

OAKDENE
99 BARON VAN REEDE STREET
ERF No. 797 (OLD ERF No. 440)

OWNER MR J. SCHOEMAN

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

This beautiful old building in Baron van Reede Street is one of the oldest dwellings in Oudtshoorn to have been kept in its original condition. In 1847 C.P. Rademeyer, the owner of the farm Hartebeestrivier, was granted permission to divide a portion of the farm into 476 irrigated and non-irrigated erven (plural of erf, the South African word for plot of ground). The newly established town became known as Oudtshoorn. The first two sales of erven took place on 15/11/1847 and 15/02/1849.

On 13/11/1852 J.H. Mulder purchased Erf No. 440, which bordered on the Grobbelaars River and C.P. Rademeyer's farm. A man named J.H. Mulder was appointed in 1858 to the building commission of the N.G. Moederkerk (the main Nederlandse Gereformeerde church in the district) for the construction of the stone church that today still stands. Prior to 1856 Mulder also bought Erf No. 442 (new No. 805) and began building the old N.G. Pastorie (parsonage). In 1857 the N.G. Kerkraad (N.G. Church Council) purchased the erf and finished building the pastorie for ds. (dominee, way to address a parson) T.J. Van der Riet. Ds. Van der Riet served as the first permanent *predikant* (parson) of the N.G. Moederkerk.

Some years later ds. Van der Riet bought the erf on which Oakdene now stands. With the death of ds. Van der Riet in 1881, his children W.A. and E.B. Van der Riet inherited the property. One K. Schenk, who was sent to Oudtshoorn during the 1880's in connection with the tobacco industry, rented the house from the van der Riets. From 1892 to 1897. In 1903 Mr. Schenk was elected as a town councillor.

In 1894 the municipal valuation of the property was 600 pounds. In 1897 the property was sold to a Mr Ockert Olivier for 900 pounds. One R.F. Ahling bought the property in 1902 and in 1915 the stables were built. A great many vines were also planted. It appears that no additional building was done on the property after 1915.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

Originally the house was built in 1853 as a typical Cape house with side gables standing proud of the roof. The extension behind the building was more in the Karoo style, built in several descending levels. This part was probably added in the 1880's.

The Victorian verandas with timber supports and ironwork, and the side annex and oriel window on the northern side were built sometime between 1897 and 1905. The cast iron decoration on the front gable dates approximately from this period. The outline finished of the doors and windows of the original part of the building were made in key pattern.

The double-panelled front door with an overhead light, sliding windows and opening-and-closing shutters are late Victorian. The house must have had a thatched roof and reed ceilings, which were later replaced with a corrugated iron roof and oregon pine ceiling. Some of the woodwork in the interior is of yellow wood.

POTABLE WATER

In front of the house is the old *leivoor* (lead water furrow) that dates back to 1847. In 1897 the Municipality made sandstone paving stones available free of charge to property owners to pave the areas in front of their homes. This one of the few paved *leivore* (furrows) from the period that still exist. Tap water became available from 1900 in this part of Oudtshoorn following the completion of the Rust en Vrede Water Scheme. Drinking water as well as lead water (for irrigation) were supplied via the furrows to the town's residents. High fines were imposed if anyone was found polluting the water. The front wall indicates a later replacement of an old wall. In front of the house stand four old oak trees that will have to be removed if expansion takes place.

PHOTOS AND SKETCHES ATTACHED

The sketches were signed by Mr D. van Biljon, an Oudtshoorn architect, and the photos were taken by members of the Preservation Committee.

MOTIVATION FOR PRESERVATION

The local Preservation Committee of Oudtshoorn and the owners of the building are concerned about the proposed further broadening of upper Baron van Reede Street. Broadening of the road began 10 years ago. The facade of Oudtshoorn's oldest existing dwelling, namely the Boswell house (1850), has unfortunately been badly affected. The road has been broadened to within 2 metres of the house's walls. The veranda and *stoep* have been removed, the old *leivoor* has been covered over and an unsightly face brick wall hides the lower portion of the building. This kind of road broadening will spoil the appearance of Oakdene too.

The Preservation Committee feels that progress and modernisation should take place, but that meaningful preservation should also be taken into account and applied. One of Oudtshoorn's main sources of income after agriculture is tourism. It is particularly important that overseas visitors be given the opportunity to appreciate the architectural heritage of our town.

NOTE: On the northern side of Oakdene is the old Keyter house, which dates from the 1860s. This double storey dwelling was purchase recently by the present Mayor, Mr de Jager. He intends to restore the house and have it declared a monument. Opposite the house stands the sandstone prison, which was built in 1912. The Preservation Committee feels that this group of buildings should be preserved at all costs.

OWNER'S OPINION

Since 1982 the owner's attitude with regard to the preservation of his house has been very positive. Mr John Schoeman, an attorney, did not realise when he bought the house that he would be living in one of Oudtshoorn's oldest houses. The agreement regarding the broadening of the road was made with the previous owner and Mr Schoeman therefore inherited this agreement. Mr Schoeman has indicated that he would very much like the facade of the building to be preserved.