

JEWISH HOTELIERS OF VRYBURG

In the mid-1880's a Jew of German origin, Daniel Abt, established and ran the first hotel in Vryburg - the Criterion, which later became the Grand Hotel. Property records at the Deeds Registry, however, reflect Daniel's brother, Hermann Abt, as the recipient of the land under a Crown Grant dated September 1890. The reason for this anomaly is unclear, other than that all sources confirm that Daniel was the hotelier.

In the late 1880's a second hotel, the Vryburg Hotel (later International Hotel) was established and a third hotel, the Central, came into existence some years later.

For a large part of the 20th century all 3 hotels were Jewish owned, the last of the Jewish hoteliers in Vryburg being the Rohloff family (Maurice and later son Boytjie) of the Grand Hotel which they sold in 1981.

Facilities at all 3 hotels were out of the top rank and all were renowned for their hospitality and table d'haute - amongst the commercial travellers and farmers, the Grand, International and Central were their homes from home.

During the week the hotels were filled with commercial travellers, Fridays were taken over by the cattle farmers coming to town for provisions, a meal and to stock up with liquor - the weekends were just as busy with weddings, dances, birthday parties and many other functions and of course, who can forget the Sunday lunches - for 3 shillings or thereabouts (half price for children) as much and as many helpings of each of the many courses as one could consume.

An invitation to the 25 December birthday dinners of Maurice Rohloff at the Grand, were much sought after and are fondly remembered by the old timers - 200 to 300 diners to a sumptuous sit-down dinner where the variety of foods was unending and the liquor really flowed.

The Grand (by then the Elgro) and Central were demolished in the mid-1990's and the only hotel remaining in Vryburg in the year 2000 is the International Hotel - as the country Jewish communities disappeared, so to a large extent, did the country hotels.

Those were the days.

GRAND HOTEL VRYBURG

Established in the mid-1880's by a Jew of German origin, Daniel Abt, (see general note under Jewish hoteliers of Vryburg), as the Criterion Hotel, which shortly thereafter became the Grand Hotel until 1982 and from then until it was demolished in the mid-1990's, was known as Hotel Elgro.

The original Grand Hotel (Criterion) was rebuilt by Joshua and Solomon Smollan prior to the first world war, probably in 1912 or 1913 (see photograph of Grand Hotel under the name of J & S Smollan) In the early 1960's major renovations and rebuilding was undertaken by Maurice Rohloff and which included a dining room which could seat 500 people.

The Grand was for most of its existence run by Jewish hoteliers as per list hereunder:

mid-1880's/1890	Daniel Abt (Hermann Abt) (see note under Jewish hoteliers of Vryburg)
1901/1906	Morris Silverman
1906/1917	Joshua & Solomon Smollan t/a J & S Smollan
1917/1927	J & D Smollan (firm)
1927/1929	Jack Perel & Jacob Cohen t/a Perel & Cohen
1929/1935	Jack Perel
1943/1947	John (Jack) Mandel Silbert
1947/1981	Maurice Aaron Rohloff and in the latter period Boytjie Rohloff

CENTRAL HOTEL VRYBURG

Established in the late 1890's as the Central Hotel, a name which it retained throughout its existence. The Central first came under Jewish ownership in the late 1920's and the imposing double storey building with sweeping staircase in the foyer to the first floor bedrooms, was built during Kevi Levin's tenure in the late 1930's. Jewish owners and hoteliers were :

1928/1931 Harry Allschwang

1931/1937 Solomon Wailer

1937/1944 Kevi Levin
(see also International Hotel)

1944/1946 Victor Alexander Zwarenstein

1946/1957 Harry Jacobson
(was previously the proprietor of the Stella Bottle Store, Stella,
in the 1930's and 1940's prior to acquiring the Central Hotel)

INTERNATIONAL HOTEL VRYBURG

Established as the Vryburg Hotel in the late 1880's, became the Savoy for a short period in the late 1920's and thereafter until the present time, the International Hotel.

The first extensive renovations and/or rebuilding operations of the original hotel took place some time after the first world war. In the late 1930's and early 40's the hotel was the subject of a number of fires which culminated in the then owner, John Weinberg, in the early 1940's building the large and imposing double storey hotel (see photographs of International Hotel early 1940's, circa 1950 and 1964) and which is still in existence in the year 2000. In 1959 the then owners Max Brodovcky and Mike Allen, undertook major internal renovations and additions to the hotel, which included some 20 bedrooms all with baths and/or showers and a dining room to seat 300 people.

Jewish hoteliers and owners during the 20th century were :

1918 - 1919	the firm of Lowitz and Radowsky
1919 - 1929	Moses Cohen
1929 - 1936	Kevi Levin (see also Central Hotel)
1936 - 1944	John Weinberg of Boer War fame (see SA Jewish Report Rosh Hashanah, 1999, 5760)
1944 - 1964	Max Brodovcky and Mike Allen