

CASS FARM HERITAGE ASSESSMENT – ARCHITECTURAL EVALUATION

BACKGROUND

I, Roger Charles Fisher, Heritage Architect, was approached by Wouter Fourie of PGS Heritage and Grave Relocation Consultants to assess the heritage-worthiness of the so-called Cass Farm in terms of its Architectural Merit.

I met with Jennifer Kitto of his office and we visited the farm on Friday 3 August 2012 at 15:00. There we met Mrs Cass Senior who conducted us around the farmhouse and outbuildings and related aspects of the family history and associations with the farm. Farming activities were being conducted, such as unpacking of seed potatoes for planting. The son met briefly for introduction before our departure about an hour-and-a-half later. The purpose was to do a 'windscreen' survey so as to determine what future heritage-related actions particularly related to its architectural merits, but more broadly in terms of its built environment and cultural landscape merits, might be necessary in the future.

I report as follows:

HERITAGE ENTITIES OF CASS THE FARM

The **Cass Farm** can be regarded as a **CULTURAL LANDSCAPE**.

A cultural landscape is a complex of fixed or static heritage resources with associated movable objects and/ or oral traditions having more than a single aspect of heritage value.

In the case of **Cass Farm** In terms of the National Heritage Resources Act Act (25 Of 1999) CHAPTER I 3 (2) the following aspects need to be investigated for assessment as Heritage Resources in the National Estate:

- (a) places, buildings, structures and equipment of cultural significance;
- (b) places to which oral traditions are attached or which are associated with living heritage;
- (c) historical settlements;
- (d) landscapes and natural features of cultural significance;
- (e) geological sites of scientific or cultural importance;
- (f) archaeological;
- (g) graves and burial grounds, including-
 - (i) ancestral graves;
 - (ii) graves of traditional leaders;
 - (v) historical graves and cemeteries;
- (i) movable objects, including-
 - (ii) objects to which oral traditions are attached or which are associated with living heritage;
 - (iii) ethnographic art and objects;
 - (v) objects of decorative or fine art;
 - (vi) objects of scientific or technological interest; and
 - (vii) books, records, documents, photographic positives and

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negatives, graphic, ...

2.1 PLACES, BUILDINGS, STRUCTURES, LANDSCAPE FEATURES AND EQUIPMENT OF CULTURAL VALUE

2.1.1 Farmhouse and Associated Outbuildings

A rail track in the workshop used as a lintel above the doors is dated '1902' which suggests the building was constructed in that decade, hence subject to the so-called 'Sixty-year Clause'.

The main house of coursed ashlar has steel windows, seemingly original, which would date it to the 1920s, again making it subject to the so-called 'Sixty-Year Clause'.

None of the structures or portions of the farm are formally declared heritage resources but many of the **structures** and **cultural landscape** features are subject to the so-called 'Sixty Year clause' [Act 25 of 1999 34. (1)] and their presence in the ensemble makes the entire ensemble subject to assessment as to its heritage-worthiness.

2.1.3 Farmstead Outbuildings

Many of these are of more recent construction although some are extensions to extant older structures. As an ensemble with associated sixty-year+ structures **ALL become subject to the Act.**

2.2 LANDSCAPES AND NATURAL FEATURES OF CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE [Act 25 Of 1999 1:3.2(d)]

2.2.1 Landscape Features

The garden that is associated with the farmhouse is in the so-called English Picturesque tradition and many trees are of plantings older than sixty years, making the entire garden subject to the Act.

The agricultural lands, roads, waterways, etc form a so-called 'vernacular landscape' and should be investigated and assessed as such to determine their uniqueness and heritage value as part of the ensemble of the cultural landscape.

2.3 MOVABLE OBJECTS [Act 25 Of 1999 1:3.2(i)]

2.3.1 Objects To Which Oral Traditions Are Attached Or Which Are Associated With Living Heritage [Act 25 Of 1999 1:3.2(i)(ii)]

The family and workforce, and interested and affected parties identified and will need to be interviewed to determine if these exist

2.3.2 Ethnographic Art And Objects [Act 25 Of 1999 1:3.2(i)(ii)]

The family and workforce and interested and affected parties identified will need to be interviewed to determine if these exist

2.3.3 Objects Of Decorative Or Fine Art [Act 25 Of 1999 1:3.2(i)(v)]

The family and workforce and interested and affected parties identified will need to be interviewed to determine if these exist

2.3.4 Objects Of Scientific Or Technological Interest [Act 25 Of 1999 1:3.2(i)(v)]



The equipment and workshop and its fittings and furnishings are of particular heritage value.

2.3.5 Books, Records, Documents, Photographic Positives And Negatives, Graphic [Act 25 Of 1999 I:3.2(i)(vii)]

The family and workforce will need to be interviewed to determine if these exist

ASPECTS OF LEGISLATION THAT MIGHT MITIGATE IN FAVOUR OF THE HERITAGE-WORTHINESS OF THE FARM AS A CULTURAL LANDSCAPE WORTHY OF HERITAGE STATUS

A place or object is to be considered part of the national estate if it has cultural significance or other special value (Act 25 of 1999 II:3) because of:

- (a) its importance in the community, or pattern of South Africa's history
- (b) its possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of South Africa's natural or cultural heritage;
- (c) its potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of South Africa's natural or cultural heritage;
- (d) its importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a particular class of South Africa's natural or cultural places or objects;
- (e) its importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics valued by a community or cultural group;
- (f) its importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period;
- (g) its strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons;
- (h) its strong or special association with the life or work of a person, group or organisation of importance in the history of South Africa; and

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

The architecture, although interesting, if assessed in terms of the heritage criteria of the act pertaining to architecture - i.e. its styling, representative of a particular style period or associated with an architect of note or unusual or special techniques or technologies is not likely to be assessed as remarkable enough to be conservation-worthy if considered in isolation.

If the heritage structures are physically isolated from their context they will have little or no heritage value whatsoever. Then it will be best to document the farmstead thoroughly for the record. The workshop, with all its equipment and cupboards etc is particularly remarkable, a fine example of such equipment still functioning and is conservation-worthy in its own right.

Farms need to be assessed as living relics and in this respect the entire Cass Farm with the full array of buildings and equipment etc, even though not all yet sixty years old, is a fine example of what this agricultural landscape is about, and might one day be able



to serve as an example and as a reminder of what this place once was before the whole region has been mined for coal.

It is thus necessary for a full Heritage Impact Assessment of the entire farm as a cultural landscape and assessing the buildings as part of the ensemble forming the cultural landscape, and should possibly be done in these terms by a cultural historian. As a farm still being run a century later by the same family for the same purpose its heritage value becomes more significant if assessed in cultural terms.

Whatever actions are anticipated in the future, the Mpumalanga Heritage Resources Authority will need to be alerted and advised as to the necessary actions they require.

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