Conversion of Old Buildings

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Grade Level: Secondary

Purpose: Relates concepts of history and geography to place. Touches concepts of infrastructure and allows students a chance to think of opportunities for the area around them and what changes they would bring.

Objectives: 1. Students will describe how the human ability to modify physical environment has increased in scope and intensity through the use of technology.
2. Students will recognize the relationship between human activities and various locations.
3. Students will understand the significance and importance of locations change as cultures change their interactions with each other.
4. Illustrate how the use, alteration, or conservation of resources influences human choices.

Materials: Copies of “A Brief History of Waterman Memorial Hospital”
Normal classroom writing materials
An area to write down student ideas to brainstorm their ideas

Procedures:
1. Have students read “A Brief History...” and answer the questions. Discuss the thought questions, help them see clues in the reading that would help them answer the questions.
2. Ask students about other buildings in their towns that have been converted.
3. Depending on student interest, begin the discussion the next day with Part II.

Additional Activities:
1. Visit an historical museum. Many are old houses of importance to that area and show a style characteristic of the period and the city. Have students compare the construction to newer buildings. Discuss why houses were built in that style.
2. Find an old abandoned building in your city. Find out about its history including who built it and why it was built. What were the advantages of that particular site? Brainstorm with students how to convert this old building. Discuss what changes would have to be made and how would this building change the surrounding areas?
A Brief History of Waterman Memorial Hospital

Waterman Hospital stands in the center of the central business district of Eustis. As other cities see their business districts being replaced by shopping malls on the outskirts of town, the center of Eustis is thriving. The hospital has allowed Eustis to maintain its small town character. How Waterman Hospital came into being is linked to the founding of the city of Eustis.

In 1836 the U.S. government sent General Abraham Eustis to put down Indian revolts. At this time Eustis was an area of rolling hills dominated by pine forests. The only access to Eustis was down the Ocklawaha River, a tributary of the St. Johns River.

In 1877 A. S. Pendry homesteaded land here. He became the first postmaster and built a house that was expanded to make room for family and friends. Mr Pendry tried to make his name known, first trying to have the area called Pendryville, and calling his house the Pendrys. He even named a street Pendry. For some reason none of these names stuck. Pendry Street became Magnolia Avenue, Pendryville officially became Eustis in 1883, and even his house changed names: it became the Ocklawaha Hotel when it was sold to John Lane in 1897.

During this period, Eustis was on the frontier. There were no community buildings. The post office, before Pendry, was a box nailed to a tree next to Lake Eustis, the lake being the easiest access to the city itself. Houses were meeting places where people could discuss and decide issues that were important to them all. Large houses had at least one large room for these meetings called a salon. On any frontier, a large part of the population are young single men. These men had come to find the “fame and fortune,” and of course needed a place to sleep. Salons often became dormitory rooms for these young men.

John Lane was a businessman and added a large wing to each side of the Pendry home and renamed it the Ocklawaha Hotel. His plan was to make the hotel a winter playground for prominent people from the northeast. A certain group returned every year, now arriving via the new railroad, and the hotel was called the “Lane House-party” by these insiders. Among this group was Frank Waterman, President of the Waterman Fountain Pen Company.

When the Ocklawaha Hotel burned down, Waterman spearheaded the drive to build a “fire-proof” new hotel. His plan was to build the most luxurious hotel in the area. The Fountain Inn, as it was named, opened up Christmas Day, 1924. It was indeed grand. It was four stories with a basement and roof garden, built in the Spanish style. There were 164 rooms with private baths, which was quite a luxury in those days.

Unfortunately, the hotel opened just before two major economic downturns in Florida. Florida had been in its boom years. People from all over the eastern U.S. had been moving to Florida. This all changed in 1926.

Two devasting hurricanes, one in 1926, the other in 1928, caused a great loss of life and property. Florida was no longer the tranquil paradise advertised in the U.S. The Fountain Inn may have survived but in 1929 the stock market crashed. This had a profound effect because many of the hotel’s clientele were financially destroyed. Waterman tried to keep the hotel afloat and virtually became its only stockholder. He had to close the hotel in 1936.

Shortly after the closing Waterman suffered a severe stroke and was under the care of Dr. Tyre. There was no hospital in Eustis, Waterman’s winter home, and he offered Dr. Tyre the Fountain Inn as a hospital as well as $100,000 in bonds to get started. The hospital officially opened in 1937. Mr. Waterman made only one request, that a room in the hospital was to be reserved for members of his family.
Bibliography:
C. S. Shaw, Waterman Memorial Hospital...its beginnings...its present. Eustis: Waterman Memorial Hospital Association, 1973

Questions:
1. Who was the original owner of the Ocklawaha Hotel?
2. What was the original name of Eustis?
3. Where did people meet to discuss issues and ideas?
4. The founder of Waterman Hospital was the president of what company?
5. What were two contributing factors that led to the closing of the Fountain Inn?
6. What characteristics of a hotel would lend themselves to converting one to a hospital?
7. What different types of jobs were created after the hotel was converted to a hospital? What jobs would remain after the conversion?
8. Give some advantages of bringing a business like a hospital to a small town.
9. What kind of businesses are associated with hospital?
10. What different materials were probably used to build the two hotels? What new part of the infrastructure allowed the Fountain Inn to be “fire-proof”?
11. What feature probably allowed the Fountain Inn to have a basement?
12. This history has no concluding paragraph. Since the opening paragraph implies that the hospital has an important effect to the economic well being of Eustis today, what data should be supplied? What would be appropriate sources for this information?

PART II

In a country where 150 years ago old houses were burned to reclaim the nails, it’s ironic that one of America’s “frontiers” are old buildings. Some young people who are enterprising may indeed find their “fame and fortune” converting older buildings. Many cities actively seek out people who will convert older buildings for other purposes. When evaluating old buildings ask questions that would include:

1. What advantages do these old buildings have?
   - location
   - heritage
   - ambiance pleasant architectural features feeling of establishment (law office)
2. What type of business could use these old buildings?
   - difference between large and small businesses
   - themes cities support
3. What types of businesses are wanted in the CBD and what types are not?
   - types of manufacturing
   - city ordinances and variances
4. As cities change how will infrastructure change?
roads (i.e. changing to one way streets)
power supply
waste management

5. Why would cities encourage conversions of buildings?
   adds to the tax base
   increased business helps a community
   creation of jobs.

Other Strategies:
1. Visit a historical museum. Many are old houses of importance to that area and show a style characteristic of the period of the city. Have students compare the construction to newer buildings. Discuss why houses were built in that style.
2. Find an old abandoned building in your city. Find out about its history including who built it and why it was built. What were the advantages of that particular site? Brainstorm with students how to convert this old building. Discuss what changes would have to be made and how would this building change the surrounding areas?
3. Have students draw a map of the area surrounding a converted building. What businesses are effected by the new business? List advantages and disadvantages of this new business to the area. Give any changes of infrastructure necessitated by this change.