

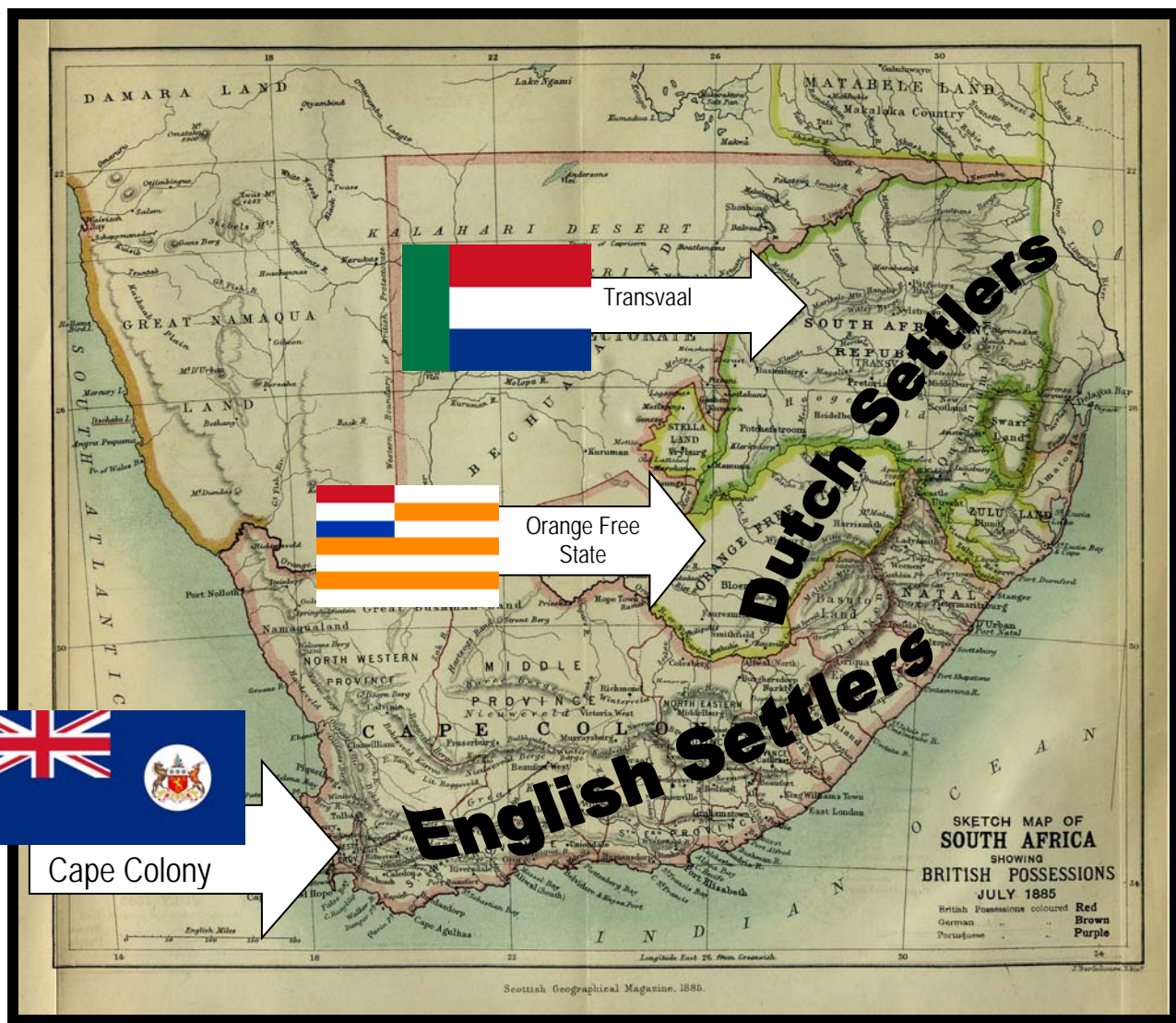
# The Anglo-Boer War

During the late 19<sup>th</sup> century Canada linked its identity and culture closely to the British Empire. For many, Canada was British.

👑 The issue of British Imperialism (Empire Building) impacted Canada in 1899, when two South African Republics (largely inhabited by Dutch-Afrikaner settlers) were made to declare war on Britain after gold and diamonds were discovered in their lands.



Canadian War Museum, Ottawa



👑 Britain wanted a commitment from Canada and other colonies for regular and systematic military support.

👑 The request for Canadian troops divided the French and English, as well as the nationalists (Canada as its own Nation) and imperialists (Canada as an integral part of the British Empire).

👑 Many English settlers (particularly from Ontario) saw it as their duty to help the British.

👑 French Canadians, led by Henri Bourassa, saw the Anglo-Boer War as a foreign war with nothing to do with Canada.

👑 A fierce debate erupted on whether or not conscription (the draft) should be imposed. Canadian Prime Minister sought a compromise that saw Canada train and outfit a force of 1000 soldiers. In the end, around 7000 soldiers, nurses, doctors and drivers saw action in South Africa.

👑 English Canadians were outraged at the lack of support, and French Canadians were upset that Canadian soldiers had been sent at all.

👑 The Boer War (fought between the professional British Army and seemingly disorganized Boer guerilla fighters) was a disaster for the British Empire.

👑 Over the next three years, more than 7,000 Canadians, including 12 women nurses, served overseas. They would fight in key battles from Paardeberg to Leliefontein. The Boers inflicted heavy losses on the British, but were defeated in several key engagements. Refusing to surrender, the Boers turned to a guerrilla war of ambush and retreat. In this second phase of fighting, Canadians participated in numerous small actions. Grueling mounted patrols sought to bring the enemy to battle, and harsh conditions ensured that all soldiers struggled against disease and snipers' bullets (source: Canada War Museum).

- WDHS students George Van Norman and John Raseberry participated in the Boer War (their names are included in the WDHS Student War Memorial located in the Atrium).
- John McCrae (author of "In Flanders Fields") also participated in the Boer War.

👑 Imperial forces attempted to deny the Boers the food, water and lodging afforded by sympathetic farmers. Britain's grim strategy took the war to the civilian population. Canadian troops burned Boer houses and farms, and moved civilians to **internment camps**. In these filthy camps, an estimated 28,000 prisoners died of disease, most of them women, children, and black workers. Civilian deaths provoked outrage in Britain and in Canada. This harsh strategy eventually defeated the Boers (source: Canada War Museum).

👑 The long and costly war highlighted that the mighty British Empire was not as invincible as once thought. The high casualty rates of the colonial forces caused the dominions (Canada, Australia and New Zealand) to question their involvement in a war that did not directly impact them.

👑 Approximately 280 Canadians lost their lives (most due to injury or illness brought on by the harsh conditions) and more than 250 were wounded.



This war, along with my death in 1901, signaled the end of the Victorian Era.