

Know your own local history

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Introduction

The history of any village, town, or city is usually characterised by cold facts and statements cast in stone, with little reference to the romance of the area, the ambience, the warmth, and the environment, (usually only expressed in glowing travelogues or pamphlets aiming to attract tourists).

History should in actual fact focus on the entire population of single villages or communities, revealing thereby all relationships that contributed to the unique character and atmosphere a specific village or town has developed over time. This kind of history has social, cultural as well as educational worth, because it is community directed and thus engenders the identity, pride, loyalty, sense of belonging and historical consciousness that binds any community together.

Quite a few definitions exist of the concept of local history. One or two are given here:

- ◀ Prof FA van Jaarsveld said: '... mense wil graag weet wie hulle is, hoe hulle op 'n plek gekom het en hoe dit ontstaan en gegroei het. Daar is belangstelling in die ontwikkeling, vooruitgang en modernisering van 'n gemeenskap vanaf moeilike tot voorspoedige tye. Mense wil graag weet hoe plaaslike bestuur, landbou, handel, kerk en skool gegroei het'.
- ◀ JW Kew thought that '... local history can be defined as the history of a town, district or any unity smaller than the union-state, with clearly-defined territorial limits in which inhabitants are so far united in thought and action as to feel a sense of belonging together'.

In the vicinity of Cape Town there are a few villages that have, through the efforts of enthusiastic local historians, historical societies and community minded inhabitants, succeeded in bringing forth this unique and purposeful sense of belonging. And in SN we are lucky to have copies of these histories, written and illustrated beautifully by people who knew what they were talking about. To browse through and read these interesting histories makes one proud to belong to communities that have so much pride in their chosen abodes. The villages' histories mentioned here are the ones around the False Bay coast, from Hottentots Holland through to Simon's Town.

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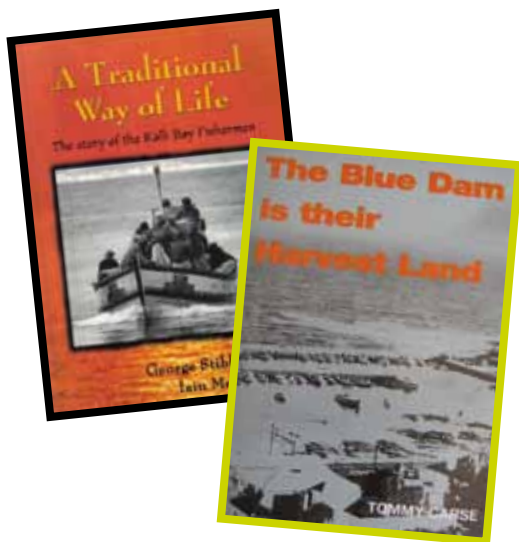
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Walker, Michael. **St James: a century by the sea, 1850-1950.**- M.Walker, c2001.

Walker, Michael. **Simon's Town: a postcard history, 1900-1913.**- M.Walker, c1998.



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