

Mercer Arts Center

240 mercer street,

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(212) 673-3937

January 11, 1974

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New York, N.Y.

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Mercer O'Casey

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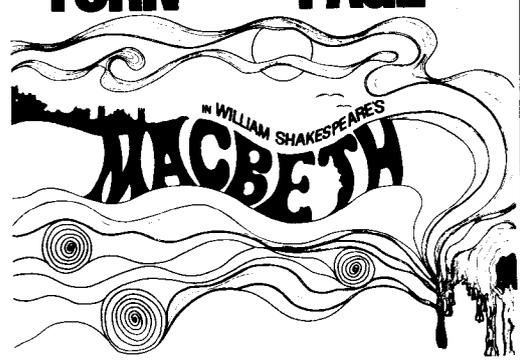
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BEST AMERICAN PLAY
 N.Y. CRITICS' CIRCLE AWARD 1970

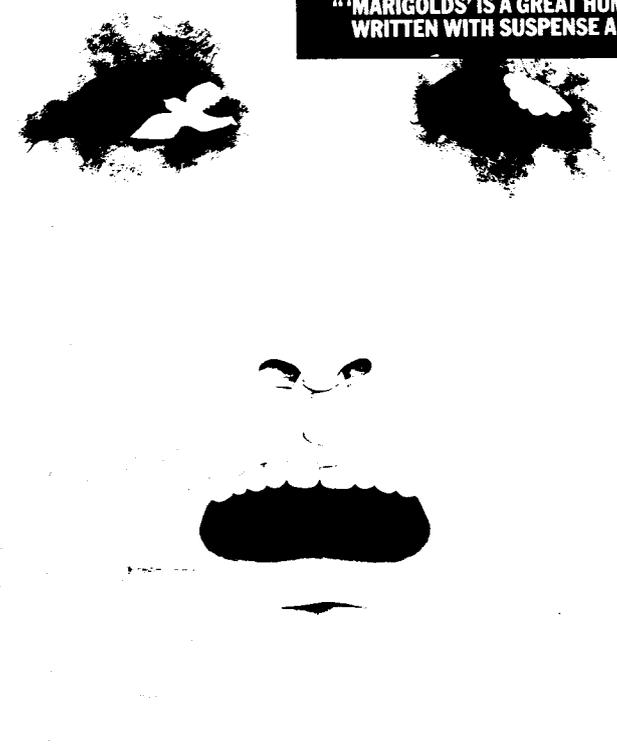
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COVER 1

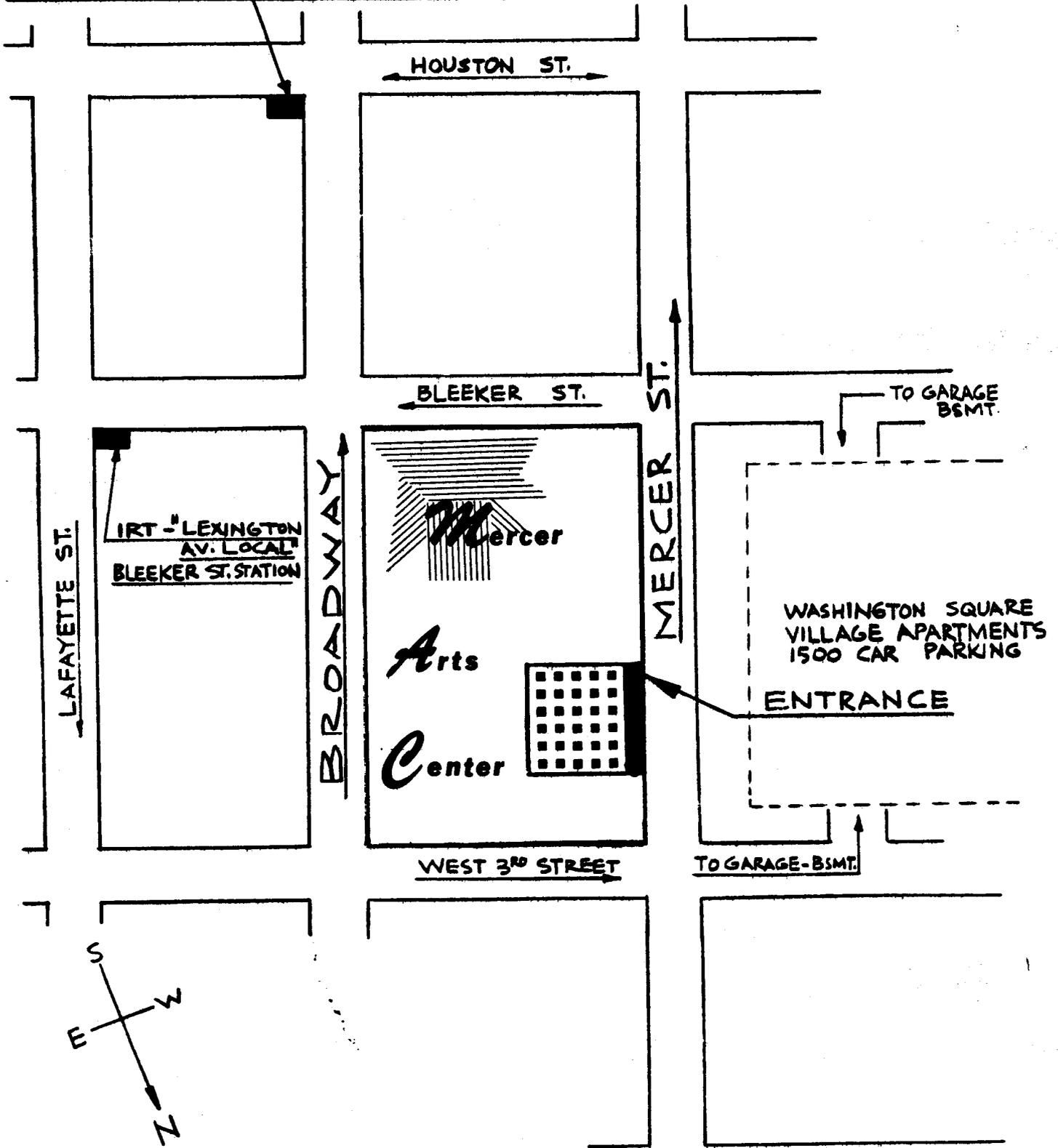
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the mercer arts center

240 Mercer Street

New York, N.Y. 10012

(212) 673-3937

Mercer Hansberry

Mercer Shaw Arena

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Viveca Lindfors'
"An Actor Works"

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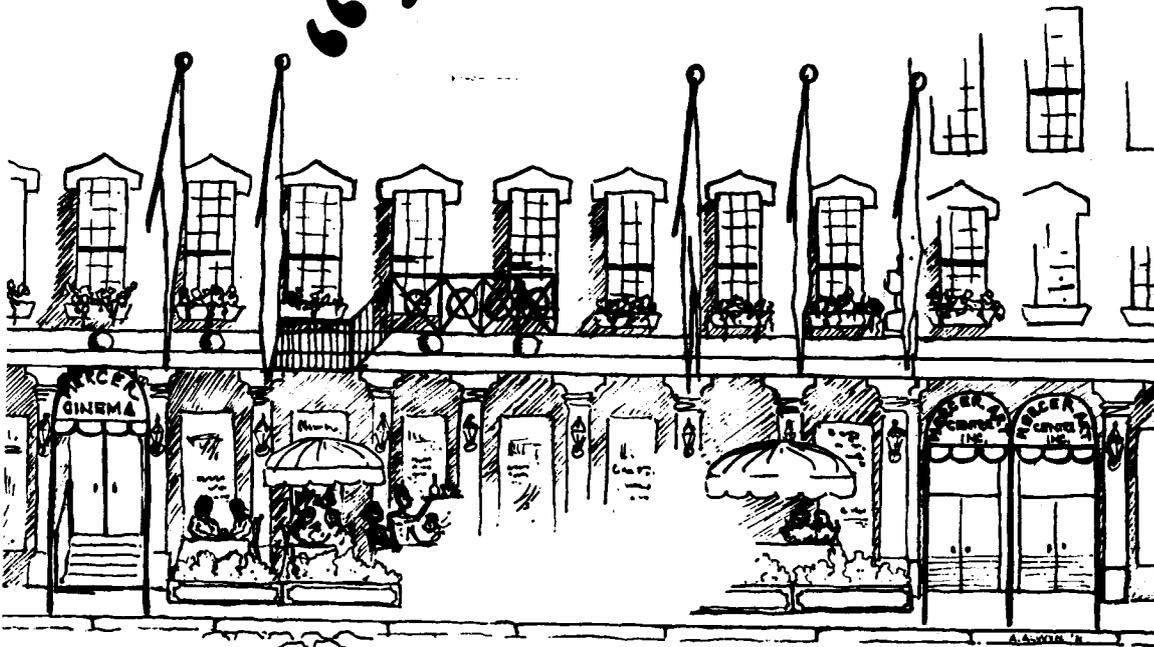
Viveca Lindfors

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"DECEASED"



Hotel's fall was also a cultural disaster

By EMORY LEWIS

Drama Critic

ONE OF New York's great architectural landmarks, the Broadway Central, built in 1870 as "America's most palatial hotel," collapsed in a shower of brick, plaster, and wood on Aug. 3 — the victim of negligence and apathy.

Instead of the proud restoration of the eight-story historic inn, city officials had allowed the hotel to disintegrate, without repairs and safety measures. In recent seasons, the city filled it with welfare cases. Four bodies have been found, and the search continues for others who are missing. It is a sad and familiar story of a city in decline.

There is another and unpublicized side to this tale. The collapse is an enormous loss to the off-Broadway theater movement. The Broadway Central included six beautiful, well-designed theaters, constructed in 1971 near the rear entrance on Mercer Street. Some of my finest hours of theater-going have been spent in the O'Casey, Hansberry, Shaw, Wilde, Brecht, and Proposition showcases.

This honeycomb of culture had been labeled variously the downtown Lincoln Center, a supermarket of the arts, and a theater miracle. The Mercer Arts Center also included a boutique, a friendly bar, an experimental film showcase, a restaurant, and the acting school of Gene Frankel.

THE REMARKABLE center was the dream of dynamic, immensely likable, and hopelessly stage-struck Seymour Kaback, and he managed it with an infectious enthusiasm. It was the house that air-conditioning built, for he had been a successful air-conditioning engineer for most of his life.

"I constantly warned the city about the conditions of the Broadway side of the hotel," he told me. "I noticed a bulge in the outside wall, and I noted large cracks in one of the interior arches. I sent a letter to the Buildings Department, and absolutely nothing was done. I warned the hotel management time and again. It was stupid as well as tragic.

"I had spent nearly \$600,000 restoring the rear section of the hotel. The rooms were in desperate decline, with rotting pipes, ceiling leaks, and peeling paint. I repaired them with love and money. In-



Workmen survey the collapsed Broadway Central Hotel.

deed the theater part of the hotel was the only section left pretty much intact after the collapse. However, it will be torn down with the rest of the hotel. The Buildings Department has requested now that the entire structure be demolished. After repeated warnings about the hazards and after the tragic deaths, they now declare the building 'unsafe.' What a sick joke.

"I tried to inject a new excitement into theater," the 50-year-old impresario continued. "I was determined to make a night at the theater fun again. It should be a festive occasion, not a pain in the neck and a dent in the pocketbook. My theaters attracted students and the young and middle-class patrons hard hit by the recession. They were people tired of the banalities and high costs of Broadway, people in search of exciting, alive, and relevant theater. Now my dreams have literally crumbled.

"I hope to reassemble my theaters under one roof, preferably somewhere in the same area. I wanted to move into Joseph Papp's Public Theater on a temporary basis, but he tells me he has no room. We'll surface somewhere."

MEANWHILE SEVERAL of the dramas and musicals that filled Kaback's dream-house have moved into other off-Broadway houses scattered around Manhattan. "The Proposition," New York's longest-running revue, has moved uptown to the Manhattan Theater Club on East 73rd Street. Last night a special benefit performance was held for the displaced welfare tenants of the Broadway Central.

"El Grande De Coca Cola," a comedy spoof which had been playing to capacity audiences at the Mercer Arts Center, has now found a home at the elegant Plaza 9 Room at the Plaza Hotel.

"One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest," Dale Wasserman's hit adaptation of Ken Kesey's counterculture classic, has reopened at the Eastside Playhouse on 74th Street. The play was to have gone into its 1000th performance within a week of the

building collapse. It would have set a long-run record for an off-Broadway drama.

William Swet's drama, "The Interview," was scheduled to open the day the building fell apart. It will now be moved to the Bouwerie Lane Theater, a landmark of cast-iron architecture.

The passing of the Broadway Central brings up many disturbing questions about our culture. Unlike European cities, New York consistently ignores its architectural heritage and its theater past.

THE HOTEL should have been carefully restored as a showplace. Its winding marble staircase was a decorative gem. I have often stood across the street from the elaborate mansard-roofed hotel on its Broadway side and conjured up its former glamor.

The National Baseball League was organized here in 1876. Diamond Jim Brady and Lillian Russell used to dine here. It was the bustling center of New York's social life.

The hotel even had its own juicy scandal. On the marble stairs in 1872, Edward S. Stokes shot and killed "Gentleman Jim" Fisk, gaudy financier and president of the Erie Railroad, in a quarrel over the attentions of bosomy actress Josie Mansfield.

An earlier hotel on the site was equally notable. LaFarge House had its adjoining theater, too. Tripler Hall was the setting for several concerts by Jenny Lind. English novelist William Thackeray lectured here. Memorial services for James Fenimore Cooper at the theater were attended by Daniel Webster, Washington Irving, and William Cullen Bryant. A production of "Julius Caesar" starred all three Booth brothers — Edwin, Junius Brutus, and John Wilkes.

THE ENTIRE area is filled with handsome relics and memories of another time when it was New York's most elegant and socially correct address. Here

are the Old Merchant's House, LaGrange Terrace (in a shameful state of neglect and another potential disaster), the Astor Library (now the home of Joe Papp's theaters, the Romanesque DeVinne Press, and the Condict Building, the only example in New York of the architectural genius of Louis Sullivan, the mentor of Frank Lloyd Wright).

However, most of the city's architectural heritage will soon be lost forever. New York has no real plan for preserving its treasures (what few are left) of the past. A local commission to preserve city treasures was belatedly appointed a couple of years ago, but it has no real teeth in it.

Most of the New York's landmarks have been allowed to crumble into decay or they ruthlessly are destroyed by the jackhammer. I have seen more foreign visitors studying gems of the past than local enthusiasts of architecture. Has the city no pride in its history? Soon New York will be a city without a past and without a heart. Surely Americans can learn from Europe how to restore and maintain building of lasting value.

The Broadway Central and its theaters were the victims of our sublime indifference to our heritage. We neglect our best architecture as we neglect the theater arts.

An ironic note states the case succinctly. The day the Broadway Central fell apart, a four-piece rock band, the Mushroom, was rehearsing in a second floor. As the building crashed, the band was playing "Everything's Going to Be All Right." That smugly cheerful title might well be a motto for a city where nobody cares.

Emory Lewis is a self-taught expert on New York with a warm regard for its many neighborhoods and its architecture. Among his published works is a book titled "Cue's New York: a Leisurely Guide to Manhattan," published by Duell, Sloan and Pearce.



The Walls Came Tumbling Down

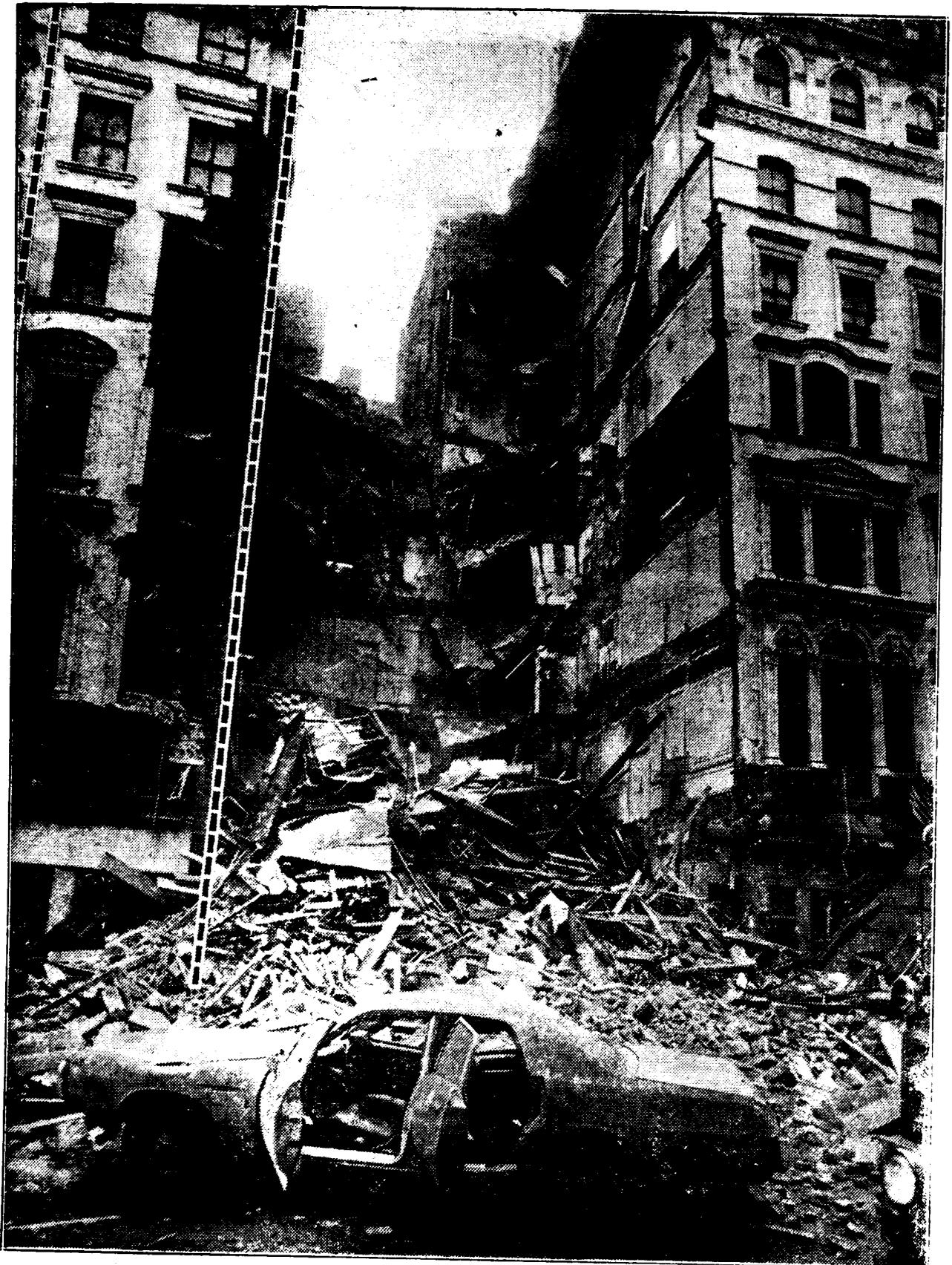
Cops and firemen run for cover as a section of the University Hotel at 673 Broadway, near Bond St., collapses with a roar and a huge cloud of dust and debris at about 5:20 p.m. yesterday. Ten minutes earlier, another section of the hotel crumbled. The eight-story, 119-year-old structure, formerly known as the Broadway Central, is one of the city's oldest hotels. There were between 325 and 350 people on the guest list. Almost a score were injured and authorities searched huge pile of rubble for possible trapped victims. Two thirds of building remained standing. —Story on page 3





NEWS photo by Anthony Casale

A panel truck is nearly buried by wood, steel, brick and mortar after the second section of the hotel tumbled, leaving a gaping hole.



NEWS photo by Anthony Casale

It is shortly after 5:10 p.m. after the first section of the hotel collapsed. Damaged car rests in front of pile of debris. Then, the second section (outlined) crumbled.



NEWS photo by Anthony Cesale
Woman victim weeps as she is aided by helmeted ambulance attendant.



NEWS photo by Vincent Riehl

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Probe Hotel Collapse; Six Still Missing



Post Photo by Jerry Engel



Post Photo by Ted Cowell

Mayor Lindsay views the scene, and an elderly victim is helped into an ambulance.

By Cy Egan, Arthur Greenspan,
Marc Kalech and Robert Garrett

Policemen and firemen were digging into the ruins of the University Hotel at the edge of Greenwich Village today for six persons still missing in the collapse of part of the 123-year-old building.

The rescue operation was pressed as Mayor Lindsay called for "a full inquiry" into the cause of the disaster, which miraculously left only these six unaccounted for and 15 of the hotel's more than 300 residents with minor injuries.

The rest fled or were led to safety unharmed when two sections of the eight-story hotel — the former Broadway Central — at 673 Broadway, between E. 3d and Bond Sts. — caved in late yesterday afternoon.

Three policemen and a fireman suffered minor injuries in the evacuation effort.

Missing were four men and two women. As of this morning, they were identified only as Mrs. Sherwin, Miss Parker, Mr. Young, Allan Frazier, Mr. Cardenale

and Mr. P. Sherin.

The seven were believed buried in the wreckage, but officials held out remote hope that one or more of them might have left the structure unnoticed before the accident and were still alive.

However, when asked what hope there was for survivors, Fire Dept. Deputy Chief John Hart replied: "None. We're looking for bodies. We're not talking about survivors."

Firemen and Emergency Service policemen worked through the pre-dawn hours under the glare of floodlights in the search, which was not expected to be completed until sometime late this afternoon.

Fire Chief John T. O'Hagan said he was "discouraged" about the prospect that anyone could survive under the debris, since the building "fell like a pancake," leaving no air pockets in which trapped victims could breathe.



A woman injured in the collapse of the University Hotel is carried to an ambulance in a chair by rescue workers.

Post Photos by Jerry Engel

Ironically, the pulverization of the wreckage possibly contributed to the small toll of injuries, since there were few large chunks to fall on and crush the residents as they escaped, O'Hagan said.

All of the at least 19 persons injured had been released from hospitals early today after treatment for minor injuries.

More than 160 welfare recipients among the hotel's tenants made homeless by the disaster were given temporary shelter by the Red Cross — about 110 at the Martinique Hotel at 32d St. and Broadway, about 50 at the President Hotel on W. 48th St. and about 50 at the Somerset Hotel on W. 47th St.

A Mayoral spokesman said Buildings and Fire Depts. officials were searching for records of the most recent inspections of the 398-room hotel, which has been the center of a storm of controversy in recent years over the use of the city's old hotels for welfare recipients and the effect of the program on surrounding neighborhoods.

Two Questions

Two of the main questions in the official investigation into the disaster appeared to be:

¶ How structural weaknesses in the building that led to the collapse escaped notice by city building inspectors, assuming that correct procedures were followed in making periodic examinations and reporting violations.

¶ Why the first report that the structure was in imminent danger was delayed until about five minutes before the building caved in, even though several tenants later said that the walls had been cracking and plaster falling in the building for more than two hours.

An early report that an explosion had preceded the collapse was discounted by O'Hagan, who attributed the accident to the undermining of the hotel by decades of vibration from nearby sub-



Firemen dig through the rubble of the hotel in search of victims.

6 Are Still Missing In Hotel Collapse

way lines and heavy vehicular traffic.

The owners of the hotel, Edwards and Latham Realty Inc., could not be reached immediately for comment.

The prelude to the disaster began earlier yesterday, residents said, when they began hearing "bongs," "tings," "groans" and other noises in the building, and seeing small cracks open in walls and plaster fall.

It was not until 5:06 p.m., police said, that they received a telephone call from Joseph Cooper, the hotel manager, reporting ominous rumbling in the building.

Cooper later said that no one had reported any tremors to him before that time, and added he thought the structure was in "fairly good condition."

Minutes after the call, the southern portion of the front wall collapsed with a thunderous roar, cascading bricks, wood, stone and plumbing fixtures in mounds 30 feet

high on Broadway and sending blinding clouds of dust billowing 50 feet skyward.

Silence fell over the scene as policemen and firemen working with pick and shovels under a light rainfall, began the monumental job of burrowing in the huge mounds of rubble.

A short while later four Sanitation Dept. bulldozers were brought in to aid in the work, but were used at first only on peripheral areas in fear that the heavy machinery might trigger new collapses in the two-thirds of the structure that was still standing.

BMT Delay

Service on the BMT RR and N lines was suspended between Canal St. and 34th St., officials said, so that vibrations would not jeopardize the search for survivors or bodies in the rubble of the University Hotel.

And Their World Crumbled...

By JOSH FREIDMAN
and LINDSAY MILLER

It started out as a good day at the University Hotel. The Social Security checks had come in the mail as the welfare checks had two days before. People were out shopping, and some had treated themselves to a bottle to celebrate.

Gordon Harrison, 55, had just taken off his artificial legs and settled down on his bed to listen to a ball game.

Sam Steinhart, 82, was sitting in the lobby chatting with friends he had made over the 18 years he had lived in the hotel, known for four decades as the Broadway Central.

Jerry Hoffman was going over records in his third floor Social Services Dept. office.

The first clue that the hotel was about to collapse came at 3 p.m.

Hoffman heard little pops, pings and crackles, but paid no attention. "It kept getting louder. Then I noticed that my three cats had lit out. One was under the steel table and two were under the bed. That's when I started getting scared."

Sam kept talking, noticing nothing. Then it was 5:06 p.m.

Michael Pagidas, a Greek NYU student, had just turned from Great Jones St. onto Broadway, a few doors from the hotel:

"The top floors just began sinking down into the bottom floors. Dust was being blown out through the windows and doors. But there were no flames and I didn't hear any explosion."

Moments before, Hoffman had decided to get out. Debris falling on him, he first called the Social Services headquarters downtown to alert them. Then he ran down the stairs. He had reached the second-floor landing.

"There was a huge rush of air that knocked me down. It blew a steel door off its hinges and it flew past me.

"I couldn't see through the dust when I made it down to the first floor but I heard people screaming. I don't think they were hurt as much as afraid. I herded them out the back door."

One of those helped out was Sam Steinhart. Moving slowly with the aid of his cane he joined a crowd of about 100 tenants across the street on Broadway. Firemen and policemen arrived.

A policeman dashed into Harrison's room, which is located on the northern wing of the hotel, the part that hadn't crumbled yet.

"I keep my legs by the bed," said Harrison, whose diabetes led to amputation four years ago. "He [the cop] picked them up and threw them on the bed."

Harrison was half dragged, half carried down to the street. Ten minutes later — another crash.

"The walls were coming down and the bricks were popping out like bullets," said Paulette Mooney, a student who had joined the crowd. "We all started running like crazy up Broadway. The cops and firemen were shouting 'run' and the dust was so thick you couldn't see, and everybody was freaking out."

Dazed residents were wandering about, many of them clutching the few belongings they had managed to salvage—pets, transistor radios, umbrellas.

Many Elderly Tenants

About half of the hotel's 320 tenants were poor working people. The rest were on welfare or Social Security. Many were elderly, disabled, alcoholic or mentally disturbed. Their world had crumbled.

Doris and Willie Artis, welfare clients, were leaning against a police barricade, stunned.

"I just want to get my cat out," Artis said over and over. "I don't care about the TV or nothing, but I'm worried about the cat."

Human Resources Administration workers threaded through the narrow streets near the hotel, using bullhorns to tell residents to mass at the city's Shelter Care Center for Women, a block away at 350 Lafayette St.

Pushed along by police, Sam Steinhart inched his way to the shelter. His leg had been hurt years ago in a shoe factory in Philadelphia.

"I'm aging a year tonight," he sighed through the wan smile that never left his face. He had lost all his possessions—his coin collection and his \$200 suit wrapped in plastic.

A Corner Bar

By 6:30 he had made it to a corner bar at Bleecker and Broadway. It was a mad scene—about 50 persons, most of them weaving around from shock or alcohol or both.

Monty Rainey, Room 604, had just returned from his job as a pants cutter. He clutched a brown paper bag. "I'm smiling 'cause I'm glad to be alive and I've been drinking," he said, patting the bag.

By 7, Steinhart had reached the shelter. Hotel refugees were packed into a sweltering basement room.

Upstairs, assistant hotel manager Charles Polanos was checking the guest register to determine who was missing. Residents wandered in and out of his cubicle. Occasionally he would sight a familiar face. "Congratulations. Glad to see you," he kept saying.

Out front, Jerry Hoffman had taken control. A tall man with long curly black hair and a clerical looking black jacket, he shoved and cajoled residents into the Red Cross and police vans that kept puffing up.

"Wait a minute, man, where you taking me?" asked one.

"Don't worry, we're taking you to a nice hotel," he said, half-easing, half-pushing a bandaged man into a van.

Hoffman was upset. For nearly a year, he had run a field office at the hotel, arranging for hospitals and private agencies to care for residents on welfare.

"This used to be a rough place, but we turned it around. People can live here and get along," he said, as if the hotel were still usable.

A few relatives came by, worried by reports they had heard on the radio. But only a few. Most of the hotel's tenants were alone in the city.

A few scuffles broke out as homeless vagrants from the nearby Bowery attempted to push into the vans taking people to other hotels.

By 9, Sam Steinhart was led into an unmarked police car. Siren wailing, it sped to the Martinique Hotel at Broadway and 32d St.

Scores of refugees clutching pets and bottles were milling about in the hotel's red-and-gold lobby. Musak played in the background.

Several friends came over to help Sam, whose thin hands were beginning to tremble.

"I can get myself up these steps," he said, wrenching away.

Rooms were going fast. Somehow Sam managed to get one just as they ran out.

He was led up to the third-floor room, where he sank into a tattered armchair and gazed at the empty coke bottles that lay on the floor and rumped bed.

Downstairs a Red Cross worker ordered a barefoot black man to set his dog and two cats loose in the street before entering the hotel.

"What am I going to do? First my house falls down and now they want me to leave my pets," he said.

'He's Dead, He's Dead!'

A woman, covered with dust, sat in a doorway directly across the street from the University Hotel last night, crying over and over:

"He's dead, he's dead! He was right there, he's dead!"

Neither police nor reporters could get any information from her—who she was, or who "he" was.

* * *

Johnny Mayo, who lived in Room 326, told police excitedly that his injured son was still in the building. He said the first collapse had knocked him unconscious and he had come to as firemen were carrying him out of his own room.

"My son is still inside," he told firemen. The child was in a part of his room that fell through in the second collapse, he said. Police could not find Mayo's son, so he assumes his child is dead.

Courtney Riddle, 48, said he went to the hotel roof when he heard the first collapse. He found an escape down the rear fire escape. He said a friend whose name he couldn't remember had tried jumping from another window in the building to the fire escape but hadn't made it, and had apparently fallen into a swirling cloud of dust below.

* * *

A black woman in her mid-20s, wearing a long red coat, refused to say who she was. "I can't give you my name," she said. "If my family knew I lived in that stench hole."

* * *

The Fire Dept. has what it calls TIPS sheets on most buildings in the city. These are diagrams, that are used by firemen to guide them in a building if a fire takes place. For the University Hotel, the TIPS sheets, under

the "life-hazard section," says: "Transient occupants, possibly under influence of alcohol or drugs."

* * *

About 8 a.m. today, a woman in her 20s appeared at the site, screaming that somebody she knew was trapped in the building. "Benjamin, Benjamin, Benjamin!" she cried repeatedly, too hysterical to give other details. After a few minutes a man led her to the Women's Shelter at 350 Lafayette St.

* * *

Jerry Hoffman, a Social Services Dept. worker, commenting on the lack of relatives searching for possible loved ones in the debris: "If an airplane had crashed with a lot of upper-middle-class passengers, there'd be a big crowd of relatives here. But these people don't have any relatives, and some have no friends."



Firemen clear debris during the University Hotel search operation. Post Photo by Jerry Engel

Broadway Central Hotel Collapses

By MURRAY SCHUMACH

The University Hotel, which as the Broadway Central was a city landmark for about a century, collapsed yesterday, injuring at least a dozen persons, halting subways and bringing scores of policemen and firemen to the scene to begin digging in the debris.

Fire and police officials, as they directed rescue work during the night, said they believed there might be five persons buried in the pile of wood, brick and mortar, which was 20 feet high at some points in the area along Broadway near Bond Street.

The vast majority of the 308 persons registered at the hotel escaped, alarmed by the preliminary rumbles that sent plaster to the floors, or urged out by the police and by other residents.

Reports relayed to Police Headquarters told of policemen seeing people "engulfed" in the wreckage as the hotel walls buckled in two sections on the Broadway side, sending six to eight floors of wall to the ground with roars and clouds of dust.

As guests fled to the street and fire equipment raced to the scene, the Fire Department asked the Transit Authority to cut off subway service beneath Broadway for fear that vibrations from the trains would cause additional collapses.

3 Walls Still Up

The north, south and west walls of the building were still standing, with the debris piled in the hotel area and sliding out onto the sidewalk and onto Broadway.

Rescuers said that for the time being they were afraid to use mechanical equipment in the rubble lest this touch off slides of debris and injure people who might be trapped and could still be saved.

As the night wore on, with five persons unaccounted for, the scene became eerie and suspenseful. Working under spotlights, 10-man squads of helmeted firemen and policemen stood in piles of rubble, picking over the debris by hand in the search for bodies.



The New York Times/Larry Morris

The scene at 673 Broadway, where University hotel stood

"This is very, very delicate work," said Fire Chief John T. O'Hagan. "The wall on the south side is questionable and there is a dangerous overhanging roof."

Dozens of the elderly persons from the hotel were taken to the women's shelter of the Department of Social Services, at 350 Lafayette Street, and then were sent to temporary living quarters.

Though there were reports that explosions had either accompanied or preceded the collapse, Fire Chief O'Hagan attributed the accident to the age of the hotel and the weakening of its structure by decades of vibrations from subways and heavy traffic.

Although the manager of the hotel, Joseph Cooper, first called the police to report ominous rumbling of the building at 5:06 P.M., the first actual collapse was at 5:10 and the second came 10 minutes later.

collapses and might not be publicly available immediately.

The police said that the hotel was owned by the 667 Hotel Corporation, headed by Henry Dercher, and that it was managed by the Edward Realty Corporation.

One of those who got out of the hotel just in time was Samuel Thompson, who was in Room 876 watching television when the rumbling began.

"I was getting ready to wash up," he said "I heard all this commotion. People began knocking on the door. The police said: 'You better get out.' I said: 'Do I have time to get my goods?' They told me I better get out."

"Thank God, Thank God"

In the street, as firemen played hoses in the debris, was Sam Steinhardt, 82 years old, who had picked up his welfare check and had planned to return to his room in the hotel. Instead he decided to go to a bank and then took a walk. It was 5:25 when he returned to see the wreckage.

"Thank God, thank God," he muttered as he told how he had decided not to return to the hotel immediately.

The hotel was six floors high for the most part, but rose to eight floors at its center. A coffee shop on the first floor was apparently empty. So, apparently, were an art center on the second floor and a commercial establishment on the third floor. Hotel rooms were above the third floor.

Some residents of the hotel said they had seen people buried in the fallen walls.

Rosemary Ridgell, who noted that she had been waiting for her fiancé, who works in the lobby, said that he had pushed her out and that she had not seen him since. She said she also saw a woman with a baby in a stroller.

"The baby was taken by the blast right out of the stroller," she said.

None of the dozen or so people—including two policemen—taken to nearby hospitals was believed in serious condition. But in some cases, hospital authorities said, they could not be certain until careful examinations had been made.

Mayor Lindsay said he would have city agencies institute "a full inquiry."

Though there was some confusion about the collapse, there seemed to be agreement that the southern portion of the east wall collapsed first, followed by the south central section, which rises to eight stories.

320 Occupants

Mayor Lindsay, who rushed to the scene, said that 308 persons were registered at the hotel, of whom about 120 were welfare recipients in single rooms.

The city's Commissioner of Relocation, Juan Villaneuva, went to the scene last night and said housing would be provided for all of the hotel's residents. Charles Raymond, chairman of the Mayor's Task Force on Single Room Occupancy, who was also at the scene, said other services—clothing, food, money and other things of necessity—would be provided by the city.

Mr. Lindsay's spokesman, Robert Laird, said officials of the Buildings and Fire Departments had begun a search for the records of the most recent inspections of the hotel. But he noted that such records are normally impounded by the District Attorney when a building

The Broadway Central Hotel Collapses

Following is a tentative list of the missing:

Allen Frazier.

Mrs. P. Sherwin, 60 years old.

M. Young, 30.

Albert Cardinale, 30.

R. Shearin, 30.

Center of Controversy

In a century of life in downtown Manhattan, the Broadway Central went from a gathering place for the famous and wealthy to a cesspool of squalor and crime.

Yet even at its lowest point, as one of the worst "welfare hotels," the hotel housed a complex of theaters at its rear known as the Mercer Arts Center.

At its heights and at its depths the hotel was a subject of considerable controversy. In its heyday, shortly after the Civil War, deals involving millions of dollars were made. On its grand staircase, Jim Fisk, the railroad magnate, was shot in 1872 in a romantic triangle.

In recent years, the hotel became one of the major sources of contention about the use of hotels for welfare families, with public officials and community groups from the Greenwich Village area charging that it was ruining the neighborhood.

The construction of six theaters within the hotel, at the Mercer Street side, gave the hotel some of the flavor of an earlier time, when Diamond Jim Brady was a frequent visitor and famous stars of the theater dined there.

Many of the meetings that led to the formation of major league baseball were held in the hotel in its prime.

The hotel went through still another phase in the late nineteen-sixties and early seventies when a restaurant in the building, called the St. Adrian Company, became a hangout for hippies, many of them apparently affluent.



The New York Times

Rescue work continued during the night. The hotel marquee, crushed, lies at right.



An ambulance attendant and a police officer lead a dazed woman away. Many people were injured.

2214

Dazed Survivors Describe a Kaleidoscope of Terror

By WOLFGANG SAXON

"She was having a chicken sandwich. I was gonna have a drink. I heard this loud explosion. 'Mamma, I think the subway just exploded,' I said."

The speaker, 70-year-old Theodore Gilbert, paused a moment.

"I looked out in the hallway, and I saw blue sky."

After that look down the suddenly daylight hallway, Mr. Gilbert recalled, he turned back to his wife and said:

"Hey, baby, put some clothes on. The building just fell down."

Firemen had just brought Mr. Gilbert and his wife, Jean, out of the University Hotel, and she was sitting in a wheel chair next to him, clutching a third survivor, their parakeet, Peegie. Their rooms were in the part of the

hotel that had remained standing.

He recalled that the building had frequently trembled to the beat of the subway trains hurtling by.

He had high praise for the firemen who had carried his wife down the stairs in her chair. "I've been around the world. Without a doubt, New York City is the greatest," he declared. "They got us out of there in 10 minutes."

A Narrow Escape

William Mitchell Jr. and his wife, Pamela, who is pregnant, reported an even narrower escape. Mr. Mitchell, an employe of the American Telephone and Telegraph Company, said they had lived since May in a \$57-a-week, third-floor studio apartment in a building section that fell in the second collapse.

Mr. Mitchell said his wife probably saved his life by asking him to stop at a store for something on his way home from work. If not, he said, he might have been in the elevator at the time the section caved in.

As it was, Mr. Mitchell recounted, he saw the rubble of the first collapse immediately after it happened and his first thought was that his wife had been caught in it. But then he spotted her in the window.

"I kept screaming at them to get a ladder, because I could see the building was going to collapse," Mr. Mitchell declared. He said he looked on helplessly for 15 minutes until firemen brought a crippled man and his wife out of the apartment with a mechanical bucket-lift. He said the wife was still in the contraption and only three feet away from the building

when the second collapse occurred.

Mrs. Mitchell later remembered running into the hall after hearing what she mistook for an explosion. But she was driven back by a cloud of dust or smoke. "People in the hall kept screaming, 'We're going to die, we're going to die,'" Mrs. Mitchell said.

Carol McGee's room—611—also went in the second collapse. Miss McGee, a secretary, said the wall of the hall had been replastered only yesterday. But that when she and a friend, Jamal Levell, went to her room, they noticed a fresh crack all along the new plaster. Minutes later, she recounted, as they were watching television, the building shook.

"The floor swerved and the walls buckled. They just swooped out," Miss McGee said.

A 55-year-old man with two wooden legs, Gordon Harrison, was about 15 feet from the collapse, in his bed. He told a reporter that firemen pounded on his door, telling him to get out of the building. "But I got no legs," Mr. Harrison said he shouted back, whereupon the firemen carried him down.

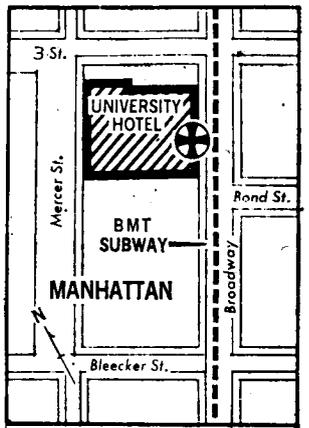
Another man, Thomas Davis, complained: "And I just paid my rent today." He said his room had cost about \$25 a week.

As rescue teams kept up their search of the rubble, Mark Fingeret, deputy director of the City's Emergency Medical Service, ordered 20 pine coffins to be brought to the scene from Bellevue Hospital. A newsman asked him whether that was necessary.

"You don't think there's anybody alive in that rubble, do you?" replied Mr. Fingeret.



Coated with dust and in shock, a woman slumps on a chair on the street.



The New York Times/Aug. 4, 1973
Cross marks area of collapse.

Mercer Arts Center Is Undamaged, Mostly

Although one second-floor theater collapsed along with the University Hotel, the rest of the six-theater Mercer Arts Center, which had brought back a touch of culture to the old hotel in recent years, was undamaged by the cave-in.

Most of the center, the birthplace of a number of recent Off Broadway successes, is housed on the Mercer Street side of the Broadway Central. The entire building was closed last night but the theaters are expected to reopen within a few days.

The two-member cast of "The Interview" was getting ready to rehearse in preparation for last night's scheduled opening in the Gene Frankel Workshop on the second floor when the walls began to buckle.

Peter Swet, the author, said that all the equipment for the play had been rescued but that no date or location had been set for its opening.

★★★★
FINAL

DAILY NEWS

NEW YORK'S PICTURE NEWSPAPER®

10¢

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WEATHER: Sunny and warm.

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VILLAGE HOTEL

FALLS; 17 HURT

Search for Bodies Amid Rubble

Old Village Hotel Collapses; 17 Hurt

11 Reported Missing At Historic Site

By VINCENT LEE, PHILIP McCARTHY, ROBERT CRANE and JOHN MURPHY

At least 17 persons were injured and eleven more, including a woman and her infant, were missing last night in the thundering collapse of a 75-foot-wide section of the 119-year-old eight-story University Hotel at 673 Broadway.

Firemen and members of police emergency squads tore at the 30-foot-high mound of rubble with picks and shovels through the night in a search for the missing from the hotel—the old Broadway Central—near Bond St.

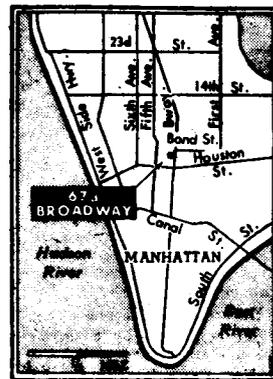
Police said part of the collapsed section of the hotel toppled at 5:10 p.m., sending a 50-foot-high cloud of blinding dust and debris mushrooming over the site. The collapse covered half the street with piles of brick, wood, stone and plumbing fixtures. A second section of the structure fell at 5:20 p.m., inflicting eye injuries on two police officers who were helping tenants in the remaining part of the building to safety.

Taken to Hospitals

Fire officials identified the missing as Mrs. E. Daniels and her baby, Mrs. Young, Mrs. R. Sherean, Mr. and Mrs. B. Morrison, and men named Melendez Allan Frazier, Albert Cardernale W. Bradley, and F. Brown.

At least 17 persons were taken to Bellevue, Beekman Downtown and St. Vincent's hospitals. Fire officials discounted early reports that two blasts had preceded the two-stage collapse.

Late last night, emergency service cops and firemen were tearing at the debris on the street in an effort to find and turn off a gas connection in a sidewalk six feet below. Gas was leaking into the area and cops cordoned



NEWS map by Bob Juffras
Map locates site of the ill-fated University Hotel.

off a four-block-square area and warned rescue workers and reporters not to smoke. Even residents were told to leave the area.

Rescue workers said hotel manager Joseph Cooper told them that 23 persons were registered in the fallen section of the structure.

They quoted him as saying



NEWS photo by Vincent Rieli
Debris and masonry from University Hotel collapse spews into Broadway.

81



119-Yr.-Old Structure Tumbles.

Minutes before, another section had fallen. The 119-year-old hotel was one of the city's oldest.

NEWS photo by Robert Primus
With a thundering roar and huge cloud of dust and debris, section of University Hotel at Broadway and Bond St. collapses yesterday evening. —Story on page 3; other pics. centerfold

17 Injured as the Old Broadway Central Hotel Collapses

that he had seen 14 of the 23 alive after the collapse. A spokesman said between 325 and 350 persons were registered in the hotel. He said that about a third were relief clients.

The once splendid hostelry was denounced in a court suit last year as a "den of vice and iniquity."

At Least 24 Hours

Among the injured was Mrs. Pamela Mitchell, 21, six months pregnant, who was taken from a third-floor room by firemen as her husband, William, battled cops below in a frenzied effort to get into the building to reach his wife. Her injuries were undetermined later in Bellevue Hospital.

Also injured were Jose Barreto, 33, of 3 West Farms Plaza, Bronx, who fell in the street near the collapse and injured his left ankle. He was taken to Beekman-Downtown.

Also at Beekman-Downtown were Matthew Coleman, 60, and Wilson Grant, about 60, both of the hotel. Their injuries were undetermined. None of the injured was reported seriously hurt.

Fire officials said at 9 p.m. that movement of the rubble would take at least 24 hours. "It's a slow and dangerous process," Fire Commissioner Robert Lowery said.

Mayor Lindsay visited the scene and asked for an immediate report. He termed the collapse a

"terrible tragedy."

Tenants suddenly made homeless by the collapse jammed a relocation center set up at the Women's Shelter, 350 Lafayette St., for assignment to other hotels.

Chief of the Fire Department John T. O'Hagan at first barred the use of cranes or heavy equipment in the hunt for victims in the debris. He said vibrations from the machinery might topple the rest of the building and bury rescue workers.

But at about 10 p.m., he permitted a crane to start knocking down overhanging portions of the standing section of the building.

By 10 p.m., mechanical loaders from Consolidated Edison and the Sanitation Department working with teams of shoveling firemen, cops and Con Ed workers had cleared Broadway of rubble and were to begin attacking the main pile of debris on the building.

The first firemen on the scene led at least 50 tenants from the standing part of the hotel to safety.

Firemen said the 398-room hotel was undergoing renovation.

The collapse cut off power at the height of the rush period on the IRT Seventh Ave. subway line and slowed service on the BMT at nearby Prince St.

The section of the building be-

tween Third and Bond Sts. that collapsed measured about 75 feet across on the south end of the structure. About two thirds of the building remained standing.

O'Hagan tentatively blamed the collapse on the age of the building and the constant vibrations from heavy surface and subway traffic. The building was completed in 1854 and rebuilt in 1871.

Fire officials said they believe the vibrations from a passing subway train triggered the second collapse. A Transit Authority spokesman at the scene later said he agreed with that assertion.

Andy Mannik, 39, of 446 W. 19th St., who owns a carpentry shop at 677 Broadway, said he had worked in the building. He said a hole in a wall in the south side of the structure permitted rain to enter and that the rain might have undermined it. He said the building was "in a perilous condition."

Many tenants in the building told reporters after the collapse that they heard "bongs," "tings," "groans" and "noises" earlier yesterday.

Among those rescued was an unidentified 350-pound paraplegic who was taken from the fourth floor in his wheelchair by a Fire Department cherry picker.



NEWS photo by Jack Clarity

Fire Chief John O'Hagan (white hat) joins firemen searching rubble of University Hotel collapse

Hotel Had Been Fined Before Collapse

Had Been Cited for Failing
to Fix Structural Defect—
—4 Tenants Still Sought

By PAUL L. MONTGOMERY

The major tenant and the representative of the owner of the old Broadway Central Hotel were each fined \$100 for an unrepaired structural violation three weeks before a segment of the building collapsed into rubble, the Buildings Department said.

Rescuers with heavy equipment picked through layer after layer of debris from the building at Broadway and Bond Street yesterday, seeking four residents still unaccounted for. Fifteen persons and four rescue workers were hurt when about one-third of the building, which had been renamed the University Hotel, collapsed at 5:10 Friday night.

About 150 people who were left homeless by the collapse were housed temporarily in three other hotels. For some of them, who were welfare clients, the shifting from hotel to hotel was a familiar part of their lives.

Board of Inquiry Meets

Buildings Commissioner Theodore Karagheuzoff convened a special four-man board of inquiry to begin an investigation of the collapse.

A department spokesman said that, in addition to the unrepaired violation in the Broadway facade of the hotel, investigators had found evidence of unauthorized work on a bearing wall within the building.

According to the spokesman, the violation was uncovered in an inspection last Feb. 22. The citation was for defective brick work between the second and sixth floors of the eight-story building. It cited bulging of the facade and evidence that the wall was "out of bond," meaning it had pulled away from the inner bearing wall.

The department said it had reinspected the hotel on March 29 and found the violation un-

corrected. Court action was recommended. On May 2, the department said, the hotel filed plans to correct the condition, but on May 16 the plans were rejected as incomplete.

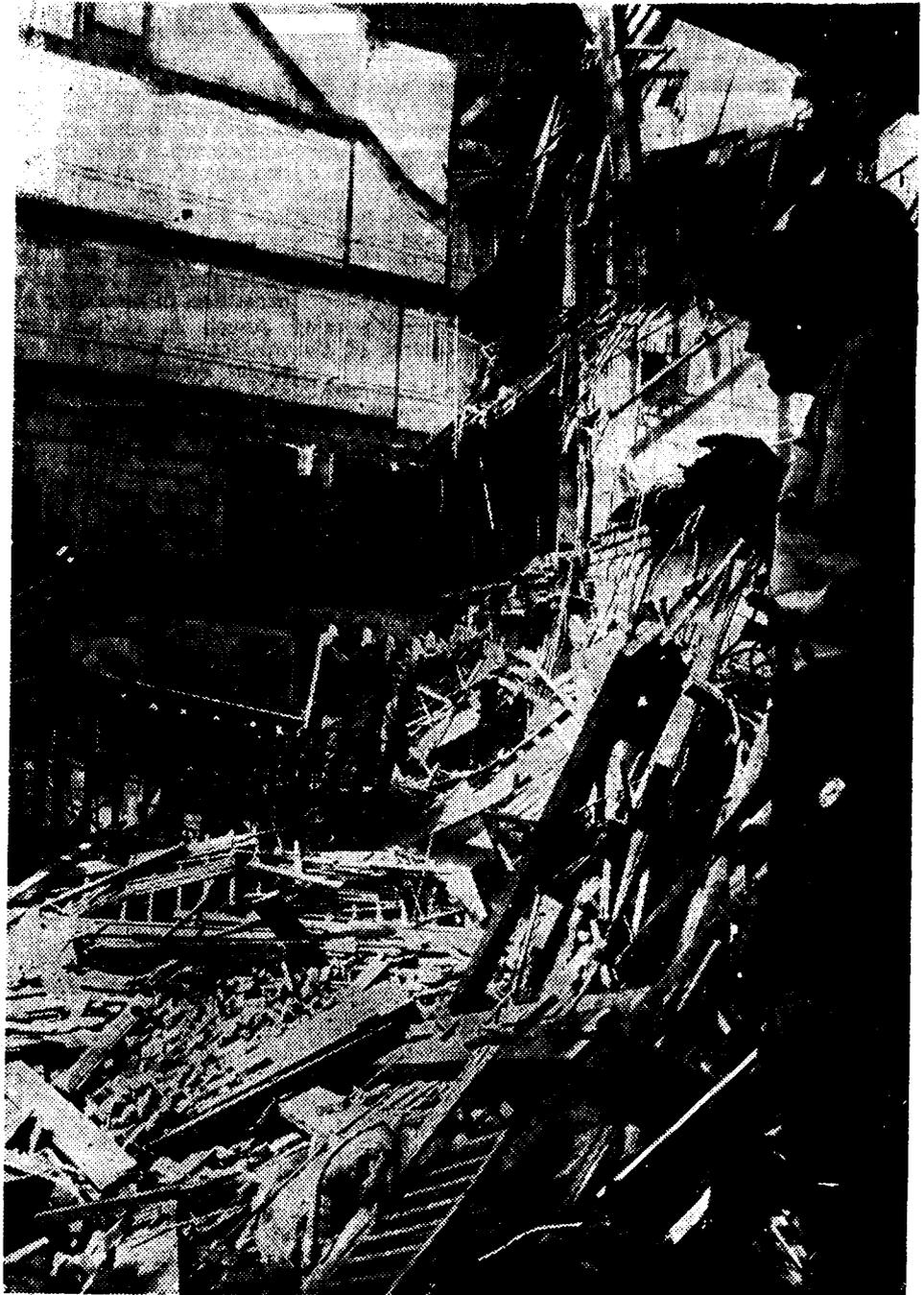
Meanwhile, in connection with the court case, the State Supreme Court ordered another inspection. According to the

department, this inspection, on May 7, showed that nothing had been done to repair the wall.

On July 16, Civil Court Judge Fritz W. Alexander 2d imposed fines of \$100 each on Joseph Cooper of the 667 Hotel Corporation, the major tenant of the building, and Philip Ed-

wards, representing the owner.

The Buildings Department spokesman also said that on May 18 the hotel had filed plans to cut an opening in a first-floor bearing wall, in connection with alterations. The plans were rejected July 18 as "incomplete and inadequate," but the department said inspec-



The New York Times/Meyer Liebowitz

At University Hotel yesterday, rescue workers continued search of rubble for survivors

tors on the site had found evidence that the work had been done anyway, in violation of the law.

Mr. Edwards, reached at his home in New Jersey, said he knew nothing about the fine or the alteration plans. He said he managed the property for the owners, whom he identified as his wife and Mrs. Gertrude Latham. He said the property was in turn leased to the 667 Corporation, which ran the hotel and sublet stores and a theater complex.

At the turn of the century, the Broadway Central was a center of New York elegance.

In recent years, however, it had become a run-down stopping place for welfare clients unable to find permanent housing, and for some transients. After a spate of publicity and official action about crime and unsafe conditions in the hotel three years ago, the name was changed to the University Hotel.

The hotel said that 308 persons were registered in the building on Friday, of whom 120 were welfare cases. In the minutes before the collapse, hotel employees and the police were able to evacuate nearly everyone. Only 23 rooms in the

section that collapsed were occupied at the time.

At first, 11 persons were listed as missing. During the night and yesterday morning, however, seven of them reported to the police that they had been elsewhere at the time of the collapse.

Those still unaccounted for were:

Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Sherwin, of Apartment 4A.

Allen Frazier, Room 612.

Mr. R. Shearin, Room 812.

The police said they had added Mr. Sherwin's name to the list after his mother called them yesterday. She told them

she was talking to her son on the telephone when he shouted that the ceiling was falling in. She had not heard from him since.

The police acknowledged, however, that there was still considerable confusion about the list. They said that the hotel manager had told them Mr. Sherwin lived alone, making it possible that there was no Mrs. Sherwin among the missing. They also said a friend of Mr. Shearin's had told them he had seen his friend drinking Friday night.

RESCUERS SEARCH DESPITE DANGERS

Possible Additional Collapse and Blasts Threaten Police and Firemen at Hotel Site

For the firemen and policemen who searched for survivors amid the rubble of what was the University Hotel, the threats that faced them were no deterrent.

Calm prevailed as the rescuers dug and poked about, although the men knew that, in the first hours after the collapse, walls might tumble on their heads or gas from a ruptured main might explode at any moment.

The searchers arrived in the hundreds and included men from the four fire rescue companies and from the 10 police emergency-service units.

"You have to balance the danger of the men with the chance of keeping people in the rubble alive," said Chief John T. O'Hagan of the Fire Department, explaining why he didn't order the remnants of the hotel knocked down. "It's a value judgment."

And as they worked, the men understood there was only a slight hope of finding survivors.

"Not in a pancake," said Chief O'Hagan, explaining that when layers of debris were piled flat on one another there were no voids or air spaces in which possible survivors could breathe.

Work Done by Hand

Chances for survival are better, he said, if the building topples in the shape of "a lean-to or an inverted V."

But in rare cases people have been found breathing under "pancakes," so the firemen and policemen worked at first by hand instead of with heavy earth movers to prevent vibrations that might collapse additional walls.

"We shake loose a wall, and the crash would kill anybody underneath," Chief O'Hagan said. As an added precaution to eliminate excessive noise, the chief ordered that service be curtailed on the BMT line, which runs beneath Broadway, and the police routed traffic around the area.

Cornelius F. Dennis, the Manhattan superintendent of the Department of Buildings, was by the chief's side with the plans of the building. As a structural engineer, he felt that the sound of the hand clearance would probably not collapse those sections of the roof that remained in place.

All Are Volunteers

So the men worked into the evening and early morning hours with the while of the portable gasoline engines that powered the emergency lights in the background. They dug and they cleared. Then they stopped and listened for the sounds of survivors. Then they dug some more.

But the most begrimed men at the scene were from the Police and Fire Department rescue units. All are volunteers and most had backgrounds in the construction industry before they joined the uniformed services.

"We've got mechanics, carpenters, welders and guys who can burn with the best of them," Chief O'Hagan said, referring to the "burners" who cut holes in metal plates at shipyards.

"I was a professional burglar," said Police Officer Frank Pewaraki of the emergency-services district, meaning that he was once a locksmith.

Officer Pewaraki was totally beamed with dust kicked up by the collapse of the hotel. He and Police Officer Walter Lynch were among the many firemen and policemen who entered the hotel to lead or carry out tenants just before it fell.

"You know on the average police run, a crowd of hoods isn't happy to see you, but when the emergency [squad] shows up people know we're the good guys."

The debris—splintered wood, bricks and plaster, pieces of furniture—was tightly compacted by the force of the collapse. Rescuers thus had no opportunity to tunnel in and look for survivors. Their only recourse was to watch as a giant crane stripped away bucket after bucket of wreckage.

Some portions of the building still standing were obviously unsafe and would have to be demolished, the Buildings Department said. A decision on the main block of the building left untouched by the collapse will be made next week.

A major tenant of the three commercial floors of the building was the Mercer Arts Center, a complex of six theaters and two acting schools. Seymour Kaback, the president, said the center was looking for other quarters, but would stay if the standing portion was habitable.

An actor who was rehearsing in one of the theaters spoke of the terror of the evacuation. "I've been an actor 30 years.

but I wouldn't go back in that building if it meant becoming a star," he said.

Mr. Edwards, in a telephone interview, said he had been concerned about the presence of welfare clients in his property for several years, and had made unsuccessful attempts to have the building vacated.

He said Mr. Cooper, the hotel manager, had told him that several hours before the collapse there were warnings of structural instability, including cracking of walls and sounds of groaning. Mr. Edwards said that attempts to summon aid were unsuccessful until the police responded to a call to the 911 emergency number a few minutes before the section fell.

The panel named by Mr. Karagheuzoff is to begin hearings on Monday. It is made up of four top officials of the department: Julius Schneider, director of special projects; Philip E. Olin, assistant director of operations; Jack Linker, chief inspector of construction, and Louis Beck, counsel.

DAILY NEWS

NEW YORK'S PICTURE NEWSPAPER ©

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WEAT



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Tale With a Happy Ending. Fireman Joseph Shreck carries brown-and-white spaniel from site of University Hotel collapse at 673 Broadway, near Bond St., yesterday. Pooch had been trapped in rubble since Friday. Dog's owner later presented him to Engine Co. 24, which lost its last mascot two years ago. —Story on page 5

NEWS photo by Keith Terrie

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Post Photo by Ted Cowell

Out of the ruins of the old Broadway Central Hotel came this dog today, scooped up with a load of rubble—under which it had been buried since the building collapsed Friday. Taking his licks is Fireman Joe Shreck. The body of a woman—the second known fatality—was also recovered today. Story on Page 10.

Survivors Of Collapse —20 Pets

"We don't like to beg, but we're destitute," explained Edward Hayes, who "risked his life" to run back for his German shepherd Portia and two Persian cats about 30 minutes after part of the University Hotel collapsed last Friday.

Hayes, who spent most of that night sleeping in a park because the Red Cross wouldn't allow him to keep his pets, is now housed at the Martinique Hotel, 49 W. 32d St., together with nine other victims and 20 dogs and cats.

Donald M. Carroll, executive director of the hotel, has permitted the pets because "we're trying to be human and help out in a crisis." Jacquie Collins, president of the Animal Preservation and Anti-Cruelty League, 140 E. 74th St., has shouldered the burden since Sunday after reading an article in *The Post* referring to Hayes and his plight.

A One-Woman Campaign

Miss Collins, who called her organization "private, with a few members," has been waging a one-woman campaign to get help for the animals, whose owners are mostly welfare recipients.

Miss Collins, who brings her own French poodles with her to the hotel when she comes every day with food, prepares "good fresh meat, vegetables and brown rice

which I cook up in a stew," but says "I can't keep this up much longer."

She says she is also liable for a \$150 veterinarian's bill. Guy, a 3½ month old "part Collie and shepherd" suffered head injuries and a fractured pelvis when hit Friday night by falling plaster. His owner, Eileen Williams, took him to a nearby vet right after the accident, but he was released only when Miss Collins interceded and promised the bill would be paid.

"These people have lost everything and if they lose these animals, I think it would have serious repercussions," she said.

'Does This On His Own'

Dan McCarthy and Jerry Hoffman don't agree. The men are both caseworkers stationed at the Martinique who work out of the Office

of Special Housing Services of the Human Resources Administration.

"Anybody on public assistance who wants to maintain a pet does this on his own," said McCarthy. He explained that pets must be cared for out of the client's regular allowance and that ailing ones could be turned over to the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

Hoffman said their clients had received an emergency grant of \$100, on Monday in addition to the regular checks, due next in a week.

To Dog in Fallen Hotel, Firehouse Is a Home

By VINCENT LEE and
ARTHUR MULLIGAN

He was hungry and thirsty, panting and shaking, dirty and disheveled, and he looked as though he had been buried alive in a mountain of debris since Friday. He had been. But he was alive. That was all that mattered.

He showed his love and gratitude to his firemen rescuers as only a dog can, wagging his tail, leaping all over them and licking their dirty, sweat-lined

Woman's Body Found

The body of a second victim, that of an unidentified woman, was recovered yesterday from the ruins of the University Hotel, Broadway and Bond St., which collapsed Friday evening. Three persons are still listed as missing.

faces. He seemed to know exactly what they had gone through to rescue him, painstakingly digging through the ruins and rubble of the eight-story University Hotel, which collapsed Friday evening.

At 6 a.m. yesterday, the tedium of their task, at Broadway and Bond St., was interrupted by a shout from Fireman Joseph Shreck of Engine 24, one of those assigned to watch for missing bodies as a crane shovel piled through the wreckage.

"Hey, there's a dog there," Shreck shouted, pointing to the bottom of the shovel scoop, which had



NEWS photo by Keith Torrie

Fireman Joseph Shreck and grateful pooch.

just lifted a load of debris and was about to transfer it to a waiting dump truck. The dog was hanging by a leash around its neck from the bottom of the scoop shovel.

Capt. Alfred Benway, also of Engine 24, directed the crane operator to lower the shovel gently into the middle of the street. He did so and a group

of firemen gathered around and removed the leash from the dog's neck.

Shreck and Firemen Victor Bengyack grabbed a hose line and turned the water on slightly. The trickle created a small puddle in the street and the brown-and-white dog, about two and a half feet long, lapped up the water appreciatively.

While the dog was drinking, Schreck turned to Benway and said plaintively, "Can we keep him, Cap?" Then, mindful of reality, he added, "That is, if no one claims him?" Benway nodded agreement.

Schreck need not have feared a claim as it turned out. Edward Brown, 35, appeared at Engine 24's house at Hudson and Morton Sts., announced he owned the dog and kept it in his seventh-floor room. He told the firemen they could keep it.

Brown said the dog is an 8-month-old Brittany spaniel and had been kept in a makeshift dog house in his room.

The men of Engine 24, on Morton St. near West St., had a mascot, Whisky, which was killed by a car two years ago. They haven't had a pet around the firehouse since. A couple of them took their new-found friend there yesterday, where he was given top-drawer treatment.

There was ham left over from Monday night's firehouse repast and one of the firemen went out and got some beef at a nearby store—he wasn't telling what store. The dog, whom they've decided to name Broadway Joe, also gobbled up two small containers of milk, and had chocolate cream pie for dessert.

The firemen also gave him a bath.

**Dog's Owner Comes Forward
And Gives Him to the Firemen**

The owner and keeper of an eight-month-old dog pulled from the debris of the lod Broadway Central Hotel yesterday, came forward last night, identified the animal and gave him to the firemen who saved him as a reward.

When Leo Workman, who had raised the white and burnt-orange Brittany spaniel from birth, and Edwin Brown, the dog's keeper, arrived at Engine Company 24, where the dog had been taken, he was romping about the fire house, free of any serious injury, from his three-and-a-half day entombment.

Relieved that their pet was alive and had been bathed and fed, Mr. Workman and Mr. Brown decided to leave the animal in his new home at 78 Morton Street, near Hudson Street, in lower Manhattan.

Hours earlier, the firemen had spotted the dog, Dino, at the site of the collapse, dangling by his leash that was caught in the closed jaws of the crane's bucket loaded with wood and concrete.

His kicking caught their attention, and after their yells alerted the crane operator, the bucket was lowered gently near a dump truck and the animal was cut free.

Dino was given some raw hamburger and a drink from a fire hose and then hurried off to a veterinarian's office nearby for pills to counter dehydration and a shot to prevent infection in his scraped jaw and bruised knees—the only injuries he suffered in the collapse of the hotel.

A sturdy dog house that Mr. Brown had provided Dino in his seventh-floor room in the hotel had apparently saved the dog's life.

Mr. Workman and Mr. Brown have been staying at the Mar-tinique Hotel since the Broadway Central collapse.

The firemen bought Dino a 20-foot leash for romping, fixed him a bed of cardboard boxes and blankets and renamed him Broadway Joe—Broadway, after the hotel, and Joe after quarterback Joe Namath, "because of his bruised knees," said Fireman Joseph Shreck.

SUMMER IS FOR KIDS.

HELP THE FRESH AIR FUND.

24

Bitterness and Sadness Grip 150 Hotel Victims

By PRANAY GUPTA

As they talked yesterday about the sudden disruption of their lives, the mood among many of the former residents of the University Hotel was one both of bitterness and sadness. For some residents, at least, the hotel's collapse meant that life would have to be started all over again.

"I lost all I ever had in the rubble," said 60-year-old Charles Erwin, as he stood outside the Hotel Martinique, at Broadway and 32d Street, where nearly 150 of the homeless are being housed temporarily.

"I lost my clothes, I lost the pictures of my parents and I lost my television."

Many Are on Welfare

Like many of the other homeless victims, Mr. Erwin is on welfare. And like many of them, he too, has moved from hotel to hotel in the last few years.

"We are the rootless people," Mr. Erwin said. "After all these years I get the feeling that I have no home, no place that I can say I really live in."

Mr. Erwin, who wore a tattered shirt and faded trousers which, he said, were "the only possessions I have now," had lived in the University Hotel for nearly 20 months.

"I had become used to things there," he said.

As Mr. Erwin talked, a white van drew up in front

of the Martinique Hotel. Representatives of the Church of the Seventh-Day Adventists had brought piles of clothing, shoes and supplies to distribute free to the victims. Mr. Erwin was given a clean shirt and a pair of trousers. And for the first time in more than an hour of talking, a smile creased his face.

Sense of Appreciation

The woman who was supervising the distribution of the items, Sylvia De Roza, said there was enough for all. Occasionally, someone would complain that a piece of clothing just didn't fit. But, for the most part, there seemed to be an overwhelming sense of appreciation on the part of the recipients that they were being looked after.

"Look at this," exclaimed Loretta Rollock, 48 years old, as she held up a green dress and lingerie. "I've never worn such nice clothes. I feel like when I was a kid and my mom brought me something."

Then she began to cry.

Some Taken In By Families

Inside the hotel, Red Cross volunteers were registering some of the people who had spent the previous night with families in the area. Among these were Julio and Isabelle Estrada, and their 8-year-old son, Jeffrey.

"When we were being evacuated, I kept on saying, 'This is so unfair, why should this happen to us?'" Mrs. Es-

trada said. "But the family that put us up for the night were so nice that a lot of our bitterness was washed away. I guess we're thankful that we're alive."

As Mrs. Estrada spoke, Jeffrey, her son, was happily darting about in the hotel lobby. The mother pointed to him and said: "Look at him now. He was so scared yesterday, so scared."

No Possessions Taken

Because the evacuation from the University Hotel was sudden—and startling—hardly anyone could take any of his possessions with him. The possession most missed yesterday was, of course, money.

"A dime, one dime, that's all I have on me," said Glenn Warner. "Where will a dime take you?"

Donald Carroll, executive director of the Hotel Martinique, said that none of the refugees were being charged for the rooms. Starting Monday, most of them would be moved to other hotels, he said. And until they receive their next welfare or paychecks the Red Cross will give each of the victims \$3 a day for meals.

"It's a new life for us all over again," observed Mr. Warner.

Feige Friedman, a white-haired woman, who was left homeless, was standing next to Mr. Warner.

"A new life?" she asked. "All over again? I'm 72 years old. Tell me how to start all over again."

Man's Body Found In Collapsed Hotel

By PHILIP McCARTHY

The naked body of an elderly, gray-bearded man was found yesterday in the rubble of the Old Broadway Central Hotel, now known as the University Hotel, which collapsed Friday evening. His age was estimated at 60 to 80.

The unidentified body was the only one recovered from the debris so far and the only known fatality from the hotel collapse, in which at least 19 persons, including three cops and a fireman, were injured.

The body was found lying under a mattress on the south side of the collapsed section of the hotel at 673 Broadway, and was taken to Bellevue Hospital morgue.

A 75-foot wide section of the hotel crashed to the street.

Police said the dead man was not on a list of five missing persons believed to have been in the collapsed section. The five were identified as R. Shearin, Alan Frazier, Miss Kay Parker and Mr. and Mrs. Arthur C. Sherwin.

Wife Answers Phone

Sherwin, 35, was talking to his mother on the telephone at 5:10 p.m. Friday when he suddenly exclaimed: "My God! The ceiling is falling and the walls are coming down!"

Then the line went dead.

Sherwin's last phone call was described yesterday by his

hotel's telephone lines had been knocked out.

The senior Sherwin said his son, who was unemployed, told him "he didn't like the hotel at all and wanted to move out."

Fire Chief John O'Hagan said yesterday that he does not expect to find any survivors among the tons of rubble. He said the debris—wood, bricks, plaster, electric wires, pieces of furniture—compacted with such force that there were no air spaces in which survivors could breathe.

As late as Saturday, rescue operations had continued at the

father, Arthur Sherwin, 68, a retired international banker, of 111 Seventh St., Garden City, L.I. The elder Sherwin said he and his wife, Grace, returned home from vacation Friday afternoon and phoned their son at the hotel, where he and his wife, Peggy, had lived for about a year.

hotel under the hope "that somebody is alive in there." But the hope faded as the hours passed and not even a muffled cry was heard.

Meanwhile, former residents of the hotel were permitted to return yesterday to collect their belongings. All were required to show their room keys or other identification. Then, accompanied by firemen, they cautiously made their way into the still-standing section of the 119-year-old hotel, once the favorite gathering place of the city's elite.

Fire officials feared for the safety of the half of the original structure which still is standing, since "a very large crack" has been sighted at the second-floor level.

"My son's wife answered the phone," Sherwin said, "and my wife talked with her for a few minutes. Then she talked to Arthur for about 10 minutes, until he suddenly said the walls were collapsing."

When the phone call was interrupted, Sherwin's parents tried to reach him again but the



NEWS photo by James McGrath
Box containing man's body is removed from rubble of hotel

Find a Second Body in Rubble of Hotel

By ANDY SOLTIS
and HERBERT HADAD

The body of a woman — apparently pregnant — was pulled from the rubble of the old Broadway Central Hotel today by firemen.

Police who took the body to the Bellevue morgue said the woman was white but could provide no further immediate description or her identity.

She was found at 10 a.m., minutes after search teams had located a live dog they believed had been buried in the ruins, since the hotel collapsed shortly after 5 p.m. last Friday.

The brown and white mongrel appeared unhurt. Engine Co. 24 firefighters said they planned to adopt the dog as their mascot if it was not claimed.

The woman was the second person found dead since the collapse of the building at 673 Broadway, called the

University Hotel in recent years. The tragedy left 308 residents homeless.

At least three others are believed buried in the rubble, and police are continuing to list almost 30 persons as unaccounted for.

A special board of inquiry, meanwhile, went into its first day of hearings today into the cause of collapse, and a second investigation was being readied by the City Council.

Majority Leader Thomas Cuite (D-B'klyn) and Michael DeMarco, chairman of the council buildings committee, said a public hearing would be held Aug. 23.

Witnesses were expected to include Housing and Development Commissioner Andrew Kerr, Buildings Commissioner Theodore Karagheuzoff, Fire Chief John T. O'Hagan and William Glinsman, president of the Allied Building Inspectors Union.

The City Council hearing, in addition to seeking the cause of the disaster, was interested in the possible drafting of legislation to avoid similar collapses in the future, Cuite and DeMarco said.

They noted that south of Houston St, not far from the Broadway Central, are located numerous buildings more than 100 years old. The hotel was erected 104 years ago.

The four-member board is composed of Buildings Dept. employees. They are Julius Schneider, director of special projects; Philip Olin, assistant director of operations; Jack Linker, chief inspector for operations, and Louis Beck, department counsel.

The board spent yesterday afternoon viewing the site of the hotel and taking photographs. It is expected

the board will call as witnesses the owner and lessee of the hotel, tenants and others who saw the collapse and construction experts.

The hotel was the oldest multiple-dwelling unit in the city, excepting buildings that have received official designations as landmarks, a Buildings Dept. spokesman said.

Mayor Lindsay directed city officials to develop a plan for regular inspection of the structural soundness of all multiple dwellings built before 1901.

Lindsay met with Kerr and Karagheuzoff and they reported to him that their investigation of the collapse would be completed within two weeks.

The Mayor also promised his "full cooperation" with the council investigation of the tragedy.



This is what the University Hotel looked like when it was the Broadway Central.



The New York Times/Neal Boenzi

Firemen from Engine Company 24 Jim Walker, left, Joe Shreck, Joe Donovan and Lieut. Richard O'Dea with the dog that was rescued at the Old Broadway Central Hotel site. The company was later given the dog by the owner.

Hotel Inquiries Are Started as 2d Body Is Found

By FRED FERRETTI

Manhattan District Attorney Frank S. Hogan said yesterday that his Homicide Bureau had begun investigating the collapse last Friday of the old Broadway Central Hotel "to determine if there is any basis for criminal action."

Meanwhile, the body of a pregnant woman was found by firemen digging through the rubble, and the city's Department of Buildings began its formal inquiry into the causes of the collapse.

The woman was described as black and in her 30's. She was the second person known to have died in the collapse. Two days ago the body of 79-year-

old Herbert Whitehead was found. Four of the 308 persons registered in the hotel—known most recently as the University Hotel—remained missing. The rescue workers also found a dog, the 10th live animal found amid the hotel ruins, as a power shovel scooped its way through the debris and dumped plaster, concrete and wood into a dump truck. A fireman from Engine Company in lower Manhattan saw the dog, a white and burnt-orange Brittany Spaniel, and retrieved it. The dog's owner, after learning of his pet's rescue, gave the animal to Engine Company 24 as a

mascot. Mr. Hogan's entry into the investigations of the hotel tragedy was not unexpected. Following the announcement of the Buildings Department inquiry, the City Council announced that it would hold public hearings beginning Aug. 23. The District Attorney's investigation will focus on the possibility of criminal negligence inasmuch as at least two people have died. The Buildings Department investigation, Commissioner Theodore Karagheuzoff said, will concentrate on the causes of the collapse.

"Had illegal alterations been done on the building? Were

there unauthorized changes made in the structure?" Mr. Karagheuzoff wondered. "We want to look at its age, its condition. Did subway vibrations contribute? Rain? Was it a cumulative combination of a lot of things? That's what we're looking for. We are not looking for criminality."

The Buildings Department inquiry began yesterday morning in an eighth-floor office adjacent to that of Commissioner Karagheuzoff. Called as its first witnesses were Alvin Fischer, a professional engineer who had inspected the building before the collapse at the request of the building owners, and three departmental employees, Borough Superintendent Cornelius Dennis, Lawrence Clarke, the chief construction

Hotel Inquiries Started; 2d Body Found in Rubble

inspector for Manhattan, and Milton Schaffner, the department inspector who twice inspected the hotel, on Feb. 22 and May 7. At those times he noted deficiencies and recommended repairs.

Executive Sessions

Mr. Karagheuzoff had ordered that the inquiry be in executive sessions. He said he believed that witnesses would be more inclined to appear before his board of inquiry if their appearances were not publicized. He declined yesterday to provide Mr. Fischer's name.

However, Mr. Fischer's lawyer, Jack H. Dorfman, said his client had appeared voluntarily before the board "for the explicit purpose of giving them some insights into what he had observed at the building site." He added, "Mr. Fischer was

not a target of the investigation but was there merely to give his recommendations on what legislation could be passed to prevent something like this from happening again."

Mr. Karagheuzoff, who is not a member of the investigatory panel, spent much of yesterday attempting to devise ways of complying with Mayor Lindsay's demand for inspections of the city's 40,000 pre-1901 "old-law tenements." These are defined as any multiple dwelling housing more than three persons.

He noted that there were only 150 inspectors for the city, 40 of these assigned to Manhattan, and that despite improvements in the rate of inspections over the last month, his staff was working "at full capacity."

"Nevertheless," he said, "we're working on a plan to do exactly what the Mayor said, to have cyclical inspections of these old buildings."

Various Facets

He said that among the considerations were the following, "composing task forces and hitting each borough one at a time"; trying to eliminate some of the buildings, perhaps "those who over the years have histories of non-violation," and "maybe borrowing inspectors from other departments."

Mr. Karagheuzhoff said his department had a table of organization of 1,000 but was at a strength of 780, and some of the openings were for inspectors.

"Perhaps those who control the purse strings might find it the right time now for us to

hire some more," the commissioner said.

He noted that in addition to the demands of the Mayor "we have to monitor new construction. That's our job."

"And we must tend to tenants' complaints," he said. "These are areas we cannot neglect."

The hearings are to resume this morning at the Buildings Department. Four witnesses, including members of the department, are scheduled to appear.

The board of inquiry is expected to come up with its findings and a set of recommendations in about two weeks.

Rescue efforts, too, will continue, the First Department said, until a determination can be made as to the whereabouts of the four hotel registrants still missing.



Fire Chief John O'Hagan (white hat) joins firemen searching rubble of University Hotel collapse. NEWS photo by Jack Clarity

Body of Elderly Man Found in Ruins of Broadway Central Hotel

By PAUL L. MONTGOMERY

The body of an elderly, unidentified man was uncovered in the rubble of the old Broadway Central Hotel, the first known fatality since a portion of the 102-year-old building collapsed on Friday.

Missing-persons specialists of the Police Department still have the names of five people on a list of those believed to have been in the hotel at the time of the accident. The victim found yesterday was not one of the five.

Fifty rescue workers labored through the day to strip away layers of brick and splintered wood from the 30-foot mound of rubble at the site, on Broadway near Bond Street. Street and subway traffic near the hotel, which had been renamed the University, remained shut off to forestall collapse of sections still precariously balanced above the wreckage.

A special four-man board of inquiry convened by Theodore Karagheuzoff, Commissioner of Buildings, is to begin hearings today on the accident.

The Buildings Department has revealed that Philip Edwards, the representative of the owners of the building, and Joseph Cooper, the principal tenant, were each fined \$100 in Civil Court on July 16 for failing to correct a bulge in the facade first reported on Feb. 22.

Former residents of the hotel were permitted yesterday afternoon to enter, accompanied by a fireman, to collect their belongings.

Room keys and other identification were required before residents were allowed in. Many left with hot plates, old suitcases bound with string, books and other items.



Ted Cowell

Men from Rescue Company 1 removing the body of a victim who was buried in the rubble of the University Hotel

The hotel, at 667 Broadway, had been a center of elegance at the turn of the century but had deteriorated into a run-down haven for welfare clients.

Because of the transient nature of the hotel population, the police list of those missing has been continually revised since the collapse. Those still listed yesterday were:

Arthur C. Sherwin, 35 years

old; His wife, the former Peggy Banks, about 35, both of Apt. 4A.

Miss Kay Parker, 39, of Apt. 4B. Allen Frazier, about 30, of Room 612.

Mr. R. Shearin, about 30, of Room 812.

Mr. Sherwin's father, a retired banker of Garden City, said his son was talking to his

wife, Grace, on the telephone on Friday and had shouted "My God, the ceiling is falling!"

Pamela Suarez, the switchboard operator on duty on Friday, gave this account of the moments before the collapse:

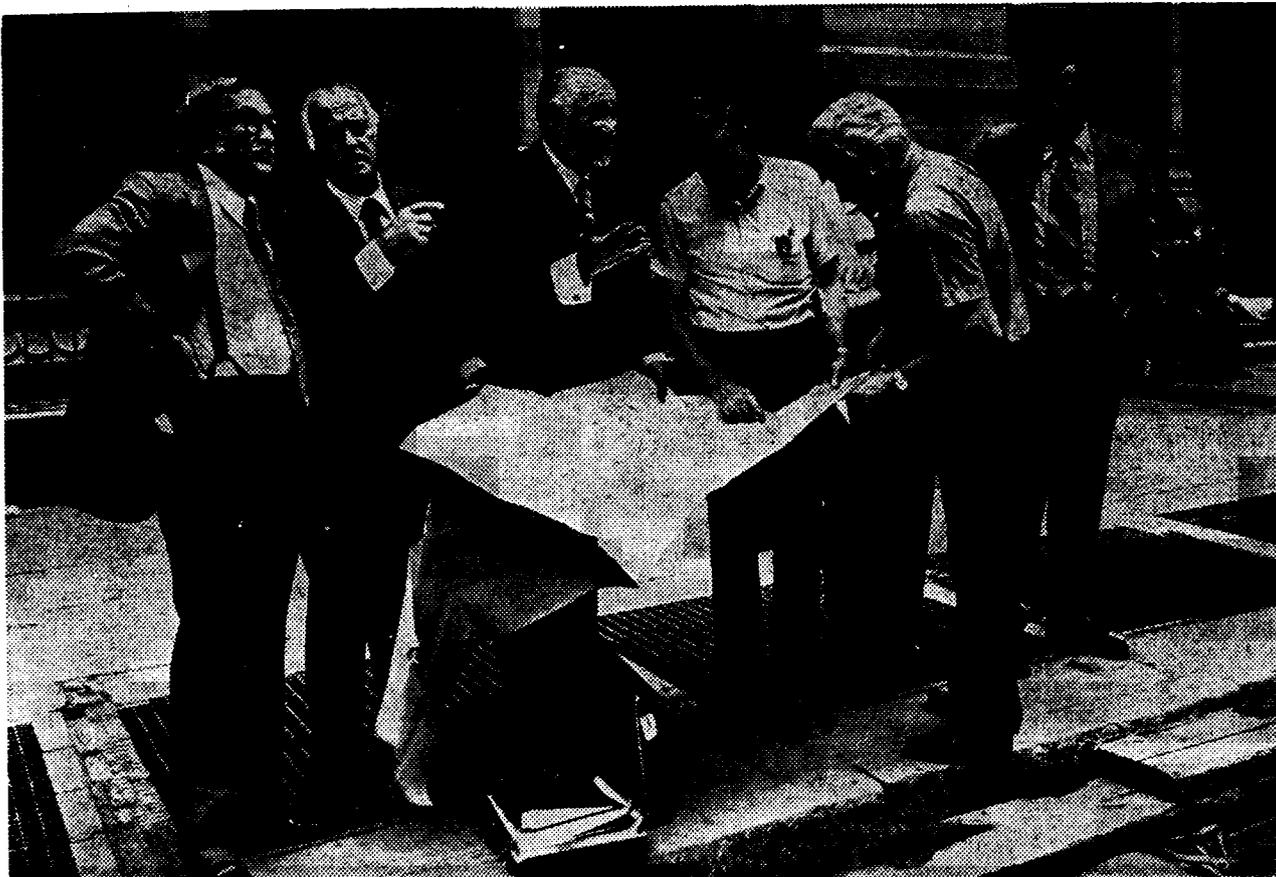
"There was a lot of confusion. 4A and 4B called complaining the windows were falling in. 5A called and said the door was not closing. Mr.

Cooper thought there was a fight and ran up to stop it.

"Then there was just a little noise, I didn't hear much I was so busy because everybody was calling then. Somebody said 'Call the police.' Three times I dialed 911, with no answer.

"Then there was a lot of dust and a man came in and said, 'What you doing here, get out!' and I ran into the road."

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The New York Times/Neal Boenzi

Opposite the rubble of the University Hotel, city building inspectors met with Phillip Edwards, second from left, building manager, and discussed blueprints for the building with Melvin Kessler, gesturing, architect

hired by Mr. Edwards. An attorney, Stephen Bernstein, is at left. Chief Inspector Lawrence Clarke is beside Mr. Kessler. Inspector Ralph Nerotto, in shirt sleeves in right foreground, also looks over plans for the hotel.

Inspection Report in February Termed Condition of Hotel Structure Hazardous

By FRED FERRETTI

At the bottom of a sheet of paper Milton Schaffner, an inspector for the city's Buildings Department, wrote in red pencil, "Hazardous."

Above he had typed; "Condition reported: Brick work defective, bulging, out of bond and a potential hazard. Location: Front wall, second through sixth stories, south of marquee. Remedy: Immediately restore wall to a safe condition. Make wall plumb, in proper bond in a workmanlike manner."

Below the red-penciled word a Buildings Department office stamp read in bold letters, "Hazardous Condition."

Mr. Schaffner's report, written last Feb. 22, was on the condition of the old Broadway Central Hotel, which collapsed last Friday, killing at least two persons. Four residents remain missing.

Other Inquiries

Mr. Schaffner was one of the first witnesses called last Tuesday, in the Building Department's formal inquiry into the causes of the collapse, and his report has become the focus of the inquiry board's efforts thus far. The Manhattan District Attorney, Frank S. Hogan, has begun an investigation of possible criminal negligence, and the City Council plans public hearings into the tragedy on Aug. 23.

Buildings Commissioner Theodore Karagheuzoff, who ordered the inquiry, has said that the board will determine how and why the eight-story structure fell, if there had been illegal alterations done on any parts of it, if the owners had complied with official demands that the hazardous violations be corrected, and if the Buildings Department inspectors and inspection system were at fault.

As the inquiry board adjourned yesterday until Monday, Mr. Karagheuzoff said its efforts concerned "reports that a store on the Broadway side of the old hotel — formerly a restaurant and now vacant — had had a maintaining wall removed."

'Unsafe Building'

Mr. Karagheuzoff said that the owners of the building, Mrs. Matilda Edwards and Gertrude Latham, had been served with Unsafe Building notices, requiring them to determine whether to tear down the remains of the hotel — the Mercer Arts Center on Mercer Street — or to make the remainder structurally safe.

The commissioner said he did not intend to call the owners to his board of inquiry "until I clear it with the District Attorney's office—if they come in here first it might

complicate the D.A.'s investigation."

Mr. Karagheuzoff said the Schaffner report of Feb. 22 resulted in "non-action."

"In March we ordered that it be recommended for court action," he said. "On May 7 the Supreme Court ordered a reinspection. This was done on May 22 and on July 16 the court imposed two \$100 fines one on Phillip Edwards and one on Joseph Cooper." Mr. Edwards of the Edwards Management Corporation, is the husband of Matilda Edwards. Mr. Cooper is the manager of the hotel.

Attorney General Louis Lefkowitz's office said that its inspectors found no violations filed against the hotel, which had been renamed the University Hotel, when they examined the place last September.

The accident drew some political comment yesterday. As-

semblyman Vito P. Battista, Republican-Conservative of Brooklyn, an architect, who is running for the City Council, urged that all commercial and industrial buildings in the city have their certificates of occupancy reviewed every five years. And Deputy Controller Joseph J. Perini, running for Controller on the Conservative and Experience lines, asked rhetorically, "By what act of omission did the structural weaknesses . . .

escape notice by the city's building inspectors?"

At the scene of the collapse, rescue crews continued digging through the wreckage searching for the four persons, from among the 308 registered, who were still missing. Two bodies, those of a man identified as Herbert Whitehead, and an as-yet-unidentified pregnant woman in her 30's, have been found.

Another dog, the 21st live animal found amid the debris, was discovered yesterday in the remains of what had been a bathroom. He had apparently survived by cowering beneath a sink. As the small black and white dog was brought out, a Broadway shopkeeper remarked to firemen, "I see they found Old Slugger."

The 20 other animals found in the debris are at the Martini Hotel, 49 West 32d Street. Ten people who survived

the collapse own 18 of the animals. Two other animals are homeless, according to Jacquie Collins, president of the Animal Preservation and Anti-Cruelty League, and in need of medical care. She said that veterinarians had refused to accept them because "there's nobody who can afford to pay for their treatment."

Operator of Hotel Denies Blame

By FRANK J. PRIAL

Philip Edwards, whose wife, Matilda, along with Gertrude Latham, is listed as the owner of the Broadway Central Hotel, which collapsed last week, has been operating, buying and selling hotels in the city for more than 40 years.

Yesterday, in an interview in his office at 217 Broadway, he discussed some of his real-estate activities and disclaimed and responsibility for the collapse of the Broadway Central—more recently known as the University Hotel—in which at least two persons lost their lives. On the contrary, Mr. Edwards insisted, he has always worked for the betterment of the community.

Mr. Edwards had been fined three weeks before the collapse for an unrepaired structural violation. The violation, a bulging brick facade, was detected by city building inspectors last Feb. 22. In a second inspection March 29, the problem was still uncorrected, and on July 16, Civil Court Judge Fritz W. Alexander 2d fined both Mr. Edwards and Joseph Cooper of the 667 Broadway Corporation, \$100 each.

Defect Denied

Yesterday, Mr. Edwards discounted the significance of the bulging wall.

"It may have been a hazardous condition," he said, "but that is a lot different than an unsafe building. No one ever said it was an unsafe building. If they had, I would have been over there in a minute."

Mr. Edwards and his lawyer, Steven Bernstein, who was present at the interview, said the facade was not a bearing wall and hence was not a structural defect. Mr. Edwards also said that repairs to the hotel were the responsibility of the major tenant, 667 Broadway Corporation.

Mr. Edwards made no secret of the fact that the Broadway

Central had been profitable. "Our return on that property was \$135,000 a year," he said proudly. "That's net."

But he insisted that "I don't run hotels. I buy large parcels and I clean them up to buildable condition." He acknowledged that many of the parcels he had assembled have involved hotels.

"Why not?" he asked. "I've been involved with hotels all my life."

To Mr. Edwards, "cleaning up" can be synonymous with tearing down. He said that he had "phased out" more than 2,000 hotel rooms in the city in recent years and that most of the property had been turned into luxury apartments or other profitable enterprises.

But he said he had not planned to tear down the Broadway Central. The 667 Broadway Corporation, the major tenant of the 102-year-old building, had a 35-year lease, Mr. Edwards said, and had long-range plans to improve the building.

In addition, Mr. Edwards said, the Mercer Arts Center, which rented much of the Mercer Street side of the building, already had invested \$500,000 in improvements to the structure.

Mr. Edwards began his career at the age of 19, operating a small hotel on the Lower East Side for his stepfather.

In recent years, Mr. Edwards has been involved with a number of old hotels in the city, including the Broadway Central, the Greenwich on Bleeker Street, which was once known as the Mills Hotel; the Bossert, the Standish Arms and the Pierrepoint in Brooklyn, and the Sutton and the Sherman Square in Manhattan, both of which no longer exist.

Real estate sources said Mr. Edwards, like others in the business, assembled parcels of

land, often using an old hotel as the principal part of the package, then sought a rezoning so the land could be sold for high-rise apartments or some other profitable purpose.

From Barn to Hotel

One such transaction that did not involve an old hotel but resulted in a new hotel was over a parcel at the corner of 42d Street and 12th Avenue, which was once a trolley barn. After rezoning, the plot, which had been assembled by Mr. Edwards and others, was sold to the builders of the Sheraton Motor Inn.

"We were going to develop the entire waterfront in that area," Mr. Edwards said yesterday. "But then they permitted motels to be built much closer to the middle of town. Now the Sheraton is the only hotel along the river."

Other Edwards properties include two brownstones at 44 and 48 West 12th Street. There the owner of record is the Heliotrope Land Corporation of 264 East 10th Street. But Heliotrope has only a \$5,000 mortgage on the properties. Bleeker-Thompson Corporation, another Philip Edwards company, holds a \$150,000 mortgage and I. Townsend Burden 3d of Washington holds a \$20,000 mortgage.

The tenants of 44 and 48 West 12th finished two days of testimony in Criminal Court this week in an action they brought charging Heliotrope with harassment. Mr. Edwards said he knew of Heliotrope's effort to oust the present tenants, but said he had nothing to do with it. He said any landlord had the right to do that if his long-range goal was to "improve the property."

Mr. Edwards lists his residence as 142 Bertha Place, Staten Island, in the exclusive Grimes Hill section. The house was put up for sale briefly some years ago for \$160,000.

Eye Illegal Work On Fallen Hotel

By PHILIP Mc CARTHY and HENRY LEE

The Buildings Department launched an inquiry yesterday into reports of illegal construction work in the old eight-story Broadway Central Hotel, now known as University Hotel, which collapsed Friday night.

As a 100-ton crane dug slowly through the 25 feet of rubble into the early hours of today, authorities listed five persons as still missing and 19, including three policemen and a fireman, as having been treated for minor injuries.

Buildings Commissioner Theodore Karagheuzoff appointed a board of inquiry and confirmed that his department will look into the charges of illegal construction work.

A spokesman disclosed that the owner of the once-elegant landmark at 673 Broadway, had filed plans last May 18 to open up the supporting wall, called a masonry bearing wall. They were rejected as "incomplete and inadequate."

However, he added, inspectors uncovered "evidence that the work was performed without a permit." He said the wall was in the area where the collapse occurred.

Last Feb. 27, he also said, an inspector issued a violation notice because the stretch of wall facing Broadway from the second to sixth floors was "bulging out of bond," meaning the mortar was loose. Reinspection on May 22 disclosed that no repair work had been done.

"It's the very area that collapsed," the spokesman said.

On July 16, the owner, listed as Philip Edwards of 12 John St., and the lessee, Joe Cooper, in care of the 667 Hotel Corporation at 673 Broadway, the hotel's address, were each fined \$100.

Tenants at the hotel, where 820

BMT Trains Still Out

Service on the N and RR trains of the BMT between Canal and 57th Sts., halted after the collapse of the old Broadway Central Hotel Friday was still out yesterday. Authorities feared that vibrations from the trains might cause further damage at the site.

persons had been registered, have been barred from entering, the spokesman said. Tomorrow a formal order to vacate the premises will be issued.

On Tuesday the remaining portion of the building will be declared unsafe, and the department will move in Supreme Court to have the rest of the building demolished. The building was completed in 1854 and rebuilt in 1871.

Mayor Lindsay and Fire Chief John O'Hagan both visited the scene. The fire chief promised that rescue operations would continue "under the premise that somebody is alive in there." However, the chance of survival was "very small," he qualified.

Fire officials described the half of the original structure that is still standing as "very unstable." Over the second floor, Fire Chief John Hart of the First Division reported, there was "a very large crack."

Those still unaccounted for yesterday were Mr. and Mrs. Arthur

(Continued on page 36, col. 1)

Construction Illegality Eyed In Hotel's Fall

(Continued from page 3)

Sherwin, Alan Frazier, Kay Parker and R. Shearin.

According to police, Sherwin was talking to his mother on the phone at the time of the collapse. She heard him exclaim: "The roof is caving in!" Then the phone went dead.

Most of the tenants were able to flee because of warning rumbles that shook plaster to the floor, but the collapse happened quickly.

"I heard a cry of distress, heard a blast, opened my door—and saw seven floors on nothing," said Glen Warren, 55.

Another resident, 47-year-old Leroy Ambrose, added, "I just heard a rumble and the walls started coming in."

Back in the elegant century, when known as the Broadway Central, the hotel was a favorite haunt for such characters as Diamond Jim Brady, railroad magnate Jim Fisk, who was fatally shot by a love rival on the staircase; Jay Gould, Commodore Vanderbilt, politicians, gamblers and aristocrats.

However the hotel fell on hard times and during the 1971 scandal over the city's welfare hotels it was described as one of the worst such facilities. Last November, Attorney General Lafkowitz charged in Supreme Court that the hotel was an "open and notorious public nuisance" and a den of thieves.

The hotel agreed to attempt to clean up its operations, and the number of welfare families decreased. As of Friday night, according to Mayor Lindsay, there were 120 welfare recipients being housed in single rooms.

The Mercer Arts Center which includes six theaters and two acting schools, also held a 25-year lease at the hotel, according to Seymour Kaback, president.

Kaback described the center as the only successful off-Broadway theatrical enterprise during its two years of operation.

SUNDAY NEWS, AUGUST 5, 1973

SUNDAY NEWS, AUGUST 5, 1973



NEWS photo by Anthony Casale
 Items removed from collapsed hotel are piled outside art center near Mercer St. entrance to the hotel.

** Inspections Ordered On Pre-1901 Bldgs.

Mayor Lindsay ordered his top housing and building officials yesterday to develop immediate plans for inspection of the structural soundness of all pre-1901 multiple dwellings in the city. The mayor's action was a direct result of the collapse of the 102-year-old University Hotel last Friday.

Digging continued round the clock yesterday in the debris of the eight-story hotel at Broadway and Bond St., formerly known as the Broadway Central. The body of the only known fatality was tentatively identified as that of Herbert Whitehead, 78, a welfare recipient who lived in room 710. Five persons were still listed as missing.

Lindsay gave the inspection directive to Andrew Kerr, housing and development administrator, and Theodore Karagheuzoff, building commissioner, and ordered them to report back within a few days. He also suggested that they come up with some ideas for legislation to control inspection of such buildings.

Hearing to Start

A Buildings Department board of inquiry will initiate a series of hearings today into the collapse. But it will be at least two weeks before the public is in-

formed of the board's findings.

Karagheuzoff said that the hearings, which will start at 10 a.m. at 100 Gold St., will be closed to the press and public "to make sure that the witnesses testify with candor" and "to insure the confidentiality of the testimony."

Other Hearing

The City Council, meanwhile, will conduct its own hearing, which will start on Aug. 23. The council's committee on buildings will hold the hearings, which will be open to press and public.

The committee said yesterday that there are many buildings in Lower Manhattan which are more than 100 years old and of construction similar to that of the ill-fated hotel. But Karagheuzoff said these are only a few commercial buildings and warehouses, none of them as tall as the University, and all of sounder construction.

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THE NEW YORK TIMES, FRIDAY, AUGUST 24, 1973

Inspector Says Hotel Got Warning of 'Hazardous'

By ALFONSO A. NARVAEZ

A Buildings Department inspector testified yesterday that a wall of the old Broadway Central Hotel "was bulging about a foot" from the second floor to the sixth floor when he placed a "hazard" violation

on the structure about five months before the building collapsed on Aug. 3, killing four persons.

The inspector, Milton Schaffner, posted the violation finding on the building on Feb. 22 and on March 29 ordered court action. Mr. Schaffner testified at a City Council hearing that he did not think the condition warranted vacating the building.

"I thought some masonry would come out but I never thought that it would take the whole building with it," he said.

Mr. Schaffner's first visit to the building, at 673 Broadway, came less than a month after a building contractor making internal alterations in the building called the Buildings Department's chief inspector to warn of "a serious condition."

A January Inspection

Frank March, supervising inspector, who was ordered to inspect the building on Jan. 26, testified that he had inspected it from the roof to the subcellar and that the bearing walls and foundations were in good order. He said that facing bricks on the Broadway side of the century-old building were bulging about an inch but that there was no imminent danger of them collapsing. The building is between Bond and Third Streets.

Lawrence Clark, chief inspector, who visited the site on Jan. 29 with Mr. March, also testified that the slightly bulging brick work was not part of the outside bearing wall, and that there had been no danger of the wall or building collapsing.

However, sources close to the investigation into the collapse said that the outside fac-

ing wall contained about 60 tons of bricks, which caused the bearing wall to give way when they pulled out.

"The bearing wall contained arches which apparently gave way when the facing-bricks pulled out," this source said.

An official board of inquiry is still piecing together testimony on the causes of the collapse of a major portion of the eight-story hotel.

There were 308 residents registered at the hotel, which had changed its name to the University Hotel after the appearance of adverse publicity about living conditions of welfare recipients housed there. On Aug. 3, a 50-by-60-foot section of the 200-foot-long hotel collapsed as residents fled after hearing rumblings in the building.

Four bodies have been recovered from the debris and two persons are still listed as missing.

Julius W. Schneider, director of special projects for the Buildings Department, said that testimony had been taken from 30 persons but that as yet no determination had been made as to the cause of the collapse.

Members of the City Council's Committee on Buildings closely questioned department officials about the long delay from the time the first inspection was made by supervisory personnel and the "hazardous" notice was posted.

The chief inspector and the supervising inspector said it was not their function to write up violations because they would then have to appear in court, causing delays in the operations of the department.

"It appears to be a classic case of bureaucratic buckpassing," said Councilman Carter Burden.

HOTEL OWNERS WIN A DELAY ON RAZING

P 37

Judge Allows Week to Shore Up Building—Inquiry Hears Ex-Tenants

By FRED FERRETTI

The owners of the old Broadway Central Hotel, which collapsed 11 days ago, killing at least four persons, won a week's adjournment in Supreme Court yesterday on the question of whether the city would be allowed to raze what remained of the structure.

Justice Gerald P. Culkin gave the owners, Mrs. Matilda Edwards and Mrs. Gertrude Latham, one week to begin plans to shore up what is left of the building and to find architectural and building experts who will determine if it can be made structurally sound. In granting the adjournment, which was opposed by the Corporation Counsel's office, Justice Culkin ordered a 24-hour-a-day guard posted at the building.

While the city and the owners were in court, the Buildings Department resumed its five-man Board of Inquiry yesterday, hearing testimony from four commercial tenants of the hotel.

The first witness was Walter Kaslow, who had operated the Worth Distributing, Inc., a mail-order house that was on the ground floor of the building running from its frontage on Broadway through to its rear on Mercer Street.

Foraged Through Debris

Mr. Kaslow, who estimated that his losses in stock and furnishings in the disaster totaled \$125,000, said that his son had narrowly missed death on the day of the collapse. After his 10 office workers had gone home, Mr. Kaslow said, he received a shipment at 4:45 P.M. His son was closing up the office when the first collapse came. "He got out between the two spasms," Mr. Kaslow recalled.

Over the last weekend, Mr. Kaslow foraged through the city dump on Mercer Street looking for his things. "I found a couple of cabinets," he said. "They were squashed like pancake. We opened them with crowbars. All we have is some correspondence."

Mr. Kaslow has relocated to another "old" building, two blocks away. "This one was built in 1888," he said. "But it's a city landmark."

The court session yesterday followed a survey made jointly by the Department of Buildings and representatives of the collapsed building, which had been renamed the University Hotel. The survey had concluded that the building was unsafe. Over the weekend, a Fire Department officer said that continued efforts by rescue teams to cut through the debris in search of additional victims could conceivably weaken the remaining walls.

The city, represented by an assistant corporation counsel, Herman Amber, had moved for a "precept" under which the city would have the unilateral right to tear down the building. The owners, represented by Stephen Bernstein, contended that they wanted time to see if the building was salvageable.

The Board of Inquiry will resume today at 100 Gold Street. Also under way is a criminal investigation by District Attorney Frank S. Hogan. The City Council has scheduled public hearings on the collapse for Aug. 23.

Meanwhile, the digging goes on in a continuing search for victims. The bodies of two men and two women have been found thus far. Based on the registration of 308 at the time of the collapse, two persons are still regarded as missing.

City Council Unit Calls Hotel-Collapse Inquiry

By FRANK J. PRIAL

A second investigation into the collapse of the old Broadway Central Hotel, this one by the City Council's buildings committee, was announced yesterday. Council Majority Leader Thomas J. Cuite said the opening hearings would begin Aug. 23 in City Hall at 11 A.M.

A board of inquiry convened by Buildings Commissioner Theodore Karagheuzoff was scheduled to begin its hearings today. During a visit to the scene of the collapse at 673 Broadway, Mr. Karagheuzoff said he hoped the hearings would determine whether alterations had been made in a key supporting wall.

Over the weekend, the Buildings Department said that its investigators had found evidence of unauthorized work on a bearing wall in the building.

Plans Had Been Filed

On Saturday, a spokesman for the department had said that the hotel had filed plans to make certain alterations but that they had been rejected as "incomplete." Yesterday, Mr. Karagheuzoff said he did not know if alterations to the hotel, which had been renamed the University, had been a factor in the collapse last Friday. He declined to say just what alterations had been planned.

The "incomplete" plans apparently dealt with structural work that was supposed to have been done earlier this year. The violation, defective brick work between the second and sixth floors of the eight-story building, caused the facade to pull away from a bearing wall. It was discovered in an inspection last Feb. 22. A reinspection on March 29 showed that the repairs had not been made. On May 2, the hotel filed plans for repairs. These plans were rejected on May 16 as "incomplete."

Mayor Lindsay yesterday ordered the city's housing and building officials to develop a plan for more frequent inspection of multiple dwellings built before 1901. Pending new legislation, the Mayor called for a plan for more frequent inspections of all old-law (pre-1901) buildings in such areas as Manhattan below 14th Street and areas of Brooklyn and Harlem.

The Mayor said Buildings Commissioner Karagheuzoff told him the investigation of the building collapse would be completed within two weeks.

At the site of the collapse,

crews continued to pull away the piles of rubble in search of more victims. So far, the only body found was that of a 79-year-old man identified as Herbert Whitehead. Edward E. Kopp, deputy director of the Office of Special Housing Services of the Human Resources Administration, said Mr. Whitehead had no known relatives. He said the man had checked into the hotel on July 16.

Mr. Kopp said the elderly man had been in St. Vincent's Hospital recuperating from a leg fracture suffered when he was hit by an automobile. He said Mr. Whitehead had slept for three years in a shack on a parking lot on Canal Street before entering the hospital.

A Haven for Criminals

The Building Department's discovery of structural problems and the subsequent court action followed only by a few weeks a separate court action, brought by the State of New York, in which the hotel was cited as "an open and notorious public nuisance," a "base of operations" for criminals and a "marke" and a meeting place for drug pushers and drug addicts.

On Dec. 27, Supreme Court Justice Irving Saypol ordered the owners of the hotel to begin a program that would end the use of the building as a haven for criminals and as a source of harassment to the people of the neighborhood.

Defendants in the suit were Henry Dercher and Matilda Edwards, listed as the owners, along with Gertrude Latham, who was listed as the owner of the land.

The decision noted that during the first six months of 1972, 117 crimes were reported in the hotel, with 46 arrests for felonies. Between June and Dec. 7, 1972, there were 170 complaints of crimes at the hotel, with 54 residents arrested and charged with 86 crimes.

Justice Saypol's order required the operators of the hotel to post a \$10,000 bond guaranteeing that the problems of crime and annoyance to the neighborhood would be cleaned up.

The Mercer Arts center, the complex of six theaters, a cocktail lounge, a cabaret and a boutique, that was housed in the University Hotel, is looking for a new home. Details on Page 26.

Officials Doubt Inspections Will Avert Future Cave-Ins

Despite Mayor Lindsay's orders for stepped-up building inspections following the collapse of the old Broadway Central Hotel, city officials say the move will do little to avert future collapses.

"There is a real question as to whether you can look at a building and tell whether there is any imminent peril," Andrew P. Kerr, the city's Housing and Development Administrator, said last week when he was asked in an interview whether regular inspections could pinpoint when a building was going to fall down.

Mr. Kerr heads the superagency that includes the Buildings Department, which is responsible for inspecting buildings in the city.

"We had some of our most competent people—engineers as well as regular inspectors—in inspecting the Broadway Central regularly recently and no one knew it was going to fall," one department employe said. "It is almost impossible to tell when a building is going to fall down."

More Inspections Planned

Some sources said the situation demanded that the Mayor take some kind of action, so plans were being drawn up in the Buildings Department for more inspections.

The feeling about the futility of inspections in predicting collapses were echoed by Joseph Stein, who resigned as Buildings Commissioner last March. Mr. Stein is now vice president of the Tishman Research Corporation, a subsidiary of the Tishman Realty and Construction Corporation.

"Building collapses are rare," Mr. Stein said, "and it is virtually impossible to go over every square inch of every building in the city to find where a collapse is going to occur."

Working out the rough figures in his Fifth Avenue office, Mr. Stein said regular inspections of city buildings were impractical. There are 850,000 buildings, he said, and to inspect each only once a year would take a staff of more than 1,000 people who did nothing else. The Buildings Department now has 344 inspectors.

Even if 1,000 inspectors were available, Mr. Stein said, an illegal alteration in a building might be done quietly the day after an inspection and the inspector would not be back for another year.

Defects May Be Hidden

Not all the weaknesses in a building can be detected by an inspector. Structural weaknesses may be hidden behind lath and plaster, for example. To find out everything about a building, the building would have to be torn apart.

A Buildings Department spokesman said that the department's inspectors were occupied with new construction and alterations and that there was little manpower left for routine inspections. The department has a staff of 775 persons. There are 227 jobs that have been left unfilled because of the budget squeeze.

Mayor Lindsay's first Buildings Commissioner, Charles G. Moerdler, who is now a lawyer in private practice, said the area around the Broadway Central was a "potential disaster area" because of the many old loft buildings. Many of these buildings have received landmark designation because of their cast-iron fronts.

Mr. Moerdler, speaking on the telephone from Houston, where he is trying a case, said he opposed the landmarks designations because they preserved an unsafe situation.

Says Money Was Lacking

He said that if the city wanted to preserve a building as a landmark it should provide money to make the building safe.

Mr. Moerdler said the city never provided any money to make the buildings safe and had been systematically cutting down on the number of inspectors to save money. The number has declined from 427 in 1967 to the present 344.

However, Administrator Kerr insisted that with a new productivity program he was getting more work out of fewer men and was saving the city money. He said he expected, for example, to make 335,000 construction inspections this year, compared with 303,170 in 1967, despite the manpower cutback.

Mr. Moerdler said paying for more inspectors would not be a financial problem for the city if landlords were charged \$25 to \$50 for each inspection.

Mr. Moerdler was commissioner when three floors of a 103-year-old loft building collapsed on Jan. 27, 1966, at Broadway and Grand Street, six blocks from the Broadway Central. Twelve persons were injured.

At that time, Mr. Moerdler asked for more inspectors for a thorough inspection of that loft area. Mayor Lindsay responded then: "He will have all the inspectors he needs." The Mayor made no such promise of unlimited extra inspectors this time.

The area was called Hells 100 Acres by the then Fire Commissioner, Edward P. Cavanagh, after 24 lives were lost in a fire on March 19, 1958, in an old loft building at 623 Broadway, just north of Houston Street and two blocks from the Broadway Central.

Welfare hotels

These questions must be answered

by Howard Blum

On August 3 an eight-story building, the Broadway Central Hotel, simply collapsed. Three bodies have already been found. The search continues through the rubble for other victims, other bodies. On August 3 an eight-story building that housed 308 residents simply collapsed. Why?

Inquiry follows disaster as perfunctorily as a funeral follows death. The wheels of city government were quickly set into motion to ensure that the men whose initiative might have prevented disaster might now share in the outraged headlines that accompany tragedy.

Buildings Commissioner Theodore Karagheuzoff and his four-man board have spent the week in private session searching for answers. Manhattan D. A. Frank Hogan has begun an investigation of possible criminal negligence. The City Council has scheduled public hearings to exhibit publicly that its anguish is as least as deep as any Buildings Commissioner. And the Mayor found the time this week to have lunch (tea and sympathy?) with Kevin Conway, the lead in "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest," a play that was being performed in the now structurally unsound Mercer Arts Center, which the hotel housed. The Mayor could not find time this week to visit the Martinique Hotel where many of the survivors of the ruined building are staying. The Mayor's scheduling, though, is understandable: one wonders if the residents of the Martinique might be witty luncheon companions.

If, however, the investigators into the disaster at the Broadway Central — which had been renamed the University Hotel — are ever going to transcend publicity luncheons and angry headlines, they must be prepared to ask the relevant questions, questions that will not only help to explain why the building collapsed, but will also provide answers for why extremely profitable welfare hotel operations are

allowed to continue in unsafe hotels in this city.

If the investigators are sincerely interested in asking the right questions, they will have to ask questions that will prevent future Broadway Centrals, future welfare profiteering, future interesting relationships between slumlords and former city employes and blue chip banks, and future token slaps on corporate wrists by judges and building inspectors. And the investigators will have to be prepared to let the punishment fit the crime: three bodies have already been found in the rubble and the search continues.

Perhaps the investigator's might be interested in finding answers to some of these questions:

- Why were 128 welfare recipients housed in a hotel that on February 22, 1973, was officially described by a buildings inspector as "hazardous"?
- Why, in fact, were there any welfare recipients in the hotel, since as long ago as 1971 the building was officially designated by the Human Resources Administration as "unsuitable"?

• Was the report of Building Inspector Milton Schaffner of February 22, which described the hotel as "hazardous," passed on to the Human Resources Administration? To Buildings Commissioner Karagheuzoff? To the Mayor's hotel task force? To whom?

• Why did the courts wait till June 16 before imposing a fine on the owners and manager for operating a structurally unsound hotel?

• Why did Judge Fritz W. Alexander II see fit to impose only a \$100 fine on the owners of a building that housed 308 people and netted \$135,000 last year alone?

• Why was a building that according to firemen from Engine Company 33 was subject to con-

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Page Eight

Welfare hotels

Continued from page 3

stant fire violations allowed to operate as a hotel?
• Who in the Department of Human Resources made the original decision to send welfare recipients to the Broadway Central since conditions in that hotel have been attacked since 1971 by city

tween the operator of the hotel, Phillip Edwards, and former Deputy Commissioner of Buildings Bernice Rogers and former Buildings Commissioner Charles Moerdler? Did their business relationship begin only after these officials left city office? Is it ethical for Moerdler, who has functioned as a legal adviser for Edwards, to represent himself in the pages of the Times as an unbiased, objective authority on real estate conditions in lower Manhattan in the aftermath of the tragedy?
• Have other hotels that Edwards owns, such as the Greenward, the Bossert, and the Pierreport (hotels which have also had large welfare tenant populations), been cited by building inspectors? And if so have these violations been corrected or ignored?
• Are the owners and the opera-

tors of the University Hotel guilty of criminal negligence? Do the events warrant prosecution for negligent manslaughter?
• Is the person or persons, if any, who did not enforce the correction of hazardous structural conditions in the hotel also guilty of criminal negligence or conspiracy to commit negligent manslaughter? Might Human Resources officials who knowingly sent welfare recipients to a "hazardous" hotel also be liable for prosecution?
These questions are only a start. Yet they are questions whose answers might serve to expose how a clique of wealthy realtors with powerful political connections takes high-profit advantage of this city's poor, a profit measured in dollars and lives.

Responsibility

In March 1971, Phillip Edwards, the realtor who is involved in the ownership of at least three welfare hotels and who was fined on July 16, 1973, for failing to correct a structural defect in the facade of the University Hotel, gave the following statement to The Voice: "It is now and has always been my position that anyone who plays an operating role in a hotel has a responsibility to provide decent quarters for people and at the very least to comply with the regulations for decent housing." Like fixing structural defects?
H.B.

Patterns of realty

by Howard Blum

The collapse of the Broadway Central Hotel was not an isolated, tragic event. It was only the final act in a segment of the intricate and corrupt pattern of ownership, management, and regulating bureaucracy that controls real estate in New York.

Suppose the Broadway Central did not fall down. Suppose four persons were not buried under brick and plaster. Suppose 308 people were not left homeless. Suppose the disaster was somehow averted, the headlines shouting other sad and gruesome stories. Then the lives would be saved, but the tragedy would continue. The Broadway Central is not exceptional. There are 2059 buildings in this city considered "officially hazardous" by the Buildings Department. The Broadway Central is, rather, exemplary, exemplary of a pattern of realty ownership and management that allows people to occupy 2059 "hazardous" buildings. It is a pattern woven by greed, disinterest, and incompetence. It is a pattern which makes tenants victims, and landlords rich men.

Consider the specific elements, in the pattern working against the Broadway Central and how each helped to give the final shove which brought the building down.

THE DEPARTMENT OF BUILDINGS—the Broadway Central Hotel might still be standing if Buildings Department inspectors had simply done their job according to the law.

On January 26, 1973, the Buildings Department received a call from an engineer doing structural renovations at the Broadway Central that brick work was bulging out of bond. The next day Supervisory Inspector March arrived and found a crack stretching from the second to sixth floor separating the bearing and front walls. March has testified at City Council hearings that "because of the magnitude of the extent of the crack, I decided to bring in the Chief Inspector." Three days later March and Chief Inspector Clark made a joint tour of the

building. Two inspectors saw the crack, but neither wrote an official report. Why? Neither issued a summons or recorded an official violation. According to March's testimony, "we informed the hotel manager, Mr. Cooper, and he promised to take immediate action."

The law requires a landlord to repair a building within 10 days. The Broadway Central was not repaired within 10 days. In fact, the Broadway Central was not even re-inspected by the Buildings Department till February 22, nearly a month after "officially hazardous" conditions were first discovered. A violation was finally recorded.

The hotel, which housed 308 residents and had been examined by three inspectors, was not re-inspected till March 29. No repair work had been done. The manager, who months ago had promised "immediate action" and who was legally bound to correct the condition, had still not even filed plans. The city still did not move against the building's owners.

Finally, on May 2 the hotel filed plans for correcting a major violation first observed on January 26. The city waited two weeks before rejecting these plans.

The owners of the hotel were fined \$100 each on July 16, nearly six months after the bulging wall was first discovered. The repair work was never done. The building fell down, killing four people, before the work could begin.

The ineptitude and possible criminal negligence of the Department of Buildings runs even deeper. Under the Spiegel Act section of the State Social Welfare Law, the Department of Buildings is legally required to compile a bi-monthly list of buildings with hazardous violations. This list is then sent to the Department of Social Services which prohibits welfare clients from occupying hazardous buildings. Councilman Carter Burden has quoted Nicholas Buccinna, director of the Social Services Housing office, that the Broadway Central was not on the list.

THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES—When the hotel collapsed, there were 128 welfare tenants in the hotel. Why were these people sent to a hotel that is

officially designated by the Department of Social Services as "non-referrable"? Also, according to the Spiegel Act, a welfare client can have his rent fully abated if violations exist in the building in which he is living. Will the Department of Social Services ask a refund of all monies it gave to the hotel during the six months the building was "officially hazardous"?

In early 1971, Robert Jorgen, head of Social Services' hotel task force, informed Congressman Edward Koch of weekly Fire, Buildings, and Health Departments inspections of the Broadway Central. What ever became of these reports? Or, were the inspections never even initiated? Or, allowed quickly to end?

THE FIRE DEPARTMENT—Members of the 33 Engine Company have reported finding numerous fire violations in the hotel. They have reported that the hotel sprinkler system showered water, as often as three nights a week for the past five years, possibly weakening ancient structural supports. Why weren't these structural violations reported to the Department of Social Services? Why didn't the Fire Department inform the Buildings Department about possible water-logged structural beams?

THE LANDLORD—Philip Edwards, husband of Matilda Edwards who with Gertrude Latham is the owner of the building, can be tied to other welfare hotels in this city. The pattern of congregating welfare tenants in one section of the city, which began in Edwards's Broadway Central and Greenwich Hotels in the Village, is spreading. Edwards owns the Pierrepont, Bossert, and Standish Arms Hotels in Brooklyn Heights. Eight months before its collapse, Attorney General Louis Lefkowitz called the Broadway Central "a squalid den of vice and iniquity." Brooklyn Heights residents are now complaining that the Pierrepont is "a haven for drug addicts, prostitutes, and pimps." The pattern of realty is as pervasive as are profits.

THE BANKS—First Federal Savings and Loan Association of New York has a lien on the Broadway Central of \$650,000. The bank, whose emblem is Pro-

metheus, Benefactor of Mankind, never once tried to do any good for the mankind living as tenants in the squalid Broadway Central.

THE COURTS—On July 16, Judge Fritz Alexander fined the owners of the hotel \$100 each for failing to correct a hazardous violation that was discovered six months ago in a building with 308 residents.

Last year there were 7089 violation cases in New York with fines totaling \$104,814. The average fine was \$14.78. It is no wonder landlords find it cheaper to pay fines than make repairs.

In a telephone interview last month, Judge Alexander stated that he did not even remember the case.

So these elements combined against the tenants of the Broadway Central. Perhaps, however, the walls coming down at the Broadway Central can be the death rattle for this pattern of realty ownership and management in this city.

The lives of the residents of 2059 officially hazardous buildings may depend on it.

The life and death of the Broadway Central

by Howard Blum

At about 5:10 on Friday there was a rumbling noise at the University Hotel. The plaster ceilings started falling. Four minutes later the wooden beams gave in. Floors began crumbling, caving. There were screams, people rushing into the street. Joseph Cooper, hotel manager, dialed 911 and then ran outside. He was in the street when he heard a large, awful crack, he remembers, and then the eight-floor building fell to the ground.

Now, nearly an hour later, Joseph Cooper is standing across from the ruined hotel. In his hand are 14 yellow slips, thin pieces of paper like scraps used for bookmarks. On each slip is a name. One says "R. Shearin." Across from the name are numbers and dollar signs. The numbers are the amount of money R. Shearin has paid to the University Hotel. The name is possibly all that is left of R. Shearin. R. Shearin, like the 14 other names on the yellow slips in Cooper's hand, is missing. Presumably, R. Shearin is across the street, under the rubble.

The disaster has turned quickly into a news event. Police barri-

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Voice: Fred W. McDerrah

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Broadway Central

Continued from page 1.

cadecades block the street. Firetrucks and ambulances wait. The Mayor rushes to the scene. He arrives and they dress him in a fireman's white metal hat and black raincoat. He stares at the rubble and bites his lip. His arms are folded in front of his chest.

The dusty mounds of fallen timber and plaster are an awful, frightening sight. It is difficult not to imagine what that moment must have been like, how it felt. Now there is only dusty rubble. The building has crumbled. A door, labeled 509, now leads to nowhere. Beyond the door is a space where hours ago a building stood. A checkerboard linoleum floor flaps in the air, a hand waving goodbye. A room stops in mid-air, a refrigerator dangerously balanced at the edge. The Mayor takes it all in and bites his lip. It is too late now.

The newsmen are everywhere. NBC has set up a videotape machine. Fire Chief John O'Hagan repeats for interviewer after interviewer, "If I had condemned this building, I would have had to condemn every building south of Canal Street." Each time he speaks, the cameramen make sure they have a good shot of the ruined building in the background.

I talk with a fireman from the 33rd Engine Company who disagrees with the Chief. The fireman's face is covered with a ghostly gray soot, not unlike a miner's. He has just come from what remains of the adjoining section of the hotel. What did he see? "Enough to make you want to go to church." "Look," he con-

tinues, "I been with the 33 for the past six years. In those six years I've made at least 30 trips a year to this hotel for violations. That's 180 trips by me alone. The sprinklers were always going. The beams were bound to give in.

They were water-logged. They should have closed this place up long ago."

Joseph Cooper, hotel manager, has been cornered by the famous television reporter. He begs the reporter, "Don't ask me anything embarrassing. It was a good hotel." The reporter agrees, "Sure, Joe." The cameras roll but the interview is lackluster. The cameras stop and Cooper becomes animated. He mixes Yiddish with English: "How could such a tsimmis happen? How?" He tells the reporter "what a good hotel I ran." The famous reporter, annoyed, reprimands, "Why didn't you tell me all that when the cameras were going?" Cooper answers, "I'm just not a very good actor." The famous reporter

decides to shoot the interview again. This time Cooper is more forceful. And, I notice, he stuck his hand with the thin yellow slips into his pocket.

Night comes. The reporters are waiting. Lights are flashed on a building. A mirror, still attached to a standing wall, catches the light and shines back a dark reflection of the tragedy, a twisted pile of sticks. The ambulances are waiting. Firemen have formed a chain, they lift one brick at a time and pass it on. The emergency squad is waiting. The Mayor has long ago disappeared. A few old people, hotel residents, sit on the stoop of a building. They wait until the walls came tumbling down the hotel was still going strong. On the day of its collapse, three priests in a row. They stand very erect, looking at the rubble. Two hours ago they received a phone call at their 25th

Street parish telling them a building had collapsed. Now they wait. Now the newsmen wait. Now the ambulances wait. They wait to find the survivors. Or the victims.

In December 1970, the Voice ran its first story on the University, then the Broadway Central, Hotel. The headline, prophetically, was "Life and Death in the Broadway Central." Two months later a striking Fred McDarrah picture was on the front page of The Voice. The picture showed a tall black woman, somehow elegant with her full Afro and long earrings, crying hysterically. The woman was crying because a child had fallen down an unprotected stairwell at the Broadway Central and died.

Behind the crying woman, mourners carried a banner. The banner asked, "How Many More Must Die?" On Friday we had the answer. "I'm just not a very good actor." The famous reporter Running a welfare hotel is a dirty business. At one point more than 200 children were living in the Broadway Central, 453 people on welfare. The rats, the dirt, the crowded living conditions forced the Human Resources Administration to list the hotel as unsuitable for welfare recipients. At a standing wall, catches the light and shines back a dark reflection of the tragedy, a twisted pile of sticks. The ambulances are waiting. Firemen have formed a chain, they lift one brick at a time and pass it on. The emergency squad is waiting. The Mayor has long ago disappeared. A few old people, hotel residents, sit on the stoop of a building. They wait until the walls came tumbling down the hotel was still going strong. On the day of its collapse, three priests in a row. They stand very erect, looking at the rubble. Two hours ago they received a phone call at their 25th

On July 16, Phillip Edwards, the representative of the owners of the building, and Joseph Cooper, the manager, were each fined \$100 in Civil Court for failing to correct a bulge in the hotel's facade first reported on February 22. A four-man board of inquiry, headed by Buildings Commissioner Theodore Karagheuzoff, is scheduled to begin an investigation of that and other aspects related to the accident.

If the investigators are sincerely determined to probe deeply into the running of the hotel, they might explore the interesting relationships Phillip Edwards has established with former members of the City Buildings Department and bankers. The University Hotel has been owned since May 1, 1969 by Matilda Edwards and Getrude Latham. Matilda Edwards is the wife of Phillip Edwards, head of Edwards Management, and also president of the Bleecker-Thompson Corporation and the Washington Square Hotel Association. The last two groups have owned the hotel over the last five years.

Bernice Rogers, former Deputy Commissioner of Buildings, has an office at 12 John Street, the same address as Edwards Management. The telephone numbers Charles Moerdler, former listed in the Manhattan directory for Bernice Rogers and Edwards Management are identical. Bernice Rogers has had a particularly interesting career. In 1956 she was awarded the City Loan Association of New York, a Fusion Party annual award with the dedication, "In Bernice Rogers, the small people have found a voice and a champion." When she took office as Deputy Commissioner of Housing in 1954, the New York Times quoted her as wanting to "rid the city of slum conditions" and suggesting that the Broadway Central were di-

"attention should be concentrated on making buildings structurally sound before they deteriorate." Elmer A. Rogers, Bernice's ex-husband, is secretary of Edwards's Bleecker-Thompson Corporation and is involved with Edwards in at least the Bossert and Greenwich Hotels. Elmer is the brother of Hugo Rogers, Manhattan Borough President from 1946 to 1949 and former head of Tammany Hall. In 1957 Hugo Rogers was involved in a scandal concerning his appointment as a non-civil service clerk at \$2750 a year to entitle him to a pension. The story in the Times outlining the controversy included the sentence, "The amount of pension will be determined by the City Employees' Retirement System."

It is perhaps pregnant coincidence that the same City Employees' Retirement System holds a \$761,250 mortgage on the Manhattan Towers, a hotel which has served as a major welfare hotel. Much of the legal work for the Edwards' organizations has been done by the firm of Rogers and Rogers.

Significantly, when Edwards first spoke with The Voice concerning the articles on Broadway Central, he suggested a meeting in his lawyer's office. His lawyer for this meeting was Charles Moerdler, former listed in the Manhattan directory for Bernice Rogers and Edwards Management are identical.

Edwards has been able to obtain financing for his hotels from the First Federal Savings and Loan Association of New York, a bank whose emblem is Prometheus, the Benefactor of Mankind. First Federal has a lien on the Broadway Central of \$650,000, a figure that has been described as "unusually large for such an apparently risky hotel." In 1967, in fact, rents from the Broadway Central were di-

On July 16, Phillip Edwards, the representative of the owners of the building, and Joseph Cooper, the manager, were each fined \$100 in Civil Court for failing to correct a bulge in the hotel's facade first reported on February 22. A four-man board of inquiry, headed by Buildings Commissioner Theodore Karagheuzoff, is scheduled to begin an investigation of that and other aspects related to the accident.

If the investigators are sincerely determined to probe deeply into the running of the hotel, they might explore the interesting relationships Phillip Edwards has established with former members of the City Buildings Department and bankers. The University Hotel has been owned since May 1, 1969 by Matilda Edwards and Getrude Latham. Matilda Edwards is the wife of Phillip Edwards, head of Edwards Management, and also president of the Bleecker-Thompson Corporation and the Washington Square Hotel Association. The last two groups have owned the hotel over the last five years.

Bernice Rogers, former Deputy Commissioner of Buildings, has an office at 12 John Street, the same address as Edwards Management. The telephone numbers Charles Moerdler, former listed in the Manhattan directory for Bernice Rogers and Edwards Management are identical.

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rectly assigned to the First Federal Savings and Loan Association.

The bank is run by a distinguished board of directors that includes Peter Sharp, a vice-president of Douglas Elliman Real Estate Company, a concern which has been trying to obtain R-10 or luxury zoning re-classifications in the city. It will be interesting to follow the battle for the zoning of the building which is built on the ruins of the University Hotel.

Two days after the hotel collapsed, a man with a hot dog cart stands in front of the police barricades taking advantage of the crowd of the curious. Behind the barricades the ambulances will wait. A crane lifts up large shovelfuls of rubble and empties them into a truck. There is a sharp crack as pieces of wood snap when dropped into the truck. The street is littered with empty paper cups marked "Red Cross." The newsmen still wait.

On Sunday they found the first victim. The body of an elderly man was found in the ruins. He remains unidentified.

On the day of the disaster the Mayor's Office issued a press release boasting that zero welfare population growth had been achieved.

Broadway Central, August 3, 1973

*It is possible to be very poor here
even here, not in Calcutta,
and lose your name
along with your skull when the roof falls in*

*Even here
though not as poor as there perhaps
where you die in the street
because your city gives no roof to fall*

*But here
on the Great White Way you/I
can be so poor our names on yellow slips at the hotel desk
disappear in careless letters*

*The names are incomplete
the given name, too much to give, taken back, perhaps?
The numbers are complete
how much you paid how much you owe exact*

*Will I have dental records,
to give me back my name? It is possible
to be too poor to have dental records
even here*

*Man is the animal that marks his deaths with prayer:
Blessed are they
who were not too poor
to take in 28? 31? pet animals
before the roof fell*

—Verna Small

DAILY NEWS, TUESDAY, AUGUST 7, 1973



NEWS photo by Anthony Casale
Items removed from collapsed hotel are piled outside art center
near Mercer St. entrance to the hotel.

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Hotel Collapse Leaves Plays Without Theaters

By MICHAEL IACHETTA

Several off-Broadway plays were looking for new homes yesterday, and the six-theater Mercer Arts Center was trying to reorganize following the collapse over the weekend of the University Hotel, 673 Broadway, where the center was established a few years ago to bring together all the performing arts.

"The theaters are in bad shape," attorney Joel Weinberg, program director of the Mercer Arts, said yesterday. "My guess is that the theaters aren't going to reopen—but we are going to try to perpetuate the concept behind the Mercer Arts."

The landmark hotel, which had 320 registered tenants, collapsed Friday evening. A board of in-



Seymour Kaback

quiry is looking into charges of illegal construction work, according to Buildings Commissioner Theodore Karagheuzoff.

The Mercer Arts was located on the Mercer St. side of the building, between Bleeker and Third Sts. It housed such long-running off-Broadway hits as "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest," "El Grande de Coca-Cola," "The Proposition" and "Tub Strip" as well as a videotape theater, a bar, a lounge-night club, two acting schools, rehearsal rooms and a boutique.

The center was created by Seymour Kaback, an air-conditioning engineer and one-time sports-car racer who spent about \$300,000 to develop the multi-

media entertainment center without state, federal or city grants which, he has said, "inhibit artistic freedom."

"Any Mercer Arts Center production has complete freedom to do what it wants so long as it meets the center's requirements, which primarily means paying its rent on time," Kaback has said.

Weinberg surveyed the damage yesterday and said: "Last year we did 40% of the off-Broadway business last year. We had closed circuit TV coming in. We had new rock groups about to open, nightly entertainment and showcase presentations going. We had off-Broadway's three longest-running shows. We had total community involvement. We were happening and we were about to happen in a big way. Now I don't know what is going to happen."

"El Grande" Finds Home

"El Grande de Coca-Cola" will reopen Friday night at the Plaza Nine in the Plaza Hotel, general manager William Craver said yesterday. "Cuckoo" is still looking.

"We were lucky," said Craver, who manages both shows. "We managed to get most of the sets and costumes out. The lighting we can always put together quickly."

"The Proposition" was seeking to relocate, a spokesman for the show said yesterday. And about 30 actors from all the shows were waiting to find out when and where they would go on.

"We're trying to pull ourselves together," said Weinberg.

"The miracle was that it didn't happen that night when there would have been around 1,500 people in the various theaters," said Sally Held, an actor's agent.

NY Post

Tues.

8/8/73

Mercer Arts Center Digs Out

By JOYCE WADLER

Playwright Peter Swet tries to joke about it; "My play brought the house down before the house opened," he says.

The play was Swet's first, scheduled to open in The Mercer Arts Center in the old Broadway Central Hotel last Friday—the day the building collapsed.

Now Swet's play will be opening in a new location. For the Mercer Arts Center,

like the Broadway Central—or the University Hotel, as it had been renamed recently—is no more.

Located in the second floor and back half of the hotel, the Arts Center housed six theaters, two acting workshops, a cocktail lounge, a boutique, and a rock club. The loss of the privately owned entertainment complex, which opened only three and a half years ago, is estimated at \$1 million. Five shows which were formerly playing in the Center are now searching for new homes. And the brief run of what its admirers called "The Lincoln Center of Off-Broadway" is over.

"Because a large portion of the center, on Mercer St., behind the hotel, remained standing, some people were hopeful that the center might be saved," said a spokesman for Seymour Kaback, who owns the Mercer Arts Center. "But now, it's definite that whatever is left of the building must come down."

"We'd like to keep the Center going, to find another home, preferably in the same area, and keep the shows together," he continued. "But now each of the shows are trying to find theaters of their own, because for now,

we have nowhere to go."

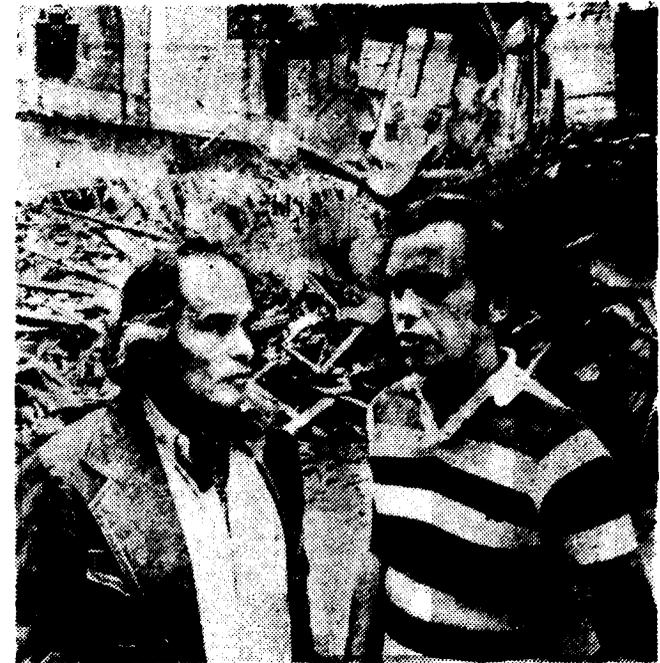
The shows, besides Swet's "The Interview," include "One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest," "El Grande de Coca-Cola," "The Proposition," "Tub-Strip," and "Henry, Sweet Henry," which was scheduled to open this week. Swet's show will open this Friday at The Theatre De Lys, in the Village.

The scene is particularly dismal at the office of the producer of "One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest," which was to go into its 1000th performance next week, setting a record for an off-Broadway drama.

"We'll be putting on a benefit performance for the victims of the collapse as soon as we find a theater to perform in," said producer Lee Sankowitz. "Meanwhile, we have no permanent place to go. We're just salvaging whatever we can in the way of props and costumes."

Director Gene Frankel, who had run a workshop in the Center, stood on Broadway and sadly surveyed a portion of his office, which had been destroyed when the hotel fell. "There's 25 years of theater memorabilia on that wall," said Frankel.

"We were going to open



Post Photo by Terence McCarten

Director Gene Frankel, left, and playwright Peter Swet, in front of the remains of the old Broadway Central Hotel.

this week," said Brenda Van Scheinck stage manager of "Henry, Sweet Henry." "It was a showcase production, no one was getting paid, we were just doing it for the exposure."

"My band was going to open here in October," said Jack Abbott, manager of "The New York Central," who had come to the Center to retrieve his files.

"It would have been our first paid performance here," he said. "But we feel sentimental about this place, because we showcased here a lot. Maybe 50 bands did also. In the last year and a half, it was the most important showcase a band could get in New York. I don't know where the new bands will be able to go for exposure now."

4B

Mercer Arts Center Rises From Rubble

By GEORGE GENT

The Mercer Arts Center, a Lilliputian-sized theater with the ambitions of a Lincoln Center, worked feverishly yesterday to salvage its "total theater environment for the young" from the rubble of the old Broadway Central Hotel, which collapsed Friday.

The Mercer's six theaters, cocktail lounge, rock music cabaret and boutique were little damaged in the disaster because they are located on the Mercer Street side of the building, but Gene Frankel's acting studio and theater, and the office of Joel Weinberg, a lawyer and the theater's program director, disappeared when the Broadway side of the 102-year-old hotel collapsed. The hotel has been declared structurally unsound and future occupancy by the theaters would not be feasible, according to Mr. Weinberg and Seymour Kabach, the center's owner and operator.

Plans to Reopen

The disaster left the four shows currently occupying the Mercer temporarily without homes. However, one of the tenants—"El Grande de Coca-Cola"—announced yesterday that it planned to reopen Friday night at the

Plaza 9 in the Plaza Hotel. Its schedule there would be: Tuesdays and Thursdays at 8 P.M.; Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays, 8 and 10 P.M., and Sundays, 3 and 8 P.M.

And Lee Sankowich, the producer-director of "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest," which also rented space at the Mercer, has announced a news conference for today at 10:30 A.M. at 521 Fifth Avenue, the office of Robert J. Malito, Deputy Commissioner of Public Events. It is understood that he will announce acquisition of a new theater and outline a city-sponsored plan for a series of benefits for victims of the hotel disaster.

The center's other occupants—the long-running satirical revue, "The Proposition," and "Tubstrip," a homosexual drama that had been in preview—are owned by the Mercer.

Mr. Frankel, whose studio and workshop were destroyed in the crash, said he has taken three weeks' occupancy of the Theater de Lys, 121 Christopher Street, where he will present weekend workshop productions of "The Interview," until a permanent home is found.

Mr. Weinberg said yesterday, "We are desperately

looking for a site that will permit us to keep the Mercer together as a total theatrical environment.

"The first person we approached, naturally, was Joe Papp," he declared. "His Place Theater is nearby and would be a logical site, but Mr. Papp said he had several plays in rehearsal and could not let us the space."

Mr. Weinberg said several other sites were under consideration, and that he expected one to be announced shortly.

Yesterday, the center, which had been refurbished two years ago at a cost of nearly \$600,000, was nearly deserted, except for a few technical men removing sound and lighting equipment for the shows. Peter Boyden, an actor who understudies four roles in "Cuckoo," somehow managed to sneak by police lines in front of the center and emerged a few minutes later with two newly born brown-and-white kittens, whose mewing could be heard from the street.

On the Broadway side of the hotel, a giant crane picked carefully at the heaps of rubble for bodies, and a street vender did a flourishing business in cherry ices among the watching crowd.

Wrecked Play 'Cuckoo' Finds a New Theater

By PATRICIA O'HAIRE

"One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest," one of the plays from the Mercer Arts Theater complex that found itself homeless when the University Hotel collapsed last week, has found a new perch.

It will move to the Eastside Playhouse, 334 E. 74th St., on Tuesday, the day it would have reached its 1,000th performance.

But while the theater is being readied, the play, which stars Kevin Conway as McMurphy, will hold two benefit performances tomorrow and Friday at 7:30 p.m. in the outdoor Pedestrian Mall at Civic Center, located just behind the Municipal Building.

The two shows, sponsored by the city's Department of Public Events, will benefit the victims of the hotel collapse. A contribution of \$2 per person will be asked of those attending, and the Rev. William McPeak, rector of St. Andrew's on the Mall, will distribute the proceeds.

The play has an unusual history. It was originally a book by Ken Kesey about life in a mental institution, and was adapted for Broadway by Dale Wasserman in a play starring Kirk Douglas as McMurphy, which had a run of only 85 performances 10 years ago.

Revived in San Francisco about three years ago, it is now play-

Callas Tix Scaled High

London, Aug. 7 (UPI)—The arrangement for selling tickets for Maria Callas' first appearance in eight years is unprecedented, a concert spokesman said today.

Managers of the Royal Festival Hall said that tickets for the Sept. 22 concert of Madam Callas and tenor Giuseppe di Stefano, go on sale tomorrow, but only by mail and restricted to two seats per purchaser.

"I think this is the first time we have ever done this," a spokesman said. He said tickets were being priced up to \$25 each, about four times normal concert prices.

ing in Boston, San Francisco, Washington and several other major cities. This fall, Albert Finney will star in the London production, and Johnny Halliday, one of France's pop singers, will appear in the show in Paris.

Theater Owner Reports ^{P-59} Warning of Hotel Collapse

By FRED FERRETTI

The owner of the Mercer Arts Center told a board of inquiry yesterday that as early as January of this year he warned the proprietors of the old Broadway Central Hotel and the city's Buildings Department that the hotel's facade was bulging dangerously and that cracks were persistently appearing throughout its interior.

The arts center, a complex of theaters and workshops in acting, occupied the Mercer Street side of the downtown hotel, which fronted on Broadway.

The eight-story structure, renamed the University Hotel, collapsed into a pile of bricks, concrete, plaster and wood last Friday afternoon. The bodies of two persons from among the 308 people registered at the hotel have been discovered by digging crews. Four persons remain missing.

The Department of Buildings, on Tuesday, convened a formal inquiry into the causes of the collapse, and District Attorney Frank S. Hogan of Manhattan announced that his Homicide Bureau had begun investigating the possibility of criminal negligence.

Council Hearings Due

The City Council's Buildings Committee will hold public hearings beginning Aug. 23.

Phillip Edwards of the Edwards Management Corporation has said he was concerned about the presence of welfare clients in the hotel and tried to have it vacated. He said he was not the owner of the building but managed it for the owners—Matilda Edwards, Mr. Edwards's wife and Gertrude Latham. The Buildings Department said yesterday it still had not served them with unsafe-building notice required by law.

They kept telling me that they were. Last Thursday the wall between Gene Frankel's Workshop and the adjoining room cracked in two places. I heard the walls groaning. By 2:30 on Friday it was a Panicville there."

The Buildings Department board of inquiry, meeting at 100 Gold Street, is closed to the public, but on its first day four witnesses—three from the department and a professional engineer who has inspected the Broadway Central for its own—testified.

Yesterday, Seymour C. Kaback, owner of the Mercer Arts Center—which occupied what had been the ballroom and catering section of the old hotel—was one of another group of four witnesses. Before entering the hearing room he disclosed in an interview "what I'm going to tell them inside."

'I Noticed Cracks'

He said that when he began his alterations of the Mercer Street side of the Broadway Central in August, 1971, he found "nothing that was done in the building to be legal."

"In Jan., I noticed cracks in the one of the arches in a hallway leading to the Viveca Lindfors Workshop," Mr. Kaback said. "I called the architect I had used. He came over and saw the bulge in the outside wall. I sent a letter to the Buildings Department, telling them of my concern because I was running a public theater."

There have been indications of concern about the hotel from other sources. A spokesman for Attorney General Louis J. Lefkowitz said yesterday that state inspectors investigating the hotel as a possible public nuisance last September found "that not one violation had been placed on the building by the city." The Department of Buildings has said it first served notice of violations last Feb. 22.

Mr. Kaback said: "We replastered the cracks, but they kept breaking through. I kept telling the management of the

Worsening Bulge Noted

He went outside early on Friday, he said, and saw that "the bulge was worse."

"I got [Joseph] Cooper [manager of the hotel] and told him to do something," Mr. Kaback continued, "We were expecting 2,000 people that night."

At 3:35 P.M., Mr. Kaback said, Mr. Cooper telephoned an engineer, Alvin Fischer, but was told that Mr. Fischer was out. Mr. Kaback said he asked the landlord to leave his phone number with the engineer.

"But by 5 o'clock," Mr. Kaback went on, "too much was going on. Bricks began to fall. We blocked off a hall. My secretary called the Buildings Department to tell them we had an emergency."

Shortly after 5 P.M. Mr. Kaback called the Fire Department and 911, the Police Department emergency number, "but we didn't have time to wait." At 5:10, he said, the building felt "like it was exploding."

"My secretary was flung into the air," Mr. Kaback said. "We ran out the fire stairs. Then I remembered that I had forgotten my wallet. I ran in from the Mercer Street side to get it. It was all black."

He said he "managed to get out just as I felt another explosion" and the building crumbled.

Hotel Collapse Forces Relocation of 4 Plays

The four stage productions of the Mercer Arts Center forced out of their theater-workshop site by the collapse of the Broadway Central Hotel have been relocated.

"El Grande de Coca-Cola" will open tomorrow at Plaza 9 in the Plaza Hotel, 59th Street and Fifth Avenue.

Tuesday at the Eastside Playhouse, 334 East 74th Street.

"The Proposition" has found a home at the Manhattan Theater Club, 321 East 73 Street, and will re-open Aug. 17.

"The Interview" will resume tomorrow at the

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City Probers Checking Hotel Collapse Inquiry

By JOSEPH KAHN

The city's Investigations Dept. is delving into the Buildings Dept. report on the Aug. 3 collapse of the Broadway Central Hotel, it was learned today.

The inquiry began on Oct. 6, the day after a copy of the Building Dept.'s board of inquiry report on the cave-in, which took four lives, was received by Investigations Commissioner Nicholas Scopetta.

On the same day The Post first disclosed that the suppressed inquiry report blamed a defective support wall for the collapse of the 119-year-old building at 667 Broadway, and not a bulging facade, as was previously believed.

Further, the report exonerated department personnel for any wrongdoing or negligence.

B'way Central Sued for 3M

A welfare couple who lived in the former Broadway Central Hotel has filed a \$3 million damage suit stemming from the Aug. 3 collapse of the building.

Victor Cohen, 51, and his wife, Arthelia, filed the suit yesterday in State Supreme Court. Cohen is suing for \$1 million for personal injuries, claiming that the collapse of the hotel at Broadway and Bond St. aggravated a heart condition and caused him to be hospitalized, and \$1 million for punitive damages.

Mrs. Cohen is suing for \$1 for "loss of services" of her husband.

After The Post's story appeared, Housing Development Administrator Andrew Kerr, who supervises the Buildings Dept., denied the report was complete and said that more witnesses were to be called.

Since Kerr's statement, it was learned the administrator was not entirely satisfied with the report and conferred with Scopetta about additional information not spelled out in the report.

Testimony Conflict

The discussions by the two officials, sources told The Post centered on conflicting testimony of buildings inspectors who testified before the board of inquiry and at the Aug. 23 public hearing of the City Council's Buildings Committee into the causes of the hotel's collapse.

At the hearing, the committee heard two different stories from three inspectors.

At one point during the session, Frank March, an inspector for 21 years, testified:

"Our testimony is contradictory. It will be up to you to determine who has had a lapse of memory or is not telling the truth."

The testimony of the three inspectors brought out that on Jan. 24 the Building Dept. was notified of a large crack in a wall and March, a supervising inspector, responded two days later.

Told of Seeing Crack

He testified that from across the street on Broadway he was able to see a jagged crack running up the building's facing and he also noticed the four-inch facing was separated from the 12 to 16-inch-thick main brick behind it.

March said there was nothing to indicate "imminent collapse," but he

asked Lawrence Clark, chief inspector for Manhattan, for his advice.

On Jan. 29th the two men visited the hotel and agreed, although a vacate order was not necessary, a violation should be issued.

"I left it in his (March's) hands to get a violation written," Clark told the committee.

March testified he then called Milton Schaffner, a district inspector, to meet him at the hotel a few days later, "so he can write up a violation" but that Schaffner "didn't show up."

Schaffner's Version

Schaffner testified that he didn't remember March's call but a month later he said March did ask him to make an inspection of the hotel.

On Feb. 22 Schaffner, after a visit to the building, wrote up a "hazardous" violation.

"I found the wall bulging a foot," he said. "How much further could a wall go?"

Two and a half months went by and no one from the city checked the building and no repairs were made.

On May 7, the hotel's owners were brought into court and a new inspection ordered.

Two weeks later Schaffner went to the building. The condition was the same, he testified, but he thought some of the masonry was ready to fall.

"But I never thought it would take the whole building with it," he said.

On July 16 the hotel owner and the leasee were fined a total of \$200.

There were no further inspections, according to the testimony, and at 5:10 p.m. on Aug. 3 the southern portion of the building collapsed.

Hotel Wall Blamed in Collapse

By JOSEPH KAHN

A defective bearing wall which had undergone several undetected unauthorized alterations was believed to be the principle cause of the Aug. 3 collapse of the Broadway Central Hotel, a board of inquiry report shows, The Post learned today.

The closely guarded Buildings Dept. report, it was learned, does not blame department personnel for any wrongdoing or negligence for the cave-in of the 119-year-old building at 667 Broad-

way, which took four lives.

The bearing wall, which supported the floor of the eight-story structure, had been under repair several times over the years without a permit from the city for the work, the report disclosed.

When Housing Development Administrator Andrew Kerr, who supervises the Buildings Dept., was asked about the report, a spokesman for him said; "The report is inconclusive. We intend to call additional witnesses. The report will be completed in two weeks."

The Post has learned that the inquiry report concludes that although a bulge in the wall was detectable it was not the cause of the collapse.

At the same time, the report points out that the defects in the bearing or sup-

porting wall, which probably caused the collapse, were not visible to the inspectors, although the bulge was.

After the collapse a preliminary investigation concentrated on defects in the facade of a wall facing on the Broadway side of the hotel.

A crack in the wall was detected by inspectors on Jan. 26. On Feb 22 an inspector found the wall was bulging a foot and a violation was filed against the owners.

On May 7 the owners appeared in court and a new inspection was ordered. Two weeks later, an inspector found the condition the same. And on July 16 the owners were fined a total of \$200.

More Inspections

The report, it was learned, makes many recommendations, including more frequent inspections of older buildings with possible dangerous defects.

The inquiry ordered by Building Commissioner Theodore Karagheuzoff began on Aug. 6. About 1100 pages of testimony was taken from department personnel, outside engineers, representatives of the owners and tenants. All four board members are Buildings Dept. employes. They are Julius Schneider, director of special projects, Philip Olin, asst. director of operations, Jack Linker, chief inspector of operations, and Louis Beck, deputy general counsel.

23 A Switch on Collapse Testimony

NEW YORK POST, THURSDAY, OCTOBER 25, 1973

By JOSEPH KAHN

A Buildings Dept. inspector—in a sudden reversal of earlier testimony — has admitted he was ordered not to write out a violation citation for a faulty wall before the Aug. 3 collapse of the Broadway Central Hotel, it was learned today.

In testimony before a Dept. Board of Inquiry into the Cave-in which took four lives and at a public hearing of the City Council's Buildings Committee on Aug. 23, the inspector did not contradict testimony that he had been asked by superiors to write a violation citation for a bulging front facade of the 119-year-old building at 667 Broadway, now the University Hotel.

After the inspector testified before the two investigative bodies, he went to see Housing Development Administrator Andrew Kerr, who supervises the Buildings Dept.

The inspector, The Post was told by reliable sources, informed the administrator that he had not testified fully. He said he had been directed by superiors not to write out a violation.

Subsequently, it was learned Kerr referred the new evidence to the city's Investigation Dept.

On Oct. 5, The Post revealed the Board of Inquiry report blamed the collapse on a defective bearing wall which had undergone unauthorized alterations. It was also disclosed the report exonerated department personnel for any wrongdoing or incompetence.

At the time Kerr said the report was "inconclusive" and more witnesses were to be called.

Stories Differed

In a second article on Oct. 15, it was reported that the Investigation Dept. was look-

ing into the collapse. Primarily it was pointed out Investigation Commissioner Nicholas Scoppetta was interested in the delay of the issuance of the summons and contradictory testimony given by city inspectors.

At the City Council hearing three inspectors told two different stories.

Frank March, a supervising inspector, testified that on Jan. 26, after being summoned to the hotel, he saw a crack in the outer wall and asked Chief Inspector Lawrence Clark for advice.

After the two men visited the hotel three days later, it was agreed a vacate order was not necessary, but a violation should be issued.

"I left it in his (March's) hands to get the violation written," Clark told the committee.

March testified he then called Milton Schaffner, a district inspector, to meet him at the hotel a few days later, "so he can write up a violation," but he "didn't show up."

Schaffner testified that he didn't remember the first call from March, but he did respond to a second call nearly a month later, and on Feb. 22, wrote up a "hazardous" violation.

Nothing happened for two and-a-half months. On May 7 the hotel owners were brought to court, after a re-inspection disclosed no repairs were made. and on July 16 the hotel and the leasee were fined a total of \$200.

From Riches to Rags

By JANE PERLEZ

Robber baron Jim Fisk was murdered there; baseball's American League was born there. And in its 123 years of history, the Broadway Central ran the gamut from splendid elegance, to fashionable Jewish, to off-beat trendy, to downright seedy—and worse.

In the 1920s, after Meyer G. Manischewitz of the matzo business took it over, hundreds of Jewish brides celebrated at kosher banquets in one of the hotel's eight ballrooms.

In 1912, it was recognized by one reporter as a "summer hotel where the guests eat an old-fashioned supper and then go out with toothpicks in their teeth."

In the 1960s it was the home of the St. Adrian's

Holding Co., a hangout for the Andy Warhol crowd.

When it first opened it was to be the hall for the premiere American performance of Jenny Lind. Named the Tripler Hall, a combination hall and hotel, it was designed to accommodate Miss Lind's expected large audience. But it was not finished in time for the event, and she sang elsewhere.

In 1853, the hotel was re-named Metropolitan Hall; then La Farge House, after a representative of Louis Philippe; then the Winter Garden.

The hotel was bought by E. S. Higgins in 1869, and enlarged, and reopened as the Grand Central with 650 rooms, seven acres of carpet and capacity for 1500 guests.

On January 6, 1872, Jim

Fisk entered the lobby through the women's entrance, avoiding the main lobby with its elegant circular staircase, and started up the narrow stairway a few feet to the right of the main Broadway entrance.

Waiting at the top of the stairs was Edward S. Stokes, the rascal son of an eminent family. A shot rang out, and one account says Fisk "clung to the handrail . . . then sank upon the landing . . . Here he sat in a chair brought by hotel employes until he was carried upstairs to room 12." He died the next morning.

The quarrel was said to be over an actress, Josie Mansfield.

Four years later, major professional baseball clubs met to form the American League. Yesterday, the assistant manager, Charles Balanos, said a plaque commemorating the league rested in a storage room.

The hotel was named the Broadway Central in 1892. After numerous changes in management, the Manischewitz family bought it, in 1923, and it soon had the reputation of being the scene of the best kosher banquets in town.

It was the Ms (as they were popularly known) who renovated the interior, installing a \$12,000 marble floor inlaid with a large brass Star of David and the name of the hotel inscribed on the floor in both Yiddish and English.

In 1934, reported the New Yorker in a Talk of the Town piece on city's then fourth oldest hotel, the Broadway Central boasted "seven sets of period rooms for wedding purposes, each set consisting of a reception-room, a bride's room, a dining-room, and a ballroom."

The Broadway Central started taking welfare clients in May, 1970, charging them \$5 a day, often with seven persons squeezed into two rooms. In July, 1970, outraged complaints from residents told of dangerous open wiring, dusty rooms, rats and an invasion by prostitutes and drug addicts.

By November, 1972, the hotel, renamed the University Hotel, was called a "squalid den of vice and iniquity" by Attorney General Lefkowitz.

Lefkowitz moved in the Supreme Court to have the hotel removed from its owners, the 667 Hotel Corp., whose officers were Henry Dercher, Philip and Matilda Edwards and Gertrude Latham.

In the first six months of last year, Lefkowitz said, there were 22 robberies, one homicide, three rapes, seven petty larcenies, five grand larcenies, six felonious assaults, 18 drug-related crimes, 49 burglaries and six miscellaneous offenses.

Last December, Dercher agreed to maintain a round-the-clock uniformed security force at the hotel and to run a "decent hostel."



Post Photo by Jerry Eigel

This is how the hotel looked after it collapsed yesterday, damaging a panel truck in front of the building.

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City Cites 'Abuses' In Hotel Collapse

By JOSEPH KAHN

The failure of a decaying supporting wall, rotting beams, illegal and slipshod alterations, improper maintenance and abuses to a "tired old building" caused the collapse of the Broadway Central Hotel, a final Buildings Dept. report asserted today.

The 114-page report on the cave-in of the century-old structure at 667 Broadway, on Aug. 3 has not yet been released by the department. A copy obtained by The Post included these disclosures:

¶ Three inspectors who detected structural faults at the hotel before the collapse, which took four lives, gave conflicting testimony regarding the reason for a long delay in filing a report on violations.

¶ Three years before the collapse, a report of "construction defects" made to the hotel's management "was met with indifference of procrastination."

¶ Before last January, a construction inspector filed violations for hidden leaks, water damage, defective rain leaders, defective brick work and cracked and broken floor beams.

¶ Beginning in 1970, tenants and employees reported to the management cracking in the walls in the area of the collapse.

¶ Cracks in the bearing wall were filled with plaster and painted over. As the cracks reopened and got larger, they were replastered and repainted.

¶ From 1869 to the present, 46 alterations were performed, 26 of them major ones. From 1913 to the present, 63 building violations were issued, of which nine were for unsafe conditions.

¶ There were 39 fires be-

tween January, 1970 and last June. The water used to put out the fires contributed to the rotting of beams.

On Oct. 25, The Post disclosed there had been conflicting testimony by the three inspectors and a subsequent change in one inspector's story. The report summarized each inspector's testimony.

In a memorandum to Buildings Commissioner Theodore Karagheuzoff, the Board of Inquiry referred to "conflicting testimony of inspectors and failure to report defects in the bearing wall."

District Inspector Milton Schaffner testified that on Feb. 21, he was instructed by Senior Inspector Frank March to inspect the hotel and file a violation for a bulge in the outer wall. The next day he did so.

Ordered to File

March, in his testimony, claimed he was told on Jan. 30 by Chief Inspector Lawrence Clarke to have Schaffner hold up on the violation pending an inspection by an outside professional engineer. However, on Feb. 21, March said he ordered Schaffner to file a violation.

Clarke testified he never told March to delay writing the violation and that he had no recollection of any conversations about an engineer.

The Board of Inquiry recommended that owners of buildings built before April 12, 1901 be required to have an annual inspection by a professional architect or engineer.

It also recommended that hazardous violations be docketed separately from other violations to expedite the repair process — and — if not corrected within 10 days, be referred for court action.

THE NEW YORK TIMES, FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 1973

Broadway Central Cave-In Laid To Owner's Failure to Fix Wall

By JOSEPH P. FRIED

The collapse of the Broadway Central Hotel last Aug. 3, which killed four persons, was caused by the building owner's failure to repair a badly weakened support wall that was damaged by an apparently unapproved drainage-pipe installation about 30 years ago, the Department of Buildings announced yesterday.

The department also said it was referring to the city's Department of Investigation a conflict in the testimony of the district buildings inspector and two supervisors regarding the issuance of a violation notice against the hotel early this year.

In announcing the results of an investigation by a Buildings Department Board of inquiry, Commissioner Theodore Karagheuzoff said testimony before the board painted a picture of a building with "a history of long-standing defects and deterioration culminating in an accelerated rate of neglect and improper maintenance."

Philip Edwards, the hotel operator whose wife, Matilda, owner of record of the Broadway Central along with another woman, Gertrude Latham, at the time of the collapse, could not be reached for comment last night.

Built in 1869

Over the last 60 years, 63 building violations, nine of them reportedly were found at the hotel, a once-elegant structure that dates from 1869 and was most recently known as the University Hotel.

From late 1970 through last March, 450 maintenance viola-

tions were placed against the hotel and 39 fires occurred in it since early 1970, according to city records.

The board of inquiry said the portion of the wall that collapsed extended 60 feet into the interior of the premises from the building line on Broadway between Bond and Third Streets.

This wall, it was reported, was separate from a nonbearing brick exterior wall facing Broadway that had a bulge in it. The bulge "was probably not due to movement of the bearing wall but rather to settlement of the brick work over the lintels at the store fronts," the board said.

Recess Cut Into Wall

A violation issued against the hotel last Feb. 22 did not include the defects in the interior support wall and referred only to the exterior bulge. This matter, has also been referred to the Investigation Department, according to Commissioner Karagheuzoff.

The board of inquiry said the brick bearing wall that collapsed had been weakened when an 8-by-8-inch vertical recess was cut into it to accommodate a five-inch cast-iron drainage pipe that ran from the cellar to the sixth floor. The hotel was mostly six floors high, but rose to eight at its center.

"There is no record that plans for the installation were filed or approved by the Department of Buildings," the department said. It said that the date the pipe was installed could not be fixed, but that it was believed to have been about 30 years ago.

Sued Owners Sue Over Hotel Collapse

By C. GERALD FRASER

In an unusual legal coincidence, two apparently conflicting suits were filed yesterday in State Supreme Court involving the collapsed Broadway Central Hotel.

One suit named as defendants the hotel's owners of record, Matilda Edwards and Gertrude G. Latham. The other was filed by the two owners against six corporations and two persons.

Both suits, however, base their claims on similar allegations. Both charge that the 104-year-old structure tumbled into a pile of dust, rubble and wood on Aug. 3 shortly after 5 P.M. because of improper alterations and maintenance.

The first suit was filed by the brother of one of the four persons killed in the collapse. Milton Parker, brother of Kay Frances Parker, asked for a total of \$5-million for his sister's death. In court papers she was identified as a 39-year-old secretary who lived at the hotel.

Mr. Parker, of 1050 Stebbins Avenue in the Bronx, is administrator of his sister's estate.

The suit charged that alterations had undermined "the wall and other supports of the

building," and that the owners had failed "to repair badly weakened walls."

Court papers noted that from 1969 until the collapse, there were 46 alterations, 26 of them "major in character." From 1913 to the collapse there were 63 building violations; many for unsafe conditions, and that between January, 1970, and June, 1973, there were 39 fires at the hotel.

The owners of record, Mrs. Edwards, of 142 Bertha Place, Grymes Hill, Staten Island, and Mrs. Latham, of 3130 Brighton Sixth Street, Brooklyn, the 667 Hotel Corporation, the Edward Reaky Corp., manager of the premises, and the City of New York, were named defendants in the suit.

Husband in Real Estate

The second suit, a \$2-million action brought by the two women, names the following as defendants:

The 673 Village Corporation, the 667 Hotel Corporation, the Mercer Arts Center, Seymour C. Kaback, Worth Distributors, Lee Schoen, Ambassador Construction Company, and the Giurdanella Contracting Company.

The women have owned the hotel, last called the University Hotel, and situated at 667-677

Broadway and 234-244 Mercer Street, one block west, since April 1969.

Actually, Phillip Edwards, the husband of Matilda Edwards, has been buying and selling hotels in this city for more than 40 years. He is said to have acted "on behalf" of his wife and Gertrude Latham in the case of the Broadway Central.

The 673 Village Corporation formerly leased the hotel. The 667 Hotel Corporation currently leases the premises. The arts center and Worth had both sublet space. Mr. Kaback is an engineer and president of the arts center, and Mr. Schoen is an architect. Mr. Schoen "prepared plans for the alteration and remodeling of the premises," according to the court papers.

The two owners charged that the defendants had "made physical alterations . . . wantonly, recklessly" and that "as a result thereof a substantial portion of the building collapsed."

Buildings Commissioner Theodore Karagheuzoff said previously that his department found "no indication whatever that any work done in the Mercer Center contributed in any way to the collapse."

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7 NEW YORK POST, MONDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 1973

B'way Hotel — Was Wall Removed?

By JOSEPH KAHN

New information related to the Aug. 3 collapse of the Broadway Central Hotel — which took four lives — is being explored by the City Investigation Dept.

The information, turned over to the department by The Post, concerns the illegal removal of a major wall in 1969, a fact not revealed by city authorities.

A man, who must remain unidentified at this time, told The Post that he worked on the unauthorized dismantling of the wall of the century-old structure at 667 Broadway during the latter part of February, 1969.

According to the informant, additional space was needed for a commercial tenant and the hotel's management allegedly took down the wall without an official permit.

While the wall was being taken down, cracks began to show in adjoining walls, the informant said.

A city building inspector visited the hotel at the time of the work and, when he saw what was being done, he allegedly exclaimed: "Oh my God! What are you doing? Get me out of here," and he left.

The informant named two men employed by the hotel who were in charge of the wall's removal. Their names have been given to Investigation Commissioner Nicholas Scopetta.

The informant said he had decided to make the information known because, "I can't keep the truth to myself when four innocent people lost their lives."

According to a recent Buildings Dept. Board of Inquiry report, a decaying wall, slipshod alterations, and improper maintenance contributed to the hotel's collapse.

The report said three city inspectors gave contradictory testimony concerning the issuance of a summons after cracks in a wall were observed last January. A summons wasn't filed until Feb. 22.

JOSEPH DEVORKIN - 135 WEST 59th STREET - NEW YORK NY 10019 - CI-6-6849

August 20th 1973

Mr. Seymour Kaback, President,
Mercer Arts Center,
673 Broadway,
New York NY 10012

Dear Mr. Kaback:-

It is with a heavy heart and a tone
of sadness that I write this letter.

What happened to the old Broadway
Central Hotel was almost unbelievable. I went down
to inspect the ruins. It was a saving miracle that
neither you nor your associates and staff were in
your offices at the time.

The tremendous effort and costly
expense you went through to establish your worthy
Art Center deserved a better fate. You have my
most sincere wishes that your financial loss will
be minimal and that all that you planned will be
revived.

Having researched so much about
the Broadway Central Hotel and its history being
an important segment in my forthcoming book about
19th Century Greenwich Village, I, too, feel its
loss.

With my best wishes, the best
of luck to you.

Sincerely,


JOSEPH DEVORKIN

Historic Hotel New Home For Theater Dream

By Emory Lewis
Drama Critic

IT HAS been variously labeled the downtown Lincoln Center, a supermarket of the arts, and a cultural miracle. It is the new Mercer Arts Center, a family of drama showcases just east of Washington Square, and it constitutes a renaissance of theater activity in Manhattan.

The Mercer Arts Center contains under one roof four handsome, well-designed theaters (the O'Casey, Hansberry, Shaw, and Wilde), a dazzling boutique, a friendly bar called Obie Alley, an experimental film showcase, a sleek restaurant and nightclub tagged the Blue Room, and the acting schools of Gene Frankel and Viveca Lindfors.

There are also elaborate plans for the future, including a sidewalk cafe and a repertory company led by Rip Torn and Geraldine Page. A new theater, the Brecht, will open next Thursday night with Vinie Burrows' look at black history in America, "Walk Together, Children."

The fascinating cultural complex is owned and managed by long-haired, bearded, dynamic Seymour Kaback. This is the house that air-conditioning built, for Mr. Kaback has been a spectacularly successful air-conditioning engineer for 22 of his 49 years.

I went down to 240 Mercer Street the other day and was guided through the exciting honeycomb of theaters by the restless, fast-talking, and hopelessly stage-struck Mr. Kaback, who was colorfully dressed in a velvet jacket, suede knickers, and leather boots. He explained that he was determined to run his house of culture on sound business principles.

"The theater is run by mad people with absolutely no sense of business acumen," he stated. "I intend to change all that. I came into the wacky world of theater while I was installing a new air-conditioning system at the Gate Theater. I fell in love with the stage, and soon I found myself building this vast complex. Am I wacky, too?"

"I have long been irritated by how costly and how difficult it is to spend a night at the theater. I have often shelled out \$50 for a night of theater on Broadway. That's ridiculous. Here you spend a pleasant night under one roof. We serve full-course dinners in the Blue Room for \$3.95. You can have an inexpensive snack or a drink in Obie Alley. We



Seymour Kaback



The new Mercer Arts Center, once the elegant Broadway Central Hotel

The
Sunday Record

Lively Arts

offer special economy rates for parking in a neighboring underground garage. We want to make theatergoing inexpensive and attractive. It shouldn't be a chore.

"I have trained my box-office personnel to be cheerful and helpful," he continued. "Often Broadway boxoffice people snap at you as though you were a criminal."

"I'm planning a very special deal whereby you can get two tickets to one of our plays, dinner in the Blue Room, and a nightcap and entertainment after the show — all for a total of \$15 per couple."

"Already I have enjoyed critical success at the Mercer, even before the complex is finished. The Pulitzer Prize-winner, 'The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds,' opened here before it moved uptown. The long-running 'One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest,' based on Ken Kesey's novel, continues to attract a large youth following. At the moment, 'Dylan,' 'The Proposition,' and 'Love Me, Love My Children' are distinguished tenants."

MR. KABACK is not only a theater owner-impresario. He deserves a medal for restoring an architectural landmark in grave danger of demolition. "My theaters are in an historic building, the Broadway Central Hotel," he declared. "I have 35,000 square feet in this distinguished caravansary. It was in desperate decline, with rotting pipes, ceiling leaks, and peeling paint. It will cost me close to \$500,000 before I am finished."

Stand across the street from the elaborate, mansard-roofed hotel on its Broadway side, and you can imagine its former glamor. The Broadway Central in the 1870's was proudly advertised as "America's most palatial hostelry." The National Baseball League was organized here in 1876. In this hotel in 1872, Edward S. Stokes shot and killed "Gentleman Jim" Fisk, gaudy financier and president of the Erie Railroad in a quarrel over bosomy actress Josie Mansfield.

The area is filled with relics and memories of a time when it was New York's most elegant and socially correct address — the Old Merchant's House, La Grange Terrace, the Astor Library, etc. In fact, Mr. Kaback plans conducted walking tours of the historic district for his theater patrons. In his own vast two floors of the hotel, he has lovingly restored many of the elegant chandeliers and baroque fireplaces to their original splendor.

Before his theatrical ventures, Mr. Kaback got his thrills from sports car racing, and he was a regular at Watkins Glen and Sebring. A lot of his friends were killed, and he gave it up. In fact, he was officially pronounced dead after a racing accident in Middletown, New York. But mouth-to-mouth resuscitation by a mechanic saved his life. Today he is content to race sailboats on Long Island Sound.

He regards his new career as a theater man as an even more thrilling challenge than racing. "Half a million is a lot of money to put into theater during a recession," he explained somewhat ruefully. "But I'm determined to make a night at the theater fun again. It should be a festive night out, not a pain in the neck and a dent in the budget. In the beginning we attracted mostly students and the young. Now we're also being discovered by a vast middle-class and middle-aged audience that cannot afford Broadway."

Mercer Arts Center

240 mercer street,

new york, n. y. 10012

(212) 673-3937

January 11, 1974

Steina and Woody Vasulka
111 East 14th Street
New York, N.Y.

Mercer Hansberry

Dear Steina and Woody:

Mercer Shaw Arena

I am enclosing (2) copies of our last brochure with the newspaper clippings covering the collapse.

Oscar Wilde Room

Best wishes for a Happy and Prosperous New Year.

Mercer O'Casey

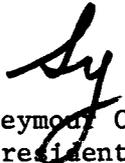
Very truly yours,

Mercer Brecht

MERCER ARTS CENTER, INC.

The Kitchen

*Gene Frankel's
"Work Shop"*


Seymour C. Kaback
President

*Viveca Lindfors'
"An Actor Works"*

SCK:bk
encl.

Directors:

Allan Albert

Roger Englander

Gene Frankel

S. C. Kaback

Viveca Lindfors

Rip Torn

Michael Tschudin

Steina Vasulka

Woody Vasulka