
JOHANNESBURG METROPOLITAN MUNICIPALITY

HERITAGE ASSESSMENT SURVEYING FORM

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

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NAME OF PLACE: HIGH COURT BUILDINGS

Previous/alternative name/s :

LOCATION: Street : corners New Street North and Joubert and Fox
Street number : 9 New Street North; 15, 17 Joubert; 112 Fox
Stand Number : 983, 988
Previous Stand Number:
Block number : BK
Suburb : Marshallstown
GIS reference :

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

DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:

Height :
Levels above street level : five-and-a-half
Levels below street level : one (small Basement)
On-site parking : none

In March 1904, the plans by the respected architectural practice of McIntosh & Moffat were approved for the construction of a three storey building, to be known as the High Court Building. The building with imposing pedimented corner gables and stucco plaster finishes to the exterior, originally comprised a Ground Floor (which accommodated two corner shops and a Mart – the latter with a separate entrance in Fox Street); First Floor offices; and flats to the Second Floor. Access to the upper floors of the building was via an Entrance in New Street North.

See electronic version of Survey Report for copies of the original building plans.

Alterations and additions to the building during the 1950s, entailed drastic changes to the external appearance of the building. An accentuation of verticality in the design of the additional floors, has had the effect of compromising the integrity of many elements characteristic of the original design of the exterior.

CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS:

External walls: blue brickwork
Internal walls: brickwork and plate wall
Motor: composed of lime and sand

Damp course: tar and sand
Foundations: cement concrete
Roof: corrugated iron roof
Windows: timber casements

SITE FEATURES:

ALTERATIONS:

In 1952, an additional two-and-a-half floors were added to the building. The architects responsible for these additions were J.C. Cook & Cohen.

INTEGRITY:

The work to the building in 1952, at the time of the floor additions, resulted in the loss of significant original façade detail and finishes, including the pedimented corner gables. The facades were replastered, leading, *inter alia*, to the removal of the original stucco plaster work, an integral element of the original design.

Subsequent changes to the exterior of the building which are considered not to be in keeping with the original design, include ill-considered alterations to the shop fronts, and the covering of the vertical face of the street canopy with panels.

INSCRIPTION:

ARCHITECT:

McIntosh & Moffat

BUILDER:

CONSTRUCTION DATE:

Date on plans :
Approval of plans : 30 March 1904
Commenced : 30 March 1904
Foundations : 8 April 1904
Completion date : 31 July 1904

BUILDING STYLE:

Edwardian / Art Deco.

BUILDING TYPE:

Commercial / office / residential building.

ENVIRONMENT:

The building constitutes an important building block in the historic layered development of Gandhi Square and remains an architectural landmark, notwithstanding various changes to the exterior of the building since the 1950s.

CONDITION:

This building is in dire need of basic maintenance / cosmetic repairs. City grime has taken its toll and the building looks dirty and neglected.

URGENT ACTION:

The down pipes on the Southern façade should be repaired, to prevent unnecessary water damage to the building; painted windows should be cleaned and broken glazing replaced; the baluster and flag mast on the corner balcony should be treated for rust. The owners should be informed not to paint the rest of the building.

Although the Liquor City displays are colourful, their intrusive effect on a visual appreciation of the aesthetic attributes of the building, is a concern, considering the value of the building as an architectural and historic backdrop to the M. K. Gandhi Statue.

The tapping of electricity should be investigated.

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:

DEEDS INFORMATION:

Original ownership: R. Abrahamson

Stand No. 983

Ownership: Somerset House (Pty) Ltd.
Document: T7024/1944
Amount:

Stand No. 988

Ownership: Somerset House (Pty) Ltd.
Document: T7024/1944
Amount:

PRE-HISTORY OF SITE:

HISTORY:



Above: View of part of the north wall of Gandhi Square , c.1982, showing from left to right, the multi-storey Metropolitan Building (then the Homes Trust Building), Somerset House, and the High Court Building. This photograph was taken before the changes to the shop fronts of the latter building. (From Hindson, M.: United Buildings/Somerset House, Fox Street Johannesburg (Restorica, Simon Van Der Stel Foundation, No. 12, October 1982).

The High Court Building was completed two years before its neighbour, Somerset House. This is confirmed by the original plans of the High Court Building, which still showed the site of the neighbouring Somerset House, as being vacant. The building for many years, housed a number of lawyers.

Lucille Davie refers as follows to one of the former anchor tenants, i.e. Millew's Fashions: " Millew's Fashions occupies its Fox Street corner, at one time a very fashionable place to visit, owned by someone who left Europe shortly after WW2. The owner of Millew's used to visit the US to ascertain the latest fashions. He walked into a designer's warehouse one day in New York and asked if he could

order a dozen each of a range of different styles. The salesman turned to his backroom supervisor and shouted: 'I've got someone here who wants some remnants', referring to a small order when most orders placed were for hundreds of items."

GENERAL NOTES:

Estimated cost of building : £12 500
Estimated cost of drainage :
Accommodation approved : 40
Valuation at completion :
Occupied :

PREVIOUS TENANT/S:

By 1954:

112 Fox – Millew’s Fashions
15 Joubert – United Property Trust
15 Joubert – Standard Meat Supply (Pty.), Ltd.
15 Joubert – Sheftz Cartage
15 Joubert – Dresner’s Furnitruue Mart
15 Joubert – Millew’s Fashions Jhbg (Pty.), Ltd.

CURRENT TENANT/S:

Liquor City
Millews Fashions
Sowetan Newspaper Stand
Jet Set Hair Stylist

SOURCES:

Published Sources

The Rand-Pretoria Directory 1954 (Comprising Complete Alphabetical And Trades Directories of Johannesburg, Pretoria And Reef Towns), Cape Times Limited, Cape Town, 1954.

Unpublished Sources

Architects In South Africa 1780 – 1940; Draft manuscript, J Walker & G M van der Waal, 1992, HSRC, Pretoria.

Plans records of surveyed buildings, Marshallstown and City of Johannesburg: Archives, Building Control, Development Management, City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality.

Rand Township Registry Johannesburg.

Newspapers, Periodicals (including Journals)

Hindson, M.: United Buildings/Somerset House, Fox Street Johannesburg (Restorica, Simon Van Der Stel Foundation, No. 12, October 1982.

Internet sources

By Lucille Davie: Somerset House's dusty, musty basement, November 7, 2003 (http://www.joburg.org.za/2003/nov/nov7_somerset.stm).

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:



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Photographs (unless otherwise indicated) by Johann J Bruwer and Alezea Bruwer.