



HISTORY OF THE MORELETASPRUIT



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EARLY HISTORY



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DERDEPOORT



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THE PIONEER'S HOUSE



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PIONEER'S HOUSE OVERNIGHT ACCOMMODATION

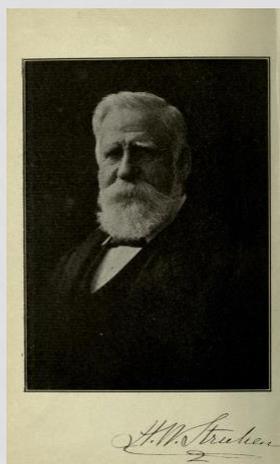


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THE STRUBEN FAMILY



- Capt Johan Marinus Struben
- Hendrik Wilhelm (Harry) Struben 1840 – 1915
- Frederick Pine Theophilus (Fred) Struben 1852 – 1931
- Frank Edward Beattie Struben (Harry's son)

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GARSFONTEIN FARM AND HOUSE BUILT BY
J C MARNEWECK – NOW IN MORELETAKLOOF
NATURE RESERVE



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ERASMUS CASTLE, BUILT BY JOCHEMUS
JACOBUS ERASMUS (1863 – 1940)



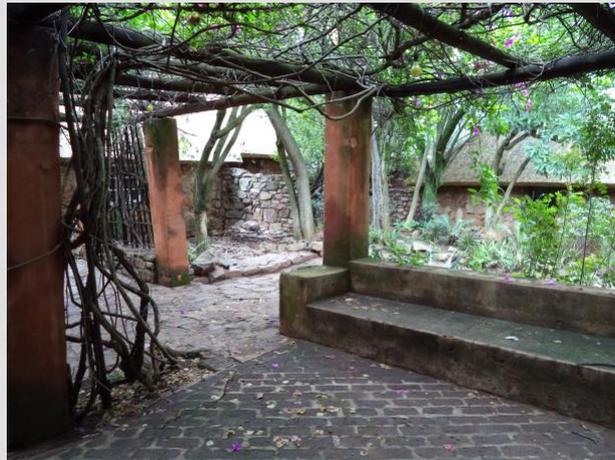
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JACOB HENDRIK PIERNEEF (1886 – 1957)
HIS HOUSE “ELANGENI” BUILT 1939



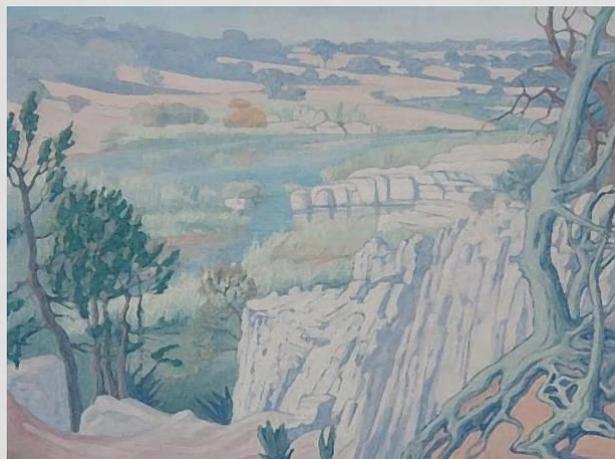
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J H PIERNEEF – LANDSCAPE 1945



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EASTWOOD TOWNSHIP



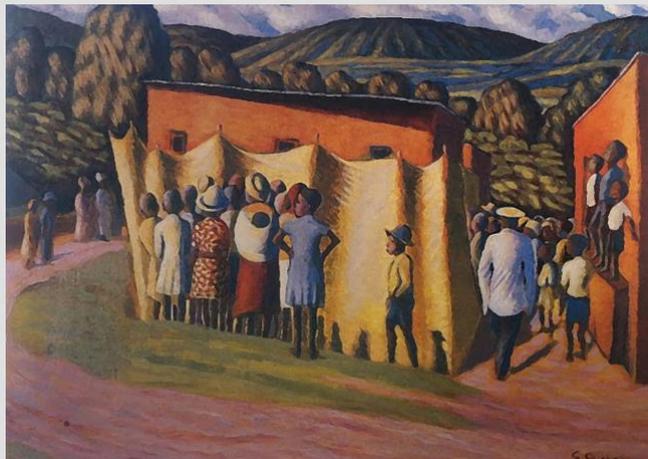
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GERARD SEKOTO (1913 - 1993) "SIXPENCE A DOOR" - 1946



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GERARD SEKOTO "VILLAGE GOSSIP" 1946



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MORELETA IN FLOOD AT FAERIE GLEN



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FLOOD AT OLD MILITARY ROAD, NOW JANUARY MASILELA DRIVE (1978?)



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Talk on the History of the Moreletaspruit – Carol Martin

A look at the heritage buildings and some of the interesting people along the Moreleta.

Slide 1: The History of the Moreletaspruit

This picture was taken at Derdepoort in December after rain and I think this is what the Moreletaspruit must have looked like in the old days before all the trees were planted.

The name Moreleta is a corruption of the North Sotho name, **Moretele** which we think is derived from the word *Moretelwa* the *Grewia flava* or raisin bush which was used to make an alcoholic drink.

Slide 2: Early History

Nomadic San people must have been in the area long ago as some Late Stone Age tools have been found on the rocky ridges around the river.

The first Bantu speaking people in the area were the Northern Sotho Bakwena and Bakgatla and the Transvaal Ndebele who arrived in the 17th century under Chief Msi. In 1827 the Matabele under Mzilikazi came sweeping through and attacked the Tswana and Ndebele with the aim of wiping them out. They killed the men, destroyed the huts and captured the cattle and most of the women to be wives for the impi. All that is left of those huts and kraals are these stone circles. There are still a few on the rocky ridges but most have disappeared.

Then in 1839 the Boers started to arrive with their ox wagons and thousands of cattle, looking for a place to live away from British influence. Adult male burghers – 16 years old - of the new Transvaal Republic were given two farms of about 3000 hectares each. The first farms along the Moreleta were surveyed in the 1840s.

Slide 3: Derdepoort

Derdepoort is a 3 km wide gap in the Magaliesberg with the Moreleta on the east and the Hartbeesspruit on the west. They meet north of Sephako Makgatho Drive.

The first owner of the farm was R J Jansen. During his time the Boers held an important meeting here under Andries Pretorius in 1849 and the first Volksraad of the Transvaal Republic was established and a draft constitution was approved – remember this was when there were a few scattered farms and no town.

The 4th owner, J B Wolmarans demolished the first house and built this Opstal in about 1900. He and his wife and some family members are buried in the graveyard next to the house.

The City Council bought portions of the farm in 1969 and 70 and established the Derdepoort Recreation Resort which is really beautiful.

Here I would like to give a bouquet to the old Parks Department of the City Council of Pretoria which had the vision to buy the farms at Derdepoort, Faerie Glen and Moreletakloof and the corridor of land along the river and to the current Department of Nature Conservation of the City of Tshwane which looks after the green areas.

Slide 4: The Pioneer House

The first owner of the farm, Hartebeestpoort, was Dawid Alwyn Botha in 1858. He built the house. He came from Swellendam and built it in the Swellendam style. It has no foundations and is built of clay packed between two planks on the ground. When the clay was dry, the planks were moved up and the next layer was added. The house has been in a bad state for 4 years and the museum now says they will restore it.

After Botha there were various owners till Hans Heinrich Mundt bought it in 1875. He thought it had an excellent position as gold had been discovered at Lydenburg and there were a lot of transport riders and travellers going to Barberton and the Eastern Transvaal and the road crossed the Moreleta on this farm.

Slide 5: Overnight Rooms for Travellers, Pioneer's House

He built accommodation for travellers and he had an arrangement to supply horses for George Heys' post coach. When the coach was about 2 miles away, the driver would blow the bugle and the Mundt sons would get the fresh horses ready.

Hans Mundt was a German and full of new farming ideas. He planted walnut trees and other fruits which the Boers had never seen before and he brought in two German gardeners to look after the crops. He also kept turkeys, ducks, chickens and pigs.

For water, they had a well and also a very long furrow, dug with wooden spades, which brought water from higher up the river.

In 1890 he sold a portion of the farm which became Silverton.

The farm stayed in the Mundt family until the portion with the old house was donated to the Silverton Town council by his daughter-in-law in 1961. It was later taken over by the National Cultural History Museum. The curators demolished a newer Victorian house and kept only the original Voortrekker house and it was opened as a museum in 1975.

Slide 6: The Struben Family

Capt Marinus Struben was a Dutch sea captain who was naturalized English at his father-in-law's insistence before he could marry his daughter, Frances Beattie. They came to South Africa in 1850 with 5 children and he became a magistrate in Natal where Fred was born and shortly afterwards Frances died. Capt Struben married again and came to Pretoria in 1855.

The Struben boys were very adventurous, hard working and entrepreneurial and Fred was a natural geologist from a very early age.

Harry described how the town was swarming with gnu, blesbok, springbok and zebras.

At the age of 17 he bought a wagon and a span of oxen and started transport riding to Durban. His business soon expanded to several wagons.

In 1862 he bought the farm, The Willows, and started farming. He married Mary Cole in 1868 and they had 7 children. All the famous people who visited Pretoria visited The Willows.

He was a member of the Volksraad, a farmer and also did some prospecting for diamonds and gold.

He bought many other properties including the farm, Lynnwood.

3.

Harry and Fred are best known for being among the first people to discover the Witwatersrand gold reef. Harry became the first chairman of the Chamber of Mines and after a few years they had made enough money to retire. Fred went to Devon in England and Harry went to Cape Town but visited the Willows every year.

Harry transferred the farm Lynnwood to his son Frank in 1912. Frank was an invalid after an aeroplane accident. He built a new house, Lynndower, in 1939 with a cottage for his full-time nurse. The house still exists and it still gets its water from a borehole in the grounds of the Menlo Park Hoërskool.

Frank was very philanthropic and donated the land for the proefplaas to the university and also gave the land for St Albans College.

Slide 7: Garsfontein and the Rademeyer and Erasmus Families

The Rademeyers owned much of the farm, Garsfontein. There were many of them and they were so well-known that the Moreleta was often referred to as Rademeyersrivier. Now we still have the tributary, the Rademeyerspruit in Moreletakloof.

Jacobus Cornelis Rademeyer married Cornelia Johanna Erasmus and they ran a dairy farm where Moreletakloof is today. They left the farm to their 6 sons and a son-in-law. Now Carel Jacobus Erasmus (1832 – 1902), son of Daniel Jacobus Erasmus of the farm Zwartkop (where Zwartkops Golf Course is now) comes into the picture. There is a legend that he bought Garsfontein for a pair of corduroy pants ('n fluweelbroek) and a pony but this is not true. In 1878 and 9 he bought portions of Garsfontein from the Rademeyer sons and the sales and amounts are recorded to be about £1 850. He built a house which is today the chapel at Moreletakloof. When Carel died in 1902, he left a third of the farm each to his son, Jochemus Johannes Petrus Erasmus, who built Erasmus Castle on his portion; and his son-in-law, Johan Coenraad Marneweck, who built the house which is now Rademeyers Restaurant in Moreletakloof; and Daniel Engenatius Schutte.

The City Council bought a portion of the farm and it is now the Moreletakloof Nature Reserve.

Slide 8: Jochemus Johannes Jacobus Erasmus (1863 – 1940) and the Erasmus Castle

There were two earlier farmhouses on this farm near to the Wolwespruit, a tributary of the Moreletaspruit, built in 1860 and 1890 respectively. Jochemus was a very successful farmer and businessman and supplied meat, maize, milk and also slate and bricks and became quite wealthy. He built a new Victorian house at the top of the hill in 1903 generally known as Erasmus Castle. We think the architect used an American pattern book for the design. There were long drop toilets but Jochemus had his own personal toilet built on the other side of a garden wall. He had a pipe running from the duck pond to the toilet and when he turned a tap on, the water from the pond flushed everything out of the toilet and down the side of the koppie!

4.

There have been many stories about girls with leprosy locked up in the tower. In fact 3 of Jochemus' children did have leprosy, a son Carel and 2 daughters, Maud and Lena. They stayed at home rather than going to Westfort Leper Colony. People avoided the Erasmus's in the streets of the town and the dominee would not bury the boy when he died. Jochemus' fortunes took a turn for the worse in the 1920's.

The house was called the Spook House after a film "Hier's ons weer!" was made there in the 1950's.

The house was bought by Armscor. They restored the house and moved the 2 older houses near to the Castle and the graveyard was also moved to the old cattle kraal to make way for new wider roads. It is not open to the public except for tours.

Slide 9: Jacob Hendrik Pierneef (1886 – 1957) – His house, “Elangeni” built 1939

Henk Pierneef was born in Pretoria and educated at the Staats Model School. During the Boer War his father was deported to Holland by the British and Pierneef studied art in Rotterdam. They came back after the war and he wanted to become an architect but could not afford to study. He worked at the State Library and lectured at Heidelberg and Pretoria Colleges of Education.

In 1929 – 32 he painted 32 panels for the Johannesburg Railway Station for £80 each (these are now in the Rupert Museum in Stellenbosch) and in 1933 he was commissioned to paint murals in South Africa House in London.

He had a love of indigenous architecture and when he bought a farm along the Moreletaspruit in 1939 he built the house himself in the form of a kraal and called it “Elangeni”- “where sunshine is at the gate”.

The house is still standing but is now surrounded by complexes. It is presently being restored to be used as a guest house. It is at the end of Knoppiesdoorn Road off Lynburn Road next to a koppie behind the CSIR.

Slide 10: J H Pierneef – Landscape 1945

Pierneef was obsessed by architecture and treated mountains, rocks and trees as structures in a modernist and geometric style and was also inspired by Bushman Rock Art.

This painting is just entitled “Landscape” but it could be a view of the Moreletaspruit in Lynnwood, from Brookside to Lynnwood Roads, from the koppie next to his house. This painting was sold in London in 2009 for £49 250.

Slide 11: Eastwood Township

Eastwood Township was a black township east of Pretoria until the mid 1950's. The people were moved so that white suburbs could be developed in the east. It was a small township and was in Garsfontein where Garsfontein Laerskool is now. The water was brought to the township by a donkey cart but one can see quite a few paths going towards the river.

5.

Slide 12: Gerard Sekoto (1913 – 1993) – Sixpence a Door 1946

Gerard Sekoto was born at Botshabelo near Middelburg where his father was a teacher. He also taught near Polokwane for a short while, but his great love was art and after his father died he went to Sophiatown, Johannesburg in 1938 and then to District Six in Cape Town in 1942. In 1945 he came to Eastwood Township to live with his mother and stepfather and his brother and his family. He found Eastwood to be a good breakaway after the hectic life of District Six and said: “Now one could still breathe in some fresh air and walk upon the natural unpaved ground”.

His great aim was to go to Paris “the Mecca for artists” and so he worked on exhibitions to raise the money for the trip. The paintings from his Eastwood period are regarded as his best works and fetch high prices on auction today.

He went to Paris in 1947 and he never came back to South Africa. He was created a Chevalier des Artes et des Lettres by the French Government towards the end of his life. On Sundays Zulu dancers sometimes came to Eastwood and put up a sort of tent. They charged sixpence for people to get in and watch them.

Slide 13: Gerard Sekoto – Village Gossip 1946

In this painting one can see the relaxed, friendly lifestyle in Eastwood. In the background the countryside with the soft rounded hills near the river.

It really interests me that two of South Africa’s greatest artists whose works are now fetching millions of rand were both working along the Moreleta in the 1940’s.

Slide 14: Moreleta in Flood at Faerie Glen

In the old records and personal recollections, the great floods and the way the river roars are always mentioned. This picture is at Faerie Glen. I’m not sure when it was but it may have been in 1978. There was a huge flood in January 1978 and the townhouses in Lynnwood Road were severely flooded. We knew people who lived there. They woke up in the night and felt something was wrong. They looked out of the upstairs window and saw a little car bobbing at window height. When they went to the stairs, they saw that the water had broken the back door open and pushed out the sliding doors in front. They had been about to move and everything was packed and ready downstairs but the water swept it all away never to be seen again. Next day the water mark was almost up to the ceiling and there were dead monkeys and fish in the house

Slide 15: Flood at Old Military Road, now January Masilela Drive (1978?)

This is the aftermath of the flood. You can see all the mud on the road. Later a high water bridge was built and a flood attenuation system was also built upstream of the bridge. You can see the stone structure which the City Council Parks Department built at each road crossing along the river to mark the Wandelpad or Nature Trail which was opened at the end of 1977. One could walk all along the Moreleta from Garsfontein Road to Roodeplaat Dam.

Slide 16: Bibliography