of the word. These were, inter alia, oNdini, eMlambongwenya and Kwa-Gqokazi to name but a few.


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The attractive dustcover and numerous photographs and illustrations place this publication in the same class as a number of other centenary publications, notably those for Stellenbosch and the Paarl Valley.

First of all this is a book commemorating the 150 years of existence of the city of Pietermaritzburg. Situated in the Natal Midlands, it began as a Voortrekker village, became the capital of colonial Natal and is now acknowledged as an ‘African city’. This is a distinction also emphasized by the contents of this book, which follow broad subject definitions, but are not strictly chronological.

In total, 73 authors contributed short pieces on a wide variety of subjects. These contributors range from professional historians to citizens reminiscing about their past experiences in specific areas of interest. The result is more of a ‘potted’ history which deals with the myriad of influences which have shaped Pietermaritzburg into what it has become today. While illustrating the city’s diversity, the book lacks a certain amount of continuity.

The introduction comprehensively discusses existing literature on Pietermaritzburg. Chapter One provides information on the physical setting, environment and location of the city. The second chapter covers the history of the area before the coming of the whites. Chapter Three gives an overview of the development of the city with sections on the Voortrekker dorps, the early decades of white settlement, the colonial town, the apartheid city, Pietermaritzburg today, and the post-apartheid city. In Chapter Four the architectural development of its buildings and the growth of parks and gardens are discussed. Two contrasting sections of the city are dealt with in Chapter Five: the outer city as embodied in the black township of Edendale, the Vulindlela district (the old Swartkop Location) and Sobantu Village; and the inner city as encompassed by life in the Loop Street area. The more formal history of Pietermaritzburg as a colonial capital city, and later a provincial capital, is presented in Chapter Six. Included are sections on the Natal parliament, the city as a legal centre, royal visits and information on Langalibalele’s trial and M.K. Gandhi’s admission as an advocate. The influence of the military presence on city life is the subject of Chapter Seven, while Chapter Eight outlines Pietermaritzburg’s development as the economic centre of the Natal Midlands. Simply entitled ‘Educational capital’, Chapter Nine traces the city’s growth as a centre for all levels of education, including its various museums. The diversity of the city’s religious heritage is covered in Chapter Ten. Hospitals and health care feature in Chapter Eleven: politics and protest in Chapter Twelve: the arts and entertainment in Chapter Thirteen; and sport and recreation in Chapter Fourteen. There is a concluding chapter entitled ‘Building the future’. The book also has boxed inserts providing interesting snippets of additional information. Although there are no footnotes, a select list of sources gives the works consulted for each chapter.

Although the chapter divisions are according to subject, the sub-divisions within these chapters do not necessarily follow on from one another, nor are they connected in terms of content. No doubt this is partly due to a desire to cover all facets of the city’s history. The tendency has been to record the lesser-known history of the city, which makes the book interesting and highly readable.

Features are not only the city’s white inhabitants, but also those of other race groups. Despite living on the peripheries of the city, they have over the years played an integral part in its history, growth, and development. This book also attempts to deal with the disparities encountered by the citizens in terms of opportunities, facilities and services. No longer will historians be able to write histories of South African towns concentrating only on the contributions of the whites. Cognisance will have to be taken of the contribution of other groups.

The editors have succeeded admirably in fulfilling their hope of creating a ‘lasting tribute’ and have revelled in having the opportunity to give back to the people of the city ‘their past and to interpret the present’. The result is a complete picture, and while being a celebration of the city’s past this book also looks to the future with an overwhelming message of optimism.

A. DE V. MINNAAR
Human Sciences Research Council

The Drakenstein Valley is not only known for its scenic beauty, good wines and delicious fruit. It was here that the Afrikaans language, the wagon industries and various industries of southern Africa were established. Furthermore, the valley was also the home of the Huguenots, as well as personalities like the Revs S.J. du Toit and Andrew Murray, and C.P. Hooghenour. There are over 300 mountains, many interesting facts to be found in this beautiful work on the history and development of the Paarl Valley over the past three hundred years.

Arie Oberholster, editor, and Pieter van Breda, both from the HSRC’s Institute for Historical Research, must be congratulated on this excellent work, the publication of which must have been a tremendous task.

Not many historical works of this nature have been published in South Africa. Similar publications include Stellenbosch 300, Pieterburg: die eerste eeu 1886-1986, and Pietermaritzburg 1838-1988. Paarl Valley 1687-1987 is however the first of its kind. The history and development of three (four when Pniel is added) towns in this region are discussed, and in this respect it differs in principle from the other publications mentioned. This fact, and also the involvement of thirteen co-authors, made the task of the editor that much more difficult.

From the source references and the list of sources it is clear that thorough research was done by all who made a contribution. The publication gives a historical background of nearly every aspect of the region, viz. evolution of the landscape; white settlement up to 1700; local government institutions; communication; economics; history of the church and education; cultural development; facets of the community such as interesting personalities, famous visitors, medical services, service organizations, sport and recreation; defence, law and order, and first political developments since 1795. This thematic approach gives a clear and well-structured picture of the development over the past three centuries.

Significant, too, is the macro-approach which links the economic, geographical and other aspects of the various towns mentioned. In fact, the history, development and growth of the valley is compared with one another. In this respect, Chapter Five gives a clear indication that agriculture played a prominent role right from the beginning. The production of wine, and later fresh fruit, became the most important substantial agricultural activities of the Drakenstein Valley. Obviously, industries, trade and finance developed later as a result of agriculture. No doubt the economy of the region is, still today, based on the well-established agricultural development.

Much effort was made with the presentation and layout of the publication itself. The attractive dustcover shows a photograph of the Paarlberg with Table Mountain in the background. The letter type was a good choice whilst the language reads easily. Other things that stand out are the title page and so forth, which is well chosen and well placed and give the reader an interesting view of the past. The statistical figures are used in such a way that they do not disturb the reader but, in fact, help to create a historical perspective. Lastly, the index, the references and the chronology at the back of the book will help the reader to easily refer to a particular source.

The year 1687 saw the allocation of the first farms along the Berg River to a number of free burghers by Simon van der Stel. The allocation of these farms represents the establishment of the first permanent settlement in this region. The reason for this view is given in the preface by the editor himself: "It is clear from historical evidence that Khoi were already visiting this region. The little that is known about the Khoi tells us that they were not permanent. They eventually played an important role in the history of the region. The statistical figures are used in such a way that they do not disturb the reader but, in fact, help to create a historical perspective. Lastly, the index, the references and the chronology at the back of the book will help the reader to easily refer to a particular source.

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