

JOHANNESBURG FIRST 50 YEARS – FROM SHANTY TOWN TO WORLD CITY

By the middle of the nineteenth century gold fever was running high in many parts of the world. This fever also spread to the **Zuid Afrikaan Repuliek (ZAR)** and apart from other areas in the ZAR, alluvial gold deposits were found on the Witwatersrand.

Before the discovery of gold, the Witwatersrand (White Water Ridge) was a farming community that was pastoral and self-sufficient with 401 burghers.

After the discovery of gold in 1886 on the Central Witwatersrand, **JOHANNESBURG** would emerge as the centre of the Witwatersrand and grew to the biggest and richest city in South Africa within years.

“Witwatersrand” has no relation to foaming white water as the name suggest, but it was inspired by the bleach limestone which sparkled in the sun next to fountains and flowing streams.

The Witwatersrand plateau forms a continental divide with the run-off to the north draining into the Indian Ocean via the Crocodile and Limpopo Rivers. The run-off to the south drains via the Vaal River into the Orange River and ultimately into the Atlantic Ocean.

AIM

This exhibit intends to deal with the first 50 years of Johannesburg, from birth to the hosting of the world-renowned Empire Exhibition during its Jubilee.

Highlights

- 1888 Witwatersrand handstamp
- 1886 Original “Staats-Courant”
- 1889 Written certificate by mine commissioner Jan Eloff
- 1889 Duty receipt
- 1898 Title deed transfer
- 1894 Claims title deed,
- 1890’s Share certificate
- 1913 Original print showing photos of the 1913 strike
- 1922 Original photo of strike
- 1936 Schlesinger Air Race cover
- 1936 Johannesburg Golden Jubilee Souvenir
- 1936 JIPEX Telegram and Post Cards



Reputedly the first house built in Johannesburg – Standard bank occupied the room on left

The growth and expansion of the Witwatersrand and Johannesburg promoted a distinct degree of the growth of South Africa. Its gold has exercised an unthinking predominating influence in shaping the history of South Africa.

The Johannesburg Empire Exhibition held from 15 September 1936 until 16 January 1937 was the first of its kind to be held outside the United Kingdom and one of the prime events hosted by South Africa in its history.

Numbers of interested visitors from overseas, who experienced at first hand the wealth of South Africa's natural resources and culture, were attracted.

In conjunction with the Empire Exhibition, the Johannesburg International Philatelic Exhibition (JIPEX), organized by the Philatelic Society of Johannesburg, took place from 2 to 14 November 1936.

The philatelic outfall was substantial. Lots of much sought after collectable items were made available such as miniature sheets, special post marks, official envelopes and commemorative pictorial postcards.

The Fifty Golden Years of the Rand 1886 - 1936: D Jacobsson, 1936 – pp 86 - 100, 141 - 3, 161 - 187

Johannesburg 1886 – 1899 Origins and early management: M S Appelgryn, 1985 – pp 1 - 128

SA Philatelist: February 1937 – pp 20 - 2; March 1937 - pp 39 - 42; April 2016 – pp 65 - 7

The Stamps of the Union of South Africa 1910 – 1961: Handbook catalogue 1986: SJ Hagger – pp 151, 161 - 2

The Special and Commemorative Postmarks, Cachets and Covers of South Africa 1882 - 1975: 1979 2nd Edition: Hasso O Reisener – pp 35-6

Frame 1

- pp 3 – 4: Central Witwatersrand
- pp 5 – 8: ZAR - Pursuing the Main Reef
- pp 9 – 10: Government Actions
- pp 11 – 14: Birth of a City
- pp 15 – 16: Mining the Gold

Frame 2

- pp 17 – 18: Mining the Gold
- pp 19 – 20: Mining the Gold
- pp 21 – 22: Land Ownership
- pp 23 – 24: Johannesburg Stock Exchange
- pp 25 – 26: Living Conditions
- pp 27 – 28: Urban Contrast
- pp 29 – 30: Public Health
- pp 31 – 32: Transport

Frame 3

- pp 33 – 36: Transport
- pp 37 – 40: Postal Service
- pp 41 – 42: Postal Communication
- pp 43 – 44: Braamfontein Disaster
- pp 45 – 46: “Uitlander” Franchise
- pp 47 – 48: Anglo Boer War

Frame 4

- pp 49 – 50: Anglo Boer War
- pp 51 – 52: ABW Aftermath/British Rule
- pp 53 – 54: Under British Rule - Colonial Johannesburg
- pp 55 – 56: Under British Rule - Transport
- pp 57 – 60: Colonial Johannesburg
- pp 61 – 62: Union of South Africa
- pp 63 – 64: Labour Issues - 1913

Frame 5

- pp 65 – 66: World War 1
- pp 67 – 68: Native Tax
- pp 69 – 72: Labour Issues - 1922 Strike
- Pp 73 – 74: “The New Johannesburg”
- pp 75 – 80: Empire Exhibition

Frame 6

- pp 81 – 96: Empire Exhibition

Frame 7

- pp 97 – 104: Empire Exhibition
- pp 105 – 112: JIPEX

Frame 8

- pp 113 – 128: JIPEX

MATERIAL

A good number of material was added expanding the exhibit to eight frames.

The exhibit is planned chronologically, but in some instances material is grouped together to keep to the story line without detracting.

Scarce items are matted with orange borders

Personal observations with a coloured + bullet

SEARCHING FOR GOLD

As early as 1806 Sir John Barrow indicated that gold is to be found near the central Witwatersrand or the nearby Magalies Mountains

Sporadic prospecting had been done on the Witwatersrand. Several insignificant finds of gold were made by various prospectors.

In October 1853, alluvial gold was discovered by Pieter Jacob Marais in the Jukskei River North of the Witwatersrand. On 6 December 1853 Marais was appointed by the ZAR Government as the first official prospector

He concentrated on river beds, succeeded discovering small quantities of gold.

His successes lead many prospectors to concentrate on river beds and little streams north of the main reef up to the 1870’s

Inferior quartz gold was discovered about 90 km west of Johannesburg in the early 1870’s. It attracted some interest in the Witwatersrand, but the main attention was focused on Barberton about 400 km North.

During 1881, Stephanus Minnaar discovered payable gold on the farm Kromdraai, North West of Krugersdorp. This discovery aroused much interest in the Witwatersrand and attracted other gold hunters from all over the world

