



Rosenwald Court has varied local history

Apartments now occupy city landmark

By Anne Koenig
Sunday News Staff Writer

The cork's popped.

Rosenwald Court, a 1.8 million renovation project at the former Farmers Supply building in the 200 block of East Fulton Street, is ready for occupancy.

The century-old warehouse – originally built for the Conestoga Cork Works – is now a 34-unit apartment building boasting modern-day amenities.

Developed by the Progressive Investment Companies and renovated by E.G. Stoltzfus Jr., the apartment building is equipped with washers and dryers, refrigerators, ranges, dishwashers, air conditioning, and mini-blinds in all units, lighted on-site parking and a high-security system.

And unlike many apartments with monotonous, repetitive floor plans, "you will find no two units in Rosenwald Court are alike," said spokesman Benjamin Bamford.

That was a challenge, said the builder's vice president Brent Stoltzfus, but he said, "it went well" and was worth the effort to preserve some of the architecturally-significant features in the building.

Stout white-washed wood columns, large six-over-six windows, deep windowsills, exposed maple and pine wood floors, and interior exposed brick walls are some of the turn-of-the-century touches that have been maintained and incorporated into many of the units.

In addition, four different color schemes were used, and kitchen cabinet styles vary among the units.

Rosenwald Court offers renters a selection of accommodations: five studio units, three units with one bedroom, one bathroom and a den; 18 units featuring two bedrooms and one bathroom; seven units with two bedrooms and two bathrooms; and one unit with two bedrooms, two bathrooms, and a library. Smallest units are 535 square feet and the largest unit is 1,034 square feet.

Six of the 34 units feature private entrances.

Rental fees range from \$385 to \$625 a month.

■ According to David Schneider, executive director of the Historic Preservation Trust of Lancaster County, the now-remodeled building was constructed in "about 1883 for Conestoga Cork Works." That was about a year after a fire destroyed the original Conestoga Cork Works building at Locust and Lime streets. At the time, Lancaster was an important center for cork-cutting.



Rosenwald Court Apartments bring turn-of-the-century charm into modern living. Shown above are Benjamin Bamford, director of public relations for The Progressive Investment Cos.; Brent Stoltzfus, vice president of E.G. Stoltzfus, Jr. builders; Helen Martinez, property manager for Clover Property Management; Quentin Miller, vice president of The Progressive Investment Cos.; and, W. Edwin Miller, president of The Progressive Investment Cos. Below, interiors feature open space and large windows.

In 1891, the Cork Works moved out of the new Fulton Street site and the Rose Bros. Umbrella Factory began its operations there, adding a wing to the east side of the building. Again, it was a building that housed an industry of economic significance to the area.

"Pennsylvania led the nation in the manufacture of umbrellas in 1900," Schneider said. "There were six umbrella factories in Lancaster City" and, he said, "they produced \$2.7 million worth of umbrella goods" and employed 15 percent of the city's industrial work force.

In 1912, "Rose Bros. was gone and the building was used as a tobacco warehouse." Sometime before 1931, E. Rosenwald & Bros. Tobacco Co. took over the building. The current developers extracted that part of the building's history when they christened the site "Rosenwald Court."

In the 1940s, the Consolidated Cigar Corp. took ownership. The Farmers Supply hardware store occupied the building in the 1960s until The Progressive Investment Companies bought the property in 1991.

Schneider said the Rosenwald Court project is especially meaningful "because it's representative of three of Lancaster city's late 19th- and early 20th-century major industries – cork manufacturing, umbrella manufacturing and tobacco."

The building is historic by local standards; and, Schneider said, it is now in the process of being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places and has been renovated according to the standards necessary to fulfill requirements for inclusion on that register.

"I think they've done a good job" with the building, Schneider said. "The building has a very antique and industrial character to it. It's one of those little treasures that, if you take a little time to savor, is worth noticing."

■ One of the first to notice the new apartments was Jennifer Zeamer, a 24-year old legislative assistant to Sen. Richard A. Tilghman (R-17th district), chairman of the appropriations committee, Harrisburg. Zeamer was Rosenwald Court's first applicant.

"I went through the whole building," she said "I got a good idea of what they have there. They definitely are the nicest thing for the price."

Zeamer, who has shared living arrangements with a roommate in another converted warehouse apartment

unit in the city, said she was ready to live in an apartment on her own. She selected a one-bedroom residence with "lots of closet space and more privacy."

Zeamer said she searched for months to find just the right place to live. She briefly considered living in Harrisburg because that is where she works; but she said, "Lancaster is home to me. I can't imagine living in downtown Harrisburg."

She said she found Rosenwald Court particularly attractive. "The beams are enormous and they painted them white. The apartments are very modern and fully equipped."

■ Progressive Investments, founded by W. Edwin Miller seven years ago, has contributed to Lancaster's economic development in other ventures, including the former King Theater, which the company renovated into apartments for the elderly.

The developers are currently rehabilitating the Governor Hotel in Harrisburg, converting the building into a 46-unit apartment complex.

E.G. Stoltzfus, Jr., after its successful venture into Rosenwald Court's large-scale remodeling project, is the general contractor for the Governor Hotel project.

For more information on Rosenwald Court, contact Helen Martinez, property manager for Clover Property Management, (717) 291-9120.

