

# When are houses just old, not historic?

The headline isn't a trick question but one that has a simple answer.

An old house is one owned by you. A historic house is one owned by someone else. Old, you. Historic, someone else.

I wasn't certain where those six houses near the hospital even were because the dispute about whether old houses could be demolished or moved or had to be renovated in place is about a .0 on my personal Featherly Scale. I mean, we've got real people out there, flesh and blood, suffering and in need of assistance and they aren't getting it - houses, old or historic, don't ring my chimes. Sorry.

And, the truth is, no house in Cheyenne would be considered "historic" on the East Coast. Houses built in 1900 would be considered the "New Kid on the Block." But, here, such a house can be considered either old or historic. Yours or mine.

It is interesting to me that, when homeowners were being displaced for a new library and a new viaduct, there was no public hue or cry. Those were people being displaced, not empty houses being considered for demolition. When a couple dozen properties in Nob Hill, a subdivision platted in 1890, before the oldest of these six houses now in dispute were built at Fort D.A. Russell, people wanting to save these houses didn't care.

The six houses near the UMC parking garage are empty and none have been occupied for many months. That doesn't change the argument that the structures are "historic" for some reason, just that the compassion shown for boards, sheetrock and nails was missing when numerous families of minority residents were told to rent a U-Haul and move.

It invariably comes down to whose ox is being gored. This dispute is no different.

Frankly, I thought the houses in question were in another location.

But, as I thought more and more about the comparative lack of compassion for those elderly families west of the City, on the southside and at Nob Hill, I thought I would look a little deeper into this story.

So, I contacted one of the owners of the six houses and asked if I could see the inside of a couple of the houses at the center of the disagreement.

The owner consented and I first drove by the area to see where I had to show up that afternoon for my unguided tour.

I was surprised to see that the houses were on the southside of the parking garage, with three along House Ave., one with a 22nd St. address and two along Evans, the southernmost one next to the Little Ol' Printshop.

I was allowed unfettered access to the small house at 2115 House and the large

house at the corner of 22nd and Evans.

Both houses on Evans and the one with the 22nd St. address are, or will be, sold and relocated. The three along House will be offered for sale and those who want to keep them in place as historic properties can now step forward and acquire them and renovate them to their own satisfaction. The Cheyenne Herald will monitor the offer and sales of the houses and report to readers as soon as each of the three properties are sold and to whom.

The three "look-alike" houses along House Avenue do appear to have good potential to be renovated - if someone has the patience and the money. They appear to have been officer's quarters at D.A. Russell about a hundred years ago. The southernmost of the three, the one I toured, looks at the back of the Historic Governor's Mansion. Fighting to retain those houses assumes the old Governor's Mansion will forever be open to the public and never demolished itself. And, in truth, holding these three old houses in places does not protect the neighborhood against losing some of the other old and rundown houses nearby. Perhaps the preservation group will find a way to acquire and restore other homes near the Historic Governor's Mansion.

With three of the houses in question being sold and relocated and three being kept in place, it sounds like a "win-win" situation for all. If you dismiss personal property rights, no one should have a problem with this resolution.

Once the three houses are removed, the question of whether the hospital will still want the diminished land for a parking lot can be resolved. It is likely they will as they've scarfed up most available properties around the facility - in spite of also having displaced a number of homeowners from Nob Hill. What will be done with that land UMC confiscated? And what will become of the St. Mary's property bought by the hospital and the old DePaul Hospital property?

Should the hospital be moved, the vacated land and buildings will present a real challenge.

# Catch and release

A used car lot owner on the southside called recently and asked about placing an ad to criticize a sheriff's department deputy's handling of a report the caller had made about a stolen vehicle.

I told him I would not use my paper for paid attacks by one person against another but that I'd be willing to discuss the matter with him. Any "attack" made would have to be by me, after I determined such criticism was warranted and provable. I won't investigate people's grievances against each other and don't really want to get started with that sort of thing.

Anyway, I went to the lot to speak with the owner and another employee there and the story goes like this:

On August 19, 2008, a person well-known to them came to the lot and was interested in buying a used pickup. The "buyer" said his father would provide him the cash to buy the truck - this lot does not self-finance their sales - and asked that the bill of sale be prepared. In the midst of the transaction, he had to leave suddenly, saying his mother had been injured and was in the hospital. That turned out to be a ruse.

The owner knew the guy because he had used him to clean carpets in the office and even in his house on past occasions. He knew little else about the guy.

When the potential buyer returned, the owner was concluding a sale with another customer in his office. The "buyer" had asked for the paperwork so he could take it to his father to approve and then his parent would bring the cash to the lot to him to conclude the sale.

As the owner sat in his office, where he could not see the lot or the truck, the guy grabbed the keys off an outside table and jumped into the truck and drove away.

The owner knew immediately that he had

just been ripped off. The father lived nearby and was called. The father said he had made no agreement to provide his son the cash and told the owner the younger man had stolen his truck and he should report it as stolen. The lot owner quickly called the sheriff's department and reported the truck as stolen.

*Upon review of this "buyer's" criminal past, it was easy to see why his father determined immediately that the son had stolen the truck. His son has a lengthy record of theft - having several times written checks on accounts not his own, including his grandmother and a girlfriend.*

A deputy sheriff assured the lot owner that an APB would be put out on the guy and the truck. Four days later, the lot owner told me, the thief was stopped in Kansas and the LCSD was contacted. To make a long story short, the guy was released without being arrested. According to what the lot owner told me he was told by a deputy of LCSD, the fact that the guy had "two keys" on the key ring and an uncompleted bill of sale for the truck meant that it was his - not stolen.

"Catch and release" is a fisherman's practice of putting fish back in the water - either because they're too small to keep or because the fisherman fishes for sport, not intending to keep fish he catches. This incident in Kansas sounds like a fugitive's "catch and release."

When I contacted the DA's office, I was told that no warrants were out on the "fugitive" even though he had been a no-show at District Court and there should have been two warrants for his arrest. One for that no-show and a second one for the truck theft. As a result of my contact, a warrant was issued for the arrest of this guy. The prospect of the stolen truck being returned is virtually nil. Even a serial lawbreaker would know he had lucked out once again and likely would have "junked" the truck for \$25 or so.



1-844-158

## Sell Your Home for CASH in 24 hours!

- Sell "As Is" • No Repairs Needed
- Foreclosure, Bankruptcy
- Fast Closings, Quick Cash!

## We BUY HOUSES!

**ALSO Land & Apartments!**

**Call 24 Hours:**

# 1-800-4-1-OFFER • Jim Ward

## WyomingPropertySolutions.com

**307-632-8222 307-630-5272**

*WyomingLiving@msn.com • 5322 Yellowstone Rd. Cheyenne, WY 82009*

