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Johann Rissik Edition

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Johann Rissik in London, 1905. Photograph by Elliott & Fry

JOHANN RISSIK

A MEMOIR

BY

HIS SON ULRICH



*Johann Rissik, aged 6, in Linschoten,
Holland*

THE FAMILY

JOHANN FRIEDRICH BERNHARD RISSIK was born in Linschoten near Utrecht, Holland on 2nd February, 1857. He was the second son of the physician and surgeon Dr. Gerrit Hendrik Rissik who in 1868 moved to Utrecht. Johann received an excellent education in languages, literature, history, mathematics and science. At an early age he was fluent in Netherlands, English, German and French. He had a modest but firm character, an easy manner, an unaffected charm, a happy disposition and an extraordinarily retentive memory. Years after he had surveyed farms he would recall exact details of topography and measurements.

The President of the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek, Thomas Francois Burgers, met Dr. Rissik in Holland in 1875 and persuaded him to come to Pretoria as District Surgeon and Physician to the President. After a journey of six weeks from Utrecht to Durban and five weeks by ox-wagon from



*Johann Rissik's grandmother Johanna
Catharina Rissik (b. Geersmeyer
5.10.1797)*

Durban over Van Reenen's Pass and through the Orange Free State, Dr. Rissik arrived in Pretoria on 17 May, 1876 with his wife Neeltje (born Altmann 25-2-1826 d.13-8-1904), his four sons Frederik Hendrik (b.18-6-1855 d.23-2-1909), Johann Friedrich Bernhard, Cornelis (b.18-2-1865 d.1928) and Gerhard Hendrick (b.16-5-1867 d.30.7.1918) and his daughter Anna Maria (b.17.6.1861 d.27-12-1931). His son Sybrand did not accompany him to South Africa.

SURVEYOR-GENERAL

JOHANN RISSIK first worked as an assistant in his father's dispensary in Pretoria and then became a land surveyor. On 25 February 1882 he

Johann Rissik aged 20, Pretoria 1877



received an appointment signed by the State Secretary W. Eduard Bok as second government clerk in the Surveyor-General's Department at a salary of £200 per annum. The following year Johann Rissik then aged twenty-six and Christiaan Johannes Joubert were appointed as a commission of enquiry into complaints against the head of the Pretoria prison.

From his twenties Johann Rissik very frequently acted as Surveyor-General of the Transvaal. On 13 June 1895 President S. J. P. Kruger and State Secretary W. J. Leyds signed his appointment as Surveyor-General of the Transvaal. On 4 November 1898 he was appointed Surveyor-General of Swaziland.

JOHANNESBURG

ON 3 August 1886 the Executive Council of the Transvaal appointed Johann Rissik then Acting Surveyor-General and Christiaan Johannes Joubert the head of the Mines Department as a commission to report on the Witwatersrand farms proposed to be proclaimed as public gold diggings and to decide upon the place for the establishment of a town. They

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

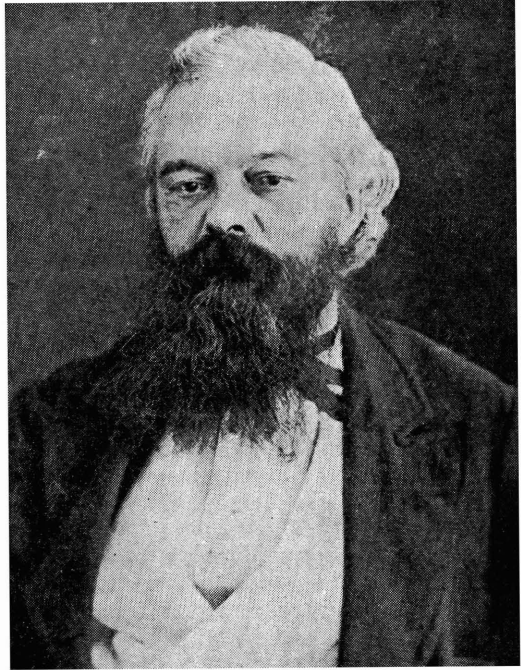
Chief Justice of South Africa in 1938 — “I must pay my tribute to one whom I always regarded with affection and respect. I first met Johann Rissik when an assistant to Vis and Relly who were doing important survey work on the Goldfields. On passing my survey exam at the Cape aged 22 (in 1891) I sought 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

were entertained by Rissik at the Pretoria Club. After they had waited some days for the President's ruling, Rissik was able to inform them that the President had decided to revise the Surveyors' Tariff in their favour."

PROPERTY OWNER

IN 1888 Johann Rissik, E. P. A. Meintjes and J. D. Celliers constituting the Trevenna Estate Syndicate bought 19 morgen 30 square roods called "Trevenna" of the farm Elandspoort 193 and divided it into erven and streets. E. P. A. Meintjes made a furrow over Trevenna leading water from the Aapies River to his water-wheel-operated mill beside the Church Street crossing of the river. In 1893 the Syndicate sold the Trevenna Streets to Johann Rissik.

He, Meintjes and Celliers had also been associated in the layouts of Sunnyside and Arcadia in which they also owned streets some of which are named after Johann Rissik — Johann Street in Arcadia and Rissik Street in Sunnyside. Rissik, Meintjes and Celliers agreed to the Pretoria Waterworks Co. Ltd., laying pipes in their streets in consideration for the company delivering water free of charge to Rissik's ten morgen property, "Linschoten", which he had in 1890 established as his home on open veld three miles east of Church Square. Rissik also agreed not to provide water from his own estate to neighbouring properties. He had on "Linschoten" a large reservoir fed with water by a canal from the source of Walker Spruit



Johann Rissik's wife Maria Magdalena Wilhelmina ("Mimmie") (b. Leibbrandt, Cape Town 10.4.1867, d. Pretoria 18.3.1947) taken in 1908



Pretoria Railway Station at the end of the last century.

on Nieuw Muckleneuk. This irrigated his own property and had also supplied water to his neighbours Advocate (formerly Judge) Ewald Esselen on the South West corner of Park and Meintjes (now Wessels) Streets, Edward Rooth (later member of Parliament for Pretoria Central) adjoining, Advocate J. W. Wessels (later Chief Justice of South Africa) on the South East corner of Park and Buiten (now Bourke) Streets and Advocate J. S. Curlewis (also later Chief Justice) on the North West corner of Park and Wessels Streets.

In 1903 the Pretoria Municipal Council succeeded to the rights of the Pretoria Waterworks Co. Ltd., and in 1905 repudiated the agreement. Rissik applied to the Supreme Court to order the Municipal Council to deliver the water to "Linschoten". Ewald Esselen K.C. and Charles Barry represented him. Advocate (formerly and also subsequently Judge) Gregorowski appeared for the Council. The Chief Justice Sir James Rose-Innes and Judge J. W. Wessels refused to grant the order but said they expressed no opinion whether Rissik had a right to compensation for non-delivery of the water. (Transvaal Law reports *Rissik v. Pretoria Municipal Council* (1907 T.S. 1024).

HOME

THE following appeared in "De Volkstem" on 11 September 1890 —
"Plaatselijk en Algemeen.

De Heer Johann Rissik, Asst. Landmeter-Generaal, vertrok op Dinsdag per coach van hier op een kuiertje naar Europa, met verlof van afwezigheid voor eenige maanden. Wij vernemen dat de heer Rissik eerst naar Kaapstad gaat, alwaar hij op den achsten October in het huwelijk zal treden met de jonge dame Miss Leibbrandt, waarna hij met zijne gade de reis naar Europa zal aanvaarden. De heer Rissik is zeer populair hier, en het is dus in't minst niet vreemd dat zijne vrienden en onderhoorigen hem, voor zijn vertrek, twee prachtig geillumineerde adressen met gepaste geschenken aanboden. Ook wij bieden de heer Rissik en zijne schoone beminde onze beste wenschen aan voor een lang en gelukkige huwelijksleven en een aangename reis naar Europa en terug".

On 8 October 1890 Johann Rissik married Maria Magdalena Wilhelmina ("Mimmie") Leibbrandt of Bree Street, Capetown, sixth child of Pieter Ulrich Leibbrandt during his lifetime a wine merchant and mayor of Capetown. The ceremony was conducted by the Rev. Gohl in the Lutheran Church, Strand Street, Capetown. They sojourned at the well-known Muizenberg Hostelry "Farmer Peck" (later the Grand Hotel) before embarking on a lengthy Grand Tour of Europe which they recorded in a sumptuous leather-bound gilt-embellished volume "OP REIS 1890—1891" weighing 24 pounds and measuring 19 x 14 x 4 inches.

On arrival in Pretoria they settled in the "Villa" recently completed



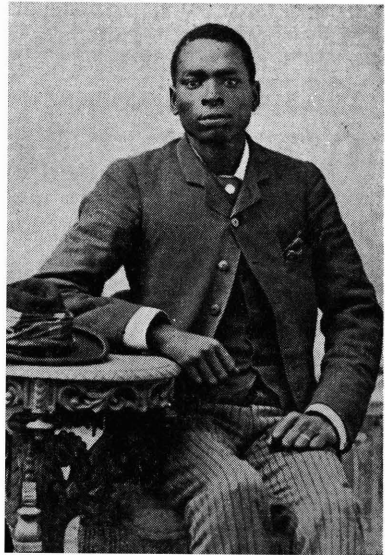
*Mimmie and Johann Rissik on the steps of their home "Linschoten",
Pretoria, shortly after their marriage on 8.10.1890*

on "Linschoten". The whole property soon became an imposing homestead beautified and improved by flourishing ornamental and fruit trees, shrubs, flowers and vegetables each individually described in orders placed by the thorough young Rissik — "Viminalis" Eucalyptus, "Devonshire Pippin" Apples, "Bride of Abydos" roses from Gowies of Grahamstown, "New York Improved Egg Plant" from J. L. Childs, New York, Blood-oranges from Malta, "Diospyros Kaki", persimmons from Japan, &c.

The green-fingered man tending orchards and gardens was Philemon Ramatlu Ferreira. As a very young man he became Johann Rissik's personal servant and attended to his horses. Later he was coachman and head gardener. In his fifties he learnt to drive a T-Model Ford and graduated to other makes. He was the ultra-cautious chauffeur and most zealous hooter-and-brake-user of Pretoria. He served the family faithfully for over half a century. In retirement at Wellington when travelling as a passenger, he was killed in a motor accident.

Another loyal member of the household from its early days for over thirty years was Bella MacDonald beloved by all children in the neighbourhood. In this "Linschoten" homestead of their own making Johann and Mimmie Rissik lived for thirty-three years and here their four sons were

P. R. Ferreira who served Johann Rissik and his family faithfully for over fifty years



born — Bernard on 8 March, 1892 (killed in action in Flanders on 22nd June, 1915), Harry, on 10 April 1894, Pieter Ulrich on 11 March 1896, and Johann on 8 November 1899 (died on 9 January 1904).

COMMUNITY HALL

BY 1898 the community near “Linschoten” had grown considerably but was without a centre for primary and Sunday School classes and general social activities. As a result the neighbouring owners built a small hall in the centre of Arcadia Park in which the new Pretoria Art Gallery now stands. The cost was met jointly by Johann Rissik and other nearby residents including Advocates Ewald Esselen, J. W. Wessels and J. S. Curlewis, Mr. Edward Rooth a well-known attorney, Mr. Gerard Rissik father of Gerard Rissik Governor of the South African Reserve Bank, Mr. Servaas de Kock a leading land surveyor living at the corner of Arcadia and Johann Streets and Mr. H. C. Jorissen (later Governor of the Reserve Bank) next door in Arcadia Street. Miss Adams and Mr. Eva ran an excellent Sunday School in the hall before its demolition about 1908.

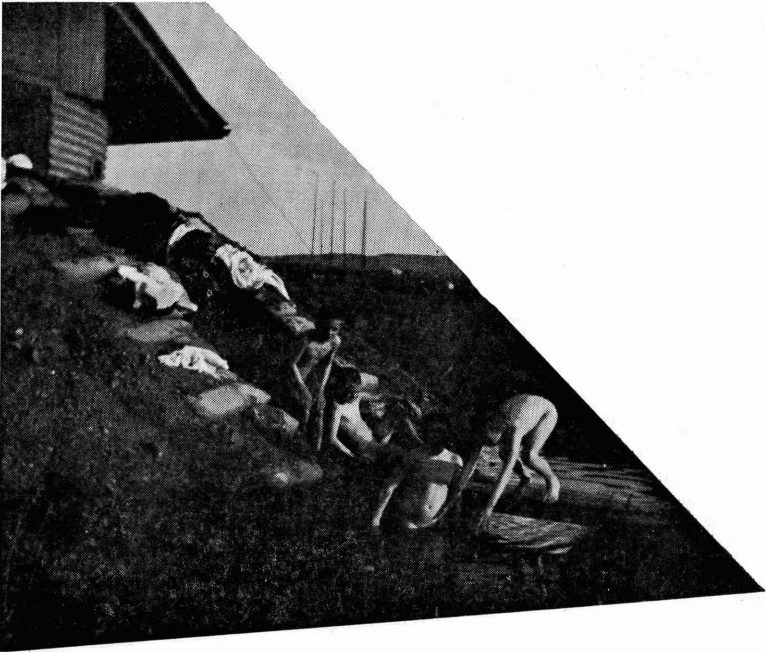
Johann Rissik was responsible for the enactment in 1891 of the General Survey Law under which the Republic was properly surveyed. He also contributed substantially to furthering accuracy, order and method in the Transvaal land registration system. On 13 September 1893 he was appointed a Commissaris (Director) of the Government-sponsored De

Nationale Bank der Zuid Afrikaansche Republiek Beperkt which had been incorporated by a special decree of the Volksraad on 9 August 1890 and which on 2 November 1925 amalgamated with two other Banks to form Barclays Bank D.C.O.

THE SPIRIT OF FRIENDSHIP

ON 29 December 1895 an armed force under L. S. Jameson invaded the Transvaal to join the Uitlanders in Johannesburg under the Reform Committee and overthrow the Kruger Government. The invasion was an abysmal failure. Jameson surrendered on 2 January 1896. The Reform Committee were arrested on 9 January and locked up in the Pretoria Gaol. They included H. B. Marshall the husband of Johann Rissik's only sister, founder of Marshall's township &c., as well as numerous friends. Johann and Mimmie Rissik with other Pretorians succoured their imprisoned relative and friends with food, drink and comforts.

Shortly after the end of the Boer War Johann Rissik had been dangerously ill in Pretoria. His physician Dr. H. P. Veale prescribed



Johann Rissik's sons and friends in 1904 bathing in moat of British block-house on what is now Hillcrest, Pretoria East

portwine for his convalescence. None could be obtained. Then without warning a case of Sandeman's best invalid port arrived at "Linschoten". It had been procured with the greatest difficulty and sent by one of the incarcerated Reform Committee who remembered Rissik's kindness — their Secretary J. Percy FitzPatrick a lifelong personal friend and political foe, writer of the topical and sensational attack on the Kruger Government "The Transvaal from Within" (1899) and later the famous author of "Jock of the Bushveld" (1907).

WAR

ON the outbreak of the Anglo-Boer War in 1899 Johann Rissik went on commando with General Louis Botha to whom he was always a trusted friend and adviser. After the British occupation of Pretoria and President Kruger's subsequent departure from the Transvaal, General Schalk W. Burger as State President at the Government's Field Headquarters on the summit of the Tautesberg, appointed Johann Rissik a member of a Special Court for the districts of Zoutpansberg and Waterberg to try a man for high treason. Johann Rissik wrote respectfully declining to act by reason of his lack of legal training.

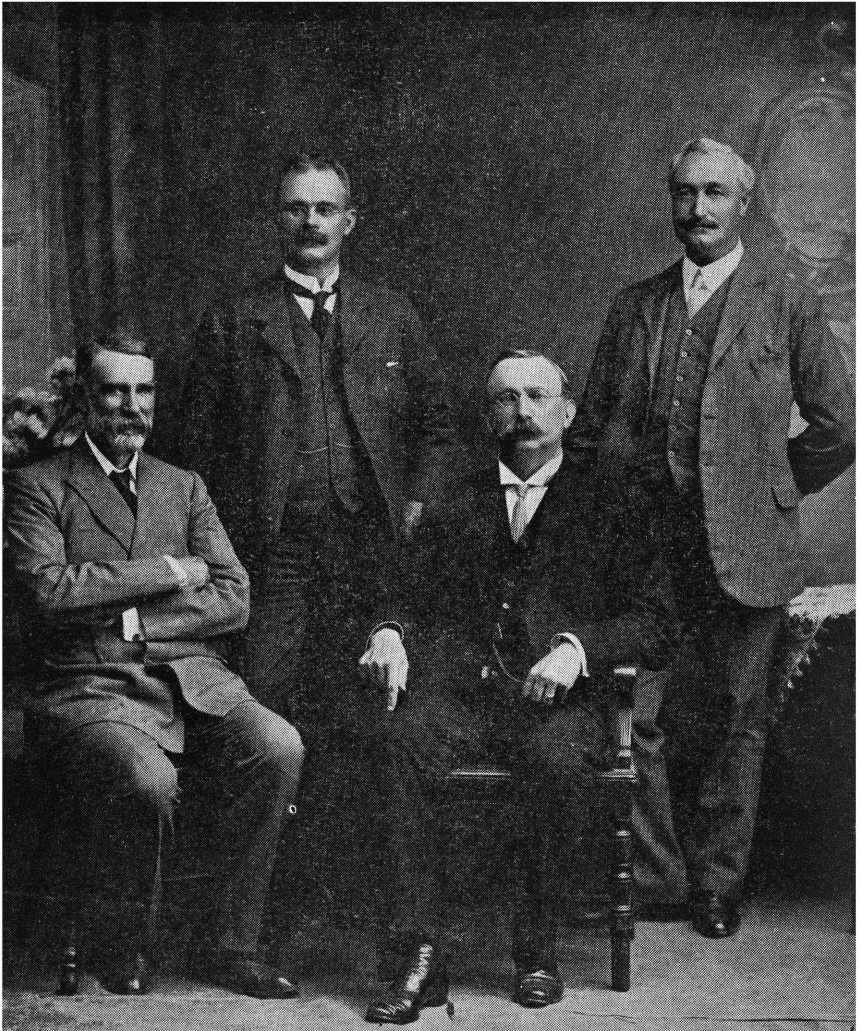
About the same time President Schalk Burger instructed Johann Rissik as a member of the Government Financial Commission at Pietersburg to borrow £500 for the Government from Mr. D. J. Brink against the security of £500 Government Notes dated 28 May, 1900. Mr. Brink was not prepared to lend the Government that sum of "klinkende munt" without further security which Johann Rissik and another then furnished by adding their own personal guarantees to the Government Notes.

A RAID ON AN ORCHARD

AFTER Johann Rissik had gone on commando and left his wife Mimmie alone responsible for looking after their young sons and large property, she found the invading British troops raiding her orange and naartje orchards and cutting the trees for fuel. Indignantly she went to British Military Headquarters which sought appeasement by placing a guard over her home. At the headquarters she also happened upon her brother-in-law H. B. Marshall's nephew Lieut. James McLaren of the Gordon Highlanders, who further placated her by entertaining her sons with a fascinating conducted tour over their enemy's redoubt on the summit of the hill on Andrew Johnston's "Lisdogan" Estate.

THE TRANSVAAL GOLD LAW

JOHANN RISSIK had a profound knowledge of the Transvaal Gold Law. Sir Richard Solomon chairman of the Gold Law Commission, appointed by the British authorities after the annexation of the Transvaal, personally asked him to give evidence. He agreed and the commission's report shows



The first Provincial Administrators, 1910. Left to right: Mr. Smythe, Natal, Johann Rissik, Transvaal, Sir Frederick de Waal, Cape, and Mr. Ramsbottom, Orange Free State

his evidence to have been the fullest and most important placed before it. The draft legislation following the commission's report was submitted to him by Sir Richard Solomon in a letter 13 July 1904 stating "The Government has not decided whether the Ordinance will be introduced this session or not but in case it is I should very much like to have your views on the draft Ordinance especially on those clauses of it which affect owners' rights. I shall be very happy indeed to discuss any objection you may have to the introduction of the ordinance this session or which you may have to any of its clauses at any time convenient to you."

COMMISSIONER

ON 28 July 1902 Viscount Milner appointed Johann Rissik and Walter Solomon Webber and John Wagner as commissioners to enquire into the working of Law 8 of 1886 dealing with the occupation of farms and to consider and report what alterations and amendments were required. On 22 October 1903 the Attorney-General wrote thanking Johann Rissik for his services on the commission. On 28 February 1903 Johann Rissik was made a member of the conference on railway matters. On 9 June 1903 the Colonial Secretary Mr. W. E. Davidson wrote requesting Johann Rissik to become an official visitor to the Lunatic Asylum in place of Mr. Curlewis who had been appointed a Judge. The letter stated that the Medical Superintendent was excellent but "*aliquando bonus dormitat Homerus*. He too finds the visitors a powerful lever for extorting improvements out of a parsimonious Government. Will you help us by taking this honorary office?" — Johann Rissik accepted.

On 26 June 1903 Dr. Mansvelt, formerly Director of Education in the Z.A. Republiek and then secretary in Amsterdam of the Vereeniging Zuid-Afrikaansche Voorschotkas wrote Johann Rissik that he had been appointed a member of the Vereeniging because of the great services he had rendered to the Boer cause.

A REFUSAL AND AN ACCEPTANCE

AFTER the Vereeniging Peace Treaty had terminated the war on 31 May 1902, the British authorities invited Johann Rissik to become a member of the paid Legislative Council under Crown Colony Government. Although without bitterness for defeat which ended both his Republic and his own employment, he would not serve in a British nominated legislative body not responsible to the people by popular vote. He therefore declined the invitation. He agreed however to make his great talents and experience available in the reconstruction of the Transvaal and Orange Free State by accepting the invitation on 24 June 1903 of Sir Arthur Lawley Lieutenant-Governor of the Transvaal, to become a member of the Inter-Colonial Council of those two colonies. The Council which had been created by Order-in-Council on 20 May 1903 controlled the Central South African



Johann Rissik and his four sons, 1903

Railways in those colonies as well as the South African Constabulary, Education, Surveys, &c. On 29 June 1904 Viscount Milner wrote Johann Rissik asking him to accept reappointment to which he agreed.

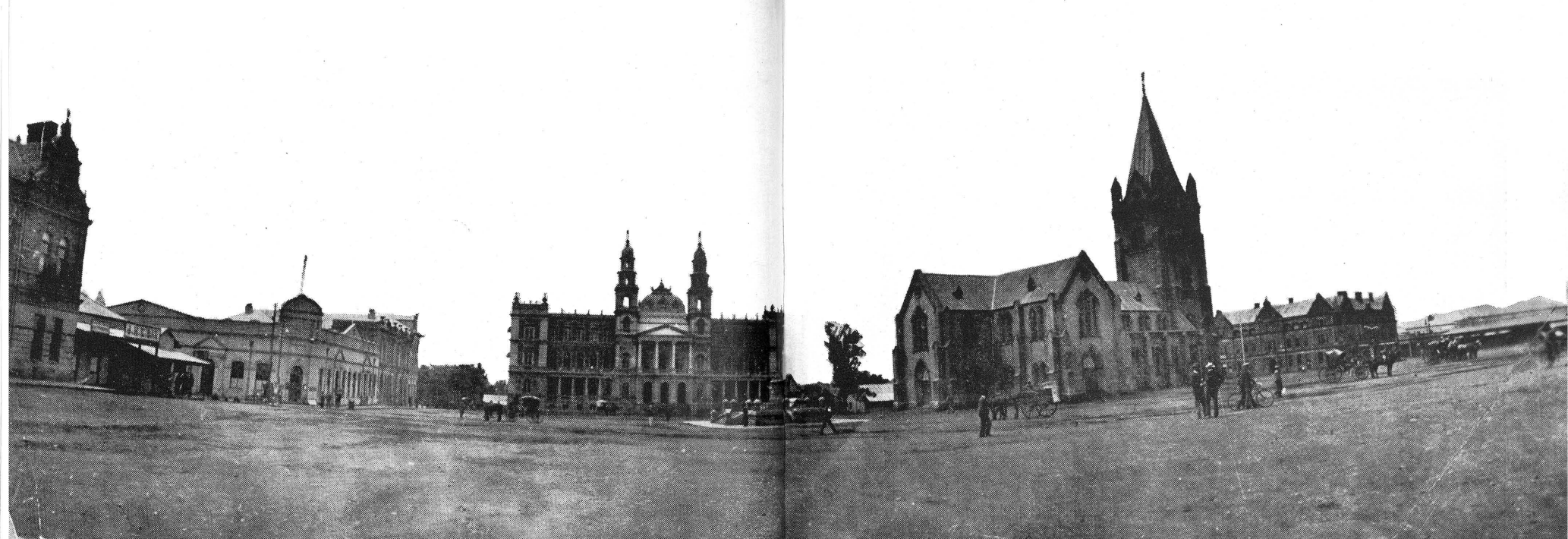
The secretaries of the Inter-Colonial Council were two of Milner's "Kindergarten" of very young Oxford and Cambridge graduated public servants — the Hon. R. H. Brand afterwards a distinguished banker Lord Brand and P. H. Kerr, later Marquis of Lothian and secretary to Prime Minister Lloyd George in World War I. Rissik resigned from the Council when elected a member of the new Transvaal Legislative Assembly and on 21 February 1907 Lord Selborne Governor of the Transvaal, wrote thanking him for his valuable help.

PATRICK DUNCAN

JOHANN RISSIK'S hard and varied work done freely and free in the service of the Transvaal and Pretoria brought him into close association with the much younger "Kindergarten" members who grew to value this association very highly. On 28 August 1904 one of them Patrick Duncan, subsequently Governor-General of South Africa, wrote: "My dear Rissik, I intended to come and see you this afternoon to say good-bye but I found so many things to be done that I have not been able to get outside the house. The tracks of Colonial Secretaries going home are like the footprints of the animals in the fable who went to call upon the lion. They all led forward as the fox observed when his turn came, but none backwards. I hope I may be privileged to be an exception because I do not want to be away from this country. I feel that I owe much to it for having had the presumption to take a hand in governing it knowing so little of the country and it's people as I did and do. In any case I must always remember the kindness and consideration which I have always met with from yourself and Mrs. Rissik who might have been excused for leaving me severely alone to learn from my own mistakes."

On 22 February 1907, two days after Het Volk under General Louis Botha had won the election under Responsible Government and Johann Rissik had been elected Het Volk member of Parliament for North Central Pretoria, Lionel Curtis another "Kindergarten" man in a letter of thanks for "a gift of delicious fruit" from Linschoten writes: "This is a country in which a friendly hand is often reached out at times when and from quarters in which one least expects it. As a member of the beaten side I should like to congratulate you on a victory clean-won all through. This victory wisely used may be handled to make South Africa the prosperous and peaceful country it might be".

On 16 October 1903 the Assistant Colonial Secretary wrote to Johann Rissik "Pretoria Water Supply Commission. In reply to your communication of the 14th instant stating your willingness to act on the above Commission but pointing out that you yourself are interested in a water right



CHURCH SQUARE, PRETORIA NORTH, ABOUT 1900

in Trevenna, I beg to inform you that this fact was already known to the Government. It was felt however that your knowledge of the water question of Pretoria was such that it would be very difficult to fill your place on the commission. For this reason I am directed to say that the interest you mention is in the opinion of the Government no reason why you should not continue to act on the commission seeing that as a matter of course you would withdraw from the deliberations of the commission while they were considering your case. I am further to express the satisfaction of His Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor in learning that you are prepared to act on the commission”.

HILLCREST

JOHANN RISSIK owned a portion of the quitrent farm “Uitvalgrond No. 67 District Pretoria Ward Aapiersrivier” to the East of Pretoria. The British authorities after occupying Pretoria in June 1900, put various buildings on this ground including a blockhouse whose water filled moat was a welcome swimming pool for the Rissik sons and friends. Rissik

Station named after Johann Rissik, dates from this period, and recently his name has been attached also to the Parliamentary Electoral Division “Rissik” in that area. Between 14 April 1904 and 26 October 1910 Johann Rissik established on this ground the township of Hillcrest where educational and religious bodies benefited from his generosity and the Rissik Hall contributed to the amenities of the neighbourhood.

PUBLIC DUTIES

ON 27 May 1904 Johann Rissik was made a member of the Commission to enquire into the financial relations between the Government and the local authorities. In June 1904 at the request of the Council of the Transvaal Technical Institute, the Colonial Secretary appointed him a Pretoria member of that council. On 16 January 1905 he with J. A. Nesor of Klerksdorp and others became members of a Commission under the Chairmanship of Judge J. W. Wessels to enquire into methods for the better conservation of the water supplies of the Transvaal and the Orange River Colony.



*The Railway Board of the pre-Union Central South African Railways.
H. C. Hull in the Chair, on his right Dr. Ramsbottom, on his left Johann
Rissik*

On 16 June 1905 Lord Selborne who on 1 April 1905 had become Governor of the Transvaal wrote Johann Rissik "I have received a copy of your letter of the 1st June in which you resign your appointment as a member of the Inter-Colonial Irrigation Commission in consequence of the arrangements which you have made for taking a holiday in Europe. I take this opportunity of expressing my sincere appreciation of the good work which you have done for the Transvaal and Orange River Colony as a member of the Commission. Please accept my thanks for the trouble which you have taken in furthering an object of the greatest importance for the welfare of these Colonies".

On 8 August 1906 the Commissioner of Lands wrote Johann Rissik "I have been honoured to inform you that it is proposed to erect a new Post Office at Pretoria on the site of the present building, and also to erect a building to accommodate the Department of Agriculture on the site of the Volksstem Buildings in Pretorius Street. Sketch Plans have been drawn by the Public Works Department and have been considered by the Executive Council by whom it was decided to appoint a Committee to confer with the Secretary for Public Works and assist him in coming to a decision as to the requirements of the departments that it is proposed shall be accommodated in the two buildings, before proceeding with the preparation of detailed plans. It was proposed that the Committee should consist of Mr. Duncan, Sir George Farrar and yourself. I have accordingly the honour to enquire whether you will consent to act on the Committee".

He agreed to act and on 12 February 1907 the Commissioner of Lands wrote him: "I am directed by His Excellency the Governor in Executive Council to convey to you His Excellency's appreciation of the valuable services you have rendered to this Colony as a member of the Public Buildings Committee".

On 22 August 1906 Sir Richard Solomon then acting Lieutenant-Governor appointed the Transvaal Indigency Commission including Johann Rissik, General Louis Botha and Mr. Richard Feetham to enquire into indigency in the Transvaal. Johann Rissik inspected, reported on, recommended and was largely responsible for the acquisition of portion of the farm Onderstepoort for the establishment of a veterinary bacteriological station. On 10 October 1906 he received a letter from the heads of the Lands and Agricultural Departments thanking him for his services and ending "The acquisition of such a good site for Dr. Theiler's laboratory is a step and a very long one towards the realisation of my cherished aims, hence my gratitude to you for your advice and support".

RISSIK—THE FARMER

IN addition to these many public duties Johann Rissik had considerable farming and business interests, took an active part in the social and cultural life of Pretoria and found time for recreation. With J. C. Gilfillan





Left to Right: Johann Rissik, H. Lorentz, Dr. F. V. Engelenburg and J. van Leenhof inspect cigar-wrapping tobacco leaf growing at Skinner's Court, Pretoria West, 2 March 1907

he pioneered ostrich farming and was a successful citrus grower on the farms "Zandfontein" and "Doornput" on the Springbok Flats. Later he bred Friesland cattle from imported stock on the farm "Elbrinxen" near Potchefstroom and sheep on "Koppie Alleen" in the Orange Free State and tobacco and citrus on "Hartebeestfontein" below the Hatebeestpoort Dam.

DIRECTOR OF COMPANIES

HE was a Director of the leading Board of Executors whose chief officials were J. J. ("Jan Bokkem") Marais and Loftus Versfeld after whom the famous Pretoria Rugby arena is named. He was associated with the establishment of the Pretoria Portland Cement Company, and later with the Delfos Brothers in forming the Pretoria Iron Mines from which grew the present Iscor. He and the Delfoses often met for talks in Turkstra's



Mrs. Rissik and Johann Rissik at the Pretoria Country Club after he had formally opened it on 10 October 1910

coffee house on the North-West corner of St. (as it then was) Andries Street and Bureau Lane pencilling figures and sketches on the marble-top tables and sipping the superb coffee ever freshly made from Java grown beans new-roasted and ground by Turkstra himself — coffee whose like in aroma and taste one can savour no more!

He belonged to the Pretoria Racing Club whose course was on Church Street West. Like his contemporaries he owned and used horses for everyday transport and for pleasure and exercise. He often rode through what was still largely virgin veld to the Pretoria Country Club which he had formally opened on 10 October 1910.

THE FIRST MOTOR CYCLE IN PRETORIA

HE had a carefully chosen and well read library of historical, biographical, travel and scientific works in English, Dutch, German and French and kept himself up to date in science and engineering.

He owned the first motor cycle in Pretoria. The explosions in its internal combustion engine were effected not by an electric spark but by rapid hot-rod insertions and withdrawals in and from the gasfilled cylinder. His next powered cycle was a “Singer” operated by an engine within the back wheel. The last was a Belgian “F.N.”

He showed his interest in the first South African heavier-than-air flying



The house (in 1949) reflected in the canal at Linschoten, Holland, in which Johann Rissik was born on 2 February, 1857.

by becoming first President of the Aeronautical Society of South Africa. Its other Officers included Lord Methuen, Sir Thomas Cullinan of Cullinan Diamond fame and Sir Johannes van Boeschoten, a well known Pretorian.

RECREATION

HE was a life member of the Caledonian Society which owned the large athletic stadium on the East bank of the Aapies River between Schoeman and Pretorius Streets. As a younger man he enjoyed golfing on a course between the present Kirkness Street and the Delagoa Bay railway line. Attorney Edward Rooth and he each seated in his own study, contested many games of chess over the telephone when that contrivance was still a servant and time no tyrant to Pretorians. He was a keen and regular player first of whist then of auction bridge. He and General Louis Botha both masters of the game, often joined in with other excellent players such as H. C. Jorissen the banker, Charles Bramley, Baron von Eeghen the stockbroker, Carl Jeppe and his brother Julius when in Pretoria. He frequently played for Pretoria Club against the Rand Club.

Johann Rissik appreciated music but was no pianist like his father. The only musical instrument he operated was a "Pianola" acquired in 1906. This was fixed to the piano and when pumped by pedals it caused the keyboard to be struck by artificial fingers working by air sucked through a moving perforated paper roll. It played remarkably well and the physical exertion of working the pedals and moving the controls produced a feeling of personal achievement lacking when a radio, disc or tape is merely switched on.

RISSIK—THE POLITICIAN

JOHANN RISSIK took a leading part with General Louis Botha and General J. C. Smuts in forming the "Het Volk" party which contested the first general election under Responsible Government in the Transvaal on 20 February 1907.

Johann Rissik and F. J. Lunnon a well-known Pretoria attorney were the opposing candidates in the North Central Pretoria constituency. Lunnon wrote afterwards "It unfortunately fell to my lot to oppose Johann who stood as the candidate of the then "Het Volk" party. We had both expected to fight other opponents, and when we found, to our mutual dismay, that we were to meet one another, we both agreed that the fight should be as pleasant as possible, free of all sort of feeling or acrimony. As an amusing illustration of how this peaceful pact was carried out, I may mention that we both received invitations to attend a particular smoking



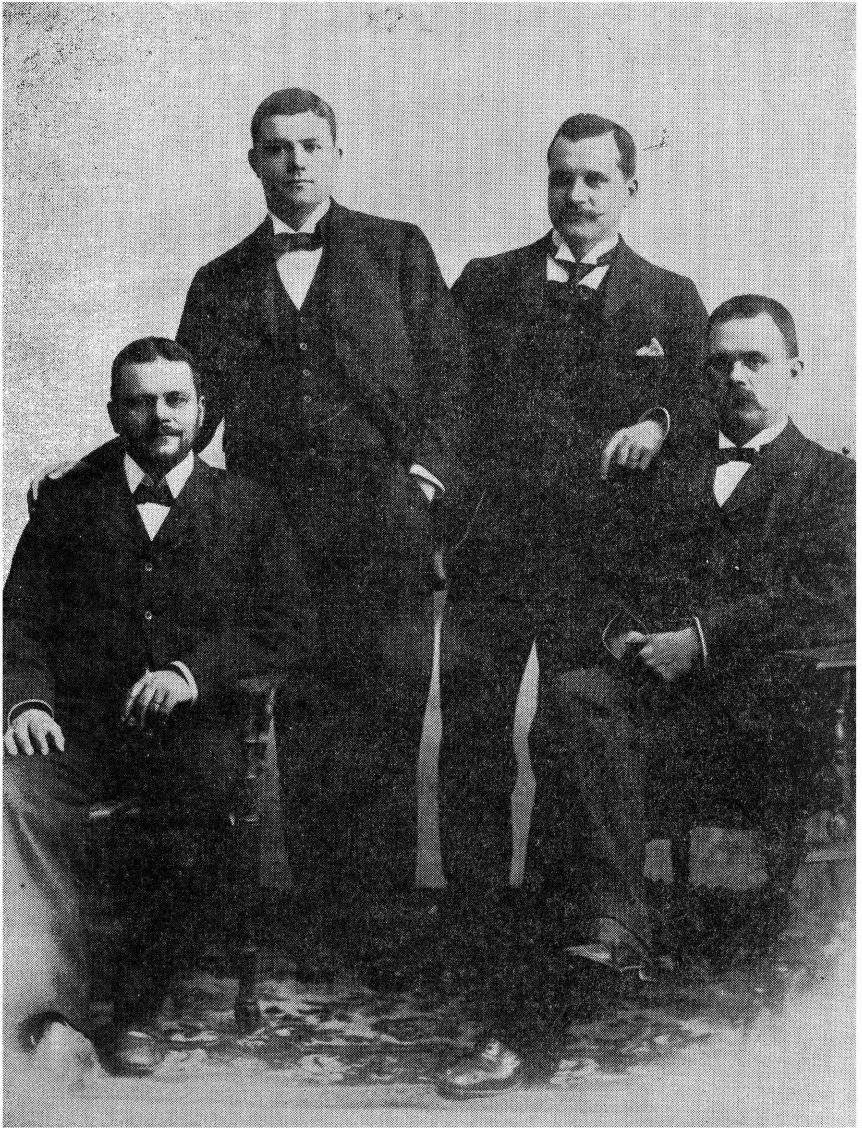
Johann Rissik and General Louis Botha outside the Pretoria Club on Election Day for the first Transvaal Parliament under Responsible Government, 20 February, 1907



concert. I at once sought out Johann and asked whether he was going and he said he was, whereupon I informed him I must go too. He offered to drive me down to the meeting and we arrived together. The Chairman, after informing the meeting in a mild outburst of alcoholic excitement that the occasion was one unique in the political history of South Africa if not the whole world, called upon Mr. Rissik to speak. Johann whispered to me 'We can't talk politics, Freddie — what are we to do? You sing and play the piano, don't you? (I admitted I did a little of each). I can do



Johann Rissik, Minister of Lands and Native Affairs, and head officials of the Transvaal Lands and Native Affairs Departments, 1909



neither' said Johann regretfully. 'But you recite?'. I asked. 'Not even recite'. The affair ended in Johann indulging in a flowery panegyric of myself, and naturally I returned the compliment with equal enthusiasm, and soon afterwards we left the hall together amid resounding cheers. That was the spirit in which the whole contest was carried on. On polling day Johann defeated me, but it was a defeat which left no unpleasant sting, and I quote the whole episode to illustrate the essential loveableness of the man."

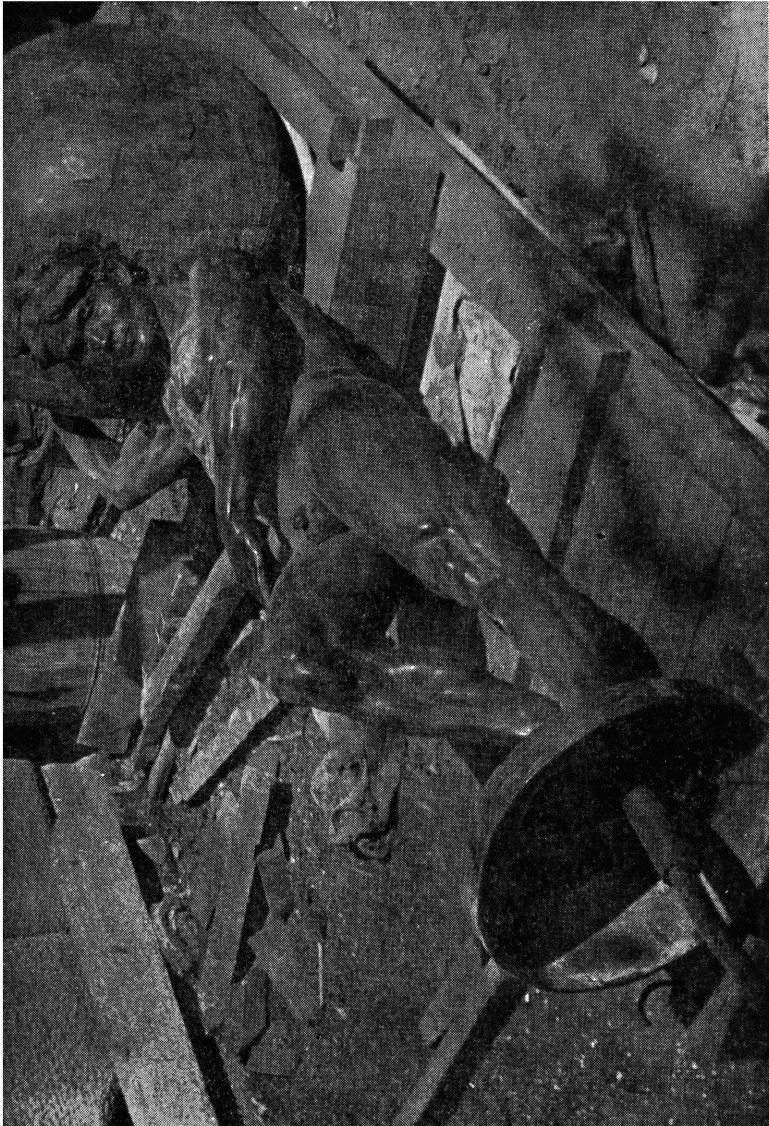
The "Het Volk" party won the election and General Louis Botha became the first Prime Minister of the Transvaal. Over the signature of the Governor Lord Selborne, Johann Rissik was on 4 March 1907 appointed Minister of Lands and Minister for Natives in the Transvaal and a member of the Executive Council of the Transvaal. The other Ministers were General J. C. Smuts, Colonial Secretary, Mr. Jacob de Villiers, Minister of Mines and Attorney-General, Mr. Hull, Colonial Treasurer and Mr. E. P. Solomon, Minister of Public Works. The Rand Daily Mail's leader on 5 March 1907 was typical of South African comment on Johann Rissik's appointment — "To Mr. Johann Rissik who it was at one time thought would be Minister of Mines there have been entrusted the Departments of Lands and Native Affairs. From the very first it was regarded as certain that he would be included in the Ministry and it is significant that in whatever capacity he had been selected his appointment would almost certainly have met with approval". The "London Times" in discussing the new Transvaal Cabinet said "The British People hold in esteem the whole of the new Ministers especially Messrs. Rissik and de Villiers".

As Minister for Native Affairs Johann Rissik successfully carried out the Government policy of replacing the repatriated Chinese labourers in the Witwatersrand gold mines by native workers without any dislocation of the mining industry. He also represented the Transvaal in negotiating the Mozambique Convention with Portugal. As Minister of Lands he bought for the Transvaal Government the land which it had chosen as the site of the future Union Buildings and on which they now stand.

On 15 April 1909 the Transvaal Colonial Secretary General J. C. Smuts, formally opened the new Pretoria Boys' High School of which one boarding house was named Rissik House after his colleague in the cabinet Johann



The Rissik brothers, Pretoria, 1892. Left to right: Frederik Hendrik (b. Linschoten 18.6.1855, d. Arnhem, Holland 23.2.1909), Cornelis (b. Linschoten 18.2.1865, d. London 1928), Gerard Hendrick (b. Linschoten 16.5.1867, d. Pretoria 3.7.1918) and Johann Friedrich Bernhard



*Recumbent Atlas at Union Buildings, Pretoria, 28 April, 1913 before
Johan Rissik fixed him atop the East tower*



*Johann Rissik and his elder brother F. H. Rissik painted by their uncle
Professor Sybrand Altmann*

Rissik and the second Solomon House after another colleague E. P. Solomon.

ADMINISTRATOR OF THE TRANSVAAL

ON the establishment of the Union of South Africa on 31 May 1910, Johann Rissik became the first Administrator of the Transvaal where his character, ability and tact guided local government, education, hospital and road policies.

He and Mimmie Rissik were host and hostess in Pretoria and Johannesburg to the Duke and Duchess of Connaught when they visited South

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.