

PROVISIONING JOHANNESBURG, 1886 – 1906

by

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(vii) The rapidity of Johannesburg's growth after the discovery of payable gold in 1886 created a provisioning challenge. Lacking water transport it was dependent on animal-drawn transport until the railways arrived from coastal ports. The local near-subsistence agricultural economy was supplemented by imported foodstuffs, readily available following the industrialisation of food production, processing and distribution in the Atlantic world and the transformation of transport and communication systems by steam, steel and electricity. Improvements in food preservation techniques: canning, refrigeration and freezing also contributed. From 1895 natural disasters - droughts, locust attacks, rinderpest, East Coast fever - and the man-made disaster of the South African War, reduced local supplies and by the time the ZAR became a British colony in 1902 almost all food had to be imported. By 1906, though still an import economy, meat and grain supplies had recovered, and commercial agriculture was responding to the market.

(viii) KEY WORDS: Johannesburg, ZAR, Food Supply, Railways, Market, Grains, Meat, Vegetables, Fruit, English-speakers, Africans, Distribution, Transvaal Colony

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION: SOURCES, BACKGROUND, AND SCOPE

The discovery of payable gold on the Witwatersrand in 1886 transformed South Africa economically, politically, demographically and socially. Johannesburg's growth from mining camp to the largest city in southern Africa in its first decade created a market for commercial agriculture, the need for an effective transport network, and moved the South African centre of gravity from the coast to the interior. Its most striking features were the rapidity and permanence of this growth, the racial and cultural diversity of its new population and the extremes of wealth and poverty.

Much has been written about the formative years of early Johannesburg. There are many biographies of the Randlords and their role in the Jameson Raid and the South African War.<sup>1</sup> Imperialist,<sup>2</sup> Afrikaans,<sup>3</sup> liberal and left-wing historians<sup>4</sup> have argued about the causes and consequences of the war. The origins and effects of the migrant labour system have been examined,<sup>5</sup> and social historians have sought information about working and living conditions.<sup>6</sup> Urban geographers have studied how this period had lasting effects on the layout of the town and suburbs, its racial structure, transport facilities and utilities.<sup>7</sup> But although the high cost of living was a constant complaint, it is surprising that little attention has been given to the basic question of how Johannesburg was fed. Although eating is a basic biological urge, in many of these studies nobody seemed to eat. This gives rise to a number of questions which have been touched on by economic, political, social and agricultural historians, but have not focussed on the city as an entity.

Where and by whom was the food produced, how was it transported, how was it distributed, and how adequate was it? In what way did the nineteenth century developments in transport and communication, and in the technology and organisation of food production, processing and distribution affect the development of Johannesburg as a city and provide food for its diverse inhabitants? What was the relative role of food production in the Transvaal and the

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<sup>1</sup> Such as Geoffrey Wheatcroft, *The Randlords: The Men who made South Africa*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1985; Robert I Rotberg, *The Founder: Cecil Rhodes and the Pursuit of Power*, Jonathan Ball Publishers, Johannesburg, 1988.

<sup>2</sup> Such as W Basil Worsfold, *The Reconstruction of the New Colonies under Lord Milner*, Keegan Paul, London, 1913.

<sup>3</sup> Such as Hermann Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People*, Tafelberg Publishers, Cape Town, 2003

<sup>4</sup> Such as C W de Kiewiet, *A History of South Africa: Social & Economic*, Oxford University Press, London, 1941; Shula Marks & Stanley Trapido, 'Lord Milner and the South African State', *History Workshop*, 8, 1979, pp.50-80.

<sup>5</sup> Such as Colin Bundy, *The Rise & Fall of the South African Peasantry*, David Philip, Cape Town, 1988; William Beinart, *Political Economy of Pondoland 1860-1930*, Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1982; Kevin Shillington, *The Colonisation of the Southern Tswana 1870-1900*, Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1985.

<sup>6</sup> Such as Elaine Katz, *The White Death: Silicosis on the Witwatersrand Gold Mines 1886-1910*, Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg, 1994.

<sup>7</sup> Such as Beavon, Keith, *Johannesburg: The Making and Shaping of the City*, University of South Africa Press, Pretoria, 2004

neighbouring colonies in provisioning the city? What was the relationship between the food cultures of the different ethnic groups and the food eaten in Johannesburg? This study is an attempt to answer these questions.

### SOURCES

In what appears to be the only recent historical study of the food supply of a single city,<sup>8</sup> Roger Scola discussed how it was necessary to focus on how the needs of Manchester were met rather than production figures of the suppliers, that is, to go beyond agricultural history, because the growth of the city led to an ever-widening chain of supply, from the immediate hinterland of the city, to the rest of Britain and then to foreign countries. This led him to a concern with the effect of transport innovations, and how the lengthening of the food chain led to the growth of intermediaries between producer and consumer. These concerns are very relevant to Johannesburg's food supply. For the supply side, Scola was able to draw on a wide range of evidence: contemporary commentators on the changing rural scene combined with the mass of descriptive and statistical material contained in parliamentary papers and commissions of enquiry of the time; records of toll roads, canals and railways (though these rarely deal with what was actually carried); and weekly market reports in local newspapers. On the distribution side he found market records (slanted towards the official rather than actual trade); directories and rate books; and the trade press. However, records for the distribution side were rarer. Most food traders operated on a small scale and, when their businesses disappeared, they vanished without a trace. Otherwise, Scola had a multiplicity of sources to draw on in comparison with what can be discovered for Johannesburg.

Official statistics are sparse, especially for the Republican period. Because the Republic was so dependent on customs revenue, annual import and export statistics are available in the late 1890s, but these lack detail. There is a similar problem with the Chamber of Mines annual reports on 'Stores' which do not tell much about how individual miners were fed, or how the mining companies obtained their supplies. The 1897 Industrial Commission<sup>9</sup> was set up to examine the mining industry's complaints against the government, and some witnesses gave comparative budgets for the cost of living in Johannesburg and England, but these are obviously biased and limited. The Sanitary Board Census of 1896<sup>10</sup> gives invaluable overall information on place of birth, occupations and religion of the inhabitants, and it would be useful to be able to study the original census sheets as can be done in most other countries, but these were destroyed after the results were released. More information is available for the period after the South African War, when numerous official commissions were set up to find answers to questions that were important to the government. Food supply and prices are mentioned in these, but were not the major focus. The 1904 Census of the Transvaal as part of British South Africa<sup>11</sup> distinguishes only between European and Coloured people and lacks the detail of the 1896 Census. Some agricultural production figures start to emerge in Department of Agriculture Annual

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<sup>8</sup> Roger Scola, *Feeding the Victorian City: The Food Supply of Manchester, 1770-1870*, University of Manchester Press, Manchester, 1992.

<sup>9</sup> *The Mining Industry: Report and Proceedings of the Industrial Commission of Enquiry*, Compiled and Published by the Witwatersrand Chamber of Mines, Johannesburg, South African Republic, 1897.

<sup>10</sup> *Census, 15th July 1896, Report of the Director of Census, Johannesburg*, A H Bleksley, Standard and Diggers' News Press, Johannesburg, 1896.

<sup>11</sup> Cd.2103, *Census Returns of British South Africa*, Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of His Majesty, July 1904, His Majesty's Stationery Office, London.

Reports, though there is nothing like the detailed records available for British food history in the nineteenth century, and the links in the food chain between farm and consumer are hazy.

There is considerable information in contemporary newspapers and in accounts by visitors, and pioneer recollections, though those dealt mainly with only a section of the population. The market is well covered, but other distributors in the system – shops, stores, wholesalers, restaurants, eating houses, hawkers - seem to have largely gone unrecorded, or perhaps records were not kept. While the locations of some shops are to be found in trade directories, such as *Longlands*<sup>12</sup> and the *Post Office Directory*,<sup>13</sup> no comparative series can be drawn up. L V Praagh's *The Transvaal and its Mines*<sup>14</sup> is basically a very detailed trade directory but it is extremely boosterish, with barely a hint of criticism. This information is mainly 'top-down', African voices are little heard and records of their experiences had been deemed unimportant. By the time the collection of oral histories and an interest in the underclasses had become an acceptable mode of history, participants were dead. Files of African evidence to commissions have been lost,<sup>15</sup> and few Africans at that time would have left memoirs in the way some of their white contemporaries did.

Contemporary memoirs and visitors' reports sometimes mention the price of bread, cabbages, eggs, butter etc., but these are mainly undated, with little awareness of seasonality, and generally express shock that prices are so much higher than those in London. Only one contemporary report mentions that the purchasing power of a sovereign was rather less than one-half of that which it possessed in the United Kingdom.<sup>16</sup> Scola found that contemporary accounts of agricultural practices in Britain were prejudiced in favour of one type of farming or another and frequently highlight the exceptional rather than the typical,<sup>17</sup> and this seems to have been also the case in turn of the century Transvaal. Newspapers provide a better source; from earliest times market prices were noted in the press. However, it is not possible to construct a price series from these as many are missing. At first only basic commodities such as mealies, Boermeal and 'Kafir-corn' (millet) were listed, but later they became surprisingly detailed – poultry, eggs, butter, hams and bacon, vegetables and salads, small game in winter, fruit, flowers etc, were included. Mealies were sold in 200 lb bags, or in muids (230 lbs<sup>18</sup>), flour in 100 lb bags, oranges by the hundred, but the quantities may well have been approximations and inconsistent. From 1892 to 1896 the districts the wagons came from are given, and these will be analysed in Chapter Three, South African Produced Food, but these figures seem to bear out the view that the Orange Free State was Johannesburg's bread-basket in the early days.

Most of this evidence is in English, and firmly based in the imperial mindset. There are no indications of the availability and prices of vegetables from other food cultures – no aubergines, okra, garlic, chillies, dhal, or morogo

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<sup>12</sup> *Longland's Directory of Johannesburg and District, 1893*, and *Longland's Directory of Johannesburg and the South African Republic, 1897*, Johannesburg, Henry Longland.

<sup>13</sup> *Post Office Directory of the Transvaal*, Johannesburg, 1906.

<sup>14</sup> L V Praagh, *The Transvaal and its Mines: The Encyclopaedic History of the Transvaal*, Praagh & Lloyd, Johannesburg, 1906.

<sup>15</sup> Matthew Smith, 'Working in the Grave: The Development of a Health and Safety System on the Witwatersrand Gold Mines', 1900-1939, MA Rhodes University, 1993, p.7.

<sup>16</sup> W Basil Worsfold, *Reconstruction of the New Colonies under Lord Milner*, Kegan Paul, London, 1913, p.278.

<sup>17</sup> Scola, *Feeding the Victorian City*, p.8.

<sup>18</sup> Sources differ as to whether a muid was 200, 203 or 230 lbs.

are mentioned; butter and cheese are there, but no amasi or yoghurt. 'Civilised standards' seem to be derived solely from the western world. Though curry powder appears, it is via the nineteenth century British fashion rather than directly from the Indian Empire.<sup>19</sup>

This mindset expressed in the Johannesburg English press was contemptuous of both Boer and African, who were regarded as ignorant and idle. Moreover, difficulties with transport infrastructure, drought, disease and pests were thought to be soluble with the application of western scientific techniques. Post-war governors, and colonial and settler historians, while convinced of the colony's bright future, disparaged the actuality. In later years this perspective was modified and Afrikaner nationalist and liberal historians discarded many of the imperial myths, inventing their own traditions. De Kiewiet's pessimistic studies in the 1930s<sup>20</sup> echoed the concerns of American historians who saw the environmental degradation that had followed on the application of western scientific techniques to the fragile soils and drought-prone lands very different from western Europe. Francis Wilson in the 1971 *Oxford History*<sup>21</sup> continued in the liberal tradition of seeking reasons for rural impoverishment, and blamed the large scale import, at the turn of the century, of wheat, maize, meat, eggs and milk, made possible by the railways, on the size of the new population of Johannesburg.<sup>22</sup>

It was left to the revisionist/Marxist/materialist historians of the 1960s to 1980s to examine the African experience with regard to agricultural production and to discover that some Africans had taken to European introductions such as maize, wheat and ploughs with alacrity, and had out-produced white farmers. William Beinart,<sup>23</sup> Colin Bundy,<sup>24</sup> and Tim Keegan<sup>25</sup> examined the food economies of Transkei and Pondoland peasants and Sotho/Tswana speakers on the southern Highveld and their responsiveness to the new markets in Johannesburg, while Kevin Shillington investigated the Thlaping groups who supplied Kimberley markets rather than becoming migrant labourers.<sup>26</sup> This early response, however, did not survive mine managements' and white farmers' demand for cheap labour, enforced by taxation, state power and commercialisation of rural economies.

These secondary sources, however, on the whole only take the story up to the produce leaving the farm. How it was distributed in Johannesburg is hardly touched on. Some information can be found in introductions to journal articles and unpublished theses and dissertations though these generally deal with a later period than Johannesburg's first twenty years. Robert Morrell, in an article on the Witwatersrand meat market in the 1920s,<sup>27</sup> sees its origins in the first years of the twentieth century in a mining company monopoly, cold storage dominated by Cape capitalists, and an auctioneers' ring, with a tantalising lack of detail as to when the last of these developed. There is more material

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<sup>19</sup> Lizzie Collingham, *Curry: A Tale of Cooks and Conquerors*, Vintage Books, London, 2006, pp.129-154.

<sup>20</sup> C W de Kiewiet, *A History of South Africa: Social and Economic*, Oxford University Press, London, 1941.

<sup>21</sup> Monica Wilson & Leonard Thompson (Eds) *The Oxford History of South Africa Volume II, 1870-1966*.

<sup>22</sup> Francis Wilson, *Oxford History*, p.114.

<sup>23</sup> William Beinart, *Political Economy of Pondoland 1860-1930*, Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1982.

<sup>24</sup> Colin Bundy, *The Rise & Fall of the South African Peasantry*, David Philip, Cape Town, 1988.

<sup>25</sup> Timothy Keegan, *Rural Transformations in Industrializing South Africa: The Southern Highveld to 1914*, Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1986.

<sup>26</sup> Kevin Shillington, *The Colonisation of the Southern Tswana 1870-1900*, Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1985.

<sup>27</sup> Robert Morrell, 'Farmers, Randlords and the South African State: Confrontation in the Witwatersrand Beef Markets, c 1920-1923', *Journal of African History*, 27.3, 1986, pp.514-516.

in Shaun Milton's unpublished London Ph.D. thesis<sup>28</sup> which deals with the role of the western Transvaal and eastern Bechuanaland Protectorate (now Botswana) in the dominant compound market trade, and in Professor Bosman's paper to a 1929 Agriculture Department conference,<sup>29</sup> though again the late nineteenth century period is largely ignored. The other staple, maize, is better covered, with books by Joseph Burt-Davy,<sup>30</sup> Herbert Frankel,<sup>31</sup> and James McCann.<sup>32</sup> These sources will be used in seeking answers to the question of where locally-produced food came from, and how effective local production was in meeting the needs of the rapidly expanding population of Johannesburg.

### FOOD HISTORY

The focus on rescuing South African underclasses from the condescension of history was part of the widening range of subjects considered suitable for historians' attention internationally in the last fifty years, and inter-disciplinary studies provided cross-fertilisation. Social and economic history became much more prominent with sub-genres developing such as environmental history, world history, gender studies, culture history, slave history – all attempting to understand and explain present-day problems in a historical context. Food history has become increasingly important, drawing as it does on economic, social and environmental history, cultural studies and anthropology; perhaps in accord with current concerns about the world's ability to meet the rising expectations of expanding numbers, of the problems of urbanisation, and of the impact on the environment of the pollution and landscape destruction associated with increased food production. As the rest of the world aspires to Western levels of consumption, especially of meat, many have questioned the world's ability to produce food in this quantity, and how much further science can increase production as it has in the past. Malthusian predictions are once again being made; and criticisms of the growing inequalities of the present market system. Excessive consumerism coupled with the restrictions of poverty were also features of early Johannesburg. Food supply is a constant routine function in all societies, taken for granted most of the time by those not directly involved, but concern from both public and government increases in disturbed times.<sup>33</sup> Various types of food history have appeared, tracing the origins of various foodstuffs,<sup>34</sup> national or ethnic food cultures,<sup>35</sup> encyclopaedic,<sup>36</sup> global,<sup>37</sup> and apocalyptic.<sup>38</sup> More general

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<sup>28</sup> Shaun Milton, 'To Make the crooked straight': Settler Colonialism, Imperial Decline and the South African Beef Industry, 1902-1942, PhD, University of London, 1996.

<sup>29</sup> A M Bosman, 'The Beef Industry in South Africa', Reprint from Agriculture Department Conference, Government Printer, Pretoria, 1929.

<sup>30</sup> J. Burt-Davy, *Maize: Its History, Cultivation, Handling and Uses, with Special Reference to South Africa*, Longman, London, 1914.

<sup>31</sup> Herbert Frankel, *Cooperation and Competition in the Marketing of Maize in South Africa*, P S King, London, 1926.

<sup>32</sup> James C McCann, *Maize and Grace: Africa's Encounter with a New World Crop, 1500-2000*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA, 2005.

<sup>33</sup> Jane I Guyer (Ed), *Feeding African Cities: Studies in Regional Social Studies*, Manchester University Press for the International African Institute, London, 1987, p.1.

<sup>34</sup> Mark Kurlansky, *Salt: A World History*, Vintage, London, 2002; and Ken Albala, *Beans, A History*, Berg, Oxford, 2007.

<sup>35</sup> Such as: John Burnett, *Plenty and Want: A Social History of Diet in England from 1815 to the Present Day*, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1968; Claudia Roden, *The Book of Jewish Food: An Odyssey from Samarkand and Vilna to the Present Day*, Viking, London, 1997.

<sup>36</sup> Such as: Alan Davidson, *The Oxford Companion to Food*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1999.

<sup>37</sup> Such as: Reay Tannahill, *Food in History*, Penguin, London, 1973 and Maguelonne Toussaint-Samat, *A History of Food*, Wiley-Blackwell, Oxford, 2009.



studies by Alfred Crosby<sup>39</sup> and Jared Diamond,<sup>40</sup> while not strictly speaking food histories, have sought explanations for fundamental differences between food cultures. Jared Diamond looks at biological, and geographical, determinism, showing, for instance, the factors which had determined domestication of animals.

Crosby's *The Columbian Exchange* drew attention to the exchanges of foods and domestic animals between eastern and western hemispheres since 1492 which was the basis of modern globalisation, and *Ecological Imperialism*, which is of some relevance to this study, argued the case for a biological explanation of the overwhelming success of European colonists in temperate regions of the world in the European crops, domestic animals, diseases, pests and weeds they brought with them. European determination to create 'neo-Europes' wherever they settled, can be seen in the introduction of maize, wheat, pigs, potatoes and other non-indigenous foodstuffs to southern Africa.

On the whole, however, Africa barely features in food history. This is probably because African food has been in the domain of the ethnologist or social anthropologist. Jack Goody, in a sociologist's approach, raised the question of why traditional African states, uniquely, largely lacked a differentiated 'high' cuisine – all classes ate much the same food.<sup>41</sup> His reference points are from West Africa, which indicates one of the problems in African food history; that it is a vast continent with many different cultures.

Southern Africa, as in other fields of activity, was both part of Africa and yet very distinctive, and the diversity of people who were drawn to the Transvaal at the end of the nineteenth century are part of the reason for its distinctiveness. Francophone Africa had its French officials and settlers, and Lebanese or Syrian traders; Portuguese Africa its Portuguese officials and half-caste settlers; British East Africa its British settlers and Indian traders, but at the time only the Transvaal had a sizeable influx of all classes from Britain; Jews from Eastern Europe; migrant labourers from Mozambique; American and German mining engineers; Dutch officials and railway workers; Italian and Swiss hoteliers and waiters; Portuguese market gardeners and craftsmen; colonial shopkeepers and professional classes; Indian and Chinese hawkers and shopkeepers; and sundry other nationalities over and above its own indigenous peoples. This ethnic and class complexity was perhaps a foretaste of twentieth century problems of industrialisation and globalisation.

The different cultures brought to early Johannesburg were reflected in the foods eaten. The public food culture was predominantly British, reflecting the background of the majority of the white population, but concessions had to be made to other cultures using maize, rice, kosher and halal foods. The food people ate was not only a reflection of national identities, but also of cultural imperialism. The period was the heyday of social Darwinism, and colonial arrogance. The predominant English food culture in Johannesburg was disdainful of what they viewed as 'lesser

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<sup>38</sup> Carolyn Steel, *Hungry City: How Food Shapes our Lives*, Chatto & Windus, London, 2008 and Paul Roberts, *The End of Food: The Coming Crisis in the World Food Industry*, Bloomsbury, London, 2008.

<sup>39</sup> Alfred W Crosby Jr, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2008, and *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492*, Praeger Publishers, Westport CT, 2003.

<sup>40</sup> Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs and Steel: A Short History of Nearly Everybody for the last 13,000 Years*, Vintage, London, 1998, and *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Survive*, Penguin Books, London, 2005.

<sup>41</sup> Jack Goody, *Cooking, Cuisine and Class: A Study in Comparative Sociology*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1982.

breeds' such as Africans and Asians ate. This will be seen in the chapter on mine feeding where the beliefs that Africans normally ate only one meal a day of mealie meal, and that African adults did not drink milk, caused particular damage.

### **HISTORICAL SETTING AND CHANGES OF GOVERNANCE**

The provisioning of Johannesburg in its first twenty years was affected by the booms and depressions, and the changes in governance which punctuated the period. The diggings were proclaimed on 20 September 1886, and a rudimentary Diggers' Committee of nine members was elected under the mining laws on 8 November 1886, from and by holders of mining licences, with the Mining Commissioner as *ex officio* chairman, to deal with claim jumping and water rights issues. As these issues petered out the Committee died a natural death after about 18 months. In parallel, a Gezondheids Comité/Sanitary Board, appointed by the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek (ZAR)/South African Republic (SAR) in 1887, but later elected, tried to maintain basic amenities.<sup>42</sup> The ZAR was adamant that 'stand townships', such as Barberton and Johannesburg, being temporary, could not be given any form of municipal government, and the Sanitary Board, financially straitened, struggled to use even its limited powers. In 1897, after the Jameson Raid, the Kruger government relented and a limited Stadsraad with a Burgomeester was appointed for some municipal functions; with health and sanitation aspects remaining under the Sanitary Board. On the outbreak of war in October 1899 Johannesburg was under martial law, and from June 1900 under British military rule for a further two years until hostilities ended. In the Transvaal Crown Colony it gained a nominated, then elected town council and mayor, with much wider powers, on British local government lines rather than the centralised continental model as hitherto.<sup>43</sup> Lord Milner, the British High Commissioner, lived in Johannesburg rather than Pretoria, the capital of the Transvaal Colony, though Pretoria regained influence after the grant of responsible government in 1906.

The mining camp that grew so rapidly after diggings were proclaimed was similar in nature to many ephemeral alluvial gold rush settlements in the second half of the nineteenth century: largely male, youthful, mobile, and boisterous, with an attendant swarm of merchants, traders, speculators, entertainers and other camp followers.<sup>44</sup> Machinery to work the ground below the surface more seriously took months to arrive from the coast by ox-wagon, and the first year or so was spent in a speculative frenzy spurred on by rumours of rich finds. The Standard Bank arrived in October 1886, and the Stock Exchange was created in August 1887. Banks from Natal and the Cape lent money on the speculative value of claims, shares and holdings. Mining men arrived from Kimberley, and from overseas. By the end of 1888, 200,000 ounces of gold had been produced in the year, but mining was becoming more expensive, and the banks began to call in loans leading to a crash in 1889, worsened by the discovery that the easily-worked, weathered ores did not reach far below the surface, and the underlying unweathered iron pyrites

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<sup>42</sup> John Lang, *Bullion Johannesburg: Men, Mines and the Challenge of Conflict*, Jonathan Ball, Johannesburg, 1986, p.23.

<sup>43</sup> John Maud, *City Government: The Johannesburg Experiment*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1938, p.50-53.

<sup>44</sup> Donald Denoon, P Mein Smith & M Wyndham, *A History of Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific*, Blackwell, Oxford, 2000, pp.142-7.

prevented the extraction of the fine grains of gold. With grades falling and costs rising, investors in Britain and Europe also shied off.

To compound the difficulties the rains were late in spring 1889, following a dry summer in 1888-89, which caused major transport difficulties, and famine threatened. Few of the newcomers had given any thought to the organisation of the food supply; it had been taken as given, but this crisis demonstrated just how tenuous was the daily supply line of ox-wagons coming in to Market Square with fresh produce or tinned goods for the stores. About a third of the inhabitants left the Witwatersrand at this time, and many expected it to become yet another mining ghost-town.

Production was saved by the MacArthur-Forrest cyanide extraction process, and by 1892 a million ounces of gold a year were being extracted. Geological exploration at considerable depths south of Johannesburg revealed that the reefs sloped downwards and would yield a high volume of ores, albeit low-grade, for a very long time. Profits would, however, depend on heavy capital expenditure, for which local resources were insufficient, and on increasingly expensive equipment. Tight cost control and economies of scale by large companies was needed, with no room for small independents. The group system devised was in place by 1897, and remained essentially unchanged for the next twenty years. The main groups were:

- Consolidated Gold Fields of South Africa (established 1887 by Cecil Rhodes)(Connies);
- Johannesburg Consolidated Investment (formed 1889 by the amalgamation between the Barnato and Robinson groups)( JCI);
- Rand Mines (established 1893 by Wernher, Beit, Eckstein, Lionel Phillips;‘Corner House’);
- General Mining and Finance (established 1895 by the Albu group);
- Union Corporation (established 1897 by the Goertz group).<sup>45</sup>

The group system of control pooled resources of expertise and financial and administrative acumen, and increased investor confidence because shares could be bought in either individual mines or in the holding company, so risk was spread. There were co-operation, cross-holding and personal antagonisms between the groups, but the strength of the main groups and the intense competition for capital between them prevented evolution into a monopoly as had happened with diamond mining at Kimberley. The Chamber of Mines played a major role as spokesman in dealings with the Government, and in producing reliable industry statistics, encouraging investment, mediating antagonisms, and promoting labour recruitment. The Rand Native Labour Association (RNLA) was formed by the Chamber in 1896 but did little to prevent independent labour contracting and touts. Poaching of labour between different mines was rampant and the Chamber attempted to lay down a maximum ration scale. The RNLA was reconstituted as the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association (WNLA) in 1900, and eventually became a system more satisfactory to mine managers, but for many years competition between the groups prevented the uniformity of conditions that prevailed in Kimberley mine compounds. The post-War outcry in Britain about the death rate from phthisis, scurvy and pneumonia and the labour shortage led to some improvement of the living conditions of the mine labour force.

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<sup>45</sup> Smith, ‘Working in the Grave’, p.13.

The shape and layout of the town was determined early by geology. The outcropping gold reef had been found along the east-west running ridge called the Witwatersrand. The reefs sloped down to the south, all the mines lay in that direction and the mining companies bought up land uncertain what would be required for mining. Mining companies had also bought land to the north of the ridge, but this was underlain by a granite dome which was not auriferous. When this became apparent, they turned to township development there. Suburbs thus grew to the north and east of the town; the west and centre remained working class, mixed-race, walk-to-work denser areas. The mining houses controlled a major portion of land in Johannesburg, both through direct ownership of proclaimed land around the mines and through the land companies they set up. This exerted a stranglehold on land for building, and forced up the cost of housing contributing, as much as food costs to the high cost of living.<sup>46</sup>

By 1892, six years after the first mining claim was auctioned, Johannesburg had moved beyond the gold rush days and was a serious town, in spite of its dusty streets and rudimentary service infrastructure. The Johannesburg Lighting Company had a gas plant working in 1888, which then generated electric power. There were some electric street lights, but no pavements. Hundreds of steam engines along the Main Reef worked on coal found conveniently near at Boksburg and Springs and transported by the Rand Steam Tram from 1889, mainly to the mines. The Johannesburg City and Suburban trams were horse-drawn (to provide a market for Boer-grown fodder), and the area covered gradually expanded from the initial four miles.

A brief census by the Sanitary Board in January 1890 showed a total of 26,303 inhabitants in the six wards within its jurisdiction of a three-miles radius from Market Square.<sup>47</sup> Another in September 1892 showed 41,000 altogether in ten suburbs and adjacent mines and townships. The area within the jurisdiction of the Sanitary Board had 21,715 inhabitants, of whom 15,005 were white and 6,710 Natives.<sup>48</sup> A third, and far more detailed Sanitary Board Census was held in 1896, giving a total of 102,078 inhabitants, will be discussed in Chapter Four, Johannesburg People. There were very substantial buildings, banks, first class hotels, clubs, shops and theatres. Telephones were laid down to the mines, and exchanges were being built. But there was no mains drainage as the hard rock presented major problems, and water supply was a constant difficulty. Sewage and waste in buckets were collected in mule-drawn carts every night by night-soil collectors, who formed a substantial part of the Sanitary Board's workforce. The unpaved roads were deeply rutted by ox-wagons, mule-carts and horses, dusty in winter and quagmires after heavy rain. The arrival of railways, from the Cape in September 1892, from Delagoa Bay in October 1894 and from Natal in 1895, reduced the cost of transport by two-thirds, and improved the availability of food though there were still complaints about high prices.

By 1894 there was a wild boom in 'kaffirs', as South African gold mining shares were called, on the world's stock exchanges, particularly in Germany, France, Britain, Belgium. Approximately £5 million was invested in this boom, compared to £3 million in the 1888-1889 one, out of the total of the approximately £15 million invested on

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<sup>46</sup> Edward Koch, 'Doornfontein and its African Working Class, 1914-1935: A Study of Popular Culture in Johannesburg', MA, University of the Witwatersrand, 1983, p.59.

<sup>47</sup> *Report of Director of Census 1896*, Johannesburg Sanitary Department, p.54.

<sup>48</sup> *The Star*, 30 September 1892.

the Rand by 1895.<sup>49</sup> Capital generated from the diamond fields at Kimberley and financial speculation had fuelled mining development in the early days, but heavy capital investment was then needed to develop the new deep level mines and continue production in the outcrop mines. The directors of the various groups were thus concerned, not only with keeping costs down, but with maintaining dividend payments and thus investor confidence. Mining engineers and scientific experts came from all over the world, and the new, heavy rock drills opened up more production faces.

The boom crested in September 1895. The Jameson Raid at the end of December 1895 pushed the slide into a deep recession which lasted until 1898,<sup>50</sup> worsened in southern Africa during 1896-1897 by the devastating rinderpest epidemic which destroyed perhaps 90 per cent of cattle, with consequences for food supply (meat was a major and relatively cheap foodstuff), agriculture (ploughing and other farm activities), and transport – although three railway lines from the coast had arrived by 1896, they tapped only a small area of the country, and ox- or mule-wagons had to provide a feeder service to stations and sidings on the rail lines. The railways did, however, enable food to be imported more easily and cheaply than before. Johannesburg may well have starved had the epidemic occurred before the railway links had been completed. The population was much more substantial than it had been during the short-lived ‘famine’ of 1889, and price rises would have damaged mine production and profitability of many low grade mines on which the life of the town depended. The effects of the rinderpest epidemic on meat supply in Johannesburg, the extension to South Africa of cold storage techniques, then coming into use between Australasia, the Americas and Europe, will be described in Chapter Five, Distribution.

The South African War of 1899-1902 was even more devastating than the rinderpest on the supply of food to the town. Most people left Johannesburg and most mines shut down. African mineworkers were left to make their own way home to the rural areas.<sup>51</sup> Recovery after its capture by the British army in May 1900 was more hesitant than hoped for. The guerrilla war waged for another two years, with widespread destruction of farms and livestock, and the military authorities were reluctant to allow more people to return to Johannesburg than could be fed. Reconstruction was hampered by severe drought, the enormous task of restoring order to the countryside, repatriating farmers and restocking farms. An outbreak of East Coast fever, the cause and cure of which was not understood, that came hard on the heels of rinderpest, further substantially disrupted the local food supply. The lower wages offered by the mines in an attempt to keep costs down meant that insufficient unskilled African labour came forward. The expected post-war boom did not materialise, the cost of living remained high, and the social structure was unstable. The experiment of importing contract Chinese labourers from 1902 enabled production to be resumed, and although the Liberal Party victory in Britain in December 1905 brought the recruitment of such indentured labour to an end, by then the Witwatersrand’s position as the world’s largest gold-producer was assured.

The Milner administration of the new colonies gave priority to the revival of agriculture in order to reduce the cost of importing food, thus reducing the cost of feeding mineworkers and the town where the cost of living was a serious hindrance to immigration. The policy also aimed to settle British migrants as yeoman farmers on the land to provide

<sup>49</sup> Robert V Kubicek, ‘The Randlords in 1895: A Reassessment’, *Journal of British Studies*, **11.2**, 1972, pp.85-86.

<sup>50</sup> Keith Beavon, *Johannesburg: The Making and Shaping of the City*, Unisa Press, Pretoria, 2004, pp.25-32.

<sup>51</sup> Elsabe Brink, 1899, *The Long March Home*, Kwela Books, Cape Town, 1999.

a good example for Boer farmers to emulate as well as to spread the British element in the population away from their concentration in urban centres. This aim of white settler agriculture was ineffective because the holdings offered were too small for the extensive agriculture that was necessitated by the climate and soils, and the cheap labour required conflicted with the needs of the mines. The post-war administration put a great deal of effort into setting up in 1902 a Department of Agriculture which the reactionary Volksraad had always blocked in the SAR. The scientists in the new Department began to investigate the numerous problems faced by agriculture; it set up model farms and aimed at educating farmers in modern, scientific methods.<sup>52</sup> This dissertation will examine whether cheap local food production was at odds with the cheap labour supply required by the mines and agriculture, and whether the investment in improving local agriculture was undermined by the availability of cheap imported food.

### SCOPE

This chapter has provided the historical setting in which Johannesburg developed. Its global and local contexts will be examined in more detail in the following chapters. Chapter Two, entitled Johannesburg's Food Supply in the Global Context, examines the impact on Johannesburg of the global developments in greater speed, cheapness and efficiency of rail and steamship travel, and from the improved technologies of food production and preservation by canning, refrigerating and freezing. The processing of food became fragmented and organised into assembly lines on an industrial scale, and there was a change from food transportation in barrels, pots and sacks to metal and cardboard specialised packing. These developments led to economies of scale in distribution and retail organisation, to the growth of large firms and branding. Land and intercontinental telegraph cables created a world capital market centred on London and contributed to the faster flow of goods by the last quarter of the century.

Another major feature was massive intercontinental migration. It has been called the greatest human migration in history. The motivations of the millions involved varied but the majority seem to have been people moving long distances by sea and land to better their prospects in life. Some were indentured, but the bulk was channelled through independent networks of family and friends.<sup>53</sup> Migration was often stimulated by land or mining 'rushes',<sup>54</sup> and was subject to booms and busts as bubbles burst. Towns mushroomed in Australasia and the Americas, fuelled by the booming demand created by this migration. Sheer numbers of people generated a complex of activities including the need for food, housing, clothing, for work animals and their feed, and the creation of transport infrastructure. Rapidly expanding towns imported the necessities of life until surrounding rural areas could provision them adequately.<sup>55</sup> Johannesburg was a town in this category, with provisioning problems amplified by its Highveld isolation and distance from the sea .

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<sup>52</sup> Paul F Cranefield, *Science and Empire: East Coast Fever in Rhodesia and the Transvaal*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1991.

<sup>53</sup> Adam McKeown, 'Global Migration, 1846-1940', *Journal of World History*, **15.2**, 2004, pp.156,167.

<sup>54</sup> Geoffrey Blainey, *The Rush That Never Ended: A History of Australian Mining*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1963.

<sup>55</sup> James Belich, 'The Rise of the Angloworld: Settlement in North America and Australasia 1784-1918', in Philip Buckner & Francis R Douglas (Eds), *Rediscovering the British World*, University of Calgary Press, Calgary, 2005, pp.44-45.



These revolutionary changes in the rest of the world enabled the exploitation of the gold discoveries in the far interior of southern Africa, bringing Johannesburg from the start into the fold of the urbanised, industrialised world of the late nineteenth century in spite of its geographical isolation.

Sir John Maud observed: 'if the gold reef of the Witwatersrand had been discovered in Australia or Canada it would probably never have been exploited at a profit; for even when the cyanide process of extracting gold from ore began to be used, about the year 1892, the percentage of precious metal in the conglomerate was still too small to make mining profitable unless a plentiful supply of labour had been obtainable at wages incomparably lower than those which a white miner would be ready to accept.'<sup>56</sup> The fact that the substantial unskilled labour force was also transitory had implications for the large scale housing and food arrangements in compounds.

Others have made similar comments about the availability of scientific and technical developments: the invention of glycerine dynamite, the cyanide process, pneumatic rock drills,<sup>57</sup> and the skills, technical expertise and geological knowledge developed in other deep level gold, silver, tin and copper mines around the world. The mining houses were able to bring to Johannesburg and pay highly for the world's leading mining engineers, mainly American.<sup>58</sup> 'Hard rock men' were also brought in from Britain, in particular Cornish tin miners. If the Witwatersrand had been discovered at the beginning of the nineteenth century or earlier, it could not have been exploited without this build-up of new technology and mining experience elsewhere, together with Kimberley capital and financial acumen close at hand.

These relatively highly paid and cosmopolitan skilled workers created a market for varied, and often expensive, foodstuffs imported from a wide range of sources. The late nineteenth-century conjuncture of international developments in transport and communication, and in the technology and organisation of food production, preservation, processing and distribution enabled the diverse inhabitants of Johannesburg to be provisioned on the bleak South African Highveld, in spite of its droughts, variable and uneven rainfall, poor soils, animals and crop diseases and lack of all-year grazing.

Chapter Three, entitled South African Produced Food: The Republican Years assesses the ability of Johannesburg's agricultural hinterland to supply the growing city with sufficient food at affordable prices, especially in the early years when the future was uncertain and when it was totally dependent on food delivered by animal-drawn transport before the railway era. The lack of infrastructure on the South African highveld calls to mind the mathematical model of the spatial relationship and economic linkages between city and country devised by the German geographer, Johann Heinrich von Thünen in 1826. Von Thünen postulated that a city standing on a level plain, with equal fertility and no water transport, would have surrounding concentric circles of different zones of production determined by transport costs. Johannesburg's lack of water transport was an obvious difficulty – it is one of only a few cities in the world not built on a river or on a coastline. Soil fertility was obviously not uniform, agriculture was

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<sup>56</sup> Maud, *City Government*, p.33.

<sup>57</sup> Katz, *The White Death*, p.47.

<sup>58</sup> Elaine Katz, 'Revisiting the Origins of the Industrial Colour Bar in the Witwatersrand Gold Mining Industry, 1891-1899', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, **25.1**, March 1999, pp.79-82.

concentrated in alluvial valleys, but it did indeed have a zone of dairy, orchard and market gardens within one or two days' ox-wagon or mule-cart journey of its market, and less-perishable grain came from further away. The coming of the railways as elsewhere, destroyed the model, but it nevertheless has some utility in seeking to understand how the cost of animal-drawn transport dominated the supply of food to Johannesburg.

From the beginning Johannesburg had to draw in grain and other produce from the Orange Free State and Basutoland, and from Natal, and tinned foods from overseas from the railheads in the other states. Livestock came to the market on the hoof, and hunting for the market provided meat and biltong from further afield. Once the railways reached the Rand, substantial amounts came in both from local producers near the railway lines, and through the ports of Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, East London, Durban and Delagoa Bay.

By the 1880s rapid, reliable steamship travel had made grain imports from Australia and North America with much lower production costs cheaper than often scarce local produce. All parts of southern Africa were importing large quantities of flour from Australia and North America when local harvests were inadequate.<sup>59</sup> The ability of Johannesburg to draw in supplies from far afield strengthened its position in the eternal struggle between town and countryside,<sup>60</sup> as cheap imports reduced farmers' ability to profit from high prices in times of scarcity. The outbreak of war in October 1899, with military needs dominating transport and the commandeering of farm supplies, reduced Johannesburg's food supply once again to van Thunen's inner circle, and the small remaining population often went hungry.

Chapter Four, Johannesburg People and their Food Cultures, examines the ethnic differences in the food cultures of different groups of people in the town, and some of the social and economic pressures faced by them. Unskilled African migrant mine labourers and skilled white miners were both transient and single males, dependent on institutional cooking in compounds or boarding houses or restaurants, whereas wealthier white mining and commercial groups might have their families with them, enabling them to eat individually-produced meals at home. There was also a large stratum of poorer whites: recent immigrants lacking education and skills who struggled to maintain a hand-to-mouth existence on the fringes of white society. Multi-racial slums housed and fed a wide range of diverse groups.

The various ethnic and/or linguistic groups which made up the population included white English-speakers not only from Britain, but colonists from elsewhere in southern Africa, and immigrants from North America and Australasia. These formed the largest group in the first half of the 1890s. By the late 1890s, however, African mineworkers, who had increased from about 60,000 in 1895 to about 82,627 in 1898,<sup>61</sup> outnumbered the English-speakers. There were also Afrikaans/Dutch speakers, though the language was little heard in Johannesburg. These comprised government officials and an increasing number of 'poor whites' driven from rural areas, and a small number of 'Cape

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<sup>59</sup> A F Hattersley, *An Illustrated Social History of South Africa*, A A Balkema Cape Town, 1969, p.196, with reference to the western Cape, but there are other references for the rest of southern Africa. Keegan, *Rural Transformations*, states that it cost 9d per bag to transport grain from Australia, but 2s 6d to carry a bag 40 miles by ox-wagon, note p.246.

<sup>60</sup> Steel, *Hungry City*, p.7.

<sup>61</sup> Chamber of Mines Annual Reports, 1895-1898.



Coloureds'<sup>62</sup> and 'Malays'.<sup>63</sup> There were also Jews from both western and eastern Europe; Indians and Chinese, and the 'others' described in the census of 15 July 1896.<sup>64</sup> They all came from different food cultures, and life in Johannesburg forced them to adapt to an environment new to them all.

Chapter Five, Distribution of Food in Johannesburg, focuses on how the distribution system for food changed as the population grew and the area of the town expanded. The central market drawing in ox-wagons and livestock for slaughter retained its dominant position in the middle of Johannesburg, surrounded by the Stock Exchange, banks, clubs and the fashionable shopping district, for a surprisingly long time after the arrival of the railways. The municipal market in Newtown with direct rail access was not opened until 1913 and the municipal abattoir until 1910. As the suburbs spread small shops for daily needs followed, though the town centre remained the main shopping area. Food distributors such as wholesalers, grocery shops, stores, bakeries, butcheries, cold storage facilities, and hawkers are also analysed in this chapter, as are the distributors of cooked food such as mine compounds, eating houses, restaurants, boarding houses, hotels and street food, which were more important than household food preparation in the early years.

The British began their colonial developmentalist project even before the guerrilla war ended. Chapter Six, Johannesburg in a British Colony, examines the measures taken to improve agricultural productivity with the aim of increasing local food supplies. With greater British state involvement in this region, the larger scale of gold mining required the building of railways, the creation of a huge workforce and vast capital resources, and with this more intensive cultivation of land.<sup>65</sup> To what extent were they successful in this period, and what were the environmental consequences?

Chapter Seven, Conclusion, summarises the evidence provided in the foregoing chapters about how Johannesburg was provisioned during the first two decades of its existence in the light of the sources available. These sources are slender compared those used by overseas food historians or by South African historians in other topics, but they contribute towards filling a gap in the narrative of the development of this remarkable mining town.

This chapter has provided the overall historical context in which Johannesburg developed and outlined its relationship to its global and South African settings. These will now be discussed in more detail in the following chapters.

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<sup>62</sup> Mixed-race descendents from the western Cape of Khoisan people, slaves, Africans and Europeans.

<sup>63</sup> Descendents of slaves and others from Indonesia who had kept their Islamic religion, and Coloured people who had converted to Islam.

<sup>64</sup> *Report of the Director of Census*, Johannesburg Sanitary Department, September 1896.

<sup>65</sup> Kenneth Pomeranz, 'Introduction: World History and Environmental History' in Edmund Burke & Kenneth Pomeranz (Eds), *The Environment and World History*, University of California Press, 2009, pp.7-16.

## CHAPTER TWO

### JOHANNESBURG'S FOOD SUPPLY IN A GLOBAL CONTEXT

In the nineteenth century there were major changes in transport and communications resulting in increased trade and migration. The industrialisation of food production, processing, and distribution, and improvements in food preservation signalled the emergence of a globalised food supply chain. These made a substantial contribution to Johannesburg's growth from a mining camp to the largest city in southern Africa in its first decade.

#### TRANSPORT CHANGES ON LAND AND SEA

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, people and goods only moved on water - the sea, rivers, or canals - or on land by horseback, carts or wagons. Transport still relied on old technologies powered by animals, wind, or people, but by the 1830s and 1840s these were beginning to be replaced by steam power.<sup>1</sup> On land, thousands of miles of railways were constructed in the ensuing decades, binding countries together, and integrating them into the world trade network, but there was little economic reason to build them in southern Africa until the mineral discoveries in the interior. The railway that reached Kimberley from the coast in 1885 went through many miles of barren Karoo and servicing the diamond town was its *raison d'être*. When gold was discovered on the Witwatersrand the next year, complex politics between the coastal colonies and the republics of the Transvaal and Orange Free State meant that a rail link through Colesberg and Bloemfontein was not completed until 1892 in spite of the urgent economic need for it. The line from Natal did not arrive until 1895 and there was close competition in tariffs and freight rates between Natal and the Cape for the huge trade with the Witwatersrand, which played a major role in their economies.<sup>2</sup>

The size and speed of Johannesburg's growth, together with its total lack of water transport, and the low level of agricultural productivity in its hinterland, made it particularly dependent on imported food, brought by ox-wagon and mule carts from railheads at Kimberley and Natal. It is worth comparing its provisioning with that of earlier goldfields in California and South Australia, which in the early 1850s had lacked railroads, but were near seaports and distance was not a serious obstacle to communication by sea. Food came by sea into San Francisco harbour: wheat and other grains from Chile and Peru, coffee and cocoa from Mexico, potatoes and other foodstuffs from Australia, sugar and rice from China. Miners came from the same areas at first as the news took three months to reach the east coast of the United States. Within a year there were 5,000 Mexicans, thousands of Peruvians and Chileans, and 40,000 Chinese.<sup>3</sup> San Francisco had had a population of 812 fishermen and whalers in 1848, the year it was acquired from Mexico, with a few lumbermen in the interior. By 1852 California's non-indigenous population had grown to a quarter of a million drawn from 25 different countries; a mushrooming growth similar to other gold rushes. Prices were ten times those on the east coast. The various alluvial mines

<sup>1</sup> Robert Kubicek, 'British Expansion, Empire and Technical Change', in Andrew Porter (Ed), *The Oxford History of the British Empire Volume III*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1999, p.249.

<sup>2</sup> Andrew Porter, *Victorian Shipping, Business and Imperial Policy: Donald Currie, the Castle Line and Southern Africa*, Boydell Press, Woodbridge, 1986, p.163.

<sup>3</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Capital, 1848-1875*, Abacus Books, London, 1975, p.79-80.

were in or near to productive farming land, however, and many of the migrants made a better living growing food than as miners.<sup>4</sup>

It was a similar pattern in Australia, where the gold discoveries that moved anti-clockwise around the coast starting in the mid-1840s in the colonies of Victoria and South Australia were always able to be provisioned by short rail links to ports, and by agriculture which quickly developed in nearby fertile regions. In the 1880s, however, the miners reached the more inhospitable parts of Western Australia where there were no market gardens or cattle runs, and which presented problems like those of the Witwatersrand.<sup>5</sup> Until railways reached Johannesburg, the cost of transporting food almost entirely by ox-wagons across national boundaries through foreign states formed a major part of the cost of living

Early in the century at sea, sailing ships, at the mercy of winds and storms, with uncertain arrival times, carried small cargoes in wooden ships, unloading into small boats off harbours. Steam took over from sail more slowly than on land. Steamships required coaling stations, and late in the century there were still long runs with light cargo, or short coastal routes, which were more economically done by sail. In the 1880s and 1890s one half of British grain imports came from the American west coast, on sailing ships taking four months round Cape Horn; sail could still be cheaper than steam where speed was not vital.<sup>6</sup>

On the whole, however, large steel steamships and improvements in ship design which increased fuel efficiency and reduced running costs after mid-century greatly increased speed, dependability and carrying capacity. By the end of the century ships were becoming purpose-built and specialised, with large cargo holds, cold storage rooms, or comfortable passenger cabins. Livestock had been carried on open decks, at the mercy of bad weather and crew-members remembering to feed them, often with heavy losses on a voyage, but became more efficiently housed in specialised vessels, greatly increasing the livestock trade,<sup>7</sup> and perhaps aiding the spread of animal diseases as stock from all continents were freely traded.

All Indian Ocean South African ports had sandbars across the harbour entrance which made dredging a constant preoccupation, and loading and unloading goods particularly difficult. Port facilities improved as the revenues from traffic to Johannesburg justified building substantial breakwaters and docks with cranes for unloading and loading.

In 1883 various companies on the South Africa run formed a shipping conference to decide freight rates, so competition thereafter was in speed, or for passengers and the mail contracts. In 1891 a Union Line ship did the voyage in 15 days, compared to 44 days in 1847, but this was very expensive in coal, and it was realised that regularity was more important than speed. In the second half of the century the South African run was dominated by the Union Steam Ship Company and the Castle Line of Donald Currie, competing fiercely for the lucrative mail contract from the Cape Government, which precluded a merger. In 1900 the non-merger clause

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<sup>4</sup> Kenneth Pomeranz & Steven Topik, *The World that Trade Created: Society, Culture and the World Economy 1400-the present*, M E Sharpe, New York, 1999, pp.122-123.

<sup>5</sup> Geoffrey Blainey, *The Rush that Never Ended: A History of Australian Mining*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1963, pp.93,250.

<sup>6</sup> Avner Offer, *The First World War: An Agrarian Interpretation*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1989, pp.97-98.

<sup>7</sup> Simon G Hanson, *Argentine Meat and the British Market*, Oxford University Press, London, 1938, p.78.

was omitted from the new mail contract, and the Union and Castle Lines immediately merged.<sup>8</sup> Complaints about the 'shipping ring', and its role in driving up prices were frequently made in Johannesburg, particularly after 1902, though it was difficult to disentangle the effects of amalgamation and the war. Mining houses felt the conference activities pushed up the cost of living, but shippers argued that other middle men and the expense of rail transport were also to blame.<sup>9</sup> Competition for passengers was intense in view of the cheap fares of the German East Africa Shipping Line on the east coast route to Lourenco Marques.<sup>10</sup> There were no immigration or passport controls, so when news of the new El Dorado in the ZAR went quickly round the world, it was less expensive or difficult for fortune hunters to get to Johannesburg than it would have been earlier in the century.

### COMMUNICATIONS

The telegraph was 'the first invention to bring electricity to the service of man'. On land a network of overhead wires provided a grid for the fast flow of information, complementing the railways. The network was widely used in Britain by the 1860s, and by 1882, Britain, France and Germany had more than 28,000 telegraph offices. The connecting submarine sea cables took longer to lay, but in the 1870s the world became linked with stronger cables, often duplicated or triplicated. The Suez-India cable was linked to the east coast of Africa, then via Zanzibar and Lourenco Marques to Durban in 1879, and then to Cape Town. A west coast route via French West Africa linked Cape Town to London in 1889, and another through Ascension and St Helena in 1900 also linked Cape Town to London. By the end of the century increased volume had brought charges down but it was still expensive at 5s a word in 1896,<sup>11</sup> and chronically congested. It was much used, however, by the commercial world.

The telegraph was a major factor in the convergence of the prices of staples everywhere. Price movements in one place were instantly reflected in all the major centres of the world. Instead of a poor harvest meaning high prices for a farmer's scanty production, dealers were able to bring cheap imports flooding in.<sup>12</sup> And in Johannesburg they did. Retail trade was also transformed. From sending orders by seamount to personal contacts in their home countries and having to wait sometimes for months for them to arrive, Johannesburg stores were able to wire orders or cancellations rapidly in an attempt to keep abreast of changing economic circumstances.

Larger Johannesburg stores could put in orders direct to London by telegraph, rather than having to buy locally from commercial travellers or wholesalers. Many advertisements in Johannesburg newspapers carry the addresses of large British food manufacturers: for example, Borwick's Baking Powder ('Invaluable at the Diggings and in the Bush, where Yeast cannot be Obtained') Guildhall, London;<sup>13</sup> Maconochie Brothers, 181 Blackwall Street, London;<sup>14</sup> John Moir and Son (London, Aberdeen and Seville) Leadenhall Street, London.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Norman Hudson, *The Race to the Cape: The Story of the Union Castle Line, 1857-1977*, Navigator Books, Ringwood, 1995.

<sup>9</sup> Andrew Porter, *Victorian Shipping, Business and Imperial Policy: Donald Currie, the Castle Line and Southern Africa*, Royal Historical Society, Boydell Press, Woodbridge, 1982, p.179.

<sup>10</sup> Charles van Onselen, *Studies in the Social and Economic History of the Witwatersrand, 1886-1914, Volume I New Babylon*, Longman, Harlow, Essex, 1982, p.108.

<sup>11</sup> Kubicek, 'British Expansion, Empire and Technical Change', pp.259-260.

<sup>12</sup> William J Bernstein, *A Splendid Exchange: How Trade Shaped the World*, Atlantic Monthly Press, New York, 2008, p.340.

<sup>13</sup> *Standard & Diggers' News*, 11 December 1896.

<sup>14</sup> *Standard & Diggers' News*, 12 December 1896.

<sup>15</sup> *Standard & Diggers' News*, 7 January 1898.

Cable services developed the growth of newspapers, accompanied by advances in printing technology and distribution methods allowed papers to cater for ever-larger audiences around the Empire. Newspapers were a powerful globalising force, often printed with very small local staffs and correspondents. It is striking how much of the news in Johannesburg newspapers in the 1890s had been put together by cable, such as famines in India, conditions on Australian goldfields, debates in the Cape and Natal legislatures affecting the Rand, cattle sickness in Bechuanaland, or unrest in Rhodesia. Reuters was one of the first companies to recognise the potential for syndication. Founded in London in 1851, by the early 1900s it had a network of some 260 agencies and correspondents, not only ensuring the Britain was informed of events on the periphery, but also that the periphery received news with a British, and somewhat conservative, slant.<sup>16</sup> Newspapers were also vital to investment and speculation in companies. Australian mines had been largely financed locally until the 1880s, when information about new finds and their prospects became easily available in British newspapers, and 'in 1886 money was cheap and plentiful in Great Britain'.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, Johannesburg booms were fuelled by British, French and German investors, boosted by cabled news or published company reports.

These changes in transport and communications were still only over long distances and between wealthier countries. Even in wealthier countries, horses and oxen were not replaced locally by the internal combustion engine until the twentieth century, and work animals still powered farms, mills, cranes and construction. The demand for horse transport was increased internationally by railways,<sup>18</sup> which tended to benefit only those near stations or halts, just as the problems of getting farm produce to market in the Transvaal were not solved by railways between the main centres, but by motor lorries and the building of rural roads from the 1920s on.

### FOOD DEVELOPMENTS IN BRITAIN

The nineteenth century has been called the British century. London in 1800 was the largest city in the world with nearly a million people, and had more than quadrupled to 4.5 million in 1900, and other cities in the industrialised world expanded similarly. Railways allowed cities to expand, and put an end to walk-to-work and walk-to-market cities. Food shopping spread from the central markets and hawkers to shops in the new suburbs created by railways. Food in markets had always been sold in the open air, where it could be supervised by the authorities, but by mid-century London butchers, bakers and grocers were operating in cramped, dark interiors of converted houses, with food piled everywhere in barrels, chests and sacks.<sup>19</sup> Cows were kept in basements in built-up areas,<sup>20</sup> dairies were grossly unhygienic, and milk for sale was carried in open pails round the streets. Adulteration of food was rife, not 'merely frauds on the pocket, but serious hazards to health'.<sup>21</sup> By mid-century

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<sup>16</sup> Simon Potter, 'The British and Dominions Press and the British World, c 1876-1914', in Carl Bridge & Kent Federowich (Eds), *The British World: Diaspora, Culture and Identity*, Frank Cass, London 2003, pp.191-196.

<sup>17</sup> Blainey, *The Rush that Never Ended*, p.101.

<sup>18</sup> James Belich, 'The Rise of the Angloworld: Settlement in North America and Australia, 1784-1918' in Philip Buckner & Francis R Douglas (Eds), *Rediscovering the British World*, University of Calgary Press, Calgary, 2005, p.51

<sup>19</sup> Carolyn Steel, *Hungry City: How Food Shapes our Lives*, Chatto & Windus, London, 2008, 133-134.

<sup>20</sup> In 1886, 21.5 per cent of London's fresh milk still came from cowsheds in London, though from the 1870s as cooling techniques improved, 'railway milk' became more acceptable. T C Barker, 'Nineteenth Century Diet; Some Twentieth Century Questions', in T C Barker, J C McKenzie & John Yudkin (Eds), *Our Changing Fare: 200 Years of British Food Habits*, Macgibbon & Kee, London, 1966, p.26.

<sup>21</sup> John Burnett, *Plenty and Want: A Social History of Diet in England from 1815 to the Present Day*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1968, p.242.

this had led to scientifically trained investigators discovering quantities of alum and flint in flour, red oxide of lead in coffee, hydrated sulphate of lime in sugar, copper in pickles, and many poisons, metals, and artificial colourings in other foodstuffs.

Eventually legislation, the appointment of public analysts, prosecution of offenders and voluntary forces led to purer food. As part of the latter, manufacturers began putting their products into sealed containers, and branding them as an assurance of quality and hygiene. Brand-name foods, such as Kellogg's, Lipton's and Crosse & Blackwell were marketed on the promise of purity, convenience, quality and reliability. London's docklands became a global food-processing centre with flour mills and factories for sauces and meat essences by London Bridge, and tinned meat in Bermondsey.<sup>22</sup>

The import and re-export of processed food was a major strand in British commercial dominance in the latter half of the nineteenth century, along with textiles, manufactured goods and machinery exports. British ports developed the physical and social infrastructure and technologies for grading, sorting, processing, mixing and repackaging spices, beverages and raw food ingredients from around the world and exporting standardized and reliably graded processed foods in increasingly sophisticated and durable packages that ensured their quality and longevity. A large number of ancillary industries and new technologies were developed for manufacturing glass, wood, ceramics, metal, pasteboard and cardboard for packaging, especially around the port of London. Processing and mixing of products in British ports often had the effect of obscuring the origins of the raw materials. 'The result was a substitution of identity: exotic products from around the world became culturally British and were capable of signifying both home and the global power of Empire'<sup>23</sup> to global expatriates.

This is exemplified by this 1889 advertisement in a Johannesburg newspaper, scarcely three years since the area was bare veld:

Wm. CULLEN & Co., SCOTCH GROCERS, near the Post Office,

Have just received a large assortment of GROCERIES and DELICACIES, including the following: German Polonies, Phillippe and Canard Sardines, Pickled Salmon, Captain White's Pickels, Lucca Oil, Tomatoes, French and American, Green Peas, Dried Sprats, Fried Soles, Patent Lax, Russian Caviarre, Pati de Fois Gras, Salmon Cutlets, Curried Lobsters, English Hams, Highly Cured Bloaters, Lime Fruit Juice, Spanish Olives, Calves Feet Jelly, Loaf Sugar, Potted Meats, Crosse & Blackwell's, Cheddar Cheese, Roast Turkey, Roast Chicken, Asparagus.<sup>24</sup>

These 'delicacies' enlivened what was probably a rather dull diet of bread, meat and potatoes for Europeans in early Johannesburg, and indicate how culturally British some exotic tinned products had become. These people would not have eaten local Indian food, but 'curried' lobsters in tins were accepted as British. Since the early nineteenth century a taste for more spicy food had been brought back to Britain by East India Company officials and merchants, 'nabobs', so had a certain snob value as well as adding bite to the otherwise bland flavours of English cooking.<sup>25</sup> Another anglicisation of Indian food arose when a Governor of Bengal retired to his country estate near Worcester in the 1830s and asked a local chemist-cum-grocer, Lea and Perrins, to make up his favourite sauce. The chemists were disgusted at the mixture, but it matured well and by 1855 they were selling

<sup>22</sup> Roy Porter, *London: A Social History*, Hamish Hamilton, London, 1994, p.194.

<sup>23</sup> Richard Wilk, 'A Taste of Home: The Cultural and Economic Significance of European Food Exports to the Colonies' in Nutzendal & Trentmann, *Food and Globalization*, pp.96-97.

<sup>24</sup> *Diggers' News and Witwatersrand Advertiser*, June 11 1889.

<sup>25</sup> Lizzie Collingham, *Curry: A Tale of Cooks and Conquerors*, Vintage Books, London, 2006, p. 115.



over 30,000 bottles a year of Worcestershire Sauce and selling it back to India.<sup>26</sup> Judging by advertisements, it was a staple item in Johannesburg grocery shops.

In spite of the ZAR being an independent foreign state, nineteenth century British food developments had particular resonance for South Africa, but because so many of the Johannesburg uitlanders, even before the South African war, had British origins. Many were 'colonials' from Natal or the Cape colonies, or from Australia, and some of the East European Jews had lived in Britain before coming to South Africa. At its imperial zenith, British food tastes were regarded as the norm in the region, and in spite of competition from Germany and America, and the rising power of producing countries, Britain largely dominated the world food trade.

### GROWTH IN WORLD FOOD TRADE

In the nineteenth century, the transformations in the cheapness, reliability, capacity and speed of transport and communications enabled large quantities of grains and meat to reach European markets from temperate regions of north and south America and Australasia, the Punjab and the Ukraine. This increased the staple foods available for European consumption, and led to the global homogenisation of food – basic foodstuffs were now available almost everywhere in the world.<sup>27</sup> Prices of primary products converged as substitution occurred when prices rose too high. Previous world trade had been driven by climate differences in non-staple commodities, and the price of tea, coffee, spices and sugar were affected by transport costs and mercantilist regulations. The shift from sail to steam, intense competition and the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, drove freight rates down for wheat and rice globally.<sup>28</sup> International trade began to centre in a few places: up to 1914 Minneapolis and Liverpool were the biggest grain-milling centres in the world and Liverpool had a futures market in wheat from 1883, enabling its traders to hedge against price fluctuations. Rice was exported from Bengal and Burma west towards Europe and Africa, and to places east of the Malay Peninsula from China and Siam. Singapore grew up as a key distribution centre, integrating markets when there were crop failures. Both trading systems were complex, and very important internationally.<sup>29</sup> Refrigeration brought a similar development for perishable goods after 1880.

However, the contention by the German economic historian, Alexander Nützendel, that by the turn of the century there was barely a place on the globe where prices were not influenced by foreign trade, where railways were not financed by foreign investments, where technology and manufacturing skills were not imported from abroad, and where labour markets were not influenced by long-distance migration flows,<sup>30</sup> is somewhat exaggerated. Even in the 'civilised' world, there were substantial areas untouched by all the advances of the nineteenth century. Rural areas in western Europe still had illiterate, peasant populations, living barely above subsistence level,

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<sup>26</sup> Collingham, *Curry*, pp.149-150.

<sup>27</sup> Sidney W Mintz, 'Food, Culture and Energy' in A Nützendel & F Trentmann, *Food and Globalization: Consumption, Markets and Politics in the Modern World*, Berg, Oxford, 2008, pp.22-24.

<sup>28</sup> A J H Latham & Larry Neal, 'The International Market in Rice and Wheat, 1868-1914', *Economic History Review, New Series*, **36.2**, May 1983, pp.272-274.

<sup>29</sup> Latham & Neal, 'The International Market in Rice and Wheat', pp.262-265.

<sup>30</sup> Alexander Nützendel, 'Food Markets and Transnational Politics, 1850-1914', in Alexander Nützendel & Frank Trentmann (Eds), *Food and Globalisation: Consumption, Markets and Politics in the Modern World*, Berg, Oxford, 2008, pp.153-155.

whose only link with their governments and capital cities was the tax collector, who continued to do things the way their forefathers had done, and to whom the life of the *platteland* Boer was not dissimilar

The great expansion in international trade in the nineteenth century was fuelled by gold rushes in Australasia, north America, and the Urals, the demand for gold driven by most countries being by then on the gold standard. The gold rushes in themselves created new population centres and areas of growth. By the 1870s, however, these gold finds were petering out and there was a frantic search worldwide for more gold to accommodate the unprecedented industrial and commercial expansion. The consistent richness of the Witwatersrand deposits made it a major supplier in the 1890s, and the largest single contributor to the maintenance of the global monetary system, and Britain's place in it, for a considerable time.<sup>31</sup> Not only did Johannesburg need the world for its food supply, but the world needed Johannesburg's gold.

### MIGRATIONS

The massive migrations of people during the nineteenth century, mainly from Europe and due to structural changes in the economy, contributed to what Eric Hobsbawm calls 'a vast extension of agricultural land ... between 1840 and 1880 the area under crops rose by half ... and an even greater increase in output through improved productivity'.<sup>32</sup> Europeans took with them an industrial toolkit to tailor their environments for alien settlement. They introduced plants and animals and changed the landscape with ruthless energy, conquering or displacing indigenous people.<sup>33</sup> European settlers in temperate latitudes exploited the virgin soils in the new grasslands to create massive specialised commercialised regions of grain and meat production of a new scale and depth. Railways and steamships created transoceanic supply chains, and capital invested in transportation brought good returns on the passage of settlers from Europe and wheat and beef being carried back to Europe. Nearly ten million people left the British Isles alone between 1853 and 1920,<sup>34</sup> and additional numbers from the rest of Europe, mainly to the United States, and largely without state help. It was mainly financed by remittances sent by relations or friends who had gone before. In many cases, migration was an assertion of individual freedom, a search for dignity, worth and self-betterment.<sup>35</sup> From the east coast of America the movement was westwards, and in Russia eastwards, to people continents; and at the end of the century from Mediterranean Europe into South America.<sup>36</sup> In the century preceding 1940, an estimated 55-58 million people migrated from Europe to the Americas.

For a number of reasons, until the mineral discoveries, South Africa received relatively little of this human capital. Of the nearly eight million migrants from Britain between 1853 and 1910, only 577,400 went to South Africa, and most of those were in the two decades after 1891.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Russell Ally, *Gold and Empire: The Bank of England and South Africa's Gold Producers, 1886-1926*, Witwatersrand University Press, 1994, pp.12-14.

<sup>32</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Capital: 1848-1875*, Abacus, London, 1975, p.212.

<sup>33</sup> John Darwin, *After Tamerlane: The Rise and Fall of Global Empires, 1400-2000*, Penguin Books, London, 2007, pp.254-5.

<sup>34</sup> P J Cain, 'Economics and Empire: The Metropolitan Context', in Andrew Porter (Ed), *The Oxford History of the British Empire, Volume III*, Oxford University Press, 1999, p.46.

<sup>35</sup> Offer, *The First World War*, p.315.

<sup>36</sup> Philip Buckner & Francis R Douglas, *Rediscovering the British World*, University of British Columbia Press, Vancouver, 2005, p.39-42.

<sup>37</sup> Cain, 'Economics and Empire', p.47.



## GRAIN INDUSTRIALISATION AND GLOBALISATION

Traditional cuisines in western Europe had been based on the produce of local farms, with a diet of wheat mixed with oats, rye and barley in a coarse loaf for the daily bread, and occasional bits of bacon of the poorer classes, but now began to change towards the wheat-bread and meat diet of the rich. The age-old process of grinding flour between millstones and sifting it through silk many times to achieve fine, very expensive, white flour, was replaced by efficient, hygienic metal rollers which separated the various constituents of wheat and made white flour much more widely affordable. A standardised flour could be produced with much better keeping qualities as the wheat germ contains fat which goes rancid quickly. Removing it, however, meant loss of proteins and phosphates, the most nutritious part.<sup>38</sup> The fertility of virgin soils in the New World was 'mined' to produce large quantities of varieties of wheat suitable for the new industrialised flour mills.<sup>39</sup>

The baking industry lagged behind milling, and until the end of the century small bakers continued to supply the surrounding areas with fresh bread. Electric power for mixing machines and steam baking in large ovens changed this, however, and industrial quantities of bread could be produced, though the high price of electricity still deterred many small bakers.<sup>40</sup>

The new methods of breadmaking needed hard flour from North America, and British wheat growers would have suffered even more if a sizeable industry had not grown up in biscuit production. Developed out of the naval 'hard tack', from 1833 steam machinery mechanised some of the processes, reduced labour costs, increased output and improved quality. Specialised packing in tins improved their keeping qualities. A whole secondary industry of specialised manufacturers of machinery developed, and by the late 1870s 37 million pounds of biscuits were being produced and distributed throughout Britain and the rest of the world. Firms such as Huntley and Palmers were among the largest in Britain. As with the early canning industry the first customers were travellers, explorers, the armed forces, traders and colonial officers, but in time biscuits became part of the daily diet of the population. Imported biscuits were prominent in Johannesburg grocers' advertisements, and bakers were making their own versions of a wide range of types.<sup>41</sup> Another secondary industry was jam-making from the 1870s onwards, with large firms such as Chivers, Wilkins and Blackwells stimulating the growing fruit industry, and supplying cheap calories to accompany bread in the working class diet.<sup>42</sup>

The emerging agrifood system, which began with wheat and meat, brought cheap food for the new industrialised urban centres of Europe, but disaster for European farmers, with their exhausted soils and relatively small farms who could not compete, leading to the prolonged agrarian depression of the 1870s and 1880s. A series of bad harvests, 1873-1879, forced Britain to import large quantities of grain just as the bountiful American crops became cheaply available, with permanent effects. In England between 1870 and 1900 the land devoted to grain

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<sup>38</sup> Reay Tannahill, *Food in History*, Penguin, London, 1973, pp.332-333.

<sup>39</sup> Harriet Friedman, 'Food', in A Iriye & Pierre-Yves Saunier (Eds), *The Palgrave Dictionary of Transnational History*, Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2009, p.417.

<sup>40</sup> John Marchant, B Reuben, & J Alcock, *Bread: A Slice of History*, The History Press, Stroud, 2008, pp.111-126.

<sup>41</sup> Jack Goody, *Cooking, Cuisine and Class: A Study in Comparative Sociology*, Cambridge University Press, 1982, pp.155-156.

<sup>42</sup> Angeliki Torode, 'Trends in Fruit Consumption', in T C Barker, J C McKenzie & John Yudkin (Eds), *Our Changing Fare: 200 Years of British Food Habits*, MacGibbon & Kee, London, 1966, pp.122-123.

production shrank by two-thirds, as farmers turned to dairy farming, vegetables and fruit growing where they had a transport advantage; in Denmark farmers turned to bacon and butter production, and from Norway to Italy peasants who could no longer make a living on the land emigrated.<sup>43</sup> The new transport facilities also involved the southern hemisphere in this integration into a global trade system. The flood of cheap food from the New World affected South African farmers as badly as their European counterparts.

As Lt Col Sir Owen Thomas, a Welsh landowner and stock-breeder brought to South Africa in 1902 to assess the agricultural prospects of Britain's new colonies of the Transvaal and Orange River Colony, warned:

England by bitter experience has learned what really is meant by competition with Australian and American agriculture. The English farmer aforesaid was the most scientific and successful wheat-grower in the world. ... The English scientific farmer, with cheap and skilled labour, and a suitable soil and climate, failed in competition with Australia and America. The South African farmer enters a similar competition, under even more crushing disadvantages. ... The tendency presumably will be toward still cheaper ocean rates, and toward greater facilities and lower rates from coast to market. It will be wholly favourable to the foreign competitor, and wholly detrimental to the local producer. The South African consumer will buy the best and cheapest commodity which is offered to him.<sup>44</sup>

In the early nineteenth century British agriculture had led Europe in productivity and innovation. The British eighteenth century agricultural revolution which had fed the early stages of Britain's industrial revolution was seen as a model of modernisation and scientific progress. By the 1840s, however, the growing pressure of urban needs had brought about the repeal of the Corn Laws and the removal of the tariffs and laws hindering the importation of cheaper meat and dairy products. To compete with the flood of foreign foodstuffs, the mixed farming model combining arable and pastoral developed in the eighteenth century was replaced by greater specialisation, with grain farmers using increasing quantities of fertilisers year after year, and livestock farmers using more and more fodder crops.

In the early 1870s climatic factors caused British farming to be overwhelmed by cheaper foreign grains and meat. Foreign competition led to lower grain prices, lower land values, and a declining labour force. As in other industries, British agriculture lagged behind best practice abroad. Lack of scientific research or interest in innovation, slowness in mechanising, a poorly paid and unmotivated work force, and the rent-drawing large class of landowners all contributed to the ills of agriculture. Germany and France, slower to urbanise, with large numbers of peasants, imposed tariffs, but in Britain free trade was supported by large urban populations as well as imperial, military, mercantile, financial and manufacturing interests. Britain became an import economy, paying for its food supply with manufactured goods, financial services and profits from investments.<sup>45</sup> By the end of the century Britain was importing some 58 per cent of its calories, and was the most important market in the world for foodstuffs, producing less than a quarter of its wheat requirements, 62 per cent of meat and half of milk. Importers were as important in the food trades as country merchants and wholesalers, and prices were influenced by world prices rather than the home market.<sup>46</sup> In the same way the food supply of Johannesburg,

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<sup>43</sup> Tannahill, *Food in History*, pp.308-309.

<sup>44</sup> Owen Thomas, *The Agricultural and Pastoral Prospects of South Africa*, Archibald Constable, London, 1904, pp.96-97.

<sup>45</sup> Offer, *The First World War*, pp.81,90-120.

<sup>46</sup> Janet M Blackman, 'Changing Marketing Methods and Food Consumption' in T C Barker, J C McKenzie & John Yudkin (Eds), *Our Changing Fare: 200 Years of British Food Habits*, MacGibbon & Kee, London, p.32.

under stress from rapidly increased population and rural setbacks such as animal diseases and drought in the late 1890s, also became an import economy, as will be discussed in Chapter Three, South African Produced Food.

The marketing of imports was highly capitalised and organised to shift large quantities quickly and cheaply from the dockside to final destinations with the minimum of handling. This increased sophistication in the handling of large quantities of imports meant more stable prices for consumers, but crowded out locally produced foods.<sup>47</sup> A similar trend could be seen in Johannesburg, where the big wholesalers importing overseas products and tendering for large food supply contracts were more powerful than the small-scale, under-capitalised, almost pre-industrial, retailers.<sup>48</sup>

In the 1870s the United States emerged as a great food power,<sup>49</sup> pioneering its industrialisation in terms of scale, mechanisation and the development of assembly line techniques of food production, processing and distribution, which constantly drove costs down. America had always had more land available than people to work it, and the rapid expansion westwards turning vast expanses of virgin soil into the world's granary was based on labour-saving machinery devised by inventive European settlers, for example the McCormick reaper (1834), the Pitts mechanical thresher (1837), the Marsh harvester (1858) and Appleby binder and knotter for grain sheaves (1878). Special cultivators were devised to use with maize, which was chiefly grown for cattle feed in the United States. Animal power – oxen, horses, mules - was still used for these machines. In the United States over half work energy came from horses, with humans supplying 13 per cent, and wind, water and steam the rest. By the end of the century huge combine harvesters needed up to thirty draught horses to pull them, and there were 15.5 million draught horses in the country.<sup>50</sup>

### MEAT INDUSTRIALISATION AND GLOBALISATION

The industrial revolution and Britain's world trade through colonialism had made Britain the earliest country where large numbers of consumers in industrialised urban settlements had a sufficiently high standard of living to be able to afford good quality meat.<sup>51</sup> The abolition of the Corn Laws and lifting of the prohibition on the import of meat and reduction of duties and tariffs in 1846 had led to greatly increased imports of livestock tapping the new railway routes of central and northern Europe, and then from America.

The unrestricted trade in livestock had led to the spread of infectious diseases: foot and mouth disease, pleura-pneumonia, sheep pox, swine fever, anthrax. In the 1860s Britain had a serious outbreak of rinderpest, traced to cattle imported from the Baltic, which was only brought under control by various Acts restricting animal landings to certain wharves, banning imports from countries where listed diseases existed, and eventually in 1896 all imported animals had to be slaughtered at Foreign Animal Wharves, which reduced live imports when

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<sup>47</sup> Richard Perren, 'Marketing of Agricultural Products' in E J T Collins (Ed), *The Agrarian History of England and Wales, Volume VII, 1850-1914, Part II*, Cambridge University Press, 2000, p.998.

<sup>48</sup> Tim Keegan, 'Seasonality, Markets and Pricing', Paper for discussion at the Seminar on the Societies of Southern Africa in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries on 31 May 1978.

<sup>49</sup> Offer, *The First World War*, p.81.

<sup>50</sup> Belich, 'Rise of the Angloworld', p.51.

<sup>51</sup> Laurie Winn Carlson, *Cattle: An Informal Social History*, Ivan R Dee, Chicago, 2001, pp.113-114,172-174.

strictly enforced.<sup>52</sup> South Africa had none of these restrictions, or the ability to enforce them, and the rising amount of livestock imports as consumers demanded more and better quality meat led to similar outbreaks of animal diseases in the later nineteenth century.

Railways had enabled an enormous expansion of American meat production and distribution. Cincinnati was an early centre of pork production, including the curing of industrial quantities of ham and bacon and sending it down the Ohio River to the East Coast. 'Porkopolis' pioneered the manufacturing techniques that would transform meat-packing into mass-production 'disassembly' lines.<sup>53</sup> Railway construction then enabled the vast herds of wild cattle in the south-west to be driven to railheads and moved on by rail to the slaughter-houses of Chicago. By 1872 the Chicago stockyards were employing 75,000 people processing three million cattle, hogs and sheep annually, rising to 17 million by 1905.<sup>54</sup> This huge quantity of meat was then distributed to American and north European markets via railways and steamers. At first it was kept fresh in natural ice, then by refrigeration and freezing, and sold at a lower price, and usually, quality, than local produce could achieve but it allowed meat to become part of the diet of far more people than before.<sup>55</sup> The development of refrigeration and its associated infrastructure meant that huge new regions in the United States, Canada, the river Plate area, Chile, Australia and New Zealand could send dead meat to Britain cheaply all the year round. Once South African ports and railways acquired refrigeration infrastructure in the late 1890s, locally-produced meat could be supplemented by, and be in competition with, this industrially produced meat.

### LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY DEVELOPMENTS

Mass production of food, and the complexities of the new international transport systems, led to the growth of large food combines to distribute and market food, stimulated by customer demand for consistent quality and stable prices: e.g. Nestlé (1866), Heinz (1876), Lever Bros (1885) later Unilever. Food tended to become standardised and homogenised throughout the industrialised world.<sup>56</sup> The new international trading system required much higher levels of control and standards of accountancy. William Cronon states that the meat packers of Chicago, such as Swift and Armour, by the end of the century had created:

immense, vertically integrated corporations capable of exercising managerial control over the food of many nations on a scale never before seen in the history of the world.... by managing supply and demand, they effectively rearranged the meat trade of the world. Their real achievement was to create immense impersonal organizations, hierarchically structured and operated by an army of managers and workers that would long outlive their founders... The very scale on which they operated made them increasingly susceptible to the same abstract logic which the railroads had discovered in their balance sheets. Fixed costs meant an inescapable need to service debt. Unused capital – whether in the form of equipment, employees, or raw materials – meant waste. Waste meant inefficiency, and inefficiency in a competitive economic environment could all too easily mean death.<sup>57</sup>

The emergence of the large industrial, rather than family, firms in retailing followed the completion of railway and telegraph systems in America and Europe, though the beginnings of 'immense, impersonal' organisations

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<sup>52</sup> Bethanie Afton & Michael Turner, 'The Impact of Foreign Trade, in E J T Collins (Ed), *The Agrarian History of England & Wales, Volume VII, 1850-1914*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp.2107-2108.

<sup>53</sup> William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West*, W W Norton, New York & London, 1991, p.228.

<sup>54</sup> Steel, *Hungry City*, p.34.

<sup>55</sup> Hanson, *Argentine Meat*, pp.22-26.

<sup>56</sup> Tannahill, *Food in History*, p.330.

<sup>57</sup> Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis*, pp.254-255.

with professional skilled managers and large amounts of capital raised over wide geographical areas can be traced back to the seventeenth century East India companies, and the Bank of England.<sup>58</sup>

In the last quarter of the century free trade was giving way to protectionism as European agriculture struggled to cope with the influx of cheap food. Trade barriers began to be raised from 1879 when Germany restored duties on wheat and other food products. Similar duties were adopted by France, Austria-Hungary, Sweden, Spain, Portugal, and the United States with the McKinley Tariff of 1890. Veterinary meat import restrictions also hampered trade. Smaller countries such as Denmark, Belgium and the Netherlands with highly commercialised agriculture and limited natural resources resisted protectionism, and free trade was deeply rooted in the British political culture,<sup>59</sup> though now on the defensive. Depressed agricultural prices led to social changes, with business men and bankers increasing their political power in relation to the landed classes in most European countries. The expansion of New World agriculture had substantially enriched urban financiers and commodity traders in Chicago and the east coast cities of North America.<sup>60</sup> By the turn of the century too, the British position was slipping, and it was the United States and continental European countries which were coming to dominate world trade. Germany was particularly feared in Britain as an economic rival – there was a ‘Made in Germany’ scare in the British press in 1896.<sup>61</sup> A committee reported to Parliament in 1898 on the rising value of foodstuffs imported to the ZAR in the years 1895, 1896 and 1897, and stated that ‘it is to be feared that the bulk of the increased trade is with the continent, and not with the United Kingdom’, and that ‘Germany is making strenuous efforts to increase exports with Government help and subsidies, and special railway rates for imports’. The report also stated that British manufacturers and exporters were represented by experienced, efficient and pushing travellers, but orders were sometimes executed with insufficient care, and packing was not up to American standards.<sup>62</sup>

The last quarter of the nineteenth century also saw the ‘scramble for Africa’ when growing tensions and rivalries between European powers were expressed in territorial claims which swept up most of Africa into colonial ownership. Colonies were no longer simply to be exploited for their natural resources by the metropolitan powers, but expected to provide markets for manufactured goods, including processed foods, from those powers. The attempt to reduce the number of foreign grocers in Johannesburg after the Transvaal became a British colony, was part of that change. It was usually brought about by tariffs, sometimes by sentiment, as when the British War Office in February 1902 tried to persuade the Imperial Cold Storage Company to supply the military contract for meat solely from British sources although it had no legal powers to do so.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Stuart Jones, *The Great Imperial Banks of South Africa*, University of South Africa Press, 1996, pp.266-267.

<sup>59</sup> Nützendal, ‘Food Markets and Transnational Politics, 1850-1914, in *Food and Globalisation*, pp.158-159.

<sup>60</sup> C A Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780-1914: Global Connections and Comparisons*, Blackwell, Oxford, 2004, p.456.

<sup>61</sup> Offer, *The First World War*, p.232.

<sup>62</sup> C.9093, British Parliamentary Papers, *Report on the Trade, Commerce and Gold Mining Industry of the South African Republic for the year 1897*, Presented to both Houses of Parliament by command of Her Majesty, October 1898. Abridged Report in Appendix Two.

<sup>63</sup> GB 162, *Rhodes Papers*, MSS Afr.t.5 647 (12), Letter from Carl Meyer, 92 Canon Street, London EC to Rhodes at Groote Schuur, 15 February 1902.

Before the South African war Johannesburg had been conspicuously cosmopolitan, and so was its food. Before the War it had Coffee Rooms on continental lines,<sup>64</sup> and afterwards Cafes and Tea Rooms as in Britain.<sup>65</sup> G A Leyds, a nephew of the Republican State Secretary, who grew up in early Johannesburg, recalled that there were many Dutch, French, Austrian, Italian and Turkish merchants who freely imported their wares directly from their home countries, creating 'an unbelievable variety both in style, price, quality and price in the shops'. Leyds noted that these cosmopolitan communities largely left during and after the War, and Imperial Preference, numerous import controls and other restrictions changed Johannesburg's character, making it more British,<sup>66</sup> though not as much so as the British authorities wished. There was a distinct feeling after the war that the expenditure of so many lives and so much money in the three years of war ought to result in advantages for British manufacturers and merchants. Non-British citizens were required to have permits to travel in the interior, and this impeded the return of American mining engineers and entrepreneurs to the Rand. 'The permit system helped to stem the expansion of American trade in South Africa as did strict inspections of incoming American products, delays to and cancellations of official contracts, a lack of local credit, high freight rates, combined with rebates to British shipping firms, and new preferential customs duties.'<sup>67</sup>

### FOOD PRESERVATION

All gold mining regions, with their mushrooming populations erupting in backwaters, and with the money to make their demands effective, relied heavily in the first years on imported preserved foods, and the nineteenth century advances in techniques of preservation were particularly important to them.

Since earliest times the ability to preserve food has been vital for human survival, and for the growth of settlements and trade, everywhere in the world. The ability to store grains by protecting them from mould and insects was an essential part of the Neolithic revolution, allowing the development of larger settlements than the small groups dependent on hunting and gathering. Year-round availability of food which equalised differences in climate and fertility have been crucial to human settlement, to towns, and to civilisation.

According to circumstances, different societies 'used their powers of observation and extraordinary ingenuity to harness the elements and natural chemicals around them to halt the inevitable processes of food decay', to evolve a variety of techniques best suited to their climate, food supplies and particular needs and cultures. The gradual discovery of the preserving powers of heat and cold, salt, spices, sugar, vinegar and alcohol led to drying in the sun or wind, salting, curing, smoking, pickling, fermenting, sealing to exclude oxygen, reduction, sugaring, canning/bottling, refrigeration and freezing.<sup>68</sup>

Trade, and exploration with a view to trade, has also been vital to widening the range of foodstuffs available, thus reducing vulnerability if a single crop failed, and adding variety to human diets. Trade in grains, oil and

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<sup>64</sup> *Longland's Directory of Johannesburg and District, 1893*, Henry Longland, Johannesburg, pp.277-278.

<sup>65</sup> *Post Office Directory of the Transvaal*, Johannesburg, 1906.

<sup>66</sup> G A Leyds, *A History of Johannesburg: The Early Years*, Nasionale Boekhandel, Cape Town, 1964, pp.201-202.

<sup>67</sup> Gary B McGee & Andrew S Thompson (Eds), *Empire & Globalisation: Networks of People, Goods and Capital in the British World, c 1850-1914*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2010, p.14.

<sup>68</sup> Sue Shephard, *Pickled, Potted & Canned: How the Preservation of Food Changed Civilisation*, Headline, London, 2000, p.7.



wine supplied the great cities of the classical world, and the ancient trade in dried spices between Europe and south east Asia, either by overland caravan or by sea, was greatly enlarged by the discovery of the New World and the 'Columbian exchange' after 1500.<sup>69</sup> The Old World passed on to the New wheat, olives, grapes, coffee, tea, citrus and other fruits, rice, sugar cane, garden vegetables, horses, cattle, sheep, pigs and poultry, and in the other direction came maize, potatoes, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, yams, chilli and capsicum peppers, cassava, chocolate, squashes and pumpkins, groundnuts, many beans and turkeys.<sup>70</sup> The exchange had continuing consequences as African slaves were taken to work in plantations in the New World producing sugar, coffee, tea and chocolate for European breakfast tables, and by the nineteenth century sugar and tea had become cheap enough in Britain to change the diet of the new working class. The wider range of foods available in both hemispheres not only improved diets, but increased food security, and enabled foods to be produced on previously inhospitable soils. Maize, in particular, provided a welcome addition to the traditional grain crops of millet and sorghum in southern Africa as it was much more productive and easier to grow.<sup>71</sup>

Food preservation was essential to the very ability to trade. Land travellers could, to some extent, live off the land, and could carry a certain amount of preserved foods with them, such as Boer trekkers with their *biltong* and *boerebeskuit*.<sup>72</sup> Sea travellers, with increasingly long voyages across oceans, were considerably worse off and often had only rotten salt meat and fish, and weevilly biscuits to eat. Drinking water was always short and in the tropics the heat and damp accentuated the difficulty of keeping food wholesome. Scurvy and malnutrition were prevalent, and the death rate was high.<sup>73</sup>

In these circumstances the cargoes carried long distances on camels and horses, in carts and on ships had to be low-bulk, high-value goods such as silk and spices, but there were also items so basic to life that regions lacking them were prepared to pay well. Salt was probably one of the oldest trades of all, being both biologically essential to replace salts lost when sweating and because it played a vital role in food preservation before the nineteenth century. Although available nearly everywhere in the world on sea coasts, in brine springs, shallow pans or mined deposits laid down in earlier geological formations, the demand, from regions lacking it, was so great that governments regulated, taxed and grew rich on the trade. Blocks of salt carried in huge caravans across the Sahara were exchanged for gold and other precious things,<sup>74</sup> and throughout Africa smaller-scale trading networks always included salt. Salt was so important it featured in place names: the suffix 'wich' in Britain as in Ipswich, Norwich, and in the Transvaal the Zoutpansberg mountains and Zoutpan (now Tswaing, meaning place of salt in Setswana) near Pretoria.

The ancient Egyptians may have been the first to preserve meat and fish in salt, followed closely by the Chinese, and both are recorded as having cured, fermented and pickled a wide range of meat, fish, eggs and vegetables.

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<sup>69</sup> Alfred W Crosby Jnr, *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492*, Preager Publishers, Newport CT, 2003.

<sup>70</sup> Alan Davidson, *The Oxford Companion to Food*, Oxford University Press, 1999, p.207.

<sup>71</sup> Crosby, *Columbian Exchange*, pp.168-202, and James C McCann, *Maize and Grace, Africa's Encounter with a New World Crop 1500-2000*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA, 2005, p.102.

<sup>72</sup> Shepherd, *Pickled, Potted & Canned*, pp.251-256.

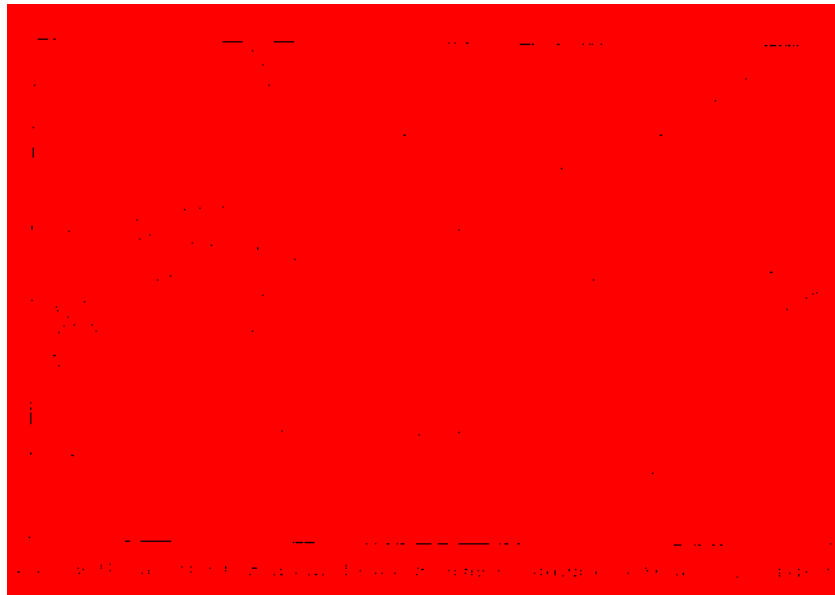
<sup>73</sup> Shepherd, *Pickled, Potted & Canned*, pp.194-199, 261.

<sup>74</sup> Kurlansky, *Salt*, pp.47-49 and E W Bovill, *The Golden Trade of the Moors*, Oxford University Press, London, 1970, pp.239-259.

These were passed on to Mediterranean civilisations,<sup>75</sup> as were the Celtic skills in curing and smoking pork as hams and bacon.<sup>76</sup> This use of pork was limited to Eurasia; pigs were not found in the Americas, and could not have been taken south across the tropical belt of Africa as cattle, sheep and goats were.<sup>77</sup> The slaughter of animals in the autumn before weight loss due to shortage of winter fodder, and various combinations of dry curing in salt or wet curing in brine and smoking the meat, much more effective with pork than beef because of the distribution of fat,<sup>78</sup> formed a major strand in European food history.<sup>79</sup> Often the only meat eaten by poorer Europeans was bits of bacon, and there is still a distinction in many European countries between 'butcher's meat' (beef or lamb), and cheaper pork meat (*charcuterie*) sold in different shops altogether. An 1889 list of meat prices by the Johannesburg Butchers' Protection Association has a Cured Pork section which includes Ham at 2s per lb and Bacon at 1s 6d,<sup>80</sup> Note the following Johannesburg grocer's advertisement in which imported and branded hams are seen as superior to the local product:

Compton's Hams, White's Hams, Bell's Hams, Inglisan Hams, Lipton's Hams  
Dells's Spiced Rolled Bacon, 1s per lb  
Colonial Bacon (fresh cured) 8d, Hams 10d, Pickled Pork 56s per cwt  
CRITCHLOW & HODKINSON, Market Buildings  
The Oldest Firm in the Trade<sup>81</sup>

A photograph from L V Praagh, *The Transvaal and its Mines*, 1906, p.321, of the curing room of a cold storage and butcher's shop shows the importance of this imported European tradition in Johannesburg.



Early travellers in the Cape noted the Khoikhoi method of cutting meat into strips and hanging it to dry, sometimes after salting, and the Boers, with their north European background in making hams, introduced the use of vinegar, coriander seed, pepper and saltpetre to help cure the meat.<sup>82</sup> As the frontiers of the Cape

<sup>75</sup> Kurlansky, *Salt*, pp. 43-46.

<sup>76</sup> Kurlansky, *Salt*, pp.52-60.

<sup>77</sup> Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies*, Jonathan Cape, London, 1997.

<sup>78</sup> Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis*, p.225.

<sup>79</sup> Tannahill, *Food in History*, pp.174-176.

<sup>80</sup> *The Star*, 8 August 1889.

<sup>81</sup> *The Star*, 1 September 1896.

<sup>82</sup> William Beinart, *The Rise of Conservation in South Africa: Settlers, Livestock and the Environment 1770-1850*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2003, p.34.



extended northwards and eastwards, distance made the driving of cattle and sheep to the Cape Town butchers to supply the settlements and ships calling in for food increasingly difficult, and more and more meat reached the market in the form of biltong, both from game and from cattle. The practice continued through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and biltong hunters were a major feature of the trade between the hunting frontier, which by then extended as far as the Limpopo, and the settled areas of South Africa, supplementing the meat obtained from freshly-slaughtered animals. In his memoir of life as a child in Johannesburg, G A Leyds described the importance of biltong, when meat was scarce or expensive, before cold storage<sup>83</sup> *Bokkoms* on the west coast of the Cape; small mullet salted and dried in the wind and the sun, were used as a year-round foodstuff by the local people.

Vegetables also were widely salted and pickled in vinegar for winter use. Where brine rather than vinegar was used, lactic acid fermentation occurred such as in cabbage (sauerkraut), producing vitamin C which was a valuable counter to scurvy through winters or long sea voyages. In southern Africa fermented sorghum or millet was, and is, used to brew a nourishing beer with anti-scorbutic qualities. In the early twentieth century some gold mines began supplying it to their African workers for this reason, although knowledge of vitamins was then in its infancy.

Fresh milk products curdle rapidly in warm temperatures though salt helps preserve butter and cheese, as does evaporating the water content in condensed and evaporated milk, and the wide range of Indian reduced-milk products,<sup>84</sup> and clarifying butter as in Indian *ghee*.<sup>85</sup> Lactic acid bacteria induce fermentation and produce the better-keeping sour milk and yoghurt products.<sup>86</sup> In pre-colonial Africa, soured milk, *amasi*, mixed with grain porridge, formed an important part of the diet of pastoral and pastoral-agricultural people, providing valuable protein and vitamins.

These food preservation techniques developed and used for thousands of years remained almost unchanged until the late eighteenth century. Enormous quantities of salt were being used world-wide for winter preservation of meat, and salted meat and fish provided protein on long sea voyages. Food imported for slaves on sugar plantations in the Caribbean consisted of salt cod from Newfoundland, salt beef and pork from England and salted dried meat from South America.<sup>87</sup>

### TINNED FOOD

As so often, war inspired a technological breakthrough. As huge armies criss-crossed Europe in the Napoleonic wars, the old method of provisioning by living off the countryside became inadequate, and a technique was devised in France of placing food in bottles, sterilising by heating in a water bath and sealing it in an airtight container. By 1818 the British navy was being supplied using tin-plated iron cans which were less breakable and provided a market for the British iron industry and Cornish tin mines. Americans were canning salmon, oysters

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<sup>83</sup> Leyds, *A History of Johannesburg*, p.199.

<sup>84</sup> Davidson, *The Oxford Companion to Food*, p.505.

<sup>85</sup> Tannahill, *Food in History*, pp.27-29.

<sup>86</sup> Don & Patricia Brothwell, *Food in Antiquity: A Survey of the Diet of Early Peoples*, Thames & Hudson, London, 1969, pp. 50-52.

<sup>87</sup> Tannahill, *Food in History*, p.219.

and lobsters in 1819, and pickles, sauces, jams and fruit in 1820.<sup>88</sup> From the 1820s on canned food was used by arctic explorers, by naval and military commissariats in places where fresh supplies were unavailable and in preference to salted dried meat or fish. It was relatively expensive, in thick, heavy, hand-soldered cans which had to be opened with a hammer and chisel.<sup>89</sup>

Sardines were canned in France since the 1820s, leading to the collapse of the salted sardine industry there and similarly the salted herring industry further north, and Mediterranean anchovies. By mid-century, there were parallel developments with fruit, such as peaches, and vegetables, especially tomatoes and baked beans.<sup>90</sup>

The scientific basis was not understood until after Louis Pasteur discovered the causes of food spoilage in 1861. It was then realised that it was sterilising by heating that was essential rather than creating a vacuum before sealing, and that large cans carried the danger of botulism as the food in the centre did not heat sufficiently.

Unit costs were reduced as salmon and other fish were canned in quantity from the American Pacific coast from 1864 and from Canada from 1876, widening the market for such fish, and also consumer choices – many people met salmon for the first time in cans. Canning peas was uneconomic while they had to be harvested and shelled by hand, but a mechanical gathering and shelling device solved that, just as Californian salmon canneries quickly developed cleaning and filleting machinery when cheap Chinese immigrant labour was prohibited in 1882.<sup>91</sup> A whole subsidiary industry rose to meet new machinery required in the preparation of food – washers, graders, peelers, huskers and cutters, snippers and filling machines.<sup>92</sup>

Troops in the American Civil War carried home with them their taste for the canned condensed milk they had been issued and it became a staple of the diet. Skimmed milk from butter factories rather than full-cream milk was used and the addition of sugar made canned milk more palatable, and also acted as a preservative; unsweetened milk was known as evaporated milk. By 1892 11.6 per cent of London's milk was tinned, but it soon became clear that there were serious health implications, particularly for infants, as the skimmed milks were low in fat, proteins and vitamins A, C and D, leading to rickets, scurvy and other diseases associated with malnutrition.<sup>93</sup> Tinned milk was indispensable in early Johannesburg, particularly for babies and infants, where fresh milk was scarce and expensive.

In the 1860s it became economically feasible for Britain to import large quantities of cheap canned mutton and beef from Australia, then from the United States and Argentina. Both armies in the Franco-Prussian war used tinned Australian meat.<sup>94</sup> In the long run a better method of preserving meat took over, but the canning of fruit, vegetables, condensed milk and fish improved the standard of living of millions. Canning showed the way towards industrialised methods and economies of scale, lowering the cost of food production and distribution, and avoiding the wastage created by food surpluses in previous times in a much more palatable way than salting

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<sup>88</sup> Hanson, *Argentine Meat*, p.20.

<sup>89</sup> Goody, *Cooking, Cuisine and Class*, p.165.

<sup>90</sup> Ralph Hancock, in Davidson, *The Oxford Companion to Food*, pp.130-131.

<sup>91</sup> Tannahill, *Food in History*, pp.312-313.

<sup>92</sup> Goody, *Cooking, Cuisine & Class*, p.165.

<sup>93</sup> Hannah Velten, *Milk: A Global History*, Reaktion Books, London, 2010, pp.73-4.

<sup>94</sup> Hanson, *Argentine Meat*, pp.34-35.

had been. Tins of food could be stacked in boxes and left lying on docksides or shop shelves for relatively long periods without deteriorating. The technology epitomised by the tin can played a major role in increasing the availability of food and improving the diets of industrialising countries, and breaking the age-old dependence of cities on what could be produced locally or cheaply transported.

In addition to widening the range of foodstuffs available at all times of the year, and improving the diet of the poor because of the cheapness of mass production methods, tinned foods enabled Europeans to survive in tropical climates and distant places such as Johannesburg. Pasteur's work on micro-organisms, and the campaigns against food adulteration had also given rise to a recurring moral panic among Europeans living in strange environments, a fear of germs and contamination. The reassuring promise of hygiene in food produced by home countries, and suspicion of local foodstuffs, was reinforced by the availability and cheapness of tinned food which had not existed in earlier times.<sup>95</sup> European explorers and travellers carried large quantities of tinned foods with them, and prospectors relied on them. In an 1889 debate in the Transvaal Volksraad on a memorial from Barberton asking for a reduction of food duties, a member stated: 'It is a custom with the diggers to eat things coming over the sea; they do not wish to buy biscuits and fruit manufactured by the Boer; these eatables must be in tins and come from Europe, or else the diggers will not eat it.'<sup>96</sup>

The question of how adequate locally produced food was in feeding Johannesburg will be discussed in the next chapter, but this statement is indicative of the clash of attitudes between the self-sufficient Boers and Africans who were used to eating only what was locally available there, and the new inhabitants brought to the Transvaal by the mineral discoveries who expected a wide range of familiar foodstuffs, and had the money to make their demand effective. The burghers welcomed the money brought by the newcomers in taxes, licence fees and customs duties, but resented their cultural arrogance especially in the wake of the British occupation of the Transvaal from 1877 to 1881, and feared for their independence.

### REFRIGERATION AND FREEZING

Food preservation by heating was followed by developments in the technology of freezing. Since paleolithic times it had been known that cold keeps dead flesh from decomposing and vegetable products from rotting for a certain time. Both the Roman and Chinese empires brought food long distances packed in ice, and their elites used ice to make cooling drinks and sorbets in summer. By the sixteenth century this practice had spread to aristocratic Europe, and ice was stored in ice houses – underground, insulated stone buildings on shady northern slopes.<sup>97</sup>

The Chinese had been using ice for refrigeration more widely for at least 2,500 years, and there were insulated ice houses (stocked simply by flooding the surrounding fields in winter and storing the ice in insulated huts) all along the Chinese coast for fisherman to take ice to sea for their catches, which were then transported along canals many miles inland packed in ice.<sup>98</sup> A Scottish visitor in the 1780s noted this and passed the information

<sup>95</sup> Simon Naylor, 'Spacing the Can: Empire, modernity and the globalisation of food', *Environment and Planning A*, **32**, 2000, pp.1632 and 1635-6.

<sup>96</sup> *The Diggers' News and Witwatersrand Advertiser*, 20 June 1889.

<sup>97</sup> Maugelonne Toussaint-Samat, *Maguelonne, A History of Food*, Wiley-Blackwell, Oxford, 2009 pp.675-676.

<sup>98</sup> Elizabeth David, *Harvest of the Cold Months: The Social History of Ice and Ices*, Michael Joseph, London, 1994, pp.227-228.

on to the Scottish fishing industry, then still heavily reliant on salt to get its catch to London.<sup>99</sup> From the late eighteenth century Scottish salmon, and then herring, industries extending their trade in summer months by packing fish on crushed ice for despatch to the London markets, and as Europeans colonised hotter parts of the world the practice spread.<sup>100</sup> Steamships and then railways speeded up the process, which was rapidly taken up throughout Europe and north America, and few towns were without commercial ice houses stocked by natural ice from the United States, or when winters there were mild, more expensively from Norway or Canada. Natural ice harvests still formed a substantial trade into the early twentieth century, though manufactured ice gradually became more competitive.<sup>101</sup>

From 1858 Chicago meat packers were sending chilled meat east all the year round in insulated refrigerated railway cars using local stored natural ice.<sup>102</sup> In the late 1870s the first chilled American meat was brought to Britain regularly by steamships using natural ice, but this was not satisfactory on longer voyages from the southern hemisphere. Ice, however well-insulated, would melt in equatorial waters, and chilled meat, held at temperatures just below freezing, has to be eaten within forty days after slaughter.<sup>103</sup>

In the early 16<sup>th</sup> century Italians had discovered that the addition of salt to ice lowers the temperature, but it was William Thomson's (later Lord Kelvin) working out of the principle of the heat pump in 1851 which led to the development of mechanical refrigeration. By 1857 a Frenchman had built the first workable refrigeration unit, powered by electricity and using ammonia as a refrigerating fluid. The first domestic refrigerator (1918) was not built until electric motors became smaller and more reliable; until then ice-boxes, dependent on bought ice, and various cooling methods, were used in the home for small quantities of foods like butter or milk.<sup>104</sup> In October 1888, the Johannesburg Waterworks, Estate and Exploration Co Limited was calling for tenders for the right to sell 1,000 lbs of ice a day, indicating how essential these ice-boxes already were in the infant settlement, and how widespread the large-scale artificial manufacture of ice.<sup>105</sup>

After much experimentation, in 1880 a consignment of frozen meat from Australia arrived in London in satisfactory condition after 65 days at sea, and initiated the great meat exporting industries of Australasia and the Americas.<sup>106</sup> The industry, however, required massive investment in ships' refrigerated holds, railway cars, and cold storage facilities at ports and in every town, and it was not really until this was in place that imports of frozen meat could be used to bring down high prices of live meat, and equalise seasonality. The voracious British market took to supplies of meat from Australasia and the Americas with alacrity. The industrial revolution had brought greater spending power and a demand for the higher standard of living to the rapidly

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<sup>99</sup> Shephard, *Pickled*, pp.281-282.

<sup>100</sup> David, *Harvest of the Cold Months*, pp.255-263.

<sup>101</sup> David, *Harvest of the Cold Months*, p.227-243; The 'Natural Ice Notes' section in *Cold Storage and Ice Trades Review* becomes shorter, but does not disappear altogether, *Cold Storage*, August 15 1902, p.145, and October 15, 1903, p.354.

<sup>102</sup> Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis*, pp. 230-235.

<sup>103</sup> Hanson, *Argentine Meat*, pp.41-45.

<sup>104</sup> Ralph Hancock in *Oxford Companion*, p.658.

<sup>105</sup> *Eastern Star*, 31 October 1888.

<sup>106</sup> Hanson, *Argentine Meat*, pp.45-47

expanding population centres of Great Britain, and British meat consumption rose to new levels, from 86.8 lbs per head annually in the decade 1831-1840 to 132.1 lbs per head in 1900-1904, of which 41% was imported.<sup>107</sup>

In southern Africa supplies of local meat seem to have largely sufficed until the rinderpest epidemic of 1896 wiped out between 50 and 90 per cent of local cattle. The Cape Colony doubled and Natal quadrupled its imports of preserved meat in 1896; Australian frozen meat began to be imported and cold storage facilities were set up at Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg. In 1898 about five million lbs of frozen meat was imported.<sup>108</sup> Cold storage in South Africa shortly attracted international attention.

Nearly three quarters of a million<sup>109</sup> British and colonial forces fought in the South African War, and provisioning them in the wake of the rinderpest epidemic, droughts and locust invasions was a major challenge. Shortly before the war broke out the British Government ordered 4½ million lbs of tinned meat for quick delivery from Cincinnati, and also put a contract out to tender for the supply of dead meat to the troops wherever they might be. Colonel W D Richardson arrived in Cape Town where he found fresh meat selling for the very high price of 1s per lb owing to rinderpest and war panic. Even breeding stocks were being slaughtered. Richardson accepted the tender for meat at 11d a lb from the South African Supply & Cold Storage Company (SASCSC) because he judged it to be the only company with the organisation and equipment to handle such a large order. He did not tell the War Office that he judged frozen meat superior to fresh-killed – it did not need guarding, there would be no disease-breeding excrement or offal from slaughtering near the camps, and it would probably taste better than the worn-out trek oxen suffering from lack of pasturage. Australasian frozen meat was then being landed in Cape Town at 3d to 3½d a lb, and for the first period of the war the fighting was mostly along the line of railway so frozen meat was easy to distribute. Three-quarters of the four million lbs of meat supplied were frozen, and the SASCSC also did well supplying the civilian population of various towns.

The War Office prevailed on the Company to reduce the price of frozen meat to 9d a lb, but astonishing profits were made and a dividend of 45% paid to its shareholders. A second contract from February 1901 was given to the Company at the same prices, and a third to February 1902 at 10d a lb for fresh and 7d a lb for frozen meat. For the year ending June 30 1901 a dividend of 105% was paid to the shareholders, and the reserve fund held £1,000,000. This large financial gain attracted great attention all over the world, and set off a boom in refrigerating facilities and companies selling machinery.<sup>110</sup> A Royal Commission on the War in South Africa in 1903 exonerated Colonel Richardson from blame for this bad bargain for British taxpayers, with 'the magnificent testimonial that cold storage had saved South Africa'.<sup>111</sup>

Although shipments of chilled and frozen meat dominated the cold storage industry in the special circumstances of South Africa as a result of rinderpest and war, the years around the end of the century were a period when the full potential of refrigerated shipping, railways and cold storage chambers were being explored.

<sup>107</sup> Richard Perren, *The Meat Trade in Britain 1840-1914*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1978, pp.3-4.

<sup>108</sup> Perren, *The Meat Trade*, p.122.

<sup>109</sup> Thomas Pakenham, *The Boer War*, Weidenfeld & Nicholson, London, 1979, p.572: 365,693 imperial and 400,346 colonial soldiers.

<sup>110</sup> Hanson, *Argentine Meat*, p.125.

<sup>111</sup> *Cold Storage & Ice Trades Review*, September 1903, pp.301-302.

The January 1899 *Cold Storage & Ice Trades Review* has a special report on the Union Steamship Company's (it did not amalgamate with the Castle Line until 1900) newest ship, the *German*, and its state of the art provision of separate chambers for different foodstuffs so that optimum temperatures can be obtained.

As a curiosity we give a list of articles of food etc., which were for the most part stowed in the cold chambers on board for the *German's* first voyage.

Meat – hinds of beef, 9,410 lb; mutton, 4,446 lb; and lamb, 241 lb. English-fed beef, 2,068 lb; mutton 2,068 lb; and veal, 332 lb. The Kosher meat included 100 lb each of beef and mutton and 48 2-lb tins of meat. There were 468 lb of corned beef rounds and briskets, 12 calves' heads, and 36 sheep's heads. The weight of calves' and sheep's liver was 100 lb, and of tripe 112 lb. In addition, it may be mentioned that the stores contained 48 calves' feet, 300 sheep's kidneys, 12 ox hearts, 36 ox tails, 48 ox tongues, 48 lb of ox kidney, 168 lb of suet, 1,080 lb of fresh and corned pork, nearly 300 lb of sausages, 100 tins of pressed beef and 100 tins of mutton.

The fish on board consisted of 1,209 lb of miscellaneous fish, 112 lb of soles, 120 boxes of bloaters and kippers, 48 boxes of haddocks, 500 boxes of fresh herrings, a half barrel of selected salted herrings, and 2 tons of block ice.

The following items make up the stock of game and poultry: 200 fowls, 100 ducks, 24 turkeys, 36 pheasants, 60 geese, 72 capons, 200 pigeons, 48 game birds, 12 hares and 200 rabbits.

The dairy produce in storage was as follows: 900 quarts and 900 bottles of milk, and 300 lb of fresh butter.

The stock of vegetables and fruit was large and varied, including such items as – 7 tons of potatoes, 5 cwt of turnips, 7 cwt of onions, 56 lb of English tomatoes, 12 dozen cabbage, 4 dozen cauliflower, 2 baskets each of spinach, assorted salads, and herbs, 5 cwt of carrots, 2 cwt of parsnips, 10 dozen beetroots, 6 dozen head of celery, 3 dozen leeks, 12 dozen horseradish, 10 dozen lettuce, 120 bunches parsley, 14 barrels of cooking and dessert apples, 200 dessert pears, 6 boxes of oranges, 1,500 lemons, 24 boxes of dates, 6 barrels of Spanish grapes, and a quantity of nuts.<sup>112</sup>

The role and importance of vitamins were not discovered for another 20 years, but however fresh the appearance, the nutritional value of the fruit and vegetables must have been doubtful after a few weeks at sea. At that date the railways did not, as yet, have facilities to carry this quantity of cold chamber food from the coast to Johannesburg, and much of it may have been for the consumption of passengers during the voyage, but the list is an indication of how ambitious the newly discovered techniques were.

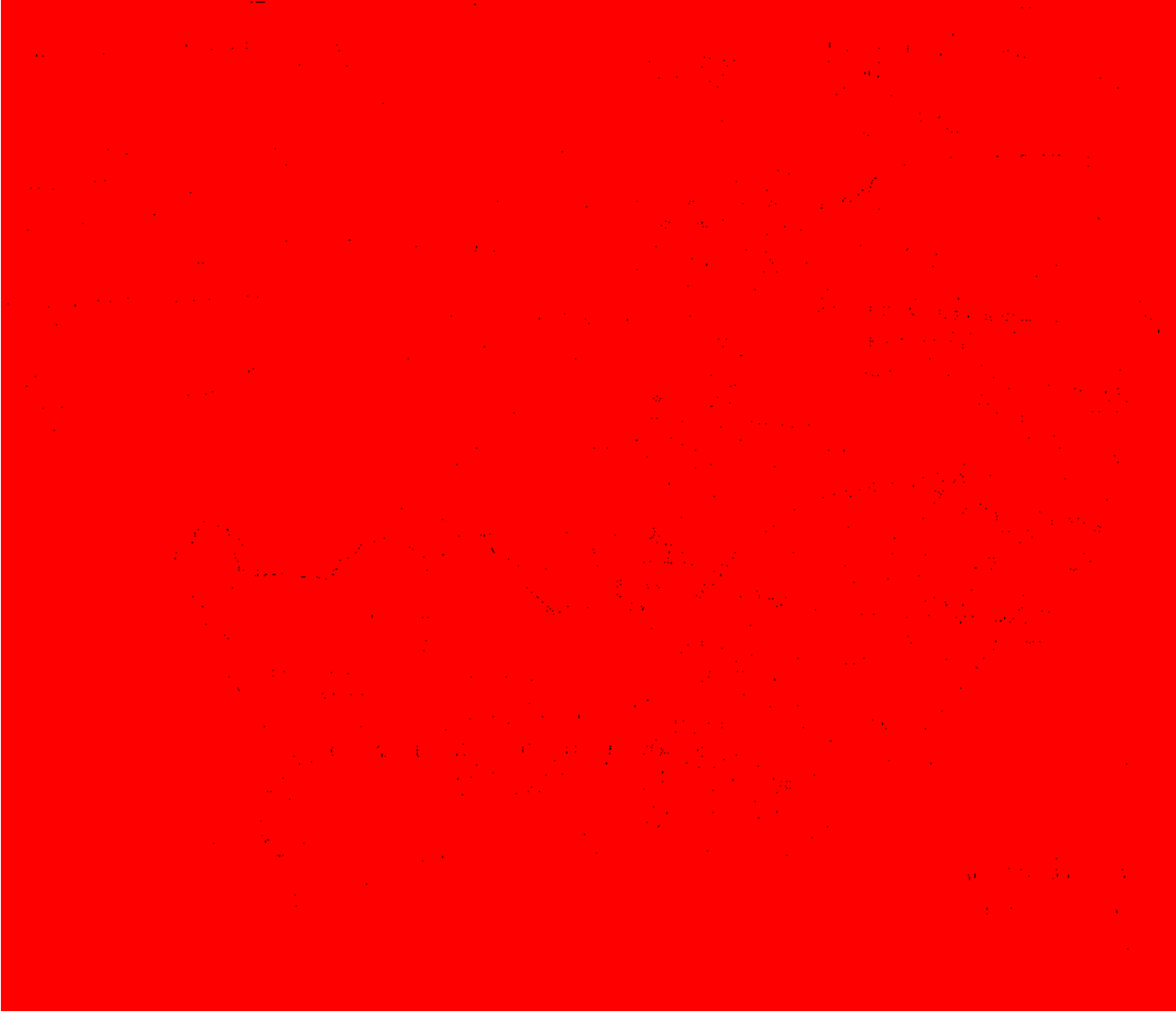
This chapter has shown how the global context for provisioning Johannesburg had developed during the nineteenth century. The supply of foodstuffs to Johannesburg undoubtedly benefited from the changes in transport, communications, the industrialising of the food chain, and in particular of food preservation techniques. Without tinned foods and, later, refrigeration, the mushrooming population could not have been fed solely from the resources of its hinterland, in view of the limited resources available locally to cope with the natural and man-made disasters of the time. But this ability to import food more cheaply than it could be produced locally carried within itself potential problems for local food production as will be examined in the next chapter.

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<sup>112</sup> *Cold Storage & Ice Trades Review*, January 1899

## CHAPTER THREE

### SOUTH AFRICAN PRODUCED FOOD: THE REPUBLICAN YEARS



South Africa in 1885, from Andrew Duminy, *Mapping South Africa: A Historical Survey of South African Maps and Charts*, Jacana, Johannesburg, 2011, p.95

#### THE DEBATE ON AGRICULTURAL EFFECTIVENESS

This chapter assesses the ability of Johannesburg's agricultural hinterland to supply the growing city. In the absence of reliable statistics there is a debate between those who maintain that in some respects South African agriculture responded well to the sudden influx of population, and those who, like the British officials in the new colony after 1902 and contemporary British observers, were scornful of both Boer and African farming methods. William Beinart has warned that constructing an image of Boer farming from materials furnished by early twentieth-century



Britons may lead the historian to concentrate on what the generality of Boer farmers were not, rather than what they were.<sup>1</sup> The British pinned their plans for development after 1902 on the modern, scientific methods developed in Europe and North America over the previous centuries, and on the immigration of 'stalwart yeoman' farmers who would provide a good example of best farming techniques. Although many of the uitlanders had had African experience at Kimberley or in the Cape or Natal colonies, most were imbued with the modernising belief that the application of science, industry and organisation could produce bounteous crops year after year. The South African Highveld, however, was a world away from that European background.

During the famine scare of 1889 a Mr R W Murray senior wrote a letter to a Johannesburg newspaper which may well have summed up the views of most Uitlanders:

I say here let the people of this country, before appealing to the Almighty for help, learn to help themselves. Let them, I say, cultivate the broad acres which are now lying waste, plough and sow and reap and mow, turn their arable lands to account for the production of grain and roots, and stock the thousand upon thousand of acres of grazing lands, which year after year produce luxuriant grasses, which ripen and rot and are held of no account ...

We have one of the finest countries in the known world, lands that will grow almost anything, and yet we are dependent upon the Free State for our beef, and upon other countries for our bread ...<sup>2</sup>

This letter typifies the outsiders' belief, pervasive in the columns of English newspapers in Johannesburg, that the Transvaal was inherently enormously fertile, and only held back by ignorance and idleness. Murray's reference to 'broad acres which are now lying waste' was to the impression also created by the waving grasses of the American prairie and the Argentinian pampas, which in the second half of the nineteenth century were ploughed up, thus releasing stored-up fertility of the soil and, with human energy and mechanisation, produced the most bounteous grain crops the world had ever seen.<sup>3</sup> C W de Kiewiet, writing at the end of the 1930s which had seen those prairies reduced to eroding dustbowls by deteriorating soils, took an altogether more pessimistic view of agricultural potential, and throughout his influential *History* emphasises the natural difficulties facing South African farmers: drought, floods, locusts, tsetse fly and other pests, soils deficient in vital minerals, crop and stock diseases, even without the human ones of poor transport and infrastructures, inadequate markets and the low purchasing power of the majority of consumers.

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century the Boers in both Republics were producing quantities of surplus grain for local distilleries producing various spirits, which found a ready market in towns and villages. The Hatherley distillery near Pretoria opened in 1883, partly to absorb the surplus grain being produced.<sup>4</sup> Fruit-based spirits such as *mampoer* and *witblits* and the Hatherley jam factory helped to utilise fruit surpluses. *The Standard & Diggers'*

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Jeremy Krikler, *Revolution from Above, Rebellion from Below: The Agrarian Transvaal at the Turn of the Century*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1993, p.67.

<sup>2</sup> *Diggers' News & Witwatersrand Advertiser*, 16 November 1889.

<sup>3</sup> William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West*, W W Norton & Co, New York, 1992 pp.213-214.

<sup>4</sup> Charles van Onselen, *Studies in the Social and Economic History of the Witwatersrand, 1886-1914, volume 1, New Babylon*, Longman Group, Harlow, Essex, 1982, pp.46-47.



*News*<sup>5</sup> in an editorial in April 1890 stated that: 'All round Johannesburg are to be seen acres and acres of veldt freshly turned into agricultural ground, the produce of which will make us less and less dependent on neighbouring states for our food.'<sup>6</sup> Joseph Burt-Davy, the first botanist in the new Department of Agriculture set up in 1902, noted that closer settlement and consequent improvement in cultivation of the soil in the Witwatersrand District (Johannesburg, Boksburg and Germiston) in 1908 had produced maize yields of 122.8 muids per square mile, the highest in the Transvaal in spite of being so thickly populated, and largely occupied by mines, mine dumps and towns or villages.<sup>7</sup> No doubt greater use of fertilisers and more intensive production methods was responsible for this apparent anomaly. Sir John Maud, writing in 1938 of the immediate effects of mining activity, stated that some farmers near the Witwatersrand expanded production:

If they adapted their farming technique to changed conditions of demand and turned part of their pasturage into market garden, they could obtain, in the early days at any rate, almost any price they chose to ask for fresh vegetables, and a similarly unexampled return could be expected from eggs, milk and butter.<sup>8</sup>

Jack and Ray Simons judge that 'far from being intractable, the burghers expanded production to provide foodstuffs for the Rand,'<sup>9</sup> and Timothy Keegan saw the opening of the goldfields as 'energising the rural areas with a rising tidal wave of demand for everything from fodder to wood to food crops to dairy produce', which in the longer term transformed the high veld of South Africa into the country's arable heartland.<sup>10</sup>

These assessments do not state who was responsible for this increased productivity. The early grain surplus Charles van Onselen writes about was surely not produced by the Boers single-handed, and much of the market gardening activity round Johannesburg, as we shall see later in this chapter, was produced by Portuguese, Indians, Chinese or Italians who worked very hard on a lower standard of living than was expected by Boer or British cultivators. Some revisionist historians of the 1960s to 1980s brought to light that African farmers had produced a very large part of the grain and meat reaching the Johannesburg market, but had been dispossessed and proletarianised by official determination to provide a labour force on the mines and on white farms. African production was more efficient than white because family and communal resources, and local knowledge, could be used.<sup>11</sup> The question remains, however, whether this sort of small-scale peasant production could have the scale and reliability that were needed to provide sufficient food for the burgeoning town of Johannesburg, or whether this could only be supplied by large-scale, wage-paying commercial farmers.

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<sup>5</sup> Relatively pro-government, from 1891 its masthead proclaimed it was 'The Authorised Government Gazette for the Witwatersrand'.

<sup>6</sup> *Standard & Diggers' News*, 10 April 1890.

<sup>7</sup> J Burt-Davy, *Maize, its History, Cultivation, Handling and Uses, with Special Reference to South Africa*, Longman, London, 1914, p.59.

<sup>8</sup> John P R Maud, *City Government, the Johannesburg Experiment*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1938, p.33.

<sup>9</sup> Jack & Ray Simons, *Class and Colour in South Africa, 1850-1950*, International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa, 1983, p.61.

<sup>10</sup> Timothy Keegan, 'Making of the Rural Economy: From 1850 to the Present' in Zbigniew A Konczaki, Jane L Parpart & Timothy M Shaw (Eds), *Studies in the Economic History of South Africa, Volume 2*, F Cass, London, 1991, pp.36-63, pp.42,44.

<sup>11</sup> Stanley Trapido, 'Landlord and Tenant in a Colonial Economy', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, **5.1**, 1978, p.35; Colin Bundy, *The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry*, David Philip, Cape Town, 1988, pp.67-69; Timothy J Keegan, *Rural Transformations in Industrializing South Africa: The Southern Highveld to 1914*, Ravan, Johannesburg, 1986, p.8.

There is something to be said for both sides of the debate. There were times up to about 1895 when local supply, supplemented by some imports, was sufficient, but the population expansion in the boom years, and the destruction of the South African war coming on the heels of the disasters of rinderpest, drought, locusts, and East Coast fever, made the import of the most foodstuffs essential. Recovery from this low point was just getting under way by 1906.

### THE 1886 STARTING POINT

Few of the thousands of diverse people who erupted on to the bleak Witwatersrand in the 1880s and 1890s gave any thought how they would be fed there. This sudden substantial and varied population would have given rise to provisioning difficulties wherever it had been located, but the Transvaal in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was singularly ill-prepared. Only a few Africans, beyond some iron-smelters, restricted by the shortage of trees, had lived on the Witwatersrand itself in pre-colonial days. Lionel Phillips later described it as desolate,

one might travel a hundred miles without seeing a tree, and fifteen or twenty miles between wretched hovels in which the *takhaar* Boers lived, or rather, eked out a wretched existence, with a few sheep and goats that had to be moved to the low country in winter to escape the inclemency and withered grass of that high plateau.... And through these inhospitable areas ran the greatest beds of gold-bearing conglomerates in the world!<sup>12</sup>

Early in 1886 there were a few Boer farms in the valleys between the parallel lines of hills making up the Witwatersrand, most settled less than a generation earlier. The Boer families, with their African servants, raised maize and some vegetables, but mainly kept cattle and sheep which in the dry, cold winter months were taken to the lowveld for better grazing. Their houses were primitive dwellings of mud plastered over a reed framework, with mud and dung floors, and roofed with a sloping thatch of dried grass. Few had more than two rooms and furniture was basic and home-made.<sup>13</sup> A few prospectors were drifting around, buying fresh supplies from the farmers, and riding to Pretoria for other provisions.

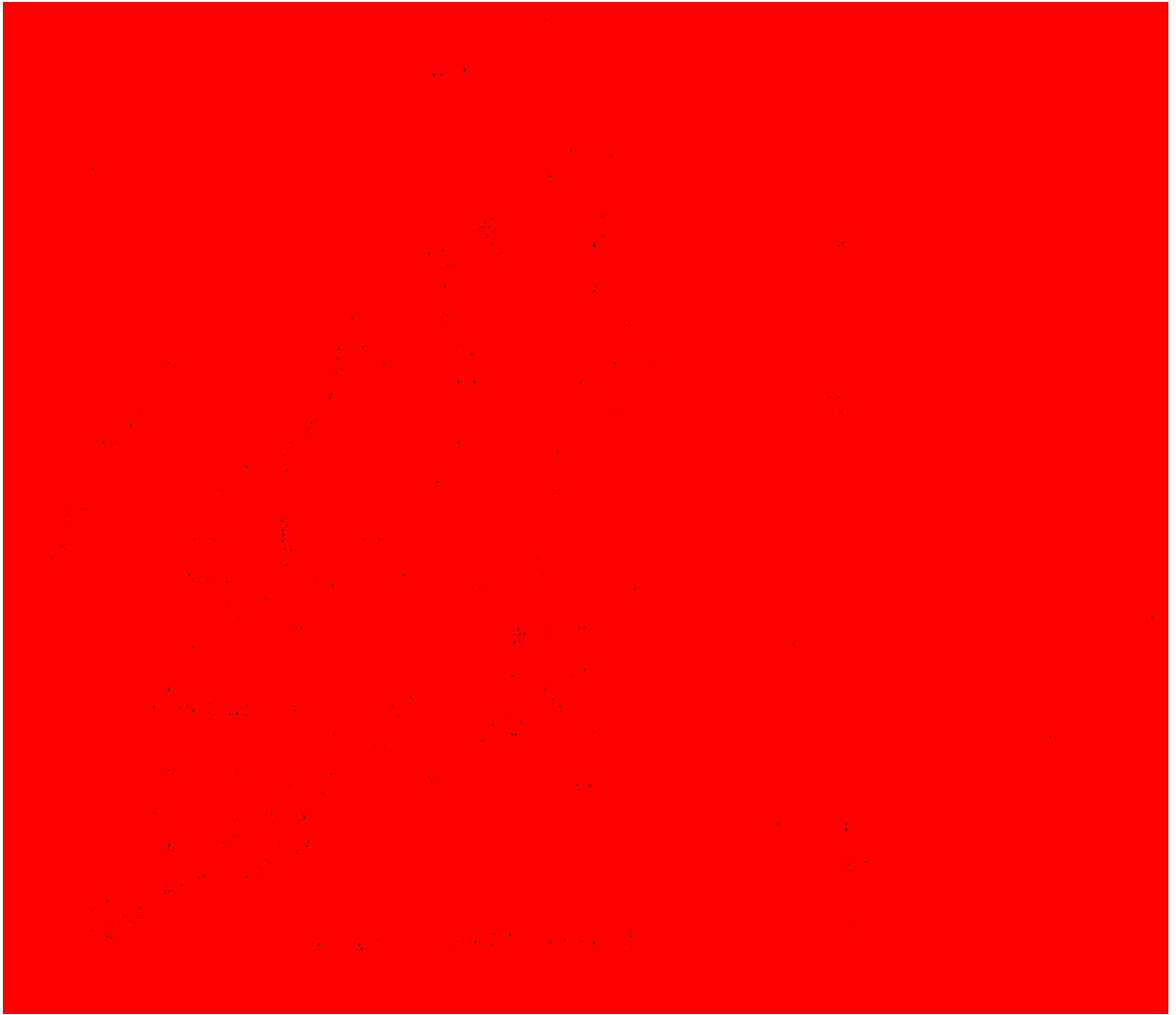
The Republic as a whole operated on very little cash. The following incident, described by Hans Sauer while travelling with Lord Randolph Churchill in 1891, epitomises the way of life:

... we were overtaken by a solitary Boer who had trekked up with a cart and eight oxen from Barberton, with one native servant who acted as *voorloper*, cattle herd and general factotum.... He was travelling light; besides his personal kit he carried nothing but a little Kaffir meal, some coffee beans, sugar and a little salt.... For food the Boer relied entirely on his rifle, and sometimes for long stretches, when game was scarce, he had lived on very little. He traded the surplus meat he shot to the natives for mealies, Kaffir corn, pumpkins and sweet potatoes, and always had in reserve a little biltong or game meat dried in the wind. He had been on the road for months, he had trekked for hundreds of miles through wild and difficult country ... and when one of his oxen died or gave up he somehow or other begged, borrowed or stole another. Money he had none; he lived entirely on his rifle, and now he could sell game meat to transport riders and other travellers he was happy.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Lionel Phillips, *Some Reminiscences*, Hutchinson & Co, London, 1924, p.50.

<sup>13</sup> Anthony Hocking, *Randfontein Estates: The First Hundred Years*, Hollard, Bethulie, 1986, p. 17.

<sup>14</sup> Hans Sauer, *Ex Africa*, Rhodesia Reprint Library, Bulawayo, 1973. Facsimile reproduction of 1937 edition, pp.199-200.



Map of the Transvaal from W Bleloch, *The New South Africa: Its Value and Development*, Heinemann, London, 1901, p 157, showing the districts of the ZAR, and some of their products. Goldfields are hatched.

Roads in the Transvaal consisted of rough tracks across the veld, often impassably muddy in summer and lacking animal fodder in the rainless winters. There were no real markets in the few towns and villages, which inhibited the best of farmers. Limited access to markets meant that there was a low ceiling above which cultivation of land was wasted effort and wasted expense. Most only produced enough for their own subsistence, though when new markets such as Barberton and Johannesburg appeared they could make producing a surplus and overcoming transport difficulties worthwhile.<sup>15</sup> Transvaal *dorps* did not have a large role in consuming produce from the neighbouring countryside. They were *erf* townships laid out with town lands for grazing, and the generous *erwen* were large enough for the owner to be able to build a house and stable, with enough land for growing vegetables, some mealies and fodder for horses, and had water rights from irrigation channels running through the *dorp*.<sup>16</sup> In addition farmers, both black and white, struggled with the hazardous environment – unpredictable droughts and floods; heavy summer

<sup>15</sup> Tim Keegan, 'Seasonality, Markets and Pricing: The South African Maize Trade in the Early Twentieth Century', *Institute of Commonwealth Studies Societies of Southern Africa in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries Seminar*, paper for discussion on 31 May 1978.

<sup>16</sup> Maud, *City Government*, pp.15 & 36.

rainfall which washed away the topsoil; dry winters when all grazing for animals died; thin ancient, impoverished soils, lacking nutrients; animal and plant diseases, locust swarms and insect pests.

### PRETORIA, KIMBERLEY AND BARBERTON

The infant mining camp grew rapidly on the shoulders of Pretoria, Kimberley and Barberton. In the Transvaal, Potchefstroom, Lydenburg, and then Pretoria, became small trading and administrative centres, with storekeepers, lawyers and doctors. Both in the Orange Free State and the Transvaal the small number of permanent inhabitants of such *dorps* tended to be English-speakers. Pretoria by 1860, when it became the capital of the ZAR, was the headquarters of itinerant traders who would travel north bartering sugar, tea, coffee, soft goods and implements for grain and hunting spoils: hides, leather, feathers, ivory and whips. The bartered goods were sent down to Natal in caravans of 10 - 20 ox-wagons which would take five to ten weeks. By the early 1870s Pretoria had about 3,000 inhabitants. Farmers brought their surplus produce to the market: butter in winter from Wakkerstroom and Ermelo districts in hide tubs, holding up to 600 lbs, at 4d or 6d a lb; chickens were 9d to 1s each; mealies 7s 6 to 10s a bag (about 200 lbs); wheat 10s to 15s; beef, mutton and pork 6d to 9d a lb.<sup>17</sup>

These prices were considerably lower than could be obtained in Johannesburg 15 or so years later. Indeed, an article in *The Star* states: 'A glance at the present ruling rate of market produce as compared with those of 1885, will show how much the farmers of this State have profited by the opening up of the Goldfields, and the establishment in the midst of them of such a market as that of Johannesburg has become.' The prices given for the food items mentioned for the early 1870s indicate that they were not a great deal higher in Pretoria in 1885, but Johannesburg prices three years later (in brackets) were: chickens 1s (4s 6d to 5s), butter 1s 9d (3s 6d to 7s 6d), mealies 9s 6d (42s 6d to 46s). Wheat, not mentioned in the 1885 Pretoria list, was 45s to 50s, and meat is not in either list.<sup>18</sup> These Johannesburg prices were, however, at the height of the famine, so the comparison is not altogether fair.

Itinerant *smouse* (pedlars) on the *platteland*, and trading stores in towns and villages came to fill a vital function among the spread-out communities of farmers, buying their surplus crops if they had a market for them, and giving credit to purchase goods imported from the larger trading houses on the coast. Transport riders carried this limited trade, but the poor state of the roads and lack of demand hindered its increase. Intermittent town-dwellers, such as Volksraad members in Pretoria, usually brought their own supplies of biltong, mealies and Boer meal, from their farms.<sup>19</sup>

Nevertheless, unlike the barren ridges of the Witwatersrand, Pretoria lay near relatively fertile agricultural districts, and its market was well-supplied from the valleys of the Magaliesberg and Rustenburg to the west, the pastoral and hunting bushveld to the north, and to the east lay what would become part of the maize triangle. In her memoirs, the governess-trader Sarah Heckford records taking produce for sale from the farm Nooitgedacht in the Magaliesberg on a two-day ox-wagon journey to the Pretoria market, in the early 1880s, including oranges, lemons, figs, peaches,

<sup>17</sup> Vivien Allen, *Kruger's Pretoria: Buildings and Personalities of the City in the Nineteenth Century*, Balkema, Cape Town, 1971, pp.131,133.

<sup>18</sup> *The Star*, 18 October 1889.

<sup>19</sup> David Mackie Wilson, *Behind the Scenes in the Transvaal*, Cassell London, 1901.

apricots, quinces, pomegranates, dried fruit, pumpkins, mealies, fowls and forage,<sup>20</sup> and getting good prices for them. The higher prices at the Johannesburg market after 1886 must have tempted many to make the longer journey there, and we know that over the year 1892, 671 wagons from Pretoria district took produce to Johannesburg.<sup>21</sup>

Kimberley was also of great importance in the early days of Johannesburg. The provisioning problems before the railway reached Kimberley had been immense. Even if food production in other areas of South Africa was abundant, getting it to arid Griqualand West in the face of drought and lack of winter fodder was sometimes impossible. In September 1872, the price of 'kafir corn' rose 50% and diggers began buying mielies, the principal horse forage, to feed their workers. In December one-third of the African mineworkers had deserted because of unaffordably high food prices.<sup>22</sup> The Sotho in the Orange Free State and Basutoland were the largest suppliers of grain, carried by Boer transport riders.<sup>23</sup> In 1885, sixteen years after the first diamonds were discovered, the railway line from Port Elizabeth reached Kimberley, bringing cheaper American and Australian grain as well as meat, eggs, and dairy produce, and canned and packaged foods.<sup>24</sup>

At much the same time as the arrival of the railway link, diamond mining moved from opencast to underground (1885); Rhodes completed his amalgamation of Kimberley mining companies into the monopolistic De Beers Company (1887);<sup>25</sup> and African mine workers were rehoused in controlled, closed compounds (1888).<sup>26</sup> These processes, although lucrative for De Beers, led to depression and unemployment in Kimberley, and released capital and people looking for new outlets. The diamond magnates, now speculating in gold-industry shares, preferred living in Johannesburg to Kimberley and spent their wealth there. Small-scale miners bought out in the consolidation and shopkeepers who lost trade to the company shops in the compounds moved to the new prospects on the Witwatersrand, and by the mid-1890s Kimberley's merchants had largely given up and moved to the Rand. These shopkeepers were influential in seeking to avoid a repetition of their experience of being forced out of mine compounds, and fought successfully to keep Johannesburg mines open to trade.<sup>27</sup>

A flourishing, but slow, transport system developed between Kimberley and the Rand after gold mining developed there, with ox-wagons, mule carts and horse-drawn carriages and coaches carrying people, provisions, mining machinery and everything required in the new mining centre. The following quotation, when Johannesburg was just over a year old, indicates that it was not regarded solely as a destination for youthful male adventurers.

... a new line of Family Coaches will run between Kimberley and here, by Messrs Geo Heys & Co, from and after this week. The fare each way will be £6 10s, children half price. These coaches will leave Kimberley at midday on Wednesdays, stopping at the hotel at the pont for the first night. Bloemhof will be the resting place for the second night, O'Reilly's (Vaal Branch) for the third night, Potchefstroom for the fourth,

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<sup>20</sup> Vivien Allen, *Lady Trader: A Biography of Mrs Sarah Heckford*, Collins, London, 1979, pp.95-124.

<sup>21</sup> *The Star*, 6 January 1893.

<sup>22</sup> Robert Turrell, *Capital and Labour on the Kimberley Diamond Fields, 1871-1890*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1987, pp.26-32.

<sup>23</sup> William H Worger, *South Africa's City of Diamonds: Mine Workers and Monopoly Capitalism in Kimberley 1867-1895*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1987, p.82.

<sup>24</sup> Keegan, 'The Making of the Rural Economy', p.44.

<sup>25</sup> Worger, *City of Diamonds*, p.271.

<sup>26</sup> Worger, *City of Diamonds*, p.228.

<sup>27</sup> Worger, *City of Diamonds*, p.293.

reaching here on the 5<sup>th</sup> day. This line of Coaches will be of very great convenience, and will no doubt be extensively patronised.<sup>28</sup>

Barberton, in the eastern Transvaal, had seen a gold rush and boom in the early 1880s, but in August 1887 'reckless speculation and mismanagement of companies resulted in a severe check on business there'.<sup>29</sup> Consequently many prospectors and storekeepers moved on to the new goldfields on the Witwatersrand, and the provisioning chain from Natal farmers and the ports of Durban and Lourenco Marques, adjusted itself towards Johannesburg,

### TRANSPORT RIDING

The Kruger government opposed the extension of railways to the Transvaal because of its effect on the lucrative transport riding of its electorate. For six years after the goldfields were proclaimed, they were thus still dependent on ox-wagon transport of local produce and from railheads, which made food extremely expensive. The cost of transport from Kimberley rose between 1885 and 1889 from 4s 6d per 100 lbs to 14s and 15s, and mealies which had cost 9s 6d per muid were 60s to 67s 6d in 1889.<sup>30</sup> The railways from coastal ports reached Johannesburg between 1892 and 1895, and reduced the cost of transport from the coast by two-thirds.<sup>31</sup>

Until then transport riding had been extremely lucrative. A wagon and a span of oxen could be easily bought and sold. Hugh Hall built up some capital as a teenager by transport riding for the British Army in the Anglo-Zulu war of 1879-80.<sup>32</sup> However, although the Kruger government was constantly expressing concern for its transport riding burghers, in 1890 it was claimed that 'white and native carriers from the Cape Colony, Natal and the Free State' were getting a major share of the five million pounds being spent on the transport of 'machinery, goods and the necessaries of life'.<sup>33</sup>

### LANDHOLDING

Bleloch, writing in 1901, gives the total number of farms surveyed and inspected in the Republic as 11,705: 6,851 owned by mostly Boer inhabitants, 2,355 by the Government, 2,124 by land companies, and 375 by non-residents.<sup>34</sup> A considerable amount of land was held by absentee white landlords: land companies and syndicates who had bought up substantial acres speculatively, and 'notables' who had accumulated farms, using their official positions to gain information and access to the levers of power. Government officials were often paid in land because the government had little cash. Paul Kruger was said to have owned 40 farms and Piet Joubert 29. Wealth was reckoned in possession of farms, and it has been suggested by historian Peter Stearns that in a pre-consumerist society when a

<sup>28</sup> *Eastern Star*, 9 December 1887.

<sup>29</sup> Alan Mabin & Barbara Conradie (Eds), *The Confidence of the Whole Country: Standard Bank Reports on Economic Conditions in Southern Africa 1865-1902*, Standard Bank Investment Corporation, Johannesburg, 1987, p.216.

<sup>30</sup> *The Star*, 18 October 1889.

<sup>31</sup> R V Kubicek, *Economic Imperialism in Theory and Practice: The Case of South African Gold Mining Finance 1886-1914*, Duke University Press, Durham NC, 1979, p.46.

<sup>32</sup> H L Hall, *I have reaped my mealies*, Hazell Watson & Viney, London, 1938 p.45-53. Hall was brought from Cornwall as a child while his father built the railway from Port Nolloth to O'Kiep. He began farming on leased government land near Nelspruit in 1890, and developed very large production of tropical fruit, tomatoes etc. The business of H L Hughes and Sons is still flourishing today.

<sup>33</sup> Memorial from the Chamber of Mines to the Volksraad, *Diggers' News & Witwatersrand Advertiser*, 14 April 1890.

<sup>34</sup> W Bleloch, *The New South Africa: Its Value and Development*, Heinemann, London, 1901, pp.185-186.



peasant sells land his only use for the money is to buy more land.<sup>35</sup> Since the 1870s but especially in the 1890s, a surge of speculative capital had swept through the Transvaal countryside on hopes of rich mineral discoveries, raising the price of land, and consequently, of production.

On the highveld, Boers tended to leave grain production to Africans who could produce grain more efficiently and cheaply, and to rely on pastoralism, hunting and transport-riding. Varying degrees of tenant farming developed both on these lands held by usually absentee landlords who were happy to derive some income from their otherwise profitless holdings, and on owner-operated farms. Africans who had always lived there, or families and groups moving into regions devastated by the aftermath of the 'mfecane' earlier in the century, paid rent in cash or kind, or came to a variety of sharecropping arrangements. Black families were allowed live on a farm, grazing their animals and growing their crops on designated patches of land, in return for working to produce the farmer's crops of which they would get a share after harvest. The variety and workings of such sharecropping arrangements over a longer period are detailed in Charles van Onselen's biography of Kas Maine.<sup>36</sup>

The laws of the ZAR forbade land ownership by Africans, but even before 1886 there were reports of African eagerness to rent and buy land, which was then communally farmed, particularly in the Rustenburg district. Missionaries were often used as fronts, though sometimes inability to register the land under African names resulted in sharp practice. Ownership and renting increased after 1886, as Africans put their profits from supplying the new Witwatersrand market into landholding.<sup>37</sup>

There were some progressive white farmers, for whom farming was their main source of income, who pressed for an agricultural department<sup>38</sup> which would help them combat the numerous difficulties faced by agriculturalists. These were mainly early uitlander settlers and colonials, such as the British F T Nicholson, a cattle-breeder, Harry Struben, of Anglo-Dutch descent, with his farm 'The Willows' east of Pretoria,<sup>39</sup> and a few Transvaal burghers such as Louis Botha, with farms in the Standerton area and other parts of the south-eastern Transvaal,<sup>40</sup> and the Prinsloo family near Bronkhorstspuit.<sup>41</sup> President Kruger was sympathetic to these improving farmers, and there were memorials (petitions) from people in areas anxious to exploit the new goldfields markets – Zoutpansberg, Heidelberg, Standerton, Vryheid, Waterberg and Pretoria. But the reactionary Volksraad year after year voted down the setting

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<sup>35</sup> Peter N Stearns, *Consumerism in World History: The Global Transformations of Desire*, Routledge, New York, 2006, p.12.

<sup>36</sup> Charles van Onselen, *The Seed is Mine: The Life of Kas Maine, A South African Sharecropper, 1894-1985*, David Philip, Cape Town, 1996.

<sup>37</sup> Colin Bundy, *The Rise & Fall of the South African Peasantry*, David Philip, Cape Town, 1988 edition, pp.201-205.

<sup>38</sup> In 1899 Botha, supported by the Transvaal Agricultural Union founded by Nicholson in 1897, tabled legislation in the Transvaal Volksraad for the creation of a Department of Agriculture, but the war intervened. Shaun Milton, 'To make the crooked straight': Settler Colonialism, Imperial Decline and the South African Beef Industry, 1902-1942', PhD, University of London, 1996, pp.25,29.

<sup>39</sup> Allen, *Kruger's Pretoria*, p.35

<sup>40</sup> F V Engelenberg, *General Louis Botha*, Van Shaik, Pretoria, 1929, p.120.

<sup>41</sup> Sandra Naudé, *Kaalfontein and its People*, Willem Prinsloo Agricultural Museum, Kaalfontein, 2004.

up of an agricultural department, perhaps influenced by folk memories of interfering bureaucrats in the Dutch East India Company and British colonial administration in the Cape.<sup>42</sup>

There were also a distinct group of 'cheque-book' or 'hobby farmers such as Alois Nellmapius (a pro-Boer Austro-Hungarian concessionaire with a model farm at Irene, now a south-easterly suburb of Centurion), Sammy Marks (also pro-Boer, a Lithuanian entrepreneur, with his fruit-growing estate, Zwartkoppies, east of Pretoria, and the vast Vereeniging Estate on the Vaal River), T W Beckett (a Pretoria merchant from England), E F Bourke (a trader/storekeeper from Natal), who had made substantial amounts of money in other fields, and were prepared to use it for the amounts of capital spending that farming enterprise requires.

### THE 1889 'FAMINE'

Although food prices were high, Johannesburg survived on local supplies and imported foods, both brought in by animal-drawn transport, though tenuously due to the lack of grazing along the road tracks in winter. The town's precarious position, however, was demonstrated in 1889 when the spring rains came late, and there was a very real famine scare with rocketing food prices affecting all types of foodstuffs.

No weather observations or records were available in the ZAR, as the first official rain gauge was only installed in Johannesburg in 1889. Most newcomers had little experience of highveld weather over more than a few years. In 1886, the year goldfields were proclaimed, there had been no rain until November. The year 1887 had been very wet and the Transvaal was said to have been a morass by mid-October. In contrast, 1888 had been very dry, with only scanty rain in mid-December so there was little grazing by the end of the winter of 1889 for the animal-drawn transport on which the whole country depended. The crisis was largely one of transport, as there had been plentiful crops elsewhere, illustrating the variability and unpredictability of highveld rainfall. The government offered days of prayer for rain, and suspended food duties temporarily. These measures were ineffectual in the first case and offered only temporary relief in the second.

By October 18 1889, *The Star* reported:

#### FARM & GARDEN PRODUCE

Famine is the cry shouted out on the highways during the last week. Every morning anxious eyes are cast to the horizon to look for the cloud which augurs rain. The clouds come and go, and leave a mocking deep blue sky behind. Breadstuffs have reached abnormally high price on the local market, and, consequently, in the shops, and the poor man suffers. The granaries of South Africa are not approachable through the distance and the drought, so that, for the nonce, Johannesburg has to look to the Transvaal for supplies. Pretoria has been fallen back upon, and luckily the harvest in the surrounding district has not failed, and Johannesburg can obtain breadstuffs from there. This morning Messrs Beckett & Co. received 40,000 lbs of flour from Pretoria.

On the whole, the amount of produce on the market this morning and for the last couple of days exhibits no material decrease from what it was several weeks ago, with the exception of the almost total disappearance of certain articles, such as potatoes, onions (dry), sifted Boer meal, and oranges. There was a vast

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<sup>42</sup> Thelma Gutsche, *A Very Smart Medal: The Story of the Witwatersrand Agricultural Society*, Howard Timmins, Cape Town, 1970, p.19-20, 28,44, and *There Was A Man: The Life and Times of Sir Arnold Theiler of Onderstepoort*, Howard Timmins, Cape Town, 1979, pp.45,73.

difference, however, in the number of buyers and lookers on. A waving, surging crowd surrounded the market auctioneers, sometimes pressing them up against the wagons in their eagerness to bid, and prices went up in an astonishing way. In less than a week mealie meal has doubled itself, going up from 45s to 100s, potatoes from £2.5s to £5 a bag, wheat to 50s to 100s, sifted Boer Meal from 47s 6d to 150s. ... Inside the market the long tables were bedecked through their whole length with vegetables, chiefly carrots, green peas, lettuces, cresses, beetroot and green onions, but when the auctioneer commenced selling, there was no getting near them, or if one managed to get through the articles were gone, with such rapidity that they were snapped up by the Coolie hawkers. There were two lots of oranges on the market this morning, the largest consisted of about a dozen bags. A crowd collected about them, and the owner received £1 14s a hundred. Retail oranges are to be had from fruiterers at 6d to 9d a piece. Potatoes must be dispensed with, seems to be the decree of the fates, there was but one load this morning, grown on the banks of the Vaal, and the owners give no hope of any more coming from that region. A few small pigs were quitted at prices between £1 4s and £2 2s, turkeys went up to £1 5s, eggs 1s a dozen; fowls up to 4s 6d.<sup>43</sup>

This was obviously panic buying. Prices were driven upwards, although supplies were still available, in fear of another dry year like 1888 with no hope of grazing recovering in time for wagons to reach Johannesburg.

Lionel Phillips's wife, Florence, arrived in Johannesburg from Kimberley in October 1889 at the height of the famine scare, and found butter was 7s a lb, eggs 4s a dozen, and milk 2s a tin. She 'searched the shoddy shops for food, finally buying meal for £5 that normally cost 25s'.<sup>44</sup>

On 21 October 1889, the newly re-formed<sup>45</sup> Chamber of Mines met to assess foodstocks in the fear that the nearly 8,000 'natives' on the mines would desert, or start looting in the town. Individual mines stated their stocks, and the rough estimate was that food for the estimated 25,000 whites would run out on 5 November, and for the 15,000 Africans on 15 November. The Chamber arrived at a figure of 7,753 African mineworkers requiring 11,579 bags of meal, and felt the needs of the approximate total of 40,000 persons on the Witwatersrand could be left to the town merchants, though it was pointed out that many mines bought their supply in town, and it was difficult to separate the figures. Many mines had made their own arrangements, Langlaagte had providentially laid in a hundred wagon loads at £1 per bag, while 90s was now being asked, and Dr Hans Sauer's<sup>46</sup> Princess Estate had secured 200 bags of mealie meal at £3. Some mines began to wonder whether they could afford to continue feeding their labour force, as was the South African tradition, or whether black workers could be left to find their own food.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> *The Star*, 18 October 1889.

<sup>44</sup> Thelma Gutsche, *No Ordinary Woman: The Life and Times of Florence Phillips*, Howard Timmins, Cape Town, 1966, p.63.

<sup>45</sup> John Lang, *Bullion Johannesburg: Men, Mines and the Challenge of Conflict*, Jonathan Ball, Johannesburg, 1986, pp.25-31. The first Chamber, formed in December 1887, was open to individual members connected with the mining industry and faded away after 18 months ineffectiveness. There was a need, however, for a body to disseminate authoritative statistical information, as opposed to the bogus flotations and false prospectuses which characterised mining in the early days, and the Witwatersrand Chamber of Mines, consisting of representatives of the mining companies, was organised on 5 October 1889.

<sup>46</sup> This is the same Hans Sauer, whose memoirs have already been quoted. From an old Cape family, and with a medical degree from Edinburgh University he was also appointed District Surgeon by the Kruger government in 1886, and as such an official member of the Sanitary Board in Johannesburg. He stated in his memoirs that he was 'Chairman of the newly formed Municipal Council'. In the early days the Sanitary Board could only be chaired by one of the government officers who were members of it, so Sauer occasionally chaired the Board if the Mining Commissioner was unable to attend. He also set up the Johannesburg Market Buildings Concession Company, which bought the concession. He left Johannesburg in 1890 to work for Cecil Rhodes in Rhodesia. See *Ex Africa*, pp.155-168.

<sup>47</sup> *The Star*, 21 October 1889.

It was normal in South Africa for food to be provided by employers, especially when the workforce was largely male. As it was part of the wage package, there were struggles over the quantity and quality of the food, but on the whole mineworkers lacked the time and opportunity to cater for themselves and had little choice but to submit to this paternalistic arrangement. In Kimberley in 1875 when unskilled mine labour had been very difficult to obtain, Africans had been paid very well and granted 'board wages' under which they were paid enough to buy their own food. Many 'native' eating houses sprang up to cater for them. This Kimberley tradition continued when they were forced to live in closed compounds, where they had to buy food from company shops and cook it themselves; usually a youth, or disabled miner, would do the cooking for a group.<sup>48</sup> Witwatersrand compounds always seem to have provided 'free' food to their workers, which of course they paid for in lower wages. The bulk purchasing involved favoured large scale producers and wholesalers,<sup>49</sup> as will be seen in a later chapter

The numerous white people in Johannesburg who did not cook for themselves, but ate in boarding houses, eating houses, restaurants, and hotels were also affected, by the joint decision of such providers:

At a meeting of hotel keepers and public caterers held at the Grand Central Hotel on Saturday afternoon at which Messrs Bryan Brazier (Height's Hotel), M A Zoccola (Grand National Hotel), Stock and King (Grand Central Hotel), J Freundlich (Hotel Monaco), Maxwell (Grand Hotel), Zonnenberg (Lee's Hotel), Hocking and Paterson (Johannesburg Club), Heath (Masonic Hotel), and others were present, it was unanimously resolved that an additional charge of 25 per cent upon all rates of board and hotel accommodation shall be made from the 15 instant.<sup>50</sup>

After much debate, the Chamber of Mines suggested to the Government that a bonus should be offered to transport riders, and this was eventually taken up. £5,000 was donated by the government to pay a bonus of £20 to the first 250 wagons of at least 6,000 lbs to reach Johannesburg, having started after 24 October, and with mules or oxen in good condition to avoid maltreatment.<sup>51</sup> The incentive seems to have worked. Wagons came in from the Free State in the first week, and then from the railhead at Kimberley, and the railheads of Aliwal North in the Cape, and Biggarsberg and Ladysmith in Natal, until by late November the bonuses had all been paid, good rains had fallen, the government resumed the suspended duties on imported food, and prices came down somewhat, except for meals in hotels and boarding houses.<sup>52</sup> A month later *The Star* was complaining that boarding house, bread and meat prices were still high.<sup>53</sup>

The government accepted the need for a railway to supply the Witwatersrand, the source of so much extra government revenue, but worried about the effect on its transport riding constituents and maintained its position that the line to Lourenço Marques be built first, rather than from the British colonies. The Dutch-German Netherlands Railway Company was having difficulty constructing their line through rough terrain, and had financial problems. Eventually in August 1892 the Cape Government lent the Netherlands Railway Company £650,000, Mr J B

<sup>48</sup> Turrell, *Capital & Labour on the Kimberley Diamond Fields*, pp.55,58.

<sup>49</sup> Jane I Guyer, *Feeding African Cities: Studies in Regional Social History*, Manchester University Press for the International African Institute, London, 1987, pp.29-30.

<sup>50</sup> *The Star*, 21 October 1889.

<sup>51</sup> Observers had not previously considered the Kruger government to be animal lovers.

<sup>52</sup> *The Star*, 23 November 1889.

<sup>53</sup> *The Star*, 23 November 1889.

Robinson, a mining magnate who at the time supported the government and opposed the Chamber of Mines, £100,000, and the government lent it an unspecified amount from its new loan of £2,500,000, in order to get the work completed.<sup>54</sup> The Cape Railways' line to Johannesburg was completed shortly afterwards, but operated by the Netherlands Railway Company in the Transvaal. Railways carried goods and people rapidly between stations and sidings, but feeder services were still needed in rural areas until motor vehicles took over in the 1920s. By the end of the century transport riding had become a seasonal means of survival for the rural poor, working on contract for the big dealers.<sup>55</sup>

### MARKET REPORTS

After the 'famine' scare, newspapers, which had focused on share prices, politics and advertising, started taking a much greater interest in food supplies as it was clear that food prices and shortages affected every aspect of life in Johannesburg. The morning market reports and weekly trade reports appeared in some detail, frequently but irregularly, and the format varies making comparison between different years difficult. It is not clear who supplied the figures to newspapers – the market-master's staff or dealers. They seem to be from the supplier's point of view. 'Good' prices are higher than previously obtained. When *The Star* was *The Eastern Star* in Grahamstown prior to its move to Johannesburg in October 1887 (the seventh newspaper to open there) it had published daily market prices obtaining in both Grahamstown and Kimberley; as was the custom in contemporary English local newspapers. This Weekly Trade Review published by *The Star* in December 1889, just after the famine scare, typifies the wider interest in food supply being taken.

Trade during the past week has been somewhat of an improvement upon last week, although prices have, generally, receded a little, large supplies of goods of all kinds having come to hand, and stores are, in consequence, filling up. The reduction in the rates of carriage has, however, been the principal factor in the increased business, merchants being anxious to clear off stocks to make room for arrivals expected.

**BREADSTUFFS – Flour, Transvaal, is selling at 32s 6d, Cape and Free State at 35s, and best Australian brands at 37s 6d. Sifted Boer meal, of which large supplies have come to market, is selling at 42s for good samples, unsifted selling on the market at from 35s to 36s 6d. Wheat went on the morning market yesterday at 39s, an advance of 5s on our last quotations.**

MEALIES etc. – Yellow command on the market 41s, and white 37s 6d. Mealie meal is selling at 40s and 41s, Kaffir corn 33s 6d to 36s, which is a large advance on last week's prices, when the highest market rate was 28s.

SUGARS – White (Natal) crystals 50s, yellow 45s. The first quotation is 2s 6d cheaper than last week.

RICE – Current rates are 4d to 4½d as compared to 4½d to 5d per lb. Good supplies are now to hand.

TRANSPORT – The roads and veldt are in excellent condition, and wagons are offering freely at all the forwarding centres. During the week large quantities of goods have been loaded up at Kimberley at 13s and 14s per 100 lbs, and by mule wagons at 17s 6d to 20s. Rates at Aliwal North remain at 11s per 100 lbs. ... The railway rate being 3s 6d per 100 lbs from East London, brings the total cost of transport from that port to 14s 6d per 100 lbs as compared to 20s rail and wagon rate from Port Elizabeth. From Ladysmith and Biggarsberg, large numbers of wagons have also started, at 15s 6d to 16s per 112 lbs.

HOTELS AND BOARDING-HOUSES – Tariffs remain as last week. Butchers have reduced prices of meat, and bread is cheaper than it has been of late. Potatoes, as will be seen from our farm and garden report, are down to 20s to 25s for very good samples. All kinds of vegetables are also cheaper.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Mabin & Conradie (Eds), *Standard Bank Reports*, p.312

<sup>55</sup> Keegan, *Making of the Rural Economy*, p.44.

<sup>56</sup> *The Star*, 18 December 1889.

## GRAINS

Orange Free State farmers were fortunate in having the new and bigger market of Johannesburg to switch to when cheaper imports took over the Kimberley food supply after the arrival there of the railway from the Cape ports. The arable districts of the southern Transvaal and northern Orange Free State were stimulated by the Rand market to more intensive grain production, but owing to the relative backwardness of Transvaal farmers this was chiefly to the advantage of the Orange Free State because under the 1889 Potchefstroom Convention it had free access to Rand markets across the Vaal river.<sup>57</sup>

Friedrich Jeppe, noting that imports of wheat had nearly doubled between 1885 (356,621 lbs) and 1887 (674,917 lbs) commented that:

the Transvaal *ought* to be the corn chamber of south-eastern Africa, for no other state in this part of the world has finer soil, or offers greater facilities for the growth of all cereals. But the farming population is too small, and the quantity of cereals and farm produce brought to the market is far below the demand, particularly since the influx of a large digging population to the Kaap and Witwatersrand Gold Fields. This is the reason that, although the country produces the finest wheat in the world, considerable quantities of breadstuffs (particularly American and Australian flour) are imported. There is no question that the Transvaal is sadly in want of producers, and that immigration of the farming classes must be encouraged. The majority of Boers grow just as much as they require for their own consumption.<sup>58</sup>

The size of the Johannesburg market made the import of less perishable foodstuffs from a wider hinterland necessary. As can be seen from the Weekly Review above, pre-dating the arrival of railways, wheat from the Orange Free State and the Cape fetched a higher price than Transvaal wheat, and Australian even more, though supply was never enough in view of the staple position of bread in European diets. Wheat grew well in the winter-rainfall climate of the western Cape, being planted in the autumn and harvested in November, but in the summer-rainfall highveld could only be grown near a river or dam from which it could be irrigated, and heavy summer rains increased its liability to rust. Inland Boers usually contrived to grow a patch of irrigated wheat for their own use, grinding it in handmills to make coarse, wholemeal '*Boermeal*', and to bake it in improvised ovens. Africans cultivated it as a cash crop to sell to white neighbours to help pay taxes or buy store goods. In the Transvaal in the 1880s, the lady trader, Sarah Heckford, had a successful trading venture in the Zoutpansberg buying wheat and mealies for cash as the Africans needed money for taxes; local farmers would only pay them in kind.<sup>59</sup>

In November 1892 *The Star* reproduced from the Orange Free State *Staatscourant* a list of certificates that had been granted by the Government for the free exportation of goods into the ZAR over a fortnight from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 31<sup>st</sup> October:

Kroonstad	316 bags mealies;
Frankfurt	145 bags mealies;
Vredefort	348 bags mealies;
Harrismith	322 bags mealies;
Ficksburg	184 bags wheat, 714 bags boermeal;
Ladybrand	309 bags wheat, 262 bags boermeal and flour.

<sup>57</sup> Timothy J Keegan, *Rural Transformations in Industrializing South Africa: The Southern Highveld to 1914*, Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1986, p.17.

<sup>58</sup> *Jeppe's Directory of the Transvaal*, p.41,p.45.

<sup>59</sup> Allen, *Lady Trader*, p.134.



Total: 1,131 bags mealies; 1,806 bags flour and boermeal, 493 bags wheat.  
This is exclusive of other produce such as eggs, butter etc.<sup>60</sup>

These figures clearly show that the fertile Caledon River Valley, which the Orange Free State had conquered from the Basutos in the 1860s,<sup>61</sup> was the prime wheat-growing area in the region. Basutoland, like the Orange Free State, was in a Customs Union with the Cape Colony, so much of the Orange Free State produce that came into Witwatersrand markets had in fact been produced by Sotho-speakers.<sup>62</sup>

Mealies (*zea mays*) by the late nineteenth century was a staple of a considerable number of African diets, but it was not an indigenous plant. One of the Columbian exchange foods, it had only reached southern Africa in the eighteenth century, probably from Portuguese territory, and had become a popular garden crop, cultivated by women with hoes, among Africans because it was easier to grow than their staple grains of millets and sorghum, and fitted in well seasonally. After ploughs drawn by oxen were introduced by missionaries and traders, production became more intensive and in male hands but, like all grains, it depleted soil nutrients after a few seasons. Like millets and sorghum it did not grow happily in winter rainfall areas so had not spread to the western Cape, and it was susceptible to drought. Many Africans who came to work on the mines in Kimberley and Johannesburg had not previously eaten it, but white people were convinced it was the staple African diet.<sup>63</sup>

In January 1893 figures were published giving the origin of the wagons coming to Johannesburg Market during the year 1892. Unfortunately this was not repeated in ensuing years so comparisons are difficult, as market reports did not appear every day so accurate annual totals cannot be obtained.

#### SOURCES OF SUPPLY

Orange Free State	3,022
Potchefstroom	1,835
Klipriver	1,828
Banks of Vaal River	881
Rustenburg	831
Pretoria	671
Klerksdorp	664
Magaliesberg	583
Crocodile River	517
Ventersdorp	547
Heidelberg	416
Krugersdorp	223
Lichtenburg	177
Marico	171
Zoutpansberg	18 <sup>64</sup>

<sup>60</sup> *The Star*, 23 November 1892.

<sup>61</sup> Keegan, *Rural Transformations*, pp.8-9.

<sup>62</sup> Keegan, *Rural Transformations*, pp.16-18.

<sup>63</sup> James C McCann, *Maize and Grace: Africa's Encounter with a New World Crop 1500-2000*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA, 2005, p.100-101.

<sup>64</sup> *The Star*, 6 January 1893.

These figures show that the Orange Free State provided 24 per cent of the total of 12,384 wagons of fresh produce coming to the market. This is a much lower figure than the 75 per cent estimate in the Bloemfontein *Friend* given by Timothy Keegan for 1888<sup>65</sup> – perhaps the Transvaal farmers may have become more productive in the intervening four years, or perhaps, the freight railway having reached Johannesburg in September 1892, some Free State produce may have been transported by rail rather than ox-wagon.

What is noteworthy about these 1892 figures is that more than twelve thousand wagons, containing foodstuffs, fodder and fuelwood, reached Johannesburg Market. In response to the expansion of population in southern Africa, by the 1860s the load capacity of each wagon had increased from 4,000 to 10,000 lbs. Wagons had got bigger and had iron instead of wooden axles, heavier straight wheels, better brakes and spans of sixteen to twenty oxen rather than ten.<sup>66</sup> The Volksraad notice offering bonuses to transport riders breaking the 1889 famine stipulated that wagons should carry at least 6,000 lbs. Taking 7,000 lbs as an average load, these 12,384 wagons would have carried 38,700 tons of supplies into Johannesburg – a not inconsiderable amount. Market reports frequently begin with phrases such as: 'It is astonishing to most of the regular attendants at the morning market to see the large quantities of produce that continually come forward, especially at this time of the year.'<sup>67</sup> There seems to have been a falling off of wagon transport from 1896 as rail transport took over, but exact figures are not possible, as the numbers of wagons are no longer given. It was, however, stated in 1896 that two-thirds of the produce offered for sale was brought in by railway.<sup>68</sup>

As well as the Free State, the southern Transvaal became an area of intensive share-cropping production, as is demonstrated by the number of wagons coming in from Potchefstroom, Klip River, Banks of the Vaal River, Heidelberg, and Ventersdorp in 1892 in the list above. The 'Banks of the Vaal River' undoubtedly refers to Sammy Marks' Vereeniging Estates which since the early 1880s had comprised over 200 square miles of prime agricultural land along both banks of the Vaal River, worked by African tenants and a few white bywoners, who were also essentially sharecroppers. In 1899 the Estate produced 31,210 bags of grain, of which the company claimed 18,585 bags. There were 352 tenants (of whom only 16 were white), with 398 wives and 1,680 other dependents. This high number of African tenants was in contravention of the squatter laws of both republics, which attempted to restrict the number of African tenant families to five per farm, or fifteen in the Free State. As with all republican laws enforcement was lackadaisical.<sup>69</sup>

Newspaper reports refer to 'the Boers bringing their wagons in to the market', but it seems unlikely that every wagon driver was selling his own produce. Many farmers sold to the trading store in the nearest *dorp*, and the storekeeper then arranged for transport to Johannesburg. As well as sending to the produce market, this may have been on

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<sup>65</sup> Keegan, *Rural Transformations*, p.17.

<sup>66</sup> Jose Burman, *Towards the Far Horizon: The Story of the Ox-wagon in South Africa*, Human & Rousseau, Cape Town, 1988, p.137.

<sup>67</sup> *The Star*, 2 July 1892.

<sup>68</sup> *The Star*, 21 November 1896.

<sup>69</sup> Richard Mendelsohn, *Sammy Marks, the Uncrowned King of the Transvaal*, David Philip, Cape Town, 1991, pp.52,81.

contract direct to a dealer, or to the mines. Under the Market Concession<sup>70</sup> only fresh produce offered for sale had to first go through the market. We know from van Onselen's study that this was the usual way of disposing of a crop by African farmers, who would not have wanted to undertake the journey to Johannesburg.<sup>71</sup>

Not surprisingly, the government tried to draw revenue from the increased consumption of the new market, but it was made aware that economic conditions in Johannesburg concerned wider interests. In December 1891, at the height of the slump caused by the pyrites problem<sup>72</sup> and bank failures, it imposed a toll of 30s per ox-wagon, but the resulting outcry and non-compliance by burgher voters forced abolition.<sup>73</sup> The government then increased duties from 5 to 7½ per cent but there was another storm of protest from the Transvaal, the Cape and England, and in May 1893 it had to lower duties on items not produced in quantity in the Transvaal.<sup>74</sup>

The amounts of produce did vary substantially, however, according to the season. Wheat was harvested between November and January, and maize in June and July. Green mealies were available from January onwards though not harvested until they were dry enough to be ground up as meal. As there were no storage facilities, prices naturally fell as each crop reached the market, and would rise a few months later. There were also factors such as:

The weather has been more favourable to farmers, and hence we have had larger supplies. One special feature in the week's transactions is the reduction that has taken place in mealies. They have now fallen to 25s 6d per bag, as compared to 32s 6d a week ago. This is accounted for by the fact that new mealies are already commencing to make their appearance, and holders are afraid to hold on any longer, and are sending in reserve stocks for disposal.<sup>75</sup>

Followed two days later by:

Some of the dealers who make a speciality of the purchase of grain have been using every endeavour to bear it down in price. So far they have been successful in their efforts. Sales of mealies were effected this morning at 20s 9d to 22s per bag. By far the greater number of the 635 bags offered were disposed of at the former figure. It is thought that many of the mealies coming forward now are being smuggled from the Natal side of the border without paying the duty of 10s per bag. Most other kinds of grain have receded in sympathy with the mealies.<sup>76</sup>

These fluctuating prices made it difficult for farmers to make a living, and the possibility of importing grain cheaply after the arrival of the railways meant that if prices rose because of scarcity, it could be arranged for cheaper imported grain to arrive in a matter of weeks. In contrast to the pre-railway figures quoted above for 1889, in 1896 good American flour was 18s a bag, whereas 'Free State farmers state anything under 20s a bag is unprofitable to

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<sup>70</sup> See the history of the Johannesburg Market Concession in Chapter Seven.

<sup>71</sup> Van Onselen, *The Seed is Mine*, p.121.

<sup>72</sup> When the mines got below the level of easily-worked weathered rock, they encountered pyritic ore from which the gold particles could not be smelted. Eventually an amalgamation and recovery technique – the MacArthur-Forrest process – was developed with an almost 90 per cent extraction rate. The overturning of the patent on this process opened the way for the great boom of 1894-1895.

<sup>73</sup> Charles van Onselen, 'What Paul Kruger Learned about Toll Roads the Hard Way', *Business Day*, 22 February, 2011.

<sup>74</sup> C T Gordon, *The Growth of Boer Opposition to Kruger, 1890-1895*, Oxford University Press, Cape Town, 1970, p.32.

<sup>75</sup> *The Star*, 4 February 1893.

<sup>76</sup> *The Star*, 6 February 1893.

grow'.<sup>77</sup> Unlike wheat, however, locally produced mealies fetched a higher price than imported. American maize (called corn in America), was mainly produced as animal feed and was of poor quality. There were frequent complaints about it arriving mouldy and full of weevils, and it was believed to be a cause of scurvy.

In time, when commercial farming began to create grain harvests bigger than the local market could absorb, railways could become the farmers' friend by allowing for the export of grain, but this was still in the future in the 1890s.

### MEAT AND SALT

Meat, before 1896, was the staple food of all groups (some vegetarian Hindus apart). It was cheap and sufficient, but of poor quality. Cattle were kept by white and black farmers as a store of wealth or for their milk and labour. They were raised and sold primarily for wagon transport or ploughing, and only sold for slaughter-stock when they became too old to work.<sup>78</sup> They lost more weight walking to market as the little pasturage growing by the tracks would have been exhausted by all the other road traffic even in good seasons, and no fodder was carried. The tracks were described as marked by the bleached bones of oxen which had died on the way.<sup>79</sup> There was no large area near Johannesburg where livestock could be rested and allowed to recover condition. They were auctioned in Market Square and killed at slaughterpoles on the outskirts of the town, notably in Brixton. This issue will be further discussed in Chapter Five, Food Distribution in Johannesburg. A large proportion of meat<sup>80</sup> went to the mines, but little has been found out about this. It is not clear from the sources whether the mines dealt directly with dealers and slaughtered on the mines themselves, as seems likely if only because it would have been preferable for live cattle to walk themselves rather than having to be carried as meat in carts and wagons. The mines' demand for low-price, low-grade meat, usually beef forequarters, dominated the entire market, and also kept the quality of the meat low. Cattle farmers, on land made expensive by mineral speculation, with poor quality pasturage that required extensive ranching practices, could not, for a number of reasons, produce high quality meat.

The extensive farming practised by highveld pastoralists was a world away from the practices in north European countries where improved cattle-rearing since the seventeenth century had resulted in much higher quality.<sup>81</sup> The predominant system had been self-sufficient mixed farming. Grain crops and livestock were produced for the market; roots, hay and grasses were grown on the farm as fodder for the livestock which supplied manure for the crops and animal power for cultivation. This virtuous circle worked well until the growing cities of industrial England demanded greater productivity, which was achieved by specialisation. Selective breeding produced animals that were best for milking or for milk, or for draught purposes, and grain crops were fertilised with imported guano and, later, chemical fertilisers in place of manure.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> *The Star*, 8 August 1896.

<sup>78</sup> Milton, 'To Make the Crooked Straight', p.41.

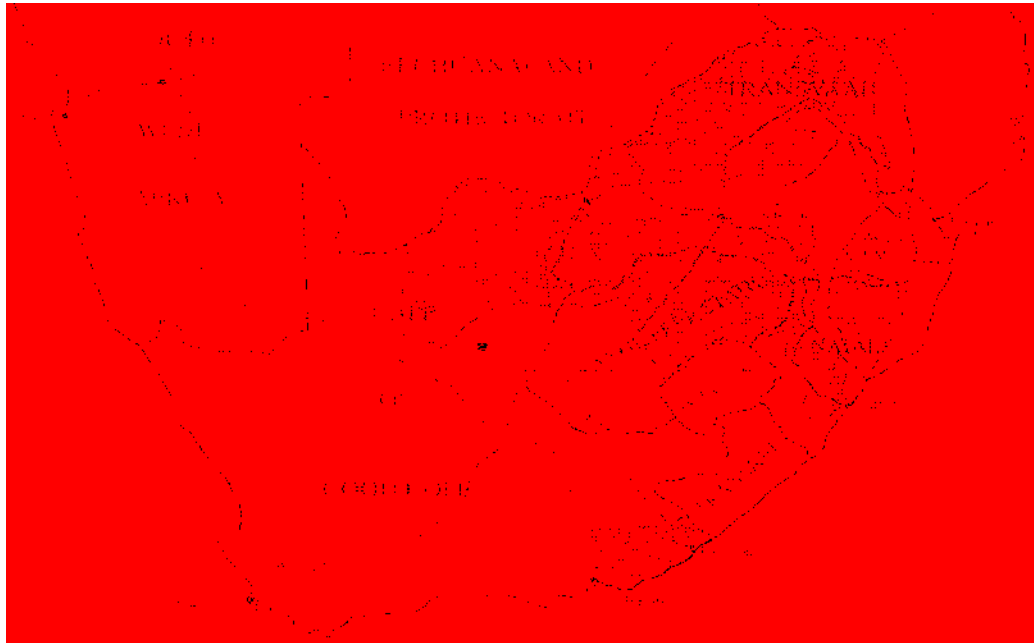
<sup>79</sup> Sauer, *Ex Africa*, p.122.

<sup>80</sup> 45 per cent in 1945, a later period when both the mines and Johannesburg had grown, and the miners were being better fed. See Milton, 'Settler Colonialism', p.10.

<sup>81</sup> Laurie Winn Carlson, *Cattle: An Informal Social History*, Ivan R Dee, Chicago, 2001, pp.172-177.

<sup>82</sup> Richard Perren, *Agriculture in Depression, 1870-1940*, Cambridge University Press, 1995, pp.1-2, and Andrew Rimas & Evan Fraser, *Beef: The Untold Story of How Milk, Meat and Muscle Shaped the World*, pp.151-153.

Highveld stock farmers did not have the resources or background for this sort of intensive farming, and many parts of the Transvaal were not suitable for year-round grazing. The lack of grass in the winter and often bitterly cold nights, together with differences in the nutritional value of pasture at different times of the year had led to the practice of transhumance. Sourveld, in areas of higher moisture, or on soils derived from quartzites or sandstones, such as are found on the highveld, only has a growing season of about six months. It is highly nutritious at the beginning of the rainy season, containing as much as 23 per cent crude protein in the first weeks and, if it has been burnt, ash adds phosphates. Sweetveld is nutritious all the year round, and occurs in more arid warmer areas on soils derived from basic igneous rocks, as in the lowveld,<sup>83</sup> but the pasturage is relatively scanty and fragile. High stocking levels of cattle and sheep result in degradation, with palatable tufted perennial grasses being replaced by annual grasses that produce small seeds prolifically, and bush thickening as a result of reduced fire frequency or intensity.<sup>84</sup>



Though of a later period, this map shows the Basic Productive Cattle Areas of South Africa From Shaun Milton, ‘“To make the crooked straight”: Settler Colonialism, Imperial Decline and the South African Beef Industry, 1902-1942’, PhD, University of London, 1996, p.xi

Africans had long been aware of these distinctions, and moved their cattle round according to the seasons on communally owned land where it was available, though cattle raiding and arguments about who could use grazing grounds was a common cause of disputes between groups.

Boers trekked with their families in wagons down to the lowveld where animals could graze on sweetveld, which was palatable all the year round but that needed a recovery period because of its fragility. They returned to the highveld as it warmed up to avoid malaria and to make use of sourveld which was nutritious in spring and early summer. Critics claimed that this long trek wore animals out, and the close mingling encouraged the spread of

<sup>83</sup> T G O’Connor & G J Bredenkamp, ‘Grassland’ in R J Cowling, D M Richardson & S M Pierce (Eds), *Vegetation of Southern Africa*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997, p.242. See also W J Bond, ‘Fire’ in Cowling, *Vegetation*, p.438.

<sup>84</sup> N Owen-Smith & J E Dankwerts, ‘Herbivory’, in Cowling, *Vegetation*, pp.397-404.

disease. Growing fodder crops such as lucerne and hay should make this trekking unnecessary, and provide a better diet. By winter- feeding cattle could be brought to market in good condition in November and December, when prices were highest.<sup>85</sup>

Fencing was still too expensive for ordinary farmers which meant that bulls grazed indiscriminately with cows, and no breeding selection could be done, there were no paddocks to move cattle round when sections were exhausted and there was no way for farms to exclude outspanned transport animals travelling on unfenced roads from wandering off to graze so that diseases spread very quickly.<sup>86</sup>

Indigenous cattle were disparaged, and there was felt to be a need for imported quality breeding stock though these did not flourish in conditions so different from what they were used to; indigenous cattle withstood disease and adverse climate better. In the opinion of Thomas, selective breeding to foster their best qualities would have been better than importing stock.<sup>87</sup>

Land shortages, caused by expanding population, land alienation and increased commercial farming towards the end of the nineteenth century made extensive cattle farming increasingly difficult. The higher densities of livestock needed for the major expansion of meat production to meet rising demand after industrialisation was achieved, after 1902, by the exploitation and reticulation of subterranean water, feed supplements and immunisation against disease. But environmental costs in pasture degradation followed such more intensive methods of meat production.<sup>88</sup>

The Johannesburg market preferred beef, and Cape Town, being nearer to sheep-rearing areas, mutton. Until Merino sheep, bred primarily for their wool, were introduced in the early nineteenth century, mutton was very cheap; when the price of wool fell, more mutton appeared on the market. The indigenous fat-tailed hairy sheep made better eating, and were less susceptible to disease. Pigs are not indigenous, and at this time were relatively rare in South Africa apart from some parts of the Cape and Natal. Pork and bacon fetched high prices in towns such as Johannesburg.<sup>89</sup> The 1896 Census lists 1,035 pigs in Johannesburg, some of which may have been awaiting slaughter, but only 81 sheep and goats are enumerated, so all may have been permanent livestock.

Some salt was produced in the Transvaal near the confluence of the Vaal and Hartz rivers in the Potchefstroom district, and some in Pretoria and Zoutpansberg districts, but it was of poor quality. The salt pans belonged to the government, to which the lessees paid 1s 6d to 6s a bag, and in 1888 it sold in Johannesburg at an average price of

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<sup>85</sup> Professor A M Bosman, 'The Beef Industry in South Africa', Reprint from Agriculture Department Conference, Government Printer, Pretoria, 1929, p.238.

<sup>86</sup> Owen Thomas, *The Agricultural and Pastoral Prospects of South Africa*, Archibald Constable, London, 1904, pp.130-137.

<sup>87</sup> Thomas, *Agricultural and Pastoral Prospects*, pp.30-40.

<sup>88</sup> Owen-Smith & Danckwerts, 'Herbivory', in Cowling, *Vegetation*, pp.401-402.

<sup>89</sup> Thomas, *Agricultural and Pastoral Prospects*, pp.47-54.



16s 7d a bag.<sup>90</sup> Large amounts, 4,703,629 lbs in 1895, were imported, probably 'Liverpool salt', from the salt mines of Cheshire which dominated the world salt market at the time.<sup>91</sup>

### VEGETABLES, FRUIT, MILK, AND FISH

Potatoes, like pigs, were another introduced food items, and a staple of European diets. Potatoes were easily transported, though did not store well as they rotted quickly. The Johannesburg Market always seems to have been well supplied with them. Vegetables and fruit, of which there always seemed to be plenty, poultry, milk, butter, and eggs, were produced within one or two days of ox-wagon travel to Johannesburg. High prices for vegetables were conspicuous early and late in the season; observers tended to ignore the much lower prices prevailing during the season.<sup>92</sup>

Some perishable produce came from suburban gardens in the alluvial valleys between Johannesburg ridges, though not the small stands of central Johannesburg. Market gardens are often mentioned, worked by Chinese, Indians, Portuguese or Italians. Shops were selling flower and vegetable seeds from a very early date,<sup>93</sup> and grafted fruit trees,<sup>94</sup> and householders grew their own fruit and vegetables and had chicken runs, and even kept cows. There are frequent mentions of this in pioneer recollections:

There was a milk boy with a very large can swinging between two wheels. This he pushed slowly along the street, calling out in a musical voice 'Milk-O'! His customers would answer the call by coming out with a milk jug. All smiles, he would stop his hand cart and take off the lid, which was attached to the milk can with a chain, take his measuring dipper which hung above the wheels and ladle out the required amount of milk. (Vera A Watt)

We returned to Johannesburg in 1902 ... my father said 'Your mother says I must find some butter. There isn't any so I will have to buy a cow', which he did and butter was made at home. (Dr Beatrice Davidine Pullinger)

There were a number of cows accommodated behind the house across the street (in Bez Valley). In the morning after milking they were led to where the grass was growing luxuriantly on the banks of one of the tributaries of the Jukskei river. The wagon-based fruit sellers were not the only traders who sold fresh produce cheaply. In the valley there were also well-known and well-patronised Chinese garden from which we could buy all the vegetables we needed when our home garden temporarily ran out of stock. I was quite big when I learnt to my surprise that vegetables and fruit could also be bought from shops! (Catherine Cole)

The whole area (Bez Valley) at the time was given over to market gardeners, mostly Portuguese. My parents lived next door to a lady who ran a dairy and were lent her cart and horse for a Sunday, but the horse stopped outside every house where it used to deliver milk. (Dorothy Wigley)

Milk deliveries were unnecessary because nearly everyone had his own cows. (Mrs Kate Blake, Norwood)<sup>95</sup>

<sup>90</sup> *Jeppes' Transvaal Almanac, 1889*, p.42.

<sup>91</sup> Mark Kurlansky, *Salt: A World History*, Random House, London, 2003, pp.318-332.

<sup>92</sup> Thomas, *Agricultural & Pastoral Prospects*, pp.98-102.

<sup>93</sup> *Standard & Diggers' News*, 22 February 1888, *Eastern Star*, 19 September 1888.

<sup>94</sup> *Standard & Diggers' News*, 17 April 1888.

<sup>95</sup> Clare Robertson (Ed), *Remembering Old Johannesburg*, National Council of Women of South Africa, Ad Donker, 1986, pp.9-10, 27-28, 53, 58, 83.

In the 1896 Census of Johannesburg there were 29 Dairy Farmers, and 2,514 Horned Cattle, some of which may have been awaiting slaughter.<sup>96</sup>

Oranges are mentioned in earlier market reports. They were grown locally in low-frost areas and travelled well. When stands were being sold in the new township of Orange Grove in September 1889, the advertisements mentioned 'the famous grove of Orange, Fig, Peach, Apple and other Fruit Trees'.<sup>97</sup> Fruits such as yellow peaches, apricots and apples were dried or made into jam. In the early days fruit trees would have been grown from cuttings and seeds obtained from the Cape, but newspapers were soon advertising grafted fruit trees:

Messrs YOUNG, PHELPS & CO.

We are expecting as Large Stock of TREES, PLANTS and SHRUBS

FRUIT TREES: Oranges, Naartjes, Lemons, Limes, Shaddock, Guavas, Loquots, Medlars, Pomegranates, Grapes, English Currant, Gooseberry, Figs, Apples, Pears, Peaches, Apricots, Plums, Nectarines etc. etc. all grafted from best varieties.

Vegetable seeds, Flower Seeds, Agricultural Seeds.<sup>98</sup>

An earlier advertisement by Young, Phelps stated that their stock of trees came from Natal, but how all these fruit varieties survived a Highveld winter is not stated. There were 16 fruiterers in Johannesburg as early as 1893, so both the supply and demand must have been ample,<sup>99</sup> but as an editorial in the *Standard and Diggers' News* points out:

Many parts of the Transvaal are exceptionally suitable. The district of Rustenburg, with its rich soil and sheltered valleys and never-failing streams of water, offers pre-eminent advantages for fruit culture. Such a district in America would be 'boomed' to a marvel. Farming lots would be portioned out, townships would be established and fortunes made and lost. This, of course, is overdoing it; but the result of the Californian orchard speculation of fifteen years ago is that the dinner tables of Johannesburg are supplied today with Californian pears and peaches and the markets of Europe are stocked with American oranges retailed at an average price of 1d each. There are no finer oranges in the world than those grown in the groves of the Magaliesberg, yet Johannesburg, seventy miles distant, has to pay an average of 3d an orange. Pears, plums and grapes grow equally well; and peaches are produced with a flavour and lusciousness unattainable anywhere else in the world. Railway connection is, of course, indispensable. At present in years of plenty a great part of the yield of many Transvaal Tuinen is given to the pigs for want of means of reaching the market.<sup>100</sup>

Once railways got refrigerated cars at the end of the century, a wider range of better quality fruit from the Cape became available in Johannesburg, and tropical fruit came from Natal. Commercial fruit farming in the Cape had started in the early 1890s when phylloxera devastated the wine industry. In August 1895, the Standard Bank was reporting that: 'The excellent markets and quicker returns to be found at Johannesburg and Kimberley are more attractive to growers than the delay and risk incidental to export to Europe'.<sup>101</sup> A year later farmers were reported to be setting up small syndicates and companies at Robertson, and fruit drying companies at Wellington. Cold storage rooms were being erected in Cape Town and Beaufort West for fruit and vegetables awaiting transit, and the Cape Government Railways had special cars adapted for this class of traffic.<sup>102</sup> The Standard Bank report for February 1899 state that 'the orchards of Mr Rhodes in the Paarl and Wellington Districts have, under expert Californian

<sup>96</sup> *Report of the Director of Census*, Sanitary Board, Johannesburg, Standard & Diggers' News Press, 1896, p.51.

<sup>97</sup> *Standard & Diggers' News*, 10 September 1889.

<sup>98</sup> *Standard & Diggers' News*, 22 December 1888.

<sup>99</sup> *Longlands Directory of Johannesburg and District*, Henry Longland, Johannesburg, 1893, p.284.

<sup>100</sup> *Standard & Diggers' News*, 25 January 1898.

<sup>101</sup> Mabin & Conradie, *Standard Bank Reports*, p.378.

<sup>102</sup> Mabin & Conradie, *Standard Bank Reports*, p.404.

management, been an object lesson to less progressive farmers'.<sup>103</sup> Rhodes was a quintessential hobby farmer, pouring large sums of money into farms to prove that fruit could be successfully produced. He, De Beers Limited and Alfred Beit set up Rhodes Fruit Farms as a limited company in February 1902 shortly before his death. But it did not make a profit until 1911.<sup>104</sup>

*Jeppe's Transvaal Almanac* 1889, reported that there were no fisheries in the Transvaal, and the only river fish were one or two varieties of perch, barbel, five or six varieties of yellow and white fish (all carp), and eels in all rivers running towards the east.<sup>105</sup> In the winter of 1892, before the railway from the Cape arrived in September, the Grand National Hotel in central Johannesburg was advertising fresh fish from different sea ports three times a week.<sup>106</sup> The Kalk Bay fisheries expected fresh snoek on Tuesday nights,<sup>107</sup> and put up the price of fresh fish to 9d per lb owing to the difficulties of transport and other causes,<sup>108</sup> then, having completed arrangements for an increased supply of fresh fish reduced it to 7d per lb for small fish and 8d for large fish.<sup>109</sup> No doubt all this fresh fish was carried, packed in ice, by the fastest means from railheads, by now just across the Vaal. By 1893, after the arrival of the Cape railway, there were five fishmongers in Johannesburg, including the Kalk Bay Fisheries, which also advertised ice supplies.<sup>110</sup> Ice-making was a major business before domestic refrigeration. Mrs B Henry recalls of life in Doornfontein: 'There were no fridges in those days; perishables were kept cool in an ice-chest. Ice was delivered regularly, wrapped in a sack and placed in a special compartment. Meat and fish were purchased as required which was quite easy as there were many shops on Beit Street within walking distance of our home.'<sup>111</sup>

The Standard Bank report of August 1897 commented that:

The States and Colonies of South Africa are unduly relying on their mineral resources, and are neglecting humbler, but more permanent sources of wealth. Agriculture is still in a backward and unsatisfactory state. The country imports nearly everything it eats, and drinks, and wears, and uses in common life, while the valuable fisheries off our coasts are most imperfectly worked.'<sup>112</sup>

In 1898 the Cape Government imported a steam trawler with a view to assisting the deep sea fishing industry, and was encouraged by the results from Saldanha Bay, False Bay, Agulhas and, most promisingly, Mossel Bay. The following year enormous catches were being reported all along the coast, and an industry was being set up at Mossel Bay for storing and curing the fish prior to consignment to inland markets.<sup>113</sup>

#### DETERIORATION OF LOCAL FOOD SUPPLIES AFTER 1895

<sup>103</sup> Mabin & Conradie, *Standard Bank Reports*, p.458.

<sup>104</sup> Moonyean Buys, *De Beers Administrative Records Pertaining to the Rhodes Fruit Farms Limited, 1899-1937*, De Beers Consolidated Mines, Kimberley, 1982, p.5.

<sup>105</sup> *Jeppe's Transvaal Almanac*, Friedrich Jeppe, Pretoria, 1889, p.42.

<sup>106</sup> *The Star*, 23 May 1892.

<sup>107</sup> *The Star*, 28 June 1892.

<sup>108</sup> *The Star*, 1 July 1892.

<sup>109</sup> *The Star*, 13 August 1892.

<sup>110</sup> *Longlands Directory of Johannesburg and District*, 1893, p.284.

<sup>111</sup> Robertson, *Remembering Old Johannesburg*, p.73.

<sup>112</sup> Mabin & Conradie, *Standard Bank Reports*, p.423

<sup>113</sup> Mabin & Conradie, *Standard Bank Reports*, pp.447, 471

The picture of the food supply in Johannesburg before the outbreak of the South African war in 1899 is a mixed one. As the population expanded, as it did substantially in the 1892-1894 boom, local food supply became less sufficient and more and more was imported, not only from neighbouring states, but from overseas from where it could come cheaply by sea. In the case of grain this was easy to arrange, but meat, until the breakthrough in cold storage facilities described in the previous chapter, had a far less elastic supply chain. From 1895 onwards a series of natural disasters substantially reduced the capacity of South African farming.

According to the Report of the Inspector-General of Customs published in *The Star* in January 1896, customs dues on imports to the Transvaal in 1895 were 53 per cent higher than in 1894, at £9,186,304 compared to £6,399,755, and nearly four times higher than those in 1891. This reflects both the boom conditions, arrival of the railways and the increased population, and the severe drought and locust attacks in 1895 which reduced supply from South African sources. The customs dues on food items (since 1893 they were only levied on food items which were produced in quantity in the Transvaal, so do not include flour) were:

CUSTOMS DUES

Butter	330,650 lbs	£16,309
Eggs	423,310 dozen	24,163
Vegetables	10,427,810 lbs	45,083
Jams	206,840 lbs	4,346
Meal	36,583,820 lbs	259,032
Mealies & Kafir-corn	65,459,740 lbs	492,158
Sugar	9,226,600 lbs	61,617
Tea	81,730 lbs	3,158
Pork	167,930 lbs	6,071
Pigs	10,382 head	946
Cattle	60,311 head	314,875
Sheep	316,205 head	167,798
Salt	4,703,629 lbs	7,666

The Report breaks down the imports into country of origin, and the entry route, with the comment that far more would come in next year from Natal once the railway was fully operative. Although the Delagoa Bay railway had been working for a year, there was considerable inefficiency both in the railway and at the port of Delagoa Bay. Imports from the other states of South Africa were up 47 per cent, indicating that overseas imports had contributed the most to the overall 53 per cent increase from 1894.

	<u>IMPORTS 1894</u>	<u>IMPORTS 1895</u>
Via Natal from Europe	£329,268	£245,635
"    America	8,922	9,598
"    Australia	94	5,522
"    India	2,706	2,857
"    other countries	185	1,580
From Natal	<u>676,197</u>	<u>717,204</u>
TOTAL	£1,017,317	£982,396
Via Cape Colony from Europe	3,307,378	5,090,839
"    America	55,568	150,990
"    Australia	2,137	6,120
"    India	1,344	4,780
"    other countries	2,189	2,667
From Cape Colony	<u>£1,135,409</u>	<u>£1,652,740</u>

	TOTAL	£4,504,020	£6,908,146
Via Delagoa from Europe		£304,575	£692,873
“ America		3,124	40,181
“ Australia		1,019	17,887
“ India		600	5,113
“ other countries		157,354	2,975
From Delagoa		<u>1,460</u>	<u>40,102</u>
	TOTAL	£424,367	£999,131
From Orange Free State		£454,051	£926,631
	TOTAL	<u>£6,399,755</u>	<u>£9,816,304<sup>114</sup></u>

These figures show a substantial increase in imports from America and Australia. There is also an increase in imports from India which was an important wheat and rice producing country at the time.

Reports of the first Witwatersrand Agricultural Show in April 1895, opened by President Kruger, are hopeful that this was a step towards improving Transvaal agriculture by demonstrating what could be done, and of the town's willingness to share the concerns of the countryside.<sup>115</sup> However, the Drifts Crisis and the Jameson Raid in late 1895 proved a turning point in the history of the country, and shook confidence in the future of South Africa and the Witwatersrand goldfields in particular.<sup>116</sup> The Kruger government closed the drifts over the Vaal River to foil the attempt to avoid the high tariffs the Netherlands Railway Company was charging on its short section in the Transvaal by unloading goods on the Free State side and taking them by ox-wagon over the drifts and on to Johannesburg. The British government claimed this closure was a contravention of the Bloemfontein Convention, and the government climbed down. This naturally had an unsettling short-term effect on the Johannesburg food supply as it was coupled with an exceptionally severe drought and locust attacks.

The Jameson raid at the end of 1895 further unsettled local farmers, and newspaper reports through January 1896 record their reluctance to bring food into Johannesburg.<sup>117</sup> The conspirators had laid in food stocks beforehand – *The Star* of 28 December 1895 had reported that: 'Produce of all descriptions fetched very high prices this morning, and some excitement was caused by the fact that mealies went up to 41s 6d per bag. This is undoubtedly the highest price ever paid on the Johannesburg market for mealies. This price was realised owing to several of the leading gold mining companies being represented on the Market, who were apparently determined to buy all that was offered.'<sup>118</sup> Hugh Hall on his lowveld farm got a request from his friend Percy Fitzpatrick, then with Corner House, to buy a very large number of cattle and sheep, drawing on any bank for all the money that was required. Hall bought 1,500 cattle and 300 sheep and took them to a farm at Irene and then by a back way into Johannesburg, by then having a good idea why they were needed.<sup>119</sup> After the Jameson raid the 'Commissariat' announced that there was no need to panic, there was plenty of food available in the town:

<sup>114</sup> *The Star*, 9 May 1896.

<sup>115</sup> *Diggers' News*, 13 & 14 March 1895.

<sup>116</sup> Mabin & Conradie, *Standard Bank Reports*, p.383

<sup>117</sup> *The Star*, 4, 9, 11, 24 January 1896.

<sup>118</sup> *The Star*, 28 December 1895.

<sup>119</sup> Hall, *I have Reaped my Mealies*, pp.153-156.

The Commissariat Department learn with regret that Dealers in various Food Stuffs are charging the public extortionate prices. There is no reason for this as the Department has very large stores of all Food Stuffs, and is now supplying Bakers in town at a price to sell Bread at from 5d to 6d per lb. Arrangements are also made for Butchers' supplies.

The Department wishes to impress on the public that there is no scarcity of provisions at all.

The Department hope that this is clear. Merchants will not try to extort exorbitant profits, otherwise steps will be taken to supply the public direct.

JAMES DONALDSON,<sup>120</sup>

COMMISSARIAT DEPARTMENT REFORM COMMITTEE

The price of mealies was up to 45s to 50s a bag on 3 January<sup>121</sup> (normally about 16s – 17s at this time of year); down to 25s on 15 February, but up to 35s – 36s on 25 April, when the Morning Market Review reported that:

The quantity of produce brought in for disposal during the past week was about equal to that of last week and in fact for several weeks, but in order to get prices down to a reasonable level the town requires fully double the present amount to come in for several weeks, as owing to the influx of population, consumption has largely increased, hence the continued rise in prices all round. So far the anticipated fall in the price of mealies through increased importation has not taken place, but mealies this week are dearer than they ever were excepting in the time of crisis, today good yellow mealies fetching 35s to 36s 6d per bag. In fact a few bags fetched as high as 37s 9d a few mornings ago. Kafir-corn and other grains have all advanced in sympathy with mealies. Vegetables prices are higher than poorer classes can pay.<sup>122</sup>

Mealies were grown in other countries as cattle feed and tended to be of poor quality. Locally grown were preferred and a higher price paid, whereas there was plenty of good quality wheat and meal from the Americas and Australia which was more easily imported as this June market report states:

As regards sifted Boer meal the best under offer is fetching from 36s 6d to 37s, but several parcels of fair quality were knocked down at prices ranging from 33s to 35s per bag. These prices are not due to the extra supply coming forward of local growth, but are owing to large consignments of flour and sifted meal imported from South America. Notwithstanding the long distance this has to travel and the number of hands it has to go through, merchants are selling it here retail at 20s per 100 lbs for flour, and 40s per 200 lbs for sifted meal. The latter is equal to seconds flour, and much superior to the ordinary sifted meal. Farmers in the Orange Free State must certainly lack enterprise, otherwise with the climate and soil they have there they ought to be able to grow sufficient to avoid the vast importation that is constantly going on and thus keep money in South Africa that is under present circumstances drifting into other countries.<sup>123</sup>

In the remaining years until the outbreak of war there is no mention in newspapers of the number of wagons bringing produce to the market but the following type of notice becomes common:

#### JOHANNESBURG KAZERNE

The following trucks have arrived at the Netherlands Railway Company's Yard, and are waiting delivery: Goods for Bond from Cape and Free State:- about 87 trucks [of which the following carried foodstuffs]:

P McIntosh and Co, pickle fish; A May & Co, flour; James Lawrence, flour; M Feifelberg, fruits; Muirhead & Gowie, potatoes; J O'Grady, flour; Rosa and Hinto, salt; Peyeke and Co, biscuits etc; H Bingen, groceries etc; J V Hoffman, milk; J Lawrence, beans; R L Kramer, flour; Bardorf and Co, beef; J Sanderson, salt.

Goods for Bond from Lourenco Marques:- about 18 trucks:

Harvin and Petersen, milk.

<sup>120</sup> Hugh Hall's brother-in-law.

<sup>121</sup> *The Star*, 3 January 1896.

<sup>122</sup> *The Star*, 25 April 1896.

<sup>123</sup> *The Star*, 6 June 1896.



Goods for Bond from Natal:- about 127 trucks

T W Beckett and Co, sugar; Zackon Bros, sugar; L Raphaily, sugar; J Sanderson, hams; P V Pillag, rice; W Cullen and Co. hams; M C Camwoden and Co, salmon; Dunton Bros, apricots; E Mulligan, cheese; Harwin and Paterson, butter; W Cunningham, biscuits; C R Savory and Co, jam; H Bingen, beef; S Amod, sugar; A Findlay and Co, bacon; W Cullen and Co, bacon; Wadner and Co, potatoes.<sup>124</sup>

Most advertisements in the newspapers are now for imported goods, and an editorial in the *Standard and Diggers' News* states:

It is nothing short of a scandal that we should have to import fruit from Natal and California, eggs from the Free State, butter from Australia, flour from America, and jam from Dundee or London. It is in the power of the State to enrich the farmers without maintaining a system of outdoor relief, while the supply of agricultural and orchard produce would find a ready demand and make an effectual contribution to reduce the cost of living in the towns and on the mines.<sup>125</sup>

The great stock exchange boom of gold-mining shares of 1892-1895 had weakened, and with the uncertainty arising from these political events which alarmed investors, deepened into a recession which lasted until 1899. The inflation and overstocking of the bubble years hung over trading in the town, and the period until the outbreak of war in October 1899 was gloomy, although the mines made the Transvaal the largest gold producing area in the world in 1899,<sup>126</sup> and some were making profits on mining rather than on the share speculation of the early years.

There was a period of climatic deterioration, stock diseases and crop pests for about a decade from 1895, which was devastating for white farmers, and even more so for Africans.<sup>127</sup> The distress from drought and locusts was so severe that the government sent 600 bags of mealies to the Piet Retief district and 2,000 bags to Zoutpansberg as famine relief for Africans, importing supplies from America to do so.<sup>128</sup>

Severe droughts were more widespread throughout southern Africa, red locusts stripped fields bare, and rinderpest, 'an acute, contagious viral disease of ruminants and swine'<sup>129</sup> reached the Transvaal in early 1896. There had been an epidemic in Britain 1865,<sup>130</sup> which William Beinart has called a turning point for the status of veterinary science,<sup>131</sup> for it was eventually brought under control there by strict control of imports, slaughter of infected stock, and fencing to prevent movements and intermingling of herds, measures strongly resented by British farmers. A total of 420,000 cattle perished (two hundred million across Europe) and it took a quarter of a century to rebuild the stock.<sup>132</sup>

<sup>124</sup> *The Star*, 30 December 1897.

<sup>125</sup> *Standard & Diggers' News*, 25 January 1898

<sup>126</sup> Mabin & Conradie, *Standard Bank Reports*, p.456

<sup>127</sup> Charles Ballard, 'The Repercussions of Rinderpest: Cattle Plague and Peasant Decline in Colonial Natal', *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, **19.3**, 1986, pp.449-450.

<sup>128</sup> *The Star*, 27 March 1896.

<sup>129</sup> Ballard, 'Repercussions of Rinderpest', p.430.

<sup>130</sup> Richard Perren, *The Meat Trade in Britain 1840-1914*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1978.

<sup>131</sup> William Beinart, 'Vets, Viruses and Environmentalism at the Cape' in Tom Griffiths and Libby Robin (Eds), *Ecology and Empire: Environmental History of Settler Societies*, University of Natal Press, Pietermaritzburg, 1997, p.90.

<sup>132</sup> Andrew Rimas & Evan D G Fraser, *Beef: The Untold Story of How Milk, Meat, and Muscle, Shaped the World*, HarperCollins, New York, 2008, p.144.



Such veterinarians as southern Africa had in the 1890s consequently knew what to expect as reports reached them during the early 1890s of the epidemic travelling southward from Ethiopia where it had been brought by the Italian army. No cure had been discovered, and southern Africa had only folklore remedies involving forcing substances like linseed oil, sulphur or arsenic down the animal's throat.<sup>133</sup> Sir Robert Koch, the eminent bacteriologist brought at great expense from Germany by the Cape Government, devised a method of inoculating bile from an infected animal which had limited success, but the ZAR's own hastily-appointed Government Veterinarian, the Swiss Arnold Theiler, and his colleagues from the Cape and Natal made a breakthrough in September 1897 with a more successful method of protecting healthy cattle and curing diseased ones with a serum inoculation of blood from the few fortunate ones which had survived the disease.<sup>134</sup>

While seeking a remedy for the rinderpest, both Colonial and Republican governments in southern Africa tried to prevent cattle movements by means of fences and border guards, and by destroying affected animals along the pattern established in Britain. By April 1896 the rinderpest had reached Mafeking from Bechuanaland, and the Free State stopped all traffic from the Transvaal.<sup>135</sup> Trekboers and Africans tended to ignore the restrictions. The Transvaal cordons of border guards were ineffectual because poor whites were used and paid at a rate of 10s a day. They therefore had little interest in bringing the outbreak to an end. A conference of Rinderpest Committees at Pretoria recommended to the government that instead cattle-owners should be commandeered to guard the borders of infected districts, paid rations and promised a bonus when the outbreak ended, if the country's finances permitted. Delegates advised the government that rather than stopping all ox-wagon traffic throughout the country for three months, local traffic could be resumed at the government's discretion in any ward declared free of rinderpest after one month.<sup>136</sup>

By November 1896 the ban on movement was having an effect on the supply of grain reaching the Johannesburg Market:

As it is nearly two-thirds of the produce under offer has been brought in by the railway. So far dealers have fair stocks in hand, and there is sufficient in the stores to cover the demand; but it is feared that during the whole of next year we shall have to depend upon importations of grain to supply our wants. Farmers in many districts, both in the Transvaal and Orange Free State, have been so disheartened lately with their severe losses that they have omitted to cultivate their lands altogether, while others have barely put in sufficient to cover their own requirements, so that just now everything tends to a gloomy outlook for next year. Mealies were in poor supply, and more than half of those offered for sale during the week were of the imported article. For a few bags of local grown mealies that were put up for sale there was keen competition. A few sound parcels were run up to 29s 6d per bag, and where one or two bags were put up for sale as much as 39s per bag were reached. Imported mealies are now fetching from 21s 6d to 26s, whereas the same samples a month or two ago would only have fetched from 17s 6d to 19s per bag.<sup>137</sup>

Ploughing without oxen was particularly difficult, and at the end of December 1896 Sammy Marks took the President and members of the Volksraad by special train to his Vaal River Estate for a demonstration of a steam

<sup>133</sup> Thelma Gutsche, *There was a Man*, p.106.

<sup>134</sup> Ballard, *Repercussions of Rinderpest*, p.442.

<sup>135</sup> *The Star*, 21 April 1896.

<sup>136</sup> *The Star*, 29 October 1896.

<sup>137</sup> *The Star*, 21 November 1896.

plough, harrow and seeder.<sup>138</sup> They were impressed, but it was not economical to use, and was abandoned once cattle became available again.

In terms of lessening or eradicating diseases African cattle received less attention than European-owned ones, and Africans were convinced rinderpest was a European plot to force them to work for them. Losses in different areas were between 50 and 90 per cent, and Africans deprived of milk, meat, currency, wealth, fertiliser and ploughing animals turned to hoe cultivation for crops and vegetables or used ponies to pull ploughs. It forced many into the migratory labour system or into moving to towns.<sup>139</sup>

Hasty attempts, which will be further described in Chapter Five, Distribution of Food in Johannesburg, were made to erect cold storage facilities, but until they were in place meat could only be chilled, not frozen, and mishaps en route caused problems. Freezing techniques at that time meant that the structure of beef made it harder than lamb to freeze satisfactorily. Johannesburg had a preference for beef, so this poor quality beef only sold because it was cheap. The poor were suffering severely with these higher food prices. At the end of May 1896 the police stated that as many as nine arrests for vagrancy were being made daily.

One thing admitted on all hands is that the lower grade of working men, and those with large families, find Johannesburg at present anything but the Eldorado that people at a distance suppose it to be. To these in particular the enormous rise in the price of butcher meat and the threatened stoppage of the supply, with the probability of a run on provisions of all kinds, is a very serious matter. ... when a heavy rent is paid, very little remains to be spent in the luxury of butcher meat at a shilling a pound. With labourers who have to rely on odd jobs at a time when these are scarce the fight to make ends meet must be very trying.<sup>140</sup>

In spite of the depressed state of agriculture, or perhaps out of an urge to do something constructive, in September 1897 the Transvaal Agricultural Union was formed of the Agricultural Societies of Pretoria, Klerksdorp, Barberton, Vryheid, Johannesburg, Middelburg and Lydenburg, with F T Nicholson as Secretary and Treasurer. He was a long-standing burgher of the Transvaal, ex-state librarian, school teacher and cattle breeder.<sup>141</sup> The Union was to 'serve as a medium for the expression of agricultural opinion in the councils of the nation, and should eventually lead to the formation of an Agricultural Department'. President Kruger sent a message wishing the movement every success, and a number of Executive Council and Volksraad members were present. A paper was read stating that:

In matters agricultural, the country, with all its vast undeveloped possibilities, was in a most backward state, and but little was being done to supply the demand which existed for the produce of the soil. Importation from abroad was relied up to meet the immediate needs of the population, and this condition of affairs must be brought to an end. To fit the farmer to play his proper part in the development of the country we had need of organisation, education, energy and unfaltering determination. An Agricultural Department which could investigate the actual position, collect and codify useful statistics, establish educational institutions, grapple with stock diseases, and generally strive to promote the agricultural interests of the country was an absolute necessity.

A second meeting was held in Potchefstroom in February 1898, which entrusted Louis Botha, one of the delegates with the task of piloting the measure dealing with the Agricultural Department through the Volksraad, and the

<sup>138</sup> *Diggers' News*, 29 December 1896.

<sup>139</sup> Charles van Onselen, 'Reactions to Rinderpest in Southern Africa 1896-97', *Journal of African History*, **13.3**, 1972, p.486.

<sup>140</sup> *The Star*, 30 May 1896.

<sup>141</sup> Milton, "To Make the Crooked Straight", p.25.

government agreed to entrust the Agricultural Union with the distribution of the yearly grant being made to shows among the various Agricultural Societies. A third meeting was held in Johannesburg in May 1899. 'The work of the Union was carried on up to the outbreak of hostilities, and was resumed on the conclusion of peace'.<sup>142</sup>

The Standard Bank reports for 1898 speak of the depression of country trade, the practical cessation of the inflow of European capital, and exceptional agitation 'in matters political' 'At Johannesburg there has been, and still is, great stagnation in business, partly due to greater efficiency on the mines and the closing down of low grade mines. ... Credit is very restricted. Fixed properties have much receded in value and business is at a standstill. ... Large sums have been withdrawn from the Transvaal Treasury to feed impecunious Boers.' A year later, in February 1899, the depression was even more severe, but signs of improvement were noted in August 1899, though by then business was adversely influenced by political unrest. 'The paralysis of trade in the Transvaal caused much actual distress... the ranks of the unemployed are dangerously swollen in the larger towns ... and general lawlessness is alarmingly on the increase. Some thousands of people – chiefly women and children – have gone temporarily away'.<sup>143</sup>

### WARTIME REPUBLICAN JOHANNESBURG

Little attention has been given to Johannesburg's eight months at war under the Republican government, save for Diana Cammack's *The Rand at War, 1899-1902*,<sup>144</sup> and the following section draws largely on this work, supplemented by *The Standard & Diggers' News* which stopped publishing only in early June 1900 when its editor was deported by the British. About 100,000 people left Johannesburg between May and the declaration of war on 11 October 1899, and houses and shops were boarded up. The Republican government appointed a Rust en Orde Commission in late September with the aims of maintaining public order and exploiting the Rand's wealth to bolster its war effort. About a dozen mines were kept operating, and about 12,000 to 13,000 Africans worked on them, living in locations and small communities along the Reef. British subjects who remained in Johannesburg were required to obtain permits; foreigners had to obtain proof of their nationality from their consuls. This must have caused considerable difficulty as passports were not a legal requirement and few people in the late nineteenth century had them.<sup>145</sup> The only foreign consuls in Johannesburg were American, Belgian, Danish, French, German, Dutch, and Swedish/Norwegian.<sup>146</sup> Many 'undesirables' were deported, and by late 1889 just over 10,000 whites and about the same number of Africans remained in the town.

There was no rationing but food prices had risen as mobilisation for war disrupted farm production and food distribution. Draught animals were commandeered, and supplies of meat and grain bought up for the commandos. The Republican government had wanted only those needed to maintain essential services and industry to remain, but many of the remaining inhabitants were those too poor to travel, or who were the dependents of men at the front or

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<sup>142</sup> F T Nicholson, 'The Rise and Growth of the Transvaal Agricultural Union', in *Transvaal Agricultural Journal*, Volume 5, 1906, pp.618-622.

<sup>143</sup> Mabin & Conradie, *Standard Bank Reports*, pp.439-465.

<sup>144</sup> Diana Cammack, *The Rand at War, 1899-1902: The Witwatersrand and the Anglo-Boer War*, University of Natal Press, Pietermaritzburg, 1990.

<sup>145</sup> <http://Eni.wikipedia.org/wiki/Passport> downloaded 2 January 2012.

<sup>146</sup> The Union between Sweden and Norway ended in 1905. Foreign Consuls in the ZAR, *Longland's Pretoria Directory for 1899*, Longlands, Johannesburg, p.228.

who had left. Some employers had left without paying their staff, so there was a considerable amount of destitution among both white and black. Shortages of money and food led to food rioting and looting by Africans, and by Boer women in the poorer districts of western Johannesburg and Jeppestown whose husbands were on unpaid commando duty. With government funding the Rust en Orde Commission set up a Johannesburg Commissariat Commission in October 1899 to distribute grain to the burgher poor.<sup>147</sup> Milk was distributed in Fordsburg, Vrededorp and Burghersdorp from 400 commandeered cows. The public works project on the Main Reef Road, set up to deal with structural poverty before the war, was continued, and charitable organisations did what they could, but by the end of November food riots again broke out. In December the authorities ordered wholesalers and retailers to notify the Commissariat Commission of the amount of food they had in stock, and goods were taken from the barricaded shops to feed the needy.

Tinned goods, sugar and flour disappeared from the shops with the cessation of rail traffic from the coastal colonies, and with the British government embargo in November of the port of Delagoa Bay aimed at cutting off supplies of arms, ammunition and food destined for the commandos. Complaints from foreign nationals in the Republic, and from the Mozambicans, who were dependent on food imports, forced the modification of the blockade in February 1900. Goods were allowed to be landed for use in Portuguese territory only, though some were smuggled into the Republic. This eased the acute shortage of imported goods. Restaurants began to advertise in *The Standard & Diggers' News* that they were still in operation.<sup>148</sup> They had also been badly affected by the Rust en Orde Commission's total ban on the sale of alcohol in early October, but in the new year this was relaxed for the 'better class' of clubs, hotels and restaurants which were allowed to sell wine and beer, but not spirits, with meals only.<sup>149</sup>

In early October 1899 *The Standard & Diggers' News* had noted that butchers and bakers were among the first of the places of business that had closed, which did not augur well for the supply of the needs of the population under Martial Law, as 'meat and bread are among the foremost necessities of life'.<sup>150</sup> Market reports appeared until the end of the year, but it was apparent that the hinterland from which Johannesburg Market could draw grain and fresh produce had become extremely limited, and that grain was particularly scarce, though vegetables, fruit, mutton and poultry were still available. Butchers were advertising from December 1899 onwards that they had meat in stock.<sup>151</sup> The harvest of 1900 was good and mealie meal appeared again for sale. Market reports cease at the end of the century, reflecting the reduced number of ox wagons coming to Market Square; their role in Johannesburg's food supply being taken over by the railway.

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<sup>147</sup> Thomas Adlam, whose father was curator of Joubert Park, recalled going with a friend whose father was on commando to draw the family's weekly rations of mealie meal, flour, tins of bully beef and milk and a chunk of bacon. Maryna Fraser (Ed), *Johannesburg Pioneer Journals, 1888-1909*, Van Riebeeck Society, Cape Town, 1985, p.88.

<sup>148</sup> *The Standard & Diggers' News*, 12 & 14 February 1900.

<sup>149</sup> Cammack, *The Rand at War*, p.72.

<sup>150</sup> *The Standard & Diggers' News*, 5 October 1899.

<sup>151</sup> *The Standard & Diggers' News*, Theron Butchers 1 December 1899, Smithfield Meat Market 28 December 1899, Angerhn & Piel 12 January 1900, Transvaal Meat Market ('with prices to suit the times') 3 February 1900.

Just before the British arrival on the last day of May 1900 there were great quantities of produce on the market stalls as farmers, fearing looting and appropriation, attempted to realise profits before it was too late.<sup>152</sup> After the British army had taken control there was said to be enough food to provide African mineworkers for nearly a month, but scarcely a fortnight's food for the whites in town, and the British army itself 'had only one day's supply in the wagons'.<sup>153</sup> The hotels and restaurants filled with officers in search of a decent meal and a bottle or two, but all bottle stores, bars and 'kafir eating houses' were closed.<sup>154</sup>

This chapter has examined the sources of food in Johannesburg that were available during the period of Republican government, complementing the outline of the international context that was provided in the previous chapter. It has been argued that in the first decade of Johannesburg's existence these local sources were more plentiful than many contemporary critics of the government of the ZAR have allowed. However, there were times of scarcity and the high prices arising from transport difficulties and government duties, which caused distress to Johannesburg's African and white population. The large increase in population in the boom of 1892-1895 compounded the food supply problems, which were greatly worsened, in the decade from 1895, by the series of natural calamities suffered by the whole of southern Africa: prolonged droughts, locusts, the rinderpest and East Coast fever epidemics, and one human-induced tragedy - the South African war.<sup>155</sup> The ease with which tinned foods and cheaper overseas grains could be brought in to fill the gap in local supplies in this period induced a reliance on these sources which had lasting effects. The recovery from these local disasters, and how the local supply of food was affected by the colonial government in the Transvaal that was established after 1902 is the subject of Chapter Six, Johannesburg in a British Colony. The various food cultures among the people of Johannesburg, and how these cultures and geography shaped the distribution of food in the town are the topics of Chapters Four and Five.

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<sup>152</sup> Diana Cammack does not give a reference for this, and no hint of it occurs in *The Standard & Diggers News*.

<sup>153</sup> H W Wilson, *With the Flag to Pretoria: A History of the Boer War 1899-1902*, Volume II, Harmsworth Brothers, London, 1902, p.644.

<sup>154</sup> Cammack, *Rand at War*, pp.110-112.

<sup>155</sup> Ballard, 'The Repercussions of Rinderpest', pp.424-425.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### JOHANNESBURG PEOPLE AND THEIR FOOD CULTURES

This chapter will describe the different ethnic and social groups in early Johannesburg and their food cultures, and builds on the previous chapters by showing how each of these communities made use of local and global food supplies. Eating is a basic biological urge, but all societies everywhere have formulated rules and codes for what is eaten and what is forbidden, who eats what, how it is eaten, and when it is eaten. Muslims and Jews do not eat pork, British people do not eat horses, as the French do, or dogs, as the Chinese do. In many societies men and women do not eat together, in most societies men get a larger share of food than women and children. The time and frequency of meals varies in different cultures and over time, and between classes in one culture. Food is a medium for social interaction in all societies, but food preferences are also culture specific.<sup>1</sup> The language people first learn to speak and the food eaten in childhood are two of the most fundamental preservers of an adult's social and racial identity. Tastes acquired in infancy always afterwards seem normal, and the tastes of people who do not share them seem strange, or even disgusting.

As the world's food supply became globalised from the sixteenth century on, there has been an intermingling of food cultures. The physical relocation of people from one region to another has been accompanied by the transplantation of their food traditions, with the dominant group maintaining its culinary traditions as the norm, and weaker groups accommodating themselves. Industrialisation and modernising trends which swept the world in the nineteenth century facilitated this process. Industrial techniques of food preservation and storage (discussed in Chapter Two) ensured that foods were appropriate for shipping to markets throughout the world.<sup>2</sup> Transoceanic supply chains of wheat and beef were part of Europe's hegemony over the world economy,<sup>3</sup> and Britain's position as the leading economy in the nineteenth century enabled the dominant British diaspora to impose its own culinary norm in Johannesburg. In a racist age, lack of interest in and disdain for what Africans and Asians ate was prevalent.

### POPULATION COMPOSITION AND GROWTH

From its beginning in 1886 Johannesburg, like earlier goldfields, was exceptionally diverse, not only in the origins of its people, but in the different classes and categories. The largest category in the early years were English- speakers who had come from Britain itself, from the colonies of the Cape and Natal, from Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United States. In an age without unemployment benefits or old age pensions, the chance of making a fortune in the latest gold mining boom was seized by many who sought a better life. The newcomers were both skilled miners and those who serviced them: shopkeepers, keepers of hotels, bars, boarding houses, eating houses, brothels, entertainers, butchers, bakers, grocers, accountants, bank clerks, insurance agents, machine repairers, shoemakers,

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<sup>1</sup> Margaret Visser, *The Rituals of Dinner: The Origins, Evolution, Eccentricities and Meaning of Table Manners*, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1993, pp.2,42.

<sup>2</sup> Melissa L Caldwell, 'Cuisines', in A Iriye & Pierre-Yves Saunier (Eds), *The Palgrave Dictionary of Transnational History*, Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2009, pp.231-232.

<sup>3</sup> Harriet Friedman, 'Food' in A Iriye & Pierre-Yves Saunier (Eds), *The Palgrave Dictionary of Transnational History*, Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2009, p.417.



etc. Just before the South African war it was reckoned that only ten per cent of the population was directly involved in mining.<sup>4</sup> Early in 1899 Dr W J Leyds, the former Republican State Secretary, told a London newspaper:

What creates the poverty is the fact that JOHANNESBURG IS OVERCROWDED. It was rushed and glutted up with a population that it could never support. Remember it is a mining town and nothing more. Only a limited number can be employed at the mines and most of the work is done by the blacks. Yet the city is crammed with clerical men, professional men, certain classes of mechanics and others who can never find employment. At the same time, crowds are still attracted to the gold reef city who soon become stranded and destitute.<sup>5</sup>

The second largest category was the Africans, who also divided into those directly involved in mining, and those in the town as servants, waiters, Sanitary Board/Municipal Council employees and numerous other subordinate positions. The Dutch or Afrikaans-speakers were government officials, policemen, or dispossessed *bywoners* making bricks or driving cabs, or 'Cape boys' also driving cabs and filling some semi-skilled roles, but it was relatively rare to hear Dutch or Afrikaans spoken in Johannesburg.<sup>6</sup>

There were also a large number of Jews, and although many fall into the English-speaking category their strong food preferences set them apart. Asians form another large group, mainly Chinese or Indian, the butt of racism from English shopkeepers, but filling an essential role as hawkers and small traders, breaking down the large quantities sold wholesale into small parcels the poor could afford. There were also 'others' in the 1896 Census, from a wide range of countries.

In 1890 the Sanitary Board conducted a brief Census of six wards, and arrived at a total population of 26,303 for the whole town. This return is appended to the more detailed 1896 Census,<sup>7</sup> and the summary is given in Appendix One.

In 1892, when the economy was just beginning to pick up from the depression which started in 1889, the Sanitary Board conducted another short Census of ten townships which distinguished between Whites and 'Natives', and arrived at a total of 41,000 inhabitants<sup>8</sup>.

### THE 1896 CENSUS

From 1892 to 1895 the population expanded at an even faster rate, and became even more diverse. The 1896 Census<sup>9</sup>, taken on the night of 15 July, asked questions about age, place of birth, occupation, 'conjugal condition', religion, types of buildings, and livestock, and produced some interesting results. English-speaking white males still predominated, though by the end of the century, as demand for underground labourers increased, Africans outnumbered whites. There were a large number of 'colonials' i.e. from Cape or Natal Colonies, but on the whole

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<sup>4</sup> Diana Cammack, *The Rand at War 1899-1902: The Witwatersrand and the Anglo-Boer War, 1990*, James Currey, London, 1990, p.3.

<sup>5</sup> *Standard & Diggers' News*, 27 January 1899.

<sup>6</sup> Katz, Elaine, *The White Death: Silicosis on the Witwatersrand Gold Mines 1886-1910*, Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg, 1994, p.63.

<sup>7</sup> *Report of the Director of Census, 1896*, Johannesburg Sanitary Department, Standard & Diggers' News Press, Johannesburg, 1896, pp.54-55.

<sup>8</sup> See Appendix One.

<sup>9</sup> *Report of the Director of Census 1896*, Johannesburg Sanitary Department.

these lacked the skills needed in mining , and hard rock miners came from Cornwall, northern Britain and mining areas in the Americas and Australasia.

The 1896 Census showed a total of 102,078, of whom 61,292 lived within the jurisdiction of the Sanitary Board,<sup>10</sup> and 40,786 outside it. Of these 50,907 were Europeans or whites, 952 Malays,<sup>11</sup> 4,807 Asiatics,<sup>12</sup> 2,879 Mixed or other races,<sup>13</sup> and 42,533 'Natives', of whom 14,195 lived within the jurisdiction of the Sanitary Board, and 28,838 outside.

In the total area, of the 24,489 Whites who had been born in Europe, 12,389 were from England and Wales

3,335	“	Russia
2,879	“	Scotland
2,262	“	Germany
997	“	Ireland
819	“	Holland
402	“	France
311	“	Sweden & Norway
206	“	Italy
139	“	Switzerland
750		Others <sup>14</sup>

An article in *The Standard & Diggers' News* describes the 'others' from Europe as from Belgium, Austro-Hungary, Spain, Greece, the 'little colony of Dalmatians in Fordsburg', plus 'the murderous hotch-potch of Mediterraneans'<sup>15</sup> – which are not further explained. The Census Report was printed by the Standard and Diggers' News Printing Press, and the data destroyed afterwards, so perhaps the *News* had access to more detailed figures. *The Star* did not seem to have published the Census results, though it published articles beforehand describing the diligence and thoroughness of Captain A H Bleksley, seconded from his post of Sanitary Superintendent to be Director of Census.

The Census figures for the total population show a male:female ratio for of 3.5:1 (79,515:22,763). The male:female ratio of 1.75:1 (32,387:18,520) for Europeans is surprisingly low in view of the general belief that Johannesburg in its early days had a predominantly male population. Ten years after its foundation, Johannesburg was more suitable for family life than it had been in the early mining camp days. One estimate is that 55 per cent of married males in the general white population had their families with them, though only 13 per cent of married miners.<sup>16</sup> This is confirmed by the October 1896 article on the Census in *The Standard and Diggers' News*, dealing with the three mile radius of Market Square only, pointing out the very small number of children between the ages of 10 and 15, but that there were 6,439 younger than 10 who had been born in Johannesburg. The article states:

<sup>10</sup> A three-mile radius of Market Square. Detailed list in Appendix One.

<sup>11</sup> Believed to be descended from Malay slaves or exiles from the Dutch East Indies, and of Muslim religion.

<sup>12</sup> Mainly Indians or Chinese.

<sup>13</sup> Mainly 'Cape Coloureds' descended from Khoisan people, Europeans, slaves from Asia and other parts of Africa, and Africans at the Cape.

<sup>14</sup> Which were in a Union until 1905, so were counted together.

<sup>15</sup> *Standard & Diggers' News*, 22 October 1896.

<sup>16</sup> Lis Lange, *White, Poor and Angry: White Working Class Families in Johannesburg*, Ashgate, Aldershot, Hants, 2003, p.14.

In the days of the pioneers on the Rand there was little time or opportunity for cultivating the domestic virtues. Women there were none, and husbands hesitated before bringing wives, burdened with piling infants, to the rough shanties of early Johannesburg<sup>17</sup>

Charles van Onselen considers the population of Johannesburg as being almost entirely miners, so that 'a few of the wealthy mine owners, and a section of the commercial middle class' were able to set up home, the rest having to be content with 'boarding houses'.<sup>18</sup> By the mid-1890s, however, less than 10 per cent of the white population worked on the mines and Johannesburg had all the characteristics of a modern city, with spreading suburbs, advanced labour diversification and specialisation. Under 'Occupations' in the Census, 6,579 were building workers or brickmakers; 6,424 housewives or wives; 3,261 merchants, shopkeepers, storekeepers or hawkers; 2,924 clerks; 756 speculators; 692 cab drivers; 605 policemen; 582 railwaymen;<sup>19</sup> etc, in addition to the more-discussed barmen, illicit liquor sellers, prostitutes and pimps. Judging by advertisements in *The Star* and *The Standard & Diggers' News* there was a substantial number of people in the middle and artisan classes living as family units, pursuing hobbies and interests, gardening, keeping chickens and cooking meals *en famille*.

Of the whites born in Africa, the gender ratios are nearly even, indeed from Natal and the Orange Free State females outnumber males. This is probably due to the figures covering all ages, so would include daughters, sisters, aunts etc. The 'Mixed Race' and 'Other' groups were also evenly balanced, in other words people coming from nearby brought their wives and families with them, often because they could not afford to maintain two homes. To Van Onselen's categories of the rich and commercial classes who had their families with them needs to be added the European, mainly local, poor, living in the multi-racial slums in the centre, so disliked by the ruling groups in Johannesburg. A few 'Asiatics' were from other parts of southern Africa (193; 122 male:71 female), but the majority were from British possessions in Asia (3,797; 3,132:615) or Other States, presumably China, (821; 818:3) and tended to be single men, as did Africans.

### AFRICANS

The African male:female ratio of 24.3:1 (40,855:1,678) considerably skews the total ratio. Very few African women came, or were brought, to Johannesburg in this period. The men were mainly young unskilled workers on the mines. A P Cartwright gives a figure of 53,910 in 1896 on the whole of the Witwatersrand, but an exact figure is probably impossible to achieve as the mines were so spread out, and the workers came and went with great frequency. In this period the usual term of employment was three months, which enabled many of the labourers to return home to help with the harvest, and there was a near 100 per cent turnover each year.<sup>20</sup> Mineworkers from Mozambique<sup>21</sup> were preferred as they stayed longer so re-training costs were lower, and they were less unwilling than the others to go underground. To all of them, however, the food served up in the mine kitchens was very different from what they were used to in their homes.

<sup>17</sup> *Standard & Diggers' News*, 22 October 1896.

<sup>18</sup> Charles van Onselen, *Studies in the Social and Economic History of the Witwatersrand, 1886-1914: 1 New Babylon*, Longman, Harlow Essex, 1982.

<sup>19</sup> *Report of the Director of Census 1896*, Johannesburg Sanitary Department, pp.36-43.

<sup>20</sup> A P Cartwright, *Doctors of the Mines*, Purnell, Cape Town, 1971.

<sup>21</sup> 'Tribal Distinctions' given in Appendix One.

Descriptions of the pre-colonial African diet, recorded by missionaries and government officials, vary between different places and different times, but there are certain common features. The basic feature, as in most pre-industrial societies, was a large portion of carbohydrate with a protein relish. Among Africans the carbohydrate was supplied by one of the millets (*Panicum* which originated in the Middle East, *Eleusine* which originated in East Africa<sup>22</sup>, and *Pennisetum*, indigenous<sup>23</sup>), *Sorghum* (native to Africa), or maize (*Zea mays*), eaten as a stiff porridge or fermented as a beer, *marewu*. Lacking gluten, they cannot be made into bread as wheat can. Maize was part of the Columbian exchange, and seems to have reached southern Africa in the eighteenth century through Portuguese territories. It was welcomed as being easier to grow than millets or sorghum with which it fitted in well as a garden crop cultivated by women with hoes in summer rainfall areas. It was also more productive, but susceptible to drought and not grown in drier areas. Grains were intercropped with cowpeas,<sup>24</sup> beans, pumpkins, and groundnuts (*Vigna subterranean*). Tamma melons were widely grown; used in arid areas for drinking, the leaves were fed to stock, the tender shoots used as a relish, the seeds contain oil and, roasted, were eaten as a snack. In addition to garden vegetables, vitamin C was provided by wild spinach (also containing calcium, iron and vitamin A), fruits, nuts, seeds, and other gathered plants, when in season. The Zulu are said to have used leaves of more than a hundred different plants.<sup>25</sup> Edible wild plants, eaten as a relish, known as *morogo* or *imfino*, such as species of amaranth or pigweed, were eaten fresh and dried; a valuable source of protein, minerals, and vitamins A and C.<sup>26</sup> Wild vegetables and fruits, however, are seasonal, although many are dried. Carbohydrate-heavy diets are frequently deficient in nicotinic acid, vitamin C, calcium, riboflavin and proteins, and *veld* foods provided a valuable, diversified food base.<sup>27</sup> Fats were insignificant in the Pedi diet; Quin in the 1950s notes that arteriosclerosis, myocardial infarction and coronary thrombosis are rare among the Pedi but ascribes this to a different coronary heart pattern between Europeans and 'Bantu'.<sup>28</sup> In the late 1950s the role of fats in heart diseases was just coming to light in the western world.

Grain porridge was eaten with milk which supplied calcium and protein and compensated for the relative sparseness of meat in the diet. Milk sours rapidly in a hot climate, and this was done deliberately as soured milk kept better. Africans even today prefer their milk soured, as *amasi*.<sup>29</sup> Fresh milk was only drunk by infants – perhaps the origin of the European belief that African adults did not drink milk at all. Milk also was seasonal as grazing was scarcer in the winter, and as cattle were herded together there was little control over when cows were in milk.

Protein was mainly provided by small stock, game, eggs and birds as cattle were rarely slaughtered except on occasions such as sacrifices to ancestors or feasts, and the animal would then be divided up in a defined allocation of

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<sup>22</sup> Alan Davidson, *The Oxford Companion to Food*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1999, pp.506,734

<sup>23</sup> Ben-Erik Van Wyk & Nigel Gericke, *People's Plants: A Guide to the Useful Plants of Southern Africa*, Briza Publications, Pretoria, 2007.

<sup>24</sup> Actually a bean, *Vigna unguiculata*, grown all over Africa, and taken by the Spanish to the Americas, where it is known as black-eyed peas.

<sup>25</sup> Renata Coetzee, *Funu Food from Africa: Roots of Traditional African Food Culture*, Butterworths, Durban, 1982, p.88.

<sup>26</sup> P J Quin, *Food and Feeding Habits of the Pedi, with Special Reference to the Identification, Classification, Preparation and Nutritive Value of the Respective Foods*, Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg, 1959, p.59.

<sup>27</sup> A B Cunningham & G W Davis, 'Human Use of Plants' in R M Cowling, D M Richardson & S M Pierce (Eds), *Vegetation in Southern Africa*, Cambridge University Press, 1997, p.477.

<sup>28</sup> Quin, *Food and Feeding Habits of the Pedi*, pp.267,269-270.

<sup>29</sup> Quin, *Food and Feeding Habits of the Pedi*, pp.226-227.

the various parts of the animal, with women and children at the bottom of the pecking order. Cattle were far too important as milk-providers and as the social and political glue that bound communities together to be a regular source of meat. The institution of *lobola*, the bride price in cattle paid to the parents of a new wife, brought women, the source of children and labour-power, to the homestead. Young men had to wait until the chief or their father could provide cattle for *lobola* before they could marry, and it was customary for age groups of young men to raid cattle or, as the nineteenth century wore on, to go to European areas to earn money to buy cattle. From the mid-nineteenth century onwards ox-drawn ploughs, introduced by missionaries and traders, enabled more land to be cultivated and men as cattle-handlers were drawn into crop production, having previously only helped women in the heavier tasks of preparing new lands. Ploughing contributed to soil erosion, however, in a way that light digging with hoes had not done, and intensive cereal cropping rapidly exhausted the soil which then needed manuring or artificial fertilisers.

The pre-colonial diet appears to have been adequate in normal times in supplying nutritional needs. Nutritionists have calculated that at best it contained all the required calories, vitamins and minerals. The women who prepared it were skilled agriculturalists and exploiters of their environment, and societies had a variety of strategies for coping with natural shortages and lack of storage capability. But even the rich were hungry in late winter before spring rains made *veld* food available, and scurvy occurred.<sup>30</sup> Missionaries had noted that men got scurvy more often than women and children because of their reluctance to eat vegetables. Most of the strategies against such calamities as drought and locust attacks involved mobility, and as southern Africa became more populated, this possibility diminished. By the late nineteenth century most parts of the country had had some contact with the cash economy through traders. Surplus crops were traded for cash to pay taxes, or for ploughs and consumer goods, and foods such as mealie meal (sparing busy women the task of grinding mealies), tea, and sugar were being bought.

As in all societies, the preparation and eating of food had acquired a number of rules of behaviour and taboos, such as who could prepare the food for whom, and certain foods bringing droughts. Cooking was entirely the women's sphere; men were not involved in food preparation except when they might grill quick-cooking meat over an open fire while out hunting or raiding. Food was also a sign of identity, distinguishing groups from each other. Natal Africans found the Amathonga disgusting because they ate fish, poultry, pork and monkey.<sup>31</sup> The Pedi thought fish akin to snakes, and eating them was debarred;<sup>32</sup> the Xhosa objected to eating intestines. Mozambique Africans preferred fish and rice to mealie meal and meat.<sup>33</sup> Some food prejudices were harmful, such as women not being allowed to eat meat or eggs during pregnancy, and many men regarded vegetables as women's food. Many nutritional diseases owe more to ideas, customs or circumstances than to the availability of nutrients.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Diana Wylie, 'The Changing Face of Hunger in Southern African History 1880-1990', *Past and Present*, 1989, 122, p.163.

<sup>31</sup> Diana Wylie, *Starving on a Full Stomach: Hunger and the Triumph of Cultural Racism in Modern South Africa*, University Press of Virginia, Charlottesville, 2001, p.23.

<sup>32</sup> Quin, *Pedi Food*, p.128.

<sup>33</sup> Matthew Smith, 'Working in the Grave': The Development of a Health and Safety System on the Witwatersrand Gold Mines, 1900-1939', MA, Rhodes University, 1993, p.117.

<sup>34</sup> Maryna Steyn, *An Assessment of the Health Status and Physical Characteristics of the Prehistoric Population from Mapungwe*, D Phil, University of the Witwatersrand 1994, p.110.

Given this background, the shock of living and eating in company with a large number of strangers with different food habits greatly increased the stressful situation that African migrant mineworkers encountered. The early compounds varied greatly, but conditions ranged from 'not good' to 'appalling'. The dominant factor was the need to keep working costs down in view of the fixed price of gold and the fact that the gold deposits, though reliable, were of low grade.

Little hard information is available about pre-war mine feeding, the first being a ration scale of 17 ½ lb mealie meal and two lb meat per week in the *Chamber of Mines Annual Report* for 1896.<sup>35</sup> This amount of food was a maximum level devised to prevent 'poaching' when labour supply was a free-for-all rife with touts and contractors, and part of the attempts to impose a maximum wage scale in late 1896 and early 1897. The rinderpest epidemic, depriving Africans of their cattle, then made mine managers' jobs easier, but competition for African labour remained cut-throat until the outbreak of war.<sup>36</sup> Official ration scales cannot be relied upon. Kitchens were not scientific, many cooks simply guessed at the amount of mealie meal that would be needed, and the chances of every African getting an exact 2 ½ lbs a day were slim. It was widely acknowledged that there was considerable variation in the quantity and quality of food issued.<sup>37</sup>

*The Witwatersrand Chamber of Mines Annual Report* for 1896 states that 47,097 Africans were employed in 81 companies, but estimated the total number as perhaps 70,000. Under 'Stores' it gives figures of 48,842 muid of mealies, and 171,682 muid of mealie meal (a muid was approximately 200 lbs, varying in different accounts between 180 and 230, but the bags used contained 200 lbs when normally filled). The figure for meat was 2,870,772 lbs.<sup>38</sup> These figures give, for 70,000 men, 12 lbs of mealies and ¾ lbs of meat per head per week, less than the maximum levels stipulated above of 17 ½ lbs of mealies and two lbs of meat per week. The 1898 Stores Returns for 82,627 men reported working for 86 companies for 1898 give a slightly higher figure of 14 lbs mealies and 1.03 lbs of meat per week.<sup>39</sup>

There was concern pre-war about the high death rate of African mineworkers, which was primarily blamed on excessive alcohol consumption. In May 1899 Dr R Hornabrook, who had come from India to advise on an outbreak of plague, was commissioned by the Chamber of Mines to advise on the health of mineworkers, and recommended fresh South African produce rather than imported grain from America and Argentina, vegetables and fresh meat to prevent scurvy, but the outbreak of war prevented action.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> P W Fleming, 'Nutrition in the Mining Industry 1889-1966, *Chamber of Mines Research Report No 65/66*, Johannesburg, 1966, p.1.

<sup>36</sup> Alan H Jeeves, *Migrant Labour in South Africa's Mining Economy: The Struggle for the Gold Mines Labour Supply 1890-1920*, Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg, 1985, p.255.

<sup>37</sup> Wylie, *Starving*, p.133.

<sup>38</sup> *Witwatersrand Chamber of Mines Annual Report* for year ended 31 December 1896.

<sup>39</sup> Chamber of Mines of the South African Republic Annual Report for year ended 31 December 1898.

<sup>40</sup> John Lang, *Bullion Johannesburg: Men, Mines and the Challenge of Conflict*, Jonathan Ball, Johannesburg, 1986, pp.146-147.



Much more information becomes available in the British colonial period, when the death rate of more than 100 per 1000 on the mines caused alarm. It rose to 166 per 1000 in 1906.<sup>41</sup> The third highest cause of this death rate was scurvy; between November 1902 and April 1903 186 African miners died of it.<sup>42</sup> A committee of mine doctors repeated the recommendation that the diet be improved, and in 1904 the Chamber of Mines recommended a minimum daily ration scale per head of 2 lbs of mealie meal, 1 lb beans, 1 1/4 lbs meat; coffee, *marewu* and lime juice weekly. A survey of 92 mines in 1904 showed that 30 per cent failed to supply any vegetables at all. In 1903, 1904 and 1905 the sums of £41,981, 51,483 and £48,311 were spent on vegetables annually for an increasing numbers of labourers, and in 1907 the amount had dropped to £34,353.<sup>43</sup> A 1907 Mining Industry Report showed that some miners were spending as much as a third of their wages on buying food at nearby trading stores, which charged higher prices than in town,<sup>44</sup> and patronising 'native' eating houses.

The cause of scurvy was not understood at the time although there had been an awareness since the late eighteenth century that fresh citrus fruit improved the condition. The medical profession was uncertain whether it was a contagious condition, a nitrogen deficiency, a consequence of eating tainted or rotten grain, the monotonous diet, or a form of rheumatism provoked by wet conditions underground. One doctor in 1911 claimed it was a septic condition which could be alleviated by frequent and compulsory brushing of teeth. It was not until the 1920s that the role of vitamin C came to be understood, and another decade before vitamin C could be produced artificially in quantity and added to miners' food. It was late in the twentieth century before the relationship between food and health, and various vitamin and mineral deficiency diseases, was fully understood.<sup>45</sup> Work in Java in the 1890s began the process by the discovery that beri-beri was caused by a deficiency of thiamine, a B-complex vitamin caused by removing the germ from rice or wheat in milling; the cure for rickets caused by lack of vitamin D found in sunshine and cod liver oil was not discovered until the 1930s; and the cause of pellagra, from consumption of large amounts of maize unaccompanied by vitamin C and nicotinic acid, which was the scourge of southern Europe and the Balkans as well as Africa, was only established in the mid-1950s.<sup>46</sup>

In 1905 the Coloured Labourers' Health Ordinance laid down minimum standards for compound accommodation and food, and by 1911 the state was issuing ration schedules. In 1913 the Corner House group invited Col W C Gorgas to visit South Africa. He had been credited with bringing down the death rate when the Panama Canal was built, and became the United States Surgeon General the following year. His report stated that he had never seen carbohydrates forming such a large part of the diet of men doing hard physical labour, and that the absence of milk, or cereals containing more proteins than maize, and the absence of fats with vitamin A, and vitamin D in a sunless work environment, lowered resistance to disease. The 1911 scale was amended in 1922, to embody the work of Dr Marion Delf, a visiting expert on anti-scorbutics at the South African Institute for Medical Research, this scale laid down a minimum ration of:

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<sup>41</sup> Alan H Jeeves, 'Over-reach: The South African Gold Mines and the Struggle for the Labour of Zambezia, 1890-1920', *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 17.3, 1983, pp.397-8.

<sup>42</sup> Wylie, *Starving*, p.134.

<sup>43</sup> *Transvaal Chamber of Mines Annual Reports*, 901, 1902, 1903, 1904, 1905.

<sup>44</sup> Wylie, *Starving*, pp.118-119.

<sup>45</sup> F W Fox, 'How South Africa Became Interested in Nutrition', *South African Medical Journal*, 1963, pp.395-398.

<sup>46</sup> Kenneth F Kiple, *A Movable Feast: Ten Millennia of Food Globalization*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2008, pp.242-246

Mealie Meal, including that used for <i>marewu</i>	3 lbs per day
Bread (not less than 64 per cent of wheaten flour or wholemeal, and not more than 36 per cent of mealie meal)	6 oz per day
Beans or peas, at least half of which to be germinated, or 2 oz per day of germinated beans or peas, plus 1 oz of whole mealies or samp or other approved cereal	3 oz per day
Meat Dressed, and containing not more than 25 per cent of bone Soup meat (heads, heels, liver, etc) or where the native labourer signifies his willingness for the alternative, 3 lb per week of fresh fish or half the quantity of dried fish (weighed before soaking) soaked for 12 hours	3 lb per week ¾ lb per week
Peanuts	2 oz per day, or additional ½ oz animal or vegetable fat
Coffee or cocoa. 1/6 oz per ration issued, together with a sufficient quantity of sugar to sweeten same	
Fresh vegetables, exclusive of carrot tops and maize husks only the following vegetables to be issued: Potatoes, Squash, Sweet Potatoes, Marrow, Carrots, Onions, Green Maize, Cabbage, Pumpkin, Leeks, Tomatoes (to be minced up fine and stirred raw into the stew or beans immediately before serving)	5 oz per day
Salt in sufficient quantity	

Even though the diet was more varied at this later date, it still contained an excessive proportion of carbohydrates, and the exclusion of spinach or morogo meant that no iron was obtained from vegetables. Negligent cooking also reduced food values. Dr Delf showed that cabbage, rich in vitamin C, lost 80 per cent of it if cooked for 20 minutes.<sup>47</sup>

In addition, African mineworkers were roused at about 4 am and sent down the shafts so that they did a full day's work on an empty stomach. The mines responded that with thousands to get to their workplaces there was no time to feed them, and that Africans were accustomed to eating only in the evening in their home areas<sup>48</sup> – a piece of misinformed ethnology. There were long delays in getting the miners down the shafts, they then had to shovel rock while waiting until the white supervisors arrived (after their breakfasts, and whites were taken to the surface for their lunches), drill holes ready for blasting all day, wait for the skips carrying rocks to the surface to be changed to cages carrying people, and from the shaft head perhaps walk a mile or so to their compounds before they could eat their first food of the day. If there had been a delay there might be nothing left. Many mines operated a system of issuing work tickets to those who had completed the stipulated work each day, which were required for food, and for pay. There was a great fear of feeding 'loafers'. The Robinson Group had a reputation of consistently underfeeding its workforce. Other mines allowed the men to have as much as they wanted.<sup>49</sup> The recommendations in the schedule were only that, and each mine prepared its food differently, dependent on the whim or meanness of the compound manager concerned.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Cartwright, *Doctors of the Mines*, p.142.

<sup>48</sup> Dr Orenstein was an American doctor employed by Rand Mines from the 1910s on, who was influential in discussions on mine feeding. A J Orenstein, 'The Dietetics of Natives Employed on the Witwatersrand Gold Mines', *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, 9.2, 1936, pp.223-224.

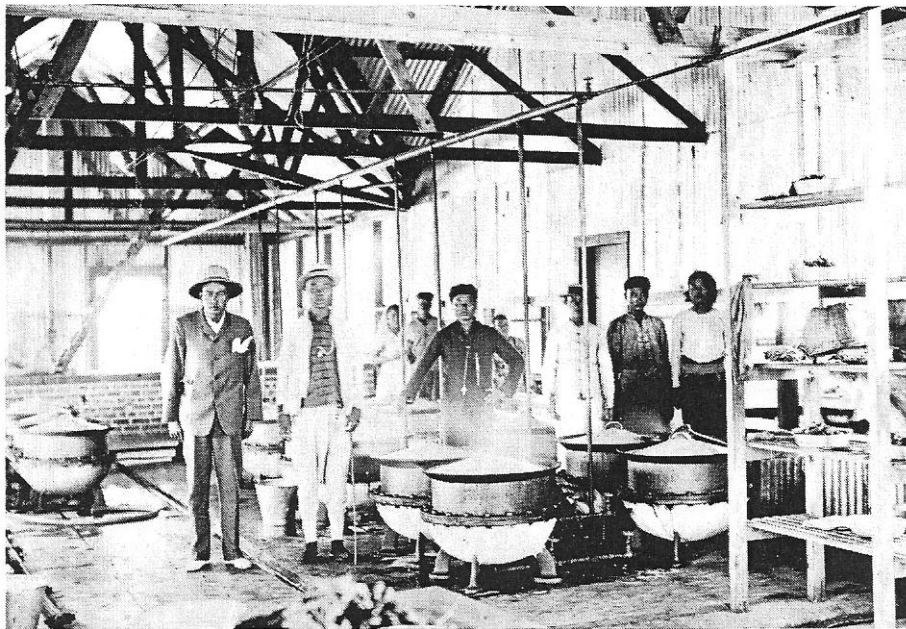
<sup>49</sup> Wylie, *Starving*, p.112.

<sup>50</sup> Wylie, *Starving*, p.135.

There was nowhere to eat food – Africans either sat on the ground in the yard or on their concrete bunks. The 1911 and 1922 food schedules laid down that two lbs of good quality meat was to be given out raw twice a week, which the men cooked themselves in their rooms and which was greatly appreciated,<sup>51</sup> though Diana Wylie states that the issue was per hut and was often appropriated by the older men.<sup>52</sup>

It has been necessary to look ahead of the period under discussion because so much more information was available, and details of the earlier period can only be assumed to have been much worse than later conditions. It can also be assumed that what was specified in the 1922 schedule, such as that bread should not contain more than 36 per cent of mealie meal had not been the case earlier. Bread with too much mealie meal in it sours quickly and smells unpleasant.

The approximately 63,000 indentured Chinese labourers between 1904 and 1906<sup>53</sup> whose treatment was covered by the 1904 Convention between the British and Chinese governments<sup>54</sup> had considerably improved compound conditions. Their food, bought through local traders, was prepared by Chinese cooks and served in large dining rooms. Daily rations stipulated were: 1 ½ lbs rice; ½ lb of dried or fresh fish or meat; ½ lb vegetables, ½ oz tea; ½ oz nut oil.<sup>55</sup>



Some of the Chinese Cooks, Supervisors and Special Cooking Facilities required for Chinese mineworkers.  
From A P Cartwright, *Doctors of the Mines*, Purnell & Sons, Cape Town, 1971, p.24

<sup>51</sup> Orenstein, 'Dietetics', p.224.

<sup>52</sup> Wylie, *Starving*, p.133.

<sup>53</sup> Norman Levy, *The Foundations of the Cheap Labour System in the South African Gold Mining Industry*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1979, p.344.

<sup>54</sup> Peter Richardson, *Chinese Mine Labour in the Transvaal*, Macmillan Press, London, 1982, p.38.

<sup>55</sup> Melanie Yap & Dianne Leong Man, *Colour, Confusion and Concessions: A History of the Chinese in South Africa*, Hong Kong University Press, 1996, p.16.

Not all African miners were fed in compounds. The smaller outcrop mines could not afford substantial buildings and their workers lived in informal locations nearby, as did, from 1892 to 1897, a small number of semi-skilled Africans, Coloureds and Indians who had gained mining experience at Kimberley, Barberton or Lydenburg. The Chamber of Mines wage agreements of the 1890s provide that extra could be paid to 'specially skilled kaffirs' providing it does not exceed 20 per cent of the total African wage bill.<sup>56</sup> In 1897 when rinderpest weakened Africans' bargaining position this was reduced to 7 ½ per cent. These non-white semi-skilled workers living in nearby locations with their families and their diet, as Dr Orenstein put it 'approximated that of the poorer European classes, and this diet is, of course, of a much more varied nature, but of doubtful superiority' to that of the mine 'natives' being fed in compounds.<sup>57</sup> Some mines tried to stabilise a higher proportion of their labour force as permanent residents with their families on company property hoping to set off the higher unit costs with improved productivity and efficiency.<sup>58</sup> Migrant labour was commonly a transitory phenomenon of the transition from agricultural societies in early industrialisation,<sup>59</sup> and in the early days a possibility existed that Witwatersrand mines might develop into a 'normal' pattern of workers living with their families near their place of work, but the mines settled on large numbers of oscillating migrant unskilled African workers paid as little as possible and supervised by small numbers of more highly paid white workers.

The evidence on the food eaten by African mineworkers in the first 20 years of Johannesburg's existence from other than official or Chamber of Mines' sources is sparse, but for other Africans in the town it is almost non-existent,<sup>60</sup> and can only be extrapolated backwards from the first scientific study by Dr Ellen Hellman. In the same 1936 issue of *Africa* on the Problems of African Native Diet in which Dr Orenstein wrote up his studies of a quarter of a century previously, she wrote 'Urban Native Food in Johannesburg' based on actual budgets and menus of African housewives.<sup>61</sup> She divides urban 'natives' into three groups, but points out that all diets were restricted by poverty. Johannesburg may have offered greater opportunities than their rural homesteads, but they were now firmly in the grip of the cash economy, and had to buy everything they ate.

Hellman's first study group was those living under normal family conditions in locations, townships or slum yards, where the wife and mother purchased and prepared food for the family. In early years this would have been a very small group – the 1896 Census gives only 1,678 African women living in Johannesburg, and many of these could have been single, surviving on brewing beer, hawking, and prostitution. Dr Hellman noted that the outstanding contrast between the urban 'native' diet and their rural diet is that in the former there is more meat, but a lack of green vegetable foods or fresh milk.<sup>62</sup> The housewives appreciated that in town meat could readily be bought in small quantities, whereas in rural areas women and children were at the end of the queue when meat was distributed.

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<sup>56</sup> Levy, *Foundations of the Cheap Labour System*, p.78.

<sup>57</sup> Orenstein, 'The Dietetics of Natives', p.219.

<sup>58</sup> Jeeves, *Migrant Labour*, p.255-256.

<sup>59</sup> Jonathan Crush, Alan Jeeves & David Yudelman, *South Africa's Labor Empire: A History of Black Migrancy to the Gold Mines*, David Philip, Cape Town, 1991, pp.xiii-xiv.

<sup>60</sup> Confirmed by Randall Packard, *White Plague, Black Labor: Tuberculosis and the Political Economy of Health and Disease in South Africa*, University of Natal Press, Pietermaritzburg, 1989, pp.57-58.

<sup>61</sup> Ellen Hellman, 'Urban Native Food in Johannesburg', *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, 1936

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<sup>62</sup> Hellman, 'Urban Native Food', pp.280-281

Mealie meal was the staple of the diet, but it was considered a hardship to eat it without a relish of meat.<sup>63</sup>

Condensed milk was almost the only tinned food purchased. Some tea, or more rarely, coffee, sugar, bread and rice had also been incorporated into the diet.

Hellman's second group comprised domestic servants who were given food by their employers, usually as specific rations and expected to prepare it themselves. This would have been a large group in early Johannesburg, where every household seems to have had a servant. The 1896 Census showed that central Johannesburg was served by 3,253 mainly black domestic servants, 146 'houseboys' and 106 'kitchen boys'.<sup>64</sup> Working class white migrants considered having a servant for menial work an indication that they had improved their situation by coming to Johannesburg. One of those giving evidence to the Industrial Commission of 1897, who provided detailed lists of basic household costs in Lancashire and in Johannesburg to show how much more expensive the latter was, admitted that the £3 a month for a servant had not featured on his home list of basic household costs.<sup>65</sup> African servants normally got food, lodging and cast-off clothes in addition to their wages which in the late 1890s could be up to £4 a month, comparing very favourably with the pay of African mineworkers at the time. The food consisted of a daily ration of mealie meal, occasional cheap cuts of meat – what was referred to as 'boys' meat at the butchers – and leftovers from the family table.<sup>66</sup>

This group would also have included the waiters and general servants supporting the white cooks, housekeepers, laundresses etc in restaurants, eating houses and boarding houses. These Africans probably lived on the premises and were fed on mealie meal and kitchen scraps. Cooking the former would have been a problem though, and many might have changed to bread which was both easier to obtain and had more status than mealie meal. Luli Callinicos details a poor white childhood, where the family got up early each morning to get to the bakery selling the previous day's bread cheaply before the Africans did.<sup>67</sup>

The Sanitary Board, later the Municipality, was the second largest employer after the mines, and had a substantial compound for its large workforce concerned with keeping the town clean – the night-soil collectors and those who maintained the mules which drew the carts. Cartwright says the Municipality had tried the system of letting them buy their own food, but they had used the money for other purposes.<sup>68</sup>

In 1906, the Johannesburg Municipal Council Minutes gave the cost of feeding its employees and animals over the previous two months:

<u>Natives</u>	<u>December 1905</u>	<u>January 1906</u>
Average number employed	1,485	1,129
Average wage per head	£1 19s 3d	£2 12s 2d
Mealie Meal consumed per head	88 lbs	84 lbs

<sup>63</sup> The present day ubiquitous '*pap en vleis*' in Afrikaans or '*papa nenyama*' in Zulu.

<sup>64</sup> Van Onselen, *New Nineveh*, p.3.

<sup>65</sup> Mr R Barrow's Evidence, *Report and Evidence of the 1897 Industrial Commission*, p.177. Domestic service was common in Britain at the time, however, and it was not uncommon for better-off artisans to employ a 'skivvy'.

<sup>66</sup> Van Onselen, *New Nineveh*, p.32.

<sup>67</sup> Luli Callinicos, *Working Life 1886-1940: Factories, Townships and Popular Culture on the Rand, A People's History of South Africa*, Volume Two, Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1987, pp.234-237.

<sup>68</sup> Cartwright, *Doctors of the Mines*, p.21.



Cost of Mealie Meal	“	4s 9.46d		4s 11.9d	
Vegetables consumed	“		5.16 lbs		4.23 lbs
Cost of vegetables	“	5.28d		4.19d	
“ salt	“	.1d		.37d	
“ meat	“	2s 11.3d		2s 0.57d	
TOTAL cost of Native food per head		8s 7.14d		7s 10.33d	
Average cost of Animal food per head (Oats, Mealies, Fodder, Bran, Forage)		£2 7s 4d		£1 14s 0d	

Cost of Mealie Meal increased during January from 5s 6d to 6s 0½d per 100 lbs.<sup>69</sup>



Johannesburg Municipality Cook House 1906

From Peter Kallaway and Patrick Pearson, *Johannesburg: Images and Continuities, 1885-1935: A History of Working Class Life through Pictures 1885-1935*, Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1986, p.21

The Council was obviously pleased to have brought African feeding costs down by giving them less vegetables and mealie meal, the price of which had risen, but appear not to have commented on the fact that the Council spent 5.5 times as much in December 1905, and 4.3 times as much in January 1906, feeding each animal as each human person referred to as 'Native'.

There were many small-scale industrial enterprises, light engineering workshops servicing the mines, flour mills, breweries, bakeries, butcheries etc. who would all have had African staff performing manual jobs, and these would have lived in the multi-racial slums to the west and south of the town, such as Ferreirastown, Marshalls, and City and

<sup>69</sup> Johannesburg Municipal Council Minutes, 28 February 1906, Summary of Statistics for Feeding Natives and Animals, p.278.



Suburban, and between the railway line and the mines. The need for housing within walking distance of the centre was acute, and overcrowded slumyards grew up in these areas and in the centre itself. Small Chinese and Indian stores catered for their shopping needs, and cooking facilities would have been limited, but Africans preferred them to living in compounds where their lives were restricted.

All these Africans struggling to survive in early Johannesburg would have patronised 'native' eating houses when they could. From April 1895 'Boarding' and 'Eating Houses' had to have licences, and the Sanitary Board met annually as a licensing committee to authorise these licences.<sup>70</sup> The Sanitary Inspector made recommendations that some licences be not granted on public health grounds, where the site was near a school or a church, or where the proprietor was of dubious character. There were 99 'Eating-house keepers' in the 1896 Census. Forty licences and 15 transfers were granted in August 1896. For three the address given was 'Kaffir Location', to James Madala, M Matiwana and J Mervana, and one in the 'Coolie Location' to Ragnamen.<sup>71</sup> None are in the outer white suburbs.

There were 52 licensed eating houses in 1904, a significant feature of the urban economy, and the lucrative trade was in the hands of Lithuanian Jews and Croats. Only white men were allowed to hold licences, but many of these licence-holders were fronts for Chinese traders.<sup>72</sup> Eating houses offered employment to people on the fringes of white society – poorly educated, newly-arrived immigrants with little or no money, who could not get the menial jobs monopolised by Africans. More detail about them is given in the next chapter, Distribution of Food in Johannesburg.

### ENGLISH-SPEAKERS AND EUROPEANS

In contrast the food culture of the white inhabitants of Johannesburg was more amply chronicled in the contemporary record. The first Uitlanders were part of the trans-continental, but mainly English-speaking, culture of gold rushes. They had worked all over the world and formed prefabricated communities with the same manners, customs, slang, prejudices, leisure habits, virtues and vices, valuing strength, toughness and manual skills.<sup>73</sup> There had been a lull in major gold rushes in the previous decade as the South Australia goldfields declined, and there was a large Australian contingent (874 in the 1896 Census) in the group on the Witwatersrand from the first. They tended to eat only what was necessary to soak up the alcohol, and relied largely on tinned foods and what could be obtained in hotels and boarding houses.

At the other end of the scale, the Rand Club in March 1888 produced a banquet for Commandant-General P J Joubert for which the menu for 50 guests was:

SOUP  
Jardiniers  
FISH  
Salmon Mayonnaise  
ENTREES

<sup>70</sup> *Standard & Diggers' News*, 5 April 1895.

<sup>71</sup> *The Star*, 11 August 1896.

<sup>72</sup> Bruce Martin Titlestad, *Eating-houses on the Witwatersrand, 1903-1979*, MA Dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, 1991, pp.159-160.

<sup>73</sup> Jonathan Hyslop, 'The Imperial Working Class Makes Itself 'White': White Labourism in Britain, Australia, and South Africa Before the First World War', *Journal of Historical Sociology*, **12.4**, 1999, p.410.

Lamb Cutlet with Green Peas,  
Supreme of Chicken and Piquant Sauce,  
Filletts of Beef with Champignon etc,  
Ragout of Wild Duck

JOINTS

Boiled Turkey and Oyster Sauce  
Roast Saddle of Mutton  
Roast Beef and  
Ham

VEGETABLES

Potatoes, Peas, Cauliflower, Asparagus,  
Chicken Curry  
Marrow Bones

PASTRY

Compote of Pears with Whipped Cream

Chocolate Cake  
Lemon Pudding

Queen's Pudding  
Custards<sup>74</sup>

By 1892, however, as it became clear that Johannesburg had a long-term future in deeper mines, and the mining companies formed themselves into groups, the speculative and mining camp element declined and different skills were needed: managerial, clerical and accounting in offices, and hard rock miners underground. Most of the latter came direct from Britain: colliers and lead miners from Scotland, the British midlands, Northumberland, Durham, Cumbria, Westmoreland, Yorkshire, Lancashire, but chiefly from Cornwall. Cornish tin mining had expanded when tinned cans came into use from the 1820s, and by mid-century Cornwall was supplying almost one-third of the world's tin and copper,<sup>75</sup> but a decline then set in as the mines became too deep for economic exploitation and competition from cheaper overseas mines intensified. More than a quarter of a million Cornish people emigrated between 1840 and 1890, and Cornish miners took their technical skills all over the world, functioning as a major labour reserve for the provision of skilled labour.<sup>76</sup> Their social cohesion abroad gave them a social impact out of all proportion to their relatively small number in England itself.<sup>77</sup> The nineteenth century revolution in communications meant that they could send remittances home easily by money orders (from 1873) and postal orders (from 1881) creating a dependency culture in Cornwall where many thousands relied on the money coming regularly from the Rand.<sup>78</sup>

Cornish miners had been working in South Africa since they came to the copper mines in Namaqualand in the 1850s, and despite its unsuitability as food in a hot climate, their wives made them Cornish pasties to take for their midday dinner as they had in Cornwall. They are said to have also introduced clotted cream, tipsy cake, figgy higgins,

<sup>74</sup> John Lang, *Bullion Johannesburg: Men, Mines and the Challenge of Conflict*, Jonathan Ball, Johannesburg, 1986, p.32-33.

<sup>75</sup> Gill Burke, 'The Cornish Diaspora of the Nineteenth Century', in Shula Marks & Richard Rathbone (Eds), *International Labour Migration: Historical Perspectives*, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, London, 1984, p.57.

<sup>76</sup> Shula Marks & Peter Richardson in Shula Marks & Richard Richardson (Eds), *International Labour Migration: Historical Perspectives*, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, London, 1984, p.12.

<sup>77</sup> Hyslop, *Imperial Working Class*, p.410.

<sup>78</sup> Andrew Thompson, *The Empire Strikes Back? The Impact of Imperialism on Britain from the mid-Nineteenth Century*, Pearson, Harlow, 2005, p.61.

stargazy pie and pilchards in any form, a particular favourite with the Coloured community, to the South African cuisine.<sup>79</sup>

In Johannesburg there were about 7,000 Cornish in the 1890s and about 10,000 at the beginning of the twentieth century, forming between one-quarter and one-third of the white workforce,<sup>80</sup> such a large proportion that white miners were known generically as Cornishmen. Some were itinerant workers, living in mine single quarters as, even if married, their wives had remained in Cornwall. These varied, those at Randfontein Estates are described as blocks lacking cooking facilities, but with boarding houses where for £6 each a month some 150 men sat down for their meals, which included their distinctive Cornish food of pasties and saffron cake.<sup>81</sup> Elaine Katz, however, describes the hostels for single men as wretched, insanitary, rat-infested, and used as a means of social control similar to the compounds for Africans.<sup>82</sup> In Johannesburg itself many Cornishmen stayed at Mrs Doney's boarding house in Frederick Street, where 200 could sit down for a Sunday dinner of Cornish pasties. The corner of Pritchard and von Brandis streets, outside Heath's Hotel, was known as 'Cousin Jacks' corner' where Cornishmen would promenade on Saturday nights exchanging news of friends and family from home and all over the world, and there were annual get-togethers at St Stythian's feast. Other Cornishmen were joined by their families and became permanent settlers, occupying key positions across the Rand as managers and captains.<sup>83</sup>

The Transvaal Indigency Commission, which reported in June 1908, collected a wide range of evidence from all over South Africa. The Report contained an estimate of the cost of living for a month of an artisan family on the Witwatersrand with three children in August 1905, and elsewhere in the Report there is another table for a similar family in England. They were obviously not intended for comparison; what the English family spent on meat, fish, and general provisions was not given. The food items were:

	<u>Cost for South African family</u> <sup>84</sup>	<u>Quantities for English family</u> <sup>85</sup>
Meat	£2 10s 0d	
Fish	10 0	
Bread, 100 lbs	1 5 0	20 lbs
Flour, 21 lbs	4 6	10 lbs
Sugar, 24 lbs	8 0	5 1/3lbs
Tea, 3 lbs	7 6	3/5lb
Coffee, 2 lbs	3 6	¼ lb
Oatmeal, rice etc 13 lbs	5 3	2 ½ lbs
Butter, 8 lbs	12 0	21 lbs
Jam (or Molasses) 4 lbs	3 0	
Eggs, 5 doz	12 6	1 doz
Cheese, 2 lbs	2 6	¾ lb

<sup>79</sup> G B Dickason, *Cornish Immigrants to South Africa: The Cousin Jacks' Contribution to the Development of Mining and Commerce, 1820-1920*, Balkema, Cape Town, 1978, pp.78-79.

<sup>80</sup> Thompson, *Empire Strikes Back*, p.61.

<sup>81</sup> Anthony Hocking, *Randfontein Estates: The First Hundred Years*, Hollard, Bethulie, 1986, p.73.

<sup>82</sup> Elaine Katz, *The White Death: Silicosis on the Witwatersrand Gold Mines 1886-1910*, Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg, 1994, pp.79-80.

<sup>83</sup> Philip Payton, *The Cornish Overseas*, Alexander Associates, Fowey, 1999, p.353-355.

<sup>84</sup> *Transvaal Indigency Commission 1906-1908, Evidence and Report*, Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of his Excellency the Governor, Pretoria Government Printing and Stationery Office, 1908, Appendix B, para XVII.

<sup>85</sup> *Transvaal Indigency Commission*, Appendix No 1, para 71.

Bacon or Ham, 5 lbs	6 3	1 ½ lb
Tinned Milk, 15 tins	7 6	
Salt, 6 lbs	1 0	
Lard, Sauce, Currants, Baking Powder etc	6 0	
Fresh Milk, 30 bottles	15 0	10 ½ pints
Potatoes, Vegetables and Fruit	1 10 0	16 lbs potatoes
		Vegetables, jams, condiments 3s 10 ½

The artisanal family in England was reckoned to spend 50 per cent less on food, but the differing quantities, where given, are interesting. Apart from butter, the South African family ate considerably larger quantities of each foodstuff.<sup>86</sup> Another point about the South African list is that there is nothing South African about it – all the foods consumed could as well have been eaten in England. Potatoes, bacon, bread, sugar, tea, jam etc were the staple of the English working class diet at the time, and were transferred to life in South Africa without question; none were indigenous, though some were probably locally produced.

The high cost of housing restricted family life and it was agreed that the cost of living caused problems for married men. Single men who only had themselves to consider, could do quite well. Renault Courtney Acutt described later how he got his first job at the age of 15 as an office boy with the South African Trust and Finance company in Natal Buildings, and his firm allowed him to sleep in the attic above his office. He was paid £5 a month, and took all his meals at the Standard Restaurant in Market Street at one shilling a meal for which he could have all he could eat. That left him ten shillings a month over, which he spent on going to the theatre.<sup>87</sup>

Voluntary associations based on place of origin existed from an early date under which people could form bonds and a sense of community, hope for financial support in the event of sickness, unemployment or, for their families, of death. Masons were in Johannesburg from February 1888, Buffaloes from February 1891, Oddfellows from August 1893 (forming part of the 'Manchester Unity'), Druids and Rechabites (the 'Salford Unity').<sup>88</sup> In nearly all they celebrated their companionship with a meal.

The British Empire was built by the Scots, Welsh and Irish as well as the English, and its prestige and profits accrued to them as well.<sup>89</sup> The Scots were a very large group in early Johannesburg, stretched across the social spectrum, from former coal miners working on the gold mines through professional people to the occasional aristocratic remittance man. The Irish numbered just under 100 in the 1896 Census, though there may have been second-generation Irish in the 12,389 from England and Wales. The largest number of people in the great Irish emigration of the nineteenth century went to the United States, but many moved only a short distance to Manchester, Liverpool and London. According to Van Onselen some Irish in Johannesburg were deserters from the British Army and formed a criminal substratum.<sup>90</sup>

<sup>86</sup> The children may have been older than the English family.

<sup>87</sup> Renault Courtney Acutt, *Reminiscences of a Rand Pioneer*, Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1977, p.36.

<sup>88</sup> Charles van Onselen, *Masked Raiders: Irish Banditry in Southern Africa, 1889-1899*, Zebra Press, Cape Town, 2010, pp.174,220.

<sup>89</sup> Thompson, *Empire Strikes Back*, pp.197-198.

<sup>90</sup> Van Onselen, *Masked Raiders*, pp.19-25.

Banquets were a popular form of entertainment from the beginning as can be seen from the 1888 menu of the Rand Club above. In 1889 there were two St Andrews night banquets, one at the Grand National Hotel and the other at the Queensberry Hotel. The lavish menu at the former hotel was written in Gaelic, accompanied by many 'wee drams', and there were toasts to 'Our Native Land', 'Scottish Song and Story', 'Scottish Heroes', the 'Mining Industry', the 'Commercial Interest', 'Friends of Other Nationalities', and 'Scottish Soldiers in the British Army'. The Highland Fling and Sword Dances were danced in full Highland costume, and the party ended only at daylight.<sup>91</sup>

This appeared to set the ball rolling and in February 1893 a Cwmrederion Society was formed, which duly held a St David's Day banquet at the North-Western Hotel with, as usual, Captain von Brandis as the principal guest. About 80 guests sat down, double the number expected and thus straining the resources of the hotel. The dining room had been decorated with Welsh emblems and mottoes as well as leeks. After numerous toasts, reading of telegrams from Cambrian societies in East London, Kimberley and Durban, there were songs, recitations, and music helped to swell the evening's enjoyment, and the gathering dispersed at one o'clock in the morning - considerably more sober than that of the Scots.<sup>92</sup>

There is no mention of any St George's day celebrations. Advertisements for tripe suppers in a few restaurants indicate a Lancashire connection, but apart from the Cornish, the English themselves did not seem to feel the need to assert their identity. Their culture was the norm, and their networking was done in the Rand Club, at the Wanderers and the race course. Their food culture was dominant. As the first industrial nation they had led the way in the industrialisation of food, put unkindly by the historian, Avner Offer as 'cheap processed foods ... white flour, refined sugar, processed fats and frozen meat, the cheap imported staples that have given Britain the worst dietary heritage in Europe'.<sup>93</sup>

Although the British working class standard of living is agreed to have improved greatly by the last quarter of the nineteenth century, there was still a 'submerged tenth' of really poor people in an age without social security of any sort, and Britain was shocked by the high proportion of young men rejected as unfit when they volunteered when war broke out in 1899. It is suggested that it was not so much lack of purchasing power as universal ignorance of the kind of foods most beneficial to health.<sup>94</sup>

Other large anglophone groups in the 1896 Census were from Natal and the Cape Colony, and their food cultures were much the same as the British at one remove. These tended to be the commercial, administrative and professional classes of Johannesburg, who in other parts of South Africa would be the leading men, and who rather resented their lower status and influence than that of mine managers.<sup>95</sup> A number had come from Kimberley and had an anti-capitalist suspicion of mine management intentions. Those from the Eastern Cape and Natal, like Australians

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<sup>91</sup> *Standard & Diggers' News*, 3 December 1889.

<sup>92</sup> *The Star*, 1 & 4 March 1893.

<sup>93</sup> Avner Offer, *The First World War: An Agrarian Interpretation*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1989, p.333.

<sup>94</sup> T C Barker, 'Nineteenth Century Diet: Some Twentieth Century Questions', in T C Barker, J C McKenzie & John Yudkin (Eds), *Our Changing Fare: 200 Years of British Food Habits*, MacGibbon & Kee, London, p.26.

<sup>95</sup> A A Mawby, *Gold Mining and Politics: Volume I, The Origins of the Old South Africa*, Edwin Meller Press, Lewiston, NY, 2000, p.75.

and Americans, came with a virulent dislike of Asians. Shopkeepers' hostility to Asian shops will be discussed in the next chapter on Distribution of Food.

There were 992 in the 1894 Census born in Australia (874), New Zealand (82) and Tasmania (36). They would have been mainly involved in mining or shopkeeping, and the male:female ratio was about 2:1 in the case of the first two, though much higher for the few Tasmanians. Their food tastes would also have been second-generation British.

Americans on the Rand (616 in the Census) were mainly mining engineers and managers brought in to help solve the particularly difficult technical problems of the Witwatersrand goldfields. J H Curle explained that in the United States, unlike Britain, mining engineering was an honoured profession, attracting men of strong character and exceptional brain power.<sup>96</sup> Many had worked on other goldfields worldwide and were highly paid, so their food was that of the international elite, with some American influences. Men such as Gardner Williams, Hamilton Smith, Hennen Jennings and John Hays Hammond (who received a then record salary of £30,000 a year)<sup>97</sup> obviously could afford the best of everything, though not all Americans in Johannesburg were affluent.

As in other parts of the Atlantic world in the second half of the nineteenth century, American food was no longer reliant on what was produced locally. The railway network, the industrialisation of food production and distribution, and the great immigrations had altered it, both quantitatively and in variety, with inputs particularly from Jewish and Italian immigrants, but also a wide range of others. It was characterised by great abundance, especially of meat. Mark Twain, touring Europe in 1878, 'tortured himself with visions of what he would have to eat when he got home – buckwheat cakes with maple syrup, fried chicken, soft-shell crabs, Boston baked beans, hominy... and a mighty porterhouse steak an inch and a half thick'.<sup>98</sup>

Americans not born in the United States were 96 Canadians, 21 born in South America, and 21 'others' – perhaps from Central American mining communities.

There was also a substantial German community, 2,262 in the 1896 Census. Some were burghers of the South African Republic, having come to South Africa earlier, such as Carl von Brandis who had immigrated with the German Legion in 1857, and the Jeppe family. The Kruger government was far more ready to grant concessions and monopolies to Germans than to the British. German mining engineers were highly respected: the State Mining Engineer appointed in 1891, Joseph Adolph Klimke, had worked at the El Callao mine in Venezuela, the training ground of about thirty, mainly American, influential mining engineers on the Rand.<sup>99</sup> Others had come on to Johannesburg from Kimberley: Hermann Eckstein was for some time president of the Chamber of Mines, the vice-president was Carl Hanau. George Albu and Otto Beit were also mining men, and there were stockbrokers and

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<sup>96</sup> Curle, J H, *The Gold Mines of the World: Written after an inspection of nearly five hundred mines in Transvaal, Rhodesia, West Australia, Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland, Tasmania, New Zealand, India, Malay Peninsula, Siberia, United States, Alaska, Klondyke, British Columbia, Mexico, Peru, Brazil, Sudan, Hungary, Bohemia and Wales*, Third Edition, George Routledge & Sons, London, 1905, pp.17-18.

<sup>97</sup> Eric Rosenthal, *Stars and Stripes in Africa*, Nationale Boekhandel, Cape Town, 1968.

<sup>98</sup> Reay Tannahill, *Food in History*, Penguin Books, London, 1988, pp.320-321.

<sup>99</sup> Elaine Katz, 'Revisiting the Origins of the Industrial Colour Bar in the Witwatersrand Gold Mining Industry, 1891-1899', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 25.1, 1999, pp.75-97.



speculators such as Sigmund Neumann and Eduard Lippert. Johannesburg had a number of German cafés and *conditoreis*, bakeries and confectioners. An afternoon gathering in the gardens of the Sans Souci Hotel, Auckland Park, for the unveiling by General Joubert of a bust of the German Emperor, with a crowd of 1,800, kept the waiters and barmen busy, but we are not told what they served.<sup>100</sup>

Newspapers at the time describe splendid banquets such as one celebrating the Austro-Hungarian emperor's birthday with innumerable toasts to his health, all attended by the indefatigable Mining Commissioner, Carl von Brandis. The Netherlands Society, when it was set up in August 1892 with about 100 members, was much more sober, being chiefly concerned with finding employment, helping Netherlands families in poor circumstances and enabling children to have a proper education, though it did hope to have social gatherings in a short time.<sup>101</sup>

Other groups in the white community played an important role in helping newly-arrived compatriots find their feet, organising the supply of familiar foodstuffs from the home country and boosting morale and their country's prestige. Arnold Theiler, for instance, a young Swiss veterinary scientist arrived in Johannesburg in 1891 without an offer of employment and for a while had to accept any work he could find, in Pretoria as a farm labourer with Alois Nellmapius, the Hungarian entrepreneur, and for a period as a veterinary surgeon in Johannesburg. He was able to stay with Swiss friends and get help from them when desperate and he often was. In time he came to head the 42 members of the Schweizerverein, hosting banquets to celebrate national days, and to help other new arrivals.<sup>102</sup>

The Swiss (139) and Italian (206) communities were also largely involved in the hotel and food supply industries. The Italian involvement was such that in *Longland's Directory of Johannesburg and District, 1893* an alternative heading to 'Grocers' was 'Italian Warehousemen and Oilmen's Stores', of which there were 26, none with Italian names, and including C H Thrupp. Luigi Fatti came to Johannesburg in 1896, after an initial spell of shopkeeping in Buenos Aires, as representative for Buitoni, a local firm in his home village of Sansepolero, near Florence. He married the following year; he worked in hotels and she as a dressmaker. In 1898 he opened an 'Italian warehouse' importing pasta, olive oil, cigars and wines from Italy and France as well as Buitoni products, which he sold on the premises as well as running a restaurant and a hotel there. A decade later Fatti & Co was manufacturing 'genuine macaroni, spaghetti, vermicelli and soup pastes of Italian style',<sup>103</sup> in Johannesburg as well as running a grocery business, the name which still survives though without family involvement.<sup>104</sup> Many new arrivals made a living by importing foodstuffs or setting up restaurants for their compatriots, catering for the homesick wanting familiar food.

It is suggested that Italian cuisine is a modern invention, which may even have been created in the Americas through the industrial production and canning of olive oil, tomato paste, and cheeses to satisfy migrant workers who could afford food unavailable to peasants at home. Well into the twentieth century peasants in Italy subsisted on monotonous diets of maize porridge, chestnuts, dried beans or rice depending on the region or season. Festival foods

<sup>100</sup> *The Star*, 6 February 1893.

<sup>101</sup> *The Star*, 28 January 1893.

<sup>102</sup> Thelma Gutsche, *There was a Man: The Life and Times of Sir Arnold Theiler of Onderstepoort*, Howard Timmins, Cape Town, 1979, p.74.

<sup>103</sup> Stefan Schirmer, 'The Contribution of Entrepreneurs to the Emergence of Manufacturing in South Africa before 1948', *South African Journal of Economic History*, 23.1&2, 2008, p.199.

<sup>104</sup> Interview with Professor Paul Fatti, 12 December 2009.

such as *maccheroni* came to be eaten every day in the United States.<sup>105</sup> Italian cuisine is still very regional, with north Italians despising the garlic and chillies eaten in the south, and southern Italians not being interested in the *risotto* and *polenta* dishes of the north. Pizzas and pastas, however, have come to be accepted all over the world as traditional Italian dishes. Something similar may have occurred with other ethnic cuisines as diasporas accentuated links with home countries, incorporating and homogenising previously distinctive regional cuisines.

The smaller French community (402 in the 1896 Census) were also largely well off, and involved in the mining industry, though there were some trading on the reputation of French cuisine as hoteliers, charcutiers and patissiers. The Belgians mentioned in the *Standard & Diggers' News* report on the 1896 Census, were probably an even smaller group and of similar makeup; some were brewing specialists.

In spite of some local differences, all north Europeans and Americans shared a common food culture based on wheat bread, the 'staff of life', and by the late nineteenth century, quantities of meat and potatoes. Pork, particularly in its cured forms of ham and bacon, and sausages, formed a large part of the meat consumed. Most Europeans and Americans were Christian, or had a Christian cultural background.<sup>106</sup> The roughly 4,000 Catholics would have abstained from meat on Fridays; all would have celebrated Christmas, with its special foods according to nationality. The British plum pudding tradition, suitable for northern hemisphere midwinter, is conspicuous in advertisements in the press in December. Boarding houses and hotels had celebratory meals to console the bachelors far from their families. Even the mines issued extra food and allowed time off.

An article in *The Standard & Diggers' News* describes the 'others' from Europe as from Belgium, Austro-Hungary, Spain, Greece, the 'little colony of Dalmatians in Fordsburg', plus 'the murderous hotch-potch of Mediterraneans',<sup>107</sup> There were said to be 70 Greeks in Johannesburg in 1896. Most came from an agricultural, village background, with little capital, at first selling fruit from stalls, but moving on to open the cafes which became a feature of South African towns. These were places of social gathering, giving support and cohesion between immigrants from the same place, selling a wide range of useful consumer needs.<sup>108</sup> The Dalmatians living in Fordsburg were probably Croats and Montenegrins; Catholic peasants who found the Austro-Hungarian regime oppressive, and who were displaced by the structural changes in European agriculture which by the end of the nineteenth century was affecting southern Europe as well. These were also uneducated and poor new arrivals, like the Greeks and Lithuanian Jews, and found their way into the eating-house trade. The 1904 Census enumerated 2,238 Austro-Hungarians, of which at least 1,500 were Croats.<sup>109</sup> By 1906 there were three Croatian newspapers.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Jeffrey M Pilcher, 'Taco Bell, Maseca and Slow Food: A postmodern Apocalypse for Mexico's Peasant Cuisine?' in Carole Counihan & Penny van Esterik (Eds), *Food and Culture: A Reader*, Routledge, Abingdon, 2008, pp.400-401.

<sup>106</sup> 1896 Census breakdown of the different religions is given in Appendix One.

<sup>107</sup> *Standard & Diggers' News*, 22 October 1896.

<sup>108</sup> Renos Nicos Spanoudes, *Patterns and Processes of Cafe Retailing in Johannesburg since 1893*, MA Dissertation, Wits, 1988, pp. 57-63.

<sup>109</sup> This nationality breakdown is not in the official published census documents.

<sup>110</sup> Bruce Martin Titlestad, *Eating-houses on the Witwatersrand, 1903-1979*, MA Dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, 1991, pp. 151-153.

The 'murderous Mediterranean hotch-potch' is mysterious. There were certainly Portuguese in Johannesburg, mentioned as market gardeners, but they seem to have come from Mozambique or Madeira – a port of call for mailships. Enumerators had to be found familiar with the Madeiran patois for the 1904 Census. The 'hotch-potch' may have been from the eastern Mediterranean, then largely still part of the Ottoman Empire. There were sufficient Ottoman interests in Johannesburg for Henry Bettelheim (a German) to be honorary Consul for the Ottoman Empire, representing Turkish investors, particularly on the East Rand.<sup>111</sup> Subjects of the Ottoman Empire at the time would have included Syrians, Lebanese, Ionian Greeks, Armenians, and Arabs from Mesopotamia and the Gulf.

### DUTCH-AFRIKAANS SPEAKERS

The Census figures do not distinguish between Johannesburgers born in the Eastern Cape and the Western. Both areas were strongly influenced by three-quarters of a century of British rule, with considerable anglicisation, particularly in the towns, such as Grahamstown, of the eastern Cape where many descendants of the 1820 Settlers predominated, which could be more British than the British. These English-speakers have been mentioned above, but the Dutch-Afrikaans speakers from the Cape Colony had evolved a rather distinct cuisine.

The Western Cape had more complex traditions, with foundations in the Dutch East India Company and a blend of European and Asian influences. Louis Leipoldt says Cape cooking owes much to Dutch, Flemish, English, German, French, Italian, Portuguese, and especially to Oriental influences. A most potent influence were the methods, tastes and ingredients of Malay cooks brought from Java. He states that later on the settlement grew its own rice, chillies, ginger, cumin, coriander and garlic, but still had to get its tamarind, turmeric, black pepper, mace, nutmeg, saffron, cinnamon and coconuts from the East; Cape housewives commissioned ship's captains to bring back the modest quantities needed. Vegetables grew easily at the Cape from seeds brought from Holland, and Cape cooks prepared them with skill, following the Continental practice of steaming them to preserve their individuality, perhaps 'felicitously improving palatability by blending with an alien spice of aromatic flavour', whereas English cooks ill-treat vegetables by vigorously boiling them and adding soda to restore greenness. Rice was served at every dinner, usually with potatoes as well.<sup>112</sup>

A number of local recipe collections were published in the Cape in the nineteenth century – Leipoldt states scornfully that a Natal recipe book of the same period reproduces an English cookery book exactly.<sup>113</sup> Natal did develop its own cuisine based on Indian and Mauritian influences and its sub-tropical produce,<sup>114</sup> but there is no indication of this at this time.

The Dutch who moved away from this rich food culture to the eastern Cape carried some of it with them, but in a harsher environment and with little overseas contacts, it became considerably reduced. Meat, milk, wheaten bread where possible, mealie meal, some fruit and vegetables formed the basis of their diet and where there were stores

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<sup>111</sup> Thelma Gutsche, *No Ordinary Woman : The Life and Times of Florence Philips*, Howard Timmins, Cape Town, 1966, pp.63-65.

<sup>112</sup> C Louis Leipoldt, *Leipoldt's Cape Cookery*, Stonewall Books, Cape Town, 2003, pp.120,128.

<sup>113</sup> Leipoldt, *Cape Cookery*, pp.14, 18-26.

<sup>114</sup> Erica Platter, Clinton Friedman, Gwyn Platter, *East Coast Tables: Specialities, Flavours, Family Recipes & Kitchen Secrets from the KwaZulu-Natal Coast*, East Coast Radio, Umhlanga Rocks, 2010.

coffee, tea, sugar, and spices could be bought. They offered such hospitality as they could to passing travellers, who all comment on the stewing coffee pot as the centre of household life. When they trekked into the interior their lives became even sparser. Through interaction with Khoikhoi people there was some use of *veldkos*, the making of preserves with local fruit such as Kei apples and sour figs, and ways of making sourdough bread such as pot bread with hot coals placed on the lid of the pot, *askoek*, *vetkoek* (fried in fat from the fat-tailed sheep) and *roosterkoek*.<sup>115</sup>

The 1896 Census gives 6,205 Whites born in the Transvaal. Under the religious section,<sup>116</sup> the various branches of the Dutch Reformed Church have 9,595 members, which must include people who had come from the Orange Free State, the Cape and Natal. The church members are likely to have all been Dutch or Afrikaans speaking, and may also have included some of the 819 Europeans born in Holland. Cooking traditions were fluid, however, as there was considerable intermarriage, notably of English men marrying Dutch/Afrikaans women. Lise Lange states the 10% of British miners who did so worried Milner and gave rise to the drive to bring single British women to the Transvaal after the war.<sup>117</sup> In a mixed marriage, it is the mother's cooking practices and language which tend to be passed on to the children.

A high proportion of Afrikaners on the Rand would have had diets limited by poverty, however. Many were *bywoners* who had been displaced by the beginnings of commercial farming, were uneducated and untrained for any of the skills needed in an urban environment where unskilled work was monopolised by African labour. The Transvaal government had recognised this early, with grants of rights to make bricks and to put up houses in Vrededorp and Burghersdorp. Some, with transport-riding backgrounds, became cab drivers, but by the late 1890s there was a considerable poor relief programme in place, both to provide employment and charitable donations of food and money for those unable to work.<sup>118</sup>

The 'Mixed Race and Others' group in the Census report should be included here as they were mainly Afrikaans speakers, and shared the same problems with the whites. Many were also cab drivers in Johannesburg, but some had worked on mines in Kimberley and Barberton and were able to fill semi-skilled jobs. An official count in 1893 listed 605 Malays,<sup>119</sup> and 562 '*Kaapsche Jongens*'. Their food tastes were much the same as the white Afrikaners, particularly to those from the western Cape.

## JEWES

The religious section of the 1896 Census lists 5,561 Jews in Johannesburg, but the Jewish community had two distinct sources: Jews who had come from England, Germany, France and the Netherlands who were particularly strong in the financial sector in the more lucrative and socially acceptable fields such as stock and share speculation,

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<sup>115</sup> Renata Coetzee & Volker Miros, *Kukumakranka: Khoi-Khoi Culture, Customs and Creative Cooking*, Lapa, Pretoria, 2010, pp.105-115.

<sup>116</sup> A summary of the religious section is given in Appendix One.

<sup>117</sup> Lange, *White, Poor and Angry*, pp.1-14.

<sup>118</sup> Van Onselen, *New Ninevah*, pp.312-333.

<sup>119</sup> Muslim descendants of slaves and craftsmen brought from Indonesia, and Afrikaans speaking.

brokerage for large firms and wholesaling,<sup>120</sup> and concerned themselves with building synagogues, ensuring the availability of kosher food and organising burial societies.

The other group was the larger number of Jews from Lithuania and Poland, the Pale of Settlement in the Russian Empire, who probably comprise nearly all of the 3,335 Europeans born in Russia in the Census. The assassination of Tsar Alexander II in 1881 had set off a wave of pogroms and emigration to the West of the poorest Jews – the more affluent stayed behind in the belief their money would be a protection. These moved to the slums of European cities and some then moved on to the Americas and South Africa. Johannesburg, with its varied ways of making a living, attracted a large number of such people. They settled in the inner city where Yiddish newspapers were available and ‘they could pray in the less-decorous East European mode alien to their more anglicised and affluent co-religionists’. The earliest to arrive became small-scale traders, butchers and eating house owners. The later arrivals took whatever jobs they could get as shop and eating house assistants, though these jobs were only stepping stones to better jobs which enabled the next generation to move into the professions.<sup>121</sup> Some became illicit liquor sellers and prostitutes, but many played a major role as *smouse* and storekeepers both in Johannesburg and on the *platteland*, buying grain and agricultural produce from both black and white producers and supplying them with consumer goods.<sup>122</sup>

The following section is taken, except where otherwise stated, from Claudia Roden’s study<sup>123</sup> of Jewish food history. Almost all Jews zealously maintained the Jewish dietary laws and prohibitions, and almost all in Johannesburg were Ashkenazi, sharing the same roots and history in the peasant food of eastern Europe, with influences from medieval Germany, France and Italy. By the sixteenth century persecution in western Europe segregated them in ghettos, and many moved to eastern Europe. Ritual, particularly involving food, took an increasing hold on Jewish life. Everyday food might be desperately poor, but on the Sabbath and on holidays commemorating events in Jewish history certain dishes had to be served. At Passover, any leavening agent and, indirectly, flour and wheat are forbidden, and there are six other major festivals during the year involving particular foods and rituals. The food rituals associated with these dishes and the dietary laws are one of the great bonds of Jewish family and community life.

The prohibition of any work, including lighting fires and cooking, between sunset on a Friday to sunset on a Saturday, gave rise to food which could be prepared on a Friday and eaten cold on the Sabbath. Delicatessens are said to have originated in New York to accommodate Jewish observance of this rule.<sup>124</sup> Meat had to be slaughtered in the ritual manner and all blood removed. It was not easy being Jewish in small communities; many had to be vegetarians until a kosher butcher arrived.<sup>125</sup> Milk and meat products must be separated, and cannot be eaten at the same meal. Animals that chew the cud, whose diet is grass and leaves, and have cloven hooves, so that they cannot

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<sup>120</sup> Titlestad, *Eating-houses*, p.139.

<sup>121</sup> Titlestad, *Eating-houses*, pp.134-147.

<sup>122</sup> Richard Mendelsohn & Milton Shain, *The Jews in South Africa: An Illustrated History*, Jonathan Ball Publishers, Johannesburg, 2008, pp.29-49.

<sup>123</sup> Claudia Roden, *The Book of Jewish Food: An Odyssey from Samarkand and Vilna to the Present Day*, Penguin, London, 1997, pp.9-46.

<sup>124</sup> Kiple, *A Movable Feast*, p.231.

<sup>125</sup> Bertha Goudvis, *South African Odyssey*, Picador Africa, Johannesburg, 2011, p.23.

hold prey and thus be carnivores, are considered kosher. Pigs, rabbits, horses, beasts and birds of prey are all considered unclean. Only fish with both fins and scales can be eaten.

The dietary laws encouraged Jews to involvement in the food trade, because the food and wine they themselves consumed could not be produced by unsupervised Gentiles. The typically Ashkenazi Jewish foods of gefilte fish, chopped liver, pickled cucumber, chopped herring, potato latkes all originated in eastern Europe and were carried in the great nineteenth century migrations to the United States, Canada, South Africa and South America.

Jewish people throughout their history have been mobile, with dispersions and re-forming into new communities, and they adapted and adopted but never lost their food-based cultural identity. In South Africa they were reported to use crumbed Marie biscuits instead of matzos meal; at a Jewish wedding in December 1891 gefilte fish was made from tinned fish as no fresh fish was available.<sup>126</sup> A farm in what became Kensington allowed very orthodox Jews to take kosher pails for the cows to be milked directly into them.<sup>127</sup> Under British military rule in December 1900, meat shortages led to all butcher shops coming under military supervision. A deputation to the Military Governor was received with great courtesy, and one shop was set aside for the sale of kosher meat to the Jewish community.<sup>128</sup> Because of their number and importance in the economic life of the town, Jews were treated with consideration, though the Lithuanian Jews much less so.

## INDIANS

Although the people of India are highly diverse, like the Jews there were two main groups in Johannesburg at that time. The first group derived from the indentured migrants who had been brought to Natal from 1860 on to work on sugar plantations. Many stayed on after their contracts were completed, and became traders and small shopkeepers, and smallholder-hawkers. It was not uncommon for the entire family to work long hours cultivating small plots in traditional ways and then sell their produce by the roadside or from panniers. They moved to Barberton, Pilgrims Rest and Lydenburg when gold was discovered and were prohibited from mining but found opportunities in petty trade and services. In Johannesburg they became hawkers and pedlars (buying licences annually), and also waiters, cooks and laundrymen.<sup>129</sup>

The other group were part of the long-standing trade between India and the east coast of Africa, predominantly Muslim Gujeratis, though Hindus became more prominent after 1890. Trading houses would send family members to run an establishment in a coastal city, and they would have links with other major trading houses. They were known in South Africa as 'passenger Indians' because they had paid their own passage money. This continued in Durban and later in the Transvaal. Many held bank accounts, were widely respected and 'could tap into multiple

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<sup>126</sup> Rose Stodel Brodie in Claire Robertson (Ed), *Remembering Old Johannesburg*, National Council of Women of South Africa/Ad Donker, Johannesburg, 1986, p.14.

<sup>127</sup> Rachel Smith of Fordsburg in Robertson, *Remembering Old Johannesburg*, p.69.

<sup>128</sup> Morris Abrahams, *The Jews of Johannesburg, 1886-1901*, Scarecrow Books, Lanham, Maryland, 2001, p.42.

<sup>129</sup> Surendra Bhana & Joy Brain, *Setting down Roots: Indian migrants to South Africa, 1860-1911*, Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg, 1990, pp.16-18.



credit lines from an astounding global diaspora'. Padayachee and Morrell label the first group 'dukawallahs' and the second 'merchants'.<sup>130</sup> Merchants could inform the public that they would close for Friday prayers:

NOTICE

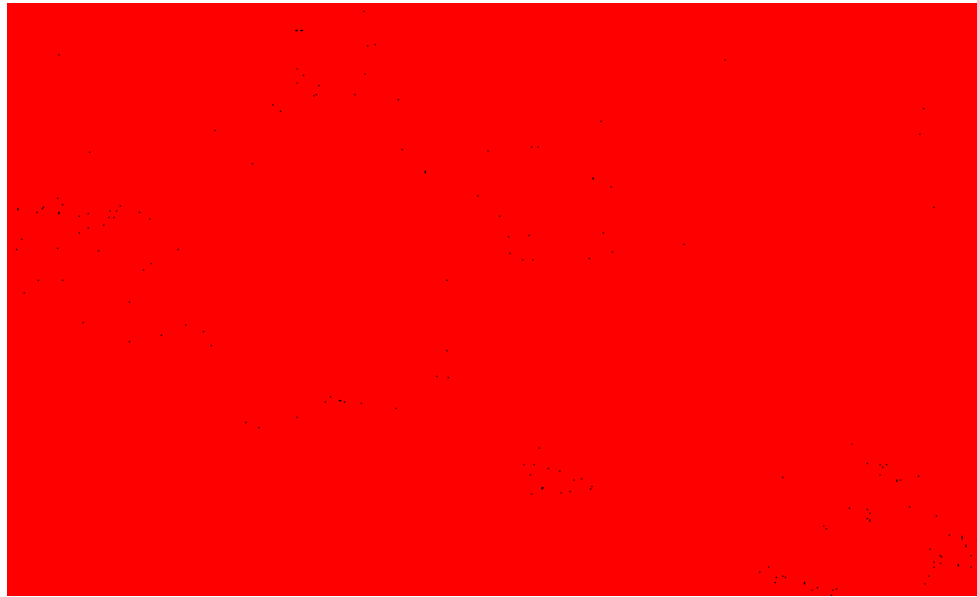
The Indian-Arabian merchants trading in Johannesburg wish to intimate to their Customers, and public in general, that it is their intention to close their Business every Friday from 12 p.m. to 2 p.m. Customers will please remember the above notice so as to save inconvenience.

M. C. CAMROODEEN<sup>131</sup>

In the last days of the Republic, the following indicates that many Muslims were Shia:

The Indian Festival of Moharum was duly observed by the Indian community in Johannesburg last week, when, with the sanction of the authorities, the usual gay procession filled the squares, giving them for the moment all the picturesqueness and colour of the East. The proceedings were conducted with great decorum, and all the usual rites were religiously observed. The day's doings ended in a banquet under the auspices of Mr Bowman.<sup>132</sup>

An official count in 1893 found 449 'Arabs' in Johannesburg, 269 in the central part of the town, 16 in Doornfontein and 164 in Braamfontein, and there were 239 'coolies'.<sup>133</sup>



Indian Hawkers from Peter Kallaway & Patrick Pearson, *Johannesburg Images and Continuities: A History of Working Class Life through Pictures, 1885-1935*, Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1986, p.69

Like Jewish and Chinese storekeepers, Indians were willing to operate on a small scale, use family labour, work long hours, extend credit to poor people and live frugally, thus incurring the hostility of white merchants whom they undercut. They were popular with poor people because they broke up the large quantities bought at the market and

<sup>130</sup> Vishnu Padayachee & Robert Morrell, 'Indian Merchants and Dukawallas in the Natal Economy, c1875-1914, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, **17.1**, March 1991, pp.71-77

<sup>131</sup> *The Star*, 12 April 1889.

<sup>132</sup> *Standard & Diggers' News*, May 1900.

<sup>133</sup> Bhana & Brain, *Setting down Roots*, 1990, p.84.

sold in small affordable quantities. Indians were particularly important in hawking fruit and vegetables on foot, and it is reported that when they were prevented from buying at the produce market for some reason, the market sold very little.<sup>134</sup>

Hindu and Muslim Indians had very different food cultures, to some extent as a result of geography and climate. Hindus were mainly from southern India so their food was rice-based, with a wide variety of pulses and vegetables. They equated vegetarianism with meritorious living.<sup>135</sup> Orthodox Brahmins avoided all foods which were thought to stimulate the passions, including meat, onions and garlic. Hindus travelling to Britain in the 1890s thought British food, then dominated by red meat and boiled potatoes, carrots or cabbage, 'plain and monotonous to a degree. The cook knows nothing of proportion in seasoning his food; knows little of variety, and has a rough slovenly touch.'<sup>136</sup> Gandhi was shocked by the English diet on his first visit to England, by which time he had become a vegetarian. He was told he would die without meat to sustain the body in a cold climate. 'Indeed the British faith in its mythical power was quite equal to the Indian faith in both the purifying and polluting potential of food .... and meat was regarded as the ultimate food for the strong, aggressive and manly Englishman.'<sup>137</sup> The Indian diet was relatively low in protein, but was supplemented with milk and milk products in the same way as the African diet.

Hawkers in Johannesburg were mainly Hindus, whereas merchants tended to be Muslim from northern India, with influences from Persia and Central Asia, using spices in a sophisticated way. They ate meat, apart from pork and beef. Although pilaus and biryani played a major role, wheat was also a staple in the form of numerous flat breads: rotis, chappatis, naan, pooris, poppadoms, and paratha, into which food was rolled or stuffed.<sup>138</sup> Because they wore turbans, Muslims were called Arabs in Johannesburg, and had more prestige than Hindus, called 'coolies'. All Muslims, whatever their place of origin or sect, would have observed the holy month of Ramadhan, abstaining from food and water from sunrise to sunset, which has always had a unifying role for Muslims worldwide.

### CHINESE

Independent Chinese had made their way as shopkeepers and miners to California and the Victorian goldfields of Australia, and also to the Cape Colony, from the middle of the nineteenth century. In the late 1850s on the Victorian goldfields, they comprised perhaps 10 per cent of the male population, and populist virulent hatred and violence against them developed; 'White Australia' formed the basis of the trade union movement. Similarly in California, organised labour was synonymous with white exclusionism, and culminated in the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act which brought Chinese immigration to an end in the United States. There was a similar movement in the Canadian Pacific provinces. This 'Pacific Rim' populist exclusionism<sup>139</sup> was carried to South African mining areas by Australasian and American diggers, where it took the form of strong anti-Chinese feeling among shopkeepers and tradesmen from the beginning.

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<sup>134</sup> *The Star*, 13 December 1897.

<sup>135</sup> Tannahill, *Food in History*, pp.108-109.

<sup>136</sup> Lizzie Collingham, *Curry, A Tale of Cooks & Conquerors*, Vintage, London, 2005, pp.21,227.

<sup>137</sup> Collingham, *Curry*, pp.178-179.

<sup>138</sup> Davidson, *The Oxford Companion to Food*, p.398.

<sup>139</sup> Offer, *The First World War*, pp.170-171.

Emigration from China had always occurred but had been restricted by the Imperial Government until 1866, after which many more migrated. At the Barberton goldfields, the Gold Law of the Transvaal did not specifically prohibit Chinese, but in practice diggers' licences were only issued to whites. The ZAR Law 3 of 1885 restricted the rights of 'any of the native races of Asia, Coolies, Arabs, Malays and Mohammedan subjects of the Ottoman Empire' who were prohibited from acquiring citizenship rights, owning any fixed property and were required to register with a magistrate within eight days of arrival and pay a fee. After protracted negotiations with the British government which protected the rights of Indians as citizens of the British Empire, the registration fee was lowered to £3, and 'Asiatics' were allowed to buy fixed property in areas set aside for them, though this was ineffective because of the difficulty of finding suitable places for such locations, and white nominees were used to run trading concerns. Chinese tended to take the full brunt of anti-Asiatic legislation, though those from Hong Kong claimed to also be British subjects.

By 1891 at least 121 Chinese were known to be resident in the Transvaal as shopkeepers, laundrymen, market gardeners and farmers, and throughout the 1890s white traders waged a campaign against them, claiming that they posed a threat to white businesses because they gave short weight goods, they would flock in and take over the most valuable property, they were a menace to health and morals, and undercut wages.<sup>140</sup> There were at least 65 Chinese trading in Johannesburg in 1893, and they were popular with working class suburbs of Braamfontein, Fordsburg and Vrededorp because they sold goods in smaller quantities and at reasonable prices, and also gave credit. An official count of all non-white inhabitants in 1893 has 237 Chinese.<sup>141</sup> *Longland's Directory of Johannesburg and District 1893* street index lists a number of 'Chinaman's shop' on the outskirts of inner Johannesburg, and there may have been others where white men were used as fronts. G A Leyds mentions 'many Chinese wholesale merchants who supported innumerable small retail shops kept by Chinese'.<sup>142</sup> The 1896 Census has 831 'Asiatics' born outside British possessions, which may not all be Chinese of course, but they were certainly smaller in number than the Indian communities, and seem to have annoyed white shopkeepers disproportionately.

Of those 831 'Asiatics' born outside British possessions, there were only three women, so Chinese cooking was probably fairly minimal, designed to cost as little as possible and to take very little time to prepare, and is unlikely to have reflected the sophistication of Chinese cuisine based on a long history with many influences. Chinese cuisine is based on a combination of the 'necessary' carbohydrate – rice in the south; wheat, millet or maize in the north – and an accompaniment of animal or vegetable matter. It is enormously varied, China being such a big country, with at least four major regional styles as well as specialised cooking for Muslim Chinese and vegan for Buddhists. It is all designed to be eaten with chopsticks or a spoon. As in most cuisines, special foods for festivals play a role in creating a cultural identity, but the small numbers of Chinese in Johannesburg at this time seem to have kept their heads down and survived by being as inconspicuous as possible – there is no mention of the Chinese New Year celebrations before the War in the English press, just as there is no mention of Diwali.

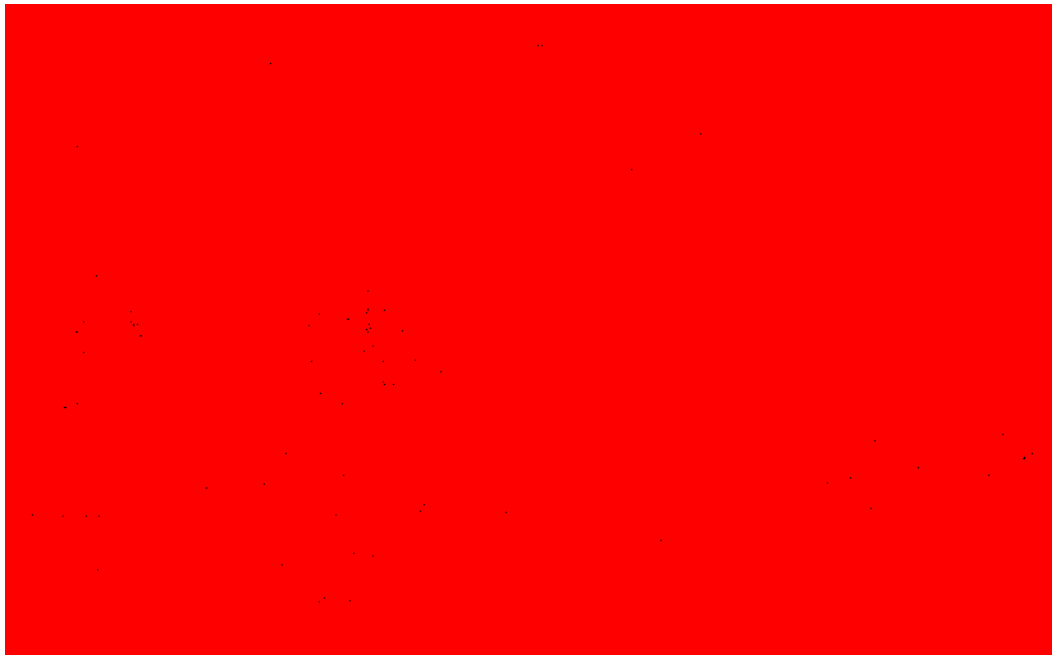
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<sup>140</sup> Melanie Yap & Man Diana Leong, *Colour, Confusion and Concessions: A History of the Chinese in South Africa*, Hong Kong University Press, Hong Kong, 1996, p.81.

<sup>141</sup> Bhana & Brain, *Setting down Roots*, p.84.

<sup>142</sup> G A Leyds, *A History of Johannesburg: The Early Years*, Nationale Boekhandel, Cape Town, 1964, p.200.

This attempt to assess the food cultures of the different peoples of Johannesburg has performed been sketchy. There seem to have been a number of influences at work, in addition to the dominant English one: the male:female ratio, and whether meals were consumed in family homes or institutional settings aiming at feeding the greatest number for the least cost; affordability; strength of original cultures given the strong reinforcement provided by religion in Jewish and Indian groups; and availability. Availability will be examined in Chapter Five on how food was distributed in Johannesburg, an issue that is influenced by the nostalgia for familiar food of various ethnic and national groups that lived in the town. G A Leyds described in the early years 'many Dutch, French, Austrian, and Italian merchants who freely imported their wares directly from the home countries'; Turkish Delight from Smyrna; Armenian traders ...<sup>143</sup>



Armenian Women Street Vendors, circa 1904, from Peter Kallaway & Patrick Pearson, *Johannesburg Images and Continuities: A History of Working Class Life through Pictures, 1885-1935*

### JOHANNESBURG UNDER REPUBLICAN MARTIAL LAW

The people of Johannesburg were affected in different ways by the eight months of Republican martial law, declared on 11 October 1899. An estimated 100,000 Africans, Asians and Coloureds had joined the mass exodus from the town by mid-October, and about 10,000 whites and 10,000 blacks were believed to have remained in the town at that date.<sup>144</sup>

Even in normal times charities and government relief projects had been unable to relieve want. Fear of starvation threatened the numerous poor who had been unable to afford the train fare to go, many of them dependents of men at the front. The poor relief system was strained, with 1,700 families being assisted. Thousands of discharged African

<sup>143</sup> Leyds, *History of Johannesburg*, pp.200-202.

<sup>144</sup> Diana Cammack, *The Rand at War 1899-1902: The Witwatersrand and the Anglo-Boer War*, James Currey, London, 1990, pp.39-72.

mineworkers looted shops in the city, and Chinese shops in Ophirton, as a result of mines not taking responsibility for repatriating their workers. Blacks were either expelled or their labour commandeered, sent to the front to dig trenches, care for livestock, drive wagons and a few to carry rifles. Others were sent to work on farms.<sup>145</sup>

Perhaps as many as 1,000 Uitlanders fought with the Boers: the Irish Brigade, Scandinavian corps; Russian corps (made up of about 60 men careful to exclude 'Russian Border Israelites'), American Scouts, Hollander corps (based on Pretoria with government officials but also Johannesburg railway workers), and the 400-strong German corps. The French corps protected property near city centre, then the mines; the Italians manned ammunition works and formed Italian Scouts; and Jews and Indians organised ambulance units. The few Greeks joined commandos rather than form their own corps.<sup>146</sup>

Some dozen mines continued operating, some by the government or by their owners. About 50 per cent of the skilled miners working them were British or Colonials, though this percentage dropped as British men left. Conditions of the African labour force became even worse than before the war, enforced by martial law. The monthly maximum wage was £1, with the average total cost of a worker estimated to be between 20s 6d and 23s 6d per month. Supplies, including food, for the mines were obtained by commandeering.<sup>147</sup>

'Undesirables' – 'known criminals and pimps' - were weeded out, and a permit system introduced. Residence permits were granted to the staffs of the Waterworks Company, the Cold Storage Company and the fire brigade, together with those working on the mines, in banks, stores, apothecaries and similar necessary institutions, provided they swore to conduct themselves in 'a quiet, calm and submissive manner and do nothing against the independence of the country'. Between 14 and 18 October about 11,000 people not granted permits left by train. Non-British foreigners had to get certificates to prove their nationalities, and all residents, black, white, male or female, over the age of 12 had to obtain residential certificates. There were over 1,200 needy British being fed charitably at the beginning of 1900, and in April 700 destitute British and 500 Coloureds were ordered to leave, and more after the terrible Begbie explosion for which sabotage was suspected. Only about 100 British remained when the British army arrived at the end of May.

When the British army arrived on 31 May 1900, there were comments along the lines of: 'we passed through an awful set of black men, yellowmen, Japs, Zulus, Chinese and Hottentots, in fact the very scum of all nations' and 'quite a sort of Port Said population', 'communists in facial type and bearing'.<sup>148</sup> Lord Roberts' ADC described 'a good many people along the road, chiefly niggers and Jews, and a big crowd waiting outside the law courts. unattractive looking people speaking with tongues, mostly friendly'.<sup>149</sup> Many Africans destroyed their passes in the delusion that they were now free.

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<sup>145</sup> Cammack, *Rand at War*, p.41,71.

<sup>146</sup> Cammack, *Rand at War*, pp.54-56.

<sup>147</sup> Cammack, *Rand at War*, pp.84-88.

<sup>148</sup> Cammack, *Rand at War*, p.110.

<sup>149</sup> Thomas Pakenham, *The Boer War*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1979, p.429.

This chapter has examined the varied population of Johannesburg and their food cultures. The largest group, Africans, had little choice in the food they were given or able to obtain. The cultural arrogance of the time meant that any wishes they may have had were disregarded. Their labour was exploited and they were fed just enough to maintain their working efficiency. Other poor people, of whatever ethnic group, exercised little control over their food, and malnutrition was a factor in the high death rate.

Of the other groups, the British and English-speaking diaspora were the dominant identity, reflecting Britain's role in the nineteenth century. Other western European citizens played a part in the growth of Johannesburg in these years, and on the whole were sufficiently well off to indulge in nostalgia for their background food cultures from time to time. There was little interest for novelty in cuisines as there is today, but there are suggestions, mainly from Jews and Italians in the United States, that the experience of migrancy had a two-way effect on national cuisines, resulting both from the migrants being better off than they had been in their home countries, and global food industrialisation having brought about greater availability and variety of foodstuffs.

No group was unaffected by the interruption of war. The cosmopolitan ambience was disrupted, and the British group largely stripped out, but their influence had remained. The food distribution system, when it achieved a new normality after the war, continued along much the same lines as in the 1890s, as will be shown in Chapter Five.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISTRIBUTION OF FOOD IN JOHANNESBURG

There had been many gold rushes before, on all continents of the earth. Most were of alluvial gold: short-lived male communities which lived hard and drank hard and which petered out, while the prospectors, with their spades, pans and cradles, moved on elsewhere. Through the 1870s and 1880s such optimistic prospectors roamed the Transvaal and found some gold at Eersteling in 1871, then at Lydenberg, de Kaap, Pilgrim's Rest and Barberton. Associated with these rushes were people who had discovered that servicing the gold miners could be more lucrative than digging themselves. It did not take a great deal of expertise or cost much to buy goods on credit and set up a store, and people slipped in and out of business and moved on easily.

### GROWTH AND SHAPE OF THE TOWN

The Witwatersrand diggings were proclaimed on 9 September 1886, and 986 stands just north of the gold-bearing ground, were auctioned on 8 December 1886, with a second auction held in June 1887. Each digger was entitled to a mining claim and a small stand on which to live. With few exceptions the stands were only 50 by 50 Cape feet (approximately 248 square metres). Blocks were small as corner stands were thought desirable for pubs and shops and as many as possible were allowed for.<sup>1</sup> Johannesburg, as Barberton had been, was laid out as a stand, rather than an *erf*, township, in the expectation that it would have a short life.<sup>2</sup>

In October 1886 the Mining Commissioner issued licences for 26 hotels, five butchers, four bakers, and four shops.<sup>3</sup> Butchers and bakers seem to be the first specialised shops in any new settlement, with rather more butchers than bakers. In *Longland's Directory of Johannesburg and District, 1893*<sup>4</sup> there are already a number of more specialised food shops: confectioners, pastry cooks, greengrocers, fishmongers and fruiterers as well as the general stores or shops. Despite the mention of zoning for commercial or residential use, these, in 1893, are scattered throughout the central district together with residences, making for convenient shopping. Also despite the prohibition on 'Asiatics' owning shops in white areas, there are 27 'Chinaman's stores' and 23 Indian, 'Arab' or 'coolie' stores – the latter tending to cluster near the market as Indian hawkers largely controlled the fruit trade in Johannesburg.

Johannesburg outgrew its mining camp beginnings with extraordinary rapidity. Standard Bank managers' quarterly reports indicate that in February 1888 the total population was between 8,000 and 10,000,<sup>5</sup> with the business of the

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<sup>1</sup> Keith Beavon, *Johannesburg: The Making and Shaping of the City*, University of South Africa Press, Pretoria, 2004, pp.22-24.

<sup>2</sup> John P R Maud, *City Government: The Johannesburg Experiment*, Oxford University Press, London, 1938, p.14.

<sup>3</sup> M S Applegryn, *Johannesburg: Origins and Early Management*, Unisa Press, Pretoria, 1984, p.38.

<sup>4</sup> *Longland's Directory of Johannesburg and District, 1893*, Henry Longland, Johannesburg, 1893.

<sup>5</sup> Compare this with J B Taylor's 17,000 in July 1888 below. It is not usually clear, however, whether any estimate refers to white and coloured populations or how much of the mines and peripheral areas are included, or how the estimate was reached.

town now large.<sup>6</sup> A year later the population was reckoned to be 15,000 to 20,000,<sup>7</sup> with four banks, and the 20 officers of the Standard Bank branch were unable to cope with all the work.<sup>8</sup>

In July 1888, J B Taylor, one of the wealthy Randlords, wrote that the town was now built in a substantial way, with about 3,000 houses and a population of at least 17,000. The tents, sun-dried brick and corrugated iron houses of the first few prospectors were giving way to substantial two- and three-storey brick-built buildings. In less than two years since the first diggings were proclaimed upwards of £5 million had been invested in stocks, shares, buildings and mining concerns,<sup>9</sup> aided by the rapid dissemination of news made possible by the telegraph system and the international press.<sup>10</sup> This financial core of substance focused on banks and a stock exchange that from early on attracted both local and foreign capital to underpin the mining enterprises, before it had much in the way of commercial, cultural and administrative trappings.<sup>11</sup> Economic growth was fostered as much by speculation as by elusive payable gold. At the end of 1889 300 mining companies were officially listed on the Johannesburg Exchange, though only 44 were actively producing gold.<sup>12</sup>

By January 1890 a shortened, rough census of the six wards within a three mile radius of Market Square gave the total population as 26,303. In July 1896, ten years after its beginnings, a more careful census of Johannesburg and suburbs by the Sanitary Board gave a total population of 102,078.<sup>13</sup> Cape Town in 1891 had a total population of 51,251.<sup>14</sup> In the April 1904 census of the Transvaal, the total white and coloured population of Johannesburg Municipality, which covered a far larger area than covered by the Sanitary Board's census, was found to be 158,580.<sup>15</sup>

Geology dictated the fundamental layout of the city. The gold mines are all to the south of the east-to-west running Witwatersrand ridge and the business centre. To the north of the ridge lies a much older, eroded granite dome which is not gold-bearing, and residential suburbs have spread over it. Mining companies, before it became clear where gold deposits were located, bought up most of the surrounding land, and subsequently developed this as residential townships. These townships were formally proclaimed, and developed privately on a leasehold basis, with the developers specifying the conditions on which leases were held, the size of plots, and whether commercial activities were permissible. Exclusive Parktown, developed from 1892 by the Corner House Group, did not allow any.

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<sup>6</sup> A Mabin A & B Conradie (Eds), *The Confidence of the Whole Country: Standard Bank Reports on Economic Conditions in Southern Africa, 1865-1902*, Standard Bank Investment Corporation, 1987, p.66.

<sup>7</sup> This may have been whites only. Eric Rosenthal states the population was 40,000 in 1889, of whom 25,000 were whites. Eric Rosenthal, *Gold! Gold! Gold!*, Ad Donker, Johannesburg, 1970, p.191.

<sup>8</sup> Mabin & Conradie, *Standard Bank Reports*, p.248

<sup>9</sup> Letter to R Kann, quoted in A P Cartwright, *The Story of the Industrialisation of South Africa and the Part Played in it by the Corner House Group of Companies 1910-1967*, Purnell & Sons, Cape Town, 1968, p.74.

<sup>10</sup> See Chapter Two

<sup>11</sup> Beavon, *Johannesburg*, p.26.

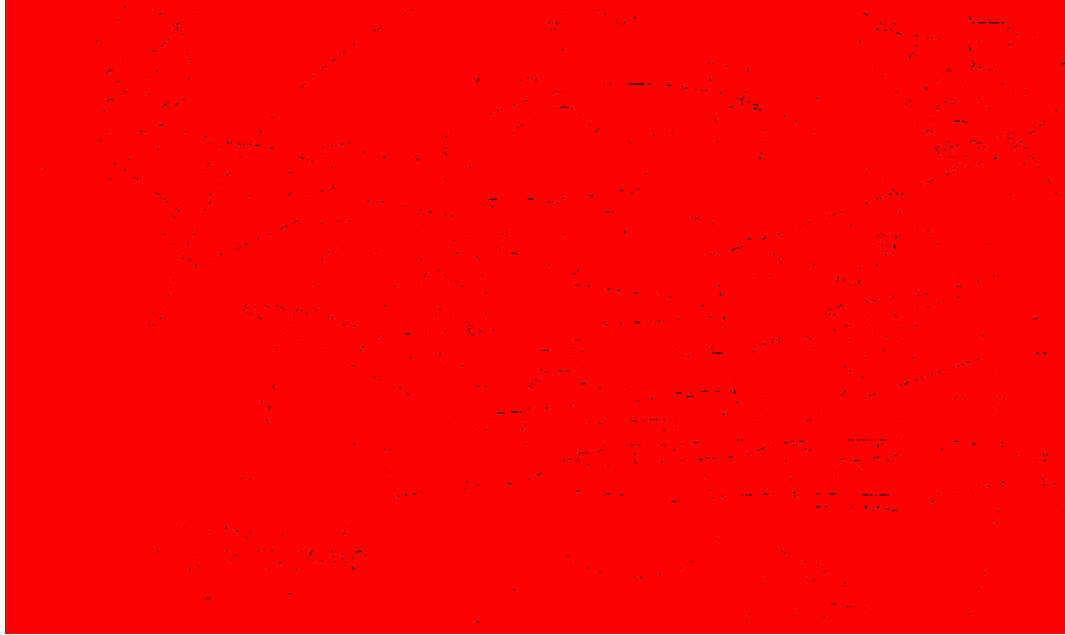
<sup>12</sup> Robert V Kubicek, *Economic Imperialism in Theory and Practice: The Case of South African Gold Mining Finance, 1886-1914*, Duke University Press, Durham NC, 1979, p.42.

<sup>13</sup> *Report of the Director of Census*, Johannesburg Sanitary Department Census 1896, Standard & Diggers' News Press, Johannesburg, 1896.

<sup>14</sup> *The Star*, 14 May 1904.

<sup>15</sup> *Census Returns of British South Africa*, His Majesty's Stationery Office, London, 1904, pp.46-47.

Properties in townships to the east and north of central Johannesburg were more expensive than those to the west or south, and this socio-economic pattern has continued to the present day.<sup>16</sup>



Johannesburg and Suburbs from  
Charles van Onselen, *New Babylon New Ninevah: Everyday Life on the Witwatersrand 1886-1914*, Jonathan Ball,  
Johannesburg, 2001, p.270

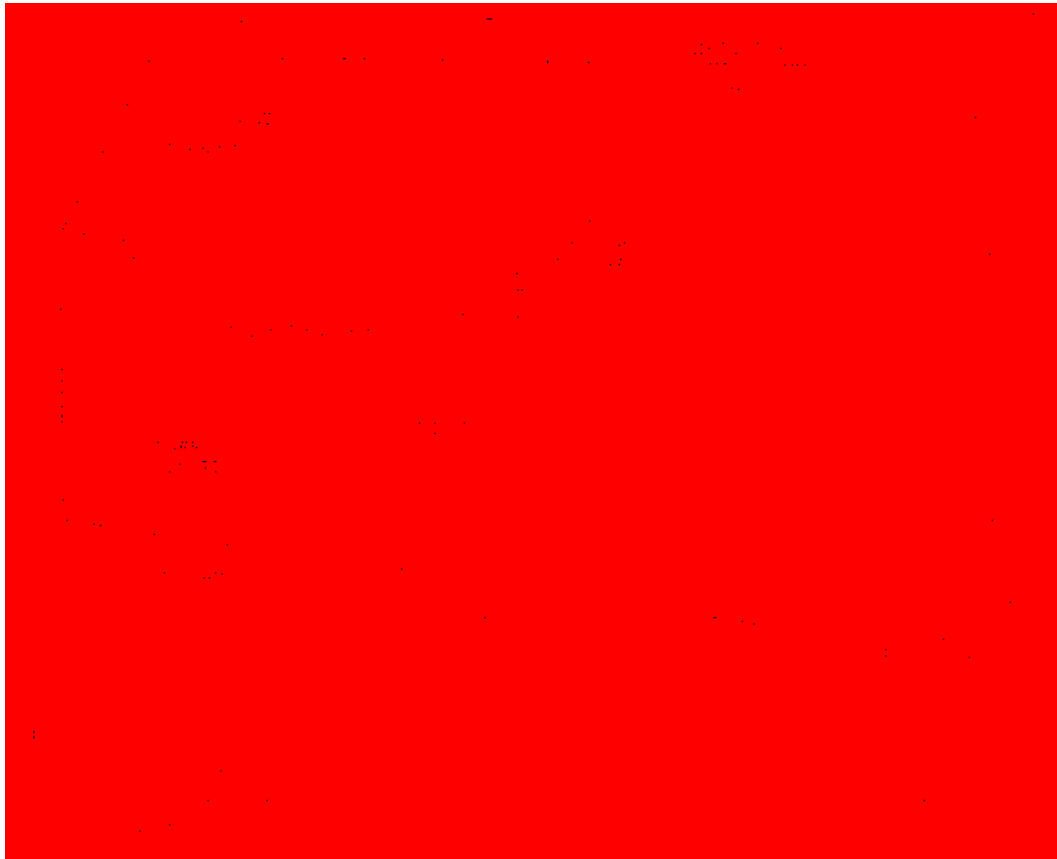
Keith Beavon has described how developments and decisions taken in the first few years stamped an almost indelible functional shape of the town for nearly a century, focused on the Market Square.<sup>17</sup> The financial centre, with the Chamber of Mines, Stock Exchange, Rand Club, mining company offices, and banks, developed immediately south of Market Square in the direction of the mines on which they depended. The area further south nearest to the mines themselves, had engineering activities connected with mining, commercial concerns engaged in building, brewing, and milling, the last two the only food manufacturers in that area. *Longlands Directory of Johannesburg and District, 1893* lists seven millers, all on the south side of town. There were also some residential suburbs linked to the mines such as Booyens, Turffontein and Rossettenville.

At the second auction, in June 1887, 79 stands to the west were reserved for 'Arabs' and the area was zoned for mixed residential and commercial use, so its value dropped. It became a slum, with multi-racial locations, and its marshy, clay ground was used for brickmaking by poor whites and Coloureds. Working class whites settled in Brixton, Fordsburg and Mayfair where property was cheap and within walking distance of the mines.

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<sup>16</sup> Beavon, *Johannesburg*, pp.41-55, and Graeme Hart, 'Residential settlement behaviour, the housing market and suburban development during the formative stage of growth in Johannesburg, 1886-1902', *South African Journal of Economic History*, **11.1**, 1996, pp.99-110.

<sup>17</sup> Beavon, *Johannesburg*, p.41.



Functional character of the central area of Johannesburg by 1898,  
from Keith Beavon, *Johannesburg: The Making and Shaping of the City*, University of South Africa Press, Pretoria,  
2004, p.58.

In the first few years the elite lived on the north side of the town, but the building of Park Station and the arrival of the railway, with its noise and crowds drove them further north to Parktown, or north-east to Doornfontein and Jeppestown. The residential areas on Hillbrow ridge to the north were blocked by the building of the fort which was also used as a prison. As Parktown became fashionable, together with the rival Houghton Estate developed by JCI, the development axis swung to the north rather than the east of the town.<sup>18</sup> The area between Market Square and these middle and upper class residential areas became the fashionable shopping district, but the town centre ceased being suitable for family living when it became 'Frenchfontein',<sup>19</sup> the 'honky-tonk heart of bad Johannesburg'.<sup>20</sup>

#### FOOD SUPPLY

These changes in the size of population, social pattern and the growth of suburbs affected how food reached consumers from an early stage, but there was a distinction between types of outlet based on the two categories reaching the town:

<sup>18</sup> Graeme Hart 'Residential settlement behaviour', pp.101-107.

<sup>19</sup> So-called after the arrival of numbers of prostitutes from Europe after 1895. Van Onselen, *New Babylon*, pp.120-123.

<sup>20</sup> Beavon, *Johannesburg*, p.44.

- Locally-derived fresh produce, poultry and eggs brought from nearby into the market daily by wagon; and on the hoof, in the form of livestock driven to the Market for auction and slaughter. This produce was sold in wholesale quantities in the Market and bought by the large institutions which fed people communally or broken down into smaller quantities for sale to householders by retailers or hawkers;
- Overseas-derived groceries and tinned foods shipped to the coastal ports. These were delivered direct to wholesalers or storekeepers, and sold either in large quantities to institutional buyers, or smaller quantities to householders.

Until the railways arrived, both categories arrived by ox-wagon or mule cart; the packed and tinned foods from overseas having been sent by rail to the railheads in Natal or Kimberley and brought on by ox wagon. How these were produced and transported to South African ports has been described in Chapter Two, The Global Context.

It seems probable that there was more communal and institutional food consumption in early Johannesburg than in other mining centres. The very large number of unskilled African migrant mineworkers were housed and fed on the mines, in the South African tradition, as has been described in Chapter Four, Johannesburg People. The majority of skilled white miners did not have their families with them, and lived, and ate their meals, in private boarding houses in the centre of Johannesburg, on mining property to the south, or in the two major working-class suburbs – Jeppe to the east or Fordsburg to the west.<sup>21</sup> Most lived within walking distance of their places of work, and the east-to-west running horse-drawn tram service between Jeppe and Fordsburg which began operating in 1891 was extensively used.

Boarding houses and restaurants were mainly interchangeable, as the following advertisement indicates:

MRS GEACH  
(late of the Phoenix Restaurant, Commissioner Street and International Hotel, Kimberley)  
Begs to announce that she has taken over the  
TEMPERANCE RESTAURANT  
Board and Lodging by the week or month. Terms on application.  
A GOOD TABLE KEPT  
Vacancies for 20 Boarders<sup>22</sup>

Although most immigrant white miners relied on the accommodation provided by boarding houses, and ate in them, some rented houses, but were unlikely to have had much skill or experience in cooking, and their cheap rented houses would not have had much in the way of cooking facilities. Cast-iron cooking stoves had become available in the mid-nineteenth century in Europe, but they remained expensive to buy and to use until well into the twentieth century.<sup>23</sup> Some are advertised in Johannesburg newspapers, but were uncommon. In early 1900 the burgher women receiving poor relief from the Boer authorities in Johannesburg pointed out that free grain was no use to them if they were too poor to buy coal with which to bake it.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Van Onselen, *New Babylon*, p.6.

<sup>22</sup> *The Star*, 10 April 1889.

<sup>23</sup> Betty McNamee, 'Trends in Meat Consumption, in T C Barker, J C McKenzie & John Yudkin (Eds), *Our Changing Fare: 200 Years of British Food Habits*, MacGibbon & Kee, London 1966, p.88.

<sup>24</sup> Diana Cammack, *The Rand at War 1899-1902: The Witwatersrand & the Anglo-Boer War*, James Currey, London, 1990, p.75.

Working class people in Britain at the time often had only an open fireplace in their homes with a kettle and frying pan to prepare tea or potatoes with bits of bacon,<sup>25</sup> and, particularly where female employment was high, had long relied on street food – pies, fish and chips, buns – and it is likely that similar street food was available in Johannesburg. Praagh, in his description of Johannesburg Market in 1906, states that cooked food was sold from stalls around the walls,<sup>26</sup> but does not say what type of food this was.

There were also a large number of men who needed a midday meal reasonably near their place of work, few of which had canteens at this time. These were catered for, at the top end of the scale, by clubs and hotels, and lower down the scale, by ‘shilling restaurants’. There were a number of ‘shilling restaurants’ in Johannesburg, of varying quality. There was correspondence on them in *The Star* on the general theme that ‘places and waiters could be cleaner, and the food better cooked and served’.<sup>27</sup> There is little evidence available lower down the social scale. Where did the cab and tram drivers, brickmakers, and workers generally eat a midday meal? Those near their homes could perhaps eat something there, but nobody has thought to record it. C M Rogerson, a historical geographer, comments that past the middle of the twentieth century Africans could buy takeaway food but had to sit on the pavement eating it, there being no provision at all for feeding the thousands of workers in Johannesburg during the day.<sup>28</sup>

Africans not living in compounds and fed by their employers would have similar problems, and mealie meal needs more cooking than buying a loaf of bread. Those with some money could patronise an eating house, but the numbers of these were limited because of objections raised by neighbours or if a site was near a school or a church. ‘Native’ eating houses were only allowed to trade between 8 am and 7 pm, and were ‘expensive and insalubrious’ according to Rogerson writing of the 1930s.<sup>29</sup> A plateful of mealie meal and meat then cost a ticky (3d), and the offal and cheap meat, before the days of refrigeration when nothing was thrown away, created ‘an overwhelming stench of offal, blood, smoke, and sweat, with the perpetual presence of flies’. The rare newspaper mention of them earlier in the century was not concerned with the plight of the customers, but with their reputed illegal activities – illicit gold buying, prostitution, gambling, or liquor selling. Many of them, particularly on mines, were associated with a butchery and general store, and these were accused of using the eating house as a front for Sunday sales which were illegal.<sup>30</sup>

This 1905 list of revenue from Trade Licences indicates the numbers of hawkers and institutional caterers in food supply:

Hawkers	£9,913	12s	6d
Boarding Houses and Restaurants	2,223	13	6
Hotel Dining Rooms	2,207	12	6

<sup>25</sup> Betty McNamee, ‘Trends in Meat Consumption’, p.88

<sup>26</sup> L V Praagh, *The Transvaal and its Mines: The Encyclopaedic History of the Transvaal*, Praagh & Lloyd, Johannesburg, 1906, p.259.

<sup>27</sup> *The Star*, 15 July 1896.

<sup>28</sup> C M Rogerson, ‘Feeding the common people of Johannesburg, 1930-1962’, *Journal of Historical Geography*, 12.1, 1986, p.57.

<sup>29</sup> Rogerson, ‘Feeding the Common People’, pp.56-73.

<sup>30</sup> Titlestad, *Eating-houses*, pp.26-27.



Dairies	954	12	6
Butchers	634	12	
Kaffir Eating Houses	420	17	6
Bakers	178	8	
Slaughter Poles	63	15	<sup>31</sup>

Hawkers were obviously a major source of food bought, but apart from the press articles about Indian fruit sellers mentioned in Chapter Three, there is little information about what they sold. Street food, such as bread and buns, must have been part of their stocks. We know that there was a 'cafe-de-move-on' in 1907 in the Market Square, but black owned coffee stalls did not appear until the late 1920s.<sup>32</sup>

### THE MARKET

Johannesburg Market was the main distributing point for fresh produce arriving in Johannesburg. In the first few months farmers had brought their wagons with food, forage, cattle and peach brandy into Ferreira's Camp and a square in Marshall's Dorp and bartered off the wagons.<sup>33</sup> At the first public sale of stands in December 1886, the Market Square laid out measured 1,300 feet by 300 feet – the largest in the country.<sup>34</sup> The need for a more permanent market place soon became obvious, however. Small towns could hold a market in a large open space on a set day of each week when it would be profitable for sufficient buyers and sellers to get together, but the mushrooming population made a daily market feasible. Producer-retailer selling is common in early periods, but soon becomes too time-consuming for producers as the food chain lengthens.<sup>35</sup> In Johannesburg's case, the length of the food chain for non-perishables was, from the beginning, so long that shops and permanent market stalls evolved at the same time as the central market. By May 1888 a market building, costing £1,000 was erected.

The Kruger Government's policy for fostering and developing industry was to sell monopoly concessions to individuals, which brought in immediate cash and saved on administration costs, but meant that, as in the case of Johannesburg market, towns were deprived of annual revenue. A Marketmaster, Zuhlsdorff,<sup>36</sup> was appointed, but the Special Landdrost recommended the permanent appointment of Stephanus Papenfus, brother of a local politician, and at 7 am on 1<sup>st</sup> February 1887, Papenfus opened the first market. His commission was 10 per cent on all turnover (2½ per cent was the normal commission<sup>37</sup>) out of which he had to meet all expenses. The Sanitary Board was assigned one half per cent of turnover, which in the first eight months of trading gained it £250 against the £5,000 made by Papenfus – Paul Kruger is said to have remarked that he earned more money than the President of the ZAR.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Local Government Library, Johannesburg Municipal Council, Mayor's Minutes for year ended October 1905.

<sup>32</sup> Rogerson, 'Feeding the Common People', pp.57-58.

<sup>33</sup> John R Shorten, *The Johannesburg Saga*, Johannesburg City Council, Johannesburg, 1970, p.105.

<sup>34</sup> F Addington Symonds, *The Johannesburg Story*, Frederick Muller, London, 1953, p.52.

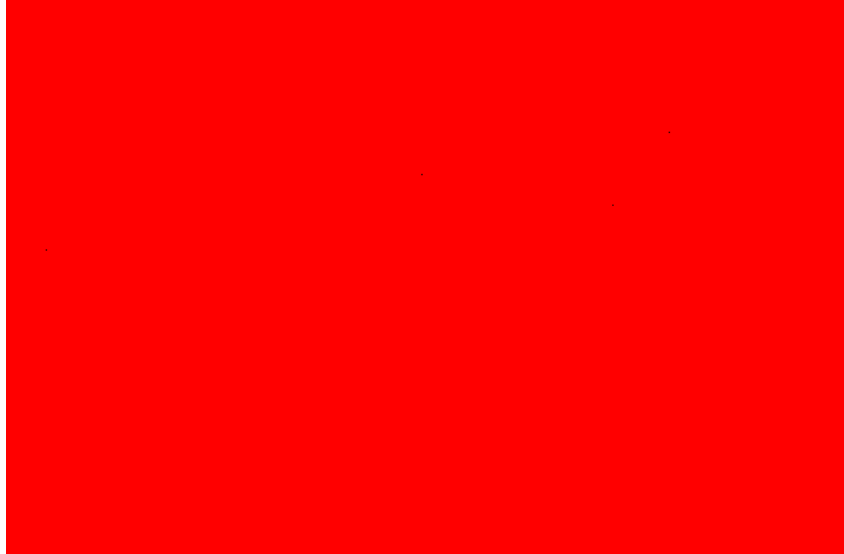
<sup>35</sup> Roger Scola, *Feeding the Victorian City: The Food Supply of Manchester, 1770-1870*, University of Manchester Press, 1992, pp.5-6.

<sup>36</sup> Possibly the M L Zuhlsdorff who was listed as a Government Messenger in *Jeppe's Transvaal Directory* of 1889.

<sup>37</sup> For instance in Pretoria in 1888. Report of the Commission on Transvaal Concessions, 1901, Cd 623-625, p.111.

<sup>38</sup> Shorten, *The Johannesburg Saga*, pp.105-106.

Papenfus was given permission to let stalls, shops, offices and rooms in the new Market building, to conduct sales in the said building and let the main hall for public entertainments, and even lease offices to the Government for ten years at an annual rental of £300. In April 1888 the Sanitary Committee, with Dr Hans Sauer in the Chair was discussing a reduction of the marketmasters' commission.<sup>39</sup>



The old Market building from *Like it Was 1887-1997: The Star 100 Years in Johannesburg*, Argus Printing, Johannesburg, 1987, p.11.

In 1888 occasional market reports were published in newspapers, such as this on 7 September with a summary: 'Potatoes scarce, salt scarce; poultry in demand', with no indication of amounts. Mealies were usually sold in 200lb bags or a muid, and poultry individually but this is not specified:

JOHANNESBURG MARKET PRICES [human food items only]

	s	d		s	d
Boer Meal	25	0			
Boer Meal sifted	27	6	to	30	
Flour, Free State	35	0		37	6
Mealie Meal	17	0		18	0
Kafir Corn Meal	13	0		14	0
Wheat	20	0		24	0
Barley	20	0		25	0
Mealies	15	0		16	0
Kafir Corn	14	0			
Potatoes	25	0		50	0
Salt	35	0			
Beans	10	0		15	0
Fowls	2	0		3	0
Geese	3	6		4	0
Ducks	2	0			
Turkeys	7	0		12	0
Sucking Pigs	5	0		7	6
Butter, Fresh, lb	1	6			
Butter, salted, lb	1	1			
Eggs, doz	1	3		1	6

<sup>39</sup> *Diggers' News and Witwatersrand Advertiser*, 24 April 1888.

Pork, lb	0	4		
Slaughter Oxen	120	0	to	170 0

S PAPPENFUS, Marketmaster<sup>40</sup>

Towards the end of 1888, Pappenfus sold his concession to A Langebrink, the market having an annual monthly turnover of £39,400. In a letter to *The Diggers' News and Witwatersrand Advertiser*, in April 1889, 'CITIZEN' complained:

Sir – When it was first made known that the Johannesburg Market was to be a monopoly in the hands of the market master, I pointed out that it would be a great public wrong and that the people of Johannesburg would live to regret it. The market master was not long before he handed it over to a syndicate – of course for a consideration. His object in getting the market into his hands was the 'consideration' and nothing else, and no one can blame him. The blame rests on those from whom he obtained the monopoly.

The syndicate set out by fixing the rent of the stalls at £5 per stall - £60 per annum. The stall keepers had hardly commenced to establish business when the rent was increased to £7 per month - £84 per year, and now it is said that they are about to increase the rent to £9 per month - £108 per year. There is nothing to prevent their fixing the rents at £108 per month if it should "please their dainty whim" to do so. The only restraint upon their doing such an outrageous act is that they would have all their stalls left on their hands. The £7 rent will soon give them back in premium on their shares an enormous profit if they sell out, and if they hold their dividends will be ten times those of any gold mining company. If the Government or the public got any advantage from these extraordinarily high rents there could be less to complain of, but the money that comes from the rents goes direct into the pockets of the members of the voracious syndicate.

And then the costly and commodious building is employed, not as was intended altogether as a produce market but a large proportion of the stalls are beer shops, ginger and hop, and something stronger on the quiet, coffee and snack shops and such like, and the offices surrounding the place are used for the sale "of tapes, and tins and walnut pickle" for beer halls and all sorts of purposes foreign to the purpose of a public market. Altogether this successful business is a scandal to the community. Public markets should be in the hands of a municipality or some other corporate body and regulated by rules and conditions. If we were to get a municipality tomorrow, that body could not get the control of the market without taxing the community to a frightful extent to satisfy the good of the syndicate who would demand an extortionate price even if they would consent to sell out or were compelled to do so by an act of the Volksraad.<sup>41</sup>

These remarks were to be heard again and again until 1906 when the Town Council finally managed to buy out the Market Buildings Company concession. Similar problems were experienced in nineteenth century English cities where many markets were still subject to manorial rights and the municipalities had no control over their exploitation. Manchester only managed to buy out Sir Oswald Mosley, the Lord of the Manor, in 1846 for the very large sum of £200,000.<sup>42</sup>

No doubt 'Citizen' was even more appalled when in October 1889, Langebrink sold the monopoly concession, together with a 99-year building lease on part of Market Square, to a company set up for the purpose, the Johannesburg Market Buildings Company Limited, under the chairmanship of Dr Hans Sauer (who was still on the Sanitary Board at that time, with an obvious conflict of interest).<sup>43</sup> The Government was to receive one per cent of the now 2½ per cent commission, and the salaries of the Marketmaster, J Smuts, a former assistant to Pappenfus, and

<sup>40</sup> *Diggers' News and Witwatersrand Advertiser*, 8 September 1888.

<sup>41</sup> *Diggers' News and Witwatersrand Advertiser*, April 16 1889.

<sup>42</sup> Roger Scola, *Feeding the Victorian City* p.161.

<sup>43</sup> Shorten, *The Johannesburg Saga*, pp.106-107.

his assistants, were to be paid from the company's one and a half per cent. Also in October 1889 according to *The Star*,

... there was a presentation to the Market Master, Mr Josias Smuts, who conducted the sales of garden produce in the market shed on being about to enter the connubial state. A money purse collected by produce dealers as a substantial mark of their regard; £200 from the produce dealers and £50 from the Directors of the Market Buildings Co. Mr D. R. McLachlan, read an address stating the respect and esteem gained by his endeavour to serve the public. Mr Smuts replied that it was hard in such a position as his to please everybody but on the whole things had gone very smoothly with the market. Monthly sales had been only £800 in 1887; they were now £40,000 a month and he believed they would soon double that amount.<sup>44</sup>

The new company was to be entrusted with the management and control of the market on the outside as well as the inside of the Market buildings.<sup>45</sup> Another condition of the new contract was that the Company should erect new market buildings by 1<sup>st</sup> January 1892 which were to cost £50,000. The existing market building was functional in appearance, and was beginning to be surrounded by far more splendid buildings such as the Stock Exchange, Rand Club and banking premises.<sup>46</sup>

On Friday 13 December 1890, *The Star* carried this announcement:

THE MARKET BUILDINGS  
AN EIGHTY PER CENT INVESTMENT  
ENLARGING THE SPHERE OF OPERATIONS

There is certainly no better investment in Johannesburg – nor, perhaps, in South Africa – than the Market Concession and Buildings Company. It is now about fourteen months since the concession was granted, the term being for five years, and the ground placed at the disposal of the *cessionaires* being of limited extent. Upon a capital of £18,000, a company was floated to carry out the objects of the concession, and its operations – hampered though it has been for want of room – have been successful in a very high degree. During the past twelve months the Company has paid dividends amounting in the aggregate to 84 per cent of paid-up capital. The declaration for November was 7½ per cent, and for the current month it has already been determined to pay no less than 15 per cent. The shares of the Company are firm at £54.

The market revenue is derived from a commission of 5 per cent, upon all auction sales effected inside the market house, from stall rents, and from a commission of 2½ per cent – of which, however, 1 per cent is paid over to the Government – upon all sales effected outside. Recognising the obligations which the right to charge these commissions threw upon them, the Company resolved some months ago to erect new and more commodious buildings, provided the terms of the concession were so varied as to make it worth their while. The Government, being approached on the subject, finally agreed to extend the term of the privilege to 99 years, and to place at the disposal of the Company an enlarged area amounting in the aggregate to six full stands. The site, as readers of *The Star* will be aware, is in the middle of Market Square, just opposite the Stock Exchange. The only condition attached to the grant is that the buildings to be erected should cost not less than £50,000, and that adequate provision shall be made for all market purposes before any portion of them is let for shops, offices, or banks.

... If the revenue of the Company were not to increase by so much as a penny, in consequence of the erecting of new buildings, a dividend of 8 per cent upon the new capital could easily be declared; but it is

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<sup>44</sup> *The Star*, October 9 1889.

<sup>45</sup> Cd.623-625, *Report of the Commission on Transvaal Concessions: With Evidence, Appendix, and Index*, Presented to Parliament 19 April 1901, London, 1901, p.114.

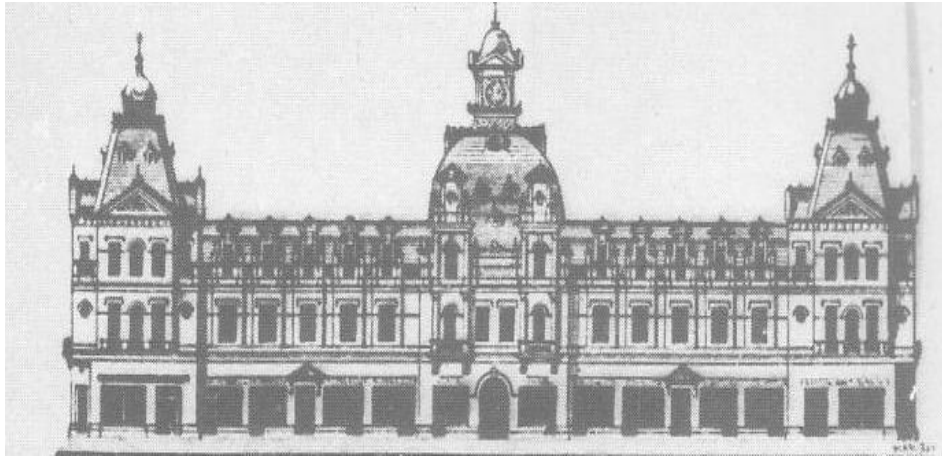
<sup>46</sup> G M Van der Waal, *The Market Square of Johannesburg: Catalogue for Buildings on and around the Square until about 1920*, Public Library, Johannesburg, 1971, p.2.

estimated that the new buildings will bring in not less than £40,000 per annum, and that a dividend of 35 per cent can be earned, even if the population of Johannesburg should be no larger than it is today. As a matter of fact, the population is increasing with marvellous rapidity, in proof of which we have only to append the official return of sales effected on the market during the past twelve months. From this it will be seen that the aggregate was not far less than half a million sterling, and that the transactions in November of the present year exceeded those of November 1888 by more than three times. Total sales for 13 months November 1888 to 1889: Outside £424,118 14 4; Inside £69,998 6 4

It may be necessary to add that no other market can be opened within a radius of three miles from the new market house. The Directors of the Company are Dr H Sauer, Mr R.C. Stroyan, Mr Eckart-Beckmann, Mr F A English, and the Hon. J W Sauer MLA. Mr D R McLachlan has received the appointment of Secretary to the new Company, and a better selection could not possibly be made.<sup>47</sup>

On 27 December 1889, ambitious plans were announced for the New Market Buildings:

These buildings, which comprise one of the largest building schemes undertaken in Johannesburg, are to be erected on the Market Square on the site of the present Market Buildings, which will be demolished. ... The plan is arranged in the form of a hollow square, with a European Market Hall 140 ft by 50 ft, and a Native Market Hall 65 ft by 50 ft, being the hollow of the square. The market halls have cart entrances from three frontages, and are divided by a wall and sliding doors.



Architects' impression of the New Market Hall, *The Star*, 29 December 1889

Three of the four corners of the block are to be occupied by spacious shops, while the fourth corner provides bar, billiard-room and restaurant accommodation for market traders. One of the centre pavilions will be devoted to a "Beer Hall" in continental style, with restaurant and billiard rooms on the first floor. The north side provides nine shops inside, and facing into the Market halls will be nine market stalls, besides the market master's public and private offices, these being directly accessible from both the European and native markets. The south front gives eight shops and eight market stalls, beside the beer-hall etc. already referred to. There will be two entrances and staircases (four in all) leading to the offices and chambers on the first and second stories, each pair being connected by a bridge which will be constructed through the roofs of the market interior, thus connecting the north and south blocks. On the first floor two of the corner shops will have spacious showrooms with independent (additional) staircase from their respective shops on the ground floor. One of the other corners will be utilised for the restaurant department set aside for market dealers, while the fourth will be merged into the general office accommodation. Besides the restaurant and billiard room apportioned by the beer-hall, all of which, by the way, are intended to be a convenience to the tenants of the offices and chambers, there will be 39 spacious offices on the first floor, with four lavatories and latrines, one being placed in each corner of the block, and each adjoining an

<sup>47</sup> *The Star*, 13 December 1889.

open area for light and ventilation purposes. The second floor is approached by four staircases, as to the first floor.

Two of the corner pavilions will be set aside for the use of local institutions or for the use of company or board meetings. The corner over the restaurant for market dealers is set aside for living rooms and kitchen in connection with that business, and the space over the central restaurant and beer hall will be similarly treated. The remainder of the second floor will be adapted for fifty-nine chambers or living rooms. Thus tenants of shops or offices in the building will have their place of business with board and lodging under the same roof.

It is estimated that the revenue of the whole of the block of the building will be not less than £2,000 per month.<sup>48</sup>

This revenue seems to be solely from rents of shops and offices; the market revenue would have been over and above this. The expected revenue from the building given in the prospectus above is hoped to be 'not less than £40,000 per annum'. It is difficult to be sure how the Market was organised. The sources, detailed in some issues, are silent on others. It is apparent from the sales figures given in *The Star* that the bulk of the sales took place outside the market hall (£424,118 14s 4d versus £69,998 6s 4d inside the hall for the period November 1888 to 1889), where livestock and animal fodder were auctioned. Heavy sacks of grain would have remained outside on the wagons that brought them while the auctioneer and buyers moved round them. Vegetables and fruit were displayed on tables inside, and in November 1889 were said to be outgrowing the space available. The newspaper report refers to the 'Native Market Hall' in the hollow of the square, but unfortunately there is no further mention in any of the sources as to who patronised this portion of the Market, nor what was sold in it. The early morning market was for bulk-buying by dealers, hotels and restaurants, and the mines, but there are later indications that the market was open to the public after 9 am.<sup>49</sup> Lionel Curtis, one of 'Milner's kindergarten' and the Town Clerk in Johannesburg Town Council after the South African war, in correspondence with Milner about the Concession, claimed that it was the practice of the Company to allow stall-holders inside the Market Buildings to sell their produce without it being first put up to auction.<sup>50</sup>

The Market Buildings Concession Company was exploiting its position next to the Stock Exchange and other important buildings to set up the beer hall, billiard table, restaurant, shops and offices in addition to the market activities. The architecture seems grandiloquent. In his catalogue of prints of the early buildings around Market Square, architectural historian G M van der Waal refers to it as 'Dutch Renaissance style'.<sup>51</sup> Its appearance seems to have been a product both of imperial expression and of the local feeling that a public building in such an important position should reflect the town inhabitant's European origins and styles. The Republican government had embarked on a gold-funded building spree in Pretoria in the 1890s drawing on continental designs. The condition imposed on the new market building was that it should cost at least £50,000, and in fact it cost only £44,000 when completed in

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<sup>48</sup> *The Star*, 29 December 1889.

<sup>49</sup> Johannesburg Local Government Library, Johannesburg City Council Minutes 1 October 1902, p.920.

<sup>50</sup> Transvaal Archives TAB GOV 458, 1901-1903, Private Secretary (PS) 86/01, Statement of the position of the Town Council in regard to the Johannesburg Market, March 1902.

<sup>51</sup> Van der Waal, *The Market Square of Johannesburg* pp.1-2



1891. In 1901 the new Johannesburg municipal government tried unsuccessfully to make this shortfall a reason for the cancellation of the concession in its evidence to the Concessions Committee.<sup>52</sup>

The Concessions Committee found, in the case of the market concessions for both Johannesburg and Pretoria the terms had been in substance complied with though there had been some shortfall in payments to the Government. The Committee added 'that the contract does not authorise the Concessionaire to make a profit out of that portion of the fees appropriated to the Market Master and his assistants, we foresee little difficulty in arranging for the retrocession to the Government or local authority of the privilege of management.'<sup>53</sup> Milner, however, disagreed to Chamberlain, the Colonial Secretary: 'I am of the opinion that no material invalidity of the Concession can be shown, and, there being no law under which the Company can be expropriated without its consent, I would recommend that the Concession be recognised.' He also proposed that the amount of 1% payable to the Government under the Concession should be assigned to the Revenue of the Town Council from the date on which the Concession was recognised.<sup>54</sup> The Colonial Secretary hesitated, stating that 'the management of the Market was contrary to the public interest' and that the Concession not be recognised, but Milner 'adhered to the position that no material invalidity of the Concession can be shown', and the Concession was recognised in 1903.<sup>55</sup> The later history of changes to the market under British colonial rule after the South African war will be continued in Chapter Six.

## GRAINS

Grain was always at the head of market price reports. The quantity required meant that from the beginning it was drawn in from far afield. As described in Chapter Three, the Orange Free State, was the chief source although Transvaal farmers rapidly expanded production once they had the effective demand of a market. There were five main ways in which a farmer could market his maize:

- By loading it onto a wagon and take it to market himself if near enough, a practise mentioned in the early days;
- by selling it to the local storekeeper, which was the usual route for the less-well-off farmer as the storekeeper provided him with credit against which he and his family could buy necessary consumer goods – tools, coffee, sugar, dress materials and suchlike - but the storekeeper did not lose on the transactions;
- by disposing of it through a broker or wholesale merchant in a bigger centre, which the better-off farmers preferred to do;
- by feeding it to pigs and other livestock on the farm to obtain increased value as meat;
- by dealing directly with milling companies or mines, in which case the farmer needed to be able to supply large quantities of reliable quality.

<sup>52</sup> TAB GOV 21 GEN 575/02, Statement of the position of the Town Council , March 1902.

<sup>53</sup> *Report of Transvaal Concessions Committee*, pp.113,115.

<sup>54</sup> TAB GOV 111, GEN 152/02, Milner to Chamberlain, 12 April 1902.

<sup>55</sup> CS 129 9975/02 Chamberlain to Milner 2 August 1902; GEN 575/02, Despatch No 10, Milner to Chamberlain 12 January 1903; GOV 21 GEN 575/02 Tvl No 165, Chamberlain to Milner 7 February 1903

In this period the second was the most usual procedure, with the storekeeper selling through a broker or direct to a wholesale merchant, who in turn sold to the mines, the milling companies and other large users.<sup>56</sup> The scale of the mines' purchasing fostered the development of large-scale intermediaries who could be relied on. The reliance on credit by smaller farmers led them into a debt trap. Rural areas in the Transvaal still operated on very little cash, and rural storekeepers needed cash to fund restocking their stores, so tended to sell quickly on to urban areas after harvest when prices at their lowest. Farmers, black and white, then had to resort to buying back grain for their own needs later in the season when prices were higher.<sup>57</sup>

The gold mines were the chief buyers of maize for feeding their unskilled African workforce and seem to have used a variety of sources:

- contracts, often put out to tender, with dealers and large farmers,
- production on their own lands, bought speculatively but utilised through tenant farmers,
- smaller mines bought direct from the market or from dealers who had bought in the market,
- some imported direct, as indicated in the following report.

Once the railways arrived cheaper supplies could be imported from overseas and this improved year-round availability for consumers. The following report in *The Star* demonstrates how this ability to import was made more urgent by the rinderpest epidemic of 1896:

One of the most remarkable effects of the rinderpest regulations, and the stoppage of the ordinary means of transport, previously at the disposal of the farmer, namely the ox-wagon ... after the first spasm of alarm had subsided, merchants and farmers gradually submitted to the new conditions, and though in the produce-growing districts of Bethlehem, Ladybrand, Ficksburg and possibly a few other places similarly situated the farmers are still suffering considerable loss and inconvenience, yet on the whole those in the trade here have no cause to grumble as to difficulties or cost of transport, and transport is being brought into town by rail in far larger quantities daily than was ever experienced during the ox-wagon regime and at far less cost to the consumer.

It is true that the produce now placed on the market is now brought in from the Free State or the Colony, whereas prior to the rinderpest regulations large quantities were sent in from various parts of the Transvaal. Moreover many of the mining companies are now importing their own mealies direct, which relieves the demand in the town to a great extent. Apparently the farmer or produce-grower is the only sufferer by the new regulations, and in his case it is only when he is so situated as to necessitate the repeated handling of the produce he sends in, which naturally adds to the expense of transport.

This in fact is a disadvantage which to a certain extent is common to everything imported by rail, and the absence of the ox-wagon results in the additional disadvantage incurred through consignments of produce being dumped down all over the Market-square, instead of as before being allowed to remain on the transport wagons until it had been disposed of by auction and delivered to its purchaser.<sup>58</sup>

This last point emphasises how extraordinary it was that for nearly twenty years, 1892-1895 to 1913, when the new produce market in Newtown was finally opened, all produce arriving by rail had to be loaded on to wagons and carts

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<sup>56</sup> Herbert Frankel, *Co-operation and Competition in the Marketing of Maize in South Africa*, P S King, London, 1926, p.21.

<sup>57</sup> Tim Keegan, 'Seasonality, Markets and Pricing: The South African Maize Trade in the Early Twentieth Century', *Institute of Commonwealth Studies Societies of Southern Africa in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries Seminar*, paper for discussion on 31 May 1978, p.2.

<sup>58</sup> *The Star*, 5 August 1896.

for the journey from the railway goods yard to Market Square. Animal-drawn traffic in the centre of a busy city, particularly in the business district, must have both greatly increased congestion and been a major inefficiency in food distribution. Its acceptance probably stemmed from the number of interests involved – the carriers, the auctioneers, dealers, customers – and the other claims on municipal funds. Similar delays in updating distribution technology occurred in European cities: the markets of Covent Garden in London and Les Halles in Paris did not move away from city centres to less congested areas until the 1970s.<sup>59</sup>

Imported Australian and American flour had for many years made good any shortfalls in the local crop, and its higher quality was preferred. In the 1890s world prices were low as a result of the Great Depression, when wheat grown on the new lands of the Americas, Australasia and the Ukraine flooded the European market and ruined European farmers as described in Chapter Two. Even before the railways reached Johannesburg, flour seems to have been plentiful, however, indicating the strong demand based on the importance of bread in the Uitlander diet. *The Diggers' News and Witwatersrand Advertiser* for 18 June 1889 reports the ceremonial opening of the Rand Steam Flour Mill, on the corner of Commissioner and Fox Streets, Johannesburg's second mill, the proprietors having for many years conducted a similar business at Vaal Bank:

No longer is wheat converted into flour by the primitive means which found favour with the intensely conservative Boer; a means which, owing to the handling to which the substance was subjected, was not calculated to satisfy one of its over-cleanliness. The wheat is cleaned and dehusked with numberless brushes, then crushed into creamy white flour and passed through a rotating silk sieve called a dresser 'whence it emerges a best flour without coming into contact with anything of an objectionable nature, and without being in any way assisted by manual labour. The machinery is driven by a 18 h.p. Rushton and Proctor engine'<sup>60</sup> ....

The Johannesburg Flour Mill had also been inaugurated a short time beforehand by Captain Von Brandis, the Landrost and Mining Commissioner, who said that 'Johannesburg had been a town of continual surprises; enterprise had followed enterprise, until one had given up being surprised at anything.'<sup>61</sup>

Bakers were a large and powerful group in Johannesburg. There were 17 bakers in 1893,<sup>62</sup> 30 in 1897,<sup>63</sup> and 76 in 1906.<sup>64</sup> The Master Bakers Association met regularly at the Langham Hotel for the purpose of dealing with matters affecting the trade under the chairmanship of J W Quinn, who was prominent in local affairs, including the Chamber of Commerce, and who became Mayor after the South African war. On one occasion in 1889 the Master Bakers resolved not to give Christmas boxes to customers, indicating the strong competition among the 34 bakeries licensed by the Sanitary Board, as well as to protest against a recent article in the press claiming that they forced their operatives to work long hours including Sundays. It was necessary to prepare dough on Sundays, but all maintained they did not sell or deliver bread as well.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>59</sup> [www.coventgardenlondonuk.com](http://www.coventgardenlondonuk.com) and [www.en.forumdeshalles.com](http://www.en.forumdeshalles.com), downloaded 18 January 2012.

<sup>60</sup> Not only foodstuffs travelled by ox-wagon in the pre-railway days, but the means of processing them as well.

<sup>61</sup> *Diggers' News & Witwatersrand Advertiser*, 18 June 1889.

<sup>62</sup> *Longland's Johannesburg and District Directory 1893*, Henry Longland, Johannesburg, pp.255-256.

<sup>63</sup> *Longland's Johannesburg and the South African Republic Directory, 1897*, Henry Longland, Johannesburg 1897, pp.689.

<sup>64</sup> *Post Office Directory of the Transvaal, 1906*, Post Office, Johannesburg, 1906, pp.155,157.

<sup>65</sup> *The Star*, 23 November 1896.

## FRUIT AND VEGETABLES

Market reports frequently comment on the abundance of vegetables, fruit and salads supplied by nearby market gardeners. *Longlands 1893 Directory*, when only the railway from the Cape had arrived, lists 19 Fruiterers /Greengrocers;<sup>66</sup> the *1897 Directory* 23,<sup>67</sup> and the *1906 Post Office Directory* 72.<sup>68</sup> According to a contemporary Johannesburg resident, Vera Watt, there was also direct producer selling:

When the yellow peaches were ripe an ox-wagon would wend its way slowly along with a *piccanin* acting as *voorloper*, and a man at the back ready to wind a black handle which put on the brakes whenever a customer appeared. The farmer walked alongside the wagon wearing a wide-brimmed leather hat, long khaki trousers and a long-sleeved khaki shirt and *veldskoene*. One of them used to shout 'Peaches, one shilling a hundred' and out we would run with baskets or basins.<sup>69</sup>

After the railway from Natal arrived in December 1895, Indian shopkeepers and hawkers became more prominent in the fruit distribution business. *The Star* in 1896 reported that Indians controlled one half of the fruit business, with 500 Indian middlemen selling 60 per cent of Johannesburg's fruit.

The majority call at the saleroom in the morning and purchase from ten to fifteen shillings worth of fruit and set out on their daily rounds or take up a position in the Market-square or Marshall's-square. Sammy's<sup>70</sup> price list is a most flexible affair. Generally speaking, he begins in the morning by charging, or rather asking, a profit of fully 100 per cent, but with all the haggling of the housewives, and especially of their domestics, he is satisfied if he earn a clear 50 per cent on his forenoon's transactions. Sometimes he may be almost equally lucky in the afternoon, but as a rule he has to be content with a rate yielding not more than 35 per cent. On an average the street-vendors earn from 3s to 7s 6d per day. Even with the former income they are quite happy, for currie and rice are not expensive articles of diet and the rent of a hut in the location does not make a heavy drain on Sammy's finances.

Indians are generally speaking thrifty when they are dealing with their own money, and many of them save in a wonderfully short time sufficient to start in business on their own account with the assistance of wealthy Indian merchants, who are ever on the alert for fresh channels of activity. So in the natural course of things Sammy will in a year or two shake the dust of the street from off his feet and graduate as a full-blown shopkeeper. Industrious, persevering, and having an eye to the main chance, he will ultimately save sufficient - this at the expense of his creditors if not by legitimate trading - to enable him to return to his native land and there spend his days in comparative affluence.

An average of three fruit trucks a day arrived from Natal, but the Netherlands Railway administration was uncooperative, with fruit rotting due to frequent delays, mishandling and pilferage. Trains might arrive at Johannesburg station at 7 am, but the fruit never reached the agents before 11 am and not infrequently until well into the afternoon. The Market would have been closed by then, so it seems likely that Natal fruit went direct to dealers.<sup>71</sup>

During the coming week it is expected that vegetables will be selling at very low rates in consequence of the action taken on the part of the Town Council in refusing to allow coolies to hawk vegetables around the town owing to the outbreak of smallpox among the coolies, so that householders in want of vegetables must now either send to their greengrocers for supplies, or make a point of attending the morning market.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>66</sup> *Longlands 1893 Directory*, p.284.

<sup>67</sup> *Longlands 1897 Directory*, p.197.

<sup>68</sup> *Post Office 1906 Directory*, pp.725-726.

<sup>69</sup> Vera A Watt in Claire Robertson (Ed), *Remembering Old Johannesburg*, National Council of Women of South Africa, Ad Donker, 1986, pp.9-10.

<sup>70</sup> Another pejorative term for Indians.

<sup>71</sup> *The Star*, 10 July 1896.

<sup>72</sup> *The Star*, 11 December 1897.

Two days later it was reported:

One special feature of the vegetable market is the absence of the coolies and kaffirs, due to the outbreak of smallpox among them. The market has been attended only by Europeans. The prices obtained have been generally satisfactory to the farmers; salesmen have greater difficulty in selling as they miss the large coolie buyer, who would sometimes purchase in very bulky parcels to distribute among hawkers to retail, whereas the European only purchases sufficient for his actual daily use.<sup>73</sup>

Little is mentioned in the pre-war press about the distribution of poultry and eggs, which also went through the produce market in substantial amounts, not always smoothly. At a weekly meeting of the Sanitary Board in 1895:

Mr A H Bleksley (Sanitary Superintendent) reported:- The Department examined 9 lots of fish and 33 of meat during the week and passed same as fit for human food. Bad eggs are constantly being exposed for sale and a trial case was this week brought before the Landdrost, who dismissed the case, however, on the grounds that the vendor did not guarantee the quality and that anybody could have seen the eggs were bad, and people were not compelled to buy them. This is regrettable, as there is no doubt a large number of rotten eggs are being sold on the Market, and I am powerless to stop it; the remarks of the Landdrost might apply to unsound meat and other articles exposed for sale.<sup>74</sup>

There were, however, eight Poulterers in Johannesburg in *Longland's 1897 Directory*<sup>75</sup>, two in Market House, indicating the increasing specialisation of shops as the population expanded. Even more so are the 12 Egg Merchants in the *1906 Post Office Directory*.<sup>76</sup>

## MEAT

Livestock was relatively easily available in the Transvaal in spite of the fact that there was a belief that Africans were reluctant to part with their cattle. In view of their value in transport and farming, these animals were likely to have been old worn out trek oxen and milking cows. They would have lost more weight walking to market as the little pasturage growing by the tracks would have been exhausted by all the other road traffic even in good seasons, and no fodder was carried. They were auctioned to butchers in the lower end of Market Square<sup>77</sup> and slaughtered as soon as possible on slaughterpoles erected on the outskirts – Brixton and Braamfontein are mentioned - but as Johannesburg and its suburbs expanded these were quickly surrounded. The slaughterpoles were grossly insanitary: 'In ramshackle wood-and-iron structures cattle, sheep and pigs were slaughtered by Natives in germ-infested ragged sacking, while in most cases the blood and offal was simply thrown out and left to rot in the sun until heavy rain washed it away and spread a putrid mass of extremely dangerous matter over the whole area.'<sup>78</sup> The meat was sold in a number of butchers' shops, all advertising first class meat as under in 1888:

## BUTCHER'S NOTICE

Mr JOHN HEARNS, while thanking his numerous customers and friends for past liberal patronage and support, and hoping for a continuance of the same, begs to inform them that he has always on hand the

<sup>73</sup> *The Star*, 13 December 1897.

<sup>74</sup> *Standard & Diggers' News*, 17 January 1895.

<sup>75</sup> *Longland's 1897 Directory*, p.225.

<sup>76</sup> *1906 Post Office Directory*, p.712.

<sup>77</sup> There is also a brief mention of slaughter oxen being auctioned in Marshall Square nearby in *The Star* of 12 November 1892.

<sup>78</sup> Shorten, *The Johannesburg Saga*, p.173.

largest and best selected stock of Beef, Mutton, Fresh and Salt Pork, Bacon (our own curing), Beef and Pork Sausages, and Polonies. Tripe and Sheepheads cleaned to order, Hams smoked on the premises. Salt Tongues, Corned Beef, Spiced Beef, Veal.

Hotels and Boarding Houses liberally treated.<sup>79</sup>

In 1888, soon after Johannesburg's foundation, an attempt was made to set up a central abattoir. The Sanitary Board made a verbal arrangement with a Mr George A Stewart that he should erect a proper, clean abattoir. Once he announced that his operation was ready in August 1889, the Board wrote to the Mining Commissioner asking him to prohibit the slaughter of meat on all unlicensed premises.

#### THE JOHANNESBURG SHAMBLES

The Gold Commissioner having reported at the last meeting of the Sanitary Board that an application had been sent into Government for a concession for the erection of slaughter-houses etc., we have inspected the structures now in use for that purpose, and the accommodation provided, to ascertain if there is any necessity for the granting of such a monopoly.

We find that the buildings at which all the cattle and sheep to supply Johannesburg are slaughtered are situated on the farm Turffontein, on ground belonging to the Paarl-Ophir Syndicate, about one mile from town, on the left of the road to Booysen's, and that the whole of the undertaking is the result of the enterprise of one man. Last year, and in what may be called the "good old days", cattle were slaughtered in the open veld and exposed to all weathers. Now, however, I found to my surprise that all this is changed. Mr. G. A. Stewart, a large wool and skin merchant, finding the difficulty of collecting hides, etc. in proper condition, got a promise from the Sanitary Board that all slaughtering required for the town should be done at one site, if he erected thereon suitable buildings, and made the necessary accommodation for the kraaling of cattle etc. When Mr. Stewart got this promise he set to work, upon plans by Messrs. Canning & Goad, and the result of that work is that Johannesburg now has as good as the shambles as can be found in South Africa – a row of thirteen houses, built of iron, each 17 feet by 15, properly flagged, with runners, rails, pulleys, blood reservoirs, and an unlimited supply of water from wells sunk on the premises, all let at moderate rentals to the butchers of Johannesburg. From these the refuse is carted away daily, and burned in suitable places pointed out by the Sanitary Inspector.

There is also at the back of each house a kraal which contains the animals required for each days supply, while further in the rear are larger kraals, in which cattle waiting for slaughter can be penned up each night after grazing during the day in the veldt.

In these houses 1,500 oxen and 15,000 sheep are slaughtered each month, giving employment to over 150 men. Due provision is also made for those whose religion requires some separate convenience, the Arabs even having a distinct house in which they can slaughter.<sup>80</sup> At one end of these houses is a large room 50 feet square, with outhouses, in which the curing and drying of skins is carried on.

We were told that the sum of nearly £6,000 had been invested in these different wells, kraals, and buildings, and we feel sure that everyone that fatal blow it would be to private enterprise in this Republic if at this stage the Government should step in and grant to any concessionaire the monopoly of slaughtering cattle in Johannesburg. It would be more detrimental to public interest than the notorious Sanitary concession could possibly have been, for in this case, an individual, who by the expenditure of large capital, has met a great requirement, would have his business stopped and be ruined. Now is a chance for the Sanitary Board to be "up and doing" and show its power.<sup>81</sup>

But the Sanitary Board's power was extremely limited in terms of the law, and many butchers preferred to make their own slaughtering arrangements. Moreover, there were objections that this was yet another government concession, and Mr Stewart's venture seems to have foundered. Butchering successfully required considerable skill

<sup>79</sup> *Diggers' News and Witwatersrand Advertiser*, 23 February and 9 June 1888.

<sup>80</sup> Using approved Muslim halal slaughter methods.

<sup>81</sup> *The Star*, 21 November 1889.



in assessing, when bidding at an auction, how much meat could be obtained from the live animal, in slaughtering and slicing up the animal to sell all parts profitably, and small-scale butchers preferred to keep all steps in the process in their own hands.

The following notice appeared in *The Star* in August 1889, and was one of the first signs of the coming 'famine'. The range of meat seems very wide for such unsophisticated infrastructure, but presumably, as so often in a strange environment, butchers and their customers from a dominant culture continued to expect everything to be as they were accustomed in their home countries to regardless of local constraints. Note the final item, the cheapest meat, and lowest quality, for Africans.

NOTICE

JOHANNESBURG BUTCHERS' PROTECTION ASSOCIATION

Beg to inform the inhabitants and Public in general of Johannesburg

That from and after the 1<sup>st</sup> AUGUST NEXT, we the undersigned BUTCHERS, beg to notify that in consequence of the great scarcity and very high price of all Slaughter Stock, we are compelled to raise the price of Meat until such time as Stock becomes more plentiful, and consequently cheaper. PRICES TO BE AS FOLLOWS:

PRIVATE CUSTOMERS

Nett

BEEF -	
Rump Steak	8d per lb
Beef -do-	6d "
Sirloin	7d "
Corn Beef	6d "
Ox Tongues	3s 6d each
Ox Tails	1s 6d "
Ox Hearts	1s 6d "
Ox Kidneys	1s "

MUTTON -

Chops	8d per lb
Saddles Mutton	8d "
Legs of Mutton	7d "
Forequarters	6d "
Sheep Kidneys	2s per dozen

PORK -

Chops	1s per lb
Roasting	10d "
Heads	6d "
Lard	1s "

LAMB -

Hindquarters	6s per part
Forequarters	5s "

CURED PORK -

Hams	2s per lb
Bacon	1s 6d "
Sausages	1s "
Polonies	1s "

Smoked and Spiced Beef at 1s "

HOTELS, CLUBS, BOARDING HOUSES

Nett

BEEF -	
Rump Steak	7d per lb
Beef Steak	3d "
Sirloin - 1 <sup>st</sup> cut	7d "
Corned Beef	6d "
Ox Tongues	3s 6d each
Ox Tails	1s 6d "
Ox Hearts	1s 6d "
Ox Kidneys	1s "

MUTTON -

Chops	7d per lb
Saddles of Mutton	7d "
Legs -do-	6d "
Forequarters	6d "
Sheep Kidneys	1s 9d per dozen

PORK -

Chops	10d per lb
Roasting	10d "
Heads	6d "
Lard	10d "

LAMB -

Hindquarters	6s per part
Forequarters	5s "

CURED PORK -

Ham	2s per lb
Bacon	1s 6d "
Sausages	10d "
Polonies	1s "

Smoked and Spiced Beef at 1s "

VEAL –		VEAL –	
Hindquarters	1s per lb	Hindquarters	1s “
Forequarters	10d “	Forequarters	10d “
Sheeps Tongues	4s per dozen	Sheep Tongues	4s per dozen
“ Brains	3s “	Sheep Brains	3s “
“ Suet	6d per lb	Sheep Suet	6d per lb

KAFFIR MEAT – To Companies 3d per lb<sup>82</sup>

It is interesting the note the lower prices on some items for hotels, clubs and boarding houses; the mines, which must have been substantial buyers of meat, are not mentioned, unless ‘Companies’ covers them. No evidence of how the mines obtained meat has come to light, probably in a variety of ways as for grain above. Offal is generally disliked by Americans, so the stock of these butchers seems more to European, even southern European, tastes. Venison, in the form of small buck like springbok or blesbok, occurs in some winter market reports in the newspapers, but not to the extent one would expect, and no mention has been found of sales of biltong.

The existence of a Butchers’ Protection Association in 1889 indicates that there were a fair number of butchers – perhaps somewhere between the five licenced by the Mining Commissioner in October 1886, and the 35 listed in *Longland’s 1893 Directory*.<sup>83</sup> Numbers grew steadily and quickly: 56 were licensed by the Sanitary Board in 1896,<sup>84</sup> there were 57 in *Longland’s 1897 Directory*, and 103 are listed in the 1906 Post Office Directory.<sup>85</sup> Competition must have been fierce – though butcheries by then were widely spread with a number in the working class areas of Fordsburg, Jeppes, Braamfontein, Doornfontein, Vrededorp, and Hillbrow. Without domestic refrigeration, householders, boarding and eating establishments would have to purchase meat supplies nearly every day.

Another attempt was made to set up an abattoir in 1895 when the Sanitary Board decided that, in the light of Consolidated Goldfields having bought out the slaughterpoles, the Town Engineer and the Sanitary Superintendent should bring forward a scheme for new abattoirs for a suitable piece of ground within five miles of Market Square.<sup>86</sup> A week later the press reported the Board heard that:

Mr C Aburrow (Town Engineer) reported on Abattoirs or Slaughter Houses:- In compliance with your instruction I beg to submit the following particulars and suggestions:- The area of land required to meet the requirements of the present population, including the mines (taken at 45,000 persons) would have to be at least three acres in extent, but taking in consideration the growth of the town, I would certainly advise that not less than six acres of ground be purchased. It seems to me quite possible, for the purpose of Abattoirs, to be able to obtain the surface rights on a portion of the proclaimed mining ground located within reasonable distance of the town, say three miles. The necessary buildings would be:-

1. Slaughter house and cooling room for cattle and sheep;
2. Lairage for cattle and sheep;
3. Pig slaughter house, cooling room, boiler house and tripery;
4. Piggeries;
5. Office, stores, folder house, and all the usual sanitary arrangements.

<sup>82</sup> *The Star*, 8 August 1889.

<sup>83</sup> *Longland’s 1893 Directory*, pp.269-270.

<sup>84</sup> *Longland’s 1896 Directory*, p.197.

<sup>85</sup> *1906 Post Office Directory*, pp.699-700.

<sup>86</sup> *Standard & Diggers’ News*, 17 January 1895.

According to information obtained from 52 towns in England, 30 had no public abattoirs, and in those with abattoirs most had separate slaughter-houses and lairage for each butcher. Compulsory powers to close all private slaughter-houses had been obtained by several towns. In 10 towns the abattoirs were found to be a paying concern, while in 5 other towns they were found not to pay their way. The remaining 7 did not state whether the abattoirs were a paying concern or not.<sup>87</sup>

Once again nothing seems to have come of this initiative, probably due to unwillingness of any mine to part with surface rights to proclaimed mining ground, and because Sanitary Board's difficulty of finding financing for a rather large project, because it did not then have powers to raise municipal loans. In 1896, the Medical Officer of Health and the Sanitary Superintendent reported to the Board that the slaughterpoles, then mainly on Government ground in Auckland Park, were 'without exception, dirty and in bad condition.... They recommended abolition of these places, and the erection of abattoirs controlled by the Board where all butchers should be forced to slaughter cattle'. The problem was not solved until January 1910 when the 17 privately owned slaughter houses were closed down and the municipal livestock market and abattoir was opened in Newtown.<sup>88</sup> Thus eventually this important food supply and public health sector came under public control.

Butchers became prominent in press reports again, and formed a Butchers' Association in the rinderpest crisis of winter 1896. The South African Republic had appointed a Rinderpest Commission which issued punitive regulations on the movement of livestock, laying down that no livestock was allowed to enter the Republic at all. The Free State was still disease free, and butchers were particularly concerned about animals they had bought which were held up, unfed and uncared for, at the Vaal River. Meetings of butchers were held almost nightly in the bar of the Monaco Hotel and deputations sent to the government. The Rinderpest Commission stated that slaughtering could take place at the Vaal River, and the carcasses then transported to Johannesburg, but given the haphazard ways of the Netherlands Railway Company, this was not satisfactory. Then the Commission agreed that animals which had passed a veterinary inspection could be transported by train and slaughtered within a mile of where they were unloaded, but the butchers were not willing to pay the high fee demanded for inspection, which they claimed would put the cost of meat up 30 per cent, and they threatened to close their shops. The figure of 5,000 cattle and 13,000 sheep being the normal monthly meat requirement in Johannesburg emerged from the sometimes heated discussion reported in the press (with a strong implication that Combrincks,<sup>89</sup> the monopolistic Cape Town butchery firm, was behind it all, especially when it emerged that the duty had been waived on chilled Australian mutton imported by Combrincks, but not on meat from the Free State or Natal).<sup>90</sup>

By October the rinderpest had spread to the Orange Free State, but Johannesburg butchers managed to get an adequate supply from uninfected areas countrywide because farmers were disposing of their stock quickly before they lost them to the disease. The price of slaughter oxen to butchers then rose from the normal price in May of £6

<sup>87</sup> *Standard & Diggers' News*, 24 January 1895.

<sup>88</sup> Shorten, *The Johannesburg Saga*, pp.172,241.

<sup>89</sup> See Chapter Two on the fear of a Combrincks' monopoly in southern Africa.

<sup>90</sup> *The Star*, 13, 15, 16, 18, 18, 21, 26, 27, 28, 30 May, 1, 3, 6 June.

10s to £7 15s, to £8 to £11 in November 1896, and £14 to £16 in December 1897, and of sheep from 15s to 15s 6d to 20s to 21s, and 26s to 37s 6d on the same dates.<sup>91</sup>

By 1898 the supply of fresh meat brought in by rail had improved as the herds recovered:

#### RAND MEAT SUPPLY

##### Last Month's Statistics

The following are the statistics of the meat supply of Johannesburg during last month. The figures refer only to stock consigned to the Rand by rail, and do not apply to the cattle sent in by road:-

	Oxen	Sheep	Calves	Lambs
Cape Colony	243	2,220	2	142
Natal	205	2,156	13	102
Orange Free State	145	2,342	3	-
Local	<u>3,850</u>	<u>10,333</u>	<u>72</u>	<u>60</u>
February 1898	4,443	17,351	90	304
February 1897	2,525	20,529	169	287 <sup>92</sup>

It may have been that more cattle arrived by road than sheep, but the supply of mutton seems to have increased to fill the demand for meat in Johannesburg, if the normal pre-rinderpest monthly meat supply of 5,000 cattle and 13,000 sheep given above can be accepted. The 13,000 in 1896 increased to 20,529 in 1897, and then fell back to 17,351 as some normality returned.

#### COLD STORAGE

Cold storage had begun to appear in news items in the mid-1890s. The railway from Natal arrived in Johannesburg in January 1896, and Natal Railways had refrigerated cars,<sup>93</sup> so enterprising butchers were bringing frozen Australian meat packed in ice for the Netherlands Railway section in the Transvaal, and selling it in Johannesburg cheaper than local meat. A Cold Storage Syndicate had been set up at the end of April 1896 by a Mr Zeb Goodman to import frozen meat from Australia, and also to set up abattoirs and freezing facilities De Aar and Beaufort West so as to avoid the debilitating trek to Johannesburg when sheep lost weight, or died of thirst on trains. The Syndicate emphasised that this would be wholesale only for butchers to buy their stock from, and would not sell direct to the public. It was stated that cold storage facilities were operating successfully in Australia, and that Combrinck's had set up a cold store in Cape Town for £10,000 and would no doubt soon be moving into the Johannesburg meat market.<sup>94</sup> A month later the Butchers' Association meeting at the Monaco Hotel learned that Mr Goodman had joined up with the 'Combrinck ring'.<sup>95</sup>

Various approaches<sup>96</sup> were made to the government for a co-operative approach, but it was not until two years later, in 1898, that the *Cold Storage and Ice Trades Review* was able to report that:

<sup>91</sup> *The Star*, 2 May & 21 November 1896, 4 December 1897.

<sup>92</sup> *Standard & Diggers' News*, 8 March 1898.

<sup>93</sup> *Standard & Diggers' News*, 10 December 1894.

<sup>94</sup> *The Star*, 22 April 1896.

<sup>95</sup> *The Star*, 30 May 1896.

<sup>96</sup> *Standard & Diggers' News*, 11 December 1896.

the Transvaalsche Koelkamers Beperkt Pretoria, SAR, was formed with a capital of £25,000. Its chief object is to carry out a contract entered into on March 22 1898 between the Government of the South African Republic and Messrs Pieter Johannes Potgieter and Hendrik Jacobus Schoeman for the erection and exploitation of cold storage rooms in the South African Republic, and elsewhere in South Africa. Tenders were called for refrigerating plants to be erected at Pretoria, Johannesburg, and either Durban or Delagoa Bay as may be decided upon. The Company was not to cede its rights without first having obtained the consent of the Government, Specifications were for the Pretoria plant to chill and freeze oxen, and to manufacture two tons of ice per day. The Johannesburg plant only requires frozen meat and chilled meat, fish, butter, fruit or other produce storage, making up to eight tons of ice per day and ice storage.<sup>97</sup>

In 1901 *The Cold Storage and Ice Trades Review* noted that:

Even the devil is not so black as he is painted. Mr Kruger was a strong believer in cold storage, and it was he who carried the Transvaalsche Koelkamers Beperkt scheme through the Volksraad. The shrewd old man argued that cold storage would be one of the pillars to support the State's independence. As it happens cold storage will enable the British to continue in possession.<sup>98</sup>

In October 1903, the Imperial Cold Storage Company, which had then taken over the Transvaal Cold Storage Company, sought to set aside some of the provisions of the 1898 agreement, further details of which now emerged:

The Government undertook to give the company the preference for supplying of any meat required by the Government should be price of the company be equal to the prices etc of the lowest 'accepted tender'. The sale of meat by the company was only to take place wholesale, and the maximum price of beef was fixed at 6d per lb and of mutton at 8d per lb. Should the prices go up, the price of meat would be raised in comparison by agreement and consent of the Government. The Government undertook to advance to the company a sum of £85,000, to be used only as working capital.

This request was opposed by the Pretoria Municipality, and the Government, with public interests in mind, decided to retain the *status quo*.<sup>99</sup>

Owing to the high cost of industrial cold storage facilities, there was a world-wide debate whether this kind of industry should be the responsibility of municipalities so as to provide facilities for small butchers and distributors, or whether it should be left to specialised larger companies. Because of the rinderpest disaster, South Africa was very much concerned with this issue, and Cecil Rhodes moved a motion in the Cape House of Assembly for municipal cold storage to be set up in Cape Town, largely in opposition to the 'butchers' ring' of Combrinck and Company, which had controlled the meat trade in Cape Town for the previous 50 years. In 1896 this was run by J Anthony Combrinck's nephews, David de Villiers Graaff and his younger brother J A C Graaff, who were Bond members politically opposed to Rhodes after the abortive Jameson raid. When the motion failed to be passed, the De Beers Consolidated Mines Company decided in 1898 to set up its own cold storage buildings in Cape Town and in Kimberley, partly to ensure a regular supply for the Kimberley compounds, and partly to break the Combrinck monopoly and bring prices down. De Beers found that the refrigerated cars on the Cape Government railways were only adequate for chilled meat, so the company had to build six cars of its own similar to those used for frozen meat in Australia. De Beers imported frozen meat and had 13 wholesale outlets in Cape Town, and marginally brought down the price of meat there.<sup>100</sup>

<sup>97</sup> *Cold Storage & Ice Trades Review*, August 1898, p.59.

<sup>98</sup> *Cold Storage & Ice Trades Review*, March 1901, p.426.

<sup>99</sup> *Cold Storage & Ice Trades Review*, October 1903, p.354.

<sup>100</sup> Mooneyan Buys, *De Beers Administrative Records on De Beers Cold Storage 1899-1902*, De Beers Consolidated Mines Limited, Kimberley, April 1982, pp.2-5.

The Combrinck company in June 1899 set up the South African Supply & Cold Storage Company Ltd (SASCSC):  
generally to carry on in South Africa or elsewhere the business of dealers in and importers of meat, live and dead stock, dealers in cattle and sheep, purveyors of an dealers in food supplies of all kinds, ice manufacturers, cold storage providers and storers; and to erect and maintain abattoirs, grazing houses, cold storage houses etc.

The *Cold Storage Review* noted that the company had a remarkable directorate of the political elite of the Cape Colony. Sir Gordon Sprigge, former Prime Minister of the Cape Colony, resigned when the conflict of interest was pointed out, but Sir James Sivewright, late Commissioner of Public Works, remained on the board through the various company transmutations that followed.<sup>101</sup> Since Cape Town's foundation with the aim of supplying passing ships, butchers had been powerful figures, and political connections had featured in the award of contracts and tenders

Messrs Combrinck & Co, Cape Town, with its contracts for cold storage accommodation and the supply of meat at Port Elizabeth, Kimberley, and elsewhere, also acquired four-fifths of the capital of the Durban Cold Storage Co Ltd at Natal, four-fifths of the capital of the Johannesburg Cold Storage Co Ltd [formed in August 1899], and nine-tenths interest in the concession for a like business granted by the municipality of Delagoa Bay.<sup>102</sup> It was thus a major player in the rapid expansion of the new cold storage business in the whole of southern Africa, demonstrating that the industrialisation of the region kick-started by mineral discoveries was sweeping aside the narrower interests of the states into which the region was still divided

The substantial profits made by the SASCSC during the South African war on its three successive and very lucrative military meat supply contracts<sup>103</sup> - for the year ending June 30 1901 a dividend of 105 per cent was paid to shareholders, and the reserve fund held £1,000,000 - attracted great attention all over the world, and set off a boom in refrigerating facilities and companies selling machinery, as this report attests:

The Cape Town correspondent of *Cold Storage* writes to say that fully two millions sterling will be spent on new refrigerating and ice-making plants in the British possessions during the next two years, and that at least 200 plants will be required, ranging from 25 to 100 capacity. He adds that upwards of £200,000 worth of provisions have been spoilt since the war began for want of adequate cold storage. We understand that the American and German manufacturers are fully alive to the possibilities following in the wake of the war.<sup>104</sup>

By early 1902, the War Office thought that 'we should attempt to get some new blood into this particular cold storage supply',<sup>105</sup> and for the fourth contract, that would begin in April 1902, tenders were called for from outside South Africa, and eventually awarded to a British company, headed by a M Bergl. Bergl's company, which had cold storage facilities in Queensland, was awarded the tender at 8.46d a lb for fresh meat and 5.48d for frozen, with the stipulation that Bergl should form a large company in South Africa to back the contract<sup>106</sup>. The War Office encouraged De Beers London Board to pay Bergl £100,000 for his contract and to set up a new company to operate

<sup>101</sup> *Cold Storage & Ice Trades Review*, 15 June, 15 July 1898, p.48.

<sup>102</sup> *Cold Storage and Ice Trades Review*, 15 June 1899.

<sup>103</sup> These contracts were described in Chapter Two.

<sup>104</sup> *Cold Storage & Ice Trades Review*, July 1900, p.130.

<sup>105</sup> Simon G Hanson, *Argentine Meat and the British Market*, Oxford University Press, London, 1938, p.125.

<sup>106</sup> Hanson, *Argentine Meat*, pp.122-125.



it, as well as paying the War Office a deposit of £200,000 which De Beers tried unsuccessfully to insist should be used for working capital rather than simply as a deposit. The War Office also obtained a written assurance from De Beers that it would have no dealings with the South African Cold Storage, 'Sivewright's Company', in any form.<sup>107</sup>

The company De Beers established - Imperial Cold Storage and Supply Company Limited - was registered in the Transvaal on 18 February 1902 with 500,000 £1 shares allotted out of a total of 650,000 of which De Beers held half, Johannesburg Consolidated Investments (JCI) 135,000, Barnato Brothers 52,600, and Lewis and Marks 47,000. Julius Weil and Company were appointed as its Cape Town agents, Lewis and Marks the Pretoria agents, and JCI the Johannesburg agents.<sup>108</sup>

The result was disastrous for the new company. The war ended only two months into the contract, and most of the British troops left South Africa. The new company had very little experience of large scale meat contracting or cold storage operations. Its Cape Town facility was inadequate and it had to rent ships in Table Bay that had adequate cold storage facilities to store the frozen meat that was pouring into the country. There was a severe drought in Australia and prices of meat imports from there rose. Although the contract was supposed to be fulfilled as far as possible from British territories meat had to be bought from Madagascar and Argentina.<sup>109</sup>

Rhodes died in April 1902, and on 22 August Leander Starr Jameson in the Cape and Alfred Beit in Johannesburg amalgamated the Imperial Cold Storage and Supply Company with the Graaff-Sivewright company, that had recently been renamed the South African and Australasian Supply and Cold Storage Company Limited. *The Cold Storage Trade Review* described the merger as having happened 'with books unseen and no representations made as to profits, goodwill or assets' as a curious arrangement for such heavily capitalised concerns. Although the new amalgamated company was still called Imperial Cold Storage and Supply Company, it gave Graaff full control and management of the Cape Town company, and De Beers only held one-seventh of the share capital. The Cold Storage Trust, registered in June, absorbed the holdings of the South African Supply and Cold Storage Company in Sparks and Young, Durban, and the Port Elizabeth and Pietermaritzburg cold storage companies, and also an interest in the Pretoria Koel Kamers Company and the Johannesburg Cold Storage Company.<sup>110</sup> The Rand Cold Storage Company was formed as a subsidiary in Johannesburg, and other subsidiary companies came into being in East London, Durban and other towns. The impetus of rinderpest and war had drawn southern African into being part of the industrialised world food industry, with large amounts of capital involved. Cold storage capacity was said to have increased from 800,000 cu ft at the start of the war to an estimated 3,344,000 cu ft in September 1902.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> GB 162, *Rhodes Papers*, MSS Afr.t.5 647 (8) Letter E R Tymms, De Beers London, to Rhodes, Cape Town, 7 February 1902; (10) Letter from E R Tymms, Secretary, De Beers London, to Dr L S Jameson, c/o British South Africa Company, Cape Town, 7 February 1902; (12) Letter from Carl Meyer, 92 Canon Street, London EC to Rhodes at Groote Schuur, 15 February 1902.

<sup>108</sup> Buys, *De Beers Administrative Records*, pp.5-11.

<sup>109</sup> Hanson, *Argentine Meat*, p.127.

<sup>110</sup> *Cold Storage & Ice Trades Review*, June 1902, p.94.

<sup>111</sup> *Cold Storage & Ice Trades Review*, September 1902, p.172.

The interlocking companies and subsidiaries now resembled the holding company structure of mining companies, and indicated the inter-connectedness of the four South African colonies, but offered little competition between them. As a result, meat was double the price in Johannesburg that it was in London.<sup>112</sup> The *Cold Storage and Ice Trades Review* that had been closely following the mergers and new company formations, commented sharply on the way Rhodes's cold storage company had finished up as a monopoly despite its high-sounding anti-monopolistic expressions at the time of its formation in 1898. Dr Jameson responded that 'the financial heads of De Beers would sell that part of their interest tomorrow if he had not managed to induce them to retain their interest with the view of keeping a finger on the meat monopoly as desired by Mr Rhodes'.<sup>113</sup> However, the De Beers interest had little control over its new partners. Imperial Cold Storage company headquarters were moved to Cape Town in 1903, and to London in 1907. Eventually in 1924 De Beers sold its remaining 43,549 shares at £1 each to Sir David Graaff.<sup>114</sup>

The high hopes of post-war prosperity proved unjustified. A serious general stagnation of trade set in and local fresh meat production had recovered by 1905. The Imperial Cold Storage Supply Company, with its connections to the mining houses managed to obtain contracts to supply meat to Africans who were 'compound labour' 'at prices ensuring a fair profit',<sup>115</sup> but at its annual meeting held on January 25 1905, according to the press, the chairman was warning that:

I think it only right to indicate to shareholders that it may possibly be some time ere they can expect the company to reach the dividend-paying stage. A popular fallacy which I should like to dissipate seems to prevail in South Africa, and more especially in the Cape Colony, that the Imperial Cold Storage Company possesses some sort of meat monopoly, and that it is sapping the life blood of our sub-continent. The company has no greater privileges than any other importer of meat. Those who are not directly interested in the trade have no idea of the keen and, I might go further and say 'cut-throat' competition between the various importers.<sup>116</sup>

Competition to the Imperial Cold Storage company in Johannesburg was offered by various small companies and chiefly by the Federal Supply and Cold Storage Company of South Africa Limited, formed in January 1903 with capital of £½ million by an amalgamation of a large firm of Johannesburg butchers, Angehrn & Piel, a number of local small businesses, which were represented on the board of management, the Nelson Shipping Line, and Mr Bergl who had done so well out of the disastrous 1902 De Beers contract to supply the British army. In 1906 it had cold storage capacity of 36,000 cubic feet, and also had a large trade in fresh meat, buying up cattle in the Transvaal, Natal and the Orange Free State, which came by train, were killed in the company's slaughtering yards outside Johannesburg, and sold fresh through various retailers.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> *Cold Storage & Ice Trades Review*, September 1902, p.162.

<sup>113</sup> *Cold Storage & Ice Trades Review*, August 1903, p.264.

<sup>114</sup> *Buyers, De Beers Administrative Records*, p.13.

<sup>115</sup> *Cold Storage & Ice Trades Review*, May 1904, p.180.

<sup>116</sup> *Cold Storage & Ice Trades Review*, March 1905, p.90.

<sup>117</sup> L V Praagh, *The Transvaal*, p.38



from L V Praagh, *The Transvaal and Its Mines, The Encyclopaedic History of the Transvaal*, Praagh & Lloyd, Johannesburg, 1906, p.296.

The 1906 Post Office Directory lists 13 cold storage companies in Johannesburg, though some of them seem chiefly to be manufacturers of ice, and some, such as the Kalk Bay Fisheries, dealt in fish rather than meat. By then competition was so intense in the cold storage business that it prevented Johannesburg meat prices rising in spite of higher livestock prices in Argentina and Australia, and higher duties.<sup>118</sup>

### PROVISIONS & GROCERIES

The large category of foodstuffs that were packed in sacks, packets and tins – flour, sugar, coffee, groceries and tinned foods – were also limited in supply by ox-wagon transport before the railways arrived. Nearly all originated in Europe or North America and came to the Transvaal through the coastal ports, Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, Durban and Delagoa Bay, the economies of which received a huge boost from the gold discoveries.

In the first few years after 1886 most shops in Johannesburg were unspecialised general stores, the mining centre equivalent of a country store. A typical advertisement has a similar style to that of the merchants of Cape Town in the early years of the nineteenth century – emphasising the recent arrival of the goods and their cheapness.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Hanson, *Argentine Meat*, p.130

<sup>119</sup> Dolores Fleischer & Angela Caccia, *Merchant Pioneers: The House of Mosenthal*, Jonathan Ball Publishers, Johannesburg, 1983, p.65.

T & A GREEN, Direct Importers, Commissioner Street, Johannesburg, and Queenstown

Wholesale and Retail

Have lately received some 30 to 40 Loads of New Goods, imported direct and to be sold Cheap,  
to make room for large Stocks yet to arrive

Boots & shoes, Men's & Boys' Clothing, Furniture, Crockery, Glassware, Bedsteads, Oilman's Stores, Ironmongery,  
Hardware, Large Marquee, Fancy Goods, Jewellery, Saddlery & Harnesses, Stoves, ..... Wagon Axels, Rein chains,  
Iron Safes, Baths, Coffee Mills....Tinware, Windows, Doors etc.

Tea, No 1 & 4, Coffee, Raw and Ground, Sugars assorted, Milk, Candles, Sardines, Gillon's Lime Juice, Rice,  
Cheese, Pickles, National & Oxford Jams, Cape, Natal & English, Salt Herrings in kegs, Salmon, Biscuits,  
Holbrook's Sauce, Potted Meats, Sweets, Fresh Herrings

T & A GREEN, Johannesburg, Agents for the Bible Society  
Agents for the Queenstown Fire Insurance and Trust Company<sup>120</sup>

The Standard Bank reports in February 1888 indicated that these stores were chiefly branches of old-established firms from elsewhere in South Africa and included T W Beckett and Co from Pretoria; F W Reid and Co from Potchefstroom; Paddon and Brock from Standerton; Henwood, Harwin, Scott Guthrie and Co; Hart and Henochsberg from Pietermaritzburg; John Millar, Parker Wood and Company; T Alcock from Durban; Mackie Dunn and Co from Port Elizabeth; and Van der Byl and Co from Cape Town.<sup>121</sup>

Differing interests developed early between wholesalers and large retail firms such as these with links to coastal wholesalers who imported direct from England, and the smaller retailers. Many smaller stores were set up, or staffed, by failed miners or speculators who had decided there was more money to be made in servicing the gold mines than actually working on them. In South Africa at the time people had to be versatile, turning their hands to whatever could make a living. There were also small shop-keepers from Kimberley who had lost their trade when De Beers instituted closed compounds, giving them an anti-capitalist outlook.<sup>122</sup> The large number of small shopkeepers in Johannesburg also increased the need for wholesalers who could deal with numerous overseas sources which they could not handle themselves.

Among the enterprising individuals who arrived in Johannesburg in the 1890s was Charles Thrupp, who had come to South Africa from England in 1884 in response to an advertisement by a trading firm in Kingwilliamstown. He moved from Kingwilliamstown to Johannesburg in 1889 to work for G P Christian and Co, and in 1892 opened his own grocery shop, C H Thrupp and Co, on the corner of Eloff and President Streets. He obviously spotted the potential at the upper end of the market, and groceries were delivered to customers in a horse-drawn carriage.<sup>123</sup> Thrupps became known as the Fortnum and Mason of Johannesburg,<sup>124</sup> and continues in business today. 'The stock kept by this firm is imported from all over the globe, and comprises such an assortment as one seldom sees in a

<sup>120</sup> *Diggers' News & Witwatersrand Advertiser*, 8 September 1888.

<sup>121</sup> Mabin & Conradie, *Standard Bank Reports*, p. 228

<sup>122</sup> Robert Turrell, *Capital and Labour on the Kimberley Diamond Fields, 1871-1890*, Cambridge University Press, 1987, pp.203-204; William H Worger, *Africa's City of Diamonds: Mine Workers and Monopoly Capitalism in Kimberley, 1867-1895*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1987, p.293.

<sup>123</sup> Personal communication, Roger Keene, son of Charles Thrupp's partner in the grocery business, 7 December 2009.

<sup>124</sup> G A Leyds, *A History of Johannesburg: The Early Years*, Nasionale Boekhandel, Cape Town, 1964, p.190.

grocery establishment in London; the *clientele* of this firm are most exacting in their requirements, and highest prices are paid in the European markets for only first-class goods.<sup>125</sup>



From *Commercial and Industrial Transvaal: Her Resources, Industries and Finance*, Transvaal Publishing, Johannesburg, 1905, p.207

As Johannesburg expanded and suburbs grew, getting shopping home became more and more of a problem. Cabs could be used, the horse-drawn tram was useful over a limited area,<sup>126</sup> and many firms delivered to homes, or sent carts regularly round suburbs to sell bread, milk, vegetables or groceries. There was said to be 'a great number of rickshaws at one time', and 'Mrs E M Fehrsen's mother and other women used rickshaws to bring home vegetables and fruit bought at the Market Square while the owner of the goods travelled by tram, only paying the rickshaw driver at the end of the journey'.<sup>127</sup> The 1906 Post Office Directory lists butchers, bakers and general stores in Auckland Park, Booyens, Brixton and La Rochelle. These were blue-collar working class areas where people travelled to work on foot, by tram or by bicycle, but in Doornfontein or Belgravia the better-off could buy in town and have orders delivered.

The Chamber of Commerce was formed in March 1890 of 48 larger firms, and it 'leaped at a bound right into the forefront of the commercial institutions of South Africa'. It advised the government on trade problems, principally concerning railways and customs. The first Congress of the Association of Chambers of Commerce of South Africa was held in Johannesburg in December 1892, and attended by delegates from all the important commercial centres of South Africa. 'In 1894 and 1895, the years of the great boom, the advance of trade was somewhat phenomenal. Every firm of note in South Africa that had not already done so opened branches in Johannesburg ... the Chamber had a membership of something like 200'. In 1896 it was accepted as an affiliated member by the Congress of

<sup>125</sup> *Commercial and Industrial Transvaal: Her Resources, Industries and Finance*, Transvaal Publishing, Johannesburg, 1905, p.207.

<sup>126</sup> However, by mid-1896 it was carrying two and a half million passengers a year. Beavon, *Johannesburg*, p.58.

<sup>127</sup> Robertson, *Remembering Old Johannesburg*, p.109.



Chambers of Commerce in London. 'A number of the small traders in the latter nineties, feeling that too much time was devoted to matters altogether outside the ordinary scope of the Chamber, formed themselves into another body, called the Mercantile Association, but this did not survive the war'.<sup>128</sup>

From 1886 one of the 'chief questions agitating the whole town' and one which concerned the Chamber of Commerce in particular was competition from 'Asiatic' trading. According to Praagh writing 20 years later, 'The Chamber adopted a very determined attitude against the free and unfettered trading by Arab merchants; and, although by no means getting from the Government all that they asked for, a good many concessions were made, and at any rate the evil was stopped.'<sup>129</sup> Like most Republican laws the 1885 and 1887 laws prohibiting Asians from owning any fixed property except in areas set aside for them was largely ineffective, but white traders were united in wishing to drive what they regarded as 'unfair' competition out of the central business districts. Many articles in the press iterate this. *The Standard & Diggers' News* in 1892 refers to Arab and Chinese traders, as 'the pest of the town, and the ruin of honest trading'.<sup>130</sup> *The Star* was more even virulent, more often. For example, in 1893, when there were at least 65 Chinese trading in Johannesburg, it reported the activities of the Transvaal Defence Association on the 'Coolie' Question:

The main object for which this Association was formed is to endeavour to have the Asiatic traders removed from town in terms of the Kleurlingen Location Law. This question your Committee has followed up with every means in its power. Two petitions were presented through the Hon Jan Meyer to the last session of the Volksraad, praying for the removal from town of all Asiatic traders. To these petitions there was received a resolution passed by the First Volksraad which has already been published. Your Committee has had several interviews with the local authorities, more especially with the Mining Commissioner and the Assistant-Commissioner of Native Affairs, both of whom have heartily co-operated with the Committee to have the resolution carried into effect.

A complete list of all Asiatics trading in the town and suburbs at the end of last year was made by a representative of this Association, who was accompanied by a constable and interpreter, supplied by the Assistant-Commissioner of Native Affairs. Upon the renewal of licences in January, this list was carefully watched by both the Assistant Commissioner of Native Affairs and the Mining Commissioner, with the result that about 100 licences were refused – since when, however, the law has been evaded by contracts being drawn out under the Master and Servants Act between white men and Asiatics, and registered before the Special Landdrost, under which contracts the Government instructed the Mining Commissioner to issue trading licences to the white men who posed as masters of these Asiatics – though in apparent direct violation of the instructions of the Volksraad. To protest against this action your Committee has arranged with the Chamber of Commerce that a joint deputation from that Chamber and this Association should proceed to Pretoria, there to interview the Government Executive on Tuesday next, having also invited representatives of the Pretoria Chamber of Commerce to join the deputation.<sup>131</sup>

This semi-vigilante action by the Transvaal Defence Association had official backing, and the government tried unsuccessfully to move Asians, 'Kafirs' and Coloured people to a new location west of Johannesburg to which their trading would be restricted, and to prohibit them carrying on business in white areas, but was unable to find a suitable place for such a location, and the function these people filled in the centre of Johannesburg was useful a number of people of all races.<sup>132</sup>

<sup>128</sup> Praagh, *The Transvaal*, p.279.

<sup>129</sup> Praagh, *The Transvaal*, pp.278-279.

<sup>130</sup> *Standard & Diggers' News*, 9 April 1892.

<sup>131</sup> *The Star*, 24 February 1893.

<sup>132</sup> *The Star*, 24 February, 4 March 1893.



All through the 1890s there were petitions against Asians based on claims that they broke the law by owners masquerading as employees, that they gave short measure of goods, that they would immigrate en masse and take over valuable property, that they were a menace to health and morals, that they spent no money on food and hospitals and that they did not contribute to charity. In addition, white traders complained that they worked seven days a week from 'sunrise to sunset', and on Sundays they wrote up their account books and hawkers settle their accounts. What was true, however, was that they used the kinship system and extended family as assistants, and that they worked very hard.<sup>133</sup>

On the other hand there were several petitions<sup>134</sup> in 1897 and 1898 from regular customers of Chinese – including one petition signed by the large number of 1,084 *arme inwoners* who protested against the removal of Chinese traders and shopkeepers. The reasonable prices the Chinese charged were welcomed. One petition in 1898 from residents of Braamfontein, Vrededorp and Fordsburg claimed:

We sometimes have no more than one shilling; at the Chinese we can buy for example 3d bread, 3d cheese, 3d sugar and 3d coffee, and this for us poor people a great help. ... And when we have no money we are also assisted with credit from the Chinese. The markets in Johannesburg and Fordsburg would regret it if the Chinese were not there to buy wood, potatoes and other products on a large scale and then re-sell it to us at a ticky a time.

The State Secretary replied that their request could not be granted since the Government could not go against the law.<sup>135</sup>

These petitions, and the listing of 'Chinaman's shop', 'Indian shop', 'Arab shop' in Directories are almost the only information available as to what shopping facilities were available to the poorest classes. Hawkers probably also sold to them, but the sources are silent.

After the South African war the merchant community found itself divided into two camps. One consisted of almost all the wholesale houses and many of the large retail dealers, and in April 1902 this group formed the Chamber of Trade. The other camp, comprising mostly retailers remained in the Chamber of Commerce. Both Chambers were affiliated members of the Chambers of Commerce of South Africa, and cooperated on matters of common interest.<sup>136</sup> The two groups re-united but it cannot be established from the available sources when this occurred.

In 1904 the commercial community arranged for a solicitor to watch the proceedings of War Claims Commission. With respect to the Chinese storekeepers, a protest was lodged against the recognition of those cases in which trading was done by 'Asiatics' under licences issued in the name of Europeans. It was submitted that such licences were obtained by misrepresentation and therefore carried no vested rights.<sup>137</sup>

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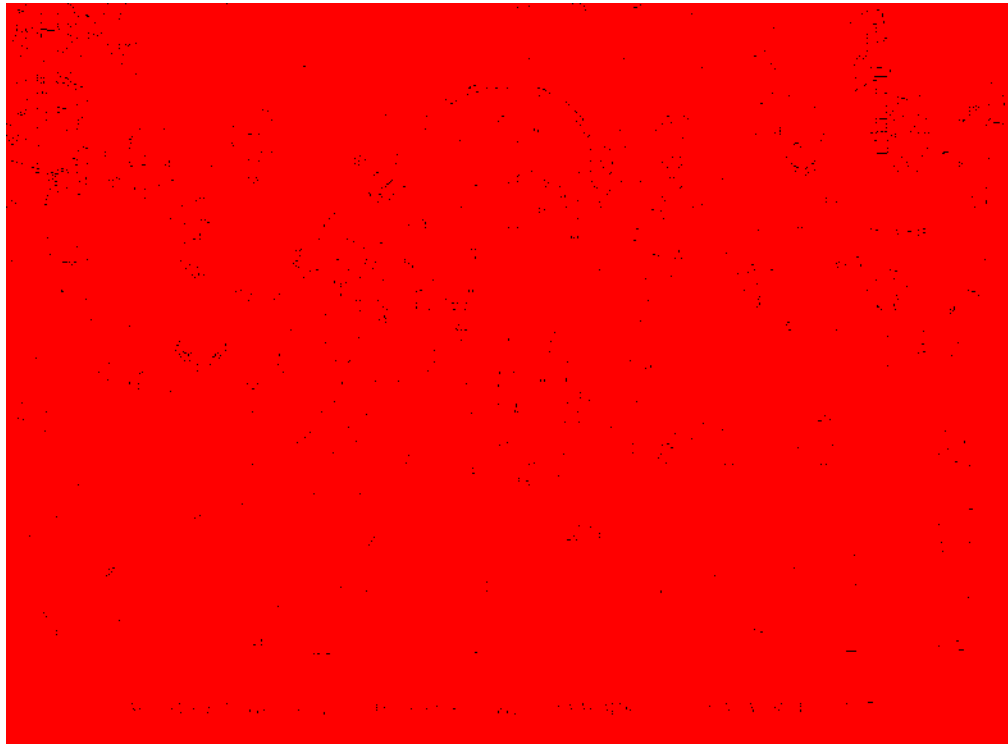
<sup>133</sup> Surandra Bhana & Joy Brain, *Setting down Roots: Indian Migrants in South Africa, 1860-1911*, Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg, 1990, pp.83-84, and Melanie Yap and Dianne Leong Man, *Colour, Confusion and Concessions: A History of the Chinese in South Africa*, Hong Kong University Press, Hong Kong 1996, pp.75-81

<sup>134</sup> Petitions (sometimes referred to as 'memorials') were the usual means through which people brought their concerns to the attention of the President of the ZAR or the government.

<sup>135</sup> Yap & Man, *Colour, Confusion and Concessions*, pp.81-83.

<sup>136</sup> Praagh, *The Transvaal*, pp.281-282.

<sup>137</sup> *The Star*, 23 April 1904.



From Praagh, L V, *The Transvaal and its Mines: The Encyclopaedic History of the Transvaal*, Praagh & Lloyd, Johannesburg, 1906, p.278.

The individuals in the photograph were not identified, but Praagh states that in 1905-6 the office bearers were Mr H F E Pistorius (President); Mr W Hosken, vice-President; Committee members: Mr J A Rogers (of Parker, Wood & Co), Mr W Hutchinson (of Reid Bros), Mr C A Garland (of Garland Bros), Mr S L Heyman (of Lewis & Marks, and the Hatherley Distillery), Mr J C Lucas (of J Lawrence & Co), Mr T W Dukes (of P J Petersen & Co), Mr W Cooke (of T W Beckett & Co), Mr C Chudleigh (of Chudleigh Bros). He adds that for a period of something like ten years Mr Pistorius and Mr Hosken between them held the office of President.

In 1905 *Commercial and Industrial Transvaal* complained:

Perhaps in no branch has the keen edge of competition reduced the retailers' margin of profit to such a minimum as in the grocery line. This is due in a great measure to the number of Celestials, Greeks and Russians who have got a hold of the Transvaal trade, and whose nominal expenses and cost of living enable them to curtail the ordinary profits; but whatever the cause, the fact remains that not all the European firms have been able to hold their own in this struggle for existence...

Russian Jews were included with Chinese and Indians as scapegoats, the 'ruin of honest traders'. One of the complaints against 'Asiatics' had been that they kept their accounts in a language incomprehensible to inspectors, and the authorities brought in a bye-law that immigrants landing at Cape Town should be fluent a recognised European language. *The Star* reported in 1904 that it had been accepted that the Yiddish language was European, but that it was 'still excluded by the Cape Immigration Act as it is written in an oriental or Hebrew characters'.<sup>138</sup>

<sup>138</sup> *The Star*, 3 May 1904.

This racism became increasingly vociferous when trade was depressed. Another reason for the hindrance to white commercial prosperity is suggested in an 1897 article in *The Star* that asked whether Johannesburg was 'overdone' in terms of shops, and whether competition was 'too keen'. It pointed out that on the continent of Europe, the number of shops per population was regulated by law<sup>139</sup> – and gave as an example that in Germany one chemist shop was allowed to every 5,000 of population. In Britain this was 'not regulated but generally accepted that one chemist is fully sufficient for 1,500 of the population'. On this basis it might be expected that there would be 40 chemists in Johannesburg, but in fact at this time there were 103. This pattern was repeated across the board; where 50 doctors might be expected, there were 110,<sup>140</sup> 'some with rather mysterious qualifications'. The same ratio applied to lawyers, 'but it is probable that Johannesburg does require more legal assistance than a more settled community'. There were over 700 restaurants, eating houses and refreshment shops, and Johannesburg was said to have spent five times as much per head as London on intoxicating liquors. 'Churches, schools and newspapers are not overprovided, however. ... There can be little doubt that unless the population is very materially increased without a corresponding increase in competition, in many lines of business the theory of survival of the fittest will be put to a very practical test'.<sup>141</sup> The population figures used are presumably white rather than the total numbers.

The British Parliamentary Paper of 1897 indicate another aspect of being overshopped; over-importation. Experience in the boom years of being 'under-stocked and the prospects of a revival in trade induced the merchants to send forward undiminished indents to Europe and elsewhere, with the result that many have surplus stocks'.<sup>142</sup>

After the War ended in 1902, the population in Johannesburg did increase, but the provision of shops did so as well. There were 83 grocers in *Longlands 1897 Directory* (white population 50,907 in 1896 census<sup>143</sup>) and 156 in the *1906 Post Office Directory* (white population 83,902 in the Johannesburg Municipal Area<sup>144</sup> – a much larger area than the 1896 Census). This indicates that roughly 613 men, women and children were served by one grocery shop in 1897, and only 537 in 1906.

It is not clear how the shops came to be listed in these directories; one purpose of a directory was for the use of trade representatives, and smaller shops were perhaps not included. *The Star* stated that the number of retail shops had increased by 50 per cent since the war.<sup>145</sup> Johannesburg was oversupplied with shops, with large volumes of goods being ordered in good times, or in expectation of good times,<sup>146</sup> and a collapse when the inevitable slump followed.

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<sup>139</sup> This is still the case, for example, in France.

<sup>140</sup> Elaine Katz confirms that the over-supply of doctors meant that they were reliant on the mines for employment and often had to compromise their professional standards. Elaine Katz, *The White Death: Silicosis on the Witwatersrand Gold Mines, 1886-1910*, Witwatersrand University Press, 1994, p.100.

<sup>141</sup> *The Star*, 20 December 1897.

<sup>142</sup> C.9093, British Parliamentary Papers, *Report on the Trade, Commerce and Gold Mining Industry of the South African Republic for the year 1897*, Presented to both Houses of Parliament by command of Her Majesty, October 1898, p.30

<sup>143</sup> *Report of the Director of Census*, Johannesburg Sanitary Board, 1896.

<sup>144</sup> *Census Returns of British South Africa*, His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1904.

<sup>145</sup> *The Star*, 26 April 1906.

<sup>146</sup> C H Thrupp & Co. was said to have had more goods shipped to South Africa on the *Walmer Castle* in 1902 than any other firm in South Africa. Personal communication Mr Roger Keene, son of C H Thrupp's partner in the grocery business.

There is no indication, however, that this competition led to lower prices, as the 'civilised living standards' of white traders had to be preserved.

It seems probable that the retail trades in Johannesburg tended to be small-scale, under-capitalised, and run on essentially pre-industrial lines. There is little indication of economies of scale in buying goods or establishing branches. The turnover of shops was high. Of the 29 Grocers and 26 'Italian Warehousemen' in *Longland's 1893 Directory*, only five of the former and nine of the latter survived to have an entry in *Longland's 1897 Directory*. Only five of both categories survived until the *1906 Post Office Directory* (P Amm & Sons, T W Beckett & Co, G B Gundelfinger Wholesalers, A Tarboton, and C H Thrupp), all of whom had advertising budgets for full-page advertisements in directories, and in the press. Of the 83 grocers in *Longland's 1897 Directory*, only 11, including the four 1893 survivors, were still there in 1906. Names may have been changed of course, but not on a large enough scale to counter the trend. The names of the 1906 shops are not conspicuously British either, in spite of Leyds statement that Johannesburg became less cosmopolitan. The *Société d'Importation de Produits Francais* on the corner of Pritchard and Joubert Streets, had disappeared, however.

The early wealth of Johannesburg's mining industry had quickly drawn in large quantities of food, both globally and from the relatively undeveloped subsistence local economy, but its distribution around the town and in terms of specific produce was uneven, and information about the distribution is even more so. It seems unlikely that all its inhabitants could afford to eat sufficient to maintain their health and well-being. Charities and welfare organisations were busy before, during and after the War. How the inhabitants of the multi-racial slums and slumyards to the west of Johannesburg, who are rarely mentioned in the sources, obtained their food is difficult to establish; one can only guess at the role that hawkers and the 'Chinaman's shops' and 'Arab stores' played, judging by the value the 'poor whites' placed on them remaining in the centre of the town.

This chapter has attempted to outline the distribution system, which was overdeveloped in some ways and inefficient in others. In this it resembled the growing pains of other nineteenth century cities, where population growth outpaced and frustrated both public health measures and equity. The next chapter will consider the changes under British rule after 1 June 1900, and how enduring were the patterns established in Johannesburg in the 1890s.

## CHAPTER SIX

### JOHANNESBURG UNDER BRITISH RULE, JUNE 1900-1906

The general view seems to be that there is a sharp dividing line in South African history between the end of the Kruger regime and change to British government so long campaigned for by some Uitlanders.<sup>1</sup> What seems to be emerging from this study of food supply and distribution, however, is that in many respects there was continuity with the formative period of the 1890s. The British put considerable effort into improving the local food supply, which began bearing fruit towards the middle of the first decade of the century, and the more supportive and efficient government helped to improve standards of food inspection and food safety. However, as far as food distribution in Johannesburg itself was concerned, this seems to have largely followed the pattern set in the previous decade.

Johannesburg, during its two years under British military rule, as during its eight months under Republican martial law, depended for its food supply on what vegetables and fruit could be grown in its immediate surroundings, and on the railway for nearly everything else. Military needs had priority on the railway, and it was liable to guerrilla attacks and natural disasters. Johannesburg also relied on the enterprise of its merchants and dealers who, in the eight months from October 1899 to 31 May 1900 under the Kruger government, had mainly been non-British. Even before Johannesburg was captured on the last day of May 1900, Sir Alfred Milner, British High Commissioner in South Africa and Administrator of the Transvaal, was determined to lay the foundations of the new British colony. There was no expectation that the war would go on for another two years, and as a first step civilian advisers were appointed to assist the British Military Governor of Johannesburg. These had been people prominent in the agitation leading up to the war such as W F Monypenny (editor of *The Star*), Samuel Evans of Corner House, and William Hosken, a prominent wholesaler and President of the Chamber of Commerce. Milner also sent his secretary, G V Fiddes as Political Secretary to act as his 'eyes and ears'.<sup>2</sup>

The first business was to ensure that law, order and peace prevailed; the second concern was the supply and price of food. There was said to be scarcely enough food for a fortnight for the whites in the town, and nearly a month for African mineworkers, and the British army itself 'had only one day's supply in the wagons'.<sup>3</sup> Monypenny was appointed Director of Civil Supplies, and began work immediately. A list of maximum prices was issued on Monday 4 June:

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<sup>1</sup> This is typified by the title of Arthur Mawby's book, *Gold Mining and Politics: Volume I, The Origins of the Old South Africa, 1900-1907*, Edwin Meller Press, Lewiston NY, 2000.

<sup>2</sup> Diana Cammack, *The Rand at War, 1899-1902: The Witwatersrand and the Anglo-Boer War*, James Currey, London, 1990, p.136.

<sup>3</sup> H W Wilson, *With the Flag to Pretoria: A History of the Boer War 1899-1902*, Volume II, Harmsworth Brothers, London, 1902, p.644.

Whereas it is necessary to regulate the price at which foodstuffs, articles of consumption, wines, spirituous and malted liquors and certain other commodities may be sold in Johannesburg and the districts thereof now in occupation of Her Majesty's troops.

Now, therefore, I, Colin Mackenzie, Colonel Seaforth Highlanders, Military Governor of Johannesburg, do hereby proclaim that the prices marked against the articles set forth in this Proclamation, shall be the maximum rates at which the said articles may be sold in the districts under my command.

And I further proclaim that any person who shall sell or dispose of any such articles at any rates or prices higher than are permitted by this my Proclamation will be liable to imprisonment with hard labour or other punishment in accordance with the provisions of Martial Law.

Given ....

Schedule referred to in the above Proclamation: Maximum Prices to be charged

<u>Articles</u>	<u>Price</u>			
	<u>From</u>		<u>To</u>	
	s	d	s	d
Mealies (whole) per sack of 203 lbs	25	0		
Mealies (best) “	25	0		
Mealies (medium) “	25	0		
Mealies (crushed) “	22	6		
Kaffir Corn, per bag of 200 lbs	10	0	15	0
Potatoes, per bag	30	0	35	0
Flour, per bag of 100 lbs	25	0		
Mealie Meal, per bag of 100 lbs	25	0		
Sifted Boer Meal, per bag of 203 lbs	60	0	65	0
Barley, per bag	14	0		
Tea (best) per lb	3	6		
Coffee, per lb	1	6	2	0
Sugar, white crystallized, per 100 lbs	30	0		
Pepper, per lb		6		
Salt (O R Colony), 200 lbs	9	0		
Salt, coarse	20	0		
Salt, in packets, per packet		3		
Rice, 180 lbs	30	0		
Sago, per lb		6		
Condensed Milk, Milkmaid Brand, per case	20	0		
Bread, per lb		6		
Oatmeal, per lb		6		
Quakers Oats		6		
Mustard, per lb	2	0		
Vinegar, per cask	20	0		
Vinegar, per bottle	1	0		
Brandy, 3 Star Hennessy, per case	90	0		
Whiskey, per case	70	0	75	0
Champagne (Goulet), per case	120	0	160	0
Ducks, each	2	0	6	0
Fowls, each	2	6	3	6
Eggs, per dozen	1	6	2	6
Firewood, per load	100	0	200	0
Geese, each	4	0	5	0
Onions, per sack	30	0	35	0
Pigs, per live weight		6		
Rye, per bag	25	0		
Turkeys, each	5	0	6	0
Bacon, per lb	1	6		
Butter	1 lb	2 6	2 lb	4 6



Cheese, per lb	2	0
Chicory, per lb	1	0
Bottled fruits, per dozen	22	6
Hams	2	0
Jam, English, dozen	13	6
Jam, Colonial, dozen	8	0
Lard, 1 lb	1	0
Lime Juice, Cask	25	0
Margarine, per lb		9
Meats, potted, per dozen	7	6
Milk, tinned, per dozen	12	0
Baking powder, per lb	2	6
Curry powder, per lb	1	6
Salmon, dozen	15	0
Sardines, dozen	5	0
Tapioca, per lb		6 <sup>4</sup>

The British had maintained the Republican ban on the sale of alcohol (though some consumption was allowed with meals in better class establishments) so why it was thought necessary to fix maximum prices for brandy, whiskey and champagne when the sale of alcohol was banned is not clear.

This schedule was repeated on Friday 8 June. The next day, indicating a certain amount of confusion, a new, better-arranged list was proclaimed under which the maximum prices either stayed the same or were higher for all items except mealie meal (from 25s per 100 lbs to the same price for 180 lbs), onions (from 35s to 20s maximum) and potatoes (from 35s to 20s per bag).<sup>5</sup> A day later the maximum price of mealie meal was further lowered to 20s per 180 lb bag,<sup>6</sup> and of Kaffir Corn and mealies to 15s and 18s per 203lb bags respectively,<sup>7</sup> which would be unlikely to increase the supply or make produce dealers happy, and these were the foodstuffs the poorest people were dependent on. The other maximum prices were about the same or slightly below pre-War levels, and in a town where everything was in short supply, did little to improve the position.

Fearing a repeat of the situation after the Jameson Raid when Boers had been reluctant to deal with the enemy and bring in produce for a week or so, the military now attempted to encourage nearby farmers and market gardeners with:

To Market Gardeners and Farmers:

FROM and after Saturday next, June 9, an office will be opened in the Market Buildings, Johannesburg, where Farmers and Market Gardeners residing within a radius of fifteen miles from the Johannesburg Post Office can, on surrendering their arms and taking the required oath of neutrality, obtain passes authorizing them to convey their produce to market and safeguarding them from all risk of commandeering as regards produce and the animals and vehicles employed in its transport.

<sup>4</sup> *Johannesburg Gazette 'Issued Under Military Authority'*, VR Proclamation No 2, 4 June 1900.

<sup>5</sup> *Johannesburg Gazette 'Issued Under Military Authority'*, VR Proclamation No 6, 14 June 1900.

<sup>6</sup> *Johannesburg Gazette 'Issued Under Military Authority'*, VR Government Notice No 38, 16 July 1900.

<sup>7</sup> *Johannesburg Gazette 'Issued Under Military Authority'*, VR Government Notice No 42, 16 July 1900.

On an after June 9 an officer will be in attendance daily at the Market Buildings, from 9 am to 11 am for the receipt of arms and the issue of passes.

Francis Davies, Major, Military Commissioner of Police<sup>8</sup>

By August Johannesburg had run out of supplies. The disruption of production and distribution, the commandeering of food by the retreating Boers, earlier looting, and guerrilla attacks on the railway lines as well as military priorities made bringing food supplies up from the coast uncertain.

British merchants previously resident in Johannesburg in exile at the coast because of the War were indignant that the German and Jewish merchants in Johannesburg, who had been supplying the enemy, were profiting from the scarcity of food. Fiddes maintained that they had been well within their rights to carry on business and could not be interfered with, but Monypenny was determined to assist British merchants re-establish themselves. Imports were directed to colonial ports although vast stockpiles were waiting at Delagoa Bay on the assumption that the shortest railway line would be the soonest re-opened. Difficulties were placed in the way of the remaining non-British merchants in Johannesburg sending money to the coast to purchase imports.

The purchase of government-held supplies was restricted to burghers, foreign consuls and British men, though after protests from foreign consuls, this was extended to foreigners but only those deemed 'fit and proper persons to enjoy it' by their consuls. Many people thus denied access to food left 'voluntarily'. Food thus became a weapon used by the British civilian advisers to remove people they did not want in their new social order, and 'to assist in the formation of a new Anglo-Transvaal where British merchants would be pre-eminent'.<sup>9</sup>

There were at least five thousand families of poor burghers, foreigners and Boer refugees from the Transvaal and Orange Free State on the relief roll of the British military in mid-1900, and their rations were made 'just sufficient for health and no more'. Those requiring more were expected to work to earn money, but there was little employment available. As many burgher dependents were removed from towns as possible, but by May 1901 there were still a thousand people receiving aid every day.<sup>10</sup>

Certain Boers and pro-Boers were sent to the Cape, including E P Mendelssohn, editor of the *Standard & Diggers' News*, which was closed down. Foreign consuls were encouraged to repatriate their citizens, though only the French co-operated. Some 1,400 foreigners were deported: Dutch railway workers in Johannesburg who had gone on strike when the British forces arrived, and then Italian, Austro-Hungarian, German, Russian, Swiss, Greek, Scandinavian and United States citizens were rounded up and taken to the coast on a pretext that they were involved in a conspiracy to bomb a race meeting held to celebrate French

<sup>8</sup> *Johannesburg Gazette 'Issued Under Military Authority'*, VR Notice No 7, 8 June 1900.

<sup>9</sup> Cammack, *The Rand at War*, p.136.

<sup>10</sup> Cammack, *The Rand at War*, pp.139-140.

Bastille Day, known in the press as 'the race course plot'. They were treated harshly and put on ships for Europe without any charge being laid or having any right of appeal. Some consuls in Cape Town were able to vouch for<sup>11</sup> about 75 of the men who were released. European governments pressed for a commission of enquiry into the deportations, and eventually minimal compensation was paid to governments rather than to the individuals concerned. The total number of foreigners and 'undesirables' forced to leave is unknown, but it ran into many thousands.<sup>12</sup>

By spring 1900 Milner and Fiddes, alarmed at the diplomatic repercussions of the illegality of these proceedings and other moves such as an attempt to move the capital from Pretoria to Johannesburg, had managed to manoeuvre the 'Uitlander clique' back to private life, but Diana Cammack states that 'in the months they had power they had gone a long way towards anglicising Johannesburg commerce ... and creating a new society devoid of paupers, Jews and foreigners'.<sup>13</sup> The Director of Civil Supplies' scheme for re-provisioning Johannesburg based on edicts on maximum prices was never very successful. A black market thrived and fresh fruit and vegetables, which had been abundant, became scarce, producers having been deterred by the low maximum prices.<sup>14</sup>

Military control of food supplies which followed was even less successful, as military needs had priority on the railways, and fussy military minds tended to inefficiency. Lionel Curtis diarised on 28 March 1901 that he had had to spend :

a tiresome afternoon obtaining provisions. The military have tried to run the supplies here themselves and have miserably failed. At Pretoria Hamilton used the shopkeepers and the town is full of supplies. There you walk into a shop and buy. Here it is a question of endless permits. Got to the house very tired with a cab load of a few kinds of things. No tea, for instance, is obtainable.<sup>15</sup>

At the end of October 1900 a planned phased return of refugees from Johannesburg at the coast was postponed by Lord Roberts, the military Commander-in-Chief, due to shortage of provisions and threats from the irregular South African volunteer corps who had been promised their interests in obtaining work after the War would be preserved while they were fighting. This postponement created great discontent as many of the refugees were dependent on charity and relief work programmes at the coast, and were anxious to get back to their jobs and homes in Johannesburg.

From January 1901 onwards various groups were returning, and three mines began functioning again in May 1901. As more mines restarted in the second half of 1901 the Chamber of Mines began worrying about a

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<sup>11</sup> In the absence of passports it was impossible at the time to prove citizenship, and frequently during the war consuls were called upon to 'vouch for' people who claimed their nationality, which tended to restrict such consular help to 'respectable' people.

<sup>12</sup> Cammack, *The Rand at War*, p.148-155.

<sup>13</sup> Cammack, *The Rand at War*, p.160.

<sup>14</sup> Cammack, *The Rand at War*, p.134-136.

<sup>15</sup> Lionel Curtis, *With Milner in South Africa*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1951, pp.207-208.

shortage of unskilled labour such as they had suffered from before the war. Africans were not tempted by the wages being offered which were better than the ZAR had paid to keep a few mines operating during the War, but were lower than they had been immediately before the war, when these had been reduced to take advantage of those who were desperate because they were so impoverished by the rinderpest epidemic and drought.

### **CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT AND THE ENLARGEMENT OF JOHANNESBURG'S BOUNDARIES**

In May 1901, a year after the British military occupation of Johannesburg, the return to municipal rule began with the appointment of a nominated Town Council. Many of Milner's 'best men' were too busy with other commitments, and pre-war Chamber of Commerce stalwarts such as W Hosken, J W Quinn<sup>16</sup> and H F E Pistorius predominated on the Council.<sup>17</sup> Major W A J O'Meara, an engineer and intelligence officer who had been chief staff officer in Kimberley during the siege, was Acting Mayor, and the young Lionel Curtis, one of Milner's so-called 'kindergarten', who had been secretary to the Chairman of London County Council, was Acting Town Clerk. The new Town Council prepared a memorandum for Milner, as High Commissioner, asking that the municipal boundaries be extended which would not only increase the rateable area, but would assist it in moulding and shaping Johannesburg into a 'place where people would desire to remain, rather than a mine of wealth whence men look to rapidly accumulate fortunes for enjoyment elsewhere'.<sup>18</sup> The larger town would have to have room to absorb the new skilled British workforce, to clear the centre regarded as overpopulated with the working poor of all colours, and to include the mines in the town's power structure.<sup>19</sup>

Pre-war Johannesburg had covered about five square miles, and this had been extended to nine in 1897 but only put into effect in 1901, and the proposed enlargement would take this to 82 square miles, which would make it the largest municipality in the world after Tokyo.<sup>20</sup> Curtis made a forceful case for the enlarged boundaries, arguing that they would enable the Council to take rational decisions to deal with problems of finance, drainage, sanitation, water supply, the tramway, and control of liquor and gambling – all of which would benefit from central control and save on staff and offices. Socially the large city should encompass a wide range of social classes, and 'not cut the residential and shopkeeping districts off from the mining and

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<sup>16</sup> J W Quinn was one of Johannesburg's leading bakers and confectioners, with two large bakeries, a number of depots and refreshment rooms before the war. He advertised as the only authorised local matzos manufacturer (*Standard & Diggers' News*, 1 April 1895). He is said to have left in 1899 and set up refugee restaurants in Durban (Naomi & Reuben Musiker, *A Concise Historical Dictionary of Greater Johannesburg*, Francolin, Cape Town 2000), but his name is on the list of British subjects ordered to leave in April 1901 (*Standard & Diggers' News*, 5 April 1901). He was Mayor when Curtis left in 1906, and Curtis refers to his 'Lancashire burr, richly flavoured with a touch of the Emerald Isle' (Curtis, *With Milner in South Africa*, p.349).

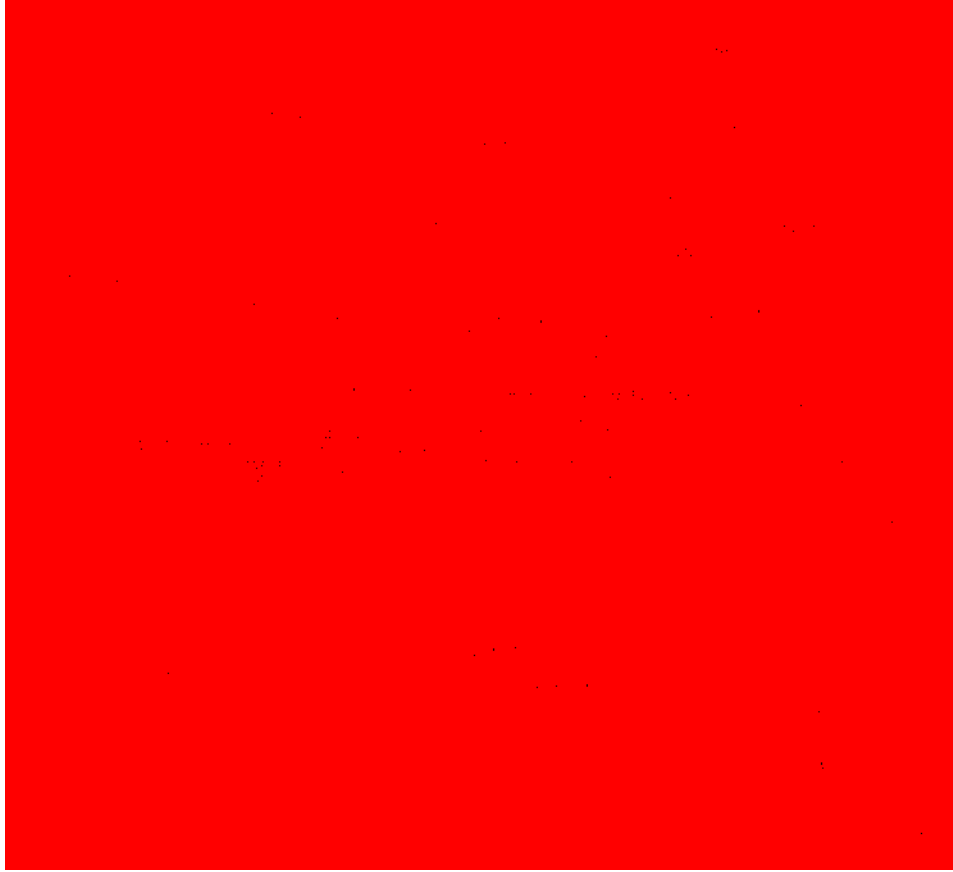
<sup>17</sup> Cammack, *The Rand at War*, p.186.

<sup>18</sup> Keith Beavon, *Johannesburg: The Making and Shaping of the City*, University of South Africa Press, Pretoria, 2004, p.73.

<sup>19</sup> Cammack, *The Rand at War*, pp.188-190.

<sup>20</sup> Beavon, *Johannesburg*, pp.73-75.

industrial centres to the south from which they draw their life'. This had happened in Kimberley where the mines had been allowed to remain separate entities, impoverishing the town and isolating the mines.<sup>21</sup> The enlarged area incorporated some of the mines near to Johannesburg which widened the tax base, though the mines were assessed only on commercial and residential buildings, not the underground values, and the Chamber of Mines was given a say in matters affecting them, so dropped their opposition to the proposal.<sup>22</sup>



The 1902 Enlargement of Municipal Boundaries, from Keith Beavon, *Johannesburg: The Making and Shaping of a City*, University of South Africa Press, Pretoria, 2004 p.74

By the end of 1901 Johannesburg was beginning to return to normal, with barricades being taken down from shops and houses. Traders could import certain goods into the city, but there were still food shortages from time to time. The white working class had reappeared in Johannesburg, together with a few Asians, non-white servants and Coloureds 'of the better class'. At the end of the war some 10,000 refugees still remained at the coast, mostly 'British subjects of bad character ... and foreigners'. Rents rose, and the shortage of cheap housing was so considerable that a third of British artisans sent their wives and families back to England – thus having the opposite effect to Milner's plans for an anglicised Transvaal.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Curtis, *With Milner in South Africa*, pp.258-297.

<sup>22</sup> Cammack, *The Rand at War*, pp.188-190.

<sup>23</sup> Cammack, *The Rand at War*, p.176.

In January 1902, when *The Star* resumed publication, it stated that the growing population had ample supplies of both foodstuffs and general requisites, and 'merchants have no complaints as to the manner in which their requisitions for permits are responded to'. Meat, however, was still in short supply, owing to the ravages of war.<sup>24</sup> The Municipal Health and Measures Committee under the Chairman, J W Quinn, moved an urgency report, signed by the Medical Officer of Health. His inspection of slaughterhouses and butcher shops showed that all animals being slaughtered were very emaciated, with no nutritional value and the carcasses weighing only half that of a normal beast. 'It is an undoubted fact that many are slaughtered which would very shortly die of starvation.' Enormous waste was incurred by killing cows and heifers needed as breeding stock. 'The strongest representation was made of the necessity of providing well-fed meat to the public, by means of imported frozen meat if other is not obtainable'.<sup>25</sup>

Johannesburg was thus almost totally dependent on imported, frozen meat, the availability of which was in turn governed by the scarcity of refrigerated trucks on the railways. The military had co-operated in allowing building materials to be brought up in late 1901 to enlarge the capacity of the Johannesburg Cold Storage Company to 21 million pounds, and although there was plenty of meat from Australia and New Zealand at the ports, frozen meat supplies in Johannesburg itself remained inadequate.<sup>26</sup> The refrigerated capacity of the railways seems to have improved by March 1902 when Kalk Bay Fisheries were advertising fresh supplies of Natal oysters, English fish, poultry, game and fresh butter available in Johannesburg.<sup>27</sup>

The vegetable and fruit section of the Market in Johannesburg was reported to be very well stocked, 'little oases' having sprung up all round Johannesburg worked by Italian and Greek colonies; 'every bit of vegetable and fruit sold on the market today was grown within a radius of six miles from where it is sold'. The Chinese had excellent gardens between Johannesburg and Fordsburg, but 'their abominable and indescribably unclean methods'<sup>28</sup> were not to be encouraged.<sup>29</sup> Portuguese and Indian market gardeners also made a living where Englishmen could not, because their cost of living was much lower, they were experienced and did all the work themselves.<sup>30</sup> However, Lt-Colonel Owen Thomas, a Welsh landowner and stockfarmer, who was commissioned just after the South African War to report on agricultural and pastoral prospects by the Transvaal Land and Exploration Company, in 1903 stated 'there can be no doubt about the demand of Johannesburg for vegetables; and yet the supply of this item often exceeded the demand. Consumers complained of high prices, but these only prevailed for exceptionally early or late produce'.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> *The Star*, 3 January 1902.

<sup>25</sup> Johannesburg Local Government Library, Urgency Report of the Health and Measures Committee to Johannesburg Municipal Council, 26 September 1901.

<sup>26</sup> *The Star*, 3 January 1902.

<sup>27</sup> *The Star*, 10 March 1902.

<sup>28</sup> That is, use of human night-soil.

<sup>29</sup> *The Star*, 22 January 1902.

<sup>30</sup> Lionel Phillips, *Transvaal Problems*, John Murray, London, 1905, p.36.

<sup>31</sup> Owen Thomas, *The Agricultural and Pastoral Prospects of South Africa*, Archibald Constable, London, 1904, pp.99-102.



The Sanitary Board inspectors had been very much concerned with food safety before the war but had had limited powers, and little support from the Kruger Government.<sup>32</sup> The new Municipality was able to widen activities substantially. In May 1902 an enquiry was made into the bread supply and bakeries of the town. Loaves were purchased from every known vendor (84 in all) and sent to the newly appointed Government Analyst in Pretoria. The controlled price of bread was 3d per loaf, and 85.7 per cent of the loaves were found to be underweight, thus being sold at a higher price than was allowed. Much of the bread was distinctly unsatisfactory, with 65 per cent containing alum, and other loaves were sour and badly baked. The 37 bakehouses then in operation were in fairly good structural condition and fairly well kept, but ventilation and general cleanliness were not as good as they should be, and the wooden or roughly bricked floors needed to be replaced with concrete or impervious asphalt. Certain bakehouses in Vrededorp, Burgersdorp and Fordsburg depended on shallow wells which were a possible source of typhoid, and the Johannesburg Water Company was asked to look into installing mains water to these areas. The pre-war Sanitary Committee had worried about the water supply to bakeries, but had lacked such powers.

The 232 licensed dairies and 29 licensed milkshops had been periodically inspected during 1902-1903; 233 samples of milk were taken of which 21 were found to be below standard, and prosecutions and fines followed.

In October 1902 it was suspected that frozen meat was arriving in Johannesburg in a thawed and partially decomposed state, and then re-frozen and sold for human food. Three further inspectors with special experience of frozen meat and practical butchery were appointed, and as the supply of meat picked up in the following year many more inspections were made.<sup>33</sup>

At the 11 slaughterpoles scattered around in Brixton, 9,744 beef carcasses, 67,154 sheep and 4,270 pigs had been examined during the year 1903-1904, of which 12 beef, 28 mutton and 66 pigs were condemned. The substantial amount of 34,283,538 lbs of frozen meat arriving at Kazerne had been inspected of which 53 quarters of beef, 261 sheep, 1 pig, 25 calves, 357 cases of fish, 16 brace of partridges, 1 buck, 200 lbs poultry, 1 box of pigs feet and 50 frozen kidneys had been condemned as unfit for human consumption, a relatively small amount indicating that refrigeration control methods on the railways had improved.<sup>34</sup>

In 1904 the Medical Officer of Health reported that 87 licensed bakeries had been inspected and were, on the whole, fairly well kept, some being very good indeed, which contrasts to the critical report two years earlier. Also licensed and kept under supervision were 286 dairies and 35 milkshops. Milk was sampled and

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<sup>32</sup> See the Landdrost's dismissal in 1895 of a complaint of bad eggs brought by the Sanitary Inspector in Chapter Five, Distribution: 'anybody could have seen the eggs were bad, and people were not compelled to buy them'. *The Standard & Diggers' News*, 17 January 1895.

<sup>33</sup> Report of the Medical Officer of Health 1902-1903 to Johannesburg Municipal Council, pp.31-32.

<sup>34</sup> Report of the Medical Officer of Health 1903-1904 to Johannesburg Municipal Council.

analysed by the Public Analyst in Pretoria in 106 cases, and prosecution followed for adulteration in 21 cases.<sup>35</sup>

In the year ended October 1905, the Medical Officer of Health obtained 21 convictions on bakers based on analyses of loaves sold. He found the average deficiency in loaf size to be 10 per cent, and ascribed the continued prevalence of offences to the numbers of bakery businesses in Johannesburg frequently changing hands. New owners disregarded the regulations in their endeavour to succeed.<sup>36</sup>

By 1906, however, the position was much more satisfactory. The Medical Officer of Health's Report to June 1906 examined 1,674 oxen, 8,345 sheep, 653 pigs and 12 calves at the slaughterpoles. He also examined 122 trucks of frozen meat and fish at Kazerne, containing 1,650,325 lbs meat,<sup>37</sup> 449,473 lbs fish, 35,039 lbs poultry and 2,622 lbs of game. The Food and Drugs Inspector made inspections of 81 butcher shops, 29 bakeries, 161 general shops, 51 dairies, one flour mill and eight cold storages, the premises in all cases being clean and satisfactory, in contrast to their state at the end of the war. The meat, fish and vegetables at the morning market were found to be fit for human consumption.<sup>38</sup> The resources and specialists put into assuring food safety standards were substantially greater compared to the struggle the Sanitary Board had had before the War, and had had a marked effect. Other measures such as improved sanitation and water supply also served to improve the health of the populace, particularly the white population, and to bring Johannesburg into line with other towns of a comparable size.

### THE MARKET IN MARKET SQUARE

When Milner, as Governor of the Transvaal, recommended to Chamberlain, as Colonial Secretary, in April 1902 that the Johannesburg Market Concession Company could not be expropriated without its own consent, he pointed out to the Johannesburg Town Council that it had the power to pass bye-laws to ensure cleanliness to the Market and its vicinity and to institute prosecutions for infringements of such bye-laws.<sup>39</sup> The Council then issued the following Bye-Laws for Regulating Public Sales by Auction on the Market Square,

Johannesburg:

1. Apart from the morning market no person shall hold or carry on any sales, by auction or otherwise, in any street, square, or other open space within the Municipality, unless he is the holder of a then-current licence for the purpose applicable to that particular spot.
2. Vehicles shall leave by 1 pm.
3. Stands to be allocated by the Council for livestock west of the Market Buildings between Fraser and Sauer Streets, and for other than livestock east of Market Buildings between Harrison and Loveday Streets.
5. Every licence for one year only terminating on 31 December.
6. List of stands and plan with fees thereof to be available for inspection at Council Offices and a ballot held to allocate stands.

<sup>35</sup> Report of the Medical Officer of Health, 1903-1904 to Johannesburg Municipal Council.

<sup>36</sup> Report of the Assizer, 1904-1905, Mayor's Minutes for the Mayoral Year ending October 1905, p.125.

<sup>37</sup> Considerably down on the 34,283,538 lbs which arrived in 1904.

<sup>38</sup> Medical Officer of Health Report to Johannesburg Municipal Council for the year 1905-1906, p.711.

<sup>39</sup> GOV 111 GEN/152/02, Milner to Chamberlain 1902.

9. Council may refuse to grant a licence without assigning any reason.
11. No auctioneer shall have the right to hold more than two licences, one on the west side and one on the east.
12. Sales can only be held on days specified; no sale until after morning market and must finish by 3.
16. No sub-letting or assigning licences.
17. The Council may cancel licence if Bye-Laws are breached.<sup>40</sup>

At a meeting of the Johannesburg Consolidated Investment Company in January 1902 the chairman, S B Joel, told shareholders that their company had a substantial holding in the Johannesburg Market Buildings Concessions Company which before the war had been paying a regular annual dividend of 10 per cent per share. The Company's property was still intact having not suffered any war damage, and it owned a valuable block of buildings in the centre of Market Square.<sup>41</sup> The identity of the shareholders in the Johannesburg Market Buildings Concessions Company had always been unclear, but the involvement of one of the large mining companies perhaps explains Milner's reluctance to expropriate the Company without consent, as had been done with the dynamite and tramways concessions.

In spite of this optimistic stance by one of the Company's larger shareholders, the Market, based on ox-wagons carrying loads into Market Square, was losing its *raison d'être* in competition with dealers collecting their goods direct from the railway station, and from the growth of specialised wholesalers, dealers and shops. It lost it further in 1904 when two Europeans living in the upper storeys of Market Buildings were diagnosed with bubonic plague and taken to the hospital in Rietfontein, one in a serious condition. A dead rat was discovered under the room they had occupied, and a bacteriological examination found it carried the plague virus. The Plague Committee issued instructions at 11.30 am that very day, 4 May 1904, that the Market Buildings should be closed. Further search was made and several dead rats were found. The police then placed a guard over the buildings and business stopped. The produce and vegetable market was moved to outside tables between Loveday and Harrison Streets while Market House was being thoroughly disinfected. The weather was extremely cold, and fruit dealers restricted their business to their own stores elsewhere. Business was dull and depressed.<sup>42</sup>

In his history of Johannesburg, Shorten states that all the fixtures in the building were placed on Market Square and burned on the night of 18 May. Thousands of people watched the huge bonfire which had eventually to be extinguished by the Fire Brigade. The Johannesburg Market Building Concessions Company instituted proceedings against the Council for the recovery of £19,000 lost due to the subsequent year-long closure of the building and the destruction of its fittings. The case dragged on and business never really recovered.

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<sup>40</sup> Johannesburg City Council Minutes, 17 December 1902, p.1132.

<sup>41</sup> *The Star*, 3 January 1902.

<sup>42</sup> *The Star*, 4 and 12 May 1904.

An undated memorandum from the Town Council complained of

the indefinite postponement of a solution to a question which is vital to Johannesburg if it is to be redeemed from the squalid conditions which obtain in the centre of the Town and to be given the kind of public buildings which befit the largest city in South Africa. The Market Square is at present a low fair, partly a forage market and partly a cattle market. To compare lesser things with greater, its associations are those of Covent Garden, Smithfield or Billingsgate rather than those of Trafalgar Square or Whitehall. Its wide surface of red clay, contaminated by the markets carried upon it is ground into dust, which on windy days blows in clouds into the surrounding buildings and down the neighbouring streets and is a real danger to the health of the Town.<sup>43</sup>

In February 1906 the Market Buildings Concessions Company accepted the Council's offer of £189,750 to buy out the Concession, the government paying half in return for a half share in the Market. The Market continued in the old building under control of the Council's Parks and Estates Committee.<sup>44</sup> L V Praagh described the Market, just after the Council had bought it:

Until these improvements are carried out, the Market Square of the 'Golden City' will continue to be a centre of filth and disorder. Inside the market house, under the supervision of officials called market-masters, every variety of fruit and vegetable produceable in the country is displayed for sale on tables in long rows, the vendors being Jews, Greeks, Portuguese, Syrians, and other Asiatics of all shades, and a sprinkling of Boers. It is on these tables that the auctions of vegetables take place.

The space round the walls inside the building is apportioned off into stalls or shops, where meat and poultry, tobacco and sweets, cooked food and a varied assortment of drinks, are vended. The cleaning up of this building is perfunctory in the extreme, and the atmosphere is unpleasantly odiferous.

Outside, twice a week, the western portion of the large Square is covered with stalls, benches, and wagons of produce- dealers, second-hand clothes and furniture dealers, poultry and egg merchants, and hawkers of other varieties of goods. These sell their wares to the passing public with the usual haggling and bargaining. To the east of the market house a huge concourse of cheap-jack auctioneers .... This species of competition has from time to time been furiously resented by the big shops where rents are heavy and salaried staffs are kept.<sup>45</sup>

*The Star* from time to time carried complaints about sharp practices, such as large potatoes at the top of bags covering smaller rotten ones underneath, and also irregular market reports on much the same lines as before the war. A few months after the Town Council had taken it over, from these reports the Market seemed better organised, with quantities clearly specified, and the wholesale prices not unduly higher.

Messrs Ullman Bros, produce and livestock commission agents, Johannesburg, report that the arrival of new Kaffir corn and barley brought a sudden change into the market and prices for these two articles gave way a good bit; the difference is about 3s to 4s per bag. Mealies are as firm as last week, while forage is easier, as the quantities offered are very large. Potatoes are coming in in huge quantities and prices are weaker, although good stuff still commands tip-top prices.

Prices for fowls and ducks have bettered as against last week's; turkeys hardened for a day or so, but dropped since, as the quantities arriving are unabating. Good fresh eggs are going up in price, but

<sup>43</sup> GOV 21 GEN 575/02

<sup>44</sup> J R Shorten, *The Johannesburg Saga*, J R Shorten, Johannesburg, 1970, p.241.

<sup>45</sup> L V Praagh, *The Transvaal and its Mines: The Encyclopaedic History of the Transvaal*, Praagh & Lloyd, Johannesburg, 1906, p.259.

there are very few arriving. Game prices are far better, and good-sized bucks are showing very fair returns. The livestock department is very lifeless, sheep are only saleable at a sacrifice, oxen are more inquired for, while pigs have slightly eased against the past week. The prices, as realised during the week ending May 10 were as follows:-

	<u>From</u>	<u>To</u>
Kaffircorn, red, 200 lbs, net	10s 0d	11s 0d
Kaffircorn, white, 200 lbs, net	9 0	10 3
Mealies, white, 200 lbs, net	13 0	13 6
Mealies, yellow, 200 lbs net	12 9	13 3
Rye, 200 lbs, net	21 0	22 0
Salt, 200 lbs, net	6 3	6 6
Wheat, 200 lbs, net	18 0	21 0
Potatoes, Transvaal, 200 lbs	13 0	20 0
Potatoes, Colonial, 200 lbs	8 0	15 0
Onions, yellow, 120 lbs net	8 0	11 0
Onions, white, 120 lbs net	5 0	9 0
Eggs, fresh, per dozen	1 7	2 0
Eggs, stale, per dozen	1 0	1 7
Fowls, killing, each	1 6	2 6
Fowls, laying, each	2 0	3 0
Ducks, each	2 0	3 0
Geese, each	4 6	5 6
Turkeys, cocks, each	6 0	15 0
Turkeys, hens, each	4 0	6 0
Pigeons, each	1 0	1 2
LIVESTOCK		
Oxen, each	200 0	300 0
Oxen, dressed weight, 100 lbs	35 0	37 0
Sheep, each	12 0	20 0
Sheep, dressed weight, per lb	0 5½	0 6
Pigs, live weight, per lb	0 3¼	0 4¼
Pigs, over 200 lbs, live, per lb	0 3	0 3½
GAME		
Springbuck, each	12 0	30 0
Blesbuck, each	20 0	40 0
Koraans, each	2 6	3 6
Partridges, each	2 0	2 9
Hares, each	1 0	2 0
Wild pigeons, each	0 6	1 3
Wild Guinea Fowl, each	2 6	3 6
Wild ducks, each	1 9	2 0 <sup>46</sup>

The prices for locally-produced staples such as mealies, potatoes, and onions were considerably lower than the maximum prices that had been set by military proclamation in June 1900, and for other produce were much the same. Apart from live-weight pigs, the June 1900 maximum price list had not included meat, so comparison of that staple is not possible; pigs were half the price six years later, perhaps an indication that meat was in better supply by then. Local potatoes fetched better prices than colonial because they were fresher. Although the Transvaal was also a colony after 1902, Natal and Cape Colony produce was still

<sup>46</sup> *The Star*, 12 May 1906.

called 'colonial'. Some small game had been brought to the Market before the War in winter, but the detail provided in this price list points to greater supply.

The slightly higher prices for white than yellow maize perhaps marks the beginnings of a change in consumer preference which became stronger by the 1920s and 1930s. Uniformity was required by millers and the industrial starch and distilling market in Europe, but the preference seems to have been aesthetic; chemically and genetically the two are virtually indistinguishable, yellow maize does contain traces of vitamin A though not enough to matter. Southern African preferences affected the rest of Africa, where yellow maize is now regarded as only fit for animal feed, and in droughts consumers would not accept imported yellow maize. Maize of all colours continued to be cultivated only in gardens and as a curiosity.<sup>47</sup>



Coloured Maize, from Dinner Menu Cover, Emirates Airlines, 2008.

### THE ABATTOIR PROBLEM AND MEAT SUPPLY

The Medical Officer of Health's Report for 1902-3 recommended a public abattoir in place of the 11 slaughterpoles, which were scattered over a considerable area in Brixton Township, west of the municipal compound in Vrededorp.

After much trouble, weekly average figures of meat consumption over the period 1 August to 31 October 1902 had been obtained:

	CARCASES OF				
	<u>Beef</u>	<u>Mutton</u>	<u>Lamb</u>	<u>Veal</u>	<u>Pork</u>
Imported frozen	850	4,000	250	50	156
Killed locally	50	360			50 <sup>48</sup>

<sup>47</sup> James C McCann, *Maize and Grace: Africa's Encounter with a New World Crop 1500-2000*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA, 2005, pp.111-118

<sup>48</sup> Report of the Medical Officer of Health 1902-1903 to Johannesburg Municipal Council, pp.31-32.



In 1906 the Council again attempted to set up a municipal abattoir, considering it 'of the utmost importance that proper facilities should be provided for the development of a regular supply of fresh meat to the inhabitants of Johannesburg. ... while a considerable advantage would be afforded to the farming community.' The Johannesburg Master Butchers' Association put forward that:

the retail butchers of this town, appreciating the fact that the fresh meat trade is now rapidly increasing to a dominating extent over the frozen supply, are anxious that such fresh meat trade should be put on a more satisfactory basis than that existing; the present wholesale caterers and their method of slaughtering leaving much to be desired.

Apart from this fact, and for financial reasons, such present source of supply is neither adequately continuous or regular. With a view to remedying this, and also to encourage the development of the country by giving farmers a reliable market for their stock, it is proposed to form a Fresh Meat Supply Association in co-operation with several farmers throughout the country, and the capital is now available for its establishment together with the concomitant adjuncts such as the erection of abattoirs, chilling room etc. A convenient site near the railway can be obtained, and the scheme would also include stockyards....

The Association asked if it is the intention of the Municipality to proceed at once with the long contemplated erection of Municipal abattoirs or if they will be content and hold aloof permitting the matter to be carried out by the private enterprise of the trade, subject to reasonable regulations touching public rights.

The Council, however, considered that it would be 'more satisfactory if municipal abattoirs were erected by which equal facilities would be granted to all persons engaged in the industry, and effective supervision of the meat supply secured, than if control and management were under a Company or Association'. The Parks and Estates Committee offered a site at Fordsburg, and the Railway Administration was asked to exchange this site for one they required in connection with the reconstruction of Braamfontein Station. Plans and estimates was drawn up by the Town Engineer, and an estimate of the sum of £58,000 was made, which included the cost of land, buildings, water supply, and railway siding. The Finance Committee was asked to make provision for this sum in the estimates. 'In view of the expressions of public opinion, the matter should be pushed forward as rapidly as possible'.<sup>49</sup> It was to be another four years before the modernised Newtown abattoir, with direct access to the railway goods station, was opened on 4 January 1910.

### **The 1904 CENSUS AND THE NEW COLONY**

The Census of the Transvaal taken in April 1904 only distinguishes between Whites or Europeans, 'Aboriginal Natives', and 'All Other Coloured Persons'; the details of birthplaces, religions etc were felt to be invidious. The Census Director's report gives an indication of how unsuccessful the expulsions of non-British Johannesburgers had been:

The Witwatersrand required a very large number of Enumerators, both on account of the density of the population and on account of the great variety of nationalities, and because many of the people

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<sup>49</sup> Report of the Public Health Committee to Johannesburg Municipal Council, June 20 1906, pp.718-719.

could speak neither English nor Dutch, consequently men able to speak and write English, Yiddish, Greek, the Indian dialects and the Portuguese patois spoken in Madeira were necessary.<sup>50</sup>

In its report on the Census *The Star* adds that Census forms had to be printed in English, Dutch, Italian, German, Turkish and Indian dialects etc, and enumerators had to have proficiency in Dutch, Yiddish, French, German and the Kafir tongue and language of Madeira – not quite the same languages as stated in the Census Director's report.<sup>51</sup> The total number of people enumerated in the Johannesburg Municipality was 158,581 (an increase of 55 per cent since the 1896 Census): 83,902 Whites or Europeans; 62,524 Aboriginal Natives and 12,154 Other Coloureds.

Social engineering of Johannesburg begun during the war with the removal of 'undesirables' from Johannesburg by both military regimes, continued in 1902 with the Insanitary Areas Improvement Scheme that aimed at cleaning up Brickfields and the 'coolie' location on grounds of the area being a health hazard with overcrowding, interracial living, immorality, crime and high mortality rates. Some 188 acres were expropriated in September 1903, and the outbreak of bubonic plague in the 'Coolie Location' in March 1904, from which 88 people died, led to its complete clearance. Nowhere within the newly enlarged municipal boundary could be found for relocation of residents, and they were dumped on the proposed Klipspruit Sewage Farm, outside the new enlarged municipal boundary and completely without facilities.<sup>52</sup> This forced removal of mainly African people multiplied their problems of getting to work and of being able to buy food at reasonable prices which they had experienced near the centre of Johannesburg. The cleared area became the railway goods yard and, in 1913, the Newtown market, as was discussed above.

The colonial Government which was installed in 1902 was far more powerful and better resourced than the old ZAR had ever been.<sup>53</sup> The 1903 municipal franchise in Johannesburg gave the vote to white British subjects only,<sup>54</sup> and between 1903 and 1906 £3.5 million, raised on municipal loans, was spent on capital works in white areas of Johannesburg that included sanitation, sewerage, roads, stormwater drainage, water supply, electric tramways and electric lighting. This expenditure was based on the assumption that, with the lower working costs made possible by the removal of the Kruger Government, the prosperity of the mines would bring about 'vast and immediate' industrial development.<sup>55</sup> These hopes were to be disappointed. In the years immediately after the war the prevailing feelings among the people of Johannesburg were depression and disappointment that the expected post-war boom had failed to materialise. The labour problems of the mines restricted production, and investors had been chary of South African mining shares

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<sup>50</sup> *Census Returns of British South Africa*, Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of His Majesty, July 1904, p.2.

<sup>51</sup> *The Star*, 14 April 1904.

<sup>52</sup> Beavon, *Johannesburg*, p. 75-78.

<sup>53</sup> Shaun Milton, 'To Make the Crooked Straight': Settler Colonialism, Imperial Decline and the South African Beef Industry, 1902-1942', PhD, University of London, 1996, p.29.

<sup>54</sup> Which Transvaal burghers had now become.

<sup>55</sup> Donald Denoon, *A Grand Illusion: The Failure of Imperial Policy in the Transvaal Colony during the Period of Reconstruction 1900-1905*, Longman, London, 1973, pp.37-39.

since the collapse of the 1892-1896 boom and the South African War, so that more and more mines had to finance development from their own resources. Immigrants continued to arrive, however, in spite of warnings, and there was considerable unemployment. The economy did not really pick up until after 1906.

The relationship between the Transvaal's commercial class and the British Government was not friction free. In the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century the Crown Agents handled all government purchases for the maze of British dependencies, territories, protectorates, mandates and crown colonies, but not for dominions such as Canada and Australia.<sup>56</sup> The Transvaal Government's announced intention in early 1904, when 'trade was bad', of making all non-locally produced Government purchases through the Crown Agents brought together Chambers of Commerce all over the Transvaal, certain nominated members of the Legislative Council, and representatives on the Inter-Colonial Council, to protest as a group. Their protest was not only at the withdrawal of the purchase of supplies from the merchants of the Colony, but a token of their reduced status that the Transvaal was no longer an independent Republic. In addition, the protestors claimed this would embarrass the Transvaal Administration as a large capital sum, more urgently needed for administrative purposes, would be required, and in addition would result from time to time in heavy losses in overstocked and out of date goods, such as those incurred by the Repatriation Department. Furthermore:

That the commercial community in South Africa is entitled to every consideration at the hands of his Majesty's Government on the grounds that it is chiefly composed of men of British birth and parentage, whose employees, to a very large extent, are also British. Further, the aforesaid commercial community employs a considerable British capital in the conduct of business, and making the bulk of its purchases in British markets, therefore represents the chief supporters of the British manufacturing interest in South Africa; and our claim for consideration is strengthened when we venture to remind you that a very large portion of the revenue is derived from Customs duties on goods, and the mercantile community is the channel through which the Government receives this revenue.... The action proposed would tend to create distrust of His Majesty's Government, and weaken the authority of the Administration, inasmuch as it would appear that this country is to be governed for the benefit of the Crown Agents in England to the detriment of the inhabitants of this Colony in general.<sup>57</sup>

At this display of unity and assertion of free market principles by a large number of commercial concerns, the administration hastily backed down, stating its intention had only been that the Transvaal Colony should make greater use of the Crown Agents in its purchasing procedures.

Johannesburg Municipality had fuller powers, and these were modelled on British rather than the previous Continental lines of the ZAR, with only policing and education in the hands of the central Transvaal government.<sup>58</sup> The commercial elite and the Randlords dominated local politics in Johannesburg for many years, and firmly supported the creation of strong commercial and industrial economy in the Transvaal,

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<sup>56</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crown\\_agents](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crown_agents), downloaded 23 November 2011.

<sup>57</sup> *The Star*, 21 April 1904.

<sup>58</sup> Beavon, Keith, *Johannesburg: The Making and Shaping of the City*, University of South Africa Press, Pretoria, 2004, p 72.

backed by the colonial administration and the Boer elite.<sup>59</sup> This improved economy, however, took some time to evolve.

### LOCAL FOOD SUPPLY

For the supply of food from the countryside, as distinct from imports coming by rail, or market gardening close enough to be independent of transport problems, the effects of the guerrilla phase of the war in the last two years had been devastating. Kitchener's scorched earth policy meant ferocious looting and destruction of Boer farms, livestock, crops and property and the herding of Boer families, and African farmworkers and tenants, into concentration camps. In some areas the British Army had substantial help in the looting of Boer farms from African communities in the expectation that they would take over these possessions after the Boer defeat, but as soon as peace was declared property rights and control were restored with the help of Native Commissioners, Resident Magistrates, and the 10,000 man newly formed South African Constabulary, that replaced the former administrative structure of veld cornets, landdrosts and *ad hoc* commandos.<sup>60</sup> Some Africans, particularly those living near the Bechuanaland or Basutoland borders, had done well, as they could hide looted cattle with kinsmen. These were wealthy enough after the war, together with those who had earned good wages working for the British military, to avoid the need to be employed, thus contributing to the shortage of mine and farm labour.<sup>61</sup> Other Africans, however, suffered from the 'methods of barbarism'; the death rate in the black concentration camps had been high and their substantial losses in cattle and other possessions from drought and warfare were scantily compensated compared with what the Boers received.<sup>62</sup>

Severe droughts in 1902 and 1903 complicated re-settling Boers on their farms. In an attempt to prevent the further drift to the towns of poor landless Boers that had already begun before the war,<sup>63</sup> the Repatriation Department supplied for draught purposes 25,000 cattle and 1,000 mules, rations, materials for rebuilding houses, seed, agricultural implements and ploughing teams to the value of well over one million pounds, and £9.5 million was awarded in compensation payments. This initial expenditure was mainly to restore the previous position rather than a drive towards the commercial farming and the increase in local production needed to feed the growing urban populations. Milner saw the need for a more commercial orientation among farmers who had largely been subsistence pastoralists before the war, even 'arranging for some selected groups of well-disposed Boer prisoners-of-war to tour Canada, New Zealand or Australia' to study what were then regarded as progressive methods of cattle-raising and agriculture.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Diana Cammack, "The Johannesburg Republic": the Re-Shaping of Rand Society, 1900-1901', *South African Historical Journal*, **18**, 1986, p.72.

<sup>60</sup> Jeremy Krikler, *Revolution from Above, Rebellion from Below: The Agrarian Transvaal at the Turn of the Century*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1993, pp.12-38.

<sup>61</sup> Fred Morton, *When Rustling Became an Art: Pilane's Kgatla and the Transvaal Frontier 1820-1902*, David Philip, Cape Town, 2009, pp.246-265.

<sup>62</sup> Warwick, *Black People*, pp.145-162.

<sup>63</sup> Cammack, *The Rand at War*, p.201.

<sup>64</sup> Krikler, *Revolution from Above*, pp.60-61 and p.77, and L S Amery (Ed) *The Times History of the War in South Africa 1900-1909, Volume VII*, Sampson Low, Oxford, 1909.

There was a general failure of crops in 1903 owing to drought, East Coast fever and locusts, and in that year the Transvaal imported foodstuffs to the value of £4,311,878. This was regarded as exceptionally high, however, and despite the adverse conditions it was hoped that in the near future the region would become self-sufficient in maize and there would be enough to export, which did happen a few years later. The high rate of imports in 1903 was shown by the Customs duties which were paid on the following, particularly the staples of mealies and meat :

Mealies	£35,432
Fresh Meat	33,871
Kafir Corn	5,714
Fresh Vegetables	3,764
Fresh Fruit	3,422

After the 1903 Customs Convention between all four colonies all duties on these foodstuffs grown in South Africa were dispensed with,<sup>65</sup> with the aim of encouraging local production and lowering the urban cost of living.

#### LAND SETTLEMENT

Milner's aim of increasing local food production was based on a massive rural development programme which included the settlement of 'sturdy British yeoman farmers' who would provide good examples to the Boers and stimulate production, and the provision of expert advice and extension services by the new Department of Agriculture. The Land Settlement Scheme, started at first for ex-soldiers, was widened to include settling British immigrants and their families as farmers in the countryside rather than in urban areas. These were expected to provide a leaven of good modern agricultural practice among what were regarded as apathetic Boers, as well as changing the demographic structure of the Transvaal in favour of British yeomanry. The *Handbook for Settlers* in 1903 noted that £3 million was being spent each year on imported farm produce which could be raised in the Transvaal, and went on to say:

This is sufficient to indicate the market that is likely to prevail for farm produce of every description, when the normal conditions that existed prior to the war are again reached. There appears to be no reason why in the near future the agriculturists of the new colonies should not only supply their own local markets and perhaps share those of the neighbouring states who are large importers of foreign produce, but it is probable that products for which the country is specially adapted will find the European markets available. It is of course impossible to grasp the extent of the markets in the future as population increases but, as to the present with which we are chiefly concerned, a great demand already exists for all that the countryman can produce and every capable settler may profit by the opportunities that are offered to him.<sup>66</sup>

It was originally envisaged that 2,500 settlers would be placed on 2.5 million hectares of land,<sup>67</sup> which the commercial and speculative land companies saw as an opportunity to dispose of some of their vast holdings.

<sup>65</sup> W Basil Worsfold, *The Reconstruction of the New Colonies under Lord Milner*, Keegan Paul, London, 1913, p.144.

<sup>66</sup> Quoted in Thomas, *Agricultural and Pastoral Prospects*, p.103.

<sup>67</sup> Milton, 'To Make the Crooked Straight', p.43.

Thomas was scathing about settlers who arrive in South Africa with neither money nor experience,<sup>68</sup> a view confirmed by the high failure rate of many of the settlers who then moved to the towns. The stipulation by the Land Settlement Commission that British settlers should have £300 of their own money to invest did limit the number available, and by 1906 only 517 settlers had been brought to the Transvaal.<sup>69</sup>

The Transvaal Lands Department set up in December 1902 became a very large department, combining settlement and agricultural production. Two months after its inception, the Lands Department laid the foundation for the beef industry in the Transvaal with the establishment of a model cattle ranch in the Waterberg. The local market for meat was import-dependent, unstable and expensive, and it was hoped that providing cheaper beef would contribute to urban food security, especially in Johannesburg. However, high land prices due to speculation, poor infrastructure and lack of economies of scale contributed to Transvaal beef being more expensive and of poorer quality than imported beef.<sup>70</sup> The state also placed white settlers on large tracts of state land in the northern and western Transvaal, based on assumptions of racial superiority and reinforced by beliefs in western scientific methods, at the same time marginalising African producers so as to increase the supply of labour to the mines and white farmers. Already in 1904, however, the Department of Agriculture was expressing concern that low quality and high costs could make settler-produced cattle vulnerable to African-produced cattle in price, and to foreign meat imports in quality. Milton states that the 'Transvaal administration disregarded the ecological and sociological arguments in support of existing African crop and cattle production in favour of the political, imperialist imperative for supporting settler production'.<sup>71</sup>

### THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

The British administration had set to work even before the Treaty of Vereeniging was signed in May 1902 to establish agriculture in its two new colonies on a sounder footing and to reduce the bill for imported foodstuffs – at the low point at the end of the War all meat, milk, fruit and maize was having to be imported.<sup>72</sup> The new Department of Agriculture, so long resisted by the Volksraad, was a major plank in the programme. It was set up in August 1902 with F B Smith as director, and had better resources than the British Ministry of Agriculture which concentrated much more on the training of veterinarians and other personnel, than on outreach to farmers. Smith, although British, had worked in the United States, and was a proponent of the methods he learned there, with peripatetic instructors, and model farms arranging experiments on crops and manures and introducing new crops and grasses. By the end of 1903 the following divisions were in place within the Department: Chemistry (soils analyses and fertilisers), Botany and Agristology (headed by Joseph Burt-Davy, which examined seed and plant introduction and the merits of

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<sup>68</sup> Thomas, *Agricultural and Pastoral Products*, p.136.

<sup>69</sup> Denoon, *A Grand Illusion*, p.74.

<sup>70</sup> Milton, 'To Make the Crooked Straight', p.32.

<sup>71</sup> Milton, 'To Make the Crooked Straight', pp.20-28.

<sup>72</sup> Thelma Gutsche, *There was a Man: The Life and Times of Sir Arnold Theiler of Onderstepoort*, Howard Timmins, Cape Town, 1979, p.192.



native plants), Horticulture (fruit growing), Forestry (tree nurseries to reduced timber imports), Poultry, Dairy, Irrigation (hydrological surveys and irrigation schemes), Entomology (including locust destruction), and Publications.<sup>73</sup> Louis Botha stated later that the Department of Agriculture was the most positive legacy of the Milner administration, because of its positive effects on agriculture and food production in the Transvaal.<sup>74</sup>

The School of Tropical and sub-Tropical Agriculture near Tzaneen was set up as a centre for surrounding settlements, and an information source and training school. In addition to the Waterberg model cattle ranch, various model farms and experimental centres were started at Potchefstroom, Ermelo and Springbok Flats at which 'numerous parties of influential farmers and others were received, a thousand names being registered' in the first year.<sup>75</sup> The Potchefstroom experimental farm, set up in 1903, was particularly influential and, among other activities, produced seeds for distribution to farmers. There had been a problem with potatoes, which require fresh seed potatoes each year. These could be planted as early as August in the Transvaal, but could only be obtained from Britain and northern Europe in October. The Potchefstroom farm experimented to find the most suitable local varieties and to make them available at the right time. It also experimented with dairy cattle, and found the best results were obtained by crossing Friesland cows for milk production with Afrikaners for stamina. Similar work was done in adapting pigs, poultry and fruit trees to local conditions and thus expanding local food production.<sup>76</sup>

The success of the Department of Agriculture in improving the locally-produced supply of food was derived partly from continuity in using trusted pre-war figures such as Arnold Theiler, employing local people who could deal with farmers in their own language, and also in drawing from the experience of other countries with similar conditions rather than trying to apply British precepts based on very different agricultural factors. The heads of divisions had all either worked in the United States or were Australian.

As a result of this, 'dry-farming' techniques from America were fashionable in the Department. This meant not only relying on rainfall rather than irrigation, but ploughing very deeply so that rainfall could penetrate the soil and be stored there. The soil then needed to be harrowed to retard capillary action and evaporation, to prevent weed growth, to promote the circulation of bacteria and nitrogen, and to quicken the decomposition of mineral elements in the soil. After ploughing and harrowing each parcel should be left fallow in alternate years.<sup>77</sup> These techniques did improve agricultural production in some parts of the country, but in drier areas had to be modified for local conditions. Ploughing deeply could remove the scanty topsoil, and lead to devastating soil erosion. The introduction of ploughs by missionaries and traders earlier in the nineteenth

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<sup>73</sup> Gutsche, *There was a Man*, p.194, and Worsfold, *Reconstruction*, p.109.

<sup>74</sup> Milton, 'To Make the Crooked Straight', p.34.

<sup>75</sup> Worsfold, *Reconstruction*, pp.97,109-113.

<sup>76</sup> *The Star*, 10 May 1906.

<sup>77</sup> William Beinart, *The Rise of Conservation in South Africa: Settlers, Livestock, and the Environment 1770-1950*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2008, pp.240-242.

century, and the change from sorghum grown by hand-hoeing to higher-yielding more intensively farmed wheat and maize, had resulted in enormous dongas in Basutoland.<sup>78</sup>

Milner, with his recent experience in Egypt,<sup>79</sup> brought to the Transvaal an expert from Egypt, W Willcocks, to advise on irrigation. Willcocks found irrigation schemes in the Transvaal to be almost non-existent, apart from a small scheme near Rustenburg, and this in a country with erratic and uncertain rainfall. He divided the Transvaal, for agricultural purposes, into the dolomite region around the Witwatersrand (a crucial catchment area and the source of most rivers), the high veld, bush veld and low veld, and more arid south-west in Bloemhof district. He advised that, apart from the high veld, the agricultural potential depended entirely on irrigation as the long winter drought and uncertain summer rains prohibit advanced agriculture without it. The intelligent application of crop rotations, suitable manures and good tillage would do much for the country, but stock breeding would always be the principal industry of the country. He pointed out that the United States Agricultural Bureau sent agents to Egypt, India and other arid and semi-arid countries to collect information and seeds to distribute to American farmers.<sup>80</sup> Similar government action would be of great help to Transvaal agriculture and Johannesburg's food supply.

Officials concurred with his shock at the lack of irrigation schemes in the Transvaal. One wrote that wartime destruction could not be blamed - 'I cannot find that artesian well boring has ever been tried'.<sup>81</sup> However, farmers had made use of water furrows led to their fields from rivers. There had been substantial such irrigation along the Orange river near Upington for table grapes and raisins since the early 1890s,<sup>82</sup> along the Vaal river for Vereeniging Estates, and early Transvaal towns had all had irrigation furrows for town gardens, but few dams had been built or boreholes put down. The Department of Agriculture had 18 powerful modern drills and by June 1906 had drilled boreholes estimated to be yielding more than half a million gallons a day. Scientific studies of water resources were begun, and a wide-ranging irrigation commission report in 1908 led to the annulment of the archaic Water Law of ZAR, and made water part of the public domain, as Mr Willcocks had strongly recommended.<sup>83</sup> Looking ahead of the study period, this prepared the way for the construction of major dams in the Magaliesberg, at Haartbeespoort, and later at Olifantsnek and Buffelspoort, between 1916 and 1933, which greatly increased the productive capacity of farms in the area and improved the food supply of Johannesburg and Pretoria.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> James C McCann, *Green Land, Brown Land, Black Land: An Environmental History of Africa, 1800-1990*, James Currey, Oxford, 1999, pp.141-170.

<sup>79</sup> He had been Under-Secretary for Finance there 1889-1892, and his book *England in Egypt* increased his reputation.

<sup>80</sup> *The Star*, 3 January 1902.

<sup>81</sup> Krikler, *Revolution from Above*, p.79

<sup>82</sup> Jeanne Viall, Wilmot James and Jakes Gerwal, *Grape: Stories of the Vineyards in South Africa*, Tafelberg, Cape Town, 2011, pp.178-179.

<sup>83</sup> Krikler, *Revolution from Above*, pp.79-80; *The Star*, 3 January 1902.

<sup>84</sup> Vincent Carruthers, *The Magaliesberg*, Southern Book Publishers, Johannesburg, 1990, p.341.

**THE TRANSVAAL AGRICULTURAL JOURNAL**

*The Transvaal Agricultural Journal* was published quarterly by the Department of Agriculture in Dutch and English from October 1902 and sent free to farmers.<sup>85</sup> It published market prices in Johannesburg and Pretoria, and an amazing stream of advice on all things agricultural. Judging by the style, the editor, F T Nicholson, mentioned earlier in connection with the formation of the Transvaal Agricultural Union, may well have written the gardening notes in *The Star* in the early years before the War. Daily market reports had disappeared from Johannesburg newspapers with the new century, though weekly reports continued. These were now supplemented by the Annual Reports of the Department and by material in the *Transvaal Agricultural Journal* which contained monthly agricultural reports from districts supplied by Resident Magistrates. These reports included details of the weather, state and yield of crops, prices in local markets, cost of both white and black labour, condition of stock and grazing, which contributed to awareness in Johannesburg of the availability and likely cost of food supplies. For instance, part of the report for Krugersdorp district, dated 30 September 1902, reads:

The weather during the month has been dry, warm and windy; on the 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>, cloudy and promising rain. Rain has since fallen in steady showers, and at the time of writing there are promises of more rain.

Ploughing has been done by the majority of farmers who have been able to get back to their farms, and who had stock wherewith to plough. A number of repatriated farmers have, in a great many instances, done considerable work with the spade; these have generally put in potatoes. There are probably more potatoes planted in this district than at any previous period before the war; planting still goes on, and, if season favours, there should be a great yield of this product....

Vegetables are being grown largely on farms near the markets, but on those situated at any distance farmers are only growing enough for home use, there being considerable difficulty in getting their products to market on account of the scarcity of horses and mules, what animals farmers have being reserved for farm use and not available for frequent trips to the town. The local markets, at the time of writing, are poorly supplied with both produce and vegetables. The produce for sale being chiefly that imported, consequently prices are exceedingly high as compared with those ruling just before the war. Mealies are 22s to 27s per 203 lbs, potatoes 15s to 35s per 160 lbs, Boer meal 42s 6 to 45s per 203 lbs, cabbages 9d to 1s 8d each ...

The fruit prospect is as good as it has ever been, in spite of the fact that a great many orchards have been damaged during the last three years by grass fires.

Horned stock is in low condition ... as the grass is springing fast they are now able to find themselves sufficient food and will rapidly get into better condition.

Native labour is scarce, in fact almost unprocurable, wages ranging from 30s to 50s per month, with food. It is to be expected that with the return of the farmers who have been spending some time abroad, new systems and methods for the development of farming will be introduced; from conversation with the returned farmers, one learns that they have broadened their views, that they have seen much, and they have learned that in other countries obstacles are only made to be overcome.<sup>86</sup>

This Resident Magistrate could not have been in post for long, and one wonders how much weight can be placed on his assessment of conversations with returning farmers. Lengthy reports on similar lines are carried from magistrates in Vereeniging, Zoutpansberg, Zeerust, Lydenburg, Lichtenburg, Wakkerstroom, Heidelberg, Boksburg etc in this first issue. Resident Magistrates were not agricultural specialists, so this

<sup>85</sup> Paul F Cranefield, *Science and Empire: East Coast Fever in Rhodesia and the Transvaal*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1991, p.53-55.

<sup>86</sup> *Transvaal Agricultural Journal*, Volume 1, Number 1, 1902, p.9.

information may not be altogether reliable, but until Department of Agriculture extension officers were in place it provides more information than was available previously on the state of agriculture in the Transvaal and its likely effect on the Johannesburg Market month by month.

### LIVESTOCK and MEAT SUPPLY

When Pretoria fell to the British on 6 June 1900, the Swiss Arnold Theiler's veterinary abilities had been immediately recognised by the new authorities, and he was back at work in his laboratory at Daspoort on 1 July with a good salary under the Pretoria Medical Officer of Health. He had made the breakthrough in finding a serum against rinderpest, and, with Charles Lounsbury, the United States entomologist, had identified the non-indigenous brown tick as vector in East Coast fever. In February 1903 Theiler 'and all his works' were transferred to the Department of Agriculture.<sup>87</sup> The veterinary research institute set up at Onderstepoort in 1908 was the best in the world at the time – Britain excelled at training veterinarians but had inadequate research facilities.<sup>88</sup> South Africa at the time was the best place in the world for a research veterinary microbiologist to be, as the country was rife with animal diseases. Many visitors were astounded at the large range of what were described as 'siektes' in the country, and assumed that South Africa was particularly unfortunate in this respect. The names of diseases varied everywhere, being usually based on symptoms rather than agreed scientific names. Indeed many Boers regarded their range of diseases as specific to their country which they knew better how to deal with than outside experts.<sup>89</sup>

It is a difficult question whether it had always been so, or whether many diseases had been imported once it had become easier to move animals by sea. Thomas in 1903 stated firmly that: 'With the exception of horse-sickness, South Africa has been practically free from animal diseases from time immemorial till twenty years ago'.<sup>90</sup>

Alfred Crosby<sup>91</sup> suggests that Europeans, as their settlements expanded after 1500, took their crops, animals, diseases, pests, and weeds with them; and devastation was caused by the diseases attacking immunologically innocent animal populations. His book barely mentions Africa. When asked why not, he said it was too complicated.<sup>92</sup>

This would be because although southern Africa was remote from Europe, it was not isolated and its domesticated animals are not indigenous. Cattle had reached South Africa in the first millennium with

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<sup>87</sup> Gutsche, *There was a Man*, p.199.

<sup>88</sup> Cranefield, *Science and Empire*, p.282.

<sup>89</sup> Beinart, *The Rise of Conservation*, p.133.

<sup>90</sup> Thomas, *Agricultural & Pastoral Prospects*, p.130.

<sup>91</sup> Alfred W Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1986.

<sup>92</sup> J R McNeill in 'Environment and History in South America and South Africa' in Stephen Dovers, Ruth Edgecombe & Bill Guest (Eds), *South Africa's Environmental History*, David Philip, Cape Town, 2002, p.246.

Bantu-speakers from the east coast, and may have brought diseases with them which had then become endemic. Nagana (bovine trypanosomiasis) has been around for many centuries because Africans living in the lowveld and Limpopo river basin knew how to deal with it by keeping their cattle away from tsetse fly infested bush. The early Dutch settlers at the Cape had brought cattle from the Netherlands which interbred with local Khoikhoi cattle to form the Afrikaner breed, the strong trek oxen with great powers of endurance. There is little mention of cattle diseases until *Longsiekte* (contagious pleuro-pneumonia) is known to have been imported with some Dutch cattle in the 1850s. Imports of domestic animals from other parts of the world intensified in the later nineteenth century as shipping improved, and it seems to be after that that reports of animal epidemics become frequent. Livestock not only carried infections, but ticks; non-indigenous brown ticks on cattle imported by boat from Dar-es-Salaam brought East Coast fever to areas inland by railway from Beira and Durban in 1901.<sup>93</sup>

Plant-borne diseases carried by indigenous plants may have been indigenous, as could diseases deriving from the clostridium bacteria which survive as spores in the soil, and from seasonal soil deficiencies such as 'lamsiekte' (parabotulism)<sup>94</sup> where the craving of sheep for phosphates drove them to eat bones. Research by Theiler and his colleagues established the cause and the treatment for many of these diseases, thus greatly increasing pastoral productive capacity and to the meat surplus which developed by 1906.<sup>95</sup>

Africans could produce livestock more cheaply than whites because of the use of family labour as herd boys, and access to communal lands for grazing. The contribution of African-produced cattle to slaughter-stock figures was either under-represented, down-played or ignored. As late as 1945 Union officials acknowledged the 'disturbing factor' that 45 per cent of all beef supplies were derived from native sources.<sup>96</sup> Much of the local replenishment livestock after the War came from African resources; cattle were commandeered or bought below market price. Some 80,000 cattle were brought into the Transvaal from the Cape and Madagascar, and more from German South West Africa, or bought in from Bechuanaland Protectorate and Rhodesia; all areas which were drawn into the post-War regional trading network by the growing demand for meat from the Johannesburg and Kimberley Markets. The railway line passed through the most populous cattle raising areas in Bechuanaland and Rhodesia, where both land and labour costs were lower, were thus better placed to provide cheap animals for the mine compound market than many parts of the Transvaal to the north and west of the lines to Pietersburg and Rustenburg.<sup>97</sup> Breeding stock was also imported from Texas and Queensland, where climatic conditions were more similar to South Africa than Britain and northern Europe.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Cranefield, *Science and Empire*, pp.2,110.

<sup>94</sup> Gutsche, *There was a Man*, pp.284,328.

<sup>95</sup> Gutsche, *There was a Man*, p.342.

<sup>96</sup> Milton, 'To Make the Crooked Straight', p.10.

<sup>97</sup> Milton, 'To Make the Crooked Straight', pp.43-46.

<sup>98</sup> Milton, 'To Make the Crooked Straight', p.31.

The state encouragement of the massive expansion of cattle production after 1902, together with more effective control of bovine diseases, created over-production of expensively produced low-quality beef.<sup>99</sup> These were so successful that by 1906 the Johannesburg market for meat was glutted,<sup>100</sup> to the chagrin of the cold storage companies (see previous chapter), but the relief of consumers.

Cold storage facilities at the main urban centres became an important link in the marketing chain, because they had the means of storing meat and equalising seasonality. Imperial Cold Storage emerged as the dominant force in South African meat wholesaling (see Chapter Five);<sup>101</sup> its subsidiary, the Rand Cold Storage Company, held most of the compound meat contracts from 1904 to 1922.<sup>102</sup> With meat supplies coming from increasing distances, specialised intermediaries, dealers and speculators, emerged in order to organise the buying of livestock, linked to commission agents at the main markets. These commission agents saw to the transactions with buyers, and provided the dealers and speculators with finance for livestock buying. Auctioneers were also a powerful force in the marketing of meat, forming a ring which doubled the price of meat between the producer and consumer. This network of middlemen existed by the 1920s<sup>103</sup> but it is uncertain how much of it was there twenty years earlier. Judging by the comments of the Master Butchers' Association in 1906 on the need for public abattoirs, it seems likely that even then wholesale meat suppliers in Johannesburg had the market tied up in a way that was against the interests of consumers, retailers and farmers.

## GRAINS

Milner's policies provided support for 'progressive' and 'cheque-book' farmers rather than small farmers who showed little ability to modernise. The size of the Johannesburg market, and the needs of the mines for a reliable and cheap source of maize and meat necessitated the development of large-scale commercial farming.<sup>104</sup> Before the War there had been some innovative and entrepreneurial foreign and burgher progressives such as Hugh Hall and Louis Botha, whose main source of income was from farming. The creation of the Transvaal Agricultural Union in 1897 (see Chapter Three), and of various Agricultural Societies in Pretoria and the Witwatersrand and country towns, showed that there were urban dwellers interested in agriculture, many with farms of their own.<sup>105</sup> The Transvaal Agricultural Union met again in September 1903, with the Agricultural Department represented by six officials. The chairman was still J Z de Villiers from Lydenburg, and the Secretary and Treasurer, F T Nicholson from Pretoria. Topics at the July

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<sup>99</sup> Milton, 'To Make the Crooked Straight', p.9 & 49-50.

<sup>100</sup> Milton, 'To Make the Crooked Straight' p.44.

<sup>101</sup> Michael Hubbard, *Agricultural Exports and Economic Growth: A Study of the Botswana Beef Industry*, Routledge and Keegan Paul, London, 1986, pp.68-69.

<sup>102</sup> Robert Morrell, 'Farmers, Randlords and the South African State: Confrontation in the Witwatersrand Beef Markets, c 1920-1923', *Journal of African History*, **27.3**, 1986, p.517

<sup>103</sup> Morrell, 'Farmers, Randlords', p.518-520

<sup>104</sup> Robert Morrell, 'The Disintegration of the Gold and Maize Alliance in South Africa in the 1920s', *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, **21.4**, 1988, pp.619-621

<sup>105</sup> Thelma Gutsche, *A Very Smart Medal: The Story of the Witwatersrand Agricultural Society*, Howard Timmins, Cape Town, 1970, pp.17-18.



1904 conference in Pretoria, with inter-colonial representatives, discussed problems common to agriculture in the region, including ‘the urgent necessity of taking steps to prevent the Colonies from being injured by the establishment of a meat monopoly throughout South Africa’ – the ever-present fear of the Combrincks monopoly.<sup>106</sup>

Cheque book farmers invested large amounts of capital accumulated from non-agricultural sources in the Highveld adjacent to the Witwatersrand. Ezrael Lazarus and other Lithuanian shopkeepers produced large quantities of grain, especially mealies, in the Middelburg/Bethal area; William Hudson, a large Johannesburg wholesaler and dairy farmer, also in the Middleburg area, the Scottish David Forbes who had a large cattle ranch in south-eastern Transvaal and Sammy Marks, Pretoria industrialist and mining magnate, with Vereeniging Estates and other commercial farms. Both progressive and cheque book farmers had mining and political connections, and access to railways, all of which helped market their produce.<sup>107</sup>

Hugh Hall at Nelspruit, trying to market his considerable quantities of tomatoes and tropical fruits struggled with the railway insistence that they could only go by slow goods train rather than the mail train. He used connections from his early days as a storekeeper on Barberton goldfields to raise the matter with Lord Selborne, the Governor of the Transvaal, and the railways agreed that perishables could travel on the mail train if there was room in the guards’ van, but he still had trouble with the guards throwing expensive boxes imported from America around and smashing the tomatoes. The authorities were finally persuaded to agree that the perishables train could stop at a halt on his farm if he guaranteed to send or pay for two tons a week, which he did from then on, supplying vegetables during the winter to colder parts of the country.<sup>108</sup> This illustrates that the marketing of farm produce went beyond simply sending it to market; the railway had to be persuaded to carry it appropriately and suitable packaging had to be found. Nevertheless a number of enterprising farmers had, since the 1890s, taken full advantage of the position of their farms on the railway routes to Johannesburg: Sammy Marks at Zwartkoppies east of Pretoria for fruit, and for maize and vegetables, his Vereeniging Estates mentioned in Chapter Three,<sup>109</sup> and the Prinsloo family at Kaalfontein, near Bronkhorstspuit, for mixed farming.<sup>110</sup> Louis Botha was sending milk and eggs by rail to Johannesburg market from his farm near Standerton in 1906.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> F T Nicholson, ‘The Rise and Growth of the Transvaal Agricultural Union’, in *Transvaal Agricultural Journal*, Volume 5, 1906, pp.623-628.

<sup>107</sup> Milton, ‘To make the Crooked Straight’, pp.17-21; Stefan Schirmer, ‘Enterprise and Exploitation in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century’ in Peter Delius (Ed), *Mpumalanga: History and Heritage*, University of Kwa-Zulu Natal Press, Pietermaritzburg, 2007, p.300; and Morrell, ‘Gold and Maize Alliance’, p.622

<sup>108</sup> H L Hall, *I have Reaped my Mealies*, Hazell, Watson & Viney, London, 1938, pp.217-219

<sup>109</sup> Richard Mendelsohn, *Sammy Marks: The Uncrowned King of the Transvaal*, David Philip, Cape Town, 1991.

<sup>110</sup> Sandra Naudé (Ed), *Kaalfontein and its People*, Willem Prinsloo Agricultural Museum, Bronkhorstspuit, 2004.

<sup>111</sup> F V Engelenberg, *General Louis Botha*, Von Shaik, Pretoria, 1929, p.120.

Krikler points out that these commercial enterprises were precarious, however. Large labour forces at low wages were difficult to assemble in a primarily peasant country, which the Transvaal still was despite its mining, commercial and growing industrial sectors. While Africans retained their access to land, they resisted proletarianisation.<sup>112</sup>

Railways played a key role in post-war agricultural development, and in getting produce to Johannesburg very much more efficiently and cheaply than had been possible with ox-wagons. Tim Keegan describes the huge stockpiles of grain in the aftermath of war in the southern Free State and Basutoland which could not be moved because of lack of transport while there were exceptionally high grain prices in urban centres. Three-quarters of the 1904 maize crop was still unsold a year later. The railways built in that area in the first decade of the century marked a shift in priority for railway construction from import-export trade centred on the mining industry to the development of internal agricultural resources.<sup>113</sup> Rates for the transport by rail of seeds, fencing materials, agricultural machinery and implements were reduced. Sheep were sent to the lowveld by rail in 1905 at one-third of the normal price.<sup>114</sup> In 1906 railway rates were cut again, by 25 per cent for grain, forage, guano, manures and salt. However, railway and customs policies were designed to aid the producing landowner, but did not help small-scale Boer farmers or Africans, and there were still anomalies in the freight rates of the different states, which were not corrected until 1911 when a flat rate for internal transport made it easier to feed livestock with South African, rather than imported, maize for the production of milk and meat.<sup>115</sup>

Infrastructure problems were not really solved until motor vehicles and a network of roads became common in the 1920s. Railways could only be used by farmers near to stations or halts, and getting produce to them by animal-drawn vehicles could greatly increase transport costs. Rail management was often not immediately responsive to the specialised requirements of different crops and types of produce. This had occurred in England a generation earlier when milk was sent to London in open wooden churns in guards' vans, and dumped on station platforms to await collection.<sup>116</sup>

By 1906 the reliance on imports was being reduced and the Transvaal was even becoming able to profit from exports.<sup>117</sup> Export subsidies introduced distorted the market, as high internal rail rates made it cheaper to export maize to Europe than to sell it locally, and the situation sometimes arose where maize was simultaneously being imported from South America to supply the non-producing parts of the Cape. It also

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<sup>112</sup> Krikler, *Revolution from Above*, p.90.

<sup>113</sup> Timothy Keegan, *Rural Transformations in Industrializing South Africa: The Southern Highveld to 1914*, Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1986, p.101-102.

<sup>114</sup> Krikler, *Revolution from Above*, p.86.

<sup>115</sup> Tim Keegan, 'Seasonality, Markets and Pricing: The South African Maize Trade in the Early Twentieth Century', *Institute of Commonwealth Studies Societies of Southern Africa in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries Seminar*, paper for discussion on 31 May 1978, pp.5-6.

<sup>116</sup> Reay Tannahill, *Food in History*, Penguin, London, 1988 edition, p.308.

<sup>117</sup> Krikler, *Revolution from Above*, pp.87-89.

sometimes happened, as in 1905, that maize bought at low prices just after the harvest for export to Europe was sent, without being unloaded, back to South Africa because prices had risen there.<sup>118</sup>

There was a creeping advance of market crops: by the end of 1908 there were three and a half million citrus and other fruit trees, and almost a million pigs and poultry being reared commercially. Also by 1908, new seed, new methods of preparing the soil, inoculation, quarantining and stock improvement had turned the agricultural and pastoral short-falls of the decade before the war into surplus stocks of maize and beef.<sup>119</sup> Labour costs forced wheat farms into mechanisation to survive, because wheat had to be harvested at a particular time which raised production costs, whereas maize could be left on the stalks to dry until convenient in some off-peak period. Wheat, in the early twentieth century became more and more a white commercial farmer's crop.

However, when dent varieties of maize were introduced from the United States at this time, white farmers took to it as a large scale commercial crop amenable to fertilisers, improved seeds, and economies of scale in cultivation, processing, and in investment in research. Dent maize tolerated poor soils and yielded better than the older flint maizes, and its soft starch was better suited to the mechanised mills in mining urban areas and markets.<sup>120</sup> Having boreholes put down and fences erected had to be paid for and labour supplied, so these improvements were largely for the benefit of bigger, wealthier farmers, who could also afford advanced agricultural implements. The islands of commercial agriculture were differentiated from the sea of poorer producers.<sup>121</sup>

The pre-war problems of fluctuating prices over the annual cycle trapping poorer farmers into debt continued. Grain deteriorates rapidly from heat, moisture, frost and pests unless properly stored. Weevils would usually appear by November so, until grain elevators became common in the mid-1920s, few farmers could hold on to their crops for more than a few months after harvest.<sup>122</sup> Having used credit for their needs from the local storekeeper, poorer farmers had to sell at the low prices which prevailed soon after the harvest, thus their produce was bonded to storekeepers in payment of debt before it was harvested. Storekeepers needed cash to replenish their stocks, so had to sell on such terms as they could get from big grain merchants. Farmers then sometimes had to buy grain back from the storekeeper for their own needs later in the season at a higher price. 'Inevitably the middleman profited at the farmer's expense, and the big middleman lorded it over the small dealer.' As a result of the post-war depression and consequent credit squeeze and bankruptcies, many small dealers turned to speculation in whatever produce seemed suitable for profiteering. Wholesalers with forward contracts for supplying mills, municipalities or mines were continually at risk of not being able to

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<sup>118</sup> Keegan, 'Seasonality, Markets & Pricing', p.5.

<sup>119</sup> Shula Marks and Stanley Trapido, 'Lord Milner and the South African State', *History Workshop*, 8, 1979, p.70.

<sup>120</sup> McCann, *Maize and Grace*, pp.108-111.

<sup>121</sup> Krikler, *Revolution from Above*, pp.87-89.

<sup>122</sup> Keegan, 'Seasonality, Markets and Pricing', pp.2 & 7.

meet these contracts, owing to crop shortfalls, and expected their profit margins to compensate for the risks involved,<sup>123</sup> thus adding to the high price of food in Johannesburg.

White farmers in this debt trap, trying to maintain a 'civilised' standard of living were often under-capitalised and unable to afford to use wage labour. In some areas as late as 1914, Boer women and children could be seen gathering the harvest alone.<sup>124</sup> Some settlers who lacked local farming knowledge also struggled to survive, and many joined dispossessed *bywoners* in fleeing to the towns, intensifying the poor white problem there.

African food production was cheaper than white, both as tenants or sharecroppers raising grain or rearing stock on white-owned land, or on communal land in the reserves using family labour and reciprocal arrangements for labour intensive work such as planting and harvesting. After the war, there was an upsurge of peasant agricultural activity, especially in the western, central and northern Transvaal in response to market opportunities, including transporting goods by wagon to railheads, adopting new strains of maize and diversifying crops. Africans gained a certain amount of economic leverage and were able to resist low-paid jobs in unattractive circumstances. This was the hey-day of absentee proprietorship, and Africans had more freedom to move to rent-paying rather than labour tenancies. Sharecroppers on company land within ten or twenty miles of the goldfields for the Rand market were so productive that they could pay high rents of £6 to £10<sup>125</sup> in addition to the crop they provided for the landlord.<sup>126</sup> 'Squatting' on Crown Lands was more accessible to Africans. In spite of protests from white farmers, the Commissioner for Native Affairs, Godfrey Lagden, refused to apply anti-squatting regulations to Crown Lands, because 'it would tend to place a good deal of land out of cultivation which is now of benefit to the country... the peasants produce a considerable amount of cereals, especially mealies, used for consumption in this country.'<sup>127</sup>

Colin Bundy states that of the African population of over 900,000 by the 1904 Census, 438,000 were renting privately owned land, 180,000 leased Crown lands, and 130,000 farmed land they owned. The ban on African land ownership was lifted briefly by the British, and Africans were eager to hire or buy land in their own right rather than through a hereditary chief or missionary, who could swindle them. Land came on the market because of losses or death during the war, or was sold by failed white farmers who could get a better price from Africans than from struggling whites. At Haenertsberg, in Zoutpansberg district, Africans took over some lots originally surveyed for whites and supplied the goldfields with farm and garden produce.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Keegan, 'Seasonality, Markets & Pricing', pp.3-4.

<sup>124</sup> Fred Morton, *When Rustling Became an Art: Pilane's Kgatla and the Transvaal Frontier 1820-1902*, David Philip, Cape Town, 2009, p.264.

<sup>125</sup> Whether a month or a year is not specified.

<sup>126</sup> Krikler, *Revolution from Above*, p.125.

<sup>127</sup> Colin Bundy, *The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry*, James Currey, London, 1988, p.209.

<sup>128</sup> Bundy, *Rise and Fall*, pp.209-211

The 1904 Native Affairs Commission was told by many witnesses that Africans were too independent, and had access to an undue amount of arable land. Africans benefited in this period; but their tenancies could be ended without notice. Sharecroppers could be dispossessed by commercial white farmers preferring a wage labour relationship, and arable farms needed more labour than pastoralism. The Het Volk victory in 1907 began to tip the balance after this brief period of independent African production, and the Native Land Act of 1913, when Africans were deprived of access to land outside the limited areas they were restricted to, gave the mines and white farmers the reserve pool of cheap labour they wanted.<sup>129</sup>

It has been suggested that some mining interests, at least in the early years after the end of the South African war, favoured the African peasant option for agricultural production and rural development. The mine magnates failed to pursue it with any enthusiasm, however, for while it may have delivered cheaper food, this risked undermining their labour supply. However, in view of the mines' imperative for the cheapest possible food for its large unskilled migrant workforce, they came to rely heavily, though not exclusively, on African produced cattle.<sup>130</sup> An observer commenting on the Chinese labour controversy said that the best solution might be to import more Chinese to work in the mines, leaving Africans to produce the food the country needed, but this was politically impossible at the time. South Africa was to be a 'white man's country' in spite of the large indigenous population, and the only place for Africans in it was as labourers.

The growth of Johannesburg as a market for food produce is reflected in the growth of Transvaal towns in the period, many of them collecting centres for a district. Arthur Mawby takes the view that 'a gulf developed between the Witwatersrand and the rest of the Transvaal, and developments there had little impact on the white farmers in the outlying areas and on the white residents of the small towns of the Transvaal ... only small numbers of them responded positively to the opportunities presented by the new markets ... there existed the phenomenon of a string of bustling industrial towns surrounded by an essentially pre-industrial wider environment'.<sup>131</sup>

Praagh's *The Transvaal and its Mines*, however, details over thirty Transvaal towns outside the gold mining areas, all of which had grown substantially since the 1890s, and nearly all of which had been given municipal status by the British in 1903, 1904 and 1905. Their leading men had come from Natal, the Cape (unfortunately he does not specify whether eastern or western), Britain and Germany, and many were produce buyers, or sold agricultural machinery, as well as being farmers, provision merchants, butchers and bakers – it obviously did not pay to specialise, to put all their eggs in one basket. Some towns had mineral water and ice-producing factories – hardly 'pre-industrial'. Carolina, Wakkerstroom, Lydenburg, Potchefstroom, Barberton, Klerksdorp, Heidelberg, Volksrust and Witwatersrand districts all had Agricultural Societies;

<sup>129</sup> Bundy, *Rise and Fall*, pp.208-213.

<sup>130</sup> Milton, 'To make the Crooked Straight', p.20.

<sup>131</sup> A A Mawby, *Gold Mining and Politics – Johannesburg 1900-1907, Volume One: The Origins of the Old South Africa*, Edwin Meller Press, Lewiston-Queenston-Lampeter, 2000, p.79.

some had held Shows.<sup>132</sup> Pietersburg had a strong Poultry Society and Farmers' Association since 1902, with 11,000 members. Praagh does mention, however, that Pietersburg merchants could bring produce more cheaply by rail from Johannesburg than buying it locally – the Johannesburg import situation in miniature. Although some of these towns had been founded by Voortrekkers, it was Uitlanders who provided the initiative, though many had been there long enough to be burghers. Some rural conservatism still prevailed. Praagh, writing in 1906, mentions that Ermelo farmers persisted in trekking to the lowveld in winter.<sup>133</sup>

Towns in the other three South African colonies were also stimulated by the new markets on the Witwatersrand. The port cities, handling the flood of imports required for Johannesburg's mines and inhabitants, had to rapidly expand their capacity in harbour construction, dock installations, railway goods yards, cold storage facilities etc. Their dependence on the prosperity of the gold mines in the interior was one of the factors leading towards Union in 1910. The mining towns and produce buying and marketing centres of the Highveld such as Bloemfontein, Maseru, Harrismith, Bethlehem and Potchefstroom organised both the market for maize and the distribution of new crop varieties and equipment.<sup>134</sup> The populations and economies of the other states of British South Africa also grew substantially. The 1904 Census showed that the population of the Orange River Colony had increased by 85.6% since 1890;<sup>135</sup> and similar increases were returned for the other states.

The British-led technocratic top-down revolution after 1902 aimed at providing cheap food for the mines and Johannesburg; at developing the economy of the Transvaal as a 'white man's country'; and at creating a reserve pool of cheap migrant labour for the mines and the farms.

This chapter began with the low level of food available in Johannesburg under martial law in June 1900, a position which gradually eased as the War came to an end and railway connections with the rest of the world could once again draw in large quantities of imports. The food distribution system continued along much the same lines as had been developed before the War, as demonstrated by the way the Market lingered in the centre of town, and the building of the much-needed municipal abattoir was postponed, while money was spent on other municipal improvements. Imported food continued to play a major role, but local food supply was stimulated by the influx of capital and resources invested by a supportive Government in contrast to the conservatism of the ZAR particularly the work of the new Department of Agriculture, and by the increasing commercialisation of agriculture and improvement in its productivity by farmers.

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<sup>132</sup> Thelma Gutsche, *A Very Smart Medal: The Story of the Witwatersrand Agricultural Society*, Howard Timmins, Cape Town, 1970, pp.19-24.

<sup>133</sup> Praagh, *The Transvaal and its Mines*, pp.358-511.

<sup>134</sup> McCann, *Maize and Grace*, p.111.

<sup>135</sup> *Census Returns of British South Africa*, Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of His Majesty, July 1904, p.14.



## CHAPTER SEVEN

### CONCLUSION

The aim of this dissertation, as expressed in Chapter One, Introduction, was to contribute to South African historiography by providing, for the first time, a systematic analysis of how Johannesburg was provisioned with food during the first twenty years of its establishment. In doing so, an attempt has been made to answer the following questions: Where and by whom was the food produced, how was it transported, how was it distributed, and how adequate was it? In what way did the nineteenth century developments in transport and communications, and in the technology and organisation of food production, processing and distribution affect the development of Johannesburg as a city and provide food for its diverse inhabitants? What was the relative role of food production in the Transvaal and the neighbouring colonies in provisioning the city? What was the relationship between the food cultures of the different ethnic groups and the food they ate? Each of these themes was treated in a separate chapter. Underlying the investigation of these research questions, attention was given to the changing political and economic context in which the city was situated. Johannesburg's changing municipal government structures, its burgeoning and diverse population, regional communications and economies, other infrastructural developments and the town's agricultural hinterland have all been taken into account.

As indicated in Chapter One, this study was suggested because although the historiography of Johannesburg is relatively rich, none of the political and civic histories, biographies, nor historians of agriculture or the economic development of the Transvaal, nor even the exciting, more radical and recent, histories of the mineworkers on the Witwatersrand and the underclasses of Johannesburg pay much attention to the question of food.<sup>1</sup> This is somewhat surprising because Johannesburg was unique in a number of ways. It exploded into the rural economy of the Transvaal Highveld in the sparsely settled Kruger's ZAR and attracted Uitlanders from around the world by the thousands, and African mineworkers by the hundreds of thousands, all of whom had to be fed.

Lack of attention to the issue of provisioning Johannesburg may be explained by a number of factors. There is, for example, no clear historiographical model that can be followed. Naturally every city is different, but Johannesburg is highly unusual because it is not located on any major river or coastal harbour, its hinterland was agriculturally poor and its structures of governance under the South African Republic were not comparable to cities elsewhere in better developed countries and states. Moreover, in its early years as a 'mining town' its future as the industrial hub of southern Africa could not have been foreseen, and investment was thus sporadic. The work of Roger Scola on Manchester's food supply was a useful book, in particular his idea that the growth of the city created an ever-widening chain of supply, thus requiring historical investigation into transport, and into the various intermediaries between producer and consumer that developed.<sup>2</sup> Alfred Crosby's scenario of

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<sup>1</sup> See for example, Charles van Onselen, *Studies in the Social and Economic History of the Witwatersrand 1886-1914, I New Babylon; II New Ninevah*, Longman, London, 1982, and *The Seed is Mine: The Life of Kas Maine, A South African Sharecropper*, David Philip, Cape Town, 1996.

<sup>2</sup> Roger Scola, *Feeding the Victorian City: The Food Supply of Manchester, 1770-1870*, University of Manchester Press, Manchester, 1992.

how the transplantation of European people, crops, domestic animals (and, less deliberately, diseases, pests and weeds) in distant temperate regions fostered a Europe-dominated globalisation, was also found to be appropriate for this dissertation.<sup>3</sup> William Cronon's study of the industrialisation of grain and meat production in the United States and its impact on world food trade has been influential as much of Johannesburg's food depended on imports from the rest of the world.<sup>4</sup>

A further possible reason for the neglect of any detailed study of Johannesburg's food supply relates to the paucity of source material and its scattering among economic, mining, and agricultural history as well as in the informal literature. In terms of primary sources, the basis on which a dissertation relies, contemporary newspaper accounts, material from the Johannesburg City Council archives, the Johannesburg Market files in the National Archives, and cold storage material in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, have been used, but these do not give a full story, are erratic and difficult to combine with the secondary sources with any accuracy. Nonetheless, what has been discovered and used here goes some way to answering the research questions of this dissertation.

Chapter Two, Johannesburg Food Supply in a Global Context, and Chapter Three, South African Produced Food: The Republican Years, examine the broad global and local contexts in which Johannesburg was situated, arguing that the goldfields of the Witwatersrand were unique in the conjuncture of two factors: their growth was rapid and permanent, and they lacked any sort of water transport, the cheapest means of transport by bulk. Other gold rush towns had grown rapidly, and some permanently – for example San Francisco and in South Australia – but they differed from Johannesburg in being near to coasts and shipping that could facilitate food supplies. For its first six years, Johannesburg had to depend on slow and cumbersome ox-wagons for transporting every single product that it required.

The improvements in marine and land transport which had been a major development of the mid-nineteenth century were critical to Johannesburg's growth and provisioning. The previous dependence of sailing vessels on the vagaries of the weather was almost overcome by the development of large iron steamships, with greatly increased capacity, speed and reliability. Moreover, the railway networks that had grown in the western world were being built in many parts of southern Africa in the last quarter of the century, thus enabling the rapid carriage of bulky goods for long distances at a fraction of the cost of animal-drawn transport. The electric telegraph brought similar rapid developments in communications over long distances, making for more efficient trading, and contributed to the spread of newspapers making Johannesburg part of the western world from the beginning. Therefore, from the outset, Johannesburg was integrated into the international community, and this greatly influenced its food supply. In addition to communications and transport, major advances in the industrialisation of food production, processing and distribution in the United States of America and Britain meant that foodstuffs could be imported to Johannesburg on the steamships and railway lines in relatively easily managed containers, in comparison to the barrels and sacks that were used earlier in the century. Preservation techniques of canning, refrigeration and freezing contributed both to the availability of internationally produced foodstuffs, and to lessening the consequences of shortages due to seasonality and weather conditions. By the late

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<sup>3</sup> Alfred W Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1986.

<sup>4</sup> William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West*, W W Norton & Co, New York & London, 1992

nineteenth century food supplies worldwide had been transformed, and Europeans had acquired the means of having a 'civilised' way of life in many alien environments, amongst which Johannesburg might be counted.

The question of the availability of food from international origins was particularly important to Johannesburg, because the subsistence economy of the Transvaal at that time was incapable of supplying the sudden influx of large numbers of miners and their attendants. Earlier prospectors in the smaller gold rushes, such as Barberton, had supplemented local supplies with tinned foods, but the scale of such provisions was magnified greatly on the Witwatersrand and was crucial to its survival and growth. Not only was Johannesburg distant from coastal ports, but its location in the then-independent ZAR meant that foreign states – the British colonies of the Cape and Natal, the Boer republic of the Orange Free State, or the Portuguese colony of Mozambique – had to be traversed to reach the sea. Customs duties formed the major item in the Republic's revenues, and a large part of the cost of imported food. The Cape and Natal, with their ports of Cape Town, Port Elizabeth and Durban profited from their customs duties and freight charges on railways, and their merchants handled the imports, some of them establishing branches in Johannesburg to do so. Thus Johannesburg's food supply was impacted upon by these complex customs arrangements, all of which were relevant to the politics and rivalries of the region.

Without water transport, until the coming of the railways, how foodstuffs were transported, and where they came from, depended almost entirely on ox-wagons. Market gardening soon developed around Johannesburg and supplies of Transvaal produce expanded considerably, but these had to be supplemented by imports from neighbouring states, as was shown by the reports from the Johannesburg Market that have been quoted. It is clear from these sources that mealies, wheat and other grains were cultivated in the Orange Free State and Natal, and livestock was raised in the bushveld and middle veld to the north, west and east of the high Witwatersrand ridge. Imports of grain and other products from further afield were brought into Johannesburg either by wagon or by cart from the railheads in Natal, the Cape, or from Delagoa Bay, facilitated by faster, cheaper oceanic and rail transport which had developed in recent decades, thus making the new town part of the interlocking chain of globalisation and industrialisation of food production, processing and preservation.

The food supply chain was shortened and strengthened when railway links between the coastal ports and the mining town were completed between 1892 and 1895, though there had been political and financial hurdles to overcome. The cost of food was reduced by railways being able to bring goods direct to Johannesburg rather than having to be transferred into ox-wagons and carts at the Transvaal borders. But this was a mixed blessing, for railway transport brought in a flood of cheap imports that discouraged local production. In Johannesburg, only locally grown maize and potatoes fetched higher prices than did similar imported produce. The railway service itself was transformed by the need to feed Johannesburg. The railway authorities were slow to appreciate the special requirements of transporting food and to adapt trains specially for different types of produce. Refrigerated cars were essential for fresh fruit and vegetables, but not adequate for frozen meat. The primary purpose of the railways had initially been to carry minerals for export and then to carry goods rapidly and cheaply from port to destination. It was only in the early twentieth century that lines began to be laid through the Free State grain-producing areas both to carry produce to the Witwatersrand, and to the ports for export. Farmers had to agitate for halts in places convenient for them, and for faster trains than ordinary goods trains which might take days to deliver fresh food to their destinations.

In addition to these constraints, the local productivity of the period before the mineral revolution simply could not cope with the growth of population in the economic boom period of 1892-1895, which itself was followed by the disasters of the rinderpest epidemic, locust invasions, droughts, and finally, the South African War. By the time the Crown Colony of the Transvaal was established after the Peace of Vereeniging in 1902 Johannesburg was almost entirely reliant on imported food.

Chapter Three also dissects how local food manufacturing was limited with high costs and unreliable quality. Local entrepreneurs simply could not compete with imported products which benefitted from economies of scale, cheaper inputs and the ability to cater for consumer preferences. The tins and packages advertised by grocers in Johannesburg newspapers show the appeal of familiar brands from 'home', that is Europe, particularly Britain, and the reassurance of cleanliness and hygiene in a town that struggled with dust, dirt, and fear of germs and thus the contamination of local food. Indeed, Johannesburg merchants and their customers came to prefer imports, not only because of the cost and variety, but also because the idea took root that local was second-rate – an attitude that was to linger for many years. Many of Johannesburg's citizens were sufficient wealthy to be able to demand the supply of a wide variety of foods from all over the world, some of which had a snob value or embodied ethnic nostalgia – a taste of home for all its inhabitants who had come from somewhere else. Moreover, as discussed in Chapter Four, Johannesburg People and their Food Cultures, so great was the diversity of population and of ethnic groups in the growing city that it was clear that the widest possible range of foodstuffs was demanded.

The population of Johannesburg was unusually varied, even by earlier international gold rush standards, and thus the food that was required was also extremely wide-ranging. As had been the case in California and Australia, early prospectors and diggers came from a number of different countries, but English-speakers predominated. As the gold seams were followed to deeper levels, this transient community of outcrop or alluvial miners was replaced by skilled hard rock men who were also English-speaking and who had British tastes in food. Many of these mining people replicated the working-class or artisan food cultures of their home countries, but there was also a large, and growing, commercial and professional class, and this wealthier elite of mine owners, engineers and managers had the means to be part of the international high quality food culture. Analysis of the 1896 Census of Johannesburg shows that the image of the town as predominantly inhabited by bachelor miners was inaccurate by the mid-1890s, and that family life was common, especially among those who had come from southern Africa.

In addition, after fierce discrimination and pogroms in Russia, large numbers of Lithuanian and Polish Jews fled to the Transvaal for its economic possibilities and their food cultures had to be catered for. Indian and Chinese shopkeepers and hawkers also found their place in Johannesburg and supplied poor whites among others, to whom they sold small quantities of food relatively cheaply. Unlike other goldfields, moreover, around half of Johannesburg's population was made up of unskilled migrant African labourers from southern Africa. All these groups of people came from different food cultures. Nonetheless, given that the local newspapers were produced by British English-speakers with a bias in this regard, it has been difficult to discover precise details of food that is not to a British taste. What is, however, clear from the record, is that other communities obtained food from their home countries, and Jewish and Muslim food requirements were taken into account in Johannesburg.

In the late nineteenth century an unprecedented number of Europeans were living somewhere other than where they, or their parents, had been born. They had conflicted loyalties, unsure whether they would return 'home' or become part of their new country. This gave rise to many inventions of tradition as shown by the Scots at the 1899 St Andrews Night celebrations in Johannesburg, watching Highland dances in full Highland costume, and eating a Gaelic menu with many 'wee drams', the Cornishmen eating their pasties (which could not have dated from earlier than the introduction of mass-produced flour), or Italians buying factory-made pasta from Italian grocers. These actions gave them a sense of identity in a strange country, and a sense of community with others of roughly the same background. The relationship between nineteenth century mass migrations and the creation of new 'traditional' foods would make an interesting topic for further research in food history.<sup>5</sup>

Food does not only nurture the body, food tastes, like language, are part of every person's upbringing and background. Food is also a matter of prejudices and ideologies which are in the mind and intellectually constructed. Social Darwinian attitudes to food types can be discerned in Johannesburg because the town's formative period occurred when European cultural arrogance was at its most intense. Generally speaking, white people regarded the labour of Africans as something to which they were entitled, and many Africans were routinely categorised 'lazy' or 'insolent'. It is well established that the working and living conditions for Africans in Johannesburg and on its mines were inhumane, and conditions only improved when productivity was threatened. The huge amounts of mealie meal that made up the calories in food provided for African workers, and the only reluctant addition of the cheapest meat to provide some protein to fuel the hard physical labour expected of them, indicates the disdain that employers had for Africans. The Municipality of Johannesburg spent more money per head on feeding its animals than its human workforce, which indicates the moral values of this time. So do the expressions of hatred that white shopkeepers expressed towards their rival Chinese merchants and traders, and also the many anti-semitic expressions that surface in the sources towards the impoverished Jewish refugees from Eastern Europe. These sentiments are reflected in how Johannesburg was provisioned.

Together with an analysis of the international and local context in which Johannesburg food supply was secured, and the range of groups who required that food, the spatial arrangement of the town determined how food was distributed. The gold mines lay to the south of the ridges that made up the Witwatersrand, while the commercial and shopping precincts lay at the centre of the suburbs that grew up to the east, north and west on non-auriferous ground. It is well known that in an early settlement fresh produce is distributed through a central market place, and the first shops tend to be general stores, butcheries and bakeries. Johannesburg was no exception. In Chapter Five, Distribution of Food in Johannesburg, the changes in food distribution that resulted from the expansion and proliferation of suburbs, and the more specialised shops that opened up to cater for the enlarged population, are traced. The immense buying power of the mines for food for labourers, and the large number of middlemen, lengthened the food chain, and their costs were added to the wholesale food price. Another, perhaps more surprising, feature of the food distribution that characterised Johannesburg, was the very large number and the high turnover of shops – very few grocers survived for the entire period from the early 1890s to 1906. This seems to indicate the transitory nature of the European shop-keeping population, the speculative value of store-keeping at that time. Setting up a shop appears to have been a way of making a living in a mining town, and if

<sup>5</sup> Eric Hobsbawm & Terence Ranger (Eds), *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1983, pp.1-15,211-281

such failed, the store-keeper moved on to another kind of employment, or left southern Africa altogether. This versatility and transience were typical of the population as a whole at the time.

In terms of the provisioning of Johannesburg, the South African War was less of a watershed than in other aspects of southern African history. Most of its features were laid down in the 1890s: the produce and cattle markets that persisted in the very centre of the town for all the first decade of the twentieth century, the dependence on and believed superiority of imports, the diversity of races involved in food distribution, and the large-scale institutional feeding of African mineworkers. The major change was the eventual improvement in local food supply under British rule, as discussed in Chapter Six, Johannesburg under British Rule.

The South African War largely emptied Johannesburg, and all its people, white and black, suffered loss and hardship. Food was extremely scarce under both the eight-month military regime of the Kruger Government, October 1899 to May 1900 (discussed in Chapter Three, Locally Produced Food: the Republican Years), and the two years of martial law after it was surrendered to the British Army on the last day of May 1900 until May 1902. The only supply of food was perishable produce that came from nearby, though commandeering for military needs made this uncertain. The railway lines could not be relied on, the colonial ports were enemy territory and for a time in the early months Delagoa Bay was blockaded by the British Navy. During the period that Johannesburg was under British martial law, guerrilla attacks on railways lines and supply convoys disrupted food supplies, as did the devastation of farms under British scorched earth policies, and the priority of the army over civilian needs. But food – or its shortage – was also used to depopulate Johannesburg by both regimes, and ‘undesirable elements’ were denied access to food.

From 1902-1906 the Transvaal was a full British colony, a period that ended with the grant of Responsible Government and the victory of the Het Volk party in the Transvaal. Food supply for some time after the War did not improve as drought and the outbreak of East Coast fever and other animal diseases hindered recovery from military operations. Once more, Johannesburg became dependent on imported food.

The victory of Britain in the South African War brought a more supportive approach to Johannesburg’s problems. The town was enlarged in 1902, and one of the reasons for the extended boundaries was to increase the attraction of Johannesburg as a permanent city with suburbs and family life, not only a mining town. The high cost of living, partly due to the cost of imported food as a result of high freight rates, impeded this attempt, and public money was put into improving agricultural practices in order to reduce the cost of local food. The newly-established Department of Agriculture introduced new crops and veterinary research began to reduce the fatalities from animal diseases, and to promote boreholes, fencing, branding and selective breeding, which stimulated local supplies to the extent that Johannesburg experienced a surplus of locally-produced fresh meat by 1905.

Many of the Department’s initiatives were aimed at the wealthier, progressive farmers who were receptive to its message, while poorer ones were sidelined and continued to drift to towns, such as Johannesburg, as ‘poor whites’. By 1906, when Het Volk took power in the colony, there were signs of a trend towards commercial farming in many areas, particularly those within easy reach of Johannesburg with its huge market, a reach now extended by a more efficient railway system.



By 1906, the incentive of the Johannesburg market, improvements in infrastructure, the efforts of the Transvaal Department of Agriculture, and the evolution of intensive, commercial farming were having some effect on the food supply from local sources. Local farmers benefited from the use of taxes from the mines to improve productivity. However, the large scale of the needs of the mines for the cheapest possible food for their labour force meant that quantity rather than quality predominated. This can be seen in the increase of poor-quality livestock resulting from the reduction of endemic diseases. White flint maize which was easier to process formed an unprecedented share of the diet of mineworkers, without the nutrients and vitamins which *veldkos* had provided in their home environments. African diets deteriorated substantially as a result of their entry into the cash economy.

The augmentation of supply, but the deterioration in quality, shows the global consequences of the industrialisation of agriculture, and of population increase outpacing local food production. Imported grains, grown globally on a large commercial scale, aided by fertilisers and expensive machinery, milled and refined, and meat that was industrially butchered, packaged and frozen, were shipped into Johannesburg at lower prices than local farmers could achieve. Only the Johannesburg affluent could afford to pay more for the fresh and distinctive flavours of local food, while the poor relied on homogenised, less-nutritive food. This impacted on South Africa and on Johannesburg because although fewer people starved to death, the diseases of malnutrition became more common.<sup>6</sup>

Investigating the food supply of Johannesburg in the post South African War era has displayed the perspective of the period in terms of a pride in technical achievements, modernity and scientific progress. This approach held that there was a 'best practice' that should be adopted everywhere, without regard for the suitability of local conditions. Sustainable agriculture and 'peasant' farming were denigrated; deep ploughing advocated by dryland agricultural theories, irrigation and dam construction lauded. The environmental legacy of these values affects our lives today.

The early history of provisioning Johannesburg raises policy issues that are relevant for our own time. At present, the value of African farming methods in a fragile environment instead of the large-scale monocrops produced for export has its proponents, but the question arises whether such methods can indeed meet the needs of rapidly expanding urban populations such as is happening today. In the early twentieth century it seemed obvious that they could not, and Johannesburg settled into being an import economy like Britain's, using its comparative advantage in gold production to pay for food, just as Britain used its manufacturing, financial services and investment income to buy cheap foreign food. Later, the First World War showed the dangers of relying on imports for both economies, and stimulated the growth in South Africa both of local food production and manufacturing, including food manufacturing.

Scola's study of the food supply of Victorian Manchester was made in the wake of the debate among British historians in the 1960s and 1970s as to whether the working-class standard of living rose or fell in the British Industrial Revolution. He notes that this debate kept breaking into his research of the details of overall food

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<sup>6</sup> Diana Wylie, *Starving on a Full Stomach: Hunger and the Triumph of Cultural Racism in Modern South Africa*, University Press of Virginia, Charlottesville, 2001, p.37.

supply, although he was interested in the supply and distribution chain rather than individual diets of a particular group. Similarly, the present study has been made in the shadow of the debate among South African historians around African peasant production, dispossession and proletarianisation. A good deal has been uncovered about these important topics, but in this historiography food production and distribution is seen as a by-product of mineral discoveries, rather than important issues in themselves. This work has identified the mechanics of these developments in terms of food, and how supplying the growing city of Johannesburg had an important impact on the urban and rural economies in the wider region. Stanley Trapido remarked many years ago that the emphasis on Afrikaner nationalism in earlier historiography had marginalised other aspects of the history of the South African Republic, including property relations and issues of land and wealth.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, the emphasis of the Marxist/radical historians on the devastating effects of rural change appears to have marginalised the early experiences of Africans and others in towns. How the basic human need of food of these people were met in Johannesburg's first two decades is absent from the historical record and this study has sought to restore it.

Many research questions remain unanswered. It has not, for example, been possible with certainty to identify how much of Johannesburg's food supply, as outlined in the records of the Johannesburg Market or local shops, was produced by African peasants or sharecroppers. Bags of mealie meal carried no racial tags in the market place, and the notion of 'the Boers bringing their produce in to the market' is misleading after the first months of 1886. Country storekeepers and dealers must have played a major role in delivering the produce of both white and black farmers to the Johannesburg Market but we know little about them. No records have survived as to who the ultimate producer had been, or into how the food was distributed to African consumers. The African voice is impossible to recover, and almost all African experience was mediated through whites, who provided evidence to commissions, to newspapers, and to the sparse Market and shop records.

This study thus highlights a neglected theme in the development of early Johannesburg which was seminal for its later history. The growth of cities can be perceived as an engine of economic growth that is just as important as mining or manufacturing. The sheer size of London in the nineteenth century and demands for products and services, for example, rivalled the manufacturing of the North and Midlands as a factor in Britain's Industrial Revolution. In the same way, the numbers of people attracted to gold rush settlements throughout the nineteenth century created urgent demands for food and housing that kick-started economic prosperity and growth in surrounding regions. Burgeoning populations brought human capital that would have taken years to develop in a rural society. All this was true of Johannesburg – the illiterate, despised Lithuanian Jews became professional classes in the second generation; the poor-white burghers of Johannesburg became governing classes a couple of generations later; the African migrant labourers replaced them even more generations later. Johannesburg today is still the industrial heartland of South Africa, even with the gold mines now so deep that they are only worth exploiting when the price of gold is high.

The city of Johannesburg that was created in these first turbulent decades has experienced many changes since its beginnings in 1886, but there is continuity in its geographical outline, attitudes and focus on making money. The food supply was, and remains today, a fundamental issue affecting all the inhabitants, with consequences for rural development, transport infrastructure, industrialisation, national politics and global connectivity.

<sup>7</sup> Jane Carruthers, 'Friedrich Jeppe: Mapping the Transvaal c 1850-1899', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 29.4, 2003, p.962

**APPENDIX ONE**

**SUMMARY, JANUARY 1890**

	Number of Buildings	Number of Stores & Shops	Number of Hotels & Bars	Population
1	9,544	53	14	6,173
2	1,312	187	88	6,935
3	1,400	365	113	6,068
4	1,041	125	30	4,382
5	245	26	11	1,090
6	278	16	5	1,655
	<u>13,820</u>	<u>772</u>	<u>261</u>	<u>26,303</u>

**AREA WITHIN A THREE MILE RADIUS OF MARKET SQUARE**

as given in 1890 Census

WARD No 1: Booyesen's Township, Height's Township (portion), Mining Companies and Outskirts, Fordsbuurg, United Langlaagte Estate, Coolie Location, Braamfontein, Auckland Park

WARD No 2: Height's Township, Mining Companies and Outskirts, Marshall's Township, Ferreira Township, Johannesburg, Fordsbuurg (portion), Veldtschoendorp, Braamfontein

WARD No 3: Mining Company's Native Locations and Outskirts, Marshall's Township, Johannesburg

WARD No 4: Mining Companies Outskirts etc, Marshall's Township, Johannesburg

WARD No 5: Mining Companies, Outskirts etc, Prospect Township, Johannesburg

WARD No 6: Mining Companies and Outskirts, Jeppe's Township<sup>1</sup>

**1892 CENSUS OF JOHANNESBURG BY TOWNSHIPS**

	Adults Whites	Whites under 16	Total Whites	Natives	TOTAL Inhabitants
Johannesburg	5483	1919	7357	2182	9539
Marshallsdorp	1741	705	2446	662	3114
Ferreira's	564	255	819	860	1679
Fordsbuurg	821	685	1506	841	1847
Location	0	0	0	1184	1184
Braamfontein	1093	872	1965	1845	3310
Jeppe'sdorp	407	345	755	168	920
Troyville	12	12	24	7	31
Fawcusdorp	21	22	43	3	46
Georgedorp	38	53	91	4	95
	<u>10 137</u>	<u>4868</u>	<u>15005</u>	<u>6710</u>	<u>21715</u>

NOTE – The above returns have been carefully compiled from actual enumeration by the officials of the Sanitary Board. They do not include the mines from Langlaagte to the Metropolitan, lately removed from the Sanitary Board jurisdiction, and estimated to contain 15,000 Europeans and natives together; nor Doornfontein, which is estimated at 2,000; nor the adjacent townships of Booyens, Ophirton, Schweitzer's, Auckland Park, which are estimated at 1,000, or a grand total of 41,000 inhabitants.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>HA.4701.JOH, *Report of the Director of Census 1896*, Johannesburg Sanitary Department, Johannesburg, September 1896, Part XI - Return of 1890 Census, pp.54 -55.,

<sup>2</sup>*The Star* 30 September 1892.

### OUTSIDE THE THREE MILE RADIUS OF MARKET SQUARE IN 1896 CENSUS

DISTRICT A: Klipfontein Estate, Police Reserve, Auckland Park Washing Site, Braamfontein Hill, Auckland Park, Cooke's Farm, Forest Town, Hillbrow, Park Town, Berea Estate, Yeoville, Bellevue, Houghton Estate

DISTRICT B: Vrededorp and Malay Camp, Brickfields, Coolie Location and Kafir Location

DISTRICT C: (West Mines) Ferreira, Pioneer, Langlaagte Estate, Paarl's Hoop, Robinson, Langlaagte United, Bonanza, Paarl's Central, Langlaagte Deep, Crown Reef, Worcester, Crown Deep, Langlaagte Royal, Gold Mining Companies etc

DISTRICT D: Ophirton, Booyens, Heronmere, Caseys, La Rochelle, Rosettenville, Klipriviersberg Estate

DISTRICT E: (East Mines) Robinson Deep, Wemmer, Salisburg & Jubilee, Village Main Reef, City & Suburban, Rand Central Ore Reduction Co (including Prospect Town), Meyer and Charlton, Wolhuter, Spes Bona, Geo Goch (including Metropolitan), Henry Nourse (including Great Scot and Louis d'Or), Gold Mining Companies etc

DISTRICT F: Doornfontein, Bertrams & Lorentzville, Troyeville etc

In the 1896 Census the six wards of the 1890 Census within the three mile radius of Market Square are given as DISTRICTS G, H, J, K, L, M.

### CENSUS TAKEN ON NIGHT OF 15 JULY 1896<sup>3</sup>

**TOTAL 102,078**, of whom 61,292 within the jurisdiction of the Sanitary Board,<sup>4</sup> and 40,786 outside

50,907	Europeans or whites
952	Malays
4,807	Asiatics
2,879	Mixed or other races
42,533	Natives, of whom 14,195 lived within 3 mile radius of Market Square, and 28,838 outside

**Of TOTAL 102,078** 79,315 male, 22,763 female a ratio of 3.5 : 1

Europeans	32,387 male, 18,520 female	a ratio of 1.75 : 1
Malays	477 male, 475 female	a ratio of 1 : 1
Natives	40,855 male, 1,678 female	a ratio of 24.3 : 1

**Of TOTAL 102,078,** 71,024 were born in Africa (45,396 of whom were Natives and mixed race)  
24,535 " Europe (46 " )  
4,733 " Asia (4,390 " )  
762 " America (8 " )  
992 " Australia  
29 were born at sea, 3 unspecified

Of 42,527 Natives born in Africa, 2,036 were born in the Transvaal

400	"	the Orange Free State
8,780	"	the Cape Colony
4,441	"	Natal
14,200	"	other British possessions
12,670	"	Portuguese territory

<sup>3</sup> HA.4701.JOH, *Report of the Director of Census 1896*, Johannesburg Sanitary Department, Johannesburg, September 1896

<sup>4</sup> A three-mile radius of Market Square.

**DETAIL OF NATIVE RACES ARRANGED ACCORDING TO THE MAIN TRIBAL DISTINCTIONS**

Basuto	8,154
Gaika and Galeka	153
Pondo and Amabaha	1,051
Tembu	412
Amaxosa	3,468
Fingo	3,410
Zulu	10,512
Mashona and Matabele	154
Tonga	154
Swazie	226
Inyambaan	5,326
Shangaan	6,460
M'Chopi	2,299
Others	<u>754</u>
	TOTAL 42,527

Of 24,500 Europeans born in Africa, 6,205 were born in the Transvaal  
 1,734 “ the Orange Free State  
 15,162 “ the Cape Colony  
 1,242 “ Natal  
 153 “ other British possessions  
 4 “ Portuguese territory

Of 935 Malays<sup>5</sup> born in Africa, 80 were born in the Transvaal  
 3 “ the Orange Free State  
 769 “ the Cape Colony  
 75 “ Natal  
 1 was born in other British possessions  
 1 “ Portuguese territory

Of 193 Asiatics<sup>6</sup> born in Africa, 39 were born in the Transvaal  
 1 was born in the Orange Free State  
 60 were born in the Cape Colony  
 75 “ Natal  
 18 “ other British possessions

Of 2,869 Mixed Race and Others born in Africa, 193 were born in the Transvaal  
 62 “ Orange Free State  
 2,363 “ Cape Colony  
 66 “ Natal  
 78 “ other British possessions  
 107 “ Portuguese territory

Of 24,489 Whites born in Europe, 12,389 were from England and Wales  
 997 “ Ireland  
 2,879 “ Scotland  
 402 “ France  
 3,335 “ Russia  
 2,262 “ Germany  
 139 “ Switzerland  
 819 “ Holland  
 311 “ Sweden & Norway  
 206 “ Italy  
 750 Others

<sup>5</sup> Descended from Malay slaves and exiles from the Dutch East Indies, and professing Islam

<sup>6</sup> Mainly Chinese and Indian

Of 762 born in the Americas, 621 were from the United States  
96 “ Canada  
21 “ South American states  
24 Others

Of 992 born in Australia, 874 were from Australia  
82 “ New Zealand  
36 “ Tasmania

Of 4733 born in Asia, 3,869 were from British possessions  
864 Others

## RELIGIONS

48,213 Protestants  
4,800 Catholics  
6,253 Jews  
2,565 Mohamedans  
7,503 Other or unspecified

Of Eastern religions, 2,489 Mohamedans  
1,822 Hindus  
239 Buddhists  
4 Brahmins  
582 Chinese religions

## AGES

Of TOTAL 102,078, 16,038 under age 15  
64,888 “ 30  
37,190 over 30  
  
6,439 between 0 and 4  
4,389 “ 10 and 14  
7,991 “ 15 and 19  
21,882 “ 25 and 29  
24,473 “ 30 and 39  
9,243 “ 40 and 49  
2,638 “ 50 and 59  
658 “ 60 and 69  
155 “ 70 and 79  
23 “ 80 and 89

Of 50,907 Europeans, 25,058 were over and 7,329 were under 16 years of age

## OCCUPATIONS

Professional classes 2,868  
Housewives and domestics 17,616  
Shopkeepers 11,988  
Agriculturalists 1,884  
Industrial workers 45,187  
Uncertain 1,378  
Dependents 13,902  
Unspecified 7,595



**NUMBER OF PERSONS EMPLOYED IN ACKNOWLEDGED 'INDUSTRIES', EXCLUSIVE OF  
'TRADESMEN' AND THEIR EMPLOYEES AND OF THOSE ENGAGED IN THE MINING  
INDUSTRY**

Biscuit making	97
Brewing	186
Brickmaking	1257
Carriage and Wagonbuilding	131
Conglomerate Building Material Works	112
Coffee Manufacture	51
Distilling	13
Engineering Works and Iron Foundries	589
Flour Mills	111
Gas Works	162
Harness and Saddle Making	107
Hide Curing	16
Ice Making	11
Mineral Water Manufacture	163
Printing, Bookbinding etc	468
Stone Cutting and Dressing	82
Timber Works and Saw mills	566
Workers in Precious Metals	55
Workers in Tobacco	302
Wash Boys	<u>543</u>
	5022

**LIVESTOCK**

Horses, Mules, Asses	Horned Cattle	Sheep & Goats	Pigs	Dogs	Vehicles
11,242	2,514	81	1,035	7,099	4,800

## APPENDIX TWO

C.9093 BRITISH PARLIAMENTARY PAPERS, *Report on the Trade, Commerce and Gold Mining Industry of the South African Republic for the year 1897*. Presented to both Houses of Parliament by command of Her Majesty, October 1898

In the early days of the 'Fields' the proved richness of the Main Reef attracted a large amount of capital, but inexperience and mismanagement brought about a reaction. During 1888 and 1889 the wildest speculation in mining shares was indulged in, but towards the end of 1889 the collapse came and for two to three years subsequently a severe depression existed. .... However, during those years of depression the good mining propositions were being carefully worked by experienced men, improvements in machinery and methods of extracting gold were introduced..... production tripled between 1892 and 1897.

The success naturally brought prosperity for a time to the community: again money flowed freely into the country, the population greatly increased, and the commercial element, which had for some years been in a struggling condition, reaped the benefit of the redundancy of capital. In 1895 a property 'boom' set in, and stands, not only in the central portions of the town, but also in the suburbs, increased enormously in value ... fabulously high prices towards the end of 1895 .... the events of December 1895 and January 1896. But these political disturbances brought adversity in their train .... a depression has been gradually deepening, notwithstanding the prosperity of the rich mines and the increasing output of gold, the financial conditions in Johannesburg are considered to be in a worse state than they have been since the discovery of the Fields.

For some time representations had from time to time been made to the Government of the Republic that the industry should be relieved of some of its burdens, but it was not until March 1897 that any acknowledgement was made of such representations, and it was only then that the Executive Council appointed a commission to enquire whether the grievances complained of were well-founded, or not. The Commission, consisting of Government officials and certain advisory members (non-official), found that real and substantial grievances did exist, and reported accordingly. The Commission's Report contained recommendations and suggestions on the following questions: ....

### IMPORT DUTIES ON FOOD-STUFFS

The Industrial Commission recommended that the import duties on food-stuffs should be abolished, on the ground that it was impossible to supply the population of the Republic from the products of local agriculture, but the Committee of the Volksraad did not accept the recommendation, and instead provided that the special (protective) duties on butter, cheese, coffee, rice, sugar and large and small cattle, should be taken off, in order that all food-stuffs should be subject to the same tariff, viz 7½ per cent ad valorem. This was done, with the exception of sugar, and the special duty of 3s 6d per 100 lbs still remains on this article.

Imports into the Transvaal reached more than £14million in 1896 ... do not reflect the legitimate requirements of trade, but on the contrary, over-importation ..... Past experience of being under-stocked and the prospects of a revival in trade induced the merchants to send forward undiminished indents to Europe and elsewhere, with the result that many have surplus stocks.

Importation of butter (including butterine, ghee and margarine) has been increasing since 1895. Increase in imports from Europe and 'other countries' and it is to be feared that the bulk of the increased trade is with the continent, and not with the United Kingdom. Although South Africa has not in the past been able, out of its own resources, to supply the demand for butter, owing to the lack of energy on the part of the farmers, it is quite certain that for some time to come, in consequence of the ravages of the rinderpest, it will not be able to produce anything like the required quantity for home consumption, and, therefore its market is opened up, which should be taken advantage of by British exporters.

### VALUE OF FOOD-STUFFS IMPORTED

	<u>1895</u>	<u>1896</u>	<u>1897</u>
Butter	£87,728	£122,245	£158,867
Cakes, Biscuits	8,384	22,022	26,537
Cattle (large)	316,675	309,897	405,984
(small)	168,086	178,672	308,120
Cheese	20,589	27,308	28,702
Eggs	24,163	39,969	51,813
Fruit (fresh)	-	40,613	50,692

(preserved)	-	31,944	31,742
Fruits of the soil	-	47,140	43,632
Jams & Confectionary	19,164	26,393	31,626
Meal, Grain, Flour & Corn	304,626	372,150	360,574
Mealies & Kaffir Corn	189,306	481,840	273,506
Meat (tinned, salted and game)	24,548	69,517	65,928
Pigs	9,395	11,703	15,400
Pork	17,015	51,943	60,568
Poultry	-	30,386	35,207
Provisions & Groceries	180,855	263,309	299,253
Rice & Dhall	23,331	35,385	40,543
Vegetables (fresh)	42,187	5,371	6,170
(preserved)	35,615	30,619	32,814
	£1,471,667	£2,198,406	£2,327,652

Provisions and Groceries include condensed milk of the value of £83,067 in 1896 increased in 1897 (in consequence of the rinderpest) to £133,322. It is not impossible that a large proportion of the necessaries of life consumed could be produced in the State, but the farmers have been so long accustomed to pastoral pursuits that they do not, as a rule, carry on agricultural operations on such a scale as would supply the requirements of the large population that has so rapidly concentrated in the Republic. Moreover, of late years they have had to contend with locusts, drought and rinderpest, the two former destroying their crops and the latter decimating their herds. With pastures such as the Transvaal possesses, and a soil and climate suitable to the cultivation of all the cereals, fruit and even tropical products, a progressive and enterprising community would not permit the importation of such a large quantity of the necessaries of life without serious competition.

The importation of sugar into the State during the last three years has steadily increased. The values are: 1895 £122,970; 1896 £161,301; and 1897 £199,483. In 1896 Natal supplied sugar of the value of £91,120; in 1897 £112,383, or 37 and 47 per cent respectively of that Colony's production for these years. Sugar of the value of £7,800 in 1896 and £20,083 in 1897 was imported from Delagoa Bay (not in transit) but it is improbable that it was produced in Mozambique as most is sent to Portugal to obtain a bounty.

Germany is making strenuous efforts to increase exports with Government help and subsidies, and special railway rates for exports.

British manufacturers and exporters are represented by experienced, efficient and pushing travelers, but orders are sometimes executed with insufficient care. Packing is not up to American standards.

#### VALUE OF LOCAL PRODUCE SOLD ON JOHANNESBURG MARKET DURING PAST THREE YEARS

1895	£610,185
1896	620,457
1897	560,509

A certain proportion of produce offered for sale is imported from Natal, the Orange Free State and the Cape Colony.

Meteorological observations for 1897 from rain gauges in Joubert's Park and Doornfontein.

#### TOTAL RAINFALL IN INCHES

1889	19.85	1894	35.405
1890	25.94	1895	29.14
1891	40.85	1896	23.23
1892	27.54	1897	28.98

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