

JOHANNESBURG METROPOLITAN MUNICIPALITY

HERITAGE ASSESSMENT SURVEYING FORM

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

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NAME OF PLACE: BOSMAN BUILDING



Left: view of Bree Street elevation and of the elevated podium of the building on the southeastern corner of Bree and Joubert Streets. Top right: Bree streetscape. Bottom right: Eloff streetscape.

Previous/alternative name/s :

LOCATION: Street : Eloff
 Street number : 99
 : [97, 99, 101 Eloff; 246, 248, 250, 252 Bree; 68, 70 Joubert]
 Stand Number : 4847
 Previous Stand Number:
 Block number : AS
 GIS reference :

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

DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:

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

"Bosman Building", according to Clive Chipkin, "and Medical City (both Stauch buildings designed in 1963) formed a consistent modern townscape on opposite sides of Eloff Street at the Bree Street intersection. In this respect we observe matching blank end-wall panels; counterpart podiums for pavement shops and car-parking above; identical brass anodised sun-screens to the lower levels; and compatible louvred frontages to the main high-rise accommodation towers above. The high-rise towers represent neat modular statements of professional accommodation protected from direct sun penetration by perimeter sun-screens: adjustable horizontal louvers pivoted between a modular system of freestanding mullions that are bracketed onto projecting floor-slabs. The sun protection and the bold forms on these Eloff Street buildings have a recognisable Brazilian flavour, but it is Brazil Mediated by Pretoria. Bosman Building has a distinctive form, comprising a central tower block with rounded corners, extended up symmetrical above two contiguous lower building masses. The expressed reinforced-concrete structure of the central tower rises up to a roof pergola, the climax of the symmetrical composition, which is a residue of an earlier design by Wayburne & Wayburne." (Chipkin, C.M.: Johannesburg Style; Architecture & Society...).

(Authors' note: the date of design given as 1963, is incorrect, as from Chipkin's own account, the building was already under construction in 1955-6).

CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS:

Walls:

Roof: concrete, flat.

Windows: steel casements with fanlights over.

SITE FEATURES:

ALTERATIONS:

INTEGRITY:

INSCRIPTION:

ARCHITECT:

Wayburne & Wayburne (The building was under construction when it was decided to hand further responsibility to the firm H.W.E. Stauch & Partners, leading to a modification of the Wayburne & Wayburne design. See DESCRIPTION OF PLACE and HISTORY.)

H.W.E. Stauch & Partners.

BUILDER:

CONSTRUCTION DATE:

The podium dates from 1955-6 and the tower (i.e. the upper sections of the building), from 1963-4 (Chipkin, C.M.: Johannesburg Style; Architecture & Society...)

Date on plans : 1956 - 1957 (Chipkin, C.M.: Johannesburg Style; Architecture & Society...)

Approval of plans :

Completion date :

BUILDING STYLE:

Brazilian.

"The sun protection and the bold forms on these Eloff Street buildings have a recognisable Brazilian flavour, but it is Brazil Mediated by Pretoria." (Chipkin, C.M.: Johannesburg Style; Architecture & Society...)

BUILDING TYPE:

Shops and office building.

ENVIRONMENT:

The impressive scale of this landmark building dominates the streetscape in Bree 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: African City Properties Trust.

PRE-HISTORY OF SITE:

ST. JAMES MANSIONS:

“Eloff Street Showing Walter Block and New St James Mansions. The previously noted vacant area on the right side of Eloff Street (see postcard 96, not included) is now occupied by the St James Mansions, and Temple Court beyond it...” (Norwich, O.I.: A Johannesburg Album; Historical Postcards, postcard 97).

In early Johannesburg, people of colour were denied the ‘privilege’ to walk on the City’s pavements as can be clearly seen in the above postcard.



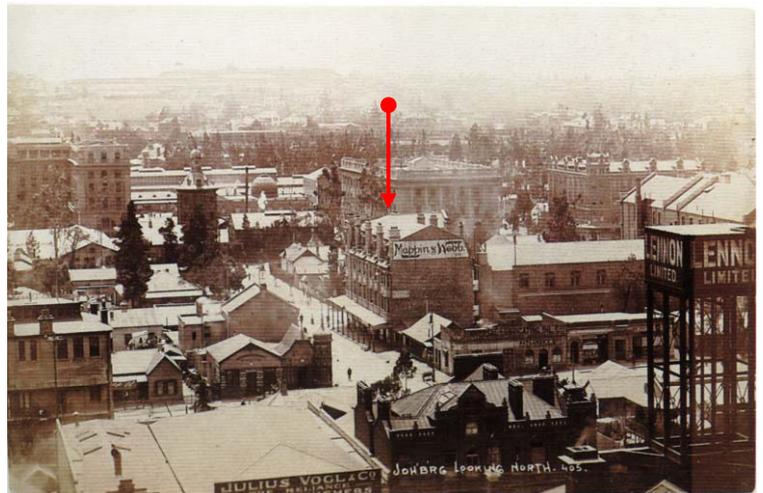
The four-storey *St. James Mansions* was situated (on three stands) at 97, 99, 101 Eloff Street and 252 Bree Street. The architects McIntosch & Moffat designed this building in the Beaux Arts Style during October 1904 and the building was completed during 1905. Shops occupied the ground floor of the building and the upper storeys were used as apartments. The gable roof of the building also contained flats or rooms. St James Restaurant and Bar was also located in the building. During 1954, tenants at 99 Eloff Street were Richardson’s Quality Shoes and Sixty Minute Cleaners.

Van Der Waal on the Beaux Arts and comparing buildings erected during the early part of the 20th century: "The first *General Mining Building* (1903-4), 76/8 Main Street, presents us with the most dynamic adaptation of the Beaux Arts. Apart from an articulated façade and eaves with pointed and undulating gables, the building also boasted a round pointed tower and steep mansard roof, so that within limits, all possible means were used to suggest movement. In the ornamentation, too, one cannot escape an impression of rich variety. Unfortunately, however, architect P E Treeby failed to impart a cohesive unity to the agglomerate of components. The second *Chudleigh Building* (1912-3), 78, 80/2/4 Eloff Street, also created a feeling of unease. The enormous columns of three storeys and the unusually heavy cornice were probably designed to herald the arrival of the department store in Johannesburg and these building elements were probably 'borrowed' from the famous *Selfridges* (1907-9), in London's Oxford Street. Nevertheless, architect J A Moffat failed to a firm base for the visual weight of the upper storeys. Nor did he succeed in finding a satisfactory way to link the columns with one another or with the cornice. Less prominent representatives of this approach were *Baldwin Chambers* (1902), 84 Market Street [see Pre-History: E-2]; *Central City Building* (1905), 61 Pritchard Street [see PRE-HISTORY: AD-1]; *Moseley Building* (1905), 91/2 [sic.] President Street; *J Forrest Building*, (c. 1906), 67 Eloff Street [see PRE-HISTORY: AD-3]; and *University House* (1912-3), 38 Plein Street. McIntosch & Moffat's *St James Mansions* (1904-5), 97/99, 101 Eloff Street, stood out as a much better solution with its broader emphasised central section and pleasant proportions in both the whole and the various components." (Van Der Waal, G-M.: From Mining Camp to Metropolis...).

NORFOLK HOUSE:

By 1956, the four-storey corner building known as *Norfolk House* stood at 68, 70 Joubert Street and 246 Bree Street. By 1954, the retail shop at the latter street address housed Trots Outfitters (Pty) Ltd.

Right: shown in this photo is the *Norfolk House*, which during the early years, accommodated *inter alia*, Mappin & Web silversmiths. "At the bottom end of Joubert Street is the first Telephone (1894) and on its right the prominent dome of Park Synagogue (1892). To the left is the CSAR Building and beyond it the early railway station and in the distance the Wanderers Club. To the right is the large TUC College and across the corner is the gabled *Victoria Mansions*." (Norwich, O.I.: A Johannesburg Album; Historical Postcards, postcard 140).



HISTORY:

The *Bosman Building* is of notable cultural significance, not merely on account of its architectural value, but also its historic association with the property development group known as the African City Properties Trust, and its important role in the development of the City. In the final analysis, the events associated with the country's turbulent political past during the 1950s and 1960s, are all manifested in the history of the design and construction of the *Bosman Building*.

From the following exposition (from 1956) by Stark of the cardinal role played by the African City City Properties Trust (1952) Ltd., it is clear that the *Bosman Building* could, *inter alia*, qualify as a monument to the achievements of this property group: "One of the modern romances of big business that will one day take up an important chapter in the history and development of Johannesburg lies behind the story of the emergence of the African City Properties Trust...as the largest property-owning concern in Southern Africa today. Originally established in London in 1894 with the object of acquiring properties in the Union, A.C.P.T. Limited, amongst other valuable holdings, owned six of the highest-valued properties in Johannesburg, facing on Eloff Street. On these sites there existed buildings which in their day were looked upon as the last word in modern architecture but which had long been outmoded by the fast pace of the city. In 1940 there came into being a company called Controlled Investments Limited, owned and operated by two brothers, Mr. Samuel L. Glazer, J.P., who came to the Union in 1926, and Mr. Bernard Glazer, who came to Johannesburg in 1930, and who were mainly responsible for the development of Hillbrow. The company built the Skyline Hotel and a new block of shops, Hillcrest Buildings, on an adjoining corner, which will eventually rise to eleven storeys. In 1947 the Glazer brothers realised that Eloff Street - South Africa's most valuable strip of land - was lagging

far behind in the meteoric progress and growth of the country. The story of how the Glazer brothers made successive trips to England, wooed the shareholders of African City Properties Trust, and finally managed to purchase a controlling interest in the company, is one that will be discussed in financial circles in South Africa for years to come. At that stage the company owned the following properties: Castle Mansions, of 10 storeys, on the corner of Eloff Street and Jeppe Street [see AE-2]; [second] Manners Mansions, of 13 storeys, on the corner of Jeppe Street and Joubert Street [see AE-3]; Davidson Mansions (now the famous Waldorf), of five storeys on the corner of Eloff Street and Bree Street; Walter Mansions, of four storeys, on the corner of Eloff Street, Bree Street and Jeppe Street, which had since been demolished, a modern skyscraper being erected in its place; Pollock Mansions, of four storeys in the heart of Eloff Street, now demolished to make way for African City – one of the landmarks of Johannesburg's commercial centre; [first] Marlborough House, of four storeys, bounded by the corner of Eloff Street, Commissioner Street and Fox Street, now demolished to make way for a modern skyscraper standing there today; St. James Mansions, of five storeys, on the corner of Eloff Street and Bree Street, and Norfolk House, of four storeys, on the corner of Joubert Street and Bree Street, which has since been demolished for the erection of the new Bosman Building [see AS-4]; Lauriston Court, of five storeys in Louis Botha Avenue, Houghton; Stanley House, corner of Commissioner Street and Bree Street [sic. should be 89, 91 Commissioner and 37 Loveday Streets; see Pre-History F-5], which was subsequently sold, and a subsidiary, Green's Buildings Limited, which owns 17-storey Annan House, Commissioner Street [see BC-2], which today [i.e. 1956] houses the headquarters of African City Properties Trust. With complete control in their hands, the Glazer brothers and associates now turned to the second part of their long-term programme. This was the organization and flotation of a public company known as A.C.P. Investment Limited, which acquired the total controlling interest in African City Properties Trust Ltd. This new company perfected the plans for the rebirth of Eloff Street, demolishing existing buildings and erecting gigantic modern edifices which today form new and progressive landmarks of the city's main shopping thoroughfare. At the same time the company gained further suburban interest by taking over Carnarvon Hotels Limited, owners of the Orange Grove Hotel, in Orange Grove, and a block of 14 shops next to the hotel. The company also bought out Stedelike Grondbeleggers Beperk, owners of bank premises in De Villiers Street, Johannesburg. The Organisation has since bought Mackay Mansions, of 11 storeys, on the corner of Rissik and Jeppe Streets [see AQ-7], Ridgeway Court, corner of Bok Street and Nugget Street and Parkleigh Court, in Wolmarans Street. The Glazer brothers have always worked together. For more than two decades they have planned real estate and building operations with an implicit faith in the future of Johannesburg and the still greater future of the country where-in their interest now extends to Bechuanaland [now known as Botswana] and the Central African Federation. But the story does not end there. As South Africa moves forward in the face of inevitable progress, so African City Property Investment Limited and its associated companies will move forward with it, secure in the knowledge that its prosperity is intimately bound up in that of a progressive country." (Stark, F. [Ed.]: Seventy Golden Years...).

Clive Chipkin shows how the proponents of apartheid willy-nilly came to have a hand in the development of the *Bosman Building*, largely as a consequence of trying to make their mark against the forces opposing the former apartheid regime. "The original name of Medical City was Walter Mansions, and Walter Mansions and Bosman Building as well as African City and Marlborough House were all Eloff Street sites owned by African City Properties, the historic property trust that erected the ACPT Building on Market Square in 1896 [see D-3]. In the 1950s this property group was controlled by the Glazer Brothers working in tandem with Volkskas and other rising financial interests. Their architect were Obel & Obel but in effect they were Wayburne & Wayburne, which is the reason why in 1956 there were large name-boards on four major Eloff Street sites bearing the legend: 'Architects Obel & Obel' (in large letters) 'with Wayburne & Wayburne' (in smaller lettering). Marlborough House and African City were completed as Wayburne & Wayburne buildings. The two-storey podiums of Walter Mansions and Bosman Building were under construction in 1956-6, the foundation loadings and column modules being predetermined by Wayburne designs. This was the stage of development reached when the banks asserted control over ACPT [by 1956 the ACPT was controlled by ACP Investment Ltd]. In December 1956 Rusty Bernstein, the senior designer in Wayburne's office, was arrested as one of the principal organisers of the Congress of the People campaign and charged with high treason. ('Bernstein, a close friend and confidant of Bram Fisher, was a key figure in the Congress movement associated with the ANC. He had been a member of the controversial Berea-Yeoville branch of the Labour Party in the 1930; an artilleryman with the Sixth [South African Armoured] Division in Italy during the war; and an intellectual of the Left in the post-war years. His drawing office was one of the centers where the Freedom Charter was prepared. On the open shelving were back copies of *Architektura CCCP* next to the *Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects*, a title in Trajan script that occupied virtually the entire cover. The Security Police raided the office on several occasions and paged through these journals...The subsequent career of Rusty Bernstein – arrested in 1956; defendant at the Treason Trial; under ninety-days detention in 1960; house arrest in 1962; arrested again in 1963 at Lilliesleaf Farm, Rivonia, together with other members

of the Congress leadership; subsequently escape to Lobiasi – are all recounted in his wife Hilda's remarkable account, *The World That Was Ours: The Story of the Rivonia Trial* (1989). It is important to record that he was found not guilty in both the Treason and Rivonia trials. At some stage after 1957, ACTP switched architects from Wayburne & Wayburne to H.W.E. Stauch & Partners in Pretoria. Thus Stauch inherited the predetermined column grid for a symmetrical tower building on the Bosman site, a layout originally influenced no doubt – like Marlborough House before it – by the Moscow journal *Architektura*." (Chipkin, C.M.: Johannesburg Style; Architecture & Society...)

It seems more than likely that Rusty Bernstein's support for and role in the anti-apartheid movement, must have influenced the ACTP's decision to switch architects. The role played by Volkskas Bank and it finally taking control of African City Property Investment Limited, could itself, become an interesting subject for discussion, albeit for another day. The Treason Trial took place in the Drill Hall, Johannesburg and others charged included former President Nelson Mandela and the late Walter Sisulu.

"Rusty Bernstein 20th March 1920 - 23rd June 2002 Lionel Bernstein was one of a very small band of Communists who committed virtually their entire lives to fighting South Africa's harshly inequitable racial system. Whatever the final reckoning about their role in the country, one thing is certain: the Communist Party played an important part in the African National Congress's adopting the ideal of a multi-racial South Africa. As a member of the South African Labour Party, I clashed with the Communists; but I learnt to respect the integrity and single-mindedness of the taciturn Bernstein, known as "Rusty", and his equally devoted and distinguished wife, Hilda Watts. It is instructive to compare the experience and roles of the Communists in South Africa with those of the anti-Communists in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Both were engaged in a seemingly hopeless struggle against ruthless regimes. Both endured long periods of imprisonment, the hardships of clandestine life and social ostracism, and the sacrifice of family life. Both closed their minds to unpleasant behaviour on the part of their allies for the sake of the wider cause. Rusty Bernstein's life embraced all these experiences. He was born into a middle-class family in Durban in 1920, one of four children of Jewish immigrant parents, who died when Rusty was eight. He was educated privately at Hilton College, and then studied architecture at the University of Witwatersrand from 1937 to 1941. He joined the then dormant South African Communist Party in his late teens. Except for a period when he served as a gunner in the South African Artillery in the Italian Campaign in the Second World War, the whole of his career, spanning 60 years, was devoted to the Party; first as a paid official, and later as a senior member of the Central Committee. When the Communist Party was banned in 1960, Bernstein helped to launch it underground. He neglected his profession of architecture, as well as the interests of a growing family. After the war, he became a founder member of the Springbok Legion, an ex-servicemen's organisation formed to campaign for democratic rights for all. He edited its publication, *Fighting Talk*, and wrote extensively for Communist publications. With his wife, Bernstein had been arrested for the first time in 1946, and convicted of aiding an illegal strike of black miners. Ten years later, together with 150 others (including Chief Albert Luthuli and Nelson Mandela), they were arrested and charged with treason. The trial lasted four years and ended in their acquittal. In 1960, after the Sharpeville massacre, both Rusty and Hilda were again arrested under the Emergency regulations. On their release they were banned and subjected to restrictions, including being forbidden to meet with other people. Yet more stringent restrictions followed in 1962 when Bernstein was placed under house arrest. On 11 July 1963 Bernstein, with 10 other leaders, was arrested at Lilliesleaf Farm, the headquarters of the high command of Umkhonto We Sizwe (MK), the liberation army of the ANC newly established by Nelson Mandela. Bernstein was not himself a member of the high command of MK. In his 1999 autobiography *Memory Against Forgetting*, he revealed for the first time that he and two other members of the CP Central Committee (Bram Fischer and Yusuf Cachalia) were initially opposed to the decision to launch an armed struggle; a decision they thought had been taken without sufficient consultation. It was typical of his independent-minded honesty that Bernstein opposed the most prominent of his colleagues, Joe Slovo, as well as Mandela. After his arrest, Bernstein was placed under 90 days' detention, and kept in solitary confinement. His minutely detailed account of this form of torture must stand as one of the most moving descriptions of the agonies of such imprisonment ever written. At the end of 90 days he was re-arrested and charged, with Mandela and nine others, in what came to be known as the Rivonia Trial. It ended with Mandela and seven others being sentenced to life imprisonment. Since there was no proof that Bernstein was involved in planning the armed struggle, he was acquitted, but threatened with re-arrest. He and his wife made a hazardous escape into exile, but without their children. Later the family was reunited in England. Bernstein worked as an architect in London for 17 years before retiring to Herefordshire and then Kidlington in Oxfordshire. He died in exile, partly because he and his wife were not prepared to be separated again from their children. Rusty Bernstein will be remembered for many reasons, and not least as drafter of the seminal Freedom Charter, which was adopted by the anti-apartheid coalition the Congress of the People in 1956. It begins with the words "Let us speak of freedom..Reprinted without the kind permission of the Independent Newspaper. Long may they forgive me." (Information sourced

from Independent newspaper obituary.htm.

GENERAL NOTES:

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

CURRENT TENANTS:

13th Floor: Consulate General; Mozambique Immigration Office; Tel (011) 336-1819, fax (011) 336-9921.
Jeppe Education Centre; Butterfield Bread.

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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