

Portion Of Facade Falls On Beaufain

By MARY A. GLASS
Staff Reporter

Charleston city officials blocked off a portion of Beaufain Street Thursday after the facade of 64 Beaufain tumbled into the sidewalk.

A detour remains in effect this morning, with traffic diverted in a loop from Beaufain to Wilson, Magazine and Logan streets. City officials plan to re-inspect the structure this morning to determine what further steps to take.

"I'm afraid the simple movement of traffic ... would cause the rest of the facade to collapse," said the city's acting Chief Building Official, Douglas M. Smits.

Noting that the facade's stucco had developed fresh cracks after the collapse, Smits said he's not sure that the remainder of the facade can be saved.

"It's the same old story: mortar reduced to virtually nothing but sand and powder. As long as nothing moves it, it's all right. But the only thing holding that part of the facade together is the stucco."

Smits, who ordered an inhabitant of the third story to evacuate the building, said there is no apparent danger of the entire building collapsing even if the remainder of the facade doesn't hold up. But under no circumstances should the building

be occupied, Smits said.

He said he was uncertain whether the man found in the third story was a bona fide resident of the building or a vagrant.

Smits said officials are uncertain what sparked the collapse. According to reports, utility construction workers had used a jack-hammer in the street immediately adjacent to the structure Thursday morning, but

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...See Page 1-B

had stopped the hammer by the time the collapse occurred around 1:30 p.m.

"What really concerns me is that appearance-wise, the facade would appear to be sound because of the stucco finish," said Smits. "How many buildings are there out there that we just don't know about" in the same condition, he asked.

City records show that building officials had called for repairs to the structure last December, and a permit for painting the exterior had been taken out in January.

Smits said the interior, however, is in a highly deteriorated condition, as are adjoining structures.

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5/30/81

SATURDAY

Owner Is Ordered To Rebuild Facade

By MARY A. GLASS
Staff Reporter

The owner of 64 Beaufain St. was ordered Friday to reconstruct the building's partially-collapsed facade.

Douglas M. Smits, acting chief building official for the city, said the order also requires that the reconstruction be properly tied to the outer walls of the dilapidated structure near Coming Street.

Smits, who was on the scene several times Friday, said he has as much concern for the structural integrity of the facade on the west of the partially-collapsed house as he does for the facade that crumbled.

The second facade has what officials considered to be serious cracks, indicating that wall, too, may give way.

Board of Architectural Review Chairman Julian V. Brandt III said he concurred in Smits' position on 64 Beaufain, and shared his concern over the adjoining building to the west. "Unless something happens, it'll be the next victim," he said.

City officials blocked off a segment of Beaufain Thursday after the lower right quarter of 64 Beaufain's facade collapsed onto the sidewalk. Smits said that action was taken out of fear that the remainder of the building wall would fall as well.

According to Smits, the mortar between the bricks of the collapsed

facade was so highly deteriorated that the only thing holding the facade together was the stucco on the outside. He and Brandt fear that's also the case with the adjoining building to the west, although no orders have been issued concerning that facade.

Brandt said he, Smits and city Zoning Administrator Paul Reavis concurred on the order for reconstruction of the 64 Beaufain facade, fearing the entire facade would crash into the street.

A contractor had braced the facade by Friday afternoon, and reconstruction work is to begin immediately.

Officials are uncertain of the cause of the facade collapse, although vibrations from nearby traffic are suspected. Utility construction had been in progress on Beaufain Street Thursday before the facade collapse.