

Demolition Defended

By MARY A. GLASS
Staff Reporter

Charleston Mayor Joseph P. Riley Jr. on Tuesday defended the city's orders to demolish a row of historic buildings Monday — and called for the resignation of the director of the Preservation Society of Charleston.

Riley said the director, Henry Cauthen, had shattered the relationship between the society and the Riley administration.

The mayor was reacting to a comment Cauthen made concerning the city-ordered demolition of buildings at 246, 244 and 242 Meeting St. The city ordered the buildings torn down after a consulting engineer said demolition of an adjacent building had rendered them hazardous.

"These demolition accidents make me wonder how many of these accidents might occur," Cauthen said. He questioned what would happen to the row of historic buildings on the other side of Meeting Street when the city tears down parts of them to make room for a parking garage.

Riley took that as a slap at the sincerity of the city's vow to preserve and restore the first 40 feet of the row of buildings that would remain between Meeting Street and the garage, which is planned as part of the Charleston Center hotel and conference center project.

Riley said Cauthen's remarks marked a "sad day in the city," and added that Cauthen's effectiveness as director of the society is "forever decimated" as far as his administration is concerned.

Cauthen said the society has expressed concern that the structures remaining after some walls are pulled



Staff Photos by Tom Spain

William Anderson...

down for the parking garage might not be able to take the strain.

"I feel like any mayor of the city of Charleston has a tremendous responsibility to be caretaker, not only of the city but also of the most extensive collection of architecture in the country," Cauthen said. "I'm very concerned

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about that ... and because of that concern, I do have fears about what might happen to the Meeting Street buildings when and if the Charleston Center is begun."

Preservation Society President Norman Olsen said it was "hog-wash" to describe Monday's demolition and collapse of structures as accidents. Both he and Cauthen said destruction of the row of buildings on the east side of Meeting between Wentworth and Hasell streets began with "illegal" demolitions at 248 Meeting St. Riley said the city had not condoned that demolition, and said it was begun without a permit.

The city's Board of Architectural Review gave permission in February to demolish 248 Meeting, as requested by Howard Sherman, one of the building's owners. The city's building inspector and attorney endorsed the request, saying the building had deteriorated to the point of being a structural hazard.

But the board was told at the time that the structure's demolition already had begun. Gregory Paxton of the Historic Charleston Foundation told board members he had seen a truck pulling down part of the wall of 248 Meeting with a cable.

Sherman told The News and Courier he knew nothing of that, and questioned whether it ever occurred.

City Building Inspector Ellis Gillum, however, told The News and Courier he personally ordered the truck driver to stop demolition, and called police to the scene when the driver refused to obey.

Gillum said he could not recall the name of the driver, and that no action was taken against him. Gillum said the truck driver told him at the scene he'd been told by someone to make the building "safe" by tearing down the rear part of a wall where someone had been hurt.

Sherman contracted with Charleston House Wrecking to demolish 248 Meeting St. after the BAR approved the removal of the building, the northernmost structure in a row of four buildings built by Isaac Barrett after the great fire of 1838.

While demolition of 248 Meeting was in progress Monday, the wall of Anderson's Electric collapsed. William S. Anderson, 73, was trapped in a second-story office but was rescued unharmed.

He maintains that he warned city officials repeatedly that the demolition of 248 Meeting was endangering his own structure, but that city officials ignored his warnings.

On Tuesday, Anderson, his sons and some friends cleared merchandise and equipment from the front portion of the structure that had housed his business for 48 years. Gillum said he told the Andersons they could enter the building at their own risk. And entering the building on Tuesday was "pretty risky," Gillum said.

But Gillum and Riley took strong issue with statements from Anderson family members and others that demolition of the Anderson structure and two others to the south could have been avoided, once destruction of 248 Meeting was in progress.

The common wall that stood between 248 and 246 Meeting was a thin, deteriorated wall, the mayor said. The consulting structural engineer who was called to the scene,

Robert Shoolbred, "was not aware of any way it could have been prevented," the mayor said of the ordered demolition.

Riley said the collapse and subsequent demolitions illustrate what happens when commercial buildings in the central business district remain abandoned. Because it wasn't economically viable to repair the structures, he said, owners left the buildings standing vacant and deteriorating to the point of imminent collapse. "In this instance, the effect was beyond repairs," the mayor said.

Riley and city planner D. William Wallace said the city has begun looking for ways to strengthen the city code to prevent similar occurrences in the future.

Wallace said the city may, for instance, pass a new requirement for certification by an outside engineer that demolition of one building won't pose a hazard to another.

The mayor visited the demolition scene Tuesday and offered the Andersons city workers' help in rescuing what could be salvaged from the former company. "I have a great concern for the Andersons," the mayor said, terming the long-time business an "important part of our community. I am extremely troubled and upset and concerned for them," the mayor said.

William Anderson and his brother Robert, 74, have been in the business at the site for the past 48 years.

Sentences Suspended For 4 Communists

GREENSBORO, N.C. (AP) — Four members of the Revolutionary Communist Party received suspended sentences and \$100 fines Tuesday for charges ranging from misdemeanor inciting to riot to disturbing a classroom at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and trespassing.

Lodge Notice

FRANKLIN LODGE NO. 96 A.F.M. A

Special Communication will be holden this Wednesday, April 2, 1980, at 7:30 p.m. in the Masonic Temple. The Entered Apprentice Degree will be conferred. Craft fraternally invited.

By order of:
Frank Leigh, P.G.S., W.M.
V. Ronald. DuBose, Jr., P.M., P.G.S., Secty.

ETIWAN LODGE NO. 95 A.F.M. A Regular

Communication will be holden this Wednesday, April 2, 1980 at 7:30 p.m. in the Masonic Temple. The Entered Apprentice Degree will be conferred. Craft fraternally invited.

By order of:
David E. Matthews, Jr., W.M.
Douglas R. Mellichamp, P.M., Secty.

LANDMARK LODGE NO. 76 A.F.M. A

Regular Communication will be held Wednesday, April 2, 1980, at 7:30 p.m., in our new Masonic Temple, 1285 Orange Grove Rd. A supper will be served at 6:30 p.m. Please attend your lodge meeting. Craft fraternally invited.

By order of:
S. Brown Sanders, Jr., W.M.
Karl E. Salvo, P.M., Secty.