

JOHANNESBURG METROPOLITAN MUNICIPALITY

HERITAGE ASSESSMENT SURVEYING FORM

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

NAME OF PLACE: Patidar Mansion



Jhb Metro - Cool Factory

Previous/alternative name/s : 'Pabst' Building

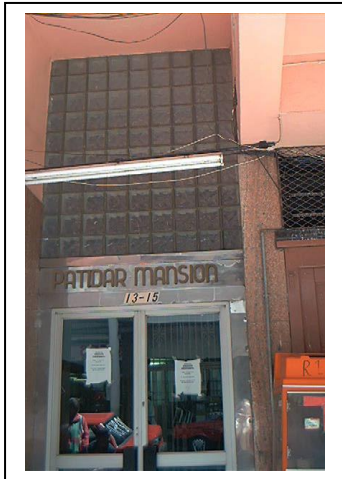
LOCATION: Street : President
Street number : 40
Stand number : 328, 329 (originally 522, 523)
Block number : N

ZONING: Current use/s : General
Previous use/s :

DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:

Pre-1990 description - "This is the first of three buildings using the principle that Pabst described as, 'to design the floors alternatively in contrast to each other so that the first, third, and fifth, etc., are identical counter curves to the second, and fourth, etc.'

On the ground and basement floors are shops, to which minor alterations have been carried out over the years. The five floors and the north section of the sixth floor, have very simply planned flats. A typical flat has two bedrooms, lounge, kitchen, bathroom, and separate toilet with Bombay squat pan...The seventh floor has servant quarters and a drying area for washing...



The entrance is in the side street..., with a long, narrow, and poorly lighted entrance hall, which leads to the staircase, wrapped around the single lift shaft.

The finishes to the building vary and are generally not of a very good quality. The street facades have plain tiled surfaces, which have not weathered well. The entrance has a terrazzo floor..., and marbled-faced walls. Glass bricks are used to light the entrance hall and staircase. The corridors at the back are face brick, with geometrically patterned floor tiles...The flats are inconspicuously finished, with occasional built-in cupboards. ..."

According to Chipkin, this city apartment building "has a segmental curve on the long elevation, cut-out corners on alternate floors, and founded forms (freed from the restrictions of load-bearing walling) set back to reveal the freestanding structural corner columns. A series of curves creates the dynamics of Constructivist space: convex on the long elevation ending as cylindrical corner bays like the scroll of an Ionic capital; concave curves on the short elevation, with reversal volute forms reminiscent of the *cyma reversa* and *cyma recta* profiles of classical architecture. Projecting cubes on alternate floors and a serrated pergola above the roof-line continue the interplay of geometry. Surprisingly, the steel windows are prosaic, if not downright ugly – an example of ordinariness that is part of the Pabst *oeuvre*."

CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS:

- Walls : steel frame construction, brick and plastered.
- Roof : flat, concrete.
- Doors :
- Windows : steel frame.
- Entrance door: double aluminium frame door with glass bricks above.

SITE FEATURES:

ALTERATIONS:

It is believed that minor alterations were carried out to the shops in 1950 and 1963.

No plans in respect of alterations to the building could be found.

INTEGRITY:

The original fabric of the building has remained intact.

INSCRIPTION:

ARCHITECT/BUILDER:

Wilhelm Arnold Heinrich Bernhardt Pabst
(See GENERAL NOTES)

CONSTRUCTION DATE:

On plan :
Completed : construction was commenced in 1947 and completed in 1950.
(The original plans of the building could not be found).

BUILDING STYLE:

"A well known & highly regarded building by the Architect Pabst...An unusual example of South African Expressionist style."



BUILDING TYPE:

Shops to street with flats above.

ENVIRONMENT:

This building is one of the crown jewels of the Diagonal Street precinct. Its unique design features and the colourful character of its designer gives the building a rather special quality, notwithstanding it being a taller building than the

buildings traditionally associated with the Diagonal Street precinct, such as its Kort Street neighbours, i.e. the Kort Tailors Building as well as the Kapitan's Building.

CONDITION:

The building requires minor external cosmetic repairs. Structurally, the condition of the building seems to be as sound as the day it was constructed.

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:

Listed in register of immovable property: Government Notice No. 945 of 4 June 1993, Government Gazette No 14835 of 4 June 1993

NOTES:

In November 1993, the owners Nimmi Investments (Pty) Ltd objected to the listing of the building, which was merely noted by the NMC.

DEEDS INFORMATION:

Original ownership: Mr Vaneyar

By 1928: Mr H Baker

T23601/1982 Nimm [sic.] Inv Pty Ltd

PRE-HISTORY OF SITE:

By 1928 both these stands were the property of a Mr H. Baker, owner of the adjacent Grand Hotel - H. Baker (Stand Nos. 324, 325, 326, 327) on President and Diagonal Streets. The former buildings on this site were single storeyed.

HISTORY:

GENERAL NOTES:

In 1990, the architect Luis Ferreira Da Silva expressed the following views: "Initially I liked the building because it does so many interesting things with the tight corner space in which it is situated. The slight ware of the one elevation, the play of scale and peeling off at the corner of the other. Today I like it even more for having withstood serious assault by recent refurbishments carried out, it appears, without much understanding or caring. I also like the way it has retained its cheekiness and stood its ground against such portly and newly famous greats as First National Bank at 11 Diagonal Street. One hopes it will sit there forever surrounded by those immensely appealing early century double/triple storey structures in the area, which the city has timeously chosen to preserve. For me, it is an amazing piece of intelligent architecture that will remain forever a tomorrow building, that being the reason I like it so much."

In 1990, Professor Amancio Guedes stated as follows: "Pabst's Patidar Mansions is one of his few surviving works. It now stands quite dilapidated and altered. It has lost its orange balustrades and some of the balconies have been glazed in, and yet it remains one of the most startling building in the city. It does many of the things the more recent architecture of schematic, impenetrable and blind super blocks are able to do. It is definitely a corner building that turns the corner with great flair. It announces its entrance in a remarkable way and enriches the straight building line with bulges and overhangs."



The entrance hall and stairs are spectacular although now difficult to get into because of security. As in most of Pabst's buildings the stair shaft is spacious and celebrates the access to upper floors in an extraordinary way. On the roof there are a number of beams set at an angle connecting the pillars which carry the building, enriching its presence in a startling manner."

Brian Altshuler believes that Pabst "created in Patidar a 'building full of movement'. Most architects agree that Pabst created something special with Patidar as a corner building. Patidar's rich façade has depth with floors and elements recessing and projecting. It also has a subtle tension with a concave north side and convex east side."

Pabst (1905 – 1964) came to SA in 1934/35 and practised in Johannesburg. "He was a most independent and original designer and was one of the first architects to challenge the diagrammatic formalism of the triumphant modern movement." (Professor Amancio Guedes, 1990)

Chipkin furnishes detailed and valuable information with respect to Pabst. On his arrival in Johannesburg, he joined the practice of Kallenbach, Kennedy & Furner. "Where Johannesburg's Edwardian, post-Edwardian and Art Deco architecture was conventional in its symmetry, Pabst's work was decidedly unconventional, irregular and asymmetrical. His building elevations avoid a repetition of rectangular accommodation units; instead they curve and bend or form oblique planes that project and withdraw unexpectedly in dynamic reciprocal alternations, flowing (as Patrick Jones has said) with 'movement and countermovement'. These bulging and recessive forms – curvilinear or rectangular – emerge from the nature of reinforced-concrete as construction process where column grids supports slabs (and cantilever slab extensions) in the poured shapes determined by the controlling formwork. We see in both Patidar Mansion and in the nearby Chinese Club Mansions the emergence of new social images, which first appeared in the architect's mind in the distant social milieu of pre-Hitler Berlin. These were then

transformed into social reality on the Witwatersrand with the help of South African Indian patronage at Patidar Mansions and South African Cantonese patronage at the Chinese Club.”

SOURCES:

NMC File 3/1/3/Joh/111 : App. Diagonal Street Conservation Area Johannesburg (including colour photograph)

NMC File 9/2/288/114/4: Patidar Mansions- 40 President Street, Johannesburg (includes colour photographs)

Chipkin, C.M.: Johannesburg Style; Architecture & Society, 1880s – 1960s, David Philip, 1993

City Engineering Department, Stand Nos. 324 to 327, Township Johannesburg (Planning Dept., City of Johannesburg)

Registrar of Deeds, Johannesburg

Mr D. Natha (Shop owner: Patidar Mansion) remembers the Architect Pabst.

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