

Early days
on the
Pikering mountains

The first real farmer on the Picketberg Mountain is thought to be a man named Moulton. He probably went there in about 1780 + ~~planted~~ established a wonderful garden, its boundaries were dog-rose hedges many feet high + wide. There were fruit trees of every description, oranges, pears, apples, plums, peaches, almonds, walnuts, neelarine's, a pomegranate hedge + a quince hedge. He had also planted oaks + fir trees + a poplar bush. After Moulton died the place became deserted.

Nearly a hundred years later, in 1867, J. P. E. Versfeld, the man who was to turn the mountain top into a paradise, bought this farm + found the remains of Moulton's garden, the farm was known as Moulton's Vlei + now belongs to the Starks.

Versfeld had trekked up the mountain with his young family, his possessions loaded onto a springless wagon, his servants + a flock of sheep. He established himself at the farm

Pikethberg. In those days marauding leopards were a great menace & the very first night after his arrival a leopard made off with a sheep. However the sheep thrived & he became an expert at hunting the leopards. After two years he bought the farm Uvorsteiki where he ~~established~~ ran another flock of sheep. Sheep & tobacco were his mainstays.

On the mountain there was already the Pukas family who had been growing a special kind of rolled tobacco much sought after by sailors, which bore the Pukas' name. Uvorfeld learnt from them how to grow & prepare this tobacco.

He finally bought the farm Mountain's Ulei, where he raised a large family. His farming enterprises were many & varied. Mountain's Ulei was a wonderful farm, fertile soil & plenty of water with the right climate for growing fruit. From those beginnings the prosperous fruit farms of the Pikethberg mountain emerged.

The mountain top is not only

renowned for its fruit farms, but also produces large quantities of buchu. At first only the wild buchu was harvested but now it is planted commercially & exported.

~~Versfeld~~ in 1899 Versfeld built the original pass up the mountain with twenty of his farm labourers & an overseer. He solved the difficulty of the hairpin's bends by making loops so that a wagon & team would not have to turn so sharply. This pass was in use until the early thirties of this century. Now transport is no difficulty & the laden fruit lorries travel down the new pass with comparative ease.