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THE ORANGE FREE STATE CELEBRATES
CENTENARY.

STORY.

Over a hundred years ago great herds of game swarmed over the plains of the country now known as The Orange Free State and one of the four Provinces of The Union of South Africa. In those days apart from hunting the Free State being the habitat of Springbok, Eland, Zebra and many other types of wild animals, there were scattered bands of wandering Bushmen, Hottentots, and other primitive savages who were often a source of grave danger to the early arrivals of Dutch or Boer settlers who crossed the Orange River from the Cape Colony in 1824 and attempted to make a home in this hitherto unchartered country.

In 1836 the first settlers were joined by more Boer farmers from the Cape. In 1843 the British appeared on the scene and in 1846 Major Douglas Warden Officer Commanding the British Occupying troops chose the present site of the now Capital City of Bloemfontein as a suitable spot to erect a fort and establish a residency.

British sovereignty was formally proclaimed by Sir Harry Smith in 1848, who defeated the Boers leader Pretorius and his followers who were driven across the Vaal River.

The country was known at that time as the Orange River Sovereignty. The British position however was unsatisfactory and in 1854 the British voluntarily handed back the territory to the Boers under the Bloemfontein Convention of February 23rd 1854 and the Boer Republic known as The Orange Free State was born. The Republic remained in force until it joined forces with the Republic of the Transvaal in the South African War which ended in defeat for the Boers in 1902.

The Orange Free State finally became one of the four Provinces of the Union of South Africa in 1910. With the recent discovery and development of rich gold fields in the Free State the prosperity of the Province is rapidly increasing and may in the future rival the wealth of Johannesburg and the Golden Reef of the Transvaal.

In 1951 the total population of Bloemfontein including all races was 127,775, and apart from being the Capital of the Province of the Orange Free State it is the Judicial Capital of the Union of South Africa.

The Free State Centenary Festival was to commemorate the Bloemfontein Convention when the British handed back the country to the Boers and the establishment of the Republic. The festivities lasted for ten days which period was filled with an extensive and varied programme, some of the highlights of which are portrayed in the film coverage. These include general views of Bloemfontein as seen from Naval Hill overlooking the city. Some of the Folk dancing displays, the procession of present day floats through the city, the great Commando of mounted horsemen in period costume converging on the City and marching through the streets to the main scene of the Festival on the Show grounds, and also other items of interest.