

**JOHANNESBURG METROPOLITAN MUNICIPALITY**

**HERITAGE ASSESSMENT SURVEYING FORM**

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

JJ Bruwer ©  
Cellphone: 082 325 5823

**NAME OF PLACE: SELWELS BUILDING**



Previous/alternative name/s :

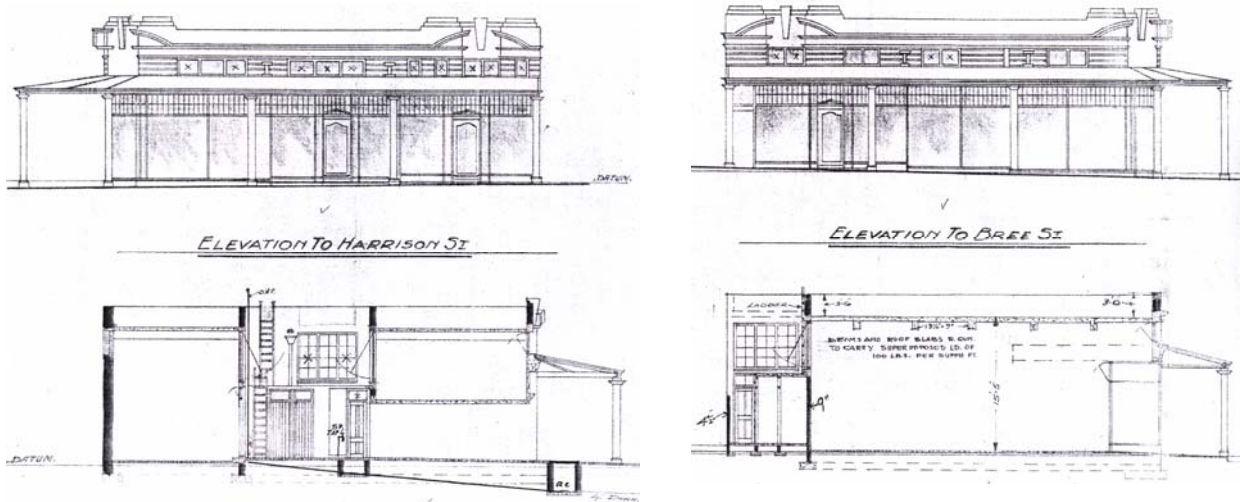
**LOCATION:** Street : cnr Harrison, Bree  
: [72, 74 Harrison; 220 Bree]  
Street number :  
:  
Stand Number : 1227, 1228  
Previous Stand Number: 1003, 1002  
Block number : AP  
GIS reference :

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

**DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:**

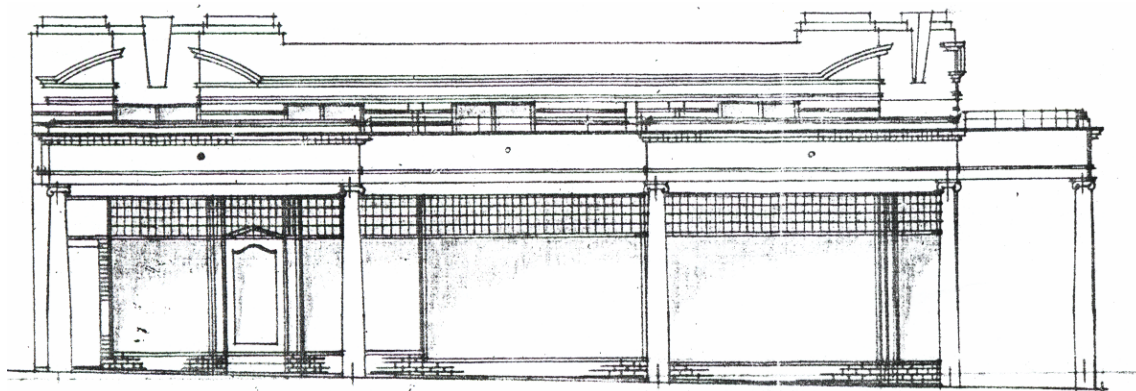
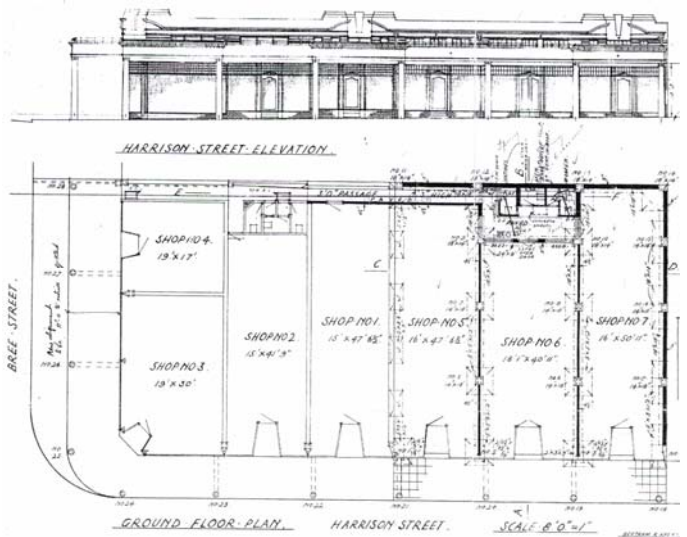
- Height : 18'5"
- Levels above street level : two to front of building; single to back of building.
- Levels below street level : none.
- On-site parking : none.

The original building designed by Bertram R Avery for L Suzman Esq. In 1920, occupied the corner stand of this site. Noteworthy features were the 8" diameter Tuscan concrete columns to the corrugated iron verandah hood and large glazed shop fronts with fanlights and three stunted turrets, each with a prominent protruding keystone. Included in this design were three W.C.s at the back of the centre shop, facing Harrison Street; one each for Women, Men and 'Natives'.



Bertram R Avery subsequently designed an addition (to match the existing corner stand building) for Messrs Suzman and Green on the adjacent stand facing Harrison Street. Noteworthy features are the extant 8" diameter Corinthian concrete columns to the verandah hood with 'dentil' moulded cement course to the original building (replacing the corrugated iron verandah canopy and supporting Tuscan columns), as well as the new addition facing Harrison Street.

The Application for Approval of Plans form for this addition could not be found; Edward H Ward the City Engineer signed the plan on 18 October 1928.



**CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS:**

Walls: reinforced concrete; internal and external walls of hard cement bricks.

Roof: "Beams And Roof Slabs R. Con. [Reinforced Concrete] To Carry Super Imposed Ld [Load] Of 100 Lbs. [Pounds] Per Super Ft [Foot]."

Windows:

Foundations: concrete; cement and sand.

**SITE FEATURES:****ALTERATIONS:**

Alterations: drainage of the building; approved 6 November 1922; completed on 30 November 1922; estimated cost building £15; drainage £30; author unknown.

Additions: approved 29 August 1922; completed on 18 November 1922; estimated cost building £150; additional value to building £70; author unknown.

Additions and alterations for DD Mandiley: approved 4 January 1937; estimated cost – building £200; architect – J.C. Cook & Cowen.

Alterations: new mezzanine for Bexley Investments & Green Bros; approved 7 April 1952; estimated cost – building £150; completed on 29 November 1952; additional value to building £100; author unknown.

Additions, alterations and drainage for Bexley Investments (Pty) Ltd.; approved – 10 August 1956; estimated cost – building £150; drainage £10; author unknown.

Alterations for Breehar Investments (Pty) Ltd.; approved 8 July 1958; author unknown.

Internal alterations for Harry's Kitchen Take Away Foods; approved 15 April 1975; estimated cost – building R400; drainage R150; architect – BC Allen.

Alterations for Breehar Investments (Pty) Ltd.; approved 15 May 1967; estimated cost – building R3 000; author unknown.

**INTEGRITY:****INSCRIPTION:****ARCHITECT:**

Bertram R Avery - original building as well as the addition in Harrison Street.

**BUILDER:**

Harrison Street addition:  
Steel reinforcement concrete work: Reinforcing Steel Co. Ld.  
Concrete work: D. Aitchison Esq.

**CONSTRUCTION DATE:**

Original building:

Date on plans : December 1920  
Approval of plans : 4 May 1921  
Commenced : 4 May 1921  
Foundations : 18 May 1921  
Completion date : 12 December 1921  
Drains:  
Commenced : 6 October 1921  
Test : 29 October 1921

Finished : 12 December 1921

Harrison Street addition:

Date on plans : 2 August 1928  
Approval of plans : record incomplete

**BUILDING STYLE:**

Edwardian (1900 to 1914).

**BUILDING TYPE:**

Originally shops and office building Class.  
By November 1922: Domestic Class.  
By August 1922: Warehouse Class.  
By April 1952: Warehouse shop Class.  
By August 1956: Business Class.  
By April 1975: Office or Flats Class.  
By May 1967: Shops Class.

Shops to street building.

**ENVIRONMENT:**

“Contributes to Area’s Character: These shops to the street are a fine example of early Johannesburg architecture”. (Johannesburg Building, Space & Urban Feature Classification, 1998: Inner City).

The design of the building is a tribute to the original owner’s intent to erect retail shops for the more well to do.

**CONDITION:**

Taking in account the building’s age and seen from the exterior, the building has successfully passed the test of time and has weathered well. This is a tribute to the artisanship of the builder and the choice of materials used in the construction of the building.

**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"/>
	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: L Suzman Esq.



By 1928: Messrs Suzman and Green.  
 By 1937: DD Mandiley.  
 By 1952: Bexley Investments & Green Bros.  
 By 1956: Bexley Investments (Pty) Ltd.  
 By 1958: Breehar Investments (Pty) Ltd.  
 1967: Breehar Investments (Pty) Ltd.

**PRE-HISTORY OF SITE:**

One of the greatest standing attractions in early Johannesburg, no doubt, was the famous *Fillis' Circus* (1889). Also known as the *Fillis' Amphitheatre*, this amenity (also used as a community hall) with seats for 2 000 persons, was according to Van Der Waal, "a conical tent-shaped structure of wood and corrugated iron, 15 metres high and 47,23 metres in diameter." It was located on the block bounded by Jeppe, Harrison, Bree and Loveday Street. See below.



Left: Seen is this postcard in the right background is *Fillis Amphitheatre* (Norwich, O.I.: A Johannesburg Album; Historical Postcards, postcard 139).

**HISTORY:**

**GENERAL NOTES:**

Estimated cost of building	: £4 000
Estimated cost of drainage	: £80
Accommodation approved	: none
Valuation at completion	: £3 950 [second class]
Occupied	:

Selwels Man's Shop was a tenant by 1954 and was then known as Selwels Gent's Outfitters.

"Why Bree Street has that 'kink'

By Irwin Manoim  
 January 6, 2003

ONE of the eccentricities of central Johannesburg is the way streets north and south of Bree Street fail to meet up correctly. Driving north or south across Bree Street requires negotiating around an awkward bend, known as the Bree Street Kink, and the cause of many a fender-dinging accident. The kink has given rise to a number of city folktales, the most popular of which goes something like this. Two teams of surveyors were charged with setting out early Johannesburg. One team worked from the north end, the other from the south. The two teams met at Bree Street - and discovered that their measurements failed to tally. The one team were using Cape feet, the other English feet (A Cape foot is 1.003 longer than an English foot). It was too late to redo the work - so Johannesburg was left with a "kink". It's a nice story, but apparently untrue, according to GA Leyds in his "A History of Johannesburg" (Nasionale Boekhandel, 1964). For the first year of Johannesburg's existence, Bree Street marked the northern boundary. A short-lived syndicate actually tried mining along the street, but with little success. But by 1887, Johannesburg had outgrown its roots, with a population of over three thousand. The government authorised the laying out of more stands north of Bree Street. The surveyor charged with laying out the streets started at the western end of Bree Street, where it meets Harrison Street. To the west of Harrison Street was an uninhabited, muddy area known as Brickfields,

where Johannesburg's first bricks were quarried and baked - today it is known as Newtown. Leyds explains the error in the following mundane terms: "The surveyor, instead of finding the south-eastern peg at the corner of Harrison and Bree Streets, took the width of Harrison Street from the peg at the north-western corner, which was some five feet more eastward than on the opposite side of the street, and thus all streets, down to End Street, crossing Bree Street, have that little bend." The city was not extended much further north - just three blocks further, with the new boundary given the name Noord Street. Today, Noord Street is a short and awkward dead-end street, crowded with taxis, immediately south of Joubert Park. Bree was one of the few early Johannesburg streets which was not named after some minor official. Bree means "Broad Street", a common Dutch name for a major street. As Leyd points out, New York's Broadway was originally called Bree Street by the city's Dutch founders." (Information sourced from [http://www.joburg.org.za/january2003/Why\\_Bree\\_Street\\_has\\_that\\_kink/stm](http://www.joburg.org.za/january2003/Why_Bree_Street_has_that_kink/stm).)

**PREVIOUS TENANTS:**

By 1954:

Bree Street – 220a Selwels Gent's Outfitters.

Harrison Street: 72 Subway Furniture Mart; 72a Park Cycle Store; 72b Ocean Fish Supply; 74 Universal Music Saloon; 74a Harrison Street Butchery.

**CURRENT TENANTS:**

Selwels Man Shop.

Johannesburg Paint & Hardware (72 Harrison Street).

**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

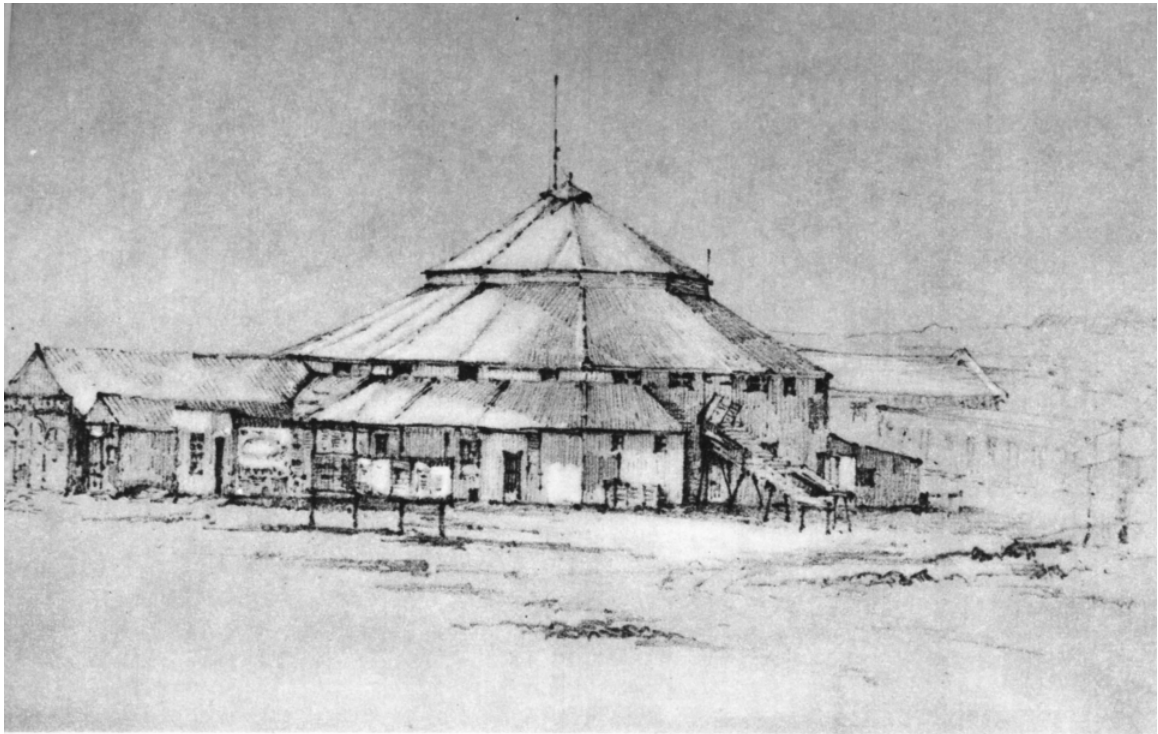
**RECORDED BY:**

Heritage Resources Management team Johann J and Catharina JM BPUWER.

Unless otherwise indicated photographs by Catharina JM BPUWER.

FILLIS' AMPHITHEATRE:

Below: (Smith, A.H.: Pictorial History of Johannesburg...).



**84**

It is noted in *Payable Gold* that Fillis' Circus gave the first professional performance in Ferreira's Camp about the middle of September 1886. The *Transvaal Mining Argus* on 21 September 1887 records that on 24 August 1887 Fillis' Circus opened on Marshalls' Square for a fortnight, and that "the support tendered surpassed the utmost expectations; and led to a scheme for the erection of a permanent Circus building, which will shortly be started upon". The *General Directory of Johannesburg* (of which the preface is dated 31 January 1890) contains a picture of this building not very different from that depicted in this pencil drawing by H. Clayton, dated 17.11.90. It is stated that this

building was erected by W. J. Symons at a cost of £8,000 and was situated in Bree Street on the site partly occupied by Paddy's Market.

For more information on *Fillis Circus*, see Pre-History: AI-1.

MARDO'S  
**TV  
REPAIRS**  
Tel: 833-7962

EUREKA

Ma



**Jumbo  
Take Aways**

17 8 2003





17 8 2003

SELWELLS  
Map  
Shop



WE CUT KEYS  
LOCK SM  
CUTTING  
REPAIR

Barker

SELWELLS Map Shop

My

Rabi

SELWELLS  
Map & CHIPS



17 8 2003



8 2003

17

SELECTS Map Shop

Map Shop  
KABDA  
Map of India



SELWELS MAN'S SHOP  
**NAVADA**  
Strong on style

SLACKS  
**NAVADA**

SELWELS

17 8 2003





17 8 2008

SELWELL'S  
**NAVADA**  
Strong on style

B

TO



28 9 2003