

Introduction to ArcelorMittal South Africa Vereeniging Works

1. History

The first true South African steel company appeared in 1909, when Horace Wright and Sammy Marks were granted a license to construct a furnace in Vereeniging, in the Transvaal region. Wright and Marks founded the Union Steel Corporation (USCO) and began construction of a blast furnace in 1911. By 1913, the partners had completed construction of a ten-ton open hearth furnace and launched production. The company initially relied on scrap materials from the country's railroads and mines as feedstock.

The first efforts to develop South Africa's own steel feedstock supply began in 1916, with the launch of the country's first ferrous ore mine in Pretoria West. That mine fed a newly constructed blast furnace, which produced some 4,000 tons of pig iron between 1918 and 1921. Meanwhile, USCO constructed a second blast furnace, producing some 700 tons.

In 1991, Iscor gained full control of the USCO steel works and renamed the facility "Iscor Vereeniging Works".

2. General information about Vereeniging

Vereeniging is situated in the Southern part of Gauteng Province, on the banks of the northern loop of the Vaal River and neighbours Vanderbijlpark (West), Three Rivers (East), Meyerton (North) and Sasolburg (South). The towns of Vanderbijlpark, Vereeniging and Sasolburg lie in a triangle on the map and are commonly referred to as "the Vaal Triangle" - a major industrial region of South Africa. Nearby Vereeniging is the predominantly black community of Sharpeville - the site of the Sharpeville massacre in 1960.

The city of Vereeniging was founded in 1892. Much of its early growth was due to the nearby coal mines.

In the late 1800s the Vaal River was crossed at Viljoensdrift, on the Free State side of the present Vereeniging. In 1878 coal was discovered on the

farm Leeuwkuil and a town developed around the mine on the northern bank of the Vaal River. The first stands were sold in 1892 and the railway track crossing the Vaal River was also completed that year. The town was called Vereeniging (meaning Association or union) because at this point transport between the two old republics: (the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republic and the Republic of the Orange Free State) met.

The city is well known for being the location where the Treaty of Vereeniging ending the Second Boer War (1899-1902) was negotiated. During this conflict, a concentration camp was set up by the British military in the area.

1.3 Demographics

Vereeniging has a population of more than 350 000. The predominant language in the area is Afrikaans, which is followed up closely by English and Sesotho.

1.4 Trade and Industry

Vereeniging is currently one of the most important industrial manufacturing centres in South Africa, with its chief products being iron, steel, pipes, cables, chains, steel tubing, farm implements, bricks, tiles and processed lime. Several coal mines are also still situated in the area, with reserves being estimated at four billion tons. Other mines nearby extract fire-clay, silica and building stone. Substantial deposits of fire-clay, silica and building stone are also mined in the area.

Vereeniging has been jokingly referred to as “the town in South Africa which has the most vehicle dealerships per square metre”.

Vereeniging also has several Eskom thermal power plants that supply electricity to the nearby industries.

1.5 Municipal area

Vereeniging consists of 13 suburbs, namely Duncanville, Risiville, Peacehaven, Arcon Park, Unitas Park, Vischgat, Sonland Park, Steel Park, Homer, Roodt's Gardens, Three Rivers, Sharpeville and Leeuhof. Since 1999, Vereeniging has been part of the Emfuleni Local Municipality, along with Vanderbijlpark and the smaller Three Rivers. Vereeniging is

located in the district municipality of Sedibeng (which incorporates the local municipalities of Emfuleni, Midvaal and Lesedi). The black townships Sebokeng and Sharpeville are close to the city.

Visit the following sites for more information on:

The district municipality of Sedibeng: <http://www.sedibeng.gov.za/>

The Emfuleni Local Municipality: <http://www.emfuleni.gov.za/>