Popular histories and travel publicity have stamped Pilgrims Rest as South Africa’s romantic gold rush site. Today’s demure and hapless valley is portrayed as a popular locale for swarms of rustic fortune seekers. The tent encampment, and later the village, drained dreams, was home to brutes and dolls, and was the site of rambunctious living and daring escapades.1

Some of the curiosity of Pilgrims Rest is also exuded in the contrast it presents between splendid mountain scenery and a place devoid of “the bare essentials of a civilised community”;2 Before and after this diagnosis of 1946, Pilgrims Rest village was wedded to quaint, but deplorable shelter, shops, streets and public services. As anywhere, the emergence and persistence of such conditions resulted partly from public administration.

In Pilgrims Rest from 1915 to the 1970s (when duties were taken over by the Transvaal Provincial Administration as landlord), this was in the hands of a small local authority called a health committee. Situated on land owned by the company named Transvaal Gold Mining Estates Limited (TGME) in a company-dominated environment, the health committee did not operate in a vacuum. On the contrary, government affairs was very limited.3o Provincial Administration, much of the work of the Health Committee was devoted to subsequent revision of regulations and framing of new ones in respect of such matters as cemetery and sanitary tariffs and control of traffic, town hall and abattoir and hawkers. At least eighteen regulations and amendments were enacted in these respects between 1915 and 1947. Active participation in wider Transvaal local government affairs was very limited.4

LABOUR AND MATERIALS

The first formal contact between TGME and PRHC involved negotiation for tidying and cleaning the village. As an opening salvo, the Health Committee notified TGME that it expected the Company to clear all vacant land. Explaining, the chairman of PRHC presented himself as “anxious that standholders should see that something tangible is being done ... it will be nice to think that (TGME) is setting an example, which would at least encourage standholders and-brace them ... for any additional taxation which may be imposed upon them ... for sanitary services.”5

Although TGME’s general manager was “perfectly prepared to lend assistance in the general cleaning up”, he balked at taking all responsibility, declaring that “it is obviously unfair that I should be asked to clean-up depositing dumps etc. of all and sundry, just because standholders have chosen to foul my ground rather than to use their own.”6

ESTABLISHMENT OF A HEALTH COMMITTEE

For close on twenty years after its establishment in 1895, the company TGME gave scant attention to the public domain of the mining village which sprang up around its offices and reduction works. Rents were levied, but streets, sanitation and other public services were rudimentary. Taking exception to the appearance of the town, to its alarming unhealthiness and neglect, 21 residents petitioned the Transvaal Provincial Secretary in mid-1914 for the creation of a local authority in Pilgrims Rest.7 Although this was but one in a series of efforts to secure some independence of the settlement from TGME,8 Company officials were aware of the benefits which could be reaped — as one put it in 1915:

“The present very insanitary condition of the village is a serious menace to all residents. Several cases of typhoid have recently occurred, and unless proper steps are taken ... a serious outbreak might ensue during summer months, when the health of the Company’s employees would also be in danger.”9

Consent was given by TGME for the establishment of the Pilgrims Rest Health Committee (PRHC) in mid-1915. At this time the Company was concerned primarily with reig-

1 See A.P. CARTWRIGHT, Valley of gold (Cape Town, 1961).
2 Pilgrims Rest Museum Archives, Transvaal Gold Mining Estates Records (henceforth PRMA, TGMER), file labelled “Health Committee 32” (henceforth HC32); G. Machanik — Secretary for Public Health, c. March 1946.
3 Central Archives Depot, Pretoria (henceforth CAD), GG 1411, 44/25: Minute 912 from Prime Minister’s Office, 20.7.1915.
5 PRMA, TGMER, file numbered 13D (henceforth 13D): General Manager TGME — Secretary TGME, 7.9.1915.
7 Ibid.: Secretary TGME — Provincial Administrator, 24.8.1915.
9 Ibid.: Secretary TGME — Provincial Administrator, 24.8.1915.
10 The invitation to PRHC to send representatives to Cape Town “to watch European interests” during passage of the Class Areas Bill in 1924 was not taken up on account of the cost (see PRMA, TGMER: PRHC Minutes, 18.2.1924).
11 Ibid.: General Manager TGME — Chairman PRHC, 20.11.1915.
12 Ibid.: General Manager TGME — Chairman PRHC, 26.11.1915.

pritable in a potentially hazardous intruder and contemplated exerting influence by direct representation on the Committee.9 TGME also took active steps to protect its interests by stipulating that it was amenable to a health committee, provided that its scope “was limited to Pilgrims Rest itself stipulating that it was amenable to a health committee, PRHC were published in November that year. Provisions were made for the following: patrol of nuisances and animals; supply of sanitary conveniences and refuse removal; control of cesspools and water pollution; supervision of noxious and offensive trades; building control; prevention of infectious and contagious diseases; appointment of officers and conduct of business.8 As reflected in periodic notices of the Provincial Administration, much of the work of the Health Committee was devoted to subsequent revision of regulations and framing of new ones in respect of such matters as cemetery and sanitary tariffs and control of traffic, town hall and abattoir and hawkers. At least eighteen regulations and amendments were enacted in these respects between 1915 and 1947. Active participation in wider Transvaal local government affairs was very limited.4

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The point of difference was finally resolved by means of the Company's offer of free supply of designated labour for a month. TGME insisted that this would end its liability for clearing vacant land, the creek and any other areas within the Health Committee's boundaries. Notwithstanding, PRHC continued to request aid in order that the appearance of the cemetery and park be improved. Clearing operations in the cemetery were not assumed lightly by TGME, and although it offered to put ten labourers and a supervisor at the disposal of PRHC, it did so on condition that PRHC contribute £5, or half of the expenses. The Company's offer of free supply of designated labour for a month. TGME insisted that this would end its liability for clearing vacant land, the creek and any other areas within the Health Committee's boundaries. Notwithstanding, PRHC continued to request aid in order that the appearance of the cemetery and park be improved. Clearing operations in the cemetery were not assumed lightly by TGME, and although it offered to put ten labourers and a supervisor at the disposal of PRHC, it did so on condition that PRHC contribute £5, or half of the expenses. The Company's business-like approach contained careful specification that its contribution was made "as an act of grace and as a contribution toward a public service to which it bears no responsibility and must not be taken as accepting any responsibility in connection with the future upkeep of the cemetery." TGME's premonition that it would continue to be approached by PRHC for assistance with cemetery maintenance, was fulfilled and in 1923 the general manager repeated that he did not think that it was his Company's duty to subscribe to what was "essentially a public health business". Amazed that burial fees did not cover the costs of upkeep, he also pointed out that "we have been so frequently called upon to provide native labour and tools for grave digging purposes that I feel we have already subscribed very liberally towards cemetery work." Protest as he may, the general manager did not succeed in relieving TGME from cemetery chores. Over many succeeding years the Company assisted in providing fencing, lopping trees and repairing the access road. In so doing, proprietary issues became so blurred that even when PRHC proposed to put cemetery tree felling out to contract, it was sufficiently hesitant about its rights to ask TGME whose property the felled trees would be. More than this, when TGME indicated its willingness to do lopping and removal, PRHC indemnified the Company against damages. The proposed tree felling programme of 1935 took a year to even...
court. More typically, it was the workshops and estates department of the Company which were involved with PRHC affairs. Although there were times when assignments were delayed by competing mine duties, considerable help was given down the years including, for instance, repair of a water furrow, repair and modification of the Committee's refuse wagon and sanitary cart, erection of an animal pound and latrines and repair to the creek footbridge. In the course of this kind of work, considerable reliance was placed on the Company stores for material such as hardware, oil drums, sanitary pails, iron rails, fencing and building poles. Acting as general supplier to the local authority irked TGME unless it was unequivocally of "material benefit to the Company which were involved with PRHC...in an emergency".

Erection and maintenance of street lights and of hydrants for street-watering was a major facet of Company assistance to PRHC. The general manager advised on at least one occasion that he shrank from expenditure on these items unless it was unequivocally of "material benefit to the public". Reluctance to continue installing street lamps hinged partly on TGME's observation that free maintenance and electricity was being abused by virtue of lamps being left burning during daylight. Complaining in 1924 to PRHC, TGME noted that its expenses would be reduced if its facilities were given "at least the reasonable attention and treatment which ... the Company is entitled to expect".

In time, TGME withdrew free streetlight maintenance and even began charging for estimating the likely costs of additional lighting.

Objections about water wastage by private users and by PRHC's leaky water cart were followed by similar withdrawal of free supply. From 1924 PRHC were allowed a certain amount of free water per day, thereafter a fixed scale per consumption unit was applied. In this matter of public facility provision TGME had a clear advantage over PRHC, typified in its attitude during a drought (1924) that "the decision as to a restricted supply of water for street watering... must rest absolutely in our hands".

**LAND USE**

Beyond the calls made upon TGME for materials and labour, another important category of dependence involved land. From its inception in 1915, PRHC requested permission to use Company land for purposes intrinsic to the business of a local authority. For example, request was made for land for a stock slaughter yard, for construction of an animal pound and a kraal for PRHC draught animals, and for use as a dumping site. Grant of a land servitude for such purposes was usually given on the understanding that should it ever be needed for mining purposes, then land would revert to the Company. Uncertainty about future mining land requirements presented severe problems in relation to irreversible uses such as cemeteries, but not otherwise. In the case of land for shambles (abattoirs) PRHC was advised that the Company retained the right to terminate the agreement at three month's notice, and that the grant was made "on the understanding that no nuisance will be created in the neighbourhood... at the termination of the servitude (the) site will be left in a clean and healthy condition".

Similar conditions were attached to the award of sites for dumping, a compound for Africans employed in Pilgrims Rest and for a bus stop for African passengers. Terms on the compound site included a nominal monthly rental and a period of one month's notice. TGME stipulated that PRHC was to assume full control of and responsibility for residents so as to ensure that they were "kept in order". Residence in the compound was to be confined to bona fide servants of village residents. Smarting from having been reluctantly involved in the earlier town cleaning programme, TGME also insisted that PRHC undertake to remove and destroy all refuse in and around the compound if and when it was aban-

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**Footnotes:**

27 PRMA, TGMER: PRHC Minutes, 23.2.1925 and 16.11.1925; 20HC: Secretary PRHC — General Manager TGME, 18.5.1938; Secretary PRHC — Estates Agent TGME, 13.2.1936 and 8.3.1938; Estates Manager TGME — Secretary PRHC, 30.3.1939.
28 PRMA, TGMER Minutes, 19.7.1926.
29 Ibid.: PRHC Minutes, 14.2.1921.
30 PRMA, TGMER: Secretary PRHC — PRHC, 27.12.1917.
31 PRMA, TGMER: PRHC Minutes, 18.2.1924 (letter from TGME to PRHC).
32 PRMA, TGMER LB: General Manager TGME — Chairman PRHC, 30.6.1927.
33 PRMA, TGMER 20HC: Estates Agent TGME — Secretary PRHC, 26.10.1936.
34 PRMA, TGMER: PRHC Minutes, 21.8.1922.
36 PRMA, TGMER LB: General Manager TGME — Secretary PRHC, 30.5.1924.
37 PRMA, TGMER: PRHC Minutes, 17.3.1926 and 22.11.1926.
38 PRMA, TGMER LB: General Manager TGME — Secretary PRHC, 2.8.1916.
39 Ibid.: General Manager TGME — Chairman PRHC, 24.3.1917.
1GME was quite ready to advertise its generosity by claiming its allusion to a grim public record, PRHC was at the same excess of (PRHC) outlay”.45

In the matter of the compound site, as in other instances, TGME was quite ready to advertise its generosity by claiming that it had yielded and lost in a land grant. In this case, TGME in 1916 claimed that it had vacated the compound site “at a considerable inconvenience and expense ... to meet the wishes of (PRHC)”.44 As if pressing for advantage, the Company was later (1932) to argue that the compound had become a great source of worry and expense owing to its proximity to TGME’s electric tramway and trees.42

In 1925 PRHC sought to establish tighter control over the town hall by purchasing both site and structure. TGME refused to grant freehold, referring once again to the possibility that in future the site might be needed for mining purposes.48 Sale of the hall alone was agreed to, with the proviso that TGME would not incur any transfer costs or legal expenses.49 A figure of £100 (half the estimated value of the building) was settled upon. A nominal land lease renewable at five year intervals was fixed, and TGME made a donation of £25 for building improvements.50 Additional assistance was extended by TGME which gave rebates on electricity charges when extraordinarily heavy use was made of the hall.51

**BUILDING TENANCY**

Although PRHC kept offices in the village, there is no record of leasing arrangements. The sole instance of tenancy by PRHC for which there is archival material, concerns use of St. Mary’s hall. In 1918 PRHC negotiated with TGME for lease of the building as a town hall. Making much of its intention to grant the lease for public benefit, TGME undertook to continue paying fire insurance on the building. For its part, PRHC was to furnish the hall, pay insurance on the furniture, maintain and repair the structure, and absorb the costs of sanitary provision.46 Electricity, piped water and earth closets were installed by TGME in 1919; costs were waived.47

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**FINANCE**

For major purchases and projects TGME sought overdraft funds from the provincial authorities. Loans (with interest) were obtained for purchase of sanitary equipment (£300 in 1915, extended by £100 in 1916) and a water cart (£100 in 1919), as well as for expenses incurred during the influenza epidemic (£200 in 1919) and for town hall costs (£50 in 1933). Requests for a donation toward establishment and maintenance of a public park (£25 in 1919), for assistance with the acquisition of fire fighting equipment (1919), for money for an abattoir (1945) and a house for PRHC’s secretary and health inspector (1950s) were turned down by the Transvaal Provincial Administration.52

The dependency of PRHC on the assistance of TGME with labour, land and materials carried significant financial implications. Cautious from the first, TGME warned that it did not intend to incur any major expense by virtue of the exis-

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42 PRMA, TGMER HC32: General Manager TGME — Secretary for Public Health, 12.7.1932.
46 PRMA, TGMER LB: General Manager TGME — Secretary PRHC, 15.2.1918.
47 PRMA, TGMER 13D: General Manager TGME — Chairman PRHC, 30.9.1919.
48 PRMA, TGMER LB: General Manager TGME — Secretary PRHC, 2.3.1925.
49 Ibid: 23.3.1925.
50 PRMA, TGMER: Minutes, 23.2.1925, 23.3.1925, 18.5.1925 and 8.6.1925.

30 CONTREE 20
Complaints and Mediation

The role of PRHC as debtor and beneficiary, and that of TGME as creditor and benefactor were not exclusive. Each organisation watched over the other’s neglect. In addition, the Company also acted as mediator between PRHC on the one hand, and TGME employees and village residents on the other.

It has already been shown that in the case of the halt for African passenger buses, TGME funnelled complaints from its employees to PRHC. Residents within the formal boundaries of Pilgrims Rest village also directed complaints to TGME, whether deliberately (because they regarded the Company as having more leverage with PRHC) or accidentally (out of ignorance about the domain of PRHC). Some of these complaints concerned the behaviour of Africans as well as their accommodation and sanitary facilities.

TGME itself initiated some complaints about village management. For example it pointed out that disrepair of fences around the park encouraged trespassing and misuse, and lodged objections about the absence of vehicular traffic regulations. Company officials complained about PRHC’s draught oxen and mules roaming destructively through vegetable gardens, about “disgraceful” conditions at the sanitary disposal site and about waste-water nuisance, an inadequate sanitary service, and leaky buckets.

The tenor of TGME correspondence with PRHC on these matters showed frustration, as when TGME saw fit to give the avuncular advice that certain of PRHC’s difficulties would be disposed of with more and better labour supervision. TGME was also dismayed that the Health Committee seemed unable to execute properly even its most basic function. As one village resident claimed in 1948, sanitation arrangements provided by TGME for its houses outside the Health Committee area were superior to those organised by PRHC.

In village affairs PRHC was, however, not always cowed and mute. On occasion it even challenged mighty TGME for contravening regulations. For example, notice was served on the Company that drains on its village properties were malfunctioning. In a notable case during 1945, the health inspector advised TGME of its unauthorised construction of buildings in the Health Committee area and allowed five days for submission of plans. Faulted in this fashion, TGME was reduced to requesting an extension of the deadline on the grounds that it did not have the staff to prepare the necessary plans. The Company also asked that its violation be regarded sympathetically on grounds that the buildings were intended to accommodate returning soldiers. According to the request, the PRHC health inspector added almost apologetically that “there is no intention whatsoever of stopping building ... as every one knows just what the housing position is like ... I think I can assure you of the Committee’s most sympathetic consideration ... but at the same time it will also be understood and appreciated that the Committee must perform its duties in terms of the regulations.”

PRMA, TGME 13D: General Manager TGME — Secretary TGME, 7.9.1915.
PRMA, TGME 13D: General Manager TGME — Provincial Administrator, 24.8.1915.
PRMA, TGME 13D: General Manager TGME — General Manager TGME, 17.9.1915.
PRMA, TGME 13D: General Manager TGME — Secretary TGME, 7.9.1915.
PRMA, TGME 20HC: Estates Manager TGME — Secretary PRHC, 13.2.1936, 26.10.1936, 11.3.1937, 10.5.1937, 23.9.1937 and 24.4.1947; Estates Manager TGME — General Manager TGME, 8.10.1937; Nevin — Estates Manager TGME, 12.4.1948.
Ibid: Nevin — Estates Manager TGME, 12.4.1948; HC32: General Manager TGME — Secretary PRHC, 13.4.1948; Estates Manager TGME — Secretary PRHC, 24.12.1951.
PRMA, TGME 13D: General Manager TGME — Secretary TGME, 7.9.1915.
PRMA, TGME 13D: General Manager TGME — Health Inspector PRHC, 4.9.1945.

Contree 20
It was obedience to these regulations which in 1948 had TGME seeking PRHC approval for a standard design African house it proposed erecting for its employee's servant resident in the Health Committee area.66

Just as residents sometimes looked to TGME to galvanise the Health Committee into action, so too there was at least one occasion on which PRHC sought intervention by TGME. The matter in question was default on sanitary payment by one of its Company employees over a period of nearly a year. After taking legal advice, PRHC turned the matter over to TGME: "... the Provincial auditors repeatedly point out that there cannot be bad debts in Pilgrims Rest where sanitary services are concerned, because, they maintain, ... the TGME as owner is responsible for payment of sanitary fees if the occupier defaults."67

Although TGME disagreed with this interpretation of PRHC regulations, it nevertheless undertook to help extract the arrears payment.68 After his repeatedly delaying payment, the Company eventually warned one offender that he risked being evicted from the village.69

THE QUALITY OF CO-OPERATION

As indicated, the surviving written record of relations between TGME and PRHC allows discernment of significant material transactions. Certain of the archival material also contains a transparent record of momentary attitudes of PRHC and TGME officials toward one another and their respective organisations. The record of any cumulative and enduring spirit of rivalry or grudging liaison is more opaque. It does appear however that the jaundiced relationship which erupted during the infancy of PRHC, attenuated with the establishment of Pilgrims Rest Health Committee, the Provincial Administrator, not TGME, was the third party in the dispute.71

CONCLUSION

Until the establishment of Pilgrims Rest Health Committee, the village appeared an inconvenient accessory in the extractive relationship which TGME had with both its employees and its land. Notwithstanding its interest in keeping the settlement operational, TGME had never involved itself earnestly in village management. The creation of a local authority was not an effort on its part to shed an onerous public burden which it resented carrying.

Established so as to manage everyday and unglamorous village affairs, the work of the volunteer Health Committee was a thankless and more or less haphazard task. It was made less attractive and more difficult still by its shaky financial foundations. On the one hand the Health Committee regulations made no special provision for the peculiar position of Pilgrims Rest as an isolated settlement which, being on privately owned, unrated mining land, made the local authority critically dependent on the viability of a mining company and its goodwill. On the other hand, the Committee was also subordinate to remote provincial authority and was unable to act freely and quickly of its own accord.

These circumstances created an unavoidable condition of institutional patronage and servility in the village, according to which the power and status of the local authority were respectively made contingent and secondary. The mine company preserved its rights jealously and came to regard the Health Committee as a useful but errant offspring to whom terms of conduct had to be dictated and periodic reminders and scoldings issued. Clearly, public administration in Pilgrims Rest was far from being a simple and tranquil affair, notwithstanding the official view that "as the interests of the Camp and Mine — to use the old distinctions — rarely clashed, a happy atmosphere of trust and co-operation was maintained."78

66 PRMA, TGME, file 803 titled "Native Labour — General, no. 43": Estates Agent TGME — Secretary PRHC, 21.6.1948.
67 Ibid: Estates Agent TGME — Secretary PRHC, 27.9.1951.
68 Ibid: Estates Agent TGME — Secretary PRHC, 11.2.1936.
69 Ibid: Estates Agent TGME — Secretary PRHC, 21.5.1946.
70 Ibid: Estates Agent TGME — Secretary PRHC, 12.2.1936.
71 Ibid: Estates Manager TGME — J. Greaver, 7.2.1940.
72 Ibid: PRMA, TGME: PRHC Minutes, 23.5.1927.
73 Ibid: PRHC Minutes, 18.2.1924.
74 Ibid: PRMA, TGME: PRHC Minutes, 26.3.1926.
75 Ibid: PRMA, TGME 15D: General Manager TGME — Chairman PRHC, 4.4.1916.
76 Ibid.
77 PRMA, TGME LB: General Manager TGME — Chairman PRHC, 24.3.1917.
78 Ibid.
79 Ibid.
81 Ibid: PRMA, TGME HC32: General Manager TGME — Secretary for Public Health, 12.7.1932.
82 Ibid.
83 Ibid.
84 Ibid: PRMACAD, TPB 1175, 10/9559: Memorandum from Pilgrims Rest Protest Committee accompanying letter to Provincial Secretary from Secretary PRHC dated 21.3.1946.
85 Ibid.