

Kas di Hadrey Antique Living Houses of Bonaire Preserving Bonaire's Architectural Heritage

by Wilna Groenenboom



Located in Rincon on the corner of Kaya Rincon and Kaya Commerce, this beautiful old house, a *Kas di Hadrey* (house with porch), can be recognized by the rain gutter around the house and the roof decorations (*dakpoppen*) on the saddle roof (*dak di hefe*). This is the first house in Rincon in this series. At the moment it's not inhabited, but because it has so many interesting details it's impossible to ignore and not write about it. The house needs some massive restoration before people can live in it again; probably this will happen in the course of this year.

The house catches our attention by its central place in the heart of Rincon at Plaza Commerce, across from the post office, literally a part of the Rincon Marshé every first Saturday of the month.

As usual, determining the right age of a house is difficult. The first record appears with the selling of the property on August 27, 1868. "By decision of the Government of Curaçao" the ground was sold to Theodorus Mool. In 1915 the house built on the property was sold to Lourens Frederik Simon van der Dijs.



In 1926 Johannes Vindicianus Schermer (b. 1878) and his wife Maria Pitronella Ellis



(b. 1879) bought the house and rented it out until 1934. For a period it even served as a government office where civil marriages took place. In 1934 their eldest son, Johannes Facundo Schermer (b.1903) married Antonia Ulpiana Martinus (b.1912) and they moved into the house. They had five children: John Gerard, Richard Patricio, Maria Ana, Emma Atanasia and Antonio Humercindo. Because of an old Bonairean Catholic tradition, each of the children's second names was that of the saint's on the day they were born. The names could be found in the Bristol Almanac which was part of nearly every Bonairean household. On their 25th wedding anniversary the Schermer family had this photo (above) taken in Curaçao.

There are two main buildings and a barn on the property. On the Kaya Commerce side is a "façade" of a small wooden building (*Kas di tabla*). Emma Schermer knows that it was always there so it must be more than 70 years old. Throughout its life the

Kas di tabla has housed a medical practice, health center, hairdresser, policeman's home, a *toko* or mini market, and most recently a kind of storehouse of one of the Schermer sons who was an electrician. In the façade we see holes where a little roof on the street side used to be.

On the right side of the house there was a storehouse and a garage where they parked their Willys, a car made in Canada, imported from the US, one of the first cars in Rincon. In the storehouse was produce from their *kurukus*: goat meat, goat skin, dried watapana fruits, aloe, com, pumpkins, watermelons and beans - which were sold in the *Kas di tabla* -not only for the local market but also for Curaçao.

From this income, combined with Johannes Facundo Schermer's salary as a light-house keeper they could pay for their five children to go to school in Curaçao. In those days there was no secondary education in Bonaire.



This is, in many ways, an unusual *Kas di Hadrey*; its porch (*hadrey*) is at the back of the house rather than the front. It also has very beautiful white braces (decorations) above each shuttered window and door, which is also very unusual (photo middle and right above). These braces also appear on the wall of Johannes Facundo Scher-

mer's parental home in Rincon on Kaya Kontento where he grew up and on a house on the seaside of Playa Pabou in Kralendijk, Kaya J.N.E. Craane.

The five half pillars on the façade of the main house define each window and door.

But perhaps the most interesting feature is the stone structure on the outside walls on the left side of the main house. This section is younger than the rest; it wasn't built of coral like the main house but was made from cement. Each layer of this "cement stone" was made in a form like they use today. Each form is one foot high. To construct a two-meter wall you will need seven forms. Afterwards the walls were decorated with a fake stone pattern made with a metal form with a certain relief on it. A small layer of cement was put in the form and placed on the wall. The wall of the Protestant Congregation of Bonaire on the Kaminda la Union 43 was built the same way but with a different pattern (photo under the *Kas di tabla*).

This side of the house is designed in a "cubistic" style. Above the shutters we see only a horizontal decoration; the white braces are missing. The chimney has a simple cubistic look. And behind the checkered window (photo right below) is the kitchen.

Because of all these different and unusual details, this house is like a diamond in the heart of Rincon, and because of its dignity and worth, in my opinion it should be placed on the list of architectural monuments of Bonaire. Story & photos by Wilna Groenenboom

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