

JOHANNESBURG METROPOLITAN MUNICIPALITY

HERITAGE ASSESSMENT SURVEYING FORM

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

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NAME OF PLACE: PROVINCIAL BUILDING

Left: view of restored façade of the *Provincial Building* at BE-3.

Above: corner Commissioner and Rissik Streets.

Previous/alternative name/s : by 1954 - *E.P.B.S. Building*

LOCATION: Street : Commissioner
 Street number : 104
 Stand Number : portion of 1263
 Previous Stand Number: 229
 Block number : BE
 Suburb : Marshallstown
 GIS reference :

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

DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:

Height :
 Levels above street level :
 Levels below street level :
 On-site parking :

The neo-classical façade of the *Provincial Building* forms the centrepiece on Commissioner Street, of the *second Surrey House*.

CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS:

Walls: concrete frame construction, plastered brick.

Roof: corrugated iron.

Windows: timber frame.

SITE FEATURES:

ALTERATIONS:

INTEGRITY:

Although the body of the *Provincial Building* was demolished, the retained façade of the building still stands proud, having been successfully incorporated in the north elevation of the *second Surrey House*. The slightly lower height of the podium has the effect of accentuating the old façade.

INSCRIPTION:

ARCHITECT:

Reid & Martin.

BUILDER:

CONSTRUCTION DATE:

Date on plans : 1926

Approval of plans :

Completion date :

BUILDING STYLE:

FAÇADE:

“Architectural Merit and Workmanship of Merit: The remaining façade that was kept by the design team is very finely articulated with mouldings and fenestration. The new building is very eclectic (sic.) using the old façade but only superficially because the flavour is distinctly of late J.H.B modernism. The success of the building is primarily in the accommodation of the old façade in then (sic.) new.” (Johannesburg Building, Space & Urban Feature Classification, 1998: Inner City).

BUILDING TYPE:

Street sculpture.

ENVIRONMENT:

CONDITION:

Good.

URGENT ACTION:

SAHRA RECORD REGARDING ALTERATIONS, RENOVATIONS, RESTORATION:

The restoration and incorporation of the main façade of the subject building was authorised by the former NMC and a complete record of this appears is to be found on SAHRA archive file 9/2/228/73: Triangle and Provincial Building, Commissioner Street, Johannesburg.

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)

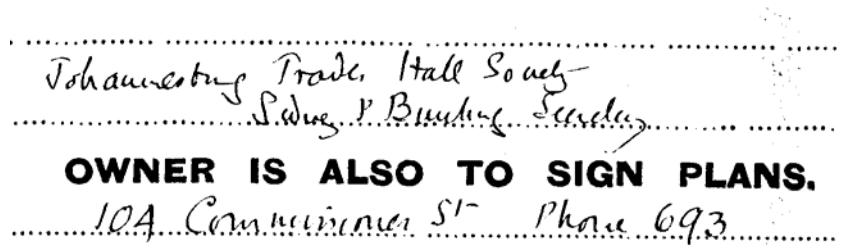
NOTES:

DEEDS INFORMATION:

Original ownership:

PRE-HISTORY OF SITE:

The original Application for Approval of Plans form for the proposed new *Trades Hall* buildings at 63 Rissik Street, dated August 1913, was signed by Sydney P Bunting, then Honorary Secretary of the Johannesburg Trades Hall Society. By 1917, Bunting held the position of Secretary of this Society. It is interesting that Bunting, on an Application for Approval of Plans forms dated 22 December 1916 (see extract from form on right), gave his work address as 104 Commissioner Street, i.e. the site where the *Provincial Building* would be erected in 1926.



“South African Communism was further linked with that of Russia through men like Sam Barlin of the Orange Free State, and Sidney (P.) Bunting, of Johannesburg – both prominent South African Communists. (Chilvers, H.A.: *Out of the Crucible*).

HISTORY:

In May 1989, Wreckers (Pty) Ltd. applied to the City of Johannesburg for clearance to demolish the *Provincial Building* and *Triangle House*, situated on Stands 229 and 737, Marshallstown, respectively. The *Provincial Building* was shown to comprise of a basement (one level), a ground floor shop, and three floors of offices. The *Triangle House* consisted of a basement (one level), two office floors, and corrugated iron roof. According to the applicant, the buildings were to make way for a new multi-storey office development by Old Mutual Properties. On being informed of this, the NMC indicated that the buildings were both of aesthetic value and called for a meeting with the architects for the new development “to discuss ways of preserving these (i.e. the buildings) in whole or part.”

In a letter dated 11 July 1989 to Old Mutual properties, the NMC again pointed to the conservation value of both buildings: “The buildings have aesthetic and historical interest. 1. Triangle House is the older building. Unfortunately no building plans were available at the City Council’s offices so the exact date of construction and the identity of the architect are not known. It is certainly a rare example of this small scale development in the C.B.D. 2. Provincial Buildings, constructed in 1926 to the design of Hill Mitchelson, was identified in the R.A.U. reports as worthy of conservation. It is a gracefully proportioned and detailed building of small scale.”

In a letter dated 21 November 1990, the NMC informed the architects responsible for the new development, i.e. Portal Partnership Inc., of its decision to permit the demolition of *Triangle House* and the body of the *Provincial Building*, subject to the in situ intact retention and restoration of the front elevation of the latter building and the re-instatement of its shop fronts. To ensure the integrity of the *Provincial Building* façade, it was insisted that the new buildings should be set back not less than one metre from the street boundary at ground level; the canopy of the new building was not to be taken across or chip onto the *Provincial Building* façade; the end walls were to “be treated as party

walls, using the same material from the parapet to street level; shops fronts were to terminate at the party walls; the existing roof profile of the *Provincial Building* was to "be returned to meet the new building façade at the respective upper levels..."

Demolition permits for the *Triangle House* and the body of the *Provincial Building* were issued by the NMC on 30 November 1990. This enabled Old Mutual Properties to proceed with its development, known as the Surrey House Development. It was anticipated to complete the new nine-storey office building by September 1992. The responsible professional team included Portal Partnership Inc. (Architects), Kampel Abramovitz Yawitch & Partners (Structural Engineers and Giuricich Bros (Pty) Ltd. (Main Contractor).

The restoration and incorporation of the main elevation of the *Provincial Building* in the *second Surrey House*, included plaster repairs to the front and sides of the old façade, new timber casement windows, the restoration of the old flag post and the complete redecoration of the façade. See attachment.



Above: The Star, 24 February 1991

GENERAL NOTES:

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

PREVIOUS TENANTS:

By 1954: JH Isaacs & Co Ltd; 102a - Brighton Furnishers and The Century Insurance Company Limited.

Surrey House Complex lateral support & piling contract

Esor Geotechnical Engineering had all the necessary in house skills for the completion of the facade retention lateral support and internal piling contract for Old Mutual Properties' latest development in the Johannesburg CBD.

One of the criteria for the development's acceptance was the incorporation of the old Provincial Building facade, into the design of the new structure.

Consulting engineers Lillicrap Crutchfield were responsible for overseeing a demolition contract of which the facade retention operation formed an integral part.

The system devised was a joint effort between Lillicrap Crutchfield, Wreckers and Esor. Four prestressed triatic towers were affixed to the inside face of the facade and supported on steel frames anchored to the face of the basement excavation by 2 x 1 000 kN ground anchors extending 20 m under Commissioner Street.

Subsequent to the demolition contract six 600 mm diameter auger piles were installed adjacent to the steel frames which together with some lattice steelwork provided the necessary support under the prestressed triatic frames to prevent vertical settlement after excavation.

Another interesting problem relating to the support of an adjacent building also arose. The owners had refused permission for the installation of ground anchors under their building. Esor, the contractor for the lateral support, were flexible enough in their operations to be able to offer an acceptable alternative in conjunction with Consulting engineers KAYP.

The accepted alternative was based on the installation of heavily reinforced cast-in-situ contiguous auger piles 1 000 mm in diameter. In order to minimise the encroachment into the site, the internal face was cast flat by shuttering inside the augered hole prior to casting. The net effect was a D-shaped pile.

Esor was also responsible for the installation of the structural piping which was carried out halfway through the lateral support contract from about 5 m below street level. In total 56 No. augered piles varying in diameter from 450 mm to 1 700 mm were installed.

Esor also installed 204 ground anchors of 450 kN and 600 kN capacity in the 13 m deep excavations.



In line with current trends the permanent retaining walls were constructed as part of the lateral support works by the application of 200 mm thick reinforced gunite, resulting in significant time and cost savings to the client.

Enquiries: Esor Geotechnical Engineering (Pty) Ltd
30 Activia Road, Activia Park, Germiston
PO Box 6478, Dunswart 1508. Tel: (011) 822-3906,
Fax: (011) 822-3112

Enquiry No 88

Below: extract from brochure dated 1994 issued by Old Mutual Properties

Surrey House

INCORPORATING PROVINCIAL HOUSE
COMMISSIONER STREET, JOHANNESBURG

Concern for preserving Johannesburg's historical buildings was the motivation for incorporating the facade of Provincial House into a new eight-floor commercial building in Johannesburg's CBD on a site bounded by Foz, Rissik and Commissioner Streets.

The building, Surrey House, was designed in harmony with the Provincial House facade which dates back to 1926.

Provincial House was designed by architect Hill Mitchellson and its elegant small-scale design with its distinct French influence is considered rare in modern Johannesburg.

The Provincial House facade has been preserved as the centre of the Commissioner Street frontage and the first three floors of Surrey House have been scaled in harmony with the old structure.

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 BPUWER.



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