

Historical house to be demolished

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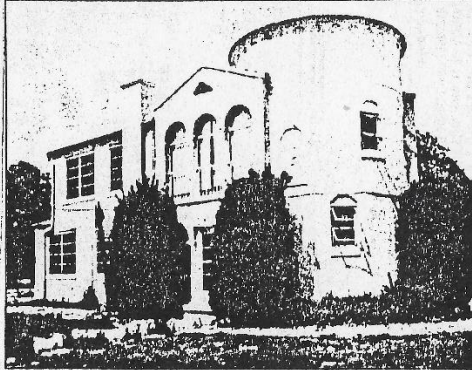
Despite objections by two council members and members of the Historical Preservation Commission, the Venice City Council agreed to grant the First National Bank of Venice a permit to demolish a historical structure on the Island of Venice.

The bank plans to build a parking lot for employees in its place.

The 2500 sq. ft. building located at 251 Nassau St. is 63 years old and zoned O.P.I. (Open use, Professional, Institutional). Consisting of five small apartments, the complex was acquired by the bank in April 1989. At that time, according to First National Bank Comptroller Carson Cox, four out of the five units were rented. Currently, only one of the units is occupied at \$275 per month.

"We never had a month where we had a positive cash flow on this piece of property," Cox added, denying recent media reports that the bank makes a \$1,000 monthly profit from the property. "There was only one

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Staff photo by Paul Schmidt

This historical house, located at 251 Nassau, will be demolished to make way for a parking lot for First National Bank of Venice. The city council gave its OK Tuesday.

★ HOUSE

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month where we had full occupancy, and we estimate we have spent nearly \$3500 a year on repairs and maintenance."

Cox added that the building has suffered from dry rot and is not structurally sound. The property that the building rests on was recently estimated to be worth \$90,000, said Cox. The building itself — \$4,000.

Bank president Meryl Graser told council members the bank has considered other options, but decided that due to growth, the additional parking is needed. The bank also plans to incorporate a park with benches to landscape the parking area.

"It is a definite need today and future (need) is no question," he added.

However, the Historical Com-

mission and the Architectural Review Board, which recently denied the bank the permit for demolition, stood their ground against the grant.

"In a report of the Historical Commission of January 1990, the conclusion was that in fact this structure has redeeming historical value, and they recommended that the building not be demolished," Chuck Place, director of planning for the city told council members.

He added that the Architectural Review Board agreed with the Historical Commission's findings.

Jeff Knuckles, chair of the architectural review board told council members that the board "had no more weight than any other person coming before the board to question the validity" of the decision.

"If this council has no desire for historical preservation in our

city — then do away with the ordinance (historical preservation)," Knuckles added.

"I myself am in favor of historical preservation, and have restored many older homes. Currently I live in a home which I consider to have great historical significance. But I have toured this building, and found no sign of historical significance on the inside," council woman Kathy Schmidt told council members.

"I just can't see a good economic reason to restore this building. I wouldn't buy the property," Schmidt added.

The council granted the appeal to First National with the stipulation that the building not be demolished until December of this year, or two months after the temporary historical preservation ordinance has expired.

A permanent ordinance should be in place by that time, according to Place.

GETTING SETTLED

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1991



Staff photo by Jeffrey Aaron

The seven-decade-old historic Triangle Inn survived its somewhat perilous journey to a new home last week, and now sits at its new home base next door to the Venice Community Center

property. A fund raising drive will be kicked off soon to raise the necessary \$170,000 to complete the project with restoration of the structure for use as the city's historic archives.