

EARLY KRUGERSDORP

Dr Janet du Plooy

The establishment of Krugersdorp in 1887 was the main factor influencing the social-cultural development of the West Rand. Two major events in the late nineteenth century lead to the establishment of the town, namely the First Anglo-Boer War and the discovery of gold. The Paardekraal Monument became the centre of cultural activities, especially of the Afrikaner on the West Rand.

The discovery of gold on the Witwatersrand in the early 1880's and the proclamation of public diggings on the farms Paardekraal, Vogelstruisfontein, Luipaardsvlei, Witpoortjie, Klipplaat, Heuningklip and Wilgespruit in 1886/1887 lead to the establishment of a stands township on the West Rand. This town was named after President Paul Kruger on request of his friend, Vaal Martiens Pretorius, on whose farm (Paardeplaats) the town was established in 1887.ⁱ

The Krugersdorp Diggings were under the jurisdiction of a Mine Commissioner, Robert Gerrit Ockerse.ⁱⁱ Two clerks assisted him with the administration of the gold fields. Act No. 8 of 1889 authorised the mine commissioner to control and manage all matters related to a specific gold field, which included the issuing of licenses and the collection of license fees.ⁱⁱⁱ The authority of the Mine Commissioner was restricted to mining related matters of a specific gold field only and not related to a town or district.^{iv} Ockerse was in charge of more than fifty mines and diggings on the West Rand at the beginning of the Anglo-Boer War.

A Special Magistrate with authority to deal with criminal and legal matters was appointed for each gold field. As in the case of the Mine Commissioner, the authority of the Special Magistrate was restricted to the given gold field and not related to matters outside the jurisdiction of the gold field. J.C. Human was the first Special Magistrate for the Krugersdorp Gold Fields.

The influx of people to the newly proclaimed diggings necessitated the proclamation of a Stands Town, Krugersdorp in 1887. The first 200 stands in Krugersdorp were sold on a public auction on 31 October 1887 under a 99-year leasehold. The condition of the leasehold stated that the lessee could "own the property for 99 years as long as his payment of stand fees was not in arrears."^v

The newly established town only serviced matters related to the gold fields and mining. People from the surrounding farms had to go to Pretoria, Rustenburg, Potchefstroom or Heidelberg for their administrative, military and legal matters.^{vi} The need for an independent district and town to attend to local matters leads to the proclamation of the Krugersdorp District Town in 1894.^{vii} A magistrate, assisted by a justice of the peace and clerks, was responsible for all matters related to the district, which included the management and administration of the District Town. The District Town was established opposite the Stands Town, northwest of the Paardekraal Monument. The first 309 "burgher" stands of approximately 400 square Cape rood ($\pm 39.65424^2\text{m}$) each was allocated to qualifying burghers in 1896.^{viii}

Forthcoming from the establishment of a District Town was the establishment of separate offices for the management and administration of the District Town. By implication, Krugersdorp was serviced at the time by two magistrates, namely J.C. Human as Special Magistrate for the gold fields and H. Hugo as the District Magistrate. Separate Health Committees were responsible for health matters and the general hygiene of the two townships. The amalgamation of the administration of Krugersdorp only happens after the Anglo-Boer War with the establishment of the Krugersdorp Municipality in 1903.

The original layout of the abovementioned towns did not make any provision for the accommodation of people of colour. Black people working on the diggings were usually housed in mine kampongs. The families of these people and other Blacks squatted on the southwestern periphery of the white settlements in an unmannerly way. The general conditions of the people were poor. Little attention was given to housing and health matters at the time. The Black settlement was proclaimed as a "location" in 1905.

The first Indians came to Krugersdorp in 1897. They settled in the area between the Black settlement and the new township for poor white people called Burgershoop. The government established the Burgershoop Brickfields in

1896 to accommodate white farmers whom had flogged to the diggings for a living after the rinderpest of that year.^{ix} The settlement of the Indians next to the poor Whites and the Black people is striking of the settlement pattern of Indian traders of the time, namely to be near their clientele where they provided goods on credit to the poor in competition to the established White traders in town.

The early development of Krugersdorp was overshadowed by the political turmoil of the late 19th Century and influx of foreigners from all over the world to the gold diggings. The character of Krugersdorp was since its inception very cosmopolitan with the development of social clusters based on income, the nature of labour and where the people stayed. During this period Lt. Frederick Tossel from the local police excelled with capturing South Africa's first bank robber and the young and later famous Danie Theron started his practice as attorney in Ockerse Street. The so-called foreigners dominated the economic, political and social scene of the day, e.g. Abner Cohen as hotel owner, Joseff Seehoff and Harvey Greenacre as General Dealers and the Hartley's and Jennings were well known farmers in Hekpoort. The majority of the people however depended on a self-sustainable livelihood, whether as digger, water car-driver, brick maker or vegetable grower. Opportunities for employment were very scarce.

The Anglo-Boer War changed society on all spheres in Krugersdorp. The Assistant Resident Magistrate, Lt. Phillips, took over the military administration of the town. The repatriation of the families in the concentration camp and the returning prisoners of war took up the first six months after the signing of the peace treaty. The return to ruined farms with limited provisions forced many farmers into an impoverished economic position where they lived from the hand to the mouth. Many of the impoverished Afrikaners settled in Krugersdorp, mainly at the Burgershoop Brickfields where they tried to make a living. The general survival of the families was depending on their ability to sustain themselves with limited resources.

As apposed to the devastated situation amongst the returning Boer families, influential traders and professional people settled in the Districts Town where they were held in respect as community leaders and for their management of town matters. They introduced a new British Colonial lifestyle and social order. The Afrikaner was only able to come into their own right as community leaders in the late 1920's and 1930's.

Living conditions amongst people of colour after the Anglo-Boer War remained poor in Krugersdorp. No special provisions were made to better the situation. They were considered to be a source for labour with no political rights.

Krugersdorp however did have all elements and characteristics necessary for a town, namely cultural, administrative and economical functions, physical structures (buildings, streets, etcetera) and an orderly settlement pattern. The development of the town however only happened after the establishment of the Krugersdorp Municipality in 1903 and the election of a Town Council. At the time Krugersdorp did have 19483 inhabitants, of which 3224 people were under the age of fifteen and 16259 above the age of fifteen.^x

ENDNOTES

ⁱ Library, Krugersdorp, Africana Collection: Information file K57, *Krugersdorp: Oorsprong van naam*, wd.

ⁱⁱ TAB, Pretoria, ZAR, band 24: *Executive Council resolutions 1886-1889*, Resolution, Executive Council, 26 April 1887, Art.327; Resolution, Executive Council, 5 June 1888, Art. 305.

ⁱⁱⁱ TAB, Pretoria, ZAR, band 26, J.G. Kotze, *Locale Wetten en Volksraadbesluiten der Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek 1886-1887, Art.24, Act. No. 8 of 1885, p.67*

^{iv} M.A. Schutte, *Die geskiedenis van Krugersdorp ...*, p.12

^v M.A. Schutte, *Die geskiedenis van Krugersdorp ...*, p.20

^{vi} Library, Krugersdorp, Africana Collection: Information file K13, *Krugersdorp, vroeë geskiedenis*, wd.

^{vii} M.A. Schutte, *Die geskiedenis van Krugersdorp ...*, pp.24-32; Library, Krugersdorp, Africana Collection: Information file K24, *Krugersdorp, Akte van Transport*, wd.

^{viii} TAB, Pretoria, MKR, band 2/3/1/119, Correspondence G9, *Konsep dorpsbeplanningskema*, Maart 1939.

^{ix} Library, Krugersdorp, Africana Collection, *Mayor's Minute for the year ending 31 October 1908*, p.24

^x Library, Krugersdorp Africana Collection, *Mayor's minute for the period ending 25 October 1904*. p.2.