

JOHANNESBURG METROPOLITAN MUNICIPALITY

HERITAGE ASSESSMENT SURVEYING FORM

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

NAME OF PLACE: Johannesburg Building Society Building



Previous/alternative name/s :

LOCATION: Street : Joubert
Street number : 25
Stand number : 4770 (previously 905, 906 and 907)
Block number : H

ZONING: Current use/s : Business one
Previous use/s : Bank and offices

DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:

Ten storey building: i.e. ground floor, and first (double volume) to ninth floors.

Originally, the building comprised the following noteworthy external elements: cast bronze panels below windows at first floor level and bronze grilles above glazed shop fronts; granite faced plinth and cantilevered canopy over pavement along entire shop frontage. On the ground floor was a banking hall and four separate shops, the latter facing Joubert Street. The public entrance to the banking hall was on Commissioner Street with a separate entrance and entrance hall off Commissioner Street at the south-west corner of the building. The top storey housed a caretaker's flat and lift motor room.

CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS:

Walls : the exterior walls are clad with brown granite on the bottom and sandstone on the remaining parts.

Roof : flat, concrete.

Windows: steel frame.

SITE FEATURES:

ALTERATIONS:

The consolidated list below refers to alterations / additions to the building subsequent to its construction (these alterations / additions mostly comprised work to the interior of the building, except where indicated otherwise):

<u>Plans passed</u>	<u>Architect</u>
7 August 1953	J.C. Cook & Cowen
11 September 1958	J.C. Cook & Cowen
20 February 1959	J.C. Cook & Cowen
4 July 1960	J.C. Cook & Cowen
24 August 1964	J.C. Cook & Cowen
29 July 1965	J.C. Cook & Cowen
1 February 1966	J.C. Cook & Cowen
22 August 1967	J.C. Cook & Cowen (Proposed "New Non-European Banking Hall In Basement Of The Johannesburg Building Society Building")
17 October 1967	C.R. Kallenbach

12 January 1968	J.C. Cook & Cowen
21 October 1968	J.C. Cook & Cowen
19 November 1968	J.C. Cook & Cowen
6 December 1968	J.C. Cook & Cowen
18 December 1969	J.C. Cook & Cowen
10 August 1976	J.C. Cook & Cowen
1 March 1978	J.C. Cook & Cowen
25 October 1978	J.C. Cook & Cowen (Alteration of existing shop fronts on Joubert Street, entailing the removal of windows and doors, new canopy over pavement, new brickwork and aluminium frame windows to match the existing, as well as stone panels with granite faced plinth. This work, which also involved various internal alterations to the ground floor, was necessitated by the removal of the shop facilities and the proposed use of the entire ground floor for banking purposes.)
24 September 1985	Allied Building Society, Premises Department

INTEGRITY:

Except for the changes made to the shop fronts of the building during the 1970 not much can be said against the integrity of this building.

INSCRIPTION:

ARCHITECT/BUILDER:

J.C. Cook & Cowen

CONSTRUCTION DATE:

Plans passed : 11 September 1951
 Completed : 1952

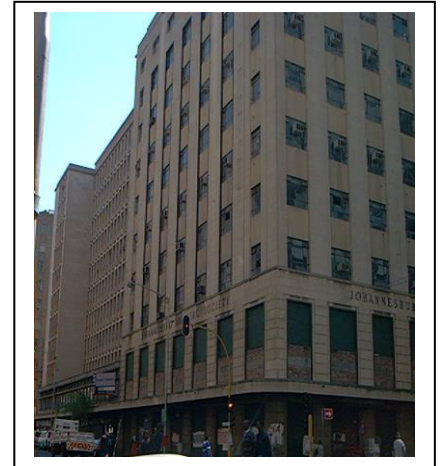
BUILDING STYLE:

BUILDING TYPE:

Bank and office building.

ENVIRONMENT:

This building stands in fine unison with the adjacent Corporation building.



CONDITION:

The entire shop frontage has been boarded up. The brown granite cladding at shop front level as well as the first floor has been removed, exposing the bare brickwork. The window openings at first floor level are also secured with steel plates as is the case with the shop fronts.

URGENT ACTION:

At the time of this survey the main entrance door in Commissioner Street had been forced open and it was clear that vandals had already been at work in this section of the building. It appeared also that electricity was being illegally tapped from the transformer room in the basement, beneath the entrance lobby, leading to the damage of the floor.

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:

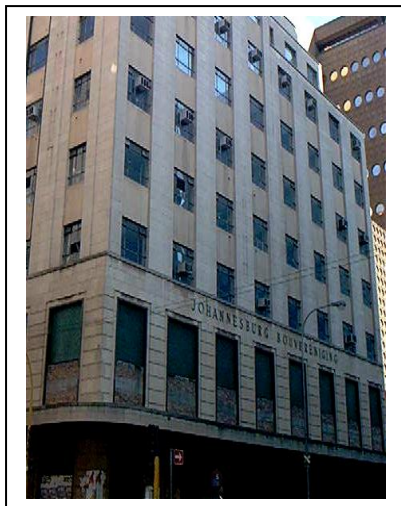
T21535/1991 Belmark Prop Pty Ltd

T35837/1992 South African Mutual Life Assurance Soc

T35837/1992 Old Mutual Life Assurance Co South Africa Ltd

PRE-HISTORY OF SITE:

By 1900 the Portland House stood on a portion of this site, facing Commissioner Street. By 1920, the Sacke Building occupied the corner site of this stand and the site next to it, facing Joubert Street.



HISTORY:

Within 12 months of the proclamation of the goldfields a group of men found the Johannesburg Building Society, the oldest in the Transvaal. Towards the end of 1887 the early mining camps were beginning to change fast. The first families were demanding more permanent structures than tin shanties and read structures. It was at this stage that action was taken to set up the first building society in the town. Bernard de Rockstro Malraison (a famous cricketer, a founder member of the Wanderers' Club, stayed a member till his death at age 90, an infamous freebooter and soldier of fortune), Fred Chapman (a stockbroker) and Henry Goodman (and architect and estate agent). December 1887 these 3 men called the inaugural meeting of the Johannesburg Building Society in the Corner Dining Room with William Crosby (a journalist) at the chair.

Altogether 22 people attended. At the next on the 28th February 1888, meeting a draft constitution was presented based on the advice of Johannesburg Advocate, John Wessels (later Sir and the Chief Justice of the Union of South Africa). The document confined the business of the new society to Johannesburg but provided that branches might be established elsewhere in the Republic of South Africa. Approval was given to the name – Johannesburg Building Society.

Edward Hancock (also founder member of the Stock Exchange) was elected as chairman, and stayed in the office for 16 years. The first vice-chairman, Albert Levy also retained his office over a long period. Malraison was the first secretary, but soon handed over the W.H. Dawe. The first office was in Commissioner Street, renting it at £10 a month. Office hours was till late on Saturday nights to enable townsmen and workers to come and pay their instalments. On the 9th July 1888 a gas lamp, costing £7, with the Society's name on was lit for the first time.

The earliest existing bond was issued in May 1888 to a Mr Browning for £300. Within a year the Society set up a new department, a saving bank witch was very popular and grew fast.

1896 was not a good year, the Jameson Raid followed by the slump in the share market, caused the Society to ask for a reduction in the £10 monthly rent. With crime and robberies on the increase the Society purchased 2 revolvers for the protection of its clerks.

During 1899 the bank continued growing, despite the depression. Unfortunately there followed a period of 2 years of no records of the JBS. With the loyalty of African servants and caretaker, there was little damage to unoccupied properties, leaving the Society's funds in good state. On 4th January 1902 the business reopened at 13 Rissik Street.

By 1904 the new Town Council compiled a valuation roll based on site values which greatly simplified the task of building societies and a prosperous period followed with the JBS opening agencies in various Reef towns.

1906 Edward Hancock retired, handing over to Albert Levy who in 1907 handed over to Joseph Waldie Pierson (an accountant and director of companies) who stayed Chairman for the next 18 years.

By 1912 the Society moved into new and larger premises at 95 Commissioner Street.

The First World War brought a serious setback to the entire building society movement, the JBS was forced to retrench staff and close agencies. It showed little growth up to 1920 with only £15,000 increase in assets for the past 10 years making a total of £196,000.

After the post-war boom another serious slump followed in the 1922 Strike. Growing slowly up the 1930s. Under the reign of S. Raphaely (Chairman 1928, 1938 – 1944) a period of rapid growth followed. In the year of Mr Raphaely's inauguration the Society bought its first property at 100 Fox Street which became the head office building. A year later a building was acquired in Cape Town and a branch opened there.

In 1940s the JBS acquired properties in several cities. Merges with 8 building societies in the country districts followed.

In 1950 the Society's assets were recorded as £22-million. By then the old head office building in Fox street became inadequate and a new site on the corner of Commissioner and Joubert Streets was acquired.

This fine and dignified building, 9 storeys high, notable for its appearance and intelligent interior design, was occupied in 1953 and from there the Society operated a network of 14 branches and 220 agencies.

In 1966 the JBS became the first building society in the country to establish 'on-line' computer system to link all its main branches. Even on world terms, it is among the first building societies outside the United States to have provided this service to its clients.

By the JBS's 75th anniversary its assets had grown to a staggering R148.7-million. On its 80th anniversary it topped the R200-million mark.

GENERAL NOTES:

SOURCES:

Shorten, J.R.: The Johannesburg Saga, John R. Shorten, Second impression, 1966

Van Der Waal, G-M.: From Mining Camp to Metropolis, The buildings of Johannesburg 1886-1940, Chris Van Rensburg Publications, 1987

City Engineering Department, Stand No. 4770, Township Johannesburg (Planning Department), City of Johannesburg

Registrar of Deeds, Johannesburg

RECORDED BY:

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Photographs by Chris JH Coxen (unless otherwise indicated).

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