

*Members of President Kruger's Bodyguard. Photo taken in front of the Kruger House, 1894.*

After Mrs. Kruger's death on the 29th July, 1901, the House was claimed by the South African Constabulary and a curator bonis appointed.

In April, 1904, Mr. F. C. Eloff (a son-in-law of the President) bought the House for his son out of the joint estate. In the meantime the House had been used as a boarding-house, under the name of the "Presidency," but when this became known to Mr. Eloff, the latter (with public support) intervened and the House once more reverted to private use and was occupied up to 1916 by the widowed Mrs. van Broekhuizen, and by her daughters for a short time thereafter.

In 1918, the owner (Mr. Eloff) leased the House to the "Moedersbond" as a nurses training centre and maternity home.

After the Transvaal Museum Authorities had for many years strongly urged the need for preserving the residence of the late President Paul Kruger as a Museum, the Government was approached in 1923 with the suggestion that the House be purchased from the then owner, Mr. F. C. Eloff, who was willing to sell the property at a reasonable figure.

Owing, however, to a shortage of funds at that time, the Government was unable to consider the offer and the matter was left in abeyance until 1925 when the House and property was eventually purchased for the State.

For some years after this the residence continued to be used by the "Moedersbond" as a Maternity Home and it was only when the latter

finally moved to its new premises in Beatrix Street in May, 1932, that the question of restoration of the House was seriously taken up.

About the beginning of 1933 the Government set about repairing and renovating the House and outbuildings. The interior of the House was restored as near as possible to its condition during the President's occupation and wall paper, curtains, carpets etc. were procured to match the former style and pattern. Items of the original furniture and a large assemblage of personal articles, already in the possession of the Museum, were transferred to the House.

A coach house was built behind the House and here the late President's State Coach and his personal wagon were transferred from the Old Museum and placed on display.

The House was officially opened to the public by the late Mr. Albert Kuit on the 10th October, 1934 and placed under the control of the Transvaal Museum, which received a small Government grant of £300 a year for its upkeep.

In April, 1936, the House was declared a National Monument and a bronze plaque to this effect was placed in the wall to the right of the entrance.

Through the kind offices of the South African Railways and Harbours, the President's State Railway Coach was restored and handed over to the Kruger House early in 1951 and suitably set up in the back garden of the House.

Since its establishment as a recognised Museum, the collections at the Kruger House have greatly increased until today they represent an almost complete picture of the late President and his times.

As the upkeep and maintenance of the House has, from its inception as a Museum, far exceeded the small extra grant received for the purpose, the Transvaal Museum has had to divert much of its general income to this purpose, and it has therefore not always been possible to purchase many of the items that have been on offer from various sources. Bearing this in mind, together with the urgent need to control the number and type of visitors to the House, the Board of Trustees of the Transvaal Museum decided, with the consent of the Government, to impose an entrance charge of 1/- for adults (children of 16 and under free) as from November, 1953. This has had the most desirable effect of excluding the irresponsible element and thus creating an appropriately quiet and peaceful atmosphere for the interested and serious visitor. In addition, it is now possible, with the extra revenue obtained, to make many necessary improvements and purchase such items as are still on offer, especially in the way of original furniture and fittings.

In closing this short history of the Kruger House Museum, it may be mentioned that provision has recently been made for further display space, by the erection of a small exhibition hall at the back of the present House. This new hall will be devoted to the museological side of the

Kruger collection and thus make it possible, to attain a more personal atmosphere in the House itself. While many of the original items of furniture etc. have slowly been coming back to the House, there are still many others outstanding in private ownership, and we would thus again appeal to these private owners to consider returning such items, so that the House and its contents can be restored as close as possible to the condition that existed when the President and his family resided there.

V. FITZSIMONS.

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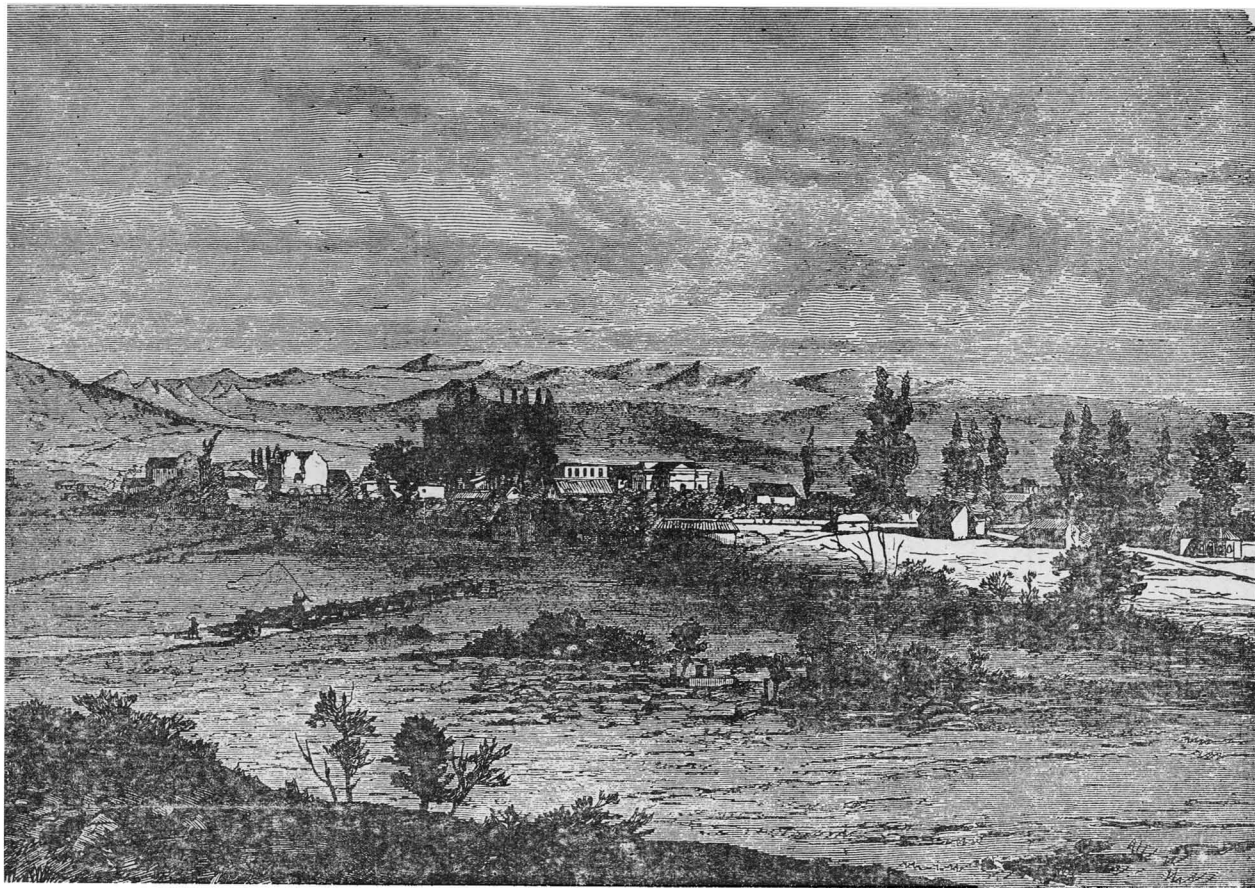
## WALTER BATTISS SE SESJARIGE VERBLYF IN RUSTENBURG (1923-1929)

**D**IT is opmerklik dat in die talryke tydskrifartikels wat oor die lewe en werk van die kunsskilder Walter Battiss handel daar seldé of ooit melding gemaak word van sy sesjarige verblyf in Rustenburg. Tog was daardie tydperk, volgens sy eie erkenning 'n paar jaar gelede aan skrywer hiervan, van ingrypende belang in sy vormingsjare as kunstenaar. Dit is daarom ook sy voorneme om mettertyd sy herinneringe aan sy Rustenburgse lewenstydperk op skrif te stel.

Walter Battiss is in 1906 in die Oos-Kaaplandse dorp, Somerset-Oos, gebore. Later het sy ouers na die Vrystaat verhuis en as jong seun het hy sy skoolopleiding op Koffiefontein en Fauresmith geniet. Na die voltooiing van sy hoërskoolloopbaan wou hy baie graag aan 'n universiteit verder studeer, maar as gevolg van die destydse heersende depressie het die nodige geldmiddele ontbreek en was hy genoodsaak om vir 'n betrekking in die Staatsdiens aansoek te doen. Op sewentienjarige leeftyd het hy dus in die loop van 1923 Fauresmith vaarwel toegeroep en na Rustenburg vertrek waar hy sy eerste betrekking as staatsamptenaar sou aanvaar. Vanaf daardie jaar tot in 1929 dateer sy Rustenburgse tydperk toe hy as 'n pligsgetroue amptenaar in die magistrataatskantoor werksaam was. Battiss het egter oor 'n sluimerende skilderstalent beskik wat deur sy nuwe skilderagtige omgewing sowel as deur simpatieke aanmoediging van vriende tot ontluiking geprikkel sou word.

Voor sy koms na Rustenburg het hy nooit enige lesse in teken- en skilderkuns ontvang nie, maar die skilderagtige omgewing en natuurskoon van Rustenburg, so vertel hy, het hom in so 'n mate geïnspireer dat hy hom op 'n spontane wyse tot teken en skilder gewend het om op dié wyse uiting te gee aan sy skoonheidsontroering en sy sluimerende skilderstalent. Die veelgeroemde natuurskoon van Rustenburg was dus die sterk prikkel en aanleiding dat Walter Battiss van sy skilderstalent bewus geword het.

Ook sy skrywerstalent het destyds na vore begin tree. In die „Rustenburg Herout” van 10 Julie 1925 is 'n skets wat hy onder die titel „That



Archie" geskrywe het, gepubliseer en daarna het hy gereed ander bydraes vir die weeklikse koerant gelewer.

'n Belangrike gebeurtenis in die annale van Rustenburg — ongetwyfeld ook in Battiss se ontwikkeling tot kunstenaar — was die kunsuitstalling wat Erich Mayer gedurende Julie 1926 in die Vrymesselaarsaal gehou het. Die uitstalling was die vrug van 'n langdurige verblyf van Erich Mayer destyds in die onmiddellike omgewing van Rustenburg. Vandag nog kan in verskillende Rustenburgse plaaswonings skilderye van Erich Mayer wat uit daardie tyd dateer, gesien word. Van Erich Mayer het Battiss destyds baie nuttige wenke en geesdriftige aansporing gekry. Daarby het Battiss ook besonder baie geleer van, en is hy geïnspireer deur, die eerste kunsuitstalling wat in 1926 op Rustenburg gehou is.

Dit is waarskynlik dat Battiss die artikel, getitel „The Awakening”, in die „Rustenburg Herout” van 30 Julie 1926 geskrywe het. Daarin het die skrywer, na aanleiding van Erich Mayer se uitstalling, onder andere die volgende gesê: „It would seem that artistic interest is at last being aroused in Rustenburg. Perhaps it is because an opportunity has at last been given us to show our public appreciation for things beautiful.”

Een van die verdere gevolge van die kunsuitstalling was dat daar gedurende Augustus 1926 in die huis van mnr. Jas. Black 'n Fotografiese Vereniging gestig en Walter Battiss as een van die bestuurslede gekies is.

Intussen het die twintigjarige Battiss hom ernstig begin toelê op teken en skilder. In November 1926 het daar in die „Rustenburg Herout” 'n afdruk en 'n beskrywing van 'n poskaart wat deur Battiss ontwerp is, verskyn. Op die poskaart was daar sewe sketse van bekende plekke in en in die omgewing van Rustenburg. Die bygaande beskrywing het melding gemaak van „an excellent Post Card”, en verder, „until the publication of these seven views, no other post cards have shown the Kloof or the Bathing Pool as it really appeals to us, nor has any set of views on one card been published of Rustenburg as it is today. All the drawings on this Post Card — which can be had at Gaudie's— have been carefully and accurately done by Mr. W. W. Battiss.”

Volgens 'n verslag in die „Rustenburg Herout” van 15 Junie 1928 blyk dit dat Battiss sy eerste uitstalling van skilderye gedurende 1927 in Rustenburg gehou het. In 'n berig onder die opskrif „A Rustenburg Artist” word die volgende vermeld: „Last year Mr. W. W. Battiss held his first exhibition which proved most successful. His pictures were delightfully varied in style and subject, while those portraying the beauties of our district were particularly pleasing.



*Rustenburg, waar Battiss 30 jaar gelede begin skilder het. 'n Tekening wat 80 jaar gelede van Rustenburg gemaak is, waarskynlik die eerste tekening van daardie mooi-geleë dorp.*

'n Skenking van Van Schaik se Boekhandel, Libri Gebou, Kerkstraat, Pretoria, maak die publikasie van hierdie tekening moontlik.

„Mr. Erich Mayer, the well-known S.A. Artist, said of Mr. Battiss at the time: ‚This young adept is not only gifted with a rare talent and observant eye for the peculiar beauties of our South African nature, but also possesses the much rarer qualities of self criticism, strength of purpose, thoroughness and perseverance, which go to the making of a real artist.’

„This year he is having another exhibition of 45 pictures, in water colours and black and white. He has during the past year laboured untiringly and with all interest at his art, and is showing a very definite improvement in technique, while his work reveals a pleasing originality, and appeals strongly to all lovers of nature. It is believed that this exhibition will be well worth seeing, and all who possibly can are urged to attend, and in that way encourage and support this very promising young artist.”

In dieselfde uitgawe van die „Rustenburg Herout” het daar ’n advertensie verskyn, tesame met ’n tekening in swart en wit, om die uitstalling van skilderye deur Battiss bekend te maak. Die uitstalling sou vanaf 27 tot 30 Junie in die Vrymesselaarsaal gehou en die opening daarvan deur die Burgemeester, mnr. J. O. Lucas, waargeneem word.

Erich Mayer was destyds op ’n deurreis in Rustenburg en hy het van die geleentheid gebruik gemaak om Battiss se tweede uitstalling te besigtig. Daarbenewens is hy ook van alle kante aangemoedig. Vir die simpatieke waardering van sy werk, sowel as vir die aanmoediging en tasbare steun wat hy van die Rustenburgers in daardie jare ontvang het, is Walter Battiss vandag nog steeds opreg dankbaar. Aan my was sy woorde: „Aan Rustenburg en sy inwoners is ek baie dank verskuldig. Die skilderagtige natuurskoon het my geïnspireer om te teken en te skilder en van die Rustenburgers het ek in ’n ruim mate aanmoediging en ondersteuning ontvang. Daarvoor sal ek altyd dankbaar bly.”

Wanneer Battiss vandag graag van sy eerste skilderye van sy Rustenburgse periode te siene wil kry, moet hy vir daardie doel spesiaal Rustenburg toe ry aangesien feitlik al sy eerste skilderye Rustenburgse wonings versier.

Gedurende 1929 het Battiss ’n oorplasing na Johannesburg gekry en toe het dit vir hom moontlik geword om aan die Witwatersrandse Universiteit vir ’n kursus in die Skone Kunste in te skryf.

In die jare daarna het Battiss tot een van Suid-Afrika se mees voor-  
aanstaande skilders ontwikkel en vandag is hy nie alleen in sy eie vaderland nie, maar ook in die hele westerse wêreld ’n bekende en hooggeroemde skildersfiguur. Veral het hy wêreldwye roem verwerf op grond van sy intense belangstelling in die sg. „Boesmankuns.”

Vir die inspirasie en aanmoediging wat Walter Battiss in sy vormingsjare in Rustenburg ondervind het, betuig hy onomwonde sy dank en erkentlikheid. Die Rustenburgse gemeenskap aan die ander kant sal dit altyd as ’n besondere eer beskou dat een van ons land se mees vooraanstaande moderne skilders vir ruim ses jaar sy verblyf aldaar gehad het.

H. M. REX.