

# Epidemic that led to the establishment of a garden city

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**T**he founding of Pinelands resulted from the Spanish Influenza Epidemic of 1918 and the housing legislation that followed it.

Cape Town has been no stranger to epidemics. In 1713 nearly 25 percent of Cape Town residents died from smallpox and another 2 000 died when it broke out again 42 years later. In 1881 another 1 000 died from smallpox. The bubonic plague claimed 395 victims in 1901.

The Spanish Influenza Epidemic of 1918, however, claimed over 6 342 lives while a further 116 378 non-fatal cases were reported.

The total population was only 199 570 which meant that two out of every three residents in Cape Town were affected.

Cape Town was experiencing a boom period which had led to gross overcrowding. The Great War had also resulted in an influx of military personnel.

The first case of Spanish Flu was in the last week of September 1918, when it broke out among the Nigerian Troops in transit. They were placed in military hospitals where they infected the medical staff.

Little more than a week later, by October 6, 60 people were being buried each day. By October 9, only three days later, this had increased to 250 per day.

Coffins were in short supply and bodies were being buried in blankets.

At Maitland cemetery a minister was on permanent duty while carts, piled with bodies, lined the road outside.

Most shops and offices closed. Public transport and postal services barely operated. Places of public entertainment were closed down and churches were requested not to hold services.

By the end of October the number

of cases was rapidly decreasing and the Town started to revive.

It was commonly conceded that the overcrowding and poor housing had been a major factor in the spread of the epidemic.

The following year the Citizen's Housing League lobbied for improved housing legislation.

At the same time the chairman of the Cape Town Chamber of Commerce, Richard Stuttaford, proposed that a garden city be established. The chamber rejected his idea and so he went directly to the Acting Prime Minister, F S Malan, and asked for a portion of the Uitvlugt Forestry Station for his concept.

On June 13, 1919 the House of Assembly resolved to support the concept and in February 1920 the grant of 800 acres of land was made.

Two years later, in February 1922, Pineland's first new resident moved into 3 Meadway.