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Cover illustration

A dwelling house on the farm 't Voetpad, Piketberg, designed and built by Johannes Erasmus van Zyl and completed in 1899 (courtesy Guy Thomas 2013).
From outlaws to in-laws: families and farms in the Piketberg District, c.1700-c.1910

Antonia Malan

Introduction

The buildings that survive in the Piketberg district are in some way the consequences of, and part of the evidence for, a very particular regional history of landowning and economic development related to stock-keeping, grain and fishing. However, there has been no fresh analysis and interpretation of the characteristic farm, hamlet and village layout, building forms and architecture of the southern Sandveld since the surveys of the 1980s and 90s. These included descriptions by Walton (1982, 1995), Fransen (Fransen & Cook 1980) and Obholzer et al. (1985), studies of Verlorenvlei and Langevlei by architects, environmentalists and archaeologists (e.g. Floyd, Sinclair and Gribble, circa 1980), and application of the ‘new’ cultural theories of the 1990s to Verlorenvlei and Klaarefontein (Hall 1991 and Swanepoel 1996). The dearth of current architectural or archaeological questions relevant to the 18th century settlement period in the region, as well as relatively little interest in the material culture of the 19th and 20th centuries, has also meant that today these places are seldom identified as research- or conservation-worthy, or flagged for further investigation when statutory heritage impact assessments are carried out.

Natalie Swanepoel (1996: 3-5, 112-113) pointed out how little historical archaeology was available at the time of her research into the story of Klaarefontein at the upper end of the Verlorenvlei. She described how valuable such an approach would be for looking into the web of associations built up by the families (owners, slaves, hired Khoekhoe and white labour) linked with the places they occupied and exploited for a living. Klaarefontein was a place where, into living memory, fishermen exchanged their catches for farm produce and there were mills and a smithy. Apart from precious sweet-water springs, there were orchards, vegetable and flower gardens, and even a rice field. Swanepoel concluded that this broad-based understanding could only be achieved with an examination of the farms in the context of the landscape and in relation to the other holdings of the owners and their families.

Nigel Amschwand has since demonstrated the value of this approach in his Bokkeveld studies (Amschwand 2001, 2009 and 2013; Archer & Amschwand 2012). Our current research under the auspices of VASSA, the ‘Sandveld Project’, is devoted to reviewing previous work, asking new questions, and stimulating focus on the Piketberg area once again before the evidence disappears: the old people and their places are fast dwindling.

Vernacular architecture and historical archaeology

During the 1990s a critical conversation started among vernacular architects and historical archaeologists in Britain and North America, which influenced a generation of researchers at the Cape (see Hall 1993). Archaeologist Matthew Johnson (1997: 13-19) explained it in his

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1 This is an expanded version of a VASSA Talk presented in September 2012.
2 The oldest freehold farm-owner families being the Coetzees, Smits, Brands, Kotzes, Vissers and Lambechts, with marriages linking them to the Van Zyls, Burgers, Brinks, Thiarts, Haushamers and Eigelaars (Smith 1985: 1).
3 This section is based on an article in the journal of the Vernacular Architecture Group in Britain, of which James Walton was a founder member in 1952.
characteristically careful and thoughtful style, borrowing the phrase ‘the loss of innocence’ to express a realisation that the discipline of architectural history was stagnating and its potential was unfulfilled. Johnson pointed out that researchers had been very good at assembling the raw material (descriptions) – surveying houses, examining carpentry techniques, producing typologies, transcribing inventories – but what was needed was not so much better recording as better ideas. While houses are important historical documents, the goal is to say interesting things about the men, women and children who inhabited them.

First, said Johnson, it was necessary to challenge assumptions of the time, and then to develop a set of principles for looking at houses afresh. This entailed looking at cultural meanings, not just economic lives but the social and cultural surroundings and what people thought when they made decisions to build in a particular form or make alterations. However, life in periods before the 20th century was very different, and meanings can vary between cultures. For example, what constitutes ‘convenience’ (Khoekhoe vs European kitchen layout) or ‘common sense’ (burying Islamic paper talismans to avert ill fortune in the home), or ideas of privacy and the individual. The organisation of space within houses, and the contents of houses, is ‘active’, and actions involved in living in the house (or visiting it) reinforce cultural values. To complicate matters, people will have different readings of the same space (for instance as a result of gender and age divisions or social background) and different attitudes to cultural values (for instance the owner of an armoire or the servant who dusts and polishes it), and it can be expected that contradictory meanings will be present. Unfortunately, thoughts and meanings are rarely overtly articulated, they are taken for granted.

The vernacular is not timeless, and there were conservative and progressive values operating at different times and places. Interpreting something as apparently banal as the insertion of a chimney stack or addition of a rear wing requires us to be aware of the subtleties and complexities at play, and the historical depth and ambiguity of past thoughts and action. There is no right or wrong interpretation of a given feature or of vernacular architecture in general, but there are ideas that better accommodate the evidence and generate further research. Clearly there are practical reasons for doing things a certain way, but in the past building techniques and farming activities, for example, were part of an everyday world that was simultaneously practical and cultural – practical decisions were culturally loaded and culture was about everyday work around the household and farm, as well as religious beliefs. The domestic and agrarian aspects, the dwelling and the outbuildings, the garden and the pastures and mountain slopes, were all part of organising the landscape (though at different scales) – hence the notion of ‘cultural landscapes’. By mapping and examining ‘landscapes’, we can see parallels and contrasts between areas, and investigate changes over time.

Several of the assumptions that Johnson exposed can be tested at the Cape.

- The relationship between attrition rates of buildings and final survival affects our interpretations. Why are Cape Dutch houses an iconic style and form – because they were common in the past, because they are common now as they have been cared-for and preserved up to the present, or because of their promotion by ‘Cape Revival’ nationalism?
- We need to formulate more rigorous questions. Why use the Cape Dutch house as the standard for comparative research?
- Furthermore, as researchers, our discipline and our own cultural environment are not neutral, as illustrated here by these alternative hypotheses. Why did houses get larger over time – because of large families, because of better building materials, because of the accumulation of wealth and social stratification, because of notions of privacy?
- We need to recognise our own biases and preconceptions. Why were ornate gables built on symmetrical buildings – to show off European fashion, because of the skills of Asian
artisans, in order for the colonist to dominate the underclass, because of lack of other means by which free-burghers could express themselves?

Johnson offered some examples of traditional questions and fresh approaches which could equally be applied at the Cape:

- When and why was the transition made between impermanent and permanent housing? It is not inevitable or purely a matter of level of affluence or security of tenure. Surplus income was previously spent in any number of ways – parish church, silver, livestock – and in Britain the change was most probably linked to a sentiment of ‘improvement’ associated with the middle class from the 17th century.
- What was the meaning of the ‘open hall’ (in the Cape context, the voorhuis and galdery)? How did the organisation of space reinforce social organisation?
- What happens to kitchens and service spaces through time, and how do house plans relate to changes in room function, cooking techniques, domestic labour and women’s roles in the family?
- Styles of framing varied regionally in Britain. In other words, craftsmen and clients had a technical choice but for cultural reasons chose the local style (a ‘dialect’ within a national ‘language’ of vernacular timber framing). Why?
- Where are the boundaries between vernacular and polite houses? What is the relationship between certain classes of gentry or urban dwelling and the vernacular? Who emulated their betters, and why?
- How do rural and urban architectures relate to each other? In the 1830s, at the same time that ‘Georgian’ styles appear in Cape Town, ‘Cape Dutch’ houses were being built in the Drakenstein, and reed-walled and mud-brick langhuise in Verlorenvlei. They were all built by people who had sufficient money to spare and were probably familiar with each other’s choices. Were some people forward-looking and others backward; to whom did fashion matter, and whose fashion?

The Sandveld regional vernacular architecture

Beyond the Berg River (Fig. 1), early Sandveld buildings were simple, practical and modest structures built of local materials – reed, clay or stone – and suited to the region’s environment and economy. During the early period buildings were probably of a fairly temporary nature, initially constructed to house the Khoekhoe and slaves overseeing the herds and the wheat cultivation or the occasional colonist who lived in the area. They would likely have been conceived, constructed and adapted by their inhabitants along similar lines, using locally available materials and building competence, rather than attempting to reflect the status or origins of the owners. Unfortunately, there are no securely datable surviving buildings from that period but we know that the matjeshuis tradition continued well into the 20th century along the northern West Coast, and forms were developed to suit their occupants. We can also extrapolate backwards from a later period when a wide variety of sapling and reed structures provided housing and outbuildings for people in the 20th century (Malan & Webley 2010).

Until the 1980s these reed-walled structures were still being built on the West Coast (Fig. 2). As Walton noted:

Twenty years ago there were several reed-walled homesteads on the sands at the mouth of the Verloren Vlei, near Elandsbaai. Each homestead consisted of a long reed-walled living room and a much smaller kitchen or cooking place. Each building had a slightly hipped roof at the end and the thatch was swept in an eyebrow over the entrance. A similar settlement formerly existed on the farm Bonteheuvel, a few kilometres along the Verloren Vlei from Elandsbaai. Such reed-walled dwellings were built by the farm labourers throughout the Sandveld and the Piquetberg but the
most interesting reed-walled dwellings were those on Oudekraal Fontein, which lies to the west of Hopefield (Walton 1995: 29).

Obholzer, Baraitser and Malherbe (1985: 267) described the complex of buildings at Modderfontein (Leipoldtville) as a “typical” example of an established Sandveld farm (Fig. 3). In the mid 20th century it had two mud-walled dwellings, a gabled TT house and a slightly earlier gable-less T house, and several outbuildings, most of them thatched with wolf ends. The farm belonged to the Mouton brothers until 1857, and Fransen dated the T house to about 1810 but possibly earlier (Fransen & Cook 1965: 168).

Figure 1. The West Coast (Obholzer et al. 1985: 266) and the Sandveld (Fransen 2004: 354).
Figure 2. Reed-walled structures at Bonteheuwel, 1965 (Walton 1995: 28).

Figure 3. Modderfontein (Leipoldtville) (Malherbe in Obholzer et al. 1985: 276).

Figure 4. Buildings at Verlorenvlei in 1969 (Malherbe in Obholzer et al. 1985: 275).
Figure 5. Verlorenvlei farm, as mapped by the School of Architecture, University of Cape Town (Floyd 1980).

Figure 6. Wolfhuis (VV88/9) "a three-roomed langhuis to which has been added a later inter-connected room" (Gribble 1990: 67).
The earliest permanent, plastered unfired clay brick, thatched farm buildings (langhuise) of the farm Verlorenvlei were possibly built in the late 1770s when Michiel de Beer and his wife Gloudina Louw owned grazing rights to Verorenvlei and several other places. Farmhouses were far apart along the edge of the vlei, and there is only good evidence of habitation on the present site of the Verlorenvlei settlement in the 1790s. Later a large hamlet developed around them during the 19th century boom years of grain and fish production (Fig. 4). One over 40-metre longhouse (half of it outbuilding), was probably built or extended by Theunis Erasmus Smit soon after 1800.

In 1980, when Sharyn Sinclair (Sinclair 1980, 1986) was carrying out social geography research and Hugh Floyd took his UCT students to make measured drawings, they counted some 25 longhouses, and several threshing-floors (Fig. 5). In the occupied houses lived the few people that made up the settlement community at that time, all of them related to one another by virtue of their membership of families that had been associated with the area at least since the beginning of the 18th century. The houses were built at different stages in the development of the settlement. Some of them were no longer occupied and had fallen into a state of disrepair or ruin, or were converted for other uses.

John Gribble measured these and several other individual buildings in the Verlorenvlei and Langevlei area (Fig. 6). He was interested in how the core of the dwelling houses (two rooms) grew and adapted over time, for example by taking special note of wall thickness, wall junctions, additions and changes to openings (Gribble 1989, 1990). He reported that local tradition indicated that the sides of buildings were measured using the ‘fathom’ (about 6 feet) and the ‘pace’ (about 3 feet). The layout of dwellings ranged from single cells (some with flimsy internal walls) and longhouses, to multi-celled and complex seemingly irregular shapes. Sometimes a second building was built at right-angles to the first, with a gap between. Gribble pointed out that the distinction between frame-style and mass-style construction was blurred, and some frames were filled with brick (Gribble 1989). Few of these houses have survived or remain unaltered today.

Establishing construction dates and a chronology is one of the problems inherent in architectural history when vernacular building traditions continued for centuries, as is the case in the Sandveld. We are therefore fortunate to have an invaluable collection of paintings by Johannes Cornelius Poortermans of farms on the slopes of the Piketberg dated 1849. The farms are Groenfontein, Kapteinskloof, Banghoek, Eselshoek, Moutonsvlei, Moutonshoek, Koelkap (originals in Museum Africa, Johannesburg), Rietkloof and Langvlei (originals in Merensky Library, Pretoria) (Figs 7 & 8).

In 1965 Walton relocated and visited the farms to see if any of the buildings still stood and in order to assess the accuracy of Poorterman’s images (Walton 1982). He concluded that, from what survived, Poortermans was “accurate within the limits of his draughtsmanship”. In summary:

These buildings present many features in common, but they are not uniform in plan or appearance and seem to have developed according to individual requirements. Most of them are simple rectangles roofed with thatch which is hipped at one end and terminated at the kitchen end by a gable to accommodate the chimney-stack. In general they have a basic element of bedroom, voorhuis and kitchen, to which rooms with separate entrances were added, thus presenting an asymmetrical facade. They constitute a regional vernacular architecture, arising from individual needs and built by local labour from such materials as could be easily obtained (Walton 1982: 13).

What the Poortermans pictures also depict are the people at their daily lives, working and interacting with animals and crops, which makes them a most unusual and extremely valuable
resource for 19th century material culture studies. They are not portraits of the property owners, but glimpses into past lives. They not only show masters and servants, but also the ‘lesser’ buildings on the properties, such as reed-walled structures of various types and *kapstylhuiise*, some of which survived into the 1980s.

It is the relationship between people and places that interests me.

*Figure 7. J.C. Poortermans 1849: Moutonshoek (MA6363), Moutonsvlei (MA6360), Koelkap (MA6364), Groenfontein (MA6380), Banghoek (MA63359) and Kapteinskloof (MA6362) (courtesy MuseumAfrica, Johannesburg).*
People of the Sandveld

When a handful of Dutch East India Company (VOC) settlers and their slaves were building homes at the Cape of Good Hope in the mid 17th century, there were some 17 000 to 18 000 Khoekhoe herders living between the Cape Peninsula and the Berg River. Within a short time, however, the social dynamics of the West Coast region changed dramatically as immigrant hunters, stockmen, traders and fugitives moved northwards away from the Cape, seeking space and freedom to live as they wished and hoping, of course, for vast riches. One way to make money was to supply meat to the Company settlement and ships, and a system of competitive contracts (pachten) and lucrative butchering monopolies arose (Penn 2005: 52-55). By issuing grazing licences across the Berg River (the Tulbagh district) in 1700, the VOC initiated a new phase in colonial expansion as Company men and freeburghers now had prospects for independent livelihood in the Cape interior.

The shift to pastoralism resulted in a system of land allocation different to that applied in the agricultural regions of the south-western Cape, because stock-keepers were semi-nomadic and needed extensive areas of land which they could vacate and move on to new grazing. The Sandveld is not an easy area in which to survive. It lives up to its name and water, let alone sweet water, is scarce, as illustrated by place-names such as Brakkefontein, Suurfontein and Stinkfontein. The factors to sustain a stock post were potable water, good pasture and game, so they were established by rivers, streams, springs and ponds or vleis. For the graziers, a kraal for the animals and a reed hut for the stockmen was all that was needed to create an ‘opstal’ (structures on a loan farm). Supervision was by a son or a knegt (overseer), with perhaps a pair of slaves or Khoekhoe (Smith 1985: 19). The loan farm system was adopted, with land rented rather than bought, unlike the freehold farms of more productive areas. This encouraged rapid dispersal of freeburghers into the interior which in turn had incalculable effects on their own and Khoisan economic, social and political development (Brink 2004).

At first all the stock-keepers followed a common pattern of economic activity as pastoralists, but eventually most Khoekhoe lost livestock and land and became labourers (Penn 1989: 4). Particularly challenging to integrated peaceful settlement was the constant jostling for access to

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4 Terminology: ‘Khoisan’ refers to people indigenous to the Cape who spoke ‘click’ languages, ‘Khoekhoe’ (previously ‘Hottentots’) refers to groups whose economy relied on domesticated livestock, and ‘San’ (previously ‘Bushmen’) to groups whose economy was based on hunting and gathering of wild resources. ‘Veeboer’ means stock farmer and ‘trekboer’ means transhumant pastoralist, and they could be people of European or ‘Baster/Bastaard’ descent. ‘Bastaards’ were ‘Dutch’-speaking, mixed-race descendants of Europeans, slaves and Khoisan (after c1850 referred to as ‘Coloured’).
such vital resources as water between trekboers, ‘Bastaards’ and independent Khoekhoe. This frontier zone of interaction and transhumance in turn decimated wild game and pushed local San hunter-gatherers further into mountain refugia from where they depended on forays to steal domestic stock. All stock keepers therefore regarded hunter-gatherers who raided their herds as a common enemy and made common cause to punish or exterminate them, inventing the commando system for this purpose. In time, however, the once collaborative commando system introduced hierarchy into trekboer and Khoekhoe interactions, placing those with lighter skins into positions of dominance (James & Simons 1989: vii-viii).

Dutch East India Company backing, such as grazing permits and the loan farm system of exclusive rights to a certain area, and supplies of arms and ammunition, gave the European stockmen a big advantage over their fellow herders. Relations became increasingly unequal. Many Europeans had built up flocks of sheep and herds of cattle through barter and robbery, of which ‘Dronke Gerrit’ was notorious in the Verlorenvlei district. Violence led to a temporary ban in trade in 1702 but this was lifted in 1704 (Penn 1989: 5). Johannes Starrenberg’s report on a bartering trip to Verlorenvlei and along the Berg River into the Swartland painted a picture of pitiful remnants of Khoe herds by 1705. He found only two homesteads between the Berg River and today’s Klawer, with 12 ‘captains’ (headmen) but only a few cattle, and remarked:

I have realised with regret how the whole country has been spoilt by the recent freedom of bartering, and the atrocities committed by the vagabonds ... and so from men who sustained themselves quietly by cattle-breeding, living in peace and contentment divided under their chiefs and kraals, they have nearly all become Bushmen, hunters and brigands, dispersed everywhere between and in the mountains (Valentyn 1971: 25).

The scale of livestock dispossession is indicted by estimates that between 1700 and 1710 alone the colonists’ ownership of cattle increased from 8 300 to 20 000 head and of sheep from 54 000 to 131 000 head (South African History Online 2006). The final blow for the independent Khoekhoe was the smallpox epidemic of 1713 and a sheep disease epidemic that lasted until 1718 and which hit the kraals of the Piketberg very hard (Penn 2005: 43). After 1714 the right to plant cereals on loan places was granted as a general concession (rather than a special dispensation) and this changed perceptions about their potential as family-occupied farms rather than mere grazing posts (Gribble 1978: 41). This date marked a major move to permanently colonise the Sandveld. For example, Langriet on the Berg River was allocated as private (freehold) property to Hendrik Oostwald Eksteen in 1715 and it later became one of the first wheat-growing farms in the southern Sandveld (Truter 1998).

The movement of private property owners onto the land resulted in permanent settlement and the defence of resources and boundaries against neighbours as well as the few remaining independent herder groups. Only rarely was a ‘Hottentot’ granted grazing rights (for instance, Adam Kok on Stinkfontein in 1751 and Jan Goeymans “at the mouth of Droogeryskloof” in 1755 (Cape Archives: RLR 14.1 p.145). The settlers also exploited rivalries between the various Khoekhoe groups. This was outlaw country, far enough from the Cape to escape surveillance and yet near enough to raid outlying settlers and the few independent Khoekhoe. Fugitives were generally disruptive – they were desperate, armed and ravenous – and naturally the settlers and Khoekhoe stock farmers alike defended themselves with violence. The Khoekhoe who managed to retain livestock benefited from the protection that armed trekboers could provide against predators and stock thieves; in exchange, or as a condition, they performed labour services, grazed their animals alongside the land-owners’ and thus prolonged their existence. For

5 A mounted fighting unit consisting of soldiers and/or local residents of an area, and used to defend the Colony and to carry out punitive raids.
instance, when the cattle of some Khoekhoe working on one of Eksteen’s farms at Saldanha Bay were stolen, a commando recovered the livestock (Penn 1989: 6).

The Khoekhoe of the Sandveld had probably been clients of the powerful Namaqua, and though the terms and nature of this clientage is not certain they may have received livestock in exchange for military support and payment of tribute. Some quickly saw the advantages of working for men with firearms and horses, such as ‘Captain’ Swaartebooij and his son Titus (alias Charmant). They lived with the Louw brothers and were involved in the turbulent events of 1738-9, accompanying ten Piketberg men (including Erasmus Smit and other farmers from around Bo-Verlorenvlei and the northern corner of the Piketberg) on an illegal expedition to Namaqualand and the Orange River. They were equipped for both trade and war. Over a thousand cattle were stolen. Once back home, the colonists cheated the Khoekhoe out of their share of the spoils, who reported them to the VOC. This ‘insult’ to the farmers sparked a burgher rebellion, while a Company deserter, Sergeant Estienne Barbier, also played a part in inspiring dissent. In turn, the Khoekhoe waged guerrilla war on the farmers involved. It was particularly bitter since, although ‘Bushmen’ clients of the Klein Namaquas were the first to attack, local Khoekhoe servants later joined in and were now fighting against their masters, and a personal and cruel dimension entered the fighting. The Company’s unfair but pragmatic solution was to pardon the burghers involved in robbery and rebellion provided they joined the commando to crush the Khoekhoe resistance (Penn 1989: 7-8).

Thus, between 1728 and 1740 there was relatively close cooperation between Khoekhoe and colonists in the Sandveld, but by 1740 the total military defeat and subjugation of all the Khoekhoe west of the Bokkeveld marked the end of the open frontier in that region. Their subject status was symbolised by the acceptance of colonial staffs of office by local kraal ‘captains’, which, although it meant the Company mediated between rival Khoekhoe groups and regulated treatment of labourers, in effect it afforded very limited protection and support (Penn 1989: 9).

The status of ‘Bastaards’, though superior to that of slaves and Khoisan, declined socially, politically and economically throughout the 18th century (Penn 2005: 13). An unequal access to civic rights was reinforced by a system of pass laws and partial enslavement of the children of Khoekhoe and ‘Bastard Hottentots’. Fragments of the Goringhaiqua, the Corachouqua and possibly the Cochoqua fled, for example to the Orange River where they formed the Koranna people or mingled with the Tlhaping. In the second half of the eighteenth century they were joined by other mixed groups, like the Kok family (Fig. 9), who trekked from the Piketberg to the Kamiesberg and built up a following of Grigriqua and other groups before moving on to the Orange River (Marks 1972: 77). By the 1770s, therefore, increasing antagonism and discrimination lead ‘Bastaards’ to leave the colony in droves – an early exodus that was only eclipsed in the 1830s when ‘Boers’ trekked away from a distasteful British-ruled Cape Colony.

Two of the better known families of independent herders (part Grigriqua descendants) were the Koks and the Afrikaaners. It is believed that Adam Kok I was a slave and had Khoekhoe ancestry (and married a Khoekhoe woman) and bought his freedom from Nicolaas Laubscher, thus acquiring free-burgher status (Ross 1976: 14). In 1751 Kok was granted grazing rights on the farm Stinkfontein at the southern end of what became Kapteinskloof. He left the Piketberg area in 1771 with his extended family and livestock and went to the Orange River, picking up adherents as he went. Adam Kok I died in 1795, rich in livestock and with many followers. His son Cornelis came to own at least five farms and became a pillar of Namaqualand society. In contrast, a man known simply as Afrikaner, his brother Klaas and their father Oud Ram, went down in history as founding a notorious gang of people of slave and Griqua origins. Afrikaner, described at the time as “an arrogant man with an evil disposition”, among other things assaulted and attempted to murder Adam Kok. He ended up on Robben Island in 1761 and died
there in 1777. Klaas, however, made his way up to the Orange River, accompanying Gordon on his travels at one time, and was probably the grandfather of Jonker Afrikaner who became leader of the Afrikaner Oorlam people (Penn 2005: 167-168).

Figure 9. Adam Kok II of Phillipolis (H. Ford) (courtesy Western Cape Archives Repository).

Figure 10. Andries Stephanus Facolyn Gous at Klaarefontein 1852 (Pretorius 1997: 155; collection F.O.F. Gous).
Upon the difficulties of terrain and transport, 18th century Sandvelders were by no means all remote backward subsistence farmers (Hall 1991: 7). In 1803 Lichtenstein encountered Mr. Laubscher, who lived just beyond the Berg River and possessed 80 horses, 690 head of horned cattle, 2470 sheep, and he remarked that there were 105 persons living on the farm (family, servants, Hottentots and slaves) (Swanepoel 1996: 99). The Gous family of Klaarefontein were substantial slaveholders and Theunis Erasmus Smit was patriarch of a sprawling extended family along with their slaves and servants. However, it is not easy to reconstruct the complex relationships and hierarchies that may have existed on and between the farms.

Andries Stephanus Gous (Fig. 10) was a Captain in the Cape Cavalry and friend of Jacobus Cloete. He held the grazing permit for Klaarefontein from 1769 to 1792 and the loan farm was converted to perpetual quitrent in 1839 under the ownership of his son’s widow, Alida Mostert. According to Swanepoel (1996: 15) a census return (opgaaf) dated 1816 lists three loan farms, 20 horses, ten trek oxen, 300 cattle and 220 sheep, but no slaves or Khoekhoe servants. However, the Slave Office records differ. In 1817 Gous registered 40 slaves, an exceptionally large number by any Cape standards: 25 men, three boys, seven women and five girls. They worked as herdsmen, labourers, wagon drivers, horsemen, shepherds and housemaids, and there was a gardener, a coachman and a mason. Not all were based at Klaarefontein, though, and a secondary oral source named the people who lived there in c.1795 as Pieter van Asch, farm manager, Francois, a smith, Hendriks Pieters, a gardener, and Namakwa, a shepherd (Swanepoel 1996: 61). In the opgaaf of 1830 A. F. Gous declared six slave men, one boy and two women slaves, 21 horses, 10 trek oxen, 406 head of cattle and 107 sheep, plus 300 muid of harvested wheat.

Theunis Erasmus Smit (Fig. 11) was born in 1804, marrying first Maria Smit of Kruisrivier and then Maria Magdalena Kotze of Willemsrivier, Clanwilliam. His father, Johannes Nicolaas Smit, was one of the wealthiest farmers of his time, but the son was even more successful having a combination of the right talents and the right range of landed properties for stock and grain farming. In the early 19th century ‘Oom’ Smit owned most of the grazing from Velddrif to Lambert’s Bay. Klein-Klipfontein, his home farm, was the most productive grain farm in the
neighbourhood. (Klein-Klipfontein was purchased by Johannes Nicolas Smit from Johannes Basson in 1818, but he did not live there and left the farm to his son, Theunis Erasmus, who lived there for the last 30 years of his life, dying in 1892 aged 88).

An important member of the Smit family network was Daniel Lambrechts, whose first wife was Cornelia Smit and the second Anna Coetzee. (Jan Coetzee was the first permanent occupant of the South Sandveld, grazing livestock across the Berg River in 1714 and by 1736 having a veepos at Bonteheuwel on the north bank of Verlorenvlei.) Lambrechts was “one of the most progressive farmers in the district” (Smith 1985: 187), with landholdings from beyond Eland’s Bay down to Stinkfontein and Kuidersrivier. His 1824 opgaaf listed 24 Hottentot men and boys and 16 girls under 14 years old, plus 13 slaves. He had cattle, sheep, horses and goats, grain, vines (and brandy), a Cape cart and eight wagons.

Part of Oom Smit’s strategy was to exploit the system of extended family farming to the full, and to buy up land without water from destitute farmers and establish tenants to bring in an income. The properties included Groeneveld (Sewevlei) in 1848, and the Melck land at Velddrif in 1852 and De Plaat in 1857. It was here that the fishing industry was growing, with landless tenants needing somewhere to live. During the second half of the 19th century, grazing of cattle and wheat cultivation were continued, and occupation of the land became more permanent, with the building of farm houses and the development of the sprawling Verlorenvlei settlement. Smit also acted as a banker for local farmers during the last 15 years of his life, and even loaned money to the Stephan Brothers (see below) (Smith 1985: 65, 69).

Stock-keeping was no longer the only economic activity in the region after 1740. Growing numbers of manumitted slaves, dispossessed Khoekhoe, failed farmers, evicted tenants and bywoners (share croppers), new immigrants and fugitives from colonial and military justice, moved towards the beaches of the west coast and subsisted on seasonal work as fishermen and farm labourers (Van Sittert 1992: xxiii). By the first half of the 19th century numbers of scattered squatter / subsistence communities had emerged along the West Coast. The uncertainties of fishing (weather and resources) made a range of other economic pursuits a basic necessity, the most common of which was seasonal farm labour during harvest time. Fishing’s inter-dependence with agriculture was further reinforced by farmers’ demand for cheap rations (dried or salted fish) as food for slaves and farm labour (Van Sittert 1992: xxiii).

Alliances of Sandveld farmers, like the Piketberg group lead by Theunis Erasmus Smit, reaped two harvests, one from grain and the other from fish (Smith 1985; Van Sittert 2001), but the distance by road from Cape Town meant that the coast became a conduit for the 19th century grain trade. The roads were dusty and uneven and, depending on weather conditions, a journey could take many days. At that time the fastest, cheapest and safest means of transport to Cape Town was by sea. Vessels would not only carry the grain and produce to market, but also delivered items procured in Cape Town (Zamudio 2008: 71). By the 1830s, merchant brigs and cutters were plying a growing trade in grain and other commodities from Cape Town to Saldanha Bay and St Helena Bay, and further afield to Lambert’s Bay and Hondeklipbaai (Van Sittert 1992: 8). At Verlorenvlei, for instance, the grain was taken by the farmers to the Plank House near Baboon Point and stored there until the arrival of the boats. This network further facilitated the growth of fishing for ration fish (rantsoenvis) destined for farmers far in the rural hinterland.

An epic battle played out in the late 19th century between the Piketberg farmer group and the coastal shipping empire of the Stephan Brothers. The Smits owned farms throughout the region (a total of 38 473 morgen by 1870), including the farm Velddrift at the Berg River mouth, and to protect the farmers’ control of trade to Cape Town, blocked the sale of Crown Land to Stephan Brothers and the introduction of a ferry service across the Berg River. Eventually, in
1886 a portion of Velddrift was sold by one of Smit’s sons to Stephan Brothers, who renamed it Laaiplek (loading place), and established a settlement for their West Coast shipping HQ (Van Sittert 2001: 195-197). The Smit family turned to inshore fishing to generate an income from the remainder of Velddrif, and rented out land for housing and fish-curing infrastructure. Smit became known as the ‘landlord of the Sandveld’ (Malan & Webley 2010.)

![House (5H) at Verlorenvlei with a viskamer on the right, 1980 (Floyd Collection).](image)

**The Sandveld project**

The current ‘Sandveld Project’ arose from an incidental suggestion that the Vernacs may be interested in the ruins of farm buildings on Wagenpad near Piketberg (Fig. 13). We visited the site and became curious to know more about the area. The project developed further due to interested encouragement from farm owners and occupants and the enthusiasm of members of VASSA and colleagues to help with exploration and research. These are some of our ongoing questions and observations.

What are the various Sandveld styles we can identify? The typology and interpretation of the Verlorenvlei vernacular tradition, as summarised by Hall (1991), is a valuable start, but as described earlier there are several other building types in the region (surviving and extinct) (Fig. 14), and a vernacular building tradition that continued well into the 20th century.

What was the relationship between the reed-walled and mass-built structures, their forms and internal arrangements – the possibly ethnic and cultural thinking behind them? What happened to the design and position of kookskerms, hearths, chimneys and kitchens over time? What are the local and wider influences that created them and lead to adaptations over time? How long were such buildings constructed into the 20th century?

How do the buildings cluster in space and time? One of the important tasks now is to map these grants throughout the region and identify which properties already had houses or structures on them, though this can be difficult. Sinclair (1980) carried out a detailed investigation of land ownership and land use since the 1830s for the Verlorenvlei farm (Sinclair 1980) but she found
it very difficult to pin down such information from the years before quitrent grants were made to individual owners.

While the buildings at Verlorenvlei have become regarded as the iconic vernacular architecture of stock and grain farmer frontiersmen of the Sandveld, they are not securely dated and have not been considered in relation to the exploitation of nearby coastal and estuarine resources or linked to the inland properties of the Smit clan towards Piketberg.

Even wealthy farmers seem to have lived in modest dwellings. For instance, Lichtenstein remarked on Laubscher’s house as “a very indifferent looking one as to the exterior” and pointed out that his considerable wealth resided in livestock and slaves (Swanepoel 1996: 99).
Smit did not feel the need to add a gable to his Verlorenvlei longhouse. Was it a matter of isolation (Walton 1982:13) or of choice?

Why are ‘Cape Dutch’ style buildings relatively rare in this area (Fig. 15), when did they appear, and were they ever built as such from scratch or are they merely facades with gables attached? Furthermore, the change from 18th century economic semi-independence to 19th century involvement in national and regional levels of economic and cultural interaction may have been reflected in architectural expression (i.e. was it only in the 19th century that central gables appeared?) (Swanepoel 1996: 103-104). What effect, if any, did the emancipation of slaves have on the economy and architectural expression in the Sandveld after 1838?

Figure 15. Modderfontein. Langvlei (photograph André Pretorius 1991).

Figure 16. Location of Klaarefontein (Pretorius 1997: 154).

Figure 17. Gerrit Kotzee’s house on Wittedrift, Charles Piazz Smyth 1843 (from reproduction in Hall 1991).
Like Klaarefontein, which grew from a modest dwelling into a symmetrical T-plan with central gable, are the gabled buildings perhaps located in similarly strategic economic and publicly visible positions? Swanepoel (1996: 100) pointed out that ownership of the Bonteheuwel loan farm complex enabled the Gous family to control all the resources of the north bank of the Verlorenvlei from the coast inland. The road linking Piketberg and the coast passed right in front of Klaarefontein, between the house and the water (Fig. 16).

Gerrit Kotzee’s Wittedrift, on the south side of the vlei, was located on a major crossing place at what is now Redelinghuys. A picture of the farmhouse by Charles Piazzi Smyth (in 1843) shows a symmetrical, centrally-gabled house (but it is no longer standing and its construction history and layout is unknown) (Fig. 17). Other and lesser houses sometimes had smaller triangular central gables. Zuurefontein was situated at an important road and river intersection, and Swartrug faced the road descending from Kapteinskloof (Fig. 18). This is a very old route traversing the Piketberg, starting at Sauer and ending at Het Kruis.

How similar or different were the houses that were built on the eastern flanks of the Piketberg, and out onto the ‘Vlakte’? Winkelshoek, set against the north-eastern Piketberg mountainside, was a ‘fine H-house’ with front gable and end gables of the pedimental hol-bol type and sash windows dating from about 1830 (Fransen & Cook 1980: 270). Klein Vogelvallei, beside today’s N7 highway, may date from the late 18th century, and ‘must have been one of the most attractive homesteads in the Piquetberg area’ (Fransen & Cook 1980: 270). The T-shaped portion was symmetrical in plan with narrow windows either side of the front door, and in c.1980 there were still traces of a central gable in the thatch (see photo in Fransen & Cook 1965). What effect did 19th century improvements to the major routes have on those houses alongside the roads?

The settlement on Verlorenvlei is not the only cluster of buildings that one finds in the Sandveld. There are other groups of buildings, now mostly demolished (Wagenpad and Winkelshoek, Het Kruis), which also require causal explanation. They consist of dwellings, farm outbuildings and services. Places such as Redelinghuys and Leipoldtville developed into villages (founded 1906), but it appears that several of the other Smit clan farms were once also extensive proto-settlements. What was happening in the 1830s when many farms were divided between several owners and Piketberg was founded?
Wagenpad, on the north-eastern Piketberg, was also owned by the Smit clan. After being alerted by an architect, VASSA identified it for further research as it is the inland expression of the farming-fishing nexus linked to Verlorenvlei. Many of the buildings have been completely razed and only appear on a 1939 survey diagram (Fig. 19) and an aerial photo of 1942, but a few ruined mud-brick structures still exist. One of the surviving buildings is of the distinctive hipped roof and chimney gable end style, and was later extended with a barn addition (Fig. 13). Another dwelling started as a row of rooms and was later enlarged by adding a back T wing and buitekamers, and a later house is a variation on the condensed H-plan.

Was there a similar dynamic to that described for the Bokkeveld multi-family farms centered on scarce water resources? The ‘vierkant’ farms described by Nigel Amschwand in his Bokkeveld reports (Amschwand 2001, Archer & Amschwand 2012) thus appear to have their equivalents further south in the Sandveld (moreover, the same family names occur in the Sandveld and in the Bokkeveld, and all the way up to Namibia), but were the resulting patterns of werf layout and structures the same or were there regional variations? What are the advantages and disadvantages of living in groups? Oral history suggests that it was a very complicated matter; informants talk of shared domestic tasks and labour and vital support in times of need, and also tell stories of violent clashes between individuals and families.

Figure 19. Core cluster of buildings on Wagenpad (Farm 50) in 1939 (DO survey diagram 7280/1939).

Other clusters have clearer origins. Some settlements near the coast partly developed out of farm-owners’ subsistence strategies that included annual rent to be made from a growing community of tenant fishermen: such as Smit at Velddrif and Kotze at Rietvlei. Company towns were developed by industrial fishing magnates. Further south, in the late 19th century the Coraizin and Pharо families settled at Vaalplaas (Paternoster) and established a closely intermarried community of fishermen (Sunde 2003).

Some were mission stations, as a result of donations of land to farm workers (Goedverwacht, Wittewater) or purchase by the Moravian Church. Slaves were emancipated in 1838 but freedom of movement and domicile were immediately curtailed by new laws restricting the livelihoods and movements of ex-slaves and Khoekhoe descendants, and moving to a mission station was one option for those who wished to retain some independence and family life (Malan 2012). The architecture of Goedverwacht and Wittewater (Fig. 20) needs to be re-examined in the light of local styles and forms and compared with other mission villages in other regions.

There are several buildings with chimney gable end and hipped roof forms but wider in plan, such as condensed-H plans (Fig. 21), possibly dating to the mid-19th century. The layout of condensed-plan houses appears to incorporate previously strung-out rooms (kitchen, voorhuis,
bedrooms and buitekamer) into a rectangle. What was the reason for this shift, was it technical or social or both? Did the rooms function in the same way as before? Throughout the district there are several long, tall and wide buildings with iron roofs, dating between 1899 and 1906 (Fig. 14). There seems to have been a whole lot of building construction at the turn of the 20th century, coinciding with the South African War period. Soft kiln-baked bricks, made at the farm Kleigat, were used for the walls of several that we have seen, and the dates and distribution of these bricks should be traced. Was there an economic boom in the area?

![Figure 20. House in Wittewater mission village (photograph Sally Titlestad 2013).](image)

These ‘war-period’ houses are sometimes delightfully idiosyncratic in design, an example being the double-storey (upper storey for storage) flat-roofed house planned and built by Johannes Erasmus van Zyl on his farm ‘t Voetpad in 1899 (Fig. 22 and cover), which according to his descendant, Marthinus van Zyl, was based on a house he admired in Cape Town (Malan 2012). This raises the question of fashion, urban influences and choices made by the designers and builders of Sandveld dwellings – and the debate over the threshold between vernacular and polite architecture (Green 2012; Johnson 2010: 11-12). For instance, maybe the fashionable imported woodwork and ironwork brought up from the Cape was only affordable to Sandveld farmers once the new railway reached Piketberg in 1902?

![Figure 21. Ground plan of T.E. Smit’s dwelling at Klein-Klipfontein, built c.1820 (Smith 1985: 73).](image)
Conclusion

The Sandveld, between the Berg and Langvlei rivers and from the Atlantic to the Piketberg Vlakte, is worthy of being reconsidered, researched and analysed in its own terms. Previous researchers assumed a direct linear link with the architecture of the south-western Cape, whereby some Sandveld houses were outliers or degenerate versions of the accepted ‘Cape Dutch’ norm while others were examples of timeless ‘pioneer’ forms. These studies lacked the critical dimensions of chronology and spatial organisation, ‘emphasising form at the expense of history’ (Hall 1993: 192).

Martin Hall and his students’ analyses and interpretations included some of these aspects but the study was limited to the ‘Verlorenvlei vernacular tradition’ and his focus was on an ‘archaeology of the mind’, largely posed in terms of domination and resistance, the elite and the underclasses. Rather than compared to the Drakenstein or Stellenbosch patriarch with his formal hierarchical Cape Dutch werf, perhaps the Sandveld patriarch with his egalitarian clusters of buildings should be more fruitfully contrasted to him. Perhaps the Sandveld may be considered as a region of genesis of new ways of living in the Cape interior (first under absentee graziers and then for settled farmers and fishermen, and then for cash crop producers). It was the antecedent to what developed in the Cedarberg, Bokkeveld, Namaqualand and Karoo.

M.H.D. Smith’s Boerepioniers van die Sandveld (1985) provides an invaluable chronological and genealogical framework. As part of current research, Smit family farms throughout the area are being plotted and spatially evaluated through survey diagrams /aerial photos. These records of grants and subdivisions are starting to fall into chronological and spatial patterns. Preliminary archival research reveals a considerable amount of documentary information about the extended families and their properties. Opgaafrolle (tax records), inventories and Slave and ‘Hottentot’ Registers reveal owners, occupants and labourers, together with economic and social activities. Most valuable for architectural history, of course, are the series of photographic records of buildings taken by Walton, Fransen, Pretorius and others since the 1960s.
The most attractive feature of the Sandveld today is the wide range of people who built or occupied a wide variety of places, many of whose descendants still live there and who can shed light on the complex cultural meanings and entangled histories of a vernacular architecture spanning 300 years. Families of those who owned the properties, built the houses and worked the land actively maintain their stories and traditions, but the ones who remember first-hand many of the events and know the people linking the 21st century to the 19th century are getting on in years. Archival research into the 20th century deserves attention too. The socio-economic effects of the South African War, Union, the Depression, two world wars and Apartheid, are still fresh in people’s memories. A critical research focus should be oral history in this area and we are seeking funding for this purpose. Meanwhile, Guy Thomas, at the University of Cape Town, has picked up the thread of the historical archaeology of Sandveld architecture and cultural landscapes as the topic for a Master’s dissertation (see cover illustration).

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References


The wine cellar at the farm Altydgedacht, Tygerberg

Janine de Waal

Introduction

This article was commissioned in acknowledgement of, and to honour the close and long-standing association between the Vernacular Architecture Society and Jean Parker of Altydgedacht. The text is extracted from my assignments for course-work submitted during 2012 towards a Master’s degree in Conservation of the Built Environment at the University of Cape Town. Those studies explored the heritage significance of the wider cultural landscape and the natural and built environment of the property (Fig. 1), but this article focuses on the wine cellar. A short description of the ownership of the estate has been included because of the fascinating thread of widow-farmers that runs through the story of the farm. The detailed genealogical, archival and historical information was compiled by Nicolaas Walters during his extensive research into the cultural history of the farm and can be found in his book, The Children of Altydgedacht: the cultural history of an old Cape wine farm, 1690-2010 (2013).

Figure 1. The layout of buildings on the werf at Altydgedacht wine estate, Durbanville, in the Western Cape (photographer and date unknown, courtesy of Jean Parker).

Cultural history

The Elsieskraal River running through Altydgedacht would have been a water source for pre-colonial inhabitants; however with the proximity of modern settlement these sites would not have remained undisturbed. Stone Age tools, such as hand axes and other artefacts, are
frequently discovered during farming activities (Fig. 2). Historical records mention that the first expedition to Tygerberg was made as early as 1655 to explore and trade with the Khoekhoe. By the end of 17th century the demand for fresh produce for Cape Town’s population, as well as the passing ships, had exceeded its capacity. The colony had to be extended with buitenposte (Company outposts) to access more sweet water and grazing. These posts also served as resting place for travelers between Cape Town and the interior. Hardekraaltjie was situated along the Elieskraal River (currently the caravan park in Bellville) and Pampoenkraal near a spring (this developed into Durbanville) (Du Plessis 1998: 31-33). Harriet Clift has noted that these VOC outposts were often established on old Khoekhoe encampments, due to the proximity to water and excellent grazing land for cattle (Buttgens 2005: 16).

The Tygerberg area consists of rolling hills with deep fertile soil suitable for crops. Some of the earliest land outside the Peninsula was granted in freehold there from 1688 onwards. Early grants were watered by the Zout, Stink or Mosselbank Rivers, but many were dependant on perennial springs for their water supply. The shapes of these grants were not simple rectangles, but often had a number of arms stretching in various directions to include springs or suitable arable land (Fagan 1994: 531) (Fig. 4).

Andries de Man, the Secunde (Deputy Governor), applied for a freehold allocation in the Tygerberg area and was awarded the land circa 1690. As a VOC official this application was highly irregular and was frowned upon by the early free burghers. Most farms were approximately 60 morgen (51 402 ha) but Andries de Man’s farm, De Tijgerbergen (later renamed Altydgedacht), consisted of 111 morgen (95 094 ha), confirming suspicions of “insider” trading (Walters 2013: 17, 19, 23).

In 1693 a farmstead was built on De Tijgerbergen but on 31 March 1695, Andries de Man died. He left a large number of assets to his wife, including properties in Table Bay and the farm. From Andries de Man’s inventory (MOOC8/1.20, 1696) it is evident that they were mainly farming sheep (300) and cattle (70), some wheat, and had some horses (12). They owned several slaves (nine men, three women, five children and two elderly), but their names are not listed.

Immediately after her husband’s estate was wound up, the 33 year old widow married her third husband, Hendericus Munquerus. As the VOC’s demand for meat, wheat and wine was growing, they started planting vines and contracted knegten (Company employees) to build a cellar. The wine cellar was erected in 1702.

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Hendericus Munquerus, committed suicide on 29 January 1705. The inventory of his estate indicates that six barrels of wine had been produced on the farm. Elsje van Suurwaarden continued farming De Tijgerbergen after her husband’s death, employing a soldier, Willem van Houten, as a farm hand in 1707. She passed away in 1713.

Figure 3. The location of the farm Altydgedacht and the extent of the farm, which comprises three separate portions with a total area of 415 7776 ha (3318DC Bellville 1:50 00, 2000, 9th edition).
Maria, Elsje’s only child from her (second) husband Andries de Man, married Jan de la Fontaine, who became the new owner of De Tijgerbergen, but in 1714 he sold the farm to a free burgher, Samuel Walter(s) from Slovakia. Walter had married a wealthy widow, Maria van Niekerk (née van der Westhuizen), who owned the neighbouring farm, Bloemendal. He bought

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De Tijgerbergen with the financial support of his wife, and they moved to live on the farm where they had three sons (Maria van Niekerk already had four sons from her first marriage). In 1725 Walters passed away and left his estate to his wife, who continued farming successfully until she died at the age of 69 in 1734. She left a huge estate of three farms and assets valued at 84 211 Dutch guilders. This inheritance allowed each of her seven sons to acquire his own farm, and the family went on to play an important role in the development of the region (Walters 2013: 42-48).

Hendrik Doman bought De Tijgerbergen after Maria van Niekerk’s death in 1734. He married Geertruijd Valk (Falck) in 1735. They were successful farmers and acquired the neighbouring farm De Hoogs Bergs Valleij (renamed Springfield, today known as D’Aria) and Leeuwenkuil outpost (near Gourits River) for more grazing. Hendrik Doman died in 1743 leaving his widow to continue farming on Altydgedacht. Geertruijd Valk immediately appointed a farm hand, Jurgen Hendrik Engelaar of Minden, to assist her. The records suggest that her only son died at a young age. From the tax rolls one can see the farm was prosperous. Geertruijd Valk married Nicolaas Wilmar in 1745, however he passed away shortly after their marriage and she sold the farm in 1748 to Johannes Krugel, born on Simonsvlei. He sold the farm to Johannes Christoffel Schabort (the son of the doctor who treated his father on Simonsvlei) in 1757 (Walters 2013: 51-55).

Johannes Schabort continued with the tradition of making wine and improved the output from three barrels in 1762 to fourteen barrels per year in 1773. He passed away in 1793 and his widow, Maria de Villiers, managed the farm, assisted by two of their unmarried children, Isaac and Hester, until she died in 1808. She further improved the wine production. Isaac Schabort inherited the farm from his mother and sold it in 1812 to Johan Ludwig Petersen, ending the 55 years of Schabort ownership (Walters 2013: 59-65).

Johan Ludwig Petersen sold the farm to his son-in-law, Johannes Augustus Dreyer, (who married Maria Cornelia Magdalena Petersen) in 1816. In the same year it was sold to Franciskus Josephus Becker. Becker apparently loved oak trees, and it is believed that many of the oaks on Altydgedacht were planted by him, including the large tree in front of the homestead. His first daughter, Johanna Elizabeth, married his second wife’s brother, Frederick Arend Gysbert Liesching, who bought the farm in 1832 (Walters 2013: 66, 70-71).

Unfortunately Liesching was declared insolvent and the farm was transferred to the trustees of his bankrupt estate, Jurgens and Watermeyer. The insolvency initiated the renaming of the farm from De Tijgerbergen to Altoos Gedagt (Altydgedagt) (Walters 2013: 79-80). Under the ownership of Jurgens and Watermeyer, in 1835 Altydgedacht was increased in size from 111 to 382 morgen. John Montgomery Hill bought the farm in 1836 and after some further transfers it was sold in 1851 to George Francis Parker (Fig. 6).

The farm has been owned by the Parker family since 1 March 1851. Many of the staff members have also lived on the farm for generations, for example the Du Plooy, Rhode, Hansen and Arends families.

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8 Cape Archives: MOOC8/5.128, 1834.
9 CA: MOOC 8/6.79, 1745.
10 CA: CJ 2889, ref 29, 1744.
12 DO: T212, 28.7.1815.
13 DO: T262, 26.7.1816.
14 DO: T221, 1.3.1851.
Parker had been a successful merchant in Cape Town but battled with farming which resulted in his estate being declared insolvent.\textsuperscript{15} The farm was transferred to his son, George Francis Parker junior in 1868.\textsuperscript{16} During his ownership he married Mary Elizabeth Berry and they had six children. She died when their youngest child was only one year old. George Francis Parker junior never remarried and brought up their six children on the farm with the help of his older sister (Walters 2013: 95-100).

\textbf{Figure 6.1:} George Francis Parker senior and George Francis Parker junior (courtesy of Jean Parker).

\textbf{Figure 7.} Ralph Parker and Daisy Pillow (courtesy of Jean Parker).

\textsuperscript{15} CA: MOIB 13/1/268, ref 339, 1867.
\textsuperscript{16} DO: T139, 17/4/1868.
Ralph Parker (born 1869) married Daisy Pillow (Fig. 7) and became the owner of Altydgedacht in 1921. He continued making wines in the traditional way, in large old German vats (stukvate) dating from 1903. Later he converted to concrete tanks, and then stainless steel tanks were used. Today the tanks of the three different materials are still present in the wine cellar, and though the concrete and the stainless steel tanks are still used, the German vats from 1903 are only on display. Ralph Parker extended the wine cellar by adding die stand on the hillside, making use of gravity feed for the juice of the grapes instead of using tractors and pulleys for crushing and pumping (Walters 2013: 101). Daisy Parker started the dairy on the farm and after her husband passed away she continued producing dairy products and also implemented modern hygienic practices in the wine cellar.

Their son Denis, aged 22, left the air force at the end of WWII to run the farm, and married Jean Lang (Fig. 8). Jean Parker, like so many of her predecessors, was widowed and had to take over the running of the farm at the age of 29, after Denis was killed in a hunting accident. (Walters 2013: 103-4). She studied winemaking at Elsenburg, and together with farm manager, Hennie Heydenrych and a very good team of workers (many of them from families who had lived on the farm for several generations), she was able to pay out her husband’s two elder brothers who had other professions and did not want to farm. This took more than 20 years and in 1983 Altydgedacht and a number of other purchases and transfers were consolidated and transferred into the Jean Parker Trust.

When Jean Parker’s sons, John David and Oliver Richard, returned from gaining experience overseas they changed the farm from general to wine farming. Currently vines and wheat are cultivated on the farm, with a small portion of grazing for cattle. Many of the buildings and structures on the farm have now lost their original use, except for the wine cellar.

**The werf and wine cellar**

The natural and cultural setting of the farm is of considerable significance. The architectural fabric and spatial qualities making up the historic werf (especially the buildings and structures that have their origins in the 17th to 19th centuries) are of architectural significance and are worthy of being accorded the status of Provincial heritage resource. Altydgedacht is a good example of simple Cape vernacular architecture, without elaborate gables. The werf layout is
also not a typical layout, due to the natural typography creating an asymmetrical enclosure (Fig. 12).

The main collection of farm buildings is located on a central flat portion of land (Fig. 1). However the wine cellar is located at a lower level near one of the main springs (Fig. 9). The low werf walls (ringmuur) connect the wine cellar with the remainder of the werf’s buildings at the higher level, creating an enclosure, or courtyard, that in the past kept the animals safe at night. The wine cellar has a continuity of use dating back to 1702, and though it has been extended over the centuries to accommodate more wine and better technology (Fig. 13) there are still many features that had have not changed over 300 years (Fig. 10). It is one of the few remaining original wine cellars still in use in South Africa. Other examples are the cellar at Muratie in Stellenbosch and Compagnes Drift (Beaumont Wines) in Botrivier. The additions can clearly be identified and the different types of wine making technology can be viewed from the more than 100 year old German vats (Fig. 14) to the modern day stainless steel tanks.

Figure 9. Panorama of the werf at Altydgedacht with the cellar on the far left (Janine de Waal 2012).

Figure 10. View of the wine cellar from the north west (courtesy Jean Parker).

Figure 11. View of the cellar (left) and outbuildings from the east (Janine de Waal 2012).
Earliest construction (late 17th/early 18th C)

Extension (19th C)

Modern

Modern agricultural sheds and auxiliary buildings

1 - Modern main residence (location of original home)
2 - Second residence
3 - Shed (location of expanded dairy)
4 - Stables and workshop (+ first dairy)
5 - Wine cellar
6 - Historic werf enclosed by low ringmuur

Figure 12. Werf layout indicating the different phases of construction of the buildings (tracing by author of 2010 aerial photograph, no. 3318DC-08-2010-307).
Figure 13. Possible phases of construction of the wine cellar.

Figure 14. Interior of wine cellar, the barrel room (Janine de Waal 2012).
Measured drawings of the wine cellar
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Archival sources (CA & DO)

Primary archival sources are cited courtesy of Nicolaas Walters.