

On the right, at the corner of Swalle Street and Lourensford Road is the Playhouse. This is the home of the Hottentots Holland Dramatic Society. Originally the Hottentots Holland Philharmonic and Dramatic Society, it was established in 1927, putting on shows in the Somerset West Town Hall and the now demolished Strand pavilion and Masonic hall in Reitz Street.

The present theatre opened on the 26th of May 1973 with the play, "The Young Elizabeth" directed by Elizabeth Carter. The building was designed by architect member, Harry Hargreaves. The grounds and buildings are fully owned by this active society.

Senior Citizens

Across the road are Vonke House, Chris Heunis Home and Swannack Gardens run by the Society for the Welfare of the Aged.

This complex was established on ground donated to the society by the Vonke Brothers Builders. Previously there was a house, a warehouse and a large brickfield excavation on the property. This very active society runs about 14 establishments for the aged in Somerset West and Macassar. The present director is Mr Bertie Kotze, one time mayor of Somerset West.

On previous maps of Somerset West, Valentine Street is positioned to run from Drama Street to Batavia Street through the Vonke House complex. This street was never to see the light of day.

Willem Adriaan

Continuing down Lourensford Road, we pass Riverside Park on the right with the entrance to the privately owned historical home of Morgenster across the river. Further down Lourensford road we pass Greef Street (leading to Thom Street) named after former mayor of Somerset West.

Turn left into Vergelegen Avenue. On the right at this junction is the entrance to Vergelegen. This was the controversial farm of Willem Adriaan van der Stel who in 1700 persuaded a visiting commissioner of the Dutch East India Company to grant him 400 morgen of land in the Hottentots Holland area. The present homestead is built on the ruins of the Van Der Stel homestead and some ruins of the wheat-grinding mill on the river still exist today.

Treasure Buried

Van der Stel also had grandiose ideas of building a summerhouse on Schaapenberg! Today all that adorns Schaapenberg is a post office microwave tower and a survey beacon. Folklore also has it that Schonenberg treasure is buried on Vergelegen. The "Schonenberg" ran aground at Cape Agulhas in 1722. Survivors made their way to the Hottentots Holland and the story goes that the treasure they brought with them was buried on Vergelegen. There have been numerous owners of Vergelegen including Barend Geldenhuys, Michael Otto, Jurgen Rodyn, Nicholaas Vlok, Johannes de Waal, Jacobus Malan, Rudolf Loubser, Wouter de Vos, and Marthinus Wilhelmus Theunissen. The farm remained in the hands of the Theunissen family from 1798 until it was sold to the Hon. Sir James Silverwright, Commissioner of Crown Lands and Public Works, in 1899.

Back Gable

Then Irishman Samuel Kerr, who made his fortune in the diamond diggings, bought the farm and later in 1917 when Kerr died, the farm was purchased by Sir Lionel Phillips. It was Lady Phillips who formed the Hottentots Holland Horticultural Society in 1924. Extensive restoration occurred at this home, including a new back gable (which is a replica of that of the Paarl Pastorie 1786) and the octagonal wall surrounding the garden. Upon the death of Lady Phillips in 1940, the farm was sold to Mrs Cynthia Barlow. Anglo American

It is now owned by Anglo American Farms who are well on their way to creating a model farm...the best in South Africa, of world class.