

1880 Oranje Vrij Staat Hospital Tax Hand-stamped surcharge.

In 1998, using a computer scanner and digital imaging software, I explored the nature of the surcharge "HOSPITAAL TAX 3d. BETAALD" applied to the Oranje Vrij Staat Een Shilling revenue. As a result, I was able to define the surcharge more accurately than previously had been possible.

The stamps of the Oranje Vrij Staat have been a source of particular interest to many for decades. However, to my knowledge, the historical origin of the 1880 Hospital Tax remains unknown.



Of course, the imposition of such a tax takes place within a social context; and I thought that it may be of interest to readers to understand some of the circumstances which prevailed in the Republic at the time.

The idea of a hospital in Bloemfontein was first mooted in 1872 and its establishment driven by the eminent medical practitioner and mayor of Bloemfontein Dr. Bernard Otto Kellner. In 1874, Henrietta Stockdale (1847-1911) (later Sister Henrietta), a English gentlewoman whom had undergone two years nursing training in Clewer Hospital and later the Children's Hospital, Great Ormond in London, arrived in Bloemfontein.

She had left Southampton on 6th March, 1874, together with Archdeacon and Mrs. Croghan accompanied by Sister Emma (Proctor) of St. Thomas' Sisterhood, Oxford, the Mesdames Sibley, Grimes, Newland and Blackwell. Disembarking at Port Elizabeth, they journeyed in post carts and ox wagons over thirteen days to Bloemfontein.

There the group formed the Anglican Nursing Order of St Michael and All Angels, and Emma Proctor was elected Mother Superior.

In 1876, Stockdale went to the Canarvon Hospital, Kimberley, where she contracted typhoid. Whilst recuperating in England, she studied nursing training at London's University College Hospital, and on her return to Kimberley she established the first training school for nurses in Southern Africa.

Meanwhile, in Bloemfontein, a sickroom was established on 7th August 1876, serviced by the Sisterhood of St. Michael's and All Angels. Public subscriptions were called for and a sum of £100 raised within months.

In 1877, President Johannes Henricus Brand and Bishop Allan Becher Webb laid the foundation stone of the St. George's Cottage Hospital and Convalescent Home. It was opened later in June 1877 on erf 21, at the corner of St. George's Street and Monument Road, Bloemfontein. Later that year, Sr. Henrietta returned to Bloemfontein for a year-long spell as matron of St George's Hospital, supported Sr. Louisa from Dublin and the Misses Longlands and Potts.

Following a petition submitted in 1882 to the *Volksraad* (Oranje Vrij Staat Parliament) requesting support, monies were granted annually until 1886. The Sisterhood withdrew from serving the hospital in 1904 and the hospital was closed in 1908.

Though no direct proof has been uncovered, it seems likely that the 1880 Hospital Tax stamp was used as a voluntary method of raising funds for St. George's Hospital; much in the same manner as has been the case over decades in many other countries throughout the world.

In 1891, Henrietta Stockdale canvassed the support of Dr William Guybon Atherstone of Grahamstown, the outcome of which was that the Parliament of the Cape of Good Hope became the first legislature in the world to provide for the registration of nurses and midwives by enacting the Medical and Pharmacy Act of 1891.

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