

SAVED FROM THE JAWS OF PROGRESS

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Written by dave

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THE GAZETTE

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BY DAVE HUGHES

YOUR HUB CONTRIBUTOR

Saved from the jaws of progress Yeah, it is sometimes called “the west side” and at other times “Old Colorado City.” But whatever it’s called, people love its glimpses of a history neither Colorado Springs nor Manitou Springs lived through. And they love it for its architecture, which isn’t as upscale as that in Colorado Springs and Manitou Springs. The west side’s architectural roots were laid down in the rough log cabin and wooden framed buildings beginning in 1859 and lasting into the 1880s. Old Colorado City got its first economic boost after uppity Colorado Springs, where there ain’t no springs, and pretentious Manitou Springs, which has springs, yet never went through real frontier days (but pretends it did,) were founded after the Civil War in the 1870s by easterners and Englishmen. There was trickle-down income in Colorado City as the resident stone masons, iron workers, carpenters and working men built the wealthier towns tanking it. And then came Cripple Creek gold in 1891. All the gold seekers and gamblers had to change trains from the narrow gauge Denver and Rio Grande, which ran up Cucharras Street to Manitou, to the full-gauge Midland Railroad in Colorado City — carousing all night between train rides. This brought in a little more money and capitalized the Victorian Brick commercial buildings, 21 saloons, the red light district on Cucharras and the gamblers on the second floor of buildings which still stand and are at the heart of what you Dave Hughes

And so a bundle of papers has recently been sent to the Colorado State Historical Fund to try and get the seed money for the creation of something called a Colorado Springs city "Historical Overlay Zone" which carries with it tax incentives, over no less than 3,600 west side homes, that can help save the west side from a fate worse than death - PROGRESS! Known as “Old” Colorado City. Minus the gambling - we think — grin.

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But the flow of money also quietly paid for widespread west-side residential building from Monument Creek to the Manitou city limits. Some call it Carpenter Victorian architecture — the modest homes of the gold mill, railroad, store front and saloon workers and their families. They are hardly the fancy homes on Wood Avenue or on Lake Avenue in the Broadmoor. But many people love 'em. These homes are the soul of the 'west side and its friendly people. They are the heritage of hard-work-ing, God-fearing, blue-collar conserva-tive west siders who produced four mayors for Colorado Springs. But are they worth saving? You bet! At least in the opinion of many west siders, new and old, and me. So your "neighborhood" organization, the long-lived "Organization of Westside Neighbors," or OWN, has been struggling to do something about it for over 10 years now. They asked me. I helped form OWN way back in 1978 while my energies were turned to revitalizing the three block "Old Town" district to rejoin them and use whatever talents I have to help them save those architectural gems before the developers tear them down and replace them with modernistic whatever's, such as the endless duplexes which are popping up now. , So even though I am getting long in the tooth at 79, I said I would. And so a bundle of papers has recently been sent to the Colorado State Historical Fund to try and get the seed money for the creation of something called a Colorado Springs city "Historical Overlay Zone" which carries with it tax incentives, over no less than 3,600 west side homes that can help save the west side from a fate worse than death — PROGRESS! I'll add in this blog the bits and pieces of what that all means, and solicit your input and commentary on the whole issue of saving the west side. So what do you think?