

JOHANNESBURG METROPOLITAN MUNICIPALITY

HERITAGE ASSESSMENT SURVEYING FORM

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

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NAME OF PLACE: CITY CENTRE BUILDING



Top: View of street facades of building in 2003.

Centre top: Shown in this photo taken in 1998, is the original cladding to the podium of the building. (Johannesburg Building, Space & Urban Feature Classification, 1998: Inner City).

Top right: View of building and its President Street neighbour, i.e. the *Milady's Building*. Bottom right: Looking down Joubert Street is the *City*



Centre Building, and in its rear, its tall neighbour, the *second Glencairn Building*.

Previous/alternative name/s :

LOCATION: Street : Joubert
 Street number : 36
 : [36, 38 Joubert, 64 President]
 Stand Number : 4550
 Previous Stand Number: originally 366, 367; by 1976 - 4550 F; by 1998 – 4550, 368
 Block number : AB
 GIS reference :

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

DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:

Height : tower - 181'32"; podium - 98'8"
 Levels above street level : seven
 Levels below street level : one
 On-site parking :

At completion, this was a well-proportioned and perfectly balanced podium and tower building. The new cladding to the podium, however, is unattractive and has created the impression of a building comprising of two separate parts, with a resultant lack of unity between its tower and podium.

CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS:

Walls:

Roof:

Windows:

SITE FEATURES:

ALTERATIONS:

INTEGRITY:

One of the most striking elements of the building is the unusual design of its podium. The new podium cladding, however, has an adverse effect on the aesthetic qualities of the building.

INSCRIPTION:

ARCHITECT:

Abramowitch, Pinshaw, Schneider & Sacks.

BUILDER:

CONSTRUCTION DATE:

Date on plans : 27 December 1965; 5 January 1966
Approval of plans : 21 August 1967
Completion date :

BUILDING STYLE:

Johannesburg Late Modernist.

BUILDING TYPE:

Shops to street and office building.

ENVIRONMENT:

The original design of the building was more in sympathy to the buildings in its immediate surround. The new cladding (including the choice of its colour), is in sharp contrast to not only the scale and the materials of the building itself, but of that of its neighbours, particularly the *Milady's Building*. The *City Centre Building* does however, acknowledge the *Milady's Building* by the extension of its fenestration to match the roofline of the *Milady's Building*.

CONDITION:

URGENT ACTION:

SAHRA RECORD REGARDING ALTERATIONS, RENOVATIONS, RESTORATION:

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

General protection:	Section 34(1) structure/s	<input type="checkbox"/>
Formal protection:	provincial heritage site	<input type="checkbox"/>
	national heritage site	<input type="checkbox"/>

- 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: Jaqwen Properties (Pty) Ltd.

PRE-HISTORY OF SITE:

FIRST GLENCAIRN BUILDINGS:

The first *Glencairn Buildings* were not located on the exact site of the second *Glencairn Building*, but at 64 President, 32, 34, 36, 38 Joubert, and 71 Market Streets section of this city block. The *City Centre* and part of the second *Glencairn Building* (AB-1) now occupy this position.

Right: According to Norwich, the first *Glencairn Buildings* was an “imposing four-storey building on the corner of President and Joubert Streets. (c. 1898). The corner ground floor shop is the familiar outfitters, Brimson and Rough. Many people today [i.e. 1986], especially the men, who went to school in early Johannesburg will remember being fitted out here with their school clothes and colours.” (Norwich, O.I.: A Johannesburg Album; Historical Postcards, postcard 12).



Palestrant describes the first *Glencairn Buildings* as follows: “Despite the depression that followed the raid (i.e. Jameson Raid in 1896), there was a steady improvement in the buildings of the town, which began to take on a more solid appearance. The new Post Office...(i.e. in Rissik Street) The (first) Glencairn Building was erected that year by JCI Investment Co. (sic. This should read JCI Co. or Johannesburg Consolidated Investment Co. Ltd.) and was regarded as one of the finest blocks in Town.” (Palestrant, E.: Johannesburg One Hundred).

According to Shorten, 1898 (i.e. the year when the first *Glencairn Buildings* was erected) was a tragic year for the Johannesburg Consolidated Investment Company. “Nine months after the death at sea of its founder, Barney Barnato, the new Chairman, Woolf Joel, nephew of Barnato and brother of Solomon, was shot in his office and in the presence of Harold Strange by a mysterious figure generally known as Kurt von Veltheim and whose real surname is believed to have been Kurte. Von Veltheim, who was attempting to blackmail Joel, was arrested and charged with murder. At his trial, which lasted nine days, he pleaded self-defence, claiming that he had used his own gun only when Joel was about to fire on him. After retiring for five minutes the jury of nine men found him not guilty to the astonishment of the presiding judge, Mr. Justice Morice, who recorded his disagreement with the verdict. President Kruger ordered the re-arrest of Von Veltheim and his deportation. Subsequently, he served a long term of imprisonment in England for blackmail. Then, in 1923, he was again discovered in Johannesburg and deported. Five years later he was arrested at the Halfway House Hotel on the Pretoria Road and after serving one month’s imprisonment for having entered the country illegally, he was put aboard the Watusi which sailed from Cape Town for London and that was the last South Africa heard of him.” (Shorten, J.R.: The Johannesburg Saga).

Neame describes how the first *Glencairn Buildings* was gutted by a disastrous fire on the night of 28 May 1908: "...thousands of people witnessed the most tragic fire in the annals of the town. It broke out in a ground floor shop in Glencairn Buildings a long four-storey structure in Joubert Street extending from President Street to Market Street and opposite the entrance to the Standard Theatre. In the three upper storeys there were some offices, but most of the rooms were occupied as flats, and scores of people slept in the building. The fire began in a shop at the foot of the wooden staircase, which at once caught alight and burnt fiercely. There was an escape stairway at the back, though few of the residents seemed to know of it, and soon there were men, women and children at the upper windows calling for help. The Fire Brigade was quickly on the scene but was hampered by the crowds, and rescue work was difficult. Ladders were run up to the windows and tarpaulins were held by the firemen, into which some of the residents jumped. Two men were suffocated in their rooms. A third tried to jump into a sheet held by the firemen but missed it and fell into the roadway and died from his injuries. A woman also died in hospital from the injuries she received. The disaster was followed by an agitation for stricter regulations in the matter of escape exists from buildings, and it was said that numerous old buildings in the town were veritable death-traps in case of fire." (Neame, L.E.: *City Built On Gold*).

By 1954 tenant: Hashomer Halzair Club, 81/3, Glencairn Building.

HISTORY:

GENERAL NOTES:

Estimated cost of building : R177 800
Estimated cost of drainage : R2 000
Accommodation approved :
Valuation at completion :
Occupied :

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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