

# Vernacular Architecture Society of South Africa



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### Cover illustration

3 Zeederberg Square, Paarl (Jozef Smit 2011).

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# **The influence of English architecture on Cape Dutch architecture in Paarl<sup>1</sup>**

*Jozef Smit*

## **Introduction**

It was in 1652 that Jan van Riebeeck, a commander in the VOC (Dutch East India Company), set foot at the Cape. He was given orders to establish an outpost that would provide fresh fruit and vegetables to the VOC's ships passing en route to the East on the Spice Route. Improving the agricultural production meant the Company had to increase the amount of productive farms. Slowly this outpost grew to become a village which today is known as Cape Town. The ever-increasing agricultural activities lead to the establishment of more villages. For nearly a century and a half these villages at the Cape developed gradually without too much influence from Europe, the newest architectural styles and fashions from Europe only reaching the Cape a decade later (Picton Seymour 1989: 64) The Second British Occupation of the Cape in 1806 would change that. Britain at the start of the 19th century was reaping the benefits of its industrial revolution, which firmly established it as an industrialized and economic superpower in the world. The tides of British dominance in the world eventually reached the shores of the Cape.

From the outset the VOC did not support the expansion of the outpost at the Cape and infrastructure outside Cape Town was seldom funded by the VOC. In comparison with the Dutch rule at the Cape, the British were ambitious to expand and develop the Cape, building roads and railways, improving communication between the towns and establishing administrative councils in the towns. It was inevitable that the towns and villages at the Cape would be influenced in one way or another by the trends that British rule brought.

## **Brief history of Paarl**

The Main Street of Paarl today is probably the richest in different architectural styles of any street in South Africa. This could be attributed to the fact that the town was never formally founded or laid out (Fransen 2006: 77), and in comparison with other Cape towns it grew organically across a difficult topography along a wagon road (now Main Street) sandwiched between a mountain and a river (Oberholster 1987: 165). At first it was essentially a farming community with pockets of built-up areas developing, small sections at a time, in between the farms. This meant that buildings of different styles and eras ended up next to one another. The space and greenery between built-up areas, which still remains today, contributes enormously to the character of the town. Another contributing factor is that, unlike Stellenbosch for instance, the town never experienced a great fire, and so the original urban and architectural character was preserved (Oberholster 1987: 165).

The name Paarl was documented for the first time in 1657 when Abraham Gabemma arrived in the valley and wrote: " ...ende wy quamen omtrent savonts te vier uyren aan de revier die by ons genoempt werd de groote Berghreviere, alwaar ons neder sloegen ende den nacht verbleven, passerende des middags de clooff, leggende tusschen den Diamandt en de Peerlbergh, en de aan de ander syde de Clapmus bergh". Gabemma and his expedition came to the valley to trade

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<sup>1</sup> Jozef Smit is an architect and VASSA member. This article is based on a talk presented to VASSA in June 2011 and discussions during subsequent outings to Paarl.

livestock with the local Khoi tribe in order to provide fresh meat for a ship shortly due to arrive in Table Bay (Anon. 1988: 25).

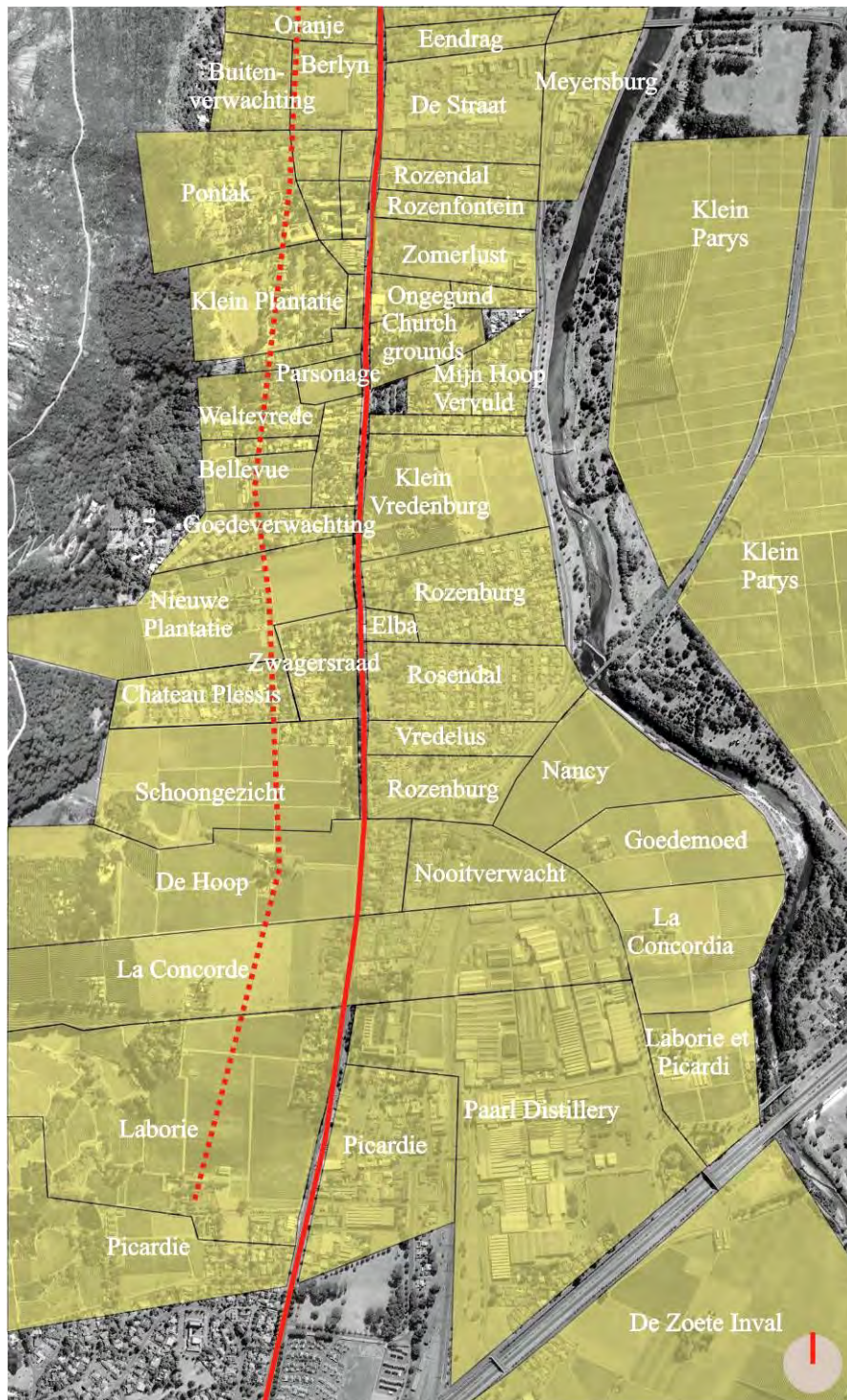


Figure 1. Paarl Farms in 1850 (solid line - wagon road; dotted line - Buurmanslaan).

It was only thirty years later in 1687 that European settlement took place when the first farms were granted to 23 farmers (Oberholster 1987:15). The farms had a 60 rood (1 rood = 3.8

metres) border along the Berg River and stretched 600 roods in a westward direction towards Paarl mountain (Oberholster 1987: 15). These elongated rectangular farms were probably an attempt to give as many farmers as possible access to the water of the Berg River. Simon van der Stel decided to name the valley Drakenstein to honour visiting commissioner Hendrik Adriaan van Reede tot Drakenstein. (Fransen 2006: 77). These farmers were joined the next year by the arrival of French Huguenots in 1688 (Oberholster 1987: 15). These stretched out pieces of land were not practical for denser settlement purposes as they were divided by the wagon road that linked the northern and southern part of the valley. It was only a matter of time before the farm boundaries would conform to the wagon road edging its way through the valley. This would set the trend for the way in which the town would develop along the wagon road (Fig.1).

The "Colonies Molen" erected the first public building in 1699 (Oberholster 1987: 167), a water mill which was built next to a mountain stream above the present Mill Street (in the vicinity of Nantes Vue). In 1717 several factors, of which steady growth was the most important, lead to the replacement of the "Huguenot church" in Simondium by a local one on a site close to the present *Strooidakkerk* (Fransen 2006: 77).

The settlement grew slowly during the 18th century, the architecture and development influenced by mainly three factors: the relocation of the church, the arrival of a third group of settlers (predominantly from the region that later would become modern Germany), and an improvement of the material wealth of the farmers (Oberholster 1987: 167). In the middle of the 18th century five houses were documented and by 1790 there were twenty-one (Oberholster 1978: 168). When William Burchell travelled through the little village in 1811 he wrote a description of: "Paarl Village, which consisted of between forty and fifty very neat houses, placed at a considerable distance from each other, and forming a single street, about the middle of which stands the church" (Burchell 1967: 104). Although the village grew at a steady pace during the first century and a half of its existence, several factors in the latter part of the 19th century would contribute to the village experiencing exponential growth and development into a town (Figs 2 &3).

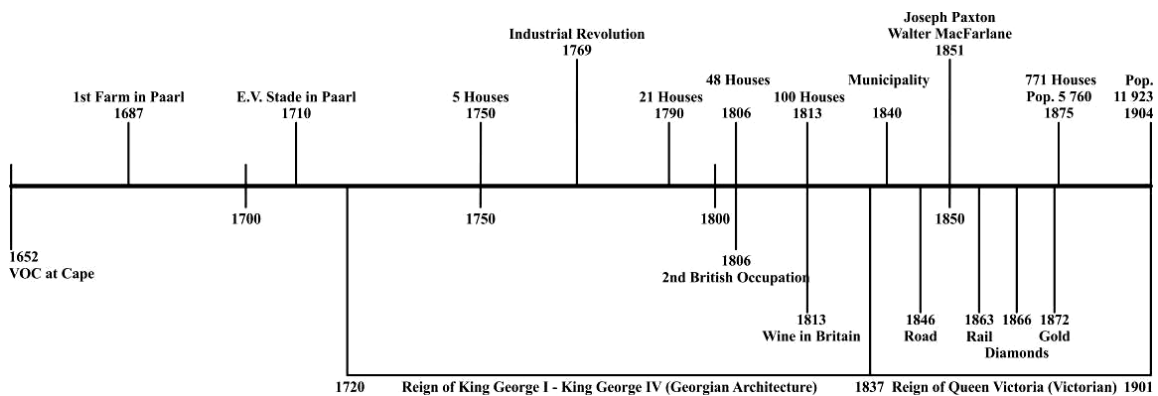


Figure 2. Timeline of contemporary events

The Drakenstein Valley developed into a hub for the manufacturing of all types of wagons. This industry received a kick-start in 1835 during the Great Trek period when many farmers, unhappy under British Rule, left the Cape Colony for the northern interior. The wagon industry received a boost in the 1860s and 1870s with the discovery diamonds and gold. These events had a profound effect on the growth of Paarl as the urban fabric grew to 771 houses in 1875 (Oberholster 1987: 174). The wagon industry was very profitable during this period and Paarl, like Oudtshoorn, became well known for its wagon "palaces" (Oberholster 1987: 176). The



wagon industry received a final financial injection with the outbreak of the Anglo-Boer War, supplying wagons to Republican and British forces. The increased demand led to unrivalled building activity and the population doubled from 5 760 in 1875 to 11 923 in 1904 (Oberholster 1987: 176).

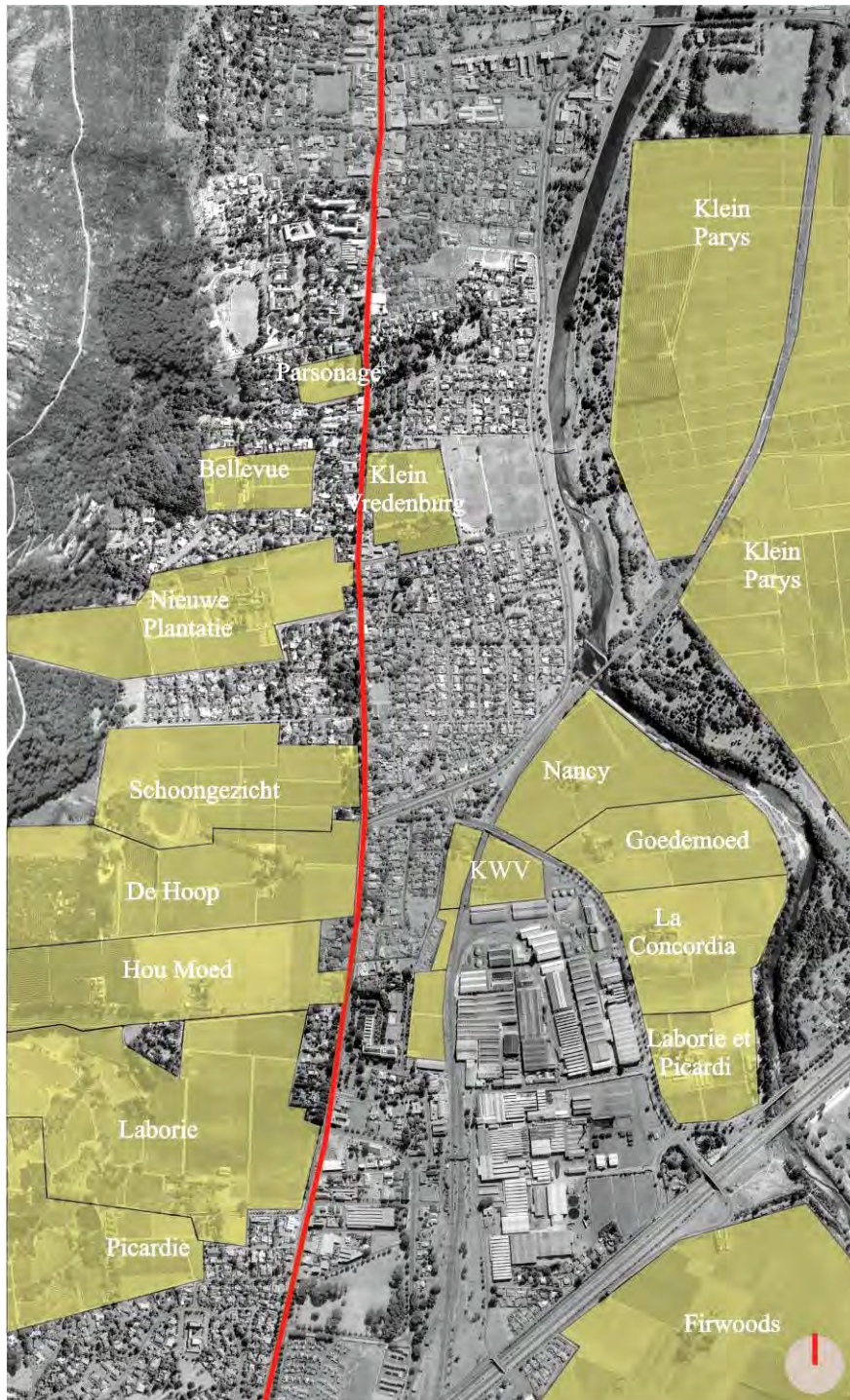


Figure 3. Paarl Farms in 2005.

Paarl received municipal status in 1840 which resulted in the construction of several public and administrative buildings (Oberholster 1987: 171). Communication with the outside world

improved with the construction of a hard road in 1845 and a railway connection between Cape Town and Wellington via Paarl in 1863 (Oberholster 1987: 65). Continued improvements to the main port of the Cape Colony and the expansion of steam ship routes meant that in 1876 there was a fixed weekly route between Europe and Cape Town (Fransen 1981: 92). As a result of the improved road, rail and sea connections, building materials were easier to import and transport and people could adopt new building methods, materials and styles more easily than ever before (Oberholster 1987: 173).

### **Cape Dutch architecture versus English architecture**

Once the different distinguishing features of the different styles are understood it becomes easier to identify Cape Dutch buildings which were influenced by English architecture or altered to conform to this new style at the Cape.

Starting at the foundations, the Cape Dutch homestead had a simple plan, usually with three rooms in the front wing. A “voorhuis” or “voorkamer” was the central entrance room and it had rooms on either side. The English way of reception differed and required the “voorhuis” to be changed to become a narrow foyer or passage so that one to two more private rooms could now be situated either side (Oberholster 1987: 170).

The changes in plan automatically had an influence on the façade. Cape Dutch homesteads had half-width windows placed either side of the main entrance door to help improve light quality in the “voorhuis” as well as improve the overall composition of the façade. The new narrow foyer meant there was no space for the half-width windows. Full-width windows in the side rooms were brought closer to the main entrance door, sometimes right below the gable ends. This was not a very architecturally pleasing solution as this meant the front gable ends, previously corresponding to the position of the inside walls, now sometimes hung above a window (Fransen 1981: 99). (See Fig.13, Kleine Konstantie.) In many cases decorative plaster details were added above doors and windows when the homesteads received a facelift. The gable was influenced by the neo-classic style with two or four pilasters and triangular and half round pediments (Oberholster 1987: 171).

The change of the roof material had a dramatic impact on the façade. Corrugated iron was a cheaper, watertight material and required less maintenance than the thatched roof of the Cape Dutch homestead (which had a life expectancy of thirty years). At a time when farmers were suffering financially from the effects of severe droughts in 1860 and the *Phylloxera* epidemic in 1886, it was probably not too difficult to persuade farmers to switch to a more financially viable material (Oberholster 1987: 175). Not only did the actual material change the appearance of the building, but the corrugated iron required a lower pitch and therefore the side walls were raised. This had a side-effect of providing more usable loft space. The raised side walls were pierced to receive loft window, admitting light and ventilation. These loft windows established a distinctive local vernacular element, especially in Paarl and Wellington. Standard practice was to place the corrugated iron on top of the end gables and not against them, eliminating the need for flashing which was a potential cause of leakage. This technique necessitated ‘clipping’ of gables. Several front gables were also clipped (Fransen 2004: 19). (See Fig.39, Nantes Vue and Fig.36, Old Dutch Reformed Parsonage.)

The veranda was a completely new concept for Cape Dutch houses, though they usually had raised open stoeps. The corrugated iron veranda roof rested on slender timber or cast iron columns (Fransen 1981: 98). (See Fig.46, Languedoc.)

Another feature previously unknown to the Cape Dutch homestead was the metal gutter, which was built in conjunction with the addition of corrugated iron roof sheets. The gutters were concealed with decorative timber work (Fransen 1981: 98). (See Fig.40, Bethel)

Door design also had an impact on the façade. The main entrances of Cape Dutch homesteads were single doors divided horizontally (double vertical doors were sometimes used for public buildings). The domestic doors influenced by the English style were divided vertically and had three to four panels per door, with the bottom panel flat and the top two or three with protruding beadwork (Fransen 1981: 97).

The early 18th century Cape Dutch fanlights were predominantly rectangular with a baroque curve to the bottom, the top of the door matching this same shape. (See Fig.38, Old Dutch Reformed Parsonage.) Later designs were more rectangular. The new design influence saw the fanlight being shaped into various geometrical designs. The new half moon and rectangular fanlights had deep and delicate glazing bars, matching those of large sash windows (Picton Seymour 1989: 49).

The small casement windows with solid external shutters and small-paned sash, fixed-transom windows of the Cape Dutch homestead were replaced with larger sash windows with internal shutters (Oberholster 1987:170). At a later stage the shutters returned to the outside, this time in the form of louvres. These were fitting for the Cape climate, keeping direct sunlight at bay while allowing fresh air into the house. Partly due to an earlier British fire regulation the windows were now also recessed from the face of the wall (previously almost flush) and built into the wall, making less of the window frame visible. The overall proportion of the window changed from the Dutch standard 2:1 to a British standard 3:1. Improved glass manufacturing technology meant that the size of glass panels increased gradually and the amount of glass panels per window decreased from five-by-eight to two-by-two at the end of the 19th century (Fransen 1981: 97). (See Fig.40, Bethel.)

The interior of the house was also not left unscathed. The dark timber ceilings were painted white or replaced with plaster ceilings and mouldings. The floors were also painted light colours. Fireplaces (previously there was only a kitchen hearth) were built in most of the living areas (Fransen 1981: 96). The use of local wood for doors, windows and ceilings continued until the improved transport connections allowed different types of wood to be imported from elsewhere (Oberholster 1987: 171).

### **Building examples in Paarl**

Please note that the selected buildings formed part of a VASSA outing to Paarl. The buildings were chosen on merit along with the ease with which they could be reached along the Main Street in a south to north direction. There are other buildings in the Paarl area that fit the criteria of this paper but which have not been included. Please refer to Hans Fransen's book, *The Old Buildings of the Cape*, for a more in-depth history of ownership of the farms and buildings.

### **Laborie (c 1800)**

The house has a H-shape plan with the wings an unusual width of 8,5 metres. Since many early structures had roof spans wider than the standard 6 metres, the house could be older than the date on its gable (1800). All corners have pilaster details and the front and back gables are almost identical. The gables have pediments with short outer pilasters, but no inner ones, and spiral scrolls instead of wings. The two wing ends on the one side of the house are half-hipped while the other side has straight gabled ends. The front façade (facing the werf) has been Victorianised while the back façade is original, retaining the door with drop fan, two half-width and two full-width windows with half shutters. The Victorian façade has a two-panel front door with sidelights, half-moon shaped fanlight and outer pilasters with horizontal pediment overhead. The rooms either side of the front entrance have French windows with shutters (Fransen 2004: 300).





*Figure 4. Laborie, front (east) façade, c 1920 (Cape Archives E2475).*





*Figure 5. Laborie, front (east) façade (JS 2006).*



*Figure 6. Laborie, back (west) façade (Cape Archives E592).*





*Figure 7. Laborie, back (west) façade (JS 2006).*

### **Villa Sarnia, Concordia Street (1895)**

Opposite the Clift Granite Works in Concordia Street stands a Victorian house with a unique Paarl flavour. The double-storey house, with stoep kamer projecting on the one side and veranda wrapping around the other, has all the traits of a text-book Victorian house. All the woodwork is typical of the period, the windows frames housing two-by-two glass panels. The distinction of the house lies in the detail. Whereas veranda support work and balustrades were usually carried out in timber or cast iron, this house has most of these elements substituted with granite. Only the concave veranda roof on the first floor is supported by cast iron supports, but resting on granite balustrades. Granite is also used around doors and windows, the street wall and on the corners as rustication. A connection with the Clift granite works cannot be ignored. The house is a good example of an imported style expressed with local materials (Oberholster 1987: 177).



*Figure 8. Villa Sarnia, front (east) façade (JS 2011).*

### 101 Main Street (1854)

This attractive house on the Main Street, bearing the date 1854, has a square pedimented gable with dentil mouldings and rusticated pilasters. Records show that this house was the last dated gable built in Paarl (Oberholster 1987: 175). This house would probably have been one of the last houses to receive a thatched roof as corrugated-iron became a common alternative roofing material after 1860 (Fransen 2004:19). The façade has no half-width windows, which indicates the prevailing preference towards the narrow foyer instead of “voorhuis” at the time. The eight-panel front door has a rectangular fanlight with decorative beadwork and is flanked by pilasters with a horizontal dentilled pediment overhead. The window sashes have slender beadwork with four-by-six glass panels and half-folding shutters on the inside. It has a rectangular plan, two rooms deep (7 metres) with rusticated pilasters on all four corners (Fransen 20004: 259). The back of the house has been considerably changed, with a portico stoep and dormer windows to light the rooms in the attic.

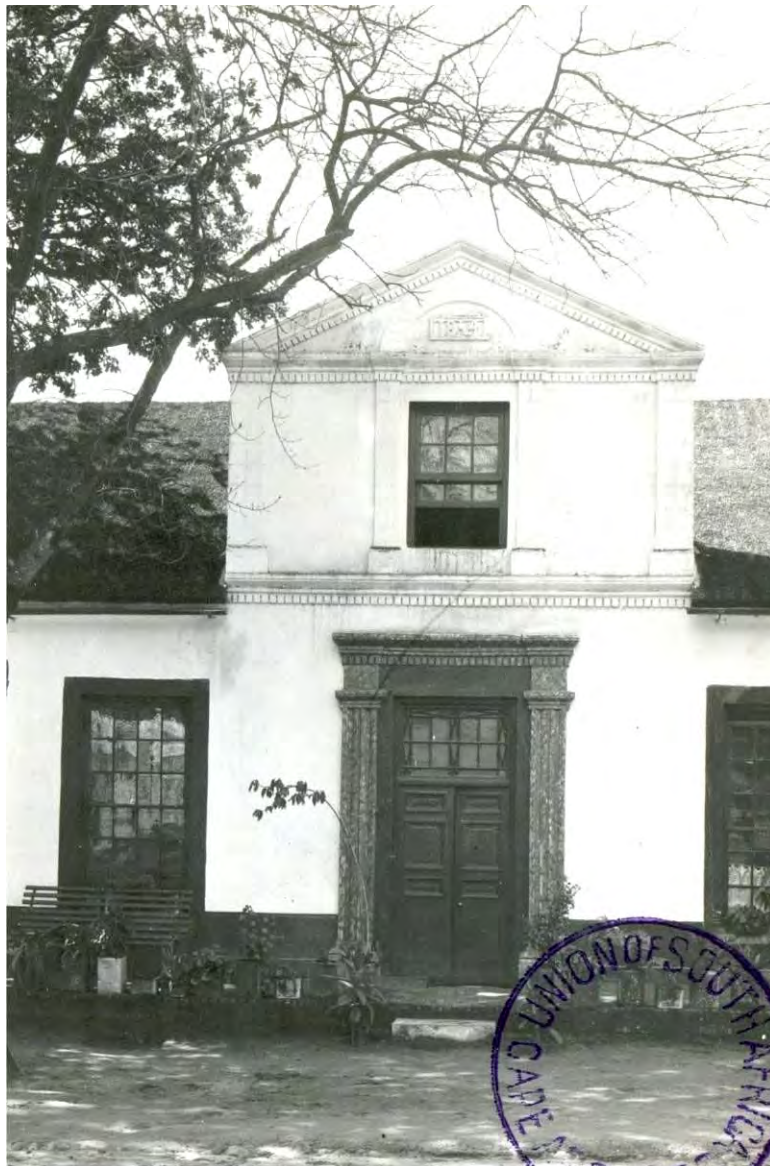


Figure 9. 101 Main Street, front (west) façade (Cape Archives E2496).





*Figure 10. 101 Main Street, front (west) façade (JS 2011).*

It is interesting to note that the house next door, 99 Main Street, has the same design motif in rusticated pilasters as 101 Main Street. They are present on the corners of the building and either side of the front door and first floor window. The rusticated pilasters of the front door are topped with dentilled moulding. This gable bears the date 1889.



*Figure 11. 99 Main Street, front (west) façade (JS 2011).*



### **De Kleine Konstantie, 4 Constantia Street (1841)**

The house has a late, rectangular plan, two rows of rooms and a depth of 9 metres. This deeper plan required the gable to be taller in order to be able to meet the roof line at the top. To some extent this makes the gable overwhelm the rest of the façade. The pedimented gable has straight sloping sides and bears the name 'De Kleine Konstantie' and date 1841, which confirms the age of the house. Tassels and stars join the inner and outer pilasters as decorative elements on the gable. Since the house has a narrow foyer instead of "voorhuis" there are no half-width windows, an architecturally weak arrangement since the full-width windows were placed directly below the edges of the gable. There is no back gable, and the end-gables are straight and low-pitched. The house has undergone restoration work and the original woodwork has since been replaced with spurious flush windows, half-shutters and a divided door (Fransen 2004: 259).



*Figure 12. De Kleine Konstantie, front (east) façade (Drakenstein Heemkring G124HP).*



*Figure 13. De Kleine Konstantie, front (east) façade (JS 2011).*

### De Nieuwe Plantatie (c 1707, homestead 1876)

The homestead on De Nieuwe Plantatie is T-shaped and has been much altered, but retains its thatched roof. The front façade has a Victorian appearance, with three French windows under bracket mouldings either side of the front entrance door. The gable has two dates and initials inscribed. The first date, 1707, refers to the construction of the original building and the initials 'HLB' (Hermanus Lambertus Bosman) to the first owner. The second date, 1876, refers to the date of the current gable and the initials are those of the descendant who carried out the alterations. There are several outbuildings behind the homestead, including a small structure said to have been a slave church, which makes this building complex of great historical value. The complex has now been turned into a hospitality centre and although well restored has lost its character as a farm (Fransen 2004: 259).



Figure 14. De Nieuwe Plantatie, front (east) façade, c1913 (Drakenstein Heemkring: HP11757C).



Figure 15. De Nieuwe Plantatie, front (east) façade (JS 2006).



### **106 and 108 Main Street**

Typical Paarl loft window houses with corrugated iron roofs. A portion of the building without loft windows between no. 106 and 108 might indicate that the two houses have been joined by a section of infill. The symmetrical façades have French windows and hood moulds surmount all openings.



*Figure 16. 106 and 108 Main Street, front (east) façade (JS 2011).*

### **Klein Vredenburg 155 Main Street (c 1823)**

This beautiful house is probably the result of a single-storey house having being enlarged and ‘Georgianised’. The façade is elegantly proportioned with slender sash windows, three-by-six glass panels per window frame, and full-length foldable shutters on the inside. The entrance has an eight-panel door and semi-circular fanlight with surrounding architrave (Fransen 2004: 261).



*Figure 17. Klein Vredenburg, front (west) façade, c 1910 (Drakenstein Heemkring).*



The photograph above shows the house with sheets of corrugated iron on either ends of the roof, perhaps an indication of the owner's opting to change the slate tile roof to corrugated iron.



*Figure 18. Klein Vredenburg, front (west) façade (JS 2011).*

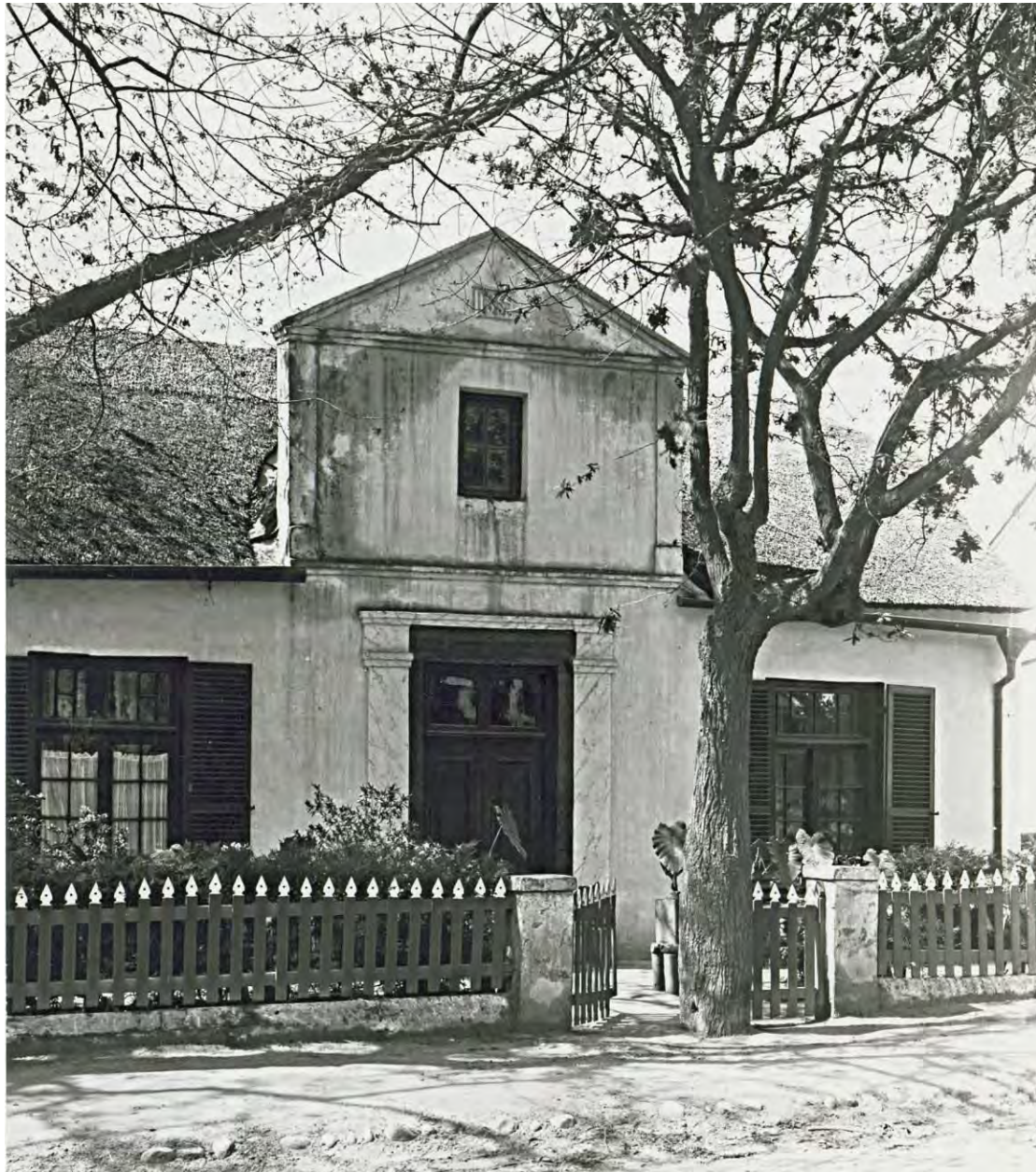
**NG Kerk Zaal, Theron Street (1908)**



*Figure 19. NG Kerk Zaal, front (south) façade (JS 2012).*



The church hall of the Strooidak church was built in 1908 and has been attributed to the Paarl architect Wynand Louw. It demonstrates the transition from Victorian to Edwardian architecture when ‘fuzzy’ detail made way for more refined, decorative forms (Fransen 2004: 262). It has a two-storey main body housing the hall and a single-storey section projecting southwards serving as the street façade. This façade is five bays wide and has a pedimented entrance, housing a wide recessed six-panel door, and two windows with six-by-six-glass panels either side.



*Figure 20. 95 Main Street, front (west) façade (Drakenstein Heemkring).*

### **3 Theron Street (c 1880)**

A three bay house with a string course which might point to an earlier gable (Fransen 2004: 262). (Some townhouses, like 95 Main Street (Fig.20), had gabled façades with only one window for each room either side of the front door). The loft windows are typical of the Paarl



vernacular of the time. Plasterwork indicates that the house might have had dado up to the window sill height.



*Figure 21. 4 Theron Street, front (east) façade (JS 2011).*

#### **Villiera, 6 Zeederberg Street (c 1860)**

This double-storey building with typical five bays under a hipped corrugated iron roof has a dormer attic entrance on the one side. It used to be a hostel of Paarl Boys' High School. An interesting two-storey warehouse (the first school building of Paarl Boys' High) with arched opening and pediment is situated to the left and the two are joined by an early lane-infill (Fransen 2004:262). Villiera has an eight panelled front door with rectangular fanlight and French windows at the ends. While the building has lost its concave veranda with plain cast iron supports, the façade has retained its rusticated plasterwork.



*Figure 22. Villiera, c1900 (Drakenstein Heemkring: MPAG02554).*



*Figure 23. Villiera, front (north) façade (JS 2011).*

### **Zeederberg House, 1 Zeederberg Square (1848)**

A double-storey three bay Victorian house, with hipped iron roof hidden behind a parapet wall. Together with the other houses at Zeederberg Square it constitutes an unrivalled conservation area. It is built of brick that has been white washed, with a cornice at the top decorated with roundels and tassels. This design motif was also applied to the coach house located to the side. The eight-panel front door has attractive surround and entablature and a rectangular fanlight with delicate tracery. The windows have fine louvred external sashes (Fransen 2004: 262).



*Figure 24. 1 Zeederberg Square, front (east) façade (JS 2011).*



## 2 Zeederberg Square (c 1860)

The house originally had an H-shaped plan and was modified to the now rectangular plan. It received a corrugated iron roof and decorative timber veranda with projecting portico. This veranda replaced a concrete one in order to match those of nos. 3 and 4. The house conforms to the local style having three loft windows in the eaves wall above the veranda. The windows are of c 1860 (Fransen 2004:262).



Figure 25. 2 Zeederberg Square, front (east) façade (JS 2011).

## 3 Zeederberg Square (c 1840)

A rectangular house, originally H-shaped, with iron roof and loft windows above the ornate hipped timber and cast iron veranda. The façade below the veranda has an eight-panel front door and sash windows with internal shutters, from c 1840. Fluted pilasters either side of the door, plain pilasters on the corners and a projecting section of the façade are indicative of an earlier date. (See Fig.38, Old Dutch Reformed Parsonage.) The house was entirely refashioned c 1890 to receive its current appearance (Fransen 2004:262).



Figure 26. 3 Zeederberg Square, front (east) façade (JS 2011).

#### **4 Zeederberg Square (c 1860)**

This five bay double-storey house has a corrugated iron roof and a very decorative hipped cast iron veranda with portico on paired columns. The windows are c 1870 (Fransen 2004: 262). Judging from the details behind the veranda, the house most probably had a Georgian façade before it obtained its Victorian appearance. It has five arch-headed windows on the first floor. The front door with rectangular fanlight and architrave is flanked by based pilasters.



*Figure 27. 4 Zeederberg Square, front (east) façade (JS 2011).*

#### **Zomerlust, 193 Main Street (c 1792)**

It is accepted that this house originally had a Cape Dutch appearance. The thick outside walls of the cellar (620 mm) are an indication that the house was built before the end of the 18th century: houses built during the 19th century had thinner outside walls (Deacon 1992: 3). An upper storey was added during the 1850s which gave the house a Georgian façade (Du Toit 1996: 47). It was this alteration that gave the house its five-bay appearance. The house maintained its Georgian façade until the 1920s when the entrance received a double-storey portico at the central bay and tiles replaced corrugated iron as roof material (Fransen 2004: 264). The windows also received external shutters of the period.





*Figure 28. Zomerlust, front (west) façade, 1897 (Drakenstein Heemkring: Decker 171).*



*Figure 29. Zomerlust, front (west) façade (JS 2011).*



### **Pontak, 193 Main Street (farm 1723, homestead c 1800)**

This homestead, at the head of Pontak Street, makes an impressive statement onto the street. A werf wall along Zion Street, a shed and a cellar flanking the homestead as well as later stable defining the forecourt, makes this one of the most complete werf in Paarl. The homestead has been altered extensively but the original H-shape plan is clearly to be discerned on the inside and outside. A flush casement window at the back leaves clues as to a possible date of the original homestead. The current appearance is that of a large mid-19th century house, with hipped corrugated-iron roof and surrounding timber veranda with curved roof. The lower façade has two doors with louvred sidelights at the centre and two French windows either side, all dating from the late 19th century. The upper storey has five mid-century sashes with hood-moulds (Fransen 2004:264). During the last renovation the building complex was converted into a hospitality centre.



*Figure 30. Pontak, front (east) façade (JS 2011).*

### **De Oude Woning (1784)**

This H-plan building, home to the Drakenstein Heemkring, was restored in 1982 to its original appearance, which it still maintains (Fransen 2004:265). Like so many other Cape Dutch buildings the end gables had been clipped, the thatch replaced with corrugated iron, the eave lines raised and loft windows inserted. The house has a holbol gable to the front and back, horizontally-divided front door with typical rectangular fanlight, and casement windows with solid external shutters. It has a small werf at the back flanked by outbuildings either side. The Wisnekowitz building to the right on the picture from 1950, below, has since been demolished.



*Figure 31. De Oude Woning, front (east) façade, c 1950 (Drakenstein Heemkring).*



*Figure 32. De Oude Woning, front (east) façade (JS 2012).*



### **Gideon Malherbe House (Westfalen), 11 Pastorie Lane (c 1850)**

This double-storeyed five bay house is a good example of Georgian style architecture during the early Victorian-period. It has a hipped corrugated-iron roof, a string course dividing the ground floor from the first floor and pilasters on the corners. The main entrance is a six-panel door with a half moon-shaped fanlight with rectangular panes and semi circular architrave (Fransen 2004: 266). The proportions of the tall sash windows on the ground floor differ from those above, however both have three-by-six glass panes per window frame. The ground floor of the interior has been restored and furnished to the late 19th century, including much of the original furniture.

The house is of great historical value since it was there that the "Genootskap van Regate Afrikaners" and the Afrikaans Language was founded in 1875. This house has strong ties with the farm Kleinbosch, on which the Hugenote Gedenkskool is located.



*Figure 33. Gideon Malherbe House, front (west) façade (JS 2011).*

### **Gymnasium (1858)**

Paarl Gymnasium was founded in 1858 by Reverend G.W.A. van der Lingen, who believed that education belonged to the church and not the state (Picton Seymour 1989: 57). The building, which also dates from 1858, exhibits abundant Egyptian detail and decoration (Egyptian figures pouring learning into cups, winged sun disks, and features such as scarabs) and is the largest of three Egyptian revival buildings at the Cape. The Egyptian influence can be attributed to Reverend van der Lingen who took keen interest in antiques and had a favourite past-time of deciphering Hieroglyphs. The building has a five bay central transverse block of one storey with double-storey blocks on either side protruding to the front and back, giving the building a "stoepkamer" appearance. A three storey tower, also protruding from the central block, is

positioned in the central bay and serves as the main entrance. The Egyptian influence is also evident in the tower tapering above and concave moulds. Low clerestory windows under the low-pitched corrugated iron roof make the building blend in with the local vernacular. All other windows on the front façade are tall recessed sash-windows with four-by-six glass panels. The doors have eight panels with spoke-fans above (Fransen 2004: 258).



*Figure 34. Paarl Gymnasium, front (east) façade (Drakenstein Heemkring HP0021).*



*Figure 35. Paarl Gymnasium, front (east) façade (JS 2007).*



### **Old Dutch Reformed Parsonage (farm 1699, homestead 1787)**

The Parsonage was built in 1787 and had one of the earliest gables in the new style with triangular caps. It had a central protruding section like many other gables of the time and plain corner pilasters. The U-shaped floor plan was typically used for parsonages and public buildings, possibly to present a more formal ‘block-like’ external appearance than was the case with T-or H-shapes. A drawing by Alyce Fane Trotter near the end of the 19th century shows the building more or less intact. Soon after that it would share the fate of many other houses in Paarl, its thatch replaced, eave walls raised, loft windows inserted, and worst of all its gable demolished. At least the woodwork remained intact which simplified the process when the decision was made to restore the building and turn it into a museum. Unfortunately the gable is not an exact replica of the original and the end-gables should have had pointed caps, like the front gable, instead of being holbol (Fransen 2004: 258).



*Figure 36. Old Dutch Reformed Parsonage, front (west) façade (Cape Archives).*



*Figure 37. Old Dutch Reformed Parsonage after restoration, front (west) façade (Drakenstein Heemkring).*





*Figure 38. Old Dutch Reformed Parsonage, front (west) façade (JS 2011).*

**Nantes Vue, 56 Mill Street (farm 1692, homestead c 1840)**

The house is strikingly situated on the precise axis of Nantes Street. This building with a Cape Georgian appearance has an 11 metre, two room deep plan, but was undoubtedly once thatched and gabled. Plasterwork shows clear evidence where eave walls were raised to have four loft windows installed. The clipped gable and façade woodwork of c 1840 is another indication. The entrance has an eight-panel front door with a rectangular gothic-inspired fanlight. Surrounding the front door are fluted pilasters with entablature (Fransen 2004: 268). The façade has a dado to below window sill height and on the left a large, arched barn door. Now a guesthouse, the interior has been changed considerably. Fortunately some of the original woodwork, including the full internal shutters, remains.



*Figure 39. Nantes Vue, front (east) façade (JS 2012).*

**Bethel (farm 1692, homestead 1764)**

Situated across from Nantes Vue is the homestead of Bethel, facing east away from the street. Bethel represents a text-book example of Victorianisation of a Cape Dutch homestead. Historical records indicate that this building took on its current U-shaped plan as early as 1752. The front façade has five bays, the front door has sidelights and is located centrally in an elaborately decorated recessed portico c 1890 (Fransen 2004: 268). The windows, probably from the same period, have two-by-two glass panels with internal full shutters. Plasterwork shows the previous height of the eaves walls, now raised with loft window on all façades. The building has an ornate timber and cast-iron Victorian veranda on three sides. Decorative support work for the (now modern) gutters can be seen on all sides. A part of the original werf remains at the back along Mill Street, as well as one of the original four outbuildings. The homestead has been converted into offices and hospitality facilities for Laborie High School, previously Paarl Handelskool.



*Figure 40. Bethel, front (east) façade (JS 2011).*



*Figure 41. Bethel, back (west) façade (JS 2011).*



**Optenhorst, 12 Napier Street (farm 1699, homestead c 1812)**

This homestead has the plan of an H with the one back wing missing. It has a hipped corrugated iron roof with loft windows above a very ornate straight timber and cast iron veranda, with projecting entrance porch. The original house probably dates from c1812 while the façade woodwork is from a later date, c1850. The eight-panelled front door has a rectangular fanlight with fine very delicate tracery and the windows have full internal foldable shutters from this period. The internal ceilings, although painted white, are original (Fransen 2004: 268). The perimeter street wall with cast-iron metalwork remains intact.



*Figure 42. Optenhorst, front (east) façade (JS 2012).*

**La Paix, 20 Nantes Street (c 1870)**



*Figure 43. La Paix, front (south) façade (JS 2011).*

An attractive Victorian / Edwardian villa with two bay windows under Flemish gables, matching a larger gable in the centre (Fransen 2004: 269). A timber and cast iron veranda with projecting entrance porch wraps around the façade. It has a front entrance with recessed portico (similar to Bethel). Elaborate plaster details can be found all round, including the fence posts, which remain intact.

**Huis Vereeniging, 388/390 Main Street (c 1870)**

Previously a five-bay double-storeyed school building with hipped corrugated iron roof, from c 1870. (Fransen 2004: 267). Although the building has been modified many of its distinguishing features remain. The ground floor openings are alternatively capped with bracket and pediment mouldings; the first floor windows all have string surrounds, except for the central bay which has an arch-headed fluted pilaster-type surround. A string course indicates the first floor level. The rustication on the ground floor corners has since been replaced with pilasters, the dormer windows removed, a window inserted in the first floor central bay, and the French windows at the ends as well as the front door with semi-circular spoke fanlight have also been replaced. A small door has been placed between the third and fourth bay.



*Figure 44. Huis Vereeniging, front (east) façade (Drakenstein Heemkring Decker 181).*



*Figure 45. Huis Vereeniging, Front (East) Façade (JS 2012)*



### Languedoc (farm 1694, homestead 1757)

This homestead is situated outside the realm of Paarl's town area, in Daljosaphat. It has a T-shaped plan and was built in 1757 by Thomas Arnoldus Theron. The holbol gable, one of the three earliest dated gables in existence, bears the initials of its builder (TATR) as well as the date of construction. In contrast to Bethel, it is fortunate that this gable was spared during the Victorian modifications the house underwent. When the thatch was replaced with corrugated iron, the end gables were clipped, the eave walls raised and loft windows as well as a decorative timber veranda with a slightly projecting portico were added. The current doors and windows are late 19th century; the windows have internal shutters (Fransen 2004: 299). The front façade beneath the veranda has dado up to window sill height.



*Figure 46. Languedoc, front (south) façade (JS 2011).*

The design of Languedoc's timber veranda is similar to that of Parys' homestead (in the near vicinity of Languedoc) before restoration. The design and construction thereof may have been the work of the same carpenter who might have been responsible for both additions.



*Figure 47. Parys, front façade, 1917 (Drakenstein Heemkring MPAG04295).*

### **Hugenote Gedenkskool (1883)**

The "Gedenkskool der Hugenoten", on the historically rich farm Kleinbosch in the Daljosafat area, has strong ties with House Gideon Malherbe, the founders and teachers being members of the "Genootskap van Regte Afrikaners". This flat-roofed late-Georgian double-storey building was inaugurated in 1883. It has five arch-headed bays on the ground floor and seven bays with rectangular surrounds on the second storey. A string course divides first floor from the ground floor, where the centrally placed front door has a semicircular fanlight (Fransen 2004: 299). Rustication as a design motif was applied to the corners and also surrounds the doors and windows.

It is interesting to note that many institutional buildings at the Cape in the late 19th century were still built in the Georgian style, even though the Victorian style was more fashionable at the time. Something probably could be said of the reserved and stately appearance that the Georgian façade gave to buildings. Perhaps the "Genootskap van Regte Afrikaners" referred to these sentiments when planning their new school building.



*Figure 48. Huguenote Gedenkskool, front (west) façade (JS 2011).*

### **Conclusion**

Presently, buildings older than 60 years receive heritage status protection. During the 19th century Cape Dutch buildings, some perhaps older than 100 years, were altered to conform to the more fashionable Georgian and Victorian styles of the time. Several of these buildings have since been restored to their former (Cape Dutch) state, perceived by some as the “glorious days”. In many cases these restoration projects (Old Parsonage and Oude Woning in Paarl) could be justified since they reinstated the dignity and presence these homesteads once had.



It is interesting to review in today's conservation climate the potential for restoration of the homestead of Languedoc in Daljosaphat. Its Victorian veranda has been obstructing one of the oldest holbol gables in existence at the Cape for more than a century. Although it could be considered that the Victorian veranda and raised eave walls with loft windows 'contaminate' this Cape Dutch homestead, the façade is layered with elements that have become historical artefacts in their own right, bearing testimony to the influence of English architecture on Cape Dutch architecture in Paarl.

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# The making of the *Kerkgronde* of Sutherland

*Karin Ström*<sup>i</sup>

## Introduction

This is an account of limited research undertaken to start to investigate the origins and significance of a set of vernacular houses in a small, distinct set of streets just outside of the town of Sutherland in the central Karoo. The buildings are smaller than those of the main town, as are the plots they stand on, but they share with main-town Sutherland buildings the use of vernacular building materials, including a highly prevalent use of stonework. From a vernacular architecture point of view, the most interesting are probably the oldest houses: they are built of unbaked brick and have low double-pitched roofs made of a combination of thatch and daubed mud. These mud buildings were in a very poor, vulnerable condition in 2004.

This paper presents twenty photographs of small houses, taken in 2004 during fieldwork for developing Conservation Guidelines for Sutherland (Cook & Ström 1994). They have been identified as ‘vernacular’ in the broadest sense of the word, on the grounds that their particular location is verifiably the site of buildings dating from at least as early as 1884, and that their form and use of materials is of interest. The little that is known of their history is given in the account below. No measuring of the buildings has been done.

## The kerkgronde

The village of Sutherland was developed during the mid-nineteenth century, as the centre of a sheep farming district under the jurisdiction of its neighbour Fraserburg, 100 kilometres distant. The first surveyed street layout of Sutherland dates from 1860.<sup>ii</sup> Growth of the town during its first three decades was slow: by 1890 there were only 3600 people in the entire district. Like many nineteenth century Cape villages, the town was established as a centre for small scale agriculture and related trades. Rights to use the town commonage for feeding livestock supplemented the income of inhabitants, whose plots were typically too small for large herds.

On July 9 1884, the Town Council of Sutherland leased land from the local church to set up the area that was to become known as the ‘Kerkgronde’.<sup>iii</sup> The church owned much of the land in Sutherland at that point in time, and Council minutes refer to the “transfer” of the land to the Municipality, which would charge rent for plots.<sup>iv</sup> The Kerkgronde were specifically to be used for housing the “native” population of the town.

The Kerkgronde were set distinctly apart from the town (Figs. 1 and 2), an early example of a pattern that was later to become almost universal in South Africa after the Group Areas Act of 1950. The continued machinations of the Town Council over the following years to attempt to disallow anyone they categorised as “native” from living within the town boundaries, specifying that they were only to live and pay rent in the



Kerkgronde, was not an urban strategy supported by law at the time within the Cape Colony. To give a broader picture, urban racial segregation in Cape and Karoo villages during the nineteenth century was prevalent, but appears to have generally been less enforced than at Sutherland. For example, in the towns of Prince Albert, Graaff Reinet, McGregor and Robertson, racial urban divisions were in the first instance underpinned by economics. Poorer black people lived on the smallest plots in town, in areas typically under-supplied with water, and usually positioned towards the outskirts of those towns – but they were not restricted to living there. Social boundaries would have applied in many and diverse ways. Many small towns included within their boundaries what was called a mission centre – a church, a church-run school, often with associated housing – all specifically set up for “natives”. These mission areas of town typically had “fluffy” boundaries, and were partly integrated into the greater town. Much further research is needed to find out how widespread was Sutherland’s model of attempting to create a genuinely segregated town.

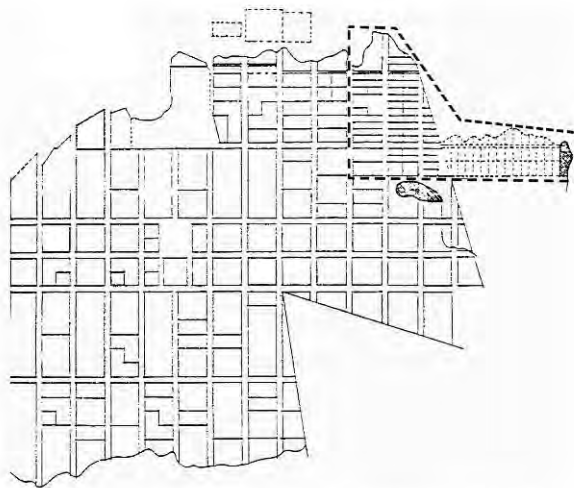


Fig. 1. Plan of Robertson showing consolidated lots, 1853-1880. Drawn from Surveyor General noting sheets.

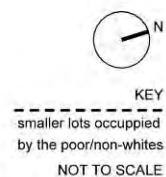
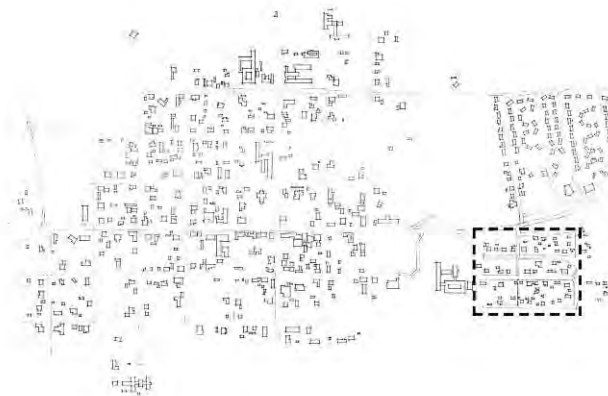


Fig. 2. Plan of Sutherland. Drawn from aerial photograph of 1999.

The making of the “location”<sup>v</sup> as the Kerkgronde were first called, was definitely fuelled by strong separatist ideology, and became the cause of divisive social politics within the village. Like all small urban settlements in the Cape during the period, Sutherland increasingly experienced the pressure of in-migration of people dislocated from their traditional land and lifestyle in the region.<sup>vi</sup> However much the Town Council disliked the incomers, they had to provide some housing, as there was a reliance on local people as a labour source in what was strictly speaking an agricultural economy.

A Council minute of 8 October 1884 required that “the huts of all those who have not made application for erven in the location (to) be destroyed” by their owners, with one week’s notice given. This draconian order was not immediately effective, and extensions were granted. Then the frustrated councillors became confrontational, declaring that “the superintendent of the location be instructed to break down all huts of those who have not yet taken out lots in the location”, and that all “squatters” should be brought before the Magistrates Court that week.<sup>vii</sup>

Council minutes show that not all “erf holders” (as they are called in Council minutes) actively supported the councillors in removing “natives” from town, but it is unclear whether they were actively resistant, or simply apathetic. In the years after the location was set up, councillors repeatedly had to urge erf holders, who had huts on their erven contrary to regulations, to remove them.<sup>viii</sup> Eight years after the establishment of the Kerkgronde there is a record that a Mr Conradie had “coloured people living in and about his house”. Council was once again concerned with “steps to be taken... to remove them”.<sup>ix</sup> Further research into Council minutes and correspondence is needed to ascertain just how difficult it continued to be for successive Town Councils to enforce segregation in a changing South Africa in the years leading up to the Group Areas Act<sup>x</sup>.

The setting up of the location was also seen as an income-producing opportunity. It is clear from the minutes that Sutherland had an extremely low rates base, and that the Municipality struggled to finance itself (the Municipality also had to pay tithes to the church).<sup>xi</sup> A “superintendent of the location” was appointed in January 1885 to collect 2 shillings per month for each occupied hut, with the proviso that anyone who did not pay would be prosecuted, or “driven out”. Further along the line, it was decided that “hut tax” should be paid a month in advance, and provision was also made for there to be fines for arrears, and for giving a month’s notice prior to leaving. It appears that the first superintendent of the location was a Mr Amerika Manuel. It is possible that his sole remuneration for the job was to live rent-free on a location plot.<sup>xii</sup> Councillors were not consistently hard-hearted. Councillors also exercised a right to allow others to live “rent free”.<sup>xiii</sup> During a period of fever in 1897, all hut tax was discontinued for five months out of compassion for suffering families.<sup>xiv</sup>

The design of the Kerkgronde was always perceived as different from the surveyed original town. A land surveyor was not approached to do a layout, rather the councillors themselves decided that they would “mark out” the place and the lots.<sup>xv</sup> Within three months of the establishment of the area, new plot holders reported that they were dissatisfied with the size of plots that had been allocated.<sup>xvi</sup> Councillors re-considered the issue and decided to change the size of plots to “10 yards instead of 5 yards” (approximately 9.5m in lieu of 4.75m). Presumably this dimension related to the



frontage, not the square area.<sup>xvii</sup> The plots were not big enough to sustain any real farming activity. Rights to run cattle and sheep on the town commonage were strictly guarded, and there is no record in Council minutes of Kerkgronde residents being granted this privilege.

This limited study has not found archival evidence of early houses built in the Kerkgronde, but some of the houses existing today certainly appear to be “original”. It seems as though Kerkgronde was developed fairly quickly<sup>xviii</sup> and within 13 years of its establishment it was reputedly overcrowded.<sup>xix</sup> There is evidence that the first houses were built of mud brick, for instance after his dismissal as superintendent, Amerika Manuel was granted the right to pay his hut tax “with bricks”.<sup>xx</sup> It is significant that the buildings are consistently referred to in the Council minutes as “huts” rather than houses, a distinction that definitely applied to their small size, but could also have related to their physical appearance. The Municipality at one point issued a resolution that huts had to have walls “not lower than six feet”.<sup>xxi</sup> Certainly, the early “huts” seem to have been thatched, like buildings in the main part of town. A working committee, appointed to inspect the houses in 1893, declared that while several huts had been repaired, many were in a “bad state”.<sup>xxii</sup>

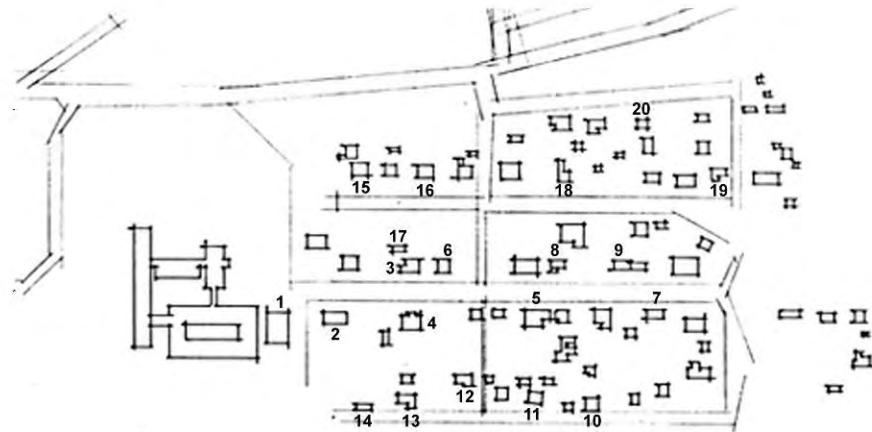
The Council was responsible for the supply of water to the Kerkgronde, and for the removal of rubbish and night soil.<sup>xxiii</sup> In an area where water was always extremely scarce, the Council often struggled to meet requirements for water provision, and it is recorded that in 1897 there was “not sufficient water for the location”.<sup>xxiv</sup> The provision of “proper privies” (long drops) was a problem in all parts of the town.<sup>xxv</sup>

There was a motion in the early 1890s to move the position of the Kerkgronde. However, in 1892 it was resolved to “allow the location to remain where it is for the time being”.<sup>xxvi</sup> It appears that the Kerkgronde remained where it had been originally established and that, like the rest of the town, it gradually changed from a mud-brick-built to stone-built environment.

## **Conclusion**

Small buildings (those of three rooms or less) built during the nineteenth century are known to have been lost from urban landscapes in many early Cape towns (Japha & Japha 1992: 69-70). This set of buildings in Sutherland thus has something of a rarity value in what it can show us about building techniques and planning at the lower end of the economic range in the Karoo in the late nineteenth century. Increasingly too, equivalent rural buildings which have long housed farm workers in South Africa are being demolished; thus any recording of buildings of this type is valuable.

Beyond the structures themselves, this small collection of buildings is of further interest in that they collectively represent a relatively early example of one town’s effort to racially segregate its citizens – a precursor of apartheid planning.<sup>xxvii</sup> Prior to about 1900, it has been found that local authorities had little power to intervene in the allocation of land to different uses or for occupation by different races (Mabin 1990:6).



SUTHERLAND KERKGRONDE: 2004 FIELDWORK IDENTIFICATION OF BUILDINGS WITH VISUALLY "VERNACULAR" CHARACTERISTICS, by Julian Cooke and Karin Strom for "Sutherland Conservation Guidelines", for Karoohoogland Municipality

NOTE: The earliest buildings could date from c.1884, the more recent ones from c.1920/30. Further research is required to see whether buildings could be more accurately dated



NOT TO SCALE

The following twenty photographs were taken by Julian Cooke and Karin Strom in July 2004



No. 1.



No. 2.



No. 3.



No. 4.





No. 5.



No. 6.



No. 7.



No. 8.



No. 9.



No. 10.



No. 11.



No. 12.





No. 13.



No. 14.



No. 15.



No. 16.



No. 17.



No. 18.



No. 19.



No. 20.



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## Endnotes

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<sup>i</sup> Karin Ström is an architect and VASSA member. This article was first written in 2004 and revised in 2012.

<sup>ii</sup> Some researchers suggest there could have been the beginnings of a town at an earlier date.

<sup>iii</sup> All the documentary evidence for this account is drawn from the Minutes of the Town Council of Sutherland in the Cape Archives. Minutes run from 21 Feb 1884 to March 1887 and then again from 1892 onwards. Minutes up until Dec 1897 were read for this study.

<sup>iv</sup> It is not clear whether the land was legally transferred, or whether the municipality was given the use but not the ownership of it. Title deed research could confirm this issue.

<sup>v</sup> This author has not found the origin of the use of the word “location” in the South African lexicon, but it is interesting to find this use of the word several decades before the passing of the Natives (Urban Areas) Act in 1923.

<sup>vi</sup> 3/SUT 1/1/1/1, Council minutes 10 Dec 1884: In December 1884 the Municipality wrote to the Colonial Government on the subject of “vagrants” in the town; and there are also references to “squatters” (12 Nov 1884). Migrancy, the traditional lifestyle of the local Khoekhoe, had been outlawed for generations by the time the Sutherland Kerkgronde were set up: the so called “Hottentot Laws” of 1809 had made it illegal for Khoekhoe not to have a fixed abode.

<sup>vii</sup> 3/SUT 1/1/1/1, Council minutes 12 Nov 1884.

<sup>viii</sup> Erf holders did not greatly fear the powers of the councillors; month after month the councillors continued making threats to “persons having huts on their erven occupied by natives” (3/SUT 1/1/1/1, Council minutes 12 Aug 1885 - Nov 1885).

<sup>ix</sup> 3/SUT 1/1/1/1, Council minutes 11 Jan 1893.

<sup>x</sup> Looking at records from other towns, it is certainly possible that, without law to support them, the Town Council would have continued to find members of all races opposed to segregation.

<sup>xi</sup> 3/SUT 1/1/1/1, Council minutes March 1887. It is recorded that the Municipality was abolished in 1887 as it was in “rent arrears” to the Church. When it was re-established five years later it was recorded that “the former contract with the churchwardens was too heavy a burden on the Municipality” (27 Jul 1892).

<sup>xii</sup> 3/SUT 1/1/1/1, Council minutes 26 Oct 1885. Amerika was dismissed as superintendent, and thereafter required to pay his hut tax.

<sup>xiii</sup> 3/SUT 1/1/1/1, Council minutes 13 May 1885.

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- <sup>xiv</sup> 3/SUT 1/1/1/1, Council minutes 1897.
- <sup>xv</sup> 3/SUT 1/1/1/1, Council minutes, 9 July 1884, and 24 Sept 1884.
- <sup>xvi</sup> 3/SUT 1/1/1/1, Council minutes 24 Sept 1884.
- <sup>xvii</sup> 3/SUT 1/1/1/1, Council minutes 24 Sept 1884.
- <sup>xviii</sup> The minutes show that within a few months, several erven had been taken up.
- <sup>xix</sup> 3/SUT 1/1/1/1, Council minutes 28 Apr 1897.
- <sup>xx</sup> 3/SUT 1/1/1/1 Council minutes 10 Feb 1886.
- <sup>xxi</sup> 3/SUT 1/1/1/1 Council minutes 11 March 1885. Whether this height restriction was adhered to is not known.
- <sup>xxii</sup> 3/SUT 1/1/1/1 Council minutes 25 Jan 1893. Those who kept their houses in “a proper state of repair” were to be exempt from hut tax for one year (3/SUT 1/1/1/1 Council minutes 24 Aug 1892).
- <sup>xxiii</sup> 3/SUT 1/1/1/1 Council minutes 14 Jan 1885.
- <sup>xxiv</sup> 3/SUT 1/1/1/1, Council minutes 28 Dec 1897.
- <sup>xxv</sup> 3/SUT 1/1/1/1 Council minutes Jan 1894. A by-law had to be established whereby residents had to be “... within 500 yards from the village boundary ... to answer the call of nature”.
- <sup>xxvi</sup> 3/SUT 1/1/1/1, Council minutes 24 Aug 1892.
- <sup>xxvii</sup> Alan Mabin suggests that up until 1900 legally enforceable racial legislation was rare at any level of government in the Cape Colony, and that it began to gain momentum at municipal level after 1910. He cites some instances (in East London, Port Elizabeth and parts of the old Transvaal republic) where, in the period 1850–1900, municipalities attempted to allocate land separately “into segregated ‘locations’ for people other than the generally dominant whites” (Mabin 1990: 5). Franco Frescura (1990) dates the origins of Port Elizabeth’s racial segregationism to as far back as 1803, but notes that this was only codified in “markedly segregationist” regulations by the Municipality in 1885. In Cape Town, nineteenth century building regulations did not codify segregation.