

Inventory No. 1/39

**Inventory of Archives of the Secretary of the
Burgher Military Council,
1718 - 1795**

J.H. Mienie

Cape Town Archives Repository ©1964

This inventory is written in English.

C O N T E N T S

FONDS SPECIFICATIONS CONTENT AND STRUCTURE 5

Context 7

 Biographical History 7

Content and Structure 9

 Scope and Content 9

DESCRIPTION OF THE SUBORDINATE COMPONENTS 11

FONDS SPECIFICATIONS**Title:**

Archives of the Secretary of the Burgher Military Council

Period:

1718 - 1795

Fonds Code:

1/39

Extent:

0.30 lin m

Repository:

Cape Town Archives Repository

Record Creator (origination):

Burgher Military Council

Abstract:

Minutes, papers received and despatched, financial papers, muster rolls and miscellaneous papers of the Burgher Military Council. The main function of the Council was to exercise control over the Cape Burgher Watch, a body created to aid the garrison protecting the Cape against attacks from outside as well as unlawful activities of the burghers.

CONTEXT

BIOGRAPHICAL HISTORY

The precise date on which the Burgher Military Council was established and the circumstances that attended its origin could not be determined. The earliest reference to the council is to be found in the resolutions of the Council of Policy of 5 November 1699 when the military council recommended to the Council of Policy that the infantry section of the Cape Burgher Watch be divided into two sections. The council was again mentioned in a placcaat (act) issued on 8 April 1710.

The earliest documents of this archives that could be traced, date back to 1712. Thus, there is a relatively long period during which the body existed but for which no documents were preserved.

Although the Burger Military Council existed de facto from before 1712, the administration and functions of this body were defined by the Council of Policy for the first time in 1768. [2] However, it can be accepted that the instructions whereby the council now functioned, were mainly a consolidation of the practise used since the creation of the body.

The main function of the Burgher Military Council was to exercise control over the Cape Burgher Watch, a body created to aid the garrison protect the Cape against attacks from outside as well as unlawful activities of the burghers.

The burgher watch, the existence of which gave rise to the establishment of the Burgher Military Council as its controlling body, began to develop shortly after the creation of free burghers. In 1659, it was already decided to organize the burghers into a company of riflemen to halt attacks from hottentots and bandits. [3] The Cape burghers were converted into a watch in 1686 to maintain order in the Cape. [4] The militia would now guard the hospital in the same manner as the free burghers guarded the butchery (vleeshuis).

The watch that was created in 1686, apparently ceased to exist because in 1696 ten years later, it is again mentioned that a burgher was instituted which would patrol around Cape Town during the night. [5]

With the first British Occupation of the Cape in 1795, the burgher watch as well as the military council apparently ceased to exist, because after this date all traces, suggesting a further possible survival of the bodies concerned, disappeared.

Meagre information was traced on the establishment, development and functions of the post of secretary of the Burgher Military Council. In the council minutes of 3 January, 1724, one

-
2. C60 Resolutions of the Council of Policy, 6 September 1768.
 3. C1 Resolutions of the Council of Policy, 1 May 1659.
 4. C6 Resolutions of the Council of Policy, 3 July 1686.
 5. Cape Placcaat Book I, 1652 - 1707, p. 295. It is not clear from the available documents whether the watch of 1696 was only a continuation of the 1686 watch with additional or alternative functions or if this watch really ceased to exist, being later re-established. As a further protection to the internal safety of the settlement, the so-called Town Guards were instituted on 11 September 1686 whose main function was also to patrol the streets and to see to the silence, rest and peace (Resolutions of Council of Policy, 11.9.1686). This body functioned simultaneously with the burgher watch but was not integrated with the former body. The names of members of the Town Guard were included on several occasions in the muster rolls of the burgher watch (items 5 and 6 in Annexure A in the inventory of the Secretary of the Burgher Military Council).

Jan de Waal is mentioned as having served the council as Scribe or Secretary. Certain Services for which he received payment were also defined in the minutes. [6] His functions were as follows:

- a. Recording the minutes of the Burgher Military Council.
- b. Issuing of summonses to appear before the council.
- c. Handling the transfer of a burgher from one company to another at his own request.

A fourth function, namely the compilation of muster rolls of the Cape Burgher Watch was possibly also the responsibility of the secretary of the Burgher Military Council. This conclusion was reached as a result of the following:

The instructions of the Burgher Military Council approved by the Council of Policy on 6 September 1768 mentioned that the secretary of the Burgher Military Council would also act as secretary of the Cape Burgher watch.

The resolution of the Council of Policy of 26 Januari 1787 mentions that certain burghers were to register themselves at the office of the secretary of the burgher watch. Together with the fact that one of the functions of the secretary of the military council was the organization of the transfer of burghers from one company to another, it appears logical that the joint position of the secretary of the military council and secretary of the burgher watch, included the task of compiling the muster rolls.

6. See also article 52 of the "Instruktie of reglement voor den Burgerkrijgsraad" 1768 for an indication of the functions of the secretary.

CONTENT AND STRUCTURE***SCOPE AND CONTENT***

This archives is incomplete. The documents that have remained preserved are in a reasonably good condition.

DESCRIPTION OF THE SUBORDINATE COMPONENTS

1 - 3

Minutes of meetings

1718 - 1795

1 1718 - 1767

Details re these taxes are given in the Notices of 9/12 October and 6/7 November 1781. See the publication Kaapse Plakkaatboek, Deel III, 1754 - 1786, pp. 125 - 126.

2 1767 - 1793**3** 1793 - 1795

4

Annexures to Minutes: Declarations of surgeons.
1736 - 1795

In terms of article 27 of the Instructions for the Burgher Military Council 1768, burghers who required exemption from service on account of illness, had to submit a declaration from a recognised surgeon. In such instances, the declarations were discussed at Council meetings. The declarations are arranged in chronological order.

5

Papers Received
1712 - 1795

Papers received for the period 1727 - 1771 could not be traced.

6 Papers Despatched
1795

7 Financial Papers: Cash book
1794

8 - 11

Diverse Papers
1768 - 1795

- 8** Instructions for the Burgher Military Council.
1768
Includes extracts from the baptismal registers of Cape Town and Swartland (later Malmesbury) churches, 1770 - 1781 which were utilised by the Burgher Military Council to determine the correct ages of individuals who rendered military service.
- 9** Muster - rolls and diverse name lists.
(circa 1780) - (circa 1795)
- a** Names of recruits who were members of the Burgher Watch since 20 October 1780.
The names of the recruits are listed under the different companies under which they were divided.
Also refers to recruits taken up after 1780, although the contents of the text does not indicate an end date.
- b** Names of Burgher watch Officers appointed.
1781
The names of the officers are listed under the different companies under which they were divided.
- c** Incomplete alphabetical list (A - M) of persons who had to pay taxes every four months during the Dutch - English War of 1780 - 1784.
1781
Details re these taxes are given in the Notices of 9/12 October and 6/7 November 1781. See the publication Kaapse Plakkaatboek, Deel III, 1754 - 1786, pp. 125 - 126.
- d** General roll of Burghers at the Cape.
1783 Oct.
Incomplete lists of persons with surnames beginning with the letters A - B, M and V.
The same problem in determining the precise date as was referred to in footnote above, arose here.
- e** (i) Lists of Burghers in the Burgher Watch Companies (pp. 1 - 66). (ii) Lists of officers in the Burgher Watch Companies (pp. 67 - 75). (iii) Lists of recruits who enlisted with the Burgher watch (pp. 76 - 81). (iv) Lists of men in the various watches (pp. 82 - 93) (v) List of twenty Burghers of the 'Ratelwag'.
1785 1785 1785 Oct. 18 - 1786 May Undated Undated
The introduction to this inventory refers to the origin of the 'Ratelwag'. See also footnote 11 below.
In many cases the number of the watch under which the men served is indicated next to the name.
Dates of appointment are also given.
Each watch was given a number (i.e 1 - 24) and was under direct command of a sergeant and a corporal. With a few exceptions, identical to item 6.
- f** Lists of men in the various watches.

- 1786
The names of the men are indicated under their respective watches. Following each man's name, the company under which he served is indicated, e.g. 2CI (Tweede Compagnie Infanterie or Second Infantry Compagny). Includes a list of twenty burghers who formed the "Ratewag" which list is almost identical to that described under item 5.
- g** Same as item 5.
1790
The contents and composition of these lists are much the same as those listed under item 5, but are, however, of a later date.
- h** Muster - Roll of Burghers who served in the Artillery Company under the command of Lieut. A. de Vogel.
1792 Nov.
- i** Muster - Roll of Burghers who served in the Artillery Company under the command of Maj. J. Fischer.
1792 Nov.
- j** Muster - Roll of Burghers who served in the Artillery Company under the command of Captain G.F. Kuhlner.
1792 Nov.
- k** List of Burghers of the First Infantry Compagnie.
1793 - (c. 1795)
Includes the numerical strength of the four compagnies of Burgher Infantry and also the names, ranks and dates of appointment of the officers of the aforementioned compagnies.
- l** List (in duplicate) of men who served under 'Veldwagtmeester' G. van Schalkwyk.
1795 April
- m** Muster - Rolls of the 3th and 4th Cavalry Compagnies of the Burgher Watch.
Undated
Probably established after 1789.
- n** Diverse lists of Cape Burghers.
Undated
Includes references to points of military service and individual expertise.
- o** List of persons who had taken the Oath.
Undated
- p** List of persons, probably living in the outlying districts of the Cape, who were called up for military service at short notice.
Undated
- 10** Questionnaire and answers on the composition of the Burgher Watch.
1789
- 11** Notes on individuals who were fined.
1793 - 1794
These notes only list the persons who were fined and the relevant amounts paid, but contain no reference to the transgressions which led to the fines being imposed.