

Initial Explorations in Reconstructing the Original Beacons and Boundaries in the Constantia Valley in Cape Town

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SUMMARY

This paper reports on the relocation of the original farm Constantia in the southern suburbs of Cape Town and explores the development of early farm boundaries in the Constantia Valley so as to provide a spatial context to pair with the book *Constantia and its Neighbours* by Dr Helen Robinson. Early farms in the Cape were granted by the Dutch East India Company (VOC or DEIC) from 1657. The southwards expansion of farming and hence grants reached this historic valley in 1865 with the granting of “Constantia”. The subsequent early grants and subdivisions in the area are represented on a plan of the entire valley compiled in 1887. Using geographic information systems as a tool for exploring multiple sources of spatial evidence (old maps and diagrams, aerial photographs, surveyor-general’s compilation sheets (noting sheets)) and employing cadastral techniques assists the researcher in identifying beacons and boundaries that are still evident in the modern cadastre. This contribution is significant in adding to the body of work on early settlement at the Cape and its spatial effects on the current city-scape in the valley of Constantia. The addition of geo-spatial evidence and processing using land surveying methods of property relocation and later mathematical beacon and boundary reconstruction has the potential bring geo-spatial rigor to locational information of historic farms at the Cape in the early Dutch period. This is a key contribution to pair with the genealogical and social historical work produced in a text such as *Constantia and its Neighbours*. This paper reports on the early outcomes of this research project while extension of the project to cadastral fieldwork and to the rigorous relocation of the other farms in the valley will be undertaken over some years to come.

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