

The photographs in this collection can be viewed online. A detailed map of St Helena, accompanied by sketches, has been digitised, see item C2.3

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Extracts regarding life and career of B.G.Verselewel de Witt Hamer. Born Doesburg, Holland, 1855

Mr, Verselewel de Witt Hamer came out to South Africa while still a young man after having resigned from the Netherlands Army in which he held the rank of Lieutenant. Landing in Durban in 1885 (he) there engaged in journalism, becoming editor of the Natal Afrikaner. (De Volkstem quoted on 12.2.30, when discussing his 75th birthday celebration which was given great prominence by the Netherlands community, that the newspaper was 'Natal Boeren Vriend').

Soon after the first gold rush to the Transvaal and after spending a few years in he service of the Republic - Collector Transvaal taxes, Johannesburg; Landdrost clerk, Pretoria, and in 1889 Secretary to Christian Joubert, then Head of the Dept, of Mines. in 1896 he was appointed Mining Commissioner of Leydsdorp, N.Tvl, in 1892 promoted to Mining Commissioner in Barberton in succession to the late Mr. J. L. van der Merwe. Five years later he resigned his office to enter political life as the elected member for Barberton in the Second Volksraad.

At the outbreak of war in 1899 Mr de Witt Hamer was largely instrumental in raising the Hollander Corps of which he became commander with the rank of Captain, was present with his Command at the Battle of Elandslaagte where on die dispersal of General Kock's commando by General French, he was taken prisoner and was sent with other officers and a number of rank and file of the Boers, to St. Helena. He became persona grata with the authorities and remained there until peace was signed, In 1923 Her Majesty Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands conferred the Knighthood of the Order of Oranje on Mr, de Witt Hamer.

(Extract from the Star, Johannesburg. 18.12.1930, at the time of the death of B.G. Verselewel de Witt Hamer)

CLASSIFICATION

- A Personal Papers
- B Correspondence - General and St. Helena
- C Documents - Anglo-Boer War and St. Helena, mining affairs, malaria, Barberton and miscellaneous,
- D Articles
- E Publications
- F Photographs

COLLECTION

- A PERSONAL PAPERS, 2 boxes, 1 framed address, 1 envelope

Includes Family Bible; 'Nederlands Patriciaat' containing an entry for B.G.V. De Witt Hamer; Hg diary (written in pencil, and later version (written in ink) while De Witt Hamer was a prisoner of war on board H.M.S.'Penelope', describing the battle of Elandslaagte; Album with handwritten poems 1900. framed document dated 1900 and awarded to De Witt Lamer in recognition of his services to prisoners of war on St. Helena; correspondence and medal in connection with the award in 1923 of the Knighthood of the Order of Oranje-Nassau; leather case containing a CV of De Witt Hamer and miscellaneous letters and photographs; illuminated scroll awarded to De Witt Hamer on the occasion of his retirement from the Miners' Phthisis Board, 1922: file containing correspondence, personal papers and obituaries of De Witt Hamer. (Note: Photos stores with photo collection. See Photograph Inventory)

B CORRESPONDENCE

B1 General correspondence (pre St Helena) 1885- 1900 3 files

B1.1 Letters, mostly from Natal, Pretoria and Leydsdorp, written by De Witt Hamer to an uncle in Holland, 1885-1892.

B1.2 Correspondence (general) 1895- 1899

B1.3 Letters written by De Witt Hamer on his being taken prisoner and awaiting transhipment from Simonstown to St, Helena. Includes an account of the Battle of Elandslaagte. 1899-1900

B2 Correspondence – St. Helena period: 1900-1902 22 files

This correspondence consists mainly of letters from and to De Witt Hamer, many of which are in Dutch (some with English summaries supplied by Mrs Barclay, daughter of De Witt Hamer). Subjects include complaints about conditions at the camp, the tracing of missing persons, the selling of artefacts made by P,O,W,s, the delivery to camps in St Helena of comforts provided. for Boer prisoners, the entertainment of prisoners, the questions of parole or release. The letters are in no particular order. There is a file containing letters by Dr. Plowright, a British supporter of the Boer cause, and one personal correspondence between De Witt Hamer, his wife, his brother in Holland and others. Other correspondents include the Netherlands Consulate and the Red Cross.

Included are 37 miscellaneous postcards. Many have photos of St Helena, or paintings and maps of the island drawn by Boer prisoners. Several are signed by Gen. Cronje (POW). 5 greetings cards from St Helena. The postcards are stored in the Media Room.

B3 Correspondence (General) 1902-1930 1 file

C DOCUMENTS

C1 Anglo-Boer War 1 file

C1.1 Correspondence, telegrams and accounts concerning the formation of the 'Vrywilligerkorps van Nederlanders en Oud Nederlanders' of which De Witt Hamer was the founder and commandant.

C1.2 Commemoration of the Battle of Elandslaagte, 1924. 1 file

C2 St. Helena

C2.1 'Kamp Kruidels' 1900-1901 (POW newspaper on St. Helena)

C2.2 'Die Krijgsgevangene' 1901-1902 (POW Newspaper on St. Helena)

C2.3 Maps of St. Helena, 2 items

Detailed maps in water colour and ink by POW Capt. De Framond, surrounded by ink sketches of locations on St. Helena, by POW E. Mayer-Vrede

C2.4 Plan adopted for the census of prisoners of war at Broad Bottom, St, Helena.

C2.5 Miscellaneous passes, permits, correspondence etc, relating to St Helena.

C3 Mining affairs

C3.1 Booklets: Gold Law. S.A.R. 1886.1898; Mining rights: regulations, 1903; Handbook; Mining and Metallurgical Exhibition, Landon, 1890; Analysis of Gold Production on the Witwatersrand, 1895,

C3.2 Correspondence, prospectors' licences, reports, prospectus, press cuttings and other documents relating to mines including the Royal Sheba (Eureka, 'Transvaal), Boschkop Copper Mine, Elandsriver, and the Independent Gold Mining Co,

C4 Malaria

Correspondence and press cuttings relating to the discovery of the transmission of malaria by the anopheles mosquito, Includes an article. 'Die Oorwinning op die anopheles' by Harm Oost who believed that De Witt Hamer was the first man to prove that the mosquito had a role in the spreading of malaria.

- C5 Barberton 1 file 1893-1905
- Documents relating to Barberton, including press cuttings, agreement re recruitment of 'kaffers' 1899, prospectus of Barberton Wanderers' Club, letter appointing De Witt Hamer as a delegate to the Municipal Conference in Pretoria. 1903, correspondence re mining, contract of lease for a property in Barberton, powers of attorney, prospectus of Barberton Banket Beds Syndicate, other correspondence.
- C6 Miscellaneous
- Includes; 'Conceptwet' 1899 in Dutch language relating to naturalisation and the franchise; rough draft of an account of a visit (by De Witt Hamer?) to Pres. Kruger in Holland shortly before his death; rough draft of terms of peace as considered by Paul Kruger and Dr. Leyds; report and minutes of the Congress of Municipal Bodies in the Transvaal, 1903 (of which De Witt Hamer was a delegate for Barberton); letter from Gen Louis Botha regarding participation in meetings in Johannesburg, 1905; Governor's Commission appointing De Witt Hamer and others to report on certain matters regarding Semi-Government townships, 1910 (signed by Lord Selborne); press cuttings re Asiatic Bill and other press cuttings,
- D ARTICLES 4 files
- Articles (in Dutch) by De Witt Hamer for magazines such as Suid-Afrika and Huisgenoot, Hollands Weekblad voor Suid-Afrika, Nieuwe Rotterdamse Courant. Includes two articles In English on Rain-making and Queen Mamatolla, Article by J.J.Verselewel de Witt Hamer on Battle of Elandslaagte in 'Nederlandse Historien' , Articles on Boer P.O.W. Censor stamps and Boer women and children.
- E PUBLICATIONS
- Includes 'Onze Krijgsofficieren' - album with photos and life-stories of the Transvaal Generals and commanders, published by " Volksstem" Kantore, Pretoria, 1904 and various other publications in Dutch and English_ Also extracts from 'Men of the Times' giving information of the early history of Johannesburg and Pretoria, and 'St Helena Guardian ' for 1900-1902,
- F Photographs
Please see online display of photographs
- F1 Portraits
F1-10 Portraits of B.G.Verselewel de Witt Hamer and family.
- F2 Anglo-Boer War
F2.1-12 Photographs of groups of Boers; railway bridges destroyed by the Boers; propaganda photo of boy shot by British; Simonstown and tug with Boer POWs.
- F3 St Helena
F3.1 Arrival of Capt. de Witt Hamer (POW) in Jamestown, St Helena.
F3.2-50 Photographs of Boer POW camps (Deadwood and Broadbottom camps); activities of the prisoners, such as sports, school, church services, de-fleaing blankets, making artefacts, camp orchestra, model of stamp battery and others.
- F3.51-72 Group and individual portraits of POWs on St Helena, including Gen.Cronje and Capt. de W. Hamer; houses occupied by POWs of senior rank.
- F3.73-103 Scenes of St Helena: Jamestown, coastline, countryside and others
F3.104-131 Small miscellaneous photos of groups, life on St Helena.
F3.132-134 Groups of POWs, English troops.
F3.135 Industrial exhibition with exhibits contributed by Boer POWs. 1900.

- F3.136 Ships: H.M.S. Penelope; H.M.S. Monarch; S.S. Putiala NEGATIVES of some photos in file; some recent duplicate photographs.
- F4 General Historical
- F4.1-2 State coach with Dr. and Mrs. Leyds and De W. Hamer, c. 1895.
- F4.3 Reform committee. 1896.
- F4.4 Luncheon party in Sheba mine, Barberton. 1898.
- F4.5 Exhibition to honour Paul Kruger.
- F4.6 New railway line: Komatiepoort to Delagoa.
- F4.7 Illuminated address to Louis Botha.
- F4.8 Opening of goldmine (Barberton?)
- F4.9 President Kruger's arrival in Rotterdam.
- F5 Miscellaneous photographs
- F5.1-12 Miscellaneous photographs
Mostly unidentified. No. 6: First wagon on the Rand; No. 9: Reunion of 1st Hollander Corps, 21/10/1924.
- F6 Album
Contains photographs of early gold mining (President and Harmony Gold mines); De Witt Hamer as mining commissioner; Nieuw Agatha and Leydsdorp; Kraals; Queen Mamatolla and her court.
- F7 British Special Mine Police, Johannesburg, c.1900.
Mounted photograph with handwritten description
ADOLPHE EPLER, Knight of the Imperial and Royal Austrian Franz Joseph's Order, of Johannesburg, and of the Rand and New Clubs, is the son of a well-known Austrian Govt. Official who at one time was Chief inspector of the Northern Railway System of Austria, and an Imperial Austrian Councillor. Educated in Vienna, he commenced business in that city in 1875, and remained there until 1889, when he left for S.A. and proceeded to Johannesburg, remaining there during the whole time of the war. In conjunction with A. Brakhan and E. Boucher, he formed the Official Police for the Protection of the Mines [Speciale politie voor de Mijnen], holding the rank of Capt. In May, 1901, he was appointed by Lord Milner as a Town Councillor for Johannesburg, he having the unique distinction of being at the time the only non-British subject on the Council. As a representative of Austro-Hungarian capital he is a director of several gold mining companies. He has been President of the Austro-Hungarian Benefit and Patriotic Society in Johannesburg since 1891, and was decorated by the Emperor of Austria in 1900. Since 1897 he has acted continuously on the Executive Committee of the Transvaal Chamber of Mines.