

Colonial Coalopolis : The Establishment and Growth of Dundee

The genesis of a small mining community in the 1880s in the heart of the pastoral paradise of Buffalo and Biggarsberg was a phenomenon of the Victorian Colony of Natal. The founding of the cosmopolitan township of Dundee gave a new dimension to the remote frontier.

By juxtaposing highly professional British stock, tied by deep-rooted loyalties to the Empire of the Great White Queen, cheek by jowl with the rugged Republican Boer veterans of Blood River, it produced a political dichotomy in the colony. The swift growth of its prime industry, coal, gave the town an influence out of proportion to its size. By 1910 Dundee could call itself “Coalopolis” and the “Capital of the North”.

Empty Triangle

Major Grantham’s map of Natal in 1864 shows the great empty triangle north of the Tugela River to Amajuba, bounded on the West by the Drakensberg escarpment and on the east by the Buffalo River, as the Klip River County. The meticulous cartographer marked only the tiny villages of Ladysmith, Newcastle and Helpmekaar. The great plateau and plains were empty of all but the names of farmers and traders living by the strategic river drifts, or prominent ivory hunters, or tradesmen offering a vital service. Between 1865 and 1875 the Umsinga magistracy to the east, manned by the second of a great Natal pioneer family, Henry Francis Fynn, in a tiny stone building on the Enhlahleni slopes looking down the Sandspruit valley to towering Umsinga mountain, was the frontier’s sole link with law and order.

Our first account of the vale where Victorian Dundee was to grow comes in the records of the famous Wenkommando of 1838.

Two years later Commandant Andries Pretorius, heading the Beeskommando, led his men back to the area. The chronicles of an imperious French naturalist Adulphe Delegorgue, recorded the strong river (die Sterkstroom) flowing northwards to the Buffalo and its tributary flowing down from a high mountain in the east, where they found coal, and made fires on the banks of the river where they camped (die Steenkoolstroom).

The promise of the empty triangle north of the Tugela River was great. Well-watered and well-timbered it offered prime grazing and a climate much healthier for cattle, sheep and horses than the lowlands of the coastal plain. Land was to be had for the taking, game was plentiful and for hunters like the Vermaaks, the trails led direct to the great elephant grounds of Zululand, Swaziland, Maputoland and Matabeleland.

The triangle of No Mans Land as it was commonly known, was indeed a crossroads. Whilst this geographical factor was in time to prove an asset in the economic development of the region, in its formative years, it proved a curse, putting the area at the mercy of marauding groups of Basuto and Swazi buccaneers or making it the dumping ground of African refugees. From the moment of their settlement in 1843, for the Biggarsberg and Buffalo Boers the next thirty years were a period of sporadic turmoil. In the thirty years following that, (1873—1903), this restless frontier was to be the cockpit of war.

New Settlers

This wild land attracted other men from wild places. As the clans of Moodie and Murray so amply prove, the Gaels and Celts easily assimilate with the Boer. Physically they too felt at home in the mist-clad Biggarsberg. Two middle-aged 1850 settlers, hillmen and doctors trained at Edinburgh, Prideaux Selby of Alnwick and John Sutcliffe Robson of Hawick had settled in the mountains east and west of the Sterkstroom. Many people of British farming stock moved into the area between 1850 and 1870.

The Sterkstroom valley attracted a Scot and a Cornishman. In 1860 a farmer's son and an ex-Ballarot goldminer, Thomas Paterson Smith, put the name of his native town Dundee on the map when he took over from Gerrit Gerhardus Dekker of "Dumain" the lease of over 3 041 acres of land on the eastern side of the valley running down the summit of Talana hill across the Steenkoolstroom towards the Sterkstroom and Impati Mountain. A builder by trade, Tom found good clay in the river flats. Burning his own bricks, he built a two-roomed thatched butt and ben in the shelter of Talana. Four years later he was joined by his younger brother Peter, who brought his wife Ann and three children to join their bachelor brother and uncle. Peter's farming venture near Ladysmith had been hit by drought, disease and the current collapse of markets in Natal. The brothers set about restoring their fortunes, Tom developing his brick-making and building skills, Peter farming and exploiting a seam of good quality coal which he found a few hundred yards north of the cottage on the slope of Talana Hill.

The Cornishman was Edward Jasper Howe Pascoe. Born in Penzance, Cornwall in 1839, Pascoe came of roving stock and followed the family tradition, though he could scarcely have got further from the sea-girt land of his birth than the drought-stricken Klip River County of the late 1860s.

On 6th January 1861 Melmoth Osborn the A.R.M. of Klip River County in Ladysmith signed the receipt for the payment of £3.3.8d sterling, quitrent payable for the farm "Coalfield" granted to G.G. Dekker for the year ended December 1861. This grant and the name attached to it would make it clear that there was already knowledge of local coal deposits and would imply that such deposits were being worked.

Ten years later E.J. Howe Pascoe became the owner of "Coalfield". On the 1st June he married Mary Aire Ritchie, the daughter of a well-to-do brewer in Edinburgh, in St. Peter's Church in Pietermaritzburg.

Her marriage dowry was £500 sterling and it was a great help to the young people in purchasing the farm and setting up their house and their store.

On "Coalfield", Howe built a pleasant thatched home and storehouse and his Mary planted bluegums and pampas grass and cultivated her wild ferns

and plants. They gave four acres for a church and with the help of Peter Smith and John Robson and the Wade brothers, the Coalburn Church, of home-baked brick and local yellowwood and thatch, was built in the year of their marriage and a cemetery for the small but growing community begun, planted to cypress. Peter Paterson and George Turner became trustees for a Methodist Chapel on “Dundee” under Talana Hill and Peter Smith set aside land for that and a family cemetery. Wagonmakers, wheelwrights and blacksmiths came to join the infant community and a Mr. Wright, seeing the need for education, opened a boarding school and gathered 40 pupils from the neighbourhood. Charles Willson, a young Londoner, arriving in 1871 “without a penny to buy a match in my pocket” set up a rival store to Pascoe at a junction where seven tracks met. Peter Smith imported Cornish miners to improve the mining and the quality of his coal. Dr. John Robson, uneasy at the Zulu rumblings along the Buffalo River, encouraged the local men to form their own volunteer Regiment, the Buffalo Border Guard (1873). The Pomeroy Gold Mining Co. and the Elandskraal Helpmekaar Syndicate (1868) busily sought the pot of gold.

The Pascoe idyll in this time of bustle was brief. Howe Pascoe died of fever on the 29th July 1875, and Mary sold up their few possessions and leased her property.

Anglo-Zulu War

The Anglo-Zulu war of 1879 was the making and the breaking of the little hamlet. Savagely stricken by the battle of Isandhlwana, in which four of their men died among the troopers of the Buffalo Border Guard, the scattered villagers went into laager and only began to return to “Dundee” and “Coalfield” when the vale of the Sterkstroom was chosen to be the H.Q. camp of Lord Chelmsford’s Second Invasion Force. Within weeks, morale and fortune changed and the local folk rallied.

In April 1879 world maps marked DUNDEE in heavy black type. Visiting war correspondents expected a sizeable town and were appalled when they could not buy notepaper or stamps in the rudimentary stores. But coal mining boomed as a bitter winter made a ready sale for it amongst the troops, and transport riders, bringing up commissariat stores from Pietermaritzburg, welcomed the chance to return with wagons laden with a saleable commodity. Social life boomed and officers enjoyed a ride out to Peter Smith’s cottage, below Talana hill, to help drink the droplets from his whisky still, whilst his son-in-law Dugald Macphail, a clansman of the Duke of Argyll, thrilled fellow Highlanders with tales of his escape from Isandhlwana.

The impetus thus given to the burgeoning Dundee could not be restrained — not even by the further traumas of the death of the Prince Imperial (June 1st 1879) nor a second war and disastrous defeat (Amajuba, February 1881). Local men turned from war after the victory of Ulundi (July 1879) and hurried to build their fortunes.

Establishing a Township

Dundee was unique in that it was the product of free enterprise. Whereas Ladysmith and Newcastle had been established by government as administrative centres for the control of a remote yet vital frontier, the coal



Mary Aire Pascoe (born Ritchie), later the wife of
Hon. George Sutton and owner of Coalfield.

(Photograph: Dundee Museum)

town was fired by the steam of its own economic potential, now recognised by leading men in the legislative and commercial capitals of the colony, Pietermaritzburg and Durban.

By 1881 the race was on to establish a township and the major rivals for first place were the owners of the farms “Dundee” and “Coalfield”. Early in that year Mary Aire Pascoe married after four years of widowhood. Her second husband was 47 year old George Morris Sutton who had settled at Howick in 1872 after some years of adventure in the United States. He had rapidly become a force in Natal colonial affairs, being elected to the Legislative Council in 1875. In 1882 he was to become an Executive Council Member. Mary could look to realising her assets well with help in high places and Sutton quickly recognised their value. In March 1881 he was up with his friend from the Dargle, Fannin the surveyor, discussing with Frederick Still, the lessor of the store, the planning of a township on “Coalfield”, deciding the site of the main road, the streets, the market square, public places and a commonage. 900 acres, 2 roods and 6 perches of land would be set aside for the township of which 420 acres, 2 roods and 6

perches would be for the above public and open spaces. Still understood from the on-site discussion that his hotel would be in the heart of the township and it was on this understanding that he signed an agreement on 26th August 1882 to accept five erven which would include Still's house and stable, his hotel and stable, his store and woolshed and a row of W.Cs.

Fannin's survey was a neat geometrical grid with each street duly given a family name ("Sutton" "Fannin" "Morris" "Aire" etc), the domestic erven a full acre each and the commercial erven along the main road half an acre each. The plan and deeds of transfer were printed, under the name of "DUNDEE TOWNSHIP COALFIELDS".

As Tommy Dodds, a local "character" with a sense of humour, told the story in the "Courier" fifty two years later (1924) (when the town belatedly celebrated its Golden Jubilee) the Smith family was stung by this pre-empting of its family name "Dundee". Moreover the Smith protégé, Charles Willson, was determined that *his* store should be the heart of the future town.

Peter Smith with the concurrence of his son William Craighead Smith and son-in-law Dugald Macphail set aside 1 000 acres of land fronting on the Steenkool river. The Ladysmith surveyor George Tatham did a hasty survey and laid out a grid of streets. This second township was pointedly named "DUNDEE PROPER". A quick sale of erven was a great success.

Sutton's township did not flourish and when Frederick Still in 1887 bought out his interests, Still complained that his hotel was now on the outskirts of the settlement. The heart of Dundee was where Willson's store stood



Coalfield store and/or home, 1905.

(Photograph: Dundee Museum)

opposite the Market Square and the Town offices at the crossroads of Victoria and Willson Street.

Thereafter growth was phenomenal. When Mrs Peter Smith opened the Dundee Public Hall on 24th April 1885 papers in the foundation stone revealed that “Dundee Proper” could boast 91 inhabitants, 25 solid new buildings and twelve flourishing businesses.

Coal Mining

Coal was the key to Dundee’s fortunes and it was about 1885 that the local interests which had been mining since the 1870s, went public. The Dundee Coal Co. (on occasion named the Durban-Dundee Coal Co.) had as its first chairman Sir Benjamin Greenacre and was backed by the Durban shipping magnates, King and Sons.

Importing a brilliant Scottish mining engineer, William Maconochie, to spur on development, absorbing the Sutton coal interests on “Coalfield”, building its own railway line from Glencoe to Talana to the Buffalo River, the Dundee Coal Co. by 1891 was supplying four-fifths of the total output of the Natal mines (97 387 tons) and the Commissioner of Mines in his Departmental report could refer to its steady rise in production and its sure markets. Its headgear at the bottom of Boundary Road on the banks of the Steenkool river and its thirteen shafts under Little Talana Hill (Lennox) dominated the valley. The company locomotives busily steaming through the village, which was rapidly expanding south and west into the Crown land known as “Dundee Extension” and onto land set aside by Dugald Macphail, underlined its dependence on mining success. Proving good deposits in 1892 and 1897, the Dundee Coal Co. expanded dramatically.

The local man who was indefatigable in his promotion of Dundee in its early days was Charles Willson. “Again and again (post 1879) he travelled by post-cart to the city to plead the case for Dundee” battling opposition from the Colonial Government, from the shipping companies and the Natal Government Railways.

Homely Peter Smith, the “Father of Dundee”, and his kindly Ann, sitting on the flagged verandah of their simple cottage in 1899, looking down on the bustling mines and village, beheld a miracle. An endless trail of wagons moving in and out of the town square transporting mining equipment, coal, lime, copper, asbestos, lead and silver and gold marked the upsurge of interest in a Zululand Eldorado and the growth of satellite coal mining villages. The Governor of Natal had called on them on his way to meet the claim holders. Victoria Street, the main street, was wide enough to turn a wagon and a span of sixteen oxen. Profits on coal and other trade were rising an average 25% per annum and the population was almost doubling itself annually. The drab wood and iron prefabricated shops and cottages of the start were being replaced by stylish buildings built in the fine local face-brick and the lovely golden sandstone. Stone Town Offices on the Market Square, an elegantly furnished Magistrate’s Court and Gaol, an imposing double-storied Post Office, and charming Presbyterian and Methodist Churches were solid proof of the permanence of the settlement. Ryley’s great mill and agricultural machinery depot, Oldacres’ stylish emporium with its wrought-iron pillars and mahogany fittings and the Victoria Hotel

with its quality table silver were symbols of Dundee's commercial pre-eminence. St. James's Church, the new Masonic Hall in Gladstone Street, the Talana Hall in Ladysmith Road and the Dominican Convent in Ann Street added further tone. Facing old Peter across the vale on the slopes of vast Impati Mountain his dynasty lived in style, his son William Craighead in "Balgray", a splendid stone mansion built in 1894 and marked by a great palm avenue. Southward along the same slopes stood "Craigsid" house, the lovely home of the irrepressible Dugald Macphail, his son-in-law. Each family had its own private mine and on the profits could live as mining magnates should.

Anglo-Boer War

Dundee mining magnates proved a powerful political lobby. In 1899, as the threat of invasion from the Boer Transvaal grew, against the better judgment of military advisers, the decision was taken to defend Dundee and the coal mines. Lt. Gen. Penn-Symons, in command of the 4 500 men camped there on Ryley's Hill, had sentimental links with the town. Twenty years before he had spent several weeks in camp at Fort Jones with the despondent remnants of the ill-fated 24th Regiment.

His gallantry did not save the town. Directing the assault against General Lukas Meyer's commandos stationed on the summit of Talana Hill on the misty morning of October 20th, (the first battle of the Anglo-Boer War), he was fatally wounded. Though the hill was taken by his successor, General Yule, the British situation was untenable and the town had to be abandoned. Wives and children had already been hastily evacuated by train on the 18th and 19th. Then imperturbable dignified Francis Birkett, the Town Clerk, in top hat and frock coat, had ridden through the town, knocking on doors, enforcing the order to pack and go, despite protests about bread still baking in the oven.

The Boer occupation of Dundee lasted eight months. Many prominent men escaped, like Charles Willson and Francis Birkett, and trudged with Yule's withdrawing troops through the slush of flooded tracks to Ladysmith, where they endured the rigours of the siege. Craighead Smith, the heir to "Balgray", was amongst them — he died there. The Dundee Coal Co. manager stumbled in barefoot — his boots had disintegrated in the march.

It was a bleak time in Dundee. A few civilians remained to protect their interests, the Rev. Bailey of St. James's Church and the Rev. Norenus of the Betania Mission to care for the abandoned British wounded, Oldacre to try to save his store stocks and young Norman, the clerk at Ryley's Mill, to control, if he could, Boer demands for horse fodder. Some bewildered refugees from the Transvaal wandered in unwittingly from Glencoe and had perforce to stay there. Young Denys Reitz observed with contempt the orgy of drinking and looting which his comrades-in-arms indulged in, a providential orgy for the men of Dundee, trudging desperately towards Ladysmith. Within days the mines ground to a standstill and as General Lukas Meyer's commandos rode out to join Commandant-General Joubert at his H.Q. on the Modderspruit, a silence fell on the battered little town. They buried the fallen on Talana, at St. James's and at Betania; then they buried the Rev. Bailey himself, dead from enteric, his young widow cradling her orphaned two-month-old son in her arms. The handful of townfolk

grew dejected as siege news filtered through; the Boer guards in the town celebrated the victories of Colenso and Spioenkop. Hope for besieged Ladysmith and their own future dwindled; they were hungry and many were ill.

The electrifying news of the Relief of Ladysmith got through by native runner on the 2nd March 1900 and the Dundonians dared a few cheers and chaffed the Boer guards. But weeks passed and the only military activity was the heavy Boer fortification of the passes through the Biggarsberg. At the beginning of May rumours spread of an impending British attack on these positions. Oldacre and Norman scrambled to the shoulder of the Indumeni and watched General Buller's 30 000 troops fanning out from Zendoda Mountain onto the Waschbank plain. A week later from their stores on the opposite side of Victoria Street the two men watched winded Boer horses and smoke-begrimed commandos clatter through and disappear towards Glencoe. An hour later Natal Carbineers and British cavalry under the command of Lord Dundonald galloped into town.

The relief of Dundee on May 13th 1900 began a recovery that was swift and impressive. Dundee men, haggard from the privation of the Siege of Ladysmith, returned overnight and resurrecting the Town Guard under the command of Charles Willson, set about resettling the civilian population who were equally prompt to return. Repairing their shattered homes and businesses, sorting out their furniture from the jumble of broken and damaged loot in the Masonic Hall, householders were soon back to normal. On the anniversary of the Battle of Talana the leading ladies of Dundee, impeccably dressed with wide picture hats, lace mittens and parasols, laid wreaths on the military graves and looked down to the Steenkool River where the local brickfields and the mines were once more in full production.

Post-War Development

Mining recovery was rapid and development was vigorous. New fields were exploited during the post-occupation boom, and these satellite mines powered a period of great economic expansion in Dundee and district in the first decade of the 20th century.

This expansion is the more remarkable in that the area faced continual setbacks. In 1901—1902 threat of a second invasion by Commandant-General Louis Botha's forces, British military disasters at Bloedrivierpoort and Scheepersnek, sabotage to railway lines and bridges and flying raids from the International Brigade at Utrecht all combined to lower morale. A specially recruited crack Natal unit, the Natal Composite Volunteer Regiment, was stationed in Dundee and the crucial line of the Buffalo-Blood River frontier was heavily garrisoned and fortified.

The upheaval of the war and of industrialisation with all its social problems affected the local African population. Correspondents in the local paper spoke ominously in 1903 of the "native trouble".

The local paper had been founded in 1900 after the Relief by a Mancunian Hughes (of "Manchester Guardian" connections) and a printer Teversham, but Hughes died within six months. Thereafter the "Dundee and District Courier" took on the grandiose title of "Dundee and District Courier And Northern Natal News". Under its third owner W.H. Doidge it became an

outspoken weekly, reporting in considerable detail the vigorous provincial and municipal politics of Dundee. It was remarkably early and frank in debating the relative virtues of Federation and Union.

But not everything was rosy. The Boer community, proscribed after the war, was struggling. The Bambatha Rebellion of 1906 not only disrupted farming life and depressed agriculture, but was directly responsible for the terrifying scourge of East Coast Fever spreading disastrously. The proliferation of mines round Hattinghspruit bade fair to give Dundee a rival. As though to cap the calamities, on Thursday, February 13th 1908 an explosion at Glencoe Colliery entombed 12 Europeans, including the Deputy Commissioner of Mines, and 60 Africans. "The shadow of a great catastrophe has spread its gloom not only over the community and a colony, but through the world at large", said the clergyman at the mass funeral.

It was perhaps not surprising that Dundee lost heart for a while and that an irate Hon. Secretary of an AGM, prayed for something to stir "the green slime of apathy off the stagnant pools of so many Dundee clubs and societies!"

Clubs and Societies

There was a plethora of such clubs and societies. The powerhouse of affairs was the Dundee and District Club, housed in new double-storied premises at



Lower Victoria Street, after 1901. The photograph shows Oldacre's Store (still standing) on the left, with Ryley's Mill and the Victoria Hotel on the right. Talana Hill, much less heavily bushed than today, is on the skyline.

(Photograph: Dundee Museum)

Central Buildings in Victoria Street, where gentlemen could sit on the glassed-in-verandah with its "splendid views" and "free from the dust of the street," summon the white stewards by the "plentiful array of bellpushes" to order "tea or otherwise". Tradition has it that "otherwise" was the popular choice! The lowlier grades of society had their Institute in the old club premises in Lyle's "Enterprise Building" in Gladstone Street, where non-alcoholic beverages were served.

The liveliest societies were the Patriotic Societies, and the mining communities boasted flourishing Caledonian and Cambrian Societies and Sons of England. One old resident still recalls the Scottish Institute making the night hideous in the Talana Hall in Ladysmith Road "with the awful squealing of their pipes and their reeling from too much whisky"! Scottish concert parties often filled the Masonic Hall to capacity and on one occasion featured a formidable "Hieland Flingist"!

The Masonic Hall was the centre of flourishing theatre life, where the Pieter Toerien of the day was Atwell, the talented local photographer. He brought the latest novelties to the town, Wolfram's Bioscope, an Aux-te-to-phone recital and the Chronophone. Local families too were talented; the Labistours gave chamber concerts, Mr. J.W. Holding staged minstrel follies and musical soirees and Mr. Bert Head brought the house down with his comic songs. St. James's Dramatic Society made more serious attempts at drama and staged the first South African production of George Bernard Shaw's "The Devil's Disciple". The daring title roused some misgivings in local breasts!

Schooling

Schoolchildren were well provided for in Edwardian Dundee. Excellent public schools existed. An ex-Hiltonian, Mr. Clifton M.A., conducted the first preparatory school for boys north of Cordwalles, The Talana Preparatory School. The Dominican Convent (later Holy Rosary Convent) expanded and added a second storey, St. John's School for girls in Pietermaritzburg opened a branch on the Berea, where the fashionable new suburb was opening up; nearby, Government built the Dundee Intermediate School where the Principal Mr. Gowthorpe laid the foundations of an excellent academic standard. But poverty amongst the Boer community restricted schooling for many to two or three years; moreover language barriers created further problems, although the provision of a Dutch-speaking Inspector and of Dutch textbooks and special syllabi in 1908 began to meet their needs.

Through the Betania trade school promising young Africans and Indians had a hope of education as also through the churches and missions; here they were fortunate in having excellent establishments like "Nazareth" at Elandskraal and "Maria Ratschitz" at Mlatikulu and several others. The Amakholwa villages in the district produced many good workmen and stable families.

Indeed the picture grows of a compassionate society moved by the plight of vagrants of all races, the Benevolent Society and the Child Welfare

Society working with the missions to alleviate distress. One of South Africa's first orphanages for African children was at Kalabasi near Dannhauser; the townsfolk and the farmers gave support in cash and kind to the pioneer hospitals at Betania and Pomeroy. Certainly the community was pious; the churches were many and well supported.

Building Boom

The town was a quaint mixture of the affluent and the poor. Rickshas plied up and down the main street and the Victoria Hotel horse-bus collected passengers from the station. Indian hawkers jostled the genteel Victorian housewives round the market stalls. The gentry trotted into town in Baverstock's handsome spiders and covered the few bold spirits on Shimwell's bicycles in dust or mud according to the season. Village children, barefoot, bobbed a curtsy as Mr. A.A. Smith, the prominent lawyer, tossed them sweets and pennies. Herds of cows being driven to the commonage and flocks of ostriches to the saleyards impeded the traffic.

The creme de la creme built double storey mansions. Some houses, like "Symonsdale" the home of Edward Ryley the Minister of Agriculture, or the mansion of Thomas Dewar of Dewar's Anthracite, faced the Talana Hill as though it were Mecca. The building boom, at its height in 1905, adorned Dundee with five residences. Harry Tatham's "Sunnyside", set in three acres, had four large reception rooms, six vast bedrooms, a bathroom, a kitchen, a larder, a butler's pantry, a washhouse, extensive stables, a carriage house and a cowshed, all fitted with electricity and piped water. Some had libraries, smoking rooms and conservatories. All had servants. Superior families like the Brokenshas had white housekeepers, nursemaids and governesses as well as a horde of young Indians in turbans. The finish of the homes and the furnishings were good. Quality imports were the rule. Indeed the well-to-do bride like Bessie Carbutt, marrying from the Oldacre home "Stonehenge", would import her wedding trousseau from London and the home furnishings from Maples of Regent Street, complete with matching carpets, wallpaper and curtains, and the bric-a-brac of the day. Sidesaddles and ladies' riding habits with stocks and bowler hats were also imported along with the fine bloodstock which sired the hacks and thoroughbreds that raced at the Dundee Turf Club meetings.

Excitement was rare and the sound of the Town Office bell and of the Electricity Co. hooter brought the brigade out in their brass helmets and crowds would rush in pursuit. On one occasion "one lady in exceeding fantastic attire and with her hair not exactly a la Grecque was most voluble in her denunciations of the wicked who raised a false alarm when people were just getting into bed." But the sinking of the "Waratah" and Halley's Comet brightened life up.

There were crudities to life. The sanitary arrangements were deplorable and the night-soil removal cart doing its early morning rounds with clanking buckets was dubbed "Mrs Baasch's Light Artillery"! Presbyterians complained that visiting clergy went away with a "stinking impression" of Dundee — the manse was uncomfortably close to the sanitary dump.



Mr and Mrs Harry Pybus Handley and family taken in the garden of their home in Victoria Street. He was a merchant who traded in Dundee throughout the Victorian era.

(Photograph: Dundee Museum)

Future Assured

As the era drew to a close Dundee's future was assured. Coal figures were re-assuring and the industry had galvanised itself in the Natal Coal Owners' Society. East Coast fever was abating, agriculture was organising itself, trade was brisk and the town was all bustle. Stores were proudly promoting "COLONIAL INDUSTRY" and a new patriotism and healing of the old political wounds in the remote frontier territory was evident, as Dundee accepted Union and the mood of the National Convention. Enviously the Greytown delegate to the N.M.A. Conference of 1910 reported: "Dundee possesses three or four times more stores and generally speaking there was much more life and activity. The streets too are well-kept and the channelling for carrying off storm water is extensively gone in for. The red flowering gum is much employed and as different varieties of trees are planted in each street the general effect is pretty."

Dundee remains pretty, set in its historic vale. Its story is slowly unfolding and the relics of "Coalopolis" are gradually being rescued. Much research is being done on this multi-faceted society and much remains to be done. Much is unique — the Amakholwa communities, the Indian mining group, the pioneer missions. The human story in time will prove as enthralling as the pageantry of the great battles of the Biggarsberg and Buffalo.

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SHEILA HENDERSON

