

Bernard ("Barney") Rissik, eldest son of Johann and Mimmie Rissik, killed in action in Flanders on 22 June 1915



Africa later that year to open the first Union Parliament and perform other duties including laying the foundation stones of the Johannesburg City Hall and the Union Buildings. The official Pretoria luncheon to the visitors after the latter ceremony was given by Johann Rissik in the pillared entrance hall of the Palace of Justice. His numerous public functions included opening in 1912 the new Pretoria Railway Station designed by Herbert Baker.

In 1914 the Labour Party under Adv. Frank Lucas obtained a majority of one in the Transvaal Provincial Council. Johann Rissik as Administrator needed all his patience and tact to surmount the continuous difficulties caused by the refusal of the Labour Party to serve on the Executive Committee because the Act of Union did not entitle it to a majority there notwithstanding its majority of one in the Council itself. On 26 May 1916 twenty Provincial Council members from the warring Labour and Unionist and Nationalist parties combined to reject the Executive Committee's budget. As a result the Province had no funds for its administration and services. To avoid poor and old people employed on relief work being deprived of their own and about 900 dependants' sole means of subsistence Johann Rissik personally paid their weekly wages until a finance vote was ultimately passed when one Provincial Councillor turned against his party.

"JOHANN RISSIK DRIVE"

IN 1916 the scenic road on the crest of the hills between Klapper Kop and Waterkloof was completed with the encouragement and assistance of Johann Rissik and named after him "Johann Rissik Drive". On 17 May 1960 the Mayor of Pretoria and the Chairman of the Waterkloof Peri-Urban Committee Dr. H. Goldin commemorated the opening of the widened and resurfaced Drive by a ceremony on the boundary of Pretoria and Waterkloof with refreshments in the reopened Klapper Kop fort.

RETIREMENT

JOHANN RISSIK was reappointed Administrator in May 1915. On 13 July 1917 he wrote the Prime Minister General Louis Botha: "As you know I have long contemplated retirement from the position of Administrator and following the discussion we had last night I herewith beg to tender my resignation if possible to take effect from the 24th instant. I beg to take this opportunity to place on record the cordial relations which have always existed between yourself, the members of the Ministry and myself. I have always received from Ministers every assistance and were it not for this the position of Administrator during the last three years would have been practically impossible. It is with very great regret that I take this step but I wish to say that I will always do my best to assist you and the Government as far as lies in my power".

On 17 July 1917 Mr. F. S. Malan replied, "On behalf of General Botha I have to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of 13th instant tendering your resignation as Administrator of the Province of the Transvaal as and from the 24th instant. I feel sure I am voicing the sentiments of the whole Cabinet when I tell you that your resignation has been received with very great regret. The Government is very pleased to be able to make use of your valuable services in another direction".

Many articles of gold and silver — keys for opening buildings, trowels for laying foundation stones, medals to commemorate ceremonial occasions &c, were presented to Johann Rissik during his active public life. Most of these his widow donated to public war funds during World War II for smelting for their precious metal content.

He was made a Railway and Harbour Commissioner in 1917 and a Public Debt Commissioner on 31 December 1919 and kept these appointments until his death. His last public act was on 11 June 1925 when he formally opened the Hercules — Magalies railway line through the Moot Valley.

THE END

IN 1923 Johann Rissik sold "Linschoten" Estate which was then laid out as a township under that name. In 1924 he moved into the new



Johann Rissik's only sister, Anna, wife of H. B. Marshall, Transvaal and Johannesburg pioneer and founder of Marshallstown, &c.



“Linschoten Huis” built in that township and designed by Gordon Leith in collaboration with Rissik’s old friend the well known Pretoria architect W. de Zwaan. The house was immediately below the site of the old reservoir on the corner of Park Street and Minni Street — so named by error in the original diagram instead of “Mimmie” Johann Rissik’s wife.

He had lived in the new house for only a few months when he died there on 26 August 1925. The service at the graveside in the Old Cemetery in Church Street West was conducted by Ds. H. S. Bosman of the Koch (now Bosman) Street Dutch Reformed Church whom he had known well since his arrival in Pretoria. His pallbearers were his old friends General J. C. Smuts, Sir Johannes Wessels, Judge J. S. Curlewis, Sir Julius Jeppe, Mr. H. C. Jorissen, Mr. Charles Bramley, his cousin Mr. C. Altmann and his brother-in-law Pieter Ulrich Leibbrandt. General Smuts spoke of Johann Rissik’s great services to South Africa. The simple granite tombstone was designed by the late Dr. Gordon Leith himself a Pretorian as a pious tribute to his much loved townsman.

ULRICH RISSIK.



BOARD OF NATIONALE BANK, Z.A.R., 1896

Standing left to right: V. Schoenmehl (Secretary), E. F. Bourke, T. Hugo (General Manager), H. Crawford, J. S. Marais, J. Rissik.

Sitting left to right: T. N. de Villiers, Dr. Magin, Karl Wolff (Vice-Chairman), T. W. Beckett (Chairman), G. A. A. Middelberg, J. N. Boshoff.

Keep the Children Quiet Mr. Fillis!

I WONDER how many Old-Timers can remember Fillis Circus? In the first decade of the century there was indeed little commercial entertainment for the young. So the rare and real thrill of those days was the advent of a circus. With what awe did we watch the disembarkment of the animals at the Station and the subsequent proud parade from there to Square. The site was then that vacant area behind Spencer & Marks' Building upon part of which the Mutual & Reserve Bank now stand.

There the Big Top was soon erected. Experienced parents then provided their young with the exact price of admission; for the hard-faced female in the Box Office (a genuine "virago intacta") was apt to short-change the unaccompanied children or so it was alleged —. Once in and seated we awaited with a lively sense of anticipation the thrills to come.

We laughed immoderately at the customary clowns, admired Mr. Fillis, the Ring Master, exhibiting his bare-backed fillies, both human and equine. But these sights but whetted one's appetite for the blood-curdlers to come. First, there was that dead-eyed dastard—hurling daggers—who fenced in the form of a frightened female, shrinking against a wooden wall. Thud . . . Thud . . . Thud . . . went the missiles — but not a vestige of blood anywhere. It was almost an anti-climax! Next there was the amazing motor-cyclist who looped-the-loop through fiery hoops, — over all too soon —.

Finally we emerged to watch Mr. Speedy dive from a tall ladder as high as the roof of the Palace of Justice into a canvass-walled tank of modest size. There aloft he would behave like a dubious debutante — now advancing his foot in measurement — now deciding against the awful ordeal—, with at intervals calling down "Keep the children quiet Mr. Fillis!" Then suddenly . . . suddenly an airborne hydronaut sped to earth with a mighty splash . . . and all was over! Over that is for at least a year, but memorable enough to be recalled more than fifty years later as I am doing now.

C. W. L. DE SOUZA.