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102 FLORENCE NZAMA ST. AMAFA REPORT



Durban Art Gallery Local history Museum



4th Nov 2013

**102 FLORENCE NZAMA ROAD DURBAN - DURBAN ART
GALLERY AND LOCAL HISTORY MUSEUM
MILNE DRAIN-JOHN MILNE STREET
AMAFA APPLICATION**

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- 1.0 PREAMBLE**

The City has identified the Precinct in which the existing Technical Centre is located, as part of a project to accommodate the exhibition of a Heritage nature for the UIA conference “Architecture Otherwhere Durban 2014” in September 2014.

The existing Technical Centre having been accommodated in the historical Beer Hall since 1995, is presently needing refurbishment.

Therefore, this document determines the alterations and site improvements being proposed to implement at the Historic Beer Hall Site as well as the Historic Milne Drain in John Milne Street
- 2.0 BACKGROUND**
 - 2.1 THE DURBAN ART GALLERY**

Now in its second century of existence, is home to collections that are as diverse as the eThekweni population.

“Artworks from Europe, the East and Africa, dating from the 15th century to the present, make the gallery a microcosm of the many histories represented here,” says Acting Art Gallery Director, Jenny Stretton. The Gallery has a comprehensive collection of artworks, and constantly rotates displays from its permanent collection, interspersing them with traveling exhibitions of contemporary and historic pictures and artifacts.
 - 2.2 THE LOCAL HISTORY MUSEUM:**

Durban’s rich heritage is presented at many unique sites located within the city. Some of these sites and collections are managed by private institutions while others are administered by various government departments and educational institutions.

The Ethekwini Municipality is responsible for the seven Local History Museums which are showcased on the Ethekwini website.

Ethekwini, located on the east coast of South Africa offers a glimpse of its history through seven unique museums. Durban, the hub of the region is the gateway to KwaZulu-Natal's rich multi-cultural heritage.

3.0 HISTORY OF DURBAN'S CURRENT CONSERVATION CENTRE

The Durban Museums' Conservation Centre, now known as the Technical Centre was officially opened on Thursday 18 May 1995 by Professor Brenda Gourley, Principal and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Natal. The building which houses this Centre is owned by the Durban Municipality. It is an attractive structure, typically Durban in character with its red face brick, clerestory windows and rather lovely gable. It is a good example of the functional style of architecture dating from the Union Period (1910-61), and is situated in close proximity to the museums it serves. A simple L-shaped building designed in the form of two distinct rectangular halls, form two axes which lock into the street layout. The short side of the rectangle is used primarily by the Durban Art Gallery; the long side of the 'L' turns the corner in the street at a right angle, is occupied by Technical Staff of the Durban Local History Museums and houses a storage area for their fine collection of costumes.

The existing building was built in 1914 as a municipal beerhall and served this purpose until 1968, after which it was rented out to various commercial firms: the last tenant rented it as a panel beating shop until the lease expired on 31 December 1993. It was due to be demolished by the Durban City Council but at the eleventh hour, quick action by the Durban Art Gallery staff, who saw its potential as a conservation and storage area for works of art, prevented this drastic action.

The Durban Museums' Conservation Centre is unique in South Africa. It is regarded by many museum professionals here, as well as abroad, as the finest of its kind in sub-Saharan Africa. The concept for its foundation did not suddenly emerge from nowhere.

In the archival records of the Durban Museums dating from the 1920s to the 1950s there are frequent references to conservation matters and to the restoration of items in the collections, in spite of the fact that there were no trained conservators on the staff of those

museums. In the absence of close controlled air-conditioning in the public galleries, elementary conservation measures were taken to try and circulate the air by the installation of fans during the hot, humid summer months. By the 1960s the science of conservation and restoration of works of art in museum collections began to gather international momentum; and many academic and scientific articles on these subjects were being published in museums journals. In the 1970s, worldwide focus on the preservation of museum artefacts was strengthened in South Africa through visits by distinguished museum scientists.

The major reason for the focus on the conservation and restoration of the Durban Art Gallery's and Local History Museum's collection was the adverse effects that Durban's sub-tropical climate was having on works of art in the collection. It was recognised that professionally trained conservators were needed on the staff, and that close controlled air-conditioning was a necessity in both the public exhibition halls of the Durban Art Gallery and in its store rooms.

During the 1980s the Durban Art Gallery took two major steps to ensure that its collections would be cared for according to the highest standards in conservation; the first was to send a Technician to Gateshead College for training in Easel Painting Conservation; and, since there was no space in the Gallery itself, the second step was to set up conservation studios and storage facilities in suitable commercial premises in Durban's Central Business District. By the early 1990s, the Durban Art Gallery could no longer afford to pay the exorbitant rentals charged for these areas. And so every effort was made to identify a municipal property which would be able to accommodate conservation studios and storage for the Durban Art Gallery and the Durban Local History Museums.

3.1 1994 CONVERSION OF THE EXISTING BEERHALL

The building was identified as being suitable for the future Technical Centre for the Durban Art Gallery and Local History Museum. Its close location, some three blocks away from the Museums it serves was an important factor. It houses the Durban Art Gallery's studios for the conservation of both easel paintings as well as for works of art on paper, and generous storage areas to house works of art from the permanent collection. Adaptation of the building for use as a **conservation and storage centre** was undertaken by the City of Durban's Architectural

4.0 MILNE'S DRAIN-HISTORIC CONTEXT

DURBANS EARLY GEOGRAPHY

Excerpt from Reminiscences of Old times in P. M. Burg by William James (in the Natal Archives) as printed in More Annals of Natal by A.F. Hattersley.

"On the 25th March 1858, I arrived in Natal by the sailing ship Quathlamba of 400 tons burthen, in command of Captain Harrison, leaving London docks on the 12th December 1857.

Vessels arriving in those days had to anchor in the outer anchorage, as there was never more than four or five feet of water on the Bar. Passengers were towed into port in a lighter, and carried to shore on the back of a native, as no landing stages or wharves then existed. This operation had its amusing side, especially to the lady passengers.

The Point at this time looked anything but inviting to newcomers, with only one permanent building, the Custom House; and some ramshackle wooden buildings in the occupation of a couple of landing agents. Huge sandhills abounded almost to the water's edge. As no hardening had yet been done, the ground was a deep loose sand. A narrow causeway, about 12 feet wide, had been cut through the natural bush to enable loaded ox-waggons and carts to reach Durban. Not more than two or three sailing vessels arrived at the Port per month.

In order to give a true picture of what Durban was like in 1858, I can best describe it just as a sandy flat. The Town gardens were an open piece of waste ground, the wind having full play on the fine sand, creating sand drifts. An open drain extended from vacant land, then called "the Flat", across central West Street and emptying itself into the Bay. This was Milne's drain. The "back beach," as it was then called, was almost blocked by a high mound of sand, which was added to on every occasion of a strong wind. The beach facing the outer anchorage was seldom, if ever, free from wrecks.

Grey Street was the boundary of Durban, and beyond was a fairly dense bush. The large trees harboured a number of small monkeys. The whole of the Berea was covered with thick bush in which grew very large indigenous trees which were the source of supplies of firewood to the residents of Durban."

ORDINANCE LANDS

Although by 1854 the availability of land for residential use in Durban Central had yet to become an issue, it must have been obvious to its planners that future developments would be severely curtailed by the presence of two marshes on either side, while any northward spread was partially blocked by the military's Ordinance Square. The need to resolve these issues, as well as the right of ownership of "townlands" was to dominate the Borough Council's political agenda for the next 20 years.

An open ditch, popularly known as Adlam's Drain, also cut across West Street in the vicinity of Mark Lane, immediately west of the Ordinance Grounds, and remained a marker for social status until it was finally covered over in 1877. Housing of a better class, it appears, was located east and upwind of its malodorous miasmas, and although by the 1870s many of Durban's upper income families had relocated to the more salubrious slopes of the Berea, the idea that the western side of town was somehow "less desirable" appears to have become ingrained in its urban fabric at a relatively early stage.

At least some of this work should have been paid for by a loan of £400 made by a resident, Mr Duff, but this was eventually spent on other schemes deemed to be more pressing. Additional drainage works were carried out in 1861 and 1862, in West and Field Streets, as well as Pine Terrace, while construction on the drainage of the Eastern Vlei was still being carried out. Thereafter the cost of draining public lands remained a fixture of the municipal budget for many years to come.

EASTERN VLEI DRAINAGE

In 1855 John Milne, the Harbour Engineer, put forward a scheme whereby Cato's Creek would be channelled for drainage of the eastern marsh. After its adoption in August 1857 the work was awarded to the firm of Gwyn & McAlister, who almost immediately ran into difficulties. Milne was then brought in to supervise the project, with the assistance of Capt Grantham, of the Royal Engineers. Much of the physical labour was provided by the local military garrison, currently manned by the 45th Regiment, and Milne's Drain, as it became known, was completed some years later.

WESTERN VLEI DRAINAGE

The first attempt to drain the Western Vlei took place in 1853 when a group of local residents, tired of the lack of progress in the pursuit of public works, appealed to the public for subscriptions of one shilling each "for the purposes of draining the pond, and repairing the road on the outskirts of Durban leading to Congella" (Russell 1899: 178). Tenders were called for the "cutting of a ditch to the spring tide high water mark 2 feet (600mm) deep, 1 foot (300mm) wide below, and 2 feet (600mm) wide above", which then was awarded to James Brickhill, described as a farmer resident on one of the newly-sold lots at Umbilo. The public subscription raised £5, of which Brickhill paid one William Goodge £4 10s "for cutting furrows and making bridge across ditto". This had the effect of concentrating the outflow of the vlei into the hollow in Smith Street, bordering the offices of lawyer JR Goodricke. Landowners in the vicinity, including Goodricke and Mr EP Lamport, then combined to erect a bridge across Smith Street, at a total personal cost of £33 14s 10d. The bridge spans were reportedly high enough for children "to hunt fish and crabs underneath".

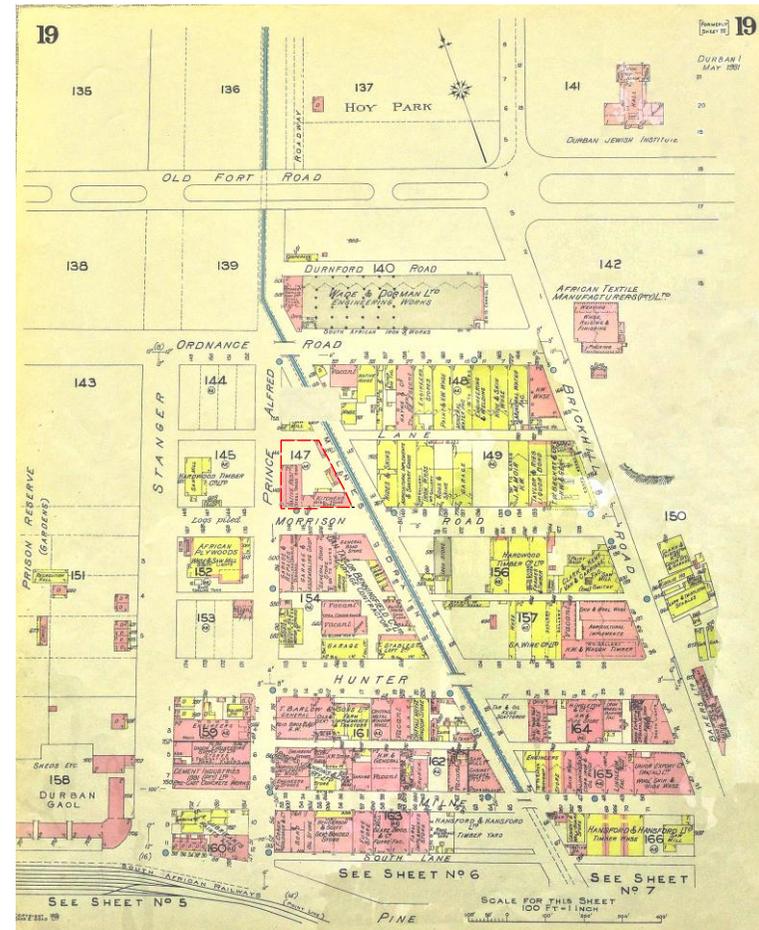
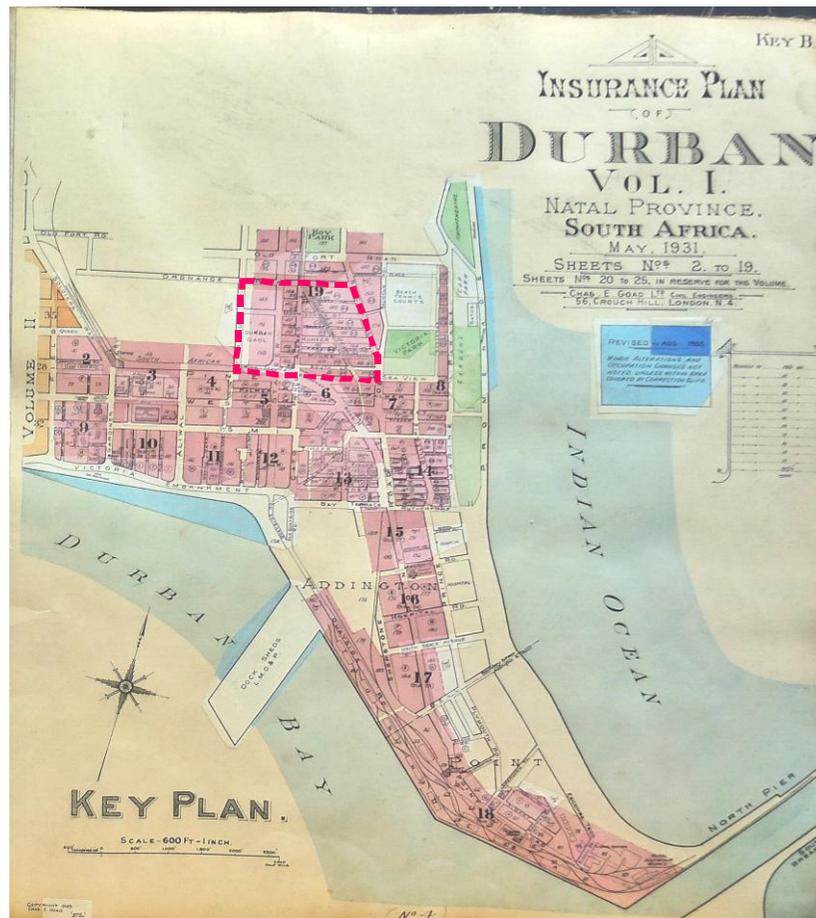
RIVERTOWN -HISTORICAL SUMMARY

- THE AREA IS LOCATED IN THE HISTORIC EASTERN VLEI AREA WHICH WAS ONCE A SWAMPY MANGROVE WETLAND AREA AND ADJACENT SECONDARY DUNE AREA OF THE DURBAN BEACH
- IT FORMED A CONNECTION BETWEEN THE UMGENI RIVER AND THE BAY AS WELL AS THE BEACH AND THE WESTERN VLEI (OR MARSH)
- THE AREA FORMED PART OF THE ORDINANCE LANDS WHICH WERE INITIALLY MILITARY PROPERTY
- THE WESTERN VLEI BECAME THE AREA THAT IN COLONIAL TIMES WAS WHERE INDIAN BUSINESS WAS FORCED TO DEVELOP DUE TO UNFORTUNATE SEGREGATION POLICIES.
- IT WAS ORIGINALLY CONTAINED IN A DIAGONAL PARCEL OF LAND KNOWN AS MILITARY'S ORDINANCE SQUARE
- THERE WERE PLANS TO ESTABLISH MARKET GARDENS IN THE AREA THUS INDIAN LABOURERS WERE ENCOURAGED TO SETTLE THERE.
- THE CITY COUNCIL IN 1855 COMMISSIONED ENGINEER JOHN MILNE TO INSTALL A DRAINAGE CHANNEL THAT WOULD CHANNEL WATER OUT OF THIS AREA TO ALLOW IT TO DRY OUT AND BE USABLE.
- THE AREA INITIALLY BECAME A COMMERCIAL/INDUSTRIAL AREA WHERE STABLES, WAGON MANUFACTURING AND LATER AUTOMOTIVE ENGINEERING WORKS, TIMBER MERCHANTS FLOURISHED. VARIOUS MANUFACTURING INDUSTRIES, PAINT, ROPE AND HARDWARE STORES AND REPAIR WORKSHOPS WERE ESTABLISHED, THUS THE AREA BECAME KNOWN AS **MOTORTOWN**
- THE BEER HALL AT 102 FLORENCE NZAMA RD. WAS A SOCIAL GATHERING PLACE FOR THE BLACK LABOUR IN THIS AREA WHERE THEY GATHERED TO EAT AND DRINK FOR YEARS UNTIL SEGREGATION WAS ABOLISHED.
- THE MILNE DRAIN INITIALLY AN OPEN CHANNEL WAS YEARS LATER GIVEN A CONCRETE COVER OVER ITS ENTIRE LENGTH WHICH EXISTS TODAY.
- THE AREA NOW FORMS AN IMPORTANT LINK BETWEEN THE CENTRUM NODE AND THE BEACH FRONT.

5.0 PHOTOGRAPHIC STUDY

5.1 HISTORIC PHOTOS AND MAPS 1931

GOAD MAPS OF 1931 SHOWING HISTORIC ACTIVITIES OF THE PRECINCT AROUND THE BEER HALL



PHOTOS OF BUILDING EXTERNALLY AND INTERNALLY FUNCTIONING AS A BEER HALL

