



HISTORICAL SNIPPETS **JOHANNESBURG STATION AND** **SPRINGS – KRUGERSDORP RAILWAY** **LINE**

Extracts from the publication “The buildings, steam engines and structures of the Netherlands South African Railways” (NZASM) by de Jongh, van der Waal, Heydenrych.

The pioneer railway contractor George Pauling built the Rand Tram line.

‘The question as to the name “tram “and not “train “or “railway” was used for the proposed iron road has been the subject of some speculation. It has been stated that that the conservative Transvaalers strongly objected to railways as the invention of the devil. To bypass this difficulty the term Tram instead of railway was used. The concession to build the Rand Tram was granted in 1887. The whole of the Rand Tram Springs to Krugersdorp 81 km in length was operational on the 10th February 1891.

Although originally intended for the transport of coal and materials for the mines it, with the ribbon development of the residential areas north of the outcrop of the gold bearing reef, developed into a line for the transport of passengers. The Rand Tram had proportionally the greatest number of stations and halts. In 1890 the stations and halts on the Boksburg Johannesburg route were Johannesburg (today Braamfontein), Park (today Johannesburg), School (today Jeppe), Jumpers (today Cleveland), Elandsfontein (today Germiston)

The halt School was in Jeppestown and took its name from one of Johannesburg’s earliest schools, the well-known St Mary’s, just a block from the railway halt. Due to the mining and prospecting activities south of the town the authorities routed the railway line just to the North of Noord Street. A strip of land had to be expropriated in Jeppestown and the owners the Ford and Jeppe Company consented on one condition that all passenger trains would stop at School Halt.

Between 1891 and 1896 nine additional halts had to be provided two of which were Doornfontein and George Goch. By 1896 the names School and Jumpers became Jeppe and Cleveland respectively. In 1895 construction began on two important station buildings at Krugersdorp and Jeppe. In 1896 a simple halt building was erected at Doornfontein halt.

I have been led to believe that the railways had a hospital near Doornfontein Halt.

It is asked why all the Government Departments (State enterprises) in South Africa are in Pretoria except the Railway Headquarters in Johannesburg. The reason being that after the cessation of hostilities (Anglo boer war)1902 neither the Director of the Imperial Military Railways, the amalgamation of all the railways in South Africa, sir Percy Girouard nor the High Commissioner had a liking for Pretoria and even Lord Roberts prolonged his stay in Johannesburg as it was the nerve centre of South Africa.

In the meantime with the formation of the Central South African Railways under Thomas Price General Manager a new Headquarters building was envisaged and the award winning design by a member of the engineering staff Thomas A Moodie was accepted. The Noord and Joubert Street wings were completed in 1905 and 1907 respectively. The Rissik Street wing to match Moodie's design was added in 1915 but the subways at the end of Joubert Street had to wait until the station building was built in 1932. The subway under Joubert Street still exists but with the lowering of the tracks by 14 ft (4.27m) with the building of the new train station and platforms the subway under the tracks was demolished and concourse level is now at (ground) road level with steps down to the platforms.

Sir Herbert Baker who designed amongst others the Union Buildings and Pretoria Railway Station building was a contemporary of Sir Edwin Lutyens RA. Their style of architecture was similar as can be seen by comparing the Government buildings in New Delhi India designed by Lutyens with the Union buildings Pretoria designed by Sir Herbert Baker.

Lutyens was the architect of the Johannesburg Art Gallery that was built facing South towards the railway line but should have been facing north towards Joubert Park. The draughtsman in the UK indicated the North Point on the plan as if the building was to be built in the Northern Hemisphere with the main entrance facing south. Thus the error in building the Gallery with the main entrance facing the railway line instead of facing Joubert Park. This has now been rectified with the extension to the gallery with the entrance now on the North side facing the Joubert Park. The original parapet railing on Twist Street Bridge was designed by Lutyens.

Prior to the second world war (1939-1945) Jeppe and Mayfair stations (halts) were lowered and subsequent to the war Johannesburg station was enlarged with the expropriation of the Wanderers sports grounds and the level of the tracks lowered 14 ft (4,27m) this enabled the subway (Harrison street) and flyover (Nugget street) under and over the tracks respectively to be eliminated and the bridges over the tracks to be at ground formation level. The temporary wooden bridge provided over the tracks adjacent to the Harrison street subway to alleviate the traffic congestion at the time of the Empire Exhibition was also eliminated with the building of the new Harrison Street Bridge.

With the building of the new Johannesburg train station it was necessary to eliminate all steam traction and freight trains.

This resulted in the Johannesburg market at Kazerne(Newtown) to be relocated at City Deep and the railway marshalling yard and goodsheds at Prospect now known as New Kazerne

For the building of the lowered and enlarged Johannesburg station it was necessary to expropriate the Wanderers sports grounds the main sporting facility in Johannesburg where greyhound racing, cricket, tennis and other sports were exercised. The Wanderers facilities were relocated in the northern suburbs of Johannesburg on Corlett Drive.

Further proposed railway developments of Johannesburg that did not come to fruition

PROPOSED RAIL COMMUTER SYSTEM FOR JOHANNESBURG

In 1946 a joint railway and municipal group was formed to investigate the provision of a combined underground and surface metropolitan railway passenger service for Johannesburg. The report of this group must be available in the archives of the Johannesburg municipality

It is recognized worldwide that the most efficient and effective way of moving people within a densely populated metropolitan area is by means of a rail guided mass transport system.

The following extracts from the presidential addresses of the Presidents of the South African Institution of Civil Engineers.

Mr William Marshall Clark President of the South African Institution of Civil Engineers in 1948 then General Manager of the South African Railways one of the investigating team of 1946 stated "I predict severe road congestion in Johannesburg and consideration must be given to an underground commuter system to serve Alexandra and other areas. Transportation is of vital interest in the world and was becoming more complex in a modern society."

Mr Frederick Jackson President of the South African Institution of Civil Engineers in 1964 stated "in 1946 an investigation committee comprised of Municipal and Railway officials in analyzing the rapid transport system of various countries found it feasible and reasonably inexpensive to provide Johannesburg with an underground system as being the most efficient and advantageous yet admittedly the most expensive. It is essential to plan the routes and acquire the land at this stage"

Although a rough route was proposed at that stage no further action was taken.

The reason for this was that, by hearsay, it was not within the Railway Act to provide a metropolitan railway network. The Johannesburg Council was to provide the funds to build the line and it would be operated as a guaranteed line, by the South African Railways, as was the case of private sidings and the extensions of the main lines for the sole purpose of serving a private company.

With the change in Government and the proclamation of the Group Areas Act involving the development of the SouthWestern Townships (SOWETO) a further commuter line from SOWETO to Johannesburg became a necessity in the early 1950's. The one end of the line to take off at New Canada Junction to Naledi and at the other end, Mr Fred Jackson then Resident Engineer Reef Construction proposed that the line take off at Crown Station and end at West Street which was on the earlier proposed route of the underground commuter system for Johannesburg.

The Crown Westgate line was built during 1955-1956 and the route plan indicated the proposed route of the M1 motorway in the vicinity of Westgate. Consideration had to be given to the siting of the station for the proposed future extension of the line to link up with the extension of the Booyens-Faraday line.

At the time of the building of the Crown Westgate line further preliminary routes were investigated.

From the end of the Crown- Westgate line to extend cut and cover under Village Road to join the Booyens- Faraday line extended constructed cut and cover down Eloff Street and tunnel under the new Johannesburg Station, still under construction, with an underground station and pedestrian connections to the mainline station.

The route in tunnel would then extend to exit in the vicinity of the Wilds now Harrow Road exit of the now M1 motorway extended further above ground virtually on the route of the present M1 to serve Alexandra Township turning sharply in a South Westerly direction to pick up Braamfontein Spruit tunnel under the Witwatersrand in the vicinity of Millpark and Braamfontein yard to exit and link up at Crown Station.

With the building of the Gautrain should an underground commuter railway system be contemplated the proposed route will have to be amended to accommodate the Goutrain Park Station

Compiled by P.H.Louw