

The control and administration of Port Elizabeth's African population, c. 1834-1923

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THE HISTORY OF residential development in Port Elizabeth during the 19th century is chequered with attempts to remove African locations (residential areas) from the proximity of white residential areas. Pressure for removal from ratepayers was offset by the demands of merchants who wanted labour close at hand. The resistance of Africans to removal was aided by the failure of the local authority to mediate this conflict of interests between the dominant classes. The closure of the 'inner locations' and the removal of some of their residents to New Brighton Location was only affected by the intervention of the central government. However, it became apparent that the central government lacked the capacity to implement a policy to ensure the effective control of urban Africans without 'the co-operation of the municipality,' and New Brighton was transferred to the latter's supervision. This article explores how these changes in control affected the administration of Port Elizabeth's African population.

EARLY SETTLEMENT AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN PORT ELIZABETH

From the outset, settlement in Port Elizabeth was determined largely by topography and the availability of water. The existence of a narrow strip between the high ridge and the coastline meant that initial expansion was linear along a north-south axis. When piped water became available, white residential growth occurred in a westward direction, on what was known as the 'Hill'.² Beyond the perimeter of the residential area, a 'Hottentot Location', a separate settlement for the Khoikhoi, was established. In 1834 the Colonial government had made a grant to the London Missionary Society (LMS), which was large enough to provide for a 'burial ground' and an area of residence of 'Hottentots and other coloured people who were members of the [LMS Mission] Church'.³ The principle of locations for the indigenous people in Port Elizabeth was established. With the settlement of Africans in the town, only the site of their residence was to be a matter of dispute.

The Mfengu arrived in the Cape Colony following an agreement with Governor Benjamin D'Urban after the Sixth Frontier War (1834-1835), and entered the wage-labour market in considerable numbers. In Port Elizabeth they supplanted Khoi labour on the beach on account of their greater reliability and sobriety.⁴ A Wesleyan Mission Report (1840) estimates that there were over 600 Mfengu resident at Port Elizabeth, most of whom were beach labourers.⁵

Apart from being as close to their place of employment as possible, Africans chose to reside in the proximity of permanent sources of water. A newspaper report in 1840 mentioned that the Mfengu lived in huts they had constructed in four specific areas: on the hillside above the town centre; near the landing beach; and in two villages, each fifteen minutes walk in opposite directions from the centre of town.⁶ The first-mentioned (and probably largest) settlement was the so-called 'Fingo Village' on the 'Hill'. The Esenhugh Survey map (1849) shows two distinct clusters of huts situated on either side of the upper reaches of Hyman's Kloof (Russell Road) which might correspond to the proximate but distinct 'Hottentot Location' and 'Fingo Village'.

The institution of local government in Port Elizabeth was occasioned by the establishment of a Board of Municipal Commissioners in 1847.⁷ In the first municipal election of 1848, six of the eight members elected to the board had commercial interests,⁸ being mainly British merchants and partners in large mercantile and shipping houses. The rapid expansion of commercial wool farming in Port Elizabeth's

hinterland between the 1840s and 1860s saw this mercantile elite dominate the municipal board until the emergence of a new commercial class whose financial resources were chiefly local. By the 1860s the interest of white ratepayers and property developers had also come to be more strongly represented on Port Elizabeth's town council.⁹ A conflict of interests was to develop with regard to the residence of Africans in the town. Inadequate landing facilities at Algoa Bay meant that the merchants were dependent on the availability of their Mfengu beach labourers at short notice.¹⁰ The growing propertied class, on the other hand, sought to exercise pressure through the town council for the regulation and control of informal African settlements and locations. They lobbied periodically for the removal of Africans from the path of the westward expansion of the middle-class suburbs.

Port Elizabeth's first set of municipal regulations included the stipulation that native huts not erected 'in such places as shall be appointed by the commissioners', were liable to be removed and destroyed.¹¹ In addition, the Board of Commissioners sought to avail itself of the provisions of a Colonial government proclamation which allowed for the establishment of 'native' locations 'within one or two miles of the centre of towns or villages' in the eastern frontier districts of the Cape Colony.¹² They chose a site on Richmond

NB: Unless otherwise stated, all archival references are to materials in the Cape Archives Depot.

¹ J. Robinson, 'A perfect system of control? State, territory and administration in early South African locations' (unpublished typescript, Cambridge University, 1988), pp. 29 and 36.

² K. Beavon, 'Factors affecting the growth and form of Port Elizabeth, 1820-1963: a study of historical urban geography', in H.L. Watts (ed.), *Focus on cities* (Durban, 1970), pp. 162-167.

³ *Director's Report of the Forty First General Meeting of the London Missionary Society, 1834* (London, 1835), p. 85.

⁴ J.C. Chase, *The Cape of Good Hope and the Eastern Province of Algoa Bay* (London, 1843), p. 238.

⁵ Cited in R.A. Moyer, 'A history of the Mfengu of the Eastern Cape, 1835-1870' (Ph.D., London University, 1976), p. 290.

⁶ *Graham's Town Journal*, 9.7.1840.

⁷ P. Swart, 'Die munisipale ontwikkeling van Port Elizabeth, 1845-1860' (M.A., UPE, 1986), pp. 36-44.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

⁹ The town council was established by Act 31 of 1860.

¹⁰ E.J. Inggs, 'Mfengu beach labour and Port Elizabeth harbour development, 1835-1870', *Contree* 21, January 1987, pp. 5-12.

¹¹ *Cape of Good Hope Government Gazette*, 18.11.1847 (Section 27 of the Municipal Regulations of Port Elizabeth).

¹² *Ibid.*, 29.7.1847 (Government Notice, dated 7.7.1847, concerning Native Locations).



'Fingo Location', Port Elizabeth, with the chapel of the London Missionary Society in the background.

Hill adjacent to the 'Hottentot Location' as it would not have necessitated moving the residents of 'Fingo Village' any considerable distance, and provide ready access to the springs of Cooper's Kloof.¹³

Accordingly, the board surveyed 144 plots and it was decided to permit the erection of 'Fingo-style' huts on these sites.¹⁴ Regulations were drawn up for the administration of the location by a specially-appointed municipal committee and submitted to the Cape government for approval. However, the board was unable to institute its plans for seven years because the central government refused to give its consent to the establishment of the location.¹⁵

CREATION OF THE NATIVE STRANGERS' LOCATION

In 1855, Governor Sir George Grey made a grant for a Native Strangers' Location to the Port Elizabeth municipality. Accordingly, the commissioners again attempted to resettle the inhabitants of 'Fingo Village'. In terms of a municipal notice dated 21 May 1855, Africans were effectively given six weeks to remove themselves to sites allocated in the new location:

Notice is hereby given to all Fingoes resident on the Hill in Port Elizabeth, as well as other natives, that the plan of the Native Stranger Location lies for inspection at the Town Office. Applications for sites should be made through the interpreter and must be lodged in the Town Office within one month of this date. Notice is further given that all residents on the South Side of the Cape road and continuation of Constitution Hill must remove from the same within two weeks from this date.¹⁶

The grant for a 'Strangers' Location where Hottentots, Fingoes, Kaffirs and other Strangers visiting Port Elizabeth may temporarily reside', was proclaimed on 27 June 1855. The site of the projected location was described as a piece of land situated within the limits of the municipality 'bounded on the south east by an open space between this land and the Hottentot's Location, and on all other sides by the Town Grazing lands ...' (See Figure 1.) The grant also made provision for the lease of sites 'for any term not exceeding twenty-one years' which would, seemingly, have accorded these sojourners the status of temporary (albeit potentially long-term) residents in the municipal area.

The Board of Commissioners appointed a Native Strangers' Location Committee to expedite arrangements for the establishment of the location. The construction of a 'model cottage' by the municipality was supposed to provide an inducement to those faced with the prospect of removal to utilize the opportunity to improve their living conditions.¹⁷ However, the Mfengu made no attempt to comply with the terms of the removal notice. After the deadline had expired, the Board of Commissioners served further notice that any huts not removed forthwith would be destroyed.¹⁸ But further delay ensued when it was realized that inadequate



Figure 1.

Source: J. Nel, 'Port Elizabeth — die apartheidstad' (M.A., UPE, 1986), p. 21.

provision had been made for the relocation of the Mfengu's huts in the new location. The removal of Port Elizabeth's African population to the site of the Native Strangers' Location was eventually achieved with a measure of coercion.¹⁹

GROWTH OF PORT ELIZABETH'S LOCATIONS

A municipal census of 1855 listed Port Elizabeth's white and 'coloured' (viz. black) population as 3 509 and 1 284, respectively.²⁰ A large influx of Xhosa refugees into the Colony occurred after the cattle-killing of 1857 and they were rapidly absorbed into the wage-labour market on account of a labour shortage in towns of the eastern frontier districts.²¹ The growth of Port Elizabeth's African population led to the overcrowding of the Native Strangers' Location. Many of these new arrivals were accommodated in a number of locations on private property. The largest was Gubb's Location which was situated on the 'Mill Property' (now Mill Park), with others in the Baakens River Valley, Walmer and South End.

¹³ Archives of the Town Clerk Port Elizabeth (3/PEZ) 1/1/1/1: Council Minutes, 15.3.1848.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*: Council Minutes, 13.4.1848.

¹⁵ See G. Baines, 'The colonial origins of segregation: the case of Port Elizabeth's Native Strangers' Location' (unpublished paper presented to the Eleventh Biennial Conference of the South African Historical Society, University of Stellenbosch, 20-23 January 1987), for details of this impasse between the Port Elizabeth municipality and the Cape Colonial government.

¹⁶ *Eastern Province Herald*, 29.5.1855 (Municipal regulations re Native Strangers' Location).

¹⁷ 3/PEZ 1/1/1/1: Council Minutes, 20.6.1855; *Eastern Province Herald*, 26.6.1855.

¹⁸ 3/PEZ 1/1/1/1: Council Minutes, 4.7.1855; *Eastern Province Herald*, 10.7.1855.

¹⁹ 3/PEZ 1/1/1/2: Council Minutes, 23.1.1856; *Eastern Province Herald*, 29.1.1856.

²⁰ A.14:57 Cape of Good Hope, *Abstract of the rural and urban population of the Colony*, 1857, p. 17.

²¹ S. van der Horst, *Native labour in South Africa* (Cape Town, 1942), p. 97.

Thomas Gubb, owner of the 'Mill' and also a merchant and councillor, had permitted so-called 'raw natives' to rent sites on his property from the early 1860s.²² By 1865 Gubb's Location had 120 traditional-style huts.²³ The property was subsequently purchased by a syndicate which devised its own regulations for the control of Gubb's Location. These regulations permitted the brewing of 'kaffir beer', a practice which came to be forbidden in the municipal locations.²⁴

The 1865 census figures reflect the fairly rapid growth of the African population in Port Elizabeth's main locations:

TABLE 1: PORT ELIZABETH'S URBAN POPULATION, 1865²⁵

| Population group | Municipality | Fingo Location | Hottentot Location | Gubb's Location | Total |
|------------------|--------------|----------------|--------------------|-----------------|--------|
| Whites | 6 886 | 20 | 25 | 9 | 6 940 |
| Khoi | 338 | 61 | 82 | — | 481 |
| Africans | 696 | 394 | 26 | 600 | 1 716 |
| Others* | 780 | 705 | 151 | — | 1 636 |
| TOTAL | 8 700 | 1 180 | 284 | 609 | 10 773 |

*'Coloureds' (including Malays)

This prompted frequent demands for the removal of Strangers' Location which was regarded by the white population as an 'eyesore' and 'health threat' by the 1860s.²⁶ An attempt by the town council to remove the inhabitants of Strangers' Location to a new site at the top of Cooper's Kloof — which was primarily a result of pressure by property developers for the expansion of white residential sites on the Hill — was not implemented immediately.²⁷

A municipal location was established at Coopers' Kloof (off Albany Road) in 1877 to provide 'further accommodation for native strangers and avoid inconvenient and unwholesome overcrowding now existing at the present location'. Cooper's Kloof came to be regarded as a 'model' location on account of the fact that its appearance was more orderly and less squalid than others. Wood and iron structures were erected instead of the bee-hive huts which were common in Strangers' Location. The demand for family housing and the pride that most residents of Cooper's Kloof Location took in their homes, provided an indicator of the increasing degree of permanency amongst African residents in Port Elizabeth.²⁸

The creation of Cooper's Kloof Location was accompanied by the framing of a new set of municipal regulations pertaining to locations, and a more concerted effort on the part of the local authorities to enforce them. Site certificates were granted by the town council to prospective location residents and had to be renewed annually; the letting of sites was restricted to three years and would only be extended upon an undertaking to erect a dwelling that met with the approval of the council; site boundaries had to be clearly demarcated and no additional structures could be erected without the permission of the council; no hut could be occupied by more than six persons unless the immediate family was larger than that; no sub-letting was allowed; refuse and night-soil disposal was enforced twice a week, and so on. The municipality also reserved the right to eject residents upon payment of compensation for any building which might have been erected on the site.²⁹

The town council was opposed to the grant of permanent freehold rights, and white inhabitants of Port Elizabeth generally regarded Africans in locations as 'squatters, having no rights whatever'.³⁰ Although private property, the Port Elizabeth town council claimed the right to supervision of Gubb's Location because it lay within the municipal bounda-

ries. In 1885 it promulgated regulations, including the imposition of an annual tax of 10s. for every hut on the estate for which the proprietor was liable. The resident magistrate was also authorized to expel 'any person having no right or authority to be in said location'.³¹

Meanwhile, renewed attempts had been made to relocate the inhabitants of Strangers' Location following a 'faction fight' in 1881. The violent death of the superintendent of locations was seen to be symptomatic of the danger posed by the proximity of the locations to white residential areas. But of greater consequence was the fact that the land on which the location was situated, had become even more valuable for property development.³² The decision to establish the Reservoir Location (in the vicinity of present-day Mount Road) was made on the understanding that Strangers' Location would be removed. A small group of so-called 'school natives' petitioned the government against the proposed removals to no avail, and the Port Elizabeth Native Strangers' Location Act of 1883 was passed.³³ According to Joyce Kirk, an alliance between white liberals and an emergent African middle class prevented its implementation.³⁴

In addition, a certain amount of inertia had to be overcome once the immediate crisis had passed. The municipality faced the daunting prospect of having to compensate church and school siteholders, which meant that the costs of expropriation and removal would have to be borne by the ratepayers. Not only were the inhabitants of Strangers' Location allowed to remain, but all those who had been resident in the Reservoir Location for at least three years prior to their being moved were also awarded freehold title. Only a few former residents of Strangers' Location and Cooper's Kloof Location relocated to the Reservoir Location which, instead, provided accommodation for the continual influx of Africans to Port Elizabeth.

This steady stream of Africans into Port Elizabeth caused the local authorities to try to regulate their settlement and outlaw squatting. A series of municipal notices sought to enforce the regulations by which the council could act against squatters.³⁵ Amended regulations promulgated in 1865 provided for the expulsion of illegal residents and the destruction of their shelters after three days written notice. Squatters on municipal 'waste ground' were to be treated in the same manner.³⁶ The problem was not so much forcing the squatters to comply with notices to remove themselves from such property, but in ensuring that they moved

²² *Eastern Province Herald*, 3.2.1863 (Letter from 'A Ratepayer').

²³ *Ibid.*, 16.3.1865.

²⁴ *Cape of Good Hope Government Gazette*, 13.11.1877 and 4.4.1882 (Regulations).

²⁵ See G.20:66 Cape of Good Hope, *Census of the Colony ... 1865*.

²⁶ Cape of Good Hope, *Blue Book of the Colony*, 1872, p. ff17 (Report of the Civil Commissioner Port Elizabeth).

²⁷ *Eastern Province Herald*, 30.1.1863 (Letter to the Editor).

²⁸ G.8:83 Cape of Good Hope, *Blue Book on Native Affairs for 1882*, p. 63.

²⁹ *Cape of Good Hope Government Gazette*, 13.11.1877 (Regulations).

³⁰ A.10:83 Cape of Good Hope, *Report of the Select Committee on the Port Elizabeth Native Strangers' Location Bill*, pp. 44-45.

³¹ *Cape of Good Hope Government Gazette*, 1.9.1885 (Additional Regulations for the Municipality of Port Elizabeth).

³² A.10:83, pp. 10-11 and 14.

³³ *Ibid.*: Petition of Enoch Hlangoboza and others, Appendix C, pp. ii-iii.

³⁴ J.F. Kirk, 'The African middle class, Cape liberalism and residential segregation in Port Elizabeth, 1880-1910' (Ph.D., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1987), pp. 56-64.

³⁵ See, for example, municipal notices re squatting of 6.7.1859 and 9.5.1860.

³⁶ *Cape of Good Hope Government Gazette*, 16.6.1865.

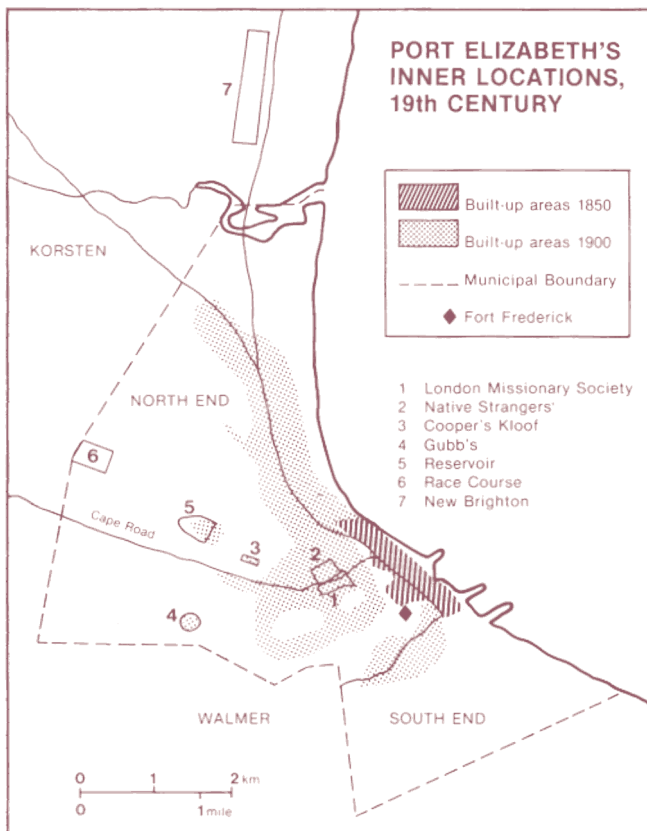
to locations controlled by the municipality. In 1881, for instance, the location inspector, acting on instructions from the town council, ejected 'native outcasts' from private property in South End to adjacent municipal ground in order to exercise control over them. Again, in 1884, concern was expressed over the 'alarming extent' to which Africans had haphazardly erected squatter shelters in the vicinity of the town. The squatter problem remained insoluble, and by the 1890s it was still the case that at least one-third of the African population lived outside the private and municipal locations.³⁷ (See Figure 2.)

In 1891 Port Elizabeth's white population numbered 13 297 and the 'coloureds' 5 147 (which excludes 891 Asians listed separately from the 'coloureds' for the first time); there were 3 931 Africans.³⁸ At that time pressure was again brought to bear on the town council by property developers and ratepayers to remove the existing municipal locations and open up the land in order to develop white suburbs. A new site had, therefore, to be found for the population it was proposed to remove from the existing locations. An agreement was made in June 1896 by the town council and the residents of Strangers' and Cooper's Kloof for the latter's removal to the planned Race Course Location (near Fairview). The conditions decided upon were included as stipulations in Section 205 of the 1897 Port Elizabeth Municipality Act. Some 300 site-holders in these locations were promised plots (18m x 12m or 60' x 40'), with title as a quid pro quo for the land which they surrendered (although not all had legal title thereto), and compensation for the buildings existing on the plot.³⁹ This move was pre-empted because the military authorities took possession of a portion of the site at the outbreak of the Second Anglo-Boer War in 1899.⁴⁰

After the war, the race course site was rejected for the resettlement of the African population. Despite having been laid out, and provision being made for the supply of water and the extension of the tramlines to the proposed location,

Figure 2.

Source: A.J. Christopher, 'Race and residence in colonial Port Elizabeth', *South African Geographical Journal* 69(1), 1987, p. 3.



it was regarded as having certain drawbacks. Amongst these was the fact that traffic to and from the location would pass through the white suburbs and was likely to cause disruption. Moreover, although it was to be situated on the periphery of the town, it was considered likely that, within a few years, white residential expansion would reach the edge of the location. This would mean that it was merely a short-term solution to the problem of having to remove the existing locations. Furthermore, the site was reckoned to be too small to accommodate the African population of 12 709 which had been enumerated for removal from the inner locations.⁴¹

THE BUBONIC PLAGUE

A case of bubonic plague in Gubb's Location in April 1901,⁴² aroused fears amongst whites that the locations were breeding grounds for the disease — notwithstanding the fact that the man in question had contracted the disease whilst working at the harbour. The subsequent spread of the disease appeared to vindicate the popular view that the problem could be eliminated by the removal of the locations. More informed opinion, in the person of the medical officer of health, expressed the following reservation about this perception:

It appears to be a common idea that by prohibiting the residence of Coloured persons within the town and banishing them to a location, the health of the European community is thereby adequately protected, the fact being lost sight of that sickness and disease cannot exist in one community, without more or less adversely affecting the inhabitants of adjoining communities.⁴³

Although the plague originated from external sources, never reached epidemic proportions, and was more prevalent in certain wards of the town than in the locations, the state of sanitation and hygiene in the locations was perceived to pose a public health threat. This so-called 'sanitation syndrome', identified by Maynard Swanson,⁴⁴ provided a particularly effective means of maintaining political pressure for Africans to be kept away from white residential areas. Indeed, it escaped public attention that, aside from the plague, infectious diseases were more prevalent amongst white than black residents of Port Elizabeth during 1901.⁴⁵

³⁷ A. Appel, 'Enkele demografiese en sosiale aspekte van vroeg-industriële Port Elizabeth, c. 1870-1914' (unpublished paper presented to the Twelfth Biennial Conference of the South African Historical Society, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 24-27 January 1989), pp. 11-12.

³⁸ G.6:92 Cape of Good Hope, *Census of the Colony ... 1891*, p. 24.

³⁹ See A.22-1902 Cape of Good Hope, *Report of the Select Committee on the Native Reserve Location Bill*, pp. 32-33, and Appendix (for list of constitutions for removal of locations, extracted from Council Minutes, 26.6.1896). Also A.15-1903 Cape of Good Hope, *Report of the Select Committee on the Native Reserve Location Act*, p. 30.

⁴⁰ Archives of the Native Affairs Department (NA) 608 f1680, Location Matters, Port Elizabeth, 1903-1904: Memorandum by Town Clerk on 'native locations', p. 4.

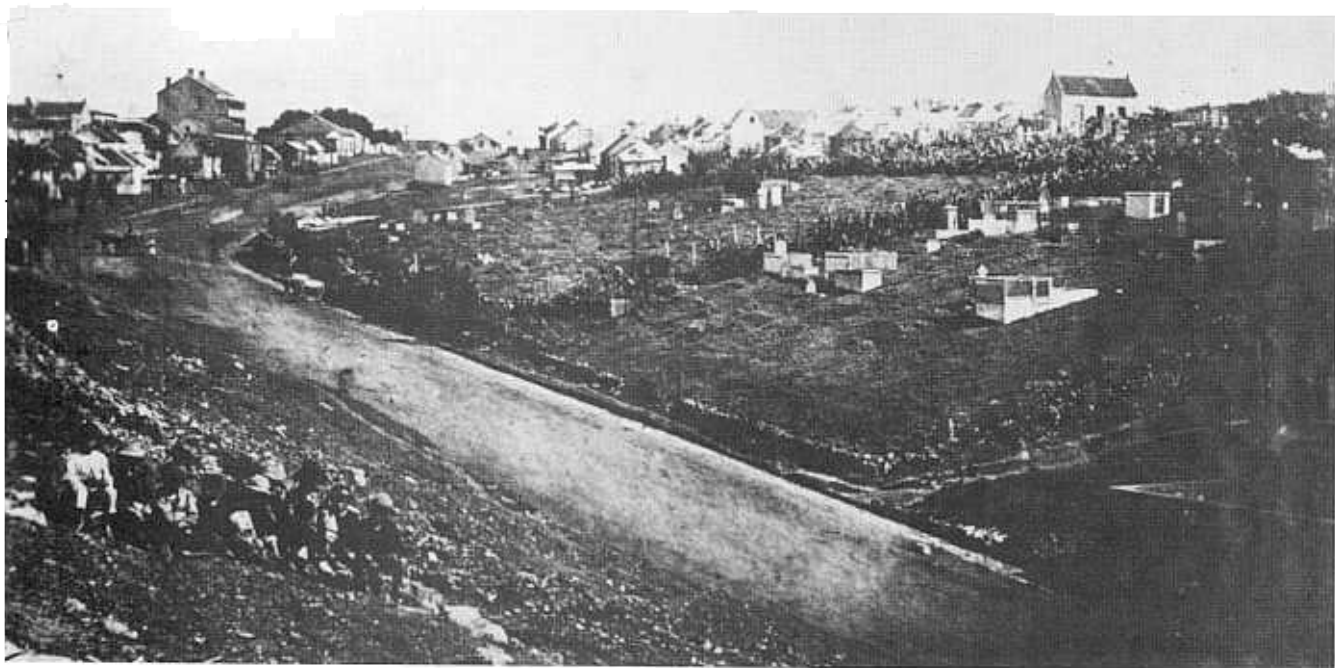
⁴¹ NA 607 1675, Removal of 'natives' to New Brighton Location: List of locations in the town and district of Port Elizabeth from which 'natives' are to be removed to the Reserve Location, 20.4.1903. This figure, which did not include enfranchised Africans, is considerably greater than the 1904 census figure for Port Elizabeth's urban African population. See Table 3.

⁴² *Eastern Province Herald*, 17.4.1901; A.J. Christopher, 'Race and residence in colonial Port Elizabeth', *South African Geographical Journal* 69(1), 1987, p. 11.

⁴³ G.39-1906 Cape of Good Hope, *Report on the Public Health for 1905*, pp. xxix-xxx.

⁴⁴ M.W. Swanson, 'The sanitation syndrome: bubonic plague and urban native policy in the Cape Colony, 1900-1909', *Journal of African History* 18(3), 1977, pp. 387-394.

⁴⁵ G.66-1902 Cape of Good Hope, *Report on the Public Health for 1901*, p. 220.



Russel Road (formerly Hyman's Kloof), showing the location in the background.

PHOTOGRAPH: PORT ELIZABETH PUBLIC LIBRARY

In terms of Section 15 of the Public Health Act 23 of 1897, municipalities were authorized to remove Africans forcibly from infected premises, if necessary.⁴⁶ But the council delegated its responsibilities to a specially constituted and virtually autonomous Plague Board which took various measures to contain the spread of the plague: suspected cases or patients who had contracted the disease were placed in quarantine at the lazaretto. In a blatantly discriminatory move restrictions were placed on the movement of Africans but not others. A campaign of inoculation was only partially successful amongst Africans on account of the inherent suspicion arising from the popular misconception that the only deaths arising from the plague were amongst those who had been inoculated. Whilst rat-infested stores — considered the

Burning of huts in Strangers' Location, June 1903.

PHOTOGRAPH: TS. BODILL COLLECTION

probable breeding ground of the disease — were merely fumigated, homes in the locations were destroyed. By September 1902 over 600 dwellings, situated mainly in Strangers' Location, had been condemned by the Plague Board as unfit for human habitation and were burned to the ground.⁴⁷ The Plague Board was, in effect, a coalition of reformist-minded local representatives and public health experts. It became the driving force in a plague eradication campaign, which rapidly assumed the form of an anti-black health and morality crusade. Location residents complained of personal harassment, arbitrary inspection and short notice prior to the demolition of homes.⁴⁸ In a matter of months

⁴⁶ *Cape of Good Hope Government Gazette*, 5.3.1901 (Notice No. 209), p. 416.

⁴⁷ *Eastern Province Herald*, 18.9.1902; Christopher, 'Race and residence', p. 11.

⁴⁸ A.15-1903, pp. 97-99 and 103.



the Plague Board had virtually accomplished what the Port Elizabeth town council had been attempting to achieve for the past forty years: to force many Africans resident in the inner locations out of town. However, the Plague Board failed to close the locations completely, because it was not empowered to remove people from properties not condemned, nor did it have the right to relocate people. In terms of existing public health legislation, 'it was impracticable to compel those evicted to reside in a particular place'.⁴⁹

THE NATIVE RESERVE LOCATION ACT AND THE CREATION OF NEW BRIGHTON

The introduction of the Native Reserve Location Act provided the means whereby the local authorities could facilitate and consolidate the emergency programme of mass evictions and slum clearance by the establishment of a location under the auspices of central government.⁵⁰ Proposed in order to regularize the actions of the Cape Town municipality, in providing a retroactive mechanism for the expropriation and resettlement of Africans in Ndabeni, it effectively translated emergency public health measures into permanent urban locations legislation. Because the removals had been motivated by self-interest on the part of the white community, and not concern for the welfare of the African population, the creation of New Brighton only served to relocate the problem — not to solve it.⁵¹

The Colonial government purchased the farm Cradock's Place and the Deal Party Estate for the sum of £20 000,⁵² in order to establish New Brighton Location. The portion set aside for the location was approximately eight kilometres to the north of the centre of town. It was situated on land that was unsuitable for industrial purposes, although in the general direction that Port Elizabeth's industrial expansion was occurring. Moreover, it was unsuitable for white residential development which, for the middle classes at least, was likely to expand in a westward direction (see Table 2). This meant that it was unlikely that the location would have to be moved at some future date.⁵³

Removals to New Brighton Location commenced a month before the Native Reserve Location Act took effect on 1 June 1903.⁵⁴ The removals were, however, held up by a number of obstacles. The African middle-class objected strongly to the lack of security of tenure and demanded the right to erect their own dwellings. Dissatisfaction with compensation payments, and the failure to provide adequate accommodation in the New Brighton Location for those to be removed from the inner locations, contributed to their unwillingness to move. Resistance to removals also came from African traders who wished to obtain exclusive trading rights in New Brighton. Merchants supported workers' objections to the distance and cost of commuting to their place of work, which amounted to 6s. per month for train fare. Moreover, rents in New Brighton of between 20s. and 30s. per month for

family quarters and 8s. per month for single quarters in 1903, were in excess of those charged by rack-renters elsewhere in the town or its periphery. Although rents were subsequently reduced, following representation from employers and the African community itself, these charges still exceeded one third of the average earnings of Africans in Port Elizabeth. For all or some of the above reasons, many Africans opted to live in Korsten which lay outside the municipal boundaries and the ambit of the Native Reserve Location Act.⁵⁵

The hiring of property in slum areas such as Korsten and neighbouring Dassies Kraal was a lucrative source of revenue, and vested interests of town councillors sometimes hindered the proper implementation of sanitation measures.⁵⁶ In 1902 the district surgeon observed that numerous dwellings declared unfit for human habitation were not demolished because 'the influence of the slum landlord in the Council was too strong'.⁵⁷ However, in his evidence before the Select Committee on the Native Reserve Locations Act, the chairman of the Health Committee rejected the assertion that the town council did not enforce demolitions on account of vested interests.⁵⁸ The weight of evidence would appear to suggest that removals to New Brighton were pre-empted by a tacit alliance between the African community and slumlords in Korsten. Many former residents of the inner locations sought accommodation in Korsten, where the African population rose steadily and reached 5 102 out of a total of 6 562 by April 1904.⁵⁹ By comparison, only some 2 125 Africans had moved to New Brighton by the end of 1903. This fell far short of the projected figure of 6 000.⁶⁰ Moreover, some 900 returned to the Reservoir Location when the Native Reserve Location Act was temporarily suspended during 1904 on account of the lack of accommodation in New Brighton.⁶¹

The housing shortage in New Brighton was particularly acute with regard to family accommodation.⁶² A number

⁴⁹ Archives of the Colonial Office (CO) 8765 f78c: (Telegram) Magistrate Port Elizabeth — Under Colonial Secretary, 29.4.1904.

⁵⁰ See Section 5 of Act 40 of 1902.

⁵¹ CO 8765 f78c: Report of Senior Plague Medical Officer, 17.1.1902.

⁵² A. Mabin and B. Conradie (eds), *The confidence of the whole country: Standard Bank reports on economic conditions in Southern Africa 1865-1902* (Johannesburg, 1988), p. 515.

⁵³ A.22-1902, Appendix A: Report of the Special Magistrate, King William's Town. (In the matter of establishing a large 'native' location in or near Port Elizabeth, see pp. iii-iv.)

⁵⁴ *Cape Daily Telegraph*, 23.6.1903; see also A.15-1903, pp. 72-73.

⁵⁵ Municipality of Port Elizabeth, *Mayor's minutes*, 1904, p. 15.

⁵⁶ G.66-1902, p. 94.

⁵⁷ G.66-1903 Cape of Good Hope, *Report on the Public Health for 1902*, p. 118.

⁵⁸ A.15-1903, pp. 100-101.

⁵⁹ CO 8765 f78c: (Telegram) Magistrate Port Elizabeth — Under Colonial Secretary, 29.4.1904.

⁶⁰ Cape of Good Hope, *Debates of the House of Assembly for 1904*, p. 224.

⁶¹ NA 607 1677: Town Clerk Port Elizabeth — Secretary of Native Affairs, 8.10.1904; Swanson, 'Sanitation syndrome', p. 404.

⁶² G.11-1904 Cape of Good Hope, *Blue Book on Native Affairs for 1903*, p. 93.

New Brighton Location, April 1912.

PHOTOGRAPH: CENTRAL ARCHIVES DEPOT, PRETORIA



of dormitory-type dwellings erected for single migrant labourers were converted into makeshift family units. According to the assistant resident magistrate, the migrant labourer constituted a relatively small proportion of the workforce:

The ordinary Native labourer in Port Elizabeth is not the raw Native who has come from the Transkei in search of work here, but he has been born and bred in one or other of the many Locations that have existed here for many years.⁶³

If this was so, it contradicts the claim of the resident magistrate made in 1904 that 'permanent residents are satisfied and well pleased with the locality'.⁶⁴ In fact, the fluctuations in the number of residents between 1903 and 1909 suggest that New Brighton had a relatively large 'floating' population.⁶⁵

TABLE 2: POPULATION MOVEMENT OF NEW BRIGHTON LOCATION, 1903-1909

| Year | Arrivals | Departures | Total population* |
|------|----------|------------|-------------------|
| 1903 | 2 581 | 456 | 2 125 |
| 1904 | 2 284 | 2 439 | 1 411 |
| 1905 | 4 506 | 1 401 | 4 516 |
| 1906 | 1 580 | 2 210 | 3 812 |
| 1907 | 1 322 | 1 356 | 3 778 |
| 1908 | 1 005 | 2 684 | 2 099 |
| 1909 | 2 030 | 1 024 | 3 105 |

*At 31 December

The large number of arrivals and departures can be partly attributed to the post-war recession and the necessity for workers to seek employment elsewhere, especially on the mines, until at least 1908.⁶⁶ But certain families, who had had their homes demolished, simply sought temporary residence in the location until such time as they found accommodation elsewhere. In fact, it was necessity and not choice that forced some to seek accommodation in New Brighton.

COMBATING RESISTANCE TO REMOVALS FROM KORSTEN

With the failure to effect the removals to New Brighton, the authorities again invoked public health legislation in order to achieve their objectives. In spite of the fact that the threat of plague had become negligible, in December 1904 a regulation was promulgated (in terms of Section 15 of the Public Health Amendment Act of 1897) which empowered the colonial secretary to direct Africans (except those who were exempt) in the Port Elizabeth magisterial district to remove to New Brighton Location.⁶⁷ A more rigorous effort was made the following year to enforce the removals despite the 'truculent' and 'obstinate' (terms employed by the magistrate) attitude of the Africans.⁶⁸ Accordingly, New Brighton's population increased from 1 411 in December 1904 to 4 516 in December of the following year (see Table 2). Whilst the Native Affairs Department saw the need to obtain police co-operation in effecting the removals, it warned of the need to 'avoid as far as practicable any show of compulsion which would have a disturbing effect on the Native mind and thus hamper the movement'.⁶⁹

In 1905 an amendment to the Native Reserve Location Act extended its jurisdiction to a distance of eight kilometres outside the municipal boundaries and, thereby, included Korsten in its provisions.⁷⁰ This legislation provided the

means to clear non-exempted Africans from Korsten whilst, at the same time, neutralizing the resistance of the propertied class with the promise that they would stand to lose nothing by being removed to New Brighton. The strategy employed by the authorities thus amounted to a combination of intimidation and co-optation.⁷¹

Provision had been made for regulating the erection and occupation of private dwellings in terms of Section 11(3) of the Native Reserve Location Act, but not for the grant of freehold title. A subsequent amendment by Section 7(18) of Act 8 of 1905 made provision for 'the lease or grant under title of building lots to any Native residents desirous of erecting their own dwelling places within the Reserve Location'.⁷² The approach of the Native Affairs Department was suggested by a memorandum of March 1908 which approved the right of Africans to purchase building lots and obtain title in locations as the rent of huts provided no incentive to effect improvements. It was argued that acceptance of this provision 'would provide an object lesson to local bodies which are as a rule averse to granting security of tenure to natives'.⁷³

In spite of these guidelines, regulations were never promulgated to implement the legislation which made provision for freehold title in New Brighton Location.⁷⁴ Thus, the undertaking made by the Port Elizabeth town council to the local African community in 1896 that title would be granted and owners be permitted to erect their own homes, was never honoured.⁷⁵ The failure to obtain title suggests that even the limited power base of African voters, which was tied to property qualifications, had been whittled away.⁷⁶ By ignoring class distinctions, the inflexible application of the Native Reserve Location Act served to decrease the physical and social distance between the African middle and working classes. Kirk rightly suggests that the creation of New Brighton served primarily to control the latter whilst, at the same time, it also alienated the middle class.⁷⁷

⁶³ G.12-1905 Cape of Good Hope, *Blue Book on Native Affairs for 1904*, p. 116.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

⁶⁵ See *Blue Books on Native Affairs and Reports on the Public Health for 1903-1909*.

⁶⁶ G.24-1908 Cape of Good Hope, *Blue Book on Native Affairs for 1907*, p. 41; G.19-1909 Cape of Good Hope, *Blue Book on Native Affairs for 1908*, pp. 67-69.

⁶⁷ *Cape of Good Hope Government Gazette*, 20.12.1904 (Notice No. 1337 of 19.12.1904); NA 608 f1680, Location Matters, Port Elizabeth, 1903-1904.

⁶⁸ NA 607 1677: Resident Magistrate Port Elizabeth — Secretary of Native Affairs, 20.3.1905, 23.3.1905, 10.4.1905 and 18.4.1905.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*: (Telegram) Secretary of Native Affairs — Civil Commissioner Port Elizabeth, 31.3.1905.

⁷⁰ G.39-1906, p. A-77.

⁷¹ Kirk, 'African middle class and residential segregation', pp. 324-332.

⁷² G.46-1906 Cape of Good Hope, *Blue Book on Native Affairs for 1905*, p. 74.

⁷³ Central Archives Depot, Pretoria (CeA), Native Affairs (NTS) 178 1703/348: (Memorandum) Secretary of Native Affairs — Prime Minister, March 1908.

⁷⁴ U.G.4-1920 Union of South Africa, *Report of the Housing Committee*, p. 30.

⁷⁵ A.15-1903, pp. 30 and 37; Kirk, 'African middle class and residential segregation', p. 203.

⁷⁶ See, for instance, Province of the Cape of Good Hope, *List of voters in the Port Elizabeth magisterial district, 1913*. Of the 7 705 voters registered in the Port Elizabeth portions of the constituencies of Port Elizabeth Central, Port Elizabeth South-West and Three Rivers, 732 (or 9.5%) were Africans. Thus, voters comprised less than 1/6 of the African male population of 4 533, a figure for the magisterial district which encompassed a wider area than the urban and peri-urban areas listed in Table 3.

⁷⁷ Kirk, 'African middle class and residential segregation', pp. 206-207 and 330-331.

In 1909 Port Elizabeth's assistant resident magistrate still lamented that local authorities did not 'take more active steps to encourage the removal and segregation of Natives residing in urban area to the Reserve Location'.⁷⁸ But in that year, the last of the 'inner locations' was finally closed when the town council came to an agreement with the Colonial government whereby owners would be compensated and provision of sites in New Brighton would be made for former residents of the Reservoir Location.⁷⁹ The decrease in the numbers of Africans resident in the municipality and the corresponding increase in figures for New Brighton between 1904 and 1911 (shown in Table 3), was partly due to the closure of the Reservoir Location:

TABLE 3: PORT ELIZABETH'S AFRICAN POPULATION, 1904-1911

| Locality | 1904 | | 1911 | |
|--------------|-------|--------|-------|--------|
| | Male | Female | Male | Female |
| Municipality | 1 581 | 634 | 997 | 647 |
| Korsten | 3 138 | 1 805 | 1 237 | 1 107 |
| New Brighton | 1 330 | 618 | 2 175 | 1 684 |
| Walmer | 395 | 204 | 124 | 87 |
| TOTAL | 6 489 | 3 261 | 4 533 | 3 525 |

Of the 1 644 Africans remaining in the municipality, the majority were voters and other classes of 'natives' such as domestic servants, who were exempt from removal in terms of the Native Reserve Location Act. The decrease in Korsten's African population must be attributed to the application of the amended Native Reserve Location Act outside of the municipal boundaries. Whilst the town council prided itself on the fact that they had removed virtually the entire non-exempt African population from the town,⁸⁰ the sanitary inspector estimated that there were about 375 Africans living in Port Elizabeth in contravention of the Native Reserve Location Act.⁸¹ Nonetheless, Port Elizabeth was one of the most highly segregated cities in the Union of South Africa in 1910.⁸²

ADMINISTRATION OF NEW BRIGHTON LOCATION, 1903-1923

New Brighton Location was under the supervision of the superintendent of natives (or location superintendent) who was appointed by and responsible to the Native Affairs Department. Because he had no judicial authority, an assistant resident magistrate was assigned to the location. When this office was abolished in 1909, the superintendent was given the powers of a special justice of the peace.⁸³ Residents who were charged with petty criminal offences or having contravened location regulations, had to appear before the weekly periodical court under the authority of the resident magistrate. The location was divided into wards under the charge of headmen who were responsible for collecting rent, keeping registers, and other administrative work.⁸⁴ 'Native' constables carried out police duties, without reference to the South African Police (SAP) or any other department. In 1918 these constables were attested to the SAP, and a white non-commissioned officer was placed in charge of the police station in order to impose discipline on them. However, the former arrangement whereby the superintendent and his staff carried out all administrative and police functions on behalf of the Native Affairs Department,

was soon reinstated. As the resident magistrate of Port Elizabeth exercised jurisdiction over the location, the system of dual control remained in force.⁸⁵

The location, to a large extent, bore the personal imprint of the superintendent. The Native Reserve Location Amendment Act of 1905 made provision for the establishment of an advisory board, which was instituted three years later. This, in the opinion of the Secretary for Native Affairs, 'would afford the people the satisfaction of being consulted to make for the smooth working of the location'.⁸⁶ The board consisted of four members elected annually by residents who qualified to vote if their rents were not in arrears, and two members appointed by the government.⁸⁷ Its monthly meetings were chaired by the location superintendent, who could convey its wishes to the officials of the Native Affairs Department. The board thus purportedly served as a link between the government and the residents of New Brighton, but (as its name implies) could only act in an advisory capacity and was virtually powerless.

The location was fenced off and people entering had to report their presence to the superintendent within 24 hours or face prosecution. In terms of Section 11(15) of the Native Reserve Location Act the Colonial governor was empowered to prescribe and regulate 'the issue of passes to natives entering or leaving any Native Reserve Location', and provide for 'the registration of all such natives'. Consequently, regulations were published in order to provide for the issuing of such passes and registration cards.⁸⁸

Residents of New Brighton had to carry their registration card which was to be produced on demand. It was fairly common for raids to be organized in the early hours of the morning in order to flush out illegal residents. Rents were to be paid in advance on a monthly basis and failure to do so could lead to eviction. It was a particular irony that the penalty for non-payment of rent was eviction from the very place in which the government was trying to force the Africans to reside.⁸⁹ However, there was no 'effective deterrent' to non-payments of rents until an amendment to the Native Reserve Location Act provided a means of punishing 'absconders'.⁹⁰ Thus, the supervision of New Brighton Location ensured an extraordinary degree of regimentation in the daily lives of the resident African population.

⁷⁸ G.19-1909 Cape of Good Hope, *Blue Book on Native Affairs for 1908*, p. 67.

⁷⁹ 3/PEZ 1/141: Secretary of Native Affairs — Town Council, 10.7.1909.

⁸⁰ Municipality of Port Elizabeth, *Mayor's minutes*, 1909, pp. 4 and 89, and *Mayor's minutes*, 1910, p. 58.

⁸¹ 3/PEZ 1/177: Report of Sanitary Inspector to Town Council, 28.7.1911.

⁸² A.J. Christopher, 'Roots of urban segregation: South Africa at Union, 1910', *Journal of Historical Geography* 14(2), 1988, pp. 165-167; also Christopher, 'Formal segregation and population distribution in Port Elizabeth', *Contree* 24, September 1988, p. 6.

⁸³ In accordance with Act 2 of 1918.

⁸⁴ U.G.10-1913 Union of South Africa, *Report of the Native Affairs Department for 1911*, p. 12; U.G.7-1919 Union of South Africa, *Report of the Department of Native Affairs for the years 1913 to 1918*, p. 17.

⁸⁵ CeA, NTS 178 1177/1914/f435: Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the System of Controlling the Police at New Brighton Reserve Location, Port Elizabeth, 9 and 10 December 1919.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, NTS 178 1703/348: (Memorandum) Secretary of Native Affairs — Prime Minister, March 1908.

⁸⁷ *Cape of Good Hope Government Gazette*, 31.7.1908 (Regulations for Native Advisory Boards as per Proclamation No. 297-1908).

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.4.1903 and 19.5.1905 (Proclamations 112 of 1903 and 159 of 1905).

⁸⁹ Swanson, 'Sanitation syndrome', p. 404.

⁹⁰ G.12-1905 Cape of Good Hope, *Blue Book on Native Affairs for 1904*, p. 70.

The sale of 'kaffir beer' was not allowed in the location, but its manufacture in limited quantities by rent-paying householders was permitted in terms of Section 16 of the Native Reserve Location Act. Permits which enabled the occupants of certain blocks ('wet areas') to manufacture eight gallons (36 litres) per day were issued on a rotational basis. Prohibition was applied in other blocks ('dry areas') according to the express wish of residents. These permits issued by the location superintendent were valid for six days of the week — from Monday morning until the following Saturday at midnight — which effectively outlawed consumption on Sundays.⁹¹ This system of domestic brewing was tolerated in order to counter the consumption and smuggling of 'European liquor' into the location. It was opposed by some of the church-going residents of New Brighton who favoured total prohibition, whilst the introduction of the 'Durban system', whereby that municipality financed its locations largely from the revenue it derived from the exercise of a monopoly in supplying 'kaffir beer' to the African population, was often raised in council chambers.⁹²

Whilst locations provided a ready source of cheap labour for urban areas, neither employers nor white ratepayers were called upon to subsidize their conditions of reproduction. In fact, it was the intention of the government that locations were supposed to pay their own way.⁹³ For this purpose, judicial fines and the lease (and even sale) of location lands supplemented the revenue derived from rents, the main source of income in New Brighton's 'native' revenue account. The revenue was to cover running costs such as staff salaries, provision of sanitation, water and medical supplies, the maintenance of huts and buildings and, in addition, the redemption of capital outlay, which amounted to £98 000 for the purchase of the site and the initial construction of dwellings. It would appear that the revenue derived from rents and judicial fines was considerably more than required to meet administration and maintenance costs of New Brighton Location, but that the repayment of capital was not substantially reduced during the period of central government control. Port Elizabeth was one of the few municipalities not to be indicted by the Housing Committee for subsidizing the rates of white rate-payers from the 'native' revenue account.⁹⁴ However, after the municipality assumed control of New Brighton Location and the land and buildings were transferred from the central government at no cost, the city council (since 1913) refused to write off the cumulative deficit of the 'native' revenue account against its general revenue account.

After Union, responsibility for the supervision of the Cape's 'native' reserve locations had passed to the central government. An amendment to the Native Reserve Location Act (No. 49 of 1918) made provision for the transfer of Ndabeni and New Brighton to municipal control. The local press accused the government of having abdicated its responsibility for the local African population and threw its weight behind the move for municipal control.⁹⁵

African opinion, on the other hand, was opposed to the incorporation of New Brighton into the municipality, presumably in the light of how the council had reneged on its promise to provide security of tenure in New Brighton. At a public meeting held in the location in April 1919, the residents expressed the following reservations about municipal control: it was thought likely that the council would raise rents; charge grazing fees for stock; charge for treatment and medicines at the dispensary and the hospital; abolish the Periodical Court; replace the 'native' police with white members of the SAP and devise new forms of taxation.⁹⁶ Although central government administration was itself

harsh, the African distrust of the local authority was even more deep-seated.

CONCLUSION

The closure of the 'Fingo Village' and the creation of the Native Strangers' Location in 1855 by the municipality marked the first attempt by the local state to control African residence in Port Elizabeth.

Until 1902, the Port Elizabeth municipality continued to regulate African settlement through the establishment of further municipal locations, but the establishment of private locations and the squatter problem suggests a failure in this regard. The establishment of the New Brighton Location under the supervision of the Cape Colonial government transferred responsibility for much of the African population to central government. This responsibility was assumed by the Union government until 1923, when New Brighton was transferred to municipal control. In the same year as the Natives (Urban Areas) Act delegated responsibility for the supervision of locations to local authorities nationwide, New Brighton was incorporated within the Port Elizabeth municipality.⁹⁷ Thus, the control of Port Elizabeth's African population had come full circle; it had changed from local to central, and back to local government.

In a number of important respects, Colonial government policy towards urban Africans was based on the regulation of municipal locations during the colonial period. The administration of New Brighton in Port Elizabeth (and Ndabeni in Cape Town) in terms of the Native Reserve Location Act, played an important role in both the systematization of urban 'native' supervision and its incorporation in the central government apparatus.⁹⁸ The inclusion of provisions such as, *inter alia*, separate 'native' revenue accounts and the creation of advisory boards in the Natives (Urban Areas) Act, illustrates the extent to which the administration of the 'native' reserve locations shaped urban 'native' policy after Union.⁹⁹

Nonetheless, Port Elizabeth was the last major centre to apply the provisions of this enabling legislation and only approved a set of regulations for New Brighton based on the Natives (Urban Areas) Act in 1923. Only then was the Port Elizabeth municipal council to bring itself into line with the uniform system of administration of urban Africans taking shape in South Africa. □

⁹¹ 3/PEZ 1/725: Report on manufacture of 'kaffir beer', New Brighton Location, by Location Superintendent, 26.5.1924.

⁹² Municipality of Port Elizabeth, *Mayor's minutes, 1913*, p. 25. For a description of this practice, see M.W. Swanson, ' "The Durban System": roots of urban apartheid in colonial Natal', *African Studies* 35, 1976, pp. 159-176.

⁹³ A.15-1903, p. 6.

⁹⁴ U.G.4-1920, p. 30.

⁹⁵ See, for example, *Eastern Province Herald*, 13.5.1920 (Editorial).

⁹⁶ CeA, NTS 157 97/1919/f348: Location Superintendent — Magistrate Port Elizabeth, 29.4.1919 and 1.6.1920.

⁹⁷ Proclamation No. 175 of 1.8.1923.

⁹⁸ T.R.H. Davenport, 'The beginnings of urban segregation in South Africa: the background to the 1923 Natives (Urban Areas) Act' (Occasional Paper, Institute of Social and Economic Research, Rhodes University, 1971).

⁹⁹ Kirk, 'African middle class and residential segregation', p. 194, identifies seven other similarities between the 1902 and 1923 legislation.