

Huguenots History

Introduction

In 1598, the Edict of Nantes, called the edict of "pacification and tolerance", gave France's protestants freedom of worship and association, as well as the right to practice any religion in the kingdom. Approximately one century later, the King of France, Louis XIV, promulgated the Edict of Fontainebleau which revoked these rights.

The majority of the French Protestants, also called Huguenots, went to the British isles, some to Dutch, German and Swiss regions, but also to North America and South Africa. This massive exodus was recorded in history as the "great refuge".

So, in 1688, some 200 French families chose to settle with Jean Jourdan in the Cape. Although they were few, they made their mark on the province. These farmers, wine growers and experienced oenologists, made a large contribution to improving South African wine-making techniques and became involved in trade and business. The history of the South African Huguenots had just begun, and today again, as Marthinus Jordaan expressed in his work, it is considered as one of the components of the rainbow nation.

The Huguenots left the Kingdom of France to protect their identity. But in less than two generations, they had formed close ties with the Dutch Protestants who had already settled in the Cape and had given up their language to ensure a rapid integration. Marthinus Jordaan's intensively researched register has compiled more than 29 000 names, which, although some were slightly altered, were passed on over the centuries. Names such as "Champagne Castle", "Parys", "Delmas", "Zola" must be placed into context. They serve as proof of passage of the French families, who were evicted from their country but did not forget their roots and were able to make their mark on the country's toponymy.

Today, French-South African co-operation is rich and diversified. Our two countries actively look to the future and our collaboration enriches several ambitious projects.

This book is a glimpse of the past. It comes at the ideal moment to reaffirm that our current relationship has its roots in our two countries' shared history.

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