

JOHANNESBURG METROPOLITAN MUNICIPALITY

HERITAGE ASSESSMENT SURVEYING FORM

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

NAME OF PLACE: Lewis and Marks Building

Previous/alternative name/s : Lewis & Marks Building
1995 – Sage Life Towers

LOCATION: Street : President
Street number : 63, 65
Street : Fraser
Street number : 41, 43
Stand number : 5180 (previously 724, 725, 726)
Block number : P

ZONING: Current use/s : Business one
Previous use/s :

DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:

One basement level; ground floor; 12 floors and roof.

CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS:

Walls : brick, cladding.

Roof : flat, concrete.

Windows:

SITE FEATURES:

ALTERATIONS:

None of the original plans of the building could be found. Neither could any records in regard to alterations / additions prior to 1984 be located.

This is rather unfortunate, considering the importance of the former building and its subsequent conversion, and the difficulty to fully assess how this conversion was actually effected. The conversion was attended to as an integral part of the construction of the Estromin Building (now the Sage Life Towers), which had the effect of clouding the issue even further. Worth mentioning also is the fact that it was originally planned to demolish the building. See GENERAL NOTES. The conversion of the building was not done in consultation with SAHRA and no record of a permit in respect of any such work could be found.

Not all documentation in respect of alterations/additions to this building, could be found.

The refurbishment of Lewis and Marks Building included the following:

The existing canopy was removed; granite cladding to existing columns on ground floor; new shop fronts; glass curtain wall to façade in between columns (glass S 10 silver bronze); walls with plaster and gamma zenith; existing windows on first floor removed and bricked up; new dog-leg stairs to each floor; second to eight floors, all existing windows removed and new glass curtain wall installed; new partitions to floors; existing stair and walls to basement removed and converted to parking space; on the exterior new steel stair connecting the building to the Estromin Building (now the Sage Life Towers); internal stairs on ground floor removed; new suspended ceiling to all floors.

On plan : 1984, 1985, 1986

Architect : E.I. Graff, Kruger Associates Incorporated

INTEGRITY:

See ALTERATIONS.

INSCRIPTION:

ARCHITECT/BUILDER:

Kallenbach, Kennedy & Furner
(See GENERAL NOTES)

CONSTRUCTION DATE:

On plan : 22 October 1935

Completed : 20 July 1937

BUILDING STYLE:

“n Tipiese voorbeeld van die Amerikaanse kantoorgeboustyl. Hierdie bouwerk was een van die eerste geboue wat ontwerp is om van alle kante af as een boumassa ervaar te word. Aan die agterkant van die gebou is die ekspressiewe skulpturale trap van gewapende beton iets besonders in die argitektuur- ontwikkeling van Johannesburg. (RAU Report, June, 1976)

BUILDING TYPE:

Office and shops to street building.

ENVIRONMENT:

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 | <input 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:

NOTES:

DEEDS INFORMATION:

Original ownership: African & European Investment Co

By 1976 – Johannesburg City Council

T31072/1984 Estromin Prop & Inv Pty Ltd
BC20864/1985C Bornman Jan Carel Pieter Landman
B32843/2002 Standard Bank of South Africa Ltd
B38640/2002 Sage Life Ltd
T53580/2002 Apexhi Prop Ltd

PRE-HISTORY OF SITE:

The Heatherley Building stood on the corner of this stand by 1890. By ca. 1901 however, a double storey building with balustrade and two neo-Queen Anne gables occupied the corner of President and Simmonds Streets. On the stand next to it (i.e. in President Street) by 1889, were two small corrugated iron structures; of which the western structure was replaced (in ca. 1910) with a single storey structure with two little pointed gables.

By ca. 1917, the first Lewis & Marks Building, had replaced all the former buildings. It was a three storey structure with a curved gable, an open balcony on the corner, balustrades and a verandah. The architecture of this building in fact, represented the first experimental application of the Neo-Cape Dutch mode in commercial buildings within the city centre. (Van Der Waal)

HISTORY:

Isaac Lewis and his cousin, Senator S. Marks were born in the Russian town of Neustadt. In their late teens they immigrated, first to England and later to South Africa, arriving at Cape Town in 1868.

The two men started as merchants in Cape Town and did very well. When diamonds were discovered at Kimberley they started doing business there. They soon became well established, and were able to form one of the first public diamond-mining companies. Success followed their effort in every direction, and they began to buy enormous tracts of land in the Transvaal and Free State, on both banks of the Vaal River, where Vereeniging is now situated. The area of freehold land directly under their control covered at one stage a total of over three million acres in various parts of Southern Africa, branching out in every direction of industry, land, agriculture and various kinds of mining activities. General de la Rey was one of the company's transport riders. Mr Marks on one occasion remarked that if he had his life over again he would put all his ground under trees. The Maccauvlei Forest was obviously his pet project.

Messrs Lewis & Marks early foresaw the vast potentialities of the steel industry in South Africa, and were instrumental in forming the Union Steel Corporation in 1911.

The two partners became great friends of President Kruger, who extended to them practical support of their various schemes.

The headquarters of the Lewis & Marks Group in South Africa were at Lewis & Marks Buildings, Johannesburg.

GENERAL NOTES:

Was recommended in the RAU Survey Report that the building be declared as a National Monument.

W.r.t. the Kallenbach, Kennedy & Furner practice: Stanley Furner designed the synagogue in Benoni (1933-35) – “a major work reflecting early modern ideas in the Transvaal. The foundation stone of the building was laid in 1933. (Chipkin: Architecture & Style)

By 1938 according to Chipkin, “there were four real skyscrapers in the city centre: Anstey’s (1935-7), at 17 storeys, Lewis & Marks (1935-7), at 14 storeys, Escom House (1935-7), at 21 storeys, and the Chrysler House (1936-8), at 16 storeys...What Johannesburg wanted in 1936 was New York skyscrapers... And that is what the four ziggurats provided: seductive images of material progress and an illusion of New York situated in far-flung Africa. For more than a decade these towers occupied a special place in Johannesburg’s psyche.”

Chipkin – “The Lewis & Marks Building was originally built as headquarters office block for the giant Lewis & Marks entrepreneurial organisation. A giant sandcastle of a building, it comprises a central tower block set back from the street boundaries and surrounded symmetrically by lesser towers in a strongly form composition. On the exterior, vertical modules rise up from a podium to meet the sky without horizontal termination. These broad, uninterrupted vertical strips with recessed spandrels at each floor level incorporate the structure and locate the cellular windows, but although they are compatible with load-bearing forces, they not a true reflection of vertical structure. Rather, they devolve from the idea of verticality derived from New York, the epicentre of capitalist development. There Raymond Hood had established the formula of the simplified, modular Skyscraper Style for the Daily News Building (1930); this was taken up and developed in the massive building programme at the Rockefeller Center, which was commenced in 1931 after a long period of gestation. No foreign architect could ignore these definitive architectural statement about the multiplicity of anonymous cellular compartments required by giant complex organisations. The Lewis & Marks Building, having absorbed this skyscraper formalism, is a truncated version of the Rockefeller Center buildings, reflecting both functional needs and ideological association.”

The rear elevation of this stunted skyscraper of the Highveld embodies a change of scale. Here a set of cantilevered, helical fire-escape stairs demonstrates the plastic potential of reinforced concrete. As in so many other Johannesburg buildings, dramatic architectural elements occur unseen on the back court elevations; it is here that we find the prelude to the emergence of the Modern Movement in Johannesburg.

That this conclusion is not fanciful can be demonstrated by reference to other examples. The Lewis & Marks Building was designed by the practice of Kallenbach, Kennedy & Furner. There are startling rear elevations to several Kallenbach, Kennedy & Furner buildings. Constantia Court (1934), on the western perimeter of Joubert Park, is a vast, well-proportioned apartment block with modern Furner-esque street elevations. At the rear of the building there are two sets of remarkable reinforced-concrete spiral fire-escape stairs, At the back of Manners Mansions there is a geometrical interplay of bulging Expressionist forms, and at the rear of the Southern Life building in Main Street (1931-41) Corbusier forms made their appearance.

The skyscraper formalism revealed in the Lewis & Marks Building survived as a viable building style for four decades in Johannesburg.”

Chipkin – Mentions the South African consulting engineer F.E. Kanthack. “F.E. Kanthack & Partners were pioneers in the development of raft foundations and gunite as well as specialists in the building of power stations. The firm’s name, in fact, is permanently linked with the design of giant concrete cooling towers, but it would seem that nothing was beyond their capability. They were responsible for the design of the great Vierendeel truss supporting thirteen floors of superstructure at the Escom skyscraper. And they were responsible, too, for the reinforced-concrete design of the Lewis & Marks skyscraper, where one of the great monuments to reinforced-concrete construction in Johannesburg during the 1930s occur. This is the helical free-form fire-escape at the rear of the building which, with its magnificent sculptural form, reveals the plastic potential of reinforced concrete as a building material.”

The following is quoted from a letter dd. 31 October 1983 from E I Graff Kruger Associates Inc Architects to the Town Planning Department, City Council in connection with parking requirements. It clearly shows the original intention to demolish the Lewis and Marks Building and how it eventually happened that its conversion was integrally handled within the overall planning pertaining to the new Estromin Building (now the Sage Life Towers).

“RE: OFFICES AND CAR PARKING AS FOLLOWS:
ESTROMIN ON STAND NO'S 730/731/732 JOHANNESBURG
LEWIS AND MARKS ON STAND NO'S 724/725/726 JOHANNESBURG
SAGE CENTRE ON STAND NO'S CONSOLODATED LOT 4636 JOHANNESBURG

With the exception of Sage Centre the above properties are wholly owned by Sage Properties Limited. Sage Properties Limited have a majority share in Sage Centre.

Sage Properties Limited have instructed us to prepare drawings of a new office building for Estromin and to submit them to your council for approval. It will be observed from the drawings that a parking garage in terms of clause 50 of the Johannesburg Planning Scheme (1979) has been incorporated and in terms of clause 50 (3) (a) and (b) Attorneys have been instructed to prepare the documentation for a servitude over the car parking basement in Sage Centre in favour of Estromin for access to their car parking basement.

Our clients have further instructed us to remove the accommodation currently situated in the basement of Lewis and Marks and rearrange the accommodation to allow for car parking accessable [sic.] off the car parking basement in Sage Centre. Accordingly Attorneys have been instructed to prepare the documentation for the registration of a servitude over the car parking basement in Sage Centre in favour of Lewis and Marks to permit access to their parking garage.

It is our client's intention to eventually demolish Lewis and Marks Building and consolidate the site with the Estromin Building site and build a new office building and parking garage linked with the new Estromin Building. When this building programme has been completed the servitudes over Sage Centre in favour of Estromin and Lewis and Marks will be cancelled and access to the combined Estromin and Lewis and Marks car parking basement will be by way of the ramp off Pritchard Street currently shown on the drawings on the Estromin site.

This letter has therefore been written to explain why an additional ramp over and above the one giving access to the car parking garage in Sage Centre and the building on the balance of the block will be owned seperately [sic.] at some time in the future and they must therefore be able to function completely independantly [sic.] of one another..”

SOURCES:

Opname Historiese Geboue In Johannesburg, Second Report June 1976, Inner City, RAU

Chipkin, C.M: Johannesburg Style; Architecture & Society, 1880s – 1960s, David Philip, 1993

The Market Square Of Johannesburg: Catalogue of buildings on and around the square till about 1920 (Compiled by G.M. van der Waal), Public Library, Johannesburg, 1971

Van Der Waal, G-M.: From Mining Camp to Metropolis, The buildings of Johannesburg 1886-1940, Chris Van Rensburg Publications, 1987

City Engineering Department, Stand No. 5180, Township Johannesburg (Planning Dept., City of Johannesburg)

Registrar of Deeds, Johannesburg

RECORDED BY:

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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