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# JOHANNESBURG METROPOLITAN MUNICIPALITY

# HERITAGE ASSESSMENT SURVEYING FORM

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

Cellphone: 082 325 5823

NAME OF PLACE: FERREIRA HOUSE











Top Left: view of building, corner Commissioner and Ferreira Streets. Top right: view of south elevation of building and the neighbouring 55 Fox Street Building, in Fox Street. Bottom left and centre: corner Fox and Ferreira Streets. Bottom right: the Ferreira House as seen at a distance from a position in Fox Street, southeast of the building; the domineering effect of the 'outsized' scale of the 55 Fox Street Building, is clearly visible from this photo.

Previous/alternative name/s

LOCATION: Street : Ferreira

Street number : 26

: [Commissioner 48; 24, 26 Ferreira; 47 Fox]

Stand Number : 1, 10

Previous Stand Number:

Block number : BA

Suburb : Marshallstown

GIS reference

ZONING: Current use/s

Previous use/s

#### **DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:**

Height

Levels above street level six

Levels below street level

On-site parking

### **CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS:**

Walls: face brick.

Roof: concrete, flat.

Windows: steel casement fanlights over.

SITE FEATURES:

ALTERATIONS:

INTEGRITY:

INSCRIPTION:

ARCHITECT:

J.C. Cook & Cowen.

**BUILDER:** 

### **CONSTRUCTION DATE:**

Date on plans : (original plans not found)

Approval of plans : 23 November 1951

Completion date : 25 March 1952 and 2 April 1953

The plans record of this building is incomplete and the original plans could not be found. completed Application for Approval of Plans form indicates that this building was erected in two stages.

# **BUILDING STYLE:**

Early Modernist.

"Architectural Merit: Beginnings of Hillbrow Vernacular Facebrick with plaster surrounds. Contributes to area's character." (Johannesburg Building, Space & Urban Feature Classification, 1998: Inner City).

# **BUILDING TYPE:**

Shops to street and office building.

### **ENVIRONMENT:**

The modest scale of the building is overawed by the buildings in its immediate surround.

### CONDITION:

The building requires attention, albeit of a cosmetic nature.

# **URGENT ACTION:**

# SAHRA RECORD REGARDING ALTERATIONS, RENOVATIONS, RESTORATION:

BA-1 2

<b>PROTECTION STATUS:</b> (under National Heritage Resources Act, 1999)			
Section 34(1) structure/s			
provincial heritage site			
national heritage site			
provisional protection			
heritage area			
listed in provincial heritage resources register			
FORMER PROTECTION STATUS: (under National Monuments Act, 1969)			
DEEDS INFORMATION:			
	Section 34(1) structure/s provincial heritage site national heritage site provisional protection heritage area listed in provincial heritage resources register		

# **HEIGHT'S HOTEL**:

PRE-HISTORY OF SITE:

Situated on the southeastern corner of Commissioner and Ferreira Streets (at 48 Commissioner Street) was the Height's Hotel, named after its owner Samuel B. Height. This was a brick building and one of the first hotels built in Johannesburg. The [first] *Central Hotel* was situated nearby at 62/4 Commissioner Street (see Pre-History: BA-3). The Italian hotelier M. Zoccola originally managed the Height's Hotel and later ran the Grand National Hotel (see Pre-History: U-1).

"There were women pioneers also, and some of them lived to see the Golden Jubilee of the town at whose birth they had been present...Mrs. S. B. Height came up with her husband, who was at one time American Consul at Kimberley. They ran the well-known Height's Hotel and had a house and farm in Doornfontein where Height Street and Louisa Street still commemorate their names. Mrs Height was the proud owner of the first piano brought up to the camp after a three hundred mile journey on an ox wagon." (Neame, L.E.: City Built On Gold).

Another first for the Height's Hotel was the first horse drawn tram service, which was implemented on the 2nd February 1889 with the halt in front of the hotel. The tram ran between Height's Hotel and Jeppestown, this route was extended in the same year on 9 June to other areas. (Later in April 1889, the ZAR Government granted Sigismund Neumann (ex Kimberley) a concession to construct and work the first tramways in the public streets of Johannesburg.

# FIRST GLOBE THEATRE 1889:

The Globe Theatre (1889) stood at 47/9 Fox Street. For its time, it was a rather fanciful building, built and ornamented, "according to Van Der Waal, "in the classicist style to accentuate the classic origins of this art form. The paucity of building materials was apparently no impediment. The Globe was constructed in brick and plaster, while the pilasters and entablature of the Theatre Royal were done up with pressed galvanised iron." (Van Der Waal, G-M.: From Mining Camp to Metropolis...). The latter building was located at 126/8 Commisioner Street.

"In February, 1889," according to Neame the well known Barney Barnato "acted in A Ticket of Leave Man produced at the Globe Theatre...He took the part of Bob Brierly. The production was in aid of the fund for building a Jewish synagogue in Johannesburg." (Neame, L.E.: City Built On Gold).

#### SECOND GLOBE THEATRE / FIRST EMPIRE MUSIC HALL:

After a fire destroyed part of the Globe Theatre the building was elaborately revamped and reopened on 8 June 1892. According to Van Der Waal: "Like clubs, theatres also played an important role in the recreation of Johannesburg's community. That theatres too, were well patronised is explained by the high-tension economic drama and political uncertainties of the time - the Jameson Raid of 1895-6 was a case in point. There was a wide range of performances to choose from...This would seem to indicate that a significant section of the population (men, women and even families) had a cultured background and they considered it essential to attend performances of musicals and plays to maintain and develop their identity. Right from the early mining camp days theatres, pubs and social clubs tended to congregate in the financial district just south of Market Square. This juxtaposition of work and recreation was in line with the tendency to group formation in the 1890s. The financial district was exclusive male territory and since the male has traditionally been the exponent of cultural values...it was only to be expected that banks and mining houses would stimulate élite cultural activities such as clubs and theatres. Of the three theatres which opened their doors in the 1890s, the Globe Theatre (1891-2), 47/9 Fox Street, is the best documented and probably also the most important of the three. Not many fires broke out in the mining camp in those days and when they did occur, the new building regulations usually confined them to one building. Even though condition and equipment were rather primitive, the fire brigade was so efficient and quick that buildings often had to be only partially rebuilt. This was also the happy fate of the Globe which caught fire only a few months after its opening in 1889 but was reopened on 8 June 1892. The basic shape of the old building was retained in the new one, but the classicist gable was given a richer ornamental finish while the interior was appointed far more sumptuously. As was the custom in 19th century theatres...the 800 seats were arranged in the shape of a horseshoe, with eight boxes along the lateral walls. The seats were covered with velvet and leather and braided in gold. The stage curtain,



The Globe Theatre, one of Johannesburg's earliest places of entertainment.

described as '...the finest yet seen in South Africa', was designed by Johannesburg artist C H Maltby...The foyer was decorated by, among other things, a hothouse with plants which served to underscore otherworldliness of the theatre. After 1894 the theatre was known as the Empire Palace of Varieties. Of similar design was the Standard Theatre (1891) [see Pre-History: I-2], located behind the Government Building and later behind the *Rissik Street Post Office* [see Pre-History: I-1]. Situated in the middle of the street block behind a Ushaped row of shops, it was connected to the street by an arcade. As a building, it had no particular impact on the city image. Like the Globe, it also had a stepped classicist façade placed against the front of the building like a screen. The Gaiety Theatre (1893), 3, 5 Kort Street, had the same low profile [see Pre-History: A-1]. In fact, the only mark of distinction was a small gable with the theatre's name. Other performances, especially music recitals, were given in the great hall of the Wanderer's Club across the railway line or in Fillis' Amphitheatre..." (Van Der Waal, G-M.: From Mining Camp to Metropolis...). (See Pre-History: AI-1)

Left: (Stark, F. [Ed.]: Seventy Golden Years...).

Stoloff: "1891, on the corner of Fox and Ferreira Streets. Home of the Lyric Opera Company for many years and scene of brilliant shows presented by British and Continental artists. Although constructed only four years after the founding of Johannesburg this illustration has all the character of 18th Century engravings of Drury Lane Theatre, London. On August 17th, 1887, a Johannesburg Turf Club was formed...The first Johannesburg Handicap on the present course was won by "The Tracker" belonging to a Mr. Casey, and ridden by Charlie Woods. This was a rank outsider and the owner was so overjoyed that he gave Woods the £2,000 cheque for the stakes, and later presented him on the stage of the Globe Theatre with gold watch and chain, and diamond pin!" (Stoloff, C.A.: The Historic Buildings of Johannesburg – 15 [Hotels, Clubs...).

"Luscombe Searelle (*Theatre Royal*) had with him in 1890 a man named Morris Davis who acted as usher and general attendant. Davis joined Hyman and Alexander at the Empire Music Hall in 1893 and for many years was a familiar figure in the town doing all kinds of jobs for theatrical companies and finally under the Schlesinger régime becoming the manager of one of the bioscopes. He was

always called 'Brother Pro' and many people knew him by no other name. Ben Wheeler and his son Frank, the actor, the Hymans, and Leonard Rayne, were among those prominent in the pioneer entertainment world on the Rand. Nor were the early Johannesburg's merely spectators. newspaper report of a concert held in the (first) Globe Theatre in April, 1889, stated that the programme 'has shown us that Johannesburg ranks as one of the foremost towns in South Africa regarding musical talent and ability.' The first comedian acting on the Rand was known as Bobbie Bolder, though his real name was Robert Edney. He had been a member of one of the theatrical companies that travelled all over South Africa in an ox-wagon giving shows in the dorps. In addition to appearing in entertainments in Johannesburg he rented the Globe Bar in Commissioner Street. After the Boer War he went to America and took up film work in the days of the silent film. He lived in Hollywood for twenty years and died there. The first Empire Music Hall was opened on the site of the earlier Globe Theatre on Saturday, December 1, 1894. The lessees were Alexander and Hyman, with Edgar M. Hyman as manager and David Foote as musical conductor. The first performance was given by a 'London company'. Seats in the stalls were 5s. and the promenade was 2s. 6d. A monthly ticket could be had for £3. This Empire Music Hall was used until 1906 when a second Empire was built on the site of the present theatre. (I.e. 1959; the second Empire Theatre, 135, 137 Commissioner Street.) (Neame, L.E.: City Built On Gold).

### **EMPIRE PALACE OF VARIETIES:**

After 1894, the second *Globe Theatre* was known as the *Empire Palace of Varieties*. "The first *Empire Theatre* (originally the *Globe Theatre*) of 1892 was partly destroyed by fire for the second time on 19 November 1903 and was again repaired. However, it finally shut its doors on May 1902 (sic.) when the company moved to the second Empire in the eastern part of the city centre." (Stoloff, C.A.: The Historic Buildings of Johannesburg – 15 [Hotels, Clubs...)..

"A great fight took place one night outside the Theatre Royal between a leading town financier and another, the crowd declaring afterwards that it had been a splendid evening, that the show was firstrate and the fight magnificent. Something of the dramatic atmosphere of Colorado pervaded the rival Empire Theatre on another pioneer occasion when a gunman began to 'shoot-up' the bar. The sound of the firing attracted a crowd; the man fired at and wounded the barman and then shot himself dead. The 'turn' on the stage proceeded, meanwhile, without interruption. But the grand old actor-cellist, Van Biene, whose high-pitched speech and Dutch accent are still recalled regretfully by pioneers, supplied a notable memory as, when playing his 'cello at the Standard Theatre (see Pre-History: I-2) one night in his mood of characteristic abstraction, an alarm of 'Fire!' was raised, and flame and smoke began to envelop the stage. The audience rose as of to rush the doors, but the sounds of the 'cello continued to be heard, and the threatened panic was soon averted. Those who had begun to move returned somewhat crestfallen to their seats. The fire was extinguished quickly and Van Biene reached the final note without having even been aware of the outbreak. It was a curious case of artistic absorption. One of the figures who became a vital personality in the town was 'Dave' Foote, conductor of the Old Empire Theatre. He was the 'Jimmy' Glover of the goldfields. He had a languid baton, passed casual nods to acquaintances in stalls and boxes, and was known by all as one who had conducted orchestras, particularly In Vaudeville, for nearly forty years on the Rand. He was bored, and he looked bored. But every man on the goldfields knew and loved him. He died in 1927. The Globe became the Old Empire Theatre, another joyous rendezvous of the old-timers. It opened in 1894. Cornish miners would enter its busy bar to get their £100 and £150 monthly cheques cashed for they had begun to earn big money then - and if they only needed a few shillings to go on with they would fling down 'fivers' in exchange for small silver which would be tossed by them by roguish barmaids. There was never any trouble about change. The prosperous barmaids, too, often found odd bank-notes on the floor when the crowds passed out in the early morning. Armed Americans with pockets full of gold made a terrifying commotion on Independence nights by 'shooting-up' the saloons and firing off giant crackers behind the counters; and after the curtain had been rung down on the last Vaudeville turns mine magnates made a point of putting up purses of £50 for fights on the Empire stage - real fights - and professional 'pugs' were generally at hand to provide them. It was all illegal, of course, and Kruger's police swiped down on the theatre one night while a fight was in progress and arrested al concerned. But nobody cared; for those were the days when olive-skinned Tarbeau, the card expert, used to throw big notes to the girls on the stage; when Advocate Hollard of the round red face - his name is perpetuated in Hollard Street - had a box all the year round; when there were crowded Sunday shows; when little Edgar Hyman, the manager, was there to welcome his patrons; and when Solly Joel agreed to let it be known in London that the House of Barnato was behind the Empire enterprise in order to ensure a continuous flow of Vaudeville artists. Everybody lived for the passing hour. The sprit of the boulevardier was abroad, such a spirit as inspired the fashionables to go across to the two leading cafes, one on the site of the present Rand Water Board offices (first Rand Water Board Building see Pre-History: BB-1), the other almost opposite, and to sit up half the night drinking, and smoking, and gossiping, and fighting. Searrele, further east down Commissioner Street,

could not cope with the new house, and he sold out just before the Jameson raid and went over-sea." (Chipkin, C.M.: Johannesburg Style; Architecture & Society...)

"In the case of the second *Empire Palace of Varieties* (1905-6)...the commercial-residential impression was even more pronounced that that of the *Orpheum Theatre*. Indeed, the function of the structure was not readily inferred from its appearance. The low block form with the visible pitched roof, verandah and bay windows under the towers and gable were strongly reminiscent of an apartment complex. The rooms around the theatre hall were used as offices. Certain elements of the *Empire*, especially the bell-shaped towers with pinnacles, mirrored the French architecture styles of that period. The mass grouping and the articulation of the exterior were not very successful, but the theatre hall, which could seat 1 000 people, was most impressive. Architects McIntosh & Moffat went on a study tour of America, Europe and England to acquaint themselves with the latest developments in theatre construction...No wonder the interior turned out to be a spectacle of Edwardian luxury with 18 boxes, plush upholstery and drapes in green and gold. At that time it was described as 'the handsomest theatre the in [sic. should read in the] subcontinent...Like the *Orpheum*, the *Empire* provided a focal point in its environment, in which several well-known theatres, such as the *Colosseum* and *His Majesty's* were destined to arise later." (Van Der Waal, G-M.: From Mining Camp to Metropolis...).

"Prior to 1900 a theatre was concealed behind a distinctive theatre front, but after 1902 the theatre space was integrated with the surrounding support rooms to such an extent that the structure was no longer readily identifiable as a theatre from the outside. The older theatre buildings had a tall front gable in the classicist style and the entrance was distinctive. Later theatres were distinguished from commercial buildings only by large billboards announcing current and future attractions. During this period Johannesburg's theatres did not develop a distinctive identity of their own. This is probably partly explained by the fact that theatres then began to provide for cinema shows as well, and that there was still some uncertainty about the future of these film shows. In addition, it would appear that, for financial reasons, the owners decided to include shops on the ground floor of their buildings and flats in the upper storeys. The most significant theatre building of this period was the five-storey Orpheum Theatre (1912), 160/2 Jeppe Street ...Like the The Orpheum, the Empire [Empire Palace of Varieties (1905-6), 135/7 Commissioner Street] provided a focal point in its environment, in which several well-known theatres, such as the Colosseum and His Majesty's were destined to arise later...With the exception of two, theatres did not play a significant role in the cityscape of Johannesburg during this period, but the relatively large number (seven) of new theatres was a pointer to the rather lively social activities of the city centre. The theatres were a popular form of relaxation where residents sought respite from the tensions brought on by feverish business activities. The fact that the theatres were located so close to the financial and business districts would seem to indicate that the former were regarded as a perfect foil for the latter. Compared with the hierarchical and insulated formalism of the banking and office buildings, the theatres represented a democratic and integrated approach to architecture." (Van Der Waal, G-M.: From Mining Camp to Metropolis...). See table below for relevant document numbers and status of buildings. The Goldreich Building, which included the first Majesty's Theatre, was refurbished and subsequently known as the Majesty's Theatre. The Starlite Cinema in President Street was demolished to make way for a parkade.

### Name: Document Number And Or Previous Name: Status Of Building:

Bijou	Pre-History, AS-1	Demolished
Colosseum	Fre-History, A3-1	Demolished
Carlton Theatre	Pre-History, AA-1	Demolished
Empire Palace of Varieties	Pre-History, BA-1, <i>Globe Theatre</i>	Demolished
Gaiety Theatre	Pre-History, A-1	Demolished
Goldreich Building	Pre-History, BG-1	Refurbished as theatre
[Second] His Majesty's	BG-1	Converted to a store
Orpheum Theatre	Pre-History, AF-2	Demolished
Palladium Theatre	Pre-History, D-4	Demolished
Plaza Theatre	Pre-History AG-4	Demolished
Standard Theatre	Pre-History, I-2	Demolished
Starlite Cinema	Pre-History, M-2	Demolished
The Royalty	AC-5	Disused as theatre
Vaudette Theatre	Pre-History, AD-5, YMCA Building	Demolished

There is a song 'Video killed the radio star' – I think the Boomtown Rats recorded it –which is an apt description of the demise of a large number of cinemas in South Africa. The video machine is connected to the television set and the arrival of television in South Africa during 1976 started a downhill period for the cinema and theatre industry. I remember going to the theatre as least once a

month and to the cinemas once a week. The television changed that for a while, and a large number of South Africans remained glued to their television sets during the evenings. It is also interesting to note that at least three of the above mentioned theatres (*Carlton Theatre*, *Gaiety Theatre* and the *Palladium Theatre*) were in one way or the other connected to the I.W. Schlesinger organisation. The destruction of these buildings left a void in the night life of the City. Another factor is the demolition of a large number of residential buildings in the Inner City. This became part of a vicious circle – the number of inner city residents was systematically reduced. (Catharina J M Bruwer).

"Adam Alexander was a famous lawyer in the pioneering days, who became a director of the Johannesburg Building Society [see H-3], a member of the Jewish Board of Deputies, and Chairman of the Empire Theatre Building Company [see BA-1]. Born in Polish Prussia in 1870, he came to the Transvaal in 1888. In politics he supported Kruger." (Leyds, G.A.: A History of Johannesburg).

#### **HISTORY:**

It is assumed that the name of the subject buildings is derived from Ferreira Street, named after the Colonel Ignatius P. Ferreira.

"Colonel Ignatius P. Ferreira was born in the Cape Colony in 184, served in several..." Frontier Wars "and with Warren's expedition, for which services he was awarded the Cross of St. Michael and St. George (C.M.G.). He was educated at the Wesleyan Grammar School in Grahamstown, C.P. He married Miss Baltrina Erasmus, and was known at first as 'Neef Naas' (cousin Naas), Naas being a contraction of Ignatius. Having laid out Ferreira's Camp, 1886, he was a prime mover in most organisations in the camp. The first Christmas in Johannesburg, was suitably celebrated and he organised a sports meeting, during which a herd of blesbok came through Booysens Township. His racehorses were 'Mariner'. 'Peter', and 'Firefly', these being his first horses; later he owned others. The Ferreira Mine, named after him, was one of the world's great gold mines, paying dividends of 400% for many years. After the Boer War he settled on the farm Kranspoort, 35 miles west of Louis Trichardt [Makhado] in the Northern Transvaal [Limpopo], via Mara Siding, where he died on the 13th May, 1921, aged 81." (Leyds, G.A.: A History of Johannesburg).

It is important to record that Ferreira Street carries an historic association with the famous Mahatma Gandhi and the history of the Passive Resistance Movement. This is explained in the following description by Lucille Davie: "...Several events in South Africa were decisive in Gandhi's growth from shy lawyer to world-renowned advocate of passive resistance. These events include being thrown off a train at Pietermaritzburg on his way to Pretoria, and, after struggling to find a hotel in the city, being told that he could not eat in the dining room of the hotel; and being ordered off the pavement outside president Paul Kruger's house and told to get a pass to walk Pretoria's streets. But a more important event moulded his thinking: the Asiatic Law Amendment Ordinance of 1906. This Law proposed that Indians and Chinese were to register their presence in the Transvaal, giving their fingerprints and carrying passes. The protest to the act united the two communities and they decided to oppose the Ordinance by peaceful methods. Protestors got together at the Empire Theatre in Ferreira Street (between Fox and Commissioner Streets), now a rather nondescript Ferreira House, where passive resistance was born. Gandhi spoke to the protestors, with the theme of "violence begets violence". Protestors then marched through Johannesburg, were arrested and thrown into prison at The Fort, a place which Gandhi got to know well over the following years - he was sentenced to spend time there at least four times. The Fort, of course, is still on Hospital Hill, but is shortly to be incorporated into the new Constitutional Court complex. A young Chinese man, Chow Kwai For, went and registered under the new law, unaware of the protest. When he realised what he had done, he committed suicide - he was only 24. His grave, with his letter of apology (written in Chinese) engraved on the headstone, stands in the Chinese section of the Braamfontein Cemetery. Transvaal Colonial Secretary Jan Smuts called Gandhi to his office and offered to repeal the law if Indians and Chinese registered voluntarily. Gandhi was censured by the community for agreeing to this - he was called a traitor and severely beaten..." November 15, 2001. By Lucille Davie." (Information sourced from http://www.goafrica.co.za/joburg/november/gandhi.stm).

# **GENERAL NOTES:**

Estimated cost of building : £70 000
Estimated cost of drainage : £700
Accommodation approved : none
Valuation at completion : £85 000
Occupied : yes

D A 1

# PREVIOUS TENANTS: By 1953: C.N.A. Stock Exchange Branch. By 1954: - André Electrical Engineers. 47 Ferreira – Jeanette Ladies' Outfitters. Room 304, 305 - Asbestos Mining & Supply Corporation Ltd. Room 123 - International Investigators Bureau and 3rd floor - Rand Tracing Agency, Detective and Tracing Agencies. Room 214, 215 - Jewish National Fund Charitable Trust of South Africa Ltd. CURRENT TENANT/S: African Leather Co. 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.













