

JOHANNESBURG METROPOLITAN MUNICIPALITY

HERITAGE ASSESSMENT SURVEYING FORM

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

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NAME OF PLACE: FNB BANK CITY BUILDING



Top left: the *FNB Bank City Buildings* in the distant background (approximately in the centre of the photo) as seen from the Mandela Bridge.

The authors were prevented by the bank security guards to take any meaningful photos of the buildings.

Previous/alternative name/s : by 1998: Bank City

LOCATION: Street : corners Simmonds, Kerk, Fraser and Jeppe
 Street number :
 : [57, 59, 61, 63 Simmonds; 13, 15, 17, 19 Kerk;
 : 26, 28, 30, 32 Fraser; 122, 124, 126, 128 Jeppe]
 Stand Number : 5251
 Previous Stand Number: by 1988 - 1167, 1168, 1169, 4494, 4655
 Block number : AJ
 GIS reference :

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

DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:

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

CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS:

Walls:

Roof:

Windows:

SITE FEATURES:

ALTERATIONS:

INTEGRITY:

INSCRIPTION:

ARCHITECT:

Revel Fox & Partners; RFB Consulting Architects; Gallagher Aspoas Polak Senior; Meyer Pienaar.

BUILDER:

CONSTRUCTION DATE:

Date on plans :
Approval of plans :
Completion date :

BUILDING STYLE:

Post Modern Neo Classical.

"Landmark: "Bank City, wheather [sic.] liked or not has become a landmark in the city. The use of space has been particularly innovative." (Johannesburg Building, Space & Urban Feature Classification, 1998: Inner City).

BUILDING TYPE:

Shops to street, bank and office building.

ENVIRONMENT:

"...from the beginning of the 20th century the nature of building development in central Johannesburg was determined largely by economic interests. In recent years the chickens have come home to roost. The city centre is losing its identity and, to an increasing extent, people are alienated from the city." (Van Der Waal, G-M.: From Mining Camp to Metropolis...).

The last statement is only true to a point; the *FNB Bank City* development - covering four and a half city blocks - has resulted in a complete alteration of the environment in this part of the City. The Post Modern Neo Classical Style of the buildings is reminiscent of the huge commercial and bank buildings that were erected in the early 1900's. Examples of these buildings are the *Third Corner House* (see E-1); the *National Bank Building* (see E-2) and certain elements of the *First National Bank* (see F-4) such as the huge columns so prominently displayed in the *First National Bank* and as a bonding factor in the *FNB Bank City Buildings*. This development would have been a perfect compatriot to the abovementioned buildings as well as the *Johannesburg Public Library* and Dr Beyers Naudé Square (see L-1) and the *City Hall* (see J-1) as its architecture could possibly be considered complementary to all the abovementioned buildings. Nevertheless, *FNB Bank City Complex* has given the city a new look (although it was done in the 'old fashioned style'), thus adding confidence to the infra structure of the city and providing much needed safe havens in the form of interconnected protected open spaces within the complex of buildings.

The five *FNB Bank City Buildings* are Documents AI-1, AJ-1, AK-2, X-1 and X-2.

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: (under National Monuments Act, 1969)

NOTES:

DEEDS INFORMATION:

Original ownership:

PRE-HISTORY OF SITE:

SIVE BROS & KARNOVSKY BUILDING:

By 1933, the *Sive Bros & Karnovsky Building* (i.e. a corner building) stood at 122, 124 Jeppe Street and 32 Fraser Street.

"One Of The Largest Pharmaceutical Organisations In Africa. - From humble beginnings to a great national organisation, the history of the South African Druggist Limited is the life story of one of the founders, Mr H. L. Karnovsky. It is also the history of the development of the pharmaceutical trade in all its wide spread ramifications to-day. Not unnaturally, something of a legend has grown up around this man who came to South Africa in 1892 at the age of eight years and who in the culmination of over half a century of endeavour and service in conjunction with Messrs A. and S. L. Sive, has built up an organisation that to-day spreads in a network through-out the whole of the African Continent. The Company today consists of several divisions – Sive Bros. & Karnosvsky, Johannesburg; Macdonald Adams & Co., Johannesburg; South African Drug Houses, Durban; and P. Grant Smith (Tvl.) Limited, Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town. Subsidiary companies are Heynes Mathew Limited, Cape Town; B. P. Davis Limited and Associated Proprietary Agencies Limited. The original firm of Sive Bros. was established in Johannesburg by the brothers A. and S. L. in 1904. Three years later it became known as Sive Bros. & Karnovsky Limited and Mr. H. L. Karnovsky became managing director and chairman. In the year 1905 Mr. Karnosky became one off the first eleven chemist and druggists to qualify in the Transvaal. In 1913 the firm's headquarters were established in the building at the corner of Kerk and Fraser Streets, which, in the ensuing twenty years, became a landmark for chemist all over South Africa. It remained there until 1932, when, as a result of acquiring the business of the Transvaal Drug Company, Limited [30 Kerk Street], Sive Bros. & Karnovsky, Limited moved into a new building on the next corner [21 Kerk Street]. Here the firm carried on its business until it transferred into its new premises facing on Jeppe Street [122, 124 Jeppe and 32 Fraser Street]. The present Directors of the Company are Messrs. S.L. Sive, H.L. Karnovsky, J.S. Sive, S.R. Karnosky, D.J. Kinlay and W. Cranko. The late Mr. Abraham Sive remained active as a director in the business until his death in 1947. Highlights of the development of South African Druggists Limited from 1922: 1922: acquired the sole shares issued in P. Grand Smith (Tvl.) Ltd., trading as dental depots. 1925: took over the total share interest in B.P. Davis Ltd. 1927: acquired the whole of the issued shares in Macdonald Adams and Co. Ltd. 1932: acquired the whole of the shareholding of Transvaal Drug Co. Ltd.

Then in 1935, the growing firm became a Public Company, S.A. Druggists Limited, to which Mr. H.L. Karnovsky was appointed Chairman and Managing Director, a position he still continues to occupy.
 1037: acquired controlling interest in Heynes Mathew Ltd.
 1952: took over the whole issued share capital in E.P. Drug House (Pty) Ltd." (Stark, F. [Ed.]: Seventy Golden Years...).

The *Transvaal Drug Building* was also known as the *Macdonald Adams Building*. This was in 1954. Macdonald, Adams & Co were Wholesale and Retail Chemists and Laboratory Furnishers dealers; the *Transvaal Drug Building / Macdonald Adams Building* was the headquarters of the firm and their retail department was situated in the *Loewenstein Building* and the store at the corner of Voorhout and Fourth Streets, Doornfontein. By 1954 contact numbers of the firm were: PO Box 68, telegraphic address "Crucible", telephone 011 33-3033/8 (wholesale), 011 33-3507 (retail). See also Pre-History Document G-6 for more information regarding the *Loewenstein Building*.

Tenant/s by 1954: Sive Bros & Karnovsky Ltd, Wholesale Manufacturing Chemist, Druggists, Optical and Photographic Dealers; South African Drugist Ltd (Division of Sive Bros & Karnovsky).



Left: "The first chemist shop in Johannesburg, established in 1885 and situated at 98 Market Street, where it still stands today and trades under the name of Macdonald Adams & Company. Seated in the horse trap is Mr Loewenstein, original owner of the pharmacy." (i.e. 1956, now demolished, see also Van Der Waal)
 Right: "The present wholesale premises of MacDonald Adams & Company." (i.e. 1956, now demolished). (Stark, F. [Ed.]: Seventy Golden Years...).



ALEX AIKEN HOUSE:

The *Alex Aiken House* (First National Bank) was situated at 13-19 Kerk Street, 26 and 28 Fraser Street, and 57 and 59 Simmonds Street.

According to Leyds, "*Alex Aiken*, [was the] founder of the firm of accountants and auditors, Aiken and Carter, known in all financial circles of the world. He was born in 1861 in Aberdeenshire, Scotland. He became financial advisor to Field-Marshal Lord Roberts, 1900-1901. He was the auditor for many mining and other industries. His famous partner was: *John Gordon Carter*, born in 1874 in Mitcham, Surrey. He was a member of the first Council of the Transvaal Society of Accountants." (Leyds, G.A.: A History of Johannesburg).

BONINI MANSIONS:

Located at 128 Jeppe Street and 61, 63 Simmonds Streets in 1954, was the *Bonini Mansions*.

MONI'S BUILDINGS:

By 1954, the *Moni's Buildings* stood at 126 Jeppe Street.

MONI BROS. WHOLESALE BUILDING:

By 1954, the *Moni Bros. Wholesale Building* occupied the stand at 17 Kerk Street.

CHESTER HOUSE:

By 1932, *Chester House* occupied the 132 Jeppe Street portion of the city block.

HISTORY:

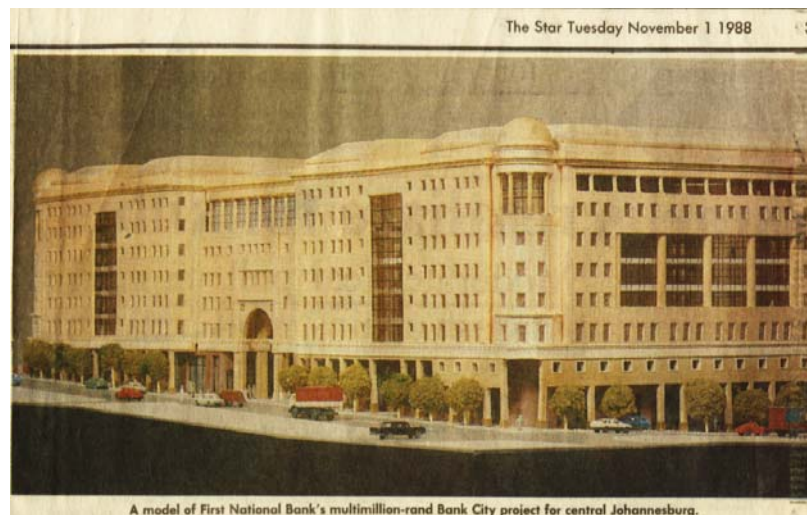
GENERAL NOTES:

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

Occupied

:

"The high-rise buildings in Johannesburg were inspired by a number of factors. In the first place, they were symptomatic of the process of consolidation in commerce which was started in the 1890s and subsequently pursued on a larger scale. Larger buildings had to be put up for the major mining companies and commercial enterprises. These structures reflected the financial and commercial power of the companies – not only by their size but also by the use of an abstract white colour and heavy classicist building forms. This philosophy put a focus on the buildings which insulated them from the more personalised older buildings. This intensive land development was also related to the manner in which property was taxed in Johannesburg. Under the ZAR government the rating system for urban property was rather limited, partly because all community services were provided by concession. In fact, the separate tax on buildings and land introduced by Johannesburg's Health Committee in 1893 was the first efficient system in the Transvaal. This system of separate taxation for land and buildings was superseded by a combined tax system in 1902 which was applied until 1916, when a provincial ordinance decreed that land should be more heavily taxed than buildings, and gave town councils the option of abolishing tax on buildings altogether... In 1919 Johannesburg chose to abolish tax on buildings... Johannesburg's subsequent development may be partly attributed to the fact that the tax was levied on the market value of the property, not revenue from the property, as was the case in England. Valuation figures show that land was assessed at much higher values than the buildings...so that owners were obliged, for economic reasons, to put up larger and ever higher buildings. This also accelerated the 'turnover' of buildings. In view of the comparatively high land tax, smaller non-functional buildings could not readily show a profit. This system, reinforced in 1919 by the abolition of tax on buildings, is still the main reason for the intensive land development in the city. It also partly explains the never-ending process of demolition through which so many historical buildings have disappeared. Apart from the system of taxation, development was also affected by the system of property ownership. As pointed out before, stands in the centre of Johannesburg were sold on 99-year leasehold during the 1880s. In the beginning, when the future of Johannesburg still seemed precarious, this was regarded as a reasonably long period. This no longer applied after 1900. Buildings of up to nine storeys were built after the turn of the century and the government, possibly under pressure from private interests, granted freehold of stands on Government land (Randjeslaagte, Marshalltown, Ferreirasdorp and Braamfontein...thereby forfeiting any influence they might have had on the future development of Johannesburg. In fact, private interests were handed the freedom of the city. To a considerable extent, the fairly random development of the city centre and the painful absence of a city square and park may be ascribed to the fact that the authorities gave up their regulating role. This meant that from the beginning of the 20th century the nature of building development in central Johannesburg was determined largely by economic interests. In recent years the chickens have come home to roost. The city centre is losing its identity and, to an increasing extent, people are alienated from the city." (Van Der Waal, G-M.: From Mining Camp to Metropolis...). See also ENVIRONMENT.



Above and below: The Star, 1 November 1988.

Jo'burg's most exciting property venture revealed

The wraps are off central Johannesburg's most exciting property venture of recent times — First National Bank's multimillion-rand Bank City project spread over seven blocks.

At a press conference last night, First National's managing director Mr Chris Ball announced plans for the first stage of the great assembly of "pre-modern" structures — a complex which will be the mainspring of the city's revitalisation for decades to come.

The first stage covers two blocks bounded by Jeppe, Harrison, Kerk and Simmonds streets and demolition has already begun to make way for neo-classic buildings costing a total of R100 million and due for com-

By Frank Jeans

pletion by July 1991.

Each building will have about 19 000 sq m of office space and a 4 000 sq m retail component and mezzanine and ground floor levels.

The blocks, along with the others to come in the overall plan, have a massive 85 per cent human capacity ratio and will be the business centrepiece of First National's office army of 6 000 which will eventually vacate about 22 other bank premises.

Features of the initial development are a connecting section between the buildings

and the creation of a new city square following the proposed pedestrianisation of Kerk Street.

Bank City has been created by a top design team of seven drawn from the leading architectural partnerships of South Africa and led by Cape Town's Revel Fox.

There will be a return to the old disciplines in design — in keeping with the style of the grand old structures of nearby City Hall, the old JCI building and the Rand Club.

Mr Jim Henrey, construction director of Bank City, says tender pre-qualification documents will be issued soon and tenders for the building of the first stage are expected to go out by March next year.

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.

RECORDED BY:

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Unless otherwise indicated photographs by Catharina JM Bruwer.

Jet
SALES HOUSE
suburbs

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