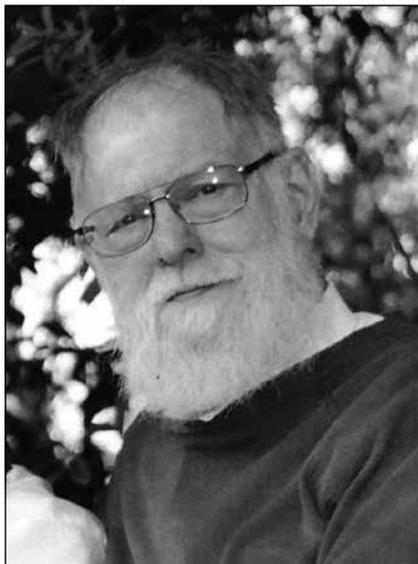


Paul Singer Thompson (1940–2017)

PAUL Singer Thompson was a leading and prolific authority on many aspects of the history of KwaZulu-Natal. That he was so might at first glance seem odd, for he was born and educated in the United States where he attended the Virginia Military Institute (VMI) from 1957 to 1961 and went on to earn an MA. and PhD in history at the University of Virginia. Following a conventional academic career path he next became an instructor and assistant professor in history at VMI from 1965 to 1968. But then Paul threw caution to the winds. He resigned his VMI post, married Mary Earline Queen in December 1968 and in 1969 took up a lecturing post in history at the University of Natal in Pietermaritzburg, introducing an exotic curriculum of Byzantine and American history.

Paul rapidly became deeply interested in his new environment and redirected his research efforts away from the American Civil War to the history of KwaZulu-Natal. He was the most diligent of scholars and painstaking of archival researchers, and was not one for flights of fancy or unsubstantiated theorising, insisting that the evidence must speak for itself. Retirement from what was by then the University of KwaZulu-Natal and his appointment as a senior research associate only stimulated his activity as a scholar. He continued regularly to present papers at international conferences, wrote more books and book chapters and contributed many articles to academic journals. A true and dedicated professional, he spent the last week of his life before going into hospital correcting two articles for publication.



Paul's publications were all based on meticulous archival research reinforced by extensive and intrepid fieldwork, and were enhanced by his considerable cartographic skills. As an authority on the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879, with John Laband he co-authored the twice revised *The Illustrated Guide to the Anglo-Zulu War* (1979, 1983, 2000); *War Comes to Umvoti: The Natal-Zululand Border 1878–1879* (1980) and *The Buffalo Border 1879: The Anglo-Zulu War in Northern Natal* (1983). They also brought out a collection of their articles in *Kingdom and Colony at War: Sixteen Studies on the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879* (1990). Paul had an especial interest in African levies and auxiliaries, and was the sole author of the authoritative *Black Soldiers of the Queen: The Natal Native Contingent in the Anglo-Zulu War* (2006). Later in his career he turned his attention to the Zulu Uprising of 1906 (the Bambatha Rebellion) and established himself as a leading authority

in that area. He authored *An Historical Atlas of the Zulu Rebellion* (2002); *Bambatha at Mpanza: The Making of a Rebel* (2004) and *Incident at Trewirgie: First Shots of the Zulu Rebellion 1906* (2005). Paul's intellectual curiosity extended to the singular English-speaking settlers of Natal, and he examined them in *Natalians First: Separatism in South Africa 1909–1961* (1990) and in *The British Civic Culture of Natal, South Africa 1902–1961* (1999).

Paul was a man of many parts who selflessly gave much of his time and energy to the community where he and Earline had made their home. Outside of the university he was a familiar figure to many as the stalwart chairman of the Scottsville Residents Association and as the enthusiastic chairman of the Pietermaritzburg Heritage Society.

He is survived by his wife Earline, their children Timothy and Theresa, and four grandchildren.

JOHN LABAND