

# CAPE TOWN IN 1829\*

H. Phillips

University of Cape Town

In 1829 Cape Town was the capital and largest town of a thinly-populated Cape Colony which extended only as far as the Great Fish River in the east and a line somewhat south of the Orange River in the north. It was quite small; in the years since it had become part of the British Empire (1806) its permanent population had grown slowly, mainly through immigrants from Britain, to 18 296 (8 805 Whites, 6 222 slaves, and 3 269 Free Blacks) in 1829.<sup>1</sup> To this figure should be added several hundred troops and visiting sailors. Though as individuals not a part of the fixed population, as a group they were a permanent feature of Cape Town and were part and parcel of its daily activities.

## LAYOUT

The town itself was only just beginning to creep outside its long-standing confines to the east and the west, the Buitenkant and the Buitengracht. It was characterized by a precise, rectangular pattern of streets and squares on either side of its tree-lined main thoroughfare, the Heerengracht. By the standards of the time these dusty and yet unlit streets were kept in a good state of repair, though winter rains made them muddy and difficult to traverse. Canals or 'grachts' dating from the 17th Century ran down their sides carrying water from Table Mountain into the bay. By 1829, however, these 'grachts' had deteriorated badly: most were in a filthy state. Smelly, often filled with refuse, spanned by shaky and dilapidated bridges, they had become a permanent source of discontent and complaint in the community. In 1825 William Bridekirk had remarked in a piece of doggerel:

"Canals, thro' some of the streets flow,  
Which stink confoundedly you must know;  
And serve so handy for lazy wenches,  
To cast therein their sloppail stench,  
Some sluts, besides th' above nam'd slop,  
Other burdens have been known to drop  
Into these reservoirs of pollution,  
And thus, give their character ablution,  
At the expense of their immortal part,  
For which deeds by the bye they'll richly smart."<sup>2</sup>

Not surprisingly, a start was made with covering these 'grachts' over during the 1830s.

The never-used line of forts and defences, built by the Dutch and the British along the curving shore-line on either side of the Castle to withstand a sea-borne invasion, were also in less than prime condition in 1829. While the War Office continued to toy with the idea of dismantling some of them, several of the guardhouses were let to the public.<sup>3</sup> It was even seriously suggested that the camp site out at Wynberg be divided up and sold as building lots.<sup>4</sup>

Tiny suburbs existed in the Gardens (49 residents), Green and Sea Point (40 residents) and 'behind the Castle'. The road to the small village of Wynberg (69 residents) was dotted with "the villas of the merchants, and more opulent tradesmen of the town, who drive their buggies to and fro, ... and repose from the fatigues of business in these rural retirements."<sup>5</sup>

\*This article originated as a lecture given in 1979 to mark the 150th anniversary of the establishment of the S.A. College, from which the University of Cape Town subsequently developed.

## ADMINISTRATION AND JUSTICE

In 1829 local government in Cape Town was in a state of transition. The previous year the Burgher Senate which had helped run the town since 1796 had been abolished and its functions transferred to Government-appointed magistrates and officials. This form of local government from above remained until the Municipality of Cape Town was established in 1840.

The Colony as a whole was ruled by a Governor (in 1829 it was Sir G. Lowry Cole) whose autocratic powers were tempered to a small degree only by a nominated Advisory Council set up in 1825. In 1828 two nominated burghers had been given seats on the Council to offset the abolition of the Burgher Senate.

The Colony's legal structure had also just been comprehensively reformed. In 1828 the Charter of Justice had created a Supreme Court with an independent judiciary and jury and a series of inferior magistrate courts to replace the old Dutch East India Company structure. Ten advocates (all with Dutch surnames) and eleven attorneys (six with Dutch surnames) were in practice in Cape Town in 1829.<sup>6</sup> Punishments remained harsh, however, in keeping with the prevailing European ethic: public floggings on Boerenplein (Riebeeck Square to-day) were quite common, though corporal punishment for women had been replaced by a House of Correction for "riotous and abandoned" women in 1827.

## THE PORT

For a town whose *raison d'être* lay in its strategic position on a sea-route, Cape Town was very poorly equipped with port facilities. In 1829 a ramshackle jetty near the Castle dating back to 1658, a light house at Green Point, and a launch (aptly named the *North Wester*) to deliver spare hawsers and emergency anchors were the only aids to shipping available in a bay notorious for the violence of

S. JUDGES, *Poverty, living conditions and social relations – Aspects of life in Cape Town in the 1830s* (M.A., U.C.T., 1977), Appendix 3.

Quoted in H.W.J. PICARD, *Gentleman's walk* (Cape Town, 1968), p.166.

*Cape of Good Hope Government Gazette*, 25.12.1829.

J.D. LINNEGAR, *From village to municipality: A history of Wynberg, to 1903* (Unpublished Honours dissertation, U.C.T., 1975), p.15.

E. BLOUNT, *Notes on the Cape of Good Hope* (London, 1821), p.10.

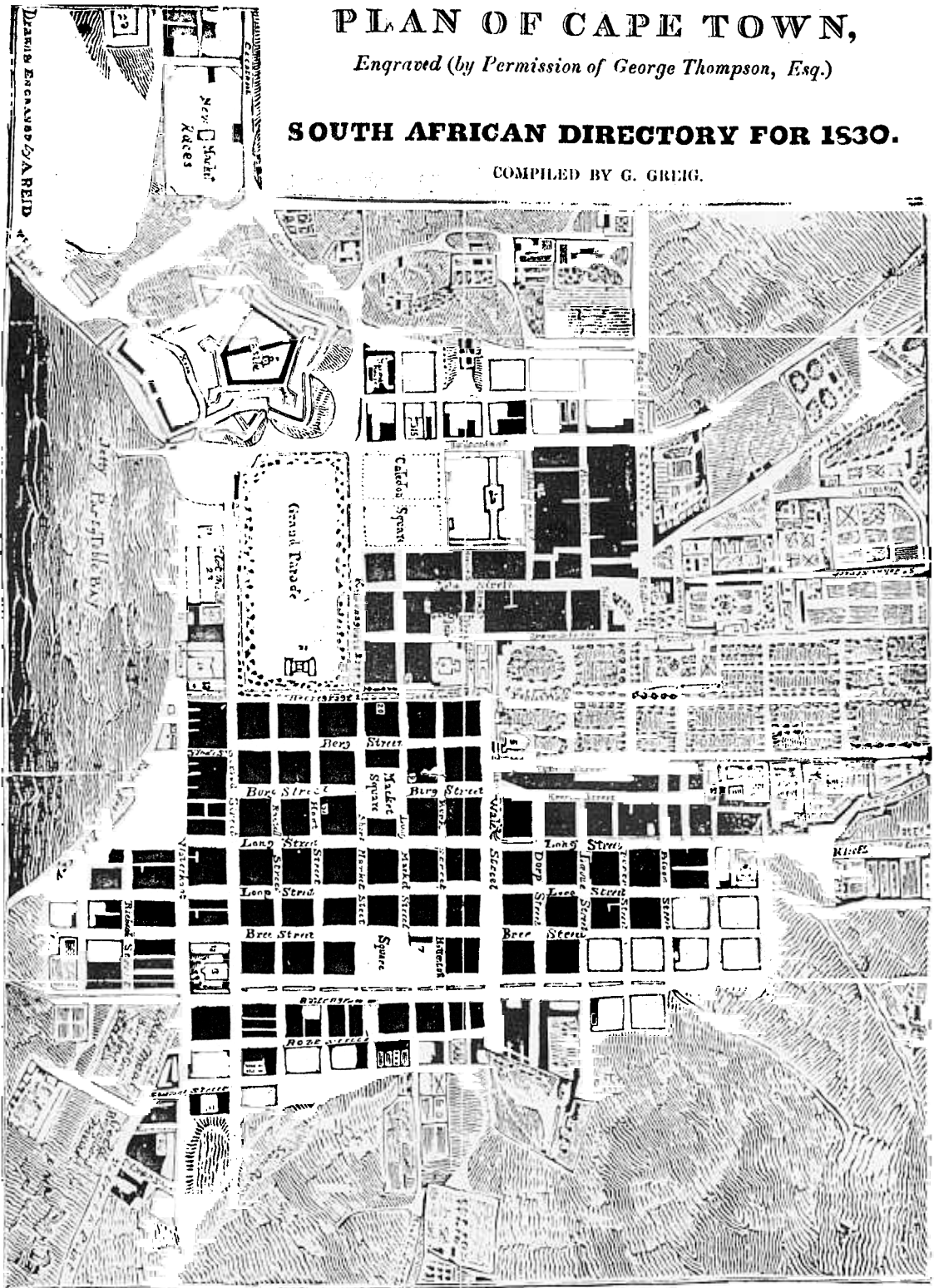
*South African almanack and directory for 1830*, p.199.

# PLAN OF CAPE TOWN,

*Engraved (by Permission of George Thompson, Esq.)*

## SOUTH AFRICAN DIRECTORY FOR 1830.

COMPILED BY G. GREIG.



### REFERENCES.

- |  |                                    |                           |                                |
|--|------------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Colonial Buildings                  | 8. Wesleyan Missionaries' Chapel   | 16. Prison                | 24. Merchant Seamen's Hospital |
| 2. Colonial Church                     | 9. Burgher Senate House            | 17. Theatre               | 25. Town Somerset Hospital     |
| 3. Lutheran Church                     | 10. Great Barracks                 | 18. Freemasons' Hall      | 26. Military Hospital          |
| 4. Catholic Church                     | 11. Methodist Chapel, now building | 19. Orphan House          | 27. Government House Lodge     |
| 5. Proposed site of the English Church | 12. Company Exchange               | 20. African Society House | 28. Menagerie                  |
| 6. Reformed Dutch Chapel               | 13. Military Depot                 | 21. Store Houses          | 29. George's Hotel             |
| 7. Independents' Chapel                | 14. Custom House                   | 22. Post Office           | 30. Beaufort Arms Hotel        |
|  | 15. Town Granary                   | 23. Town Shambles         | 31. Freemason's Tavern         |

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its winter gales. Between 1806 and 1835 47 ships were wrecked in Table Bay.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, the *North Wester's* service was only initiated by private enterprise after several ships had been driven ashore in a storm in 1828. Calls by sailors and merchants for the construction of more adequate facilities had been turned down by a penny-pinching Imperial Government on grounds of the need for economy.

## THE INHABITANTS

Many of these merchants were Englishmen who had come to the Colony after 1806 — J.B. Ebdon, Hamilton Ross, R.W. Eaton, C.S. Pillans and H.E. Rutherford. Mainly involved in the export of local products (in particular wine and wheat) and the import of finished goods into a colony lacking in all but the crudest forms of manufacturing, by 1829 the merchants of Cape Town were becoming a powerful interest group with wide-ranging contacts and influence. Organized in the Commercial Exchange with its palatial headquarters on the Parade, they had recently been able to secure the removal of tariffs on their exports of wheat and wine to England, an end to the English East India Company's tea monopoly at the Cape, and a start to the construction of Sir Lowry's Pass to expedite the movement of produce from the interior. They had also tried, as yet without success, to set up a commercial bank to replace the meagre Government-run Lombard Bank, and, to facilitate the sale of produce, they had helped establish a new market alongside the Castle, far more convenient for incoming farmers than the traditional market-place in Greenmarket Square. The shift in the locale of their shops was just one indicator of their growing stature in Cape Town. In 1829 there were 15 retail shops in the Heerengracht, previously an exclusive residential area.<sup>8</sup>

The merchants' hand is visible too in the retention of the rix-dollar as legal tender at the Cape despite the fact that in 1825 the Imperial Treasury had decided to replace the foreign currencies of new colonies with sterling. The two currencies co-existed side by side at the Cape until 1841. A complete overhaul of the system of taxation could not be prevented, however: from 1829 every free male over 16 and free female over 20 had to pay a 6/- (six shillings) p.a. poll tax. Taxes were also levied on male slaves and servants and most modes of transport, including horses, waggons, and carts. In this way Governor Cole hoped to balance the self-financing Colony's budget at a time of economic stringency.

Apart from these influential and innovative merchants, who else lived in Cape Town in 1829?

Excluding the garrison and visiting "Indians" (the name given to British officials serving in India who often holidayed at the Cape for some months), the permanent white population of Cape Town was almost equally composed of men and women, about four and a half thousand of each.<sup>9</sup> Dutch-speakers were still the most numerous among these, though they were increasingly subject to English influences. In the absence of any regular instruction in their native Dutch culture, they were like "malleable clay for a regime bent on moulding them in its own image".<sup>10</sup> Recent migration had introduced a significant English-speaking minority into the population too. Though Whites tended to occupy the upper strata of society, there were a number of Poor Whites employed as labourers or domestic servants. Especially noticeable

among these were Irishmen: in 1829 a St. Patrick's Benefit Society was founded "to secure to themselves and their Families, a provision against the numerous casualties (*sic*) of life".<sup>11</sup>

In 1829 some of Cape Town's Khoi and Free Blacks (free persons wholly or partially of African or Asian descent) were just beginning to enjoy the fruits of Ordinance 50 of 1828 which had secured for them theoretical equality before the law. Now free to come and go as they liked, some became vagrants; a few utilized their new opportunities to buy property or slaves; for others, still bound by contracts of indenture or 'apprenticeship', the Ordinance remained a dead letter: Sophie, a free girl indentured to Mr Blanckenberg for 3 years, was sentenced to 8 days in prison on rice and water in April 1829 for running away from her master;<sup>12</sup> H.F. Campie, an apprentice of D.C. Lesar, was condemned to 39 lashes for repeated desertion "and threatened that next time he would be more severely beaten".<sup>13</sup>

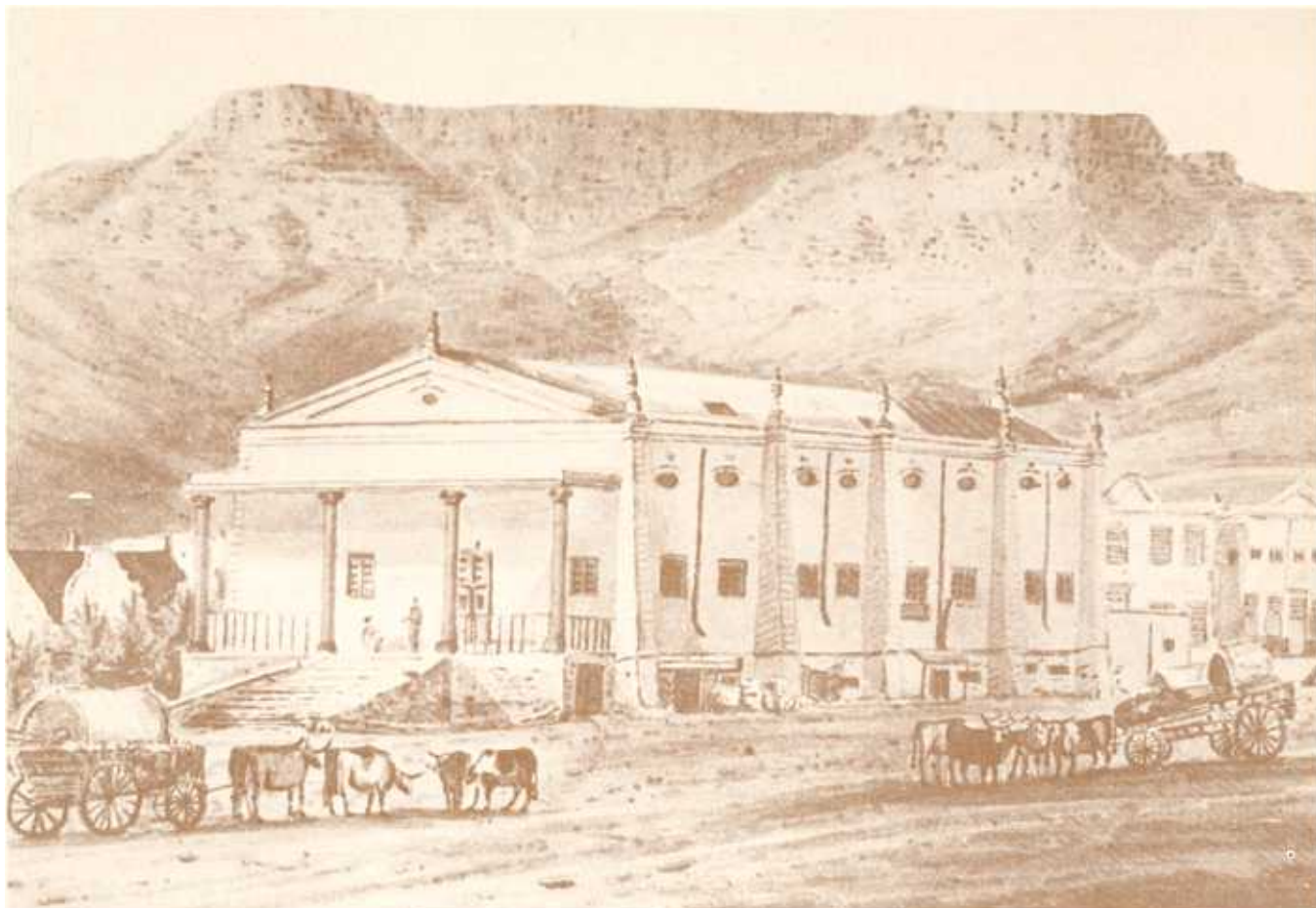
The lot of the over 6-000 slaves in Cape Town, many of them with highly specialized skills as tailors, masons, coopers, and shoemakers, has often been seen as improving during the decade after 1820. In many ways this was so.

In 1823 Somerset had issued detailed regulations for their care and education and permitted them to own property; in 1826 a Guardian of Slaves had been appointed to keep an eye on their general treatment; in the next year most government slaves left over from the Dutch East India Company period had been freed and in 1828 the 'Cape of Good Hope Philanthropic Society for Aiding Deserving Slaves and Slave Children to Purchase Their Freedom' had been set up. Talk of emancipation was in the air — indeed, some slaves actually hired people to read them newspapers with the latest on this topic.<sup>14</sup> A few were even able to buy their own freedom, especially those who had earned enough money by doing Sunday work at between 1/6 and 3/- a day<sup>15</sup> or been able to set themselves up as craftsmen or hawkers on their own account, for which they paid their owners 'hire money'.

However, a close examination of the reality of 1829 shows up a far less rosy picture for slaves: Somerset's regulations were often flouted; the Guardian of Slaves, Henry Murphy, showed himself less than sympathetic in all but the most blatant cases of ill-treatment and by the end of 1829 the Philanthropic Society had purchased only 24 slave children, who would only be manumitted on turning 16. Moreover, the Society gave the assurance that it intended to proceed "without injury to the property, or interference with the just claims of the proprietor",<sup>16</sup> for many slave-owners were up in arms at the idea of emancipation. A burger petition of 1826 had spoken of those who advocated emancipation as "enemies of the people".<sup>17</sup>

R.F.M. IMMELMAN, *Men of Good Hope — The romantic story of the Cape Town Chamber of Commerce 1804–1954* (Cape Town, 1955), p.86.

8. PICARD, *op. cit.*, p.174.
9. JUDGES, *op. cit.*, Appendix 3.
10. M. WILSON and L. THOMPSON (eds.), *The Oxford history of South Africa I* (Oxford, 1970), p.278.
11. *Cape of Good Hope Government Gazette*, 5.6.1829.
12. *South African Commercial Advertiser*, 11.4.1829.
13. *Ibid.*, 11.2.1829.
14. JUDGES, *op. cit.*, p.137.
15. *Cape of Good Hope Government Gazette*, 16.1.1829.
16. *South African almanack and directory for 1830*, p.198.
17. Quoted in PICARD, *op. cit.*, p.160.



*The South African Theatre on Boerenplein.*

PHOTOGRAPH: AFRICANA MUSEUM, JOHANNESBURG

Nothing provides a better taste of the attitudes and assumptions underlying the slave-owning society that was Cape Town in 1829 than contemporary advertisements in the official *Cape of Good Hope Gazette*. For example:

- “To let, a healthy Wet Nurse, without a Child, about 8 months from her Child-bed, being also a clever sempstress, and irons well ...”<sup>18</sup>
- “a Slave Girl ... for sale with or without her two Children.”<sup>19</sup>
- “Wanted to purchase, for ready Money, a clever HOUSE-BOY; — also required, the Works of Flavius Josephus.”<sup>20</sup>
- “The Undersigned, Trustees in the Insolvent Estate of J.A. van Niekerk, Gs. will sell by public Auction, on Monday, the 26th instant, at the Place occupied by him, situate at Koebergen, Cape District, Waggon, Ploughs, and other Farming Implements, draught Oxen, Horses, &c. the Crops of Wheat, Oats, and Barley; Glass and Crockery Ware, Kitchen Requisites; also a number of clever male and female slaves, who will be sold on very favourable terms ...”<sup>21</sup>

Nor did the courts show much mercy in the frequent cases of drunken or runaway slaves: Telemachus, a slave who had escaped from his owner, Cornelis Mostert of Rondebosch, said that Mostert had maltreated him and so “it was not his intention to return; at any rate, if he did return, they might look out, as he would certainly do some mischief. Indeed he wished rather to be placed in the Government’s service, than remain in that of his master.” In delivering sentence, the magistrate told him such threats only aggravated his situation — and his punishment, 45 lashes.<sup>22</sup>

Cases heard in 1829 include many such charges of ‘desertion’ by slaves. Just as frequent were claims by slaves that they had been ill-treated. Commenting on one such case, the *Guardian of Slaves* remarked however, “that this was clearly another to be added to the melancholy list of groundless complaints with which he was sorry to waste the time of the Court”.<sup>23</sup>

## RACE RELATIONS

How far did the racial differences that have been outlined determine status in Cape Town’s population in 1829?

First, it should be noted that these divisions were far from watertight. ‘Whites’ and ‘Blacks’ at either end of the racial spectrum were easily identifiable as such, but the high rate of miscegenation had created a large number of people of various hues in between.

Second, it would seem that, though there was an increasingly close correlation between one’s colour and one’s social status in Cape Town in 1829, the society had not yet become a rigid, closed pigmentocracy. An analysis of the current street directory shows up several mixed residential areas.<sup>24</sup> Some jobs at the lower end of the wage scale (e.g. watchmen) were filled indiscriminately by Free Blacks or Whites.<sup>25</sup> Intermarriage still oc-

18. *Cape of Good Hope Government Gazette*, 24.7.1829.

19. *Ibid.*, 16.1.1829.

20. *Ibid.*

21. *Ibid.*, 16.10.1829.

22. *South African Commercial Advertiser*, 29.4.1829.

23. *Ibid.*, 8.4.1829.

24. JUDGES, *op. cit.*, p.127.

25. *Ibid.*, Table 2 and p.129.



curred: the wife of that leading businessman of the period, Baron von Ludwig, was, for instance, a woman of colour, Alida Maria van de Kaap.

Yet, notwithstanding these qualifications and the colour-blind legislation which existed, it is clear that in 1829 Cape Town was moving in the direction of a segregated society in which colour was becoming the yardstick of status, treatment, and achievement. There are examples of differential punishments for the same crime depending on one's colour,<sup>26</sup> of two different kinds of apprenticeship for orphans ('craft' for Whites, 'indenture' for Free Blacks) and even of social segregation. After much rowdiness at a performance at the local theatre, a note was added to the advertisement for a performance by the Dutch Amateur Company in July 1829 that "No Slaves or Free Blacks will be admitted to the Gallery".<sup>27</sup> In the words of the visiting imperial Commission of Enquiry in 1823, "The difference of colour furnishes ... but too broad a line of distinction".<sup>28</sup>

## LIVING CONDITIONS

Life for those Capetonians of all colours at the bottom end of the social scale (but especially for Free Blacks) was a hard grind. Often living in dank and unhealthy squalor, many dwelt in cramped and overcrowded conditions. By 1832 the Constitution Hill area was "covered with hovels",<sup>29</sup> while evidence at a trial in 1830 of five to six people to a room elicited not a word of comment.<sup>30</sup> During the winter of 1829 several poor people died from exposure in the back streets of Cape Town, and this was not an unusual occurrence.<sup>31</sup>

This contrasts starkly with the spacious houses belonging to the upper strata of Cape Town society in the centre of town. In 1829 several of these were beginning to be rebuilt, in keeping with Regency style — porticoes, light, latticed verandas, curving zinc roofs, and enclosed stoeps.

Poverty was the usual condition of many large families, especially among the Free Black labourers, fishermen, and coolies. S. Judges has suggested that much of Cape Town's work-force in the 1830s received earnings well below her estimated minimum living cost of £3 8s 10d per month for a family of 5.<sup>32</sup> For a labourer or a coolie with a large family, earning £1 16s per month, commodities like cheese (4½d — 9d per lb.), butter (9d — 1¼d per lb.), sugar (4¼d per lb.), and soap (4¾d — 6d per lb.) were expensive.<sup>33</sup> A little private charity was available, but it was haphazard and rather limited in scope.

## HEALTH

If poverty was especially acute among certain groups in Cape Town, it was the population as a whole that was affected by the generally insanitary state of the town. Mention has already been made of the 'grachts' with their eye-and nose-catching character; in 1828 a fine of up to £5 was prescribed for anyone who "cast any Filth, Soil, Earth, or Rubbish" into them.<sup>34</sup> Many streets still lacked sewers; town cleaning, under the control of the Superintendent of Police, was rudimentary to say the least; nightsoil was collected only on certain days of the week and fresh water was available solely from the sixty or so fountains or pumps dotted round the city. Though forbidden to do so, people washed meat, fish, clothes, themselves, kitchen

utensils and even soil-tubs at these places. The Shambles was a particular health hazard: after slaughtering animals there, butchers disposed of offal by throwing it into the nearby sea at high tide; but when the tide dropped, this refuse was washed back onto the shore, creating, in the words of one contemporary, "heaps of horrors on the beach behind Strand Street [which] deadened the sense of smell and reconciled it to effluvia pernicious to health".<sup>35</sup>

No wonder a local journal observed in 1834: "That there is not some pestilential or malignant fever in the Town, must certainly be owing to causes as yet unexplained; for the filth which pervades many parts, and the nuisances to be found in others, whether from putrid skins, or dead whales, or tanners pits and last not least, the fish market, are quite sufficient to bring on disease, or certainly prevent it being stopped ..."<sup>36</sup>

It comes as little surprise therefore that the health of a large section of Cape Town's population was never really good. Diseases like typhus, leprosy, tuberculosis, and gastro-enteritis, associated with poverty or dirt, were endemic, while malaria was common in summer when mosquitoes flourished in the 'grachts'. The existing medical facilities of Cape Town, the Somerset and the Merchant Seamen's Hospitals, a vaccine institution operated part-time by the District Surgeon, some seven doctors and eight apothecaries or druggists, were no match for living conditions that were fundamentally unhealthy. The result is seen in a high rate of infant mortality (made worse by the absence of trained midwives, a lack which the Government tried to overcome by appointing a Public Instructor in Midwifery in 1829) and an average life expectancy among all Capetonians of not more than 30 years.<sup>37</sup>

## RELIGION

If the physical needs of Capetonians were less than adequately provided for, their spiritual needs were well served. In 1829 formal religion was flourishing in Cape Town: a new Dutch Reformed Church was inaugurated in Wynberg in that year and a second town one projected to meet the needs of the less affluent members of the congregation on the slopes of Signal Hill; St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church was opened in May (until then Presbyterians had held services in the Lutheran Church) and the foundations of a second Wesleyan Chapel were laid in Burg Street in October. At long last, too, concrete steps were taken towards erecting an Anglican Church. This scheme had been proposed five years earlier but had not borne fruit for want of funds. As long as this remained so, Anglicans used the Dutch Reformed Church in the Heerengracht for their services. Finally in 1829 a

26. *Ibid.*, p.133.

27. *Cape of Good Hope Government Gazette*, 17.7.1829.

28. Note III by H.T. COLEBROOKE in W.W. BIRD, *State of the Cape of Good Hope in 1822* (London, 1823), p.349.

29. Quoted in JUDGES, *op. cit.*, p.79.

30. *Ibid.*, p.78.

31. *South African Commercial Advertiser*, 27.6.1829, 4.7.1829, and 15.7.1829.

32. JUDGES, *op. cit.*, Table 1.

33. *Ibid.*, Appendix 1.

34. Ordinance 48 of 1828 as quoted *ibid.*, p.58.

35. Quoted in C. PAMA, *Regency Cape Town* (Cape Town, 1975), p.55.

36. *De Zuid Afrikaan*, 28.2.1834, as quoted in JUDGES, *op. cit.*, p.59.

37. *Ibid.*, p.99.

local ordinance was issued to raise the requisite sum through 250 shares at £25 apiece. These were quickly snapped up, the names of shareholders reading like a list of the eminent worthies of Cape Town. The foundation-stone of the new Anglican Church, Old St. George's, was laid in April 1830. A Roman Catholic Church in Harrington Street and several mission chapels complete the picture of Christian places of worship in Cape Town.

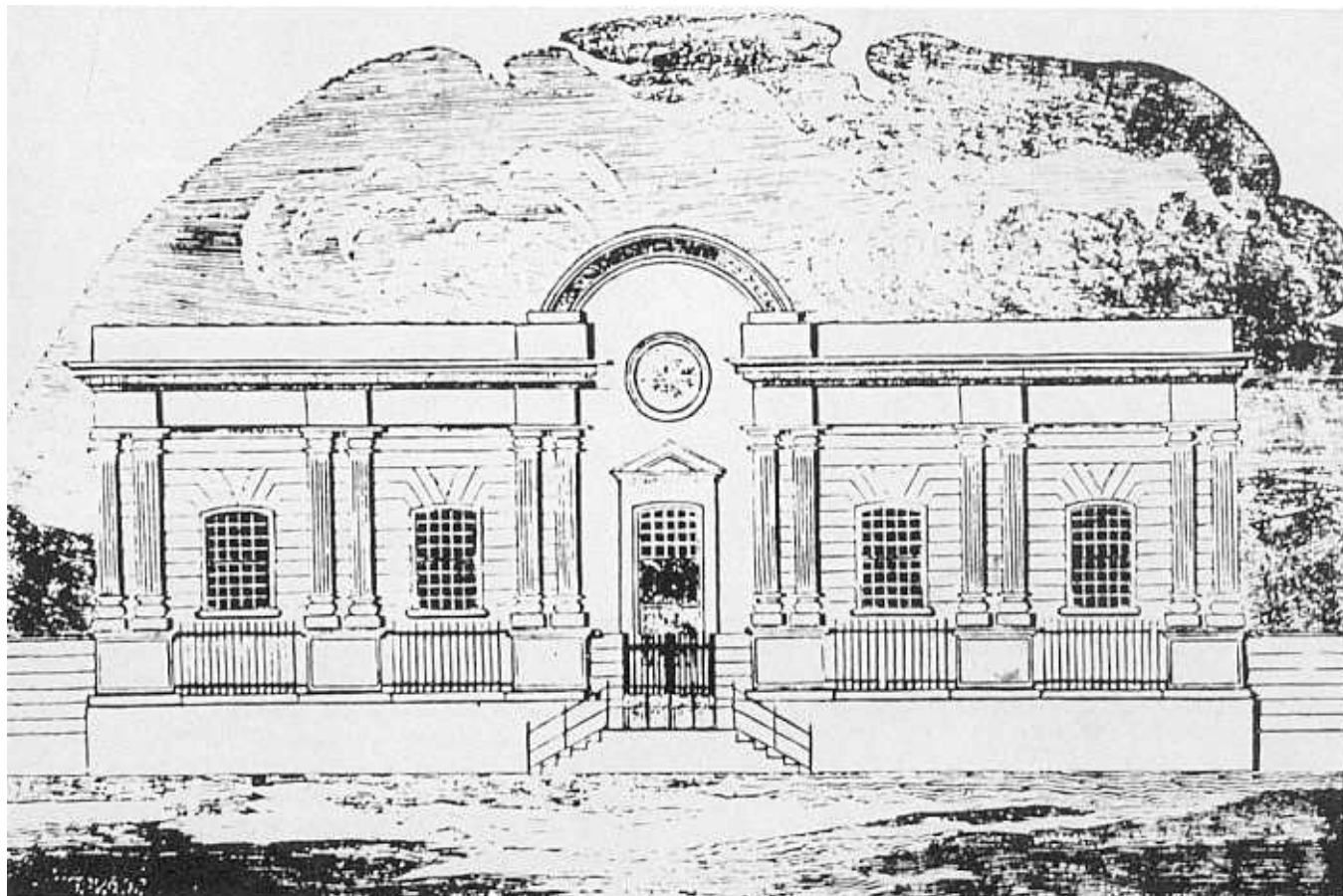
Islam was thriving too. In 1825 there were 2 167 Muslim Free Blacks and slaves in Cape Town.<sup>38</sup> There was as yet only one mosque in Cape Town, in Upper Dorp Street, dating from c.1804, but possibly 8 to 10 'langas' (house-chapels) existed.<sup>39</sup> It is clear too that Islam was firmly established in official circles in Cape Town. Imams ('Malay priests' in contemporary parlance) were employed to administer oaths to Muslim witnesses in court, though, unlike their Christian counterparts, they were not paid for this duty.<sup>40</sup>

particular denominations. In 1829 moves were also afoot to establish a school for infants; in the next year two were opened, one for the children of slaves and the poor, one for the children of parents in better circumstances.

1829 also saw the foundation of a new school, the South African College or Zuid Afrikaansche Athenaeum. Its small post-matric section was later to develop into the University of Cape Town. It had originated in 1828 as the brainchild of several leading Capetonians, dissatisfied with existing educational facilities. £2 500 had been raised by the issue of £10 shares and on 1 October 1829 the College was opened with due pomp and ceremony in part of the Orphanage in Long Street. It had a staff of three professors and two teachers, and 115 students who were

*The South African College in the Orphanage Building, Long Street.*

PHOTOGRAPH REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION OF  
A.A. BALKEMA, CAPE TOWN



All told, therefore, in religious matters, toleration and harmonious co-existence were the order of the day in Cape Town in 1829.

## EDUCATION

Educational facilities were mixed in character and quality. The British administration had introduced free schools into the Colony in 1819; in 1829 there were two in Cape Town, both of which had just adopted English as the medium of instruction. Their numbers fell rapidly as a result.

Far more numerous were the privately-run schools. These ranged from seminaries for young ladies, commercial, classical and French academies, and ones where Dutch was the medium of instruction in schools run by

to be instructed in Dutch and English Literature, Classics, Mathematics, and French.

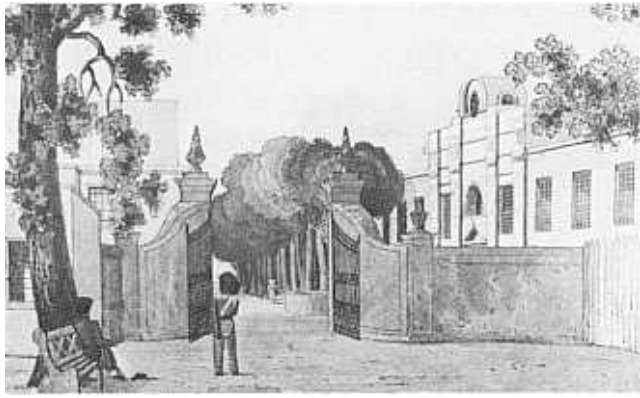
## CULTURE

Of all the changes wrought in the life of Cape Town by the British presence, it was in cultural and intellectual circles that English influence was most conspicuous. In the years after 1806 a host of typically English institutions, clubs, and societies had blossomed, like the South African Public Library (in 1829 its 30 000 volumes were housed in the Commercial Exchange), the South African

38. *Ibid.*, p.152.

39. F.R. BRADLOW and M. CAIRNS, *The Early Cape Muslims* (Cape Town, 1978), p.24.

40. *South African Commercial Advertiser*, 15.8.1829.



View of Government Buildings in the Heerenracht from the Company's Gardens.

PHOTOGRAPHE: JAGGER LIBRARY, UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

Museum, the Royal Observatory, the South African Mechanics Institution, the Horticultural Society, and the Colony's only newspaper in 1829, the *South African Commercial Advertiser*.

Founded in 1824, but suppressed twice since then by the Government, this newspaper had only been back on the streets since October 1828. Published bi-weekly in English and Dutch under Dr. Johnson's rubric, "The mass of every People must be barbarous where there is no Printing", it not only contained local news from Cape Town and the Colony at large, reports of trials, letters, and advertisements from the "Higher class of merchants",<sup>41</sup> but also long reports on European affairs. Parliamentary debates (both Lords and Commons) were reported at length and extracts from English newspapers and journals appeared regularly. Under its editor, John Fairbairn, a Scot who had come to the Cape in 1823, it campaigned vigorously for representative government and freedom of the press. In 1829 it achieved some success in the latter cause when an Ordinance granting a rather limited degree of press freedom was promulgated.

1829 also saw the establishment of two new societies, the South African Literary Society, with its intention of promoting "every useful branch of knowledge", and the Southern African Institution founded to investigate "the Geography, Natural History and General Resources of Southern Africa". In the first year of its existence it produced the *South African Quarterly Journal*, set up a small museum, and ran an essay competition.

For the less intellectually minded, clubs like the Society House in the Heerenracht provided billiard and card rooms, a coffee lounge, and a dance-hall. "Between 11 and 5", remarked a contemporary, "almost everyone may be seen from the door of this House. Every lady passes (*sic*) the gauntlet of these acute Heerenracht observers".<sup>42</sup>

Other entertainments available in 1829 included performances in Dutch and English at the South African Theatre on Boerenplein; concerts by military bands in the Gardens or on the Parade or by Pieter van Bredas slave orchestra on his estate, Oranje Zigt; dances, billiards, skittles and gambling in public bars; horse-racing on Green Point Common, and near by, at Gallows Hill, the rare public execution. In December the *South African Commercial Advertiser* reported that "an immense number of persons had assembled to witness the melancholy spectacle" of the hanging of William the Shoemaker for murder.<sup>43</sup>

Cape Town, with its numerous soldiers and sailors, housed many a prostitute. In 1829 the Government com-

plained that "the expense incurred for the cure of Prostitutes infected with Venereal disease ... [was] a very heavy burthen" and suggested that they be committed to a House of Correction "that by their labour they make some return for the expense".<sup>44</sup> Police claimed that "the greater proportion by far" of the town's prostitutes were 'Bastard Hottentots', many fresh from the country.<sup>45</sup> These did not have a monopoly however: an Irish woman, Abigail Diamond, with her "truly Hibernian accent and manner", was the most notorious of several white prostitutes plying their trade in Cape Town.<sup>46</sup>

Excessive drinking was almost endemic. "We see grogshops in every street, & staggering drunkards daily meet our eyes", wrote one visitor to Cape Town.<sup>47</sup> A combination of its cheapness, especially of wine and Cape brandy, and easy availability (pubs were open from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. and outside these hours 'smugglers' ran a lucrative trade) made liquor readily accessible to all classes. The Commissioners of Enquiry in the 1820s referred specifically to drunkenness among slaves and Khoi,<sup>48</sup> but excessive drinking was by no means exclusive to them — a number of the Irish labourers brought to the Cape in 1823 were said in 1829 to have "died of Cape brandy".<sup>49</sup> One visitor observed that "The Cape wines and brandies are so attractive to the generality of mechanics, that not one in twenty can resist their seductive influence ... [They are soon] transferred from the hospital to the churchyard".<sup>50</sup>

Remembering the harsh working and living conditions and the prevalence of diseases in Cape Town in 1829, escape from the unpleasant realities of everyday life through drink might have seemed a most attractive option to many.

To put the Cape Town of 1829 into perspective: it was a society part unchanging, part in the throes of significant change — new economic opportunities, Ordinance 50, talk of emancipation, new legal, administrative, fiscal and tax structures, sharpening race relations, growing anglicization, and the establishment of institutions which were the marks of the new urban civilization emerging in Britain.

Instigators of many of these changes were either the British Commissioners of Inquiry sent out in 1823 to report on the state of the Cape, or the new Capetonians — merchants, teachers, and government officials. In many ways these were the first and greatest beneficiaries of these changes.

It was a town and a society beginning to develop a new character as innovations altered many of the features which had lasted for 177 years. In short, it was becoming British. ■

41. *Ibid.*, 18.4.1829.

42. Quoted in PICARD, *op. cit.*, p.117.

43. *South African Commercial Advertiser*, 2.12.1829.

44. Quoted in JUDGES, *op. cit.*, p.90.

45. G.M. THEAL (ed.), *Records of the Cape Colony 35* (London, 1905), p.159.

46. Quoted in JUDGES, *op. cit.*, Appendix 2.

47. G. CHAMPION, *The journal of an American missionary in the Cape Colony 1835* (Cape Town, 1968), p.7.

48. JUDGES, *op. cit.*, p.50.

49. *South African Commercial Advertiser*, 19.12.1829.

50. J.E. ALEXANDER, *An expedition of discovery into the interior of Africa II* (Facsimile Reprint, Cape Town, 1967), p.286.