

Around Cheyenne Magazine article Inter Ocean Hotel - Barney Ford

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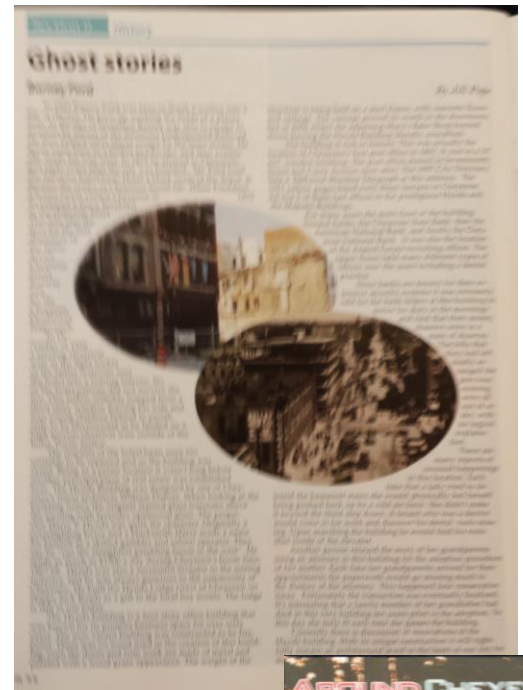
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In 1822 Barney Ford was born in South Carolina into a life of slavery. He grew up working the fields of a plantation. At the age of seventeen Barney was able to escape to freedom by means of the infamous Underground Railroad. He then helped other slaves escape by the same means. He spent some time as a barber in Chicago, and then eventually made his way west. In 1875 he arrived in Cheyenne, just eight years after the city was founded. Mr. Ford built the fabulous Inter Ocean Hotel a block north of the depot. It became the center of Cheyenne Social life. When President Ulysses Grant visited Cheyenne in 1875 he enjoyed a fancy breakfast at the elaborate hotel. This was also the spot for the first departure of the horse-drawn Cheyenne Street Railway and for the Cheyenne Deadwood Stagecoach.

In December of 1916 a sizzling electrical wire in the light socket of the ladies restroom sent the hotel into a roaring inferno. Six of the hotel patrons did not survive the fire. One fellow selfishly jumped from a third story window leaving his wife and four young children behind to perish, only to be electrocuted as he landed on a high tension electrical wire outside of the hotel, poetic justice.

The remains of the Inter Ocean were too unstable to be repaired and so the building was razed. Being in a prime location it wasn't long before another principal piece of real estate was established here. The Hynds Building was designed by one of Cheyenne's finest architects William Dubois. When looking at the building notice the original stained glass transoms above the awning with lavender opalescent glass. The proprietor, Harry P. Hynd's. was quite the character. Originally a prizefighting boxer and a blacksmith Harry made a name for himself as a skilled gambler and saloon operator. They say he "ran the straightest gambling house in the west". He made as much as \$1500 a day during Cheyenne's boom time 1867-68. Hynd's was also a successful investor in the mining industry, and he was always generous to the community of Cheyenne. He built the Hynds Lodge (west of Cheyenne on Happy Jack Road) as a gift to the local boy scouts. The lodge is still in use today.

The Hynds building is a four story office building that was known for its premier business space for over sixty years. The now vacant building was constructed to be fireproof. There was no wood used in the creation of this building, even the doors and trim work are made of metal and painted with a wood grain



appearance. The weight of the structure is being held on a steel frame, with concrete floors and ceilings. The concept proved its worth in the downtown fire of 2004 where the adjoining Mary's Bake Shop burned down leaving the Hynd's Building literally unscathed.

The building is rich in history. This was actually the location of Cheyenne's first post office in 1867. It was in a 10' x15' wooden building. The post-office moved to Seventeenth Street and Carey Avenue soon after. The 1907 City Directory lists a DeForest Wireless Telegraph at this address. The 1911 yellow pages list forty-three lawyers in Cheyenne. All but 2 of them had offices in the prestigious Hynd's and the Majestic Buildings.

For many years the main floor of the building housed banks, The Cheyenne State Bank, then the American National Bank, and finally the Cheyenne National Bank. It was also the location of the Armed Forces recruiting offices. The upper floors held many different types of offices over the years including a dental practice

Since banks are known for their extensive security systems it was extremely odd for the bank tellers at this building to arrive for duty in the mornings and find that their money drawers were in a state of disarray. The bills that they had left neatly arranged the previous evening were all out of order, with no logical explanation.

There are many reports of unusual happenings in this location. Each time that a lady tried to descend the basement stairs she would physically feel herself being pushed back up by a cold air force. She didn't make it beyond the third step down. A tenant who was a dentist would come in for work and discover his dental tools missing. Upon searching the building he would find his tools shut inside of the elevator.

Another person relayed the story of her Grandparents using an attorney in this building for the adoption procedure of her mother. Each time her Grandparents arrived for their appointments the paperwork would go missing much to the dismay of the attorney. This happened four consecutive times. Fortunately the transaction was eventually finalized. It's interesting that a family member of her grandfather had died in this very building ten years prior to the adoption. To this day she feels ill each time she passes the building.

Currently there is discussion of renovations of the Hynd's building. With its unique construction it will rightfully remain an architectural jewel in the heart of our city for many years to come.