

HISTORY OF CANDLEWOODS COUNTRY ESTATE



For more than a century the glimpse of the red, Victorian pitched roof and white wrap around verandas, visible for a mere second through the cluster of trees, have captured the imagination of everyone that travelled past. The stately homestead, observed even from a distance, is a testimony of a remarkable tale of a family of pioneers that settled and shaped our place as we live here today.

The history of the Erasmus family meanders through the documented milestones of early South Africa and its first struggle to tame the land. It begun around 1688 in the Cape with a young adventurer named Pieter Erasmus, aged 19, that arrived in the Cape from Rotterdam and settled on a farm “Groenkloof” in Drakenstein. In 1691 he married Maria Elisabeth Joosten and they had six children. Five generations later did his descendant, Daniel Jacobus Erasmus, later fondly referred to as “Oupa Swartkoppies” respond to the initial call of independence and participated in the Great Trek and finally staked a claim on the land that is present-day Centurion. He settled on a farm and called it Zwartkop.



Rasmus Elardus Erasmus, aka Dubbele, was a young lad of eleven years old during the pioneering wanderlust of his older brother and parents during the Great Trek. Once he came of age he settled on Brakfontein and married Louisa Catharina Erasmus. They had ten healthy children.

In the first years on Brakfontein, Rasmus build a small Voortrekker house for Louisa in 1856. This

original unassuming structure is a national monument today along with the remains of his hand packed wafer style-rock shelter that Rasmus constructed to protect his prized cattle stud. This kraal could keep more than a thousand heads of cattle and has withstood the ravages of time. Legend has it that Dubbele fought with a leopard within this very rock shelter, between his mauling cattle, one night. He was seriously wounded when the leopard scalped him before his brother managed to kill the predator on top of him. Louisa made a compress of medicinal herbs mixed with mud and cattle dung to glue the loose skin of his scalp back in place.



In later years Dubbele started to reap the benefits from his meticulous stud farming and henceforth all 10 children were educated by a private tutor from Holland. Rasmus started the foundations of a more fashionable house and in 1895 this grand Victorian homestead was finally completed by his son, Lourens Jacobus Abram Erasmus.

This architectural jewel was saved during the 2nd Boer War from being burned to the ground since Dubbele passed away in 1891 and the British army left the widow Louisa in peace. They burned all family homesteads during Lord Kitchener's controversial *Scorched Earth Campaign* of the 2nd Boer War and left Brakfontein that day to burn Rooihuiskraal instead.

In 1905 Lourens Jacobus Abram Erasmus, a young widower, brought his second wife, Aletta Adriana Malan, to Brakfontein to live in his late father's house. Hannie Malan ordered Lettie's wedding trousseau

especially from Paris so that her daughter will "look the part" at her new home on Brakfontein. Louw took pleasure in importing most furniture pieces such as the chandeliers and *piece de resistance* from England. With great pains these Victorian pieces were hauled over mountains and rough terrain by ox wagons from the coast. One of the original chandeliers can still be seen hanging in the dining room of the historical home, a bustling restaurant named Ga Rouge, today.

In 1988, with the 150 year memorial of the Great Trek, Sarel & Vicky agreed that the visual splendour of their century old, stately home became the set for the romantic war drama named the Mannheim Saga that was written and narrated by Lerina Erasmus about the early gold rush in Johannesburg.

With modern times the pressure on commercial farming and forever shrinking cattle pastures due to metropolitan expansion forced the Baard family to sell the ancestral home to Topbou Developers.

Shortly after the turn of the Century, Candlewoods Residential Estate was successfully launched in the market.

Today the red pitched farm house still plays a major part in giving us a sense of belonging to the land and the people that dwelled here before us. Seven generations of the Erasmus clan are still living on Brakfontein today and the house forms a central part of Candlewoods Residential Estate. Because after all, home is where the heart is.

