

# 150 years of history

## PRE-1857

Waving grasslands and a strong stream of fresh water attracted farmers to the Kleijne River Valleij in the old days. One of them was Christoffel Brand, who built the first farmstead on the farm Kleine Rivier's Valley. This was the house in which Lady Anne Barnard stayed over during her inland journey in 1798.

In 1801 the farm was granted by the British Government to Brand. The farm changed hands several times until it was bought in 1838 by a prosperous Irish farmer, Robert Stanford. He made many improvements and built the mill (for grinding wheat) close to the stream that ran close to his farm house.

Being an entrepreneurial spirit, he transported products by sea from a small bay (now known as Stanford's Cove, close to De Kelders), to Cape Town – rather than using the time-consuming route over the Hottentots-Holland Mountain. Robert Stanford lost his farm after the Neptune tragedy (read more about this in Stanford Stories II) when, being a half-pay officer, he had to supply the British government in Cape Town with produce from his farm.

Philippus de Bruyn bought the farm in 1855, laid out the village and sold plots of which the first was registered in the name of Duncan McFarlane on 30 September 1857. The village of Stanford was born.

## 1857 – 1919

Many of the families employed by Robert Stanford, such as the Moore and Carse families, stayed on in Stanford. Many of the English in the village married Afrikaans-speaking people from the area and together they helped to build the little village. Churches, schools, a police station and other amenities followed.

Stanford was administered by a Village Management Board from its foundation in 1857. When a piece of land had to be bought for the extension of the village in 1919, Stanford became a municipality on 14 November that year.

## 1920s and 1930s

During the 1920s and early 1930s Stanford blossomed economically. It became a prosperous village with many shops, butcheries and tailors. Customers came from far and wide – and also from Hermanus, which at that stage was nothing more than a nondescript fishing village. During this boon period most of the fine old Victorian and Overberg type homes that can still be seen in Stanford today, were built.

The farmers from the area also built their 'tuishuise' (town houses), which they used during Holy Communion weekend. Others camped in ox wagons on the village green. The NG church in Stanford also served the communities in Gansbaai and Baardscheerdersbosch. The result was that weekends were alive with young and old joining in many activities in the village.

## 1940s

During the 1940s, Hermanus started to develop rapidly as a holiday resort and Gansbaai established its fishing industry. The result was that, on the whole, life in Stanford started to slow down. Apart from these towns opening their own shops, churches and other amenities, it became the trend for young people to move to the city (Cape Town) and parents eventually following them to be closer to medical facilities. Clothing factories took over the work of tailors who with their staff became redundant and moved on.

## 1950s to 1970s

During these years Stanford's heyday seemed over. The village slowly drifted into a sleepy little 'dorp'. Hardly a house was built and the school numbers dropped significantly, reducing Okkie Smuts School to a primary school.

These were also the grim years in South Africa's history when, during the early 1960s the Coloured families in the community were moved to Die Skema as part as the Nationalist government's Group Areas Act. Many of the older folk still speak with sadness of the homes they were born and raised in. Mathilda May, however, rebelled against the policy and refused to move; and stayed on in her house in Langmark Street until she died in the 1980s.

Farming traditions also changed during these years. Whereas wheat, stock and vegetables were the backbone of the farming industry since Juriaan Appel starting farming in the area in the 1700s, many farmers changed to flower

(&lsquo;fynbos&rsquo;) farming in the 1970s when the international markets opened up. A co-operative, serving a wide farming community and building industry, was built and more speciality shops appeared.

#### 1980s to 2000

During the late 1980s Stanford started to experience a slow change. City-dwellers discovered this small tranquil village along the Klein River and the Klein River Mountains as backdrop. Being close enough to Cape Town but far enough for a weekend away, more and more Capetonians spent time in Stanford, buying holiday homes and eventually retiring here or starting up their own business. It was these &ldquo;inkommers&rdquo; (new people coming into the village) who, with the help of the then Monuments Council, were the main movers and shakers to get the old village of Stanford declared as a conservation area. This made Stanford even more attractive to new residents, whilst residents were proud to restore their homes to their former glory. Robert Stanford&rsquo;s old home underwent the same rebirth as the town. Stanford almost experienced a renaissance &ndash; new businesses, restaurants and people with innovative ideas arrived &ndash; new developments &ndash; it became a sought-after place for investment and to live or retire.

#### THE NEW MILLENNIUM

New blood brings forth change &ndash; and Stanford&rsquo;s character has changed tremendously in the new millennium. It now boasts a vibrant and colourful community living in peace and harmony in the most beautiful part of the world. The challenge lies in maintaining that harmony &ndash; in both our rainbow community and the natural and architectural heritage we are obliged to protect and conserve for our future generations, just like it has been done in the past. And we will &ndash; that&rsquo;s why we are Proudly Stanfordians!

Content courtesy of Stanford Tourism Bureau