

JOHANNESBURG METROPOLITAN MUNICIPALITY

HERITAGE ASSESSMENT SURVEYING FORM

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

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NAME OF PLACE: ABC CHAMBERS

Top right: building seen from a position in Pritchard Street behind skywalk, southwest of the building. Bottom centre: view of building and its Pritchard Street neighbours, i.e. from left to right, the second *Royal Arcade Building*, *Royal St. Mary's Building*, with the *H.W. Markhams Building* further in the background, on the corner of Pritchard and Eloff Streets.

Previous/alternative name/s :

LOCATION: Street : Cnr Pritchard, Joubert
 Street number :
 : [61 Pritchard; 48 Joubert]
 Stand Number : 854
 Previous Stand Number: 1568
 Block number : AD
 GIS reference :

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

DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:

Height : (original plans not found)
 Levels above street level : eight
 Levels below street level : two
 On-site parking :

"This building with interesting vertical flanges, is a building of architectural merit." (Johannesburg Building, Space & Urban Feature Classification, 1998: Inner City).

Van Der Waal, in describing the *Dunvegan Chambers* (see AC-4) mentions the following: "The building also boasted one of the purest applications of the 'crested arch', an almost detached concrete strip centred on the gable plane, which directed the eye in a sweeping movement over the eaves. This type of upper façade accentuation was reminiscent of the Late Victorian practice of accentuating the upper portion of the façade. However, during the 1930s this was not done to draw attention to the picturesque roofline but rather to strengthen the illusion of verticality and give a streamlined finish to the mass of the building." (Van Der Waal, G-M.: From Mining Camp to Metropolis...). A more modern version of this application is found in the *A.B.C. Chambers* and the same effect is achieved. It is also interesting to note that both the buildings are designed by J.C. Cook & Cowen.

CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS:

Walls: reinforced concrete structure.

Roof: flat, concrete.

Windows: steel frame.

SITE FEATURES:

ALTERATIONS:

No record found.

INTEGRITY:

INSCRIPTION:

ARCHITECT:

J.C. Cook & Cowen.

BUILDER:

CONSTRUCTION DATE:

Date on plans : 19 February 1950 (RAU Opname Historiese Geboue In Johannesburg).
: original plans not found (2004).
Approval of plans :
Completion date :

BUILDING STYLE:

Late Modernist.

BUILDING TYPE:

Multi Storey Light Industrial.

ENVIRONMENT:

The prominent corner position of the building enhances the effect of the use of vertical fins in the design of the street elevations of the building. and *vice versa*. The use of these fins and the resultant accentuation of vertical lines in the design of the building, has created a visually pleasing distinction between the building and its neighbours, albeit that the height of the building matches that of its neighbours in Pritchard Street.

CONDITION:

Good.

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
- national heritage site
- provisional protection
- heritage area
- listed in provincial heritage resources register

Relevant Gazette Notice:

Gazette description:

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

NOTES:

DEEDS INFORMATION:

Original ownership: ABC Shoe Co.
By 1976: Central City Buildings (Pty) Ltd, PO Box 885, Johannesburg.

PRE-HISTORY OF SITE:

CENTRAL CITY BUILDING:

The *Central City Building* a Neo-Baroque five-storey building - designed by Mitchelson, Sydney Percival Hill in 1904 and completed during 1905 - previously occupied this corner site.

Right: "Joubert Street Looking Towards Railway Station. The first building on the right is part of the E.K. Green & Co. site. Continuing down Joubert Street is Tarry's Building, designed by W. Leck, in 1896 for the pioneer ironmongers. Adjacent to it is the Paddon and Brock Building (1893). At the intersection with Pritchard Street is the five-storey Central City Building (1904) designed by Hill and [sic.] Mitchelson. At the Kerk Street intersection is the Royston Building and on the corner the well-known Walter Wise Drapery Store in Watt's Building. In the distance is Mappin & Webb, Silversmiths, in Norfolk House in Bree Street. Beyond, the dome of the first Telephone Tower (1894) is visible." (Norwich, O.I.: A Johannesburg Album; Historical Postcards, postcard 82).



HISTORY:

"From modest beginnings as a single basement shop selling women's fashions, the Edgars Group has become an internationally recognised organisation with over 730 stores, covering 680 791m2, throughout South Africa and surrounding areas. Founders Morris and Eli Ross would be proud of their creation. They would also be proud of the Group's modus operandi of making the customer king as well as creating a highly motivated work force. The Group was a subsidiary of South Africa Breweries from 1982 until January 1999. In June that year the Edgars Group, previously known as Edgars Stores Limited, began trading on the Johannesburg stock exchange as Edgars Consolidated Stores Limited -

listed as Edcon in the retail sector - a name more accurately reflecting the function of the Group. The Edcon Group is comprised of the following companies: Edgars, Sales House, Jet, Cuthberts, ABC, Smiley's and the Manufacturing Division." (Information sourced from <http://www.profile.co.za>)

"On the 6th September 1929, the first Edgars store opened in Joubert Street, Johannesburg. Over the past 73 years, the company has grown to six retail brands, over 720 facias in the 443 store locations throughout South Africa and the neighbouring territories of Namibia, Botswana, Swaziland and Lesotho. In August 2000, Edgars went live with the largest online clothing offering of any South African retailer. Our customers and staff are at the forefront of our corporate values, as we strive to be the stores of choice in our various market segments in Southern Africa for clothing, footwear, home textiles and accessories. We do this through our different retail formats. Edgars, incorporating the ABC shoe stores, is a department store, targeting the middle to upper market segments with a predominant focus in the larger shopping malls and downtown metropolitan areas. The middle to lower market segments are covered by the United Retail discount formats, trading as Jet, Sales House, Cuthberts and Smileys. We continue to align our retail brands and store sizes to meet the changing needs of our customers in the malls and on the high street. The company first began trading on the JSE in 1946. In June 1999, Edgars Consolidated Stores Limited embraced the spirit of the new millennium and began trading on the JSE as Edcon." (Information sourced from www.edgars.co.za)



"The Claude Harris Leon Foundation is a charitable trust, resulting from a bequest by Claude Leon (1884 - 1972)...A founder and managing director of the Elephant Trading Company, a wholesale business based in Johannesburg, Claude Leon also helped develop several well-known South African companies, including Edgars, OK Bazaars and the mining house Anglo Transvaal (later Anglovaal). He served for many years on the Council of the University of the Witwatersrand, which in 1971 awarded him an honorary Doctorate of Law." (Information sourced from <http://www.leonfoundation.co.za/foundation-history.html>)

Right: 1956: Copy of advertisement taken from *Seventy Golden Years*. (Stark, F. [Ed.]: *Seventy Golden Years...*).

GENERAL NOTES:

- Estimated cost of building :
- Estimated cost of drainage :
- Accommodation approved :
- Valuation at completion :
- Occupied :

PREVIOUS TENANTS:

By 1954: John Murray & Co, Government Sworn Appraisers; J Murray & Co, Loss and Accident Assessors; Jackson-Lipman Corporation, "Representing the McCall Corporation, New York and London..."

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:

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Unless otherwise indicated photographs by Catharina JM Bruwer.



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