

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 BUILDINGS



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

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

LOCATION: Street : corners Harrison, Kerk, Simmonds and Jeppe
 Street number :
 : [61, 63, 65, 67 Harrison; 21, 23, 25, 27 Kerk;
 : 58, 60 62, 64 Simmonds; 130, 132, 134, 136 Jeppe]
 Stand Number : 5232
 Previous Stand Number: by 1988 – 1149, 1150, 1151, 1152, 1153, 1154, 1155,
 : 1156, 1157, 1158, 1159, 1160
 Block number : AI
 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:

LTA Construction Limited.

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 buildings.

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:

FILLIS CIRCUS:

Occupying the entire city block in 1889 and during the 1890s, was the famous *Fillis Circus* or *Fillis Amphitheatre*.

Johannesburg by the 1890s had more than 20 000 residents and the circus was often used as a community hall. It appears to have been an unornamented corrugated iron and wood structure built in a conical tent form, about 15 meters high and 47,23 meter in diameter. It could seat 2 000 people. This semi-permanent structure – erected at a cost of £8 000.00 - replaced the tent circus of Wallet and Fillis that was in use from 1886.

It is stated by Van Der Waal that the amphitheatre was still in use by 1900. "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...Other performances, especially music recitals, were given in the great hall of the *Wanderers's Club* across the railway line or in *Fillis Amphitheatre*."

Leys describes the circus as follow: "There have been many circuses to visit Johannesburg. Soon after the Boer War Texas Jack brought a circus to the Rand, one of his performers being the famous American comedian Will Rogers. None of these, however, caused the thrill that Fillis did with his circus on 22nd July, 1888. Four years before the coming of the railways he brought a train of wagons and caravans all the way from Ladysmith by road. He had one Ceylon elephant, five lions, five tigers, four jackals, zebra, two laughing hyenas 14 'comical' monkeys, a five-legged bull, two four-horned sheep, on three-legged sheep, some porcupines and volatiles of all sorts. The word volatile for wild-fowl has become obsolete, but Fillis frequently used it. He also brought gymnasts, tumblers, pigeon-charmers, clowns and horses. His tent was 130 feet in diameter – a big marquee, but later he built a wood and iron permanent circus on a block bounded by Simmonds, Jeppe, Harrison and Kerk Streets. One night his tent blew down, causing much loss, but his spirit never flagged. Even President Kruger on one of his visits to the town came to see the circus, and was especially interested in the wild

animals. Seats were six shillings and three shillings, with two shillings for the Natives. Everyone, even from long distances, came to see Mr Fillis with his waxed little moustache...Loveday Street also held other entertainment for us in the shape of the famous Circus, near Jeppe Street. That was in 1898."

On 14th February 1961 South Africa officially adopted the decimal coinage, I was almost six years old when this happened - six shillings was equal to R0.60, gone were the tikkies (three cents or three pennies - one penny was equal to two half a pennies -, this could buy you a banana ice-cream on a stick or three marshmallow mice with liquorice tails), a six pence paid for the whole lot and a half a penny for one large 'niekerball' [spelled as pronounced as no correct spelling could be found]. One shilling - also called a bob - was equal to two six pence, a half a crown was worth R0.25, this was my pocket money for the week - a kings ransom as it supplied me with sweets for a whole week. Next was a crown and following that the pound - worth R2.00 in those days. Catharina JM Bruwer

"Frank E. Fillis owned a travelling show which gave the first performance in Ferreira's Camp as early as 1886. A year later, in a tent on Marshall Square, he presented a lavish programme including equestrian feats, animal acts and introduced the Mistress of the Ring, Miss Rosa Bell, who was said to have 'an hourglass waist.' His wife, Vincenta, was known as the world's first human cannonball as well as a skilled equestrienne. Fillis made his headquarters in Johannesburg and put up an immense amphitheatre, a galvanised building in Bree Street, at a cost of eight thousand pounds, which seated two thousand people and which was said to be the largest entertainment hall in Africa. The dome was fifty feet high. Both the interior and exterior of the building were lit by electricity...During the Boer War the variety of entertainment had been limited for companies from abroad could not be invited...At Fillis's Circus, Tom Burrows broke the world record for club swinging when he whirled some Indian clubs at fifty revolutions a minute for forty-one hours and ten minutes." (Palestrant, E.: Johannesburg One Hundred).

Authors' note: Subsequent to the information furnished in this form, the authors have successfully verified the view shared by Van Der Waal, Shorten, and Palestrant, that *Phillis Circus* was ultimately located in Bree Street on the block bounded by Jeppe, Loveday, Bree and Harrison Streets, i.e. AP1 - AP5. It is contended that the Circus' association with the site covered by this form (i.e. A1-1) might therefore only have been for a relatively short period.

TRANSVAAL DRUG BUILDING / MACDONALD ADAMS BUILDING:

The *Transvaal Drug Building* - designed by Kallenbach, Kennedy & Furner, stood at 21 Kerk and 58 Simmonds Streets. This corner building was erected in 1932.

"The fourth type of building with an identity of its own was represented by the warehouses west of the shopping and office districts. Designed in an utilitarian fashion throughout, these buildings all met the primary need of sufficient light in the storage spaces. Thus, all the facades consisted of a grid-like concrete frame construction with large window panels. In most cases there were no sidewalk covers or display windows, so that the facades projected a closed and aloof image, excluding all inviting gestures to the people on the street. This approach was consistently followed in the design of *Bradlow Building* (1925-6), 85 Market Street, and even more so in the *Lennon Building* (1932), 57 Pritchard Street [see U-1]. References to the Beaux Art mode were popular in these buildings throughout the 1920s, so that a classicist design structure was often applied over the grid pattern...A certain group of warehouses erected in the 1930s were distinguished by a fresh design approach, however. It would seem that a certain freedom and a degree of creativity was prompted by the singleness of their user function and the fact that they largely lacked the need to communicate which was traditional in the case of shops. An early example of this was the *Transvaal Drug Building* (1932), 21 Kerk Street, designed by Kallenbach, Kennedy & Furner, who closed off the cuboid of the building with broad eaves and gave the face a central panel with vertically arranged windows, on the model of the *Plaza Theatre* [Kinema] by the same architects. This gave the building rather attractive proportions...Like the *Plaza Theatre*, Cooke 1983 also specifically ascribes this building to Stanley Furner." (Van Der Waal, G-M.: From Mining Camp to Metropolis...).

"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. Karnovsky 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. Karnovsky, 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.

1937: 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...).

By 1954, the *Transvaal Drug Building* was also known as the *Macdonald Adams Building*. 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*.



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



CHESTER HOUSE:

Chester House, designed by Cowin, Powers & Ellis for Patlansky Bros and Patley, was completed during 1926. It stood at 132 Jeppe Street. Patlansky Bros. and Patley (Pty.) Limited during 1958, relocated to this building from their then premises, i.e. the second *Universal House*, 157 Jeppe Street, Document AR-2. This presumably, is a move they were later to regret, as this building was eventually demolished whilst the second *Universal House*, is still extant.

DUNDEE HOUSE:

By 1954 *Dundee House* occupied the 23 Kerk Street portion of this site.

ELSTEN HOUSE:

By 1954 the *Elsten House* occupied the 63 Harrison Street portion of this site.

PERSONAL SERVICE GARAGE:

The *Personal Service Garage* stood at 134 Jeppe Street, by 1954.

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.

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 completion 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.

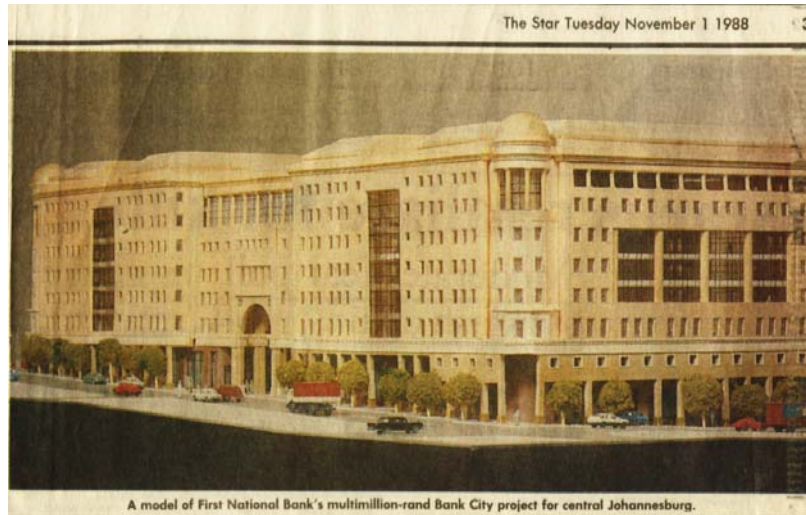
Bank City has been created by a top design team of seven drawn from the leading architectural partnerships of South Africa and led by Cape Town's Revel Fox.

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.

By Frank Jeans

Above and below: The Star, 1 November 1988.



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:

Heritage Resources Management team Johann J and Catharina JM Bruwer.
Unless otherwise indicated photographs by Catharina JM Bruwer.



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