

CHAPTER II

HISTORY OF THE TRANSVAAL MUSEUM

1913 - 1964

At the outbreak of the Anglo-Boer War there were eight museums in South Africa. Two were in the Boer Republics of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State and six in the British colonies of the Cape and Natal. After the occupation of Pretoria by the British forces on 5 June 1900 the Staatsmuseum of the ZAR was reopened as the Pretoria Museum under the new British Military Government. At the request of the Management Committee the name was changed to the Transvaal Museum in 1903.

1. THE TRANSVAAL MUSEUM : NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM

The Staatsmuseum

The mother museum of the Transvaal Museum was the Staatsmuseum of the ZAR. This Museum, founded in 1892, was situated in Pretoria, the capital of the ZAR. It was a general museum with the declared aim to collect and preserve objects of general and historical interest.¹ It was also a national museum that had to reflect the status of the Republic.² The national character of the Staatsmuseum was clear from the nature of the exhibitions, in particular the historical displays, but the flora and fauna on exhibit also contributed to its national character.³

When the Anglo-Boer War broke out the patriotic aura of the Staatsmuseum became even more pronounced because burghers in the commandos were invited to contribute memorabilia to the Museum, such as lances, rifles, cannons, clothes, banners and papers from the battlefield. These objects were seen as “zegeteekenen” [signs of victory] used to

¹ E. Grobler, “Die Staatsmuseum van die Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek en sy historiese en etnografiese versamelings” (unpublished M.A. dissertation, University of Pretoria, 1994), p. 51.

² Ibid., pp. 196 - 197.

³ Ibid., p. 187.

bolster the national sentiment.⁴ The circular letter in which this appeal for donations was made, was signed by J.W.B. Gunning,⁵ the director of the Staatsmuseum, and N. Mansvelt, the chairman of the Curatorium. This initiative bears witness to the deep feelings of nationalism fostered in the Boer Republics. According to the circular, the Republics were seen as the liberators of the whole of South Africa.

Prominence accorded to natural history

The Staatsmuseum as national institution of the ZAR ceased to function with the occupation of Pretoria by Britain on 5 June 1900. Eight years later, Gunning, now director of the Transvaal Museum, contended that the first aim of the Staatsmuseum had been the scientific exploration of the State (the ZAR) and the making and the preservation of scientific collections. According to him other objectives had been to further education and to promote national pride. Clearly, in the aftermath of the Anglo-Boer War there was a distinct turnabout in Gunning's interpretation of the aims of the Staatsmuseum in its role as a government institution.

The Transvaal Museum was transformed from a general national museum to one that zealously focused on the natural world, geared to generate and disseminate information on natural history and to produce research of international significance.⁶ In this way Gunning's retrospective ideal for the Staatsmuseum materialized and the anthropological, archaeological and historical⁷ collections became subordinate to the overriding natural history focus. Moreover, the Transvaal Museum was in line with other museums in the country as they consisted "principally of collections of natural history".⁸

⁴ NCHMA, Letterbook April 1899 - September 1902, p. 436, circular letter drafted by Gunning, dd 15 November 1899. See copy of letter in E. Grobler, *Die Staatsmuseum van die Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek, die Anglo-Boereoorlog en regstellende aksie, Navorsing deur die Nasionale Kultuurhistoriese Museum*, vol. 9: 2000, pp. 27 - 28.

⁵ Jan Willem Boudewijn Gunning (1860 - 1913) was born in Hilversum, the Netherlands. He was educated at the universities of Amsterdam, Leiden and Jena. He came to South Africa in 1884 and was appointed director of the Staatsmuseum in 1897. As he suffered from ill health, he went to Europe for treatment in 1912. He died in Pretoria in 1913. C.J. Swierstra, *Obituary: Dr J.W.B. Gunning, Annals of the Transvaal Museum*, 4(2), October 1913, pp. 110 - 111; E. Grobler, "Die Staatsmuseum van die Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek en sy historiese en etnografiese versamelings" (unpublished M.A. dissertation, University of Pretoria, 1994), p. 92.

⁶ C.K. Brain, *Natural history at the Transvaal Museum 1901 - 1992*, in N.J. Dippenaar (ed.), *Staatsmuseum 100*, pp. 16 - 18.

⁷ The historical collection includes the numismatic and philately collections.

⁸ J.W.B. Gunning, *Matters concerning museums in South Africa*, pp. 1 - 2.

In 1908 Gunning set the pace by introducing the *Annals of the Transvaal Museum* to reflect the scientific research done by staff at the Transvaal Museum. The first issue, apart from an article on the history of the Museum by Gunning and a note on rock engravings by C.J. Swierstra, carried articles by R. Broom on the *Chrysochloride*, R. Leendertz on the *Amaryllidaceae* of the Transvaal, L.H. Gough on breeding experiments with *Cystericercus tenuicellus* and two natural history notes, also by Gough. In all the following issues the *Annals* show a heavy preponderance towards natural history, except for a note written by Gunning entitled *Aantekeningen over enige weinig bekende muntstukjes van Zuid-Afrika*,⁹ Gunning's obituary¹⁰ and five anthropological articles.¹¹ Three of these were written by an anthropologist, Dora Earthy, and one was by Percy Wagner. Neither of these authors were on the staff of the Transvaal Museum.

The museum building in Boom Street, Pretoria, which was opened officially on 15 December 1904, soon became too small. A new building was planned to house the Museum, including the library and art gallery, on a site in Market Street (now Paul Kruger Street), Pretoria. Although the new building was designed in the form of an H, only the central portion had been completed when the First World War broke out and the building was never finished to the original design. In 1960 the Transvaal Museum had less than half of the accommodation that had been planned 50 years earlier and in that time the Museum had developed to such an extent that the existing space was totally inadequate.¹²

In 1912 some of the natural history study collections were moved to the "New Museum", as it was then called, but the natural displays were only moved in 1925.¹³ The anthropological, archaeological and historical objects on display and in storage remained in the "Old Museum" in Boom Street as it was known locally. These two early buildings played a significant role in the history of the Transvaal Museum.

⁹ *Annals of the Transvaal Museum*, 2(3), 1910.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 4(2), 1913.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 7(4), 1921 and 11(2), 1924.

¹² NCHMA, *Komitee van Ondersoek na openbare museums in Pretoria, 1960 - 1961*, J.T. Robinson, Memorandum on the accommodation problem of the Transvaal Museum, p. 1.

¹³ C.K. Brain, Natural history at the Transvaal Museum 1901 - 1992, in N.J. Dippenaar (ed.), *Staatmuseum 100*, p. 18.

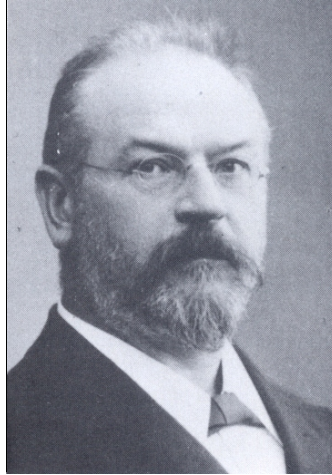


Figure 2

Dr H.G. Breijer, Director of the Transvaal Museum, 1913 - 1921

(N.J. Dippenaar (ed.), *Staatmuseum 100*, p. 35)

In 1913 Gunning was succeeded by H.G. Breijer (figure 2).¹⁴ The policy of the Museum, as conveyed to the Minister of the Interior, was the collecting, preserving, identification and arranging of natural history, anthropological and historical specimens. That the emphasis was on natural history is abundantly clear from the description of new forms and the re-description of old ones. Attention was to be focused on the geographical distribution and scientific study of flora and fauna in the Transvaal, the northern half of the Union and only then in South Africa in general.¹⁵ To this end the Management Committee decided in 1914 that “as funds permit, the members of the staff will be sent out on collection expeditions, as material collected in this manner will be of higher scientific value in every respect, than the material collected haphazardly by incompetent collectors and amateurs”.¹⁶

¹⁴ Hermann Gottfried Breijer (1864 - 1923) was born in Arnhem in the Netherlands and he died in the district of Morgenzon, Soutpansberg, in 1923. He obtained a doctorate in mathematics and physics at the University of Amsterdam in 1893. In the same year he was appointed as lecturer in physical science at the State Gymnasium in Pretoria and also as honorary director of the Staatmuseum. In 1897 he was asked to arrange for the establishment of a mining school, of which he was appointed temporary director, but the outbreak of the Anglo-Boer War put an end to this venture. After the war Breijer was appointed to the staff of the Normal College in Pretoria. In 1905 he became professor in mathematics at the South African School of Mines and Technology in Johannesburg. The Management Committee approved his appointment as director of the Transvaal Museum on 11 December 1913. NCHMA, System 1 No 14 TM1/59, letter M. Buys, Transvaal Archives to T. Jacobs-Venter, dd 1 May 1959; B.C. Cronjé, “Breyer (Breijer), Hermann Gottfried” (unpublished article).

¹⁵ National Archives (hereafter NA), UOD Z15/6 - 15/8, vol. 7, letter chairman, Transvaal Museum Committee to the Minister of the Interior, dd 15 April 1914.

¹⁶ Ibid.

Although the First World War intervened, this decision was put into effect and natural history objects were collected on numerous field trips, such as expeditions to Maputa, Zululand, Zoutpan, the Carolina-Nelspruit region, the Murchison Range and Komatipoort, Harrismith, Gazaland, Barberton and Umtamvuna.¹⁷

Natural history specimens were also purchased; a collection of bird skins was bought, for example, for a sum not exceeding £50, fossils at £1/10/6 and mosses at £2/10/0.¹⁸ Exchanges also took place. For example, the collection of stamps belonging to the Museum was exchanged for a collection of about 200 ferns and mosses, a move that was approved by the Museum Committee.¹⁹ In 1919 Breijer was clearly following Gunning's lead with the statement "Our Museum is trying to become more and more a Museum of Nat[ural] History ...".²⁰

Breijer resigned in June 1921.²¹ He was succeeded by Swierstra (figure 3),²² who was the first assistant and had acted several times in the capacity of director. His official appointment dates from 1 July 1922.²³

¹⁷ See Transvaal Museum Committee minutes, meetings 24 November 1914, 5 May and 1 June 1915, 5 December 1916, 31 July 1919.

¹⁸ Ibid., 1 September and 3 November 1914.

¹⁹ Ibid., 3 September 1918.

²⁰ NCHMA, Letterbook 4, p. 380, letter Breijer to the Secretary for the Interior, dd 10 June 1919.

²¹ Transvaal Museum Committee minutes, meeting 15 June 1921. Breijer's death was reported in the minutes, meeting 16 October 1923.

²² Cornelis Jacobus Swierstra (1874 - 1952) was born in the Netherlands. He studied entomology under Jonkheer van der Pol at the University of Amsterdam. He arrived in the Transvaal in 1894. He was appointed on the staff of the Staatsmuseum and was naturalized as burgher of the ZAR in 1896. He was married twice. He convened the first meeting of SAMA, and was elected the first President in 1936. He was a fellow of the Royal Entomological Society. C.K. Brain and M.C. Erasmus, *The making of the museum professions in Southern Africa*, p. 6; F.O. Dentz, Van Dordrecht naar Pretoria. De geschiedenis van een Zuid-Afrikaansche Museum en een schildery, *Historia*, 5(2), June 1960, p. 115.

²³ Transvaal Museum Committee minutes, meeting 7 November 1922.

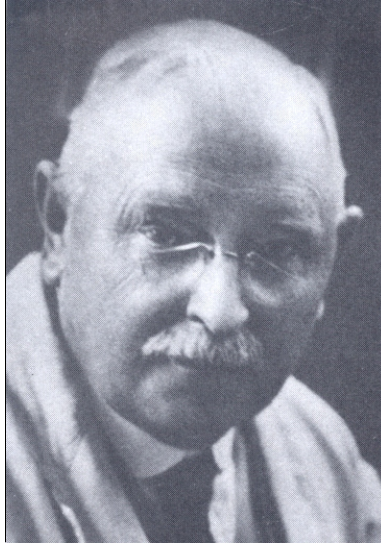


Figure 3

C.J. Swierstra, Director of the Transvaal Museum, 1922 - 1946

(N.J. Dippenaar (ed.), *Staatmuseum 100*, p. 35)

Museum expeditions went on as usual. In 1922 for example, the Museum Committee sanctioned trips to Bulawayo, Salisbury, the Western Transvaal, Haenertsburg, Kaap Valley, Louw's Creek, Barberton and Natal.²⁴ From a scientific and financial point of view, the expedition undertaken to the Soutpansberg in 1923 was the most successful over the previous five or six year period.²⁵ The most lucrative expedition undertaken by the Transvaal Museum in those years was the Vernay-Lang Kalahari Expedition in 1930. Seven months (March to September 1930) were spent in the veld and scientists such as Austin Roberts and Georges van Son collected an abundance of natural history specimens.²⁶ The results of this highly successful expedition were later published in the *Annals of the Transvaal Museum*.²⁷

²⁴ Ibid., 12 September 1922.

²⁵ Ibid., 16 October 1923.

²⁶ C.K. Brain, Natural history at the Transvaal Museum 1901 - 1992, in N.J. Dippenaar (ed.), *Staatmuseum 100*, p. 18.

²⁷ *Annals of the Transvaal Museum*, vols. 15, 16 and 17.

First enquiry into museum matters

During the first survey of museums in South Africa undertaken in 1932 by Miers and Markham, the Transvaal Museum (Old and New), the Janse Entomological Collection and the university museums in Pretoria were surveyed. The director reported that they were impressed with the condition and grouping of the specimens in the Museum and that they found the study collections larger and better than those of most museums in the country.²⁸

In the report little is said about the Transvaal Museum, except

- that the new building compared favourably with museum buildings in Europe and North America, but that another building was required for the historical or art collections, as the Old Museum was congested,
- that the labelling and displays were very good and that colour had been skilfully harmonised in bird habitat cases,
- that the Old Museum specialized in South African history of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and the New Museum in natural history,
- that the Transvaal Museum had a full-time qualified taxidermist,
- that public lectures were abandoned through a lack of interest,
- that the research publications were excellent, and
- that Pretoria had admirable scientific collections.²⁹

The report stressed the virtually inexhaustible natural history, or what they called the scientific treasures of Africa and the imperative need for detailed surveys, careful expeditions and the immediate publication of the resulting discoveries.³⁰ The Transvaal Museum did its utmost to meet these requirements.³¹ The scientific contributions of its natural history scientists succeeded in attracting international recognition and the admiration of the scientific world.

The endeavours of the Museum staff were motivated and encouraged by the directors, as well as by the members of the Committee and the Board of Trustees, who often accompanied the staff on field trips. Prominent citizens of Pretoria such as H.C. Jorissen,

²⁸ Transvaal Museum Committee minutes, meeting 19 April 1932.

²⁹ H.A. Miers and S.F. Markham, *A report on the museums and art galleries of British Africa*, pp. 3, 16 - 25 and 30.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

A. Johnston, G. Brink and C. Jeppe served as trustees, and although the members changed from time to time, the nucleus consisted of renowned scientists, such as A. Theiler,³² H.A. Wager,³³ A.W. Rogers,³⁴ I.B. Pole Evans,³⁵ L.C. de Villiers,³⁶ S.H. Haughton³⁷ and L.J. Krige.³⁸ Although there were staff and financial shortages during the Second World War, the scientific work of the Museum continued to expand, and a new initiative to publish a series of memoirs was launched.³⁹

³² Sir Arnold Theiler (1867 - 1936) was a distinguished veterinarian, who came to the ZAR in 1891. He was the founder of the Onderstepoort Veterinary Institute in 1908. He always supported local scientific activities. His outstanding achievements were widely recognized. M. Gunn and L.E. Codd, *Botanical exploration of Southern Africa*, pp. 342 - 343.

³³ Horace Athelstan Wager (1876 - 1951) came to South Africa in 1903. He was appointed as professor in botany and zoology at the Transvaal University College (University of Pretoria). M. Gunn and L.E. Codd, *Botanical exploration of Southern Africa*, p. 366.

³⁴ Arthur William Rogers (1872 - 1946) came to South Africa in 1895 and worked as geologist and head of the Cape of Good Hope Geological Commission in 1902. In 1916 he became director of the Geological Survey of the Union of South Africa until his retirement in 1932. He took part in the Vernay-Lang expedition organized by the Transvaal Museum. He received many honorary awards. W.J. de Kock (ed.-in-chief), *Dictionary of South African Biography*, vol. I, pp. 677 - 678.

³⁵ Iltyd Buller Pole Evans (1879 - 1968) was a botanist appointed to the post of mycologist and plant pathologist in the Transvaal Department of Agriculture in 1905. In 1913 he became head of the division. He went on several expeditions. He supported scientific activities and through his energy and dedication, research in plant sciences in the Department of Agriculture flourished. He received several major awards. M. Gunn and L.E. Codd, *Botanical exploration of Southern Africa*, pp. 284 - 285.

³⁶ Louis Celliers de Villiers (1882 - 1958) was a mining engineer and geologist. He was head of the Department of Geology at the University of Pretoria from 1920 to 1947, and then curator of the Geological Survey Museum. D.W. Krüger and C.J. Beyers (eds), *Dictionary of South African Biography*, vol. III, pp. 221 - 222.

³⁷ Sidney Henry Haughton (1888 - 1982) emigrated to South Africa to take up the post of geologist and palaeontologist at the South African Museum in Cape Town. He joined the Union Geological Survey in 1920 and became director in 1934. He retired in 1948. He served on several highly important national and international commissions, such as the advisory committee on uranium research from which the Atomic Energy Board developed. He received many awards and honours. C.J. Beyers and J.L. Basson (eds), *Dictionary of South African Biography*, vol. V, pp. 335 - 336.

³⁸ Leopold Jacobus Krige (1884 - 1965) was born in Stellenbosch. He studied at the universities of Stellenbosch, Cambridge and Zurich. He worked on the Venezuela oil-fields, and returned to South Africa in 1921. He was employed by Geological Survey in Pretoria. Although he was appointed director in 1932, he resigned in 1933 to resume his work as an ordinary geologist. He received awards for his contributions to geological research. C.J. Beyers and J.L. Basson (eds), *Dictionary of South African Biography*, vol. V, p. 426.

³⁹ V. FitzSimons and L. Brain (comp.), A history of the Transvaal Museum, *Bulletin of the Transvaal Museum*, no. 13, 30 November 1972, p. 9.



Figure 4

Dr V.F.M. FitzSimons, Director of the Transvaal Museum, 1947 - 1966

(N.J. Dippenaar (ed.), *Staatmuseum 100*, p. 35)

The next director of the Museum, V.F.M. FitzSimons (figure 4),⁴⁰ was appointed in a research post in charge of the department of lower vertebrates and invertebrates in 1924. He had been interested in reptiles from an early age. While at the Transvaal Museum he documented the reptile fauna of South Africa, continuing his research even after his appointment as director in 1947.⁴¹

Intensive field work continued over the years in all the natural history divisions, as this was regarded as the Museum's most important activity. Many prestigious natural history books and papers were published, and the quality and significance of the natural history collections

⁴⁰ Vivian Frederick Maynard FitzSimons (1901 - 1975) was the son of the director of the Port Elizabeth Museum, in particular known for its Snake Park. He graduated with a M.Sc. degree at Rhodes University and later obtained a doctorate from the University of the Witwatersrand. His museum career spanned 41 years, beginning with his appointment at the Transvaal Museum in 1924, until he retired as director in 1966. He published several monographs and articles (21 of them in the *Annals of the Transvaal Museum*). One of his greatest achievements was the part he played in the establishment of the Namib Desert Research Association, enabling scientists to study desert life. He served on several boards and committees. In recognition of his contribution to science he received many awards, such as an honorary D.Sc. degree from Rhodes University. C.J. Beyers and J.L. Basson (eds), *Dictionary of South African Biography*, vol. V, p. 267; C.K. Brain, Dr V.F.M. FitzSimons: Herpetological pioneer in South Africa, in J.H. van Wyk (ed.), *Proceedings of the FitzSimons Commemorative Symposium*, Herpetological Association of Africa Symposium, 11 - 15 October 1993, pp. 1 - 3.

⁴¹ Transvaal Museum Board of Trustees minutes, meeting 6 March 1947.

grew steadily.⁴² The result was, as FitzSimons and Brain put it in 1972, that

... the study collections of the Transvaal Museum have been carefully built up until they probably rank, in many fields, amongst the largest and most representative of their kind in the world today. Their scientific value and importance is steadily gaining widespread recognition as is demonstrated by the increasing numbers of scientific workers, both from South Africa and abroad, who are making use of the unique opportunities which are provided for study ... and a number of officers concerned are recognized as authorities in their particular fields.⁴³

During the tenure of FitzSimons significant changes took place in the Transvaal Museum. There was a dramatic increase in professional staff appointments in every division. It was, however, in the history division that possibly the most far-reaching effects were felt.

2. THE TRANSVAAL MUSEUM : HISTORY MUSEUM

Despite the changes, the Transvaal Museum still remained, in essence, the old Staatsmuseum: in the eyes of many a national history museum, portraying and preserving the history of the country. In wider museum circles the Museum remained known as the Staatsmuseum: a parcel was sent from the Port Elizabeth Museum to Swierstra, addressed to the Director, State Museum, Pretoria.⁴⁴ In 1918 Gustav Preller, Afrikaner nationalist, historian and editor of the Pretoria-based newspaper *De Volkstem*, still addressed Breijer as the director of the Staatsmuseum in a letter to donate a Voortrekker table to the Museum.⁴⁵ Even in the late 1920s, F.V. Engelenburg, editor of the *Die Volkstem*, journalist and author, still referred to the Staatsmuseum and still addressed Swierstra as the director of the Staatsmuseum.⁴⁶ Clearly, if not *de jure*, the Staatsmuseum indeed survived *de facto* in the guise of the Old Museum for a number of years⁴⁷ and would undergo a rejuvenating process in the 1950s.

⁴² NCHMA, Box 515, Memoranda dealing with Transvaal Museum matters - space, finance, collections etc. etc. 1955, Functions of a museum - Transvaal Museum, p. 3.

⁴³ V. FitzSimons and L. Brain (comp.), A history of the Transvaal Museum, *Bulletin of the Transvaal Museum*, no. 13, 30 November 1972, p. 11.

⁴⁴ NCHMA, Box 514, TM5/9/17, letter F.W. FitzSimons to Swierstra, dd 12 August 1912.

⁴⁵ Ibid., System 1 No 1 TM1/12 - TM1/26, letter G. Preller to Breijer, dd 25 March 1918.

⁴⁶ Ibid., System 1 No 2 TM1/27 - TM1/30, letters F.V. Engelenburg to Swierstra, dd 13 August 1928 and to director Staatsmuseum, dd 22 April 1930.

⁴⁷ Cultural History Committee minutes, meeting 26 September 1963.

Slow expansion

Although the Transvaal Museum regarded itself as a natural history museum, it still assumed responsibility for the anthropological, archaeological and historical collections in the Old Museum. In the 1920s the Museum Committee took steps to ensure that historical acquisitions, which would later form a significant part of the historical collection, were secured for the Museum. These objects pertained especially to eminent Afrikaner leaders such as President Paul Kruger, President of the ZAR from 1883 to 1902, and General Louis Botha, Commandant-General of the Boer forces during the Anglo-Boer War and first Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa.

One of the most important collections acquired by the Museum was the so-called Dordrecht Collection.⁴⁸ The name is derived from the Zuid-Afrikaansch Museum in Dordrecht in the Netherlands, that was open from 1901 to 1921. Certain objects from the Staatsmuseum were sent to France as part of the International Exhibition in Paris in 1900, in which the ZAR participated. When the exhibition ended in August 1900 the Anglo-Boer War was still in progress and the objects could not be returned to South Africa.

In the meantime several options were considered. In the end a solution was devised and a pseudo-purchase was arranged with J. Hidde Nijland, a self-professed pro-Boer, art lover and businessman. The objects were transferred from Paris to the Zuid-Afrikaansch Museum, specifically established by Nijland to house the objects from Paris and his own large collection. But the matter subsequently developed into an ugly dispute when Nijland refused to return the objects. Many objects from the Zuid-Afrikaansch Museum were sold in the Netherlands, such as prisoner-of-war items and indigenous musical instruments and weapons.⁴⁹

The Transvaal Museum Committee was adamant that the collection sent to Paris from the Staatsmuseum should be returned to the Museum,⁵⁰ but the matter was out of their hands. It was only in 1921 that the remainder of the objects from Dordrecht arrived back in South

⁴⁸ See P.J. de Beer, "Die 'Zuid-Afrikaansch Museum' te Dordrecht 1902 - 1921" (unpublished M.A. dissertation, University of Pretoria, 1964).

⁴⁹ NCHMA, System 1 No 20 TM1/64, letter P.S. Pretorius to Coetzee, dd 11 February 1964.

⁵⁰ Transvaal Museum Committee minutes, meeting 6 April 1915.

Africa due mainly to the unceasing efforts of W.J. Leyds.⁵¹ The first consignment was packed into 14 cases and a further 28 were forwarded later.⁵² These were unpacked and the objects put on display at the Old Museum.⁵³

The Transvaal Museum took the initiative in procuring the collection of objects and memorabilia that had belonged to Botha. On 14 February 1922 the Museum Committee decided to write an official letter to Annie Botha, his wife, requesting that she donate or loan to the Museum the General's possessions that were of historical value.⁵⁴ The Committee at the time comprised Theiler, Jeppe, Rogers, Wager, W. Dod and the acting director, Swierstra. The feeling of the Committee in support of Swierstra's sentiments were strongly in favour of acquiring the Botha memorabilia. The following motivation was sent to Annie Botha:

... die selfde voorwerpen, wanneer 't eigendom van die Natie is en voor een ieder te bezichtigen, zullen zeker er toe bijdragen om 't suiwer Vaderlandse gevoel van ons Afrikaners op te wekken en ook de liefde voor wijlen ons Generaal nog te versterken. Ik geloof zeker dat die voorwerpen, tentoongesteld in ons Museum, veel zullen bijdragen om 't geen wat wijlen Genl. Botha voor zijn land gedaan heeft in dankbare herinnering te houden bij 't nageslacht.⁵⁵

Negotiations were entered into with Engelenburg, a member of the Botha Committee, to secure a grant to purchase showcases for the Botha Collection.⁵⁶ This Committee was formed in Pretoria under the chairmanship of General J.C. Smuts to build a monument in

⁵¹ For particulars, see P.J. de Beer, "Die 'Zuid-Afrikaansch Museum' te Dordrecht 1902 - 1921" (unpublished M.A. dissertation, University of Pretoria, 1964).

⁵² For details of the three consignments, see NCHMA, Box 515, TM 5/11A, List of objects received from "Het Zuid-Afrikaansch Museum te Dordrecht, Holland".

⁵³ NCHMA, System 1 No 2 TM 1/27 - TM1/30, letter Swierstra to the Secretary for the Interior, dd 22 November 1927.

⁵⁴ Transvaal Museum Committee minutes, meeting 14 February 1922.

⁵⁵ NCHMA, System 1 No 1 TM1/12 - TM1/26, letter Swierstra to Mrs Botha, dd 9 May 1922. [If the objects become the property of the Nation and are accessible for everyone to see, they would contribute to a spirit of patriotism among Afrikaners and would also strengthen the esteem we feel for our General. I believe that the objects, displayed in our Museum, would keep the memories of General Botha's service to his country alive for posterity. (Translated from the Dutch.)]

⁵⁶ Transvaal Museum Committee minutes, meeting 28 November 1930.

honour of Botha.⁵⁷ The Collection was to be displayed in a Botha Hall, to be created by partitioning off one of the halls in the Old Museum. This move was sanctioned by the Museum Committee.⁵⁸ The aim of the Botha display was to familiarize to the public with the life of one of the most interesting South African militarists and statesmen.⁵⁹ From time to time the collection was extended, amongst others with additional documents donated by Annie Botha.⁶⁰

Other historical objects of general interest were also considered. A donation of watches and movements, for instance, was offered by the Victoria and Albert Museum in London in 1919.⁶¹ Although the offer was accepted, it was only entered into the acquisitions entry register and accessioned in March 1954.⁶² Sometimes valuable historical objects were purchased. In 1925 six bronze busts by the sculptor Anton van Wouw were purchased for £150 and in 1926 a San (Bushman) bust was acquired for an amount not exceeding £100.⁶³ Four years later, in 1930, the Museum was unable to afford a painting of Pretoria by Thomas Baines for 100 guineas.⁶⁴

The Museum Committee was of the opinion that the government should acquire Kruger's residence in Pretoria for the nation and that it should become known as the Kruger Museum. The necessary supervision would be provided by the Museum.⁶⁵ The government bought the house in 1925, but the lease of the Moedersbond, which had used the Kruger House as a maternity home, only expired at the end of 1926.⁶⁶ Because it was felt that it was a well-

⁵⁷ See NCHMA, System 1 No 2 TM1/27 - TM1/30, letter Engelenburg to director Staatsmuseum, dd 22 April 1930.

⁵⁸ Transvaal Museum Committee minutes, meetings 7 June 1929 and 20 October 1931.

⁵⁹ NCHMA, Box 515, list, Botha Collection, dd 8 April 1924 and "Die 'Generaal Louis Botha' versameling" (unpublished pamphlet), p. 3. The pamphlet was probably written by G.S.H. Rossouw.

⁶⁰ Transvaal Museum Committee minutes, meeting 7 June 1929.

⁶¹ Ibid., 1 April 1919.

⁶² Transvaal Museum Acquisitions entry register, vol. 4, acquisition no. 5069; Historiography Catalogue, vol. 2, H.C. accession nos. 6001 and 6002.

⁶³ Transvaal Museum Committee minutes, meeting 27 October 1925 and 27 August 1926.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 28 November 1930.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 20 February 1923, underlined in the minutes.

⁶⁶ Ibid., meeting 6 August 1925.

nigh impossible task to restore the house and its contents to their original condition and arrangement, the thinking was that it should instead become a general Kruger Museum.⁶⁷ It was envisaged that the objects displayed there would be associated with the people close to Kruger during his life.⁶⁸ The Transvaal Museum thus looked upon the Kruger House as a general historical museum for the era that ended when the President died.⁶⁹

Nonetheless details on the original arrangement of the furnishing in the house were obtained from knowledgeable people and these were submitted to the Department of Public Works that was in charge of the renovations.⁷⁰ The Department of the Interior suggested that at the very least the main bedroom and the reception room should be restored as it was when the President and his wife lived there. Because the aim was to preserve the original historical atmosphere of the house it was felt that it had to be renovated gradually.⁷¹

In the meantime the original furniture had been dispersed to family members throughout the country and was proving difficult to locate.⁷² The Museum Committee felt that furniture for the Kruger House should be purchased by the government and not out of Museum funds⁷³ and the Town Council of Pretoria and the Union Treasury gave £250 and £400 respectively for the refurbishment of Kruger House.⁷⁴

Although the house remained the property of the government, it was entrusted to the care of the Transvaal Museum Committee as from 1 April 1933.⁷⁵ The Kruger House became part of the Transvaal Museum and fell under its administration. The House was officially opened on 10 October 1934.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 27 June 1932.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 20 February 1923.

⁶⁹ NCHMA, System 1 No 2 TM1/27 - TM1/30, letter Swierstra to the Secretary for the Interior, dd 22 November 1927.

⁷⁰ Transvaal Museum Committee minutes, meeting 22 July 1932.

⁷¹ Ibid., 26 September 1932.

⁷² Transvaal Museum Board of Trustees minutes, meeting 10 November 1933.

⁷³ Ibid., 11 October 1933.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 10 November 1933.

⁷⁵ Transvaal Museum Committee minutes, meeting 26 September 1932.

The interim period (1938 - 1953) : the persuasive power of outsiders

The anthropological, archaeological and historical collections of the Transvaal Museum remained largely unknown until the late 1930's, except for objects that were placed on display. With the centenary celebrations of the Great Trek in 1938, the first stirring in a long process began; eventually this was to lead to a separate cultural history museum.

Kotie Roodt-Coetzee and Afrikaans cultural organizations

One of the first outsiders to work with the Museum's history collection in depth was a student in Afrikaans cultural history at the University of Pretoria, Kotie Roodt-Coetzee (figure 5).⁷⁶ This was the beginning of her intimate association with the historical, anthropological and archaeological collections, an association that was destined to last for more than 40 years.

In about 1934 she obtained permission to work with the objects in the history collection in the storage rooms at the Old Museum. Because she regarded them as a particularly fine collection of cultural objects that were linked to the history of the Afrikaner, she felt that the objects should have been on display in 1938.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Jakoba Aletta Johanna (Kotie) Roodt (1913 - 2005) was born in the district of Lichtenburg, but the family later moved to the historic farm Nooitgedacht near Bronkhorstspuit, where the battle of Bronkhorstspuit between the Boers and the British had taken place in 1881. She matriculated at the Erasmus School in Bronkhorstspuit. In 1933 she became a student at the Pretoria Normal College, but took an additional course in Afrikaans art and culture, that inspired her to redirect her studies to a B.A. degree at the University of Pretoria. In her second year she married P.C. Coetzee, librarian and later professor in library science at the University on 5 February 1934. She graduated with the subjects psychology, philosophy and Afrikaans art and cultural history. During the prolonged illness of Prof. M.L. du Toit, the head of the Department of Afrikaans Art and Cultural History, she lectured for three years. She also taught Afrikaans at an English school for girls. She took an active part in the cultural life of Pretoria, promoting Afrikaans culture and cultural organizations. Her expertise became well-known with the celebration of the centenary of the Great Trek in 1938, the inauguration of the Voortrekker Monument in 1949 and the tercentenary Van Riebeeck celebrations in 1952. She wrote many articles on the cultural history of the Afrikaner, such as the costume of the Voortrekkers, the Voortrekker kappie, the pioneer way of life, the arts and crafts of the Boer prisoners of war and the social life in republican Pretoria. She received numerous awards for her contributions to the preservation of South Africa's cultural heritage and museology, such as the medal of the Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns [South African Academy for Science and Art] (1976) and the address and medal of the Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurverenigings [Federation of Afrikaans Cultural Associations]. In 1990 she received recognition from the government of the day, being granted the highest award in South Africa, the Order of the State President for Meritorious Services. E. Grobler, Pionier Roodt-Coetzee (90), *Bylae tot Die Burger*, 11 October 2003; E. Grobler, Mev Kotie Roodt-Coetzee – doyen van kultuurhistoriese museums, *Lantern* 42(4), 1993, pp. 4 - 7; *Museum Memo*, 6(3), November 1978; E. Klopper and R. Badenhorst, Kotie Roodt-Coetzee, *De Oude Emigrant*, Groot Trek herdenkingsjaar, no. 5, 8 August 1988, pp. 1 and 4; NCHMA, Kotie Roodt-Coetzee Archives, C.V., Kotie Roodt-Coetzee en die kultuurhistoriese museumwese in Suid-Afrika.

⁷⁷ NCHMA, Kotie Roodt-Coetzee Archives, file Briewe A.T.K.V. - Museum, letter Coetzee to D. Mostert, dd 24 February 1940.



Figure 5

Kotie Roodt-Coetzee as young student, c. 1936

(NCHMA, Kotie Roodt-Coetzee Archives)

Coetzee also brought to the attention of the Afrikaanse Kultuurraad [Afrikaans Cultural Board] of Pretoria the fact that limited space was allocated to objects in the history collection and that the caretakers were untrained and therefore incompetent to provide guidance at the Old Museum.⁷⁸ In 1939 the Kultuurraad asked Coetzee and P.J.S. de Klerk to take the matter up with Swierstra, the director of the Transvaal Museum, with the following result:

Mnr Swierstra het gekla oor die gebrek aan ruimte en het aangeraai dat die Kultuurraad 'n versoek van die voltooiing van die museumgebou in Paul Krugerstraat, aan die regering moet rig, en dat die kultuurhistoriese materiaal in een of twee groot kamers uitgestal sal word. Op 'n vraag van my oor die klassifikasie het Mnr. Swierstra geantwoord dat dit onmoontlik was in die verlede om 'n persoon te vind wat tegelyk geoloog, dierkundige en kultuurhistorikus is. Daar is ook nie geld om net 'n persoon vir die kultuurhistoriese afdeling alleen aan te stel nie.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ The Afrikaanse Kultuurraad was established on 6 August 1930, but only got off the ground in 1937. In 1938, the Voortrekker centenary year, it reached the peak of its activities. In the early 1940s the Kultuurraad approved of a policy of conservation of material culture. Although little was accomplished, the Kultuurraad retained its interest in museums. E.C. Labuschagne, *Die geskiedenis en betekenis van die Afrikaanse Kultuurraad, Pretoria, 1930 - 1980* (M.A. dissertation, University of Pretoria, 1980), pp. 9, 13 - 14, 146 - 148.

⁷⁹ NCHMA, Kotie Roodt-Coetzee Archives, file Briewe A.T.K.V. - Museum, letter Coetzee to D. Mostert, 24 February 1940. [Mr Swierstra complained about the lack of space and advised the Kultuurraad to request the government to complete the museum building in Paul Kruger Street. He also suggested that one or two big rooms should be used for the display of cultural history material. In reply to my question about classification, Mr Swierstra said in the past it had proved impossible to find someone who was simultaneously a qualified geologist, zoologist and cultural historian. There was no money to appoint a person who would be responsible for the cultural history section only. (Translated from the Afrikaans.)]

At this stage Coetzee felt that the history collection of the Transvaal Museum should be relocated to the Voortrekker Monument. Swierstra also wrote that the Transvaal Museum is responsible for antiques for the volksmuseum [national museum] that was being proposed for the Voortrekker Monument.⁸⁰ The benefits of a central museum such as this would be considerable. Visitors and students would know where to find Afrikaans cultural material and collecting could be done easily as there were many objects located in Pretoria. A qualified cultural historian could give the necessary information to visitors, students and scholars.⁸¹ The Afrikaanse Taal- en Kultuurvereniging (ATKV) [Afrikaans Language and Cultural Society]⁸² had already decided to house their collection at the Voortrekker Monument.⁸³ The architect Gerard Moerdyk felt that the available space in the Monument for a museum was three times that of the Voortrekker Museum, Pietermaritzburg.⁸⁴ The idea of a museum in the Voortrekker Monument was promoted actively by Coetzee in 1949, because she felt that a museum would be a significant asset to the Monument.⁸⁵

The Central National Monuments Committee was of the opinion that the artists who were working on the historical frieze for the Voortrekker Monument did not have a clear idea of the historical facts they had to depict. Furthermore, it decided that more emphasis should be placed on the cultural lifestyle of the Voortrekkers rather than on armed action. Coetzee, and other members of the historical committee appointed by the Central Committee, were thus asked to evaluate the art work to make sure that it was historically accurate, and that the clothing, people, animals, topography, clarity and composition were satisfactory.⁸⁶ The result was an exhibition of Afrikaans antiques organized by Coetzee in the Harmony Hall

⁸⁰ Ibid., System 1 No 4 TM1/34 - TM1/42, letter Swierstra to A.E.G. van Velden, dd 24 February 1939.

⁸¹ Ibid., file Briewe A.T.K.V.- Museum, letter Coetzee to D. Mostert, dd 24 February 1940.

⁸² The ATKV was initiated at a meeting of railwaymen in 1930 and founded in Johannesburg on 17 February 1931. The Society played an important role in the attainment of equal rights for Afrikaans alongside English as official language inside and outside the railway service and in the official enquiry into bilingualism in the railway service. The Society played a prominent role in the centenary celebrations of the Great Trek in 1938 and the inauguration of the Voortrekker Monument in 1949. D.J. Potgieter (ed.-in-chief), *Standard Encyclopaedia of Southern Africa*, vol. 1, p. 127.

⁸³ NCHMA, Kotie Roodt-Coetzee Archives, file Briewe A.T.K.V. - Museum, letter G. Moerdyk to Coetzee, dd 29 February 1940; System 1 No 4, TM1/34 - TM1/42, letter E.G. Jansen to Coetzee, dd 1 March 1940.

⁸⁴ Ibid., file Briewe A.T.K.V. - Museum, letter G. Moerdyk to Coetzee, dd 29 February 1940.

⁸⁵ O.J.O. Ferreira, "Die geskiedenis van die Sentrale Volksmonumentekomitee" (unpublished M.A. dissertation, University of Pretoria, 1970), p. 240.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 143; NCHMA, Kotie Roodt-Coetzee Archives, file Voortrekker Kultuur - 1938, letter Secretary, Central National Monuments Committee to Coetzee, dd 7 June 1943.

in Pretoria from 22 to 25 May 1943 in which all the artists had to work to ensure conformity of style.⁸⁷ The display was to give the sculptors an indication of the lifestyle of the Voortrekkers and the clothes they wore. The exhibition was under the patronage of the Central Voortrekker Centenary Committee and the Afrikaanse Kultuurraad⁸⁸ and was the first of its kind in the country.

Although the primary motivation for the exhibition was to provide visual assistance to the artists, it could stress the necessity of creating a Voortrekker museum, an idea that was not widely recognized.⁸⁹ It also focused attention on the Old Museum, where conditions were causing serious concern. The Kultuurraad met to discuss the matter on 4 August 1943. Coetzee was invited to attend so that she could make recommendations on possible improvements.⁹⁰ She was also present at a subsequent meeting, where she made an earnest plea for the establishment of an Africana museum by the City Council of Pretoria. The Kultuurraad had already sent a deputation to the Transvaal Museum in 1939, but to no avail.⁹¹ Now they decided to pursue the issue by appointing a committee to investigate and report on local museum conditions, the re-organization of existing museums and the possible establishment of an Africana museum. The following objections were raised by the Kultuurraad about local conditions (at the Old Museum):

- the collections were neglected,
- the collection had been kept in inaccessible storage for a long time,
- the display space was far too small,
- there ought to be continual change of objects on display and in storage to circumvent the lack of space,
- objects on display should be described accurately,
- the museology was entirely English-oriented, and

⁸⁷ O.J.O. Ferreira, "Die geskiedenis van die Sentrale Volksmonumentekomitee" (unpublished M.A. dissertation, University of Pretoria, 1970), p. 141.

⁸⁸ NCHMA, Kotie-Roodt Coetzee Archives, invitation card.

⁸⁹ Ibid., file Persoonlik 1, newspaper clipping, Tentoonstelling van oudhede. Beroep op Publiek deur Mev. Roodt-Coetzee, *Die Transvaler*, 19 April 1943.

⁹⁰ Ibid., letter M.C. Botha, honorary secretary, Die Afrikaanse Kultuurraad to Coetzee, dd 2 July 1943.

⁹¹ Ibid., K. Roodt-Coetzee, Memorandum insake die Kultuurhistoriese Museum te Pretoria, p. 1.

- little could be expected of the incumbent curators.⁹²

The members of the Committee were Coetzee, S.P.E. Boshoff, J.F.W. Grosskopf, J.H. Pierneef and H. Rode. Nothing came of this worthwhile initiative, probably due to a lack of sufficient funds during the Second World War.⁹³

Another cultural association that was concerned about the prevailing conditions at the Old Museum was the Krugergenootskap [Kruger Society].⁹⁴ The Krugergenootskap was of the opinion that such a valuable collection, unique in South Africa, should not be exposed to the ever-present risk of a fire. It was proposed that the geological collection in the New Museum should be housed elsewhere and that the cultural history material should be placed there instead, where it would be safe.⁹⁵ Inevitably this did not happen; the Board referred the matter to the Minister of Education, Arts and Science.⁹⁶

Although the Transvaal Museum was world renowned for its natural history research and exhibitions, Coetzee felt that the displays at the Old Museum and the classification system used for historical objects were among the worst in comparison to other history museums in South Africa. She mentioned that various objects – some had even been identified by Swierstra – had simply disappeared from the collection, with the result that the public had grown hesitant to donate objects to the Museum. The displays had not been changed for 15 years, whereas there were treasures hidden in the storerooms.⁹⁷ The reason, according to the director, was that it had been impossible to make any radical improvements to the

⁹² Historiography Catalogue, vol. 21, H.C. accession no. 18712, letter M.C. Botha to Coetzee, dd 11 September 1943.

⁹³ E.C. Labuschagne, *Die geskiedenis en betekenis van die Afrikaanse Kultuurraad, Pretoria, 1930 - 1980* (M.A. dissertation, University of Pretoria, 1980), pp. 147 - 148; Historiography Catalogue, vol. 21, H.C. accession no. 18712, letter M.C. Botha to Coetzee, dd 11 September 1943.

⁹⁴ A Kruger Day Committee existed in Pretoria by 1931, but it changed its name in c.1935 - 1936 to the Kruger Committee, and functioned as a sub-committee of the Afrikaanse Kultuurraad. On 9 August 1939 this committee was disbanded and a new association, known as the Krugergenootskap was founded. This was an autonomous body and aimed to organize all matters concerning Kruger, such as the relocation of the Kruger statue and Kruger festivals. E.C.Labuschagne, *Die geskiedenis en betekenis van die Afrikaanse Kultuurraad, Pretoria, 1930 - 1980* (M.A. dissertation, University of Pretoria, 1980), pp. 261 - 263.

⁹⁵ NCHMA, Box 515, TM15/40, Gen. File Krugergenootskap, letter B.C. Goosen, secretary Krugergenootskap to the chairman of the Board, dd 23 May 1950.

⁹⁶ Ibid., letter FitzSimons to the Minister of Education, Arts and Science, dd 17 June 1950.

⁹⁷ NCHMA, Kotie Roodt-Coetzee Archives, file Persoonlik 1, K. Roodt-Coetzee, Memorandum insake die Kultuurhistoriese Museum te Pretoria, p. 1.

collections, because of the lack of space in the existing cases and the perilous state of the Museum's funds, which meant that new cases could not be purchased.⁹⁸

Nevertheless, in 1951 FitzSimons stated categorically in reply to requests that sections of the history collection should be handed over to certain societies:

that it is wrong in principle that historical relics, which have been assiduously collected and preserved by the Museum, should be again dispersed and become difficult of access. In fact a national collection such as that in the Museum has become, should be kept intact as dispersal not only reduces its value but disrupts the complete picture which is necessary to retain.⁹⁹

It was only in 1956 that he was persuaded that the scope of national museums (collecting, preserving and interpreting material of scientific and general interest) was so wide that no one body could be expected to discharge its obligations satisfactorily. One possible solution was the centralization of scientific research and the Transvaal Museum made a start in this direction by handing over the botany collection to the botanical division of the Department of Agriculture.¹⁰⁰ In 1964 the history section of the Museum was also destined to become a separate entity.

A second enquiry into museum matters

In 1948 a Commission of Enquiry was appointed by the Governor-General of the Union of South Africa under the chairmanship of P.J. du Toit. It was given nine directives on the functioning of state-aided institutions.¹⁰¹ In the Commission's report the Transvaal Museum was categorized as a national natural history museum and the Kruger House as a national history museum, but no mention was made of the Old Museum.¹⁰² The Transvaal Museum was, however, also identified as a state-aided institution and with it the Old Museum, where the archaeological and historical collections remained, was mentioned. The Du Toit Commission regarded the old building as totally inadequate to fulfill its function, as the

⁹⁸ Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1950 - 1951, p. 10.

⁹⁹ V. FitzSimons, Historical collections of the Transvaal Museum, *Pretoriana*, 1(1), September 1951, pp. 9 - 10.

¹⁰⁰ V. FitzSimons, National Museums in South Africa, *SAMAB*, 6(6), June 1956, p. 137.

¹⁰¹ NCHMA, *Verslag van die Kommissie van Ondersoek na sekere staatsondersteunde inrigtings*, p. 1.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 14.

rooms were dark, the space far too cramped for the objects on hand, some of which were stored in the cellar.¹⁰³ The historical collections were regarded as valuable but the unbecoming displays were seen as not doing credit to the collections. Important objects were kept out of the public eye and some of the owners had asked to repossess their donations.¹⁰⁴

The Commission carried out its brief by conducting interviews and reviewing memoranda. Correspondence was exchanged and interviews were granted to the director of the Transvaal Museum and representatives of the Board of Trustees, the Krugergenootskap, the Old Pretoria Society,¹⁰⁵ the Komitee ter Bevordering van die Historiese Museumwese [Committee for the Advancement of Historical Museums],¹⁰⁶ based in Pretoria. Very few of the recommendations made by the Du Toit Commission were ever implemented,¹⁰⁷ but three aspects of the report were important for the subsequent development of the Transvaal Museum. Firstly there was a recommendation that qualified historians should be appointed in museums.¹⁰⁸ A minority report was made by G.W. Eybers¹⁰⁹ on museums of history and general culture.¹¹⁰ A third important aspect was that one of the memoranda that was laid

¹⁰³ Ibid., pp. 31 - 34.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 35.

¹⁰⁵ The Old Pretoria Society (also known as the Association Old Pretoria and the Pretoria Historical Society), was founded on 22 March 1948, aiming to take the lead in research on the history of Pretoria. The origin of street names, the identification of important buildings and the conservation of cultural objects were its primary concern. It also took part in historical festivities. F.J. Du Toit Spies, *Die Genootskap Oud-Pretoria se tienjarige bestaan – 'n oorsig, Pretoriana*, nos. 26 & 27, April - August 1958, pp. 20 - 24.

¹⁰⁶ This Committee was an un-allied group of people in Pretoria interested in the preservation of the cultural heritage of the Afrikaner. They constituted an *ad hoc* body on 19 August 1948. Prof. A.N. Pelzer was the chairman. The secretary was W.J. de Kock, who informed the director of the Transvaal Museum that the Committee had been formed and that a memorandum, stressing the urgent need for better and more extensive accommodation of the historical collections had been prepared by them. Other members of the Committee were P.J.H. Basson, H.P.H. Behrens, C.J. Beyers, G. Bigalke, F.C.L. Bosman, P.J. du Toit, S.P. Engelbrecht, FitzSimons, P. van Biljon, H.D. van Broekhuizen and W. Punt. Transvaal Museum Board of Trustees minutes, meeting 10 September 1948; P.J. de Beer, "Die fenomeen opelugmuseum in kultuurhistoriese perspektief" (unpublished D.Phil thesis, University of Pretoria, 1979), p. 55.

¹⁰⁷ H. Oberholzer, *Skeletons by the roadside*, pp. 11 - 12.

¹⁰⁸ NCHMA, *Verslag van die Kommissie van Ondersoek na sekere staatsondersteunde inrigtings*, p. 171.

¹⁰⁹ George von Welflingh Eybers (1888 - 1976) received his academic training at the universities of Stellenbosch, Amsterdam and London. He was a teacher for 20 years, then inspector of schools and later under-secretary of the Department of Education. He was closely associated with the establishment of an open-air museum, as proposed by the Old Pretoria Society, of which he was founder-member and chairman from 1960 to 1964. He was also a member of the Cilliers Commission in 1960. C.J. Beyers and J.L. Basson (eds), *Dictionary of South African Biography*, vol. V, pp. 252 - 253; caption, photograph of Eybers, *Pretoriana*, no. 30, August 1959, p. 13.

¹¹⁰ NCHMA, *Verslag van die Kommissie van Ondersoek na sekere staatsondersteunde inrigtings*, pp. 201 - 219.

before the Commission was prepared with specific reference to the historical collections in Pretoria, those in the Old Museum.¹¹¹

In his minority report Eybers made it quite clear that the historian and the natural historian have divergent research interests. In a plea for the founding of history museums Eybers recommended the study of lifestyles, labour practices, state craft and politics, intellectual pursuits and religion.¹¹² Although history museums had been established in many towns and cities, in his view they remained under-developed and there had even been degeneration in some cases. The neglect of historical displays in national museums could be, according to Eybers, the result of a number of factors such as:

... die ontsaglike wetenskaplike rykdom van die land wat in 'n mate nog onontdek is, en, by vergelyking, die klein getal werkers; die ekonomiese noodsaaklikheid daarvan om die natuurlike hulpbronne van die land te ontdek en te gebruik en om die baie gevare wat dit bedreig, te bestry; die tradisionele funksies van museums wat in hoofsaak gewoonlik as museums vir natuurlike historie fungeer het ... die afgetrokkenheid van kurator-personele, wat dikwels aangestel is op grond van hul kwalifikasies in die natuurwetenskap; die boeiende belangstelling wat die algemene publiek in natuurverskynsels toon ...¹¹³

Eybers was of the opinion that two separate kinds of institution, namely those for natural history and those for history, were a necessity because both have different aims, collect and exhibit different materials and require different people to care for them.¹¹⁴

The Du Toit Commission regarded the memorandum by the Komitee ter Bevordering van die Historiese Museumwese as thorough and detailed, and saw the many comments and suggestions as useful. As far as collections management was concerned, the Committee testified that the catalogues were so incomplete that it was impossible to ascertain the exact

¹¹¹ Ibid., pp. 39 - 40.

¹¹² Ibid., pp. 203 - 204.

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 208. [The vast scientific wealth of the country remains to some extent uncharted. [This is due to the] comparatively small number of workers, the economic necessity of exploring and utilizing the natural resources of the country and combatting the many dangers that threaten it and the traditional functions of the museums that used to operate, in the main, as natural history museums ... the pre-occupation of curators who have generally been appointed on the ground of their qualifications in the natural sciences; the absorbing interest shown by the general public in the phenomena of nature (Translated from the Afrikaans.)]

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p. 209.

extent of the history collection; the whole collection was in a state of decay.¹¹⁵ The most crucial recommendation in the memorandum was that a qualified historian should be appointed to the staff of the Transvaal Museum to investigate the historical collection and to catalogue the objects. Although additional space for the preservation and display of these objects was a dire necessity, the ultimate aim had to be the foundation of a separate history museum in Pretoria.¹¹⁶

Ultimately many of the above suggestions were implemented by the Transvaal Museum but only some of them were endorsed by the Commission, such as the immediate appointment of a historian to the staff of the Museum in the post of professional officer.¹¹⁷ The Commission was also in favour of a separate history museum, the core of which should be the Kruger House and the historical collection in the Transvaal Museum.¹¹⁸

The Transvaal Museum : a new identity for the history division

At the inauguration of the Voortrekker Monument in 1949 another temporary exhibition of Voortrekker objects (figure 6), for which Coetzee was responsible, also promoted the idea of a separate history museum. The committee charged with planning this exhibition was called the Komitee ter Bevordering van die Historiese Museumwese (the same Committee that had laid a report before the Du Toit Commission).¹¹⁹ The final display (figure 6a and b) was co-ordinated by a sub-committee of the Krugergenootskap, on which the Transvaal Museum was represented.¹²⁰ The Museum was also associated with the 1949 festivities because it acted as recipient for objects to be donated in response to an appeal made by the steering committee of the dispatch riders (Afrikaans: *Rapportryers*) for information and objects.¹²¹

¹¹⁵ P.J. de Beer, "Die fenomeen opelugmuseum in kultuurhistoriese perspektief" (unpublished D.Phil thesis, University of Pretoria, 1979), p. 56.

¹¹⁶ NCHMA, *Verslag van die Kommissie van Ondersoek na sekere staatsondersteunde inrigtings*, p. 40.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 44 - 45.

¹¹⁹ NCHMA, System 1 No 5 TM43/51, letter secretary Komitee ter Bevordering van die Historiese Museumwese, to the Board, dd 29 April 1949.

¹²⁰ Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1949 - 1950, p. 4; *Amptelike program en gedenkboek van die fees ter inwyding van die Voortrekkermonument 13 tot 16 Desember 1949*, pp. 5 - 12.

¹²¹ NCHMA, System 1 No 5 TM43/51, Media release, Insameling van historiese stukke, dd 12 July 1949.



Figure 6a

(J.J. Bond, *The saga of the Great Trek*, p. 12)



Figure 6b

(M.C. Botha, *Die huldejaar 1949*, p. 264)

Figure 6 (a and b)

Exhibition of objects from the Transvaal Museum (1949) in the Voortrekker Monument

In 1950 the Voortrekker display moved to the Africana Museum in Johannesburg for a short while, and then to the Old Museum, Pretoria. Enhanced by new donations it thus became the first exhibition of cultural history objects in the Transvaal Museum and marked a significant and positive change as far as historical displays were concerned.¹²²

In the meantime the history division took on a completely new character. This was due for the most part to the willingness of the director to steer the division in an innovative new direction and the creativeness of Coetzee (who worked voluntarily at the Museum). New significance had been accorded to historical and cultural historical objects. In the words of FitzSimons, there was “a vast store of invaluable historical material” in the Old Museum.¹²³

The Board of Trustees also reflected these changes. In September 1950, for the first time a historian, Prof. A.N. Pelzer¹²⁴ of the University of Pretoria, was appointed as a Board member. This was followed, on 1 October 1951, by the appointment of Prof. P.J. Coertze, also from the University of Pretoria, who was an anthropologist.¹²⁵ Prof. H.M. van der Westhuysen,¹²⁶ an art historian, and J.J. van Schaik, a prominent Pretoria businessman, were appointed in 1955.

¹²² W. Louw, Die ontstaan en ontwikkeling van die Nasionale Kultuurhistoriese en Opelugmuseum, *Museum Memo*, 6(3), November 1978, p. 16; Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1949 - 1950, p. 4.

¹²³ Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1949 - 1950, report for the division of history, p. 1.

¹²⁴ Adriaan Nicolaas Petrus Pelzer (1915 -1981) studied at the University of Pretoria and the Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam in the Netherlands. He received a doctorate at the University of Pretoria in 1941. He was appointed as lecturer at the History Department of that University in 1942 and became head of the Department and professor in 1947. He was a member of many committees, and co-founder of the Historical Association of South Africa and the Old Pretoria Society. He played a prominent role at the University of Pretoria and became vice rector in 1974. F.J. Du Toit Spies and D.H. Heydenrych (comp.), *Ad destinatum II 1960 - 1982, 'n Geskiedenis van die Universiteit van Pretoria*, pp. 17 - 19.

¹²⁵ Pieter Johannes Coertze (1907 - 1998) received his academic training at the University of Stellenbosch, where he later worked as lecturer. He was also on the staff of the University of South Africa and the University of the Orange Free State. In 1950 he was appointed as professor and head of the Department of Ethnology at the University of Pretoria, remaining there until he went on pension in 1972. He is the author of many scientific papers. J.F. Eloff, Die mens en die vakman, in J.F. Eloff and R.D. Coertze (eds), *Etnografiese studies in Suidelike Afrika*, pp. 1 - 13.

¹²⁶ Hermanus Marthinus van der Westhuysen (1904 - 1987) studied at the Pretoria Normal College and the University of Pretoria and received his doctorate at the University in 1938. He was head and professor of the Department of Afrikaans Art and Cultural History from 1939 and of the Department of Art History from 1953 to 1969. F.J. Du Toit Spies and D.H. Heydenrych (comp.), *Ad destinatum II 1960 -1982, 'n Geskiedenis van die Universiteit van Pretoria*, p. 52.

The next celebration that had a significant effect on the history division of the Transvaal Museum was the Van Riebeeck festival, organized to commemorate the tercentenary of the arrival of Jan van Riebeeck at the Cape in 1652. Other than the Van Riebeeck exhibition there were still only a few history displays. These included the Botha Hall, displays on the indigenous peoples of South Africa, some Peruvian pots, a selection of English paintings, furniture and a collection of Chinese porcelain donated to the Transvaal Museum in 1918 (figure 7).¹²⁷ There were also uniforms, a Voortrekker Bible, various paintings, the Bratina¹²⁸ and some smaller objects on display.¹²⁹



Figure 7

Displays in the Old Museum, c. 1938, with the caption
Oriental Art Oost Aziatische Kunst, on the cabinet to the right

(Collection: National Cultural History Museum HKF 863)

¹²⁷ In the Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1918, p. 3, it was reported that the Museum received a valuable donation from Smuts on behalf of an English gentleman, who chose to remain anonymous. This donation consisted of 14 large cases of old furniture, paintings, drawings, vases, ornaments and Persian rugs. The donor was Colonel R. H. Whitwell, Worthing, England, whose death on 1 December 1937, was reported in *SAMAB*, 1(7), March 1938, p. 174.

¹²⁸ The Bratina or fraternity cup (Historiography Catalogue, vol. 1, H.C. accession no. 884) was part of the Russian tokens of honour to General Piet Cronjé and the Boer heroes during the Anglo-Boer War. It arrived at the Transvaal Museum in 1921 with other objects from the Zuid-Afrikaansch Museum in Dordrecht in the Netherlands.

¹²⁹ W. Louw, Lewenskets van Mev Kotie Roodt-Coetzee, *Museum Memo*, 6(2), November 1978, p. 17; NCHMA, *Komitee van Ondersoek na openbare museums in Pretoria, 1960 - 1961*, K. Roodt-Coetzee, Memorandum oor die kultuurhistoriese afdeling van die Transvaal Museum, p. 1.

In 1950 the Transvaal Museum decided to introduce a system of Certificates of Associate Membership to be awarded to individuals in recognition of outstanding and sustained service to the Museum. Coetzee was included in the 1952/53 list for her contribution to history (figure 8).¹³⁰



Figure 8

Certificate issued by the Transvaal Museum to
Mrs P.C. Coetzee (Kotie Roodt-Coetzee), 25 April 1952

(NCHMA, Kotie Roodt-Coetzee Archives)

¹³⁰ Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1950 - 1951, p. 6 and 1952 - 1953, p. 11; Transvaal Museum Board of Trustees minutes, meeting 25 April 1952, certificate.

Kotie Roodt-Coetzee officially on the staff of the Transvaal Museum

Coetzee was appointed as professional officer on 1 September 1953 (figure 9).¹³¹ This was the first time that such an appointment had been made at the Transvaal Museum in the history division. She immediately made a meticulous enquiry into matters at the Old Museum and at Kruger House and also prepared a memorandum on the proposed Museum at the Voortrekker Monument.¹³² One of the most important tasks undertaken was to supplement the existing history collection. Objects that were still lacking were sought by means of the press and radio, and the response from the public was very encouraging.¹³³ The director supported this new initiative and spared no effort to enhance the reputation of the history museum.¹³⁴



Figure 9

Kotie Roodt-Coetzee soon after her appointment
to the staff of the Transvaal Museum in September 1953

(NCHM, Kotie Roodt-Coetzee Archives)

¹³¹ Although her name appears on the lists of both the permanent and temporary staff in the annual reports, she had been appointed on contract on a triennial basis. In 1964 the Board recommended to the Department of Education, Arts and Science that her appointment be made permanent, backdated to 1 October 1953. NCHMA, NKP66/1, letter director to the Secretary for Education, Arts and Science, dd 8 May 1964.

¹³² Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1953 - 1954, departmental report division of history, p. 35.

¹³³ Ibid. and NCHMA, System 1 No 8 TM1/54, letter Coetzee to W.J. de Kock, dd 25 February 1954.

¹³⁴ Ibid., letter Coetzee to R. Palk, dd 8 June 1954.

Within a year, as a result of its considerable enlargement, the collection of the history division was regarded as one of the most significant of its kind in the country. The Museum Board thus felt that its scope should be expanded to include the cultural history field, **in order to record and perpetuate for posterity the cultural development of the country.**¹³⁵

One of the biggest promotional events that stimulated interest in the collection of history objects in the Transvaal Museum, was the celebration of the centenary of Pretoria in 1955. According to the director of the Transvaal Museum, the displays were visited by a large number of the public, and aroused much interest and enthusiasm.¹³⁶ It earned such glowing tributes that the Board felt that the effort was lucrative.¹³⁷

A catalogue describing the Pretoria Centenary exhibition and in particular the two period rooms, the camping scene and the dioramas, was an important bench-mark in cultural history publications and probably the first to describe period rooms on display in a South African museum. The catalogue was published by the City Council of Pretoria.¹³⁸ Other than the articles by Gunning,¹³⁹ his obituary¹⁴⁰ and five anthropological articles,¹⁴¹ nothing else had been published by the Transvaal Museum on the anthropology, archaeology and history collections. Now, for the first time, articles covering these fields appeared, albeit not in the *Annals*, nor in the *Memoirs*. In the *Bulletin of the Transvaal Museum*, however, the number of articles, news items and notes increased. Coetzee, for example, wrote about paper

¹³⁵ My bold. Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1954 - 1955, report of vice-chairman of Board, p. 1.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ N a, Pretoria Centenary Exhibition, *SAMAB*, 6(4), December 1955, p. 95.

¹³⁸ N a, *Historical exhibition: Pretoria (1855 - 1955)*.

¹³⁹ *Annals of the Transvaal Museum*, 1(1), 1908 and 2(3), 1910.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 4(2), 1913.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 7(4), 1921 and 11(2), 1924.



Figure 10

Period room, 1855, representing Heemraad Daniël Prinsloo, leaving for the Landdros's office. Exhibited during the centenary of Pretoria, 1955
Kotie Roodt-Coetzee on the right



Figure 11

Period room, 1895, representing bride and groom leaving the parental home for the church. Exhibited during the centenary of Pretoria, 1955
These two rooms show in detail the difference in lifestyle between the early pioneer period (top) and the elegant, luxurious houses in Pretoria 40 years later (below)

(Collection: National Cultural History Museum HKF 4826 and 4824)

cut-outs, a glass chalice, a Cape armoire and a Cape silver snuff box;¹⁴² A.P. du Toit contributed a piece on rock paintings¹⁴³ and T. Jacobs-Venter one on indigenous dolls.¹⁴⁴

The Voortrekker Monument Museum

The development of the Voortrekker Monument Museum, that had been dormant since 1949, also played a conspicuous role in fostering the ideals of a cultural history museum. A sub-committee consisting of members nominated by the Board of Control of the Voortrekker Monument and the Transvaal Museum was appointed to investigate the possibility of a museum at the Monument.¹⁴⁵ The Department of Education sanctioned this new venture, with the proviso that the Transvaal Museum Board retained control of the objects exhibited at the proposed museum and was satisfied that the material was cared for and insured against theft and fire.¹⁴⁶ All the professional work was done by Coetzee, who was duly congratulated by the Board of Trustees of the Transvaal Museum for the quality of her work, fully realizing that this had been by no means an easy task and had presented many difficulties.¹⁴⁷ The project involved the design of a new museum, including plans for the display cases, correct lighting, humidity and ventilation, and assembling suitable objects. It was decided to construct room interiors, and the technical aspects of creating ceilings, walls and floors all had to be considered, as did the making of life-like models.¹⁴⁸

The Museum was first housed in the basement of the Voortrekker Monument and the choice objects to be exhibited were from the collection in the Transvaal Museum. Some objects were also transferred to Pretoria from the collection at Hartenbos, the headquarters and

¹⁴² K. Roodt-Coetzee, Papiersnitte, *Bulletin of the Transvaal Museum*, no. 3, July 1959; Kaapse armoire van die Retief-familie, *Bulletin of the Transvaal Museum*, no. 5, July 1960; Die egtheid van 'n V.O.C.-bokaal, *Bulletin of the Transvaal Museum*, no. 7, July 1961; 'n Unieke snuifdoos in die Ou Museum, *Bulletin of the Transvaal Museum*, no. 8, January 1962.

¹⁴³ A.P. du Toit, 'n Samevatting van opvattinge aangaande die rotsskilderye van die Republiek en Suidwes-Afrika, *Bulletin of the Transvaal Museum*, no. 9, July 1962.

¹⁴⁴ T. Jacobs-Venter, Bantoe-speelpoppe in die Ou Museum, *Bulletin of the Transvaal Museum*, no. 5, July 1960.

¹⁴⁵ Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1953 - 1954, departmental report division of history, p. 39.

¹⁴⁶ Transvaal Museum Board of Trustees minutes, meeting 11 September 1953.

¹⁴⁷ NCHMA, Kotie Roodt-Coetzee Archives, file Persoonlik 1, letter FitzSimons to Coetzee, dd 23 August 1957.

¹⁴⁸ Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1954 - 1955, departmental report history, p. 35; 1955 - 1956, p. 34.

seaside resort of the ATKV.¹⁴⁹ It was recommended that the Hartenbos objects that were considered unsuitable for display become the property of the Museum,¹⁵⁰ but in 1964, at the request of the ATKV, they were packed in cases for return to Hartenbos.¹⁵¹

The Voortrekker Monument Museum was opened on 1 July 1957.¹⁵² The display created for the Pretoria Centenary, and in particular the period rooms, was a precursor for Coetzee's exhibitions at the Voortrekker Monument Museum. It comprised three rooms (a kitchen, bedroom and voorhuis [sitting-room]) as well as an outspan (figure 76) in addition to the traditional glass display cases. The control of the Voortrekker Monument Museum fell under a joint sub-committee of the Transvaal Museum and the Board of the Monument.¹⁵³ Within a year new plans for a bigger museum were under way.

Kruger House

By the early 1950s it was clear that the Kruger House was overcrowded which meant that the aura of the house was lost because it was dominated by a preponderance of additional displays such as cabinets and the photographs illustrating the life of the President (figure 12). A separate exhibition hall became thus a priority, and the search for original furniture continued so that the House could be refurbished to the home it had been in the lifetime of the President and his wife.¹⁵⁴ In reaction to Coetzee's insistent appeals, items that were originally in the house were gradually donated by Kruger's descendants.¹⁵⁵

¹⁴⁹ A.N. Pelzer, Mev. Roodt-Coetzee en die Voortrekkermonumentmuseum, *Museum Memo*, 6(2), November 1978, p. 7.

¹⁵⁰ Sub-committee minutes, meeting 6 March 1957.

¹⁵¹ NCHMA, Jaarverslag van die voorsitter van die Raad van Kuratore van die Kultuurhistoriese en Opelugmuseum vir die jaar geëndig 31 Maart 1965, p. 3.

¹⁵² O.J.O. Ferreira, "Die geskiedenis van die Sentrale Volksmonumentekomitee" (unpublished M.A. dissertation, University of Pretoria, 1970), p. 242; Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1957 - 1958, p. 13.

¹⁵³ Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1957 - 1958, p. 13.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 1950 - 1951, p. 10, departmental report for the division of history, p. 32; 1953 - 1954, p. 9; 1954 - 1955, p. 9.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 1954 - 1955, departmental report for history, p. 35 and 1958 - 1959, p. 40.

In 1952 the railway coach used by Kruger was transferred to the back of the Kruger House. It was protected by a shelter consisting of a roof and ramps on both sides of the train.¹⁵⁶ In the financial year 1955 - 1956 funds were provided for the building of an additional hall behind the House.¹⁵⁷ When this hall had been completed in 1957, exhibits were removed from the house to relieve the excess of displays so that the house could be redecorated and the original furniture put in place.¹⁵⁸ The redecoration of the house included the painting of the ceilings, re-papering of the walls and the cleaning or replacement of the curtains.¹⁵⁹ Slowly but surely, the nineteenth century lifestyle of the President and his wife was reflected in the old House. In the hall the displays showed objects linked to Kruger and his times, thus depicting the “Kruger Museum”, as previously envisaged by the Transvaal Museum.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 1952 - 1953, p. 8.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 1955 - 1956, p. 7.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 1956 - 1957, p. 8; 1957 - 1958, p. 8.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 1957 - 1958, p. 38.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 1953 - 1954, p. 9.



Figure 12a

(P. van Zyl, “Die Krugermuseum” (unpublished paper for post-graduate diploma in museology, University of Pretoria, 1982), p. 55

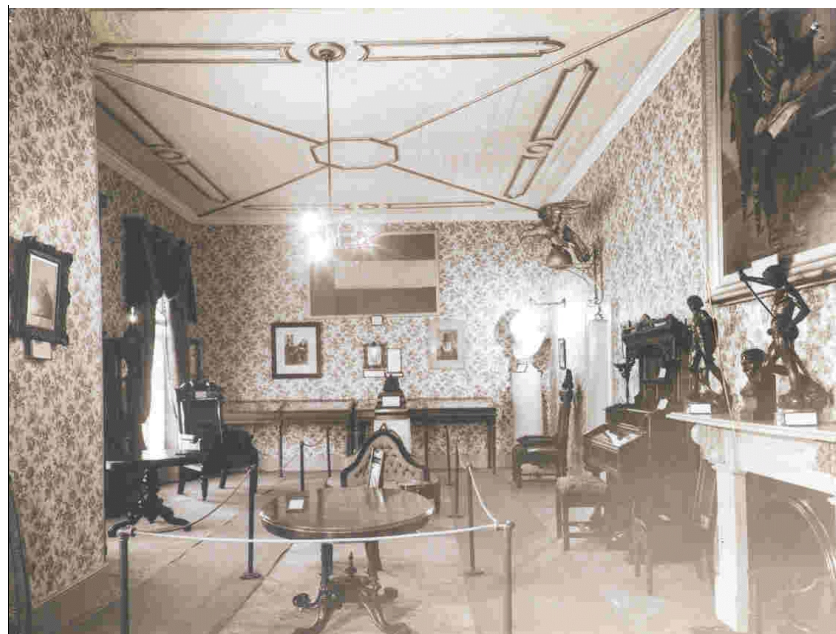


Figure 12b

(Collection: National Cultural History Museum)

Figure 12 (a and b)

Display cases in President Kruger’s reception room in the early 1950s (top) in comparison to the display c. 1956. Furniture such as a house organ, conversation seat and a table had been added to the decor, but display cases still remained against the wall (below).

3. MUSEUM ADMINISTRATION

In 1906 the responsibility for the Transvaal Museum was transferred from the Department of the Colonial Secretary to the Department of the Commissioner of Lands.¹⁶¹ A few years later, in terms of government notice no. 8 of 31 May 1910, the Department of the Interior was made responsible for the administration of all matters in relation to the Museum.¹⁶² The Transvaal Museum was regarded as a central national institution (a Union museum), as indicated by the Minister of Finance during the second reading of the Financial Relations Bill in 1913¹⁶³ and in terms of the Financial Relations Act No. 10 of 1913, par. 4 of the 2nd schedule.¹⁶⁴ This was the first act of importance to be applied to the administration of the Transvaal Museum.

Although it received a so-called grant-in-aid from the government, the Museum was not regulated by its own act, nor had the Staatsmuseum of the ZAR been constituted by an act. The Transvaal Museum was thus part of a group of heterogeneous museums that received government aid, but each one was administered by a museum committee or board that for all practical purposes was autonomous.¹⁶⁵ The Transvaal Museum was managed by the Museum Committee until 1933. The first meeting of the Transvaal Museum Board of Trustees was held on 29 June 1933.

The invidious position of museums led to the promulgation of the State-aided Institutions Act No. 23 of 1931. During the second-reading debate the Minister of the Interior specifically referred to important state institutions, such as the Transvaal Museum, that should be controlled by an act. In terms of government notice no. 99 of 17 January 1933 regulations applicable to the Transvaal Museum were published, but these were amended or added to from time to time.¹⁶⁶ The museum boards, in other words, were gradually deprived

¹⁶¹ V. FitzSimons and L. Brain (comp.), A history of the Transvaal Museum, *Bulletin of the Transvaal Museum*, no. 13, 30 November, 1972, p. 6.

¹⁶² NA, UOD 68 File 13/6, letter Secretary for the Interior to the Secretary Agriculture, dd 8 June 1910.

¹⁶³ H. Oberholzer, *Skeletons by the roadside*, p. 8.

¹⁶⁴ Transvaal Museum Committee minutes, meeting 2 October 1917.

¹⁶⁵ H. Oberholzer, Administrasie van nasionale museums in die Republiek van Suid-Afrika, *Memoirs van die Nasionale Museum Bloemfontein*, vol. 17, June 1982 (M.A. dissertation, University of the Orange Free State, 1987), p. 31.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 11 - 16.

of their autonomy.¹⁶⁷ The Transvaal Museum resorted under the Minister of the Interior until 1948, when the Governor-General charged the Minister of Education with the execution of Act No. 23 of 1931.¹⁶⁸

A new management style

With the appointment of Coetzee in 1953 a new dispensation began for the history division. It soon became clear that provision for the needs of the history division could not be met in the traditional natural history set-up. The first indication that a new trend was developing in the Transvaal Museum as far as the management of the human sciences division was concerned, was the appointment of a special Historical Sub-committee in June 1955.

The appointment of this Committee made museological matters easier to address, but there were still administration problems that remained unresolved. As secretary of the Committee Coetzee had to implement decisions taken by the Committee, while at the same time remaining subordinate to the director. She had to do administrative work as well as acting as link between the director and the staff. In practice she acted as assistant director, an invidious position that often lead to difficult and unpleasant situations between Coetzee and the staff. To alleviate her position, the director issued instructions to the staff at the Old Museum that Coetzee had to supervise them. She was directly responsible to the director. Any instructions by her should be regarded as given by the director and reports on any matter had to be given directly to her.¹⁶⁹ Any matter that a member of staff wanted to raise with the director, the Board or the Historical Sub-committee had to go via Coetzee.¹⁷⁰

The establishment of the National Cultural History and Open-Air Museum

The next great change in management took place in 1964, when the Transvaal Museum had to accept that the cultural history division was breaking away. The secession was a long process that took a great deal of input from a number of interested parties. By constant

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 33.

¹⁶⁸ H. Oberholzer, *Skeletons by the roadside*, pp. 8 - 10.

¹⁶⁹ NCHMA, *Komitee van Ondersoek na openbare museums in Pretoria, 1960 - 1961*, K. Roodt-Coetzee, Memorandum oor die kultuurhistoriese afdeling van die Transvaal Museum, pp. 3 - 4; Sub-committee minutes, meeting 6 August 1957; NKP66/1, Notice to staff members by FitzSimons, dd 13 August 1957.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., NKP66/1, letter FitzSimons to Coetzee and A.P. Du Toit, dd 15 September 1961.

lobbying, both in and outside the Museum, Coetzee changed the sentiments and perceptions of many prominent people and set in motion a self-imposed undertaking to gain independence for the history division.

Outside the Museum

At the annual congress of the Historical Association of South Africa on 30 and 31 August 1957 a resolution was taken about the separation of cultural history museums in South Africa from natural history museums.¹⁷¹ During the congress a paper was delivered by W.J. de Kock¹⁷² entitled *Die lewende verlede. Voorwerp en Beeltenis in die Geskiedenis*.¹⁷³ The Association regarded the neglect of historical museums as an injustice that had existed for many years, and one that should be rectified.¹⁷⁴

A memorandum compiled by Coetzee on behalf of the Historical Association focuses especially on three aspects, namely the situation of cultural history museums in general, the ideal circumstances that should prevail, and ways and means of making improvements to reach optimal levels. It was stressed that natural history and cultural history are diverse disciplines and that this could, in the opinion of the Association, lead to preferential treatment of the one discipline at the expense of the other, usually cultural history, in any one museum. It was recommended that a complete separation should be made at the museums in Pretoria, Cape Town, Bloemfontein and Pietermaritzburg. Each museum should then have its own board of control, own head, separate funds and eventually also its own building.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷¹ N a, Van die Redaksie; Beskrywingspunte deur kongres aanvaar, *Historia* 2(3), December 1957, pp. 194 and 214.

¹⁷² De Kock had an intimate knowledge of circumstances at the Transvaal Museum. He was responsible for the photographs and documents at the Pretoria Centenary exhibition and was also the secretary of the Komitee ter Bevordering van die Historiese Museumwese. He was in particular interested in the Kruger House and compiled the photographic display illustrating Kruger's life. He also wrote a brochure for the Kruger House. As temporary archivist for the Union of South Africa in Europe, he solicited a number of donations. Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1953 - 1954, departmental report for division of history, p. 38.

¹⁷³ *Historia*, 2(3), December 1957, pp. 202 - 214.

¹⁷⁴ N a, Van die Redaksie, *Historia* 2(3), December 1957, p. 194.

¹⁷⁵ NCHMA, System 2 No 43 NKO(1) 1955 - 1970, Memorandum vir voorlegging deur die Historiese Genootskap van Suid-Afrika aan Sy Edele die Minister van Onderwys, Kuns en Wetenskap.

The struggle for independence for the cultural history division of the Transvaal Museum was reinforced by the idea of an open-air museum.¹⁷⁶ The organization that fostered this notion was the Old Pretoria Society, established in 1948. The Society was disconcerted by the demolition of houses and shops which had been typical of old Pretoria and their aim was to preserve an old dwelling. They were of the opinion that the rich historical heritage of the city could be saved for future generations.¹⁷⁷ The Museum Board was aware of the fact that the Society had identified itself with the establishment of an open-air museum in Pretoria.¹⁷⁸

One of the old homes in question was on the corner of Skinner and Paul Kruger Streets, built in 1866 by the Portuguese merchant, Bras Perreira. In 1953 this house was the oldest remaining home in Pretoria. The efforts to preserve it were supported by the idea of an open-air museum, which the Society discussed with the City Council of Pretoria. They received the idea favourably and set aside a piece of ground for the purpose.¹⁷⁹ The plan was also fostered by the knowledge of objects of sentimental and cultural value at the Old Museum and the Kruger House. With the establishment of an open-air museum the Society wanted to extend the traditional historical museum, housed in one building, to a museum consisting of many buildings, representing various lifestyles, periods, events and architectural variety.¹⁸⁰

At the outset the Transvaal Museum could not, even if it wanted to, take part in the venture of the Society to set up an open-air museum, because its funds were very limited. As plans for an independent and separate cultural history museum progressed, it became clear that the need for a site, where a functional cultural history museum could be built was a priority. Objects for an open-air museum were also collected. The Transvaal Museum perforce

¹⁷⁶ For details on the open-air museum, see P.J. de Beer, "Die fenomeen opelugmuseum in kultuurhistoriese perspektief" (unpublished D.Phil thesis, University of Pretoria, 1979).

¹⁷⁷ W.H.J. Punt, Our city is growing, *Pretoriana*, 2(1), September 1952, pp. 2 - 3.

¹⁷⁸ Transvaal Museum Board of Trustees minutes, meeting 12 March 1954.

¹⁷⁹ W.H.J. Punt, Annual Report: Association Old Pretoria, *Pretoriana*, 4(3), April 1955, pp. 5 - 6; F.J. Du Toit Spies, The open-air museum, *Pretoriana*, no. 22, December 1956, pp. 2 - 5; F.J. Du Toit Spies, Die Genootskap Oud Pretoria se tienjarige bestaan - 'n oorsig, *Pretoriana*, nos. 26 & 27, April - August 1958, pp. 23 - 24.

¹⁸⁰ G.W. Eybers, 'n Suid-Afrikaanse Opelugmuseum, *Pretoriana*, nos. 16 & 17, July - September 1955, p. 69; see also n a, Oud-Pretoria: Opelug-museum word beoog, *Pretoriana*, nos. 16 & 17, July - September 1955, pp. 82 - 83.

discussed a cultural history museum, together with an open-air museum, with the Society.¹⁸¹ Indeed, the Minister of Education, Arts and Science was also approached more than once,¹⁸² and eventually he decided that a committee of enquiry should be appointed to look into the question of local Pretoria museums.

- The third enquiry into museum matters

After two previous enquiries (1932 and 1948), the third Committee of Enquiry into public museums in Pretoria was appointed on 25 July 1960. The chairman of the Committee was C.A. Cilliers. There were five directives pertaining to the Transvaal Museum, the most important being to investigate and report upon

the organisation, staffing and control of the Transvaal Museum with a view to the effective carrying out of its functions as both a natural-history and a cultural-history museum, with consideration of the desirability of the separation of the two sections as separate institutions, each under its own controlling body, the building requirements of the Museum, and the establishment of an open-air museum ... and the possible co-operation and/or merger with the Transvaal Museum or with a portion thereof.¹⁸³

The Committee came to the conclusion that the natural and cultural history divisions of the Transvaal Museum should be separated immediately and that each should be managed by a separate board of control in a separate building. Evidence was provided that one board of control for both sections resulted in more interest being given to natural history matters than cultural history. Furthermore this had led to a lack of control, development and functioning. It was also shown that the background and training of the staff in both divisions differed so markedly that staff transfers and relief-work between them was impossible.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸¹ Sub-committee minutes, meeting 3 May 1962; Verslag van 'n samespreking tussen verteenwoordigers van die Transvaal-Museum en van die Genootskap Oud-Pretoria, op uitnodiging van die Transvaal-Museum, dd 23 August 1962 (minute book); P.J. Coertze, *Die Nasionale Kultuurhistoriese en Opelugmuseum*, Pretoria, *Pretoriana*, no. 46, December 1964, pp. 3 - 7.

¹⁸² Sub-committee minutes, meeting 26 May 1958; Transvaal Museum Board of Trustees minutes, special meeting 30 May 1958; G.W. Eybers, Verslag van 'n onderhoud, *Pretoriana*, no. 30, August 1959, pp. 9 - 11; Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1958 - 1959, p. 7; NCHMA, System 2 No 43 NKO(1) 1955 - 1970, Memorandum re proposed new museum of history, Reduced committee (Afrikaans: *kleinkomitee*) with regard to the open-air museum report, meeting 16 August 1962.

¹⁸³ NCHMA, *Komitee van Ondersoek na openbare museums in Pretoria, 1960 - 1961*, Memoranda.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, Report, 14 March 1962, pp. 2 - 3.

In the light of the overwhelming evidence, the Committee recommended the establishment of a cultural history museum, including an open-air museum, as a single institution, under one board of control.¹⁸⁵ The Committee also remarked that the building of a cultural museum should be regarded as a priority, because conditions at the Old Museum were extremely bad. However, acting on this directive should not be to the detriment of the accommodation of the natural history museum.¹⁸⁶

- The fourth enquiry into museum matters

On 29 December 1960 a Committee was appointed to investigate and report on the needs of state-aided institutions in terms of Act No. 23 of 1931 under the chairmanship of C.M. Booysen.¹⁸⁷ In this report the Transvaal Museum was categorized as a national or state museum. The Committee found that the cultural history division of the Museum was exceptionally important and included an overwhelming amount of material, some of which dated back to early Africa before the arrival of the whites. This material was currently in storage and where possible was exhibited in the Old Museum, the Kruger House, the Voortrekker Monument Museum and the New Museum. Nonetheless there was a lack of space for both display and storage purposes.¹⁸⁸

According to the Committee the turning point in the progress of the cultural history division had been the appointment of Coetzee in 1953 and this served to prove that it was unpropitious to unite a cultural history and a natural history museum under one management (board and director). The following reasons were given:

Kennisgebiede en uitgangspunte (die natuur en die mens respektiewelik) verskil so radikaal, spesialisering is so nodig, die gevoel van agterstelling of verontregting na die een of die anderkant so maklik, dat onafhanklike inrigtings as die enigste juiste oplossing beskou word.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 7.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 9.

¹⁸⁷ The needs of the Transvaal Museum on accommodation were excluded in the directives.

¹⁸⁸ NCHMA, *Verslag van die Komitee van Ondersoek na die behoeftes van staatsondersteunde inrigtings, deel 1, hoofverslag*, p. 19.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 20. [Fields of knowledge and methods of approach (those of the natural sciences and humanities respectively) differ so completely that specialization is necessary; and feelings of subordination or injustice can arise so easily, that independent institutions are the only equitable solution. (Translated from the Afrikaans.)]

The Committee unconditionally recommended that the cultural history division be separated as an independent state-aided museum with its own board of trustees. Although the need for a new building fell outside the scope of the Committee, they regarded the condition of the old one as so appalling that they suggested the housing problem should be addressed urgently.¹⁹⁰ The recommendation of the Committee that posts for archaeologists should be created¹⁹¹ (there were as yet no archaeologists in museums) was met only when the National Cultural History and Open-Air Museum appointed an archaeologist on 1 January 1967.

Both the above Committees carried out their brief by interviews, undertaking visits to museums and reviewing memoranda. Visits were paid to the New Museum, the Old Museum, Kruger House, the Voortrekker Monument Museum and the site for the open-air museum at the Fountains, near Pretoria. Memoranda and/or oral testimonies were given by interested parties, such as the Transvaal Museum, the Old Museum, the Old Pretoria Society and the Kultuurraad. Individuals such as Pelzer, Eybers, Coetzee and FitzSimons all gave their opinions. Although a range of viewpoints were heard, both Committees were convinced that separation was the only solution to the predicament at the Transvaal Museum. By the end of 1962 the chairman of the Old Pretoria Society had hopes “that a decade of persuasion will soon give way to a decade of action”.¹⁹²

Within the Transvaal Museum

Within the Museum the Historical Sub-committee, speaking through Van der Westhuysen, felt that additional staff would not be a permanent solution to the critical condition in the cultural history, archaeology and anthropology divisions. Radical change and a positive policy towards historical museums in Pretoria and South Africa were needed. He argued that:

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 21.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., p. 80.

¹⁹² G.W. Eybers, Old Pretoria Society Annual Report, 1962, *Pretoriana*, nos. 39 & 40, August - December 1962, p. 40.

Tot die einde van die vorige eeu was historiese museum[s] in die Westerse wêreld ondergeskik aan die natuurwetenskaplike; sedertdien het daar 'n nuwe beskouing oor die geskiedenis as geesteswetenskap gegroei en in Europa het die Kultuur-historiese museums in die jongste tyd feitlik geheel afgeskei en selfstandig ontwikkel. So hoort dit, want die kultuurgeskiedenis en die natuurwetenskap is twee geheel aparte dissiplines. Die Historiese Afdeling kan ten volle ontwikkel, alleen as dit 'n aparte entiteit is ...¹⁹³

The question then arose: which divisions of the Transvaal Museum should fall under the new cultural history museum? In practice this had been answered as early as 1953. Coetzee had accepted responsibility for history, as well as for ethnology and archaeology, and the bulk of the show and study collections of these three disciplines were housed at the Old Museum. The monthly reports show that work had been done on an ongoing basis in these three divisions. Coetzee was also responsible for the annual reports from 1953 to 1959. According to Coetzee a cultural museum (Afrikaans: *kultuurkundige museum*) collected and preserved ethnological, archaeological and cultural historical material as documents or evidence to be used in scientific research on the cultures of the various groups in South Africa in the pre-historical and historical periods.¹⁹⁴

In answer to a question by the director on the appropriate division between natural and cultural history at a Historical Sub-committee meeting in August 1956, Van der Westhuysen argued that ethnology and archaeology had a very strong bond with cultural history, but at that stage he did not venture a final answer.¹⁹⁵ For the time being, the director himself dealt with the numismatic and philately sections.¹⁹⁶ These had to remain in the New Museum because the numismatics collection has to be kept in a safe.¹⁹⁷ The two sections only became part of the new museum in July 1965.

¹⁹³ Sub-committee minutes, meeting 8 August 1956, underlined in minutes. [Until the end of the previous century the history museum in the Western World was subordinate to the scientific one; since then a new view on history as a human science has developed and nowadays Cultural History museums in Europe have separated and developed independently. This should happen because cultural history and natural history are two very separate disciplines. The Historical Section can develop fully only if it is a separate entity. (Translated from the Afrikaans.)]

¹⁹⁴ NCHMA, *Komitee van Ondersoek na openbare museums in Pretoria, 1960 - 1961*, Aanbevelings met betrekking tot die toekoms van die kultuurkundige museum, p. 6.

¹⁹⁵ Sub-committee minutes, meeting 8 August 1956.

¹⁹⁶ Transvaal Museum Annual Reports, 1953 - 1954, 1954 - 1955, 1955 - 1956, 1956 - 1957 and 1957 - 1958.

¹⁹⁷ Sub-committee minutes, meeting 29 July 1955.

In an internal memorandum dealing with the separation of the cultural history division from natural history, it was argued that the two were different in various ways. For example, in the academic sense, natural science use data derived from the natural environment while cultural history deals with interactions between people and cultural endeavours created by man (Afrikaans: *kultuurlike vorme van die skeppende mens*).¹⁹⁸ Cultural history museums and natural history museums should enjoy equal status. In South Africa, however, natural history museums developed earlier and were better equipped than cultural history museums. Cultural history museums could only come into their own if they developed in terms of their own unique discipline, with particular aims and requirements, independent of natural history. It was important to have their own board of control made up of members who could contribute on the basis of the human sciences.¹⁹⁹

The most decisive argument was that the ultimate purpose of the natural history and cultural history divisions were so divergent that their best interests are not served in one institution. J.T. Robinson, assistant director of the Transvaal Museum, also put forward the following arguments:

Furthermore the public is generally rather clearly divided into those primarily interested in the subject matter of the one Division and those interested in the other – that is to say a relative minority of people are interested to an equal degree in cultural history and science. This raises the very pertinent point of whether the best interests of both Divisions are served by having them lumped together in a single institution.

Members of the Board of Trustees will be interested more in one Division than another in most cases. This raises difficulties as far as really effective control and direction is concerned. It is unfortunately true that Board meetings are seldom fully attended; which means that interests of the two Divisions may be very differently represented from one meeting to another. Then also, however fair and impartial the Director may strive to be, it is only reasonable to expect that he will have more interest in one Division than in the other. In this case, where the basic approaches of the two Divisions are so different, this whole situation leads to untold difficulties and minor or major frictions which are the fault of nobody – they are inherent in such a situation.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁸ Memorandum insake afskeiding van die kulturologiese deel uit die natuurwetenskaplike deel van die museum, c. November 1956, added to Sub-committee minutes, meeting 7 November 1956.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ NCHMA, *Komitee van Ondersoek na openbare museums in Pretoria, 1960 - 1961*, J.T. Robinson, Memorandum on the accommodation problem of the Transvaal Museum, pp. 2 - 3.

The Board of Trustees of the Transvaal Museum concurred with the complete separation of the cultural history museum as an additional state-aided institution (with its own board of trustees, director, administration and financial provision), but, as worded by the director:

... the Transvaal Museum authorities wish to make it clear that, while regarding it as probably the best long-term solution, it is by no means wedded to same and would be glad to consider any other suggestion ... Other suggestions that come to mind are:

- a) The completion of the New Museum Building by addition of the two wings, and
- b) The abandonment of the present New and Old Museum Buildings (neither of which are really suitable for up to date museum purposes, according to modern concepts) and the erection of new and separate Museums for the Natural Sciences and Cultural History ...

To conclude, it must be emphasized that your Board of Trustees' one and only concern is to see that something is done before irreparable loss, through overcrowding and unsuitable housing, is sustained to the valuable collections on the building up of which thousands of pounds have already been spent.²⁰¹

As a preliminary step, the Minister of Education, Arts and Science was willing to approve the principle of an independent cultural history section under the auspices of the Board of Trustees of the Transvaal Museum because this section was, according to him, still in its formative stage.²⁰² The Historical Sub-committee then recommended to the Board various ways to achieve this independent status.²⁰³

The most important suggestions were accepted by the Board on 4 October 1957, with the proviso that the existing status of the natural history division would remain unaltered and that the growth of the cultural history division would in no way impair the natural history division. Two sub-committees, the Historical and the Natural Science Sub-committees, with equal status, were constituted. This meant that there were now two main divisions at the Transvaal Museum, the natural history division and the cultural division. The latter comprised the cultural history, ethnology and archaeology sections. The chairman of the Board of Trustees laid down that:

²⁰¹ Ibid.; System 2 No 43 NKO(1) 1955 - 1970, Memorandum re proposed new museum of Cultural History, 1958, p. 4.

²⁰² Ibid., System 1 No 12 TM1/57, letter, Secretary of Education, Arts and Science to the director, dd 18 January 1957.

²⁰³ Sub-committee minutes, meeting 29 August 1957.

This arrangement ... has been brought about in order to give as much autonomy as possible, within the present administrative framework, to each of the major divisions of the Museum's activities, until such time as they can be completely divorced to form separate and independent institutions.²⁰⁴

In March 1958 it was decided to appoint members to the two Sub-committees. The Historical Sub-committee consisted of the following board members:

Prof. A.N. Pelzer (chairman)
H.P.H. Behrens
G.A. Botha
Prof. P.J. Coertze
W.J. Snyman
Prof. H.M. van der Westhuysen
J.J. van Schaik.

The chairman of the Board and the director each had a seat on both Sub-committees. The following rules were set for the Sub-committees:

- Each Sub-committee should submit their needs annually to the Board, who would allocate the budget with regard to these requests.
- The Sub-committees were authorised to spend up to an amount of £100 for a single item of the available funds.
- All decisions taken by the Sub-committees on policy matters had to go to the next Board meeting as recommendations.
- The Sub-committee could decide on routine matters, but a report had to be tabled at the next Board meeting.
- Sub-committees should meet every month on the same date.
- The annual reports of the Sub-committees should be tabled at the February meeting of the Board.
- All staff matters would rest with the Board.

²⁰⁴ Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1957 - 1958, p. 3.

- Statements of income and expenditure would be made available to the Sub-committees, as requested.
- Financial matters should remain unchanged for the time being.²⁰⁵

From April 1963 the cultural history division had been managed by a committee with increased authority, and a separate budget. But it was still under the auspices of the Board of the Transvaal Museum – with the result that the administrative work increased, in particular for Coetzee as she had been appointed as acting director of the division.²⁰⁶ A decision by the financial sub-committee was endorsed by the Historical Sub-committee and by the Board, namely that:

- the separation should be effected on 1 July 1963,
- the finances, bookkeeping and general administration should continue to be handled by the secretary of the Transvaal Museum,
- provision be made in the budget of the new financial year for the posts of director and secretary, and
- Coetzee should be appointed as acting director for the new cultural museum for the remainder of the year.²⁰⁷

The existing Board was divided and the following members were transferred to the Board of the cultural history museum:

H.P.H. Behrens
F.C.L. Bosman
G.A. Botha
Prof. P.J. Coertze
J.A. Marais
Prof. J.J. Mulder
J.C. Otto
Prof. A.N. Pelzer
Prof. H.M. van der Westhuysen
J.J. van Schaik.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁵ Transvaal Museum Board of Trustees minutes, meetings 4 October 1957 and 7 March 1958.

²⁰⁶ Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1963 - 1964, pp. 10 - 11.

²⁰⁷ Sub-committee minutes, meeting 24 May 1963.

²⁰⁸ Transvaal Museum Board of Trustees minutes, meeting 28 May 1963.

The Minister of Education, Arts and Science approved the division of the Transvaal Museum into two separate institutions.²⁰⁹ At its final meeting in 1963 the Sub-committee for the cultural history section decided to request the Minister to validate the separation as from 1 April 1964 and that the separation would entail no additional financial obligations for the Department.²¹⁰ The whole process dragged on until June 1964. At the last meeting of the Board of Trustees before the separation, Pelzer said that it had been both an honour and a privilege to have worked with FitzSimons. The cultural history museum was congratulated on the attainment of such a long-cherished ideal. The natural history section shared in its joy and expressed sincere thanks for the spirit of cooperation that had prevailed in the settlement of minor differences.²¹¹ The chairman of the Board was of the opinion that the establishment of two separate and independent museums

marks an important milestone in its history, and the future expansion of these two institutions into independent national monuments will be a task which will require careful planning, dedicated interest and hard work.²¹²

The National Cultural History and Open-Air Museum, Pretoria : new prospects

The official separation into two independent museums was formalized by government proclamation in the *Government Gazette* no. 881 of 1 August 1964 by the Minister of Education, Arts and Science. It read as follows:

(a) the Cultural History Division of the Transvaal Museum (consisting of the Old Museum, the Paul Kruger House and a new open-air museum to be established in Pretoria) shall be known as the National Cultural History and Open-Air Museum, Pretoria, and

(b) the Natural History Division of the Transvaal Museum (consisting of the New Museum and the Janse Entomological Museum) shall be known as the Transvaal Museum, Pretoria.²¹³

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 12 June 1964.

²¹⁰ Committee for the cultural history section minutes, meeting 4 December 1963; NCHMA, System 1 No 20 TM64, letter chairman of the Board to the Secretary for Education, Arts and Science, dd 20 February 1964.

²¹¹ Transvaal Museum Board of Trustees minutes, meeting 12 June 1964.

²¹² Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1962 - 1963, p. 1.

²¹³ Ibid., 1964 - 1965, p. 8; my bold.

On 1 April 1965 Kotie Roodt-Coetzee was appointed as first director of the National Cultural History and Open-Air Museum.²¹⁴ The newly-formed Museum comprised the Kruger House, the sections of numismatics and philately, ethnology and archaeology and a section for general South African culture, which dealt for the most part with photographs, furniture, costumes and militaria. The Museum had displays in the Old Museum, the Transvaal Museum (numismatics and philately, uniforms and the Pretoria centenary exhibition), the Voortrekker Monument and the Kruger House. With zeal and fine prospects for success, the National Cultural History and Open-Air Museum set out to attain aims similar to those of the Staatsmuseum, aspirations which had lain dormant for over 50 years. The new Museum felt that it, too, could contribute a great deal to the consolidation of national consciousness.²¹⁵

Objectives set for the National Cultural History and Open-Air Museum

The establishment of the new Museum was founded on clear-cut management principles. It set itself objectives and identified the functions it had to undertake to attain them. The following aim was approved by the Board of Trustees on 25 November 1965:

The goal of the National Cultural History and Open-Air Museum is to collect objects with documentary or visual value and to make them available to researchers, students, school children and the general public, to the benefit of scientific research, formal education and general social instruction.

Functions of the National Cultural History and Open-Air Museum

The functions of the Museum were set out as follows:

- *Collecting*
This to be done by means of donations, purchase, fieldwork and excavations and to include the following material:
objects of the culture of the white language groups in South Africa, which had been crafted here or elsewhere, but used here; and of groups outside South Africa, inasmuch as they are necessary for comparative studies, ethnological material with regard to the non-white groups in South Africa and Africa, and comparative material from other parts of the world,

²¹⁴ NCHMA, NKP66/1, letter Secretary of Education, Arts and Science to the Board National Cultural History and Open-Air Museum, dd 10 February 1965.

²¹⁵ Ibid., Jaarverslag van die voorsitter van die Raad van Kuratore van die Kultuurhistoriese en Opelugmuseum vir die jaar geëindig 31 Maart 1965, pp. 1 - 2.

archaeological material from South Africa and Africa, and comparative material from other parts of the world and

photographs, drawings and other documentary pictorial material to complement the objects.

- *Registration*

The compilation of registers and catalogues of own possessions, of material owned by private persons or material available elsewhere.

- *Restoration and maintenance*

The restoration, conservation and maintenance of material in possession of the Museum.

- *Museological research and instruction*

Research on museological problems such as collecting methods, restoration, conservation, maintenance and exhibitions, as well as instruction about museological matters by means of holiday courses in museology.

- *Exhibition*

The erection of temporary and permanent displays by using objects from the Museum's collections and on loan; the purchase and manufacture of display cabinets, replicas, models and other additional accessories and research that was required for exhibition.

- *Educational activities*

Guided tours to groups of children and adults, lectures, film and slide shows, the staging of plays and musical performances associated with objects in the Museum and

the organization of discussion and work groups.

- *Service to scientists*

The provision of expert information with regard to objects falling within the scope of the collection field of the Museum, in particular to scientists and students.

- *Publication*

Brochures, books, magazines and photographs in connection with the content of the Museum, and

registers and catalogues on the content of the Museum and objects of value to the Museum in private hands and the results of museological research undertaken by Museum staff.

- *Library service*
The establishment of a library necessary for research by the staff and visiting scientists.
- *Open-Air Museum*
Building structures for the open-air museum to be obtained, demolished and reconstructed.
- *Public relations*
Fostering of good relations with the public, associations and other institutions in order to gain cooperation from people and institutions to reach the aim of the Museum, and
to collect funds for the execution of the functions of the Museum and in particular the establishment of the open-air museum.²¹⁶

The year 1964 marked new beginnings for a new and autonomous Museum, independent of the Transvaal Museum. In her own domain the new director's time would be taken up almost exclusively by the extensive organizational, administrative and financial requirements as set out in the aim of the National Cultural History and Open-Air Museum. She was also responsible for the in-house training of the staff, the supervision of curatorial and technical work, planning of publications and public relations. For some time the director also acted as curator, dealing with collecting and accessioning, in the cultural history section.²¹⁷ Outside the Museum, guidance to local museums also took up some of her time.

The establishment of an open-air museum now changed from a long cherished ideal to a very real and demanding legal requirement, entrenched in the very name of the Museum. This was destined to bring many a frustration as site after site was considered and then rejected. Nevertheless the initiation of an open-air museum fund, the identification of suitable buildings and objects for the open-air museum, the assembly of these objects, and the appointment of staff to deal with these matters had to be managed by the director. The detailed planning of a functional museum building as part of the open-air museum complex took many hours of research and liaison with the relevant government departments and architects.

²¹⁶ NCHMA, NKP66/1, letter Coetzee to the Secretary for Education, Arts and Science, dd 3 December 1965.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

Simultaneously, the development of new “open-air” museums,²¹⁸ such as the Pioneer Open-Air Museum in Silverton, Pretoria, to compensate for the long delay in setting up the national open-air museum, also took much time and effort by the director. The collections management tenets that had already been set out clearly in the previous period, were retained and followed by Coetzee and her staff. These did not change radically in the new Museum, and after 1964 would set an example to be followed by other cultural history museums in South Africa.

During the 51 year period (from 1913 to 1964) in which the Transvaal Museum assumed responsibility for the natural history departments and the anthropology, archaeology and history divisions, the Museum’s commitment to natural history remained constant. Research in these departments, underpinned by solid collections management, continued uninterrupted and earned the Museum world-wide recognition. Work on the anthropology, archaeology and history collections, however, was far less frequent. After 1953 when the greatest changes took place and the cultural history division became independent, the Transvaal Museum faced its greatest challenge. Not only did one woman alter the visible, public face of the Museum (the displays), but the manner in which the collections were assembled and managed, in particular the cultural history collection, changed almost unrecognizably. In the analysis of the collections management practices during these two periods (1913 - 1953 and 1953 - 1964) the similarities, but more particularly the differences, will be shown.

²¹⁸ The term “open-air museum” was used incorrectly for site museums.