

**JOHANNESBURG METROPOLITAN MUNICIPALITY**

**HERITAGE ASSESSMENT SURVEYING FORM**

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

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**NAME OF PLACE: GLEGG HOUSE**



Top: photo taken from the *third Corner House*. Bottom left: shown in this photo (also taken from the *third Corner House*), are the Lift Motor Room and Staff Quarters on the flat, concrete roof of the *Clegg House* – an interesting and valuable record of one of the City's 'Locations in the sky', dating from the 1930s.

Previous/alternative name/s : originally *Mercantile House*  
: by 1940 - *Cluwer House*;  
: by 1954 - *New Clewer House*

**LOCATION:** Street : Commissioner  
Street number : 82  
[82 Commissioner; 31 Simmonds]  
Stand Number : 27  
Previous Stand Number:  
Block number : BB  
Suburb : Marshallstown  
GIS reference :

**ZONING:** Current use/s :  
Previous use/s : office

## DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:

Height : original plans removed  
Levels above street level :  
Levels below street level :  
On-site parking :

The most striking feature of this building is the random placing of different balconies in the lower and upper portions of the building, thus softening the otherwise harsh environment associated with office buildings and adding a small touch of homeliness to the building. (Catharina JM Bruwer).

## CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS:

Walls: partial reinforced concrete structure; partial load bearing walls; plastered brick.

Roof: flat; concrete.

Windows: steel frame; casement

It is interesting to note the combination of construction methods used in the *Clegg House*, according to Van Der Waal: "In the third place, new building techniques and materials made the construction of such tall buildings entirely feasible. After 1920 the old steel-frame construction was rapidly replaced by reinforced concrete frame construction techniques. As was stated in Chapter 3, after 1908 reinforced concrete was used to a limited extent and mainly for floors and beams incorporated in steel-frame constructions. However, as early as the First World War a shortage of steel obliged architects and builders to use concrete to an ever greater extent, but the real innovations in building techniques came only in 1920 when the first building with only a reinforced concrete frame was put up - The *Transvaal Hat and Cap Factory Building*...probably also known as the four storey *Cambridge Mansions*...c/o Pritchard and Troye Street...This was followed by several other buildings in quick succession...so that by 1926 this construction technique was generally preferred to all others...As had happened in the US and Europe...the first buildings in which this technique was applied, were factories and warehouses...The explanation for this is probably the practical need for extensive open working and storage areas in this type of building. Moreover, concrete structures were erected much more quickly than steel-frame structures (a reduction of 30 % in construction time in 1926...) and this was an important consideration in a frenetic and highly competitive economic environment. Whereas steel-frame buildings were given a closed façade by the brick panels, with the size of the windows being determined by load-bearing brick walls, buildings erected on a reinforced concrete framework allowed the frame to be reflected in the façade. In the 1920s this application was probably also largely prompted by the practical need for more light on the large floor spaces. At the same time these façades brought an entirely new perspective to the street aspect due to the large reflecting glass surfaces in the upper storeys and the ahistorical approach which this signified in that the façades were almost entirely stripped of historical ornamentation.



Examples were the *Belfast Warehouse* (1926), 108/10 Market Street [see Pre-History: H-2], and the *Lennon Building* (1932), 57a Pritchard Street [see Pre-History: U-1]. This building technique was continually improved by the city's greatest reinforced concrete specialists, such as A S Joffe & Co and the Reinforcing Steel Co...These efforts paid dividends during the 1930s, especially in respect of flat-roofed constructions which were initially beset by leakage problem...Walgate 1935: 'Unfortunately our engineers and chemists have not yet given us a suitable material of which to make buildings of this kind. High temperature change causes high volumetric [sic.] change...reinforced concrete has tended to develop fewer cracks of considerable magnitude.' During the 1930s high-rise construction was supported by improved building techniques and modern facilities such as high-speed lifts...Elevators date from 1850 when Waterman installed the first ones on tracks in New York. Up to about 1910 steam power was used. This method was replaced by electricity which had in fact already been used as early as 1889. High speed elevators appeared in 1898...the radio...and telephones, which reduced distances in relative terms. The new freedom in design permitted by these

building techniques and regulations was reflected in the way in which the general building form was prised open. The main building form of the first three decades was the closed cuboid but by now attention was focused on the manipulation of the building mass and the articulation of the façade surface." (Van Der Waal, G-M.: From Mining Camp to Metropolis...).

Top: 1956 - note the shop fronts. Photograph (Stark, F. [Ed.]: Seventy Golden Years...).

**SITE FEATURES:**

**ALTERATIONS:**

1958: Nurcombe, Summerly, Ringrose & Todd Architects.

**INTEGRITY:**

Although the original shop fronts have been removed, the building remains true to the original design.

**INSCRIPTION:**

**ARCHITECT / BUILDER:**

J.A. Moffat & Harvey.

"John Moffat was one our prolific fore fathers that significantly affected this city." (Johannesburg Building, Space & Urban Feature Classification, 1998: Inner City).

**CONSTRUCTION DATE:**

Date on plans : original plans removed  
Approval of plans : 30 January 1934  
Completion date :

**BUILDING STYLE:**

Art Deco - Stripped Neo Classical.

"Architectural Merit: A very powerful building, more neo classical than art deco." (Johannesburg Building, Space & Urban Feature Classification, 1998: Inner City).

**BUILDING TYPE:**

Originally, shops to street and office building, the shops were later converted to offices.

**ENVIRONMENT:**

This is one of the important Art Deco buildings of Commissioner Street and an excellent compatriot to the *S.A.R.B. House*.

**CONDITION:**

This building is currently bricked-up and is earmarked for demolition.

**URGENT ACTION:**

**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

listed in provincial heritage resources register

Relevant Gazette Notice:

Gazette description:

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

**NOTES:**

**DEEDS INFORMATION:**

Original ownership: Mercantile Buildings Co. SA Townships Mutual & Federal Corp. Ltd. / SA Townships, Mining & Finance Corporation Ltd

By 1976: S.A. Reserve Bank, p.a. Syfrets Executor Trust, P.O. Box 61058, Johannesburg.

**PRE-HISTORY OF SITE:**

MERCANTILE BUILDING:

By 1892, the *Mercantile Building*, designed by Snell (or Schnell), Charles R, stood on this site.

**HISTORY:**

THE SOUTH AFRICAN RESERVE BANK:

"The South African Reserve Bank - Leadership In The Banking And Currency Field. At the end of the First World War the financial position of the Union was characterized by a number of unsatisfactory features, some of which had existed for many years while other had originated during the war or had at least been intensified by the strains and stresses of that period. Among these factors may be mentioned the lack of uniformity in the note issue and the possibility of an over-issue of notes under the laws of certain Provinces; the existence abroad of a premium on gold which led to a considerable and illegal drain of gold from the country at a time when the commercial banks were under an obligation to redeem their notes in gold; and fears based on past experience, that the inflation which had resulted from the war and had continued in the immediate post-war boom would be followed by an undue restriction of credit once the cyclical movement turned downwards. These and other considerations all pointed to the need for a central bank which could assume leadership and responsibility in the banking and currency field. The Currency and Banking Act of 1920, therefore include provisions for the establishment of the South African Reserve Bank, and the institution commenced operations in July 1921. The statutes of the Bank have been amended in several important respects since that time with a view to giving the institution more scope and flexibility in meeting the needs of a developing country under changing world economic conditions, and in 1944 the laws governing the operation of the Bank were consolidated in the South African Reserve Bank Act of that year. Constitutionally, however, there have been no changes of a basic nature. The Bank is still a privately-owned institution with, at present, just under one thousand stockholders, some fifty per cent of whom hold less than £500 stock each. A limit of £5,000 exists to the amount of stock which may be held by any single stockholder, and dividends on the stock are restricted to a maximum of ten per cent per annum, the balance of the net profits being allocated in a small part to the Bank's general reserve fund and in the main to the Government. The organisation is controlled by a Board of eleven directors, five of whom (including the Governor and the Deputy Governor) are appointed by the Government and the remaining six by the stockholders from among persons representative of commerce finance, agriculture and other industries. All directors must be Union nationals residents in the Union. The Bank is thus a purely South African institution which is a factor of some significance in a country where the greater part of the banking business is conducted by banks whose Head Offices are abroad. Furthermore, the form of constitution which the Bank was given, in practice, enabled a successful combination to be effected between State control over monetary policy on the one hand and the advantages of a privately-owned central bank on the other. The Bank was accorded by its statutes the sole right of note issue which thus ensured uniformity in the circulation, and the commercial banks were obliged to maintain reserve balances with the Bank equivalent to ten per cent of their time liabilities. As in other countries, the commercial banks soon discovered the advantages of maintaining their free cash balances with the central bank as well. Not only did this procedure facilitate the settlement of inter-bank clearing balances but it enabled the commercial banks to make

more efficient use of their resources as a result of the rediscount and advance facilities which could be obtained from the central bank. At an early stage of its career, therefore, the Bank had assumed the recognised central banking functions of responsibility for the note issue, custodian of the cash reserves of the commercial banking systems and central clearing institution and was, of course, from the start prepared to act as lender of last resort by way of loan facilities against commercial, agricultural and Treasury bills and Government stocks. The assumption of these functions contributed to the bank becoming the custodian of the country's gold reserves, and its position was strengthened in this respect by arrangements concluded in 1925 whereby the Bank purchased the gold output and attended to its disposal. This arrangement enabled the Bank, in addition, to assume the leading role in the exchange market of the Union in that gold occupied a predominant place among the country's exports. The Bank has, from an early stage, determined the exchange rates for sterling and its control of these rates has assisted it in influencing the rates quoted by the commercial banks for other currencies, their requirements of which are obtained through London. With the development of trade and financial relationships with the United States, Canada and Switzerland, the Bank has come to quote directly for the currencies of these countries as well, thus ensuring the public of fine rates in the circumstances obtaining at any time. When the need arose, the Bank also entered the forward exchange market in these currencies. Another recognised central banking function was assumed in 1927 when the Bank took over the Government's accounts from the commercial banks and thus became the Government's banker. The Provincial account, and those of certain quasi-Government organisations were subsequently also transferred to the Bank. In the conduct of these varied activities, the Bank naturally became intimately acquainted with economic conditions in the Union and developed close contacts with a number of the leading foreign countries. Almost automatically, therefore, the Bank became the Government's consultant in matters falling within the Bank's field of activity, and was able to act as the Government's agent in a large number of matters where it could appropriately serve in this capacity. As instances may be mentioned the administration of the exchange control system in the Union on behalf of the Treasury; the repatriation of Union Government stocks from overseas during the war years; acting as agent for the Government in its operations with the International Monetary Fund, in connection with certain loans granted to the Government by banks in the United States and Switzerland. As illustrative of the Bank's growth during the thirty-five years it has been in operation, it may be mentioned that its assets at the end of January, 1956, totalled £1890,300,000, including gold and foreign exchange to an amount of £120,900,00 and advances, investments and discounts totalling £62,800,00. As against these assets its liabilities in respect of notes in circulation amounted to £106,000,000 and deposits to £66,900,00. The Bank has a total of eight branches situated in Pretoria (where the Head Office is also located), Bloemfontein, Cape Town, Durban, East London, Johannesburg, Pietermaritzburg and Port Elizabeth." (Stark, F. [Ed.]: Seventy Golden Years...).

**GENERAL NOTES:**

Estimated cost of building :  
 Estimated cost of drainage :  
 Accommodation approved :  
 Valuation at completion :  
 Occupied :

There is no information available on this building all the plans, correspondence and Application for Approval Forms have been removed. The following note dated 8 February 1982 is attached to the relevant file titled City Engineering Department, Stand No. 25, 26, 35 and 36. Township Marshallstown (Planning Department), City of Johannesburg: THIS PROJECT FOR THE RESERVE BANK HAS A HIGH SECURITY RATING: Consequently [sic.] the plans must not circulate with the file, and must always be in the possession of the architects – who are sworn to secrecy & security. THEREFORE WHEN THE FILE REACHES YOUR DEPT. FOR EXAMINATION PLEASE PHONE: (Mrs) Jean Searle. 838-6651 (Mallows, Louw, Hoffe & Ptnrs.) Who will then make a time to bring the plans to you, remain with you whilst they are being examined by you & then, upon completion, of your examination, take them away again. Your comments may be either dealt with immediately or handed to Mrs. Searle.  
 Building Surveyor.

COMMISSIONER AND SIMMONDS STREETS:

"The names of the streets in Marshallstown revealed how quickly the story of the beginning of Johannesburg was forgotten even by the people living in it. It was only on February 1, 1890, that a writer in *The Star* asked: 'Who was Simmonds that he should have been immortalized by having his name given to the thoroughfare that will son be of world-wide repute?...Was there ever such a man?' After a lapse of only forty months there were people on the Rand who had never heard the name of

the draughtsman who laid out the first of Johannesburg's many townships...Among the prospectors and speculators in Ferreira's camp was a man named Samuel Fox who had lost a leg in the Secocoeni War. He leased a strip of ground at the side of the camp on which to run horses. It was realized, however, that the land could be put to much more profitable use, and on September 20 [1886], a week before the farm Turffontein was proclaimed, Henry Brown Marshall, a storekeeper from Heidenberg, R. R. Hollins from Pretoria and Sam Fox sat down in Edgson's temporary hotel and decided to establish a private township and offer plots to the public. At first they thought of laying out the township in Natal camp (later Jeppestown) because of the ample supply of water in Natal Spruit. Difficulties arose, however, and they resolved to mark it out on Sam Fox's ground. A man named Simmonds, who was a draughtsman, was engaged to draw the plans, and the township was named Marshallstown. Streets were named after Marshall, Fox and Simmonds, while one roadway was called Commissioner Street because Captain Von Brandis, who was acting as Mining Commissioner, had a tent at the side of the proposed thoroughfare." (Neame, L.E.: City Built On Gold).

According to Leyds, the township Marshallstown was laid out approximately three weeks before Johannesburg's first stands was surveyed, and subsequently the Government had Marshallstown resurveyed by De Villiers who kept the street names as allocated by Simmonds. The first northern boundary was Pritchard Street with the rest proclaimed as diggings; this boundary was later extended to Bree Street. (Leyds, G.A.: A History of Johannesburg).

"Whether the establishment of these two private townships", i.e. Marshallstown and Ferreirstown, "on ground that was proclaimed as a public digging was legal, was uncertain. Ultimately they were both incorporated in the Government township of Johannesburg on condition that part of the proceeds of the sale of plots went to the State." (Neame, L.E.: City Built On Gold).

It is planned (2004) by the Gauteng Provincial Government to demolish this building (see below):

(Information sourced from IT'S NOT 5 BUILDINGS FOR DEMOLITION, BUT 10!.htm).

"It's not 5 buildings for demolition, but 10!

*January 13, 2004*

By Lucille Davie

THE Gauteng provincial government submitted a report on Monday on its proposal to demolish not five inner city buildings, as reported in the media last week, but 10 buildings. The provincial government moved into the city in 1995 and has since been acquiring property. It has purchased 18 buildings at a cost of some R150-million, and plans to demolish 10 of them. Five of the ten buildings are 60 years and older, therefore considered of historical value, and the other five buildings are 55 years and younger. Once demolished, two inner city blocks will have been flattened to create a square alongside the present Beyers Naude Square between Market and President streets. The square would be bordered by Sauer Street in the west, Market Street in the north, Commissioner Street in the south, and Simmonds Street in the east. The newer buildings are: Custom House (Fraser Street, 1967), Volkskas, now Absa (Market Street, 1948), Litorn House (Fraser Street, 1959), Absa (Market Street, 1952), and First National Bank (Market Street, 1960). The older buildings are: the New Library Hotel (1938), People's Bank (1939), the South African Reserve Bank House (date unknown), Clegg House (1935), all in Commissioner Street, and the Rand Water Board Building (1941) in Fraser Street. Clegg House already has a demolishers board pegged onto its first floor balcony. The report was submitted to the South African Heritage Resources Agency on Monday, for consideration at their next committee meeting on 23 January. Interested parties may in the meantime submit their recommendations or comments to SAHRA by 4 February. The draft report of 120 pages was compiled by Johann and Catharina Bruwer, who in 2002 compiled a Heritage Survey of Johannesburg's central city area, commissioned by the city council. Flo Bird, chairman of the Parktown & Westcliff Heritage Trust and campaigner of the city's heritage for many years, was outraged at the proposal. "Whose bright idea is this? I'm angry. What sort of CBD do we want? These are buildings that make the city. Once the buildings are gone, they're gone, it's like murder," she said. Jennifer Kitto of SAHRA says that she has started receiving submissions from the public. She says the general sense from the submissions is that "people are not too happy about the city's heritage being destroyed, but no specific recommendations have been made". The square is to be part of what is called the provincial government precinct. The province already owns the City Hall, and the precinct will centre around this historic building, consisting of 150 000 square metres of office space. According to Mbhazima Shilowa, Gauteng premier, the province is one of the city's biggest property owners. The precinct will stretch from Fox Street in the south to Pritchard Street in the north, Sauer Street in the west, through to Rissik Street in the east. It is expected that the square will be created between Sauer and Simmonds streets, south of Commissioner Street. Public comments or recommendations to the proposal may be submitted to SAHRA in writing by 4 February. The address is PO Box 87552, Houghton, 2041, or by fax on 011 482 8196, or by e-mail to Jennifer Kitto at [jkitto@jhb.sahra.org.za](mailto:jkitto@jhb.sahra.org.za). The 10 buildings proposed for demolition:

- The New Library Hotel, 67 Commissioner and 1 Fraser streets
- The Second Rand Water Board Building, 3 Fraser Street
- People's Bank, 73-75 Commissioner and 33-35 Simmonds streets
- Custom House, 5 Fraser and 68-70 Market streets
- First National Bank, 78 Market and 37-39 Simmonds streets
- Volkskas, 74-76 Market Street
- Litorn House, 69-71 Commissioner and 2-4 Fraser streets
- Absa, 72 market and 6-8 Fraser streets
- Clegg House, 82 Commissioner and 31 Simmonds streets
- SARB House, 78-80 Commissioner Street".

**PREVIOUS TENANTS:**

By 1954: Union Watchmakers and Witwatersrand Deep Ltd.

**CURRENT TENANT:**

Vacant.

**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

**RECORDED BY:**

Heritage Resources Management team Johann J and Catharina JM Bruwer.  
 Unless otherwise indicated photographs by Catharina JM Bruwer.

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