



- 3 The Diamond fields Post Cart outside the Post Office Pretoria in about 1872. This building originally the house of Van der Hove, later became the South African Hotel.

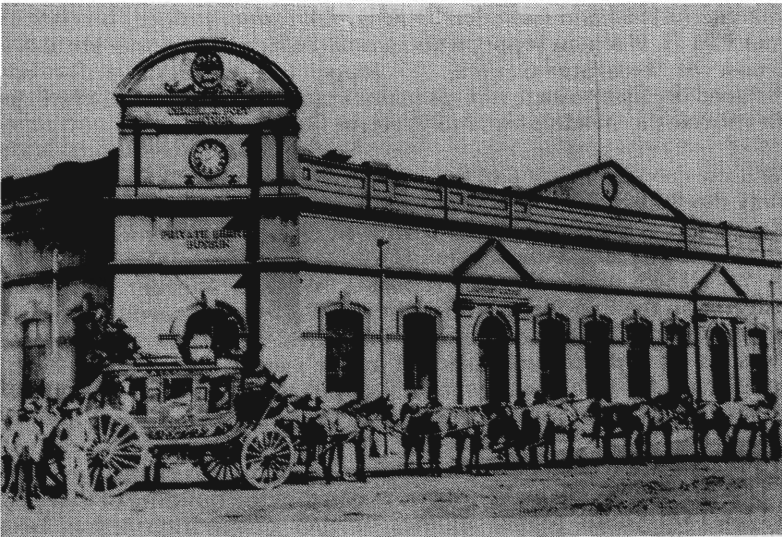
The post office remained in the Pretorius house until 1862 at which time the house became the parsonage. On the erf on the western side of the Palace of Justice site, about where Palace Street now runs, a school building was erected in 1859 and in 1862 when the Landdrost and the Post Office had to be moved it was temporarily placed in a section of this school building. Whether the Post Office also moved into the school building at this stage is uncertain. It is possible that although the first Raadsaal was erected around 1866, that nevertheless there was a previous building on the Raadsaal site just behind the position of the first Raadsaal. A descriptive article on Pretoria in the Cape Argus for 1868, refers to a small building on the old Raadsaal site. In 1859 a contract was given to F. Botes to deliver stones for a government building so it would appear possible that such a building was erected and that if so government offices including the Post Office could have been here up until 1866.

A picture of around 1870 shows a view of the 1st Raadsaal as viewed from the north west. Just behind it and on the western side is a small thatched roof building with a bell mounted outside and a tethered donkey. It is thought possible that this was the post carrying donkey referred to in contemporary literature and that possibly the bell was used to inform the public when the post was sorted. So possibly this was the Govt. Building erected from the stones delivered in 1859 by F. Botes.

The appointment in 1860 of J.G.C. van Leenhof as Postmaster of Pretoria resulted from a resolution of the Volksraad who had condemned the amateur and part-time postal system and decided to appoint full-time postal officials. Herman Jeppe, a former postmaster of Swellendam in the Cape, and Rustenburg in the Transvaal, assumed duty on 23 July 1859 as Postmaster of Potchefstroom and from 9 August 1859 was appointed the first Postmaster General of the Transvaal. (His actual title at the time was "Postmeester" van den Z.A.R.). His salary as Postmaster was about R18 per year but this was raised to approximately R40 (300 rixdollars) when he embraced the additional duty of Postmaster General.

It is worthy of mention that the total revenue for the Transvaal Post Office at the end of 1859 was about R86 and at the end of 1860 it had risen to R300.

During these early years, the post was uncertain and irregular and the cause of considerable dissatisfaction. There were no interterritorial postal arrangements and thus for example, letters to the Cape Colony were simply delivered across the frontier to the nearest Post Office (Colesberg) where they had to be paid for.



4 The Zeederberg Mail Coach shown in front of Pretoria Post Office. This building was erected in 1887 and demolished in 1909.

In 1858 Andries du Toit, complained that the newspapers sent via Rustenburg were a month old on arrival and were in such a tattered and filthy condition that the recipients were reluctant to handle them.

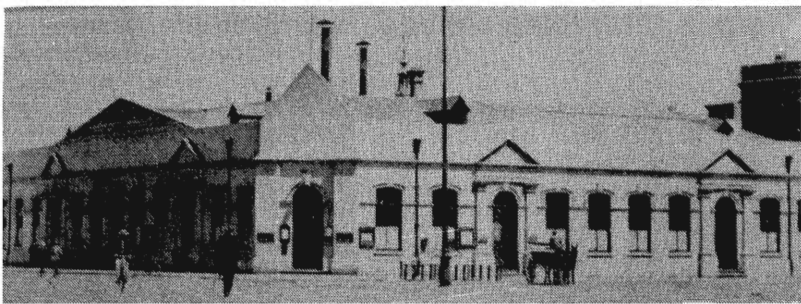
The pressing problem was trying to find reliable "post kaffirs". They were expected to carry the heavy post, plus their blankets and food and frequently to swim flooded rivers without damage to the post.

The first Postmaster-General Herman Jeppe was succeeded by D.F. Steyn on 29/11/1861 and then H.S. Lombard who recommended that the postal headquarters be moved to Pretoria. This was approved in 1863 by which time J.G. Bantjes was the incumbent of the post. Bantjes who became P.M.G. on 10/11/63 resigned in September 1864 due to the inadequate salary and his successor John Lennox who was appointed on 26/7/1864 moved the headquarters back to Potchefstroom. Lennox was relieved of his post at Potchefstroom due to a dispute over paper money which at that time the Government was refusing to accept or honour. It is probable that when Lennox transferred to Potchefstroom the duties of Postmaster Pretoria would have fallen on the landdrost's office.

The President M.W. Pretorius had to assume personal control of the Post Office until he was able to hand over the responsibility to the Treasurer-General in Pretoria, H. van der Linden on 7/10/1866. Van der Linden was discharged in 1867 and succeeded by Friedrich Jeppe, younger brother of the former P.M.G. Herman Jeppe, who assumed office in Pretoria. He also held the post of Treasurer-General. F. Jeppe was responsible for having introduced the first postage stamps in the Transvaal in 1869. In 1871 F. Jeppe again moved the headquarters to Pretoria.

With the erection in 1866 of the 1st Raadsaal, certain Government Offices namely the Registrar of Deeds and probably Postmaster of Pretoria who at that time was also clerk to the Registrar of Deeds moved into the adjacent offices in the Raadsaal building. J.G.C. van Leenhof remained Postmaster up until 29/4/1869 when he was replaced by O.C. Weeber. Weeber was transferred to the Landdrost's office on 25/10/70 and accordingly the postal activities also transferred across. The Landdrost's office was at that time on the western erf of the present Palace of Justice's site in the building which had been erected in 1859 as a school. Readers will recall that in 1859 the landdrost's office was in the President's House on the adjacent erf.

From 1871 when F. Jeppe was transferred to Pretoria as Postmaster General and Treasurer-General, his office was situated in the building of C.I. Becker. On 17/1/1871 Julius Jeppe, another brother of Fredrich Jeppe, became Postmaster of Pretoria. In October 1871 the office moved to another building but its locality has gone unrecorded.



- 5 The Pretoria Post Office as it looked early this century. The original facade which included the clock and the Republican coat of arms has been removed as the stone work was crumbling and becoming a danger.

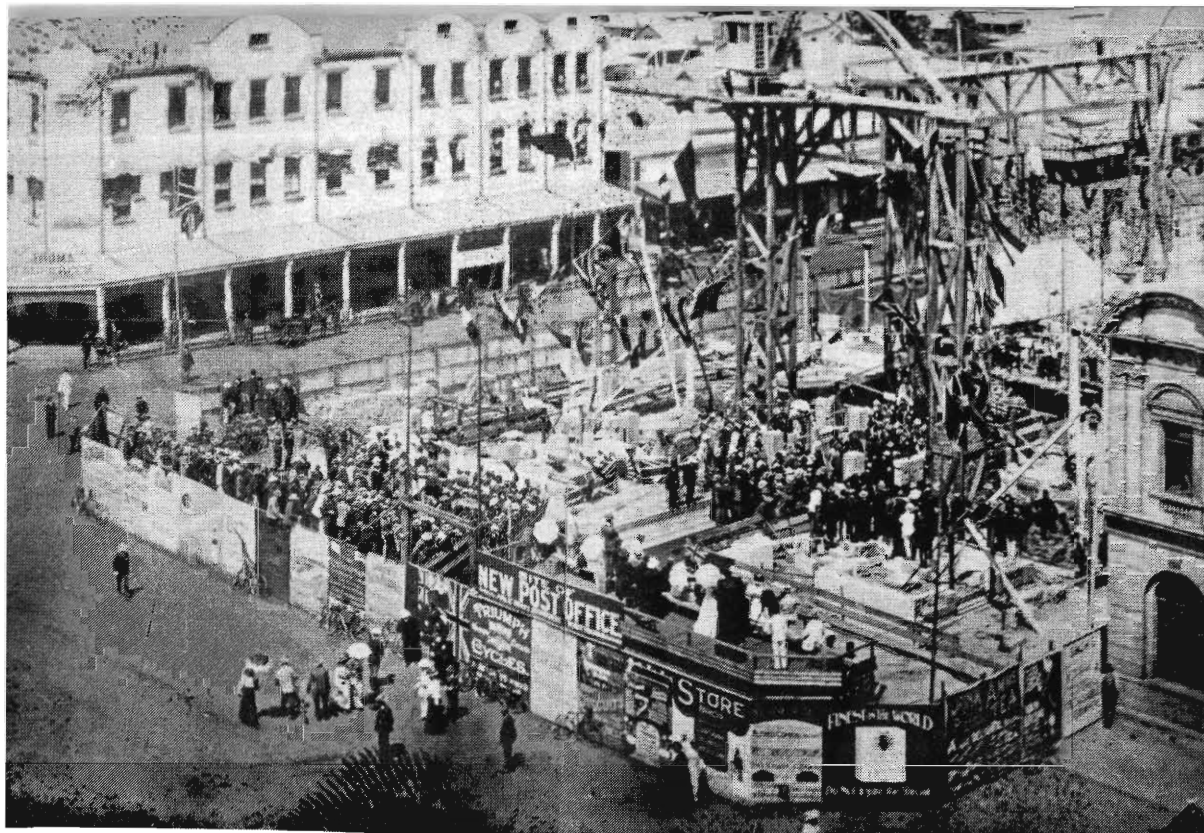
In 1872 the office again moved, this time to the building of Van den Hove on Church Square Erf 350 (Market Plein at that time). This was the building which later became the South African Hotel and it was situated on the West side of Church Square on the Southern section. This site had previously been the home of Dolf Jansen and later J.S. Schoeman. An excellent photograph exists of the Kimberley–Pretoria Postcard outside this building in 1872.

In March 1874 the posts of Postmaster General and Treasurer General were again separated and F. Jeppe took over the joint position of P.M.G. and Postmaster of Pretoria. Up until October 1874 when the post office and the landdrost's office were moved into the Austin building on the site of the present post office. Readers will recall that this was where Phillip Bronkhorst the first landdrost had lived. After Bronkhorst the property was owned by J.F. Schutte, then by Evans & Churchill and then by Willie Austin, a Portuguese smouse (trader), who previously had been there with his wagon, took over the original Bronkhorst's house as a store for his trade goods. It was this old store which was now renovated and enlarged to accommodate the post office and landdrost.

F. Jeppe was followed in 1875 as P.M.G. by J.A. de Vogel.

In 1877 the Republic was annexed to the British Empire. Between 1880 and 1881 A.W. de la Hunt held the post of P.M.G. but with the Transvaal regaining independence in 1881 de Vogel again resumed office.

In January 1885 de Vogel was drowned in the Crocodile river while returning from a postal inspection and Isaac von Alphen the last of the P.M.G.'s of the Z.A.R. took office. The posts of P.M.G. and Postmaster of Pretoria were again separated at this time.



6 The ceremony of laying the foundation stone of the existing post office is shown taking place in this historic photograph. The stone was laid on 2 March 1910 by the Earl of Selbourne. The left corner of the National Bank Building is just visible on the right.

Meanwhile it had been decided to erect a new building on the site of the old Austin building and it became necessary to evacuate during the demolition and erection period.

Temporary premises were provided for the post office in a section of the old goal behind the Raadsaal, which had been built in 1866. Here the post office remained until completion of the new "Postkantoor" in 1887.

The new post office of 1887 was an imposing single storied structure, L. shaped and on the corner where previously the Austin Building had stood. It also embraced the Landdrost's office. We are left with an excellent description of this building in a newspaper of 1891 and this I quote below in full:-

"The above-mentioned building comprises not only the Post-office, but also the Telegraph-office, the Postmaster General's Department, the Civil and Criminal Landdrost's Courts, and the Civil Commissioner's Office.

The yard at the back gives room to the police barracks, the Charge Office, and the Fire Station, improvised into a barrack for the Kaffir police.

The building has a decidedly modern appearance, and occupies the most central position in the town. The edifice cannot be called solid. During a recent gale part of the galvanized iron roof was flapping up and down like the roof of a canvas tent.

SHANTY

In days of old, the Post-office operations were conducted in a thatched-roof shanty on the site of the present building. Afterwards the Post-clerks were shifted to the old goal where they remained until the new "Postkantoor" was completed. The "Postkantoor" boasts a clock with a white dial, black numbers and gilt hands. Above the Post-office is a flagstaff, and when the English mail comes in, usually of a Monday afternoon a black flag with the characters B.M. in white floats from the flagstaff, threatening to tear down the cornice whenever the wind is a bit fresh.

On entering the corner door you come full tilt against the tiers of "postbussen". The arrangements are peculiar. In the right wall are the letter and paper slides, below which stand baskets, which receive a steady stream on mail days.