

A common heritage / an appropriated history: the Cape Dutch preservation and revival movement as nation and empire builder

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The Cape Dutch architectural revival at the time of the Union of South Africa in 1910 points to more than just an emerging interest in building preservation and the Arts and Crafts rural ideal germane to English architectural circles of the time. Cape Dutch architecture, and the gable of Groot Constantia in particular, was used as a symbol to establish a common European heritage that could transcend the animosities of English and Afrikaans South Africans and help forge a new white 'nation'. A closer reading reveals that Cape Dutch architecture, as history and as style, was appropriated by English architects at the Cape as the contribution South African architecture could make to the British Empire.

Key words: Cape-Dutch revival, nationalism, British Empire

'n Gemeenskaplike erfenis/'n toegeende erfenis: die Kaapse Hollandse bewaarings- en herlewingsbeweging as nasie — en ryksbouer

Die Kaaps-Hollandse argitektoniese herlewing met Uniewording in 1910 dui op meer as net die ontwikkeling van 'n belangstelling in bewaring en die landelike ideaal van die 'Arts and Craft' beweging in Engelse argitektuur sirkels. Kaaps-Hollandse argitektuur, en spesifiek die gewel van Groot Constantia, was gebruik as simbool van 'n gemeenskaplike Europese erfenis wat die tweestryd tussen Engelse en Afrikaanse Suid-Afrikaners moes oorbrug en die groepe saambring as 'n nuwe wit 'nasia'. Kaaps-Hollandse argitektuur, as geskiedenis en styl, is deur Engelse argitekte in die Kaap aangeneem as 'n bydrae wat Suid-Afrikaanse argitektuur kon maak tot die Britse Ryk.

Sleutelwoorde: Kaaps-Hollandse herlewing, nasionalisme, Britse Ryk

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, Cape Dutch architecture and Cape Dutch homesteads in particular (Figure 1 and Figure 2) - with their distinctive gables and whitewashed symmetrical facades - had reached a state of decay, alteration and destruction¹ that signified their loss of cultural capital in the face of Victorian aesthetics, building styles and values.² Yet, by 1910 they had started to form the focus of a concerted building preservation program and many were being documented and mapped out through drawings and photographs. Furthermore, a few highly significant official and government buildings were simultaneously starting to be built in a Cape Dutch revival style. What led to this dramatic turnaround in the "fortunes" of Cape Dutch architecture? In many ways the building preservation movement was simply a mirroring in Cape Town of similar concerns in England as exemplified through the formation of the National Trust,³ whilst the search for a national style was a common pursuit throughout Europe at the time.⁴ Yet South Africa has a distinct history that gives the building preservation movement and issues regarding a national architectural style a fairly unique edge. Before an investigation can be made into the emergence in Cape Town of the building preservation movement and Cape Dutch as a national style, it is important to give some of the background to South Africa's political situation at the time.

Background

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, South Africa was a collection of disparate political and geographical entities comprising in part, the two British colonies of the Cape and Natal, the two separate Boer Republics of the Orange Free State and the South African Republic (Transvaal), and the ill-defined territories of British Bechuanaland, the Transkei, and Zululand, which operated under diverse forms of "native law." Politically astute imperialists, exemplified in the character of Cecil John Rhodes (1853-1902), saw immense potential in the unification of these areas under British administration: the mineral wealth (the diamond rush in the 1870s and

gold in 1886), natural resources and a large pool of unskilled black labour could be combined to produce great personal wealth and increase the region's cache in the workings of the British Empire. That the tribal protectorates were effectively conquered British territories suggested that the two Boer Republics, as missing parts of the equation, would have to be conquered or coerced into unification - or both, as it turned out. The unification of the territorially distinct Boer Republics with the two British colonies of the Cape and Natal to produce the Union of South Africa in 1910 was a legal technicality that brought the mineral wealth of the Boer Republics within easier administration of the British. That this occurred less than ten years after the South African War, where thousands of men, women and children were interned and died in concentration camps,⁵ points to the realisation by those men in power that a national identity that healed or overcame the differences between the Dutch Boers, or Afrikaners as they were becoming known, and the English was something that needed to be fought for and manufactured. Thus, one of the biggest events that shaped the future of South Africa and, indeed, ultimately led to the establishment of Apartheid, was the emergence of a common English/Afrikaner identity distinctly in opposition to the "non-Whites" who dominated South Africa in numbers and yet who lacked the wealth and power to usurp the colonial power structures.



Figure 1

Koopmans-de-Wet House, Cape Town - urban Cape Dutch Architecture. Source: Fairbridge, *Historic Houses of South Africa*.

To use the neutral word "emerged" does not adequately capture the processes involved in the intentional structuring of this common English/Afrikaner identity by many figures, among them Cecil Rhodes. He recognised, even before the South African War, that the consolidation of power and wealth in South Africa was contingent on the end of antagonism between the English and Afrikaners, an antagonism supposedly beginning in the early 1800s at the Cape and leading to the Great Trek and the diaspora of Dutch speakers into the hinterland of South Africa. It was these latter people, with the help of Cape intellectuals,⁶ who eventually started to constitute their identity as Afrikaners. The necessity of overcoming the antagonism was understood by General Botha who, after having fought against the British in the South African War not more than ten years before, is purported to have asked the following rhetorical question at the Bloemfontein Congress of the South African Party in 1911: "What is our main object? The co-operation of both the European races, in order along that path to form a South African Nation."⁷ Whilst General Hertzog stated: "This is the beginning, the practical beginning of the existence of a South African nationality and national life",⁸ even though he later went on to establish the Afrikaner and republican oriented National Party.⁹



Figure 2

Morgenster, Somerset West - whitewashed walls, curvilinear gable, shuttered windows, thatch roof - elements typically associated with the phrase "Cape Dutch." Source: Fairbridge, *Historic Houses of South Africa*.

Two issues need to be clarified. Firstly, it should be noted that, on the whole, the English and Cape politicians were firm believers that this nationalism was a necessary component of the strengthening of the British Empire; it was only once a common identity had been achieved that South Africa's unproblematic contribution to the Empire could proceed. Secondly, South Africa was not unique, at this point in history, in its emergent nationalist rhetoric; the rise of nationalist agendas throughout the world was endemic to the period.¹⁰ Yet, unlike other "nations," English and Afrikaans South Africans arguably had little in common, except, and this was the crux of the matter, their European culture, made more poignant by being in Africa.

Cape Dutch architecture, or rather, Cape Dutch homesteads were icons of this "common" European culture. Yet, they were not ready-made and unproblematic symbols English/Afrikaner identity. In fact, the English had only developed a presence at the Cape at the beginning of the nineteenth century, just as the production of Cape Dutch homesteads was on the wane. They had had little to do with the production of Cape Dutch architecture at all. And yet the same could have been argued with regard to the Afrikaners who, although largely the descendents of the original Dutch and other non-English settlers at the Cape, had developed a distinctly non-Dutch identity forged at the frontier of the Great Trek and its resulting tribulations. The 150-odd years of Dutch administration *prior* to the occupation of the Cape by the British formed the perfect material for the representation of a history that saw this period as primarily *European*, and hence open to mutual claim by the British and the Afrikaner alike. The work needing to be done was to represent Cape Dutch architecture and Cape Dutch homesteads in particular as part of a common heritage. In fact, the symbolic representation of the new nation was to be partly formed through the mutual custodianship of a set of buildings that neither English, nor Afrikaner, had had a hand in making - like a squabbling couple overcoming differences on finding an abandoned baby on their doorstep. And, like a child, Cape Dutch architecture represented the potential of a "glorious" future through its representing a "glorious" past.

As we will see, the (predominantly) English motivators of the building preservation movement and the promoters of Cape Dutch as a national style can be interpreted as having motives for this other than the structuring and representation of a common English/Afrikaner identity. In effect, the English and the imperialists also claimed the Cape's past as their own and thereby added veracity and longevity to the project of Empire in Africa. In this sense it was not quite a common heritage, but rather an appropriated history. Yet, as already noted, the aim of developing a common English/Afrikaner identity through the idea of a common heritage was itself supportive of the strengthening of South Africa's role in the British Empire - it was irrelevant whether it was a common heritage versus an appropriated history that was being promoted, the result was intended to be the same. This paper explores how the emerging building preservation

movement and its focus on Cape Dutch architecture, as well as the promotion of Cape Dutch architecture as a South African national style, formed part of the explicit and implicit structuring of a common English/Afrikaner identity.

Cecil Rhodes, Herbert Baker and Groote Schuur

Cecil Rhodes can generally be credited as the first person to realise the potential that Cape Dutch architecture in general, and Cape Dutch homesteads in particular, held for the creation of a common English/Afrikaner identity. When Rhodes looked for a new residence in the early 1890s whilst Premier of the Cape, he chose the site of the former Dutch East India Company's barn in Rondebosch which had been established by the Cape's first Dutch Governor, Jan van Riebeeck. Not only did he change the somewhat Anglo name of the house existing on the site from The Grange to Groote Schuur (a name reflecting its origin as a Dutch built barn), but he also chose to have the residence altered in 1892 in the Cape Dutch style, a style arguably forged by the ancestors of the Afrikaners. Not quite a replica of a Cape Dutch homestead, the alterations by Herbert Baker relied on florid gables, shuttered windows and whitewashed stucco, to achieve the association (figure 3). Notwithstanding the trend of the Queen Anne revival,¹¹ these moves can be very easily taken as a conscious attempt to begin the process of this identity restructuring especially when it is considered that Rhodes was making political overtures to the Afrikaner Bond at the time. Baker, as his architect on the project, seems to confirm this in his book on their relationship published in 1934:



Figure 3

Groote Schuur, designed by Herbert Baker for Cecil Rhodes. Source: Le Roux, W.J., *Groote Schuur*.

But he would, I believe, not have been displeased in thinking that when, on the formation of the Union of South Africa, it became the home of the Prime Minister of the Union, it would be three Dutch South Africans who first dwelt there. Surely Groote Schuur and the aura of its *genus loci* can have no small influence in the consummation of Rhodes' ideals for the future of South Africa?¹²

The *Rand Daily Mail*, around the same time, expressed a similar sentiment through its acclamation of Groote Schuur as an architectural marvel:

He restored the far more picturesque name of Groote Schuur, he rebuilt and remodelled the mansion, and in its architecture and decorations made it typical of the Union of English and Dutch. Then he filled it with the treasures of South Africa.¹³

Baker's belief in Cape Dutch architecture as a political instrument in structuring a common English/Afrikaner identity is doubtful, even if he was initially the main motivator for the development of the Cape Dutch revival. That he was schooled in Arts & Crafts architecture was perhaps the more powerful motive for his belief in the Cape Dutch revival as a worthy event in the Cape. The Cape Dutch buildings' "honesty" of natural materials and simple but elegant rural designs would have suited the sensibilities of an architect keen on exploring the architectural ideas of his time. As we shall see, Baker did join in the chorus of voices promoting the preservation of existing Cape Dutch buildings and the valorising of Cape Dutch as an appropriate national style, but its emphasis does not lie with either Baker or even Rhodes. The active promotion of Cape Dutch architecture as a new national style gained in emphasis following Rhodes's death in 1900 and Baker's move to Johannesburg in 1903 during which he began a slow self-extrication from the style he had helped to promote. The concern to actively advance Cape Dutch buildings as worthy of preservation and Cape Dutch architecture as a national style whilst recognising its potential to represent and structure a common English/Afrikaner identity was generated by political movements explicitly aimed at consolidating the two Republics and Colonies into a Union.

The Closer Union Society: Cape Dutch architecture as a "Common Heritage"

Of all the institutions and their members most involved in the promotion of Cape Dutch architecture as the embodiment of a common English/Afrikaner identity, the Closer Union Society (hereafter CUS) was the most active, certainly before and within the first few years of Union in 1910. The CUS was formed in 1908 with W.P. Schreiner as president with the aim of promoting a nation after the union that was imminent because: "A handful of leaders may fashion a state, but they cannot create a nation."¹⁴ Although the constitution and work of the South African National Society (hereafter SANS) predated that of the CUS, its initial interest was in the preservation of Cape Dutch homesteads and not necessarily in promoting their image and substance as a symbol of a common English/Afrikaner identity. Certainly, a few years after the inception of the SANS, the rhetoric around the preservation of the Cape Dutch homesteads seemed to undergo a change from one promoting the interests of antiquarians to that of nationalists. It should also not go unnoticed that there were members common to both the CUS and the SANS at the highest level, for example Senator F.S. Malan was one of the vice-presidents of the CUS at its inception and was president of the SANS by 1922.

It was, however, the CUS that holds the somewhat dubious distinction of conflating the Cape Dutch homestead with the emerging common English/Afrikaner identity. F. Masey, a partner in the firm established by Herbert Baker, started an eight-part series of articles titled "The Beginnings of Our Nation" in the first issue of *The State*, the main propaganda organ of the CUS.¹⁵ Rich in photographs of Cape Dutch architecture (thanks to the work of Arthur Elliott), the series ran across eight articles in the monthly editions from January to October 1909 that saw most of the writing focused on Cape Dutch architecture owned by the Cape's elite, including Schoongezicht, Koopmans-de-Wet House, and the Drostdy at Tulbagh (figure 4.). Dorothea Fairbridge took over the series in August 1911 with a new series titled "Old South African Homesteads" which ran twelve articles until December 1912. This formed the basis of

her *The Historic Houses of South Africa*}⁶ Her series was more focused on the particular history of the more picturesque and gabled homesteads such as Morgenster (figure 3) rather than actively promoting them as symbolic and material expressions of a common English/Afrikaner identity. However, as we shall see, this initial concern of Masey's was not something ignored in her articles.

Masey's first article is simply an introduction to Cape Dutch architecture and carries some sentiment regarding the need for preservation of the homesteads which were undergoing serious depletion in their numbers, their integrity and their artefacts which were being removed and sold out of the country. Whilst no explicit overtures were made to represent Cape Dutch architecture in general, and the homesteads in particular, as symbols of a common English/Afrikaner identity, the title of the series expresses this sentiment quite clearly. It is in fact a book review of Alys Trotter's *Old Cape Colony* that begins to give voice to the nationalist spirit being promoted by *The State*:

Our readers up-country should make a point of buying Mrs. Trotter's book. For it deals with a national heritage, and though he may never see it the dweller in the North has as good a claim as anyone else to be proud of the handiwork of his forbears in planting forests and building the homesteads of the most beautiful peninsula in the world.¹⁷



Figure 4

The Drostdy at Tulbagh as illustrated in *The State*, v.2, n.9, (September, 1909).

That the people of the two Republics in the north were invited to possess the homesteads through the physical device of Trotter's book is apparent. But it was with the Drostdy (magistrate's house and office) at the small town of Tulbagh in the Cape that the idea of Cape Dutch homesteads being symbols of a common English/Afrikaner identity began to be more overtly voiced.¹⁸ The second edition of *The State* carried a poem dedicated to the Drostdy penned by F.C. Kolbe, whose great-great-grandfather, it was noted, was the magistrate of Stellenbosch, a town noted for its Cape Dutch buildings. In the poem, the Drostdy, with its 'stately halls and courtly manners' symbolises the European past at the Cape which demands to be emulated in the present - and therein lies the common mission of English and Afrikaner alike:

Relic and emblem of a storied past.
Thrice happy they whose lines in thee are cast
Thy records summon all in thy embrace
To emulate the virtues of the race.
Thy stately halls of courtly manners tell,
Where only Ladies Bountiful should dwell.
Thy solid frame is pledge of future glory,
And links our doings with our country's story.
F.C. Kolbe, "To the Drostdy at Tulbagh."¹⁹

The "our doings" - perhaps the impending act of Union but certainly the structuring of a common English/Afrikaner identity and a new nation - is the necessary conclusion of the past symbolised by the Drostdy. However, as hinted at by Kolbe's line "Thy records summon all in thy embrace," the Drostdy was found by Masey to be more than just a symbol. Masey took pains

to point out that the Drostdy was the literal manifestation of the joining of the Dutch and British administration of the Cape: "Whilst it proved to be the last building begun upon Dutch soil in South Africa, it was destined to be the first completed upon the passing of the Cape into the hands of the British."²⁰ There was, so suggested by Masey, at least one Cape Dutch homestead that the British had a hand in making. In the very next edition of *The State* Masey continued to expound the symbolic meaning of the Drostdy as unifier of Afrikaner and English, both in the past and in the present, as exemplified in the following quote:

To-day particular interest is attached to the old house, for, as has already been pointed out, it perhaps more than any other official building in South Africa represents the link between the past and present which under the Act of Union we are consolidating [...] It is interesting to note that its present owner [Meiring Beck] was a member of the National Convention [for Union], which finally linked up the differences between the new regime and the old regime of which his old house saw so much long ago.²¹

Meiring Beck, through owning the Drostdy and through partaking in the convention that forged the Union of South Africa, is recognised as helping to legally bring together the two "races" that had already been spiritually unified through the Drostdy and its history. It is useful to include a fairly extensive quote taken from an article written by Meiring Beck himself titled 'south Africanism':

There is scarcely a single point in which you will not find striking similarities in the modes of thought and expression between Dutch-descended and English-descended South Africans [...] The problem for those guiding the destinies of the British Commonwealth is not how to banish for ever the phantom of a South African nation but how, by fostering the national spirit, to drive into grooves sympathetic to common interests rather than into grooves out of harmony with those interests [...] In building up South African character let us cultivate pride in our own history and in the history of our forefathers. Let us accept each other's history as a common heritage.²²

That the Imperialist bent of the CUS recognised the importance of fostering and guiding a common English/Afrikaner identity should be apparent to the reader. That the sentence "let us accept each other's history as a common heritage" came from a man who owned and lived in one of the material artefacts of that (imagined) common heritage should appear as less than coincidental and should illustrate the extent to which Cape Dutch homesteads began to be represented as material manifestation of this common English/Afrikaner identity. In fact, John X. Merriman, the Prime Minister of the Cape and the main proponent of union over federation,²³ himself owned the Cape Dutch homestead of Schoongezicht.²⁴

As mentioned earlier, the writing on Cape Dutch architecture began to show the interests of an aesthete more than a propagandist when Dorothea Fairbridge took over the exposition of Cape Dutch homesteads in *The State*. If there is any doubt as to Fairbridge's initial support for the use of Cape Dutch homesteads and associated history to be used to forge closer ties between English and Afrikaner alike, then certainly by 1922 with the publication of her benchmark book *The Historic Houses of South Africa* the opposite is evident. In what amounts to an extensive and highly illustrated (through photographs, drawings and colour plates) survey of many of the Cape Dutch homesteads, the book included a Foreword written by the then Prime Minister, J. C. Smuts, which included the following statement:

The old houses of South Africa are a common heritage of which all South Africans are proud, and are precious links binding us all together in noble traditions and great memories of our past.²⁵

That "all South Africans" referred to all White South Africans is fairly certain, as at the time, the citizenship of "non-Whites" was not a plausible concern. Smuts confirms this by going on in considering the importance of disseminating South African history:

It is, for the greater part, a record of struggles in the face of difficulties, and those difficulties overcome and shaped to noble uses, even as the dogged spirit in which her two white races more than once met in collision is being fused into an equally determined spirit of patriotism which has a wider outlook than that of race.²⁶

The above quote illustrates again the tendency emerging in the discourse around Cape Dutch architecture and homesteads of a conscience attempt to find in Cape Dutch history elements common to both English and Dutch, and thereby allow the subtle appropriation by the English of Dutch history at the Cape. As we will see in the example below, this tendency, to conflate the histories and cultures of Dutch settlers and the English into one narrative, allowed the 170-odd years separating their respective initial settlement at the Cape to be ignored and enabled the English to symbolically appropriate a history that was not theirs.

Conflated histories: writing commonalities between Afrikaner and English

An example of this tendency to conflate English and Dutch histories and cultures is found in the December 1920 edition of the *Architect, Builder & Engineer* (hereafter the *AB&E*). The *AB&E* was the unofficial magazine of the Cape Institute of Architects (hereafter CIA), both entities being heavily involved in the production of discourse around the Cape Dutch homesteads. As part of a series titled "On the Need for a South African Architecture" which ran from November 1920 to March 1921, the December edition of the *AB&E*, in its valorising of the Cape Dutch homesteads, notes the "remarkable" similarities in architecture between the English Queen Anne period and the Dutch Renaissance and goes on to mention that "the streams running at the sides of our typical village streets have become significant of the land and its people and not less so because this disposition of the water-minded earlier settlers of the waterways of Holland or the country streamlets of the English shires."²⁷ What the author is identifying is the dual-purpose irrigation and storm-water gutters running between streets and pavements, typical to most Dutch-settled towns such as Stellenbosch. The text locates these dual characteristics as essential racial qualities of the European races involved and states "we are the stronger socially for this weaving of diverse [European] racial qualities into the fabric of the settlement which has now become a nation in the Union of South Africa". Commonalities identified through the built environment or landscape, such as those of architectural styles and an ingrained and mutual love for water - "the fabric of the settlement" - are identified as bonds tying English and Afrikaner into a strong nation. The article exists almost as if to say, "We, the English, could have and would have done this, if you had not done it before us."

In part, the common history or heritage being promoted or read through the Cape Dutch homesteads was aimed at establishing ties to a common European racial origin. The November 1920 edition of the *AB&E*, not coincidentally featuring full-page photographs of the gables of Groot Constantia (figure 14), Morgenster (figure 3), Spier, and Elsenberg homesteads, contains an article titled "Our Racial Inheritance".²⁸ The article takes on board all the racial and genetic/environmental thinking of the day²⁹ in which the author praises the "combined resistance by the civilised population of onslaughts by native barbarians" as the single thing that has strengthened the "European stock" against a debilitating, almost subtropical climate. Although never mentioning the English and the Dutch directly but rather deferring to generalised "European nationalities," the article is written to allow the reader to place the English alongside the first settlers in its recounting early colonial history, whilst suggesting both as being "noble in origin and fusible in character".³⁰ This architectural magazine, through processes of conflation and concealed anomalies, suggests to the reader that the English and the Dutch were together at the origin of the settlement of South Africa and produced the architectural heritage signified by the Cape Dutch homestead.

As mentioned before, articles such as these could be read as a general effort by the predominantly English authors to appropriate and inveigle the English into a history that was not specifically theirs. However, it should be fairly clear that at least some individuals sincerely considered Cape Dutch architecture and homesteads an appropriate material representation and

symbol around which a common English/Afrikaner identity could be forged. This nationalist spirit is easily recognised in the movements that sprang up at the turn of the century to secure the preservation and restoration of many of the Cape Dutch homesteads. Even if the discourse around Cape Dutch homesteads was part of an English appropriation of early settler history, the promoters of the preservation movement certainly considered the buildings essential to a national history. Part of this was a realisation of the didactic potential that the homesteads, as museums or monuments, presented to visitors to them. Whilst the preservation movement was not by any means peculiar to South Africa it is important to acknowledge the extent to which it was motivated by sentiments particularly aimed at defining the history of a "nation."

The South African National Society: representing a national history in monuments

As has been mentioned already, the South African National Society (hereafter SANS) was the first institution along with the CIA to promote the preservation of Cape Dutch homesteads as being of national importance. On the 23rd December 1904, at a meeting in Cape Town presided over by Chief Justice Sir Henry de Villiers (later Lord), the South African Association decided to form the SANS.³¹ On the 18th February 1905, the first general meeting of the SANS was held, whereupon a constitution was drawn up and officers were elected. That the SANS was a wide-spread and influential body can be deduced from the membership list. In 1909 a branch was established in Durban and one in Pietermaritzburg in 1922. By 1922 there were 168 members in Cape Town, 74 in Durban and 13 in Pietermaritzburg,³² a geographical tally that hinted at the fact that English-oriented South Africans were its main motivators. Its membership of 1922 makes up a formidable list of South African elite. The importance of this society is further illustrated by the attendance of the Governor-General of the Cape and H.R.H. Princess Alice at the 25th anniversary of the SANS held in the Castle in Cape Town on the 8th of April 1930.³³

It is worth quoting the aims of the SANS at length as it clearly illustrates that the society was not merely intent on preserving Cape Dutch buildings (amongst others), but also to act as a didactic organ:

To endeavour to inculcate respect and affection for the natural beauties of the country, to preserve, as far as possible, from destruction, all ancient monuments and specimens of old Colonial architecture still remaining in South Africa, and to keep systematic records of such in cases where they cannot be saved; to compile a record of old furniture, and other objects of interest still in South Africa, and to take all possible methods to discourage their removal from the country; to promote love and care for the trees and save unnecessary destruction; to endeavour to regulate the gathering of wild flowers so as to avoid the danger of the extinction of any species; to collect records, and endeavour to acquire archives of historic interest; to make known by means of lectures and printed matter circulated throughout the country, the object of the Society, and to endeavour to promote in legitimate manner reverence for the natural beauties of the country, and a conservative spirit towards the remains and traditions of old colonial life.³⁴

That the SANS was not simply a group of antiquarians with a sentimental love of the "beautiful" was apparent very early on. The very name of the organisation certainly suggests that its preservation agenda was part of a nationalist agenda. By the 1910s it had inaugurated a series of public lectures and "Half Hour Talks with the object of inculcating in the minds of the people, a spirit of respect and desire to preserve".³⁵ The report of the SANS 25th anniversary considered this need to "inculcate" arose from the fact that in the early years "The people as a whole had not realised the necessity of retaining our monuments of the past. As the years passed it was necessary to educate them to what should be looked upon as a *national duty*".³⁶ [emphasis added].

That Cape Dutch architecture and Cape Dutch homesteads were to be a major part of their preservation and nationalist agenda is hinted at in the last sentence of their "Object" which was printed in each annual report: "a conservative spirit towards the remains and traditions of

old colonial life." Certainly, one of the first exhibitions the SANS organised was a display of "Colonial furniture and antiques" in Cape Town.³⁷ One of their earliest successful projects was motivating for the preservation in 1913 of Koopmans-de-Wet house, an urban Cape Dutch house (figure 1). The list of its protectors certainly confirms the active involvement of both the English and Afrikaner Cape and South African elite, including the wife of the Prime Minister of South Africa, Louis Botha.

In a similar manner, the SANS had as early as 1906 been pressing the government to turn Groot Constantia, the Cape Dutch homestead of Simon van der Stel (the "father of the nation," as he was occasionally known), and a government vintners college at the time, into a museum.³⁸ The SANS, along with the Historical Monuments Commission (hereafter HMC), formed a committee appointed by the government to oversee restoration work on Groot Constantia after it was gutted by fire in 1925.³⁹ Yet, the SANS was not simply an institution for lobbying support for building preservation. When the architect Frank Kendall published his findings on *The Restoration of Groot Constantia*,⁴⁰ the SANS helped fund the considerable publishing costs⁴¹ of the 1,000 copies printed.⁴² The SANS also made payments in 1935 to James Morris for his architectural services rendered to restore the Cape Dutch Drostdy or Magistrate's Home at Tulbagh which had suffered a fire.⁴³ A year before they had paid towards some of the costs needed to restore the doors and doorway at the erstwhile Cape Dutch homestead in Cape Town then known as the Normal College.⁴⁴ The SANS was in effect, spending their member's subscriptions directly on preservation work and propaganda.

Yet, there are perhaps two projects that the SANS was involved with that had the greatest impact on the production and dissemination of the Cape Dutch homestead as a generic national icon. The first was the 1906 commissioning of the photographer Arthur Elliott to document and survey Cape Dutch homesteads in the Western Cape.⁴⁵ Elliott later continued the project of his own volition and produced a photographic archive of Cape Dutch homesteads of enormous proportions. In 1936, the HMC recommended that the Government purchase the entire 9,368 collection of Elliott's various photographs to be held at the State Archives building where they remain today.⁴⁶ The second project that the SANS were instrumental in achieving was the lobbying for Act No. 6 of 1923 which was passed, thereby establishing the HMC.⁴⁷ Although the HMC initially had limited powers in motivating for the governments involvement in the preservation of historical monuments, the Act was revised in 1934 as the Natural and Historical Monuments Relics and Antiques Act which allowed the Historical Monuments Commission (hereafter HMC) to make recommendations to the Minister of Education to proclaim national monuments.⁴⁸ That Cape Dutch homesteads subsequently made up an inordinate amount of the national monuments of South Africa is a fact noted by Franco Frescura.⁴⁹

The nationalist sentiments associated with the preservation of Cape Dutch homesteads were not limited to the SANS and its followers, although certainly their influence and occupations were diverse enough for it to be quite likely that its members may have regularly contributed articles on the topic to newspapers and magazines. A case in point is the un-authored article concerning the restoration of Bien Donne 1931, bought by Rhodes Fruit Farms because the trustees felt "that this would be in keeping with the ideas of [Rhodes] that old monuments should, where possible, be preserved, so that, whilst looking to the future from a practical viewpoint, links with the older generation should be strengthened".⁵⁰ The quote almost perfectly sums up Rhodes's imperialist vision being legitimised through a literal connection to the past as represented and strengthened through the preservation of Cape Dutch homesteads.

Undoubtedly it was the fire that decimated Groot Constantia on the 19th December 1925 that brought preservation and the importance of turning the building into a museum directly into the focus of the public eye. Although the government had (at least since 1917) been considering

Groot Constantia as 'something in the nature of show buildings',⁵¹ it was only with the fire of 1925 and subsequent restoration that the production of Groot Constantia as museum became a directed activity. The January, 1926 edition of the *AB&E* reported that "This is a national architectural calamity of the first degree",⁵² and then went on to "plead with all the force of which we are capable that the Government should immediately restore this historic building"⁵³ (figure 5). Support also came from the Cape Town City Council. When the projected costs were set to rise from £8,000 to £12,000 this did not stop the call to restore the building to its fullest extent, in fact it seemed to have made arguments more strident. Consider the statement by Councillor S. Caldecott: "It will cost twelve thousand pounds. It will cost that much (maximum) to rebuild this fine expression of the early White conquerors for the honour of their descendants".⁵⁴ He goes on to make very the symbolic importance Groot Constantia presented to the building of a common English/Afrikaner identity:

More especially, and more closely, it touches the descendants of the men of the race that built it, the compatriots of Van der Stel. But unless we, whose language and ways of thought, though allied and close, are other than theirs, are insincere in our profession of a desire to fuse and to mingle our traditions and pride with theirs in a common love of country, it touches us also. Groot Constantia can be restored.⁵⁵

As was mentioned, the SANS helped fund the publication of Kendall's restoration work on Groot Constantia. Senator F.S. Malan, who at the time was President of the SANS and had, from 1910 to 1924, held the cabinet portfolio of Mines and Industry, contributed the Foreword in which the didactic intent of the restoration and the book are made clear:



Figure 5
 Cartoon showing the ghost of Simon Van der Stel urging the Labour leader Madeley to support the restoration of Groot Constantia. Source: *South African Nation* (April, 1926).

It was felt by the Society that this restoration would not only preserve a priceless national asset, but would also afford an unique opportunity for impressing upon the public by a direct object lesson, the importance, from a national point of view, of preserving the best types of one of the few really artistic creations, namely Cape Dutch Architecture, on which our southern continent prides itself [...] May the publication of this handsome record of Mr. Kendall's work, now satisfactorily completed, not only be of assistance to the architectural profession, but also be prized by all who love our storied past as enshrined in our ancient national monuments.⁵⁶

The moves to have Groot Constantia preserved as part of a "national" heritage reinforcing a common English/Afrikaner identity are only one half of the story that emerged following the fire at Groot Constantia. For its restoration is a prime example of the general wilful and spurious restorations that took place in order to secure Cape Dutch homesteads as icons matching an ideal posited through earlier discourse.

Groot Constantia and other wilful and spurious restorations

Following governmental approval to restore Groot Constantia, the Minister of Public Works asked the CIA to nominate an architect to plan and oversee its restoration, and Frank Kendall was duly confirmed for the job some two months after the fire.⁵⁷ During the process of his investigations, and thanks to the unveiling effects of the fire, Kendall was able to establish that the house has been considerably altered during a period long after the death of Van der Stel into its form just before the fire. That the original dwelling of Simon van der Stel was a far more humble abode was not only confirmed through Kendall's archaeological investigations, but also through the reinterpretation of a drawing by Van der Heydt made in 1741 (figure 6).

This illustration was previously thought to be an inaccurate rendering of Van der Stel's residence because it depicted the dwelling with hipped roofs rather than the gables that were thought at the time to characterise Van der Stel's residence. Kendall now took Van der Heydt's illustration of an un-gabled and fairly humble abode to be an accurate illustration of the house during Van der Stel's time.

Kendall published these revelations in his *The Restoration of Groot Constantia* in which he refers to the commonly held view that Van der Stel had designed Groot Constantia as it was then known: "although it goes to my heart to do so, I must dispel this illusion."⁵⁸ Not only was Constantia assumed to have been "built" by Van der Stel and promoted as such by numerous individuals such as the Town Clerk, J.R. Finch, in the official guide to the Cape Peninsula,⁵⁹ but it was also taken by architects of significance such as J.M. Solomon to be the "prototype of all the Cape homesteads".⁶⁰ Not to mention the idea that the "father of the Nation," as Van der Stel was generally regarded thanks to his policy of introducing settlers to the Cape, had not lived in such a grand and noble building as had previously been supposed. The conflation of "great man" and "grand building" that had been assumed and promoted since the beginning of discourse on Cape Dutch architecture had been exposed for the wilful propaganda it was.

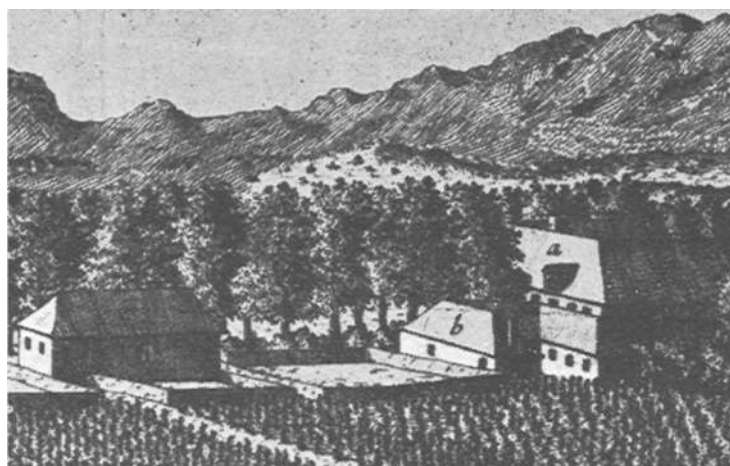


Figure 6

Van der Heydt's illustration of the original Groot Constantia showing hipped roofs and no gables. Source: Kendall, F., *The Restoration of Groot Constantia*.



Figure 7

Groot Constantia Interior showing checker floor tiles, c1927. Source: [UCT]BC206.



Figure 8

Groot Constantia showing cannon "improvement" implemented by Kendall, c.1927. Source: [UCT]BC206.

As required through the terms of his appointment, Kendall consulted the joint committee of the SANS and the HMC which was "called upon to see that the restoration was conducted on lines which would preserve the traditions and appearance of the old Manor House without improvements".⁶¹ The committee considered restoring the dwelling to the Van der Stel period which would have meant tearing down its gables. As another alternative they considered restoring it to a condition just before the fire, which "would mean immortalising a lean to iron roof at the back with a modern excrescence obviously out of harmony with the original conception".⁶² In the end, though "*Constantia at its best*" was the formula agreed upon as most effectively meeting the real end in view".⁶³ Exactly what "the real end in view" was is not stated. It seems reasonable to interpret this as being the general desire to restore the original conflation of Simon van der Stel and Groot Constantia through the restoration of the building to its ideal 'self.'

Certainly the opening ceremony of Groot Constantia would suggest that this ideological restoration was successful. The opening ceremony was a major event in the year of 1927. As the Administrator of the Cape, Fourie, noted in his opening speech, there were many institutions represented: representatives of the Senate, the House of Assembly, the Provincial Council, the Judiciary, the Magistracy, the Municipalities of Cape Town, Wynberg, and Simon's Town, the Divisional Council of the Cape, the University, the Church, the Press, the Publicity Association, the Chamber of Commerce, the Army, the Navy, the Mountain Club and the Consulates of foreign countries and not forgetting the South African National Society and the Historical Monuments Commission.⁶⁴ In a speech that made no mention of the controversy over the attribution of the gabled building to Van der Stel, Fourie located the value of the building with its association with Simon van der Stel whilst also admiring the wine cellar's "beautiful pedi-

ment". He ended his speech with the sentiment that the museum "may long serve its purpose of ministering to the inspiration, instruction and delight of many generations to come".

There is other evidence of wilful restoration that sought to return Groot Constantia to an ideal condition fitting to its status as an icon of Cape Dutch homesteads. Right from the beginning of his appointment, Kendall was involved in sourcing items of Cape Dutch metalwork and furniture to fill the homestead.⁶⁵ This aspect of the project received a major financial boost when the South African born Alfred de Pass, described by Kendall as "A Connoisseur and Collector of various works of Art,"⁶⁶ offered to locate items of furniture for the project. Kendall mentions that De Pass had committed himself to add to the collection over the following years and "it is hoped that something may be found which can actually be identified as having belonged to Simon van der Stel himself".⁶⁷ Kendall's restoration of the flagstone floors can be seen in a similar way. Kendall spent a fair amount of energy trying to locate the clay source that Simon van der Stel had used for their manufacture, as they had become prone to disintegration thanks to the heat of the blaze.⁶⁸ The flagstones, as completed in Kendall's restoration, are a curious checkerboard pattern, not previously part of the homestead and which may have emerged out of cost-saving concerns (figure 7).⁶⁹ Kendall also wilfully inserted a door between the two front rooms to the left of the entrance hall to permit "a very desirable vista through these rooms," which he felt "would be quite consistent with the general ideas of a house of this kind".⁷⁰ It seems plausible to suggest, then, that Kendall, following paintings depicting the layered space of Dutch interiors from Van der Stel's time such as Pieter de Hooch's *The Card Players*, was simply restoring the dwelling to the ideal of the icon. In a final note on the somewhat wilful restoration Kendall organised, through De Pass, two small cannons to be brought from overseas based on no other rationale than "the two guns flanking the Main Entrance from the *Stoep* would be admirable"⁷¹ (figure 8).

Kendall's was not the only restoration that returned Cape Dutch homesteads to their imagined ideal. Welgemeend, the homestead of "Onze Jan" Hofmeyr, leader of the Afrikaner Bond and occasional friend of Rhodes, was given the facelift of a gable it never originally had,⁷² specifically in order to commemorate the "great" man. In another instance of spurious restoration, Rhodes' cottage at Muizenberg had its original corrugated iron roof removed and replaced with thatch⁷³ - a material and image more in keeping with that "great" man.



Figure 9.

Gwelo Goodman, *Groot Constantia*. Source: Fairbridge, D. *Historic Houses of South Africa*.



Figure 10

Gwelo Goodman, gable "renovation" for Newlands House. Source: J. Newton-Thompson, *Gwelo Goodman*.

The final example is found in the somewhat maverick work of Robert "Gwelo" Goodman, an England-born South African artist. Goodman, who was notably a friend of the architects James Morris and Frank Kendall, as well as Dorothea Fairbridge,⁷⁴ contrived a Cape Dutch restoration of his own. He had begun painting Cape Dutch homesteads at least by 1919⁷⁵ and by 1923 they formed the major subject of his exhibition in Grahamstown,⁷⁶ (figure 9). It is not surprising, then, that as an amateur architect he focused most of his attention on the Cape Dutch style. When his friend, Judge Newton-Thompson, bought the much-altered Cape Dutch homestead of Newlands House where Goodman had stayed in the 1920s, Goodman offered his services in restoring the dwelling to its Cape Dutch origins⁷⁷ and designed two Cape Dutch gables at the new entrance to the dwelling (figure 10). Goodman's architectural career promoting Cape Dutch architecture did not end there. Thanks to his friendship with the sugar-baron Douglas Mackeurton, he was invited to design many buildings in the plantation town of Tongaat in Natal, and not only set Cape Dutch as the style for most subsequent designs there, but also literally copied some well known Cape Dutch buildings, for instance, Tongaat High School is an almost exact replica of the Old Slave Lodge/Supreme Court building in Cape Town.

Promotion and dissemination of Cape Dutch as a national style

That the first few decades of the twentieth century were characterised by a rise in nationalism the world over is mirrored in the explicit agenda of many "nations" to establish or recover a national style of architecture. South Africa, as we shall see, was caught up in this general movement. That Cape Dutch architecture was understood to be the basis for a national architectural style was a common sentiment expressed by many architects and politicians in the 1920s. Just exactly how literally this was intended to be taken, was a matter for debate. Baker had, in his years at the Cape, developed a Cape Dutch revival style that, apart from being un-typically double storied, carried with it simplest visual clues of Cape Dutch homesteads: white-washed walls and gables. Yet in following the spirit of the Arts & Crafts movements Baker saw within the Cape Dutch homestead the organic development of a style that had emerged out of the strictures of its place and as a response to local climatic, material and cultural conditions; style was not as important as rooting the building to place.⁷⁸

It is difficult to believe the sincerity of Baker's canvassing for the correctness of organic or place-based architecture when, after moving to Johannesburg, he designed many houses there in the manner of the Cape Dutch revival style he had pioneered in Cape Town. In a way, it seems more plausible to consider the words of Rex Martienssen, who later became South Africa's venerated modernist architects, as being more genuinely attuned to the place-based and organic aspects of Cape Dutch. In an article written in 1928 following a tour of Cape Dutch homesteads, Martienssen wrote that "the ideals [of Cape Dutch] must remain unbroken. The

spirit live on,"⁷⁹ but that it was important that "we must not copy, we must find our own solutions to the problems we will meet".⁸⁰

Whether or not Baker or Martienssen was more sincere in their suspicions of the trappings of 'style' is somewhat irrelevant. Certainly people were willing to credit Baker for the development of Cape Dutch as the basis for a national style. In fact, in dedicating his *The Restoration of Groot Constantia*, Kendall writes: "To Herbert Baker who awakened an interest in the arts of the old Cape settlers and laid the foundation of a national architecture in South Africa."⁸¹ Even if Baker had moved on to adventures in classical revival in the Union Buildings in Pretoria and the classical-colonial stylings of New Delhi, others were still willing to advocate Cape Dutch as a national architectural style in his name.

Baker was also credited with providing the country with the basis for a national style in furniture design. In an article titled "How we can Achieve a National Style in this Country," Professor Pearse noted that "In this country we owe a great debt to Sir Herbert Baker for the interest created by him in the Dutch furniture at the Cape, and for the furniture designs which he has had carried out".⁸² That Cape Dutch furniture was uniquely South African was suggested in an article in the *Cape Argus* by T. Elliston-Clarkson, who states that "in South Africa, it seems, only two of the arts have been truly good and truly South African. The one of these is architecture and the other is cabinet-making"⁸³ (figure 11). Perhaps the strongest call to Cape Dutch as a national style was made by the *AB&E*, which ran an article titled "Old Cape Craftsmanship" in July 1920. In it, both Cape Dutch architecture and furniture, as represented in the homesteads, were pointed to as the basis for a future national style, but also more simply, as the basis for domestic architecture in South Africa in general.



Figure 11

Yellowwood Wardrobe, Characteristic of Cape Dutch Furniture. Source: *Groot Constantia Catalogue, 1934*

With the increasing expansion of a truly South African national spirit a more widespread interest is being taken in those beautiful specimens of furniture craftsmanship which have been preserved to us from those spacious Cape homesteads which were built in the latter half of the eighteenth century [...] We feel, therefore, with the growth of an essentially South African spirit we cannot do better than to urge a sound study of the examples of architecture and craftsmanship left to us in South Africa, particularly of those remitted from the latter half of the eighteenth century - that period which is now recognised as having left us the most attractive models [...] It is true that early Cape craftsmanship is based on European examples, mainly the beautiful proportions and curves of, what is

called, the Queen Anne period. Yet there is much of an original style in it. Of all the dominions, we are the only one to possess an unique style. It should be our duty to develop it [...] We want beautiful, yet not extravagant, homes, and we cannot do wrong in following these early Cape models.⁸⁴

Charles Walgate, an architect of Cape Dutch persuasions, spoke at a meeting of the Cape Architectural Students Association, stressing that it was "a greater thing" to work towards a national style than to pursue an individual one.⁸⁵ He went on to stress that students needed to gather "pictures and books and drawings" to bring the style into focus. It seems significant that the article appeared in the *AB&E* which, along with many other publications and events, was providing enough drawings, books and pictures on Cape Dutch architecture to do exactly that. Walgate, through his position as an assessor of architectural students' work, was involved in prescribing Cape Dutch homesteads as the basis for measured drawing exams half a year later⁸⁶ which suggests he was literally helping students build up this visual data based on Cape Dutch homesteads. Prof. A.E. Snape, lecturer to architectural students at the University of Cape Town in the 1920s, gave no doubt as to where he thought the sources of a "national culture" lay: "In South Africa we inherit from the old Dutch examples of architecture a graceful simplicity and clear ideals which suit this country admirably. And though we must not be slavish copyists, yet here is our inspiration on which we must develop."⁸⁷

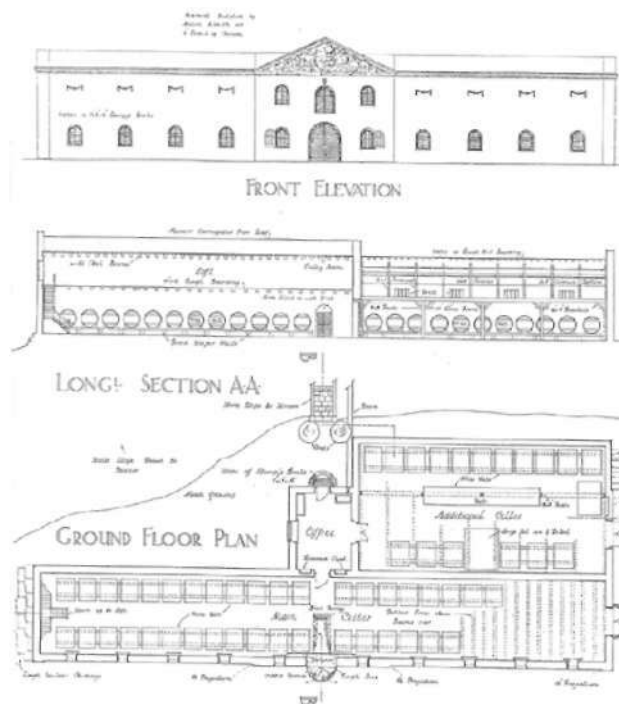


Figure 12

Fred Glennie drawing of Groot Constantia Wine Cellar, 1912. Source: Fairbridge, D., *Historic Houses of South Africa*.

Slavish copyists: Mapping the Cape Dutch gables

Being literal 'slavish copyists' was certainly one of the techniques employed by educational and institutional promoters of the Cape Dutch style in their attempts to inculcate both knowledge and veneration for the original homesteads. The Cape Institute of Architects (CIA) inaugurated a prize-giving scheme of measured drawings of "old buildings in the Cape Colony,"⁸⁸ with the first prize being awarded to Fred Glennie in 1912 for his set of drawings of Groot Constantia wine cellar,⁸⁹ (figure 12). The didactic intent of the CIA regarding Cape Dutch architecture is perhaps indicated by the fact that 100 copies of the 12 drawings of this competition

were made, costing £32,⁹⁰ a somewhat considerable expense at the time. Whether these were intended for sale or distribution to members is not particularly relevant: what is clear is that the CIA intended or expected to distribute images of a part of the Groot Constantia homestead to a fairly large audience. Cape Dutch homesteads were a dominant part of the measured-drawing lists prescribed by the CIA. Perhaps even more revealing was the focus on gables: the 1913 competition was limited strictly to a composition of six "Dutch gables to 1/2 scale and full size details"⁹¹ whilst the competition of 1914 prescribed "two gables and two pediments' 1/2 scale and full size details".⁹² As we shall see in a section below, this almost obsessive reproduction and focus on gables was indicative of a propensity to ignore the other buildings making up the homesteads; social space was ignored in favour of the exact measurements of "high" architecture. The measured drawing competition continued as an annual event in the Cape at least until 1922, whereupon the competition was opened to students from all over the country.⁹³

A sub-committee of the CIA, including Delbridge, Kendall and Walgate, made up the Royal Institute of British Architects (hereafter RIBA) board of assessors of students' work at the University of Cape Town after its establishment in 1922.⁹⁴ Cape Dutch architecture in general and Cape Dutch homesteads in particular, dominate the lists of legitimate subjects as part of the measured drawing component of work to be submitted at least for 1923⁹⁵ and 1924.⁹⁶ It was also noted at the bottom of the list for 1923 that 'students should measure drawings not in CIA sketch Book'⁹⁷ which is indicative of the intention of the CIA to have most of the Cape Dutch homesteads and other historical buildings measured and mapped out. The CIA was not alone in these endeavours. In 1920, thanks to a grant made by the government,⁹⁸ the Pretoria, and later Afrikaans nationalist architect, Gerard Moerdyk, had made "an extensive tour of the Cape and surveyed the most important of these [Cape Dutch] buildings".⁹⁹ These drawings were later lost at the High Commissioner's Office in London. In 1928 Professor Pearse took a group of 11 architectural students from Johannesburg on what Rex Martienssen (later an exponent of South African modernism) called an "Architectural Pilgrimage".¹⁰⁰ Judging from Martienssen's report, there is little doubt that Pearse intended to have the students survey and draw as many of the homesteads as possible.¹⁰¹ Among other parts of the Cape, they spent as many as five weeks in the Cape Dutch rich region of Paarl, met some of the main promoters of the preservation and nationalist movement such as Dorothea Fairbridge and Lady Phillips, and also studied Herbert Baker's Cape work.¹⁰² Pearse later made extensive use of their measured drawings in his *Eighth Century Architecture in South Africa*.¹⁰³

Obviously the measured drawing competitions were also important for providing the elite of the city precise architectural details from which increasingly accurate facsimiles of Cape Dutch homesteads could be constructed. An example of this is the use of the facade of Groot Constantia for the Empire Exhibition in 1924 - examined in the next section. It is important to acknowledge that the measured drawings were a literal mapping out of Cape Dutch homesteads, mirroring the production of knowledge of the buildings and their use in the politics of nationalism and Empire.

Official Buildings and the Cape Dutch style

Kendall, at a lecture before the Society of Artists in 1925, was clearly exaggerating when he suggested that "scarcely a house is erected to-day that does not bear signs of Cape Dutch influence".¹⁰⁴ Certainly within the mind's eye of some of the stewards of the city, Cape Dutch, as a national style, was *a fait accompli*. In a letter to the editor of the *Cape Argus* in 1923,

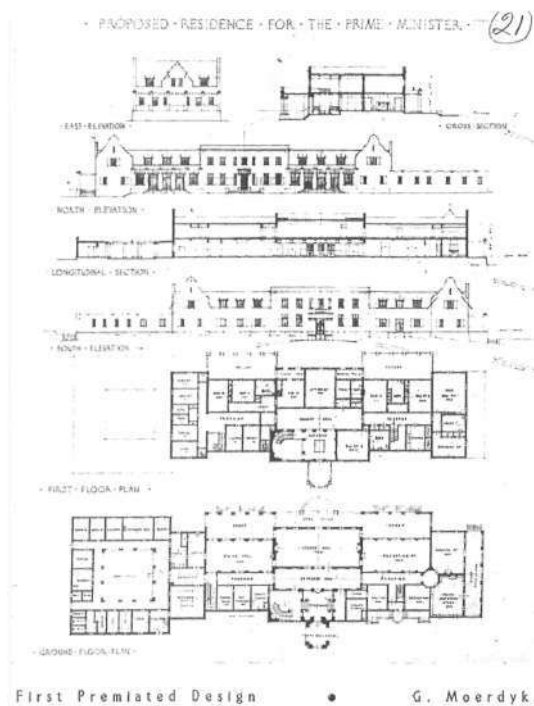


Figure 13
Gerard Moerdyk winning competition entry for Prime Minister's Residence, Pretoria. Source: *South African Architectural Record*, April, 1934.

Lady Phillips, whose Cape Dutch homestead, Vergelegen, was nearing completion of its restoration and addition, commented that the imminent creation of the new Union Art Gallery which was reported to be in the "Cape Dutch style" with the following comment:

South Africa is fortunate in already having a national style in architecture and furniture and metal work - the heritage of the early Dutch. These precious relics of the past, left us by a nation renowned for the purity of its taste, should be guarded and treasured by us all.¹⁰⁵

However, despite the efforts to promote Cape Dutch architecture as a national style it enjoyed limited success in the Cape and less so in the rest of South Africa, and did not dominate the production of new domestic architecture. Nevertheless, as late as 1929, the President of the Transvaal Institute of Architects, in his Valedictory Address, still seemed to be searching for a national style that could foster a common English/Afrikaner identity:

It should be the object of every student and every architect to attempt to develop a National style of architecture in South Africa. In a community composed of many races with diverse views, this is no simple task. Our responsibilities in this direction are nevertheless great, and it is the duty of all of us to develop, wherever possible, styles most suitable to this country, with the purpose of eventually evolving that character in our work which will lead to a definite National character.¹⁰⁶

It should, however, be noted that there were some important areas in which Cape Dutch had a large impact on defining what a South African identity might constitute, and this was in the region of official and institutional buildings. That the Union Buildings in Pretoria, designed by Baker, had only nominal Cape Dutch elements such as windows, doors and brass work,¹⁰⁷ would seem to suggest that the arguments for Cape Dutch as a national style did not carry much weight even for Baker himself. There is enough evidence to hint that this was not the case. Consider, for example, the competition for the design of the Governor-General's residence in Cape Town at which Herbert Baker was one of the three assessors. That the editor of the *African Architect* - which later transformed into the *South African Architectural Record*- expressed some resentment that "about one-third of the drawings [exhibiting] the style and characteristics peculiar

to one of the assessor's",¹⁰⁸ makes it almost certain that Cape Dutch was the style pursued and deemed appropriate. A report by E.H. Waugh in a later edition of the *African Architect* confirms this.¹⁰⁹ Although no award was made on the basis of what was considered to be deficiencies in planning, the assessor's report almost literally referenced Groot Constantia as a model for what the assessors had in mind as appropriate architecture for the King's representative in the country, namely, "the home of an English gentleman, who occasionally has to entertain in a princely style".¹¹⁰

In a similar manner, the competition for the Prime Minister's new residence in Pretoria, as drawn up by the Public Works Department in 1935, drew criticism for the inclusion of the following sentence which was understood to be requiring the building be in the Cape Dutch style: "It is suggested that the design might be on simple lines, while not slavishly following, yet suitably based on the fine old traditional work of this country."¹¹¹ That the article criticising these strictures appeared in the *South African Architectural Record* was indicative of that magazine's increasing modernist leanings, as we shall see below. Yet, it should be noted that some individual or individuals in the government and the Public Works Department, had deemed it appropriate that the Prime Minister of South Africa should live in a Cape Dutch style dwelling whilst resident in Pretoria, to which Gerard Moerdyk's winning entry obliged (figure 13).



Figure 14

Groot Constantia main house front gable. Source: Author.

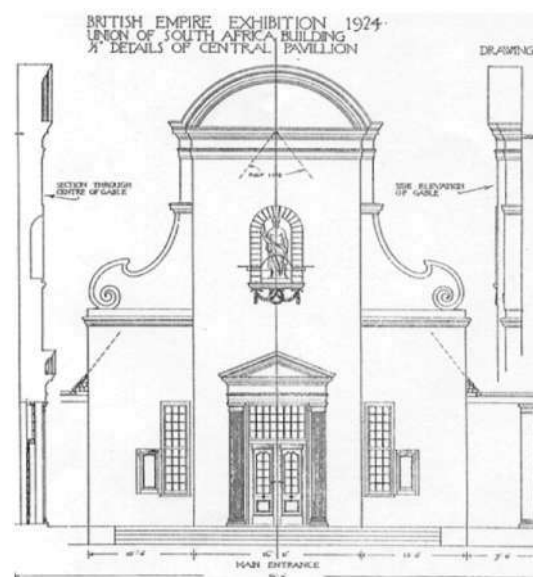


Figure 15

South African Pavilion, Entrance Gable. Source: *Building*, December 1924.

Representations of a South African identity through national or governmental building projects using Cape Dutch as a stylistic source was not limited to projects on home soil. The South African government and its provincial subsidiaries used the whitewashed gable and other Cape Dutch characteristics as the basis for a number of projects overseas. The prime example is perhaps the South African pavilion at the Empire Exhibition in Wembley, London, in 1924. Covering an area of some 50,000 square feet, the pavilion was constructed following the detail design of London-based Simpson & Ayrton Architects,¹¹² and following Baker's somewhat begrudging approval of the design in his capacity as an honorary consultant.¹¹³ Of particular significance for this study is not only simply the use of Cape Dutch gables in the design, but the almost exact replication of the front gable of Groot Constantia at the entrance to the pavilion (figure 15). Differing slightly in proportion and missing the attic-height window above the door, the entrance gable of the pavilion is a clear copy of Groot Constantia's entrance gable (figure 14). At a time when the conflation of the "father" of the nation and "his" house had not yet been shown to be somewhat erroneous, the design suggests a direct intent to represent South Africa to the rest of the Empire and the world as having arisen from a "grand" history with the literal replication of its "grandest" and "oldest" building. In essence, Groot Constantia was represented as the archetypal South African building, which in turn became emblematic of South Africa's part of the British Empire.

The South African pavilion at the Empire Exhibition contained a central zone made up of museum areas extending from the entrance towards two cinemas at the back, and flanked by exhibitions areas indicated as "Education" and "Natives." This central zone effectively split the pavilion into two halves, the one to the right of the entrance predominantly covering agriculture, and the one to the left predominantly covering industry. Mixed in with these general areas were exhibition spaces dedicated to cities and large areas given to Rhodesia, belying its status as a virtual colony of South Africa. Cape Town, along with Durban and Port Elizabeth, was one of the three cities represented at the pavilion. With two main areas of around 3,000 square feet in total, Kendall was given the task of setting up the exhibition space for the City, perhaps following Baker's initial concept.¹¹⁴



Figure 16

Kendall's Cape Dutch "Voorhuis" design as Cape Town's exhibition at the South African Pavilion at the Empire Exhibition, London, 1924. Source: [UCTimage]BC206, Portfolio.

Kendall described the basic concept as an attempt to recreate the "Voorhuis (or Entrance Room), representing a typical room in one of the old Dutch houses, and accommodating furniture of the period"¹¹⁵ (figure 16). This was linked by a pergola to the other main exhibition space which consisted of a series of large photographs showing Cape Town and its surrounds. The entrance door, placed along one of the main passageways of the pavilion, was purposefully

aligned with a similar door on the opposite wall of the room thereby allowing clear sight of the photographs displayed on the wall beyond.¹¹⁶

Although hardly a perfect replica of a front hall in a typical Cape Dutch homestead - the addition of two walls running between the paired windows on either side of the entrance door would have given a more correct proportion - Kendall, and the City of Cape Town as the client, did go to considerable effort and expense to render the project as close to its original type as possible. The doors and windows were manufactured in Cape Town, copying an undisclosed original house, but bearing a marked resemblance to the doors and windows at the Oude Pastorie in Paarl. The wall at the entrance was specifically constructed 15 inches thick so as to provide the necessary deep window jambs and reveals, whilst hollow ceiling beams were constructed at three feet intervals to simulate the appearance the typical ceiling construction.¹¹⁷

Kendall also spent considerable effort on trying to have a steel column within the space of the room relocated, but to no avail.¹¹⁸ Following a public appeal,¹¹⁹ items of original Cape Dutch furniture and paintings and illustrations to be displayed on the walls were sent to London on loan. At Baker's suggestion that Kendall himself should go "home"¹²⁰ (not forgetting that Kendall had been born in Australia) to London to supervise the project, the City Council ended up paying Kendall's partner James Morris £100 to oversee the job.¹²¹ The "Voorhuis" was used, significantly, as the reception room for the Royal Family during their visit to the South African pavilion in July 1924,¹²² whilst its windows and doors eventually made their way back to Cape Town where they were used in the post office building at Sea Point.¹²³

There were other instances of the promotion of Cape Dutch icons at the Empire Exhibition. Dorothea Fairbridge specifically prepared a pamphlet on *The Old Houses of the Cape of Good Hope and their Furniture* to be provided along with other CPPA brochures.¹²⁴ The list of the 74 photographs put on display by the City of Cape Town includes an extensive number of Arthur Elliot photographs of Cape Dutch homesteads.¹²⁵ Significantly, there is one photograph listed illustrating a "Malay Mosque," and the last photo, literally as an afterthought indicated by the changed ink on the original, depicts a "Native Group." That Cape Town and the Cape Peninsula was intentionally represented as predominantly picturesque and part of a grand European tradition through its emphasis on Cape Dutch architecture, and with a marginal nod to marginalized Others was made very clear by the list.

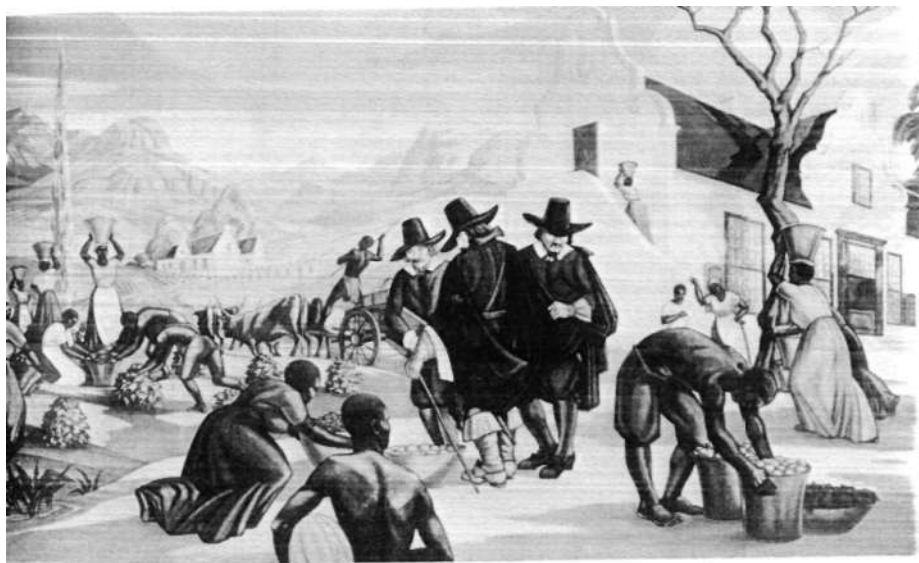


Figure 17

Jan Juta, Mural of Vergelegen, South Africa House. Source: McNab, R., *The Story of South Africa House*.

The Cape Town exhibition was a great success. The City's representative in London who wrote as much to Kendall went on to add: "In regard to the Exhibition there is only feeling for all of us connected with the British Empire who have seen it, and that is one of pride that we belong to one of the Nations represented in it."¹²⁶

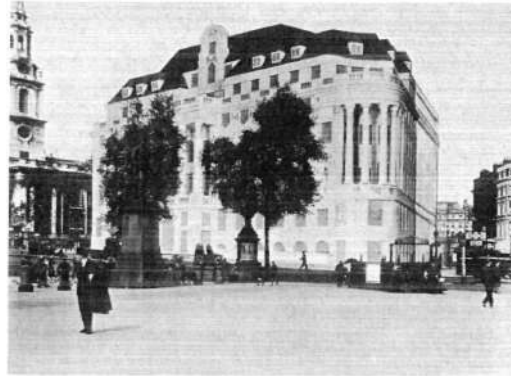


Figure 18

Herbert Baker, model/photo composite of South Africa House showing proposed gable. Source: McNab, R. *The Story of South Africa House*.

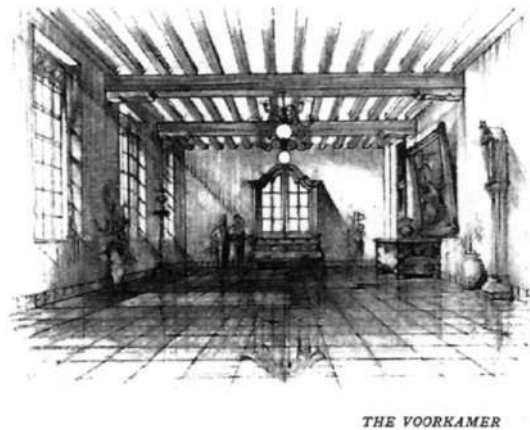


Figure 19

South Africa House interior. Source: Office of the High Commissioner, *South Africa House*.

Clearly then, Cape Dutch architecture and artefacts were considered successful representational imagery whereby South African nationalism was thoroughly and un-contradictorily integrated into the vision of the British Empire. In fact, "an old Dutch Homestead" would be used in another Empire Exhibition at Bellahouston Park, Glasgow in 1938.¹²⁷ That Cape Dutch architecture and artefacts constituted a significant part of South Africa House in London's Trafalgar Square was simply an extension of its use as representational imagery of South African nationalism integrated into the British Empire. Baker's original design (figure 18) showed a central Cape Dutch gable and tiled roof but this was rejected by the Fine Arts Commission.¹²⁸ Although Baker modified the design to fit in with the other buildings around Trafalgar Square, the building's windows and doors are clearly Cape Dutch in origin. An entrance hall is even called a "Voorkamer" in an official pamphlet¹²⁹ (figure 19) and with its wooden beamed ceiling, flagstone floor, and furniture, goes some of the way to recreate a Cape Dutch interior. Paintings and relief sculptures continue the Cape Dutch theme: Goodman contributed murals depicting Cape Dutch homesteads and Jan Juta contributed a pastoral mural depicting *Vergelegen*, with Willem Adriaan van der Stel and slaves toiling in the estate (figure 17).

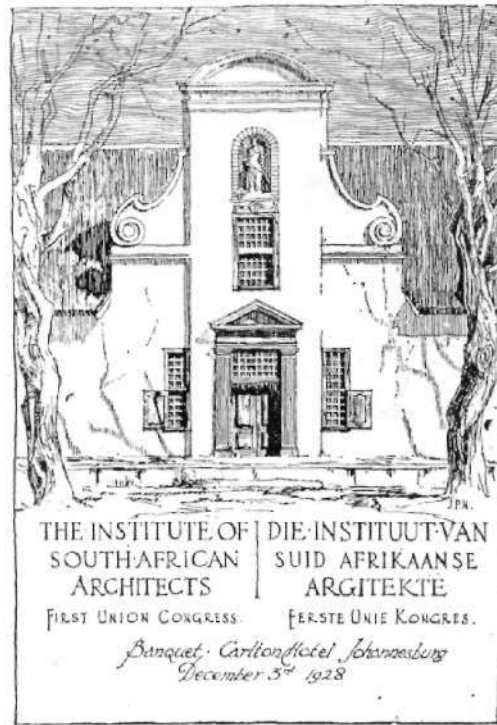


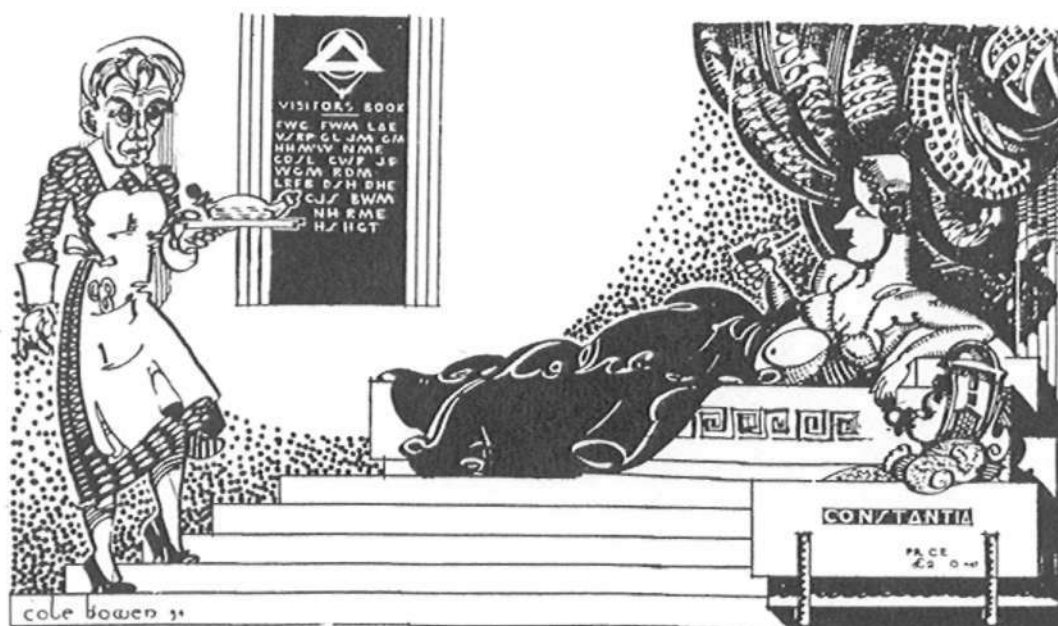
Figure 20

Groot Constantia gable as Dinner Menu Cover for the first Congress of South African Architects, 1928.
Source: *South African Architectural Record*, December, 1928.

Waning enthusiasm

Perhaps the Cape Dutch gable reached its apotheosis (for architects) as an emblem of national architecture when it appeared on the menu of the first South African Architect's Congress in 1928 (figure 20). By the early and mid-1930s opinion amongst architects, particularly in the increasingly modernist *South African Architectural Record* (hereafter *SAAR*), was starting to turn against Cape Dutch as necessarily the ideal South African style. Certainly a Professor A. Winter-Moore felt that a nation formed a national art and not vice-versa, and included the following pejorative comment: "In the meantime I suppose that we shall continue to ape the Cape farm house in our public buildings."¹³⁰ Although the *SAAR* had published numerous pin-up style photographs of Cape Dutch homesteads - for example those submitted by latterly celebrated modernist architects such as Norman Hanson¹³¹ - and a few articles extolling the virtues of the Cape Dutch style through the years¹³² (especially as its earlier incarnation as *The African Architect*),¹³³ it certainly began to promote modernism and the International Style above the vernacular traditions of the Cape Dutch in the 1930s. The *SAAR* went so far as to publish a satirical cartoon in 1933 depicting Herbert Baker as the midwife to Geoffrey Pearse's birth of Groot Constantia (figure 21). The joke is a play on the discovery that the building originally revered as Simon van der Stel's had been constructed under the favour of a later owner and was most likely a friendly jibe aimed at the Pearse's recent publication celebrating eighteenth century architecture in South Africa.¹³⁴ Although Pearse's book did not focus on Groot Constantia or on Cape Dutch architecture solely, the punning title of the cartoon, "The Birth of a Notion," acknowledges the role which architects, academics and others in general had played in using Cape Dutch architecture to promote ideas of nationhood. The initials listed in the "Visitor's Book" on the wall are those of the architects and students Pearse voiced his indebtedness to in the Preface of the book and who had accompanied him on the Cape Dutch "pilgrimage" in 1928.

T h e B i r t h o f a N o t i o n



Mid-wife Herbert. "A beautiful daughter but——"
 Geofforine , " It doesn't matter who her father was she's
 still her mother's joy."

Figure 21

Cartoon showing Herbert Baker playing midwife to Geoffrey Pearse's birth of the South African "nation," Groot Constantia after revelations of the mistaken attribution of the building to Simon van der Stel's design. Source: *South African Architectural Record*, April 1934.

In contrast to the *SAAR's* emerging modernist agenda, the *AB&E* had always been more firmly rooted in the Arts & Crafts ideologies and, through its location in the Cape had made the dissemination of Cape Dutch style and the veneration of the old homesteads an almost moral agenda. As late as 1934 it was running articles promoting Cape Dutch, if not as a national style then certainly as appropriate for the development of a new civic and monumental tradition, and even advocated, contrary to the spirit of Arts & Crafts, deceit in materials where necessary: "We can build in concrete and thatch over that if fire is an issue."¹³⁵ However, aside from an article in 1938 praising the Elliott Exhibition of architectural and other photographs which architects were urged to see so as to "inspire them to carry on worthily [the Peninsula's] best traditions,"¹³⁶ the magazine shows an increasing lack of interest in Cape Dutch architecture in the late 1930s until the Second World War ended its production in 1940.

Conclusion

Faced with the task of defining a common English/Afrikaner identity at the beginning of the Union of South Africa, and perhaps inspired by building preservation and nationalist architectural movements in England, local architects, politicians, historians and journalists set about using Cape Dutch architecture as a device through which a common English/Afrikaner identity could be symbolised. Through various symbolic and rhetorical means and as an act of appropriation, Cape Dutch architecture was claimed by its predominantly English motivators to be literally a common English/Afrikaner heritage in whose production the English had had a hand, thereby placing the English with the Dutch at the original settlement of the Cape. At the same

time, Cape Dutch architecture, and Cape Dutch homesteads in particular, were represented as a common *inheritance* needing care and attention - acts of preservation, it was understood, would bring English and Afrikaner together. The preservation movement also understood its role in securing museums and monuments that could instruct English and the Afrikaner on their common heritage, but in the process, set in motion wilful and propagandistic restorations where gables became emblematic of an idealised and romanticised history.

In correlation with the preservation movement, Cape Dutch architecture, and particularly the gable of Groot Constantia, began to define a national style and to be used in official buildings, in the process of which, Cape Dutch architecture started to locate South Africa and its settler history un-problematically in the logic of the British Empire.

Key to archival sources

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[UCT]BC206 Baker Collection
[UCTimage]BC206 Images in the Baker Collection

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SAHRA]HMC Historical Monuments Commission

Notes

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