

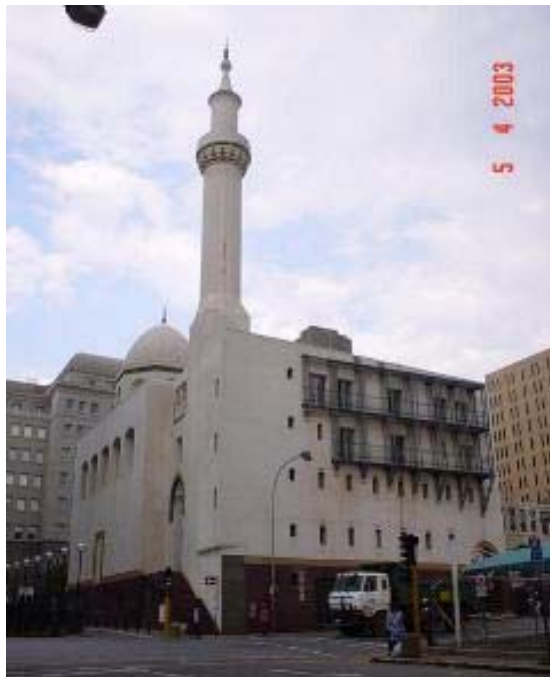
JOHANNESBURG METROPOLITAN MUNICIPALITY

HERITAGE ASSESSMENT SURVEYING FORM

Compiled by: Dr JJ Bruwer, 2002-07-29

JJ Bruwer ©
Cellphone: 082 325 5823

NAME OF PLACE: [Second] KERK STREET MOSQUE



Left: Corner of Kerk and Sauer Streets.

Previous/alternative name/s :

LOCATION: Street : Kerk
 Street number : 12
 : (62, 64 Sauer; 10, 12 Kerk)
 Stand Number : 786, 787, 788
 Previous Stand Number: by 1976 - 1424
 Block number : Y
 GIS reference :

ZONING: Current use/s :
 Previous use/s :

DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:

Height :
 Levels above street level :
 Levels below street level :
 On-site parking :

CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS:

Walls :

Roof :

Windows :

SITE FEATURES:

ALTERATIONS:

INTEGRITY:

INSCRIPTION:

ARCHITECT:

Muhammad Mayet.

“Suliman Omar WAJA:

Projects: 1995 - Kerk Street Mosque, Johannesburg; (Design, Site inspection and detail design and manufacturing – For Muhammed Mayet Architects); Cost: ± R 4 500 000; Mould making for the muqurnas details (free corbelling) to minaret at the Kerk Street Mosque.” (Information sourced from <http://mandla.co.za/tayob/Waja.htm>)

BUILDER:

CONSTRUCTION DATE:

Date on plans :

Approval of plans :

Completion date :

BUILDING STYLE:

Post Modern Neo Classical.

“Architectural Merit and Artwork of Merit: A very well articulated building, with both modern and historical references. The plasterwork and moulding work is of good quality.” (Johannesburg Building, Space & Urban Feature Classification, 1998: Inner City).

BUILDING TYPE:

Mosque. Religious building.

ENVIRONMENT:

“Compared with their subordinate role during the mining town days of Johannesburg, church buildings now began to assume a role of much grater significance in the city aspect. This was only to be expected in a Western city after the turn of the century. While churches were still not built on squares, their very size and architectural style significantly elevated them above their environment. (The beautiful tower of the second *Kerk Street Mosque* immediately focus all attention to the building.) Churches extant from this period have since been surrounded and dwarfed by new high-rise structures, but historical photographs nevertheless show that they once constituted striking landmarks in the landscape. (The new mosque, as shown in the photographs below, has retained its position as a prominent feature in the landscape). In their prominence and the contrast between them and their environment they were reminiscent of the government buildings. Apparently the highly regimented communities within the city needed to assert their hierarchy by way of dominance. This tendency was strikingly apparent in the central parts of Johannesburg. In the suburbs, by contrast, a more moderate and assimilating approach was followed.” (Van Der Waal, G-M.: From Mining Camp to Metropolis...).

CONDITION:

Fair.

URGENT ACTION:

SAHRA RECORD REGARDING ALTERATIONS, RENOVATIONS, RESTORATION:

PROTECTION STATUS: (under National Heritage Resources Act, 1999)

- General protection: Section 34(1) structure/s
- Formal protection: provincial heritage site
- national heritage site
- provisional protection
- heritage area
- listed in provincial heritage resources register

Relevant Gazette Notice:

Gazette description:

FORMER PROTECTION STATUS: (under National Monuments Act, 1969)

NOTES:

DEEDS INFORMATION:

Original ownership:

Juma Masgied Society (The ownership of the property on which the *first Kerk Street Mosque* was situated, rests with the Juma Masgied Society. It was given as a grant by the Government of the Republic of South Africa under Deed of Transfer No.L729/16, dated 28 July 1916).

PRE-HISTORY OF SITE:

FIRST KERK STREET MOSQUE:



Top left: view from Kerk Street facing east. Top right: minaret on northwest corner of mosque. Bottom left: photo taken from *Opname Historiese Geboue In Johannesburg, Second Report June 1976, Inner City, RAU, unpublished.*



The Johannesburg Valuation Roll of 1906 described the buildings situated at 12 Kerk Street as a Mohammedan brick church (sic) as well as a wood and iron building, comprising eight rooms, a living room and two brick Earth Closets, as well as two urinals.

The entry for 1919 in the Valuation Roll records a New Mohammedan church (sic) nearing completion. This building is referred to as follows by Leyds: "Lower down, near Sauer Street, the Moslem community built a Mosque at No. 12 Kerk Street. The road does not run true east and west, so this

Mosque stands at a slightly oblique angle to face due east. The foundation stone was laid by Syed Tajamool Hoosain Mashadi on 5th May 1918." (Leyds, G.A.: A History of Johannesburg). The date is more accurately recorded as 15th May 1918, in the June 1976 RAU Report.

The *first Kerk Street Mosque* was a single storey plastered building with hipped corrugated iron roof. The building was isolated from the street-noise by a high richly decorated wall. The wall was designed to enhance the architecture of the building. The mosque had semi-circular arches – this was repeated in the boundary wall – the old windows were replaced with modern yellow tinted opaque louvered glazing. The roof section of the mosque was elaborately decorated with cornice, balustrade, nine pillars (five on Kerk Street and four on the Sauer Street side) each crowned with a finial, the boundary walls were decorated in the same fashion with five pillars, finial and balustrade in between. Four identical minarets, one at each corner, adorned the building. These three tiered towers each had two small balustrade bands, a dome and finial. The centre of the roof on Kerk Street was enhanced by a gabled dormer window with ventilator. The mosque was erected during a period when all building activities in Johannesburg had almost come to a standstill on account of the First World War.

In July 1988, the former NMC was approached by the Trustees of the Juma Mosque whose intention it was to demolish the existing mosque and to build a new mosque in its place. The NMC, however, felt that the building was of sufficient historical and architectural significance to warrant its retention. It was consequently recommended by the NMC's Transvaal Regional Committee during November 1988 that the building should be proclaimed as a National Monument. This Committee also endorsed a previous decision by the NMC's Transvaal Plans Committee not to issue a demolition permit for the building. The building had previously been identified as a conservation-worthy building in the 1976 RAU Survey report and by not only the Heritage Committee of the Transvaal Institute for Architecture, but also the Johannesburg 100 Committee. The Juma Mosque Trustees believed the National Monuments Act, 1969 to be in conflict with Islamic Law and that the NMC was obstructing them in the necessary course of their duties by delaying the construction of a new mosque. Both parties were unanimous that an impasse had been reached.

In a memorandum to the NMC dated 18 May 1989 by Abdullah M. Mia, a Trustee of the Juma Masgied Society, the following was stated: "We...respectfully submit that with regard to consecrated buildings and Mosques it has never been the practice of the Prophet Muhammad (Sallalaahu Alayhi Wasallam) or his succeeding four caliphs and Muslims down the generations to regard, and therefore, uphold a historic building for the purpose of maintaining historical or cultural heritage. In Islam the purpose of buildings are their need and not historic, monumental or aesthetic splendour."

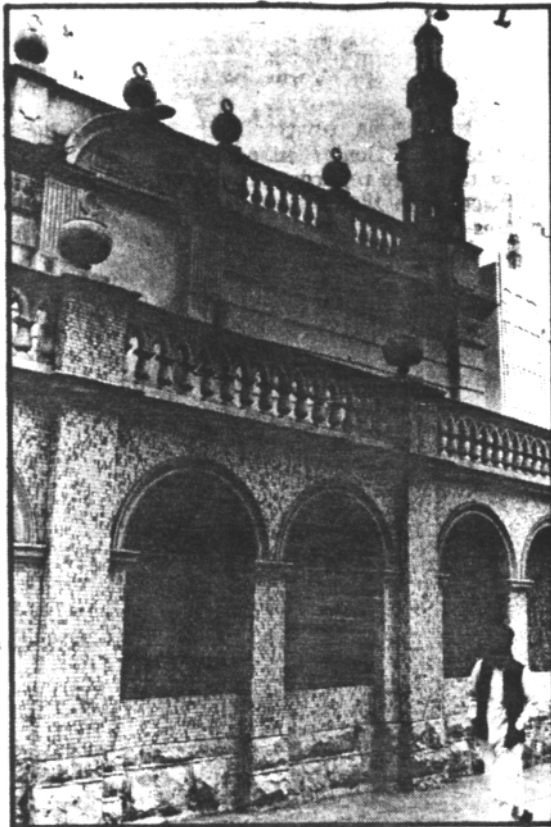
It was eventually decided by the NMC to issue a permit for the demolition of the mosque. This permit, however, was subsequently suspended on the instruction of the Minister of National Education, due to an appeal lodged against the proposed demolition of the mosque by members of the congregation.

The following was stated in an article titled "Mosque must be safeguarded", as published in *The Star* dated 9 October 1989: "The Simon van der Stel Foundation noted with interest and concern the letter from Mr Ebrahim Suliman regarding the intended demolition of the Juma (Kerk Street) Mosque. We believe that the Juma (Kerk Street) Mosque is one of the most important historic building in Johannesburg. It is also a landmark and possibly one of the best remembered old buildings in the city. It was with distress that we learnt that the trustees of the mosque were considering its demolition. We believe that the building should not be demolished and should be declared a national monument. We have written to the National Monuments Council expressing our strong views on the historic and cultural value of the mosque. We have been informed by the National Monuments Council that they have given a permit for the demolition of the mosque. We understand that consent for demolition was given by the National Monuments Council because the trustees of the mosque insist that:

- The mosque is too small to accommodate the congregation.
- The building is of no cultural or historic value.
- The enlargement of the mosque is not practical.

We emphatically disagree with the last two contentions and, therefore, with the decision of the National Monuments Council to accede to the demands of the trustees. Mr. Suliman's letter lends support to the opinion that the mosque should not be demolished. He would seem to imply that the trustees of the mosque are not properly constituted and that therefore they should not speak on behalf of the community they claim to represent. The Simon van der Stel Foundation requests:

- The trustees of the Juma Mosque reconsider its decision to demolish the mosque.
- The Muslim community of Johannesburg to use its influence with the trustees to safeguard this important cultural heritage."



KERK STREET MOSQUE: Muslims don't want it but conservationists do.

1918 mosque facing demolition this year

PAT DEVEREAUX

THE oldest Muslim mosque in Johannesburg, dating back to 1918, is to be demolished within months.

Rumours that either the facade or core of the Kerk Street mosque would be preserved as an historical national monument were this week dismissed by the trustee of the mosque, Mr Ebrahim Mia.

"We are going to demolish the mosque completely and build a bigger one because this is what the Muslim community needs," said Mr Mia.

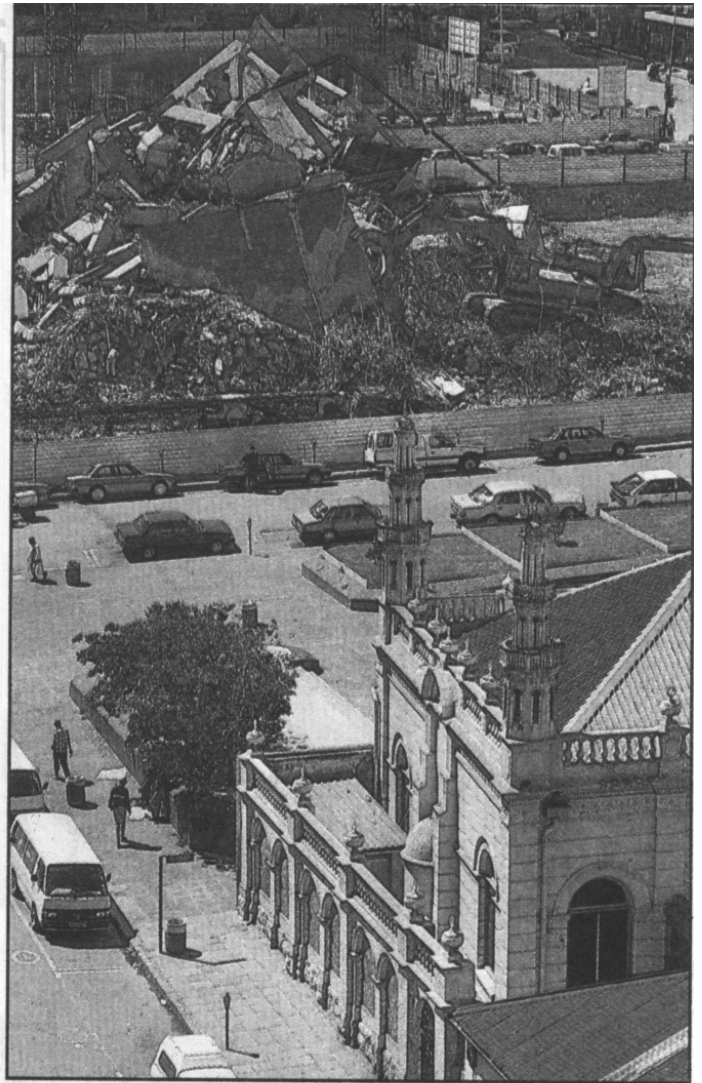
He added that the trustees of the mosque had negotiated with the National Monuments Council but had decided to demolish the building completely.

"Aesthetically it is not an example of Islamic architecture," he added.

However, a number of people have expressed dismay that the building will be demolished.

Mr Norman Bloom, of the Simon van der Stel Foundation, said: "It is a building worth preserving. We had hoped that they would maintain the facade. It is listed by the foundation as one of the 100 buildings in Johannesburg which should be preserved and would be suitable as a national monument".

However the ground is held to be sacred and, unlike other buildings, cannot be taken over as a monument.



The embattled Juma Mosque in Kerk Street, Johannesburg, looking vulnerable next to the rubble of extensive demolitions carried out to make way for Bank City, is, sad to say, also on the short list for a similar fate — a permit for its demolition has been issued. It was erected in 1918 and is the oldest Muslim mosque in Johannesburg, but will be demolished to make way for a new and bigger one, according to Mr Ebrahim Mia, a trustee of the mosque. Futile efforts have been made to save the mosque and have it declared a national monument, but the trustees argue that it is too small for the congregation, is not an example of Muslim architecture and is in a state of disrepair.

● Picture by John Hogg.

Left: the name and date of publication of the newspaper from which this copy was originally sourced, are not known. Top: copied from The Star, 27 March 1989, p.6.

BLAKES RADIO FURNISHERS:

Situated on the corner of Sauer and Kerk Streets next to the *first Kerk Street Mosque*, was a single storey plastered brick shop with hipped corrugated iron roof and distinctive firewall. This building was designed for L. Levinson. The architect was J.W. Mackey and the date on plan was 2nd February 1925. During 1974 "Blakes Radio Furnishers" occupied the building. It was noted in the 1976 RAU Survey report that the diminished height of the building, complimented the original mosque and it was consequently recommended that the building should be restored. By 1976 the Stand Number was 1422 and the owner of the property was Ghala Land Co Ltd.



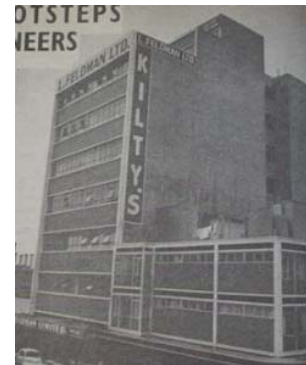
CIGARETTE-HOUSE:

The *Cigarette-House* situated on a double stand at 60, 62 Sauer Street. By 1976 the Stand Numbers were 1423, 1530. The owners of the building were World Furniture Holdings. Bertram R. Avery designed this double storey building for L & R Feldman in 1925. It was a plastered brick building with a saddle corrugated iron roof. When the building was demolished, the stand at 62 Sauer Street became part of the site for the proposed new mosque, i.e. the *second Kerk Street Mosque*.

According to Stark, the "firm of L. Feldman Ltd., of 7 Pritchard Street, Johannesburg, Wholesale Tobacconists, Confectioners and General Merchant, had been established as far back as 1918 by two young men, Louis and Richard Feldman, the sons of the late Mr. Joseph Feldman, who arrived in Johannesburg in 1897 and commenced business as a produce merchant. In those years the tobacco business was carried on mostly on the basis of the shopkeeper buying his cigarettes and tobacco straight from the van. Thus the person in charge of the horse-drawn covered van took the order, invoiced the goods, made up the order on the street, and duly delivered it to his customer. Feldmans occupied a small store at 45 Sauer Street (now part of the premises of Barclays Bank, Market Square Branch) (see Pre-History: O-1). There was one lady assistant, one 'native' driver, one horse and one covered van. Cigarettes in those days was a highly competitive article, and it was accordingly decided to introduce confectionery. Messrs. Feldmans were probably the first in Johannesburg amongst wholesalers to combine Cigarettes and the Sweet business. In 1922, Feldmans decided to discard the old method of going out with a van full of cigarettes and tobaccos, and instead a traveller was engaged and a horse and trap provided, to canvass for orders. There was some resistance on the part of the retailers to this departure, but the assurances having been given and kept that orders placed in the morning would be delivered in the afternoon, and those placed in the afternoon would be delivered early the next morning, the objection on the part of the retailers soon disappeared. The business had since progressively increased year by year, to a point where it is to-day (i.e. 1956) one of the large wholesale distributing houses in the country. In 1926 Stands 123/1530 at 60 and 62 Sauer Street were bought, on which was one of the earliest houses erected in Johannesburg, and used as a produce store, and a new building was erected. (This building, known as *Cigarette House* now demolished. See Pre-History: Y-1.) At the end of 1935 the firm of L. Feldman, as it was then known, was formed into a Proprietary Company, under the name of L. Feldman (Pty.) Ltd., and in 1946 a holding Company under the name of Tobacco & General Supplies (Pty.) Ltd. To-day its Share Capital consists of 800,000 shares 5/-, and 100,000 6 per cent £1 cumulative preference shares. L. Feldman Ltd. are primarily Wholesale Tobacconists and Confectioners, but provide a large variety of other merchandise required by the tea room, café and Hotel trade, as well as general storekeepers. They are the distributors for the nationally popular Kilty Sweets, and are the sole South African Agents of Henry Clay, the famous Havana Cigars, Karl I, the Cigar which has the largest sale in Holland itself; and are specialists in Pipes, being the owners of the following well-known brands: Victor Hugo, which claims to be the world's finest Pipe; John Ruskin, the quality London-made Pipe; Dr. Mansfield, the superior Filter Pipe; Dr. MacNab, probably the branded Pipe with the largest sale in the country; No-Nik Cigarette Holders, with Crystal Filter. The third Department, which is known as the General Department, consist of Household Crockery, Glassware, Cutlery, and other household commodities such as Enamelware, Aluminiumware (sic.), etc. There is a stationery Department and a Toy Department, and of course, all smokers' sundries are stocked. The Company has branches at Pretoria, Benoni and Vereeniging, and at Port Elizabeth its branch is known as Algoa Wholesalers. The present directors are Messrs, Louis Feldman, Richard Feldman, Charles Silberman, who joined the firm in 1929, and Simon Leon Kirschner, who started as an office boy in 1925, and the Company's Secretary is Mr. Harry Margo. It is significant that the Company's first employee, who has now celebrated his 70th Birthday, is still with the firm in a part-time capacity, as he is reluctant as yet to retire entirely. Likewise, many of the Company's managers and heads of departments have been with

the Company for many years. In 1952, Messrs. Feldman's moved to their own eight-storey building, situated at 7 Pritchard Street, and this year the Company acquired No. 5 Pritchard Street, which will be connected with the present building occupied by them." (Stark, F. [Ed.]: Seventy Golden Years...).

Sadly today none of the above mentioned buildings remain, all these buildings have been demolished.



Left: "Cigarette House at 60 Sauer Street, Johannesburg, head office of the Company in 1926."

Right: In 1952 the company moved to *L. Feldman Ltd. Building* at 7 Pritchard Street. During 1956 the company occupied the three-storey building at 5 Pritchard Street. (Stark, F. [Ed.]: Seventy Golden Years...).

Appearing below is extracted information from a relevant SAHRA archive file regarding the demolition of the *Union Fresh Meat Supply Building* (this vacant stand now forms part of Y-1) and *Cigarette House*; the Stand Numbers of the two building by 1992 were 780, 781 and 786.

The City of Johannesburg in a letter dated 20 May 1992 to Wreckers (Pty) Ltd.: "...It is confirmed that this Department has no objection to the demolition of this property, on condition that all three gas connections to the property are disconnected before demolition work proceeds.

Letter dated 1 June 1992 from Wreckers (Pty) Ltd. to Bank City Projects: "Our Lump Sum Prices For The Above Demolition Are As Follows
 Cigarette House R55,000-00
 Union Building R20,000-00".

NMC letter dated 19 June 1992 to Wreckers, with reference to the proposed demolition of the two buildings: "...The demolition was discussed at a National Monuments Council's Transvaal Plans Committee meeting, held on 1992-06-16...It was decided to grant the (demolition) permit for the buildings..."

In granting the demolition permit by the NMC no consideration was given to the fact that the *Union Fresh Meat Supply Building* was demolished for the sole purpose of being used as a parking lot; the owner First National Bank of the two buildings as not even taking the time to look at the properties and knowing there were two buildings in question reflects this disregard for Heritage during the 1990s. Seemingly the NMC at that stage only regarded buildings designed by 'important' architects as conservation worthy. Very few other buildings had a chance of survival.

Letter dated 15 May 1992 from Wreckers (Pty) Ltd., to NMC (only received by NMC on 21 July 1992): "RE: CLEARANCE TO DEMOLISH UNION MEAT BUILDING SITUATED ON CORNER OF SAUER AND PRITCHARD ST JHB (STAND NO780) [sic.]...It is our intention to demolish the above building and in order to do this we have to obtain a letter of clearance from your department to obtain the necessary permit. Please note that we have to date not received your clearance for stand nos. 781 & 786. Because the above stand no [sic.] 780 and stand nos [sic.] 781 & 786 is one and the same contract only one letter of clearance is required. Please treat this matter as very urgent now as they want to get on with the building of the new mosque..."

Notes regarding the above-mentioned letter:

1. The building situated on the corner of Sauer and Pritchard Streets was the *Union Meat Building* Stand No. 780 but "Blakes Radio Furnishers" situated on Stand No. 787, was adjacent to the Kerk Street Mosque.
2. Why "Please treat this matter as very urgent now as they want to get on with the building of the new mosque" as the new *Kerk Street Mosque* is situated on Stand Nos. 786, 787 and 780

on the corner of Kerk and Sauer Streets?

HISTORY:

“Church buildings were not only spiritual focal points but were also mostly located within the geographic centre of a community. Thus the distribution of church buildings was a reliable indicator of the concentration of specific population groups in the city. [This is still very relevant in the second Kerk Street Mosque, as only a vibrant community would erect a much bigger new mosque to replace the first mosque.] In modern cities commercial and administrative buildings tend to subsume the role of church buildings in older cities. This trend was apparent in Johannesburg soon after 1902. No new church building was put up in the central business district...Significantly, with one exception (the Mosque (1917-8), 12 Church Street), all church buildings on the perimeter of the city centre were grouped together in the north-east...Like the *Mosque* in the city centre, these buildings clearly show that by this time minority groups were so well established in Johannesburg that they built their own prayer houses in the city. To this day the oriental sections of the community are concentrated to the east of the city centre.” (Van Der Waal, G-M.: From Mining Camp to Metropolis...).

GENERAL NOTES:

Estimated cost of building :
Estimated cost of drainage :
Accommodation approved :
Valuation at completion :
Occupied :

CURRENT TENANT/S:

SOURCES:

For additional illustrative information, see relevant supplementary photo album in electronic format.

See SOURCES DOCUMENT for information on sources consulted with reference to this document.

ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE:

Historic Value:

- Associated with historic person, group or organisation
- Associated with historic event or activity

Architectural/Aesthetic value:

- Important example of building type
- Important example of a style or period
- Fine details, workmanship or aesthetics
- Work of a major architect or builder

Social/Spiritual/Linguistic value:

- Associated with social, spiritual, linguistic, economic or political activity
- Illustrates an historical period

Scientific/Technological value:

- Example of industrial, technical or engineering development/achievement
- New, rare or experimental building techniques

RECORDED BY:

Heritage Resources Management team Johann J and Catharina JM BPUWER.
Unless otherwise indicated photographs by Catharina JM BPUWER.



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