

National

Wrecking firm knocks down historic lodge

United Press International SAN ANTONIO — The Chee Kung Tong Masonic Lodge is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. However, a problem has arisen since a wrecking firm without a permit tore the building down.

They just tore it down illegally," Pat Osborne, city history pre-servation officer, said Monday. "Not only did the people who tore it down do it illegally, they are not even licensed here as demolition contractors," she said.

Osborne said wrecking crews demolished the building early Sunday, before city officials could get the necessary court injunctions to stop the wrecking ball.

The structure, also known as the Chinese Free Masons Lodge, was built in 1918 by Chinese laborers who accompanied Gen. John J. Pershing into Mexico two years earlier.

Police Sunday issued citations to Gonzales Lumber & Demolition Co. and its job-site representative, Albert Wechsler, for illegal demolition. The penalty for a conviction is a \$200 fine.

Osborne said the Gonzales firm has made application to become a licensed demolition service in the city, but "is sure the application will be turned down nov

City Councilwoman Maria Berriozabal said she plans to start an investigation to find out why city ordinances could not prevent the demolition. "It's a good tactic to kind of sneak up on people and do it on a Sunday," Barriozabal said. "It doesn't speak well for a historic city, does it?"

Although the structure has been used as an apartment building over the past few years, Osborne said it had not been occupied for several months.

"Somebody will probably put a parking lot in there," she said. "Not only has the historic value been destroyed, but it takes the building off the tax rolls.

City officials said the Gonzales company ignored warnings not to destroy the building. Osborne said the company had been warned several weeks ago when the firm made application to re-place the building's roof.



Surf's up

Cindy Tough hits the waves in Rudder fountain Tuesday. Tough, a senior ag economics major, was promoting the new

Texas A&M University windsur The club's first meeting is tonight in 510 Rudder Tower.

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