



File Photo

Bluestein Building on King Street was gutted by 1987 fire.

Chas. City Council Agrees To Help Rebuild Upper King Street Building

By KERRI MORGAN
Post-Courier Reporter

Charleston City Council agreed Tuesday to help rebuild the burned-out Bluestein Building at 494 King St. to signify a commitment to revitalizing the upper portion of the city's business district.

The building burned on Oct. 2, 1987.

Council approved Mayor Joseph P. Riley Jr.'s request to appropriate \$49,833 for stabilizing the facade and for engineering and architectural studies. The money will be taken from the unallocated portion of the city's accommodation tax funds.

M&R Contractors submitted a low bid of \$29,975 to stabilize the facade in 35 days. The remaining \$19,858 will be used for the studies.

Further, council agreed to pay Evans and Schmidt Architects, specialists in historic preservation, up to \$12,023 to help in studies of stabilizing and restoring the facade. The firm also was hired by the owner to design the new construction. Once the plans for restoration are completed, council also will be asked to approve additional money for that phase of the project, Riley said. He

also will seek private donations for the effort.

In return for its investment, the city will receive a conservation easement giving it total control over what happens to the facade of the building. And, the city will receive 15 percent of the profits when, and if, the Bluestein family sells the building.

Riley made his presentation to council's Real Estate Committee before the full council met. He announced shortly after the fire last October that the city might move its Office of Revitalization into the Bluestein building if the owners consented to rebuild. But an agreement wasn't reached until this week.

In a letter to council, Riley said the building "could be considered the linchpin of upper King Street. Built between 1852 and 1872, it was one of the most beautiful and architecturally significant buildings in this area."

After the fire, the city met with owner Nathan J. Bluestein and requested that the facade be incorporated into a new building on the site.

Committee member John Thomas questioned

the wisdom of allocating more money to revitalization in the area. He said the city already has committed a great deal of money nearby to establishing the new visitor's center and to subsidizing the Charleston Trident Chamber of Commerce's move to the center. "I'm not saying it's wrong. I'm just trying to find out how much is enough," he said.

Riley said rebuilding the Bluestein building is necessary because "that area will one day be a prime and much more commercial area. The Bluestein creates a special renewal statement there."

He said that while the level of business on that part of King Street currently might not warrant rebuilding, the result "will be an economic statement, something to draw investors into a commercial area."

The explanation apparently satisfied Thomas. "So what we're doing is putting a down-payment on the future," he said.

Council unanimously approved the money to restore the building.

Searches Continue For Young Boy, Man

By ERIC FRAZIER
and CHRIS SOSNOWSKI
Post-Courier Reporters

Search efforts continued Tuesday for a 5-year-old West Ashley boy and a Columbia man who disappeared in Rockville and off Edisto Beach, respectively.

Charleston County police Underwater Recovery Team divers suspended their search for Chad Michael Dawson, who was reported missing in Rockville Monday.

Local restaurants and neighbors brought food and beverages to the divers as they searched Tuesday. "I appreciate the job everyone has been doing for us," Dawson said. "All we can do now is pray God will send him back to us."

Police were notified about 4:30 p.m. Monday that the boy was missing.

Chad is white and about 3 feet tall. He was wearing a blue-and-white striped shirt and blue pants.





Measuring Damage

Architects take to the air Monday to examine the remains of the Bluestein Brothers Department Store on King Street, which was heavily damaged by fire last month. Architects Will Evans and Joseph Schmidt were hoisted along with a Charleston firefighter to the top of the building's facade in the bucket of a city fire truck to examine windows and other details that will have to be rebuilt. Evans said their firm will serve as architects for both the city, which is committed to restoring the building's facade, and for the owner, Nicky Bluestein, who will rebuild the back. Before any restoration can take place, the building must be shored up. Evans said all the Bluestein family's information on the building has been destroyed, so he is seeking from the public any pertinent pictures or information dating from the time the facade was built in 1913 to the time the building was modernized in the 1960s.

Staff Photo by Bill Jordan

Ruins Tell A City's History

Some To Be Incorporated Into New Buildings

Newest
Courier
2-7-89

By KERRI MORGAN
Post-Courier Reporter

Bits of Charleston's history lean on props throughout the city — a column here, a doorway there, and an occasional front wall left standing with blue sky visible through its windows.

Some are slated to be incorporated into new buildings and others will remain simply as monuments to the way things once were.

Some of the more prominent remnants lovingly preserved around town include the facades of the Bluestein building, Bennett's Rice Mill and a former King Street business, the old Charleston Museum columns, a portico at Mitchell Elementary School, and the doorway of the Charleston Sheet Metal Building.

• **The Bluestein building at 494 King St.**, an elegant structure built in the late 1800s, burned in October 1987. Firemen were able to save the facade and the building is being reconstructed.

Shortly after the fire, Mayor Joseph P. Riley Jr. and Nicky Bluestein, the building's owner, struck a deal to ensure that a better building would rise from the ashes. City Council allocated \$49,833 from its hotel-motel accommodations tax fund to stabilize the facade and pay for engineering and architectural studies. In return, Bluestein gave the city an equity easement in the facade that allocates 15 percent of the proceeds to the city if the building is ever sold.

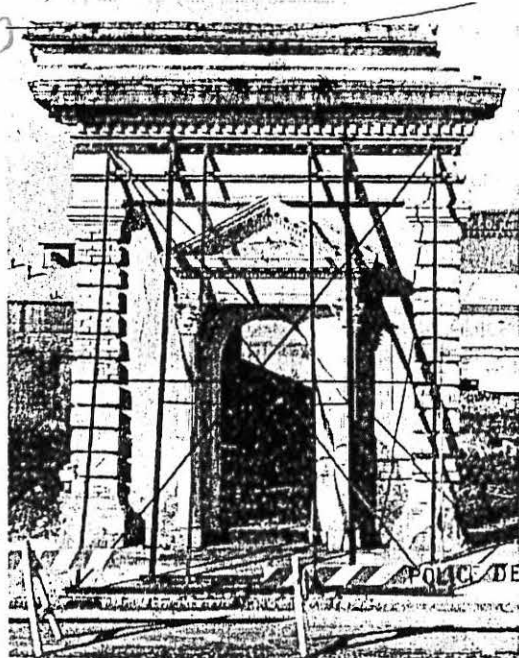
The city also plans to relocate its Downtown Revitalization Office to the second floor of the building. That move and the restoration of the building are seen as key catalysts in the revitalization of the upper section of King Street.

• Fire also claimed the Charleston Sheet Metal Building at 181 Church St., at the corner of North Market, last October. But its historically and architecturally significant doorway on the Church Street side was saved. It is slated to remain where it is and be incorporated into the entrance of an inn to be built by Amherst Development Co. of Southern Pines, N.C.

The ornate wood and masonry doorway was part of an otherwise bare antebellum warehouse. The building was the home of George W. Williams and Co., which began as a wholesale grocery in the mid-1800s and later included a number of other enterprises. The doorway is believed to have been added to reflect growing prosperity when Williams began a banking business. By the beginning of the Civil War, having been in Charleston only eight years, Williams was head of two large mercantile houses, and a director of two railroads and the Bank of South Carolina.

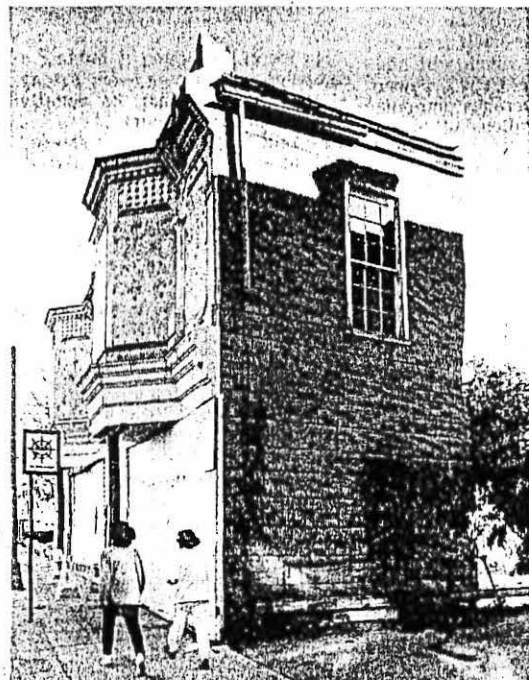
• Perhaps the most famous and photographed of Charleston's relics are the six Corinthian columns of the former Charleston Museum, located on the current site of Cannon Park on Rutledge Avenue.

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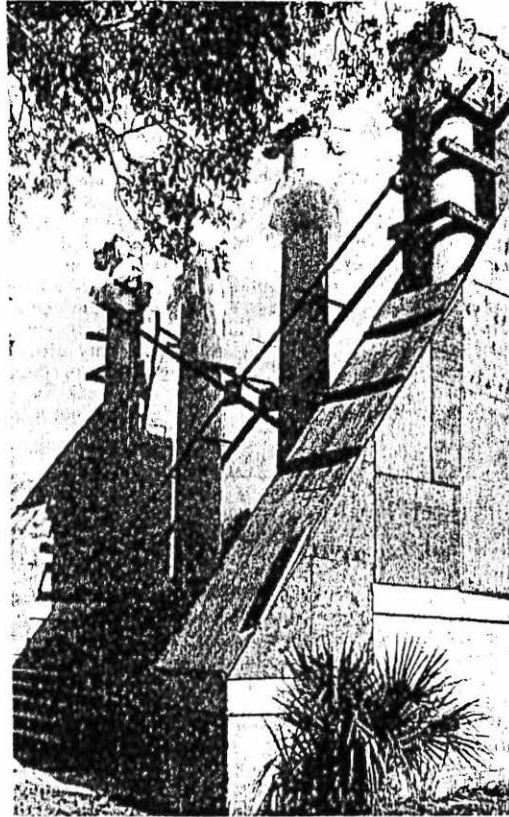
Staff Photo by Brad Nettles

Church and North Market streets



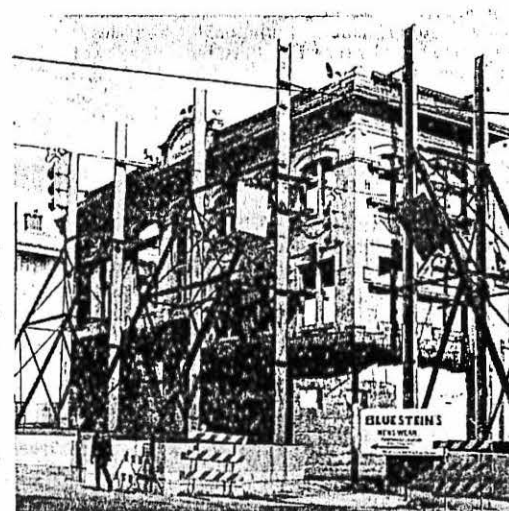
Staff Photo by Wade Spees

158-160 King St.



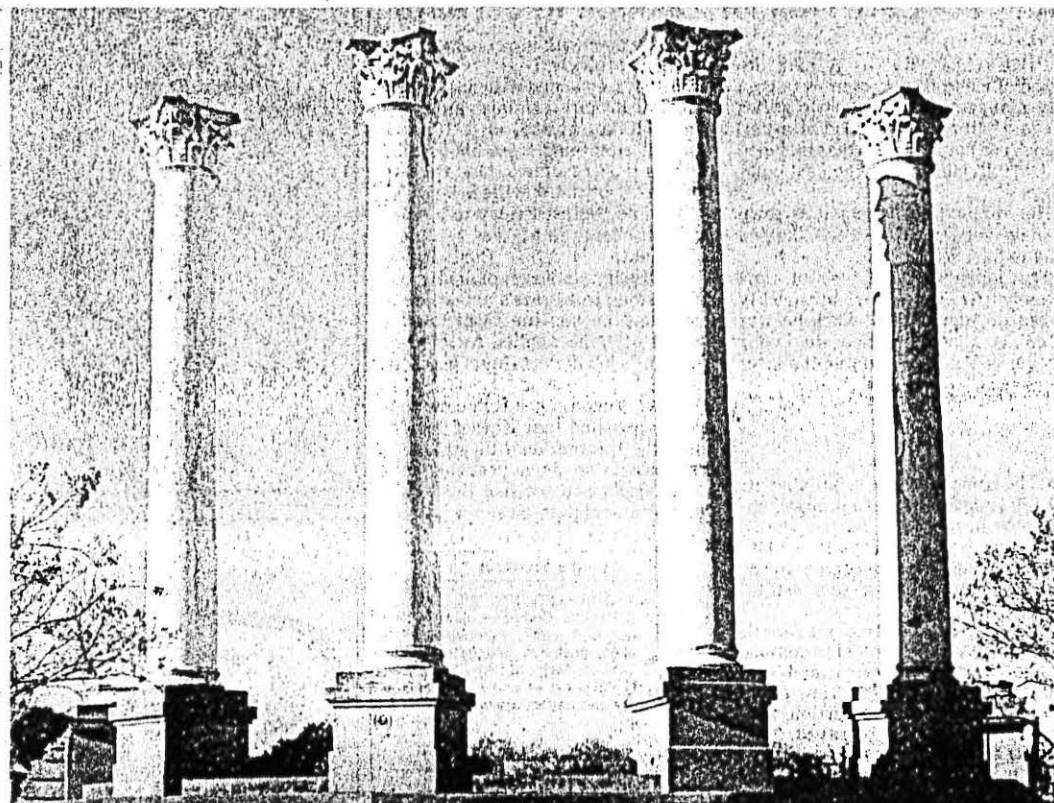
Staff Photo by Brad Nettles

Mitchell Elementary School portico



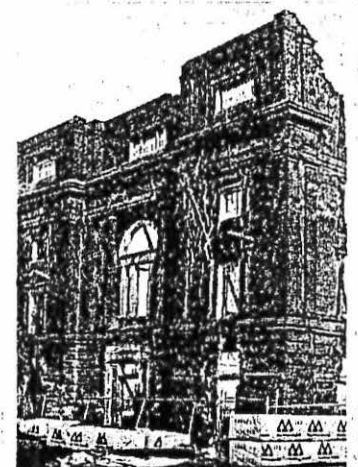
Staff Photo by Brad Nettles

Bluestein Building, King Street



Staff Photo by Tom Spain

Old Charleston Museum columns, Rutledge Avenue



Staff Photo by Brad Nettles

Bennett's Rice Mill