

**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: ROYAL ST. MARY'S BUILDING**



Previous/alternative name/s :

**LOCATION:** Street : Eloff  
 Street number : 85  
 : [64, 66 Kerk, 83, 85 Eloff, 65 Pritchard]  
 Stand Number : RE/4480  
 Previous Stand Number: by 1976: 4480 F  
 Block number : AD  
 GIS reference :

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

**DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:**

Height : 35 850mm  
 Levels above street level : twelve  
 Levels below street level : four  
 On-site parking :

This is a well-detailed podium and tower building.

**CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS:**

Walls: reinforced concrete structure.

Roof: flat; concrete.

Windows: steel or aluminium frame; first and second floor casement windows; the rest fixed panel windows.

**SITE FEATURES:**

**ALTERATIONS:**

1984: Renovations to arcade; Stauch Vorster Architects.

**INTEGRITY:**

**INSCRIPTION:**

**ARCHITECT:**

Marke Markovitz, Meyers, Rix & Partners.

**BUILDER:**

**CONSTRUCTION DATE:**

Date on plans : July 1968  
Approval of plans : (original plans not found)  
Completion date :

**BUILDING STYLE:**

Johannesburg Late Modernist.

**BUILDING TYPE:**

Shops to street and office building.

**ENVIRONMENT:**

Van Der Waal: "Moreover, the economic interests of the individual were more important than the overall aspect, as was shown by the differentials of height and façade articulations of the buildings. The highly individualistic treatment of buildings was particularly disturbing in the case of tall buildings erected in a low-rise environment. Such buildings had unfinished lateral sides in which the light-coloured grid pattern of the reinforced concrete frame was in sharp contrast (sic.) to the filled-in unplastered red brick panels. These buildings not only betrayed a marked insensitivity to the visual aspect of the environment, but also highlighted the unilateral optimism of the owners (that other buildings constructed next door would soon make good the impairment of the general aspect) as well as their contempt for the historical building corpus of the city." (Van Der Waal, G-M.: From Mining Camp to Metropolis...). The *St. Mary's Building* is a prime example of this insensitivity as the only unfinished lateral sidewall of the building is the one standing next to the landmark *Markham Building*.

**CONDITION:**

Fair. First Floor bricked-up.

**URGENT ACTION:**

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

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

General protection: Section 34(1) structure/s

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:**

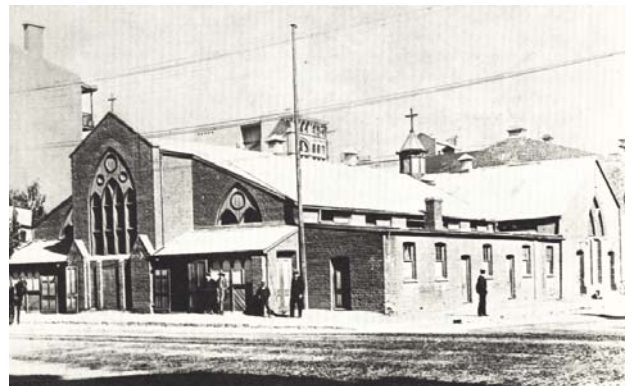
Original ownership: St. Mary's Building.

By 1976: St. Mary's Building (Pty) Ltd, PO Box 1760, Johannesburg.

**PRE-HISTORY OF SITE:**

ST. MARY'S ANGLICAN CHURCH:

During 1887 Johannesburg had between five and six thousand residents and the *St. Mary's Anglican Church*, on the corner of Kerk and Eloff Streets, was one of three prominent churches serving this small community. The draughtsman F. Holman designed the church, which was a simplistic brick building in the form of a cross with lancet/drop arch windows and a freestanding bell tower. The corner stone was laid in 1887 and the church inaugurated on Christmas Day 1887. The current St. Mary's Building occupies this site and the building was named in memory of the *St. Mary's Anglican Church*.



Right: "St. Mary's, Eloff Street, 1898, birthplace of St. John's (College)". (Lawson, K.C.: Venture of Faith...).

"Early in November (1886), Bishop Bousfield, the Anglican Bishop of Pretoria, conducted the first religious service on the Rand in the dining room of the Central Hotel (this would be the first *Central Hotel*, a wood and iron structure, see Pre-History: BA-3), Ferreira's Camp (now known as Ferreirasdorp). At the end of the service a subscription list was opened for the erection of a church and Mr Ross, the manager of the Standard Bank, was appointed Honorary Treasurer. Later in the month the Bishop applied to the Government for a church site at Randjeslaagte. His letter was signed H. B. Pretoria, a signature the Authorities refused to recognise. Nevertheless, he was informed that the Government would grant this request and in the following year the foundation stone of St. Mary's Church was laid in Eloff Street. On 11th of June, 1887, the Reverend John T Darragh, the first Anglican priest to be stationed on the gold fields, arrived from Kimberley. A much-loved figure who was later to be Dean of Johannesburg for many years, he died on the 16th of November, 1922. He is buried in the Braamfontein Cemetery." (Shorten)

Stoloff, May 1948: "St. Mary's Church, which has recently celebrated its Diamond Jubilee, has a romantic story which is itself part of the history of Johannesburg. To-day its centre is the great St. Mary's Cathedral – sixty years ago its first service was held by the Bishop of Pretoria in a shed that had neither door nor windows, only an iron roof and wooden supports. The shed, lend for the occasion, was situated in Commissioner Street, near the corner of Harrison Street. The seating accommodation consisted of 20ft. planks erected on temporary brick pillars. From that time onwards as the population increased, services were held in a succession of borrowed buildings. By 1889 land was acquired at the corner of Eloff and Kerk Streets, and it was here that the old St. Mary's was built. It was a crude building of plain brick with an iron roof..." Note, the difference of opinion as to the exact position of the first service held of the St. Mary's Church.

G.A. Leyds records the following: "St. Mary's Parish Church at the south-west corner of Kerk and Eloff Streets (where St. Mary's building now stands) was a low red brick iron roofed building, architecturally unadorned; but the choir of this church was renowned even in pioneering times for its fine singing. The priest was the Rev. Wm. Darragh, known in those restless days, when the Reform Committee and the Republican Government were at each other's throats, for his tolerance and his eagerness to recognise both sides in a struggle which history has shown had elements of justice on both sides – always components of true tragedy. The church of St. Mary's was demolished after the Boer War, and until St. Mary's Cathedral was built, the church held its services in Darragh Hall." The foundation stone of the St. Mary's was incorporated in the St. Mary's Cathedral. The first Hospital Concert in aid of funds for the 'Johannesburg Hospital' was held on 2nd February, 1888, in the Hall of St. Mary's Church, Eloff Street. The pianist was Mr Maurice Nathan, the organist C. Barrett, and the conductor, Francis Crane. The artists appearing were Messrs Mendelsohn, P. de Jongh, A. Lavine, Feinholtz, Dr Shulz, Jerome, Bain, A. Witte, J. Sylvester and Miss Reimer. All the printing of tickets and notices had been done free by various printers, names not shown. The concert was an annual affair until the Government provided funds for new hospital buildings and equipment... St Mary's...had been completed. *The Star* (21.10.1887) reports that a beautiful and elaborate altar and chancel furniture had been made by Mr George Weeks of Grahamstown from a design by Mr Sydney Stent. The altar was of teak. The fine workmanship is praised. This altar is now in the English Church at Mayfair, Johannesburg."

Chilvers: "Not long after the first rushes to the Rand, Bishop Bousfield invited the Rev. J. T. Darragh, of Kimberley, to become the first permanent Anglican priest of Johannesburg, and he arrived in June, 1887. Now Darragh was an Irishman, masterful and human, and called as he had been to a new field, which speedily developed signs of wealth and enabled him to control not only his own church of St. Mary but also sub-churches at Doornfontein, Jeppestown, Germiston, and elsewhere, he gradually became to the bishop (who was a great stickler for the forms and prerogatives of his office) a rival in power. It was a case of the stalwart child wanting to go its own way, and of the parent who would not let it. A protracted feud which was reflected in Synod and out of it, and was echoed in the columns of the local Press. Matters had to go ultimately to arbitration. Thus even the Church reflected the countless and ceaseless antagonisms between old and staid Pretoria and young and vigorous Johannesburg, antagonisms alluded to at some length in previous chapters of book. That St. Mary's Church, Johannesburg, must one day become a cathedral, and that the goldfields would have their own Anglican Bishop, seemed inevitable, although the change was not actually made until 1922, when both leaders in the original controversy had passed away."

During the middle of South African Anglo-Boer War during 1900, according to Chilvers, a strange incident occurred: "The cloaked figure of Drama stalked through the streets of the city in those days, and as is always the case in war-time, Rumour moved with it. Without doubt both were concerned with reports of the alleged plot to blow up Lord Robert while attending service in St. Mary's Church. At that time the church was in Eloff Street, roughly on the site of what is to-day St. Mary's Buildings (Mansions); for it was not until September 1904, that Lord Milner laid the stone of the present cathedral in Plein Street to the north. The Commander-in-Chief was a regular attendant. Forty yards from the church in a south-easterly direction, stood a now-vanished hostelry on the site of John Orr's Buildings in Pritchard Street. It was alleged that a number of Republicans had plotted in this hotel to drive a tunnel from this place under Eloff Street through an intercepting barrier of rock, and to a point immediately below the pew occupied by Lord Roberts. A heavy charge of dynamite was then to be exploded. But secret service men, it was whispered, had learned of this plot; many arrested followed, and men were deported to St. Helena, to Ceylon, and elsewhere, notwithstanding which, a great deal of scepticism prevailed at the time and still prevails, as to whether there was ever an intention to excavate a tunnel, if only because of the extreme difficulty of cutting through rock. It was said that sane men could never have contemplated such a tunnel: for to excavate it would have needed the most costly mining apparatus."

Neame: "Complaints of the destructiveness of 'young hooligans' were made in 1892, and it was stated that Sunday evenings the worship of the congregation at St. Mary's Church in Eloff Street 'is frequently disturbed by stones thrown on the roof'...Behaviour in church sometimes gave offence. On January 15, 1890, there appeared in the newspapers a letter signed 'Two Churchmen' complaining of the behaviour of the female choir in St. Mary's Church on Sunday evenings. 'Some female members,' said the writers, 'are in a constant state of 'giggle' from the time they enter the church until they depart from thence. One young lady in particular seems to have little control over her risible instincts and the slightest look from a young man on the opposite side sends her off into an uncontrollable fit of laughter.' Other letters supported or pooh-poohed the allegation. *The Star* on Monday, January 20, said that at the previous day's services the demeanour of the ladies was 'as demure as that of a cloistered nun. The next man who says aught against these fair creatures may expect a warm time of

it – especially if he has the temerity to reveal his name and address’...Half the town used to turn out for the weddings of well-known people. There was a huge crowd in Eloff Street on September 10, 1889, when the Rev. J. T. Darragh, the popular vicar of St. Mary’s, was married to Miss Ross. The wedding breakfast was in Jeppestown, where the bride began her honeymoon by laying the foundation stone of the English church to be built in that township. For the wedding of Frikkie Eckstein and Miss Mitchell on April 30, 1890, the whole camp was *en fête*. The wedding of J. B. Taylor and Miss Mary Gordon at St. Mary’s on March 10, 1891, and of George Farrar and Miss Ella Mabel Waylan at the same church on June 3, 1893, were great social occasions.” Whether by coincidence or not, the last three weddings described above were those of prominent persons associated with the history of the *Corner House*: Frikkie or Friedrich was the brother of Hermann Eckstein; James Benjamin Taylor was Hermann Eckstein’s first partner; George Farrar received a knighthood in 1902 according to Cartwright. For more information on the Corner House see Document E-1.

Neame: “The Church of England built St. Mary’s in Eloff Street and also purchased a block of land on the opposite side of the road. It eventually sold all its central property for a very large sum.”

#### Y.M.C.A. BUILDING:

The first *Y.M.C.A. Building*, designed by Herbert Goodman, was erected during the early years of Johannesburg, at 65 Pritchard Street. This site was first used as an arcade. Two years after the town of Johannesburg was laid out, the Young Men’s Christian Association bought the site and in 1888 President Kruger laid the foundation stone. According to Leyds, it “used to be said that the Palace Building was the oldest existing two-storey building in the town, but up till 1955 this was not true. Until then there was still one building in Pritchard Street which beat them all, and that was the old Y.M.C.A. building next to Markhams. It was first used as an arcade, but only two years after the town of Johannesburg was laid out the Young Men’s Christian Association bought the site and they had no difficulty in persuading President Kruger to lay the foundation stone in 1888. The old man was only too pleased to encourage a movement which would rescue young officials from the influence of those ‘goddelose mense wat die aardse slyk soek’ (those godless people who seek the earthly dross) and he took pride in coming over from Pretoria by horsedrawn coach to perform the ceremony. The stone is now in the wall of the new Y.M.C.A. in ‘Wanderers View’, Smit Street.”

The address given by Leyds for the first *YMCA Building* – called the “Y.M.C.A. Rooms” in 1897, is accepted by the authors.

Neame: “A taste for good literature is not usually a characteristic of a mining camp yet Johannesburg was able to boast of a library early in its history. Among the pioneers there was a leaven of book lovers, and some of them got together and discussed the subject of securing a regular supply of better reading matter. The result was that on March 20, 1889, a public meeting was held in the City Chambers – the site of which is now covered by the Corner House (see E-1) in Commissioner Street – under the presidency of Sir Thomas Scanlan. The gathering was unanimously in favour of a library, and action was immediately taken to give effect to the general desire. Both British and Dutch co-operated to make the movement a success...A public subscription list was opened and about £700 was received. In October the first consignment of one thousand books was received from Mudies, London. The selection was left entirely to the booksellers, the only stipulation being that the books should represent all branches of literature. At first the books were housed in the boardroom at City Chambers, and later rooms were obtained in the former building of the Y.M.C.A. in Pritchard Street.” (See Pre-History: AD-5)

#### VAUDETTE THEATRE / MAJESTIC BIO CAFÉ:

In 1912, the *YMCA Building* (1894) was converted into a theatre, known as the *Vaudette Theatre*. By 1954, it was known as the *Majestic Bio Café*.

#### FIRST ANSTEY’S BUILDING:

According to Norwich (postcard 89), the first *Anstey’s Building* or Norman Anstey & Co. was situated at 83 Eloff Street. This five-storey building was completed in 1899. On the lateral wall facing Kerk Street, the company advertised themselves as The New Drapery Stores, Costumiers, Milliners. For further information on this, see Document AF-2. It appears that this building was demolished in 1906 or early 1907, as by 1907, the 83 Eloff Street portion of this stand was part of the *St. Mary’s Mansions*.

## ST. MARY'S MANSIONS:

The *St. Mary's Mansions*, designed by the architects McIntosh & Moffat, was completed during 1907. It stood at 64, 66 Kerk and 83, 85 Eloff Street. By 1954, the building was known as *St. Mary's Building*.

Van Der Waal: "During this period cast-iron verandahs on upper storeys were the exception rather than the rule, probably because it was instinctively felt that the articulated mass of solid building components more suitably expressed the spirit of the British Empire than semi-transparent verandahs could have. There were two exceptions to this approach, however. They were *St Mary's Mansions*...and *Leander Mansions* (1905), 72 Plein Street, where the residential function was expressed by means of verandahs. In the case of *Leander Mansions*...gables and towers played a determining role in the overall architectonic effect, while verandahs were better accentuated in the case of *St Mary's Mansions*. Here another interesting solution was found since the verandahs were divided into balcony-like structures which alternated with flush strips of brick walling – to give the whole a powerfully articulated aspect which extended above the roof ledge to the roof windows. This was McIntosh & Moffat's most experimental design and was never used again, either by them or any other architect...*Leander Mansions* after the *Parktown Convent* had the largest cast-iron verandah in Johannesburg in the post-1902 period. ...Less important hotels were also located on the edge of the business district. This was in line with the tendency for residential buildings to be gradually crowded out of the city centre – a trend that was to be continued in later years. Indeed, this marked the beginning of the slow death of the city core, which would eventually contain only commercial buildings and lack all vestiges of night life."

During 1927 N. Kobrin & Co. opened a Fashion Branch, 'Cobryn's', at 65a Pritchard Street. Tenants of *St. Mary's Building* during 1954 were Affleck & Co (Pty) Ltd; The Parisian Diamond & Pearl Co; Marks & Co and Wings Ltd.

### **HISTORY:**

### **GENERAL NOTES:**

Estimated cost of building : (original plans not found)  
Estimated cost of drainage :  
Accommodation approved :  
Valuation at completion :  
Occupied : yes (partially)

### **CURRENT TENANTS:**

South African National Civic Organisation (SANCO): 12th Floor St. Mary's, PO Box 2783, JOHANNESBURG, 2000.  
Dr Auer's Base Powder Natural Remedy for acidity. Tel: (011) 492-1799, ABE Rakusin T/A Tothill Pharmacy St Mary's Building, 65 Pritchard St., Johannesburg. Tel: (011) 333-3337. [www.aapospa-sa.com/jhb.htm](http://www.aapospa-sa.com/jhb.htm).  
Ground Floor shops: 4 Minute Heel Bar & Watch Repairs, Scissors & Knife Sharpeners.

### **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.

### **RECORDED BY:**

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

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