THE LIFE OF

AN

INDIAN IMMIGRANT

AMIR SING

by

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STUDENT NO. 3832 EXTERNAL

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1.PLACE OF ORIGIN IN INDIA/OTHER COUNTRY.

Amir Sing arrived at Port Natal on the 30 th June 1883 on the John Davie 1. He set out from a little village Muzaffarnagar,[2][1] which is situated near Delhi, in India. He was accompanied by his brother Golab Sing.[2]

Why did a young man of 22 years on the threshold of life leave his motherland ?

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1. Appendix no. 1.

2. Appendix no. 2.

2. REASONS FOR LEAVING ORIGINAL COUNTRY.

In 1851 Edward Morewood set up the first sugar mill on the Natal North Coast and this gave impetus to the development of the sugar industry. To ensure a steady growth of the industry a forceful and regular labour supply was required. During this time the Zulus who lived in Natal found it totally unnecessary to unshackle themselves from their firmly entrenched tribal system of living and go out to work for the white colonists. So Natal faced a severe labour shortage. Since Natal was a British Colony she turned to India a British ruled country for assistance to overcome her labour shortage.

In 1860 the first batch of Indians aboard the ship TRURO arrived in Port Natal.
"The coming of Indians to Natal was no spontaneous uncontrolled movement of adventurous individuals seeking a better livelihood than their home-country gave them. It was an elaborate system organised and controlled by the Government of Great Britain and India." [3]

"It should be emphasised that there has been very little spontaneous emigration of the labouring classes from India to South Africa. They were recruited with

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3.Mabel Palmer: The History of Indians in Natal,P.4.

difficulty, and not unfrequently by methods which were commonly knowm as "Coolie Catching".[4]

This scheme of bringing out indentured labourers was an elaborate scheme devised by the British to acquire labour but at the same time people other than those who were caught in the "Coolie Catching" scheme were lured by recruiters who were paid £3 to £5 per individual recruited. They told stories of a country where "chilli trees bore gold," and where "fowls laid diamonds".[5] Who would not resist the temptation of emigrating to such a country? However, broadly speaking in every case emphasis for the reason for emigrating is to be cited in one of these general reasons that is economic oppurtunity, family disputes and the desire for adventure.

According to Ms. I.A. Singh (Anjani) the daughter of Amir Sing he left India because of a dispute with his sister-in-law. It could have well been the case but I believe that this was subsidiary and that he left India with visions of wealth and progress. This was evident in the fact that while working on the sugar estate he rose to the responsible position of a "sirdar" a position equivalent to an overseer.Later he acquired many hectares of land in the Avoca, Red Hill area. He was an aspiring man who toiled relentlessly to fulfil whatever, his visions of wealth was.

4.Hilda Kupur: Indian People in Natal, P4.

5.Hilda Kupur:Indian People in Natal, P10.

3. SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND.

Much is not known about his socio-economic background in India but the family possessed a family house in Muzaffarnagar. Amir Sing used to visit India after his period of indenture in the company of his eldest son Dalip Sing, now deceased. They visited the family house where his brother lived. Twenty years ago when Dalip Sing visited India he found that the house was not there. All that he saw was a solitary tree that grew in the garden. The neighbours told him that they had sold their property and moved away.

4. MARRIAGE AND BIRTH OF CHILDREN.

Amir Sing married Bhogaruthy,[6] South African born daughter of Ranjith Singh also an indentured labourer.

Nine children were born of this marriage.

1. Jalwa Sing.	Deceased.
2. Sookdhay Sing.	Deceased.
3. Chanderkali Sing.	Deceased.
4. Dalip Sing.	Deceased.
5. Debi Sing.	Deceased.
6. Runjit Sing.[7]	Deceased.
7. Phoolmathie Sing.	(Presently residing in Belvedere Road, Isipingo.)
8. Deoki Sing.	(Presently residing at 183 Bailey Road, Red Hill.)
9. Anjani Sing.	(Presently residing at 191 Bailey Road, Red Hill.)

Each one of his children married well, lived well and died natural deaths except for Debi Sing whose marriage ended in a separation due to the fact that too much of his time was spent away from home due to his pursuits in the South African Congress.

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6. Appendix no. 3.

7. Appendix no. 3.

5. FIRST PLACE OF SETTLEMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA.

As an indentured labourer to South Africa Amir Sing's first place of settlement was on the sugar estate of Courtney Acutt and Company situated in the Ottawa, Inanda area. This estate was then known as the "Acutt Kotrie" by the Indians and is today owned by the Durban Corporation for Indian housing (Phoenix) and the old house of the boss still romains as a monument.

6. FIRST OCCUPATION.

On his arrival he served as an indentured labourer on the Acutt Estate earning the minimal wage of 10s per month for the first year and then an additional 1s for each of the remaining years in his five year period of contract. It is not knowm when a transfer from the Acutt Estate to the Effingham Sugar Estate in Duikerfontein took place but it was here that he worked as a "sirdar" This sugar estate was situated in the road now known as Mill Road.

7. SUBSEQUENT PLACES OF SETTLEMENT.

The only other place of settlement during his life was on the property that he acquired in the Avoca, Bhamo Avenue and Bailey Road area. On his land in Avoca he built two houses. His first house was situated on the shoulder of the hill under a very large fig tree which still stands today and the levelled ground on which the house stood is still recognisable. This house he built around the year 1900.

While living here he farmed extensively and gradually he procured land on the hill facing the Avoca property, now known as Bhamo And Bailey Road.[8] The present Avoca Secondary lies in the valley of the two adjacent hills. This property that he bought later was to be more arable. On this property he grew vegetable, mainly peas and mealies and he also kept poultry. Peas and mealies were grown on a large scale, both of which was sold fresh and a large quantity was dried and supplied to a small local grocer's shop.

Fresh fruit, mainly tropical such as bananas, guavas, granadillas, pineapples, pears and mangoes were marketed. Alarge orchard of mango trees is still visible on the hill. Eventually, he turned to flower cultivation and this is how I remember the land in my childhood. Hectares of land was covered by flowers called agapanthus and red hot pokers. This business was handed down to his sons.

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8. Appendix no.4.

Amir Sing was very enterprising and business-minded. He worked very hard and provided well for his family. Both his younger sons had high school education. He worked hard to expand but he was by no means frugal.

About 1919 with the help of a building contractor he erected a large colonial styled wood and iron house on top of the hill which stands majestically facing Avoca Road and overlooking the valley below. The house at 214 Avoca Road [9] was surrounded by a very large park -like garden complete with white benches and swings. Part of the garden has now been removed to make way for his grandson's houses but part of the garden with a brick fence,tall pine trees and palm trees still exist.

I have often heard my father the late Runjit Sing speak of the family effort that went into all farming activities. His sons as well as his daughters helped in sowing as well as harvesting. Spotted on the farm were little barracks in which Bantu lived and who made up the labour supply. Every member of the family had to stay up as late as was required in order to get the farm product that they were either packing or bundeling ready for the next day.

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9. Appendix no. 5 .

8. SOCIAL, RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL ACTIVITIES.

Amir Sing was pious and devout and the old umdoni tree under which he and his family offerred prayers still stands today as part of the family property.

Soon he, as well as other residents of Avoca began thinking of a religious centre within easy reach. This is not at all surprising for an Indian having come from India where there are numerous temples. A concerted effort together with contemptories Ragubir and Mahangu lead to the construction of the Avoca Road Temple situated on the corner of Avoca Road and Umhlangane Road in the 1920's. This was built to serve the immediate community.

The method used to procure money was by requests of donations. Money was required for material only, the land was donated and manpower was supplied by willing residents. Although, it is a very modest temple it serves the community and is now run under the auspices of the Avoca Cultural Group. Children can be seen gathering in the afternoons to learn Hindi and important Hindu religious festivals are still observed elaborately.

9. CONCLUSION.

Amir Sing is remembered with fondness and spoken of lovingly by his three surviving daughters. The fruit of his hard work is still enjoyed today because every grandchild, son or daughter has inherited a part of his land .

Amir Sing's death certificate reads that he was found dead in a river in Avoca. [10] According to his daughter Ms. I.A.Singh (Anjani) he committed suicide, a topic much avoided by the family. I myself had not known the fate of my grandfather until I begah this research.

It makes me wonder why such a strong man as he was and one who accomplished so much in a strange country and with the beginnings of a peniless servile should have chosen such a death. He was eighty years old when he passed away and we shall never know the personal reason for his death but he remains peacefully buried next to his wife under an avenue of pear trees on an empty plot belonging to my family at 199 Bailey Road, Red Hill.[11]

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10. Appendix no. 6 .

11. Appendix no. 7.

APPENDIX 1.

B.M.25

DEPARTMENT OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS

COPY OF SHIP'S LIST OF INDIAN IMMIGRANT

Serial Number	:	15
Colonial Number	:	29277
Date of Arrival	:	30.6.1883
Name of Ship	:	JOHN ~~DAVIE~~ DAVIE I
Place of Registration	:	—
Date of Registration	:	—
Number in Register	:	—
Name	:	AMIR SING
Father's Name	:	GURJA SING
Age	:	22 YRS
Sex	:	MALE
Caste	:	RAJPOOT
District	:	MOZUFFURNUGGUR
Thanna/Taluq	:	[illegible]
Village	:	KHOSALEE
Height	:	5'10"
Bodily Marks	:	FACE POCK MARKED
Name of Next-of-Kin	:	BROTHER GOLAB
Relations Accompanied	:	—
Small Pox/Vaccinated	:	VACCINATED
Remarks	:	—
		DIED 27-11-1933

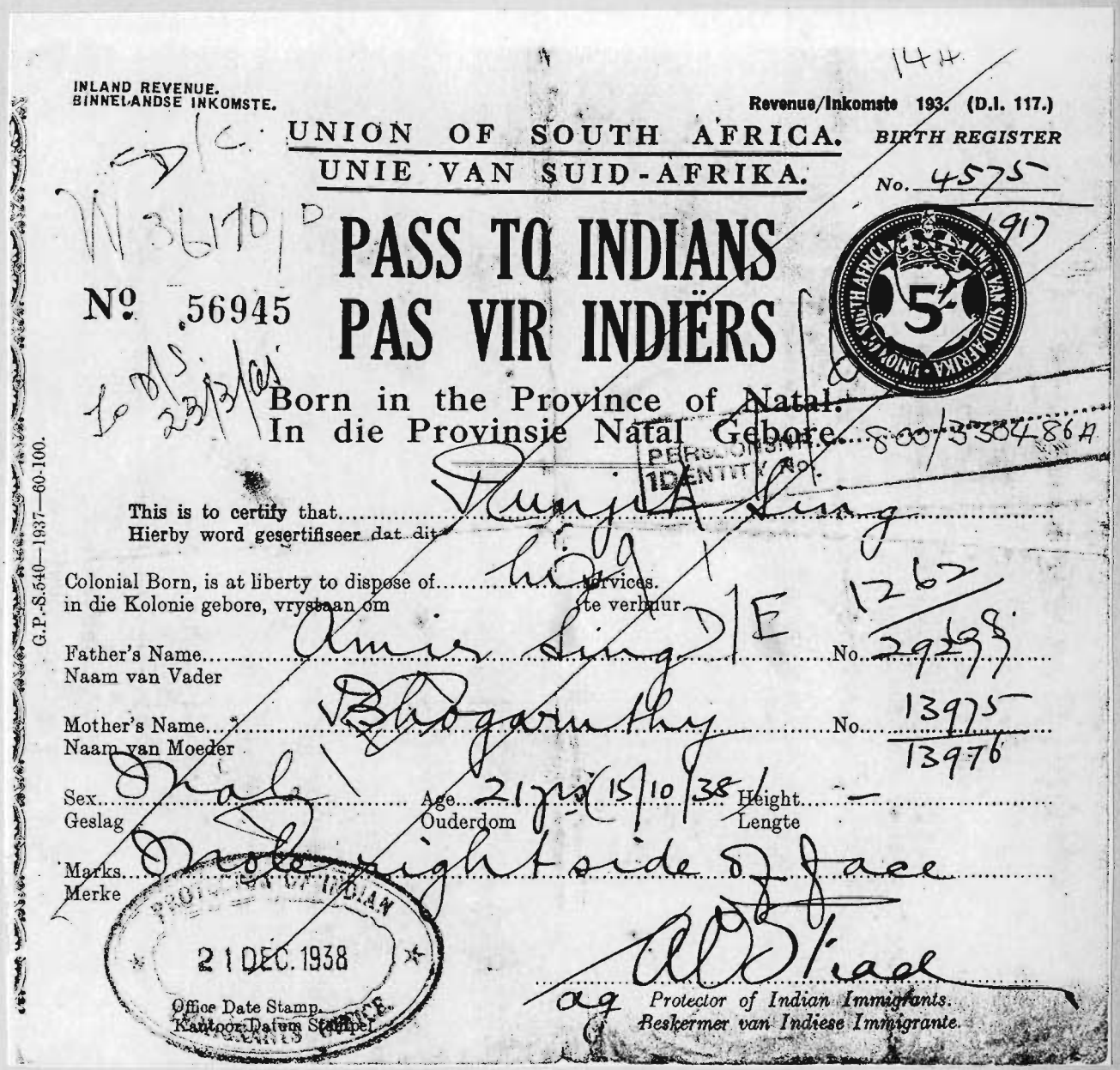
Certified a true copy.

REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE

APPENDIX 2

Srinagar
Rawalpindi
Islamabad
Lahore
Amritsar
Ludhiana
Chandigarh
Ambala
Delhi
Meerut
Moradabad
Bareilly
Jaipur
Agra
Kanpur
Jodhpur
Udaipur
Ahmadabad
Baroda
Indore
Bhopal
Jabalpur
Surat
Nagpur
Aurangabad
Bombay
Poona
Sholapur
Hyderabad
Kolhapur
Belgaum
Hubli
Bellary
Kurnool
Raichur
Gulbarga
Nizamabad
Warangal
Vijayawada
Rajahmundry
Kakinada
Visakhapatnam
Vasulipatam
Gauhati
Lucknow
Varanasi
Allahabad
Patna
Gaya
Ranchi
Jamshedpur
Calcutta
Howrah
Bhagalpur
Darbhanga
Gorakhpur
Muzaffarpur
Kathmandu
Everest
Lake Manasarowar
Tsangpo
Brahmaputra
Bay of Bengal
Indian Ocean
Mouths

APPENDIX 3



INLAND REVENUE.
BINNELANDSE INKOMSTE.

Revenue/Inkomste 193. (D.I. 117.)

UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA. BIRTH REGISTER
UNIE VAN SUID-AFRIKA. No. 4575

1917

PASS TO INDIANS
PAS VIR INDIËRS

No. 56945

Born in the Province of Natal.
In die Provinsie Natal Gebore.

This is to certify that
Hierby word gesertifiseer dat dit

Colonial Born, is at liberty to dispose of services.
in die Kolonie gebore, vrystaan om te verhuur.

Father's Name
Naam van Vader

Mother's Name
Naam van Moeder

Sex
Geslag

Age
Ouderdom

Height
Lengte

Marks
Merke

21 DEC. 1938
Office Date Stamp.
Kantoor Datum Stempel.

Protector of Indian Immigrants.
Beskermer van Indiese Immigrante.

G.P.-S.540—1937—60-100.

APPENDIX 4

The area shaded in red indicates the land that he acquired after he bought property in Avoca.

COUNTY

LOT

AVENUE

BAILEY

BHAMO

Runjit

7

C
4.6605A

B(Road)
26427 SF

G
14207 SF

F
10776 SF

E
12752 SF

H
15790 SF

I
13709 SF

J
14040 SF

18
18124 SF

21
23525 SF

22
16034 SF

2
14368 SF.

3
12552 SF

4
16858 SF

5
12554 SF

6
14061 SF

8
10001 SF

9
11086 SF

10
12635 SF

11
10002 SF

7
12314 SF

14
10000 SF

13
10002 SF

12
10001 SF

23
10080 SF

22
10000 SF

21
10001 SF

15(Road)

A(Road)

11(Road)

13(Road)

9(Road)

A(Road) of 2

A(Road) of 4

Rem of 11
(17650 SF)

Rem of 12
(18733 SF)

Rem of 3
(14441 SF)

Rem of 2
(13742 SF)

Rem of 4
(10890 SF)

Rem of 5
(12315 SF)

Road

APPENDIX 5.

Different views of the house.

5.1

5.2

260

5.3.

5.4.

APPENDIX 6

B-I 20

15137

REPUBLIEK VAN SUID-AFRIKA

VERKORTE STERFTESERTIFIKAAT

(Uitgereik kragtens Wet No. 81 van 1963)

Gesertifiseer **'n ware uittreksel** uit die sterfte-register **van:**

REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

ABRIDGED DEATH CERTIFICATE

(Issued in terms of Act No. 81 of 1963)

Certified a true extract from the death register of:

Identiteitsnommer
Identity number

Van SING
Surname

Volle voorname AMIR
First names in full

Geboortedatum: Dag — Maand — Jaar — 80YRS
Date of birth: Day Month Year

Geslag MALE
Sex

Bevolkingsgroep INDIAN
Population group

Huwelikstaat NOT STATED
Marital status

Datum van afsterwe: Dag 27 Maand 11 Jaar 1933
Date of death: Day Month Year

Plek van afsterwe AVOCA
Place of death

Oorsake van dood THE DECEASED WAS FOUND DEAD IN A RIVER AT AVOCA.
Causes of death

(Amptelike kantoordatum-stempel)

(Official date stamp)

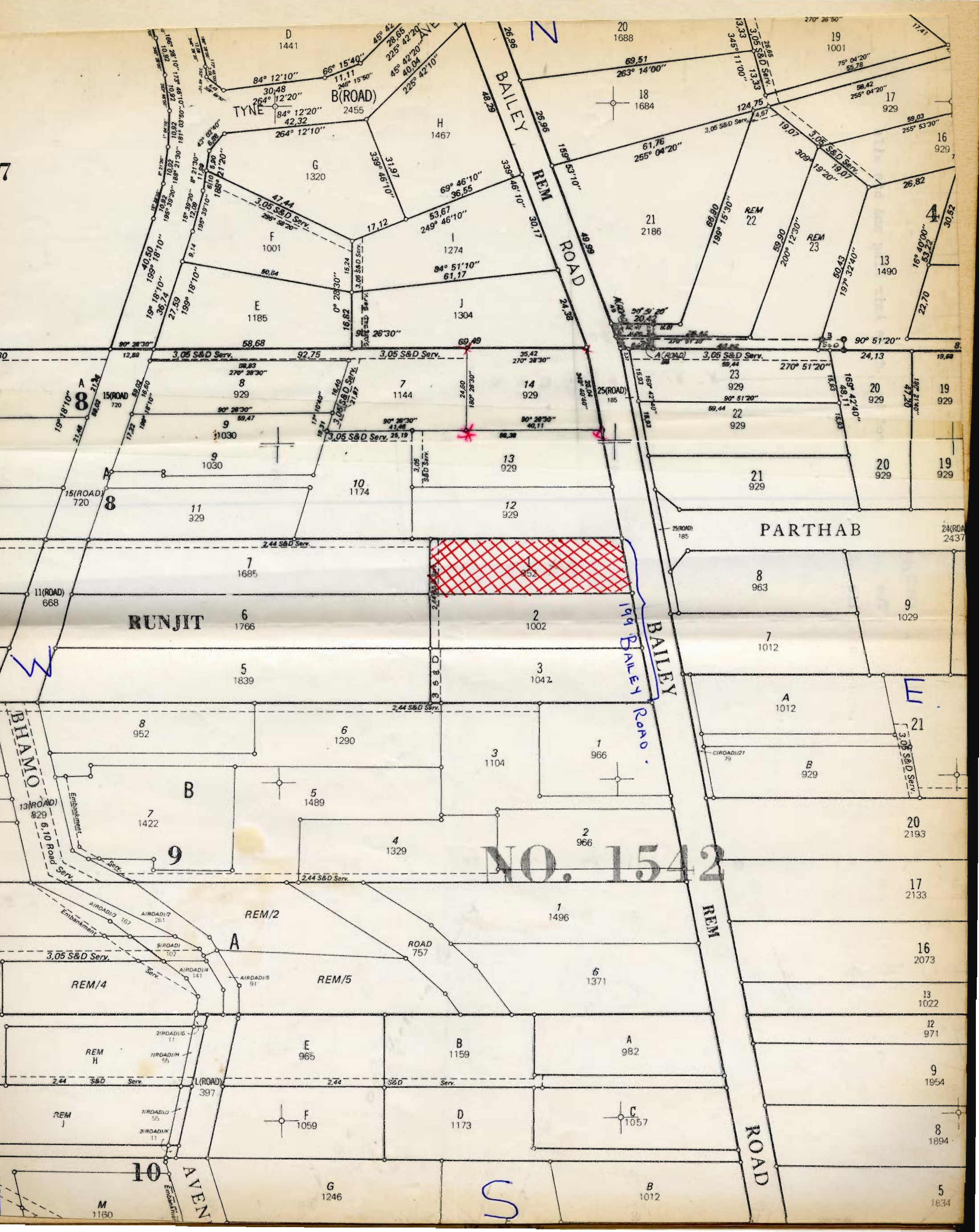
Sekretaris van Binnelandse Sake
Secretary for the Interior

D/E 1903/33

G.P.-S.53858—1970-71—1 000-100 S

APPENDIX 7

The area shaded in red is where Amir Sing and his wife lie buried.


BAILEY ROAD
REM
ROAD
TYNE
AVE
BHAMO
RUNJIT
PARTHAB
AVEN
D 1441
B(ROAD) 2455
H 1467
G 1320
F 1001
I 1274
E 1185
J 1304
20 1688
18 1684
19 1001
17 929
16 929
21 2186
REM 22
REM 23
13 1490
8 929
7 1144
14 929
9 1030
13 929
10 1174
11 929
12 929
15(ROAD) 720
25(ROAD) 185
11(ROAD) 668
7 1685
6 1766
5 1839
3 1047
2 1002
1 952
8 952
6 1290
3 1104
1 966
5 1489
7 1422
4 1329
2 966
REM/2
1 1496
ROAD 757
REM/4
REM/5
6 1371
E 965
B 1159
A 982
F 1059
D 1173
C 1057
G 1246
B 1012
M 1160
A 1012
B 929
21 929
20 929
19 929
22 929
8 963
9 1029
7 1012
20 2193
17 2133
16 2073
13 1022
12 971
9 1954
8 1894
5 1834
NO. 1542

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