

RE-CREATION, TOURISM AND HISTORICAL PRESENTATION: THE CASES OF GEORGETOWN, COLORADO (USA), AND GAMKASKLOOF, WESTERN PROVINCE (SOUTH AFRICA) CONSIDERED

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Opsomming

Die geskiedenis van twee gemeenskappe, een wat op mynbou gegrond was en die ander op boerdery, word in die artikel vergelyk. Georgetown, Colorado, in die V.S.A. het in 1859 ontstaan, terwyl die koloniale wording van die Gamkaskloof-gemeenskap in Suid-Afrika vanaf 1841 strek. Beide gemeenskappe is deur middel van paaie meer toeganklik gemaak, met uiteenlopende gevolge. Beide verkeer tans in 'n oorgangsfases. Hulle word herskep as weerspieëlings van hulle onderskeie verlede teen einde hulle toekoms te probeer waarborg. Georgetown, 'n eertydse mynboudorp, was in sy glorie dae die 'silwer koningin' van die Rotsgebergtes genoem. Sy status het in die begin van die twintigste eeu tot dié van 'n spookdorp gedaal. Vanaf die middel van die 1940s het verskeie mense pogings aangewend om Georgetown te restoreer, ten einde die verlede werklikheid van sy kulturele en historiese landskap te probeer herstel. Gamkaskloof, 'n eertydse oorwegend Afrikaner boerderygemeenskap in die Swartberge van die Suid-Kaap in Suid-Afrika het 'n vergelykbare ontwikkeling deurgeloo. Gevolglik is Georgetown en Gamkaskloof vergelykbare voorbeelde van mense se futiele wjer om die skyn van verlore kulture as werklikhede aan te bied.

Reflective studies of this nature offer more than just a window into aspects of the histories of different areas of the world, be they similar or different. While this paper tacks back and forth between Georgetown and Gamkaskloof it is hopefully more than just a parallel narrative and history of two local places and communities. More important is the opportunity it affords one to ask questions about the history of rural places in general, and in this case specifically, about their presentation, preservation and future viability - also about what and whose history is being presented, by whom and for what purpose.

On New Year's Day 1991, on a visit to Gamkaskloof, I learnt that the Swanepoels, the last inhabitants, were moving out of the valley later that year to the village of Prince Albert, some 70 km away. They had sold their farm to the Cape Nature Conservation Department which was seeking to restore some farming cottages in the valley as part of a preservation project. 'No', the Swanepoels were not sorry to leave - the community had disappeared and they were lonely. The Otto du Plessis road,¹ completed in 1962, was not a bad thing though, they said - Progress cannot be stopped. The Swanepoels saw themselves as part of the depopulation of the 'platteland', and the inevitable process of urbanization.² Piet Swanepoel had been keeping a tally of all vehicles

¹ Named after the then (1962) Administrator of the Cape Province in South Africa.

² Ironically they were moving to Prince Albert in the Great Karoo (the heart of the 'platteland') which by comparison to Gamkaskloof is a city, but which in reality is a small rural town.

entering the valley for Cape Nature Conservation. Over a cup of tea he wondered why my father-in-law, Mick Radford, and I had driven all the way just to speak to him and his wife. After all, "The Hell"³, is a valley situated 57 km (35.4 miles) directly west from the top plateau of the Swartberg Pass.

By contrast, many thousands of miles away and on a different continent, I found the trip to Georgetown, Colorado much easier - along US-93, up US-6 toward Idaho Springs, and then onto the I-70. Georgetown was there, right alongside the I-70, and so accessible. The town's Tourist Bureau offered numerous brochures and advertisements revealing a heavily tourist-oriented community, yet just by walking and driving around the town, one quickly became lost in the time-warp that Georgetown projects.⁴

Why Gamskaskloof and Georgetown? The common mountain valley setting appears to be all they have in common. Yet, both have been made more accessible by roads and both places have thus been opened to tourists, with different results. Gamskaskloof, situated in the eastern region of the Western Province, South Africa, and Georgetown, Colorado, USA, have also been, and are in the process of being, 're-created'. They seek to present themselves as fragments, and texts, of the past to ensure their future survival.

Thus the decision to route the Interstate to Grand Junction past Georgetown definitely benefited that town. In 1962/1963, the population of Georgetown started to grow once again after having reached an all-time low in the 1930s Depression years.⁵ The

³ Gamskaskloof (or Lion Gorge, if one is to make a literal translation from the Khoi name given to it) has this more infamous name - "The Hell". The origin of this name is perhaps not as much debated as it (the name) is controversial. The name, it has been claimed, has various origins (or possibly it is a combination of all): it is said to have originated from the Afrikaans word 'helling', indicating the steep inclination of the valley in the Swartberg Mountain Range; or from the English word 'hell' referring to its previous inaccessibility and inhospitality; or from the heat of the valley. This name has certainly elicited much emotion and has been viewed with extreme distaste by the former inhabitants of the valley. P. E. Raper, *Dictionary of Southern African place names* (1987), p.93; Interview with J. H. van Zyl, the buldler/bulldozer operator of the Otto du Plessis road, on 12 Aug. 1991; A. le Roux, "Die Hel loop leeg" in *Sarie Marais*, 14 Jan. 1987, p.32; B. M. du Toit, *The people of the Valley: Life in an isolated Afrikaner community in South Africa*, (1974) p. 22.

⁴ Hamill House, Hotel De Paris, Alpine Hose House No.1, The Old Jail and the Georgetown Loop Railroad specifically .

⁵ Population statistics for Georgetown and neighbouring Silver Plume. (Georgetown mentioned first, then Silver Plume): 1868: 1500, none ; 1870: none, 2000; 1877: 5000, none; 1884: 3000, 1500; Depression years 200, none; 1940: 300, none; 1946: 394, none; 1962: 307, none; 1963: 307, none; 1968:500, none; 1971: 520, none; 1977: 500, none; 1982: 700, none; 1984: 800-1000, 150-200; 1992: 900, none; 1994: 880, none.

The general trend which both Georgetown and Silver Plume followed was: c.1880 - 1930 decline; to c.1962 low plateau; from 1963 slow increase. These statistics have been compiled on a generalized basis from: L. L. Sander, "The men all died of miner's disease.' Women and families in the Industrial Mining Environment of Upper Clear Creek, Colorado, 1870-1900". Ph. D. dissertation, University of Colorado, (1990), pp. 35, 209-211; J. C. Biggins, "Historical Geography of the Georgetown, Colorado, Silver Mining Area". Ph. D. dissertation, University of Colorado, (1973), p.13; Government Publication (I 29.2: G 29/3/draft): Georgetown - Silver Plume Historic District, Colorado - Draft Study of Alternatives, July 1989, pp.19,23; D. Halaas "The Story of a Valley - Georgetown Loop Historic Mining and Railroad Park" in *Colorado Heritage*, 3 (1984) p. 28; J. Boslough "Is this the Williamsburg of the Rockies?" in *Historic Preservation*, 36, 6 (1984) p. 35-36. Also various newspaper articles in *Rocky Mountain News*, 1 April 1946, 7 April 1946,

Interstate was a major factor in Georgetown's resurgent growth and the road would receive much newspaper coverage over the next 20 - 25 years. Like I-70, the opening of the Otto du Plessis road, from the top of the Swartberg Pass into Gamkaskloof also received wide publicity.⁶ The long term effect of this road, however, was the valley's depopulation.⁷ While the average daily traffic past Georgetown increased, the number of vehicles entering Gamkaskloof (the road leads nowhere else) declined.⁸ The extreme

7 April 1963, 3 July 1977, 28 Nov. 1982, 21 July 1986, 1 Jan. 1984, 15 April 1984, 29 Sept. 1984 and 13 April 1992; and *The Denver Post*, 12 May 1940, 10 Dec. 1962 and 18 July 1971.

⁶ The major motivation for the road, as implied in many of the articles written, appears to have been for the benefit of the people of the valley. Du Plessis' statement, that he had decided that the road was necessary, should not detract from the major contribution he made to have the road built, but does have a tinge of politics. This, in addition to the fanfare of arriving in the valley on a white stallion, called Venus, accompanied by so many journalists, certainly ensured that the event would receive maximum publicity. See *Nederlandse Post*, Dec. 1953; *The Cape Argus*, 11 and 15 May 1959; *The Argus*, Magazine Section, 16 May 1959; P. Younghusband, "Women in The Hell", pp. 18-21; Sersant Bokkie van der Merwe, "Konstabel dring die Hel binne", pp. 23-26; *Die Landbouweekblad*, 19 May 1959, 28 Feb. 1961 and 21 Aug. 1962; Nan Henning, "Nan Henning gaan kyk waar 'Die Hel' is", *Justitia*, Apr. 1962, pp. 15, 57-58; *Die Burger*, May 1959; *Landstern*, Mei 1959 - Nine journalists accompanied Dr Otto du Plessis; S: van Waart, *Kannalandse Kamee* (Pretoria, 1991), pp. 23-34.

⁷ Although the valley has always known migrations, none has been as dramatic as over the past thirty-plus years. The valley has all but become depopulated. Statistics show the from 73 inhabitants in 1937, (95 in 1952, 85 in 1965, 52 in 1967, 35 in 1977, approximately 10 in 1987, and approximately 6 in 1991) to no former inhabitants or their descendants left in 1992, a major depopulation has come about in the post-road period. Du Toit, *People of the Valley*, p. 26. He uses information from Rev. L. E. du Toit, a former minister from Prince Albert, and one of the first ministers to visit the valley; Anon., "At Last - a direct line to Hell," *The Cape Times Weekend Magazine*, 19 June 1965, p.1. Here mention is made of 10 families; S. van Niekerk, "Juffrou in Die Hel," *Dagbreek*, Bylaag, 14 Mei 1967, p.7; J. Helberg, "They named it after Hell," *Family Radio and T.V.*, 11 Sept. 1977, p.57; A le Roux, "Die Hel loop leeg" pp.29-30; M. Morgan, "Last People in Hell", *You*, 26 Sept. 1991, pp.24-26; Interview with P. J. Swanepoel, 1 Jan. 1991. Two farms owned by absentee landlords were entrusted to the care of two caretaker families. These families were not of the valley's traditionally known (1841-1962) inhabitants. Gamkaskloof is now a nature reserve, and will probably not support a rural village community village again.

⁸ i) *Average daily traffic in 1987 on I-70 between Georgetown and Silver Plume*: January - 16 000; February - 16 900; March - 18 200; April - 13 900; May - 12 900; June - 16 600; July - 21 400; August - 22 100; September - 18 100; October - 14 000; November - 13 200; December - 14 900.

Yearly average daily traffic: 16 500. Projected growth: 1988 - 17 800; 1989 - 18 400; 1990 - 19 000; 1991 - 19 500; 1992 - 20 000; 1993 - 20 600; 1994 - 21 100; 1995 - 21 800; 1996 - 22 300; 1997 - 22 800.

ii) *Tourists visiting Georgetown Loop Railroad*: 1889 - 25,000; 1939 (Loop taken down); 1975 - 7,500; 1976 - 15,000; 1977 - 23,000; 1978 - 46,500 (passengers could now board at either end); 1982 - 31,200; 1983 - 35,000; 1984 - 45,500 (Devil's gate viaduct dedicated); 1987 - 125,000 (projected growth was never realized); 1988 - 90,000; 1989 - 86,000; 1990 - 83,000. Halaas "Story of a valley" p. 38; L. Ashby and C. Wiatrowski "Rebirth of the Georgetown Loop Railway", *Journal of the West*, 24, 3, (1987), pp.69, 74-76, 78; and *Rocky Mountain News*, 15 April 1984.

iii) Between 1986 and 1988 some 9,600 tourists visited the Hotel De Paris Museum run by National Society of Colonial Dames of America in Colorado. "Georgetown-Silver Plume draft", July 1989, p.30.

P. J. Swanepoel, 1 Jan. 1991, monitoring for Nature Conservation. From 3 Dec. 1990 to 1 Jan. 1991, 91 vehicles entered the valley i.e. 3 per day; Traffic Counts for Main Road 00369 and the Gamkaskloof section from D. A. Parker (C. P. A. Roads and Traffic Administration Branch). The equivalent vehicle usage (EVA - monitoring the road over two days with an intervening night) was:

vehicle and population variance between these places is striking. The number of residents, tourists and vehicles in Colorado has increased significantly over the last thirty-plus years, whereas the rural population of the 'Cape Colony' has declined.⁹

Yet there is more. The Rocky Mountains are a great attraction for 'recreation' and tourism in the American West, and Georgetown's proximity to a main feeder to this 'wilderness' playground is a decided advantage. Recreation, omnipresent in Georgetown, is less so in Gamkaskloof. It takes a great effort (by vehicle or by foot) to get to Gamkaskloof to appreciate its wild beauty. While the I-70 made Georgetown more accessible to the public, the Otto du Plessis road gave the (erstwhile) inhabitants of Gamkaskloof their opportunity to 'escape'. The number of visitors to this place decreased correspondingly.

The two places also differ with regard to their early history and the reason for their occupation. Gamkaskloof was occupied from 1841 by predominantly Dutch/Afrikaans speaking farmers who were attracted by the fertile valley and the isolation of the place.¹⁰ Despite their seclusion, farmers from the valley did have contact with outsiders

1984 = 29 vehicles, 1985 = 27 vehicles, 1988 = 7 vehicles on average.

⁹ The following figures bear this out: Between 1913 and 1941 - Denver assembled a mountain parks system of over 20,897 acres. In 1919 - 169,492 visitors visited the Rocky Mountain National Park, while in 1933 (despite the depression) this climbed to 291,934. In 1920 - 28,910 campers and 7,847 cars stayed at Overland Park, in 1921 - 39,854 and in 1923 - 59,970. After the introduction of a fee this figure dropped to 49,034 in 1924. In 1955 Colorado established a state parks and recreation program. In 1974, 1,498,000 people with 1,178,054 vehicles resided in Colorado so that by 1980 Colorado had the 6th highest per capita vehicle registration in the United States.

The completion of the I-70 in 1966 accelerated automobile suburbanization around Denver. Denver's population decreased from 514,678 to 492,635 between 1970 and 1980. Correspondingly the suburban county population increased from 728,686 to 1,133,404 during this same period. Between 1940 and 1970 - about 1 million new residents came to the Denver Metro area. Hiking trails, mountain lakes, ski slopes, and other tourist attractions lie within an easy one hour drive from Denver. Georgetown is 45 miles away.

See Thomas Noel "Paving the way to Colorado - the evolution of Auto-Touring in Denver", in *Journal of the West*, 26, 3 (1987), pp. 42-48.

¹⁰ It seems almost certain that the valley was originally inhabited by San and/or Khoi groups prior to the first recorded European occupation of 1841. From the time of the first European occupation, the history of the valley may be roughly divided into two general phases, the pre- and post-road phases, or into three more specific phases, namely: 1841-1921, 1921-1962, and 1962-1992.

During the first period (1841-1921), the railway development that was taking place in the Cape Colony, the building of the Swartberg Pass (1883-1888), the 1899 to 1902 South African War, and the First World War, barely had an impact on the valley. It is not, however, quite true to say that during this period the people of the valley lived a totally isolated lifestyle, for Denys Reitz, a member of a Boer Commando led by General Jan Smuts, visited the valley and there are records of a J. H. Mosterd (sic) from Gamkaskloof paying road rates.

The period from 1921 to 1962 may be seen as the second or transitional stage. During this stage the outside world started penetrating the valley with more insistence. This outside penetration came through a Dutch Reformed Church school being established, a peddler trading with people of the valley, exposure to motor vehicles, the purchase of radios and newspapers, and inquisitive journalists, photographers and adventurers visiting the valley.

See D. van Pletsen, "Gamkaskloof", *South African Panorama*, Nov. 1974; J. Burman, *The Little*

and outside markets. During the period c.1921 through 1962, visitors entered the valley with more insistence and the farmers from Gamkaskloof undertook bi-annual marketing trips to Prince Albert.¹¹ The valley became renowned for its dried (preserved) fruit and the production of onion seed.¹² Officials hoped that when they opened the road in 1962, the inhabitants would prosper by farming "road-wise" and sell large quantities of "wet fruit."¹³ The unexpected departure of the valley's inhabitants prevented these visions from coming to fruition.

A very different story unfolded in Georgetown, Colorado. While farmers from Gamkaskloof expected to sell more fresh fruit and other agricultural produce to a greater market, those who came to Georgetown in its initial years had visions of acquiring wealth quickly. Gold was discovered in Colorado in 1859. The Griffith brothers, George and David, came to seek their fortunes, and soon set up a camp in the Georgetown valley. In 1864 it became apparent that the future lay in mining silver. Georgetown grew apace and had her boom years in the 1870s through early 1880s. During this early period the town was occupied by mine and mill owners, engineers, bankers and some artisans. In contrast adjacent "low rent" Silver Plume was occupied by miners, millers and merchants.¹⁴ After the repeal of the Sherman Silver Purchase Act in 1893,¹⁵ it took some time for the town to experience the full and desperate

Karoo (Cape Town, 1981), p. 77; M. Morgan, "Last People in Hell", *You*, 26 Sept. 1991; Du Toit, *People of the valley*, 14, p. 75-77; D. Reitz, *Commando*, p. 272; Cape Town Archives (hereinafter CA) 4/PAL 8/3/1/1, Prince Albert Cash Books, February - June 1894; "Padlans Hel toe", *Die Landbouweekblad*, 21 Aug. 1962, p.16 - Here a J. H. Mostert, age 74, is mentioned - He must surely have been a descendant; M. Griffin "We went to Hell", p. 4; *The Argus*, 16 May 1959; A. le Roux "Die Hel loop leeg", p. 32; T. V. Bulpin, "Discovering Southern Africa", *Interpak*, 1986, p. 263; Sersant Bokkie van der Merwe, "Konstabel dring die Hel binne", *Nonquai*, Jan. 1960, pp. 23-26; *Die Landbouweekblad*, 28 Feb. 1961; and C. Morgan, "The Road to Hell" *Evening Post Weekend Magazine*, 19 Feb. 1966, p. 1; *The Cape Argus*, 11 May 1959.

¹¹ They would negotiate the Gamkaskloof River, and move up the defile (for approx. 7 miles) bisecting the valley with their laden donkeys. This was a very arduous trip to Prince Albert.

¹² The average production of onion seed in the valley was between 40 and 50 lbs per bag (18 to 22,5 kg) as opposed to a normal 'outside' average of 30lbs (13,6kg). There was an expectation that this average would increase with the introduction of fertilizer. Anon, "Grootpad Hel Toe" in *Die Landbouweekblad*, 28 Feb 1961; and Anon. "Padlans Hel Toe" in *Die Landbouweekblad*, 21 Aug. 1962.

¹³ *Ibid*; B. M. du Toit, "Meganisasie en Kultuurverandering", *Tydskrif vir Geesteswetenskappe*, 9, 2 (1969), p. 122. Within a few years of the road being opened there were ten light delivery vans ("bakkies") in the valley. The impact the road had on the valley is clearly evident. Du Plessis's appeal that he hoped the people would not sell out, along with Nico Malan's (administrator of the Cape Province) statement on the opening of the road/pass in Aug. 1962, that a road was a good thing but that it could lead to the emptying of a place, encapsulates what in fact did eventually occur. Anon., "The road to Hell is paved with - rocks, mud, sand" in *The Cape Argus* 15 May 1959; and interview with J. H. van Zyl, 12 Aug. 1991.

¹⁴ Silver Plume in contrast was occupied by miners, millers and merchants. See Biggins, "Historical geography of the Georgetown," p. 32.

¹⁵ Sander, *Miner's disease*, pp. 204-206. In 1890 the American Congress responded to calls by those who had interests in the purchase of silver to buy 4.5 million ounces of silver each month, and to pay for it with treasury notes redeemable in gold or silver. As a direct result gold reserves plunged from \$190 million to \$100 million in just three years. To stop this run on gold, and to create a safe currency, the Silver Purchase Act was repealed in 1893. Consequently silver mining towns were adversely affected.

effects. Nonetheless the economic downturn affected the town and from c.1900 through the early 1960s it slumbered. It was the building of the I-70 along with other 'initiatives' like recreational development in the Rocky Mountains - and the designation of the Georgetown-Silver Plume area as an historic landmark district - that awakened Georgetown.

Given these differences, again why Georgetown and Gamkaskloof? The physical characteristics of both places, although set in different parts of the world and in different climatic zones, are for one, strikingly similar. Both communities can be classified as compact, once isolated, and spatially defined. Both are situated in mountain valleys. Georgetown is set in a 5 mile (8km) x 2000 feet (610m) wide valley, flanked by 1000 to 3000 feet mountains on either side. Gamkaskloof is situated in a 8.75 miles (14 km) x 0.63 mile (1 km) wide valley flanked by a mountain range of similar height on either side. Both communities have been fashioned by this landscape.

Both Georgetown and Gamkaskloof can also loosely be classified as 'ghost towns', Georgetown, a rhetorical ghost town as a tourist image, and Gamkaskloof as a literal ghost 'town'. While 'ghost town' literature is 'alive' in the United States it is a subject less written on, and not so readily classified, in South Africa.¹⁶

Most of the literature on Georgetown, and on recreation in Colorado, do not deal fully with specific towns and restoration, recreation and re-creation.¹⁷ Articles, along with the "Draft Study of Alternatives for the future management of the Georgetown-Silver Plume Historic District," however do provide a window into this aspect (restoration and

¹⁶ M. Wollé, *The ghost towns and mining camps of Colorado* (1949); C. Bancroft, *Unique ghost towns and mining spots* (1967); I. Hunt and W. Draper, *Ghost trails to ghost towns* (1958); P. Eberhart, *Guide to the Colorado ghost towns and mining camps* (1959); S. Dallas, *Colorado ghost towns and mining camps* (1958); M. Wollé, *The Bonanza Trail: Ghost towns and mining camps of the West* (1953); The Writer's Program of the Works of Progress Administration, *Ghost towns of Colorado* (1947), and W. Carter's photographic study of, "Ghost towns - The quick and the dead" in *American Heritage*, 23, 4 (June 1972). All the above works tend to a general survey of ghost towns and, as such no specific place receives the full attention it should. None of these works deal with preservation, recreation or re-creation.

¹⁷ Books and/or articles relative to the topic, the history of recreation and/or aspects thereof in Colorado include, Jack Benson's, "Before Aspen and Vail: The story of recreational skiing in frontier Colorado" in *Journal of the West*, 20, 1 (1983), and Thomas Noel, "Paving the way to Colorado: The evolution of auto tourism in Denver" *Journal of the West*, 26,3 (1987). Benson narrates the story of the origins and evolution of skiing in Colorado from the late nineteenth century through the late 20th Century. The articles by Lindsey Ashby and Claude Wiatrowski, "Rebirth of the Georgetown Loop Railway" in *Journal of the West*, 24, 3 (1987); Walter Bomeman, "Ride the Historic Georgetown Loop - Relive Colorado mining glory days" in *American West*, 24, 3, 1987; Haalas: "Story of a valley"; and Boslough: "Williamsburg?" all deal with Georgetown, its mining and railroad history, the community's demise and the re-creation (cultural re-presentation) of this past through the rebuilding of the loop and restoration of certain buildings and sections of Georgetown. T. Huber, *Colorado - the place of nature, the nature of place* (1993); B. Draper, *Georgetown pictorial* (1964); J. Homer, *Silver Town* (1950) - a potted history of Georgetown with numerous newspaper extracts from the period 1865 - 1880; M. Howe, *The story of Silver Plume* (1960); C. and M. Wiatrowski, *The Georgetown Loop railroad* (1989); P. Griswold, *Georgetown and the Loop* (1988); D. Wetzel, *The Georgetown Loop - A capsule history and guide* (1986); B. Draper, *Georgetown: the high point in the story of the famous Colorado silver camp*, and the pamphlet-type *Guide to the Georgetown - Silver Plume historical district*, make up the rest of the literature on this area.

recreation) of the history of Georgetown.¹⁸ In South Africa Gamkaskloof has received popular, but minimal scholarly treatment.¹⁹

Lastly, and perhaps the most significant reason for the purposes of this article, is that both places have groups and/or organizations seeking to restore them and present them as living museums of their respective pasts. Both restoration and re-creation thus attend Georgetown and Gamkaskloof. While Georgetown is a commercialized village along a main highway, Gamkaskloof is an isolated, lonely, and peaceful refuge for a weary hiker, or a specific destination for a determined motorist.

Articles concerning aspects of Georgetown's history, buildings and future started appearing in the *Rocky Mountain News* and the *Denver Post* around 1940.²⁰ Newspaper accounts suggest that from 1953 onward Georgetown began shaking off its lethargy and re-creating itself.²¹ This particular narrative is only partially true. It fails to recognize the early efforts of "Georgetown Enterprises" (run by partners Benjamin Draper and Jack Simmons) and others in the 1940s.²² These efforts coincided with the development of the early contemporary ski-industry when more people realized the potential of Georgetown as a gateway to a recreational world. As these early boosters hoped, tourists, 'mountain men', skiers, hikers and trout fishermen visited the town with more frequency during this immediate post-World War II period. The town soon sported a fresh coat of paint and owners restored some buildings to reflect the late nineteenth century Victorian architectural style. In the 1950s the Georgetown Manufacturing Corporation, the Georgetown Players and a 'modern sports car' rally all helped to enhance the image of the town.²³

¹⁸ See those cited in footnote 5 as well as other articles in *Rocky Mountain News*, 3 Nov. 1940, 27 March and 1 April 1946, 16 April 1947, 27 Feb., 1 March 1966, 15 July 1968, 16 July 1960, 13 & 14 June 1970, 27 March 1972, 3 March 1973, 11 May 1974, 18 March 1978, 19 May 1984, 30 Aug 1985, 30 Jan 1989, 3 Feb. 1983, 6 Apr and 10 Jul 1989, 21 June 1990. *The Denver Post*, 9 June 1946, 26 July 1953, 2 Oct. 1958, 14 Aug & 31 Oct. 1971, 11 May 1977, and 10 July 1978, *The Sunday Denver Post*, 14 June 1970; and "Georgetown's changing face" in *Denver Post*, *Empire Magazine*, 22 Aug. 1965, pp.16-17.

¹⁹ Of the articles that have been written those cited in footnotes 6, 7, and 10 come very close to a complete list. The main scholarly work on Gamkaskloof is Du Toit's *People of the Valley*. Written from a predominantly sociological perspective there is not much of a historical analysis on the people, or of the valley itself, in this book. Also see T. Goetze, "Where in the 'Hell' are the People? - The Otto du Plessis Road and the depopulation of a valley", *Kronos* (Nov. 1994). Interview with P. J. Swanepoel, 1 Jan. 1991. It was he who first mentioned to me that Cape Nature Conservation had restoration plans for Gamkaskloof. I also received a letter from Cape Nature Conservation in 1994 in which they indicated that they were restoring some of the cottages to provide overnight accommodation for hikers on the Swartberg Nature Trail, and that they were also wanting to preserve the natural, cultural and historic heritage of Gamkaskloof. The aim was to create an 'open air' museum.

²⁰ See footnotes 5 and 17.

²¹ *Denver Post*, 26 July 1953.

²² Articles in the 1940s as listed in footnotes 5 and 17.

²³ *Rocky Mountain News*, 27 March and 1 April 1946; *Denver Post*, 26 July 1953. The Corporation manufactured bomb, gun, truck and other mechanical parts; the Georgetown Players was organised from the University of Denver's school of theatre actors; and the first Georgetown Alpine sports car trials were held in June 1952 attracting some 4 500 spectators.

The 1966 designation of the Georgetown-Silver Plume area as a historic landmark was the significant event of the 1960s for Georgetown. This landmark designation heightened a growing awareness which many individuals and organizations felt concerning the need to keep a check on Georgetown's changing face. In addition, the economic and social costs which attend unbridled progress became more apparent, as well as the need to restore and preserve aspects of the town's history.²⁴

In 1970, the Georgetown town council passed a local preservation ordinance that designated all land within the town boundaries a city historic preservation district, distinct from the federal landmark area district which included Silver Plume. The Georgetown Historic Preservation Committee handled all issues relative to this ordinance. This local initiative hoped to achieve historic architectural conformity and to preserve Georgetown as a living monument to Colorado's mining past. These efforts, along with the attempts by the Georgetown Society to control and limit growth, soon resulted in rumblings and clashes, this revealing the different aspirations and biases of those seeking to re-create Georgetown for commercial reasons and/or as a particular text of the past. The preservationist segment of Georgetown's permanent residents considered the Public Service Company insensitive in its attempt to run power lines over the town.²⁵ They also joined a state-wide ballot initiative to oppose the 1976 Olympics, worried about the potential for unchecked development. Many residents did not want Georgetown to become another Aspen or Vail.²⁶

Real estate developers seemingly had other plans. Robert Stringer, the president of Azcor Inc., a construction company, claimed that the biggest problem his company had to deal with was the historic preservation committee. The reason for this was that there was no-one on the committee to translate the city's wishes, and many people had building plans turned down on numerous occasions.²⁷ In 1978 the Colorado Supreme Court overturned the local ordinance on the grounds that it was unconstitutionally vague. The court also disallowed the designation of all property in the town as part of the historical preservation district as overly vague.²⁸ This ruling resulted in the development of 57 townhouses.

During the 1980s two issues, both related to change, dominated the re-creation of Georgetown. The first was the completion of the Georgetown Loop Scenic Railroad; the second was the National Parks Service survey of the Georgetown-Silver Plume district and their alternative suggestions for the future management of the district.

The Colorado Central Railroad, the first line to serve the state's major mining districts, reached Georgetown in August 1877. The plan to build the line from Georgetown to Leadville did not materialize but the railroad was extended five miles west of Silver Plume. The Georgetown to Silver Plume link required engineering ingenuity, as the latter town is some 640 feet (195m) higher than Georgetown and would have required

²⁴ See newspaper articles listed in footnotes 5 and 17.

²⁵ *Rocky Mountain News*, 15 July 1968 and 13 June 1970.

²⁶ *Denver Post*, 18 July 1971.

²⁷ *Rocky Mountain News*, 3 March 1973.

²⁸ *Denver Post*, 10 July 1978.

a grade of more than 6 degrees in a narrow canyon. The solution was to build a railroad that switched back on, and crossed over itself high above (some 90 feet or 27,4m) the creek below, in a loop. Eventually four miles (6,4km) of railroad were laid for a direct distance of two miles (3,2km).²⁹ The thrilling, almost gravity-defying loop ride was also a tourist attraction in those early days, as some 25,000 people rode the line in 1889.³⁰ The loop was scrapped just before World War II for pennies on the dollar and rebuilt at a cost of over one million dollars. The re-creation of the loop between 1973 and 1984 definitely boosted the town's tourist potential. Yet it also generated controversy, as not all of Georgetown's residents wanted a complete re-creation which would have brought the train into the town itself. Again they sought to control the historical image they wanted the town to project. The question was whether the railroad should run through the town as it did in its early years. It started/stopped about one-and-a-half miles (2,4km) outside Georgetown. At issue was the additional noise and congestion.³¹

The proposed survey by the Parks Service to study alternatives for the possible future management of the Georgetown-Silver Plume district was also controversial for it raised the fear of Federal control.³² A local group, the "Friends of Independent Georgetown," emerged as the chief antagonist to the survey. Even the Colorado Historical Society refused to become involved in a move to halt the study. A mayor of Georgetown, Jerry Buckley, later characterized the whole Georgetown issue as a clash between those pursuing progress and those not wanting change. It is apparent through all this that some residents of Georgetown did not want their town to reflect a gambling and a 'honky-tonk' lifestyle.³³ They wanted Georgetown to replicate and project its 'authentic' historical image, or perhaps, one can argue, stay a middle to upper-class 'refuge' from a dirty, corrupt mining town! Georgetown is certainly a text to the past that reveals the biases of its re-creators.

Once the Otto du Plessis road to Gamkaskloof was completed in 1962, social interaction with the outside world increased, and the road brought an end to the distinct "folk community" existence of Gamkaskloof's inhabitants. More 'tourists', or curious visitors, arrived in the valley from time to time. Some inhabitants served as deacons in outside congregations; parents sent children to school; and the farmers visited markets with their produce more frequently. Initially the reaction - to the road and its effects - of

²⁹ Ashby and Wiatrowski, "Rebirth of the Georgetown Loop Railway"; W. Borneman, "Ride the Historic Georgetown Loop". The loop railroad reached Silver Plume in 1884.

³⁰ Halaas, "Story of a Valley."

³¹ In general the noise levels in the Georgetown-Silver Plume area exceeded the Environmental Protection Agency's recommended level of 55 decibels (on the "A" weighted scale of measurement (dB). Noises above this level are noted as irritants and annoyances until the 70dB level is reached - hearing damage can occur from that point upward. Local measurements at Georgetown ranged from 58.5dB (at about 8:00am) to 76.7dB (from 12 noon to 1:00pm). 67.4dB was the average noise level. Noise levels at Silver-Plume exhibited much the same results.

³² *Rocky Mountain News*, 3 Feb. 1983; 30 Jan., 6 April and 10 July 1989.

³³ *Rocky Mountain News*, 13 April 1992. After a thorough study of the area, the National Park's draft survey laid down six alternatives for the future management of the Georgetown-Silver Plume district. The manner in which they viewed it was that these towns could: guide their own destinies, emphasize their recreation opportunities, increase their economic viabilities, build on their past and continue to manage at a local but consolidated level, through preserve their past with National Parks Service assistance.

some people in the valley was mixed and cautious. L. Marais, for example, built a house "far from the road, and the Mostert and Joubert families withdrew."³⁴ The road in essence invaded the privacy which had characterized Gamkaskloof for so long.

The road brought other consequences. A telephone line put the people of the valley in direct contact with the outside world in 1965.³⁵ The telephone line further removed the 'filter' that had protected the valley from the outside world and ushered the inhabitants fully into the twentieth century.³⁶

The road also affected the material culture of the people. Stoves, beds and other items of furniture no longer had to be carried by donkey and hand into the valley³⁷. Newer and better furniture items, fencing, and corrugated iron for roofing, were also acquired³⁸. Ironically, however, despite this improvement in the material culture of the people and their standard of living, the road also brought in more sickness. Although a small consolation, the road did however give the inhabitants easier access to medical care³⁹.

The road affected the people of the valley both individually and communally. Marie Mostert's experience is a good example of how the building and opening up of the road could affect individuals of the valley. To her, 18 years of age in 1959, the Swartberg Mountains were prison-like. The road provided her with a husband and freedom. She married Kosie (J. H.) van Zyl, the bulldozer operator who worked on the Otto du Plessis road, who took her out of the valley. Of all the publicity they received at that time it was this of which they were probably most proud.⁴⁰

The valley became increasingly depopulated as a result of the road. The Cape Department of Nature Conservation took an active interest in the valley and bought a number of farms, including Piet Swanepoel's place. The Department was concerned that the sizes of the original farms of the nineteenth century had been drastically reduced over the past century mainly through legacy sub-divisions. It would not have been economically viable for descendants of former valley inhabitants to continue farming on such small plots. In addition, Cape Nature Conservation was concerned with

³⁴ Du Toit, *People of the Valley*, pp. 48, 91, and Du Toit, "Meganisasie en Kultuurverandering," p. 115.

³⁵ Anon., "At Last - A direct line to Hell," p. 1; Letter, E. Eastes (Telkom) to self, 5 Dec. 1991. The line was erected between April and June 1965.

³⁶ Du Toit, *People of the Valley*, pp. 48, 91.

³⁷ Du Toit, "Meganisasie en Kultuurverandering," p. 115.

³⁸ Interview with P. J. Swanepoel, 1 Jan. 1991.

³⁹ Younghusband, "Women in 'The Hell,'" p. 21, and Du Toit, *People of the Valley*, p. 78. Sannie (A. S.) Marais contracted tetanus in 1950. Had she lived almost anywhere else in South Africa at the time, it would not have been too much of a problem to have her transported to a hospital. She, however, had to be carried out of the Gamkaskloof valley on a bed by six men. The men were accompanied by a doctor and nurse (who had been summoned into the valley to help with the rescue operation) and they had to negotiate the Gamka River wading waist deep through it in places. The distance up the northern gorge took them five hours. Sannie Marais survived the ordeal and recovered later in the Oudtshoorn Hospital. See also Goetze, "Where in the 'Hell' are the people?" *Kronos*, Nov. 1994.

⁴⁰ Younghusband, "Women in The Hell," p. 21; J. H. van Zyl, 12 Aug. 1991.

both the potential results of intensive and over-farming, and with farms being neglected as inhabitants exited the valley.

With the migration of the inhabitants from the valley, Gamkaskloof has become a lonely place⁴¹ - aloes and "suikerbos" have started taking over, and it has been left to Nature Conservation and a few new private owners to restore and maintain the valley and to guide and 'control' its future. A couple of doctors from Tygerberg Hospital in Cape Town bought a farm, probably to escape the stresses of the twentieth century!⁴² The stated goal of Cape Nature Conservation was to restore and preserve the cultural and historic heritage of the valley through a living and open air museum and establish a nature reserve. Some work has been done but it is a project in its infancy. Restored cottages in the valley will also form part of the Swartberg Nature Hiking Trail. This clearly brings the recreational aspect, and the recognition that Gamkaskloof is both a place of history and of nature, into focus.

Restoration, recreation, re-creation, tourism and historical presentation are the key to a comparison of these places. The re-creation of Georgetown was an attempt to create a cultural and historic landscape reminiscent of the past. The irony was and is that in order for the town to survive and carry on its livelihood as a town it needs to 'relive' its past. The new base that sustains Georgetown is no longer silver mining but an image of the past. Georgetown has (and is) being re-created to attract visitors and tourists to experience this image of the past. Yet the base which sustains Georgetown is broader than this. While restoration is a valiant yet vain attempt to hold an image of a culture lost, and a period past, in perpetuity, it is apparent that the town has not only been re-created on this foundation, but that it also presents a new recreational opportunity for visitors and tourists. It is a gateway to a ski-world and a recreational hinterland, and a 'place' where a variety of modern sports can be practiced.

What type of 'historical experience' do Georgetown or Gamkaskloof then wish to project? What kind of experience/s do those involved in their restoration and re-creation wish visitors to experience, and, as such do they not also reflect the biases of these contemporary re-creators?

In the case of Georgetown, the emphasis has been on the restoration and re-creation of a Victorian-Alpine architectural heritage, along with authentic colours to match.⁴³ Georgetown thus holds up a pretty picture, an aesthetic appeal, for visitors. Tours of a number of these restored buildings, now museums, transport tourists into this bygone era, and offer a look at an old face of Georgetown. The re-creation of an 'old-world' atmosphere is also meant to connect visitors with an historic past - the creation of an Old-World-type Christmas market in the early 1960s is an example.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Interview with P. J. Swanepoel, 1 Jan. 1991, and, Morgan, "Last People in Hell," p. 24.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ See footnotes 5 and 17.

⁴⁴ The Holmes' (Mrs Holmes an Austrian native), then owners of the Red Ram restaurant and rathskeller, and the Gustemans from Sweden gave impetus to this market. Other Norwegian, German, and European trappings gave Georgetown a further time-lost appeal. In her study of the Upper Clear Creek Industrial Mining Environment of 1870-1900, Leanne Sander points to the ethnically diverse (European) nature of the population of this region during that time.

Ron Neeley, executive director of the Georgetown Society Inc. in 1992, highlighted his society's frustration in trying to raise \$5000 to purchase a bell clangor for the fire-station tower. It would not have been a problem to have raised the money through gambling, but this was not the route which they wished to take, or the image and lifestyle which they wanted Georgetown to reflect and experience. Neeley claimed that "people smile when they hear the sweet sound of that bell," and that is all that it was meant to do, "to make people smile."⁴⁵ This further underlines the sweet nostalgic spirit which many who are associated with Georgetown's re-creation wish its visitors to experience. The negative reaction of some residents to 'tourist gimmicks' like phony 'western' shootouts⁴⁶ illustrates the manner in which Georgetown's unique genteel character is prized. The same can be said of the re-creation of the Georgetown Loop. The Loop not only reminds visitors of the ingenuity and engineering skill of late nineteenth century railroad builders, but also points to the physically harsh terrain and environment in which these people (engineers and Georgetown residents) lived and worked. A visit to the Lebanon Silver Mine, an option open to those undertaking the trip, completes this 'looped' trip down memory lane. It is also a reminder to all of Georgetown's association with its mining past.

Georgetown's lack of a "raucous, callous 'male' environment teeming with saloons, brothels, claim jumpers and continuous tests of masculine mettle" set it apart from many mining towns, camps and communities of this late nineteenth century era. The churches and Opera House in this "wage-earning community reflected a stable and mutually supportive population."⁴⁷ This appears to be the ambience Georgetown wishes to perpetuate.

As far as Gamkaskloof is concerned, the former inhabitants or living museum 'pieces' have now all left, and this is probably for the good. They were always very wary of outsiders and of being exhibits. They were a private people who mostly shied away from visitors who entered the valley, many out of curiosity. Rumours and myths concerning the nature and lifestyle of the people of the valley abounded when the area became 'more' accessible. One of these rumours concerning the alleged attitude to, and treatment of, people of colour has not been too complimentary. Although Brian du Toit has debunked the myth of inter-family marriage in this former community with his genealogical and sociological study,⁴⁸ the mythical aura of the place has had a magnetic appeal. The re-creation of a place is obviously meant to evoke memories, but these are surely some that all connected with that place hope will fade.

The restoration of farm cottages, and the maintenance of a nature reserve in Gamkaskloof, is arguably then meant to reflect a fragment of a pioneering, farming ('boer') and settler community. The attempt to freeze this picture of Gamkaskloof reflects an admiration of a Post-colonial society, as in the case of Georgetown as well, for a pioneering community that 'tamed' an inhospitable territory, its former inhabitants (if they indeed were present in the valley in the early 1840's) and 'nature'. It is an open

⁴⁵ *Rocky Mountain News*, 13 April 1992.

⁴⁶ *Rocky Mountain News*, 28 Nov. 1982.

⁴⁷ Sander, *Miner's disease*, p. 176-177.

⁴⁸ Du Toit, *People of the Valley*.

question as to what any new political dispensation, and/or organization (and/or individual), under whose authority the valley may yet fall, will make of these attempts and this possible viewpoint. One would hope that while they may be more sensitive so as to reflect a broader and more inclusive history and perspective, they will see the value of restoration and preservation as well as conservation in the case of Gamkaskloof. Although most traces of any pre-1841 habitation of the valley have been erased, a thorough search would reveal and/or unearth fragments of a former hunter/herder existence, in the form of cave art, wooden and iron pegs to reach beehives, and other artifacts. This aspect of the valley's history should be reflected in any continued re-creation of Gamkaskloof.

Georgetown has thus been re-created in an image of, and as a text to, the past, and this image now also reflects the latter twentieth century culture of those who have had a hand in this fashioning as well. As far as Gamkaskloof is concerned, the motives for its re-creation and restoration are varied. In order to conserve the resources of Gamkaskloof, to ensure that water from the Gamkaskloof Dam (built at the top of the northern defile which dissects the valley) flowed freely from the Great Karoo to the Little Karoo, Cape Nature Conservation took on the task of 'preserving' the valley. Yet they also clearly believed in the preservation of the historic and cultural heritage of the valley through the restoration of cottages and farms, this perhaps to bolster the conservation goals. The Cape Nature Conservation goals can thus also, like the goals set for Georgetown, be seen as a valiant attempt to hold an image of a culture lost in perpetuity. Although very little else sustains Gamkaskloof at present, hopefully the nature reserve ideal will work for its future.

Gamkaskloof and Georgetown are not, and can never be, the communities they once were, yet they do provide a temporary bridge between a people's past and future. Georgetown is no longer the centre it used to be, it is now on the periphery, or the 'roadside'.⁴⁹ Gamkaskloof, always situated at the periphery, or the terminus of a journey, was made accessible by the Otto du Plessis road. Ironically though it is less visited today as a direct result of it being made more accessible.

Both I-70 and the Otto du Plessis road provide access to these respective re-created places. These re-created places also provide access to a past history and to recreation beyond. In his book *My Rocky Mountain Valley* James Rogers wrote: "our valley is a palimpsest, a parchment written upon, erased and written over again." Both places also bear testimony to this.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ J. G. Biggins, "Historical Geography of . . . Georgetown", iv. Georgetown can also be said to have been the nucleus and terminus of its nineteenth century world.

⁵⁰ J. Rogers, *My Rocky Mountain Valley* (1968), p. 189.