

Last week we ended our adventure at the point of passing the original Parel Vallei Homestead on the right in Parel Vallei Road.

In 1717 this farm, then divided into two, was sold three times eventually becoming the property of Olaf de Wet. In 1748 the two divisions were sold separately, the original Parel Vallei to Matthaim Le Roux and De Paarden Stal (or later De Paarde Vlei) to Jacob van Renen.

In 1763 the De Vos family took ownership and it remained in this family for 33 years before being sold to Johannes Albertus Myburgh. He probably added the front and back gables to the house. It remained in the hands of the Myburgh family until after World War I when it was purchased and restored by John Macdonald. In the 1920's James Head purchased the homestead and during this time it was almost completely gutted by a fire. It was then sold to Mr Hendrickson who rebuilt the homestead. The next owner was Captain SB Hulls. Finally it was purchased by Historical Homes of S.A. Ltd.

Turn right at Irene Avenue and first left into Pinewoods Road. Continue down Pinewoods Road until its intersection with Helderberg Street. Pinewood Road takes its name from the home of Captain Harries, Pinewoods, which was in this area. He owned the first motorcar in Somerset West, a Humber. The CFM registration in the early 1900's was C.L.O! At the bottom of Helderberg Street, turn right into Main Street - I don't think that you can turn right here anymore. On the left is Stellendal Homestead and on the right a little further up can be seen what used to be the residence of the Magistrate.

Further down on the right is Southey's Vines. These Herbert Baker homesteads, built in 1923, were sold to the Municipality in 1978 by Mrs Ann Cara-Southey, daughter of Capt. Robert Southey. The area is now used as a community Centre.

Turn right at Links Garage into the Old Stellenbosch Road. This is all that remains of the original road from Stellenbosch to Somerset West. On the right is De Hoop Primary School, opened in 1970 with Mr P Bshoff as first Principal. On the left at the intersection of Scholtz Road is the Helderberg Hospice Headquarters opened in August 1988. The property is leased from the Municipality.

Helderberg College

Continuing up the Old Stellenbosch road you cross Helderberg College Road, the original part of this road are on the right and leads to the Helderberg College of the Seventh Day Adventist Church. It was established in 1928.

At the intersection of Irene Avenue, turn left over the bridge. This is Bakkerskloof Road leading back along Harewood Avenue to Bakkerskloof Road. Bakkerskloof was originally a small grant to Christiaan Gunter in 1784. It is of importance in that it was purchased in 1868 by David Christian de Waal. Heel later became the MP for Piketburg and in 1889 became the Mayor of Cape Town. De Waal Drive is named after him.

He married Hester Sophia Hofmeyr, elder sister of Onze Jan Hofmeyr who frequently visited the farm and thus eventually met his bride-to-be, Alida Hendriksz. The second of David Christiaan de Waal's seven children was born at Bakkerskloof in 1871. This was Jan Hendrik Hofmeyr de Waal (named after Onze Jan).

Afrikaans Language.

He was one of the early champions of the Afrikaans language. He was the editor of De Goede Hoop and published a play Anjelina in its first issue in 1903. In 1904 he published the first historical novel written in Afrikaans - Johannes van Wyk. Like his father, he too was MP for Piketburg and was speaker in the House of Assembly in 1929. It was David Christiaan de Waal, who planted the avenue of oaks leading to the homestead. Continue over the bridge, turning left into Abelia Street. We are now in Heldervue suburb, the streets all being named after plants. One street was Hakea but its name was changed because Hakea is regarded as a noxious weed.

Continue down Abelia Street until the intersection of Lobelia Street and turn left into Lobelia Street.

It was in this area that the first glider aeroplane flight of the region took place in 1908. The boxed place was imported from France and assembled and flown here by Ralph "Papa" Mansell, the chief engineer of the Cape Explosive Works. The last street on the left is Magnolia Street. This leads to the old homestead of Groot Paardevlei. Originally called De Paarden Stal and formed part of Parel Vallei although it was only granted to Francois van der Stel some eight years after

he was granted Parel Vallei.

Fortune Buried

Groot Paardevlei also has its ghost - Boon. Boon, a one-time owner, is said to have hung himself in one of the rooms of the homestead when he got into financial difficulties. He is also reputed to have buried a fortune in premises near the old farmhouse. In view of the circumstances of his death the story of the treasure is very doubtful. It has however, been searched for but never found. The farm was also sub-divided in the late 1800's De Beers purchasing Lower Paardevlei and Klein Paardevlei.

In 1945 Groot Paardevlei was purchased by Mr and Mrs. A Rudston Brown. They fully restored the home and extended all four ends of the "H" with the addition of new rooms. The homestead now belongs to Sanlam.

Lord Charles

Continue down Lobelia Street until Main Road is reached and turn left. The Lord Charles Hotel (named after Lord Charles Somerset who granted the establishment of the Village of Somerset) is Somerset West's newest and most modern hotel. It was opened in 1988 and received a five-star rating 1989.

At the traffic lights turn right; proceed along the highway leading to strand. At the traffic lights at De Beers Avenue turn left. On the right is AECL. A provisional licence for the erection of an explosives factory was first granted to De Beers consolidated Mines in 1900. Building was immediately commenced and completed in 1901.

Final Episode

Continue back along De Beers Avenue. The gum trees planted along this avenue are attributed to George Brooke who managed the De Beers dairy farm in the early 1900's. He was the son of Archdeacon Richard Brooke, headmaster of Diocesan College in Cape Town. Along De Beers Avenue the Melck Slot is crossed. This waterway follows the course of an old furrow dug by Martin Melck of Groot Paardevlei to supplement water in the vlei with waters from the Lourens River. At the intersection of De Beers Avenue and the N2 on the left is the Danie Ackerman Primary School opened here in 1989 and behind it is the new school building for Gordon High School. Turn right onto the N2 and continue to the traffic lights and turn left into Victoria Street.

Continue up to the intersection of Reitz Street and turn right. Turn right again in Church Street. This leads you to the Old Dutch Reformed Church. This church was completed in the early 1820's being opened and consecrated Ds Meent Borchard of Stellenbosch on 13th February 1820.

In 1862 a storm damaged the church and it had to be repaired. Restoration to a limited extent took place in 1962. It was declared a National Monument in 1963. This derelict church and graveyard is the shame of Somerset West. It is an important part of our history and urgently needs to be fully restored. The ministers resided at Pastorie Farm, as the official pastorie was not yet completed. The pastorie was, however, occupied by the church sextant, Pieter Weyderman, who was also the undertaker. Draft Constitution

Buried in the church graveyard are many prominent Somerset West citizens including JH ("Onze Jan") Hofmeyer, the champion fighter for harmonious relations between the Dutch and the English. He died in London while part of a delegation taking the draft constitution of the Union of South Africa to the British Government. His remains were brought back to South Africa and he was buried in Somerset West on the 17th of November 1909. Members of the Cape Town cricket club acted as pallbearers.

Continue back along Church Street up to Andries Pretorius Street. When the Emancipation of Slavery Act" came into force in the Cape Colony this area of Somerset West was purchased by the Rev. Barnabas Shaw for the settlement of freed slaves. The Methodist church is on the right. It was opened in 1861. Built when an earlier chapel (together with the mission home) was demolished because it had become too small for the growing congregation.

Continue up Church Street. On the right is the Synagogue, opened in 1923.

We have come to the end of our tour. We ho you have enjoyed rediscovering this beautiful town with its rich heritage going back to the cattle post established here over 300 years ago.

With thanks to Dr Chipps!!!! And the District Mail.