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Those outhouses that block the view of the depot are awful

The outhouses



Photo by The Cheyenne Herald, January 27, 2010

The “couldn’t pour liquid out a boot without directions on the heel” group has done it again.

The ongoing construction of toilets on the northeast corner of the WYDOT land in front of the depot perfectly obstructs the view of the depot to traffic from the east until they reach Capital Avenue. The only remaining unobstructed view of the majestic former UP depot is from straight down Capital Avenue from the north.

There have been no rest rooms for the patio since it was completed eight years ago. Only PortaPotties. So waiting until an intelligent design could be accomplished would not have been noticed by the beer drinkers who crowd the area in front of the depot on Friday nights.

As though it wasn’t bad enough to spend millions of dollars - against the express wishes of voters - to remodel the depot so it could be given over to the Old West Museum and leased to a tavern, a picture gallery and insiders’ offices that were moved from other downtown locations, they’ve now destroyed the only things locals agreed upon. That is the magnificent former UP depot and the view.

Beginning in 1989, when Union Pacific wanted to rid itself the depot and donate it to some public entity in Cheyenne but voters said no to making “museums” in the depot and in the Hynds Building with public money, the depot has polarized locals like few other subjects. Not even the garage has caused comparable damage.

Because while the depot has always had many supporters, the downtown parking garage has never had more than a few.

Voters twice said “no” to using public money to remodel the depot. And the candidate who would become mayor in 2001 also held that position. Until after he took office. Then millions of dollars that would look pretty good right now in the City bank account was spent to remodel the interior and build a patio in front of the former depot.

Even while voters were rejecting the use of new sales tax money on the depot, all agreed that the depot was a beautiful, impressive and stately historic structure that should be saved. There were never any discussions about demolishing the building - none - but that didn’t stop those with their hands out threatening such action was imminent unless voters approved millions for the remodeling. A Transportation Museum Joint Powers Board was formed and a local legislator led the effort to appropriate \$2 million of state funds - to establish a “world class transportation museum.”

That grant came with a caveat that the JPB had to raise a matching amount of money. The Union Pacific, which had tried to give the depot to the county/city somehow, agreed to donate \$300,000 to the effort. The city diverted hundreds of thousands of dollars that were intended for city streets. There were minimal private donations and the group used interest on the grant money and UP money

to reach their goal. The State, in typical lack of wisdom and forethought, had not required that the matching funds be of “private” money and little of it was.

That Joint Powers Board was a model of futility. Little was accomplished except spending the \$4+ million. When the City took back ownership of the property from the JPB, trouble lights and extension cords were hanging from the ceiling and that might have been the most impressive of their accomplishments. The roof covering was blowing off so the new city administration “trumped” up an insurance claim to finally replace that ceramic tile roof that had inappropriately been placed.

One of the efforts to make use of the depot involved an elixir-peddling salesman from Omaha. Car dealers and a few other local businesses ponied up a goodly sum of money for this guy and friends to come into town. All they lacked was a wagon that opened in the rear where the snake oil could be sold and distributed. They told the gathered masses, without breaking a smile, that 292,000 annual visitors could be drawn to the depot with certain changes. One of the additions was to be a 40’ call girl that could be seen from I-80. Sycophant after sycophant marched to the microphone in city council chambers and swore to God that the estimate was “conservative” - that many more people would come into our downtown to see whatever was offered at the incredible depot property.

They referred to that guy’s “successes”

along I-80. The Great Platte River Archway cost \$62 million, they shouted. No speaker made it very clear that none of the “attractions” on this guy’s resume were actually operational and no one knew what success or failure they’d see.

He was also involved in the Golden Spike project in North Platte, Nebraska. When I spoke with Chamber insiders there, all they wanted of this charlatan was for him to be gone. He was draining their resources and nothing was being accomplished. But, Cheyenne insiders were ecstatic. Beside themselves that such a man would even travel here to accept their money. He had, after all, friends who had been involved with Disney World. Probably visited there as we have.

He also weaseled his way into the Wyoming Territorial Park in Laramie.

Nothing he was involved in was successful. The Archway at Kearney has been an unmitigated failure. A financial disaster. You know what has happened with the Territorial Park. North Platte finished their project years later and without him.

Now, toilets should not obstruct the view of the UP depot. The “people” of Cheyenne have put millions of dollars into the restoration of the building, whether they wanted to or not. When it was proposed that the “Big Boy” locomotive in Holliday Park be relocated to in front of the depot, that idea was dismissed out of hand. “It would obstruct the view of the depot.” At least that was thematic. Toilets are not.

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