

Morkel House, Stellenbosch

The Morkel house at 4-6 van Ryneveldstreet in Stellenbosch is one of the oldest building structures in South Africa¹, albeit repeatedly altered since it was built in the 1690s. *Stamvader* Philip Morkel owned it from 1729 to 1734. About 150 years later, Dirk Cloete Morkel acquired it and he was followed by his daughters, Anna and Nettie Morkel, who lived there until the 1960s². The Historical Homes of South Africa bought it in 1968 and had it restored.



Morkel House Stellenbosch – Restored 1968 with new gable

Photo: <http://www.kapstadt-net.de/pages/sebenswuerdigkeiten/weinland/stellenbosch/tours/sebenswertes/morkel-house.php>

¹ *Archeology Report* <http://www.sahra.org.za/sahris/node/44233/sitereport-archaeology-pdf>.

² A.M. Hugo and J. van der Bijl, 1963. *Die Kerk van Stellenbosch*. Tafelberg Uitgewers, Kaapstad.

Origins

During the years 1693 and 1694 a large *erf*, almost half the present block, was granted to *Landdrost* Cornelis Linnes. In the north-western corner of his ground, opposite the present Mother Church, he built his homestead. Because he had a vineyard nearby, he built a wine cellar in the south-western corner, where Morkel House is now situated. The entire property, house and cellar, came into possession of Jan Conterman in 1703. He, in turn sold it, in 1710 to Jan Botma, a prosperous farmer with his own home and wine cellar on his farm *Welgevallen*.

The Stellenbosch church was destroyed in the great fire of 1710 and needed a venue for their activities. After having pressed the first harvest from his 'town vineyard' in Stellenbosch, Jan Botma offered the wine cellar to the church, free of charge. In this *onnosel pershuijs, zonder de minste commoditeit* (simple press-house, without the least amenities)) the congregation held all its religious services for close on eleven years, so that later they began speaking about it as *de Kerk* (the Church). However, it was not satisfactory with its location close to the street, with heavy traffic (*drukke verkeer*) and noise from speeding vehicles and cracking of whips (*sommigen zig nieten ontsien de stoutheid te gebruiken van onder de godsdiens voorbij de kerk te jagen, en sterke met swepen te klappen, waar door niet alleen de Eern.: Predicant maar ook zelfs de toeboorders in haare aandacht werden gestoort, konnende door zulke geklap nauwelijks Gods woord hooren of verstaan*³).

Botma died in 1719 and, documented in the minutes of the Church Council, the congregation bought the wine cellar/cum church for the meagre sum of 600 Cape *gulden*. Although unsatisfactory, the church council took their time finding funds and having a new church designed and built. It was the *Landdrost* rather than the *Predicant* and *kerkeraad* (church council) that took the initiative. They pleaded poverty even though there were wealthy farmers in the district. It was expected that the VOC would provide the funds, rather than the congregation. Eventually building started in 1719 and the was ready for church services in 1723. Services were thus held in the *onnosel pershuis* for about 13 years.

³ Hugo and van der Bijl p49

Acquired by *Stamvader* Philip Morkel, 1729 - 1734

Ten years later, when the new church had been completed, the *kerkraad* sold *de oude Kerk* (the old church) at public auction. It attracted almost no interest and *Stamvader* Philip Morkel bought it at the bargain price of 250 Cape *gulden*. Philip paid for it in three instalments on 14 December 1729, 10 April 1730 and 28 May 1731⁴. In 1734, a year before his death Philip Morkel sold the property for 600 *gulden* to the so-called *Kolonie van Stellenbosch* (Colony of Stellenbosch), i.e. the *landdrost* and *beemraden*. After owning it for about five years he sold it for more than twice its purchase price. Philip died in 1735, and his will⁵, drawn up shortly before his death stated that he was ill (*enigszins ziekelijk*), and it is likely that he sold when his health declined.

After a century and a half, back in Morkel hands.

For almost a century up to 1830, the house was the official residence (*huis van de Bode*) of the town bailiff (*balju*). The house was altered and adapted soon after its purchase in 1734 to be a suitable residence for the bailiff⁶. and in due course further improvements were added. The old cellar which had been built in 1693/94 was incorporated into a typical large U-shaped gabled Cape house with a high front stoep of Robben Island Slate. Further improvements were added at a later stage. Research by Dr. André Hugo revealed that the old cellar still remains in its entirety as one oblong quadrangle with thick walls and with a large double cellar door on the side away from the street⁷.

In 1830 the house was sold and became the private property of Mr. J. A. Mader.

About forty years later, in 1890, it was bought by ^{e7} Dirk Cloete Morkel and he lived there with his family until his death in 1914. He was born in 1838 on the

⁴ Hugo and van der Bijl, p 212

⁵ André Theron Morkel, 2015, MORKEL. A Remarkable South African Family, Published by Fuutre Managers, p3.

⁶ Hugo and van der Bijl p48.

⁷ Hugo and van der Bijl p 49 and p212

Morkel farm *Rome* at Somerset West and attended school in Stellenbosch⁸. He married Susanna Johanna Neethling from *Neethlingshof* in 1861. He bought the farm *Bellevue* in the Bottelary district of Stellenbosch and farmed there until 1903, when his sons Jan and Dirk took over. In the eleven years he lived in town in retirement, he served on a School Board, the *Curatorium* for the Theological College, later part of Stellenbosch University. He was also Inspector of Roads for the District Council, and a director of the Stellenbosch District Bank.

Nanny, Nettie and Dinah

After his death, his three unmarried daughters, *f3* Anna (Miss Anna), *f5* Susanna (Susie) and *f6* Jeanne Francoise (Nettie) continued to live in the house. Susie died in 1917 while Anna and Nettie carried on. Nettie died in 1956 and Miss Anna or Nanny as she was known within the family, passed away aged 99 years, in 1965. Nanny and Nettie were known and loved by the family and widely within the Stellenbosch community. Nanny was practical and basically ran the household and Nettie had a lovely sense of humour⁹. A third member of the household was their faithful servant and friend, *aia* Dinah van Wyk. Nanny loved children and her nephews and nieces were constant visitors to her home. She related how her grandfather, Daniel Johannes (*Dik Daniel*) sitting in elders' bench in the church, had his feet resting on the grave of *Stamvader* Philip Morkel. The indoor graves were eventually shifted to the outdoors graveyard and the exact location of the grave was lost. Nanny was an avid reader. Her bible, *Die Burger* (newspaper), *Kerkbode* and library books kept her busy. Being practical she would stretch out on her back on the dining room table with her head resting on a cushion to make use of the best light in the house.

In the home two framed church window panes (shown below) hung on the wall. They were the decorated centre pieces of leaded windows in the second church, completed in 1723. Seventeen prominent families subscribed to have their crests and inscriptions painted and burnt into the window panes. Only two survived. They were of *Stamvader* Philip Morkel and his sister-in-law, Sibella Pasman. The inscriptions read *Philip Morkel, Heemraat anno 1723* and *Sibilla*

⁸ Notes on the Stellenbosch Morkels by Gerda van Niekerk, neé Morkel kindly supplied by her daughter, Marianna Kritzinger.

⁹ Ibid

Pasman, wedwe (widow) Jan Lobsten, anno 1723. (Sibella was the widow of Jan Loubser, wrongly spelt here as Lobsten). The panes were thrown out as demolition rubble when the new (third) church was built in 1862. Two were rescued by e5 Daniel Johannes O'Flinn Morkel, a land surveyor and uncle of Anna Morkel, when he passed through the town on a visit from his home in Oudtshoorn¹⁰. When his daughter Alice passed away her husband, Richard Kleinschmidt, gave them to Miss Anna. After her death, the window panes went to her niece, Gerda van Niekerk, who gave it to the church for display in their museum.

The house had a garden which extended the width of the block to Drostdy street. Miss Anna made good use of it and supplied friends and needy with fruit such as figs and a variety of her own jams and preserves. Stables for horses were along the Drostdy road and a garden gate gave Misses Anna and Nettie a shortcut to the church diagonally across the road. After sister Nettie's death Nanny lived in half of the house and rented out the remainder, accessed through the second front door.

With declining health in her final years she was nursed by Gerda van Wyk. When she passed away, Gerda and her brothers agreed to sell the house to Historical Homes of South Africa, declining more lucrative offers from developers. In 1968 the house the Society restored the house and changed the simple triangular gable to the current Cape Dutch style. The stables were converted to modern garages.

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Extracted by André Theron Morkel from

- *Die Kerk van Stellenbosch* by A.M. Hugo and J. van der Bijl, Tafelberg Uitgewers, Kaapstad.
- *Archeology Report* <http://www.sahra.org.za/sahris/node/44233/sitereport-archaeology-pdf>.
- Family history and clippings generously provided by Marianna Kritzinger, daughter of family historian Gerda van Niekerk (née Morkel), niece of Nanny (Miss Anna). Her name is remembered in the latter part of Marianna's name.

¹⁰ Hugo and van der Bijl p82



Window Panes rescued in 1862 by D. J. O'Flinn Morkel from demolition rubble of the second church of Stellenbosch.

Hugo and van der Bijl facing p 64



The Morkel House with triangular gable, as it was when the family lived there, before restoration in 1968.

Eikestadnuus 22 Maart 1968

The Family line of the Morkel owners.

a1 Philip MORKEL *27 Feb 1677 (?) Germany, † 12 Apr 1735 Onverwacht ,
xx 17 Nov 1713 Catharina PASMEN ≈ 17 Aug 1691 Stellenbosch, † 1764 Onverwacht, Hottentots Holland

b4 Willem MORKEL ≈ 25 Dec 1718 Onverwacht, † 1788 Onverwacht,
xx 22 Jul 1759 Helena Catharina MALAN ≈ 11 Mar 1736 Morgenster, Hottentots Holland, † 1825 Stellenbosch

c6 Daniel Johannes MORKEL * 17 Aug 1764 Onverwacht, ≈ 2 Sep 1764 † 15 Aug 1825,
xx 06 Sep 1793 Stellenbosch Maria Dorothea LOUW * 1775, ≈ 17 Dec 1775, † 1807, Onverwacht

d8 Daniel (Dik Daniel) Johannes MORKEL * Abt. 1801, ≈ 19 Jul 1801, † 20 Oct 1843,
x Anna Elizabeth van der Byl CLOETE * Abt. 1808

e7 Dirk Cloete MORKEL * 05 Aug 1838, † 29 Jun 1914
x 12 Nov 1861 Susanna Johanna NEETHLING * 1835, † 11 Dec 1920 Stellenbosch

f3 Anna Margaretha (Miss Anna or Nannie) MORKEL * 19 Nov 1866 Bottelary, † 30 Dec 1965
f4 Dirk Cloete MORKEL 4 Jul 1969 , † 22 Dec 1922 x Maria Wilhelmina KRIGE 1879 - 1923
g3 Gertruida (Gerda) Woutrina MORKEL 1911 - 2013 x Pieter Eduard Le Roux VAN NIEKERK
h4 Marianna VAN NIEKERK *2 Oct 1948 xx Serfontein KRITZINGER

f5 Susanna Johanna (Susie) MORKEL * 17 Oct 1873 Bottelary, † 18 Sep 1917 (cem r) Stellenbosch
f6 Jeanne Françoise (Nettie) MORKEL * 02 May 1875 Bottelary, † 4 Feb 1957 (cem r)