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A PATTERN OF BOER SETTLEMENT AT THE
CAPE EASTERN FRONTIER, 1769-1779

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**A PATTERN OF BOER SETTLEMENT AT THE CAPE EASTERN
FRONTIER, 1769-1779**

by

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In intolerable heat we took the Mercedes where few cars had gone before, and where wagons once struggled as much as we did. Their love and support are always a strong driving force,

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We found the ascent of the Sneeuberg, along a road no better than a wagon road, as difficult as Swellengrebel. The adventure of climbing mountains in order to establish the viewpoints of drawings equalled that of the early travellers,

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For the initial impulse came, not from exact knowledge, but from the lack of it.

De Bosdari, 1953

*DEDICATED
TO THE MEMORY
OF THOSE
BRAVE AND GOD-FEARING PIONEERS
WHO PUSHED THEIR WAY INTO
THE UNKNOWN OF SOUTH AFRICA
AS WELL AS
TO THOSE WHO
LOVE ITS HISTORY AND TRADITIONS*

Colin Graham Botha, 1926

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CHAPTER 1 THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Rural settlement, as man's living and functional space, dots the countryside since prehistoric times and forms an integral part of human life. A rural settlement, as the point of origin and primary residence of human society, is the linking thread and life blood of all geographical studies. Therefore, the consideration of settlement runs like a thread through almost the whole fabric of geographic thought. (Mandal, 1979:13)

This study investigates the pattern of settlement of the first White inhabitants on the Eastern Frontier during the first decade of occupation of the land. It is concerned with the cultural and physical environment of settling and as such falls within the field of settlement geography. Settlement geography is the study of the form of the cultural landscape developed by people in the process of occupancy (Mandal, 1979: 15-22). It deals with the facilities built in the process of human occupancy of land. Their nature and distribution are related on the one hand to the mode of living and on the other to aspects of the physical geography. The centre of interest in settlement geography is the built up structure and its relation to the environment. A settlement is an organised colony of human beings, including the buildings in which they live or work and the tracks or streets over which their movement takes place.

Rural settlement is the totality of human community in rural areas with all the social, material, organisational, spiritual and cultural elements that sustain the community. Furthermore it is the topographic expression of the groupings and arrangements of two fundamental elements of human geography - houses and highways in the rural environment.

Habitation, like any other cultural trait, evolve through both time and space. They, inevitably, carry within themselves some hidden and some apparent characteristic elements of their times and areas. Hence, they provide us with one of the most readily available forms of synthesis, the temporally changing patterns of the inter-regional and intra-regional character of the cultural landscape. (Mandal, 1979:15)

Buildings and transport routes form the fixed elements of landscape and they continue as relict features even after the way of living, they represent, is changed. (Mandal, 1979:17)

Geographers consider rural settlement as human-made habitat in the rural landscape, based on primary occupations such as agriculture, forestry, mining, fishing, hunting, which flourish on local resources. They examine the settlement features such as

buildings and their styles, roads and routes, in order to distinguish new categories or patterns and determine their functional relationships. Thus, the size, spacing, form and functions of rural settlements and their origin are essentials of the subject matter. The cultural environment in which this pattern evolved is central to the physical pattern. This view is broader than Pacione's (1984: 9) who states that rural settlement geography is 'a study of the visual imprint made by man (sic) on the countryside in the process of occupancy'. Thereby the form of dwellings and their arrangement on the land is seen as the basic components of the rural landscape and requires only an understanding of the morphology and genesis of farmsteads. Daniel and Hopkinson (1981:13) explain that this concept of 'physical determinism', where it was assumed that the pattern and organisation of settlements are determined solely by physical factors, has been superseded by the realisation that social factors also play an important role in the location and emerging character of any settlement. But while the environmental factors like topography, climate, availability of water and food, and agricultural practices have a direct effect on the types, patterns and built form, other associated factors are elements of cultural geography, cultural history, culture processes, culture ecology and culture area.

Geographers recognise that whilst almost any kind of settlement form is possible in a given landscape, the probability is that certain locations will be chosen in preference to others, and how they are used will depend upon the level of skill and technology available to the people living there. (Daniel and Hopkinson, 1981:13)

The settlement is central to all human geography, modifying as it does the natural environment by intruding a cultural element. Any settlement can be studied in either a world or a regional context, but any settlement, if it is to be adequately appreciated, must be correlated with other facets of geography, for example relief, climate, geology and social and economic conditions. (Hudson, 1976: 3)

To present a rounded account of settlement geography, therefore, it will be necessary to describe and try to interpret the site and situation, building materials, form and function of small rural settlements and the patterns they make on the map. (Hudson, 1976: 11)

The approach in this study is biarticulate; on the one hand it is ecological, assuming that the settlement pattern is the product of the interaction of two aspects - environment and technology - which is concerned with the adaptation of a society and its technology to an environment. This will be referred to as the physical environment and the road and homestead will be investigated as the manifestation thereof. On the other hand it is concerned with making inferences about the cultural environment; the

social, political and economic organisation of that society. It is assumed that an understanding of the origin and cultural environment of the frontier settlers is imperative for an understanding of the manner in which they settled themselves on an unknown frontier.

The research area was visited in November and December 1996, and the routes followed by the early travellers were retraced on the landscape. In some instances the original wagon tracks had become roads in their own right and in other instances the grooves left by wagons are the only indication that people once crossed the land. The original homesteads had long ago disappeared and the only evidence of their existence is to be found in some of the farm-names that had been retained to the present. The original homesteads can only be studied through the drawings made for the journals of the early travellers. The authenticity of these had been established by the documentation of the surrounding landscape that corresponds favourably with the existing landscape.

The study fills a gap in the recorded history of South Africa. The history of the Cape Colony under Jan van Riebeeck and subsequent commanders, and later governors, is well documented. The British Occupation followed by the Great Trek is dealt with in detail by different authorities. The British Settlers have their own chroniclers as have the Boer Republics and Natal. The formation of the Union and later the Republic of South Africa have also been dealt with at length.

Although the history of the former Graaff-Reinet district is well documented, the preceding history of settlement has been neglected both in general historical writings and studies on early rural vernacular architecture of the Cape.

1.2 THE STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This dissertation determines the pattern of settlement by the Boers at the Eastern Frontier of the Cape Colony for the period 1769-1779.

1.3 THE SUBPROBLEMS

- 1.3.1 A review of significant primary documents related to the period and place under investigation so as to extrapolate the significant aspects of settlement.
- 1.3.2 An investigation of the origins and culture of the Boers that settled at the Eastern Frontier of the Cape Colony: 1769-1779, as significant elements of the settlement pattern of the cultural environment.
- 1.3.3 An investigation of the established routes at the Eastern Frontier: 1769-1779, as significant element of the settlement pattern.
- 1.3.4 An investigation of the homesteads at the Eastern Frontier: 1769-1779, as a significant element of the settlement pattern of the physical environment.

1.4 THE HYPOTHESES

- 1.4.1 There is sufficient extant primary material on the period and place to be investigated.
- 1.4.2 The Boers that settled at the Eastern Frontier were of European origin and a specific cultural environment can be associated with them.
- 1.4.3 Established routes existed or either still exist on the Eastern Frontier: 1769-1779, and the settlement pattern can be traced through the position of these routes and the farms situated on them.
- 1.4.4 The building types and layout of the homesteads can be studied as a significant element of the settlement pattern of the physical environment.

1.5 THE DELIMITATIONS

- 1.5.1 The study is limited to the Eastern Frontier as it existed in the late eighteenth century.
- 1.5.2 The study is limited to the first decade of settlement.
- 1.5.3 The study is limited to settlement documented and described by the travellers to the area between 1769 and 1779.

1.6 THE DEFINITION OF TERMS

- 1.6.1 All terms have their Oxford English Dictionary meaning.
- 1.6.2 Names and terms that do not occur in above will be defined in the text.
- 1.6.3 Eastern Frontier refers to the area comprised of the Camdebo, Sneeu-berg and Agter-Bruintjieshoogte.
- 1.6.4 Boers refer to the original White settlers.

1.7 THE METHODOLOGY

In formulating a method for recalling the architecture and setting the descriptions contained in the journals and the illustrations of the homesteads are the most important sources of information. During the first decade of settlement, the homestead was the only facility built in the process of occupancy of the land. These have long ago disappeared from the physical environment and its former character, function and layout had to be generated from the documentary evidence.

The area was revisited in 1996 and the sites of the drawings were identified. In all instances the features of the landscape corresponded exactly with that depicted in the drawings. The viewpoint from where the drawing would have been made could thus be determined and the existing landscape was documented photographically from this point. The authenticity of the architectural representation was assumed to be accurate on the basis of the exact correspondence between the depicted and existing landscape and correspondence with descriptions of the character of these homesteads contained in the journals.

A perspective representation was traced on MicroGDS, a CAD programme, to correspond with the sizes, positions and relations of the different buildings that comprised the homestead and a speculative plan layout was generated.

1.8 THE IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

The study is important in that it infers from known facts an aspect of the Eastern Frontier history that has not hereto been investigated. The present writer has no

knowledge of any study that deals extensively and exclusively with the pattern of settlement by Boers on the Eastern Frontier in the late eighteenth century.

A problem that arose in the course of the study was the spelling of names. They were often spelt in different ways, and as far as the journals are concerned, often, different versions were found in the same document. This applied to places as well as people. In direct quotations the original spelling was retained and if deemed necessary the name is clarified, in general text a common form is adopted. Where possible the modern Afrikaans version has been used.

An aspect, typical of the primary and secondary sources, is the sexually biased approach from which one is led to believe that 'man' was the only sex involved in the historical process. This is evident in the journals, where, in reference to the owners of farms all are male with only one exception. In these sources there is little or no reference to the role of the female in the process of settling. Therefore, the origin of the settlers can best be researched through the male line. Recent writings are also indicative of a sexually biased approach that today is under close scrutiny. The term frontiersman is an example of this. In the present study the term will be used in accordance with its Oxford Dictionary (1990: 473) meaning as:

a person living in the region of a frontier, esp. between settled and unsettled country.

Direct quotations with a sexually biased approach will not be changed. This aspect, inevitably, is part of the present study.

CHAPTER 2 A BRIEF HISTORY OF EXPANSION

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter gives a brief history of the expansion of the Cape Colony to the Eastern Frontier for the period 1652-1770. The evolution and influence of farming practices on the opening of frontiers will be investigated. The shift from agrarian practices to the rearing of livestock is central to the expansion of the Colony and settlement of the Eastern Frontier. The role of the loan farm system on the opening of the frontier will be made evident and the reaction of Government to the rapid expansion of the Colony will be investigated.

2.2 SETTLEMENT AT THE CAPE - 1652

In April 1652 the VOC¹ established a settlement at the Cape, situated half way on the route between the Netherlands and the East Indies, to provide fresh produce and supplies to its ships, both outward and homeward bound. The settlement was conceived of as a supply station rather than a colony. The idea was to confine it to a small, easily defensible portion of the Cape Peninsula. This plan in turn rested on two central assumptions. The first assumption was that the pastoral natives would be eager and able to supply the Company with livestock. The second assumption was that the settlement would produce enough grain, fruit and vegetables to support itself and supply visiting ships. The early experiences of Jan Van Riebeeck² at the Cape, put these assumptions to the test.

2.3 THE FIRST FORM OF EXPANSION

The first opportunity for bartering of livestock presented itself only in December 1652 and had a disappointing result. The Saldanhars³, who had trekked with their herds near

¹ VOC for *Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie* (Dutch East India Company), hereafter the Company.

² Jan van Riebeeck, born 21 April 1619 in Holland, qualified as surgeon and entered the service of the VOC. Later became an assistant merchant, serving in Batavia. Selected in 1651 to be the first commander of the proposed establishment at the Cape of Good Hope. Transferred to Batavia in 1662 and died there on 17 January 1677.

³ 'Those from Saldania' - the Khoi tribe, fairly numerous and exceptionally rich in cattle, at that time one of the most important Khoi tribes at the Cape and principal traders of livestock. On account of their large herds they were always compelled to seek new pastures, and therefore led a nomadic life. They generally arrived in the vicinity of Table Bay in the springtime, after the winter rain had fallen. (Van Riebeeck, 1952: 25 note 2 & 71 note 4)

to the vicinity of the white settlement, were not as eager as anticipated to trade with the colonists. Van Riebeeck (1952: 111-112) noted with despair that:

The Saldanhars with thousands of cattle and sheep came so close to our fort that their cattle nearly mingled with ours. Could not, however, get the bartering properly under way. Every now and then they would offer a lean, inferior beast and a sheep or two for sale, with the result that no more than twenty sheep, two cows and five calves were obtained, they were very unwilling to part with any more cattle.

He stated that it was sad to behold such fine herds and not to be able to purchase anything worth while and he lamented the fact that higher orders prevented them from confiscating the animals.

Gie (1955: 60) is of the opinion that Van Riebeeck's restraint, in this case, had more to do with his considerations for his personal future in the service of the Company. The subsequent solution, to send trading expeditions inland in search of livestock, therefore was the first step in the expansion of the colony. Although expansion was contradictory to the views of the Company, local factors demanded that the interior should be explored. The first expedition inland in search of livestock left the Cape in March 1655.

2.4 THE FIRST FREE BURGHERS

Van Riebeeck (1952: 73) proudly describes a farewell dinner they had on the 13th of October 1652, for the officers of a ship in the roadstead which was ready for departure.

Everything on the table was produced at the Cape: the fowls were reared here, new green peas, spinach, chervil, pot-herbs, asparagus (a finger's thickness) and lettuce as hard as cabbage and weighing at least 1¼ lbs. each.

He further noted that the cabbages, carrots and beetroot were doing well, but that the supply of turnips and other earth fruits and vegetables were still rather meagre.

But it soon became obvious that the small labour force could not produce enough to feed the colonists and supply the passing ships. It became apparent that extensive farming required a larger labour force - free colonists. Van Riebeeck believed that farming would develop better if left to individual initiative. Gie (1955: 66) describes how a start was made by giving Annetjie Boom, wife of Hendrik, the head gardener some cows on lease in October 1655. She tended to them with the help of her eight

children, any profit made on milk or butter was hers and she was considered ‘een vrije vrouw’. [A free woman.]

Die Afrikaanse privaatboerdery het dus met ‘n vrou begin! [The Afrikaans private farming therefore began with a woman!]

Although Gie makes a lot to do of the fact that Annetjie Boom was the first ‘free burgher’, it is stated in the journal of Van Riebeeck that the cows were leased to her husband on account of her experience and ability:

It was finally agreed that the Company’s milk cows (10 in number) would be farmed out to the gardener Hendrick Hendrickssen Boom of Amsterdam, whose wife had been engaged in farm work in the Fatherland. Living in the gardens outside the Company’s fortress, they would have a good opportunity for this experiment: apparently the other married people first wanted to see how it would work in the case of the gardener’s wife. (Van Riebeeck, 1952: 347)

The lease of the cows can be seen as a precursor of the system of Free Burghers at the Cape. That a person whose material progress depended on the success of the farm would be more industrious than the Company’s paid servants; that more milk and butter could be produced; that married persons would be persuaded to stay longer at the Cape - these were the arguments used by Van Riebeeck when he advocated the establishment of Free Burghers at the Cape.⁴

It was therefore decided, by the Lords XVII⁵, that officials in the service of the Company, under certain regulations could become free colonists. In 1657 nine servants of the Company became ‘Free Burghers’ under the direction of Van Riebeeck. They were given smallholdings in the Liesbeeck Valley on which they bound themselves to live for twenty years (figure 2.1). They were free from taxation but had to supply the Company with its requirements at fixed prices. Any produce that the Company did not need could be sold to passing ships three days after their arrival. They were not allowed to grow tobacco, nor were they free to trade with the natives.

De Kiewiet (1957: 5) states that much of the Company’s subsequent history was contained in this incompatibility between little freedom and much restraint.

It soon became evident that the farming life was not profitable under the conditions set by the authorities. This is evident from the fact that some Free Burghers soon applied to be re-admitted to the Company’s service, some stowed away in the Company’s

⁴ Views expressed by H. B. Thom, editor of Van Riebeeck (1952: 349) note 1.

⁵ Authorities of the VOC in the Netherlands.

ships in an attempt to return to Europe, others became tradesmen, while some settled in houses near the fort and ran lodging houses.

Van der Merwe (1951: 84) singles out the following factors as reasons for the slow start in agriculture:

- the first colonists were Company soldiers who had no experience in farming, and although they received land for free they still had to cultivate the ground and this required a lot of labour
- the nomadic Khoi were not suitable labourers, they did not want to relinquish their nomadic lifestyle. Farmers could hire Company soldiers but this was very expensive, there was a shortage of slaves and they were very expensive
- the farmers did not have proper agricultural implements and draft animals
- the farmers did not have the benefit of a free market, all produce were sold to the Company who also set the prices, the Company was a commercial enterprise that had profit in mind and not the development of colonies.

Guelke (1979: 45) mentions problems such as unacclimatised wheat seed, poor tools, a shortage of draft animals, severe southeast winds and unenthusiastic labour as reasons for the slow start in agricultural production.

2.5 ANOTHER FORM OF EXPANSION

A few months after the first farms were given out, on the 6th of June, 1657, Van Riebeeck (1954: 122) noted in his journal that it had come to his attention that three freemen, without the knowledge of the authorities, had marched fifteen hours inland, and had been away for three nights. They told of a beautiful river with bitter almond trees on its banks and fine fertile soil, much better than that of the valleys of the Cape. They encountered a tribe of natives there who informed them that this exceptionally rich pasture was their Holland.⁶ Spilhaus (1966: 9) says this disgruntled entry is of historic significance, 'for the event he recorded was to become a recurring feature in the pattern of Afrikaner development'.

So here they were, these farmers, evading authority, slipping off on their own, trekking away now for days together, but it would be months, many months, in the course of time.

⁶ The name given to the region was therefore Hottentots-Holland, still so called today.

Gie (1955: 93) maintains that the migration into the interior that occurred in the first hundred and fifty years of colonisation of the Cape was not the result of a natural wish for expansion, but a result of the unresolved production problem. In the 1670's the production of grain was especially inadequate, and it was therefore decided to extend the farmland of the Company to the fertile region of the Hottentots-Holland.

The argument was that this would not only stimulate production, but a Company Post would be created which was better protected against foreign enemies. It would also mean an increase in Free Burghers, something that the authorities desired. In January 1678 the first farmers obtained permission to settle across the Cape flats in Hottentots-Holland.

2.6 SIMON VAN DER STEL'S POLICY ON FARMING AND EXPANSION

By the time that Simon van der Stel⁷ began his work, colonisation was already a component of the practical politics of the Lords XVII. The census of 1679 showed that the inhabitants of the settlement comprised eighty-seven free men, fifty-five woman, one hundred and seventeen children, thirty European men servants, one hundred and thirty-three men slaves, thirty-eight women slaves, and twenty slave children (Theal, 1964: 245).

The problem of production had not yet been solved, and notwithstanding hundreds of 'vrybriewe'⁸ Van der Merwe (1951: 90) points out that only about twenty-two burgher families were applying themselves exclusively to agriculture.

As a Dutch patriot it was Van der Stel's ambition to create here a true Netherlands, a true colony of the motherland, with a dense, hardworking, agriculturist, Dutch population. Three weeks after his appointment as commander he undertook a journey to visit the farms in Hottentots-Holland. On his return he came across the fertile valley where Stellenbosch is situated today, and decided to expand colonisation to this area. By September 1683 thirty families had already settled there. In 1687 the Commander declared a new settlement along the Bergriver which he called Drakenstein. In time, Van der Stel therefore extended the colony to the interior with the intention that the

⁷ Simon van der Stel (1639-1712), became commander of the Cape Colony on 12 October 1679 and Governor of the Cape Colony from 1691-1699.

⁸ Farming permit or licence.

cultivation of new and fertile ground would increase the production of agricultural products. (Van der Merwe, 1951: 92)

The reign of Simon van der Stel is characterised by a steady stream of immigration with the support of the authorities in the Netherlands (see chapter 4). The conditions were very favourable: free passage was provided and they received as much ground as they could cultivate and any supplies could be bought from the company stores on credit.

Guelke (1979: 51) says of Van der Stel's land policy that in economic terms, land, in abundant supply, was substituted for capital and labour. Van der Merwe (1951: 90) defines Van der Stel's contribution to agriculture directly and colonisation indirectly as: the increase in the price of grain, the solving of the production problem, the solving of the labour problem as the Khoi became settled as labourers.

In time, and especially during the reign of Simon van der Stel, stockfarming became more popular among the colonists than agriculture (Van der Merwe, 1951: 101). In the first place it was more profitable, it did not require as much effort to sell a sheep as it required to produce a 'muid' of grain, which roughly had the same market value. The stockfarmer did not have the same problems as the agriculturist to get his produce to the market. And lastly, stockfarming did not require as much physical effort as agriculture. For this reason some Free Burghers as time went by, spend more effort on stock rearing than agriculture, and in some cases they abandoned agricultural practices altogether.

At his retirement in February 1699 Simon van der Stel handed over the governing of the Cape to his son Willem Adriaan van der Stel⁹. From the written advice¹⁰ he provided for his son it is evident that Simon van der Stel wanted a colony of Dutch farmers at the Cape. Foreigners (Germans were not regarded as such) had to be kept out. The trend towards stockfarming among the colonists had to be stopped, because this made them travel into the interior and a dispersed population over a large area was undesirable. He suggested that it would be much better to have a close-knit community of patriotic colonists close to the capital, who would be easily governed, and who could take the responsibility of defending the settlement against attacks from the sea.

⁹ Willem Adriaan van der Stel (1664-1723). Born in Amsterdam, became second Governor of the Cape. As a result of the dissatisfaction among the colonists he was recalled and after enquiry dismissed from the Company's service in 1707. He died in Amsterdam.

2.7 WILLEM ADRIAAN VAN DER STEL'S POLICY ON FARMING AND EXPANSION

Contrary to the advice of his father, Willem Adriaan did not oppose the trekking of the stockfarmers into the interior. This has earned him the title of 'the great stock-farming pioneer' (Van der Merwe, 1995:37) and 'Vader van die Veeboer-pionier' [Father of the stock-farming pioneer] (Gie, 1955: 122). Van der Merwe (1951: 102) describes this as a significant change of the foundation on which expansion and colonisation was taking place. Van der Merwe (1995:38) ascribes Willem Adriaan van der Stel's break with the economic policies set down by his father, to various factors. The production of agricultural produce was no longer a problem, the Cape market was stable and could not really expand. In this regard Simon van der Stel had reached his goal of making the market self-sufficient. Gie (1955: 141) also refers to the influence of the conflict between Willem Adriaan van der Stel and the farmers on colonisation. On the one hand it temporarily halted the stream of immigrants to the Colony. At the same meeting of the Lords XVII on 26 October 1706, where judgement against Willem Adriaan van der Stel was made, the conditions for emigration to the Colony were suspended. Furthermore, as Theal (1964: 454, 455) states:

There was an effect upon the South African colonists that these troubles produced which makes them memorable in our history. They blended the different nationalities together so firmly that thereafter they were inseparable. ...Thereafter all were Afrikanders.

With little regulations in place the interior was opened up for the colonists.

Die koloniste staan so op die vooraand van 'n groot ontwikkeling, of, beter gesê, die môrelik van 'n nuwe tyd, waarin hulle die binneland anderkant die berge in beslag sou neem, wenk hulle reeds van die ooste toe. En hulle was klaar vir dié groot historiese taak, want hulle was verenig! Kolbe en ander tydgenote het reeds met nadruk daarop gewys dat in die hitte van die stryd teen Van der Stel rasverskille onder die koloniste uitgewis is. Manne wie se wieg in Nederland gestaan het, gebore Afrikaners en Hugenote het saamgestry en saamgely en 'n gesamentlike seëpraal behaal, en die natuurlike proses wat hulle onvermydelik tot één volk moes saamsmelt is verhaas. Gelukkig die nasie wat so tot 'n eenheid gesmee word, juis wanneer hy 'n groot werk moet opvat! ¹¹(Gie, 1955: 142)

¹⁰ 'Instructions' of Simon van der Stel in *Collectanea* (1924: 11-24)

¹¹ The colonists stood on the eve of a great development, or, better said, the dawn of a new era, in which they would occupy the interior beyond the mountains, that already lead them to the east. And they were prepared for this great historical task, because they were united. Kolbe and other contemporaries had already indicated that in the heat of the struggle against Van der Stel, racial differences among the colonists were erased. Men, whose cradle had stood in the Netherlands, those

The quote from Gie reflects a patriotism typical of some writers of the history of White southern Africa. It tells of a nation, united in race (as far as European nationalities are concerned) ready to take up the challenge of conquering the interior. The underlying assumption is that this land was theirs for the taking. The boundaries of the colony gradually expanded as more and more land was occupied for grazing.

2.8 EXPANSION OF THE CAPE COLONY EASTWARD IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

2.8.1 Land Tenure systems¹²

The movement of farmers inland was not the result of a progressive colonisation policy, the process began with the colonists themselves. The Company seemed powerless to stop it for their written decrees proved useless. The Company was forced to increase the area of the colony in order to retain authority over the colonists and to derive revenue from them. The effect of the Company's control on the market has already been discussed as a contribution to the movement inland. When the colonists began to give up agriculture in favour of stockfarming, the increase in the number of animals meant that the established grazing areas were not sufficient. Farmers began grazing their animals on the unoccupied lands on the border of the colony. To address this problem Simon van der Stel introduced a system of common grazing, with specific areas in the districts of the Cape, Stellenbosch and Drakenstein and with the specific understanding that livestock from one district was not allowed into the grazing area of another.

2.8.2 Individual grazing licences

The system of individual grazing licenses came into being at the beginning of the eighteenth century, the first being registered in the Old Gamehunters Books¹³ in 1703. Out of this system there gradually developed a fixed form of land tenure for farmers

born as Afrikaners and the Huguenots, fought and suffered together and achieved shared glory, and the natural process that would unite them as one nation was accelerated. Fortunate is a nation that is forged into oneness, especially when he (sic) has to take up such an important task! (own translation)

¹² Unless referred to otherwise, the information on land tenure systems was obtained from Van der Merwe (1995).

¹³ RLR – Receiver of Land Revenue, register of hunting, and later grazing licences known as the 'Oude Wildskutte Boeke', Cape Archives.

without freehold land, although the system was not drawn up with this purpose in mind. The same area, vaguely defined, were granted to different farmers, therefore it can be assumed that this was a continuation of using pasture in common. Another factor of importance was the opening of the cattle trade between 1699 and 1703 after which it continued by licence. By 1727, when trade was closed under threat of severe penalties, the land beyond the mountains was already familiar to the colonists. To them it was logical to assume that where it was possible for the Khoi to rear cattle, it would also be possible for a farmer to make a living. In time the grazing license became the basis for extensive stock farming. The stock farm became the permanent abode of the licensee; this being evident from the practice of the renewal of grazing licenses. The migrant farmers who held no free land began to build on the farm. This provided more incentive to return there regularly and later to stay there permanently, if conditions were favourable. They also displayed a tendency to sow the land close to their homesteads, so as to be able to harvest enough wheat for bread. The fact that farmers could build, sow and plant on their livestock posts, necessitated private grazing rights as opposed to the common grazing rights associated with the grazing license. This would also give him greater control over the water on the property.

This development was inevitable as soon as the government allowed license holders to settle permanently on specific sites, to build houses and cattle pens there, and to till the soil. (Van der Merwe, 1995:59)

The strongly developed ideas about private property, typical of the individualistic South African colonists, removed the possibility of communal farming associated with native tribes like the Khoi. They wanted to keep their farms separate, and for that reason they had to live dispersed from one another and use the land on the basis of individual grazing rights - regardless of whether their grazing areas were allocated through the government or separated by mutual consent.

2.8.3 The loan farm system

The loan farm system, which gradually developed after the Government decided to halt the issue of freehold land in 1717, was a system of land tenure that favoured expansion. It grew from the necessity to place restrictions on the unbounded grazing rights of individual license holders. After its inception expansion into the interior increased rapidly along three routes: to the north towards the Roggeveld, across the

Hottentots-Holland mountains and on to the Karoo, and parallel to the south coast through the Langkloof.

All loan farm leases included the stipulation that the licensee could use the land 'provided he would not be a bother to someone already herding there' (figure 2.2). Therefore, the licenses were granted conditionally. This was done because in most cases the governor had no idea what the exact location of the farm was. Complaints were dealt with as they occurred concerning the above-mentioned stipulation.

If the occupant of an old loan farm complained that the issuance of a new farm harmed him, the deputy Heemraden were sent to investigate the complaint and deliver a written report about it. They then recommended, according to circumstances, that the new farm be withdrawn, that it might remain occupied in loan, or that the grazing land must be divided in a specified manner between the parties concerned. (Van der Merwe, 1995: 65)

Generally a distance of one hour's walk between two homesteads was regarded as the natural minimum sufficient space between two loan farms. Mostly, disputes centred on the natural landscape and topography; farmers were compensated for natural elements that impeded their grazing land, like rocky hills. In areas with poor grazing land, bigger farms were permitted. Van der Merwe (1995:68) refers to an example of two farms lying 1,100 yards¹⁴, roughly ten minutes walk from each other. The intervening space was divided equally between the two farmers and the case was settled!

Evidently it was generally accepted that half an hour's walk under normal circumstances was a reasonable intervening space between loan farms but the judging of the sufficiency of farms was dealt with on its own merits in every special case. What was permissible as the minimum intervening space in a specific case depended on the local circumstances. The principle of a minimum intervening space of an hour was thus not maintained as an unbreakable rule. On the other hand it was also not departed from too often, evidently because it was a more or less natural distance and not an arbitrary one. (Van der Merwe, 1995: 68)

The one factor that had an important influence on the distribution of loan farms was the distribution of perennial pools of water. These being mostly spread out, inevitably meant that in most cases the homesteads could not be established too near to each other.

... the first pioneers depended on the use of permanent natural waters that were not distributed across the country according to some or other geometrical principle. Consequently, land under the loan farm system was also not divided systematically, but the farmers themselves selected their farms and set up their homesteads on sites that appeared environmentally the most promising. (Van der Merwe, 1995:71)

¹⁴ 1,005 meters.

No rule or principle was laid down to define the maximum space allowed between two loan farms.

Over time there developed among the farmers the view that a loan farm lease gave them grazing rights on a circular 'farm' with the homestead at the centre and a radius of a half hour's walk, about 3 000 paces, or 750 roods. A loan farm would therefore have had a size of around 2 945 morgen¹⁵. It is not known precisely when this theory developed and how quickly it gained favour. Roughly a hundred years after the distribution of the first grazing licenses, mention was repeatedly made in the archival records of this theory. (Van der Merwe, 1995:77)

Van der Merwe (1995:77) quotes M.C. Gie, who in 1810 tried to determine the origin of the loan farms, as saying:

From all leases and papers respecting to the same which have been duly examined, I can't trace why Loan Places have obtained the right of half an hour's extend each way from a certain placed Beacon... This custom of giving a half hour each way has been followed for many years and serves as a limit, and now become a surreptitious custom, of which no Law exists, but from the time elapsed can be considered as a tacit acquiescence of the same, as many decisions of Landdrost and Heemraden and of Commissioners of the Court of Justice in case of disputes between two farmers have rested upon this point, and accordingly been decided in favour of one of the parties.

Van der Merwe (1995:81) poses a theory as to the origin of the circular form of the loan farm. He states that it was born out of the need for something more concrete than the concept 'sufficient farm'. The farmers assumed that they owned the grazing rights to all the land around their homesteads, and although there was no prescribed size for a loan farm, they realised that the government repeatedly withdrew new loan farms which were located nearer than one hour from the old loan farm. This principle of minimum intervening space was developed further through abstract reasoning, and naturally extended in all directions to determine the maximum size farm. The simplest farmer with minimum labour and no measuring instruments could determine the size of the loan place for himself. Furthermore, with the homestead as the centre point his livestock could graze his entire farm without trampling his fields situated around the homestead. No effort was made to define the circular area, either with a fence or by any other means, and no effort was made to keep strangers off the land. If his farm did not have bordering neighbours, he most probably would not have respected the circular form as the limits of his grazing rights.

¹⁵ Therefore a circle with a radius of 2,814 meters.

The farmers evidently developed the theory simply and solely with the unconscious intention of giving concrete expression to the principle of an hour's intervening space, because in practice they invoked only this element of the theory constantly; on the erroneous, imaginary structure that was built on this real element, the farmers never based any practical claims. This is, in my view, the psychological explanation for the fact that a theory having so little basis in reality could originate and find general acceptance. (Van der Merwe, 1995:83)

Van der Merwe (1995:83) does not accept the claim that the uncertainty of ownership under the loan farm system was detrimental to the economic development of the Cape Colony. This claim involves the assumptions that farmers would not invest capital to make permanent improvements on the land if it could be taken away from them at any time. They would not take good care of the land but rather over-use it for immediate gains, abandoning it and taking out new land when they had extracted all they could. He maintains that this claim is based on abstract reasoning and not actual practice. Rather, the farmer reasonably expected that the government would allow him to renew his license, his claim becoming stronger as the temporary livestock post developed into a place of residence.

In reality the government never refused the regular renewal of grazing licenses for livestock farmers whose livestock posts were permanently in use. (Van der Merwe, 1995:85)

In the oldest Gamehunters Books one often finds notes for the renewal of old leases, but in time the practice of applying for the yearly extension of grazing rights gradually fell into disuse. It was apparently regarded as self-evident that under normal circumstances the government would not deny the extension of grazing rights.

Accordingly, the farmers did not bother themselves over the yearly renewal of their licenses and the government did not insist on it. Finally the practice developed whereby the loan farm leases were renewed automatically each year until either the farmers had 'discarded' the farms or the government had 'withdrawn' the farms. In the majority of cases it was the farmers who terminated the agreement. (Van der Merwe, 1995:86)

The quitrents imposed yearly, was an important income for the government, and for not paying the farmers were threatened with a fine, rather than with the suspension of the license. Even when the farmer fell into arrears with the payment of his quitrent, there was still no great danger that the government would take his farm and lease it to somebody else.

Every five or six years the names of the farmers who were in arrears with their quitrent were send to the Landdrosts, and the farmers were notified that they must pay up. But the farmers generally did not bother themselves too much about this because the government had never taken legal action against them for their debts. ...In 1793 there were 1 959 occupied loan farms in the colony, and of those the amount of overdue quitrent was the substantial sum of 324 067 rix-dollars. Thus, every loan farm in the

colony was on average about seven years' quitrent in arrears. (Van der Merwe, 1995:87)

If farmers could not pay their quitrent for reasons beyond their control they were often exempted from it.

The degree of permanence that the farmers attached to the loan farms was further established through the recognition, by the government, of ownership of improvements as that of the farmer. Although, in theory, the land remained the property of the government, the farmer could dispose of the homestead as private property. He could sell it, or include it in his will. The buyer could reasonably expect that the government would grant him the lease of the land after he had 'bought' the homestead. Van der Merwe (1995:88) notes that although the government could refuse the lease, 'in practice - so far as known - this never happened'.

Eventually they came to believe firmly that their grazing rights were based on their having purchased the 'farm' - and not on the lease - and that after the farm was purchased the rest was only a matter of formal registration. (Van der Merwe, 1995:89)

Loan farms could not be subdivided, although this happened in secret. Van der Merwe (1995:95) does not agree with the connection made by others between this and the rapid expansion of the colony. The theory rests on the presupposition that because the farms could not be divided, the children once they have grown up, or when the parents die, would each have to take out a new loan farm, and that the wide dispersal of the population therefore became necessary. Van der Merwe says it is of greater importance that loan farms were granted with little formality, to any one requesting it, as long as it did not infringe on the grazing rights of established farmers. The officials in most cases did not know the exact location of the loan farms they provided. The farmers knew that the further they settled from one another, at twice the regular distance, a new loan farm could not fit in between, and they had more grazing land.

Thus the loan farm system promoted scattered settlement and for that reason the expansion into the interior occurred at a quicker pace than it would have had the government systematically divided land at the Cape according to reasonable settlement patterns. (Van der Merwe, 1995:97)

The claim of each man to a farm of not less than 6 000 acres became ultimately an inborn right. In subsequent South African history few factors are of greater importance than the uncontrolled and haphazard method of Boer land settlement and the habits which were bred by the Company's loss of control over the Boer expansion. (De Kiewiet, 1957: 17)

Whether the Government had any design of dispersing the people by such an absurd system, under the idea of keeping them more easily in subjection, I can't pretend to say, but it thought proper to encourage the continuance of the system, which is in full force to this moment. (Barrow, 1806: 85)

Migration also had to do with the search for the best soil and pasture. Furthermore, the life of a stockfarmer was considered much easier as that of an agriculturist. There were no initial costs involved for a new loan farm; not even surveying costs and the quitrent did not make excessive demands on the capital of the farmer.

The system facilitated a rapid expansion of stock farming, which in return gave rise to a migration into the interior. (Van der Merwe, 1995:99)
It permitted the colonists to acquire land without capital and therefore enormously stimulated the rapid dispersal of colonists. (De Kiewiet, 1957: 16)

2.9 THE OFFICIAL REACTION TO EXPANSION - THE SHIFTING OF BORDERS

The government had taken the position that the rapid expansion was inevitable although the Lords XVII from time to time warned that the mass dispersal into the interior must not be permitted. In a short time the Lords XVII were provided with two reports which both spoke out strongly against the territorial expansion that was occurring at the Cape.

The first of these was compiled by Baron van Imhoff¹⁶, who travelled through the colony in 1743 and on his departure left 'Instructions' in the form of a report on the Cape for Governor Swellengrebel¹⁷. He denounced the rapid migration into the interior because, in his opinion, it promoted the moral degradation of the colonists.

There is to my mind little doubt that to give out farms on the loan system is a drawback to agriculture because the farmer is not only forced annually to renew the loan but is also prevented from spending as much money and energy on it as he would do if the farm were his own, for under this system of revocable grants he always runs the risk of being supplanted by another. In addition the system may have other bad features caused by the covetousness of human nature to which this form of tenure offers every opportunity. (Van Imhoff, 1918: 138)

The system he proposed whereby farmers could become legal owners of parts of the loan farm, contrary to his expectations, were not popular and it soon disappeared. On

¹⁶ Gustaaf Willem Baron van Imhoff (1705-1750). Councillor of India and Governor General of Batavia. Died at Batavia on 1 November 1750.

¹⁷ For biographical information see 3.4.1.

his recommendation the subdrostyd of Swellendam was established in 1745, to control the farmers in the interior.

J.W. Cloppenburg compiled the second report¹⁸ in 1768 in his capacity as Secunde (deputy governor) of the Cape Colony. He was appalled at the poor moral condition of the inhabitants inland and the degradation of religious faith and obedience that threatened posterity with full-scale barbarism. Cloppenburg (1768: 5-41) proposed various measures; no farms should be more than thirty hours travelling time from a church. Failing that, regular services must be held in a wagon or farmhouse so that baptism and communion could be administered. Ignorance should be abolished by the establishment of schools, no more farms should be distributed. No more slaves should be brought to the colony and all means had to be employed to keep the Khoikhoi out of the service of the farmers. This would help develop a white working class and force the sons and daughters to work!

The response of government to reports such as these was an attempt to, at least, keep the farmers within the official borders of the colony. To achieve this, the border continually had to be moved further inland to keep up with the *trekking* farmers. By the middle of the 18th century the stock farmers had migrated up to the Swartberg range where the migration was temporarily halted by the arid wilderness region to the north; the Great Karoo. In time this barren stretch of land was crossed, and the first farmers arrived in the Camdeboo in 1769. Again, it was decided that the position of the eastern border had to be changed. At the instruction of Governor Ryk Tulbagh¹⁹, the Landdrosts of the districts of Stellenbosch, Drakenstein and Swellendam, assisted by the Heemraden, set out on a journey to establish the exact division between the above mentioned districts and to ascertain how far into the interior the farmers had settled. They were also instructed 'to take in consideration, if among the said newly established cattle farms, there may also be some, the occupation of which, in consequence of their too remote position, might be deemed to be inexpedient'²⁰. It was decided that the Swart Berg would form the boundary between the districts of Stellenbosch and

¹⁸ Jan Willem Cloppenburg, arrived September, 1762 as Fiscal, appointed Secunde in April, 1766. Died 30 May 1770.

¹⁹ Ryk Tulbagh (1699-1771). Born in Utrecht, became Governor of the Cape on 27 February, 1751.

²⁰ Extract of resolution of Council, 14 November, 1769. (Moodie, 1960 III: 1)

Swellendam²¹. The inhabitants residing to the northern side and those lying in the mountains would belong to the former and those residing to the south would belong to the latter. From the Swart Berg they travelled northeast to the Camdebo, to 'the furthest place inhabited there, being that of the burgher Rudolph Godliep Opperman, named the Uytkomst'. This farm, still called so today, was therefore one of the first farms in the Camdebo. Some of the well-known frontier farmers were at this time still residing on the Swart Berg; Johannes Jurgen de Beer (who later became Opperman's neighbour), Abraham Oberholser and Pieter Erasmus.

It was further proposed that the farmers of the Camdebo should also be incorporated into the district of Stellenbosch. Lastly the question of whether to grant any more loan-farms in the Camdebo was answered as follows:

While with regard to the question concerning the farms so situated, whether the same may be continued in loan, with safety and to the advantage of the Honourable Company, and also whether more farms may be given out in loan there, the undersigned must submit, with all respect, that as there is no road leading to Kafirland, by means of which any illicit traffic by bartering cattle can be carried on, and on the other hand, as in those countries, there are no other inhabitants than wild Bushmen and Hottentots, who possess no cattle, and who must subsist solely by the game in the fields, and therefore on that side no evil is to be apprehended, - the undersigned are therefore of the opinion, that the farms already there, should not only remain on loan, but even, should such be your Excellency's pleasure, still more farms might be given out along the Bosjesmans Mountains to the eastward, as far as a certain Height, lying between the Blye River, being the last or most easterly branch of the Sondags River, and the first branch of the Fish River - named by us De Bruyns Hoogte²² - for it is true, that if the farms now lying in the Camdebo could remain as they now are, it would be, indeed, better; but as the country thereabouts is a more profitable tract, and rich in grass, it is to be apprehended that the occupiers of those farms would avail themselves of the opportunity, and take their trek farms there, from which the Honourable Company would not derive any the least income; but, if as has been said, farms were given out as far as the so named Hoogte, the Honourable Company would then receive the stipulated loan rent, and thus, at the same time, a fixed boundary could be agreed upon, on this side. (Moodie, 1960 III: 3)

This proposal was resolved by the Council²³ with an additional stipulation that 'His Excellency did not deem it proper that the said farms should be granted to any but respectable persons of good name and repute, in order, as far as possible, to prevent all irregularities upon the said remote farms'. At this time, the Council of Policy did not establish an eastern border. This became necessary shortly afterwards when it became

²¹ Report of Landdrosts and Commissioned Heemraden of Stellenbosch and Swellendam, 7 February, 1770. (Moodie, 1960 III: 1-4)

²² Bruintjieshoogte.

²³ Extract of Resolution of Council, 13 February, 1770. (Moodie, 1960 III: 5)

evident that the farmers had moved beyond Bruintjieshoogte. In a letter, dated 9 October 1772, from the Cape Government to the Landdrost of Stellenbosch (Moodie, 1960 III: 14) it is stated that a certain farmer, Willem Prinsloo, who had obtained permission from the late governor Tulbach to select two farms within the boundaries of the colony, had settled beyond Bruintjieshoogte; outside the borders of the colony. He was to be instructed to decamp and move within the limits of the colony.

In reaction to this Governor Van Plettenberg and the Council renewed the Proclamation of April 26, 1770 on the 5th of April 1774. This prohibited settling beyond Bruintjieshoogte and the Gamtoos River. Interestingly, as Moodie (1960 III: 24) points out, Bruintjieshoogte was not mentioned in the Proclamation of 1770. In reaction, those farmers who had settled beyond Bruintjieshoogte, drew up a petition²⁴ in which they requested permission to stay where they were. The tone of the request is evident from the following extract:

Great powerful Sirs: -We entreat, in all submission, respect, and obedience, that you will take pity on us, and permit us to remain here, and to pay rent to the Company for this country,
Then we shall, as obedient burgers and faithful subjects, each as far as he is concerned, take good care that such troublesome complaints be not conveyed to your Honors to awaken your anger.
Meanwhile we shall not cease to pray God Almighty to preserve the dear persons of your Honors still many years in his holy keeping, and remain with all imaginable respect, your Honors most obedient humble servants.

Thirteen farmers, among others Willem Prinsloo, three of his sons and Jacobus Potgieter signed the letter. None of the other farmers were ever mentioned by any of the travellers to this area in the 1770's.

The Resolution reacting on the request of the farmers contained three reports²⁵; a report from the Landdrost and Heemraad of Stellenbosch and Swellendam respectively, and a report on the boundaries by one Myburgh. All three reports were positive about including the disputed area within the boundaries of the Cape Colony. It was stated that, for the farmers to make a better living, more grazing land was needed, and specific reference is made to the poor conditions under which these farmers lived. It was therefore believed that their standard of living could improve if they had the necessary grazing at their disposal. The Council therefore resolved to extend the

²⁴ Petition of Inhabitants residing beyond De Bruyns Hoogte, 10 November, 1774. (Moodie, 1960 III: 39)

²⁵ Extract from resolution of Council, 11 July, 1775. (Moodie, 1960 III: 46-49)

boundaries of the Colony and appointed an ‘express combined meeting’ to regulate the exact position thereof. It was further resolved, on the proposition of the Governor (van Plettenberg) that this part of the country should be surveyed and that a proper map should be drawn up. The group of twelve men, consisting of Landdrosts, Heemraaden, Secretaries and retired Heemraaden and Militia Officers, send through their findings on the 3rd of November 1775 to the Council in which they proposed that the Fish River become the eastern boundary of the colony. This then included the area beyond Bruintjieshoogte and the farmers who had settled there in defiance of the law would then be within the legal borders of the colony.

The Council, in a resolution dated 27 December 1775, accepted the proposed boundaries. (Moodie, 1960 III: 50)

2.10 CONCLUSION

The assumptions on which the Colony was founded could not be attained as easily as expected. The native population did not prove as eager to trade in livestock as had been anticipated and the settler community struggled to deliver enough produce even for their own needs. The belief that performance would be better if left to individual initiative, gave rise to the system of Free Burghers but the restraints placed on trade by Government hampered their economic success. In time stockfarming became more popular than agrarian farming. Willem Adriaan van der Stel sanctioned the growth in stockfarming and the loan farm system was established whereby sufficient grazing could be obtained easily. The loan farm system facilitated the rapid expansion of the Colony. To benefit from the income by rent of these farms and to keep up a pretence of control over the stockfarmers that trekked inland, the Government reacted by continually extending the borders of the Colony (figure 2.3). By 1769 the limits of the Eastern Frontier had been established and by the end of the following decade around thirty families had settled permanently on this frontier.

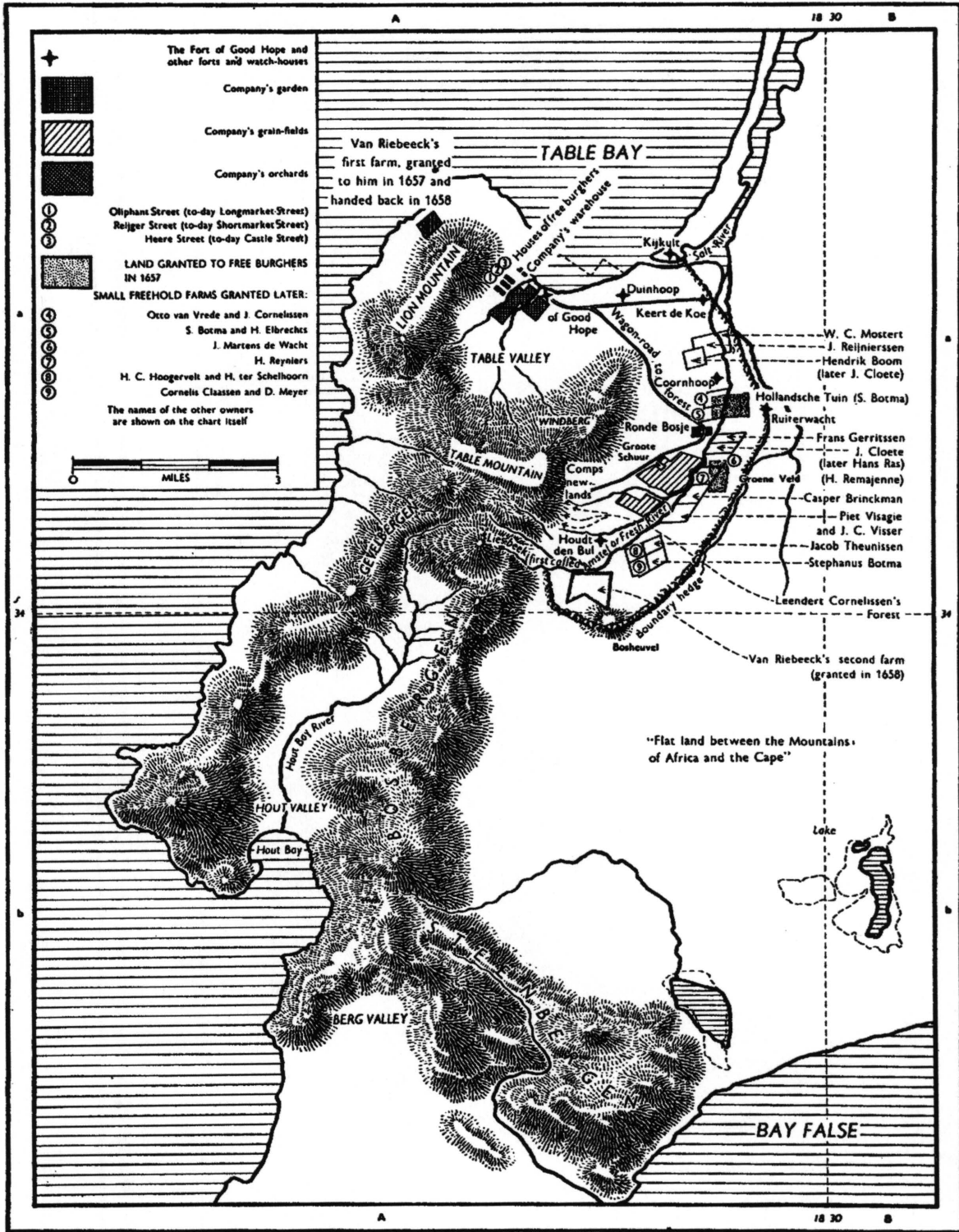


Figure 2.1

The Free Burgher settlement

S. J. G. B. [19] Stellenbosch
-191

Verd door deelen Separatit

aan den Landbouwer Nicolaas van der Heuwe Maack: omme
 voor den tijd van een geheel jaar met zyn oer te mogen gaan leggen
 en wyden op de plaats gelyc de dusse kloof gelegen op de Sneeuw berg
 met aldaar ymuid leggende in 't koocken met kinderlyk te zyn hog
 Subj en geen Consequentie te breken gehouden Wafende voor dat oeffen
 ten secretarie sal werden geregisbrewd daer voor in 't Conyncklyc te del
 seken somme van secht hien by Ducaton d' 72 fl. goer ofte typp
 24 in deese Permissie binnen de tijd van een maand naar oer Expirate
 weder te moeten laaten Vernuuen op de Paratituten daer toe staande
 voort Verplicht blyvende de thende van A aldaar 't onchte soorn te deelen
 schtede aan den heer ofte de Conynck te moeten opbrengen ondesen alsworm
 aan den Landdrost Lucas Jansmunders Faber over te geuen

Figure 2.2

A typical loan farm contract



Figure 2.3

Expansion of the Cape Colony, 1652-1806

CHAPTER 3 A REVIEW OF SIGNIFICANT PRIMARY DOCUMENTS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The primary documents used in this study include official documents, the registers of land granted on the Eastern Frontier: 1760-1779, and the journals of travellers to the region in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century.

3.2 OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS

The expansion into the interior by the stockfarmer-pioneers was uncontrolled and the authorities, for the most part, did not follow their movements and doings. Settling occurred without a well-ordered official authority and the settlers themselves were incapable and unqualified to establish their own form of administration. The official communications between the frontier settlers and the Government, published in *The Record* (Moodie, 1960), offer valuable information on the Government's reaction and response regarding the settlement of the Eastern Frontier. This document had been referred to in the preceding brief history of expansion (chapter 2), but its importance, as significant primary source, will be discussed here. In 1836 Donald Moodie¹ was instructed by Governor D'Urban to compile and translate the official records that dealt with the relations between the colonists and native tribes, from the earliest settlement of the Colony by Whites to 1834². The book contains much more on the settlement of the Frontier than one would expect from its alternative title 'A series of official papers relative to the condition and treatment of the native tribes of South Africa'. For a researcher without easy access to the Cape Archives, the book offers a wealth of archival material on the history of the Colony.

3.3 REGISTERS OF LAND GRANTS

The *Oude Wildskutte Boeke* (Old Gamehunters Books) can be found under the section *Receiver of Land Revenue* (reference RLR) in the Cape Archives. The *Oude Wildskutte Boeke* cover the period 1687-1793, originally only hunting licences and

¹ Donald Moodie (1794-1861), arrived at the Cape in 1820, became Protector of Slaves in the Eastern Division of the Colony, in 1834 he was employed by the Government to report on the state of the Frontier.

² Information from the introduction to the facsimile reprint of *The Record* (Moodie, 1960: v).

permission to graze livestock in a specific area were noted, but from 1703 all registers of loan farms were also noted therein. These documents were studied to establish when and where land was granted to farmers on the Eastern Frontier: 1769-1779.

3.4 TRAVEL JOURNALS

The history of the Eastern Frontier, its inhabitants and their lives, cannot be known through official documents only. Supplementary primary sources for knowledge of the frontier society are the journals of travellers who visited the region. These do not only reflect their own experiences, but also offer insight into the routes that they followed and the lifestyle and character of the people they met. In the historiography of the frontier in the late eighteenth century the journal becomes the most important source of information.

3.4.1 EARLY TRAVELLERS

The pattern of settlement will be determined through the information on routes followed, farms visited, and the character of the inhabitants and the built form contained in the journals of the travellers to the Eastern Frontier in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century. The routes followed by the travellers to the region during the first decade of settlement will be traced and the farms situated on and along it will be noted to determine the pattern of settlement of the physical environment. The travellers to the region during the first decade of settlement were Hendrik Swellengrebel, Robert Jacob Gordon, Governor Joachim van Plettenberg and Anders Sparrman.

Swellengrebel, Hendrik³, visited the Eastern Frontier on his second journey into the interior of the Cape Colony. He left Cape Town on 10 September 1776 and followed the northern route across the Karoo to the Eastern Frontier. He returned along the coastal route and arrived back in Cape Town on 26 December 1776. According to Forbes (1965: 5), this journey might have been made in the hope that a personal acquaintance with the territory would better his prospects of becoming Governor of

³ Hendrik Swellengrebel (1734-1803), born in Cape Town on 26 November 1734. He spent his childhood at the Cape but was sent to the Netherlands for formal education. He completed his studies

the Cape, as his father had been. He travelled in a private capacity. The journal contains valuable information on the lifestyle and habitation of the colonists on the frontier.

The journal of Swellengrebel, never published, is kept in the Swellengrebel Family Archive in Schagen, Netherlands. The Cape Archives has a transcript copy of this manuscript under Accession 447. Portions (information from two pages in the transcript copy) had been translated by, and printed in Forbes (1965), but apart from these no other translations exist. The journal is not well known. This is evident from the fact that it is not mentioned in either *Mendelssohn's South African Bibliography* (1979) or Musiker's *Bibliographical Guide with Special Reference to Territorial Expansion and Colonisation* (1984). The present study is concerned with the part of the journal that covers the Eastern Frontier, namely the part of the journey from Beervlei to Agter-Bruintjieshoogte. For purposes of the present study this part has been translated (see appendix A and figure a.1). Godee Molsbergen (1932) published a journal which in content is very similar to that of Swellengrebel's. The route followed corresponds with that in the original, many sentences and paragraphs are identical, but it lacks any discussion of the inhabitants, which makes the original manuscript much more valuable in information. The abridged form of the original has been attributed to Swellengrebel's travel companion, Pieter Cloete⁴. Differences in the two journals will be noted in the translation.

The drawings made during this journey are of utmost importance for the present study because they provide views not only of the landscape but also examples of the homesteads of the frontiersmen. Forbes (1965: 60) explains that it was not uncommon for travellers without artistic ability to employ an artist to accompany them to further document their journey with drawings. For his purpose Swellengrebel employed Johannes Schumacher, a Company soldier and draughtsman. A collection of these drawings, made during Swellengrebel's journey to the frontier, was published in 1951⁵. The drawings form part of the Swellengrebel Family Archive. Very little is known of

in Law at the University of Utrecht in 1755. In 1776, at the age of 41, he returned to the Cape. He made three journeys into the interior of the Cape Colony. (SADB, volume III, 1977: 798)

⁴ Forbes, 1965: 59.

⁵ Hallema, 1951.

Schumacher. Swellengrebel, in this journal, never refers to him by name, only by occupation. On Sunday, 22 September 1776, Swellengrebel⁶ writes:

At four o'clock in the afternoon we departed with three wagons and one cart, sixty-eight draught-oxen and seven riding-horses, and apart from us three⁷, the servant of the lord Cloete, J. Swanepoel, two wagon-drivers, one draughtsman⁸, a cook, a servant, and eight Hottentots.

According to Forbes (1965: 60) he was a German from Rodenburg, he arrived around 1770, he is listed in the Muster Rolls of that year as Johan Schoenmaker and he was a soldier in the company of Captain R. J. Gordon.

Gordon, Robert Jacob (Colonel)⁹ made his first journey inland from October 1777 to March 1778 in the company of William Paterson, the English botanist. Paterson returned to Cape Town before they reached the Eastern Frontier but Gordon trekked on, in search of the 'Great River'. He visited the Eastern Frontier and from there continued North. On 23 December 1777 he reached the 'Great River' and named it, Oranjerivier (Orange River), after the royal house of the Netherlands, the House of Orange. He arrived back in Cape Town in March 1778. His second journey again took him to the Eastern Frontier, this time in the company of Governor Joachim van Plettenberg, who took him along chiefly for his drawing abilities. This journey extended from August 1778 to January 1779. In total he made four journeys into the interior, the last two along the West Coast and East Coast respectively.

At the time of publication of Forbes's *Pioneer Travellers* in 1965, the whereabouts of the journals of Gordon were as yet unknown. Forbes (1965: 5) at that time wrote:

There is good reason to believe that he had prepared for publication a manuscript that dealt with his travels and researches. It is indeed a deplorable circumstance that this document is now lost, for in its absence our knowledge of his work must rest chiefly upon his great collection of drawings... and his remarkably detailed and accurate map.

The journals had, in fact, been discovered in the Staffordshire County Record Office, England, in 1964, when Forbes's *Pioneer Travellers* (1965) must have been completed

⁶ Acc. 447: 11.

⁷ Swellengrebel, Pieter Cloete and a surgeon named Dr. Hagh.

⁸ *een tekenaar*

⁹ Robert Jacob Gordon (1743-1795), born in Doesberg, Netherlands on 29 September 1743. He arrived at the Cape on 9 April 1773. By 1774 he had become a captain in the Scots Brigade. During his first visit he travelled inland as far as what is today Plettenberg Bay. He returned to the Netherlands in 1774. In 1777 he arrived back at the Cape. In 1780 he was raised to the rank of colonel in service of the Dutch East India Company. He died on 25 October 1795. (DSAB, volume IV, 1981: 200-203)

for publication. They were apparently left there by Gordon's wife to be sold in England¹⁰. The collection was ultimately auctioned in London by Christie's on 4 April 1979 and was purchased on behalf of Mr. H. F. Oppenheimer. They were only published 1988. The journals of Gordon make it possible to clarify exactly the route followed by Gordon, and offers valuable information on the farming practices of the frontier settlers.

Van Plettenberg, Joachim¹¹ became Governor of the Cape on the 18th of May 1774. He undertook an official journey to inspect the frontier in reaction to a petition drawn up by the inhabitants in which they requested a landdrost and church in that part of the country. Van Plettenberg left Cape Town on the 3rd of September 1778 to ascertain the conditions and affairs on the frontier. He was accompanied, among others, by Gordon who was then second in command of the garrison.

The official report of Van Plettenberg's journey, of which he was probably the author, is published in Godee Molsbergen, *Reizen in Zuid-Afrika in de Hollandse tijd*, 1916 and 1932. Direct quotes used in the present study are all translations from these documents.

Sparrman, Anders¹², travelled in 1775-76 from Table Bay along the coastal regions as far as the present Somerset East, thereby becoming the first traveller to visit the newly established farmers on the Eastern Frontier. His observations on the characters, traditions and culture of the settlers near the frontier are of great value for the present study. Unlike the journals of Swellengrebel and Gordon, Sparrman's accounts of his travels were published in 1783, soon after his return to Sweden. Translations soon followed in German, English, French and Dutch, attesting to the popularity of the text.

¹⁰ DSAB, volume IV, 1981: 202.

¹¹ Joachim Ammema van Plettenberg (1739-1793) arrived at the Cape in January 1765. He soon afterwards became a member of the Council of Justice probably because of his qualification in the Netherlands as lawyer. He married the rich widow of Louis Tailler. The marriage was childless. (DSAB, volume V, 1987: 870-873)

¹² Anders Sparrman, born in Tensta, Sweden on 27 February 1748. After his schooling he entered Uppsala University where he studied medicine. He made his first voyage in 1765-1767 to South China. No stops were made at the Cape either way. He returned to Uppsala to finish his studies and resumed his travels when he sailed for the Cape in January 1772. After a stay of seven months in Cape Town he joined Captain Cook's ship *Resolution* as an assistant naturalist and at the end of the 28-month voyage he returned to Cape Town in March 1775. He left the Cape for good on 11 May 1776. (Sparrman, 1975: 1-9)

The English translations of Sparrman's travels published by the Van Riebeeck Society in 1975 and edited by V. S. Forbes will be referred to in the present study.

3.4.2 LATER TRAVELLERS

The observations of the travellers, mentioned above, will be supplemented from the accounts of later travellers to the region, especially concerning the character of the inhabitants and the built form. Those referred to are: John Barrow, Paravicini di Capelli, Henry Lichtenstein, William Burchell and George Thompson.

Barrow, John¹³ was instructed to travel to the interior, shortly after his arrival at the Cape. The purpose of this journey was to solve the border disputes in the district of Graaff-Reinet, and to construct a map of the whole Colony. The journey extended from July 1797 to January 1798 and included a visit to the Eastern Frontier. He made two more journeys inland, but none of these extended as far as the Eastern Frontier. The first part of the account of the first journey was published in London, 1801, when Barrow was still residing at the Cape. It proved very popular and the second part was published, with as much success, in 1804.

Barrow's critical observations on the lifestyle and character of the frontier settlers are of special interest for the present study. His antagonistic view of the colonists, according to Lichtenstein (1930: 11), resulted from the purpose of his visit to the Frontier and the company in which he travelled.

He regarded every colonist as turbulent, seditious, and a disturber of the public peace, who must be judged according to the utmost rigour of the law, and with whom it was scarcely worth any man's while to make a farther acquaintance; and while this was the case on his side, the colonists on theirs considered him as a rigorous judge, as the delegate of a government which they did not love, and had grievously offended. To this may be added, that he had brought with him the former Landdrost Meiner, who had neither motive or inclination to think favourably of these people, and whose presence was enough to crush any confidence that might be germinated in their bosoms.

¹³ John Barrow, Sir (1764-1848), was trained as navigator. When still young, he visited Greenland in the company of a Captain Potts. 1792-1794 he visited China with lord George Macartney. When Macartney became Governor of the Cape he invited Barrow to the Colony. He arrived at the Cape on 4 May 1797 and became the private secretary of Macartney. In 1799 he became Auditor-general of the Cape. He returned to England in 1803. (DSAB, volume II, 1972: 34-37)

Barrow's criticism of the character of the frontier settlers had been echoed by other travellers to the region in the early nineteenth century, and should therefore not be ignored.

Paravicini di Capelli¹⁴ made a journey inland to the Eastern Frontier from April to August 1803 in the capacity of aide-de-camp of the Cape governor Janssens.

Lichtenstein, Henry¹⁵ made two expeditions inland. The first, which commenced in October 1803, was made along the West Coast of the Colony to Saldanha Bay. The second journey was in fact a continuation of the first. He travelled east to Algoa Bay and then north to the Eastern Frontier. On his way back he travelled across the Karoo and arrived in Cape Town on 23 March 1804. During these journeys, he compiled extensive notes on the colonial lifestyle and problems associated with settler life. This enabled him to present a detailed account of frontier life, not matched in any of the other journals. He attempted to give an impartial description of the cultural and religious life of the frontier pioneers. As has been indicated above, he was highly critical of the views of Barrow.

Burchell, William¹⁶ stayed in Cape Town for seven months after his arrival in November 1810, to prepare for his journey into the interior. He eventually set out on 19 June 1811 on a journey that would last nearly four years. He arrived in Graaff-Reinet on 25 March 1813 along a new route. Burchell arrived back in Cape Town in April 1815 with a collection of 63 000 species of which 50 000 were vegetal. He is best known for the detailed and exact notes on ecology and geography. The journals of his travels were published in two volumes in 1822 and 1824 respectively. The subsequent controversy over the identity of the artist of the engravings contained in the

¹⁴ Willem Bartholome Eduard Paravicini di Capelli (1778-1848) artillery-captain in the army at the time of the Batavian Republic.

¹⁵ Martin Hinrich Carl Lichtenstein (1780-1857) graduated in medicine at the University of Göttingen in 1802. Lichtenstein arrived at the Cape in December 1802 to take up the post of tutor for the son of Governor Janssens. He stayed at the Cape till the beginning of 1806. (DSAB, volume III, 1977: 533-536)

¹⁶ William John Burchell (1781-1863) qualified in botany at Kew Gardens. Employed in 1807 as naturalist in the service of the Dutch East India Company on the island St. Helena. He quitted his position in St. Helena and arrived at the Cape in November 1810, age 29. He remained at the Cape until August 1815.

journals, and the time lag between the travels and publication of the journals, had an adverse effect on how the journals were received. Contemporaneous reviews treated the journals harshly, none more so than a contemporary verse written by Frederic Brooks and printed under the title *South African Grins* (1825)¹⁷:

There's Burchell's dull and stupid book,
About which such great pains he took;
Its essence you may if you please,
On a sheet of paper clap with ease.

This view differs sharply from that of modern critics, who admire the journals for its thoroughness, its fluent style and impressive language¹⁸. Burchell's observations on the lifestyle and character of the frontier settlers make an impressive contribution to the present study.

Thompson, George¹⁹ left on a journey to the Eastern Cape in January 1821, the purpose of which was to investigate the expansion of trade with the newly arrived British Settlers of 1820. This journey did not include a visit to the Eastern Frontier. He briefly returned to England but arrived at the Cape for a second visit in March 1822. From April to July 1823 he travelled to the Eastern Frontier of the Colony with the same purpose as the journey made previously to the Eastern Cape. The journal, published in 1827, is devoted to a detailed account of this journey. Theal²⁰ described the journal as 'one of the best that has ever been written upon South Africa' and stated that the author's 'powers of observation were keen, his mind free from prejudice, and his style of writing was clear'.

The nature and extent of his travels clearly demonstrate his spirit of inquiry, his vigour, hardihood, courage and perseverance. Leaving the comfort of his home in Cape Town, he set out upon his horse and rode resolutely to the distant frontiers. His intrepid journeyings provided material for a book that stands high in the distinguishing series of accounts of the Cape Colony and of its far frontiers that illuminates our knowledge of those distant days.²¹

¹⁷ From the introduction to Burchell (1967: 15), written by Gordon-Brown.

¹⁸ *ibid.* p. 14.

¹⁹ George Thompson (1796-1889) made his first voyage as sailor to Rio de Janeiro, South America. Thereafter he worked as clothier and attorney's clerk in England. He arrived in the Cape on 26 August 1818 at the age of 22. He obtained official permission to settle as merchant in the Colony. He left the Cape in April 1821 but returned in 1822. He left the Cape for good in November 1859 and settled in London. (DSAB, volume II, 1972: 765-767)

²⁰ Quoted in the introduction to Thompson (1967: xxi).

3.5 CONCLUSION: SIGNIFICANT ASPECTS OF THE SETTLEMENT PATTERN EXTRAPOLATED FROM PRIMARY SOURCES

The significant aspects of the pattern of settlement that can be extrapolated from the accounts of early and later travellers to the Eastern Frontier are the following:

1. all families that had settled on the Eastern Frontier between 1769-1779, as mentioned by these travellers, will be noted and their European origins will be determined so as to establish their national character as an aspect of the settlement pattern of the cultural environment (chapter 4)
2. references to the customs, habits, lifestyle and character of the frontier settlers will be studied as an aspect of the settlement pattern of the cultural environment (chapter 4)
3. the routes that these travellers followed will be traced and it will be determined whether an established network of roads existed as significant aspect of the pattern of settlement of the physical environment (chapter 5)
4. the position of farms and its relation to routes and regions will be studied to determine the pattern of settlement of the physical environment (chapter 5)
5. references to the styles, types and character of buildings of the homesteads will be studied as a significant aspect of the settlement pattern of the physical environment (chapter 6).

²¹ *ibid.* p. xxii, written by V. S. Forbes.

CHAPTER 4 THE ORIGIN AND CULTURE OF THE BOERS ON THE EASTERN FRONTIER

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The Boers that settled on the Eastern Frontier became a community in its own right with a specific cultural environment that evolved both from their background and a response to the specific conditions of their situation. They were characterised by the travellers to the region in the early nineteenth century, as a unique group whose lifestyle and customs differed greatly from the farming communities in the established areas. Their lifestyle became typical of a frontier culture where the luxuries of society were exchanged for a simple near-subsistence existence. The aim in this chapter is, firstly, to investigate the origins and background of the frontier community. Secondly, to put forward the theories of later writers on settlement of this frontier and thirdly, to describe the cultural environment of the Eastern Frontier society as an aspect of settlement and to test later theories against the evidence in the primary sources.

4.2 THE ORIGINS OF THE EASTERN FRONTIER BOERS

Objective information on the origins and background of the frontier farmers is not to be found in the travel journals and written histories but in an analysis of the first group of farmers who settled on the frontier.

A list of the farmers who had settled on the frontier between 1769 and 1779 is contained in Table 1 (page 142). The names of all farmers referred to by Swellengrebel, Gordon and Van Plettenberg are given according to the region in which they had settled¹. The names of farms, if known, and genealogy of the owner are given. If father and son are counted as one, a total of twenty-six families had settled on the frontier during the first decade of occupation of the land. This figure corresponds satisfactorily with Swellengrebel's² estimate of twenty-five farms that were occupied. Table 2 (page 144) gives the names of the first ancestors of the frontier farmers, to arrive at the Cape, their countries of origin, and year of arrival at the Cape. Table 3

¹ Those names indicated on Gordon's map (figure 5.2) but not mentioned by any one of the travellers, are not included.

² Acc. 447: 23.

(Page 146) contains a list of all the commanders, and later governors, of the Cape, and the names of the ancestors of the frontier farmers that immigrated to the Cape during their command.

The fact that eleven of the ancestors arrived at the Cape during the time of Simon van der Stel, first as commander and then as governor, is significant. These emigrants arrived from the Netherlands, Germany, Zeeland and one from France (a Huguenot). They automatically became part of the farming community with 'farms in full property as large as each could cultivate, and a supply of agricultural implements, seed, and cattle, at cost price on credit' (Theal, 1964: 313). They were to remain at the Cape for fifteen years, after which time, if they desired, they could return to Europe. They immediately received the rank of free burghers and this status was passed on to their descendants. Their success at farming is illustrated by the following comment by Theal (1964: 327), reflecting on the state of farming a few years after their arrival:

The colonists were at this time in a fairly prosperous condition. There were no avenues to great wealth open to them, but on the other hand no one was suffering from want of the necessaries of life. ...The thriftless and unstable burghers who had given so much trouble in the earlier days of the settlement had died out or returned into the Company's service, and their places were occupied by a more industrious class of men.

The ancestors of the frontier farmers who arrived before 1691 are all mentioned in the census of 1691, which listed the most notable burghers in the Cape district, Stellenbosch and Drakenstein³. Meyburg, Smit, Prinsloo and Burger had settled in the Cape District, De Klerk, Greeff, Venter and Van den Berg in Stellenbosch, and Joubert and Erasmus in Drakenstein. Of the farmers who had arrived at the Cape during the first year of settlement, the following are included in this census: two sons of Cloete, in Stellenbosch and Drakenstein respectively, the first son of Basson in Drakenstein, the original Van der Merwe and his first-born son in Drakenstein, and Potgieter himself in Stellenbosch. Therefore, the ancestors of the frontier farmers were, at the end of the seventeenth century, counted among the more successful farmers in the colony. As Gie (1955: 169) rightly states, the true stockfarming pioneer of the eighteenth century had pure European blood with a strong cultural and agricultural association with the settled communities of the country districts.

³ Theal, 1964: 364-369

Theal (1964: 381) states that by 1692 the relationship between the burghers and Simon van der Stel began to change. Esteem and affection were replaced with anger and mistrust and his strong personal interest had been replaced with 'a love of wealth'.

He was now a disappointed man, for his dream of earlier years, to form here a purely Dutch settlement, had been thwarted.

When Simon van der Stel retired in 1699 he was succeeded by his son Willem Adriaan whom Theal (1964: 386) calls 'the most corrupt of all the men who have ever been at the head of affairs in this country'! This can chiefly be ascribed to the fact that he transgressed the resolution of 1668 that no member of the council should engage in farming or cattle breeding. At first the burghers were ignorant of the existence of such a resolution and by the time that they had become aware of it, Van der Stel had made Vergelegen one of the most prosperous estates in the colony. It became evident that they would be ruined by the competition offered by the governor, and the discontent and indignation of the burghers became stronger by the day. Willem Adriaan van der Stel was removed from office and the different nationalities were united through their suffering.

Thereafter all were Afrikanders. (Theal, 1964: 454)

At the same time cattle breeding became a more profitable pursuit due to the surplus in the market and Van der Stel's monopoly on agricultural products. The farmers were allowed to graze their cattle in the areas around Stellenbosch, and they did not hesitate to move further afield if the grazing proved insufficient.

Many men and woman were thus undergoing a special training for pushing their way deeper into the continent. They were acquiring a fondness for the healthy life of the open country, with its freedom from care and restraint, and its simple pleasures. The tastes and habits which were thus formed were transmitted to their offspring, and in a few generations there was a body of frontiersmen adapted, as no other Europeans ever were, for acting as the pioneers of civilization in such a country as South Africa. (Theal, 1964: 403, 404)

In 1700 a resolution was passed with the aim of further increasing the farming population at the Cape. On the 15th of July 1707, immigration was suspended and from that date onward the European population of the colony was increased chiefly by natural means and by the discharge of servants of the Company. The De Beer's was the only family that immigrated to the Cape during this time, of which descendants settled on the frontier. The general decline in immigration from 1707 onwards is also reflected in the small number of ancestors of the frontier community that arrived at the

Cape from that time onwards. It is also noticeable that these families were not of Dutch origin, but predominantly German. Of these the families Grobbelaar, Koekemoer and Kruger settled on the frontier.

Contrary to De Kiewiet's (1957: 11) opinion that the authorities in the mother country made no effort to add to the number of the colonists, the Dutch East India Company regularly enquired of the colony whether it would be advisable to send immigrants to the Cape. In a letter dated 24 June 1716 the authorities in the Netherlands posed the question 'as to whether it would be compatible with the interest and service of the Company to add to the population at the Cape'⁴. De Chavonnes⁵ (1918: 87 - 128) reported that although the district was large the uncultivated land, both in the valleys and on the mountains, was very stony and devoid of water in most places. He attributed the wide dispersal of the colonists to this fact and stated clearly that in his opinion more people were not needed at the Cape, especially as it could worsen the poverty already in existence. The report included the views of seven other parties, among these the views of the Heemraden and Landdrosts of the country districts and Captain de Chavonnes, his brother. They all rejected an increase in the population on the same grounds as the Governor. His brother alone reacted positively to the suggestion. During this time the families Opperman and Van der Walt immigrated to the Colony. Of these the first generation settled on the frontier.

The question of immigration was again raised in 1750, during the governorship of Hendrik Swellengrebel, along the same lines as that posed to Governor de Chavonnes in 1716:

Whether, in addition to those already here, further families could find a means of subsistence, and, if so, in what way they consider such families could most easily obtain a livelihood.⁶

The answer represented the views of the Burgher Councillors of Cape Town, as well as the Landdrosts and Heemraden of the country districts. They regarded the scheme as absolutely impossible and stated that in their opinion additional families would increase the state of poverty that already existed.

⁴ Extract from a letter dated 24 June 1716 from Amsterdam to the Cape (De Chavonnes, 1918: 85).

⁵ Mauritz Pasques de Chavonnes (1654 - 1724). Born at The Hague, entered the army and rose to the rank of lieutenant colonel. Appointed Governor of the Cape in 1714 and made an Ordinary Councillor of India in 1721. Died at the Cape, 7 September 1724.

⁶ Extract from Resolution passed on Tuesday, the 1st of December 1750 (in De Chavonnes, 1918: 149).

From the viewpoint of the Burgher Councillors it was explained that the townspeople mostly made a living from lodging and trading with passing ships, and due to the increase in poverty among travellers they suffered the same fate. The Landdrosts and Heemraden of the country districts stated that there were already many people who could not maintain their households and therefore lived in poverty.

The Heemraden of Stellenbosch stated:

By way of demonstrating that this country, notwithstanding its enormous extent, is far from being able to support a proportionate number of inhabitants, we would hereby add, that not only in very many places, over a large area, is it impossible to obtain water for the ordinary requirements of man and beast alike; but that also, in other extensive districts where there is no lack of water, or at least, where it can, in some measure, be obtained at great expense, the ground being in such poor and rough state owing to its stony nature and to the presence of large sand flats cannot be exploited with any expectation of real success. ...And, while this country is actually as badly off in many respects as above represented by us, so, on the other hand, it is equally true that peopled as it is at present, the country is provided with inhabitants in such a measure that it would be impossible to indicate by what means any further families would be able to earn even a moderate living here; more especially when it is remembered that there are already several families here, consisting of six, eight and nine children, continually growing in numbers, the parents of which are at a loss to know how to provide for their children properly.⁷

The Heemraden of Swellendam also referred to the lack of water, the lack of large rivers, the high and rocky river banks which make it difficult for the livestock to get to the water. They further noted that the farmers were moving further and further inland because of the large families and the fact that they were all taking out farms on loan. The rapid migration and dispersal of colonists had become a fact of life. At the time of above mentioned report, the families De Kooker and Griesel immigrated to the Cape, and soon after settled on the frontier.

4.3 ASPECTS OF FRONTIER SETTLEMENT

frontier 1a the border between two countries. **b** the district on each side of this. **2** the limits of attainment or knowledge in a subject. **3** the borders between settled and unsettled country.

frontiersman (*pl.* -men) a person living in the region of a frontier, esp. between settled and unsettled country.⁸

⁷ Extract of Resolution, 1 December 1750 (in De Chavonnes, 1918: 152-153)

⁸ The Concise Oxford dictionary, 1990: 473.

The principles and character associated with 'frontier' is central to the present study. The Afrikaans word for frontier, *grens*, also refers to a border or boundary. But the southern African frontier of the eighteenth century, as has been shown, was not a static line but a dynamic movement of people. Accordingly, those who write about this frontier, make an effort to define it in a broader sense than the definition above. Giliomee (1981: 76) defines a frontier as a zone where processes of colonisation occurred in a situation marked by weak political authority and often by conflicting claims to the land by two or more distinct societies existing there. By the same token, Lamar *et al* (1981: 7) defines a frontier not as a boundary or line, but as a territory or zone of interpenetration between two previously distinct societies. The one society is indigenous to the region and the other intrusive. The frontier 'opens' when the first representatives of the intrusive society arrives and 'closes' when a single political authority has been established. The advancement of southern Africa had four stages according to Lamar *et al* (1981: 23). The first occurred between 1652 and 1700 when control was taken of arable land within forty miles from the first white settlement in Table Bay. The second occurred during the eighteenth century when stockfarmers occupied land in the arid interior. The third stage began in 1835 when groups of stockfarmers migrated into the better-watered interior. The fourth stage occurred during the last thirty years of the nineteenth century when Whites gained control of the remaining territory up to the Limpopo River and further north.

During the first two phases, despite the meagre resources, whites were able to gain control of vast areas because the indigenous Khoisan hunting and herding peoples were too few, too weak and too divided (*sic*) among themselves to prevent it. (Lamar *et al*, 1981: 23)

In the South African historiography of the recent past, as Freund (1974: 85) states, the frontier had been elevated into a Biblical parable whereby white Christian man survived the perils of a harsh environment and heathen savages to mould his own God-given social order. Freund (1974: 86) questions the validity of the 'Turner thesis' which states that the positive quality of 'rugged individualism', which was supposed to have made America great, originated as a result of the insecurity and threatened nature of life on the frontier. This is similar to the 'Voortrekker legend' in which the frontier has been described as a zone of freedom, 'a liberating experience from the more stratified,

tamed societies...’ with emphasis on social and economic opportunity and on toleration of individual eccentricity and deviance.

The South African frontier certainly did not produce the same loyalty to a national government which Turner argued the American frontier did. In the eighteenth century, frontier colonists’ request for the extension of the colonial borders had limited objectives: they wanted a school and a church so they might remain part of the European cultural and kinship network; they desired to be incorporated into the landholding system of the colony in order to legitimise their occupation of the land; and they needed the government’s sanction and its supplies of ammunition for commandos against indigenous enemies. They certainly did not intend to invoke a strong government which might protect their labourers or prevent them from acting against their enemies as they wished. (Giliomee, 1981: 90)

4.3.1 THEORIES ON FRONTIER SETTLEMENT

The frontier situation was not unique to South Africa, and studies of the American frontier have provided useful guidelines for approaching our own history. The development of the southern African and the North American frontiers, according to Lamar *et al* (1981: 14) were both products of the same process, namely the expansion of Europe and of capitalism. These two countries have the same chronology; the coasts were explored in the fifteenth century, the first European settlements were established in the seventeenth century, after which frontier zones into the interior were opened up. But although both ‘countries’ were regarded as stepping stones to Asia, it was soon recognised that America had its own intrinsic attractions, whereas ‘the only substantial merit seaborne explorers saw in southern Africa, before diamonds were discovered in 1869, was the strategic location of the Cape peninsula’. (Lamar *et al*, 1981: 15)

The two frontiers are further distinguished from each other by the fact that the American interior has a climate very suitable for crop production and movement and natural obstacles do not hinder stockfarming. But in southern Africa a series of natural obstacles impeded movement, namely the Cape flats, the mountain belts and the arid Karoo, and a large area with a climate that at most permitted stockfarming.

This is reflected in the scale of European migration to the two regions. In 1700 there was approximately 200,000 Europeans in the colonies in America and only 1,200 in the Cape Colony, in 1800 four million in the United States and only 20,000 in southern Africa. Whereas the American colonies possessed considerable autonomy, the colonial inhabitants of South Africa had very little say in the formulation of official policy - the only autonomy they acquired was in the frontier zone.

In both regions the European immigrants carried with them ethnocentric attitudes that were deep-seated in Western culture. Ignorant of the needs of local societies, they assumed that they were not depriving the inhabitants of anything if they occupied the land that was not already built on, cultivated, or grazed by domestic animals. When they did knowingly deprive local societies of their resources, they assumed that they were justified in doing so on the ground that the native populations had not used them effectively, or that their customs and mores stamped them as savages or barbarians. (Lamar *et al*, 1981: 17)

Furthermore, the indigenous societies of both counties can be described as inclusionist rather than exclusionist; therefore they readily assimilated strangers, they made use of their ideas and techniques. But they soon realised that they were up against a completely new type of person whose impact would be more fundamentally devastating than anything they had previously experienced.

Whites soon assumed control over areas of land that were regularly used by hunters and collectors, or seasonally by transhuman pastoralists... Moreover, they assumed *exclusive* control of such areas, whereas Indian and African leaders could not transfer the ownership of land; they could merely grant people the right to make use of land subject to specified conditions. (Lamar *et al*, 1981: 18)

There were, however, also substantial differences between the historical processes of the two countries. For the most part the southern African frontiers were far more peripheral to the market economy than those of North America. Although expansion at first took place under the control of the Company and that it performed a minor but useful role in the capitalist system, the pastoral farmers who moved beyond the arable belt also loosened their link with the Company and capitalist system. Lamar *et al* (1981: 29) describes the 'capitalism' of the frontier in terms of the role of 'free' land. The idea of 'free land' must be understood within the European social, legal, agrarian and capitalistic concepts that spawned entrepreneurial expectations of enormous consequences.

Whites in both regions conceived of land as being like clothing in the sense that, if it wore out, one could discard it and move on to more fertile areas. A search for new lands meant population movement, and that meant a change in the relation of the seat of government to population. (Lamar *et al*, 1981: 29)

Giliomee (1981: 76) describes the Afrikaner frontier as a mixed capitalist and subsistence frontier but with the subsistence element heavily predominant.

The Afrikaners introduced the concept of private property, especially in the sense of individually owned land, and the idea of the family existing separately as a patriarchal unit while at the same time regarding itself as part of a distinct European cultural group and kinship network. In southern Africa the initial occupation was only very

gradually followed by commercial development - in some cases after fifty years or more. (Giliomee, 1981: 77)

The political, social and economic factors, according to Giliomee (1981: 81), shaped the frontier movement in the eighteenth century. Politically, expansion offered a refuge from the controls of government and the wealthy farmers in the Cape Peninsula and vicinity. Socially, it was an escape from a catastrophic loss of status: with slaves providing the manual labour and skilled labour in the western regions of the colony, the European who entered service lost not only his independence but also his standing as a member of the dominant class. Economically, expansion of near-subsistence farming was not profitable from a commercial point of view. However, apart from all the political and social advantages, the pioneer farmer who directly exploited the existing resources and abandoned them when they were exhausted could support himself with much less effort than the commercial farmer who had to increase the yields through manuring and weeding. As long as the frontier was still open, it was more economical for the frontiersmen to expand production by enlarging the size of their grazing lands than by using the already occupied area more intensively.

Giliomee's viewpoint rests on the following assumptions:

- that expansion symbolised a deliberate break with government,
- that the frontiersmen were of a specific 'class' for whom the options were social disgrace or movement into the interior, and
- that the political and social advantages weighed up equally against the economic disadvantages associated with near-subsistence farming.

This view is a misrepresentation of the political motivations, social standing and economic considerations of the frontiersmen, as will be shown later.

De Kiewiet (1957) does not support Giliomee's (1981) view that the move inland was made by persons in defiance of government and in search of social standing. Two decades after the founding of the colony at the Cape it was clear that intensive agriculture had failed. By the end of the seventeenth century overproduction was chronic and from then on the expansion of the settlement was based on extensive stockbreeding that offered a feasible economic alternative. Thereby the frontier of agricultural settlement was closed and the frontier of stock-farming settlement was opened. De Kiewiet (1957: 8) describes the struggle between programme and

performance, between what the Company desired of the Colony, and what the climate, geography and population could provide. He states that the well-known picture of burghers, turning their backs on the commercial monopoly is overdrawn. The problem was to be found in the Colony's natural handicaps; there was no staple product that drew the Cape into the trade of the world, it did not have the rich soils and advanced agricultural techniques of Europe, or cheap labour and intensive rainfall of the East Indies.

A colony so isolated, so poorly endowed, so dependent upon a tiny domestic market and the ships that anchored in its bay was unable to attract capital, and itself created new wealth with despairing slowness. (De Kiewiet, 1957: 9)

He states that the real sinning of the Dutch East India Company was not in the monopoly it had on trade but its insistence on a type of settlement that was more suited to the conditions of Europe than South Africa. The task was therefore to find a level of economic activity proper to the climate and geography, and a community adapted to its environment.

Their guns gave them self-reliance, their wagons freedom of movement, and their cattle economic independence. Most of them were men with the best qualities of their French and Dutch blood, who embraced the poverty of the interior as a way of life and a source of freedom. (De Kiewiet, 1957: 11)

The question of economic independence is central to most studies on the history of the frontier. The opposing views of Neumark (1957) and Guelke (1979, 1982) will serve to illustrate the conflicting opinions regarding economic motivation for frontier expansion.

The image of the frontier farmer as isolated and subsistence orientated is challenged by Neumark (1957) who shows that the frontier farmers were significantly integrated into the exchange economy of the Cape Colony as suppliers of meat and pastoral products and as purchasers from manufacturers. He argues that the economic attractiveness of inland areas constituted the primary factor encouraging the dispersal of settlement away from the Cape. He questions the importance of self-sufficiency as force for migration and emphasises the economic factors behind the expansion movement above all others. He rejects as myth the idea that frontier expansion occurred as a result of 'the love of exploration and thirst for travel'.

... with regard to frontier expansion, what has to be stressed is not so much the extent of self-sufficiency as the significance of the exchange with the outside world. (Neumark, 1957: 4)

Neumark stresses that the interest of the colonists was always in conflict with the policy of the Company. This is evident in the way the colonists desired to partake in the lucrative cattle trade whereas the Company was determined to reserve for itself the right to barter with the natives. As the colonists moved further inland, the Company disregarded the expansion of the Colony's limits.

At the root of this long struggle was the fact that the market for Cape grain and wine was precarious, while Capetown's (*sic*) demand for meat seemed insatiable. (Neumark, 1957: 16)

According to him the idea that the ban on freehold land and the introduction of the loan-farm system encouraged stock farming and led to the dispersion of the colonists is 'wholly misleading'. The only reason why farmers preferred to move into the interior and keep loan-farms, according to him, was because stock farming was more lucrative than arable farming. The loan farm system only lent legal sanction to a process which had started earlier and better control of this system could not have made arable farming more profitable.

Neumark (1957:24) stresses the fact that the Boers had never severed their economic intercourse with the outside world, and that the stock they bred were mostly intended for the market.

Admittedly, the ease with which people from the older areas could become graziers in the interior played an important part in the expansion movement. But this in itself does not explain why people from the more civilised parts of the colony should have wished to go into the wilds. It can be satisfactorily explained only if account is taken of the deterioration in the economic conditions of arable farming in the older area, on the one hand, and the relative posterity of stock farming in the interior, on the other. (Neumark, 1957: 39)

Neumark (1957: 42) goes on to explain that of all the fresh products, meat was the most important single pastoral product that was demanded at the Cape market. Meat was supplied to the Company's merchant fleet, the garrison, the hospital, and the population of the town and foreign ships. Under the meat contract, the Company was theoretically the sole buyer and seller of slaughter stock and fresh meat, but the stock-farmers remained the most important suppliers of this commodity.

Whatever role noneconomic factors are supposed to have played in the expansion movement of the Cape Colony, the predominance of economic motivation can hardly be in doubt. It is also clear that the dynamics of the expansion movement did not simply spring from the fact that self-sufficient households reproduced and multiplied themselves at the frontier. Nor was it so much self-sufficiency that attracted new

settlers to the wilderness. In fact, it was the prospect of other and greater opportunities than subsistence farming that constituted the main attraction. (Neumark, 1957: 5)

Guelke (1982) rejects Neumark's (1957) theory that commercial considerations were never far from the settler's minds; that they always maintained some commercial ties with the outside world. For Guelke (1982: 88) the crucial issue is not the existence of commercial ties, but rather whether such ties were profitable from a commercial point of view. If not, they could not have provided a commercial motive for settlement. He makes use of a quotation from Barrow to show that a frontier farmer would not have been acting rationally if he had any expectation of making a profit.

The distance is a serious inconvenience to the farmer. ...If he can contrive to get together a wagon load or two of butter or soap, to carry with him to Cape Town once a year, or once in two years, in exchange for clothing, brandy, coffee, a little tea and sugar and a few other luxuries, which his own district has not yet produced, he is perfectly satisfied. The consideration of profit is out of the question. A man who goes to Cape Town with a single wagon from the Sneeuwberg (*sic*) must consume, as least, sixty days out and home.

Guelke (1982: 89) poses the question:

Why were European colonists eager to take up and settle land without immediate commercial value, often in defiance of government decrees and without government protection?

They would have been aware of the distance from the market and must have realised that they would live at a near subsistence level for decades.

He proposes a 'possible explanation' namely that the frontier was attractive, 'because it offered settlers individual liberty'. He substantiates two points, namely:

- that the idea of individual freedom was a strong element of the cultural heritage of the *trekboers*, and
- that this element was strong enough to persuade individuals to take decisions which were, from an economic point of view, irrational.

Guelke (1982: 90) states that if it can be assumed that people in the settled areas near the frontier zone were aware of the possibilities of frontier life, such awareness would have been a major consideration in their decision to settle on the frontier. If they knew that the land/man ratio would be low and resources were readily available so that a sparse population could make a comfortable living from subsistence activity, it would go a long way to explain why the farmers moved to these isolated areas. Guelke also

put forward the idea that frontier living might have been much easier than modern scholars imagined. The following are important considerations:

- The system of individual landholding and nature of the land led to the dispersal of the stock farmers.
- The extremely low population density precluded the growth of villages.
- Each farmer had to be independent in meeting his everyday needs.
- There was no incentive to invest while transport costs prevented him from reward from such an investment.
- The improvement of transportation would have placed an intolerable financial burden on the inhabitants.
- The lack of services made the inhabitants less, rather than more hard working.
- The general isolation worked against those who made improvements and favoured those who sought a living directly from the available resources.
- The lack of outlets led to a remarkable uniformity of agricultural operations.
- The rich were distinguished from others by their greater number of stock but their lifestyle was very similar.
- Farmers were independent from one another for their economic well being.

The stock-farmer was caught in a vicious circle - transportation improvements required an increase in population density which required better transportation facilities - that kept him at a near subsistence level. (Guelke, 1982: 92)

The frontier society of South Africa lacked the glue that a nonfarm rural population provided and became, in consequence, excessively atomized. (Guelke, 1982: 93)

Guelke (1979: 70) states that the fact that well-established cultivators did not sell their freehold land to take up stockfarming is evidence of the fact that arable farming was not as marginal as Neumark has suggested.

The weak interest in the interior shown by wealthier colonists of the Cape, who had a clear choice of where to invest their money, strongly suggests that they did not assess the investment opportunities of the interior highly. Rich arable farmers often held loan farms for their stock, but these were not major assets. (Guelke, 1979:70)

In the final analysis Neumark's interpretation of frontier settlement in South Africa is a defence of conventional economic theory, which maintains that subsistence economies are less efficient than exchange ones. On this assumption the trekboer expansion was 'irrational' unless it could be related to the exchange economy. An implicit acceptance of this view probably lay behind Neumark's overemphasis on the few commercial ties the trekboers did maintain with the outside world, and his failure to appreciate the

considerable economic benefits that were to be obtained from the direct exploitation of resources on an extensive scale. (Guelke, 1979: 71)

Ross (1981) interprets the conflicting views of Neumark and Guelke.

Ross (1981: 213) maintains that for the major part of their own subsistence the frontiersmen were dependent on what they produced themselves. Food was entirely home-produced. The major component of the frontier diet was meat, and some farmers sowed grain. Clothing was homemade and shelters were constructed from local materials. But he states further that no frontier farm could operate without wagons, firearms, gunpowder and lead which had to be purchased 'and it was therefore necessary for each farmer to market his produce regularly'. (Ross, 1981: 215) He demonstrates that the genealogies published by De Villiers (1966) show that in the eighteenth century almost all whites visited the drostys at least once every two years, to have their children baptised, and that it is reasonable to assume that these visits were combined with commercial activities. Ross is also of the opinion that by marketing such goods as soap, tallow, butter, wax, dried fruit, hides, skins and horns, thus diversifying his wares, the farmer was attempting to preserve the major component of his capital, his stock.

Still, to establish on the one hand that the frontiersmen were very largely, if never entirely, self-sufficient and on the other that they were responsive to market opportunities - that, each in his own way, both Guelke and Neumark are correct - does not provide any deep insight into the dynamics behind the rapid spread of colonial structure throughout what was to become South Africa. (Ross, 1981: 217)

Ross (1981: 217) believes that the economic arguments 'cannot penetrate the actual motivation as a whole'. He believes that the decision to move into the interior stems from the structure of the colonial family and 'the tendencies within that institution that led to its regular fission'. He states that the regular breaking up of colonial families can be explained by their immense size and consequent high growth of population. He cites, according to his research, good nutrition, a relatively low death rate, high birth rate in a pre-contraceptive society where women married very young. Ultimately, 'the low age at marriage and consequent population increase derived from the opportunities for independence provided by the open frontier in land'. (Ross, 1981: 218)

In other words, it is wrong to explain southern African frontier expansion solely in terms of population increase, since to a considerable extent that very increase was encouraged by the presence of the frontier. (Ross, 1981: 219)

Whereas, in general, the property of a man at his death was divided, whereby half went to his widow and the other half was distributed among his children, the young men on the frontier did not have to wait for their fathers to die before they could become independent. The loan farm system made it possible to obtain land easily and facilitated the rapid expansion of the colony.

4.3.2 ASPECTS TO BE VERIFIED

From the different theories presented above a few aspects can be isolated for verification in the primary sources. The objectives are the following:

- to determine the social factors that might have influenced the colonists to settle on the frontier,
- to determine the political factors that might have influenced the colonists to settle on the frontier,
- to determine the degree of social and political contact the colonists maintained with the established areas, if any,
- to determine the degree of economic exchange that the colonists maintained with the Cape economy, if any,
- to determine the degree of independence that existed between the inhabitants of the frontier,
- to determine the degree of independence between the inhabitants of the frontier and the established areas of the Colony.

These aspects will be made evident in a general discussion of the cultural environment of the frontier society.

4.4 THE CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT

When Willem Adriaan van der Stel (see above) used the abusive name *boere* to describe his opponents, he unknowingly provided a new name for a nation that would arise in the history of South Africa. Others referred to the new nation as *Afrikaners* (of Africa), and then not necessarily only those born in Africa, but a nation united after their struggle against Willem Adriaan van der Stel. (See above and chapter 2) The farmers who had settled on the Eastern Frontier in the 1770's formed a part of the small white community, and were the bearers of specific and unique racial

characteristics and cultural values. The frontier group mainly consisted of Dutch and German ancestors and descendants, which can be tabled as follows⁹:

	Netherlands	Germany	France	Zeeland	Friesland	Denmark
Camdebo	7	6	1	2	-	-
Sneeuberg	2	5	-	-	1	1
Agter- Bruintjieshoogte	1	1	-	-	-	-
Total	10	12	1	2	1	1

TABLE 4 - European origins of frontier families.

It is generally believed that the Dutch and German nationalities did not have a distinct influence of their own but that the Dutch culture absorbed the German culture, to form a uniform whole. Theal (1964: 370) is of the opinion that the similarity was evident even in the mother countries and that absorption by the stronger Dutch element at the Cape was natural:

The German male settlers were chiefly from the borderland where high and low Teuton blood is intermingled, and in religion, language, and sentiment they were as near to the people of Amsterdam as to those of Berlin. Owing to the foreigners having come from different countries, they lost their national characteristics more quickly than if they had all been of one origin, and the Dutch element was strong enough to absorb them without itself undergoing much change.

Louwrens (1954: 217), on the other hand, states that the uniformity in language, morals and customs, typical of the Cape burgher population, was a product of the assimilation of both Dutch and German culture. This is ascribed to the religious qualification that applied to all free burghers, namely that they had to be members of the Dutch Reformed or Lutheran Church. The Calvinistic approach to life in time became more important than the principles of governing and law that they brought with them. In time, a strong wish for an independent lifestyle developed and this wish was manifested in the *trekking* of the stock-farmers in the eighteenth century. In this, their strong developed religion and the belief in a religious force on which they could depend and which would guide them gave them strength.

4.4.1 THE CHARACTER OF THE FRONTIER FARMERS

The earliest written sources that offer valuable information on the character of the farmers who had settled on the frontier, are the journals of travellers to the region. The character of the farmers was not a concern of the travellers who visited the frontier

⁹ Father and son, and brothers, is counted as one unless they were settled in different regions.

during the first decade of settlement. Swellengrebel and Gordon, apart from mentioning the farms they visited and on some the agricultural practices they observed, made only a few references to the character and habitation of the settlers. These will be referred to later. Their interest centred on the indigenous population, and the fauna and flora which fascinated them. Sparrman, although he only visited Agter-Bruintjieshoogte, gives the best description of the culture, customs and beliefs of the frontier farmers. There are in the descriptions of later travellers, either a strong antagonistic or sympathetic attitude towards the frontier society, their lifestyle and view of life. As Lichtenstein (1930: 7) warned:

The humour which the traveller himself happens to be in at the moment, as I can answer from my own experience, has often a great influence in the estimate he forms of those with whom he associates.

The antagonistic attitude is generally found in those who were ignorant of the country and language, but there is no reason to doubt the factuality of their observations.

Furthermore, the facts are as much a reflection of the subject as a reflection on the traveller. Most travellers judged the frontier farmers from their own framework of reference. In this way Mentzel (1921: 11) could be highly irritated by the fact that farmers were more interested in their own practices, than in his descriptions of the Escorial Palace and Versailles, but this also reflects ignorance on his part.

When referring to the character of a farmer some travellers made a distinction between the 'few decent men' who were Europeans by birth or 'at least' children of a European-born father, and those who were African-born. The first, according to Mentzel (1944: 115) by ability, industry and skill 'have everything their hearts desire'.

... but those African-born, who adapt themselves to such a mode of living, are the children of fathers who were themselves descendants of European parents, and they have accustomed themselves to such an extent to the carefree life, the indifference, the lazy days and the association with slaves and Hottentots, that not much difference may be discerned between the former and the latter. If, in addition, the sweet little wife has also grown up among slave and Hottentots woman, one may easily form a conception of the kind of people their children will eventually be. Will they not, with the passing of time, forget that there is a God who created them?

This concern, shared by Van Imhoff and Cloppenburg (see p. 20-21), was based on the assumption that a degeneration of the future generations that had moved beyond the control of government, was inevitable. It implied that a group who chose to live in virtual isolation from 'civilisation' and 'society' could not sustain the moral and

cultural values. A selective reading of the travel journals with an underlying antagonistic attitude, would offer enough evidence to support this assumption. But even in those with a sympathetic attitude, life on the Eastern Frontier, to some degree, represented degeneration of a society. Even Lichtenstein measured the general character of a whole society against his own principles:

Among the colonists of Africa, as well as the world over, are some individuals of extremely light principles and character, but there also are many thoroughly upright, honest, worthy men, and those even among the most zealous opponents of the English government. (Lichtenstein, 1928: 443)

were highly critical of the lifestyle of the farmers and believed that it was below the standards of the 'civilised' population at the Cape.

More recently, the idea has been formulated that that which the travellers interpreted as a degeneration, could just as easily be described as a regeneration - an adaptation to specific conditions, of which the simplicity and meagreness of the lifestyle is evidence. De Kiewiet (1957: 12) states that in his view, the stock-farmers have been criticised too often and unfairly. The plain truth, according to him, was that industry and resourcefulness was rewarded poorly in South Africa in the eighteenth century. He sees the evolution of the trekboer as a successful adaptation to South African conditions, and their movement as in obedience of simple economic life. The result of this, according to Spilhaus (1966: 91) was the formulation of a specific and unique character of independence and wilfulness, typically ascribed to the pioneers:

All over the country the story unfolded of Afrikaner wagons nosing their perilous way through the mountain ranges; the wagons taken apart and loaded upon oxen over the more frightful precipices; crawling patiently at five miles an hour over the vast expanse of monotonous veld, their isolation floodlit by an African moon that the oxen might graze by day. The men who drove the wagons feared neither distance nor silence, nor the void of learning and of bodily comfort. Indeed, the Calvinist best of them trusted in Jehovah with all the faith of the Israelites, and many believed that the footsteps of the Israelites had preceded them. It is not surprising that it bred a race of men extraordinarily independent, self-confident, and wilful.

4.4.1.1 RELIGION, EDUCATION AND SENSE OF COMMUNITY

The image of the stockfarmer on the eastern frontier as an independent individual, driven by religious convictions, and content beyond the control of government, does not tell the whole truth. The journey of Van Plettenberg was made in order to inspect the frontier and to evaluate the petition of the inhabitants for a landdrost and clergyman. In the petition, dated March 1778, the frontier farmers referred to those

‘who had already departed from the commands of their God’, and who would continue in their wrongdoing, ‘unless God, through your means and power, should be mercifully pleased to prevent it’. They referred to many fine young people who were growing up like the ignorant cattle.

But as to the good, how many a distressed soul longs and sighs to approach the throne of God, and day and night to seek pleasure in His law, and to partake the sacrament appointed by Christ, which he is sometimes denied the opportunity of enjoying.
(Moodie, 1960 III: 74)

This indicates a desire in their community for a society with organised religion and representation by government, and a concern for those who had strayed from the righteous path. During his inspection of the frontier Van Plettenberg (1916: 75) found that, although most farmers lived in a state of poverty, each household had the necessary books to practice their religion at home, which they did with great enthusiasm. He described the frontier farmers as modest and reasonably educated whose only wish was for a minister and representative from government. Although there were for this thinly spread group of farmers no direct ecclesiastical ministration and educational system, the Bible played an important role in their lives. Lichtenstein (1930: 447) described the daily devotions of a frontier family as follows:

Much time was also passed in the services of devotion, at which I regularly attended; although it must be acknowledged, that for the most part I found them very tiresome. The day was begun regularly with a psalm being sung, and a chapter from the Bible being read. Not only the children, but all the slaves and Hottentots, were required to attend. ...In the evening... ,the whole collective body of people belonging to the house were again assembled. ...A table was set out, at which all the Christians seated themselves; the slaves and Hottentots squatting, as in the morning, round the room. The father then read some extracts from his old sermons, which was followed by the whole company singing a psalm.

Barrow (1801: 82) described the daily devotions in much the same way:

A book of any kind is rarely in any of the farmers’ houses, except the Bible and *William Sluiter’s Gesangen*, or songs out of the Bible done into verse by the Sternhold and Hopkins of Holland. They affect to be very religious, and carry at least the devotion of religion fully as far as the most zealous bigots. They never sit down to table without a long grace...; and every morning before day-light one of William Sluiter’s *Gesangen* is drawled out in full chorus by an assembly of the whole family.

Barrow’s suggestion that these forms of family devotions was an outward display without deeper meaning is shared by others who felt that the colonists were overly fanatical in their religious zeal. The self-control and strong morality of the colonists

that appeared false to some, is ascribed by Lichtenstein to the strong piety and isolated living conditions of the farmers:

The universally religious turn of the colonists, amounting almost to bigotry, is, perhaps, a principle cause to which this command of themselves is to be ascribed; - it may also be in some measure the result of their living so extremely secluded from the world; a circumstance which preserves them from temptation to many vices.
(Lichtenstein, 1930: 116)

Templin (1984) shows that the Afrikaner ideology where nationalism is closely associated with theological motif, was central to society on the frontier. The frontier-life, according to Templin (1984: 32), had many far-reaching effects on the mental outlook and theological interpretations of the settlers, in a society where religion became the directive. Through hardships and insecurities they believed that they would not have survived but for the protecting hand of God, and they believed that they were special in the sight of God. Baptism was considered indispensable in the development of individuals as faithful Christians but the distance that separated them from Cape Town meant that in politics, education and religion, they became self-sufficient individualists. For this reason they desired a church and governmental representative. It was only four years later, after Van Plettenberg had inspected the frontier, that a town, Graaff-Reinet, and a church was established.

There was no means of formal education on the frontier. Where possible, a travelling schoolmaster would teach the rudiments of reading and writing in exchange for food and a room. The objective was to prepare the children for church membership.

The education that was available, inadequate as it was, contributed to the developing image of the individualists but gave virtually no directive to the culture. The Bible was the basic textbook, and according to Afrikaner understanding its stories were being re-enacted in the South African situation. Examples were often called to mind for various extrinsic motivations, depending on the situation. Thus the pioneers used religious ideas to justify conclusions arrived at for personal or group-centred, short-term objectives. (Templin, 1984: 35)

The earliest travellers make no mention of any education but later travellers refer to several families who had a schoolmaster in their house. Burchell (1967: 114) came to refer to them as 'those itinerant tutors' and formed a general dislike of their vain and boastful manners.

4.4.1.2 CUSTOMS AND LIFESTYLE

The greatest part of the spiritual and intellectual culture was handed over from the country of origin and the greatest part of the material culture originated from the new conditions. In Sparrman's (1977: 130) view the colonists of Agter-Bruintjieshoogte led an easy and pleasant life. Sparrman arrived at the farm of Willem Prinsloo on Sunday the 31st of December, 1775. New Years Day was celebrated with the singing of a few psalms, after which a few games of *Klaverjass*¹⁰ was played. Swellengrebel¹¹, a year later, referred to the merry existence of the Prinsloo family and described how, on the day of his visit, they played cards during the day and emptied a vat of brandy after which they danced cheerfully till late in the evening. Prinsloo's riches, like that of most frontier farmers, consisted of his herds and flocks which were driven to pasture by Hottentots or slaves, who were also responsible for the making of butter. The farmer concerned himself with the cultivation of the land and his wife and children were responsible for the milking. Not neglecting anything of consequence, he usually took a nap in the afternoon.

That they might not put their arms and bodies out of the easy and commodious posture in which they had laid them on the midday bed, they have been known to receive travellers lying still, excepting that they have very civilly pointed out the road, by moving their foot to the right or left. (Sparrman, 1977: 131)

Most travellers at some time referred to the indolence of the frontier farmers and for this their reputation was greatly tarnished. Their simple and meagre lifestyle was interpreted as a manifestation of their lazy character. Sparrman was surprised to find among 'a set of beings so entirely devoted to their ease', no easy chairs or sofas. As an example of their indolence he referred to a wealthy farmer who sold timber but who, nevertheless, only had a rickety elbow-chair and a few stools in his house.

What, however, was still more singular was, that notwithstanding that one of these stools had lost a leg, yet it was frequently made use of to the endangering of the person's limbs who sat upon it, without either the master of the house or any of his three adult sons, who were otherwise all alert enough at the chase, having ever thought of mending it. (Sparrman, 1977: 132)

The lifestyle, household effects, and architecture reflect a more practical and simple existence. Again, in a regenerative perspective, as opposed to a degenerative perspective, there is something to be said for the instinctive and direct approach

¹⁰ A card game for four players.

¹¹ Acc. 447: 28.

towards the environment. But the simplicity is mostly ascribed not to inability to achieve but the lack of trying and lack of concern. The numerous references to the uncleanliness and disorder of the house outweigh Lichtenstein's specific reference to the spotless beauty of the interiors, and that although the houses were meagre, characteristically they were tidy and neat. The universal reproach of travellers with regard to the badly managed households is not sufficiently explained by Lichtenstein's defence thereof:

When Mr. Barrow among the many accusations charges the colonists with extreme sloth, he shows either that he has never paid due attention to their household economy, or that he has no discrimination with regard to the difference of circumstances created by difference of climate, but expects the same exertions from a peasant at the Cape as from an English day-labourer. (Lichtenstein, 1930: 139)

Their possessions in Sparrman's opinion did not reflect their wealth in stock. There was no china to be found, different courses of food were served in the same dish, which sometimes had to be shared due to shortage thereof. They used their fingers for forks, and a guest had to bring his own knife to eat with. By the time that Burchell visited the region one still had to use your own knife, forks were in use, and these were sometimes used very inventively:

It seems to be the custom, more particularly in this part of the colony, for every one to use at dinner the knife which he always carries about him. Consequently, the first day, nothing was laid for me but a fork; and as soon as he perceived that I was not equipped with a knife of my own, I was accommodated with a small one not much bigger than a penknife, which he pulled out of his pocket. His fork served for a variety of purposes, and I now had the opportunity of seeing how dextrously it may be used as a toothpick. (Burchell, 1967: 240)

Sparrman describes as custom, the leaning of their arms on the table at meal times and the 'inventive spirit of idleness', displayed in the posture which they universally adopted when smoking their pipes. Barrow, who visited the region a few years later, saw the manner of smoking as yet another manifestation of the low character of the colonists:

His pipe scarcely ever quits his mouth, from the moment he rises till he retires to rest, except to give him time to swallow his sopie, or a glass of strong ardent spirit, to eat his meals, and to take his nap after dinner. Unwilling to work, and unable to think; with a mind disengaged from any sort of care and refection... (Barrow, 1801: 77)

Another popular custom was related as evidence of the lazy and unrefined character of the colonists. Barrow (1801: 79-80) described how the women, without any manners or concept of social etiquette, walked barefoot during the day and, that a slave then

had to wash their extremely dirty feet at night. The washing of feet, when referred to, is always described as a peculiar, and sometimes revolting, custom. It was still in practice, when Burchell visited the frontier although he reported that it was dying out on account of the improvement of the quality of shoes among the colonists.

I now for the first time, had an opportunity of witnessing the old colonial custom, of *washing feet* after supper. A maid-servant carried round to each member of the family in turn, according to age, a small tub of water, in which all washed in the same water. It must be regarded as proof of their good sense, that they showed respect to the habits of a foreigner, by not pressing me to join in the ceremony: the tub was merely offered to me and then passed on. (Burchell, 1967: 122)

4.4.1.3 HOSPITALITY TO STRANGERS

Without exception, the visitors to the frontier mentioned the hospitality with which the colonists received acquaintances and strangers alike. As Lichtenstein points out, the estimate that the traveller formed of his host, greatly depended on the success of the visit, and the surroundings thereof:

In this country the people are seldom to be known but in their domestic capacity. The traveller enters with them immediately into the relationship of host and guest, and the more or less friendly reception he experiences, must unavoidably, unknown almost to himself, give a bias to his judgement. Not much accustomed to the visits of persons of distinction, the colonist is easily embarrassed, - he endeavours to conceal his embarrassment under various ill-chosen deviations from his ordinary manner, or, to give himself an air of consequence in the eyes of the stranger, assumes the lordly manner which he exercises towards his slaves and Hottentots, and so presents himself under a much worse aspect than really belongs to him. On the contrary, should it happen that the traveller and his host meet in a favourable humour, the one enters with confidence, the other receives with hospitality; a pleasant conversation immediately commences; each is open and frank towards the other. Thus the stranger forms his general judgement of the people of the country, according to the good-will or ill-humour in which he happened to find the few families he has had an opportunity of seeing, - according to the auspicious or inauspicious circumstances under which he has visited them. Equally respectable persons are, however, to be found in every part of the colony; and Mr. Barrow, had he travelled under more propitious circumstances, would have met with them everywhere. (Lichtenstein, 1930: 8)

It is evident from Sparrman's account that he was well received and well liked at Agter-Bruintjieshoogte. Lichtenstein makes various references to the hospitable way in which he was received, for example he writes:

They received us with a pleasure and friendship of manner, which evinced indisputably the utmost purity and simplicity of heart and which made the frugal meal they set before us doubly agreeable. (Lichtenstein, 1928: 226)

Even Barrow, who had nothing good to say about the colonists remarked on their hospitality:

Rude and uncultivated as are their minds, there is one virtue in which they eminently excel - hospitality to strangers. (Barrow, 1801: 83)

The natural hospitality that the colonist extended to the traveller grew from specific conditions.

In this country no inns are anywhere to be found; consequently, the necessity of the case, as well as common humanity, urges every Christian-like colonist to open his door to the hungry and benighted traveller. And as this hospitality becomes reciprocal, by their occasionally passing each other's houses, they feel no hesitation either in asking such favours or in granting them. Thus a boer is never at a loss for a meal on the road. (Burchell, 1967: 145)

Most farms were situated relatively far apart, but all travellers refer to a social bond between the farmers and a wish between the colonists for social intercourse. In most instances they refused payment for hospitality but would sell their agricultural produce if they had a surplus.

4.4.2 ECONOMY OF THE FRONTIER

The degree of participation of the frontier community in the economy of the Colony, is a central concern for those writing about the frontier. This is understandable, for the degree of economic participation would determine the degree of contact that the frontier farmer maintained with the rest of the Colony. It would also give an indication of the degree of economic independence and, therefore, economic motivation and attractiveness that frontier settlement offered.

Thompson (1967: 43) refers to the considerable trade in livestock that existed between the Eastern Frontier and Cape Town in the late eighteenth century. The farmers would trek with their livestock across the Karoo in the winter or spring and return before the summer heat had destroyed the vegetation and dried up the springs. He noted that at the time that he was travelling through the colony:

By this road the Cape butchers still procure a large proportion of the sheep and cattle which are wanted for the use of Cape Town and the shipping in Table Bay.

By the early nineteenth century it had become custom for the butcher to send a *slagters knegt* (butcher's man) to the frontier to buy the necessary livestock. Barrow (1801: 88) tells of a butcher that passed their camp while they were crossing the Karoo in the direction of Graaff-Reinet:

A butcher from the Cape passed our encampment with about five hundred head of cattle and five thousand sheep that he had purchased in the Sneuwberg (*sic*), or snowy

mountains. The sheep were in tolerable good condition; but the cattle were miserably poor. As the greatest part of the beeves that are killed at the Cape must travel from Graaff Reynet (*sic*) across the desert (*sic*), it cannot be a matter of surprise that the Cape beef should be universally complained against.

These references indicate a lively trade and imply that the frontier farmers played an important role in the provision of meat to the rest of the Colony.

Another commodity of trade was soap. The ingredients, ganna bush (*Salsola aphylla*) and sheep fat, was readily available, it could easily be transported in the wagon on the annual journeys to Cape Town or the towns of the country districts. The soap was not sold, but traded for clothing and other articles. (Burchell, 1967: 113)

There is no indication that the frontier farmers, during the first decade of settlement, became rich or prosperous. It was rather the ease and convenience that attracted others to follow their example. Sparrman was so impressed with the innocent, virtuous and happy life that he for a moment contemplated settling there himself¹². On his way back to Cape Town, near the Groot Visrivier, Sparrman came across a young couple on their way home after a visit to the frontier.

On our entering into conversation with them, our voluptuous corn-boor and his beautiful spouse informed us, that they had just been to pay a visit to their relations at Agter-Bruintjieshoogte, where having experienced for the space of six months the sweets of the ease and convenience attending a pastoral life, when compared with the drudgery of that of the husbandman and wine-farmer, they had given up all thoughts of their former business, so that they intended to sell their vine-yard and corn-farm near the Cape, and to look out for some spot in these parts, proper to carry on the cattle breeding business. (Sparrman, 1977: 191)

4.5 CONCLUSION

Six aspects had been identified as factors that might have contributed to the settling of stock-farmers on the Eastern Frontier:

1. the conflict with Willem Adriaan van der Stel
2. the loan farm system
3. economic attractiveness / profitability of the frontier
4. refuge from Government
5. loss of social status in settled areas
6. ease of existence on the frontier.

¹² Sparrman, 1977: 133.

These can now be critically evaluated against the evidence from the primary sources - as related by the travellers to the region themselves. The influence of the conflict with Willem Adriaan van der Stel is evident if one takes into account that all the ancestors that arrived during the commandership of his father, would have been settled as farmers when the difficulties started. Van der Stel's monopoly of the fragile market for arable produce, which at the same time was plagued with a chronic surplus, made stock-farming an attractive alternative. The loan farm system, in turn, facilitated the rapid expansion of the interior - grazing land was needed and could be obtained without difficulty. The Eastern Frontier offered good grazing after the barren and dry plains of the Karoo. The economic prospects of the farmers, while they were still settled in the country districts, were not high. They certainly did not leave a life of luxury behind. They would have been aware of the demand for fresh meat, a market not burdened with over-production. One might therefore assume that their economic expectations would have been moderate, while they must have been convinced that a living could be made from stock farming. There is nothing to suggest that the move inland was an attempt to escape the control of Government. The inhabitants on the frontier, by choice, upheld the registration of loan farms and requested official representation. There is also nothing to suggest that they left the Cape as colonists of a lower social standing. Most were descendants of established farming families that were regarded as prosperous in the time of Simon van der Stel. The ease of existence was not a factor that could be universally applied to all farmers on the frontier, and it is not a factor that they could have foreseen when they chose to settle on the frontier. The colonists on the frontier maintained a degree of social contact with the established areas of the Colony, through annual journeys with the purpose to attend Holy Communion and to baptise their children. These journeys also offered the chance to procure necessary items such as clothing, gunpowder, tobacco and so forth. This they financed with their income from livestock, and smaller items were traded for soap. There is nothing to suggest that the frontier society was not integrated in the exchange economy of the Cape. The abundance of land opened up a frontier, some took up the challenge and a settlement came into being.

CHAPTER 5

THE HIGHWAY AS ELEMENT OF SETTLEMENT

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The rude and bold features of the wild landscape, and the sublimity of nature, were unmingled with any trace of human works; and the beaten track under our feet, was the only mark which could inform the traveller that these rugged valleys had ever been frequented; or that the abode of man was to be found in a region apparently so deserted and solitary. (Burchell, 1967: 124 on the Sneeuberg)

Mossop (1927) in the foreword of *Old Cape Highways* states that a part of each country's history is the story that her highways can tell. In the same way a part of the history of the eastern frontier can be told through the tracks that were laid down during occupation of the land, from 1770 onwards. By the time that Burchell visited the region in 1811, a part of the beaten track had become a highway in its own right. Today, it is not a 'forgotten highway' in the sense that Mossop (1927: 191 - 202) described the road that once took travellers to the Orange River, of which there is nothing left today, but a route that still exists in portions of the present roads between Aberdeen and Somerset-East, and on the Sneeuberg.

This road, in the late eighteenth century, was an extension of two of the old Cape highways, each described on Van de Graaff's map¹ as a *Grote Route*, literally 'big route' meaning main road (figure 5.1). Van Plettenberg and Swellengrebel followed the main road through Paarl to Wagenmakers Vallei² and along the Berg River through Roodezand Kloof to Roodezand³, at that time also known as the Land van Waveren. From there they entered the Karoo and travelled east, past the Touws Gebergte and further past the Swart Berge where they both visited the well known farm Kweekvallei⁴. From there they travelled to Beervlei⁵.

Beervlei will be referred to as starting point of the eastern frontier highway as this is the place where the road that Gordon followed met with the road followed by Van Plettenberg and Swellengrebel. Gordon set out on 6 October 1777 accompanied by the English botanist William Patterson. They travelled through Swellendam, across the

¹ Published in Koeman (1952: 63), plate XI.

² The present Wellington.

³ The present Tulbach.

⁴ The present site of Prince Albert.

⁵ The present-day Beervlei is twenty-four kilometres N of Willowmore.

Platte Kloof on to the Little Karoo, through the Zuurberg Poort on to Beervlei where they parted company and Patterson returned to Cape Town. Spilhaus (1966: 89) states that these were the routes that were made familiar by garrison men out bartering. It will be shown that Gordon, Swellengrebel and Van Plettenberg travelled on the same road from Beervlei to the last farm situated at the foot of the Bosberg, and that they, at times, also followed the same routes on the Sneeuberg (figures 5.2, 5.3, 5.4). This will show that there existed, even during the first years of occupation of the land by the colonists, a well-established network of roads. The importance of the established road as a component of the settlement pattern of the first farmers will be made evident, and its relation to the natural environment and man-made structures will be analysed.

5.2 THE ROUTE FROM BEERVLEI TO THE CAMDEBO

Beervlei, also known as Kriega Vallei, is situated in the Central Karoo near the present-day Willowmore. Gordon (1988: 68) called it De Bere Vlei and says that the name is derived from that of the first people who lived there.

The road across Beervlei was part of a well-established wagon route through the Central Karoo and was the main link with the Eastern Frontier. From *Kweekvallei*⁶, the last farm situated in the Swartberge and the last resting-place for travellers on their way to the eastern frontier, the journey to the Camdebo took a week on average. The Swartberg chain is considered the natural border on the southern side of the Central Karoo and therefore also signalled the start of a long tiring stretch.

The name Karoo, according to Botha (1926: 42, 53) was derived from an old Khoi word *kurú* which means dry, sparsely covered and hard, and the first settlers referred to this area as the *droogveld* (dry veld), which in itself is significant of this area (figure 5.5).

Gordon (1988: 72) compares the plains of the Karoo with those of Gelderland in the Netherlands, the area in which he was born.

Along this entire way we had seen no water except for two bad pools of rainwater. Close to this farm stood some thorn-trees. Half an hour from these we crossed the only watercourse along the entire journey, which was a dry river bed. ...Just the same reddish *caro* clay with stones, but dusty because of the drought. Almost no flowers. It is a pity that there is so little water in this country, for this entire veld consists of fertile clayey soil.

⁶ The Karoo farm which belonged to Zagarias de Beer.

Swellengrebel⁷ states that the few farms in this part of the country, which were situated along the fountains, were all deserted.

Above-mentioned conditions explain why the Central Karoo is still one of the most unpopulated parts of the country and why it must have seemed totally inhospitable to the farmers and travellers who crossed it.

Burchell (1967: 211) in later years remarks on the excellence of the Karoo-roads and gives a good description of how these roads were formed (figure 5.6):

...a clayey soil, washed level and smooth by frequent thunder-storms, and afterwards hardened and baked by the heat of the sun, forms a strong floor, on which the wheels of a waggon (*sic*) leave little or no impression; and on which eight oxen is found to be a sufficient team. These African roads are, however, nothing more than the space cleared from shrubs and plants, by the passing and repassing of waggons. Those of the Karro (*sic*) are mostly worn few inches below the general surface of the plain.

5.3 THE ROUTE THROUGH THE CAMDEBO

The wagon-road entered the Camdebo roughly along the present road between Aberdeen and Graaff-Reinet (figure 5.7). Camdebo means 'green hollow' in the Khoi language⁸, and lies S and SE of modern-day Graaff-Reinet, roughly between Aberdeen and Brintjieshoogte; the Sneeu-berg range encircles a small part of the Camdebo, in the words of Gordon (1988: 73) '- as with a longbow'. Although the Camdebo in general is more fertile than the Central Karoo, this small part, lying in the hollow of the Sneeu-berg, is especially well watered and fertile.

The physiography of the Camdebo differs markedly from that of the Karoo. Being the first fertile stretch offering good farmland that one would have encountered after the journey across the Central Karoo, it is not strange that the first pioneer farmers chose this area to settle on the frontier of the Cape Colony, the first farmers having moved here in 1769.

For Van Plettenberg (1916: 72) arrival in the Camdebo marked the end of a long and very sorrowful road, through a barren, dry and desolate veld. In comparison he saw a valley overgrown with very fine high grass and mountainsides thickly covered with thorn-trees between which the grass stood even higher. Gordon (1988: 76) also noted how the appearance of the veld began to change when he reached the Camdebo; the ground became less rocky, and the reddish clay mixed with organic soil was covered

⁷ Acc. 447: 16.

⁸ From Gordon (1988: 73) note 178.

with long, sweet grass and many thorn-trees and flowers, mainly mesembryantheums⁹ (figure 5.8).

The first farms that the travellers mentions were found around the present town of Aberdeen, situated on the Kraai and Camdebo Rivers. From these farms excursions into the Camdebo lying in the arc of the Sneeuberg, was made roughly along the western arm of the secondary road that presently runs in a circle through the area (figure 5.7). On the banks of the Swart Rivier they all visited the farm *Uitkomst* (meaning deliverance, godsend, relief¹⁰), which was the furthest place inhabited when the Landdrosts and Heemraden of Stellenbosch and Swellendam inspected the area in 1769¹¹. At that time the owner was Rudolph Godlieb Opperman¹², and the name he gave to his loan farm could either refer to his relief at finding such a fertile location or it could be symbolic of his deliverance from the stranglehold of authorities. The farm has retained this name to the present day. Gordon visited this farm on 11 November 1777 and when Van Plettenberg visited the farm ten months later, Christiaan Opperman¹³ had taken over the farm from his father and from that time onward he was known as the owner of *Uitkomst*.¹⁴ The farm *De Vrede* (later *Vrede*), the closest neighbour of *Uitkomst*, was also situated on the Swart Rivier a little further upstream. Like *Uitkomst*, and most farms in the region, it was situated across the route so that the road ran close by the homestead. Its owner, Johannes Jurgen de Beer was the brother of Zacharias de Beer who was the owner of *Kweekvallei*, in the Swartberge. J. J. de Beer was also the owner of *Brakfontein*, one of the farms situated in the area of Aberdeen. The name *De Vrede*, meaning peace and calm could have been derived from the tranquil surroundings or from the peace and calm it offered from authorities far removed. Concerning these two farms, Gordon (1988: 77) noted the excellent wheat and reasonable vineyards that grew there and found everything in a better state than could be expected. He described this part of the Camdebo as the most beautiful and

⁹ Described by Baten and Bokelmann (1966: 65) as one of South Africa's most characteristic flowers, generally known as *vygie* in Afrikaans and *iGina* in Xhosa.

¹⁰ According to Bosman, Van der Merwe & Hiemstra (1984: 555)

¹¹ See Moodie III (1838: 2)

¹² Godlieb Rudolphus Opperman, bapt. 19.06.1729, died 1781, burgher Drakenstein: De Villiers, *Genealogies*, p. 676

¹³ Christiaan Rudolph Opperman, bapt. 16.11.1755, burgher Stellenbosch: *ibid.*, p. 676.

¹⁴ Forbes (1965: 67) is wrong when he states that Christiaan Rudolph Opperman was the owner of *Uitkomst*, for this would mean that he was a fourteen-year old farmer when the inspection took place in 1769.

finest region one can visualise, full of lush grass and trees, mainly thorn-trees or mimosas (figure 5.9). Van Plettenberg (1916: 73) remarked on how well situated these farms were and commented on the irrigation system used to water the wheat and vineyards. He also noted that the wines he received on these farms were of a poor quality, not because of the irrigation, but probably because of the casks used and treatment of the grapes.

From these farms the road continued in the direction of the Sneeuberg, and crossed *Tweefontein*, the farm of Diederik Koekemoer¹⁵. This was the first farm situated across the Little Sundays River (today called the Moordenaars River) at the foot of the Sneeuberg. The name, like all other farm names except those referred to above, refer to a characteristic of the natural environment; two fountains in the vicinity of the farm. Schumacher's drawing titled *The Sneeuberge at Koeckemoer* (figure 5.10) shows the homestead, cultivated fields and the road that runs through the centre of the farmyard. The wagon road across the Sneeuberg is shown very prominently. The pointed hill depicted in the foreground is Spitskop (pointed hill) and the position of the road that ascends the mountain corresponds with position of the present road between Tweefontein and Kleinfontein, on the Sneeuberg. However, the mountains depicted bears no resemblance to the actual landscape (figure 5.11); it would appear that the drawing might not have been finished on the spot, which would also explain the fact that the drawing of the homestead is indistinct.

Swellengrebel¹⁶ gave the following description of the ascent of the mountain along this road:

The road was at times so steep that notwithstanding the six robust and first-rate oxen we had in front, they frequently had to rest and we with the cart suspended in the air had to hold on not to fall out at the back. If this steepness had been of longer duration, it would have been impossible to go up the mountain; as the front oxen had finished the ascend the back ones still had to haul the cart up.

Gordon (1988: 80) describes the ascent as very steep, which at times was as much as the oxen could manage, and which was very dangerous, since if the wagon were to have overturned, it would have fallen three or four hundred feet¹⁷ down. Van

¹⁵ Diederik Koekemoer, bapt. 19.07.1716 in Paarl, burgher Drakenstein: De Villiers, *Genealogies*, p. 413

¹⁶ Acc. 447: 18.

¹⁷ English feet, 90 to 120 meters.

Plettenberg does not discuss the ascent; he only mentions that it took one hour and that he travelled light, which probably made it easier.

5.4 THE ROUTES ON THE SNEEUBERG

Schumacher's drawing *The Camdebo mountains as seen from the Sneeberg* (figure 5.12) was made from the top of Sneeberg. Swellengrebel¹⁸ noted the outstanding and beautiful view that they had from this point with the green grass and scattered thorn-trees in the Camdebo below. The farm in the drawing is *Vrede*, again it is clear from the drawing that the road runs directly past the homestead. On the Sneeberg the three travellers followed different routes. Only a brief account of their routes on the Sneeberg will be given to show where they followed the same roads, so as to ascertain the position of the 'main roads'.

Swellengrebel first passed the farm of H v/d Walt, Johannes Petrus van der Walt¹⁹ of whose farm Schumacher made the drawing *View on the Sneeberg at van der Walt* (figure 6.19). The name of this farm, *Houd-Constant* (still so called today), literally means 'keep constant', which could refer to a determined loyalty to the land and a wish to succeed. From here Swellengrebel rode west along the plateau of the Sneeberg past two farms and proceeded to *Doornbosch* (thorn-bush), one of the two farms on the Sneeberg loaned by Carel van der Merwe²⁰. Swellengrebel²¹ described the plains of the Sneeberg as lying very high, with no trees or shrubs, and said the hills looked much like the fatherland's pasturage. The grass he described as very short and sour, this was stated as the reason for the cattle not getting very fat. Only enough wheat necessary for bread was grown because the transport thereof was almost impossible. The most important product to sell was lamb and furthermore butter and soap was produced. He described the milking as pitiable, and stated that nineteen cows do not give as much milk as two good ones in the fatherland. Swellengrebel followed the same route back the next day and descended the Sneeberg along the usual road. Gordon (1988: 80) travelled north to the farm of 'a certain Van der Werwe (sic), where fairly good wheat grew' (figure 5.2). This was the second farm on loan by Carel van der

¹⁸ Acc. 447: 18.

¹⁹ Johannes Petrus van der Walt, bapt. 08.09.1750, died at Graaff-Reinet on 27.07.1825: De Villiers, *Genealogies*, p. 1099

²⁰ Carel van der Merwe, bapt. 19.01.1755, burgher Stellenbosch: *ibid.* p. 560.

²¹ Acc. 447: 19.

Merwe, named *Doornplaats* (thorn-farm). Travelling in a westerly direction, along the same route that Swellengrebel had followed, he came to the farm of Petrus Venter²² called *De Droge Heuwel* (the dry hill) and from there turned south and arrived at the second farm of Carel van der Merwe, *Doornbosch*, 'although there is no shrub or bush there'. (Gordon, 1988: 81) The names of Van der Merwe's two farms must be derived from the many thorn-trees found in the Camdebo.

From there Gordon travelled NE and then NNE downhill onto a flat veld with a Karoo-like landscape where *Twee Fontein* (two fountain), the farm of Theodorus de Kooker²³ was situated. Further on he reached the farm of Johannes Dawid Griesel²⁴, called *De Soete Rivier* (the sweet river). Gordon (1988: 82) noted that on both these farms there grew a fair amount of wheat and described them as good stock farms for sheep, as everywhere on the Sneeuberg. It is significant to note that these two were the only farmers on the eastern frontier who were native Europeans; De Kooker being Dutch and Griesel, Danish. One can only speculate on the significance of these farms situated so close together.

After travelling E then SE and N Gordon came to the farm of Tjaart van der Walt²⁵, called *Drooge Rivier* (dry river), and with twists and turns, three hours later at the farm of Willem Burgers²⁶. From there he travelled further north to the furthest farm situated on the Sneeuberg, the farm of Stephanus Smit²⁷, called *Drie Fonteynen Aan De Crane Valey* (three fountains in the crane valley).

...so called, according to De Beer, because sometimes up to four hundred cranes are there at a time. (Gordon, 1988: 82)

The route that Van Plettenberg followed to this last farm differs only slightly from that of Gordon (figure 5.4). From *Doornplaats*, the same first farm on the Sneeuberg that Gordon visited, Van Plettenberg travelled north to the farm of the widow of Hendrik Venter²⁸ called *Rietfonteyn* (reed fountain). From there they travelled further north to a

²² Petrus Venter, bapt. 06.12.1745: De Villiers, *Genealogies*, p. 1007.

²³ Theodorus de Kooker, from Bergen op Zoom: *ibid.* p. 416.

²⁴ Johannes Dawid Griesel, from Copenhagen: *ibid.* p. 265.

²⁵ Tjaart van der Walt, born 28.08.1748, died 08.08.1802 as a famous commander: *ibid.* p. 1097.

²⁶ Willem Burger(s), bapt. 30.09.1742, burgher Stellenbosch: *ibid.* p. 119.

²⁷ Stephanus Christiaan Smit, bapt. 05.10.1749, burgher Stellenbosch: *ibid.*, p. 894.

²⁸ Jan Hendrik Venter, bapt. 26.12.1723 died 1793. Married on 07.02.1745 Johanna Maria Buys, bapt. 25.09.1725: *ibid.*, p. 1007. The date given by De Villiers for the death of Hendrik must be mistaken for when Van Plettenberg visited the farm in 1778, his wife was already a widow. The register of the Venter family offers no alternative. It was Hendrik's son, Petrus, that Gordon visited. (See p. ?)

farm of Johannes van der Walt²⁹, the farm *Drooge Rivier* of Tjaart van der Walt. Johannes and Tjaart were brothers who probably farmed together. From this point Van Plettenberg followed the route of Gordon past the farm of Willem Burgers to Stephanus Smit 'aan de eindigen der Sneeuwbergen'. (Van Plettenberg, 1916: 74)

5.5 BACK IN THE CAMDEBO

Both Gordon and Van Plettenberg followed this route back to *Doornplaats* and from there descended the Sneeuweg along the usual road. From the farm *Tweefontein* at the bottom of the Sneeuweg they took the wagon road past *Vrede* and *Uitkomst*. Van Plettenberg and Swellengrebel proceeded to *De Doorndrift* (the thorn drift), the farm of Hendrik Cloete³⁰. This farm is depicted in Schumacher's drawing *In the Camdebo at the farm of Johannes Swanepoel* that will later be discussed in detail (figure 6.2).

Gordon proceeded to a farm of Venter (probably Petrus) lying next to that of Cloete's. From this point they travelled on the same road, in an easterly direction, through the less fertile part of the Camdebo. Along this route the farms were situated further apart along the tributaries of the Sundays River. The first is recorded as belonging to Joshua Joubert³¹ but farmed by Adriaan Greef³² called *De Fontein* (the fountain). This farm is situated at the foot of the eastern slopes of Tandjiesberg, and is presently called Fonteinplaas. Gordon (1988: 99) described the garden of Greef as very neat, full of flowers, vegetables and fruit trees. He had also planted a vineyard that was growing well, but the house was, like most others, a small reed or straw hut consisting of a single room, smeared with clay or cow-dung. Swellengrebel³³ found here a state of tidiness and wrote that it was clean but poor. He told of the garden with vegetables, fruit trees and a small vineyard; and that this Greef did not have the means to own any cattle of his own, but that he took in the stock of others for grazing.

Whereas Gordon and Swellengrebel only mention visiting the farm of Joubert where Greef stayed, Van Plettenberg also mentions visiting the farm of Joshua Joubert

²⁹ Johannes Petrus van der Walt, bapt. 08.09.1750, died at Graaff-Reinet on 27.07.1825. *ibid.*, p. 1099.

³⁰ Hendrik Cloete, bapt. 09.12.1725, died 12.11.1799: *ibid.*, p. 142. He was a well-known Heemraad of Stellenbosch, owned many farms (among other Groot Constantia) and his son Pieter was the travelling companion of Hendrik Swellengrebel.

³¹ Josua Joubert, bapt. 15.06.1735: *ibid.* p. 377.

³² Adriaan Greeff, bapt. 19.07.1744. *ibid.*, p. 261.

³³ *Acc.* 447: 25.

situated on the Melk River. He states that the field between the first and last mentioned farm of Joubert, although level and grassy; was however totally uninhabited, because of the lack of water.

The next farm, visited by all three travellers, was the farm of Johannes Meyburg (sic)³⁴ on the Voël River, west of the present-day town Pearston (figure 5.13 and 5.14). The vegetation in this area began to change from that of the Camdebo and for this reason it was described as the end of the Camdebo. Gordon (1988: 100) describes the vegetation in the vicinity of this farm as *caro veld* that gradually became very bushy, with shrubs no taller than ten or twelve feet, and with many 'spekbomen'. The wagon road continued past the farm of Pieter Erasmus³⁵, which lay close to the road, and after crossing the Blyde River they came to the last farm west of Bruintjieshoogte, the farm *Alleman's Fontein* (every man's fountain) owned by Coert Grobbelaar³⁶.

The name Bruintjieshoogte (figure 5.15) was derived, according to Lichtenstein (1928: 441), from the name that a Khoi Chief gave to the first settlers that colonised the area. He called them, in mockery, *Bruintjes* that means brown ones. Lichtenstein were misinformed, according to Forbes (1965: 70), who states that it was named after Nic de Bruyn, a Heemraad of Swellendam.

Swellengrebel³⁷ describes the crossing of Bruintjieshoogte as steep but for the most part not rocky and he comments on the beautiful view that one has from the summit.

Among all the wood that these hills are overgrown with is nearly no timber, it consists mostly of thorn trees and 'spekbome', the last cannot even be used as firewood, one finds here no wood that can be used for more than yoke-pins. Against this Bruinshoogte and the hills following in the south, the *caroveld* ends.

Van Plettenberg (1932: 43) found the road across Bruintjieshoogte to be steep and uncomfortable. He describes the vegetation on both sides as a stretch of field with many 'spekbome' which were spongy and useless, also with other wild trees with short trunks and shrublike, that they had not seen thus far.

Gordon (1988: 100) recorded reaching the summit of Bruinshoogte in two hours:

This wagon road is very steep in two places, so that we had to hold the horse-wagon fast while they rested.

³⁴ Johannes Albertus Myburgh, bapt. 17.09.1719, burgher Stellenbosch: *ibid.*, p. 615.

³⁵ Pieter Erasmus, bapt. 14.04.1732, burgher Stellenbosch: *ibid.*, p. 201.

³⁶ Coert Grobbelaar, bapt. 26.11.1730, burgher Drakenstein: *ibid.*, p. 267.

³⁷ *Acc.* 447: 27.

5.6 THE ROUTE THROUGH AGTER-BRUINTJIESHOOGTE

The first farm visited once across Bruintjieshoogte was *Doornrivier* (thorn-river) owned by Jacobus Potgieter³⁸. It was situated on the Fish River at the foot of Bruinshoogte and was visited by all three of the travellers. The area situated on the other side of Bruinshoogte was called Agter-Bruintjieshoogte.

Gordon (1988: 100) described the change in vegetation as follows:

The terrain from Greve's was all the same type of soil: first caro, thorn-trees at the rivers, many mesembryanthemums in the caro and arctotises, then grassveld again. At Bruinshoogte, the vegetation became thicker, and at Potgieter's there were many tall thorn-trees.

From this farm they proceeded to the last farm in Agter-Bruintjieshoogte, namely that of Willem Prinsloo³⁹, situated at the foot of the Bosberg, along the Fish River on the site of Somerset East today. Both Schumacher and Gordon made drawings of this farm, these will be discussed later (figures 6.25 and 6.29).

Van Plettenberg (1932: 43) thought this farm had the most entertaining position of all the farms in the whole region that he had travelled through. It was his opinion that when it was properly built up and cultivated, it would not only be a very pleasant place to live, but that it would also provide the owner with a good livelihood. He wrote of Bosberg with forests of ironwood and yellow-wood and other trees that they had not found on the mountains to the west; and of the plains which consist of very rich and moist ground, which with little effort could be used very effectively for the cultivation of wheat, while the surrounding field provided clean grassy pasture for the livestock. Gordon (1988: 102) described the farm of Prinsloo as one of the most beautiful sites or situations he had seen on the eastern frontier. He also described the forests with very tall trees, in the ravines and on the southern side of the Bosberg, so that it was difficult to transport the timber. The landscape was very hilly, covered with grass and thorn-trees, and abundantly watered.

Swellengrebel⁴⁰ states that the broad beaten road that they had followed thus far came to an end at the farm of Prinsloo. This road along the Bosberg and Fish River is described as very picturesque. The field is described as having short grass with high and luxurious grass along the rivers and in the valleys. The yellow-wood trees along

³⁸ Jacobus Potgieter, bapt. 14.11.1734, burgher Swellendam: *ibid.*, p. 720.

³⁹ Willem Prinsloo, bapt. 05.05.1715, died 07.07.81: *ibid.*, p. 740.

⁴⁰ Acc. 447: 28.

the slopes of the Bosberg is described as excellent timber but notwithstanding this, the houses were no better than those of the Camdebo and Sneeberg.

Sparrman arrived at Agter-Bruintjieshoogte from the eastern side and unfortunately did not visit the Camdebo and Sneeberge 'on account of the disorder among the horses'.

He described the farm of Prinsloo as having the finest situation for a farm in the whole district, 'and, I had almost said, in all Africa'. (Sparrman, 1977: 109)

He later describes Agter-Bruintjieshoogte as the most beautiful place in the whole country.

On its banks (referring to the Little Fish River), besides fields, were seen scattered up and down orchards and kitchen-gardens recently laid out, and some of them cut through with water furrows. Plantations, which though as yet inconsiderable, seemed however, to promise every thing to time and industry. The houses, far from intimidating the traveller by their splendid appearance, with the constrained pomp of antichambers and drawing-rooms, were rather in the style of plain and simple cottages; but on the other hand, were environed with the animated embellishments of sheep and cattle, and inhabited by people in easy circumstances; who not with interested views, but with open arms received me and my companion, just arrived from the dreary and inhospitable wilderness, and charmed us with their kind and friendly behaviour. (Sparrman, 1977: 129)

5.7 CONCLUSION - THE PATTERN OF SETTLEMENT

From the above discussion of the routes followed by the travellers to this region in the 1770's, it is evident that there existed, after only a few years of settlement, a well-established network of roads (figure 5.16). These beaten wagon tracks were a line that served as a link between the different farms; not only a physical, but also a social link, and with Cape Town and the small towns of the country districts it served as a social, economic and religious link. It is also possible to understand the expansion in this region through the way this network grew and extended itself as more and more farmers obtained land in this area through the loan-farm system. In this sense one would refer not to the social, political, cultural or economic influences; but the influence of the environment; the geography and topography.

The first farms that were taken out on loan were situated in the most fertile area of the Camdebo; namely that part encircled by the Sneeberg. As this area was well-watered and had rich soils one also finds reference in the writings of the travellers and the drawings included in their journals to more extensive cultivation of the land.

In a few year's time the first farmers crossed the Sneeberg, the plains of which proved to be especially suitable for the rearing of sheep. For this reason and the fact that the

ground was not very fertile, the farms were situated further apart. Of these farms one finds little reference to the extensive cultivation of the land.

The part of the Camdeboo situated to the east, at the foot of Tadjiesberg, is less fertile and the farms are situated far apart along the tributaries of the Sundays River.

Lastly, it is not difficult to understand why Willem Prinsloo defied the law in order to settle at the foot of the Bosberg. The Klein-Vis Rivier that flows more steadily than the rivers to the west assured a constant supply of water and the forests on the slopes of the Bosberg assured a constant supply of wood. The area is especially fertile and one finds intensive cultivation of the land.

The settlement pattern clearly shows the influence of the availability of water on the choice of site. The homestead was positioned in such a way that the water supply was close-by. The underlying principle is not new; it had been followed since the earliest settlements at the Cape and in time became one of the key factors in choice of settlement site. Figure 5.17 shows the pattern of landholdings in Stellenbosch and Drakenstein for the period 1680 - 1700. Being arable farming in a very fertile area means that the holdings are situated very close to one another, but the same principle applies.

Chisholm (1968: 102) states that where a new settlement is established, two sets of space-relationships come into being which is of the utmost importance; one is the relationship to its lands and the other its links with the outside world. The relationship to the land is illustrated in the following way:

He shows that the basic requirements of a group of Saxon settlers would have been: defence, water, fuel, building materials, lands for crops (arable) and livestock (grazing). Their choice of settlement site would reflect the degree of importance they attach to each of these. He describes these five elements as the basic elements of such a settler community's economy. Each element is ascribed a 'unit cost' whereby it is shown that on a scale of importance water has the highest unit cost and building material has the lowest unit cost (figure 5.18). This is supported by the fact that water is needed daily whereas building material is required only at spasmodic intervals. In the same way, the importance of water is evident in the pattern of settlement on the frontier. The good grazing found in the region was one of the reasons for settlement, and its influence can also be seen in the pattern of settlement; the fertile areas which offered good grazing is more densely populated than those with poor grazing.

Cultivation of the land was more intensive in areas with good arable land, especially in the Camdeboo. Links with the outside world were not the main consideration, social and friendly contact was limited to yearly visits to the country towns and trade took place on a limited basis, as has been shown previously. Therefore, the choice of a situation for a settlement does not reflect a balance of considerations: the ease of conducting the internal economy of the community outweighed the ease of concluding the external transactions.

The extremely dispersed settlement pattern was fostered in part by the nature of the country with its large areas of arid and mountainous land, and the loan-farm system which entitled each landholder to at least 2,420 ha (6,000 acres). The dispersed settlement pattern, in this case, is typical of the factors associated with this pattern of settlement. These, according to Pacione (1984: 12) include:

- Colonisation by individual pioneer families rather than by groups bound together by the ties of blood relationship or religion.
- Domination by private-enterprise agriculture rather than communalism.
- A rural economy dominated by livestock rearing or ranching.
- Readily available water supplies.

According to Hudson (1976: 66) dispersed patterns will occur:

- in areas where agricultural opportunities are limited by a difficult terrain, harsh climate and sterile soils
- where water supplies are virtually ubiquitous, provided it is also reasonably productive
- because of individual initiative, the desire to 'get away from it all', whether 'it' is religious or ethnic persecution, the law or social incompatibility
- because of the chance of improving one's living standard

It is clear that the dispersed pattern on the frontier was a product of factors that generally apply to this type of settlement. At the same time, the dispersed pattern is reflective of the social and economic relationships that existed on the frontier. These have been referred to in chapter 4.



Figure 5.1

The *Grote Routtes* on Van De Graaff's map, the main roads to the Eastern Frontier have been highlighted in red



Figure 5.2

The Eastern Cape, redrawn from the maps in the Gordon Collection. The route that Gordon followed is highlighted.

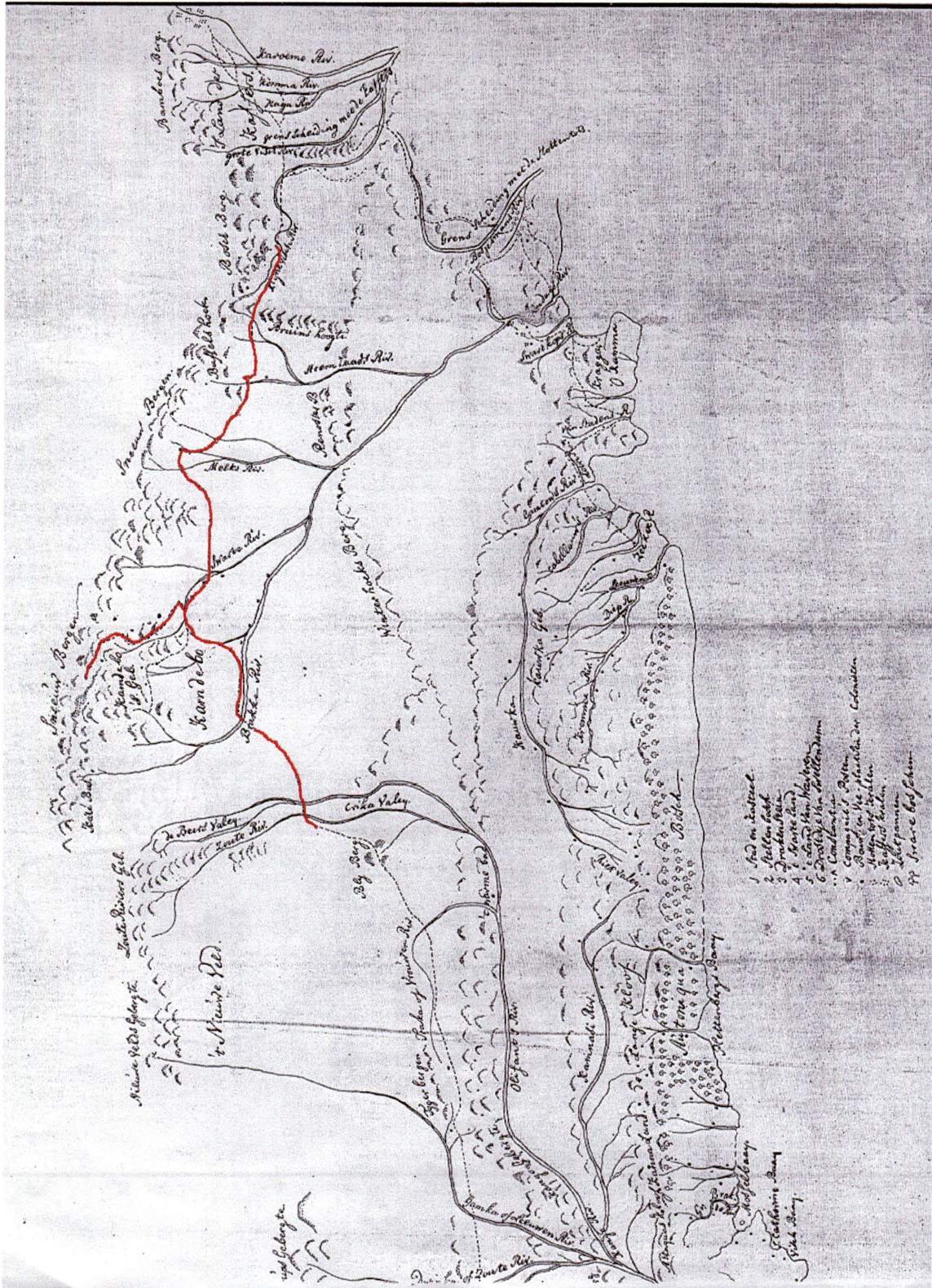


Figure 5.3 Swellengrebel's map. The route has been highlighted.

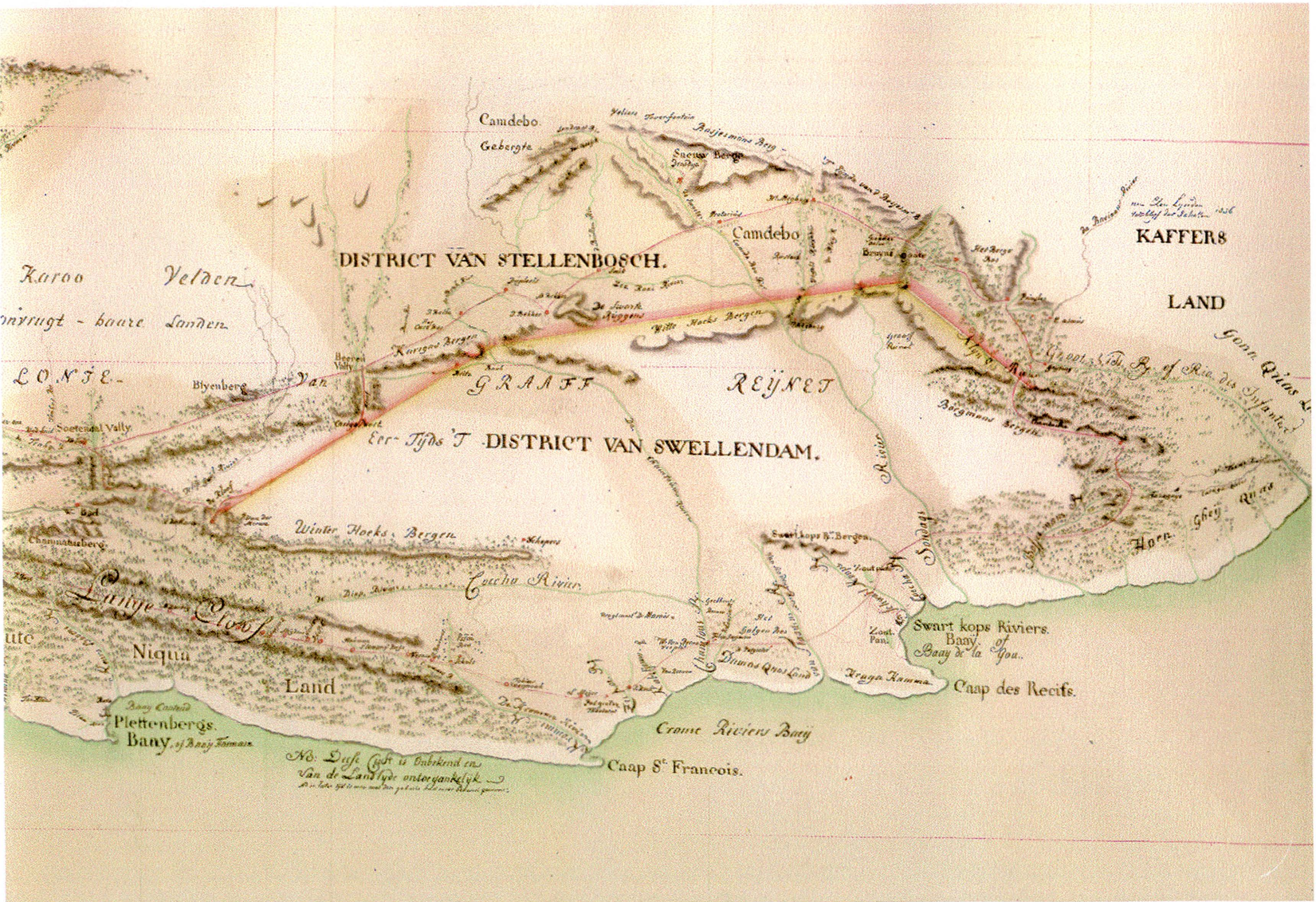


Figure 5.4

Leysten's map of Van Plettenberg's journey to the Eastern Frontier.



Figure 5.5 Typical view of the Karoo.

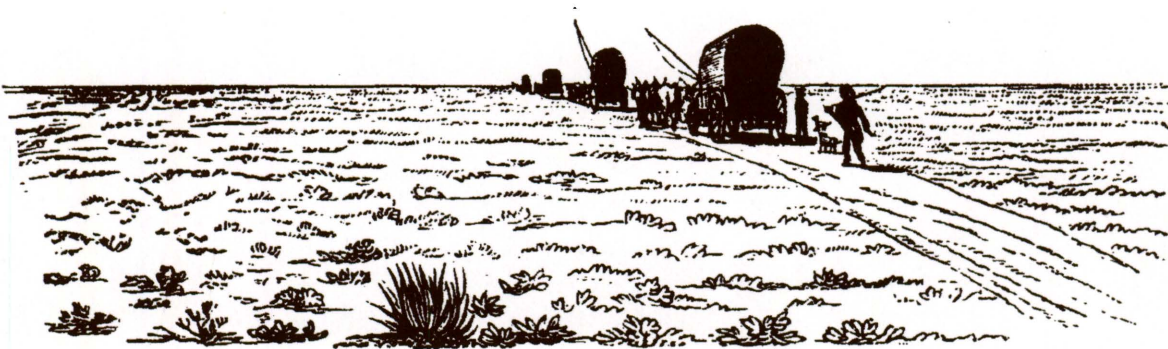


Figure 5.6 Vignette of a Karoo road, Burchell.

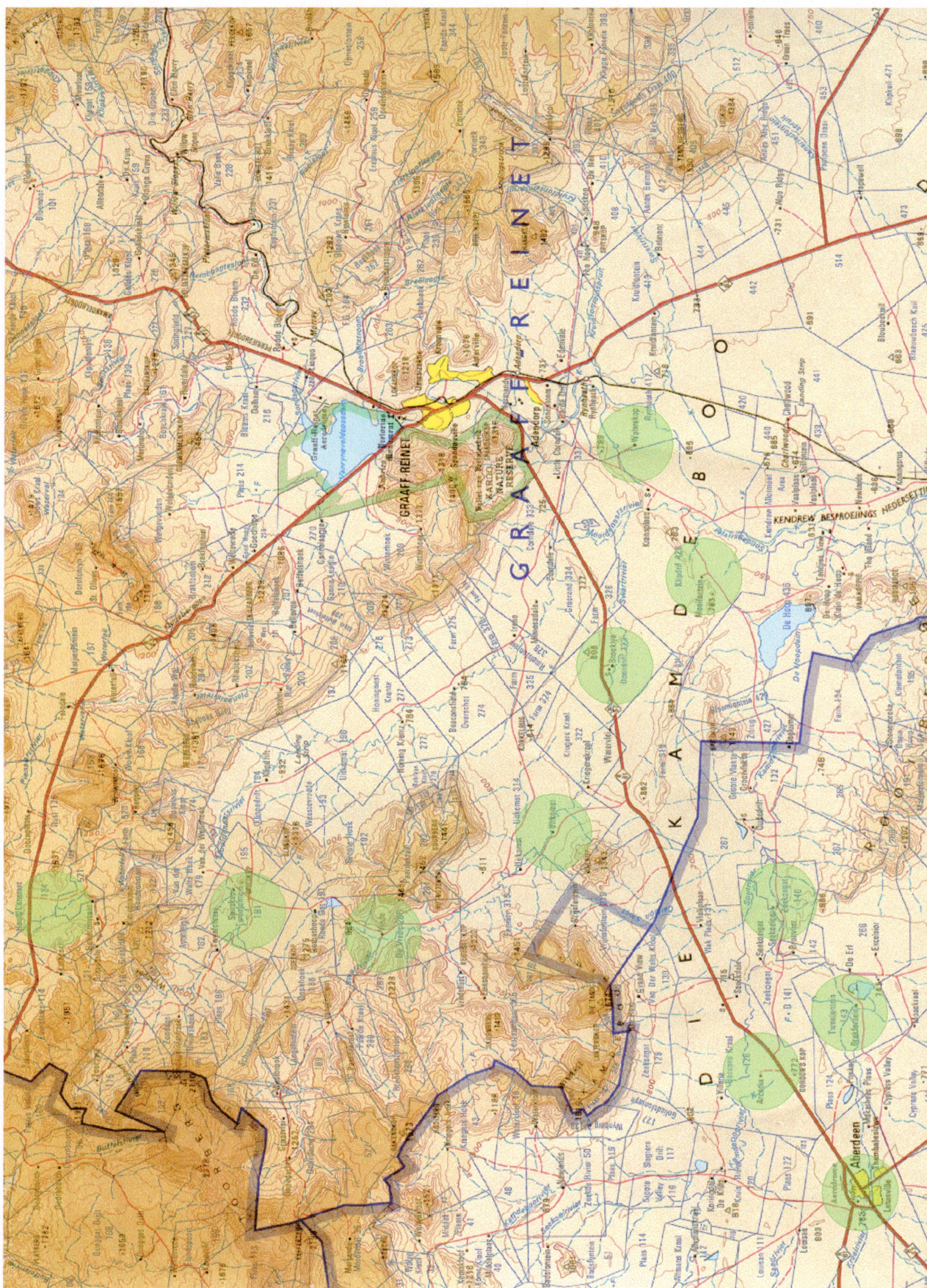


Figure 5.7

The present road between Aberdeen and Graaff-Reinet. The positions and sizes of the loan farms are shown.



Figure 5.8 Mesembryanthemums .



Figure 5.9 Mimosa nilotica

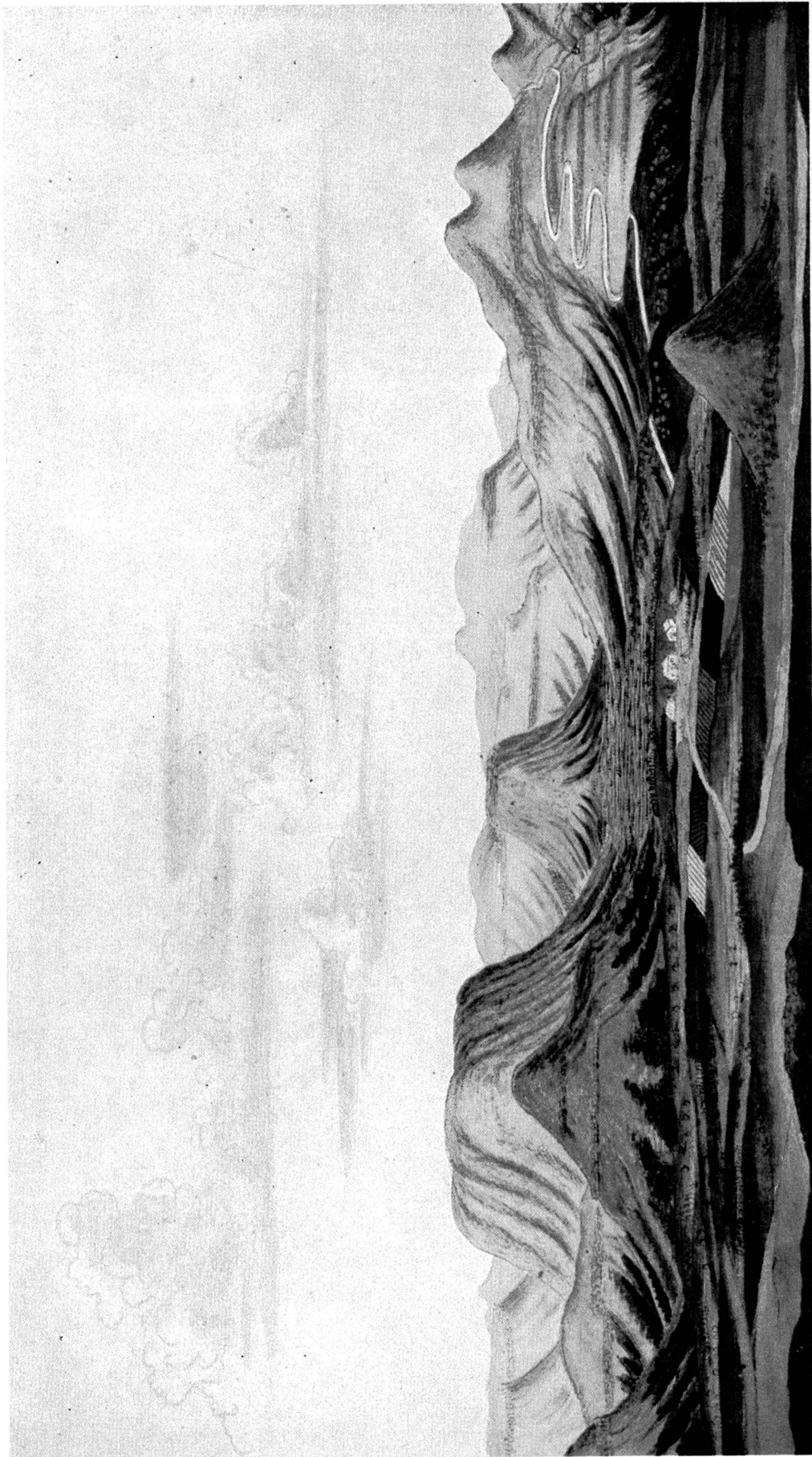


Figure 5.10

The Sneeuberge at Koeckmoer.



Figure 5.11

View of the Sneeuwberg.



Figure 5.12

The Camdebo as seen from the Sneeuberge.

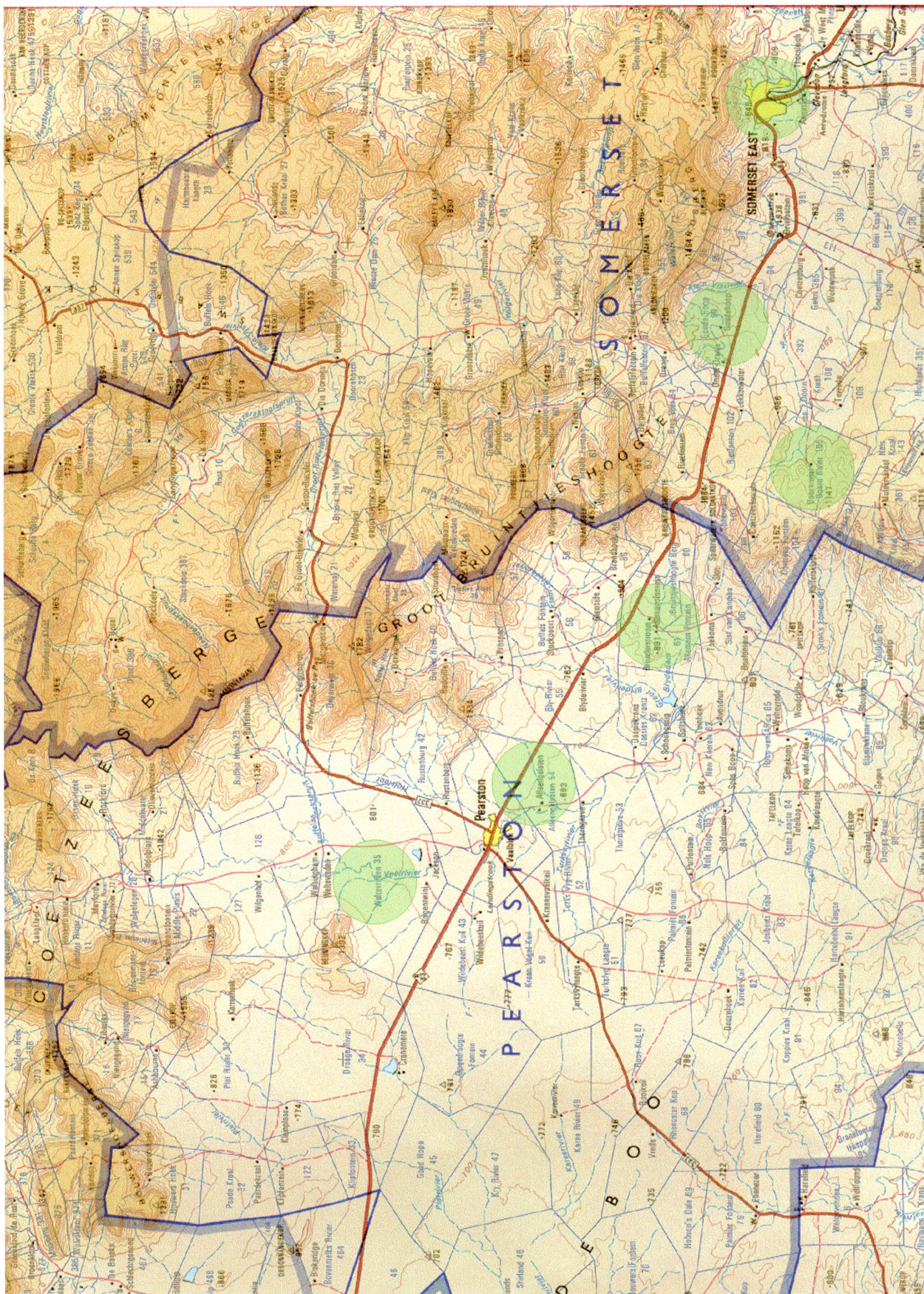


Figure 5.13

The area around Brintjieshoogte.
The positions and sizes of the loan farms are shown.

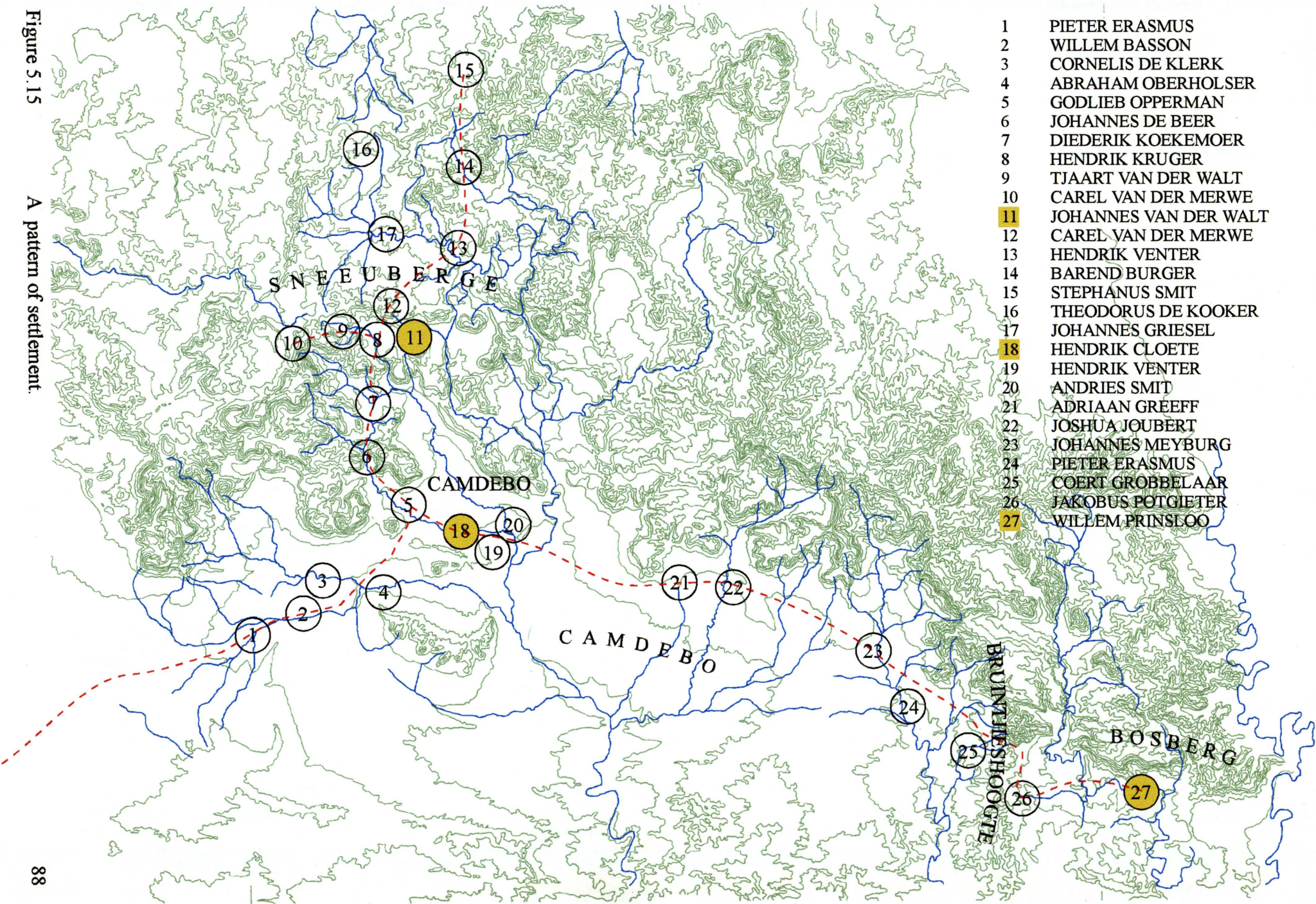


Figure 5.14

Bruintjieshoogte

Figure 5.15

A pattern of settlement.



- 1 PIETER ERASMUS
- 2 WILLEM BASSON
- 3 CORNELIS DE KLERK
- 4 ABRAHAM OBERHOLSER
- 5 GODLIEB OPPERMAN
- 6 JOHANNES DE BEER
- 7 DIEDERIK KOEKEMOER
- 8 HENDRIK KRUGER
- 9 TJAART VAN DER WALT
- 10 CAREL VAN DER MERWE
- 11 JOHANNES VAN DER WALT
- 12 CAREL VAN DER MERWE
- 13 HENDRIK VENTER
- 14 BAREND BURGER
- 15 STEPHANUS SMIT
- 16 THEODORUS DE KOOKER
- 17 JOHANNES GRIESEL
- 18 HENDRIK CLOETE
- 19 HENDRIK VENTER
- 20 ANDRIES SMIT
- 21 ADRIAAN GREEFF
- 22 JOSHUA JOUBERT
- 23 JOHANNES MEYBURG
- 24 PIETER ERASMUS
- 25 COERT GROBBELAAR
- 26 JAKOBUS POTGIETER
- 27 WILLEM PRINSLOO

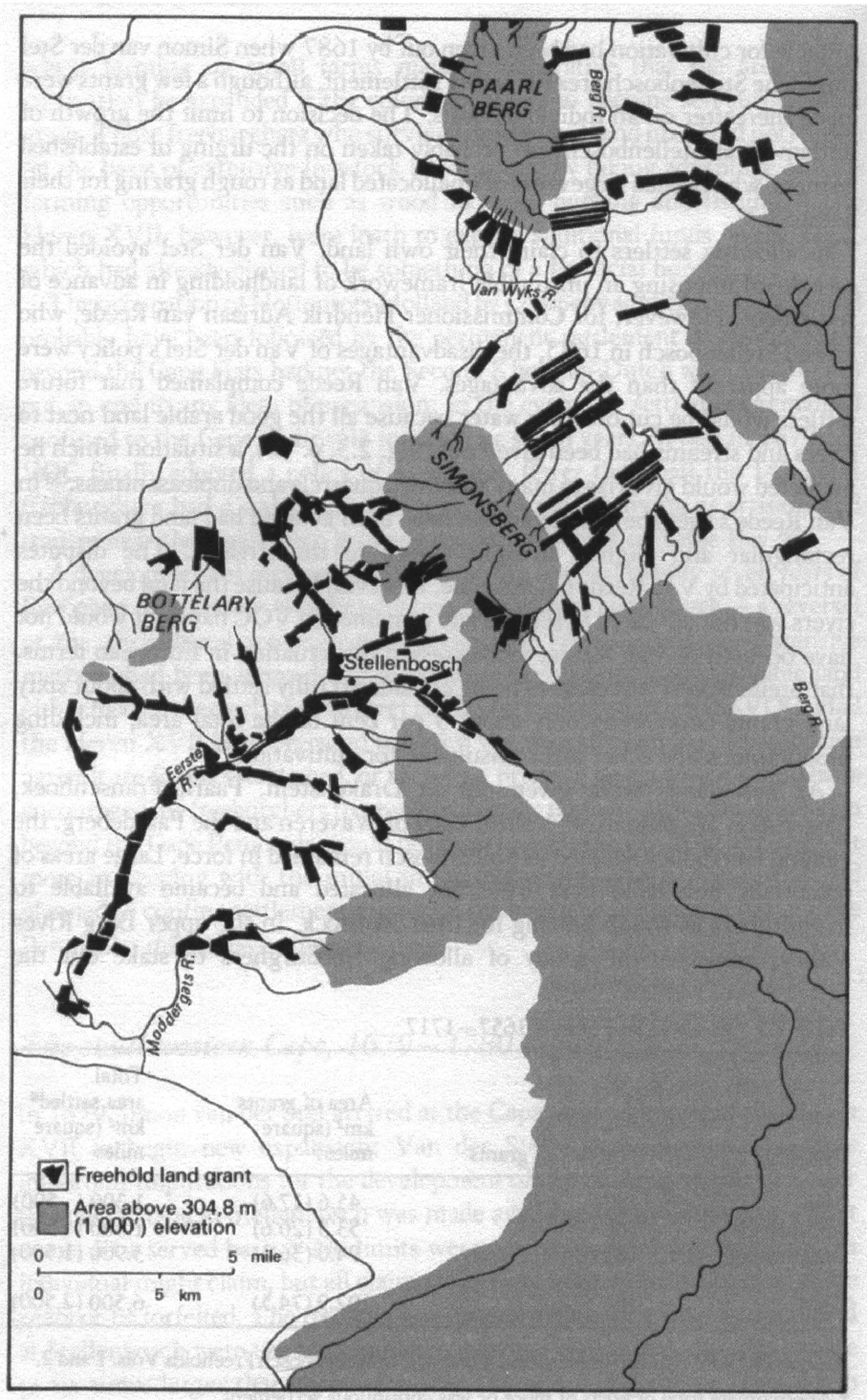


Figure 5.16

Patterns of landholdings in Stellenbosch and Drakenstein, 1680-1700

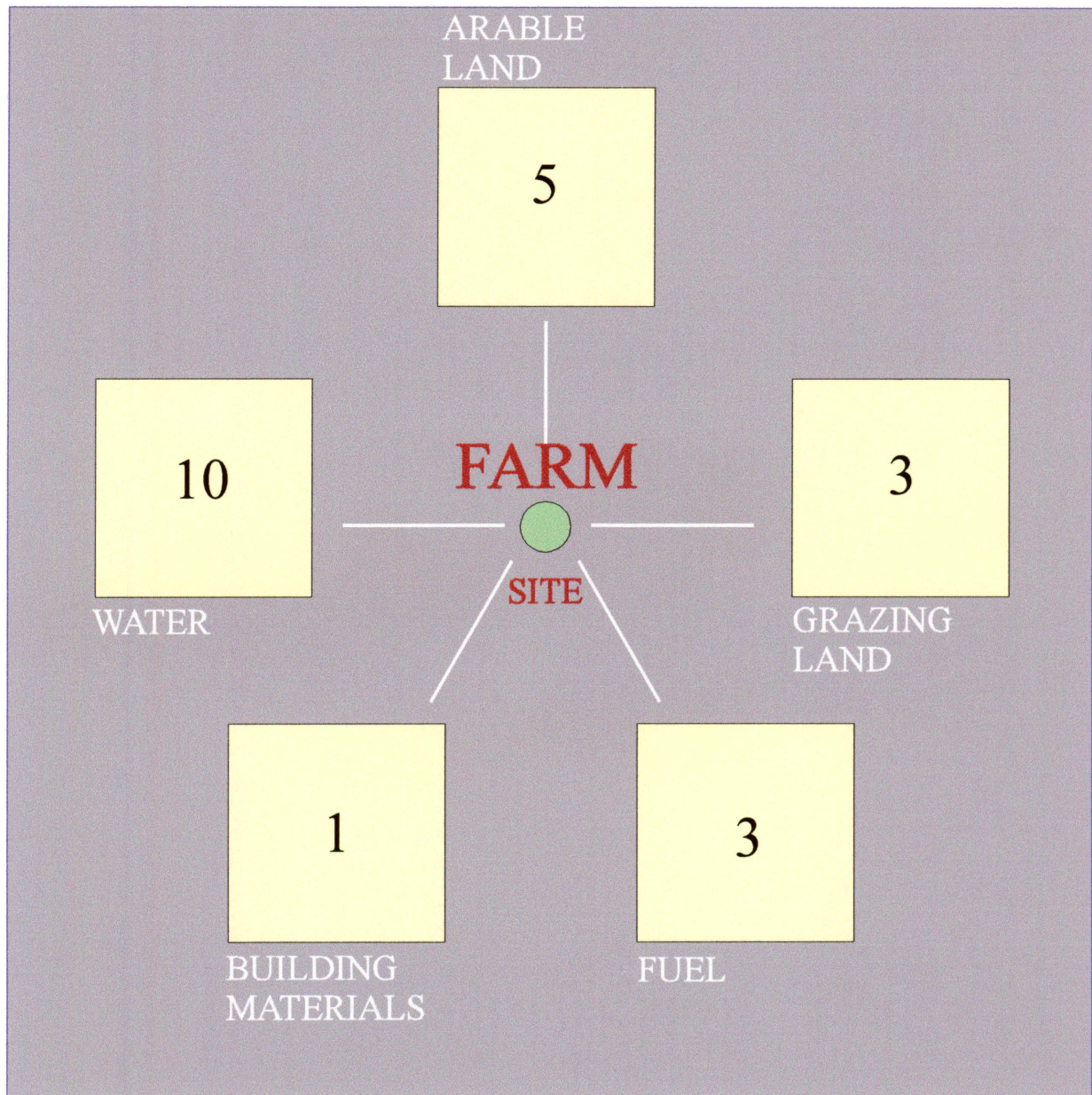


Figure 5.17

Factors influencing location.

CHAPTER 6 THE HOMESTEAD AS ELEMENT OF SETTLEMENT - People of another house¹

6.1 INTRODUCTION

If the Arcadian shepherds, who were certainly not so rich, were as uncomfortable in their cottages as the Cape boors, their poets must have been led woefully astray by the muse. But Pegasus was always fond of playing his gambols in the flowery regions of fancy. (Barrow, 1806: 120)

The rich heritage of Cape-Dutch architecture with its thatch roof and whitewashed walls, as Walton (1961: 8) points out, constitutes one of the finest surviving examples of folk building in the world. These well-appointed homesteads, with extensive orchards, vineyards and farmlands and long avenues of oaks, were the estates of wealthy landed gentry. They were the homes of a settled population in a fertile and rich country. The dwellings of the stock-farmers that migrated into the interior can not compete with the grandeur of the established estates, but they, like the well-known estates, represent a way of life; the life of the stock-farmer and his response to the environment in which he settled. Studies have neglected this form of vernacular architecture in favour of the more imposing Cape-Dutch farmsteads.

Throughout South Africa, as the Trekboers settled they evolved regional styles of building which are quite characteristic of the different areas and resulted from the prevailing climatic conditions, the nature of the building materials available, and the previous building experience of the settlers themselves. (Walton, 1961: 21)

These conditions correspond with the principles formulated by Baraitser *et al* (1985: 29) that they have found to be generally applicable to various vernacular styles of architecture. These are that the structure of the buildings is determined by the availability of local building materials and that the basic materials are seldom transported from any distance. A result of this local self-sufficiency on materials is the fact that the building would be built by the farmer himself, sometimes with help of labourers, rarely with help from skilled builders. Climatic conditions and type of soil will play an important role in the type of building that would be build and, the settlers

¹ From Crais (1992: 30), English translation of the Xhosa word employed in the early nineteenth century to refer to 'white people'.

approach to new problems will be determined by his background (origin) and his native traditions and methods, which will be adapted to the new context.

The aim in this chapter is to investigate the character, function and style of the homesteads built during the first years of settlement on the eastern frontier. The approach is regional and environmental. The three regions found on this part of the frontier, namely the Camdebo, Sneeu Berg and Agter-Bruintjieshoogte, although in distance closely linked, differ considerably in character. The topography, climate and landscape of each are unique.

A homestead from each of these regions will be analysed and the influence of the specific environment on the built form will be made evident. Descriptions and drawings by the early travellers form the basis of the analysis, supplemented with information from travellers in the early nineteenth century, namely: Barrow, Lichtenstein, Thompson and Burchell. It is clear that the mode of living and building on this part of the frontier had changed very little by the early nineteenth century, and these travellers offer valuable information on materials used, construction of, and character of the *Boer* homesteads on the frontier.

6.2 THE CAMDEBO - GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF HOMESTEADS

As stated before, the Camdebo, lying in the hollow at the foot of the Sneeu Berg, is especially well watered and fertile and the first farmers on the frontier chose to settle in this area. They built permanent residences of a better quality than the temporary cattle-places found in the Karoo. As some of the travellers relate, they also cultivated the land more extensively. Gordon (1988: 78) noted the excellent wheat and reasonable vineyards found on some farms in the Camdebo and Van Plettenberg (1916: 73) remarked on how well situated these farms were. He also commented on the irrigation system used to water the wheat and vineyards. Burchell (1967: 248) found on one of the first farms he visited in the Camdebo an excellent garden, stocked with fruit trees and vegetables, and a constant supply of water, that gladdened the eye of the traveller, after passing the dreary waste; the Karoo. Water was the main consideration in choosing a settlement site. The homestead, which was the centre point of the loan-farm, was situated in close proximity to the water-source.

The style and layout of buildings bears a strong resemblance with the earliest homesteads at the Cape. But these structures are simple and unpretentious and

represent the inhabitant's ingenuity and inventiveness to create from what was available in the environment. The occupants build themselves and the functional considerations far outweighed the aesthetic considerations.

There are very few men who do not build their own houses and make the rafters as well as the thatched roof. Of course, one can see that no master mason and master carpenter have made it, but the farmer makes shift with what he can have, and not with what he would like to have. (Mentzel, 1944: 107)

A house that 'functioned' well easily impressed a traveller, as illustrated by the following observation by Burchell (1967: 231):

The hut was in, what might be called in this part of the colony, very decent condition, as the walls and roof were weather-tight, and it was furnished with a door; ... It contained, however, merely a single room, which fortunately was large enough to lodge the whole of the party, ...

They were also prone to equate the character of the dwelling with that of the farmer; those with decent houses and good fields are described as decent and industrious farmers and those with poor houses are described as lazy degenerates. But in general the life-style and farming practices of the farmers are severely criticised by the travellers.

But a true Dutch peasant, or boor as he styles himself, has not the smallest idea of what an English farmer means by the word comfort. Placed in a country where not only the necessaries, but almost every other luxury of life might by industry be procured, he has the enjoyment of none of them. Though he has cattle in abundance he makes very little use of milk or of butter. In the midst of a soil and climate most favourable for the cultivation of the vine, he drinks no wine. He makes use of few or no vegetables or roots. Three times a day his table is loaded with masses of mutton, swimming in the grease of the sheep's tail. (Barrow, 1801: 76)

The travellers also had a very low opinion of the habitation of the frontier farmers as can be seen from the following description that Swellengrebel² gave of the houses of the Camdebo:

Although the farmers at most live four to five stages from the forests, and therefore could have had good homes, the houses consist here of a clay wall build up three to four feet and above that a roof of thatch. There is no division of rooms and no chimney, the smoke drifting through a hole in the roof or wall; there is a door made of common reed and bound with a rope and a square hole that serve as a window. ... The floor is of clay, on this everything stands in disorder; a butter churn, a slaughtered heifer, stock bread and so forth, while chickens, ducks and young pigs walk around like a menagerie, yes, even the doves that nest in the roof. The household effects to proportion is, one small table, or for lack of this, a wooden chest, three to four veld chairs, with seats of hide and so forth. In these sheds, barely forty feet long and fifteen

² Acc. 447: 23.

feet wide³, on some farms two to three families dwell with their children. The cleanliness was therefore not high, ... I have found only two houses, that was build up decently, and where there was cleanliness, although far from luxurious.

This description correspond with a later description by Burchell (1967:237):

... a small oblong low hut built with rough bits of rock; rudely thatched with reed and sedge; having no window, except one small opening covered with white linen, instead of glass; and the doorway but half closed with a clumsy panel of reeds. No other furniture was to be seen, than a table and three chairs, or rather stools.

Burchell made an engraving of this farmstead that shows the flocks going out to pasture in the early morning (figure 6.1). He mentions the proximity of a stream that ran close by the house, characteristic of these early settlements. Lastly, he mentions that the appearance of the inhabitants corresponded with that of the place, and that both bespoke their moderate ambitions.

It is clear that the household effects matched the sorry state of the houses (see chapter 4). This is evident in the descriptions by Swellengrebel and Burchell mentioned previously, and the following description by Barrow (1801: 77):

His house is either open to the roof, or covered only with rough poles and turf, affording a favourable shelter for scorpions and spiders; and the earthy floors are covered with dust and dirt, and swarm with insects, particularly with a species of the *termes*, which, though not so destructive as some others of this genus, is nevertheless a very troublesome and disagreeable animal. His apartments, if he happens to have more than one, which is not always the case among the grazing farmers, are nearly destitute of furniture. A great chest that contains all his moveables, and two smaller ones that are fitted to his waggon, are the most striking articles. The bottoms of his chairs consist of thongs cut from a bullock's hide. The windows are without glass; or if there should happen to be any remains of this article, it is so patched and daubed as nearly to exclude the light it was intended to admit. The boor notwithstanding has his enjoyments: he is absolute master of a domain of several miles in extent; and he lords it over a few miserable slaves or Hottentots without control.

And later Barrow (1806: 117-118) writes:

... with regard to the hovels in which they live. These have seldom more than two apartments, and frequently only one, in which the parents with six or eight children and the house Hottentots all sleep; their bedding consists generally of skins. Their hovels are variously constructed, sometimes the walls being mud or clay baked in the sun, sometimes sods and poles, and frequently a sort of waitling (*sic*) plastered over with a mixture of earth and cow-dung, both within and without; and they are rudely covered with a thatch of reeds that is rarely water-proof.

...The bed for the master and mistress of the family is an oblong frame of wood, supported on four feet, and reticulated with thongs of a bullock's hide, so as to support a kind of mattress made of skins sewed together, and sometimes stuffed with wool. In winter they use woollen blankets. If they have a table it is generally of the boor's

³ A measurement of 12,5m by 4,7m.

making, but very often the large chest that is fitted across the end of their ox-waggon serves for this purpose. The bottoms of their chairs or stools are networks of leather thongs.

... Their huts and their persons are equally dirty, and their whole appearance betrays an indolence of body, and a low grovelling mind. Their most urgent wants are satisfied in the easiest possible manner; and for this end they employ means nearly as gross as the original natives, whom they affect so much to despise.

For Mentzel (1944: 111) 'household effects' meant something of much higher importance for he states:

... the first and most essential piece of furniture is a wife.

6.2.1 EXAMPLE 1: IN THE CAMDEBO AT THE FARM OF JOHANNES

SWANEPOEL (figures 6.2 and 6.3 - Drawing 36, Swellengrebel Archive)

This farm was granted to Hendrik Cloete on 3 March 1775 as 'De Doorn drift by de Swarte Rivier'.⁴ It was situated on the Swart River near the present homestead of Brooklyn, along the present road between Aberdeen and Graaff-Reinet (figure 5.7 and 5.16). The landscape depicted corresponds exactly with the natural surroundings depicted by Schumacher. The main characteristic is Vuilkop, the sharp cone in front and the Kamdebooberg, the table-topped mountain in the back (figure 6.4). Johannes Swanepoel was the foreman (*kneg*) of Hendrik Cloete, whose son Pieter was the travelling companion of Hendrik Swellengrebel.

It is clear that, in general, the visitors did not have a high regard for the habitation of the farmers. Even today, only a romanticist could idealise the mode of living described. But the architecture and lifestyle of the farmers represent a simple and truthful response to their specific environment.

The house can easily be identified as the building in the centre, characteristically with its low walls and high pitched hipped thatch roof. An overhang of the roof can be made out and along the side the texture of the roofline is representative of grass. The front door is situated in the middle of the long side. The thatch is swept over the doorway, forming a *wolweneus* (wolf nose) above it, for the walls are so low that a person would not otherwise be able to enter without stooping. Walton (1995: 127) states that the origin of the name *wolweneus*, which is Dutch, is obscure. He describes it as a type of half-hipped roof that is terminated by a gable wall, the top of which is rounded off as a

⁴ RLR 23/2, p. 210

segment of a circle, and the thatch then slopes back to the roof. This element can be found on the ends of the building, or as an element above the front door, as is the case here (figure 6.5). In Burchell's depiction of the farm of Gerrit Snyman, made in 1811, the same feature can be seen (figure 6.6). The thatch of the roof is lifted to provide for the height of the door.

The rectangular 'barn-like' structure was typical of the earlier houses built in the country towns. Baraitser *et al* (1985: 155) points out that the earliest farm buildings in the Stellenbosch district were simple rectangular structures, sometimes without gables. This can clearly be seen in Stade's drawing of Stellenbosch, that was made in the early eighteenth century (figure 6.7) and the buildings depicted on the land deeds by Mulder (figure 6.8).

Concerning the methods of construction and materials used, the following can be deduced from the descriptions of typical dwellings given above.

Clay is found in abundance along the rivers in the region and this seems to have been the most popular material to build with. The drying of the clay-bricks in the sun was in practice by the time that Barrow visited the region. Of this method of construction an example still exist in the ruins of a farmhouse which would have been built in the late eighteenth century⁵ (figure 6.9). Of the 'sod and pole' and 'plastered waiting' referred to by Barrow no examples have remained but there is nothing to suggest that these were not also typical methods of construction. The materials necessary would also have been found in the immediate surroundings. The floor was of clay, and probably sometimes the natural ground plane, compacted but not treated in any way. The door consisted of a reed panel bound with rope. Windows were mere openings in the walls, sometimes covered with a piece of linen. The roofs were thatched with grass or reed, and Barrow's reference to the use of 'turf' is interesting but probably not typical.

There was no ceiling and the roofs were rarely waterproof. There was no chimney; the smoke had to escape through the holes in the walls and roof. Cooking was done in the house; the separate kitchen structure made its appearance in the early nineteenth century. It is clear that the style of buildings was not an invention of the farmers but a continuation of styles that were known and of which the basic principles were understood clearly.

⁵ Information obtained from Peter Whitlock, architect Graaff-Reinet.

No reference to any other buildings that comprise the homestead is made in the journals of the early travellers. This could be ascribed to the fact that the homestead was not their main concern. They did not have a high regard for the built form and made only a few observations about the character of the dwellings. But the drawings of Schumacher clearly show that the homestead comprised of a variety of buildings. The arrangement is at right angles to one another, which gives it a formal pattern typical of the established estates (figure 6.10). The buildings are positioned in relation to the dwelling that would have been the first structure erected. It is clear from the difference in the shading of the ground at the bend of the road, that an area was cleared on which the buildings were erected, thus forming a loosely defined farmyard.

The three buildings in front of the dwelling have forms characteristic of a *kapstylhuis*. The positions and arrangements of these structures in relation to the dwelling indicate that they served two different functions. This is also supported by the difference in the treatment of end-walls. The structure in front of and in the view of, the dwelling has built-up end-walls that suggest a concern for the security of its contents. This building would have been used for storage. The other two are positioned further away from, and off the visual axis of the dwelling. The tent-like openings in their end-walls look exactly like that of the tent of the travelling party. In the case of the permanent structures, hides would have been used for the end-wall. These buildings were most probably the dwellings of labourers.

The *kapstylhuis* was a well-known form of building among the colonists. The first *kapstylhuis* was built in October 1654, when Jan van Riebeeck ordered that a shed be built on Dassen Eiland. (Walton, 1981: 2) The chart of Dassen Eiland, dated 1656, shows this structure and a walled building; both with end entrances (figure 6.11). As shown by Walton (1961: 9) and Baraitser *et al* (1985: 62) the *kapstylhuis* occurred over a wide area in Western Europe and is still widely employed by herdsmen on the German heathlands and in Holland. In an earlier article Walton (1951: 52) refers specifically to the German *Dach-haus*, *Scapkoven* and *Dach-hutten* and to an English example named Teapot Hall of which a local rhyme said “Teapot Hall, all roof and no wall”!

This same structure has survived in the roof-truss of South African houses and to enter the loft of an eighteenth century Cape house is almost identical to entering a *kapsteilhuis* (sic). This roof structure is peculiar to Western Europe, particularly Germany and Holland, from where it spread to South Africa. (Walton, 1951: 53)

But on closer inspection the structures do not correspond exactly with the characteristics of the *kapstylhuis* as described by Walton (1961: 9)

The *kapsteilhuis*, as its name suggests, consists solely of a thatched roof, carried on a series of about eight couples and reaching right down to the ground. In its simplest form it has no walls and is in fact nothing more than the roof of a Cape house built at ground level. Eight or more pairs of poles, meeting at the top, *kapbalke*, are spaced at regular intervals to cover a floor space measuring about 25 feet by 16 feet. Each pair is joined together by a tie-beam, *hanebalk*, all pegged together with wooden pegs, and across these couples are secured the battens, to which the bundles of reeds and thatch are sewn with riempies, twine or grass rope. The ends are rounded and at one end is a recessed entrance, closed by half doors.

The end-walls of the typical *kapstylhuis* are therefore slanted, the thatch at the top corners is rounded and the entrance is recessed into the end-walls (figure 6.12). The sophistication of this description is not typical of the structures under discussion. It is more characteristic of the 'roof-house' which, according to Walton (1961: 13), has a framework consisting of a ridge-pole carried on two or more pairs of rafters which cross at the apex to form a V, in which the ridge-pole rests. This form of construction also originated in Europe, where it is called a tong-support, 'on account of its resemblance to a pair of tongs'. For waterproofing, the ridge of the 'roof-house' and the *kapstylhuis* was smeared with a mixture of cow-dung and sand. (Walton, 1961: 9) Poorterman's drawing of the farm Philipskraal shows a *kapstylhuis* under construction (figure 6.13). The framework had been completed and it is a much simpler structure than that proposed by Walton.

The building situated next to the road has a structure more typical of the *kapstylhuis* and bears a distinct similarity with a structure depicted by Dingley⁶ titled *A Boors House of the Interior of South Africa* (figure 6.14). The sides are all sloped but at the top corners the 'thong-supports' is visible and the door is situated in the sidewall. This was most probably the barn in which the wheat and farming implements would be stored. The door is not big enough for the wagon to be stored inside. The rendering on the drawing indicates that the whole structure was thatched. The field to the right would probably have been used for the cultivation of wheat, used for own consumption.

⁶ Robert Dingley, British soldier in the Cape Regiment. Dingley was stationed at the Cape from 1813 to 1817. He spent most of this time on the Eastern Frontier.

The building to the back of the house was also used for storage. From the position of the two doors and window openings one can conclude that it was divided into two rooms. The walls were built up much higher than those of the dwelling were. The roof again is a hipped thatch roof with no apparent overhang. The suspicion that this building might be a fanciful exaggeration by the artist, can be ruled out by the close proximity of a footbridge that crosses the irrigation stream. The relation between these two elements makes sense if one assumes that the orchard laid out is actually a vineyard. This assumption is based on the fact that most farms in the region had vineyards. Then this building could have been used for the storing and processing of the grapes or any other fresh produce from the orchards.

The irrigation stream would have been fed by the Swart River that can be seen in the background. Lower down, in the left-hand side of the drawing the vineyard is bordered by farmland. Along the cultivated land across the irrigation stream is a small building, the purpose of which is obscure. The shape and size correspond to a soap house as described and illustrated by Walton (1989: 137 -139) (figure 6.15). The soap house was typically a small rectangular building with the entrance on the short side of the building. The thatch roof, according to Walton (1989: 138), was not uncommon for this type of building. Soap was an important commodity of the frontier farmers. The ingredients, ganna bush (*Salsola aphylla*) and sheep fat, were readily available, it could be transported easily, and a handsome profit could be made from the sale of soap in Cape Town as reported by Burchell (1967: 113):

... the family, with their slaves and Hottentots, being fed with mutton at every meal, caused a daily consumption of two sheep, the fat of which was considered almost equal in value to the rest of the carcass, by being manufactured into soap. It was, as they informed me, more profitable to kill their sheep, for this purpose only, than to sell them to the butchers at so low a price... In the house, I saw a great number of cakes of this soap, piled up to harden, ready for their next annual journey to Cape Town; whither they go, not merely for the purpose of selling it, but of purchasing clothing and such other articles as are not to be had in the country districts, but at an exorbitant price.

It is therefore a possibility that this building might have been used for the production of soap.

The small structure on the other side of the entrance road, in size and location, would have been a *wolwehok* (wolf cage), also referred to as a *wolwehuis* (wolf house).

Walton's (1989: 135) description of a typical Karoo *wolwehok* as having a rectangular plan with low entrance and corbelled roof corresponds with the appearance of this

structure (figure 6.16). The *wolwehok* was used to ensnare leopards, hyenas and jackals, all of which are found in this area. Lichtenstein (1930: 21) gave the following description of a *wolwehuis*:

At almost every farm is to be seen, at some little distance from the dwelling-house, a *wolwehuis*, as it is called; that is, a snare for catching hyenas. It is a building form six to eight feet square, constructed of rough stones, with a trap door, and bait within, which closes upon the same principle as a mouse-trap, on the animal attempting to seize the carrion within.

6.3 THE SNEEUBERG - GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE HOMESTEADS

The Sneeu Berg is not as fertile as the Camdebo. Being an escarpment, the sources of the south and north flowing rivers are found here but the rivers do not flow as strong as those in the Camdebo. One does not find extensive plains of high grass, as in the Camdebo and bigger farms were needed to provide adequate grazing for the sheep and cattle. The rearing of sheep was the dominant practice. The areas around the homestead were cultivated, but to a lesser extent and only for own consumption.

Burchell (1967: 118) described a 'good garden' as follows and highlighted the adverse effect of the extreme winter climate on arable farming:

In front of the house, there was a small garden: I saw growing in it, maize, dakka, cabbages, pumpkins, lettuces, cucumbers, and tobacco; but the latter had been stripped of all its leaves, and utterly destroyed by the hail which had fallen yesterday. Wheat and barley are grown on this farm in small quantities; but the climate has been found too cold to ripen grapes; and from the same cause their peach-trees appeared to be in a very unthriving state. In the month of April, they usually expect frost sufficiently severe to kill all their garden-crops; but it must be confessed, that in general the boors take very little pains with their gardens, and, from either ignorance, or slovenliness, are very bad gardeners.

The houses were considered of as poor quality as those of the Camdebo and they have the same characteristics as those of the Camdebo. Gordon (1988: 102) wrote:

...The inhabitants here have poor houses, generally consisting of a rectangular room with one window and one door, but made only of reeds, so that it is cold and dirty.

Van Plettenberg (1916: 75) wrote of the houses on the Sneeu Berg:

The Sneeu Berg has very little firewood, and practically no timber, so that the inhabitants of this mountain have to endure the terrible cold, which is a great inconvenience. They live in the most poverty-stricken way, their houses mostly consist of a room with a low wall, with no divisions and covered with a sort of coarse reed roof, that serve as chimney and storing space.

In a later reference Thompson (1967: 46) gives his own description of a typical *Boer* dwelling on the Sneeu-berg and some idea of what was stored among the rafters:

The house resembles a large barn... The houses, being without any ceiling, are open to the thatch; and the rafters are generally hung full of the ears of Indian corn, leaves or rolls of tobacco, slices of dried meat, called *bill tongue*, &c.

Paravicini di Capelli (1965: 162, 256) on his travels through the colony in 1803, stated:

Each farm consists of a variety of buildings, one used for the storage and another occupied by servants, and so forth. ... The walls around an elongated square, not more than five feet high, consist of the same crumbly clay as the floor. On these walls rest a bad thatched roof, on unplanned thick and thin branches, tied together with thongs of hide. The door is an opening with the usual width, and the height of the clay walls. The two windows are small holes; in front of which men put for protection a shutter woven from branches; there is no chimney, because the cookhouse is a separate hut. A fire is made in the middle of the floor and the smoke escapes through the roof. (Own translation)

The cookhouse was a later development and was not found in the earliest homesteads. Burchell (1967: 113 - 114) describes how the farmers from the Sneeu-berg obtained their timber from the Bosberg, beyond Brintjieshoogte. The doors, tables and larger beams, he observed, were all of *Geelhout* (yellowwood), but the rafters were of willow, which according to him proved sufficient for its purpose. It is not clear whether the earliest farmers made the same effort to obtain wood from the Bosberg. The lack of wood posed a bigger problem in terms of heating. They addressed the problem in the following way:

Because of the lack of wood the inhabitants sometimes prepare their meals by burning dried cow-dung or the omentum of a sheep with a little wood or dung. (Gordon, 1988: 81)

This became a well-known custom associated with the Sneeu-berg farmers and was commented on by most travellers to the region.

On the Sneeu-berg special measures were needed to secure the livestock at night. For this purpose a *kraal* (fold) was built near the front of the dwelling. The walls of the kraal consisted of a strong hedge made from the branches of the thorn-tree, as described by Burchell (1967: 237)

...At a little distance from the building, or on the *werf*, as the space immediately surrounding a colonist's dwelling, is termed, was a very large sheep-fold, hedged round with branches of Karro-thorn.

And Thompson (1967: 28)

... it is highly necessary to secure the herds and flocks at night, in folds or kraals fenced round generally with a strong hedge of *mimosa* or other thorny bushes.

For Barrow (1806: 119) the uncleanliness of the folds or kraals far outweighed the uncleanliness of the huts and to make it worse these folds were situated immediately in front of the door. The folds were never cleaned out and the dung gradually formed a mound. The dung was therefore used as fuel, and later also as building material:

From the immense number of cattle kept on these farms, their manure accumulates in the fold, to a great thickness; and this, from time to time, is cut into square pieces in the manner of peat, and appeared to answer the purpose of *fuel* equally well. The walls of these cattle-pounds, are at many farms here, built entirely of such pieces of manure piled up to dry; and which go by the name of *mest-koek* (manure-cake) (sic). This fuel produces a strong heat; but gives out a disagreeable smell, until it is well-ignited. (Burchell, 1967: 114)

Thompson (1967: 37) while visiting the farm of Captain Harding in the vicinity of Graaff-Reinet, wrote:

This farm called Drie-Fonteyn, (Three Fountains) (sic) where he resides, has been formerly occupied by an extensive cattle boor, who had left a memorable monument of his residence in a prodigious dunghill just in front of the house. This had been the station of his cattle kraal, and the manure had accumulated in the shape of a solid mountain, which Captain Harding had for several years been exerting himself to reduce, though with but little apparent effect, by cutting it out in square pieces like peats, and erecting out of this material, extensive enclosures, and farm-yards. In the vicinity of London this mountain of manure would be worth many thousand pounds.

6.3.1 EXAMPLE 2: VIEW ON THE SNEEUBERG AT VAN DER WALT

(figures 6.17 and 6.18 - Drawing 34, Swellengrebel Archive)

This farm was granted to Johannes Petrus van der Walt on 4 December 1771⁷. It was registered as 'Houd Constant' and still retains this name.

The written history of this farm clearly illustrates the neglect and erroneous impression that exist about the earliest farms on this part of the frontier. Numerous references have been used from the studies of James Walton who has played an important role in the regeneration of interest in rural vernacular architecture of South Africa. But the only reference made by Walton to the early rural vernacular architecture of the area that the present study is concerned with, in *Homesteads and villages of South Africa* (1952), is misinformed. His discussion on earliest settlement in the Sneeuwberg area is of particular interest. Walton (1952: 59) rightly refers to Houdconstant as one of the earliest homesteads in the Graaff-Reinet district but the building is described as having

doors with ornamental fanlights, ornate gables and the stoep. These elements are typical of the Cape Dutch style and with the accompanying drawing nobody could be criticised for describing it as such (figure 6.19). The building described is not the earliest dwelling, but the present one situated very close to the position of the farm depicted by Schumacher. The homestead of Van der Walt drawn by Schumacher was in fact the first permanent settlement on the farm of Houdconstant. In describing the farmstead of Clifton, Walton (1952: 59) states:

It is situated in a bend of the narrow Pretorius' Kloof and is almost hidden from view by tall poplar trees and a row of fig trees on which the young folks carved their initials as far back as 1880.

The two references serve to illustrate firstly that the earliest homesteads were thought to be those in existence and that Walton considers the date 1880 'far back' whereas the first farms were already settled permanently a century before this date. The drawings of Schumacher represent the earliest settlements on this part of the frontier.

The drawing of Van der Walt's homestead was made from Perskeboomhoogte looking northeast (figure 6.20). As stated before, it was situated just east of the present farmstead of Houdconstant. The hill in front and mountains to the right is called Sneeberghoogte. The cone in the back is called Boesmanskop and the range to the right thereof is called Tafelberg.

The scale of the buildings in relation to the landscape is exaggerated, as is the main elements of the landscape. Notwithstanding this, the drawing still offers an interesting view of a Sneeberg stock farm. Again, no mention is made of any other structures but the drawing clearly shows that the homestead consisted of a group of buildings (figure 6.21).

The house is situated in the centre of the yard that has been cleared of vegetation. It has a pitched thatch roof but from the drawing it is very difficult to make out whether the roof is hipped or not. If one assumes that the building has gable walls, then the thatch most probably would have extended over these walls for the joining of the grass and wall would have been a problematic detail to solve. The walls are built up high enough to accommodate the full height of the door. Therefore, the height of this specific wall is not 'low' as Van Plettenberg described it. The door is placed in the centre of the wall on the long side, with two small openings alongside it. Another

⁷ RLR 22/1, p. 6,

opening is indicated in the end-wall. All the openings of this building are at the same height.

Gordon's comment that the walls were made only of reeds is interesting, but most probably the reed wall would also have been covered with clay, which could be found in abundance on the Sneeuberg.

The building at the back of the house is situated very close to the latter and has the same construction as the dwelling. It has a door in the centre of the wall on the long side, and an opening in the end-wall. In this case, however, this opening is situated higher, in the gable wall, so that its purpose was probably to provide light in the roof area (attic) of the building. This means that it was probably used as a storeroom, and that the roof construction could also have been used as such.

These two buildings are surrounded by five structures with the appearance of *kapstylhuise*, with the tent-like openings found on the drawing of Cloete's farm (figure 6.3). The structure again is a combination of the *kapstylhuis* and roof-house, it is covered with thatch, and the end-walls have the same tent-like opening, probably made from hides. The smaller structures would have been used as sleeping quarters of the servants. The larger one, situated near the road would have served the purpose of a barn. The circular low-walled structure to the left-hand side of this building is a *trapvloer*, used for the threshing of wheat.

The grain is trodden out by horses on circular floors in the open air; and the straw is left to rot or to be scattered about by the winds. (Barrow, 1801: 84)

It can be assumed that the buildings near to it would have been used for the storing of the wheat. Burchell (1967: 124) described how on one farm on the Sneeuberg, his men were comfortably housed in a 'corn-house' while he himself stayed in the house.

The cultivated fields are drawn in the same way as the field on Cloete's farm. The fields are bordered and divided by hedges, the character and purpose of which would be the same as the hedges used for the kraal, as discussed above.

In front of the house is a square low-walled structure, the *kraal*, which was used to keep the livestock in overnight. The position of this structure in relation to the dwelling is logical in that it provided the best protection of the livestock in the nighttime. The distribution and position of the *kapstylhuise* are also related to security and defence. In view of this, the placement of one at the entrance to the farm seems very wise.

Likewise, two others nearby are placed at both sides of the walled area. The fourth,

situated at a right angle to the entrance of the wheat-store, probably served to protect the valuable contents.

6.4 AGTER-BRUINTJIESHOOGTE - A HOMESTEAD

As stated before, the area behind Bruintjieshoogte was settled in the early 1770's in defiance of the law that determined that Bruintjieshoogte was the eastern border of the colony. Of the three regions on the frontier, this one was by far the most fertile and the Klein-Vis Rivier that runs at the foot of the Bosberg offered a constant and strong supply of water.

6.4.1 EXAMPLE 3: THE BOSBERG AT BRUINTJIESHOOGTE WITH THE FARM OF PRINS SR. (figures 6.22 and 6.23 - Drawing 32, Swellengrebel Archive)

Willem Prinsloo had moved to this area around 1771 and was one of the first inhabitants of Agter-Bruintjieshoogte. Although this farm was granted to him when the border dispute was settled and this area was incorporated into the colony, no record of this licence was found in the Wildschutte Book.

This farm that was situated at the foot of the Bosberg, was probably the best known of the eastern frontier farms, mostly because of the beautiful surroundings in which it lay. Van Plettenberg (1932: 43) thought it had the most gratifying position of all the farms in the whole region that he had travelled through. He was of the opinion that when it was properly build up and cultivated, it would not only be a very pleasant place to live, but that it would also provide the owner with a good livelihood. He described the Bosberg (figure 6.24), with forests of ironwood and yellow-wood and other trees that they had not found on the mountains to the west, and the plains that consisted of very rich and moist ground, 'which with little effort could be used very effectively for the cultivation of wheat, and the surrounding field that provided clean grassy pasture for the livestock'. Gordon (1988: 102) described the farm of Prinsloo as one of the most beautiful sites or situations he had seen on the eastern frontier.

Sparman arrived at Agter-Bruintjieshoogte from the eastern side and unfortunately did not visit the Camdebo and Sneeuberge 'on account of the disorder among the horses'. He described the farm of Prinsloo as having the finest situation for a farm in the whole district, 'and, I had almost said, in all Africa'. (Sparman, 1977: 109)

He later describes Agter-Bruintjieshoogte as the most beautiful place in the whole country.

On its banks (referring to the Little Fish River), besides fields, were seen scattered up and down orchards and kitchen-gardens recently laid out, and some of them cut through with water furrows. Plantations, which though as yet inconsiderable, seemed however, to promise every thing to time and industry. The houses, far from intimidating the traveller by their splendid appearance, with the constrained pomp of antechambers and drawing-rooms, were rather in the style of plain and simple cottages; but on the other hand, were environed with the animated embellishments of sheep and cattle, and inhabited by people in easy circumstances; who not with interested views, but with open arms received me and my companion, just arrived from the dreary and inhospitable wilderness, and charmed us with their kind and friendly behaviour. (Sparman, 1977: 129)

The sizes of the buildings in relation to the natural landscape are again exaggerated. The farmhouse looks similar to that of Cloete (figure 6.3), having low walls, a hipped thatch roof, entrance door on the long side of the building and *wolweneus* above the door. But in this case the building has an additional room build onto the one side, which in Schumacher's drawing appear at a slight angle to the main building, with a door and a window. In relation to the supposed height of the roof-overhang it seems doubtful that this addition would have had a door, but when one compares the size of the smaller door with that of the building farthest in the drawing it could be ascribed to an exaggeration in perspective.

This building is drawn too small, especially considering that the walls would have had to be build up high enough so that the door fitted in below the overhang. It lies at a right angle to the main house and forms another side of the rectangular yard. The door is situated in the middle of the long side with two openings, evenly spaced, on both sides thereof. The end-wall is built-up to form a gable wall in which there is another opening. This opening provided light for the attic space, and therefore this was probably a storehouse. The roof runs between the gable walls and the thatch extended across the gable-walls.

The building across the yard has the same structure and form as the storehouse, but from the position of the door and window in the end-wall, it has the character of a winepress house, or cellar. Walton (1989: 69) describes an early cellar as a rectangular windowless building with an entrance large enough to admit a wagon. The reason for there being no or few windows was to avoid direct sunlight.

The window shown in the gable wall would not have admitted enough light to be a problem. It is not uncommon for the early press houses to have small windows, later these were closed off with wooden shutters. Having followed this assumption it must be said that this could have been another storehouse.

The building at the entrance to the farm has the appearance of a barn. Compared to the roofs of the other buildings, and assuming that they all have the same pitch, this building has nearly the same width as the main house. It is definitely much wider than those buildings that have been described as the storehouse and press house. The structure consists of a thatch roof on low walls, with a large opening in the gable wall.

One must not imagine these barns to be buildings provided with bays and a threshing-floor, such as one finds on the farms in Germany. They are merely wagon-houses or sheds, of four walls and a roof, in which the farmers store straw for mixing with the manure, keep their wagon tools, and into which they drive the sheep to keep them dry during the rainy season, when it is very cold and wet. (Mentzel, 1944: 106)

The shape and layout of the yard is more regular than those of the other two farms (figure 6.25) are. It is bordered on three sides by buildings positioned at right angles to one another, thus forming a well-defined rectangular *werf*. Cultivated fields surround the buildings, except on the side where the road enters the yard. These fields are laid out in strips and defined by hedges.

6.4.2 GORDON'S DRAWING OF THE SAME FARM

For the purpose of the present study the drawings of Schumacher were analysed as authentic representations of frontier homesteads. Another depiction of the homestead of Prinsloo can be found in Gordon's collection of drawings made on his journey to the frontier. This was the only frontier farm depicted by him and the homestead shown differs considerably from that by Schumacher. Gordon's drawing (figure 6.26 - Drawing 34, Gordon Collection) of this homestead was made either during his first visit there on the 3rd of December 1777 or on the 15th of October, 1778, when he visited the farm in the company of Van Plettenberg. Either of these dates would have been after the visit of Swellengrebel of 22 October 1776. The drawing is characteristic of Gordon's own style. It does not correspond favourably with the drawing made by Schumacher. The dwelling and its extension and the barn are the only buildings that might be related to the structures found on the drawing by Schumacher. The dwelling

does not have the typical *wolweneus* entrance but an opening that fits comfortably in the wall. The barn has the same characteristics and position in relation to the dwelling as depicted by Schumacher. The position of the entrance road corresponds with that of the Schumacher drawing. The differences are more apparent. Gordon's drawing shows a *kapstylhuis* at the back of the house and a cone-shaped thatched structure to the side, in front of the house. A threshing floor can be seen in the foreground and the hedged fields or *kraals* are circular and irregularly spaced. The layout does not correspond with the regular layout in the drawing of Schumacher and the two structures that complete the rectangular form are missing. The surrounding landscape, in both drawings, can be described as favourable representations of the Bosberg. To prove the authenticity of one would discredit the other, but the differences are too fundamental to ignore. Both artists have a reputation for truthful representation of landscapes in general. Forbes (1965: 115) has shown that Gordon, without doubt, also had a draughtsman in his employment on his journey to the frontier. He is convinced that this was Schumacher who was a soldier under Gordon's command. Hallema (1951), although he made several references to the similarity in style between some of the drawings in Gordon's collection and those of Schumacher, never proposed that they could have been made by Schumacher and not Gordon. Forbes, on the other hand, is convinced of this. As proof he compares the unfinished pencil sketch, Drawing 46 of the Gordon Collection (figure 6.27), with the drawing that Schumacher made of Cloete's farm (figure 6.2). The drawings are almost identical.

These two drawings together with two others have been pronounced by authorities at the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, to be 'without any doubt by the same person who did most of the drawings in our Collection', i.e. the Gordon Collection. (Forbes, 1965: 116)

As Schumacher was without a doubt the artist of the drawing made for Swellengrebel, one can, furthermore, with certainty assume that Gordon made the drawing of this homestead, found in the Gordon Collection. This is based on the assumption that the same artist would not have produced two drawings of the same subject that differed so much. The similarity in style between the drawings of homesteads on the frontier made by Schumacher and Drawing 65 of the Gordon Collection, of the farm Kweekvallei (figure 6.28), suggest that they were definitely made by the same person. Characteristic of the drawings of Schumacher, the viewpoint is high, so that it appears as if one is looking down on the homestead. In all instances these viewpoints correspond with the

landscape, as has been established on site (figure 6.29). The style is crisp and there is a well-developed sense of perspective. Of Kweekvallei only a few of the cypresses that stood in front of the house remain. The positions of these correspond with the position in which it is depicted. Generally, in the drawings that can, with certainty, be ascribed to Gordon, the viewpoint is low and the buildings are shown with little detail. Hallema (1951: 14) praises Gordon for his accurate representations of the objects of nature; animals and landscapes alike, but Schumacher is considered more attentive when it comes to the representation of the built form. This might provide a reason why Gordon found it necessary to employ a draughtsman, when he himself was considered an artist of note. The preceding discussion does not furnish enough proof to discredit the representation made by Gordon, but certainly offers enough proof of Schumacher's accuracy of drawing; landscapes and buildings alike.

6.5 LATER DEVELOPMENTS

The subsequent future of two of the frontier farms that were established in the first decade of settlement, illustrate the opposite sides of growth and development of the earliest farms.

On the ninth of June 1803, Paravicini di Capelli and his party passed the ravaged farm of Willem Prinsloo. The onslaughts from the San from the north and black tribes from the east had taken their toll and the earlier history of one of the best-known frontier farms had come to an end. Di Capelli (1965: 110) noted that the house of this farm must have been of appreciable size from the overthrown walls of the ruins he saw. There were still some orchards and garden left, but these were also in a ruinous state. He recalls the more prosperous days when this farm was known for the excellent wheat and wine it produced, and he ends by stating:

... jammer is den staat daar zy zig in bevind.⁸

By the time that Thompson visited the area a government farm had been established on the site of Prinsloo's farm. Its purpose was to provide the British settlers with rations (for two years after their arrival), and the provisioning of troops on the frontier.

⁸ ... sorry is the state in which it is found.

The subsequent history of the farm of Barend Burger, situated on the Sneeuwberg represents the opposite end of the scale. He became one of the most prosperous and well-known farmers on this part of the frontier in the early nineteenth century.

Lichtenstein (1930: 22) stated that very few farms in the whole of the Colony could be compared with this one. He describes the extensive system of water channels, the longest one being a mile in length, the extensive orchards and corn fields, and the small neat buildings for the slaves and Hottentots, barns, storehouses and workrooms situated around the dwelling-house.

Burchell (1967: 173) describes the farmstead of Barend Burger on the Sneeuwberg as follows:

Burger's house stood near to the river, in an open, though not unpleasant, situation. The building, and the whole establishment were not only the best on the Sneeuwberg, but as far as my collection serves me, I have not seen a better farm-house in any district of the colony; and no intelligence from this part of the world, would afford me more gratification, than to hear that the Cape settlement had so far advanced in improvement and riches, that every boer possessed so comfortable and respectable a dwelling. It was built of red bricks, in the usual Dutch style of architecture; and it appeared not only extremely neat, but was within exceedingly clean: and, if compared with the houses of the great number of farms in this part of the country, it might seem to deserve the name of palace; although in reality nothing better than an ordinary English farm-house. The surrounding buildings and an excellent garden, rendered this place a village in itself, and almost an independent settlement. Here were separate and complete workshops for, smiths, waggon-makers, and carpenters; and to these, although not noted in my original journal, I may, I believe, add, a corn-mill turned by a water-wheel. The owner, who was a man far advanced in years, was acknowledged as the greatest sheep-grazier in the colony; a fact which I had no difficulty in crediting, when assured that he possessed 30,000 sheep, besides other cattle.

6.6 CONCLUSION

The homestead is a significant element of the pattern of settlement. The built form with its considerations of function, layout and available technology and building materials illustrates the innovative response of the Boers to settling on the Eastern Frontier. The approach of the frontier farmers in the creation of a habitable environment has characteristics of both the environment from which they came and the environment in which they settled. The ordered character and style of building resemble established patterns that were imported from the established areas of the Colony. This aspect was united with a rudimentary knowledge of technology and materials to give life to a vernacular architecture worthy of investigation.



Figure 6.1

Snyman's homestead, vignette by Burchell.

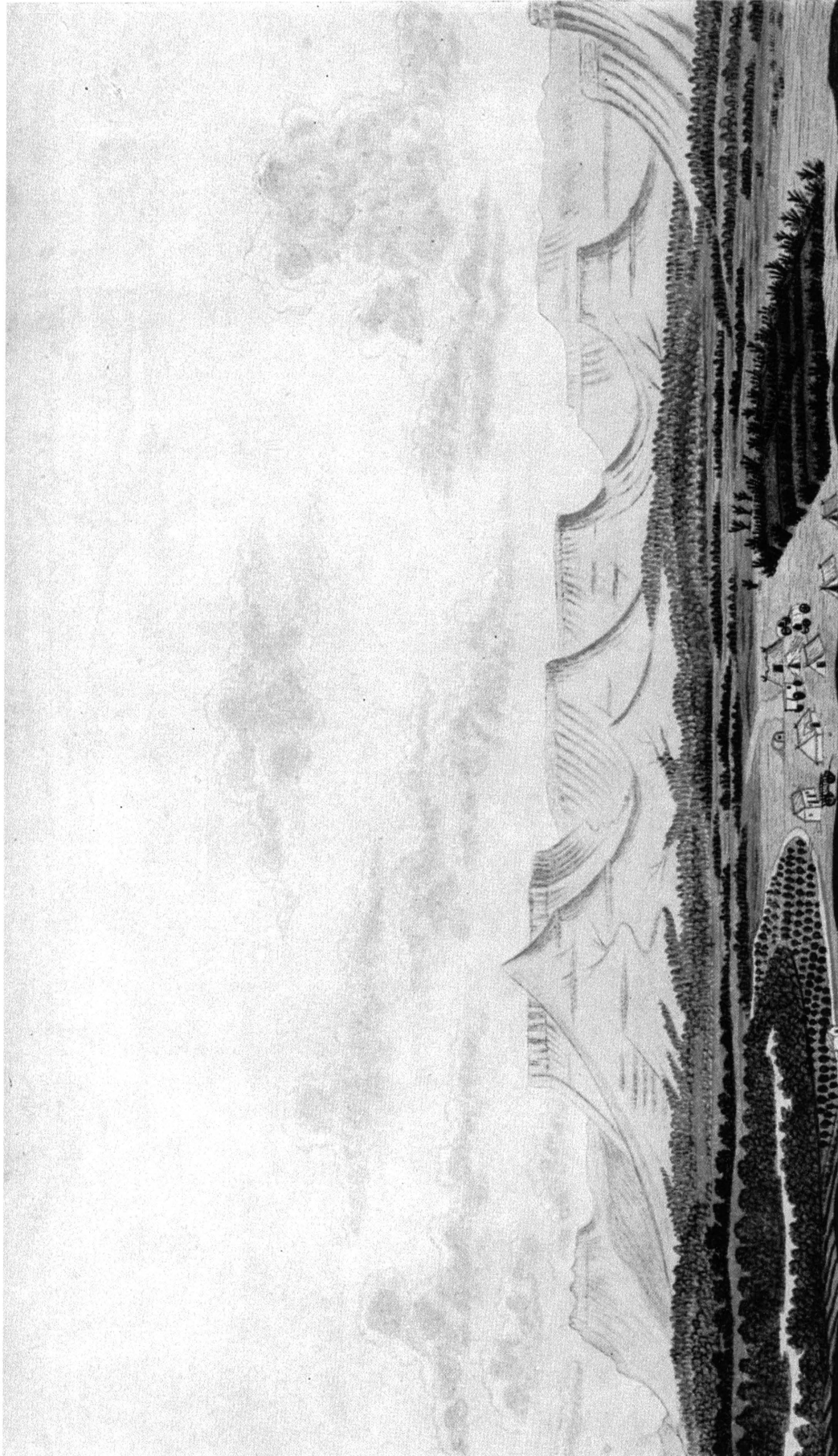


Figure 6.2

In the Camdebo at the farm of Johannes Swanepoel.

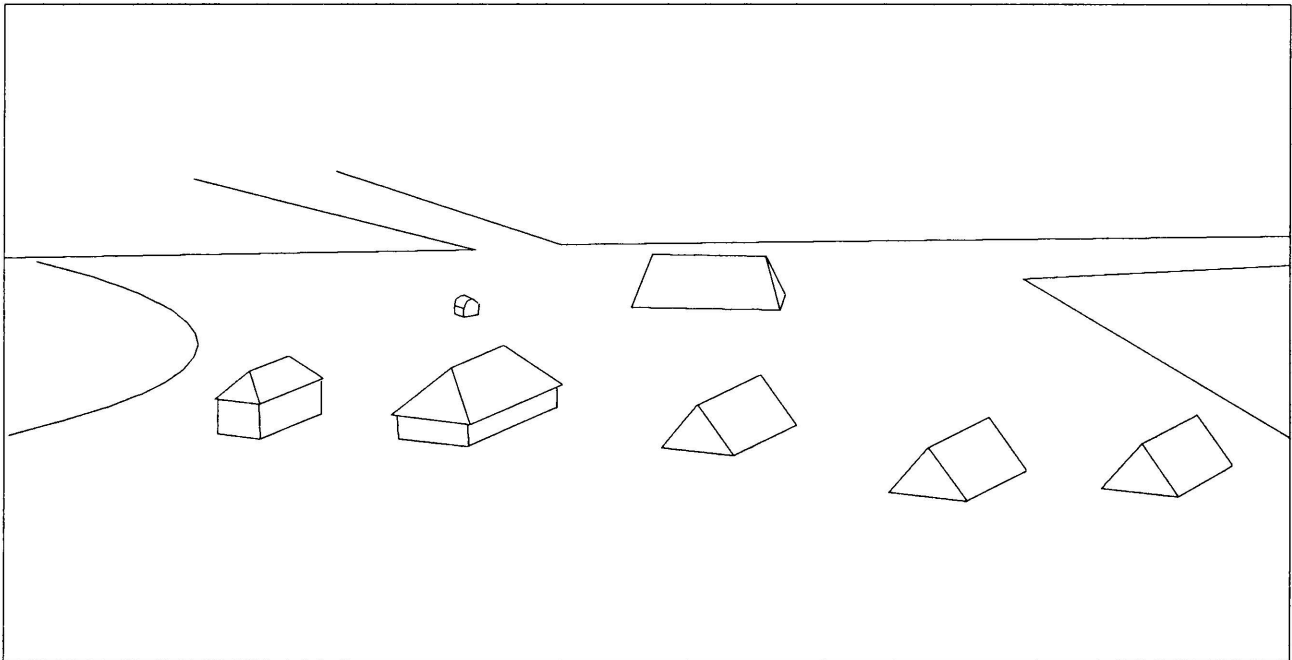
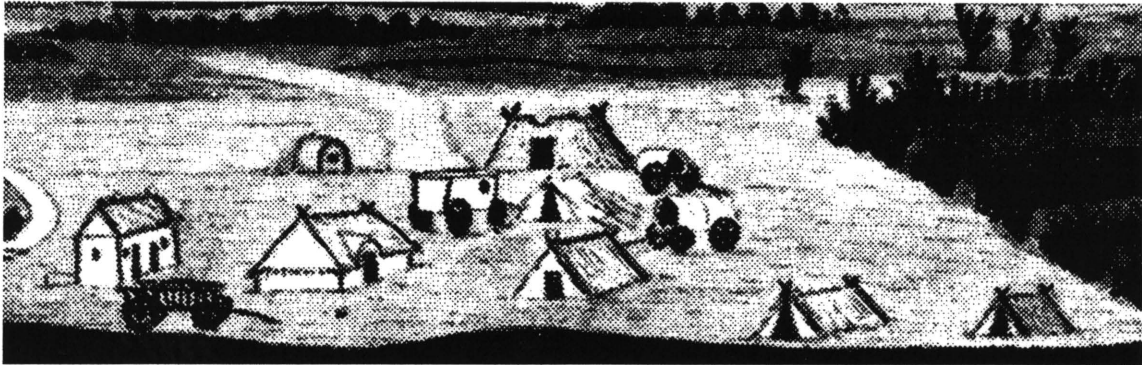


Figure 6.3

In the Camdeboo at the farm of Johannes Swanepoel, detail of figure 6.2. Bottom drawing: computer drawing from which the plan (figure 6.10) was generated.



Figure 6.4

Viewpoint at present time.

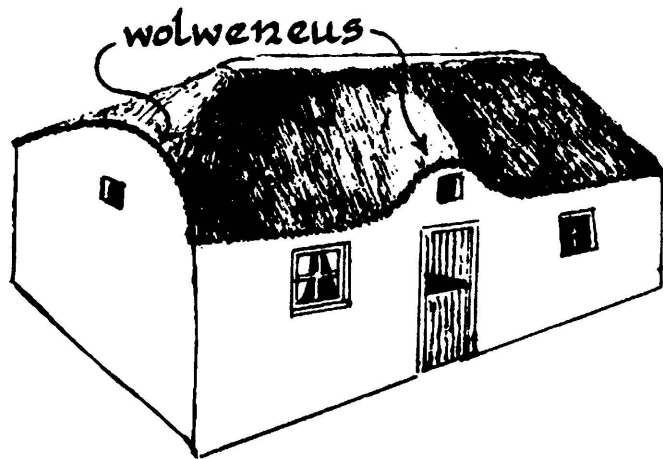


Figure 6.5 Wolweneus



Figure 6.6 Snyman's dwelling, detail of entrance.

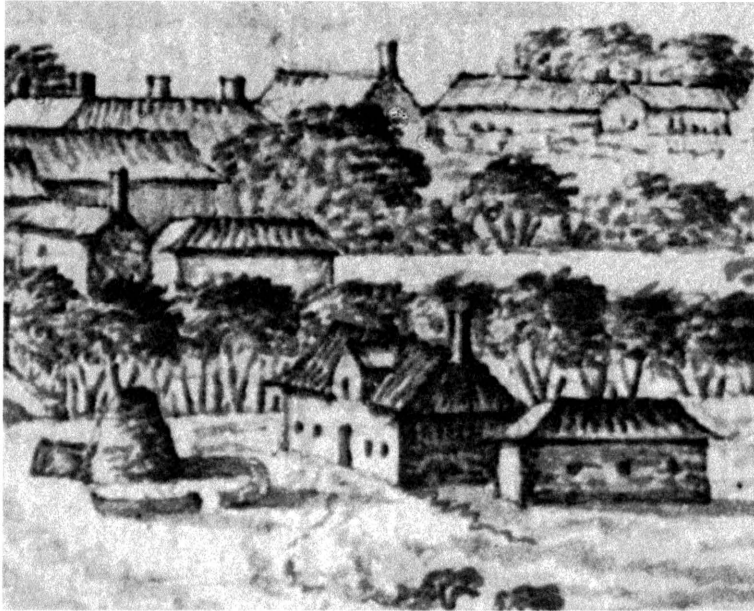


Figure 6.7 View of Stellenbosch as drawn by Stade in 1710.

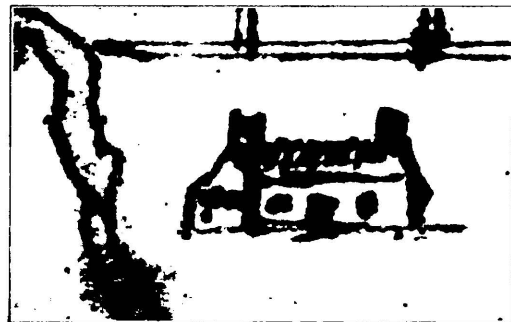


Figure 6.8 Early farmhouses depicted on land deeds by J. Mulder.



Figure 6.9

Clay wall in the Camdebo, early nineteenth century.

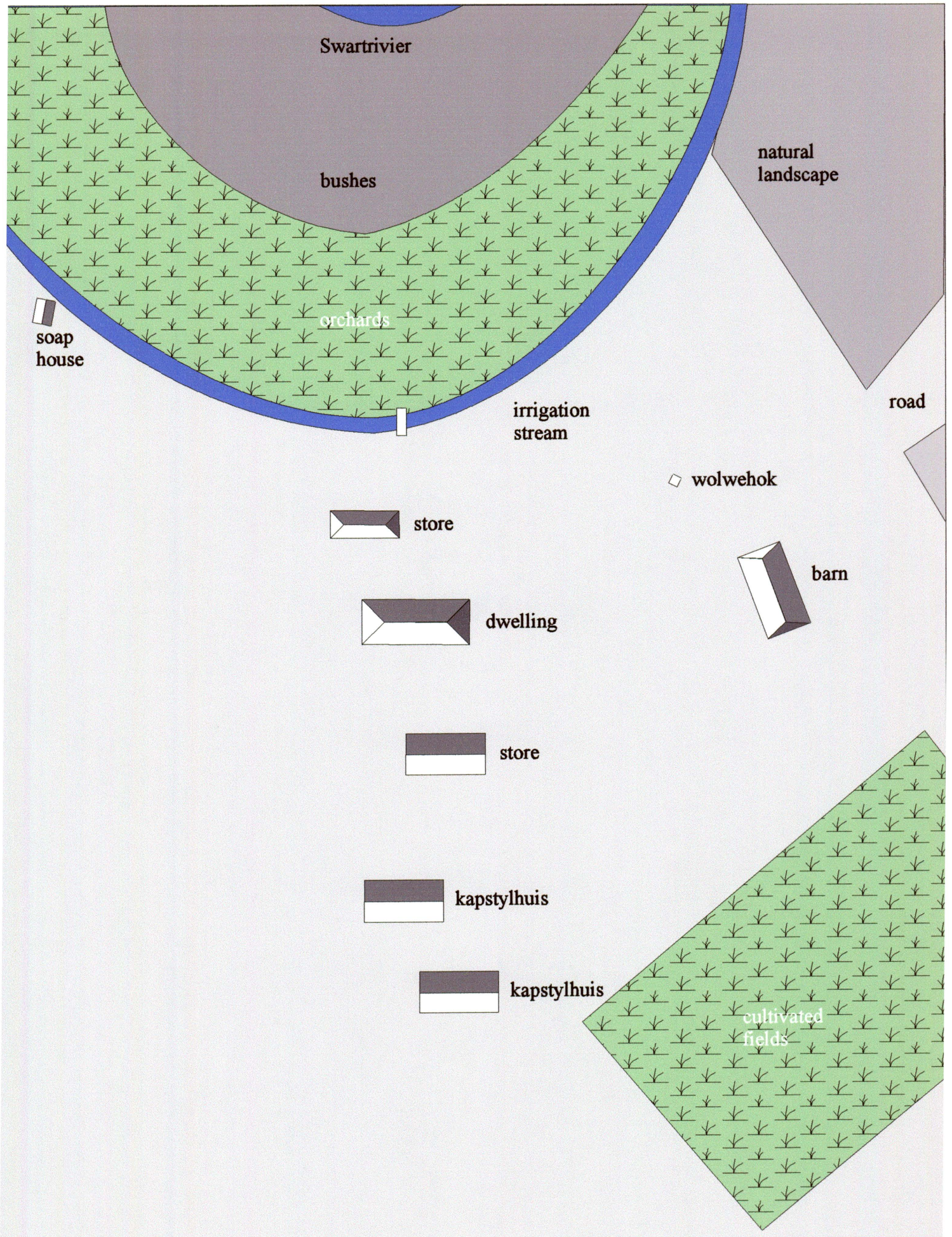


Figure 6.10

Plan of Cloete's farm, scale 1:500

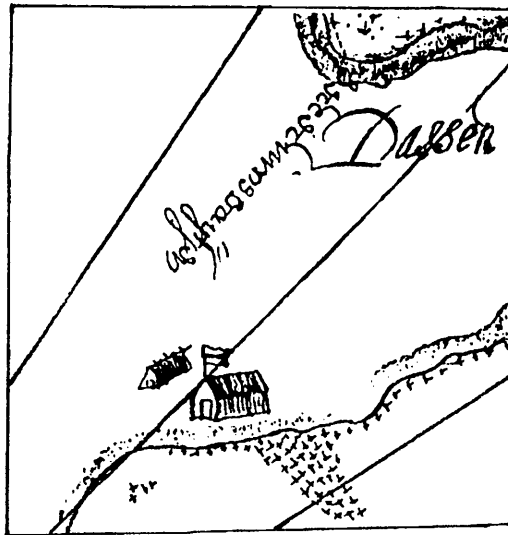


Figure 6.11 The earliest illustration of a kapstylhuis, from a chart of Dassen Island dated 1656.

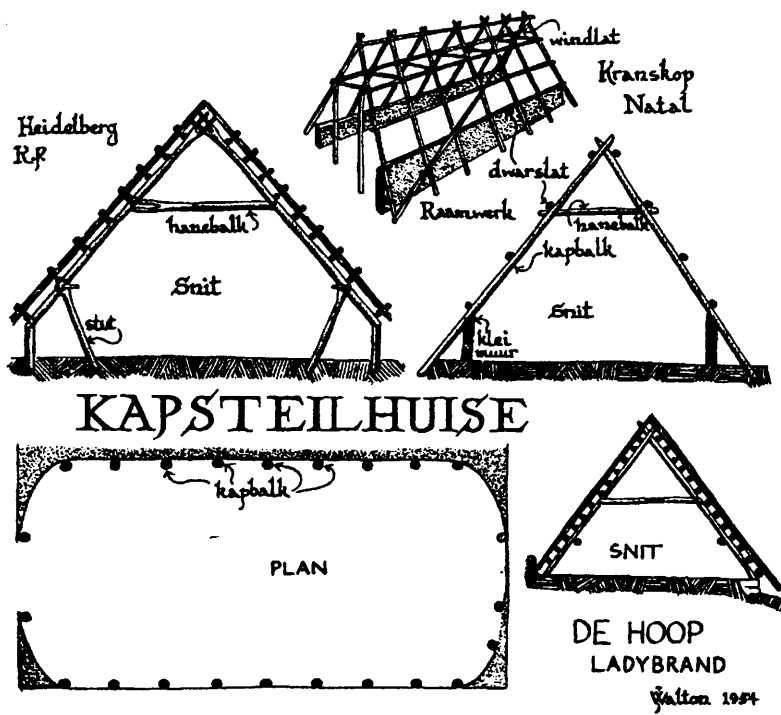


Figure 6.12 Typical kapstylhuis.

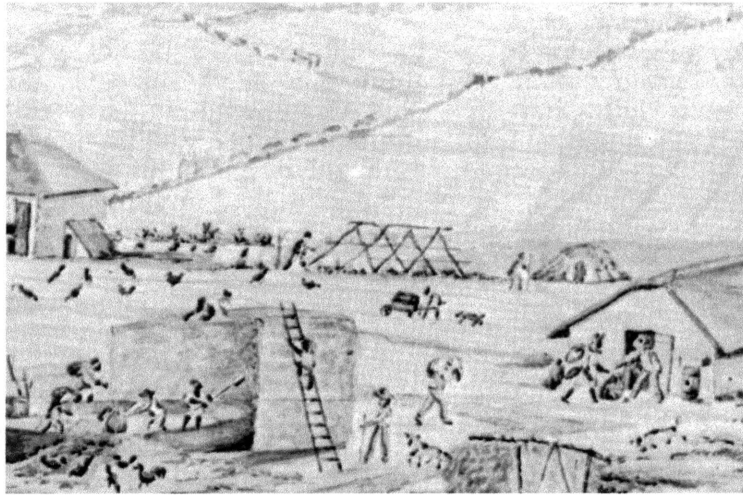


Figure 6.13 Detail of Poorterman's drawing of the farm Philipskraal with a kapstylhuis under construction.

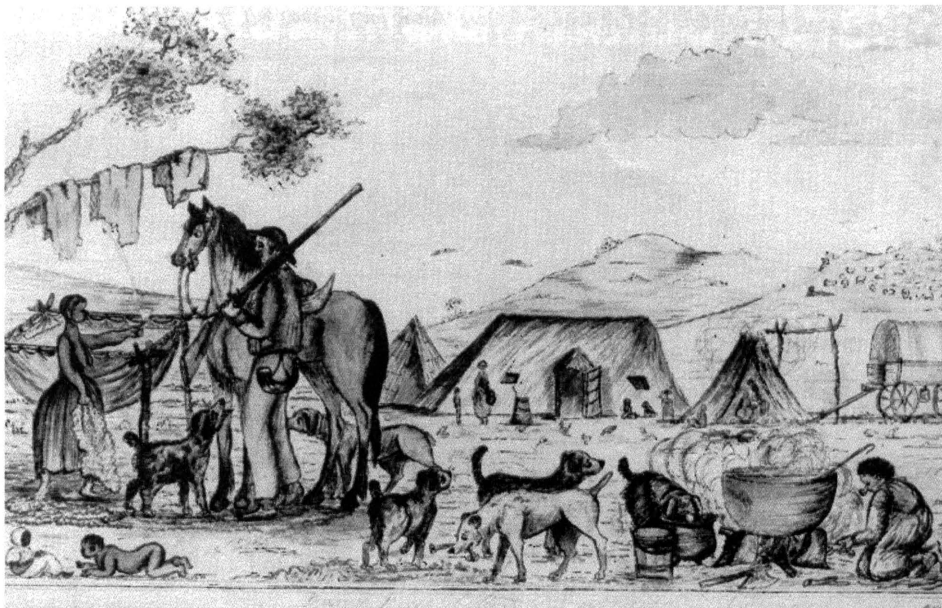


Figure 6.14 Dingley's drawing of a boer's house on the Eastern Frontier with a kapstylhuis in the background. 120

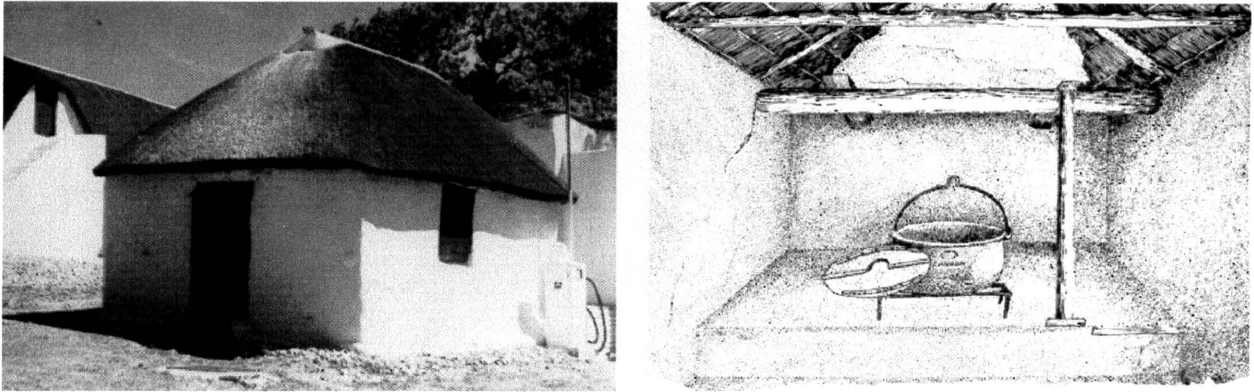


Figure 6.15 A typical soap house.



Figure 6.16 A typical wolwehok.



Figure 6.17

View on the Sneeberg at Van der Walt.

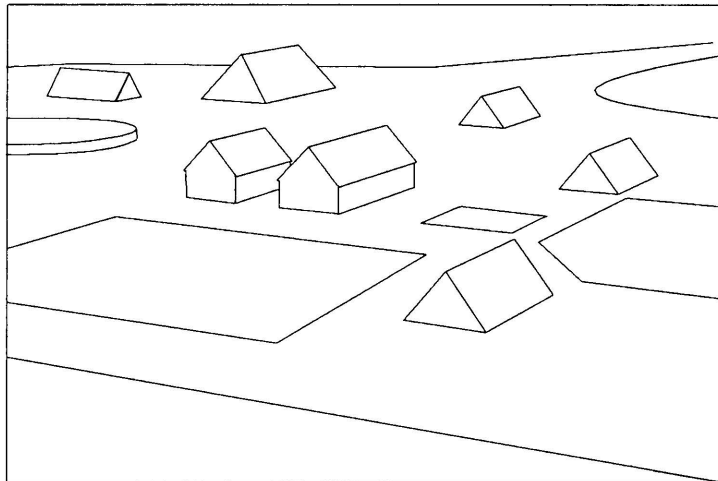


Figure 6.18

View on the Sneeu Berg at Van der Walt, detail of figure 6.17.
Bottom drawing: computer drawing from which the plan
(figure 6.21) was generated.



*Houdconstant - prior to alteration
(from a photograph by William Roe)*



Figure 6.20

View from Perskeboomhoogte in the direction of Houdconstant.

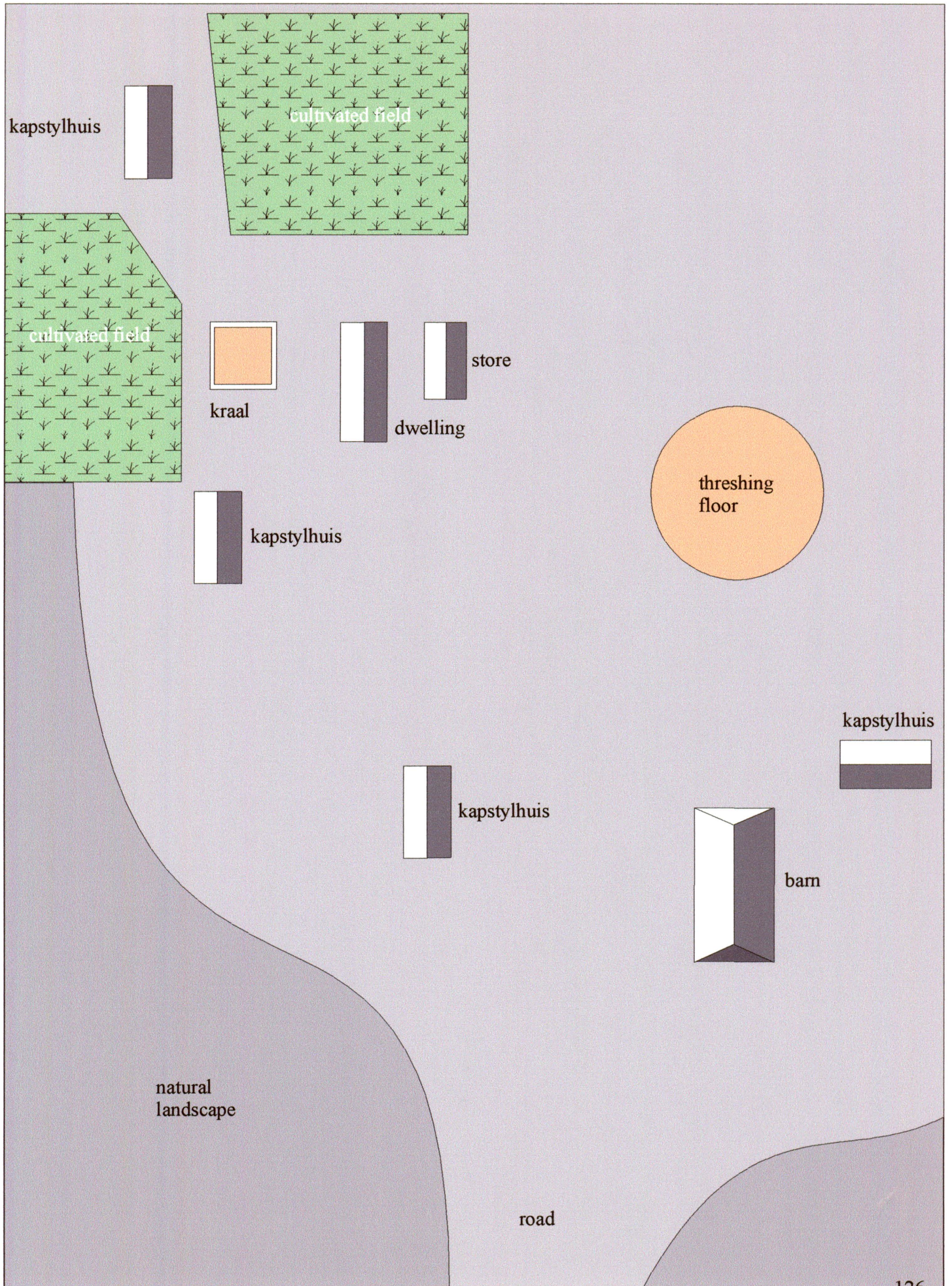


Figure 6.21

Plan of Van der Walt's farm, scale 1:500

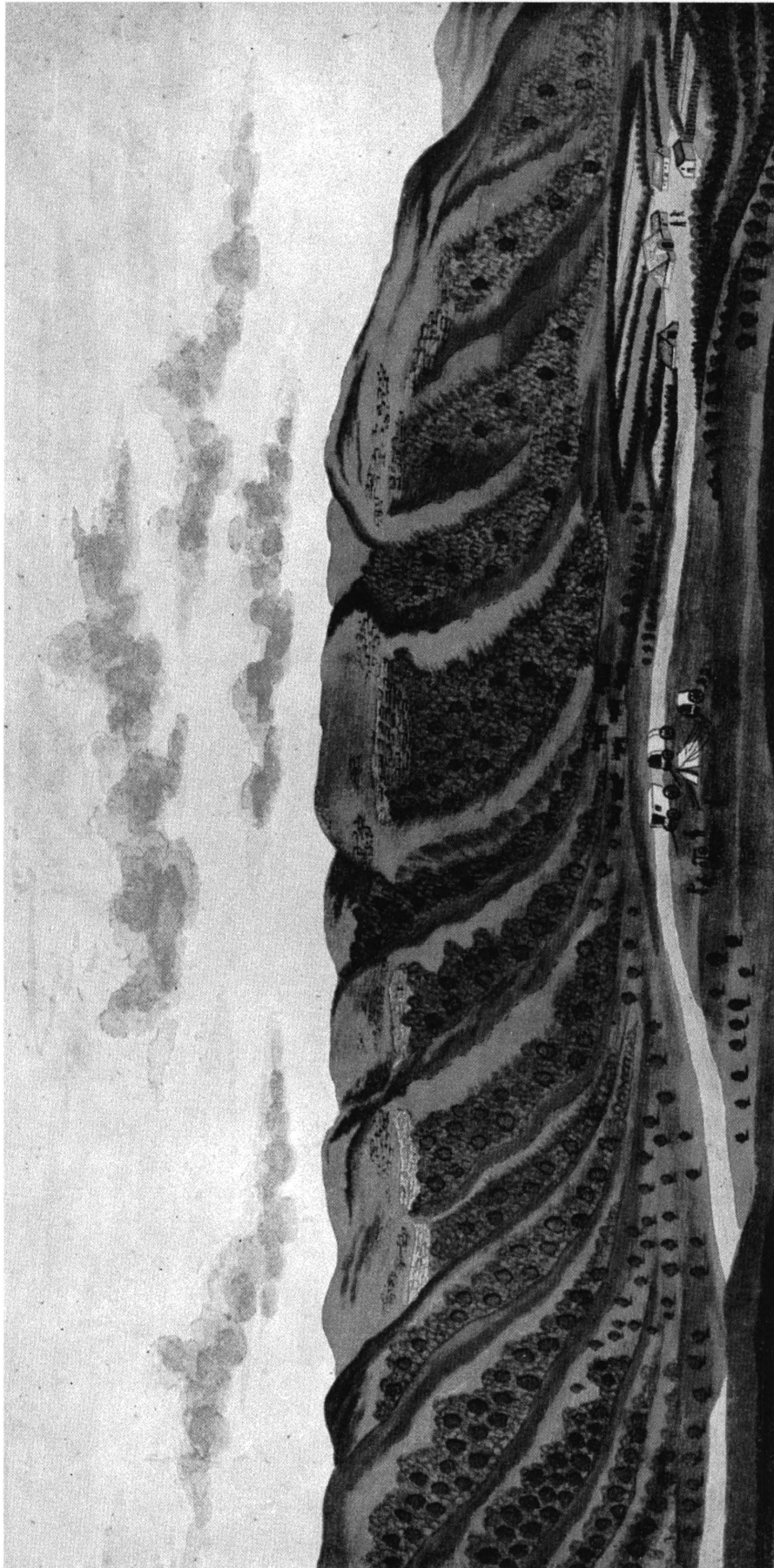


Figure 6.22

The Bosberg at Bruintjieshoogte with the farm of Prins Sr.

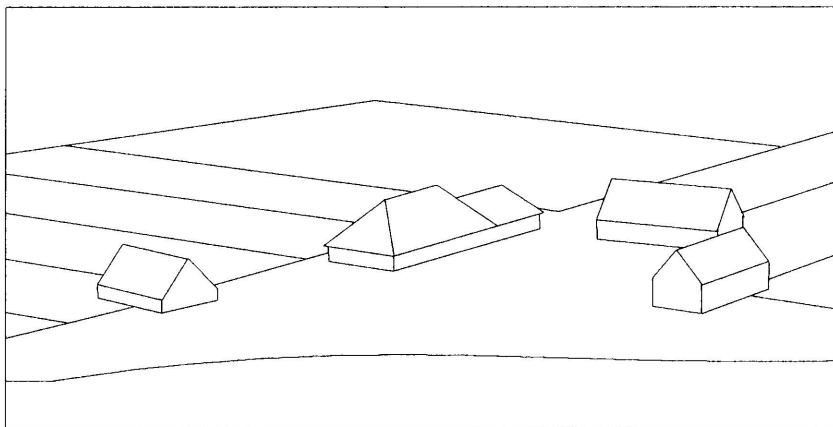


Figure 6.23

The Bosberg at Bruintjieshoogte with the farm of Prins Senior, detail of figure 6.22. Bottom drawing: computer drawing from which the plan (figure 6.25) was generated.



Figure 6.24

Present view of the Bosberg with the town of Somerset East.

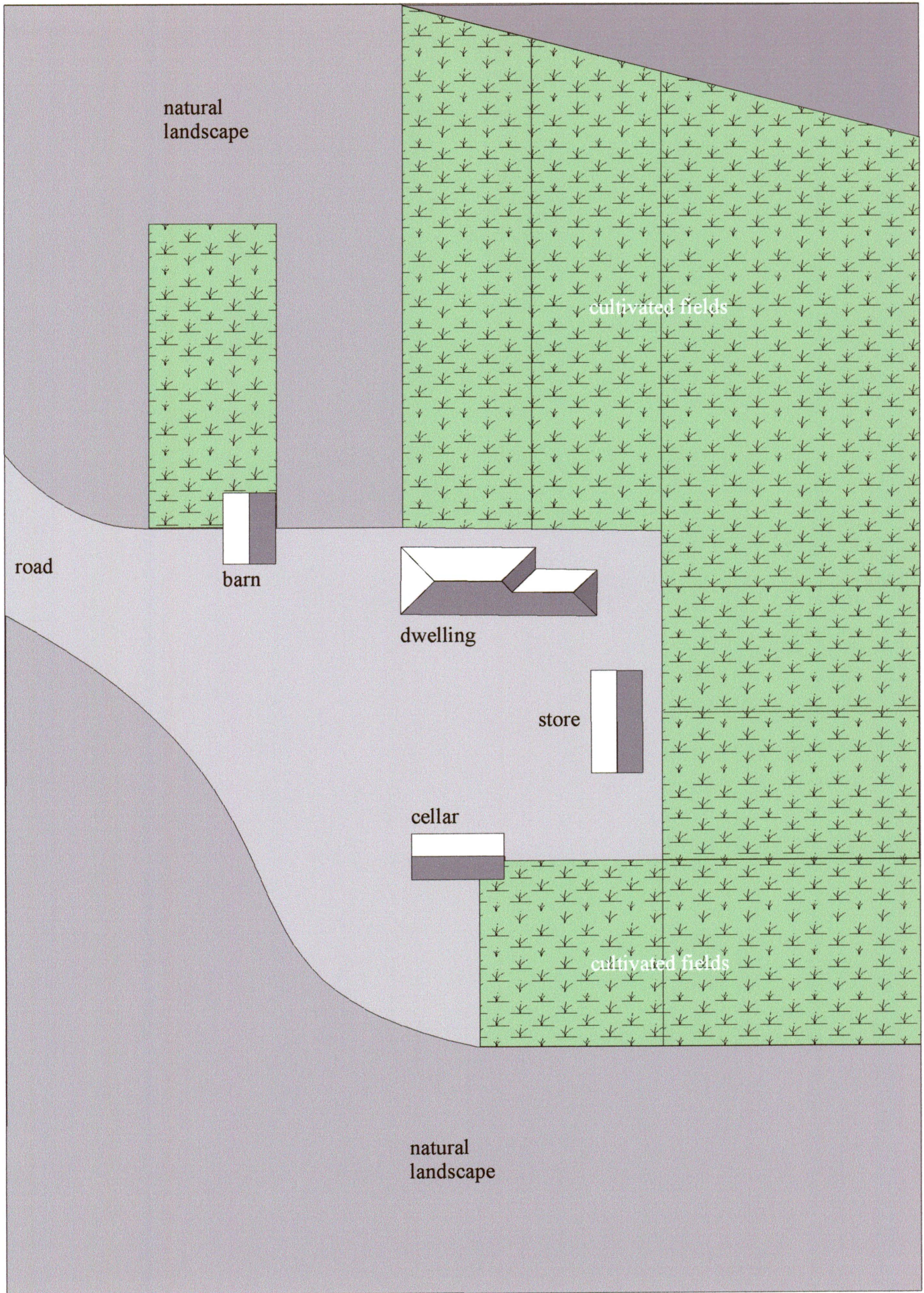


Figure 6.25

Plan of Prinsloo's farm, scale 1:500

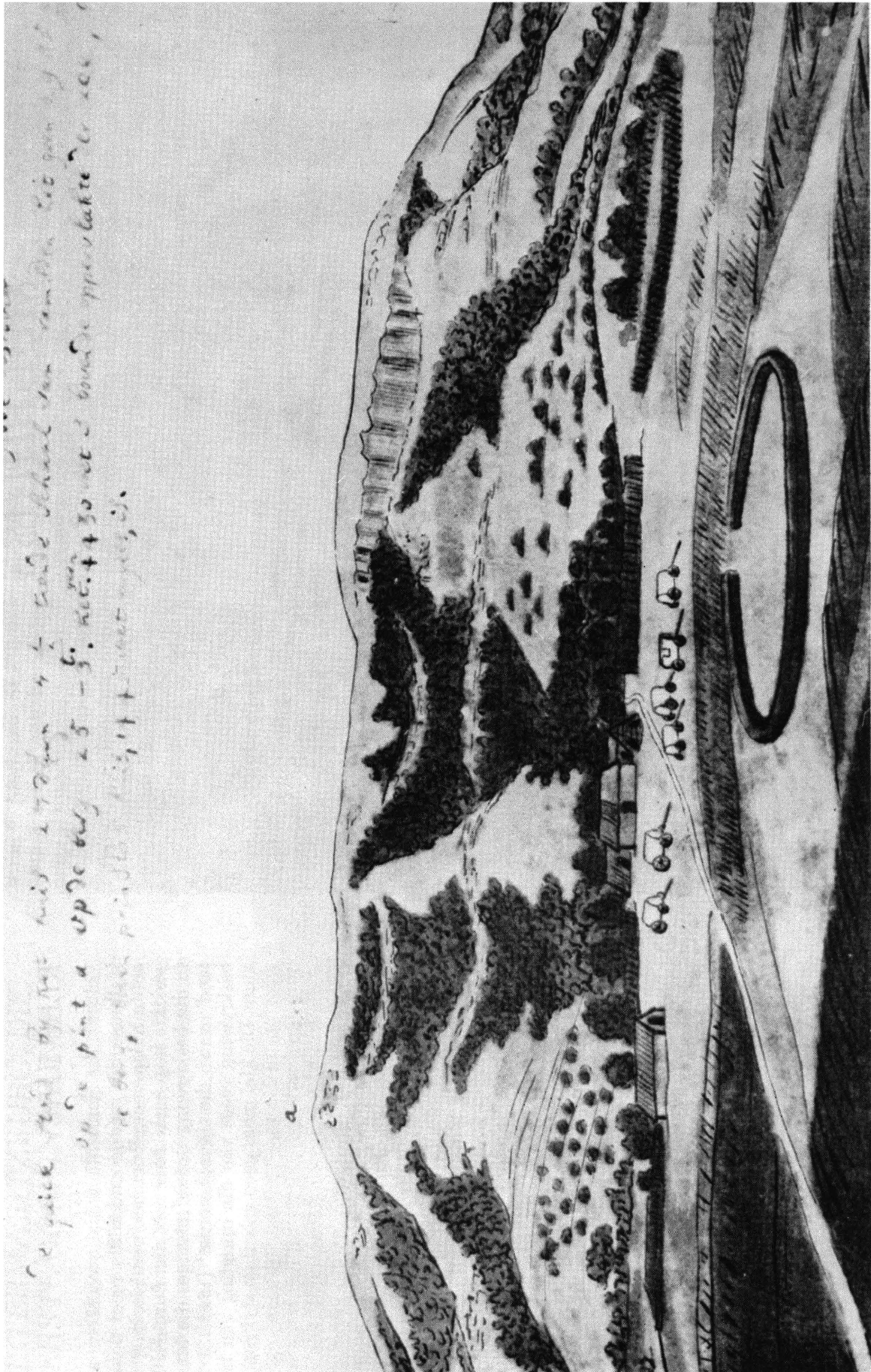


Figure 6.26

The farm of Willem Prinsloo at the Bosberg (Gordon Collection)

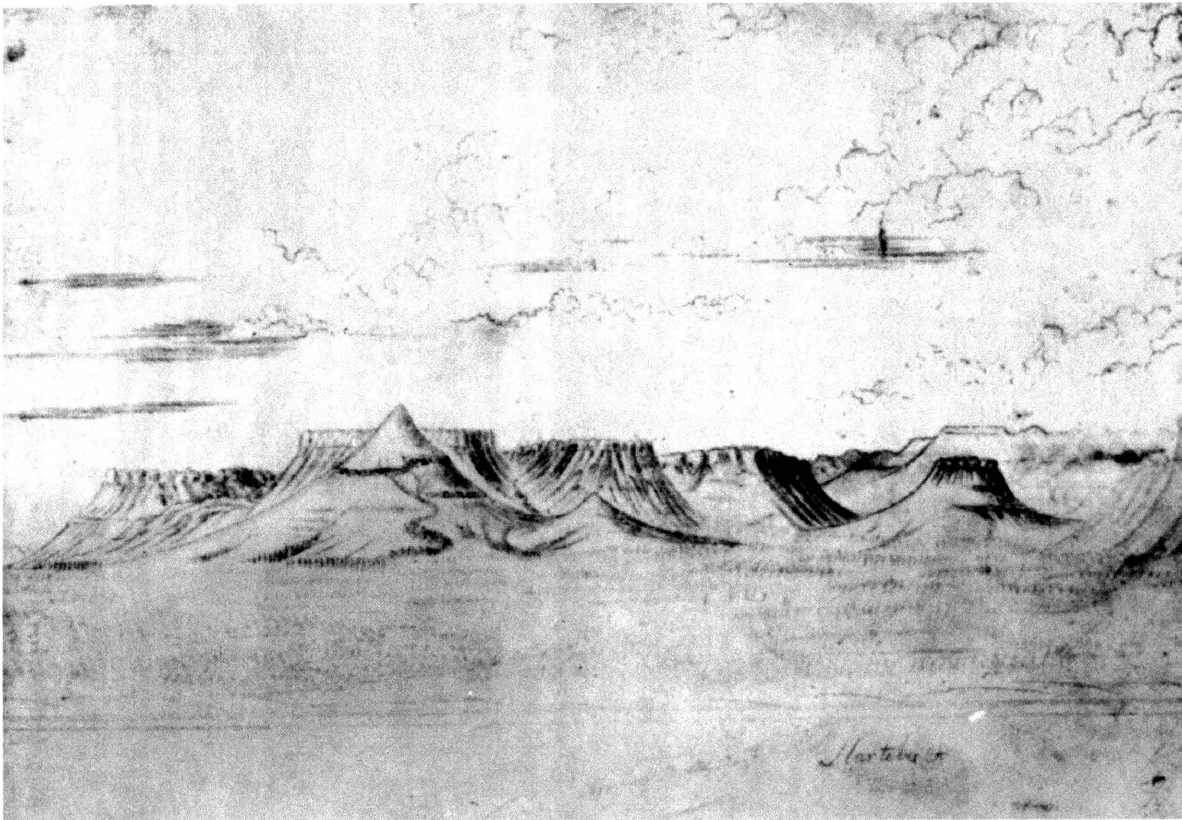


Figure 6.27

Unfinished pencil sketch. (Gordon collection)

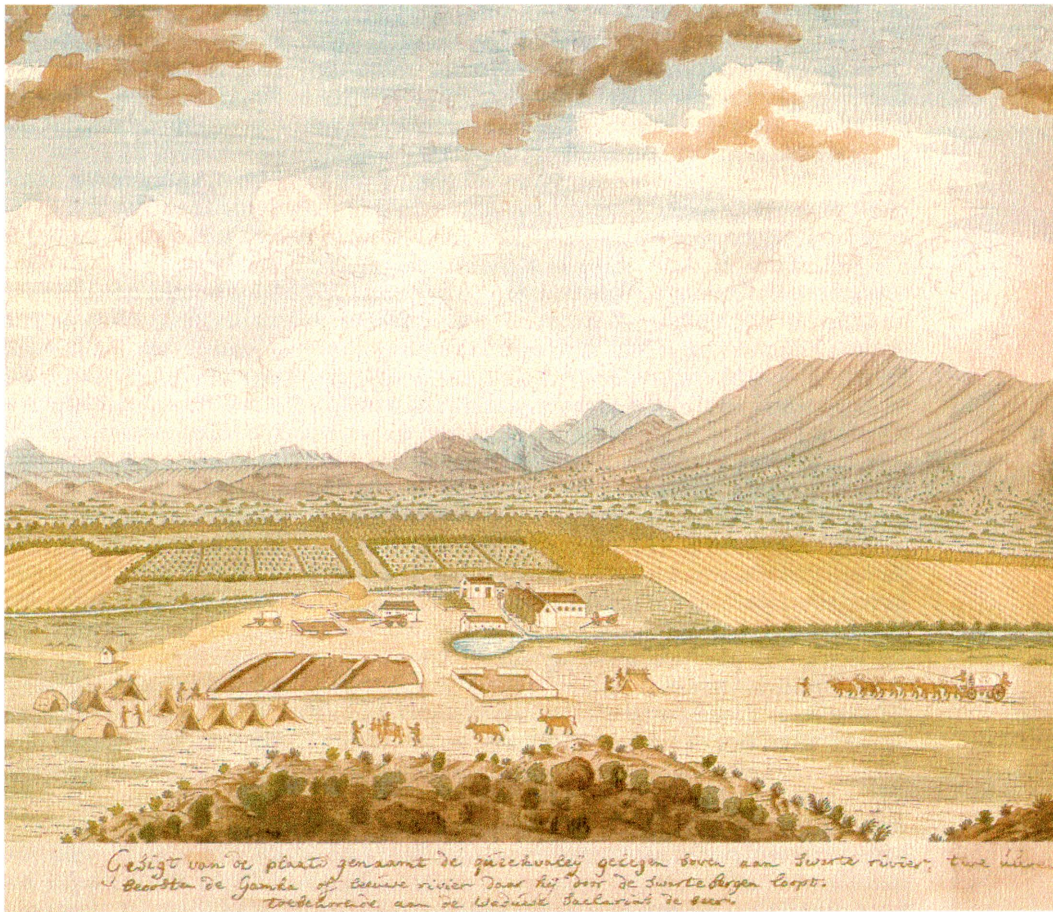


Figure 6.28 Kweekvallei (Gordon collection)



Figure 6.29 Present view of Prince Albert, where Kweekvallei was situated. 133

CHAPTER 7 RECAPITULATION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

7.1 RECAPITULATION

The problem was to determine the pattern of settlement of the Boers on the Eastern Frontier for the period 1769-1779.

In Chapter 2 the historical background of expansion to the Eastern Frontier was investigated. It was shown that the incompatibility of the authorities' wishes for the settlement at the Cape and the realities of the specific environment and situation produced a shift in emphasis from agrarian farming to stockfarming. The territory of the Colony in the eighteenth century was expanded by the stockfarmers in their search for suitable grazing and sufficient water. The Government sanctioned territorial expansion with the implementation of the loan farm system and the continual shifting of the borders of the Colony. By 1769 the first stockfarmers had settled on the Eastern Frontier and a community of frontier settlers came into being.

In Chapter 3 the significant primary sources were reviewed. It was determined that there is sufficient extant primary material available on the period and place and the significant aspects of settlement were extrapolated from these. The main source of information was the journals of travellers to the region. Those who visited the region during the first decade of settlement were referred to as the early travellers. From the journals the route followed, the habitation, the culture and lifestyle of the frontier settlers were identified as the significant aspects to be investigated of the settlement pattern of the cultural and physical environment. Those who visited the region after the first decade of settlement were referred to as the later travellers and it was determined that their observations would provide useful supplementary information to the aspects mentioned above.

In Chapter 4 the origins and cultural environment of the Boers that had settled on the Eastern Frontier during the first decade of occupation of the land, was investigated. It

was shown that they were primarily of Dutch and German decent and that they originated from the established agrarian farming community. The conflict that arose between this community and the corrupt dealings of Governor Willem Adriaan van der Stel was identified as the main reason for the move inland. The ease associated with stockfarming and the loan farm system were identified as aspects that facilitated this move from the established areas. The community that settled on the frontier evolved a distinct culture of their own, as described by the travellers to the region. The degeneration of culture, generally associated with them by the visitors, was interpreted as a regeneration of culture in response to a specific environment and conditions. Their religion, education, sense of community, customs and lifestyle was investigated as aspects of their cultural environment. Their involvement in the economy of the Colony, a point of debate in contemporary theories of frontier settlement, was clarified, and it was determined that they were actively involved in the exchange economy of the Cape.

In Chapter 5 the routes followed by the early travellers on the frontier was traced as a significant element of the pattern of settlement of the physical environment. It was determined that a well-established network of roads came into being during the first decade of settlement. These were described as the highways of the Eastern Frontier. The position of farms along this road was determined and the aspects of distribution for the three regions respectively, were investigated. The pattern of settlement was identified as dispersed, due to the environmental conditions of the availability of cultivable soil and sufficient water. Accordingly the fertile and well-watered areas were more densely populated.

In Chapter 6 the homestead was investigated as a significant element of the pattern of settlement of the physical environment. The built form was described as an inventive response to the specific environment influenced by aspects that had been imported from the established settlements of the Cape. The function, type and arrangements of the homestead were investigated through the drawings made of them by Johannes Schumacher.

7.2 CONCLUSION

Where the fabric no longer exist, it is possible to use contemporaneous sources to reinvent an aspect of history. In the same way the pattern of settlement of Boers on the Eastern Frontier during the first decade of settlement was reinvented from the information in official documents and journals of the time. A significant aspect of the history of the Cape Colony has been extrapolated and it is hoped that it will make a worthwhile contribution to the historiography of the Cape Colony in the eighteenth century.

7.3 CONTRIBUTIONS MADE BY THE STUDY

- 7.3.1 The setting up of the origins of the first Eastern Cape settlers.
- 7.3.2 The translation of a part of Swellengrebel's journal.
- 7.3.3 The revisiting of sites to match by photograph the drawings.
- 7.3.4 The use of modern computer facilities to generate speculative plans layouts.
- 7.3.5 The presentation of a method whereby other settlements can be investigated.

7.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

- 7.4.1 An investigation of the European origin of the rural vernacular architecture of the Eastern Frontier.
- 7.4.2 A full translation and publication of the journal of Hendrik Swellengrebel so that this document can take its rightful place in the historiography of the Cape Colony in the eighteenth century.

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TABLE 1 - The Boers that had settled on the Eastern Frontier between 1769 and 1778¹

For the three areas; the Camdebo, Sneeu Berg and Agter-Bruintjieshoogte, respectively. The name of the farmer, name of the farm, date of baptism, genealogy, and number of generation is given.

- 0 first immigrant to arrive at the Cape
 1 first generation to be born at the Cape
 2,3 second-, third generation to be born at the Cape

CAMDEBO

BASSON, Willem	Brakfontein	~ 27.06.1734	b1,c2,d4	3
CLOETE, Hendrik	De Doordrift	~ 09.12.1725	b4,c2,d2	3
DE BEER, Johannes George	Vrede	~ June, 1729	b9 Netherlands ²	1
DE BEER, Mattheus Johannes	Vrede	~ 26.01.1755 Stellenbosch	b9,c1	2
DE KLERK, Cornelis	-	~ 08.01.1730 Stellenbosch	b10 Zeeland	1
ERASMUS, Pieter	-	~ 14.04.1732 Stellenbosch	b3,c1	2
GREEFF, Adriaan	De Fontein	~ 19.07.1744	b2,c1,d5	3
GROBBELAAR, Coert	Allemansfontein	~ 26.11.1730 Drakenstein	b9 Germany	1
JOUBERT, Joshua	-	~ 15.06.1735	b8,c5	2
KOEKEMOER, Diederik	Tweefontein	~ 19.07.1716 Drakenstein	b4 Germany	1
MEYBURG, Johannes Albertus	-	~ 17.09.1719 Stellenbosch	b4,c4	2
OPPERMAN, Godlieb Rudolphus	Uitkomst	~ 19.06.1729 Drakenstein	b1 Germany	1
OPPERMAN, Christiaan Rudolph	Uitkomst	~ 16.11.1755 Stellenbosch	b1,c1	2
SMIT, Andries Adriaan	-	~ 23.12.1742	b4,c10	2
SWANEPOEL, Johannes	De Doordrift	~ 07.10.1751 Stellenbosch	b5,c4	2
VAN DEN BERG, Abraham	-	~ 01.04.1747 Graaff-Reinet	b1,c10	2
VAN DER MERWE, David	De Lust	~ 01.10.1746 Stellenbosch	b2,c13,d5	3
VENTER, Petrus	-	~ 06.12.1745	b3,c1,d1	3

¹ According to the journals of Swellengrebel, Gordon and Van Plettenberg.

² De Beer, 1984: 5.

SNEEUBERG

BURGER, Barend	Rhenosterfontein	~ 13.12.1717 Drakenstein	b2,c1	2
BURGER, Willem	Rhenosterfontein	~ 30.09.1742 Stellenbosch	b2,c1,d1	3
DE KOOKER, Theodorus	Tweefontein	unknown	Netherlands	0
GRIESEL, Johannes David	De Soete Rivier	unknown	Denmark	0
KOEKEMOER, Joachim	Tweefontein	~ 22.11.1744	b4,c1	2
KRUGER, Hendrik	-	~ 08.04.1725	b6 Germany	1
SMIT, Stephanus Christiaan	Drie Fonteynen	~ 05.10.1749 Stellenbosch	b4,c12	2
VAN DER MERWE, Carel	Doornbos Doornplaats	~ 19.01.1755 Stellenbosch	b2,c9,d12	3
VAN DER MERWE, Jacob	-	~ 09.10.1757 Swellendam	b2,c14,d9	3
VAN DER WALT, Johannes Petrus	Houdconstant	~ 08.09.1750	b5 Friesland	1
VAN DER WALT, Tjaart	Drooge Rivier Zuurplaats	~ 28.08.1748	b4 Friesland	1
VENTER, Johanna Maria, (widow of Jan Hendrik)	Het Riviertjie	~ 25.09.1725	b3,c1	2
VENTER, Petrus	De Droge Heuwel	~ 06.12.1745	b3,c1,d1	3

AGTER-BRUINTJIESHOOGTE

POTGIETER, Jacobus	Doornrivier	~ 14.11.1743 Swellendam	b6,c8	2
PRINSLOO, Nicolaas		~ 25.08.1743 Swellendam	b2,c3,d1	3
PRINSLOO, Willem		~ 05.05.1715	b2,c3	2

TABLE 2 - The origins and dates of arrival at the Cape of the Boer's ancestors

For the three regions accordingly: the name of the frontier farmer, the first names of the first immigrant to arrive at the Cape, his country of origin (according to De Villiers, 1966), and the year of arrival at the Cape.

(fb) - free burgher

* - approximate date according to marriage and baptism of first child.

CAMDEBO

BASSON, Willem	Arnoldus Willemz (fb)	Netherlands	1665
CLOETE, Hendrik	Jacob (fb)	Germany	1652
DE BEER, Johannes George	Matthys Andries	Netherlands	1699*
DE BEER, Mattheus Johannes	as above		
DE KLERK, Cornelis	Sara	Zeeland	1687 ¹
ERASMUS, Pieter	Pieter	Netherlands	1690
GREEFF, Adriaan	Matthias (fb)	Germany	1680
GROBBELAAR, Coert	Johan (fb)	Germany	1708
JOUBERT, Joshua	Pierre (fb)	France	1688 ²
KOEKEMOER, Diederik	Jochem	Germany	1710*
MEYBURG, Johannes Albertus	Jan Lambrechts (fb)	Netherlands	1685*
OPPERMAN, Godlieb Rudolphus	Godlieb Christiaan	Germany	1725
OPPERMAN, Christiaan Rudolph	as above		
SMIT, Andries Adriaan	Jan (fb)	Netherlands	1680*
SWANEPOEL, Johannes	Pieter	Netherlands	1695
VAN DEN BERG, Abraham	Jacobus	Zeeland	1690
VAN DER MERWE, David	Willem Schalk	Netherlands	1663
VENTER, Petrus	see Venter below		

SNEEUBERG

BURGER, Barend	Barend (Berndt) (fb)	Germany	1691
BURGER, Willem	as above		
DE KOOKER, Theodorus	-	Germany	1760*
GRIESEL, Johannes David	-	Denmark	1750*
KOEKEMOER, Joachim	Jochem	?	1710*
KRUGER, Hendrik	Jacob (fb)	Germany	1713
SMIT, Stephanus Christiaan	Jan (fb)	Netherlands	1680*
VAN DER MERWE, Carel	see Van der Merwe above		
VAN DER MERWE, Jacob	as above		

¹ Pieter de Klerk never made it to the Cape, according to De Villiers (1966: 395) he probably died on the journey to the Cape. His widow arrived with three children; Abraham, Johanna and Joost. The only son of Joost died with no children of his own, therefore Abraham is seen as the ancestor of the de Klerk-family. The date given above is that of the arrival of his mother.

² He came out with the China on 4 August 1688 as part of a group of Huguenots, at the age of twenty-three. (Theal, 1964: 335, 337)

VAN DER WALT, Johannes Petrus	Geele Andriesz (fb)	Friesland	1727
VAN DER WALT, Tjaart	as above		
VENTER, Johanna Maria, (widow of Jan Hendrik)	Hendrik (fb)	Germany	1688
VENTER, Petrus	as above		

AGTER-BRUINTJIESHOOGTE

POTGIETER, Jacobus	Harmen Jansen	Germany	1665
PRINSLOO, Nicolaas	Adriaan Gerrits	Netherlands	1680
PRINSLOO, Willem	as above		

TABLE 3 - The arrival of the ancestors corresponded with the commanders, and later, governors of the Cape

The commanders / governors and a list of immigrants related to the frontier farmers, their country of origin, that arrived during their time.

1652 - 1662	Jan van Riebeeck	Cloete (Germany)	1
1662 - 1666	Zacharias Wagenaar	Basson (Netherlands) Van der Merwe (Netherlands)	2
1666 - 1668	Cornelis van Quaelberg	Potgieter (Germany)	1
1668 - 1670	Jacob Borghorst		-
1670 - 1671	Pieter Hackius		-
1671 - 1672	Council of Policy		-
1672	Albert van Breugel		-
1672 - 1676	Isbrand Goske		-
1676 - 1678	Johan Bax		-
1678 - 1679	Hendrik Crudop		-
1679 - 1691	Simon van der Stel (as commander)	Burger (Germany) De Klerk (Zeeland) Erasmus (Netherlands) Greeff (Germany) Joubert (Friesland) Meyburg (Netherlands) Prinsloo (Netherlands) Smit (Netherlands) Van Den Berg (Zeeland) Venter (Germany)	10
1691 - 1699	Simon van der Stel (as governor)	Swanepoel (Netherlands)	1
1699 - 1707	Willem Adriaan v.d. Stel	De Beer (Netherlands)	1
1707 - 1708	Johan Cornelis D'Ableing	Grobbelaar (Germany)	1
1708 - 1711	Louis van Assenburgh	Koekemoer (Germany)	1
1711 - 1714	Willem Helot (acting governor)	Kruger (Germany)	1
1714 - 1724	Maurits Pasques de Chavonnes		-
1724 - 1727	Jan de la Fontaine	Opperman (Germany) Van der Walt (Friesland)	2
1727 - 1729	Pieter Gysbert Noodt		-
1729 - 1737	Jan de la Fontaine		-
1737	Adriaan van Kervel		-
1737 - 1739	Daniel van den Henghel		-
1739 - 1751	Hendrik Swellengrebel		-
1751 - 1771	Ryk Tulbagh	De Kooker (Germany) Griesel (Denmark)	2
1771 - 1785	Joachim van Plettenberg (acting governor)		-

APPENDIX 1

Journal of a journey, to the North East of the Colony up to Kafferland and returning along the South East coast.

Extract from Swellengrebel's journey through the Camdebo to Agter-Bruintjeshoogte, from 8 to 24 October 1776.

folio 17

Tuesday, 8 October, in the morning at 5:30 we spanned out on the Karé River¹, which flows to the Camdebo and which is further called the Brakke River².

At 9:15 we saddled again. Saw thousands of springbok, scattered in the field like a flock of sheep, and many wild beast, quagga and hartebeest; we spend more than one hour to hunt this game. At 2:30 we spanned out on the Brakke River at the farm of Hannes de Beer³, being the first farm since that of Z. de Beer⁴ on the Swartes berg. From the Krika Valey⁵ the Caroveld becomes better as one approaches the Camdebo, the road remained just as well throughout. Overcast sky, wind N.

At 5:15 we saddled again. Course NE. Rode the whole night through until;

Wednesday, 9 October, in the morning at 1:30 in the Camdebo on the farm of the Oud Heemraad HE Cloete⁶ named: Doorndrift. Wind N, sunshine.

Thursday, 10 October, rode in the afternoon at 2:40 on one cart strung with six oxen to the Sneeuwbergen. Course N to W through a flat field, here and there with patches of grass and in the valleys thorn-trees as high as an average apple-tree. (*Mimosa nilotica*) At 6:30 we arrived at G Koekemoer⁷ in the Camdebo

folio 18

below the Sneeuwbergen. Overcast sky, wind SE.

¹ The Kraai River which downstream becomes the Kleine Brakkerivier, a tributary of the Camdebo River. (Forbes, 1965: 50)

² Klein Brakkerivier, see note 1.

³ Johannes Mattheus de Beer, bapt. 26.01.1755, who owned Vrede.

⁴ Zagarias de Beer, bapt. 05.03.1719, who owned Kweekvallei at the foot of the Swartberg (present day Prince Albert). He was the uncle of above-mentioned de Beer.

⁵ Kriegavalley, also known as Beervlei, near the present day Willowmore.

⁶ Hendrik Cloete, bapt. 09.12.1725, (retired Heemraad) whose son, Pieter was the travelling companion of Swellengrebel.

17.

reedt

11 een hize ~~aan~~ op, dog vergat door ~~vergeten~~ ~~er~~ op te schieten. Helder weer, schil. Hons hoogte 62.10. Komt op 32.47' L.Bx.

15 Zondag 6. Obliken hie nog stil om de bougen ~~reede~~ Helder weer schil. Hons hoogte 62.39. Komt op deselve breeter. Wy dachten de miswijking op Llampal te vinden 23° NW.

17 Maandag 7. Om nam 1.40 van hie, de Cours een Korten tijd langs de Krika dat is Kiri rivier Noordop; daarna NO, lagen en troep van eenige diuisenden springbokken en een menigte quagga.

Kiri of Kuri is een stak van onder met een knop die de Hottelots & Kappers in de hand dragen. Betrokken Lucht, wind Oost. Reden die heelen naelt door Dondere. Heelicht met Regen.

18 Dinsdag 8. Om morgens 5 ^{uur} 30 ^{spannen} uit na de Kari rivier, die naede Camdebo loopt en verder de Brakke Rivier wordt genoemd. Om 15 ^{uur} weer op laey Cours Oost. Lagen by diuisende van springbokken, die rondom in 't veld, als een ^{lang} telape verspreid, als meede eenige wilde beeste quaggaas en hartebeesten; wij hielden ons hie meer dan een uur op om op al dat wild te jagen. Om 2 ^{uur} 30 uitgespanne aan de Brakke Rivier by een plaats van Hannes de Beer, zijde de eerste ledend die van T. de Beer aan de Swaatsberg. Van de Hotta Taleij, wordt 't Caroveld ^{nae} make men 't Camdebo noedt eenigzins hetu; de wey blijft daarvaan loe goed. Betrokken Lucht 5 ^{uur} 15 weer ingespanne Cours. NO. Reden die gehelen naegt door tot:

19 Woensdag 9. Om morgens 1.30 van de Camdebo op de plant van den Vred Heemruad H. Clvebe geniden D vordrift. Wind N. Zonnensijn.

20 Donderdag 10. Reden s middags 2.40 op een Kar met 6ossen gespannen naede Swaatsbergen Cours NtW door een vlak veld, hie en daar met plekken gras en in de laayten met ^{diverse} boom zoo hoog als gemeene appelbomen beaaffe. (*Namadia Lotica* ^F) (*Mimosa nilotica*)

6 ^{uur} 30 by G Koekemoer in de Camdebo (vriede)

8 verbetering J.W.

Figure a.1

Friday, 11 October, in the morning at 5:15 from here course NW to W.

At 6:40 at the elder Koekemoer⁸, just below the Sneeuwbergen where the road runs up the mountain; good grassy hills; at 9:50 from here up the mountain, course initially NNE thereafter E. At 12:50 on the mountain. The road was at times so steep that notwithstanding the six robust and valuable oxen we had in front, they frequently had to rest and we with the cart suspended in the air had to hold on not to fall out at the back. If this steepness had been of longer duration, it would have been impossible to go up the mountain; as the front oxen had finished the ascent the back ones still had to haul the cart up. We had from this height an outstanding beautiful view of the green grass and thorn-trees scattered here and there in the Camdebo, all along the Sneeuwbergen were rocky ledges 40 to 60 feet high, the one above the other, so regular as if they had been drawn in one line, and on top and in between, the ridges were grown over with young grass, so that it looked like a fortification. From here we rode NW, past the farm of H v/d Walten⁹, and an hour later past two others¹⁰ lying close to each other and came in the afternoon at 4 o' clock to Z v/d Merve¹¹. The plains of the Sneeuwgebergte, wherein the countrymen live, lie very high, evident from the time it took us to come up the mountain; these plains again form other hills, the same as those below, with regular rock ridges, in a second stage. These plains on top of the mountain, on which a second stage of mountains stand, were here more numerous. So I found when climbing the Thouws Gebergte¹², at the so-called Kaaymans gat¹³

folio 19

⁷ Gerrit Jacobus Koekemoer, bapt. 27.04.1749. Swellengrebel did not follow a wagon road from Doorndrift to this farm, but travelled through the open veld. This Koekemoer is not mentioned by Gordon and Van Plettenberg.

⁸ Diederik Koekemoer, bapt. 19.07.1716, who owned Tweefontein. He was the father of above mentioned Koekemoer.

⁹ Johannes van der Walt, bapt. 08.09.1750, who farmed Houd Constant.

¹⁰ Referred to in the journal of Cloete as Tjart van der Walt and H. Krieger (Godee Molsbergen, 1932: 7). They were Tjaart van der Walt, bapt. 28.08.1748 who farmed Drooge Rivier, and Hendrik Kruger, bapt. 08.04.1725.

¹¹ Carel van der Merwe, bapt. 19.01.1755, who farmed Doornbos. Referred to in the journal of Cloete by his correct name (Godee Molsbergen, 1932: 7)

¹² On map 463 it is spelt 't Thows Gebergte, the position corresponds with the present-day Anysberg and Touwsberg in the vicinity of the town Touwsrivier.

¹³ According to Forbes (1965: 63), this Kaaimansgat was situated south of the Verkeerdevlei, near the present town of Touwsrivier.

above a wide outstretched Caroveld of the same rocky hills (see folio 10). In general it occurred to me that the land from inside to the seaside falls not continual but in levels. From the top of the Hottentots Hollands kloof¹⁴ one descends only a small way, at least in comparison with the ascend, to arrive in a plain in which the Steen brasems rivier¹⁵ runs, for this reason its discharge into the sea is from a high perpendicular waterfall between two mountains through an outstanding picturesque view, which nevertheless at the Cape is wholly unknown, and I had seen through the indication of a slave herdsman whom I met when I was hunting red partridges. One sees here¹⁶ not a tree or a shrub, therefore the hills looks much like the fatherland's¹⁷ pasturage; the grass is often very short and sour, this being the reason for the cattle not getting very fat. These mountains are wholly covered with snow in the winter¹⁸, the rain does not start till the half of October; the grass does not appear till this time; only enough wheat necessary for bread is grown, the transport thereof is almost impossible. The most important produce to sell is lamb at 4 to 5 shillings¹⁹ a piece and oxen, the fat ones being sold for 5 Rds.²⁰ a piece. Furthermore a lot of butter and soap is made. Nevertheless the milking is pitiable, instead of milking in one bucket, they milk in a small wooden bowl, so that the one hottentot must time and again empty into a bucket in the centre of the kraal. Nineteen cows do not give as much (milk) as two good ones in the fatherland and six to seven persons are needed to milk these cows. The Sneeuwgebergte stretches a further five to six days journey into the north, however the further

folio 20

the more rocky and wooded. In this area several persons have settled, but are disturbed a lot by the *Bosjesmans*²¹, a nation of the Hottentot²², of old not used to keeping their

¹⁴ On the Hottentots Hollandberge.

¹⁵ Today, the Steenbrasdam which empties into False Bay.

¹⁶ The discussion returns to the Sneeuweg.

¹⁷ Netherland.

¹⁸ Exaggerated statement, the Sneeuweg (literally Snow Mountain) were named so because they are occasionally covered with snow in the winter (Botha, 1926: 40, 69)

¹⁹ Unit of currency at the Cape of Good Hope.

²⁰ Rix-dollar, unit of currency at the Cape of Good Hope in the eighteenth century, 1 rix dollar = 8 shillings (see Neumark, 1957: xiii).

²¹ Bushmen, has become an offensive term, they are now referred to as the *San*.

²² Hottentot has become an offensive term, they are now referred to as the Khoi. The San, a hunting people, were the first inhabitants of southern Africa. They were followed by the Khoi, a nomadic race. They were two distinct races but the San often attached themselves to Khoi groups for mutual advantage in the role of clientship.

own livestock, but to go out and hunt, the situation is not bettered by the fact that they are time and again hustled aside by us, and that their chief article of subsistence, namely wild, the longer the more, as the field is populated, retreat, depriving them of their livelihood. Through war with each other, the animosity is so great, that the *Bosjesmans* do not see it fit to hold the peace, as before they steal, but now they also destroy everything, even starting to murder, their weapons the arrow and bow, yet so poisonous, that anyone that is wounded, must die. It has occurred to me that the discomfort of our fellow-countryman can be attributed to their unfriendliness towards the Hottentotten because previously it did not bother them to live among us, but they had started deserting the farms. It is now very difficult to control them; continually commando's must go into the field, that can not accomplish much on account of the Hottentotten who hide in the mountains like baboons, strengthened by stacked rocks behind which they are bullet-proof. From the Nieuwe Veld and Zoute Riviers gebergte²³ most inhabitants have already fled their homes and it is to be feared, that those of the Sneeuwbergen will have to follow, when those in the Camdebo suffer too much. Clear weather. Quiet.

Saturday, 12 October, in the morning at 5 o'clock we rode back. 10:15 at the elder Koekemoer²⁴ in the Camdebo, 11:05 from here, course S to E past one farm²⁵, thereafter WSW, 12:25 at Hannes de Beer²⁶, 1:40 from here through a thick thorn-bush with clean grass, we passed another farm²⁷ before the end of the road and came 5:15 back on Doorndrift²⁸. Clear, wind SE, the morning was very cold.

Sunday, 13 October, clear sky, warm, strong N wind.

folio 21

Monday, 14 October, in the morning 6:30 I travelled by horse, along the Camdebobosche²⁹ to D v/d Merve³⁰. I saw in the gateway, an opening between two

²³ The Nuweveldberge, north of Beaufort West, was at that time, considered by some to extend past the present day Graaff-Reinet. The mountains between the present day Nuweveldberge and Sneeubergen were then sometimes called the Zoute Riviers Berg (Forbes, 1965: 65, 69). Swellengrebel is therefore referring to the region west of the Camdebo.

²⁴ See note 8.

²⁵ This farm is unknown and not mentioned by Gordon or Van Plettenberg.

²⁶ Cloete (Godee Molsbergen, 1932: 7) refers to J. J. De Beer. This was Johannes George (Jurgen) de Beer, bapt. June 1729, who farmed Vrede.

²⁷ Cloete (Godee Molsbergen, 1932: 7) refers to G. R. Opperman. This was Godlieb Rudolphus Opperman, bapt. 19.06.1729, who farmed Uitkomst.

²⁸ The farm of Hendrik Cloete, see note 6.

²⁹ The bushes of the Camdebo.

hills, through which the road runs, a big horde of sixty to ninety hartebeest and in the plains outside, the field was filled with various wild, mostly springbok. 9:45 past J Oberholser³¹, 10:30 at D v/d Merve. On this farm was one of the *Bosjesmannes Hottentot* that men call *Chinesen*³² and he told us that where they live the rocks are painted with various animals. I had him paint on one sheet of paper with ink, still I did well to write the name under each figure to know what was meant. 2:30 from here going on at G Oberholser³³, from whom we lend a bastard Hottentot, who on the rest of the journey would look after our horses till we got back to Doorndrift. Clear weather, in the morning a fresh N wind.

Tuesday, 15 October, as before, hot. Strong N wind and an unusual amount of bothersome dust.

Wednesday, 16 October, solar altitude 66° 53', sunrise 32°14' (LBr.) Variation compass 24° NW. I measured the mountain over the Platte Rivier³⁴, whereto our route will be E to S 5/9 S. Clear sky, warm fresh N wind. The "Camdebo", in *Hottentotten* meaning Green Hole³⁵, is a stretch of land, a full three hours in breadth, that extends six to seven hours in length along the Sneeberg³⁶. It lies much higher than the Caroveld in the south, and is beautifully overgrown with grass, in comparison with the other (Karoo) that is thin and barren, probably because the ground in the low-lying plain is too salty and nitrous. The ground here appear to be a yellow clay. The best grass stands among the thorn-bushes, where it is in the shadow; on the banks of the rivers grows the so-called *kweek* or broad grass³⁷ that survives here the best. Although the hills seem very rocky, up to the crests, there is however a lot of grass clumps; the grass is however lanky with no clover³⁸, but it is free from weeds. No more wheat than can be consumed, is grown. It does not rain during the season of cultivation, the

³⁰ David van der Merwe, bapt. 01.10.1746, who farmed De Lust.

³¹ Johannes Oberholster, bapt. 24.08.1710.

³² Sparrman (1975: 219) refer to the '*Chinese*, or *Snese Hottentots*, so called from their complexion, which is yellower than that of the other Hottentot nations, and therefore more like the Chinese'. This group of San dwelt chiefly in the basin of the middle and upper Great Fish River and on the plains north of the Sneeberg.

³³ Guilliam Oberholster, bapt. 1712.

³⁴ Platrivier, a branch of the Sondagsrivier. The mountains measured were Groot-Bruintjieshoogte.

³⁵ In the original text *Groen Gat*. The Afrikaans *gat* means hole, gap or opening. Forbes (1965: 68) translates it to Green Hollow.

³⁶ The indefiniteness of this method of measurement is discussed in Forbes (1965: 69).

³⁷ *Paspalum* grass.

³⁸ In the original 'Klaver or Kemp', *kemp* referring only to the white or red clover. Forbes (1965: 68) wrongly translates it as *hemp*.

weather is then cold and bleak, so that no one can sow apart from those that can obtain water by irrigation. Many farms are

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in fact watered in this way, and on these farms the wheat flourish. They have in the summer a lot of thunder, when it also rains more; transport of the wheat falls too far, even if it could be done from the nearest coast and from there on sea. Yet apart from the cultivation of wheat, this district is very important, for when the land along the coast is cultivated, and if the valuable pasturage that is available for livestock, is kept in a good condition, men can keep the interior for the raising of livestock and they would therefore need less land in the above-mentioned cultivable district. Some persons from Stellenbosch and areas close by have stock-farms for the raising of draught-oxen and sheep. They churn a lot of butter, the value set by the buyers in the Cape at three to four St.³⁹ per pound, they also make a lot of soap for which they receive four to eight St., in proportion to the amount delivered. Yet, while one wagon can take no more than 1000 lbs. of butter and 400 to 500 lbs. of soap, the men need two months to ride there and back for which they need at least two teams of oxen, that is twenty oxen, which does not leave much for the maintenance of the wagons. Men pay with oxen the rent of 24 Rds. for each farm, each estimated at 8 Rds. by the Company, that uses them on its numerous outposts. Men also make a profit on the sale of wether, worth here 4 shillings a piece. For someone not using the farm for the raising of live-stock, where not possible because of the poorness of grazing, there is apart from this not much profit to be made. Various persons that settled here could have had a very good life if the transport to Cape Town⁴⁰ were not as difficult and expensive, although the most do not now live better than the Hottentots.

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Although they live at most four to five stages from the forests, and therefore could have had good homes, the houses consist here of one wall of clay build up three to four feet⁴¹ and above that a roof of reeds (thatch) , there is no division of rooms, no chimney, the smoke drifting through a hole in the wall or roof; only one door of

³⁹ Stuiver, unit of currency at the Cape in the eighteenth century. 1 schilling = 6 stuivers.

⁴⁰ In the original text '*hoofdplaats*', the singular form of which probably refers to Cape Town, the main center of trade at that time.

⁴¹ It is assumed that Swellengrebel used the English foot in measurements. The walls therefore had a height of between 900 and 1200 mm.

common reed⁴² bound with a rope, one square hole as a window; the beds are separated from one another by a Hottentots mat, the sleeping arrangements are therefore very sociable, the floor is of clay mixed with dung, on this everything stands in disorder, butter churn, a slaughtered heifer, stock bread and so forth, while the chickens, ducks, young pigs, walk around like a menagerie, yes, even the doves that nests in the roof. The household effects to proportion is, one small table or, for lack of this, a wooden chest, three to four veld chairs, with seats of hide and so forth. In these sheds, barely 40 feet long and 15 feet wide⁴³, on some farms two to three families live with their children. The cleanliness was therefore not high, with little decoration of products by the activity of these people, who moreover like it much more to live in the veld from hunting, from an early age, the longer the more diminution, and it can be foreseen, that they will become a wholly wild nation. I have found only two houses that were build up decently, and where there were cleanliness, although these were far from luxurious. Men have here almost no slaves. The Hottentotten looks after the stock, and makes the ménage not more brilliant, but more stinking. In the Camdebo lies around thirty farms of which twenty-five is occupied. If men don't start to conserve the pasture for their stock, it is feared that the richness that already seven to eight years after this area was first populated,

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has notably diminished, and it will not take long before the veld even up to the *hoofdplaats* becomes completely wild. It already goes so far that a certain Jac. Botha had to relocate to the Groote Vis Rivier⁴⁴ because he could not find any pasturing for his stock, and a Van den Berg spoke of trekking elsewhere if he could not keep his farm. The cold and frost is so severe, that on most farms no orange-trees will grow, and the branches of the peach-trees have died from freezing, from the top more than one foot down, probably because the field in itself high, lies so close by the cold and high Sneeuwbergen.

Thursday, 17 October. After we had provided ourselves of everything, we departed from here at 9:50 with two wagons and two carts on course ESE, we passed some hills with red-like rocks, as heavy as the ironstone, like we had seen at David van der

⁴² In the original '*fluitjes riet*', *Phragmites communis*, *P. mauritanus*.

⁴³ Therefore roughly 12 000 by 4 600 meters.

⁴⁴ Great Fish River

Merve. 12:35 past the farm of A van den Berg⁴⁵ on the Swarte Rivier⁴⁶, that flows from the Candeeboos gebergte⁴⁷ and in the SE to the Swarten berg⁴⁸, and later forms part of the Sondags Rivier. 1:00 we spanned out on the Landrost or Sneeuwberg Rivier⁴⁹, that rise in the Sneeuwbergen and below runs into the Swarte Rivier. The bottom of this river is made up of flat square stones, so level and close to each other as if it had been built that way. 3:15 we travelled from here through a bleak veld towards the salient corner of the Caroveld. 9:40 we arrived at the Jouberts fontein⁵⁰ where we found little but good running water; the veld is here also better. Clear, wind N.

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Friday, 18 October, we rested till the afternoon, for last night thirteen oxen stayed behind in the *spek*⁵¹ - and thorn-trees that stand next to the streams, and we send J Swanepoel⁵² and a hottentot to go look for them. In the afternoon we moved on to A W Greef⁵³ lying half an hour from here. We found it very tidy and clean, but poor. The garden had vegetables and fruit-trees and a small vineyard; this Greef does not have the means to own any amount of cattle, but take in the stock of others for grazing. Clear wind W.

Saturday, 19 October, I measured the height in the S near this farm of Bruinshoogte between ESE and SE to E the Renosterberg SES1/2S the Swartenberg and behind that the protruding Wintershoekberg S to W Camdeboo berg W to N the Sneeuwbergen⁵⁴ from WNW, N to ESE. Solar altitude 67°58' sunrise 32°15' S latitude. We received our lost oxen in the afternoon, 3:50 we travelled from here, our course along the Sneeuwbergen with its regular ridges overgrown with grass and ridges on various hills that were thickly wooded. The road was very level through a rich grassy field, with no

⁴⁵ Abraham van der Berg, bapt. 01.04.1747.

⁴⁶ Swartrivier, a branch of the Sondagsrivier, which runs through the Camdebo west of Graaff-Reinet.

⁴⁷ Kamdebooberg, west of the Camdebo.

⁴⁸ Swartberg, today considered as part of the Sneueberg range, and not the Groot Swartberge, south of Prince Albert.

⁴⁹ Presently the Droërivier and Moordenaarsrivier. The latter is sometimes also referred to as the Klein Sondagsrivier (the Little Sundays River).

⁵⁰ The name and position is difficult to trace. The estimated position from the preceding and following information in the journal, would put it west of Tandjiesberg.

⁵¹ *Spekboom* - purslane tree (*Portulacaria afra*)

⁵² Johannes Swanepoel, bapt. 07.10.1751, the *knegt* (servant) of the elder Cloete and the foreman of De Doorndrift. He accompanied Swellengrebel and his party on their trip to Agter-Bruintjieshoogte.

⁵³ Adriaan Greeff, bapt. 19.07.1744, who farmed De Fontein, presently known as Fonteinplaas.

⁵⁴ The Renosterberg, Swartberg, Winterhoekberge and Kamdebooberg are today all considered as part of the Sneueberg range.

trees or shrubs apart from along the banks of the rivers, where it has a breadth of half an hour and is very thick. We saw a multitude of hartebeest, springbok and wildebeest. Altogether giving an enchanting sight. 5:37 through the Melksrivier⁵⁵.

7:45 at the Platte Rivier⁵⁶ course SSE. Quiet clear pleasant weather.

Sunday, 20 October, in the morning at 5:30 we travelled with the wagons from here, and arrived at 10:45 at the Heemraads Rivier⁵⁷ on the farm of Meyburg⁵⁸. We rode from here by horse and saw a delightfully beautiful morning with the rise of the sun from a hill along the road, and in the Caroveld an unusually large number of various

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game, walking among each other in a menagerie revelling in the quiet nature, mostly springbok, some buffalo far away, whose prints we tracked, but they were to far aside.

We shot one zebra and with the dogs caught one wild boar. We also saw the fresh spoor and droppings of a rhinoceros. Arrived 11 o'clock back at the wagons. The course was E to S. We had our lunch on large rocks in a strong flowing stream under the shadows of the trees, while it was a hot day; 4:45 we travelled from here over the hills overgrown with lye-bush⁵⁹ of various species, whose layers is used for cooking soap. 5:30 past a farm close to the road. 7:30 at the Blyrivier⁶⁰. We found that the mountains and hills were more thickly wooded. Clear wind NE.

Monday, 21 October in the morning at 9:38 from here. Course SE to E. 11:15 at Coert Grouvelaar⁶¹ on the Allemans Fontein. 11:40 from here E, at 12:50 we arrived at a fountain at Bruinshoogte in the midst of a wood. The weather was very hot, although the SE wind blew strongly, we met H de Beer⁶² with a load of timber from the forests on the Boschberg⁶³. Course something north of E. Among all the trees that these hills are overgrown with there is nearly no timber, it consists mostly of thorn- and *spek*-trees, the last cannot even be used as firewood, one finds here no wood that can be used for more than yoke-pins. Against this Bruinshoogte and the hills following in the

⁵⁵ Melkrivier, a tributary of the Sondagsrivier.

⁵⁶ Platrivier, a tributary of the Sondagsrivier.

⁵⁷ Today known as the Voëlrivier, a tributary of the Sondagsrivier.

⁵⁸ Johannes Albertus Meyburg, bapt. 17.09.1719.

⁵⁹ In journal '*Kanna bosjes*' (*Salsola* spp.).

⁶⁰ Groot Blyderivier, a tributary of the Sondagsrivier.

⁶¹ Coert Grobbelaar, bapt. 26.11.1730, who farmed Allemansfontein (every man's fountain), still called so today.

⁶² Most probably Johannes George de Beer, see note 26.

⁶³ Bosberg, situated east of Bruintjieshoogte, with the town Somerset East at its foot.

south, the caroveld ends, it stretches from the street in the Hexrivier along the Thouwsgebergte up to the Swarteberg⁶⁴ and from there further along this mountain. In the outstretched field, that we had gone through, we had seen almost no grass apart from at Z de Beer⁶⁵ below the Swartenberg in the Krika Valey⁶⁶ and in the Camdebo and the field we had ridden through up to this place which is called “on the Bruinshoogte”. The highest field of the Sneeuwbergen

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is in this area, I was told, the Groote Rivier⁶⁷ rise from the north, it is very wide and flows on the N coast into the sea; and to the south a great number of rivers which flows through the Swartenbergen and further into the sea. 5:35 from here, 6:25 below Bruinshoogte, 6:48 on top; this passage is steep, but on only one farm rocky. From the top into the west one have a very beautiful view, over the hills in front, thickly wooded, below plenty of thorns and other plants in bloom; on the ground between the trees is a lot of flowers grew. 7:45 we spanned out on the other side of Bruinshoogte, the course something south of E. Pleasant weather in the evening.

Tuesday, 22 October we had in front of us a level field, on the left the projecting corner of the Sneeuwbergen and from this followed the Boschberg. In the morning at 7:08 we travelled from here. Course E to N to the bottom of the Boschberg and from there southerly up. At 9:38 we arrived at Jac Potgieter⁶⁸ at the bottom of the first mountain on the Vis Rivier⁶⁹ where we spent a quarter of an hour. At 10:00 we spanned out on the mentioned river. We met here a Botha⁷⁰ that had undertaken to trek with us to the Kaffers⁷¹, but he excused himself because his foreman had become dangerously ill, above mentioned Potgieter agreed to accompany us. 1:45 we saddled again. 2:13 past N Prinselo⁷² on the Klyne Vis Rivier. 2:30 through the river, 3:05 once

⁶⁴ Referring to the Groot Swartberge near Prince Albert.

⁶⁵ See note 4.

⁶⁶ See note 5.

⁶⁷ The Oranjerivier. Gordon's journey of 1777 was made in search of the Groote Rivier. When he found it he named it after the ancestral house of the Netherlands, The House of Oranje.

⁶⁸ Jacobus Potgieter, bapt. 14.11.1743, who farmed Doornrivier, still called so today.

⁶⁹ Today known as the Klein Visrivier. Cloete (Godee Molsbergen, 1932: 9) rightly refers to it as the *Kleyne Visch Rivier*.

⁷⁰ Unknown.

⁷¹ Referring to the black native tribes to the North. Today this name is considered highly offensive.

⁷² Nicolaas Prinsloo, bapt. 25.08.1743.

again. 4:30 at W Prinselo⁷³ on the Boschberg. The road along the Boschberg and Kleine Visrivier is picturesque and scenic. The field has short green grass, here and there in the hollows and between the rocks there are thorn-trees, and through the burning of the grass, these are from the bottom leafless and bare with a small crown⁷⁴, so that they look like palm-trees from afar. The mountains has

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rocky ridges with green grass between. In the gorges up to the top are large bushes of high and heavy trees. The Visrivier has a variety of routes, then through the level green field, then below the woods and then rustling along the rocks. We saw some baboons. Hitherto we had followed a broad beaten track. Cool weather, quiet, in the evening wind N.

Wednesday, 23 October, a company of farmers would undertake a journey of three to four months from here to the mentioned Groote Rivier to the NE with permission from the Governor to shoot elephants. We went to look at the woods against the mountain, which was more dense than we expected; there were various kinds of trees and low growing shrubs. Among the first were yellow-wood trees, with very high trunks three to four to five feet⁷⁵ in diameter. This is excellent timber. We shot two green louries. We were also told that there is a lot of buffalo, wild pigs, kudu, bushbuck and other wild in these woods. Although one finds in these woods an ample supply of timber, the houses are not better than those in the Camdebo and on the Sneeuwbergen. Along the water and in the valleys stands high and luxurious grass. We made an agreement with the elder Prinselo that he would, besides Potgieter and the above mentioned company, trek with us to the Kaffers. While we were here, five oxen of the company were butchered by lions, notwithstanding this, the inhabitants lived very merrily, emptying one vat of brandy, that they had brought along for the big journey, playing cards during the day and dancing cheerfully till late in the evening. The morning clear, in the evening wind SE with rain.

Thursday, 24 October we baked bread and biscuits for the journey ahead. Quiet weather with drizzle.

⁷³ Willem Prinsloo, bapt. 05.05.1715, a well-known elephant hunter of the Colony. He was the father of above mentioned Prinsloo.

⁷⁴ Swellengrebel might have been referring to the aloes that are numerous in this part.

On Friday, 25 October they left Agter Bruintjeshoogte.

⁷⁵ That would be 900 to 1500 mm. in diameter.

SUMMARY

A PATTERN OF BOER SETTLEMENT AT THE CAPE EASTERN FRONTIER, 1769-1779

by

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The study investigates the pattern of settlement of the Boers at the Eastern Frontier between 1769 and 1779. The settlement pattern is studied through the journals of Hendrik Swellengrebel, Robert Jacob Gordon and Joachim van Plettenberg and the drawings of Johannes Schumacher, employed by Swellengrebel. The origins and culture of the frontier settlers are investigated as elements of the settlement pattern of the cultural environment. The highway and homestead are investigated as elements of the settlement pattern of the physical environment. Eastern Frontier refers to the area comprised of the Kamdebo, Sneeuwberg and Agter-Bruintjieshoogte; the first fertile region that the Boers encountered after crossing the Karoo. The dispersed pattern of settlement was governed by the availability of water and arable soil. The built form was reflective of principles imported from the established areas adapted to the technology and building materials available.

SAMEVATTING

'N PATROON VAN BOER NEDERSETTING BY DIE OOS-GRENS VAN DIE KAAP, 1769-1779

deur

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Die studie ondersoek die patroon van nedersetting van die Boere by die Oos-grens tussen 1769 en 1779. Die nedersettings patroon is bestudeer deur die jurnale van Hendrik Swellengrebel, Robert Jacob Gordon and Joachim van Plettenberg, en die tekeninge van Johannes Schumacher, in diens van Swellengrebel. Die oorsprong en kultuur van die grens nedersetters is ondersoek as elemente van die nedersettings patroon van die kulturele omgewing. Die hoofweg en opstal is ondersoek as elemente van die nedersettings patroon van die fisiese omgewing. Oos-grens verwys na die area wat bestaan uit die Kamdebo, Sneeuwberg en Agter-Bruintjieshoogte; die eerste vrugbare streek wat die Boere sou teekom na die Karoo. Die verspreide patroon van nedersetting is bepaal deur die beskikbaarheid van water en landbougrond. Die argitektuur reflekteer beginsels wat ingevoer is van die gevestigde areas, aangepas by die beskikbare tegnologie en boumateriale.