

Historic building in city bought

By Dan Daly
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Now you can call it the Blote Building.

Larry Blote and his son Mark have bought the 106-year-old Sweeney Building at Seventh and Main streets in downtown Rapid City.

The Blotes have First Stop Gun & Coin and First Stop Pawn on the first floor of the building. They have leased first-floor space for 15 years, Larry Blote said.

According to county records, the Blotes paid \$137,500. The seller was listed as Donald K. and Patsy Piearson, and the deed was filed Oct. 1.

The second and third floors are vacant, but Larry Blote said Tuesday he hoped to someday make the improvements necessary to make the upper floors once again useful.

"It is going to cost a lot of money," Blote said. The upper floors have been condemned and would need extensive electrical and plumbing work.

In the short term, the priority will



Photo courtesy of Rapid City Historic Preservation Commission

This undated photo shows the Sweeney Hardware Building, Seventh and Main streets, in better days.

be to restore the building's brick exterior, he said.

He also would like to repaint the faded historic signs with which the original owner, pioneer hardware dealer Tom Sweeney, once advertised hardware and other products. Blote said they must find out how much such a paint job would cost. The Blotes also need to check with the city of Rapid City to see if such signs are even legal under today's sign codes, said Blote, a member of the Rapid City Common Council.

Although the paint is barely visible, the hand-painted advertising can still be seen high on the building's brick wall. Among them is a drawing of the horse-drawn Studebaker wagon Sweeney once sold.

Built in 1886, the Sweeney building is one of downtown Rapid City's oldest structures. Historic photos depict the three-story brick building towering above wooden shanties that lined the city's Main Street in the 1880s.

But its poor condition earned the Sweeney building a spot on the Rapid City Historic Preservation Commission's 10 most-endangered properties list, released in May of this year.

"We would like to clean it up," Blote said. "It would be a good addition to downtown if it looked good. ... Tearing it down is not in our plans."

Blote said he had been checking, so far without success, into federal programs to help fund historic preservation. But he said he was committed to keeping his shops at the downtown location.

11-11