

**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: RANATH HOUSE**



Centre top: Joubert Street. Shown in the middle-background are *Ranath House* and its northern neighbour, the *Fine Arts Building*. Top right: view of upper section of main façade. Bottom right: The building once had a prominent stepped gable. Postcard 82 taken from Norwich, O.I.: A Johannesburg Album; Historical Postcards.

Previous/alternative name/s : originally *E.W. Tarry Building*

**LOCATION:** Street : Joubert  
 Street number : 42  
 Stand Number : 5283  
 Previous Stand Number: by 1974: 1754; by 199: 4806  
 Block number : AC  
 GIS reference :

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

**DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:**

Height :  
 Levels above street level : three.  
 Levels below street level : one basement level.  
 On-site parking :

In his description of the building styles of the period 1890 – 1900, it is stated by Van Der Waal that apart from the textured approach followed in the facades of Johannesburg's commercial buildings between 1894 and 1900, "other aspects also claimed the attention. First, there was a tendency to accentuate the upper portion of the façade more than any other. This was done with gables, sometimes single and broad as in the *Parker Building* (1895-6), 106 Market Street [see Pre-History: H-2]; with two additional little gables, as in the *E.W. Tarry Building* (1896-7), 42 Joubert Street [now known as Ranath House]; or with a row of gables of the same size, as in the *Gordon Mitchell Building* (1897), 99 President Street [see Pre-History: T-1] and the second *Thorne & Stuttaford Building*...Contemporary literature also focused on this tendency to accentuate the topmost part of the façade." (Van Der Waal, G-M.: From Mining Camp to Metropolis...). See also BUILDING STYLE.

#### **CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS:**

Walls:

Roof: flat, concrete.

Windows:

#### **SITE FEATURES:**

#### **ALTERATIONS:**

According to the 1976 RAU Report, blue metallic louvers were affixed to the façade of the building in November 1968. This has since been removed. Unspecified internal alterations were carried out during the same period. No record, however, could be found of this in January 2004. Drastic changes have also been carried out to the shop fronts.

Right: Photo, RAU 1976 Survey Report.



#### **INTEGRITY:**

In 1976, the building, according to the RAU Survey Report of the time, was in a bad condition. The view expressed in the report, was that the building had no connection to the environment. It was also suggested that the site could be redeveloped. This drastic position is clearly explained by the unsympathetic changes to the building in 1968, i.e. particularly to the main façade.

The recommendation made in the 1976 RAU Survey Report cannot be supported. The structural condition of the building appears to be sound. Except for the removal of the stepped gable and changes to the shop fronts, the main façade of the building remains relatively intact.

#### **INSCRIPTION:**

#### **ARCHITECT:**

Leck, William.

#### **BUILDER:**

#### **CONSTRUCTION DATE:**

Date on plans : 20th October 1896 (RAU Opname Historiese Geboue In Johannesburg).  
: original plans not found (2004).  
Approval of plans :  
Completion date : 1897 (RAU Opname Historiese Geboue In Johannesburg).

#### **BUILDING STYLE:**

Edwardian (1900 to 1914).

The following is stated by Van Der Waal, with reference to building styles of the period 1890 – 1900: "Ornamentation was applied in a light projection on the wall plane, specially in the form of mouldings and window frames. The multiplicity of projections and the isolation of planes by the underlying grid

structure prevented a clearly defined articulation. This means there was no focal point and the viewer's attention was diffused over the entire surface. The projection of the façade was therefore sensory to a high degree. The eye, and to a lesser extent touch, played the most important role in perceiving the effect. In this respect it was typically late Victorian. A shift in levels of consciousness occurred in architecture at the beginning of the 19th century. This shift was away from a prescribed form perception which was inspired by the intellectual reasoning supporting the structures of authority in society to a form perception that effectively had to be initiated by the individual. On the one hand, the Neo-Gothic style relied on its ethical and religious connotation while, on the other hand, the classicist tradition relied on the force of convention. The emotional "Battle of the Styles" waged between these two schools during those years elicited powerful expression and clear definitions. However, by the end of the century these 'style' positions had lost much of their meaning and the search was on for new sensations. Purity of 'style' was superseded by eclecticism and the archeologically correct representation of ornamentation by immediate sensory effect. A great measure of synthesis therefore emerged at both levels. A parallel development was the rise of Impressionism in the fine arts and photography, which no longer perceived and depicted the world in accordance with predetermined concepts and conventions or associations, but in a 'neutral' manner, with the emphasis on the outward visual form in which reality presents itself. Thus, in the buildings discussed above, ornamentation lost its conventional (iconographic) significance to assume a new role as sensory stimulus. In architectural literature of these times there is also a reference to the shift from the associative to the visual significance of architecture. In 1893 *The Builder* called it 'Impressionism'...In 1891 Robert Kerr ascribed the vibrating light effects in the architecture of his time to the influence of sketchy architect's Drawings: '...as this fascinating architectural sketching was thus advancing so buoyantly, let it not be forgotten that a style of sketchy architecture would arise as a natural consequence'...A supportive role in this regard was undoubtedly played by the appearance of many architectural journals with gravures and (from 1885) photographs...From all this it was clear that architects had discovered a new perception of space. With the shift of emphasis from form to textures without focus, and from mass groupings to interplay between light and shade, the Renaissance principles of a central perspective (for a homogeneous space) were no longer applied. In this sense, this period represented a transition between the homogeneous space tradition of the Renaissance and the multivalent perception of space of modern times. In these circumstances it was only to be expected that Johannesburg's commercial buildings sought different solutions from 1894 to 1900 for these effects. Apart from the textured approach followed in the facades...other aspects also claimed the attention. First, there was a tendency to accentuate the upper portion of the façade more than any other." (Van Der Waal, G-M.: From Mining Camp to Metropolis...). See also DESCRIPTION OF PLACE.

**BUILDING TYPE:**

Shops to street and office building.

**ENVIRONMENT:**

According to the 1976 Rau Survey Report, the building has no connection with its environment. This, presumably, was because of its isolation behind a metallic louvre curtain. There are, however, no grounds for supporting the contention that there is a lack of interconnectedness between the building and its surround.

**CONDITION:**

Fair.

**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	<input type="checkbox"/>



Relevant Gazette Notice:

Gazette description:

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

**NOTES:**

**DEEDS INFORMATION:**

Original ownership: E.W. Tarry & Co. Ltd.

By 1976: Ranath House (Pty) Ltd, p/a JH Isaacs & Co. Ltd, PO Box 5575, Johannesburg.

**PRE-HISTORY OF SITE:**

**HISTORY:**

Before 1890, a wide range of building materials was to be imported from abroad through local agencies. "The following", according to Van Der Waal, "were among the most important: E W Tarry & Co., established in Kimberley 1870, branch opened in Johannesburg 1887." (Van Der Waal, G-M.: From Mining Camp to Metropolis...).

Leyds remembers the E.W. Tarry & Co (by 1897 the engineering works was situated on the block bounded by Ferreira, Marshall, Anderson and Sauer Streets): "At the rear, in Frederick Street was – and is - E.W. Tarry & Co.'s engineering workshop. By 1894 they were working day and night for the mines, and at night-time the rivetting [sic] machines – the modern pneumatic drill in the streets makes the same noise – kept the neighbourhood awake." (Leyds, G.A.: A History of Johannesburg).

E.W. Tarry & Co Ltd – incorporated in England - was specialists in the following fields: Water supply equipment, irrigation, purification and installations, machinery, mining and general hardware merchants; ironmongers, cutlery and tool merchants. The firm was also agents for Tauco Woodworking Machines, paints and Aga Cookers. By 1954, the company now longer occupied the premises at 44 Joubert Street.

**GENERAL NOTES:**

Estimated cost of building :  
Estimated cost of drainage :  
Accommodation approved :  
Valuation at completion :  
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.”

PREVIOUS TENANTS:

By 1954: Chamber of Horrors and Edworks (1936) Ltd.

CURRENT TENANT/S:

**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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