

Historic Hotel Building Faces Demolition

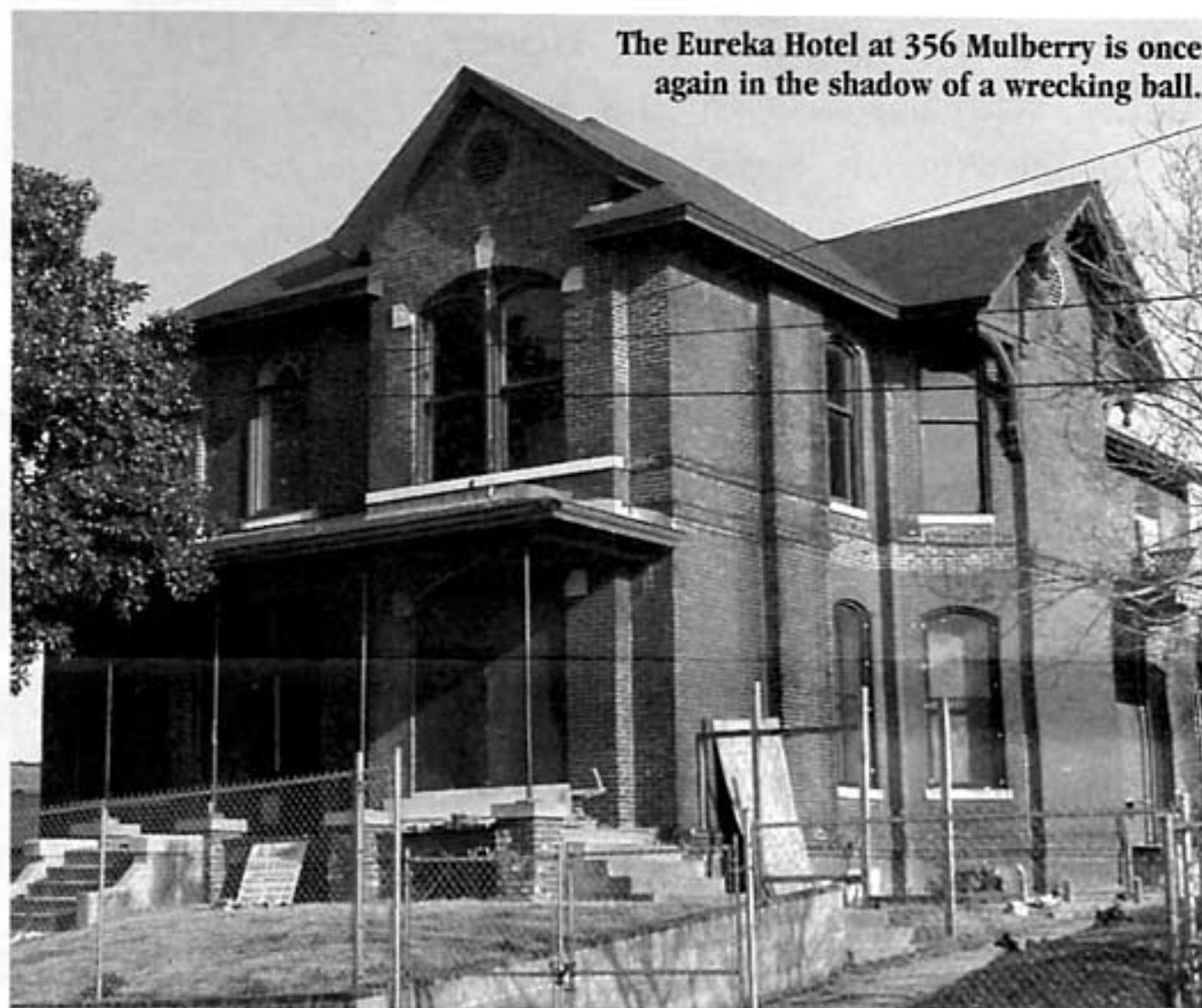
A historic property in Downtown Memphis is once again facing the wrecking ball. Cheri and Henry Rudner, owners of the old Eureka Hotel at 356 Mulberry, have spent six months trying to find a nonprofit organization that will accept a donation of the property and agree to renovate it. So far, that effort has been unsuccessful.

“Cheri and I have offered to donate the property to the National Civil Rights Museum, NAACP, 100 Black Men of America Inc., Facing History and Ourselves, Soulsville USA, and The Blues Foundation,” says Henry. “None of these organizations was in a position to make the kind of commitment needed to restore the building in a reasonable amount of time.”

In the 1930s, the Eureka Hotel was one of the first upscale hotels for blacks in the South. But over the years, it has fallen on hard times. The property has been condemned by the City of Memphis due to damage by vagrants and damage from the 2003 straight-line windstorm.

In January, when the Rudners discovered the building had a history, they halted demolition and began working to find an organization to which they could donate the property. The only requirements were that the recipient had to be a legitimate not-for-profit organization and had to make a firm commitment to restore the building within a reasonably short period of time.

In a final effort to save the building, the Rudners are now looking for any individual or organization that will agree to move the structure from the current location at its own expense in return for the donation of the building. “We’ve really gone the extra mile to save this building,” says Henry. If no one comes



The Eureka Hotel at 356 Mulberry is once again in the shadow of a wrecking ball.

forward, the Rudners will move forward with demolition of the property, probably by mid July.

June West, executive director of Memphis Heritage Inc., is very disheartened to hear of Henry and Cheri Rudner’s decision to return to their original plans of demolishing the hotel. “MHI proposed several options to the Rudners for the adaptive reuse of the hotel, but they were not receptive to these plans,” she says. “We sincerely hope that a plan can be presented that the Rudners will agree to and save this historic architectural treasure.”

For more information about the hotel’s historic significance, contact Memphis Heritage at 529-9828 or go to their website: www.memphisheritage.org. **DNA**