In 1865, the Cape Colony promulgated a law that forced all landowners to prove they owned the land they used. Because of protests from white colonists, the Basters did not succeed in officially acquiring land. They were also not allowed to establish their own society and subsequently came under greater pressure from white colonists. As a result the Basters decided to migrate out of De Tuin.

On 24 February 1868, a Peoples Assembly was held at De Tuin. During this meeting 90 family leaders voted to move out of De Tuin to the north. At this meeting Hermanus Van Wijk was elected Kaptein of the community.

Chronology

1770 Dutch colonist Van Wijk marries a Khoikhoi woman.
1845 Heinrich Kleinschmidt of the Rhenish mission establishes a mission post in !Anis and calls it Rehoboth.
1861 The Basters travel to De Tuin. (The Garden)
1863 Peter Sterrenberg of the Rhenish mission establishes a mission post in De Tuin.
1864 War between the Oorlam Nama and the Swartbooi Nama depopulates the Rehoboth area.
1869 Basters in Pella and De Tuin petition the Cape parliament to request the purchase of land. This is denied and the Basters consequently decide to look elsewhere.
1868 24 February — At a meeting in De Tuin a group of Basters decide to leave. Hermanus van Wijk is elected Kaptein.
1868 12 July — Basters leave De Tuin and move to Pella.
1868 16 November — Basters from De Tuin and Pella cross the Orange-river.
1868 15 December — Basters draft a constitution in Warmbad.
1870 Basters settle in Rehoboth.
1872 Paternal Laws are drafted.
The migration started at July 12, 1868, when 30 families placed all their possessions on ox-wagons and rode off to a new future. The caravan consisted of about 40 ox-wagons, each of which was pulled by 14 to 20 oxen. All the horses, pets and cattle, amounted to more than 20-thousand animals.

The Baster community was about 50% Christian. Missionary Heidmann held a service at the day of the great migration. After this service, the Church clock was placed on a wagon and the journey could begin.

The Baster-migration actually consisted of three different groups. One was headed by Hermanus van Wijk, the second by Klaas Zwarts. The third group was ambushed in the morning fog by the Korana, just a few days after their departure. They lost all their possessions and had to turn back or link up with the other Baster groups. The migration moved at a speed of about 15 kilometers a day though dry and difficult terrain. The first stop was in Pella at the banks of the Orange River. There the Basters regrouped and stayed for several months in order for the cattle to recuperate.

The Basters moved again on 4 November 1868. More than 50% of the participants of the Baster journey were children. The hard journey proved too much for the elderly Basters, and they were therefore left behind in Pella. At Pella several resident Basters joined the caravan.

The caravan crossed the Orange River on 16 November 1868. On 7 December they reached Warmbad (then called Nisbeth Bath). At De Tuin, the Baster community (re-)elected their leader (Kaptein), Hermanus van Wijk. In Warmbad, a preliminary constitution to aid the Kaptein and his Council to regulate Rehoboth Baster affairs, was drafted on 15 December 1868.
On 16 April 1869, the Basters were offered a territory near Ganigobis (in Nama: Hot fountain) where they could settle. The Basters moved to Ganigobis in early May, only to find a barren moonlike landscape. The area was completely unsuited for intensive settlement and so on 25 May they packed up their belongings and moved on. Negotiations continued, and the Nama Kaptein of Bethanie offered the Basters a temporary resting place near Chamis.

The Basters were now on Nama lands. The large number of people and animals of the caravan soon stripped the grounds, which led the Nama to force the Rehoboth Basters caravan out of their territory. On 25 December they were forced to move on, further north. The journey led through the inhospitable Karas mountains, after which they reached Keetmanshoop on 14 February 1869. The Basters had long and extensive negotiations with the various Nama tribes in the area to determine where they could settle as a people. The Nama were unwilling to hand over good territory in a very difficult and drought stricken land.

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Part of the Baster migration, under the leadership of Klaas Zwarts, moved to Grootfontein (south) and erected their own small 'Baster state' that existed until 1901.

In Chamis the Basters quickly transformed the land into garden territory, while at the same time the search for a permanent settlement continued.

It came to the attention of the Basters that somewhere up north a depopulated area would be able to sustain a large number of people and cattle. This area was depopulated by various wars in the previous decades, and functioned as a buffer zone between the Herero in the north and the Nama in the south. This is the place, where in 1870 the journey of the Basters ends. Rehoboth: a new place for a new people.

The hostilities between the Nama and Herero officially ended at the peace conference of Okahandja on 23 September 1870. At this conference, the Basters were granted permission by the participants to permanently settle the area around Rehoboth as a buffer between the Nama and Herero.
Settlement of Basters from the rest of Southern Africa caused the population to expand rapidly. Rehoboth was quickly cultivated for habitation by an ever growing Baster population. Stone houses and churches were built. Merino sheep were imported out of the Cape Colony, gardens laid out and waterways adapted for the purpose of irrigation. Within several years, the Rehoboth Basters were more prosperous than ever, owning more than 20-thousand sheep and over 3-thousand cows and horses.

The Basters had already created a simple constitution in 1868, during their journey to Rehoboth. This constitution was amended and in 1872 the new constitution for Rehoboth was drafted. The Paternal Laws consist of 30 articles which together encompass all major political activities.

On 31 January 1872, the constitution was officially accepted. It contained among others, the procedures for the election of the Kaptein and his Council, rights and duties of Rehoboth citizenship, election of the Peoples Council and general regulations to structure Rehoboth politics. The constitution was continually amended with new laws until 1919.
Security remained of great concern to the Rehoboth Basters. The hostilities between the Nama and Herero did not completely disappear, despite the agreements at the peace conference of 1870. The Rehoboth Basters were sandwiched between two peoples (Nama and Herero) with much larger populations. The Kaptein and his Council tried hard to convince Basters from elsewhere to move to Rehoboth in order to increase the population size of the Rehoboth Basters.

Twenty Baster families lived at Grootfontein where they settled during the great journey to Rehoboth. In 1874 the government of Rehoboth requested them to move to Rehoboth, which they refused. The regional security situation became worse in the following years, causing most of the Basters in Grootfontein to migrate to Rehoboth in 1881.

The Basters that lived at Okahandja and Otjimbingwe moved to Rehoboth in 1882. A total of 51 families moved from Hoachanas to Rehoboth in 1889. These migrations were a very important factor in the population development of Rehoboth during the founding years.

The tensions between the Nama and Herero turned into war in 1880. The Rehoboth Basters tried to remain neutral, but the rising death toll among the Baster population forced them to form an alliance with the Nama in December 1880. The Herero defeated this coalition on 12 December 1880, after which the fragile alliance fell apart. On 21 July 1882, 18 months later, the Nama, launched an attack on Rehoboth. The Nama were set on regaining the territory they inhabited before the Basters settled there. The siege on Rehoboth was repelled and the Nama were defeated by the Rehoboth Basters.

In the mean time, the Rehoboth Basters had brokered a peace deal with the Herero and expected that the Nama would follow soon. The Nama however attacked Rehoboth again on 10 November 1882, but were repelled and defeated by the superior firepower of the Rehoboth Basters.

The expansion of German colonial influence began with the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885 where Germany was granted South West Africa. Germany concluded many treaties of Friendship and Protection with various indigenous peoples, including the Rehoboth Basters in order to enhance their influence.
German presence in Rehoboth was hardly felt until 1892, when Germany began sending more troops to Rehoboth. The Basters were forced to assign a 'Baster corps' to fight alongside the Germans in their quest for dominance of South West Africa.

The number of military confrontations between Germany and the Nama increased dramatically in 1893. The Nama waged a very effective guerrilla campaign against the encroaching Germans. To gain control of the territory of South West Africa, Germany sent a large force to deal with Nama resistance. With the aid of a Baster corps, the Nama were defeated by Germany in 1894.

The genocide of 1904-1907, that caused the destruction of the Herero and the subjugation of the Nama, completely changed the security situation. In this genocide the Herero lost more than 75% of their population. Germany's control of South West Africa was now complete, and the Basters who were first seen as a (reluctant) ally, lost their position, and with it much of the autonomy of Rehoboth.