

proceeded to the Witwatersrand next day, personally inspected the whole area, held meetings with interested parties and on 12 August 1886 they personally presented to the President and Executive Council a lengthy report (R.3871/86) dated that day and explained various points by reference to a plan drawn by Johann Rissik. The report recommended that the goldfields should not be thrown open without reservation for general pegging of claims but that mining leases should be granted to the owners and lessees of the land. This was a significant and far-sighted recommendation marking the transition to the modern Gold Law system of government mining leases. The report also recommended that a piece of Government ground situate between the farms Turffontein and Doornfontein — known as Randjeslaagte — was the most suitable site for a town. The Executive Council accepted these recommendations and decided that the town be laid out and be named “Johannesburg” after the names of the two Commissioners Johann Rissik and Christiaan Johannes Joubert and as one of the President’s own names was also Johannes.

Tenders were invited to survey the new town. The Executive Council accepted that of Jos E. de Villiers to whom Johann Rissik wrote on 5 October, 1886 giving detailed instructions on the survey and stating that



Nieuwe Gracht, Utrecht, where Johann Rissik's father Dr. G. H. Rissik lived from 1868 until his departure for Pretoria on 16 February, 1876

it would have the name "Johannesburg". The Executive Council wanted all stands to be 50 x 50 feet corner stands because they were more valuable. Johann Rissik managed to persuade the Executive to double the distances between streets to 200 feet and also to include the few open squares in the original town lay-out. Had it not been for him Johannesburg's central streets would have been only 100 feet apart and there would have been no open squares.

THE TRANSVAAL-MOÇAMBIQUE BOUNDARY

PRESIDENT KRUGER and the Executive Council on 2 December 1887 instructed young Johann Rissik as official representative of the Transvaal to settle the Transvaal-Moçambique boundary and welcome the arrival of the first train from Lourenço Marques at the border. He promptly left next day for Barberton. From there he and Surveyor Servaas de Kock travelled on horseback to the terminal railway station beside the Komati River in the Lebombo Mountains. They arrived there on 12 December 1887 and met Colonel Machado the Portuguese representative. The latter and Johann Rissik after a survey settled the beacons of the neighbouring Transvaal-Moçambique boundary and also the site of 320 morgen to be allocated by the Transvaal to the Portuguese Government for a railway station, customs office &c. On the afternoon of 14 December Johann Rissik met the first train from Lourenço Marques at the boundary railway terminus where Colonel Machado formally introduced him to the Governor-General, the Governor of Lourenço Marques, Sir Thomas Tancred and other dignitaries who welcomed him most cordially. They all returned in the train to Lourenço Marques at 6 p.m. and attended a large state banquet where Johann Rissik as Transvaal delegate was treated with the utmost attention and respect and responded to the toast of the Transvaal proposed by the Governor-General.

In his official report to President Kruger on 10 January 1888 he conveyed the Governor-General's special and warm greetings to President Kruger and the hope that the President had not forgotten that the Governor-General had had the honour to call upon the President, General Smit and Mr. du Toit when they visited Lisbon. The Governor-General also requested Johann Rissik to inform President Kruger that in his honour the locomotive that had taken the first train from Lourenço Marques to the border and back had been christened "Paul Kruger".

TRIBUTE

JOHANN RISSIK'S qualities of character, intelligence, tact and *savoir faire* that caused President Kruger and his Executive Council to delegate to him when only Assistant or Acting Surveyor-General and a very young man, the onerous responsibilities of reporting on the Witwatersrand Goldfields, determining part of the Transvaal-Moçambique boundary, &c., are well illustrated by his contemporaries. The first is The Hon. James Stratford

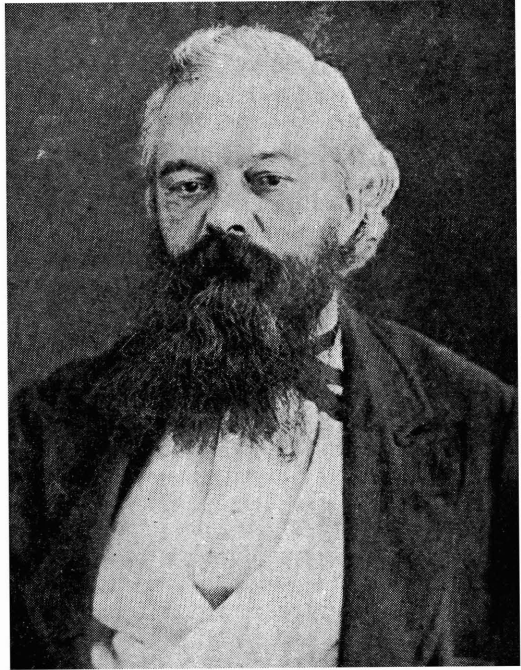
Chief Justice of South Africa in 1938 — “I must pay my tribute to one whom I always regarded with affection and respect. I first met Johann Rissik when an assistant to Vis and Relly who were doing important survey work on the Goldfields. On passing my survey exam at the Cape aged 22 (in 1891) I sought admittance as a Government Surveyor in the Transvaal. Rissik was then Assistant Surveyor-General but regarded by all as the real brains and head of the Survey Department — and by all too loved and admired. I passed my Dutch Exam and then presented myself to Johann Rissik to be examined in the laws relating to survey. He greeted me in his usual kindly hearty way and started asking me questions — but then interrupted himself ‘But this must be in Dutch!’ ‘Oh,’ I said, ‘I’ll do my best but I don’t expect that you will be able to understand me’. We thereupon stumbled along for a few minutes in Dutch, but being interested in the discussion we both drifted into English till the end — and I passed! I can only give my first and lasting impression of a man one instinctively liked and esteemed. The keynote to his character was kindness and sincerity and that was the instant impression one got from his first firm — very firm — hand-clasp. After I came back from Oxford to the Bar I met, at rare intervals, the same cordial friend who squeezed my hand in the same old way, who spoke with the same resonant voice and looked at you with the same direct eyes.”

The other contemporary is Mr. W. H. Auret Pritchard a distinguished Surveyor on the Witwatersrand from early days whose name is commemorated in Pritchard Street, Johannesburg — “In 1889 the Surveyors of the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek refused to take part in the general survey



*Johann Rissik's mother Neeltjie Rissik
 (b. Altmann 25.2.1826 in Texel, Holland,
 d. Rotterdam 13.8.1904), taken in Utrecht,
 Holland, 1876*

Johann Rissik's father Dr. G. H. Rissik (b. Dordrecht, Holland 9.4.1824, d. Pretoria 13.5.1881) taken in Pretoria, 1876



as a protest against the very low tariff of Surveyor's fees. President Kruger was very angry at their attitude and summoned them to appear before him. When the Surveyors arrived in Pretoria they were met by Johann Rissik then Acting Surveyor-General who was most courteous and friendly, but strongly advised them that when the President appeared they should not argue with him or answer him back in any way as that would only make matters worse. The Surveyors were then ushered into the reception room. The President entered limping with the support of a thick gnarled stick. He remarked to young Rissik that the Surveyors looked a fine lot of fellows who would make good officers. The President then proceeded to tell the assembled Surveyors off very severely and to point out to them that there was no justification whatever for their attitude and that the Surveyor's fees were very reasonable. As he was speaking he was getting more and more excited and advanced towards them brandishing his stick — so much so that those in front thought he might even strike them. Taking young Rissik's advice however, they said nothing and made no attempt to answer back. Finally the President said 'Don't forget that I have the sjambok which I shall use' and stalked out of the room. That night all the Surveyors