

THE FOUNDER MEMBERS OF THE GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTH AFRICA

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It was the inspiration of Philip Myburg which brought the society into being. Himself keenly interested in genealogy he selected eight others with similar or allied interest and invited them to partake of the traditional hospitality of his farm, Joostenberg to discuss the setting up of a body devoted to the study of genealogical and family research in general. So, one winter's night in 1963 the Genealogical Society came into being in the *voorkamer* of Joostenberg. Those who attended that night were the founder members, in alphabetical order:-

Dr Anna Böeseken; Professor CGS de Villiers; Dr JA Heese; Mr Louis Hiemstra; Ds C Hopkins; Professor André Hugo; Mr Philip Myburg; Dr Cornelis Pama; Mr Johannes van der Bijl; of these four remain, Dr Böeseken, Ds Hopkins, Mr Myburgh and Dr Pama. One and all they deserve to be remembered with gratitude by present and future members for their contribution to genealogical research in South Africa.

Dr Anna Böeseken

Born in Bloemfontein of Dutch parents she initially taught for several years, and then joined *Nationale Pers* as reader, editor and author of many school books. The greater part of her working life was spent with the archives service where she was responsible for many publications with her knowledge of early Netherlands and its script, placing her in a class by herself. Her best known privately published works are intensive studies on Jan van Riebeeck and Simon van der Stel. A graduate of the universities of both Cape Town and Stellenbosch from which she received her doctorate she had also received honorary doctorates from Stellenbosch and from Potchefstroom and in the early 1980's, was elected an honorary professor of the University of the Western Cape, all of which are the richly deserved rewards for her historical and literary ability. She served on the Council of the Genealogical Society from its inception until 1986 when she resigned and was awarded honorary membership.

Professor CGS de Villiers (1894-1978)

Born in the Caledon district he was universally known as 'Dr Con'. He lectured Zoology at Stellenbosch his alma mater, for thirty-six years. Internationally recognised as a scientist and as author, he wrote with equal skill in both English and Afrikaans on a vast variety of subjects. His interests spanned folksongs, folkmusic, drama and literature and a passion for genealogy. His publications on the De Villiers family and that of the Swarts, his maternal forebears, being testimony of the volume and depth of this research. His series of essays and tales of the people and places of the Overberg in his youth are evocative of days that have gone for ever. He was also a regular contributor to *Familia*.

Dr Johannes August Heese (1907-1990)

Born at Paarl and a graduate of Stellenbosch where he obtained his D Ed, he was an educationalist by profession and worked as both teacher and principal throughout the Cape and Namaqualand. For countless years he was both secretary and treasurer to the society and was the king pin in keeping the young body together. After his retirement he devoted the remainder of his life almost to the

end, to genealogy, working in die DRC archives from 1964-1969. His literary output was stupendous with *Die Herkoms van die Afrikaner* being his most controversial work. At the time of his death he had completed 2 volumes and was busy on the third of the ambitious new *South African Genealogy* series. South Africa genealogy owes a great debt to this man.

Mr Louis Hiemstra (1897-1978)

Louis Hiemstra was born in Lydenburg and almost his entire life was involved with Nationale Pers. He started as a young journalist on the Volksblad and later joined the Burger where he was language editor for many years. His final and most important achievement was on the compilation and publication of the *New Nasionale Woordboek* by Tafelberg. He was perhaps not as genealogically – orientated as the other founder members but he was always a staunch supporter of the society.

Ds Charles Hopkins

Born in 1918 he completed his theological studies at Stellenbosch in 1943. Until 1955 he served many congregations throughout the Cape including Robertson and Oudtshoorn where he also was attached to the military camp. He was later appointed minister to the similar camp at Wynberg. After relinquishing this position he held the post of archivist at the DRC archives in Cape Town from 1976 to 1984 where his genealogical expertise and knowledge of records were of inestimable value. He published the history of several DRC congregations and was a contributor to Familia.

Professor André Hugo (1929-1975)

Professor Hugo was head of the Department of Classics at UTC. After graduating MA at the University of Stellenbosch he received his doctorate at Utrecht. Descended from the Huguenot refugee's of 1688 he was steeped in their history and spent a long period in France conducting extensive research into the background history of many families. Most of this was made available in Familia. He was one of the three Hugo's responsible for the compilation of the *Hugo Familieboek*. His history of the Moederkerk at Stellenbosch, *Die Kerk van Stellenbosch* is well-known. As council member of the Van Riebeeck Society he was involved with the publication of several volumes. His tragic early death robbed South Africa of a great genealogist and scholar but his works serve as a memorial to this dedicated young man.

Mr Philip Myburgh

Born at Joostenberg in 1910 his entire life has been centred in this farm but for his four years as a prisoner of war in Italy and Germany during World War II. Joostenberg is a late 17th century property with a homestead of great age and bearing the oldest genuinely dated gable in the country, and has been in Myburgh hands for several generations. It was from his grandfather that Philip Myburgh when a young lad derived his love of genealogy and this has resulted in momentous work of the family throughout South Africa and elsewhere. Myburgh hospitality hosted not only the formative meeting of the Society but over the years other gatherings have been held on the farm. For many years Philip served on the council and was also a contributor to Familia.

Dr Cornelis Pama

The most prolific writer on genealogy and heraldry in South Africa Dr Pama was born in 1916 Rotterdam and received an honorary doctorate in Belgium. His entire life has revolved around books, writing, and research and publishing in Holland prior to 1964 and thereafter in England (1947-1955) and in South Africa. His revision and publication of the early de Villiers *Geslagsregister* and known universally as 'De Villiers/Pama' brought genealogy into the homes of the ordinary individual. Books on local history have also come from his pen. A council member of the society from its foundation he has edited *Familia* for the same period namely 28 years. He was also heavily involved with the formation for the Bureau of Heraldry in South Africa, served on their council from 1962 until 1980 is chairman of the Heraldry Society of South Africa and remains one of our most prominent armorists.

Mr Johannes van der Bijl (1901-1977)

Stellenbosch born Mr van der Bijl had a deep love for his birthplace and his death bequeathed his home for use as a museum. A physicist by profession he studied at both Stellenbosch and Harvard and his active life as a physicist was spent at the University of the OFS and Bloemfontein. His working days over he devoted his time to genealogy and history and his name appears with that of the author of *Die Kerk van Stellenbosch* professor Andre Hugo, as a tribute to the volume of work he contributes to its compilation. A two volume manuscript work on the grants and erven of Stellenbosch itself also demonstrates his zeal to record the history of the town. His historo-genealogical publication on the Van der Bijl family from Gerhard who settled at Stellenbosch in 1680 is masterpiece of research. He also completed a volume on the Roux's and researched the Beyers's in some detail.

The writer is privileged to know of have known all these remarkable people with the exception of Mr Hiemstra. All persons of outstanding ability they were always willing to share their knowledge and expertise with those who did not possess these to the same extent and in so doing to further the urge to enter the fascination field of genealogical research.

-Margaret Cairns