



A HISTORY *of*
CAPE DIEM LODGE



Historical background

RIGHT The beautiful Vesperdene House (also known as Vesper Hill). Demolished in the 1960s, it stood on a large property that was later subdivided, and 11 Vesperdene Road was built on one of these subdivisions not long after 1900.

BELOW Big Blue Lodge (previously Kinnundy House), whose back garden Cape Diem Lodge was built on.

OPPOSITE PAGE A photo of Green Point taken from Signal Hill during the Angle-Boer War (1899-1902). Vesperdene Road (then called Kinnundy Road) can be seen on the far right, with the newly built 11 Cape Diem Lodge (then called Uitsig) in the right foreground. It was then owned by the Scott family. Just below it to the left is the flat-roofed Vesperdene House. The formidable Breakwater Prison (now Breakwater Hotel) can be seen on the top right.



Western Cape Archives & Records Service (Elliott Collection): E6398

Cape Diem Lodge, originally called Uitsig, stands on what was originally Vesperdene estate, which was established by Hendrik Heckroodt in 1815

THE HISTORY OF 11 VERSPERDENE ROAD (Cape Diem Lodge) can be traced back to the early 19th century, when 14 large portions of land were sold off to private buyers in what was to become the suburb of Green Point.

One of these private buyers was Hendrik Heckroodt, who obtained a piece of land next to

Braemar estate, off what is now Upper Portswood Road in 1815. Heckroodt added an extra portion of land above what is now High Level Road in 1823, until his estate stretched up the slopes of Signal Hill. On the lower portion, he built a beautiful homestead, known as Vesper Hill (later Vesperdene), one of the finest homesteads in early Green Point, that would

become the Heckroodt family home until 1861. Once, the old flat-roofed house with its sash windows and forward-projecting stoepkamers (verandah rooms), had sweeping views of Table Bay far below, then full of sailing ships. But it slowly became engulfed by suburbia as more families moved into the growing, increasingly popular suburb of Green Point.

The 1878 Wilson survey map of the area (see page 8) shows Vesperdene House with its outbuildings behind it, as well as a second, later homestead, Kinnundy House (a large double-storeyed Victorian villa built by the Scott family, later known as the Kinnundy Residential Hotel and now Blue Lodge Backpackers) that had been built on the east side of Vesperdene Road (which was then called Kinnundy Road after the house).

In 1879 Vesperdene House finally passed out of the Heckroodt family (although they still owned part of the estate) and was bought by another family who would own it for almost a century – the Kearns family. Engineer Robert Kearns bought Vesperdene that year and by the turn of the century, new houses were being built around it in the lower half of what is now Vesperdene Road (then called Kinnundy Road). Although at that point the house, still owned by Richard Kearns, had grounds that still stretched down to the Main Road.

From here, the Kearns family could still see down to the sea, and could, along with other residents, witness Boer prisoners of war being kept in tents on Green Point Common (now the Fan Park) in a makeshift internment camp built by the British during the Anglo-Boer War (1899 to 1902).



Eventually in the last decades of the 19th century, more parcels of land (formerly part of Vesperdene, then renamed Kinnundy estate) had been sold off. In 1888, Maria Elizabeth Heckroodt sold two portions of Kinnundy estate to two brothers, George Adie Scott and William Scott. William Scott died in about 1904 and George inherited his portion

that year. He then donated this land to his mother Elizabeth Scott in 1907 as a token of his "natural love and affection" for her (as it says on the title deeds). He must have been very fond of his mother, who had been widowed, and had just lost her other son, so the surviving son, George, must have wanted her to live close to his own house (Kinnundy).



BELOW Detail of the photo on the previous page showing the house as it looked from the southern side in c.1900. The filled-in verandah must have had unencumbered views of Signal Hill in those days, before other houses were built further up Vesperdene Road.

RIGHT A view from a similar date, looking from the south-east (in the vicinity of Braemar Road). Here the back of the house can be seen, already with a few flat-roofed additions. There was an open field to the east of the house (part of Braemar estate) in those days.

By 1902, an attractive Victorian villa had been built on the plot by the Scott family (Uitsig, now called Cape Diem Lodge), because it is shown on various Anglo-Boer War period photographs (1899-1902, *see above*). Elizabeth Scott owned the property until 1923, when Thomas Martin took ownership. The street directory of 1927 lists Thomas Martin as a coach builder, with his business situated in Roger Street (District Six), but by then he had already sold Uitsig and was living elsewhere.

In 1925, Margaret Martin took ownership, but she soon died and in 1926 it went to Minnie Edith Hillis, who owned the house for 15 years, selling it in 1941 to Helene Christina Abrahamse. Uitsig remained in the Abrahamse family for quite some time, as Cornelis Alan Walters Abrahamse inherited it in

In 1926, Minnie Edith Hillis (born Bell) took ownership, and she owned the house for 15 years



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1964, and only sold it six years later. (Around this time, Vesperdene House was sadly demolished for the building of Cascades Flats in Vesperdene Road.)

Uitsig (11 Vesperdene Road) can be seen on the City Survey map made between 1944 and 1966 (*see page 9*). It was also listed in the 1956/1957 street directory as Uitsig, before the street numbering system was implemented in Green Point). The City Survey map shows that there was a driveway leading off Vesperdene Road on the left-hand side of the property, that led to a garage. Later a pool was built on the site of this garage.

Cornelis Abrahamse doesn't seem to have lived at Uitsig and just let it out to tenants, as the street directory of 1965/1966 lists the occupants as G.R.

Harris (number 11 Vesperdene Road) and R. Burger (at 11a, probably a separate flatlet or rental room on the property).

Allan Zane Volstedt bought the house in 1970, which ended the long Abrahamse period of ownership. He then sold it in 1972 to Bernard Behr and George Rowley, who each had a half share of the property. The Cape Town street directory of 1973 lists George Rowley as living at number 11, and R. Burger living at 11a.

George Rowley died not long afterwards, and in 1975, his widow Sarah Jane Rowley took over the property. She did not keep the house for very long, though, selling it to Andrew James Roper in 1977.

Uwe Michael Pfaff (of German descent) and Flavia Theresa Lucia Pfaff took equal ownership of the property in 1984 and kept it for 17 years, making this couple one of the longest-running owners of the house. They eventually sold it in 2001 to another couple: Nigel Stephen Wood and Angela Pat Wood, who then sold it in 2007 to Daniel Balbach.

Daniel is now the proud owner of Cape Diem Lodge (as Uitsig is now called), and has put a lot of effort into renovating the house. During restoration, which



began in 2007 and was completed by 2008, and the utmost care was taken to preserve the historical integrity of the house, while ensuring that all modern conveniences and comfort would be included.

As a result, guests are treated to the perfect balance of old and new. Many of the house's original features survive, such as the beautiful timber floors, elegant sash windows, mosaic tiles on the verandah and the teak front door with fanlight and side lights, all contributing to the character of the boutique-style guesthouse, which Daniel has furnished luxuriously.

Guests of Cape Diem Lodge can now sleep in the lofty rooms with their high ceilings, knowing that they are experiencing a valued piece of Green Point's fascinating history.

By renovating this beautiful Victorian house, Daniel has played his part in preserving its history.

Elizabeth Scott
George Adie Scott

ABOVE LEFT The left-hand front bedroom of the house has beautiful large bay windows that allow a lot of light into the house. Before Cascades Flats were built below the house, there must have been views of the sea from these windows. But the garden view is still very pleasing! The bay windows on the right-hand bedroom appear to have been added later, as they are not shown on the diagram dated 1907 (*see page 8*).

ABOVE RIGHT The signatures of early owners of the property, Elizabeth Scott and her son George Adie Scott, who signed his name as Geoge! He donated the house and property to his widowed mother out of love and admiration for her.

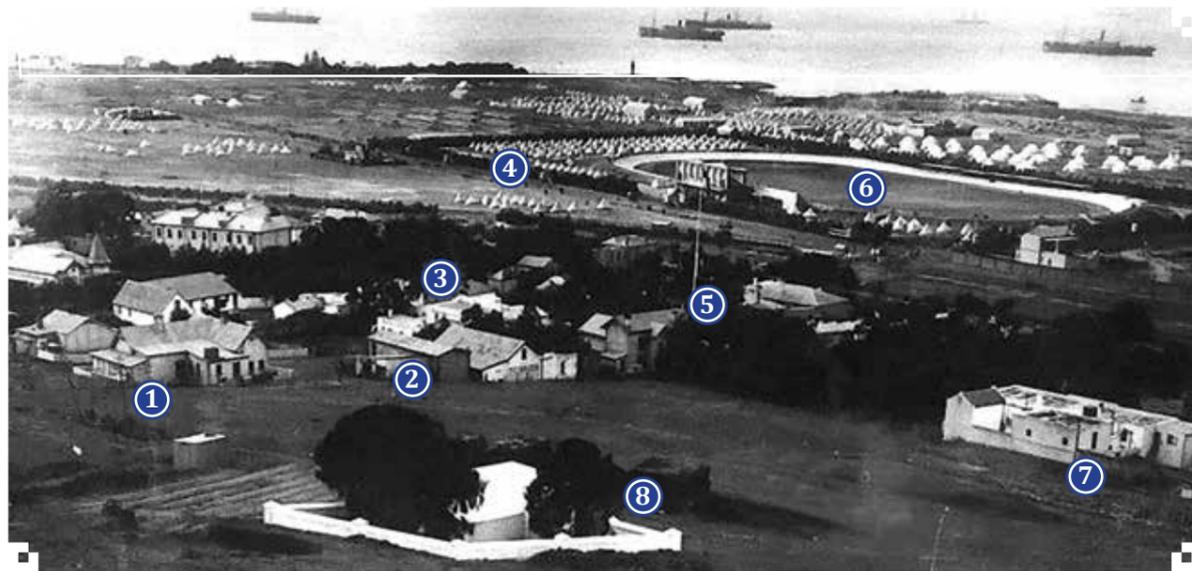


THE WESSELS TOMB

SEEN AT THE TOP of Wessels Road, near Cape Diem Lodge, the Wessels Tomb (also known as the Wouterson Vault) was supposedly designed by master builder Herman Schutte, who built Groote Kerk in Adderley Street. The tomb was commissioned as a monument to Pieter Wouterson (the owner of Braemar) in 1827. An impressive neo-classical structure, the vault also contains deceased members of the Wessels family, who later also owned Braemar. It was used as a landmark for ships entering the bay during stormy weather, as sailors could see the bright white-painted walls from the ocean. It was given National Monument status in 1961 (now a Provincial Heritage Site).

VIEW OF GREEN POINT DURING THE ANGLO-BOER WAR

Looking from High Level Road, between 1899 and 1902



- | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| ① Uitsig House (now Cape Diem Lodge) | ⑤ Kinmundy House |
| ② Kinmundy stables and outbuildings | ⑥ Green Point Racetrack and Common |
| ③ Vesperdene (Vesper Hill) House | ⑦ Braemar |
| ④ Prisoner of war camp for Boers | ⑧ Wessels/Wouterson tomb |

THE ABOVE VIEW of Green Point taken during the Anglo-Boer War shows some of the landmarks of the area during that period. Vesperdene estate had by that time been subdivided, but the homestead was still standing (see Nr. 3). Uitsig (now Cape Diem Lodge) was built on a portion of this old estate. The

adjoining old estate, Braemar, was still largely open, with only Braemar House (Nr. 7) and the Wessels Tomb (Nr. 8) occupying the western side of the estate. The tomb still exists but the homestead was demolished decades ago. Table Bay can be seen in the distance, busy with British war ships.



OWNERSHIP TIMELINE OF UITSIG (CAPE DIEM LODGE)

Previously Erf 373, formerly Portion D of Lot No. 3 of Vesperdene, granted to Hendrik Heckroodt on 4 August 1815, now Erf 2222

| TITLE DEED NR./OLD CAPE FREEHOLD NR: | OWNER: | DATE: |
|--------------------------------------|---|----------------|
| T122 | George Adie Scott and William Scott | 12 May 1888 |
| T12129 | George Adie Scott | 29 Oct 1904 |
| T3922 | Elizabeth Scott | 16 May 1907 |
| T7629 | Thomas Martin | 13 Sept 1923 |
| T1019 | Margaret Martin (born Anderson) | 10 Feb 1925 |
| T5251 | Minnie Edith Hillis (born Bell) | 2 June 1926 |
| T10 066 | Helene Christina Abrahamse | 2 October 1941 |
| T1753 | Cornelis Alan Walters Abrahamse | 3 Feb 1964 |
| T34 046 | Allan Zane Volstedt | 20 Nov 1970 |
| T12535 | Bernard Behr (half) and George Rowley (half) | 2 June 1972 |
| T13479 | Sarah Jane Rowley (widow) | 21 March 1975 |
| T4283 | Andrew James Roper | 1977 |
| T35045 | Uwe Michael Pfaff and Flavia Theresa Lucia Pfaff | 1984 |
| T59529 | Nigel Stephen Wood and Angela Pat Wood | 2001 |
| T70534 | Daniel Balbach (Imvusa Trading/ Lifestyle Hospitality) | 2007 |

Maps

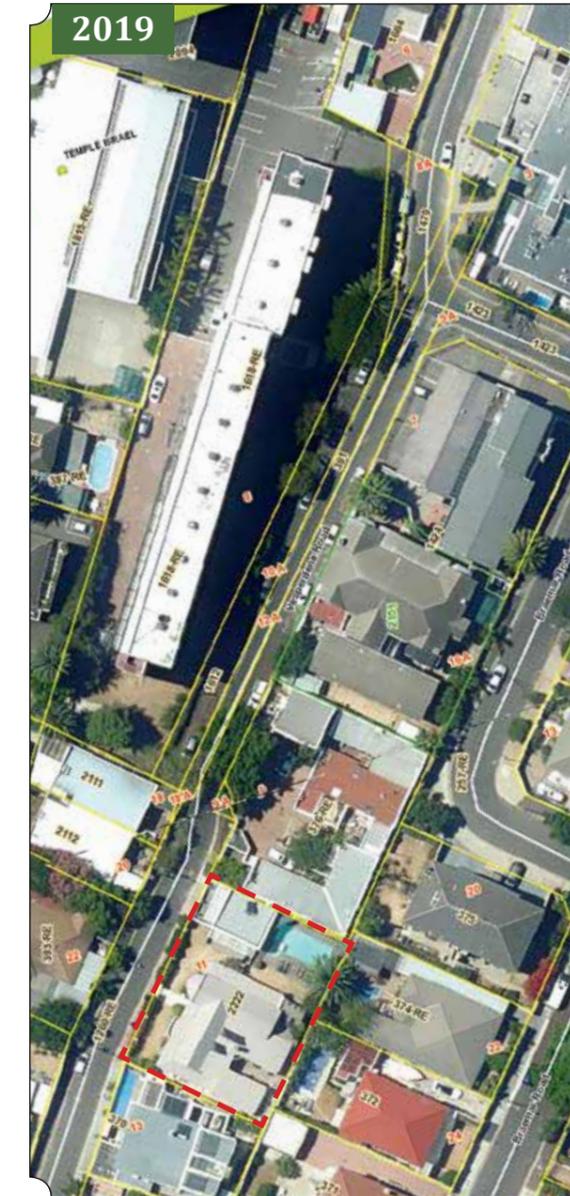
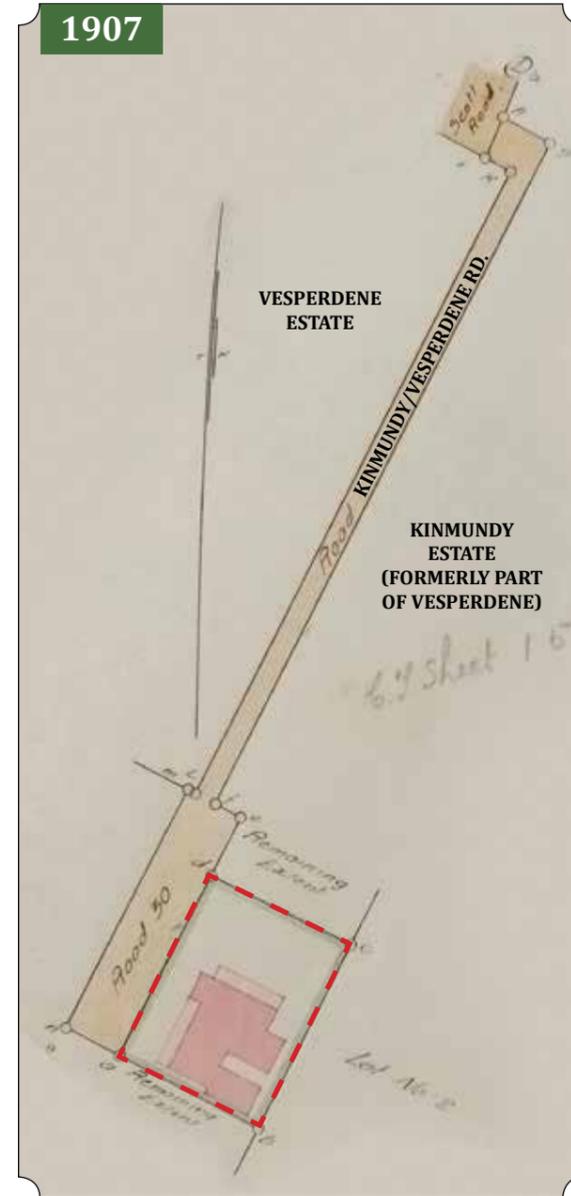
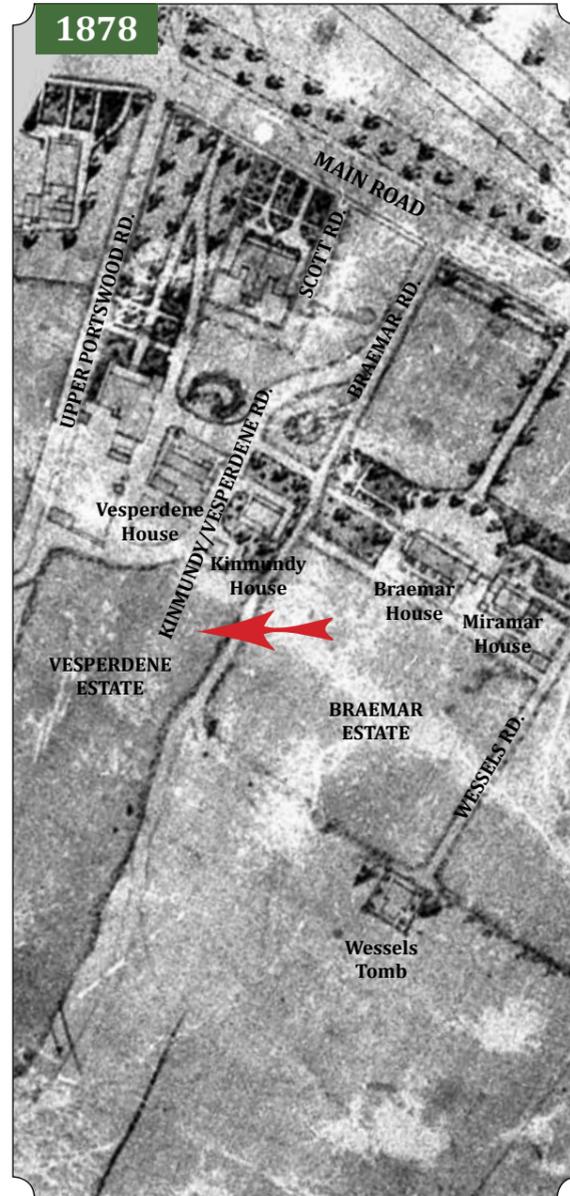
The development of 11 Vesperdene Road (Cape Diem Lodge), explained through a series of survey diagrams

RIGHT Part of the Wilson survey map of 1878, showing the buildings and roads on Vesperdene estate and Braemar estate. Kindmundy House (now Big Blue Backpackers) had been built by then. Cape Diem Lodge had not been built yet, but a red arrow marks the future site of the house.

FAR RIGHT A 1907 survey diagram showing the narrow bottom part of Vesperdene Road (before it was widened), as well as the newer, wider upper section of the street. This is the first map that shows Uitsig (Cape Diem Lodge), which is seen in pink, with the property boundaries marked with a red dashed line. It appears that the house did not yet have its right-hand bay window, as it is not shown on the diagram. The lower section of Vesperdene Road was then called Scott Road, after the Scott family who built Uitsig.

OPPOSITE PAGE, LEFT By the mid-20th century, the house (outlined in red) had been surrounded by newer houses and the second bay window had been added. There was a little entrance off Vesperdene Road that led to a small garage.

OPPOSITE PAGE, RIGHT Today the house has a pool for guests (which replaced the old garage) and a newer garage can be seen next to the road.



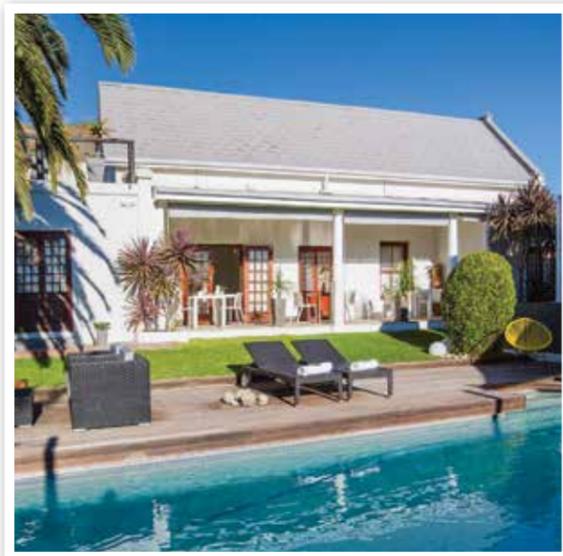
CAPE DIEM LODGE'S HISTORICAL ARTEFACT



DURING RESTORATION between 2007 and 2008, an interesting artefact was discovered.

Made of copper and engraved with the date of 1838 and a depiction of an ox-wagon being pulled by a team of oxen, the plaque (now mounted in the hallway) appears to commemorate the Great Trek of the Boers that began in 1835, the year after slavery was abolished by the British (followed by four years of forced apprenticeship that ended in 1838). The Boers decided to leave the Cape and trek upcountry so they could create a new homeland away from the rule of the British, who they resented. Many also believed that the abolition of slavery left them without a workforce for their farms.

The trekker families were armed (women and children included), and travelled as an informal army, coming into conflict with the indigenous peoples that they encountered along the way, and leading to much bloodshed. Eventually in the 1850s, the Boers obtained their own independent republics.



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TOP LEFT The front stairs to the stoep (verandah) are an attractive original feature of the house.

TOP RIGHT A view of the house from Vesperdene Road. The bay windows on the left would have originally been sash windows.

BELOW LEFT The garden and pool area that once faced the sea. There was once a little garage or shed that stood where the pool is now situated. There was once another verandah on the opposite side of the house too.

BELOW RIGHT Fireplaces were very popular in Victorian and Edwardian buildings in Cape Town. They would usually have brightly coloured tiles surrounding them.

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Photos: Supplied



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TOP LEFT The right-hand front bedroom has beautiful restored wooden features, such as the timber floor and sash bay windows with panels below them. There were probably once folding glass and wood doors behind where the bed sits now.

TOP RIGHT The sitting room has the perfect combination of original features and modern furnishings.

BELOW LEFT The original front door with etched glass fanlight and sidelights. Below the door are beautiful glazed mosaic tiles (also probably original)

BELOW RIGHT The left-hand bay window, with Signal Hill in the background.

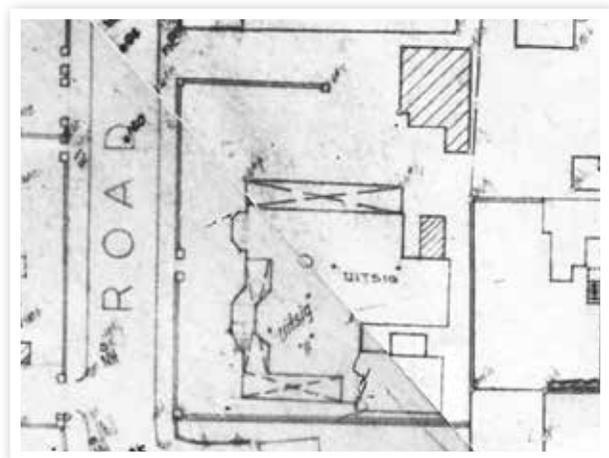
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ABOVE The house (seen in the foreground) in 1928, when it was owned by Minnie Edith Hillis. She bought the house in 1926 and sold it in 1941.

BELOW A plan of the house from c.1950 showing the two bay windows and garage where the swimming pool is now situated.



Sources & credits

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HISTORIC IMAGES, DIAGRAMS, MAPS AND INFORMATION

City of Cape Town

Deeds Office, Plein Street, Cape Town

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