

MONT ROCHELLE

HOTEL & MOUNTAIN VINEYARDS

A BRIEF HISTORY

The title deeds to the property were granted to the de Villiers family in 1688 and building was commenced in 1700. The cairn of stones on the property marked the position of a beacon, which was lit to advise local residents that the local Dominee had arrived and that they could all gather with the slaves, for prayer. It was also be used to welcome VIPs to the district.

Since the 1700s, fruit and wine were cultivated on the property, which in 1940 was purchase from Danie Roux by Abraham Michealson. The Roux Family made their own wine and there was an old cellar, together with 20 large oaks vats, when the Michealson's took occupation. The major parts of the vineyards were planted at the time of the Boer War and are still owned by a branch of the Michealson Family, who lives there. The green grape grown was found to be an excellent blend for Semillon.

Abraham Michealson started Franschoek Winery after the 2nd World War and the farmers in the district used to send their bulk wine to them for bottling. Mr. Michealson employed a former Italian prisoner of war, Mr. A G Augustini, to manage their winery, as during the war, Italian prisoners were used to work the wine farms in the district. In 1975, Michael Trollip of La Bri wine estate, found a gap in the wine regulations and requested that the bulk wine from his estate be returned to him for bottling, thereafter others followed his example and are now bottling their own wines.

Tobacco was also grown on the farm and used the well-known brand of cigarettes Cape to Cairo. The farm also had mineral rights. In the 1940s A. Michealson started Champagne Honey. "From the blossoms of the Valley of the Huguenots". In 1947 The Queen of the Royal Family visit to South Africa tasted some and found it to be the she had ever tasted.

In 1955 A. Michealson died and his three children inherited the farm. One son ran the farm, a daughter moved to Champagne and still lives there and Siggie Michealson moved with his wife and four children into the small residence where our present Reception area stands. When a further child was expected, the Michealson got an Italian ex prisoner of war to extend the building to house the growing family.

The estate, which comprised La Couronne Hotel and wine estate, was sold to Michael Stander in 1988 and he did the major extensions to the building, which he subsequently sold to Mr. Bongo, the ambassador to Gabon. Thereafter, it was purchased by a group of Johannesburg businessmen and then later by Erwin Schnitzler and the Rwayitare Family, who are the current owners. The La Couronne Winery is now a separate company and is not affiliated with the hotel.

La Couronne Hotel and Restaurant was severely damaged by a fire in February 2006. The hotel's main wing including the restaurant, kitchen, spa and gymnasium as well as seven (7) rooms were gutted. With the temporary closure of the well-known hotel renowned as a gourmet destination, owners Miko Rwayitare and Erwin Schnitzler used the opportunity to merge the hotel and their neighbouring Mont Rochelle Mountain Vineyards to create the new Mont Rochelle Hotel and Mountain Vineyards brand.

Mont Rochelle Hotel and Mountain Vineyards is run by Mr. Schnitzler, a German Hotelier. He previously owned Michelin-graded restaurants in Germany as well as a Relais and Chateau property in Tegernsee.

In the past five years the hotel has increased in size from a ten-bedroom hotel to its present twenty-two bedrooms. Mont Rochelle Hotel & Mountain Vineyards offers clients luxury accommodation at the Mont Rochelle Hotel, informal dining at the Country Kitchen Restaurant, and fine dining at Mange Tout Restaurant. The estate offers wine tasting, cellar tour as well as country picnics.