

Durban Art Deco Society

Motown Rumble

Sunday 30 May, 2021

A ramble around Durban's old motor town, taking in a number of magnificent Art Deco (and other) buildings which you may not have noticed before. Commentary will be by Professor Franco Frescura.

There is a well-designed rear elevation, especially the escape stairs. In a recent development, louvres have been added to enclose the balconies.

1. Stirling Court

163 Anton Lembede (Smith) St



Brick pilasters punctuated with windows. Capped with Mayan-style finials. Coloured brick XXX pattern across the skyline.



3. Forsdick Motors

174 Dr Pixley Kaseme (West) St



Serrated pattern pilasters interrupted to support title block. Additional floor repeats skyline horizontal scallop pattern.

2. Hollywood Court

197 Anton Lembede (Smith) St

Hobbs & Bonieux, 1937

An early skyscraper of the Union Period in Art Deco style; residential flats in concrete and plastered brick having landmark value. It might also be termed "Style Moderne" as the principal design qualities reside in the strong geometric forms which are consistently well arranged around the whole building and which look particularly good in sunlight. It has a notable entrance hall with an interesting niche feature.



4. P L Maharaj Lodge

158 Dr Pixley Kaseme (West) St



Narrow eleven-floor building with the front equally-divided by a single stepped fin.

5. 144 Dr Pixley Kaseme St
c. 1920



Three-storied residential/commercial building with verandah collonades on two street fronts and corner acknowledgement. Tiled roof.

6. New Rand Hotel
c. 1920



Two-storied residential/commercial building with verandah collonades on two street fronts and corner acknowledgement. Hotel/boarder house of the Union period.

7. Pembroke Mansions
138 Dr Pixley Kaseme (West) St
c. 1925



A significant, three storied residential/commercial building of the Union period in Berea style; hipped, tiled roofs and balconies and collonades to two streets; corner acknowledgement.

8. Serena Hotel
123 Dr Pixley Kaseme (West) St



Squat 5-storied residential building with shops on the ground floor. Broad brick “pilasters” rise to Mayan-style finials. Decorated with plastered spandrels.

9. Kingsway House
111 Dr Pixley Kaseme (West) St



Symmetrical façade with rounded closed balconies. Interesting skyline with curved lids on penthouses. Unusual off-centre entrance tucked into ground-floor corner. Excellent foyer with walls dressed in travertine



Entrance to Kingsway House with impressive Art Deco streamlining.

10. Landmark Accommodation
99-105 Dr Pixley Kaseme (West) St
1928



Heavily-embellished “Berea” Spanish styling with some similarities to Quadrant House on the Esplanade. Curious corner figurehead, balcony over portico, shields and complex windows.

11. Buckingham Court 40 Farewell Street



A seven-storey apartment block with a curious round tower on one end, and what appears to be a disjointed extension on the other end. Instead of window eyelids, strong horizontals are created by black windowsills running the full width.

12. Metropole (Downtown) Hotel 106 Anton Lembede (Smith) St



The old Metropole Hotel has seen better days – windows are rusty and it needs brighter painting. The facades are

heavily embellished with window surrounds, sills, eyelids, pilasters and vertical fins – all well worth preserving.

13. Villa Mitrie 121 Anton Lembede (Smith) St Nelson Sercombe, 1930



This brick apartment building has been designed with shops at street level and a central entrance on Smith Street. A cornice of vertical spokes runs along the top. Brickwork is used to create folds on the façade and patterns below the windows. The owners are unfortunately plastering over the brickwork on the South elevation.

14. Heronmere 73 Stalwart Simelane (Stanger) St



This is a handsome 6-storey streamline art deco building with three strong fins rising above the entrance to the skyline. A less subdued paint job would enhance it.

Lower West Street

(An extract from "A revised listing of Important Places & Buildings in Durban", Brian Kearney, 1982)

"This was known as the 'East End', lying between the central node of development and the port. From an early time it was occupied by such prominent persons as George Cato and Dick King. George Cato's name lives on in Cato Square and Cato's Creek. It seems that the low-lying land which drained the Eastern vlei through the creek (properly drained as Milne's Drain from 1857) was a reason for the late development of the area. This development was primarily industrial or service. The area to the East of Stanger Street was largely connected with the building and agricultural trades, but included breweries and a skating rink. To the West, the earlier residential use slowly changed to the wool trade and then early in the twentieth century to motor related functions – car showrooms, machine shops and garages. In addition to the single storied industrial buildings and gabled warehouses which accommodated these demands there were also a number of residential buildings and hotels with collonaded verandas over pavements. This multi-functional character was further enhanced by the strange geometry of street pattern resulting from the early railway routing and Milne's Drain, some early churches, the dockside views from the cross streets and certain historical trees such as the fig tree in lower Pine Street. The best groups are those of the hotels & boarding houses with Union period collonades."

