

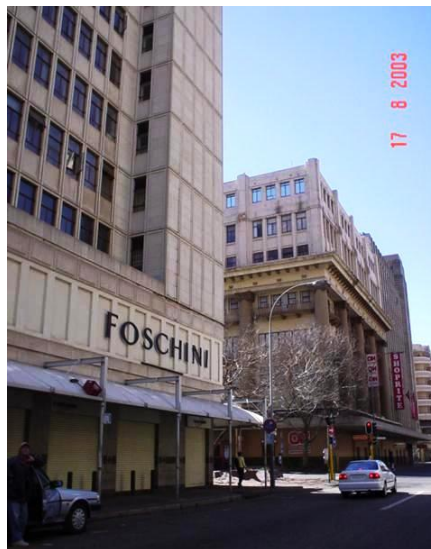
**JOHANNESBURG METROPOLITAN MUNICIPALITY**

**HERITAGE ASSESSMENT SURVEYING FORM**

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

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Cellphone: 082 325 5823

**NAME OF PLACE: FOSCHINI BUILDING [Eloff Street]**



Left: View of main (President Street) elevation. Centre: President Street elevation. Right: Eloff Street elevation.

Previous/alternative name/s : originally *Franwell Building*

**LOCATION:** Street : President  
 Street number : 107  
 : [105, 107 President; 71 Eloff Street]  
 Stand Number : 5283  
 Previous Stand Number: by 1976 662F; by 1998: RE/666, 4805  
 Block number : AC  
 GIS reference :

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

**DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:**

Height :  
 Levels above street level : 10  
 Levels below street level : one  
 On-site parking :

**CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS:**

Walls: reinforced concrete.

Roof: flat; concrete.

Windows: steel frame; casement.

**SITE FEATURES:**

**ALTERATIONS:**

**INTEGRITY:**

The convex corrugated iron pavement canopy detracts from an appreciation of the design qualities of this finely proportioned Late Modernist building.

**INSCRIPTION:**

**ARCHITECT:**

J. C. Cook & Cowen.

**BUILDER:**

**CONSTRUCTION DATE:**

Date on plans : 6 December 1957; 31 January 1958  
Approval of plans : 17 October 1958  
Completion date : 17 August 1959

**BUILDING STYLE:**

Late Modernist

**BUILDING TYPE:**

**ENVIRONMENT:**

**CONDITION:**

Good.

**URGENT ACTION:**

**SAHRA RECORD REGARDING ALTERATIONS, RENOVATIONS, RESTORATION:**

**PROTECTION STATUS:** (under National Heritage Resources Act, 1999)

General protection:	Section 34(1) structure/s	<input 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:**

## DEEDS INFORMATION:

Original ownership: Cranson Props Pty. Ltd & Franwell Investments.  
By 1976: Franwell Investments Pty Ltd, PO Box 55675, Johannesburg.

## PRE-HISTORY OF SITE:

### WARD AND SOLMONS BUILDING:

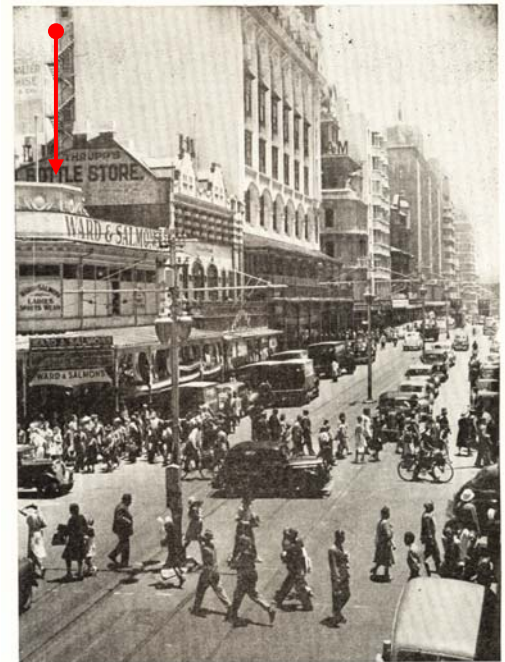
By 1954 the double storey *Ward and Solmons Building* occupied this site. The building can be seen in the left foreground in the photo on the right.

Eloff Street: on the corner President Street: *Ward & Solomon Building* - demolished, *Penlan House* and *Cuthberts Building*. Across Pritchard Street: *H.W. Markham Building*, the now demolished *Hannah Court*, *first Anstey's Building* and *St. Mary's Mansions* – not visible. Between Kerk and Jeppe Streets the *second Castle Mansions*. Right: (Stark, F. [Ed.]: *Seventy Golden Years...*).

## HISTORY:

Helen Grange in a most informative newspaper article titled "Graceful old stores have all gone" (date of publication not known) on department stores in early Johannesburg, writes as follows: "Of all the character changes which have left their mark on Johannesburg none has been more noticeable than the disappearance, in the 1970s, of the graceful old department stores. Its contemporaries – Ansteys, Belfast, Ackermans, Paramount and Stuttafords went too. So complete was the rout that Stuttaford's building in the city remained derelict for years. Some would even remember the firm of Blinman, Holwell and Islip – a department store with style and panache in the British manner in Eloff Street on the site now occupied by the OK. The OK was one of the stores which stayed – and flourished. Historically, these stores all stood relatively close to each other, in the city's prime spots. Their siting was considered to be of huge significance in terms of fashion appeal – and only very few streets were regarded as fashionable. These streets were all north of Commissioner Street – that part of the city which the Transvaal Republic auctioned to the public in 1886 when Johannesburg was born. South of that street on what historically mine-owned land, are the grandiose old mining and financial houses. John Orr's had been a pioneer department store. Stuttafords had also been a household name since early in the century. But when Sam Cohen launched the cash-and-carry store called OK Bazaars in 1927 he was told it would fail – it was, people said, on the 'wrong side of Eloff Street'. Not only did the Eloff Street store do a roaring trade, it triggered a new age of cash stores and remained a powerful force even when similar cash stores were foundering. Instalment credit Because large department stores occupying four to five floors presented management difficulties, speciality department stores emerged – and quickly grew. One of the earliest speciality stores to open its doors was Hepworths, a menswear [sic.] retailer launched in 1894 in Harrison Street [on the corner of Eloff Street]. Edworks, the country-wide shoe chain opened its first Johannesburg shop on the corner of Joubert and Pritchard streets in 1924 – Foschini's clothing outfitters started in 1925 (in Pritchard Street) and Truworhs opened soon afterwards in 1926 (on the corner of President and Eloff). But the most noteworthy speciality store was Edgars, which started in 1939 as a tiny business specialising in giving instalment credit to typists and shop assistants when John Orr's was serving the upper end of the market. Since then, Edgars has established the largest and most successful speciality department store in Market Street (where the Belfast used to be) while also spreading its chain into shopping centres and other central areas nationwide. Its subsidiaries [sic.], Sales House and Jet Stores are major chains in their own right, each aiming at identifiable segments of the market. It was management difficulties which saw the closure of the old-timer, Greatermans, in 1982. The space vacated was promptly taken by Dions, a very successful speciality store dealing in furniture, sporting and photographic equipment and appliances....While some department stores went to the suburbs some, like Ansteys whose tall stepped building was the city's highest for years, and the bargain-basement shop, Paramount, simply disappeared. Ackermans, a giant in the 1920s, was bought out by Pep stores and today exists only as a supplement to Pep."

See also *Foschini Building* (Joubert Street), Document AC-9.



Eloff Street, Johannesburg's main shopping thoroughfare and the busiest business centre in South Africa.

It was highly fashionable in the Seventies to collect trousseau and I still possess some of the articles collected during those years; a wooden cutlery-holder bought at the main OK as it was known then; pieces of a dinner-set from *Greatermans* with the words 'Microwave oven safe' printed on the bottom – keeping in mind that microwave ovens were not a household name in the 70s in South-Africa; a rose-pattern stainless steel kitchen utensil set from *John Orr's* at a sale price of R25.00 – remember the rose-pattern, it was on everything such as glasses, dinner sets, carving sets and cutlery. Every Easter season a special stand was allocated for Easter eggs in *Greatermans* at the entrance on Rissik Street, the eggs I remember were the size of an ostrich egg, hand decorated with icing sugar and by special request, a name was iced on the egg. The best place to have breakfast on a Saturday morning was at the restaurant located on one of the upper floors in *Greatermans* – their scrambled eggs and toast was well known. My first account was opened at *Edgars*, the manageress was a Mrs. Van Den Heever, and with her help the account was opened without the permission of my parents, keep in mind that during the 70s women had fewer rights than now! The amount I could buy for was a staggering thirty rand! *John Orr's* had a Jucy Lucy bar and it was very vogue to say 'O, I went to John Orr's today.' The clothes sold at *Foschini's* and *Truworths* were more expensive but their window dressing was always very tasteful and nice shops to do window-shopping at. Catharina JM Bruwer.

#### **GENERAL NOTES:**

Estimated cost of building	: £198 000
Estimated cost of drainage	: £2 000
Accommodation approved	:
Valuation at completion	: £150 000
Occupied	:

In a letter dated 25th May 1992 to J Hugo, Director: City Planning, City of Johannesburg, Flo Bird, then chairperson of the Transvaal Plans Committee of the former NMC, stated as follows: "...We have been asked to approve the demolition of yet another block of flats in the CDB. This is Mansfield House (101 President Street), on the north-east corner of President and Joubert Streets. The developer has purchased the entire block (the city block bounded by President, Eloff, Pritchard and Joubert Streets), having been warned in advance of the historical importance of a number of buildings on it. These include Cutherts (see AC-7), Penlan (see AC-2), Hilson (see AC-6), The Royalty (see AC-5), Dunvegan Chambers (see AC-4) and possibly Ranath House (see AC-8)...When that assessment was made some years ago, Mansfield was not considered of great significance. It is a good substantial building, with relatively modest Art Deco facades, designed by the same architects as Hilson, the (sic.) Royalty and Dunvegan ie (J.C.) Cook and Cowen, but less lavishly – presumably because it was done in the Depression (during the early 1930s). A case can be made to some extent for its conservation in terms of the National Monuments Act, but it is not of such outstanding significance as to be worth retaining if that is the only contribution it makes. The NMC has always tried to work with the City Council in terms of planning policies, because it is our belief that conservation is most successful where it is integrated into planning. According to numerous press statements the Council is deeply concerned with increasing the residential component of the CDB. We understand it is fundamental to all proposals for revitalising the City Centre. If this is the case, is the City Council opposed to the demolition of Mansfield House? Is there a plan which deals with maintaining or increasing the residential stock in this sector? And if there are plans for this what incentives are being offered to landlords and/or developers? The redevelopment of the block as outlined by the developers exclude any residential component. It is proposed to erect two stories of retail space, with a floor of offices above. They are prepared to retain the facades and a certain module of the original building behind (at least up to the pitch of the roof where applicable) in respect of Hilson, the (sic.) Royalty, Ranath and Penlan. Cuthberts will be retained intact since it is already a fully declared National Monument. But is it proposed to remove Dunvegan Chambers, as well as the two newer buildings, Fine Arts (see AC-3) and Franwell."

CURRENT TENANTS:

#### **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.

17 8 2003

FOSCHINI





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