

**CATALOGUE NO:** F-1

**DATE RECORDED:** Aug/Sept 2002

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## HERITAGE ASSESSMENT SURVEYING FORM

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

**NAME OF PLACE:** Natal Bank

**Previous/alternative name/s** : Old Natal Bank  
1914 – National Bank  
Barclays Bank (since 1926)  
In 1978, became the Barclays Bank Museum  
Since 1987 - The First National Bank Museum

**LOCATION:** Street : Market  
Street number : 90  
Stand number : 194 (previously 756)  
Block number : F

**ZONING:** Current use/s : Business one  
Previous use/s : Bank Museum

**DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:**

Four storeys; one basement level.

The following description dates from February 1991: The building has a basement, ground floor (of double volume) high Banking Hall and three storeys of offices above and a pitched roof over. This symmetrical Neo-classical building has two imposing entrances with a large circular headed window between them which light the main banking hall. The first and second floors are a classical composition in the Ionic order. The east and west bays have two pairs of Ionic pilasters supporting an architrave decorated with swags and an overhanging cornice with dentils. The third floor has no set back but has unfortunately lost its balustrade. Above the granite the building is plaster and painted white.

The architecture of this building is in the neo-classical style with arched windows and a gracious banking hall of high moulded ceilings, marble flooring, teak panels and classical columns.

The building is a "fine example of early Johannesburg financial architecture. The building has a classical ambience. Interesting features of the façade are the use of a giant Ionic order, double volume centralised recessed balcony and heavy rusticated base. The finer details on the façade

are in the neo-baroque style. The marble banking hall is still intact." (NMC Provisional Declaration memorandum dd. 1990)

According to Van Der Waal, "...it is a pompous four storey neo-Baroque façade, with two Ionic columns in front of the centre part, balustrades, tympanums and mouldings. Characteristic is the large arched window on the ground floor." Van Der Waal also describes the building as follows: "Attractively proportioned, this building was divided horizontally and vertically into three sections according to the classicist tradition. A strikingly broad arched window, similar to those used by the Richardson School in America, was placed at ground level in the conspicuous middle section with its Ionic columns."

## **CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS:**

### External

- Walls : steel frame construction, socle of dressed granite; marble columns at main entrance; plastered brickwork.
- Roof : saddle (pitched) roof.
- Windows: first and second floors – sliding sash windows, timber framed; third floor – casements.
- Doors : timber.
- Decorative elements: sculptured decorations in pediments over doors.

### Internal

- Walls : brick, plastered.
- Floors : ground floor - marble chequer-board pattern; remainder – tongue and groove timber on steel girders.
- Ceilings: plaster – main banking hall has classical decorations.
- Doors : timber, panelled.

## **SITE FEATURES:**

### **ALTERATIONS:**

It was recommended in the RAU Report of 1976 that the balustrade on the cornice should be reinstated. (RAU Report, June 1976)

### **INTEGRITY:**

Balustrade (pediment) missing from top of building. Regrettably, the trees on the pavement prevents one from making a full visual appreciation of the building.

**INSCRIPTION:****ARCHITECT/BUILDER:**

Carter & McIntosh (1899)  
McIntosh & Moffat (1902)

All that remains of the original plans, is the basement plan. (Refer SOURCES).

**CONSTRUCTION DATE:**

On plan : 20 July 1899 and 7 October 1902  
Completed : 1903

**BUILDING STYLE:**

Symmetrical Neo-classical.

"It is a typical 'Classic Revival' design (the Gothic Revival was not popular in South Africa) with Ionic columns, and the pilasters, swags and pediments typical of the French Renaissance." (Stoloff, Cyril A.)

"The building is one of the earliest examples in the City of the Beaux Arts-style and is a building of a good proportioned design." (RAU Report, June 1976)

**BUILDING TYPE:**

Bank and office building. (Originally a bank building with living quarters on top floor for employees.)

**ENVIRONMENT:**

This is an outstanding historical building opposite the City Hall. Unfortunately the trees detract from the extraordinary visual qualities of this building. It is also unfortunate that the building has a 'bad' neighbour, i.e. Solly Kramer's Building. Contextually, the association of the building with the Meischke's Building is a mutually complementary one.

**CONDITION:**

Good.

**URGENT ACTION:**

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

In 1989 the owner had to attend to numerous problems created by water penetration. By the replacing of pipes, gutters and down pipes as well as repairs to the drainage, these problems were successfully solved. The NMC was informed of this work.

**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)

The building was provisionally declared as a national monument in 1990. Refer Government Notice No. 463 of 9 March 1990. "The Barclays Bank Museum Building, situated on a portion of certain Stand 194 (formerly No. 756)..."

The following was stated in a memorandum of the NMC regarding the provisional protection of the building: "Negotiations on the conservation of the building commenced during 1986. During the past 3 years several notices for provisional proclamation had been issued. Time and again First National Bank has objected against the proposed provisional proclamation. During a meeting held on 1989-02-20...(between the parties) it became evident that they (i.e. the Bank) would like to sell the building, or redevelop the property. The ...(NMC) felt that provisional proclamation would safeguard the building..."

The period of the provisional declaration subsequently lapsed.

**NOTES:**

**DEEDS INFORMATION:**

Deed of Transfer F2554, dated 30 June 1926: - property being Stand No. 194 (formerly No. 756) was registered in the name of Barclays Bank DCO. Transfer from National Bank Of South Africa Limited. See also HISTORY

T2554/1926 First National Bank of Southern Africa Ltd  
T2554/1926 Firstrand Bank Ltd

### **PRE-HISTORY OF SITE:**

By 1888, this site had a corrugated iron structure with a saddleback roof and a verandah on it. The shop was known as *Boerenvriendwinkel* of Weppener Bros. & Cairncross. The Natal Bank's first building was erected on this site in 1891 with M.B. Houge as architect. This high single storey brick building (in the Neo-Baroque style) had a façade with a projecting pediment. This building was demolished to make way for the existing building.

### **HISTORY:**

The *Natal Bank Limited* was established on 1 April 1854 – making it one of the earliest banking enterprises in the country.

The *Natal Bank* was taken over by the *National Bank of South Africa Limited* in 1914. In 1926 (1925?), the latter became *Barclays Bank (Dominion, Colonial & Overseas)*. In 1954, the latter changed its name to *Barclays Bank DCO*. Since 1971, known as *Barclays National Bank Limited*. Subsequently, since 1987, known as the *First National Bank of Southern Africa Limited*.

1904: Valuation – ground £20,000 / building £27,000.

1910: Valuation – ground £11,000 / building £19,000.

From a brochure of The First National Bank Museum (undated) – “Constructed in 1902, when Johannesburg was still little more than a mining town, this elegant late Victorian building housed the Johannesburg branch of *The Natal Bank*, an important predecessor of *The First National Bank*.”

The Natal Bank was established in Pietermaritzburg in 1854. It was the second bank to open a branch in Johannesburg. Their first premises soon became too small. Carter and McIntosh designed the new building during 1899, but the second Anglo Boer War hampered the building operations. Soon after peace had been restored, McIntosh and Moffat were commissioned to redesign the building, which was eventually occupied on 24 August 1903. Until 1961, the building housed a working bank. The old building was subsequently left vacant. However, by 1963 two departments of the bank moved into the building and occupied it totally. Since 1978 it housed the Barclays National Bank Museum.”

The Natal Bank, the second bank to open a branch in the mining village, bought the stand in April 1887. They built a solid, single storey building which, in those days, stood right opposite Market Square bustling with traders, merchants and shoppers, and a block away from the first Stock Exchange.

As Johannesburg prospered, so did the bank and the building became too small. So in 1899 the board decided to erect a four storey building. The basement plan comprised a front cellar, strong room, and storerooms for stationery, old documents and books.

Over the years the building was renamed as buy-out followed buy-out until 1988 when it became the First National Bank Museum.

And just as its names have changed five times this century so has its usage. In 1961 it was a storage and rehearsal centre for a theatrical group known as the Bank Players. Two years later it housed the Intelligence Department and the Foreign Branch under the management of Colin Waterson. Rather appropriately, it was he who started developing a 'museum' in the building. In 1968 the Bank decided to appoint Ivan Swanepoel as its Museum Representative. Soon the job was too demanding and he was joined by Sue Smith. Within a year she became Museum Representative when Swanepoel was promoted to another position. Smit's position was subsequently changed to Museum Curator and Di Arnott joined her in the task of sorting, classifying and labelling the mass of material stored in the basement. When the Foreign Branch moved out in 1977, management decided to create a public museum as a marketing and public relations venture. Waterson, in particular, was keen to preserve the bank's tradition and heritage and to save the building from demolition, *an alternative that was suggested by some managers*. With the managing director's sanction, the building was renovated – and the doors of the museum were opened to the public on 21 February 1979.

### **GENERAL NOTES:**

It is the oldest bank building in Johannesburg.

### **SOURCES:**

Opname Historiese Geboue In Johannesburg, Second Report June 1976, Inner City, RAU

Photographs (coloured) of north (main) elevation ca. '88 : NMC File 3/1/3/Joh/124

Johannesburg, 100. 1986 : One Hundred Places of Outstanding Cultural, Historical, Architectural And National Interest, April 1986

NMC File 9/2/228/49 : Barclays Museum Building, Market Street, Johannesburg

NMC File 3/1/3/Joh/42: Barclays Bank Museum Building, Market Street, Johannesburg (included in this file are some photocopied photographs / also photograph taken of the building in approximately 1987, as well as copy of Deed of Transfer of 1926)

Refer for detailed information on the Museum to "The Barclays Bank Museum", a most informative article in the Barclaycard Magazine 2/79

The Johannesburg Historical Foundation (Norwich, I ; Grant, B.L. ; Saul D) Some Historic Drives & Walks of Johannesburg Framic, no date

Stoloff, C.A.: "The Old Banks Of Johannesburg" (SA Architectural Record, September 1947) – contains a picture of the building ca. 1904 and a copy of an interesting drawing of its Market Street elevation

The First 150 Years: First National Bank Of Southern Africa Limited, 1988

The Market Square Of Johannesburg: Catalogue of buildings on and around the square till about 1920 (Compiled by G.M. van der Waal), Public Library, Johannesburg, 1971

City Engineering Department, Stand No. 193, Township Johannesburg (Planning Department), City of Johannesburg [Note that this source pertains to the adjacent building on Stand No. 193. No record could be found with respect to Stand No. 194]

Van Der Waal, G-M.: From Mining Camp to Metropolis, The buildings of Johannesburg 1886-1940, Chris Van Rensburg Publications, 1987

Registrar of Deeds, Johannesburg

**RECORDED BY:**

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Photographs by Chris JH Coxen (unless otherwise indicated).

**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