

Historic Somerset West
Historiese Somerset - Wes

ASSOCIATION NOT FOR GAIN
VERENIGING SONDER WINSOOGMERK

P.O. BOX 98 POSBUS
SOMERSET-WES/T 7130

June 1978

THE MISSION GROUND: A SURVEY

This survey has been produced by a team of
members of Historic Somerset West comprising:

Mr. F. Fehrson (architect) did the drawings
and plans and was helped by

Mr. K. Grossman (retired architect) and
Mr. G. Morton (retired builder)

Mrs. V. Burger did most of the photography
and helped with research

Mrs. A. Boshoff helped with research and
did the secretarial work.

PATRONS

THE HON. MR J.C. HEUNIS, M.P.
MR J.J. FOUCHÉ (FORMER STATE PRESIDENT)
THE HON. MR JUSTICE M.A. DIEMONT
MR F.D. CONRADIE, M.E.C.
DR C.J. ROELOFSE, M.P.C.

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The Coachman's Cottage prior to restoration

1. 23 Andries Pretorius Street Erf 719

Ground owned by Methodist Church

Cottage owned by Mrs. Gordon

Appearance: neat and attractive

State of repair: no urgent repairs
partial services - no electricity or bathroom

Alterations: addition of toilet and store, otherwise
intact

Temporary additions: none



2. 19 Andries Pretorius Street on erf 719

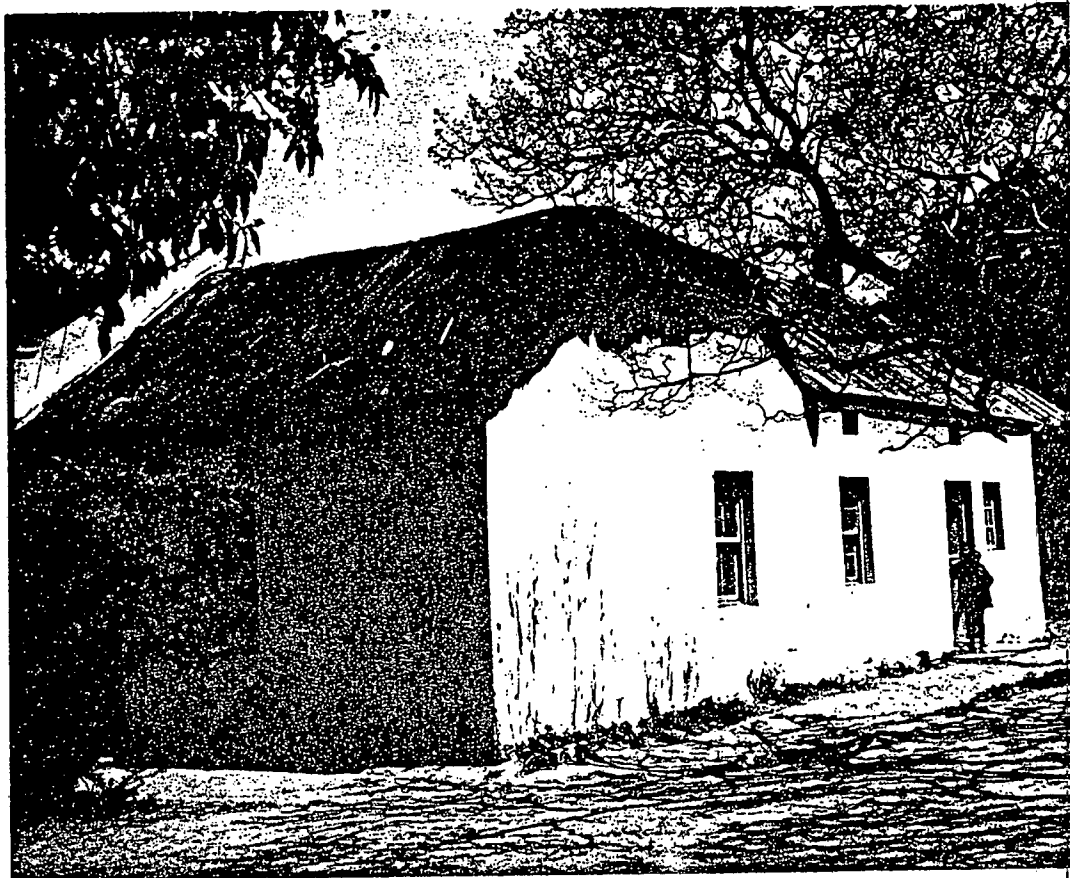
Ground owned by Methodist Church

Appearance: neat

State of repair: very good; no urgent repairs;
all services installed

Alterations: extensively modernized; part of
corrugated iron roof and vents still
intact

Temporary additions: garage, in good state of repair



3. 14 Church Street (corner Andries Pretorius Street)
on erf 719

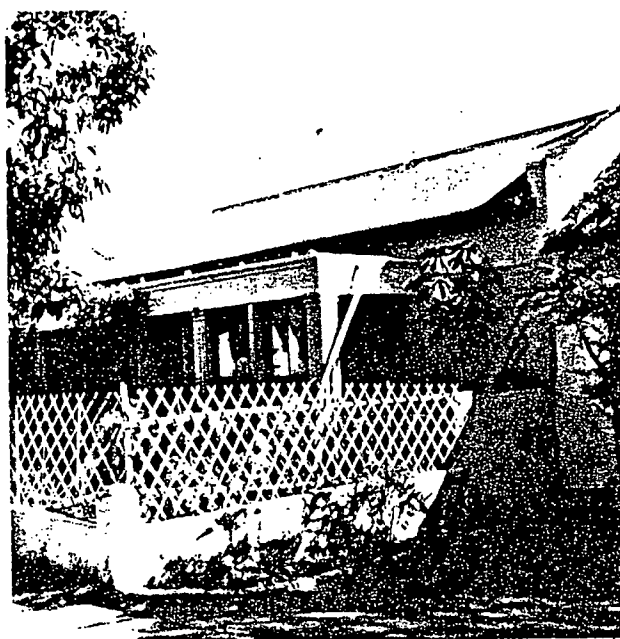
Ground owned by Methodist Church

Appearance: 'cute', well placed on site

State of repair: fair; thatch needs replacing
urgently; window sashes need repair

Alterations: original roof in part
addition has original corrugated iron
and vents as well as door and window
frames

Temporary additions: none



4. 16 Church Street

on erf 719

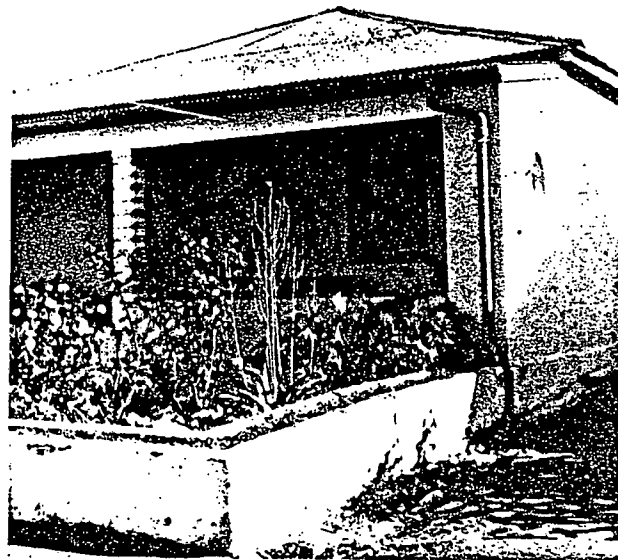
Ground owned by Methodist Church

Appearance: neat, with garden

State of repair: good; all services incl. phone

Alterations: modern front stoep to intact
Victorian door and window frames;
extensive modern additions to rear

Temporary additions: corrugated lean to shed of used
material



5. 18 Church Street

on erf 719

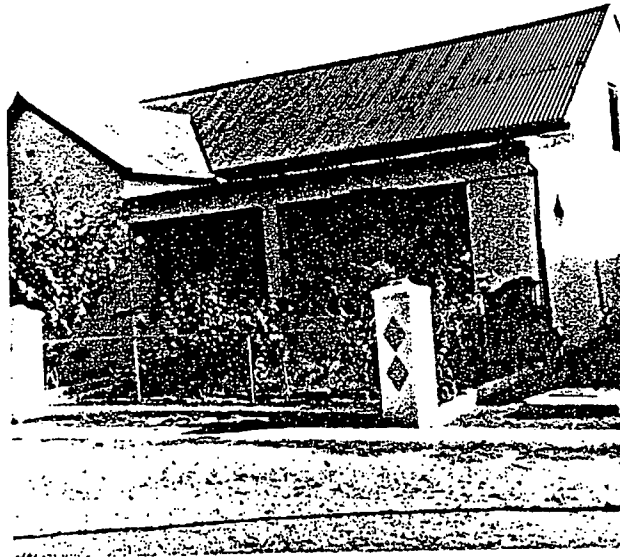
Ground owned by Methodist Church

Appearance: neat, with garden

State of repair: very good with all services

Alterations: extensively modernized approx. 1945

Temporary additions: small shed



6. 20 Church Street 'Kirkhaven' on erf 719

Ground owned by Methodist Church

Appearance: neat, with garden and gate

State of repair: very good with corrugated iron in good state; all services available

Alterations: completely modernized approx. 1950

Cottage owned by Mrs. Erickson



7. 22 Church Street on erf 720

Ground owned by Methodist Church

Appearance: simple, no veranda, neat garden

State of repair: fair; gutters and plaster in need of attention; roof fair (corrugated)

Alterations: no additions to original shell; door and window frames replaced with modern; probably typical shape of all cottages

Temporary additions: corrugated sheds of used material



8. 24 Church Street

on erf 720

Ground owned by Methodist Church

Appearance: neat and well kept with garden

State of repair: good; all services available
no urgent repairs

Alterations: completely modernized and extensively
added to approx 1960

Temporary additions: none



q. 26 Church Street 'Garth Cottage' on erf 720

Ground owned by Methodist Church

Gottage owned by Mrs. Weaver (nee Swarts) who was born in house

Appearance: quaint cottage - picturesque
 interesting lay-out and garden

State of repair:	walls in need or urgent repair; thatch good but timbers sagging; owner says it is very dilapidated; all services available
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Alterations: probably the cottage with most original material; original shape of roof; virtually no modernization; additions old and in keeping with rest of cottage

10. 32 Church Street erf 727

Owned by P.J. & J.E. Daniels

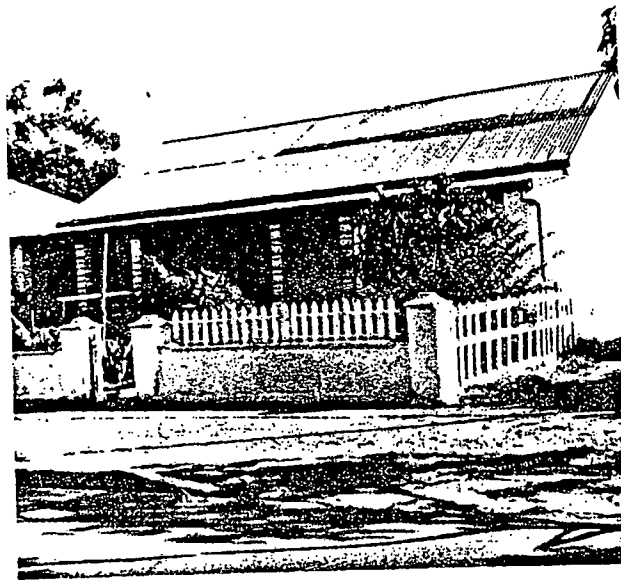
Built in 1930 according to Mrs. Daniels who lives in the house

Appearance: house completely hidden behind
overgrown fruit trees (very old figs,
avo, guava and bananas)

State of repair: fairly good

11. Converted cement store

Situated in the middle of the complex with no direct street
frontage, a cement store converted into several dwellings.



12. 34 and 36 Church Street on erf 728 semi-detached

Owned by A.H. Engel and H.W. Wessel

Appearance: gaudily painted

State of repair: fairly good;
in 34 some new floor boards needed; leaks
in roof are being mended

Alterations:

- 13 37 Reitz and 38 Church Streets erf 729

Owned by D.J.B. Visser

Semi-detached and similar to above



14. Complex of semi-detached cottages

Situated on corner of Victoria and Reitz Streets- erf 730

Owned by Willmore Investments (Pty) Ltd. MR. W. MORRIES

Dr. Mary Cook has dated this complex with the Police Station

Appearance:

an extremely attractive complex

State of repair:

fair, recently repainted outside;
various minor repairs needed, e.g. loft
door to be replaced;

Council has declared this complex unfit
for human habitation (outside toilets)

Alterations:

originally thatched roof

15. 39 Victoria Street

erf 726

Owned by I.M. Heunis

Appearance:

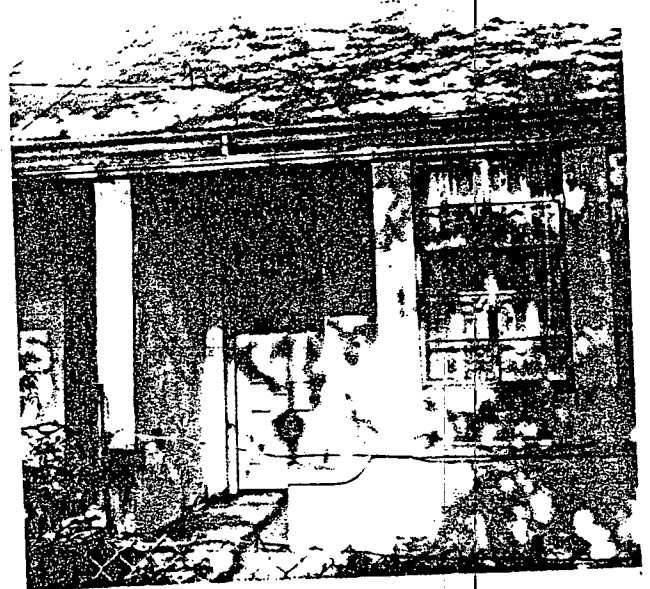
built approx. 1900; set well back
in large garden with fruit trees; a large
house with original front porch;

State of repair:

good

Alterations:

half of front porch enclosed,
sheds in back

6. 35 and 37 Victoria Street semi-detached erf 725

Owned by J.E. Gordon of Grassy Park - built approx. 1900

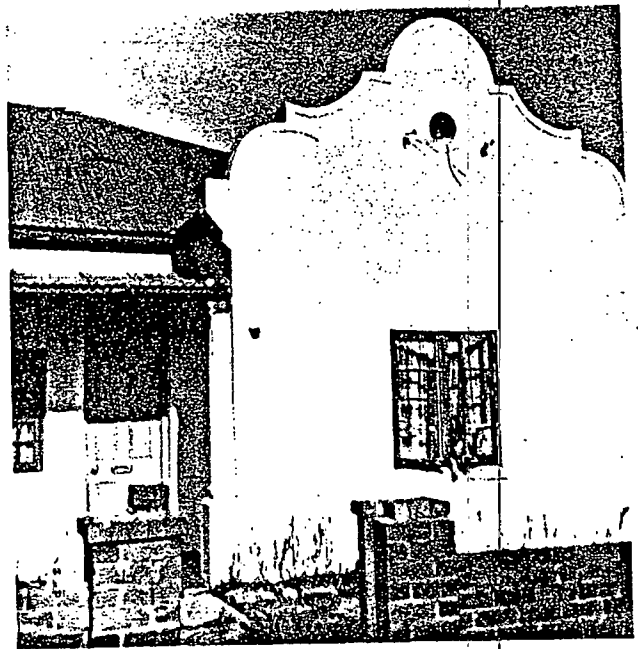
Appearance:

35: neat; garden poor but two
lovely oaks; large rooms with tall
ceilings, very neat inside;
interesting old oven at back

37: neat; garden poor but with one oak

Alterations:

35: stoep added on; 37: stoep enclosed



17. 31 and 33 Victoria Street erf 724 semi-detached

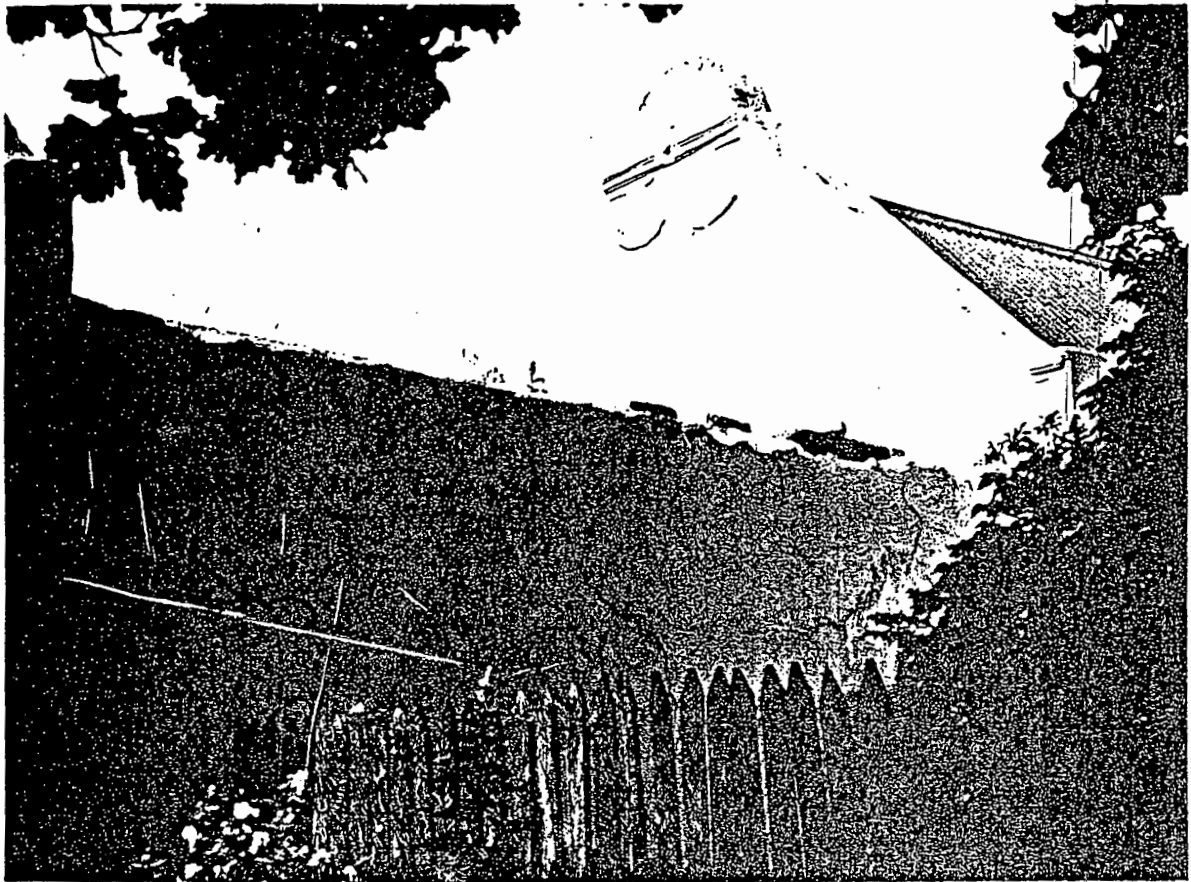
Owned by Municipality of Somerset West

Built in approx. 1930

Appearance:

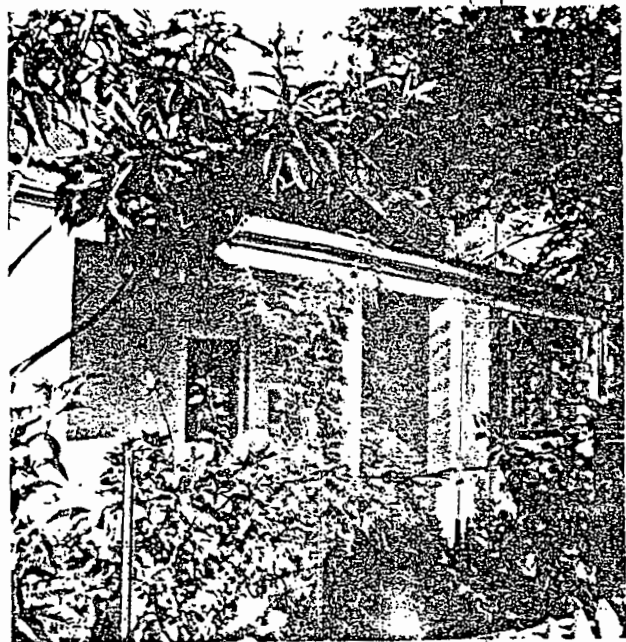
State of repair:

both badly need painting and
general repairs



18. 29 Victoria Street
on erf 720

Ground owned by
Methodist Church



Appearance:

neat, very modernized, small tidy garden,
large oak at one end; very interesting gables
rounded and with molded garland; painted
white with turquoise woodwork.

State of repair:

good

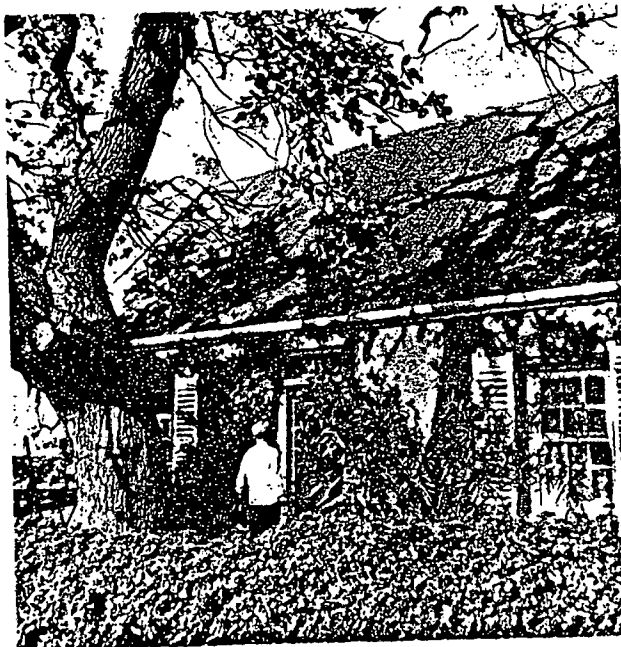
Alterations:

stoep and enclosed porch added, also back
section

Temporary structures: sheds and garage, fairly good condition



19. Between 27 and 29 Victoria Street is a small and low home which is simply the gap between the two houses filled in. It has a small door and one window on the street; the plaster is falling off and there is no garden. It also looks old.



20. 27 Victoria Street on erf 720

Ground owned by Methodist Church

House owned by Mrs. van Wyk (Mrs. Gordon's daughter)

she has lived in the house for 20 years, it originally belonged to the Adonis family but they died out

Appearance:

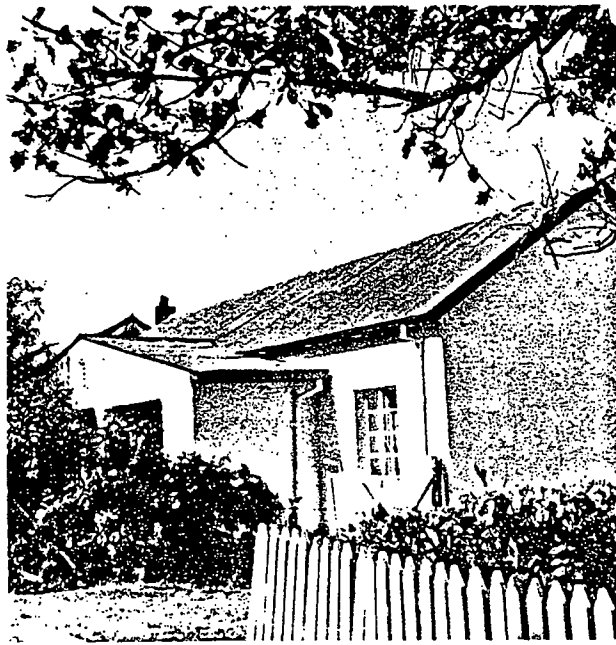
picturesque and most attractive -
one of the older houses; painted pinky
brown with white shutters and fence; neat
garden with lovely oak; high gables,
very low door sills inside; original riet
solder uncovered in one bedroom

State of repair:

fair

Alterations:

kitchen added at back



21. 25 Victoria Street on erf 720

ground owned by Methodist Church

Appearance: neat, well kept, painted white
with red roof; garden

State of repair: good

Alterations: front porch and back wing added

Temporary structures: tin sheds in good condition - a
builders yard and looks neat



22 23 Victoria Street on erf 719

Ground owned by Methodist Church

Appearance: fair, painted pale blue, half roof red and half not painted; no garden - bare earth and two oaks

State of repair: not good, whole back wall in bad condition and plaster coming off side wall; down pipes from gutter broken off and water damage to walls as result

Alterations: roof raised, tin roof, room at back added

Temporary Structures: very ramshackle sheds at back



23 21 Victoria Street

on erf 719

Ground owned by Methodist Church

House owned by Mr. Syndon

Appearance: neat, well kept, nice garden;
painted cream, roof red

State of repair: good

Alterations: stoep added on and half of it
enclosed; also small room at side
all steel window frames; door not
original

OUTLINE OF THE HISTORY OF SOMERSET WEST

In the year 1672 the Council of the Dutch East India Company at de Kaap decided to establish a cattle post in the Hottentots Holland. The Area, in exchange for a paltry sum of money and certain goods, was ceded to the Company by the Hottentots.

A small group of soldiers, with tools and provisions, were sent out from the Fort. The site chosen for the post is thought to have been on the west bank of the Tweederivier (now the Lourens River) somewhere between the present Main Road of Somerset West and the railway line. A rough fortified dwelling and kraals were built as protection for men and beasts against marauding Hottentots and wild animals. Land was cleared, ploughed and sowed and in time several hundred head of cattle and sheep were at pasture. Thus began the earliest farming activity on land now engulfed by the town of Somerset West which today serves an important agricultural district.

The company cattle-run and grainlands existed as such until the early years of the eighteenth century when they became redundant as more and more land in the area was granted to free burghers. These isolated pioneering farmers, although entirely self-supporting, were obliged to travel to Stellenbosch to attend church. The journey took several hours by ox wagon, perhaps two on horseback.

However, it was not until 1817 that a move was made towards the formation of a separate Hottentots Holland congregation. The Governor of the Colony, Lord Charles Somerset, gave permission for the erection of a Dutch church and for a proposed village to be named Somerset. A portion of the farm Cloetenburg was purchased, the church building was begun and erven in the newly-laid out village were put up for sale.

In due course a few thatched cottages made their appearance, but progress was slow and life was primitive indeed in the early days of the little village of Somerset. After many vicissitudes the church was opened in 1820, but it was not until 1823 that there was a resident minister. (This church still stands and has been declared a National Monument.) In 1830 Sir Lowry Cole's Pass

over the Hottentots Holland mountains was opened, and in 1845 the Central Road Board bridged the Lourens River. (This bridge still stands and has been declared a National Monument.)

During the latter half of the century the village became known as Somerset West, the first doctor set up in practice there, a Wesleyan Church and an Anglican Chapel were built, a savings bank and an inn established. By the end of the century the railway line had been extended from Eerste Rivier to Somerset West, the town had become a Magisterial District and boasted a post office, a public school and a commercial bank, two hotels and several shops. The population, white and coloured, had risen to well over 1,200.

The establishment in 1903 of De Beers Explosives Works nearby, and the consequent influx of personnel, brought much prosperity to Somerset West which began to expand. In 1904 it was proclaimed a municipality which in due course provided the amenities of piped water, electricity, roads and waterborne sanitation.

Somerset West has made tremendous progress since the early days of the century. Today the municipal area covers more than 21 km square, the total municipal valuation is over R127,000,000 and the all-race population is 22,000.

From this outline it will be seen that the development of Somerset West can be divided roughly into the following periods:-

1670 - approx. 1700

1. THE COMPANY'S GARRISONED CATTLE POST

Unfortunately not a trace remains of the garrisoned cattle post.

1700 onwards

2. THE DEVELOPMENT OF A PROSPEROUS FARMING COMMUNITY

Many handsome farm houses remain from the above period, e.g. Vergelegen. These are all in private hands, well cared for, and outside the scope of our Society at present.

1817 onwards

3. THE FOUNDING OF THE CHURCH AND THE VILLAGE

We are interested in preserving several buildings from this period. (See attached brochure.)

1830 and 1845 onwards

4. THE OPENING OF THE PASS OVER THE MOUNTAIN RANGE GIVING ACCESS TO THE OVERBERG AND THE BRIDGING OF THE LOURENS RIVER

Not mentioned in the brochure is the Somerset Hotel, the nucleus of which is thought to be approximately 1850. The Hotel as it now stands with alterations dated 1903 is well worth preserving.

1900 onwards

5. THE BUILDING OF THE RAILWAY LINE AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE DE BEERS EXPLOSIVES FACTORY

The railway stations of Somerset West, Van Der Stel, Sir Lowry's Pass and Strand, although altered and enlarged are all original buildings and should be preserved. A.E.C.I. buildings are in good hands.

1945 onwards

6. THE GROWTH OF SOMERSET WEST FROM A RETIREMENT VILLAGE TO A DORMITORY SUBURB

This will be a matter for future generations.

This report was compiled by Francois Fehrson M.I.A. in February 1976 for Historic Somerset West.