

WT07-43, Continued

The full-frontal porch is a twentieth century replacement of the earlier Victorian porch but retains its essential dimensions. A frame, board-and-batten sheathed carriage barn with a clipped-gable roof occupies the rear of the site.

8. SIGNIFICANCE: Mr. and Mrs. Bentley were natives of England and New York, respectively, and came to Nebraska from Iowa. Matthew R. Bentley was the prototype for "Wick Cutter," the "Black Hawk [Red Cloud] money lender." Mildred Bennett has stated that when they came to Red Cloud, Mrs. Bentley opened a millinery shop and made enough money to start her husband in his loan business (Bennett: 1961, p.82).

After the construction of the house, the Webster County Argus(Oct. 25, 1883, p. 7) stated that it was ". . .one of the most elegant and tasty dwellings in this section of the country, not from any lavish architectural display, but from its harmonious design, and the neatness and taste with which it had been carried out." Cather described the house this way: "They dwelt in fussy, scroll-work house, painted white and buried in thick evergreens, with a fussy white fence and barn." (My Antonia, p. 210).

Cather continues,

"Cutter often threatened to chop down the cedar trees which half-buried the house. His wife declared she would leave him if she were stripped of the 'privacy' which she felt these trees afforded her. That was his opportunity, surely; but he never cut down the trees." (My Antonia, p. 213).

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage: Less than one acre
UTM Coordinate: 14/E540860/N4438070

Verbal Boundary Description: Lots 1-3, block 8, Smith and Morre's Addition to Red Cloud, Webster County, Nebraska.

WT07-54

- 1. NAME: Warner-Cather house
Second Cather house 82-4928
- 2. LOCATION: 541 No. Seward Street
- 4. OWNER: Ruby Mae Copley
ADDRESS: 541 No. Seward, Red Cloud, Nebraska 68970

7. DESCRIPTION: Built by Joseph and Sylvia Warner, probably in the late 1890's, the house was sold to Charles F. Cather in 1903. The Cathers continued to live in the house until the death of Willa's mother in 1931.

The house is a large one-and-one-half story frame structure, a deep-rectangle in shape with a slightly projecting gabled wing on the north. The gabled front facade faces east and features two bays with the assymmetrically placed entry in the left (south) bay. A round-arched attic light with keystone is placed in the shingled gable (photo #28).

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A distinctive feature of the house is the Doric columned (interspersed with Eastlake columns) front porch which terminates on the north with a half-circle in plan. Balustrades encircle both the lower and upper (walk-out) portions of the porch. The external stairway, an intrusive element, was added when the house was converted to a nursing home.

8. SIGNIFICANCE: In 1904 the Cather family left their little rented house on the corner of Third and Cedar (WT07-26) and moved into this more spacious house which they had purchased. Although Cather had left Red Cloud as her residence permanently in 1896, she continued to visit her family in this house often during the summers and occasionally for Christmas. Willa used to put a tent-like awning on the upper front porch and spent a great deal of time there.

The house is the setting for the Ferguesson family home in one of her short stories, "The Best Years." Her family was the prototype for the Ferguesson's.

"The depot Ferguessons? Oh, they live uptown now. Ferg built right west of the Court House, right next to where the Donaldsons used to live." ("The Best Years" - Five Stories, pp. 144-45).

"How comfortably you are fixed here, Mrs. Ferguesson! I'm so glad to find you like this."

"Yes, we're comfortable--now that they're all gone! It's mostly his taste. He took great interest." She spoke rather absently, and kept looking out through the polished hall toward the front door, as if she were expecting someone." ("The Best Years" - Five Stories, pp. 144-45.)

"I do believe they feel as bad as I do about moving up here. We have four nice bedrooms upstairs to make them comfortable, should they all come home at once, and they're polite about us and tell us how well fixed we are. But Miss Knightly, I know at the bottom of their hearts they wish they was back in the old house down by the depot, sleeping in the attic."

"Mrs. Thorndike stroked her hand. 'I looked for the old house as I was coming up from the station. I made the driver stop.'

"Ain't it dreadful, what's been done to it? If I'd foreseen, I'd never have let Mr. Ferguesson sell it." ("The Best Years" - Five Stories, p. 146.)

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage: Less than one acre

UTM Coordinate: 14/E540750/N4437720

Verbal Boundary Description: This property is located on lots 1-4, block 16, Original Town of Red Cloud, Webster County, Nebraska.

WT07-70

1. NAME: The City Pharmacy
"Dr. Cook's Drug Store"

2. LOCATION: 410 No. Webster

4. OWNER: Roger D. Mans

ADDRESS: Inavale, Nebraska 68952

82-4829

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