

The Influence of British Traders on Early Potchefstroom, 1852-1877

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Background

The place of Potchefstroom as the earliest Voortrekker town next to Pietermaritzburg, is well-established. On the other hand, little has been published about its demographic, economic and cultural development and influence.

In fact, within little more than a generation of the town's settlement, its economic influence was phenomenal. By the late 1850s, it had become nothing less than the most important trading centre in the interior of Southern Africa and it was to remain that until the rise of Johannesburg. In this foreign, and especially British influence was to play the predominant role.

While most Voortrekker leaders had Natal in mind as the final destination of the Great Trek, Hendrik Potgieter was a significant exception. On the one hand, like all other Voortrekker leaders, he was haunted by fears of British intervention in the founding of an independent Voortrekker state. He accurately predicted the annexation of Natal as a denial of Trekker self-determination. He feared, if not foresaw, the establishment of a British sovereignty in what was later to be the Orange Free State. Dread of British pursuit prevented Potgieter from shedding his Trekker mentality easily. His leadership was marked by anxious backward glances, rather than future expectations.

A dimension of this phobia was to regard all British subjects, indeed all foreigners, entering the Transvaal as British agents bent on spying and inciting disaffection amongst blacks to Voortrekker rule. Steps were taken to deny such foreigners entrance into areas under his control, initially around Potchefstroom, and later also in the vicinities of Ohrigstad, Lydenburg and the Soutpansberg.

While taking great care to forestall the entry of "all ilk of English"¹ into the Transvaal, an exception was made for a number of missionaries and, for the sake of trade, *smouse* or itinerant traders coming from the colonial harbours. Suffered, but subjected to police supervision² to prevent arms trade with blacks,³ the latter were an indispensable element in a society, which, especially after the annexation of Natal, had no self-sufficient trade. These insignificant hawkers were the forerunners of the traders who, within 15 years of its establishment in 1839, were to make Potchefstroom

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1 J H Breytenbach (ed), *South African Archival Records, Transvaal I, Minutes of the Volksraad of the South African Republic 1844-1850* (The Government Printer, Cape Town, 1949), p 292; see also J H Breytenbach (ed), *South African Archival Records, Transvaal II, Minutes of the Volksraad of the South African Republic 1851-1853* (The Government Printer, Parow, 1950), pp 337-339

2 Breytenbach (ed), *Transvaal I*, p 28

3 Breytenbach (ed), *Transvaal I*, p 64

the trading capital of all of Southern Africa outside of the British colonies and, to some extent, the Portuguese harbours in Mozambique.

The Sand River Convention brings British Settlers

After the annexation of Natal in 1843 and the establishment of the Orange River Sovereignty in 1848, Potgieter, in dread of real or imagined pursuit by the Union Jack, abandoned Potchefstroom and moved closer to the Portuguese harbours of Mozambique. The political vacuum which this move left in and around Potchefstroom, was filled by a new, more daring and imaginative leader, Andries Pretorius. Unlike Potgieter, he was prepared to resort to diplomacy, underlined by an armed clash, to have the Vaal River formally acknowledged as boundary between independent Voortrekkers to the north and British expansionism to the south.

The other side of Pretorius' aversion to British territorial incursion, was his awareness, more so than Potgieter, of the pioneer Transvaal settlement's dependence on regular, extensive and broadly-based trade. That was not to be sought in the unhealthy Lowveld through Portuguese harbours, but in the obvious expedient of broadening the existing trickle of trade with the colonial harbours.

To this end his efforts revolved around the re-establishment of Potchefstroom as the focal point of Voortrekker political and economic growth. To stimulate trade, his first step was not only to tolerate, but also to encourage traders to bring their wares to the region, though still under close scrutiny. From 1850 onwards, the issuing of *ad valorem* licences to foreign traders, still mostly of the *smous* category, took place. Although Pretorius had by that time largely supplanted Potgieter's influence in Potchefstroom, retentive antagonism towards foreign traders, intensified by the recent annexations, was still buoyant enough to deny them right of settlement. Transgression of this regulation resulted in the seizure of their merchandise.⁴

All of this was about to change. The Sand River Convention, signed in January 1852, by acknowledging Voortrekker independence north of the Vaal, normalized relations between the British colonies and the Transvaalers. It was a defeat for isolationism and a triumph for reason. Pretorius, and after him his son, Martinus Wessel Pretorius, were now prepared to remove all obstacles in the way of friendly relations between the British colonies and the Transvaal – soon to be the South African Republic (ZAR). That included the unimpeded right of Britons to trade, and now also to settle here. After a year's permanent residence, foreigners were henceforth allowed to purchase both property and citizenship.⁵ The Convention was to alter the economy of Potchefstroom dramatically and overnight. Before a generation had passed, Potchefstroom was to be elevated from a struggling village of hovels, to a prosperous trading Mecca. The cause of this dramatic expansion is in direct relation to the settlement of foreign, especially British, merchants.

4 Breitenbach (ed), *Transvaal* I, pp 118-119; National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria (hereafter NASA): ZPO (Landdrost Potchefstroom) 161: Criminal Cases 28; Executive Council 1, Minutes of the Executive Council (hereafter UR), 15 July 1860, Article 12

5 Breitenbach (ed), *Transvaal* I, pp 522-524, 525

Economic influence

There were various reasons why Potchefstroom was the preferred centre of trade, as opposed to Lydenburg, Rustenburg or Bloemfontein, amongst others. These included the healthy and central interior location of the town, its easy access from the Cape harbours and Durban, and the friendly relations existing between the government and the native tribes in the region, which set the town apart from all other regions in Southern Africa. Other beneficial factors were the political dominance, which father and son Pretorius had secured for Potchefstroom, and the fact that in Bloemfontein, the only other viable alternative, British control exerted a stricter monitory control over imaginative trade than was possible in the politically unsettled communities north of the Vaal.

The rapid expansion of trade is reflected in market activities. Before 1852 and for a time thereafter, the focal point of town trade was the market. In the year before the Sand River Convention, two or three wagon-loads of goods were sold there on market days.⁶ By the end of the decade, as many as 12 wagon-loads offering a variety of as much as 37 different products were being sold daily.⁷ The 1860-budget estimated an income of £1 400 from market dues for Potchefstroom, as opposed to only £600 for Pretoria.⁸ By 1866, it was estimated that for every 113 wagon-loads sold on the Potchefstroom market, only seventeen were sold in Pretoria, twelve in Lydenburg and ten in Rustenburg.⁹ In the course of the 18 months between October 1858 and April 1860, the market turnover increased by 400 per cent.¹⁰ This disparity was also reflected in direct imports. For the year ending in July 1866, Potchefstroom shopkeepers imported 292 wagon-loads of about 1 360 kilograms each, compared to 62 wagon-loads for Pretoria.¹¹

This imbalance in market activities cannot be attributed to population growth only, but indicates a flourishing in- and export trade, carried on by foreign, mainly British, traders. The rapid and decisive growth of the market is marginally reflected in constitutional bills from 1856 onwards.¹² Under the heading Revenue of the State, import duties, market fees and trading licences are singled out. The financial statements of the *landdrost* reflect the considerable revenue these sources funnelled into the state coffers.¹³ The significance of the Potchefstroom market is also reflected

6 DE Krynauw (red.), *Transvaalse Argiefstukke, 1850-1853* (Staatsdrukker, Pretoria, 1949), p 76

7 *De Staats Courant der ZAR*, 27 Desember 1857, "Markpryzen"; NASA: ZPO 149: Markt Boek

8 Breytenbach (ed), *South African Archival Records, Transvaal IV, Minutes of the Volksraad of the South African Republic 1859-1963* (The Government Printer, Parow, 1952), p 355

9 F Jeppe, *Die Transvaal'sche oder Süd-Afrikanische Republik beschrieben von Friedrich Jeppe in Potchefstroom* (J Perthes, Gotha, 1868), p 13; See also: Standard Bank Archive, Johannesburg: Box insp file 442, Potchefstroom Annual Report, Manager, Potchefstroom Branch, 1877

10 A N Pelzer, *Geskiedenis van die Suid-Afrikaanse Republiek I* (Balkema, Kaapstad, 1950), p 183

11 *Transvaal Argus*, 17 Julie 1866, "Transvaalse of Zuid-Afrikaanse Republiek Schatting van invoer."

12 Breytenbach (ed), *Transvaal II*, p 463; Breytenbach (ed), *Transvaal II*, p 526

13 For example: *De Staats Courant der ZAR*, 1 July 1866; *Transvaal Argus*, 20 Februarie 1866, "Begroting"; *Transvaal Argus*, 5 June 1866; *Transvaal Argus*, 26 June 1866

in the market master's salary, which was four times that of his colleague in Pretoria.¹⁴ The first market was situated a on site of two *morgen* (1,8 hectares) which it had to share with the municipal pound and *landdrost's* office. Within a year of the Convention, the market was moved to a site double that size.

Another indication of foreign settlement is to be found in the quarterly reports of the *landdrost* who, together with the *heemraden*, controlled the movement of aliens.¹⁵ His financial statements indicate that from 1850, two years before the Sand River Convention, temporary licences were periodically issued to traders, many of whose surnames indicate that they were British, such as F.W. Read, A. Davidson, E. Honey, W. Thomas, James, Melville, J. McCabe, J. Murphy, J. Chapman, Gibson, Anderson and Good.¹⁶ From 1853 onwards, a new type of licence was issued to Anderson, R.T. Gibson, H. Austin, J. Chapman, Edward Pavey,¹⁷ J. Churchill, the Welshman J. Evans, the Scottish brothers Thomas and Glen Scorgie, and the Germans Martinus Goetz and A.F. Schubart. Significantly these were issued to general agents and for shop keeping, which indicates permanent residence.¹⁸ The influx of foreign businessmen was to continue unabated till the end of the 1870s. Trade brought demographic expansion. Families, clerks and servants of traders formed their entourage. Expansion brought with it an increased demand for artisans.¹⁹ By the late 1860s, there were 15 large and a number of lesser shops,²⁰ as well as many other business undertakings. Whereas the white population of the town was estimated at 700 in 1853, it had reached 1 000 four years later.²¹ By 1860, there were some 50 British businessmen in Potchefstroom.²² In 1866 the white population was estimated at 1 200, of which 200 were foreigners.²³ Two years earlier, the population of Pretoria was only 776 and that of Rustenburg, the third largest town in the region, 275.²⁴

By 1853, the first sale of *erven* (stands) to foreigners, both individuals and businesses, were recorded.²⁵ Among the individual buyers were Dunn, Peach, Britton, Henwood, Pavey, Reid and Gibson. Vergottini was an Italian buyer. From various countries Jews like Solomon Hirshfield, J.H. Morris, Sammie Davis and G.W. Glaeser arrived in Potchefstroom. By the 1860s there were also Swedish,

14 *De Staats Courant der ZAR*, 30 Oktober 1866, "Begroting"

15 NASA: Examples in ZPO 161: *Notulen van de hof van Landdrost en Heemraden*.

16 Breytenbach (ed), *Transvaal I*, pp 318-323; Breytenbach (ed), *Transvaal II*, pp 358-362, 505-507

17 R W Schikkerling, *Hoe ry die Boere* (Afrikaanse Pers Boekhandel, Johannesburg, 1964), p 7

18 NASA: RAK (Registrar of Acts), 1940, Potchefstroom Erven, 121, 12; Krynaauw, *Transvaalse Argiefstukke*, p 76 Chapman claimed that he had been a resident in Potchefstroom since 1848 – A J Clement, *Chapman Khama* (Longmans, Cape Town, year unknown), p 1 – but there is no record of a licence for him prior to 1850

19 Pelzer, *Geskiedenis van die Suid-Afrikaanse Republiek I*, p 185

20 *Transvaal Argus*, 5 June 1866, "Transvaal or South African Republic"; Jeppe, *Die Transvaal'sche oder Süd-Afrikanische Republik*, p 7; F Jeppe, *Transvaal Book Almanac and Directory for 1878* (Davis & Sons, Pietermaritzburg, 1877), p 13; F Jeppe, *Transvaal Book Almanac and Directory for 1879* (Van Alphen, Potchefstroom, 1878)

21 D G McGilll, "A History of the Transvaal 1853-1854" PhD thesis, University of Cape Town, 1943, p 35

22 *De Volksblad*, 13 May 1860, editorial

23 *Transvaal Argus*, 5 June 1865, "Transvaal or South African Republic"

24 F J Potgieter, "Die vestiging van die blanke in Transvaal, 1837-1886", *Archives Year Book for South African History*, 21, II (The Government Printer, Elsievirivier, 1959), p 164

25 NASA: ZPO 57: Mortgages; NASA: ZPO 61: Mortgages; NASA: ZPO 59: Property Transfers

Dutch, Portuguese and French residents. Firms for which property was registered, were Evans & Churchill, Austin & Van Zweel and Openshaw & Co.

A comparison between foreign businessmen and Afrikaner licence holders reveals little disparity in numbers. In the course of the 13 years before the Sand River Convention, however, business was confined to a handful of Afrikaans residents to whom the *landdrost* issued licences. By the early 1850s, nine local tradesmen could be identified. They included butchers, leather dressers, tanners, canteen keepers and general agents.²⁶ The most significant of these were Roland Schikkerling and Chris Landsberg, both of whom had settled there by 1849,²⁷ and were to remain prosperous traders for the rest of the century. Particularly Schikkerling traded on a broad basis and was both an importer and exporter, setting the trend, emulating established British business practices.

The significance of British businessmen lay not in their numbers, but in other factors. Apart from individual and communal initiative and capital strength, their business success was the result of their extensive trade contacts and family connections in the main trading centres of the British colonies in Southern Africa and abroad.²⁸ Equally important was that, with roots in the British colonies, the newcomers brought cash into the country, of which the Transvaal had, before the discovery of gold on the Witwatersrand, none of its own. The benefits of cash reached much further than the traders themselves, the town and its farming community, and also provided much needed cash for the state through import duties and tax.

These factors ensured prosperity for British entrepreneurs,²⁹ a state of economic comfort in which the native Potchefstroom residents did not share at first. In fact, Potchefstroom Afrikaners who were later to achieve economic prominence, did so by virtue of association with British undertakings.

A third indication of the prosperity of foreign traders is reflected in the soaring prices of property in the town. In 1850, full stands could be bought for between £1 and £5-5-0.³⁰ Three years later, before the rush, they could be had for £15.³¹ Already those around the market square were the most expensive.³² Immediately before the market was moved in 1853 to its new location in the centre of town, empty stands cost £20 to £60 there,³³ but as soon as shopkeepers and agents relocated to the new centre of trade, prices rocketed. At the close of the 1850s, stands cost as much as £250³⁴ and by the mid-1860s, full *erven* fetched as much as £1 000. In effect the demand for prime property resulted in most *erven* being subdivided. Blossoming trade caused the

26 E Rosenthal, *Manne en maatskappye* (Human & Rousseau, Kaapstad, 1963), p 36

27 Schikkerling, *Hoe ry die Boere*, p 26

28 I Churchill and M Churchill, *A Merchant Family in Natal* (Balkema, Cape Town, 1979), p 51; *Transvaal Advocate*, 20 May 1873, advertisement of A Forssman & Co; *Transvaal Argus*, 5 October 1877, advertisement of F W Reid & Co

29 *Transvaal Argus*, 3 June 1866, editorial

30 Breytenbach (ed), *Transvaal II*, pp 126, 316, 317

31 Breytenbach (ed), *Transvaal II*, p 362

32 Breytenbach (ed), *Transvaal II*, pp 409, 63

33 NASA: ZPO 101: Kontant Boek; NASA: ZPO 57: Verkopen, 4 Oktober 1852; Breytenbach (ed), *Transvaal II*, pp 393, 527

34 *De Staats Courant der ZAR*, 1 July 1859, editorial

erection of shops costing up to £3 000.³⁵ The rapid expansion of trade is reflected in the following editorial, which appeared in the *Staats Courant* of 1 July 1859:

Everywhere is bustle, life, industry and activity Here bricks are being made, there the foundations of new buildings are being laid, there is one half-completed ...

At first the stands most sought after by the new traders were on the fringes of the old market square. The significance of this was emphasised when the *landdrost* decided to move the market. A petition was presented to the Volksraad urging that the move should not take place. Although only five of the 61 signatories were foreign traders, their importance for Potchefstroom is demonstrated therein that most of the other petitioners were prominent residents, including the *landdrost*, the commandant, *heemraden*, field cornets and the local Dutch presbytery. They pointed out that most of the shops around the existing square belonged to *buyten lieden* or “outsiders”, who had paid dearly for these properties to build their shops there, to the benefit of the town as a whole.³⁶

The expansion of trade benefited the existing urban population in various ways. At the outset, residents provided board and lodging, or leased properties to the new settlers. There was an increased demand for fresh food. Butchers and bakers, builders and brick makers, smithies and wagon-makers all profited.³⁷ In 1866, the business community of the town petitioned the Volksraad to encourage journeymen skilled in all branches of the building trade to settle in Potchefstroom.³⁸ There was also a shortage of shoemakers and tailors.³⁹

In keeping with an ever-increasing volume of trade, was the demand for transport, not only to and from harbours, but also to distribution points beyond Potchefstroom, such as Kimberley (especially after 1871). All of the imports for these points passed through Potchefstroom.⁴⁰ This provided farmers, whose means of transport was the ox wagon, with a ready source of additional income. It also explains the continual expansion of the town common to provide grazing for the large numbers of oxen required for transport-riding.⁴¹ By 1877, there were 37 fulltime carriers in Potchefstroom.⁴²

The extent of foreign settlement is reflected not only in the rapid increase in the number of business licences,⁴³ but also in their variety. By the mid-1870s, licences differentiated between shopkeepers, general agents and exporters. The differences are not clear and many businessmen traded in all three capacities, with varying emphasis. In theory, if not always in practice, all forms of export continued to revolve around the market. The farmers who provided produce for local

35 *Transvaal Argus*, 3 July 1866, “Handel”

36 Breytenbach (ed), *Transvaal II*, p 406

37 NASA: ZPO 161: Notulen van de Landdrosthoof, 3 Januarie 1854

38 J H Breytenbach (ed), *South African Archival Records, Minutes of the Volksraad of the South African Republic, 1864-1866*, *Transvaal V* (The Government Printer, Cape Town, date unknown), p 383

39 Jeppe, *Transvaal Book Almanac and Directory for 1879*, p 13

40 NASA: ZPO A 375: Forssman Collection: Forssman – Prekker & De Villiers, 5 May 1875; Forssman – A Foster, 7 May 1875

41 A J van der Walt, *Uit vanmelewe ou Potchefstroom se dae* (Potchefstroom City Council, Potchefstroom, 1936), p 267

42 Jeppe, *Transvaal Book Almanac and Directory for 1878*, p 13

43 *De Staats Courant der ZAR*, 27 November 1857, “Schets Eener Wet”

consumption and now also for export purposes, came there, as well as shopkeepers whose wares were not only imported, but could be purchased at the market, either at auction or on order. Licensed agents were typically wholesalers who bought goods of all description for export to firms established in the colonial harbours. Finally there were still licences for *smouse*, whose custom was soon confined to distant rural farming communities. By the start of the British interregnum in 1878, an informal and incomplete census⁴⁴ revealed 36 importers and exporters, seven general agents and seven speculators. By then there were 60 shopkeepers and professional men in the English community and some 30 artisans, labourers and clerks. Among the Afrikaners there were 49 businessmen, 40 artisans and clerks, as well as 23 officials.

While it is not possible to trace the origin of all the early British inhabitants, it is certain that at least 57 per cent of the English-speaking businessmen were second and third generation 1820-Settlers. Of the 130 businessmen with English and related surnames to whom trading licences were issued between 1871 and 1880, 74 surnames appear on the rolls of settlers who arrived in South Africa between 1820 and 1826.⁴⁵

Potchefstroom shops vied with one another to advertise newly arrived goods in the Potchefstroom newspapers.⁴⁶ For ladies there was a separate department in most shops, which offered dresses of a variety of materials, lace, hats, cosmetics, jewellery, brushes and combs. For men there were work and “best” clothes, pipes, razors, pocket-watches, pocket-knives, hats, caps, spittoons, cricket bats, telescopes and combs. For children there were tailored outfits, toys, harmonicas, toothbrushes and sweets and for the general household, stocks included iron bedsteads, sewing machines, patent medicines, tea, coffee, sugar, rice, dates, linen, feather dusters, porcelain, glassware, cutlery, wallpaper, vases, reels of cotton, tinker ware and even tinned crab and salmon. For farmers, stock included the latest models of British and American ploughs, steam-driven threshing machines, carvers, grinders, and other necessities. Some shops also advertised native truck.⁴⁷

On the other hand, goods on demand for export and for which newspapers carried equally prominent advertisements, were sheep, wool, ostrich feathers, ivory, tobacco, skins, leather, corn, butter, lard, oats, wheat, flour, maize-meal and even giraffe bones. By 1860, more than 80 different types of goods were being sold on the Potchefstroom market, varying from peas to butter and from tobacco pouches to live game.⁴⁸ Exports to Natal by 1860 exceeded those to other destinations and was valued at £50 000.⁴⁹ Cattle, wool and skins seemed to be most in demand. For the Cape Colony it was cattle, tobacco and maize-meal. For the Diamond Fields it was tobacco and leather, and for the Free State, tobacco. To meet the demand for

44 Jeppe, *Transvaal Book Almanac and Directory for 1878*, p 13; Jeppe, *Transvaal Book Almanac and Directory for 1879* The census, conducted by the printer Jeppe, lists only 293 names out of a population of approximately 2 000 From this it appears that his census refers to the heads of households only

45 E. Morse Jones, *Roll of the British Settlers in South Africa - Up to 1826* I (Balkema, Cape Town, 1969), pp 17-72

46 For example: *Transvaal Argus*, 15 May 1866; *Transvaal Argus*, 29 May 1866; *Transvaal Argus*, 12 July 1866; *Transvaal Argus*, 21 September 1866; *Transvaal Argus*, 1 July 1868; *De Staats Courant der ZAR*, 20 July 1865, advertisements

47 *De Staats Courant der ZAR*, 27 November 1857, “A Forssman: Nieuwejaars Goederen”

48 Pelzer, *Geskiedenis van die Suid-Afrikaanse Republiek* I, p 183; *Transvaal Argus*, 25 August 1865

49 *De Zuid-Afrikaan*, 4 Junie 1860

Transvaal flour and maize-meal, both of which were considered to be of superior quality and much in demand on the Diamond Fields,⁵⁰ no less than eight water-driven mills were established at the northern fringe of the town, where there were also facilities for washing wool before bailing it for export. Certain exporters specialised in buying wool⁵¹ and others in the export of elephant tusks. In December 1857, the firm of Evans & Churchill paid £1 575 for 2 727 kilograms of ivory, bought from a single hunter.⁵² In the course of the 18 months between November 1858 and April 1860, 9 768 kilograms of wool was sold on the Potchefstroom market, realising £27 500.⁵³ In 1863, almost half of the Transvaal export of ostrich feathers and 40 per cent of wool exports passed through Potchefstroom.⁵⁴ By then, every wagon-load of merchandise that came to market, was sold, and always at good prices.⁵⁵

On the other hand various factors were responsible for excessively high prices of imported goods in Potchefstroom. These included the high excise duty levied at colonial ports on goods destined for the Transvaal⁵⁶ and the long distance which imports had to travel, facing delays caused by flooded rivers and bad roads. A journey between Port Elizabeth and Potchefstroom could take 30 days and cost £20.⁵⁷ This was partially relieved by attempts to establish ferries on the Vaal River from 1858 onwards, and bridges to span the Mooi River at the town itself.⁵⁸

All imports were not intended for sale in Potchefstroom. A significant volume was destined for markets which lay in all directions from Potchefstroom in the Transvaal, Orange Free State and even beyond in “Darkest Africa”.⁵⁹ Many Potchefstroom traders, like Leask, Churchill & Evans and Forssman, had branches in other towns. In the same measure not all goods brought to market came from the town’s own district, but often originated from far afield. In 1857 a petition from Marico requested the Volksraad to sever the town’s political attachment to Rustenburg and to incorporate it in the Potchefstroom District. The reason, the petitioners argued, was that they visited Potchefstroom regularly to sell their produce and might as well have used such opportunities to conduct administrative business.⁶⁰

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- 50 Potchefstroom Museum: The Potchefstroom Branch of the Standard Bank of South Africa Limited, file 332 12 STA
- 51 Potchefstroom Museum: R. Scorgie, “My Swan Song” (manuscript), 09/35190, 1971, p 35
- 52 *De Staats Courant der ZAR*, 21 February 1857
- 53 NASA: ZPO 149: Markt Boek
- 54 Jeppe, *Die Transvaal’sche oder Süd-Afrikanische Republik*, p 7; NASA: ZPO 150: Markt Boek
- 55 *De Staats Courant der ZAR*, 4 December 1857
- 56 This is indicated by goods travelling from Durban to Potchefstroom costing double the price of goods travelling in the opposite direction – *Transvaal Argus*, 17 July 1866
- 57 *De Volksstem*, 23 July 1878; Jeppe, *Die Transvaal’sche oder Süd-Afrikanische Republik*, p 13; F. L. Cachet, *De Worstelstrijd der Transvalers* (The Press, Pretoria, 1897), p 411
- 58 NASA: UR 1: 25 September 1858, Article 22; *De Staats Courant der ZAR*, 20 November 1859, “Bekendmaking”; *De Staats Courant der ZAR*, 1 July 1859; *De Staats Courant der ZAR*, 1 August 1865, “Potchefstroom Budget”; *Transvaal Argus*, 18 April 1863; *De Staats Courant der ZAR*, 3 February 1866; *De Staats Courant der ZAR*, 20 May 1865, editorial; *De Staats Courant der ZAR*, 15 May 1866, “Scandinavia”
- 59 *Transvaal Argus*, 12 June 1866, editorial
- 60 NASA: State Secretary: Petitions, R1823/57, R257/59; NASA: VR Register: 92, 6 February 1868

As the Transvaal had no currency of its own, a significant volume of trade was conducted by means of bartering.⁶¹ Farmers and other producers of whatever was in demand for export, brought their wares either to the market or, on order directly to a trader. In exchange they would be credited and then debited for whatever was required from the extensive stock of the shopkeeper, or an order would be placed for what was not in stock.

It is not surprising that the Volksraad and Executive Council, having their sittings in Potchefstroom, would commission local traders to supply the state's household needs – from stationery to weaponry.⁶² When cash was in short supply, payment for such supplies usually came in the form of farms estimated to value £40 each.⁶³

By the 1860s, the flourishing trade in Potchefstroom was to face an extended period of tribulation. Government insolvency, amplified by civil war, obliged it to issue bills of exchange without security. By 1865, the bills were replaced by paper money, the infamous “blue backs”. Potchefstroom traders were accustomed to a lack of hard cash, but a complete drying-up of coinage was another matter, especially as townspeople who had been cash customers, now tendered paper money, which offered little security. Shopkeepers added to the dilemma by refusing to accept the “blue backs” or by accepting them at less than face value.

One result of the unsettled economic *impasse* was that farmers no longer brought their produce to the local market, but preferred to sell it in the Free State or Diamond Fields, where cash was available. The once flourishing Potchefstroom was faced with a complete cessation of trade.⁶⁴ Panic-stricken traders and artisans, supported by senior government officials, petitioned the government,⁶⁵ which appointed official and unofficial commissions to seek solutions for the problem.⁶⁶

The first steps towards a solution did not come from the government, but from Potchefstroom initiative. In 1866, a number of Potchefstroom traders established the Transvaal Society of Agriculture and Stock Breeding.⁶⁷ Annual shows were planned; all directed towards encouraging agriculture and once more to sell agricultural produce in Potchefstroom. Also on display were examples of minerals from the region and artefacts, including those of indigenous tribes. This resulted in the establishment of a State Museum and Natural History Association.⁶⁸

Thus far the economic flourishing of Potchefstroom was achieved despite the absence of a commercial bank. If required, credit could be obtained from wealthy farmers, or shopkeepers and traders. The need for a bank was now recognised as the

61 For example: *Transvaal Argus*, 29 July 1857, advertisement of F W Reid

62 Krynauw, *Transvaalse Argiefstukke*, p 77; Breytenbach (ed), *Transvaal IV*, pp 374, 493, 183

63 Breytenbach (ed), *Transvaal V*, p 59

64 Breytenbach (ed), *Transvaal V*, p 373

65 NASA: ZPO 3: Incoming Correspondence, State President – Pavey, 13 September 1865, 4 August 1866, 1 February 1868; Breytenbach (ed), *Transvaal V*, p 359.

66 *Transvaal Argus*, 3 June 1868, editorial; *Transvaal Argus*, 16 Oktober 1867, “Vergadering van handelaars”

67 *Transvaal Argus*, 3 April 1866, editorial; *Transvaal Argus*, 2 October 1866, editorial; *Transvaal Argus*, 10 July 1869, editorial

68 Jeppe, *Transvaal Book Almanac and Directory for 1878*, p 13; Jeppe, *Transvaal Book Almanac and Directory for 1879*, p 13

basic requirement for ending the recession.⁶⁹ As early as 1860, Potchefstroom Volksraad members Evans and Steyn, urged the Volksraad to establish a bank, or at least to arrange for the opening of a branch of a Cape bank in the Transvaal.⁷⁰

The second initiative was therefore to address the lack of banking facilities. A number of businessmen, among them Reid and the Swedish entrepreneur Forssman, founded The Transvaal Board of Executors and Trust Company in 1871. It acted as trustee, auditor, insurer, debt collector, creditor, and bill of exchange negotiator. In short it fulfilled the role of a commercial and credit bank.⁷¹ For the government it acted as auditor and controller of imports and import duties.⁷² It enjoyed the blessing of the government and soon had agencies all over Southern Africa.

In 1874, the first conventional bank, the Cape Commercial Bank, opened a branch in Potchefstroom. Its main contribution to the country's economy was to restore liquidity, before falling into bankruptcy itself in 1882.

More successful was the Standard Bank. Although it had its origins in 1857, its statutes limited operations to British-controlled territories. Its fervour to open branches in the Transvaal therefore had to wait for the British Annexation of 1877. Its interest in this regard is therefore limited to the image the manager's reports portrayed regarding the state of trade in Potchefstroom by the end of the 1870s. Many of the original British businessmen were by that time in financial difficulties or had shut down. Despite high expectations of prosperity which would ensue from British rule, the manager, J.L. Couper, predicted a long wait "for the place to assume features of great magnitude".⁷³ The pessimism of these expectations was to be justified. British rule had ulterior motives and did not bring a return of economic prosperity. The Transvaal War and political tension regarding the *uitlander*-question, which the discovery of gold was to bring in the 1890s, further strained relations between trader and customer.

Political influence

British influence on the development of Potchefstroom was not limited to trade only. Foreigners were debarred from holding public office in the Transvaal until they had acquired citizenship. This was achieved by either a year's residence and ownership of fixed property, or by purchase.⁷⁴ As naturalised citizens, many British residents distinguished themselves. J. Evans and F. Reid were elected to the Volksraad. R.L. Daly and E. Pavey became *heemraden*, next to the *landdrost*, the most important local officials. A.M. Goetz was master of the Orphan Chamber, justice of the peace, *landdrost* and member of the Volksraad.⁷⁵

69 *De Oude Emigrant*, 2 July 1861; *Transvaal Argus*, 25 August 1866; *Transvaal Argus*, 29 January 1868

70 Breytenbach (ed), *Transvaal V*, p 327; *De Oude Emigrant*, 2 July 1861; *Transvaal Argus*, 25 August 1866; *Transvaal Argus*, 28 January 1868

71 *Transvaal Gouvernements Courant*, 41, 22 January 1878, editorial

72 *Transvaal Government Gazette*, 22 January 1878, editorial

73 Standard Bank Archive, Johannesburg: Box insp file 442, Potchefstroom Biannual Reports, July-December 1877 & Biannual Reports, May-December 1878

74 F Jeppe and J G Kotzé (reds), *Locale Wetten der Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek 1849-1885* (Uitgewer onbekend, Pretoria, 1887), pp 31, 646

75 NASA: T96: List of Members of the Volksraad

Less obvious, but equally significant, was the role of British settlers in the local politics of Potchefstroom.

Before the seat of government moved to Pretoria in 1855, Potchefstroom was the capital of the Transvaal. The administrative burden resting on the shoulders of the *landdrost* increased during sittings of the Volksraad and the Executive Council, when the redundant tasks of the State Secretary were passed on to him. To lighten his routine duties, the *landdrost* requested the forming of an auxiliary committee. By 1853 this resulted in a set of town regulations, which was extended a year later⁷⁶ to encompass an elected town board of four members.⁷⁷ The upgrading of the regulations in 1858 offer the first complete picture of what the legislation had entailed. Twelve of the 35 articles revolved around the perennial complaint of water supply,⁷⁸ while the rest concerned traffic, the market, control of vagrant animals, hygiene, building regulations, property taxation, fire fighting and policing.⁷⁹ It appears that the town board had a brief and uneventful existence.⁸⁰

The year 1860 brought a shift in emphasis when English speakers began to take up the call, this time for a fully-fledged municipal system.⁸¹ By 1863, influential Potchefstroom residents, among them Reid, Pavey, Scorgie, Daly, Evans and Ricketts, supported by the overworked *landdrost*, began, significantly, to ask for “a municipality as in the Cape Colony”.⁸² What carried weight, was that all of the 43 signatories of the new petition were prominent townfolk and of these, 20 were British traders, many of whom were government creditors. The petitioners specifically asked for a municipal council similar to that of Grahamstown, where many of the descendants of the 1820-Settlers living in Potchefstroom had relatives and business relations, and thus a firsthand knowledge of local administration there.

In many respects Grahamstown was a suitable political model for Potchefstroom. Both towns were pioneer settlements of almost similar size and both were important trading centres in their respective regions. The municipality of Grahamstown dated from 1863.⁸³ Significant was that, apart from being a military base, the town owned its prosperity largely to trade. In its early years, members of the municipal council were drawn mainly from the business community.

In 1863 a government commission drew up “Regulations for the Municipality of the City of Potchefstroom”,⁸⁴ which was approved at a public meeting. The

76 NASA: ZPO 161: Minutes of the Court of Landdrost and Heemraden, State President – Landdrost, 17 June 1854; Breytjenbach (ed), *Transvaal* II, p 176

77 NASA: ZPO 161: Minutes of the Court of Landdrost and Heemraden, 22 March 1854; also see: *De Staats Courant der ZAR*, 6 November 1857, “Stads Regulatien”

78 Breytjenbach (ed), *Transvaal* VI, p 145.

79 Breytjenbach (ed), *Transvaal* II, pp 59, 17; Jeppe & Kotzé (eds), *Locale Wetten*, p 85

80 *De Staats Courant der ZAR*, 20 November 1857

81 NASA: State Secretary: Incoming Correspondence: R3821/60, Petition: Reid and others – State Secretary; NASA: UR 1: Article 3, 23 February 1860

82 Breytjenbach (ed), *Transvaal* IV pp 539-540

83 K S Hunt, “The Development of Municipal Government in the Eastern Province of the Cape of Good Hope, with special reference to Grahamstown (1827-1862)”, *Archives Year Book for South African History*, 24 (The Government Printer, Parow, 1961), pp 152-198

84 Breytjenbach (ed), *Transvaal* VI, p 295

introduction of municipal government was delayed for three more years by the bankruptcy of the state and the protracted civil disturbances of the 1860s. This delay caused much irritation, as evidenced by press reports.⁸⁵ Pressure from the Volksraad on the government to initiate the town council,⁸⁶ eventually resulted in elections for the seven-member council being held in November 1868.

On 4 January 1869, *landdrost* W.J. Otto, to everyone's satisfaction, formally handed over civil control of the town to the commissioners.⁸⁷

A scrutiny of the 86 regulations⁸⁸ reveals mainly the influence of the Grahamstown regulations, but also aspects of everyday life in Potchefstroom. To the satisfaction of the *landdrost*, a corps of minor functionaries took over the care and regulation of traffic, bridges, water supply, hygiene, market affairs, assize of weights and measures, grazing facilities on town lands and control of milling rights. From a trading perspective, thorough control of all of these matters by a body in which its interests were directly represented, was gratifying and related to the restoration and regulation of trade in stressful times. From complaints by the *landdrost* about the distribution of water from the town furrow, the emphasis had over a period of 15 years expanded into a town council with comprehensive civic powers.

The Potchefstroom regulations served as model for all subsequent municipalities that were to be established in the Transvaal.

Municipal control caused high expectations from all Potchefstroom residents. These expectations were that the municipality would resolve many of the irritating problems with which the expanding town had become burdened.

The system was not without its problems though. The most serious of these was a lack of funds. At the time of its institution, the council received no government grant to get it going. There simply was no money. Funds, including the bulk of salaries for its professional officials, were to be generated from property taxes, leases, and a variety of fees.⁸⁹

Municipal government came to an end with the advent of the Transvaal War in December 1880, at the very moment that preparations were being made for elections for a new council. Attempts to revive the council in 1882 failed, and in July 1886 the municipality was abolished and full civic control once more reverted to the *landdrost*.⁹⁰

The significance of municipal control lay in a period of progressive control of what today is referred to as "services". Above all it demonstrated the ability of Dutch and English speakers to collaborate in harmony for the common good. Elsewhere, such as in Pretoria and Johannesburg, municipal control prospered. Through the

85 *Transvaal Argus*, 17 July 1866, editorial; *Transvaal Argus*, 2 October 1866, editorial; *Transvaal Argus*, 4 March 1868, editorial.

86 Breytenbach (ed), *Transvaal V*, pp 145, 146

87 *Transvaal Argus*, 12 February 1869, editorial

88 Breytenbach (ed), *Transvaal VI*, p 295

89 Breytenbach (ed), *Transvaal V*, p 175

90 NASA: State Secretary: R4718/85, Landdrost – State Secretary, R1923/8; NASA: UR 1: Article 253, 1 May 1889

influence of British traders in Potchefstroom, “Grahamstown had come to the Transvaal”.

Cultural influence

Like (and due to) its economic pre-eminence, early Potchefstroom had a rich cultural history. In evaluating this, it is necessary to emphasise the significant differences in the cultural levels of the Dutch-speaking population and that of the new foreign settlers. Originating mainly from the Cape Colony’s frontier, remote from intellectual progress, the Voortrekkers’ level of culture was lower than that of their fellow Afrikaners living in or near Cape Town, or even near the lesser *drosdys*. In the interior of the country where the Voortrekkers and their descendants settled, a new and vibrant culture would develop in time, differing from that of their kin in the Cape Colony. By the 1850s, this was not yet evident to refined colonial and European settlers, the most numerous amongst whom were British, with a much smaller number of German, Swedish, Dutch, Portuguese, French and Italian residents. The common, but inaccurate, perception was that foreigners were wealthy and Afrikaners, especially townfolk, poor. It is understandable that the foreign elements were to form the hub around which formal culture in Potchefstroom was to develop.

Of all the early foreign settlers in Potchefstroom, the British were the least warmly welcomed by the Afrikaner community. This was due to Potgieter’s lingering anti-imperialist influence, protracted British hostility and continued opposition from the Cape Dutch Church towards the Great Trek.

On the other hand, many British had scant regard for the established population. They came for profit and trade, “that great civiliser of nations”. Some of them, like the Churchills, tended to regard the settled population as “childish, ignorant and intolerant of English ... and very uncivilized in their manners and habits”; then revealing the reason for their prejudice: “they have no idea of respect for superior rank, holding all in an equality with themselves and deeming those proud who do not mix freely with them as one of themselves”.⁹¹ Disparaging remarks about the government landed some British residents in court.⁹² The negative attitude towards Afrikaners was aggravated by lingering suspicions of slavery, the dominance of Voortrekker politics in the region and of Dutch as official language in which all official correspondence was to be conducted. On the other hand, the state took care to recruit teachers for the young republic in the Netherlands, who were proficient in English with a view to social and business intercourse.⁹³ Other visitors and newcomers, including clergy, thought of the Afrikaners as “invariably kind, hearty and hospitable”.⁹⁴ Even the critical Churchills admitted that “We have been very kindly received, however, by the respectable Boers we have visited”. The arrogance of the Churchills apart, their remarks indicate a class differentiation in Afrikaner society, just as there was one between the British merchant establishment and their

91 Churchill & Churchill, *A Merchant Family in Natal*, p 117

92 *Transvaal Argus*, 8 July 1868, “Rev Ludorf and the Burning of Children”.

93 Krynauw, *Transvaalse Argiefstukke*, p 247

94 E Twells, “Narrative of a Pastoral Visit to the Transvaal, May, June, July, 1868”, in “Occasional Papers V Orange Free State and Basutu Mission”, *Quarterly Paper* (William Skeffington, London, 1864), p 9

clerks. It was the upper crust of foreigners who took the lead in the establishment of productive, formal culture.

Non-British settlers also demonstrated the social differentiation between British and Dutch speakers. The well-to-do among them tended to Anglicise, while tradesmen leaned toward Afrikanerization. This is demonstrated by their membership of either the Dutch church, or one of the English parishes. In the course of the first two decades of foreign settlement, the Goetz family, some Jeppes and Zinns found a spiritual home in English churches and among the Swedes there were the Forssmans, Mobergs and Forsbergs. Those who became Afrikaner parishioners were the German Fleischacks, Zeilers, more Zinns, the Frenchman Rocher, and Swedes like the Oléns. The superficiality of these distinctions is demonstrated by the frequency of intermarriage between the various language groups.⁹⁵

A number of factors brought about a thawing of mutual distrust between old and new inhabitants. Important catalysts were father and son Pretorius. Both were well-versed in English. Martinus Wessel, the first State President, was a Freemason and therefore easily accepted in British circles. A widower, he had his daughter, Chrissie,⁹⁶ who had been educated in Scotland, act as his hostess. She helped to cement the Pretorius' popularity in British circles. An important factor in easing relations, was the compact nature of the Potchefstroom society, which necessitated social intercourse. Within two generations, integration was at the level of hearty support of all festivities and church fêtes by the whole community.

Formal culture started in the 1860s with the establishment of a number of organisations and facilities. In March 1868, the Mutual Improvement Society was established. Basically a debating society on general and local topics, its aim was to provide "an agreeable opportunity of storing young peoples minds with useful knowledge".⁹⁷ Modelled on this example, a Dutch equivalent was established in 1875 to encourage parents to "expose their sons to more knowledge than the going market price of wool".⁹⁸

Freemasonry, brought to Potchefstroom by British traders, had a considerable following. By the 1860s, there were two lodges, the Hope of Potchefstroom and the Flaming Star, later renamed the Golden Light. The Masons had close relations with the Anglican parish, where annual services, followed by a supper, were held for them.⁹⁹ The church and lodges were also co-owners of two building stands, one of which had belonged to President Pretorius.¹⁰⁰ By 1877 the Flaming Star had a hundred members.

The most popular form of performing arts was music, from private performances to public concerts, and from solo performances to brass bands. This

95 St Mary's Parish, Potchefstroom: Marriage and Baptismal Registers, 1866-1880; Argief van die Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk, Pretoria: Huweliksregister, Potchefstroom-gemeente

96 Christiana and Chrissiesmeer was named after her

97 *Transvaal Argus*, 18 March 1868, editorial

98 *Transvaal Argus*, 12 September 1868, editorial

99 *Transvaal Argus*, 1 July 1868, "Local and General: St John's Day"

100 NASA: RAK 1940: Erf 122; Fleischack Collection, Ferdinand Postma Library, Potchefstroom: File 10(a)3, Erf Register, Stand 122

was one of the fields in which Afrikaners held their own.¹⁰¹ A unique feature was the Eden School and Musical Academy. Its headmaster, D.J. Forbes, also gave private music lessons. A male choir festival was held in 1862. The program included Dutch and English songs, as well as other music items.¹⁰² Possibly in consequence of that, the Harmonie choir was launched a year later.¹⁰³ At the first concert no less than 20 items appeared on the programme and the choir performed to a packed audience.¹⁰⁴

The Potchefstroom Amateur Dramatic Society was formed in 1875. Its programmes comprised a variety of items, concluding with a one-act play.¹⁰⁵

Private concerts were held by prominent Potchefstroom residents like the Reids, Goetzes, Van der Hoff's, Zinns and Forssmans on family occasions, either in their homes or in lantern-lit gardens.¹⁰⁶ For public performances, there was a lack of facilities for the performing arts. Well-attended meetings of all kinds were held in empty warehouses, hotels or Masonic halls.¹⁰⁷ In 1866 the call went up for a town hall "in which public meetings, lectures, balls and concerts can be held",¹⁰⁸ but the realisation of that ideal would have to wait for the twentieth century.

As a rule, significant public occasions, such as sports meetings or agricultural shows, were concluded with formal balls in one of the hotels.

Sporting influence

Sports, in one form or another, were not unknown to the Voortrekkers.¹⁰⁹ What was new, was formal sports organised on a team basis. For Potchefstroom, this was also introduced by foreign, and specifically British residents.

The oldest organised sports club in Potchefstroom of which we have certain knowledge, was a turf club. The initiative for it came about in 1858, when a race between "Bob" and "Fritz" was arranged during a meeting of interested parties at the home of Landdrost J.H. Visage. Judging by their names, the horses would have belonged to a Briton and a German, but the organisation was done in an Afrikaner's home. Interest in the race alone was sufficient to ensure that the town had a turf club and a racecourse within a year. The club was organised along British lines,¹¹⁰ while the stewards came from all sections of the population.

Afrikaners were competent at horse riding. The *Transvaal Argus* attributed their interest in racing to a love of horses and the hunt, while British interest revolved

101 A W Wegelin, "Die geskiedenis van die musieklewe in Potchefstroom, 1838-1925" M Mus-verhandeling, Potchefstroomse Universiteit vir Christelike Hoër Onderwys, 1965

102 *De Emigrant*, 15 July 1862, editorial

103 Potchefstroom Museum: J Vorendyk, "Die musieklewe van Wes-Transvaal (1838-1960)" (manuskrip), lêer 09/3519, p 12

104 *De Volksblad*, 5 September 1863; *Transvaal Argus*, 4 April 1867, "Local and General"

105 *Transvaal Argus*, 3 September 1875, "Local and General"

106 Vorendyk, "Die Musieklewe van Wes-Transvaal", p 17; NASA: A376: Forssman Collection

107 *De Volksblad*, 5 August 1863

108 *Transvaal Argus*, 18 September 1866, editorial.

109 Potchefstroom Museum: S du Toit, "Die sportgeskiedenis van Potchefstroom" (manuskrip)

110 *De Staats Courant der ZAR*, 13 February 1859; *De Staats Courant der ZAR*, 20 May 1859

around the social atmosphere prevalent at race meets.¹¹¹ No mention was made of the gambling aspect – perhaps because the government frowned on that.

The mutual interest of all sections of the community is reflected therein that the first committee consisted of Afrikaner, British, German and French residents. To encourage participation, a variety of handicaps featured in each programme, all of which had English names. In the 1860s a temporary pavilion was erected, while hoteliers made bids for contracts to sell refreshments.¹¹² At the end of each of the biennial meetings, a ball was held.

Another sport at which the old residents were well-skilled, was shooting, but again organised target shooting was introduced by the newcomers. In 1864, Alaric Forssman mooted the establishment of a rifle club.¹¹³ The government showed interest and, in due course, a rifle range was provided west of the town.¹¹⁴ Sponsors provided trophies.¹¹⁵

Although the first match was played earlier, the oldest existing cricket club in the Transvaal was established in Potchefstroom in 1863. It was obviously initiated by British enthusiasts, in particular the Scot, Glen Scorgie. Other businessmen among the early players were the Pavey brothers, the naturalist Thomas Ayres, and the clergymen Fred Ludorff and Thomas Hinds. Other Potchefstroom residents who took to the game were the Germans, A.M. Goetz, J.W. Zulch and Doctor Otto. The most enthusiastic Afrikaner was Stephanus Botha. By 1866, the club was three years old, however the first match of which we have certain knowledge, was played between “Mother Country and Colonial Born” on New Year’s Eve of that year.¹¹⁶ Other matches were contested by “North Men and South Men”, “Married Men and Single Men”, “Freemasons and All Comers”, and by “Flaming Stars and Blazing Comets”.¹¹⁷ The ladies of the town selected the “Uglies and Handsomes” teams. Matches were also held against teams from as far afield as Bloemfontein. For many years matches were played on the market square. For the match of 1874 against Pretoria, the pitch was prepared by dampening it overnight, scraping it with spades and levelling it by having labourers stamp it down with their feet. As the market master’s office was in the middle of the square, the playing field was extended westward across Kerk Street into the grounds of the Dutch church. On the bonus side was the free use of market tables for the scorekeepers and refreshments.¹¹⁸ Not before the 1880s was the club allotted a proper field.¹¹⁹ Rugby and tennis had to wait till the 1890s for clubs to evolve.

111 *Transvaal Argus*, 3 July 1866, advertisement

112 NASA: ZPO 3: J Desardines – Landdrost, application for a licence; NASA: ZPO 3: Secretary, Turf Club – Landdrost, 1 September 1867

113 NASA: ZPO 3: Incoming Correspondence, Forssman – Landdrost, 26 July 1864

114 Potchefstroom Museum: Minutes of the Town Council, 10 March 1879

115 *Transvaal Argus*, 11 April 1867, “Prysschieten”

116 *Transvaal Argus*, 3 January 1866, “Local and General”

117 *Transvaal Advocate*, 12 April 1870; *Transvaal Argus*, 8 January 1868

118 Potchefstroom Museum: Municipal Council’s Letter Copy Book, 11 November 1874

119 *Potchefstroom Advocate*, 18 May 1888

Conclusion

British influence on the early development of Potchefstroom, and thence on all of the Transvaal, was comprehensive and decisive.

In the course of the quarter century between the Sand River Convention of 1852 and the British occupation in 1877, they and other foreign settlers, established and stimulated economic, cultural and sports development. The influence was founded on broadly-based economic backing and European cultural roots. Original self-centred interests yielded to common goals and arrogance to social acceptance and integration. On the economic front, sound business sense and shared vision weighed up to monetary restraints to contain the recession of the 1860s and 1870s. Political experience on local government level resulted in the establishment of municipal government to replace expansive control by the *landdrost*, and served as model for the rest of the ZAR, while cultural refinement and sporting tradition turned Potchefstroom into a haven of accomplishment in which all sectors of the population shared.

Abstract

Fear of annexation by Britain resulted in strained economic relations between Transvaal Voortrekkers and the British colonies. At first only indispensable trade was tolerated. Andries Pretorius, however, favoured broader trade with the colonial harbours. The Sand River Convention of 1852, whereby relations between the ZAR and the colonies were normalised, facilitated this. This resulted in an immediate and extensive settlement of foreign, especially British, merchants with their families and staff in Potchefstroom. Trade boomed overnight to the advantage of all concerned, but centred on British initiative. As money was scarce in a state with no coinage of its own, much of the trade was conducted by means of bartering. The recession of the 1860s and 1870s, which could have had a disastrous effect on trade, was held in check by resourceful new entrepreneurship. Accustomed to municipal government in the Eastern Province, from where most of the new merchants came, they were instrumental in establishing a similar system in Potchefstroom from where it spread to the rest of the Transvaal. A number of the new residents were elected to the Volksraad in time. The foreign residents were also instrumental in establishing a variety of formal cultural movements, in which the Afrikaner community shared and which was emulated by them.

Opsomming

Die Invloed van Britse Handelaars op Vroeë Potchefstroom, 1852-1877

Vrese vir Britse anneksasie het stram verhoudinge tussen die Transvaalse Voortrekkers en die Britse kolonies veroorsaak. Aanvanklik is slegs onontbeerlike handel verdra. Andries Pretorius was egter 'n voorstander van nouer handelsbetrekkinge met die koloniale hawes. Die Sandrivierkonvensie van 1852, waardeur verhoudinge tussen die ZAR en die kolonies genormaliseer is, het handel vergemaklik. Dit het 'n onmiddellike en uitgebreide vestiging van buitelandse, en veral Britse handelaars met hulle gesinne en personeel in Potchefstroom tot gevolg gehad. Handel het oornag geblom, tot voordeel van almal, maar dit het veral om Britse inisiatiewe gewentel. Aangesien geld skaars was in 'n staat sonder 'n eie

geldstelsel, het 'n groot deel van die transaksies die vorm van ruilhandel aangeneem. Die resessie van die 1860's en 1870's kon ramspoedige gevolge vir handel gehad het, maar dit is afgeweer deur middel van vindingryke nuwe tipes entrepreneurskap. Aangesien baie van die nuwe handelaars oorspronklik van die Oos-Kaap afkomstig was, waar hulle aan munisipale bestuur gewoond was, was hulle instrumenteel in die vestiging van 'n soortgelyke bestuursstelsel in Potchefstroom, vanwaar dit na die res van die ZAR uitgebrei is. Mettertyd is enkele van die nuwe aankomelinge selfs tot die Volksraad verkies. Die uitlanders het die leiding geneem om 'n verskeidenheid formele kulturele organisasies te stig, wat ook deur die Afrikanergemeenskap geniet en nageboots is.

Keywords

Culture; Grahamstown; human relations; municipality; Potchefstroom; Sand River Convention; sports; trade; transport riding.

Slutelwoorde

Grahamstad; handel; kultuur; menseverhoudinge; munisipaliteit; Potchefstroom; Sandrivierkonvensie; sport; transportry.