

JOHANNESBURG METROPOLITAN MUNICIPALITY

HERITAGE ASSESSMENT SURVEYING FORM

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

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Cellphone: 082 325 5823

NAME OF PLACE: S.A.R.B. HOUSE



Previous/alternative name/s : originally *Transvaal House*; by 1951 *Eagle Star House*;
: by 1961 *J.I.C. House* as well as *Eagle Star House*;
: by 1976 *S.A.R.B. House*; see GENERAL NOTES.

LOCATION: Street : Commissioner
Street number : 78, 80
Stand Number : 25, 26
Suburb : Marshallstown

ZONING: Current use/s :
Previous use/s : office building

DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:

Height : original plans removed
Levels above street level :
Levels below street level :
On-site parking :

The perfect symmetrical portioned *S.A.R.B. House* is accentuated by the tripartite grouping of windows bands and vertical fins, the latter enticing the eyes to follow the façade centre grouping to the softened roofline. The vertical fins on the façade on the building are reminiscent of the *Dunvegan Chambers* - on the corner of 46 Joubert and 66 Pritchard Streets (see AC-4) and the building on the

corner of Rissik and 193, 195 Bree Streets. The strong tripartite grouping can be found in *Shakespeare House* - corner of Joubert and 114, 116 Commissioner Streets (see BF-3) and to a lesser extent in the *Avril Malan Building* - on the corner of 59 Commissioner and Sauer Streets (see B-6). The balconettes on the third floor, each with a set of ornamental brackets, are most attractive as they form a perfect end to the fins and add a special J.C. Cook & Cowen touch to the building. (Catharina JM Bruwer).

The prominent brackets placed under the balcony are a rare example of a transition period between two verandah fashions – this would also apply to balconies - especially when taken into account the building was erected during 1934. This is typical of the architects J.C. Cook & Cowen to have added a special design feature to their buildings.



“While the commercial buildings were vertically orientated, especially in the upper portions of their facades, they did not entirely escape the force of the strong horizontal lines and planes of the display windows and pavement hoods. Verandahs with their pillars began to be replaced by cantilever pavement covers in the early 1930s, but such hoods were first used in the *Paramount Building* (see AE-1) as early as 1911. In Johannesburg this change-over was more gradual than in Sydney, Australia, where new building regulations introduced in 1912 banned verandahs altogether...Initially, Johannesburg’s hoods were fitted with bearer beams on the underside. Later however, beams were placed on the upper side of the hood to leave an uncluttered ceiling over the pavement. The effect of this practice was that the hoods, together with the long bands of display windows, reinforced the suggestion of horizontal movement in the smooth street and pavement surfaces.” (Van Der Waal, G-M.: From Mining Camp to Metropolis...).

Left: 1956 - note the shop fronts. Photograph (Stark, F. [Ed.]: *Seventy Golden Years...*).

CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS:

Walls: reinforced concrete structure with partial load bearing walls and internal brick partitioning.

Roof: flat; concrete.

Windows: steel frame casement.

SITE FEATURES:

ALTERATIONS:

No record found (2004).

See GENERAL NOTES. The alterations done at various stages to the building, collectively reads like the Who’s Who of architects; J.C. Cook & Cowen- 1935; Nurcombe, Summerly, Ringrose & Todd – 1958; Philip Nel 1962 – no plans or Application for Approval Form available and Gordon Leith & Partners – 1963 no plans or Application for Approval Form available.

INTEGRITY:

Although the original shop fronts have been removed, the exterior of the building remains true to the original design.

INSCRIPTION:

ARCHITECT:

J.C. Cook & Cowen.

BUILDER:**CONSTRUCTION DATE:**

Date on plans : 22 January 1934
Approval of plans : 15 March 1934
Completion date : 20 September 1935

It is interesting to note the combination of construction methods used in the *S.A.R.B. House*. This is described as follows by Van Der Waal: "In the third place, new building techniques and materials made the construction of such tall buildings entirely feasible. After 1920 the old steel-frame construction was rapidly replaced by reinforced concrete frame construction techniques. As was stated in Chapter 3, after 1908 reinforced concrete was used to a limited extent and mainly for floors and beams incorporated in steel-frame constructions. However, as early as the First World War a shortage of steel obliged architects and builders to use concrete to an ever greater extent, but the real innovations in building techniques came only in 1920 when the first building with only a reinforced concrete frame was put up - The *Transvaal Hat and Cap Factory Building*...probably also known as the four storey *Cambridge Mansions*...c/o Pritchard and Troye Street...This was followed by several other buildings in quick succession...so that by 1926 this construction technique was generally preferred to all others...As had happened in the US and Europe...the first buildings in which this technique was applied, were factories and warehouses...The explanation for this is probably the practical need for extensive open working and storage areas in this type of building. Moreover, concrete structures were erected much more quickly than steel-frame structures (a reduction of 30 % in construction time in 1926...) and this was an important consideration in a frenetic and highly competitive economic environment. Whereas steel-frame buildings were given a closed façade by the brick panels, with the size of the windows being determined by load-bearing brick walls, buildings erected on a reinforced concrete framework allowed the frame to be reflected in the façade. In the 1920s this application was probably also largely prompted by the practical need for more light on the large floor spaces. At the same time these façades brought an entirely new perspective to the street aspect due to the large reflecting glass surfaces in the upper storeys and the ahistorical approach which this signified in that the façades were almost entirely stripped of historical ornamentation. Examples were the *Belfast Warehouse* (1926), 108/10 Market Street [see Pre-History: H-2], and the *Lennon Building* (1932), 57a Pritchard Street [see Pre-History: U-1]. This building technique was continually improved by the city's greatest reinforced concrete specialists, such as A S Joffe & Co and the Reinforcing Steel Co...These efforts paid dividends during the 1930s, especially in respect of flat-roofed constructions which were initially beset by leakage problem...Walgate 1935: 'Unfortunately our engineers and chemists have not yet given us a suitable material of which to make buildings of this kind. High temperature change causes high volumetric [sic.] change...reinforced concrete has tended to develop fewer cracks of considerable magnitude.' During the 1930s high-rise construction was supported by improved building techniques and modern facilities such as high-speed lifts...Elevators date from 1850 when Waterman installed the first ones on tracks in New York. Up to about 1910 steam power was used. This method was replaced by electricity which had in fact already been used as early as 1889. High speed elevators appeared in 1898...the radio...and telephones, which reduced distances in relative terms. The new freedom in design permitted by these building techniques and regulations was reflected in the way in which the general building form was prised open. The main building form of the first three decades was the closed cuboid but by now attention was focused on the manipulation of the building mass and the articulation of the façade surface." (Van Der Waal, G-M.: From Mining Camp to Metropolis...).

BUILDING STYLE:

Art Deco - Exhibition Style.

"Architectural Merit: "Good Art Deco Building with vertical fins." (Johannesburg Building, Space & Urban Feature Classification, 1998: Inner City).

It is interesting to note that the Urban Features survey covered 1,864 building and only 50 buildings were classified as Art Deco - Exhibition Style buildings.

BUILDING TYPE:

Originally, a shop to street and office building, the shops were later converted to office space.

ENVIRONMENT:

The building forms an integral part of the collection of Art Deco buildings in Commissioner Street and is an excellent compatriot to the *Clegg House*.

CONDITION:

This building is earmarked for demolition and has been bricked-up.

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: Transvaal Props. Ltd.
By 1976: S.A. Reserve Bank, p.a. Syfrets Executor Trust, P.O. Box 61058, Johannesburg.

PRE-HISTORY OF SITE:

FRASER BUILDING:

By 1900, the *Fraser Building* occupied the 78 Commissioner Street portion of this stand.

GALPIN BUILDING:

By 1900, the *Galpin Building* stood at 80 Commissioner Street.

HISTORY:

THE SOUTH AFRICAN RESERVE BANK:

"The South African Reserve Bank - Leadership In The Banking And Currency Field. At the end of the First World War the financial position of the Union was characterized by a number of unsatisfactory features, some of which had existed for many years while other had originated during the war or had at least been intensified by the strains and stresses of that period. Among these factors may be mentioned the lack of uniformity in the note issue and the possibility of an over-issue of notes under the laws of certain Provinces; the existence abroad of a premium on gold which led to a considerable and illegal drain of gold from the country at a time when the commercial banks were under an obligation to redeem their notes in gold; and fears based on past experience, that the inflation which had resulted from the war and had continued in the immediate post-war boom would be followed by

an undue restriction of credit once the cyclical movement turned downwards. These and other considerations all pointed to the need for a central bank which could assume leadership and responsibility in the banking and currency field. The Currency and Banking Act of 1920, therefore include provisions for the establishment of the South African Reserve Bank, and the institution commenced operations in July 1921. The statutes of the Bank have been amended in several important respects since that time with a view to giving the institution more scope and flexibility in meeting the needs of a developing country under changing world economic conditions, and in 1944 the laws governing the operation of the Bank were consolidated in the South African Reserve Bank Act of that year. Constitutionally, however, there have been no changes of a basic nature. The Bank is still a privately-owned institution with, at present, just under one thousand stockholders, some fifty per cent of whom hold less than £500 stock each. A limit of £5,000 exists to the amount of stock which may be held by any single stockholder, and dividends on the stock are restricted to a maximum of ten per cent per annum, the balance of the net profits being allocated in a small part to the Bank's general reserve fund and in the main to the Government. The organisation is controlled by a Board of eleven directors, five of whom (including the Governor and the Deputy Governor) are appointed by the Government and the remaining six by the stockholders from among persons representative of commerce finance, agriculture and other industries. All directors must be Union nationals residents in the Union. The Bank is thus a purely South African institution which is a factor of some significance in a country where the greater part of the banking business is conducted by banks whose Head Offices are abroad. Furthermore, the form of constitution which the Bank was given, in practice, enabled a successful combination to be effected between State control over monetary policy on the one hand and the advantages of a privately-owned central bank on the other. The Bank was accorded by its statutes the sole right of note issue which thus ensured uniformity in the circulation, and the commercial banks were obliged to maintain reserve balances with the Bank equivalent to ten per cent of their time liabilities. As in other countries, the commercial banks soon discovered the advantages of maintaining their free cash balances with the central bank as well. Not only did this procedure facilitate the settlement of inter-bank clearing balances but it enabled the commercial banks to make more efficient use of their resources as a result of the rediscount and advance facilities which could be obtained from the central bank. At an early stage of its career, therefore, the Bank had assumed the recognised central banking functions of responsibility for the note issue, custodian of the cash reserves of the commercial banking systems and central clearing institution and was, of course, from the start prepared to act as lender of last resort by way of loan facilities against commercial, agricultural and Treasury bills and Government stocks. The assumption of these functions contributed to the bank becoming the custodian of the country's gold reserves, and its position was strengthened in this respect by arrangements concluded in 1925 whereby the Bank purchased the gold output and attended to its disposal. This arrangement enabled the Bank, in addition, to assume the leading role in the exchange market of the Union in that gold occupied a predominant place among the country's exports. The Bank has, from an early stage, determined the exchange rates for sterling and its control of these rates has assisted it in influencing the rates quoted by the commercial banks for other currencies, their requirements of which are obtained through London. With the development of trade and financial relationships with the United States, Canada and Switzerland, the Bank has come to quote directly for the currencies of these countries as well, thus ensuring the public of fine rates in the circumstances obtaining at any time. When the need arose, the Bank also entered the forward exchange market in these currencies. Another recognised central banking function was assumed in 1927 when the Bank took over the Government's accounts from the commercial banks and thus became the Government's banker. The Provincial account, and those of certain quasi-Government organisations were subsequently also transferred to the Bank. In the conduct of these varied activities, the Bank naturally became intimately acquainted with economic conditions in the Union and developed close contacts with a number of the leading foreign countries. Almost automatically, therefore, the Bank became the Government's consultant in matters falling within the Bank's field of activity, and was able to act as the Government's agent in a large number of matters where it could appropriately serve in this capacity. As instances may be mentioned the administration of the exchange control system in the Union on behalf of the Treasury; the repatriation of Union Government stocks from overseas during the war years; acting as agent for the Government in its operations with the International Monetary Fund, in connection with certain loans granted to the Government by banks in the United States and Switzerland. As illustrative of the Bank's growth during the thirty-five years it has been in operation, it may be mentioned that its assets at the end of January, 1956, totalled £1890,300,000, including gold and foreign exchange to an amount of £120,900,00 and advances, investments and discounts totalling £62,800,00. As against these assets its liabilities in respect of notes in circulation amounted to £106,000,000 and deposits to £66,900,00. The Bank has a total of eight branches situated in Pretoria (where the Head Office is also located), Bloemfontein, Cape Town, Durban, East London, Johannesburg, Pietermaritzburg and Port Elizabeth." (Stark, F. [Ed.]: Seventy Golden Years...).

EAGLE STAR INSURANCE COMPANY LTD:

Below: The Rand-Pretoria Directory 1954 (Comprising Complete Alphabetical And Trades Directories of Johannesburg, Pretoria And Reef Towns), Cape Times Limited, Cape Town, 1954.

Manager for South Africa:
P. C. HARMAN

Manager for Transvaal:
D.K. LANG, A.C.I.I.

Telegrams: "POLICY"
JOHANNESBURG

EAGLE STAR
INSURANCE COMPANY LTD.

P. O. Box 498
Telephones 34-2102/3/4/5

Eagle Star House, 80 Commissioner Street
JOHANNESBURG

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GENERAL NOTES:

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

There is very little information available on this building. Most plans, correspondence and Application for Approval Forms have been removed. The following note dated 8 February 1982 is attached to the file, titled City Engineering Department, Stand No. 25, 26, 35 and 36. Township Marshallstown (Planning Department), City of Johannesburg: THIS PROJECT FOR THE RESERVE BANK HAS A HIGH SECURITY RATING: Consequently [sic.] the plans must not circulate with the file, and must always be in the possession of the architects – who are sworn to secrecy & security. THEREFORE WHEN THE FILE REACHES YOUR DEPT. FOR EXAMINATION PLEASE PHONE: (Mrs) Jean Searle. 838-6651 (Mallows, Louw, Hoffe & Ptnrs.) Who will then make a time to bring the plans to you, remain with you whilst they are being examined by you & then, upon completion, of your examination, take them away again. Your comments may be either dealt with immediately or handed to Mrs. Searle.
Building Surveyor.

From the limited information available, it appears that the building was originally known as *Transvaal House*. It was later (refer a reference dated 26 September 1958) known as *Eagle House*.

In a letter of 28 November 1961 from Philip Hill, Higginson & Co. (Africa) Ltd, the following request was made to the Council's Building Survey Department: "Please allow our representative, D.H. Brown, to examine plans of J.I.C. House, 80, Commissioner Street, and to take such tracings as he may require." On 28 January 1963 in a letter to The City Engineer's Department, City Hall: "Kindly permit Messrs. Gordon Leith and Partners, Architects of Johannesburg, to examine and inspect and to make tracings of any plans of the above building..." The Treadneedle Properties Limited on 13 November 1962 requesting The City Engineer's Department regarding the "Eagle Star House – 80, Commissioner St. Would you please permit Mr. Philip Nel of Pretoria to inspect the plans which you have of the above building." The conclusion to be drawn from this is that the building was at one time, known as the *Eagle Star House* as well as the *J.I.C. House*. By 1976, the building was known as the *S.A.R.B House*; only half of the original elevation plan is on file - why this plan was cut is senseless as the building is symmetrically designed! This also suggests that two different companies

occupied the building.

On the 11th March 1934 the following fees and deposits for the new building were paid: building fees £40.13.6; drainage fees £12.9.0; footway deposit £5.0 and R.C. deposit £40.

It is planned (2004) by the Gauteng Provincial Government to demolish this building (see below):

(Information sourced from IT'S NOT 5 BUILDINGS FOR DEMOLITION, BUT 10!.htm).

"It's not 5 buildings for demolition, but 10!

January 13, 2004

By Lucille Davie

THE Gauteng provincial government submitted a report on Monday on its proposal to demolish not five inner city buildings, as reported in the media last week, but 10 buildings. The provincial government moved into the city in 1995 and has since been acquiring property. It has purchased 18 buildings at a cost of some R150-million, and plans to demolish 10 of them. Five of the ten buildings are 60 years and older, therefore considered of historical value, and the other five buildings are 55 years and younger. Once demolished, two inner city blocks will have been flattened to create a square alongside the present Beyers Naude Square between Market and President streets. The square would be bordered by Sauer Street in the west, Market Street in the north, Commissioner Street in the south, and Simmonds Street in the east. The newer buildings are: Custom House (Fraser Street, 1967), Volkskas, now Absa (Market Street, 1948), Litorn House (Fraser Street, 1959), Absa (Market Street, 1952), and First National Bank (Market Street, 1960). The older buildings are: the New Library Hotel (1938), People's Bank (1939), the South African Reserve Bank House (date unknown), Clegg House (1935), all in Commissioner Street, and the Rand Water Board Building (1941) in Fraser Street. Clegg House already has a demolishers board pegged onto its first floor balcony. The report was submitted to the South African Heritage Resources Agency on Monday, for consideration at their next committee meeting on 23 January. Interested parties may in the meantime submit their recommendations or comments to SAHRA by 4 February. The draft report of 120 pages was compiled by Johann and Catharina Bruwer, who in 2002 compiled a Heritage Survey of Johannesburg's central city area, commissioned by the city council. [Flo Bird](#), chairman of the Parktown & Westcliff Heritage Trust and campaigner of the city's heritage for many years, was outraged at the proposal. "Whose bright idea is this? I'm angry. What sort of CBD do we want? These are buildings that make the city. Once the buildings are gone, they're gone, it's like murder," she said. Jennifer Kitto of SAHRA says that she has started receiving submissions from the public. She says the general sense from the submissions is that "people are not too happy about the city's heritage being destroyed, but no specific recommendations have been made". The square is to be part of what is called the provincial government precinct. The province already owns the City Hall, and the precinct will centre around this historic building, consisting of 150 000 square metres of office space. According to Mbhazima Shilowa, Gauteng premier, the province is one of the city's biggest property owners. The precinct will stretch from Fox Street in the south to Pritchard Street in the north, Sauer Street in the west, through to Rissik Street in the east. It is expected that the square will be created between Sauer and Simmonds streets, south of Commissioner Street. Public comments or recommendations to the proposal may be submitted to SAHRA in writing by 4 February. The address is PO Box 87552, Houghton, 2041, or by fax on 011 482 8196, or by e-mail to Jennifer Kitto at jkitto@jhb.sahra.org.za.

The 10 buildings proposed for demolition:

- The New Library Hotel, 67 Commissioner and 1 Fraser streets
- The Second Rand Water Board Building, 3 Fraser Street
- People's Bank, 73-75 Commissioner and 33-35 Simmonds streets
- Custom House, 5 Fraser and 68-70 Market streets
- First National Bank, 78 Market and 37-39 Simmonds streets
- Volkskas, 74-76 Market Street
- Litorn House, 69-71 Commissioner and 2-4 Fraser streets
- Absa, 72 market and 6-8 Fraser streets
- Clegg House, 82 Commissioner and 31 Simmonds streets
- SARB House, 78-80 Commissioner Street".

PREVIOUS TENANTS:

By 1954:

Spearhead Stationers (Pty) Ltd.

A Kahn & Son.

Union Arms & Ammunition Co (Pty) Ltd.

Literary & Educational Services and Anglo-American Utility Services.

AM Loots & Co, Loss and Accident Assessors.

Graham Miller & Co (SA), Loss and Accident Assessors.

Stegman & Able (Legal Practitioners).

Ground Floor - Jewish Book Centre; Associated Book Clubs.
10th Floor – H. T. Herch (Legal Practitioner); B. Shapiro (Legal Practitioner).
Room 303 – N. Kaye (Legal Practitioner).
Room 307 – Joseph Levin (Legal Practitioner); M. J. Schosberg (Legal Practitioner).
Room 401 - Corporation of Secretaries Ltd.
Room 412 – Reinsurance Union of South Africa Ltd. (Manager G. C. Hobson).
Room 512 – Abbington Investment & Trust Co (Pty) Ltd, transfer secretaries.
Room 514 - Registered office: Diamond Mining & Utility Co (SWA now Namibia) Ltd, telegraphic address "Indosa".
Room 804/1 - Rosin & Rosin (Legal Practitioners).

CURRENT TENANT:

Vacant.

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:

Heritage Resources Management team Johann J and Catharina JM Bpuwer.
Unless otherwise indicated photographs by Catharina JM Bpuwer.

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SABE CENTER

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AZAP
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AND
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Sunday
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9am
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Stadium
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CLEGG HOUSE



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