



YUNIBESITHI YA BOKONE-BOPHIRIMA
NORTH WEST UNIVERSITY
NOORDWES UNIVERSITEIT

Vaal Triangle Campus

**"THE SEETHING MASSES" – HOUSING, WATER AND
SANITATION IN THE LIVES OF JOHANNESBURG'S POOR
1886-1906**

VALERIE ANNE ZANGEL

A dissertation submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in the subject group History,
School of Basic Sciences, Vaal Triangle Faculty, North-West University.

Study leader: Prof JWN Tempelhoff

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DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation is my own, unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of master of arts in the subject group History, School of Basic Sciences, Vaal Triangle Faculty, North-West University. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university.

V A Zangel
November 2004

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CSAR	Central South African Railways
JWC	The Johannesburg Waterworks' and Exploration Company Limited
kms	kilometers
m	meters
p	page
RWB	Rand Water Board

ABSTRACT

This dissertation is a study of the lives of the poor in Johannesburg during the period 1886 to 1906, with an emphasis on housing, water and sanitation. These three elements are essential to the lives and well-being of all people, and form major components in their standard of living. The use of Johannesburg as the setting for this study is interesting due to its establishment primarily as a mining town, in a location entirely unsuitable for any other purpose. Most large cities are located on a river – this was not the case in Johannesburg. Already in this fact alone there are pointers to the sentiments of the first pioneers. Many of them were hungry for the riches of the earth, and anxious to use it for whatever gain could be derived from it. Initially, water was obtained from small streams and shallow wells. This was however not sufficient to sustain the needs of the rapidly expanding population. With the nearest viable source of supply being the Vaal river, located 70 kilometres outside of the city, entrepreneurs were quick to realise the financial potential of providing water to the residents. Water, so essential to life for drinking and hygiene, became a commodity to be sold. The poorer sectors of the population, without the financial resources to purchase water from tanks and water vendors, remained reliant on shallow wells and whatever the natural environment could offer. With increasing pollution following the rapid urbanization, this constituted a serious health hazard. During periods of drought, such as that in 1895, the reality of the lack of water began to seriously affect the lives of residents. Thereafter it became clear that water was too important to be left in the hands of concession companies. This led to the establishment of the public utility company, Rand Water, who have supplied Johannesburg's needs since 1903.

Housing is a further need which is essential to all people. In the early years of Johannesburg's existence, the necessary building materials were obtained from the natural environment. Due to the fundamental principle of law that the ownership of land determines the ownership of the improvements on that land, speculators realised that there was a profit to be made in the purchasing of large tracts of valuable land in close proximity to the city centre. This had a profound effect on the housing market. Much of the available land was held in the hands of speculators and township companies.

Overcrowding was a result. Other major forms of housing in early Johannesburg were the compounds for unskilled labourers used by the mines, railways and council. Boarding houses were favoured by many single white men. The lack of town planning, especially in areas such as Brickfields (later known as Burghersdorp), and the crowded conditions, led to the deterioration of many parts of the city. It is in the arena of housing that the true sentiments of the residents with regard to issues such as racial divisions, became clear. Ultimately the decision was made that persons of 'colour' should reside in their own separate areas.

In the city, residents are dependent on the council for their sanitation infrastructure. The lack of provision of services of a satisfactory standard leads to a lack of dignity on the part of the population. This was particularly true with regard to the lack of facilities provided to the poorer residents of Johannesburg. Not only did the council fail to accommodate the fact that different cultures have varied habits with regard to their ablutions, but in many cases services were kept to the absolute minimum.

By focusing on housing, water and sanitation in the first two decades after its founding, it is possible to obtain a perspective on the lives of the 'ordinary' people living in Johannesburg. These people contributed in large measure to the city's early growth, yet their contribution has largely escaped the historical record. This study seeks to bridge that gap, and to draw some comparisons with the already well-documented lives of the wealthier citizens of the city.

OPSOMMING

Hierdie studie is 'n ondersoek na die lewenswyse van arm mense in Johannesburg (1886 tot 1906), met besondere verwysing na behuising, water en sanitasie. Dié drie elemente vorm 'n essensiële deel van die mens se lewe en welsyn in samelewingsverband. Dit vorm in die besonder 'n belangrike onderafdeling van wat beskou kan word as 'n lewensstandaard in 'n geordende gemeenskap. Die feit dat juis Johannesburg as terrein van ondersoek vir hierdie studie gekies is, is interessant. Die stad is oorspronklik as 'n myndorp gestig. Dit was vir geen ander doel wesentlik funksioneel nie. Die meeste groot stede word gewoonlik langs 'n rivier, of 'n betekenisvolle waterbron aangelê. In die geval van Johannesburg was dit nie so nie. Hierdie feit is op sigself reeds 'n aanduiding van die eerste baanbrekers se sentimente. Hulle het 'n versugting na die rykdom van die aarde gehad en was gretig om dit ten alle koste te bevredig.

In die destydse Johannesburg is water aanvanklik uit klein spruitjies en vlak putte gehaal. Dit was onvoldoende om in die behoeftes van 'n snelgroeiende bevolking te voorsien. Die naaste omvangryke en bruikbare waterbron was die Vaalrivier, sowat 70km suid van die Witwatersrand. Ondernemers het spoedig die waarde van hierdie bron ingesien. Aangesien water essensieel is, het dit onder omstandighede van skaarsheid in Johannesburg 'n kommoditeit geword wat verkoop kon word. Behoeftige mense wat nie oor die geldelike middele beskik het om water van handelaars by behoueringstenks en watersmouse te koop nie, is genoodsaak om staat te maak op vlak putte of natuurlike omgewingsbronne. Besoedeling, as gevolg van die snelle verstedeliking, het toenemend 'n probleem geword. Dit het 'n ernstige gesondheidsgevaar ingehou. Gedurende droogtes, soos byvoorbeeld in 1895, het die werklikheid van watertekorte die lewensgehalte van inwoners ernstig aangetas. Daarna het dit duidelik geword dat watervoorsiening te belangrik was om bloot aan private maatskappye met konsessies oor te laat. Dit het daartoe gelei dat 'n openbare nutsbedryf, Rand Waterraad, in 1903 gestig is om in Johannesburg se waterbehoefte te voorsien.

'n Tweede basiese behoefte van alle mense is behuising. In die vroeë jare van Johannesburg is boumateriaal uit die natuurlike omgewing ontgin. As gevolg van die regsbeginsel dat die eienaarskap van grond ook by implikasie die eienaarskap van verbeteringe daarop insluit, het spekulante spoedig besef dat groot grondaankope naby die sentrale handelsgebied van Johannesburg winsgewend kon wees. Dié besef het 'n wesentlike invloed op die behuisingsmark gehad. Groot stukke grond was in die hande van spekulante en maatskappye wat dorpsgebiede ontwikkel het. Die gevolg was oorbevolking in die gebiede wat vir behoeftige mense beskikbaar was. 'n Ander belangrike vorm van behuising in die vroeë Johannesburg was die kampongs vir ongeskoolde arbeiders wat in die myne, op die spoorweg en by die munisipaliteit werksaam was. Blanke mans was egter meer ten gunste van losieshuisverblyf. 'n Gebrek aan dorpsbeplanning, veral in gebiede soos Brickfields (later bekend as Burghersdorp), en die gepaardgaande oorbevolkte omstandighede, het tot die agteruitgang van groot dele van die stad aanleiding gegee. Dit is dan ook op die behuisingsgebied wat die ware

gevoelens van inwoners met betrekking tot rasseskeiding duidelik geword het. Uiteindelik is daar besluit dat gekleurdes in hulle eie gebiede moet woon.

Wat die derde element van konsentrasie in dié studie betref, die volgende: mense in stedelike verband is in die reël vir hul sanitasie-infrastruktuur op 'n plaaslike owerheid aangewese. 'n Gebrekkige diensvoorsiening in dié verband sal die menswaardigheid van die inwoners aantas. Sodanige situasie was veral die geval in die meer armoedige dele van Johannesburg waar fasiliteite bykans nie bestaan het nie. Die stadsraad het nie net misluk om erkenning te gee aan die uiteenlopende sanitêre behoeftes van die mense wat deel van verskillende kulture was nie, maar in baie gevalle die beskikbare dienste tot die minimum beperk.

Deur op behuising, water en sanitasie gedurende die eerste twee dekades van Johannesburg se bestaan te konsentreer, is dit moontlik om 'n perspektief op die lewens van sogenaamde gewone stadsmense te kry. Hierdie mense het in 'n groot mate tot die vroeëre groei van die stad bygedra, maar in die rekordhouding van die stad se geskiedenis word weinig erkenning aan hulle gegee. Die huidige studie poog om hierdie leemte te vul, asook om aan die hand van die bevindinge 'n aantal vergelykings te tref met die reeds bestaande en goed gedokumenteerde inligting oor die lewens van die meer gegoede inwoners van die destydse Johannesburg.

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FOREWORD

The choice of subject matter, when embarking on a post-graduate study, is unlimited. My own decision to investigate housing, water and sanitation in early Johannesburg stemmed, in the first instance, from an attempt to record a history of numerous people whose contribution played an essential part in the shaping of Johannesburg as we know it today, and whose contribution has been largely ignored. Johannesburg has been my home town for the whole of my adult life, and it seemed appropriate that I should acknowledge them.

Housing, water and sanitation, as the point of reference for the study, provided an opportunity to bring my own life's experiences into the picture. I grew up in rural Zimbabwe, the youngest of nine children, born of an illiterate white labourer. My life therefore had many similarities to that of the many people who came into Johannesburg during the period about which the study relates. "Home" was a house made of poles and "dakga" (mud), with a thatched roof. There were no ceilings. Windows were openings in the rooms, without glass, but with wooden shutters. The floors were of compacted earth, which had to be swept several times each day. The kitchen was set apart from the main house, and we had the good fortune of having a wood-burning stove.

Our toilet facilities consisted of what was termed "a long drop". This was an outside toilet consisting of a hole dug deep into the ground with wooden boards covering most of the hole, providing the base of the wooden box (with a small opening) which was the actual toilet. The toilet was situated in the far end of the property. My father's meagre income did not allow for the purchase of toilet paper – newspaper was the best that we could afford. Many of my earliest memories revolve around the "long drop" – surprisingly smell was not one of them! The pathway was jealously guarded by a rooster called Peter who had the most formidable spurs and who dreamed of a life as a Bali cock fighter in the story described by Clifford Geertz! Any attempt to reach the toilet meant running as fast as one's little legs could manage, armed with a stick to protect oneself

against the dreaded Peter! At night the situation changed. With Peter safely in the chicken-coop, it was possible to enjoy the night sky – with the most stunning views of the Milky Way and the appreciation that my surroundings were truly magnificent.

My relationship with water was also one which had a profound influence on my life. There were no taps in the house – water had to be carried into the house in buckets, and any hot water was heated on a fire outside. Water was an extremely precious commodity, and was never wasted. Very often, as the youngest in the household, it was my fate to bath after several other family members, in cold water bearing the soap scum of the previous users. The water was cold, and there was no invitation to prolong one's stay in it! Once it had been used it was carried out once more in buckets, and used to water the small garden which surrounded our house.

Rain was very special. Often we would hear thunder, but no rain would fall. The showers, when they did come, were of short duration. It was not the time to be indoors, but rather out, removing the planks off the drums which were the main storage containers for our water supply. All basins, buckets and tubs were put into the open, to catch as much water as possible. Once the rain was over, we would wash our hair outside in the most wonderful, sweet-smelling water! It was a time of much joy and excitement!

When I was at school I always felt that my home set me apart from the other scholars. As a white person, I was able to receive an education, and was introduced to the different facilities and standards which the other scholars took for granted. At no stage did I speak about the situation at home – it was a secret I guarded very closely.

However, my studies of Johannesburg history showed me that there were many people who had similar backgrounds, and who had also come into the city in the hope of a better life for themselves. In the first few years of Johannesburg's existence, there was inter-racial mixing. It was a society resting on class divisions, rather than racial ones. By 1904, however, the situation had begun to change. With the preoccupation of the importance of the 'white' race as displayed by the Milner regime, and by the Afrikaners,

there was a calculated move towards the separation of the races. Just as my own colour had allowed me to get an education, so too were the whites of early Johannesburg elevated into a different social standing – this time based on colour. The stigma of being a ‘poor white’ is a mantle that is often worn in secret; in the chapter titled “The lives of the poor” we learn about the Afrikaners who felt obliged to dress in a certain way to differentiate themselves from Black Africans.

The sadness in this study rests in the inability of Whites in positions of authority to recognise the fact that lack of services such as sanitation, poor housing conditions, and limited water resources lead to a lack of dignity on the part of the impoverished. To deny the African population a reliable and clean water supply, and on removal to Klipspruit, to limit their water supply to 32 litres per day, and to then expect that they would by some miracle conform to Western standards of hygiene, is a travesty of justice. It is my hope that this study will bring some light to the appalling conditions under which these early Johannesburg residents lived, and to acknowledge their vital contribution to the history of the city.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It was at the History Workshops held at the University of the Witwatersrand that my love of history was first awakened, and along with it, the decision to learn about the history of the country that I had decided to make my home. The University of South Africa (Unisa) became my ‘academic home’ for many years thereafter. Nicolas Southey’s help and encouragement during my honours degree will always be appreciated and never forgotten. He gave history life and meaning. Professor Johann Tempelhoff was a true inspiration and mentor. I would like to thank him for supervising my work so thoroughly, and for allowing me so much academic freedom. His support has been consistent and he has always been available for discussion. It has been an extremely pleasurable experience to study under his guidance. The staff of North-West University’s campus at Vanderbijlpark deserves special mention for their caring attitude. Dr Kevin Wall, a personal friend, was also very supportive during the course of these studies. My special thanks go to each and every one of these individuals.

... timid historians ... have tip-toed through the tree-lined avenues of the northern suburbs, peering into the homes and lifestyles of the 'Randlords', attempting to put a romantic gloss on the ceaseless pursuit of wealth at a time when, elsewhere in the city, the dusty streets were bursting at the seams with a seething mass of struggling humanity. It is almost by concentrating exclusively on the exploits of a small number of ruling-class actors the people could be ignored, and the city would somehow be endowed with a mythical collective past which was more becoming to its present role as one of the major finance capitals of the world.¹

CHAPTER 1 - CONTEXTUAL PERSPECTIVE

The primary focus of this study is to obtain an impression of what life must have been like for the majority of Johannesburg's residents during the first twenty years of its existence, especially in relation to their housing, water and sanitation needs. The story of Johannesburg has generally been told from the perspective of a gold mining town. The mining magnates have been in the centre of history's stage, with the white mine workers in the wings. These individuals were, however, in the minority. In order to service the gold mining industry, numerous other individuals also played a very real part. This study seeks to give a voice to the history of these ordinary people – those who, of whatever race, had also come to the city in the hope of a better life. Occasionally, some of the citizens were, through hard work, and good fortune, able to improve their situation. But this was the exception rather than the rule. For the remainder, life was a daily struggle, often containing a central thread of poverty. Other common denominators were the need for housing, water and sanitation.

The use of Johannesburg as an example of a city providing housing, water and sanitation to its residents is, in itself, particularly interesting due to its establishment primarily as a mining town, and in a location entirely unsuitable for any other purpose. Most cities in the world are located on a major river – this is not, however, the case in Johannesburg. Already in this fact alone there are pointers to the avarice of the first pioneers – many of whom were hungry for the riches of the earth, and anxious to use the earth for whatever gain could be derived from it. Water thus became another commodity, which could be sold for a profit.

Worster has rightly pointed out that a history of water use without any theory in it becomes a mere massing of details – specifics without conclusions, data without consequences.¹ The same is equally true with regard to housing. In this chapter, the aim is to provide the necessary framework to enhance the reader's understanding of the social and cultural focus that will follow in the remainder of the study. A number of areas have been identified:

1 D Worster, *Rivers of empire*, p. 21.

SECTION ONE – WATER AND SANITATION

In this section it is our need for water, in all its multi-faceted aspects, that is considered. A further aspect that will be evaluated is Johannesburg's unique position with regard to water supply.

Sanitation, as it existed at the time of the study, will also be discussed.

SECTION TWO – HOUSING

Here the focus is on providing a background to housing, and in particular, the materials that were available for use in construction, as well as the laws which were in force at the time.

SECTION THREE – THE FIRST FIVE YEARS

Johannesburg saw a tremendous growth during the first five years of its history. This section seeks to give some idea of what newcomers would have encountered on their arrival in the city.

SECTION ONE - WATER AND SANITATION

The focus of this study is not on the manner in which the water companies came into existence. It is not on the number of metres of piped water that were brought into the suburbs. It is rather on the daily struggles of the majority of the inhabitants, who were often without recourse to a safe and reliable source of drinking water, effective sanitation and good accommodation.

Some background on the establishment of the water companies is necessary, however, in order to place the study in the correct perspective. This is especially so in the light of the fact that these companies, in the first few years of Johannesburg's existence, had a very real impact on whether or not its citizens received water from public supplies.

THE IMPORTANCE OF WATER IN OUR LIVES

In present-day society, water seems to be available merely by turning on a tap. We have become so accustomed to the ready availability of water that we have lost sight of what life would be like without it. What is often overlooked are the many ways in which water impacts on our lives. The use of water by humans for domestic use has had an effect on both the quality of life of such persons, as well as an effect on the natural environment from which the water emanates. Human history cannot be understood in a vacuum. All human societies have been, and still are, dependent on complex, interrelated chemical and biological processes. Humans are part of the earth's ecosystems, whether or not they are always conscious of this fact and its implications. All plants and animals tend to modify the environment as they compete and co-operate with others to survive and flourish.² Earth has been variously called the planet of water and the planet of life, the connection between the two attributes being by no means casual. Without water, there simply can be no life. Water flows in the veins and roots of all living organisms, as precious to them as the air they breathe

2 C Ponting, *A green history of the world: the environment and the collapse of great civilisations*, p. 17.

and the food they eat. It is the lifeblood of their collective body.³ The human body is 70% water. People begin to feel thirst after a loss of only 1% of bodily fluids and risk death if fluid loss nears 10%. Human beings can only survive a few days without fresh water.⁴

Water has been critical to human history, not only because of man's need of it to sustain life, but also because of its various other attributes. As an organic form, it does not have regard for the life forms it maintains. It is only with human intervention that particular communities receive it in abundance, while it is denied or restricted to others. Through the course of its history, it has shaped institutions, destroyed cities, set limits to expansion, brought feast and famine, carried goods to the market, brought and washed away sickness, divided nations, inspired the worship of gods, given philosophers a metaphor for existence, and disposed of garbage. To write history without putting any water in it is to leave out a large part of the story. Human experience has not been as dry as that.⁵

Equally important is the manner in which water, in its presence or absence, impacts directly on the lives of the people. Water has become so much of a commodity in our lives that we lose sight of the fact that it is about human dignity, which is as precious as food, and painfully absent where there is no easy access to ample water supply. It is also about the recognition that different cultures may relate to water and sanitation in various ways. These issues are explored throughout this research.

WATER AND SANITATION

Water provides yet a further dimension. Over and above our need of it for drinking purposes, it is absolutely essential with regard to cleanliness and hygiene. The cult of cleanliness, upon which modern hygiene fundamentally depends, had its origins before the nineteenth century: it owes much to the Dutch cities of the seventeenth century, with their plentiful water supplies. But cleanliness got new reinforcements from

3 D Worster, *Rivers of empire Water, aridity and the growth of the American West*, p. 19.

4 D Hinrichsen, et. al, *Solutions for a water-short world*, p. 2.

5 D Worster, *Rivers of empire*, p. 19.

medicine after 1870, following especially on Pasteur's research in bacteriology.⁶ Instead of being a delicate upper class taste, scarcely popular even in aristocratic circles in the eighteenth century, it became a universal necessity. Hygiene magnified the importance of the water supply: not merely demanding purity, but increasing steadily the quantity necessary, as the habits of bathing and washing spread in widening circles from one economic group to another. Frequent hand washing and body washing, to say nothing of the washing of clothes, made the provision of running water an essential element in house-planning or community-building. Whereas bathrooms were frequently not provided for even in the finest houses early in the nineteenth century, by the end of the century the provision of a separate bathtub for every family – and if possible a separate bathroom – became a minimum ideal, if not an actual achievement, in every rational housing programme.⁷

With increasing rigour and effectiveness these hygienic requirements were extended to the disposal of human excrement and rubbish. The water-closet, invented by Sir John Harrington in 1596, was not perfected until 1778 when the Bramah took a hand in its design.⁸ In the course of a century the installation of water-closets in urban houses rose rapidly. By the end of the nineteenth century the standard of one water-closet for every family became the most imperative sanitary precaution for close-built communities throughout the western world.⁹ All these individual changes, moreover, had important collective consequences. It became necessary for municipalities to become involved in the provision of services, especially with regard to sanitation and water supply. In Johannesburg the supply of water had further ramifications. Without a ready supply of water in close proximity to the city, and without the financial ability to address the problem of a reliable water supply, the municipality looked to the state for assistance. The state, in turn, also lacked the financial reserves and expertise. The initial solution appeared to be in the provision of concessions to interested companies, and it was this route that was taken. The concessions soon became monopolies, and within a number of years it became evident that water had become too important a matter of public concern to be left to the supply of the individual water companies, selling their product only to those who could afford to pay for the services, and continuing in business only

6 L Mumford, *The culture of cities*, p. 424.

7 L Mumford, *The culture of cities*, p. 424.

8 L Mumford, *The culture of cities*, p. 424.

9 L Mumford, *The culture of cities*, p. 424.

so long as the company could show a profit. For the sake of the health of the community as a whole, it became important to distribute pure water, whether or not a particular family wanted it or could afford it. These facts held equally true for the systems for disposing of garbage, waste and sewerage.

JOHANNESBURG AND ITS UNIQUE POSITION REGARDING WATER SUPPLY

*I do not know much about gods; but I think that the river
Is a strong brown god – sullen, untamed and intractable,
Patient to some degree, at first recognised as a frontier;
Useful, untrustworthy, as a conveyor of commerce;
Then only a problem confronting the builder of bridges.
The problem once solved, the brown god is almost forgotten
By the dwellers in cities – ever, however, implacable,
Keeping his seasons and rages, destroyer, reminder
Of what men choose to forget.*

T S Eliot¹⁰

Since time immemorial, water has determined the locality of the world's earliest civilizations, and throughout history it has governed human life and progress. In early South African history, areas which showed promise as sites for new towns were generally surveyed, and thereafter a "leivoor" was dug in order to provide the residents with water.¹¹ This was not the case in Johannesburg.¹² Once gold was discovered on the Witwatersrand, it was no longer the presence of water, but minerals, particularly gold, which dictated the locality of human settlement.

10 T S Eliot, *The Four Quartets*, p. 31.

11 J W N Tempelhoff, "Time and the river: Observations on the Vaal River as a source of water to the Witwatersrand 1903-1924" in *Historia*, 46 (1), May 2000, p. 91.

12 J W N Tempelhoff, "Time and the river: Observations on the Vaal River as a source of water to the Witwatersrand 1903-1924" in *Historia*, 46 (1), May 2000, p. 91.

Johannesburg's unique situation regarding its water supply stems primarily as a result of the distance between the city and its nearest reliable source of supply. The founding of Johannesburg in 1886 on the Transvaal Highveld in many respects placed a high premium on human ingenuity. It was located in the sparsely populated interior of the southern subcontinent, and provision had to be made for an urban society that was soon to set the pace for industrial development in southern Africa. Water was to play a crucial role. The fact that Johannesburg was not located on a major river presented a major engineering challenge. The engineering fraternity clung to the idea of literally capturing the water of the Witwatersrand before it flowed into the Vaal River for as long as possible. It was a strategy that would ultimately be exhausted by the sheer growth in consumer demand. In the end, the Vaal River, some 70 kilometres south of Johannesburg, proved to be the only viable source of water. That realization however, only manifested itself in the twentieth century.¹³

There is another ramification of the lack of a ready water supply for Johannesburg's citizens. At its inception, the residents were forced to rely on the natural environment to provide for their water requirements. The landscape was arid and the rainfall poor. Within a few short years, the environment was unable to cope with the population growth, and to sustain the needs of the people. Soon the necessity for human intervention was established. The state did not have the resources, either financial or technical, to deal with the enormous demand for water. Initially it was thought that the provision of concessions to private companies would be an ideal way of generating revenue for the state. As the mining camps mushroomed it became obvious that a coherent system of water provision was necessary. The situation was addressed on two fronts: as a business proposition by a group of wealthy Johannesburgers, and as a community problem by the diggers' committee.

In the first months after the proclamation of the Johannesburg gold fields, the diggers' committee was the only civic authority. The body operated under the instructions of the government of the South African Republic and the under legislation emanating from the first and second *Volksraad*. The members' task was to ratify diggers' claims

13 J W N Tempelhoff, "Time and the river: Observations on the Vaal River as a source of water to the Witwatersrand 1903-1924" in *Historia*, 46 (1), May 2000, p. 89.

and water rights, and settle any disputes. The committee members began to liaise with President Paul Kruger towards the end of his first term of office in 1887, regarding the needs of the Johannesburg community, including the increasingly serious water situation. The *Volksraad* had little experience in dealing with such problems, and although Kruger was reasonably sympathetic, he did not have the means at the disposal of the state to do much to improve the situation. The *Volksraad* did, however, purchase 200 hectares of land on the farm Braamfontein as a commonage for Johannesburg. The single spring on the land was then cleared by order of the *Landdrost* and the water was made available to the community.¹⁴ But the yield of the spring was weak and it provided an insufficient increment to the water resources of the community.¹⁵ This spring was all the state offered and it became evident that, by default, public services would have to be brought to Johannesburg by other means.¹⁶

Simultaneously with official efforts to improve the water situation in Johannesburg, a group of businessmen had become involved in initiating a water supply system. They began their work independently, without any sanction from the *Volksraad*, and formed an unregistered syndicate. The group included prominent individuals such as A Mosley, T Y Sherwell, D M Burton, S B Height, and C Jeppe. The syndicate received its overall direction from the mining magnates Cecil John Rhodes and C D Rudd in Kimberley, and it appears to have been purposefully established in order to pave the way for a larger concern. The creation of the syndicate demonstrated that, from their inception, waterworks were viewed as a profitable enterprise especially useful in association with mining endeavours. Soon after the formation of the group, negotiations began with Rhodes and Rudd for the floating of a formal company which would take over all the stocks and operations of the syndicate. At this initial stage in the development of a formal water supply system for Johannesburg, there was a contest between public and private interests. Because the private concern occupied a more commanding financial and managerial position than the still embryonic *Volksraad*, the private initiative succeeded at this stage. But these early public-orientated

14 E M Crosser, Water supply and utilization in Johannesburg, pp. 13-14.

15 *Eastern Star*, 14 November 1887 as quoted by E M Crosser, Water supply and utilization in Johannesburg, p. 14.

16 E M Crosser, Water supply and utilization in Johannesburg, p. 14.

manoeuvres had nonetheless taken root and proved to be a continual thorn in the flesh of private enterprise.¹⁷

The Johannesburg Waterworks' Estate and Exploration Company Limited (JWC) came into being in July 1887, with a capital of £40 000,00 in £1 shares. In their initial prospectus they stated that the company's intention was to convey the water to Johannesburg by means of piping. The population of Johannesburg at the time was 3000 inhabitants, and was said to be rapidly increasing. It was anticipated that water would be available in three months.¹⁸ (See illustration 1, p. 47).

With regard to the water supply, the government found itself unable to cope with the demands of the ever-increasing population. Once again it was left to private initiative to get a proper water supply system off the ground.¹⁹ The government found the grant of a concession the simplest way of meeting public needs, and benefiting public revenue.²⁰ In April 1887 the owners of a pocket of land on the farm Doornfontein, which was laid out as a suburb of Doornfontein a month later, applied to the government for a concession to supply water to the settlement. (Their property included the farmstead and farm fed by a perennial spring). The application was approved in December.²¹ The distinction of being the first concessionaire belonged to James Sivewright (afterwards Sir James, and a prime minister in the Cape Colony).²²

The syndicate began its activities by making roads, and purchasing and leasing stands in Doornfontein. During the course of 1887 the building of a reservoir was begun, and the water-pipes which would be required for a reticulation system were ordered. The rights to a water source situated on a part of the farm Doornfontein were acquired on lease. The agreement allowed the group to sell water, or the right to its use, to various people in the immediate area.²³

17 E M Crosser, *Water supply and utilization in Johannesburg*, pp. 14-15.

18 E L Gray, *A history of the discovery of the Witwatersrand goldfields*, p. 203.

19 G-M van der Waal, *The beginnings of Johannesburg, 1886-1940*, p. 11.

20 D Jacobsson, *Fifty golden years of the Rand, 1886-1936*, p. 171.

21 G-M van der Waal, *The beginnings of Johannesburg, 1886-1940*, p. 11.

22 D Jacobsson, *Fifty golden years of the Rand, 1886-1936*, p. 171.

23 E M Crosser, *Water supply and utilization in Johannesburg*, p 15.

The local sources of Doornfontein and Weltevreden, from which the Johannesburg Waterworks Company drew their supplies, yielded between 2 271 000 litres and 3 407 000 litres, according to the season. However, the quality and quantity of this water gave rise, according to the Water Supply Commission of 1895 ('the commission') to 'everlasting complaints by the public'. In about 1896 they acquired the farms Steenkoppies and Wolvekrans, and later on, a portion of the farm Zuurbekom. Steenkoppies and Wolvekrans were not utilized, as the company found that Zuurbekom would supply at least 378 500 litres per diem, which was the greatest amount that the company then considered they would be justified in attempting to secure. Weltevreden seems to have been regarded as useless for any considerable supply.²⁴ At this time Johannesburg was little more than a collection of huts and tents, with an estimated population of 3000.²⁵ Early in 1888 the concessionaries began constructing a reservoir and laying underground pipes to relieve the pressure on the numerous wells and water carts with which the community had to make do until then.²⁶ At a function attended by a thousand guests in September, Mrs von Brandis laid the foundation stone on the storage reservoir at Doornfontein.²⁷ The site chosen by the company for the construction of the reservoir was a spring emerging from a steep ridge on the edge of the northern boundary of the farm Doornfontein. It was just over two kilometres from the edge of the township, with the advantage of a 17 metre head of natural gravitation.²⁸ (See illustration 2, p. 48).

Although Mrs Von Brandis laid the foundation stone early in 1888, it was not until Barney Barnato secured control towards the end of that year that any impetus was given to the actual work of construction.²⁹ Fortunately, Barney Barnato realized that if the company went bankrupt Johannesburg would be deprived of the bulk of its water supply no matter how defective it might be. He therefore supplied the working capital which enabled it to continue operations. The company began the purchase of urgently needed pumping machinery and piping, and plans were put in hand for the construction of reservoirs and other necessary works.³⁰ It was not finished in time to

24 TA C4, *Report of the Witwatersrand Water supply commission, 1902-1902*, p. viii.

25 R J Laburn, *An historical review of the water supply of the Witwatersrand*, p. 2.

26 G-M van der Waal, *The beginnings of Johannesburg, 1886-1940*, p. 11.

27 J R Shorten, *The Johannesburg saga*, p. 96.

28 R Crisp, *The outlanders The men who made Johannesburg*, p. 122.

29 R Crisp, *The outlanders The men who made Johannesburg*, p. 122.

30 J R Shorten, *The Johannesburg saga*, p. 167.

cope with the drought of 1889.³¹ Eventually the Johannesburg Waterworks, Estate and Exploration Company laid on piped water from its dam in Doornfontein on the 23 June 1888.³² The first house to be supplied was that of Henry Struben.³³

However, the amount of piping was quite inadequate to meet the needs of the rapidly growing town. The company's high charge for the water it supplied varied from 1s 6d per 100 to 10s per 3800 litres. Yet even this tariff was far from sufficient to ensure the company's success. Its first balance sheet showed that it had debts of £18 645 while cash in hand only amounted to £10.³⁴ A large number of premises did not connect up with the company's mains and shallow wells and rainwater tanks were in use for a long time. In the higher levels of the town the pressure was not sufficient to send the water through the pipes and the company used to deliver it in service vans or water carts.³⁵ As from January 3, 1890, taps were turned off daily for three hours. However, copious rains fell in April and the supply was restored.³⁶ At this stage, the company only pumped 15 litres per head of the population and it was feared that there would be a shortage in the coming winter. At that time a large part of the town was still not served by the company. In Jeppe, wells nine metres to 12 metres deep secured an ample supply and cost £7 10s to sink.³⁷

Two other companies, the Braamfontein Company and the Vierfontein Syndicate, were also formed to supply water to various parts of Johannesburg. The Doornfontein Reservoir was supplemented by a large well in Auckland Park.³⁸ Later, the Braamfontein Estate Company began to supply water from a large well in Auckland Park some 23 metres deep in the Hospital Hill shale. Meanwhile, the government had authorized the construction of a cattle dam between the fountains on the farm Braamfontein. This turned out to be a great attraction for the people of Johannesburg who began using it as a swimming pool.³⁹

31 R Crisp, *The outlanders The men who made Johannesburg*, p. 122.

32 J R Shorten, *The Johannesburg saga*, p. 96.

33 J A S Gray, *Payable gold*, p. 204.

34 J R Shorten, *The Johannesburg saga*, p. 166.

35 L E Neame, *City built on gold*, p. 66.

36 R J Laburn, "A historical review of the water supply of the Witwatersrand", p. 2.

37 L E Neame, *City built on gold*, p. 67.

38 N and R Musiker, *A concise historical dictionary of Greater Johannesburg*, p. 276.

39 J R Shorten, *The Johannesburg saga*, p. 96.

With the enormous increase in the population, the growth in water consumption was phenomenal. The effect of the concession which had been granted to the Johannesburg Waterworks Company was that the company had the exclusive use to supply water to the town's residents. It was not long before residents recognised that this placed them in a very precarious situation. The inhabitants had tolerated the inability of the company to constantly live up to its mandate to supply water to them, especially during the drought of 1895 – 1896. However, at the inception of the South African War, many British subjects were forced to flee Johannesburg, often at very short notice, and under the most arduous conditions. Under these circumstances, many failed to notify the Waterworks Company. The Waterworks Company continued to read meters during the war, or at the very least to impose the minimum charge for water usage despite the absence of the owners. When the owners returned to their homes, and disputed their obligation to pay, the company argued that in some cases the water was used by caretakers responsible to the owners. In other cases, the company denied that consumers had given notice to discontinue the provision of the service, when they had in fact done so. A number of disputes arose, with the company stating that they had come to an 'amicable settlement' with the residents. Quinn's attitude was that – "what else we ask can a man without water do than to come to an 'amicable settlement' in order to obtain it". He further expressed the view that the company could dictate terms, and that nowhere else under His Majesty's Government would a man have the right to sit in judgment in a court where he himself is a party to the dispute.⁴⁰

In a report submitted by J W Quinn to the town council, he raised a pertinent question :

What, we ask, would be the attitude of the government toward a company who claimed the sole right to supply a great city with food but acknowledged no obligation to supply it? But water is no less a necessity than food, and the citizens of Johannesburg must cease to

40 TA MJB 1/4/2 Health Committee minutes, Meeting 16 January 1902.

drink water or drink it at the pleasure of the Johannesburg Water Company.⁴¹

The situation was brought to the attention of Major W O'Meara. O'Meara was an engineer, and he became aware that in Johannesburg the supply of water – the most vital of all human needs – was not satisfactory. O'Meara's "Notes on Proposed Reconstruction, Johannesburg Municipality" written in April 1901, observed that the company holding the waterworks monopoly had "raised quite a storm" by its high-handed actions in the past. It possessed unusual powers over the streets in the town and used meters which tended to record inaccurately in its favour. That aspect required immediate attention but, said O'Meara, it should be recognised that the springs in the area were inadequate and unreliable. The long-term solution would have to be a regional scheme to bring water for both towns and mines from the Vaal River.⁴² In 1902 the colonial secretary notified interested parties that a communication had been addressed to the secretary of state for the colonies with the view to the appointment of an engineering expert of the highest reputation to investigate and report on the proposals for a permanent water supply for Johannesburg and the Rand, who would have a free hand for a year to make such experiments, aided by local engineers and surveyors.⁴³

By the end of the war the supply of water to Johannesburg was in the hands of three main business concerns, namely, the Johannesburg Waterworks Company, the Braamfontein Company and the Vierfontein Syndicate.⁴⁴ After the South African War the assets of the Johannesburg Waterworks Company were acquired by the municipality, and a vast scheme of water mains and distribution pipes was put in hand which linked in with the take-over of supplies by the Rand Water Board.⁴⁵ The Rand Water Board was established in 1903 by the Transvaal government, which appointed its chairman. The board comprised five representatives of the mining industry, three

41 TA MJB 1/4/2 Health Committee minutes, Meeting 16 January 1902.

42 N Mandy, *A city divided: Johannesburg and Soweto*, p. 24.

43 T A R Purchas "Souvenir of the opening of the Vaal River Scheme by his Royal Highness, Prince Arthur of Connaught", p. 10.

44 R J Laburn, "An historical review of the water supply to the Witwatersrand", p. 9.

45 J R Shorten, *The Johannesburg saga*, p. 168.

of Johannesburg and one each for towns on the East Rand and the West Rand.⁴⁶ After a preliminary investigation the board recommended that two principles should guide its actions. Firstly, the municipalities of the Witwatersrand should receive water from it in bulk, which they would then distribute and sell within their respective areas. Secondly, the board should expropriate the private undertakings which were then supplying water throughout its area.⁴⁷ The Rand Water Board was established as a public water supplier in terms of Ordinance No. 32 of 1903. This consolidated the commercial service providers of Johannesburg under the umbrella of a statutory body, which acted in the interest of a number of local authorities on the Witwatersrand and the economically powerful mining companies. Shortly after its formation the board took over the Johannesburg Waterworks Company, the Vierfontein Syndicate and the Braamfontein Water Company.⁴⁸

Water tariffs were reduced sharply and additional sources of supply were tapped.⁴⁹ The area of supply at the inception of the Rand Water Board was 4547 square kilometres. Since then its activities have been enlarged several times.⁵⁰ From its very beginning, the Rand Water Board was at pains to supply Johannesburg's residents with pure and uncontaminated water. The Rand Water Board (now known as 'Rand Water') still survives to this very day, and is an important part of the lives of all Johannesburg residents. An old photograph of the tombstone of William Ingham, who died on 7 March 1924, bears this inscription –

“EXEGI MONUMENTUM AERA PERENNIUS”

which means, literally, “I have achieved something of long standing”.

These words are fitting, not only to Mr William Ingham, Chief Engineer of the board from 1910 to 1924, during which time the board made incredible progress, but also to all those worked for this organization, which had so well provided for the water needs

46 N Mandy, *A city divided: Johannesburg and Soweto*, p. 24.

47 N Mandy, *A city divided: Johannesburg and Soweto*, p. 24.

48 J W N Tempelhoff “Time and the river: Observations on the Vaal River as the source of water to the Witwatersrand 1903-24” in *Historia*, 46 (1), May 2000, p. 251.

49 The site which Major O’Meara had recommended in 1901 was eventually acquired in 1914.

50 N Mandy, *A city divided: Johannesburg and Soweto*, p. 24.

of Johannesburg's residents.⁵¹ Certainly, without the Rand Water Board, Johannesburg would not have been able to develop so rapidly and so freely. Since the board assumed responsibility for the provision of water in 1903, the Witwatersrand has received a reliable supply of water. This is in itself testimony to the fact that the decision to place the supply of water in the hands of a public utility corporation, rather than to continue the practice of the use of concessionaries, was the best one that could have been made by Johannesburg's early residents.

SECTION TWO - HOUSING

The need for housing or some form of shelter is common to all people. In the first few years of Johannesburg's existence, the residents looked to the natural environment for the provision of this need. Houses were built of reeds, poles and any other materials which were readily available. Initially they were located close to the small *spruits* (streamlets) and natural reservoirs in the area, and thereafter in close proximity to the market square. In the early years of Johannesburg's existence the boundaries of the urban centre were limited, and service provision, likewise, did not extend beyond the boundaries of the city. Anyone who wished to have some semblance of service, and help with water supply, was therefore practically obliged to try and find accommodation close to the city centre.

There was a tendency for employers to keep their employees in close proximity to their workplace. The emergence of a racially pure lattice of residential townships in early Johannesburg was undermined by these labour requirements.⁵² This gave rise to domestic servants being housed on the premises of their employers,⁵³ mine workers in the compounds on the mines,⁵⁴ and municipal workers also in compounds within the city boundaries.⁵⁵ For those who were not employed in any of the above categories, a number of alternatives presented themselves. For single white men, accommodation

51 R J Laburn, "An historical review of the water supply to the Witwatersrand", p 27.

52 S M Parnell, and G H Pirie, "Johannesburg", from A Lemon, (Ed.), *Homes apart South Africa's segregated cities*, p. 130.

53 E Koch, Doornfontein and its African working class 1914-1935, p. 51. See Chapter 4.

54 E Koch, Doornfontein and its African working class 1914-1935, p. 51. See Chapter 4.

55 TA MJB 1/1/1 Council minutes. Meeting 31 July 1901. See Chapter 3.

was often found in a room in one of the many boarding houses in the city.⁵⁶ Persons of colour found accommodation in the various locations situated in the city environs, for example, the Indian Location, African Location and Malay Location.⁵⁷ Afrikaners tended to populate the areas of Brickfields and Vrededorp,⁵⁸ whilst the English speaking residents sought out accommodation in areas such as Jeppestown, Ferreira's town and Doornfontein.⁵⁹

It was only a few years before the rapid urbanization began to manifest a multitude of problems, among them the scarcity of land, an acute housing shortage, depletion of natural resources such as trees and water, growth of slums, and the separation of the working classes and the wealthy. The years between 1892 and 1896 saw a boom in the construction activity in Johannesburg, and 1895-6 marked the peak of a period of prosperity.⁶⁰ This was reflected in the number of plans approved by the sanitary board during these years. But the five years of prosperity were followed by the 1897-99 depression that continued during the war years. The department of works recorded the number of new buildings constructed in Johannesburg during the period 1894 – 1904, as follows:⁶¹

1894	1236 buildings
1895	2538 buildings
1896	1491 buildings
1897	1058 buildings
1898	444 buildings
1899	600 buildings
1900	Nil
1901	79 buildings
1902	1072 buildings
1903	3000 buildings

56 C Van Onselen. *Studies in the social and economic history of the Witwatersrand 1886-1914 Volume One, New Babylon*, (1982 edition), p. 5. See Chapter 5.

57 TA TKP, Report of the commission appointed to enquire into and report on the Johannesburg insanitary area improvement scheme, 1903, p.8. See Chapter 2.

58 TA TKP 181 (4) *Vrededorp stands commission, 1904*, p. 1.

59 TA C22 Census commission, 1904-1906. See Chapter 5.

60 M L Lange, *The political economy of white working class housing in Johannesburg*, p 24.

61 M L Lange, *The political economy of white working class housing in Johannesburg*, p 24.

1904 7883 buildings

The impact of the South African War can be clearly seen, as can the boom during the Reconstruction Period.

Although the mining industry was the largest single employer of white workers, urban growth created the economic space for other industries that employed some of Johannesburg's population. The most important local industries that spread throughout the city included brewing, brick and tile making, flour milling and baking, carriage and wagon-building, harness-making, ice-making, mineral water manufacturing, and printing. The transport and construction industries were the ones that employed the largest workforce in town. Until the establishment of a service of electric trams in 1906, the need for transport in the city kept 96 wagon and carriage builders busy. They built vehicles for private citizens as well as for the 83 cab owners registered in the 1896 census. These vehicles were driven by almost 2000 drivers while animals and equipment were cared for by 16 farriers, 165 grooms and 43 harness makers. The construction industry created jobs for 1648 brick-makers, 431 bricklayers, 185 builders and 89 building contractors, 261 plasterers and some of the 2203 carpenters that lived in Johannesburg. The distribution of these sources of employment had an important part in the configuration of the working class neighbourhoods.⁶²

Underlying all the local industries, were the needs of the mining industry. The shortage of accommodation in Johannesburg, which had been a permanent feature in the history of the city, became particularly acute after the war. If in the context of the 1895-98 economic slump the working classes complained about the high rents they had to pay, after 1901 the rents were not only higher but the lack of working class accommodation turned into a threat to the settlement policy proposed by the Reconstruction administration.⁶³ Lionel Curtis, who in 1901 had been appointed Town Clerk by Lord Milner by reason of his municipal experience in London, saw with trepidation Johannesburg's pattern of urbanisation. In his memorandum on the extension of Johannesburg's boundaries, he argued that sooner or later this pattern of urbanisation would reproduce the separation between affluent and poor

62 C22 Census commission, 1904-1906.

63 M L Lange, The political economy of white working class housing in Johannesburg, p. 12.

neighbourhoods that prevailed in London. In Johannesburg the line of the Reef had already isolated the well-to-do areas in the north of the city from the mines and its satellite working class neighbourhoods in the south. To begin to change this pattern it was necessary to incorporate the mines and the northern suburbs into the municipal areas, extending the jurisdiction of the town council from an eight kilometre radius from Market Square to a 16 kilometre radius.⁶⁴ To Curtis, there was no question that Johannesburg should be governed on the model of British municipalities. He felt that a municipal system on the same basis of those in England would provide a school for self-government for the time when this would become a reality. The extension of the jurisdiction of the town council would imply not only the establishment of a unified administration, but also the rates would be levied on the mines' property. This had important implications for housing. The Chamber of Mines reacted swiftly to what it considered a most unfair situation. The mines, the chamber explained, could never be seen as an important residential area. Their generally unhealthy conditions made them unsuitable for habitation purposes for anybody other than mining employees. Also, the development of deep level mines necessarily implied more ground being taken up for mining purposes. This would allow the ground as from 1893-4, according to the *Gold Law of 1898*, to immediately be excluded from taxation.⁶⁵

There were a number of factors which contributed to the reluctance of the mines to invest in any form of housing, especially with regard to their African employees who were housed in the compounds.⁶⁶ Thus it is not surprising that the mines adamantly refused to contribute to the financing of housing and other services such as sanitation, especially in relation to its African employees.⁶⁷ Still other Transvaal residents, who had remained on farms in close proximity to Johannesburg, saw the potential of investing in land within the city perimeters. For these various individuals, the housing crisis in Johannesburg presented the opportunity to use what capital they had to

64 N Mandy, *A city divided, Johannesburg and Soweto*, p. 25.

65 M L Lange, *The political economy of white working class housing in Johannesburg*, p 6

66 According to E Koch, the mining industry existed at the limits of its profit margins. The price of gold was fixed on the international market. The ore was of a low grade and capital costs were high. Unable to pass these costs on to the consumer market, the industry developed its characteristic pattern of labour exploitation based on the twin institutions of migrant labour and compound housing. E Koch, *Doornfontein and its African working class, 1914-1935*, p.54.

67 E Koch, *Doornfontein and its African working class, 1914-1935* p. 54.

purchase land and rent them out to the increasing numbers of people requiring homes close to their places of employment.

Areas such as the Indian, African and Malay Locations were particularly attractive to these early land speculators.⁶⁸ They offered virtual certainty of tenancy, as many of the poor and almost destitute of Johannesburg's early residents simply had no alternative place to go in search of accommodation. The appalling condition of the houses, the overcrowding and the insanitary conditions which prevailed in these areas has been described in other chapters. Exorbitant rentals were charged. The properties were not maintained by the absentee landlords, and the tenants simply did not have the financial resources to see to their upkeep.⁶⁹

The potential of making a good profit was not lost on those who chose to partake in the speculative buying of any property that became available in the above areas, and also in other areas close to the city centre. Burghersdorp and Vrededorp were also targeted. Ownership of land in these areas had initially been restricted, but gradually the restrictions were either overlooked or withdrawn. For these early land speculators there must have been the realization that Johannesburg would, sooner or later, have to extend its boundaries. As these areas were situated in close proximity to the city centre, growth into these areas would have been a natural progression. In the event of an expropriation, a profit could also be realized. No matter which way one looked at the situation, they could not lose. When rumours abounded regarding the removal of persons of colour into locations outside of the city perimeters, the land speculators again set about purchasing as much of the land as they could lay their hands on. At the slightest hint that the boundaries of the African Location would be extended, and thereby affect the profits that they might make, petitions were immediately drawn and submitted to the council. In this way, the extension of the African Location in a westerly direction was circumvented.

Once word was out that an insanitary commission would look at the homes in the insanitary area, the speculators came together and appointed legal counsel to look after

68 TA TKP, Report of the commission appointed to enquire into and report on the Johannesburg insanitary area improvement scheme, 1903, p. 142. See Chapter 2.

69 TA TKP, Report of the commission appointed to enquire into and report on the Johannesburg insanitary area improvement scheme, 1903, p. 142. See Chapter 2.

their interests in the hearings regarding the expropriation. Ultimately this had the effect of increasing the amount paid out in terms of awards to the owners of the properties by a substantial sum.⁷⁰ In as much as the actions of these speculators had a bearing on the housing crisis in Johannesburg in the period from 1901, it was the actions of the township companies that was responsible, in the main, for the housing and land shortage in Johannesburg at the time.

Amongst the most important township companies operating in Johannesburg were the Witwatersrand Township Estate and Financial Corporation, the Johannesburg Consolidated Investment Company, and the Braamfontein Estate Company. All three of them were closely linked to mining operations. The Witwatersrand Township Estate and Financial Corporation belonged to the Gold Mining Corporation. By the end of the South African War it had managed to acquire 300 hectares of land. This land had been divided into 5397 stands. The main areas of concentration for this company were the townships of Jeppestown, Fordsburg, Wolluter, North Doornfontein, Jeppestown South, Bellevue East and Spes Bona. The Johannesburg Consolidated Investment Company owned 2380 acres, divided into 5238 stands, corresponding to the townships of Berea, Yeoville, Houghton and Old Doornfontein. The Braamfontein Estate Company, also connected to the Corner House mining group, owned the townships of Braamfontein and Parktown. This made the estate companies the largest owners of land in Johannesburg, putting them in a position of not only controlling the mines but also the land in the city and its perimeters.⁷¹ (See illustration 3, p. 49).

By 1901 the concentration of land ownership in the hands of the estate companies had reached alarming proportions.⁷² This had a very real effect on the housing market. It must be borne in mind that ownership of the land, in terms of South African law, determines the ownership of the improvements on such land.⁷³ The result is that the estate companies, together with land speculators in early Johannesburg, were able to exert a profound influence on the housing market. Rather than taking on the estate companies, the town council devised other ways of dealing with the housing crisis.

70 TA TKP, Report of the Johannesburg Insanitary Area Improvement Scheme, findings.

71 M L Lange, The political economy of white working class housing in Johannesburg, p 4.

72 TA C13 Report of the Johannesburg Housing Commission; Report TKP 181 (3) p. 8.

73 N J J Olivier, et.al. *Law of property*, p. 20.

One of these methods was the establishment of electric trams to connect the newly incorporated suburbs in the north and the south with the centre of the town and the mines. The thinking behind this move was that people would be more inclined to move into the more economical areas further out, and use the trams as a means of transport to and from the city. In theory, this would reduce the need for workers to live close to their work places.

Serious consideration had been given by the council during 1902 as to whether or not they should undertake the provision of a permanent housing scheme. They had contemplated the building of two and three roomed cottages, which would be rented out in order to cover the building expenses. The rental would have been under the fair market value of rentals at the time. The council, however, decided against the idea of the housing scheme. The decision not to go ahead was because they were opposed to the use of public funds in order to 'subsidize' the properties, and they further did not want to create a certain 'class' of persons that were favoured by the council.⁷⁴ The council remained convinced that the housing market would eventually correct itself, at the time when the supply caught up with the demand. Private enterprise was not idle. During the period November 1902 to July 1903 plans were approved for 332 houses, and the council had been informed that Rand Mines were in the process of building cottages for 274 families. However, a practical problem existed in that the railways appeared to be unable to cope with the transportation of building materials which were not available in the Transvaal at the time. The plans were in place, the labour ready, and brick-making was on the increase. Seeing the initiative already in place by private enterprise only increased the council's reluctance to be actively involved in the housing market, feeling that any involvement on their part would discourage private enterprise.⁷⁵ They tried to assist in increasing facilities for the importation of building materials to Johannesburg, and further by allowing permission for Johannesburg residents to pitch tents on any vacant government grounds.⁷⁶ However, no residents took up this offer, leading to the conclusion that the housing shortage was not so acute as to induce people to undergo the inconvenience of tent life.⁷⁷

74 TA C13 Report of the Johannesburg Housing Commission; TKP 181 (3) Preamble.

75 TA C13 Report of the Johannesburg Housing Commission; TKP 181 (3) Preamble.

76 TA C13 Report of the Johannesburg Housing Commission; TKP 181 (3) p. 7.

77 TA C13 Report of the Johannesburg Housing Commission; TKP 181 (3) p. 8.

By 1903 the problem of shortage of accommodation, especially for the White working class, led Lord Alfred Milner to appoint a commission of enquiry into the lack of housing for that sector of the population.⁷⁸ A discussion of the background and the findings of the commission follows below.⁷⁹

THE FIRST FIVE YEARS

*Into this cauldron of capitalist development poured men, women and children drawn from all over the world, giving the Rand a cultural diversity and social texture that bubbled with excitement and vitality.*⁸⁰

Johannesburg was founded in 1886 following the discovery of gold on the Witwatersrand. On 8 September 1886 the first farms on the Rand were declared public diggings under a proclamation in the *Government Gazette* of the South African Republic signed by President Paul Kruger and W Edward Bok, the state secretary.⁸¹

When the first gold diggers arrived in Johannesburg, they found a barren landscape with few trees.⁸² Herds of migratory game had once roamed the area. Before the arrival of the white settlers, Sotho-Tswana speaking people had inhabited the Witwatersrand region and established pastoral communities.⁸³ The climatic conditions of the area had determined the locality of these pastoralists and nomadic inhabitants,⁸⁴ whilst skilled artisans, such as iron smelters, had carried on their trade in regions such as the Melville Koppies.⁸⁵ (See illustration 4, p. 50). Thereafter, the early White settlers of the Transvaal plateau, the Voortrekkers, moving slowly with their ox-wagons to new areas, had been extremely dependent on water. The Voortrekkers were

78 M L Lange, *The political economy of white working class housing in Johannesburg*, p. 16.

79 See Chapter 5.

80 C Van Onselen, *New Babylon, New Nineveh, Everyday life on the Witwatersrand, 1886-1914*, p. xi.

81 J J Mc Cord, *South African struggle*, p. 98.

82 J Glazewski, *Environmental law in South Africa*, p. 509.

83 N and A Musiker, *A concise historical dictionary of Greater Johannesburg*, p. 35.

84 J Glazewski, *Environmental law in South Africa*, p. 509.

85 N and A Musiker, *A concise historical dictionary of Greater Johannesburg*, p. 35.

pioneers of Dutch origin, who established the Boer capital of Pretoria in the area beyond the Vaal River in 1853.⁸⁶

On his arrival in Johannesburg, an early pioneer, W H S Bell, described the landscape as a bare, desolate *veldt*, with small farm homesteads at long intervals. There were hardly any real creeks - small streams rose from springs in the hills or swamps in the folds of the slopes. As water was indispensable both for the diggers and the washing process by which the first gold was extracted, the first mining camps were close to these streams.⁸⁷

At first the trek Boers lived in their wagons or tents with a few rondawels, huts and *skerms* as storerooms and kitchens. (See illustration 5, p. 51). Soon, however, they started building primitive *hartbeeshuisies* which provided better shelter from rain and cold.⁸⁸ The men collected the poles, hard reeds and grass before digging a shallow trench to outline the house. They planted the poles, tied the top ends together and strengthened them with cross-beams and a ridge pole. Reeds, grass and bushes were tied to the battens with *riempies*. The low walls were made from stout reeds or sticks, plastered inside and outside with mud. The door was a reed screen, hinged and fastened with *riempies*, and if there was a window at all it was a tiny slit. The floor was ant-heap, covered with dung and polished with ox-blood. A curtain divided the sleeping quarters from the living room and cooking was done outside on a fireplace of three stones sheltered by a *skerm*.⁸⁹ (See illustration 6, p. 52). These structures were superseded by a roomier type with walls of poles and trussed reeds and a pitched roof of grass and reeds. (See illustration 7, p. 53). Usually these shelters had only a door. Apertures were limited to a minimum. Apparently the reed walls transmitted enough air and light. Some of these reed huts were quite large, comprising up to three rooms. They were particularly vulnerable to the vagaries of the elements. An improvement on these were the clay huts with daubed or sun-dried clay-brick walls,

86 N and A Musiker, *A concise historical dictionary of Greater Johannesburg*, p. 35.

87 G-M van der Waal, *The buildings of Johannesburg, 1886-1940*, p. 1.

88 M Barry and N Law, *Magnates and mansions, Johannesburg 1886-1914*, p. 5.

89 M Barry and N Law, *Magnates and mansions, Johannesburg 1886-1914*, p. 5.

often buttressed, and a grass or reed roof. While these structures were more durable, they took longer to build.⁹⁰ (See illustration 8, p. 54).

When they were more settled, assisted by their servants, they built more permanent homes in stone, mud sod or brick. These were rectangular structures with walls of rubble set in clay, or wattle and daub, thickly plastered with clay and lime washed. Some had a dividing wall between living room and bedroom. Others had an additional store, kitchen or bedroom. There were, too, houses divided into as many as four or five bedrooms, each room for a married couple and their children.⁹¹

In this open grassland the mine camps probably seemed like casual agglomerations of tents and wagons strewn all over the place. The overall impression was one of an open, temporary and insecure settlement. The tents were pitched and the huts built at random.⁹² (See illustrations 9, 10 and 11, pp. 55 - 57). The camps grew rapidly, initially comprising between 200 and 300 prospectors in 1886 and increasing to 3000 people in 1887. Most of the newcomers had congregated around Ferreira's Camp.⁹³ Colonel Ignatius Ferreira established Ferreira's town and, in military fashion, laid out roadways and kept discipline in the tent and shanty-town that mushroomed overnight.⁹⁴ Ferreira's town is a good example of the haphazard way in which the digger's camps were established. Ferreira parked his wagon and left it in the same spot for months on end. Other diggers joined him and unhitched their wagons all around his.⁹⁵ Paarl Camp was also known as Afrikaner camp owing to the large numbers of Afrikaners who settled there from Paarl in the Cape Colony. This was the most orderly and peaceful of all of the camps. By October 1886 it boasted a butchery, bakery, blacksmith and general store.⁹⁶ (See illustration 12, p. 58).

90 G-M van der Waal, *The buildings of Johannesburg 1886-1940 From mining camp to metropolis*, p. 3.

91 M Barry and N Law, *Magnates and mansions, Johannesburg 1886-1914*, p. 8.

92 G-M van der Waal, *The buildings of Johannesburg 1886-1940*, p. 2.

93 G-M van der Waal, *The buildings of Johannesburg 1886-1940*, p. 2.

94 "Tell it like is" column. Mrs J Theo, *The Star*, 14 November 1987.

95 H Rudolph, *Johannesburg 100 years*, p. 9.

96 H Rudolph, *Johannesburg 100 years*, p. 9.

These fortune hunters did not demand much in the way of accommodation, except that it had to be erected quickly and easily. The diggers were accustomed to a hard life and the ephemeral nature of mining camps at other diggings. There was also a lack of building materials. There were no trees to provide timber, and processed timber and corrugated iron had to be brought in over long distances by ox-wagon. Improvisation was therefore the order of the day among the early arrivals. The various types of huts were both more permanent and more comfortable. The most popular of all early types of shelter appeared on the scene as soon as the first sheets of galvanized corrugated iron reached the diggings. The first tin structures had already been erected in August 1886 – to give the settlement the aspect of a typical mining camp.⁹⁷ (See illustration 13, p. 59).

In 1886 Johannesburg was not proclaimed as an ordinary town but as a ‘stand’ town in which residential stands could only be acquired on a 99-year leasehold. This system of land tenure was an important source of revenue for the state but it also complicated the control and management of the town considerably. Representations were made from the outset that Johannesburg be proclaimed as a town with its own health committee and municipality. These were turned down by the executive council and the *Volksraad* for whom the experience of the Eastern Transvaal diggings was still a bitter memory. The fortune hunters who flocked there proved to be no real asset for the Transvaal Republic. The revenue from these diggings never covered the high cost of administration.⁹⁸ A digger’s committee of nine members was elected on 8 November 1886 to give the inhabitants of Johannesburg a share in the management of the town. The committee had no significant powers, however. It acted as a court of appeal and allocated water rights. Real power was vested in the mining commissioner who was appointed by the government and was *ex officio* chairman of the committee. This subordinate position of the committee was compounded by a lack of independent funding, and soon these men were as frustrated as they were powerless. Most of their time and energy was devoted to representations to have the status of Johannesburg elevated to that of municipality. Nevertheless, their contribution was not insignificant: they helped to improve health and sanitary conditions and maintain the roads.⁹⁹

97 G-M van der Waal, *The buildings of Johannesburg 1886-1940* p. 3.

98 H Rudolph, *Johannesburg 100 years*, p. 20.

99 H Rudolph, *Johannesburg 100 years*, p. 20.

At a very early stage in Johannesburg history, the digger's committee were aware of the fact that the disposal of bath water which had been used for washing purposes (so-called 'slops') onto the streets and on the grounds would soon create environmental degradation and lead to disease. Bye-laws were implemented prohibiting the practice, and the council assumed responsibility for the collection and removal of waste water. Washing was carried out in rivers some distance from the town. The financial potential of washing of clothes was soon recognized by the *Amawasha* washermen, who became an essential feature of Johannesburg's early history.¹⁰⁰

Almost within a year of the gold discoveries on the Witwatersrand in 1886, the few hundred inhabitants of the area, which had been surveyed and named Johannesburg soon after the proclamation of public diggings, were provided with a local governing body, the *Gezondheids Komitee* or sanitary board. This body soon became an organ of self-government; provision was made by the government of the South African Republic at Pretoria for the election of most of its members by the owners and occupiers of fixed property in Johannesburg, and shortly afterwards, in 1891, for the election of its own chairman from among members of the board. The board was allowed to make regulations on almost any subject, especially (as the name implied) in relation to the health of the local community, but also for the general convenience of the public.¹⁰¹

Johannesburg in its early years attracted a wide variety of settlers. Amongst them were Barney Barnato, Cecil John Rhodes, L Starr Jameson and J B Robinson. In addition to these new inhabitants, there were also thousands of Afrikaners, who had practised subsistence farming, and had been driven off the land due to drought and natural disasters, and there were Indians, and immigrants, all of whom wished to improve their lives and circumstances in the newly formed town.¹⁰² Other, more

100 Charles van Onselen, in his groundbreaking study on the early history of Johannesburg, was one of the first historians to recognise the importance of the *Amawasha*. See C van Onselen, *Studies in the social and economic history of the Witwatersrand 1886-1914 Volume 1 New Babylon*, (1982) C van Onselen, *Studies in the social and economic history of the Witwatersrand 1886-1914 Volume 2 New Nineveh*, (1982), C van Onselen, *New Babylon New Nineveh Everyday life on the Witwatersrand 1886-1914*, (2001).

101 J P R Maud, *Johannesburg and the art of self-government*, p. 7.

102 See Chapter 2.

commercially oriented, Afrikaners found that Johannesburg provided new markets for the ox-wagon transport services and their farming produce, but that town and country were incompatible in their outlook and temperaments. To complicate matters further, rural Africans began to stream to the urban areas to provide much-needed labour.¹⁰³

The population, for the most part, was forced to obtain its water requirements from the natural reservoirs and *spruits* in the area. (See illustration 14, p. 60). This was not the most ideal situation.¹⁰⁴ Some of the residents of early Johannesburg sank wells in their backyards and others erected rainwater tanks, but before long the wells were polluted by seepage while in the dry season the rainwater tanks were empty.¹⁰⁵ Many people who were desperate for water simply dug holes just a few metres deep near their dwellings but these water sources began to decline. The wells were roughly made without any protective lining or sealant; consequently, pollution of water was a sinister threat as the population of Johannesburg increased. The seepage from sewerage, the brickyards, the cemetery, and overcrowded areas was a grave danger.¹⁰⁶ Thus the only source of supply available to large sections of the public were the itinerant vendors who sold water at 2s 6d a bucket from water carts.¹⁰⁷ (See illustration 15, p. 61).

Amongst those who saw the dangers to public health in the use of the water supply was W P Fraser of the diggers' committee. At a meeting of the committee in November 1886, he suggested that the mining commissioner request the government to purchase the land outside the boundaries of Ferreira's Camp, which had a supply of clean drinking water at the time. However, no timely action was taken. The stream running through Ferreira's Camp constituted part of the town's natural drainage. When the rains came the filth was washed into the stream so that this source of supply also became polluted.¹⁰⁸ Soon the streams, with the exception of a strong spring that flowed from a ridge a little to the west of the present-day Harrow Road viaduct, were

103 N Mandy, *A city divided, Johannesburg and Soweto*, p. 86.

104 J R Shorten, *The Johannesburg saga*, p. 95.

105 J R Shorten, *The Johannesburg saga*, p. 95.

106 E M Crosser, Water supply and utilisation in Johannesburg, 1886-1905, p. 10.

107 G A Leyds, *A history of Johannesburg, the early years*, p. 53. This was the cost of water during periods of drought. At other times it was considerably cheaper.

108 J R Shorten, *The Johannesburg saga*, p. 95.

contaminated by filth, and every dam and well was a constant menace. So, too, were the pools of stagnant water that collected in the open mine workings. Whilst some of the residents did not recognize the potential dangers of the polluted water supplies, and stated that Johannesburg was the 'healthiest spot in the world', the mining magnates were careful to drink, and even, it is said, to wash themselves in soda-water that had been hauled by wagon from the coast.¹⁰⁹ (See illustration 74, p. 265). The situation was at its worst in times of drought. Then the streams would become mere trickles or they would dry up altogether, and the masses of rotting matter would lie exposed to sun and wind. This is what happened in 1886 and although there were good rains early in 1887, most of the water ran to waste and the town was forced to fall back on wells. Even water from these sources was not fit to drink unless it had been boiled and filtered first. As Johannesburg did not have any electricity at the time, and the wells were for the most part unprotected, they proved to be a serious and sometimes fatal danger to those who had to walk through the town at night.¹¹⁰

In November 1886, William Percy Fraser put a resolution before the diggers' committee proposing the acquisition of the farm Braamfontein, which had plentiful water, by the government. The matter was raised again in December, and the magistrate was instructed to discuss it with the owner and then to make recommendations to the government. Evidently these were satisfactory, and it was announced in January 1887, that the portion of Braamfontein on which the water was situated, had been purchased by the government.¹¹¹

Among the early problems faced by the town was the question of drainage, in regard to both surface water and sewerage. The flow of storm-water over the surfaces of the streets caused great damage by erosion and plans were prepared for a storm-water drainage system in the main streets. The ground in the town did not lend itself to the disposal of waste water in French drains, and a slop-water removal service was provided in addition to the night-soil service. This was unsatisfactory and expensive, and as early as 1895 a scheme was prepared by the town engineer for a system of water-borne sewerage and a sewerage treatment plant. The work, however, was not

109 J R Shorten, *The Johannesburg saga*, p. 95.

110 J R Shorten, *The Johannesburg saga*, p. 95.

111 J A S Gray, *Payable gold ...*, p. 201.

carried out, as, after tenders had been invited, the government gave notice that it intended taking the drainage of the town under its control. But little headway was made in this matter, and the development of the town was brought to a standstill with the outbreak of the South African War.¹¹²

On the whole, there was a failure on the part of these early Johannesburg pioneers to recognize that the streams and wells had to be kept free from contaminants and garbage. This would enable the streams to function properly once the rains came. This was evident by the fact that most of the good rainfall in early 1887 'ran to waste'. No doubt this was exacerbated by the fact that the soil around the tents and huts was bare, which would have added to the run-off of the available water. There was no sanitation and no other health services. Often a carcass would be left for days where the animal had fallen, and the sight of animals being killed at the open slaughter poles which were dotted around the area was one of the more sickening spectacles.¹¹³ The rain water fell onto the carcasses of animals, usually livestock, and other filth which had been left to rot wherever it fell. Any run-off which did not make its way into the streams and *spruits* would have found its way into the underground water supply, thereby polluting the wells which were an important source of water supply for these early pioneers.

The year 1886 was very dry, and the rapid increase in population made the water question a difficult one. By September, water was scarce on all farms except Langlaagte.¹¹⁴ In 1886 there was not a single stamp in the Johannesburg area, but by 1887 there were nearly 500. This development precipitated an enormous demand for water since each stamp required 1300 litres of water per hour for the crushing process. Ground water sources had to be relied upon by the ore crushing stamps and by settlers. Even within this first year the struggle to find sufficient water took its toll on the community and life was difficult for miners, labourers, and householders alike. The explosive pace of urbanization in Johannesburg had already left the evolution of public services such as water provision far behind.¹¹⁵

112 F Stark, *Seventy golden years, 1886 – 1956*, p. 354-355.

113 J R Shorten, *The Johannesburg saga*, p. 67.

114 R J Laburn, A historical review of the water supply to the Witwatersrand, p. 1.

115 E M Crosser, Water supply and utilisation in Johannesburg, 1886-1905, p. 8.

The vital and limited water sources became progressively polluted by the ever-increasing multitude of settlers and by the mining operations. In the crushing of the ore, much of the water was muddied and simply returned to the streams. At the outset of mining operations, the position of industry with regard to water supply was contradictory: the mines and other industries required clean, soft water for their operations, yet they were also primarily responsible for the contamination of local water sources. Competition intensified, and there was rivalry among the miners and between domestic and industrial demands for water. In some cases miners' zeal went to the extent of building a dam and fencing off sections of the streams for their own use. Furthermore, they charged for the drawing of water for domestic purposes. In the same vein a notice appeared in the local newspaper, in the summer of 1887, designed to lure the inhabitants away from a spring which was of strategic value for a local ore processing battery.¹¹⁶

The advertisement read as follows:

Doornfontein springs, free water. It is particularly requested that those who are allowed access to the springs will not take water from the southern fountain adjoining the City and Suburban *Mijnpacht*, as it affects the batteries. Until further notice water may be taken free of charge for domestic purposes only from the northern spring fountain.¹¹⁷

Within the first year of the settlement of Johannesburg, water issues came to the fore. E Bierman applied in October 1886 for permission to construct a dam in the dry stream on the farm Vogelfontein. His motivation stemmed, not for the need of water for domestic purposes, but rather from a view that a dam would improve the value of the ground in the neighbourhood as a supply of water was necessary for gold recovery.¹¹⁸ The consent for the building of the dam was considerably delayed, for it was not until 20 January 1887 that the conditions under which Bierman was authorized to construct a dam on Vogelfontein were published. The concession was

116 E M Crosser, *Water supply and utilisation in Johannesburg, 1886-1905*, p. 9.

117 *The Eastern Star*, 28 November 1887.

118 E M Crosser, *Water supply and utilisation in Johannesburg, 1886-1905*, p. 8.

granted for 15 years, subject to the payment of £6 per annum, to commence on completion of the dam, which had to be finished within one year. The proposal to build the dam called forth a very strong protest to the mining commissioner by George Hill, chairman of a syndicate of 50 claimholders who had pegged claims on Vogelfontein. It was pointed out that some of them had taken out prospecting licences for Vogelfontein on 25 October 1886, and had then pegged the ground on which the water right had been granted. Due to the fact that the proposed position of the dam would interfere with six mining claims, Bierman was forced to construct the dam to the north of where the claims had been pegged.¹¹⁹ This was not the most ideal location for the dam. It is an early example of the need for water being placed in a secondary position vis-à-vis mining rights.

During the winter of 1886 the dry grass was trodden underfoot until the soil surrounding the tents and huts was bare. This gave rise to dust storms in spring and large mud puddles when the first rains came.¹²⁰ The hard surface also echoed the din of the diggers working their claims and sounds emanating from the tents and corrugated iron huts. Huts of reed and corrugated iron made their first appearance among the tents before the end of 1886.¹²¹ Corrugated iron was also the material used to build some of the earlier hotels in Johannesburg. In 1887 the Cohen family were fortunate enough to find a room at the Grand Hotel. This hotel had been built from corrugated iron which had been brought up from Kimberley. It was presided over by a Mrs Dean¹²² from Aliwal North who, when she first arrived, had managed Bray's boarding house, one of the numerous establishments catering for bachelors. Cohen described it as a large building in the front, which housed the dining saloon, sitting-room and bar. There was a spacious quadrilateral courtyard behind, three sides of which were devoted to tiers of doubled-stored tin shanties. These were "called bedrooms by the grace of heaven and Mrs D."¹²³ The 'Grand Hotel' was considered a respectable hotel. The Cohen family rented a bedroom on the upper storey. This

119 E M Crosser, *Water supply and utilisation in Johannesburg, 1886-1905*, p. 205.

120 G-M van der Waal, *The buildings of Johannesburg 1886-1940 From mining camp to metropolis*, p. 2.

121 G-M van der Waal, *The buildings of Johannesburg 1886-1940 From mining camp to metropolis*, p. 2.

122 No record exists of Mrs Deans' Christian name.

123 M Kaplan and M Robertson, (Eds.), *Founders and followers Johannesburg Jewry, 1887-1915*, p. 24.

room was modestly comfortable in good weather, but 'hot as an oven' in the summer months. When it rained the roof leaked copiously. The partitions between the bedrooms were also made from corrugated iron and one could hear the slightest movements from the occupants on the other side.¹²⁴

Whilst the availability of water had determined the location of the first camps such as Ferreira's town, geology and topography soon became important factors in influencing the early settlements. The gold reef dipped sharply to the south, so the undermining went in that direction. A broad belt of mine workings and dumps separated what were ultimately to become the less fashionable southern suburbs from the main part of town. In addition, the ridges of the Witwatersrand run parallel to and about one and a half kilometres north to the line of the gold reefs. This induced development to go east and west following the Main Reef outcrop.¹²⁵ Northerly winds blew the dust and noise of the mine workings and sand dumps southwards. Another reason for the popularity of the northern suburbs is that the ridges protect the homes there from the cold southerly winds of winter. Townships for non-whites continued to expand in the less attractive south-western sector.¹²⁶

In 1887 the first local government appointments were made by Carl Von Brandis. These included Charles Shaw as sanitary inspector in January 1887, Dr Hans Sauer as district surgeon in March, and Charles Pietersen as full-time secretary in June 1887.¹²⁷ The rapid development of the camp demanded much more than this. At a meeting of residents on 6 October 1887 it was decided to ask the government to appoint a sanitary and health committee, as well as a hospital committee. The government responded to this request by promulgating health regulations which would be applied only in Randjeslaagte, Marshalltown and Ferreira's town, while the other suburbs were left to their own devices. Almost exclusively related to sanitary matters, these regulations were not designed to have any effect on the physical development of the mining camp.¹²⁸ The functions of the sanitary board were fairly general, but they were

124 M Kaplan and M Robertson, (Eds.), *Founders and followers Johannesburg Jewry, 1887-1915*, p. 24.

125 N Mandy, *A city divided: Johannesburg and Soweto*, p. 25.

126 N Mandy, *A city divided: Johannesburg and Soweto*, p. 25.

127 N Mandy, *A city divided: Johannesburg and Soweto*, p. 8.

128 G-M van der Waal, *The buildings of Johannesburg 1886 – 1940, From mining camp to metropolis*, p. 11.

preventative rather than creative in character, and were concerned with the health rather than the wealth or happiness of the inhabitants. Although the board was responsible for roads, a private company was granted a concession by the Transvaal government to provide horse trams, and gas and electricity were similarly left to concessionaires until 1895. In that year, since private enterprise was no longer interested, the board inherited the right of supply. Even the sphere of public health had to be shared between the board and private enterprise, once the right of supply water was given to a concessionaire.¹²⁹

The sanitary board, recognizing that the town lacked a natural system of drainage which would allow for the ready removal of effluent, prohibited the washing of clothing in residential areas since it feared that the slops tipped onto the dusty streets would soon create a serious health hazard for the white community. This, and the absence of steam laundries, meant that for some time these miners had to do their own laundry in the streams on the outskirts of the town.¹³⁰ This potentially lucrative market for a washing enterprise was soon recognized by the *Amawasha*, who quickly won formal recognition from the sanitary board, and its members did much to ease the domestic burden of these immigrant miners.¹³¹

The sanitary board had the authority to levy charges in respect of the services it provided. The first charges that were imposed on the citizens of Johannesburg were for the nightly collection of sanitary pails and the daily collection of rubbish and slop-water. The residents were not allowed to let dirty water to run onto the streets. Such slop-water had to be collected in a tank, which every home or building had in the backyard. Twice a week a large wagon with several tanks on it, came into the suburbs. The sanitary workers would then empty the householder's slop-water into the wagon tanks. Householders were compelled to make use of this service and in the event of the non-payment of the prescribed fees, they could be punished by imprisonment without the option of a fine. While the regulation may appear to be harsh, in the absence of waterborne sewerage and a proper drainage system, it was

129 J P R Maud, *Johannesburg and the art of self-government*, p. 7.

130 C Van Onselen, *Studies in the social and economic history of the Witwatersrand, 1886-1914, Volume 1, New Babylon*, p. 8.

131 C Van Onselen, *Studies in the social and economic history of the Witwatersrand, 1886-1914, Volume 1, New Babylon*, p. 8.

true that with the slightest relaxation of the 'wagon' system, a serious typhus or cholera epidemic was always just around the corner.¹³²

The lack of clean water, sewerage or water-borne sanitation was a further source of considerable anxiety for Charles Shaw and the sanitary board. Immediately after his appointment as health inspector, Shaw began sending notices to the inhabitants of all the goldfields ordering them to keep their premises clean.¹³³ There was garbage all over the place. The town must have been almost septic in parts with animals slaughtered wherever it was convenient. Even at this early date, the unhygienic conditions and the contamination of the environment were affecting the health of the inhabitants. 'Camp fever' was a chronic complaint among the residents, and hardly a week went past without somebody dying of the condition.¹³⁴

On 30 November 1887 a health committee was established to supplement the diggers committee and the first elections were held on 19 December 1887.¹³⁵ By this time, Johannesburg had acquired some vestiges of civilization. A market was held regularly in the village square, a church and a school had been built, and the stock exchange was in operation. Along with this growth, water provision also developed. Various persons took to the business of traversing the rough streets and offering water for sale.¹³⁶ Local African people drew water from the wells and streams and, with buckets slung across their shoulders, walked through the scattered community selling water. (See illustration 39, p. 156). The increase in the size of Johannesburg exacerbated the difficulty of bringing water to residences. As allocation of land came to be dictated by the mineral potential and the proximity of water for milling the ore, the choice of land for dwellings was limited and the distances involved in obtaining domestic water supplies increased. It is not surprising that several early inhabitants related that the vendors were a welcome, if expensive, addition to Johannesburg life.¹³⁷ Indeed, T Newbigging recalled that it was a common sight to see 'niggers'

132 G A Leyds, *A history of Johannesburg the early years*, p. 32.

133 M S Appelgryn, *Johannesburg origins and early management, 1886-1899*, p. 45.

134 J Clarke (ed.) *Like it was: The Star 100 years in Johannesburg*, p. 7.

135 H Rudolph, *Johannesburg 100 years*, p. 20.

136 *Eastern Star*, 2 November 1887.

137 E M Crosser, *Water supply and utilisation in Johannesburg, 1886 – 1905*, p. 11.

trailing water barrels, with a swivel at each end, through the streets.¹³⁸ (See illustration 16, p. 62).

Even in this early period when settlement was relatively sparse, most of the available water was impure and even muddy. This lack of wholesome water was not surprising, however, as the majority of water sources were thoroughly communal, and were utilized for people, ore stamps, as drinking places for livestock, and as a playground for ducks. For those who were fortunate enough to live near a spring, small quantities of water could be rolled home in a barrel. Baths were a luxury throughout Johannesburg, and those who could not afford soda water sneaked out after dark to secure an extra barrel of water. Housewives were constantly told to use water sparingly, and this added to the many hardships in the primitive settlement.¹³⁹

Johannesburg residents became increasingly alarmed at the conditions in the town. Their sentiments were expressed in letters addressed to the local newspaper, *The Eastern Star*. These letters capture the spirit and language of the times, as well as the concerns of residents. It is for this reason that they have not been substantially edited, and why several letters have been quoted at length. On 21 January 1988 a resident wrote to *The Eastern Star* as follows:

I am aware, ... there is an abundance of churches, chapels, stores and a population of 8000 or 9000. It would be just as well to add filth-heaps, fever-beds, polluted water supplies ... yes, you have all that in abundance ... Concerning your water supply? Well, you have none, although you have plenty of wells – not an unknown fact to people fond of taking midnight walks, I believe ... Your population should clear those stinking and rotting heaps of muck from the back of the premises in Market Square, spans of oxen can be seen, at night, tied up in their own mire. Every old prospecting trench and building hole in the outskirts is filled, or being filled, with every conceivable sort of

138 E M Crosser, Water supply and utilisation in Johannesburg, 1886 – 1905, p. 11.

139 E M Crosser, Water supply and utilisation in Johannesburg, 1886 – 1905, p. 13.

rotting animal or vegetable product, awaiting the first heavy rain to float their putrefaction into the nearest drinking fountain.¹⁴⁰

The connection between the unsanitary conditions and the fact that these conditions would ultimately contaminate the water was recognized by this resident. A visitor to Johannesburg, writing to *The Eastern Star* on 18 April 1888, called attention to the fact that large volumes of garbage, including carcasses, were in close proximity to the outskirts of the town, and stated:

A deposit heap of such dimensions in close proximity to the town – I may say within the town itself – will shortly sow the seeds of disease, and we may any day hear that typhoid is in its full sway and decimating the inhabitants.¹⁴¹

Charles Shaw paid attention to these comments and recognized the need for a clean environment. He was able to prevent the slaughtering becoming a public nuisance within the area of control of the digger's committee. However, the slaughter men merely moved their operations to outside the boundaries of the town, and as such, were beyond the reach of the sanitary inspectors and thus able to avoid their controls.¹⁴² Within a short period of time he had a small fleet of scotch-carts drawn by mules and manned by prisoners under guard. With these vehicles a night-soil removal service was conducted and he was allowed to charge householders for this service.¹⁴³

Despite his efforts, and those of his department, the sanitary board received much criticism from the residents of Johannesburg. In a report-back of a meeting of the sanitary board as reported in *The Eastern Star* of Friday 8 June 1888, Mr Shaw reported that upwards of a hundred complaints had been reported since the last meeting. No less than 22 complaints had been made on Tuesday regarding the non-removal of rubbish. This was as a result of the council having insufficient plant for the carrying out of the work. At that stage they only had five carts for night-soil

140 Quoted in J R Shorten, *The Johannesburg Saga*, p. 137.

141 *The Eastern Star, Johannesburg*, 18 April 1888.

142 J R Shorten, *The Johannesburg Saga*, p. 97.

143 J R Shorten, *The Johannesburg Saga*, p. 97.

removal, and two for rubbish removal. In some instances it had been necessary for stable and other rubbish to be removed privately.¹⁴⁴

On 30 June 1888 a letter addressed to *The Eastern Star* highlighted some of the problems with regard to the lack of sanitary arrangements:

After making full allowance for the difficulties of organising sanitary arrangements that can keep pace with so rapid a growth as that of this town, there are some defects so glaring as to seem almost incredible. A heavy monthly tax is imposed to householders to cover the cost of removing all refuse from their premises, the cleanliness of which is recognised as a necessity. But here all precaution ends, and the rubbish which individuals are forbidden to bury or burn is deposited by thousands of cart loads within a few hundred yards of town, to become a putrid festering mess, poisoning the air for miles. Besides there is the more horrible nuisance caused by scores of carcasses which are left to rot where the animals fall. So serious have these evils become that it is common to hear people before starting for a walk or a drive discuss the question as to which road will lead them past the fewest carcasses and filth-stacks. While individuals are worried up about a bucket of ashes, acres of filth are allowed to rot within sight and scent. .. It is hoped that something will be done before the warm weather comes, or the result will be must be serious.¹⁴⁵

William Douglas Adler remembered the sanitary system in Johannesburg's suburbs and described it as:

... primitive to say the least. After 11 o'clock the 'night brigade' used to thunder through the suburbs collecting the black tarred buckets placed on the kerbside, leaving fresh buckets for the owner to collect in the early hours of the dawn. These sanitary vehicles were drawn by

144 *The Eastern Star*, 8 June 1888.

145 *The Eastern Star*, 30 June 1888.

strong Clydesdales mostly, although other horses were used. It was all very unhygienic and enteric fever was not uncommon. Soak pits could not always be used owing to the composition of the soil around the houses which was more clay than sand except in some lucky cases.¹⁴⁶

In a sense there was competition for water amongst the residents of Johannesburg – on the one hand, there was the urgent need for water for domestic purposes, and on the other, the enormous demands made on the supply by the mining industry. Invariably the needs of the mines took precedence over those of the general population. And, of course, a natural development was the pollution of the supply by the mines, which impacted on the domestic water. For example, there was pollution of the water by the batteries located at higher levels to the detriment of those situated lower down. The solution to this difficulty was recognized as being the construction of depositing tanks in the water races. Another formidable difficulty was the disposal of tailings. Already in 1887 this was a matter of grave concern near some mills which had been in operation only for a few months.¹⁴⁷

There were frequent disputes amongst claim holders regarding water, and many of these were adjudicated by the digger's committee. Speculators, with a view to ultimate gain, purchased water rights and were able, by this means, to hamper mining operations. It is recorded that one canteen keeper cut off the water supply at a newly started battery because it interfered with the family washing! The practice of using water, which was intended for milling purposes, for washing, caused many problems. This was because the water became so contaminated and resulted in reducing the gold extracted by amalgamation considerably. It was suggested that regulations should be introduced to prevent the washing of clothes in such water.¹⁴⁸

In the early days of Johannesburg, many residents relied on water obtained from Natal Spruit for their needs. Generally speaking, the western half of Johannesburg drained in a south-westerly direction to the Natal Spruit, the drainage slope of the eastern half being more directly southerly. The houses in the portion of the district west of

146 C Robertson (ed), *Remembering old Johannesburg*, p. 64.

147 J A S Gray, *Payable gold ...*, p. 199.

148 J A S Gray, *Payable gold ...*, p. 202.

Macintyre Street were small, with confined yards, which were occasionally overcrowded. They were largely occupied by mine employees. There was a good deal of evidence of soil pollution caused by slops. In some of the small yards, both the pail closets and the rubbish bins were often very offensive and located very close to the kitchen and back rooms.¹⁴⁹

The health department was of the opinion that the pollution in the area was predisposing the residents to both enteric and other diseases. This was, however, localized. Amongst the fine houses in the vicinity of the Park and the Oval, and with the exception of one very slight attack in Browning Street, which affected a recent arrival in the country, and some cases which had been brought to a private hospital in Ford Street to be nursed, there had been no enteric amongst the residents living between Macintyre and Browning Streets. However, between Browning Street and Berg Street, where the houses were considerably smaller than those near the Park and Oval, but where the sanitary conveniences were still fairly good, six cases of disease had been reported.¹⁵⁰

Later, at the turn of the century, the City and Suburban Company built a dam on the *spruit* (streamlet). Initially it contained a large quantity of water, but a year later it began to silt up. The Natal Spruit had played an important part in the natural drainage of Johannesburg, and much slop water had been deposited into the *spruit* by residents living next to it. The state of the water began to deteriorate considerably. During the rainy season this was not so noticeable, but in the dry season the state of the stream became quite obnoxious.¹⁵¹ The town engineer's department was of the opinion that until a proper culvert or channel was formed to carry off the stream water along the course of the *spruit*, it would be almost impossible to keep it in anything near a sanitary condition, owing to the water becoming stagnant as a result of being held up by the dam. As a temporary measure many of the holes where the water was stagnant were filled in and a channel formed in the drift sand. However, these steps were

149 TA MJB 1/1/3 Council minutes. Meeting 25 March 1903.

150 TA MJB 1/1/3 Council minutes. Meeting 25 March 1903.

151 TA MJB 1/4/5 Health committee minutes. Meeting 19 March 1903.

insufficient to carry off the slop water which was continually flowing from the private properties and adjacent streets into the *spruit*.¹⁵²

Two factors caused the condition of Natal Spruit to deteriorate in a few short years: one being its use as a 'dumping ground' for slop water by people residing on its banks, and secondly, the building of the dam by the City and Suburban Company. The dam hampered the free flow of the water and ultimately led to the silting up of the river. Had the residents taken more care of the *spruit*, it would, in all probably, have remained an important source of water for the community.

By 1889 things had begun to change in Johannesburg. Up until then, the small entrepreneur could actively participate in mining, which required no special knowledge, technical expertise or a large capital outlay. However, large capital investments and expensive machinery became essential as the excavations were taken down deeper and shafts had to be sunk. At the same time, land values began to rise sharply and when it became necessary miners had to lease even larger pieces of land. It was at this stage of development that the wealthy capitalists began to buy up farms and by 1890 virtually all farms were in their hands. They had the means to buy the machinery and import the mining engineers from the United States and elsewhere to Johannesburg. Soon the town assumed a cosmopolitan character and the burghers of the Transvaal began to feel less and less at home in their own country.¹⁵³ By September 30 1890, the town's fourth anniversary, a third of Johannesburg's people had gone. Many others, once well off, had been rendered destitute. An ominous silence hung over the town: the stamp batteries were still.¹⁵⁴ The capitalists who would eventually own the gold wealth represented another facet of the new town. During the early years the very aspect and spirit of the city were to be determined by them.¹⁵⁵

The 'natural environment' had showed itself unable to cope with the needs of the rapidly increasing population, for which it was not suitable in the first instance. The rainy season of the Transvaal highveld is comparatively brief, spasmodic and storms

152 TA MJB 1/4/5 Health committee minutes. Meeting 19 March 1903.

153 H Rudolph, *Johannesburg 100 years*, p. 11.

154 J Clarke (ed.) *Like it was The Star 100 years in Johannesburg*, p. 16.

155 H Rudolph, *Johannesburg 100 years*, p. 11.

are violent, and with a certainty that for at least four months of the year not a drop of rain will fall. Thus, without proper storage facilities, failure of summer rains was followed by inevitable hardship. The parched earth would yield no nourishment for crops or beasts, and fears of famine grew alongside the minor inconveniences of a shortage of drinking and washing water. The streets were seen to be paved with nothing but garbage and sewerage. Johannesburg was a dump – a rubbish dump, a place fit enough for the flies which swarmed all over it, flies which bred in millions in the cess pits and flew over, heavy-winged, to regurgitate their threat of pestilence through the town.¹⁵⁶

The health committee, seeing itself unable to cope, approached the council and informed them that in order to place the sanitation of Johannesburg on a proper footing, it would be necessary to make some far-reaching changes. These included the drafting of sanitary bye-laws, the administration of these bye-laws, and powers to enable them to contain any infectious diseases which broke out and the reorganization of the bucket system for removing night-soil.¹⁵⁷ Without resource to the expertise required for the task at hand, the decision was made to advertise both locally and in the press in England, for a suitable candidate for the job. This was found in Doctor Charles Porter, and under his guidance, the sanitary and health affairs of the city were placed on a firm foundation. (See illustration 21, p. 113).

Five years had passed since the arrival of the first settlers in Johannesburg. The residents had already experienced, at first hand, the effects of drought, dust-storms, and the inconvenience of lack of proper sanitation. (See illustration 75, p. 266). The time was now ripe for taking these matters under control. Within the next 15 years, many improvements were made and living conditions became easier for the residents.

156 R Crisp, *The Outlanders, The men who made Johannesburg*, p. 124.

157 TA MJB 1/1/1 Council minutes. Meeting 19 July 1901.

CONCLUSIONS

For most individuals, the ready availability of water for drinking, cleansing and other uses in an urban environment is so much part of our daily lives that it is barely given a second thought. So, too, is the convenience of toilet facilities. Indeed, in the minds of most, water and water-borne sewerage have become synonymous. This has, however, not always been the case for Johannesburg's residents, as has been highlighted in this chapter. The daily battle for water, and the logistics of being without water-borne sewerage and proper housing were just some of hardships that early residents had to face.

Works dealing with the history of water *per se* are scarce.¹⁵⁸ Also scarce is literature that tells the story of Johannesburg's 'poorer' inhabitants.¹⁵⁹ The bulk of the literature which is available regarding the first five years of Johannesburg's existence has been told from the perspective of 'White' South Africans. The comment made by Charles van Onselen (and quoted in full on the first page) regarding the focus of historians on the lives of the wealthy, is particularly appropriate.¹⁶⁰ So, too, is that of Nigel Mandy, when he makes the point that Africans were seldom seen in Johannesburg and 'made no impact on the town's consciousness other than as human machinery to be used in the production of gold and to be returned to store when no longer required.'¹⁶¹

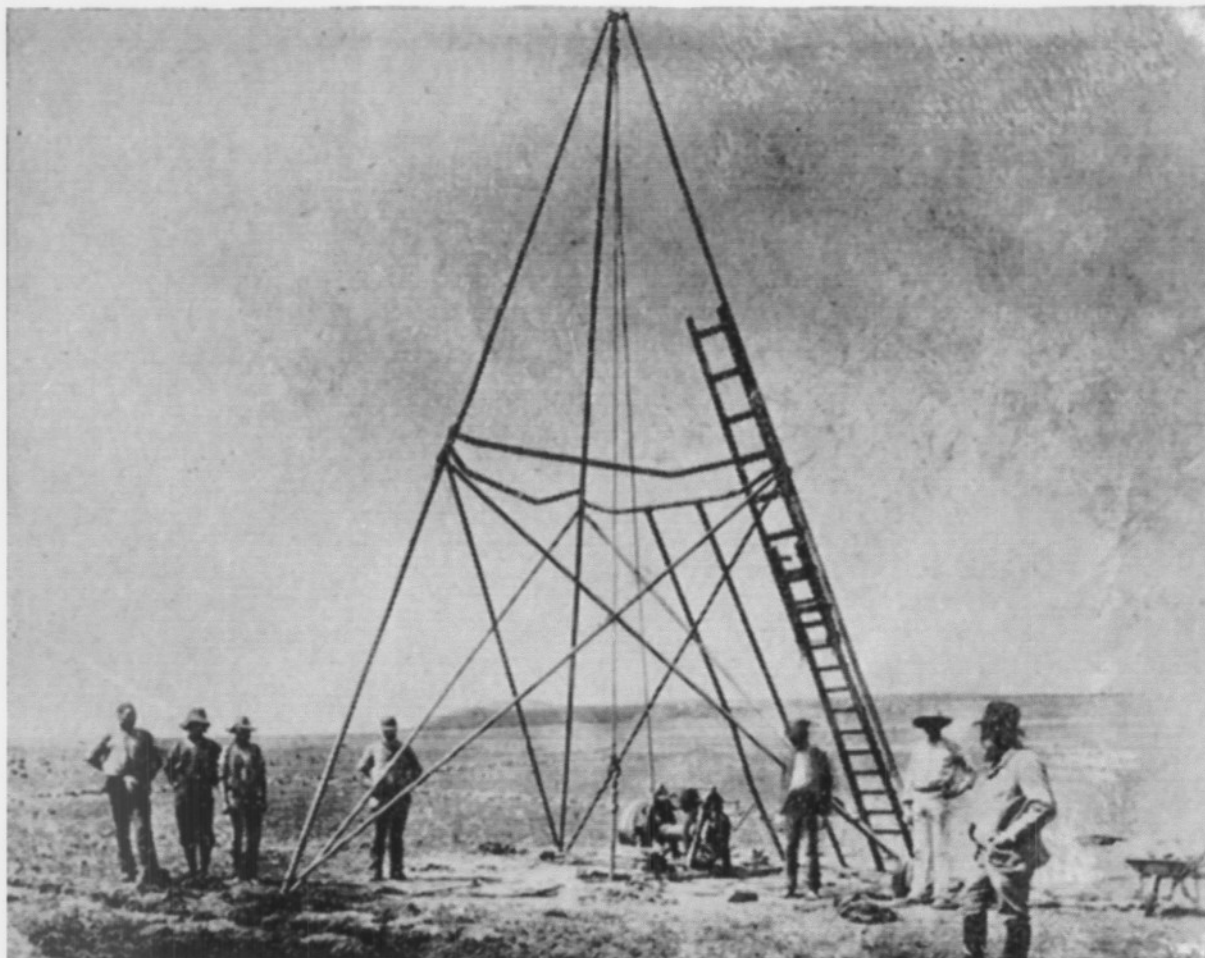
Yet the reality of life in early Johannesburg was that the poor and working classes formed the bulk of the population, and without their efforts the gold-mining industry would not have been able to exist, let alone flourish. An attempt, in the remainder of this study, will be made to tell the story from their perspective, so as to acknowledge their valuable contribution to the history of the city.

158 J W N Tempelhoff, "The commodification of water in the arid and semi-arid parts of South Africa: a preliminary historical exploration". Paper presented at a conference of the Historical Association of South Africa, University of Stellenbosch, Stellenbosch. p. 6.

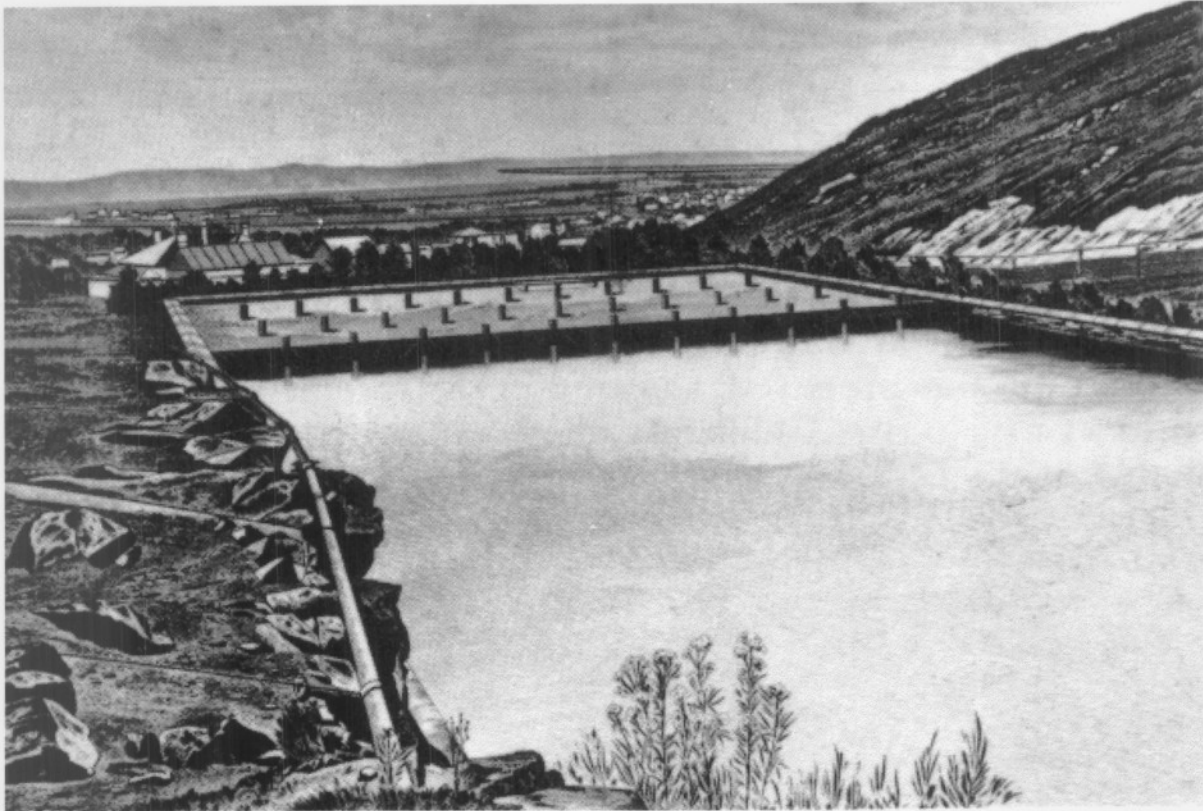
159 Notable exceptions are the works of L Callinicos, C Van Onselen, N Kagan, N Mandy and E Koch. Full references are contained in the bibliography.

160 C Van Onselen, *New Babylon New Nineveh Everyday life on the Witwatersrand 1886-1914*, p. xiv.

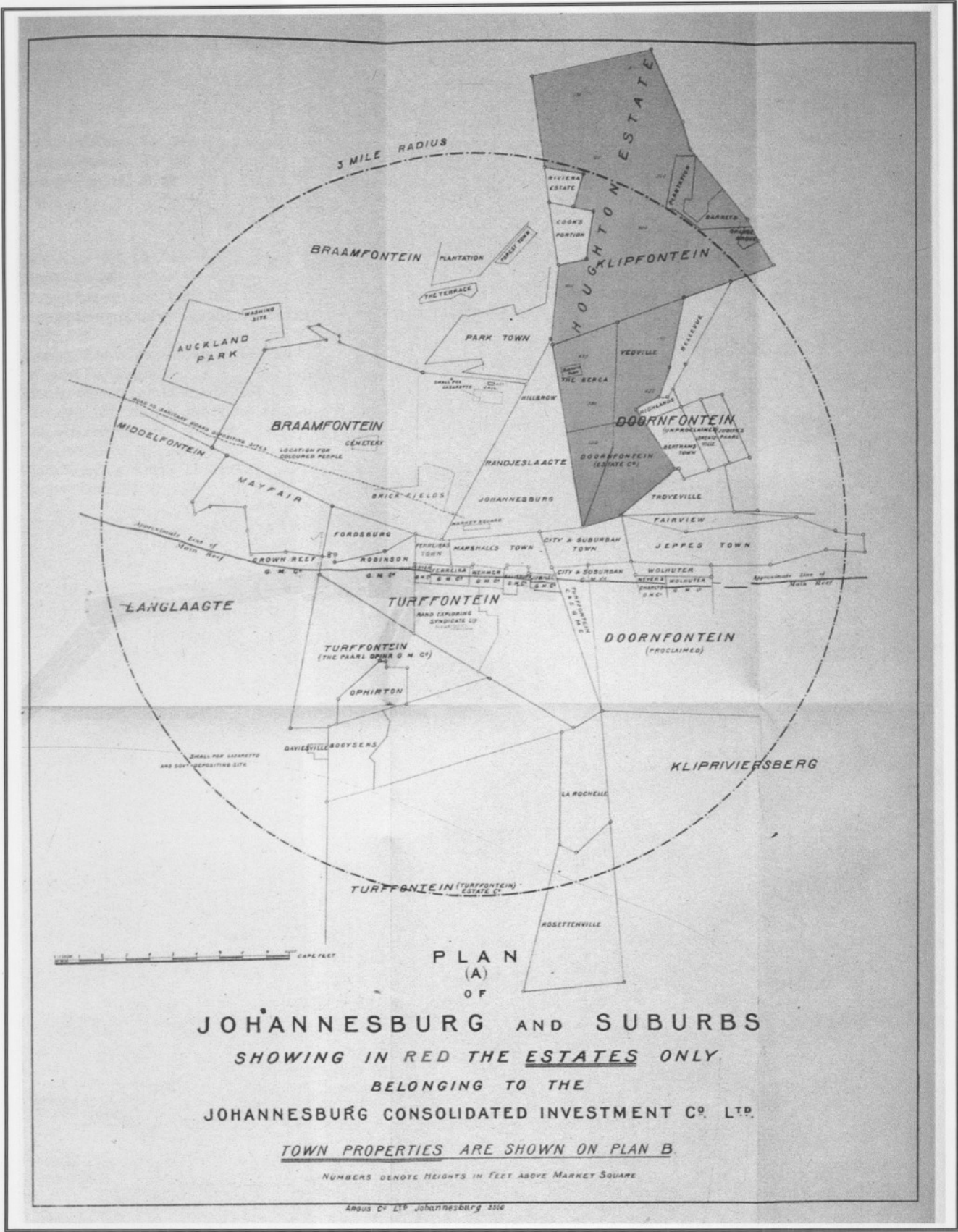
161 N Mandy, *A city divided Johannesburg and Soweto*, p. 33.



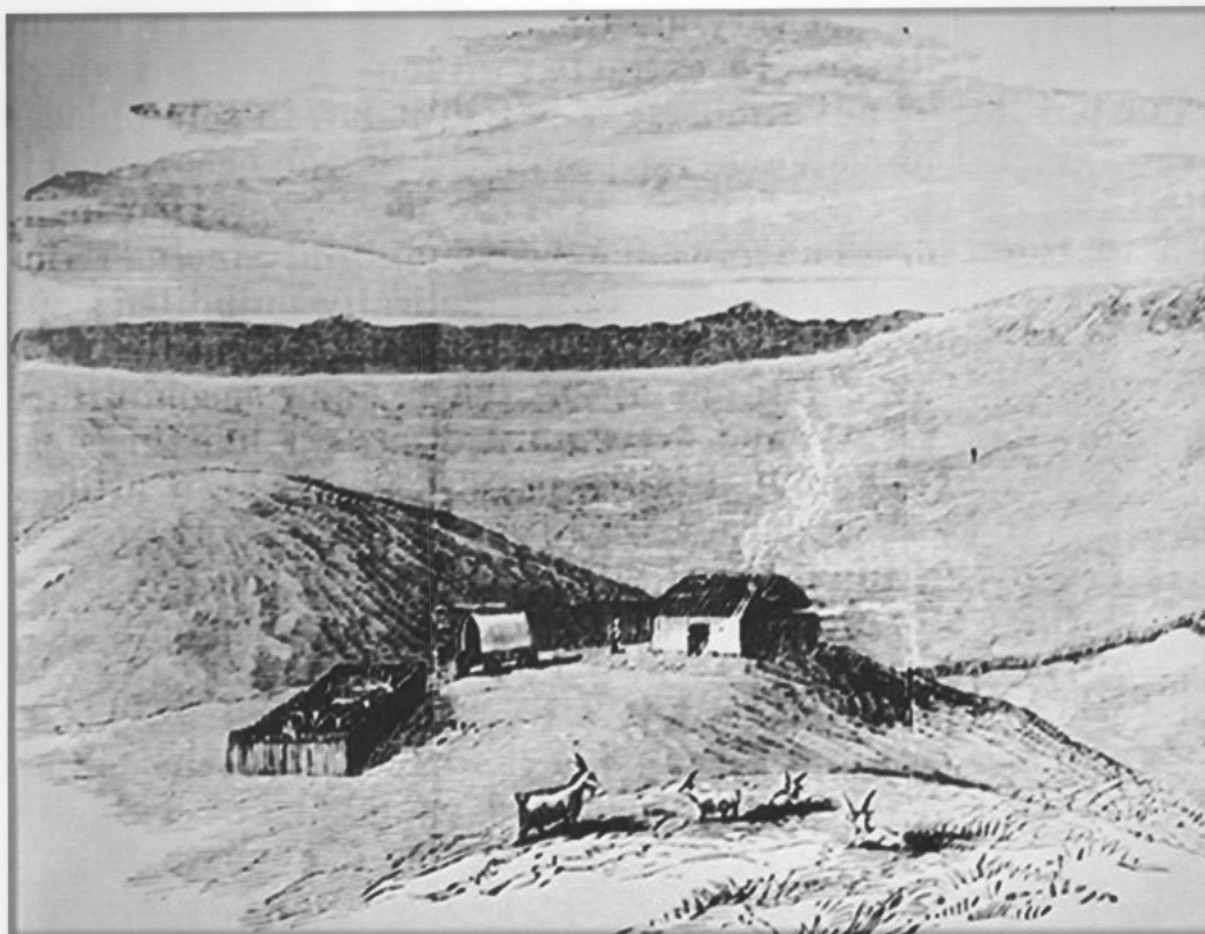
Boring for water in Johannesburg, 1888.



Main water supply. Halfway up Harrow Road there survives the oldest reservoir on the Witwatersrand from which the Johannesburg Waterworks Company in the 1880's and the 90's tried to meet the needs of the fast-growing city. Not until the establishment of the Rand Water Board in 1903 was the Company's precarious system replaced with something more ambitious.

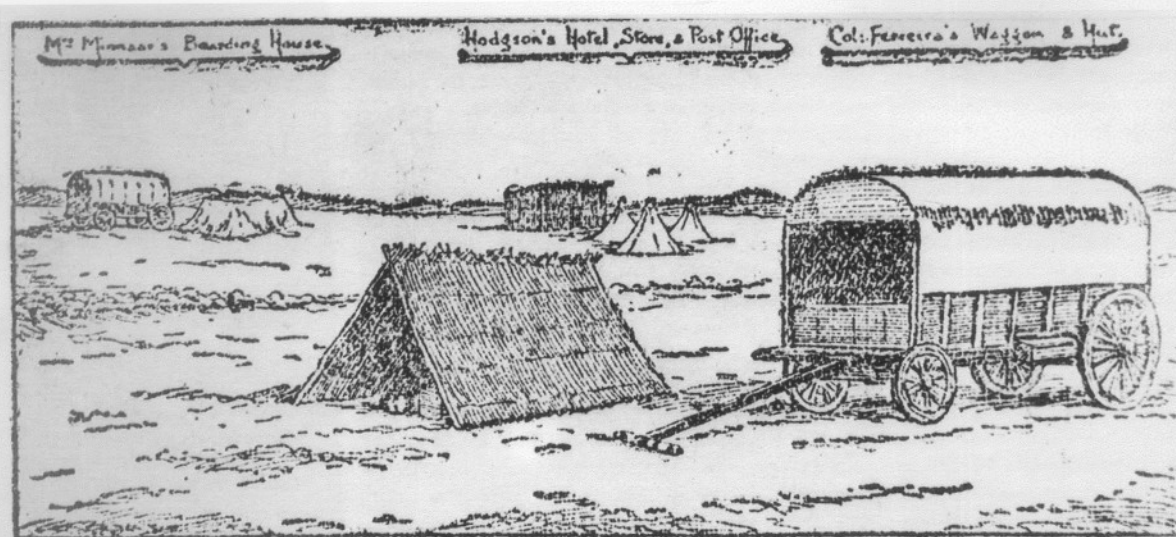


Source: M Kaplan & M Robertson (Editors), *Founders and Followers, Johannesburg Jewry 1887-1915*, p. 302.



Before the miners came: Victorian engraving published in an official guide book issued by the Cape Government which carries the caption: "On the High Veld before the gold discovery". It seeks to convey something of the emptiness, poverty and barrenness of this region a century ago.

Source of illustration and caption: E Rosenthal, *The Rand Rush 1886 – 1991 Johannesburg's first 25 years in pictures*, p. 21.



THE BEGINNING OF JOHANNESBURG.

From a Sketch by an 1886 Pioneer.

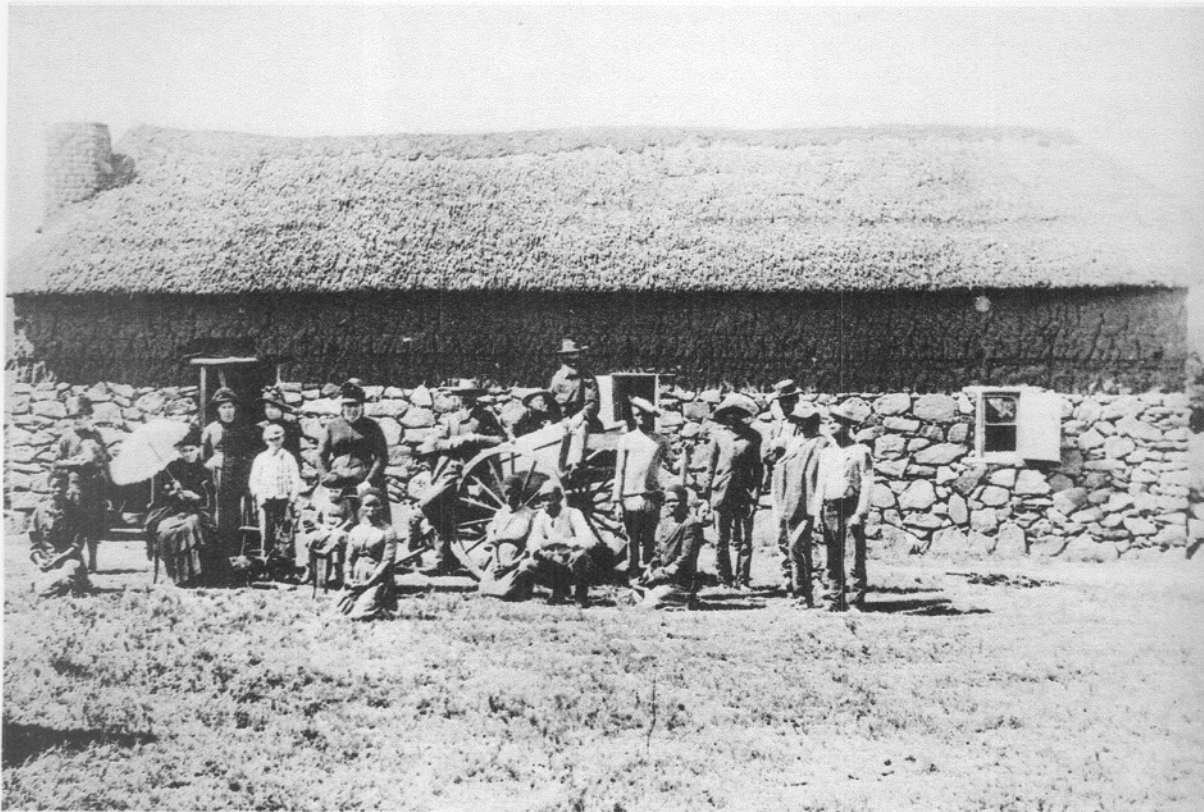
On hearing of the gold discovery on the Witwatersrand, prospectors, fortune hunters and farmers began to move to the new El Dorado. They simply unhitched their wagons and pitched their tents in the veld.



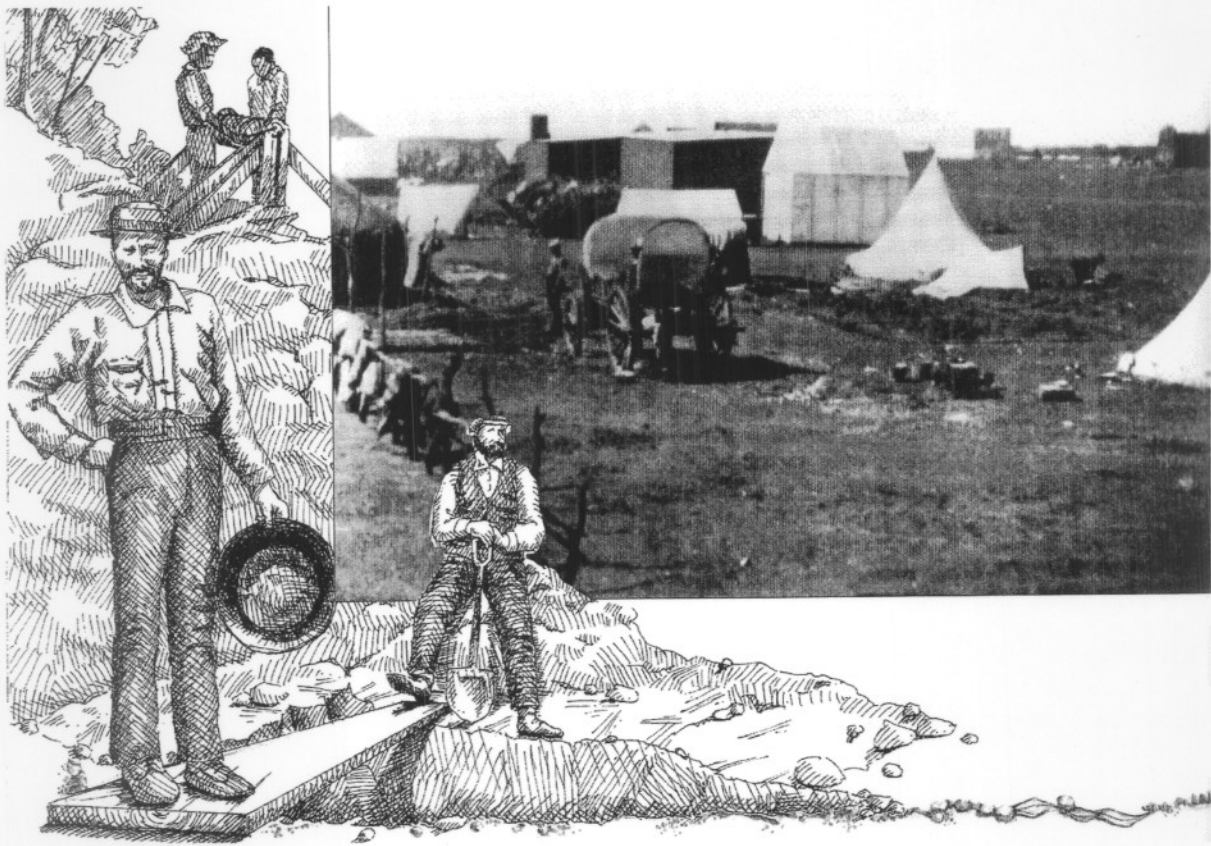
‘Reed-and-daub’ dwellings were preferable to tents and were built by a number of pioneers.



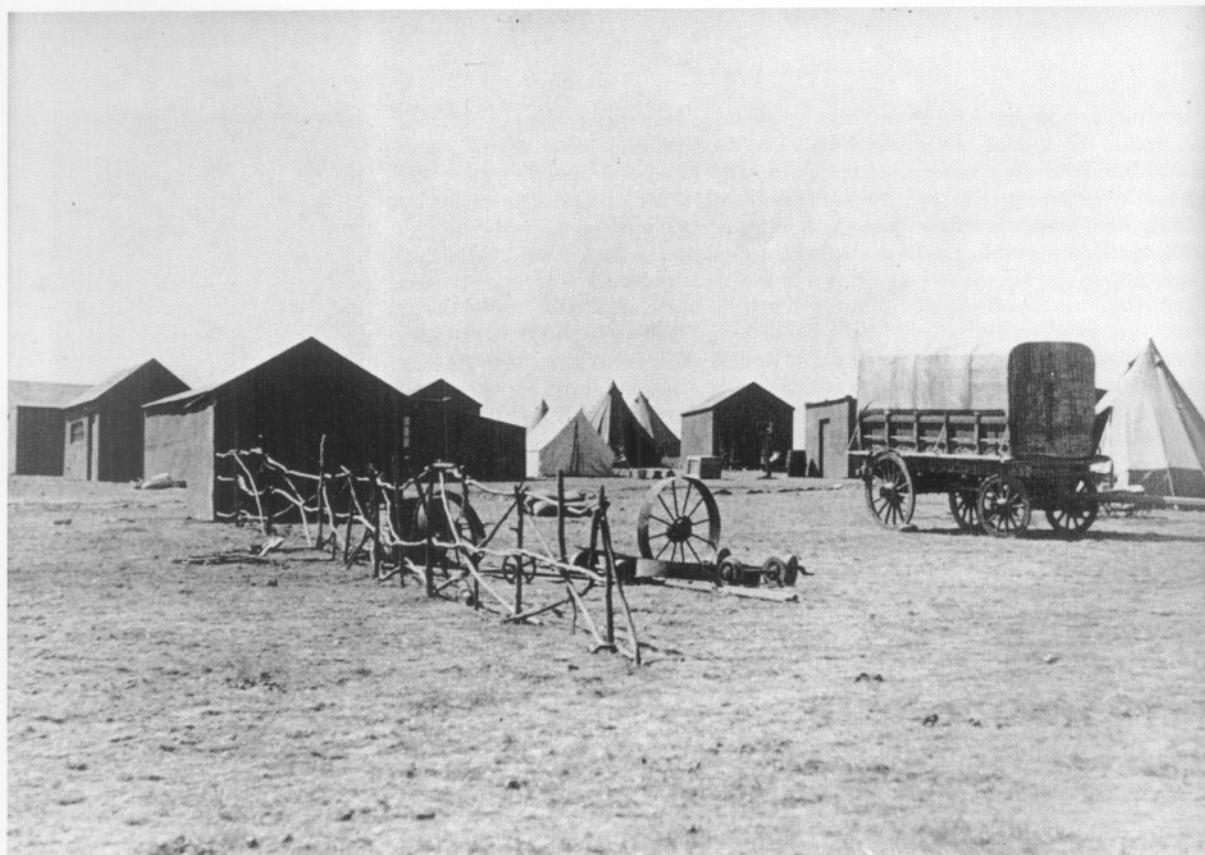
Part of a traditional homestead. Houses were built by members of the families that lived in them, using the materials freely available around them. The Rand municipalities forbade the construction of 'reed huts', and the traditional skills of house-building therefore lost their usefulness in the towns. Most self-built houses were tin shacks.



Afrikaner family taken in front of their stone and thatch home. Note that the family servants have been included in the picture.



Ferreira's Camp – the beginnings of Johannesburg, 1885.



The very beginning – Ferreira's Camp in 1886.



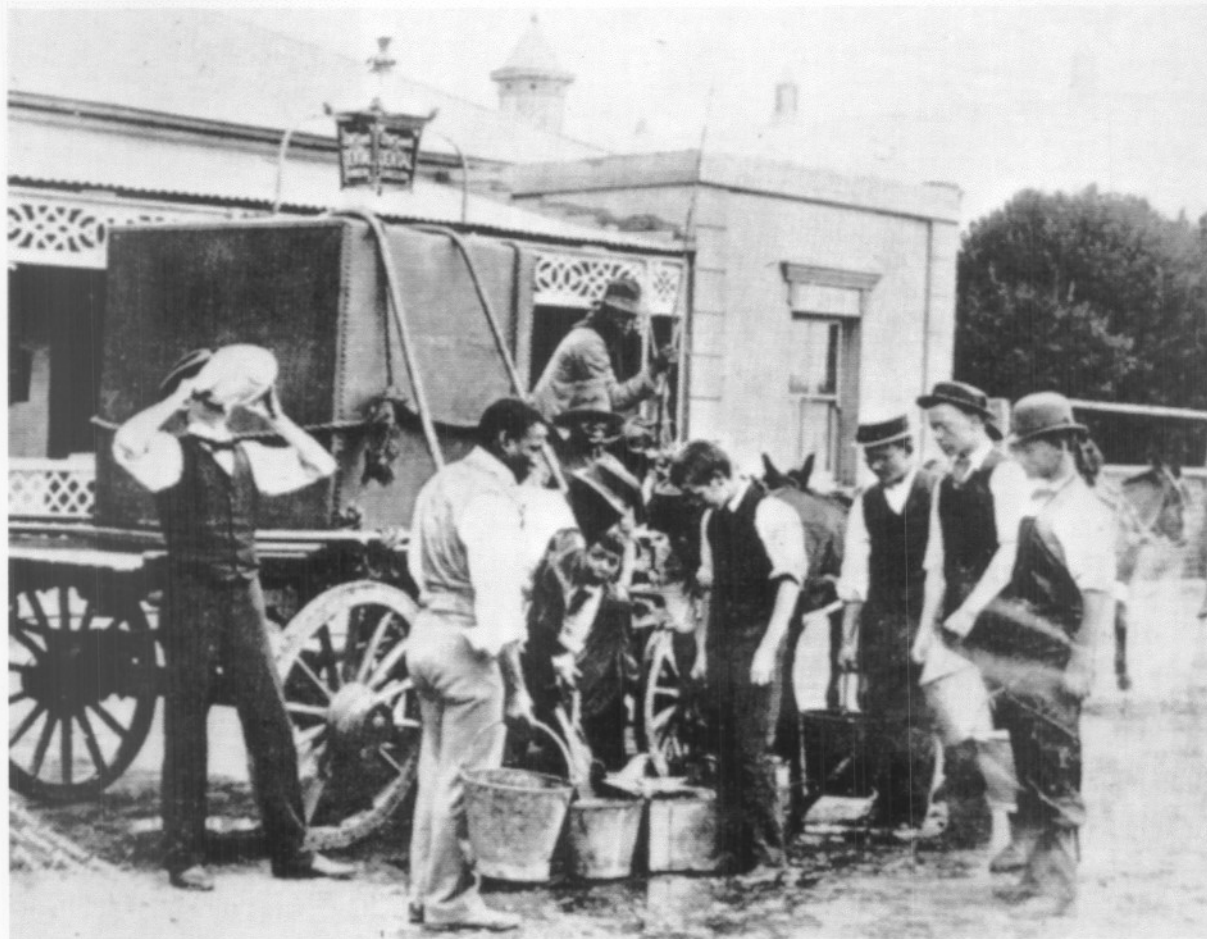
Johannesburg, 1887. The speed with which Johannesburg developed is strikingly shown by contrasting this photograph from the year 1887 with those preceding it. Already most of the gaps between the huts and shanties had been filled up, while the street lines are almost continuous – even if the backyards remain extremely shabby and primitive. Tents had not yet entirely disappeared, as shown by the one in the right foreground. Note also the array of Cape carts in the neighbouring streets and the reed fence in the left foreground.



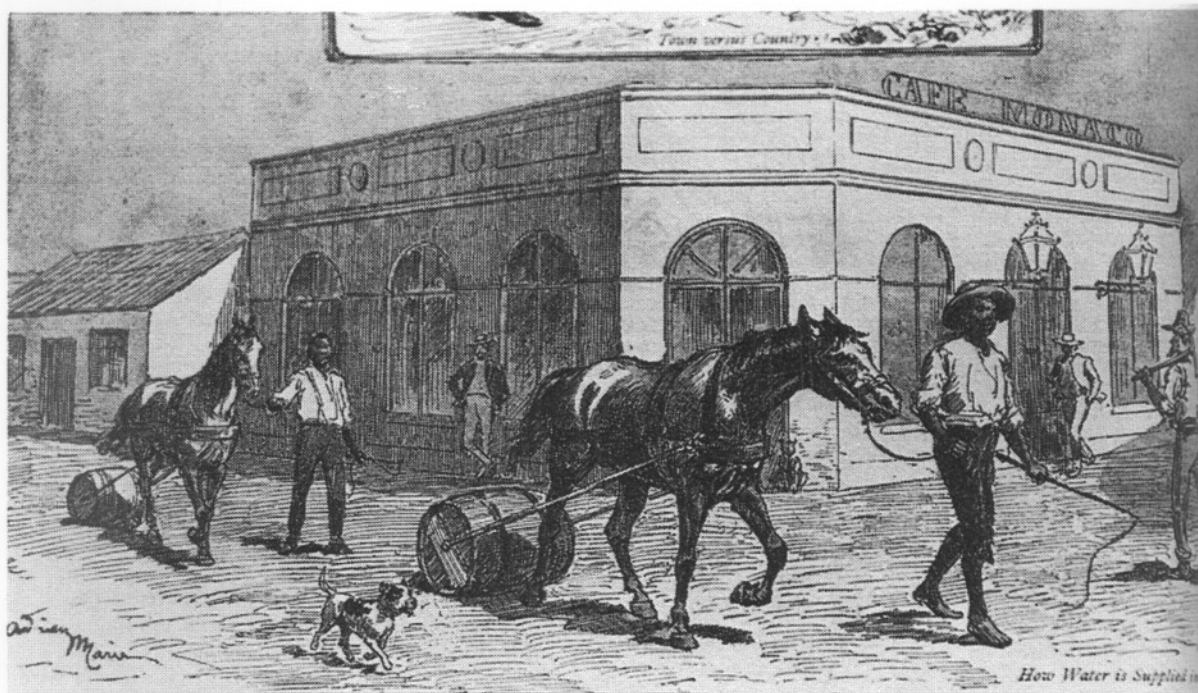
Paraffin-tin house. This house was built on the outskirts of the city. Paraffin-tin houses also existed in the locations. The tins were readily available. No windows were used.



Natural reservoir with some Johannesburg settlements in the distance.



Purchasing water from water-carts. J. W. Quinn, the leading baker of early Johannesburg, and himself destined to become an early mayor of the city, caught with his camera a unique scene during the great drought of 1896.



Water carriers, Johannesburg 1888.

Source of illustration and caption: P Kallaway and P Pearson, *Johannesburg: Images and continuities A history of working class life through pictures 1885 - 1935*, p. 56.

CHAPTER 2 - THE LIVES OF THE POOR

On the whole, the plight of the poor in Johannesburg during the period 1886 – 1906 has been largely ignored. Their contribution was essential to Johannesburg, but it has seldom been recognized. For the most part, these masses of humanity lived in appalling conditions. Poverty, lack of education and familiarity with the workings of Western society, together with the constraints of the law did not allow them to improve their situation. Their situation was made even more untenable by the actions of other Johannesburg citizens – there was little provision of services, and often these areas were used as ‘dumping grounds’ for slops and rubbish emanating from other, more affluent, areas. Landlords were quick to recognize that these people were desperate for housing, and charged exorbitant rentals for property.

During Johannesburg’s early history, they were dependent on the council and the environment to provide for their basic needs. Invariably the council fell well short of what could have been reasonably expected of them. By way of example, whilst water was routinely used for street watering and road making in other parts of Johannesburg, no tanks were dispatched to the suburbs of the poor.¹ As early as 1895 the medical officer of health had urged the laying of pipelines to the locations so that the inhabitants could have safe water. His recommendations were supported by the sanitary superintendent who considered the matter urgent, stating that it was an ‘absolute necessity that some provision be made to supply these natives with good drinking water, otherwise typhoid and other diseases are bound to set in’.² No attention was paid to his request. The inhabitants were forced to rely on the environment – water was obtained from shallow wells and very few natural springs. The medical officer of health recognized that the killer disease of the stomach – enteritis – struck down most of its victims in households that drew their water from unprotected wells which had been contaminated by animals and people.³ However, the mere threat of disease emanating from their living conditions was insufficient to spur the council into action.

1 TA MJB 1/4/8 Health committee minutes, Meeting 14 March 1904.

2 J R Shorten, *The Johannesburg saga*, p.169.

3 L Callinicos, *Working life 1886-1940 A people's history of South Africa, Volume Two, Factories, Townships and popular culture on the Rand*, p. 79.

There were a number of primary areas in which the very poor of Johannesburg lived during these early years. These were the Malay Camp, the Indian Location and the African Location. Initially the inhabitants were not racially separated. The Brickfields (later known as Burghersdorp) was the area in which the poor Afrikaners had their homes. The council was very much aware of the living conditions in these areas. They were the subject of a number of commissions of enquiry, and were frequently discussed at the meetings of the health committee and council. However, little was done to improve conditions.

In the Malay Camp, where conditions were slightly better and the people more educated and therefore able to give a voice to their dissatisfaction, they were largely ignored. These residents would most certainly have used any promise of security of tenure as the foundation on which to build better homes for themselves, but it was not, despite repeated requests for reassurance, forthcoming. Eventually slums were allowed to develop.

Each area will be dealt with separately as they were formed at different times, and sometimes under different criteria, for example the Brickfields. For the most part the residents were bound together by a common bond – that of poverty. (See illustration 17, p. 109).

THE INDIAN ('COOLIE') LOCATION

The Indian Location had been laid out shortly after Johannesburg itself, in about 1887. The land in the area was held by virtue of a ninety-nine year leasehold⁴ in the same manner as in other parts of Johannesburg. The Indian Location was situated at the north-west corner of the Brickfields area.⁵

People were densely packed in the location. The surface area never increased with the increase in population. Beyond arranging to clean the latrines in the location in a haphazard way, the council did little to provide any sanitary facilities, much less improve the roads or lights. In M K Gandhi's opinion, the council was 'hardly likely to safeguard its sanitation, when it was indifferent to the welfare of the residents'.⁶ (See illustration 18, p. 110).

From an environmental perspective, the location was not in the most ideal position. The soil in the Indian Location was soft to a considerable depth.⁷ Part of the district was low-lying, and, if not actually flooded, the ground water level was too high during part of the year for the site to be used for residential purposes.⁸ It was probable that this could, to some extent, be remedied by drainage.⁹ The streets were irregular, unmade, unpaved, narrow primitive tracks, and ill-planned.¹⁰

As early as 1901, Major W A J O'Meara had been concerned about the Indian Location and the possibility of the outbreak of disease in the area.¹¹ He voiced his concerns in a letter addressed to the office of the mayor of the Johannesburg on 10

4 TA, TKP, Report of the commission appointed to enquire into and report on the Johannesburg Insanitary Area Improvement Scheme, 1903, p. 5.

5 TA, TKP, Report of the commission appointed to enquire into and report on the Johannesburg Insanitary Area Improvement Scheme, 1903, p. 6.

6 M K Gandhi, *An autobiography or the story of my experiments with the truth, Book Two*, p. 429.

7 TA TKP, Report of the commission appointed to enquire into and report on the Johannesburg Insanitary Area Improvement Scheme, 1903, p. 8.

8 TA TKP, Report of the commission appointed to enquire into and report on the Johannesburg Insanitary Area Improvement Scheme, 1903, p. 33.

9 TA TKP, Report of the commission appointed to enquire into and report on the Johannesburg Insanitary Area Improvement Scheme, 1903, p. 33.

10 TA TKP, Report of the commission appointed to enquire into and report on the Johannesburg Insanitary Area Improvement Scheme, 1903, p. 89.

11 TA TKP, Report of the commission appointed to enquire into and report on the Johannesburg Insanitary Area Improvement Scheme, 1903, p. 142.

May 1901. In the correspondence he acknowledged that he was aware that the council did not have the power to enforce the removal of the residents. However, the government had set aside land to the east of the town for the rehousing of the inhabitants. Plans had been drawn for the replacement huts, and these had the approval of the medical officer of health.¹²

In respect of the Indian Location, originally it had been contemplated that certain sections of the area should be improved. However, it soon became evident that piecemeal treatment was not desirable,¹³ and that the area should be treated, and improved, as a composite whole.

Doctor Johnston¹⁴ was instructed to carry out an inspection of the area in 1901. He reported, in a letter addressed to the acting mayor dated 22 March 1901, that he had visited several of the stands, and had not found any suitable for human habitation. All the rooms were found to be in a very dirty condition, consisting of plain galvanised iron shanties, all of which were smeared with filth of every description.¹⁵ The rooms were very small, and generally did not have lighting or ventilation. Most were without proper flooring. The floors, or lack of them, were considered to be a harbouring place for fleas and other vermin, as the soil was very sandy.¹⁶ The closets were haphazardly placed, making it difficult for the sanitary men to reach them in order to give them proper attention and keep them clean.¹⁷

Like the other areas in the insanitary area, the water supply was derived from a series of shallow wells. The wells had been used as depositing sites for night-soil, dead animals and stable manure, and were grossly polluted and unsuitable for drinking purposes. This was the conclusion reached by Doctor George Turner on 22 March 1901. He again brought the matter up with the health committee on 12 February

12 TA CS Volume 14 01 1618/01 Minute from W O'Meara to Secretary of the Transvaal Administration, dated 10 May 1901.

13 TA TKP, Report of the commission appointed to enquire into and report on the Johannesburg Insanitary Area Improvement Scheme, 1903, p. 142.

14 No mention has been found of Dr Johnston's Christian name

15 TA TKP, Report of the commission appointed to enquire into and report on the Johannesburg Insanitary Area Improvement Scheme, 1903, p. 15.

16 TA CS Volume 426 01 926 Minute to the Secretary, Transvaal Administration, from office of Doctor Turner dated 6 April 1901, enclosing report on Precautions against Bubonic Plague.

17 TA TKP, Report of the commission appointed to enquire into and report on the Johannesburg Insanitary Area Improvement Scheme, 1903, p. 15.

1903, and with the city council on 5 August 1903. On the latter date he had observed water being drawn from a shallow well in a courtyard that was in the vicinity of another disused well, which was used as a receptacle for rubbish. The water of such wells was often grossly polluted.¹⁸ Water samples were taken from the area for testing, and with possibly one exception, only the two cold storage¹⁹ wells were considered to be safe for drinking purposes.²⁰

Due to the absence of many Johannesburg's inhabitants in 1901 owing to the war, there were only 630 people in the location at the time. In order to bring order into the location, Doctor Johnston carried out an inspection of each of the stands. He proposed that, in the case of a stand being unoccupied, and considered unfit for human habitation, the floors were sprinkled with disinfectant, large amounts of rubbish removed and burnt, and the entrances fastened up and sealed. A record of the stand numbers was made, so that any person found on the stand thereafter could be prosecuted. These actions should be taken in terms of section 45 of the sanitary regulations which dealt with buildings which were unfit for human habitation.²¹

Doctor Turner was equally vociferous about what needed to be done to improve the Indian Location. Due to the fact that the location was largely inhabited at the time, he felt that the opportunity should be seized to pull 'these hovels down'. The iron, from which they were constructed, could be cleaned and disinfected, and utilised to build temporary homes for the occupants. The wood could also be planed and reused. But rebuilding would only be allowed in terms of the regulations and by-laws.²² (See illustration 19, p. 111).

Apart from some effort that was made to disinfect the houses, all the above plans and reports remained only lip-service to the potential problem of plague. Aside from

18 TA TKP, Report of the commission appointed to enquire into and report on the Johannesburg Insanitary Area Improvement Scheme, 1903, p. 33.

19 'Cold storage' were refrigeration facilities where meat was kept cold.

20 TA TKP, Report of the commission appointed to enquire into and report on the Johannesburg Insanitary Area Improvement Scheme, 1903, p. 93.

21 TA TKP, Report of the commission appointed to enquire into and report on the Johannesburg Insanitary Area Improvement Scheme, 1903, p. 15.

22 TA CS Volume 426 01 926 Minute to the Secretary, Transvaal Administration, from office of Doctor Turner dated 6 April 1901, enclosing report on Precautions against Bubonic Plague, no page number.

some effort which was made to improve the sanitary conditions of the area, no further steps were taken. The concern for the inhabitants of the area was fundamentally self-serving on the part of the council. It was viewed as a danger to the rest of the town as many of the inhabitants who resided in the location were hawkers of fruit and vegetables, and waiters and cooks at white boarding houses and hotels.²³

Doctor Johnston recognised that if an infected person were to arrive in Johannesburg from one of the coastal towns, and take up residence in one of the healthier parts of the town, the symptoms of bubonic plague would probably be recognised and the person removed at once. If precautions were taken, probably no further cases would occur. However, if an infected person were to move into the crowded and dirty Indian Location, the disease would spread before it was recognised and removed. He warned that, while such places as the Indian Location existed, any outbreak of bubonic plague would spread extensively. If it were to appear there, there would be no telling where it would stop.²⁴ Stringent precautions were taken for any newcomers entering into the Transvaal.²⁵

Not only was the area overcrowded, the water supply in the area was not of a good quality, or suitable for human use. An indication of the state of affairs was that, when efforts were made to clean wells in Caro's Court, the *Rand Daily Mail* of 8 December 1902 reported that two men had been poisoned when attempting to clean a well. Two policemen were sent down to recover the dead men. However, one of these policemen had to be dragged up, as he had become unconscious.²⁶

By 1903 the area was bursting at the seams. Doctor C L Samson, the medical officer of health of the Witwatersrand district, had been informed that up to four or five people were inhabiting a room. However, he suspected that the numbers were in excess of this amount, and therefore personally carried out an inspection at night. He

23 TA AMPT PUBS, TKP, Report of the commission appointed to enquire into and report on the Johannesburg Insanitary Area Improvement Scheme, 1903, p. 15.

24 TA AMPT PUBS, TKP, Report of the commission appointed to enquire into and report on the Johannesburg Insanitary Area Improvement Scheme, 1903, p. 15.

25 TA CS Volume 426 01 926 Minute to the Secretary, Transvaal Administration, from office of Doctor Turner dated 6 April 1901, enclosing report on Precautions against Bubonic Plague, no page number.

26 TA AMPT PUBS, TKP, Report of the commission appointed to enquire into and report on the Johannesburg Insanitary Area Improvement Scheme, 1903, p. 197.

found that between eight and nine people were living together in a single room in a number of the houses.²⁷

Many of the inhabitants of the Indian Location were poor white tenants. These homes were often owned by corporations, and some people owned as many as 84 and 130 stands.²⁸ Apart from the poor whites, washermen, vegetable hawkers and waiters were amongst the residents.²⁹ In particular, on stands 619 and 620, there were thirteen rooms used as dwellings for Africans. These consisted of miserable shanties made of biscuit tins, which were almost falling down, and were without proper lighting or ventilation. There were earth floors, and no windows. Doctor Ronald Mackenzie, the district surgeon, remarked that these particular homes were 'unfit to house commonly decent pigs in'.³⁰

There was no drainage whatsoever, and the people were forced to obtain their drinking water from a shallow well in the yard. The same water supply was also used for clothes washing, and the slops were thrown onto the yard. (See illustration 20, p. 112). When asked whether the water had been tested, Doctor Mackenzie retorted that a test would have been unnecessary, as it was obvious that the water was polluted, just by looking at the surroundings.³¹

Doctor Johnson was also questioned about the water supply, and in particular, whether there was any other source for obtaining water other than the wells. He commented about the natural springs in the area, stating that one of these springs belonged to the council, whilst the other belonged to Benson Aaron. He had no knowledge of the council making their spring available to the residents – they were

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- 27 TA AMPT PUBS, TKP, Report of the commission appointed to enquire into and report on the Johannesburg Insanitary Area Improvement Scheme, 1903, p. 184.
 - 28 TA AMPT PUBS, TKP, Report of the commission appointed to enquire into and report on the Johannesburg Insanitary Area Improvement Scheme, 1903, p. 142.
 - 29 TA AMPT PUBS, TKP, Report of the commission appointed to enquire into and report on the Johannesburg Insanitary Area Improvement Scheme, 1903, p. 142.
 - 30 TA AMPT PUBS, TKP, Report of the commission appointed to enquire into and report on the Johannesburg Insanitary Area Improvement Scheme, 1903, p. 85.
 - 31 TA AMPT PUBS, TKP, Report of the commission appointed to enquire into and report on the Johannesburg Insanitary Area Improvement Scheme, 1903, p. 84.

using it for their own purposes. The area was not one which was supplied by the Waterworks Company, as was the case in many of the other areas in Johannesburg.³²

Doctor Charles Porter, the medical officer of health, shared Doctor Mackenzie's sentiments about the area. (See illustration 21, p. 113). He went as far as to state that he had seen insanitary places in a great many towns in England, but had never seen anything as bad as the Indian Location. In fact, until he saw it, he did not think that anything could be that bad. His particular concern was that, as the places were dark dens, it was impossible to tell what was going on inside the properties. As such it would be possible to conceal the presence of disease. In his opinion, the inhabitants 'would never think of calling a doctor, and, ostrich-like, would consider it the right thing to conceal the existence of disease'.³³ Sanitary conditions in the Indian Location were also extremely bad. Doctor Porter felt that nothing short of a whole army of inspectors would be required to keep the place clean.³⁴

D Leitch, the town engineer, when questioned by the insanitary commission, voiced his opinion that he felt that there was no reasonable hope for the district unless expropriation was resorted to.³⁵ In Doctor Mackenzie's opinion, the whole of the Indian Location was insanitary. He felt that the whole site was saturated with sewerage, and would have to be dug up and planted for some time.³⁶

The city council received severe criticism regarding the location during the proceedings of the insanitary commission. In particular, the sentiment was voiced that the council had felt that the site was a magnificent one to expropriate, and the declaration of the area being insanitary was the means to justify their action.³⁷ The council denied this absolutely.

32 TA AMPT PUBS, TKP, Report of the commission appointed to enquire into and report on the Johannesburg Insanitary Area Improvement Scheme, 1903, p. 329.

33 TA AMPT PUBS, TKP, Report of the commission appointed to enquire into and report on the Johannesburg Insanitary Area Improvement Scheme, 1903, p. 59.

34 TA AMPT PUBS, TKP, Report of the commission appointed to enquire into and report on the Johannesburg Insanitary Area Improvement Scheme, 1903, p. 59.

35 TA AMPT PUBS, TKP, Report of the commission appointed to enquire into and report on the Johannesburg Insanitary Area Improvement Scheme, 1903, p. 98.

36 TA AMPT PUBS, TKP, Report of the commission appointed to enquire into and report on the Johannesburg Insanitary Area Improvement Scheme, 1903, p. 6.

37 TA AMPT PUBS, TKP, Report of the commission appointed to enquire into and report on the Johannesburg Insanitary Area Improvement Scheme, 1903, p. 158.

In Doctor Marais'³⁸ opinion, the blame for the insanitary state of the area belonged squarely to the council. He stated that the council could not complain that the area was slop-sodden, when they could have sent proper carts into the area to remove the slops.³⁹ He disregarded the defence of the council when they stated that they did not have the necessary powers to deal with the area, saying that they never attempted to put such powers into force. The council had already recognised the dangerous state of the area in 1901. However, in the opinion of Doctor Marais, they had deliberately not dealt with the area effectively, thus allowing it to deteriorate and thereby facilitating its ultimate expropriation.⁴⁰

It was also Gandhi's opinion that the council had deliberately allowed the location to deteriorate. In his autobiography he stated that :

The criminal negligence of the municipality and the ignorance of the Indian settlers ... conspired to render the location thoroughly insanitary. The municipality, far from doing anything to improve the condition of the location, used the insanitation, caused by their own neglect, as a pretext for destroying the location, and for that purpose obtained from the local legislature authority to dispossess the settlers.⁴¹

The Indians were not removed from the location as soon as the council secured its ownership through the expropriation. It was necessary to find the residents suitable new quarters before dislodging them. This was not an easy task for the council. The Indians were therefore permitted to stay in the same 'dirty' location. They were now no longer proprietors, but tenants of the council. The result was that their surroundings became even more insanitary than before. When they were owners, they had to maintain some sort of cleanliness, if only for fear of the law. The council

38 No mention has been made of Dr Marais' Christian name.

39 TA TKP, *Report of the commission appointed to enquire into and report on the Johannesburg Insanitary Area Improvement Scheme*, 1903, p. 346.

40 TA TKP, *Report of the commission appointed to enquire into and report on the Johannesburg Insanitary Area Improvement Scheme*, 1903, p. 347.

41 M G Gandhi, *An autobiography or the story of my experiments with the truth*, II, p. 430.

had no such fear! The number of tenants increased, and with them the squalor and disorder.⁴²

It is certainly true that the council was carrying out regular inspections in the Indian Location in early 1904. On an inspection held on 28 January 1904, for example, the sanitary department found that the pail closets were full to overflowing in many cases, and that the ground surrounding them was saturated with faecal filth. The sanitary inspector, when questioned about the state of affairs, advised that the service provided to the area was a regular one, but only on every alternate night. However, because of the overcrowding in the area, this was hopelessly inadequate, as the number of people in the courts was so great that the closet accommodation was quite insufficient. The result was conditions that were exceedingly unpleasant and unhealthy. In most cases there was insufficient room to erect further closets, even if the council were prepared to undertake structural additions to property which might, in any event, be demolished.⁴³

Looking at the life of Mahatma Gandhi in South Africa, it becomes evident that the lack of facilities was part and parcel of the lives of all people of colour. Although he was an attorney and his home was built in a 'Western style' the rooms had no outlets for dirty water. Each room therefore had chamber-pots. Rather than have these cleaned by a servant or a sweeper, he or his wife attended to them personally.⁴⁴

On 11 February 1904, M K Gandhi wrote to Dr Porter regarding the state of the location. He felt that the Indian location was in a shocking state. The rooms were overcrowded beyond description. Many of the residents had been to his office to complain about the irregular sanitary service. By 1904 it was deteriorating even further. He emphasised that the residents were in no way responsible for the conditions in the location.

Gandhi stressed that many Africans were living amongst the Indians, without authorisation. He had heard that the mortality in the location had increased

42 M G Gandhi, *An autobiography or the story of my experiments with the truth, II*, p. 432.

43 TA MJB 1/4/8 Minutes of the health committee, meeting held on 2 February 1904.

44 M K Gandhi, *An autobiography or the story of my experiments with the truth, II*, pp. 412-413.

considerably, and that if things were allowed to continue in the present fashion it would only be a matter of time before some epidemic disease broke out in the area. He appealed to Doctor Porter's reputation for sanitary reform, and requested him to visit the area personally, offering to accompany him on the visit.⁴⁵

Dr Porter accepted Ghandi's invitation, and they visited the area together on 13 February 1904. Following the inspection, Dr Porter again emphasised his opinion to the council that the area was insanitary and that its continued existence was a danger to public health. He recommended that the residents be removed from the area as soon as possible, and if necessary accommodated in tents until alternative arrangements could be made for the erection of more permanent dwellings.⁴⁶

The town clerk responded by authorising the increase of services to the area, and the collection of night-soil on a daily basis instead of the alternate collections which were taking place at the time.⁴⁷

However, this really was a case of 'too little, too late'. On Saturday 19 March 1904 there was an outbreak of plague in the location.⁴⁸ It was not the location but one of the gold mines in the vicinity of Johannesburg that was responsible for the outbreak. There were a few Indians who were employed at the relevant mine. Twenty three of them caught the infection, and returned one evening to their quarters in the location with an acute attack of the plague. The plague in question was the black plague, also referred to as the pneumonic plague. This strain was even more terrible and fatal than the bubonic plague.⁴⁹

Ghandi's attention was quickly drawn to the plight of the plague sufferers, and he, together with Dr William Godfrey, immediately set about nursing the sick. A vacant house was occupied, and the town clerk notified of the fact that possession had been taken of the property. The town clerk expressed his gratitude to Ghandi for having taken charge of the vacant house, and confessed frankly that the council did not have

45 TA MJB 1/4/8 Health committee minutes. Meeting 16 February 1904.

46 TA MJB 1/4/8 Health committee minutes. Meeting 16 February 1904.

47 TA MJB 1/4/8 Health committee minutes. Meeting 17 February 1904.

48 TA MJB 1/1/5 Council minutes. Meeting 21 March 1904

49 M K Gandhi, *An autobiography or the story of my experiments with the truth, II*, pp. 432-433.

the immediate means to cope with the emergency. Within a day the council placed a vacant building at the disposal of Ghandi, but refused to assist with the cleaning of the premises. Ghandi therefore cleaned it himself, together with some other Indians who had come to his assistance. A number of beds and necessities were donated by the community. Twenty of the initial patients died. Meanwhile the council were busy taking other measures. There was a lazaretto for contagious diseases about 11 kilometres from Johannesburg. The two surviving patients were removed to tents near the lazaretto, and arrangements were made for sending any fresh cases there. Gandhi and his helpers were therefore relieved of their duties in connection with the plague.⁵⁰

The reaction of the authorities was extremely swift. By 4:00 the following morning a cordon of police was drawn around it to prevent people from either entering or leaving the location. All the patients were transferred either to a temporary hospital which was opened in the government entrepot building, or to a vacant house on stand 36 in the Location, and all the houses from which the patients were removed were immediately disinfected. Doctor Porter was absent due to illness, and Doctor Pakes,⁵¹ the acting medical officer of health, was appointed to supervise the proceedings. Together with Doctor Mackenzie, the district surgeon, and Doctor Turner, the medical officer of health for the Transvaal, they came to the decision that the whole of the Indian Location was to be regarded as an infected area. All the inhabitants remaining in the area when the cordon was drawn around it on Sunday morning were treated as suspects.⁵²

The Rand Plague Committee recommended to the council that, in their opinion, the location should be burnt to the ground. The health committee immediately set to work, taking adequate measures to exterminate the vermin in the location, and to prevent the escape of vermin while the destruction was being carried out. Within a week the whole population had been removed from the location. The fire brigade was called in to supervise the burning operation.⁵³

50 M K Gandhi, *An autobiography or the story of my experiments with the truth*, II., pp. 436-437.

51 No mention is made of Dr Pakes' Christian name.

52 TA MJB 1/1/5 Council minutes. Meeting 21 March 1904.

53 TA MJB 1/1/5 Special meeting of the Johannesburg City council. Meeting 31 March 1904.

Sufficient corrugated iron, in up to two metre lengths, was purchased, and the town engineer had the task of using it to fence in the entire location to prevent the escape of vermin. The order was given to the chief officer of the fire brigade to burn the location to the ground at daybreak on the day following the completion of arrangements by the town engineer.⁵⁴ The council did not show any inclination of trying to save anything from the fire. (See illustrations 22 and 23, pp. 114-115). About this time, and for the same reason, the council burnt down all its timber in the market, and sustained a loss of some £10 000. The reason for this drastic step was the discovery of some dead rats in the market. The council had to incur heavy expenditure, but it successfully arrested the further progress of the plague, and the city once more breathed freely.⁵⁵

The 1600 Asiatics and the 1358 Africans who had been resident in the location were moved to separate camps on the Klipspruit farm, 16 kilometres from town, where they were housed in tents, semi-circular huts and tanks that remained there from the 1899-1902 War.⁵⁶ The location residents were removed by special train and were supplied with provisions by the council at public expense. This city under canvas looked like a military camp.⁵⁷ Since no provision had been made for the 142 coloureds that had been resident in the location, they were moved into the Malay Location.⁵⁸

Initially the camp at Klipspruit was regarded as 'a suspect camp' as a number of further cases of plague had occurred during the period between the first case of plague and the burning down of the Location. It was felt that there was a strong possibility that some of the inhabitants might be going through a period of incubation. After the transfer only one case occurred at Klipspruit, and 12 days after the death of this individual, no further case was reported. The camp therefore ceased to be classified as a suspect camp, and became an accommodation camp.⁵⁹

After a period, the inhabitants were allowed to return to Johannesburg. Obviously, as their homes had been destroyed, they were forced to find alternative accommodation.

54 TA MJB 1/4/8 Health committee minutes. Meeting 5 April 1904.

55 M K Gandhi, *An autobiography or the story of my experiments with the truth, II*, p. 442.

56 N Kagan, *African settlements in the Johannesburg area, 1903-1923*, p. 25.

57 M K Gandhi, *An autobiography or the story of my experiments with the truth, II*, p. 442.

58 N Kagan, *African settlements in the Johannesburg area, 1903-1923*, p. 25.

59 TA MJB 1/4/10 Minutes Health committee meeting 11 July 1904.

Most of them moved into the Malay Location, Burghersdorp and Vrededorp, some found residence in other parts of Johannesburg, and some left the colony altogether. Some of the Africans found employment in Johannesburg, and found accommodation with their employers.⁶⁰

The procedure adopted for rehabilitation differed in the case of the Asiatics and the coloureds on the one hand, and the Africans on the other. In the case of the Asiatics and coloureds, these were, as a rule, not employed where they resided, and were therefore treated as though they were not in employment. Before they were allowed to leave the camp, they were required to submit to the camp superintendent a request to live in a certain place. This request was then passed on to the medical officer of health's staff, and an inspector was sent to the premises. If the premises were up to the standard of the municipal bye-laws a permit was granted, which was signed by the medical officer of health and the Asiatic was allowed to leave the camp.⁶¹

If the premises were not up to standard, the permit was refused until either the premises were suitably altered, or alternative premises, which were up to standard, were found. At this stage the permit was granted. In the case of Africans, if an employer was found, he would be allowed to leave the camp. The premises were then inspected and if not suitable the employer was compelled to make the necessary alterations. A large number of the Africans were employed by the railways, and also by the mines – many outside the municipal area. As a result of the procedures which were put in place, all of those who left Klipspruit did so to better accommodation than they had lived in prior to the burning of the location.⁶²

A number of the location residents had proprietary rights in the land, and were thus entitled to compensation. A special tribunal was appointed to try the land acquisition cases. If the tenant was not prepared to accept the offer of the municipality, he had a right to appeal to the tribunal, and if the latter's award exceeded the municipality's

60 TA MJB 1/4/10 Minutes Health committee meeting 11 July 1904.

61 TA MJB 1/4/10 Minutes Health committee meeting 11 July 1904.

62 TA MJB 1/4/10 Minutes Health committee meeting 11 July 1904.

offer, the municipality had to bear the costs. Most of the tenants engaged Gandhi as their legal adviser. Of 70 cases, only one was lost.⁶³

In terms of the census taken on 8 April 1904, there were a total of 3181 people affected by the burning of the location.⁶⁴ These comprised 1412 Africans, 149 coloureds and 1620 Indians. A total of 2323 permits were granted, 1249 to Indians and 752 to Africans, to reside in Johannesburg, while 107 Indians and 216 Africans were permitted to leave Johannesburg. 145 people deserted the camps, ten died in the camps, and 491 moved into the various compounds.⁶⁵

THE 'MALAY CAMP'

The 'Malay camp' was established in 1894. The 'location' was divided into 279 small stands.⁶⁶ It was situated on a rectangular strip of 15 428 square hectares to the south-west of Vrededorp. The surface soil was of a sandy nature. At a depth of a few metres it became mixed with clay, forming a reddish loam.⁶⁷ (See illustration 24, p. 116).

When the sites were granted in the Malay Location by the republican government to coloured persons, the residents immediately took steps to improve the property which was allocated to them. Applications for building rights were made, and granted, without any restrictions whatsoever. The result was that a number of structures were erected upon the stands, many of which were expensive and substantial, a considerable number of these being of burnt-brick.⁶⁸ Steps were taken to reclaim the land, in order to improve it for building purposes. In addition to being itself more

63 M A Gandhi, *An autobiography or the story of my experiments with the truth*, Book Two, p. 430.

64 TA MJB 1/4/10 Minutes Health committee, Meeting 11 July 1904.

65 TA MJB 1/4/10 Minutes Health committee, Meeting 11 July 1904.

66 L Callinicos, *Working life, 1886-1940*, p. 76.

67 Municipal Council of Johannesburg Report of the Medical officer of health on Sanitary circumstances of the Malay Location, dated 11 December 1909, p. 1.

68 TA LTG 103/38 Correspondence relating to the Malay Location deputation dated 1st May 1906, from Lieutenant-Governor's Office, Pretoria, addressed to the deputation of standholders of the Malay Location, Johannesburg.

habitable, the Malay Location became the centre around which a number of prosperous townships sprung up.⁶⁹

In order to formalise the tenancy of the stands, the practice adopted was for the superintendent of locations to issue a certificate. On the production of this certificate, the mining commissioner issued a stand licence, in precisely the same form as those which he issued in regard to the ordinary stands in the town. Such stand licences, however, could only lawfully be issued to white persons, and the conclusion arrived by the attorneys of the government, Messrs Lance and Hoyle, was that these licences issued to Africans or Malays did not convey the ordinary stand tenure but merely rights of occupation from month to month.⁷⁰

By 1903 there were 170 stands in the Malay Location that were vacant. These stands had been granted to people as far back as 1896 and 1897, but they remained vacant. As Mr W Lloyd, the manager of locations, was inundated with requests for stand licences from Malay and coloured persons who wished to reside in the area, it was decided to cancel the stand licences, especially in the light of the fact that they only conveyed a monthly tenancy, and to reallocate the licences to the applicants.⁷¹

The residents of the Malay Location, however, never felt secure regarding their occupancy of the area. There were two main reasons for this insecurity – the lack of security of tenure, and the close proximity of Vrededorp, a white district. A further factor was the ownership of the adjoining land by the Central South African Railways (CSAR) who could at any time require land for the extension of the railways.⁷²

At the time that land in the neighbouring district of Vrededorp had been allocated to poor whites for residential purposes, they had been well aware that their neighbours would be coloured persons. This was not a cause for concern by the new inhabitants

69 TA LTG 103/38 Correspondence relating to the Malay Location deputation dated 1st May 1906, from Lieutenant-Governor's Office, Pretoria, addressed to the deputation of standholders of the Malay Location, Johannesburg..

70 TA MJB 1/4/1 Minutes Health committee, Meeting 9 October 1902, Opinion of Messrs Lance and Hoyle, government attorneys.

71 TA MJB 1/4/5 Minutes Health committee, Meeting 12 February 1903.

72 TA LTG 103/38 Volume No 115 A2/36 Correspondence relating to the Malay Location deputation dated 1st May 1906 from Lieutenant-Governor's Office, Pretoria, addressed to the deputation of standholders of the Malay Location, Johannesburg.

of Vrededorp. Apart from the Vrededorp Township, there was no white township contiguous to the Malay Location.⁷³

Little attempt was made to enforce racial divisions, and people of different races did not necessarily live in the area set aside for them. In fact, whites also took up residence in the Malay Location. For example, most of the stand owners registered in the Malay Location bore characteristic Malay names such as Abdoolah Abrahams, U Mahomet, and August Davids. However, amongst these, one finds names such as Peter Stone, Robert Smith and James H Smith. Thus, out of the total population of 3376 in the Location in June 1904, half were Asiatic, (this included 70 Chinese), 937 coloureds, 405 whites and 252 Africans.⁷⁴

For many years the stand holders of the Malay Location gradually continued to improve their property.⁷⁵ But they always remained insecure about whether they would be allowed to remain in their homes. Correspondence was entered into, extending over a considerable period, with the honourable the colonial secretary, drawing attention to their insecurity of tenure, but no reassurances in any way were given to the stand holders of the Malay Location. A formal petition was drawn up and submitted in 1904, and again this did not receive any response.⁷⁶

In particular, the Malay Location residents requested the colonial secretary not to grant the land to the municipality, as they were of the opinion that such a move would result in their being removed from the location to some other site. A formal reply, received in November 1905, stated that the matter was receiving attention, but no further correspondence resulted.⁷⁷ Given the insecurity of tenure, it is hardly surprising that conditions in the Malay Location began to deteriorate rapidly. In

73 TA LTG 103/38 Volume No 115 A2/36 Correspondence relating to the Malay Location deputation dated 1st May 1906 from Lieutenant-Governor's Office, Pretoria, addressed to the deputation of standholders of the Malay Location, Johannesburg..

74 N Kagan, *African settlements in the Johannesburg area, 1903-1923*, p. 19.

75 TA LTG 103/38 Volume No 115 A2/36 Correspondence relating to the Malay Location deputation dated 1 st May 1906 from Lieutenant-Governor's Office, Pretoria, addressed to the Deputation of Standholders of the Malay Location, Johannesburg.

76 TA LTG 103/38 Volume No 115 A2/36 Correspondence relating to the Malay Location deputation dated 1 st May 1906 from Lieutenant-Governor's Office, Pretoria, addressed to the Deputation of Standholders of the Malay Location, Johannesburg.

77 TA LTG 103/38 Volume No 115 A2/36 Correspondence relating to the Malay Location deputation dated 1 st May 1906 from Lieutenant-Governor's Office, Pretoria, addressed to the Deputation of Standholders of the Malay Location, Johannesburg.

addition, during the war years, the health department (with the knowledge of the council) did not enforce the bye-laws in regard to water supply and structural conditions as rigorously as previously.⁷⁸

The Malay Location was the starting-point of the plague in 1904. It was also the starting-point of almost all subsequent smallpox epidemics. The influenza epidemic was particularly severe in the Malay Location.⁷⁹

On 22 September 1905 an ordinance "to enable a certain land to be conveyed to the municipality of Johannesburg" was promulgated, in the *Government Gazette* of that date, enabling the lieutenant-governor to grant to the council of the municipality the freehold of the Malay Location, amongst other portions of land dealt with at the same time.⁸⁰

The residents of the Malay Location responded by sending a deputation to the acting governor of the Transvaal reaffirming their emphatic protest against the grant of the land to the municipality. They stated that they felt they were entitled to consideration from the present British government in the Transvaal, in view of the repeated assurances that had been given to them by the British vice-consul, during the regime of the previous Dutch government, that their claims would receive favourable attention. They felt that they had done nothing to deserve what they feared by the vesting of the freehold, namely, forced removal, and requested that they receive some assurance as to the definite fixity of tenure being granted to them in the Malay Location from the lieutenant-governor.⁸¹

The plight of the residents was recognised by the assistant colonial secretary, who when forwarding the memorandum of the deputation of the stand holders of the Malay Location to the city council, added a postscript to the memorandum, in his own

78 TA GOV 1239 PS 44/4/10 Letter from Public Health Department to the High Commissioner, Johannesburg, dated 17 January 1910.

79 N Kagan, *African settlements in the Johannesburg area, 1903-1923*, p. 31.

80 TA LTG 103/38, 115 A2/36 Correspondence relating to the Malay Location deputation dated 1st May 1906 from the Lieutenant-Governor's Office, Pretoria, addressed to the Deputation of Standholders of the Malay Location, Johannesburg.

81 TA LTG 103/38 Volume No 115 A2/36 Correspondence relating to the Malay Location deputation dated 1st May 1906 from Lieutenant-Governor's Office, Pretoria, addressed to the Deputation of Standholders of the Malay Location, Johannesburg.

writing, stating that the government were taking steps to ensure fixity of tenure for the old burgers living in Vrededorp. He added that :

Whilst the inhabitants of the Malay Location recognise the generous spirit underlying the proceedings, which they have been closely following, they have a right to expect the same spirit regarding themselves, if only because they have always, and even during the trying times of war, been perfectly loyal to the crown.⁸²

He added that if a reasonable security of holding were offered to the inhabitants of the location, it would be fair to assume that they would build better buildings and would be in a position to live in a much better style to which they had always aspired.⁸³

By November 1905 the population of the Malay Location, as estimated by the location superintendent, was about 4200. This included 1600 Indians, 970 South African-born Malays, 70 Chinese and Japanese, 100 Egyptians, Somalis, Malagasies, 40 Natives, 1300 Cape coloureds and 120 Europeans.⁸⁴ The location consisted (in 1905) of 17 streets, in which there were 466 stands with 1010 dwellings, including 85 shops and about half a dozen small cigar works. There were also 86 stables sheltering some 215 horses, and one licensed dairy in fair condition, with one cow.⁸⁵ In these crowded and dirty conditions, it was no surprise that there was an outbreak of small pox in the location in May 1906. Following its rapid spread to Marshall's Town and City and Suburban, the council improved the house refuse removal service, and employed the services of a rat catcher.⁸⁶

Only a portion of the location was under the control of the council, being the area north of Smit Street. The remainder was the property of the CSAR Administration,

82 TA LTG 103/38 Volume No 115 A2/36 Correspondence relating to the Malay Location deputation dated 1 st May 1906 from Lieutenant-Governor's Office, Pretoria, addressed to the Deputation of Standholders of the Malay Location, Johannesburg.

83 TA LTG 103/38 Volume No 115 A2/36 Correspondence relating to the Malay Location deputation dated 1 st May 1906 from Lieutenant-Governor's Office, Pretoria, addressed to the Deputation of Standholders of the Malay Location, Johannesburg.

84 Report of the Medical officer of health, 1904-1906, p. 62.

85 TA GOV 1239, PS, 44/4/10, *Report by the Medical officer of health on the sanitary circumstances of the Malay Location*, dated 11th December 1909.

86 TA TAD 700, G3009, Report of the Medical officer of health on the Public Health and Sanitary Circumstances of Johannesburg during the period 1st July – 30th June 1906, p. 57.

whom, it was presumed, would sooner or later wish to use it for railway purposes.⁸⁷ This materialised in May 1906 when the CSAR decided that they wished to extend the railway station, and that part of the land occupied by the Malay Location was required for the purpose.⁸⁸ The worst fears of the residents had been realised. Legal opinion was sought on the position of the council in the circumstances. As the stands were only held on a monthly tenancy, the residents had few rights. However, some relief was available to the residents in terms of Section 2 of Ordinance 17 of 1905. In terms of this section, the council was obliged to compensate them for any structures belonging to them in the event of their removal.⁸⁹ The value of any awards made was to be determined by arbitration. In addition, a suitable alternative site was to be found to accommodate the displaced Malays.⁹⁰

No suitable site was available, and the residents therefore had a temporary reprieve. Because of the high incidence of disease, and the fear that any outbreaks would threaten the health of the town, the staff of the health committee maintained a continual presence in the Malay Location. A number of reports were written on the area. One such report was written by Doctor Coke,⁹¹ the acting assistant medical officer of health, on 12 January 1906. In it he emphasised the pollution which was resulting following the use of shallow wells for the water supply. He stressed the necessity for more efficient scavenging, including the removal of slop water. In addition, he drew attention to the danger arising from the special susceptibility of Indians to plague and smallpox, and from their practice of concealing infectious diseases.⁹²

Crowding became a serious problem. Despite the fact that the municipal regulations in force in 1906 prohibited the erection of more than one dwelling on each stand, in

87 TA GOV 1239, PS, 44/4/10, Report by the Medical officer of health on the sanitary circumstances of the Malay Location dated 11 December 1909.

88 TA LTG 103/38, 115 A2/36 Letter from Lieutenant-Governor's Office, Pretoria, to City council, dated 1 May 1906.

89 TA LTG 103/38, 115 A2/36 Letter from Lieutenant-Governor's Office, Pretoria, to City council, dated 1 May 1906..

90 TA LTG 103/38, 115 A2/36 Ref A.914F Letter from Colonial Secretary's Office, Pretoria, Transvaal, to the Deputation of Standholders of the Malay Location, Johannesburg, dated 18 April 1906.

91 No mention has been made of Dr Coke's Christian name.

92 TA GOV 1239, PS, 44/4/10, Report by the Medical officer of health on the sanitary circumstances of the Malay Location dated 11 December 1909.

January of that year a survey conducted found that a number of stands had more than one dwelling house. Sixty-eight stands had two separate houses, ten had three houses, 54 stands had a building with two tenements, three had three tenements, and 65 had four tenements.⁹³ In most instances, there was a yard at the back of each stand, and the sanitary conveniences were placed at the far end of the yard. During inspections of these yards by medical officer of health in November 1906, the majority were found to be littered with cinders and house refuse. Where stables existed, horse manure was generally used for the bedding of the horses, and this manure was spread over the surface of the roads during the day to dry out. The prevalence of cinders was as a result of the practice of making fires in the yards, for cooking or for heating water for washing clothes.⁹⁴

Although the medical officer of health had, on a number of occasions, urged the council to provide the Malay Location with a proper refuse-removal service, this had not been done. It was felt that the resources of the scavenging department did not permit the provision of anything beyond what existed at the time. Residents of the location were expected to carry their refuse to any of nine public rubbish boxes which were placed on vacant stands. In some cases these boxes were over a distance of 150 – 182m from the homes of the residents. Five of these boxes were just over a metre high, and the comparatively young children who usually took the rubbish of their household to the bins found it difficult to lift the rubbish and empty it into the bins. The result was that the lanes and streets were littered with refuse spilt in transit, while each refuse-bin was surrounded with a miniature refuse-tip. Often, in order to avoid the trouble of carrying the refuse or of paying someone else to carry it, the yards were left dirty or the refuse was thrown into the sanitary lanes, many of which were in a filthy condition, especially after rain.⁹⁵

93 TA GOV 1239, PS, 44/4/10, Report by the Medical officer of health on the sanitary circumstances of the Malay Location dated 11 December 1909.

94 TA GOV 1239, PS, 44/4/10, Report by the Medical officer of health on the sanitary circumstances of the Malay Location dated 11 December 1909.

95 TA GOV 1239, PS, 44/4/10 Charles Porter, Report of the Medical Officer of Health on the sanitary circumstances of the Malay Location. (No page numbers).

As late as 1906 the residents were still acquiring their water from the shallow wells that existed in the area.⁹⁶ The health department remained alarmed at the general deterioration of the area. Sanitation remained rudimentary, and most of the 557 pail-closets were very dilapidated wood and iron structures. In nearly every case the flap at the back of the closet had been torn off, and used for firewood. This practice was so common that it was impossible to stop it. A few of the closets on premises occupied by the 'better type of Cape people' were reasonably clean. Those belonging to Indians were, almost without exception, in a wet condition, owing to the Asiatic habit of using water, instead of paper, for cleansing purposes. In other instances, the closet seats were fouled. In nearly all cases the closets were 'evil-smelling'. The health department felt that it was impractical to try and enforce the use of ashes in the closets, due to the fact that these ashes would ultimately find their way, through the night-soil intakes, into the sewers, and cause blockages.⁹⁷

Doctor Charles Porter was of the opinion that the Malay Location should be sewerred, and that 'Coolie' or 'Turkish' closets should be provided for the Malays. The rim of this type of closet is level with the floor, and on each side is a facet for the feet of the user, who would be 'enabled without creating a nuisance to use the closet in nature's crouching position'. The habit of the Indians was to crouch on the raised seat of the ordinary closet, and thereby both the closet and the earth in front of it were fouled during ablutions.⁹⁸

As laundry was carried out in the location, a considerable quantity of waste water was generated. There was no slop water removal service, and all waste liquids were thrown on to the surface of the yards or allowed to flow into the streets. The question of the disposal of slop water had been raised before the public health committee in 1902, and already at that stage it has been recommended that each street should be provided with waste water tanks for the residents to use for the disposal of their water. The council would then remove the water from these tanks. It was felt that if this method could not be used, then once the area had sewerage and water mains, the

96 TA GOV 1239, PS, 44/4/10, Report by the Medical officer of health on the sanitary circumstances of the Malay Location dated 11 December 1909.

97 TA GOV 1239, PS, 44/4/10, Report by the Medical officer of health on the sanitary circumstances of the Malay Location dated 11 December 1909.

98 TA GOV 1239, PS, 44/4/10, Report by the Medical officer of health on the sanitary circumstances of the Malay Location dated 11 December 1909.

waste water could be thrown on to clinker beds which would be installed over the shallow wells in the area.⁹⁹

Regarding the water supply, it was noted that only 24 stands were connected to the water mains. Most of the water used in the Location was drawn from some 325 wells. These wells were usually situated close to the closets. It was safe to say that all the well-water was not fit for human consumption.¹⁰⁰ It was suggested that, although some controversy existed in relation to the bearing of the costs of the reticulation, it should be completed as soon as possible.¹⁰¹

The report concluded with a number of recommendations, and these are very telling as they point to the conditions existing at the time and which required change. The medical officer of health acknowledged that conditions in the Malay Location were unsatisfactory, and in certain respects, in a very insanitary condition. He believed that this was as a result of the uncertainty as to the future of the location, and partly due to the fact that during the recent period of depression, the sanitary committee had hesitated to enforce the provisions of the bye-laws in regard to the water supply and to unsatisfactory structural conditions.¹⁰² He felt that the state of affairs should not be permitted any longer, and recommended that a number of steps be taken to improve the situation. In particular, he recommended that a tri-weekly refuse removal service be established, and that a water supply be established in the part of the location which belonged to the council, and that the railway administration be approached with a view to establishing a water supply in the part of the location that belonged to them. Once the water supply was established, the wells in the area could be closed as soon as the residents had made a connection between the water mains and their properties. In addition, the recommendation was made that the pail-closets in the area be replaced by an approved type of 'Coolie' or 'Turkish' closet, which would be built into the ground and be capable of being used in the crouching position as preferred by the residents.

99 TA GOV 1239, PS, 44/4/10, Report by the Medical officer of health on the sanitary circumstances of the Malay Location dated 11 December 1909.

100 TA GOV 1239, PS, 44/4/10, Report by the Medical officer of health on the sanitary circumstances of the Malay Location dated 11 December 1909.

101 TA GOV 1239, PS, 44/4/10, Report by the Medical officer of health on the sanitary circumstances of the Malay Location dated 11 December 1909.

102 TA GOV 1239, PS, 44/4/10, Report by the Medical officer of health on the sanitary circumstances of the Malay Location dated 11 December 1909.

Other suggestions related to the provision of street-lighting, the improvement of the roads, and the appointment of an additional full-time sanitary inspector.¹⁰³

The report concluded with the following warning:

There is no doubt that the Malay Location is *the* danger spot of the town, and whatever expenditure the measures in question may involve, the medical officer of health is satisfied that it will be prudently incurred and far less than the outlay which would, in all probability, be necessary if plague obtained a foothold in this district.¹⁰⁴

Despite these good intentions, things never really improved in the Malay Location. This was partly because of the statement made by the railways in 1906 that they would be needing the area for new railway sidings within the following ten years.¹⁰⁵ The landlords and the council remained reluctant to spend money on improvements.

As the housing shortage got worse for Africans, more and more people were crowded into the Malay Location. Conditions were very bad. In 1908 the *Rand Daily Mail* described the Malay Location as the 'worst slum in Johannesburg'.¹⁰⁶

STANDS OCCUPIED BY INDIANS ELSEWHERE THAN IN THE MALAY AND INDIAN LOCATIONS

By 1904 there were 1677 Indians living in Johannesburg in areas outside of the Malay Location. By far the majority were not well off, and fell into three categories, being small storekeepers, individuals living in decent private houses, and 'low class Indians' living in warrens. Warrens were defined as being aggregations of thickly populated

103 TA GOV 1239, PS, 44/4/10, Report by the Medical officer of health on the sanitary circumstances of the Malay Location dated 11 December 1909.

104 TA GOV 1239, PS, 44/4/10, Report by the Medical officer of health on the sanitary circumstances of the Malay Location dated 11 December 1909.

105 L Callinicos, *Working life 1886-1940, A people's history of South Africa*, p. 77.

106 L Callinicos, *Working life 1886-1940, A people's history of South Africa*, p. 77.

huts or rooms, more or less defective in structure, crowded on area, and usually lining a very dirty courtyard or passage.¹⁰⁷

In 1904, there were 1677 Indians living outside of the Indian Location. The majority were resident in Burghersdorp (620), 251 lived in Ferreira's Town, another 216 in Fordsburg, 444 in Johannesburg central, 88 in Marshalltown, 55 in Vrededorp, two in Braamfontein, and one in lower Doornfontein.¹⁰⁸

Many of the Indians were storekeepers. (See illustration 25, p. 117). The stores were, in most cases, run by Bombay Indians. They were built of wood and iron, and, except in regard to the closets, were kept fairly clean and tidy. Owing, however, to the very general Indian practice of crouching instead of sitting on the closets, and of using water for washing themselves after responding to the calls of nature, all the closets, without exception, were in an offensive condition, and in nearly every yard a smell of decomposing urine was noticeable in the neighbourhood of the sanitary conveniences.¹⁰⁹

There were very few Indians living in decent private houses. There were three such houses in Fordsburg, and one in Market Street. As regards their interiors, there was no reasonable cause for complaint; the remark already made, however, in respect of closet accommodation in connection with the premises of Indian storekeepers, applied equally to the sanitary conveniences of these houses.¹¹⁰

The Indians living in 'warrens' were chiefly to be found in the western part of Ferreira's Town, at the eastern and western ends of Market Street, and also in Spies Street and Dam Street, Burghersdorp.¹¹¹ These people consisted chiefly of Hindu hawkers, waiters and 'apparently low-class Indians', living in crowded conditions in small ill-constructed rooms, lining courtyards which were often narrow, strewn with refuse and fouled with slops and washing water. The closets of these 'warrens' were

107 TA MJB 1/1/6 Minutes of Johannesburg city council, meeting held on 12 October 1904.

108 TA MJB 1/1/6 Minutes of Johannesburg city council, meeting held on 12 October 1904.

109 TA MJB 1/1/6 Minutes of Johannesburg city council, meeting held on 12 October 1904.

110 TA MJB 1/1/6 Minutes of Johannesburg city council, meeting held on 12 October 1904.

111 TA MJB 1/1/6 Minutes of Johannesburg city council, meeting held on 12 October 1904.

particularly objectionable on account of the different sanitary customs of the Indians, as well as of a want of cleanliness in other respects.¹¹²

In the opinion of the authorities, due to the occupation of Cape people and 'other half-castes' occupying adjoining rooms in the same court, and the presence and habits both of these Indians and of the half-castes, the vicinity was rendered undesirable as a place of residence for 'decent whites', and also comprised a distinct and serious danger to the health of the town. It was almost impossible by any practical method of supervision to keep these places clean, whilst the persons by whom they were occupied were, on the one hand, specially susceptible to both plague and small pox, and, on the other, notably inclined to conceal the occurrence of infectious illness amongst them.¹¹³

The attitude of the authorities towards the different customs of the population of Johannesburg, and in particular, the Indian community, was particularly judgemental. Although individuals such as Doctor Porter drew the attention of the authorities to the different cultural practices of this group, and the advisability of catering to their needs¹¹⁴, at no stage did the authorities carry out any of his recommendations.

REMOVAL OF INHABITANTS OF MALAY LOCATION TO ASIATIC BAZAAR

In the very early days of Johannesburg's existence, there had been no enforced racial separations. Rather, it was a town in which class was the determining factor of where people lived, who they mixed with, and the type of life they lived. On the whole, there was a very small 'upper echelon' of society, a small 'middle-class', whilst the remainder of the population were bound together by poverty. However, by 1904 attitudes had begun to change, and plans were in motion for the removal of the Indians residing in Johannesburg to an 'Asiatic bazaar'. The council was of the view that the interests of the poorer part of the European community required that the

112 TA MJB 1/1/6 Minutes of Johannesburg city council, meeting held on 12 October 1904.

113 TA MJB 1/1/6 Minutes of Johannesburg city council, meeting held on 12 October 1904.

114 TA GOV 1239, PS, 44/4/10, *Report by the Medical officer of health into the sanitary circumstances of the Malay Location*.

Asiatic and European populations should be kept completely apart, as 'experience [had] shown that social intercourse between the two was calculated to result in the deterioration of the white man, without improving the Asiatic, and the vices of each race [had] always exerted a demoralizing effect upon the other'.¹¹⁵

A total of 3376 people (in June 1904) were included in the removal programme. These comprised of 1682 Indians, 70 Chinese, 937 coloureds, 282 Africans and 405 whites.¹¹⁶ There were 52 Indian stores in the location. Some of the buildings were overcrowded, ill-ventilated, dirty internally and defective in structure, and the closets were particularly offensive. The ground in the area was in a very unsanitary condition, as evinced by the smell noticed when passing through the location at night. The only source of water supply was from shallow wells which were liable to all sorts of pollution. The practical difficulties of effective sanitary supervision were very considerable and real. For these reasons, as well as on account of the difficulty that was anticipated in effectively isolating the location in the event of the outbreak of plague, the proximity of the location to the town was considered to be extremely undesirable.¹¹⁷

BRICKFIELDS (LATER KNOWN AS BURGHERSDORP)

The Brickfields was unique in early Johannesburg history in that it was an area of land specifically set aside by President Paul Kruger's government for the poor Afrikaners. These Afrikaners petitioned the republican government for the right to manufacture bricks from the clay to be found on the Brickfields.¹¹⁸ (See illustration 26, p. 118).

There were a number of reasons for the white rural exodus into the cities. It can be explained only in part as a response to industrialisation. Other factors also played a part, such as the subdivision of land amongst family members. In addition, wasteful

115 TA MJB 1/1/6 Council minutes. Meeting 12 October 1904.

116 TA MJB 1/1/6 Council minutes. Meeting 12 October 1904.

117 TA MJB 1/1/6 Council minutes. Meeting 12 October 1904.

118 C Van Onselen, *Studies in the social and economic history of the Witwatersrand, 1886-1914 Volume One New Babylon*, (1982), p. 8.

and unsystematic methods of farming contributed to a decline in the quality of land so that a class of squatters or 'bywoners' grew out of the white farming community. Their situation was aggravated by improvements in the methods of farming, such as more economical grazing, and these factors provided the 'push' to the towns for the white rural population.¹¹⁹ They were also affected by the growing commercialisation of agriculture in the Transvaal hinterland, and by drought and natural disasters.¹²⁰ (See illustration 27, p. 119).

The Kruger government, aware of the difficulty which his unskilled countrymen experienced in obtaining employment of any kind in the mining industry,¹²¹ responded by making the Brickfields area available to them. It served a dual purpose – it allowed them to work at brick making, and to build homes for themselves. Kruger had initially envisioned the arrangement as a temporary measure. However, within months the site gave rise to a local industry of some importance. Scattered about were clay diggings, puddle machines, kilns, stacks of drying bricks and many horses and carts. By the early 1890s, the Brickfields had started to assume an even more permanent aspect and had become well-known as a place of economic refuge for the Afrikaner poor.¹²² The Brickfields was a marshy piece of ground, and as such, particularly well suited to brick making.¹²³ The residents held the land by what was referred to as 'brick makers licences'. These licences were granted up until the beginning of 1887. They were peculiar in that they granted the holder the right to make bricks all over the area, and consequently there was no delimitation of rights as regards brick making. At the same time, they were permitted to occupy a portion of the land for residential purposes, and that was defined as a plot measuring 4,65 square metres.¹²⁴ The immediate result was that the brick makers moved into the area, and established themselves wherever they sought fit. There was no regard for continuity

119 N Kagan *African settlements in the Johannesburg area 1903-1923*, p. 10.

120 C Van Onselen, *Studies in the social and economic history of the Witwatersrand, 1886-1914 Volume One New Babylon*, (1982), p. 8.

121 C Van Onselen, *Studies in the social and economic history of the Witwatersrand, 1886-1914 Volume One New Babylon*, (1982), p. 8.

122 C Van Onselen, *Studies in the social and economic history of the Witwatersrand, 1886-1914 Volume One New Babylon*, (1982), p. 10.

123 TA TKP, Report of the commission appointed to enquire into and report on the Johannesburg Insanitary Area Improvement Scheme, 1903, p. 6.

124 TA TKP, Report of the commission appointed to enquire into and report on the Johannesburg Insanitary Area Improvement Scheme, 1903, p. 6.

or the necessary arrangements for neighbours. Their homes were little huts, built of very poor and cheap material.¹²⁵

The land immediately alongside the Brickfields was obtained from the government by the Netherlands Railway Company for railway purposes. This particular land separated the Brickfields from Randjeslaagte.¹²⁶ By 1895 the town was beginning to grow at a rapid rate, and was extending in a westerly direction. It was already evident, by then, that something would have to be done about the Brickfields area. The government ordered a survey of the area in 1895. However, the surveyor, a Mr Currie,¹²⁷ was given instructions that, as permission had been legitimately granted for the residents to squat anywhere they wished in the area, he was to be guided by the position of the houses and to draw his plans accordingly. The result was that, on the first blueprint handed in, the area presented an appearance of a network of streets, lanes and alleys, some of them leading nowhere, some of them wide, some short, some long, and all badly constructed.¹²⁸

The government decided that it wished to do away with the area in order to facilitate the growth of the town and get rid of the slum that lay in its midst. The first step in achieving this objective was to do away with the brick makers' licences, and to substitute them for ordinary stand licences, such as those held by the residents of the rest of the town. This was implemented in 1896, and the residents were given the opportunity up to 1898 to make the necessary conversion. In nearly every case, the brick makers' licences were exchanged, and the tenants became owners of the stands. Stand licences were issued for a period of 99 years.¹²⁹

The brick makers had the opportunity to make a decent life for themselves. Clay mixers and drying kilns had been set up, and Africans were employed to produce and sell the bricks. Good money was to be made. An active brick maker who owned a

125 TA TKP, Report of the commission appointed to enquire into and report on the Johannesburg Insanitary Area Improvement Scheme, 1903, p. 6.

126 TA TKP, Report of the commission appointed to enquire into and report on the Johannesburg Insanitary Area Improvement Scheme, 1903, p. 6.

127 No Christian name provided.

128 TA TKP, Report of the commission appointed to enquire into and report on the Johannesburg Insanitary Area Improvement Scheme, 1903, p. 6.

129 TA TKP, Report of the commission appointed to enquire into and report on the Johannesburg Insanitary Area Improvement Scheme, 1903, p. 6.

clay mixer and employed three African workers could make 2500 bricks a day and sell them at 10/- per 1000. Soon brick making became the largest industry in the Transvaal after mining and farming. By 1896 there were 7000 people of all races living in the Brickfields. Among them were 1500 brick makers. There were also 450 wagons, and 1200 mules and horses were stabled in the area.¹³⁰

Owing to the general conditions in the Brickfields, it was impossible for the sanitary department to render an effective service in the area, especially in relation to the removal of rubbish and slop water in the district. This was mainly due to insufficient plant and mules on the part of the sanitary department. In addition, the residents did not have the necessary receptacles for rubbish and slop water. In most cases rubbish was thrown all over the yard.¹³¹ No doubt poverty played a key role in the failure of residents to have the necessary equipment available. Only 18% of the residents were paying for a daily service in respect of night-soil removal. The sanitary department, for its part, was only replacing the buckets once in every six removals. Every ten removals, the buckets were washed and placed in boiling tar. The reason why clean buckets were not supplied more frequently was due to the fact that the council did not have sufficient plant available. The washed buckets were taken to the residents either in scotch carts (of which there were 12, each carrying 30 pails), and in a special compartment in the front of the 16 new type of night soil vans. The carts and vans only provided for the transport of 2720 tarred night soil pails nightly, whereas between 8000 and 9000 pails were emptied nightly.¹³²

Up until that time, it had been impossible to obtain more plant, and further, to obtain the necessary mules for the purpose. Twenty-four of the new type of night-soil vans were ordered, and were arriving at the rate of eight per month, with the contract being fulfilled at the end of 1902. This allowed the sanitary department to cope with a further 3600 pails, which, with those 2720 carried by the existing plant, made a total of 6360 removals per night.¹³³ With the number of people living in the area, the services remained hopelessly inadequate.

130 E Brink, *Newtown, Old Town*, p. 8.

131 TA MJB 1/4/4 Health committee Minutes. Meeting 13 October 1902.

132 TA MJB 1/4/4 Health committee Minutes. Meeting 13 October 1902.

133 TA MJB 1/4/4 Health committee Minutes. Meeting 13 October 1902.

By 1903 the area of Brickfields had come to be known as Burghersdorp. At this stage it was bounded on the west by Malherbe Street, on the south by Park Road, on the north by Locatie Street and the railway ground, and on the east by the Goods Station and the Lighting Works, and immediately surrounding the Indian Location. It consisted roughly of about 1600 stands, and the ground known as Benson's Aarons. About 370 of these stands had buildings erected on them, and on a further 250 stands people had taken up residence.¹³⁴

People of all races mingled freely and lived side by side. Poor whites rented rooms in green brick shanties built around courtyards where shallow wells and outhouses were dug, often very close to each other. As the Indian Location became overcrowded, many Indians rented shacks in the backyards in Brickfields, while local African people took rooms there as well as in the Indian Location.¹³⁵ In 1902 a census of Brickfields reflected that amongst the residents of the area there were 348 Dutch, 70 immigrants from Europe, 276 Africans, 145 Cape Malays, 67 Indians and 12 Chinese.¹³⁶

Brickfields was an example of an area in Johannesburg where, in 1902, the concept of 'class' dominated over that of 'race'. Invariably poverty was the determining factor as to where the residents lived, and the poor remained in particular areas regardless of their race.

However, due to the close proximity of the land to the centre of the city, its value soon came to be recognised. Although the land in Brickfields was ear-marked for sale only to the Railways, the residents successfully petitioned the government for permission to sell their land on the open market. As this land was so close to the railway line, many businesses and immigrants coming from overseas bought stands there. Trading companies, banks, brick companies, a brewery, fisheries and the Imperial Cold Storage Company moved into the area. Many Indians set up shops and eating houses along Locatie and Hoofd Street which led to the station.¹³⁷

134 TA TKP, Report of the commission appointed to enquire into and report on the Johannesburg Insanitary Area Improvement Scheme, 1903, p. 16.

135 E Brink, *Newtown, Old Town*, p. 11.

136 E Brink, *Newtown, Old Town*, p. 11.

137 E Brink, *Newtown, Old Town*, p. 12.

By 1903, the area had again deteriorated to the point where it was part of the area earmarked for discussion as part of the insanitary area improvement scheme.¹³⁸ This, in itself, is interesting, especially when it is contemplated that something similar to ownership, as provided in the 99 year lease scheme, might have proved to be an incentive to improve the quality of the homes and the surrounding area. The whole area did not deteriorate, however. On the eastern boundary, close to the railway, a row of ten fairly good dwellings had been erected – the so-called Northumberland Cottages. Close to the cottages, on stands 635 and 640, there was a block of some 20 wood and iron rooms, in good structural condition, and occupied by Africans. The sanitary arrangements were, however, very primitive. Solid and liquid refuse was thrown out close to the dwellings, and the water supply was obtained from an unprotected well in the narrow dirty yard.¹³⁹

As soon as the commission of enquiry was appointed in 1903, the people of Brickfields, who were experienced petitioners, hurried into action. Objections were received from 234 people who represented or owned 533 stands out of a total of 1350 in the insanitary area. The objections were directed against the plans of the council to expropriate the land because the buildings on it were a danger to the public health. Protests were also lodged against plans to redevelop the area by the making of new roads.¹⁴⁰

The majority of the houses were either tin shanties or green brick sheds, and unsuitable for human habitation. There was no provision made for ventilation or light, and the rooms were very overcrowded. In most cases there was only an earth floor.¹⁴¹ During the war years conditions had deteriorated even further. Most of the buildings were badly in need of repair, with many of them in an extremely dilapidated condition and very unsafe. The streets were still badly planned, and extremely narrow. They were in a filthy condition, due to the habit of the residents of throwing

138 TA TKP, Report of the commission appointed to enquire into and report on the Johannesburg Insanitary Area Improvement Scheme, 1903, p. 63.

139 TA TKP, Report of the commission appointed to enquire into and report on the Johannesburg Insanitary Area Improvement Scheme, 1903, p. 63.

140 E Brink, *Newtown, Old Town*, p. 15.

141 TA TKP, Report of the commission appointed to enquire into and report on the Johannesburg Insanitary Area Improvement Scheme, 1903, p. 16.

their slop water onto the streets. Some of the houses were detached, whilst those near the lighting station were densely crowded together, so that there was no chance of them being kept clean and in anything approaching a sanitary state.¹⁴²

Following the South African War, many Afrikaners moved into the city. Often they had lost their homes and possessions as a result of the war, and had little or no resources. The urbanised Afrikaners were expected by their fellow whites to live like whites. When a witness was called to the Transvaal Indigency Commission, he spoke of their grim struggle, stating that the Afrikaner had rent to pay and had to keep up appearances, in addition to having far more expenses, such as keeping his family.¹⁴³

Many white workers preferred unemployment to degrading work or menial wages. There were few decent jobs paying a living wage. In the immediate aftermath of the war, most Afrikaner men in Johannesburg worked as cab or trolley drivers; some became brick makers, others offloaded the wagons that delivered farm produce. Girls found work at hand-laundries and boys as messengers or newspaper sellers. Prostitution and crime were common alternative ways of earning a living. Most young white criminals and street thugs were Afrikaners for many years to come. The traumatic urbanisation of Afrikaners had cultural and political dimensions as well. A study depicted the scene:

Urban Afrikaners were working like black people, taking orders like black people, living in shabby residential streets adjacent to black shanty towns, and having to speak a foreign language – English – like a conquered race. The better-off fellow-Afrikaners did not know whether to avert their eyes or rush to help, but, whatever they did, the poor represented an acute embarrassment. In the view of the English-speakers the Afrikaner usually appeared as the poor, uneducated railway worker, the ignorant policeman ... vacant low

142 TA TKP, Report of the commission appointed to enquire into and report on the Johannesburg Insanitary Area Improvement Scheme, 1903, p. 16.

143 H Gilliomce, *The Afrikaners, Biography of a people*, p. 324, quoting from the *Transvaal Indigency Commission, 1906-1908*, p. 12.

class beings. A stigma of poverty and ignorance was attached to the whole group.¹⁴⁴

Many moved into Burghersdorp. Immediately after the war, Major O'Meara visited the area. He noticed that even then, when the town had passed through a period of war and a large number of the inhabitants were absent; overcrowding was still the order of the day.¹⁴⁵ He felt that steps should be taken to do away with the area, particularly as he had seen, at first hand, the consequences of the outbreak of the bubonic plague on the coasts of the Cape Colony and Natal, early in 1901.¹⁴⁶

Refugees, especially Oriental refugees, were starting to come into Johannesburg from the coastal areas, and there was a fear of infection occurring in the area, and from there, spreading into the rest of the town.¹⁴⁷ The general idea had been to deal with the area before any outbreaks occurred, in an orderly manner and with the co-operation of the law and the residents. Major O'Meara appointed the assistant health officer to make an inspection and furnish a report on the area. The report was duly completed. However, Major O'Meara did not act on its contents beyond taking certain steps for improving the sanitation of the Indian Location. Instead, he waited for the appointment of the new town council.¹⁴⁸

On 19 February 1903 the number of residents in the Burghersdorp district was 987. The majority were Afrikaners (348), whilst the remainder consisted of 12 Chinese, 69 British, 276 Africans, 145 coloureds, 70 whites and 67 Indians.¹⁴⁹ The houses were considered to be a collection of 'low class, poor and unsightly dwellings', built of the very cheapest materials. The lack of arrangement of the houses led one of the witnesses at the Insanitary Commission hearings to remark that he felt that it appeared

144 H Gilliomee, *The Afrikaners, Biography of a people*, p. 324, quoting from the *Transvaal Indigency Commission, 1906-1908*, p. 324

145 TA TKP, Report of the commission appointed to enquire into and report on the Johannesburg Insanitary Area Improvement Scheme, 1903, p. 7.

146 TA TKP, Report of the commission appointed to enquire into and report on the Johannesburg Insanitary Area Improvement Scheme, 1903, p. 7.

147 TA TKP, Report of the commission appointed to enquire into and report on the Johannesburg Insanitary Area Improvement Scheme, 1903, p. 7.

148 TA TKP, Report of the commission appointed to enquire into and report on the Johannesburg Insanitary Area Improvement Scheme, 1903, p. 15.

149 TA TKP, Report of the commission appointed to enquire into and report on the Johannesburg Insanitary Area Improvement Scheme, 1903, p. 16.

that the owners had carried the houses on their backs, and dropped them down when they felt tired.¹⁵⁰ (See illustration 28, p. 120).

Many of the streets were irregular, crooked, narrow and unmade, others were *cul-de-sacs* leading nowhere.¹⁵¹ The council was of the opinion that they could not enforce the same stringent sanitary regulations as in the locations without the whites taking great offence,¹⁵² and they therefore did not regulate the area to the extent of the other areas. The water supply of the area was derived from a series of shallow wells, none of which had been properly constructed. Many of them appeared to have been used as a depositing site for night soil, dead animals, stable manure, and every form of 'obnoxious material', so that they had become grossly polluted and unsuitable for use as a source of drinking water.¹⁵³ Water samples were taken from the area, and forwarded to the government analyst in Pretoria, for evaluation. Of the 21 samples taken, 20 were returned as either wholly unfit or as dangerous. These were chemical analyses, as there was no apparatus available for making bacteriological analyses.¹⁵⁴

Stores had been opened up on the road facing the Braamfontein station – 27 in total, and belonging to local Indians. In the area behind the stores, there were court yards containing huts occupied by Indians and Africans. In one particular court yard, there were more than 20 huts, consisting mainly of one room, without proper means of ventilation or lighting, and generally defective in structure. Water was obtained from a well. In an adjacent lane the buildings were even more dilapidated, the yard and approaches there strewn with refuse and polluted with slops. Descending south-wards along Henry Street to the low-lying neighbourhood of Burgers Street, there were some irregular rows of very poor dwellings occupied by Africans, Malays and very poor whites, who paid from £18 to £30 per annum for these hovels. These particular homes were subject to flooding in the rainy season, by water from the deep spruit

150 TA TKP, Report of the commission appointed to enquire into and report on the Johannesburg Insanitary Area Improvement Scheme, 1903, p. 57.

151 TA TKP, Report of the commission appointed to enquire into and report on the Johannesburg Insanitary Area Improvement Scheme, 1903, p. 57.

152 TA TKP, Report of the commission appointed to enquire into and report on the Johannesburg Insanitary Area Improvement Scheme, 1903, p. 16.

153 TA TKP, Report of the commission appointed to enquire into and report on the Johannesburg Insanitary Area Improvement Scheme, 1903, p. 16.

154 TA TKP, Report of the commission appointed to enquire into and report on the Johannesburg Insanitary Area Improvement Scheme, 1903, p. 57.

which skirted Henry Street on the west, crossed Hoofd Street at its lowest point, and traversed Aaron's ground in a south-westerly direction, *en route* to Park Lane.¹⁵⁵

In order to facilitate drainage, there was a drain that had been constructed in Hoofd Street, and another drain under the Goods Station.¹⁵⁶ However, these drains were hopelessly inadequate. Already in 1902 a report had been prepared suggesting that a 200 centimetre drain would be required to carry the water destined for this spruit. Each drainage area was handled separately in the report. If the recommendations had been carried out, the area would have been put into a perfectly sanitary area as far as surface drainage was concerned.¹⁵⁷

However, the drainage was not carried out as suggested. The result was that many of the houses suffered from damp, and many should never have been permitted to have been built.¹⁵⁸ It was very strongly felt that nothing short of demolishing the houses and rebuilding them would sort out the area. But an equally strong sentiment was that no rebuilding should take place until such time as the sub-soil had been drained.¹⁵⁹ The conditions that eventually prevailed in Burghersdorp was a prime example of the very worst of what could (and did) happen in early Johannesburg when residents disregarded and failed to respect the environment in which they lived. The suggestion is not that the residents of the Burghersdorp area were the primary cause of the conditions. On the contrary, although the area was already marshy, it was the fact that surface water from a large section of the town was allowed to saturate the area. This contributed considerably to the deterioration of the properties, and left some residents living in very wretched conditions.

Water that should have naturally flowed through the area, in the *spruit* leading to the Robinson Dam, for example, was not able to do so. This was as a direct result of the

155 TA TKP, Report of the commission appointed to enquire into and report on the Johannesburg Insanitary Area Improvement Scheme, 1903, p. 63.

156 TA TKP, Report of the commission appointed to enquire into and report on the Johannesburg Insanitary Area Improvement Scheme, 1903, p. 318.

157 TA TKP, Report of the commission appointed to enquire into and report on the Johannesburg Insanitary Area Improvement Scheme, 1903, p. 320.

158 TA TKP, Report of the commission appointed to enquire into and report on the Johannesburg Insanitary Area Improvement Scheme, 1903, p. 16.

159 TA TKP, Report of the commission appointed to enquire into and report on the Johannesburg Insanitary Area Improvement Scheme, 1903, p. 16.

failure of the mine owners to keep the channel open, and specifically, to dig out the point of entry into the dam. This had led to the silting up of the lower portion of the spruit, culminating in flooding in the area.¹⁶⁰ With increased building operations in the city centre, the water that previously had run over Hoofd Street, was now also making its way into the same *spruit*, causing further flooding.¹⁶¹

The sanitation amenities fared no better. In some of the tenement houses, the sanitary facilities consisted of pail closets situated in a room between the two living rooms.¹⁶²

Burghersdorp was a particularly interesting area in the period under consideration. It was a prime example of the dangers of ignoring fundamental town planning. Due to crooked roads and the placement of houses without regard to position, it was very difficult for sanitary services to be supplied to the residents. It was also impossible to install such services as water supply (and ultimately electricity). This led, in no small measure, to the deterioration of the area. The government, in an early attempt to encourage pride of ownership in the properties, and some level of care on the part of the residents, decided to implement a 99-year lease scheme. However, this failed to result in any real improvements. Ultimately, the area continued to fall into decline, and was included in the expropriation scheme as defined in the insanitary scheme commission of 1903. The closeness of the area to the city centre, and the consequent value of the land, coupled with the failure of the residents to maintain it, led ultimately to its downfall.

VREDEDORP

In 1893¹⁶³ the government of the South African Republic (Transvaal) decided to set aside some vacant land west of the Braamfontein cemetery for the housing of the various African groups. However, the poor Afrikaners (burghers) sent a petition to

160 TA TKP, Report of the commission appointed to enquire into and report on the Johannesburg Insanitary Area Improvement Scheme, 1903, p. 331.

161 TA TKP, Report of the commission appointed to enquire into and report on the Johannesburg Insanitary Area Improvement Scheme, 1903, p. 331.

162 TA TKP, Report of the commission appointed to enquire into and report on the Johannesburg Insanitary Area Improvement Scheme, 1903, p. 94.

163 L Callinicos has put this as happening in 1895 in *Working life 1886-1940*. It would appear that it took place two years earlier in 1893 in terms of *The Vrededorp Stands Commission*.

the government to ask for the land in that area at a special price. The African housing scheme was then shifted to make space for an Afrikaner housing settlement called 'Vrededorp', meaning the 'village of peace'.¹⁶⁴ (See illustration 29, p. 121).

In terms of the executive council resolution No 709 of 13 December 1893 the Vrededorp stands were granted to indigent persons. The right of occupation was confined to the person who had been granted permission to live on the stand. Once the stand-holder left the stand, it would revert to the government without compensation.¹⁶⁵ The licences were, in their origin, a benefit granted out of public assets to private individuals. The granting of a stand was very carefully controlled. This was achieved by requiring a responsible official to see that no licence was transferred to any person who did not come within that class. The right to occupy a stand could be terminated at any time. The beneficiaries were entitled to live on the ground just as long as the government pleased and no longer; and, if dispossessed, they were to receive no compensation for the loss of their licences. The temporary and charitable character of the grant was also emphasized in the declaration which each applicant was required to sign. The declaration also contained a clause binding the applicant to vacate the stand if his circumstances improved.¹⁶⁶

This arrangement was changed in March 1894, when an executive council resolution gave two more rights, namely that the stand holder would be entitled to compensation for buildings on removal, and secondly, that the rights could pass to his/her lawful heirs.¹⁶⁷ In 1896 a further resolution stipulated that transfer could also pass to other poor and destitute inhabitants of Johannesburg, but that a stand licence of 3s 6d per stand should be paid. The stand would be forfeited if the licence fee was more than three months in arrears.¹⁶⁸

164 L Callinicos, *Working life 1886-1940, A people's history of South Africa, Volume Two, Factories, townships, and popular culture on the Rand*, p. 76.

165 TA TKP 181 (4), Vrededorp Stands Commission, 1904, p. 1.

166 TA TKP 181 (4), Vrededorp Stands Commission, 1904, p. vi. Report of Messrs Buckle and Murray.

167 TA TKP 181 (4), Vrededorp Stands Commission, 1904, p. 1.

168 TA TKP 181 (4), Vrededorp Stands Commission, 1904, p. 1.. Executive Resolution Article 18 dated 3rd March 1896.

By 1901 there was still vacant land available in Vrededorp. As there were 1811 whites living in the insanitary area, it was proposed that housing should be provided along the northern boundary of Vrededorp, and in Vrededorp itself. The houses contemplated consisted of 180 houses of three rooms each, 150 of two rooms each, and 150 of one room each.¹⁶⁹ No indication could be found that anything ever came of these intentions.

On 15th September 1903, it was resolved, in terms of executive council resolution 764 of 1903, that the transfer of the Vrededorp stands should remain subject to the same conditions which existed before the war.¹⁷⁰ However, despite the existence of this resolution, in practice no enquiries were made into the financial status of the transferees after this date. In other words, the stand holders were allowed to transfer the rights they had not only to poor and destitute inhabitants of Johannesburg, but to anybody.¹⁷¹ A survey conducted revealed that very few speculators had purchased in Vrededorp. However, a very large number of the transferees were very poor people, who had found it cheaper to live in Vrededorp; a large number of them were found to be shunters on the railway or mineworkers.¹⁷² (See illustrations 29, 30 and 31, pp. 121-123).

It therefore became necessary to deal with the rights of the owners of stands in Vrededorp, as, with the 'opening up' of the sale of the stands in the area, many of the new owners were not indigent or destitute. During the hard times of the South African War, many of these desperately poor burghers sold their licences. Many of the new people who moved into Vrededorp came from Fordsburg and Brickfields after the 1904 plague. Most were Afrikaners – there were very few English names on the register.¹⁷³ Vrededorp was intended as a suburb for white working-class people and the municipal council was determined to ensure that this expectation was met.¹⁷⁴ In July 1905 the Vrededorp Stands Commission was appointed to report on the

169 TA MJB 1/4/3, Report of D Leitch Town Engineer dated 25 August 1902, No 28/02 appended to Minutes of Health and Measures Committee, meeting held on 27 August 1902.

170 TA TKP 181 (4), Vrededorp Stands Commission, 1904, p. 2.

171 TA TKP 181 (4), Vrededorp Stands Commission, 1904, p. 2.

172 TA TKP 181 (4), Vrededorp Stands Commission, 1904, p. 5.

173 L Callinicos, *Working life 1886-1940, A people's history of South Africa, Volume Two, Factories, townships and popular culture on the Rand*, p. 76.

174 N Kagan, *African settlements in the Johannesburg area, 1903-1923*, p. 26.

changes in title which had occurred in the past, and to show the general effect of the various recommendations made over the years.¹⁷⁵

The Vrededorp Stands Commission of 1905 was established to investigate the manner in which the rights in the township came into being. Attorneys Buckle and Murray, who prepared their own report, found that the transferees, as a group, did not have any claim upon the community. There was nothing to show that they had acquired their interests in Vrededorp for the benefit of the public. The view was rather that they purchased the stands as other people purchased stands, for their own interests. Their investment in the area was, particularly in the light of the rights acquired, a highly speculative one. The conclusion reached was that, in the circumstances, there was no reason why the community should take upon its shoulders the burden of making their speculation a success.¹⁷⁶

The original stand holders had had considerable claims to the stands because of their poverty; the new transferees often did not have the same claims. The records available in 1905 indicated that, to the contrary, quite a number of the owners were men of some wealth. Many of them had been in possession for less than two years when the Vrededorp stands commission started its deliberations. The commission did not feel that there was any moral obligation to these new owners, especially as they were not of the class intended to benefit from the purchase of the stands in the area. In short, it was felt that the only characteristic which was common to the transferee and the original holder was the possession of a Vrededorp licence. The original holder obtained his licence after an enquiry which showed him to be a fit object of the benefit; the transferee obtained his by purchase in the open market. That purchase passed to the transferee the legal rights of the original holder, but did not (and could not) pass his equitable rights. Such rights were purely personal; and could not therefore be the subject of sale and purchase.¹⁷⁷

According to the report of the Vrededorp Stands Commission in 1905, 75% of the whites in Vrededorp were poor and their position was further aggravated by the

175 TA TKP 184 (4) *Vrededorp Stands Commission*.

176 TA TKP 184 (4) *Vrededorp Stands Commission*. p. vii. Report of Buckle and Murray.

177 TA TKP 184 (4) *Vrededorp Stands Commission*. p. viii. Report of Buckle and Murray.

decision not to permit the sub-letting of stands to Asiatics, coloureds and Africans. Economic considerations soon overcame all other objections and before long losses were being recouped as landlords began to subdivide parts of their stands into yards specifically for letting to Africans. Vrededorp thus once again began to develop a multiracial character. Furthermore the failure of the central authorities to co-operate with the local authorities encouraged coloured settlement in Vrededorp.¹⁷⁸

CHINESE LIVING IN JOHANNESBURG

The Chinese population of Johannesburg tended to live in the various areas occupied by the poorer sectors of the population in the period prior to 1903. Despite the more prominent role played by the free Chinese in the Transvaal during the early twentieth century, the source material relevant to them is limited.¹⁷⁹

The Chinese in the Transvaal set up service businesses in Johannesburg, and were primarily general dealers, grocers and laundrymen. Although there are no specific figures of their income, indications are that many of them, particularly the store owners, developed large and successful enterprises. From the information available, it appears that the Chinese began arriving after 1850. A number of them arrived as storekeeper assistants, earning £4 a month, and later established their own shops. Initially their numbers must have been fairly insignificant because in the first decades of ZAR government rule there was no reference to them. This might have been because they preferred to maintain a low profile. There appears to have been a gradual increase in their numbers after the discovery of the Witwatersrand gold reef in 1886. This was probably related to the emergence of larger potential markets that developed as a result of the influx of European skilled miners and African unskilled workers. Many of the Chinese came from Mauritius.¹⁸⁰

The Chinese population was denied the rights of citizenship and the right to own fixed property by Law 3 of 1885.¹⁸¹ Despite the paucity of archival material on Chinese

178 N Kagan, *African settlements in the Johannesburg area, 1903-1923*, p. 27.

179 K L Harris, *A history of the Chinese in South Africa to 1912*, p. 261.

180 K L Harris, *A history of the Chinese in South Africa to 1912*, p. 268-269.

181 K L Harris, *A history of the Chinese in South Africa to 1912*, p. 272.

activities, there is some evidence of resistance to the 1885 legislation. Once the law had been elaborated by further amendments and an additional resolution passed in 1893, specifically stipulating that the Chinese had to carry passes, reaction was forthcoming. In 1894, a petition was allegedly sent to the British high commissioner in Cape Town protesting against the proposed removal of Chinese to locations. In 1897 a petition signed by 354 Chinese residents in Johannesburg and surrounding areas, again appealed against removal from the region where they had established viable businesses, some of them since 1886 and 1887. They declared themselves loyal and law-abiding supporters of the state and requested that they should have the same free trade rights as 'foreigners of all nationalities in China'.¹⁸² No information was found about the conditions under which the Chinese shopkeepers lived.

The majority of the European population was in favour of restrictive legislation for 'Asiatics'. Negative attitudes towards Asians, so apparent in official records, were also reflected in the media. Asians were stereotyped as 'mean and dirty', with low standards of living.¹⁸³ In racist fashion it was stated that:

the invincible hostility and repugnance felt towards the indigenous black races had produced so marked a line of cleavage on the basis of colour that the Asiatic races cannot ever be treated on a basis of equality with the white races.¹⁸⁴

The importation of Chinese indentured labour for the mines exacerbated these anti-Asian attitudes.¹⁸⁵ Plagued by labour shortages, the decision was made to introduce indentured Chinese labourers from 1904. An important element of Milner's reconstruction programme was to aid economic recovery. The Chinese made it possible for expansion to take place while the machinery for the recruitment of African labour was getting into gear again, which it did from about 1907.¹⁸⁶

182 K L Harris, *A history of the Chinese in South Africa to 1912*, pp. 274-275.

183 K L Harris, *A history of the Chinese in South Africa to 1912*, p. 286.

184 *Transvaal Leader*, 4 August 1903, as quoted by K L Harris, *A history of the Chinese in South Africa to 1912*, p. 286.

185 K L Harris, *A history of the Chinese in South Africa to 1912*, p. 287.

186 T R H Davenport, et. al., *South Africa, a modern history*, p. 237.

Altogether 63 000 Chinese were introduced into the mines between 1904 and 1910.¹⁸⁷ (See illustration 32, p. 124). The majority came from two provinces of China, namely Chihli and Shantung. These areas were mainly rural in character, and the overwhelming majority came from the lowest stratum of this economy. They included poor peasants, rural wage labourers, migrant urban labourers and the destitute.¹⁸⁸ They were brought into the country on three year indentures under the labour scheme. The scheme provided for compulsory repatriation. The majority of the Chinese were employed on the mines, and housed in compounds. Conditions were far from satisfactory. There were numerous desertions.¹⁸⁹ (See illustrations 33 – 37, pp. 125-129).

1906 saw a general election in Britain. A deputation was sent to London in the same year, highlighting the plight of the Chinese in South Africa. In addition, there was correspondence between the Chinese ambassador in London to the British foreign office.¹⁹⁰ Possibly in response to the increased awareness of the plight of the Chinese, the liberal party based a large part of their campaign on the allegation of 'Chinese slavery' on the Witwatersrand. They highlighted the harsh working conditions imposed on the Chinese. Election posters represented the Chinese being led to work in chains. Jacobsson, in his "Fifty golden years of the Rand 1886-1936," was of the opinion that the allegations by the Liberal Party were false.¹⁹¹ Shorten states although most of the mining companies treated their Chinese labourers well, some complained of the brutal treatment they received at the hands of the mine police, of illegal deductions from their wages and the failure of their employees to give them promised pay increases.¹⁹²

It is fair to concede that while the conditions for Chinese labourers in the Transvaal were reasonable, the same cannot be said of their treatment. This left much to be desired. Although the humanitarians sometimes exaggerated the treatment of the Chinese recruits, it can be argued, as British Liberal Party member of parliament, C P Trevelyan, did

187 D Jacobsson, *Fifty golden years on the Rand 1886-1936*, p. 83.

188 K L Harris, *A history of the Chinese in South Africa to 1912*, p. 152-153.

189 D Jacobsson, *Fifty golden years on the Rand 1886-1936*, p. 83.

190 L Harris, *A history of the Chinese in South Africa to 1912*, p. 295.

191 D Jacobsson, *Fifty golden years of the Rand 1886-1936*, p. 85.

192 J R Shorten, *The Johannesburg saga*, p. 249.

[that] the allegations ... could not be believed off-hand. But neither could they be denied off-hand by companies against which allegations had been made.¹⁹³

It should also be emphasised that mine management, white miners and Chinese police did indeed abuse the Chinese flagrantly, which often resulted in disturbances, riots and fatal confrontations.¹⁹⁴

In April 1905 there was a strike on the Randfontein mine and from time to time individuals and small groups, believing they could find their way to China, broke out of mine properties, robbing and sometimes committing murder as they went. Before long the residents of Johannesburg and the Reef towns, already critical of a government which was apparently unable to solve the economic problem, was holding it responsible for the 'Chinese peril'.¹⁹⁵

Yielding to the urgent representations of deputations, the government established police posts at distances of about 500 metres along the Reef to arrest deserters. People living in the country districts, afraid of murder and pillage, were used issued with rifles to protect themselves against the Chinese. In the compounds themselves, there were often serious disorders, in particular the trade in opium.¹⁹⁶

The medical officer of health visited the Chinese compounds at Jupiter, Jumpers Deep, Village Deep and Langlaagte Consolidated on 30 January 1906. He reported that they were housed in substantial buildings as regards lighting, heating and ventilation, and that the floor and air space were in line with the recommendations of the Transvaal Medical Society. With regard to Jumper's Deep, in particular, he reported that the rooms were 'quite gay in appearance'. The 'muggy' smell generally associated with hostels was absent. An ample number of baths (with hot and cold water) and latrine accommodation was provided. In addition, the Jumper's Deep and

193 K L Harris, *A history of the Chinese in South Africa to 1912*, p. 138.

194 K L Harris, *A history of the Chinese in South Africa to 1912*, p. 139.

195 J R Shorten, *The Johannesburg saga*, p. 249.

196 D Jacobsson, *Fifty golden years on the Rand 1886-1936*, p. 83.

Village Deep compounded had a fine dining room. Each compound had a large kitchen fitted with steam-heated cooking pots.¹⁹⁷

The indication provided in the report was that the living conditions were of an acceptable, possibly even good, standard. However, the photographic records show narrow concrete bunks, one above the other, as the sleeping arrangements. There is no evidence of cupboards or any other places where personal effects could be stored. What is clear is that there were many desertions, and a reliance on drugs, especially opium. If the living conditions had been satisfactory, it would have been unlikely that the liberal party in Britain would have drawn attention to the conditions in the mines, and further, that the desertions and drug use would have occurred on the high level that it did. Once the liberal party led by Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman came into power it was a foregone conclusion that the Chinese had to go.¹⁹⁸ This marked the end of the 'experiment' regarding Chinese labour, and this episode of South Africa's history.

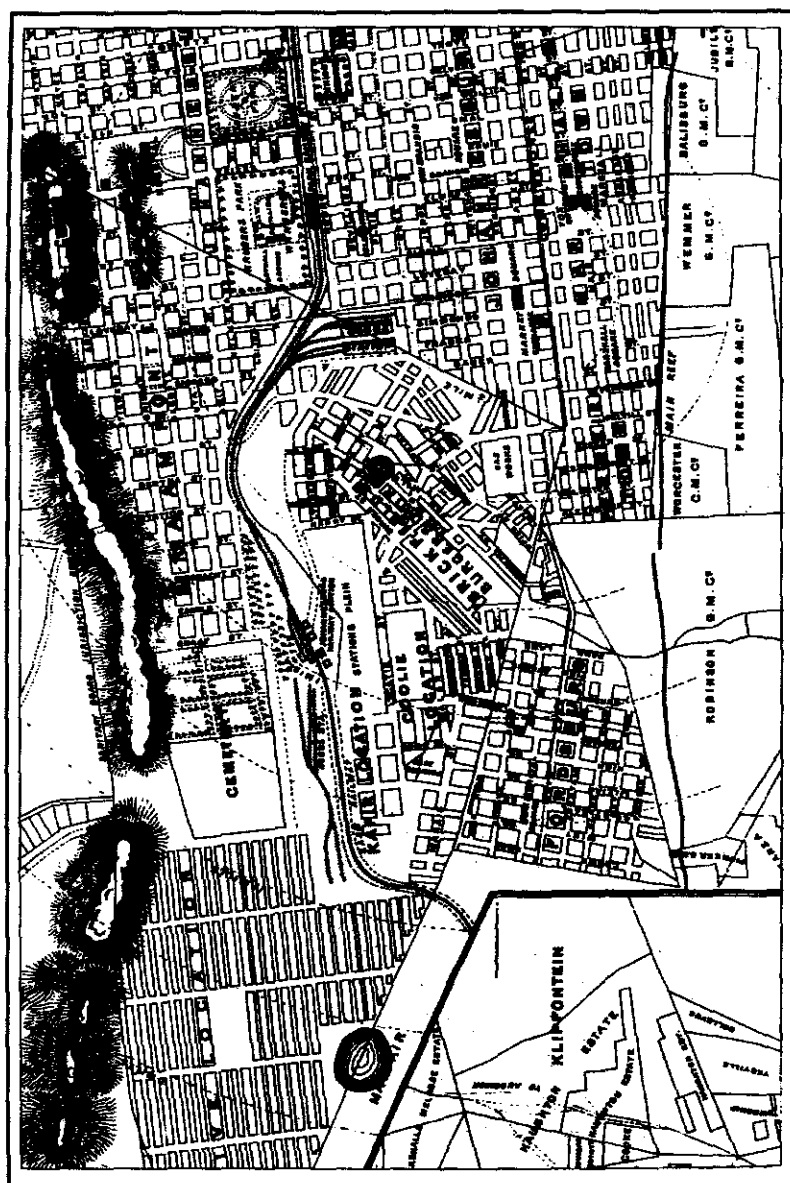
CONCLUSIONS

The so-called 'poor' of Johannesburg were undoubtedly a large sector of the population. They were extremely dependent on their employers, landlords and the council to assist them in their attempt to obtain a decent standard of living. However, this help was invariably not forthcoming. Many scarcely earned a living wage, but were expected to pay high rentals for crowded and poor quality accommodation. The provision of services, especially those of a sanitary nature, from the council, was often rudimentary at best. Water was invariably only obtainable from shallow wells, and much of what was available was polluted. Yet these people, through their labour, played a crucial role in Johannesburg's history. Their contribution was often overlooked, both during the period in which they lived, and even to the present-day. It is hoped that this chapter will provide some measure of understanding of the

197 TA TAD 700 01 G3009 Municipality of Johannesburg, Report of the Medical officer of health on the Public Health and Sanitary Circumstances of Johannesburg during the period 1 July 1904 – 30 June 1906, pp. 58-59.

198 K L Harris, A history of the Chinese in South Africa to 1912, p. 143.

difficult conditions under which they lived, and recognise their contribution, so badly neglected in the historical writings of the period.



Johannesburg and suburbs, 1897.



MAHATMA GANDHI (1869-1948)

Gandhi arrived in South Africa as a young attorney in 1893 to give advice in a court case. After having experienced the discriminatory treatment inflicted upon non-whites during this period, Gandhi was instrumental in forming the Natal Indian Congress to defend Indian rights. In terms of the law in force in the Transvaal in 1886, all Indians were required to pay a poll tax of £3 as a fee for entering the Transvaal. They were not allowed to own land, except in specific locations set aside for them, and even that was not ownership. Indians were not allowed to walk on public footpaths, and were further not allowed to be out of doors after 21:00 without a permit. Mahatma Gandhi, in his autobiography, described what it was like to be a 'coolie' in Johannesburg. He was once found walking on a public footpath, and was kicked and beaten by a policeman for the infringement. He wrote of how the incident deepened his feelings for the Indian settlers, and how his mind became more and more occupied with the question as to how the state of affairs should be improved.^[1]

Source of photograph: E Brink, *Newtown Old Town*, p. 20.

Source of caption: M K Ghandi, *An autobiography or the story of my experiments with the truth, Book One*, p. 190-194



Disinfecting an inhabitant's house during the plague, 1904.

Source: P Kallaway and P Pearson, *Johannesburg: Images and continuities A history of working class life through pictures 1885 - 1935*, p. 32.



A Johannesburg yard. The drums were used for storing water or for cooking food. Overcrowding, poverty, and the lack of services – clean water, sewerage and rubbish collection – were major causes of disease.

Source of photograph and caption: L Callinicos, *Volume Two Working Life Factories, Townships, and Popular Culture on the Rand 1886-1940*, p. 79.



DOCTOR CHARLES PORTER (1864-1934)

Medical officer. In 1901 Dr Porter was appointed medical officer of health by the British authorities in Johannesburg. He transformed the existing unhealthy conditions and established a clean and healthy city. His legal training was of assistance in drawing up extensive health regulations. In addition, he organized an efficient public health department, established a water purification system and laid down schemes for child welfare, disease control, hygienic milk supply and refuse and waste disposal. He was responsible for a number of reports and manuals on health and hygiene. On behalf of the town council he drafted a petition for extension of the town's boundaries. He also supported the move for the establishment of a university in Johannesburg.

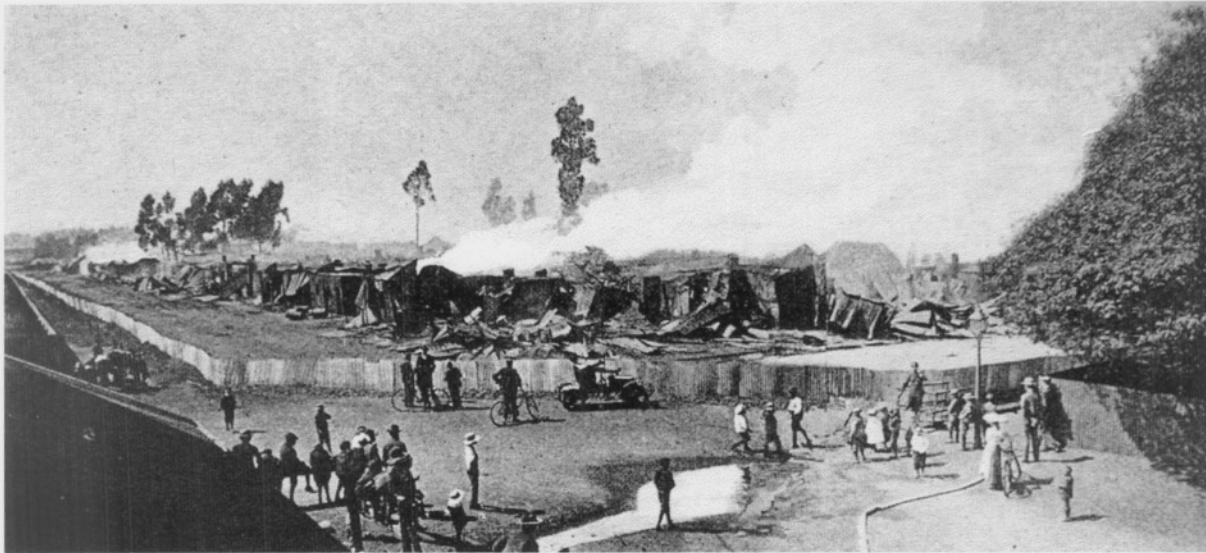
Dr Porter served on various government commissions connected with health matters. He was consulting advisor to the Rand Water Board and a member of the Public Health Council. He became the first professor of public health at the University of the Witwatersrand from 1923 to 1932. In 1925 he resigned his position as medical officer and retired with the rank of lieutenant colonel in the South African Medical Corps.

Source of illustration: E Brink, *Newtown Old Town*, p. 18.

Source of caption: N and R Musiker, *A concise historical dictionary of Greater Johannesburg*, p. 214.



The burning of the Indian Location, 1904.



Stamping out the plague: burning the Indian Location, 1904.

Source: P Kallaway and P Pearson, *Johannesburg: Images and continuities A history of working class life through pictures 1885 - 1935*, p. 32.



The 'Malay Camp' which adjoined Vrededorp.



A location shop, 1906.

Source: P Kallaway and P Pearson, *Johannesburg: Images and continuities A history of working class life through pictures 1885 - 1935*, p. 34.



Brickfields. This area was unique in early Johannesburg as it was set aside specifically for poor Afrikaners by the Kruger government. The residents were allowed to make bricks and to build a home for themselves. No restrictions were imposed. The area was marshy and particularly well suited for brick-making.



An Afrikaner rural family treks to town. Many Afrikaners lost their land during the South African War. Others could not survive the depression that followed.



Moving house. The edifice was constructed of paraffin tins hammered flat.



Scene from a Vrededorp yard. Water was stored in drums and barrels. Washing was also done in the yards, in basins.



Whites also lived in back yards. Their water was stored in drums and barrels. Toilets were located at the very rear of the yards, with the backs abutting onto sanitary lanes. The sanitation workers would remove the buckets from the toilets.

Source: L Callinicos, *Volume Two Working Life Factories, Townships, and Popular Culture on the Rand 1886-1940*, p. 184.



This photograph is dated 1903. It is likely that it would have been taken in an area such as Vrededorp. The width of the street and the presence of light poles would indicate that it was taken in the main street.



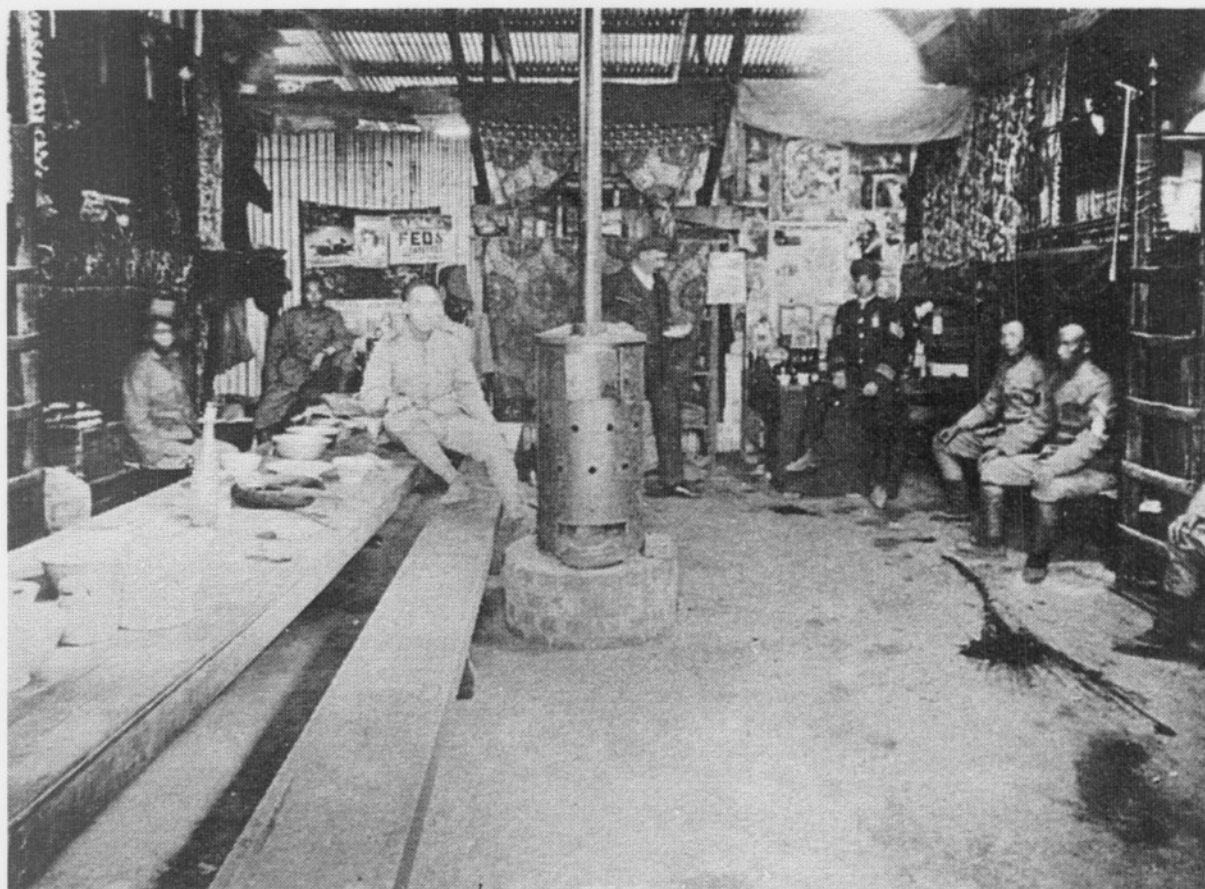
This photograph forms part of the Museum Africa collection. Although it is not dated, it would be typical of the scene at the rear of properties in early Johannesburg. Notice the outbuildings and the drums. It is likely that the drums would have been used for water storage.



Arrival of Chinese labourers on the Rand.



Chinese Compound. This compound was on the Simmer and Jack Mine Pty Ltd.



Chinese compound, ± 1905. Dining room area.



Chinese cook house, 1906.

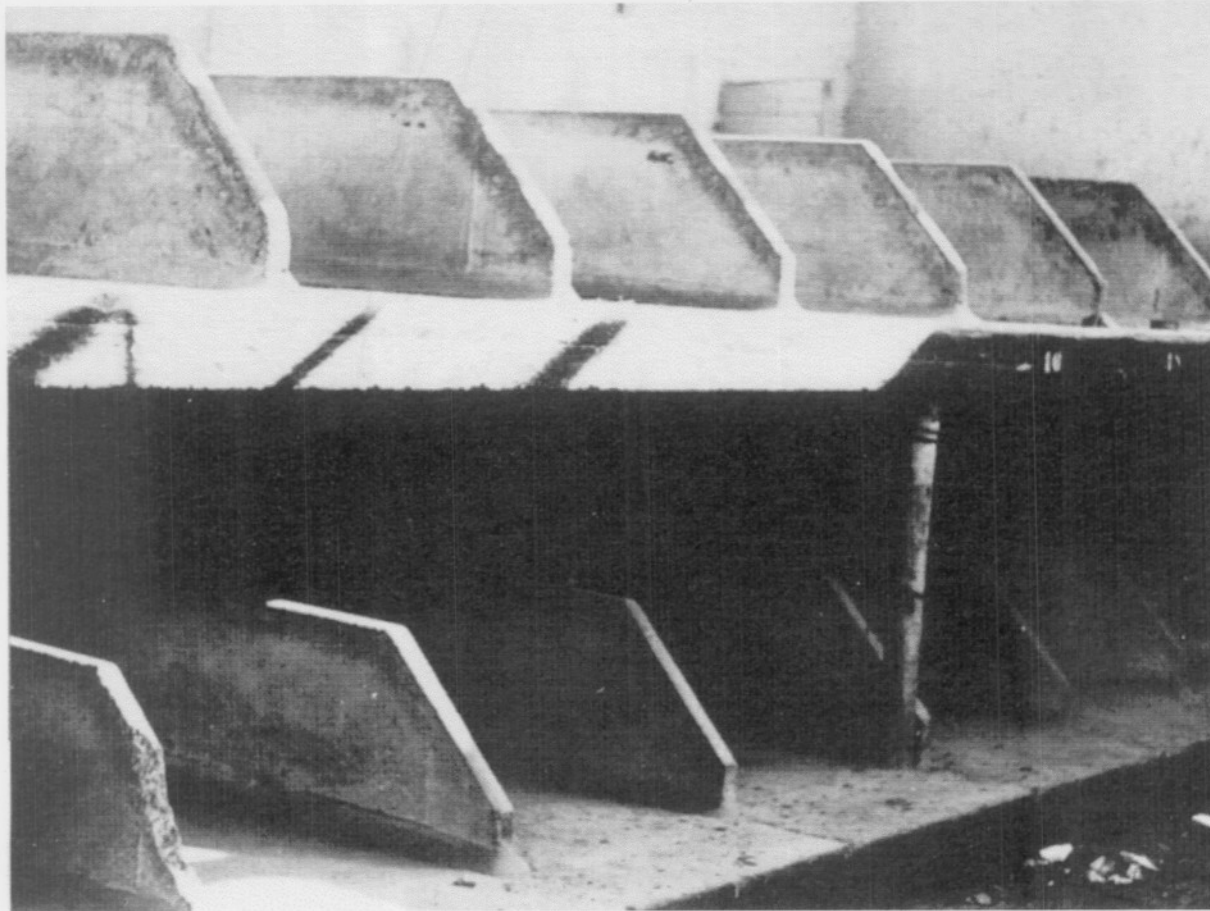
Source: P Kallaway and P Pearson, *Johannesburg: Images and continuities A history of working class life through pictures 1885 - 1935*, p. 20.



Rant
Chinese
Cookhouse.

Heune & Levy, Johannesburg, No. 1319.

Kitchen in the Chinese compound.



Bunks in Chinese compound sleeping quarters, 1906.

Source: P Kallaway and P Pearson, *Johannesburg: Images and continuities A history of working class life through pictures 1885 - 1935*, p. 19.

CHAPTER 3 - WATER AND SANITATION “WORKERS”

In the early years of Johannesburg, and especially in the period up to 1904, water, whether directly or indirectly, provided a means of generating a livelihood for many of its citizens. In this chapter the contribution of the many, seemingly invisible, workers whose involvement with water provision and collection, which has largely escaped the historical record, will be recognised. Amongst them were water vendors and hawkers, the staff of the Johannesburg sanitary and scavenging department, and the predominately Zulu clothes washers, the *Amawasha*. It is necessary to pause for a moment to look at the reasons that gave rise to the need for the existence of this sector of the community.

In the early stages of the formation of a new town, the inhabitants, without recourse to an established infrastructure, are forced by necessity to rely on what the local environment can offer them. This is especially true with regard to water provision and use. As has been indicated in Chapter 1, Johannesburg is in a unique situation in this regard, for unlike most other major cities in the world, it is not situated on a major river. Neither does it have a natural system of drainage to allow for the ready removal of effluent. The conditions are semi-arid, rainfall is seasonal and in short supply. The physical locality of the settlement ensured that water was a scarce commodity, the lack of a natural system of drainage meant that what water was used could not be thrown onto the streets and that it had to be removed in order to ensure that it did not create an environmental hazard. It was primarily these two factors that gave rise to an entire infrastructure based on the delivery and removal of water.

WATER VENDORS

Water vendors soon recognized the lucrative potential of the delivery of water. Although water vending was a simple enterprise, it represented the first stage in water trading in Johannesburg, providing a means of generating an income for a number of individuals, and filling a very important niche in the community. Little is known about these vendors except that which is gleaned through the occasional mention in

the autobiographies of pioneers, and from a few photographs.¹ (See illustrations 39 and 40, pp. 156-157). Photographs indicate that hawking was augmented by supply of water from horse-drawn kegs, and later by mule-drawn carts. (See illustration 16, p. 62).

It was particularly in times of drought that the services of water hawkers came to be in great demand. The historian, D Jacobsson, writing of his own experiences, recounts how, during the severe drought of 1895, the provision of water by the Johannesburg Waterworks Company failed, and it was necessary for whatever supplies of water that were available from springs to be distributed by water carts. Families would gather around the cart, the father with a bucket, mother with a bedroom jug, the children with kitchen utensils and even mantelpiece ornaments, while servants carried paraffin tins.² G A Leyds, writing of the same period, described how the water was delivered to the higher parts of town by water carts drawn by mules. Such water was sold at 2/6s per bucket. His mother used to keep a half-crown ready on the mantelshelf to pay for the bucketful which she could draw from the wagon when it came. This was their allowance for the day, during the winter, for all purposes: washing, drinking, cooking.³

This drought, in 1895, affected all sectors of society. Residents of the locations were especially faced with hardship and suffering. The wells, which often provided their only source of water supply, dried up, forcing men, women and children to walk long distances to secure their meagre supplies by bucket.⁴ At every level of society, the obtaining of water became a crucial element in the fight for survival. Entrepreneurs were quick to recognise the potential of using the crisis as a means of making money. It provided the opportunity, already discussed in Chapter 1, for the commodification of water. For water vendors, it provided the opportunity to supply water to the homes of the wealthier citizens of the city. (See illustration 15, p. 61).

1 E M Crosser, *Water supply and utilization in Johannesburg, 1886 – 1905*, p. 11.

2 D Jacobsson, *Fifty golden years of the Rand, 1886-1936*, p.171.

3 G A Leyds, *A history of Johannesburg, the early years*, p. 53.

4 J R Shorten, *The Johannesburg saga*, p. 170.

WATER AND SANITATION WORKERS EMPLOYED BY THE CITY COUNCIL

The water and sanitation workers who were employed by the city council played a crucial role in the provision of services relating to water supply, the collection of slops ('dirty' water) and the servicing of the sanitation needs of the rapidly expanding city. Little is known about the lives that they led and their living and working conditions. Therefore, in this chapter, their contribution, which has largely escaped the historical record, will be recognised.

The council recognized that, in order to be able to provide the city with essential services such as sewerage and refuse removal, its workforce needed to be resident in close proximity to the centre of the city.⁵ Accommodation was therefore provided specifically for the staff of the council in municipal compounds. Following the prevailing tendency of the time, no families were permitted to live in these compounds, only the workers themselves. Conditions were described as being very overcrowded. In 1901, for example, one section of the compound capable of housing 44 employees had 150 living on the premises. The bathing facilities were recognized as being of a 'primitive nature' and it was only in 1901 that a shower bath was installed.⁶ All the rooms except four were unventilated, and sanitary arrangements were frequently far from good.⁷ Under normal conditions in 1901, the compound manager had to take care of 1150 'natives', 1050 animals and the corresponding number of carts, water carts and wagons.⁸

This, however, was not the full quota of workers required by the sanitary department. Already, at that stage, 600 workers could not be housed in the compounds due to lack of space, and 528 individuals were accommodated in sheds. By the council's own admission, these were not at all suitable for dwelling places.⁹ Additional sheds were therefore erected, each measuring 12 metres long by five metres broad, and three metres high. The sheds were constructed out of wood and iron. The 'beds' comprised

5 S M Parnell and G H Perie, "Johannesburg", from A Lemon, (Ed.) *Homes apart: South Africa's segregated cities*, p. 130.

6 TA MJB 2/4/1 Health Committee minutes. Meeting 5 November 1901.

7 TA MJB 2/4/1 Health Committee minutes. Meeting 31 July, 1901.

8 TA MJB 2/4/1 Health Committee minutes. Meeting 16 October 1901.

9 TA MJB 2/4/1 Health Committee minutes. Meeting 19 July 1901.

of sleeping boards, one metre broad by two metres long, and arranged in rows along the sides of the sheds, each board being just over half a meter from the next, with a passage of one meter broad down the centre of the room. These boards were numbered and put on tressels, so that everything could be easily moved and cleaned. The sheds were ventilated by louvred ventilators and had a window and a door at each end.¹⁰ Cooking was done on an open-fire. The council, ever vigilant to mechanisms by which costs could be cut in respect of their workers, decided to invest in a mealie meal steam cooking plant in 1901. The advantages of the new system meant a saving of both fuel and mealie meal, with less burning of the meal. In addition, only two men were required to cook for 600 men.¹¹ Apart from mealie meal, the workers received rations of meat, which comprised of half-meat and half-offal. The offal consisted of ox-heads, ox-livers and ox-tripe.¹² In July 1901 this was extended to include cleaned ox-feet.¹³

One of the functions of the sanitary department was the capture of stray dogs. These workers lived in the same quarters as the animals up until 1901, when a decision was made to turn their quarters into a stable and house them in a room (there were 20 persons employed as dog catchers) measuring four and a half metres by three and a half metres. Surplus stray animals, which could not be accommodated in the stable, were housed in a lean-to shed which was propped up against the quarters of the dog-catchers.¹⁴ The resultant unhygienic conditions can only be imagined. It must be borne in mind that under normal conditions the compound manager would be responsible for the care of 1150 'natives', 1050 animals and the corresponding number of carts, water carts and wagons.¹⁵

Aside from the discomfort of their living conditions, the sanitary workers also had to contend with performing their duties with plant and equipment that was often in a bad state of repair. At the end of 1901, the plant belonging to the sanitary department consisted of 47 bath and slop water tanks, 87 rubbish carts, 14 night-soil vans, 42 tumbler carts, 11 pail carts, two trolleys and four sediment tanks. Of these, 15 of the

10 TA MJB 1/4/1 Health Committee minutes. Meeting 2 July 1901.

11 TA MJB 1/4/1 Health Committee minutes. Meeting 9 July 1901.

12 TA MJB 1/4/1 Health Committee minutes. Meeting 16 July 1901.

13 TA MJB 1/4/1 Health Committee minutes. Meeting 16 July 1901.

14 TA MJB 1/4/1 Health Committee minutes. Meeting 2 July 1901.

15 TA MJB 1/1/1 Council minutes. Meeting 16 October 1901.

bath and slop water tanks, 13 rubbish carts and three night-soil vans were not in use because of their condition, and there were many breakdowns amongst the remainder. The collection of both slop and bath water was further handicapped by the difficulty of getting repairs done in a reasonable amount of time. Even under such conditions, the collection of an average of 5900 buckets was carried out each night.¹⁶ It must be remembered that the work was without the aid of electric light, making the work even more difficult and unpleasant to carry out. Other difficulties arose from the lack of animals available to draw the carts. Fourteen oxen were loaned from the military authorities, and these animals were eventually purchased by the council for use in the night-soil removal service.¹⁷ In addition, the council agreed to purchase a further 100 San Juan mules and 100 others from the shipment of animals which was due to arrive in Durban on 18 November 1901. Any additional mules in good condition were also authorized to be purchased on the wharf at £21 each.¹⁸ Due to stormy weather, upwards of 60 animals were lost before they arrived at the port, and the number actually purchased by the council was 227. Of these, 16 were handed over to the Military Governor of Pretoria for use in the refugee camps, and the council retained the remainder.¹⁹

In 1901 the labour supply for the sanitary department was drawn from a number of sources. It was found that the Africans from Natal were more suited to the carrying out of the night-soil work, and only certain 'classes' of Africans were prepared to do this work.²⁰ The sanitary department expressed the opinion that the Cape 'boys' were more suitable for the purpose of driving the carts than the Africans, and a suggestion was made (and carried) that the then employed Africans, who received pay at the rate of 30/- per month for the rubbish carts, and from 10/- to 15/- per week for the driving of the slop carts, be replaced by the Cape 'boys' at a uniform rate of 15/- per week.²¹

Whilst the refugees were absent from Johannesburg during the South African War, the sanitary department workers assisted the council with the cleansing and

16 TA MJB 1/4/2 Health Committee minutes. Meeting 23 January 1902.

17 TA MJB 1/1/1 Council minutes. Meeting 6 November 1901.

18 TA MJB 1/1/1 Council minutes. Meeting 20 November 1901.

19 TA MJB 1/1/1 Council minutes. Meeting 11 December 1901.

20 TA MJB 1/1/1 Council minutes. Meeting 12 June 1901.

21 TA MJB 1/1/1 Council minutes. Meeting 19 June 1901.

disinfecting of all unoccupied premises.²² 1901 saw the increasing return of the refugees into Johannesburg. The badly worn and out-of-date slop vans were, by that stage, far too heavy for the work required of them, especially in areas such as Auckland Park which were rough and hilly. The council therefore obtained 15 two-wheeled slop vans similar to those used in Kimberley for the workers.²³ At that stage, each night-soil bucket was individually carried from the closets to the cart, which was extremely time-consuming.²⁴ A hand-barrow cart was therefore designed and constructed, enabling the workers to carry six night-soil buckets to the cart at the same time.²⁵

By 1903 the population of Johannesburg had grown substantially, and along with it, the services and responsibility of the council and the sanitary workers. The work was done in two main shifts, a day service and a night service. In September 1903, for example, the day service, comprising 167 vans and carts, 182 animals and 353 workers, removed 21 710 loads of refuse, and to their credit, only 136 complaints were received. A further 123 carts and vans, manned by 343 workers, assisted by 632 animals, removed 16 610 loads of slop and bath water.²⁶ The sanitary workers also assisted in the removal of carcasses (104 were removed in September 1903) and the cleaning of blood (54 loads of blood were removed).²⁷ (See illustration 41, p. 158).

The night service workers had the unpleasant task of removing night-soil. Although documents relating to the period often make reference to an improved 'dry earth' removal system, the reality was quite different. Sanitary regulations provided that a sufficient quantity of dry earth should be used to cover the contents of pails, but this was seldom, if ever, done, though in some hotels and clubs disinfecting powder or tailings were used.²⁸ The night-soil was taken to a depositing site, where, by December 1903, 58 workers were engaged in excavating trenches which were used for the burying of night-soil and carcasses.²⁹ Still other workers cleaned catch-pits

22 TA MJB 1/1/1 Council minutes. Meeting 23 October 1901.

23 TA MJB 1/1/1 Council minutes. Meeting 20 November 1901.

24 TAB MJB 1/4/1 Health department minutes. Meeting 15 October 1901.

25 TA MJB 1/1/1 Council minutes. Meeting 23 October 1901.

26 TA MJB 1/1/4 Council minutes. Meeting 14 October 1903.

27 TA MJB 1/1/4 Council minutes. Meeting 14 October 1903.

28 TA MJB 1/1/3 Council minutes. Meeting 1 May 1903.

29 TA MJB 1/1/5 Council minutes. Meeting 24 February 1904.

and tarred buckets,³⁰ tarring being the mechanism in use for the disinfection of the buckets. (See illustration 42, p. 159). The night-soil workers, especially, worked extremely hard. For example, during the day, in December 1903, 167 vans and carts, drawn by 182 animals, controlled by 377 workers, removed 16 532 loads of refuse. At the same time, a further 159 carts and vans, 738 animals and 455 workers removed 18 582 loads of slop and bath water. Trolleys were used for the removal of the dead carcasses, which were a familiar sight in the city and 145 were removed by four workers using two trolleys and eight animals. The council, feeling the need to keep the city in a sanitary condition, also assumed responsibility for the removal of blood from the various slaughter poles (slaughtering of livestock within the city limits was another familiar sight). Three workers, using eight animals and one cart, removed 70 loads of blood.³¹

At night, further teams of workers came on duty. In December 1903 there were 478 workers employed. These workers removed 414 348 buckets of night-soil. They were aided by 493 animals. This night-soil was buried in trenches which had been excavated by a team of 58 workers. In addition to burying the night-soil, the 145 carcasses which had collected during the day were also buried.³² A year later the number of workers who were responsible for the removal of slop and bath water had been increased to 526, removing 22 167 loads of water.³³ In 1905 the numbers increased again, with 562 workers removing 20 496 loads of water.³⁴ The night-soil workers employed during the night shifts also increased – in December 1904, 958 workers removed 499 935 buckets (521 buckets each per shift).³⁵ A year later, 1047 workers removed 531 521 buckets (507 buckets each).³⁶

The night shift started at 23:00, and returned to the compound again by 5:00.³⁷ The majority of the workers engaged in night-soil removal were recruited from Umzimkulu, in Natal.³⁸ The work performed by them was not popular, causing the

30 TA MJB 1/1/4 Council minutes. Meeting 24 November 1903.

31 TA MJB 1/1/5 Council minutes. Meeting 24 February 1904.

32 TA MJB 1/1/5 Council minutes. Meeting 24 February 1904.

33 TA MJB 1/1/7 Council minutes. Meeting 25 January 1904.

34 TA MJB 1/1/8 Council minutes. Meeting 14 June 1905.

35 TA MJB 1/1/7 Council minutes. Meeting 25 January 1904.

36 TA MJB 1/1/8 Council minutes. Meeting 14 June 1905.

37 TA MJB 1/4/8 Health committee minutes. Meeting 14 March 1904.

38 TA MJB 1/1/1 Council minutes. Meeting 12 June 1901.

recruiting agent to request the council to consider increasing their wages, or risk losing the workers. The recruiting agent was in contact with the workers who had been placed in the services of the council, and was very sympathetic to the conditions under which the night-shift workers, in particular, worked. He was aware of the fact that many of the workers were so affected by their work, that they found themselves unable to eat after working. If they did eat, they often vomited directly thereafter. Whilst the performance of the work in itself was unavoidable, he felt that the council should recognize that only certain workers had the constitution to work under such conditions.³⁹ The majority of the drivers of the carts were from the Cape.⁴⁰

The residents of the houses in the suburbs viewed the sanitary system as primitive, and recalled how the 'night brigade' used to thunder through the suburbs collecting the black tarred buckets placed on the kerbside. They used to replace these with clean buckets for the owners to collect in the early dawn. These sanitary vehicles were drawn by strong Clydesdales mostly, although other horses were used. It was all very unhygienic and enteric fever was not uncommon.⁴¹ At 5:00 the garbage collectors would collect household refuse from houses in the suburbs. Every house had an aluminium dustbin which stood the back gate for easy access for the 'dirt boys' as the garbage collectors were called in those days. There would be a great clattering of bins, which would be dropped anywhere and everywhere, spilling rubbish as they went and singing and shouting to awaken the dead. All the dogs in the neighbourhood set up a terrible din and would chase after these 'boys' adding to the noise. They could be heard from blocks away. These men dressed in the most outrageous clothing which had been discarded by the house-owners. They would wear dresses over their trousers, ladies hats with feathers, flowers or fruit on them, any odd shoes, aprons, etc. They were quite a colourful, noisy bunch.⁴²

For the workers themselves, the living conditions in the compounds remained far from satisfactory during these early years. In 1903 the council decided that it was time that they improved the bathing facilities in the compounds which were used by

39 TA MJB 1/4/13 Health committee minutes. Letter received from Mr Strachan, recruiting agent based at Umzimkulu, and quoted at meeting held on 23 November 1904

40 TA MJB 1/1/1 Council minutes. Meeting 19 June 1901.

41 C Robertson (Ed.), *Remembering old Johannesburg*, p. 64.

42 C Robertson (Ed.), *Remembering old Johannesburg*, p. 77.

their workers. To this end a communal bath was installed. Two methods for disposing of the effluent were considered, one being to allow it to percolate into the ground, and the other being to purify it and use it again. With regard to the latter option, the proposal was to discharge the water into a sedimentation tank, and to allow it to escape from there into a trench filled with cinders and capable of containing about one day's effluent. The trench would have been circular in form and about nine metres in diameter, with a shallow well in the centre.⁴³ The expenditure required for the construction of the trench and well was never reflected in the accounts of the council, and it can therefore only be assumed that the decision was made to allow the effluent to percolate into the ground. This, in itself, points to the differing standards applied to the living conditions of the workers as opposed to the general community – the realization by the health committee that the disposal of slop water onto the ground was unhygienic was a clearly recognized principle from the very outset of Johannesburg's history.

On the whole, the accommodation at the municipal compounds was not properly maintained. The view of the council was "to keep down expenditure to the minimum [required] for the purpose of securing sanitary conditions".⁴⁴ A shed was constructed for cooking purposes and wash places were made available to the residents at Concordia, and the windmill and tanks which provided the water supply at Newlands were removed and restored. Water was also laid on from the tanks to the kitchen and compound. New latrines, a sawdust urinal, eight shower baths and washing places for clothes were added to the main compound in Vrededorp, as well as ventilators in the roofs of the barracks, and four hooded stoves were installed in the hospital.⁴⁵ A few months later, the town engineer, together with the medical officer of health, had come up with new plans for subsequent compounds. These consisted of houses, arranged in parallel rows, and designed for better sanitary supervision and making the best use of the space available. The closets were situated only five and a half metres away from the rooms on the one side, and four metres away from the kitchen on the other.

43 TA MJB 1/1/4 Council minutes. Meeting 10 July 1903.

44 TA MJB 1/1/7 Council minutes. Meeting 5 April 1905.

45 TA MJB 1/1/7 Council minutes. Meeting 5 April 1905.

Quarters for married persons were also provided. There were 20 closet pails provided for the single quarters, and 30 for the married quarters.⁴⁶

The residents of Johannesburg were not particularly partial to the presence of the compounds in their midst. Sanitary workers servicing Judith Paarl, Belgravia, Denver, Bertrams, Troyeville, Bellevue, Fairview, Jeppes, Yeoville, Houghton Estate, New Doornfontein, Bezuidenhout and Lorentzville were accommodated at the Bertrams compound. Altogether there were 104 workers accommodated in the compound itself, and a further 130 in 28 tents adjacent to the compound. Mules were also accommodated on the site. On the slope to the north of the compound there were 47 slop tanks, 19 rubbish carts and one sediment tank, which had not been used for some time. The land was held on a temporary lease, and the workers were busy from 3:00 until late in the afternoon. This caused considerable annoyance to the residents in the surrounding areas. The council felt that the presence of the compound in the area was essential to their operations, despite the protests of the residents.⁴⁷ However, following the outcry of the residents in the area, 78 workers, 32 mules and 32 refuse carts were removed from the compound.⁴⁸ The services required by the council had, by 1904, reached such proportions that they were housing their workers in several temporary premises in Johannesburg.⁴⁹ The number of Africans employed was about 4000, distributed amongst the various compounds, the larger portion belonging to the town engineer or to the sanitary department.⁵⁰

In line with the mines, the council also provided hospital facilities for its staff members in their own hospital. The hospital was situated at the centre of the top compound at Vrededorp. It was a stone and brick building, 15 metres by six metres broad, and well-built. As such, the hospital had only one ward, and there was no means available of separating any of the sick people, either from the other sick people or their visitors. The building was well lighted and ventilated, with a special ventilator over each bed. The hospital consisted of 16 beds, with only 15 available, as the remaining bed was used by the official in charge. At the eastern end of the

46 TA MJB 1/4/15 Health committee minutes. Meeting 23 November 1905.

47 TA MJB 1/4/9 Health committee minutes. Meeting 9 June 1904.

48 TA MJB 1/4/9 Health committee minutes. Meeting 18 August 1904.

49 TA MJB 1/4/11 Health committee minutes. Meeting 18 August 1904.

50 TA MJB 1/4/13 Health committee minutes. Meeting 16 December 1904.

building, but completely shut off from it, were the latrines and urinals. Any cooking was carried out in the open air, with the exception of special food which was prepared at the house of the disinfecter, who was in charge of the hospital. At times when it was particularly cold, the inmates would carry an open stove into the centre of the ward, around which they would sit and cook.⁵¹ During the dry seasons, the hospital accommodation was only just sufficient to cope with the needs of the council. However, once the rainy seasons started, and the number of ill persons rose substantially, the only way to deal with them was to transfer them to the Johannesburg Hospital, where facilities were often not available. In 1904 the decision was made to incorporate two additional compound rooms which were in close proximity to the hospital ward into the facilities available for hospital accommodation. In order to prepare these rooms, windows were installed, as well as a concrete floor (earth floors and lack of ventilation still being the order of the day in the regular council accommodation at the time). An iron fence was erected around the hospital, as well as the additional accommodation, to keep them separate from the main compound. In addition, two iron sheds were erected to serve as a kitchen and bathroom.⁵² A further hospital, containing 40 beds was erected by the council in 1904 in the cemetery grounds. The main motivation behind this move was to avoid the high cost of sending their workers to the Johannesburg hospital when they were ill.⁵³

CONCLUSIONS

There is a certain amount of irony in the fact that the council was the authority which dictated the standards under which Johannesburg residents lived, and who carried out the inspections on the various compounds in the area. This lies in the fact that the conditions in their own compounds fell far short of their own regulations.⁵⁴ A further bone of contention was with regard to the sanitary and washing facilities offered by the council to their own staff members. It was only in 1903 that they began to pay attention to the lack of amenities, and at that stage their proposal was to dispose of

51 TA MJB 1/4/13 Health committee minutes. Meeting 16 December 1904..

52 TA MJB 1/4/13 Health committee minutes. Meeting 16 December 1904.

53 TA MJB 1/4/13 Health committee minutes. Meeting 16 December 1904.

54 A comparison of living conditions in the various compounds (mining, railway and council compounds) will be done in Chapter 4.

effluent in a manner which had already been disregarded as being unsuitable for Johannesburg's other residents. It is unfortunate that the council, whilst being fully aware of the difficulties experienced by their workers in the carrying out of their functions, both with regard to the lack of plant and the unpleasant nature of their duties, did not do more to improve the quality of their living conditions. Instead, the council showed that they were guilty of double-standards by dictating the 'ideal' in respect of living conditions in the compounds, and failing to live up to them in their own facilities.

THE AMAWASHA

A further group of individuals who 'worked with water' were the *Amawasha*, who made a livelihood out of washing clothes. As discussed in Chapter 1, the sanitary board had prohibited the washing of clothes in residential areas, as they were afraid that the slops (dirty water) would be thrown onto the streets, and would soon come to constitute a serious health hazard for the European community.

Many of the *Amawasha* were Zulu-speaking and came from the rural areas in Natal which supplied the Rand with many of its 'houseboys'. They came to the Rand because by the 1890s they had been pushed off the land by a number of bad droughts as well as the cattle-killing rinderpest disease. Initially they established themselves on the banks of the Braamfontein Spruit in the vicinity of Sans Souci. The *Amawasha* members, who wore turbans and modelled themselves along the lines of the Hindu Dhobi or washer-men's caste which they had seen at work on the East Coast, soon dominated Johannesburg's hand-laundry business. Once on the Witwatersrand itself, they were soon joined by a small number of Hindu Dhobis. They quickly won formal recognition from the sanitary board, and its members did much to ease the domestic burden of the immigrant miners who were without the assistance of their wives and daughters. By 1890 the site at Sans Souci had taken on a semi-permanent character. The 80-odd washermen had constructed their own huts, regularly planted crops along the banks of the spruit, and made other efforts to develop the gardens. The demand for the services of the washermen mushroomed at an enormous rate. In August 1894, for example, the sanitary board issued 683 washing licences. Licences were renewable on a monthly basis.⁵⁵ The following table provides details of the number of washing licences which were issued by the sanitary board during the period 1893 – 1904.

55 C Van Onselen, *New Babylon, New Nineveh, Everyday life on the Witwatersrand 1886-1914*, p. 285.

Number of washing licences issued monthly by the Johannesburg Sanitary Board⁵⁶

	1893	1894	1895	1896	1897	1898	1900	1904
January		605			500	521		
February		556			513	388		
March		507			569	458	66	
April		654		845				
May				923		546		
June				939		316		429
July				1036				
August		683		1043			120	220
Sept		524					120	220
October	729	591		1222				
Nov	635			892		650		
Dec	556	511	821	498		535		
Total	1920	4631	821	7398	1582	3414	306	869

The lack of licences during 1895 can be attributed to the fact that there was a severe drought in Johannesburg during that year. It was during the drought that the sanitary board officials became alarmed at the dangerously low levels in the streams and pits at the Zulu washing sites. While the pits at the crowded washing sites were always somewhat contaminated, their condition became truly disgusting during the drought, and by late October 1895 the local health inspectors had ordered a temporary closure of the main Braamfontein-Auckland Park sites until such time as the pits had been thoroughly cleaned. (See illustration 43, p. 160). The sanitary board also recommended that the number of washermen at the Concordia, Booysens and Elandsfontein sites be reduced by half, and that no further licences whatsoever be issued for the two last-mentioned sites until the water levels there had improved considerably. About 150 washermen were affected by this decision, and the situation persisted throughout the dry summer of 1895.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ C Van Onselen, *New Babylon, New Nineveh, Everyday life on the Witwatersrand 1886-1914*, p. 285.

⁵⁷ C Van Onselen, *Studies in the social and economic history of the Witwatersrand, Volume One*, p. 19.

On Wednesday 6 November 1895 soaking rains began to fall over the Witwatersrand and life returned to normal. But in the meantime Doctor Visser⁵⁸ had found that the water in the streams at the wash-places where much of Johannesburg's laundry was done had become so dirty that he prohibited further washing. After the drought had broken, he continued to draw the attention of the sanitary board to these places which he considered to be a continuing danger to general health and extremely unhygienic. He felt very strongly that, without direct supervision, they should be condemned.⁵⁹ The drought had brought special attention to the *Amawasha*, and Doctor Visser's pleadings to move them were no longer falling on deaf ears. By 1896 the washing site at Sans Souci had expanded considerably, and was taking on a more permanent character. In addition to scores of dogs, and small numbers of pigs and cattle, the community around Sans Souci also laid claim to 14 horses and four carts. Perhaps more significantly, the same census showed that besides the 546 Zulu washermen and 14 Dhobis, there were also four Indian females and 64 black women resident on the site in 1896.⁶⁰ (See illustrations 44 and 45, pp. 162-163).

When autumn came, in March 1896, the sanitary board saw the need to plan for a longer term and a more radical solution to the problem of washing sites and appointed a sub-committee to examine the question. The sanitary board called for tenders for new facilities to be used as a wash place, and three tenders were received. The only one to receive serious consideration was that of Mr Dell at the farm 'Witbank' on the Klip River. There were a number of problems with the site, mainly relating to cost and distance from Johannesburg. However, in August 1896 the sanitary board eventually approved a modified offer from Dell, and it was decided, in the interests of public health, to move the washer-men to the site at Witbank where they could enjoy the use of a permanent and more abundant supply of clear water.⁶¹ By this time a number of different types of laundry systems, such as American, French and Italian laundry schemes, began to be established, creating competition for the *Amawasha*. (See illustration 46, p. 163). All of these developments – the advent of the steam laundries and the proposed removal of the guild members to Witbank -

58 No Christian name has been provided.

59 J R Shorten, *The Johannesburg saga*, p. 170.

60 TA C22 Census commission, 1904-1906.

61 C Van Onselen, *Studies in the social and economic history of the Witwatersrand, Volume One*, p. 19.

were of concern to the *Amawasha*. Their attempts at protest went largely unheeded. In October the Sanitary Board refused to renew their licences, which would allow them to continue at the old established wash sites in Johannesburg.⁶² Ultimately, they had no choice but to accept their fate. Between 30 November and 2 December 1896 several hundred *Amawasha* left their old and familiar workplaces, informing the site owners that they no longer wished to be involved in the washing business. Of this large number a few succeeded in obtaining positions as domestic servants, but the vast majority proceeded directly to their homes in the rural areas of Natal. Within 12 hours White Johannesburg lost the services of nearly 40 percent of the washermen that usually dealt with its laundry needs.⁶³

Nearly half of the *Amawasha* left for their homes in Natal⁶⁴ rather than move to the Witbank site. The swift exodus of such a large part of the washermen's guild soon frustrated many of the town's White residents who now turned to the remaining Zulu laundrymen for help. From 2 December, however, and for a full week thereafter, the overwhelming majority of the remaining *Amawasha* stayed on at their old central site but went on 'strike' and refused to take in any new work. To make matters worse, the 100-strong contingent of washermen who had moved to the new site in Witbank decided to double the charge for their services. By the end of the week Whites were either starting to wash their own clothing at home illegally or reluctantly paying the 100 percent increase to meet the weekly laundry bill. Then, just as the defiant washermen's action appeared to be seriously inconveniencing the White community, the *Amawasha's* resistance started to collapse. From about 8 December 1896 onwards, growing numbers of washermen capitulated and defected to the distant Klip River site. Lack of leadership, the need for cash, the presence of the new steam laundries and 'scabs' at Witbank all combined to undermine the morale of the *Amawasha*, and by the last week of 1896 most of the washer-men's guild was at work in the Klip River.⁶⁵ (See illustration 47, p. 164).

62 For more information regarding the protests conducted by the *Amawasha*, (which falls outside of the scope of this study), see C Van Onselen, *New Babylon, New Nineveh, Everyday life on the Witwatersrand*, p. 284.

63 C Van Onselen, *New Babylon, New Nineveh, Everyday life on the Witwatersrand*, p. 284.

64 L Callinicos, *Working life 1886-1940*, p. 55.

65 C Van Onselen, *New Babylon, New Nineveh, Everyday life on the Witwatersrand*, p. 285.

The *Amawasha* were allowed to return to town in August 1897. This was mainly as a result of a series of legal battles fought by the owners of the old sites. By this time the depression had set in, and competition from the laundries had grown. The Sans Souci site was believed to be the best available, because of its close proximity to the town and owing to the fact that there was ample space for the drying of clothes. During 1901 the city council made efforts to purchase the site. The water supply was to be obtained from two sources – the present spring water, which they intended to catch in large reservoirs, and an additional supply from the Park Town Waterworks Company. Reserve water could also be obtained from a second large spring which was situated in close proximity to the site. The council had plans to construct a large shed, complete with washing tables, with space to accommodate a hundred washermen, to start with. There would be an impervious floor and wood stretchers for the men to stand upon. The water from the tables might then be easily drained on to some of the dry land further down and used to irrigate it. An approach was made to the owners of the site to ascertain the conditions on which the ground could be let, or purchased.⁶⁶ Unfortunately, the then owners of the Sans Souci site, the Braamfontein Coy, Limited, were not prepared to dispose of the site.⁶⁷

By this stage (September 1901) conditions at the Sans Souci site had deteriorated to such an extent that the medical officer of health came to the conclusion that something had to be done immediately, while the question of a larger scheme was under consideration. In order to improve conditions at Sans Souci, an inspector was sent to oversee the filling in of 17 mud holes on the first stream, the implementation of tin-lined pits and the erection of latrines on the site. With regard to the second stream, all the mud pits were filled in, and the water led by a proper channel to a place below the waterfall of the main street. Here wooden tubs were provided, as well as wooden troughs to carry the water, which were all numbered and kept under careful observation by the sanitary department. In addition, special bits of ground were fenced off and used as drying and bleaching grounds.⁶⁸

66 TA MJB 1/4/1 Health committee minutes. Meeting 9 July 1901.

67 TA MJB 1/4/1 Health committee minutes. Meeting 10 September 1901.

68 TA MJB 1/4/1 Health committee minutes. Meeting 3 September 1901.

Dr Turner's⁶⁹ investigations had revealed that the French laundry at the head of the first street was not being used, and perhaps was available for purchase. He felt it would be beneficial if the health committee obtained the site as a laundry for municipal purposes, and implemented a bye-law making it compulsory for all infected linen belonging to persons with infectious diseases be washed there. A special apparatus for the disinfecting of washing would be set up. At this stage, this area fell outside of municipal limits and the government commissioner advised that he had approached the Transvaal administration for power to frame sanitary bye laws and put them in force in this district, but permission had not yet been granted. A resolution was passed in terms of which the medical officer of health interviewed the owners in order to establish what steps could be taken to keep the place in a sanitary condition in case the owners were not prepared to dispose of the site. In addition, the council appointed a representative who was asked to obtain particulars from the owners as to the lowest price they would be prepared to accept for the site, and as much ground as possible to the north of it, for an undisclosed client.⁷⁰ The owners of the site responded by advising that they wanted £12 000 for the site, building and plant, and the council decided to decline the offer.⁷¹

At the beginning of 1902 the owners of the Sans Souci site refused to allow the *Amawasha* to continue working there, and had given them notice for the majority of them to leave the site by the end of January 1902, and the remainder on 8 February 1902. Dr Turner advised that although notice had been given to the workers six weeks previously, this fact had only just come to his attention on the morning of 30 January 1902. Negotiations ensued, and subsequently they were granted a respite to carry on with their work until the end of February 1902.^{72 73}

69 No Christian name for Dr Turner has been mentioned.

70 TA MJB 1/4/1 Health committee minutes. Meeting 3 September 1901.

71 TA MJB 1/4/1 Health committee minutes. Meeting 17 September 1901

72 TA MJB 1/4/2 Health committee minutes. Meeting 30 January 1902.

73 It is important to note that, despite the council's wish to close down the site and remove the *Amawasha* to the Witbank site, it was actually the owners of the Sans Souci site that refused to allow them to continue working there. The council, in fact, intervened on their behalf and obtained the extension of time. Charles Van Onselen, in *New Babylon New Nineveh Everyday life on the Witwatersrand*, p. 294, gives the impression that it was solely the actions of the 'municipality and government' that led, in a short space of 12 months, to destroy the 'oldest and by now the most central of all the washing sites in Johannesburg – that at Sans Souci in the Braamfontein-Auckland Park complex.' It would appear that the blame cannot be squarely placed on the shoulders of the council, and that the owners of the site were also responsible for its closure.

The practice of carrying out washing at the various sites was also the cause of other problems. For example, the city engineer reported that the pumping station at Fordsburg was unable to cope with the water from any wash site in the town. In any event, there were no alternative sites to take the place of Sans Souci. The feeling was that there were no *spruits* near enough to the town where washing could take place. Even if such a *spruit* existed some little distance from the town such as at the Waverley Estate, and the municipality acquired the site for a wash site, it would simply mean that the problems at Sans Souci would be removed to another place and it would practically have received the sanction of the health committee.⁷⁴

The health committee acknowledged the fact that the system of washing clothes in any quantity in small streams would always be a source of danger to the owners of the clothes and also to the people living along the course of the stream.⁷⁵ The suggestion was therefore made that no washing site be selected at the time, or until a new temporary sewerage system was started, which could deal with the fouled water from the washing site in a satisfactory manner. The decision was made that the washermen from Sans Souci should be removed to the location, and any washermen still wanting to wash in the Johannesburg area would have to do so at Langlaagte or some of the *spruits* on the south side of the mines.⁷⁶ In the meantime the search for new washing sites continued. The medical officer of health visited Klipriversberg, Florida and other places in the western vicinity of Johannesburg and made enquiries as to whether there was any spare land which could be used as a washing site.⁷⁷ An advertisement was placed in the local newspaper, inviting applications for the sale of land in the western part of Johannesburg for the purpose of a washing site. Such land was to be near the railway line, and within a distance of 16 kilometres from the centre of town. The railway department was also approached to establish whether they would be willing to run a train to enable the washers to carry out their work some distance from the town.⁷⁸ Despite their efforts, no suitable site in close proximity to the city centre was found.

74 TA MJB 1/4/2 Health committee minutes. Meeting 6 February 1902.

75 TA MJB 1/4/2 Health committee minutes. Meeting 6 February 1902.

76 TA MJB 1/4/2 Health committee minutes. Meeting 6 February 1902.

77 TA MJB 1/4/2 Health committee minutes. Meeting 27 February 1902.

78 TA MJB 1/4/2 Health committee minutes. Meeting 27 February 1902.

The health committee continued to take steps to place the washers under their control. On 29 August 1902 a new bye-law was introduced with respect to the licensing of persons undertaking washing and laundry work. In terms of the bye-law, no washing or ironing of clothing or linen and fabrics would be done by any person within the boundaries of the municipality of Johannesburg for payment unless that person was in possession of a licence from the council. Each licence identified the holder, and was valid for a period of one year. Of particular importance was the stipulation that the licence could not be issued until the medical officer of health had confirmed that the premises were suitable, and that there was sufficient water available at the site.⁷⁹ By the use of this mechanism, the health department was able to exercise some control over the various sites. Those sites in existence continued to receive the regular attention of the medical officer of health. Almost as soon as he had arrived in Johannesburg, Dr Charles Porter, Johannesburg's newly appointed medical officer of health, drew the attention of the health committee to the state of the Claremont washing site.⁸⁰ By November 1903 the conditions at the site had deteriorated even further. The site consisted of pools and holes extending over a length of just over half a kilometre. Along the whole of the length, Africans and coloured people washed clothes, "the water becoming filthier and more polluted as it flowed southwards, till the state of that in which the most southern washer immerses his clothes is more easily imagined than described."⁸¹ A sample of the water taken for analysis by the government analyst was condemned, with the water taken from the stream supplying the washing site being particularly bad.⁸²

By 1904, 150 licensed washers were employed at the Concordia site, with a total number of 240 males and 70 females residing at the site. The washing, by this stage, was conducted in a series of pits about 500mm x 122mm along the side of the marsh.⁸³ The clothes were dried on lines or by being spread out on the ground. The following scene describes how the washing took place:

79 TA MJB 1/4/3 Health committee minutes. Meeting 29 August 1902.

80 TA MJB 1/4/7 Health committee minutes. Meeting 17 November 1903.

81 TA MJB 1/4/7 Health committee minutes. Meeting 17 November 1903.

82 TA MJB 1/4/7 Health committee minutes. Meeting 30 November 1903.

83 TA MJB 1/1/6 Council minutes. Meeting 12 October 1904.

The wash boy stands in the pool, often dressed in some of the garments he is going to wash, and scrubs the clothes on flat stones placed upon one edge of the pit. These washing pits are fed either by the overflow from the one next above or by water led in a small cutting from the marsh. The water therein is seldom properly changed, and the last of the clothes of each weekly consignment are washed in practically the same water as has been used for the first. Natives may also be seen washing themselves in these pools, often while clothes are being washed in the pool below.⁸⁴

The washer-men lived in huts on the banks of the marsh. The accommodation had improved considerably since the inhabitants had been temporarily removed to Klipspruit in May 1904, by the Rand plague committee. However, no toilet facilities existed. All in all, the conditions under which washing was carried out at the Concordia site were most unsatisfactory and objectionable.⁸⁵

Conditions at the Claremont washing site were considerably worse than those at Concordia. This washing site was situated in the horse-shoe formed by the Johannesburg to Krugersdorp railway shortly before it reached the Claremont Station. It consisted of some 50 pools and holes similar to those described as existing at Concordia, but in some cases much larger, extending over a length of just over a kilometre in the bed or sides of a marshy stream, which flowed from the Newlands depositing site in a southerly direction, underneath the railway culvert, and along the foot of the slope on which Claremont Station stands.⁸⁶ Washing was done by Africans and coloureds all along the whole length of the stream. As the water flowed southwards, the water became more and more filthy. The overflow from the dam, especially in wet weather, consisted to a large extent of soakage and washings from the night-soil pits and trenches, and the result of chemical and bacterial examination of the water in the stream were exactly of the nature that its origin would lead one to expect.⁸⁷ Thirty people were licensed to use the site. However, washing in 11 of the pits had been prohibited by the sanitary inspector because of the foul and filthy condition of the water. Some of the washing pits at the southern end of the site were

84 TA MJB 1/1/6 Council minutes. Meeting 12 October 1904.

85 TA MJB 1/1/6 Council minutes. Meeting 12 October 1904.

86 TA MJB 1/1/6 Council minutes. Meeting 12 October 1904.

87 TA MJB 1/1/6 Council minutes. Meeting 12 October 1904.

satisfactory for use, because the water originated from a spring in a different area.⁸⁸ A total number of 68 huts provided the accommodation for the washers using the Claremont site. These huts were very primitively constructed. There were no toilet facilities, with the result that the land was literally peppered with excrement in some places.⁸⁹

A further washing site existed at Craighall, situated approximately two kilometres to the north of the Craighall Hotel, in the bed of a stream which flowed in a easterly direction. At this site a good supply of running water existed, and the washing was carried out in natural pools in the bed of the river, flat stones and rocks forming rough but efficient washing tables.⁹⁰ A total of 60 washers made use of the Craighall site, of which 40 held municipal licences. The washers and their families lived in 10 huts in the vicinity. These huts were primitive in structure, and without closet accommodation.⁹¹ The washing at the Craighall site was dried by hanging on lines or spreading on the ground. As there was plenty of water and ample space, the medical officer of health, on his tour of inspection in October 1904, did not raise an objection to this site.⁹²

The remaining washing site in Johannesburg in 1904 was the Langlaagte Washing Site. This was the smallest of the sites, with only ten people using it. No objection was raised against this site, apart from the fact that the complete change of water in the pools was probably not very rapid.⁹³ The conclusion reached by the medical officer of health during his inspection of the sites in 1904 was that the site at Langlaagte was too small to be of much use, that at Craighall too far away, and the remaining two sites at Claremont and Concordia were objectionable in every way, 'and a conceivable source of danger to the health of those by whom the clothes are worn.'⁹⁴

88 TA MJB 1/1/6 Council minutes. Meeting 12 October 1904.
 89 TA MJB 1/1/6 Council minutes. Meeting 12 October 1904.
 90 TA MJB 1/1/6 Council minutes. Meeting 12 October 1904.
 91 TA MJB 1/1/6 Council minutes. Meeting 12 October 1904.
 92 TA MJB 1/1/6 Council minutes. Meeting 12 October 1904.
 93 TA MJB 1/1/6 Council minutes. Meeting 12 October 1904.
 94 TA MJB 1/1/6 Council minutes. Meeting 12 October 1904.

In view of the lack of washing facilities in close proximity to central Johannesburg, it was proposed that a wash site be established at Klipspruit under the supervision of the health committee.⁹⁵ Entrepreneurs in Johannesburg, also seeing the potential in the laundry business, had already started operating steam laundries from 1901. By late 1902 the Rand Steam Laundry employed over 100 white and Malay women workers in its main plant at Richmond. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, their presence in the washing business, as well as the distance of 21 kilometres to be travelled from the Klipspruit site, severely hampered the *Amawasha*. By August 1904 most of them had already left the Klipspruit site and returned to Johannesburg. On their return they were confronted, in addition to the competition of the stream laundries, by urban segregation barriers which effectively denied them access to the oldest and most central washing sites. Of the older sites, only one was successfully reoccupied in 1904 – the site at Concordia.⁹⁶ The council did not respond to the *Amawasha*'s return to Johannesburg, as by now the plans to develop a permanently segregated camp for Africans at Klipspruit were well under way. By 1904 there were 429 licensed washermen, and it was estimated that they were washing for approximately 60 000 people.⁹⁷ It was evident that the wash sites could no longer accommodate the washermen, and steps were taken to move them to the new site at Klipspruit.

Washing accommodation at Klipspruit was provided for approximately 200 washermen as it was considered that not all of the 429 washer-men would work on every day. Each washer was provided with two wooden tubs – one for washing and one for rinsing. In addition, there was a concrete slab measuring 93 centimetres by 70 centimetres on which to scrub or to receive the washed clothes. This accommodation was provided out in the open. There was a covered shed containing ironing tables and stoves for about 50 workers, a further room for the oil engine and mangles, and another room in which to store the clean washing before sending it off by rail. A drying ground, with gravelled surface and with galvanized iron line on posts, was also provided. There was also latrine accommodation and a caretaker's cottage.⁹⁸ With regard to drainage, provision was made for leading the foul water onto the land available for its disposal, adjacent to the washing site. The water consumption was

95 TA MJB 1/1/6 Council minutes. Meeting 12 October 1904.

96 C Van Onselen, *New Babylon, New Nineveh, Everyday life on the Witwatersrand*, p. 297.

97 TA MJB 1/4/9 Health committee minutes. Meeting 23 June 1904.

98 TA MJB 1/4/9 Health committee minutes. Meeting 23 June 1904.

estimated at 865 000 litres per day, with 45 500 litres of this amount being allowed for waste.⁹⁹ By 1906 the site was operational, complete with an ironing room, a fenced-in drying site and the first of 100 specially designed concrete wash tubs. The irony is that the site shared its setting with the municipal sewerage works!¹⁰⁰ (See illustration 47, p. 164). By this stage the *Amawasha* business had fallen into serious decline. Not only had they been removed to Klipspruit, and forced to travel to and from their customers by rail, the council had also increased their monthly licence fee in order to re-coup the funds expended in establishing the washing site. In addition, owing to the economic depression which was experienced on the Witwatersrand at the time, they were forced to decrease the charges for their services. Further competition came from the Chinese laundries which were beginning to establish themselves. Whereas there had only been about a dozen such laundries in 1904, by 1907 there were over 40.¹⁰¹ It was only a matter of time before the *Amawasha* would cease to be a familiar site and service for the residents of Johannesburg.

CONCLUSIONS

The various individuals who worked 'with water' – be they the employees of the council, the *Amawasha*, or water vendors, were an important part of Johannesburg's early history. Without their contribution, the city would have faced serious problems in respect of the provision of laundry services, water distribution and sanitation services. The primary recipients of their services were the working classes and the wealthier citizens of Johannesburg. It was these same people who were the first to receive piped water and water-borne sewerage facilities, initially from the Johannesburg Waterworks Company, and later from Rand Water. Once the inhabitants were able to make alternative, and undoubtedly more convenient, arrangements with regard to their washing needs, and sewerage facilities had been improved, the need for the services of the water workers ceased to exist. However, to fail to recognise their very real contribution to the lives of the people in early

99 TA MJB 1/4/9 Health committee minutes. Meeting 23 June 1904.

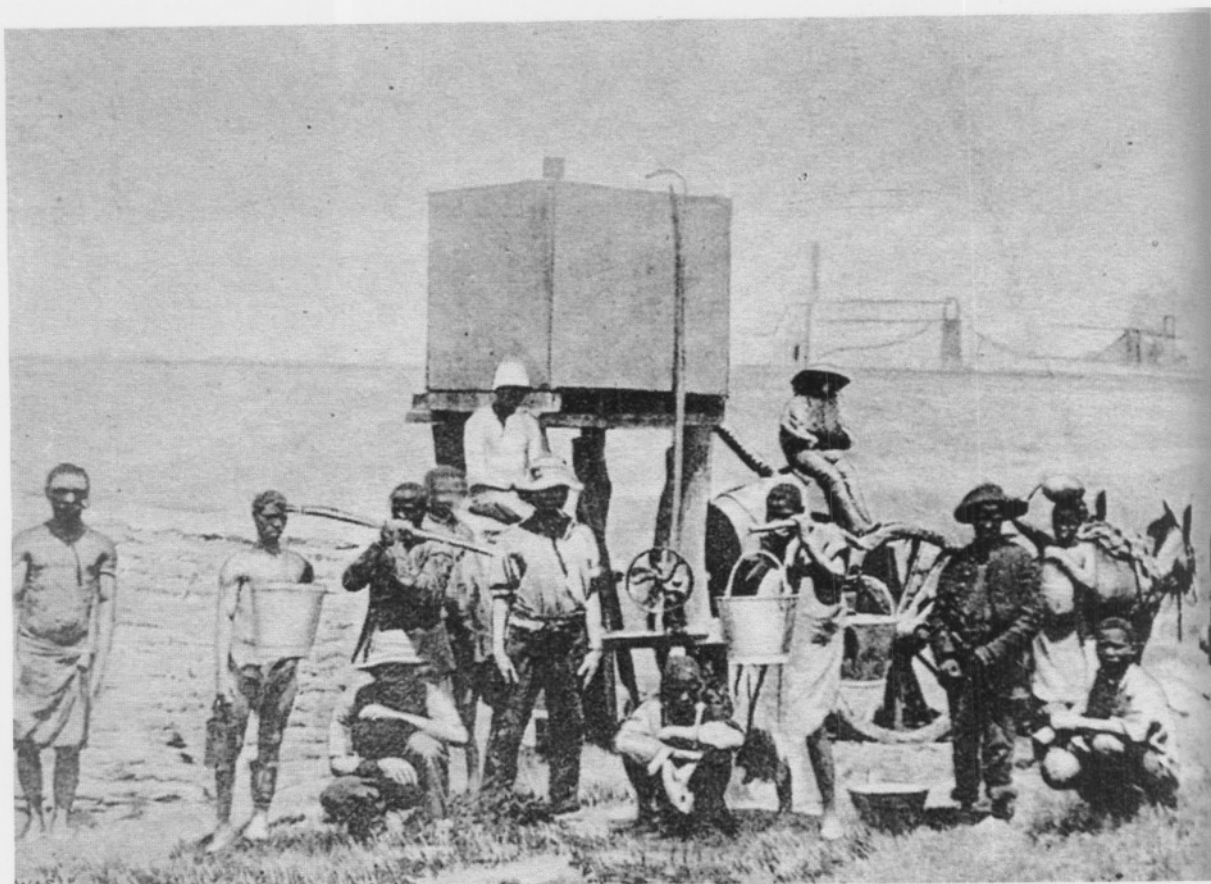
100 C Van Onselen, *New Babylon, New Nineveh, Everyday life on the Witwatersrand*, p. 298.

101 C Van Onselen, *New Babylon, New Nineveh, Everyday life on the Witwatersrand*, p. 300.

Johannesburg would be to overlook an important element of daily life in the city in its formative years.



The Johannesburg of the 1880s was very cosmopolitan. Rickshas, which had been introduced to Natal from Japan were for many years popular in Johannesburg as well. Note the man carrying buckets of water on right of picture.



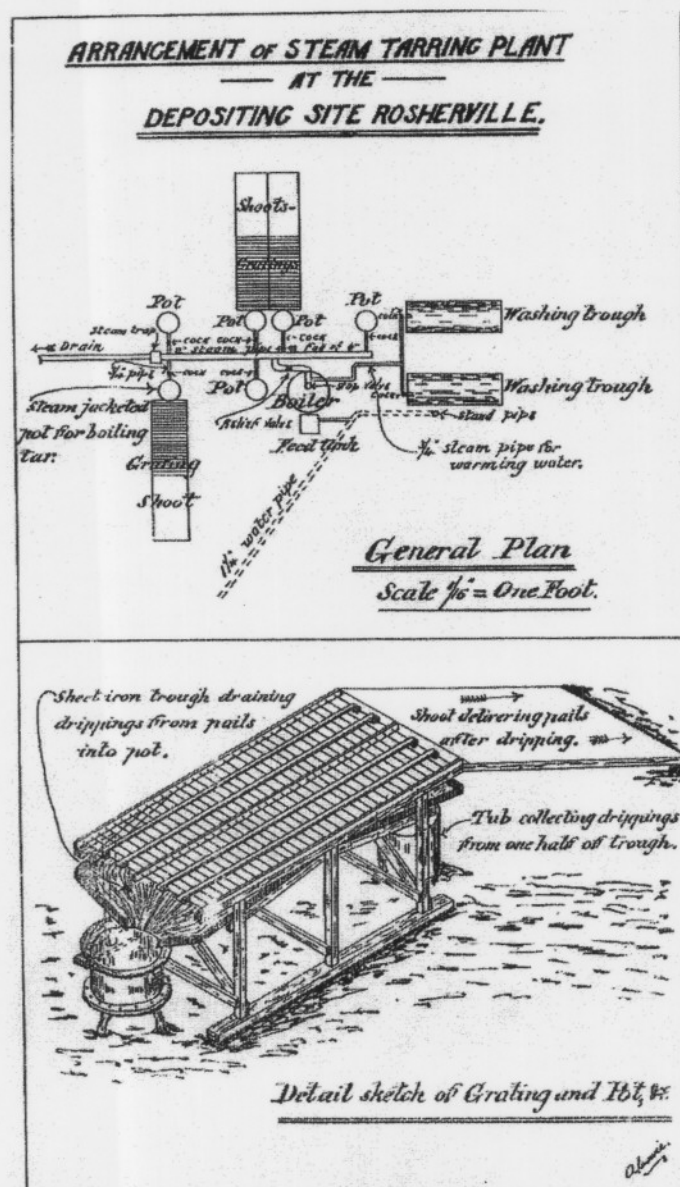
Water carriers, Johannesburg 1892.

Source: P Kallaway and P Pearson, *Johannesburg: Images and continuities A history of working class life through pictures 1885 - 1935*, p. 56.



Refuse cart.

Source: G Grant and T Flynn, *Watershed town: the history of the Johannesburg city engineer's department*, p. 58.



Method by which sanitary buckets were tarred by the Council.

Source: TAB CS Volume No 426 01 921/04 Municipality of Johannesburg. *Report of the Medical Officer of Health on the Public Health and Sanitary Circumstances of Johannesburg during the period 1st July 1904 – 30th June 1906*, to which is appended *A report by the Medical Attendant (Dr P G Stock) on the health of the Natives and Indians employed by the Council*, Charles Porter M.D. D.P.H. Barrister at Law, Medical Officer of Health 1906, p. 59.



A wash site near Johannesburg. Washing was carried out all along the stream. By the time the water reached the lower part, it was extremely dirty and contaminated.

Source: P Kallaway and P Pearson, *Johannesburg: Images and continuities A history of working class life through pictures 1885 - 1935*, p. 78.

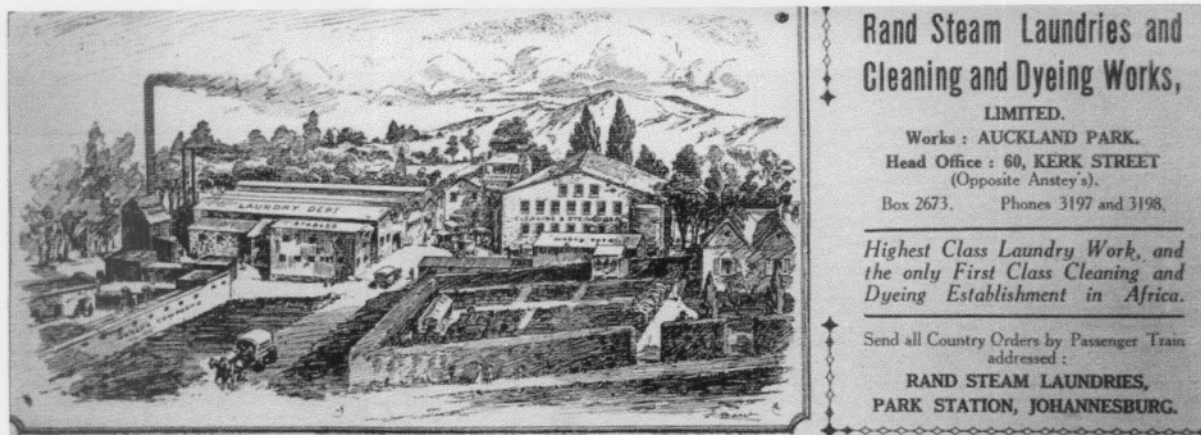


Amawasha. The *Amawasha* at work doing laundry for Johannesburg's residents. Photograph taken the outskirts of the city, circa 1900.

Source: P Kallaway and P Pearson, *Johannesburg: Images and continuities A history of working class life through pictures 1885 - 1935*, p. 78.



The Johannesburg Washtub.



An advertisement in the local press showing the Rand Steam Laundry and detailing the services offered by this company.



Washermen at the municipal washing site, Klipspruit. It was a long way from town, and transport pushed up working costs. Ultimately, this forced move drove the *Amawasha* out of business, for they could not compete with the steam laundries established in town.

CHAPTER 4 – AFRICANS

Already by 1895 the African population of Johannesburg was, in terms of the *Stadsraad* census conducted in that year, 45 000 individuals.¹ In the 1890s the majority of Africans came from beyond the borders of the Transvaal.² The African population formed the bulk of the labour force on the mines, and also found employment with the council, and later, the railways. Still others were employed as labourers, domestic servants and in a variety of industries. The African mine labourers were primarily migratory workers who were accommodated in compounds on the mine properties. On expiry of their contracts they were returned to their homes and families in the rural areas. Nigel Mandy makes the point that they were seldom seen in Johannesburg and 'made no impact on the town's consciousness other than as human machinery to be used in the production of gold and to be returned to store when no longer required.'³

In terms of the South African Republic's Law Number 3 of 1885, no special provision was made for Africans. Similarly the Town Regulations promulgated in 1899 stated only that coloured persons were not permitted to reside in any place abutting on a public street in any town or village. However, householders were permitted to house servants required for their domestic use in their backyards.⁴

This regulation had far-reaching consequences for servants living in cities, and also for South African architecture. It became common practice for houses to be built which incorporated an outside room for the housing of the domestic servants, a practice which has continued to this day. The practice of ensuring the maximum convenience for employers was also adopted by other sectors. For example, employees of the railways, mines and city council were housed in compounds provided by their employers and located on their properties. For other Africans, who were either unemployed or not employed in any of the above sectors, the slums

1 F Stark, *Seventy golden years 1886-1956*, p. 371.

2 N Kagan, *African settlements in the Johannesburg area, 1903-1923*, p. 14.

3 N Mandy, *A city divided Johannesburg and Soweto*, p. 33.

4 Regulations for Towns, Section 39, Volksraad Resolution, Article 1256 of 1899 as cited by N Kagan, *African settlements in the Johannesburg area, 1903-1923*, p. 24.

offered a range of housing, from tin shanties to cottages formerly occupied by white families. These areas had far more appeal to the African community than the compounds and location housing provided by the municipality. Accommodation was also to be found in the African Location, the Malay Location and the Indian Location.

THE SLUM YARDS

It was Africans who formed the bulk of the inhabitants of the slums of Johannesburg. The slums were a crucial feature in the history of Johannesburg's black working class. It was here that the newly urbanised black proletariat forged a new lifestyle and a distinctive identity for itself. The slums, in particular, attracted African families who wished to stay together, and could not do so in the compounds. For them, 'home' was usually a single room, about 3,6 metres by 3,6 metres. Men and women, adults and children, all slept in the one room. Sometimes over 20 families occupied a single yard. Since all the washing and much of the cooking was done in the yard, standards of cleanliness left much to be desired. As a rule, sanitary conditions were very bad. There was rarely more than one toilet per yard, and this was frequently out of order. Receptacles for rubbish were the exception, rather than the rule. Structures varied from brick buildings, usually old and dilapidated, to shanties of wood and iron. Most leaked. Few had stoves and water had to be fetched from outside. The average rent was 30s per month, but any slight advantage or improvement resulted in an increase in rent.⁵ (See illustration 48, p. 202).

DOMESTIC WORKERS

Domestic workers formed a large core of the Johannesburg population. By way of example, in 1904 there were 20 000 "kitchen boys" in Johannesburg alone – compared to 68 000 men in the compounds along the Reef. Black workers considered domestic service to be more preferable than working on the mines. This sector of the labour market was governed by *The Masters and Servants Act 1880*

5 E Koch, Doornfontein and its African working class 1914-1935, p 45.

rather than the strictly curtailed and long term contracts enforced by the mines.⁶ (See illustration 49, p. 203).

For servants who had to live on their employer's properties, conditions were often almost as bad as in the slum yards. They generally slept in outside rooms, sometimes in converted stables. Sometimes they were forced to sleep on the kitchen floor of the main house. The result was that domestic servants often chose to collectively rent houses in slum areas or to rent individual rooms in areas such as Doornfontein.⁷ This gave them some measure of independence, but also had the effect of increasing the demand for slum accommodation. For those employed in hotels and boarding houses, accommodation was often provided on the top floor of the premises which they served.⁸

No information could be found regarding water supplies for domestic servants. They would have been reliant on obtaining their requirements from their employers, and also on the sanitation facilities provided at their place of employment. As the conditions under which they lived was often far from satisfactory, the toilet facilities would not have fared much better.

OTHER AFRICANS LIVING IN JOHANNESBURG

In 1901 the sight of Ricksha 'boys' in Johannesburg in 1901 was a common one. These flamboyant characters fitted in well with the ostentatious lives of the city's wealthier residents. (See illustration 39, page 156). Although they comprised a relatively small number of the inhabitants, it was an application received by the council in connection with the housing of Ricksha 'boys' on the premises of their employers that spurred the council into formulating a policy on Africans residing in Johannesburg. A new bye-law, which clearly set out their attitude towards residents of colour, was placed in the *Government Gazette* :

6 E Koch, Doornfontein and its African working class 1914-1935, p 51.

7 E Koch, Doornfontein and its African working class 1914-1935, p 52.

8 L Callinicos, *Working life 1886-1940 A people's history of South Africa, Volume Two, Factories, townships and popular culture on the Rand*, p. 68.

On or after the publication hereof in the *Government Gazette* all natives and coloured persons, including Indians, Arabs and Asiatic races within the jurisdiction of the Sanitary Board of Johannesburg shall be required to live at such locations on sites as may from time to time be set apart for that purpose.⁹

The policy of segregation of the races was established, and the mechanism was now in place for the removal of all persons of colour to places designated by the council. This had an enormous impact on housing. Although there had been, up until this time, little freedom of choice regarding the locality of the homes of Africans and Coloureds, the whereabouts of their residences could, in the future, be determined by the governing authorities.

THE AFRICAN ('KAFFIR') LOCATION

Under the Transvaal government a township for people of indigenous African origin (called a "Kaffir Location") was established at the west end of the town on government ground, and in the same district, also on government ground, a Malay location was also established. Government ground was also set aside in the same neighbourhood for an Indian location, although the Indian population favoured living in the area near Brickfields. The management of the locations was the responsibility of the *Stadssraad* (town council). Each local authority could implement bye-laws in accordance with its own special requirements. The *Volksraad* appointed an officer who, together with his assistants, was responsible for the efficiency of the police arrangements and the enforcement of the sanitary regulations. His duties, however, were never strictly defined. The important point to be borne in mind in connection with the consideration of the administrations of locations by the *Stadsraad* was that no definite system was ever strictly enforced, with the result that large numbers of 'natives' of all races lived independently among the White population of the town.¹⁰ After 1903 the different local authorities determined where Africans should reside within their jurisdictions. The government's policy with regard to locations and the

9 TA MJB 1/4/1 Health Committee minutes. Meeting 15 October 1901.

10 TA MJB 1/1/1 Council minutes. Meeting 18 September 1901.

housing of its African residents was formulated in what became known as 'The Lagden Report'. Sir Alfred Milner had already, in 1903, appointed Sir Godfrey Lagden as his Commissioner for Native Affairs. It was Lagden's task to write a report suggesting methods of achieving uniformity with regard to 'native' policy, and to make recommendations to the various governments 'with the object of arriving at a common understanding' against the day when the South African federation would be achieved.¹¹ The report had a profound influence on the lives of Africans living in South Africa.

The Report, issued in 1905, reflected Milner's own concern for social planning, and introduced new rigidities into South African thinking about race relations. It formalised the idea of segregation in a new way. In the first place, it envisioned the territorial separation of black and white as a permanent, mandatory principle of land ownership.¹² Much of the report concentrated on rural Africans. However, the commission also gave approval to the systematic establishment of segregated locations for urban Africans. To its credit, it saw the locations less as dumping grounds for African labour, but rather as a place where they could set up comfortable homes of their own.¹³ It was only a matter of time before the recommendations of the report were implemented, and locations situated outside of city limits became a permanent feature of the South African landscape.

After 1905 the Lagden commission's proposals came into effect. It outlined the policy of segregation and in fact made provision for segregated townships. This had the effect of creating even further restrictions on the places in which Africans could live, and was therefore of fundamental importance with regard to housing.

In 1903, however, it was a superintendent in the employ of the council who had the responsibility of issuing certificates which determined title to land in the African locations. The conclusion arrived at by Lance and Hoyle, the government attorneys, was that the ground in the African and the new Indian Location, was vested in the government. The rights which vested in the certificate holders amounted to a simple

11 R Davenport and C Saunders, *South Africa A modern history*, p. 240.

12 R Davenport and C Saunders, *South Africa A modern history* p. 241.

13 R Davenport and C Saunders, *South Africa A modern history*, p. 241.

monthly tenancy.¹⁴ For these rights of tenancy, the council was entitled to a hut tax of 7s 6d from each registered owner of a stand in the locations. This was conferred by an executive council resolution dated May 9, 1895.¹⁵ One of the earliest acts of the Johannesburg City Council was to appoint a sanitary inspector, as a provisional measure, whose duty was to devote all his time and attention to the sanitation of the locations.¹⁶

In 1901 the health department recognised that the sanitary arrangements in connection with the latrines in the African Location were unsatisfactory. However, they felt that as the land still belonged to the government, it would not be desirable for them to take any steps requiring capital expenditure to improve the sanitary conditions until the council had permanent control of the land. There was therefore a reluctance to improve conditions as the improvements would require capital expenditure.¹⁷

The management of the locations received the council's constant attention in 1901. During this year, the medical officer of health received applications from 'natives' who wished to build houses in the African Location. When the matter was brought before the city council, instructions were given to him to approve the applications, provided that they were satisfactory.¹⁸ The decision was made in September 1901 by the council to make a definite statement about the policy they proposed to follow in regard to the locations. They were given the power to make, alter and revoke bye-laws and regulations for the purposes of establishing, maintaining and regulating public baths, wash houses and locations for 'natives'.¹⁹

The situation with regard to housing for Africans was complicated by the fact that, from the time of the inception of the council to 1901, the government was in the position of landlord. The duty of the management of the locations, however, fell on the shoulders of the council. The council was strongly of the opinion that this state

14 TA MJB 1/4/1 Health Committee minutes. Meeting 9 October 1902, Opinion by attorneys Lance and Hoyle.

15 TA MJB 1/4/1 TAB Health Committee minutes. Meeting 3 June 1901.

16 TA MJB 1/1/1 Council minutes. Meeting 18 September 1901.

17 TA MJB 1/4/1 Health Committee minutes. Meeting 3 June 1901.

18 TA MJB 1/4/1 Health Committee minutes. Meeting 10 September 1901.

19 TA MJB 1/1/1 Council minutes. Meeting 18 September 1901. Clause 21, Section 22 of Proclamation 16 of 1901.

of affairs should not be allowed to continue. They felt that, until such time as they were placed in the position of landlords as well as managers of the locations, they would not be able to regulate the locations to their advantage.²⁰

The fundamental principle which the council wished to adopt was that Africans should not be allowed to remain outside of the locations, and in particular, amongst the white population.²¹ This was in line with the popular sentiment at the time. In order to achieve these objectives, the council decided that negotiations should be entered into with the government so that sufficient land could be transferred to them to establish locations for Indians, Malays and Africans. The plan envisaged that each location should be kept separate from the others, and space allowed for their gradual extension as the need arose. In addition, the council wanted the principle that they should be in total control of the locations, not only as the sanitary authority, but also in the capacity of landlord, to be approved and implemented.²² The council considered that the best plan of action would be for it to erect the dwellings, on an improved sanitary basis, and then to let them out at a monthly rental to the occupants.²³

The first step would be the appointment of a manager of locations, under the immediate control of the medical officer of health. He would be entrusted with the overall management of the locations in all matters apart from those of the police. He would be accountable for the collection of all rents, sanitary fees, hut tax and other revenue accruing from the tenants. In addition, he would be responsible for the enforcement of the sanitary and other regulations of the council, the allotment of dwellings to applicants, the issuing of licences to the *Togt* (transport riders) and washer-men, and, through the medical officer of health, he would be the adviser to the council on all matters pertaining to the general management of the locations. It was considered that an absolute prerequisite for this appointment would be the knowledge of various native languages, and he would have several assistants to help him carry out his duties.²⁴

20 TA MJB 1/1/1 Council minutes. Meeting 18 September 1901.

21 TA MJB 1/1/1 Council minutes. Meeting 18 September 1901.

22 TA MJB 1/1/1 Council minutes. Meeting 18 September 1901.

23 TA MJB 1/1/1 Council minutes. Meeting 18 September 1901.

24 TA MJB 1/1/1 Council minutes. Meeting 18 September 1901.

The council was of the opinion that the washer-men should also be obliged to live in the locations under their management, and not at the wash-sites as was the case at the time.²⁵ In July 1901 the post of Inspector of Natives' Department was abolished, and on the recommendation of Dr Turner, C E Martel was appointed as the Sanitary Inspector for Locations.²⁶

By 1902 the demand for accommodation in the African Location had increased to the point where the then manager of locations suggested that the Location be extended by adding the Indian Location, which consisted of 585 stands, situated to the west of the African Location, which were then vacant.²⁷ In order to facilitate such an extension, an approach was made to the government enquiring whether, in the event of the insanitary scheme being passed, government ground would be made available as an Indian township for such Indians as may be required to be removed from the district proposed to be expropriated by the council.²⁸ By July 1902, 2298 Africans were living in the African Location, with an increase of 215 for the month of July 1902 alone.²⁹ This led to very crowded housing conditions for the residents, and also placed a severe strain on the water availability, which had, by 1902, become very scarce in the location. The Africans, finding themselves with no alternative, were using stagnant water out of the pan, which was unfit for human consumption. The manager of the locations appealed to the medical officer of health to make some arrangement to provide them with water.³⁰ The council decided to allow them to draw water from the pipe which supplied water to the main municipal compound. As a result of an oversight on the part of the council, no arrangements were put in place for charges to be made for the water, with the result that the council eventually paid the Waterworks Company for the water in question.³¹

25 TA MJB 1/1/1 Council minutes. Meeting 18 September 1901.

26 TA MJB 1/4/1 Health Committee minutes. Meeting 18 July 1901.

27 TA MJB 1/4/3 Health Committee minutes. Meeting 21 August 1902.

28 TA MJB 1/4/3 Health Committee minutes. Meeting 21 August 1902..

29 TA MJB 1/4/3 Health Committee minutes. Meeting 21 August 1902.

30 TA MJB 1/4/3 Health Committee minutes. Meeting 21 August 1902.

31 TA MJB 1/4/4 Health Committee minutes. Meeting 10 July 1903.

It is interesting to note that whilst no water was available to the residents in the location, during the month of November 1902, 102 000 litres of water were used for road-making, and a further 11 851 649 litres were used for street-watering!³²

Conditions in the location were allowed to deteriorate. By August 1903 the amount of liquor consumed in the African Location had increased to the extent that beer and liquor were being sold on virtually every other stand.³³ Water was one of the essential components for the brewing of beer. The use of water which was polluted and unhygienic in the brewing process would, no doubt, have had an effect on the health of the residents. For the residents, it can only be imagined how this would have affected their lives, having to deal with drunkenness on a daily basis. It was only when conditions deteriorated to such an extent that failure to solve the underlying root problems started to affect the white population, that action was taken. Social conditions were in themselves a reason for despair. Living in appalling conditions, with little or no municipal services, rubbish was allowed to accumulate. This led to problems with vermin in the area. The sheer mass of rubbish had reached such alarming proportions that, in February 1903 the health department had to hire an additional 20 scotch carts for a number of days in order to remove the rubbish.³⁴ Very often, it was fear of disease or vermin spreading into white areas, that spurred the council to take action.

The population in the location increased at an alarming rate. As has been stated, the population in July 1902 had been 2298. By the end of July 1903, only a year later, this number had increased to 6340,³⁵ an increase of almost 300%. All of the 788 stands in the African Location were occupied.³⁶ The houses were built from any materials which were available – from cardboard to tin linings and packing cases.³⁷ (See illustration 48, p. 202). The population density was eight persons per stand, and

32 TA MJB 1/1/3 Council minutes. Meeting 21 January 1903.

33 TA MJB 1/4/7 Health Committee minutes. Meeting 2 August 1903.

34 TA MJB 1/4/5 Health Committee minutes. Meeting 19 February 1903.

35 TA MJB 1/4/7 Health Committee minutes. Meeting 22 September 1903.

36 TA MJB 1/4/7 Health Committee minutes. Meeting 22 September 1903.

37 MJB TAB 1/4/10 Health Committee minutes. Report 16/1904 of the Town Engineer's Department, addressed to the Town Clerk, dated 16 August 1904, Meeting 16 August 1904.

there was no additional accommodation available for the large numbers of Africans who were living in the town, who should have been living in the locations.³⁸

It was hardly surprising that the latrines were also unsatisfactory. It was found that most of the timbers were very rotten and would have to be replaced, but that the corrugated iron could be reused.³⁹ The health committee authorised the erection of 50 latrines, each to contain four special pails, with one latrine of four pails to every 16 stands. This arrangement would facilitate the removal of night-soil.⁴⁰ Within a few months this was already hopelessly inadequate. One latrine for every 16 stands, when the population density was eight persons per stand, meant that 128 people were sharing one latrine. It must be borne in mind that latrines were situated outside of the houses, and some distance from certain houses. The lack of ablution facilities was, in no small measure, a contributory element in the deterioration of conditions in the area.

The ability to pass bye-laws calling upon residents to improve living and sanitary conditions was a weapon in the armoury of the council. In September 1903 a further set of regulations was promulgated by the council. In terms of clause 35, every holder of a stand permit was obliged, if and when required by the medical officer of health, or the superintendent acting on his instructions, to erect a suitable privy or closet on his stand. He was also required to keep it clean and in good order and repair.⁴¹ This bye-law also retained the right of the council to erect latrines and urinals at suitable places in the location, and to allocate them for the use of the residents on particular stands. The responsibility for the cleanliness of the latrines and urinals was that of the users. Clause 37 of the regulations related to places for use for depositing rubbish and liquid refuse. This clause allowed the superintendent to nominate the places which could be used as depositing sites, and stipulated that anyone not making use of the sites would be guilty of an offence.⁴² In an area such as the African Location, where the residents were desperately poor and conditions overcrowded, the passing of bye-laws could not be enforced as the reality of life did

38 TA MJB 1/4/7 Health Committee minutes. Meeting 22 September 1903.

39 TA MJB 1/4/8 Report No 28/1903 appended to the Health Committee minutes. Meeting 16 November 1903.

40 TA MJB 1/4/5 Health Committee minutes. Meeting 24 February 1903.

41 TA MJB 1/1/4 Council minutes. Meeting, 2 September 1903.

42 TA MJB 1/1/4 Council minutes. Meeting, 2 September 1903.

not allow the residents to abide by the regulations. They therefore remained as nothing more than good intentions on the part of the council.

In 1903 new bye-laws were introduced to regulate the tenure of stands in the African Location. Up until this time, permits were issued up to the 31st day of the year of issue, and these permits could be renewed annually. The council retained the right, at any stage, to refuse renewal by giving one month's notice.⁴³ The effect of the changes in the bye-laws was to convert the rights of the holders of stand licences in the African location from monthly tenants to yearly tenants. In order to encourage better buildings, and to give the holders of the stands a feeling of greater security, a right to compensation existed under clauses 9, 10 and 11 for any improvements which the holder of the stand permit chose to leave upon the stand when the tenancy expired, if such buildings were of a value of £25 or more.⁴⁴ The irony is that, whilst the council recognised that the implementation of these bye-laws would have beneficial effects, they came to the decision that it would be undesirable for any permits in terms of the bye-laws to be issued. This was mainly as a result of the fact that a sub-committee had been appointed in order to consider proposals for the relocation and re-arrangement of the location.⁴⁵ A further bye-law was therefore introduced, which allowed the holders of monthly tenancy rights to apply for new stands. If their applications were successful, they were entitled to remove the buildings on their current stands to the new stand. The council could undertake the removal and re-erection of the buildings itself, or pay a reasonable sum for the expense incurred in such removal and re-erection.⁴⁶

The Report of the Location Sub-committee recommended that the ground occupied by the existing African Location and the vacant ground to the west of it, which was intended for the Indian Location, should be laid out afresh, in such a way that was more uniform and economical, so as to provide for both the accommodation of the Asiatics and African population who were waiting for accommodation, and for the

43 TA MJB 1/4/7 Health Committee minutes. Meeting 2 August 1903.

44 TA MJB 1/4/7 Health Committee minutes. Meeting 2 August 1903.

45 Letter from Richard Feetham, Town Clerk, dated 2 August 1903 included in Health Committee minutes Meeting 25 August 1903.

46 Letter from Richard Feetham, Town Clerk, dated 2 August 1903 included in Health Committee minutes Meeting 25 August 1903.

increased numbers which may have to be provided for during the next few years.⁴⁷ A plan was drawn showing the proposed laying out scheme. The existing streets leading north and south through the location would be retained, their width being five metres, and of the streets running east and west, four out of five shown as two metres and every fifth street being five metres in width.⁴⁸ To provide for latrines, baths and wash houses, blocks of two stands extending from one street to another, were reserved. These were at such intervals that no stand was more than four metres from a latrine block. Each latrine block was to house eight latrines and three urinals. There was no water-borne sewerage at the time, but in anticipation of the future, it was planned that when a drainage system was provided for, each block of latrines would be connected with it, gullies being provided at the end of each latrine space for slop water, etc., and the surface water would be removed in the usual way by surface gutters.⁴⁹

Once the news of the proposed extension of the African Location in a westerly direction reached the white population, they were not happy. They immediately got together and forwarded a petition expressing their dissatisfaction to the council. The petition was addressed to the mayor and town councillors of Johannesburg, and signed by Mr H Miford Carlis and 1200 residents. As residents and ratepayers, they petitioned the council to remove the locations from their present situations to 'a more desirable position'. They held the view that the extension should not be entertained. The fundamental objection was that they felt that the land should be used for White residential accommodation, and the presence of persons of colour would reduce the value of the land and their investments, such investments having been made on the strength of a rumour that the location would be moved out of the city.⁵⁰

The reasons given were that the ground in question was surrounded by white residential townships, such as Brixton, Mayfair, Fordsburg, and a government township laid out for the residences of civil servants. If the present location was allowed to stay in its present location, they felt that these areas would deteriorate, as would the areas for a considerable radius. This would reduce the rateable value of all

47 TA MJB 1/4/7 Health Committee minutes. Meeting 22 September 1903.

48 TA MJB 1/4/7 Health Committee minutes. Meeting 22 September 1903.

49 TA MJB 1/4/7 Health Committee minutes. Meeting 22 September 1903.

50 TA MJB 1/4/7 Health Committee minutes. Meeting 19 October 1903.

the land in the vicinity.⁵¹ Another concern was that it would not be safe for white women to live in the vicinity.⁵² Although they had been aware that the land had originally been laid out as a location, they felt that conditions had changed considerably from the time of the original decision to the present time, and that it had never been anticipated that the town would extend in that direction and become occupied by whites. Once it had been stated unofficially that it was the intention of the government to remove the location to an area outside the town, a very large number of them had purchased land and built themselves houses in the aforementioned townships. They felt that the ground was eminently suited for a first-class white residential township, and that the land should be sold for this purpose and the proceeds devoted to purchasing other land to the south of the Reef, or in any other neighbourhood which was not occupied by white men's dwellings.⁵³

Under pressure, the council capitulated. Plans to move the location outside of Johannesburg's boundaries were put into motion. On 10 February 1904 new bye-laws were gazetted. The term 'location' was defined as :

The term 'location' in these bye-laws shall mean an area set apart for the occupation of natives not living on the premises of their employers, and defined as such by a resolution of the council.⁵⁴

On 11 July 1904 the locations sub-committee reported that they were of the opinion that an African Location and Asiatic Bazaar should be established on the farm Klipspruit, and that provision should also be made for a washing site for use by the washermen.⁵⁵ The decision to relocate the residents to Klipspruit was no doubt influenced by the recognition that the land which they currently occupied was becoming increasingly valuable by virtue of its close proximity to the city centre. Many of the houses on the boundaries of the locations had been converted into small businesses and industrial concerns, and these were flourishing, making the land even more attractive. By this time the number of Africans living in the African Location

51 TA MJB 1/4/7 Health Committee minutes. Meeting 19 October 1903.

52 TA MJB 1/4/7 Health Committee minutes. Meeting 19 October 1903.

53 TA MJB 1/4/7 Health Committee minutes. Meeting 19 October 1903.

54 TA MJB 1/1/5 Council minutes. Meeting 10 February 1904.

55 TA MJB 1/4/10 Health Committee minutes. Meeting 11 July 1904.

had decreased. The secretary of the native affairs department put the decrease down to the outbreak of the plague,⁵⁶ and the higher wages and cheaper cost of living at the coastal ports, as compared with Johannesburg.⁵⁷

The plans in hand provided for the accommodation of 10 000 persons, of whom 2000 would occupy married quarters, and the remainder would be for single men. The location was also planned to house the washermen, police and the superintendent's office. It was estimated that the cost of the housing, together with the provision of latrines and wash places, water supply and road construction would amount to £57 274.⁵⁸ The then proposed location consisted of 39 blocks, each containing 20 stands measuring three metres by five metres each, four corner stands of five and a half metres by five metres each, and two spaces for latrines measuring nine metres by three metres each.⁵⁹

Plans were also made for the removal of the buildings in the African Location. A list was prepared of all the buildings, and a value placed on each. The number of huts to be removed was 198, and it was estimated that the cost of taking them down and re-erecting them in Klipspruit would be about £7 980. The number of buildings which were not fit for removal was 669, and the value of the material was estimated at £1 270. The valuation included all buildings erected up to 2 August 1904. No value was placed on the houses that were built out of tin lining and packing cases.⁶⁰

The report of the town engineer's department of 16 August 1904 was carefully considered by the public health committee, and this committee also submitted their own report to the council on 12 October 1904. In their report they made the point that they had been considering the move of the African population for some time, but an obstacle that been present in that the council had not been in a position to acquire the freehold property of the Klipspruit farm until the formal approval of the lieutenant-governor had been given for the use of part of the farm for the purposes of sewerage irrigation. The obstacle had been removed by the publication in the

56 The reasons for the outbreak of the plague are discussed in Chapter 5.

57 TA MJB 1/4/10 Health Committee minutes. Meeting 18 August 1904.

58 TA MJB 1/4/10 Health Committee minutes. Meeting 11 July 1904.

59 TA MJB 1/4/10 Health Committee minutes. Meeting 11 July 1904.

60 TA MJB 1/4/10 Health Committee minutes. Report Number 16/04 of the Town Engineer's Department, addressed to Town Clerk, dated 16 August 1904, meeting 16 August 1904.

Government Gazette of 15 September 1904 in terms of which the lieutenant-governor had sanctioned the proposed sewerage farm. The council was accordingly in a position to take formal transfer of the land.⁶¹ The available water supply was also carefully considered and reported upon. The town engineer decided that an amount of 32 litres per person per day, made up of five litres for drinking purposes, nine litres for washing and laundry purposes, and 18 litres for ablution requirements, would be sufficient. This allocation was in marked contrast to the daily allowance reserved for residents in white areas, where, for example in Booysens, each consumer received a daily allowance of 246 litres.⁶² The medical officer of health agreed with this ration of water, as it was considered that the occupants of the location would be absent during the day, and there would be a smaller percentage of woman and children permanently resident on the properties. In addition, it was proposed that a service tank be installed in the central square capable of containing 160 000 litres, and to lay the water on to the different latrine blocks, at each of which a self-closing tap would be provided.⁶³

Housing was required for the Africans living in the African Location, those living in numerous private locations within the municipal area, and others living in various parts of the town, other than Africans living on the premises of their employers.⁶⁴ There were roughly 4585 people living in the African Location, and most were living in insanitary conditions. There were 2174 males, 1131 females and 1280 children. Those living in private locations numbered, according to the Native Affairs Department, 2607, and included 378 females and 428 children. Housing was therefore required for about 10 000 people.⁶⁵

The houses were extremely small. Provision was made for four styles of houses, ranging from one room to four rooms. There were different prices structures, dependent on whether the house had an earth floor or concrete floor. The estimates provided for wood and iron huts on hardwood stumps, with no lining. Stone

61 TA MJB 1/1/6 Council minutes. Meeting 12 October 1904.

62 TA MJB 1/4/9 Health Committee minutes. Meeting 23 June 1904.

63 TA MJB 1/1/6 Council minutes. Meeting 12 October 1904.

64 TA MJB 1/1/6 Council minutes. Meeting 12 October 1904.

65 TA MJB 1/1/6 Council minutes. Meeting 12 October 1904.

foundations would increase the cost by about 5%.⁶⁶ With regard to latrine facilities, the proposal was to install 63 latrines and wash places. These were arranged in such a manner as to allow the water used for washing and bathing to be subsequently used to flush the latrine troughs. The sewerage would be disposed of on the land adjacent to the location, but at a lower level, a reasonable space being left between the inhabited area and irrigated land.⁶⁷

CONCLUSIONS

What is clear is that the standards required for housing and sanitation in Klipspruit, as well as the water allocation to the residents, fell far short of what was required for Johannesburg's white residents. Once the African people were no longer living in close proximity to their white counterparts, the threat of disease moving into the city centre and surrounding neighbourhoods, their living, housing, water and sanitation needs ceased to be cause of major concern to the council.

66 TA MJB 1/1/8 Council minutes. Meeting 23 August 1905.

67 TA MJB 1/1/6 Council minutes. Meeting 12 October 1904.

MINE COMPOUNDS

The most common form of employer-provided housing in Johannesburg was the compounds used by the mining industry. The compounds had originally been used for the housing of the mineworkers in Kimberley. After the discovery of gold they were quickly adapted to conditions on the Witwatersrand. The compounds had originally been devised as a means of controlling theft, drunkenness and desertion on the part of the workers.⁶⁸

For many years, most African workers on the Rand were migrant workers. The earliest compounds were camps or tents or low iron huts in rows. As industry developed, employers of 50 or more African workers were obliged by municipal regulations to provide accommodation for them.⁶⁹ Mine owners on the Rand were quick to realise the benefits to the employers of compounds. Only males were housed in the compounds. The fact that they were built on mine property meant that there were no transport costs.⁷⁰

The early compounds on the Rand were usually 'nothing more than camps', a native commissioner reported in 1903. Living conditions were mostly overcrowded, dirty and unhealthy, although some mines provided better housing than others.⁷¹ Inspectors reported that the compound huts contained 20 to 50 workers, who slept on concrete bunks built one above the other like shelves. Many of the huts had earth floors which turned muddy in wet weather. When the huts were crowded, workers had to sleep on these damp floors.⁷² The mine compounds were usually built in the form of a large open square, or series of connected squares, in the middle of which were the kitchen and large open baths.⁷³ (See illustrations 50 and 51, pp. 204 and 205). They were constructed of stone, or brick and iron, or corrugated iron and

68 E Koch, *Doornfontein and its African working class 1914-1935*, p. 49.

69 L Callinicos, *Working life 1886 – 1940, A people's history of South Africa Volume Two, Factories, townships, and popular culture on the Rand*, p. 77.

70 E Koch, *Doornfontein and its African working class 1914-1935*, p. 49.

71 L Callinicos, *A people's history of South Africa Volume One Gold and workers 1886 – 1924*, p. 43.

72 L Callinicos, *A people's history of South Africa Volume One Gold and workers 1886 – 1924*, p. 43.

73 TA GOV 754 PS 50/04 Report on the treatment of natives on the mines of the Witwatersrand, p. 7.

wood. In some compounds, residents were allowed to put up their own bunks. The rooms were badly lighted and ill-ventilated. The Africans ate and slept in these rooms, cooking their meat and warming their porridge over the open coal stoves. The stoves were not provided with flues and were certainly injurious to health. (See illustrations 52, 53 and 54, pp. 206, 207 and 208). For many, leisure time was spent in the compound grounds, where mock war-dances were often performed.⁷⁴

In the earlier years, many compounds did not provide washing facilities, but by 1903 most compounds had concrete baths in the centre of the compound in which workers could wash themselves and their clothes. There was no privacy anywhere in the compound. The toilets were nothing but a long bench with holes where 20 men could relieve themselves at the same time. Washing was also done in public. In the rooms, the men dressed and undressed in full view of others. The lights were left on all night. Seeing their fathers naked was completely against African tradition,⁷⁵ but unavoidable in the context of the compounds. In addition, there was no place for workers' possessions. Clothes, bicycles other belongings were hung from the ceiling and people could only hope that these would not get stolen.⁷⁶ (See illustration 52, p. 206)

Within each compound, discipline was enforced by a hierarchical police system composed of compound managers, *indunas* and compound police. Every compound had a detention room where workers could be handcuffed and placed in solitary confinement for defying regulations. (See illustration 55, p. 209). Food, which was often not fit for human consumption, and liquor regulations, were used as a means of social control.⁷⁷ The mining industry was well aware of the correlation between the poor food and lack of health amongst its African employees. Added to this were the harsh working conditions, acknowledged by the state mining engineer in his report in 1901 as follows:

74 TA GOV 754 PS 50/04 Report on the treatment of natives on the mines of the Witwatersrand, p. 7.

75 L Callinicos, *A people's history of South Africa Volume One Gold and workers 1886 – 1924*, p. 43.

76 L Callinicos, *A people's history of South Africa Volume One Gold and workers 1886 – 1924*, p. 43.

77 E Koch, *Doornfontein and its African working class 1914-1935*, p.50.

At the mines he must work hard, almost ten hours every day, mostly underground and gets very inefficient food; as a matter of fact he has to live on *mealie-meal* porridge, although he is supplied with one pound of meat twice a week and recently some mines have commenced supplying them occasionally with fresh vegetables. This does not help much. As a consequence of this bad feeding, the natives are generally weak and unhealthy, and sickness, and especially scurvy is of frequent occurrence.⁷⁸

Many of the mines were closed down during the war, and re-opened in 1901. The new British government introduced stricter laws to control labour. By 1902 the mine owners dropped the wages of African unskilled labour. As a result, many labourers did not return to the mines after the war. They stayed at home, or they went elsewhere for employment.⁷⁹ Plagued by the labour scarcity, the gold mining industry failed to recover at the anticipated rate.⁸⁰ As Milner's elaborate plans for reconstruction depended on revenue from the mining industry,⁸¹ they were forced to look elsewhere for the much needed labour. Ultimately, Milner's administration agreed to import Chinese labour.⁸²

The failure of the Chinese labour policy is beyond the scope of this document. However, it did have important implications for Africans working and living in the Johannesburg area. The mine owners were forced to return to a reliance on African labour, and therefore had to take steps in order to improve living and working conditions on the mines. The rates of wages were raised. Living conditions in the compounds were improved, and in particular, steps were taken to make them more sanitary. Special care was taken to provide good and sufficient food, the rations

78 L Callinicos, *A people's history of South Africa Volume One Gold and workers 1886 – 1924*, p. 49.

79 L Callinicos, *A people's history of South Africa Volume One Gold and workers 1886 – 1924*, p. 63.

80 A J Morgan, *A symphony of power, the Eskom story*, p. 25.

81 M Fraser and A Jeeves, *All that glittered Selected correspondence of Lionel Philips 1890-1924*, pp. 100-101.

82 M Fraser and A Jeeves, *All that glittered Selected correspondence of Lionel Philips 1890-1924*, p. 101.

generally included meat, vegetables and beer, besides the daily allowance of *mealies*, biscuits, coffee and lime-juice.⁸³

The Witwatersrand Labour Association did, however, have some success in its recruitment of African labour, which were obtained from many sources. In 1903, for example, of 85 377 Africans recruited by the Witwatersrand Labour Association, 45 242 came from the Portuguese East Coast territory, 11 775 from the Transvaal itself outside the Johannesburg district, 14 656 were recruited locally in Johannesburg, the latter comprising Africans who were re-engaged, and also a considerable number of Natal Zulus, 7 082 came from the Cape Colony, and smaller numbers from Bechuanaland, Basutoland, German South West Africa, and Swaziland, whilst 941 were drawn from British Central Africa.⁸⁴

For those coming to the Transvaal from the Portuguese East Africa territory, they were recruited by representatives of the Native Labour Association, who had some 27 white recruiters and conductors, licensed by the Portuguese government. There were 13 recruitment stations, the headquarters of the recruiters, and the receiving places in charge of African headmen. Licensed African runners were also employed in large numbers, who were in frequent contact with the *kraals* (enclosure for domestic livestock and domestic compound of rural Africans) allocated to them. The recruits were collected at various receiving places, and then escorted to the camp of the nearest white recruiter where their engagements were registered. Once the formalities were completed, the Africans were issued with one blanket, one sweater, and one military overcoat at cost price. They were then transported by train to Johannesburg. Two special trains were used, and the Africans were transported in covered coaches, with seats, and latrine accommodation. Food was provided during the journey. From the time the Africans left their kraals they were provided with food and shelter during the whole period of the journey.⁸⁵

83 The South African Native Races Committee (Eds.), *The South African Natives, their progress and present condition*, p. 25.

84 TA GOV 754 PS 50/04 Report on the treatment of natives on the mines of the Witwatersrand, p. 5.

85 TA GOV 754 PS 50/04 Report on the treatment of natives on the mines of the Witwatersrand, p. 6.

Once the Africans arrived at Johannesburg, from whichever source, they were taken to a central compound at the central depot of the Native Labour Association, from where they were drafted to the various mines. At the mines themselves, they were allocated to various kinds of work. Roughly one-third were assigned to surface work, and the remaining two-thirds to underground work. Underground workers alternated night and day shifts, so that no workers worked longer than a week continuously on night shift. The view was that Africans from the East Coast made the best underground workers. Africans from the Cape Colony and Natal were, on the whole, not prepared to work underground and were therefore employed on surface work.⁸⁶

In March 1902 the Native Affairs Department assumed control over the Africans employed on the mines and inspectors were sent out to the various districts on the Witwatersrand. This had important implications with regard to the living conditions as it provided for the inspection of the compounds. In terms of The Transvaal Administration Report of 1902, Appendix 11, the procedure that was adopted during an inspection of a mine as regards its African employees was outlined as follows:

To examine and check registers and passports of natives employed, ascertain the number of natives suffering from sickness and to note the various diseases prevailing. To adjudicate any cases, whether offences or disputes, and transact any business requiring attention. To visit the compound hospitals and kitchens, and generally to enquire into all matters affecting native employees.⁸⁷

The intention of the authorities, when passing the regulations, was that the inspectors should be provided with as wide a mandate as possible, so that they could investigate all aspects which related to the well-being of the African staff.⁸⁸

The work of the inspectors was at first very slow due to the conditions prevailing in the early months of 1902 following the war.⁸⁹ They found that, generally speaking,

86 TA GOV 754 PS 50/04 Report on the treatment of natives on the mines of the Witwatersrand, p. 7.

87 TAB LC 142 217/275/04 Memorandum regarding conditions in the compounds [1904]

88 TAB LC 142 217/275/04 Memorandum regarding conditions in the compounds [1904]

89 TAB LC 142 217/275/04 Memorandum regarding conditions in the compounds [1904] p. 4.

there were mud floors in the compounds. These were dirty and difficult to keep clean. The habit of spitting on the floors made them particularly conducive to the spread of infectious diseases. The new regulations required that impervious floors be laid. They found the sanitary arrangements on the mines were primitive, and in many cases so bad that they were literally a threat to health. The mines were required to make radical changes in this direction.⁹⁰ Following improvements, the drainage in the compounds was generally good, whilst baths with a steady flow of clean water were common. In some mines showers with hot water were available.⁹¹

Although many constructive changes were taking place, the reality of the statistics proved that much more was required before the improvements could be felt. The number of deaths occurring as a result of poor conditions was still far too high. The health of the Africans suffered as a result of the unsatisfactory living and sanitary conditions. During the period 1 October 1902 to 31 March 1903, for example, the mortality rate amongst natives on the mines was a staggering 42,03 per 1000 individuals, which translated to 1476 deaths. Of a total of 26 139 Africans employed in Johannesburg, there were 511 deaths in this period. Pulmonary disorders were the cause of the bulk of the deaths, with 217 (42,4%) being from this cause. Sixty-one deaths (11,9%) were as a result of scurvy, 69 (13,5%) as a result of dysentery and diarrhoea, 41 (8,02%) following enteric fever. Only 35 lives were claimed due to accidents, and 87 were due to other causes.⁹² During this period, the average number of Africans in hospital daily amounted to approximately 21,09 per thousand.⁹³ These figures show that desertion from the mines was on the increase – 47,6 per 1000 per annum – no doubt the living and working conditions was at least, in some measure, responsible for this state of affairs.⁹⁴

90 TAB LC 142 217/275/04 Memorandum regarding conditions in the compounds [1904] p. 4.

91 TAB LC 142 217/275/04 Memorandum regarding conditions in the compounds [1904] p. 5.

92 TA GOV 132 GEN/250/03 Correspondence between Milner, Lieutenant-Governor, Pretoria, and The Right Honourable Joseph Chamberlain, Colonial Office, London, dated 23rd May 1903, regarding mortality amongst natives, and enclosing return of statistics

93 TA GOV 132 GEN/250/03 Correspondence between Milner, Lieutenant-Governor, Pretoria, and The Right Honourable Joseph Chamberlain, Colonial Office, London, dated 23rd May 1903, regarding mortality amongst natives, and enclosing return of statistics.

94 TA GOV 132 GEN/250/03 Correspondence between Milner, Lieutenant-Governor, Pretoria, and The Right Honourable Joseph Chamberlain, Colonial Office, London, dated 23rd May 1903, regarding mortality amongst natives, and enclosing return of statistics.

It is also ironic that illness as a result of the living conditions which the Africans were forced to endure was the primary cause of the deaths on the mines, and not mining accidents. The district medical officer of health, Doctor Charles Samson, acknowledged that the death rate amongst Africans on the Rand was abnormally high. He felt that conditions in the *kraals* at their homes did not leave them resistant to disease. He further felt that account had to be taken of conditions in Johannesburg following the South African War. Food supplies had for many months been diverted leaving non-nutritious mealies as the staple food stuff for the labourers.⁹⁵

Doctor Samson further recalled that during 1902, when over-dried mealies were principally supplied, scurvy was rife. He reported that scurvy is a dietetic disease, caused by insufficient variety in food, and particularly by a lack of fresh meat and vegetables, and also to indifferent quality of food, especially to decomposition changes. Tainted meat had been shown to be in itself a cause of scurvy, and in all districts where maize formed the staple food, disease, due to partial decomposition or disease of the maize, also frequently occurred.⁹⁶ On the Witwatersrand, the mine doctors traced a relationship between outbreaks of scurvy on individual mines and the defective quality of *mealies* supplied. On one mine in particular, in 1903, where there was at the time no case of scurvy, there appeared 31 typical cases of the disease, during March. The *mealies* consumed during that month were found, on investigation, to be tainted and musty. When other and sound *mealie meal* was substituted, the disease disappeared. In general the situation improved once more local produce was available. A factor to be borne in mind was that, when Africans arrived from the northern areas, many were already malnourished due to the lack of food availability in that area.⁹⁷

95 TA GOV 132 GEN/250/03 Correspondence between Milner, Lieutenant-Governor, Pretoria, and The Right Honourable Joseph Chamberlain, Colonial Office, London, dated 23rd May 1903, regarding mortality amongst natives, and enclosing return of statistics.

96 TA GOV 132 GEN/250/03 Correspondence between Milner, Lieutenant-Governor, Pretoria, and The Right Honourable Joseph Chamberlain, Colonial Office, London, dated 23rd May 1903, regarding mortality amongst natives, and enclosing return of statistics. In particular, report of Dr Charles Samson, District Medical Officer of Health, regarding Native mortality on the mines.

97 TA GOV 132 GEN/250/03 Correspondence between Milner, Lieutenant-Governor, Pretoria, and The Right Honourable Joseph Chamberlain, Colonial Office, London, dated 23rd May 1903, regarding mortality amongst natives, and enclosing return of statistics. In particular, report of Dr Charles Samson, District Medical Officer of Health, regarding Native mortality on the mines.

He further was of the opinion that many of the deaths that had been classified as being caused by pulmonary disease should have been attributed to scurvy. He went on to state that

pulmonary diseases amongst natives working on the mines are partly due to the carelessness and ignorance of the native who does not realise that whilst he is living and working in a colder climate and at a higher altitude than he is accustomed to he should take some ordinary common-sense precautions against getting sudden chills when heated by exertion – partly due also to working in a dust-laden atmosphere and general living conditions in compounds.⁹⁸

This particular statement is extremely telling. What Doctor Samson failed to take into account is the fact that Africans arriving to work on the mines were only provided with one blanket.⁹⁹ The dust in the mines was certainly a contributory cause of pulmonary disorders, so much so that it was the subject of a Government Commission of Enquiry in 1903, when recommendations were made for the improvement of conditions.¹⁰⁰ An extremely important cause of disease was the lack of sanitation in the underground mine workings. Of necessity

the native at work below ground is in the habit of depositing excreta in workings, this gets mixed with water circulating in mines – polluting it and readily spreads enteric and dysentery.¹⁰¹

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- 98 TA GOV 132 GEN/250/03 Correspondence between Milner, Lieutenant-Governor, Pretoria, and The Right Honourable Joseph Chamberlain, Colonial Office, London, dated 23rd May 1903, regarding mortality amongst natives, and enclosing return of statistics. In particular, report of Dr Charles Samson, District Medical Officer of Health, regarding Native mortality on the mines.
 - 99 TAB GOV 754 PS 50/04 Report by Doctor Louis G Irwine on the treatment of natives on the mines of the Witwatersrand, p. 5.
 - 100 TAB GOV 132 GEN/250/03 Correspondence between Milner, Lieutenant-Governor, Pretoria, and The Right Honourable Joseph Chamberlain, Colonial Office, London, dated 23rd May 1903, regarding mortality amongst natives, and enclosing return of statistics. In particular, report of Dr Charles Samson, District Medical Officer of Health, regarding native mortality on the mines.
 - 101 TA GOV 132 GEN/250/03 Correspondence between Milner, Lieutenant-Governor, Pretoria, and The Right Honourable Joseph Chamberlain, Colonial Office, London, dated 23rd May 1903, regarding mortality amongst natives, and enclosing return of statistics. In particular, report of Dr Charles Samson, District Medical Officer of Health, regarding Native mortality on the mines.

Mr T J Macfarlane, the general manager of the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association Ltd., who investigated the health of the Africans on the mines in depth, submitted a report to the chairman and members of the board of management of the Association on 17th February 1904. In it he advised that since the beginning of December 1903 the medical officers had been given instructions to reject any persons applying for work whom they believed to be unfit for mine work.¹⁰²

Mine hospitals also became a regular feature after 1903. It was customary for the mines to provide hospital accommodation for a little over 2% of the number of workers employed.¹⁰³ Whereas previously the standards had varied considerably, improvements were now made. The hospitals were run by whites, assisted by African orderlies. (See illustration 56, p. 210). The medical officers attended at the hospitals on a daily basis, and patients were not permitted to return to work until they had obtained the consent of the medical officer. During their stay in the hospital, a special diet of meat, vegetables, bread, milk (fresh or condensed milk) and coffee was provided to the patients. Africans disabled by accident were compensated according to a fixed scale, being £35,00 in the case of death or permanent total disablement, and £17,00 in the case of permanent partial disablement; with *'umfaans'* or young boys receiving half this amount.¹⁰⁴

In 1903 the living conditions in the compounds became the subject of much discussion in England. Joseph Chamberlain, writing from Downing Street, London, asked Milner to furnish him with a report on the matter, following debate in the house of commons.¹⁰⁵ No immediate response was forthcoming, and Alfred Lyttelton, the secretary of state, hearing about the confidential report produced by MacFarlane, the general manager of the Witwatersrand Labour Association, sent a telegram to the

102 TAB GOV 754 PS 50/04, Correspondence between the Association of Mine Managers and the Chamber of Mines, Johannesburg, regarding sickness amongst natives, dated 19th January 1904.

103 TAB MJB 1/4/13 Minutes of health committee, 16 December 1904.

104 TAB GOV 754 PS 50/04 Report on the treatment of natives on the mines of the Witwatersrand, p. 11.

105 TAB GOV 132 GEN/250/03 Correspondence between J Chamberlain and Lord Milner dated 20th March 1903.

governor of Johannesburg asking for his consent to the report being tabled in the British parliament.¹⁰⁶

Mr Macfarlane's report indicated that during the year 1903, 5022 deaths had occurred on the mines.¹⁰⁷ The majority of the deaths were as a result of pulmonary disorders (3003 deaths), abdominal problems accounted for 589 deaths, whilst enteric and other infectious diseases accounted for 219 fatalities.¹⁰⁸ When eventually Lord Milner responded to the Colonial Office in London, he submitted to them an amended statement which had been prepared by S M Pritchard, the pass controller of the Native Affairs Department. In terms of this despatch, the number of deaths was reported as being 4834. He accounted for the discrepancy as being caused by the fact that the revised figure gave information strictly limited to Africans, whilst MacFarlane's report had enumerated the deaths of 'coloured persons' as well.¹⁰⁹

Even the later reduced figure amounted to a death rate of 72,47 per 1000 workers. In evaluating the number of deaths, the report on the treatment of 'natives' acknowledged that this figure was extremely high, but that the number of diseases contributing to it was relatively few. Respiratory diseases were by far the most deadly, pneumonia alone accounting for 50,83% of the total. Cerebra-spinal meningitis was the next largest individual constituent of the death rate accounting for 8,21%, diarrhoeal diseases (enteric fever, dysentery and diarrhoea) together totalled 14,03% and scurvy accounted for 4,73%. There was a seasonal incidence to the diseases. Pneumonia and meningitis were far more prevalent during the colder months, reaching serious epidemic proportions, while scurvy and diarrhoeal diseases were most prevalent during the summer months. Scurvy as a direct cause of death practically disappeared during the colder months.¹¹⁰ Considering the vast changes in temperature when miners went from underground to the surface, the high incidence of

106 TAB LTG 169 Telegram No 2964, Telegram from Secretary of State, London, to Governor Johannesburg dated 13th May 1904.

107 A summary of the findings is reflected as Appendix I at the end of this chapter.

108 TAB GOV 754 PS 50/04 Correspondence between Witwatersrand Native Labour Association and G G Robinson, Private Secretary to the High Commissioner, to which was appended Report of T J M Macfarlane, General Manager, Witwatersrand Native Labour Association Limited.

109 TAB GOV 754 PS 50/04 Letter from Governor's Office, Johannesburg to The Right Honourable Alfred Lyttelton, Colonial Office, London, dated 13th June 1903.

110 TAB GOV 754 PS 50/04 Report on the treatment of natives on the mines of the Witwatersrand, p. 18.

pneumonia was not surprising. Lack of clean water and proper sanitation, both in the compounds and underground, would certainly have contributed to diarrhoeal diseases.

When the matter was debated by the house of commons in London, there was an outcry in the British press. The local response in the Transvaal was to view the debate as an attack on the government, in an attempt to damage its position with regard to the importation of Chinese Labour, "by showing how utterly unfit as guardians of human life the mine owners of the Rand were."¹¹¹

The mining magnates, as well as the government, were now forced to pay some attention to the conditions which existed in the various compounds. That the majority of deaths were as a result of disease and appalling living conditions, and not because of mine accidents, was a severe indictment on the mine owner's treatment of its labourers.

No doubt at least partly as a result of embarrassment of the adverse publicity, the government's response was to call for a number of reports, both from the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association and from the various mining companies who were members of the Transvaal Chamber of Mines.

The Witwatersrand Native Labour Association Limited reported that between the beginning of June and the end of December 1903, 28 669 Africans from the East Coast, with 12 month working contracts, had been allotted to their members. Of these 1083 were dead by the end of the year.¹¹² Three thousand, one hundred and thirty-seven Africans from the Northern Transvaal were distributed to members during the same period.¹¹³ Sixty-three died within eight months of arrival in Johannesburg.¹¹⁴

111 TAB GOV Volume No 754 PS 50/04 Report by Doctor Louis G Irwine on the treatment of natives on the mines of the Witwatersrand, p. 1.

112 TAB GOV 754 PS 50/04 Letter from Witwatersrand Native Labour Association Limited, Johannesburg, addressed to G G Robinson Esq. dated 28th May 1904.

113 TAB GOV 754 PS 50/04 Letter from Witwatersrand Native Labour Association Limited, Johannesburg, addressed to G G Robinson Esq. dated 28th May 1904.

114 TAB GOV 754 PS 50/04 Letter from Witwatersrand Native Labour Association Limited, Johannesburg, addressed to G G Robinson Esq. dated 28th May 1904.

The Chamber of Mines became increasingly concerned about the number of deaths that were occurring in their midst. J Cowie, the secretary of the Transvaal Chamber of Mines, was particularly concerned about the deaths as a result of pneumonia. During the month of December 1903 alone, of a total of 520 of the deaths occurring amongst their staff, 211 were due to pneumonia.¹¹⁵ The average number of deaths from all causes for the months of both November and December 1903 was 95 per thousand per annum.¹¹⁶ Suggestions that were made to improve the situation were the construction of a special compound to be used to house any new recruits coming into the city who were suspected of carrying disease, or to be in particularly poor health. The intention was that these particular Africans should be allowed to achieve better health before being assigned to the various mines.¹¹⁷ D Farquharson, the Secretary of the Association of Mine Managers, was particularly keen on the idea of the establishment of a hospital. He felt that many of the workers arrived in Johannesburg in an emaciated condition, and were being allocated to mines while they were too ill or weak for work.¹¹⁸

Following the outcry about the treatment of Africans on the mines, and about their living conditions, an effort was made to improve the situation. Whereas pneumonia had been accountable for 56% of the deaths on the mines in 1903, by the end of April 1904 this number had decreased to 30%. This decrease was put down to improvements in their treatment and living conditions. In addition, the recruiting agents were now being more selective and taking in only men who had a strong physique. The Africans were, in addition, allowed to acclimatise to the new climate before being sent to work, especially underground.¹¹⁹

115 TAB GOV 754 PS 50/04 Letter from the Transvaal Chamber of Mines to The Secretary, Witwatersrand Labour Association, Johannesburg, signed by J Cowie, Secretary, dated 28th January 1904.

116 TAB GOV 754 PS 50/04 Letter from the Transvaal Chamber of Mines to The Secretary, Witwatersrand Labour Association, Johannesburg, signed by J Cowie, Secretary, dated 28th January 1904.

117 TAB GOV 754 PS 50/04 Letter from the Transvaal Chamber of Mines to The Secretary, Witwatersrand Labour Association, Johannesburg, signed by J Cowie, Secretary, dated 28th January 1904.

118 TAB GOV 754 PS 50/04, Correspondence between the Association of Mine Managers and the Chamber of Mines, Johannesburg, regarding sickness amongst natives, dated 19th January 1904.

119 TAB GOV 754 PS 50/04, Correspondence between the Association of Mine Managers and the Chamber of Mines, Johannesburg, regarding sickness amongst natives, dated 7th May 1904.

By comparison, the number of deaths, per thousand workers, was 207 in 1903, and had decreased to 164 for the same period in 1904.¹²⁰ An important aspect to be borne in mind was that these statistics were taken during January and March, the healthiest months of the year in the Transvaal.¹²¹ Improvements which were made in the living conditions of the Africans on the mines during 1903 included the provision in the compound huts of impervious floors, heating and ventilation stoves, moveable bunks, more space, ventilation and lighting, and the erection of change houses and coffee houses or soup kitchens at the shaft heads. Stricter supervision was made in relation to clothing, and certain improvements were made in their diet.¹²²

In 1903 an additional fourteen entirely new compounds had been erected by the mining companies on the Rand, and in more than thirty others substantial improvements had been effected in the way of provision of impervious flooring, stoves and bunks. Thirty-six hospitals were built, and many gold mines had erected change houses and coffee houses at the shaft heads.¹²³

Doctor Irwin, reporting on the treatment of Africans on the mines, was of the opinion that :

Even if one were to attribute this, as is the fashion of economic text-books, to the more selfish desire of the capitalist to get and retain his labour supply, the record of substantial and progressive betterment is nevertheless definitely there to his credit. In view of the financial circumstances of the mines consequent on the war, and the severely felt shortage of the necessary labour, the record of improvements is very satisfactory.¹²⁴

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- 120 TAB GOV 754 PS 50/04, Correspondence between the Association of Mine Managers and the Chamber of Mines, Johannesburg, regarding sickness amongst natives, dated 7th May 1904.
 - 121 TAB GOV 754 PS 50/04, Correspondence between the Association of Mine Managers and the Chamber of Mines, Johannesburg, regarding sickness amongst natives, dated 7th May 1904.
 - 122 TAB GOV 754 PS 50/04 Report by Doctor Louis G Irwine on the treatment of natives on the mines of the Witwatersrand, p. 3.
 - 123 TAB GOV 754 PS 50/04 Report by Doctor Louis G Irwine on the treatment of natives on the mines of the Witwatersrand, p. 4.
 - 124 TAB GOV 754 PS 50/04 Report by Doctor Louis G Irwine on the treatment of natives on the mines of the Witwatersrand, p. 4.

Other improvements in 1903 were the provision of a large concrete bath in each of the compounds. The bucket-system of latrine was also implemented. Maize remained the staple diet. It was often ground at the compound, and then cooked by steam.¹²⁵

Following the outcry in Britain about the living conditions, and in an attempt to prevent the high incidence of scurvy, the medical committee recommended that the diet of the Africans be changed, and after 1903 the following became the regular diet in the compounds:

Mealie meal, 2 lbs per day
 Meat, 2 lbs per week
 Fresh vegetables, 2 lbs per week
 Biscuit, 2^{1/2} lbs per week
 Treacle, 1 lb per week; and
 Salt, 3^{1/2} ounces per week.

In addition to the above, soup and coffee were provided during the winter months.¹²⁶

In February 1904 Lord Milner informed the colonial secretary that "the high rate of mortality in mines is the weakest point in our armour, and though mining can never be a healthy employment, the death rate ought to be enormously reduced."¹²⁷ The South African Native Races Committee recalled how the death rate in 1903 had been 71 per thousand. They felt that although this appalling figure might have been partly due to the employment of Africans who were not strong enough to work in the mines, there was little doubt that it was largely to be attributed to defective accommodation and the neglect of necessary precautions. Attempts to improve the situation on the part of the mine owners included the provision of lime-juice and vegetables to prevent scurvy. The danger of contracting pneumonia and other pulmonary diseases was

125 TAB GOV 754 PS 50/04 Report on the treatment of natives on the mines of the Witwatersrand, p. 7.

126 TAB GOV 754 PS 50/04 Report on the treatment of natives on the mines of the Witwatersrand, p. 10.

127 The South African Native Races Committee (eds.), *The South African Natives their progress and present condition*, p. 27.

guarded against by erecting change houses at shaft heads, by supplying workers with coats or blankets when leaving work. Improvements were made in the lighting, ventilation and sanitary arrangements of the compounds, and a number of hospitals were provided. Recruits were subjected to medical examinations before they were engaged. Recruiting of Africans from north of latitude 22° during the winter months was prohibited. The result of the improvements led to the fall in the death rate to 46 per 1000 in the year 1905-1906, with a further decline to 34 per 1000 in the following year.¹²⁸

The intense public scrutiny of the conditions in the compounds certainly led to some improvements. It is interesting that the mining magnates responded to outside pressures to bring about change in the living conditions of their workers. This was the second occasion on which their hands were forced into improving conditions, the earlier being when the experiment with Chinese mine labourers had failed and they found themselves dependent on the labour of the African mine workers. The improvements in living conditions following the British investigations into the matter could not, however, have been substantial, as the records show that whenever the opportunity arose, workers chose to avoid the compounds and seek out other types of employment and accommodation. Desertion became a major defensive response by miners to their conditions of exploitation. Many just moved into the slum yards.¹²⁹

128 The South African Native Races Committee (eds.), *The South African Natives their progress and present condition*, pp. 27-28.

129 E Koch, *Doornfontein and its African working class 1914-1935*, p.50.

THE RAILWAY COMPOUNDS

In line with other employers of large labour forces in Johannesburg, the railways also housed their employees in compounds. Very little information has been found regarding life on the railway compounds, but it can be assumed that they were very similar to those on the mines. In 1903 the medical officer of health visited the compound belonging to the CSAR in Braamfontein to find it in a disgracefully overcrowded and insanitary state. These conditions had led to the occurrence of a large number of cases of dysentery and scurvy amongst the inhabitants. The compound consisted of 101 rooms.¹³⁰

The rooms in the compound were found to be insufficiently and badly ventilated. The closet accommodation was also insufficient, and consisted of a very primitive underground tank, the contents of which were 'bucketed' out. At the time of inspection by Dr Charles Porter on 19 January 1903, it was found to be sending a putrid overflow into the neighbouring spruit.¹³¹ In order to correct the situation, Dr Porter instructed the compound manager to either reduce the number of occupants of the compound, or increase the amount of accommodation available. A further requirement was that proper and sufficient ventilation should be provided by means of louvered ventilators in the walls opposite the doors, additional pail closets should be provided, and a pump and overhead urine tank with a hose should be provided so that the contents could gravitate into the slop carts. More attention was required to be paid to the cleanliness of the latrines and disinfectants were to be used. Dr Porter added that this particular compound, in its present condition, was the most insanitary and overcrowded he had come across in Johannesburg.¹³²

Thereafter, the railway compounds were inspected on an ad-hoc basis by the health department in an effort to encourage the manager to maintain better living and sanitary standards. No information could be gleaned from the various documents consulted with regard to the water and sanitation facilities at the railway compounds.

130 TA MJB 1/4/5 Health Committee minutes. Meeting 22 January 1903.

131 TA MJB 1/4/5 Health Committee minutes. Meeting 22 January 1903.

132 TA MJB 1/4/5 Health Committee minutes. Meeting 22 January 1903.

CONCLUSIONS

Despite the paucity of information regarding the railway compounds, Dr Porter's comment that the compound used by them throws some light on the living conditions experienced by the residents. The railway compounds, and those occupied by the staff of the sanitary and other council employees, were under the direct control of the council, who had the power to adjudicate the standards adopted by each of the compounds. Despite this fact, they failed to maintain decent living conditions in their own compounds. Although the conditions in the mine compounds were also far from satisfactory, in many cases they were better than those belonging to the council, and certainly a great improvement on those at the railway compound.

The mine owners were undoubtedly the major employers of Africans in Johannesburg in the period under review. An evaluation of the living conditions of the workers is therefore extremely revealing. On the whole, in the earlier period, the main preoccupation of the mine owners was to house their employees as cheaply as possible. The compounds allowed them to do this. Not only did their use mean that there was no need to support the families of the workers, it also meant that they were close to work (and therefore there were no transportation costs or difficulties) and easily controlled. Conditions were allowed to deteriorate progressively in the compounds. The tide turned during the South African War. The mines were forced to close down. Once they re-opened after the war, mine workers were not prepared to return to lower wages and the living conditions that they had been forced to endure prior to the war. The resultant labour scarcity and the need to resort to the Chinese as an alternative source of workers, and the failure of this policy, led the mine owners to reconsider their policies in relation to their African workforce.

Finding no other alternative, the mine owners were forced to take steps to improve living conditions on the compounds, and to increase wages. This was a pattern that often occurred in the history of Johannesburg during its first 20 years - the preoccupation with money. The mine owners, finding themselves reliant on the labour of the mine workers in order to maintain profitability, found solutions that, in the first instance, benefitted them, and had as a further result, an improvement in the living conditions of their workers.

AFRICANS LIVING OUTSIDE OF THE AFRICAN LOCATION AND THE VARIOUS COMPOUNDS – LIFE IN SOPHIATOWN, NEWCLARE AND MARTINDALE

At an early stage in Johannesburg's history a number of property owners realised that there was a lucrative market being created by the shortage of official housing for Africans. One of the earliest speculators in the African housing market was H Tobiansky. In 1897 he had planned a township for coloureds and this had led to the emergence of Sophiatown. Other areas in which Africans could buy land in Johannesburg were the neighbouring townships of Martindale and Newclare. These three areas were unique in Johannesburg in that they were the only places where Africans owned land. Most other suburbs in Johannesburg had title deeds that prohibited the sale of land to any "coolie, Indian, Asiatic or native".¹³³ These three townships were later to develop into a unique and thriving African community, known collectively as Sophiatown.¹³⁴

In 1897 Hermann Tobiansky had begun to buy portions of a township site about five and a half kilometres west of the centre of Johannesburg. He named this township Sophiatown, after his wife Sophia. He had offered the land to the government of the SA Republic so that a Coloured location could be established there. This was formalised in a lease agreement in 1899, in terms of which the government obtained use of part of the farm "Waterval 79". In 1903 this lease was cancelled and the land then reverted to Tobiansky. On 20 July 1903 and again on 24 July 1903, he bought blocks of adjoining land, and subsequently began to plan the areas as a single private leasehold township. The area of the township was about 960 000 square metres, and this was divided into 1694 stands, 15 metres by 15 metres, or 50 metres by 30 metres. The township was covered with *veldt* and rock, and, after the council refused to approve plans for the township unless plots for open spaces were provided, 10 120 square metres were set aside for parks. This was particularly important since the size of the stands indicated that the township would be occupied by people of limited

133 Registrar of Deeds, *Freehold transfers*, 1905, No. 1599/1905.

134 E Koch, Doornfontein and its African working class 1914-1935, p. 54.

means, whose children would be largely dependent on the resources of the township for their means of recreation.¹³⁵

By 1904 Tobiansky was selling stands at prices ranging from £25 to £30. Tobiansky had bought portions of the township site from different people, and the titles in the servitude attached to them differed. Initially, the deeds of transfer expressly indicated that the owner of the land Tobiansky had bought in 1899, as well as that bought by him on the 24 July 1903, 'shall not have the right to use it as a location for coloured persons, or have the right to sell or hire this portion or any part thereof of coloured persons'. Over the years these restrictions were gradually cancelled by notarial agreement, so that fewer and fewer areas were restricted against Coloured occupancy.¹³⁶ Africans who acquired land in Sophiatown did not buy directly from Tobiansky's township company, but usually by auction from individual stand-holders who, in effect, acted as agents buying from the township company. In fact, not only in Sophiatown, but in any township where the title deeds did not specifically state anything to the contrary, Africans were, in terms of a law department opinion of March 1906, permitted to purchase a plot, and have it registered in trust for them in the name of the Commissioner of Native Affairs. This did not automatically give them the right to live on the plot.¹³⁷

The problem with Sophiatown was that it was too close to white suburbia. After the South African War, there was a fresh influx of Africans into the city. This created a massive housing shortage. In Sophiatown, landlords crammed rows of corrugated-iron shacks into the backyards of their properties. As many as 80 people were living in eight rooms of a single yard, all sharing a single toilet and tap, with each family paying the then high sum of 30 shillings for their room. The landlords paid rates to the council, but had no representation there. Many of the landlords were heavily

135 N Kagan, *African settlements in the Johannesburg area, 1903-1923*, pp. 59-60.

136 N Kagan, *African settlements in the Johannesburg area, 1903-1923*, p. 33.

137 N Kagan, *African settlements in the Johannesburg area, 1903-1923*, p. 33, quoting from NA 402M 126/1907, Commissioner of Native Affairs – Colonial Secretary, 14 January 1907.

bonded to money lenders, and saw the charging of high rentals as a means to recoup their debt. And besides, there was nowhere else for the people to live, anyway.¹³⁸

When African standholders in Sophiatown were given notice to move to the location at Klipspruit¹³⁹ they were legally bound to comply, since the relevant bye-law stated:

From and after a date to be hereafter fixed by resolution of the council, every native dwelling or remaining within the limits of the municipality, with the exception of such natives as may reside on the premises of their European employers, shall be required to reside in a location, and after the due date every native hereby required to live in a location, who shall be found residing elsewhere within the municipality, shall be guilty of a breach of these bye-laws.¹⁴⁰

As the council was still, at the time, approving plans for Africans to build houses in Sophiatown, the African residents did not comply with the order to move. The council, in turn, did not force compliance.¹⁴¹

White stand holders, frustrated at this development, formed a vigilante group in 1907 with the idea of forcing Africans out of the area. This was not successful. They therefore decided to purchase the vacant plots. When the council decided that the area would be ideal for dumping purposes, it ceased to be attractive to whites.¹⁴² The township owners continued to sell stands to anyone, so that a mixed population was growing in Sophiatown.¹⁴³ However, these areas ultimately ceased to be attractive to Africans, due to the distance from public transport.¹⁴⁴

138 A Benjamin, *Lost Johannesburg*, p. 21.

139 NA 402, 126/1907, Secretary for Native Affairs – Native Commissioner, Central Division, 24 April 1906.

140 *Transvaal Government Gazette*, 22 January 1904, p. 102.

141 N Kagan, African settlements in the Johannesburg area, 1903-1923, p. 34.

142 N Kagan, African settlements in the Johannesburg area, 1903-1923, p. 35.

143 L Callinicos, *Working life 1886-1940 A people's history of South Africa Volume Two Factories, Townships and popular culture on the Rand*, p. 180.

144 N Kagan, African settlements in the Johannesburg area, 1903-1923, p. 35.

Appendix 1 – Witwatersrand Native Labour Association Limited Native Mortality Statistics 1903

WITWATERSRAND NATIVE LABOUR ASSOCIATION LIMITED NATIVE MORALITY STATISTICS 1903¹⁴⁵			
Month	No of deaths	No employed	Per 1000 p.a.
January	287	49 406	69.48
February	207	52 472	47.28
March	252	56 218	53.76
April	265	59 280	53.64
May	447	62 502	85.8
June	523	64 454	97.32
July	629	66 662	113.16
August	503	68 228	88.44
September	450	68 466	78.84
October	436	68 958	75.84
November	503	69 311	87
December	520	68 841	90.6
TOTAL	5 022	754 898	79.8
SUMMARY ENUMERATING DISEASES FROM WHICH THE ABOVE 5022 DEATHS OCCURRED			
PULMONARY	3003	BROUGHT FORWARD	4422
ABDOMINAL	589	ENTERIC & OTHER INFECTIOUS DISEASES	219
BLOOD, INC SCURVY, ANEMIA, SEPTICAEMIA	295	CANCER	6
CEREBRO, SPINAL INC MENINGITIS	400	BONE DISEASES	4
CARDIAC	108	GAS POISONING	5
URINARY	22	RHEUMATISM	4
SYPHILIS	5	OTHER DEBILITY SYNOOPE NATURAL CAUSES	153
BROUGHT FORWARD	4422	SUICIDE	4
		ACCIDENTS	205
		TOTAL	5022

145 TA GOV 754 PS PS 50/04 Correspondence between Witwatersrand Native Labour Association and G G Robinson, Private Secretary to High Commissioner, to which was appended Report of T J M Macfarlane, General Manager, Witwatersrand Native Labour Association Limited.



MuseuMAfrica, Johannesburg. PH2002/686

Slumyards 1903. This poignant photograph shows how the poor and destitute built their homes out of any material which was available – in this case home was a collection of cardboard boxes. The drum situated at the front of the residence would have constituted the family water supply.



a. A milkman on his delivery round.



b. African domestic employed in a Johannesburg kitchen. Africans considered domestic work to be preferable to work on the mines. By 1904 there were 20 000 Africans employed in 'kitchen work'.



A mine compound.



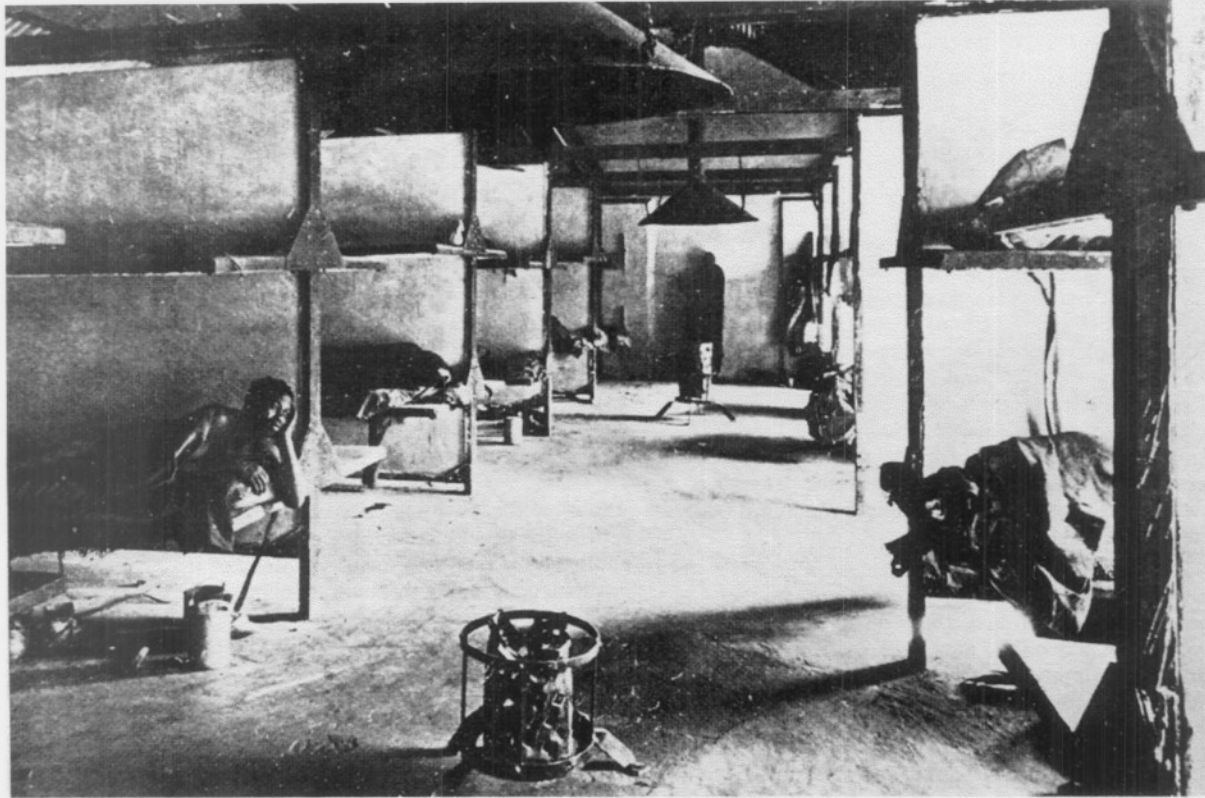
Bath in a compound.

Source: P Kallaway and P Pearson, *Johannesburg: Images and continuities A history of working class life through pictures 1885 - 1935*, p. 19.



Compound sleeping quarters. Notice the bunk beds, earth floor, coal stoves, and possessions hanging from the roof beams.

Source: P Kallaway and P Pearson, *Johannesburg: Images and continuities A history of working class life through pictures 1885 - 1935*, p. 19.



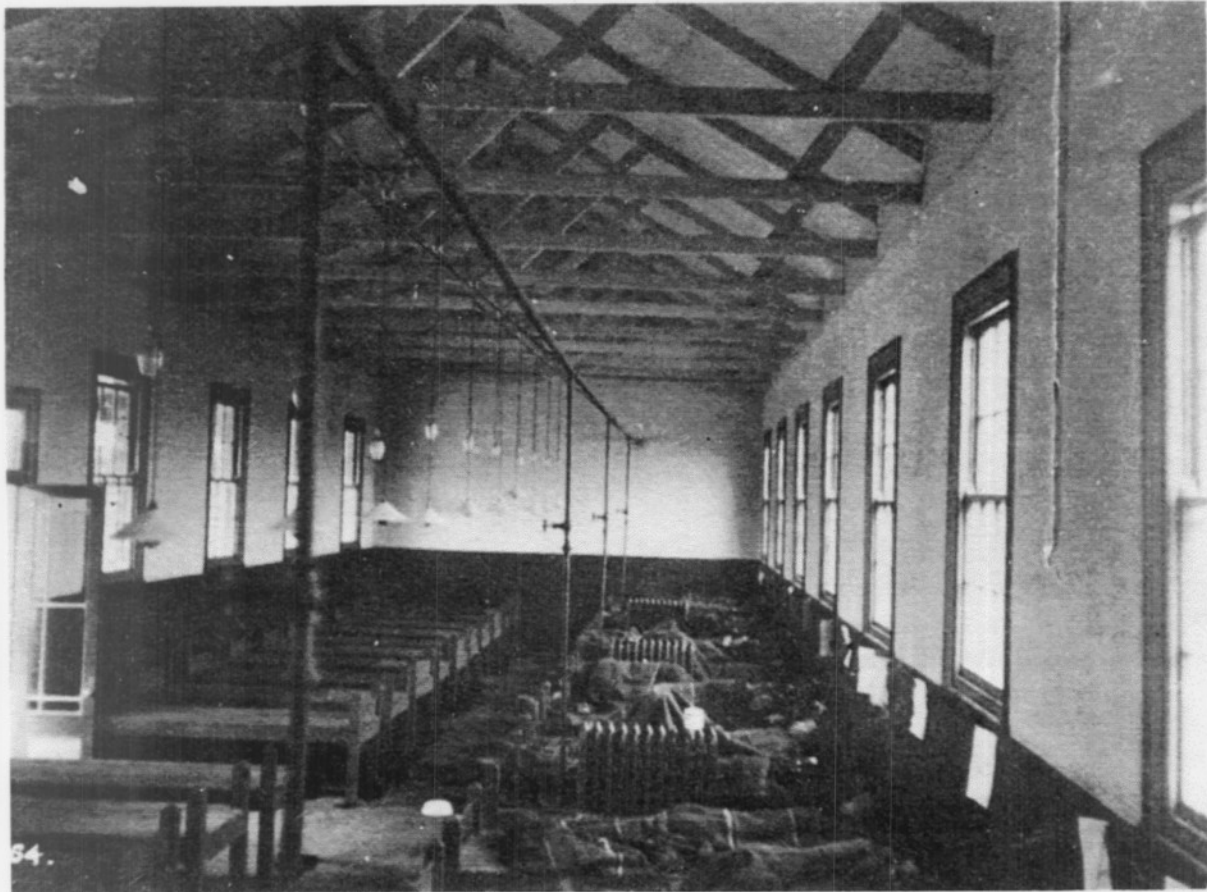
Goldmine compounds. This photograph reflects a typical scene in a compound dormitory. Notice the earth floor, coal stove and bunk beds. The light would have been left on throughout the night.



A compound dormitory in Crown Mines, during demolition, showing the concrete shelves or 'bunks' upon which workers had to sleep. Workers were housed in this compound until 1979. (Photo: Les Lawson).



Mine police were employed to control the workers.



A compound hospital. Thousands of mineworkers died each year from disease, malnutrition and accidents underground.

Source: L Callinicos, *Volume One A People's History of South Africa Gold and Workers 1886-1924*, p. 49.

CHAPTER 5 - THE LIVES OF THE WORKING CLASSES AND RICH IN JOHANNESBURG – A DIFFERENT WAY OF LIVING

Much attention has been placed on the lives of the ordinary, very often poor, people living in Johannesburg as they form the primary focus of this study. There were two other sectors in the population – the white working classes¹ and the rich. The manner in which they lived, especially the rich, was often in complete contrast to the remainder of the city's residents. Johannesburg was in a particularly unusual situation regarding the white working classes. Many of the initial residents came as speculators, and with a desire to make their fortunes in the gold rush. Although the mining industry was the largest single employer of white workers, the rapid urbanisation created a demand for industrial growth. Brewing, brick and tile making, flour milling and baking, carriage and wagon building, harness making, ice making, mineral water manufacturing, and printing were the most important local industries that spread throughout the city.² In addition, the banks and mines provided employment for many clerical workers. One of the main features of early Johannesburg in the period leading up to the South African War was the fact that the population was overwhelmingly male-dominated. This had important implications for housing in the early years of the town's existence. Initially the newcomers were uncertain about the economic future of the goldfields. They were therefore reluctant to bring their wives and families to the Witwatersrand. This, together with the expense and difficulty of getting to the Transvaal before the rail link with the Cape was established in January 1893, meant that early Johannesburg was largely devoid of working-class family life. Only a few of the wealthy mine owners and a section of the commercial middle class brought their families with them, while the majority of the male Whites lived alone. Each of these individuals had a need for shelter, as well as water and sanitation.

A large number of the skilled white miners from Cornwall, Cumberland and Lancashire in England took up residence in the town's numerous boarding houses.³ Most of the boarding houses were located either on the mining properties themselves,

1 The focus of this chapter is specifically the White working classes, as Africans have been discussed in Chapter 4.

2 M L Lange, *The political economy of white working class housing in Johannesburg*, p 11.

3 C Van Onselen, *Studies in the social and economic history of the Witwatersrand 1886-1914*, 1, *New Babylon*, (1982 edition), p. 5.

or in one of the town's two major working-class suburbs – Jeppe in the east and Fordsburg in the west. Other popular areas were central Braamfontein, and later, suburbs such as Hillbrow, Yeoville and Bellevue.⁴ The boarding houses generally provided for all the amenities and requirements of their residences. Water was very scarce, and men used to ride to the Modder River, which generally harboured a few pools even in the dry season, or to the Vaal River, for a thorough cleansing. The boarding houses did not provide a laundry service.⁵ An alternative source of accommodation to the boarding houses was to reside in one of the many hotels in the city. Central Johannesburg was home to 8337 individuals in 1904. There were 146 hotels located there, each with its own bar. Marshalltown also had a large concentration of hotels and bars (52), followed by Ferreirastown with 34 hotels and bars.⁶ The number of hotels and bars in itself is telling, as it bears testimony to the transient life styles of the predominately male population.

Johannesburg central had the largest concentration of buildings in the city. This neighbourhood was the site of a great number of hotels and boarding houses, interspersed with residential houses, shops, banks and offices. The mixing of residential and commercial buildings in the city centre meant that the bourgeoisie mixed with the working classes, Afrikaners with English-speakers, and whites with Africans.

For those who elected to live elsewhere, accommodation in the suburbs presented an alternative. The rudimentary nature of this accommodation in the first few years of Johannesburg's existence has already been described.⁷ Once the city had become more established, many of the men wished to bring their families to Johannesburg to live with them. The boarding houses, which had served as the primary places of accommodation for the single men, were not equipped for the needs of small families. The main residential areas in Johannesburg for the working classes comprised Marshall's town to the south, Ferreirastown and Fordsburg to the west, and Jeppetown (including Belgravia) to the east.⁸ Ferreirastown was situated on the western side of

4 N Mandy, *A city divided Johannesburg and Soweto*, p. 13.

5 L Phillips, *Some reminiscences*, p. 13.

6 TA C22 Census commission, 1904-1906.

7 See chapter on first years of Johannesburg.

8 TA C22 Census Commission, 1904-1906.

the city opposite the Ferreira Mine. This township was divided into 289 stands of 15 metres by 15 metres and 15 metres by 30 metres. Ferreirastown started off as a residential area for the middle classes. (See illustration 57, p. 248). It was not long before this neighbourhood started to deteriorate, as many poor people moved into the small and overcrowded houses and started to eke out a living through mostly illicit occupations. South of Johannesburg, Marshalltown was the next most important neighbourhood regarding population and commercial activity. The township comprised 977 stands. In spite of its subsequent commercial development this area managed to keep a more residential character.⁹

Finally, on the eastern side of the city, Jeppestown constituted the other important working-class neighbourhood. The township was divided into 2709 stands (including Belgravia). Restrictions on the utilisation of plots as business premises, put in place by the township owners, had made Jeppestown a more residential area. With the comparatively small population, 708 inhabitants in 1890, Jeppe became the residential area of many mine workers and their families. Although neither overcrowded nor insanitary as a whole, some areas inside the neighbourhood were reported by sanitary inspectors in 1902 and 1903 as a focus of infectious diseases and contaminated water.¹⁰

LIFE IN WORKING-CLASS SUBURBS

In the west end of the city Fordsburg constituted another typically working class area. With a multiracial population of 1386 inhabitants in 1890, many poor white families lived there. As there were no restrictions in Fordsburg regarding the use of plots, poor shopkeepers living in rooms behind their shops became a normal feature of this neighbourhood. Fordsburg was not a prosperous area, and parts of it were considered insanitary during the insanitary board proceedings of 1903. Some of the roads in Fordsburg constituted a main thoroughfare for the residents of Johannesburg. The traffic on these roads was very heavy, night and day. The dust was nearly 'knee deep' in places. The people complained that they could not open a door or window facing

9 M L Lange, *The political economy of white working class housing in Johannesburg*, p. 7.

10 TA MJB 1/1/3 Council minutes. Meetings 1 March 1902 and 28 February 1903.

the street at any time.¹¹ The council, when hearing and seeing the plight of these residents, agreed to water the streets twice a day.¹²

One of the main problems encountered by Fordsburg residents was the fact that some of the stands were partly within the limits of the water-right claimed by the Robinson Mining Company. For example, stands numbers 928 and 929 were both situated on land below the level to which flood water had been known to rise. These same stands were so little above the water level in the adjoining *spruit*, during a great part of the year, that no buildings to be used for housing should have been allowed on them. In his report on the subject of storm water drainage, the town engineer suggested that if an arrangement could be made with the Robinson Mining Company, a proper channel for the discharge of storm water could be carried down to the boundary of the mining ground, the banks being sufficiently raised to protect the adjacent lower-lying land from flooding, and an embankment being carried along the boundary of the mining ground for a distance of about 220 metres in order to save the stands on the lower lying ground south of the main road from being flooded.¹³ With a little effort and expense on their part, the Robinson Mining Company could have made life considerably better for the residents in the affected houses. They chose, however, not to do so.

When the shoe was on the other foot, however, the Robinson Mining Company showed itself to be intolerant of the behaviour of Johannesburg residents. For example, when dirty water was allowed to run into the spruit on their property, they threatened to take legal action against the council. On enquiries, the medical officer of health established that this water flowed from the yards of the Bettelheim, A.B.C. and Netherlands Bank buildings. A similar case had been brought before the magistrate, in terms of the old bye-laws, in order to secure a conviction against people flushing their yards, and had been dismissed. The medical officer of health therefore suggested that a further test case be brought before the courts in terms of the new bye-laws, and if this case was also dismissed, an appeal would be lodged.¹⁴ There is no evidence that the test case was ever brought before the courts as recommended.

11 TA MJB 1/4/7 Health committee minutes. Meeting 8 September 1903.

12 TA MJB 1/4/7 Health committee minutes. Meeting 9 September 1903.

13 TA MJB 1/4/5 Health committee minutes. Report of D Leitch, town engineer, submitted to meeting of 28 February 1903.

14 TA MJB 1/4/7 Health committee minutes. Meeting 12 August 1903.

Of the other problems encountered by Fordsburg residents was the fact that refuse was frequently dumped there, especially on the open stand to the north of Marais Street and west of Kelly's Home. This refuse included a large proportion of street sweepings, and refuse of all kinds. This was reported to the public health committee on 12 February 1903, and four notices were placed on the site prohibiting the dumping. This, however, had no effect. By March the condition of the site had become so bad that immediate steps had to be taken to stop the problem, and a police officer was stationed at the site to prevent further dumping.¹⁵

At this stage most of the residents of both Vrededorp and Fordsburg obtained their water from wells which were sunk in soil that was constantly and greatly polluted with slops, and which did not have any adequate protection from further contaminated effluent flowing into them during the rains. Many of the residents were unable to afford the costs of a private water pipe leading from the mains supplied by the Johannesburg Waterworks Company. Thus, on the occasions when residents were ordered to close their wells by the council, they had no alternative but to draw on water from neighbour's wells, many of which were as contaminated as their own.¹⁶

One of the results of the use of the contaminated water was the occurrence of enteric fever. There were 40 reports of enteric fever in Fordsburg, and a further 11 in Vrededorp during the period November 1902 to February 1903. Of the 40 Fordsburg cases, 18 had obtained their drinking water from shallow wells, whilst all the sufferers in Vrededorp were supplied from this source. The medical officer of health recommended that an additional 25 standpipes be supplied to Fordsburg, and 14 more to Vrededorp.¹⁷ Correspondence with the Johannesburg Waterworks Company ensued, with the end result being that the company was not prepared to lay mains to the area, despite having committed themselves to the project in 1901. The number of cases of enteric fever continued to rise, and most continued to be attributed to the use of contaminated water. Eventually the council, seeing no alternative available,

15 TA MJB 1/4/5 Health committee minutes. Meeting 24 March 1903.

16 TA MJB 1/4/5 Health committee minutes. Meeting 24 March 1903.

17 TA MJB 1/4/5 Health committee minutes. Meeting 24 March 1903.

decided to lay the water to the area themselves, and to purchase the water in bulk from the Waterworks Company.¹⁸

By the end of 1903 several streets in Fordsburg were receiving water from the Rand Water Board, the successor to the Johannesburg Waterworks Company. These were Crown Road, Main Road, Central Road, Lilian Road (south of Main Road), High Road, Terrace Road, Lover's Walk (all south of Main Road); and west of Central Road, Fountain Road, Clare Road, Main Road and Pioneer Road.¹⁹

OTHER AREAS OCCUPIED BY WORKING CLASS RESIDENTS

Ophirton and Booysens were examples of residential areas occupied by working-class residents. By 1904 there was still no piped water to these areas. The Water Company was approached with respect to the matter, and stated that they were prepared to supply the council with water in bulk at the termination of their present mains, which were situated opposite the Robinson Deep property. Pipes were laid from this point to two others, one terminating at the corner of Mentz Street and Main Road in Booysens, and the other at the corner of Hay and Garland Streets. At these intersections, the council provided water tanks. Water vans were used to take the water from there to the individual consumers. Each consumer was allocated a daily allowance of 246 litres.²⁰

Melville and Auckland Park presented their own special difficulties, due mainly to the rough and irregular nature of much of the ground. In some instances this meant that the water tank could not reach certain houses. A monetary concession was granted by the council to these residents. The remainder were required to install tanks at their homes, each tank to hold 234 litres of water, and located in a position to allow easy access by the water vans for the purposes of filling them.²¹ (See illustration 58, p. 249).

18 TA MJB 1/4/5 Health committee minutes. Meeting 31 March 1903.

19 TA MJB 1/4/7 Health committee minutes. Meeting 6 October 1903.

20 TA MJB 1/4/9 Health committee minutes. Meeting 23 June 1904.

21 TA MJB 1/4/9 Health committee minutes. Meeting 23 June 1904.

For those residents living in Hospital Street, on route to the goal pumping station, the supply of water and collection of slop water meant constant disturbance due to the traffic of the collection carts.²² In a petition addressed to the town clerk dated 17 February 1904, the residents complained that during the previous weeks, they felt that all the vehicles carrying slop-water had been redirected to their street. This resulted in a great deal of noise and inconvenience to them as the iron vehicles passed to and from the direction of the fort from early in the morning until late in the evening. This caused the residents much irritation, and they believed that, although this was a necessary result of the imperfect system of sanitation, it was unfair of the council to bring so much of the traffic into their area. What caused particular concern was the fact that slop-water was allowed to spill onto the road, and they expressed their distaste at the smell, and concern about the possibility of the spread of disease through this practice. Quite a number of the property owners had recently erected fine homes in the area, and others were in the process of improving their houses. As rate-payers, they objected to the council using that particular route.²³ The petition gives some idea of the sounds and smells of the sanitary collection system. It was, however, not entirely accurate, and perhaps a little exaggerated. It was, from the records of the sanitary manager, impossible for the carts to be throwing the bulk of the slops on the streets, as the cart drivers had been disciplined for not filling their carts to capacity.²⁴

In an effort to improve general sanitation in the city, the council passed a number of bye-laws in 1903 relating to cesspools and the pollution of water. No cesspool could be constructed or used without the written permission of the council. A fine of £50 was the penalty for polluting water supplies, such as wells, reservoirs, filter beds, water purification or pumping works, tanks, cisterns or other sources of supply. In addition to the £50 fine, a further penalty of up to £5 per day was imposed for every day that the pollution continued. It became obligatory to fence-off wells. In the event of a failure to do so, the council could step into the shoes of the owner of the well, and erect the fence at the cost of the owner. This law did not apply to wells or excavations on land on which mining operations were being carried out.²⁵

22 TA MJB 1/4/8 Health committee minutes. Meeting 3 March 1904.

23 TA MJB 1/4/8 Health committee minutes. Meeting 3 March 1904.

24 TA MJB 1/4/8 Health committee minutes. Meeting 3 March 1904.

25 TA MJB 1/1/4 Council minutes. Meeting 10 July 1903.

A further issue of concern to the council was the scarcity of accommodation for working-class families. In order to alleviate the shortage, they seriously contemplated the building of a number of cottages to meet the demand, but ultimately decided against this course of action. They felt that they did not want to create a favoured class of individual in the housing market, and further they were reluctant to do anything which might have the effect of discouraging private initiative in the housing market.²⁶

After the war, there was a serious attempt to try to encourage the white mine workers to bring their families to the Transvaal. The miners were not the only people who were affected by the housing shortage after the war. There was also an acute shortage of housing for members of the artisan working class, and for those earning small salaries. Also affected were those employed as clerks, bank officials, shop assistants and artisans, who earned between £20 to £30 per month. Married men, in particular, were affected. These individuals could not afford the high rentals that were common in the better parts of Johannesburg, and as such, had to live in areas occupied by predominately poor people.²⁷

By 1903, however, Lord Milner considered that the problem was serious enough to appoint a commission of enquiry into the lack of working-class housing. Not only did he recognize the urgent need for the situation to be corrected, he was also extremely keen to try to encourage white miners to immigrate to South Africa to increase the numbers of English-speaking people in the country.²⁸

The commission of enquiry provided some insight into the state of the housing market at the time. The persons who testified before it talked of real difficulties experienced as a result of the lack of suitable housing. The agents were unable to cope with the demand, and only about 10% of those individuals on their books were provided with accommodation. One of the agents, Mr Japhet, stated that in the six-week period prior to the hearings (i.e. since the beginning of June 1903) he had received applications for 110 unfurnished houses of two or three rooms. There was simply no suitable

26 TA TKP C13 Report of the Johannesburg Housing Commission; Report TKP 181 (3)

27 TA TKP C13 Report of the Johannesburg Housing Commission; Report TKP 181 (3)

28 TA TKP C13 Report of the Johannesburg Housing Commission; Report TKP 181 (3), p. 7.

accommodation to satisfy their requirements. In addition, Mr Barnett stated that in his opinion, there was a strong demand for cottages at rentals between £6 and £12 per month. Any cottage that became available at these rentals was immediately taken up, very often on the same day that it became available.²⁹

Reverend S J Hamilton testified from his personal experience not only to the absence of accommodation, but also to the overcrowding which existed in certain parts of town. As the Presbyterian minister of Fordsburg, he had wide experience of working class neighbourhoods. In his opinion,

Men are finding that it is impossible for them to keep their families and the result is that they are sending them home, in large numbers. Therefore the old evil is being intensified, that is, men instead of making their home here are looking upon this place as one in which they make money as speedily as they can and then get out of it. Now this is encouraging the gambling spirit. One object should be to encourage family life. As it is Johannesburg is threatened with remaining a mining camp instead of being a settled community.³⁰

Reverend Hamilton was making a valid and important point – and drawing attention to the lack of family life. It was this problem, especially, that Lord Milner had sought to address by his immigration policy and correcting the problem of the housing shortage.

Mr Eaton, who represented 64 families, stated that there was a very pronounced scarcity of houses suitable for married artisans.³¹ The bricklaying industry was represented by Mr Joseph Marshall at the hearing. He testified that the scarcity in housing was causing great hardship to his members, and even went as far as to state that it precluded nine out of ten people from living with their spouses. As proof of this statement, he advised that he had called a meeting for the purposes of nominating two householders to represent the bricklayers before the commission. Out of 180 men attending the meeting, only two were qualified to attend the hearings. The remainder

29 TA TKP C13 Report of the Johannesburg Housing Commission; Report TKP 181 (3), p. 7.

30 TA TKP C13 Report of the Johannesburg Housing Commission; Report TKP 181 (3), p. 7.

31 TA TKP C13 Report of the Johannesburg Housing Commission; Report TKP 181 (3), p. 7.

lived in rooms and were separated from their wives. Mr Marshall blamed 'the present exorbitant rentals' for causing the problem. He felt that a solution lay in providing mortgage finance in order to enable the bricklayers to be in a position to purchase homes.³² These problems had a very real impact on the lives of the people, and also went a long way in contributing to the decision of men not to bring their families to Johannesburg. This, in turn, meant that the city remained devoid of family life in this sector.

Another witness testified that the housing shortage was due to several reasons. Firstly, many of the property owners were converting private dwellings into shops and stores in order to get higher rentals. Secondly, the ground in the immediate vicinity of the town had become so valuable, that the landlords were compelled to put up buildings for other purposes other than that of work men's dwellings. Thirdly, he felt that the system of tenure was not in the interests of honest workmen, or the landlords, and in this regard he strongly suggested that houses should be leased for at least six or 12 months at a time. He felt that things could be considerably improved if better transportation was available to areas outside the city boundaries.³³

The housing shortage and scarcity of land was put down to Johannesburg still being in a state of transition and expansion. With the rapid increase in the population, and even larger increases expected in the future, the business centre of the town was fast expanding, rendering the land which had formerly been used for residential purposes to being in demand for business purposes. In addition, the cost of land within a short distance from the city centre had risen to very high prices. This land had been purchased, not with a view to its resale in the short term for residential purposes, but rather as an investment in the longer term. It was considered that the centre of the town would expand, and that any land in its close proximity would soon be required for business purposes. Land speculation was rife. In addition, transportation was not readily available, and the cost of building, including wages and material, was very high.³⁴ The costs of services, as well as water, were extremely high. Other factors contributing to the housing shortage were the high rates of interest on mortgage bonds, and the slow-

32 TA TKP C13 Report of the Johannesburg Housing Commission; Report TKP 181 (3), p. 7.

33 TA TKP C13 Report of the Johannesburg Housing Commission; Report TKP 181 (3), p. 7.

34 TA TKP C13 Report of the Johannesburg Housing Commission; Report TKP 181 (3), p. 10.

down, sometimes coming to a complete standstill, of building operations during the South African War.³⁵

Surprisingly, in its findings, the commission expressed the opinion that only a limited number of people were suffering from undue hardship as a result of the housing shortage and that the solution to the housing problem would be found in private enterprise coupled with extensive railway and tramway services and better roads.³⁶

The scarcity of housing at the time has to be understood in its historical context. An evaluation of the concerns expressed in the hearings of the housing commission indicate that the shortage was economically, socially and politically constituted. At the economic level the shortage of housing was defined in terms of the affordability of the available houses for white breadwinners. From this point of view there were three main components to the housing problem. Firstly, there were insufficient houses to suit the needs of working-class families, i.e. houses with four rooms at a rental of between £7 to £10 per month. Secondly, when these houses did exist, rentals were unaffordable. Thirdly, the housing problem was politically constituted in as much as lack of appropriate working-class accommodation posed a serious hurdle to the process of settlement of British immigrants.³⁷

There was, in 1903, a considerable amount of vacant land immediately adjacent to the centre of the town. It was obvious to the housing commission that if the surface of the land held under mining title could be utilized for building purposes, a very large area of ground close to the centre of the town would immediately become available. In terms of *The Gold Law Act 15 of 1898*, there was ample provision for the utilization of the surface of the land for housing purposes. Articles 53 and 93, in particular, allowed the government to allocate the surface of proclaimed land for the purposes of establishing stand townships, and providing residential sites. The commission was, however, unaware of any instances where townships had been proclaimed on land which was actually being mined, or which had been held under claim licence title at the time of allocation. Townships such as Marshall's and City and Suburban, though the ground on

35 TA TKP C13 Report of the Johannesburg Housing Commission; Report TKP 181 (3), p. 11.

36 TA TKP C13 Report of the Johannesburg Housing Commission; Report TKP 181 (3), p. 7.

37 M L Lange, *The political economy of white working class housing in Johannesburg*, p. 15.

which they were situated had formerly been held under mining title, had come into existence under the provisions of the former *Gold Law*, which allowed the owner of claims, when convinced that his claims were useless for mining purposes, to convert those claims into stands, by agreement with the government. Other townships had been established on open land, i.e. land which had been proclaimed as a goldfield or a part of a goldfield, but had remained unpegged and not given out under *mynpacht* (land held under mining rights).³⁸

Under the *Gold Law* as it existed in 1902, ground held under mining title as distinct from proclaimed but open, i.e. unpegged, ground could not be utilized by the government for housing purposes. In addition, the freehold owner of ground, which could not be utilized for mining purposes, had the right to be compensated should his rights of ownership be taken from him for purposes other than those which had been the object of the *Gold Law*.³⁹

The commission felt that the solution would be found in the introduction of a rating bill. The finance committee of the council felt that this was a practical solution to the problem, and entailed the taxing of every ownership interest in land belonging to the municipality, excluding the mineral rights. It was considered that it would constitute an inducement for owners to put their land on the market, which in turn, would make it available for occupation. In addition, such a bill would not act as a deterrent against building.⁴⁰

The estate companies were opposed to the bill, and through successful lobbying, were able to ensure that the bill was not passed by the government. Instead, the decision was made to retain the assessment rates as was the case in Britain, where rates were based on the annual rental values of the land and buildings, and not on its capital value. Other solutions entailed the consideration of an improved transportation system (by way of electric trams) in and out of the city centre, and a more frequent railway system.⁴¹

38 TA TKP C13 Report of the Johannesburg Housing Commission; Report TKP 181 (3) pp. 16-17.

39 TA TKP C13 Report of the Johannesburg Housing Commission; Report TKP 181 (3) p. 18.

40 TA TKP C13 Report of the Johannesburg Housing Commission; Report TKP 181 (3) p. 18.

41 TA TKP C13 Report of the Johannesburg Housing Commission; Report TKP 181 (3) p. 14.

At the same time, the existence of destitute families of mainly Afrikaner origin who had enjoyed state support during the Republican government, put the new administrators in a position of having to make political decisions in terms of state intervention in the market that might create a privileged class of Afrikaners.⁴²

The town council therefore decided on a different approach towards the land and housing shortage when it came to the Afrikaners living in Vrededorp. This was reflected in the Vrededorp Stands Ordinance of 1906. The background relating to the ownership of stands in Vrededorp has been described elsewhere, but briefly, the land had been granted to destitute burgers by the Republican government. The use of the land was reserved to the original holder for his/her lifetime, and thereafter reserved to the surviving spouse. If transferred, such transfer could only be made to other destitute persons. During the Milner regime the restriction regarding transfer was lifted, allowing anyone to purchase the land.⁴³ The only characteristic that the new transferees had in common with their predecessors was that they held the land by virtue of a Vrededorp licence. However, whereas the original holder had obtained his licence following an enquiry into whether or not he qualified for assistance, this was not the case with the new purchasers. These individuals purchased the rights of the original holder, but did not and could not transfer the personal rights which had accrued to the original holder.⁴⁴ Considerable debate took place during the hearings of the Vrededorp stands commission, but the officials were determined to create uniformity of tenure amongst all the stand holders in the area. By 1905, of the 758 stands that comprised Vrededorp, 450 were still under grant from the Republican government, 321 stands had been transferred under the new administration, and 14 were reserved for schools.⁴⁵

Following the investigation of the Vrededorp stands commission in 1905, the freehold of Vrededorp was vested in the municipality. This had the effect of giving the council a new source of income, and at the same time, removed the privileges that had accrued to the burghers who were now obliged to pay for and take transfer of their properties within a period of four years.⁴⁶ Any stand holders who were moved to other stands were

42 TA TKP181 (4) Vrededorp Stands Commission, 1905, p. vi.

43 M L Lange, *The political economy of white working class housing in Johannesburg*, p 8.

44 TA TKP 181 (4) Vrededorp Stands Commission, 1905. p. vi.

45 TA TKP 181 (4) Vrededorp Stands Commission, 1905. p. vi.

46 TA TKP 181 (4) Vrededorp Stands Commission, 1905. p. vi.

entitled to compensation from the municipality.⁴⁷ Thus the ownership of the stands in Vrededorp was brought into line with the rest of Johannesburg. In addition, the stands which were not taken up were brought on to the market.

For those individuals who had purchased stands in Vrededorp as speculative buyers, the ordinance gave the right to freely transfer the properties. However, they, too, were subject to expropriation by the council on the payment to them of the value of their buildings.⁴⁸ Thus some land became available to the council. Steps were also taken in the direction of uniformity of tenure, and special treatment of specific classes of white persons was eliminated.

SANITARY REGULATIONS IN THE SUBURBS

In 1901 many of Johannesburg's residents were absent due to the South African War. This created a number of challenges for the sanitary department, especially with regard to the care of the numerous unoccupied properties. The department responded by cleansing and disinfecting the properties. Their attitude was that they were acting on behalf of future rate payers, and that the residents would look to the council as guardians of their properties. The council carried the cost of disinfecting and cleansing the properties.⁴⁹ A further problem experienced during the war regarded houses which were unfit for human habitation. Notices were affixed to these properties, but these notices were removed and unscrupulous landlords let the properties.⁵⁰

The sanitary department were constantly trying to improve matters regarding the water supply and general sanitary arrangements in the city. One of the methods used for doing this was the implementation of bye-laws regulating the behaviour of the citizens. It was the working classes, in particular, who were affected by the regulations as put out by the sanitary department and the medical officer of health. Ever vigilant in their attempts to improve services, the new bye-laws were constantly enforced. By way of

47 TA TKP 181 (4) Vrededorp Stands Commission, 1905. p. vi.

48 TA TKP 181 (4) Vrededorp Stands Commission, 1905. p. vi.

49 TA MJB 1/4/1 Health committee minutes. Meeting 2 July 1901.

50 TA MJB 1/4/1 Health committee minutes. Meeting 17 September 1901.

example, the practice of building closets on any part of the stand, and in any place, had become common in Johannesburg by 1901. This made the inspection of the facilities extremely difficult. The acting town clerk issued a notice calling upon residents to erect or re-construct the latrines in terms of the sanitary regulations. Offenders were required to rectify blocks or guides, so as to secure the fixing of the pail in its proper place. Proper urine arrestors were to be provided under the seat, and a sufficient quantity of dry earth or ashes was required to be used daily to cover the contents of the pail in use. No flap-doors were allowed to face the street. Floors were required to be made of concrete or paving, and ventilation was required to be provided at the bottom of the door and near the ceiling of the closet.⁵¹ It was the function of the works committee to approve plans for the erection of closets, and they were instructed by the council to ensure that plans were carefully scrutinised. The sanitary department, in turn, was instructed to inspect each of the closets in its district, and to report on the condition of each of them.⁵²

Very few descriptions of the manner in which homes were designed in order to facilitate the collection of slop water and sewerage exist. Juliet Marais Louw, writing about her childhood in Johannesburg, referred to the area in which the water was collected as a “secret place”. It was situated at the back of the house, where the outside walls formed an angle between the bathroom and the pantry. She went on to say that:

There was a tank let into the ground there, into which the bath water ran, for as yet there was no proper sewerage disposal system in Johannesburg. The slop-water, as it was so elegantly called, was collected daily by an extremely smelly, mule-drawn slop-cart, from which emerged a thing like an enormous, long elephant’s trunk. This was passed up the side of the house and inserted in the tank, whence it sucked the effluent into a tank on the cart.⁵³ (See illustration 59, p. 250.

51 TA MJB 1/4/1 Health committee minutes. Meeting 17 September 1901.

52 TA MJB 1/4/1 Health committee minutes. Meeting 17 September 1901.

53 J Marais Louw, *When Johannesburg and I were young*, p. 28.

She went on to describe the toilet facilities as being constructed of corrugated iron and situated in the far corner of the yard. The buckets were emptied at night, also into the heavy, 'unsavoury mule-drawn lorries rolling ominously through dark streets'.⁵⁴

One of the major drawbacks of such a primitive system of sanitation and water collection was the increased possibility of the spread of disease in the city. For example, in 1903 there was a fear of typhoid fever. The medical officer of health issued a report regarding the matter, drawing comparisons to England regarding the association of conservancy methods of excrement disposal with occurrences of typhoid fever. Regarding the situation in Johannesburg, he was of the opinion that the inhalation of air, polluted by emanations from the infected contents of pails, and the contamination of food and drinks by material carried by flies, were amongst the ways in which enteric fever could be spread by pail closets. He thought that it was desirable that where a pail had been infected by typhoid discharges, it should be emptied as soon as possible, and thoroughly disinfected before being used again. Buckets used by persons suffering from typhoid fever were painted red to distinguish them from the other buckets. Additional precautions were taken in respect of the red pails. The relevant households were provided with a strong disinfectant. Instructions were given to them to ensure that the discharges from patients had to contain a small quantity of disinfecting fluid, and the discharge had to be further disinfected by the addition of further liquid. This precaution was taken not only for typhoid fever sufferers, but also for those with cholera, which was chiefly spread by the excreta of sufferers. Such discharges, including the urine, was disinfected by the addition of an equal amount of chlorinated lime solution. This was stirred until the disinfectant and discharges had been in contact for at least half an hour. Thereafter the contents were deposited into the special service pails provided for the purpose. The pails were removed daily. In addition, the water in which the patient or his linen had been washed was not allowed to flow on yards or streets, but had to be collected in a slop receptacle for removal by the sanitary service.⁵⁵

Special instructions were also given to households where typhoid sufferers were resident. When they were provided with a supply of disinfectant, an inspector from

54 J Marais Louw, *When Johannesburg and I were young*, p. 28.

55 TA MJB 1/4/5 Health committee minutes. Meeting 25 February 1903.

the health department called on them to explain the method and importance of its use, leaving behind a printed notice with the information.⁵⁶ The red pails were disinfected and cleansed each time they were emptied, whilst the remainder of the pails were merely emptied, and only washed once in every four removals. Ordinary pails were dipped in boiling tar once in about every ten removals.⁵⁷ (See illustration 42. p. 159).

The council felt it would be extremely desirable from the point of view of the prevention of enteric, as well as infectious diarrhoea, and probably dysentery, that all pails, and not merely red pails, should be thoroughly disinfected each time they were emptied, and that an effort should be made for the pails to be changed on a daily basis.⁵⁸ A number of different ways in which to disinfect the pails was considered. These included the boiling or sterilising of the pails with steam, the immersion of the pails into a strong disinfectant for half an hour, and dipping in tar. The third alternative was considered to be the most appropriate course of action, as it was the least expensive and an equally efficient method, which added greatly to the lifespan of the bucket.⁵⁹ It was recognised that the disinfecting of pails would only deal with one obvious cause of typhoid fever in Johannesburg. Another cause attributed to the spread of typhoid fever was the widespread soil pollution by infected slops.⁶⁰ Typhoid was a very real problem in early Johannesburg, especially during 1895-1896 when there were 1120 admissions into the hospital, and 1896-1897 when there were 737 admissions. By 1897-1898 this figure had dropped to 374.⁶¹ The occurrence of typhoid fever was very seasonal, with most cases occurring between December and April.⁶²

PUBLIC SANITARY FACILITIES

Very little information can be gleaned from the public records about the sanitary habits of the working classes. This can be attributed, at least in part, to the very private nature of the subject.

56 TA MJB 1/4/5 Health committee minutes. Meeting 25 February 1903.

57 TA MJB 1/1/3 Council minutes. Meeting 25 March 1903.

58 TA MJB 1/1/3 Council minutes. Meeting 25 March 1903.

59 TA MJB 1/1/3 Council minutes. Meeting 25 March 1903.

60 TA MJB 1/1/3 Council minutes. Meeting 25 March 1903.

61 TA MJB 1/1/3 Council minutes. Meeting 25 March 1903.

62 TA MJB 1/1/3 Council minutes. Meeting 25 March 1903.

However, in the domain of public sanitary facilities, such as those at schools, some information is available which serves as a useful guide to the facilities and standards which existed in Johannesburg at the time. The children of the members of the working classes, and also of the wealthier citizens of Johannesburg, no doubt attended the local schools. It was in the school environment that many of the lessons of hygiene and sanitation were taught to the young children. The facilities at the various schools differed considerably. Inspections were carried out on a regular basis, not only at the homes of residences, but also at the schools. In this regard, Doctor Charles Porter was strongly of the opinion that, should basic hygiene be taught at the schools, the future residents of Johannesburg would have a far better concept of the principles than if they were left to be taught the lessons at home.

In February 1906 Dr Porter carried out an inspection of 13 different schools in the Johannesburg municipal area. Without exception, the closet accommodation was found to be unsatisfactory. Generally speaking, toilet facilities were insufficient, bearing in mind the required ratio of three pails to each 100 students. Very often the screening between the toilets for the girls and those for the boys left much to be desired, and some toilets were even visible from the classrooms.⁶³

Even on the occasions when the toilet facilities were moderately clean, it was most unusual to find any provision of sifted ash, earth or tailings which should have been provided in terms of the requisite bye-law. For this purpose, a large paraffin tin and a grocer's scoop attached by a chain to the wall or to the seat, should have been placed in each closet. The tin should have been kept filled with the sifted ash, earth or tailings. Doctor Porter suggested that instruction should be given to the children, both verbally and by notice placed in each closet, that it was their duty to apply the sifted ash, tailings or similar substances to the contents of the closet pail after each time of use, both for the sake of preventing offensive smells and for keeping flies from conveying disease from the buckets. Such instruction was to be given decently and impressively – Doctor Porter was of the opinion that, if thoroughly emphasized in all the Transvaal schools, it would do much to prevent the prevalence of enteric in the colony. Doctor Porter also observed no provision of paper in any of the closets. Although this might

63 TA MJB 1/1/9 Council minutes. Meeting 7 February 1906.

have been a small point, he felt that, for the sake of education in personal cleanliness, and knowing how careless children are likely to be, it was not unreasonable to suggest that principals should arrange for a supply of paper to be placed in a box in each closet.⁶⁴

In respect of the facilities at the different schools, the City and Suburban school was found to be as bad in every respect as it was possible to be. It was very overcrowded, improperly lighted and ventilated, and the sanitary conveniences were insufficient, indecent and liable to be very unhealthy. The toilets were situated within a short distance from the classroom doors. There were no proper urinals and no playground. The medical officer of health insisted that a sawdust urinal be installed, and a further four closets to cater for the needs of the students, and further that the accommodation for the girls be decently screened off from that of the boys.⁶⁵ The Vrededorp school's closet accommodation was also found to be totally insufficient, and the boys' closets, in particular, to be in a very filthy condition.⁶⁶

The school toilets were very primitive, and the fact that their conditions were, on the whole, far from satisfactory, points to the lack of emphasis placed on sanitary facilities. Not only was toilet paper not provided, little in the way of instruction to assist the children was available. The close proximity of the toilets to the classrooms, and the consequent lack of privacy, was also a cause for concern. The facilities that were available were allowed to deteriorate into a filthy state. As this state of affairs existed in the schools – a public arena - this would undoubtedly send a message that these conditions were acceptable to the impressionable young minds. The long-term implications of this type of thinking could not have been positive in any respect.

64 TA MJB 1/1/9 Council minutes. Meeting 7 February 1906.

65 TA MJB 1/1/9 Council minutes. Meeting 7 February 1906.

66 TA MJB 1/1/9 Council minutes. Meeting 7 February 1906.

THE MINES AND THE PROVISION OF HOUSING FOR THEIR WHITE EMPLOYEES

Once the development of the gold-mining industry on a scientific basis was assured, mine owners realized that its future depended on the existence of a stable labour force, which in its turn, depended in no small measure on the provision of housing which would keep the employees healthy and contented. Herbert Baker had already proved the value of good industrial housing in the Cape. Shortly after he arrived in Johannesburg he designed a housing scheme consisting of about 40 detached cottages in Parktown for the Braamfontein Estate Company, a subsidiary of the mining group known as 'The Corner House'. The chairman of the group had been Hermann Eckstein, hence the scheme was nicknamed 'Eckstein's Compound'.⁶⁷ (See illustrations 60 – 63, pp. 251-253).

The cost of the houses was about £1 000 each and the three types of plans were used with variations within a square outline. The walls were of plastered and lime-washed brick on rubble foundations of *koppie* (stones from the hills) stone with a damp-proof course of sand and tar. Every room with a wooden floor had rat guards of sheet iron taken up from the surface of the floor and fixed behind the skirtings. The houses were roofed with corrugated iron sheets. The stable doors, the proportions of the windows, the Tuscan columns on the *stoeps*, (verandas) the shapes of the chimneys and the pitch of the roofs were common to all the houses and gave them unity as a group. This scheme proved to its owners that such architect-designed houses could be built just as cheaply as, but better in every way, than the wood and iron structures with brick linings which had been, until then, the kind of houses which the mechanical engineer's department had caused to be built. It was therefore not surprising that Baker was asked to plan new mine-housing schemes. He introduced some radical changes at a cost which was found to be not greater than that of former plans but which offered much better social and material conditions for white mineworkers.⁶⁸

In single quarters, instead of long lines of rooms built back to back and leading off long verandas, Baker arranged the rooms and their verandas around a courtyard, thus forming an open-air living space, sheltered and protected from wind and sun and

67 D E Grieg, *Herbert Baker in South Africa*, p. 141.

68 D E Grieg, *Herbert Baker in South Africa*, p. 141.

providing a sociable gathering place for the men. The rooms were arranged in blocks of 50 units, each block with centrally placed toilet facilities, drying rooms and slow combustion heaters to provide ample hot water.⁶⁹

The married quarters were small, square, usually detached but sometimes semi-detached, houses with enclosed *stoeps*, built of plastered bricks and with wide-eaved, hipped roofs, at a low pitch under corrugated iron (which was painted a dull red or grey-brown to reduce glare) which cast shadows on the grey-white walls. Their simple plans were much the same as those Baker had formerly designed with his colleague Sloper for the Parktown cottages, and the regular care with which the mines maintained their houses kept them trim and decent. They were provided with electric light and facilities for heating water. The houses, each on its own plot of about one-third of an acre, which allowed space enough for a garden, were laid out in small groups, round a 'village green' – over-generous in size from the point of view of upkeep – where children could play. The streets were wide and planted with avenues of trees to serve as windbreaks and provide shade.⁷⁰

CONCLUSIONS

An evaluation of working-class housing during the period under discussion provides some interesting perspectives. In the early days, accommodation was mainly to be found in the numerous hotels and boarding houses in the city. It was a male-dominated society, many of whom did not demand much in the way of housing, water or sanitation.

However, once there was a move towards a more settled type of existence, many of the male residents wished to bring their wives and families to Johannesburg. It was then that the reality of the absence of accommodation suitable to family life began to make itself felt. Lord Milner recognised that it was a serious problem, and appointed the housing commission to look into the matter. The report gives valuable insights into the difficulties of the residents in securing accommodation.

69 D E Grieg, *Herbert Baker in South Africa*, p. 141.

70 D E Grieg, *Herbert Baker in South Africa*, p. 141.

Even more telling, however, were the reasons why the report was commissioned in the first place. As part of the Reconstruction programme, Lord Milner was anxious to encourage white miners from Britain to immigrate to South Africa in an effort to increase the numbers of English-speaking people in the country.⁷¹ It was crucial that suitable housing be made available in order to facilitate family life in the city.

The mine owners also recognised the need for their middle- and upper-management staff to have a decent family life. (See illustrations 64 and 65, pp. 255-256). It was, in part, in an effort to address this that gave rise to Herbert Baker's mine houses and to the establishment of 'Ekstein's Compound'.

Little effort was made to address the needs of the lower-income members of the working class during the period under discussion. In the light of the evidence heard during the deliberations of the housing commission enquiries, the conclusion reached by the committee that no serious housing problem existed cannot be justified.

In less than two decades urbanisation had produced all the evils of fast-developing capitalist cities: the working class was separated from the well-to-do by lack of transport, high cost of living and scarcity of affordable accommodation. Slums such as those in the Brickfields-Burghersdorp area were associated in the mind of the ruling classes with London's rookeries. Milner's plans to make the Transvaal predominately British through the immigration of the right kind of working man was undermined by successive economic crises and, not less important, the ravages of silicosis amongst British miners.⁷² Housing therefore remained a problem at the end of the Reconstruction Period, and it was some time before the situation would be resolved.

As has been detailed in this chapter, the working classes certainly fared better than the poorer inhabitants of the community with regard to water and sanitation. Water was provided to them, sometimes by way of a piped water supply, whilst on other occasions it was necessary to collect water from a tank in the district. In addition, sanitary collection was provided by the council on a regular basis. All of this led to a far better quality of life for this sector of the population than their poorer counterparts.

71 M L Lange, *The political economy of white working class housing in Johannesburg*, p. 16.

72 E Katz, *The white death, Silicosis on the Witwatersrand gold mines 1886-1910*, pp. 93-121.

THE RICH

The discovery of gold on the Witwatersrand heralded the arrival of many entrepreneurs who sought to make or extend their fortunes in Johannesburg. In the nineteenth-century urbanisation was taking place all over the world. It was quite characteristic of the period – an age of New World cities and vast expansion that took the middle-class entrepreneur or his agents to the four corners of the earth. This phenomenon had been anticipated by Marx and Engels when they wrote in 1848:

the need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, and establish connections everywhere.⁷³

It was from the ranks of these entrepreneurs that Johannesburg was to create its *nouveau riche*.

The core of individuals who became wealthy and who formed the upper crust of society, consisted of only a few individuals. Some brought their families with them, others came alone. In 1897 James Bryce wrote about how these individuals all knew each other, despite the fact that they lived in Bloemfontein, Kimberley, Cape Town and Pretoria. He commented that they all followed each other's doings, and mixed frequently, to the extent that there was a sort of unity to the upper society which found few parallels in any other part of the world.⁷⁴

In the early stages, this small core of individuals constituted Johannesburg's high society and wealthy citizens lived in close proximity to the city centre. It was, however, less than a decade after the proclamation of the gold fields, that they began to separate themselves distinctly from the vicinity of the mine workings. The commotion of the early morning shifts, the noise of the mining hooters and whistles

⁷³ C M Chipkin, *Johannesburg style Architecture and society 1880s – 1960s*, p. 5.

⁷⁴ J Bryce as quoted in M Kaplan and M Robertson (Eds.), *Founders and followers Johannesburg Jewry 1887-1915*, p. 18.

and the incessant crushing of the stamp batteries, together with the dust clouds, the stench of the bucket carts, the noises of the heavy wagon traffic and the close proximity to the Indian and African Locations became too much for them.⁷⁵ Ironically, they were forced to move away from the very city centre that they were instrumental in creating!

Initially they retreated from the central town to the north-eastern peripheries and across End Street to Doornfontein.⁷⁶ (See illustrations 66 – 73, pp. 257- 264). Quite naturally, the western part of Doornfontein, being the nearest to town, developed first and the first houses were built in Saratoga Avenue, near End Street, the eastern boundary of the town, and not far from "Millionaires Row" in Noord Street. Mr Willie Struben built the first single storied house with a corrugated iron roof and veranda at No 3 Saratoga Avenue. Henry Nourse built a modest villa at No 1 Saratoga Avenue and called it Clyfton House. Although other magnates moved up the scale in housing and suburbs, the Nourses lived in the same house for more than 60 years.⁷⁷

There was great celebration when the first tap was opened in Willie Struben's house. With shrewd foresight, Henry Nourse had sunk a well on his property so that he did not have to pay for water. His was the only household which did not suffer the miseries of the water shortages, and his luxuriant garden was the envy of all. Society ladies eagerly accepted invitations to Mrs Nourse's tea parties, as it meant that they could take a bath and emerge for tea refreshed, dressed in trailing diaphanous gowns, and afterwards carry back some of the precious liquid to their homes.⁷⁸

H R Thompson spent several years in Doornfontein. His family lived at No 8 Charlton Terrace, where a new rectory had been built. Theirs was a double storey house of brick with a corrugated iron roof. He recalled how much he enjoyed the sound of the rain on the roof. Water was obtained from the main pipe, but there was no drainage. The toilet was a bucket closet on the back stoep. This was serviced regularly by a sanitary cart, drawn by six or eight mules. At the back of the house were two enormous tanks of corrugated iron, one for rain water and the other was used

75 C M Chipkin, *Johannesburg style Architecture and society 1880s – 1960s*, p. 30.

76 C M Chipkin, *Johannesburg style Architecture and society 1880s – 1960s*, p. 30.

77 M Barry and N Law, *Magnates and mansions in Johannesburg 1886-1914*, p. 61.

78 M Barry and N Law, *Magnates and mansions in Johannesburg 1886-1914*, p. 61.

for bath water. The latter was emptied from time to time by the sanitary cart. Water from the kitchen sink, which was too low to discharge into the tank, was channelled into the garden where the family grew irises.⁷⁹

In 1899 John and Jose Dale Lace also lived in Doornfontein, in their home *Norman House*. The house had an imposing carriage entrance and Jacobean gables. The entrance hall was magnificently panelled in dark wood, and there were stained-glass windows on each side of the front door. The reception room on the ground floor also had beautiful stained-glass fanlights. The story is told about how John Dale Lace had installed a bath on rails which, at the touch of a button, slid from the bathroom to the bedroom. On one occasion he was reputed to have been giving a demonstration of the novelty, and the bath appeared with Jose in all her naked glory seated in it!⁸⁰ Bathing rituals received much attention from Johannesburg's residents, primarily because water was often in short supply. It was particularly difficult to come by water for bathing purposes during periods of drought. L E Neame recalled the story of how a British agent in Pretoria, whilst staying in a hotel in Johannesburg, found the dust and dirt very trying. On seeing a bath full of clean water standing in a room, she slipped in and locked the door and had a bath. While so engaged there was a violent banging on the door. Outside she found a furious proprietor. "Do you know what you have done?" he cried. "You have used the only water we had for drinking! And what is worse, *you have used soap!*"⁸¹ (See illustration 74, p. 265).

During periods of water shortage, many were obliged to purchase water from the various water carts that came into their areas, selling the precious liquid. Others simply purchased their requirements from the various manufactures of soda water, who had found a lucrative market in Johannesburg. Almost all local newspapers contained advertisements relating to soda water.⁸² Bathing, during these times, became a real test of ingenuity. Whilst soda water provided an obvious alternative, less obvious choices were champagne and even milk! Jose Dale Lace bathed in fresh milk twice a

79 C Robertson (ed.), *Remembering old Johannesburg*, p. 73.

80 D Saul, *Bird of paradise*, pp. 16-17.

81 J R Shorten, *The Johannesburg saga*, p. 170.

82 J R Shorten, *The Johannesburg saga*, p. 170.

week to keep her skin in good condition. And, least her efforts in this direction remain unnoticed, she had black silk sheets on her bed to show off her fair skin!⁸³

The lack of rain and water led to some ingenious schemes on the part of the residents. During the severe drought of 1895/1896, Solly Joel, a local entrepreneur, supervised a number of rain making experiments with rockets at the Wanderers Grounds on 25 October 1895. One was launched into a particularly heavy cloud and reports of the results varies from “a few drops of rain” to a “smart shower”. But the experiments infuriated the *Volksraad* who received a petition from Krugersdorp for the enactment of legislation prohibiting the practice that was “a defiance of God”. A member of the Executive Council wanted to know why people should be permitted to mock the Almighty in this manner. He thought it was terrible to contemplate the godless actions of those responsible. On 6 November 1895, soaking rains began to fall over the Witwatersrand, and life returned to normal.⁸⁴

At the very least, the drought caused citizens to come to recognise the value of water. It did not take long for them to associate polluted water with the manifestation of disease, and soda water offered the advantage of being the subject matter of rigorous and routine tests by the sanitary department and government analyst.

By way of example, when the Spes Bona Aerated Water Works Company supplied large quantities of seemingly 'filthy' soda water to the troops, the Medical Officer of Health, feeling that the case was a particularly bad one, instituted legal proceedings against the proprietor. Soda water from his company was recalled from the troops and the various shops in Johannesburg, and the remainder of his stock seized. The government analyst examined the samples, and prosecution ensued.⁸⁵ The residents who could afford soda water were thus assured that the quality would be good. Perhaps one of the most telling examples of the use of water was its use for street watering in the city streets and in the wealthier suburbs. (See illustration 75, p. 266). In January 1904 alone 11 033 370 litres of water were used to keep the dust at bay, and

83 D Saul, *Bird of paradise*, p. 27.

84 J R Shorten, *The Johannesburg saga*, p. 170.

85 TA MJB 1/4/7 Health committee minutes. Meeting 6 October 1903.

a further 952 000 litres were used for road making purposes.⁸⁶ By July 1904 these amounts had increased to 1 375 460 litres and 16 033 287 litres respectively.⁸⁷

In Parktown, street watering had been carried out by the council. In July 1902 the council accepted the offer of the Braamfontein Company Limited to water the streets of Parktown with the company's own watering carts, for the sum of £65 a month, on condition that the council lent the company two mules. At the time that this arrangement was made the council was spending £50 per month upon street watering in Parktown, and for this expenditure only one street, about a mile long, could be watered, owing to the distance which the water cart had to cover in order to obtain water. As the company had its own water supply and hydrants fixed in convenient positions throughout the township, it was in a more favourable position to do the work than the council. The water supply of the Braamfontein Company was, however, expropriated in July 1905, and at this stage the council once more resumed the responsibility for the street watering in the area.⁸⁸

Street watering, by May 1905, had reached enormous proportions. For example, in that month alone, the water carts worked 28 days. Twenty seven streets were watered twice, 15 were watered three times, and five were watered four times each day.⁸⁹

LIFE IN THE SUBURBS AFTER THE SOUTH AFRICAN WAR

Once the South African War was over, and Johannesburg's high society returned to the city, the majority decided that the time was ripe to move from the once fashionable areas such as Doornfontein to areas further out from the city, such as Parktown, Westcliffe and Forest Town. (See illustration 76 – 78, pp. 267-269).

For the new arrivals in Johannesburg, the cold and dust did not seem to matter much. The wheels of the mining industry were slowly revolving, old friendships were being

86 TA MJB 1/1/5 Council minutes. Meeting 23 March 1904.

87 TA MJB 1/1/6 Council minutes. Meeting 29 September 1904.

88 TA MJB 1/1/7 Minutes town council meeting. 10 May 1905.

89 TA MJB 1/1/7 Minutes town council meeting. Meeting 14 June 1905.

renewed, and there was much co-operation and goodwill amongst them.⁹⁰ Appearances were most important to Johannesburg society. Their homes, furniture, dress and entertainments were opportunities to display their wealth and social standing. They vied with each other on all fronts. They particularly admired period houses and their dream mansions were often modelled on those they had seen overseas. The few architects in Johannesburg were influenced by the prevailing fashions in England and America, striving for the picturesque and employing a mixture of styles, gleaned from books, to suit their clients' or their own fancies. The builders were European who used their native building materials and methods wherever possible. The great variety of materials, usually of inferior quality, obtained locally or imported, made for even more confusion of style and often downright shoddiness. When the only means of transport was by ox-wagon, which was slow and costly, lighter materials such as timber and corrugated-iron were used extensively. Bricks were imported at great expense as the quality of the local kiln-dried bricks was too poor. With the advent of the railways in 1894 it became possible, with the aid of a catalogue, to obtain at lower cost a wide variety of materials and ready-made articles in Johannesburg. These included bricks, tiles, sash windows and other joinery, stained glass, stamped metal ceilings, wrought-iron structures and ornaments.⁹¹ (See illustrations 79 – 80, pp. 270-271).

After the war Lord Milner arrived together with a group men, known as 'Milner's Kindergarten', to deal with the task of reconstruction.⁹² He requested Herbert Baker to join him in the Transvaal to 'aid in introducing a better and more permanent order of architecture' as part of his reconstruction programme. He had learnt to respect Baker's work as an architect when Baker was employed by the British Government on work at the Cape. They both shared a conviction, so strong as to be almost a religion, of the rightness of British Imperialism.⁹³

Upon his arrival, Baker found building conditions much the same as in Cape Town, except that in the Transvaal there were no existing building traditions as a starting point. Dutch houses in the country were little better than hovels with no proper

90 C Christie, *Charles Murray*, p. 6.

91 M Barry and N Law, *Magnates and mansions in Johannesburg 1886-1914*, p. 34.

92 W Nimocks, *Milner's young men: the 'kindergarten' in Edwardian imperial affairs*, p. 16.

93 D E Grieg, *Herbert Baker in South Africa*, p. 115.

windows, merely slits to provide light and air. Wind, rain and cold were kept out by wooden shutters. *Tambuki* grass was used for thatch and there were no trees to provide timbers. In the towns, everything except mud for mortar and sun-dried bricks had to be imported, a costly business even after the railway line was completed. Political instability had discouraged building as an investment and the results were flimsy wood and iron structures, sometimes brick-lined for warmth. Houses were built mainly as bungalows of the same pattern with the most primitive arrangements for sanitation. Few of the rich built anything larger than big bungalows.⁹⁴ Exceptions were the house of Barney Barnato or *Hohenheim*, which the visiting Baron Rothschild said reminded him of Wimbledon.⁹⁵

Baker made it his business to do what he had done in the Cape, to examine local resources for durable building materials. The *kopje* stone, quartzite, intractable and difficult though it was to work, struck him as being suitable material for foundations and walls. He explored the possibility of developing other indigenous building materials, and also introduced *klompjie* bricks from Holland, later to be manufactured in South Africa. He had to bring to the Transvaal, all the way from the Cape, many of his building materials, windows, flooring and ceiling boards, cornices, skirtings and roof-timbers which were manufactured in the sawmills which he had set going there for the first time. But the enterprising Transvalers soon realized there was a living to be made out of the manufacture of building materials, and a new industry arose.⁹⁶

The tradesmen had to be trained to make use of these available materials. There was no professional or building tradition to protect the relationship between architect, builder and client. However, Baker's qualities of leadership helped to attract to him groups of architects, builders and craftsmen who produced from the materials and resources which lay at hand buildings which "are among the choicest possessions of South African architecture".⁹⁷

94 D Grieg. The domestic work of Sir Herbert Baker and his influence in the field of building in the Transvaal, p. 58.

95 D E Grieg, *Herbert Baker in South Africa*, p. 116.

96 D Grieg. The domestic work of Sir Herbert Baker and his influence in the field of building in the Transvaal, p. 58.

97 D Grieg. The domestic work of Sir Herbert Baker and his influence in the field of building in the Transvaal, p. 2.

With regard to Baker's clientele, on the whole they were well-educated and knew something of the classics and the arts. Many of them such as Cecil John Rhodes, Abe Bailey, Percy Fitzpatrick and Lionel Curtis had been brought up in surroundings where good building and fine architecture influenced their taste; they knew what they wanted and their remembrance of past surroundings and cultivated taste found expression through Baker's education and architectural experience – which for all his foreign travel retained the English virtues and the English faults.⁹⁸

All told, including houses which he designed for group building on the mines, about three hundred houses in the Transvaal emanated from Baker's office. They provided for every type of client – artisan, magnate, professional man and farmer.⁹⁹

One of the houses designed by Baker was the home of Dale Lace. During the war Jose Dale Lace evidently decided that she was no longer prepared to remain in Doornfontein. She set her sights on the rapidly growing suburb of Parktown, which had been established by the Braamfontein Company in 1892. Many of the wealthy citizens of Johannesburg were moving there, including mining magnate Lionel Phillips, and his wife, Florence. Accordingly, in 1901, the Dale Laces acquired a site on the Parktown Ridge with wonderful views to the Magaliesburg range of mountains 64 kilometres away. There they commissioned Herbert Baker, who had recently completed his own home, *The Stonehouse*, nearby, to design the mansion they called *Northwards*. The house was designed on a grand scale (it had forty rooms) and was built of the quartzite stone quarried on the site. Its design was markedly different from the houses in the immediate neighbourhood such as *Dolobran* and *North Lodge*. It lacked the turrets, spires, cupolas, art nouveau ironwork and conservatories that characterised those dwellings. Instead it had decorative gables in the Dutch and Flemish styles, Tudor and Venetian windows, plain chimneys and a recessed front verandah. It was at Baker's suggestion that a large hall for dancing was incorporated into the design. It was a distinctly innovative idea at the time. The hall was Restoration in character and contained features such as a beamed ceiling, heavily carved fanlights, large brass chandeliers, elegant brass fittings and wide floorboards. It also had a double-volume bay window on the north wall which ensured that the room

98 D E Grieg, *Herbert Baker in South Africa*, p. 204.

99 D E Grieg, *Herbert Baker in South Africa*, p. 116.

received plenty of light. The wood panelling, the minstrel gallery, the window seats and the imposing staircase reflected Elizabethan and Jacobean influences. The house was approached through an impressive gateway flanked by the Flemish-gabled lodge. The gardens were laid out in a style to match the house, with formal beds of flowers, scrubs and trees.¹⁰⁰

Initially, sanitation services for residents of Parktown were provided by the Braamfontein Company Limited, and this state of affairs continued until the town council took over the service on 30 June 1901.¹⁰¹ At the time, there were many complaints about the unsatisfactory sanitary arrangements in both Parktown and Doornfontein, and the manager of the sanitary department was instructed to take the appropriate measures to correct the situation.¹⁰² This led to some improvement.

By early 1902 there was a fair number of building operations taking place in the Parktown area, but the builders were not provided with sufficient sanitary facilities. The council immediately stepped into action, serving a notice on the culprits, requiring the situation to be corrected without delay.¹⁰³

When J S Robinson found the services of the sanitary department lacking, he immediately took it upon himself to make his own arrangements. The council's attorneys were quick to respond, stating that individuals were not at liberty to take such action, and insisting that they continue to provide the service and to charge for it. Within a week the sanitary service had been resumed to his property by the council.¹⁰⁴

It is interesting to note that when the council deposited rubbish in Parktown in 1902, they were immediately threatened with a court action by residents. Generally, they were given 24 hours to refrain from the dumping, or risk an interdict.¹⁰⁵ This is in sharp contrast to the situation in the poorer areas, where dumping took place on a regular basis, to such an extent that it was, in least in some measure, responsible for the deterioration of the area.

100 D Saul, *Bird of Paradise Jose Dale Lace*, pp. 21-22.

101 TA MJB 1/4/1 Minutes of health committee, Meeting 25 June 1901.

102 TA MJB 1/4/1 Minutes of health committee, Meeting 16 July 1901.

103 TA MJB 1/4/1 Minutes of health committee, Meeting 2 May 1903.

104 TA MJB 1/4/2 Minutes of health committee, Meeting 9 January 1902.

105 TA MJB 1/4/1 Minutes of health committee, Meeting 20 March 1902.

The areas occupied by Johannesburg's more affluent citizens were the first to receive services such as piped water. The council was constantly at pains to ensure that their lives were as pleasant as possible. Disinfectant and water was sprayed onto the streets, both at night and during the day.¹⁰⁶

For that small percentage of residents, Johannesburg's elite, services provided by the council were, on the whole, satisfactory. As the primary rate payers in the city, the council were at pains not to irritate or alienate them in any way. These individuals were well-educated and familiar with methods that could be used to enforce their rights. Letters addressed by them to the council more often than not received extremely prompt responses. Very often the reason for this was that they contained threats, either implied or explicit, that they would resort to the courts if their demands were not met. Accordingly, the delivery of water and the provision of services to areas such as Parktown, Westcliffe and Forest Town received priority. These areas contained 147 houses in 1904. The 316 buckets used in these areas were collected by ten Africans, using two tumblers, one pail cart, and six mules.¹⁰⁷

These residents also had a further enormous advantage over that of other citizens – they had the financial ability to supplement the majority of items which were supplied and/or serviced by the council. An example was the use of the bucket system of sewerage disposal. Specially designed buckets, which did not permit the emission of odour, were available from overseas, and could be purchased from shopping catalogues. (See illustration 81, p. 272). Servants were employed, and, no doubt included in their duties, was the care of the household sanitary facilities. (See illustration 82, p. 273). They observed the use of ceramic toilet and bath ware in overseas countries during their travels abroad, and ordered these items for their homes and personal use.

The huge disparities between the facilities that were available to them, and even those available to the working class population, not to mention the poor, was enormous. (See illustration 83, p. 274). On a positive note, it was this sector that, by and large,

106 TA MJB 1/1/6 Council minutes. Meeting 24 October 1904.

107 TA MJB 1/4/8 Council minutes. Meeting 14 March 1904.

facilitated employment, in one way or another, for the majority of Johannesburg's residents. But the tragedy lies in the fact that they went about their lives in such a way that one can only imagine that they were oblivious to the hardships and poverty of the rest of the community. This is particularly evident when it is considered that water – which is so essential to life itself – became a commodity which could be sold to those who could afford to buy it. It was only when severe water shortages, coupled with outbreaks of disease through lack of water and insanitary conditions, came to affect all of Johannesburg's residents, and when they received shocking treatment at the hands of the Johannesburg Waterworks Company,¹⁰⁸ that they finally sat up and took notice. The decision was taken that water was too important to be left in the hands of concessionaries, and that it should be controlled by a public utility company. Ultimately this realisation led to the establishment of the Rand Water Board. This was an extremely wise decision, as the utility is still responsible, 100 years later, for the satisfactory supply of water to all of Johannesburg's residents.

CONCLUSIONS

The focus of this study is not on the lives of the rich. Some details of their way of life has been included in order to be able to draw comparisons with the lives of other Johannesburg residents. Not much information could be gleaned from the numerous texts regarding water and sanitation *per se*. Sanitation is considered a private affair, and this would account for the paucity of information in this regard. The homes of the wealthy have received much more attention. These houses were often lavish, opulent and full (to overflowing) with furniture. The photographic records bear this out. (See illustration 79, p. 270).

What is of crucial importance in this study, however, is not so much the ways in which the wealthy lived their lives, but rather the enormous impact that their attitudes had on the remainder, and therefore the majority, of the population. Being the principal employers and controlling the wealth in the city, other residents were dependent on them. The various officials of the city council and health department also had an impact on their lives. These officials were largely drawn from the better-educated

108 This relates to billing in the absence of residents during the South African War and has been discussed in detail in the theoretical section.

members of the community, and therefore formed part of the top echelon of Johannesburg society. To state that their influence on the community was enormous, is almost an understatement. It was felt very strongly in the areas of housing, water and sanitation, and each will be discussed in turn.

In respect of housing, the mine owners soon realised the benefits of keeping their African employees in compounds. This eradicated the need to provide housing for families, and allowed them to pay lower wages. The conditions in the compounds, for the most part, were completely unsatisfactory. The communal living conditions led to a lack of privacy, both in respect of sleeping, washing and sanitary facilities. These have been discussed in Chapter 4.

The lives of the Africans who chose to live outside of the compounds were also affected by the actions of the wealthy citizens. They realised that, sooner or later, the city limits would have to expand, and land speculation in the areas close to the city was rife. When the insanitary board hearings took place, it was found that many of the houses in the areas belonged to these speculators. The houses had been allowed to deteriorate and exorbitant rentals were charged. This led in turn to overcrowding, as more and more people lived together in an effort to afford the rentals. Not only the Africans were affected by the high rentals – this was very much a reality in the lives of poor Whites, and indeed, the working classes of all colours. Ultimately, the lack of available housing for the working classes, especially for those with families, led Alfred Milner to appoint the Housing Commission.

Again, the behaviour of the wealthy citizens had a direct bearing on the causes of the housing shortages. The details of the manner in which the estate companies purchased large tracts of land (especially under the terms of the *Gold Law*) have been discussed in Chapter 1. This had the effect of increasing the price of land, which already was out of the reach of affordability for the average citizen.

The actions of the council should also be mentioned. Whilst they were always quick to respond to the needs of the wealthy, this was not the case with regard to the poorer members of the community. In Chapter 2, we have seen how the African and Indian Locations were ‘dumping grounds’ for the refuse of the wealthy. Service delivery in

these areas was far from satisfactory, leading to the complete decline of the areas. Some of the witnesses brought before the insanitary commission even went as far as to accuse the council of allowing conditions to deteriorate to suit their own ends. Seeing the value of the land because of its close proximity to the city centre, it is conceivable that there may be some truth in the accusations levelled against the council in this regard.¹⁰⁹

The attitude of the wealthy and influential citizens towards racial issues was a further factor in the determination of the location of housing. Initially, there was no racial separation in Johannesburg, but within a few years attitudes began to change.¹¹⁰ Eventually the changed views were expressed in the Lagden Commission Report and the removal of persons of colour to Klipspruit.

In respect of sanitation, the attitudes of the wealthy and the council also made themselves felt on the lives of the majority of Johannesburg's citizens. In the African Location in 1903, 128 people were forced to share one latrine.¹¹¹ In the Indian Location, the health department made constant references to the different cultural practices of the inhabitants, and the need to provide sanitary facilities that were in keeping with these customs. Yet these were nothing more than lip-service as nothing was ever done to facilitate the differences.¹¹²

In areas such as Burghersdorp, where development had been allowed to take place on an ad-hoc basis, sanitary removal was virtually non-existent. This fact was well-known to the council, who commented that the area was literally 'peppered with excrement.'¹¹³

In sharp contrast, the council allocated ten Africans, two tumblers, one pail cart and six mules to the collection of 316 sanitary buckets belonging to the owners of 147 houses in Parktown West, Westcliffe and Forest Town!¹¹⁴

109 This has been discussed in the chapter on the Lives of the Poor.

110 These changing attitudes have been discussed primarily in the chapter on Lives of the Poor.

111 This is discussed in the chapter on Lives of the Africans.

112 This is discussed in Chapter 2.

113 This is discussed in Chapter 2.

114 This is discussed earlier in this chapter.

The ultimate irony, however, is with regard to the provision of water to Johannesburg's residents. In the first few years of the city's existence, the inhabitants were forced to rely on the natural environment for their needs. They failed to take care of the water supply, allowing carcasses and rubbish to accumulate in streams. This led to the pollution of the available water.¹¹⁵ They soon came to realise that water was scarce and therefore had value. Companies such as the Braamfontein Waterworks Company and the Johannesburg Waterworks Company were established. The commodification of water was the result, with water being available to those who could afford to pay for it. Eventually, the high-handed behaviour of the Johannesburg Waterworks Company during the absence of most of the residents during the War which led, in least in part, to its downfall.¹¹⁶ Already frustrated at the inability of the company to maintain a regular supply, the charging of absent landlords for water during their absence was the final straw. They came to realise that water was too important to be left in the hands of a concession company, and was best controlled by a public utility company. This led to the establishment of the Rand Water Board.

In the meantime, the poorer members of the community were forced to rely on supplies from contaminated and polluted wells. There is no doubt that, in the minds of the wealthy and the council, there was a correlation between disease and the use of polluted water. But, again, the callous disregard for the plight of the less fortunate was evident in that little was done to secure a supply of safe drinking water for these inhabitants. Whilst the majority of the population were forced to fight a daily struggle for what meagre water supplies they could obtain, thousands and thousands of litres were being used daily to keep the dust at bay in the wealthy areas! The redirection of even ten percent of this water could have gone a very long way in improving the quality of life for so many of Johannesburg's citizens. Somehow the council had come to the conclusion that the needs of Africans and the poorer sector of the community was not the same as the needs of even the white working classes. When delivering water to the residents of Auckland Park for example, an amount of 234 litres of water was allocated to each resident.¹¹⁷ In contrast, when planning for the relocation of the Africans to Klipspruit Location, only 32 litres of water per person was

115 This is discussed Chapter 1, in particular in the section on Johannesburg's early history.

116 This is discussed in the chapter on Contextual Perspectives.

117 This is discussed in the chapter on the Lives of the Working Classes.

allocated.¹¹⁸ Many derogatory comments were made about the standards of hygiene and cleanliness on the part of the poorer inhabitants, obviously without any thought for the realities of the situation and the impossibility of maintaining the same standards under such disparate living conditions.

For the poor and destitute who came to Johannesburg in search of work and a better future, life was a bitter struggle. It should be recognised that in many respects they were not the creators of their misfortunes. They provided the labour that facilitated the gold rush and the rapid urbanisation of the city, yet they were denied a share in the rewards. It is hoped that, through these pages, some greater understanding of their plight has been obtained.

118 This is discussed in Chapter 4.

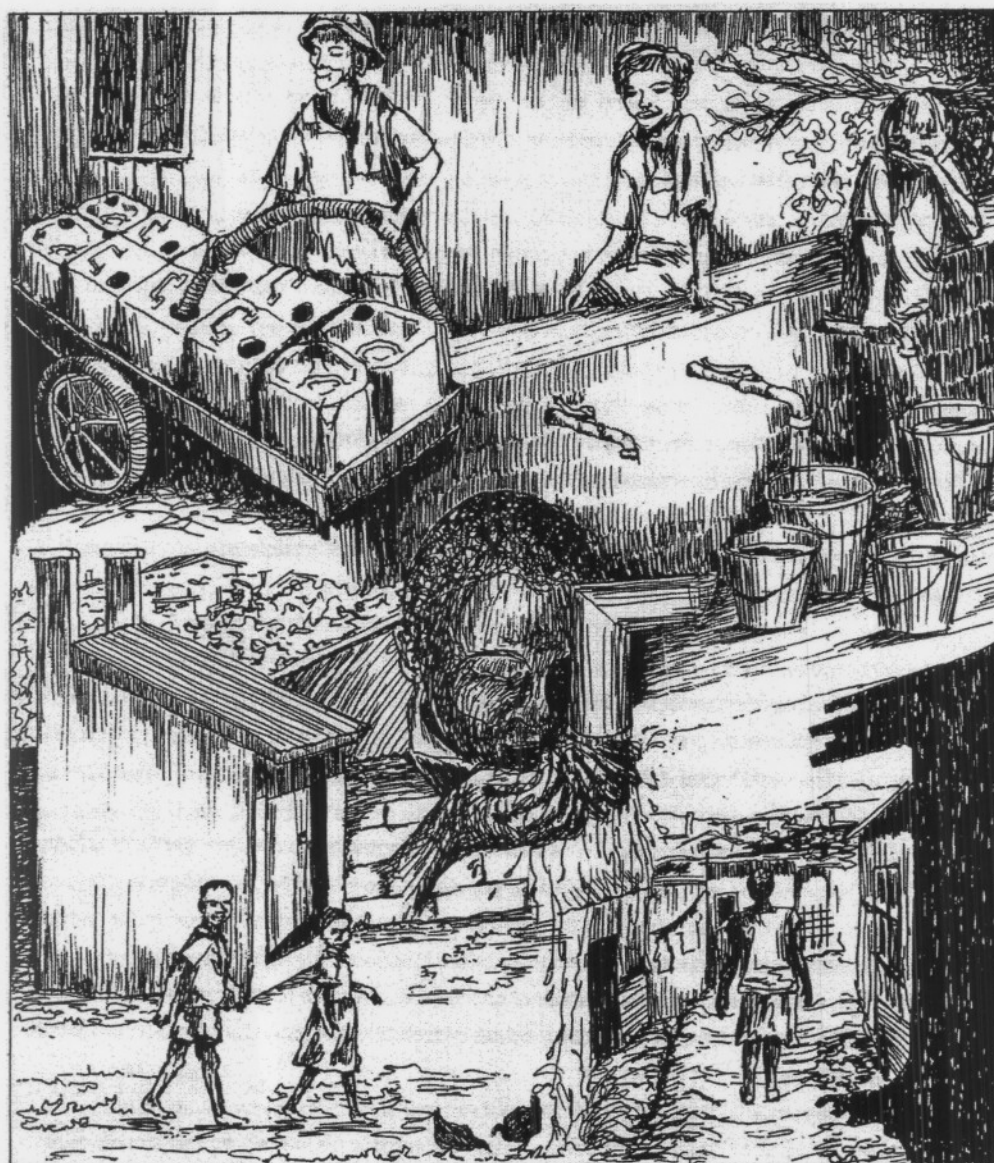


Old Johannesburg. Ferreira's Town

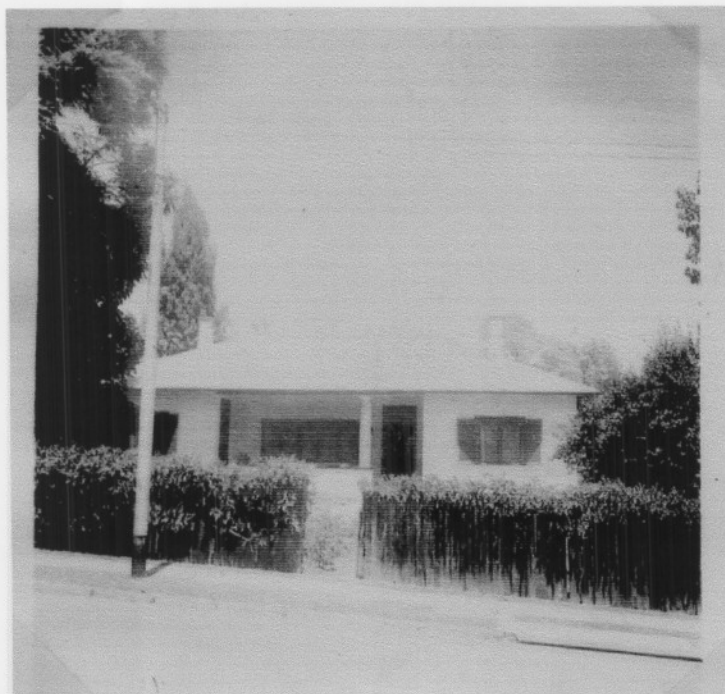
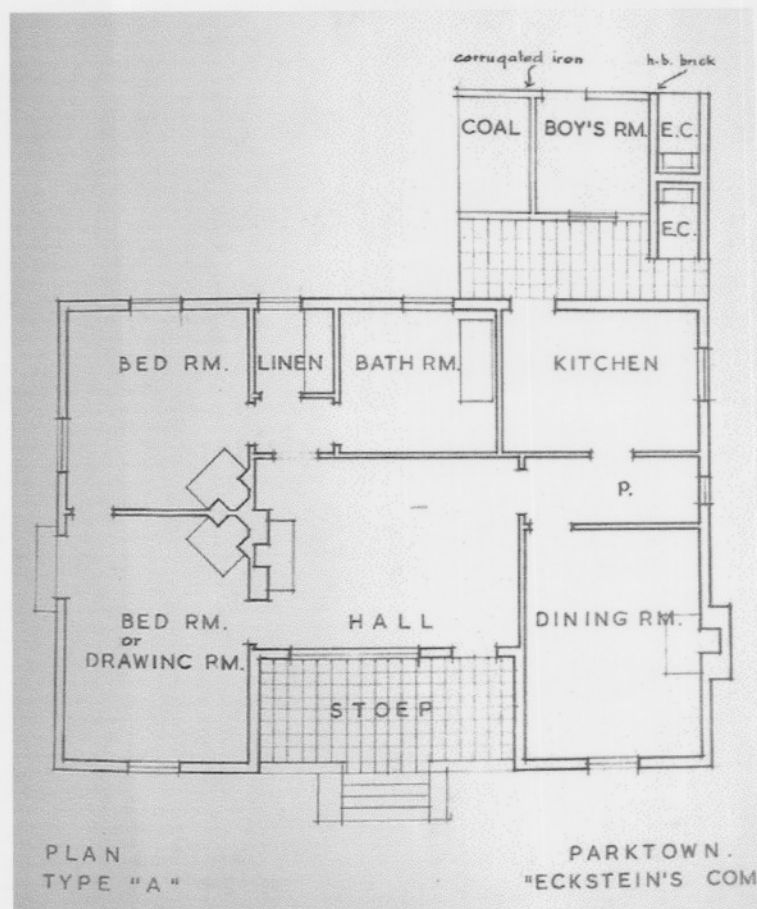
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Auckland Park.

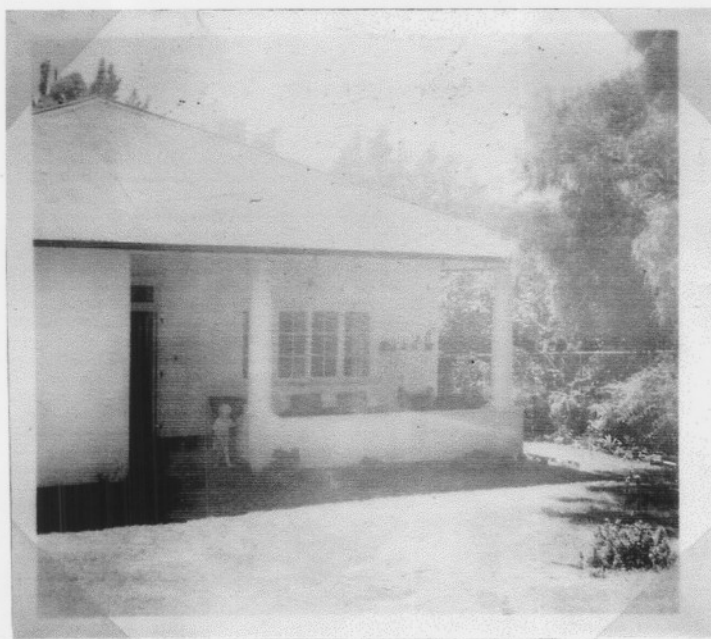
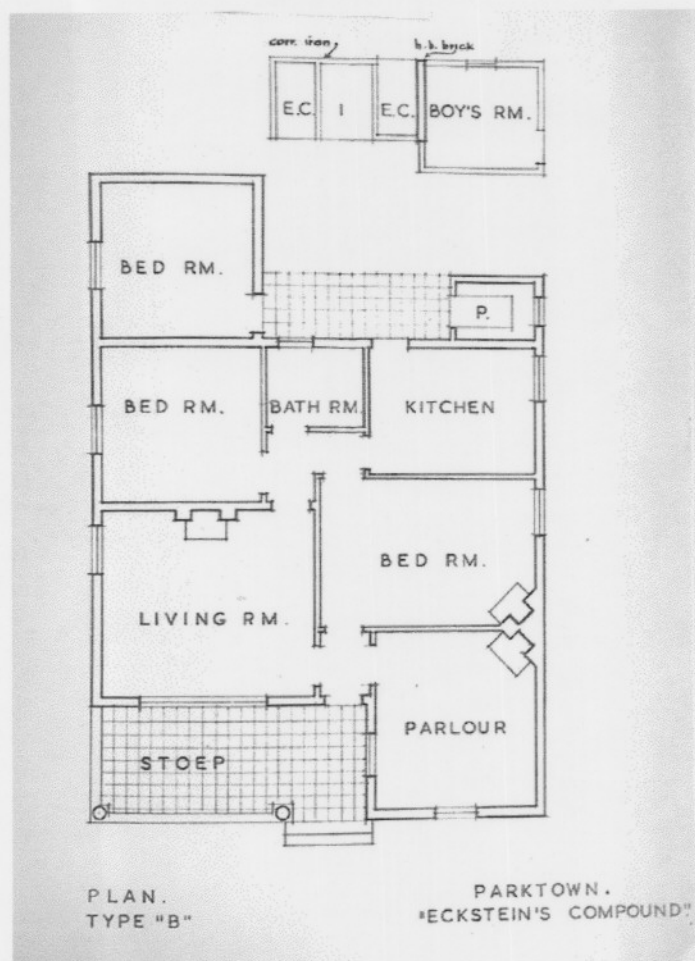


This illustration conveys various aspects of water and sanitation in early Johannesburg – the paraffin tins which were used for water storage, the pipes used to empty sewerage from the outside toilets into the sanitation carts, buckets and outside toilet facilities.



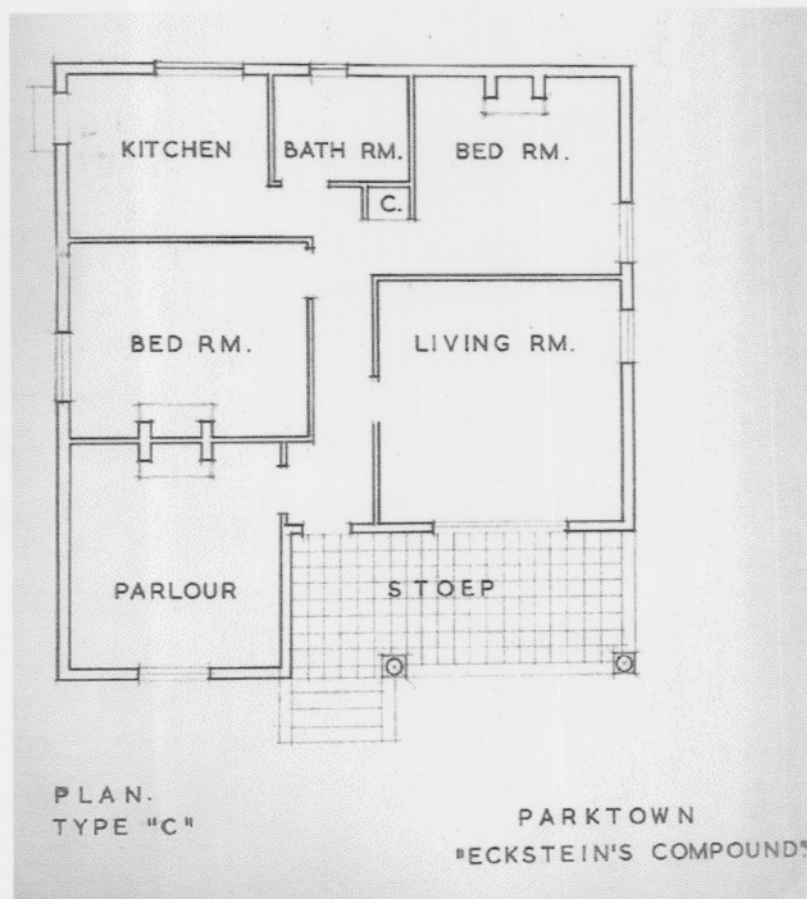
Parktown. "Ecksteins' Compound"

Source: D Greig, "The domestic work of Sir Herbert Baker and his influence in the field of building in the Transvaal".



Parktown. "Ecksteins' Compound"

Source: D Greig, "The domestic work of Sir Herbert Baker and his influence in the field of building in the Transvaal".

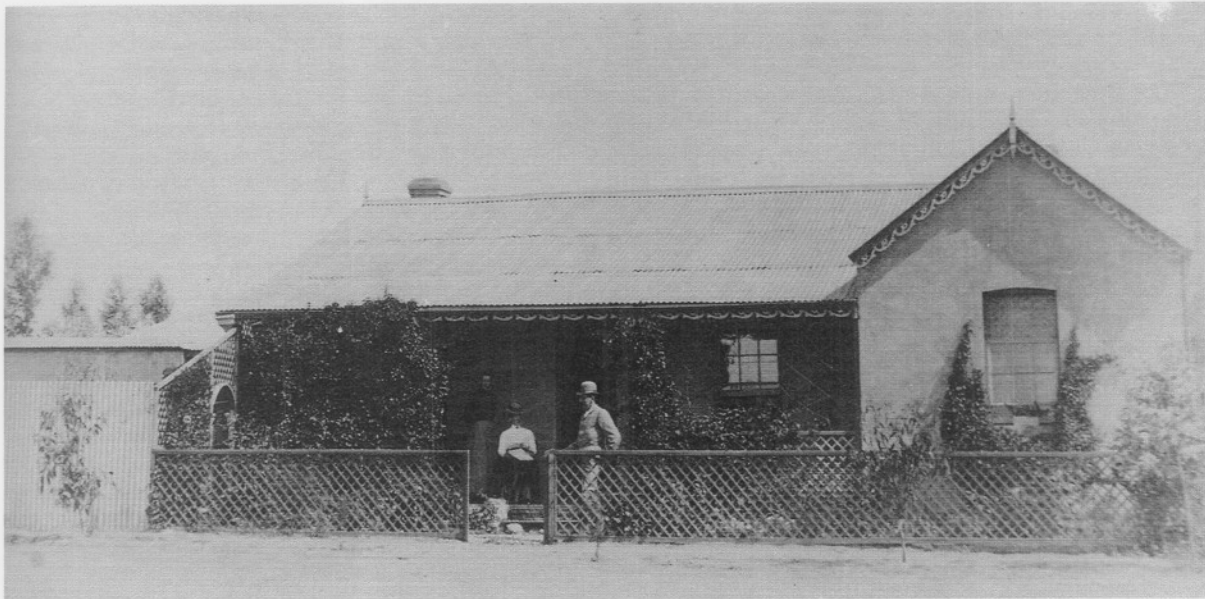


Parktown. "Ecksteins' Compound"

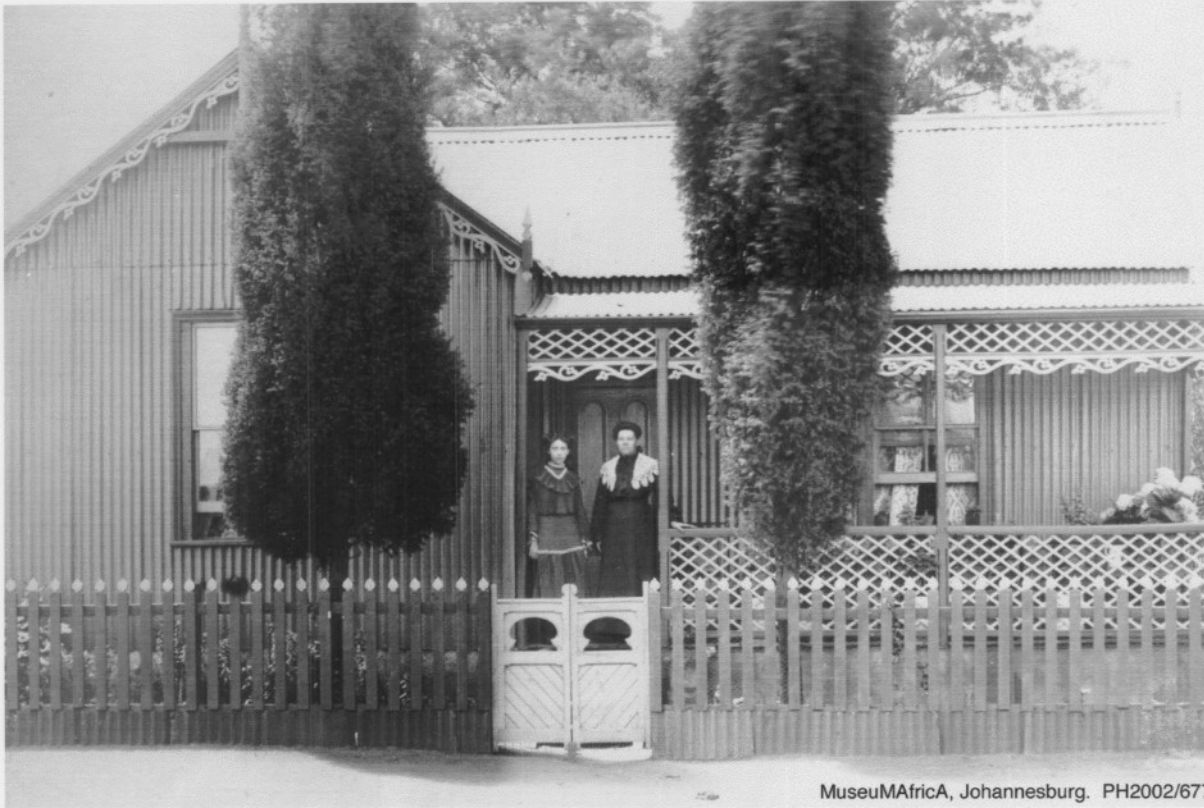
Source: D Greig, "The domestic work of Sir Herbert Baker and his influence in the field of building in the Transvaal".



The western suburbs – Parktown West, Auckland Park and Melville. The sandy road in the foreground is Jan Smuts Avenue, formerly referred to as the old Pretoria Road. On the left is a cluster of houses some of which are the original group put up by Eckstein and Co. in 1905 for staff members and known in the early days as Eckstein's compound.



The manager's house on the Meyer and Charlton Mine, built in 1890. His was made of brick – the other officials' homes were constructed from corrugated iron. Africana Museum.



MuseuMAfricA, Johannesburg. PH2002/677

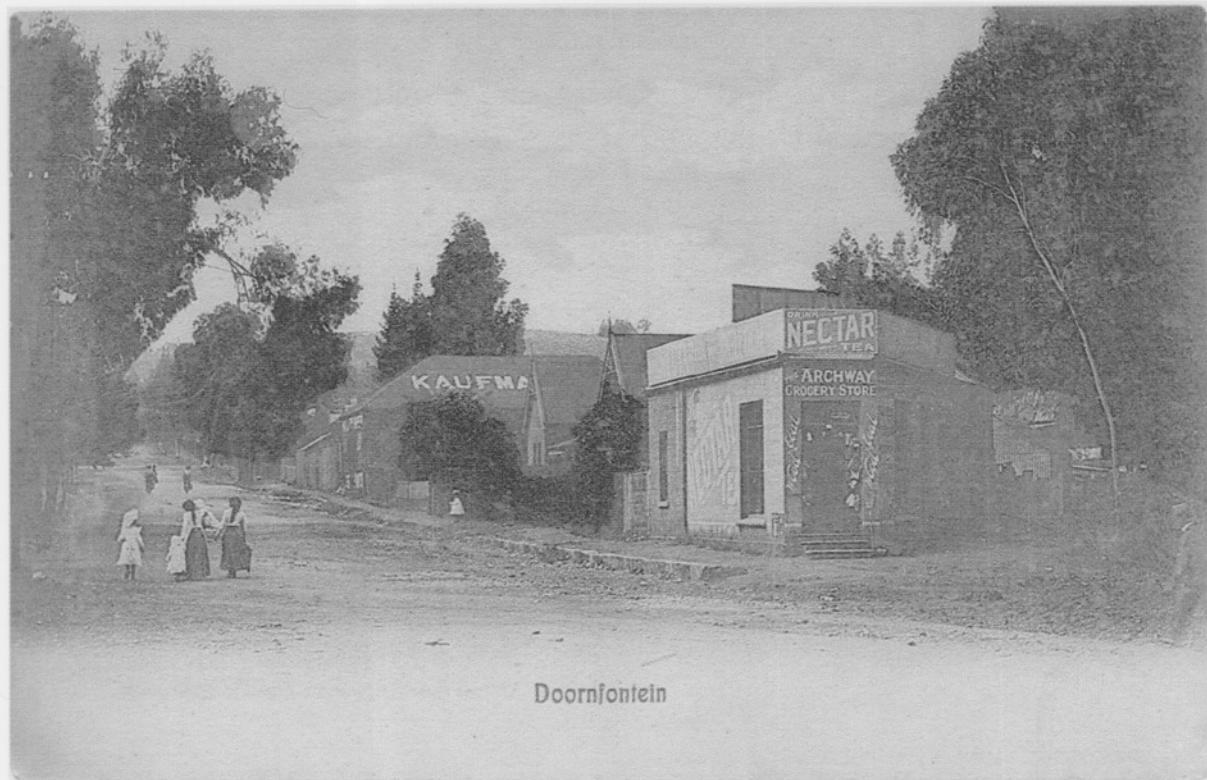
Parktown, Johannesburg, possibly taken in 1903-1906.



Doornfontein. Probably taken in 1886–1887.



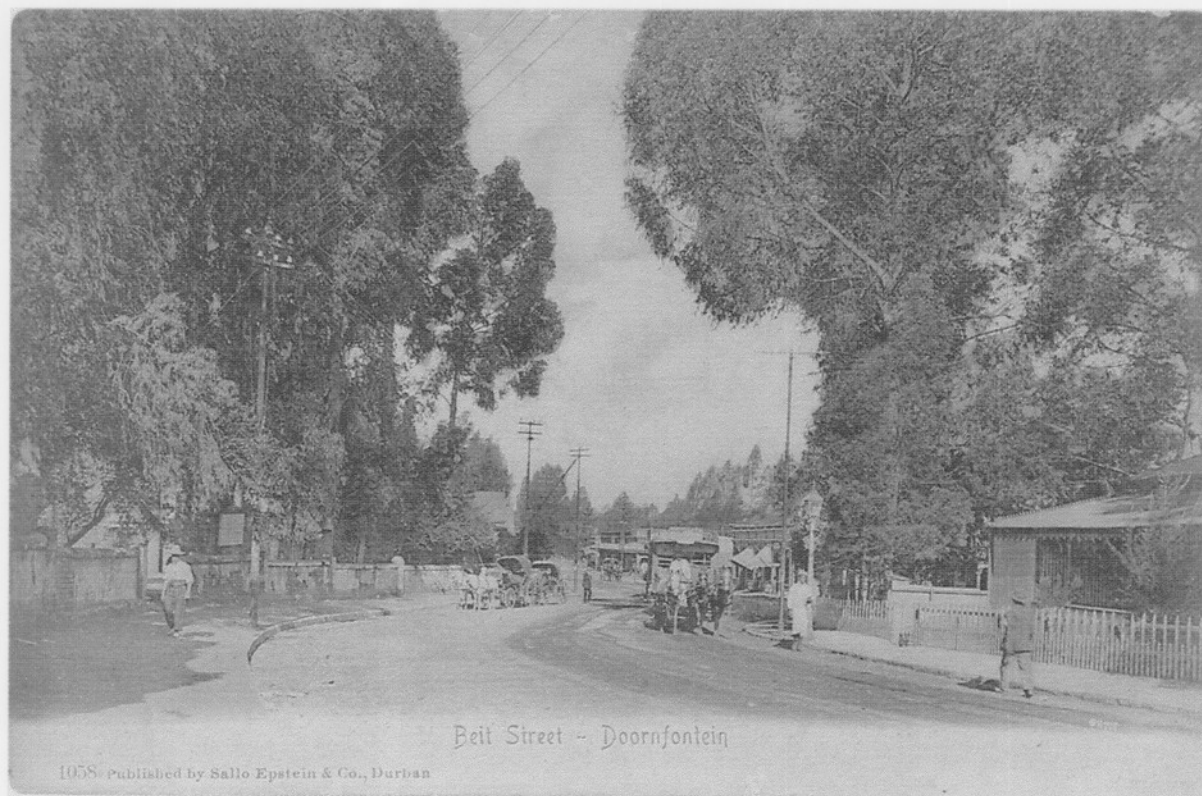
Doornfontein, 1888.



Doornfontein. A view of sparsely-developed Doornfontein looking north towards the Berea and Yeoville ridges. There are only two shops with a few houses in between. The front shop, Archway Grocery Store, advertises the popular nectar tea and the sale of wood and coal. The back shop appears to belong to a Mr Kaufman. Two gabled homes are between the shops.



Doornfontein. 1891.



Doornfontein, Beit Street.



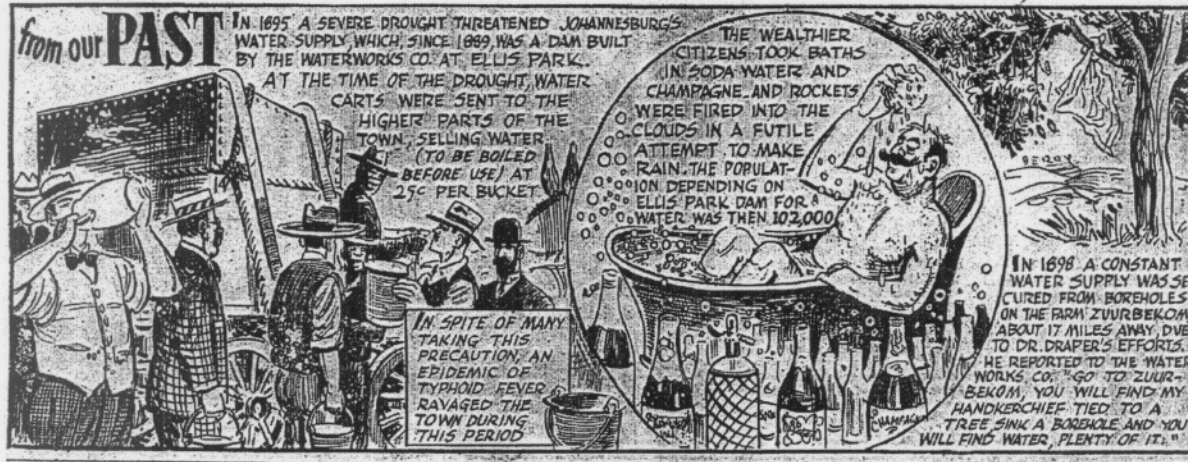
Doornfontein, Saratoga Avenue. A view of tree-lined Saratoga Avenue looking east towards the Berea and Yeoville ridges.



Doornfontein, Sherwell Street



Doornfontein, Sivewright Avenue. This suburb was a residential area with some beautiful double-storey buildings. It later became part of industrial Doornfontein.



Published by the Public Relations Office, City Council of Johannesburg, and printed by Dagbreek (M&G) Johannesburg.

Abe Berry's cartoon has captured, with some irony, the drought of 1895, the reaction of the wealthy citizens, and the location of the water supply source at Zuurbekom in 1898.

Source: Cartoon from the Sunday Times. This cartoon is part of the collection at the Harold Strange Library. The only date that was available was 1980.



Dust clouds in Johannesburg. Around 1895 there were no tarred roads and when a strong wind blew the results were unpleasant in the extreme. Mrs Lionel Phillips wrote: "I have seen dust storms so thick that one could not see one's hand before one's face."



1906
MuseumAfrica, Johannesburg. 916.82

Short cut to Johannesburg from Parktown.



Prospect Terrace, Parktown, Johannesburg.





"Glenshiel" Westcliff

Source: D Greig, "The domestic work of Sir Herbert Baker and his influence in the field of building in the Transvaal".



**"SUNNYSIDE," JOHANNESBURG,
THE RESIDENCE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER, LORD SELBORNE.**

Published by HALLIS & Co.
Port Elizabeth.

Sunnyside, Residence of the High Commissioner, Lord Selborne.

JAPANNED WARE.**Chamber Pails.**

No. 16494. Slop Pail. Full size, elegantly painted outside and in, with double gilt band, tight fitting top or tray.

Each.....**30c**

No. 16495. Galvanized iron Chamber Pail, made of heavy iron, will not rust.

Each.....**40c**

Challenge Odorless Commode and Slop Bucket Combined.

No. 16495 1/2. Beats everything of the kind on the market. It is impossible for the foul air to escape, even when the lid is removed, as there is inside the lid a receptacle that holds a deodorizer and which neutralizes all gases inside the commode. The disinfectant (2 tablespoonfuls of chloride of lime) needs only to be renewed once in two weeks at a small cost.

It is indispensable in the sick room, especially in cases of contagious diseases and fevers. Does not have to be emptied until filled, no matter how long it stands.

Made of heavy galvanized iron, and has no paint to hold stench or disease germs. Has removable seat, etc. It needs only to be seen to convince you of its wonderful merit.

Price, each.....**\$3.25**

Try one.

Chamber Sets.

No. 16496. Chamber Sets. Full size, nicely finished in different styles, as follows: Oak, walnut, red and blue.

Price, per set of 3 pieces.....**\$1.30**

A shopping catalogue showing a selection of sanitary ware in circulation in 1897, and from which wealthy Johannesburg residents would be able to purchase goods by mail order.

Bowl and Pitcher.

No. 16497. Decorated Bowl and Pitcher. Beautiful and artistic designs, elegant workmanship, high, rich colors. Price, per set.....**\$4c**

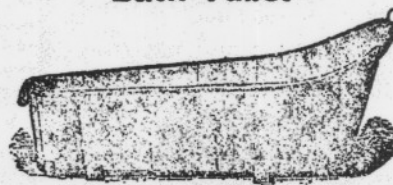
No. 16498. Bowl and Pitcher. Very heavy tin, painted in assorted colors; pretty set.

Price, per set.....**50c**

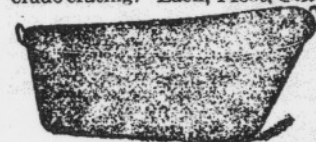
**Toilet Stand.**

No. 16499. Toilet Stand, japanned. 80 1/2 inches high, with japanned tin wash bowl and pitcher and soap cup; assorted colors; weight, 2 1/4 lbs.

Each, complete.....**\$1.40**

Bath Tubs.

No. 16504. Plunge Baths; same shape as cut, made of heavy tin, with wooden bottoms and handles at each end; japanned, blue inside, drab outside, trimmed in black, blue and gilt stripes; weight, 50 lbs. Prices include crating. Each, 4 feet, **\$3.75**; 6 feet.....**\$5.00**



No. 16505. Infants' Bath Tub; weight, 10 to 25 lbs.; japanned tin.

Size, 27 inches.....**\$0.80**

30 inches.....**.80**

33 inches.....**1.10**

36 inches.....**1.30**

Hip Baths.

No. 16506. Japanned Hip Baths. Diameter, 22 1/2 inches.

Each.....**\$3.25**

Diameter, 27 inches.

Each.....**\$4.00**

Japanned Foot Tubs.

No. 16508.
Size. Weight.
17x13 1/2 x 7 1/2 2 lbs.
18 1/2 x 14 1/2 x 8 1/4 2 lbs.

Price.
each.
\$0.40
.45



No matter whether your clothes
are washed in the river, in well
or town's water, there is nothing
so good as

Sunlight Soap

Remember that !



Returning from the
river with the laun-
dry, after washing
with Sunlight Soap.

This advertisement is particularly telling – clothes were washed “in the river, in well or town’s water” and guaranteed to be clean when washed with Sunlight soap!



STANDARD
Turkish, Kuhne & Plunge Baths

Proprietor - - - H. F. RAYMOND.

Separate Turkish and Kuhne Baths
—Open Daily for Ladies.—

 Also Hot and Cold Baths. Hot and Cold Showers. 	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 60%;">Turkish, Kuhne, Plunge and all attendance</td> <td style="width: 5%; text-align: center;">-</td> <td style="width: 5%; text-align: center;">-</td> <td style="width: 5%; text-align: center;">-</td> <td style="width: 25%; text-align: right;">5s.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Hot and Cold Baths</td> <td style="text-align: center;">-</td> <td style="text-align: center;">-</td> <td style="text-align: center;">-</td> <td style="text-align: right;">2s.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Hot and Cold Shower and Plunge</td> <td style="text-align: center;">-</td> <td style="text-align: center;">-</td> <td style="text-align: center;">-</td> <td style="text-align: right;">1s 6d</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Extra Massage</td> <td style="text-align: center;">-</td> <td style="text-align: center;">-</td> <td style="text-align: center;">-</td> <td style="text-align: right;">1s.</td> </tr> </table> Experienced Egyptian Male and —Female Shampooers.— HAIRDRESSING AND REFRESHMENTS. Von Brandis Street. Between Main and Marshall Streets.	Turkish, Kuhne, Plunge and all attendance	-	-	-	5s.	Hot and Cold Baths	-	-	-	2s.	Hot and Cold Shower and Plunge	-	-	-	1s 6d	Extra Massage	-	-	-	1s.
Turkish, Kuhne, Plunge and all attendance	-	-	-	5s.																	
Hot and Cold Baths	-	-	-	2s.																	
Hot and Cold Shower and Plunge	-	-	-	1s 6d																	
Extra Massage	-	-	-	1s.																	



An advertisement reflecting bathing facilities available in Johannesburg.

Source: P Kallaway and P Pearson, *Johannesburg: Images and continuities A history of working class life through pictures 1885 - 1935*, p. 48.

CHAPTER 6 – CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this study is to gain some understanding of the lives of the poor during the first 20 years of Johannesburg's existence. Most history texts covering this period have been told from the perspective of the mining magnates and entrepreneurs of the time, their lives and their business and gold mining ventures. These individuals, however, formed the minority of the population. Charles van Onselen captured it perfectly when he stated that:

... timid historians ... have tip-toed through the tree-lined avenues of the northern suburbs, peering into the homes and lifestyles of the 'Randlords', attempting to put a romantic gloss on the ceaseless pursuit of wealth at a time when, elsewhere in the city, the dusty streets were bursting at the seams with a seething mass of struggling humanity. It is almost by concentrating exclusively on the exploits of a small number of ruling-class actors the people could be ignored, and the city would somehow be endowed with a mythical collective past which was more becoming to its present role as one of the major finance capitals of the world.¹

Among the reasons for the focussing on the lives of the few wealthy citizens is because they dominated society at the time. They were the major employers and provided housing for a large sector of the population, for example the mine labourers in the compounds and domestic servants. An entire infrastructure was created around the needs of these few individuals.

It is certainly true that there was a side to their lives which was full of adventure, as they braved the unknown in search of the new-found mineral wealth, setting up their often ostentatious homes in a foreign land and being part of a small, close-knit community whose main preoccupations seemed to revolve around comfortable living, socialising and the pursuit of wealth.

¹ C Van Onselen, *New Babylon New Nineveh Everyday life on the Witwatersrand 1886-1914*, p. xiv.

But there was a darker, and more sinister, side to the lives of the Randlords. Together with the members of the city council, they wielded enormous influence on the lives of the majority of Johannesburg's residents. And nowhere was this more keenly felt than in the arena of housing, water and sanitation. Much can be gleaned from their attitudes towards these elements, and equally, about the manner in which they influenced the lives of the poorer sectors of society.

Water, for example, is taken so much for granted by present-day urban dwellers that it is difficult to imagine a time when it was not available 'at the turn of a tap'. Likewise, we have become so accustomed to water-borne sewerage that we also do not give this a second thought. This was not, however, always the case for Johannesburg's early residents. Upon their arrival, they found a barren land with a few *spruits* and natural reservoirs. Most cities are built in close proximity to a reliable water supply. In the case of Johannesburg, it was the presence of minerals, particularly gold, which determined the location of the city. For the first few years they appeared to cope with the natural water supply. Soon rapid urbanisation and the pollution of the available water, by practices such as leaving dead carcasses in river beds and throwing dirty water onto the streets, placed a severe strain on the supplies that existed. It was used for domestic and mining operations, both competing with each other for what little was available.

As humans cannot survive without water, it is an interesting story in itself to investigate how a society deals with the dilemma of not finding a plentiful supply in its midst. On a personal level, when water supplies were in short supply such as during the 1895 drought, the wealthy citizens were able to purchase soda or mineral water, or to pay the price demanded by the various water vendors. Stories about individuals such as Jose Lace, the wife of Dale Lace, bathing in milk, and the tea-parties held at the home of the Nourse family, where guests could bathe in the water obtained from his well, and 'emerge for tea

refreshed, dressed in trailing diaphanous gowns,² point to a very superficial attitude towards water.

A further, and very important, aspect regarding water in early Johannesburg was the fact that the city was not well suited to drainage. This led to the decision, on the part of the council, to prohibit washing in residences. The *Amawasha*, who provided a 'laundry service' for the early residents, were an important part of the early landscape. Washing was done in various streams, creating a thriving business for the *Amawasha*. It was not long before the streams were severely polluted, and the decision made to transfer the washermen to a site outside of the city limits. All too soon this sector of labour was overtaken by the introduction of technology with the advent of steam-powered mechanical laundry washing.

It is clear that water came to form an important part of the lives of all Johannesburg's residents. It was not long before the Randlords recognised that it had value. For the upper echelon of society, ever in search of ways to increase their wealth, the idea that it could be treated as a commodity which could be sold was not lost to them. The state did not have the financial resources or expertise to assist in any real way, and therefore approved the granting of concessions for water provision. It was not long before the concession became a monopoly in the hands of the Johannesburg Waterworks' Company. Their high-handed approach towards the residents, especially in war years and immediately thereafter, alienated the population, causing them to re-think about the water supply and ultimately to form the public utility company, the Rand Water Board.

For the remainder of Johannesburg's population, who did not have the financial resources to purchase soda or mineral water, or the water provided by the Johannesburg Waterworks Company (even if supplies were made available to them), obtaining water was part of a daily struggle. In areas such as the Indian and Malay locations, the water supply often obtained from shallow wells. As these locations were extremely overcrowded, these wells were built in close proximity to the latrines in the yards.

² M Barry and N Law, *Magnates and mansions in Johannesburg 1886-1914*, p. 61.

Contamination of the water supply was an obvious result. Water-borne diseases such as dysentery were common. Yet little was done to supply the residents with safe drinking water. It is a severe indictment of the lack of concern about these individuals when it is considered that street-watering was carried out several times a day in the wealthier areas to alleviate the inconvenience of dust, while no water carts were despatched to these areas – even for drinking purposes. There was a perception in the minds of the council that people of colour required less water than their white counterparts. When planning for the water consumption of their consumers, the council allocated, for example, 234 litres of water per person living in white householders, and a mere 32 litres per day to Africans destined to live in Klipspruit!

Water supply was largely in the hands of the Waterworks Company in Johannesburg's early years. Sanitation was a different issue. Here control was exercised by the council, more especially as the period under discussion pre-dated water-borne sewerage. They were always anxious to appease the wealthy citizens, and quick to respond to their complaints. A regular sanitary collection service was provided to them, together with 'house-calls' and special arrangements when the presence of typhoid was detected. For those of limited means, living in crowded conditions in the various locations, the service provided by the council was rudimentary at best. In 1903, for example, in the African location there was one latrine for every 16 stands, when the population density was eight persons per stand, meant that 128 people were sharing one latrine. The buckets from these latrines were only emptied on alternate nights. The stench and resultant unhygienic conditions can only be imagined! A number of the health officials recognised the different cultural habits of various population groups and recommended that these be taken into account when providing for their needs, and also brought the council's attention to the squalid conditions under which the people were residing. But theirs were voices in the wilderness, for no one paid any attention to them. Only when the threat of disease became a real concern, was any action taken.

Overcrowded housing was a further threat to the health of the city, as it was feared that the plague would eventually take root in one the 'poor' areas. A number of

commissions of enquiry were conducted, and expropriation of the areas recommended. Ultimately the worst fears of the citizens was realised, when the plague broke out in the Indian location. The council were quick to react. Within days the area had been cordoned off, the residents relocated and the houses burnt to the ground.

The blame for the deterioration in the Indian and other locations cannot be placed squarely in the hands of the local residents. The lack of sanitary facilities, already discussed, certainly played a part. The role of the land speculators further contributed to the downgrading of the areas, albeit in a more subtle manner. By purchasing vast amounts of the available land, they precipitated a housing shortage, and the severe overcrowding of what little accommodation that was available. The majority of the population was forced to live in extremely difficult circumstances. Often there were more than ten people occupying a single two-roomed house, with no electricity, running water or toilet facilities. Little regard was paid to the concept of human dignity. When the areas close to the city centre began to increase in value, there was an even greater tendency to allow them to deteriorate so that a financial gain could be made from their inevitable expropriation.

A large sector of the early residents, specifically African mine workers, and African council and railways employees, lived in compound accommodation. Those owned by the railways were classified as the worst in Johannesburg. Life in the mine compounds was regimented and austere, and far from satisfactory. Some improvements were made after the South African War, following the outcry in Britain regarding the treatment of mine labourers and in an effort to encourage the workers who had left the mines to return. There was, however, some irony in the fact that the council compounds were of a standard that fell short of the regulations prescribed by council themselves. It was only in 1903 that they began to pay attention to the lack of amenities, and at that stage the proposal was to dispose of effluent in a manner which had already been disregarded as being unsuitable for Johannesburg's other residents. It is unfortunate that the council, whilst being fully aware of the difficulties experienced by their workers both with regard to the lack of plant and the unpleasant nature of their duties, did not do more to improve

the quality of their living conditions. Instead, the council showed they were guilty of double-standards by dictating the 'ideal' in respect of living conditions in the compounds, and failing to live up to them in their own facilities. It is lamentable that they did not take cognizance of their potential to be role-models for the other providers of hostel accommodation in Johannesburg at the time.

An evaluation of working-class housing during the period under discussion also provides some interesting perspectives. In those early days, accommodation was mainly to be found in the numerous hotels and boarding houses in the city. It was a male-dominated society, many of whom did not demand much in the way of housing, water or sanitation. However, once there was a move towards a more settled type of existence, many of the male residents wished to bring their wives and families to Johannesburg. It was then that the reality of the absence of accommodation suitable to family life began to make itself felt. Lord Milner recognised that it was a serious problem, particularly in the light of his plans for reconstruction, and appointed the housing commission to look into the matter. The report gives valuable insights into the difficulties of the residents in securing accommodation.

In less than two decades urbanisation had produced all the evils of fast-developing capitalist cities: the working class were separated from the well-to-do by lack of transport, the high cost of living and scarcity of affordable accommodation. Slums such as those in the Brickfields-Burghersdorp area were associated in the mind of the ruling classes with London's rookeries. Milner's plans to make the Transvaal predominately British through the immigration of the right kind of working-class man was undermined by successive economic crises and, not less, the ravages of silicosis amongst British miners.³ Housing therefore remained a problem at the end of the Reconstruction period, and it was some time before the situation would be resolved.

The ultimate conclusion, when evaluating the period under discussion in terms of housing, water and sanitation, is that these aspects were under the control of a very

³ E Katz, *The white death, Silicosis on the Witwatersrand gold mines, 1886-1910*, pp. 93-121.

limited number of individuals. They showed very little in the way of compassion and humanity towards the greater part of Johannesburg's citizens, but rather viewed them as little more than 'tools' to be used to increase their own financial standing through the use of their labour. The result is that the majority of the residents lived in appalling conditions, with little hope of achieving the dreams of a better life that had brought them to the city. It is hoped that these pages have contributed to some understanding of the lives of 'the seething masses', and that their suffering and despair will be recognised.

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