

## LOCATIONS BEFORE TEMBISA, PRE-1957

The existence of Tembisa<sup>1</sup> Township can be traced back to the locations established in the pre-1950s to accommodate the ever-increasing number of black people who were migrating from the rural areas to the Witwatersrand in search of employment. There are various factors that caused black people to drift to the urban areas, the main amongst these being the insufficient land allocated to black South Africans. The Land Act of 1913 allowed blacks to own about seven per cent of the land, and while the 1936 Land Act increased this to 13%, 87 % of the land remained in the control of white South Africans.

The severe droughts which began after 1927 and worsened between 1932 and 1934 also contributed to the rapid influx of blacks in the urban areas, particularly the Rand.<sup>2</sup> Some of these migrants settled in places like Dindela, Tikkieline, Phelindaba, and Modderfontein locations. Nomathemba Catherine Thulare recalls that her family moved from a rural area and stayed briefly with relatives in Alexandra Township. However due to overcrowding, her father found a stand and built the family a house in Dindela location. She explains:

I was born in the Free State ... on the whites' farms. Our father, Samuel, came here to look for work and then he returned to fetch us, the kids and wife, Emily. We came here together and lived in Alexandra Township ... There was a place in Edenvale or Dindela, which was called 'Stands'. [My parents] went there and looked for 'Stands'. When they arrived there they built a house, and that's where we grew up. We attended school there ... Even there it was shacks and not a place that was built with bricks. [It was] not a decent place...<sup>3</sup>

Dindela Location (also known as Edenvale Location) seems to have been established in 1938 after the Edenvale Village Council was able to raise a sub-economic loan of £30 000 to purchase the 110 acres of land for the purpose of a 'Native Location'.<sup>4</sup> After battling with the problem of illegal squatting for three years since 1935, the council finally allowed "... the natives who are bona fide employed within the area of jurisdiction falling under the Edenvale Municipality to construct dwellings thereon".<sup>5</sup>



UNIE VAN SUID-AFRIKA.—UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA.

DEPARTEMENT VAN NATURELLESAKE,  
DEPARTMENT OF NATIVE AFFAIRS.

Cape Town.

27th March, 1939.

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Edenvale Location.

Dear Senator Rheinallt Jones,

Referring further to your letter of the 11th ultimo in the above connection, I have made enquiries into the matter and have ascertained that this Department has supported the Village Council's proposal to raise a sub-economic loan of £30,000 as a charge against the Native Revenue Account for the purpose of carrying out a native housing scheme in the location.

In your letter you mention that you called at my Pretoria office several times in this connection, but could not get any definite information.

On this point I can only say that no one in either the Urban Areas or Lands Sections has any recollection of the said interviews.

Yours sincerely,

Senator the Honourable  
J.D. Rheinallt Jones,

The Senate,

CAPE TOWN.

It was against this backdrop that more and more people built their houses and settled in Edenvale Location. Mr Mahunga, Matilda Vuyelwa Mabena's father, was one such person. Matilda Mabena remembers that her father lived with his parents in Alexandra before establishing himself in Dindela. She remarks:

After my father found a job in Edenvale, he bought himself a site in Edenvale and built his house. In Edenvale there were three different areas: there was a coloured area called New Stands. There, there were three-roomed houses. It was a big kitchen, combined with a dining room, then there were two bedrooms. The other area had bigger stands. People who bought those stands had big yards so they could have many tenants. The third area was a newly developed site, and that's where my father bought his stand. The yards were also bigger and people were building their own houses and rooms/shacks to rent out to tenants. So my father was one of the stand-owners<sup>6</sup>

Another group of black people settled in Tikkieline Location. Mr Buti David Mahlobo, who was born in 1932 in Bethlehem in the Orange Free State, explains that after moving from Bethlehem when he was still an infant, his family first settled in Alexandra Township with relatives. Again, because of insufficient living space in a four-roomed house and the need to own a house, Mahlobo's parents left Alexandra searching for better accommodation. For a brief moment they lived in Mooifontein, and finally moved to Tikkieline Location. Mahlobo recounts this process as follows:

I was born in Bethlehem in the Free State. But I don't know that area at all because my family moved when I was still a little baby. They moved to Alexandra Township. There I lived with my grandparents and their children: my parents and my uncles. My grandfather was renting a room in a four-roomed house owned by the stand-owner of the yard at 18th Avenue (I think there were about 12 families in that yard, sharing one tap of water and four bucket system toilets). It was not a big room ... My uncle found a house in Mooifontein, that's how we also moved in 1938. Mooifontein then was a plot. So when we arrived there we built a shack. We lived there until 1942 when we moved to Tikkieline. My mother, who was then working in Orange Grove as a domestic labourer, was employed by a white man who became the first mayor of Kempton Park, Mr MacNamara. The latter informed my mother that a new location was going to be established called Tikkieline. When we arrived at Tikkieline in 1942 there were no houses; we were allocated stands. Then my parents built their own house<sup>7</sup>

Similarly, Julius Lelaka's father, Phineas, who was born in Ga-Matlape in what is today Limpopo Province, arrived in the Rand to look for work and finally settled in Tikkieline. Phineas started working in Germiston. Julius Lelaka explains:

There was a compound there and he lived there ... By the time he thought of bringing his wife this side, he got a transfer to work in Elandsfontein and he lived in Tikkieline. It was closer to work for him ... But then, they moved to Dindela.<sup>8</sup>

At this stage Phelindaba Location, today Spartan in Kempton Park, was already established. This is where another group of black migrants found accommodation. Again, right of accommodation seems to have been tied to employment in the area of the jurisdiction of Kempton Park municipality. Thembi Makakase recalls that her mother had to move from Springs to Phelindaba in order to secure employment as a domestic worker so as to be able to live with her children. She takes up the story:

My mother used to work in the kitchens. That's how she managed to care for us. Well, after school we would go and fetch water. Taps were in the streets. You see, we moved from Springs and we came to Kempton Park. There was a location there called Phelindaba, in Isando. It was there in Phelindaba where I got my first child when I was 16 years old. When we left Springs I was 15<sup>9</sup>

For the white municipalities, these settlements were a cause of great consternation. First, they were difficult to control and overpopulated; and secondly, the white officials perceived them as a source of health hazard in the urban areas. It was for this reason that the Edenvale Village Council in 1939 was adamant that the removal of all the black people who were squatting in the location was imperative.

Cowly, the Town Clerk argued:

“Shortly after my Council purchased the present Location Site, a number of natives without any authority squatted on the Location and built thereon small unhealthy iron and wood huts”.<sup>10</sup>

# EDENVALE VILLAGE COUNCIL/DORPSRAAD

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ALL COMMUNICATIONS TO  
BE ADDRESSED TO THE  
TOWN CLERK

ALLE BRIEWE MOET  
AAN DIE STADSKLERK  
GERIG WORD

3 OCT 1941

Telephone } 25

Telefoon } 25

P.O. Box } 25

Postbus

MUNICIPAL OFFICES,  
EDENVALE.

1st October, 1941.

Senator R. Jones,  
P.O. Box 97,  
JOHANNESBURG.

Dear Sir,

RE: NATIVE LOCATION.

With reference to your telephonic communication with me in regard to certain natives who have been given notice to quit the Location, I beg to advise as follows:-

My Council purchased a certain 110 acres for the purpose of a Native Location in 1938. My Council proposed to obtain a Sub-economic Housing Loan for the purpose of constructing dwellings thereon for the Natives. However in view of the International situation, my Council has decided to drop the proposed scheme for the meantime and to allow natives who are bone fide employed within the area of jurisdiction falling under the Edenvale Municipality to construct dwellings thereon.

Shortly after my Council purchased the present Location Site, a number of natives without any authority squatted on the Location and built thereon small unhealthy iron and wood huts. Some two years back in view of the unhealthy condition prevailing, my Council gave all these natives notice to quit. However in view of a request from Mr Jenner, the Native Commissioner for Germiston, my Council withdrew these notices and allowed the natives to remain thereon temporarily until such time as they could make other arrangements. These natives have however made no effort to remove from the Location, but instead many others have taken up residence there.

At present there are approximately 150 families squatting on the Location, more than 50 per cent of whom are either employed in Germiston or Johannesburg or are unemployed. In view of this my Council has given all natives who are not employed in Edenvale up to the 30th of November to quit the Location.

You will appreciate the difficulty of my Council. The size of the Location grounds is not unlimited, moreover there are numerous natives employed in Edenvale, who are living within the boundaries of the Township, and my Council is anxious to get these natives removed to the location. Should my Council allow any number of natives employed in other Municipal Areas, or un-employed to remain on the present Location site, it would not be long before the present location site is crowded out. Moreover the present

Another worrying factor the white authorities managing these locations was the increased number of gangs in these areas.

John Mlahlelo Tshabalala, who fled from Alexandra Township after stabbing a rival and settled in Dindela in 1960, recalls that when he arrived he immediately joined the Deadline Gang. According to him, some of the gangs in the location included the Vultures, Bhasoba (meaning 'Be careful' in IsiZulu), Seven, and Sika Bopha (meaning 'Cut and Mend' in IsiZulu)<sup>11</sup>

12 It was against this background that, upon assuming power in 1948 on the apartheid ticket, the National Party government passed the Group Areas Act of 1950, which was designed to allocate separate residential areas to Africans, Coloureds, Indians and Whites. It forbade all non-whites to reside in areas designated for whites only. To enforce this law, the government established model townships and forcibly removed black people residing in 'white' areas and settled them in these townships. Tembisa was one such township.

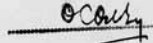
conditions prevailing in the Location are intolerable. The majority of natives who have been given notice are the type who make no effort to obtain work and<sup>are</sup> therefore the undesirable type of native. As regards the remainder my Councils sees no reason why they should undertake the responsibility of other Municipalities in housing natives that are employed in these Municipalities' areas of jurisdiction.

I feel sure that you will appreciate that my Council is by no means unreasonable. I may moreover add that all these natives have been notified that should they obtain employment in Edenvale before the 30th November they would be entitled to remain on the Location site.

I trust that the matter is now clear and fully understood by you.

Yours faithfully,

EDENVALE VILLAGE COUNCIL.  
DORPSRAAD.

  
Town Clerk.  
Stadsclerk.