



J. LABAND and R. HASWELL (eds). *Pietermaritzburg: 1838-1988, a new portrait of an African city*. University of Natal Press and Shuter & Shooter: Pietermaritzburg, 1988. 286 pp. Illus. R49,95 (exclusive). ISBN 0 86980 639 4.

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 dorp, 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 contents. 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.

Featured 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 opportunity, 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.

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