**FONTENAY**

This estate was developed around the original house, MEADOWBROOK. Hanson, Tomkin and Finkelstein designed the Italianate-style house – but Hanson claimed that it was modelled on the Spanish style - in 1934 for Harold Jeppe and his wife, Cicely (nee Marais). Harold Jeppe was managing director of SA Townships Mining and Finance Corporation, had other business interests and later ran the Litchi Art Gallery in the City. Apart from his business interests, he was an Olympic athlete in 1920 while studying at Oxford, an international polo player and was instrumental in moving the first polo club founded by his father and associates, to Inanda. The Jeppes moved to Parktown in the mid 1940’s.

Dennis Adams who wrote the citation for the blue plaque has said that the most of this information was taken from Who’s Who.

[](http://artefacts.co.za/main/Buildings/bldg_images.php?bldgid=12982#34575)

**Photograph from Homes of the Golden City. It has no further information except that it was called House Epstein, possibly because of a later occupant.**

The original house, Meadowbrook, around which the Fontenay Estate has been built, has been apparently been subdivided into four units.

Norman Hanson is the architect who designed house.  He was one of the leading architects at Wits University in the 1930’s.  While travelling in Europe he was influenced by famous European architects such as Le Corbusier and Mies van der Rohe, and was instrumental in bring the International Style of architecture to South Africa.  This made South African Modern Movement architecture world renowned.  His firm is responsible for designing some of the finest Modern Movement buildings in the country. The plan of the Meadowbrook House, though Spanish influenced on the exterior is spatially reminiscent of the Modern Movement.

**NOTE BY HERBERT PRINS – WHO WORKED FOR THE FIRM HANSON AND TOMKIN -**

Hanson, Tomkin and Finkelstein were prominent architects in the 1930s. They all graduated from Wits University in the 1930s. There was a slump in the economy and their families encouraged them to open an architectural firm, offering to support them financially until they established themselves – which they soon did.

In the 1950s they split up and the firm became Hanson and Tomkin in 1956. It became Hanson, Tomkin and Prins in 1960 until 1976.

Norman Hanson told me that the design of Meadowbrook was a challenge because Cicely Jeppe had her heart set on a house in the Spanish style. Norman had to undertake a detailed study to emulate the architecture of Spain.

**H M J Prins**

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