

CHAPTER V - PRETORIA, 1935 TO 1946

5.1 Arrival

Hellmut Stauch arrived in Pretoria on March 24th 1935. The German community there was sociable, friendly and gregarious, and that evening he found himself celebrating with Bram Hoffmann and other members of the German community the birth of Bram's daughter Tosca. It was an auspicious beginning to his stay there. ⁽¹⁾

5.2 Aubrey Nunn's practice

Aubrey Nunn had registered with the ISAA in December 1927 ⁽²⁾ and was in practice in Hamilton Chambers since 1932 (SAAR, October 1932, p 274).

The character of his architecture was charming and romantic in style if workmanlike. He had sufficient commissions to keep the pot gently simmering and needed assistants. ⁽³⁾ The arrival of this new, unknown talent in the shape of an athletic, volatile, unpredictable young architect must have set the practice into a ferment.

Stauch had never meekly conformed to the ideas of others or accepted points of view with which he disagreed. He lived his life intensely, whether related to architecture, sailing or his personal life. ⁽⁴⁾ The houses which he now designed had an unusual individuality and a tremendous appeal to those who lived in them ⁽⁵⁾. His detailing differed from the ordinary; his understanding of materials, form, space and light was superb (Herbert, 1975, p 151). Nunn allowed him a fairly free rein, and although it was not possible to offer him a formal partnership since he had no qualifications recognised by the South African Institute of Architects, he was recognised in other ways and eventually appears to have held the equivalent unofficial status of an associate in the firm; (Herbert, 1975, p 151) an article by Hugh Casson in the Architectural Review of August 1940 (fig 29) crediting four houses and a block of flats to "A V Nunn with Hellmut Stauch", a school and an office building to "A V Nunn and Hellmut Stauch", one house to "Hellmut Stauch" and, surprisingly, one house to "Gordon Macintosh and Hellmut Stauch." In view of Casson's careful differentiation of credits, there seems little doubt

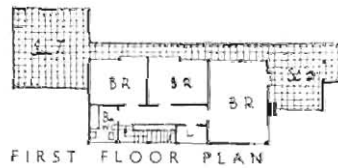
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1. Vorster, Mrs Tosca, Step-daughter of H.W.E. Stauch, 1984 - interview.
 2. Information from the Institute of South African Architects
 3. Vorster, Mrs Tosca, Step-daughter of H.W.E. Stauch, 1984 - interview.
 4. Consensus in nearly all interviews
 5. Wepener, F.J., Ex-partner of H.W.E. Stauch, 1984 - interview.



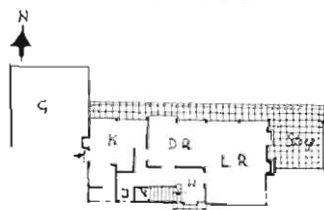
4 House by A. V. Nunn with Hellmut Stauch

All the main rooms of this house face north, and receive protection against the sun from generous eaves and the cantilevered balcony, which serves the bedrooms. The sleeping-porch and steep under are open to the north and east, and their open-air character is further emphasized by the glass screens which protect them from the cold southern winds. The native quarters in this instance are not connected to the house. The house is built of stock bricks, rendered off-white, and roofed with corrugated iron, laid at the minimum pitch.

7, the south (and entrance) front. 8, the garden (north) front.



FIRST FLOOR PLAN



GROUND FLOOR PLAN

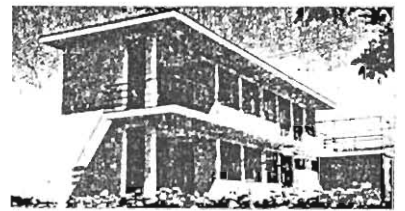


FIG. 29 House by A V Nunn with Hellmut Stauch. Published in an article on Johannesburg and its environs in the *Architectural Review* of August, 1940, this house shows basic similarities to those designed by Stauch while he was still in Germany.

concerning their correctness. In contrast to this, however, four years later the South African Architectural Record published the same block of flats (Marchie Mansions) under the same credit, only to apologise for this in the following issue stating that at the time Stauch had not been Nunn's associate but his assistant (South African Architectural Record November, 1944, pp 279 - 283 and December, 1944)

5.3 Projects

Hochstetter House was unique in that it was probably the first building in Pretoria, if not South Africa, to express totally the concrete frame and infill panel of which it was constructed. It was modular in design, well proportioned and precisely detailed.⁽⁶⁾ Unfortunately, this building was recently demolished and replaced with one of higher bulk. (figs. 30 and 31).

Marchie Mansions was more fortunate; it has survived the wreckers' ball and the passage of time has left it in singularly good condition - largely the result of thoughtful and practical detailing. (figs. 32 to 36).

As well as these two projects his work covered mainly domestic architecture, schools, office buildings and flats (Herbert, 1975, pp 151, 152, 153). And he was interested in projects other than those in the practice, such as the Cape Town Foreshore scheme (fig. 37)

5.4 Contact with his family

For a long time Stauch had stayed out of touch with his family, but now that he was settled he travelled to their farm Dordabis, near Windhoek, to visit them. Typically, he gave them no warning of this visit, but on the way there turned over in his mind ways of surprising his father. Stopping at a garage en route he saw a particularly disreputable hat on one of the attendants, and insisted on buying it from the surprised owner. At Dordabis, he parked his car out of sight and walked up to the farmhouse, his head lowered, with the disgusting hat obscuring his face. August responded predictably, ordering the "stranger" off his farm. Only then was the hat discarded, and the joke enjoyed by father and son.⁽⁷⁾

5.5 Sailing in South Africa

During this time he had by no means confined his interests to

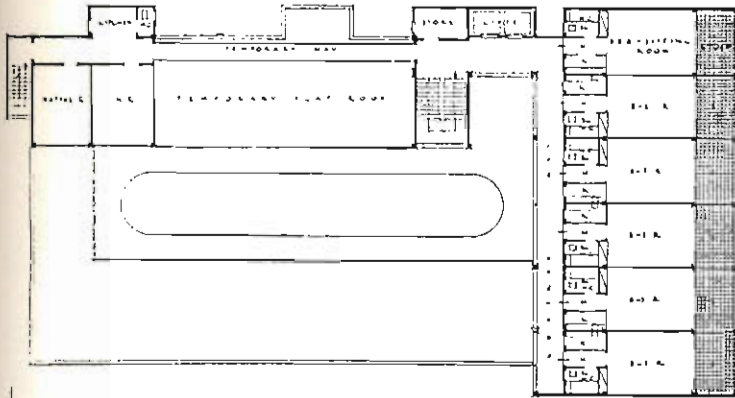
6. Van Wyk, Jan, M.I.A., Ex-student of H.W.E. Stauch, 1984 - interview.

7. Krafft, Mrs Marianne, Sister of H.W.E. Stauch, 1984 - interview.

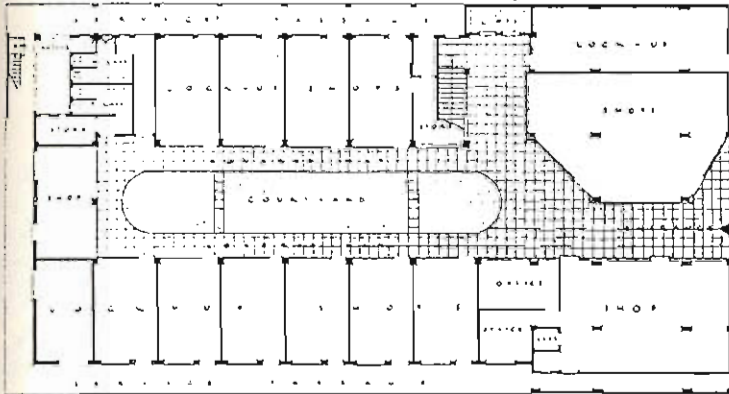
This block occupies an important frontage in one of the main streets of Pretoria. On the ground floor the whole site is occupied by shops which are planned round an open court. The first floor contains offices, and the remaining floors are planned as one room flats.

The construction consists of a R.C. frame, which is exposed on the main façade, and brick infilling. The floors are of concrete and the eill panels to the front balconies are faced with black terrazzo tiles. The steel windows are painted white and the sunblinds, essential for protection against the afternoon sun, are striped red and white.

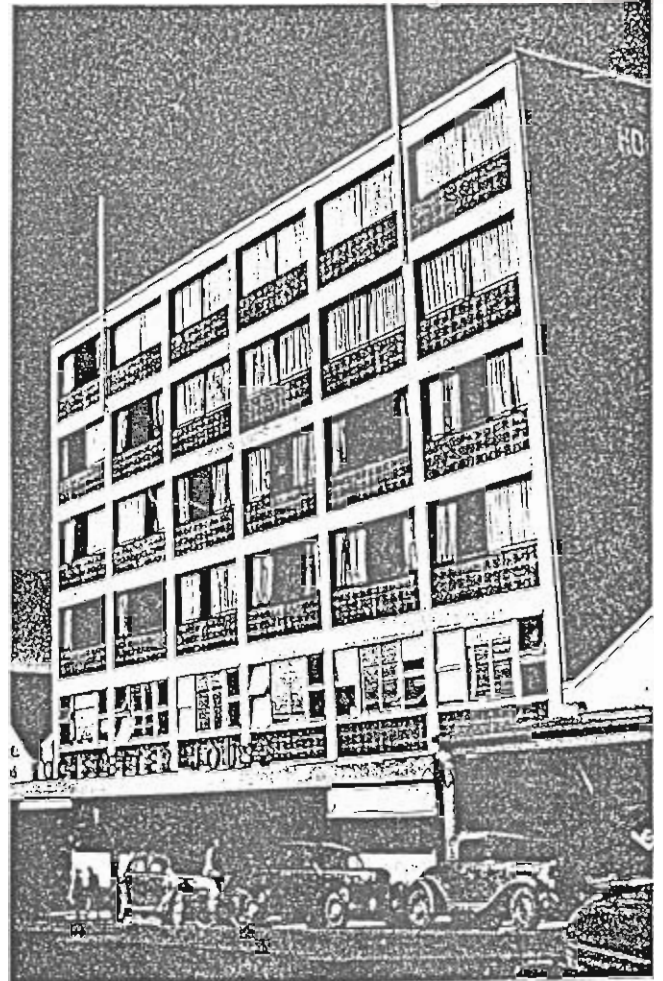
27, main elevation to street. 28, looking from courtyard towards street.



TYPICAL UPPER FLOOR PLAN



GROUND FLOOR PLAN

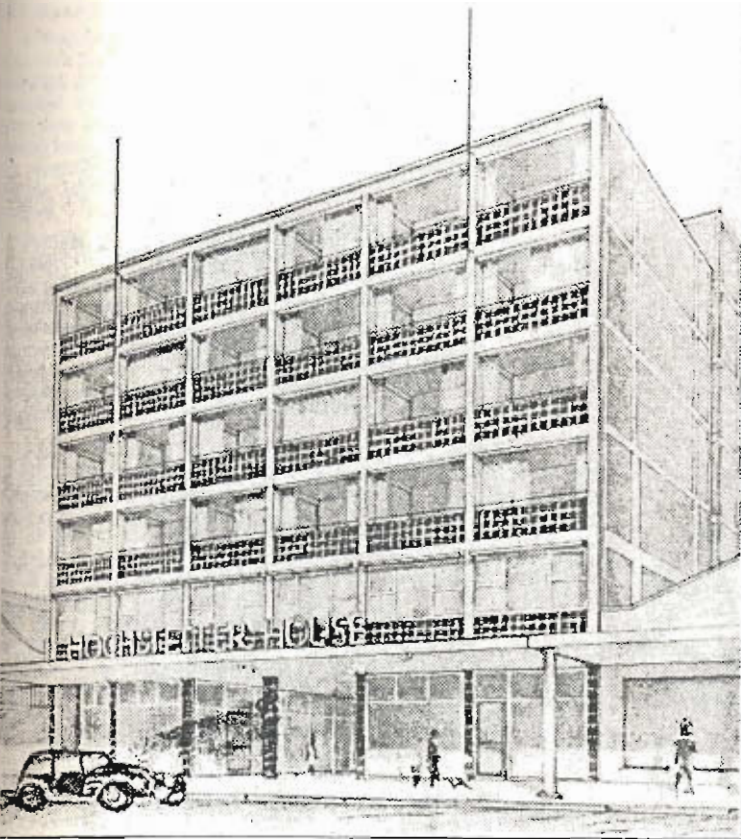


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FIG. 30 Hochstetter House : from an article by Hugh Casson in the Architectural Review of June, 1953. This building's frame-and-panel was unique to Pretoria at the time and served as a model for architectural students, who were referred to it by their lecturers.



HOCHSTETTER HOUSE

The well-known firm of Hochstetter and Dierig (Pty.) Ltd., Estate, Insurance, Finance, Shipping and General Agents, established in 1902, is moving to their new building, Hochstetter House, 280 St. Andries Street, between Pretorius and Schoeman Streets, next to the Graud Theatre, at the end of this month. As will be seen from the architect's sketch, the building consists of six floors. It extends 150 feet to the rear and there will be shops and offices at the back built round a wide courtyard with a pleasant lawn in the centre. The first floor will be occupied as offices and the remaining four floors as flats. The architect is Aubrey V. Nunn and the contractors Messrs.

FIG. 31 Hochstetter House; perspective and view from South-West. Note the differing credits on the newspaper clipping and on the article on the previous page.



ARCHITECT: AUBREY VICTOR NUNN, A.R.I.B.A.

Programme: Eight flats, with garages, to be erected on a narrow, deep site facing north, and with a slight slope from south to north, in the residential area of Pretoria.

On the eastern boundary is an existing brick wall with the neighbour's outbuildings and yard at the back; on the western boundary, the owner's own residence and garden with rooms at the back.

Different schemes have been prepared. The first scheme, featuring one long, south-to-north block, facing east, was not satisfactory in view of the fall of the ground and the not too pleasant eastern aspect. After developing several alternative schemes, the one shown in this publication was decided on, and in practice proves this as being the correct solution. This consists of two separate units, the one placed behind the other, each containing four flats. The native rooms are on top of the garages at the back of the ground. The narrowness of the ground, together with the restrictions of the by-laws regarding the distance from the side boundaries, did not allow the planning of all the rooms on the north side. In view of this the best solution seemed to plan the living section, including balcony and stoep, broadly on the north side, and develop the rest towards the less restricted depth of the ground. The basement of each block contains the boiler. Coal is thrown through a chute from the car drive-in, which is on the east side.

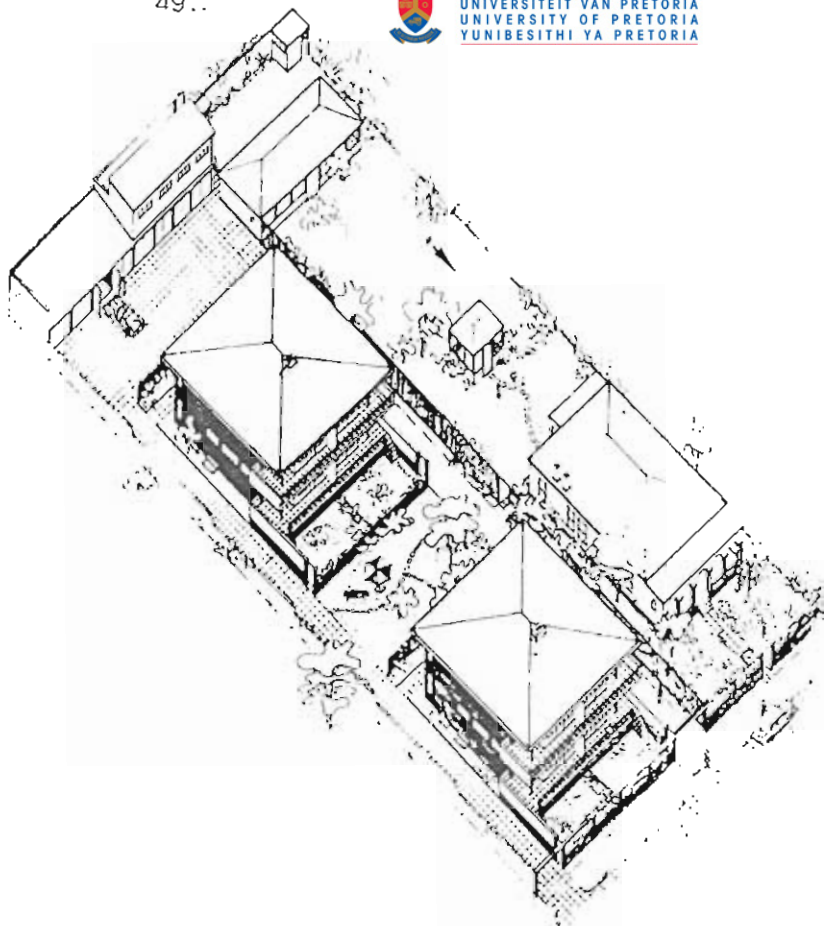
A central staircase leads to the entrance hall of each flat. From here each flat is developed so as to separate the different functional groups. A direct door leads to the living room and, connected with this, the dinette, balcony and stoep. Another direct door leads to the kitchen and allows same to be reached without interfering with the other sections. The kitchen is fitted with electric stove, refrigerator, vegetable cupboard under working table and sink with draining board and plate rack attached.

Between the kitchen and dinette a cupboard is built in. At the height of the working table an opening is provided with sliding doors on each side, forming a smell-proof hatchway. This cupboard is fitted with various sized drawers to hold cutlery as well as smaller groceries. On the dinette side it contains a recess with sliding glass doors, making a special sideboard unnecessary. Shelves with doors opening both to kitchen and dinette make it unnecessary for the servant to leave the kitchen during meals, as the crockery, etc., can be taken out straight from the dinette.

It is felt that one of the biggest disadvantages of flats is the lack of freeness and of space for walking about apart from the space left after the rooms have been furnished. It is a big advantage if a room can be widely opened to the outside, as there is then no feeling of being shut in or cramped. Therefore, an arrangement has been adopted of an open balcony in conjunction with living-room, stoep and dinette. This gives that extra space to the living-room without interfering with stoep or dinette, which, if desired, can be formed into one big unit by a double glass door. A parapet wall on side and back of the stoep gives the necessary privacy, while a glass screen shelters it from wind and rain. Blinds have been provided to separate the stoep from the front balcony. This balcony, running along the full length of the north front, has another advantage: in winter time it allows the sun to shine right into the rooms, giving the necessary warmth, while in summer it affords shade and coolness.

The bedroom section is entered through a lobby containing a built-in cupboard for linen and clothes, with space on top for articles not in use. Bedroom and bathroom are entered from this lobby, which gives the necessary isolation of the bedroom section from the living section. A further deeper cupboard is provided in the entrance hall for storing suitcases, boxes, etc.

The flats on the ground floor have, in addition to the provided balcony space, small gardens in front, which can be reached by means of steps from the balcony. Garden space for use of occupants of the upper flats is provided between the two blocks.



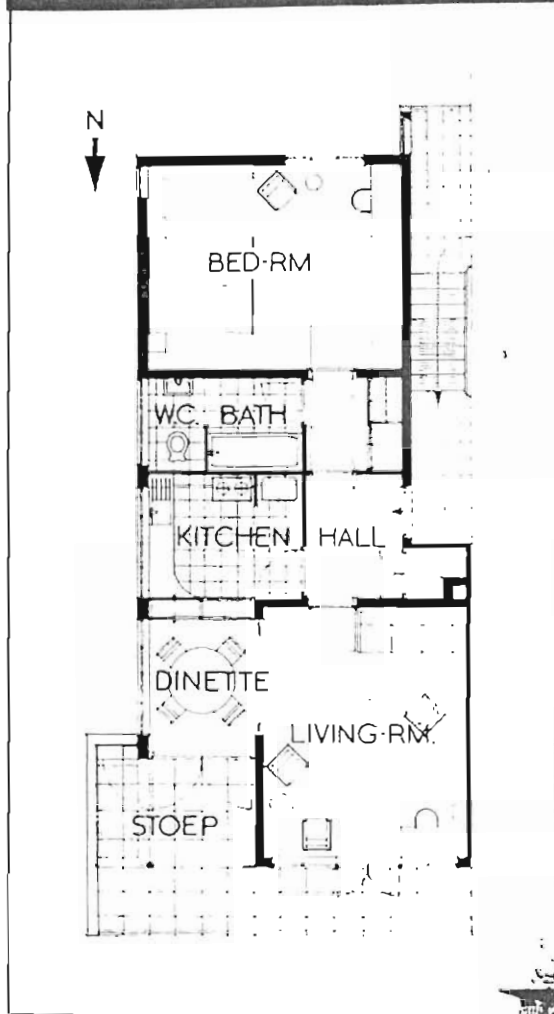
Marchie Mansions Pretoria. Architect Aubrey Nunn

The finish has been chosen with special attention to its durability. The outside walls, including the walls of the staircase, are finished in red face-bricks, the horizontal joints being pronounced. The balconies and eaves are painted white, while the walls under cover of the stoeps and balconies are finished in grey. The windows and external doors are painted white contrasted by the deep blue of the tubular railings and columns of balconies and staircases. The bathroom and kitchen are tiled the full height of the walls. All internal walls are treated in light cream, the ceilings and door frames in broken white, while doors and cupboards are finished in grey. This neutral colour scheme has been chosen so as not to clash with any colour brought in with the furniture of the occupants.

The same principle applies to the sizes and shapes of the rooms, which have been kept as neutral as possible, giving various different possibilities of placing the furniture, according to different individual tastes.

Contractor: W. Stretton (Pty.), Ltd.; reinforced concrete, Hunt, Leuchars and Hepburn, Ltd.; painter, Horak and Gravenstein (materials, Herbert Evans & Co., Ltd.); electric light, Pretoria Electrical Co.; ironwork, A. Wolff.

HELLMUT STAUCH.



PART PLAN

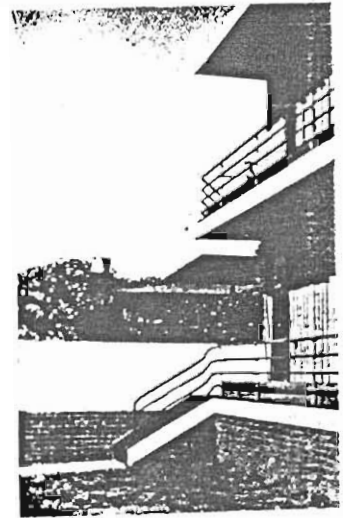


FIG. 33 Marchie Mansions, stage 1; plan of one flat unit and views from Schoeman Street.

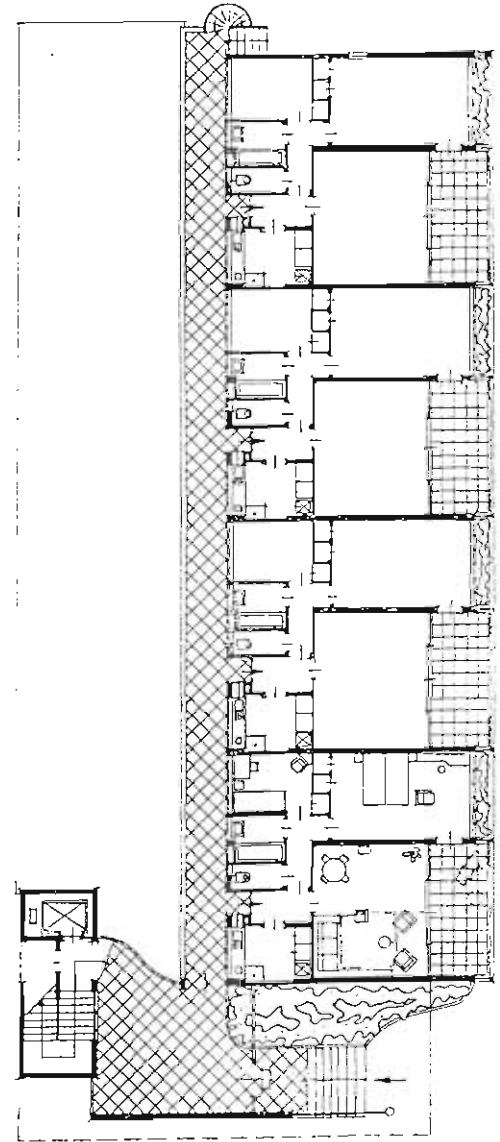
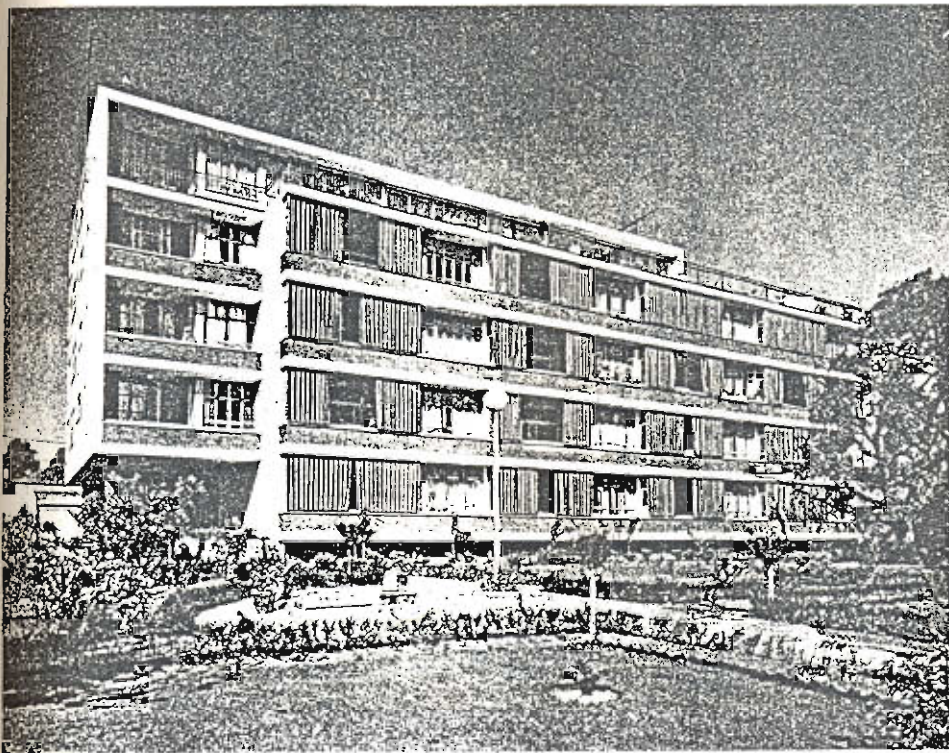


FIG. 34 Marchie Mansions stage 2; ground floor plan and two views of main block from Schoeman Street

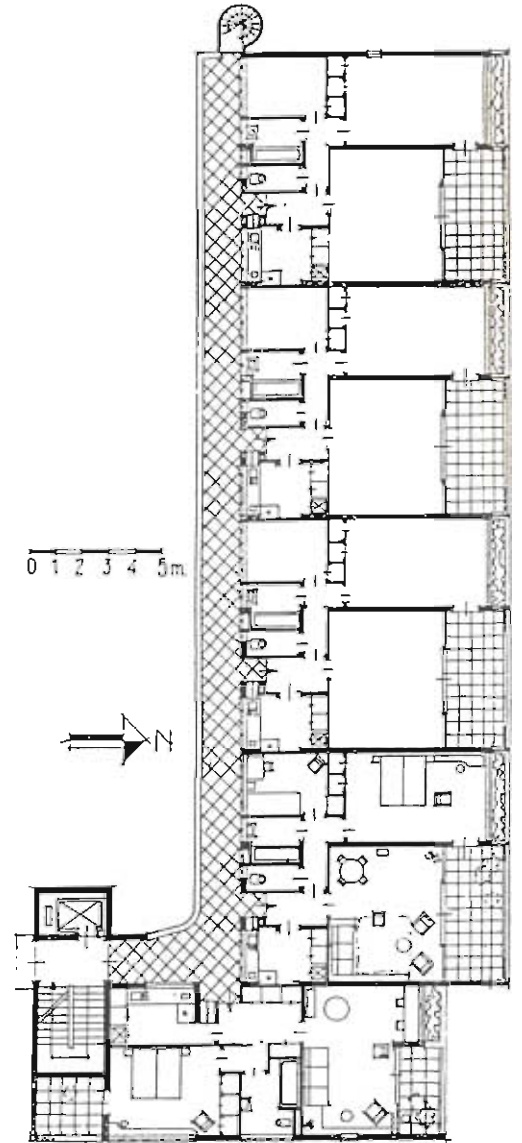
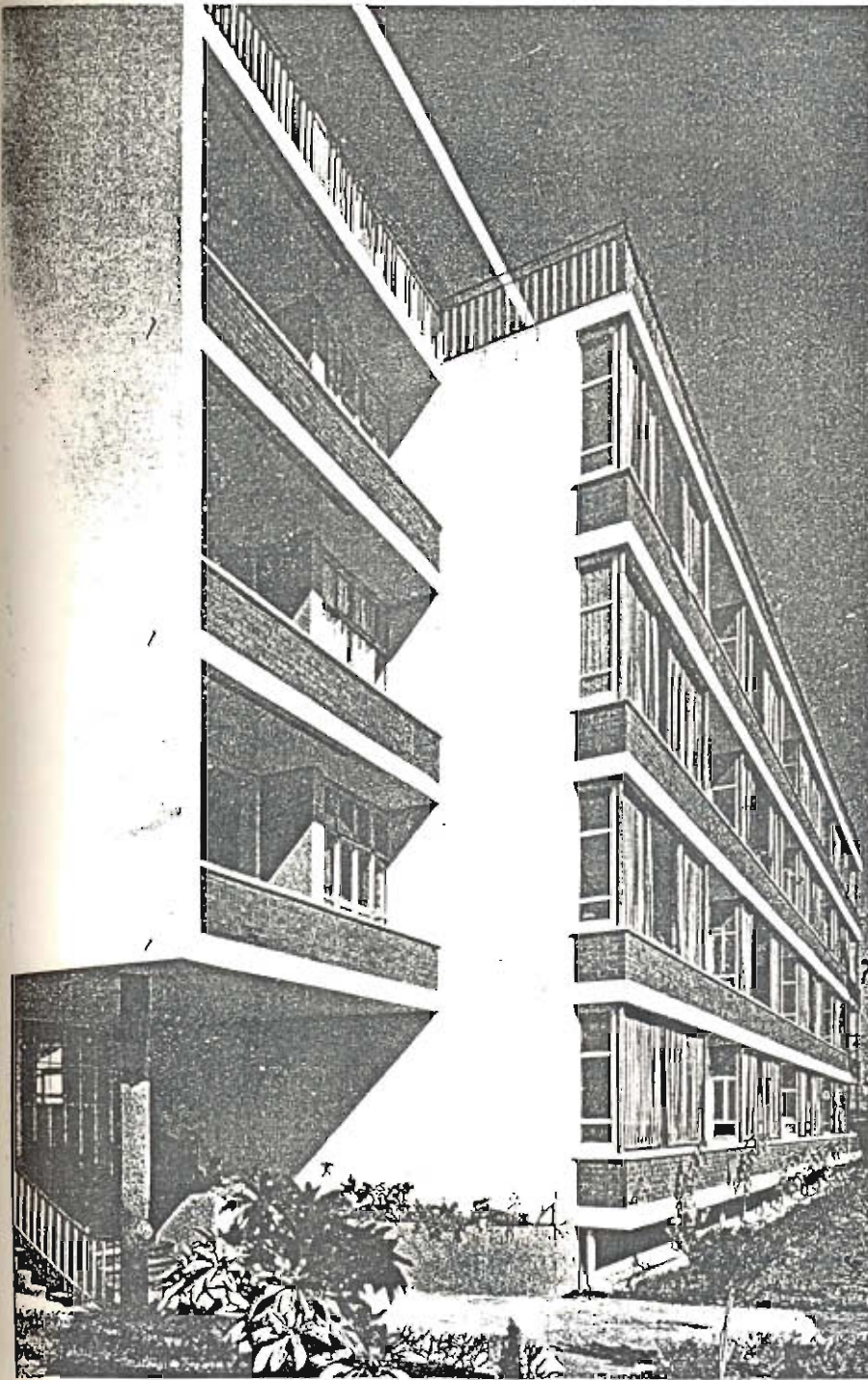
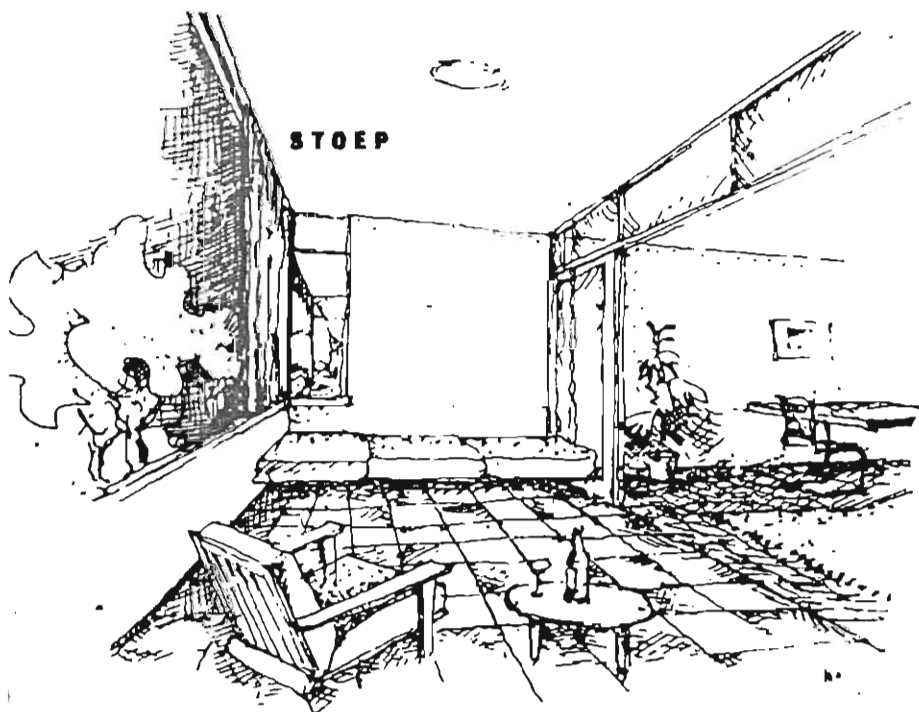
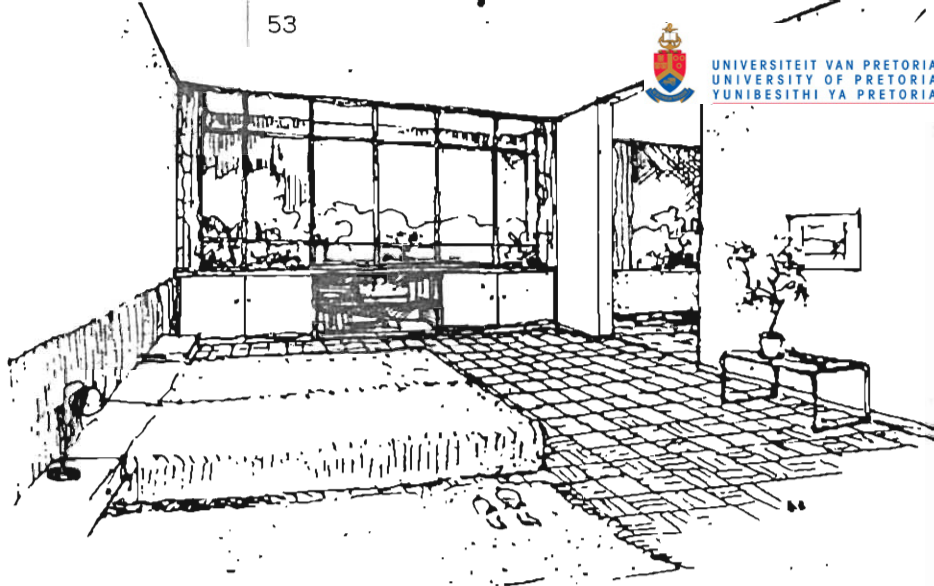


FIG. 35 Marchie Mansions stage 2; first floor plan and a view from the entrance at the North-East of the block.



LIVING ROOM

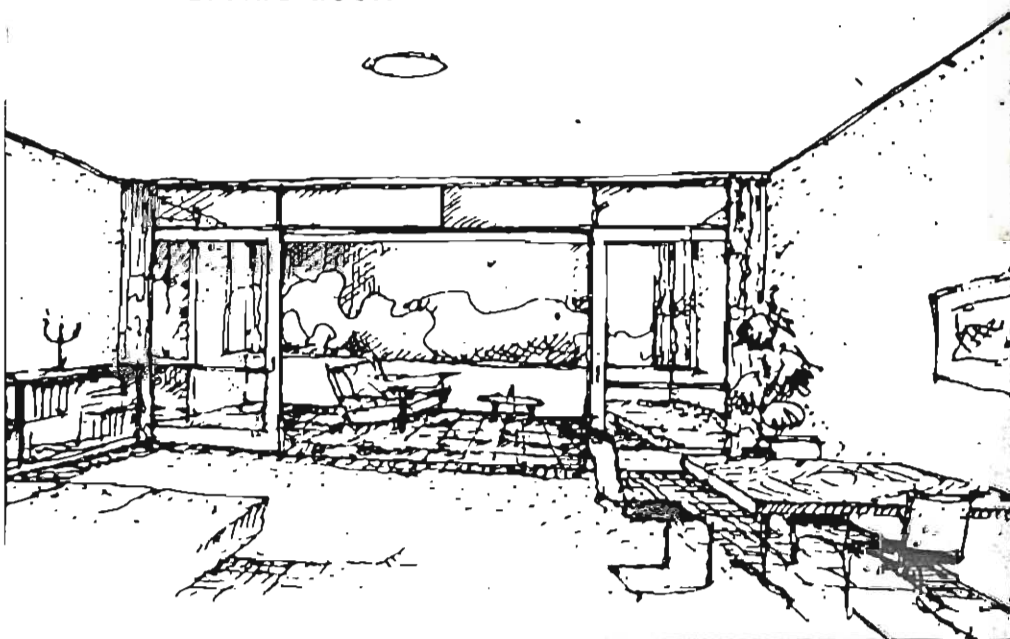
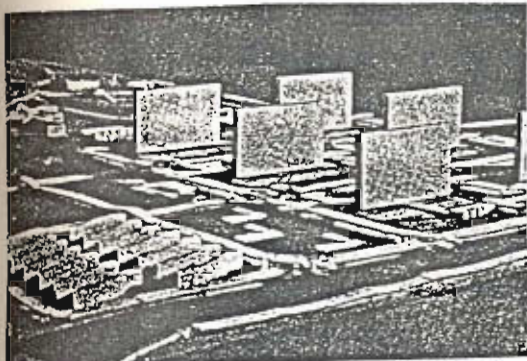
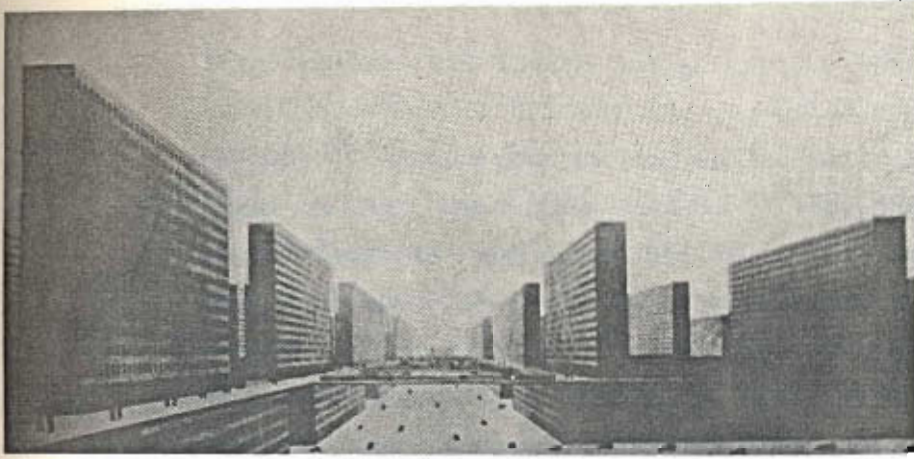
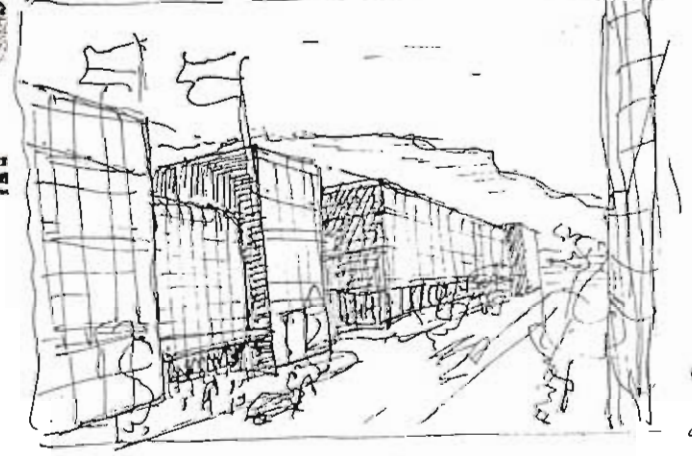
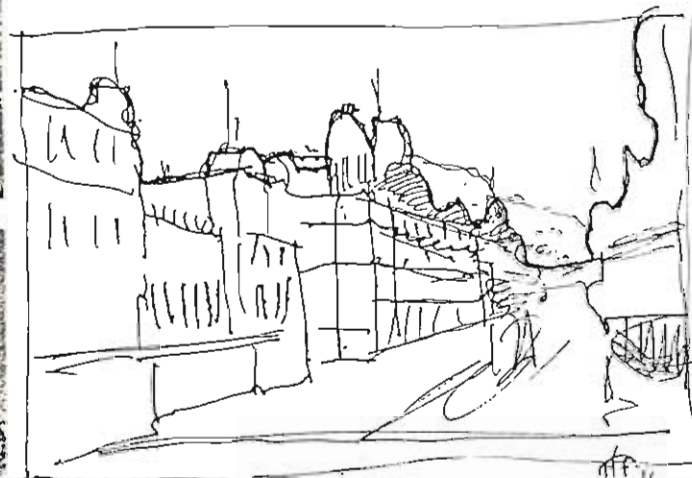
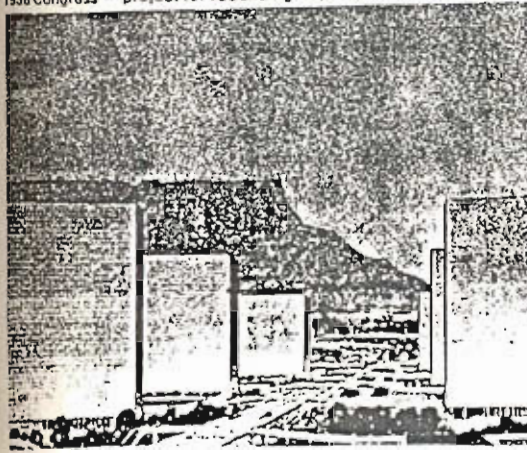


FIG. 36 Marchie Mansions stage 2; interior perspectives. These sketches show Stauch's "modular" approach to both structure and furniture, and the co-ordination of these.



1938 Congress — project for rebuilding Cape Town (SAAR 9/38)



Sollen wir mit-der 15
entwickeln (Wo bleibt
der Tafelberg, er
erd nicht?)

(Vaf 'Pretoria'
Wittley?)

Egerton
Adderley
Street:
(Die Hillside)

(Der Dächer sind
sinnlos auf
dieser Seite
aufgrund i. h. h.
Der st. j. zu h. h.
sind die gleich
von h. h. h.)

Der gleich
Mit ohne
Dächer, mit
den gleich,
etwa von h. h.
von h. h. h.
Der D. h. h.
S. j. j. j.

(Wo man sieht
h. h. h. von h. h.
mit h. h. h. h. h.
h. h. h. h. h.
h. h. h. h. h.)

h. h. h. h. h. h. h. h.

FIG. 37 Sketches of Adderley Street, looking towards Table Mountain. In 1938 there was controversy and discussion on the development of Adderley Street, and an article was published in the journal of the Institute of South African Architects showing a townscape reminiscent of the above Bauhaus-designed cityscape from Wingler (1969). Stauch apparently had similar, Bauhaus-influenced views on Adderley Street, albeit a little less harsh.

architecture. His lively and gregarious character made him the centre of attention wherever he went. He was attractive to women and enjoyed their company.⁽⁸⁾ And he was sailing again, helping to bring the sport which he loved up from the earlier status of "the sport of princes", with all its implications of exclusiveness, to one which was affordable and popular and exciting. The first race he had won was at the age of twelve, on Wannsee, near Berlin.⁽⁹⁾ Now he embarked on what was to be a record-making sailing history in South Africa. Between 1948 and 1970 he was to win National Championships in the Finn, Flying Dutchman, Spearhead-Goodricke, Sprog and Sharpie classes; and Interclub contests in the Flying Dutchman, Sharpie, Spearhead and Twenty-Footer classes (Hocking, 1972, pp 31, 35, 39, 40, 70, 205, 207). It seemed that he could sail anything. An envious competitor, having lost a race to him at Hartebeespoort, was overheard saying "if you gave that man a tennis-shoe with a handkerchief for a sail, he'd win races in it".⁽¹⁰⁾ There was a keen and rapier-like competitiveness about Stauch, together with single-minded concentration and total determination to win, and this was not confined only to his sailing.⁽¹¹⁾ He was to become a Springbok yachtsman, representing SA at the Olympics in Helsinki and Rome and at the Internationals in Cascais. The first of his South African trophies was the Dewar Congella Shield, which he won in 1938 sailing the Twenty-Footer scow, "Rambler", at Hartbeespoort.⁽¹²⁾

5.6

Personal life

In 1941 Stauch, having led the carefree life of a bachelor for some seven or eight years, married again. René van Niekerk was an attractive clerk working as a clerk for a firm of solicitors, and for a time it seemed that Stauch would settle down to greater domesticity, but the following year the marriage ended in divorce and Stauch once more concentrated on working hard, playing hard, and sailing to win.⁽¹³⁾ He had built himself a house on erf 1461, 27th Avenue, Villieria, which was one of 10 erven purchased by him in 1939, (see addendum A) but during his

-
8. Consensus in nearly all interviews.
 9. Statement by Stauch in curriculum vitae (undated) submitted to Architect and Builder to accompany an article.
 10. Overheard by the author at Transvaal Yacht Club.
 11. Consensus in nearly all interviews.
 12. Personal records in Stauch Vorster archives.
 13. Vorster, Mrs Tosca, step-daughter of H.W.E. Stauch and Thoms, Pulli, sister-in-law of H.W.E. Stauch, 1984 - interviews.

marriage he lived in a house in Servaas Street in West End which he owned from 1941 to 1942, while the Villieria house was let.⁽¹⁴⁾ But now there was a major change in his life. At a party with friends, his centre-of-the-stage party games - he would invariably do handstands, play the piano and behave like the born entertainer he was, keeping the other party-goers in fits of laughter - bewitched Carmen Kohly, then married to Bram Hoffmann, who was to become his wife and who was the only woman who could cope with his complex personality and unusual approach to life. Coincidentally, she was the mother of a seven-year-old daughter, Tosca, whose birth Stauch had helped to celebrate on the first day he spent in Pretoria.⁽¹⁵⁾

5.7

Application for Registration with the Institute of Architects

Nunn and he were firm friends as well as associates and spent a fair time together during the eight years up to 1942. During this time, Nunn had urged him to register with the Institute, and eventually in August 1942 he wrote to them, applying for registration, stating that Nunn's firm might close down and adding that through a physical disability he was not eligible for military service and might have to practise on his own.⁽¹⁶⁾ In support of his application he sent copies of published work and stated that several members of the Institute were willing to give their recommendation that the application be accepted. Early in February 1943 he received notification from the Institutes Board of Education that he would be exempted from the First, Second and Third Year examinations, and would be admitted direct to the Final Year examination for the Certificate in Architecture. The Board also suggested that he write this examination at the end of 1944, implying the necessity for a full two-year study period. They also asked him to nominate whether he would write the examination at the University of the Witwatersrand or at the University of Pretoria where the Architectural Faculty had recently been established.⁽¹⁷⁾

Stauch could not have been pleased with this reply to his application which arrived only a few days before he left the employ of Nunn, at the end of February 1943, for he ignored it for a full 14 months.

14. Correspondence with the Receiver of Revenue (1952.12.24).

15. Thoms, Mrs Pulli, Sister-in-Law of H.W.E. Stauch - interview.

16. Letter to Institute of South African Architects (1942.08.13). No further details concerning the date when Nunn ended his practice or Stauch's physical disability were found.

17. Letter from Institute of South African Architects (1943.02.04).

He did not, however, allow this apparent set-back to influence his move. As early as 1938 he had been "moonlighting", earning in that year £22.7.6 for an unnamed number of projects, and now he was committed to the 15 projects which he completed during the 1944 financial year. There is no record of the nature of these projects but from subsequent records and from financial statements it would seem likely that they were almost exclusively residential, some new projects and some alterations or additions.⁽¹⁸⁾

From 1943 to 1951 Stauch lived at Kiepersol, a farm which he had acquired at Kameeldrift, (fig. 38) with Carmen whom he married in 1945, and her daughter Tosca.⁽¹⁹⁾ He also retained his interest in furniture design. (fig. 39), (see addendum B). At the same time as establishing his new practice, he was building a house for himself and one for his manager, sinking boreholes and constructing dams, erecting fencing and building a tennis court, sailing competitively at Hartbeespoort Dam every weekend, and entertaining informally but unstintingly almost every evening. In between this frenetic activity, Carmen taught Stauch to ride, shouting instructions to him as she rode her bicycle next to him. Later, they enjoyed riding together every morning, although Stauch never learned to post but rather bounced his way along the bridle path at a brisk trot, happily maintaining that this was very good for the kidneys.

In this year Tosca was enrolled in Grade I at the Diocesan School for Girls, but after a year of arriving at school at any time up to noon, depending on what Stauch, who had no sense of time whatever, had been doing until then, the school suggested that she become a boarder. This was a great relief to everyone, and her schooling became more conventional, although punctuated by the customary weekends of sailing and entertainment.⁽²⁰⁾

5.8 The beginning of a private practice

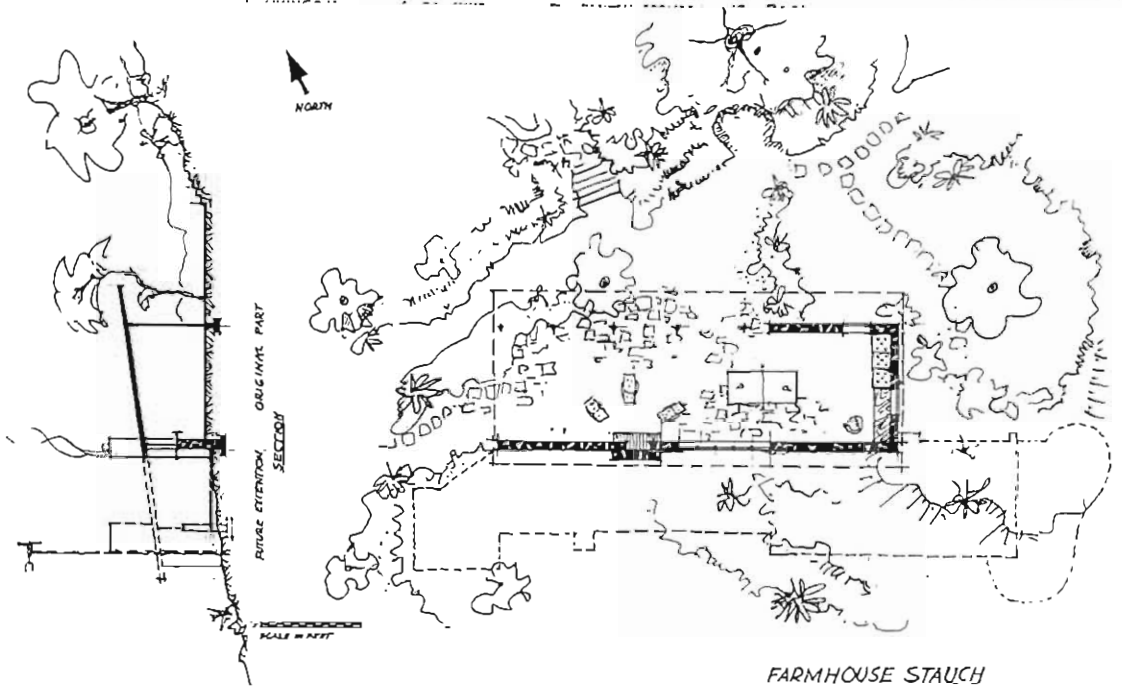
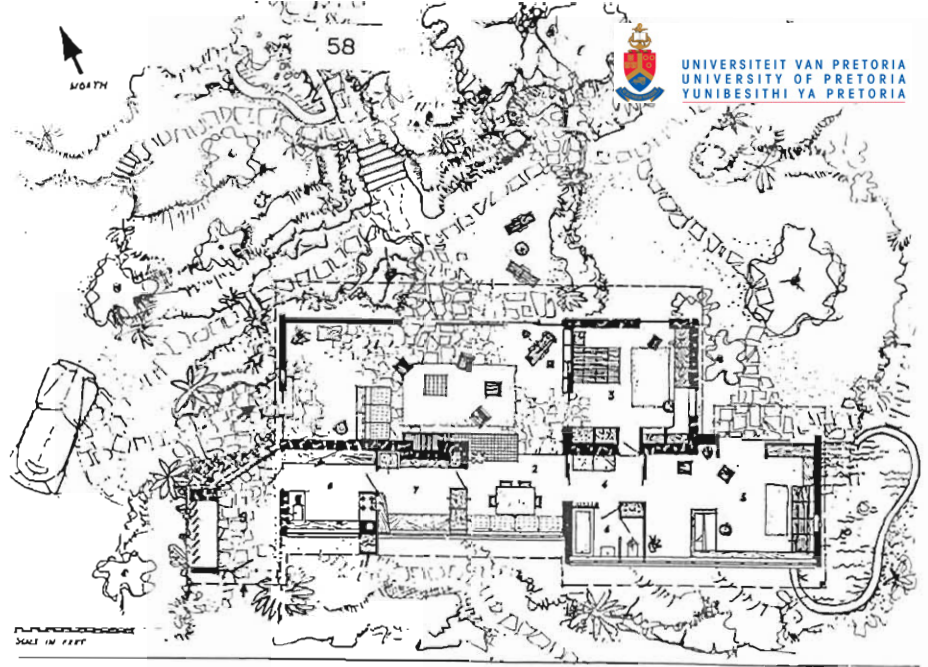
He rented offices from the Johannesburg Building Society, at 5 Central Chambers until November 1944 and then moved to RSE Chambers.

The offices in Bureau Lane were unique. It was a down-at-heel two-storied building with open balcony access to the offices. At the end of the first-floor balcony and next to Stauch's office was, reputedly, a

18. Financial records : Stauch Vorster archives.

19. Ibid

20. Vorster, Mrs Tosca, Step-daughter of H.W.E. Stauch, 1984 - interview.



FARMHOUSE STAUCH
ORIGINAL PLAYSHELTER WITH BARBEQUE

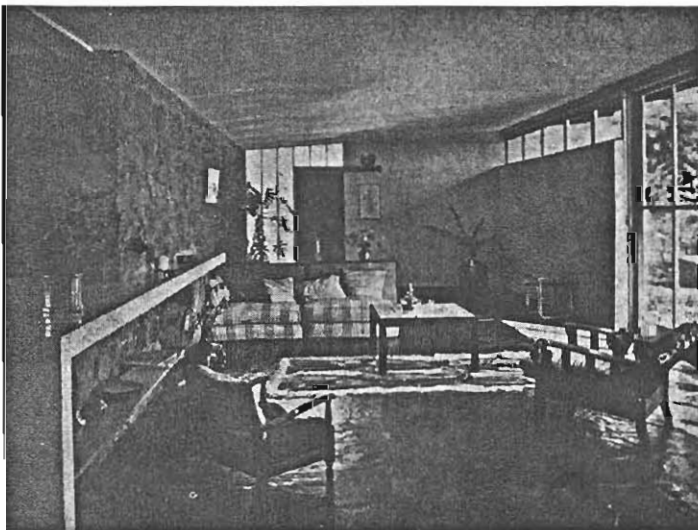


FIG. 38 "Kiepersol" - the farm house which Stauch built for himself at Kameeldrift, East of Pretoria.

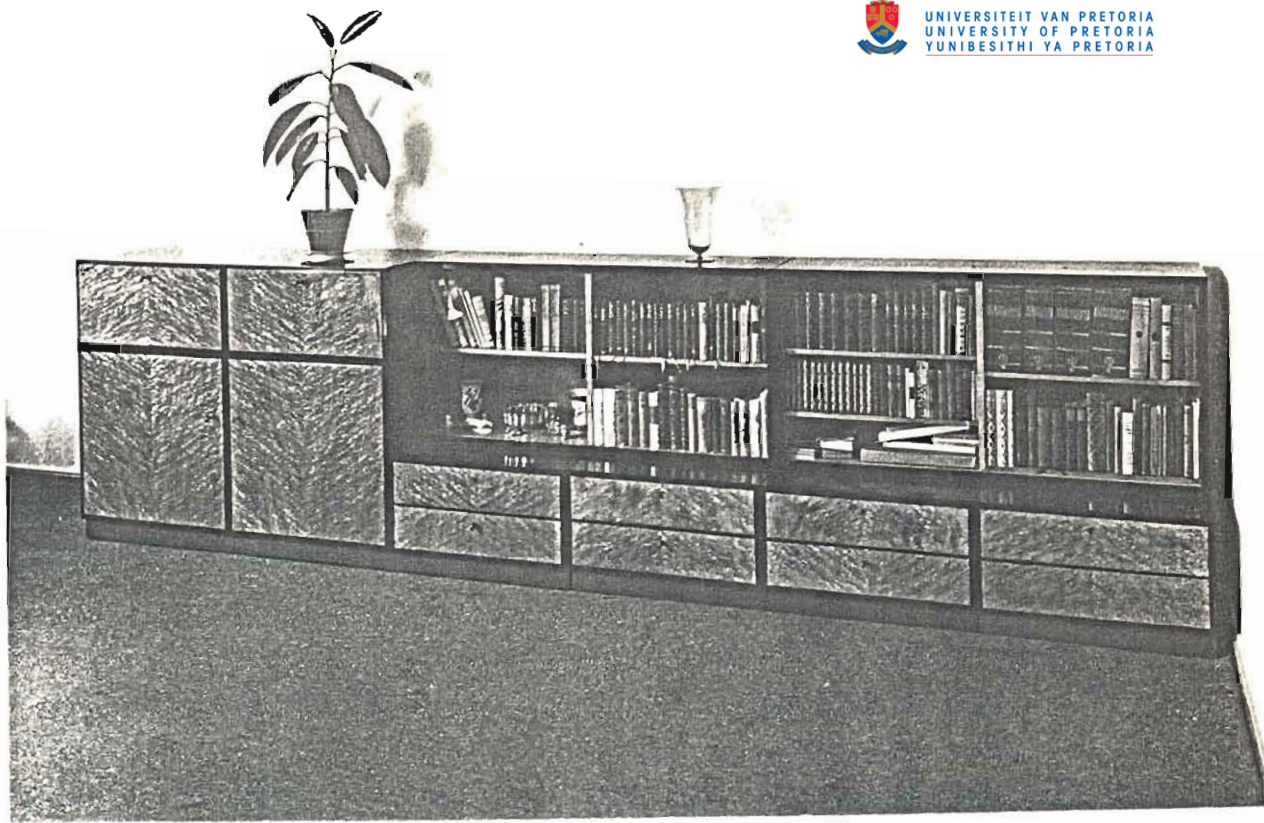


FIG. 39 Study of modular furniture. Stauch's interest in this issue continued and was considered to some extent in each of his projects.

brothel.

Stauch's secretary, Pulli Thoms, was not kept too busy as a secretary so she filled in time doing leatherwork and a little draughting. Because of Stauch's frequent lateness in the mornings - he so enjoyed his farm and the horses and dogs and cows that he did not always get to the office before ten or eleven - she also learned to keep clients happy when they telephoned at such times.

One of Stauch's traits was to make a friend of each client, and these friendships generally endured, even though at times there would be irritable telephone calls about forgotten details.

On one occasion he had reluctantly agreed to design chairs for a client and after having delayed this for a long time he rushed into the office one morning, having apparently made an appointment to give her the drawings, designed the chairs in short order and handed them to her with a flourish when she arrived a few minutes after had had completed the drawings.⁽²¹⁾

5.9

Qualification

After a delay, on 20th April 1944 Stauch again wrote to the Institute of South African Architects. This time he persisted, writing his examination at the Pretoria School of Architecture at the end of 1945 and receiving official notification of acceptance and registration on 1946.01.14.

21. Thoms, Mrs Pulli, Secretary to H.W.E. Stauch - interview.