## JOHANNESBURG METROPOLITAN MUNICIPALITY

### HERITAGE ASSESSMENT SURVEYING FORM

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

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#### NAME OF PLACE: UNION CLUB BUILDING



Previous/alternative name/s

: Union Club Flats

LOCATION	Street number	:	Bree 244 [242, 244 Bree; 67, 69 Joubert]
	Previous Stand Number:	:	1256, 1257, 1258, RE/1255 originally - 1018, 1019, 1020, RE/1017 AR
ZONING:	Current use/s Previous use/s	:	

#### DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:

Height	:	
Levels above street level	: originally three-storeys	
Levels below street level	: none	
On-site parking	: none	

Authors' note: A detailed architectural history of the building remains outstanding on account of its incomplete plans record. Of particular concern is the fact that the plans of the additional storeys of the building are missing. This is a common predisposition in the case of buildings designed by eminent architects such as Baker & Fleming. It is also quite noticeable that only plans of 'lesser importance' have escaped the attention of the responsible wrongdoers.

"Long ago at the Cape Baker had not hesitated to use the most economical and efficient modern building methods that were then available in South Africa when he built multi-story (sic.) office blocks. He had done the same at the Union Club, the Pretoria Station and the Union Buildings..." (Doreen E. Greig, D. E.: Herbert Baker...)

Van Der Waal not only describes, but also compares various aspects of the Union Club Building with those of the YMCA Building: "The YMCA makes a rather tentative statement in the Neo-Georgian style because the formal relationships are underemphasized. Moreover, the architects Leck & Emley and Dickson were not able to divorce themselves completely from Victorian revival styles, as was revealed by the prominence of the underlying grid pattern in the spacing of the windows and in the application of a corner tower. On the other hand the Union Club by Baker & Fleming, located on the opposite side of Bree Street, made a clear statement. The key characteristics of the historical model blended with Neo-Cape Dutch form motifs, were integrated into a new unity in this building. The highly satisfactory proportions and attractive finish of the Union Club made it one of the most successful designs in the city centre. Architects Baker & Fleming imparted a successful rhythm to the whole by arranging the windows in clusters of three sets, with the accent on the centre group. In Joubert Street this centre group was accentuated by balconies and in Bree Street by a stately portico [sic. should read porch: portico is a columned and pedimented entrance] with columns. Like that of the Rand Club [33, 35 Loveday Street], the interior of the Union Club was richly decorated. In addition, the Union Club boasted a spacious courtyard with columns which was reminiscent of the atriums of the Union Buildings in Pretoria. The YMCA had a similar courtyard. Architects J M Solomon and A J Marshall were members of the Baker School, as was evident from their designs for residential buildings. There was a distinct similarity between the Union Club and the YMCA Building. Solomon and Marshall used the design principles and articulation of form employed by Baker and Fleming, but did not apply them as powerfully as the latter might have done. For instance, the grouping of the windows was much less striking and types of windows used not nearly as varied. With its general block form, hipped roof, heavy chimneys and classicist ornamentation, the SAP Club Building [Cowin & Powers; 122, 124 Eloff Street] was designed in the same style as the nearby Union Club (1913) by H Baker, and the YWCA Building (1917) by Solomon & Marshall [179. 181 Jeppe Street; demolished to make way for the Medical Towers]. In fact, at that time these three building constituted an interesting group." (Van Der Waal, G-M.: From Mining Camp to Metropolis...).

"The Union Club was the second important club to be built in Johannesburg. The first was The (third) Rand Club...Baker and Fleming's Italianate Union Club built in 1913-14 at a cost of £40,000<sup>1</sup> was a complete contrast. It is a reinforced concrete building with a plastered brick exterior and a bold, rusticated ground floor built of a light grey, massive, fine-grained stone from the Elands River quarries, east of Pretoria. The same materials runs up the angles in rounded rustic quoins to a strong modillioned cornice over which rested a pitched dormered roof covered with Vereeniging tiles, an important part of the design. To its detriment, this has been replaced with three additional floors and a flat roof. A beautiful feature was a central, columned, fountain cortile forty-six feet square and surrounded by three floors of arcades of Doric and Ionic columns, which provide access to the various rooms on each floor. The cortile is lined with Pavanazzo marble; the hall which is also marble paved had a dado of Vert des Alpes, and the floor of the cortile itself round the pool is paved with Vereeniging tiles and bricks. The main stairway, eight feet wide, is groined in plastered concrete throughout and the panelled dining-room has a ceiling which consists of a wide barrel vault intersected by smaller vaults which run into arch-headed door and window openings. Next to it are the President's Rooms, panelled in white and opening on to a groined loggia. The design was one of utmost simplicity and had the minimum amount of applied decoration. Its grace derived from good proportions, elegant vaulting, such details as fanlights carved by Benjamin Smith, wrought iron balustrades by Ness and the use of forms suitable for the climate. As a conception, it was a tribute to Baker's appreciation of the classical origins of a club in a situation where, to his way of thinking, the monumentality of conventional Victorian and Edwardian club designs was inapplicable. It is, in scale, a most happy compromise between such intimate clubs as the old Arts Club in Dover Street, Piccadilly, and those of Pall Mall. The success of this building was, very largely, owing to its supervision by F. L. H. Fleming, despite his difficulties in finding suitable workmen, all the good ones being employed at that time on the Union Buildings." (Doreen E. Greig, D. E.: Herbert Baker...)

1. This might not be correct, as the original Application for Approval of Plans form shows the estimated cost to be £29 750 and drainage £250, a total of £30,000. The building was completed in three stages: stage one was completed on 28 October 1912 at a value of £12,000 (partially complete); stage two was completed on 13 December 1912 at a value of £8,000 (partially complete); final work was completed on 1 April 1913 at an additional value of £10,600. The total value at completion was £30,600. The final valuation figure, normally, was always lower than the total estimated cost of the building.



Above: extract from "Proposed New Flats for Union Club of South Africa...Elevation to Bree Street" as designed and signed by F.L.H. Fleming "164 Exploration Buildings Johannesburg for the Union Club Building Syndicate 22nd June 1934". This design would have been a much more successful and sympathetic addition to the building as the extant addition.



Left: extract from municipal submission drawing showing position of Stands RE/1255 and 1/1255. By 1929, these portions of the site accommodated 'Boys Rooms', a Cycle Shed and Store. The property had the benefit of an own borehole.

#### CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS:

Walls:	reinforced concrete; plastered hard stock brick.	
Plinth and quoins:	Elands River sandstone.	
Roof:	pitched dormer roof with Vereeniging tiles; corrugated iron.	
Windows:	wooden frame sash windows with shutters.	
Doors:	exterior doors to the balconies are double inward opening cottage pane doors.	
Floors:	Pavanazzo marble; Vereeniging tiles and bricks.	
Balustrade:	wrought iron balustrade work done by Ness.	
Fanlights:	interior fanlights carved by Benjamin Smith.	
Porch:	supported by four Tuscan columns on plinths with cement balustrade.	
Foundation:	hard brick on cement concrete; mortar composed of one part cement and four parts sand.	
Sewage Drains:	stoneware.	
Soil Pipes:	iron.	
Waste pipes:	lead and iron.	

#### SITE FEATURES:

A most attractive example of one of the few porches left in the city on the Bree Street elevation with balustrade.

This porch, originally a Porte-Cochére (meaning a porch large enough for vehicles to pass through) was cut back at the time of the widening of Bree Street. See attached copy of Application For Verandah dated 2 April 1912.

Right: sketch from (Greig, D.E.: Herbert Baker...).

#### ALTERATIONS:



Addition: municipal submission plan/s missing; approved 20 April 1920; estimated cost – building £200; drainage £10; architects – H Baker & Fleming.

Alterations: cutting back of Porte-Cochére municipal submission plan missing; approved 4 February 1930; estimated cost – building £100; architect - FLH Fleming (164 Exploration Buildings, Commissioner Street, Johannesburg).

Additions to building: municipal submission plans missing; "reinforced concrete floors throughout"; approved 22 October 1934; estimated cost – building £23 000; additional value of £12 000; architect FLH Fleming; drainage approved 27 May 1935; estimated cost –drainage £1500; architect - FLH Fleming.

Correspondence during 1941 refers to addition/alterations; reinforced concrete construction work by The Reinforcing Steel Co. Ltd as designed by Fleming & Partners; municipal submission plan/s as well

as Application for Approval of Plans form are missing.

Internal alterations during 1943. New cold cupboard to ground floor; date on plan – 30 September 1943; approved 11 November 1943; architects – Fleming & Partners (address: 67 Balgownie House, 66 Commissioner Street). This is the only extant plan showing the layout of the sections of the building mentioned below. The Ground Floor contained the following spaces: on the corner of Bree and Joubert Streets a Reading Room; on Joubert Street a Lounge, office and secretary's office, adjacent to these offices was the Ladies Cloak Room with double entrance and lift. The residents entrance leading to a lift for residents only as well as a staircase. The main entrance to the building was on Bree Street via the porch and hall, this in turn, lead to the court yard with access to the Bar Lounge, Bar and Men's Cloak Room. Adjacent to this was the goods lift and the newly built cold cupboard. The entrance to the yard was next to the goods lift. A section of a mezzanine floor plan is also included on this plan. This area, situated directly above the Men's Cloak Room and goods lift, comprised a barbershop, and one small and two large cold rooms.

Installation of air-conditioning plant; municipal submission plan/s missing; approved 26 February 1946; estimated cost – building £60.

An addition of a new storeroom to rear of the building, this space included two separate areas, one for the storage of foodstuffs and a separate are for storage of crockery and cutlery; date on plan -27 April 1953; approved -29 May 1953; estimated cost - building £75; architects - Fleming & Cooke.

#### INTEGRITY:

Van Der Waal believes that the addition of three storeys in the thirties and the alterations in the seventies, "totally destroyed the original effect" of the design of the building. (Van Der Waal, G-M.: From Mining Camp to Metropolis...). This notwithstanding, the building has retained its prominence as a valuable building in the streetscape – a building, truly worth preserving. See CONDITION.

The unsightly painting of the two most important facades of the building at street level, and the cluttering of the building with shopkeepers' advertising boards, should never have been allowed to happen to a valuable building such as this. Owners of buildings such as the *third Rand Club* and this, the *Union Club Building*, should be encouraged to limit the use of advertising signs to a bare minimum.

Right: the building - at the time when this photo was taken during the late 1980s – was clearly in an excellent condition. Compare this photo, however, with one of the above main photos of the building, taken on 25 January 2004, soon after it was discovered that the rusticated ground floor of the building had been painted white! (NMC Data Sheet, undated: SAHRA Archive File 3/1/3/Joh/A).



#### **INSCRIPTION:**

#### ARCHITECT:

Baker & Fleming.

#### BUILDER:

#### CONSTRUCTION DATE:

July 1912
April 1913

#### BUILDING STYLE:

Edwardian (1900 to 1914).

Neo-Georgian. Van Der Waal. (Van Der Waal, G-M.: From Mining Camp to Metropolis...). See below.

"A second group of club buildings were erected between 1910 and 1920 in the northern reaches of the city centre on the perimeter of the commercial district. The three most important – the second *YMCA Building* (1912), 199, 201 Bree Street, the *Union Club* (1913-4), 242/4 Bree Street, and the *YWCA Building* (1917), 179, 181 Jeppe Street – are so similar in appearance that one can easily confuse one with the other. Not only are they much the same size and located on street corners, but they were also designed in the same architectural style – the Neo-Georgian mode which emerged during the 1880s in England as a variation of the Neo-Queen Anne style. This particular mode reflects the detached English home of the 18th century in which the architectural effect relied on the disciplined proportioning of façade apertures in a severe block form with a hipped roof, while ornamentation was limited to rustic work, cornices and window frames. Skylights and clusters of chimneys underscore the role of windows in the façade and at the same time give these buildings a homely appearance." (Van Der Waal, G-M.: From Mining Camp to Metropolis...).

See also DESCRIPTION OF PLACE.

#### BUILDING TYPE:

Shops to street and domestic building.

#### ENVIRONMENT:

The *Union Club Building* is situated within an area where the maintenance of buildings, generally, no longer seems to be the norm. The cluttering of the *Union Club Building* with all kinds of advertising signs, not only conceals many of the important features of this building, but also weakens its potential contributory value towards the strengthening of the streetscape. The building, notwithstanding, forms part of a valuable collection of buildings. This was confirmed in a NMC letter dated 30 May 1995, in which the following was stated: "The Committee (i.e. the NMC's Northern Interim Plans Committee) is of the opinion that a number of buildings on the remainder of the city block in question were considered to be conservation worthy, ie. The Fontana building [AR-2], the City Health building [*School Clinic*: AR-3], the building directly to the north of Anstey's [i.e. *Steadman Mansions*: AR-4] and the Union Club. The Anstey's building [AF-2] has recently been declares as a national monument and together with Manners Mansions [AE-3] and the abovementioned buildings forms an important conservation area." (Authors' note: the area is not formally protected under the current heritage conservation legislation as a heritage area, previously called a conservation area).

With reference to *Embassy Place*: "These buildings not only betrayed a marked insensitivity to the visual aspect of the environment, but also highlighted the unilateral optimism of the owners (that other buildings constructed next door would soon make good the impairment of the general aspect) as well as their contempt for the historical building corpus of the city." (Van Der Waal, G-M.: From Mining Camp to Metropolis...). *Embassy Place* (AR-7) is an example of this insensitivity with the prominent projection of its street elevation, as if to challenge whatever reason there might have been for its façade to stand flush with that of the neighbouring *Union Club Building*.

#### CONDITION:

Below are extract from a letter dated 16 March 2004 by the authors addressed to the Provincial Heritage Resources Authority: Gauteng, regarding not only the condition of but also certain recent (i.e. unauthorised) changes to the building.

"The Union Club Building...is one of the most valuable buildings in the City. It is the only building designed by Baker & Fleming in the Inner City and the only building of its kind (i.e. Club Building) ever designed by this practice. The fact that it lacks formal protection status does not diminish the importance of the building. It is of serious concern that work recently carried out to this building (see attached photos) has had an adverse effect on the integrity, appearance, fabric, character, and if you want, cultural significance of the building. This specifically refers to the painting of the valuable sand stonework and the removal of the canopy of the corner shop. Is it not possibly time that the responsible owners <u>as well as</u> Metro be approached to prevent further illegal changes to this building?...Act No. 25, 1999 Section '34. (1) No person may alter or demolish any structure or part of a structure, which is older than 60 years without a permit issued by the relevant provincial heritage resources authority. Definitions: "(i) 'alter' means any action affecting the structure, appearance or physical properties of a place or object, whether by way of structural or other works, by painting, plastering...' Dates photographs were taken: 17.08.2003 - DSCO2190a, DSCO2196a 25.01.2004 -

DSCO4731a, DSCO4730a..."

Comments received by the authors from Mrs Flo Bird: "It is so degraded I have to admit we don't take tours past it. I can live with peeling paint as we get in many art deco buildings, but the horrors perpetrated on this one are too awful."

This must be the only Baker & Fleming building in South Africa, where the building has been degraded to the extent where it has nearly become unthinkable to any longer associate the architectural practice of Baker & Fleming with the building. The oil-based paint applied to the sandstone is beyond comprehension! This equally applies to the dilapidated state of the building, particularly from first floor up. When last has even the most basic of maintenance work been carried out to this building? (Catharina JM Bruwer).

#### **URGENT ACTION:**

See CONDITION. The neglected condition of the building should be attended to without delay, before this building becomes just another *Barbican* or *Trades Hall*.

#### SAHRA RECORD REGARDING ALTERATIONS, RENOVATIONS, RESTORATION:

PROTECTION STATUS: (under National Heritage Resources Act, 1999)

General protection:	Section 34(1) structure/s	
Formal protection:	provincial heritage site	
	national heritage site	
	provisional protection	
	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: The Union Club of South Africa. By 1930: The Union Club Buildings Syndicate, Limited.

#### PRE-HISTORY OF SITE:

#### HISTORY:

"Burning furniture and Fittings in the Pavilion Beer Hall. This early beer hall was owned by the German H. Ahrens and situated at 47 [sic.] Jeppe Street, on the corner of Joubert Street." (Norwich, O.I.: A Johannesburg Album; Historical Postcards, postcard 315). This photo provides a rare view of the Union Club Building before the additional storeys were added. Johannesburg's Demand for the Internment of Germans, May 12, 1915.



"Where the Voortrekker building now stands at the corner of Hoek Street, there stood in 1912 the first real ice-skating rink in South Africa. The plant was inadequate, the ice was slushy, and it soon closed down and became a dance hall. Later it became the Unionist Club, a club for English-speaking people who wanted to maintain union with England. It closed down for lack of support after Abe Bailey had started the Union Club at the corner of Joubert and Bree Streets." (Leyds, G.A.: A History of Johannesburg).

#### BAILY, Sir Abraham (Abe); 1854 - 1940:

"South African mine magnate and legislator. Born in Cradock, 1864; son of Thomas Bailey, trader and member of original Cape Parliament. School in Yorkshire, England, and first business post in London. Returned to South Africa aged 20, at beginning of Barberton gold rush. Soon gained considerable wealth and moved to Johannesburg when gold was discovered there. Among the friends who foresaw his possibilities was Cecil John Rhodes. Became involved in Reform Movement at time of Jameson Raid, was imprisoned in 1896 and fined £2,000. During South African War raised several corps of irregulars and served on staff of General Pole-Carew. He succeeded Cecil Rhodes as member for Barkly West from 1902 to 1905. Represented Krugersdorp as staunch Unionist Party member from 1910 to 1924. He was a prominent figure on the Rand Stock Exchange [see Pre-History: D-1]. As member of the firm Ford and Jeppe he developed the Witwatersrand Townships, Mining and Finance Corporation. Registered in 1896, this became the Witwatersrand Townships, Mining and Finance Corporation Ltd. (taken over by the Anglo-American Corporation in 1942). His main interests were on East Rand [eastern Witwatersrand] and in Eastern Transvaal [now Mpumalanga]. He developed South African alkali occurrence in North Pretoria. Spent most of later life in England, where known as important racehorse owner and sporting figure. As strong protagonist of better relations between white races in South Africa, he willed large sums for establishment of trust to this end. Died in 1940. Buried on hillside overlooking his home in Muizenberg." (Rosenthal E.: Encyclopaedia of Southern Africa...).

"...Member of the Cape Legislative Assembly, 1902 – 05, Transvaal Legislative Assembly, 1907 – 10, Union House Legislative Assembly, 1915 – 24." (Fraser, M. [ed.]: Some Reminiscences...)

"Reflecting the upsurge in society activites (sic.) in Johannesburg, club buildings mushroomed all over the city after 1902. Like church buildings, club premises for the first time assumed a significant place in the general city aspect. Admittedly not as prominent as the church buildings, these club buildings were not confined to the edge of the city either – several were built in the very heart of the city. With the British flag and a city government firmly established, it was only to be expected that social, national and sporting associations began to feel a need for accommodation to reflect their character. In accordance with the cycle of business activities in the city, club buildings were put up in two phases – around 1903-5 and then again in 1917-9." (Van Der Waal, G-M.: From Mining Camp to Metropolis...).

#### GENERAL NOTES:

Original building: Estimated cost of building Estimated cost of drainage Accommodation approved Valuation at completion Part completed by 28.10.1912 Part completed by 13.12.1912 Part completed by 01.04.1912	::	£29,750 £250 10 'Europeans' and 5 'Natives'. £30,000 £12,000 £8,000 £10,600
Addition: Estimated cost of building Estimated cost of drainage Accommodation approved Additional valuation Occupied	:	£23,000 £1,500 66 'Europeans' and 4 'Natives'. £12,000 yes

By 1954 the address of the Union Club of South Africa was PO Box 1112, Johannesburg; the telex address 'Patriotic' and the telephone Number 011 22-3791.

#### PREVIOUS TENANTS:

By 1954: 67 Joubert Street – Arcadia Hairdressers and 'Chanelle'.

#### 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:





Architectural/Aesthetic value:



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 Bruwer. Unless otherwise indicated photographs by Catharina JM Bruwer.

# .ticipal Council of Iohannesburg.

# APPLICATION FOR VERANDAH. Balemettes and Porch .

2nd april 1912 /

TO THE TOWN ENGINEER,

Sir,

I (we) beg herewith to submit Plans, Elevations and Sectional Details (scale  $\frac{1}{2}$ " to one foot) of Baliquette Poich which I (we) propose to crect in application by the Council, agreeing hereby to comform to the following conditions in every respect, viz. :---

- (1) To defray the extra cost which may be incurred in raising the existing wires belonging either to the Government Telegraphic Department or the Municipal Gas, Electric Supply and Tramways Department.
- (2) To give the aforesaid Departments free powers (leaving it optional with them) to erect on top of building, verandah or balcony, brackets or posts which may be required for carrying the said wires now or hereafter ; to guarantee that the building or verandah or balcony will be sufficiently strong to carry such wires.
- (3) At my (our) own expense to construct kerb, gutter and pavement along the entire length of the verandah to the specification and satisfaction of the Town Engineer.
- (4) To observe the Municipal By-Laws in force in respect of verandahs over public streets.
- (5) To be responsible for and to pay to the Council or third parties concerned all loss or damage which may be caused by the construction of such verandah to electric cables, wires, gas pipes, water pipes and sewerage and stormwater drains or pipes.

(6) To maintain the said verandah in a good state of repair at my (our) expense.
(7) To Homore the faillars if at any time the Council requires the use of the space occupied by the faillars. In witness whereof I (we) hereunto append my (our) signature.

Owner's own signature and address : UNION CLUB DUILDINGS SYNDICATE, LIMITED.

NOTE .- This Form is liable to alteration by the Council from time to time.































