

OBSERVATORY COMMUNITY HERITAGE PROJECT



Discovering Observatory's History Together

Historic Observatory

"Officially, it is not a town at all : half of it included in the town of Woodstock, and the other half in Mowbray, Station Road being the dividing line. Yet in reality, it is as compact and self-contained a town as you will find in any suburbs in South Africa. It is a little world unto itself"

The Cape, 23 October, 1908 pg. 14

*Man was born a little lower than the angels.
And has been descending into suburbanism ever since*

T. A. Crosland, 1904



The Varshedrift homestead
c1900 photograph by Elliot



Sketch of Royal Observatory dated 1837 with caption
"from beyond the swamp of the Liesbeek River"

Most famous as the site of the Royal Observatory, built in 1827, the surrounding area we know today as Observatory remained essentially farmland until the later 19th Century. With the discovery of diamonds and then gold in the interior Cape Town was transformed from provisioning station to gateway to a rapidly developing hinterland.

Resulting growth in population and demand for housing in Cape Town led to subdivision of the first portion of an Observatory farm, Onderneming, into small residential plots in 1881

