

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



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 :
 Street number :
 : [Bounded: Simmonds, Pritchard, Fraser & Kerk]
 Stand Number : 5248
 Previous Stand Number: by 1988 - 755, 756, 799, 4501, 4675
 Block number : X
 GIS reference :

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

DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:

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

“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).

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.

BUILDING TYPE:

Shops to street, office and bank 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

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:

NORTH WEST (WESTERN) HOTEL:

During the 1890s, the *North West Hotel* was situated at 19, 21 Pritchard Street and 18 Fraser Street. The following is thus recorded by Stoloff: "North portion of this stand the Western Hotel. 1891. Situated on the corner of Pritchard and Fraser Streets, this exuberant 'Late Victorian' building is decorated with wooden balustrading and verandah pillars. A Popular feature at this stage was the use of dormer windows. Sir Johan and Lady Loch stayed at this hotel during their visit on June 9th, 1893. Lady Loch then christened the deep level shaft of the Simmer and Jack Mine, which in 1893 had reached the greatest depth in gold mining history." (Stoloff, C.A.: *The Historic Buildings of Johannesburg – 15 [Hotels, Clubs...]*). Van Der Waal puts the date of construction of the building at 1893-5.

"Then of course there was Barney Barnato. He often played billiards at the North Western Hotel at the corner of Pritchard and Fraser streets. He was skilful at most games and few people could beat him at dominoes or draughts. The goldfields had become his headquarters and within nine months of his arrival, he had started the New Primrose mine..." (Palestrant, E.: *Johannesburg One Hundred*).

"The proliferation of residential buildings in Johannesburg in the 1890s can be ascribed to the rapid influx of people who preferred temporary accommodation before buying or leasing a house. Obviously the high cost of houses in the mining town must also have been a factor in this development...Residential buildings erected in Johannesburg during this period shared one major feature – verandahs which, in the case of higher buildings, were stacked across the full height of the facades...To a great extent, these verandahs expressed the homeliness and habitability of this type of building. High French doors gave access from the rooms to the verandahs on which residents relaxed or entertained their friends. Early buildings such as the *Salisbury Chambers* (1891), 65/7 Von Brandis Street, and the *North Western Hotel* (1893-5), 19,21 Pritchard Street had timber verandahs. Here mentioned is made in passing of the so-called 'rooms' erected in a single row. Situated away from the street they had no street frontage at all. They gave the impression of having been erected in an emergency, with a minimum of conveniences, for single working class men..." (Van Der Waal, G-M.: *From Mining Camp to Metropolis...*).

According to Neame, the *North West Hotel* at the time of its existence was "a select and expensive resort." (Neame, L.E.: *City Built On Gold*).

HOTEL SIDNEY:

By 1954, the *Hotel Sidney* stood at 18 Kerk Street and 24 Fraser Street.

MERLEN HOUSE:

By 1954, the *Merlen House* occupied the 25 Pritchard and 49 Simmonds Streets corner of this site.

PREVIOUS TENANT:

By 1954: room 404 - Cleveland Art Co.

STABLES:

By 1908 *Stables* for T.W. Beckett & Co stood on the 22, 24 Kerk and 55 Simmonds Street portion of this site.

20 KERK STREET:

The stand at 20 Kerk Street was undeveloped by 1908. By 1954, the Amalgamated Engineering Union had offices in the building, subsequently erected on this stand.

NEW CUSTOM HOUSE:

By 1954, the *New Custom House* occupied the 21 Pritchard Street portion of this site.

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.

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.



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