Bergvliet Meadowridge Ratepayers Association
BMRA
for the good of the community

Bergvliet Meadowridge Ratepayers' Association

Celebrating 75 Years of Service to Our Suburbs

The History of Bergvliet

The name Bergvliet (which means "little mountain stream") probably dates back to the early 1700s when a section was subdivided from the original large farm that encompassed the entire Constantia valley.

Early History

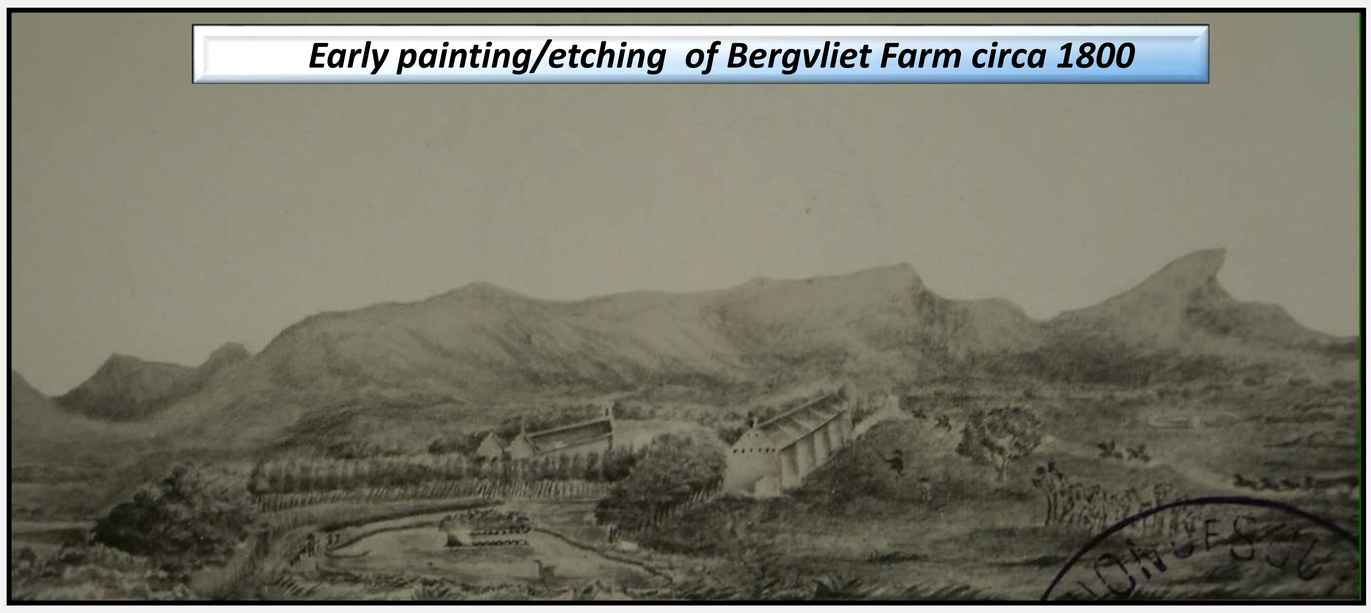
The early Dutch settlers of the Cape brought with them the concept of property ownership along with the Dutch system of *landdrost* (local official) and *heemraden* (similar to the concept of today's local council).

The original Constantia farm area (approximately 763 hectares) stretching from the Almond Hedge (remnants of which can still be seen in Kirstenbosch Garden) to the sea (Muizenberg) was granted to Governor Simon van der Stel in 1685. During the 18th and 19th centuries, the estate was divided into six farms, on each of which five houses were eventually to be built. The farms were named: Groot Constantia, Klein Constantia I (later renamed Hoop op Constantia), Bergvliet, Klein Constantia II, Hoogte Constantia and Constantia Valley.

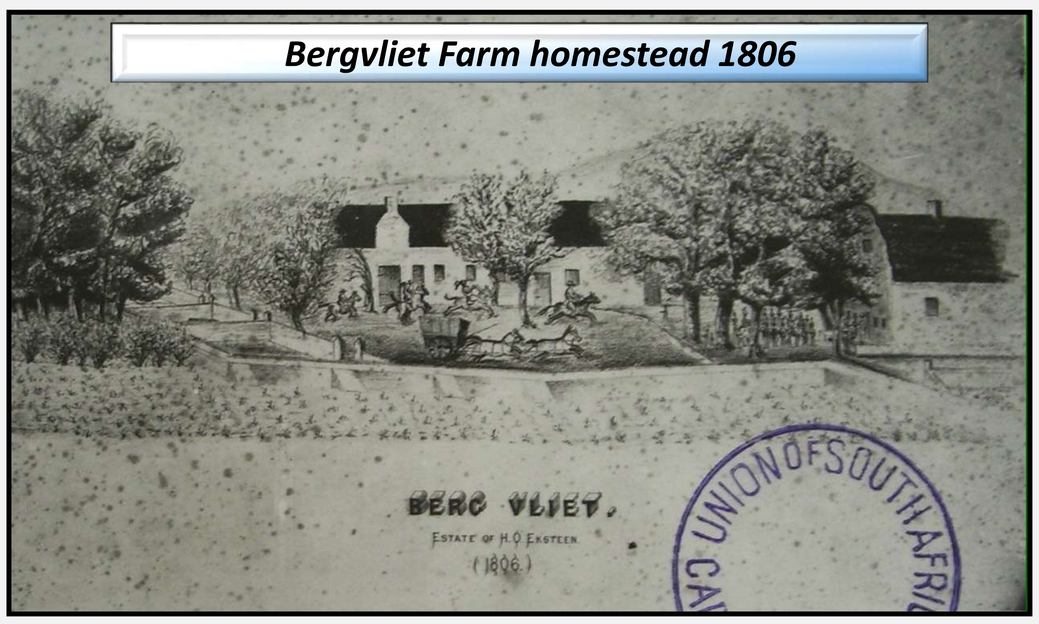
In 1716, Isaac Scheepers and Jan Brommaert, in partnership, acquired Bergvliet (405 hectares) and a portion of Klein Constantia (117 hectares). Over the years ownership of Bergvliet Farm changed several times. However, the Eksteen family owned the farm from 1769 to 1863, and around 1769 Petrus Eksteen added a "fine gabled homestead" to the existing buildings, which still stands today at the western end of Homestead Avenue within Farmside Estate. The farm's original water source was at Die Oog.

Portions of the farm were later shared amongst relatives and sold, and in 1863 Willem Frederick Hertzog (the uncle of South Africa's third Prime Minister) acquired Eksteen's portions of Bergvliet and Sweet Valley. On Hertzog's death in 1902 the estate passed to his nieces (referred to as sisters in some historical accounts), Mrs S Purcell and Mrs A Jeffcoat. Following the death of Dr Purcell in 1919, the Rev W Jeffcoat assumed stewardship of the farm on behalf of his family. In about 1930 the farm was again divided, the Jeffcoats acquiring Bergvliet, and the northern portion, Kreupelbosch, going to the Purcell descendants.

Bergvliet Farm homestead today

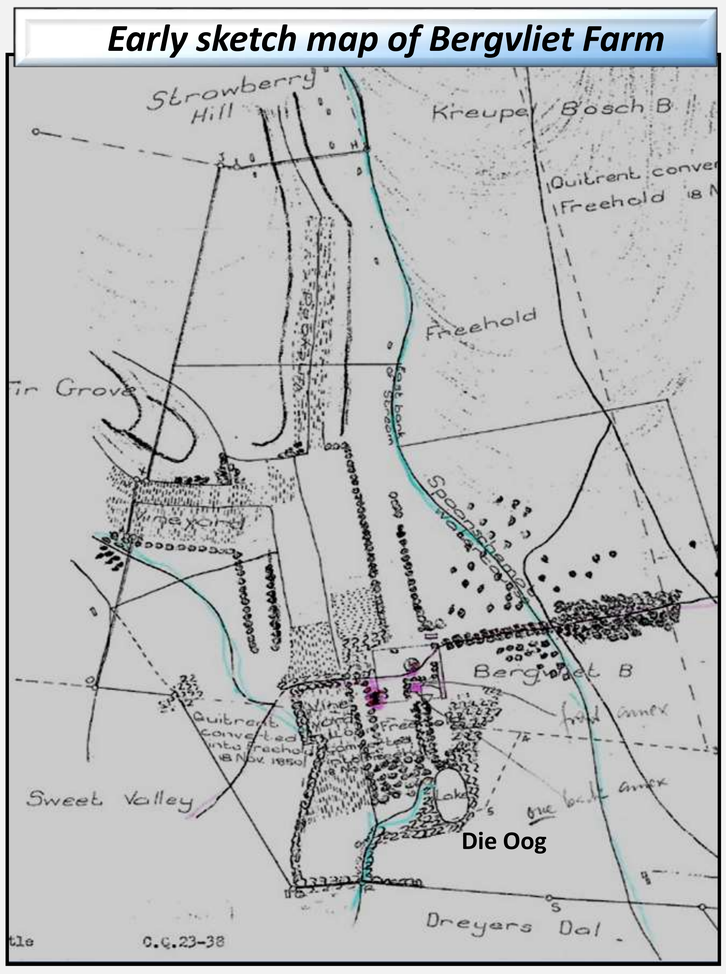


Early painting/etching of Bergvliet Farm circa 1800



Bergvliet Farm homestead 1806

Early sketch map of Bergvliet Farm



History could have been very different…..

The story of the Last Will and Testament of Willem Frederick Hertzog

Willem Hertzog bought Bergvliet Farm from Johannes Eksteen in 1863. Wishing to travel to Europe, Willem asked his nephew General James Hertzog (who later became South Africa's Prime Minister) to oversee his farm during his absence. Unfortunately, Willem, who was unmarried and had no heirs, died soon after he arrived in Hamburg.

An early will, dated 1889, in which he left his estate to his sister Susanna Maria Hertzog who had died sometime before, had been lodged with his Executors . By default his estate would then naturally pass on to Willem's two nieces.

However, in the process of winding up the estate a stranger, Mr Albert Heyer, arrived unexpectedly on the doorstep, claiming to be a friend of Willem Hertzog, and offered his assistance in making an inventory of Willem's possessions. Heyer claimed that, amongst the books in the library, he had found a more recent will dated 1902. This new will left Hertzog's estate to Mr Michael Hiddingh of Newlands (a relative on Willem's maternal side of the family).

A lengthy court case ensued that was only settled in 1904. The finder of the new will, Albert Heyer, was not entirely respectable having been a spy for both the British and the Boers, and having been jailed for an offence committed in Zanzibar. The court finally ruled that the new will was a fake, and the estate passed on Hertzog's rightful heirs, the Jeffcoats and Purcells.

Later the heirs equitably split the estate with the Jeffcoats becoming owners of the Bergvliet half, and the Purcells owners of the Kreupelbosch half.

Dreyersdal Farmhouse (original house built circa 1835)

The Longhouse at Dreyersdal Farm

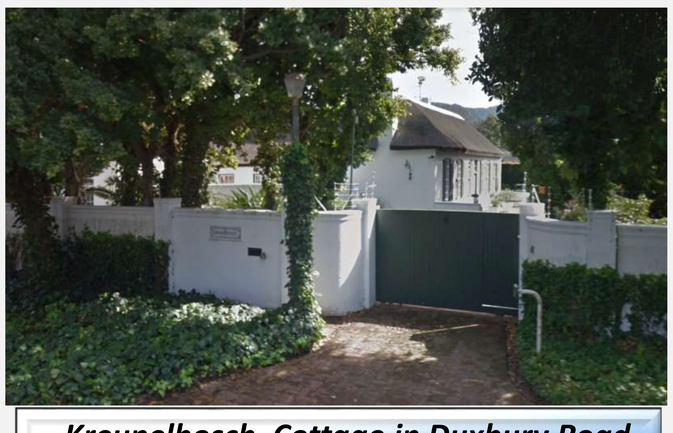
Other historic buildings in Bergvliet

Dreyersdal Farm is also historically linked to the development of Bergvliet. It appears that the farm may have been part of the adjacent Bergvliet Farm when in the ownership of Eksteen. The original Dreyersdal farm buildings may have been constructed in about 1835, and extensions to the farmstead complex followed in later years. The Longhouse or barn forms the eastern boundary of the homestead complex and is now zoned to permit an educational institution. The farm remains an agricultural remnant and a fine ensemble of buildings and landscapes relating to agricultural/historical endeavours.

The attractive thatched farmhouse within Evergreen Bergvliet was known as Sonnenhof Farmhouse and now forms the clubhouse at the estate.

Not far from the Sonnenhof farmhouse is Kreupelbosch Cottage, a thatched cottage in Duxbury Road which is situated on part of the original Bergvliet Farm, and was built in 1910 as a replica of Plumstead House.

Sonnenhof Farmhouse at Evergreen



Kreupelbosch Cottage in Duxbury Road

Acknowledgement
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