

Caledon and the Overberg : placid centre of a geographic microcosm?

J.E. Wilson

'Oatlands', Caledon

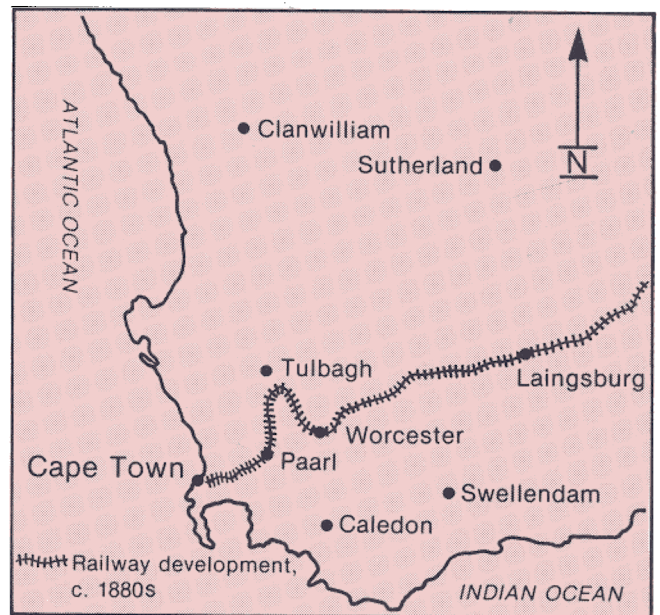
THE TRAVELLER James Backhouse, the Wesleyan missionary who took the *wagenweg* or 'great cattle road' from Cape Town to the interior (the Eastern Cape) in 1838, found Caledon to be a village with two or three rows of detached white houses with a centre of worship belonging to the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk (NGK).¹ If he were to return today, taking into account the passage of a century-and-a-half, Backhouse would have little trouble in recognizing the village that he visited in the 19th century. New buildings have replaced old, the thatch roofs have disappeared and there are now two centres of worship for the Nederduitse Gereformeerde congregation. But essentially Caledon remains a small country town with its rows of houses, no longer only white, and, ironically, with a centre of worship for the Anglican Church (whose congregation today is almost exclusively Coloured) in the centre of the limited Central Business District. Backhouse would not recall this church — it was completed in the 1850s following the visit of Bishop Robert Gray in 1848 who left a plan drawn by his wife Sophy for its construction.²

Apart from a brief spurt of rapid growth during the wool boom of the 1850s, Caledon showed none of the sustained and sometimes spectacular growth of some South African towns following the discovery of minerals. What was it that checked the growth of a town situated in one of the most stable and prosperous agricultural areas of the country? Could it not too have expected to show continuous growth and urbanization in its role as a collection point for the products of its district — grain, mutton and wool — for shipment to the centre of the country where rapid expansion occurred in the second-half of the 19th century?

This article traces Caledon's growth from its establishment in 1811 until about 1875 and attempts to explain why it has remained a small town. The implication is not that commercial progress is necessarily desirable nor that rapid urbanization should be lauded as a paradigm. On the contrary, the small town of a prosperous rural area offers a lifestyle which hopefully will not soon disappear in a world of increasing population growth and mounting pressures.

Caledon is situated about 110 kilometres to the east of Cape Town in the area known as the Overberg. Today the term 'Overberg' is generally accepted as referring to the districts of Caledon, Swellendam and Bredasdorp³ although formerly the term had a far wider connotation and in the early days of settlement at the Cape referred to an undefined area over the Hottentots Holland Mountains. On examination of a topographical map it will be seen that the delimitations of the area are largely physical, being the Hottentots Holland Mountains to the west, the Sonderend Mountains and the Langeberg to the north and the sea to the south. It is not quite so easy to understand why the eastern delimitation of the Overberg should today be considered as ending at the magisterial boundary of Swellendam. In the 19th century the Swellendam district extended eastwards to the Gourits River and included the present districts of Riversdale and Heidelberg. The latter two districts are not as favourably placed with regard to the rain-bringing north-west winds and as one progresses towards the Gourits River the annual rainfall becomes less and more erratic. Thus the possible explanation for the eastern boundary of the Overberg is the changing circumstances brought about by climatic differences. The area within these boundaries enjoys fairly uniform conditions: the climate is Mediterranean with a reliable winter rainfall and the absence of extreme temperatures while the rolling topography is well adapted for cultivation.

It is perfectly understandable why in the 19th century, and particularly in the pre-mineral era before 1867, the Over-



berg formed a geographic microcosm. The mountains to the west and north were formidable barriers to communication with other areas while the absence of safe ports prevented regular and large-scale contact with Cape Town and other ports. Port Beaufort did play an important role in the early economic development of the Overberg but it could not accommodate large ships and by 1864 was no longer listed as a port.⁴ Although the main route from Cape Town to the eastern districts passed through the Overberg and contributed to its early prosperity, the concentration of traffic was subsequently diverted to the northern interior as the economic centre of gravity shifted in this direction following the discovery of diamonds in 1867 and the Witwatersrand gold reef in 1886.

EARLY WHITE SETTLEMENT OF THE OVERBERG

The first free burgher to obtain grazing rights east of the Hottentots Holland Mountains in the Overberg was Ferdi-

NB: All archival references are to materials in the Cape Archives Depot.

¹ J. BACKHOUSE, *A narrative of a visit to the Mauritius and South Africa* (London, 1844), p. 93.

² R. GRAY, *Journal of a visitation through the Cape Colony, 1848* (London, 1853), p. 7.

³ A. ROTHMAN and J. WARNER, *Overberg* (Cape Town, 1983), p. 7.

⁴ E.H. BURROWS, *Overberg outspan : a chronicle of people and places in the south western districts of the Cape* (Cape Town, 1952), p. 253.

nand Appel who in 1708 obtained permission to depasture his cattle in the area. By this date the hot springs on the slopes of the Klein Swartberg (the mountain at the foot of which Caledon was established) were known to the authorities of the VOC (Dutch East India Company) at the Cape. It is difficult to establish exactly when their presence became known to the White settlers. But since the Bot River, which is about twenty kilometres from Caledon, is featured on a map dated 1662⁵ it is fairly safe to assume that contact with the indigenous races would have carried news of the springs to the Castle within a decade or two of this date. The first concrete reference to the springs is that made in 1707 by Jan Hartogh, a servant of the VOC who was sent into the interior to barter cattle.⁶ The beneficial effects of the water from the hot springs soon became known and when Ferdinand Appel was granted ten hectares in full ownership at the springs in March 1710, it was on condition that "he erect thereon a house for the accommodation of visitors to the Baths for health reasons and who could pay for their board".⁷

The earliest detailed account of anyone visiting the baths is found in the journal of Commissary Govert Cnoll, ex-commander for the VOC on the east coast of Java. According to the journal, Cnoll suffered from asthma and he was persuaded that a visit to the hot springs would be beneficial. On arriving at the springs in January 1710, he and his party met a group of five Europeans, all of whom had been "completely cured" of their bodily ailments which included stiffness of limbs, skin ulcerations, headaches, rheumy eyes and palsy in the legs. The party found numerous baths dug out in the various springs, some of which emitted water not much under boiling point. When the commissary first took to the springs the bystanders were amazed at "how strongly the water affected his Honour's body. He was barely in for as long as it takes to count 100, when a noise was heard in his chest, like the sound of a pot of stew or starch boiling on a fire". The group used the baths assiduously each day with great enjoyment and the commissary's ailment diminished daily.⁸

The springs were frequented throughout the 18th century, but very little development took place on and around the hot waters. There are numerous references by early travellers to the dilapidated nature of the buildings and the absence of civilized facilities and many visitors preferred to camp in tents or in wagons rather than use the rooms that were available. In an attempt to improve the facilities, the government offered a contract to Dr J.F. Hassner, a medical man from Breslau, Germany, who was at Paarl at the time. He consented to the construction of a sanatorium. *Caledon Hot Baths and Sanatorium erected in 1903. The buildings were totally destroyed by fire in 1946.*

PHOTOGRAPH: CALEDON MUSEUM

ted to the management of the springs and on 20 June 1805 was granted a piece of land on the Klein Swartberg, 50 hectares in extent. One of the conditions was that no one else would be allowed to use the water outside his property for baths.⁹

Although Hassner built a new bath house which is referred to by the traveller Henry Lichtenstein in the early 19th century,¹⁰ the accommodation remained unsatisfactory even though a full century had passed since the VOC's gardener Jan Hartogh's first mention of the springs. Despite their apparent renown and the miraculous cures which they were purported to effect, the springs were not to be fully developed into a flourishing resort and sanatorium until the end of the 19th century when, in 1897, a company was formed by the Walsh brothers.¹¹ The potential of the springs probably took so long to be exploited because the supply of water from the hot springs, although consistent, was limited. When the village was first surveyed in about 1810¹² seventeen plots were demarcated as this appeared to be the maximum number that could be adequately supplied with water from the hot springs and from a stream from the water gap in the Swartberg. Any proprietor of the baths had to ensure that he did not encroach on the water rights of the village. If the facilities at the baths were to be developed to cater for a large clientele, water would be required not only for the baths but for a vegetable garden and pasturage as well. A constant complaint of visitors to the baths was that they could not procure even the most basic requirements. It is also highly likely that, in a young colony with a sparse population, there was a fairly limited demand for the use of the springs and the number who frequented it was inadequate to justify elaborate extension.

It is evident that up to 1810 no spontaneous town development had issued from the presence of the curative waters.

⁵ *A short historical sketch of the Caledon Baths* (Published by the Directorate of the Caledon Baths, 1931), p. 4.

⁶ M. DU P. LE ROUX, *Ned. Geref. gemeente Caledon* (unpublished dissertation for the Licentiate in Theology, US, 1977), p. 3.

⁷ *Short historical sketch of the Caledon Baths*, p. 4; B. BOOYENS, *Bronwaters van genesing: die tradisionele warmbronwaterkuur in ons volksgeeneskunde* (Cape Town, 1981), p. 15.

⁸ See *Collectanea* (Van Riebeeck Society 5, Cape Town, 1924), pp. 79-90, for Commissary Cnoll's journal (especially pp. 86-87); *Short historical sketch of the Caledon Baths*, pp. 4-7.

⁹ 1/SWM 12/25 Inventory of Swellendam Archives, Diverse Documents: Contract, 20.6.1805.

¹⁰ H. LICHTENSTEIN, *Travels in southern Africa in the years 1803-1806*, I (Van Riebeeck Society 10, Cape Town, 1928), p. 176.

¹¹ *Short historical sketch of the Caledon Baths*, p. 13.

¹² 3/CAL 11/6 List of Archives of Magistrate Caledon, Water rights register: Survey diagram, c. 1810.



However, other factors were compounding which were to make the hot springs a desirable site for the nucleus of a new village. The British government, which had reoccupied the Cape in 1806, was eager to establish a more effective control over the inhabitants of a vast interior that was insufficiently supervised owing to the existence of only six drostdys (or administrative districts) for the whole of the Cape Colony. They were Cape Town, Stellenbosch, Swellendam, Graaff-Reinet, Tulbagh and Uitenhage. By the creation of new districts and subdistricts, the authorities hoped to improve their hold on what was an almost unrestricted population. They were equally keen to see the erection of churches and schools as it was believed that these tended towards gradual civilization.¹³

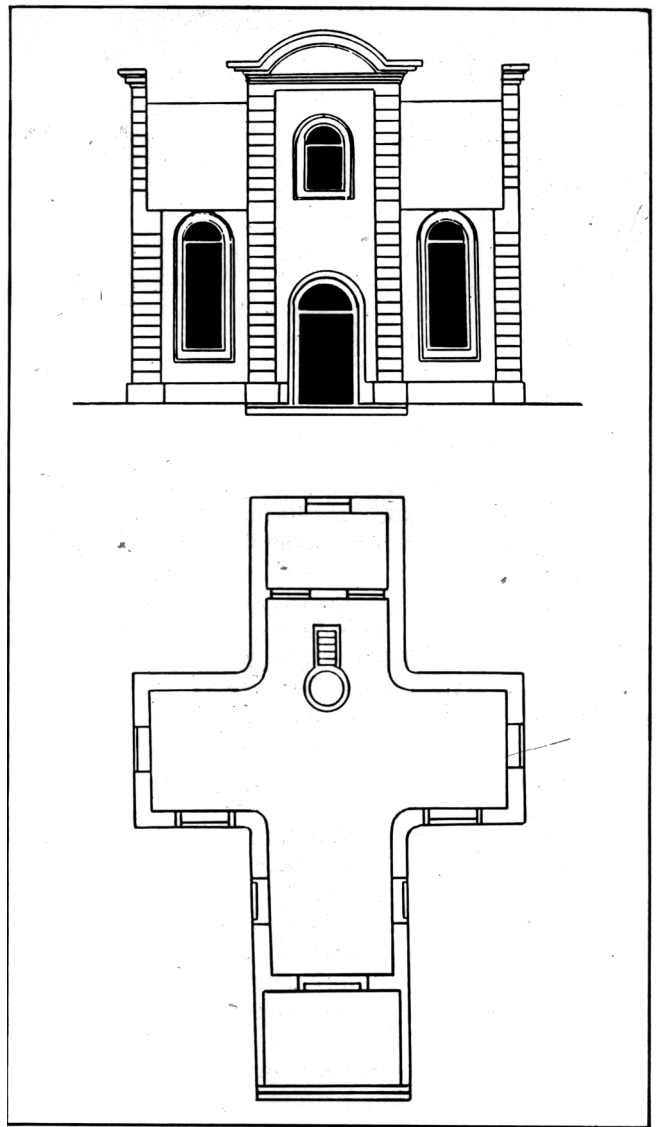
A CONGREGATION AND SUBDROSTDY AT KLEIN SWARTBERG

Although no settlement had arisen at the hot springs, White expansion in the Overberg was going on apace, so much so that by 1810 there was already a generation of Overbergers in the vicinity of the springs with farms being handed on from father to son.¹⁴ Klein Swartberg fell within the Stellenbosch district and the farmers of the area were compelled to undertake the hazardous journey over the Houhoek Pass and Hottentots Holland Mountains in order to attend church or to visit the landdrost at Stellenbosch. Many also attended church at Swellendam but an equally long trip was involved.

It is not surprising, therefore, that four farmers in the vicinity of the hot springs requested the governor for permission to build a church near the *warme bad*. The request of Wessel Wessels, Philipus de Bruyn, Johannes Marais and Hans Swart was made about five months after the decision of the government in March 1810 to create the subdrostdy of Klein Swartberg. It would appear from the dates that the decision to create a subdrostdy preceded the idea of building a church, but it could well be that informal approaches to government for a church were made before March and may have influenced the government in choosing Klein Swartberg as a prospective site for a subdrostdy. The farmers who had requested permission to erect a church were desirous of purchasing the farm *Warme Bad* belonging to P.J. Rademan which was adjacent to the hot springs. The Stellenbosch landdrost, R.J. van der Riet, who investigated the site, felt that it was very suitable, being central, fertile and well supplied with water.¹⁵

The inhabitants in the vicinity had made a small contribution towards their project, but the government agreed to purchase the farm for the erection of a church as it also fulfilled their requirements for the site of a subdrostdy. The price named by Rademan was 30 000 guilders, a price which was considered in excess of the value of the farm, the buildings being in a poor state of repair.¹⁶ But the authorities wished to accommodate the inhabitants and paid the price requested. The transfer was signed on 21 December 1810.¹⁷

Klein Swartberg was separated from the Stellenbosch district on 23 April 1811 and became a subdrostdy within the Swellendam district.¹⁸ Later it was announced that as from 31 December 1813 Klein Swartberg would be known as Caledon, the name being conferred by the governor, Sir John Cradock, in honour of his predecessor, the Earl of Caledon.¹⁹ The factors which had been operative in the formation of the nucleus of a new village had been threefold — the presence of curative hot springs (which were also a valuable source of water), a scattered rural population which had become sufficiently numerous to warrant its own church and a new government eager to bolster its administrative control and to promote the forces of civilization by providing schools and churches.



Plan of the first NGK building at Caledon (dated 1811) by H. Voorman.
PLAN: CAPE ARCHIVES DEPOT, CAPE TOWN

EARLY RESIDENTS

The first residents of a village created by government are necessarily the government functionaries — landdrost, clerk, minister, teacher and doctor. A hundred years spent in civilized paucity had not promoted literacy among the local inhabitants and thus government had to look elsewhere for its officials. The first deputy-landdrost for Klein Swartberg was Jan Hendrik Frouenfelder, a Hollander who had been in the service of the VOC and who had been vendue-master at Swellendam prior to his appointment to the new subdrostdy. He was assisted in his duties by a clerk, the first of whom

¹³ G.M. THEAL (ed.), *Records of the Cape Colony, VIII* (London, 1901), p. 298.

¹⁴ E.J. PRINS, *Aspekte van die geskiedenis van die westelike Overberg in die agtiende en vroeë negentiende eeue* (M.A., Unisa, 1979), pp. 29-30.

¹⁵ CO 2570 Letters received from Drostdys Stellenbosch and Swellendam: R.J. van der Riet — C.C. Bird, 25.8.1810.

¹⁶ E.J. PRINS, *Die kulturele en ekonomiese ontwikkeling van die westelike Overberg in die agtiende en vroeë negentiende eeue* (D.Litt et Phil., Unisa, 1983), p. 45.

¹⁷ 1/STB 10/157 Letters received by Landdrost and Heemraden, Stellenbosch: C.C. Bird — R.J. van der Riet, 21.12.1810.

¹⁸ G.M. THEAL (ed.), *Records of the Cape Colony, X* (London, 1902), p. 402.

¹⁹ *Cape of Good Hope Government Gazette*, 31.12.1813.

was his son-in-law, Georg Christiaan Bergman. In 1812 he became the first public notary for Klein Swartberg and thus obviated the necessity for the inhabitants of making the long trip to Swellendam for the drawing up of contracts.²⁰

As there was a doctor at the hot springs, it was not necessary to appoint another, but J.F. Hassner now also became the district surgeon. His duties were extended to the supervision of the lepers at the leper colony in the Hemel-en-Aarde valley about 35 kilometres from Caledon. In 1813 the various landdrosts had been instructed to provide accommodation for leper patients. The farm of Mrs Sarah Niemand, whose family had all contracted leprosy, was considered a suitable site for the location of a leper colony for the Swellendam district. At first the farm was hired from Mrs Niemand but in December 1819 it was decided that the farm should be purchased by the government and made a permanent home for the lepers.²¹ By 1820 there were about 120 inmates, most of whom were Khoi. Lepers of all races were admitted but the admission of Whites was a rare exception. A supervisor was appointed and the district surgeon from Caledon was expected to visit the patients every two weeks.²²

The Rev. M.C. Vos was the first minister of the NGK for Klein Swartberg. George Theal describes him as one of the most zealous workers for the good of Whites and Blacks alike.²³ Vos was a dynamic supporter of the missionary effort at a time when men of the church still only had a vague conception of their duty to spread the gospel to all human beings.²⁴

Vos preached his first sermon in a converted wine-cellar on P.J. Rademan's farm Warme Bad on which occasion 102 wagons surrounded the provisional church. A new church, in the form of a cross, and built by M.W. Theunissen, was consecrated on New Year's Day 1813. His avant-garde ideas were, however, not universally acceptable and he had left the Swartland for Klein Swartberg owing to fierce opposition to his teachings. He was warmly received by his new congregation who had not evinced any opposition to his appointment. The absence of antagonism to missionary work is possibly explained by the exposure of the Overbergers to the constructive work of the Moravian missionaries at Genadendal with whom Vos was on friendly terms.²⁵



Caledon's first NGK, completed in 1813.

PHOTOGRAPH: CALEDON MUSEUM

Vos served the congregation at the hot springs until 1818 when he retired to Tulbagh. His successor, the Rev. George Thom, a former member of the London Missionary Society, continued the missionary work of Vos, but his baptism of slaves without the consent of the owner caused opposition, which was the probable cause of Thom's departure from Caledon in 1825.²⁶

The first teachers for Klein Swartberg were the *kosters* (or church clerks), who also fulfilled an educational role. Sir John Cradock had established the church clerk schools, hoping to link education to the church as it had been prior

to the Batavian occupation (1803-1806) because of the high regard in which the church was held.²⁷ There is no indication where the first *kosters* came from, but there is nothing to suggest that they were locals. P. Maas, the first incumbent, made an unfavourable impression both because of neglect of duty and because his sheep and goats were allowed to roam freely and were a nuisance to the village. His successor, J.C. van Graan, was more conscientious and by 1816 had built up a school of sixteen pupils, amongst whom were a number of slaves. This school subsequently catered only for slave children (nine in 1824)²⁸ and ultimately became known as the Hollandse Slawe Skool. White children, from 1823, were able to attend the English Free School established in Caledon by Lord Charles Somerset's government. The first teacher of this school was Robert Blair, a Scottish Calvinist, enlisted by George Thom.²⁹

Apart from the handful of functionaries, the only other homeowners in Caledon for a number of years were farmers who erected town houses for their visits to church on Sundays. At the inception of the village, most of the seventeen erven that had been surveyed followed Mill Street or the old *wagenweg* to Swellendam. These plots received their water supply from the hot springs, the supply being adequate only for a limited number of residents. The balance of the plots were laid out in Church Street which ran at right angles to the *wagenweg* and which housed the minister, the *koster* and *voorlezer*, the deputy-landdrost and later, the doctor. (See diagram.) These plots were supplied with water from the water gap in the Swartberg which was an important supplement to the village supply. A lack of abundant water was to be a continual problem³⁰ and became critical with the sudden village expansion of the 1850s.

TOWN GROWTH

Prior to 1838, the year when Backhouse visited the village, growth had been very slow. In the first eleven years (1811-1822) the number of resident families could not have exceeded about fourteen. The slow increase in the town's population can partly be attributed to the absence of those natural conditions which promote intensive agriculture on small-holdings and which support a denser population than the

²⁰ 1/CAL 9 List of Archives of Magistrate Caledon : J.H. Frouenfelder — P.S. Buissonne, 21.12.1812.

²¹ CO 2617 Letters received from Drostdy Swellendam : V.A. Schönberg — Colonial Secretary, 27.9.1819.

²² For information on the leper colony which was moved to Robben Island in 1845-1846 see E.H. BURROWS, *A history of medicine in South Africa up to the end of the nineteenth century* (Cape Town, 1958).

²³ G.M. THEAL, *History of South Africa since 1795, V* (Cape Town, 1964), p. 317.

²⁴ F.N. DU PLESSIS (ed.), *Merkwaardig verhaal (aangaande het leven en de lotgevallen van Michiel Christiaan Vos* (Cape Town, 1911), editor's note, n.p.

²⁵ G.B.A. GERDENER, *Reguit koers gehou : die wording, wese en werking van die N.G. Kerk se sendingbeleid* (Cape Town and Pretoria, 1951), p. 18.

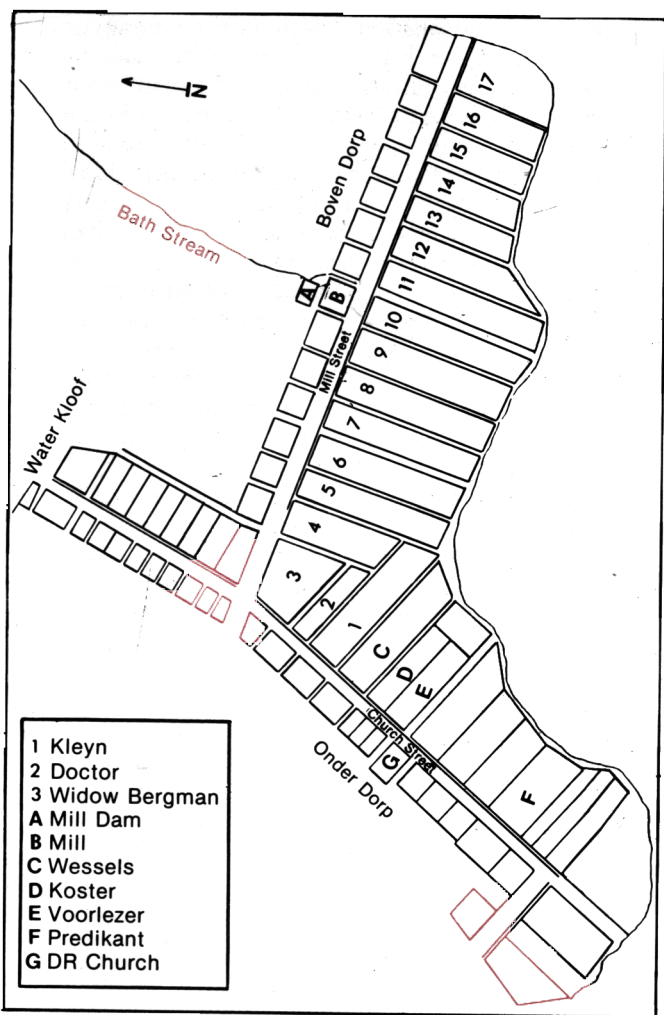
²⁶ CO 2666 Letters received from Drostdy Swellendam : J. Theunissen — Church Board, 28.4.1825.

²⁷ E.G. MALHERBE, *Education in South Africa (1652-1922), I* (Cape Town and Johannesburg, 1925), p. 81.

²⁸ CCP 1/2/3/2/1 Cape Colony Publications : Report of Commissioners on education, 1863, Appendix V, p. 45.

²⁹ CO 2648 Letters received from Drostdy Swellendam : V.A. Schönberg — Colonial Secretary, 9.1.1823 and 25.1.1823.

³⁰ CO 2590 Letters received from Drostdy Swellendam : P.S. Buissonne — Colonial Secretary, 22.9.1814; 1/SWM 11/38 Inventory of Swellendam Archives, Letters received from Adjunct Landdrost Caledon : W.C. van Rynveld — V.A. Schönberg, 31.3.1820.



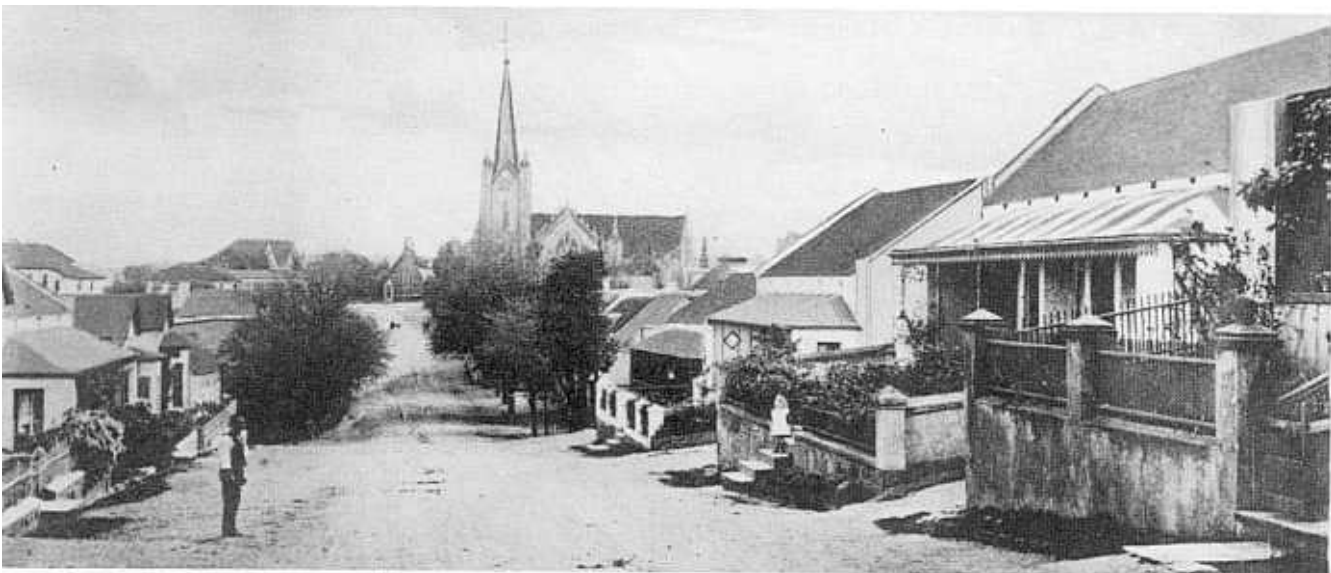
Plan of Caledon, c. 1823, showing the original seventeen erven.
PLAN: CAPE ARCHIVES DEPOT, CAPE TOWN

grain and stock farming of the Overberg. Water was not plentiful and even by 1814 it had become clear that a lack of this essential commodity would restrict the growth of the village.

By 1840 the number of householders was 39, an increase of about 25 in eighteen years. Who were the newcomers? In the list of ratepayers it can be seen that there were only

Mill Street, Caledon, early 20th century.

PHOTOGRAPH: CALEDON MUSEUM



about five English names. Four of these non-Dutch personages were officials and one was a baker — thus the growth was almost entirely the result of natural increase and not because of an influx of immigrants from Britain. From the diary of the justice of the peace, J.S. Needham (1832-1839),³¹ one learns that the village had a few canteen owners, a saddlemaker, a harnessmaker, a carpenter, a baker and some residents who took on building. There was also a blacksmith, a coppersmith, a shoemaker and a tailor named Slammat, which indicates that Coloureds were finding employment in the village. Shops in the modern sense were few. The only record of one in these years is an agency of the Barry firm which was based in Swellendam. By 1840 the village was still no more than a church and administrative centre providing essential services for a limited clientele.

Although Caledon gained only three resident householders between 1840 and 1850, this decade began to see important changes which were to affect the village status and to convert it into a small, but decidedly commercial centre. In 1838 a new and safe pass over the Hottentots Holland Mountains was completed,³² greatly facilitating communication with Cape Town. In 1840 a village management board was formed.³³ Even more important was the creation of a local market. Prior to 1840 the village had not provided an organized outlet for the produce of the farmers and Caledon appears to have carried on very little business with its surrounding district. But changes were taking place at different and interactive levels. The marked improvement in the economic situation of the Cape Colony, which was chiefly due to increased wool exports, was making available larger amounts of merchant capital. This, in turn, drew subsistence farmers into the capitalist system. After 1840 the growing demand for colonial wool in Britain led to a phenomenal increase in Cape wool exports, from £1 000 in 1830, to £286 000 in 1850 and more than £2 million in 1866.³⁴

Caledon, in the middle of a stable sheep-farming area

³¹ 1/CAL 21 List of Archives of Magistrate Caledon : Diary of Justice of the Peace Caledon, 1832-1839.

³² E.E. MOSSOP, *Old Cape highways* (Cape Town, 1941), pp. 57 and 69.

³³ 3/CAL 1 List of Archives of Magistrate Caledon : Minutes of Board meeting, 6.9.1840, p. 15.

³⁴ S. DUBOW, *Land labour and merchant capital in the pre-industrial rural economy of the Cape : the experience of the Graaff-Reinet district (1852-1872)* (Centre for African Studies, UCT, 1982), p. 3; C.G.W. SCHUMANN, *Structural changes and business cycles in South Africa* (London, 1938), p. 47.

which was rapidly replacing its Afrikander sheep with the wool-bearing Merino, was about to expand rapidly. The first evidence of a wool agent in the village was found in October 1845. J.S. Needham, the justice of the peace, was "prepared to make advances on wool or other produce consigned to their friends in London and Liverpool".³⁵

The increasing prosperity is clearly indicated by the growth of the village. In the ten years between 1850 and 1860 the number of ratepayers had very nearly doubled with an increase of 39 householders (from 42 to 81). Growth tapered off after 1860 with an increase of only 20 in the fifteen years up to 1875.³⁶ Necessity is ever the mother of invention and the water problem was overcome to some extent by the construction of a reservoir in 1857 which received the flow from the water gap.³⁷

Before examining the reasons for the decline after 1880, a look at the composition of the White population is interesting. With increasing immigration from Britain one would expect to see English names forming a fair percentage on the ratepayers list. Bishop Robert Gray who passed through the district in 1848 recorded in his journal that he had found many English people in the district;³⁸ yet by 1850 the English element in the village amounted to a mere 11,6% of the total. Between 1850 and 1860 the village had doubled in size and still English names only represented about 16,6%. Even by 1884 the Dutch preponderated by 75% to 25%.³⁹ Natural increase of the Dutch population was thus chiefly responsible for the increase in numbers. Offspring of farmers, whom most travellers of the time agree were numerous, were evidently finding employment in the village.

The wool boom of the 1850s had brought unprecedented prosperity to the Colony, but the first warning that this golden era was at an end was a drought in the early 1860s. This was followed by a severe worldwide recession and in some parts of South Africa adversity reached crisis proportions in 1866.⁴⁰ Under these conditions it is easy to understand the declining growth rate of Caledon.

However, by 1870 the economy had recovered substantially and a report indicates to what extent the economy of the village had diversified. In July that year Caledon had 3 churches, 2 ministers, 5 schools, 5 teachers, 3 doctors, 3 enrolled agents, 1 bank, 2 money-lenders, 1 brass band, 6 hotels and boarding houses, 4 auctioneers, 13 shopkeepers, 5 bakers, 5 butchers, 4 carpenters, 5 waggonmakers, 4 shoemakers, 4 smiths, 5 masons, 6 tailors, 3 saddlemakers, 2 watchmakers, 1 gunsmith, 3 painters, 3 hairdressers, 2 gunpowder dealers, 12 photographers, 4 canteens, 2 bottlestores, 2 confectioners, 2 passenger carts, 4 livery stable keepers, 6 *karwyers* (carriers) and last but not least, 2 undertakers.⁴¹

Having traced Caledon's growth into the mineral era, it now remains to compare its growth with other towns in the Cape Colony which appear to have benefited more directly from the discoveries of diamonds and gold. Examination of the map (p. 21) will show just how isolated Caledon and the Overberg remained once Cape Town and the Eastern Cape ports had been linked with the diamond and gold fields by railways. The effect that this had on the growth of Caledon (and other Overberg towns such as Swellendam) can be seen when its population figures are compared with those of Grahamstown and Worcester, both towns that had the advantage of being on a direct rail route between the main ports of Port Elizabeth and Cape Town and the interior. In 1904 Grahamstown (established in 1812, a year after Caledon) had a population of 13 887 and Worcester's figure for the same year was 7 885. Swellendam stood at a mere 2 406 and Caledon at 3 508.⁴²

The mountains which cut off the Overberg from the rail-links with the interior, until the turn of the century perpetuated its relative isolation from the new hub of South Africa. Even when rail-links were completed, the Overberg continued to be very much 'out on a limb' regarding the important commercial routes, and this had the effect of curtailing urban growth. Furthermore, agriculturally the area was rapidly reaching optimum population and production levels (until 20th century technology became available) and thus Caledon and its neighbouring towns could not expect to grow as a result of stock and crop expansion. By about 1863 land in the Overberg was fully settled and the average size of farms had diminished from the 3 000 morgen (2 580 hectares) of the loan farm to 1 835 morgen (1 578 hectares).⁴³

The number of woolled sheep which had risen sharply from 187 268 in 1850 to 359 313 in 1865, had by 1875 levelled off at 384 655.⁴⁴ Wool production was in fact still on the increase but this would have been a result of improved stock and methods and not because of an increase in sheep numbers. Wheat production was also increasing, but not spectacularly and the figures do not indicate a sharp rise despite a rapidly expanding market in the interior. In 1850 the Caledon area produced 82 284 bushels of wheat, in 1865 the figure was 103 725 and in 1875 it rose to 111 429 bushels.⁴⁵

CONCLUSION

The town of Caledon, which is arguably the main one in the Overberg, owed its growth in the 19th century mainly to the expansion of wool production. The increased capital made available by wool sales would have enabled farmers to extend their grain production, and slowly, farming in the Overberg became more intensive. But because of distance from the markets of the interior and because the area was isolated from the main communication routes from the coast to the mineral fields, the Overberg was unable to compete successfully with other towns which were more favourably placed. Furthermore, it appears that by 1875 the area was reaching its optimum farming population for a non-scientific era and further town growth was likely to be commensurate with developments and intensification in the agricultural sphere. □

³⁵ *Cape of Good Hope Government Gazette*, 31.10.1845.

³⁶ 3/CAL 1 : Minutes of Village Management Board, 1840-1860; 3/CAL 3 : Minutes of Village Management Board, 1861-1875 (List of ratepayers).

³⁷ 3/CAL 1 : Minutes of Village Management Board, 1.1.1857.

³⁸ GRAY, *Journal of visitation through Cape Colony*, p. 6.

³⁹ Figures calculated from ratepayers lists (see note 36 above).

⁴⁰ J.A. HENRY, *The first hundred years of the Standard Bank* (London, 1963), p. 17; G.T. AMPHLETT, *History of the Standard Bank of South Africa Ltd.* (Glasgow, 1914), p. 26.

⁴¹ *Cape Mercantile Advertiser*, 18.7.1870.

⁴² See A.S. MABIN, *The making of colonial capitalism : intensification and expansion in the economic geography of the Cape Colony, South Africa, 1854-1899* (Ph.D., Simon Fraser University, Canada, 1984).

⁴³ LBD 21-26 Swellendam Land Reports, 1817-1863 : Request for conversion of loan farms to quitrent.

⁴⁴ Information from Blue Books of the Cape of Good Hope for 1850 (p. 450), 1865 (pp. EE 2-3), and 1875 (pp. EE 2-3).

⁴⁵ See Blue Books of the Cape of Good Hope for 1850 (p. 454), 1865 (pp. BB 2-3), and 1875 (pp. BB 2-3).