

Anything two people know is not a secret

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Historic? Or just plain old?

What's the difference between a house, church or commercial building being historic and just being old?

That definition, as you would expect, depends on the definer.

Basically, that definition boils down to a couple of simple rules:

- 1.) If the building is near me, it is historic. If it is near you, it is old.
- 2.) If the neighbors are middle income or higher, it is historic. If they are poor, it is old.

The current tempest in a teapot involves a handful of neighbors - they like to refer to themselves as "preservationists" - who object to the local hospital expanding in the neighborhood where the hospital now sits.

That group argues that the surrounding rundown properties are "historic." Some will appear at public meetings and voice misguided opinions and make false statements to try to make their points and convince each decision-making body to decide against the hospital. Not all neighbors to this hospital oppose expansion where it now sits. In all likelihood, the vast majority of Cheyenne residents within a mile of the hospital would oppose a relocation of the facility. They prefer that it be near them, not a mile west of downtown.

This increasingly tiresome hypocrisy about fighting to preserve history in Cheyenne is getting old.

There have been three well-known confiscations of private property. Not willing sales as around the hospital's expansion zone but forced sales against the desires of residents. The "preservationists" were nowhere to be found during those confiscations. Perhaps hunkered down in their old houses in a designated "historic district" that is nothing more than an area of old houses. Each of the three previous takings were of houses that were every bit as "historic" as those now facing the wrecking ball (or being relocated) north of the hospital.

The primary difference is that the targets of the three earlier takeovers (one by this same hospital) were of low income - of modest means.

Where were these do-gooders when the library displaced several property owners and tenants in their path, including one lady who had been displaced during World War II and owned a home on the near westside because that was the only place she was allowed to live when she was finally released from the internment camp in Wyoming. Where were these loudmouths then?

Houses and properties have been purchased for development in other areas of town (near St. Mary's school, the Safeway acquisitions, etc.) but those three (5th St. on the City's southside for a new viaduct and street extension, Thomes Avenue for the new library, and Nob Hill for a new hospital) were the only ones where the threat of condemnation and use of the right of eminent domain were used on residents. Nob Hill was platted in 1890 - the same year Wyoming became a state - and nine households of the same lineage lived there. They were forced from their homes in an action that was proven unnecessary. The plans for CRMC to expand right where it is, and was at the time of that multiple confiscation, negate having taken that land that was, to a great extent, unwillingly sold.

Residents in the three areas referenced above meant nothing to those now wailing about the hospital taking "historic" homes for expansion. They stood mute and disinterested.

The truth is that little in Wyoming has "historic" significance. In Europe, if one were to lament to them that buildings constructed in the 1920s or 1930s are "historic," they would laugh. They have toilet seats older than those houses.

Whenever one of the house huggers wants to try to score points about Cheyenne having demolished historic buildings, they bring up the former

Carnegie Library that once stood at the corner of 22nd St. and Capitol Avenue, and Castle Dare.

What in their tears-cascading presentations are that authorities did everything that could possibly do to save Castle Dare? A great deal of money was spent in an effort to relocate that structure. Only after great effort and cost was it determined Castle Dare could not be moved.

And, the Carnegie Library?

They want residents to believe that the Carnegie Library was something it was not. Let me share with readers what a little research would have done to educate the whiners.

The major thing it was NOT is the first Carnegie Library in the United States. A recent column in the daily newspaper in town (dwindling in influence and accuracy), offered by one of the neighborhood "preservationists," stated "Cheyenne had the first Carnegie Library in the United States." The column writer appears to have lifted that bogus claim from an internet offering that didn't even have the right photo of the Carnegie Library.

Allow me to provide a little education about Carnegie libraries and the 16 built throughout Wyoming.

Andrew Carnegie funded grants for public libraries to be constructed throughout the United States (all states except Delaware), including Arizona, New Mexico and Hawaii (not yet states when grants were approved), as well as the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. In all, 1,419 grants were approved for 1,687 public libraries. Wyoming's first grant was approved in 1899 and 16 grants totaled \$257,500.00 - Cheyenne's grant was \$50,000.00. Cheyenne did have the first Carnegie Library in Wyoming,

opening in 1902 and demolished in 1971. The local Carnegie Library was small - 10,000 sq. ft. The former library on Central Avenue was 38,000 sq. ft. and the new one on Pioneer Avenue is over 100,000 sq. ft.

Of the 16 Carnegie libraries built in Wyoming, the ones in Basin, Casper, Cheyenne, Cody, Douglas and Sheridan have been demolished. Ten still stand, five being used as a library in the local community.

Carrying on the tradition of exaggerations (lies) in Cheyenne, like "we could have had the Budweiser brewery but Gary Schaeffer wouldn't sign the agreement," preservationists have made the Cheyenne Carnegie Library, demolished 40 years ago, the first one built in the U.S.

In fact, Pennsylvania had as many as 16 such libraries open by the time the one in Cheyenne opened on May 19, 1902. The first Carnegie Library opened in Braddock, Pennsylvania on December 31, 1895, six and a half years before the first one was opened in Wyoming - in Cheyenne. Nearly four years before the first Wyoming grant was even approved



If you choose to believe all old houses are historic, that's your choice. But when you argue with bogus "facts," that is wrong

Communities do demolish historic structures. If has happened before and it will happen again. But "preservationists" should learn the difference between historic and old.

The State Capitol Building is historic. The Plains Hotel and Hynds Building are historic, too. The houses in Bar X are not. The houses in The Pointe are not. And, the houses immediately north of the current hospital are not either. They are old houses. Period. Not historic. Just plain old.

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