

THE GARDEN CITY OF PINELANDS, SOUTH AFRICA

The development of Pinelands has a unique role in the history of South Africa as it was the first town-planned area to be established in the country.

The idea of a new form of city based on economic and scientific principles was postulated by Ebenezer Howard in his book *Garden Cities of Tomorrow*, published in 1898. The concept, outlined in this book was that an estate could be bought and held in trust, first as security for debenture holders and second, in trust for people of the garden city. He conceived the idea of a planned town with public buildings and a park being built in the centre. Around the park would be situated a great arcade containing shops and other commercial activities. Houses and work areas would be surrounded by gardens and standards of architecture were to be established in order to maintain the beauty of the original site. The shops and factories whilst accessible to workers would be built where they would not spoil the landscape. This concept was a far cry from the sub-human level of housing which had resulted from the Industrial Revolution. Ebenezer Howard's intention was that the community would retain for its own benefit portion of the income derived from commercial sites and by this means be able to establish sites for recreation and leisure pursuits. His ideas led to the formation of the Garden Cities Association and the subsequent establishment of Letchworth and Welwyn, England, the world's first Garden Cities.

Immediately after the First World War, conditions in the urban areas of South Africa were deteriorating rapidly. The diamond and gold rush had brought many people to towns, the Great War had caused sharp rent increases and the influenza epidemic carried off thousands of people in the Cape Peninsula alone. Richard Stuttaford, a well-known merchant and city councilor of Cape Town, was convinced that better housing and living conditions were necessary to meet these problems and, on meeting Ebenezer Howard, was greatly impressed with the latter's ideas and schemes. As a result, in 1919, he persuaded the South African Government to grant the Trustees of the newly formed Garden Cities Trust 365 morgen of the Uitvlugt Forest Reserve for the purpose of establishing a garden city. He donated the then considerable sum of £10,000 to the Trust in order that it could pursue its objective "of providing better housing and social conditions for the people, the latter purpose to be construed in its widest sense".

In the 1880's, what is now Pinelands was all sandy waste, sporadically covered with wattle. Chief Langalibalele, a tribal Chief of the Hlubi of the Utrecht district and leaders of the Langalibalele Rebellion, was sent to the Cape where he was imprisoned on 4 August 1874. From the 27 August 1875, he was held on the farm Uitvlugt (transl. "The Escape") on the Cape Flats. The land adjoining Uitvlugt was Oude Molen (transl. "Old Mill") and was originally granted to one of the Free Burghers during the time of Jan van Riebeeck. When the Zulu War came to an end Cetewayo, King Panda's son, was captured and brought to Oude Molen as a prisoner of the Colonial Government. The farm Uitvlugt was later earmarked as a Forest Reserve by the Cape Colonial Government and tens of thousands of pine trees were planted to control the drifting sands from the Cape Flats, the isthmus between the main body of land and the peninsula proper. Langalibalele was sent back to Natal in 1887 and the original farmstead, situated in the area of the present Homestead Way, was occupied by the Forestry Officer.

The homestead was a spacious Dutch-styled house with walls of mud and stone which, during the early 1920's, had to be reinforced with concrete supports. Sadly, it was demolished in 1947.

In the early 1890's a rich clay pit was discovered in Uitvlugt and a brick-making business was set up on the site which is today the corner of Forest Drive and Alice's Ride (the latter so named because Princess Alice, wife of the Earl of Athlone who was Governor General of South Africa, often rode on horseback in the area). A shack was erected to provide living quarters and an office for the brick-makers. Excluding the farm homestead, this shack, subsequently occupied by the Estate Manager, Mr. Logan, was Pinelands' oldest building. It was demolished in 1955.

During the Anglo-Boer War (1898-1902), Uitvlugt was used as a remount camp by the British Army who used not only horses and mules, but also camels for certain purposes. The camels were later trained for postal duties in the Kalahari Desert by the South

African Postal Service. During later property developments in Pinelands bones identified as those of camels as well as hundreds of horseshoes and tent pegs were to be unearthed. At some stage, a Police Training Depot was established on the site of the present "Oval" cricket field.

In 1900, on the northern border of Pinelands and adjacent to the industrial area, N'dabeni, there were built a number of wood and iron hostel huts first used by the Cape Government to accommodate bubonic plague patients and later occupied by elderly people. The deaths of British Army nursing sisters here were recorded in a poem of Rudyard Kipling's "*They Who Died at Uitvlugt*". The elderly were subsequently housed at the Conradie Hospital, the which was founded in 1938.



Foundation Stone of Pinelands

Once the site for Pinelands had been determined and the Trust Deed drawn up it was necessary to commence the design and layout of the Garden City and a competition, open to local architects, was held. Although the first prize was awarded to John Perry the designs for the layout and various types of houses were rejected after being referred to Sir Raymond Unwin, the planner of the first Garden City of Letchworth. The architectural firm who had planned the development of Welwyn were then appointed to develop the Uitvlugt housing project and Mr. A. J. Thompson, the first Supervising Architect of Pinelands, was sent out from England for this purpose under a two year contract. The layout plan for Pinelands followed Howard's broad principles and allowed for plenty of open space. Strict building lines were adhered to and as Thompson foresaw that Pinelands would need more than one railway station, attention was paid to the siting of these with major roads being planned to lead to them. A small civic centre was located in the heart of the township. At the beginning of 1921, the layout of the first section of Pinelands was completed and in August 1921 the Trustees applied for a Government Housing Loan of £200,000 to cover the costs of the first group of houses. However, the Administrator of the Cape, Sir Frederick de Waal, had little faith in Pinelands and would not sponsor the loans for properties to be built in the area. Once again Richard Stuttaford, in addition to his initial £10,000 grant, had to deposit with the Administrator his own personal security for each loan granted.

J.W.P. (William) Logan was appointed the first Estate Manager of Pinelands on 23 July 1922 with a salary of £35 per month and free use of the house he occupied on the estate. The name "Pinelands" was suggested by the first Secretary of Garden Cities Trust, Percy Stuart Horne, in preference to the name "Midwood". As the township plan aimed to preserve the pines wherever possible the name appeared apt and was adopted on 11 August 1921.

"A Piano Comes to Pinelands" was a picturesque headline to a story published by the Cape Argus on 11 February 1922. The sub-headlines read "First house now occupied - others rapidly nearing completion". The pianist was Gurth Cox, an architect, who moved into the first house, No. 3 Meadway.



No.3 Meadway to-day



"Runnymede" to-day

The house had been completed in mid January 1922 and was roofed with thatch which was then the only roofing material permitted in Pinelands. At the end of February 1922, Dr/Mrs Edith Gertrude Pycroft (later John Perry's mother-in-law and herself a figure of stature in South Africa's medical history) occupied "Runnymede" at the north corner of The Mead and then A. J. Thompson took his family to live in what is now "Hampstead" on the corner of Meadway and Forest Drive. In Forest Drive between Meadway and the Raapenberg Bridge more cottages were built and by February 1922 there were three roads, a main avenue for heavy traffic (Forest Drive), a second for cyclists and lighter vehicles (Central Avenue) and a third for pedestrians. Care was taken to preserve the trees and each road was a long, natural avenue. Each of the newly built houses was different with no uniformity of type or price and they were designed to combine an attractive appearance with comfort and low cost.

By the end of 1922 there were 24 houses occupied and the population of Pinelands totaled 60. By this time the sum of only £15,000 from the Government Housing Fund had been invested. Electricity was installed in late 1922 to early 1923 and by 1924 there were 10 street lights in operation.

On May 25, 1923, four years after the project had been started, General J. C. Smuts laid the foundation stone in Central Square "to commemorate the founding of Pinelands", the first Garden City to be established under the Trust formed by the Union Government and Richard Stuttaford of Cape Town. Richard Stuttaford presided over the ceremony and mentioned that 34 houses had been completed, 49 were in the course of construction, and the total value of properties erected by June 1923 would exceed £100,000. In 1927, the Garden Cities Trust was incorporated as a not-for-profit section 21 company "Garden Cities". The Pinelands Development Company was established in 1930 to oversee the development of the area.

In April 1932, erf. No.509 at 15 Uitvlugt, Pinelands, was surveyed and, in July 1936 for a deposit of £175 against a purchase price of £875, **Emily Mary Scotton (later Pelteret)** purchased the property. She was to remain owner of the property until her death in January 1994; whereafter it passed via her daughter-in-law into the Pelteret Trust.

By that time, Pinelands had grown into a town of over 20,000 inhabitants. The area of the Garden City was 567 hectares with additional land having been acquired by the trustees, Garden Cities, in 1942. There were over 3,000 houses and 750 flat units and Howard Centre, together with Central Square one of the two shopping complexes, had developed into a thriving commercial area of shops and offices.

Until recently, perhaps the most significant feature of the development of Pinelands has been the establishment of a wide range of community facilities and activities. The Garden City built a number churches of different denominations, nursery, primary and secondary schools, homes for the aged, various sports clubs and a large number of social and cultural societies. Community spirit was always a hall-mark of its society; a society that "looked out" for each other and was charity orientated. Everyone knew

everyone else; and many families either returned to Pinelands having temporarily "drifted away" or have lived for several generations within its amiable environment. There remains a strong bias against "liquor" in the community and as such Pinelands is one of two "dry" suburbs in Cape Town (probably South Africa). It was these aspects of the development of Pinelands which, together with the attractive physical layout, played a major role in making the Garden City a tranquil, sought after place in which to live; bring up children or grow old.



Views of The Mead :

The Edwardian Pillar Post-box moved in the 1980's from outside the original Post-office (to-day a chapel) to its present site, seen together with the National Monument Stone laid in 1983

To many inhabitants, its wealth of history and the beauty of the early areas established in Pinelands made it important for Pinelands to preserve its heritage not only as the first Garden City laid out in South Africa and as such the forerunner of town planning in the country, as a tribute to a wonderful environment with a unique "old-world charm". To this end, The Mead and Meadway, with their little thatched "Cotswold" houses, were proclaimed National Monuments on 22 April 1983, with the intention of their standing for all time a tribute to those who visualised a garden city in South Africa and had the financial clout and political courage to carry their conviction through to fruition.



Views of Meadway :

original thatched-roofed cottages with Table Mountain as a back-drop to the west

In order to avoid incorporation into the City of Cape Town, the community of Pinelands voted to create an independent municipality of the then Pinelands Local Board. The municipality was promulgated on 5 March 1948 with Mr. William Gardener, the first mayor. In June 1997, Alderman Ron Strybis presided as last mayor over the last council meeting. Sadly, with the promulgation of legislation reorganizing local authorities, the independent Municipality of Pinelands was disbanded at that meeting, management control being vested in the Cape Town City Council and later the management of Cape Town Unicity. This change has been accompanied by a distinct change in character and a widely held perception that the (now) suburb of Cape Town and its people has lost considerably more than Cape Town ideologically would ever have gained.

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