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Cover illustration

Erich Mayer: A winter plaas in the Onder-Bokkeveld, 1930 (private collection).

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Recording on the northern frontier: The Bokkeveld case study

Tim Maggs & Nigel Amschwand

We would like to dedicate this contribution to the memory of Guido Lugtenburg.

Starting in the new millennium from small serendipitous events, the Onder-Bokkeveld Project grew into one of VASSA’s major recording and research activities of the decade. The team comprised a multi-disciplinary group of enthusiastic volunteers well capable of recovering both the tangible and intangible heritage of the group of remarkable farms in the vicinity of Nieuwoudtville in the Northern Cape. Activities included not only weekend field trips but also planning meetings, a newsletter, archival research, many interviews and the assembly of an archive.

As the Project developed our enthusiasm perhaps led us to somewhat overreach what was practicable under the circumstances. We began to visualise additional avenues of research that would require funding and commitments of time greater than some members were able to spare. Some of our hopes were therefore not reached, yet the project has assembled a substantial archive and, though the team has shrunk, the number of publications has continued to grow (see list at end of paper).

The two of us came to be involved in rather different ways. Nigel Amschwand (NA) was already interested in the journals of early travellers in the area and had been following their routes to see what remained from their time.

Tim Maggs (TM), recently retired as an archaeologist, bumped into an old friend, Julia Meintjes who, with her husband Willem Strydom, had restored and were living in part of an old farmstead in the Onder-Bokkeveld. They were very concerned about the deterioration of these werwe so Julia was put in touch with Antonia Malan who promptly bounced the ball back into TM’s court. Antonia also told NA about the buildings, some of which he had visited the previous weekend.

The two of us therefore did a recce trip in 1999 when Julia and Willem showed us a number of complex but dilapidated farmsteads, none of which had been recorded in detail though Hans Fransen and others had done some photography. We could do little to prevent further deterioration of most of these old buildings and therefore decided to start a program of recording.

Returning to the next ‘Vernacs’ meeting we asked for volunteers and thus the team was formed. During recording trips in the field we were also joined by a number of local people thanks to the efforts of Julia and Willem. A number of lasting friendships have emerged from the project.

A typical day’s recording would see two teams led by architects tackling the buildings one by one while a third team surveyed the whole werf. Others would be conducting interviews in the neighbourhood and taking photographs. To quote from our first publication:

The project covers individual buildings, styles, raw materials and how these differ from the vernacular of other areas. We are interested in the composition of the werf and how this fits into the landscape. Following recent VASSA policy, we are also particularly interested in the people of
the farms and their lifestyles; not just the owners but also the landless classes of people who made a contribution to farm histories (Amschwand 2001: 1).

To appreciate the special nature of these Onder-Bokkeveld farms it is necessary to place them in their unique environmental setting. The name Onder-Bokkeveld has been used to denote this area since the early eighteenth century, but it should not be confused with the Koue and Warm Bokkeveld areas which are much further south, around Ceres. Our Bokkeveld centres on the town of Nieuwoudtville, and is an elevated and relatively well-watered plateau surrounded by much less hospitable landscapes (Fig. 1). Its western edge is the dramatic Bokkeveld escarpment which plunges steeply down to the Knersvlakte desert. To the north and east the plateau gives way to semi-arid Karoo, while to the south the land becomes deeply dissected by dry valleys leading down to the Doorn River canyon. From north to south it extends 65 km and from east to west about 35 km.

*Figure 1. Section of a late 19th century map of the Cape Colony with the Onder-Bokkeveld framed. (CA Map 1/342).*
The Onder-Bokkeveld must always have been recognised as a green island in an arid sea. For the colonial frontiersmen it offered a patch suitable for grain cultivation surrounded by areas at best suited only for extensive grazing. The colonial frontier reached here early in the eighteenth century. The inevitable clash between colonists and indigenous people led to warfare in the late 1730s, still remembered in the local name, Oorlogs Kloof, where a skirmish took place when a commando attacked a group of Khoi thought to be cattle thieves. Colonists started to establish themselves here in the early 1740s and soon thereafter the first loan places began to be registered. These all occurred at the best water sources as can be seen from the names; nearly all have the appendage Fontein or Rivier. This water monopoly would have greatly marginalised the remaining previous inhabitants, those who had not fled to the north beyond the colonial border.

Figure 2. Early farm registrations (base map courtesy of the Chief Directorate, Surveys and Land Information).
While the project did not set out to examine the pre-colonial past of the area we did come across some evidence (Figs 3 and 4). Both rock paintings and scatters of Cape coastal pottery, with the characteristic lugs associated with Khoisan herders of the second millennium, show that the Onder-Bokkeveld had long been a magnet for settlement. We also found some alignments of stone forming rough enclosures which may also have been the work of pre-colonial people.

Figure 3. Pottery shards found during a surface investigation.

Figure 4. What is thought to be pre-colonial walling for a stock enclosure.
A significant resource for the project arose from the longstanding interests that NA had in establishing the routes taken by early travellers through this region. Working from the travellers’ descriptions of their journeys, aided by botanical clues, early loan farm grants and genealogical tables, it was possible to accurately trace the routes taken. The fascination was to see how botanists, such as Thunberg and Masson, were passed along to relatives deep in the Cape interior by those living nearer civilization.

The intermarriage of families to keep farms from being split up and the relationships between the relatively rich farm owners and the relatively poorer bywooner class showed what social conditions were like. Most of this information came from research in the Cape Archives in Roeland Street. As is usual with such records they are only written from one point of view, that of the ruling class. This is even truer of relationships between the colonists and the original inhabitants, the Khoisan. However, occasionally one comes across a gem, such as a letter from a “Baster” farm supervisor complaining that although the local Veldcornet insists that he reports for commando duty, his employer refuses to release him and he is stuck in the middle.

Archival sources on farm boundaries provided the earliest surveys. These date from around 1820 when the British administration was converting the Dutch East India Company (VOC) system of loan-place land tenure to perpetual quit-rent. In the VOC period, loan farms were not surveyed but merely described by a name and location, for instance being called Avontuur over the Oliphant’s and Doorn Rivers. From a central point, usually the water source, the farm extended in a half-hour’s walk in every direction, thus creating a circular farm with at least one hour walk between neighbours. In practice this did not always work out and in the case of a serious conflict those encroached upon could complain to the Veldcornet and in some cases the offending grant was cancelled. In other cases there was room at other edges of the farm for the farmer to expand into. Over time, the half-hour’s walk became standardised as being 750 Cape roods (2833.5 m) from the central point, giving a farm an extent of about 3000 morgen.

The unique VOC pattern of circular farms proved a nightmare to the surveyors who had to convert these to straight-line boundaries based on trigonometrical measurements. Fortunately these first surveys also recorded the theoretical circular boundaries with their central opstal (structures). By assembling these surveys for the whole block of Bokkeveld farms NA has been able to reposition the circular loan-places on the broader landscape and thus create an early 19th century map of land tenure for the area (Fig. 2). This was done literally by cut and paste whereas now you can use Geographical Information Systems.

The basic recording work progressed, farm by farm, and the resulting archive now covers most of the older Bokkeveld farmsteads. Architecturally they show a typical though simple Cape vernacular with undecorated gables or wolfneus ends to the buildings. There are some langhuis structures, while the more elaborate houses tend to be T or H shaped. Locally available restio (Cape reeds) species for thatching are less than ideal and have led to the need for steeper roof pitches on some buildings – angles approaching 60° rather than the more typical 45° or less. We also noted composite layers of thatching on some buildings, where rye straw with the heads still attached formed the under-layer with restio laid on top.

Some buildings were of mud brick but the great majority were of dry stone construction, usually with a clay plaster. Styles of stonework vary greatly and it seems that, while some buildings were probably built by the people on the farm, there were also some specialist masons. It has been possible to stylistically link different buildings on various farms to the same builder and date them. The work of two builders is illustrated (Figs 5 to 9). Much of their beautiful stonework still stands today though, in most cases, the roofs and plasterwork is long gone. Wooden lintels may have rotted and collapsed but the rarer stone lintels have stood the test of time.
Figure 5. The arch of a building at Groenrivier.

Figure 6. Detail of the wall construction.

Figure 7. The same builder constructed a staal at Bokkefontein. The edge of a now collapsed arch can be seen at the left. This building has been dated to the 1880s by oral history.

Figure 8. A store-room at Bokkefontein.

Figure 9. Detail of a barn at Inhoek dated to before 1893 by an inscription on an attached building.
As our research developed we became aware of a complex pattern of land use and land tenure on the Bokkeveld plateau. While these basically fit into the wider Cape context of the 18th and 19th centuries, some farms developed in a unique way. One factor here was the local geology, for it emerged that the most complex farms were established in a roughly north-south line along the boundary between the Cape and the Karoo Supergroups (see Fig. 2). The quartzitic sandstones of the Cape, forming the western side of the plateau, provide sandy soils, relatively poor in nutrients but appreciated as heiveld (heathland) for grazing livestock. To the east the finer-grained sedimentary formations and dolerite outcrops of the Karoo provide richer soils – the rooigrond – the best arable land. Farms which had both types of soil were evidently able to support larger communities, as shown by their large clusters of buildings, forming small hamlets. In addition to the normal complement of farm buildings – the owner’s house, barn, threshing floor and horse mill – these hamlets might include a school, shop, blacksmiths, prison and even a church.

Interviews and archives provided information on the network of landowners and how this progressed through time. Here, as elsewhere in the Cape, with the death of the landowner, the farm was normally divided equally among the heirs. This process characteristically led to the repeated subdivision of land until, as one farmer acquaintance of ours put it: “the portions became so small that you could only farm tortoises”. Faced with this issue, some of the major Bokkeveld farms developed what seems to have been a unique solution. The centre of the farm, where the original opstal (building complex) was situated, continued to be the site of all or most of the new buildings added by the next generation of owners. The terms ‘common werf’ and ‘vierkant’ (rectangle) are still used for this space. Some examples are indeed four-sided, like those on Groenrivier and Willemsrivier, originally called Klipperiver (Fig. 10).

"Figure 10. Section of the diagram of lot 9 of Klipperivier showing the vierkant (courtesy of the Chief Surveyor-General)."

Instead of dividing the farmland up into blocks, as was so often the case, some of these common werf farms took to a radial pattern of subdivision resulting in sector-shaped plots radiating outwards from the central werf (Fig. 11). Situated on the geological boundary described above,
each recipient of these subdivisions required a sector of the heiveld for grazing and a sector of the rooigrond for cultivation. These old radial divisions are still prominent on the landscape at Willemsrivier and Groenrivier, part of the latter being interrupted by the later rectangular grid of Nieuwoudtville village.

Figure 11. Klipperivier agricultural sub-divisions.

Despite the shared common werf, individual landowners remained relatively self-sufficient – each aspired to have their own threshing floor, barn and horse mill. The larger farmsteads contain several sets of these structures.
The common werf probably also contributed to the tensions characteristic of neighbourhood relations. We were told, for example, that at Klipperivier, despite the dominee’s (minister) best efforts the situation became acute. The children of one owner reported indignantly to their parents that: ‘their geese are swimming on our pond’. Eventually this werf, the only one carefully situated along a central roadway (Fig. 12), had to be cut up with barbed wire fences, to restore peace. The dominee was heard to say that the fences achieved what even the Good Lord had been unable to resolve.
This brave experiment in closer communal living has not been a success in the long run. While ownership of the agricultural plots may be clear, the common werf presents problems. Ownership of individual structures on it is recognised, but the space itself is regarded as a single unit in which people hold shares. After many generations this has led to large numbers of people holding tiny fractions of a share in the werf. While some of the houses are still maintained, many buildings have been abandoned and joint management action is well-nigh impossible.

This research has to date spanned 15 years, and while the original project was to survey a sample of five of the more interesting / important farms (Bokkefontein, Klipperivier, Groenrivier, Matjesfontein & Papkuilsfontein), along the way other farms and areas of interest came to our notice.

One such was a graveyard on the farm Papkuilsfontein. Fieldwork comprised surveying the graveyard and investigating how best to clean the lichen from the few inscribed headstones. Archival research into the residents of the farm determined how many had died and were possibly interred. Although there were two distinct alignments of the graves it was determined that all were colonial.

Another was the result of being informed by a local farmer of some ruins on part of his land. Research on the ownership of Rietfontein indicated that it was, in later years, always occupied by overseers / bywoners, and this gave contextual information for interpreting the simpler style of dwellings of these people.

Although NA appears as the author of the documents that have resulted from this project, this has only been possible with the contributions from the architects, archaeologists, botanical experts, photographers and surveying teams. Special mention must be made of the chefs who provided the superb food at the many enjoyable dinner parties held after a day in the field. None of these projects would have been possible without the wholehearted cooperation of the owners of the farms. We hope that this project will in some way generate interest in the heritage of this picturesque area.

What of the future? Further to the east of the Onder-Bokkeveld is the Onder-Roggeveld, an area geologically different and concentrating almost entirely on the rearing of livestock, with little or no cultivation of cash crops. This area abounds with interesting ruins and hospitable farmers and may well keep VASSA busy for the next 15 years.

**List of documents from the Bokkeveld Project**


The vernacular art of Erich Mayer – then and now

Nigel Amschwand

Introduction

Erich Mayer was a prolific artist; the National Cultural History Museum in Pretoria has 850 of his works, others are in Museum Africa in Johannesburg, museums in Bloemfontein and Kimberley and many in private collections.

During my research in the Northern Cape, Mayer’s name often cropped up in conversations. However, it was only during the research carried out into the farm history of Grasberg/Avontuur in the Onder-Bokkeveld (Amschwand 2013) that a strong connection appeared.

Biography

Ernst Karl Mayer was born in Karlsruhe, Germany in 1876.1 In 1894 he was awarded a bursary to study architecture at Charlottenburg Technische Hochschule in Berlin, but had to discontinue his studies due to ill health in 1896. Mayer moved to South Africa in 1898, seeking a better climate for his health. He took up employment as Assistant Land-Surveyor in the Orange Free State and a year later joined the Boer side in the Anglo-Boer War. During his time on commando with the Boer forces, he would often sketch portraits of farmers he encountered: “Boer figures, seen in their everyday sphere and environment, have always been of particular interest to him”, writes Van der Westhuysen (1952: 11). In 1900 Mayer was captured by the British forces and interned at St. Helena, where he continued dedicating his free time to painting and sketching.

Mayer was repatriated to Germany in 1902 and decided to continue his art training there. In 1904 he moved to South West Africa, and continued travelling to Germany between 1904 and 1911 to take drawing and painting courses in Karlsruhe and Stuttgart. He returned to South Africa in 1911, settling in Potchefstroom. During his time there he earned his living creating illustrations for books and the press, but did not cease working on his art - painting mostly in watercolour and sketching in pencil and charcoal.

During his “Potchefstroom period” Mayer befriended Pierneef and Wenning, who he regarded as close friends. By 1914 he had his first successful exhibition; however, later that year the First World War broke out and Mayer was interned for 21 months in Pietermaritzburg, which took a heavy toll on his health and affected his work for several years (Van der Westhuysen 1952). In 1920 Mayer had an important exhibition in Stellenbosch. He decided to move to Johannesburg in 1921.

Erich Mayer’s marriage in 1928 to Margaretha Gutter was followed by a caravan trip around South Africa, recording scenes of everyday life and allowing him “to study the country, its people, and its features closely” (Van der Westhuysen 1952: 9). The couple moved to Pretoria in 1931, starting a weaving and spinning school in 1933. Whereas previously he had worked mainly in watercolour, Mayer started working in oils and also on a larger scale whilst in Pretoria – completing a few large murals in the Johannesburg Main Post Office and the Monument High School in Krugersdorp (Van der Westhuysen 1952).

1 This short biography is reproduced courtesy of Johans Borman Fine Art. www.johansborman.co.za.
Mayer decided to further his studies and moved to Florence, Italy for a year in 1935, studying under Chini and Annigoni. Upon his return he exhibited around the country. Erich Mayer was awarded a Medal of Honour for Painting by the ‘Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie’ in 1943.

Esmé Berman (1996: 280) notes that: “The work of Erich Mayer furnishes a fairly comprehensive record of rural SA life and scenery during the first half of the 20th Century.” Van der Westhuysen (1952: 11) writes of Mayer’s work: “Seldom has his subjective vision or perception led him to evading the usual form of things, for the direct visual element has always been decisive with him. Because of that his work throughout has adopted such an intense South African character.”

Erich Mayer died in Pretoria in 1960. In 1962 his work was included in an exhibition titled ‘Art in South West Africa’ at the South African National Gallery in Cape Town and in 1972 at the Prestige Retrospective Exhibition at the Pretoria Art Museum.

**Connections to the Onder-Bokkeveld**

Mayer visited the area on at least two occasions, in 1920 and 1930. The first may have been prompted by meeting Herman Buhr during their internment at Fort Napier near Pietermaritzburg. Buhr owned half of the farm Avontuur and although a naturalised British subject fell afoul of the authorities by being in partnership with his German brother. This meeting may have prompted Mayer to visit the area. It is known that he stayed at both Avontuur and Perdekraal further up the mountain.

**The Artworks**

The attractiveness of Mayer’s works to those interested in vernacular architecture is that the images of buildings almost all depict the simpler structures of farmers living in the hinterland rather than the grander buildings near to the major cities. This also means that the depictions of almost 100 years ago probably do not differ markedly from conditions 100 years earlier.

The illustrations used in this article all come from the collection at the National Cultural history Museum in Pretoria (unless otherwise stated), for whose assistance we are very grateful.
Comparisons

_Doorn Rivier_

This farm situated NNW of Nieuwoudtville straddles the road to Loeriesfontein. Brandkop is a hamlet to the east of the road, once apparently a busy community that is now deserted.

Since 1920 the building to the left has had its veranda removed. The centre house has had its thatch replaced by a flat roof and the right hand building reduced in length, though the foundations are still visible, and its thatch replaced by corrugated iron.

*Figure 13. NCHM HC 4017 272.*

*Figure 14. Brandkop 2014.*
**Willemsrivier**

Directly north of Nieuwoudtville, this farm originally known as Klipperivier was also the subject of a VASSA report. Due to the extensive bush-growth a present day perspective could not be found.

*Figure 15. NCHM HC 4017 269.*

*Figure 16. Old photograph taken from a similar perspective*
Figure 17. NCHM HC 7014 258.

Figure 18. Building 8 at Bokkefontein.
Figure 19. Site plan of Bokkefontein werf (Tim Maggs).

The tree to the right in the painting and the photograph is very similar. However, the exact viewpoint could not be replicated. Close examination of the house indicates that it could have once had the same features that Mayer painted.
Brabazon

Figure 20. NCHM HC 4017 289.

Figure 21. Brabazon today.

The rock outcrop in the centre is identical. The shed to the left is built on the walls of the small house and the remains of the outside oven remain.
A plaas naby Nieuwoudtville

Of all the buildings seen this was the most interesting. Although it cannot be said to be definitely the same place photographed, as the changes are extensive, it is extremely probable. It is in the small area that Mayer worked while in the Onder-Bokkeveld. The building alterations since 1921 can be read in the structure and no other building in the vicinity matches the basic layout.

Figure 22. NCHM HC 7014 256.

Figure 23. A plaas naby Nieuwoudtville, with lines indicating the earlier structure shown in the painting.
This dwelling and the associated buildings shown on this and two other paintings Mayer made of the same werf were the subject of an article by Mauritz Naudé (2002) where he points out that buildings were constructed on an ad hoc basis dependent on needs. The other buildings on the werf are a kapstylvhuis, as seen to the left of the main building, and a matjeshuis further to the left. At the time of the painting the kapstylvhuis appeared to be a storeroom (the door was a corrugated sheet propped closed), but this and the matjeshuis could have been dwellings for bywones (share-croppers).

The interesting point is that when the doors and windows were added, the walls extended and the new chimney added, a typical 19th century half-hipped roof was replicated (probably using elements from the original). This was done sometime after 1921 and probably prior to the 1950s.

The section of the farm where the buildings are situated was a deduction from the main farm made in 1892. Whether this is the date of the original buildings would need further investigation.

Conclusion

Artworks, paintings, drawings and photographs can be used as a guide to vernacular buildings at an earlier age. Comparing these earlier depictions with present day views can indicate how long vernacular building traditions were maintained or how buildings were adapted using modern materials or for different purposes. Furthermore, using Mayer’s works some of which are very detailed, a good idea of lifestyles in the 1920s can be seen which could not have been much different from a hundred years earlier.

Figure 24. A winter plaas in the Onder-Bokkeveld (private collection).

Bibliography


A short architectural history of the Schotschekloof homestead, Cape Town

(erf 1877, 79 Dorp Street, Bo-Kaap, and including 67, 69 and 81 Dorp Street, formerly outbuildings)

Jim Hislop

History

The origins of Schotschekloof suburb can be traced back to a market garden of the same name. The Schotschekloof garden, which was situated on the lower slopes of Lion’s Head, was granted to free burgher Andries Thomasz in 1707. An inventory of a subsequent owner, Christina de Bruyn, dated 1722, describes a simple single-storeyed building on the property at that time, consisting of three rooms. Later, a kitchen was added at the back of the house, forming a T-shape (Fransen 2004: 55). In about 1723, a freed slave – Robert Schot of Bengal – took ownership of the estate, hence the name Schotschekloof. He also owned Coornhoop in Mowbray (Rootsweb).

An inventory of the deceased estate of Jan de Waal, dated 1768, reveals that the Schotschekloof homestead was then double-storeyed (MOOC8/13.43). It was unusual for farmhouses to be double-storeyed at this early date; most only received a second storey at the end of the 18th century to mid-19th century, possibly when larger families and an increase in income necessitated and allowed for bigger houses. The house further increased in size during Hendrina Jansen’s ownership from 1765 to 1783, as the value of the property had increased by 4 000 guilders (from 8 000 to 12 000) (Fransen 2004: 55).

Explorer, artist and soldier, Colonel Robert Jacob Gordon, included the Schotschekloof homestead on his richly detailed and accurate panorama of Cape Town of circa 1790 (Fig. 1). Here the house can be seen as a grand double-storeyed, five-bay house, much like Leeuwenhof in Hof Street, with a raised stoep and entrance stairs on either side of the front door, surrounded by farmlands, and with what appears to be a small outbuilding on the right side of the house.

The original entrance drive to the farmhouse was probably Almonda Street, which got its name from the ‘great number of almond trees which grew on the old Schotschekloof estate’ (Hart 2011: 94). In the opgaafrol of 1800 (CA J37109), when the estate was owned by Cornelis Brink, Schotschekloof market garden is listed as being some 40 morgen in extent, with 40 000 vines in the vineyard. Brink owned 14 slaves to tend the farmlands at this time (Harris 2007: 43). Brink Lane, nearby, is named after Andries Brink, one of his descendants (Hart 2011: 95).

More steep increases in value in the early 19th century probably signified the construction of various outbuildings, such as stables on either side of the homestead in line with the road running in front of the house (now Upper Dorp Street). These can be seen flanking the Schotschekloof homestead in the Josephus Jones panorama of circa 1808 (Fig. 2). A long thatched and gabled wing has appeared on the left of the house, while a flat-roofed addition has been added on the right, now occupied by 81 Dorp Street (see below).

An artwork from circa 1828 in the possession of the Library of Parliament (Fig. 3) shows what appear to be flat-roofed stables on the left of the house, with the thatched-roofed, gabled...
outbuilding on the far left, while an extensive flat-roofed, now partially double-storeyed wing can be seen on the right of the main house (on the site of 81 Dorp Street), with a vine-covered trellis shading its front. A projecting stoepkamer was added in front of the main house (on the left of the front door) in about 1850, when more additions were made on the right side of the house (Fransen 2004: 55).

Figure 1. Detail of Colonel Robert Jacob Gordon’s panorama (original Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam), from circa 1790, a copy of which is displayed at the Prestwich Memorial in Somerset Road, Green Point. The house and a small outbuilding are marked with arrows, while the farmlands and VOC quarry (which can still be seen on High Level Road) are labelled.

Figure 2. A portion of Josephus Jones’s panorama from circa 1808 (courtesy Rembrandt Art Foundation), showing the Schotschekloof complex. Since the Gordon panorama (c.1790), a long thatched outbuilding has appeared on the left of the main homestead and a single-storeyed flat-roofed wing (possibly with a trellis) has been added on the right.
Figure 3. The Schotschekloof homestead in its prime circa 1828, when Petrus Johannes Pentz senior (1780-1860) lived there (Library of Parliament (30733/2)). It is much enlarged since the Gordon panorama. From left to right: Thatched outbuilding; flat-roofed outbuilding (probably stables); main house (with parapet and Cape Dutch sash windows); single-storeyed extension; double-storeyed wing with vine-covered trellis (now the approximate site of 81 Dorp Street); werf muur and orchards.

During the late 19th century the many-paned Cape Dutch sash windows were replaced with Victorian two-paned sashes. Eventually the single-storeyed stoepkamer was given a second storey, while the various outbuildings were converted into separate houses on separate erven as the market garden was subdivided. In 1902 Mrs A.C. Pentz, then owner, commissioned E. Seelinger to make further additions (Louw 1983: 289). Nearby, Pentz Street was named after one of this owner’s forebears; Petrus Johannes Pentz senior, a wine merchant, who occupied Schotschekloof in 1822 (Hart 2011: 95).

Today, although altered and with its windows changed, the main house retains its basic 18th century layout and shape, and is still easily recognisable as the house in Colonel Gordon’s panorama (c.1790). It still retains some fine single-panelled Cape Dutch doors inside. As one of the few remaining market garden homesteads of the Table Valley, and one of only three in the Bo-Kaap (along with Stadzicht and Spolander House), it is worthy of preservation and, ideally, restoration, though fortunately it is currently well maintained, unlike 81 Dorp Street next door.

81 Dorp Street (erf 9693)

As mentioned above, as early as about 1808 a single-storied outbuilding stood on the site of 81 Dorp Street, which was double-storeyed by circa 1828 (see Fig. 3). Whether the present house encapsulates this farm outbuilding is not absolutely certain, but removal of plaster may provide a clearer answer. Although the house in its present form dates from circa 1870 (Fransen 2004: 55), it appears to have already existed in 1859 largely in its present form, as can be seen on Millard’s panorama of that date (Fig. 8). In the panorama 81 Dorp Street can clearly be seen adjoining the main Schotschekloof homestead.

It seems likely, therefore, that the existing building was given a Victorian facelift in about 1870. This three-bay double-storeyed house has some fine features, including grooved and quoined plasterwork, and moulds around the windows. The parapet features an attractive moulding (Fig.
Until very recently, the house was in fairly good condition, but lately has been allowed to become derelict. It has recently suffered fire damage (from vagrants) and no longer has a roof, as can be seen in figure 13. The windows and doors have been bricked up to prevent further access to ‘undesirables’. It appears that some of the inner walls are starting to collapse (see also Fig. 13). It has been declared a problem building.

Figure 4. Undated photograph of Bo-Kaap (early 20th century) showing Schotschekloof homestead with single-storeyed projecting stoepkamer on left and 81 Dorp Street nearby.

Figure 5. Schotschekloof homestead in June 1983 (courtesy of John Rennie). The projecting stoepkamer can be seen on the left, now given a second storey to match the main house. The house is much the same today and easily recognisable as the same house shown in the previous images and the 1790 Gordon panorama, only now it is obscured by tall trees.
Figure 6. The entire remaining Scotschekloof complex, Dorp Street, in March 2013, as seen from upper Bo-Kaap. The two small cottages on the left stand on the approximate site of the thatched outbuilding in figures 2 and 3 and may contain part of that structure. The main house, with its projecting stoepkamer wing, can be seen at the centre, and 81 Dorp Street can be seen on the right, joined to the main house by a single-storeyed wing, which can also be seen in figure 3.

Figure 7. A portion of George Thompson’s ‘plan of Cape Town and its environs’ (from Thompson’s Travels, published in 1827 (National Library of South Africa)), showing the Schotschekloof homestead, already with extended outbuildings. The main homestead and 81 Dorp Street are marked by arrows. Although 81 Dorp Street’s current appearance dates from circa 1870, the site was already developed in 1827 according to this map, or even earlier, in circa 1808 (see Fig. 2).
Figure 8. Portion of the 1859 Millard panorama, showing the Scotschekloof homestead and 81 Dorp Street.

The house was featured in two Peoples Post articles on problem buildings (Hassen 2012; Roux 2012) where it was stated that it had been unoccupied for three years and recently suffered two fires started by vagrants. Nearby residents were concerned that the house was becoming a drug den and haven for criminals, and becoming a danger to local children who play in the adjacent park (Leeuwen Street Park, which was once part of its extensive garden). One of the articles stated that the house is: “Believed to be around 150 years old, the Georgian-style house is said to have been built in the late 1850s and was used as a homestead by the British. The house once boasted a garden where the British famously hosted parties and referred to it as their ‘sweeping gardens’.”

The house is at risk of further deterioration unless the owners are forced by the City to renovate the roof and inner walls before the onset of another winter (see Figures 9-14).

Figure 9. Detail of fine moulded parapet at 81 Dorp Street. Part of the top central window can be seen at the bottom of the photo, with moulded surround partially broken away from the wall, exposing brickwork.
Figure 10. 81 Dorp Street in March 2013, seen from the cobbled side alley off Pentz Street, Bo-Kaap. Leeuwen Street Park is on the right and the main Schotschekloof homestead is below the palm tree.

Figure 11 illustrates the systematic degradation of 81 Dorp Street from the mid-1980s to present. As can be seen in the middle photograph, though already fire-damaged the house was still in fairly good condition in September 2012. In the bottom photo, the roof is missing and ground-floor windows and door are now bricked up.

Figure 11. 81 Dorp Street: (a) c.1986 (courtesy David Hart);(b) September 2012 (courtesy People’s Post).

(c). April 2013, in its present state.
Figure 12. An aerial view of the Scotchekloof complex (Google Earth). 67, 69 and 81 Dorp Street and Schotschekloof house marked. Note: 81 Dorp Street still had its roof when photographed for Google Earth in c.2011.

Figure 13. 81 Dorp Street seen from Signal Hill road, March 2013. Missing roof and partial collapse of inner walls and roof timbers are evident.

Figure 14. 81 Dorp Street, March 2013. Note the remnants of attractive stone and brick garden walling in the foreground, facing Dorp Street. The main Schotschekloof homestead can be seen on the left, partially obscured by trees.
**Latest news on 81 Dorp Street**

David Hart, Principal Professional: Environmental Resource Management Department at the Heritage Resources Metro Office, City of Cape Town, says: “We are acutely aware that the winter is coming on and the building (81 Dorp Street) remains unprotected. Our City Engineer, I understand, inspected the site earlier this week. In the meantime our Problem Buildings Unit has been in discussions with the owners regarding its restoration. I am awaiting an update on this. (As the National Heritage Resources Act does not provide the City with any tools to require the maintenance of this building, the Problem Buildings By-Law is the only way we can try to address this issue)” (Email to Jim Hislop, 11 April 2013).

**Postscript:** Although the *People’s Post* articles claimed the house is owned by the Boorhanol Trust, it is in fact owned by the Moslem Progressive Society, according to Ward Councillor Dave Bryant.

**67 & 69 Dorp Street**

To the left of the main Schotschekloof homestead are two altered semi-detached three-bay cottages (now double-storeyed), which stand on the site of the long thatched outbuilding seen in figures 2, 3 and 16. Hans Fransen states that they are part of the old Schotschekloof complex, (Fransen 2004:55) and contain at least some of the fabric of the outbuilding seen on the Josephus Jones 1808 panorama (Fig. 2), which was converted into two cottages. Number 67 Dorp Street (the cottage on the left) was given a second storey in 1904 (Louw 1983: 290) while number 69 was given its second storey more recently.

![Figure 15. A portion of Josephus Jones’s panorama from circa 1808 (courtesy Rembrandt Art Foundation), showing the long thatched outbuilding on the left of the main homestead. This building seems to have been added sometime between circa 1790 when the Gordon panorama was made, and circa 1808, when the above artwork was drawn.](image1)

![Figure 16. Numbers 67 and 69 Dorp Street (the white and green buildings on the back left) stand on the site of the long thatched outbuilding, which stood to the left of the main homestead. These cottages appear to incorporate some of the thatched outbuilding (as does the house on the right, number 71 Dorp Street), though all have been given second storeys over the years.](image2)
Conclusion

The Schotschekloof complex – the remaining structures of the 18th and 19th century Schotschekloof werf – is an architecturally interesting and historically valuable group of buildings, with ties to well-known Cape families such as the Brink, Pentz, De Bruyn and De Waal families. As one of the few remaining market garden building complexes left in the Table Valley, it is deserving of protection from further alterations and vandalism. 81 Dorp Street, the building on the far right of the complex, is in dire need of protection from further damage by vagrants and the elements (it has no roof), and has been listed as a ‘problem building’ by the City. The state of this building may directly or indirectly affect that of the other buildings in the complex (such as lowering of property value, more criminal elements and further fires).

References


