

KEETMANSHOOP - MEMORY LANE

Keetmanshoop was known during the 18 hundred and still is known as #Nu-#goaes or “Fountain of Black Mud”.

Stone Age people were attracted to a spring in the area for thousands of years and much later the !Karo-!oan Nama, led by Chief Henderik Tseib, settled here and named it as #Nu-#goaes or “Fountain of Black Mud”. The spring also became a staging point for early explorers, traders and hunters from the Cape Colony and they, in turn, named it Zwartmorast (Black Marsh).

A German missionary, Johann Schröder, arrived at Zwartmorast in 1866 to establish a Rhenish mission station. Schröder renamed Zwartmorast after Johann Keetman, the Chairman of the Rhenish Mission Society, who donated money for a church, which was consecrated on 18 July 1868. But, disaster struck when the Swartmodder River came down in flood on 26 October 1890 and destroyed the church. A new church, built on higher ground, was inaugurated in May 1895.

Missionary Tobias Fenchel built the town’s first school in 1888. Following the proclamation of Deutsch-Südwest Afrika as a German Crown colony, a military post was established at Keetmanshoop under Lieutenant Bethe in 1894.

Construction of a fort began the following year and was completed in 1898. Sadly, it was demolished later to make way for the police station.

The opening of the railway line between Keetmanshoop and Lüderitz on 21 June 1908 gave the town an economic boost. A further boost came when the railway line between Windhoek and Keetmanshoop was opened on 3 March 1912.

Keetmanshoop became a municipality with six councilors in November 1909, but civilian governance was cut short when World War I broke out and the town’s elders handed over to the military authorities. After the war the town’s management reverted back to the municipal council.

During the 1960s separate residential areas were created for the various population groups in line with South Africa's policy of apartheid. Tseiblaagte honours Chief Henderik Tseib, while Krönlein owes its name to an early Rhenish missionary.

From humble beginnings, Keetmanshoop has steadily developed into the Capital of the South and the seat of Namibia's largest region, Karas.