

Helena Vosloo

Bef. 1 August 1694¹-bef. 5 June 1732²

<http://www.e-family.co.za/ffy/g8/p8648.htm>

mtDNA Haplogroup L1c1d

Delia Robertson

Introduction

Helena Vosloo was almost certainly the daughter of the SA progenitor of the Vosloo family, **Johann Vosloo**³, although to date nothing in the record has been found that specifically identifies her in this way.

Johann Vosloo, who is never recorded with a wife at the Cape, appears to have fathered six children by five different slave women⁴:

1. **Helena/Lena/Magdalena Vosloo** – candidate mother **Nantsana van Madagascar**
2. **Jannetie** – **Helena van Malabar**
3. **Johannes Vosloo** – **Tamar van Madagascar**
4. **Maria Vosloo** – **Tamar van Madagascar**
5. **Casper Vosloo** – **Apollonia van Badaga**
6. **Catrijn Vosloo** – **Catrijn van Madagascar**

She appears variously in the record as **Helena**, **Lena**, **Leena**, **Magdalena** and **Maghdalena**.

Birth

I have assumed **Helena** was born before 1 August 1694.

In 1707 her putative father, **Johann Vosloo [Baas Jan]**, the *baas timmeramn* or master wood cutter/carpenter for the VOC at the Cape settlement filed a petition seeking the emancipation of a company-owned slave girl named **Lena**, who he said had been born in his home ten or eleven years earlier⁵. He said the child's mother was

¹ This date is estimated, which estimation is explained in the text.

² <http://databases.tanap.net/mooc/> MOOC 8/5.80, 5 Junij 1732. Inventory of the estate of her deceased husband Johannes Pretorius. Helena Vosloo is not named as a beneficiary in this inventory, and I have therefor assumed she predeceased him.

³ <http://e-family.co.za/ffy/g8/p8642.htm>

⁴ Mansell Upham, "Johann Vosloo", *Capensis (Johann Vosloo - reworked 2014)* 3/2001

⁵ Jacobs, Daniel: Die Vosloos, Nuttige Landsburgers Deel I, Publisher: Ton Vosloo. p. 82. Hereafter cited as Die Vosloos.

a company owned slave who had been assigned to see to his needs in the forests in which he worked.

It was extraordinary, if not unique, for an individual to seek the manumission of a company-owned slave child who was not connected to him in some way. He furthermore witnesses the baptisms of three of Helena's children. All of this taken together with the fact she was born in his home, in my view, points to a biological connection. His putative daughter by **Tamar van Madagascar**, **Helena's** half-sister **Maria**, witnesses another.

By **Baas Jan's** account a birth year of 1696 or 1697 can be deduced. However, such estimates in the record are known to be incorrect on occasion, and so it would not be unlikely that **Lena** was in fact even a year or two older than 11.

Baptism was a prerequisite for manumission and so finding a baptism for **Lena** is important. A baptism for a company-owned slave girl named Lena in the timeframe (1694-1697) has not been found. However, **Lena** was (is) a common diminutive of Helena, and the only record of a currently non-ascribed baptism of a company-owned slave child in the timeframe is in this group:

Ao 1694

*dito (1 August:) van Comp: slavinnen kinderen gedoopt
een kind van Lijsbeth van de Caap, Dirk halfslagh]⁶*

een kind van Elisabeth van de Caap, Maria.

een kind van Maria van de Caap, Pieter.

een kind van Satima van Madagas:, Hendrik

een kind van Nantsana van dito, Helena

een kind van Maria van Batavia, Ariana Heel[]

een kind van Leentje van Batavia, Loenora.

een kind van Sua van Madagr., Hendrik

een kind van Anna van de Caap, Isaacq.

een kind van Sarmala van Madagr: Reijnier

If this is indeed the **Lena** in question, it would make her 13-years-old at the time **Baas Jan** petitioned for her manumission on 1 November 1707⁷, she was said to be 11-years-old and was named as **Lena**. The discrepancy in his memory of her age would not be very unusual. She was subsequently manumitted on 10 April 1708⁸

⁶ I have assumed the scribe meant that the children from Dirk to Helena were all *halfslagh* and those from Ariana to Reijnier were *heelslagh*. There doesn't seem to be another reason he assigned a racial designation to only two of the children in this group.

⁷ Daniel Jacobs, *Die Vosloos*, p.82

⁸ Mansell Upham, "Johann Vosloo", *Capensis (Johann Vosloo - reworked 2014)* 3/2001

Helena Vosloo's mother

Helena van Malabar - disproved

I am confident that this relationship is now conclusively disproved. Firstly, the known facts for these two individuals clearly rule out a biological mother/daughter relationship. **Helena van Malabar** was privately owned by **Baas Jan** and any child born to her would also have been privately owned. As his own slave, she would not have been assigned by the company to see to his needs. **Baas Jan** stipulated that the slave girl **Lena** was the daughter of a company owned slave. In any event, **Helena van Malabar** was manumitted by him on 20 November 1696, at which time she was said to be 20-years-old. Her two-year-old daughter **Jannetie**⁹ was manumitted at the same time.

And now, a descendant on the direct matrilineal line of **Helena Vosloo** has now tested for the **mtDNA haplogroup L1c1d** which is a central African haplogroup and therefor conclusively rules out **Helena van Malabar** as the biological mother of **Helena Vosloo**.

This, of course, also immediately begs the question as to the identity of Helena Vosloo's mother and if she could indeed be **Nantsana van Madagascar**?

Nantsana van Madagascar - candidate

A company owned slave, her name is written variously in the record as **Nasana**, **Nasanna**, **Nansana** and **Nantsana**. She first appears in the record on 18 June 1690, when she presents a daughter named **Maria** for baptism¹⁰. Two years later, on 7 September 1692 she presents for baptism a presumed twin, **Johannes**¹¹ and **Cornelia**¹². And two years later, on 1 August 1694 she presents her daughter, **Helena**¹³. In the 1714 census of the Slave Lodge¹⁴, as transcribed by Rob Shell, she is recorded as **Nant Sara**, **Nant Sana**, and **Nantjana** [sic] de Groot.

⁹ Daniel Jacobs, Die Vosloos, p.79. ... 'n dokument waarvolgens Jan Vosloo op 20 November 1696 die slavin Helena van Malabar en haar tweejarige kind vrygestel het. ...Dit terwyl die spelling in die oorspronklike document Jannetie, 'n meisienaam, is. Dié dokument meld ook dat die kind 'n meisietjie was.

¹⁰ <http://e-family.co.za/ffv/g9/p9777.htm>

¹¹ <http://e-family.co.za/ffv/g9/p9957.htm>

¹² <http://e-family.co.za/ffv/g9/p9959.htm>

¹³ <http://e-family.co.za/ffv/g8/p8648.htm>

¹⁴ Shell, Robert C-H., Changing Hands

The names of Helena's daughters

Helena had two daughters, **Johanna** and **Anna**. **Johanna**, in accordance with prevailing naming patterns, is clearly named for her father's mother, **Joanna Victors**. Was the name **Anna** a derivation of **Nantsana** (var.) and she too according to prevailing custom, named for her mother's mother? This is entirely conceivable.

The Malagasy slaves

With few exceptions, the slaves exported to Cape from Madagascar were bought from Malagasy rulers who enslaved their vanquished enemies or acquired when slaving expeditions attacked local populations.

In the decade leading up to 1690, numerous slaves were brought to the settlement at the Cape by well-known English slavers such as **William Deeron**, **Steven Bradly** and **Oliver Cranisbough** [sic], but also by company slaving expeditions and finally by seagoing personal and officials travelling directly from Madagascar or who had stopped over enroute to the Cape from the East.

While many transactions involving slaves to private individuals recorded on a case-by-case basis have been published, sales acquired by the company have not.

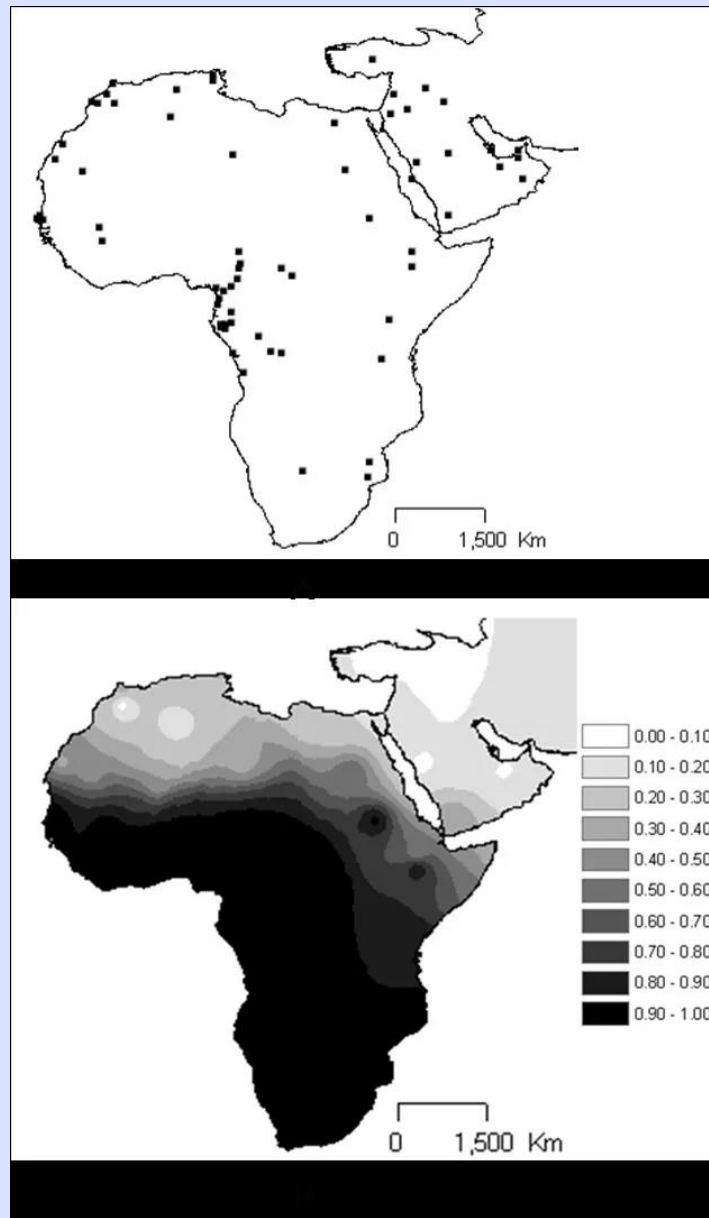
I assume that **Nantsana van Madagascar** would have been among the Malagasy slaves acquired by the company within a year or two before she gave birth to her daughter **Maria** in 1690. The infant appears to have been recorded as *halfslagh*, indicating a white father.

mtDNA haplogroup L1c1d

General

The study of DNA in Africa is still very much in its infancy and a tiny fraction of the continent's population of 1.2-billion have had their DNA analysed. Studies often have a focus such as a particular people, or the impact of the enforced movement of slaves and so on. Sample groups are usually very small.

Nevertheless, even with small samples clear patterns emerge in the case of mitochondrial DNA and Y-chromosome DNA haplogroups which remain stable from generation to generation over the millennia. Mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) is passed unchanged from mother to child, while Y-chromosome DNA (yDNA) is passed unchanged from father to son.



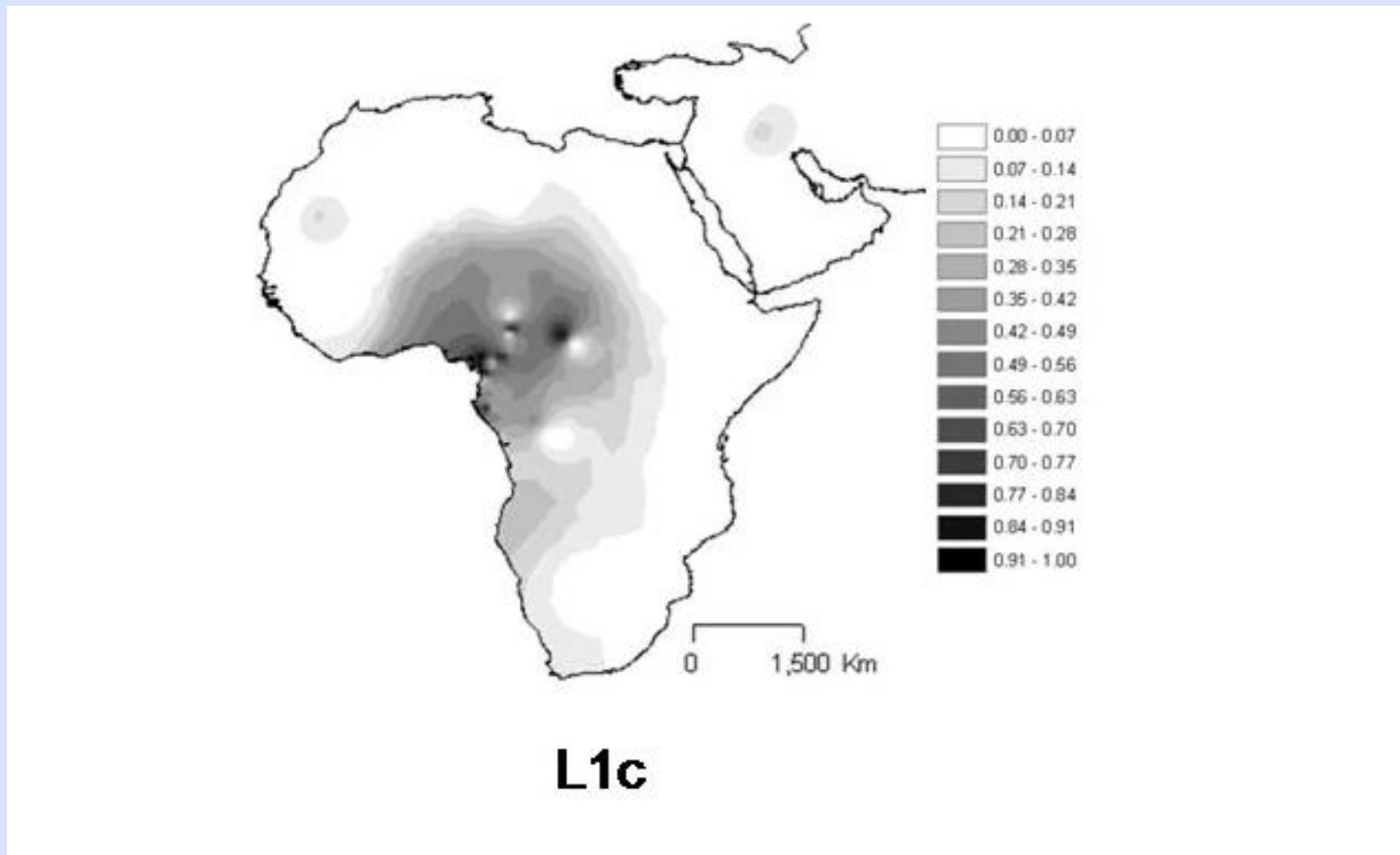
This illustration shows the location (top) of samples taken to test for mtDNA L lineages and the interpolation map (bottom) of those samples¹⁵

L1c

L1c is an African haplogroup with centres of high concentration in Cameroon, Gabon, Nigeria, Chad and the Central African Republic and then spreading in an arc from Liberia to Libya down to Angola and even very few occurrences in Namibia and the South African west and south coast.

¹⁵ <https://bmcevolbiol.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/1471-2148-10-138>

It emerged at about 85 thousand years ago. It reaches its highest frequencies in West and Central Africa, notably among the Pygmy and pygmoid peoples¹⁶



From: The trans-Saharan slave trade - clues from interpolation analyses and high-resolution characterization of mitochondrial DNA lineages¹⁷

L1c1d

There is a dearth of information about L1c1d online. However, I would expect to find that its occurrence broadly tracks that of L1c. On FTDNA one woman in Brazil has tested for L1c1d; and in a study¹⁸ on matrilineal diversity a sample from a Khoisan woman and another from a non-Khoisan woman were mentioned.

¹⁶ [https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haplogroup_L1_\(mtDNA\)](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haplogroup_L1_(mtDNA))

¹⁷ <https://bmcevolbiol.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/1471-2148-10-138>

¹⁸ <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.329.1848&rep=rep1&type=pdf>

Would L1c1d be found on Madagascar? Amazingly, a study¹⁹ of human diversity across the country found samples of L1b and L1c subclades, including 8 samples of L1c1d²⁰. The overall study sample was small, with just 1,023 people tested. So, while just a fraction, 8 samples of L1c1d in that pool is significant indicating to me that it is well established on the island.

Assuming she was indeed the mother of **Helena Vosloo** and therefor L1c1d, it is possible that **Nantsana van Madagascar** could have been a slave acquired on the west coast of Africa who was taken to the island and subsequently sold to a slaving expedition. However, it is more likely she came from this small but established pool of L1c1d on the island.

An early introduction of L1c1d to Madagascar could conceivably have come through the importation of a slave or slaves or even free individuals from the west coast of Africa by the Portuguese who traded on the island from August 1500²¹.

Conclusion

While triangulation would be necessary to state conclusively that **Helena Vosloo's** haplogroup was L1c1d, even a single test of a documented direct matrilineal descendant must be considered important evidence of this fact.

This means that **Helena Vosloo's** mother was most likely a woman of central African heritage. While slaves from that region were imported via the west-African coast to the Cape, there is no evidence that any company-owned slave from that region baptised a child named Helena [var.] in the period 1693-1707 – the period encompassing a likely birth date and when her manumission was petitioned for.

There is just one baptism of a company-owned slave-child in this period named **Helena** (none named **Lena**) and that child was born to **Nantsana van Madagascar** and baptised on 1 August 1694.

One study has shown that a small pool of the mtDNA haplogroup L1c1d exists on the island of Madagascar. These women would all be of central African origin, whose ancestors may have arrived with Portuguese traders and settlers from late 1500.

¹⁹ <https://www.pnas.org/content/suppl/2017/07/12/1704906114.DCSupplemental>

²⁰

<https://www.pnas.org/content/suppl/2017/07/12/1704906114.DCSupplemental/pnas.1704906114.sfig01.pdf>

²¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Madagascar

It is therefor quite conceivable that a Malagasy woman, in this instance **Nantsana van Madagascar**, was mother to **Helena Vosloo**.

I would urge other direct matrilineal descendants of **Helena Vosloo** to undergo DNA testing to conclusively establish her maternal heritage as L1c1d.

As to identifying **Nantsana van Madagascar** as **Helena's** biological mother with certainty, this could only be done with a strong degree of confidence if documented direct matrilineal descendants of her daughter **Cornelia** also tested as L1c1d. Her daughter **Maria** does not appear in the 1714 census of the Slave Lodge and pending further discovery in the record, I presume she died before the census on 31 August 1714. Is it significant that the purported sisters, **Helena** and **Cornelia**, both had sons named **Lodewijk** (var.)? I believe this could be one more sliver of evidence of the biological connection between **Helena** and **Nantsana**.

Helena Vosloo

Biographical summary

Helena Vosloo was born in bondage before 1 Aug 1694 and was owned by the company (VOC / Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie). **Helena** may be the individual who was baptized on 1 Aug 1694 at Nederduitsch Gereformeerde Kerk, (Cape Town).

Helena was emancipated by **Johannes Vosloo**, on 10 Apr 1708. **Vosloo**, her putative father, had filed a petition for her emancipation on 1 November 1707.

She married **Joannes Pretorius**, son of **Johannes Pretorius** and **Joanna Victors**, before 21 Mar 1711. The marriage is assumed because the practice at the time was to record if the parents of the child were not married, and in the baptism of her oldest child, Joannes, on this date there was no such notation. Many Drakenstein church records have been lost.

In Apr 1720 **Joannes Pretorius** was enumerated on the opgaafrol (census/tax roll) in Drakenstein District, with his wife **Helena Vosloo**. He was also enumerated with three sons and two daughters who would have been **Joannes**, **Gerrit**, **Wessel**, **Johanna** and **Anna**. Three unnamed male slaves were included in the record. He was said to own 86 cattle, 400 sheep and four pigs.

In 1723 **Joannes Pretorius** was enumerated on the opgaafrol (census/tax roll) in Drakenstein District, with his wife **Helena Vosloo**. He was recorded with four sons and two daughters, **Joannes**, **Gerrit**, **Wessel** and **Lodewicùs**, **Johanna** and **Anna**.

She and **Joannes Pretorius** witnessed the baptism of **Arnoldùs Vosloo** on 27 Aug 1724 at Nederduitsch Gereformeerde Kerk, Drakenstein, de Caep de Goede Hoop.

- On 21 March 1771, at the baptism of her son **Joannes**, she is named as **Helena Vosloo**
- On 12 Nov 1712, at the baptism of her son **Gerrit**, she is named as **Helena Voslo**.
- On 30 Sep 1714, at the baptism of her son **Wessel**, she is named as **Helena Vosloo**.
- On 8 Nov 1716, at the baptism of her daughter **Johanna**, she is named as **Helena Vosloo**.
- On 2 Oct 1718, at the baptism of her daughter **Anna**, she is named as **Lena Vosloo**.
- In the 1719 opgaaf taken in April 1720, she is named as **Helena Vosloo**
- On 31 Aug 1721, at the baptism of her son **Lodewicus**, she is named as **Lena Vosloo**.
- On 27 Feb 1724, at the baptism of her son **Jacobus**, she is named as **Maghdalena Vosloo**.
- On 24 Feb 1726, at the baptism of her son **Arnoldus Kruijsman**, she is named as **Leena Vosloo**.
- On 11 Jul 1728, at the baptism of her son **Willem Sterrenberg**, she is named as **Helena Vosloo**.
- On 7 Oct 1730, at the baptism of her son **Wynand**, she is named as **Magdalena Vosloo**.

She died before 5 Jun 1732 at de Caep de Goede Hoop.

Joannes' estate was inventoried on 5 Jun 1732 at *Zanddrift, Kleine Berg Revier*. His wife, **Helena Vosloo**, was not included in the inventory and I assume she predeceased him. His children, **Joannes**, **Gerrit**, **Wessel Pretorius**, **Johanna**, **Anna**, **Lodewicùs**, **Jacobùs**, **Arnoldùs Kruijsman**, **Willbem Sterrenberg** and **Wýnand** were all named as the beneficiaries of his estate. It was recorded that they ranged in age from 22- to 2-years-old.

Descendants of Helena Vosloo

3 generations

HELENA VOSLOO (8648), bir. before 1 Aug 1694 de Caep de Goede Hoop, before 5 Jun 1732 de Caep de Goede Hoop

+**JOANNES PRETORIUS** (9158), before 22 Aug 1680 de Caep de Goede Hoop, mar. before 21 Mar 1711 de Caep de Goede Hoop, before 5 Jun 1732

└— **JOANNES PRETORIUS** (9159), before 21 Mar 1711 de Caep de Goede Hoop

└— **GERRIT PRETORIUS** (10759), before 12 Nov 1712 de Caep de Goede Hoop

| +**MARIA COETZEE** (10760), before 20 Jan 1704 de Caep de Goede Hoop, mar. 21 Jan 1734 de Caep de Goede Hoop

| └— **JACOB LODEWYK PRETORIUS** (12358), before 7 Nov 1734 de Caep de Goede Hoop

| └— **JOHANNES PRETORIUS** (12359), before 29 Apr 1736 de Caep de Goede Hoop

| └— **GERRIT PRETORIUS** (12360), before 4 Aug 1737 de Caep de Goede Hoop

| └— **DIRK PRETORIUS** (12365), before 9 Jul 1741 de Caep de Goede Hoop

└— **WESSEL PRETORIUS** (11609), before 30 Sep 1714 de Caep de Goede Hoop, before 26 Nov 1752

| +**JOHANNA GOUS** (12836), before 8 Jul 1727 de Caep de Goede Hoop, mar. 6 Sep 1739 de Caep de Goede Hoop

| └— **JOHANNA HELENA PRETORIUS** (12835), before 19 Nov 1741 de Caep de Goede Hoop

| └— **MAGDALENA JOSINA PRETORIUS** (13071), before 20 Oct 1748 de Caep de Goede Hoop

└— **JOHANNA PRETORIUS** (11610), before 8 Nov 1716 de Caep de Goede Hoop

| +**MARTINUS BEKKER** (7390), 14 Dec 1710 de Caep de Goede Hoop, mar. 4 Nov 1736 de Caep de Goede Hoop

| └— **HELENA BEKKER** (13064), before 6 Mar 1740 de Caep de Goede Hoop

| └— **MARTHINUS BEKKER** (13388), before 2 Feb 1744 de Caep de Goede Hoop

└— **ANNA PRETORIUS** (11004), before 2 Oct 1718 de Caep de Goede Hoop, before 22 Jun 1755

| +**ZACHARIAS DE BEER** (8852), before 5 Mar 1719 de Caep de Goede Hoop, mar. 12 May 1743, before 5 Dec 1779 de Caep de Goede Hoop

| └— **JOHANNES MATTHEUS DE BEER** (13171), before 31 Aug 1749 de Caep de Goede Hoop

└— **LODEWICUS PRETORIUS** (11611), before 31 Aug 1721 de Caep de Goede Hoop

| +**CHRISTINA BOTMA** (11177), before 8 Nov 1722 de Caep de Goede Hoop, mar. 29 Sep 1741 de Caep de Goede Hoop

└— **JACOBUS PRETORIUS** (11613), before 27 Feb 1724 de Caep de Goede Hoop

└— **ARNOLDUS KRUIJSMAN PRETORIUS** (11614), before 24 Feb 1726 de Caep de Goede Hoop

└— **WILLEM STERRENBURG PRETORIUS** (5841), before 11 Jul 1728 de Caep de Goede Hoop

| +**ELIZABETH CORNELIA CRAFTORD** (5839), before 1 Mar 1731 de Caep de Goede Hoop, mar. 20 Jun 1756 de Caep de Goede Hoop

| └— **WYNAND PRETORIUS** (11615), before 7 Oct 1730 de Caep de Goede Hoop

Comments and corrections welcome: [van.de.caep\(at\)gmail.com](mailto:van.de.caep(at)gmail.com)

Further reading

Mansell Upham, "Johann Vosloo", *Capensis (Johann Vosloo - reworked 2014)* 3/2001, Western Cape Branch, Genealogical Society of South Africa, (2014): p. 6-11.

Daniel Jacobs, *Die Vosloos, Nuttige Landsburgers* (40 Heerengracht, Cape Town: Ton Vosloo, 2003)