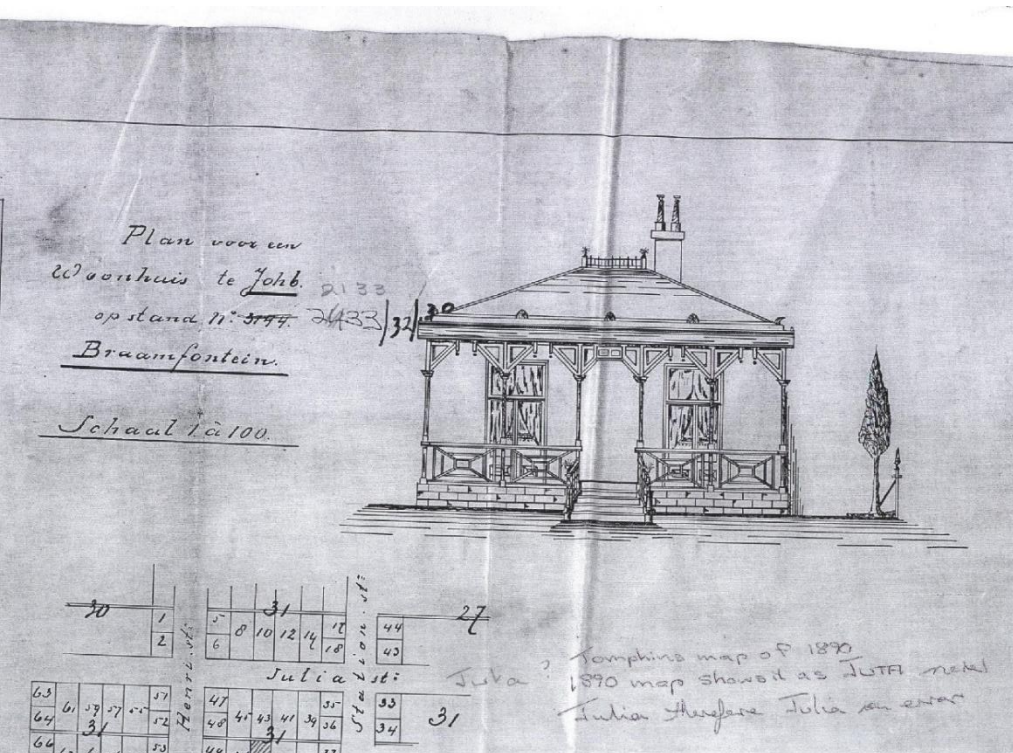


JOHANNESBURG

HERITAGE FOUNDATION



JOHANNESBURG 140

A BOOKLET TO ACCOMPANY THE EXHIBITION
OF EARLY JOHANNESBURG PLANS

October 2026

The Story of a City in its Plans by Flo Bird

In 2013, the Johannesburg Heritage Foundation got permission to transfer a selection of important plans from the master archive located at the Metro Centre in Braamfontein to Museum Africa. Initially, printed paper copies were made but later the chosen plans were scanned, and these were sent to Building Survey for their records.

Sadly, with COVID, visits to the Metro Centre archive were halted and the project was suspended. Then, when the Metro Centre was closed indefinitely ‘for safety reasons’ with all the drawings still inside, it was no longer possible to continue searching the archives.

Nevertheless, Museum Africa now has a collection of 2027 historically and artistically significant architectural drawings stored safely inside. Possibly as many as half came from the JHF project. They are filed according to township and stand number with ‘Township Johannesburg’ occupying the most space followed by ‘Jeppestown’.

The importance of these plans (and the city’s larger plans archive) cannot be overstated. Not only are they beautiful objects in their own right, these drawings and documents dating back to 1892 contain an irreplaceable record of Joburg’s growth from a mining camp to a sprawling metropolis. They are also important for the future development of the city as property owners and architects

have to submit copies of the original plans as part of the approval process for new builds and renovations, as is required by legislation.

It is therefore beyond alarming that since the Metro Centre was abruptly closed with little warning, the plans archive in the basement has been sitting abandoned, at great risk of destruction and degradation. Letters to the city authorities have been sent raising the alarm. The press and media have repeatedly reported on the issue. The JHF and the Johannesburg Crisis Alliance have held a public protest outside the Metro Centre. And yet nothing has been done to remedy the situation, much to the frustration of anyone who cares about the city and its heritage.

We now hope that, following the municipal elections in November, a new City Council will take the matter seriously and transfer the 1 million or so drawings from the derelict Metro Centre to suitable facility where they can once again be properly organised and made accessible to home owners, property developers, architects and researchers.

Joburg's Heritage on Paper by Kathy Munro

In 2026, Johannesburg celebrates its 140th anniversary. This exhibition looks at the city through an unusual and precious record of its past: the architectural plans preserved in the City of Johannesburg's plans archive.

A city is more than its streets and buildings. Its history is also recorded in the drawings that show how those buildings were imagined, designed, altered and sometimes lost. Plans reveal the changing ambitions of Johannesburg — from the modest houses of the early mining town to the grand residences, schools, commercial buildings and civic architecture that followed.

Among the plans displayed here are some of Johannesburg's remarkable survivors and tragic losses: an early house at Oaklands; Friedenheim at Jeppe Boys High School, now demolished but remembered through its original gates; the Bez Valley farmhouse, possibly the oldest surviving house within Johannesburg; Cullinan House and Cullinan Chambers; Pen-y-Bryn in Parktown, now demolished; Broadcast House in Commissioner Street; and the plans for an old cottage in Braamfontein dating as far back as 1890.

Together these drawings create a kind of architectural archaeology of Johannesburg. They allow us to 'see' buildings that have disappeared, to understand buildings

that survive, and to appreciate how profoundly the city has changed over 140 years.

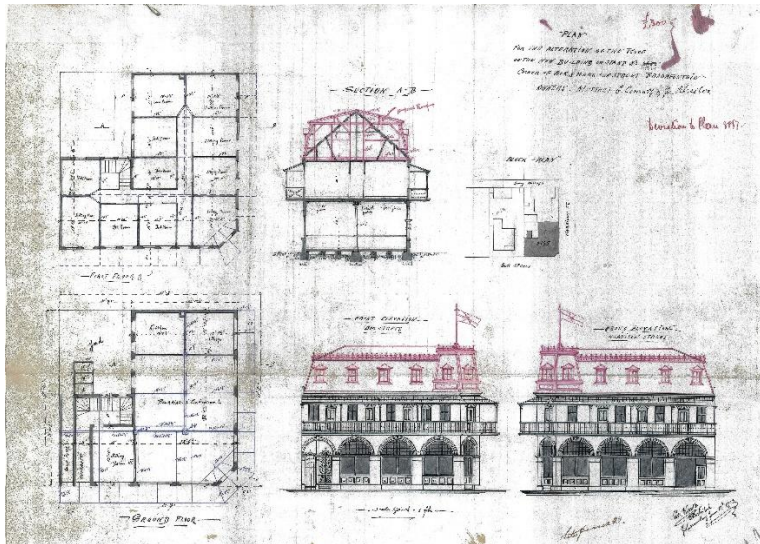
But this exhibition is also intended as a warning.

Johannesburg's architectural plans archive is an irreplaceable part of the city's heritage. Yet, for the past few years, this extraordinary collection has suffered from neglect and inadequate maintenance. Once plans are lost, damaged or discarded, the historical record they contain cannot simply be recreated. The plans are not merely administrative documents. They are the memory of the city. If we lose the plans, we lose part of Johannesburg's history. If we lose the archive, we lose part of Johannesburg's identity.

This exhibition is therefore both a celebration and a plea: that Johannesburg recognise the value of its plans archive, preserve it properly, and ensure that this extraordinary visual record of the city's past survives for the generations who will inherit Johannesburg next. Johannesburg has preserved its buildings imperfectly. It must not now lose the drawings that preserve their memory. A city that allows its historic plans to disappear is allowing its own history to disappear.



1897 Plan of Johannesburg and Suburbs, B Melvill, Grocott and Sherry



1. A Beerhall on the edge of Johannesburg: 81 Harrison Street, Braamfontein

The plan for the Beerhall and Rooms at 81 Harrison Street, corner Bok Street, Braamfontein, dates from a particularly revealing moment in Johannesburg's history. The building was erected in 1903, soon after the end of the Anglo-Boer War, for Conrath and Schreiber, to designs by the architect Chas. Kunz. The roof was subsequently extended in 1908.

The drawing presents a substantial and rather theatrical building: a deeply arcaded ground floor, an upper-storey veranda and a steeply pitched roof with dormer windows and a prominent central feature. It belongs to the period when Braamfontein was developing as a busy suburb immediately north of the city, just beyond the railway lines.

Braamfontein at this date was not yet the university and office district familiar today. After 1902 it developed strongly as a working-class suburb, with houses, small shops and businesses. The later commercial transformation of Braamfontein came much later.

The railway was central to this story. Johannesburg's rapidly expanding railway system effectively divided the young city, and increasingly elaborate bridges and subways were required to connect the centre with the northern suburbs.

The world represented by Kunz's drawing would eventually disappear. After the Second World War, Johannesburg Station underwent a vast reconstruction. The railway tracks east of Harrison Street were lowered by approximately four metres, allowing roads and bridges to cross the railway at street level. The first stage of the new station included a new bridge system, and the old Harrison Street subway was ultimately eliminated.

This transformation explains the extraordinary contrast between the plan and the present-day photograph of the site. The street corner shown in 1903 no longer exists in anything like its original form. The Beerhall has vanished, Bok Street no longer meets Harrison Street in the manner indicated on the old plan, and the railway barrier has been replaced by a complex landscape of bridges, roads and station infrastructure.

The drawing is therefore more than an architectural record. It captures Braamfontein before the university, before the great post-war office development and before the railway reconstruction reshaped the northern edge of Johannesburg's central city. Wits itself would only receive full university status in 1922, almost two decades after this building was constructed.



2. Joubert Park Mansions — a new way of living in Johannesburg

66 Sophie de Bruyn Street (formerly Noord St)

demolished

This beautifully rendered 1905 drawing records Joubert Park Mansions, designed by Johannesburg architects

Arthur and Walter Reid for the corner of Noord and Wilhelm Streets, overlooking Joubert Park. Wilhelm Street was subsequently renamed King George Street during the First World War when anti-German sentiment was high.

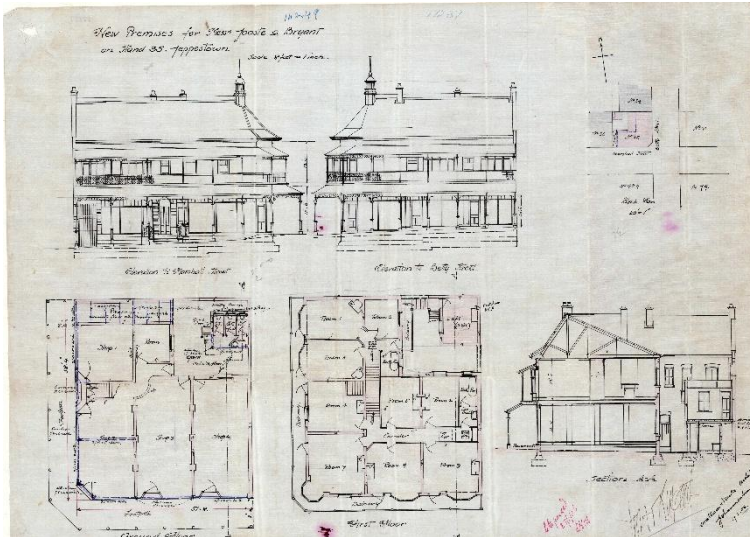
The building represents an important moment in Johannesburg's transformation from mining town into a more sophisticated city. The prestigious location beside Joubert Park was complemented by an equally ambitious architectural treatment: elaborate balconies, curved and stepped gables, decorative stonework and two distinctive roof pavilions gave the building a highly theatrical Edwardian presence.

The plan is especially significant because the building was chosen for illustration in G. A. T. Middleton's multi-volume *Modern Buildings: Their Planning, Construction and Equipment*. Middleton presented Joubert Park Mansions as a contemporary example of the small blocks of flats appearing in Johannesburg.

It was also a distinctly modern building in its organisation. Shops and a bar occupied the ground floor, with residential suites above, while the basement included a billiard saloon. Middleton noted that the suites, each with its own bathroom, were particularly suited to the considerable number of Johannesburg residents who boarded rather than maintaining conventional households.

The contrast with the site today could hardly be greater. The Bridge Shopping Centre, dating from 1993, now occupies this part of the Joubert Park precinct, while the surrounding area has become one of Johannesburg's major pedestrian and public-transport environments. The railway infrastructure, Park Station and the Noord Street taxi facilities have transformed the movement patterns around the site. City planning documents describe the area as a heavily pedestrianised commuter link connecting Park Station, taxi facilities, Rea Vaya and the Bridge and Park Central shopping centres.

Thus this single drawing records not only a lost building but a lost urban condition: a fashionable early Johannesburg address overlooking a newly established public park, before the railway and transport infrastructure came to dominate the character of the area.



3. Jooste & Bryant Building, Jeppestown, 1906

This finely detailed drawing records the Jooste & Bryant Building on Stand 35, at the corner of Marshall and Betty Streets, Jeppestown, designed by the Johannesburg architectural partnership Waterson & Veale and completed in 1906. The building was commissioned for Jooste & Bryant, an important Johannesburg wine and brandy merchant established in 1889. By the time this building was erected the firm had developed into a substantial commercial enterprise with outlets and business interests across Johannesburg.

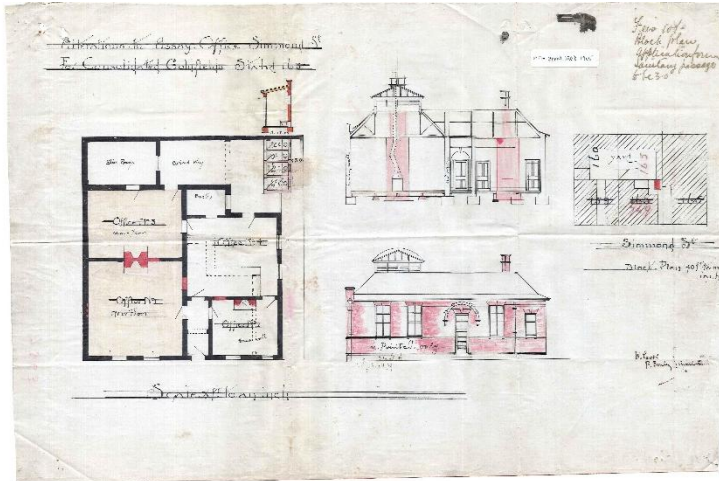
The plan reveals a carefully designed two-storey commercial building, with shops opening onto both streets with offices or rooms above. Particularly characteristic are

the generous verandas, elaborate balcony detailing, prominent roof forms and the small tower marking the corner. The architecture belongs to the transition from the exuberant Victorian commercial architecture of the 1890s to the more restrained Edwardian architecture of the new century.

The architects, John Waterson and Henry George Veale, were well-established members of Johannesburg's emerging architectural profession. Waterson was elected a Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects in 1906, the very year in which this building was completed.

What makes this plan especially valuable is that the building it records still survives. It has recently been conserved and incorporated into a new residential development. The Johannesburg Heritage Foundation lists it as an A-rated heritage building, although it is not formally declared.

The survival of both the drawing and the building make this an unusually complete record of early Johannesburg commercial architecture. Its history and survival make a strong case for awarding a Blue Plaque commemorating Jooste & Bryant, Waterson & Veale and the building itself.



4. The Assay Office, Simmonds Street - Johannesburg Consolidated Gold Fields, 84 Main Street, Now Swiss House

Among the plans of Johannesburg's lost buildings, this small assay office is a reminder that the city's mining landscape was not made up only of spectacular headquarters, banks and tall commercial buildings. Behind the financial machinery of the gold industry was an equally important world of scientific testing, sampling and metallurgy.

The drawing, for Johannesburg Consolidated Goldfields on Stand 163 in Simmonds Street, records alterations to an existing assay office. It is attributed to Leck & Emley, one of the leading architectural practices of early Johannesburg. The drawing shows a compact brick building containing

offices and a sample room, together with the specialised equipment and chimneys required for its technical work. Its architecture is modest, but its function was critical.

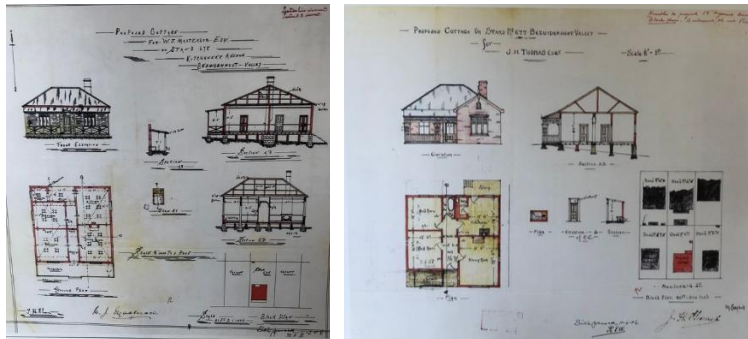
An assay office tested samples of ore to determine their gold content – their grade – and hence their potential economic value. The distinction was crucial. A mine might contain enormous quantities of ore, but if the gold was present in insufficient concentration, or if it was too expensive to extract and process, the ore was not economically viable. Conversely, a sufficiently rich and recoverable orebody could transform a mining venture into a highly profitable enterprise.

Payability was therefore one of the fundamental questions of mining. Before investors committed capital to sinking shafts, extending workings or developing a reef, they needed reliable information about what the ore would yield. The assay office was one of the places where that question was answered.

The survival of this plan is consequently more than a record of a vanished building. It documents one of the hidden technologies of Johannesburg's gold-mining economy: the point at which a piece of rock was converted into a number, and that number into an economic decision.

The building itself has long disappeared as Simmonds Street was progressively transformed by larger commercial developments. The plan, however, allows us to recover

something of the specialised and largely invisible infrastructure that made Johannesburg's mining city possible.



5. Bezuidenhout Valley: A Freehold Suburb of Modest Aspirations and Grand Possibilities

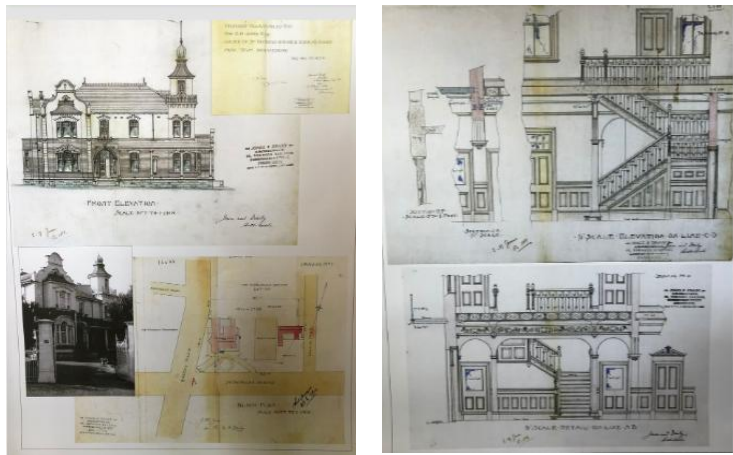
Bezuidenhout Valley is a particularly revealing example of the way Johannesburg expanded beyond its original mining settlement. The suburb emerged from the extensive Doornfontein farm of the Bezuidenhout family, whose land occupied much of the valley east of Johannesburg. When gold was discovered in 1886, parts of Doornfontein were proclaimed for mining, but the northern portion was retained by F.J. Bezuidenhout and remained outside the original diggings because it was cultivated land. The Bezuidenhouts continued to own substantial areas and progressively released land for development.

The establishment of Bezuidenhout Valley in 1902 came at an interesting moment in Johannesburg's suburban history. The city was expanding rapidly after the South African War, and there was demand for the creation of prestigious new suburbs to compete with Parktown, such as Auckland Park, Belgravia and other developments. Bezuidenhout Valley offered something different: freehold residential stands close to the city, but at a scale and price that made individual home ownership possible to a much wider section of Johannesburg's population. Bezuidenhout Valley is recorded among the working-class suburbs established in this period, generally characterised by smaller stands than those of the wealthier northern suburbs.

The three plans displayed here illuminate that social history. A.E. Adams's house was a relatively substantial villa, with four bedrooms, formal drawing and dining rooms, a generous veranda and carefully composed gabled elevations. The houses designed for J.H. Thomas and W.J. Maiterson were more modest cottages, but they too were detached houses with verandas, proper kitchens and domestic accommodation. Their timber construction raised floors and corrugated-iron roofs are characteristic of the practical yet often attractive domestic architecture of early Johannesburg.

These were houses for people who had achieved a modest degree of economic independence: established artisans, tradesmen and other members of the emerging urban

middle and working classes who could purchase a stand outright and build a home of their own. Their significance lies precisely in their ordinariness. The plans reveal a Johannesburg that is often overlooked in favour of the great mansions of Parktown and the Randlords.



6. Pen-y-Bryn — Turnip Towers and the remaking of Parktown

18 Queens Road Parktown, demolished and site now part of Wits Education School campus

Pen-y-Bryn was one of the great, picturesque mansions of early Parktown. Designed in 1905 by Jones & Draiby for E. H. Jones, the house combined the romantic eclecticism of the late Victorian period with the emerging Edwardian taste for the picturesque. Its elaborate gables, arched windows,

decorative ironwork and especially its tower with an onion-shaped cupola gave it an extraordinary presence. The affectionate nickname “Turnip Towers” captured both its eccentricity and its visual character.

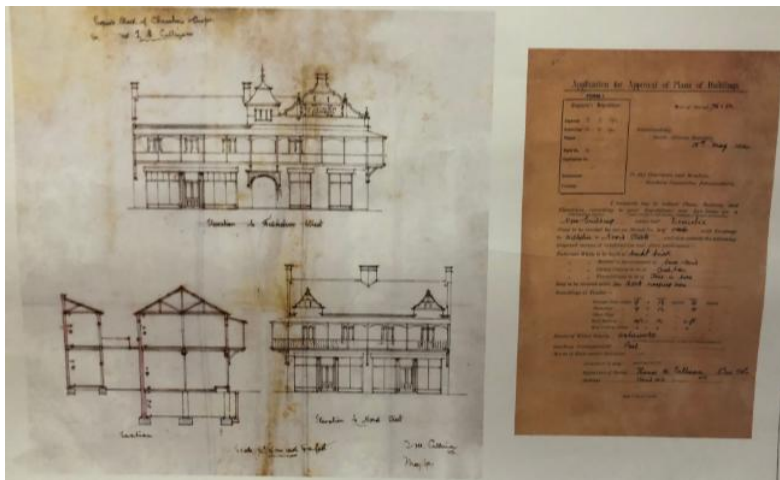
The drawings are unusually revealing. Alongside the principal elevation are detailed drawings of the staircase and interiors, while the block plan shows the house set within a substantial property, with its drive, gardens and ancillary buildings. Together they evoke the world of the early Parktown mansion — a large private residence set within generous grounds on the ridge above Johannesburg.

Pen-y-Bryn was, however, one of the many Parktown houses that disappeared during the transformation of the suburb in the later twentieth century. Like dozens of other houses and old streets in this part of Parktown, it was demolished to make way for the Johannesburg College of Education. The Johannesburg College of Education eventually became part of the University of the Witwatersrand in 2001, and the site is now the Wits Education Campus.

The transformation is remarkable. A landscape once characterised by large private houses and gardens has become a landscape of educational, medical, cultural and sporting institutions. The present Education Campus, built in the Brutalist style, is bounded by the same historic roads — Jubilee Road, York Road, Victoria Avenue and St

Andrews Road — that appear on maps of this part of Parktown.

Pen-y-Bryn therefore represents more than a lost house. Its drawings document a lost landscape — the disappearance of an entire residential suburb and its replacement by the institutional Parktown we know today.



7. Thomas Cullinan: Builder, Entrepreneur and Diamond Pioneer - 1891 home in De Villiers Street (no 63) demolished

These plans offer a glimpse into the career of one of the remarkable pioneers of early Johannesburg, Thomas Major Cullinan (1862–1936). Cullinan arrived in Johannesburg in 1887 and began as a builder and contractor. From this

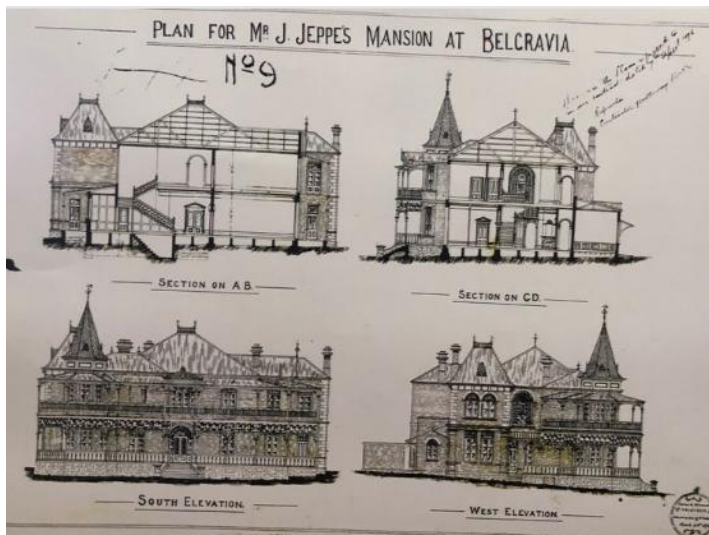
beginning he developed a remarkable range of business interests, extending from building and brickmaking to clay, industry and, ultimately, diamonds. He became one of the city's influential businessmen and political figures and was later knighted for his contribution to industrial development.

The drawings include a 1891 municipal application for a Cullinan dwelling, with its handwritten specification of brick walls, stone foundations, corrugated-iron roofing, water supply and sanitary arrangements. A later drawing shows a more ambitious two-storey building on Wilhelm and Nord Streets, its elaborate veranda, ornamental roofline and prominent nameboard expressing the growing confidence of its owner. Together they illustrate the transformation of Johannesburg from mining camp to substantial commercial town.

Cullinan's career was expanding rapidly. In the 1890s he became involved in brick and clay industries, while pursuing his interest in prospecting. His great breakthrough came with the Premier Diamond Mining Company, established in connection with the diamond-bearing ground north of Pretoria. The famous 3,106-carat diamond discovered at the Premier Mine in 1905 was subsequently named the Cullinan Diamond, permanently attaching his name to one of the most celebrated gems in the world (now part of the British Crown Jewels).

Just before the Anglo-Boer War, Cullinan built The View in Ridge Road, Parktown, for his growing family. Designed by Charles Aburrow in 1896–97, with additions by Aburrow & Treeby in 1903, the house survives today and is a rare tangible reminder of the world of the early Rand entrepreneurs. Cullinan also commissioned the later Cullinan Building, an ambitious commercial and office building designed by Leck & Emley in 1904–05/06. It was demolished in 1966 and replaced by the Standard Bank Centre.

The plans therefore capture something more than individual buildings. They record the emergence of the Johannesburg entrepreneur as a new type of civic figure — a man whose business interests, family life, architecture and political influence were all part of the making of the city.



8. Friedenheim — Sir Julius Jeppe's Belgravia mansion 40-42 Robinson Street. House demolished: Gates extant with blue plaque

Among the plans in this exhibition, Friedenheim provides an unusually complete record of a lost Johannesburg mansion. Built in 1896 for Julius Jeppe in Belgravia, the house represented the confidence and aspirations of the first generation of Johannesburg's wealthy property developers.

Jeppe was one of the men who helped shape the young city. Through the Jeppe estate, he was closely involved in the development of Jeppestown and Belgravia, while his public life extended into municipal, business, educational and charitable affairs. He was a member of St John's

Anglican Church and was knighted in 1922 for his public service.

Designed by Carter & McIntosh and built by John Moffat, Friedenheim was an exuberant late-Victorian mansion. Its plans show a large and sophisticated household, with drawing and dining rooms, a morning room, nursery, bedrooms, servants' accommodation, kitchens, scullery, laundry and extensive ancillary buildings. The stable and coach-house complex was itself carefully designed, reflecting the importance of horses, carriages and domestic staff to the life of a wealthy Johannesburg household.

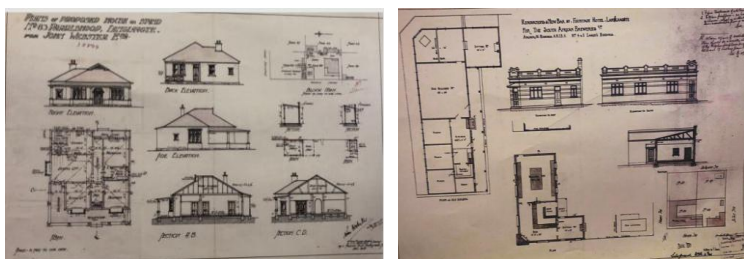
The later drawings are particularly revealing. By 1898, only two years after the mansion was completed, Carter & McIntosh were preparing further work, including new bathrooms and a ballroom extension. These additions demonstrate how quickly the requirements of Johannesburg's elite were changing, with the mansion becoming not simply a private residence but a place for large-scale entertaining.

Friedenheim remained in the Jeppe family until 1908, after which it was occupied by Sir Abe Bailey. In 1915 the property was acquired by the Transvaal Education Department and became Tsessebe House, a boarding house for Jeppe High School for Boys. The former private estate was gradually absorbed into the school campus. The orchard was eventually replaced by the school swimming

pool, while the mansion itself deteriorated. It was condemned and demolished in 1963.

The Friedenheim gates, however, survive. Imported from the Macfarlane foundry in Glasgow, they are now the only surviving component of the mansion itself and have become an important physical reminder of the lost house. The associated stables also survive within the Jeppe Boys High School grounds.

Friedenheim demonstrates why architectural plans are so important to the history of Johannesburg. A vanished building can be reconstructed through its plans, elevations, specifications, photographs and surviving fragments. In this case, the drawings allow us to recover not only the appearance of the mansion but something of the social world, technology, domestic life and ambitions of Johannesburg in the 1890s.



9. Paarlshoop/ Langlaagte: Living beside the Reef Plans for houses in Johannesburg's first planned suburb

Langlaagte was one of the earliest settlements associated with the development of Johannesburg and the gold mines of the Main Reef. Its importance, like that of neighbouring early settlements such as Paarlshoop, lay in its close relationship to the mines themselves. The people who worked the early workings needed to live within practical reach of their employment, while access to water was equally fundamental to the survival and development of these settlements.

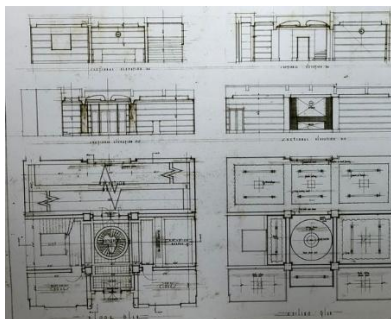
Paarlshoop, Johannesburg's earliest planned suburb, provides an important point of comparison. The earliest plan in the exhibition is Auret Pritchard's November 1886 plan for Paarlshoop, which already incorporates the ideas of a planned town, including a market square and church square. These early plans remind us that Johannesburg did not emerge fully formed as a city: it grew through a series of settlements laid out around the needs of mining, movement, water and habitation.

The Langlaagte drawings show this process at the level of individual buildings. The plans for houses on Stands 83, 54 and 43 reveal the characteristic single-storey veranda house of the period – practical, climate-responsive and relatively modest in scale. Alongside them is the Fountain Hotel, shown with alterations and a new bar for South African Breweries Ltd. The hotel points to another dimension of early settlement: the places where miners and residents met, drank and socialised. The name *Fountain Hotel* is tantalising, suggesting that a spring or

fountain may have been a local landmark and a reminder of the preciousness of water in the early settlements.

Much of this early Langlaagte has disappeared, but its history has not entirely vanished from the landscape. The Abraham Kriel Orphanage and the old Dutch Reformed Church remain important survivors, giving physical presence to a settlement whose original houses and commercial buildings have largely been lost.

These drawings therefore allow us to see Langlaagte not simply as a place on an old map, but as a living mining settlement — a place where people worked, lived, worshipped, obtained water and socialised within close proximity to the Reef.



10. Broadcast House, 170-176 Commissioner Street, 1935 - extant

Broadcast House captures Johannesburg when new technologies were transforming the way the city communicated with the wider world. Designed in 1935 by the prolific Johannesburg practice of J. C. Cook & Cowen, the building was commissioned by Isidore W. Schlesinger, one of the most influential entrepreneurs in Johannesburg's early entertainment industry.

Schlesinger had built a remarkable business empire around cinema and entertainment, and broadcasting was a natural extension of his interests in the new forms of mass communication. Broadcast House gave this emerging medium a substantial architectural presence in Commissioner Street. Its modern design, together with its striking decorative aluminium work and relief panels associated with René Shapshak, announced that broadcasting belonged to the technological and cultural modernity of the 1930s. The building is included in Clive

Chipkin's *Johannesburg Style: Architecture & Society 1880s–1960s*, reflecting its recognised importance within the city's architectural history.

The building subsequently became closely associated with the South African Broadcasting Corporation, established in 1936. On 17 July 1950, the first SABC in-house news bulletin was broadcast from Broadcast House, establishing the building as an important landmark in the history of South African journalism and radio.

The plan displayed here allows the building to be understood not simply as an Art Deco façade but as a purpose-designed environment for a new technology. Broadcast House was concerned with studios, technical spaces, offices and the controlled production and transmission of sound. Its history also reflects the changing and often contested role of broadcasting in South African society, including the SABC's later involvement in the political and cultural structures of apartheid.

Most importantly, Broadcast House is still standing in Commissioner Street. The architectural plan can therefore be read alongside the surviving building, linking the drawing on paper with a substantial piece of Johannesburg's twentieth-century cultural and technological history.



The original Height's Hotel (demolished) and the plan for expansion

11. Height's Hotel: 42 Commissioner Street - accommodation for a mining town - the plan that did not come to fruition

Hotels were fundamental to the making of early Johannesburg. The new goldfield attracted thousands of men who had come to work in the mines, in commerce, construction and the growing industrial economy. Johannesburg was overwhelmingly male in its early years, and many of these newcomers needed somewhere to sleep, eat, wash and obtain drinking water. A hotel provided the essential services of urban life in a town where permanent housing was still developing. The bar was equally important, providing the thirsty mining population with a place to drink, socialise and exchange news.

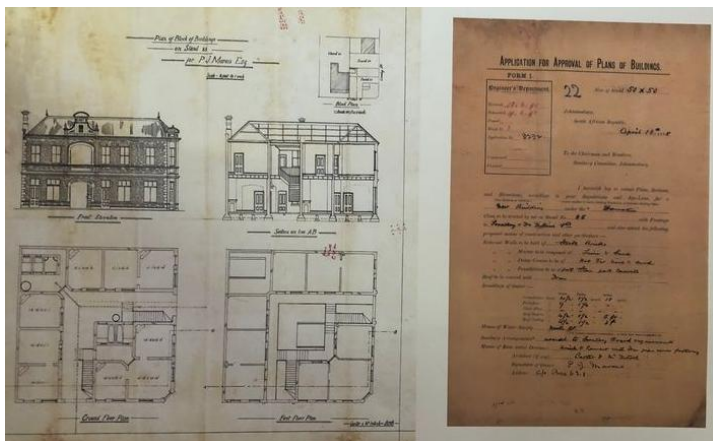
Height's Hotel was established in 1887 in Ferreira's Dorp and is described as the first hotel in Johannesburg. It was run by Sam B. Height and his wife, Louisa, and became one of the social centres of the fledgling town. Height is remembered not only as a hotelier but as an entrepreneur

and property developer. Anna Smith describes him in *Johannesburg Street Names* as “the American hotel owner and company director.” The Height name survives in Height Street in Doornfontein, close to the Height family's former property, Saratoga Villa. The family connection is also remembered in Louisa Street and Saratoga Avenue.

The hotel was associated with several early developments in Johannesburg's social life. Height is traditionally credited with owning the first piano on the Rand, while the first horse-drawn tram service began in 1889 with a stop outside the hotel. Height also established the Doornfontein Club in 1889.

The 1895 drawing is particularly revealing because it represents a building that appears never to have materialised. Goldberg and Harris commissioned H. C. Brauer to design this imposing three-storey hotel, with its elaborate classical façade, balconies and grand architectural detailing. Within only two years the site was being redeveloped by the African Hotel Company as the much larger Rand Hotel, also designed by Brauer.

The drawing therefore captures something important about Johannesburg's first decade: the city was changing so rapidly that even ambitious new buildings could become obsolete before they were constructed.



12. The P. J. Marais House, 114 Putney Road, Brixton a new Johannesburg suburb

Before looking at the house itself, it is worth understanding something about Brixton. Brixton was one of the new suburbs created as Johannesburg expanded after the South African War. The land had formed part of the Braamfontein farm. Anna Smith records the story that Captain Carl von Brandis recommended this area for acquisition to extend the town and provide grazing for Johannesburg's cattle. The precise circumstances of the acquisition remain something that needs to be treated with care.

The new suburb was surveyed by W. H. Auret Pritchard in December 1902 for the Auckland Park Real Estate Company. The first stands were offered for sale shortly afterwards. They were small by the standards of some of the more fashionable suburbs — generally 50 by 100 feet

— and Brixton was intended to appeal particularly to people of modest means who wanted to build their own homes.

The developers were clever marketers. Horatio Collins, the secretary of the Auckland Park Real Estate Company, gave the suburb the name Brixton, after London, and many of the streets were given London names. Putney, Fulham, Chiswick, Hampton, Kew and Uxbridge are reminders that this was a new Johannesburg suburb deliberately presented with a familiar British identity.

The location was also attractive. Brixton stood close to Auckland Park and Mayfair, and the ridge gave extensive views across the developing city. The sales material particularly promoted the higher ground for houses and villas.

Brixton has retained a strong sense of identity. Today most people immediately associate it with the great Sentech Tower rising above the ridge. The suburb has much older landmarks, however: the water tower, its churches, Kingston Frost Park and its First World War memorial, the Brixton cemetery and a considerable collection of early houses.

This brings us to the plan in front of us. It is a substantial two-storey house designed by Carter & MacIntosh for P. J. Marais.

We are working on the assumption that this was the Marais House in Putney Road, subsequently numbered 114 Putney Road. The identification is not something regarded as absolutely proven, but there are enough pieces of evidence to make the connection compelling.

The house dates from the early years of Brixton's development. Its scale and architectural treatment tell us something about the ambitions of the new suburb. Brixton may have been marketed towards artisans and the lower middle classes, but the developers also recognised that the ridge offered sites for substantial houses with commanding views.

The architecture is strongly late Victorian. The symmetrical front elevation, the projecting bays, the large arched openings and the elaborate roofline give the house a considerable presence.

The plan also gives us a glimpse of domestic life. The staircase occupies a central position and links the two floors. The rooms are carefully arranged around the circulation space, with the more private accommodation upstairs and service areas towards the rear.

If this is indeed the Marais house, the building was to acquire a very different significance sixteen years later. During the Rand Revolt of 1922, Brixton became one of the principal areas of confrontation. The Marais family was

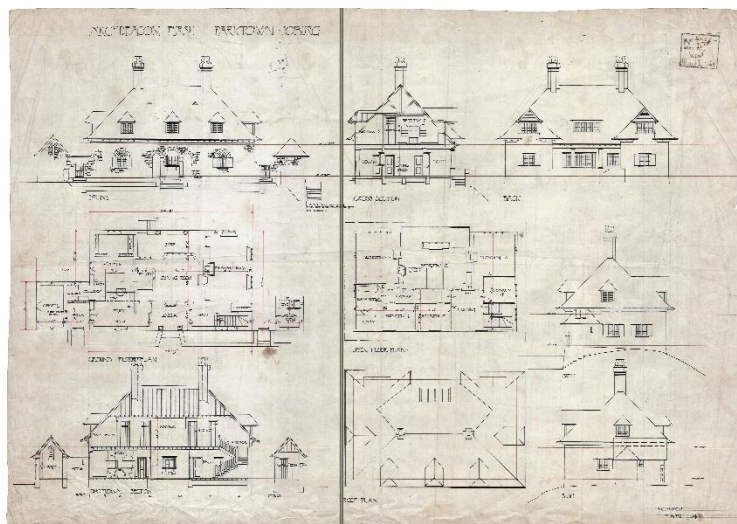
living in Putney Road at the time, and historical accounts associate their house with the fighting.

Pieter Marais was killed by union leader Taffy Long in nearby Fordsburg while, according to contemporary accounts, members of the family sheltered under the staircase. The story is sufficiently striking that the house later became associated with the name “Under the Stairs.” This all remains tentative, however, as the heritage research treats the identification of the house and its association with Pieter Marais cautiously. It is nevertheless a fascinating possibility.

If the identification proves correct, this plan does something rather extraordinary. It takes us from the creation of a new Johannesburg suburb in 1902, through the ambitions of its developers and the work of Carter & MacIntosh, into the domestic life of one family, and ultimately into the violence of the 1922 Rand Revolt. The house still stands today.

The architectural plan therefore becomes much more than a drawing of a house. It becomes a potential witness to the changing history of Brixton and to one of the most dramatic episodes in Johannesburg's history

13. Bishopskop, Gale Road, Parktown, 1904



These drawings of Bishopskop were prepared in 1904 for the Venerable Michael Furse, Archdeacon of Johannesburg from 1903 to 1909 and subsequently Bishop of Pretoria. The house was designed by Baker, Masey & Sloper, with Ernest Willmott Sloper as design architect. Its use of locally quarried koppie stone, Arts and Crafts detailing and carefully composed roofscape made it one of the characteristic houses of early Parktown.

Most remarkable in this set of drawings is the small private chapel, designed as an integral part of the residence. It suggests something of the position occupied by the Anglican Church in Johannesburg at the beginning of the twentieth century: it was not simply a provider of parish worship, but an important force in education, social

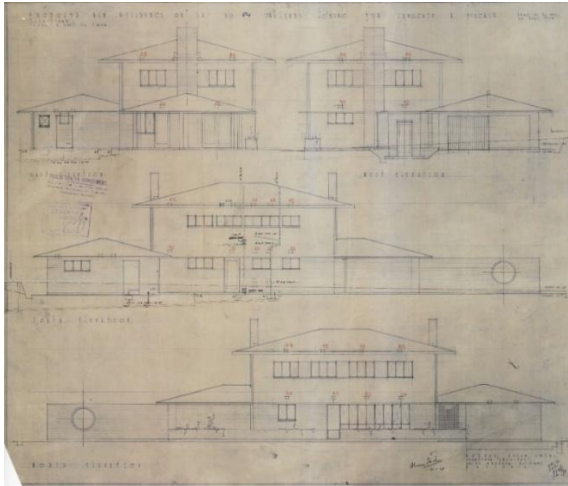
welfare, missionary work and the formation of the city's professional and civic life.

Furse was part of an Anglican establishment that was itself evolving as Johannesburg grew in importance. The young mining town was originally served within the extensive Diocese of Pretoria, under Bishop Henry Bousfield and subsequently Bishop William Carter. The emergence of Johannesburg as a major urban and commercial centre created pressure for a more locally focused ecclesiastical administration. Furse, as Archdeacon of Johannesburg, stood at the centre of this development. The separate Diocese of Johannesburg was finally established in 1922, two decades after these drawings were made.

The influence of the Church can be traced through a remarkable network of institutions. St Mary's Church provided one of the earliest Anglican foundations in the town, while St Mary's College, established in 1888 for the education of girls, moved to Belgravia in 1903–04. St John's College, founded in 1898 as a parish school of St Mary's, was rescued from possible closure in 1905 when Furse, as chairman of its council, called upon the Community of the Resurrection to take responsibility for it. The Community subsequently moved the College to Houghton Ridge and established the Anglo-Catholic character that remains fundamental to its identity.

The later St Mary's Cathedral in De Villiers Street provides another architectural expression of this growing Anglican presence. Although the cathedral scheme was commissioned from the practice of Herbert Baker and Frank Fleming, the surviving architectural record specifically identifies Fleming as the responsible architect for the main building constructed from 1926. The cathedral was consecrated in 1929.

Bishopskop therefore represents more than a distinguished Parktown residence. Its chapel, its architecturally sophisticated design and the status of its occupant embody the moment when Johannesburg was acquiring the institutions, leadership and confidence of a major city.



14. Bram Fischer Family House, 12 Beaumont Street, Oaklands

Oaklands is one of Johannesburg's early northern suburbs, originating in 1896 as the city expanded beyond the mining town into a landscape of larger residential properties, gardens and trees. By the time Norman Eaton designed the Fischer family house in 1938, Oaklands had become an established and desirable residential suburb for Johannesburg's prosperous professional families.

It was into this world that Bram and Molly Fischer moved in 1939. Fischer was a successful advocate and a member of a prominent Afrikaner family. The house at 12 Beaumont Street was designed by Eaton, one of South Africa's most distinguished architects whose career was centred largely on Pretoria. Eaton designed relatively few buildings in Johannesburg, making the Fischer house an especially

interesting example of his work in the city. His Johannesburg Children's Home in Observatory provides another important example.

The house demonstrates Eaton's early modernist approach. The two-storey building combines face brick with a lighter plastered upper storey, strong horizontal lines and broad roof overhangs. The house was carefully related to its generous garden, with the architectural drawings also showing a tennis court. Eaton's admiration for Frank Lloyd Wright can be seen in the way the building extends into its landscape rather than being treated simply as an isolated architectural object. The Fischer house belongs to an important transitional stage in Eaton's career, before the distinctive South African character of his later work became fully developed.

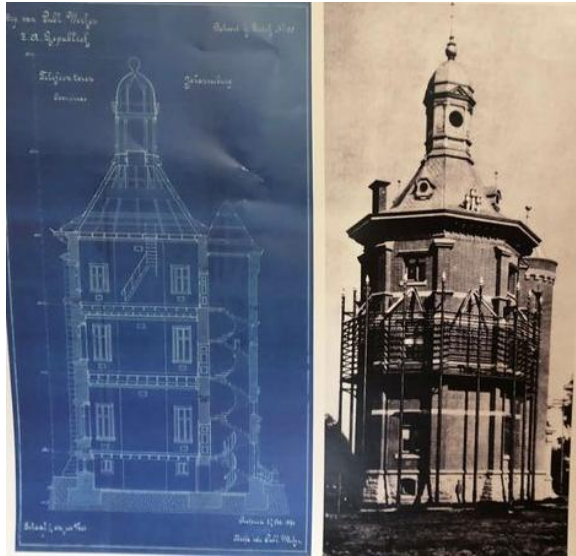
For the Fischer family, however, the house represented a short and extraordinary interlude in a much larger story. Bram and Molly lived here with their children, Ruth, Ilse and Paul, and the house became a place of friendship and hospitality. Political activists and colleagues were welcomed into the household. At a time when apartheid was increasingly imposing racial separation on every aspect of South African life, the Fischer home provided a remarkably different kind of social space.

The later history of the house is inseparable from Bram Fischer's transformation from successful advocate and family man into a major figure in the struggle against

apartheid. As repression intensified, Fischer was forced to abandon his conventional public life. In 1965 he went underground, eluding the security police for months and acquiring something of the quality of a “Scarlet Pimpernel”. His capture brought his double life to an end. He was sentenced to life imprisonment and died in 1975, having spent his final years as a political prisoner.

The house also has a remarkable connection with Eli Weinberg, who was himself a political activist, trade unionist, Communist and important documentary photographer whose camera recorded the people and events of the struggle. He too suffered imprisonment for his political convictions. His photographs of the Fischer house therefore have a significance beyond architectural documentation: the photographer was himself part of the political history he was documenting.

The Johannesburg Heritage Foundation has marked the property with a blue plaque commemorating the Fischer family and its political history. Its quiet suburban appearance belies the extraordinary history that took place within its walls.



15. The Johannesburg Telephone Exchange, Plein Square - De Villiers Street

The Johannesburg telephone exchange was one of the earliest pieces of modern communications infrastructure in the young city. The tower was erected in 1894 by the Transvaal Public Works Department, under Sytze Wierda, and telephone services commenced in September that year. With approximately 200 subscribers, the exchange connected the rapidly expanding world of mining, commerce, banking and professional services. Its tall tower provided a point from which telephone wires could be distributed across the town, creating what was described as a giant “cobweb” of wires.

The site itself has a history almost as interesting as the vanished tower. Originally Lawn Tennis Square, it was taken over by the Sanitary Committee in November 1893. For a short period it was known as Telephone Square, but by 1896 the *Standard and Diggers' News* was referring to it as Plein Street Park, while the *Staatscourant* called it Plein Park in 1899. The square later accommodated the city's municipal offices in the prefabricated Tin Temple, followed by the Technical College.

The telephone exchange moved to larger premises in Von Brandis Square in 1907, reflecting the rapid expansion of Johannesburg's telephone network. The old tower survived for several decades; demolition was contemplated in 1929 and it was probably demolished in 1934–35.

In 1955 the garden section of Plein Square was renamed Attwell Gardens, after I. E. B. Attwell, who had served as Mayor of Johannesburg in 1951–52. The following year the gardens became a garden for the blind. Today the garden has disappeared, and the open space is used for basketball and other recreational activities.

The changing uses of the site provide a small but revealing history of Johannesburg itself — from recreation ground to communications hub, municipal centre and public garden, to a contemporary recreational space.

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