

30 November 2020

SAHRA

Attention: Mr. Elijah Dumisani Kaketse

Dear Mr. Kaketse

RE: Permit Application to allow for the Destruction of the Meyer and Du Toit Farmsteads (CaseID: 15730)

Your letter of 26 November 2020 has reference. We take note of its contents indicating that the *“...reports submitted in support of this application provide conflicting information on the age of Building 1 and associated infrastructure. Please provide clarity on this in order for SAHRA to process your application. If the site and associated infrastructure is younger than 100 years an application to Mpumalanga PHRA must be submitted.”*

It is also understood from your letter that this comment is only made in relation to the Du Toit Farmstead. As a result, this letter aims to provide more clarity on the age of this farmstead.

Overview of the Buildings at the Du Toit Farmstead

At the time of the assessment undertaken in 2012, the Du Toit Farmstead was comprised of the following buildings:

- Farm Dwelling;
- Garage;
- Rondavel; and
- Livestock Enclosure.

As indicated in the Phase 2 report that was submitted with the permit application, only the Farm Dwelling, Garage and Livestock Enclosure still exist today. The Garage is younger than 60 years and is deemed to be of Low Significance whereas the Livestock Enclosure is preserved *in situ* and does not form part of this permit application. The Farm Dwelling is older than 100 years, and represents the focus of this permit application in relation to the Du Toit Farmstead.

Information Contained in the 2012 Assessment of the Du Toit Farmstead

In 2012, one of the authors of this letter (Polke Birkholtz) compiled a heritage assessment of the Du Toit Farmstead. This report consolidated the information that was available at the time, including information obtained from a study of archival references. The 2012 report was also submitted with the permit application, and is believed to be the reason for the statement made in your letter that “... reports submitted in support of this application provide conflicting information on the age of Building 1 and associated infrastructure...”.

The 2012 report provided a date for the farm dwelling as older than 60 years but younger than 100 years. This indicated date was based solely on one archival reference, namely an evaluation that was done on the property owned by Henry du Toit at the time of his death in 1973.¹ This evaluation was contained in Henry du Toit’s estate papers (National Archives, MHG, 6007/73), and indicated that in 1973 the dwelling was estimated to be 39 years old. In retrospect, the use of this archival reference without further scrutinising its accuracy, and by disregarding the other information sources such as the built fabric of the dwelling and the information on the dwelling’s age obtained from Henry du Toit’s daughter, was a mistake.

A re-investigation of this archival reference was made during the compilation of the Phase 2 report earlier this year. This re-investigation revealed a number of mistakes and problems with this archival reference. These are as follows:

- In Part A of the document, the date of acquisition of the property is given as 7 January 1967. We know from other sources and references that this date was in actual fact 7 January 1957;
- In Part C of the document, the total number of rooms is given as seven. At the time that the evaluation was done in 1973, the dwelling contained more rooms than seven, and very likely a total of 10 rooms as is the case today;
- Also in Part C of the document, the walls of the dwelling is described as ‘brick: stone’. The Du Toit dwelling has walls comprised almost entirely of stone;
- In the same section, the extent of the dwelling is indicated to be 1,250 square feet. The actual extent of the dwelling as it appears now, is closer to 2,000 square feet. Before the

¹ Henry du Toit and his wife Susanna Jacoba du Toit (born Meyer) are significant figures in the history of the farm dwelling, as they are believed to have originally built the farm dwelling and to also have lived in it for some time.

extension was made to its western side, the dwelling's extent would have been close to 1,500 square feet;

- A garage is mentioned in Part C of the document. The extent of the garage is indicated to be 180 square feet. The actual square feet extent of the only garage that ever existed on site is closer to 600 square feet; and
- Even though a space is left in the evaluation form for a rondavel, no rondavel is indicated. This despite the fact that the rondavel would have been located on site at the time that the evaluation was done.

These mistakes made on the evaluation form makes it clear that any other information included in this document should not be taken at face value and must in fact be questioned. Additionally, it is also important to note that no indication is given for where the age of the building as indicated on the form was obtained from.

For these reasons, and more importantly due to the other more reliable information listed below which shows the dwelling to be older, the indicated age of the building shown on this document was not included in the Phase 2 report and should not be considered.

Information relating to the Age of the Du Toit Farm Dwelling

Desktop Information on the Age of the Du Toit Farm Dwelling

The Du Toit farmstead was built and occupied by Henry du Toit (16 February 1881 - 27 May 1973) and his wife Susanna Jacoba du Toit (born Meyer) (26 November 1891 – 11 January 1983). This was confirmed during a discussion one of the authors (Polke Birkholtz) had with one of the couple's daughters in Emalahleni in 2012. At the time, she identified herself as Ms. Bessie du Toit. From the estate papers of Henry du Toit, it seems evident that she was the eleventh child of the couple and that her full names were Elizabeth Rautenbach (born Du Toit).

According to the estate papers of Henry du Toit (National Archives, MHG, 6007/73), Portion 5 of the farm Steenkoolspruit 181S was transferred to him on 7 January 1957. This transaction is registered as Deed Number 324/1957. After the death of Henry du Toit, the same property was transferred from his estate to his wife Susanna Jacoba du Toit on 5 February 1974 (National Archives, MHG, 6007/73). From information that is currently available, it would appear that this original Portion 5 of the farm is currently known as Portion 7 of the farm Steenkoolspruit

(<https://csg.esri-southafrica.com>). This is said from available archival and historical research, which also revealed that many of the numbers associated with other portions of the farm also changed at least once over the last century or so. The archival research has also revealed that Portion 7 can confidently be associated with Henry du Toit. This is clearly stated as such in the above-mentioned estate papers for Henry du Toit. Portion 7 of the farm Steenkoolspruit is also the correct property description for the property that the Du Toit Farmstead is currently located on.

As it is known that the Du Toit family had been living on the farm for some time before 1957, it means that they were residing on land not owned by them. However, the death certificate of Johannes Martinus Meyer (National Archives, MHG, 22088) makes it clear that Susanna Jacoba du Toit, Henry du Toit's wife, was his daughter. With this in mind it is therefore evident that the Du Toit family was staying on land owned by Mrs Du Toit's family.

Recently, we found details of the Du Toit family recorded by a family member on a genealogical website on the internet (www.geni.com), which further supports the association of Henry du Toit and his wife Susanna Jacoba du Toit (born Meyer) with the farm Steenkoolspruit as well as their residence on the farm before 1920. Of significance for establishing the age of the farm dwelling is that this genealogical information indicates that at least two of the couple's children were born on the farm Steenkoolspruit **before** 1920. This website indicates the following details for two of the couple's children:

- Johanna Maria Meyer (born Du Toit) – born on 21 June 1913 on the farm Steenkoolspruit; and
- Magdalena Dorothea Aletta Pretorius (born Du Toit) – born on 18 January 1915 on the farm Steenkoolspruit (www.geni.com).

What this information reveals is that the Henry du Toit and his wife Susanna Jacoba du Toit (born Meyer) were already living on the farm Steenkoolspruit in 1913 when their daughter Johanna Maria Meyer (born Du Toit) was born. With all archival and oral historical evidence associating the couple to this farmstead, it is reasonable to assume that the couple was living in the house known for the purposes of this study as the Du Toit Farm Dwelling as early as 1913, and quite likely a few years before the birth of this child. This supports the estimated construction date provide by Ms. Bessie du Toit as c. 1910 and also supports the estimated construction date provided by the architectural historian.

Oral Historical Information on the Age of the Du Toit Farm Dwelling

As indicated in the Phase 2 report that was submitted with the permit application, the author of that report (Mr. Polke Birkholtz) was fortunate enough to have been able to speak to the daughter of the person who built the farm dwelling in the first place. Ms. Bessie du Toit was met at her home in Emalahleni in 2012. She indicated that although she did not know the exact date on which the dwelling was completed, it was built by her father sometime before her birth in 1934. However, when asked to provide a more specific date for the age of the dwelling, Ms. Du Toit suggested that according to the information that was related to her by her parents, the house was built in c. 1910.

Architectural Historical Information on the Age of the Du Toit Farm Dwelling

General Observations regarding the Dating of Buildings

Dating vernacular farm dwellings in the region north of the Vaal River (the former province of Transvaal) is mainly guided by the single argument about the period of the building's origin: does it date to the period prior to the Anglo Boer War (1899-1902), to the period after the war and before 1920 or does it date to the period after 1920. In terms of the obligations of the National Heritage Resources Act, the objective is to determine whether the building is older than 100 years or older than 60 years.

These early farm dwellings were not recorded or documented on any map and seldom formed part of an official survey that would assist in dating them precisely. Farm boundaries were determined and later surveyed by 'veldkornettes' and only sometime later, transferred into formal deeds with a map indicating the boundaries of the farm. Although a deed with a map may have existed prior to the war, the buildings on these farms were not recorded with maps or drawings to guide dating them.

All farm dwellings were of the vernacular kind in origin as they were constructed by the landowners themselves. Few if any, may have been designed by formally trained engineers or architects. No formal documentation relating to such a formal process exist of these dwellings. The vernacular character of these dwellings implied that they were constructed from materials collected and extracted from the direct environs of the farmstead. One of the typical features of the dwellings from before the Anglo Boer War was the presence of a thatched roof. Any investigation into the date of origin would be based on an analysis of the physical built fabric.

Few farm dwellings survived the Anglo Boer War due to the 'scorched earth policy' that caused the loss of almost all farm dwellings erected prior to the war. The farm dwellings that may have survived belonged to individuals who did not oppose the presence of the British imperial forces, belonged to foreign immigrants or were utilised by the British Army for their own purposes. During the war, dwellings were burnt down, and stone dwellings were destroyed by dynamite resulting in some of the foundations and sometimes some ruins remaining.

Farm dwellings or the ruins dating back from the period prior to the war, are seldom found. The bulk of what can now be referred to as 'early' vernacular farm architecture dates to the period after the war – post 1902. When the Afrikaner farmers returned from the battlefield or the camps where they were interned during the war, they lived in the ruins on their properties. They had no money and shelters had to be created from any materials available. New dwellings were erected on the foundations of the original structures and any available cut stone or usable 'koppieklip' was used for the reconstruction of old dwellings. These buildings were also not recorded and any investigation regarding the construction and date of such a structure would be based on an analysis of the physical fabric of the structure.

Dwellings erected after the war had corrugated iron roofs with cut and planed roof trusses. Windows and doors with wooden frames and movable sections often with glass panes, were bought and subsidised by the new British government. The period 1902 to 1920 became a significant period in the architectural history of vernacular farm architecture and the Du Toit dwelling certainly dates from this period. The period after 1920 became a significant indicator of construction dates, as steel frame windows were only introduced after 1920. Wooden doors and windows were the norm prior to this date.

Dating of the Du Toit Farm Dwelling

Key sources in the dating of buildings include an assessment of the built fabric combined with oral evidence. In terms of the former, dating depended on the presence and age of any prefabricated and manufactured materials, equipment, fixtures and fittings.

The size and scale of the original core section of the structure indicate that it was a small dwelling. It was later extended. This scale expresses the economic status of the landowner. The building was constructed of stone with sand and clay mortars. The original windows and doors were simple and the most basic prefabricated wooden units. When the building was extended, fixtures and fittings from the 1920s and later were introduced. This confirms that the core section

of the dwelling must have existed prior to 1920. It implies that the original core section of the dwelling is certainly older than 100 years.

Conclusions

The following conclusions can be made regarding the age of the Du Toit Farmstead:

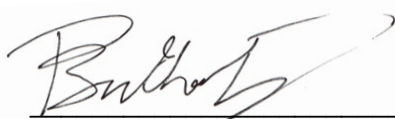
- The farm dwelling is strongly associated with Henry du Toit (16 February 1881 - 27 May 1973) and his wife Susanna Jacoba du Toit (born Meyer) (26 November 1891 – 11 January 1983). At least two of their children were born on the farm Steenkoolspruit before 1920, with one born in 1913 and the second in 1915. What this information reveals is that Henry du Toit and his wife Susanna Jacoba du Toit (born Meyer) were already living on the farm Steenkoolspruit in 1913 when their daughter Johanna Maria Meyer (born Du Toit) was born. With all archival and oral historical evidence associating the couple to this farmstead, it is reasonable to assume that the couple was living in the house known for the purposes of this study as the Du Toit Farm Dwelling as early as 1913, and quite likely a few years before the birth of this child;
- The daughter of Henry and Susanna Jacoba du Toit told one of the authors of this letter in 2012 that according to information related to her, the house was built by her father in c. 1910;
- The tangible remains of the farm dwelling were assessed by an architectural historian and dated to the first two decades of the twentieth century, further supporting the establishing of the building's age as older than 100 years;
- The above-mentioned sources of information all support a construction date for the farm dwelling of before 1920. The only contradictory information regarding the dating of the building was originally found in an evaluation document associated with the estate papers of Henry du Toit. In the heritage assessment compiled by one of the authors of this letter in 2012 (Polke Birkholtz), this archival reference and the contradictory date contained in it were mistakenly taken at face value. A closer examination of this archival reference revealed a number of mistakes, which brings the entire document and age for the dwelling contained in it, into serious question. It is for this reason that this date was never mentioned in the Phase 2 report;
- At the time that the heritage assessment was undertaken in 2012, the farmstead comprises four buildings, namely a farm dwelling, rondavel, garage and livestock

enclosure. Of these buildings, the garage is younger than 60 years and of low heritage significance whereas the rondavel does not exist anymore. Additionally, the livestock enclosure is protected *in situ*, which means that the permit application for this farmstead only relates to the farm dwelling, which as shown above, is older than 100 years; and

- Three sources of data confirm that the farm dwelling is older than 100 years, namely desktop and genealogical information, the architectural historical assessment of the built fabric of the dwelling and information obtained from the daughter of person who built the farm dwelling. The authors are both confident that the farm dwelling forming part of the Du Toit Farmstead is older than 100 years.

If any additional information is required please feel free to contact the undersigned.

Yours sincerely,



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