



**planning 41**  
**& building developments**



## **RAND MINES PROPERTIES' RESTORED OFFICES**

On the south-western boundary of the city of Johannesburg, against the backdrop of a grass covered mine dump, stands a group of buildings which are remnants, reminders, of the early mining era which followed the discovery of gold on the Witwatersrand in 1886. These buildings are, in fact, on the Crown Mines property, the heart land of an area which yielded an unparalleled production of gold during the succeeding half century.

Today Crown Mines is a subsidiary of Rand Mines Properties and it is here that this major property company has established itself in the mine offices originally built in 1911.



*Left: view of the old assay block  
Below: on the left, a view of the  
double storey section of the  
building, and on the right, the  
entry sign feature today*



*Left: the entry road before  
landscaping*

## Historical Value

With the expansion of the company the need arose for additional space and improved working conditions and facilities. RMP, acknowledging the aesthetic value of the building and their obligation towards its preservation, set about the restoration and expansion of the old office building. The beauty and virtues of an architecture which has developed in response to a particular region, people and course of events, are gaining their deserved appreciation and approval. The character of the old mine office building is in stark contrast to the uniformity of styles and standards of modern architecture.

## Exteriors

The facade of the building has been restored to its original state – the rustic brick walls, the corrugated iron roofing, rows of wooden framed sash-cord windows, the mass of chimneys against the skyline and the large balcony with its four arches off the main entrance.

To the east of the main building stands the assay office which is presently undergoing extensive restoration and which will become the company's conference centre. Only the tall majestic chimney serves as a reminder of the time when precious metal was smelted in the furnace below it.



*Above and left: the main entrance  
Below: the west facade*



*Right: the entrance hall  
Below: an executive waiting room*



*Above: the entrance hall showing reception*



## **Interiors**

Although it was necessary to modernize certain areas of the interior building, efforts were made to retain an element of the mining era, and this has been successfully achieved in the reception area and the executive suites of the offices.

The lower walls of the reception area are wood panelled. Above the paneling the walls are adorned with portraits and wash line drawings of old mine buildings. An old brass chandelier hangs from the decorative pressed steel ceiling.

The character of this period is further reflected in the wooden door frames and brass door handles, the sash-cord windows, the brass chandeliers and beautiful pressed steel ceilings, which have been preserved where possible. The executive suites are a tasteful mix of old and new. They have been decorated with pieces of furniture and items recovered from various mine offices and store rooms, and past mine managers' homes, where many had lain hidden and half forgot-

ten beneath layers of dust. Their potential beauty and value were recognised by an employee, Mr Fanie Kotze, who set about the task of restoring them. The laborious job of repairing, sanding, oiling and polishing was undertaken and the results are both rewarding and astounding.

A pre 1920s pine and yellow wood ledger desk with spindle shaped backrail and slope dominates the VIP waiting room. Opposite it is a bullion balance – the large metal scale with copper



pans formerly used on the mine. It is set upon an oregon pine kist base. Black and white photographs on the walls depict early mining scenes.

The focal point of the board room is an oval Rhodesian teak table, 3,8 metres in length. The table was converted into an extension table and required an additional set of four legs to support the additional length. Twelve chairs and two carvers, also of Rhodesian teak, are set around the table. From necessity, modern instruction facilities, including blackboard and slide projection, make the board room purely functional.

Other valuable furnishings in the executive offices include a pine pedestal desk with leather inset top and moulded edge, a set of stinkwood armchairs with thong seats, a pine and teak kist, a pine and yellow wood wakis with metal hasp and side handles, a kiaat pedestal desk, an oak roller top desk, its interior fitted with pigeon holes and drawers, and two clocks, one an oak-cased mantel clock with an enamel dial, Arabic numerals and metal spandrels, and a brass ships clock with an enamel dial, Roman numerals, Arabic second hand and metal spandrels.

Numerous framed shaft maps and plans, historic mining scene photographs in black and white, and paintings of old mining buildings, adorn the walls.

*Above: one of the offices  
Below: the boardroom*





*Above: the cashdesk  
Below: one of the modern landscaped offices*

Interior landscaping successfully combines the modern with the old and the remaining area has been converted into open plan offices to suit the needs of modern business. The offices are spacious and the numerous windows allow for a maximum of natural light and air.





*The landscaping enhances the office blocks.*

*Below is a south elevation of the building.*

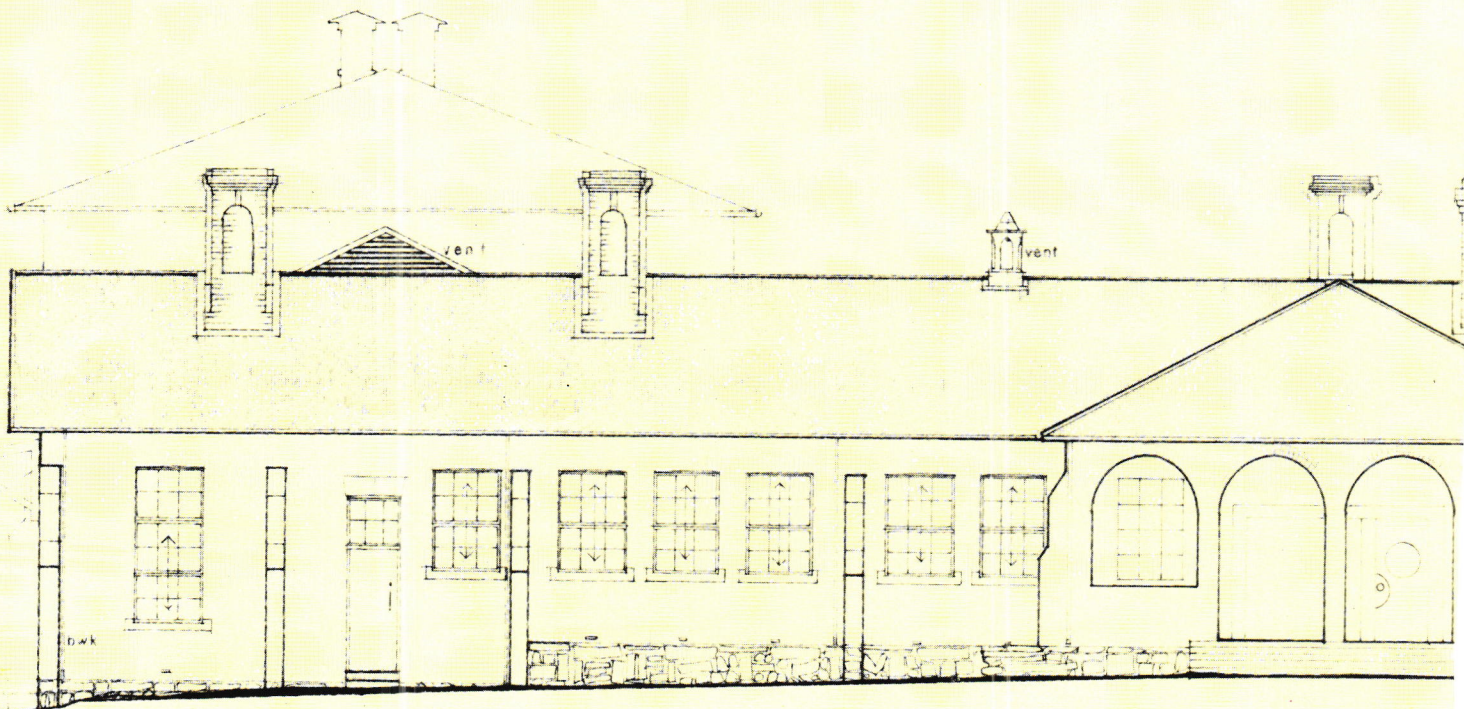
### **Garden/Landscaping**

The gardens have been completely remodelled and contribute an added dimension of tranquility and beauty. Seedlings are propagated and tended in the company's hot house by Mrs Meda Pask, and a magnificent display of flowers, shrubs and trees is provided all year round. The cheerful

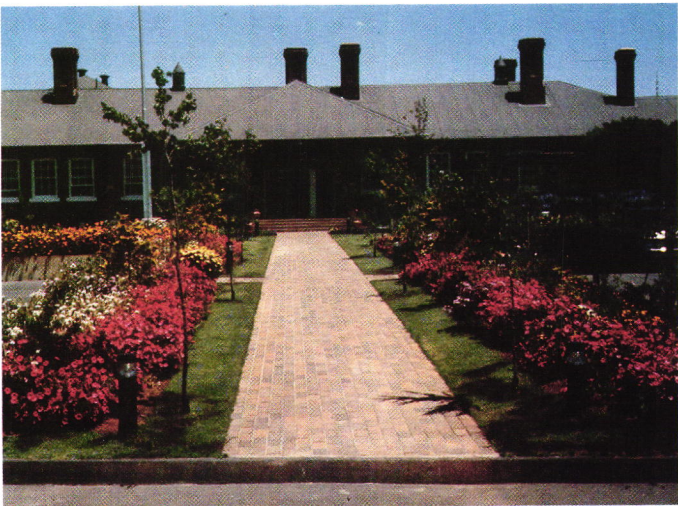
blaze of flowers and well tended lawns contribute very effectively to a feeling of warm welcome and concern for the environment which is characteristic and part of the image of the company.

### **Parking**

Parking facilities exist for both staff and visitors. New



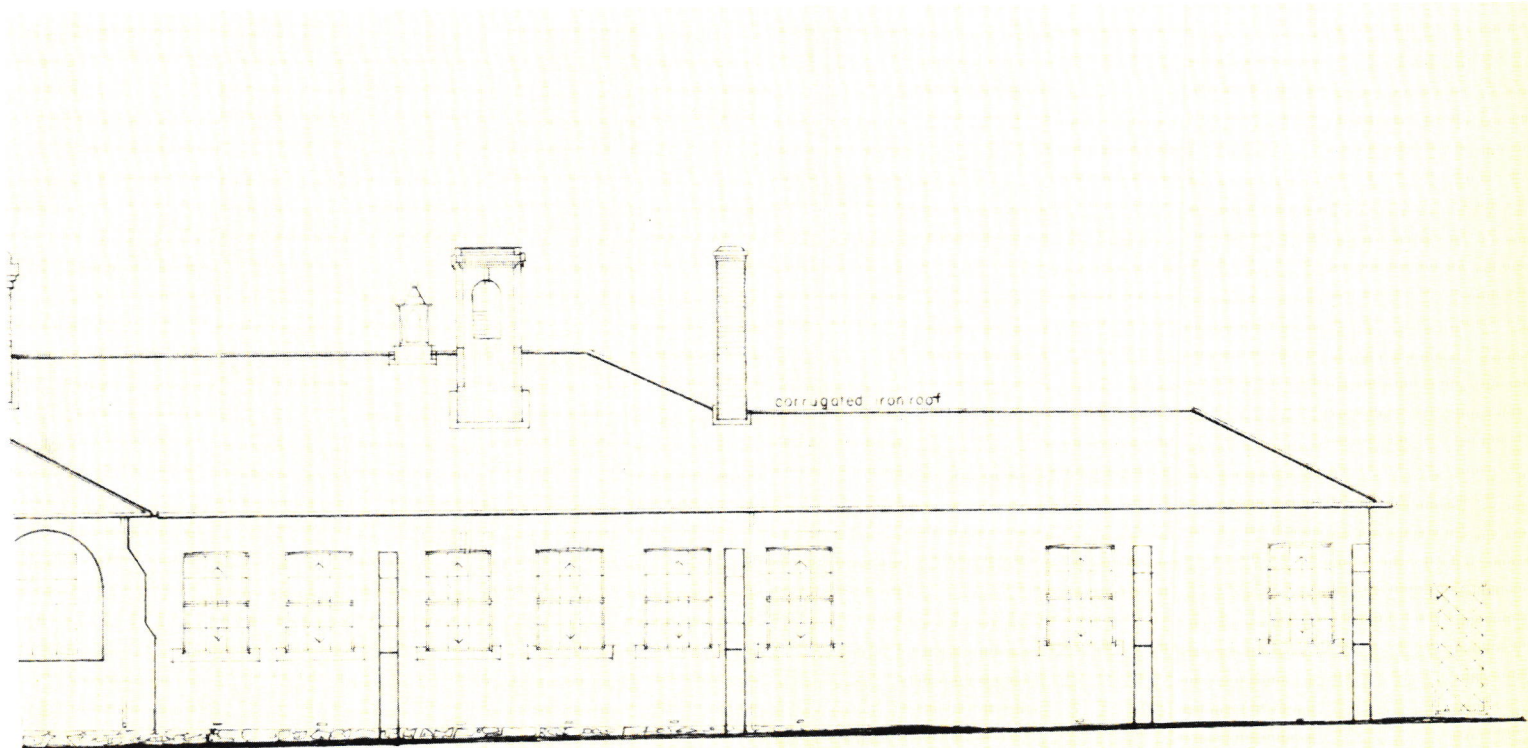




parking areas of pre-cast paving blocks with green grass planted between them have been introduced. Trees have been strategically planted in the parking areas and in time will provide adequate shade.

**Conclusion**

Rand Mines Properties has managed to achieve an extremely pleasant working environment for its staff, only five minutes from the central business district with its high rise office buildings, bustling crowds and ceaseless traffic.



SOUTH ELEVATION 1:100