

CHAPTER EIGHT

COMMUNICATION

8.1 Postal and telegraph services

Owing to the semi-nomadic living conditions of the early hunters, stock farmers and Trekkers, communication by means of letter-writing was, as a matter of fact, not a common practice. However, the introduction of postal services was one of the first matters that received attention in the Voortrekker State to the north of the Vaal River. Post was sometimes transported by black mail carriers, merchants and hunters.¹ On 27 May 1850, a *Vaste Brieven Post* (permanent letter postal service) was introduced from Lydenburg via Suikerbosrand and across the farms Jachtfontein, Hartebeesfontein, Kalbasfontein, Cardoville, Doornfontein number 470 and Elandsfontein number 360 in the Gatsrand ward to Potchefstroom.²

In 1857, the field cornet was also tasked with the forwarding of post to people in his ward. Owing to problems such as, inter alia, the illegal opening of letters by the mail carriers and field cornets, the government decided to annually appoint a contractor to handle the post. An act of 1866 determined that the postal services would be undertaken by the state with a postmaster-general in charge.³ A postmaster was appointed for the district of Potchefstroom that very year.⁴

In order to facilitate the transport of post for the private contractors over long distances, mail-coach routes were planned and implemented along government places for outspanning. A place for outspanning was a stopping place where the coach driver would get fresh horses from the owner of the farm on which the outspanning was located.⁵ The only outspanning in the Gatsrand, adjacent to the western side of the farm Wonderfontein, was used as part of the mail-coach route from Barberton to Kimberley in 1871.⁶ A major reason for the use of this particular outspanning was its strategic location between the towns of Pretoria and

¹ H. Zeederberg, *Veld express*, p.16.

² E. Rosenthal en E. Blum, *Runner and mailcoach*, p.27.

³ P.J.H.S. Grobler, *Poswese in die Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek tot 1899* (D. Phil-proefskrif, 1956), pp.9, 220.

⁴ E.H. Jenkins, "Commercial section of Potchefstroom history" in A.J.H. van der Walt (red.), *Potchefstroom, 1838-1938*, p.272.

⁵ Carletonville (PU vir CHO), verw. 3: Bandopname K. du Preez, 6.11.1986.

⁶ *Staats Courant der ZAR* nr. 366, 21.2.1871, p.205.

Potchefstroom that made it possible to transport post back and forth daily.⁷ The route ran across the farms Welverdiend, Wonderfontein, Rooipoort, Oog van Wonderfontein and Elandsfontein number 494.⁸

Apart from post offices in larger towns, postal agents were also appointed at smaller places. Postal agencies on Gatsrand farms were usually accommodated in a suitable room in the farmer's house, in an outbuilding or in a shop. Such a postal agent – usually the farmer – had to perform these duties without any remuneration.⁹ Farmers in the vicinity of a postal agency could, as a rule, only collect post from an agent on a specific day and at a particular time of day.¹⁰

From 1887, the Volksraad used the district road from Potchefstroom across the farms Taaiboschspruit, Elandsfontein number 289, Leeuwpoort, Doornkloof and Rietfontein number 162 to Johannesburg as postal road.¹¹ According to tradition, whenever a mail-coach would be approaching the postal agencies along this route, a bugle would be blown to announce its approach. A midday meal could then be served to the coach driver and his helpers so that no time might be lost.¹² The contractors were bound by contract to adhere to the prescribed delivery times.¹³



C DREYER

Photo: H Zeederberg, Veld Express

Postal agencies, some of which also had a money order section and which were opened in the Gatsrand prior to 1900, were located on the farms Wonderfontein (3 June 1873),¹⁴ Elandsfontein number 289 (also known as Wolvaardts or Suikerbos, 3 June 1890), Driefontein number 591 (19 July 1893),

⁷ *Staats Courant der ZAR* nr. 515,4.3.1874, p.2. Vergelyk ook E.H. Jenkins, "Commercial section of Potchefstroom history" in A.J.H. van der Walt (red.), *Potchefstroom, 1838-1938*, p.274.

⁸ Carletonville (PU vir CHO), verw. 3: Bandopname K. du Preez, 6.11.1986.

⁹ P.J.H.S. Grobler, *Poswese in die Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek tot 1899*, p.220.

¹⁰ Carletonville (PU vir CHO), verw. 3: Bandopname K. du Preez, 6.11.1986.

¹¹ Staatsekretaris (TAB), verw. R6967/87: Landdros/Staatsekretaris, 27.9.1887.

¹² Carletonville (PU vir CHO), verw. 3: Bandopname K. du Preez, 6.11.1986.

¹³ H. Zeederberg, *Veld express*, p.14.

¹⁴ *Staats Courant der ZAR* nr. 476, 3.6.1873, p.2.

Vlakfontein (15 May 1894), Rietfontein number 162 (also known as Geldenhuis, 1 January 1895), Boschhoek (1 August 1895), Welverdiend (1 February 1897), Bank (1 March 1897), Losberg (1 October 1897) and Modderfontein (1 November 1898).¹⁵

Post was delivered on a monthly basis by coach by most of the postal agencies. There was, however, also a weekly postal service from Potchefstroom to Elandsfontein number 289 via Losberg to Krugersdorp, as well as a half-weekly postal service to Welverdiend via Elandsfontein number 289 and Losberg to the ward Vaal River.¹⁶

Owing to the activities of mail-coach contactors in the Cape Colony, few of these contractors were operating in the ZAR by 1873 when gold was discovered near Lydenburg and Pilgrim's Rest. The discovery also increased the demand for contractors. The need for a mail-coach and passenger service gave rise to the establishment of the Transvaal and Goldfields Extension Transport Company by OWA Forssman of Potchefstroom. The route of this company extended from Potchefstroom over the Gatsrante to Pretoria and Lydenburg. Up to and including the annexation of the Republic by Britain in 1877, Forssman was the major contractor in the ZAR. By 1882, as a result of the discovery of gold, the Republic began to make headway economically. The prosperity gave rise to an increase in the number of mail-coach contractors.¹⁷

Almost certainly, the best known contractor was the Zeederberg Mail-coach Service. This contractor transported post especially between Potchefstroom and Kimberley, as well as to the current Zimbabwe.¹⁸ An inhabitant of the Gatsrand, who was employed by these contractors and went as far as Umtali in the current Zimbabwe and other towns in that area in his term of service, was CL Dreyer of Kraalkop. Apparently, he was well-known for his adventures with animals of prey, thieves and the Ndebele.¹⁹ Kraalkop was also an unofficial stopping place when the Zeederberg mail-coach travelled from Potchefstroom to Johannesburg. The local hotel seems to have been the major attraction.²⁰

¹⁵ P.J.H.S. Grobler, *Poswese in die Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek tot 1899*, pp. 479-491. Kyk ook *Staats Courant der ZAR* nr. 884, 17.3.1895, p.11.

¹⁶ P.J.H.S. Grobler, *Poswese in die Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek tot 1899*, bylaag U.

¹⁷ H. Zeederberg, *Veld express*, pp.17-19.

¹⁸ *Carletonville/Fochville Herald*, 5.8.1977, p.9. Vergelyk ook H. Zeederberg, *Veld express*, p.30, en W. Vernon Johnstone "The old coaching days in South Africa had a thrill all their own" *The Outspan* 5, 6.4.1945, pp.22-23.

¹⁹ H. Zeederberg, *Veld express*, p.144. Kyk ook Senex (Pseud.) "Legendary figures of old Potchefstroom", *Potchefstroom Herald and Western Gazette*, 23.12.1975, p.2.

²⁰ *Carletonville/Fochville Herald*, 5.8.1977, p.9.

The opening of the Krugersdorp-Klerksdorp railroad in 1897 would gradually replace the use of mail-coach services.²¹ Postal services were, however, further affected by the start of the Second Anglo-Boer War. The agencies in the Gatsrand were disrupted for the entire duration of the war.²²

From 1903, matters were gradually normalised and in Potchefstroom telephone services were installed and started operating in 1908. About 40 subscribers made use of the service; however, most of these were businesses.²³

Telephone communications between Potchefstroom and Johannesburg were envisaged as early as in 1907²⁴ and the Gatsrand would also benefit by that. After WWI a telephone and telegraph line was installed all along the Krugersdorp-Klerksdorp railroad. The post office at Welverdiend Station was the main telephone centre for places such as Fochville, Taaiboschspruit and Klerkskraal. The post of the surrounding area arrived at Welverdiend Station by rail and the distribution thereof was managed by a postmaster and two white assistants.²⁵ Telegraph services were also installed at Welverdiend.

Apart from the postal agencies that were already operating in the Gatsrand prior to WWII, five more were opened at Loopspruit (Klipdrift), Jachtfontein, Kraalkop, Cardoville and Rietspruit after the war. Those living on farms on the border of the Gatsrand, usually made use of agencies outside the area, such as those at Frederikstad, Vereeniging, Evaton and Potchefstroom because of the long distances to agencies within the area.²⁶ After the Potchefstroom-Fochville railroad had been constructed in 1927, the postal agencies at Loopspruit, Kraalkop and Losberg were also provided with public telephones while, at Losberg, provision was also made for telegraph services.²⁷

As a means of communication, postal, telegraph and telephone services fulfil a special role in every society. This was applicable to Gatsrand as well, especially for mines that had opened in the area from 1937. Initially, mineworkers had to make use of the Oberholzer post

²¹ C.F. van R. Zietsman, "Die bou van die Suidwestelyns, 1895-1897, en die NZASM-stasie= geboue op Krugersdorp en Klerksdorp", *Contree* 12, Julie 1982, p.7. Kyk ook Carletonville (PU vir CHO), verw. 1: Herinneringe ds. J. Dreyer.5.8.1977.

²² Carletonville (PU vir CHO), verw. 1: Herinneringe ds. J. Dreyer, 5.8.1977.

²³ Potchefstroomse Museum, verw. PO. 248.96: "Die ontwikkeling van die poswese", p.4.

²⁴ Unie van Suid-Afrika, *Report of the Postmaster-General for the year 1907* 8, p.1.

²⁵ Justisie (SAB), verw. 395 nr. 3/251/25: M. du Toit/Secretary SAP,4.11.1924. Kyk ook Carletonville (PU vir CHO), verw. 1: Herinneringe dominee J. Dreyer, 5.8.1977.

²⁶ Ongekatalogiseer: (TAB), Kieserslys van wyk nr. 5 Gatsrand, 1905. Kyk ook Unie van Suid-Afrika, *Report of the Postmaster-General for the year 1913* 13, p.1 en *De Westelike Stem*, 3.10.1923, p.6 en 9.4.1924, p.8.

²⁷ *De Westelike Stem*, 18.1.1928, p.5. Vergelyk ook United Transvaal Directory Company Limited, *United Transvaal directory 1941*, pp.402, 1522.

office at Wonderfontein.²⁸ In 1945, a post office was opened at Blyvooruitsicht. It was named the Blyvooruitsig Post Office.²⁹ It was named thus to avoid any confusion between this office and the one at Schweizer-Reneke. The latter office had already been known as the Blyvooruitsicht Post Office since 1922.³⁰ A telephone line was installed to the mines as well, yet only a few mine officials already had a telephone at their disposal by 1948.³¹

8.2 Road transport

There were no proper roads during the pioneering years of the Trekkers to the north of the Vaal River. The means of transport involved animals such as oxen and horses, as well as wagons.³² The best known route in the Gatsrand in the nineteenth century probably was the mail-coach route from Potchefstroom via Welverdiend and the government's place for outspanning at Wonderfontein to Pretoria. It was also generally known as the "Boer route".³³ During the *volksvergadering* (large public meeting) at Wonderfontein in 1879, people from far and wide made use of this route to get to the farm.³⁴

After the proclamation of Johannesburg in 1886,³⁵ a start was made with the planning of a road link thither (to that place = Johannesburg) from Potchefstroom. The proposed route was inspected by Field Cornet JT Martins and approved in collaboration with the respective owners of the farms Kaalplaats (A du Plessis), Buffelsdoorn (P Schutte), Elandsfontein number 289 (G Pienaar and B Wolvaardt), Driefontein number 591 (A de Vries), Leeuwpoort (J van der Merwe), Doornkloof (A Oosthuizen) and Rietfontein number 162 (WM van Vuuren).³⁶

In pursuance of an earlier decision by the *Volksraad* in 1874, namely to have tollgates on public roads in various areas, a tollgate was opened at Elandsfontein number 289 on completion of the Potchefstroom-Johannesburg route.³⁷ The Department of Public Works were in charge of the tollgates.³⁸ Owing to problems experienced with tollgates, such as

²⁸ United Transvaal Directory Company Limited, *United Transvaal directory 1941*, p.1557. Kyk ook Anon., "De Nederlandsche Landbounderzetting op Wonderfontein (Transvaal)", *Zuid-Afrika*, Oktober 1934, p.6.

²⁹ W. Hagan-Watson, "Down memory lane..." p.41.

³⁰ Unie van Suid-Afrika, *Report of the Postmaster-General for the year 1922* 22, p.2. (Inligting hieroor is ook verkry uit die katalogus van die Poskantoor Museum, Pretoria).

³¹ Carletonville (PU vir CHO), verw.5: Onderhoud C. Rautenbach, 23.4.1987

³² P.J. van der Merwe, *Die noordwaartse beweging van die Boere voor die Groot Trek, 1770-1842*, p.359.

³³ Carletonville (PU vir CHO), verw. 3: Bandopname K. du Preez, 6.11.1986.

³⁴ M.C. van Zyl, *Die protesbeweging van die Transvaalse Afrikaners, 1877-1880*, p.95.

³⁵ J.S. du Plessis, "Die Suid-Afrikaanse Republiek" in C.F.J. Muller (red.), *500 jaar Suid-Afrikaanse geskiedenis*, p.250.

³⁶ Potchefstroomse Landdros (TAB), verw. 15: J.T. Martins/Landdros, 9.2.1888.

³⁷ Potchefstroomse Museum, verw. NOO 725.98: Tolhekke en die geskiedenis van Noordbrug, p.4. Kyk ook B.J.V. Naude (red.), *Gedenkuitgawe: Ontvangs van poskoets te Oberholzer, 9-11 Februarie 1952*, p.58.

³⁸ Departement Publieke Werken (TAB), verw. 28 nr. 07/0728: Tolhekke, 1888.

inadequate operators and the costs involved, caused the District Council of Potchefstroom to finally discontinue toll tax in the district.³⁹

Roads were also constructed in the wards and paid for by the District Council of Potchefstroom. Farmers in the Gatsrand often constructed roads on their own and were compensated for doing so. Ever since 1888, a number of bridges and roads were built in the ward. Roads in the wards eliminated the problems inhabitants had previously experienced to get to the respective schools and stations in the area.⁴⁰ In 1888, JP Nortjé constructed a road from Blyvooruitzicht to Doornfontein number 470 at a cost of £60.⁴¹ In 1892, he also built a road from Rooipoort to Wonderfontein for £11.⁴² Other roads that were constructed from 1888 to 1892 were the routes Stompoorfontein to Poortjie (£68), Driefontein number 591 to Oog van Elandsfontein (£40), Leeuwspruit to Doornpoort (£15) and Poortjie to Wonderfontein (£11).⁴³ Five bridges were also built on the farms Stompoorfontein, Poortjie, Kaalfontein, Rietspruit and Modderfontein.⁴⁴

All of the above-mentioned roads in the Gatsrand were dirt roads. The result was that rain, as well as frequent use of these roads, eventually made some of them impassable. In 1896, Field Cornet Martins, for instance, asked permission from the magistrate at Potchefstroom to repair three sections of the road from Potchefstroom to Johannesburg at a cost of £50.⁴⁵

The opening of the Krugersdorp-Klerksdorp railroad (in 1897) resulted in the construction of ward roads to the stations at Welverdiend and Bank. In 1898, A de Vries got permission to build a road from Oog van Elandsfontein to Bank Station at a cost of £35, while JM Nortjé and PJ Terblanche built a road from Buffelsdoorn to Welverdiend Station at a cost of £30.⁴⁶ Other roads in the wards built prior to Union, were between Buffelsdoorn and Taaiboschspruit (1902) and between Klipdrift and Potchefstroom (1909).⁴⁷

In the course of time, the arrival of the motorcar resulted in an improved and well organised basis being created for both the maintenance and the improvement of roads in the

³⁹ Potchefstroomse Museum, verw. NOO 725.98: Tolhekke en die geskiedenis van Noordbrug, p.4.

⁴⁰ Carletonville (PU vir CHO), verw. 3: Bandopname K. du Preez, 6.11.1986.

⁴¹ Potchefstroom Landdros (TAB), verw. 15: J.P. Nortjé/Landdros, 3.7.1888.

⁴² Potchefstroom Landdros (TAB), verw. 19: J.T. Martins/Landdros, 10.3.1892.

⁴³ Potchefstroom Landdros (TAB), verw. 15: J.T. Martins/Landdros, 20.8.1888 en 7.7.1888. Vergelyk ook verw. 154: Diverse losse stukke, 12.2.1892, 28.4.1892 en 6.5.1892.

⁴⁴ Potchefstroom Landdros (TAB), verw. 154: Di verse losse stukke, 12.2.1892, 25.4.1892 en 6.5.1892. Vergelyk ook verw. 25: A.L. Rousseau/Landdros, 23.6.1898.

⁴⁵ Potchefstroom Landdros (TAB), verw. 23: J.T. Martins/Landdros, 27.8.1896.

⁴⁶ Potchefstroom Landdros (TAB), verw. 25: J.T. Martins/Distrikraad, 28.6.1898.

⁴⁷ Departement van Paaie (Potchefstroom), verw. P92/1 nr. DP 07/072/23/22/92, 1909. Kyk ook Carletonville (PU vir CHO), verw. 3: Onderhoud T.F. Dreyer, 6.5.1987

Potchefstroom district. In the twenties, the Transvaal was subdivided into a number of road districts, each with a road council to assist the administrator in an advisory capacity. In Potchefstroom, a road council (subsequently the Department of Roads) replaced the previous District Council.⁴⁸

In order to make two-way traffic possible, a road commission established on the initiative of the inhabitants of the Gatsrand, requested the Road Council (also known as the *Wegeraad*) in 1924 to widen the roads in the ward.⁴⁹ Owing to a lack of funds, the Road Council could not always comply with such requests. Some of the roads from Potchefstroom to other towns were consequently in poor condition.⁵⁰

For the convenience of the inhabitants of Fochville and surrounds, the SAR & H initiated a motor bus service on 1 April 1925 from Potchefstroom via Rietfontein number 503, Klipdrift School, Loopspruit Post Office, Boschhoek, Kaalplaats, Taaiboschspruit Office and Elandsfontein number 289 to Fochville. Passengers and parcels were transported.⁵¹

The economic depression of the 1930s also affected the operations of the Potchefstroom Road Council. Roads could not be repaired owing to a shortage of funds.⁵² Roads that were in a poor condition gave rise once more to complaints. In 1936, the owners of the West Wits Hotel at Bank,

G Morris and Jones, requested the Potchefstroom Road Council by means of a petition to repair the road from Bank to Venterspost, since it was in a shocking condition. In 1937, the inhabitants of Fochville and environs asked the Minister of Lands to address the poor condition of roads in the area.⁵³

The gold-mining industry in the Gatsrand sped up the provision of better roads and transport services. The Blyvooruitzicht mine introduced a bus service from Randfontein to Blyvooruitzicht in order to transport its workers to and fro.⁵⁴

⁴⁸ J.H. Coetzee (red.), *Voortgesette streekopname van beheerde gebied nr. 2...*, p.147 .

⁴⁹ *De Westelike Stem*, 9.4.1924, p.5.

⁵⁰ E.H. Jenkins, "The last quarter of a century" in A.J.H. van der Walt (red.), *Potchefstroom, 1838-1938*, p.300.

⁵¹ *De Westelike Stem*, 8.4.1926, p.1.

⁵² E.H. Jenkins, "The last quarter of a century" in A.J.H. van der Walt (red.), *Potchefstroom 1838-1938*, p.300.

⁵³ Departement van Paaie (TAB), verw. P89/1 nr. DP 07/072/23/22/98: G. Morris en Jones/ Departement van Paaie 22.11.1936. Kyk ook *Potchefstroom Herald and Western Gazette*, 18.6.1937, p.5.

⁵⁴ G.L. van Heerde, *Die invloed van moderne vervoer op die ontwikkeling van dorpe in Wes-Transvaal*, p.116.

A bus service was started by the city council of Potchefstroom from the town to the Blyvooruitzicht and West Driefontein Mines. This, however, led to a court case between the city council of Potchefstroom and the South African Railways. The railways reckoned that the train service from the station at Oberholzer was adequate and requested that the bus service should cease because it was robbing the SAR of income. The city council, however, argued that the train schedule did not meet the needs of the mine workers who worked shifts. Those who, for instance, whose shifts ended at 19:00 had to wait for a train to Potchefstroom until 20:30. Owing to the popularity of the bus service, the SAR lost the case.⁵⁵

Apart from the extending transport services in the Gatsrand, roads were constructed in the area of the mines in order to eliminate transport problems. In October 1946, a road was planned and construction started on it across the farms Varkenslaagte, Welverdiend, Twyfelvlakte, Blyvooruitzicht, Driefontein number 118 and Rietfontein number 105 to Uitval. The road was, however, not yet completed by 1948.⁵⁶

In 1947, a dirt road of 25 km was built from Welverdiend to Blyvooruitzicht where it linked with the road going to Johannesburg.⁵⁷ Apart from the road going from Potchefstroom to Johannesburg, one which was constructed as far back as in the thirties, all of the other roads in the Gatsrand had dirt or gravel surfaces by 1948.⁵⁸

8.3 Railways

Although there was a possibility of developing railways in the Gatsrand only in 1895, inhabitants were already informed of the possible construction of a railway line from Pretoria to Delagoa Bay (the so-called Eastern Line) in 1876. The Volksraad had, before any steps could be taken in this regard, tested the opinion of the ZAR burghers by means of a referendum. At that stage, the inhabitants of the Gatsrand did not share the *Volksraad's* ideal regarding the establishment of a link with a non-British-controlled harbour. The reason for this was the government's intention to sell government property for the sake of raising funds or for applying for a loan.⁵⁹ The existing debt burden of the ZAR and fear of even more

⁵⁵ *Potchefstroom Herald and Western Gazette*, 14.2.1947, p.2.

⁵⁶ *Potchefstroom Herald and Western Gazette*, 22.11.1946, p.2. Vergelyk ook Carletonville (PU vir CHO), verw. 3: Onderhoud C. Rautenbach, 23.4.1987.

⁵⁷ W. Hagan-Watson, "Down memory lane...", p.48.

⁵⁸ J.H. Coetzee (red.), *Voortgesette streekopname van beheerde gebied nr. 2...*, p.146. Vergelyk ook *Potchefstroom Herald and Western Gazette*, 3.11.1946, p.3 en 22.11.1946, p.2.

⁵⁹ *Potchefstroom Landdros (TAB)*, verw. 6: J.J. Hoffman/Landdros. 17.10.1876 en 26.11.1876.

debts if a loan was applied for was what caused the burghers' negative attitude towards the construction of this particular railway line.⁶⁰ Consequently, the government paid attention to the building of the Eastern Line again only after the First War of Independence (1880-1881). The Dutch South African Railway Company (NZASM) was founded in 1887. The purpose for construction of the Eastern Line. Other lines were actually constructed before long. There was, inter alia, the south-western line from Krugersdorp to Klerksdorp.⁶¹

The railway plan for the south-western line originally envisaged only two stations in the Gatsrand, namely Bank and Welverdiend.⁶² The owners of Wonderfontein, Blyvooruitzicht and Elandsfontein number 289 were, however, not pleased with this decision, since they were located too far from these stations. In 1896, a petition was drawn up on the initiative of HF Oberholzer and signed by all of those who were disgruntled. J Smit, the government commissioner of the railways, gave permission on behalf of the railways for the construction of a railway halt (or siding) at Wonderfontein.⁶³

Owners of die farms involved had to make available 12 morgen (10,32 hectares) of land to the NZASM – 10 morgen (9,56 hectares) for die building of die station and 2 morgen (1,72 hectares) for business premises.⁶⁴ On 2 November 1896, the south-western line covering a distance of 84 km as far as Frederikstad was opened and on 11 July 1897 this line was completed from Krugersdorp as far as Potchefstroom over a distance of 108 km.⁶⁵

Up to and including the end of the Second Anglo-Boer War in 1902, the Krugersdorp-Klerksdorp railway line was the only railway line that passed through the Gatsrand. A trajectory between Vereeniging and Johannesburg that was completed in 1904 crossed over three farms within the south-eastern Gatsrand border, namely Houtkop, Kwaggafontein and Wildebeestfontein. On 2 June 1911, Ventersdorp was linked to Welverdiend by rail.⁶⁶ This soon meant that the inhabitants of the Gatsrand had to make use of the station more often – especially for transporting fresh products to other towns. Facilities were also created for the convenience of passengers as was the case in 1913,⁶⁷ when permission was granted to the

⁶⁰ J.S. du Plessis, "Die Suid-Afrikaanse Republiek" in C.F.J. Muller (red.), *500 jaar Suid-Afrikaanse geskiedenis*, p.246.

⁶¹ C.F. van R. Zietsman, "Die bou van die Suidwestelyn, 1895-1897...", *Contree* 12, Julie 1982, p.5. Kyk ook Anon., *In memoriam N.Z.A.S.M.*, pp.16, 173.

⁶² Anon., *In memoriam N.Z.A.S.M.*, p.16.

⁶³ Staatsekretaris (TAB), verw. R12714/97: H.F. Oberholzer/Regeringskommissaris van Spoorweë, 1897.

⁶⁴ D.J. Coetzee, *Spoorwegontwikkeling in die Suid-Afrikaanse Republiek, 1872-1899*, p.88.

⁶⁵ C.F. van R. Zietsman, "Die bou van die Suidwestelyn, 1895-1897...", *Contree* 12, Julie 1982, p.7. Kyk ook Anon., *In memoriam N.Z.A.S.M.*, p.174.

⁶⁶ SAS en H., *Jaarverslag van die hoofbeampte, 1962-1963* 47(63), p.157.

⁶⁷ Justisie (SAB), verw. 174 nr. 3/1001/13: General Manager SAR/Secretary Justice, 1.10.1913 en 17.10.1913.

Jew, S Rosenthal, to open a bookstore on the station for selling newspapers and magazines.⁶⁸

The route of the south-western railway line was not advantageous to the farm residents in the southern parts of the Gatsrand. A request for a more centrally routed line to link with Potchefstroom was made to General L Botha as early as in 1910 by TFJ Dreyer in response to the insistence of the inhabitants.⁶⁹ This project must have been postponed owing to the outbreak of WWI and a lack of funds. The importance of such a railway link led to a petition in 1922 by grain farmers who wished to sell their products in Potchefstroom.⁷⁰

The government approved the construction of a railway line from Potchefstroom to Losberg in 1925.⁷¹ This line was completed on 13 April 1927 over a distance of 50 km and at a cost of £145.⁷² At the request of the inhabitants of Klipdrift, a railway halt (siding) was provided close to the school building.⁷³

The establishment of mines in the Gatsrand heralded a new era for the stations at Welverdiend, Bank and Oberholzer. Mine workers who lived in other towns made use of the train services to get to work and back home. It was especially the opening of the alluvial diamond fields in the vicinity of Lichtenburg and Ventersdorp that made the Welverdiend railway link an important one.⁷⁴ In 1948, the Minister of railways announced that an amount of £616 000 would be spent on improvements to the railway facilities at Welverdiend.⁷⁵ This envisaged more railway services for the inhabitants of the Gatsrand.⁷⁶

8.4 Air traffic

As far as air traffic is concerned, the Gatsrand had no modern airfield up to and including 1948. However, an airfield had been laid out as long ago as 21 February 1923 about one kilometre to the east of Welverdiend and it was apparently used especially for the army's military reviews.⁷⁷ In 1927, during a military review at Welverdiend, the poor condition of the airfield was brought up for discussion after aircraft could no longer land there and had to

⁶⁸ Suid-Afrikaanse Spoorweë (SAB), verw. 200 nr. G4/547: E.H. Hood/ S. Rosenthal, 29.7.1913.

⁶⁹ Carletonville (PU vir CHO), verw. 3: Onderhoud T.F. Dreyer, 6.5.1987.

⁷⁰ Ministerie van Vervoer (SAB), verw. 409 nr. 1644: J. Wulfsohn/T. Dreyer, 15.3.1922.

⁷¹ Unie van Suid-Afrika, *Official yearbook of the Union and of Basutoland, Bechuanaland protectorate and Swaziland* 8, 1925, p.699.

⁷² Suid-Afrikaanse Spoorweë (SAB), verw. 408 nr. 1644: Sekretaris SAS/G.P. Brits, 4.4.1928.

⁷³ Suid-Afrikaanse Spoorweë (SAB), verw. 408 nr. 1644: P.A.J. Opperman/Minister van Spoorweë, 13.8.1926.

⁷⁴ Justisie (SAB), verw. 395 nr. 3/251/25: Commissioner Police/Secretary of Justice, 6.3.1929.

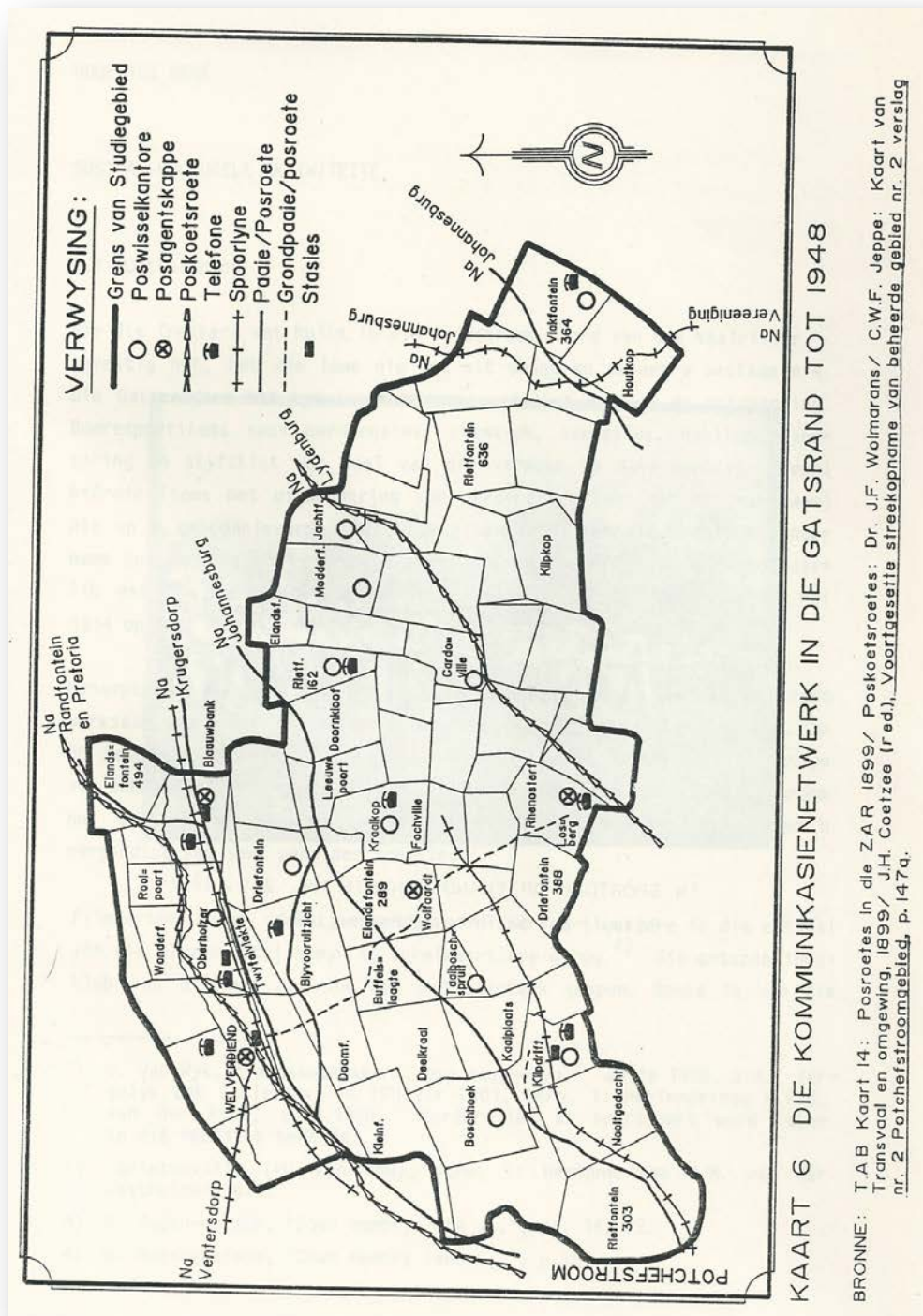
⁷⁵ *Potchefstroom Herald and Western Gazette*, 16.1.1948, p.5 en 26.3.1948, p.2.

⁷⁶ Gesondheid (SAB), verw. 304 nr. 500/1: Additional district surgeon Welverdiend, 1930-1943, 7.9.1943.

⁷⁷ Direkteur van Burgerlike Lugvaart (SAB), verw. 34 nr. 824/161: Aerodromes Welverdiend, 21.2.1923.

return to Zwartkop.⁷⁸ Consequently, the airfield was seldom used and the problem remained until the 1940s.⁷⁹

Judging by Map number 6, it would seem that the communication network of the Gatsrand was already well established by 1948. This inevitably made improved communications possible between towns in the area and was also stimulating in all spheres regarding the activities in every town:



⁷⁸ Direkteur van Burgerlike Lugvaart (SAB), verw. 34 nr. 824/161: Aerodromes Welverdiend 24.10.1927 en 28.10.1927.

⁷⁹ Direkteur van Burgerlike Lugvaart (SAB), verw. 34 nr. 824/161: Aerodromes Welverdiend, 11.8.1941.