

Prof. Bethwell A. Ogot and Prof. Madara Ogot
History of Nairobi 1899-2012

FROM A RAILWAY CAMP AND SUPPLY DEPOT
TO A WORLD-CLASS AFRICAN METROPOLIS

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History of Kenyan Cities and Towns Series

HISTORY OF NAIROBI CITY, 1899-2000

From a Railway Camp and Supply Depot to

A World Class African Metropolis

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Preface

The City of Nairobi is, historically-speaking, an illegitimate child of European imperialism in Africa in the Nineteenth Century and white settlement in Kenya in the early part of the Twentieth Century. European powers who were scrambling for African territories met in 1885 and signed the *Treaty of Berlin* which defined their spheres of influence, especially in West and East Africa. In East Africa, the two competing powers that were fighting each other were Britain and Germany. The extent of their domains was complicated by the unclear boundary of the Sultan of Zanzibar's territory. A Delimitation Conference was therefore convened in 1886 to define the boundaries of the Sultan's land. There was also an agreement between Britain and Germany on various 'terms of reference' for the control of the respective hinterlands which included the construction of railways, among other developments.

In the British sphere, the Conservative Government in London decided in 1888 to entrust the development task of the vast area from Mombasa to Buganda, a distance of 700 miles (1,126 kilometres), to the Imperial British East Africa Company (IBEAC). IBEAC was a private company created by William Mackinnon, a Scottish shipping magnate. He saw a railway as the only means of opening up a trade route to Buganda. The major concern of the British Government at that time was to secure Buganda which, in its view, occupied a vital strategic position for controlling the sources of the White Nile.

It was also at this time that the German Government in Berlin decided to call a temporary truce with Britain to end their rivalry in East Africa. Through an Anglo-German Treaty signed on July 1st, 1890, Germany agreed to cede influence over Buganda and Zanzibar in exchange for the North Sea Island of Heligoland.

The British Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury, requested King Leopold II of Belgium to convene a conference at Brussels of interested European powers to devise measures,¹

“for the gradual suppression of the slave trade on the continent of Africa, and the immediate closing of all external markets which it still supplies”.

The Brussels Conference of 1892 was attended by thirteen European countries and the United States of America. The Congo Free State, Persia and Zanzibar were also represented. The deliberations lasted seven months and resulted in the Brussels Convention of 1892 which detailed the most effective means for European powers to counteract the slave trade in Africa. Among other recommendations, Item 3 of the General Act of Brussels strongly recommended: ²

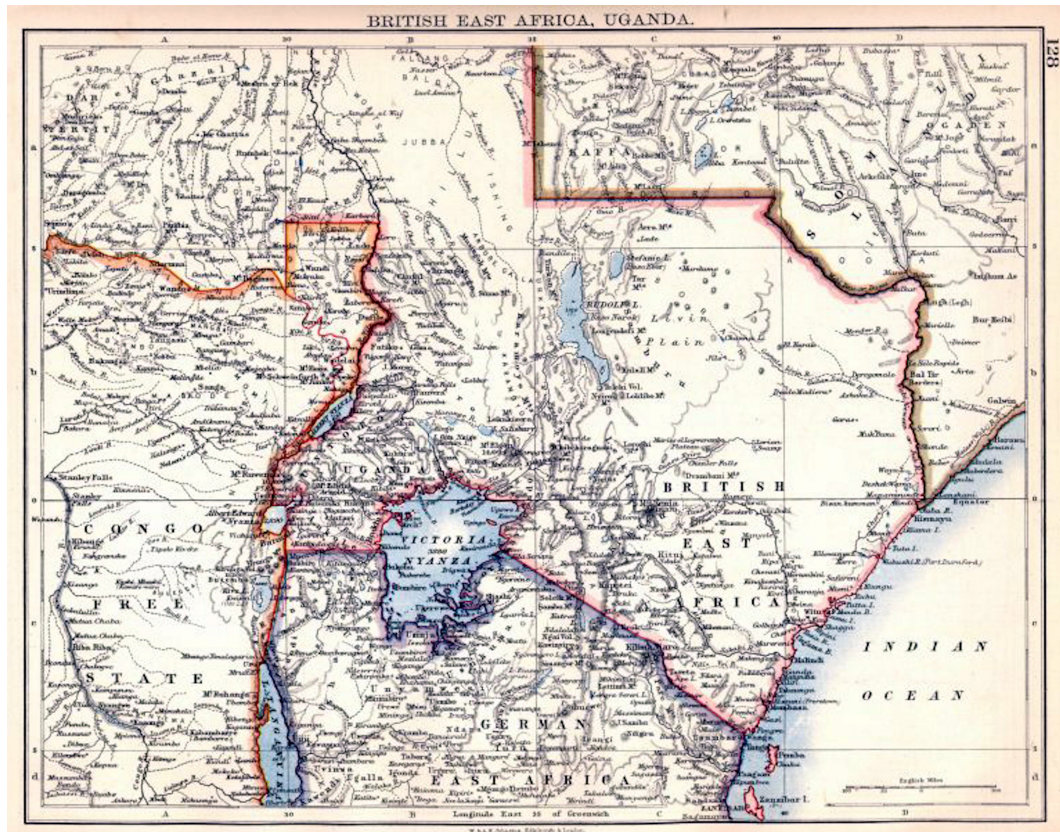
“The construction of roads, and in particular, of railways connecting the advance stations with the Coast, and permitting easy access to the inland waters and to such of the upper courses of rivers and streams as are broken by rapids and cataracts, in view of substituting economical and rapid means of transport for the present means of carriage by men”.

Through its chartered company, the IBEA, and treaties made with the local rulers such as the Sultan of Zanzibar and the Kabaka of Buganda, Britain had been able to establish its influence over most of the 750 thousand square miles (1.9 million square kilometres) in East Africa. In 1893, the British Government declared a protectorate over the Buganda Kingdom and neighbouring lands, following the withdrawal of the IBEA from the region. It began to plan a railway to run from Mombasa to Lake Victoria. This was made more urgent as France steadily extended her influence in Egypt, Ethiopia and Djibouti.

The final plans were drawn up for the Uganda Railway in 1894. George Whitehouse, the Railway’s chief engineer, arrived in Mombasa in 1895. He had plenty of railway building experience in other parts of the world, including Britain, South Africa, India and Mexico. By 1896, a group of 2000 Indian labourers had arrived in Mombasa, including many skilled craftsmen—carpenters, stonemasons, blacksmiths, clerks, surveyors and

¹E. Hertslet *The Map of Africa by Treaty, II* London: 1909, pp. 488-517 and G.H. Mungeam *Kenya Select Historical Documents, 1884-1923* Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1978, pp. 10-12

²ditto, p. 11



Source: BritishEmpire.co.uk

Figure 1 – German and British East Africa - 1897

draughtsman. The first plates were laid at Mombasa on May 30th, 1896. In 1897, the railway was on its way to Lake Victoria.³

In February 1897, Ronald O. Preston, who was placed in charge of the plate-laying gangs, arrived from India. Like most other senior construction officials, Preston had spent many years working as a foreman plate-layer on the Indian railways. With him was his wife Florence, who was to accompany him along the entire length of the track to the shores of Lake Victoria to a site which for a while was named Port Florence after her.

Towards the end of 1896, the first party of Uganda Railways engineers – Blckett, Welby and Snowden – arrived at Fort Smith to carry out a survey. They established the first camp in Nairobi inside the forest on the South of the river. There was a market near the present junction of

³ Playn, Somerset, Gale and F. Holden, *East African (British) Its History, People, Commerce, Industries and Resources*, London, The Foreign and Colonial Compiling and Publishing Company 1900-1909.



Source: UK National Archives

Figure 2 – Railhead Reaches Nairobi - 1899

Ngara Road and Limuru Road on the site later occupied by the East Africa Power and Lighting Company building. The Kikuyu brought maize, beans and potatoes to the market while the Maasai came with goats and cows. At about the time the Uganda Railway reached Nairobi, the Sudanese soldiers in the East African Rifles had set up a camp near the markets. A few years later, the old Sudanese were taken to Kibra, while the young stayed at the camp.

The Europeans had also begun to make their mark on the landscape even before the rails reached Nairobi. A temporary transport depot with stables and workshop had been set up as early as 1895 by James McQueen. By 1898, he had built the first European house on the edge of the forest where the City Park stands today.⁴ There was a Maasai settlement to the North-East on the site now occupied by Muthaiga Club. McQueen, although a trained blacksmith, quickly took advantage of the opportunity created by the expanding population and opened a small shop and began trading.

At the western limits of the Kapiti Plains, at Mile 309 of the Railway, the Athi River was reached. The Ngong Hills were already on the horizon and the swampy area on which the future capital of Kenya would arise was only a few miles away. On May 30th, 1899, the railway builders reached Nairobi.

⁴McQueen Evidence, *Kenya Land Commission Report (KLCR) Volume V*, p. 717).

The name, Nairobi, was derived from Maasai, *Engore Nyarobe*, meaning, a place of cold water. The Maasai and the Kikuyu traded there with the Swahili and Arab caravans from the Coast, and later with those employed by the IBEA. These caravans passed through Ngong, not far from Nairobi. Dagoretti became a major caravan stage largely because of the surplus food available in Kikuyu. Fort Smith, which the IBEA established in 1892 in the North-West of the future town, became one of the inland supply points after Machakos.

George Whitehouse had earmarked Nairobi in 1897 when he travelled on foot from the railhead looking for a suitable site for the railway headquarters. He decided that supplies and base camps could be organised from there because the level terrain was ideal for building the railway yards, station facilities, and workshops that would be necessary before tackling the connection across the Kikuyu escarpment and the drop into the Great Rift Valley. Moreover, being 327 miles (523 km) from Mombasa, this was roughly the half-way point to the lake terminus 257 miles away.

Preston was, however, not impressed. He described Nairobi as ⁵

“A bleak, swampy stretch of supply landscape, windswept, devoid of human habitation of any sort, the resort of thousands of wild animals of every species. The only evidence of the occasional presence of humankind was the old caravan track skirting the bog-like plain.

It was unsafe to walk out at night after dark between the railway line and what is now known as the Railway Hill, the whole valley being one series of game pits. The game used to come down in their thousands to drink at a small spring trickling through the long grass at the spot where the present Military Sidings stands. Nearby the natives had dug several game pits and here they used to lie in wait for their prey, firing poisoned arrows at the game as they passed.

Lions were also very plentiful here about especially in the then papyrus-clothed swamp extending from the present site to Norfolk Hotel to the hill beyond Ainsworth Bridge. The Kikuyu Forest started from Nairobi River, and the present Parklands area was one magnificent stretch of impenetrable forest composed chiefly of the stately Mohogo. This splendid forest has been depleted by the natives cutting firewood for the Europeans in Nairobi.

The flat on which Nairobi itself now stands did not boast one single tree, such trees as there now are, including the avenues of stately Eucalyptus, being due to the efforts our District Commissioner”.

⁵ R.O Preston, *The Genesis of Kenya Colony: A Paradise for Sportsmen and Tourists*. Nairobi, The Colonial Printing Works, pg 172-173. nd

What then were the forces that transformed this bleak, wind-swept, treeless and swampy stretch of supply landscape, into one of African's largest inland cities, a centre of urban civilisation, with a commercial vigour, an appreciation of the amenities and a civic spirit within a period of a hundred years?

From a Railway Camp to a Frontier Town, 1899-1920

1.1 The Beginning

In deciding to establish a forward base on the flat and open stretch of land to the south of the swamp to serve as the headquarters of the Uganda Railways, George Whitehouse, the Chief Engineer, was acting within the provisions of the British Foreign Office which gave him powers to secure and control all land that was necessary for railways purposes. This included a middle zone on each side of the surveyed line from the coast to the terminus on Lake Victoria.

The Uganda Railway was a self-governing entity with extremely capable staff, including officers drawn from the Indian Police and the coolies. It embarked on the task of turning Nairobi into a railway town. The hill overlooking the town and the railway station was from early days known as the "Railway Hill" and later became "The Hill" (and today known as Upper Hill). A three-roomed bungalow of wood and iron was built in 1900 for J.W.T Mc Clellan, the District Officer of the Maasai and Kikuyu. He was thus the first resident of the Hill. The first railway house was also erected in the Hill. Built of bricks with a corrugated iron roof, the house was used by the chief engineer, Sir George Whitehouse. In 1905 it was handed over to the Government and renamed the Residency, when Sir Donald Stewart,



Figure 1.1 – George Whitehouse and Col. John Ainsworth

who had replaced Sir Charles Eliot as the Commissioner¹ on July 1st, 1904, moved his headquarters from Mombasa to Nairobi.

Meanwhile, increasing numbers of Europeans and Asians were being drawn to the new frontier. Although it was technically the duty of the Uganda Railway to provide order to the life of this community growing around the go-downs and workshops of Nairobi, the Protectorate Government felt bound to assume some responsibility. This led to the transfer of the Provincial Administration under Col. John Ainsworth from Machakos to Nairobi.

John Dawson Ainsworth was born on June 16th, 1864, in Urmston, just outside the City of Manchester. He first arrived in British East Africa in 1889 to serve the IBEA. In January 1892, he was posted to Machakos to take charge of the Ukambani Province. He turned the station into a safe stronghold and a valuable provisioning centre on the caravan route to Uganda, often applying ruthless measures. On July 1st, 1895, the British Government took over the territory from the Imperial British East Africa (IBEA) Company. Ainsworth was appointed Sub-Commissioner in charge of the Ukamba province that included Kikuyu country, Ukambani, Taita and Taveta Districts. From 1899 to 1906, he served as the Sub-Commissioner with headquarters now in Nairobi.

Ainsworth arrived in Nairobi on August 25th, 1899, and held discus-

¹When the British Government took over from the Imperial British East Africa Company (IBEA), the person in charge of the colony was referred to as the Commissioner. The name was changed to Governor when the colony became a protectorate, with Sub-Commissioners becoming the Provincial Commissioners

sions with George Whitehouse. He wanted to find out what areas would be available to the provincial administration for the construction of offices and residences. He received a cold reception from the Railway authorities who resented the arrival and interference of a second authority which was bound to restrict their freedom of action, especially over matters of land. He had therefore to make use of the areas that the Railway Administration did not have any designs for. Consequently, the railway town was divided into two sections: the land controlled by the Uganda Railway and the *boma*, north of the swamp with its shopping centre, under Provincial Administration.

Temporary civic offices, police lines and a jail were constructed along the future Ngara Road. These were later moved to the top of the Government Road (now Moi Avenue), opposite the Railway Station. Ainsworth laid out Government Road, the main street that ran from the railway station to Ainsworth Bridge in early 1900. He constructed a bungalow for himself in February 1900 on a site overlooking the river near the location of the present-day National Museum.

By the mid-October 1900, several government offices were completed including the Sub-Commissioner's office, registration and land office, the magistrate's court, the accounts office, assistant collector's office, a police post and lines and a temporary jail. He next turned his attention to building staff houses in Parklands.

All First Class² officials lived on "the Hill" and the Second Class in Parklands. Class distinction was already very strong. Later when Muthaiga was developed into a residential area, it became the "home from home" of the elite and well-to-do. Nairobi was thus being established as an administrative centre. District Commissioners wore khaki uniforms with shiny brass buttons when on duty and white "duck" uniforms and tall white pith helmets with plumes on ceremonial occasions.

Ainsworth had to also face the challenge presented by the increasing daily arrivals of European, Asian, Arab and Somali traders and Africans from all parts of Kenya, Congo, Tanganyika and Uganda. These newcomers had to be accommodated in the commercial area, adjoining the *boma*, or into the spontaneous villages which had sprung up without any proper planning. The dual control between the Railway and the

²First and Second Class Officers were civil service categories.

1. FROM A RAILYWAY CAMP TO A FRONTIER TOWN, 1899-1920



Source: *East African Railways and Harbours Magazine*, Vol. 1., No. 7, December 1953

Figure 1.2 – Nairobi in 1900 with goods shed, station (clocktower) and locomotive shed in centre foreground.

Provincial Administration further complicated the situation. The Railway Administration was blamed for not catering for the needs of immigrants it never planned for, while on its part, the Railway resented government interference.

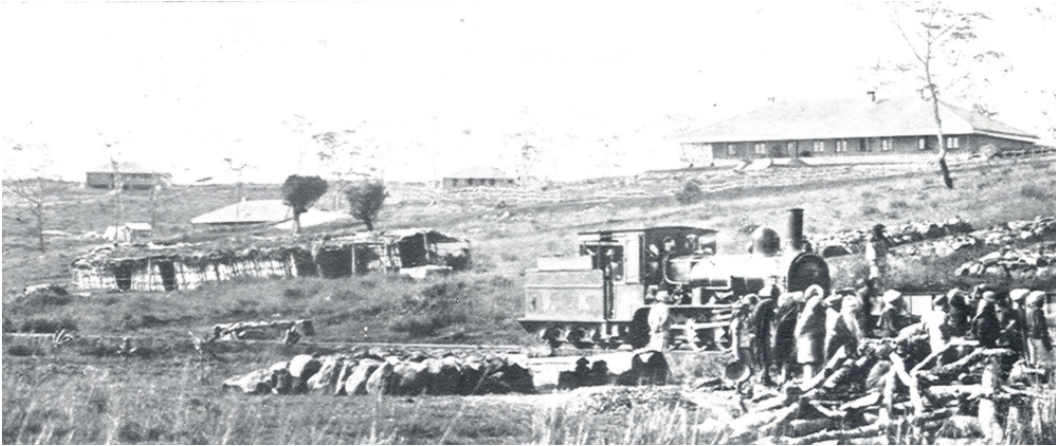
The Government and the Railway portions of the town were from the start separate and unequal. The Protectorate's side was less impressive compared with that of the Railway Administration who had lots of funds at its disposal. It had more and better buildings than those of the Ukambani Provincial Administration. What was urgently required was the unification of the local government of the town.

Sir Charles Eliot, the Commissioner, decided to assert his authority as the representative of the Crown. In 1901, after demarcating all the land that it required for its use, the Railway Administration was asked to relinquish the remaining area along the south side of the swamp. This was then handed over to the Government, including Victoria Street (present-day Tom Mboya Street). The Public Works Department now assumed full control and responsibility for surveying and demarcating the various plots and roads.

1.2 Politics and Governance

1.2.1 The Township Committee

The Township Committee came into existence under Regulations No. 20 of December 1st, 1901. It consisted of one Protectorate official, two Rail-



Source: *East African Railways and Harbours Magazine*, Vol. 1., No. 7, December 1953

Figure 1.3 – Nairobi circa 1900. Railway siding running across the foot of the Hill with an N Class Engine on it. The house in the left foreground (only the roof is visible) is Sir George Withouse’s House.

way officials and three local merchants, and the Sub-Commissioner as Chairman. The Committee had the power to make by-laws, with the approval of the Sub-Commissioner, and to levy rates. The Sub-Commissioner, on his part, was to submit in December each year, estimates of expenditure (a kind of budget) to the Committee. After the estimates were approved, a rate could be levied.

Members of the first Township Committee were Gilkinson, Grieson, Paul Huebner, Allidina Visram and Amer Singh. It is interesting to note that the Sub-Commissioner appointed Huebner, a German citizen, to the Committee. Huebner was born in 1870 in Hamburg. He worked in Zanzibar as a banker and a merchant and was the Honorary German Vice-Consul. He later moved to Mombasa, where, besides his commercial and banking activities, he found time to work for the Zoological and Ethnological Museum in Berlin. From Mombasa, he organised a caravan to Lake Victoria, through Naivasha, Nakuru, Eldama Ravine, Nandi, Kakamega, Mumias, Kampala and Entebbe. He then returned to settle in Nairobi in 1899.³

The Township Committee was faced with several problems: a filthy bazaar, no street lighting, the daily opening of unplanned shops, no proper streets, no conservancy, no refuse collection, no police and no money. During their first meeting,

³ From his unpublished memoirs, *Ein Mann Fuhr nach Kenia (A man went to Kenya)*

1. FROM A RAILYWAY CAMP TO A FRONTIER TOWN, 1899-1920

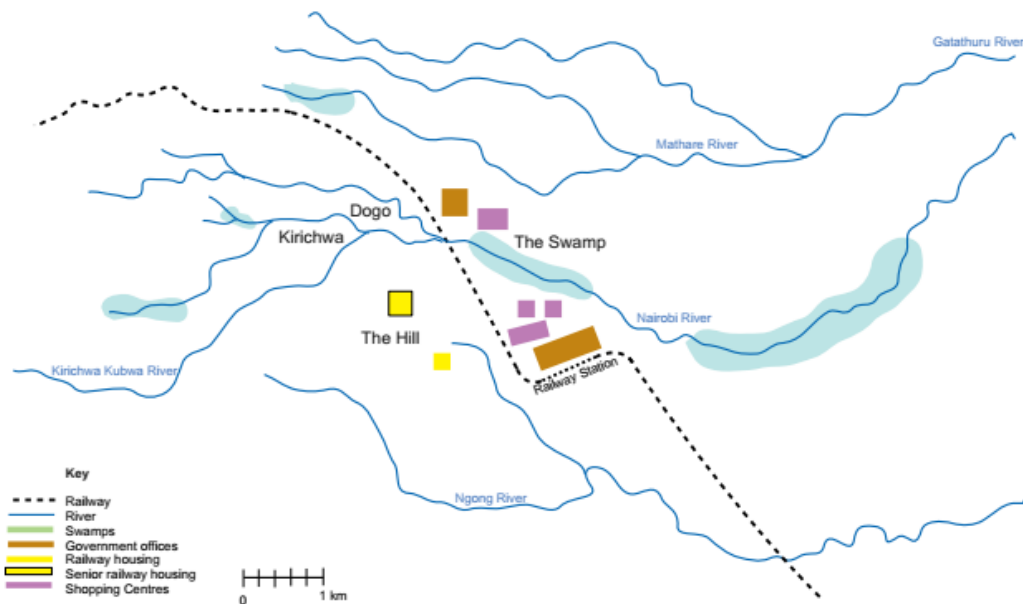
“It was pointed out by Mr Gilkison that the first thing to be done was to have the Bazaar properly laid out and the value of the buildings assessed to enable a rate of taxation to be fixed. The funds procured from this source to go towards forming a Police Force, a system of street lighting and conservancy purposes. Also to stop the extending of the Bazaar as being carried on at present, and that a proper map is obtained from the Uganda Railway showing the size and position of the plots. It was proposed by Mr Huebner that from a certain date proper houses should be built, and any shopkeeper not complying with regulations would have his shop removed”.

These regulations were repealed by Ordinance No. 20 of September 25th, 1903. The Committee was now to consist of the Collector (District Commissioner) as Chairman, one other Government official, two Railway officials, two European residents and two Indian traders. It was now the responsibility of the Collector, not the Sub-Commissioner, to prepare the estimates which were afterwards to be submitted to the Commissioner for approval.

By the Rules of February 14th, 1905, other changes were made in the constitution of the Committee, which now consisted of the Collector as chairman, three other Protectorate officials, three Railway officials, four European residents, and two Indian traders, with the Medical Officer of Health and Town Clerk as ex-officio members. The last two ceased to be members in December 1905. It is important to note that while the number of European members of the Committee was increasing, that of the Indians remained the same. In other words, the Protectorate Government was establishing a firmer control in the running of the Municipality.

Four years later, Ordinance No. 11 of 1909 was passed. A major provision was the establishment of Municipal Councils leading to the replacement of the Nairobi Township Committee by a Town Council. The Council was to have at least eight councillors, all of whom had to be nominated by the Governor and could serve for a maximum of two years.

The construction of the Uganda Railway had opened up the country in a very short period. Nairobi was being founded from one day to the next. In other colonies, development was always very slow. Normally, the white settlers would arrive first, followed by administrative officials who had to adapt themselves to the already established situation. In Nairobi, it was the other way round. The officials were the first to arrive, followed



Drawing: Madara Ogot based on White et al, 1948⁴

Map 1 – Nairobi circa 1900

by the settlers and traders. But even before the arrival of the settlers, a great number of dubious characters came: speculators, fortune hunters, Japanese and Syrian prostitutes, and desperados of the worst kind from the Boer War.

They were one of the major causes of the disagreements that soon arose between the Government and the immigrants. Laws and regulations were introduced to regulate their behaviour. When the first settlers arrived, they had to conform to laws which were not meant for them. They condemned the legislation as ridiculous and complained that the handling of Africans and Indians was wrong. In short, they found faults in everything and felt hampered in all directions.

On January 4th, 1902, a meeting of all classes of men of European origin was convened at Wood's Hotel in Nairobi to encourage the colonisation of the East African Protectorate (EAP) by European settlers. Thirty-four men attended and passed resolutions which were forwarded to Charles Elliot, the Commissioner, for onward transmission to the Foreign Secretary. Among the resolutions passed were that the EAP was suitable for European occupation owing to its climate and fertility of the soil; that freehold land grants would encourage European colonisation, and that further immigration of Asians into the country was detrimental to the Eu-

1. FROM A RAILYWAY CAMP TO A FRONTIER TOWN, 1899-1920



Source: sikh-heritage.co.uk

Figure 1.4 – Government Road with Nairobi House at the corner of Delamere Avenue and Govt. Road - 1910s

ropean settler in particular, and to the native inhabitant generally.

A year later, on January 14th, 1903 the Planters and Farmers Association whose object was to secure better conditions for farmers and an outlet for their produce was formed. It changed its name to the Colonists' Association of British East Africa and transformed itself into a political organisation whose membership was open to every white man in the Colony. Its main objective was to advance the development of EAP as a 'White Man's Country'.

On the transfer of the administration of the British East Africa Protectorate from the Foreign Office to the Colonial Office on April 1st, 1905, the Colonists' Association sent a petition to the Colonial Secretary, Alfred Littleton. In the memorandum, they complained that the EAP was being governed as if it were a province of India, as a large number of Indian Ordinances were applied to it. They had the greatest objection in principle to placing white men under laws intended for a coloured population despotically governed. Hence, they demanded the entire abolition of Indian Law. Instead, they advocated for the introduction of the English Common Law as, by the Laws of England, every Englishman carries the Common Law of England to every new country settled by him over which the King has proclaimed sovereignty.

Also, they objected to the method of administration which they de-

scribed as 'taxation without representation.' Such a principle, they argued, was alien to the British Constitution and is tolerated only in newly colonised territories until the number of white colonists justified self-government. They further demanded that the portion of the protectorate beyond the ten-mile strip at the coast should be turned into a Crown Colony immediately.

On security, they demanded the immediate introduction of imperial white troops and white mounted police instead of relying on the Kings African Rifles and African and Indian police. The colonists further demanded the provision of adequate means of protection from a native attack which, in their view, was inevitable.⁵

Some of the reforms demanded by the settlers were acceded to by the metropolitan power. Under Lord Elgin at the Colonial Office, the Colonists gained their victory on the road towards self-government when it was decided to establish a Legislative Council. In 1905, the British Imperial Government promulgated a new Order in Council which represented an important stage in the constitutional development of Kenya. The order did two things. First, it changed the designation of the protectorates chief officer from Commissioner to Governor and Commander-in-Chief. Second, it established two key institutions, the Legislative Council and the Executive Council. The main function of the former was to make laws for the Protectorate. This meant that the Governor (former Commissioner) could no longer make laws on his own. The members of the Legislative Council were to be appointed by the Governor who was also the Chairman of the Council. From its inception, the Council associated the unofficial settlers in the country with law-making. The Governor nominated two settler representatives. The Legislative Council was officially established in 1907.

Secondly, through the Elgin 'pledges' of 1906 and 1908, no Indian could acquire land in the highlands. Lord Elgin had become the Secretary of State in 1905 after the transfer of the East African Protectorate (Kenya) from the Foreign Office to the Colonial Office. In 1908, he issued a despatch containing what became the famous "Elgin Pledge" which run as follows,⁶

⁵This is what happened in 1952, almost 47 years later.

⁶*The Despatch*, March 19, 1908, Section 8 and 20 Cmd. 4117 of 1908, marked the official genesis of the policy on the 'White Highlands'.

1. FROM A RAILYWAY CAMP TO A FRONTIER TOWN, 1899-1920



Source: UK National Archives

Photo features in *East Africa (British): Its History, People, Commerce, Industries and Resources* compiled by Somerset Playne and Edited by F. Holderness Gale. The Second Impression was published by The Foreign and Colonial Compiling and Publishing Co. in 1908-9.

Figure 1.5 – First Legislative Council Sitting - 1907

‘It would not be in accordance with the policy of H.M. Government to exclude any class of His Subjects from holding land in any part of the British Protectorate, but that, in view of the comparatively limited area in the Protectorate suitable for European Colonisation, a reasonable discretion will be exercised in dealing with an application for land on the part of the natives of India and other non-Europeans. I have to inform you that I approve of your adhering to the principle acted on by your predecessors, viz., ‘that land lying outside Municipal limits, roughly lying between Kiu and Fort Ternan, should be granted to only European Settlers.’

Gradually the protectorate Government also introduced a policy of commercial and residential segregation in urban areas which not only affected Indians but ‘all men of colour.’ A hierarchical society was to be formed with all white men being treated as aristocrats, irrespective of their economic or social class.

Lord Delamere, the Cecil Rhodes of Kenya, was the spokesman for the disgruntled white settlers. He was the owner of huge acres of land in and on the outskirts of Nairobi, and of large farms in the Kenya Highlands where he cultivated cereals and tobacco. He also experimented successfully with the crossbreeding of Zebu cows and the fat tail sheep. The



Source: Sikh-heritage.co.uk

The statue was taken down after Kenya's independence

Figure 1.6 – Lord Delamare Statue Opposite New Stanley Hotel - 1960

white settlers knew that he was not only an able farmer but that he had connections with the motherland. Under his leadership, a long conflict started between the settlers and the Government. Initially, the settlers' agitation achieved no result because the British Government regarded Kenya more as an appendage of India – good enough to accommodate the Indian human surplus, than as a colony for white settlers. The sudden interest of white settlers in the colony was therefore completely unexpected and unforeseen.

Born on April 28th, 1870, at Vale Royal in Cheshire in England, Hugh Cholmondeley was educated at Eton and became third Baron Delamere upon the death of his father when he was only seventeen years old. He made several trips abroad to Corsica, New Zealand, Australia, before visiting Africa, starting with Somalia in 1891. He made six hunting trips to Somaliland between 1891 and 1896. Between 1896 and 1897, he travelled through Gallaland, eventually arriving in the British East Africa Protectorate (Kenya) in 1897. He returned as a settler in 1903 and soon became the chief advocate of the idea of transforming Kenya into a "White Man's Country". He brought European district associations together with a form of a federal organisation called the Convention of Associations, often referred to as "The Settlers' Parliament." Until 1927, it was a very influential body regularly addressed by the Governor and



Source: Delamere - UK National Portrait Gallery; Eliot - University of Hong Kong

Figure 1.7 – Lord Delamere (1930) and Sir Charles Eliot (1924)

other Colonial officials. It soon became the focus of European political expression.

In this ambition, Lord Delamare was supported by Sir Charles Eliot, a brilliant scholar and linguist and a career diplomat, who had been appointed Commissioner and Consul-General of the British East Africa Protectorate in December 1900. Before his appointment in East Africa, he had served at St. Petersburg, Russia as Third Secretary in 1887; in the Near East; and in Washington, D.C in the United States as First Secretary in 1898. During his tenure as Commissioner, the Uganda Railway reached Kisumu and the Eastern Province of Uganda was transferred to the East Africa Protectorate on March 5th, 1902.

*** **

Winston Churchill, Under Secretary to Lord Elgin at the Colonial Office, visited Nairobi in 1907. He gave a very insightful portrait of Nairobi in his book *My African Journey*.⁷ As his train from Mombasa approached Nairobi he wrote:

“Our train traverses the Athi Plains, more crowded with game than any other part of the line, and approached swiftly the long rows of one storey tin houses which constitute the town. Nairobi is a typical South African Township ... there are 580 whites, 3,100 Indians and

⁷Churchil, Winston, *My African Journey*, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1908.

10,550 African Natives. The shops and stores are more considerable than those figures appear to warrant”

Continuing with his comparative comment, he wrote:

“It might be Pietermaritzburg or Ladysmith before blue gum trees and stone buildings. It resembles Bulawayo ... Every white man in Nairobi is a politician and most of them are leaders of parties. One would scarcely believe it possible, that a centre so near should be able to develop so many divergent and conflicting interests or that a community so small should be able to give such vigorous and even vehement expression.”

He continued:

“There are already in miniature all the elements of keen political and racial discord, all the materials for hot and acrimonious debate. The white man versus black, the Indian versus both, the settler versus the planter, the town contrasted with the country, the official class against the unofficial, the coast and the highlands. ... In truth, the problems of East Africa are the problems of the world. We see the social, racial and economic stresses which rack modern society already at work here.”

Winston Churchill, who had already been a Member of the House of Commons for six years, was 33 years old when he wrote his book. He understood that the Protectorate could never be a “White Man’s Country” like Canada or Australia but that the place was big enough for all and **fundamentally African**. The publication of his book, upon his return to London, caused a storm of anger among the Kenya white settlers. Their newspapers deplored the shortsightedness of the Government. *The Pioneer*, for example wrote:⁸

“Upon the return of Mr Winston Churchill, the evil policy of the British government regarding this promising country was revealed with all brutality. First, no settler should be permitted to own land. Secondly, the black man is better than the white man. Third, it is ridiculous to try the colonisation of the Highlands where the white man can live, instead, the moderate areas should be neglected in favour of the low, infected areas where Europeans cannot live.

⁸1907

1. FROM A RAILYWAY CAMP TO A FRONTIER TOWN, 1899-1920

When a responsible politician evolves such as ruinous and unfruitful theories, one can lose all hope that our countrymen in British East Africa ever will get a free hand. It is good for our settlers that Mr Churchill has no more dealings with the Colonial Office and we can only hope that his successor is a little more enlightened and less an opponent to the interests of the men who struggle hard that this colony becomes a success. It is hard that a country like British East Africa, which had all the essentials for success, faces in its Government whose duty should be to nurse and foster mother the resources and to do everything for those who struggle there for their existence."

As to whether the town should be transferred to a new site, Churchill was quite philosophical, commenting that while some sites seem created to greatness, others have greatness thrust upon them. He believed that it was probably true that its proximity to the line chosen for the Uganda Railway had much to do with the thrusting of greatness upon the site of Nairobi town. He explained:

"Originally chosen as a convenient place for assembling the extensive depots and shops necessary to the construction and maintenance of the railway, it enjoys no advantages as a residential site ... A mile further on, however, upon the rising ground, a finer position could have been found and this being occupied sparsely by Government buildings, hospitals and a barrack."

He then concluded:

"It is now too late to change and thus lack of foresight and a comprehensive view leaves its permanent imprint upon the countenance of a new country".

1.2.2 Nairobi Municipal Committee

In 1907, Nairobi became the capital of the Protectorate and became the seat of the new Legislative Council. Towards the end of 1916, on a motion by T.A. Wood, a scheme for the election of the five European unofficial members of the Committee for the year 1917 was forwarded to, and approved by, the Governor. This was the first occasion on which any election to a public body had taken place in East Africa. A register of male European voters was opened. The number of persons possessing the necessary qualifications who registered was 377 and the number

who voted was 321. When the town attained the status of a municipality with the long-sought autonomy in 1919, the Council chair automatically became the mayor.⁹

Further changes to the constitution of the Municipal Committee were made in 1917-1918. The number of its members was increased to 18 (including the chairman) equally divided between officials and non-officials. Of the latter, six were Europeans, two Indians and one Goan. The Governor acceded to the Committee's request that the Indians and Goans be allowed to hold elections under its management. Consequently, three elections were held in December 1917. European women were also given the vote. The results of the elections were as shown in Tables 1.1 and 1.2.

Table 1.1 – Number Registered Voters for First Municipal Committee Election

Race	Registered Votes	Votes Recorded	No. Candidates
European	487	287	9
Indians	1,146	287	5
Goans	578	510	2

Table 1.2 – Winners of First Municipal Committee Election

	Successful Candidates	Votes
Europeans	J. C. Coverdale	200
	H. E. Henderson	184
	T. A. Wood	171
	F. F. Tate	165
	A. Vincent	164
	T. Raynes	149
Indians	M. A. Desai	635
	Mangal Dass	473
Goan	R. A. Nazareth	293

1.2.3 The First World War 1914-18 and Aftermath

The outbreak of the war against Germany on August 4th, 1914, meant that British East Africa was at war with German East Africa. At that time, the only regular troops in the country were the King's Africa Rifles (KAR). These were splendid troops, all African, with European officers seconded from the regular army in the United Kingdom.

⁹White, T. *Nairobi: Masterplan for a Colonial Capital* London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1948



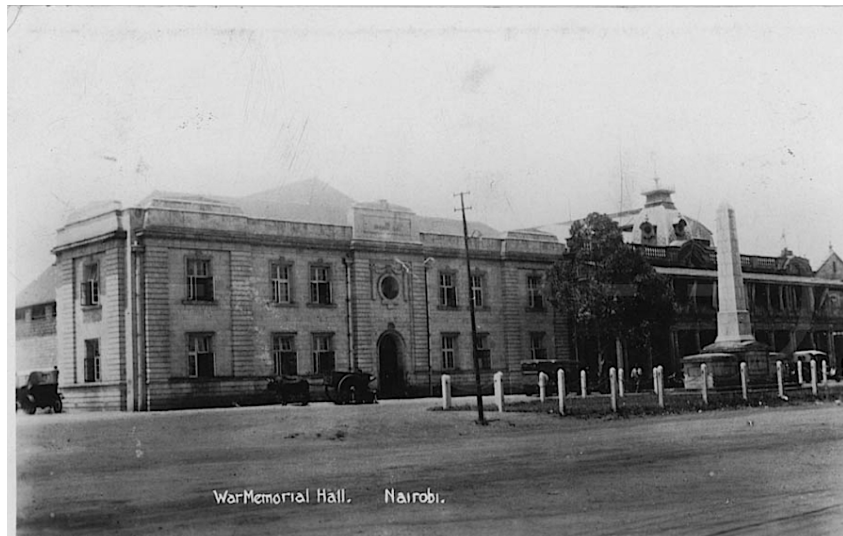
Source: UK National Archives

Figure 1.8 – 3rd Battalion King's African Rifles formed in 1902

In Kenya, there was a rush to join the forces among the Europeans. Within a few weeks, every able-bodied European man had joined something. Several local units were formed immediately and the country was put on a war footing. The units formed were the East African Mounted Rifles and the East African Regiment, an infantry unit. These two units comprised all the local European settlers. The East African Transport Corp was an animal-drawn transport unit with European conductors and African drivers. It consisted mostly of wagons with pack donkeys and pack mules added later and used where wagons could not go. The Medical Corps comprised of many local doctors who went into uniform; the East African Pioneer Corps was an African unit with European officers; the East African Supply Corp, the East African Motor Transport Corp and the Carrier Corps were all formed.

The recruiting office was on the third floor of Nairobi House situated on Government Road under Recruiting Sergeant Dave Genower. Approximately 195 thousand were enlisted, many compulsorily, and nearly 50 thousand died mainly from inadequate diet and poor medical services. Nairobi became a major military base in 1914 with contingents of men coming from East and Central Africa. The railway workshops in Nairobi changed over to war production.

The economic impact of the war on Kenya and Nairobi were disastrous. Thousands of tonnes of coffee (a prohibited import into Britain after 1917) and sisal could not be exported. Imports were negligible and ma-



Source: Postcard by Howse and MacGeorge Ltd

Figure 1.9 – War Memorial Hall, Sixth Avenue, Nairobi - 1929

chinery for primary and secondary production almost unobtainable. In 1918, Nairobi was full of army personnel. Then the rains failed, resulting in a terrible famine, the worst since 1898. Hundreds of Africans died from starvation. This was followed by the Spanish Flu which killed hundreds of people. It was said that the flu, which spread to all parts of the world, even to ships at sea, killed more people than the war.

Many volunteers were discharged and returned to their peacetime occupations. Development, which had been halted by the war, resumed with all speed. Sir Henry Belfield was succeeded as Governor by Sir Edward Northey at the beginning of 1919. The changeover marked the commencement of a period during which Nairobi gained a constitutional advance, suffered a post-war recession, and was faced with new problems of representation and organisation through the rise of Indian political aspirations.

Trade was affected by war conditions. For example, imports from Britain such as ironware, drugs, chemicals and explosives, were restricted. Due to the presence of a comparatively large number of troops in Nairobi, trade was generally good. Principal industries and businesses were maintained. Several new buildings many of them of substantial nature involving large expenditure, were erected.

The work on the new Church on Sixth Avenue proceeded uninter-



Source: Postcard, Peter Hill, ARPS East Africa Series

Figure 1.10 – The Cathedral of the Highlands (All Saints Cathedral) - 1950s

rupted. The Church's foundation was laid on February 3rd, 1917 and it became the Cathedral of the Highlands in November 1924, equal in status to the Cathedral in Mombasa. It was completed in 1952. World War II had disrupted its construction. This church is the current iconic All Saints Cathedral, the Anglican Church of Kenya's seat of power. The imposing building is today classified as a national monument. But until independence in 1963, the Cathedral was largely a "whites only" place of worship. All Saints was also close to the Colonial Governor's residence in what is State House today. The official residence of the Bishop was on State House Road.

Asians, in particular, did very from the war from military contracts and the increased trade arising from the exceptionally large number of African troops stationed at Mbagathi and Nairobi. Remarkable development also took place on River Road during the War. Several merchants were overstocked, but the release of a large number of Africans from military service relieved the situation.

1.2.4 Constitutional Development

The European settlers exploited the war to achieve their objectives on labour, land and elective representation. In 1915, a Native Registration Ordinance was passed following the recommendation of the Native Labour Commission. All adult African males were to be registered to facilitate the movement of labour. When implemented, it became

Exhibit 1 – Nairobi African Memorial for the Great War, 1914-1918



Photo: Madara Ogot - 2018

The Nairobi African memorial is one of three erected shortly after the First World War in memory of the over 50 thousand Africans who died. Over 34 thousand East African soldiers and 600 thousand porters and carriers served during the war. The statues for the memorial were designed by Alexander Stevenson in London, from where they were shipped to Nairobi, Mombasa and Dar-es-Salaam.

The memorial is made up of three statues: a scout of the Intelligence Corps, a soldier of the King's African Rifles, and a member of the carrier corps. The plaque on the memorial, written in English, Swahili and Arabic reads,

"This is to the memory of the native African troops who fought; to the carriers who were the feet and hands of the army; to all other men who served and died for their King and Country in Eastern Africa in the Great War 1914-1918. If you fight for your Country, even if you die, your sons will remember your name."

Exhibit 2 – African Registration Documents, Kipande, 1919-1947



Source: Anon.

From 1919, all African men leaving their reserves were required by the Native Registration Ordinance to carry a pass or *kipande*. It recorded their name, fingerprint, ethnic group, past employment history, and current employer's signature. They put the pass into a small metal container that they wore around their necks. The *kipande* became one of the most hated symbols of British colonial power. Africans had no choice but to carry them at all times. Failure to produce the papers on demand could result in a large fine, imprisonment, or both.

the *Kipande* system of registration. All Africans opposed it. The Kipande system was first passed into law in 1915, implemented by 1919. It was abolished in 1947. It was abolished in 1947 following the recommendation of a sub-committee of the Labour Advisory Board appointed in May 1946 to investigate and report upon this matter. It recommended the repeal of the Native Registration Ordinance and its replacement by the Registration Persons Ordinance, which was to apply to all races.¹⁰

Regarding land, the settlers recommended and obtained a 999-year lease instead of the 99 years as the Colonial Office wanted. They also agreed that the African lands should be called Crown lands. To stop the transfer of land to Indians, they obtained the provision that all transfer of land between races shall be subject to the Governor's veto. Thus the Governor could enforce racial segregation both in the Highlands and in towns such as Nairobi.

¹⁰Ogot, B.A., (1981) *Historical Dictionary of Kenya* London: Scarecrow Press.

There remained the problem of elective representation. Bonar Law, the Colonial Secretary, approved the introduction of elective representation in October 1916 pending the working out of the details. These included the qualification of electors, electoral boundaries and the best way of representing the interests of the Indian, Arab and African communities. A committee of the Legislative Council appointed to examine these questions concluded that votes should only be given to every male British subject of European origin on proof of twelve months continuous residence. The franchise, they concluded, should not be extended to Indians or Africans, though two Indians could be nominated by the Governor.

In 1919, a Legislative Council Ordinance was promulgated providing full adult white suffrage. Eleven seats were provided, but provision was made for maintaining an official majority in the Council. In the same year, the settlers were granted representation by two officials in the Executive Council, a kind of Colonial 'Cabinet.' As the British Government was busy fighting a war and attentions were elsewhere, the Kenya European settlers were thus able to obtain major successes in respect to land, labour and electoral representation which affected the future history of Kenya and Nairobi in serious ways.

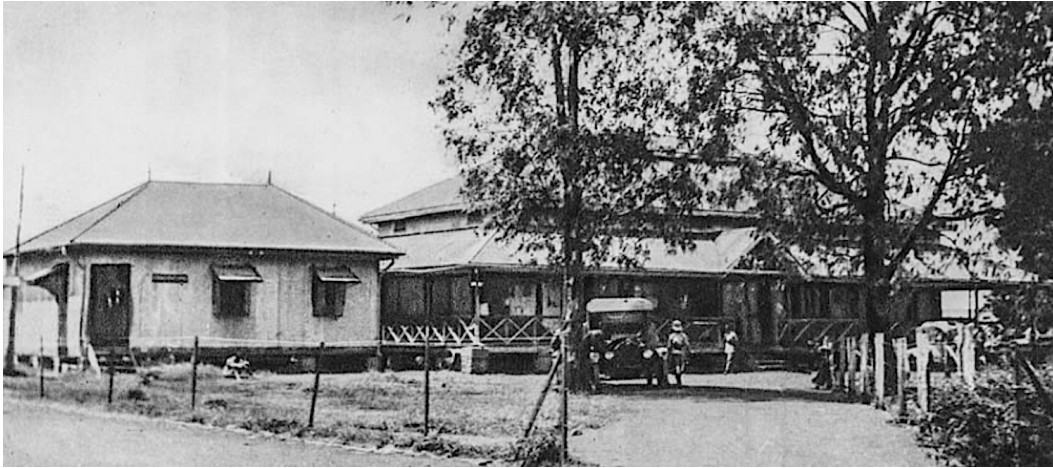
1.3 Early Planning and Infrastructure

On September 9th, 1903, Nairobi was declared a township and defined as "the area comprised within a circle of having a radius of 1.5 miles with the Sub-Commissioner's Office as the centre."¹¹

Sir Charles Eliot had little confidence in the ability of Africans and strongly affirmed the idea of Kenya being a "white man's country". He believed that with a white settlement, the colony would be profitable in ten years based upon a policy of *integrated* not *separate* development. Although many colonists were attracted by the economic prospects in Kenya, Eliot was looking for particular individuals – aristocrats and people with capital and titles who had already done well in North America, Australia and South Africa.

In Kenya, he found two white individuals who fitted that description: Lord Delamere and Lt. Col. Ewart Scott Grogan. Grogan was born

¹¹ Colony and Protectorate of Kenya, *Report of the Local Government Commission, 1927*



Source: East African Standard Ltd Postcard

Figure 1.11 – Court House - 1910

in 1874 and educated at Winchester and Cambridge University. He became the financial editor of the *Financial Times* before migrating to Africa. He made the famous journey from Cape to Cairo from 1898 to 1899. He arrived in the East Africa Protectorate in 1903.

Eliot challenged Delamere to invest at least £5 thousand and he could then have as much land as he wanted. Delamere accepted the challenge, and in return for getting large tracts of urban and rural land, he invested heavily in ranching and researched and experimented with coffee, wheat, wattle, oranges, tobacco, pigs, ostriches and flour mills. He built Nakuru Hotel in 1908, started a cooperative creamery in Naivasha in 1920 which later became the Kenya Cooperative Creameries. He was the first President of the Farmers and Planters Association founded in January 1903 in Nairobi, which in the following year changed its name to the Colonists Association. At various times between 1907 and when he died on 13 November 1931, he was a member of the Legislative and Executive Councils.¹²

After being sent down from Cambridge, Grogan went to South Africa in 1896 as a volunteer with the force that was sent to quell the Second Matabele Rising and later took part in the Anglo-Boer war. In South Africa, he met Cecil Rhodes who said to him:

“A rich continent awaits development ... you know as few do, what is

¹² See his biography by Elspeth Huxley, *White Man's Country*. London, Chatto and Windus, 1935.



Source: www.sikh-heritage.co.uk

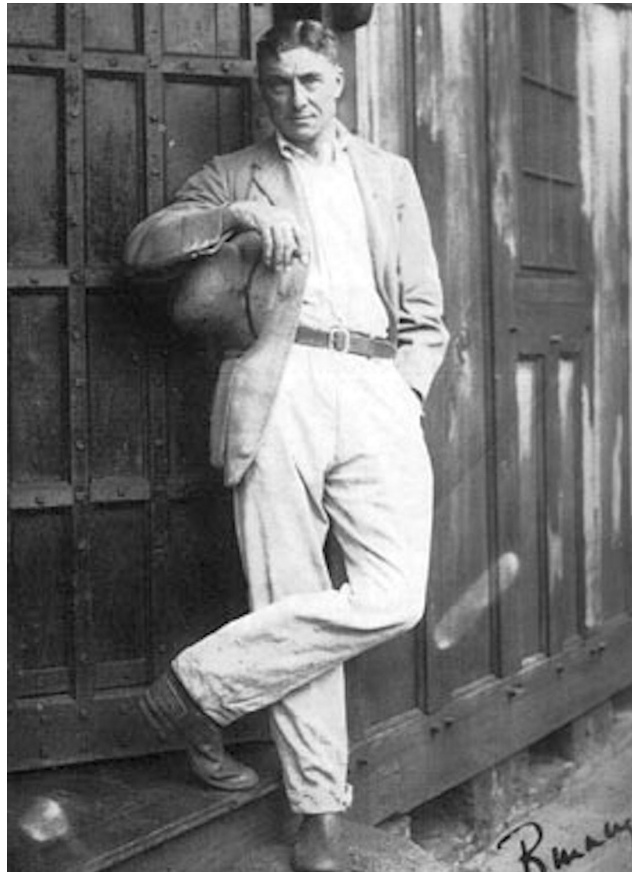
Figure 1.12 – Nairobi Railway Station - 1920s

wanted. Give yourself to Africa, GROGAN GIVE YOURSELF TO AFRICA”.

Grogan decided to give himself to Africa. He came to Kenya and their first home, with his wife Gertrude, was at present-day Chiromo, which in 1904 became known as “Tentfontein” to the many pioneers who camped there while waiting for the Government to survey their lands.

From Elliot, Grogan got his first timber concession of 64 thousand acres of tropical hardwoods; part of Mombasa deep water harbour and a big chunk of Nairobi. Grogan grabbed “Enkare Nyarobi” itself, turning it into Groganville. He and an Asian partner, Shariff Jaffer, acquired the whole of Nairobi Swamp of 120 acres for a nominal sum on a 99-year lease. He bought Jaffer out for £3 thousand in 1910 and by 1928, he was asking for £60 thousand for it. Some plots were sold, and the rest went for £180 thousand in 1948. £10

By 1915, Ewart Grogan had become a large landowner and property developer in Nairobi. He served in the military in both World Wars. A great orator, Grogan represented European settlers in the Legislative Council at various times, besides serving as the Second President of the Conventions of Association after Lord Delamere. Throughout his public life in Kenya, he held reactionary and racist political views which made him popular among white settlers but notorious among non-Europeans. He built Gertrude Garden Children’s Hospital as a memorial to his wife in Muthaiga – an area named after a tree whose bark the Maasai used



Source: *Lost Lions of Empire*

Figure 1.13 – Ewart Grogan

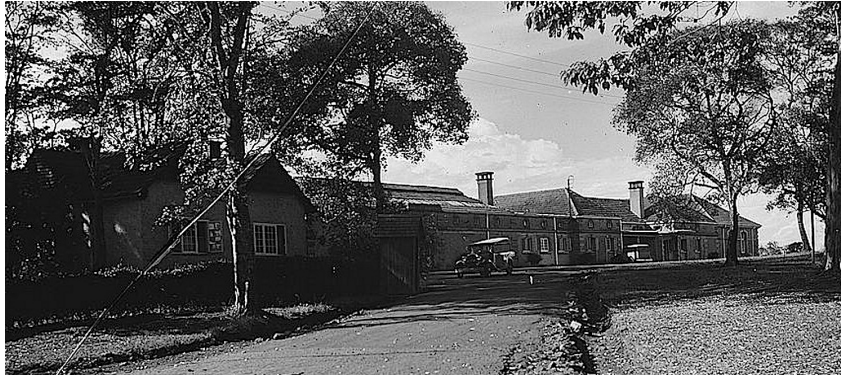
to distil poison for their arrows. The hospital cost £30 thousand and was opened in 1947. He retired to South Africa where he died in 1964.¹³

Delamere and Grogan were to dominate the new colony and its social, political and economic character for about three decades. They, however, rejected Eliot's idea of integrated development and with the latter's resignation in 1904 over "native policy", separate development was quickly established as the official policy in Kenya. A small group of individuals were given undreamt-of freedom to develop themselves. And as Karen Blixen was later to write in her book, *Out of Africa*,¹⁴ they brought with them from Britain,

"something of the grand manner of an age already dying, and tried, perhaps unconsciously, to create in Africa a replica of the feudal

¹³See Ewart S. Grogan, *From Cape to Cairo*, 1900. Farrant, Leda, *The Legendary Grogan*, London, Hamish Hamilton, 1981.

¹⁴ Blixen, Karen, *Out of Africa*, London, Jonathan Cape, 1964.



Source: US Library of Congress

Figure 1.14 – Muthaiga Club - 1920s

system of their fathers."

On the recommendation of Ainsworth, another large lease of land in Nairobi was given to Mr and Mrs Sandback Baker by Eliot in 1901, on condition that they supplied Nairobi with meat. They were given 5 thousand acres of land in Muthaiga which they called "Homestead Farm." It was here that Mrs Baker produced the first dairy butter to be made in Kenya. By 1908 she had bred between three to four hundred milking cows, a good example of self-help. Muthaiga farm was thus created to service Nairobi through provisions. In 1912, in the space of just one year, Muthaiga was transformed from a dairy farm into a residential estate, the layout remains today.

James Archibald Morrison, a retired Captain of the Grenadier Guards bought 750 acres in 1912 from Marie Sandback Baker at £20 per acre. She thus departed with a huge profit. Morrison engaged Henderson and Ward, a firm of architects, to prepare a sub-divisional scheme of four acres plots. Morrison wanted to develop a modern residential estate with a country club and a golf course and an office block in town. He obtained £60 thousand loan from the City of London Finance. It turned out to be a shrewd investment. Muthaiga Club was established in 1913 and was an extension of the exclusive London "clubland". As an estate, Muthaiga was a huge success. It declared itself a "town" in 1922, with its by-laws, road maintenance, and a Town Clerk. It was incorporated into Nairobi town in 1928. The open Maasai plains very close to the town were of no interest to land speculators because of the acid soil. Of great interest, however, were the hillsides of the Kikuyu rising towards the West.

1. FROM A RAILYWAY CAMP TO A FRONTIER TOWN, 1899-1920

The area, on the east bank of the East African Rift Valley, rose to 3,200 meters in altitude. It had fantastic grazing grounds and valuable cedar forests. The speculators bought land from the Kikuyu chiefs whose ownership rights for vast areas of land were recognised by the Government. The Kikuyu at that time did not trust money, they preferred animals. For two or three cows, one could buy 200 acres about 80 hectares of first-class land.

Soon, everybody who could somehow afford it possessed a farm in the Highlands. But not to farm. Most times, the purchase was registered with the District Officer, without any development taking place on the acquired land. The lands were being acquired simply for speculative purposes so that at the right time in future, they could be sold at a profit.

This grabbing of African land did not seem to worry Commissioner Eliot. He justified it with his racist and arrogant remarks contained in his private letter to Lord Lansdowne who was concerned about the possible clash in the Rift Valley with the Maasai over land. He wrote: ¹⁵

"Your Lordship has opened this Protectorate to white immigration and colonisation, and I think it is well that in confidential correspondence at least, we should face the undoubted issue-viz that white mates black in a very few moves ... There can be no doubt that the Maasai and many other tribes must go under. It is a prospect which I view with equanimity and a clear conscience ... (Maasaidom) is a beastly, bloody system founded on raiding and immorality."

In other words, what mattered to Eliot was not justice, but might. He was, however, forced to resign in 1904 over his disagreement with the Foreign Office about the need to safeguard African interests. He moved back to Britain to become the Vice-Chancellor of Sheffield University.¹⁶

One of the very few Europeans who opposed this grabbing of African land for speculative purposes was Colonel Richard Meinertzhagen (1878 - 1967), a British soldier of German extraction. The unapologetically racist intelligent officer was deployed to Kenya from Palestine to "pacify" Africans resisting the construction of Uganda Railways in early 1900, especially the Kikuyu and Nandi. He kept a diary which was published in 1960. He was

¹⁵ Bennet, George, *Kenya, A Political History. The Colonial Period*. London, Oxford University Press 1963, pg 14.

¹⁶Eliot, Charles, *The East African Protectorate* London, Frank Cass 1905

doubtful about the success of the settlers' dream. He wrote in his diary:
17

"I cannot see millions of educated Africans – as they will be in a hundred years time – submitting tamely to white domination. After all, it is an African country, and they will demand domination. Then blood will be spilt and I have little doubt about the eventual outcome ... sooner or later, it must lead to a clash between black and white."

He was, however, wrong about the time it would take for blood to be spilt, it took only fifty years, instead of a hundred.

The advance guard of the French Fathers and Brothers of the Missionary Society of the Holy Ghost arrived from Mombasa at Nairobi station in 1899. Among them were Bishop Allgeyer, Father Blanchard and Father Hemery. They kept a written record of each passing day, a Community Diary which is a mine of historical information on the early history of Nairobi. In the Community Diary of St. Austin's Church kept from August 13th, 1899, the following concern was recorded on November 12th, 1901:¹⁸

"Settlers are robbing Africans of their land all over Kikuyu country. Poor people, there is even worse to come."

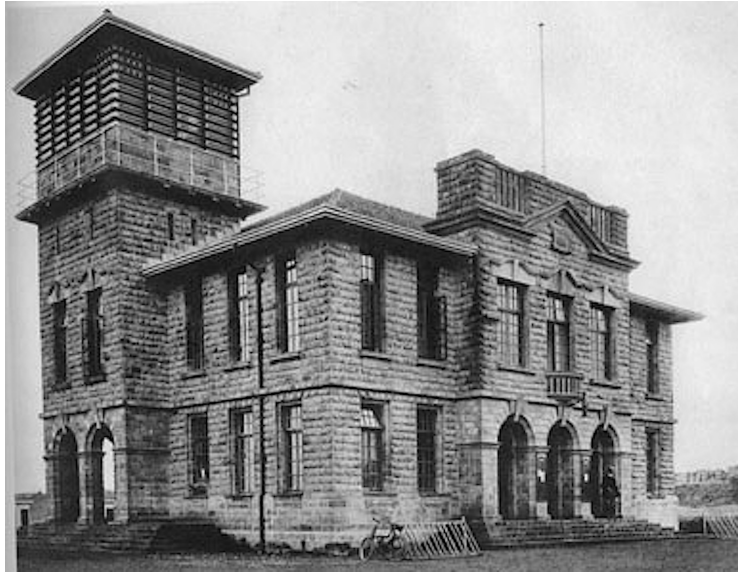
They founded the first Catholic Mission in Kikuyuland, St. Austin's Mission in 1899. This was the place where Kenya's first coffee was successfully cultivated. The first coffee plantation extended from the old Father's House right through the site of the new St. Mary's School, down to the swimming pool and beyond. Eventually, all the area occupied by the present school playgrounds was under coffee. Later, the coffee spread out on either side of old St. Austin's Road across to Braeburn and Dagoretti.

As early as 1904, the Director of Agriculture, whose government farm had 2 thousand seedlings supplied by the Mission, complimented St. Austin's on its coffee,

"which, as regards (to) growth, healthiness and bearing qualities, (he had) never seen surpassed in any part of the West Indies."

¹⁷ Meinertzhagen, Colonel R., *Kenya Diary, 1902-1906* London, Oliver and Boyd, 1960. Preface pg. vii.

¹⁸In the Mission Library at Msongari, Nairobi.



Source: Nigel Pavit, www.sikh-heritage.co.uk

Figure 1.15 – Post Office Built in 1906 after the previous one burnt down in 1905

By 1912, St. Austin's had won three first prizes for coffee at the Nairobi Agricultural and Horticultural Show in 1905, 1909, and 1911. The mission grew in size and prestige with the years.

Despite these misgivings, speculation and grabbing of land in and around Nairobi town continued. People, who had earlier bought plots for as little as Rs. 2 per acre, could now sell at a handsome profit. Little or no control was exercised over the subdivision of freehold plots, and landowners were not compelled to develop the plots they held.

Eastleigh, so named in 1921, after the railway works town of Eastleigh in Hampshire, England, was previously known as Egerton Estate and Nairobi East Township. Its 2,003 acres were bought freehold in two lots at Rs. 1 an acre in 1904 and 1905. In 1912, 654 acres of the block was subdivided into 3,332 plots and it was discovered that the Government had no power to impose any conditions. A member of the Municipal Council, G.P Stevens, with three other Nairobi residents and backers from South Africa, bought land and contractually undertook the construction of seven miles of streets frontage and fourteen miles of lanes, together with drains and water supply "at such time and in such manner as they saw fit". They disposed of their interest to a prominent Indian businessman, Allidina Visram before they "saw fit" to do any of those things.

In 1925, the Government bought 1,078 acres of Eastleigh from the estate of Allidina Visram (which was insolvent) for £5 thousand and some control was then exercised in the area.¹⁹ Eastleigh remained a separate township, as did Muthaiga, until 1928 when both were absorbed into Nairobi Municipality. At that time, Eastleigh's population was 345.

Kenya did not have any gold, diamonds or oil, but it had prime land. Original purchasers of land in and around Nairobi, Chiromo, Kileleshwa, Langata, Parklands, Upper Hill, Lavington and Karen, were finding land more profitable than gold. A senior civil servant, Fredrick Jackson, conveyed his concern in a letter to the Colonial Office in 1905. He wrote:

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“During the last two years the country has been overrun by several hundred more or less adventurers, mostly from South Africa, whose sole idea was to take up land upon the pretence that they had the means to develop it, but when it was granted, they simply sat still and waited for the purchaser to come along and take the land off their hands.”

The present-day Karen suburbs was originally a coffee farm that belonged to Karen Blixen (Blixen of Rungstedlund, Baroness Karen – pen name Isak Dinesen), 1885 - 1962. She came to East Africa from Denmark with her husband, Baron Carl von Blixen, who was later killed in a car accident. Together they established and successfully operated a 6 thousand acre coffee plantation, which they named Karen. The collapse of the coffee market in the 1930s forced her to go back to Denmark finally defeated by locusts, drought, broken dreams and a broken heart. Her farm was divided into plots and sold for between £15 and £32 an acre.

An 18-hole golf course was constructed, the current Karen Country Club, between 1935 and 1937. At the time building costs were estimated at nine shillings per square foot for a stone house with a tiled roof. Her book, *Out of Africa*, vividly records many of her experiences in Kenya. Back in Denmark, she wrote nostalgically about Kenya. A book of short stories titled, *Shadows on the Grass*, based on her memories of life in Kenya was published in 1961.

¹⁹ Kenya Legislative Council Debates 17th April 1925. pg 232.

²⁰Jackson to Littleton, October 1905, Colonial Office Records 879/87/771, pp 97–101, A memorandum written with C.W. Hopley.

1. FROM A RAILYWAY CAMP TO A FRONTIER TOWN, 1899-1920



Source: Rajni Shah, www.sikh-heritage.co.uk

Figure 1.16 – Nairobi Street 1911

As far back as 1800, the Catholic Mission of the Holy Ghost established a mission in Zanzibar. One hundred years later the Community started St. Austin's Mission near Nairobi where they acquired thousands of acres of prime land. Lavington Estate was built on land which originally belonged to St. Austin Mission and is one of Nairobi's recent suburbs. Later in the 1950s, Bernhard Estate, which was bought by the Block family from St. Austin's Mission, was developed to the west of Thompson's Estate.

Two other recent Nairobi suburbs are Spring Valley and Rosslyn. The former is the name of the farm which was owned by Evans and Langmore which when they dissolved their partnership became Spring Valley on the east and Kyuna on the west. Rosslyn also developed from the breaking up of an old established coffee farm that lay on the lower ridges of the Kikuyu Hills between two diverging roads leading eventually to Limuru. It was established in 1949 and quickly developed with many attractive houses. Except for Eastleigh which was occupied by Asians and Africans, all the other Nairobi suburbs mentioned above were exclusively reserved for whites until independence in 1963.

The government also prevented non-Europeans from buying plots in certain parts of Nairobi. The result was that by 1926, Europeans owned plots totalling 2,700 acres in Nairobi, while the Indians had only 300 acres for their residential purposes. The Africans, unfortunately, did not have any, except the nominal official housing. By 1921, 12,088 Africans were living in eight informal villages, a situation the Government called zoning, not racism. Eighty per cent of the town was reserved for ten per cent of the residents.

*** **

The first masterplan for Nairobi was drawn in 1898 by Arthur F. Church, a young assistant railway engineer, who had been dispatched to assist George Whitehouse who instructed him to prepare a town layout for the railway depot. The plan, placed the railway station, just about where it remains today, with the rail line passing along what is currently Uhuru highway. The main street from the railhead, called Station Road (Tom Mboya Street today) was laid to the north of the station, wide enough to enable three-axled ox carts to turn.

Victoria Street (renamed Government Street in 1901, and Moi Avenue today) was laid parallel and the same width as Station Road on which were 13 commercial forming the European Bazaar. The railway workers houses were placed off Victoria Street on ten streets. The Nairobi River was also to be dammed to create an impounding pond. Whitehouse approved the plan on November 30, 1899, and dispatched it to London where it was approved.²¹

1.3.1 Early African Settlements

In 1907, Nairobi was named the capital of the East African Protectorate. It had a Municipal Committee to organise its affairs, an Indian Bazaar, a soda water factory, shops and hotels. It had a population of 13 thousand out of which 9,300 were Africans. Subsequent African population estimates were 12,088 (1921), 26,781 (1931), 40 thousand (1938) and 70 thousand (1947), showing a rapid rate of growth.

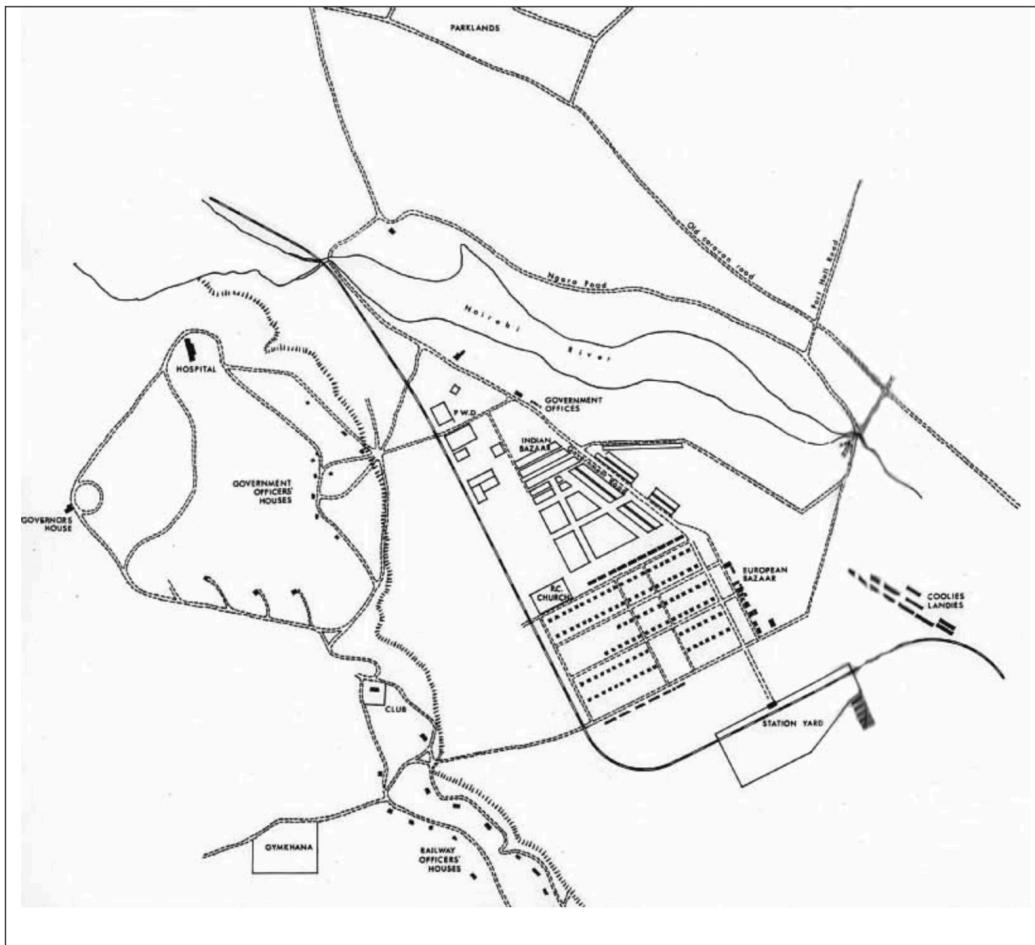
One of the first implications of Nairobi's colonial role was that, despite a preponderance of Africans in its population from the very beginning, the town "was laid out to accommodate a European and Indian population, not an African one."²²

The first African settlements sprung up spontaneously and outside the orbit of official planning. The largest of them, Pangani, existed as a transit camp on the caravan route to Uganda before the founding of Nairobi. It was later used by European hunters on safari and their African ser-

²¹Nairobi City County and Japan International Cooperation Agency (2014) *Nairobi Integrated Urban Development Master Plan*, Final Report.

²²Rosberg, C.G and Nottingham, J. *The Myth of Mau Mau: Nationalism in Kenya*, London, Pall Mall Press, 1966, pg. 23.

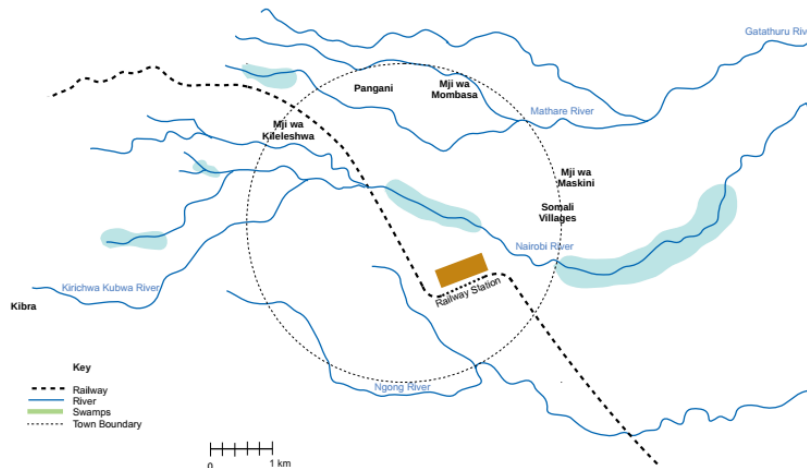
1. FROM A RAILYWAY CAMP TO A FRONTIER TOWN, 1899-1920



Source: Mills, S. (2012) *Railway to Nowhere - The Building of the Lunatic Express Line, Nairobi*.

Figure 1.17 – First Master Plan of Nairobi City by A.F. Church, 1898

vants. Pangani village was demolished to make room for Asian housing in 1938. The second-largest African village, Mji wa Mombasa, was demolished in 1922 along with two smaller settlements, Mji wa Maskini (literally, a Village of the Poor), and Kaburini. In addition, there was Mji wa Kileleshwa, consisting of a disorderly collection of small settlements in the present-day area of Kileleshwa and stretching into Chiromo. There was also Kibra, where Sudanese soldiers settled down, and two small Somali settlements. Apart from these last three, which were more or less ethnically exclusive, all the other villages were occupied by heterogeneous populations comprising Kikuyu, Akamba, Luo, Maasai, Luhya, Wanyamwezi, Baganda, Nandi, Kipsigis, Bajunis, Wasukuma and coast peoples, to mention only a few. A small number of Africans live on River Road, mainly domestic servants, tailors, and hawkers who worked for



Drawing: Madara Ogot

Map 2 – Early African Settlements, 1920

Indians.

Although their labour was needed, Africans who were pouring into Nairobi in large numbers from all over Eastern Africa were not permitted to reside in the township. This put considerable pressure on the available accommodation in the African Villages such as Pangani, Mji wa Maskini, Mji wa Mombasa and Somali Villages. While the Europeans and Indians struggled for the political and economic control of the town centre, Africans were building urban “villages” around the edges which became the cultural and ideological context of their struggle for social identity. Those who were escaping from the Vagrancy Law of 1906 and the numerous pass laws based on the South African model, found a resting place in these villages, instead of sleeping under the verandas of Indian shops. Porters for the large shooting safaris also found temporary lodgings here.

Mji wa Maskini was a mud and wattle village that came into being in 1909. It was established by Railway employees and was situated at the corner of Ngara and Kiambu Roads. The main inhabitants of this village were the Kikuyu, Embu (mainly Ndia, who were employed as sweepers in Nairobi), Akamba and some Meru. In 1913, members of the Luo and Luyia were drafted into the village by Mauladad and another person called Mamu Kasai. These Nyanza people were referred to as *Ogirimiti*, people recruited through forced labour agreements with chiefs who had to meet certain quotas. Other Luo people were found accommodation

in this village through the influence of Sergeant Majors Ahenda Ogutu, Baridi Olando from Gem (father of Baridi Olando, the husband of Hon. Grace Onyango) and Onyango Oloo from Kadimo.

Nyasa people (Malawians) were brought to Nairobi as recruits in the Kenya African Rifles (KAR) towards 1910. Some of them lived in this village. But three years later, they were repatriated back to their country, following a major ethnic clash between them and the Akamba over women. They took many Kamba women with them. There were also a few Baganda and Wanyamwezi from Tanganyika living in this village.

Mji wa Mombasa was established mainly by the Bajuni and other coastal peoples who worked as guides and domestic servants for Europeans. It was established in 1909 near present City Park Cemetery. Its chief, Sheikh Lali, converted many Africans to Islam. Both Mombasa and Maskini Villages were demolished in 1923 and their inhabitants evicted and moved to Pumwani. The move was unpopular and the people offered sacrifices to their gods by slaughtering cows and goats and prayed that there would be no further move from Pumwani.

Pangani was the largest and most cosmopolitan of the early African settlements in Nairobi. It was founded by the early Administrative guards from Tanganyika, especially the Wanyamwezi. The name derives from Pangani found near Tanga. The Chief of Pangani was a Mnyamwezi called Mwinyi Tajiri. After his death, he was succeeded by Asumani Tom, who converted one of the Kikuyu leaders – Tairara – to Islam. He became Abdulla Tairara bin Asuman. The Wanyamwezi played a prominent role in the promotion of Kiswahili in Kenya, especially while residing in Mji wa Maskini, Pangani and later Pumwani. Indeed, they constituted the nucleus of “Mjini People” (urbanised people). They also intermarried extensively with the local people.

Other people who lived at Pangani included Kikuyu, Baganda and Luo. Many single women owned lodges where they rented rooms to fellow women. One of the richest Baganda in Pangani was a woman called Namyage. Other rich Baganda were Abdulla Ndawala, a driver with the Express Company, married to a Chagga lady, and a great philanthropist; and Suleimani Katagganda, a painter from Masaka in Buganda. Many other Baganda lived in Pangani and worked in town as drivers, painters, builders, clerks, cooks and domestic servants. They also estab-



Source: Anon.

Figure 1.18 – Sixth Avenue Nairobi - 1915

lished a branch of the Young Baganda Association, a welfare organisation, with Juma Biantu as its leader. The Association owned a printing press which was located on River Road. The press published a daily newspaper which was sold at 50 cents a copy. The editor of the newspaper was Sentongo, who later worked with Harry Thuku in forming the East African Association.

Some of the inhabitants of Pangani who gave evidence before the Kenya Land Commission²³ were largely from the Congo. Msema Kwelli bin Hamisi, a native of Congo, came from Zanzibar and joined Captain (later Lord) Lugard. Jackson, an Assistant Commissioner in Nairobi, told him to go live and bring up his children in Pangani. He did not have to return to Congo. Masana bin Mungia, a Mswahili from Tanga, came to Fort Smith with Jackson. Hopley, another Senior Administrator, brought him to Nairobi with Captain John Ainsworth, who sent him to Pangani, to live there permanently. Munye Wasa was also a Mswahili from Tanga. He was an askari who accompanied Jackson from Zanzibar to Nairobi. Jackson sent him to Pangani, telling him that so long as the British remained in Kenya, he could stay in Pangani.

Pangani soon acquired a Swahili ambience and remained a stronghold of the Muslim faith. In 1938 it was demolished to make room for Asian

²³See Section 2.2.2

residence. By the end of World War I, if not before, Pangani had become a convenient asylum for African Muslims. Its inhabitants thrived in providing lodgings for Africans employed by the shooting safaris and by the small Indian industries that were gradually being established across Nairobi River, and by supplying other urban amenities such as home-brewed beer, brothels, hotels, butcheries, tea shops and barbers.

It had three Mosques, one each for the Kikuyu, Luo/Luyia, and Kamba. The segregation was due to major ethnoreligious clashes brought about as a result of Kikuyu Muslims, led by Abdalla Tairara, who decided to form their sect known as Jamiaj Baladia, meaning, local Muslims, as opposed to alien Muslims. Other groups, the Akamba, the Coastal people, the Nyanza people, responded by building their Mosques. Ali Sefu, from Wanga in North Nyanza, was the leader of the Nyanza Muslims in Nairobi. Like Christianity, Islam thus only succeeded in dividing the urban Africans.

1.3.2 The Native Location Scheme

In 1906, a Commission of Inquiry was set up to consider sanitary conditions in Nairobi following two serious outbreaks of plague. The Commission's main conclusion was that it was too late to rebuild Nairobi on a new, healthier site. Among its recommendations for improving conditions, however, was building of a "Native Location" to house all Africans living in Nairobi. It also suggested the location be somewhere South of the existing African Villages and near the quarry. Due to the outbreak of World War I and other exigencies, the execution of this scheme was postponed. By mid-1917, members of the European-controlled Municipal Committee were emphasising,²⁴

"the urgency of the Native Location scheme as providing for segregation, a prime necessity for preventing and combating the plague."

With the scheme was described as

"the keystone of all sanitary reform in Nairobi."

Improving the sanitary conditions was not the only justification given for the Native Location Scheme. There was also the fear that African migra-

²⁴Nairobi Municipal Committee Minutes, August, 14th, 1917.

tion into the town was getting out of hand, and had to be controlled. Dr H. J. Radford, Principal Sanitation Officer, contended,²⁵

“that the vast majority of the inhabitants of the existing villages were undesirables who should not be permitted to reside in the township at all and the introduction of a proper pass law would go far towards the mitigation of the evil.”

It was explicitly anticipated that the establishment of a “Native Location” would involve a more effective control on Africans in town and would go hand in hand with the enforcement of an Ordinance passed in 1915 requiring the registration of all African men. It was not, however, put into practice until 1919.

A third reason for moving all Africans to one native location was that the land occupied by the “Native Villages” was required for “Asiatic” residential plots.²⁶ A final justification was reported on November 5th, 1918, by the Municipal Committee based on a letter received from a committee appointed by a public meeting convened to consider the question of venereal diseases. They stressed the importance of the Native Location as a first measure towards controlling African prostitution.

With the implementation of the Pass Laws Ordinance in 1917, discussion of the Native Location scheme in the Municipal Council began to take on a more oppressive overtone. The idea was that it would be made,²⁷

“an offence for any native to be found between (10 pm) and (5 am) at night elsewhere in the township.”

It is worth noting that employment did not feature in this formulation. Barely any of the economic activities of the town could have gone on without the African labour. A lack of willingness to accept this fact was a recurrent theme in the history of relations between African and Europeans in Nairobi.

The idea of a “Native location” was strongly opposed by William McGregor Ross, Director of the Public Works Department (PWD) and one of

²⁵Nairobi Municipal Committee Minutes, October, 15th, 1917.

²⁶Nairobi Municipal Committee Minutes, June 1922.

²⁷Pass Laws Ordinance, 1919

the very few European liberal critics at the time. He was a pioneer Colonial Civil Servant, who served for twenty-three years (1900-1923). For the first five years in East Africa (1900-1905), he was an Assistant Engineer in the Uganda Railway. From 1905 until his retirement in 1923, he was the Director of Public Works. He was also a member of the Legislative Council from 1916-1922. He, and Dr Norman Leys, Director of Medical Services, were the first serious and knowledgeable critics of the Colonial policies and administration in Kenya.

His book, *Kenya from Within*, published in 1927 is a fearless attack on colonial policies on land, labour and race relations.²⁸ He opposed the idea of the "Native Location" on several grounds:

- (a) Government sanction was given concurrently to the reservation of an area for an African Location and the establishment of a Public Works Department (PWD) Landhies in or about 1905 so that the PWD had an established right to house Africans in their compound.
- (b) The PWD compound had been drained and generally made sanitary at great expense, and was better adapted for the housing of Africans than the Native Location could be for a considerable time.
- (c) In principle, the scheme could be regarded as an infringement on the liberty of a British Subject. He preferred to see the African population of Nairobi established on cosmopolitan lines such as prevailed at Mombasa rather than on South African lines.
- (d) Africans should not be compulsorily removed, but voluntarily attracted to the location by its amenities.

Considering white-collar employees of government departments in Nairobi, the Railways was Kenya's largest and best employer. It employed educated and skilled Africans in large numbers, especially the Luo, who were nicknamed, "railway people." The railway provided family housing whose standard was unlikely to be matched in the African location. The Municipal Sub-Committee on the Native Location scheme prepared a Memorandum in reply to Ross' objections and advocated the opposite principles. They forwarded their memorandum to the Chief Secretary and stated, inter alia that:

²⁸Ross, W. McGregor, *Kenya from Within: A Short Political History*. London. George Allen and Unwin 1927.

- (a) The Government had repeatedly sanctioned the Native Location principle. They quoted the Principal Medical Officer of Nairobi who had expressed himself emphatically in favour of the complete segregation of the African element. Hence, the movement could not be voluntary.
- (b) It was a question of what the Government African policy in urban areas should be.

Ross decided to send a letter to the Chief Secretary of Native Affairs on the question of Native Location in Nairobi. He stated his opposition to the scheme at length, arguing that:

“it would be discreditable to the British Administration in the Protectorate if sanction were accorded for the scheme in its present form to be proceeded with ... The Committee’s anxiety for the introduction of order and method into the general control of the town was admirable. They appear to consider, however, that if they arrange to remove excrement and supply roads of access and portable water, they have done all that the most exacting of natives, would possibly require. We do more than this for drought oxen in the PWD stables. Anything in the way of the ordinary human liberties and privileges which non-criminal sections of the population ordinary enjoy in civilised communities are to be restricted wholesale in the interest of proper organization (whatever that may be held to cover) and through sanitary conditions.”

He then objected to the numerous regulations that were to operate in the location. He believed they were imported from South Africa and cited the example of Mombasa, Alexandria and Cairo as an alternative way of organising a town. He predicted failure when the African population reached over 25 thousand

The Governor appointed a committee in 1921 under the chairmanship of K.R. Tate, Assistant to the Provincial Commissioner, Ukambani. The other members were: Rev G. Burns, CMS Nairobi; Dr W. Radford, Principal Sanitation Officer, East Africa Protectorate; I.L.O Gower, Legal Assistant to the Land Officer; C.S. Hunter, District Engineer, Uganda Railway and member of Nairobi Municipal Committee; W.K. Notley, Commissioner, East Africa Police and member of Nairobi Municipal Committee; W.H. Tannah, Deputy Director of PWD and member of Nairobi Municipal Committee; T. A. Wood, member of Nairobi Municipal Committee;

1. FROM A RAILYWAY CAMP TO A FRONTIER TOWN, 1899-1920

G Woodruff, District Surveyor, Survey Department and J.A. Watson, Town Clerk, Nairobi and Secretary to the Committee. The Committee was tasked to confer upon the future administration of the Native Location.

The site available for occupation was about 56 acres exclusive of roads, giving 1,654 stands averaging 1,500 square feet each, and was supposed to suffice for the accommodation of 8,000 Africans. The location would be divided into 116 blocks, averaging 21,030 square feet, each capable of division into about 14 stands and traversed by roads 100 feet wide and subsidiary roads 50 feet and 25 feet wide.

The final recommendations of the Committee were that the Native Location Scheme was important to the whole Protectorate and will involve expenditure disproportionate to the resources of the Municipality and that the capital cost of the scheme should, therefore, be regarded as a Protectorate and not a Municipal charge. They further recommended that the principle of compulsory removal of all Africans except the domestic servants and members of the Police and their families be accepted and regarded as an essential principle governing the Scheme; that Africans be encouraged to remove and erect their huts in the Native Location to the satisfaction of the Municipal Engineer and wattle poles be supplied to them at cost price; and that the Municipality be required to erect several model huts for the guidance of Africans wishing to build.

In line with the Colonial policy of "divide and rule", the policy of segregation was extended to African communities and religious groups in the location. Separate residential quarters for each group were to be provided and it was also proposed to separate the adherents of different religions. Canon Leakey of the Church Missionary Scheme (CMS),²⁹

"urged that it was essential that the Protestant Christian natives should have a separate quarter of their own assigned to them.

The Council later agreed to allot plots to both the CMS and the Native Muslims on which to erect their religious buildings.³⁰

²⁹Nairobi Municipal Committee Minutes, October 28th, 1921.

³⁰For the early history of Pumwani, see K.G. McVicar, "Twilight of an African Slum: Pumwani and the Evolution of African Settlement in Nairobi", PhD. Thesis, UCLA, 1968; and Andrew Hake, *African Metropolis: Self Help City*, Sussex University Press, Brighton, 1977 pp 129-146.

The Native Location, Pumwani, was finally opened in January 1922, with 324 plots available for houses. The residents in the old African Villages were unwilling to move, and only 22 of the plots were taken. By early 1923, however, Mombasa, Maskini and Kaburini on the Nairobi River opposite the commercial area and below Ngara villages had been demolished. The African villages in Kileleshwa survived several threatened evictions at this time but were finally demolished in 1926, and their residents moved into Pumwani.

As Pumwani was a resettlement area, not a Municipal Housing Scheme, those who moved into the area were expected to construct their own houses at a relatively high cost. This made Pumwani very unpopular with African workers, so much so that by 1929, only 327 houses had been built in the Location.³¹ Even when all the plots in the new location were taken up, they only sufficed for a small proportion of the African working population of Nairobi.

1.3.3 Nairobi City Park

On October 3rd, 1904, Nairobi Pioneer City Fathers first reserved for a public park and gardens "the area marked on the map as Municipal Forest Reserve" - the City Park of today. Thus was born the City's loveliest reservation, 300 acres of Africa's untamed forest. In February 1905, the Municipal Committee applied to the Government for reservation of the whole area. In August of the same year, a modest sum of Rs135 (about £10) was voted by the Committee for the upkeep of parks and gardens for the remaining five months of the year.

Mrs Cowie, the mother of Mervyn Cowie, the future Director of Kenya National Parks, was the first resident in the area. She had left Nairobi's first stone house in 1905 and moved into the wilds of Parklands. All kinds of game, especially the destructive wild pig, strayed out of the Municipal Forest opposite her new home and played havoc with her garden. Until the 1920s, the area teemed with small buck, baboons and monkeys.

During the 1914-18 War, small parties of townspeople frequently hunted in the park for meat for the troops stationed in Nairobi. In 1921, the Game Warden wanted to turn the place into a zoo. A small committee discussed the idea, but this was not followed up. A year or two later, the

³¹Terry Hirst's Cartoons and David Lamba's text, *The Struggle for Nairobi*, Mazingira Institute, Nairobi, 1994, pg. 63

idea was revived as the Governor wanted to rid Government House of a small private zoo. Sixty-eight European residents of Parklands drew up a petition protesting against the plan for a zoo because the roar of the lions would keep them awake at night. A compromise was reached. The committee decided against the idea of having a zoo but paid £165 for new lion cages at Government House. Eventually, the Governor sent the lions to the London zoo.

In 1923, the area was developed, named City Park, and opened to the public. In December 1924, the Royal Highness the Duke and Duchess of York, later their Majesties King George VI and Queen Elizabeth, visited Nairobi, and re-opened City Park, which was nearly re-named "York Park" in their honour.

1.4 Social and Cultural Life

Nairobi did not have any formal villages that grew into suburbs around a community of interests such as shops, churches, social halls, cinemas and schools. Instead, it had residential areas consisting of houses in gardens, served by a network of roads with no definite centre. For the white settlers, social networking was based on the telephone, personalised transport (horses, bicycles, rickshaws and more importantly, the motor car) and the Country Club. For example, although Muthaiga suburb had a wonderful Country Club opened in 1913, it still had no shops or public social areas by 1967. The residents had to travel twelve miles to town for a loaf of bread. It is not surprising that the motor car was to be one of the most dominant influences in shaping Nairobi during the next decades.

The first car was brought to Nairobi by Major G.E Smith.³² By 1917, it was claimed that

"a feature of Nairobi life is the large number of motor cars and cycles privately owned and plying for hire,"

with the Ford car ranked first among the mechanical pioneers of Kenya. During the 1920s, the motor car influenced the life of the town. In 1928, a writer claimed that,³³

³² Ref. mentioned in Goldsmith, F.H., *John Ainsworth: Pioneer Kenya Administrator 1864-1946*, London 1955.

³³Joelson, F.S (editor), *East African Today*, London 1928, pg. 175.

“Nairobi in fact, is reputed to be the most motor ridden town in the world proportionately to its white population, the ratio being somewhere in the neighbourhood of one motor car to every two Europeans.”

The town was therefore divided between the privileged car-owners and the non-car owners. This was regrettable as public bus service was not inaugurated until 1934. In addition, European residences were, for the most part, scattered along the circumference of the municipal area, while their business quarters and offices were confined chiefly to Government Road (now Moi Avenue) and Sixth Avenue (now Kenyatta Avenue).

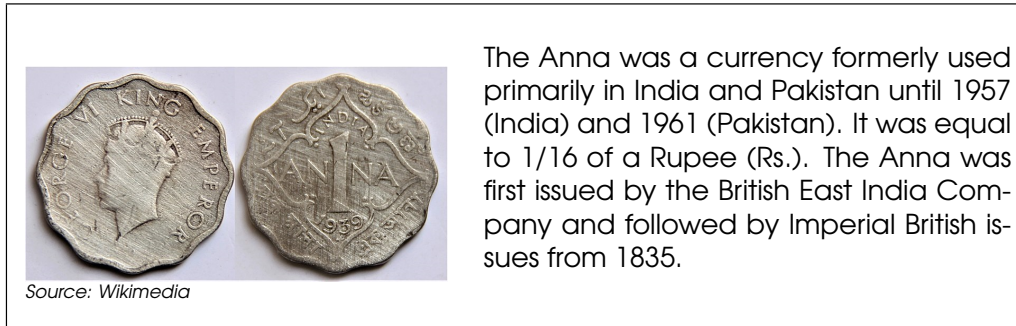
The policy of segregated development championed by white settlers was even extended to markets. The Europeans, for example, had their produce market. Rule 6 of the By-laws stated that,

“Non-Europeans may not enter the Market House unless authorised by a European employer in writing to act on their behalf,” or “the Market Master shall not accept the bid of any non-European before satisfying himself that such bidder is duly authorised in writing to purchase on behalf of a European.”

Both African and Indian Markets were under Municipal control. The Indian Market which was situated in the centre of the town was erected by Messrs A.M Jeevanjee and Company and contained 72 stalls for meat, vegetables and sundries. The African Market was situated on Ngara Road, east of the town centre on the northern side of the river. It was built in 1906/07 out of Municipal funds at a cost of Rs 6,276. The market fee was formerly one Anna per stand per day (see Exhibit 3). From October 1908, however, the fees were suspended as it was discovered that Africans were selling goods outside the market, especially to the Indians in the Bazaar.

The Indian Market was occupied chiefly by Indian and Somalis and was the place to which for the most part, the sale of meat and vegetables was confined. Messrs Jeevanjee and Company had no lease of the land on which they had erected the market and the Municipal Committee had no lease of the building. Through a complicated legal arrangement which led to many difficulties, the two shared the fees.

Exhibit 3 – British Indian Coins - The Anna



1.4.1 The Early Africans in Nairobi

The early Africans came to Nairobi primarily to exploit the opportunities for employment and cash wages. Some Africans had been recruited as servants, porters and soldiers by the British in their advance upcountry and had stayed on in Nairobi. Some had been employed by the builders of the Uganda Railway as labourers, personal servants, and gun-bearers for European staff. Later on, men were recruited or press-ganged into fighting for the British in the First World War. Most of them were in the Carrier Corps of the King's African Rifles. Many of these men also remained in Nairobi after the war was over with some of them settling in the area known as "Karioko".

By 1903 there were Waswahili, Kikuyu, Luo and other Africans from different territories, employed in the railway shops as hammer men and riveters. Also, many Africans worked at menial occupations concerned with civic administration, such as bush-clearing, building, manual labour, street-sweeping, night soil removal, and water carrying.

Mosquito gang and ward "boys" in hospitals, guards, slaughterers in butcheries and domestic servants are all mentioned in the early town records. Later, small traders and market stall holders, masons and African clerks are mentioned, suggesting that Africans were quick to take advantage of the opportunities available in Nairobi for learning new skills and for entrepreneurial activities in a centre of expanding population. By 1922, Africans were employed in the Post and Telegraph Department as postmen and telegraph workers and by 1923, the bulk of the manipulative telegraph work was done by Africans.

In the private sector, the establishment of such enterprises as corn, flour and sawmills, tent-making, soap, furniture, ice soda and bacon fac-

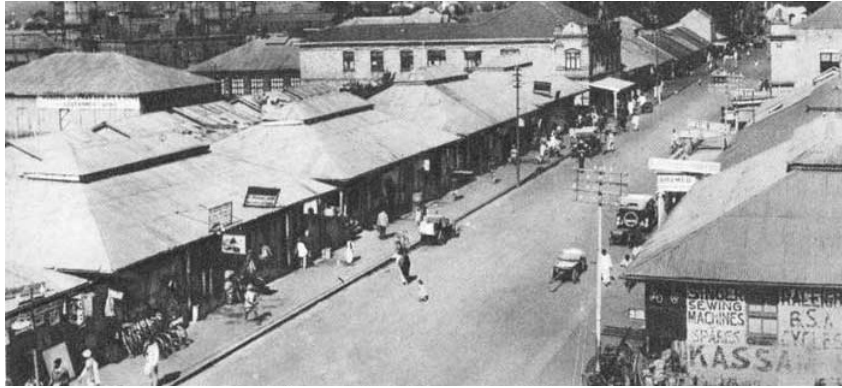
tories and the expansion of printing and publishing between 1908 and 1910 required skilled and semi-skilled workmen. The commercial and industrial expansion led to demands for an education which would prepare Africans for such occupations. The prison industries in Nairobi and Mombasa were the chief means at that time of providing industrial training for Africans, who were taught chain-making, tailoring, basketry, mat-making and carpentry. Africans, on their initiative, sought and obtained instruction from Indians and Goans, particularly in driving and tailoring.

The Christian Missions also offered some elementary education to the Africans. By 1914-15, the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in Nairobi had a boys school with a 120 student daily average attendance. Teaching included reading, writing, simple arithmetic, English, and the Geography of Africa. The work of the day school was carried out by a staff of three African teachers under European supervision. The CMS also had a night school, three times a week with an average attendance of 200. It was run by a European missionary with the help of volunteers. There was also a women's school run by two lady missionaries whose average attendance was 60. Students were taught reading, writing and religious knowledge. In all these schools, about 50 per cent of the students were Kikuyu, 35 per cent Luo and 15 per cent other Kenyan ethnic groups.

The Roman Catholic Church provided technical education for Africans in carpentry, masonry and coffee planting. Concerning secular education, they had a Day School for Africans under the supervision of African teachers where reading, writing and elementary arithmetic were taught in Kikuyu and Kiswahili. The attendance was irregular and progress was disappointing. The Catholics also had the Nairobi African Roman Catholic School, with an average attendance of about 157. The majority of students were Kikuyu and Luo and the subjects taught were Religion, Moral Training, Reading and Writing - all in Kiswahili; and Elementary Arithmetic, Singing and English for those who wished to learn them.

The official Colonial policy supported by European settlers, however, was against offering literary education to Africans. Professor Frazer, who in 1909 was appointed by the Colonial Office to report on education in Kenya, stated that he was instructed not to put forward plans for literary education for Africans. He, therefore, recommended that the Government should subsidise the Missions who were already providing some education to Africans. Secondly, he proposed a possible subsidiary scheme

1. FROM A RAILYWAY CAMP TO A FRONTIER TOWN, 1899-1920



Source: East African Standard Limited

Figure 1.19 – Indian Bazaar - 1920s

for the formation and training of an industrial corps, about 100 strong, enlisted for three years at the age of sixteen and then dismissed to earn their living. Proposed suitable areas were carpentry, blacksmithing, tannery work, and simple medical services.³⁴

By 1912, literary education was found to be necessary for certain spheres especially simpler forms of clerical work. In 1923, technical education was considered as necessary by industrial employers, but they too fought the need for literary education for Africans.³⁵ The European settlers contended that they needed wage labourers, not competitors.

In a Memorandum to the Convention of Associations, a Nairobi Councillor advocated a Native Technical and Training Department supported by Government so that the few artisans who existed could not demand “excessive and outrageous wages.” Race conflict in the economic sphere entered here. In 1923, Kenya was only just recovering from the first post-war depression. European relations with Indians had been very bitter, due to the strain from the slump conditions in the two communities. The movement to replace Indian labour by the (“cheaper”) African labour was in process.

It was soon discovered, as had been found in other countries, that a basic knowledge of the 3Rs (Reading, wRiting and aRithmetic) is necessary for the skilled worker in any sphere. Consequently, the same factors which determined the rise of an unskilled, and later, of a skilled labour force gave to certain members of that force the power to become vocal

³⁴*East African Standard*, 30th October and 27th November, 1909.

³⁵*East African Standard*, 20th October, 1923.

in the political sphere. It provided conditions necessary for the formulation of demands of political representation both in central and local government. Through contact with other communities, therefore, African societies in towns had taken on a new economic structure which meant a different social and political structure as well.

The urbanisation of the African provided increasing opportunities for the growth of the small trader. The numbers increased steadily, and by 1941, African traders in Nairobi were estimated to be about 2 thousand, with about 5 hundred hawkers. Some of these traders were no longer small. There were 225 market traders, 120 tailors, 90 cobblers, 60 painters, 20 carpenters, 13 tinsmiths, 25 dhobis, 90 barbers and 30 butchers. Also, there were 145 African shops, 150 eating houses, 400 houses and 60 taxi drivers.³⁶

Furthermore, Africans formed trading companies, parallel to those of Europeans and Indians, bought land in commercial areas, in direct competition with other races. In 1945, for example, the Eating House Keepers Association bought the property in Nairobi Bazaar for £15 thousand.³⁷ In 1946, the Kiambu Chicken and Egg Dealers bought a property at the Nairobi Bazaar for £8 thousand. This trend was commented on by W. Waswa Awori, one of the emerging African leaders in Nairobi. In a report published in *African World Annual, 42nd Edition*, he wrote:

“The leading one is the Kenya African Farmers and Traders’ Cooperative Limited. This Company, like that in Tanganyika, employs the services of a European who is concerned with the importing and marketing of goods. Then there are, to mention but a few, the African Musical and Printing Works Limited, the African Book Writers Limited, the Commercial College, the Egg and Poultry Dealers Limited, the Fuel and Bark Company, and the Ndesafa Industrial Company. The last was recently formed by ex-servicemen and it may become the biggest industrial enterprise in the Country. Recently, it was negotiating to purchase a large factory worth more than £150, 000,”³⁸

An analysis of information from labour returns by the Chief Registrar of Africans in December 1928, showed Africans in Nairobi were employed in 96 classes, confirmation of the great and varied part already being

³⁶Parker, Mary op. cit

³⁷Ibid, p.22

³⁸Ibid, p. 55

1. FROM A RAILYWAY CAMP TO A FRONTIER TOWN, 1899-1920



Source: Nigel Pavit

Figure 1.20 – Two Kikuyu Women conversing on the streets of the New Indian Bazaar - 1900s

played by Africans in the economy. The highest-paid registered African in Nairobi, a linotype operator employed by the Government, earned £25.10s per month. One clerk interpreter drew £20.16s in a government job in which average pay was £4.6s per month. One African postal clerk earned £18 per month, though the average wage where he worked was £6.1s. One African Policeman earned £17.10s, though the average policeman got £2 per month. The highest-paid European employed African, an Assistant Surveyor, who was the only African so employed, earned £15 per month. Highest paid Asian employed African, a vulcaniser, got £10. The lowest recorded registered wage earner in Nairobi, an African herds boy, employed by a European, earned 4s. per month.

*** **

African women who came to Nairobi in the first two decades of the Twentieth Century were from different ethnic groups and came from widely scattered areas. The majority were Kikuyu, Nandi, Kipsigis, Baganda, Luyia, Maasai, Akamba and later Wanyamwezi from Mwanza. They left their rural homes for a variety of reasons including marital discords, quar-

rels with parents, widowhood and childlessness. As recorded in the Political Record Book, by 1911, their numbers in Nairobi were significant, although still outnumbered by men with a ratio of six to one.³⁹ In the same document, is the first mention of prostitution in the town, probably referring to the present River Road:⁴⁰

“Behind the government offices runs the Nairobi River, through a swamp cultivated almost entirely by Indians. On the borders of this swamp are several houses, some of which are occupied by native prostitutes who pay rent to Indian owners.”

Before Pumwani Estate was built in 1921/2, most African prostitutes also engaged in other economic activities such as working on small farms in Kileleshwa and finding European men there; or cutting wood near Muthaiga and selling it in *Mji wa Mombasa* or *Mji wa Maskini*. They made good money going to bed with Europeans and Indians and were, therefore, able to own property in *Mji wa Maskini* and *Mji wa Mombasa* and later in Pumwani.

Possibly the first African prostitutes in Nairobi followed the soldiers of the British East African Rifles and the Asian “Coolies” working on the railway line. One of the first Nandi prostitutes, for example, was a woman called Fauzia, who first set herself up in the Indian Bazaar. She was very successful and had many Asian, European and African customers. She encouraged many Nandi women to come to Nairobi, putting them up when they first arrived and helping them to establish themselves. She later moved to Pangani where she built herself a house. African prostitutes were soon to be found in all the early African settlements around Nairobi. It should, however, be noted that right from the beginning there were non-African prostitutes in Nairobi as well: Japanese, Syrians, Europeans and Americans.

By the late 1920s, both Pangani and Pumwani had a large population of independent African women, many of whom did well and built or bought houses there. Unlike the situation in other cities of the world, prostitutes in Nairobi were never subjected to exploitation by pimps or

³⁹*Political Record Book*, Nairobi District, File DC/NB 1/1, Kenya in National Archives.

⁴⁰White, Luise, *The Comforts of Home: Prostitution in Colonial Nairobi*, Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press 1990; Janet Bujra, “Women ‘Entrepreneurs’ of Early Nairobi” *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 9,2:213-34; and Janet Bujra, “Proletarianization and the Informal Economy: A case study from Nairobi.” *African Urban Studies* Vol 3, 47- 66 (1978-79).

brothel owners. Every woman seemed to have organised her business separately and lived independently. This was mainly due to the advantageous economic position in which these women found themselves. They did not need middlemen to find clients as prospective customers were in abundance. The demand was far greater than supply.⁴¹

What were the precipitating factors? First, was undoubtedly the demographic imbalance of the sexes. From the beginning, men vastly outnumbered women. Men from all over Eastern Africa had come to Nairobi attracted either by the opportunities of earning money from wage labour or the hope of making quick profits from trade in a centre of expanding population. These men rarely brought their wives with them. It is not surprising then that there was a demand for women.

Second, employment opportunities for women were largely non-existent in the early Colonial urban economy. Existing wage employment was primarily for men. Although a few women were able to obtain jobs as domestic servants or ayahs, they remained in competition with men. Moreover, domestic service was a sphere in which labour was exploited to the full: pitifully low wages, long work hours and poor accommodation.

In the early days, some women were able to make a good living by brewing and selling beer to men. From 1921, however, the Municipal Council forbade the brewing of beer by Africans. They set up a Municipal Brewery at Pumwani that was soon doing good business. A few African women were employed there as workers, and it seems probable that this constituted the first labour for women on any scale in Nairobi. Women also made a subsistence living selling cooked food, vegetables or firewood. But these fields were monopolized by Asian traders. In addition, Municipal control was also extended to these areas, making it illegal to operate without a license.

The situation had not changed by 1938, the year of the first survey of African employment in Nairobi. The survey found that there were 230 positions in the wage labour force for women. All involved the sale of domestic service: care for children (ayahs), care of the infirm (ward attendant in the female wards of African hospital and asylum), factory cleaners, and brewers employed by the Nairobi Municipality. In that year, the number of males in wage labour in Nairobi was over 25 thousand. The

⁴¹Ibid.

highest wage available to women was 50 shillings a month given to the licensed brewers.⁴²

Successful prostitution enabled women to build and buy houses in town. Forty-two per cent of houses in Pangani were owned by women in 1932 and by 1943, forty-one per cent of Pumwani houses were in the hands of women.⁴³ In acquiring urban property, they formalized their commitment to urban life.

*** **

The Somalis, who always preferred to be on their own and sometimes even refusing to be classified with Africans, had two "villages". Their history in Nairobi dates back to the early days of the Uganda Railway construction. They came from three different areas, the Northern Frontier District (NFD), Ogaden in Ethiopia and from the present Somali Republic, and therefore formed three distinct groups. Many came with European hunters as domestic servants or guides cum-interpreters. Most of them later changed to become livestock traders or butchers. Captain Lugard (later Lord Lugard) for instance, engaged a Somali servant named Duale Idris, who also acted as an interpreter and later a *Nyapara* (labour supervisor). After the completion of the railway, Duale resigned from Lugard's employment to start his own business as a livestock trader, buying cattle from Ethiopia, NFD and Maasailand to sell to slaughterhouses in Nairobi. He lived in one of the Somali villages located on Forest Road.

Another prominent Somali was Mohamed Farah, who came from Adis Ababa in 1900 at the age of eighteen years. He was a servant-cum cook of Captain Bell and Major Ryan, who were hunters. The two hunters employed about 100 servants mainly Wanyamwezi whose names ranged from Penda Kula, Kufa Kulala, Kasambo, Nyama Moto, and Akili Mali. Bell and Ryan were major elephant hunters and their hunting expeditions took them to Ethiopia, the Sudan, Congo, Uganda and back to Kenya after being away for three years.

Farah later worked for Major Ryan at Witu in Jubaland and the army. At the end of the war, Ryan went back to England and Farah was employed as a cook by Sir Northrup McMillan, whom he accompanied in

⁴²*Davis Report*, Rhodes House Library, Oxford, RH: MS Afr, pg. 13.

⁴³Carter Land Commission, Evidence Vol. I, pg.1129.

many safaris in Africa. He later worked as a cook for different Europeans in Kitale, Murang'a, Nyeri and Nairobi. He and his son Omar were later engaged in butchery business and they bought several houses in Nairobi and Thika. He died on January 17th, 1954. Farah's story is typical of the early Somali inhabitants.

Parklands was the European area of residence. The first Somali settlement was on Forest Road to enable the servants to live near their employers. When Eastleigh, Muthaiga and other European areas were incorporated into Nairobi Municipality in 1928, the Somali bought some plots in Eastleigh and started serious grazing of cattle in the open area, Section III, towards Bahati (now Eastleigh Airport). Others moved as far as Dagoretti market where they grazed their animals in the open space. Those whose houses had been demobilised after World War I were compensated with the land behind the Nairobi National Park towards Mbagathi. Indeed, some lived there until about the early 1970s when the then Nairobi District commissioner, W.K Martin had their cattle compulsorily auctioned in public. The affected Somali community split and scattered to Molo, Kitale, Nakuru, Naivasha and Nanyuki.

The story of Al Haj Jama, whom Bethwell Ogot interviewed on May 17th, 1974 in Nairobi, confirms the picture portrayed of early Somali settlements. He came from Berbera in British Somaliland at the beginning of the Twentieth Century as one of the porters cum guide cum cook for Major (later Colonel) Ewart Grogan. They trekked from Berbera through Ogaden on a hunting safari. After travelling for many months, they reached Kenya via Moyale. Within Kenya, they travelled using mules and horses before reaching Nairobi in 1902. Grogan joined other Europeans in Parklands, and Jama joined other Somalis from Berbera, Hargeisa and Ogaden who were working as porters, guides and cooks at a Somali Village.

Jama, together with other Somalis in the village, joined the army during World War I and saw service in Tanganyika, where some of them survived and others disappeared. Their forces captured some prisoners of war, including Wanyamwezi and Wasukuma. On their demobilization, he and other Somali together with some Wanyamwezi, Wasukuma, Baganda and Sudanese, decided to settle in Nairobi. He went on to live in one of the Somali villages.

Many of his Somali colleagues resigned from European employment

and ventured into private business. Some became cattle traders, buying cattle from the North Eastern District and selling them to butchers in Nairobi and Nakuru. Others became large pastoral farmers while others moved into new towns such as Nanyuki and Gilgil as retail traders. In Nairobi, Jama lived in Mji wa Mombasa for some years before moving to Eastleigh Section III. From there, he travelled to Mogadishu, Hargeisa and NFD to buy cattle.⁴⁴

A third witness, who confirms this outline of early Somali history in Nairobi, is Mohamed Sheikh Ali whom Bethwell Ogot recorded on November 20th, 1974, in Nairobi. Ali was born in Nairobi in 1909. His father came from Hargeisa as a guide for Lord Delamere and later joined other Somalis to fight for the British in World War I. After demobilisation, his father worked as a watchman for a short while before becoming a livestock grazer in the area now occupied by Nairobi West Estate. As the town developed, the Somalis were moved from place to place including Mbagathi. Ali and other Somalis decided to move to Kajjado, where he established a butchery and later owned several buildings.⁴⁵

In January 1917, it was decided to move the Somali villages situated on the Ngara Plain in Nairobi Township. The number of houses involved was about 126. A suitable site for their relocation was prepared at Mbagathi, a distance of about eight miles from Nairobi. The choice did not meet the approval of the Somalis and they took up residence in Nairobi East location. Others moved to the present Gikomba area where their main business was the brewing of *Mairungi* and methylated spirits. Also in Pumwani, in an area called Digo Road, Somalis were selling *Mairungi* and methylated spirits. The location was very popular with Government employees, not only for the drink but also because there were high-class prostitutes there extending to Eastleigh Section III. The downfall of several African leaders was traced here. Other Somalis moved to new towns, including Nanyuki and Gilgil, as retail traders.

When the Municipal Council decided to demolish Somali Villages to create room for Asian settlement, Somalis were offered land in Eastleigh by the District Commissioner Hamilton. They possessed cattle and money and could, therefore, afford to pay ten rupees for a plot that the govern-

⁴⁴Interview on May 17th, 1974 in *Nairobi, in Nairobi as I Saw It, Being Reminiscences of Nairobi Townsmen*, a volume of unpublished recorded interview by Bethwell A. Ogot in Bethwell Allan Ogot Research Library, Yala, Kenya.

⁴⁵Ibid.

ment was charging. This marked the beginning of Somali settlements in Eastleigh. Other African communities did not approve of the idea of buying land, but gradually, some of them like Tairara and other members of the Young Kikuyu Association bought land in Eastleigh.

1.4.2 The Early Asians in Nairobi

The early Asians in Nairobi played a major economic role in the development of the town. They controlled, and continue to control, most of the wholesale and retail trade, a substantial part of the industry, banking, insurance and services in general. Indian contacts with the East African region date back many centuries before the Europeans came. Trade between India and the Eastern coast of Africa had flourished and was largely controlled by Indians as sailors, merchants, financiers and administrators. They developed large settlements in Zanzibar, Pemba, Kilwa, Pangani, Bagamoyo, Tanga, Mombasa and Malindi where they benefitted from the protection of Arab rulers in those areas. From such commercial activities, they developed an independent base which enabled them to benefit from the colonisation of the region by European powers.

When the decision was taken in 1895 to build the Uganda Railways, the IBEA Company entrusted the task of recruiting Indian personnel to a Punjabi agent, Seth Alibhoy Mulla Jeevanjee. Born in 1856 in India, he was already an established trader in India and from 1886, in Australia where he had established an agency for the import of Eastern goods to Adelaide. In 1890, he obtained a contract from the IBEA Company to recruit Indian labour, artisans and police for the company's territories. He opened a branch of his Karachi-based firm in Mombasa, working as a contractor. His firm was hired by the Uganda Railway in 1896 to recruit Indian workers, construct buildings, do earthworks, and provide food for Indian railway workers. His recruitment of Indian workers was from the province of Punjab and other regions of Northern India, in particular Gujarat and Sindh.

Of the 35 thousand people he recruited only a small minority were unskilled labourers, referred to as Coolies. The majority were professionals, land and quantity surveyors, telegraphers, accountants, nurses, photographers, masons, carpenters, boilermakers, mechanics, locomotive drivers and cooks. Some were independent immigrants looking for



Photo: Madara Ogot

Figure 1.21 – Jeevanjee Garden. Statue in the middle of Jeevanjee Garden of Seth Alibhoy Mulla Jeevanjee, that was unveiled by His Worship the Mayor of Nairobi, Councillor John Ndirangu in 2001. Picture taken in 2019

green pastures in East Africa. Over 30 thousand of these Indians workers returned to India at the end of the construction of the railway, leaving only a few of them behind, some of whom eventually settled in Nairobi.

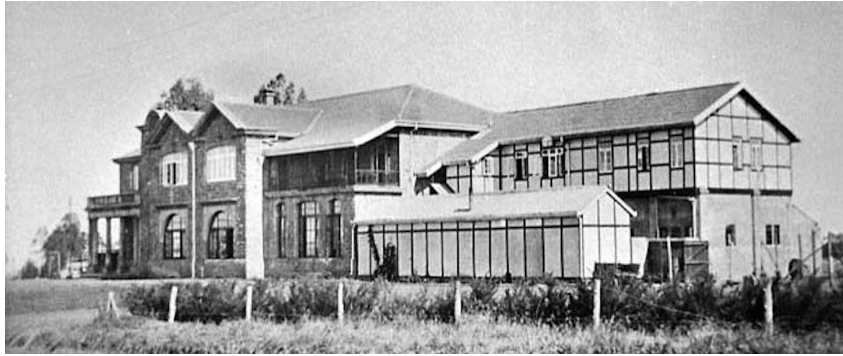
Since the British Government had hoped that “East Africa would be the America of the Hindus”, the construction of the Uganda Railway opened up vast opportunities for the Indian immigrants. The European settlers, however, vehemently opposed Indian immigration to Kenya, arguing that the county should be developed into a white dominion on the lines of Canada, Australia and South Africa. Such racist arguments were rejected by the Indians who contended that as British subjects, they had as much right as any British citizen to contribute to the development of a British colony, such as Kenya. So they came as representatives of very rich Indian merchants, construction companies, businessmen, farmers, employees of government and railway, professional craftsmen, civil servants etc.

Jeevanjee became the principal local Uganda railway contractor for supplies. He built John Ainsworth’s house in Nairobi, which marked the beginning of his business activities in the town. His firm was later commissioned to build government offices and residences, post offices and

railway stations between Mombasa and Kisumu. He soon became a major landowner in Nairobi and Mombasa. He started a newspaper, the *African Standard* in 1902, which he later sold to Anderson and Mayer for \$50 in 1903 when it was renamed *The East African Standard*. He also sold a sister paper called *The Mombasa Times*. He then became an importer and a ship-owner, operating steamships between Bombay (Mumbai) and Mauritius, and Bombay and Jedda. He laid the first public garden in Nairobi (the Jeevanjee Gardens) which he gave to the town in 1906. His family set up Jeevanjee Market, the first of its kind in town. He helped with the construction of the first Nairobi Club, a charitable act which earned him honorary membership of the Club, the only Indian member of the club, until 1961. Jeevanjee was a keen racing enthusiast and his horse was the first to win at Nairobi Racecourse in 1903. Horse racing, at that time, was carried out under the East African Turf Club with the course situated north of Nairobi, about two miles from the centre. There were already several very keen racing enthusiasts. They all trained and many of them, those who could make the weight, rode their horses. The principal race of the year, the "Produce Stakes", was the forerunner to today's Kenya Derby. Many years later, the course was moved to a much better site on Ngong Road, and the old course became a housing site for African town workers.

Jeevanjee was the President of the Indian Association in Mombasa (1905-06) and was an unofficial Indian member of the Legislative Council from 1910 to 1911. In 1912, he published a document entitled *An Appeal on Behalf of Indians in East Africa* in which he condemned racial discrimination against Indians, and demanded equality of treatment with the Europeans. He died in 1934.

Another Asian who played a leading role in the early history of East Africa and of Nairobi was Allidina Seth Visram. One of Visram's leading roles was in laying foundations of trade in Uganda and several agricultural industries such as cotton, sugar, rubber and tea as well as shipping across Lake Victoria. Born at Kaira in Cutch in 1851, he came to East Africa at the age of twelve. Between 1885 and 1888, he joined Seth Nasser Virjee and had a chain of stores between Bagamoyo and Ujiji in Tanzania. As the Uganda Railway project matured, Visram diverted his attention to Kenya and opened a chain of stores along the railway line, always being one station ahead of the Uganda railway construction



Source: Rajni Shah www.sikh-heritage.co.uk

Figure 1.22 – Nairobi Club - 1916

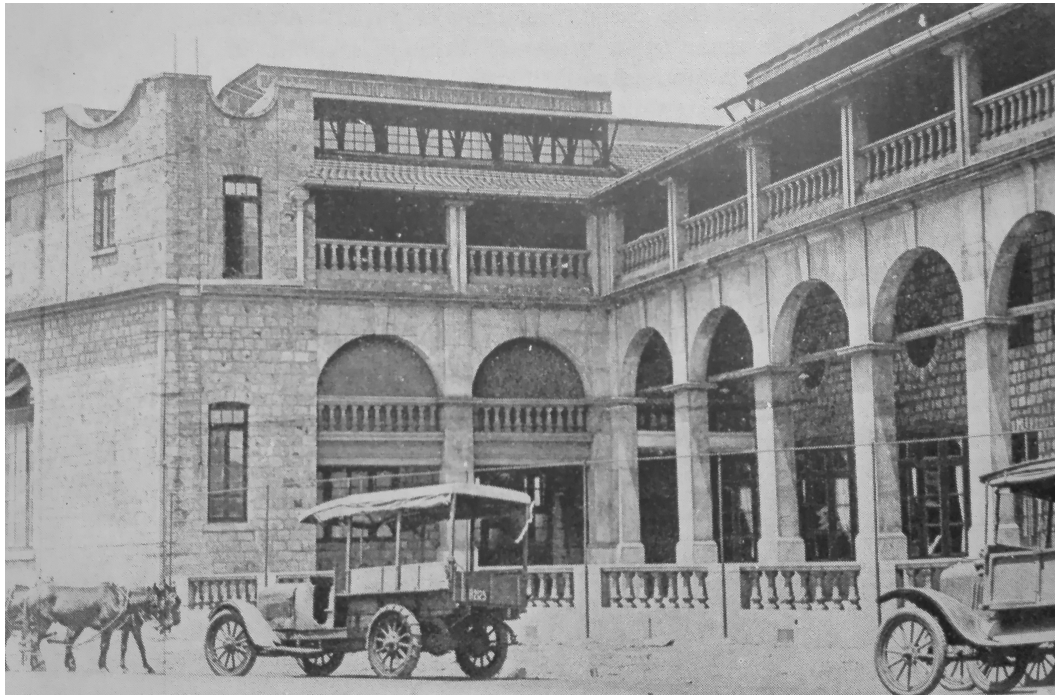


Figure 1.23 – Col. Alibhai Jevanjee and Alidina Visram

camp.

By 1904, Visram was working with the Colonial Government to expand the business and to develop agriculture. By this time, he had over 170 branches in Kenya and Uganda, and a few plantations employing thousands of Indians and Africans. He also had several dhows and a small steamer on Lake Victoria and a well-organised transport service from Mombasa. This was in addition to several ginneries, the first of which he opened in Entebbe in 1910. He owned the first bazaar in Nairobi. He died in Kampala on June 30th, 1916. His son Abdur Rasul Allidina Visram, built, furnished and gave to the Government of Kenya, the well known Allidina Visram High School in Mombasa to commemorate the name of his illustrious father.

Ali Khan arrived in Nairobi in 1904 with a string of horses. He opened



Source: *Hemsing, J. Old Nairobi and the New Stanley Hotel, 1974.*

Figure 1.24 – New Stanley Hotel - 1913

livery stables on River Road and supplied most of the transport in town – rickshaws, coaches, mule-carts, gigs and landaus. When the New Stanley Hotel was opened in 1912, Ali could be seen most mornings standing on the hotel steps talking to people with his grey horse tethered nearby. He always wore riding breeches and leggings and dark glasses. He knew everybody and everybody knew him. He remained in business for many years and became quite an “institution”. After World War I, motor vehicles gradually replaced animals drawn carriages and the taxis replaced the rickshaw. Ali’s business slowly came to an end. He was unable to adapt himself to the changing circumstances, went blind towards the end of his life and died in poor circumstances.

Many other Indians and Goans played key roles in the Protectorate’s development and by 1903, thousands of them had settled in Nairobi. The coolies who settled in Nairobi had their warehouse in what is known as Kipande House. Designed by Gurdit Singh (architect), it was completed in 1913. This historic masterpiece was later used by the colonial government as the registration office where Africans were registered and issued with their identity cards (kipande), hence the name. The one storey building along Kenyatta Avenue and Loita Street was Nairobi’s



Photo: Madara Ogot

Figure 1.25 – Kipande House - A Kenya Commerical Bank Branch- 2018

tallest building until City Hall was opened in 1935. Currently, it is occupied by the Kenya Commercial Bank and was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 2012 for its historical significance in Kenya.

Blocked from agricultural enterprises, except in a few low-lying areas, the Indians were confined to their commercial and industrial ventures in the central business district. At first, this was restricted to the Bazaar which contained 112 shops and a corresponding number of dwellings. The remainder of the Indian population was spread on both banks of the Nairobi River. The Goans lived near and around the present Ronald Ngala Street up to Reata Road. Their neighbours were the Sikhs who lived just across, facing River Road. Landhies Mawe Estate was exclusively reserved for Indian locomotive and firemen. This was because the Estate was near a locomotive she and station.

Then there was the Swamp, an area of 1.5 miles long and 0.75 miles wide and extended from the Ainsworth Bridge to just below Ngara Bridge on both banks of Nairobi River. It was bounded on the north by Ngara Road and the south by the irrigation furrow. It was let out in plots, most on short leases, for market gardening. From the Ainsworth bridge to behind the Norfolk Hotel, a distance of about 0.5 miles, the Swamp was under cultivation and not used for residential purposes. But from this point to the South Eastern extremity, it was inhabited by a mixed population of Indians and Africans numbering about 1 thousand the great majority of whom were not employed in market gardening, the purpose for which

the area was let by the Crown.

There were 30 plots in this portion of land including Shariff Jaffer's estate of 128 acres which was held on a 99 years lease. The remainder of the plots varied in extent from one to eight acres held on a ten-year lease from 1904. Except for three or four stone buildings, the population was housed in flimsy iron landhies, mud huts and other temporary structures, with the majority of these building occupied by African prostitutes. It was a health hazard and the area where the majority of small-pox cases occurred.

Jeevanjee, who was already emerging as the "Delamere of the Indians", condemned this unfair racial zoning. He was, however, told that in future Parklands, which was still largely undeveloped, would be subdivided by the European plot owners and sold to Indians of the better-off class. They would have Pangani by pushing out the Africans, as eventually happened in 1938.

Although classified as "Asiatics" by the Colonial administration, the Indians were linguistically and religiously very diverse and practised the custom of social exclusiveness. The majority of them, however, came from only two major regions of India: Gujarat and Punjab. Although everyone else saw them as one group, they lacked cohesive unity. The notion of social exclusiveness within a framework of commercial and administrative relations culturally came easily to them. So they kept to themselves, neither interacting with the Europeans nor the Africans. The community's divisions were deeply rooted in their traditional beliefs and ideas of political organization, with each sub-community insisting on using their resources to establish separate services such as schools, hospitals, burial grounds, shops, places of worship and places for entertainment.

The community, for example, collected money and built the Desai Memorial Building and Library at a cost about \$3,250 in honour of Manilal Ambalal Desai who was one of the best known Indian leaders in Kenya. Desai fought for better conditions and equal rights for both Indians and Africans. The Patel Brotherhood Hall was built in 1917 through the restless energy of young Patels to assist the disabled and distressed persons of their community. It was built in two stages, the last one being in 1923 at a total cost 9plot and building0 of \$3,500. In the late 1890s, a

new wave of educated Punjabi Hindu pioneers came to Kenya, among them Lalchand Sharma, Mahashya Badrinath, Mathura Dass, Inder Singh and Baiskhi Ram. They were staunch disciples of Swami Dayananda, the greatest of the Indian reformers in the Nineteenth Century and founder of the intellectual Vedic revival movement in India called the Arya Samaj. As members, they devoted much of their time to *prachar* (missionary work). They started to organize their community. On July 5th, 1903, forty-five Arya Samaj men got together to sow the seeds of Arya Samaj in Nairobi with the call for "Return to the Vedas". Essentially Hindu, the reformist ideology appealed to those grasping for a new consciousness in the charged political-cultural climate.

The Arya Samaj advocate lifting the status of women with their education being fundamental. They led in the field of Indian girl's education in Nairobi, starting with classes taught in homes. In 1910, they constructed the Arya Kanya Pathshalla temple. By 1917, they had established a girl's school in Nairobi and erected a Rest House for their supporters. Over the years, no fewer than three new Arya Samaj Centres were created in the Nairobi area: in 1963 a large complex was built in Parklands area, in 1966 a Vedic temple was opened in Nairobi South "C" and in 1967 another one on Juja Road. The centres were prayer halls that also incorporated rest houses and schools. Much of the money to finance these buildings came from contributions from members and various wealthy Arya Samaj industrialists like Seth Nanji Kalidas Mehta who, for example, donated the plot of land for the Parklands Arya Samaj.

The Cutchi Gujarati Hindu Union on Grogan Road (now Kirinyaga Road) was established in 1906, as a representative body for all Hindu who came from Cutch, Kathiawar and Gujarat in India. It built a temple, girls school, rest house and crematorium. The followers of another Hindu religion called Sanatan also pulled their efforts together and built a beautiful building-Shri Sanatan Dharma on the corner of Duke Street, which provided for a rest house, temple, and living rooms. In 1922, they opened a girls school.

The Sikh religion was created by ten successive Gurus (religious preceptors) who lived between the Fifteenth and Seventeenth century. It is based on a Holy Book, the Adi Granth, which contains the writings of many of these Gurus. The Sikhs were originally a passive, religious sect dedicated to the removal of evil practices from society and the oppres-



Source:Ranjani Shah, www.sikh-heritage.co.uk

Figure 1.26 – Government Road with a view of Khoja Mosque to the Left - 1920s

sion of the then rulers. Later, they supplemented this effort with military action. The Sikhs have since then been famous for their fighting qualities. But they have won even greater fame for their working qualities. The original home of the Sikhs is in Punjab in Northern India, a good part of which now lies in Pakistan. The Sikhs, through their representative body Siri Guru Singh Sabha laid the foundation stone of their temple in Racecourse Road in 1911 and opened a school in 1936. The Muslims of Nairobi, on their part, put up a magnificent building, reflecting modern architecture, situated in the heart of the town which added much to the beauty of Delamere (now Kenyatta) Avenue. Jamia Mosque was built in 1902. The extension was laid by the Grand Mufti Alhaj Sayed Abdullah Shah Sabib who came from Uganda for this purpose. The H.H the Aga Khan who visited Kenya in 1926, accepted the invitation from the Muslim community to lay the skewback stone and later donated \$1,500 towards the cost of the domes which had to be imported from England. In 1933, the Mosque was completed and opened by Sir Sayed Ali Bin Salim, KBE, CMG.

The foundation stone of Khoja Mosque was laid by the Governor, Sir Charles Bowring on January 14th, 1920, and two years later was opened



Photo: Madara Ogot

Figure 1.27 – Khoja Mosque on what is today Moi Avenue - 2018

by Governor, Sir Edward Northey, under the management of the Resident of the Council, Hussaibhai Suleman Verjee by Order of H.H Hazar Imam, Sir Aga Khan. It was built by donations from the Ismaili Community who played a leading role in the development of East Africa such as Allidina Visram, a prominent businessman in Nairobi and more famously known as the “uncrowned king of Uganda”. It dominated the Central Business District from the earliest days.

Each caste or community from India never relaxed until it had its building for religious or social purposes. The building of the Ahmeddyya Mosque on Murang’a Road started in 1923, and eight years later, thanks to contributions from the East African Ahmadias, the building was completed. The Bohra Mosque which is situated off the Victoria Street (now Tom Mboya Street) is a magnificent building of typical oriental design with a dome and minarets, thus maintaining the architectural tradition of all mosques. Although the Bohra were resident in the country from its early days, there were no facilities for a proper mosque until 1931 when the present Mosque was completed, thanks to the generosity of Mrs Mohomedali Karimji of Messrs Karimji Jivanji and Company. The Mosque served as a centre of all spiritual and social activities of the community. Within its compound, a primary school was set up.

Despite the community’s divisions, which were both a strength and a weakness, the Indians focus on commerce-enabled them to survive many challenges and crises and to contribute greatly to the Nairobi’s

development. However, the concentration of the Indians in the Central Business District, by no choice of their own, prevented racial integration and pushed up urban land prices making it almost impossible for Africans to start any enterprises there. It also reinforced the idea in the minds of Africans, that Indians were a privileged group of town dwellers with all the facilities. Indeed, it was not until 1945 when the first African venture, the Kiambu Chicken and Egg Dealers, could afford to open in the Nairobi Bazaar. Chege Kibachia, who later became a prominent trade union leader, got his first job there. However, on River Road, some Indian traders acted as Bankers for the Africans who deposited their money in return for goods and other services.⁴⁶

In the 1920s, the Indians struggled to get out of the city ghetto where over 9 thousand of them occupied 300 acres. They gradually moved to the new Pangani, Parklands, Ngara and Eastleigh which soon became the first true suburbs of the town. Each Indian community concentrated on commerce and reproduced itself through teaching its specific codes to their children, in separate systems. As they did not have secular social institutions to facilitate communication, the Indians adopted the western "club" idea. "The Patel Club" was opened, followed by many others.

1.4.3 Public Health

Dr Rosendo Ayres Ribeiro, a Goan, arrived in Nairobi in February 1900. He was Nairobi's first private medical practitioner. He found a motley collection of mud huts and tin shacks and decided to make Nairobi his home. He pitched his tent where Whitehouse Bakery later stood on Whitehouse Road and started his practice. He stayed there for months, but as the first Bazaar began to grow, he moved there into a healthier residence, an enclosure made from wooden packing cases. From here, Dr Ribeiro visited the sick among all communities. In 1902, Dr Riberio diagnosed bubonic plague among two Somali patients and reported it. These later escalated to 69 cases and 60 deaths. The Resident Medical Officer of Health ordered the evacuation and burning down of the whole Bazaar area. It was surrounded by askaris and all persons had to leave their shops without taking a single item, not even money. They were transferred to an already prepared camp outside Nairobi, where they had

⁴⁶Paul Muchene, a Kikuyu who came to Nairobi in 1911. Interview on April 13, 1974, in BA Ogot *Nairobi as I saw it, Being Reminiscences of Nairobi Townsmen* Unpublished Manuscript.



Source: Nigel Pavit

Figure 1.28 – First Indian Bazaar before it was burnt down and moved - 1890s

to stay for some time. Everything which could have been in contact with rats like flour, rice and other foodstuffs, clothing, bedding, etc were thrown onto the streets by the *askaris* and burnt. Then all shops were set on fire. The Bazaar was later built at another site in the town. The Government paid £23 thousand in compensation.

Sir Charles Eliot requested medical men in Nairobi to report on the sanitary aspect of the current site of the town. They unanimously condemned the site and recommended its removal to the high ground behind the official quarters. The proposal was supported by all except the railway authorities. In May 1902, it was decided to let the railway quarters to remain. By 1903, although the medical authorities continued to be dissatisfied with the site, they appeared to have accepted the fact that it was too late to move the town. In May of the same year, Dr Mofart, Principal Medical Officer, submitted a report in which he made various recommendations about the water supply, drainage, the disposal of night-soil and refuse, and other sanitary matters.

In 1906, heavy rainfall combined with unrepaired roads, bad drainage and rapid traffic growth, made the streets practically impassable. A second plague epidemic broke out. This time there were 25 cases and 21 deaths. In the same year, the Colonial Office sent G. Bransby Williams, a

1. FROM A RAILYWAY CAMP TO A FRONTIER TOWN, 1899-1920

civil engineer, to report on the sanitary conditions of Nairobi. He spent over two months in Nairobi and produced a lengthy report dated January 28th, 1907. He recommended the removal of the Indian Bazaar to a new site near the Railway landhies, drainage of the central portion of the municipal area and the Western Valley, construction of new Dhobi quarters, development of a new African location on the South-West boundary of the township area, and approval of fresh public health legislation.⁴⁷

Dr Ribeiro's surgery had gone up in flames with the rest of the shops after the first plague. However, the Government showed its gratitude by granting him a concession of sixteen acres of land between Duke Street and River Road. He later sold half of it to another Goan pioneer, Julio Campos, who had arrived in 1901. In 1907, Ribeiro bought his famous zebra and was a familiar figure as he rode around the struggling township, wearing a Stetson, visiting patients. Years later, he sold the zebra to the Bombay zoo for 800 rupees. Dr Ribeiro also became famous in Nairobi for his special malarial cure, which he patented and was eventually sold to an international pharmaceutical company. He was appointed the Portuguese Vice-Consul between 1914 and 1922 but continued to run his surgery until 1950, a year before his death, and two weeks before his 81st birthday. His son Dr. Ayres Ribeiro, later become the Kenya Police Pathologist. Dr Seth Ribeiro was instrumental in the founding of the first Goan Institute and many schools, including the Dr Ribeiro Parklands School.

*** **

The first hospital for Africans, the Native Civil Hospital, was set up in 1901. It was located at the Junction of Government Road and Kingsway, in the building currently occupied by the Central Police Station. It had two wards and a capacity of 40 beds with two separate waiting rooms, one for Africans and the other for Asians.⁴⁸ By 1908, bed capacity had increased to 45. It has been widely reported that the hospital was poorly constructed, with limited drainage and sanitation.⁴⁹

⁴⁷Williams, G. Bransby, *Report on the Sanitation of Nairobi*, Nairobi, 1907.

⁴⁸Thorton White, L. Silberman and P. Anderson, 1948, *The Native Civil Hospital*

⁴⁹KNH, 2001, *Kenyatta National Hospital: 1901-2001: A Hundred Years of Quality Health-care*, Nairobi: Suma Printers and Stationers.



Source: Wikipedia

Figure 1.29 – Dr. Ribeiro on his zebra

1.5 Industrial and Commercial Pioneers

The rapid development of Nairobi as a railway and colonial town attracted business people from many parts of the globe. Tommy A. Wood led the Nairobi community in the hotel business when he rented a two-storey wood-and-iron building owned by A. M. Jeevanjee on Victoria Street (now Tom Mboya Street) in 1901. Known as Tommy Wood's Hotel or Victoria Hotel, it was the acknowledged centre for wheeling and dealing. It was also here that the first European political meetings took place. Wood, who originally came from Sheffield in England, spent eleven years in South Africa before coming to Nairobi in 1900.

The Norfolk Hotel, built during the early months of 1904 by R. Aylmer Winearls and Major Ranger, soon became so popular that at the end of that year it was offering accommodation to Lord Delamere and other dignitaries. It became famous as a farmers and settlers centre and affectionately as the "House of Lords" because of the titled nobles who stayed there: W. H. McMillan, Theodore Roosevelt and his son Kermit, Prince of Wales and an impressive assortment of Counts, Barons and European Princes. In 1923, the hotel was bought by W.H. Edgley. It had 34 rooms, two cottages for married couples, a dining room to seat from 60



Source: Nigel Pavitt www.sikh-heritage.co.uk

Figure 1.30 – Stanley Hotel - 1920s

to 100, and a small private dining room.

The present New Stanley Hotel was first built and run by Mrs Mayence Bent. It was then located near Choitrum Building in Government Road (now Moi Avenue). But when it was destroyed by fire, she moved it to its current location. Soon after the new hotel was built, she sold it to Sydney Tate, who in turn sold it to W.H. Edgley who finally sold it to Jack Block.

In 1910, Lord Cranworth was granted a plot by the Municipal Committee for the establishment of a transport depot. He ran a passenger transport service between Nairobi and Murang'a with two five-ton lorries. The Nairobi terminus was at the Norfolk Hotel.⁵⁰

Messrs Kanje Naranjee, a firm of rich Indians, owned a grocery, provisions, wine and spirits shop on Government Road, opened in 1907. They later built the present Regal Mansions Building. Messrs Lalji Vishram and Company, builders and contractors in Bazaar Street, were the largest Indian building contractors in Nairobi. They erected many buildings including Karen County Club, Boys Boarding Block at the European School (Nairobi Primary School), Masonic Temple, and Rahimfulla Walji Hirji Trust Building on Government Road, Kiambu District Hospital, Electricity House (now Nanak House) and Playhouse Theatre.

The most respected health firm was Messrs. House McGeorge Limited which started operation in 1912 and took care of chemistry and drug

⁵⁰Cranworth, Lord, *A Colony in the Making, or Sport and Profit in British East Africa*, London, Macmillan, 1912.

supply. At the same time, in Saddler Street (now Koinange Street), there was a big sawmill which operated nine other mills in its concessions of over 200 thousand acres in the Kenya Highlands. The firm is today known as TIMSALES.

Highland Transport Company, which later became Express Transport Company, was founded in 1908 in Nairobi. By 1920, the company amalgamated with Messrs. Hunter and Higgs of Mombasa. They started operating as transporters and shipping agents. During the First World War, its two partners died and for a time the business was run by the government. Later, its third partner, E.A Ruben bought the company on his demobilisation. He successfully carried out the business until Lonrho acquired controlling interests. The transport business between Nairobi and Rhodesia (Zambia and Zimbabwe) was very smooth without any conflict even though most of the supervisors were Europeans from Rhodesia and South Africa. The company claimed that the wife of one of its employees from Uganda, Filipo, became the first African lady to drive a car in East Africa.

A distinguished European contractor in Nairobi's early days was George Blowers. He erected Standard Bank on Sixth Avenue (now Kenyatta Avenue); old Motor Mart Building where 680 Hotel now stands; Torr's Hotel (now Ottoman Building), Nairobi School, and Muthaiga Golf Club and Dancing Hall. He started his business in 1911 and had stone and ballast quarries in Nairobi West and Muthaiga area. His offices were in Saddler Street where Kenya Oil offices now stand. Many of Uganda Railway's European employees remained and settled in Nairobi after their contracts had expired. Among these were the founders of Gailey and Roberts, J.H Gailey and D.O Roberts (both were surveyors); the plate-layer Ronald Preston who founded the Nairobi Stock Exchange and W.D Young, the official Uganda Railway photographer who opened the Dempster Studio, Nairobi's earliest commercial camera house.

Early in 1904, Messrs Gailey and Roberts established themselves as retail ironmongers and licensed surveyors. They had come to British East Africa as executive engineers under the Foreign Office on railway construction. After leaving the railway, they started business as direct importers, before becoming agents for the German East African Line, Royal Exchange Assurance, among others. Irrigation works were also carried out by the firm. For example, Gailey was in charge of the Killindini Har-

bour extension in 1909. They soon became the chief importers of agricultural implements their imports coming largely from England and America, except fencing wire which came from Germany. They also supplied ploughs to African farmers and made and repaired saddlery. Africans were later trained to do this.

R.O Preston, the plate-layer of the Uganda Railway, resigned from the railway in 1905 and settled in Nairobi. He built ten houses, six of which were owned by him, including a private residence called "Floette Villa" in Parklands. He later acquired three 5-acre plots in Parklands and three building plots in town and invested in a farm of 1,320 acres at Athi River, where he experimented with ostriches and sisal. In 1907, Preston opened the "Exchange" in Nairobi, dealing in stocks and shares, and the buying and selling of land. He also established an estate and house agency that he combined dealing in guns, rifles, ammunition, cycles, sporting goods and provisions.

W.D Young, the owner of the Dempster Studio in Nairobi, came to East Africa in the railway service after many years of life in India. The Railway Administration employed him as the official photographer to provide records of the progress of the work and engineering features. He was a recognised leader in artistic photographic work.

Messrs J.A Nazareth and Brother were appointed caterers to the Uganda Railway and Lake Steamers. The firm, with branches in Murang'a and Kisumu, opened its business in Nairobi in 1899. They carried out their business as bakers and soda water manufacturers, supplying 150 dozens of soda water per day. The machinery, by Hayward and Tyler, was run by an oil engine and electric motor.

A flour mill, Unga Limited, was specially equipped to deal with the needs of farmers in British East Africa was established in January 1909. *Unga* is the Kiswahili word for flour. A.L White, a certified miller since 1904, came to British East Africa in 1907 from Scotland. Recognising the prospects of wheat and milling in East Africa, approached Lord Delamere with the idea of forming a company. The company was subsequently formed before the end of 1908 and the flour mill, with up-to-date machinery, was put up in Nairobi. Locally grown wheat could now be ground. The flour produced was pronounced by experts to be equal to any that could be imported. It soon proved to be a boon to local

wheat growers. By 1910, the capacity of the mill with its staff was 84 tons a month. With an increase in staff, some 200 tons a month could be realised. The mill started to grind maize in 1909. The output, however, suffered from the competition from imported Indian flour, forcing the company to take orders from Mombasa and German East Africa.

British East Africa Music Stores Company Limited was established in 1911 in Government Road and was owned by Mr and Mrs Shuttleworth. The business was later bought by Indian businessmen, who changed its name to Shankardass. Their premises were where the Standard Bank on Government Road stands, before moving and putting up their premises known as Shankardass House.

S.C Fischat, a land and estate agent, came to Nairobi from South Africa in 1903. He acted as Secretary to the Colonists' Association, Chamber of Commerce, the Caxton Printing and Publishing Company Limited, and as a representative of the Norwich Union Fire Insurance Company. He was formerly in business in Johannesburg. In 1901 he went to Rhodesia and took part in the Matebele War and the suppression of the Rebellion. He also took part in the Anglo-Boer War. On arrival in British East Africa, he bought land at Kikuyu and then went to Mombasa as manager of the *African Standard* newspaper. His business as a land agent was established in Nairobi in 1905. He became an agent of the *African Standard* in Nairobi and district. He also acquired 2,400 acres of land, nine miles from Nairobi.

The vast interest in timber and grain in British East Africa at the beginning of the Twentieth Century demanded modern mills. In this respect, the needs of the country were met by the Nairobi Timber and Milling Company established in 1904 by Messrs. Lucy and Rayne. The firm had an interest in 15 square miles of forest on the Kikuyu Escarpment, adjoining the railway line and the timber consisted of cedar, podocarpus and Mona. All the timber was rough cut in the forest and railed to Nairobi, where it was put through a breakdown saw. About 120 Africans were employed in the forest and another 28 in Nairobi, besides three Europeans. The corn mills had a capacity of 200 loads (60 pounds) per day for maize, oats or wheat. Grinding and crushing were undertaken for the public.

P.A. Raphael established Raphael Limited in 1908, as auctioneers,

general merchants, upholsterers, cabinet makers, wheelwrights, blacksmiths, house and estate agents, indent agents, official brokers, and commission agents, occupying premises on Government Road known as the "White House." Raphael had seventeen years of similar business experience in Johannesburg. He later became a member of the Committee of the Nairobi Chamber of Commerce and the Colonists Association, Treasurer of Parklands Sports Club, President of the Hebrew Congregation and Secretary of the Zionist Association.

In the early days of the Protectorate, no district was complete without a chemist store that was typically combined with a supply of photographic materials. A.E Standing established his business in Nairobi in 1905 and Mombasa in 1908 as a wholesale and retail chemist, having previously had experience in England, Australia and Fiji Islands. His premises occupied a central position in Government Road in Nairobi, and in Mombasa were opposite the Government Treasury. At both branches, a large and assorted stock of photographic goods, Dutch and patent medicines, perfumes, optical goods and general chemicals and drugs were kept.

Messrs J.H.S Todd and Company established themselves in Nairobi in 1906 and Mombasa in 1908 as general merchants and commission agents and wholesale wine and spirit merchants. A large floating stock was always carried of general merchandise, soft goods and hardware and a speciality of trading goods for Africans. The firm was a large exporter of ivory, hides, beeswax, gum and other local products. Since 1904, Todd had farms at Fort Ternan in Kisumu Province of about 7 thousand acres. They built the IBEA Building on Government Road. J.H.S Todd also carried out a hardware business and run Carlton Bar with his brother, which was very popular with the business community.

The following were among other pioneering firms. Beliram Parmal and Company, grocers provisions, wine and spirit merchants, located on Government Road, was one of the oldest of its kind in Kenya having been founded in Mombasa in 1892, and seven years later established in Nairobi. Imtiazali and Son, who were importers, exporters, millers and general merchants who dealt in all kinds of country produce and kept large stocks of African produce. Kirparam and Son established at Simba Hills in 1898 and extended to Nairobi in 1899, where they traded as general merchants and commission agents and had several shops



Photo: Madara Ogot

Figure 1.31 – Imperial British East Africa Company (IBEA) Building built in 1919 on Government Road, now Moi Avenue - 2018

in Maasailand. Meghji Ahamed and Company, who were tailors, had started their business in Mombasa in 1885 and moved to Nairobi in 1900. Ahamed Brothers was started by two brothers, Ahamed and Karmali in 1903 in Nairobi and traded as tailors, general outfitters and Government contractors.

M.S. Elliot and Company Limited in Government Road was founded in 1903. It was originally a small bakery run by Mrs M.S Elliot, a Scottish lady who baked and sold scones, shortbread and cakes, which were highly prized by the Nairobi community. Mrs Elliot had gone to South Africa as a bride before the Boer War. When the War ended, her husband joined Uganda Railway in Nairobi in 1903. She later brought a professional baker from Scotland who turned the bakery into Elliot Bakery, which became one of Nairobi's largest bakeries.

J. Marcus came to Nairobi from India in 1899 and began to export local produce, mostly potatoes, trading as Marcus, Tarte and Company. The partnership was dissolved in 1903 and he then traded under his name as a commission agent and local produce buyer and seller. His business premises were on Government Road. He also possessed two stone houses in Parklands and a farm of 300 acres on Murang'a Road, some 16 miles from Nairobi.

1. FROM A RAILYWAY CAMP TO A FRONTIER TOWN, 1899-1920



Source: Robin Grayson www.sikh-heritage.co.uk

Figure 1.32 – Alibhai Shariff and Sons on Hardinge Street - 1920s

Maxwell, Brady and Company was a firm of outfitters which was established in Nairobi in 1908. Both partners, W. Maxwell and R. Brady came from South Africa where they had a long experience in their business. They had a complete high-class stock of hosiery and general outfitting of goods. They catered for the general outfitting of both men and women. Messrs D. and J. Mackinnon established themselves in Nairobi in 1903 as Mackinnon Brothers, wholesalers and retail grocers, produce, wine and spirits merchants. They erected a two-storey building and owned two town plots by 1909. Messrs, Alibhai Shariff and Sons; merchants and agents, operating in both Bazaar Street and Government Road. They started their business in hardware and building materials in 1918.

Another promising firm was Messrs Foster and Blowers, butchers and produce merchants located on Government Road, who started their business in Nairobi in 1916. They owned the present Westlands or Kirungii, as it was then known. Their Government Road premises is now Ebrahim and Company Building next to Nairobi House. A mention must be made of Hartz and Bell, tinsmiths, plumbers, tank makers, metal workers and sanitary engineers, who operated from Hardinge Street and Duke Street opposite Tusker House. The firm was established in 1904 by Hartz who was later joined by Bell in 1912. Another renowned blacksmith and ironmonger merchant and wagon builder of the time was John Rifkin, who is remembered for building all kinds of wagons which helped a great

deal when there were no motor vehicles and transport on the country's roads. One of the oldest booksellers and newsagents, S.J Moore Limited was established in Nairobi in 1915.

During the latter part of the First World War, Nairobi witnessed major commercial developments: Messrs Phillips and Company, manufacturers' representative located first in Government Road but later moved to their own premises, Ambassador House in Victoria Street (now Tom Mboya street); J.R Stephens and Company, tailors and outfitters on Government Road, who later moved to Queensway, and are now situated in Kenyatta Avenue; the establishment of Kenya Breweries Limited in Court Chambers and the building of the brewery on the Ruaraka River by H. Taylor; a service company distributor of Ford vehicles on Sixth Avenue (now Kenyatta Avenue) and the establishment of May and Company, the Sports House in Government Road by Messrs. H.J May and C.M Prangle; Messrs Hutchings Biemer, specialists in furniture, furnishing drapers on Government Road and Saddler Street (now Koinange Street); Messrs Muter and Oswald, auctioneers, estate agents, approved valuers on Hardinge Street (now Kimathi Street); erection of Hotel Avenue by James Walker; and Messrs. Hussein and Company, tailors, general outfitters and tent makers established in Cearn's Chambers in Government Road by two partners, Hussein Alibhai and Kassamali Noor.

One of the first motor firms to operate in Nairobi was run by Messrs. Fisher and Simmons and was situated next to Wardles on Government Road. Ford Motor Company, another motor firm, was managed by Sexton, a garage mechanic who later sold his business to K. Mclvor, the first motor rally driver in Kenya. The firm later changed hands and was managed by Lawson who carried on the business as Carr Lawson and Company. The business was later bought by J.J. Hughes who changed its name to Hughes Limited.

1.5.1 Financial Sector

Banking is key to commercial and industrial progress. In 1904, the National Bank of India (NBI) was established in Nairobi in a very modest way. It started commercial banking in Kenya in 1896. NBI was a British bank based in London and operating in India. By 1906, it established a stone building and catered for a wide variety of small account holders from all communities: clerks, merchants, railway employees and settlers.

1. FROM A RAILYWAY CAMP TO A FRONTIER TOWN, 1899-1920



Source: Robin Grayson www.sikh-heritage.co.uk

Figure 1.33 – Barclays Bank Queensway Branch. To the right is the part of the Gailey and Roberts Building - 1920s

In 1931, their building on Government Road, which today houses the National Archives, was built. Its name changed later to National and Grindlays Bank which was finally split into Kenya Commercial Bank and Grindlays Bank International.

The Standard Bank of South Africa started business in Nairobi and Mombasa in January 1911, in competition with the National Bank of India. The Standard Bank appeared more ready to advance money on land titles than the National Bank of India. The influx of newcomers with capital and high land values brought more money into the country and facilitated business transactions. They wished to develop their land and not buy for speculation as was the case in the past. By 1911, grazing lands near the Railway were fetching £1-£2 per acre. During the early part of the First World War, Barclays Bank built its premises at the corner of Sixth Avenue (now Kenyatta Avenue).

1.5.2 The Press

The *East African Standard* newspaper published by the Standard Printing and Publishing Works of Nairobi and Mombasa was founded in 1902 by Jevaanjee in Mombasa. He sold it to W.H. Tiller, who was his editor and publisher. Tiller moved the newspaper headquarters to Nairobi in 1903. He sold the business to Messrs Anderson and Mayer. The paper soon developed into a powerful political organ, circulating throughout British East Africa and Uganda. The printing works where the publication



Photo: Meghji Shamji Shah

Figure 1.34 – Standard Bank Building Completed in 1911 - Photo 1945



Photo: Madara Ogot

Figure 1.35 – Standard Bank Building - Photo 2018, in front is the World War I and II Memorial to African Soldiers

was produced (the Standard Printing and Publishing Works) was the most complete and up to date in the country.

Their business increased steadily and the circulation of their weekly and daily editions of the newspaper more than doubled by 1911. In the same year, a second linotype machine costing £1 thousand was imported and the firm moved into their new and extensive premise built on Sixth Avenue. Their stationary business also witnessed a tremendous increase. In addition to the publication of the *East African Standard* newspaper, Messrs Anderson and Mayer published *The Handbook of East Africa* more generally known as the Red Book. This annual publication provided a wealth of general information, an alphabetical directory of residents, and a complete Civil Service List. The staff in 1911 included



Source: www.sikh-heritage.co.uk

Figure 1.36 – East African Standard Newspaper Building - 1920s

18 Europeans, 20 Indians and 12 Africans.

The other newspaper in Nairobi was the *Leader*, published by the Caxton Printing and Publishing Company Limited. The policy of the paper was that of safeguarding the European settlers' interests. The *Leader* was published weekly. The Caxton Printing and Publishing works witnessed a phenomenal growth in business. New offices were built and new machinery installed in 1910. Europeans gradually took over the places of Indian and African employees in the firm. There was also a steady increase in the circulation of the *Leader* which had now a daily and weekly issue. The *Leader* was later absorbed by the *East African Standard* in 1920.

1.5.3 Touring and Hunting Safaris

The development of Nairobi was proceeding apace. Corrugated iron houses slowly replaced the grass huts and tents. Temporary roads were constructed and even named. Hotels, some with a few guest rooms were opened. They often accommodated more persons than there was room for. Only very seldom now did jackals and hyenas get lost in the streets and one did not need to be afraid of an attack by lions in the town area.

South African prospectors in search of precious metals and speculators in land, begun to arrive in Nairobi from 1902. Even prospectors from the American Wild West came to town. They looked fearless and dashing. One could see them at the bar of Norfolk Hotel, with rolled-



Photo: Madara Ogot from Kenya National Archives

Figure 1.37 – Front Page of East African Standard Newspaper - 1908

up sleeves, cowboy scarves and wide-brimmed felt hats. They paraded their beautiful horses through the town. The South Africans and the Americans added a new touch to life in town. They generously invited people to drink in bars and everybody tried to copy them in appearance. People even tried to imitate American Yankee dialect. They also became good friends of the Colonial officials, who now reported to the Crown Agent for the Colonies.

The new colony was developing fast and attracting many immigrants and tourists. By 1905, Nairobi was catering for about 1 thousand European visitors a year. Hunting quickly became the main tourist attraction for wealthy Englishmen and American sports enthusiasts, with Nairobi at its centre. Wildlife was abundant close to the town. As recorded by Col. Meinertzhagen,⁵¹

“I counted the game on the Southside of the railway between Athi River and Nairobi. It amounted to 5 rhinoceros, 18 giraffes, 700 wildebeest, 400 zebras, 845 Coke’s hartebeest, 324 Grant’s gazelle, 142 Thomson’s gazelle, 46 impalas, 24 ostriches, 7 great bustards, 16 ba-boons.”

The recruitment of porters for the hunting safaris was easy as only short distances were covered, and there there were long stays in camp, with good food, for there was as much game meat for the porters as they wanted. These porters, too, could almost be called professionals. The standard load was 60 pounds and once on the road, the leader could turn himself into a one-man band by blowing a horn and beating a tattoo on the box he was carrying as he went along. The hunters and their clients rode on mules. Also, every hunting party had gun bearers whose job was to carry spare guns for the hunters when going for the big game.

For many years, trade-in hunting equipment and the organization of hunting safaris provided a major source of income for Nairobi’s population. The most expensive and best pieces of equipment from London and the rest of the world were available. Several Nairobi-based firms and individuals specialized in this business. The Boma Trading Company Limited, established in 1907, held a permit to cross the border of the Protectorate to trade in Ethiopia. Their other specialities were safari outfitting and African curios. The company’s agents met sportsmen on the ship at

⁵¹ *Diary*, May 8 1902

Mombasa and facilitated the passage of their luggage and ammunition.

C.A. Heyer and Company were complete outfitters of scientific and shooting expeditions. They had shooting and driving ponies and mules always on hand as well as one of the largest stocks of rifles and ammunition in the protectorate and German East Africa. They were also brokers, land and commission agents, government auctioneers, and stock salesmen. C. A Heyer and A. Minners were the sole proprietors. One of their principal lines of business was the export of live big game: lions, leopards, rhino, zebra, hartebeest, roan wildebeest, impala and steinbuck. Heyer was formerly in South Africa (Cape Colony). They owned large premises in Nairobi, with 150 feet frontage on Government Road. Newland, Tarlton and Company Limited was established in 1904 as land and stock agents, and in 1905, started a safari outfitting business. V.M Newland and L.J Tarlton were born in South Australia where their fathers were pioneers in that colony. The firm was agricultural implements' importer and the first to start land sales in Nairobi.

Hotels and bars in Nairobi catered for a clientele for which money was not a problem. They paid exceptionally high prices for poor hotel rooms without complaining. Their future fame as elephant, lion or rhino hunters was more valuable to them than money. The most important thing was to take home a lion skin. The administration also took advantage of the hunting fever. They charged high import duties from the foreign hunters. For a hunting license with a limited number of shootings of gazelles, they charged £150. A male elephant with tusks of at least 60 pounds or a buffalo, rhino or greater kudu, each cost another £50 to £75. Several loopholes in the hunting regulations also enabled the administration to further exploit these hunters by imposing for each offence a fine of £50 to £100.

The hunters even included young and single ladies from England and America who came to Kenya to hunt big game. They employed professional hunters who established themselves in Nairobi for a monthly salary of £200 to £300. The main responsibility of the professional hunters was to guarantee the ladies' safe return from their dangerous adventures. The length of the horns of shot gazelles, the weight of the tusks of an elephant, and the number of kills accomplished formed the main topics of conversation. The stories of close escapes from attacks of rhino and lion

became more gruesome the more whisky stimulated their imagination.

Owners of undeveloped land also profited from the hunting passion in Nairobi. They obtained licenses from the administration permitting them to shoot wild animals that allegedly destroyed their crops. They thus acquired some kind of right to issue private licenses for hunting on their land. "White hunting" soon became a profession. Many of them were farmers who took out hunting parties to augment their incomes, while others took it up as a full-time job and did little else. Unlike today when tourist parties are whisked away in four-wheel-drive vehicles to tourist hotels and resorts and are back in a week or less, in the early days in the protectorate, a hunting safari could take as long as six months. All camping equipment and stores were carried on the heads of porters and food for the porters, too, had to be carried so that a big safari could include 100 porters or more.

1.6 Nairobi as a Frontier Town

The rest of Nairobi District outside the two-mile radius constituting Nairobi town during the first two decades were private estates of Europeans and Indians. Much of the early history was characterised by land disputes and bitter litigations over water-holes, water rights and grazing rights. The wild and uncouth conduct of some of the settler leaders could only be permitted in a frontier town. The wildest parties originated in the bar of the Norfolk Hotel. Shooting matches with bottles on the top shelf as the target were common. The garb of the settlers was often strange: tengallon hats, bright shirts and belts from which a revolver holster hung.

Rickshaw races up and down Sixth Avenue (now Kenyatta Avenue) and Government Road (now Moi Avenue) were a popular occupation after dinner for the young blood of the town. Target shooting from Norfolk Hotel verandah was a popular sport and the street lamp opposite must have been replaced many times. Lord Delamere was a striking figure, with his long hair and a wide-brimmed hat. He was reputed to have been skilled at shooting out street lamps along Government Road, bracing himself for the aim in a rickshaw hauled by sweating Africans over a rough road surface. He had a weakness too, for organising rugby matches for the European settlers in the confined space of a bar or drawing room, whenever the party grew uninteresting. Behaving like a typical frontier's man, Delamere was capable, in irritation, of locking the man-



Source: Postcard picture by Kodak (EA) Limited

Figure 1.38 – Norfolk Hotel - 1920s

ager of that same hotel in the meat safe with several dead sheep.

US President Theodore Roosevelt, who visited Nairobi in 1909, observed that ⁵²

"Nairobi is a very attractive town, and most interesting with its large native quarter, and its Indian Colony. One of the streets consists of little except Indian shops and bazaars. Outside the business portion, the town is spread over much territory, the houses standing isolated, each by itself, and each usually bowered in trees, with vines shading the verandas, and pretty flower-gardens round about. Not only do I firmly believe in the future of East Africa for settlement as a white man's country, but I feel that it is an ideal playground alike for sportsmen and for travellers who wish to live in health and comfort, and yet to see what is beautiful and unusual."

There was also the weird behaviour of Sir William Northrup McMillan. From Kenya, he had crossed Africa to the West Coast, finally reaching Nigeria, where he was introduced to the Juju cult. The "long juju" was a well-known fetish residing in Benin town. The cult was found in different places and each site had its fetish usually cut out of ivory with an ugly mask of brass on top. Many people were sacrificed to the fetishes in Nigeria.

McMillan decided to introduce the juju cult in Kenya. He got a two-wheeled dogcart on which, instead of the seats, there was something like a box with an inscription on all four sides reading "Juju service". A

⁵²Roosevelt, T., *African Game Trails*, New York: Scribners, 1910, p. 173

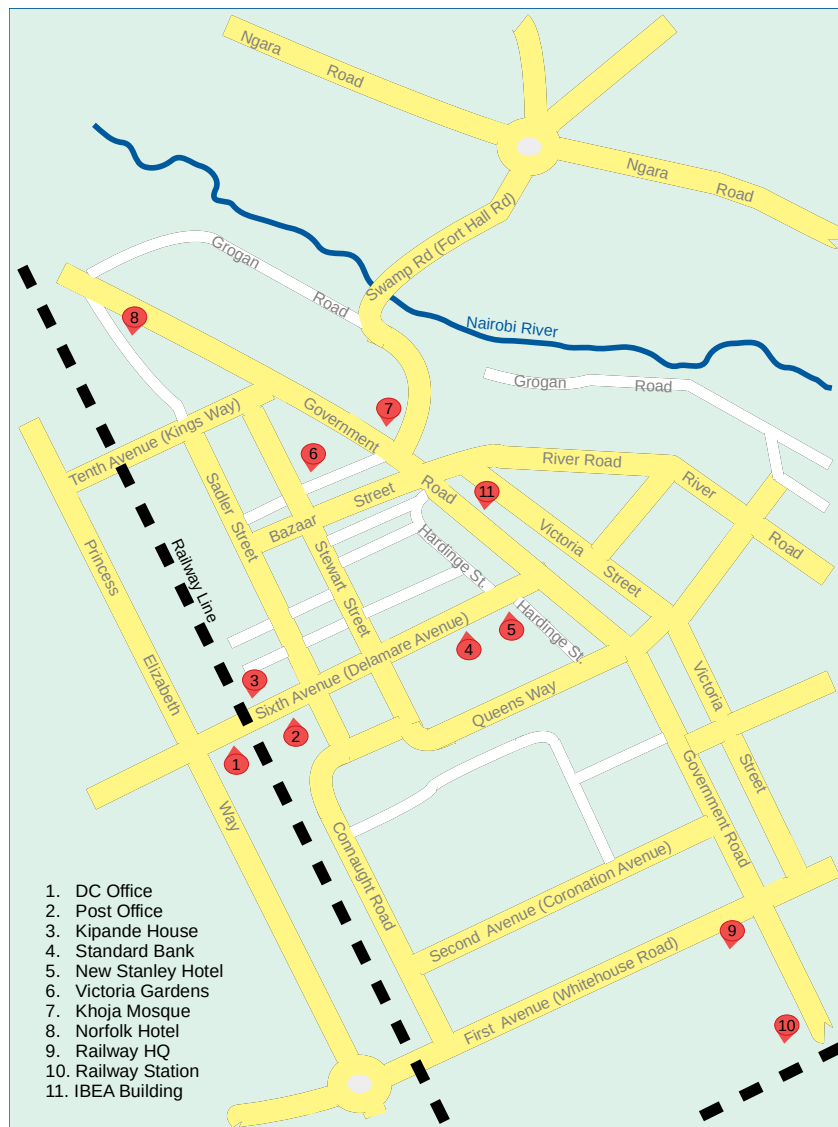
sign with the same inscription was fixed to the shaft. In the middle of the box was erected a pole. Various useless items like empty whisky bottles, a torn boot, and two empty corned beef tins were fixed with strings to the top of the pole. This was to symbolize the futility of human life.

The "Juju Services" were regularly set up by him in front of Norfolk Hotel at 5 pm. The altar, pulled by Africans, would stop in front of the hotel. McMillan would be surrounded by his 400 porters who were commanded to attend this event and his European employees. With terrible noise, dances would start round the altar and this performance finally ended in a wild and hysterical confusion among all the Africans who had joined. He, however, did not take part. With an obvious self-satisfaction, he watched the service from the terrace of the hotel, a bottle of Heidsieck Monopol champagne in front of him. At the end of the performance, he threw a substantial donation of silver coins among the followers of the cult.

McMillan was an American multi-millionaire and a great hunter. In 1904, he went from London on an expedition down the River Nile. He explored the Blue Nile going through Ethiopia and eventually reached Nairobi, at that time a tiny Railway station around which wild game roamed in countless numbers. The intrepid hunter liked the country so much that he decided to purchase a huge piece of land close to Mount Donyo Sabuk where he bred cattle on a large scale at his famous Juja Ranch. The cowsheds were covered with white tiles and had electric lights. The abundance of luxury at the farm was more than one could have dreamt of being in Africa at that time. He built a dwelling house which he made his headquarters.

He usually only stayed at the farm for short periods, gave orders as to what was to be done, and then left to go on his safaris across Africa, hunting and enjoying himself in other ways. He was always accompanied by 400 porters together with a driver, who was usually an African-American. Among many notable persons who were guests at his farm was Theodore Roosevelt, President of the United States of America from 1901 to 1909, during his celebrated hunting expedition through East and Central Africa.

"Chiromo" was McMillan's residential estate of 77 acres, situated on Riverside Drive about two miles from the heart of Nairobi. He had bought



Drawing: Madara Ogot

Origin of Street Names

- Connaught Rd. - After Duke of Connaught after first Royal Visit in 1906
- Coronation Ave. - Hosted Royal Ceremonies
- Delamare Ave. - After Lord Delamare
- Grogan Road - After Col. Ewart Scott Grogan
- Hardinge St. - After Sir Arthur Hardinge, Colonial Head, British East Africa Protectorate, 1895-1900
- Princess Elizabeth Way - After Princess Elizabeth before she became Queen
- Sadler St. - After Sir J. Hayes Sadler, First Governor, British East Africa Protectorate, 1905-1909
- Stewart St. - After Sir Donald Stewart, Commissioner, British East Africa Protectorate, 1904-1905
- Victoria Street - After the late Queen Victoria
- Whitehouse Rd - After Eng. George Whitehouse

Map 3 – Main Roads and Landmarks in Nairobi - 1920

Exhibit 4 – Story Behind the Name “Chiromo”



Photo: Madara Ogot - 2018

It is said that when Ewart Grogan was on his Cape to Cairo walk, he was attacked by hostile Malawi tribesmen at the village of *Chiromo*, meaning “meeting of two rivers”, located where the rivers Ruo and Shire meet. Grogan lost all his luggage and narrowly escaped death. He passed Nairobi in 1899 en route to Cairo, returning in 1904. He bought 113 acres on the beautiful forested site between the Nairobi and Kirichwa Rivers, and named it Chiromo, after the village in Malawi.

He built his residence, Chiromo House, and a smaller hunting lodge below it know as Grogan Lodge. Chiromo House, pictured above, has been preserved and is part of the University of Nairobi, Chiromo Campus. The Grogan Lodge was sold to Sir William Northrup McMillan in 1910. Chiromo House was donated by Grogan to the Government in 1958. The house is today gazetted as a national monument. The Grogan Lodge was carefully taken apart and rebuilt in Karen in 2007 as part of the Karen Blixen Coffee House.

the estate from Grogan (see Exhibit 4). When the First World War broke out, McMillan was in England where he joined the army and was given a commission in the 25th Fusiliers, otherwise known as the Legion of Frontiersmen. On his return to East Africa, he was promoted to the rank of Major. Because of his enormous size (over seven foot tall and above 135 kgs), he did not stay long in the field but went back to Nairobi where he turned one of his houses into a convalescent home for the officers of the regiment. He spent large sums of money on the war effort and was duly knighted.

He retired with the rank of Major in 1917 and directed his attention to the agricultural development of the Colony. By then he had given

up hunting but still retained his love for animals. He preserved a large herd of buffalo in the forest at the top of Donyo Sabuk. He acquired more land around the mountain forming the 30 thousand acre Estate on which in 1918, he decided to plant sisal. In conjunction with his wife, McMillan next turned his attention to cattle breeding on Mua Hills where they bred probably the largest and best herd of grade Ayrshire cattle in Eastern Africa. He later launched into many other ventures such as the cultivation of coffee, flax, and maize.

Mineral possibilities also attracted him and he was the pioneer of the Lologorrien Goldfields. McMillan died in Italy in 1932, but his body was brought back and buried on top of his beloved mountain, Donyo Sabuk. Lady Lucie McMillan donated a public library for the use of all citizens of Nairobi without any discrimination, in the memory of her husband. It is the only building in Kenya that is protected by an Act of Parliament, the McMillan Memorial Library Act of November 1938, preventing the sale of the building or alteration of its Victorian design.

There was little doubt that in Nairobi of the time, many white men had "gone native" and this would only happen in a frontier town where there was lack of strict code of conduct to guide the behaviour and activities of the immigrants.

In the last two years of the First World War, Nairobi was a thriving and animated township. The town was made of seven district areas: Railway Quarters, Indian Bazaar, European Business Administrative Centre, Washerman (Dhobi) Quarters, European Residential Area, and Military Barracks outside the town. Nairobi's commercial area, which was to develop into the town's Central District Area, continued to expand and in 1914, an industrial area was developed. This was situated immediately south of the railway station and workshops.

Industry would serve the needs of the people coming to live in the new administrative centre. The nature of industry in Nairobi was of three main kinds: the processing of food and agricultural produce from up-country farms for home consumption and export; the manufacture of consumer goods from largely imported raw materials for the Nairobi and Kenya market; and small scale service industry. As a centre of the railway administration, having a fast-growing population in the hinterland, and with the Highlands rapidly developing, Nairobi became the collecting

1. FROM A RAILYWAY CAMP TO A FRONTIER TOWN, 1899-1920

and distribution centre for almost the whole country. Due to the good communication for collection of raw materials and finished products, the town acted as the "factory" for consumer goods for the whole of East Africa.

The medical authorities had been badly shaken by the recurrence of the plague in 1911, 1912 and 1913. The root cause of the matter was the over-population in the Bazaar area, with its inadequate sanitation. The Branby Williams recommendations of 1906 regarding drainage were not put into effect for many years and by 1913, the Bazaar was still in its old site and worse than ever. In that year, the Colonial Government appointed Professor W.J. Simpson, a health and sanitation expert, to advise on the town planning of Nairobi. He described the government offices as overcrowded corrugated iron sheds with inadequate sanitary accommodation. The police lines were drained by badly excavated earth trenches which discharged latrine effluent and sewerage water on to adjacent land in Government Road. The African Civil Hospital and the military lines were inadequately drained. The postmortem room of the hospital had no drainage system of any kind, while the construction of a system of the cement drains recommended for the latter in 1907 had scarcely begun.

His solution to the problem was for the complete relocation of the Bazaar to the North of the Nairobi River, where Ainsworth had previously established a shopping area. Even more importantly, the Report recommended racial segregation and zoning. He wrote:⁵³

"It has to be recognised that the standard of life of the Asiatic, except in the highest class, do not consort with those of the European, and that on the other hand, many European habits are not acceptable to Asiatics, and that the customs of the primitive African, unfamiliar with and not adapted to the new conditions of town life, will not blend in with either. In the interest of each community and of the healthiness of the locality and country, it is essential that in every town and trade centre the town planning should provide well-defined and separate quarters for European, Asiatic and African."

Simpson's Report on Town Planning was forwarded to the Municipal Committee by the Chief Secretary on May 2nd, 1914, for comment. A

⁵³Simpson, W.J., *Report of Sanitary Matters in the East African Protectorate, Uganda and Zanzibar*, London, Colonial Office, February 1913. Africa No. 1025, pg. 53.

Sub-Committee consisting of the Nairobi Committee Chairman, Hamilton and Messrs Allen Ghaudy, Notley, Tannahil and Wood was appointed to consider the report. Jeevanjee, as leader of the Indians, had two objections to the Report. First, he objected to the principle of racial segregation; and secondly he suggested that the commercial area should be divided into high class and middle-class areas, with the latter including the area North of Victoria Street, Government Road line, plus the Bazaar. The Sub-committee, however, reaffirmed their belief in the principle of racial segregation and racial planning, arguing that comparisons between Nairobi and ancient oriental cities were wholly misleading.

Regarding segregation, the Sub-Committee considered it of vital importance that this principle is accorded the fullest possible recognition in Nairobi before it was too late. On further discussions, the Sub-Committee recommended that the Ngara plain area be reserved as the Asiatic residential zone. Thus the removal of Native Villages, which involved the establishment of an African location, was a necessary preliminary to the opening up of the proposed Asiatic residential area.⁵⁴ They then concluded:⁵⁵

“If finality in such matters is attainable it would appear to be definitely established as an accepted axiom in planning and laying out of all towns in the tropics that European population should be segregated from the natives.”

Simpson’s report was simply endorsing a pattern of urban development typical of what Professor Southall called a “Type B” town – one characterised by rapid development, the domination of foreigners, careful control of African urban settlement and the development of a pattern of segregation and stratification along racial lines.⁵⁶

Within a short time, Nairobi expanded into three distinct areas: a large sector of Europeans to the West and North West, consisting of substantial homes with gardens and servants quarters; a much more restricted area for Asians in Ngara and part of Parklands, with the poor living near or in conjunction with the shops in Bazaar; and the Africans

⁵⁴*Report of the Sub-Committee on the Simpson Scheme*, Nairobi, Nairobi City Council file, para. 122, Nairobi City Council Archives

⁵⁵Ibid

⁵⁶Southall, Aidan, ed. *Social Change in Modern Africa, Introductory Summary*, London, Oxford University Press, 1961

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confined to Eastlands. In 1926, Europeans who formed 10 per cent of Nairobi's population (which at that time was 30 thousand), had 2,700 acres for their use, leaving them far more numerous Asians who formed 30 per cent of the town's population with only 300 acres for residential purposes. African residents lived in slums in Eastlands.⁵⁷

General Sir Edward Northey, who arrived in Nairobi in February 1919, to take up his appointment as Governor, was a strong supporter of the white settlers. In a meeting with a delegation from the Municipal Committee on August 11th, 1920, he emphasised that the policy of racial segregation as regards residential areas was cardinal and would be continued. In the commercial area, he explained that transfers of property would only be allowed to members of the appropriate race taking Victoria Street as the boundary between European and Asia areas.

Richard Meinertzhagen considered this obsession with racial segregation, especially between Europeans and Africans, as sheer hypocrisy since most of the former were "going native" all the time. He recorded in his diary that he was amazed at the casual way in which his brother officers brought African women into the mess where "talk centred around sex and money and is always connected with some kind of pornography." He wrote that "going native" was not confined to the mess – it was forgivable anywhere so long as you were not caught. White men twilighted in the Bazaar with African women, and "almost every man in Nairobi was a Railway Official and everyone keeps a native girl, usually a Maasai".⁵⁸

There were still several problems facing the Municipal Committee. Street lighting still consisted of only 2 hundred oil lamps, which served to mark out road crossing and dangerous spots but were otherwise ineffective. The lighting was done by a contract at a cost of Rs. 3 thousand per annum. It was now planned to enter into a contract with the Nairobi Electric Power and Lighting Company to install electric lighting along 16 miles of roads for the sum of £1,600; the lamps were to be spaced 60 yards apart, making a total of 29 lamps.

Also, the water supply was still controlled by the Railway Department

⁵⁷Parker, Mary, *Political and Social Aspects of the Development of Municipal Government in Kenya with Special Reference to Nairobi*. London, HMSO, Colonial Office, 1948, pg. 239.

⁵⁸ Meinertzhagen, *Kenya Diary, 1902-1906*, pp 9-10



Source: Postcard Picture by Caxton P&P Co., Nairobi

Figure 1.39 – Government Road looking towards the Railway Station - 1918

and delivered using standpipes at a consumption rate of about 100 thousand gallons per day. The rate per standpipe was Rs. 5 per month. In the case of private and public standpipes, of which there were 170 in use, the Municipality collected the rate on behalf of the Railway and received a commission of Rs. 5 per cent of the amount collected.

There were also problems concerning conservancy. The town was divided into five districts, to each of which a headman, a staff of sweepers of various grades and a certain number of carts and oxen were allotted. Conservancy consisted of removal and burial of night soil; removal and disposal of refuse; digging trenches; removal and burial of dead Africans; digging graves and upkeep of European cemetery; removal and burial of carcasses and condemned meat; scavenging, road sweeping, and drain cleaning. The conservancy staff consisted of 133 Indians and Africans under a European Sanitary Inspector. The transport consisted of 94 bullocks and 40 carts. This was woefully inadequate.



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