

JOHANNESBURG METROPOLITAN MUNICIPALITY

HERITAGE ASSESSMENT SURVEYING FORM

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

NAME OF PLACE: National Bank Building



Previous/alternative name/s : Second National Bank Building
Barclays National Bank
Old National Bank (The National Bank Building)
First National Bank Building (reference of 1995)

LOCATION: Street : Simmonds
Street number : 38, 40
Stand number : 5293 (previously 748-751)
Block number : E

ZONING: Current use/s : Business one
Previous use/s :

DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:

This building comprises 11 storeys and one basement level.

It appears that the building was completed in the same year as the Corner House, viz. 1904. The former was originally a seven storey and the latter, a nine storey building. Together, these two buildings were the City's tallest skyscrapers till the 1920's. In 1954, an additional two storeys were added to this building.

Stoloff states that glass-domed banking halls, with characteristic roof lights was a feature of early 20th century bank design. The building clearly illustrates this feature.

Van Der Waal mentions the building regulations which were promulgated by the Town Council in June 1903. According to these regulations, buildings in Johannesburg would be limited to a height of 140ft (44m), but they were nevertheless limited to a height equal to one and two-thirds the width of the street in which they were built. The interesting point here is that the third Corner House, the National Bank Building, as well as the third Thorne and Stuttafords Building were all built prior to the promulgation of these regulations and were all much taller than the regulations would have allowed; the result of this being that these three exceptional buildings dominated downtown Johannesburg for long.

CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS:

Walls : steel construction (provided by P.W. McLellan, Glasgow); brick with sawn sandstone cladding.

Roof : flat; concrete.

Windows: sash windows in northern façade; double windows, the front being new.

Floor : parquet.

SITE FEATURES:



ALTERATIONS:

Development of Stand Nos. 750 and 751 in 1953 in same style; two storeys were added to existing building.

INTEGRITY:

Outstanding example of how a development of 50 years later was sympathetically achieved in relation to the old building.

INSCRIPTION:

The NMC in August 1978 suggested to Barclays National Bank Ltd. that a bronze plaque should also be placed at this building. On 31 March 1980, Barclays National Bank Ltd informed the NMC that the plaque had been successfully affixed to the building. See below.

NATIONAL BANK BUILDING

THE ORIGINAL PORTION OF THIS BUILDING WAS ERECTED IN 1904. LECK AND EMLY DESIGNED IT IN COHERENCE WITH THE ADJOINING BUILDING, NOW KNOWN AS BARCLAYS BUILDING. THE PORTION IN MARKET STREET AND THE TWO TOP STOREYS OF THE OLD SECTION WERE DESIGNED BY GORDON LEITH AND PARTNERS IN 1953 AND ARE OUTSTANDING EXAMPLES OF SYMPATHETIC ADDITIONS.

THIS PLAQUE WAS DONATED BY BARCLAYS NATIONAL BANK LIMITED

National Monuments Council

1979

ARCHITECT/BUILDER:

Leck & Emley (1903)
Gordon Leith & Partners (1953)

CONSTRUCTION DATE:

On plan : 16 January 1903
June 1953 (additional two storeys)

Completed : 1904
1954 (additional two storeys)

BUILDING STYLE:**BUILDING TYPE:**

Bank and office building.

ENVIRONMENT:

"The National Bank of South Africa purchased a site adjacent to the Corner House in Simmonds Street, and erected a building identical to the Corner House, and of the same height. This is one of the few examples in Johannesburg of an architect being

'neighbour conscious' in the design of a new city building." (Stoloff, C.A.)

Van Der Waal describes the second National Bank Building – third Corner House relationship as follows: "While these two buildings apparently constitute a whole, there are important differences, such as a lack of articulation in the Simmonds Street façade of the National Bank,

and the poor statement of the main entrance in the same street (despite its monumental proportions). Even a cursory comparison with the Commissioner Street façade of the Corner House reveals that the National Bank does not have the same qualities by far. In any event, these two buildings provide an interesting sidelight on the force of example of a pioneering design (the Corner House). This generic power had not abated 50 years later when Gordon Leith extended the National Bank's façade over two stands in Market Street...and made it fit that of the existing building exactly."

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 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:

(See also PRE-HISTORY OF SITE and HISTORY)

By 1976: Barclays Bank D.C. & O.
T79355/1999 Firststrand Bank Ltd

PRE-HISTORY OF SITE:

This site originally consisted of four separate stands, namely

Stand No. 748: This, the corner stand, was occupied by 1890 by the Beaconsfield Hotel, a single storey corrugated iron building with saddleback roof and verandah.

Stand No. 749: 1889 - Double storey iron building, facing Simmonds Street.

Stand No. 750: Adjoining Stand No. 748 on the East was by 1889, a single storey low iron building with saddleback roof and verandah of Barret & Brayshaw.

By 1894 : Chamber of Commerce (Mines); architect F. Emley & Scott; richly decorated four storey building in neo-Queen Anne style; the large arched windows on ground floor and three gables characterised the façade.

Stand No. 751: At Market Street 84, by 1889, was a low corrugated iron single storey shop with saddleback roof and verandah of R. Kramer & Co.

By 1890 : Baldwin Chambers; a single storey brick building with arched ornament above entrance.

By 1899 : New Court Building; architects Carter & McIntosh; four storey building with central pointed gable, bay window balustrade, balcony and verandah.

HISTORY:

In 1892, the *Nationale Bank van de Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek* (National Bank of the ZAR, launched by special decree of the Volksraad the previous year) was erected opposite the Market Building on Stand Nos. 748/749, i.e. the corner stand (80 Market Street) and the adjacent southern stand; this was a double (three?) storey building with a funnel-like corner turret and classical decoration; the architect was William Leck. According to Van Der Waal, the building "was conceived in the palazzo style and the façade on the square was accentuated by a low pediment and pointed corner gable."

In 1903/4 followed the National Bank building by William Leck & Frank Emley. This nine storey office building in the "imperial style" with neo-Renaissance decorations, housed the former National Bank, which was formed by Hermann Eckstein and J.B. Taylor in 1891 (Taylor joined The Corner House and remained with the Ecksteins for four years. He subsequently became a director on the first Board of Directors of the National Bank of the ZAR, later the National Bank of S.A., who later merged into Barclays Bank).

In 1910 the valuation of the building stood at £45,300.

This, according to Van Der Waal, was the second significant banking building dating from early years of the 20th Century. (The first such significant building was the Standard Bank Building at 33-35 Harrison Street.) "Resembling a massive pillar in the southern wall of Market Square, this...structure focused the attention on the financial district. As early as the 1890s, Market Square was the display window of the gold mining industry and financial world rather than that

of the authorities, so it was only to be expected that the former would also assert themselves in this area after 1900."

The building formed a unit with the old Corner House and together were the tallest construction in the city until the 1920's.

The Market Street portion and the two top storeys of the old section were added in 1953 and designed by Gordon Leith to blend in with the original."

The building was subsequently taken over by Barclays at the time of the National Bank of S.A.'s merger with the latter.

GENERAL NOTES:

P.H. Anderson in 1965 in his *Foreword* to Cartwright's work states as follows: "The Corner House building (i.e. E-1), which began in 1886 as a single-storeyed wood-and-iron shack ...was replaced by a larger, more modern, building first in 1890 and again in 1904. The building that rose after the South African War has been one of the landmarks of Johannesburg for 60 years and certainly can claim to have played its part in the history of the city and of South Africa. Shortly after it was completed a twin building was erected on the adjoining stands in Simmonds Street to accommodate the National Bank of South Africa (now incorporated in Barclays Bank D.C.O.) which had been formed in 1891 at the urgent plea of President Paul Kruger to his friend J.B. Taylor of The Corner House, and with the backing and assistance of the financiers of The Corner House. It is fitting, therefore, that this third building should now have been purchased by Barclays Bank and that it will be integrated with their existing matching buildings. The historic building will thus be preserved, although under a different guise. This is the appropriate moment to tell The Corner House story, for the companies it has housed these many years have recently moved to a new Corner House."

SOURCES:

Opname Historiese Geboue In Johannesburg, Second Report June 1976, Inner City, RAU

NMC File 3/1/3/Joh/124

Photographs (coloured) – north elevation ca. '88 and photocopied drawings of street elevations : NMC File 3/1/3/Joh/124

The Johannesburg Historical Foundation (Norwich, I ; Grant, B.L. ; Saul D) Some Historic Drives & Walks of Johannesburg Framic, no date

NMC File 3/1/3/Joh/49: National Bank Building, Simmonds Street, Johannesburg

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Cartwright, A.P.: The Corner House; The Early History Of Johannesburg, Purnell & Sons, 1965

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

RECORDED BY:

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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