A SHORT HISTORY OF DURBANVILLE

Fifty years after van Riebeeck landed at the Cape, the Tygerberg hills were occupied by loan farms. Within these farms was an outspan with a strong spring of sweet water that became an important stopover (probably well known since 1679) on the road to the north.

This stopover became known as Pampoenkraal (Pumpkin Patch) and a village was laid out in 1826. On the 2nd September 1826 it was renamed D'Urban in honour of the governor of the Cape from 1826 to 1832, Sir Benjamin D'Urban. Unfortunately the following year, Port Natal changed its name to Durban, which caused some confusion. To avoid this, the name was changed to Durbanville in 1886.

Up until the mid-19th century D'Urban was a farming centre with a church, school and no doubt a trading store. Prosperity arrived with the founding of King Brothers Wagon Works. These works expanded to take up half a block, extending from Church Street and running between Durban and Gladstone roads up to the carpark between Durban Road and Secher Street. It was said by some to be the greatest wagon works in South Africa and at its height employed 295 men and produced 270 vehicles per month. The business closed before the First World War.

A wagon business needs blacksmiths and Baxter Brothers started their establishment around the same time. Their works were situated where the Calleeke fuel station is at the corner of Wellington Road and Voortrekker Street.

In 1886 three thousand eucalyptus trees were planted to line eight kilometres of Durban Road. These were removed to enable road widening but a similar avenue can be seen in Tygerberg Valley Rd where it cuts through the Altydgedacht wine farm.

In the early part of the 20th century it was proposed that a railway branch line be constructed from the main line at Bellville where it already served the quarry (to the south of where Willowbridge shopping centre is), terminating somewhere near where Durbanville High School stands today. The line was never built but Durbanville did have a station from 1920 to 1930 situated in Station Street, now Voortrekker Street. Here you could purchase a ticket for anywhere in South Africa and have the porter carry your luggage to the bus to take you to Bellville.

Historic Durbanville brochure by Nigel Amschwand & Janine de Waal - Design by Alta Stiegermann

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Walk & Explore

The idea for this guide came about during our search for the Conservation-worthy Buildings and Sites in Central Durbanville as listed 20 years ago (see sources). Of the 28 buildings listed you will still be able to see 17. Some original, others renovated beyond recognition.

Walk the lane between 23 & 27 Oxford Street.

Refreshments can be enjoyed at Yoyo Eatery at Rust-en-Vrede Gallery

Sources
Brian Bassett & Jatimar Rushmer, A Survey of Conservation-worthy Buildings and Sites in Central Durbanville, Circa 1993
Hans Franken, A Guide to the Old Buildings of the Cape, 2004
PE Raper, A Dictionary of Southern African Place Names, 1987
Janine de Waal, Authenticity and the Perceptions of Significance, 2014
All Woolen. A Short History of Durbanville, 1989
All Woolen. Strolls around Durbanville, 1990
**Rust-en-Vrede**

The building was perhaps created as early as 1808 and, if not initially built that way, it was developed into a 2-plan house. Around 1830 it became the magistrate's offices, and jail cells were added. From 1926 to 1979 it was used as a four separate dwellings. It was restored to its present appearance in 1984 and has since then served as a cultural centre, housing a gallery, ceramics museum and art studios.

**35 Main Road**

This Victorian U-shaped house (since extended to the rear) dates from the 1870s and was built for Dr Andreas Brosterburg, the general practitioner. It has a slate roof with a central veranda flanked by flat fronted stoepapers featuring plaster quoins. The attractive front wall and gateway are thought to be contemporaneous with the house's construction. It is a private property.

**12 Queen Street**

The Skalehouse is a long building originally semi-detached houses built at the turn of the 19th/20th century. Incorporating boarque type end gables and smaller galleries over the two (original) entrances it has also been extended rearwards to increase space. It now houses premises and is privately owned.

**Car Queen & Gladstone**

This building diagonally opposite the Skalehouse is of similar age but had been extensively altered in recent times from a semi-detached house into business premises. It is thought that these dwellings were for workers of the Baxter brothers who owned a large blacksmithing business in Durbanville. It is privately owned.

**3 Queen Street**

This is a large Edwardian house with a tiled roof that has replaced the original corrugated iron roof. The façades are decorated with plaster quoins and window surrounds and the gable ends have shell ornaments. The veranda is supported on classical pillars. It is thought that it may have been the home of William Baxter (baldasmith, see no.4).

**2 Scher Street**

This late Victorian house (1901) was built for the Churchwarden of the Dutch Reformed Church probably by the King Brothers. The veranda has a conovenial corrugated iron roof with closed ends and a four panel front door with a three paneled fanlight. It was purchased in 1954 by the Hebrew Community. It is a private residence.

**4 Scher Street**

Hidden behind a large bush, this Edwardian cottage, with a half hipped corrugated roof with ridge ventilators, was originally part of the King Brothers Wagon Works. It is a private business.

**7 Gladstone Street**

This building, now used as a dance studio, has a corrugated iron roof at 45° indicating that it may have once been thatched. Note the closed up doorway into the loft space. Probably it was part of King Brothers Wagon Works. It is a private business.

**10 Gladstone Street**

This building was once owned by the King Brothers. In 1921 it was purchased by George Milne Baxter and known as Baxter House. It was later converted into flats/zoestel and more recently into business premises.

**13 Scher Street**

A semi-detached Victorian cottage with a full length veranda. The veranda end walls have diamond shaped windows. It has a corrugated iron roof at a steep pitch indicating that it may once have had a thatched roof. There is also a door into the roof space. It may be owned by the Baxter house of 1881. It is now one house and a private dwelling.

**DISCOVER HISTORIC DURBANVILLE**

**Durbanville Synagogue**

Built in 1937 for the Durbanville Jewish community, it was designed by the Town Clerk, T. Chenoweth and built by the Baxter Brothers on a piece of ground donated from the Dutch Reformed Church. In 1954 the community purchased the ground and adjoining properties.

**4 Church Street**

Said to be one of the best Edwardian gent's residences in Cape Town, King's Court was built for John King in about 1905. King was a partner in the wigmaker's and many times the Mayor of Durbanville. The facade has a double-storey bay window and double-storey balcony that wraps around the side. It was declared a National Monument in 1989. It is a private business premises.

**27 Church Street**

Dating from around the same time as King's Court on a lot owned by the King Brothers and probably built by the same builder, this house has a particularly fine double storey veranda. It has a six panel front door with side and fanlights. Note this house has rusticated quoins at the facade corners. It is a private business premises.