

Ashley Street Residents Welcome New Neighbor

By **MATT BURGARD**
COURANT STAFF WRITER

When there's a 3,000-square-foot brick house hovering in the street outside your front yard, the logical thing to do is to go get a pizza.

That, at least, was the thinking of Jeanine King and her neighbors on Ashley Street in Hartford, where the two-day relocation of a 110-year-old Victorian house ended Monday with the house being lowered onto an open plot across the street from King's apartment building.

"We figured we'd be spending a lot of time sitting out here watching the house, so we might as well get something to eat," said King, who sat in a lawn chair in her building's driveway with a slice of pizza dangling in her hand. "This is better than TV."

While King and her friends didn't have to go far to watch the spectacle, others came from points across the state to see the stately two-story house — a classic keepsake of Hartford's architectural past — complete its arduous journey to Ashley Street.

The move, which cost more than \$100,000, began Sunday when a professional moving company hoisted the house from its former address at 47 Sigmourney St. and began inching it along on an elaborate system of hydraulic engines and steel beam supports.

The move is part of an effort by the

Northside Institutions Neighborhood Alliance, a community development corporation, as well as other community enhancement groups, to preserve the city's history and revitalize its neighborhoods. Now that the house, which had been threatened with demolition, has been moved, the groups will spend several weeks refurbishing it before putting it on the market as a single-family residence.

A network of enormous wheels was supposed to guide the house on a roughly mile-long journey to Ashley Street by the end of the day Sunday. But the move proved to be so slow-going that the moving crews opted to suspend the operation and begin again Monday morning — a decision that forced the closure of Garden Street from Collins to Ashley streets during the morning rush hour.

For the most part, spectators were amazed at how the house, which is held together by bricks and mortar more than a century old, stayed together. The only damage to the house occurred Sunday when one of its three chimneys hit a tree branch, crumbling a top section of the chimney.

By noon Monday, Garden Street was reopened as the house turned the corner onto Ashley. Crews began the complicated task of propping the house on a system of blocks, and then reversed the wheels to lower the house onto the spot where a new foundation will be built under the propped-up house.

'THIS IS BETTER THAN TV'



TOM BROWN / THE HARTFORD COURANT

KATE SIMCIC, right, of Ashley Street, sits with friends Charles and Evelyn Babella, of Bloomfield, to watch as a two-story brick Victorian inches down the street.