



VERSAILLES

WINES

The Beginning of the Farm, Versailles

By the end of the 17th century, the Huguenot families were flourishing in their new surroundings which reached from Franschoek to Drakenstein and Paarl. With another wave of French refugees expected, Van der Stel extended the settlement across the Berg River, into the verdant and picturesque valley of Limietvallei (Boundary Valley). Hemmed in by towering mountain ranges, this untamed wilderness represented the very outer reaches of the colony.

Amongst the newcomers to be granted land here was Pierre Crosnier (later Cronier/Cronjé) from Normandy, who arrived in 1698 on the ship, Driebergen. In 1699 he received the ironically named farm, Versailles, although he was to wait until 1714 for the official signed title deed.

Crosnier married Susanne Taillefert of Provence and sired several children before his death in 1718. On his wife's death, however, the farm was inherited by a son from her first marriage, Jean Gardé. He died childless and over the years Versailles changed hands many times, until, in 1846, a descendant of the Huguenot-pioneer Jacques Malan purchased a portion of the farm, together with its elegant mid-18th century homestead.

It is here, in the "Val du Charron", or Wagenmakersvallei (Valley of the Wagonmaker), that our story continues.

The First Malan Who Bought Versailles

When Petrus Johannes Malan (1820 - 1899) bought Versailles, he could never have anticipated the mark his descendants would make in the area now known as Wellington. Today, more than 170 years later, the Malan family still lives and farms on Versailles, for seven generations with the eighth generation growing up to continue the legacy.

P.J Malan, together with his brother-in-law, Willie Joubert, was also involved in establishing the country's first co-operative winery in 1904, becoming both manager and winemaker at the Wellington "Wynkelder Koöperatief". He was succeeded by his son, Jan Gysbert Malan, in 1922. Although the company was eventually liquidated, it was the forerunner of the Wellington Wine Cellar (established in 1934), of which, many years later, Jan Gysbert's son, M.C. "Tienie" Malan, was to become a shareholding director. The wine-producing gene certainly flowed strongly in the Malan blood as P.J. Malan also contributed towards the founding of Bovlei Wynkelders in 1907. Over the years, several Malans followed as managers, directors and shareholders of Bovlei Wynkelders.

Today, we grow pear trees, guavas and butternuts on the Versailles Farm, and we deliver grapes to Wellington Wine Cellars.

