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Voortrekker

Oom Paul was born on his grandfather's farm at Bulhoek, 10 October 1825. Paul's parents were Casper Kruger and Elsie Steyn. Drought, locusts and migrating herds of buck forced them to lead a nomadic existence in the Karoo. He was hardened by nature and schooled by the Bible. He received only three months of formal education, mostly being home schooled. He read the Bible daily.

His father, Casper Kruger, joined the Trek party of Hendrik Potgieter in one of the very first of the expeditions, 1835. As a young boy of 10-years-old, Paul Kruger set out on the Great Trek under Hendrik Potgieter.

Battle of Vegkop

At age 11, Paul Kruger was one of the *men* who successfully defeated the previously unbeaten Matabele Impies of Mzilikazi at the Battle of Vegkop.

Fighter

He had a rough upbringing on the trail and, in the wilderness, became proficient in horse riding and hunting. After his baptism of fire at the Battle of Vegkop, he served in numerous campaigns against raiding tribes, including the Makapan in 1854 and Mapela in 1858. He led the Republican forces in the First Anglo Boer War of 1880 - 1881.

Farmer

Paul Kruger's father first settled close to what is today Potchefstroom, and later moved to what is now Rustenberg. At age 16, Paul Kruger carved his own farm out of the wilderness at the foot of the Magaliesberg Mountains. He later made this farm available to Missionaries from Andrew Murray's Africa Institute to establish the first Reformed Mission station in the Transvaal.

Father

At age 17 he married Anna Marie Etresai du Plessis (1826 - 1846). His wife and child died January, 1846. He then married again in 1847, Gezina Suzanna du Plessis (1831 - 1901).

Together they were blessed with 7 daughters and 9 sons. Before the end of his life he had over 144 grandchildren.

Reformed Christian

Paul Kruger was a deeply devout believer who studied the Scriptures daily. He memorised most of the Bible by heart. He was a founding member of the Gereformeerde Kerk, which was formed in Rustenberg in 1859. The *Doppers*, as the Gereformeerde Kerk members were known, separated from the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk over a new Hymnbook, which they believed contradicted some of the principals of their foundational documents, the Synod of Dort, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Belgic Confession. The Gereformeerde Kerk founded the Potchefstroom University College for Higher Christian Education. The Gereformeerde Kerk uses only Hymns from the Bible, mainly the Psalms, and other Skrifberymings directly drawn from the Bible. His first involvement in politics began at age 25, when he represented the Transvaal at the Sand River Convention, 1852.

Leader

Paul Kruger was a Field Cornet in the Commandos and eventually became Commandant General of the South African Republic. He was appointed member of a Commission of the Volksraad to draw up the Constitution for the Transvaal Republic. He was present at the Sand River Convention of 1852, in which the British government recognised the independence of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. In 1875, he was elected as a member of the Executive Council and shortly after that became Vice President of the Transvaal. When President T.F. Burgers came to power in 1872, Paul Kruger could not support his liberal policies and resigned in early 1873. It was the declining popularity of Burgers that led Lord Shepstone to seize the Transvaal Republic and annex it to the British Empire. So unpopular was Burgers and his policies that not one Boer responded to his call for the Commandos to defend their independence.

However as the British began to tax the farmers, Paul Kruger became the most vocal leader of the Resistance to foreign rule. At a historic gathering at Paardekraal, in December 1880, the citizens restored the Republic, electing Paul Kruger, Piet Joubert and M.W. Pretorius to form a Triumvirate to lead their Republic.

Resistance

After the Transvaal was annexed by Britain in 1877, Paul Kruger led the resistance movement, visiting Britain as the leader of a deputation protesting the violation of the Sand River Convention and demanding the restoration of Transvaal independence. After the Boer victory at the Battle of Majuba in 1881, Paul Kruger played a vital role in the negotiations with the British which led to the restoration of the Transvaal independence.

President

On 30 December 1880, at age 55, Paul Kruger was elected President of the Transvaal. He visited Europe on a number of occasions and was received with great honour in Germany, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Spain. In the elections of 1883, 1888, 1893 and 1898, Paul Kruger was victorious, each time defeating his main rival, Piet Joubert.

Gold and the Uitlanders

The discovery of gold, on the Witwatersrand in 1884, had far-reaching political repercussions as Uitlanders poured into the Transvaal, dramatically changing the demographics and threatening to overwhelm the independence of the Boer Republic. In his Memoirs, Paul Kruger declared that instead of rejoicing at the discovery of gold, they should have wept, because of how it would cause their land to be soaked in blood.

Nature Conservation

Paul Kruger was far-sighted in his concern for nature conservation and he is credited with the establishment of the initial Sabi Reserve in the Eastern Transvaal which has grown into the greatest game reserve on earth: The Kruger National Park.

The Jameson Raid

Paul Kruger displayed tremendous wisdom and restraint in how he handled the treachery of some prominent miners in their attempt to foment revolution, and the failed Jameson Raid, led by Cecil John Rhodes' most trusted leader, Leander Starr Jameson, in 1895. Instead of hanging the plotters, and imprisoning the invaders, as his own people demanded, he handed them over to the British government to deal with.

Paris Fashions

There are numerous amusing stories of Oom Paul on state visits overseas. On one occasion he walked into a French banquet hall only to immediately turn around and walk out, declaring: *"I am sorry, I was not aware that your women were not yet dressed!"* a protest against the immoral fashions prevalent in Paris.

Half the Bible

When President Kruger announced that any church could receive an acre free for them to build their House of Worship on, he was approached by a Jewish Rabbi, who requested an acre. Oom Paul thought for a moment and then responded that he could have half an acre, as the Jews only believed half the Bible!

Dedicating a Synagogue to Christ

When the Rabbi invited the President to dedicate the Pretoria Synagogue, Oom Paul solemnly removed his hat and declared: *"In the Name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, I dedicate this Synagogue to the Glory of God."* It may be the only Synagogue dedicated in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Uitlander Dilemma

With the radical economic and political challenges that followed the discovery of gold on the Witwatersrand, President Kruger was concerned that the miners would soon out-vote the farmers. To counter this possibility, he made the conditions of naturalisation more demanding. In 1890, the government restricted the Uitlander franchise for presidential and Volksraad elections to naturalised citizens who had been in the country for at least 14 years. A second Volksraad was created to represent Uitlander interests, to be elected by naturalised citizens of at least two years.

Anglo Boer War

Sir Alfred Milner, the British High Commissioner in South Africa, was an ardent imperialist and committed to agitating Uitlander dissent and opposition to Kruger's government in the Transvaal and the absorption of both the Transvaal and the Orange Free State into a British South Africa. As the British invaded the Transvaal, May 1890, President Kruger was sent overseas to raise support for the Boer cause. He withdrew through Portuguese East Africa (Mozambique). There he boarded the Dutch Warship, *Gelderland*, sent by the young Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands, which defied the British naval blockade to transport him safely to Europe.

Mobilising Opposition to Britain

In Europe he was greatly honoured as the principled leader of a courageous people who had been most unjustly invaded and abused by the British Empire. Visitors to Kruger House in Church Street, Pretoria, can see many of the trophies and awards granted by the Russian Tsar, the Emperor of Austria, Kaiser Willem II of Germany, from the Dutch, French, Italians and Swiss.

Honoured Hero

Oom Paul died in exile in Clarens, Switzerland, 14 July 1904. On 16 December 1904 his remains were reburied in Heroes Acre in Church Street Cemetery, Pretoria. A statue of Paul Kruger in his characteristic formal dress, stands in the centre of Church Square, Pretoria. The Kruger Rand gold coin is named in his honour and features his face. A street in St. Gallen, Switzerland, Krügerstrasse was named after him. His greatest monument is the Kruger National Park.

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</p> <p align="center" style="margin-right: 2.05pt; text-align: center;">KRUGER HOUSE</p> <p align="center" style="margin-right: 2.05pt; text-align: center;">
</p> <p style="margin-right: 2.05pt;">Pretoria is also home to Kruger House, the historic residence of the President of the South Africa Republic, Paul Kruger. Built in 1884, by architect Tom Claridge, this house was the first in Pretoria to be lit by electricity. The two stone lions on the veranda were presented to President Kruger as a birthday gift on 10 October 1896, by mining magnet, Barney Barnato.</p> <p style="margin-right: 2.05pt;">
</p> <p style="margin-right: 2.05pt;">Oom Paul, as the president was often referred to, used to receive citizens on the stoep to discuss their concerns over coffee and koeksisters.</p> <p style="margin-right: 2.05pt;">
</p> <p style="margin-right: 2.05pt;">Kruger House now houses a Museum with many fascinating artefacts and furnishings from Paul Kruger and the tumultuous times in which he lived. Paul Kruger and his family lived in this house on Church Street from 1884 to 1900. The museum includes the president's state coach and ox-wagon and many of the awards received during his exile in Europe, the presidential railway coach he travelled on for official business and artefacts from the Anglo Boer War.</p> <p style="margin-right: 2.05pt;">
</p> <p align="left">Dr. Peter Hammond</p> <p align="left">Frontline Fellowship
 P.O. Box 74 Newlands 7725
 Cape Town South Africa
 Tel: 021-689-4480
 Fax: 021-685-5884
 Email:◆