

**JOHANNESBURG METROPOLITAN MUNICIPALITY****HERITAGE ASSESSMENT SURVEYING FORM**

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

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**NAME OF PLACE: MACKAY MANSIONS**

Main photo: view of *Mackay Mansions* on the northwest corner of Rissik and Jeppe Streets. Top right: Jeppe Street – from left to right – *Mackay Mansions*, *Joshua Doore Building*, *second Universal House*, *School Clinic*, and *Steadman Mansions*. Bottom right: the building as seen from a position nearby in Jeppe Street, southwest of the building.

Previous/alternative name/s :

**LOCATION:** Street : corner Jeppe, Rissik  
Street number :  
: [151 Jeppe; 69, 71 Rissik]  
Stand Number : 1236, 1237, 1238  
Previous Stand Number: 1124, 1125, 1126  
Block number : AQ  
GIS reference :

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

## DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:

Height :  
Levels above street level : 11 (plus roof)  
Levels below street level :  
On-site parking :

"Another indication of the variety of styles used during this period [1920 – 1940] was the streamlining of the salient series of balconies in some buildings. In this regard the most dramatic effect was achieved in *Normandie Court* (1937-8), 94/6 Kerk Street, where the rounded corners of the balconies were complemented and their effect reinforced by the cantilever concrete slabs at the corner of the building. Earlier the same effect was created in *Mackay Mansions*...albeit in a less integrated manner, while the treatment of the banded windows of *Annan Building* (1935-7). 86 Commissioner Street [see BC-2], was in much the same mould." (Van Der Waal, G-M.: From Mining Camp to Metropolis...).

## CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS:

Walls: reinforced concrete frame construction, plastered brick.  
Roof: concrete, flat.  
Windows: steel side-hung casements with fanlights over.

## SITE FEATURES:

## ALTERATIONS:

## INTEGRITY:

Gutting of the interior of the building has been in progress for months. It is more than likely that not much remains of the original interior fabric of the building.

## INSCRIPTION:

## ARCHITECT:

Cowin, Powers & Ellis in association with Emley & Williamson.

## BUILDER:

## CONSTRUCTION DATE:

Date on plans :  
Approval of plans :  
Completion date : 1934-1935

## BUILDING STYLE:

Late Modernist.

## BUILDING TYPE:

Shops to street and residential building.

## ENVIRONMENT:

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

By 1956 *Mackay Mansions* was still in a prime condition and a building claiming and responding to a prime position on the corner of Jeppe and Rissik Streets.



This building despite its abandoned state, is an integral part of the three important Art Deco buildings on this city block, i.e. the *Mackay Mansions* and its immediate neighbour – *Dorchester Mansions* in Rissik Street, and *Roehampton Court* on the corner of Rissik and Bree Streets.

#### CONDITION:

This building requires attention. It projects an image of abandonment, e.g. broken window panes, peeling paint; bricked-up first floor, and the neglected condition of the cantilevered verandah etc.

#### URGENT ACTION:

#### SAHRA RECORD REGARDING ALTERATIONS, RENOVATIONS, RESTORATION:

##### PROTECTION STATUS: (under National Heritage Resources Act, 1999)

General protection:	Section 34(1) structure/s	<input checked="" 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:  
By 1956: African City Properties Trust.

#### PRE-HISTORY OF SITE:

#### HISTORY:

"Apartment living reflected a specific attitude and a preference for a particular lifestyle. Blocks of flats were built to be let (there was as yet no question of the sectional titles of today), so that occupation was always temporary. In addition, apartment buildings met the accommodation requirements of the lower to middle-class sections of society only. The most affluent and poorest sections preferred detached houses. At the same time there was no concerted effort by friendly societies or any other agency to provide housing for the poorer sections of the community on the model of developments in Europe. By their location near the city centre, these buildings brought their middle-class occupant conveniently close to their places of work and relieved them of the bother of caring for either house or garden, so that they could devote their energies to earning a living. Since the apartment buildings were put up on or very near the street line and the busy streets afforded no place for children to amuse themselves, there was little opportunity to develop a healthy family life. Human interaction was also severely inhibited by the isolation of the flats as closed units next to or above one another, as well as the absence of communal social areas, such as recreation halls. Financial considerations were the only criteria applied in selecting tenants for the apartments. Thus personal income, not a propensity to fit in with a particular group, was the deciding factor. A prominent feature of apartment buildings was the general block form with a certain degree of mass articulation, mostly in the central sections, which suggested an illusion of depth. This treatment created an impression of friendly accessibility – probably a reference to domestic architectural styles, in which the function of the building was expressed in a traditional form. A second important common feature of these blocks was the use of balconies, by which these buildings came to be identified. Referring to the social aspect of flats, these balconies constituted a link between the interior and exterior and were reminiscent of the Edwardian verandahs. Built in the same materials as the face, the balconies were visually an integral

element of the whole, but were at the same time more isolated in terms of function: only one balcony was allocated to each flat. This meant that the need for social space was gradually changed from the communal to the individualised. The balconies were not only inaccessible to neighbours but they could also be furnished to suit the taste of the individual tenant. It is interesting to note that the balcony appointment mostly contained arrangement of plants...in separate pots, which probably reflected a need to retain some kind of bond with the natural environment from which the tenants originated. The construction and provision of services in apartment buildings followed a course of development parallel to that of office and commercial buildings. After the late 1920s reinforced concrete frame constructions were used to an increasing extent, and in a few exceptional cases this permitted a free arrangement of interior walls. In most cases, however, one floor was usually an exact replica of the next, with rectangular rooms. Elevators were fairly common. They were linked to the lobby and the passages built on each floor on the longitudinal axis of the building. As was to be expected, property developers provided built-in cupboards and a bathroom for each flat only in the more luxurious blocks, which were also equipped with the most modern domestic appliances available at the time, including an electric stove and refrigerator...In some cases parking for tenants' cars was provided in the basement...However, the average block of flats supplied only the protection of a roof and walls and tenants had to make do with communal ablution and toilet facilities on each floor. Such asocial effects were common where the profit motive was the major determinant." (Van Der Waal, G-M.: From Mining Camp to Metropolis...).

1956: "African City Properties Trust (1952) Ltd. One of the modern romances of big business that will one day take up an important chapter in the history and development of Johannesburg lies behind the story of the emergence of the African City Properties Trust 1952 Ltd. as the largest property-owning concern in Southern Africa today. Originally established in London in 1894 with the object of acquiring properties in the Union, A.C.P.T. Limited, amongst other valuable holdings, owned six of the highest-valued properties in Johannesburg, facing on Eloff Street. On these sites there existed buildings which in their day were looked upon as the last word in modern architecture but which had long been outmoded by the fast pace of the city. In 1940 there came into being a company called Controlled Investments Limited, owned and operated by two brothers, Mr. Samuel L. Glazer, J.P., who came to the Union in 1926, and Mr. Bernard Glazer, who came to Johannesburg in 1930, and who were mainly responsible for the development of Hillbrow. The company built the Skyline Hotel and a new block of shops, Hillcrest Buildings, on an adjoining corner, which will eventually rise to eleven storeys. In 1947 the Glazer brothers realised that Eloff Street - South Africa's most valuable strip of land - was lagging far behind in the meteoric progress and growth of the country. The story of how the Glazer brothers made successive trips to England, wooed the shareholders of African City Properties Trust, and finally managed to purchase a controlling interest in the company, is one that will be discussed in financial circles in South Africa for years to come. At that stage the company owned the following properties: Castle Mansions, of 10 storeys, on the corner of Eloff Street and Jeppe Street [see AE-2]; [second] Manners Mansions, of 13 storeys, on the corner of Jeppe Street and Joubert Street [see AE-3]; Davidson Mansions (now the famous Waldorf), of five storeys on the corner of Eloff Street and Bree Street; Walter Mansions, of four storeys, on the corner of Eloff Street, Bree Street and Jeppe Street, which had since been demolished, a modern skyscraper being erected in its place; Pollock Mansions, of four storeys in the heart of Eloff Street, now demolished to make way for African City - one of the landmarks of Johannesburg's commercial centre; [first] Marlborough House, of four storeys, bounded by the corner of Eloff Street, Commissioner Street and Fox Street, now demolished to make way for a modern skyscraper standing there today; St. James Mansions, of five storeys, on the corner of Eloff Street and Bree Street, and Norfolk House, of four storeys, on the corner of Joubert Street and Bree Street, which has since been demolished for the erection of the new Bosman Building [see AS-4]; Lauriston Court, of five storeys in Louis Botha Avenue, Houghton; Stanley House, corner of Commissioner Street and Bree Street [sic. should be 89, 91 Commissioner and 37 Loveday Streets; see Pre-History: F-5], which was subsequently sold, and a subsidiary, Green's Buildings Limited, which owns 17-storey Annan House, Commissioner Street [see BC-2], which today [i.e. 1956] houses the headquarters of African City Properties Trust. With complete control in their hands, the Glazer brothers and associates now turned to their second part of their long-term programme. This was the organization and flotation of a public company known as A.C.P. Investment Limited, which acquired the total controlling interest in African City Properties Trust Ltd. This new company perfected the plans for the rebirth of Eloff Street, demolishing existing buildings and erecting gigantic modern edifices which today form new and progressive landmarks of the city's main shopping thoroughfare. At the same time the company gained further suburban interest by taking over Carnarvon Hotels Limited, owners of the Orange Grove Hotel, in Orange Grove, and a block of 14 shops next to the hotel. The company also bought out Stedlike Grondbeleggers Beperk, owners of bank premises in De Villiers Street, Johannesburg. The Organisation has since bought Mackay Mansions, of 11 storeys, on the corner of Rissik and Jeppe Streets [AQ-7], Ridgeway Court, corner of Bok Street and Nugget Street and Parkleigh Court, in Wolmarans Street. The Glazer brothers have always worked together. For more than two decades they have planned real estate and

building operations with an implicit faith in the future of Johannesburg and the still greater future of the country where-in their interest now extends to Bechuanaland [now known as Botswana] and the Central African Federation. But the story does not end there. As South Africa moves forward in the face of inevitable progress, so African City Property Investment Limited and its associated companies will move forward with it, secure in the knowledge that its prosperity is intimately bound up in that of a progressive country." (Stark, F. [Ed.]: Seventy Golden Years...).

#### GENERAL NOTES:

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

#### PREVIOUS TENANT:

By 1954: Marias Diamond Cutting; Abe Gordon (Pty) Ltd; De Kock & Kessel.

#### CURRENT TENANTS:

Fixed Star Jeans & Shoes, Wholesalers.  
Pakeezah Cellular & Accessories.  
City Cellular.

#### 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.

#### 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

#### RECORDED BY:

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Unless otherwise indicated photographs by Catharina JM Bruwer.



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