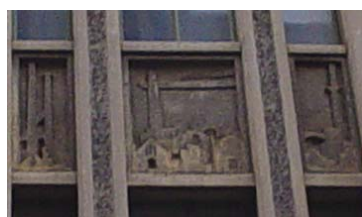


**JOHANNESBURG METROPOLITAN MUNICIPALITY****HERITAGE ASSESSMENT SURVEYING FORM**

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

JJ Bruwer ©

Cellphone: 082 325 5823

**NAME OF PLACE: DUNVEGAN CHAMBERS**

Previous/alternative name/s :

**LOCATION:** Street : cnr Joubert, Pritchard  
Street number :  
: (46 Joubert, 66 Pritchard)  
Stand Number : 4807  
Previous Stand Number: originally 1669; by 1976 - 673  
Block number : AC  
GIS reference :

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

**DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:**

Height : 119'0"  
Levels above street level : 11  
Levels below street level : one  
On-site parking :

The following description of the building is provided by Chipkin: "Central vertical fins occur on both street elevations of Dunvegan Chambers, built in 1934 at the corner of Pritchard and Joubert streets to provide suites for city-centre dentists and other professional tenants. These fins rise seven floors; recessed initially as window mullions, they then emerge dramatically as three-dimensional fetish objects up to the roof-line. Again, these surface insignia clearly carry the emotional charge of cult objects of the 1930s – related as they are to the majestic, streamlined tail-plane of Sir Malcolm Campbell's famous Bluebird racing-car, which at that time had usurped the world and land speed record, just as Vickers Supermarine aircraft had annexed the Schneider Trophy." (Chipkin, C.M.: Johannesburg Style; Architecture & Society...).

The plaster relief panels, adorning the main facades of the building between the first and second, and second and third storeys, according to Chipkin, depict "smoke and pollution as signs of progress". The panels also portray an interesting collection of animal species and gold mining activities. (Chipkin, C.M.: Johannesburg Style; Architecture & Society...).

"By 1930 the Traditional Style had" according to Van Der Waal, "become the basis for stylistic renewal, as was manifested by the imitation rustic work, pillars, pilasters and mouldings used together with, for example, Art Deco Form and ornamentation elements in *Astor Mansions* (1931-2), 178 Jeppe Street. The Ahistorical Style appeared on the scene shortly afterwards, but embellishments were still based on the Art Deco style medium. A good example of this was *Dunvegan Chambers*...with its relief panels on the lower storeys of the middle section and the ornamentation running over the top of the corner sections. 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. An early example of the use of crested arches was to be found in the second *Castle Mansions* (1930-2)...87/9.91/3 Eloff Street (see AE-2), whose façade, shorn of all ornamentation, represented one of the first applications of the Ahistorical Style in Johannesburg. Compared with *Astor Mansions* and *Dunvegan Chambers*, whose bay windows still echoed the traditional (domestic) architecture, *Castle Mansions* with its singly textured façade made a particularly modern impression." (Van Der Waal, G-M.: From Mining Camp to Metropolis...).

The following explanation offered by Van Der Waal, bears particular relevance to the reinforced concrete pavement canopy of the *Dunvegan Chambers*: "...While the commercial buildings were vertically orientated, especially in the upper portions of their facades, they did not entirely escape the force of the strong horizontal lines and planes of the display windows and pavement hoods. Verandahs with their pillars began to be replaced by cantilever pavement covers in the early 1930s, but such hoods were first used in the *Paramount Building* (see AE-1) as early as 1911. In Johannesburg this change-over was more gradual than in Sydney, Australia, where new building regulations introduced in 1912 banned verandahs altogether...Initially, Johannesburg's hoods were fitted with bearer beams on the underside. Later however, beams were placed on the upper side of the hood to leave an uncluttered ceiling over the pavement. The effect of this practice was that the hoods, together with the long bands of display windows, reinforced the suggestion of horizontal movement in the smooth street and pavement surfaces." (Van Der Waal, G-M.: From Mining Camp to Metropolis...).

The *Dunvegan Chambers* can hardly be described as a modern skyscraper, but in comparison to its immediate 'earth-bound' neighbours, the following description offered by Van Der Waal, helps to better understand the design intentions manifested in the *Dunvegan Chambers*: "With the growing number of skyscrapers constructed in a large section of the city centre... Johannesburg began to resemble a mini New York in the 1920s and 1930 – an extraordinary achievement for a city so young. Thus the city was given many flattering sobriquets, such as 'Wonder of the Modern World' and 'Miracle of the Empire'...The outstanding feature of the cityscape was its youthfulness, the 'oldest' tradition of the city. C H Sayce remarked in 1948: 'a youthful vigour...is the spirit of the place'. This boundless energy was used to prise open the shape and three-dimensional form of the centre, thereby replacing the pristine shelter effect by a bold configuration of building blocks of up to 20 storeys in various parts of the city centre. At the same time the verticality and rectangularity of the building masses shifted the attention in large measure from the material to the cerebral. It seemed as if the buildings, by their very height and emphasis on simple stereometry, broke away from the earth-bound sentiments which marked the previous periods." (The definition of a skyscraper according to Van Der Waal is: "On the whole the word 'skyscraper' means: a multi-storey building with a steel or reinforced concrete frame which supports the weight of the building. The development of this method of building dates

from the 1880's in Chicago where it was applied in conjunction with the installation of high speed electric elevators.") (Van Der Waal, G-M.: From Mining Camp to Metropolis...).

#### **CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS:**

Walls: concrete skeleton structure, plastered burnt brick walls.

Roof flat, concrete with Malthoid cover.

Windows: steel frame; side hung casement and ventilator.

Foundations: concrete.

Floors: marble floors on ground floor.

According to Evenwel, a skeleton construction is "method of construction consisting of a framework...and an outer covering which takes no load...The skeleton may be visible from the outside...a structure whose weight is carried by the framework instead of by load-bearing walls. The term includes modern steel and reinforced concrete structures..." (Evenwel, J.K.: Modern Building Methods).

#### **SITE FEATURES:**

#### **ALTERATIONS:**

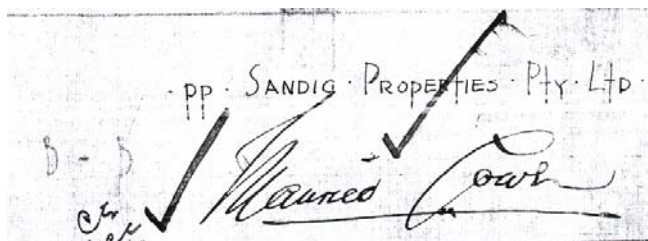
No plans found.

#### **INTEGRITY:**

#### **INSCRIPTION:**

"In March 2003 South Africa hosts the Seventh Annual World Congress on Art Deco. This will be held in Cape Town and to link into this, Jo'burg is erecting plaques on buildings evidencing the Art Deco theme. We start with the TOP TWENTY – great buildings in the Inner City will be identified by means of distinctive blue and white heritage plaques. A further forty buildings of similar merit will follow in the hall of fame. These include more in the centre of town but also those spread across Johannesburg, noticeably blocks of flats. Art Deco was not just the preserve of the wealthy corporates (sic.)- it belonged to everyone, and the purpose of this project is to highlight a period in the history of Jo'burg which created a valuable architectural and social treasure. Some of these buildings are, sadly, deteriorating but dilapidation and decay cannot conceal the glorious and exuberant architecture." (Information sourced from [Art Deco Plaques\main.htm](#))

"Designed in 1934 by J.C. Cook & Cowen for Samuel Sandeg & Son (Proprietary) Limited (\*sic.), Boksburg, this 10-storey unpainted concrete block offered suites for dentists and other professional tenants. The building contrasts with its late-Victorian neighbours to the east. Note the sculpted relief decoration depicting scenes of industry and progress on the Rand. The vertical fins rise 7 floors, initially as window mullions and then emerge dramatically up to the roofline." (Information sourced from [Art Deco Plaques\list2.htm](#))



\*Note the owners' name. Extract from original municipal submission drawings by JC. Cook & Cowen, and signed by Maurice Cowen on behalf of the owners.

#### **ARCHITECT:**

J.C. Cook & Cowen.

#### **BUILDER:**

**CONSTRUCTION DATE:**

Date on plans : 25 July 1933  
Approval of plans : 4 May 1933  
Completion date : 27 Sept 1934

**BUILDING STYLE:**

Art Deco - New York.

"Architectural Merit (and) Artwork of Merit: A fine art deco skyscraper with inlaid decorative (sic.) panels". (Johannesburg Building, Space & Urban Feature Classification, 1998: Inner City).

**BUILDING TYPE:**

Shops to street and office building.

**ENVIRONMENT:**

The following interesting comparison between the *Dunvegan Chambers*, and the *Cuthberts Building* (see AC-7) and *H.W. Markham Building* (see AD-7), is drawn by Chipkin: "Dunvegan Chambers must be seen in the context of the Victorian profiles of its neighbours, Markham's Building and also Cuthberts Building. The verticality and modishness of Dunvegan Chambers are an attempt to catch the eye and upstage its late-Victorian neighbours, and provide a clear example of how new styling is used to discredit old eclecticism." (Chipkin, C.M.: Johannesburg Style; Architecture & Society...).

Here in Pritchard Street, between Joubert and Eloff Streets, is to be found one of the most interesting collections of buildings in the City, all designed by the well known architectural practice of J.C. Cook & Cowen. This collection, which clearly illustrates the diversified talents of J.C. Cook and Maurice Cowen, comprises of the *Dunvegan Chambers*, *The Royalty Building* (see AC-5), and the *Hilson House* (see AC-6). The dominant member of this ensemble of buildings, no doubt, is the *Dunvegan Chambers*, which notwithstanding the difference in scale, form and materials between this building and its neighbours to the east, continues to show valuable qualities of interconnectedness with the *Royalty Building*, and the *Hilson House*. The effect of its dominance furthermore, tends to be countered by the imposing architecture of the *Cuthberts Building* on the southwestern corner of Pritchard and Eloff Streets.

**CONDITION:**

Mention was made of the deterioration of the condition of the building in the RAU Survey report of 1976. Thus, it was recommended that the plasterwork should be restored where necessary, and that the building should be cleaned-up. Thirty years have passed since it was recommended that the deteriorating condition of the building be arrested. Nothing has been done to the building, which now shows of serious disrepair.

**URGENT ACTION:**

Urgent action is required to restore the plaster relief panels and other sections of the building.

**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: Samuel Sandig & Son Pty Ltd, Boksburg.; Sandig Properties.

By 1976: Rudge Properties Pty Ltd, c/o Stewart Steyn & Co, Prudential Assurance Building, Johannesburg.

**PRE-HISTORY OF SITE:**

**HISTORY:**

**GENERAL NOTES:**

Estimated cost of building	: £33500
Estimated cost of drainage	: £1100
Accommodation approved	:
Valuation at completion	: £26500
Occupied	:

In the 1930s, the building was considered as one of the most modern office buildings of its kind in Johannesburg. It was consequently recommended from the RAU Survey of 1976, that the building should be declared as a National Monument (i.e. in terms of the former National Monuments Act, 1969).

In a letter to Mr J Hugo, Director: City Planning, City of Johannesburg dated 25th May 1992, Mrs Flo Bird then Chairperson of the Transvaal Plans Committee of the former NMC, enquired 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 Cuthberts (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 (sic.) 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 (see AC-1)."

**PREVIOUS TENANT:**

By 1954: London Fur Co.

**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.















































25 1 2004

Blue banner with a graphic of a person's head and shoulders.

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