

JOHANNESBURG METROPOLITAN MUNICIPALITY

HERITAGE ASSESSMENT SURVEYING FORM

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

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NAME OF PLACE: PERSAM HOUSE



Top left: view of main (Bree Street) elevation. Right: from left to right – *Dorchester Mansions, Roehampton Court, Lawson Mansions, and Persam House.*

Previous/alternative name/s :

LOCATION: Street : Loveday, Bree
 Street number :
 : [71, 73, 75 Loveday; 222, 224, 226 Bree]
 Stand Number : 4670
 Previous Stand Number: 1004, 1005, 1006, 1007, 1119
 Block number : AP
 GIS reference :

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

DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:

Height :
 Levels above street level :
 Levels below street level :
 On-site parking :

This is a most striking and well-proportioned building. The asymmetrical siting of its roof structures and the effect of this on the Bree Street roofline of the building is noteworthy. So also is the anchoring effect of the heavy cantilever pavement canopy as the most distinctive of the horizontal elements in the design of the building. An interesting aspect is the harmony attained by the design and prominent siting of the name of the building. (Catharina JM Bruwer).

CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS:

Walls:

Roof:

Windows:

SITE FEATURES:

ALTERATIONS:

INTEGRITY:

INSCRIPTION:

ARCHITECT:

BUILDER:

CONSTRUCTION DATE:

Date on plans :

Approval of plans :

Completion date :

BUILDING STYLE:

Johannesburg Late Modernist (1970s).

BUILDING TYPE:

Shops to street and office building.

ENVIRONMENT:

Photographs sometimes tend to reflect a building in a romantic light. The *Persam House* is an excellent case in point. Although massive in size - if judged by the scale of its immediate more earthbound neighbours - it remains a striking building and in its own particular way, contributes, albeit indirectly, to the landmark qualities of the valuable buildings to its east in Bree Street, on the neighbouring city block. (Catharina JM Bruwer).

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 type="checkbox"/>
Formal protection:	provincial heritage site	<input type="checkbox"/>
	national heritage site	<input type="checkbox"/>
	provisional protection	<input type="checkbox"/>

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:

PRE-HISTORY OF SITE:

HARRIS & CO SHED:

Situated at 71 Loveday Street and on the adjacent corner stand at 69 Loveday Street and 143 Jeppe Street (the site of the existing *Kirchhoff's Building*) between 1914 and circa 1920, was a single storey corrugated iron shed with barge board gable and ash floor designed for Harris & Co. See AP-3. This shed was demolished prior to December 1920.

73 LOVEDAY STREET:

The stand at 73 Loveday Street was shown as being vacant on a site plan dated March 1914.

NATIONAL PARTY CLUB BUILDING / ASTORIA MANSIONS:

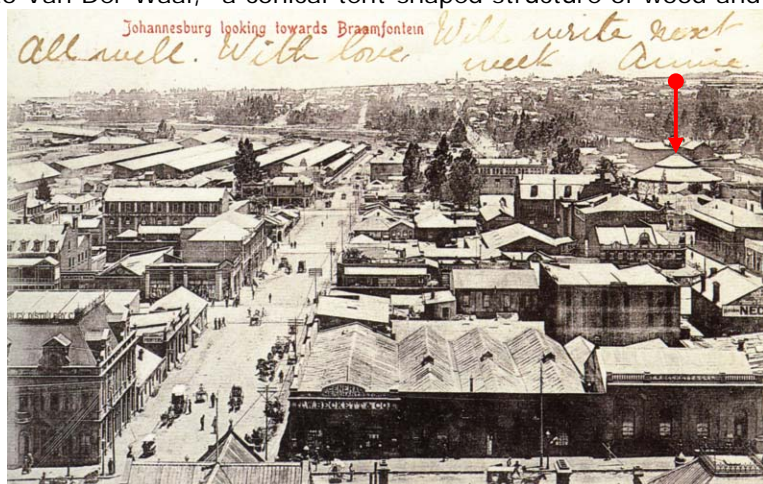
The *National Party Club Building* designed by J.C. Cook (date on plan February 1924) was situated at 71, 73, 75 Loveday Street and 226 Bree Street.

"Just as the various church denominations", according to Van Der Waal, "built no more churches in the city centre after 1920, the greater portion of Johannesburg's residents felt no need to extend organised social activities in this period. Personal social activities found greater favour than the various social clubs, as was revealed by the growing popularity of theatres and cinemas during this period. At the same time the telephone and radio, by virtue of their independence of locality, provided a new form of communication which allowed the individual greater freedom in the selection of contacts. Curiously enough it was the Afrikaners who felt the need for collective social contact, albeit of a political nature, during this period. The only two significant club buildings to be built at this time were put up by them. After being relegated to a subordinate position in the city community for more than 20 years, Afrikaners asserted themselves physically in about 1925 – for the first time since the period before 1899 when the buildings of the Transvaal government were put up. The timing was remarkable in the sense that it preceded the massive migration from the rural areas to the cities during the 1930...The reason is probably to be found in the political circumstances of the time. The club buildings were those of the two most important political parties of that period, the South African Party of General J C Smuts...and the National Party of General J B M Hertzog...Even the dates of construction of the two buildings were probably related to political developments...Gen. Smuts' 'propaganda effort' (i.e. in the construction of the *SAP Club Building*) was of no avail and in the election held in April 1924 he was defeated by Gen. Hertzog's National Party. Gen. Hertzog immediately instructed J C Cook to design a suitable club building for the NP in the vicinity of the other club buildings...The building was opened by Hertzog himself in 1925...The club building of the SAP was conceived in an English style (the party itself was English-orientated)...but the NP adopted a nationalistic stance by opting for a Neo-Cape Dutch design, which was in line with Hertzog's policy of promoting the interests of the Afrikaans-speaking community in particular...The reference to the early Cape architecture had a symbolic force with which the Afrikaners of Johannesburg could identify. Despite the unfortunate isolation of the broad end gable in Bree Street from the longer façade with three pedimented gables in Loveday Street and the break between the upper part of the façade and the lower section with its shops and veranda, the *National Party Club Building* made a powerful statement in the street aspect. Particularly striking were the white gables, unknown in the city centre until then, which stood out against the red tiled double-pitched roof. The great central gable was in fact derived from that of *Groot Constantia* in the Cape, which was in the news at the time because it was destroyed by fire and later restored."

It is possible that the *National Party Club Building* was later turned to a different use and that it might have been known as the Astoria Mansions by 1954.

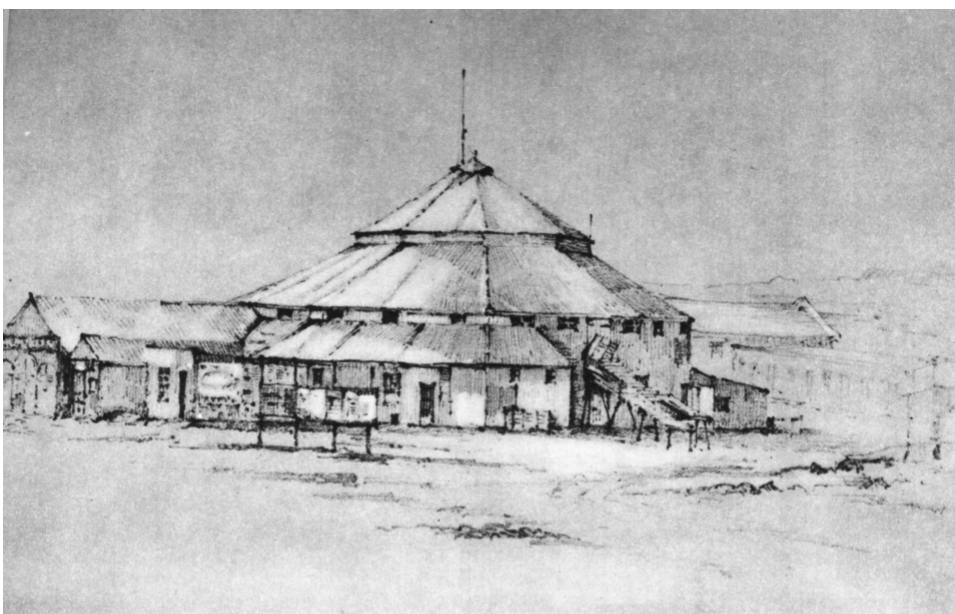
FILLIS' AMPHITHEATRE:

One of the greatest standing attractions in early Johannesburg, no doubt, was the famous *Fillis' Circus* (1889). Also known as the *Fillis' Amphitheatre*, this amenity (also used as a community hall) with seats for 2 000 persons, was according to Van Der Waal, "a conical tent-shaped structure of wood and corrugated iron, 15 metres high and 47,23 metres in diameter." It was located on the block bounded by Jeppe, Harrison, Bree and Loveday Street. See below. For more information on *Fillis Circus*, see Pre-History: AI-1.



Right: Seen is this postcard in the right background is *Fillis Amphitheatre* (Norwich, O.I.: A Johannesburg Album; Historical Postcards, postcard 139).

Below: (Smith, A.H.: Pictorial History of Johannesburg...).



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It is noted in *Payable Gold* that *Fillis' Circus* gave the first professional performance in Ferreira's Camp about the middle of September 1886. The *Transvaal Mining Argus* on 21 September 1887 records that on 24 August 1887 *Fillis' Circus* opened on Marshalls' Square for a fortnight, and that "the support tendered surpassed the utmost expectations; and led to a scheme for the erection of a permanent Circus building, which will shortly be started upon". The *General Directory of Johannesburg* (of which the preface is dated 31 January 1890) contains a picture of this building not very different from that depicted in this pencil drawing by H. Clayton, dated 17.11.90. It is stated that this

building was erected by W. J. Symons at a cost of £8,000 and was situated in Bree Street on the site partly occupied by Paddy's Market.

HISTORY:

GENERAL NOTES:

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

CURRENT TENANT/S:

Milano Shoes (corner shop).
Zach's Mr Braiding Trading.
Family Butchery.

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.

RECORDED BY:

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Unless otherwise indicated photographs by Catharina JM Bruwer.



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Huls

Persam
House

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