

**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: Harrison, Pritchard, Simmonds and Kerk]  
 Stand Number : 5237  
 Previous Stand Number: by 1988 - 1/804, 809, 810, 811, 812, RE/813, 1/813, 814,  
 : 815, 4522, 4817  
 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 :

**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:**

The Heritage Resources Management team strongly recommends that a plaque be erected at 30a Kerk Street, the address of the now demolished *third Trades Hall*, commemorating the launch of the National Women’s Organisation on 17 April 1954. and its part in the Liberation Struggle.

**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:

**PRE-HISTORY OF SITE:**

THIRD TRADES HALL:

Located at 30a Kerk Street by 1954, was the *third Trades Hall*.

Sadly the building as physical reminder of this watershed event in the history of the advancement of women’s rights in South Africa is lost and buried under a new building with no recognized association with the historic importance of this site.

The names, *inter alia*, of Walter Sisulu, Charles Harris and Albert Nzula are closely associated with the *third Trades Hall*. See below.

WALTER SISULU:

“Walter Sisulu was the main link between the conference organisers and the ANC. He was a leading member of the ANC executive, who saw that a National Women’s Organisation could play an important role in the Liberation Struggle. The conference took place on 17 April 1954 in the Trades Hall, Johannesburg. Catering was done by men to give women delegation (sic.) more time to debate Political issues. The opening speech was delivered by the ANC Women’s League President, Ida Mtwana. She said, ‘Gone are the days when the place of women was in the kitchen and looking after the children. Today, they are marching side by side with Men (sic.) in the road to freedom.’” (Information sourced from <http://www.anc.org.za/wl/docs/50years.html>).

CHARLES HARRIS:

“The last halcyon months of peace were marred by the wanton murder in Kerk Street on the 15th of June, 1939, of Charles Harris, the able and popular General Secretary of the Mine Workers’ Union. Harris was 43 years old at the time of his death. He had been President of the Mine Workers’ Union before becoming its General Secretary and in 1936 he had received the King’s Jubilee Medal for distinguished trade union services. In 1937 he had been the South Africa Workers’ delegate to the

conference of the International Labour Organisation at Geneva and his crowning achievement was the decisive part he played that year in negotiating the 'Closed Shop' Agreement between the Mining Unions' Joint Committee and the Chamber of Mines. A few of Harris's intimate friends knew that he had been receiving threatening letters warning him to resign his post or forfeit his life. But apparently the threats were not taken seriously, for when two of his colleagues were unable to accept his invitation to have a drink with him after work on the day of the tragedy, Harris jocularly remarked, 'Well, it might be the last chance you'll have'. His words were all too prophetic. Later that afternoon, when he emerged from a garage opposite the Trades Hall [this could be 60 Jeppe Street] and stepped into his car to drive home, he was accosted by a 22-year-old brandy-fuddled miner named Jacob Moller Hugo who drew a revolver and fired five shots at point-blank range. Four struck Harris and when an ambulance arrived he was dead. Meanwhile, the assassin had walked into the garage and surrendered himself. At his trial for murder, Hugo revealed a fearfully warped mentality. Witnesses testified that he had told them that Harris had been a 'scab' in 1922 and was 'selling out' the miners to the Chamber of Mines. Several times Hugo had said that he was going to kill the General Secretary, but he was known as a shiftless and unbalanced person, and unfortunately his workmates had paid little attention to these outbursts. Passing sentence for life imprisonment, Mr. Justice Schreiner said the court was satisfied that Hugo was mentally defective and subject to abnormal obsessions. Labour historians, however, insist that the murder was the culmination of a sinister plot in which Hugo was used as a tool. Walker and Weinbren *2,000 Casualties*, (op. cit. pp. 216-221) set out this view in some detail, maintaining that Harris's death was a 'tragic consequence' of the campaign conducted by the Reformers' Organisation in the Mine Workers' Union to convert the union into a 'Christian-National' body. While recording that after the death of Harris the administration of the union's affairs was riddled with 'shocking instances of gross mal-administration and worse', the joint authors attempt to trace the history of the Reformers' Organisation. They believe it had its origin in the form of a donation of £10,000 made by the Marias Trust of Stellenbosch in 1936. This donation, they maintain, led to the forming of Die *Nasionale Raad van Trusteers* which had as its objective 'the rescue of Afrikaner miners from the evil materialistic influences of the Witwatersrand'." (Shorten, J.R.: The Johannesburg Saga). This tragic event is also recounted in Chilvers, H.A.: *Out of the Crucible*, pp. 241-242.

#### ALBERT NZULA:

"Albert Nzula's life was tragically short - he died in Moscow on January 17th, 1934, at the age of 29. Although his period of activity in the Party was limited to only six years, he made a vital contribution to the Africanisation of the Party which took place at that time, and to strengthening the ties between the Party and the international working class movement. Born in Rouxville, in the Orange Free State in 1905, his political involvement was stimulated by the popular upsurge which marked the depression years of 1928-1933. After qualifying as a teacher at Lovedale, Nzula took up teaching in Aliwal North, becoming active in the ICU. His entry into the Party took place at a time when the slogan of an Independent Native Republic was being fiercely debated in Party circles. An avid reader, Nzula had a deep understanding of the role of the national movement in South Africa. He was emphatic that the leadership of the Party must pass primarily into the hands of Africans. Strong and fearless, his influence grew rapidly. He taught in the Party's night school, was active in the Federation of Non-European Trade Unions, became one of the leading speakers on Party and ANC platforms. Elected assistant secretary of the Party at its conference in 1929, he soon took over as acting editor of the party paper, the *South African Worker*. In 1930 he was the chairman at the 'all in ' conference held at the Trades Hall, Johannesburg, to launch a campaign to fight repressive legislation introduced in parliament by General Hertzog's Justice Minister, Pirow. He was in the chair again at an anti-pass conference held at the Inchcape Hall, Johannesburg which resolved to work for a mass burning of passes, and thousands throughout South Africa burnt their passes on December 16, 1930. Nzula organised mass meetings of unemployed Africans, and he led African workers on a massive May Day demonstration in 1931, which merged into one huge procession with demonstrating white workers. Nzula was smuggled out of South Africa and enrolled at the Lenin School in Moscow, the first African from South Africa to do so. While there he wrote a series of articles on the South African revolutionary movement for various communist publications, and co-authored *Forced Labour in Colonial Africa* with Il Pothekin and AZ Zusnianoch. He died in hospital in Moscow on January 17, 1934, of pneumonia." (Information sourced from <http://www.sacp.org.za/biographies/anzula.html>).

#### CLARENCE HOTEL:

Standing at 26 Kerk Street and 56 Simmonds Street, was this double-storey Neo-Queen (with Art Nouveau characteristics) building, which was completed in 1905. In 1972, the stand number recorded for this stand, was 1434. (By 1954, this building was known as *Atkin's Buildings* or new building.)

## FINDLAY BUILDING:

The *Findlay Building* – standing at 28 and 30 Kerk Street - was completed in 1906. This three-storey building – compared quite favourably with its immediate neighbour, the *Clarence Hotel* – as it was a prime example of a design combination of the Neo-Queen and Art Nouveau styles. In 1972, the stand numbers recorded for these stands, were 1436, and Portion of 1437.

“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.

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...).



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...).



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: G-6 for more information regarding the *Loewenstein Building*.

Tenant/s:

By 1954: Building Workers’ Industrial Union of South Africa.

Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers of South Africa.

South African Engine Drivers’ & Firemen’s’ Association.

Room 19, 20 – Witwatersrand Liquor & Catering Trade Employees Union.

Room 22 - Transvaal Leather and Allied Trades Industrial Union.  
Room 6 - Jewellers and Goldsmiths Union.

#### TIVOLI HOTEL:

The *Tivoli Hotel* –completed in 1906 - occupied the 32 Kerk and 59 Harrison Streets corner of this stand.

This building was known as *Russell's Buildings* by 1954. Tenants of the building during the same period were Russell's the furniture people; the Labour Party Club and the South African Labour Party Head Office.

Right: "An interesting view of a corner of Harrison and Kerk streets, looking west. On each corner is a hotel, the one on the right is the Tivoli, advertising the well-known Thoma Lager Beer; and on the left is the two-storey Australia Hotel (see Pre-History: W-1)...Both hotels can be identified in early directories as the Tivoli, 32 Kerk Street, of 1906, and the Australia Hotel, 24 (sic. should read as 58) Harrison Street, also of 1906." (Norwich, O.I.: A Johannesburg Album; Historical Postcards, postcard 27).



"Less important hotels were also located on the edge of the business district. This was in line with the tendency for residential buildings to be gradually crowded out of the city centre – a trend that was to be continued in later years. Indeed, this marked the beginning of the slow death of the city core, which would eventually contain only commercial buildings and lack all vestiges of night life." (Van Der Waal, G-M.: From Mining Camp to Metropolis...).

#### UNION CENTRE BUILDING:

By 1954, the *Union Centre Building* occupied the 31 Pritchard Street portion of this site.

Tenant/s by 1954: room 212 – Craft Centre.

Room 203, 204 - Johannesburg Association of Taxi Operators, controlling Checkers Cabs, Rose Taxis, Red Line Taxis and City Cabs.

Room 101, 104 – Johannesburg Municipal Transport Workers' Union.

Room 115 – Johannesburg Municipal Workers' Union.

Room 112 – National Milling Workers' Industrial Union.

Room 128 – National Union of Commercial Travellers, Johannesburg Branch and Head Office.

Room 111 – South African Trades & Labour Council.

Room 119, 120 – Sweet Workers' Union.

5th floor – Transvaal Coal Owners' Association (1923) (Pty) Ltd.

Room 203 – Witwatersrand Taxi Drivers' Union.

#### NORTHERN FURNITURE MART BUILDING:

Completed in 1906, the double-storey *Northern Furniture Mart Building* occupied the 27 Pritchard 50, 52 Simmonds Street portion of the site. The façade of this Neo-Queen Anne building was plastered. By 1954 Charles Furniture Mart (Pty) Ltd, occupied the building.

#### ART HOUSE:

By 1954 the *Art House* occupied the 57 Harrison Street portion of this city block.

During the same time a certain Arthur Carnaby had a 'school of piano accordion and piano syncopation' on the first floor of the building; eight floor - Johannesburg Operatic and Dramatic Society.

## HAROLD BUILDING:

By 1954, the *Harold Building* stood at 55 Harrison Street.

### **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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