



Rhenish Church - the birth of a town

Amandelboom Mission Station was founded in 1845 at the request of approximately 156 mixed-race Christians living nomadically in the Karee mountains and Sak River region, descendants of white males and Nama/Khoisan females. As the original church, constructed of matting, became too small, plans were made to build a larger one.

The cornerstone of the Rhenish church was laid in 1855, and its Chancel completed on 12 November 1857, at a cost of eight hundred and fifty Pounds. Approximately six hundred people attended its dedication on 13th November 1857, conducted by missionary Leipold van Wupperthal.

Twenty thousand bricks for the church were made on the banks of Sakriver, with bricklayers recruited from Tulbach, aided by local girls and women.

Missionary J H Lutz oversaw the church's dimensions: eighty feet long, twenty-seven feet wide, and seventeen feet high, with a brick floor. The exterior walls were whitewashed with lime, and the interior walls smoothed with lime plaster.

The church featured a raised stage in front of the oak pulpit, serving as an altar. Pews were arranged on the right for men and opposite for women, separated by an aisle. Two chandeliers with twelve candles each hung above the aisle.

Various donations contributed to the church's furnishings, including pulpit bibles, candlestick holders, Communion cups, and christening jugs.

In 1849, the Children's Mission Society from Barmen, Germany, donated Communion cups and christening jugs.

The British government's 1849 boundary shift to the Orange River led migrating white farmers to claim more land and water sources, impacting the local community. The mission congregation invited these farmers to share the Rhenish church, unique for its integrated parish council during the nineteenth century.

Following crown land impoundment in 1862, many congregation members moved away, notably to De Tuin, where the mixed-race trek to Rehohoth began. In 1882, the Rhenish church and mission buildings were sold to the Dutch Reformed Church in the Cape Colony.



Williston

On 10 July 1768, Johan Abraham Nel of Stellenbosch rested near a fountain close to the Sak River during the birth of his son, planting an almond tree in honor of the event. This tree eventually grew to be enormous, becoming an oasis in the dry, treeless area of the Karee Mountains. In 1845, Johann Heinrich Lutz of Switzerland established a mission station named Amandelboom (*Almond Tree*) at this spot (see more about the Mission Station in the panel opposite). In 1883, the name was changed to Williston in honor of the British Cape Colonel Secretary, Colonel H. Willis.

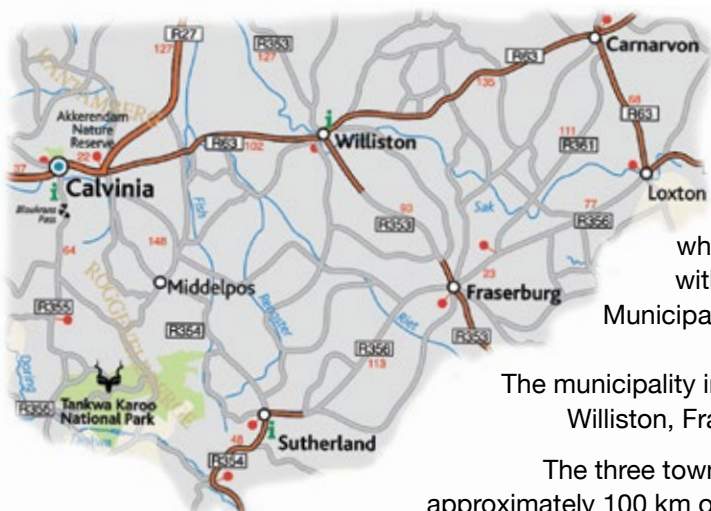
Covering an area of 13,264 km², Williston became an official district in 1926, focusing primarily on sheep farming. Since 1913, farmers were legally obligated to fence their boundaries, and in 1929, jackal-proof fencing replaced conventional fences.

Williston is situated on the banks of the Sak River, a seasonal river where unique riverbed irrigation is practiced, similar to that of the Nile River in Egypt

The Tombstone Route in Williston showcases an unusual form of art – stonecutting. Nowhere will one find more beautiful and fascinating tombstones than here. Tombstone-making became a form of folk art as they were skillfully chiseled out of local sandstone.

In 1995, Dr. Bruce Rubidge of the University of the Witwatersrand discovered a fossil, *Anomecephalus Africanus*, on the farm Kruitfontein in the Williston district. It was a cross between a mammal and a reptile, which lived 260 million years ago on the banks of an inland sea.

This area is renowned for its Corbelled houses, with this building method considered the the first pioneer architectural style in the northwest Karoo. It is unique in that it is entirely built of stone, with flat stones protruding from a domed roof, forming a scaffolding. Examples of these houses may be seen on the farm Arbeidersfontein, in the direction of Carnarvon, and along the Fraserburg road at Jan Klaasplaas and on Van Reenensplaas.



Williston

is a town within the Karoo Hoogland (Highlands) Municipality, which is a local municipality within the Namakwa District Municipality, in the Northern Cape province of South Africa. The municipality incorporates the towns of Williston, Fraserburg and Sutherland.

The three towns are each separated by approximately 100 km of road which, in the past, was a day's ride on an ox-wagon.

Indulge in the rich, uniquely Karoo cultural heritage of Fraserburg with a leisurely stroll through its streets.

TOURIST INFORMATION Karoo Hoogland Tourism Tel 053 285 0998

Design & Photography - tourismblueprint.co.za

Tourist & Walking Trail Map

of Williston

KAROO HIGHLANDS, NORTHERN CAPE



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1 N.G. SENDINGKERK & MUSEUM
12 Lutz Street

The Mission Church was consecrated on 29 March 1884. The original church was a rectangular building with just the consistory at the back and a bell outside. Later two wings were added. The museum is also used for gatherings of a religious and cultural nature.

MISSION PARSONAGE

14 Lutz Street

The Mission Presbytery was built in 1922 by Reverend Scholtz who did construction work for the N.G. Mission Church to supplement his salary. The cornerstone was laid by Ds. C. F. Shippers of the N.G. Congregation Amandelboom.



STONE DWELLING

Corner Van der Valk & Mulder Streets

The house was built in 1912 by the same builders who built the church. The same stone with which the church was built was used to build the house's foundation as well as the horse stable and feed room. However, the current owner demolished the latter and used the stone to build the staircase to the attic room.



3 OLD CINEMA

8 Lutz Street

The section of the Trade House on the corner of Lutz and Reynecke Streets was specially built around 1932 to be able to host cinema shows. A pianola provided the background music for silent films. The very first electric street light in Williston can be seen on the north side on Reynecke Street against the Trade House wall.

STONE WALL DWELLING

13 Lutz Street

This house is one of the few houses that has been partially preserved in its original form. Dating from the last century. With the restoration of the old house, the current owner preserved the special stonework walls.



SINGKOPPE (Singing hills)

On the east side of Williston there are two sugar-loaf-shaped mountains. A footpath was built to the summit of the mountains which in the earlier century was called Sangkoppe and later became known as Singkoppe. From there, choirs made spiritual songs that echoed in the surrounding fields.



AMANDELBOOM Township

The township has kept the original name of Williston and has an eclectic mixture of the original Karoo houses



1876 DWELLING

7 Lutz Street

The original two flat-roofed rooms that existed in 1876 can still be seen. The stoep was added in 1882. The corner stone nestled in the front of the hotel was this house's. In 1876 Mr. Bean, a waggon maker who also did missionary work, lived in the house and had his wake next to the house when the meat shop is now.



To CARNARVON

Langbaken Karoo Cheesemakers

R63



12 NG CHURCH
Robinsky and Kuhn Street

The uniquely styled stone church, erected in 1912-1913 at a cost of £8,000, stands today as a declared historical monument. Surrounding clay walls were added in 1953, while the sandstone for the building was sourced from the nearby hill. A Hoog-Hollandse Bible and Hymnal were placed within the cornerstone cavity. Original oak furniture graces the interior, complemented by one window retaining its imported Dutch panes. Initially, a wooden arch adorned with the inscription "Praise God in His Sanctuary" adorned the front gallery, but was later removed due to its interference with the organ's sound. The tower's height was compromised during construction due to budget constraints.

THE ARK

Hodgson Street

One of the first buildings on the outskirts of the town, it was a boarding school for girls from 1916 and a house of an author and member of the Flat Earth Society. After standing empty for a few years, and because of its shape, it became known as The Ark. Since 2005 it has been magically grown into both a guest house and also a quirky and creative 'must experience' Williston Mall.



13 LAST CENTURY HOUSE
Corner Reynecke and Kraal Streets

The house dates from the last century. The original zinc roof still exists, but is now covered with a second roof. Where the annex now stands was a horse stable. In front of the house's back door was a small pond (foundation still visible) where all the horses of the farmers who came to town drank.

9 RHENISH CHURCH

10 Church Street

This little church was consecrated on 13-11-1857. The original roof of matting can still be seen under the current zinc roof. (see the full story of this historic building on the opposite side)



11 THE CEMETERY

The new Main Cemetery, one of two cemeteries in town has some very interesting headstones. The more historic cemetery is on the northern side of town.



10 ORIGINAL PARSONAGE

1 Church Street
The house, dating back to the last century, was originally owned by Paul Diergardt, grandfather of the legendary Captain Hans Diergardt, revered leader of the Rehoboth hybrids in Namibia. Remarkably, the interior still showcases its original cedar doors and thatched ceiling, preserving its historic charm.

BLOCKHOUSE

2km west of town

Dating back to the first Anglo-Boer war, built by the British troops. The outer circle had a diameter of about 12m and the walls were approximately 60cm thick.



SAK RIVER

The Sak River, renowned as one of the swiftest-flowing rivers in the Northern Cape, courses northwestward until it meets the Grootvloerpan near Brandvlei. Notably, a distinctive seed irrigation method is employed along its banks, adding to its uniqueness. (photo on back cover)

