



CITY OF CAPE TOWN
ISIXEKO SASEKAPA
STAD KAAPSTAD

Stories of the South Peninsula

Historical research, stories and heritage tourism opportunities in
the South Peninsula



SOUTH AFRICAN TOURISM

The peninsula from Cape Point Nature Reserve

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Background

The primary objective of this project was to prepare a series of 'story packages' providing the content for historical interpretive stories of the 'far' South Peninsula. Stories cover the geographical area of Chapman's Peak southwards to include Imhoff, Ocean View, Masiphumelele, Kommetjie, Witsand, Misty Cliffs and Scarborough, Plateau Road, Cape Point, Smitswinkel Bay to Miller's Point, Boulders, Simon's Town, Red Hill, Glencairn and Fish Hoek to Muizenberg.

The purposes for which these stories are to be told are threefold, namely to support tourism development; to stimulate local interest; and to promote appropriate and sustainable protection of heritage resources through education, stimulation of interest and appropriate knowledge.

To this end, the linking of historical stories and tourism development requires an approach to story-telling that goes beyond the mere recording of historic events. The use of accessible language has been a focus. Moreover, it requires an approach that both recognises the iconic, picture-postcard image of parts of Cape Town (to which tourists are drawn initially), but extends it further to address the particular genius loci that is Cape Town's 'Deep South', in all its complexity and coloured by memory, ambivalences and contradictory experiences. We believe there is a need to balance the more conventional approach, which selects people or events deemed worthy of commemoration (for example, the Battle of Muizenberg) to tell the story of places, by interweaving popular memory and culture into these recordings (for example, the rich Muslim culture that existed in Simon's Town before the removal under the Group Areas Act).

Thus, these are stories, familiar and unfamiliar, that link intangible heritage with (largely) material forms and are about real-life characters and events that have shaped our past. The tone of these stories is conversational in order to engage local residents and tourists alike, and can be utilised in story-telling mode (by tour guides for example) or to fulfil on-site interpretive requirements.

Stories have been selected to balance historical themes from prehistory, through pre-colonial to colonial settlement, apartheid and democratic South Africa. The history of Cape Town's South Peninsula has been very ably and comprehensively recorded by many of its residents, and we wish to acknowledge and give thanks to all those cited as references.

Referencing

The stories are intended for popular consumption. Therefore, the traditionally detailed referencing that would be expected of historical research was not regarded as appropriate in this instance, although full accuracy in terms of content and referencing has been sought. All references utilised have been listed. In respect of images, reference sources have been provided, which are open-source as far as possible.

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12. The Group Areas Act and its aftermath in the South Peninsula

(K. Dugmore Ström)

“Nation building enables history to be rewritten, and the apartheid legacy of devaluing and erasing the heritage of black South Africans from the consciousness of the nation to be reversed, facilitating healing.”³⁸

South Africa's rise to world fame as a 'story' in the years around 1994 had much to do with the twinning of tragedy and hopes of redemption. South Africa's apartheid years generated innumerable tragic stories, many of which are still awaiting their denouement. As facts about the Group Areas Act are uncovered by families and researchers, the stories continue to come to light, assisting with emotional healing. To hear the stories of the Act, a listener needs patience and needs to allow each victim to tell their story in their own way. The religious man suffers the loss of his home, but is guided in his suffering by a strong belief that brings him slowly to accept his new life of struggle in a new place; to his neighbours, his refusal to complain when his vegetables won't grow in the sandy, salt soil is close to craziness. By contrast, a quiet woman demurely accepts a notice of eviction from her childhood home, telling her neighbours she prefers to move anyhow; later, she astonishes herself by becoming a vociferous community leader, standing for elections and rallying people around causes left, right and centre.

The grand sweep of the big story of the rise and fall of apartheid is well known. But many of the lesser-known, more nuanced aspects of the 'big story' are worth hearing, particularly those stories of the infamous Group Areas Act. The Act was an urban nightmare, stripping families of the very roof over their heads. For many, home, however humble, is their own form of castle, the centre of their hopes and dreams. In the Cape's South Peninsula, homes lost in the forced removals were often the products of generations of great effort put into forging lives in tricky conditions. The meaning of 'home' differs greatly from one person to the next, partly due to varied experiences, but partly also because people themselves differ so much.

³⁸ National Planning Commission.

Herein lies much of the interest of these stories of moving and resettling under dire circumstances.

The Cape Peninsula is a land of rocky slopes and sandy flats. Thus, the saying 'the wise man builds his house upon the rock; the foolish man builds his house upon the sands' has particular relevance to the geography of the place. This dictum is well known to those of the Christian faith, where its origins lie in the Gospel of Matthew. So arresting is the 'rock and sand' analogy, that it is known equally well beyond church-going communities. It often presents a particularly challenging mystery to children: How, little children ask innocently, can a man in a sandy area choose 'the rock'?

For some South Peninsula children in the years after 1951 and up to the 1970s, the rock-and-sand analogy must have been puzzling indeed. Families from all over the peninsula were being moved unwillingly away from their well-established villages hugging the safe, protected rocky slopes from Kalk Bay to Simon's Town. Resettled on the Cape Flats, they would hear sermons based on the analogy of whether rock or sand is the apt choice for the foundation of one's life. While walking to those church services, fierce winds would often whip up the sands, catching in the folds of their smart Sunday clothes and blurring their vision of many other Sunday-smart families passing them on the dusty roads. Those folks had every right to ask: 'So, where is the rock in our lives?' The answer from their priests and pastors, which brought at least some relief, was the assurance that where there are no real rocks, God's love and their faith could supply a symbolic base-rock of faith for them on which to build. Thus, the new communities of the Cape Flats – dishevelled, reduced, embattled and embittered – embraced their new realities. Grief engulfed both the Christians and their fellow Muslims, and many turned to their faith to make sense of the senselessness of it all. Reactions were as varied as the thousands who were moved – more than 6 000 from Simon's Town, and thousands more from Kalk Bay, Fish Hoek, Glencairn, Murdoch Valley and the farmlands of the peninsula.

The famous author on loss and death, Elizabeth Kubler Ross, has identified grief as a process rather than a moment. The human spirit is generally moulded to optimism, even in the face of preposterous difficulties. Grief progresses for different individuals through despair, anger, fear, guilt and, for some, eventual acceptance. Of the thousands who lost homes on the South Peninsula, the voices of those who have spoken about their experiences are but echoes of the feelings of the many whom the experience left mute. The sheer loss of human endeavour is a common theme. One Kalk Bay family spent weekends hefting stones from the mountain to build the retaining wall on which their house stood: Their hearts were as calloused as their hands when the Group Areas Act announced that neither their stonework nor the streets they loved to walk in their village alongside the sea would belong to them anymore.

Margaret Constant tells of her family's experience of living in the upland hamlet of Red Hill Village, a cultivated green oasis in the fynbos above Simon's Town, before they were wrenched out of their comfortable homes in 1970 and moved to the barrenness of Ocean View.

The Constant family and their neighbours were told that they were being moved to make way for the building of a large dam in their valley. The dam was never built. As the man who issued the dam-building notice was the same man who had issued Group Areas Act removal

notices to residents of Simon's Town, the natural speculation was that the proposed dam story was a red herring.

"We did not want to move," said Margaret. "I was a little girl of nine years of age at the time. As children, we lived a free life at Red Hill Village, playing in the fynbos and walking down the long road to the beach. Our fathers walked to work in the Simon's Town dockyard. We had our own vegetable patches and gardens. The first night in our new flat in Ocean View I was awoken by a gang fight going on outside my window. The people who had been moved there from Noordhoek were different from the people who were moved from the Simon's Town area. We came from different backgrounds. Apart from that, people were emotionally stressed. Families and friends had been ripped apart ... We had big homes in Red Hill Village. In Ocean View, we were moved into tiny flats. We had to leave a lot of our furniture out on the streets to be taken away, as it did not fit into our rooms. We lost valuable family heirlooms. Our communities were old and integrated. It was an enormous wrench to be moved out of the area where our parents and grandparents had lived to a place where there was no transport and there were no schools. Many of the old people just pined away."

A hiking party that encountered the ruins of Margaret Constant's dear lost village on the heights of Red Hill in 2013 made contact with the Simon's Town Museum and with Margaret herself, and published the story and the interview with Margaret on the internet. Respondents

who thanked the writer for the posting are indicative of a commonly expressed South African desire to learn lessons from the fractured past, where so much was hidden under restrictive apartheid laws.



Before the removals at Red Hill Village. Simon's Town Museum.

Simon's Town Museum does an admirable job of working in the heart of its community. The museum keeps lists, which are updated as information becomes available, of the many families who were affected by the Group Areas Act. An extension of the museum is located within the home of a family who were themselves forcibly removed from the area: Amlay House is run by the daughter and the wife of the original homeowner.



Amlay House Heritage Museum, Simon's Town, circa 1950. Amlay House was owned by Councillor DA Amlay at the time of the forced removals from Simon's Town in the 1960s. The building now houses the heritage museum, which was established by his daughter, Zainab 'Patty' Davidson, in her old family home. It was one of the few houses within the village of Simon's Town that were available for the family to return to after the fall of apartheid and the repeal of the Group Areas Act. Most families have not been able to return to Simon's Town, as the 'Community Development Board' either demolished or sold their homes.



Interior of the living room of Amlay House, with a display showing a family celebratory meal in the style of a Simon's Town Muslim family. The walls provide a display of pictorial images relating to group areas issues before, after and during forced removals and resettlement.

DUGMORE STRÖM, K.

The communities of the South Peninsula who were forcibly removed are now primarily to be found living in what are called 'townships'. The names of some of these townships in the South Peninsula are Rylands, Heathfield, Retreat and Steenberg, Gugulethu and, as mentioned above, Ocean View. 'Township' is a distinctive word in South Africa, used to describe living areas that are neither 'towns' nor 'villages'. Townships in Cape Town have a look and feel that makes them similar, wherever they are. The similarities to be found in the townships relate to the fact that they are typically on flat, sandy ground, where plants struggle to take root, and that they are primarily made up of very small, box-like houses, spread around evenly to the point of monotony. (Ocean View is the only one that has a pleasant, hilly geographic location, but shares the wind and sand issues.) Metal-built shacks often intersperse the box houses. Neighbourly, cosy, public places, such as small groups of shops, along with parks and town squares are often makeshift or missing. They are missing in many senses: missing as an important part of a town's function, and missing in terms of people's own experience of living within a community. One of the problems of these townships is that there is really very little opportunity to go anywhere really pleasant. But many township dwellers talk of their overcoming this by making friends their focus, rather than places.

The classifications that describe urban living areas for different groups of people in South Africa still seem strange to many. But, broadly, if a place is called a 'town', that means that it is often 100 years or older and is built in the kind of place where people really wanted to settle. The townships, by contrast, are places where people have put down roots against the odds stacked against them. These 'townships' are all chiefly products of that terror of 1951, the Group Areas Act.

The sadly ironic name given to the board having had to implement the Group Areas Act was the 'Community Development Board. This board was delegated to identify separate living areas for various communities of South Africans. People who looked different, spoke differently, and had different parents and lands of origin were classified into separate races, whether or not those being classified agreed with the classification. 'White' was the master category, the category that allowed people the right to live in the best places, which also usually had the best schools and other attractions, such as the best beaches. In the South Peninsula's towns and villages, the Community Development Board was widely opposed: In Simon's Town, although the entire population of the town stood together to oppose the imposition of the Group Areas Act, their pleas fell on deaf ears, and 50% or more of the town were forced out. In some places, such as Kalk Bay, fewer removals were enforced, with resistance efforts somehow being more effective – nonetheless, the emotional scarring of the splitting of the community was severe.

Whilst some have suffered almost irreparably due to resettlement, for others, the experience has been one that they have been able to absorb into their personal identity, finding recovery through the telling of the story. 'Simonite' Peter Clarke, who moved to Ocean View across the mountain unwillingly as a Group Areas Act victim, in 1973, had this to say of his experience: "People were moved from Simon's Town as their new homes were completed. Although Ocean View has a wonderful setting [being surrounded by fynbos-clad mountains, with sea views], at first people were resentful of being put in the wilderness, especially having come from the history-rich Simon's Town. At first, there were different factions here, which is only to be expected. People from different areas were dumped together. They could not take out their agonies on the authorities, so they took them out on each other. But

eventually, as people got to know their neighbours, the sense of separateness dissipated and a sense of community grew."



Resourceful children at play, Ocean View, 2013.



"Coming from the crèche", by artist and activist Peter Clarke of Simon's Town (1929-2014), showing Clarke's customary sympathetic, honest observations of the relative ages of his subjects, and their relationships.

"People of surrounding communities are scared to come to Ocean View, with the town conjuring up images of drugs and gangsterism. But drugs are not peculiar to Ocean View. Towns all over are struggling with the scourge. People have no need to fear coming here. The people are as friendly and as helpful as anywhere else," Clarke said. In his book *Plain Furniture*, Clarke, a brilliant artist as well as an author, wrote about Ocean View, and his artworks, which capture the poignancy of his removal experience, are widely acclaimed. Clarke, who died in 2014 at age 82, had received international fame for his artworks. His art is praised for its authentic, often humorous portrayal of the people he shared his life with in the windswept Cape Peninsula. Although his artwork was sought-after, and thus fetched rising prices, especially towards the end of his life, Clarke preferred to carry on living simply, as he had always done. His work reflected that, for him, richness derived from other people, relationships with them, and respect for their trials and tribulations. A true 'star of the South', his work speaks to the hearts of many.

Another 'southern star' who has been able to assimilate his experience of removal and resettlement into his personal and working life is Bonke Tyhulu of the vanished settlement of Luyolo. Tyhulu studied at the University of the Western Cape, and then went on to specialise in heritage work, winning a scholarship to Sweden to further his studies. One of his interests is oral history, which he has used to good effect working with the Lwandle Migrant Labour Museum in Cape Town, and he has also gathered oral histories from Langa and Luyolo. The link between the South Peninsula's museums, which offer meaningful memory projects on group areas, and the Lwandle Migrant Labour Museum is an important one in terms of heritage tourism.

In South Africa, 24 September is Heritage Day. This day has been chosen as a tribute day by a group known as 'Simonites'. Heritage Day 2013 marked a first gathering in Simon's Town main square, Jubilee Square, where the great contribution made over time to the heritage of the town by anyone who lives or lived in Simon's Town was recognized. The project is redemptive. The 'Simonites' who plan to meet annually at the plaque on the town square are part of a longer-standing project run by Simon's Town Museum, aptly known as 'Project Phoenix'. As the 50th anniversaries of the removal of many families will come around in the upcoming ten years, the phoenix symbol, denoting a 'rising from the ashes', will be celebrated over and over again. As journalist Farieda Kahn writes: "The best tribute to the resilience of former residents lies in their refusal to let their history be forgotten, and in their initiatives to commemorate their heritage." Honouring their past includes the recording of stories of shared culture and marvelling at the talents of their ancestors. Musical traditions, in particular a strong tradition of playing brass instruments and participation in marching bands, are sustained. A shared culinary heritage is celebrated in the sharing and updating of recipes, many based on the seafood once so abundantly available in the South Peninsula villages. Although scarcer and more costly now, seafood is still hugely enjoyed by South Peninsula descendants everywhere.



Wreaths laid at the Jubilee Square memorial in celebrating the lives of those who have survived and thrived in spite of Group Areas Act removals, and mourning the loss of those who have suffered and passed away, many of whom did not live to see the end of the Act and apartheid.

In Gugulethu, a bit further from the sea, one older resident likes to lovingly prepare the famous Cape dish "ingelegde vis" (pickled fish), particularly at Easter time. Her younger relatives, some who have never visited Simon's Town, know that the village by the sea is where their grandma ("gogo") lived as a child, and that the seaside village is the place where gogo learned to prepare the family's favourite dish. With her warm laugh, she tells them: "I come from the land of fish." They love to eat gogo's "ingelegde vis", but they do not like the idea of living in Simon's Town – although they love to visit on a Sunday. There's nothing really in Simon's Town for them now in terms of jobs, friends and other living opportunities. By contrast, for their neighbours, mere memories of their fishing village heritage, shared in recipes and talk, are not sustaining enough: They long to return, not just eat "ingelegde vis".



SIMON'S TOWN MUSEUM

Some houses in Luyolo, built with great effort onto the steep slopes of the kloof alongside Simon's Town. All that remains now are some of the stone-terraced walls.

One hopes time passing will bring healing to all who have suffered. The progress of land restitution in South Africa has been distressingly slow. Some people have given up on land restitution as a means of reaching closure for the sorrow caused by the Group Areas Act. Others fight on, continuing their correspondence with government

and the press. Mr and Mrs Davidson of Amlay House heritage museum in Simon's Town have devoted years of effort to a memory project, which is a community touchstone and, at the same time, a personal means of dealing with their own tremendous loss. The Davidsons have collated and curated a huge collection of objects and photographs that celebrate life as it was before the Group Areas Act. The collection includes a section on people the Amlays call "our stars" – the many Simonites whose lives were thrown off course by forced removals, but who have gone on to shine in various ways nonetheless. Dancers, artists and poets are featured, providing proof of the resilience of human nature, and inspiration for others.

For some, grief has been replaced by acceptance, particularly after the 1994 democratic elections took away the stigmatising categorisation of people into different racial groups, with all the baggage that went with it. For others, the road to healing still stretches out before them. A project planned for the rebuilding of housing at the site of old Luyolo, just outside Simon's Town, is worth looking forward to.

Acknowledgements and disclaimer

The history of Cape Town's South Peninsula has been very ably and comprehensively recorded by many of its residents, and we wish to acknowledge and give thanks to all those quoted as references. These stories are intended for popular consumption, and the traditionally detailed referencing that would be expected of historical research was therefore not regarded as appropriate for this purpose. However, all references utilised have been listed.

References

Amlay House Heritage Museum and Simon's Town Museum (particularly "Project Phoenix").

Anon. *Simon's Town and the forced removals of the 1960's*, Simon's Town Historical Society, 1998.

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Tyhulu, B. *Curriculum vitae* quoted by topix.com/forum/afam. – note: within the parameters of this project, a better source for the work of Bonke Tyhulu has not been sourced: the source is a "blog" and therefore further references to Bonke Tyhule should be sought by City of Cape Town in the implementation stage.

Image references

capetown-as.ciee.org/ (page 132, left)

<http://www.simonstown.com/museum/sthm.htm> (page 130, top)

<http://scenicssouth.co.za/2012/03/peter-clarke> (page 132, right)

scenicssouth.co.za/2013/01/the-story-of-the-ruins-on-redhill-the-mountains-of-simons-town (page 129, 133)

Also, not mentioned in story above, but of references of further interest re Group Areas:

An interview with prominent protest poet and activist Gladys Thomas of Ocean View see

Earl Mentor of Ocean View: poet, hip-hop artist and youth developer. To see Earl in action and to hear the message he spreads watch his video on <http://youtu.be/WJoiN7td-Ul>

Ndileka Biyo of Masiphumelele, story -a woman who has strived very successfully under difficult circumstances to make a life for herself and her children, see

<http://scenicsouth.co.za//business-index-2/dressmaking-and-alterations/>

A short history of Masiphumelele - www.masicorp.com

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