

# History of the Hynds Building

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The building on the corner of 16th and Capitol is an illusion.

First visitors to the Hynds Building, designed by famed Cheyenne architect William Dubois, and constructed in the early 1920s, were said to remember the “beautiful woodwork” in the five-story building, the likes of which the city had never seen.

Only there is no woodwork.

The entire five-story building is made of steel and concrete. There is no wood -- in the window sills, door frames, floors, casings, or picture rail. And, yes, you have to touch it.

There was method behind the madness of constructing a building of steel and concrete -- it was to have been fireproof. And, 85 years later, when fire took Mary’s Bake Shoppe next door in 2004, the Hynds Building still stood.

Wyoming wind, funneled across the high plains of Cheyenne, and screaming along 16th street, had wreaked havoc on hastily-constructed shanties and grand buildings alike in early Cheyenne. When the Inter Ocean Hotel succumbed to fire in 1916, killing a family of six, Harry P. Hynds, blacksmith and entrepreneur, tackled head-on the bane of the wind.

In the 1880s, Hynds had been among the influx of soldiers and camp followers, war heroes, and wanderers in the years following the Civil War to Cheyenne and the railroad, to become prominent or notorious in Cheyenne legend. Madams and politicians alike made fortunes in Cheyenne.

Strong and flamboyant, Harry P. Hynds traveled to Cheyenne in 1882 from Illinois via Idaho and Colorado, a skilled blacksmith, and found his occupation useful in this frontier city. He built wagons and drove the Black Hills stage. He opened bars and gambling halls in four cities and called them “the straightest in the West.” He killed his first wife’s lover after discovering them together, and divorced her after he was acquitted. He dabbled at professional boxing, then opened his own ring on his saloon property and offered \$100 to anyone still standing after four rounds.

By 1911, he was an investor in the Plains Hotel at 16th and Central.

Hynds added to his fortune through oil investments, amassing over \$1 million. Later in life, he became a philanthropist and gave much of his fortune to charity, building for the Boy Scouts the Hynds Lodge west of Cheyenne. He lived at the Converse home at 18th and Warren with his wife, Nel. Hynds died in 1933.

Before the flood of 1986, the Hynds Building housed offices. An aura still lingers in the upper floors, where the old lettering frosts glass panes of the former offices and sunlight falls soft on amber “wood” floors.

Steve Freudenthal owned the building for a while. In 2006, Al Wiederspahn sold the building to Outback Investments of Loveland, eager to explore the potential, saying, “Whenever you revitalize a downtown, you shift people’s attitudes back toward downtown. We hope to participate in bringing that energy back.”

After the 2008 recession, things slowed down considerably.

The “Lights On!” project has been operating since 2011 in the Hynds building to “add vitality and arts and education to the downtown,” said Glen Garrett, local architect, affiliated with the Hynds project. The group has made Herculean efforts to make building habitable by unboarding windows, putting in electricity, heat, plumbing, replacing windows, securing the building, and adding restrooms. The building is now being used for the community, and has sponsored a busy roster of: art shows, Wyoming Philanthropy Days, Christmas Parade VIP viewings, public meetings, art and music classes, solo and group performances, the Governor’s Art Exhibition, art shows, and the spectacular New Year’s Eve Ball Drop.

Ghosts are rumored to haunt the Hynds Building and, indeed, all of downtown Cheyenne. Magician Aiden Sinclair found out that “Doc Holliday had dealt cards at the Inter Ocean Hotel and that Tom Horn, the last man legally hanged in Cheyenne, had been a visitor.” Digging further into newspaper accounts, Sinclair developed Cheyenne’s haunted history show, not recommended for children under 10, and played the Hynds during Frontier Days.

Even more events and elaborate decorations are being planned this year for downtown, once a focal point of Frontier Days, to bring back vitality back into the area.

More recently, Hynds Building owners have been in negotiation to develop the building into LCCC student housing.

(Sources: Rick Ammon, “The Hynds Building;” Denny Curran, “Downtown Cheyenne’s Building Sold” (2007); Josh Roten “Get the haunted History of Cheyenne at Hynds Show,” WTE; Glen Garrett, architect; Alan O’Hashi)