

THE ESTABLISHMENT AND GROWTH OF EMPANGENI

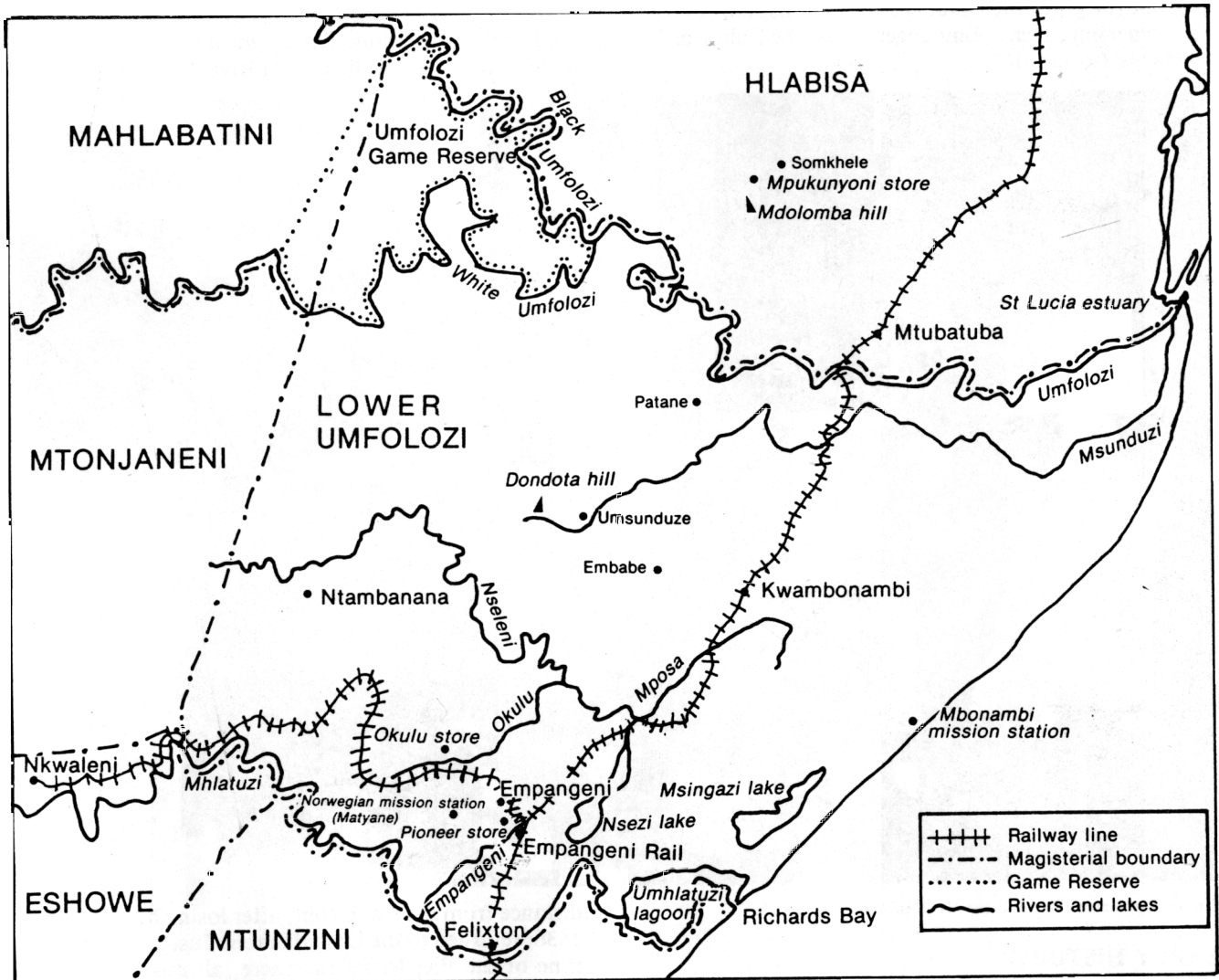
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ORIGIN OF NAME

Extensive research has been done to ascertain the origin of the name *Empangeni*, but it is difficult if not impossible to come to a conclusion. A complicating factor is that the history of the Nguni people has been passed down from generation to generation by word of mouth without a written record and hence the correct origin and translation are difficult to establish.

The name *Empangeni* was already in use by the time the first Whites arrived in the area. It referred mainly to a small tributary stream of the Umhlatuzi River. Old Zulus of the area are adamant that the Empangeni Rail area is Empangeni proper and that the name was derived from a nearby stream infested with crocodiles which used to grab (*panga*) unwary water-bearers or travellers; then too *panga* means to rob or plunder, and the Empangeni was a fast-flowing stream subject to frequent flooding that caused damage to crops along its alluvial banks, and it became known as the robber or the plundering river.¹



Map of Lower Umfolozi District.

DRAWN BY LYNETTE HEARNE

Another derivation was from *phanga* (to conceal), as the area, being an attractive and fertile place, concealed illness, there being much malarial fever about.² Another name was *the place of plunder* or *the place of thieves* as the impis, on their way back from a raid with stolen cattle, used to gather there to divide the spoils.³

It has also been known as *the place of important people* (because Shaka had his royal kraal Bulawayo halfway between Empangeni and Eshowe, while both

Mpande and Cetshwayo had their royal kraals in the vicinity of the present town⁴); or as *the place of confiscation* (because the Zulu king Mpande held court there to settle disputes and invariably one or both of

1. Private collection of A. Bozas, Empangeni (BPC), correspondence: H.C. Lugg — A. Bozas, n.d.
2. Natal Archives, Pietermaritzburg (NA), EPI 3/1/1 Historical register book of Empangeni, p. 38.
3. J.C.B. Mattinson, Empangeni, 14.4.1983.
4. A. BOZAS, *Empangeni: the origin of its street names* (Empangeni, 1970), p. viii.

the litigants would be fined several head of cattle).⁵ Another derivation could be from the Emmangweni or Mpangisweni military kraals which were established near the present-day town.⁶

Some called it *the place of begging* from the Zulu word *phanza* (to beg for food in time of famine). It is said that food was always plentiful in the fertile area near Empangeni and in times of drought or famine Zulus travelling through the area would beg for food.⁷ One other derivation is that it took its name from the mpange trees (*Olinia radiata*) which grow along the banks and at the source of the Empangeni.⁸

However, the most common explanation is that the Empangeni River flowed through a rich grazing area and that every summer the herdboys came down with their cattle, and because of the rivalry either between the cattle owners or the cattle themselves they had to peg out (or grab) their plots to prevent disputes as to the ownership. Hence Empangeni from the Zulu word *empanga* (to grab).⁹

1818 the Empangeni area had become part of Greater Zululand.¹⁰

Not far from present-day Empangeni Shaka established his royal kraal, Bulawayo, on a hilltop overlooking the Umhlatuzi River. It was here that he was visited in 1824 by F.G. Farewell and H.F. Fynn.¹¹ Dingane's successor, Mpande, built his royal kraal, Mangweni, on the farm (lot 197) later owned by R.F. Logan. Near this kraal was the deep crocodile-infested pool (*tagaan*) on the Okulu River, into which those of the Zulu king's subjects who had displeased him were thrown after having had their shoulder blades broken.¹²

Missionaries

The first White man to settle in the Empangeni district was Aldin Grout of the American Mission Society. He arrived in Natal about 1835 to help the Rev. G. Champion at the mission station, Ginani, located thirteen to sixteen kilometres north of the Tugela River and about the same



*The tagaan (crocodile pool) on the Okulu River.**

EARLY HISTORY

Zulu

The area is rich in history regarding the Zulu but so little was recorded that it is difficult to obtain anything that can be corroborated by the written word. The early history is shrouded in mystery but the area was definitely populated by the Nguni long before the coming of the White man to Natal. In pre-Shaka times the area was occupied by the Mthethwa. This clan, under their chief Dingiswayo, started the consolidation process of the Natal Nguni peoples which was completed by Shaka. By

distance from the sea. Grout, after losing his wife in early 1836, returned to the United States. Just after this, at the time of the Piet Retief massacre, all missionaries were withdrawn from Zululand. After hostilities had ceased

5. BPC, correspondence re origin of name.
6. BOZAS, *op. cit.*, p. viii.
7. BPC, correspondence re origin of name.
8. C.M. DOKE and B.W. VILIKAZI, *Zulu-English dictionary* (Johannesburg, 1958), p. 510; A. Bozas, Empangeni, 13.4.1983.
9. A. Bozas, Empangeni, 13.4.1983; BPC, correspondence re origin of name; J.W. ROBERTSON, *Traveller's guide for South Africa* (East London, 1945), p. 234; P.J. NIENABER, *Suid-Afrikaanse pleknaam-woordeboek* (Cape Town, 1963), p. 213; T.V. BULPIN, *Natal and the Zulu country* (Cape Town, 1969), p. 119; H.C. LUGG, *Life under a Zulu shield* (Pietermaritzburg, 1975) p. 94.
10. E.A. RITTER, *Shaka Zulu: the rise of the Zulu empire* (London, 1968), pp. 1-53; BULPIN, *op. cit.*, pp. and 8-10.
11. BULPIN, *op. cit.*, pp. 28-31.
12. A. Bozas, Empangeni, 13.4.1983; BOZAS, *op. cit.*, p. viii.

*All photographs from the Senator A. Bozas Collection, Empangeni.

Grout, having returned from America with a new wife and unwilling to give up the idea of working in Zulu country, sought an interview with Mpande and was able to obtain permission to recommence operations in Zululand. With the Boers' consent Grout crossed the Tugela in May 1841 and proceeded to the Empangeni, an eastern branch of the Umhlatuzi River, and commenced operations there. He called his station Inkanyezi (star). The country around was thickly inhabited, there being no fewer than 37 kraals or villages in the vicinity.¹³

For a time the affairs of the station seemed to prosper. On Sundays a crowd of 200-300 collected at the mission and the day school was well attended. At length, however, the king became aware that some of the people who lived even at a distance from the station were looking upon it as a place of refuge and were fleeing to it to escape his displeasure. He began to think that those living near the station were forgetting their allegiance to him. Both the missionary and the people around the mission station had, for some time, been aware that they were not in the king's favour. This led them to shun the royal presence; this only served to exasperate the king and to widen the breach between him and his subjects still further. Accordingly on 25 July 1842, a little more than a year after the station was commenced, the king sent a military force to punish these subjects. An attack was made upon half of the kraals closest to the mission station, three of which the king doomed to utter destruction. In accordance with Zulu custom this attack was sudden and at early dawn. Though no violence was done to the missionary Grout and his family, he thought it no longer safe to remain. He accordingly left the place at once and eventually set up a mission station at Groutville in Natal.¹⁴

After this attack on Grout, Mpande would not allow any missionary to preach the gospel north of the Tugela. But around 1850 Mpande fell sick — reputedly with gout — and when the witchdoctors failed to heal him one of his subjects, Mkhonto Ntuli, recommended the Rev. H.P.S. Schreuder of the Norwegian Mission Society at Mapumulo who, Ntuli said, had lots of medicine bottles. The Rev. Schreuder was sent for and was able to ease Mpande's pain. Mpande, realizing the benefits of White medicines, decided to give Schreuder a place near by so that whenever he needed him, he would be within easy reach. Mpande offered him a place called Matyane on the banks of the Empangeni in the present Reserve No. 7B. It was here that in May 1851 Schreuder, with the Rev. T. Udland, started a school.¹⁵ This was the first mission station in Zululand since Grout's ill-fated attempt ten years previously.

Eight years passed before Schreuder baptised his first convert and during these years he was kept busy building, making and carving furniture, studying the language and customs of the Zulu, and preaching. On 25 September 1859 a number of Zulus were baptised at the Empangeni mission station among whom were Mkhonto Ntuli's two sons.¹⁶

Schreuder and Udland remained at Empangeni till 1854 when the Rev. O.C. Oftebro arrived to take over. Schreuder moved to Entumeni where he had already started building a church, while Udland moved to Mapumulo.¹⁷ A son of the Rev. Oftebro, M.E. Oftebro, was born at Empangeni in 1856 and was reputed to be the first White child to be born in Zululand. The Rev. Oftebro was succeeded by the Rev. L. Larsen.¹⁸

In about 1862 Daniel Nielsen, a builder, arrived with his wife and three daughters to build a permanent church at Empangeni. Life was not easy for these first White

pioneers. They lived in primitive houses and bartered goods for cattle and sheep to provide milk and meat, as provisions were only sent up once a year from Durban. The mortality was high; Nielsen lost two of his daughters, one from croup, one from malaria and a later infant to dysentery. The Rev. J.O. Kielland, who arrived in 1863 and stayed till 1874, lost a daughter.¹⁹

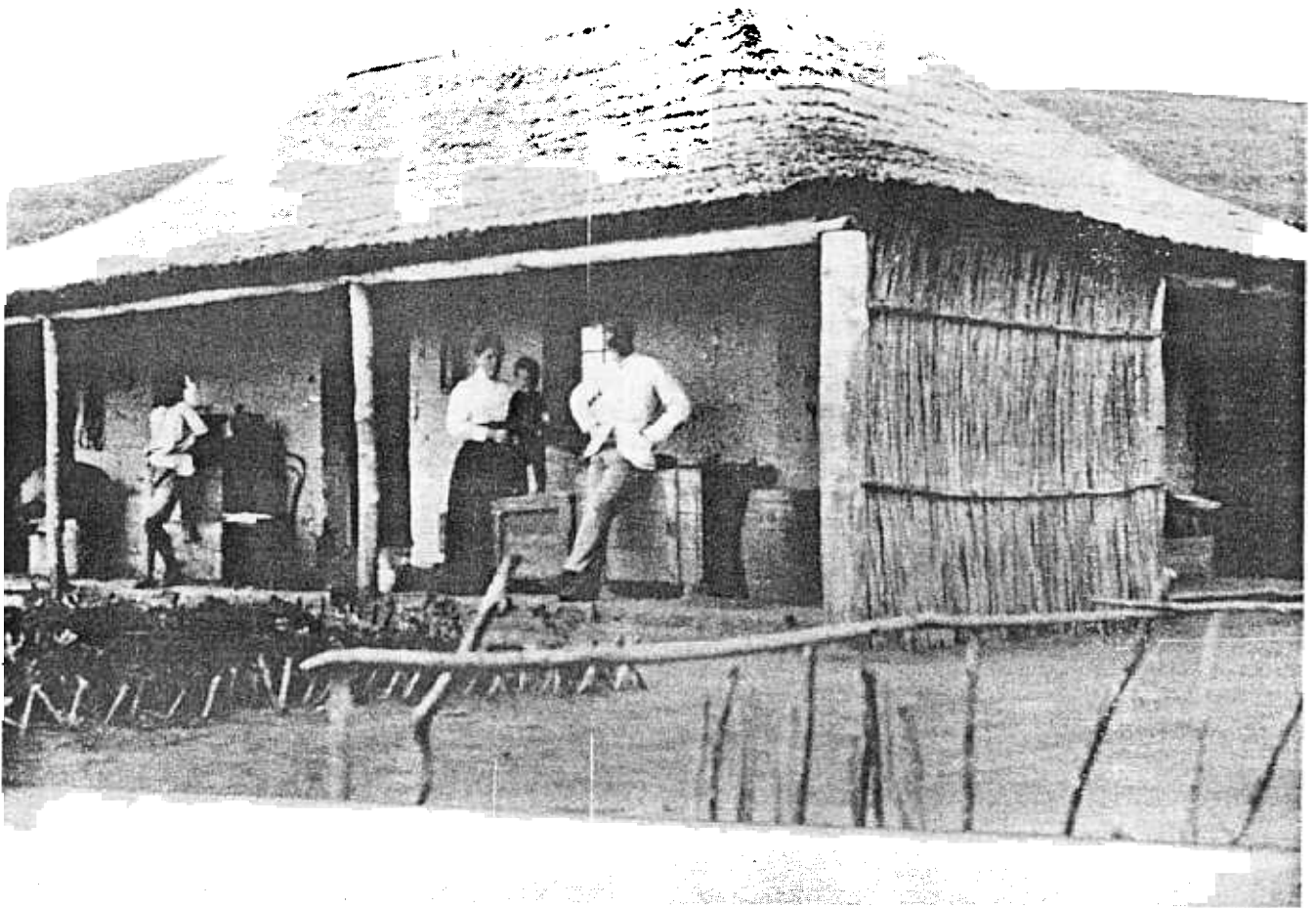
The church at Empangeni was dedicated by Bishop Schreuder in 1870. During the Zulu War of 1879 this church was destroyed along with the whole of the mission station. In 1880 the Rev. M. Dahle, who had succeeded Kielland in 1874, decided to look for a healthier spot for a mission station. He was given a spot five kilometres east of the present-day plot 880 in Ngwelezana township — the original site — by Chief Lokothwayo. In 1886 the Rev. O.S. Norgaard arrived and built the manse and present day church which was completed in 1893, the year in which the first Zulu minister, the Rev. Simon Ndlela, was ordained at Empangeni. It was also in this church that the marriage of the first White couple to be married in Zululand (G.W. Higgs and Ragna Henriksen) took place in 1903.²⁰

THE MAGISTRACY

In 1887 the magisterial district of the Lower Umfolozi was established by proclamation No. 1 of 1887.²¹ On 25 June 1887 A.J. Shepstone formally accepted appointment as the first magistrate.²² The site chosen for the residency was on the Embabe (bitter) River.²³

One of the first acts of the new magistrate was to grant Frank Green, who had a store at Ngoye in the Eshowe district, a licence to build a trading store near the residency.²⁴ Green commenced building his store about three kilometres from the residency on 29 August 1887. The only other store in the district was one at the lower drift of the Umfolozi River started by E.W.B. Knight in the early 1880s. There was also a store further north run

13. E.W. SMITH, *The life and times of Daniel Lindley 1801-1880* (London, 1949), pp. 219-221; L. GROUT, *Zululand: or life among the Zulu kafirs of Natal and Zululand* (London, 1970), pp. 210-211; C.P. GROVES, *The planting of Christianity in Africa II, 1840-1878* (London, 1964), pp. 138-145; W. IRELAND, *Historical sketch of the Zulu mission in South Africa* (Boston, c. 1865), p. 68.
14. E.W. SMITH, *The life and times of Daniel Lindley 1801-80* (London, 1949), pp. 219-221; L. GROUT, *Zululand: or life among the Zulu kafirs of Natal and Zululand* (London, 1970), pp. 210-211; C.P. GROVES, *The planting of Christianity in Africa II, 1840-1878* (London, 1964), pp. 138-145; W. IRELAND, *Historical sketch of the Zulu mission in South Africa* (Boston, c. 1865), p. 68.
15. NA, EPI 3/1/1 . . . , p. 9; *Incwadi yejubilee: Norwegian Mission Society 1844-1944* (commemorative brochure, n.p., n.d.) pp. 8-16; J.E. CARLYLE, *South Africa and its mission fields* (London, 1878), p. 250; E.H. BROOKES and C. de B. WEBB, *A history of Natal* (Pietermaritzburg, 1967), p. 101; H.C. LUGG, *Historic Natal and Zululand* (Pietermaritzburg, 1949), pp. 90-92; BULPIN, *op. cit.*, p. 119.
16. *Incwadi yejubilee* . . . , pp. 8-16.
17. *Ibid.*
18. BPC, correspondence: O.C. Oftebro — A. Bozas, 29.5.1961.
19. *Zululand Times*, 26.7.1962; 2.8.1962, 9.8.1962.
20. NA, EPI 5/1/9 Magisterial records of the Lower Umfolozi district, correspondence and minutes 1892-1894; 2324/1894; *Incwadi yejubilee* . . . , pp. 8-16; BPC, correspondence: N.M. Follesoe (superintendent, Norwegian Mission Society) — A. Bozas, 10.8.1961; *Zululand Times*, 23.10.1969; BOZAS, *op. cit.*, p. 11.
21. NA, EPI 3/1/1 . . . , p. 34.
22. NA, EPI 5/1/1 Magisterial records of the Lower Umfolozi district, letter book 1887-1888, p. 1.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
24. NA, EPI 5/1/8 Magisterial records of the Lower Umfolozi district, correspondence and minutes 1887-1891: 1/1887.



The second magistrate's residency built in March 1896.

by W.F. White at Mdolomba in the Umpukunyoni district near Somkhele. H. Sjöthun was the first trader to establish a store named Empangeni. He was granted a licence on 5 September 1887, to establish one near the Empangeni on the hill to the south of the main wagon road, sixteen to nineteen kilometres from the lower Umhlatuzi Drift and slightly north-east of the Empangeni mission station.²⁵

Shepstone handed over on 27 February 1888 to a new magistrate, A.L. Pretorius, who set up a temporary residency on the Okulu River, while searching for a healthier spot than Embabe.²⁶ He eventually decided on a hill called Dondota near the source of the Umsunduze River and moved there on 9 April 1888.²⁷ It was here that he was attacked by the Usuthu followers of Dinuzulu on 30 June 1888. With the aid of a detachment (40 men) of the Zululand Police (Nonquai) under Sub-inspector J. Marshall he repulsed them with light casualties but found himself surrounded by an estimated 2 000 armed men.²⁸ He was eventually relieved on 9 July 1888 by a flying column— from Eshowe commanded by Maj. A.C. McKean.²⁹

Pretorius was replaced by C.H. Tye on 1 November 1888³⁰ and two new traders also moved into the district. On 9 July 1889 J. Hoogvorst was given permission to erect a store on the Okulu River ten kilometres from the Umhlatuzi Drift,³¹ while T.M. Loftheim was granted a licence for a store near the Empangeni mission station on 24 February 1890.³²

When the new magistrate, A. Boast, arrived in September 1889, he made a trip to the Mbonambi Norwegian mission station looking for a healthier spot for a permanent residency. In May 1890 fever decimated the Zululand police detachment at the Umsunduze residency. Conse-

quently Boast suggested Mbonambi as a possible site but nothing came of this. On 28 July 1890 Boast was given permission to try out a site at Patane that was only ten kilometres from the old Embabe site to which spot he moved in January 1891.³³ But the site at Patane was no healthier than any of the previous sites and in January 1894 the resident magistrate, Thomas Maxwell, who had taken over in May 1892,³⁴ moved to a site (which is the present-day Empangeni) on the hills approximately 1,75 kilometres slightly north-east of the Empangeni mission station at Matyane.³⁵

T.M. Loftheim, who had previously opened a second store near the Mbonambi mission station in February 1891,³⁶ was quick to apply to move this Mbonambi store closer to the new residency. He was granted permission on 26 January 1894 and called his new venture the Pioneer Store.³⁷ By 1894 there were eight stores in the district; White's at Umsunduze (Dondota), Hoogvorst's at Okula, Loftheim's at Empangeni mission station (Matyane) and at the residency (moved from Mbonambi January 1894), Green's at Umfolozi Drift, Embabe and Umhlatuzi Drift,

25. NA, EPI 5/1/1 . . . , p. 42; EPI 5/1/8 . . . : 11/1887.

26. NA, EPI 5/1/1 . . . , p. 125.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 136.

28. *Ibid.*, pp. 160-161.

29. GREAT BRITAIN, Parliamentary papers, *Further correspondence respecting the affairs of Zululand and adjacent territories* (C.5522-1888, p. 94, and C.5892-1890 pp. 5-9).

30. NA, EPI 5/1/2 Magisterial records of the Lower Umfolozi district, letter book 1888-1892, p. 87.

31. NA, EPI 5/1/8 . . . , 30.7.1889.

32. *Ibid.*: 35/1890.

33. NA, EPI 5/1/2 . . . , pp. 194 and 200; 3/1/1 . . . , p. 34.

34. NA, EPI 3/1/1 . . . , p. 36.

35. NA, EPI 5/1/9 Magisterial records of the Lower Umfolozi district, correspondence and minutes 1892-1894: 215/1894.

36. NA, EPI 5/1/8 . . . , 13.2.1891.

37. NA, EPI 5/1/9 . . . : 215/1894.



The old Empangeni court house.

and H. Ash's between Mbonambi mission station and the Umhlatuzi River mouth.³⁸

In the years up to the Second Anglo-Boer War the magistrates were chiefly concerned with policing the local tribes and the prevention of illegal hunting. On 1 June 1895 the post of special constable/game conservator was created, and the first person appointed to this post was Sigurd Sivertson in July 1895. He was based at Patane and held the post until 13 May 1896 when he was replaced by W.E. Pettie.³⁹

In August 1899 C.C. Foxon took over as magistrate from Maxwell⁴⁰ who in turn was succeeded in November 1901 by A.R.R. Turnbull.⁴¹ At the end of the Anglo-Boer War the people of Natal began to demand the opening up of Zululand to White settlers. So in October 1902 L.M. Altern, the government surveyor, started work in the district on the Delimitation Commission's survey.⁴² At the same time, on 2 July 1903, the Lower Umfolozi magistracy was formally named Empangeni. Turnbull had requested the name change to avoid the confusion that had arisen with the magistracy's mail going on to the Lower Umfolozi railway station in the Hlabisa district.⁴³ This railway line to the Somkhele coalfields had reached Empangeni (53 Mile Station) on 16 January 1903.⁴⁴ The area through which this railway ran had, at that time, no planters or White settlers, beyond a few adventurous traders and travellers, and the missionaries. The census taken on 14 April 1904 found a total of 43 Whites (32 males and eleven females) in the Lower Umfolozi district.⁴⁵ But this was soon to change with the opening of the Zululand coastal lands to settlers.

THE SETTLERS

On 18 October 1904 the final report of the Zululand Delimitation Commission came out and was accepted by the Natal Parliament on 7 June 1905. It reserved 1 573 047 hectares of Zululand for the use of Black tribes while throwing open 1 057 466 hectares for White settle-

ment.⁴⁶ It was decided, when opening the coastal lands to White cane-growers, that the large company estate should be discouraged with the land rather being made available in comparatively small farms.⁴⁷

The surveys of the coastal lands were supervised by L.M. Altern, the government surveyor for the area. The 1905 survey of the Umhlatuzi lands was done by Percy Stott who, in February 1907, took lot 149 as payment of his survey fees, while Augustus Hammar did part of the 1909 and 1910 surveys of the Empangeni lands, taking lot 182 as payment.⁴⁸

The applicants for government land had to be in possession of £500. The government helped these early settlers by providing steam ploughs, cattle dips, and fencing. Terms of repayment were spread over many years on condition that the farmers planted mostly cane and sent it to the local mill.⁴⁹

The first allotment of lands in the coastal belt took place in November 1905 to approximately 50 settlers. These lots stretched from the Mandini River near the

38. *Ibid.*: EPI 545/1983.

39. NA, EPI 5/1/10 Magisterial records of the Lower Umfolozi district, correspondence and minutes 1895-1896, 1.7.1895: 937/1896.

40. NA, EPI 3/1/1 . . . , p. 40.

41. *Ibid.*, p. 41.

42. NA, EPI 5/1/14 Magisterial records of the Lower Umfolozi district, correspondence and minutes 1902-1903: 662/1903.

43. *Ibid.*: 1023/1903.

44. BPC, historical file; A.H. TATLOW, *Natal province: descriptive guide and official yearbook* (Durban, 1911), p. 538.

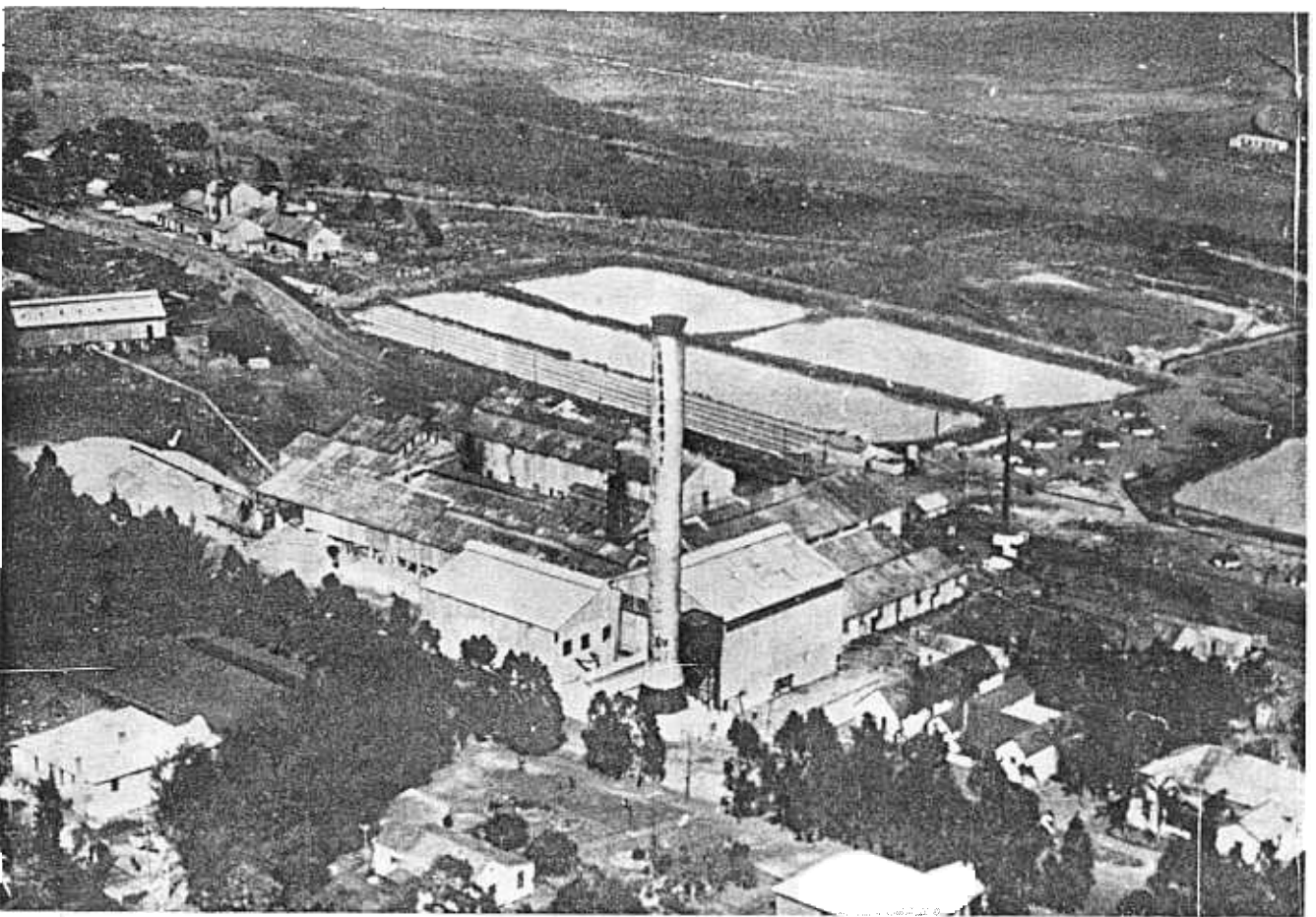
45. NA, EPI 5/1/15 Magisterial records of the Lower Umfolozi district, correspondence and minutes 1904; EPI 5/1/7 . . . , letter book 1905, p. 497.

46. NA, EPI 3/1/1 . . . , p. 43; S. MARKS, *Reluctant rebellion: the 1906-8 disturbances in Natal* (Oxford, 1970), p. 127.

47. T.J.D. FAIR, *The distribution of population in Natal: Natal regional survey III* (Cape Town, 1955), p. 20.

48. NA, EPI 5/1/22 Magisterial records of the Lower Umfolozi district, correspondence and minutes 1911: 1070/1911; Natal Deeds office, Pietermaritzburg, Government volume 465, p. 17; D. Clarke, La Lucia, 20.7.1983.

49. *Zululand Times*, 3.1.1957.



The Empangeni sugar mill.

Tugela River to the Umhlatuzi River. Only C.B. Addison was given a lot (no. 122) north of the Umhlatuzi, but in the next allotment in March 1908 he was joined by G.W. Higgs and T.C. Sturrock, these three being the first to grow sugar cane commercially north of the Umhlatuzi River.⁵⁰ For these first settlers serious handicaps appeared in the forms of locusts (1904-1908), an outbreak of East Coast fever among their cattle, nagana, the ever-present threat of malaria, and the Zulu disturbances (Bambata Rebellion) of 1906.

During these disturbances Green's store at the Umhlatuzi Drift was burnt down on the night of 3 December 1905,⁵¹ and Loftheim's Pioneer Store was broken into on 24 December 1905.⁵² Many of the new settlers and their families laagered at the house of G.W. Higgs on his farm Greenlawn (lot 121).⁵³

To make the area further inland more suitable for stock farming and to clear the district of the scourge of nagana, the magistrates of Entonjaneni (Melmoth) and Empangeni organised the first large game drive for this purpose

An early settler house on the Umhlatuzi flats c.1908.



in Zululand. It was held on 17 June 1907 and endeavoured to drive all game away from the main wagon roads.⁵⁴

Prospective settlers urged that more land in the district be allotted. Accordingly during September and October 1907 G.W. Higgs guided members of the Natal Land Board through the area so that they could inspect the land from the Umhlatuzi to the Umfolozi River.⁵⁵ This land was surveyed by L.M. Altern during January 1909,⁵⁶ while the coastal Survey from the Umhlatuzi lagoon to the St. Lucia light house was done by A. Hammar during May and June 1910.⁵⁷

During September 1909 the so-called Empangeni lands were allotted (lots 171-207). In 1910 and 1911 78 sugar farms were allotted up the Okulu River towards the Enseleni, making a total of 127 sugar farms in the Empangeni district plus another 30 lots on the south side of the Umfolozi River. Twenty agricultural and stock farms were laid off in the Ntambanana Valley while there were another 27 awaiting allotment at Kwambonambi. These allotments provided the bulk of the settlers and besides individual allotments the next big allotment was only after the First World War for returning soldiers in

50. NA, EPI 5/1/16 Magisterial records of the Lower Umfolozi, correspondence and minutes 1905: 524/1905; EPI 5/1/17 . . . , correspondence and minutes 1906-1907: 339/1906; Bozas, *op. cit.*, pp. 1 and 11.

51. NA, EPI 5/1/16 . . . : 722/1905.

52. *Ibid.*: 769/1905.

53. D. Clark, La Lucia, 20.7.1983.

54. NA, EPI 5/1/17 . . . : 494/1907.

55. *Ibid.*: 651/1907.

56. NA, EPI 5/1/20 Magisterial records of the Lower Umfolozi district, correspondence and minutes 1909: 111/1909.

57. *Ibid.*

the Ntambanana and Nkwaleni valleys. The 1911 allotments pushed up the estimated population on 31 December 1911 to 300 Whites of which 85 qualified as parliamentary voters. The area under sugar cane at the end of 1911 in the Lower Umfolozi district was 2 482 hectares.⁵⁸

To serve these new cane lands three mills were established in the area. In 1905 when the Natal government had proposed to open up Zululand, they had called for tenders for the erection of sugar mills, the sole purpose of which was to crush for concession holders who were to be paid for their cane by mass delivered. Sir Liege Hulett's tender was accepted on 9 August 1905 and his company erected a sugar mill at Amatikulu in 1908 and one at Felixton in 1911.⁵⁹ The Umhlatuzi mill (Felixton) went into operation at the start of the cane-cutting season in 1912.⁶⁰ When the Empangeni lands were opened up in 1909 and added to in 1911, the need for a second mill in the district became obvious. By the end of 1912 36 422 hectares had been opened up along the coast north of Empangeni and the contract for the sugar-crushing concession in these lands was given to George Armstrong who built the Empangeni mill in 1911.⁶¹

Crushing operations first commenced in August 1913⁶⁵ with an initial output of 1 768 tons of sugar. The following year the output increased to 3 753 tons. By 1916 there were 2 932 hectares under sugar cane in the concession, producing 7 427 tons of sugar. By 1918 this had increased to 9 829 hectares and by 1930 to 45 840 hectares.⁶⁶ In 1926 the concession for the Empangeni area was increased from the original 12 000 tons to 18 000 tons while in actual fact the mill produced 22 585 tons of sugar.⁶⁷

To cater for all the growth and settlement in the district the area round the magisterial residency expanded and developed into a trading centre.

THE VILLAGE

On 19 June 1906 Empangeni village officially came into being.⁶⁸ At that stage it comprised a residency, magistrate's court buildings, a police camp and goal, one store

The first station building at Empangeni Rail.



There is no doubt that the Empangeni mill was responsible for the real growth of Empangeni into the centre of the Zululand sugar industry.⁶² In their agreement with Armstrong the government had ruled that the mill would be a concession mill and had to take all the cane grown on the 11 073 hectares of land within the Empangeni concession lands. A limit of 12 000 tons of sugar was put on the mill capacity. Armstrong, together with his son Athol, E.W. Hawksworth, A.A. Smith, and Sir Thomas Hyslop formed the Zululand Sugar Milling Company Limited (ZSM).⁶³ On 15 August 1911 the ZSM company signed an agreement with A. and W. Smith Company of Glasgow, Great Britain, to build all the machinery and plant for a sugar factory. The equipment was to be ready for shipment from Glasgow before 11 February 1912. The agreed price for the machinery and plant was £28 767.⁶⁴

58. NA, EPI 5/1/21 Magisterial records of the Lower Umfolozi district, correspondence and minutes 1910: 1121/1911.

59. *Zululand Times*, 27.1.1921; R.F. OSBORN, *Valiant harvest: the founding of the South African sugar industry, 1848-1926* (Durban, 1964), pp. 194-195; BULPIN, *op. cit.*, p. 268.

60. *Zululand Times*, 23.2.1912.

61. *Ibid.*, 4.4.1913.

62. BULPIN, *op. cit.*, p. 268.

63. *Zululand Times*, 3.1.1957; OSBORN, *op. cit.*, p. 200.

64. BPC, Memo of agreement between G. Armstrong and A. and W. Smith, 11.8.1911.

65. *Zululand Times*, 13.3.1914.

66. N. HURWITZ, *Agriculture in Natal 1860-1950: Natal regional survey XII* (Cape Town, 1957), p. 47.

67. *Zululand Times*, 23.6.1927; 3.1.1957.

68. NA, EPI 3/1/1 . . . , p. 44.

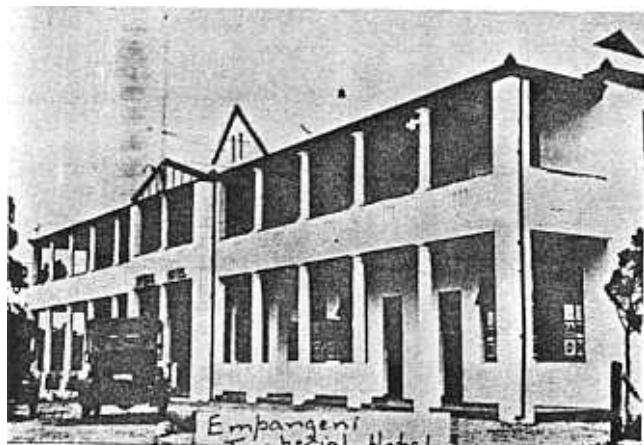


Tennis party in front of Royal Hotel, 31 December 1910.

(Loftheim's), and a handful of wood-and-iron houses. Approximately 4,5 kilometres away was the 53 mile station siding, later to be known as Empangeni Rail. Here there was a wood-and-iron station building and goods shed, a stationmaster's house and a platelayer's cottage.⁶⁹

Up to 1910 travellers were put up at Loftheim's Pioneer Store,⁷⁰ but on 14 February 1911 S.M. Salvesen and A.E. Larsen were granted a country hotel and bottle store licence for their new Royal Hotel.⁷¹ By 31 December 1910 there were 178 Whites in the Lower Umfolozi district, of which 52 were parliamentary voters, and by 31 December 1911 the population had increased to 300 Whites, 85 qualifying as parliamentary voters.⁷² This population growth was catered for by Loftheim's Limited building a new store, for White trade only, in December 1911 on lot 9, facing Maxwell Street.⁷³

The Imperial Hotel, 1925.



On 21 December 1911 a branch of the Natal Bank opened in a little office on the verandah of this new store⁷⁴ with J.W. Andrew as the first manager.⁷⁵ Other developments were the establishment of a postal agency at Loftheim's store on 1 July 1912, while the trunk telephone service came to the village in December 1912. A public library was started by the people of the district on 29 July 1912.⁷⁶ A pharmaceutical chemist's shop was opened by F. White who made out the first prescription on 31 July 1913 to a Mrs Borgen for three shillings.⁷⁷

One other development of importance to the village was the building of a public hall. On 1 April 1916 lot 13 in Turnbull Street, 0,8 hectares in size, was bought for £20 by the trustees of the Empangeni Public Hall Association (S.M. Salvesen, R.F. Logan and C.A.W. Young). This association had been set up in 1913 and planning and fund-raising had been going on for a number of years. Building was started in May and the hall was officially opened on 9 September 1916.⁷⁸

69. A. Bozas, Empangeni, 13.4.1983.

70. TATLOW, *op. cit.*, p. 280.

71. NA, EPI 5/1/21 . . . : 982/1910.

72. *Ibid.*: 1121/1911.

73. *Ibid.*: 1105/1911.

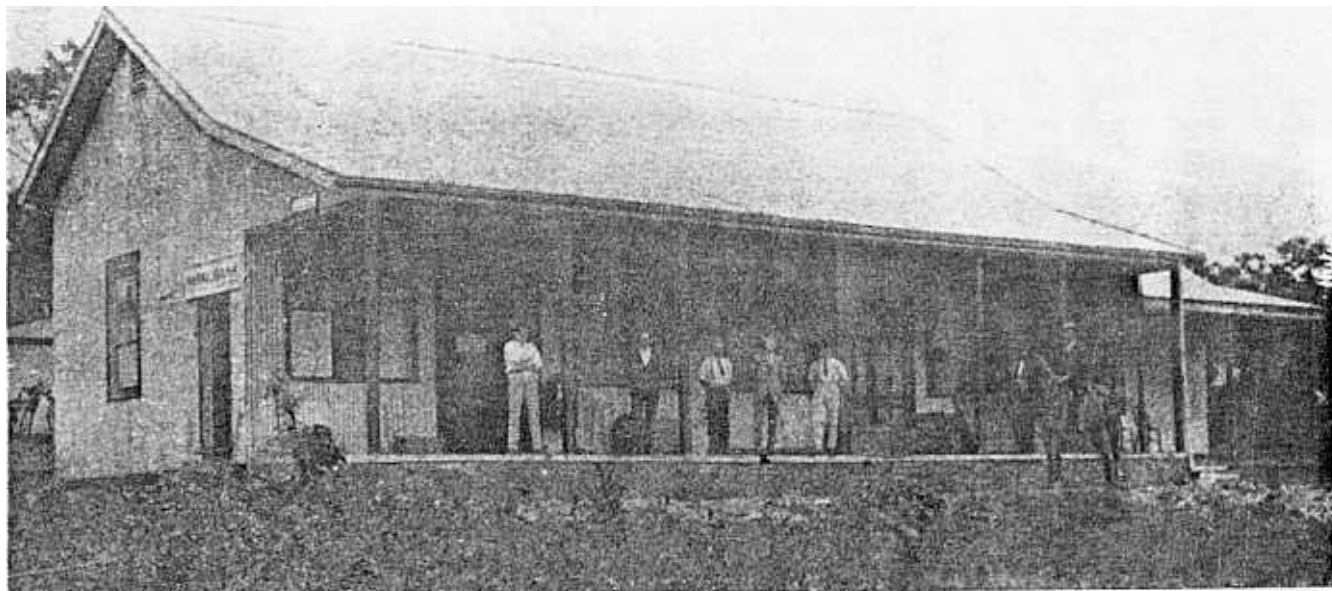
74. NA, EPI 3/1/1 . . . , p. 46.

75. Human Sciences Research Council, Pretoria N/5/7/1 General correspondence: Barclays Bank museum — A. Minnaar, 29.7.1983.

76. NA, EPI 3/1/1 . . . , p. 47.

77. D. Clark, La Lucia, 20.7.1983; Edwards Pharmacy, Empangeni, original prescription book, p. 1.

78. NA, EPI 3/1/1 . . . , p. 51; EPI 7/2/7/1 Records of the Town Board of Empangeni, correspondence and minutes: File 12/4/1.



Loftheim's Pioneer Store for Whites, 1912, with the Natal Bank on the left of the verandah.

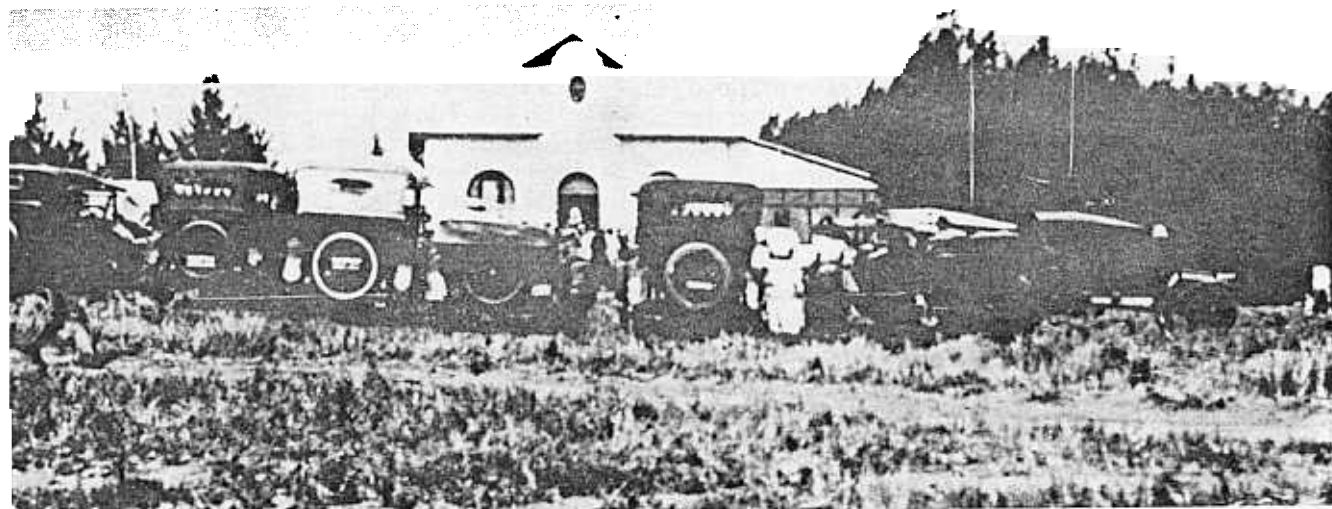
On 13 July 1917 the village and town lands came under the public health regulations.⁷⁹ A Village Advisory Board was formed on 24 October 1919. The first members of this board were Dr G.K. Moberly (chairman), S.S. Salter, C.C. Mack, J. Snelgrove, S.M. Salvesen, and R.G. Roberts.⁸⁰ The 1920s saw the growth of the village into a bustling town. In 1921 the White population of the village stood at 153 and ten years later, in 1931, had reached 674.⁸¹

The post office as a government institution had been started in Empangeni on 2 March 1918 with a Mr Smith

to fifteen.⁸⁵ At the beginning of 1928 the provincial authorities felt that the time had arrived for Empangeni to take charge of its local affairs.

Accordingly the magistrate, Col. R.M. Tanner, published a notice calling for another public meeting of Empangeni residents to give them the opportunity to express their views on the question.⁸⁶

A complicating factor was that there were basically three separate communities, namely those in the village proper, the Rail, and the Mill areas. The Rail, some four kilometres from the village, consisted mainly of houses occupied by railway employees together with some general stores. The Mill area contained the Indian compound and houses for mill employees grouped around the mill, while the village proper had developed as the business centre since it was on higher ground away from the



The Town Hall built in 1916.

as the first postmaster.⁸² Construction of a new brick post office was started in December 1919 and opened on 12 April 1920,⁸³ while a telephone exchange was installed in October 1921.⁸⁴

All these developments gave the district a real community feeling and among some of the residents a move was started to set up a local authority. On 29 October 1925 a public meeting was held to decide whether or not Empangeni should come under the Township Act. The motion to become a township was defeated by 45 votes

79. NA, EPI 3/1/1 . . . , p. 53.

80. BPC, historical file.

81. Borough offices, Empangeni (BOE), Town Board records: Chairman's minutes, 30.6.1934, p. 4.

82. NA, EPI 3/1/1 . . . , p. 55.

83. *Ibid.*, pp. 59-60.

84. *Ibid.*, p. 63.

85. *Ibid.*, p. 70.

86. NA, EPI 3/1/1 . . . , p. 75; *Zululand Times*, 1.4.1928.



The brick post-office built in 1920.

malarial swampy area and marshland between it and the Rail area.⁸⁷

The village had developed on a grid plan based on the parallel Union, Maxwell and Turnbull streets on level land opening onto the Town Square (on which is sited the existing municipal office complex). Besides the square there were numerous open spaces, such as the golf course, soccer ground, general sports ground and cricket field, bowling green and tennis courts. There was no public swimming bath at that time. The erven varied in size from 0,1 hectares to 2,8 hectares, the average size being 0,4 hectares. The streets were earth and gravel, none being macadamised; there was no kerbing or channelling but the streets had earth gutters on each side to carry off flood water. The Provincial Roads Department looked after the main roads in the area and had placed a few culverts but the streets themselves were in a state of disrepair.⁸⁸

The Railway Administration had initially refused to allow the Empangeni Rail area to be included in the village for local board purposes. At a public meeting held on 24 February 1928, by a vote of 56 against and 33 for the local residents decided to carry on as in the past. Both the *for* and *against* admitted that a local board was necessary but what kept the opposition strong was the belief that not sufficient revenue could be raised to run the local board successfully without the burden falling too heavily upon the few who owned property of appreciable value. However, some of the opposers indicated that if the Rail area was included in the local board area then the financial aspect would be so improved that local board status would be acceptable to them.⁸⁹

In February 1930 the provincial secretary, A.E. Charter, visited Empangeni to conduct a round table conference with the residents concerning their opposition to local board status. One of the demands of the residents was the inclusion of the Rail area. However, there was still considerable opposition to the formation of a local board and a second demand was raised that the Mill and surrounding property should also be included in the local

board area.⁹⁰ But irrespective of this opposition the provincial secretary published a notice defining the township boundaries. Besides land reserved for government use and purposes the following were also exempted from the general rate: the sugar mill lands, lot 171A on which the distillery stood, the land upon which the cotton ginnery (lot 18, Empangeni Rail) and the creamery (lot 2, Empangeni Rail) were erected, and any land being used for agricultural purposes.⁹¹ The area under the jurisdiction of the new Town Board was 1 055 hectares: Mill — 17,4 hectares; Rail — 21,4 hectares; Village — 503 hectares; and Farms 513 hectares.⁹²

On 9 May 1931 the first local board elections took place with the magistrate, Oxley Oxland, as the returning officer. There were fourteen candidates for the seven places and a total of 492 votes were cast (village 252; Rail 142; Mill 98). The following were elected: W.H. Crawford (outside manager of ZSM), 193 votes; W.L. Brandon (stationmaster), 193; H.M. Grenham (proprietor of the station buffet), 188; J.H.G. Royston (engineer and draughtsman at the Empangeni mill), 183; Dr G.K. Moberly (hospital superintendent and district surgeon), 141; E.T. Mullins (for many years the secretary of the Land Board but at that time the secretary of the Zululand Co-operative Agricultural Association), 106; W.A. Dunne (general manager of Loftheims), 97. The unsuccessful candidates were: F.H. Bull with 66 votes; E.T. Salberg, 55; G.E. Hands, 48; L.J. Byrne, 46; P. Berman, 37; F.C. Hill, 37.⁹³

87. NA, EPI 4/1/1 Records of the Town Board of Empangeni, correspondence and minutes: File 521.

88. *Ibid.*

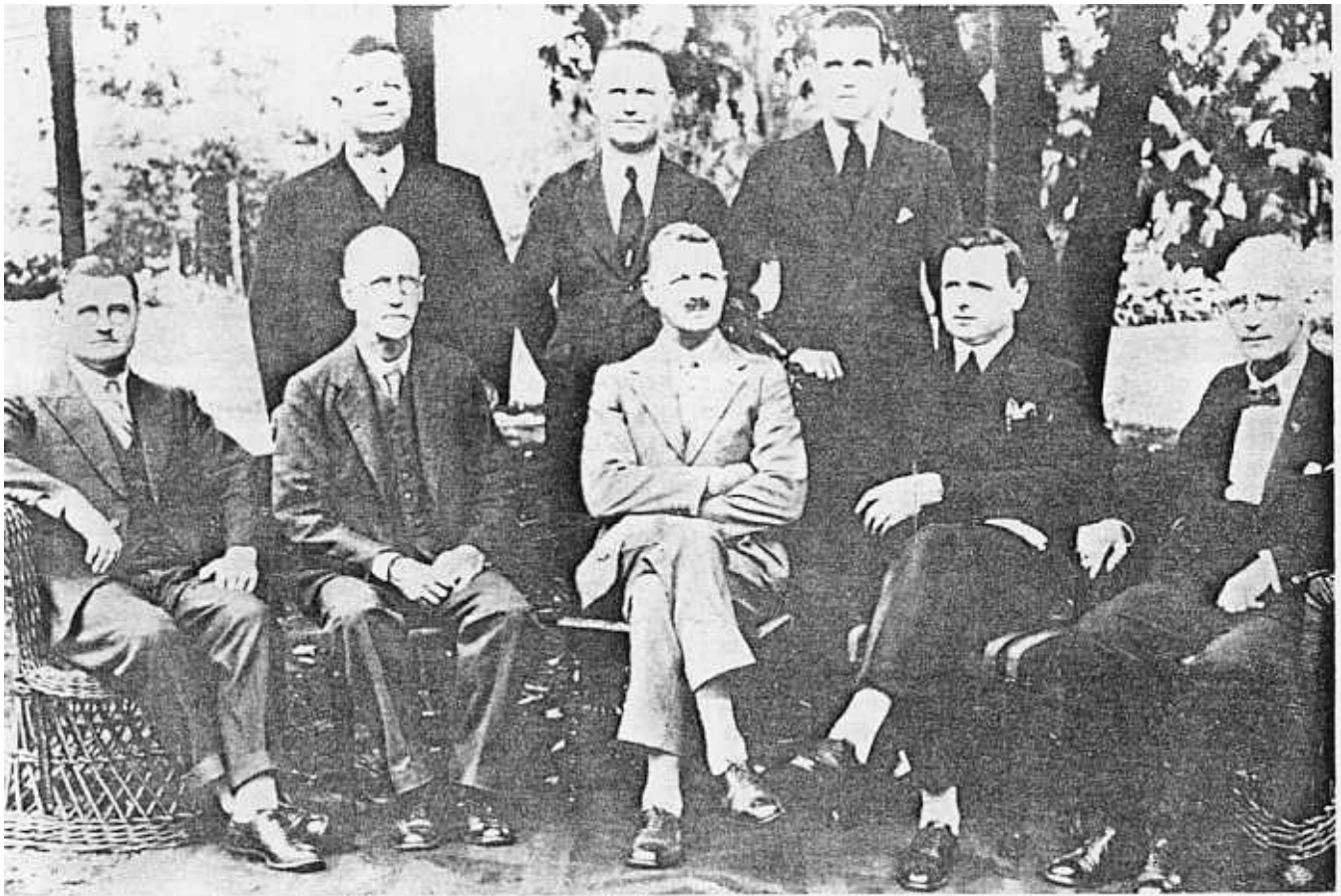
89. *Zululand Times*, 1.4.1928.

90. *Ibid.*, 23.2.1930.

91. NA, EPI 3/1/1 . . . , p. 79; *Zululand Times*, 22.1.1931; BOE, Town Board records: Chairman's minutes, 30.6.1932, pp. 1-4 and 12.

92. BOE, Town Board records: Chairman's minutes, 30.6.1932, pp. 1-4 and 12.

93. NA, EPI 4/1/6 Records of the Town Board of Empangeni, correspondence and minutes: File 118; EPI 3/1/1 . . . , pp. 78-80; *Zululand Times*, 14.5.1931; BOE, Town Board records: Chairman's minutes, 30.6.1932, pp. 1-4 and 12.



The first Town Council, 1960, from left to right back row: P.C. Asselbergs (borough engineer), C.J.B. Andrews, C.J. de Beer, H. Muller, D. Clark, G.J.E. Coetzee; front row: J.W. van Zyl, P.R. Steenkamp (deputy-mayor), A. Bozas (mayor), E.A. Sherwood (town clerk and treasurer), P.M. Addison.

The first meeting of the newly established Town Board was held on 12 May 1931 in the magistrate's office, where W.H. Crawford was elected chairman and E.T. Mullins deputy chairman. The first town clerk, O.C. Swanson, was appointed on 30 June 1931 and the first town foreman, F.G. Bugden, on 10 October 1931.⁹⁴

In the area taken over by the Town Board there were 176 dwellings occupied by Whites. The general nature of these dwellings was 25 % brick and 75 % wood-and-iron in the village; 100 % brick at the Rail and 50 % wood-and-iron at the mill. In 1932 the approximate length of roads in the township was sixteen kilometres.⁹⁵

The first Town Board, 1931, from left to right back: J.L. Brandon, O.C. Swanson (town clerk), J.H.G. Royston; front: W.A. Dunne, E.T. Mullins, W.H. Crawford, H.M. Grenham, Dr G.K. Moberly.



The Town Board continued functioning until 1960. The 1950s had witnessed the start of the industrial expansion and development of Empangeni. Evidence of this real growth was obvious in the population figures. In 1921 the White population of Empangeni was 153. Ten years later in 1931 it had reached 674 and at the 1936 census was officially put at 703. At the end of the Second World War in 1946 the population stood at 1 037 and in 1951 at 1 336. However, the next three decades saw a tremendous increase from 2 570 Whites in 1960 to 4 512 in 1970

94. NA, EPI 4/1/6 Records of the Town Board of Empangeni, correspondence and minutes: File 118; EPI 3/1/1 . . . , pp. 78-80; *Zulu-land Times*, 14.5.1931; BOE, Town Board records: Chairman's minutes, 30.6.1932, pp. 1-4 and 12.

95. NA, EPI 4/1/1 Records of the Town Board of Empangeni, correspondence and minutes: File 521.

96. SOUTH AFRICA, DEPARTMENT OF STATISTICS, *Population census of South Africa: cities, towns and rural areas 1970* (Report No. 02-05-01), and 1980 (Report No. 07-07-01); A Bozas, Empangeni, 13.4.1983.



Union Street c., early 1920s.

and 9 400 in 1980 with an estimated population in 1983 in excess of 12 000.⁹⁶

With this increase in population went a need for a town council so that the representation could be better spread. At a meeting of the Town Board held on 16 July 1960 it was unanimously resolved that a petition be presented to the administrator of Natal asking that borough status be conferred on Empangeni.⁹⁷ This borough status was officially conferred on Empangeni on 13 October 1960.⁹⁸ On 10 December 1960 the Town Council held its first meeting.⁹⁹ The first mayor of Empangeni was A. Bozas who served in that capacity till 1967. Other members of this first town council were P.R. Steenkamp (deputy mayor), C.J.B. Andrews, C.J. de Beer, H. Muller, D. Clarke, G.J.E. Coetzee, J.W. van Zyl, P.M. Addison, E.A. Sherwood (town clerk and treasurer) and P.C. Asselbergs (borough engineer).¹⁰⁰ This newly established Town Council ushered in a dynamic growth phase in the life of Empangeni. Its growth into an industrial, medical, educational, commercial, and shopping

Union Street, 1970s.



centre gained new impetus with the announcement in April 1965 by the Minister of Transport, B.J. Schoeman, that the South African Railways were going to develop a port at Richards Bay. Industries to cope with the expected expansion sprang up. This growth continued at a rapid rate through the 1970s and into the 1980s with the development of large new housing areas and business centres. In 1983 a new town hall and civic complex was completed and Empangeni seems destined to remain, in the foreseeable future, the service and commercial centre of the Richards Bay/Empangeni growth point as well as for the rest of Zululand. **c**

97. BOE, Town Council records: Minutes, 16.7.1960; *Zululand Times*, 21.7.1960.

98. *Zululand Times*, 13.10.1960.

99. *Ibid.*, 15.12.1960.

100. BOE, Town Council records: Annual minutes, 31.8.1961; *Zululand Observer*, 14.1.1971.