

JOHANNESBURG METROPOLITAN MUNICIPALITY**HERITAGE ASSESSMENT SURVEYING FORM**

Compiled by: Dr JJ Bruwer, 2002-07-29

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NAME OF PLACE: C.N.A. BUILDING

Top left: corner Commissioner and Rissik Streets. Top right: view of the building taken from a position in Commissioner Street, to its northeast. Bottom left: view of part of Commissioner Street façade; the Ground Floor of the building has been bricked-up, and the First Floor secured, as can be clearly seen in this picture. Bottom right: the building, as seen from a position nearby, on the corner of Commissioner and Rissik Streets.

Previous/alternative name/s :

LOCATION: Street : Commissioner
Street number : 108, 110
 : [32 Rissik; 109 Fox]
Stand Number : 1274
Previous Stand Number: 271, 272, 277 (consolidated in 1962 into Stand 1097)
Block number : BF
Suburb : Marshallstown
GIS reference :

ZONING: Current use/s :
Previous use/s :

DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:

Height : 128' 4"
Levels above street level : ten plus roof structures
Levels below street level : one
On-site parking :

The design of the *C.N.A. Building* is of particular interest. During 1933, the architect John Waterson was commissioned to design a new head office building for the Central News Agency. The decision to call upon his services clearly followed from his earlier design of a building for the Central News Agency (1926-28) in Cape Town. Waterson's illustrious career, *inter alia*, included a term (1904-05) as President of the Transvaal Institute of Architects. He was also a founding member of the Rand Club.

On 22 November 1933, the submission drawings by Waterson of the proposed new building were submitted to the City Engineer's Department for approval. Additional drawings prepared by Waterson, were submitted on 2 March 1934. These drawings (see copies of relevant extracts from these drawings below) were passed on 16 March 1934. From what followed, it appears that adjustments to the Waterson design might belatedly have been called for by the owners. Sadly, this was not for Waterson to attend to, having passed away on 11 May 1934. The architects J.C. Cook & Cowen were consequently approached to finalise all outstanding matters with regard to the design and erection of the new building. As a result of this, the necessary deviation plans were prepared by the latter architectural practice and submitted for approval on 5 June 1934. These plans were passed on 20 August 1934.

The Waterson design provided for the proposed construction of a substantial building occupying the corner stand at 108 Commissioner Street and 32 Rissik Street, the adjoining stand at 110 Commissioner Street, and the stand adjoining the latter stand, at 109 Fox Street. The building would comprise a Basement, Ground Floor (double volume with Mezzanine) with shops, nine office floors up, and various roof structures (Staff Quarters, Lift Motor Rooms, and Caretaker's Quarters). A distinctive feature of the Fox Street façade was to be its stepped-back floors from Seventh Floor up.

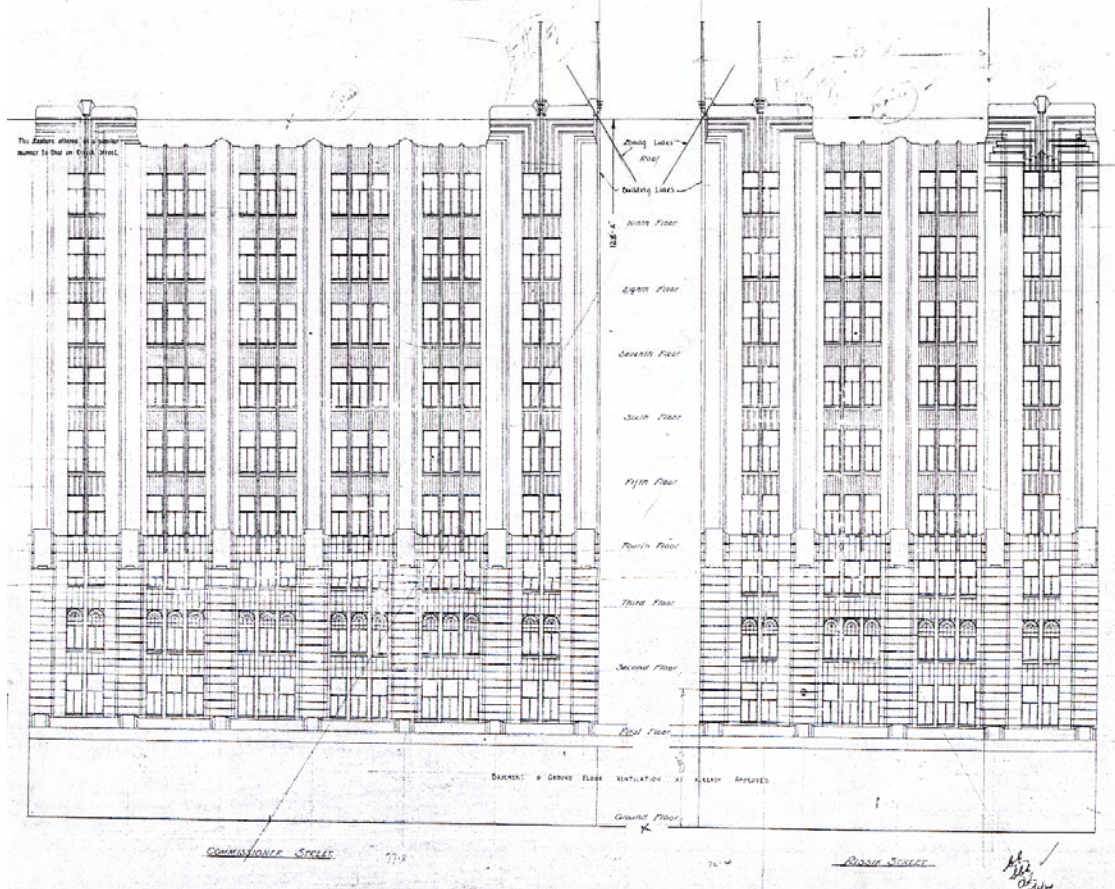
Special mention must be made of the following proposed design aspects by Waterson that originally, were to form part of the Commissioner, Rissik, and Fox Street facades: the special treatment of the lower corner (i.e. of Commissioner and Rissik Streets) section with reference to two large Board Room windows on the Second Floor, each with flanking Tuscan columns supporting a projecting pediment, surmounted in turn by a pair of bulls-eye windows; an elaborate cornice between the Third and Fourth Floor, with pilasters beneath with volute capitals; the application throughout of stucco work to the vertical bands of the facades; and the provision of small and slender towers as fitting extensions to the vertical bands at roof level.

As can be seen from the copies below of relevant extracts from the deviation plans prepared by J.C. Cook & Cowen, major modifications were made to the original external design of the building. One of the most obvious changes was necessitated by the provision of a new double volume Second Floor. Waterson's special design of the lower northwest corner section of the building was completely discarded and also his suggested use of small parapet wall towers. Generally, Waterson's suggested treatment of the main facades of the new building with classical detail, was centred on a design aimed at striking a visual balance between vertical and horizontal movement. In the end, none of Waterson's suggested finishes or detail to the main facades, e.g. stucco work, were implemented. The result is a building of uncontested verticality. Originally not designed as an Art Deco building, it became a worthy example of this style in the City by the partnership of J.C. Cook and Maurice Cowen.

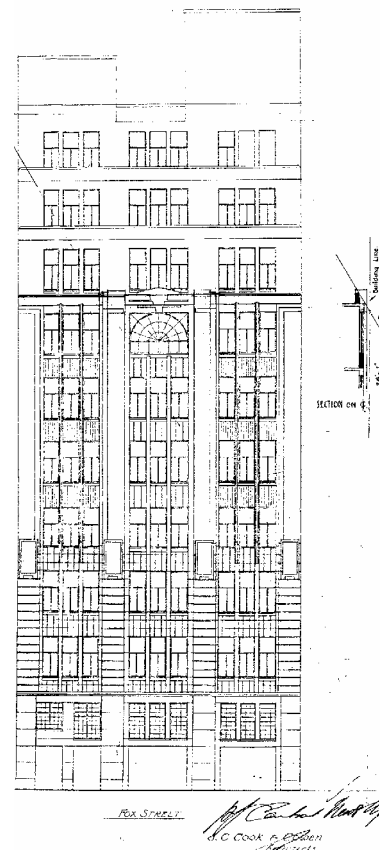


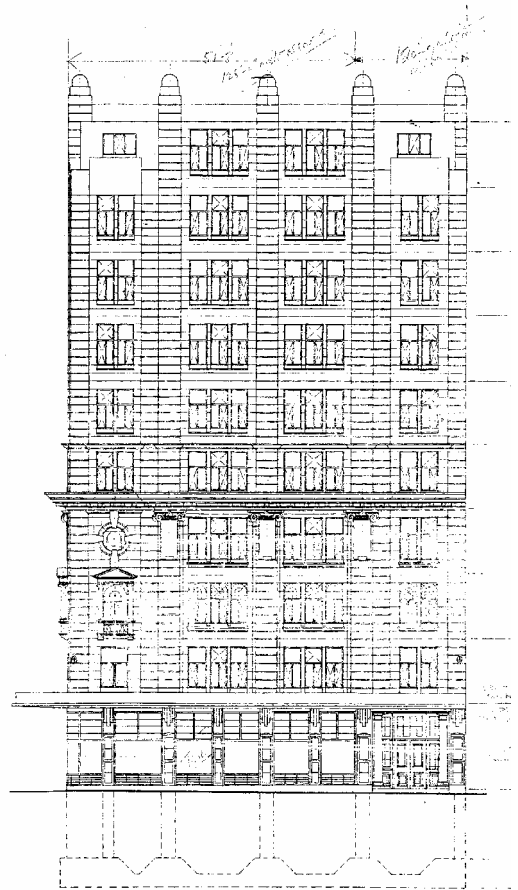
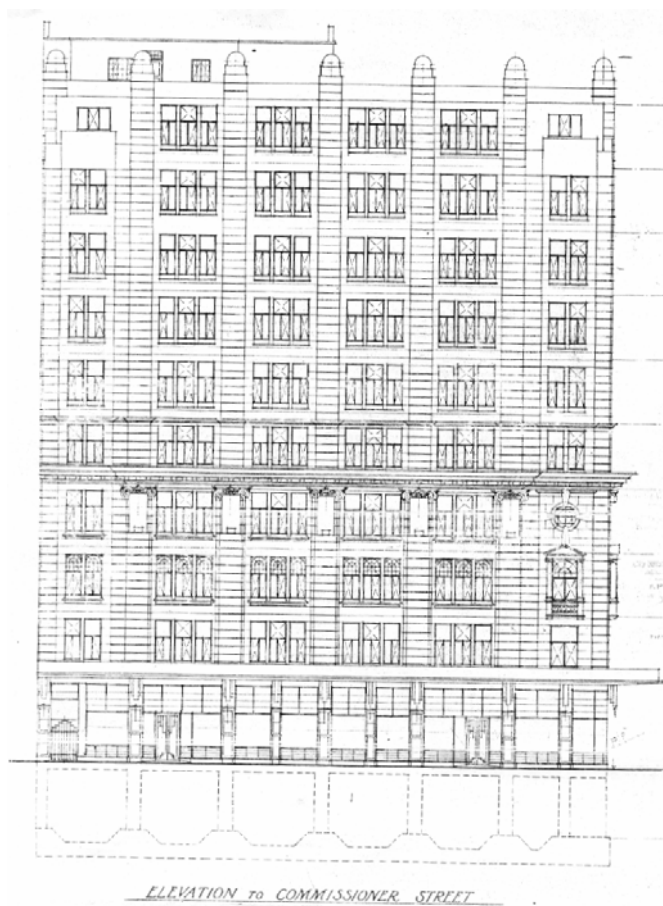
CENTRAL NEWS AGENCY LTD JOHANNESBURG.

REVISED ELEVATIONS TO NEW PREMISES STANDS Nos 271-2 & 277.

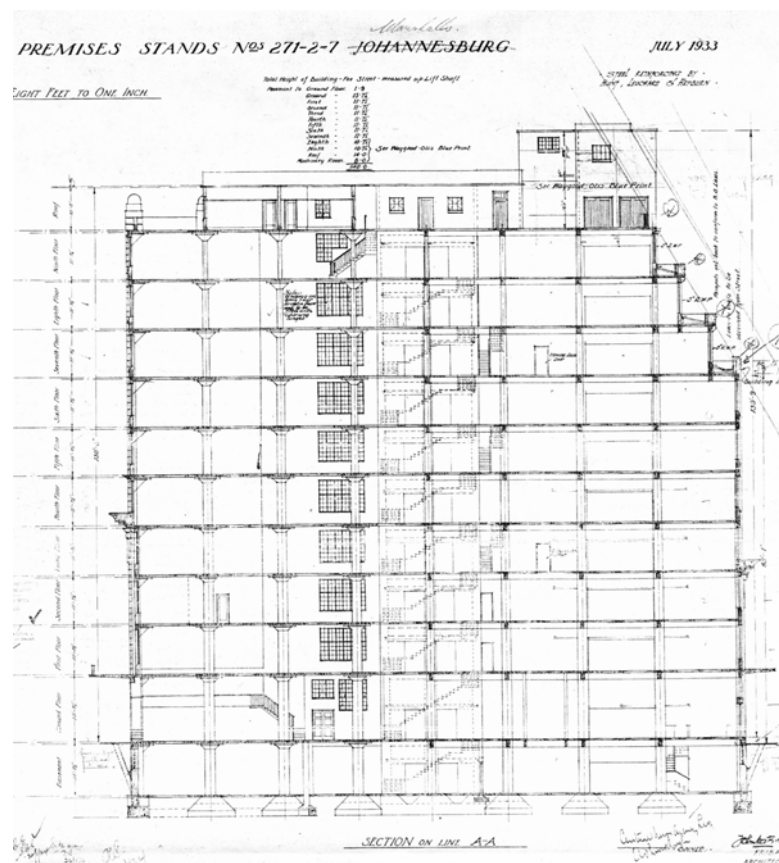


Copies of deviation plans by J.C. Cook & Cowen dated 13 June 1934. Top left: Commissioner Street elevation. Top right: Rissik Street elevation. Right: Fox Street elevation.





Shown here are copies of extracts from the original submission drawings by the architect John Waterson. Top left: Commissioner Street elevation. Top right: Rissik Street elevation. Below: Section.



CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS:

Walls: reinforced concrete frame construction; plastered brick.

Roof: concrete, flat.

Windows: steel casements with fanlights (arched fanlights to windows on Second Floor).

SITE FEATURES:

ALTERATIONS:

Minor internal alterations. Architects – J.C. Cook & Cowen. Plans passed 13 July 1936. Estimated cost £10 (building), £10 (drainage).

Minor internal alterations (Mezzanine Floor over passage to Fox Street). Architects – J.C. Cook & Cowen. Plans passed 21 November 1936. Estimated cost £55 (drainage).

Minor internal alterations. Architects – J.C. Cook & Cowen. Plans passed 30 December 1936. Estimated cost £15 (drainage).

Internal alterations. Architects – unknown. Plans passed 23 May 1942. Estimated cost £300.

Internal alterations (new Lavatory Block to Mezzanine). Architects – Cowin & Ellis. Plans passed 12 November 1948. Estimated cost £75 (building), £75 (drainage).

Internal alterations (Basement, Ground Floor and Mezzanine, including Ladies Rest Room). Architects – Cowin & Ellis. Plans passed 16 September 1949. Estimated cost £100 (building), £100 (drainage).

Internal alterations (e.g. partitions to Ninth Floor). Architects – Cowin & Ellis. Plans passed 9 March 1953. Estimated cost £60 (building).

Alterations. Architects – Cowin & Ellis. Plans passed 23 March 1953. Estimated cost £1 500 (building).

Alterations. Architects – Cowin & Ellis. Plans passed 28 May 1953. Estimated cost £100 (building).

Internal alterations. Architects – Cowin, De Bruyn & Cook. Plans passed 30 August 1960. Estimated cost £275.

Alterations. Architects – Cowin, De Bruyn & Cook. Plans passed 14 March 1961. Estimated cost £4 800 (building), £1 000 (drainage).

Internal alterations. Architects – Cowin, De Bruyn & Cook. Deviation plans passed 19 November 1963.

Alterations. Architects – Cowin, De Bruyn & Cook. Plans passed 9 November 1970. Estimated cost £3 000 (building), £75 (drainage).

External alterations: extensive renovation work to pilasters (Rissik Street and Fox Street facades); this entailed the removal of existing precast concrete facings and construction of new brick pilasters against existing columns. Architects – Steffen Ahrends, Wellbeloved & Van Dongen.

INTEGRITY:

Although the facades of the *C.N.A. Building* have remained largely unaltered, the integrity of the building as a whole is under threat due to the progressively dilapidated condition of the building.

INSCRIPTION:

ARCHITECT:

Original design by the architect John Waterson (address: 22 Victoria Buildings, Commissioner Street, Johannesburg).

Final design by the architects J.C. Cook & Cowen (National Mutual Buildings, Rissik Street, Johannesburg).

BUILDER:

CONSTRUCTION DATE:

Original plans by the architect John Waterson:

Date on plans : July-August 1933
Approval of plans : 16 March 1934
Completion date : 1935

Deviation plans (final design) by the architects J.C. Cook & Cowen:

Date on plans : 13 June 1934
Approval of plans : 20 August 1934.

BUILDING STYLE:

Art Deco - Exhibition Style.

"Architectural Merit: very well detailed Art Deco building responding well to the corner. Well preserved." (Johannesburg Building, Space & Urban Feature Classification, 1998: Inner City).

BUILDING TYPE:

Shops and office building.

ENVIRONMENT:

"Norman Hanson, describing Johannesburg in 1952, wrote that there were 'no boulevards, no monumental approaches, no interweaving parks, no city squares'. He neglected to say, however, that by 1952 Johannesburg possessed one metropolitan thoroughfare in the central city portion of Commissioner Street. When His Majesty's was completed, it made this thoroughfare work visually: looking eastwards, its own vertical signage extended the thematic vertical illuminations of the lesser Broadway from Broadcast House in the east up to Joubert Street in the centre. In addition, from its central position, His Majesty's [see BG-1] looked westwards to the financial quarter that extended from Eloff Street as far as Sauer Street. Here a whole series of secular statements of material power occurred: two substantial Victorian finance buildings, Permanent Building (extant as *Victory House*) [see BD-1] and Exploration Building [see Pre-History: BB-1]; four major Edwardian blocks, the Carlton [the first *Carlton Hotel*; see Pre-History: AA-1], the Rand Club [see BD-3], Standard Bank [see BC-3] and the Corner House [see E-1]; and massive 1930s statement of financial power at the S.A. Permanent [*Peoples Bank Building*; see D-1], S.A. Mutual [see E-3] and Barclays Mutual and Barclays Commissioner Street [see F-4]. On this east-west axis of variable character there was one stepped infill skyscraper, Annan House, besides the verticality of the CNA Building [see BF-1] on Rissik Street corner, Cook & Cowen had contributed a substantial building to this block, Shakespeare House [see BF-3] (on the corner of Joubert), which picked up the verticality of the CNA headquarters in its own vertical modular treatment. The superblock [sic.] between Joubert and Eloff streets was the missing link, and it was here that Cook & Cowen would make connections and form the transition between the theatreland of the east and the financial sector of the west." (Chipkin, C.M.: *Johannesburg Style; Architecture & Society...*)

A sense of utter desolation and abandonment surrounds this whole city block. The open wounds left by the demolition of once proud buildings signifies an irreplaceable loss; the brick-up and dirty broken windows as dim eyes, the unfinished lateral sides disposing the vulnerable and naked sides of the buildings – a façade that was never intended to be exposed to the outside world and a void of any human activity shrouds the city block in a deep crevice of total depression. (Catharina JM Bruwer).

CONDITION:

The building is in a serious state of dilapidation. Notwithstanding efforts by the owners to secure the building, it has been discovered by the authors that vagrants do appear to the building.

It has been shown by this survey that there are numerous valuable buildings in the City that have blatantly become victims of demolition by neglect. The *second Trades Hall* and the *Barbican Building*, both in Rissik Street, are prime examples of this. So undoubtedly, is the *C.N.A. Building*.

URGENT ACTION:

The building should be properly secured.

SAHRA RECORD REGARDING ALTERATIONS, RENOVATIONS, RESTORATION:**PROTECTION STATUS:** (under National Heritage Resources Act, 1999)

General protection:	Section 34(1) structure/s	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Formal protection:	provincial heritage site	<input type="checkbox"/>
	national heritage site	<input type="checkbox"/>
	provisional protection	<input type="checkbox"/>
	heritage area	<input type="checkbox"/>
	listed in provincial heritage resources register	<input type="checkbox"/>

Relevant Gazette Notice:

Gazette description:

FORMER PROTECTION STATUS: (under National Monuments Act, 1969)**NOTES:**

The following is quoted from a note appearing on a SAHRA Current File (reference 9/2/228/185): "On 23rd May 1994 the architect Michael Scholes telephoned to say he had been asked by Old Mutual to approach the NMC with the proposal that if they bought the Barbican and restored it, would we agree to demolition of CNA. I said the NMC did not go in for that sort of thing and CNA was retained as part of a conservation plan for Johannesburg. If CNA [is] demolished how could we keep anything of its kind in Commissioner Street." Mrs Flo Bird, then Chairperson of the the former NMC's Transvaal Plans Committee, date 3/6/94.

DEEDS INFORMATION:

Original ownership: Central News Agency Ltd.

PRE-HISTORY OF SITE:

"The Government appointed J. Heystick of Rustenburg to sell the township, and he sent a man named Van Noorden as auctioneer. The sale began at 10 a.m. on Wednesday, December 8, 1886...The auction sale lasted all the Wednesday and Thursday and part of the Friday...Many stand were bought by speculators for re-sale and changed hands frequently. Some of them were abandoned because the ten shillings monthly licence was thought to be too high. Alex Hope Bailie, from Harrismith, bought for ten shillings the stand at the corner of Rissik and Commissioner Streets on which the huge Central News Agency building now stands. After six months he abandoned it as not being worth the monthly licence." (Neame, L.E.: *City Built On Gold*).

JEPPE ARCADE:

The *Jeppe Arcade* – designed by Robert Lockhart McCowat and completed in 1896 – previously stood on the 110 Commissioner Street and 109 Fox Street portions of the site of the *C.N.A. Building*. The most striking feature of this three-storey combination Neo-Queen Anne and English Renaissance style building was the cast iron verandah on ground level, the cast iron triangle on the entrance of the building is illustrated in the Illustrated Catalogue of Macfarlane's Castings, vol. 1, pg. 317, No. 891. There were four covered arcades in the business district of Johannesburg during the period 1890 to 1900. Of interest is the fact that these arcades were situated in close proximity to each other (within five city blocks) and all built north to south between Commissioner and Fox Streets. The arcades were the *Exploration Building* (Pre-History: BB-1); *Barnato Building* (Pre-History: BC-3), its immediate neighbour *Green's Chambers* (Pre-History: BC-2), and *Jeppe Arcade Building*.

According to Van Der Waal "On the face of it these arcades would appear to have been out of place in

this district, but the fact that they were used almost exclusively for offices and were not at all as colourful as *The Arcade* [see (Pre-History: G-7)], shows that this type of construction was 'borrowed' from the commercial buildings and adapted for office use. The office area certainly was no place for women...To return to office buildings, the facades may be divided into two main categories. In the first the emphasis was on confining the wall plane, while the second type was conceived as a framework. In the case of the first (larger) category, windows were regarded as spaced perforations of the wall surfaces: the grid scheme was in fact seen largely as abstract linear connections, suggested by the rhythm of the window and position of the moulding. The gables and other obtrusions at roof level were rather striking in that they formed, as it were, a dynamic and sculptured counterbalance for the static aspect of the wall plane. Another important feature was the almost light-hearted variation between red-brick wall sections and white plaster or sandstone accents, the latter chiefly as mouldings but also used for rusticated ground floors. These features were in line with the Neo-Queen Anne mode as applied in England from the 1870s...Examples of this style in Johannesburg were the *W P Brown Building* (1895-6), 29 Loveday Street, *Winchester House* (1896), 89,91/3 Main Street, *Jeppe Arcade* (1896), 110 Commissioner Street and the *Trust Building* (1897), 96/8 Fox Street." (Van Der Waal, G-M.: From Mining Camp to Metropolis...).

"Jeppestown and Fordsburg are among the oldest suburbs of Johannesburg, both being laid out by the Ford and Jeppe Estate Company. Julius Jeppe Senior and his sons Carl Jeppe K.C. [Knight Commander], and Sir Julius, together with L. P. Ford, who had been one of J. B. Robinson's men, formed the Ford and Jeppe Company, later known as the Witwatersrand Townships and Estates. Co. They had an arcade building running from Commissioner Street to Fox Street, on the site of the present C.N.A. building, between Rissik and Joubert Streets. In this building they had their offices, as did Sir Abe Bailey. They laid out Fordsburg in 1888 and Jeppestown in 1889. Both townships were an immediate success and stands sold well, all the partners becoming wealthy. Of Ford not much is known, but the Jeppe family became...well-known figures in the social and business life of the town." (Leyds, G.A.: A History of Johannesburg).

Sir Abe Bailey (1854-1940), according to Eric Rosenthal, was a member of the Ford and Jeppe Company: "South African mine magnate and legislator. Born in Cradock, 1864; son of Thomas Bailey, trader and member of original Cape Parliament. School in Yorkshire, England, and first business post in London. Returned to South Africa aged 20, at beginning of Barberton gold rush. Soon gained considerable wealth and moved to Johannesburg when gold was discovered there. Among the friends who foresaw his possibilities was Cecil John Rhodes. Became involved in Reform Movement at time of Jameson Raid, was imprisoned in 1896 and fined £2,000. During South African War raised several corps of irregulars and served on staff of General Pole-Carew. He succeeded Cecil Rhodes as member for Barkly West from 1902 to 1905. Represented Krugersdorp as staunch Unionist Party member from 1910 to 1924. He was a prominent figure of the Rand Stock Exchange [see Pre-History: D-1]. As member of the firm Ford and Jeppe he developed the Witwatersrand Townships, Mining and Finance Corporation. Registered in 1896, this became the Witwatersrand Townships, Mining and Finance Corporation Ltd. (taken over by the Anglo-American Corporation in 1942). His main interests were on East Rand [eastern Witwatersrand] and in Eastern Transvaal [now Mpumalanga]. He developed South African alkali occurrence on North Pretoria. Spent most of later life in England, where known as important racehorse owner and sporting figure. As strong protagonist of better relations between white races in South Africa, he willed large sums for establishment of trust to this end. Died in 1940. Buried on hillside overlooking his home in Muizenberg." (Rosenthal E.: Encyclopaedia of Southern Africa...).

According to Leyds Sir Abe Bailey was the founder of the Union Club. See in this regard *Union Club Building*: AG-5.

"...Member of the Cape Legislative Assembly, 1902-05, Transvaal Legislative Assembly, 1907-10, Union House Legislative Assembly, 1915-24." (Fraser, M. [ed.]: Some Reminiscences...)

ALLIANCE BUILDING:

Completed in circa 1897, the three-storey *Alliance Building* designed in the Neo-Queen style, previously stood at 108 Commissioner Street and 32 Rissik Street. By 1900, this corner building was known as the *Zweigenhaft Building*.

HISTORY:

"The Central News Agency was founded in 1895 by a Mr Micheal Davis of Leeds, England. Albert Lindbergh of Swedish descent, came to Johannesburg...and was employed by the Argus Printing & Publishing Co. (see O-1). He joined up with Davis and together they formed the CNA. It has

remained on the same site, growing in size and diversification. Today (i.e. 1986) it is reputed to have more than 180 branches all over South Africa." (Norwich, O.I.: A Johannesburg Album; Historical Postcards.).

"CENTRAL NEWS AGENCY FOR JOHANNESBURG! (1886 – 1898) Today, CNA is one of the biggest



book and stationery retailers in the country. But their start was a humble one, in the newspaper and publishing business a little over 100 years ago. In 1896 two entrepreneurs, Michael Davis and Albert Lindbergh, paired up to sell newspapers on the dusty streets of the mining town called Johannesburg. By coordinating teams of newsboys who delivered papers by foot and on bicycles, the Central News Agency was founded. The first newspapers sold were The Star, The Standard and Diggers News. [See also O-1 and Pre-History: H-1]. Davis and Lindbergh were continually trying to increase their shares of street sales. They soon moved into the

sale of books, periodicals and stationery and began acting as advertising agents. Newspapers, however, were their greatest interest.

CNA MOVES TO BIGGER PREMISES (1899 – 1901): By 1899, the business had outgrown the Harrison Street base. Bigger premises were needed and the choice was a large building on the corner of Commissioner and Rissik Streets. Forty years later, CNA Head Office moved to the opposite corner...In 1901 the partners began opening bookstalls at railway stations across the Cape. New branches were opening all over the country and the first suburban branch was opened in Jeppestown, Johannesburg. By 1904, the company was nationwide.

CNA GOES PUBLIC! (1902 – 1903): In 1902 Davis and Lindbergh clinched a huge deal - the Argus and the Cape Times placed their entire publishing contracts with CNA. CNA experienced phenomenal growth and in 1903 was floated as a public company. With a capital of £120 000 in £ 1 shares, joint managing directors were appointed and a board of directors was constituted.

GORDON & GOTCH AND CNA JOIN FORCES (1904): The worldwide publishing house, Gordon & Gotch, had been operating in South Africa since 1891. They had long been associated with CNA, for whom they obtained bulk supplies of magazines from London. Gordon & Gotch watched CNA's phenomenal growth and subsequent flotation with much interest. And in 1904 the two companies reached an unprecedented agreement - Gordon & Gotch would become the sole agents for CNA in Great Britain, while their branches in the Cape and Natal would be taken over by CNA. This agreement afforded CNA great strength, both nationally and internationally. It paved the way for Davis' acquisition of the sole agency in South Africa, for a number of important and popular overseas newspapers and periodicals.

CNA GRABS THE RAND (1904 – 1906): Later in the same year the CNA-South African press relationship was strengthened. Lindbergh and Sir Abe Bailey joined forces to take over the 2 year old Rand Daily Mail. In 1906 the Sunday Times was founded and Lindbergh was once again a member of the owning syndicate. Both the Rand Daily Mail and Sunday Times were published by CNA. And it was all happening in the corrugated iron structure in Commissioner Street, Johannesburg.

WAR! (1907 – 1921): With the Advent of World War 1, CNA had to meet the growing demands of a public hungry for written information. And they produced it in the form of newspapers, periodicals, books and other literature. Although shipping losses were frequent and the strain on the staff who were not doing active service was considerable, the company was strong. And when the war ended, new branches continued to open all over the country. Soon a new range of "fancy goods" was introduced onto the stores – toys, cutlery and leather goods.

THE RAND STRIKES! (1922): In 1922 the strike on the Rand left it is (sic.) mark on CNA. But CNA had met the challenge by delivering newspapers to cut off Reef towns by aircraft.

CNA MOURNS DAVIS! (1928 – 1932): In 1928 Michael Davis, one of CNA's founding fathers, retired. He died four years later, the end of a chapter in CNA's history. By this time the company was publishing most South African newspapers. They were also the sole agent for 92% of all British newspapers and periodicals distributed in South Africa, as well as many American publications.

CNA RESTRUCTURES (1933 – 1937): Between the two World Wars, Albert Lindbergh became the sole Managing Director. The 10-storey building in Commissioner Street became CNA Head Office, new

branches were opened and premises in Cape Town and Natal were expanded. Structural reorganisation of CNA took place in 1936 with the foundation of the holding company, CNA Investments. CNA and all other wholly or partially-owned companies were grouped under CNA Investments.

CNA VS SCHLESINGER (1937 – 1938): In 1938, for the first time CNA was suddenly faced with major competition. It came in the form of the Schlesinger organisation, who distributed a number of weekly and daily newspapers. A fierce and expensive circulation war ensued, which only cooled when an agreement was reached shortly before World War 2. The Schlesinger organisation eventually disposed of its interests to CNA Investments. [“In March, 1939...Mr. I. W. Schlesinger liquidated his newspaper interest – the end of a costly and in some ways a gallant venture.” (Chilvers, H.A.: Out of the Crucible).]

THE END OF AN ERA (1939): In 1939 CNA's remaining founding father Albert Lindbergh died. Lindbergh and Davis, the two entrepreneurial gurus, had guided their company with imagination, shrewdness, and most of all hard work. They were responsible for transforming CNA from a couple of newspapers sold on a dusty street corner in Johannesburg, to a great commercial success throughout South Africa. Lindbergh was succeeded by JH Crosby as Chairman with two long standing employees, MC Friedman and NC Wayne, as joint General Managers.

WW2 - THE BIG ONE (1939 – 1945): South Africa was thrown into World War 2. Submarine warfare was intense and hindered shipping and Gordon & Gotch, CNA's London suppliers, were bombed in a blitz. Still, the company stayed strong.

Friedman died during the war years and 1947 brought new changes to the development of the group, including Adam Berrill from Britain who succeeded Crosby as Chairman.

CNA NOW IN AFRICA (1946 – 1953): After the war South Africa experienced a developmental expansion phase. CNA mirrored this phase and established itself in Rhodesia with one of their partially-owned subsidiaries, Kingstons Ltd. Black readership was established in 1951, via a subsidiary company called Banner News.

CNA GROWS. AGAIN (1955 – 1982): During the period 1961 to 1975, CNA grew so extensively that it managed its own dispatching of imported merchandise in the Cape, to enormous transport fleets in the Transvaal that managed the entire country. The success of this process can be attributed to the progressive management style and the proactive focus on remaining up-to-date with technology.

CNA MERGES WITH GALLO (1983): In 1983 CNA merged with Gallo Africa. When Layton Slater retired he was succeeded by Tony Bloom of Premier as Chairman of CNA Gallo. With the merger, it was agreed that the chairman of CNA Gallo would alternate between Premier and Argus. In 1987 Ian Outram was appointed Managing Director of CNA, taking over from James Lowman who remained on as Chairman of the company.

CNA GALLO GETS NU METRO (1990): In 1990 CNA Gallo acquired 50% shares in Nu Metro. In 1992 the remaining 50% shares were bought out and Nu Metro became a wholly-owned subsidiary under Gallo Africa.

AMANDLA! (1994 – PRESENT): On the 27 April 1994, South Africa had their first ever Democratic elections and the ANC took over government of the country. This was a period of uncertainty for business as many had predicted a civil war. South Africans pulled together and the transition to a new government proved to run more smoothly than expected. In July 1994, Ian Outram stepped down as chief executive to become involved in a revolutionary re-engineering program. Andries Smith, previously Retail Director, was appointed Managing Director. By 1994 the CNA base had expanded to 316 stores. In 1995 a rationalisation process was initiated and today there are 350 stores nationwide.” (The above information has been sourced from <http://www.cna.co.za/history.html>).



Left: “The old shanty shop on the corner of Rissik and Commissioner Streets. A famous Johannesburg landmark for many years, it became known as C.N.A. corner.” (Stark, F. [Ed.]: Seventy Golden Years...). See also GENERAL NOTES.

“Reverie on an old postcard...The date-stamp on the faded postcard I hold in my hand reads ‘2 Oct. 1905.’ The photograph on the card is a view of a Johannesburg – little more than a shanty – on the

corner of Rissik and Commissioner Streets. The City of Gold was then 20 years old; the shop depicted, six years old – and the Central News Agency (whose premises that shanty continued to be but improved until as recently as 1935) was just 10 years old. It is now (i.e. 1956) 70 years since Johannesburg was founded, 60 years since CNA first saw the light of day...and 20 years since that old shop in the postcard vanished from our city scene. Symbol of 'Two Phases' As I turn to look at another photograph – a shot of the present HQ of the CNA, built in 1935 – it seems to be a symbol of the 'two phases' of Johannesburg. The first 50 years represented sheer growth, the most recent 20 years, sharp change. There was change in the growth, of course, and growth in the change; but the span of life of the old shop and the span of the new do give the right emphases. For all those years, amid the burgeoning growth, the original shop, so typical of primitive Johannesburg, did duty. Nobody really noticed how old it was. Then, suddenly, almost overnight, it had gone – and had been replaced, in violent contrast by a 10-storey skyscraper on the opposite site...a skyscraper, in its turn, so typical of *modern* Johannesburg...Of the two founders of the Central News Agency in 1895, only one was alive to take his proud place among his fellow directors in the new building – Albert Victor Lindbergh. Michael Davis, his partner, had died in 1932. These two men had been part of the very tissue of Johannesburg's mighty growth almost from the moment when the gold-heavy dirt first spawned our city's life...Young Lindbergh and young Davis first met in 1895. Lindbergh had already begun to make his mark as a publisher, having revolutionized distribution of the *Star* by his enterprising methods. Just before meeting Davis, he had stumbled across a little newsagent's shop. This shop rejoiced in the imposing title of the Central News Agency, and Lindbergh had so liked the name that he had bought the entire business just for that...Now, he and Davis (who had been selling newspapers and magazines from a windowsill 'display stand'!) formed an agreement. They went into business as newsagents and publishers under the name Central News Agency, and by 1899 had expanded to the extent of leasing a new shop – the shop on our old postcard – a shop which was to be a famous Johannesburg landmark for many years. It was a large corrugated-iron building. Inside, the periodicals were displayed on long wooden trestles, counters and tables. The shop became known as CNA Corner, a popular Johannesburg meeting place. In those days there were no shop-hours laws, so the shop remained open far into the night on the days the British periodicals arrived from England and the news-hungry pioneers besieged the CNA shop for their papers. And in the year 2056? In this way – and so many others – has the CNA organization developed alongside a fast-growing Johannesburg. The original corrugated-iron shed – which in 1899 represented the CNA retail organization – has been succeeded by 114 shops throughout the Union, lending weight to the company's slogan...you're never far away from a branch of C.N.A. And what of tomorrow? Having begun this reverie with a postcard from the past, how illuminated we would be if we could end it with one from the future! A postcard showing the C.N.A. building and the Johannesburg scene 50 years hence, in the years 2056! Pure speculation...but it does one certainty. As Johannesburg grows, so will the C.N.A. grow and continue to serve its most vital needs in reading and writing matter...Of the bookshops established shortly after the South African War, only three still exist; the British and Foreign Bible Society, L. Rubin and the Central News Agency. The two former still [i.e. in 1956] have their shops in central Johannesburg, while the Central News Agency has spread all over Southern Africa, and has some twenty-eight branches in Johannesburg. The C.N.A. was established in 1895 as a periodicals distributing agency, and was probably selling books before the out break of the [South African] Anglo-Boer War. Of the bookshops absorbed by the Central News Agency, three were old-established, highly respected, firms: Chicken's News Agency was founded in 1893 [Chicken & Co., News Agency, Kimber's Chambers, see R-1] and was taken over in 1928; Handel House was established shortly after the South African War and was taken over by the C.N.A. in 1923, and shortly there-after specialized in University and other educational books; and the business of that very knowledgeable bookseller William Anderson became a branch of the C.N.A. in 1935..." (Stark, F. [Ed.]: Seventy Golden Years...).

GENERAL NOTES:

Estimated cost of building	: £72 000
Estimated cost of drainage	: £1 000
Accommodation approved	: two Europeans and two 'Natives'
Valuation at completion	: £53 000 (21 August 1935)
Occupied	: no.

PREVIOUS TENANTS:

By 1954: the ground floor of the building was exclusively occupied by the Central News Agency.

CURRENT TENANT:

The building is currently vacant.

Below: copy of relevant extract from Wentzel, J.: A View From The Ridge.



THE MAIL IS 'IN'

The C.N.A., and the 'Bluebird' bus that used to ply between Rosebank and the city, past 'The Towers'

So many of the animal characters that filled the world of comic fiction in the 'twenties are dead and nearly forgotten. Cartoons and pictures of that veteran, 'Mickey Mouse', first began to appear in 1923, but it was a long time before he, 'Donald Duck', and their nephews and friends, took the place of such established favourites as 'Tiger Tim', 'Georgie Giraffe', 'Joey the Parrot', 'Felix the Cat', 'Uncle Oojah the Elephant' and 'Bonzo the Pink Puppy'.

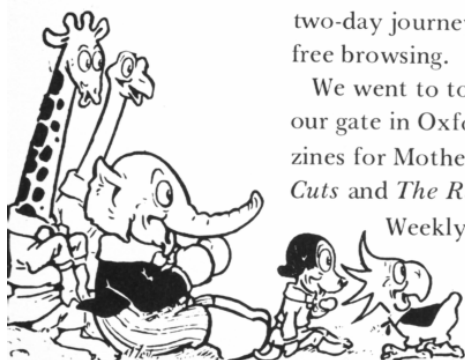
Although they have staged something of a come-back, the gang at Mrs Bruin's school were among the casualties of the Second World War and I know of no new British-born animal character that has anything like the charisma and international fame of 'Mickey Mouse' and even 'Bambi'.

Thursday was usually the day for the English mail. Outside the green tin façade of the single-storied Central News Agency depot, which stood across the road from its present central city store, notices would be put up which told us that the mail, like the doctor, was IN.

The Sphere, The Bystander, The Tatler, The Illustrated London News, Punch, The Strand Magazine and Blackwoods were three or four weeks old when, after a seventeen-day journey by sea and a two-day journey by land, they were set out for inspection and free browsing.

We went to town on Fridays by the Bluebird Bus that passed our gate in Oxford Road. We came back laden with glossy magazines for Mother and the Aunts, 'colouredies', including *Comic Cuts* and *The Rainbow* for ourselves, and Nanny's *Times*

Weekly Edition for the crossword puzzles.



SOURCES:

For additional illustrative information, see relevant supplementary photo album in electronic format.

See SOURCES DOCUMENT for information on sources consulted with reference to this document.

ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE:

Historic Value:

- ☒ Associated with historic person, group or organisation
- ☐ Associated with historic event or activity

Architectural/Aesthetic value:

- ☐ Important example of building type
- ☒ Important example of a style or period
- ☐ Fine details, workmanship or aesthetics
- ☐ Work of a major architect or builder

Social/Spiritual/Linguistic value:

- ☐ Associated with social, spiritual, linguistic, economic or political activity
- ☐ Illustrates an historical period

Scientific/Technological value:

- ☐ Example of industrial, technical or engineering development/achievement
- ☐ New, rare or experimental building techniques

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Heritage Resources Management team Johann J and Catharina JM Bruwer.
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