

**THE CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CHURCH OF THE VOW IN
PIETERMARITZBURG, KWAZULU-NATAL**

by

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Submitted as a requirement for the degree

**MAGISTER HEREDITATIS CULTURAEQUE SCIENTIAE
HERITAGE AND MUSEUM STUDIES**

in the Department of Historical and Heritage Studies

University of Pretoria
Faculty of Humanities

Supervisor: Dr. Jackie Grobler
December 2014

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KEYWORDS

Australia ICOMOS (International Council for Monuments and Sites) Burra Charter
Battle of Blood River
Church of the Vow
Cultural Significance
Dutch Reformed Church
Great Trek
KwaZulu-Natal
Msunduzi Museum (Incorporating the Voortrekker Complex and Ncome Museum)
Pietermaritzburg
South African National Heritage Resources Act (Act 25 of 1999)
Voortrekkers
Vow

SUMMARY

This is an in-depth study of the history of the Church of the Vow (also sometimes referred to as the Church of the Covenant) in Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal, which was built in fulfilment of a vow taken by the Voortrekkers before the Battle of Blood River (also referred to as *Ncome* in Zulu and *Bloedrivier* in Afrikaans) on 16 December 1838.

Afrikaner farmers (later referred to as Voortrekkers) were leaving the Cape Colony for several reasons and wanted to settle in the interior. This movement later became known as ‘The Great Trek’ and it was during this time that they clashed with the Zulus at Blood River (close to present day Dundee in KwaZulu-Natal). After winning the battle, the Voortrekkers built a church as promised and used it for many years until they were forced by circumstances to sell it. The building changed hands quite a few times during the second half of the 19th century and served various purposes including being a school, a pharmacy and mineral-water factory. In 1910 it was saved from demolition, was then renovated and became a museum in 1912 which it still is today in 2014.

This study focuses on a time period of 100 years, looking at the history of the Church of the Vow from 1838, during the time of the Great Trek when the vow was made, to 1938 when the centenary of the Great Trek was celebrated across South Africa, including Pietermaritzburg where 18 000 people gathered at the Church of the Vow for the commemorations.

The study also looks at the building within a wider context by looking at other vows and churches or monuments built in fulfilment of vows in South Africa and internationally, in an attempt to understand why the Voortrekkers made such a promise and how this resulted in the building of the church.

This study makes use of a variety of secondary sources and historical publications relating to the Church of the Vow, and valuable primary sources to reveal new information about this significant building which has not been published before.

It is only by fully understanding the history of the building that one can attempt to determine its cultural significance. The concept of ‘cultural significance’ has been widely used to determine the heritage value of places. In South Africa, heritage practitioners are guided by

the South African National Heritage Resources Act (Act 25 of 1999) which provides criteria as set out in Section 3(3).

The Act was used for the purpose of this study, in conjunction with the Australia ICOMOS (International Council for Monuments and Sites) Burra Charter, since South Africa does not have its own charter. The Burra Charter provides standard guidelines for conservation and management of places of cultural significance and is supplemented with the Australia ICOMOS Practice Notes, which gives detailed explanations of the use and application of the Burra Charter, including the understanding and assessment of cultural significance.

The Church of the Vow has for many years been an important monument to the Afrikaners. By looking at the history of this building, this study attempted to determine what value it held within this community in the past and whether it is still significant to them at present. The purpose of this study is also to challenge popular beliefs about this building and create new debates by taking a new look at this historical landmark from a new perspective within a democratic South Africa, by determining if this building could potentially be significant to other cultures as well, especially those cultural groups in Pietermaritzburg and KwaZulu-Natal.

This study hopes to create awareness and appreciation for this small building of which its foundations date back more than a hundred and seventy years.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all I would like to thank my family. Thank you for your love, encouragement and support and listening to my stories about this little church which I am so passionate about. Your love and faith in me has inspired me in so many ways. I am blessed to have all of you in my life. A special thank-you to my husband Chris Henning– you are my inspiration.

I would also like to express a special thank-you to Cecilia Kruger, Senior Manager: Professional Services at the Heritage Foundation and my study supervisor Dr. Jackie Grobler and co-supervisor, Mauritz Naudé for your guidance. Also to Brian and Shelagh Spencer, Eckhard von Fintel, Rodney Coyne, Louis Eksteen and Estelle Liebenberg-Barkhuizen for your assistance.

Thank you to all staff at the Dutch Reformed Church Archive, Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository, the Bessie Head Library and the Msunduzi Museum (incorporating the Voortrekker Complex and Ncome Museum).

A huge thank-you to Gilbert and Jenny Torlage. Words cannot express my gratitude for your interest and support.

And last but not least I would like to thank my Maker who has blessed me abundantly in so many ways.

CHAPTER 1

DETERMINING ‘CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE’ – THE CHURCH OF THE VOW AS A CASE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

“Het zou tevergeefs zijn,” zegt Dr. Theal, “in enig ander land te zoeken naar een gebouw met een geschiedenis van lijden, moed en uiteindelijke overwinning, geboren uit de gehechtheid aan God en Zijn Woord, gelijkstaande met die verbonden aan het Voortrekkers-Kerkje.”¹

(It would be in vain, says Dr. Theal, to look in any other country for a building with a history of suffering, courage and ultimate victory born from the bond with God and His Word, such as that associated with the Voortrekker Church).



Figure 1: Church of the Vow²

Long after the Church of the Vow had been built, Dr. Theal, a leading South African historian of the late 19th and early 20th century and many of his contemporaries, especially those within the Afrikaner community, looked back at the building with much nostalgia.

¹ A. Dreyer, *Eeufest-album van de Nederduits Gereformeerde-Kerk in Zuid-Afrika 1824-1924*, p. 92.

² *Byvoegsel tot Die Natalse Afrikaner*, 1947-06-12, Front page.

The significance of this building has been imprinted in the subconscious of one generation to the next within this small South African community. When consulting history books and newspapers printed prior to the 1990's, it is clear that the building has become an important memorial to Afrikaners in remembering the Battle of Blood River and the lives and times of the Voortrekkers. The 'older' generation, especially people above the age of 30, remember learning about the building at school and being told the history by their parents or when going to church. This was an important part of Afrikaner history, heritage, culture and religion. However, it seems as if the younger generation, especially people younger than 30, do not know about the building, because it does not form part of the school curriculum³ or their parents have not told them about it. This can also be an indication that the value this building holds within the 'older' generation is slowly diminishing or perhaps that more value is attached to the actual battle site at Blood River, than the church that was built later.

The building's history originated from the conflict between the Afrikaners and the Zulus on the banks of the Blood River in 1838. It is also embedded in the memory of the Zulu community. For them the church is a symbol of oppression, built after a battle that left many of their warriors dead. This issue has become central to many debates, and the conflicting values that this building still represents in both cultural groups.⁴

For many Afrikaners and other cultural groups the Church of the Vow has also been memorialized as a heritage landmark only belonging to Afrikaners, even though a small group of English, Black and Coloured people were present during the reading of the Vow and even though it was not only Afrikaners who constructed and used the building. Individuals from the Black, Coloured and English communities and people from other nationalities, assisted with the construction of the building or attended church services there.⁵

This building has a rich history that only a few are aware of. Erected by the Voortrekkers in fulfillment of a vow to God prior to the battle of Blood River in 1838, it was inaugurated in 1841 and served as a Dutch Reformed Church for about 20 years, during which time various

³ Department of Education, National Curriculum Statement: History, Grade 10-12; Social Sciences, Grades 4-6.

⁴ Ncome Museum & Monument Complex brochure, *Ncome/Blood River: another point of view*, pp. 31-33.

⁵ Msunduzi Museum Library, Pietermaritzburg: box file 'Blood River', INEG research proposal, p. 4; B774/99, *The Battle of Blood River/Ncome* (report of the panel of Historians appointed by the Department of Arts and Culture, 1998-09-01).

ministers tended to the Voortrekkers' spiritual needs. Not many ministers wanted to leave the Cape Colony to settle in unknown hinterland. This often left the Dutch Reformed Church congregation without a spiritual leader. Those who were willing to assist came from countries such as America, Germany and the Netherlands. The Church of the Vow was the first church building erected as a permanent structure in Pietermaritzburg. Services were held in Dutch (probably rather an early form of Afrikaans) on Sunday mornings and in English on Sunday afternoons or some Wednesday afternoons. After the British annexed Natal in 1843, Presbyterians and Methodists were allowed to use the Dutch Reformed Church building for their own services until they were able to construct their own church buildings. Twice when the congregation was left without a spiritual leader, ministers from these denominations assisted the Voortrekkers and their descendants in their time of need.⁶

For about 20 years people were baptized, confirmed and married in the church. The Dutch Reformed Church congregation attended Sunday school, Holy Communion and other services in the building. The congregation included some well-known individuals such as J.N Boshoff (the second state president of the Free State Republic, 1855-1859⁷) and Henry Cloete (Special Commissioner of the Colony of Natal from 1843 – 1844⁸). The congregation at times consisted of people from different races. Some of the ministers of the Voortrekkers such as Daniel Lindley and D.P.M. Huet encouraged Africans and Coloured people to attend services.⁹

In 1861 the congregation bade farewell to the old building and moved into their newly built 'Tower Church'. The old building was sold and subsequently used as a bookshop, school, soda-water factory, pharmacy, wagon factory, dining-and-refreshment room and wool-shed.¹⁰

Over the years the building underwent various changes. One of the main reasons for this was the initial poor construction of the building.¹¹ Many people from the community assisted when it came to the physical construction of the building, however some of them did not

⁶ B.I. Buchanan, *Natal Memories*, p. 92; Msunduzi Museum Library, Pietermaritzburg: box file 'Church of the Vow', Exhibition text: *Religion and education in the life of the Voortrekkers*.

⁷ W.J. de Kock (chief editor), *Dictionary of South African Biography I*, pp. 102-103.

⁸ W.J. de Kock (chief editor), *Dictionary of South African Biography I*, p. 172.

⁹ E. Botha *et al.* (eds), *N.G. Kerk Ladysmith 1854-2004*, p. 10.

¹⁰ Dutch Reformed Church Archive, Pietermaritzburg: box G53/1, File on history of the congregation by Dr. Besselaar, compiled from original minutes, 1926.

¹¹ H.B. Thom, *Die Geloftekerk en ander studies oor die Groot Trek*, pp.13, 38-39.

possess the necessary skills to do so. The congregation was poor and could not afford to maintain the building properly. This resulted in its rapid deterioration. Soon after the inauguration in 1841 the roof started to leak and had to be replaced shortly afterwards. Gables were added at the same time but were so poorly constructed that they had to be replaced. Renovations continued between the 1840s and early 1850s.¹²

During the early 20th century the building became so dilapidated that it was considered to have it demolished to make room for the construction of a roller-skating course, but it was repurchased by the Church Council in 1910. It was once again renovated and on 16 December 1912 it reopened as a museum, housing exhibitions on the lives and times of the Voortrekkers.¹³

In 2014, more than a century later, the museum still stands proudly amongst the contemporary buildings in the centre of town. It has survived even though regarded by many today with less sentiment than in the past. The building currently forms part of the Msunduzi Museum (incorporating the Voortrekker Complex and Ncome Museum). The Museum celebrated its centenary in 2012, proudly acknowledging its history. Today it is a multi-cultural museum. Recently a new look was taken into the value which the museum, especially the Church of the Vow, could hold within different communities within South Africa and internationally and to determine the building's cultural significance.

1.2 The concept 'cultural significance'

According to the Australia ICOMOS (International Council for Monuments and Sites) Burra Charter,¹⁴ the cultural significance of a place is synonymous with cultural heritage significance and cultural heritage value, and is something that may change over time. Cultural significance is 'embodied' in the place itself, its fabric, setting, use, associations, meanings, related places, records and objects:

¹² Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository: A1704, Handwritten Manuscript by W.J. Pretorius. s.l., s.a.

¹³ Msunduzi Museum Library, Pietermaritzburg: box file 'Church of the Vow', pamphlet: E.G. Jansen *et al.*, *Het Voortrekkerskerkje te Pietermaritzburg*, 1910.

¹⁴ Australia ICOMOS, *The Burra Charter: The Australia ICOMOS Charter for places of cultural significance*, 2013, pp. 2-3, <<http://australia.icomos.org/publications/burra-charter-practice-notes/>>, Updated: 2014. Accessed: 2014-09-14.

- a. Place: can include a memorial, building, group of buildings, urban area or town, cultural landscape, a community meeting place, a site with spiritual or religious connections, a tree, garden or location of a historical event.
- b. Fabric: refers to the physical material of a place, including elements such as fixtures, contents and objects. It can include excavated material and also natural elements.
- c. Setting: can be the immediate and extended environment (the area around the place) including structures, spaces, land, relationship with other places, visual setting (including views to and from the place), smells and sounds. The physical location of a place is also part of its cultural significance.
- d. Use: refers to its function, including activities; and traditional and cultural practices associated with indigenous people.
- e. Associations: refers to special connections that exist between people and a place, including social and spiritual values.
- f. Meanings: relates to symbolic qualities and memories. It denotes what a place signifies, indicates, evokes or expresses to people.
- g. Records: refer to the records of the history of the place.
- h. Objects: refers to tangible, visible expressions of culture.
- i. Related places: refers to places within a given context that contribute to the cultural significance of the place and includes visual connections and interconnectedness.¹⁵

The ICOMOS Burra Charter also defines places of ‘cultural significance’ as being:¹⁶

- a. natural, indigenous and historic places with cultural values
- b. historical records that are important expressions of identity and experience
- c. able to tell us about who we are and the past that has formed us and the landscape
- d. reflective of the diversity of communities
- e. irreplaceable and precious
- f. able to enrich people’s lives

¹⁵ J. Bruwer *et al.*, *Heritage Impact Assessment of the recommended route alignment for the proposed Gautrain rapid rail link project, Final report*, April 2003, p. 6, <http://www.gautrairieia.co.za/contents/report_april_2003/pdf/hia_final_report.pdf> , Updated: s.a. Accessed: 2014-09-23.

¹⁶ Australia ICOMOS, *The Burra Charter: The Australia ICOMOS Charter for places of cultural significance, 2013*, <<http://australia.icomos.org/publications/burra-charter-practice-notes/>>, Updated: 2014. Accessed: 2014-09-14.

- g. able to provide a deep and inspirational sense of connection to community and landscape, to the past and to lived experiences
- h. places that must be conserved for present and future generations.

The South African National Heritage Resources Act (Act 25 of 1999), Section 2(xvi) defines a place or object with cultural significance as a heritage resource and explains in Section 5 (1a, c), (4), (5) what distinguishes ‘heritage resources’:¹⁷

- a. have lasting value in their own right
- b. provide evidence of the origins of South African Society
- c. are valuable, finite, non-renewable and irreplaceable and must be carefully managed to ensure their survival
- d. have the capacity to promote reconciliation, understanding and respect, and contribute to the development of a unifying South African identity
- e. form an important part of the history and beliefs of communities and must be managed in a way that acknowledges the right of affected communities and to be consulted and to participate in their management
- f. contribute significantly to research, education and tourism and they must be developed and presented for these purposes in a way that ensures dignity and respect for cultural values

1.2.1 Criteria to determine cultural significance

In order to establish the cultural significance that a building holds within a community or communities, it is important to comprehensively understand its history by studying a variety of primary and secondary sources. Only then can one attempt to analyse its cultural significance within the framework of the South African National Heritage Resources Act (Act 25 of 1999).

The Act was drafted as part of new legislation to redefine a heritage resource as a place or object with ‘cultural significance’, including oral history and living traditions associated with these resources, which form an important part of the country’s cultural identity.¹⁸ These resources can be of national, provincial or local importance. They are “...*our legacy from the past, what we live with in the present, and what we pass on to future generations to learn*

¹⁷ Republic of South Africa, *National Heritage Resources Act (Act 25 of 1999)*.

¹⁸ South African Heritage Resources Agency, Newsletter, *SAHRA News* 1 (1), December 2005, p.1.

from...many of our communities are unaware or uninformed about the importance of heritage in South Africa...and dealing with heritage matters means we deal with sensitive, emotive and contentious issues."¹⁹

The Act aims *"to promote good management of the National estate and to enable and encourage communities to nurture and conserve their legacy so that it may be bequeathed to future generations. Our heritage is unique and precious and cannot be renewed. It helps us to define our cultural identity and therefore lies at the heart of our spiritual well-being and has the power to build our nation. It has the potential to affirm our diverse cultures and in so doing shape our national character. Our heritage celebrates our achievements and contributes to redressing past inequities. It educates, it deepens our understanding of society and encourages us to empathise with the experience of others. It facilitates healing and material and symbolic restitution and it promotes new and previously neglected research into our rich oral traditions and customs"*.²⁰

The wording in this part of the act reiterate the importance of determining the cultural significance or value of the Church of the Vow as part of the South African nation's irreplaceable heritage resources inherited and to be preserved for future generations. A study such as this one can assist in providing an understanding of the building's past and provide context for determining its relevance for present and future generations.²¹

In order to determine the cultural significance or heritage value of the Church of the Vow, the building will be assessed in Chapter 5 against nine criteria as set out in Section 3(3) of the South African National Heritage Resources Act (Act 25 of 1999), namely:

- a. its importance in the community, or pattern of South Africa's history
- b. its possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of South Africa's natural or cultural heritage

¹⁹ South African Heritage Resources Agency, Newsletter, *SAHRA News* 1 (1), December 2005, p. 1.

²⁰ Republic of South Africa, *National Heritage Resources Act (Act 25 of 1999)*, preamble. The words "communities", "our" and "their" in the text refers to the South African nation.

²¹ GTTPSA (Global Travel and Tourism partnership South Africa), *GTTP South Africa Heritage*, <<http://www.gttpsa.org/wp-content/uploads/201007Heritage-Webinar1.pdf>>, Updated: 2012. Accessed: 2012-10-22.

- c. its potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of South Africa's natural or cultural heritage
- d. its importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a particular class of South Africa's natural or cultural places or objects
- e. its importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics valued by a community or cultural group
- f. its importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period
- g. its strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons
- h. its strong or special association with the life or work of a person, group or organization of importance in the history of South Africa
- i. sites of significance relating to the history of slavery in South Africa.²²

Since South Africa has no charter that can be used in the management of heritage sites, overseas charters such as the Australia ICOMOS (International Council for Monuments and Sites) 'Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Significance', referred to as the Burra Charter (which was adopted in 1979 and revised in 2013) is often used in addition to the National Heritage Resources Act (25 of 1999) to guide heritage practitioners in determining the cultural significance of a place.²³ ICOMOS also published 'practice notes' to supplement and provide clarity on aspects of the Burra Charter and its application, such as the one titled *Understanding and assessing cultural significance*.²⁴

Both the Burra Charter and the South African National Heritage Resources Act (Act 25 of 1999) Section 2(vi), describes cultural significance as the aesthetic, historical, scientific,

²² Republic of South Africa, *National Heritage Resources Act (Act 25 of 1999)*; Australia ICOMOS, *The Burra Charter: The Australia ICOMOS Charter for places of cultural significance*, 2013, p. 2,

<<http://australia.icomos.org/publications/burra-charter-practice-notes/>>, Updated: 2014. Accessed: 2014-09-14. (a) and (h-i) refers to historical significance, (b-d) scientific significance, (e) aesthetic significance, (f) aesthetic and/or scientific significance, and (g) social significance

²³ Australia ICOMOS, *The Burra Charter: The Australia ICOMOS Charter for places of Cultural Significance*, 2013, p. 2, <<http://australia.icomos.org/publications/burra-charter-practice-notes/>>, Updated: 2014. Accessed: 2014-09-14.

²⁴ Australia ICOMOS, Practice Note *Understanding and assessing Cultural Significance*, <http://australia.icomos.org/wp-content/uploads/Practice-Note_Understanding-and-assessing-cultural-significance.pdf>, Updated: 2014. Accessed: 2014-09-14.

social and spiritual value or significance of a place. The Act also includes linguistic, technological and architectural value²⁵ (see Chapter 5).

By assessing these values, one can describe why a place is important. Since the Church of the Vow has no particular linguistic value, that category will not be used for the purpose of this study. Technological significance will be assessed as part of scientific and architectural value.

As a proclaimed Provincial Heritage Site, the Church of the Vow is protected by the National Heritage Resources Act (25 of 1999) and the provincial heritage body Amafa aKwaZulu-Natali (Heritage KwaZulu-Natal). No study has thus far been undertaken to document the history of the building while assessing its cultural significance.

1.3 Rationale and background to the study

1.3.1 Outline and topics of the study

The Church of the Vow, Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal will be used as a case study in the process of understanding the concept of cultural significance and how it applies to this historical building. Firstly the history and historical context of the building, what is known about the place, and its previous and current uses and chronology of events will be investigated (see chapters 2 – 4).

The study focuses on a period of 100 years: from 1838 to 1938 – from the Great Trek to the centenary celebrations in 1938, including topics such the Vow made before the Battle of Blood River in 1838; the establishment of the town Pietermaritzburg; the building of the church; the inauguration and use of the building; its renovations; its furnishings; its clergy, services and associated ceremonies; its multiple uses over the years; its renovation and establishment as a museum; and the special commemoration of the Great Trek that was celebrated at the Church of the Vow in 1938.

²⁵ Republic of South Africa, *National Heritage Resources Act (Act 25 of 1999)*; Australia ICOMOS, *The Burra Charter: The Australia ICOMOS Charter for places of cultural significance*, 2013, p. 2, <<http://australia.icomos.org/publications/burra-charter-practice-notes/>>, Updated: 2014. Accessed: 2014-09-14.

A variety of primary and secondary sources were used, including museum objects and their accompanying information, which are often overlooked as sources of information.

In Chapter 5, the cultural significance of the building is assessed against various criteria, using the South African Heritage Resources Act (Act 25 of 1999), and the Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter and Australia ICOMOS practice note on understanding and assessing cultural significance to determine if the building has aesthetic, historical, scientific, social, spiritual, technological and architectural value. Within this chapter the building's importance in Afrikaner culture and the meaning it holds within other cultural groups is analysed in order to determine whether it could add value within these diverse cultures, especially in Pietermaritzburg and KwaZulu-Natal.

1.3.2 Problem and sub problems

No substantial published secondary sources on the history of the building could be found, except for three publications: *Die Geloftekerk en ander studies oor die Groot Trek* by H.B. Thom, published in 1949; *Herbevestiging van die gelofte*, a 1955 commemorative publication compiled by P.W.J. Groenewald and T.V. Bresler; and an article by S.P. Engelbrecht titled *Die Geloftekerk*, published in 1950 in the *Almanak van die Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika*.

During the late 1940's Thom and Engelbrecht were requested by the *Sentrale Volksmonumentekomitee* (Central People's Monuments Committee) which was originally established by the Federation of Afrikaans Cultural Organisations (the FAK) to each separately investigate the validity of claims stating that the vow made in 1838 was never fulfilled and that a Church of the Vow was never built. Both came to the same conclusion and suggested the claims to be false. Their research resulted in the two publications on the Church of the Vow mentioned above.²⁶ Both made use of a variety of primary sources and gave a definitive account of especially the building of the church. Engelbrecht's account is however rather brief compared to that of Thom, who also focused extensively on the ownership of the building. The 1955 commemorative publication also includes an account of the history of the

²⁶ S.P. Engelbrecht, 'Die Geloftekerk', in S.P. Engelbrecht *et al.* (reds.), *Almanak van die Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika* (44), 1950, pp. 79-103; H.B.Thom, *Die Geloftekerk en ander studies oor die Groot Trek*, pp. 1-42 ; O.J.O. Ferreira, 'n Volk se hulde, p. 228.

building, but that is not the only focus of the publication and it is in no way a comprehensive account.

These publications which were produced in the 1940's and 1950's therefore leaves many questions unanswered or only partially answered:

- a. Why did the Voortrekkers make a vow and was it only Voortrekkers who made and believed in the importance of vows?
- b. Was it only people from the Afrikaner community who participated in the building of the church and made use of the building?
- c. Who were the initial congregation and what was life like during the time?
- d. Why did the building's appearance change so much over the years and how did it change?
- e. What happened in the building after it was no longer used as a church?
- f. What value does the building have within the Afrikaner community and does it have any significance in any other cultural group?

In order to answer these questions, information had to be gathered from primary sources such as minutes, newspapers and museum objects. These were often difficult to locate since they were scattered across various archives, museums and libraries. There was also a challenge in fully documenting the development and changes made to the building over time. There were only a few drawings and photographs found of the building in its earlier years.

Furthermore there are no previous publications or articles specifically analysing the cultural significance of this building, making this study a first attempt in this direction. There were only a few guidelines available on how to go about it, since there are only a few criteria stipulated in the South African Heritage Resources Act (Act 25 of 1999), which consequently had to be supplemented by the Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter, widely used by heritage practitioners as a guideline to assess the cultural significance of places and in the management of these heritage resources.

1.3.3 Rationale for the study

“The researcher, it is clear, looks for his facts even more actively than the traveller. He must piece together the ‘scenery’ of the past from fragments that lie scattered in many places...”²⁷

²⁷ J. Barzun and H.F. Graff, *The Modern Researcher*, pp. 151-152.

The Church of the Vow has a rich history. A visit to the Dutch Reformed Church Archives in Pietermaritzburg revealed numerous sources of information, containing valuable facts about the history of the building and the lives and times of the people who used the church. These have not been published before. This study is an attempt to analyse and document as much of the building's history as possible in order to preserve it for future generations.

Another valuable source of information is the Msunduzi Museum (previously known as the Voortrekker Museum). The then Voortrekker Museum relied on donations from the public, mostly the Afrikaner community. Consequently the acquisitions consist mainly of objects which reflected their material culture and history.²⁸ However, some objects and other acquisitions in the collection provides us today with some information relating to the construction and use of the building, and the involvement of people from other cultures. This has not been utilised in research before.

This study will attempt to address some of the problems and questions posed earlier and will attempt to establish what value the building held within different cultural groups in the past and its relevance and cultural significance to communities today.

The Church of the Vow was declared a national monument in 1937 by the then Historical Monuments Commission, established in 1923 and later replaced by the National Monuments Council through promulgation of the National Monuments Act (Act 28 of 1969). The Council was subsequently replaced by the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA) through the National Heritage Resources Act (Act 25 of 1999). In terms of Section 58(11)(a) of the Act, national monuments became provincial heritage sites to be protected by provincial heritage authorities, except where these authorities assessed sites to determine their eligibility as resources of national significance. KwaZulu-Natal established its own legislation in terms of the KwaZulu-Natal Heritage Act (Act 10 of 1997, replaced by no 4 of 2008). The Church of the Vow is a Grade II provincial heritage site and falls under the protection of the

²⁸ C.M.O. Rodéhn, *Lost in transformation: a critical study of two South African museums*, D.Phil. thesis, University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2008, p. 92.

provincial heritage authority, Amafa aKwaZulu-Natali (Heritage KwaZulu-Natal). However, this act provides no indication as to how significance will be defined.²⁹

When the Church of the Vow was declared a national monument in the 1930s, the Historical Monuments Commission looked at the significance of the building in terms of the Natural and Historical Monuments, Relics and Antiquities Act (Act 4 of 1934). Since then South Africa has become a democracy and has relooked at heritage to accommodate a diverse nation. The heritage bodies established under the new legislation – Amafa and SAHRA – has not yet reassessed the cultural significance of the building within the context of a democratic society, making this study all the more important.

Over the years there has been much debate amongst historians as to who is writing whose history and from which perspective. This study is not an attempt to rewrite history or explain the different viewpoints of particular groups referred to in the study. It is merely an attempt to illustrate that the Church of the Vow has a rich history that is not exclusive to one group only and could potentially be significant to different cultural groups today in a process of understanding and accepting one another.

1.3.4 Assumptions and conditions associated with the study

It was assumed by the researcher that primary and secondary sources would be available to support the hypotheses that people from cultural groups other than Afrikaners were involved with regard to the construction and use of the building. However, specific information around who assisted with the construction of the building was limited. There are only a few invoices which survived from the time the church was built and they only refer to the Voortrekkers' labourers who assisted in constructing the church, but unfortunately no names were given.³⁰ Although having as much information as possible from written sources about the specific individuals from other communities, apart from the Afrikaner community would have been ideal, this factor did not affect the outcome of the study since it soon became evident that some of this information could be obtained from objects and their related information in the

²⁹ G. Whitelaw, 'New legislation for cultural heritage', in M.H. Comrie *et al.*, *Natalia* (30), December 2000, pp.58-60; KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Government, *KwaZulu-Natal Heritage Act No. 4 of 2008*.

³⁰ Dutch Reformed Church Archive, Pietermaritzburg: box G53/1, File on history of the congregation by Dr. Besselaar, compiled from original minutes, 1926.

collection housed at the Msunduzi Museum (incorporating the Voortrekker Complex and Ncome Museum) in Pietermaritzburg.

It was also evident that there were sketches, photographs, minutes from the Church Council and some archaeological evidence available, indicating how the building drastically changed over the years and how it was used for various purposes. No published source has fully examined why and how the building has changed, and what the building was used for over the years. This study puts together all the bits and pieces in order to attempt to reconstruct this part of the history of the building. A lack of evidence for certain time periods resulted in minor gaps in this narrative, however this did not affect the outcome of the study since it still shows a sequence of development.

There were other aspects of the building's history including the lives and times of the congregation, which were scattered throughout various sources. All these aspects make this study all the more important by researching and interpreting this historical landmark's past in order to assess its significance within a contemporary society and the value it can hold for future generations.

The heritage value of the building needed to be assessed according to the nine criteria as set out in the South African Heritage Resources Act (Act 25 of 1999) in Section 3(3), to determine whether the building had significance in the past, whether it still has significance and whether it still plays an important part in South Africa's history. The Act had to be supplemented with an international charter that could provide clear guidelines as to how to assess the cultural significance, since South Africa does not have its own. The Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter was used for this purpose including practice notes which were also developed by Australia ICOMOS.

The history of this building has only to a limited extent been a subject for continuous discourse. It is an objective of this study to open the floor for further debate, looking at the value this building holds or could hold within different cultural groups as discussed in Chapter 5.

1.3.5 Delimitations and parameters of the study

This study was done within the framework of the Human and Social Sciences, drawing from disciplines such as History, Cultural History, Museology and Archaeology.

The study covers the period 1838 to 1938, focussing on important years such as 1838 when a vow was made by the Voortrekkers to build a church in God's honour should they win the battle against the forces of the Zulu king uDingane; the subsequent building of the church which was inaugurated in 1841; its change from a church building to a building with various purposes from 1861 until 1910; and the final transformation when it was purchased and renovated to open as a museum in 1912. The study will end with the museum's development until the centenary celebrations of the Great Trek in 1938, only highlighting significant developments, such as the appointment of the first caretaker who was from Indian origins and who worked for the museum for more than 20 years.³¹

This study will furthermore attempt to answer some questions posed earlier about the Voortrekkers making a vow, by looking at the making of vows across South Africa and internationally. The main objective of this study remains, however, to look at the Church of the Vow – the building, the site on which it stands and its surroundings – in order to determine its cultural significance, using the criteria as set out in Section 3(3) of the South African National Heritage Resources Act (Act 25 of 1999) and the Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter and practice notes.

1.3.6 Motivation for and significance of the study

This study aims to make a contribution to South African historiography by compiling for the first time, a comprehensive scientific account of the history of one of the oldest surviving landmarks in Pietermaritzburg. This study will be a scientific investigation and assessment of the cultural significance of the building. When the Church of the Vow was declared a national monument by the then Historical Monuments Commission in 1937, they used criteria as stipulated in Section 8 of the Natural and Historical Monuments, Relics and Antiquities Act

³¹ B. Guest, *Trek and transition: a history of the Msunduzi and Ncome Museums (incorporating the Voortrekker Complex) 1912–2012*, p. 44.

(Act 4 of 1934).³² When the new National Heritage Resources Act (Act 25 of 1999) was introduced, new criteria were stipulated for determining cultural significance in terms of Section 3(3), yet there was no reassessment of, in this case, the historical value of the Church of the Vow within a democratic South Africa, which necessitated this study to take a new look into the building's cultural significance today, in 2014.

The study aims to create an awareness and appreciation for this historical building, which survived because of a community's determination – not only the Afrikaans community but also English citizens of whom many settled in Pietermaritzburg after the British occupation of the Colony of Natal in 1843.

After being rescued from demolition and turned into a museum,³³ this site formed a significant part of Afrikaner collective memory, culture and history for many years. The Vow has even been described as "...a cornerstone of Afrikaner Nationalism resulting in its annual commemoration..."³⁴ Although for some it still occupies a special place in Afrikaner historical consciousness, it seems after speaking to local inhabitants in and around Pietermaritzburg that this pride has faded and at present it seems that only a few people actually know about the building's existence and what the building is all about. Many of those who were actually aware of the Church of the Vow had not visited the building in many years. Dr. Jackie Grobler's statement in his paper *Afrikaner perspectives on Blood River: A never-ending debate?* presented at a seminar at the University of Zululand in 1998, that "there are many Afrikaners today who seem to attach no importance whatsoever to the annual commemoration of Blood River", underlines this apathy.³⁵ Since the battle and the Church of the Vow is undeniably interlinked, as the church was built in fulfilment of a vow taken before the battle, the diminishing importance of commemorating the battle subsequently affects the importance and relevance of the Church of the Vow in a fast-changing society.

³² The South African Heritage Resources Agency, PDF document: 'Natural and Historical Monuments, Relics and Antiquities Act, 4 of 1934', Union of South Africa, *Government Gazette*, 5 April 1934, <<http://www.sahra.org.za/about/legislation>>, Updated: s.a. Accessed: 2014-10-02.

³³ Msunduzi Museum Library, Pietermaritzburg: box file 'Church of the Vow', pamphlet: Jansen, E.G., *et.al. Het Voortrekkerskerkje te Pietermaritzburg*. 1910.

³⁴ Msunduzi Museum Library, Pietermaritzburg: B477/99, 'The report of the panel of historians appointed by the South African Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology', in *The re-interpretation of the Battle of Blood River/Ncome* (compilation of seminar papers, University of Zululand), 1998-10-31, pp. 63-64.

³⁵ Msunduzi Museum Library, Pietermaritzburg: B477/99, J. Grobler, 'Afrikaner perspectives on Blood River: a never-ending debate?' in *The re-interpretation of the Battle of Blood River/Ncome* (compilation of seminar papers, University of Zululand), 1998-10-31, p. 46.

For any other culture except the Afrikaner community the building seems to have little or no significance. Often the Church of the Vow is referred to as a building which originated from conflict. It is perceived to have been built and used by the Afrikaners after winning the battle of Blood River – a battle which left many Zulus dead, or as Sithole puts it – a battle viewed by the victorious side as the outcome of a clash between ‘good versus evil’ or ‘civilization versus barbarism.’³⁶ This study aims to change that perception. The church was not only built by Afrikaners, and it was not only Afrikaners who attended services in the building while it was still used as a church. Research has revealed that the Afrikaners were at times joined by the English, Coloured and African communities from different denominations,³⁷ who congregated in harmony in the church for services, making the building a significant historical landmark in Pietermaritzburg and KwaZulu-Natal.

People from other provinces, countries and cultures can also relate to the Church of the Vow, because there are examples of other structures built in fulfilment of vows. In Louis Trichardt in the Limpopo Province, for example, another Church of the Vow was built in 1926 to fulfil a vow made by Commandant-General Piet Joubert of the *Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek*, before taking on the Venda people in battle in 1898.³⁸ In 1836 the Fingo of the Eastern Cape declared a milkwood tree as their sacred site where they made and commemorated their vow to God.³⁹ Chiesa del Voto, also known as the Church of the Vow in Modena, Italy was built in 1634 after a plague crippled the town during the early 1600’s.⁴⁰

The Church of the Vow is one of the few Voortrekker buildings left in Pietermaritzburg, a city where a number of important historical figures have treaded. Its attractive Cape Dutch characteristics are a feature in the surrounding urban landscape. This study hopes to encourage the continuous preservation of this historical landmark to be enjoyed by current but also future generations for many more years to come.

³⁶ Msunduzi Museum Library, Pietermaritzburg: B477/99, J. Sithole, ‘Changing images on the Battle of iNcome: a view from the sidelines’, in *The re-interpretation of the Battle of Blood River/Ncome* (compilation of seminar papers, University of Zululand), 1998-10-31, p. 30.

³⁷ The Natal Society Foundation, D. Buckley, ‘The story of the Metropolitan Methodist Church, Pietermaritzburg (the Chapel Street Society), 1846-1996’, in J.M. Deane (ed.), *Natalia* (26), May 1997, p. 60.

³⁸ Limpopo Tourism and Parks, ‘Museums and Monuments’, <http://www.golimpopo.com/activity-details_museums-and-monuments_110.html>, Updated: 2012. Accessed: 2012-06-02.

³⁹ V. de Kock, *Our Heritage*, p. 242.

⁴⁰ Virtual Tourist, ‘Modena things to do’, <<http://members.virtualltourist.com/m/3001d/242bf/4/>>, Updated: 2012. Accessed: 2012-02-06.

1.3.7 Research organization and Methodology

Research is a process of finding, comparing, interpreting and using information in an effort to understand the past.

This study is a descriptive, interpretive case study of the history of the Church of the Vow and its cultural significance, using the qualitative research methodology, often used in the human and social sciences to attempt to understand the what, how and why of social and cultural phenomena. Rich descriptions and a deep understanding of the research study are indicative of this research paradigm. One area of interest in this methodology is the understanding of the contextual nature of the research study. This paradigm is deeply rooted in scientific disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, cultural studies and so forth.⁴¹

The first step in order to attempt to answer the questions posed earlier in this study, and in order to assess the cultural significance of the Church of the Vow, was to consult a variety of secondary sources in both printed and digital format, which contain information relating to the building. The first sources consulted were those printed specifically about the Church of the Vow such as *Die Geloftekerk en ander studies oor die Groot Trek* (1949) by H.B. Thom; and the article by S.P. Engelbrecht, “Die Geloftekerk” in the *Almanak van die Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika* (44). These gentlemen were important academics and historians of their time.

Primary sources that could contain information about the Church of the Vow were also consulted. The first institution visited was the Msunduzi Museum (incorporating the Voortrekker Complex and Ncome Museum) in Pietermaritzburg. The museum opened its doors in the Church of the Vow for the first time in 1912. It houses numerous objects and photographs relating to the history of the building. Sadly museum collections are often overlooked in research as places where information can be obtained. Museum objects are tangible traces of memories and cultural expressions. They are a valuable source of information together with the accession registers and catalogue cards which provides accompanying information. In the case of the Voortrekker Museum (now part of the

⁴¹ A. M. Velez, ‘Evaluating research methods: assumptions, strengths, and weaknesses of three educational research paradigms’, <<http://www.unco.edu/ae-extra/2008/9/velez.html>>, Updated: s.a. Accessed: 2014-09-21.

Msunduzi Museum), objects had been collected ever since 1910, before its opening in 1912. These were also documented in the souvenir catalogue which was published for the opening event.⁴²

The first objects in this museum were mostly donated by Afrikaner families of whom many were descendants of the Voortrekkers. As a result most of the collection comprised of Voortrekker clothing, furniture and other domestic items.⁴³ However, African items such as Zulu spear points, copper armbands and neck rings, snuffboxes and San (Bushmen) digging stones, were also collected,⁴⁴ although it was not intended to represent and educate visitors about the material culture of Africans, but was rather collected and exhibited to illustrate the relationship between the different groups during the time of the Great Trek.⁴⁵

Although most of the objects collected during the early years of the museum are associated with the history of the Voortrekkers, a few objects (and their accompanying information) relate to the building and the individuals who formed a part of it. One example is a photograph of Heinrich Repsold who, according to Mrs. Uys (the donor), was a teacher during the time when she attended school in the Church of the Vow.⁴⁶ This could be corroborated with minutes of the Church Council housed in the Dutch Reformed Church Archive, Pietermaritzburg.⁴⁷

The collection's accompanying information proved to be valuable for the purposes of this study, even though it is often based on oral evidence which is not supported by other evidence. Some information would not have been known to us today if people did not find it important enough to donate items to the museum with the associated information. One example is a hymn book belonging to Alfred Roberts (donated in 1974), which had accompanying information indicating that he was a choir master in the church from 1847 to

⁴² Msunduzi Museum, Pietermaritzburg: Voortrekker Museum booklet: *Souvenir Voortrekkers Museum 16th December 1912*, Pietermaritzburg, 1912.

⁴³ C.M.O. Rodéhn, *Lost in transformation: a critical study of two South African museums*, D.Phil. thesis, University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2008, p. 92.

⁴⁴ Msunduzi Museum Archive, Pietermaritzburg: Curator's entries, old accession register: VMT 1-85, pp. 3, 5, 11, 15.

⁴⁵ C.M.O. Rodéhn, *Lost in transformation: a critical study of two South African museums*, D.Phil. thesis, University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2008, pp. 252-253.

⁴⁶ Msunduzi Museum Collection, Pietermaritzburg, Accession Register, Accession no. 1266 (photograph, Heinrich Albrecht Repsold).

⁴⁷ Dutch Reformed Church Archive, Pietermaritzburg: book G53/2b, minutes of the Church Council.

1856.⁴⁸ This information would probably have been lost if the book had not been donated to the museum.

Another significant source is a booklet about possible donations to the museum containing entries from 1971 to 1981, probably authored by the curator at the time. The Museum had several curators from 1971 until September 1977 when Dr. Ivor Pols assumed office.⁴⁹ An entry dated 28/5/74 indicated that a prospective donor had a photo of her ancestors, John Banks and his wife. According to the donor the couple's child was born in the Church of the Vow.⁵⁰ It is possible that the birth did indeed occur in the church because the date of birth was given as 1898. At this time the church was used as a pharmacy and included medical consulting rooms, where a birth could presumably have taken place.⁵¹

Although there is not much material evidence in the museum collection reflecting the contribution of other cultural groups to the history of the building, the few items that are there, make a valuable contribution to our understanding of who was involved in the construction of the church. The photograph of 'Outa' Flink (the word 'Outa' was often used in the past to refer to an elderly person of colour) who assisted with some of the interior work of the church is one example. His contribution was recorded in the museum accession register and in a letter in the Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository directed to the Museum Council of 1910 by the Burger-family, for whom Flink worked during the time the church was built.⁵²

Another relevant item is a snuffbox of the Frenchman John Samuel Laffnie that was donated to the museum in 1910.⁵³ The accompanying information revealed that he contributed towards the building of the church. This object indicates that the building was not exclusively constructed by the Voortrekkers, but included other individuals in the community.

⁴⁸ Msunduzi Museum, Pietermaritzburg: Curator's entry, Accession register, Accession no. 2610 (hymn book, Alfred Roberts).

⁴⁹ B. Guest, *Trek and transition: a history of the Msunduzi and Ncome Museums (incorporating the Voortrekker Complex) 1912 – 2012*, p. 82.

⁵⁰ Msunduzi Museum Archive, Pietermaritzburg: Curator's booklet *Voornemende skenkings 1971-1981*.

⁵¹ J.F. Ingram, *The story of an African city*, pp. 182-183.

⁵² Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository: A81, 'Voortrekker Museum', Correspondence 1908-1938, Letter from Genl. Schalk Burger to Church Council, 1910-10-14.

⁵³ Msunduzi Museum Archive, Pietermaritzburg: Curator's entry in old accession register, VMT 1-85, no. 31, p. 6; Voortrekker Museum booklet: *Souvenir Voortrekkers Museum 16th December 1912*. Pietermaritzburg, 1912.

The metal wagon parts and glass bottles that were found in the garden when a pavement was laid on the present site of the Msunduzi Museum, contributes to our understanding of the multiple uses of the site, when the building was no longer used as a church.

The Msunduzi Museum (incorporating the Voortrekker Complex and Ncome Museum) library and archive contains books published in the mid and late 19th century which provide a glimpse of Pietermaritzburg's history during the time, including the Church of the Vow. It is also a repository for old registers, souvenir booklets, letters and other administrative documents of the museum containing information about donations.

The Museum library and archive also contain newspapers and books published before the 1950s, with reference to the history of the building, such as the commemorative issue of the *Huisgenoot* of December 1938, which includes an article by Rev. J.D. Kestell⁵⁴ in which he refers to the church and some members of the congregation he remembered from his childhood in Pietermaritzburg, which contributes to our understanding of the life and times of the congregation. Other publications include the *Boys Model School Pietermaritzburg Centenary Magazine 1849-1949*,⁵⁵ which contains recollections of children who attended school in the building during the mid-1860s and early 1870s when it was no longer used as a church.

Other institutions where research was undertaken for this study include the Dutch Reformed Church Archive, the Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository and Bessie Head Library, which are all situated in Pietermaritzburg. These three institutions contain sources with a wealth of information about the Church of the Vow which have not been published before. Thus the Dutch Reformed Church Archive houses numerous documents from the 19th century including letters, subscription lists and minutes of the Church Council which provide more information on who built the church, what the church looked like, how the building was used and how its appearance changed over the years.

The Bessie Head library houses various old newspapers including *Die Patriot*, *Natalian* and *Natal Witness* dating back to 1846 and reflecting on the social life of the congregation and the

⁵⁴ J.D. Kestell, 'Voortrekkers wat ek geken het', in J.M.H. Viljoen (red.), *Die Groot Trek Gedenkuitgawe van die Huisgenoot*, Desember 1938, p. 147.

⁵⁵ Anonym, *Boys Model School Pietermaritzburg Centenary Magazine 1849-1949*, pp. 1-50.

different services that were held to accommodate the different communities and denominations in Pietermaritzburg. They also provide details about the preparations prior to the opening of the museum in 1912.

The Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository contains a variety of letters and documents relating to the history of the building. It reflects on the time when the church was a pharmacy and also contains the only description (found until 2014), of a wedding that took place in the church.⁵⁶ It also provides more details about the renovation of the building in 1911 and the decorative gable which was added at this time.⁵⁷

Internet also allows quick access to a variety of sources published on the web, including research articles, family histories and books which are out of print. It also revealed how the making of vows is not associated with the Voortrekkers alone and that there are other churches and structures in South Africa and internationally, constructed in fulfilment of vows.

After these sources were examined, the next step was to consult the South African National Heritage Resources Act (Act 25 of 1999) in order to assess the cultural significance of the Church of the Vow. Specific use was made of the nine criteria for determining the cultural significance or special value of a place as stipulated in Section 3(3) of the Act and listed earlier on in this chapter.⁵⁸

Since South Africa does not have its own charter which provides more detailed guidelines for determining cultural significance, the criteria as stipulated in the Act was used in conjunction with the Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter and its supplementary practice notes on understanding an assessing cultural significance in order to be able to assess whether the building has aesthetic, historic, scientific, spiritual, social, architectural and technological value. This could only be determined by firstly looking at the building's history, which will be discussed in the next three chapters.

⁵⁶ Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository: A982, Personal memories of Rev. F. de Kock, s.l., 1938.

⁵⁷ Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository: A1704, Handwritten manuscript in Dutch by W.J. Pretorius. s.l., s.a.

⁵⁸ Republic of South Africa, *National Heritage Resources Act (Act 25 of 1999)*.

CHAPTER 2

THE CHURCH OF THE VOW AS A HERITAGE OBJECT

2.1 Introduction

Buildings are excellent examples of physical cultural heritage. As three-dimensional, visible evidence of the past, they can be regarded as immovable heritage objects. This chapter introduces the Church of the Vow as a historical place, from its origins to its construction. As a tangible heritage object the building's setting and physical attributes plays an important role in the process of determining its cultural significance. This chapter also introduces the intangible aspect of the building, its associations and meanings of the place.

2.2 Background to the history of the building

The building of the church was a result of the Battle of Blood River which took place on 16 December 1838, during the time of the Great Trek. Prior to the battle, the Voortrekkers in their desperate situation, made a vow to God that they would build a church should they be victorious against the warriors of the Zulu army.⁵⁹

2.2.1 Trekking into the interior

During the 1830s, Afrikaner farmers, especially on the eastern frontier of the Cape Colony, became dissatisfied with the British government for various reasons. They left their properties and land in the Colony in organised groups and ventured northwards in their ox-drawn wagons, aspiring to settle in the interior. These people were later known as Voortrekkers (meaning those who trek or move ahead).⁶⁰

The idea of building a church in the interior was conceptualised many months before the actual vow was taken. As early as 1837 the newspaper *De Zuid-Afrikaan* reported that a

⁵⁹ F.A. van Jaarsveld, F.A., Historiese spieël van Bloedrivier, in F.A. van Jaarsveld, *Die evolusie van apartheid en ander geskiedkundige opstelle*, pp. 46-89.

⁶⁰ E.A. Walker, *The Great Trek*; J. Visagie, The emigration of the Voortrekkers into the interior, in F. Pretorius (ed.), *A History of South Africa From the Distant Past to the Present Day*, 125-154; J.W. Colenso, *Ten weeks in Natal*, p. xvi – xvii.

collection list was established to generate funds to sustain a salary for a minister and building of a proper church by the Voortrekkers after reaching their ‘promised land’. The concept was possibly reinforced when the Voortrekkers were facing a dangerous situation.⁶¹

The men, women and children were led by several leaders such as Louis Tregardt, Andries Hendrik Potgieter, Gerhardus Marthinus Maritz, Petrus Lafras Uys, Piet Retief, and Andries Wilhelmus Jacobus Pretorius. Servants, travellers and missionaries also joined the trek. On their journey, the Voortrekkers befriended and bartered with indigenous groups and they also faced many dangers such as rough terrain, deep rivers, storms, fires, wild animals and fierce enemies.⁶²

One of the Voortrekker leaders, Piet Retief, negotiated with the Zulu King uDingane for land, but when negotiations failed, Retief with those who accompanied him were murdered on 6 February 1838 at ‘The Hill of Execution’ (KwaMatiwane), just outside King uDingane’s homestead. More attacks followed about 10 days later on small groups of Voortrekkers in the upper Thukela River basin.⁶³ In retaliation, Commandant-General Andries Pretorius⁶⁴ at the end of 1838, organised a commando against King uDingane.⁶⁵

2.2.2 A vow to God

On their way into Zululand, Pretorius’s commando took a vow, promising God that if they succeeded in defeating the warriors of the Zulu army, they would commemorate the day and build a church in His honour.⁶⁶

There are four primary accounts of the taking of the vow. Firstly, that of the Coloured man Jan G. Bantjes, Secretary of Andries Pretorius, who records the event in his journal under the date of 9 December 1838. Secondly, the account of Andries Pretorius, the Commandant-General, recorded a week after the battle of Blood River (16 December 1838). Both can be

⁶¹ A. Dreyer, *Die Kaapse kerk en die Groot Trek*, p. 10.

⁶² R. Carstens & P. W. Grobbelaar, *Voortrekkerlewe*, pp. 37, 44, 74-75, 120.

⁶³ J.W. Colenso, *Ten weeks in Natal*, p. xvi – xvii.

⁶⁴ D.J Potgieter (Chief ed.), *Standard encyclopedia of Southern Africa* Vol. 9, pp. 115-116.

⁶⁵ Msunduzi Museum Library, Pietermaritzburg: E.G. Jansen, *From the time of the Voortrekkers: memories of Louis Jacobus Nel* (English facsimile reprint of the Afrikaans version), (no page numbers).

⁶⁶ F.A. van Jaarsveld, F.A., *Historiese spieël van Bloedrivier*, in F.A. van Jaarsveld, *Die evolusie van apartheid en ander geskiedkundige opstelle*, pp. 46-89.

regarded as contemporary accounts. Thirdly, the account of Dewald Pretorius recorded in 1862, who was also present when the vow was taken and lastly, the account of Sarel Cilliers, who was part of the commando, documented 32 years later, in 1870.⁶⁷

According to Jan Bantjes:

*“Des Zondags morgens voordat de godsdienst begon liet de Hoofdkommandant (Pretorius) dengenen die de godsdienst zouden verrichten by malkander komen, en verzocht hen met de gemeente te spreken dat zij allen volijverig in geest en in waarheid tot God mochten bidden om Zijn hulp en bijstand in `t slaan tegen de vijand; dat hij aan de Almachtige `n gelofte doen wilde (indien allen wel wilden) - om, zo de Heere ons de overwinning geven mag, `n Huis tot Zijn grote naams gedachtenis te stichten, alwaar het hem zal behagen; en dat zij ook moesten afsmecken de hulp en bijstand van God, om deze gelofte zeker te kunnen volbrengen; en dat wij de dag der overwinning in `n boek zullen aantekenen, om dezelve bekend te maken aan onze laaste nageslachten, opdat `t ter ere van God gevierd mag worden”.*⁶⁸

According to Andries Pretorius:

*“...dat wij alhier onder elkanderen besloten hebben om de dag onzer overwinning, zijnde Zondag, de 16e dezer maand December, onder ons ganse geslacht te doen bekend worden, en dat wij het aan de Heer willen toewijden en vieren met dankzeggingen, zoals wij voordat wij tegen de vijand streden, in `t openbaar gebed beloofd hebben; zoo ook dat, zo wij de overwinning verkrijgen mogen, wij den Heere to Zijns naams gedachtenis `n huis stichten zullen, alwaar Hij ons zulks aanwijzen zal; welke geloften wij nu ook hopen te betalen met de hulp des Heeren; nu Hij ons gezegend en onze gebeden verhoord heeft.”*⁶⁹

The accounts differ regarding the date/s, place and how the vow was taken, but both Bantjes and Pretorius mention a promise being made to God, that should they defeat their enemy, they would build a house (church) in His honour. The account of Sarel Cilliers is similar, but he makes no mention of a church building.⁷⁰ However, in a letter to a Mr. Van Broekhuizen,

⁶⁷ H.B. Thom, *Die Geloftekerk en ander studies oor die Groot Trek*, pp. 2-3.

⁶⁸ G.S. Preller, *Scripta Africana reeks II, Die Groot Trek, Andries Pretorius*, p. 36. (1988 reprint of G. Preller's 1937 publication. Original source the newspaper *De Zuid-Afrikaan*, 16 February 1839).

⁶⁹ G.S. Preller, *Scripta Africana reeks II, Die Groot Trek, Andries Pretorius*, p. 36.

⁷⁰ Msunduzi Museum Library, Pietermaritzburg; box file 'Church of the Vow', Anonym, Research notes: *Waar die Voortrekker gelofte afgelê is?* G.S. Preller, *Scripta Africana reeks II, Die Groot Trek, Andries Pretorius*. (1988 reprint of G. Preller's 1937 publication), p. 37.

Cilliers later mentions the building of a church: “*dat wij ook de Heer een kerk zal bouwen in ons midden.*”⁷¹

Dewald Pretorius’ (1809-1870)⁷² account mentions that if God granted them victory, they would commemorate the day and build churches and schools in his honour.⁷³



Figure 2: Dewald Pretorius and his wife⁷⁴

There are three accounts of the exact wording of the vow – those of H.J Hofstede (1876), F.L. Cachet (1882) and G.B.A. Gerdener (1919). All three are similar but Hofstede and Cachet do not mention the building of a church. Hofstede also used the memoirs of Cilliers when he wrote the words. Cachet used the words of Hofstede.⁷⁵

According to Gerdener the following is the closest to the original wording (for the purpose of this study translated into English): “*Here we stand before the holy God of heaven and earth, to make a vow to Him that, if He will protect us and give our enemy into our hand, we shall keep this day and date every year as a day of thanksgiving like a sabbath, and that we shall*

⁷¹ G.D.J. Duvenhage, *Die Groot Trek: Die eerste drie jaar, Deel 3: 1838: Die Gelofte*, p. 165.

⁷² C.J. Visagie, *Voortrekkerstamouers 1835-1845*, p. 379.

⁷³ S.P. Engelbrecht, ‘Die Geloftekerk’, in S.P. Engelbrecht *et al.* (eds), *Almanak van die Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika* (44), 1950, p. 80.

⁷⁴ Msunduzi Museum, Pietermaritzburg, Photo Negative No. F46.

⁷⁵ F.A. van Jaarsveld, F.A., *Historiese spieël van Bloedrivier*, in F.A. van Jaarsveld, *Die evolusie van apartheid en ander geskiedkundige opstelle*, pp. 47-49.

erect a house to His honour wherever it should please Him, and that we also will tell our children that they should share in that with us in memory for future generations. For the honour of His name will be glorified by giving Him the fame and honour for the victory."⁷⁶

Some historians question the 'so-called vow' and its association with the building of a church, concluding it to be a myth (especially since Prof F.A. van Jaarsveld could not locate the original text during his research).⁷⁷

For the Voortrekkers, the vow was seen as an important part of Christian life, as indicated by Wilhelmus à Brakel in his book *Redelijke Godsdienst*, a book on religion used by the Voortrekkers. He notes that by making a vow, one creates a bond with God, especially in times of need and allows an opportunity to renew your dedication to God. He warns however that a vow should not be unrealistic and that one should be careful in making them, ensuring that you must be able to execute your promise.⁷⁸ It can be assumed that the Voortrekkers considered it important to respect the vow by erecting a church at some point in time.

The making of vows or promises to higher powers when faced with danger, is not associated with the Voortrekkers alone. People from all over the world have been doing this for centuries.

In Chiesa del Voto in Italy is a building also known as the Church of the Vow, built after a plague crippled the town during the early 1600's.⁷⁹ In Ireland, Tintern Abbey was constructed after the Earl of Pembroke's ship was threatened by a storm on the way to Ireland (ca. 1200) and he vowed to build an abbey wherever they landed.⁸⁰ The Cathedral of Christ the Saviour in Moscow (Russia) was built by Tsar Alexander I in fulfilment of a vow he made during

⁷⁶ G.D.J. Duvenhage, *Die Groot Trek: Die eerste drie jaar, Deel 3: 1838: Die Geloofte*, pp. 186-189.

⁷⁷ Msunduzi Museum Library, Pietermaritzburg: B477/99, J.S.M. Maphalala, 'The re-interpretation of the war of Ncome, 16 December 1838', in *The re-interpretation of the Battle of Blood River/Ncome* (compilation of seminar papers, University of Zululand) 1998-10-31, p. 62.

⁷⁸ E. Pretorius, 'Geloofedag' (Voortrekker Monument and Heritage Foundation article), September 2005, p. 2; W. à Brakel, *Het leven des geloofs op de beloften, Hoofdstuk 42, Redelijke Godsdienst*, in *De Evangelist*, <http://www.theologienet.nl/documenten/Brakel_RedGod_hfd42.pdf>, Updated: 2014-08-29, Accessed: 2014-10-05.

⁷⁹ Wikipedia, 'Chiesa del Voto' <http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chiesa_del_Voto>, Updated: 2013-04-01, Accessed: 2013-08-30.

⁸⁰ Msunduzi Museum Library, Pietermaritzburg: box file 'Church of the Vow', Pamphlet: R. Mulder, *Other Churches of the Vow*.

Napoleon's invasion of Russia in 1812 (construction only started in 1839).⁸¹ In Blerick (Netherlands) the Anthony de Padua Church, also known as the Church of the Vow, was destroyed in 1944 during World War II.⁸² The St. Sophia's Cathedral (Los Angeles) was constructed in 1952 after Charles Skouras vowed that he would build a cathedral if God granted him success in the entertainment business.⁸³

Other churches include: Battle Abbey, Vale Royal Abbey and Zion Congregational Church (England); Santa Maria da Vitoria (Portugal); Basilica di Superga (Italy); Catedral de Santa Maria de Palma de Mallorca (Spain) and Naira Church (Nigeria).⁸⁴

In Louis Trichardt in the Limpopo Province a church, which was designed by the well-known South African architect Gerard Moerdyk, is also known as the Church of the Vow. It was built in 1926 to fulfil a vow made by Commandant-General Piet Joubert before a battle with the Venda nation in 1898.⁸⁵

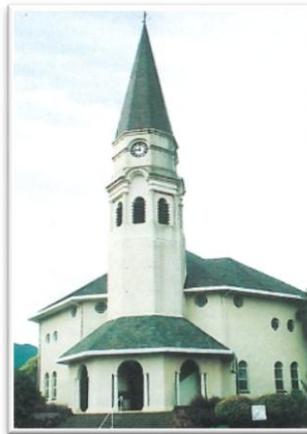


Figure 3: Church of the Vow in Louis Trichardt⁸⁶

⁸¹ Msunduzi Museum Library, Pietermaritzburg: box file 'Church of the Vow', Pamphlet: R. Mulder, *Other Churches of the Vow*.

⁸² Reliwiki, Blerick, Geloftekerk, < http://www.reliwiki.nl/index.php?title=Blerick,_Adres_onbekend_-_Geloftekerk>, Updated: 2013-03-09 Accessed: 2013-09-23.

⁸³ Msunduzi Museum Library, Pietermaritzburg: box file 'Church of the Vow', Pamphlet: R. Mulder, *Other Churches of the Vow*.

⁸⁴ Msunduzi Museum Library, Pietermaritzburg: box file 'Church of the Vow', Pamphlet: R. Mulder, *Other Churches of the Vow*; Information Nigeria, 'Multi-Million Naira Church Building Is A Fulfilment Of Vow I Made To God', <<http://www.informationng.com/2013/04/multi-million-naira-church-building-is-a-fulfilment-of-vow-i-made-to-god-ekweremadu.html>>, Updated: 2013-09-23, Accessed: 2013-09-23.

⁸⁵ Msunduzi Museum Library, Pietermaritzburg: box file 'Church of the Vow', Pamphlet: R. Mulder, *Other Churches of the Vow*.

⁸⁶ J. Oxley, *Places of worship in South Africa*, p. 95.

In 1836 the Fingo of the Eastern Cape proclaimed a milkwood tree their sacred site where they made and commemorated their vow to God⁸⁷ after they were assisted by English soldiers who rescued them from Chief Hintza's warriors.⁸⁸



Figure 4: Fingo Vow Monument⁸⁹

2.2.3 Battle of Blood River (16 December 1838)

On 16 December 1838, one of the most famous battles in South African history took place between the Voortrekkers and the Zulu warriors at Blood River. A Zulu army under Ndlela kaSompisi Ntuli and Nzobo (Dambuza) kaSobadli Ntombela, attacked the Voortrekker wagon laager on the banks of the River.⁹⁰ Ngidi kaMcikaziswa, who took part in the battle said: “*We Zulus die lying facing the enemy – all of us – but at the Ncome we turned our backs. This was caused by the Boers and their guns*”.⁹¹

⁸⁷ Look and Learn, Children's Newspaper 1935-08-17, p. 4, < <http://www.lookandlearn.com/childrens-newspaper/browse.php>>, Updated: 2012, Accessed: 2012-02-06.

⁸⁸ Tracks4Africa, 'Milkwood tree-Fingo treaty 1835' <<http://tracks4africa.co.za/listings/item/w159161/>>, Updated: s.a., Accessed: 2013-08-30.

⁸⁹ V. de Kock, *Our Heritage* (Cape Town, 1960), p. 192.

⁹⁰ The Zulus refer to the River as *Ncome*. It is also known as Blood River in English and *Bloedrivier* in Afrikaans, named as such after the battle.

⁹¹ C. de B Webb & J.B. Wright (eds.), *The James Stuart Archive* (5), p. 77.

The Voortrekkers won the battle. Gert Viljoen, who participated, said that a person could not see whether Jan Joubert, who manned one of the cannons, was a white or a black man as his face was covered with gunpowder.⁹²



Figure 5: Zulu snuff container and pouch found on the site after the 1838 battle⁹³

The day has been commemorated by the Voortrekkers and their descendants ever since. First known as Dingaan's Day, it later became known as the Day of the Covenant and Day of the Vow. On 16 December 1961 the ANC launched its military wing *uMkhonto weSizwe* (meaning 'spear of the nation'). In the ANC 16 December subsequently became known as Heroes' Day. In 1994 the name changed to Reconciliation Day and in 1998, at a ceremony held before the construction of the planned Ncome Museum, Mangosuthu Buthelezi initiated a new vow wherein he encouraged all South Africans to view the day as a day that binds us together in the quest to build a new country in the fight against poverty, inequality, corruption and crime.⁹⁴

2.2.4 Establishment of Pietermaritzburg (1839)

In 1838 the Voortrekkers founded Pietermaritzburg. On 23 October 1838, Erasmus Smit noted in his diary that the town would be named in honour of leaders Pieter (Piet) Retief and Gerrit (Gert) Maritz.⁹⁵ According to the Voortrekker Louis Jacobus Nel (1835-1915), whose memoirs appeared in *De Volkstem* newspaper on 11 September 1917, their group arrived in

⁹² Msunduzi Museum Library, Pietermaritzburg: E.G. Jansen, *From the time of the Voortrekkers: memories of Louis Jacobus Nel* (English facsimile reprint of the Afrikaans version), (no page numbers).

⁹³ Msunduzi Museum, Pietermaritzburg, Accession No. 1925 and 45.

⁹⁴ G. Hofmeyr (ed.), *NG Kerk 350*, p. 33.

⁹⁵ H.F. Schoon (ed.), *The diary of Erasmus Smit* (English translation by W.G.A. Mears), p. 143.

Pietermaritzburg in July 1839 and formed a laager (camp). The village was to become the capital.⁹⁶

Pietermaritzburg was, according to Nel, surveyed by Piet Greyling and Phillip Nel, using a large wooden cross to get the streets at right angles, while the measurements of stands were fixed by a thin strip of leather and a try-square.⁹⁷ Adulphe Delegorgue, a French traveller who was known to be unsympathetic towards the Voortrekkers, spent November and December of the same year in what he called ‘Pieters Mauritz Burg’. He described it as “a stockaded camp, simply a collection of crude shanties made of wood and rushes and plastered with cow-dung”.⁹⁸

By 1841 about 80 shelters and dwellings had been erected. By this time only a few buildings were of a permanent character, including the Dutch Reformed Church (the Church of the Vow), the Magistrate’s office (on the location of the current Town Hall), the prison and powder magazine.⁹⁹ In 1843 Rev. A. Faure reported that there were approximately 120 dwellings, a court house and a church.¹⁰⁰ A year later the newspaper *De Natalier* reported that there were about 132 houses made of shale or burnt brick, with slate or tiled roofs, with ceilings and floors made of yellow-wood. The houses had ‘riempie’ furniture inside (meaning furniture made with a wooden structure and seats made of strips of raw hide).¹⁰¹



Figure 6: Pietermaritzburg in 1844, painted by L. Cloete¹⁰²

⁹⁶ Msunduzi Museum Library, Pietermaritzburg: E.G. Jansen, *From the time of the Voortrekkers: memories of Louis Jacobus Nel* (English facsimile reprint of the Afrikaans version), (no page numbers).

⁹⁷ Msunduzi Museum Library, Pietermaritzburg: E.G. Jansen, *From the time of the Voortrekkers: memories of Louis Jacobus Nel* (English facsimile reprint of the Afrikaans version), (no page numbers).

⁹⁸ C.D. Webb & S. Alexander (eds.), *Adulphe Delegorgue’s Travels in Southern Africa* (I), 1990, p. 96.

⁹⁹ Msunduzi Museum Library, Pietermaritzburg: E.G. Jansen, *From the time of the Voortrekkers: memories of Louis Jacobus Nel* (English facsimile reprint of the Afrikaans version), (no page numbers).

¹⁰⁰ A. Dreyer, *Die Kaapse kerk en die Groot Trek*, p. 60.

¹⁰¹ R. Gordon, *The place of the elephant*, p. 6.

¹⁰² J. Laband and R. Haswell (eds.), *Pietermaritzburg 1838-1988*, p. 23.

In January 1845, James Michiel Howell described Pietermaritzburg: “It has nine long streets, besides a handsome square, and back streets and lanes. It has a handsome stone-built church [the Church of the Vow], public offices, prison, market place, printing office, horse races, subscription balls and a theatre.”¹⁰³



Figure 7: Thatching houses in upper Longmarket Street, circa 1845¹⁰⁴



Figure 8: Church Street, Pietermaritzburg circa 1848. Visagie's mill on the right sketched by Col. Coxen¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ Quoted in The Natal Society Foundation, U.E.M Judd, ‘The origins of the Natal Society, Chapter 1: Early Pietermaritzburg’ in C. de B. Webb (ed.), *Natalia* (2), December 1972, p. 31.

¹⁰⁴ J. Laband and R. Haswell (eds.), *Pietermaritzburg 1838-1988*, p. 27.

¹⁰⁵ Msunduzi Museum, Pietermaritzburg, Accession No. 464.

Several references to Pietermaritzburg in the 1840's describe it as a town with buildings of whitewashed gables. In 1849 Thomas Phipson wrote: "The town consists of about two hundred houses of various size and structure, but all built more or less in the style of English rural architecture. The walls consist either of burnt brick (or unburnt) or else of stone... With few exceptions they are whitened externally, and the roofs are either thatched or tiled".¹⁰⁶



Figure 9: Pietermaritzburg 1846, by Surveyor Piers¹⁰⁷

In 1851 J.J. Freeman reported that: "There are 400 building lots in the town; many are still unoccupied, but there are already about 1200 European or colonial inhabitants".¹⁰⁸

By 1855 Bishop Colenso notes: "*The view of Maritzburg from Fort Napier is very beautiful. The town is very regularly built, (as all towns founded by Dutchmen are) in the form of a rectangle..., with its white houses and shops – some large and some small, some good and some bad...*"¹⁰⁹



Figure 10: Pietermaritzburg during the 1850's¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ R.N. Currey (ed.), *Letters & other writings of a Natal Sheriff Thomas Phipson, 1815-76*, p. 13.

¹⁰⁷ B. Bassett (ed.), *The buildings of Pietermaritzburg*, Vol. I, p. vii. Original in Alan Paton Centre, Pietermaritzburg: Hattersley Collection: NS-PE-H.

¹⁰⁸ J.J. Freeman, *A tour in South Africa*, p. 350.

¹⁰⁹ J. W. Colenso, *Ten weeks in Natal*, pp. 47-48.

¹¹⁰ J.W. Colenso, *Ten weeks in Natal*, p. 49.

2.2.5 Establishing a Dutch Reformed Church and a temporary church building

When the Voortrekkers left the Cape Colony, they aspired to establish Dutch Reformed congregations wherever they settled. Early baptism registers, minutes of the church council and other documents indicate that in Natal, the congregation was referred to as “Gereformeerd”, “Hervormd Gereformeerd” or “Hollandsche Gereformeerd”, meaning Reformed or Dutch Reformed.¹¹¹

J.H. Steenkamp records in 1910 that his father, a Voortrekker who settled in Pietermaritzburg, told him that before the church was built they gathered in the house of Lenie (Magdalena Johanna) Retief, widow of Voortrekker leader Piet Retief and that he also got married there. Widow Retief lived in Church Street 22. As the congregation expanded, the need for a bigger building became more urgent. In the meantime the congregation built and used a ‘*rietekerk*’, described by Susanna Smit in her diary as a ‘primitive, temporary structure used for church gatherings’. Her husband, Erasmus Smit used to preach there.¹¹²

The oldest baptism register indicates that the first three baptisms were in the ‘*rietekerk*’ on Sunday 15 March 1840 during a sermon led by Rev. Erasmus Smit.¹¹³ Elisabeth Catharina Cilliers, born on 3 November 1839, was baptized on 13 February 1841 at the first baptism service held by Rev. Lindley. She was baptized later due to personal differences between her father Sarel Cilliers and Rev. Smit.¹¹⁴

According to Hester Maria Magdalena Maré the ‘*rietekerk*’ had a pitched roof of wooden poles over which tarpaulins were drawn. She got married to Johann Heinrich Carl Haveman in 1841 in the church. The service was conducted by Rev. Smit. It was the first of three marriage ceremonies, which were conducted in the ‘*rietekerk*’. The other two couples included the German, Joseph Hansmeyer (1813 -1855) and Aletta Letitia Maré (1816 - 1899), Paul Zietsman and an unnamed girl.¹¹⁵

¹¹¹ G.D. Scholtz, *Ons kerksnaam*, pp. 11-14.

¹¹² H.B. Thom, *Die Gelooftekerk en ander studies oor die Groot Trek*, pp. 5, 13.

¹¹³ A. Dreyer, *Voortrekkers en hul kerk, sketse uit die kerklike geskiedenis van die Groot Trek*, 1932, p. 100.

¹¹⁴ P.S. de Jongh, *Sarel Cilliers*, p. 202.

¹¹⁵ P.J. Haveman, *My mother, a Voortrekker*, pp. 12-13.



Figure 11: 50th wedding anniversary of the Havemans who married in the *Rietekerk*¹¹⁶



Figure 12: Aletta Letitia Maré got married in the *Rietekerk*¹¹⁷

The Msunduzi Museum collection contains a bible with an inscription indicating that G. Roedeloff (Rudolph) donated it to the church, and states that it was the first true Calvinistic Reformed Church established in Pietermaritzburg. It also indicates that the bible was handed over to Rev. Smit as the first minister of the immigrants and had to be used on the pulpit in the church.

¹¹⁶ Msunduzi Museum, Pietermaritzburg, Accession No. J57.

¹¹⁷ Msunduzi Museum, Pietermaritzburg, Accession No. 481.



Figure 13: The Rudolph-Bible which was probably used in the *Rietekerk*¹¹⁸

2.3 Construction of the Church of the Vow (1839-1841)

The '*rietekerk*' soon became too small for the growing congregation and the need for a larger, more permanent structure became urgent.¹¹⁹ Some Voortrekkers did not forget their vow made on their way to Blood River. Thus on 16 December 1839 a thanksgiving ceremony and prayers were held in Pietermaritzburg.¹²⁰ Consequently when the Voortrekkers decided to build a permanent structure, the Vow of Blood River was in the minds of some. Several references from the later part of the 19th century refer to the church being built in fulfilment of the vow.¹²¹ The following are examples of such references:

- a. In his book *South Africa, Past and Present* (1877), John Noble recalls: "The Dutch Reformed Church was one of the first buildings erected at Pietermaritzburg, in fulfilment of this solemn undertaking".¹²²
- b. G. McCall Theal writes in 1887 in his book *History of the Boers in South Africa*: "The church at Pietermaritzburg stands as a sign that they kept their vow".¹²³

¹¹⁸ Msunduzi Museum, Pietermaritzburg, Accession No. 2737.

¹¹⁹ H.B. Thom, *Die Geloftekerk en ander studies oor die Groot Trek*, pp. 5, 13.

¹²⁰ Msunduzi Museum Library, Pietermaritzburg, box file 'Church of the Vow', R. Mulder, Research article *Chronologie: Geloftekerk*.

¹²¹ S.P. Engelbrecht, 'Die Geloftekerk', in S.P. Engelbrecht *et.al* (reds.), *Almanak van die Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika* (44), 1950, pp. 101-102.

¹²² J. Noble, *South Africa, Past and Present*, 1877, p. 93.

¹²³ G. McCall Theal, *History of the Boers in South Africa*, 1887, p. 152.

- c. D.C.F. Moodie wrote in 1888: “Chaarl (Sarel) Cilliers was for many years an elder of the Dutch Reformed Church at Pietermaritzburg, which he and others of the primitive Boers erected as a memorial of the gracious Providence which crowned their arms with victory on the occasion of the battle with Dingaan in 1838”.¹²⁴
- d. Robert Russell, Superintendent of Education in Natal, wrote in 1891: “The vow made before the battle was religiously kept. The Dutch Reformed Church in Maritzburg – one of the first buildings in the town – was erected in fulfilment of the pledge...”¹²⁵
- e. Forsyth Ingram writes in 1895: “At the foot of Market Square stands an old building...one of the first houses erected in Pietermaritzburg...the Boers engaged in prayer, and made a solemn vow that if the Lord would grant them the victory, they would raise a house to the memory of His great name...the vow was faithfully kept by the erection of the old Dutch Church...”¹²⁶
- f. The book *Life of James Green* (1909) states “Its anniversary is still kept as ‘Dingaan’s Day’, and the Dutch Reformed Church at Maritzburg was built by the Boers as a thanksgiving for their victory”.¹²⁷
- g. John Shepstone who lived in Pietermaritzburg writes on 12 March 1912: “In Church Street there was the present Dutch Church...It was a memorial church in connection with Dingana’s day – church still there.”¹²⁸

The construction of the church was not an easy task. Circumstances in Natal in these days differed from those in the Cape Colony. This necessitated adaptations in the way structures were built. It had to be simple but functional. The Voortrekkers still retained the basic principles of a style which was later on called Cape Dutch architecture.¹²⁹

As early as April 1839 a newspaper correspondent mentioned that a church was being built in Pietermaritzburg “...die kerk, wat ons besig is om te bou”.¹³⁰ It is possible that he had the old *Rietekerk* in mind.

¹²⁴ D.C.F. Moodie, *The History of Battles and adventures of the British, the Boers and the Zulus, &c. in Southern Africa*, p. 436.

¹²⁵ R. Russell, *Natal the Land and its story*, p. 159.

¹²⁶ J.F. Ingram, *The Colony of Natal*, p. 174.

¹²⁷ A.T. Wirgman, *Life of James Green I*, p. 7. James Green arrived in South Africa in 1848.

¹²⁸ C. de B Webb & J.B. Wright (eds.), *The James Stuart Archive* (5), p. 295.

¹²⁹ J.C. Pretorius, *Die geskiedenis van volkskuns in Suid-Afrika*, p. 35.

¹³⁰ G.S. Preller, *Scripta Africana reeks II, Die Groot Trek, Andries Pretorius*. (1988 reprint of G. Preller’s 1937 publication), p. 75.

In a letter dated 13 May 1839 Jacobus Burger, Johannes Stephanus Maritz and Andries Pretorius indicated that subscription lists have been opened to collect funds and supplies to build a Dutch Reformed Church in Pietermaritzburg.¹³¹ A letter dated 20 May 1839 confirmed that inhabitants of Pietermaritzburg have already opened subscription lists and that within half an hour money had been pledged.¹³² Fundraising was not restricted to Pietermaritzburg only. In Cape Town, subscription lists were also sent out.¹³³ In a letter dated 29 May 1839 Maritz indicates that they are planning to erect a church.¹³⁴

On 7 June 1839, *De Zuid-Afrikaan* newspaper reported that the building of the church in Pietermaritzburg had already started: “...in de hoofstad Pietermaritzburg ...genoemd naar de twee eerste Hoofden Pieter Retief en Gert Maritz, zijn begonnen aldaar ene Kerk te bouwen”.¹³⁵ On 13 June 1839, C.J. Brand, editor of the newspaper *De Zuid-Afrikaan*, wrote to Andries Pretorius that he opened a list for the collection of funds to build a church as was promised to God.¹³⁶



Figure 14: Constructing the Church as depicted by W.H. Coetzer in 1938¹³⁷

¹³¹ H.B. Thom, *Die Geloftekerk en ander studies oor die Groot Trek*, p. 6.

¹³² B.J. Liebenberg, *Andries Pretorius in Natal*, p. 125.

¹³³ H.B. Thom, *Die Geloftekerk en ander studies oor die Groot Trek*, p. 9.

¹³⁴ S.P. Engelbrecht, 'Die Geloftekerk', in S.P. Engelbrecht *et.al* (reds.), *Almanak van die Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika* (44), 1950, p. 83.

¹³⁵ H.B. Thom, *Die Geloftekerk en ander studies oor die Groot Trek*, p. 16.

¹³⁶ A.F. Hattersley, *More annals of Natal*, p. 128.

¹³⁷ B. Johnson-Barker, *The Great Trek* (Cape Town, 1987), p. 19.

Pretorius also sent a list to his half-brother Christiaan Hattingh in the Cradock district, who opened the list with £5. Pretorius' mother donated £1.¹³⁸ Two undated statements in the handwriting of Piet Pretorius and another statement by Jacobus Boshoff indicate that quite a substantial amount was collected from the Cape Colony and later also in the Orange Free State.¹³⁹

On 7 September 1839 the Church council wrote to the Volksraad about the building of the church. The response was the nomination of four members forming a committee to address the issue.¹⁴⁰

Pietermouritsburg,
den 29 October 1839.

Seer geliefde broeders susters en vrienden in den Heer als meden alle amspersonen sowel Kerkelyk als andersins. Daar wy voornemens zyn op bovengemelde dorp een ware geriformeerde Kerk ofte ware geriformeerde godsdienstig huys op te bouwen, Soo begeren wy op die allereerbiedigste en nedrigste wyse van UE, een aalmoes te doen tot opbouwing van het zelve; de minste en geringste penningen sal in groten aanmerking genomen worden. Die armoe-digen toestand wegens rinnuweringe door Silkaats en dunkaan [Dingaan] aan verschydene mensen gedaen dring ons tot noodsaakkelykheid UE assistensie, hulp en bystand te vragen van alle weldinkende personen, die tragte sal dat onse ware gereformeerde Kerken hier in ons land opgebout sal worden en dat den dierbare evangelium den gehele wereld door sal verkondig word."

Figure 15: Letter indicating building plans and pleading for assistance¹⁴¹

On 28 October 1839, Sarel Cilliers mentioned in a letter to the people of Rietrivier in the southern Free State, that people of Natal were preparing to build a church made of wood and stone and that some money had already been collected. In the letter he pleaded with the community for contributions. He also mentioned that the church would be built by G. Mokke.¹⁴²

¹³⁸ B.J. Liebenberg, *Andries Pretorius in Natal*, p. 125.

¹³⁹ B.J. Liebenberg, *Andries Pretorius in Natal*, pp. 125-126.

¹⁴⁰ S.P. Engelbrecht, 'Die Geloftekerk', in S.P. Engelbrecht *et.al* (reds.), *Almanak van die Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika* (44), 1950, pp. 83-84.

¹⁴¹ A. Dreyer, *Voortrekkers en hul Kerk, sketse uit die kerklike geskiedenis van die Groot Trek*, p. 100.

¹⁴² H.B. Thom, *Die Geloftekerk en ander studies oor die Groot Trek*, p. 10.

Some Voortrekkers made large contributions, but the majority could only afford the minimum. The widow of Piet Retief, who was extremely poor, donated a small amount of money. Some members of the English-speaking community also donated money: Charles Maynard, Richard Daniell and Henry Nourse contributed one pound each.¹⁴³ J. Smith, E. Gibson and E.R. King and J. White also contributed.¹⁴⁴

John van der Plank (1805 - 1882), who referred to himself as the first British farmer in Natal and the first British resident of Pietermaritzburg, assisted his Voortrekker friends during the Weenen massacre (1838) and later with the building of the church. He made his wagon available and transported river sand from the Karkloof area.¹⁴⁵ Van der Plank later became known as the ‘father of the wattle industry’.¹⁴⁶



Figure 16: John van der Plank¹⁴⁷

A document to the Church Council from Van der Plank dated 28 November 1839 reads:

*“I will give to the Church of Pieter Maritzburg 2 kegs of White Paint of 30 lbs. each and one Keg of green paint 14 lb. weight and ten loads of building stone”.*¹⁴⁸ Dark green paint was

¹⁴³ H.B. Thom, *Die Geloftekerk en ander studies oor die Groot Trek*, p. 10, pp. 11-12.

¹⁴⁴ Dutch Reformed Church Archive, Pietermaritzburg, Box: G53/1, File on history of the congregation by Dr. Besselaar, compiled from original minutes, 1926; B.J. Liebenberg, *Andries Pretorius in Natal*, p. 125.

¹⁴⁵ C.S. Shaw, *Stories from the Karkloof hills*, p. 9.

¹⁴⁶ Howick uMngeni Museum, Howick, File: *Wattle, G. Sutton, v.d. Plank*.

¹⁴⁷ Howick Museum, file: *Van der Plank, John*, p. 66.

¹⁴⁸ Dutch Reformed Church Archive, Pietermaritzburg, Box: G53/1, File on history of the congregation by Dr. Besselaar, compiled from original minutes, 1926.

usually used for external woodwork.¹⁴⁹ The paint also protected the wood against harsh climatic conditions.¹⁵⁰

On 14 October 1839 the Volksraad identified Erf 21 in Pietermaritz Street as the property for a parsonage. In the meantime a house was rented to accommodate the minister. The Council was eager to have a more permanent residence and not to waste church money on rent.¹⁵¹

The Church Council subsequently obtained Erf 33 in Longmarket Street as location for the church and Erf 34 for the parsonage.¹⁵² A list dated 15 April 1840 mentions that the objective of the collections was to build the church on parsonage ground¹⁵³ until more funds were available to build a larger church and convert the old building into a manse.¹⁵⁴ J.P. Zietsman, *Landdrost* (Magistrate) at the time, confirmed this in 1855.¹⁵⁵

2.3.1 Builders

Measurements of the building were to be 50 x 30, and 13 feet high (approximately 15 x 9 meter, and 3.9 meter high).¹⁵⁶ This is confirmed by Rev. Faure in 1844: “The town...contains ... a court-house, and a place for divine worship thirty feet by fifty.”¹⁵⁷

In 1840 more contributions were collected. A subscription list indicates that 6 000 bundles of thatch and 400 loads of stone were needed and (amongst others) 17 x 30 feet (approximately 5 x 9 meter) long beams, 30 planks and two loads of poles. The list also records who contributed to the project (spelling according to the original document): Lourens Badenhorst, A.W.J. Pretorius, Christiaan Cloppers, Dewald Pretorius, Piet Grobbelaar, Bard Pretorius, Willem Venter, Shalk Bruwer, Piet Pretorius and Philip Rudolph Nel (six days masonry work); Hendrik de Beer, Sacharias Pretorius, Jan de Beer and Andries Gous (two days

¹⁴⁹ B. Kearney, *Architecture in Natal 1824-1893*, p. 68.

¹⁵⁰ J.C. Pretorius, ‘Tydgenootlike getuienis oor pionierswonings in Suid-Afrika voor en na die Groot Trek’ in *Navorsing deur die Nasionale Kultuurhistoriese en Opelugmuseum* 1 (2), 1986, p. 42.

¹⁵¹ H.B. Thom, *Die Geloftekerk en ander studies oor die Groot Trek*, p. 19.

¹⁵² M.J. Swart *et.al* (reds.), *Afrikanerbakens*, p. 249.

¹⁵³ Dutch Reformed Church Archive, Pietermaritzburg, Box: G53/1, File on history of the congregation by Dr. Besselaar, compiled from original minutes 1926.

¹⁵⁴ H.B. Thom, *Die Geloftekerk en ander studies oor die Groot Trek*, p. 13.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 14, 30, 37.R; Gordon, *Victorian Pietermaritzburg*, p.93.

¹⁵⁶ H.B. Thom, *Die Geloftekerk en ander studies oor die Groot Trek*, p. 14.

¹⁵⁷ A. Dreyer, *Die Kaapse Kerk en die Groot Trek*, p. 60.

masonry work); Gert Thomas van Rooyen (trusses); Stephanus Lombaard (two loads of thatch); Laurens Badenhorst (some windows); Jan Rabie (five loads of stone); Andries Pretorius and Thomas Dunhuizer (each a thousand bundles of thatch); Jacobus Schepers (to transport the thatch); Hendrik Botha, Jacobus Johannes Burger and H. Pieterse (carpentry); Karel Oorthman (contributed money and five planks); and the Coloured man, Jan Gertze Bantjes contributed money.¹⁵⁸



Figure 17: Construction of the church depicted on the frieze in the Voortrekker Monument, Pretoria¹⁵⁹



Figure 18: Stone used by Dewald Johannes Pretorius to sharpen chisels for shaping stones for the construction of the church¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸ Dutch Reformed Church Archive, Pietermaritzburg, Box: G53/1, File on history of the congregation by Dr. Besselaar, compiled from original minutes, 1926.

¹⁵⁹ Beheerraad van die Voortrekkermonument, *Die Voortrekkermonument Pretoria* (Pretoria, 1955), p. 45

¹⁶⁰ Msunduzi Museum, Pietermaritzburg, Accession No. 1636. D.J. Pretorius's son, Marthinus Erich Walter (born 1848), inherited the stone. He moved to the Ermelo district where he died in 1923. J.M. Pretorius, who donated it to the museum, inherited it from Walter.

By 26 April 1840, construction of the Church had already started. More subscription lists were sent out asking for contributions. Andries Pretorius contributed an additional 2 000 bundles of thatch.¹⁶¹ According to payment statements, work on the church progressed well in May and June.¹⁶² A document dated 1840 mentions a door and doorframe in the gable.¹⁶³

Various people from the community offered their assistance. Prominent individuals such as Voortrekker leader A.W.J. Pretorius made donations and assisted with the construction. This is confirmed in a letter to Lieutenant-Governor Martin West in 1848, in which Pretorius states: “...den Kerk welke ik zelfs als een der Bouw Meesters heft helpen Bouwen...”¹⁶⁴



Figure 19: Painting of Andries Pretorius, with his arm in a sling as a result of him being wounded in the Battle of Blood River in 1838¹⁶⁵

The building commission appointed by the Volksraad included A.W.J. Pretorius, H.P.N. (Piet) Pretorius (a brother of Andries Pretorius and an important member of the congregation in Pietermaritzburg), Johannes Stephanus Maritz (member of the Volksraad and brother of Gert Maritz), and Lucas Johannes Meyer. Jacobus J. Burger (secretary of the Volksraad) was appointed secretary and Jacobus Moolman (member of the Volksraad) as treasurer. Others

¹⁶¹ Dutch Reformed Church Archive, Pietermaritzburg: box G53/1, File on history of the congregation by Dr. Besselaar, compiled from original minutes, 1926.

¹⁶² B.J. Liebenberg, *Andries Pretorius in Natal*, p. 128.

¹⁶³ Dutch Reformed Church Archive, Pietermaritzburg, Box: G53/1, File on history of the congregation by Dr. Besselaar, compiled from original minutes, 1926.

¹⁶⁴ B.J. Liebenberg, *Andries Pretorius in Natal*, p. 266.

¹⁶⁵ Msunduzi Museum, Accession No. 2648.

included Karel Landman (served as a Commandant and member of the Volksraad) and Jan du Plessis (Field Cornet after whom Plessislaer close to Pietermaritzburg was named).¹⁶⁶

According to J.H. Steenkamp, who assisted with the construction of the church, the building process was challenging as the community was poor, since they had to endure many hardships. Moreover, and some building materials were difficult to obtain.¹⁶⁷ In 1844, the newspaper *De Natalier* reported that the church was built of stone and mainly built by Andries Pretorius and three other Pretorius men.¹⁶⁸ According to Daniel Lindley the building was mainly done by the two brothers Willem Jurgens (who took part in the Battle of Blood River and was a Natal Volksraad member) and Johannes Pretorius, assisted by the German Carl Wilhelm Heinrich Pistorius.¹⁶⁹



Figure 20: Willem Jurgens Pretorius (1808 - 1889)¹⁷⁰

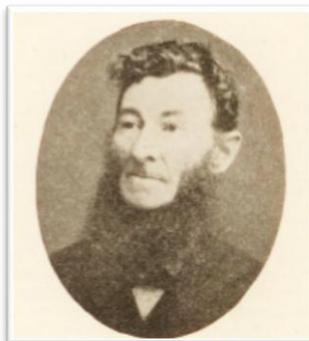


Figure 21: C.W.H. Pistorius (1819 - 1909)¹⁷¹ who assisted with the interior of the church¹⁷²

¹⁶⁶ H.B. Thom, *Die Geloftekerk en ander studies oor die Groot Trek*, p.7.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 17. (Steenkamp's memories were documented in 1910).

¹⁶⁸ *De Natalier*, 1844-06-07, p. 3.

¹⁶⁹ B.J. Liebenberg, *Andries Pretorius in Natal*, p. 129; L.J. Eksteen, *Die Voortrekkerbegravingplaas Pietermaritzburg*, p. 2.

¹⁷⁰ L.J Eksteen, *Die Voortrekkerbegravingplaas Pietermaritzburg*, p. 2.

¹⁷¹ A.F. Hattersley, *More annals of Natal*, pp. 104.

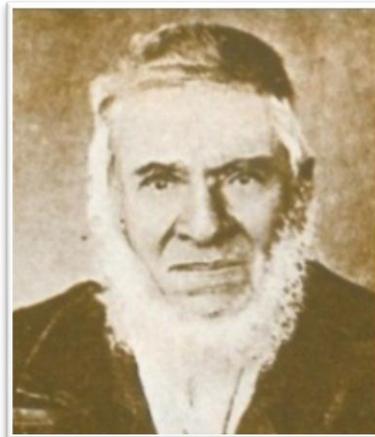
¹⁷² P.J. Haveman, *My mother, a Voortrekker*, p. 40.



**Figure 22: Pietermaritzburg Colonists of the 1840's. Pistorius is second from the right.
The photo was taken at his home in 1908¹⁷³**

Pistorius owned a brick and tile factory and constructed some of the first dwellings in Pietermaritzburg. According to him, the church was under construction on Market Square when he arrived in Natal in the 1840's.¹⁷⁴ He assisted with the interior, including the yellowwood roof trusses.¹⁷⁵

According to Steenkamp, the other individuals who assisted with the construction were: J.H. Steenkamp, Frans Botha, Marthinus Bekker, Piet de Wet, Andries Smith, Willem Nel, Theunis Nel, Stoffel Lotter, Wynand Maré¹⁷⁶ and J.C. van den Berg.¹⁷⁷



**Figure 23: Wynand W. Maré (born 1800) was a school teacher and assisted with the
building of the church¹⁷⁸**

¹⁷³ A.H. Tatlow (ed.), *Natal Province: Descriptive Guide and official hand-book*, p. 3.

¹⁷⁴ A.F. Hattersley, *More annals of Natal*, pp. 104, 114.

¹⁷⁵ L.J. Eksteen, *Die Voortrekkerbegraafplaas Pietermaritzburg*, p. 38.

¹⁷⁶ H.B. Thom, *Die Geloftekerk en ander studies oor die Groot Trek*, p. 17.

¹⁷⁷ H.B. Thom, *Die Geloftekerk en ander studies oor die Groot Trek*, p. 39.

¹⁷⁸ *Lantern* 23 (3), March 1974, p. 53.



Figure 24: Theunis Nel¹⁷⁹



Figure 25: Andries Johannes Christoffel Smith and his wife¹⁸⁰

Expenditure lists dated 1840 and 1841 indicate that payments were made to (spelling according to the list): W. Ootendal, B. Badenhors, J. Pretorius, P. Viljoen, W. Bruwer and B. Baatnos. Payments for thatching were made to: S. Pieterse, M. Prins, M. Pretorius, J. Pretorius and W. Ootendal, including work done by the labourers of B. Baatnos and J. van Niekerk. A payment was also made to Mr. Nagel for supplying rope and to Willem Pretorius for manufacturing a doorframe and window.¹⁸¹ Mr. Koos Burger also manufactured window and door frames¹⁸² assisted by ‘Outa’ Flink who served as his carpenter.¹⁸³

¹⁷⁹ Msunduzi Museum, Pietermaritzburg, Accession No. N44.

¹⁸⁰ J.C. Visagie, *Voortrekkerstamouers 1835-1845*, p. 450.

¹⁸¹ Dutch Reformed Church Archive, Pietermaritzburg, Box: G53/1, File on history of the congregation by Dr. Besselaar, compiled from original minutes, 1926.

¹⁸² W.J. de Kock (ed-in-chief), *Dictionary of South African Biography II*, pp. 107-108.

¹⁸³ Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository, A81, *Voortrekker Museum*, Correspondence 1908-1938, Letter from Genl. Schalk Burger to Church Council, 1910-10-14.



Figure 26: 'Outa' Flink¹⁸⁴

Philip Jacob Naudé (1808-1880), who took part in the battle of Blood River, assisted with the interior carpentry.¹⁸⁵



Figure 27: Philip Jacob Naudé and his wife A.E.S van den Berg¹⁸⁶

Three items donated to the Voortrekker Museum revealed that Frenchman Jean Samuel Laffnie, Abraham Cilliers (brother of Sarel Cilliers) and M.W. Pretorius were involved in the

¹⁸⁴ Msunduzi Museum, Pietermaritzburg, Accession No. 480. His photo was donated to the Msunduzi Museum in 1919 by Genl. S.W. Burger with the accompanying information.

¹⁸⁵ J.C. Visagie, *Voortrekkerstamouers 1835-1845*, p. 324.

¹⁸⁶ J.C. Visagie, *Voortrekkerstamouers 1835-1845*, p. 325.

construction of the church. This illustrates the importance of museum objects and accompanying records as sources of information.¹⁸⁷



Figure 28: Snuffbox of J.S. Laffnie, tobacco pouch of A. Cilliers and spectacle holder of M.W. Pretorius, donated to the original Voortrekker Museum by family members¹⁸⁸

From July to September 1840 no payments were made because of a lack of funds.¹⁸⁹ By the end of September A.W.J. Pretorius, H.P.N. Pretorius, J.J. Burger and Sarel Cilliers approached the Volksraad to finish the parsonage with money from the church fund in order to use it as a church in the meantime. This was approved.¹⁹⁰

On 3 November 1840 P.H. Zietsman reported that the parsonage which was intended to serve as a temporary church would be completed within a month's time.¹⁹¹ However, it was only completed several months later. Work continued later into the first half of 1841. According to Louis Jacobus Nel, the parsonage was one of several other buildings under construction on Market Square in 1841.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁷ Msunduzi Museum Archive, Pietermaritzburg: Curator's entry in old accession register, VMT 1-85, no. 31, p. 6. Voortrekker Museum booklet *Souvenir Voortrekkers Museum 16th December 1912* (Pietermaritzburg, 1912), p. 14; Msunduzi Museum Collection, Pietermaritzburg: Accession register, Accession no. 2624 (tobacco pouch), 116 (snuffbox) and 1283/1 (spectacle case).

¹⁸⁸ Msunduzi Museum, Pietermaritzburg, Accession No. 116, 2624, 1283/1

¹⁸⁹ B.J. Liebenberg, *Andries Pretorius in Natal*, p. 128.

¹⁹⁰ G.S. Preller, *Voortrekkerwetgewing: notule van die Natalse Volksraad 1839-1845*. (1988 reprint of G. Preller's 1924 publication), p. 78.

¹⁹¹ B.J. Liebenberg, *Andries Pretorius in Natal*, p. 128.

¹⁹² Msunduzi Museum Library, Pietermaritzburg: E.G. Jansen, *From the time of the Voortrekkers: memories of Louis Jacobus Nel* (English facsimile reprint of the Afrikaans version), (no page numbers).

A subscription list dated April 1841 mentions work to the church, the making of curtains by the widow Vermaak, 14 loads of rocks and a doorframe for the vestry, 4500 bricks, soil for constructing a gable, thatch rope, paper, ink and chalk.¹⁹³

The church was completed in 1841. This was confirmed in a speech by J.N. Boshoff at the Van Riebeeck Festival in 1852: “*Veertien jaren geleden, toen ik mij voor het eerst op reis begaf, om het land van Natal te bezien, zag ik dit geheele land woest, onbebouwd en onbevolkt, behalve eenige legerplaatsen van de toen pas aangekomen Emigranten. Drie jaren daarna, toen ik mij met mijn huisgezin hier ter woon kwam vestigen, werd dit Godshuis reeds opgerigt.*”¹⁹⁴ (Fourteen years ago, when I first went on a journey to see the land of Natal, I found the whole land desolate, uncultivated and uninhabited, except for some camps of the newly arrived Emigrants. Three years later, when I came to stay here with my family, this House of God had already been built).

In September 1841 Rev. James Archbell also confirms this: “They have built a large temporary church at Umlazi, and a more permanent one at Bushmansrands, where the Rev. Mr. Lindley is now officiating...”¹⁹⁵

The church was a simple rectangular building¹⁹⁶ constructed of stone (shale) from C. Ohrtmann’s quarry,¹⁹⁷ and yellow-wood timber cut in the Karkloof forest, supplied by the sawmill belonging to the Naudé brothers.¹⁹⁸ The walls were about 600mm thick¹⁹⁹ and the church could seat approximately 300 to 400 people.²⁰⁰ James Michiel Howell, a visitor to Pietermaritzburg in 1845, describes it as a “...handsome stone-built church”.²⁰¹

¹⁹³ Dutch Reformed Church Archive, Pietermaritzburg, box: G53/1, File on history of the congregation by Dr. Besselaar, compiled from original minutes, 1926.

¹⁹⁴ S.P. Engelbrecht, ‘Die vierings van die eerste en die tweede eeufeste ter herinnering aan die koms van Jan van Riebeeck’, in S.P. Engelbrecht *et.al* (reds.), *Almanak van die Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika*, 1952, pp. 99-126.

¹⁹⁵ S.P. Engelbrecht, ‘Die Geloftekerk’, in S.P. Engelbrecht *et.al* (reds.), *Almanak van die Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika* (44), 1950, pp. 88-89.

¹⁹⁶ B.J. Leverton, ‘The Voortrekker Museum’, in V.C Wood (ed.) *Lantern 10* (3), March 1961, p. 260.

¹⁹⁷ B. Guest, *Trek and transition: a history of the Msunduzi and Ncome Museums (incorporating the Voortrekker Complex) 1912 – 2012*, p. 21.

¹⁹⁸ B. Kearney, *Verandas in the mist*, p. 9.

¹⁹⁹ A.J. du Plessis, Die Republiek Natalia, in *Argief-jaarboek vir Suid-Afrikaanse geskiedenis* 5 (1), 1942, p. 180.

²⁰⁰ *De Natalier*, 1844-06-07, p. 3.

²⁰¹ The Natal Society Foundation, U.E.M. Judd, ‘The origins of the Natal Society, Chapter 1: Early Pietermaritzburg’ in C. de B. Webb (ed.), *Natalia* (2), December 1972, p. 31.

M.J. Lindley (daughter of Rev. Lindley), remembers standing beside her father watching the men during construction. The gables of the church reminded her of buildings in the Cape. She could not remember the location of the doors and windows, but recalled that they were very large with small panes of glass, like ‘old Cape windows’. They were painted dark green. “It was the grandest building I had ever seen”. She was not sure about the floors, but thought it could have been of stone. “I believe it was a stone structure. I remember watching some stones being laid...I do not remember seeing any bricks.”²⁰²

2.3.2 Inauguration (April 1841)

According to J.H. Steenkamp, who assisted with the construction of the church, the building was inaugurated in 1841.²⁰³ Rev. Erasmus Smit, Rev. Daniel Lindley, J.S. Maritz, Andries Pretorius, Philip Rudolph Nel (*Landdrost* (Magistrate) at the time) and Sarel Cilliers were among those present.²⁰⁴



Figure 29: Magistrate Philip Rudolph Nel and his family²⁰⁵

²⁰² Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository, A81, *Voortrekker Museum*, V3, Correspondence 1908-1938, Letter from M.J. Lindley (Inanda) to E.G. Jansen (Pietermaritzburg), 1910-10-30.

²⁰³ H.B. Thom, *Die Geloftekerk en ander studies oor die Groot Trek*, p. 17.

²⁰⁴ Msunduzi Museum Library, Pietermaritzburg: box file ‘Church of the Vow’, copy from *De Gereformeerde Kerkbode*, 1861, p. 158-159.

²⁰⁵ Msunduzi Museum, Pietermaritzburg, Accession No. 708.

Maria Petronella Nel²⁰⁶ remembered the joy people felt on that day.²⁰⁷ With the inauguration and church services thereafter, congregants had to bring their own chairs and form pews until furniture could be bought for the church.²⁰⁸ Martha Lindley remembers that “the good old ladies had their footstoves carried to church by their servants”.²⁰⁹

2.3.3 A Pulpit

It seems that over a period of about 20 years there were three pulpits made, first for the ‘*Rietekerk*’ and then the Church of the Vow.

Hester Maria Magdalena Maré remembers that the first pulpit was a soap-box and was used in the ‘*rietekerk*’ before the Church of the Vow was constructed.²¹⁰ Susanna Smit describes in her diary how Rev. Lindley did not mind to occasionally give her husband Erasmus an opportunity to preach, but elder Sarel Cilliers and some deacons refused Smit’s requests to stand on the pulpit. They did allow him to stand in the lithurgical space in front of the pulpit. They believed that, because he was not an ordained minister, he would desecrate the pulpit. Smit was old and in bad health which made it difficult for him to stand and preach.²¹¹

The widow of Piet Retief, Magdalena Johanna (also known as Lenie) with her three daughters and a group of other women contributed towards a pulpit for Smit. Susanna (Rev. Smit’s wife) contributed dry planks 10 feet (approximately 3 meter) in length. According to Susanna she asked the German carpenter, C.H. Nagel, to build the pulpit which cost 65 rixdollars.²¹²

On one Saturday afternoon when Smit arrived at the church (*rietekerk*) his pulpit was gone. He looked everywhere for it. An old German who lived next to the church saw Smit and asked him what he was looking for. When Smit told him that his pulpit was stolen, the

²⁰⁶ J.C. Visagie, *Voortrekkerstamouers 1835-1845*, p. 505.

²⁰⁷ E.W. Smith, *Die lewe en tye van Daniel Lindley 1801-80*, p. 122.

²⁰⁸ H.B. Thom, *Die Geloftekerk en ander studies oor die Groot Trek*, p. 17.

²⁰⁹ Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository, A81, *Voortrekker Museum*, V3, Correspondence 1908-1938, Letter from M.J. Lindley (Inanda) to E.G. Jansen (Pietermaritzburg), 1910-10-30.

²¹⁰ P.J. Haveman, *My mother, a Voortrekker*, pp. 12-13.

²¹¹ L. Steenkamp, ‘Uit die dagboek van ‘n Voortrekkervrou’ in A.E. Steenkamp *et.al*, *Die dagboek van Anna Steenkamp en fragmentjies oor die Groot Trek*, pp. 70-71.

²¹² L. Steenkamp, ‘Uit die dagboek van ‘n Voortrekkervrou’ in A.E. Steenkamp *et.al*, *Die dagboek van Anna Steenkamp en fragmentjies oor die Groot Trek*, pp. 70-71.

German said that he saw Sarel Cilliers taking it. Smit reported this to Landdrost (Magistrate) Boshoff, but he did not want to concern himself with the case.²¹³ The fate of the pulpit remains uncertain, but it could be the ‘ugly one’ which is referred to in other sources.

In 1841 another pulpit was constructed for the new church (Church of the Vow). It was made by the Germans C.H. Nagel and C.H. Heine, using local timber.²¹⁴ Casper Heinrich Heine was a mason and carpenter who joined the Voortrekker migration to Natal, and settled in Pietermaritzburg.²¹⁵ Martha Jane Lindley described the pulpit as a “fine Pulpit made...of Natal woods which replaced the initial ‘ugly one’ and the Sounding board...was thick and heavy, upheld by a thin rod of iron, that I feared would break and kill my father.”²¹⁶

The initial ‘ugly one’ is possibly the same pulpit mentioned by the Church council in their minutes on 5 July 1845 when they decided not to sell the ‘old pulpit’ but to keep it until needed. In 1848 it was decided that improvements had to be made to the pulpit and it had to be moved.²¹⁷ It remains uncertain which pulpit was referred to.



Figure 30: The pulpit photographed in the ‘Tower Church’ (used 1861-1955)²¹⁸

²¹³ L. Steenkamp, ‘Uit die dagboek van ‘n Voortrekkervrou’ in A.E. Steenkamp *et.al*, *Die dagboek van Anna Steenkamp en fragmentjies oor die Groot Trek*, pp. 70-71.

²¹⁴ A.F. Hattersley, *A camera on old Natal*, p. 13.

²¹⁵ Msunduzi Museum Library, Pietermaritzburg: filing cabinet, theme: ‘Christianity, Lutheran Church’, unpublished manuscript, E.S. von Fintel, *Chronicle of the ‘Luterkirche’ in Pine Street, Pietermaritzburg*, p.27.

²¹⁶ B. Guest, *Trek and transition: a history of the Msunduzi and Ncome Museums (incorporating the Voortrekker Complex) 1912 – 2012*, p. 31.

²¹⁷ Dutch Reformed Church Archive, Pietermaritzburg: book G53/2b, minutes of the Church Council.

²¹⁸ Voortrekker Museum Brochure, *Voortrekkermuseum Pietermaritzburg*, p. 5.

When the congregation relocated to the new ‘Tower Church’ in 1861 the third pulpit was moved (after various alterations had been made to it) as indicated in a letter from the contractors to the building committee of the Dutch Reformed Church on 28 October 1860:²¹⁹

- a. To remove and install the pulpit in the new church
- b. Lifting the height of the pulpit
- c. To install a plinth around the bottom of the pulpit
- d. To board-up the present openings in the frame
- e. To install Gothic panels to blend with the present panels in the pulpit
- f. To build a sound board supported by two timber columns with brackets
- g. The old pulpit to be properly repaired and polished
- h. To build and mount a staircase of yellow wood at the back of the pulpit
- i. To board up the back of the pulpit in order to hide the Gothic panel doors
- j. To install fluted boards on either side to match the present pulpit

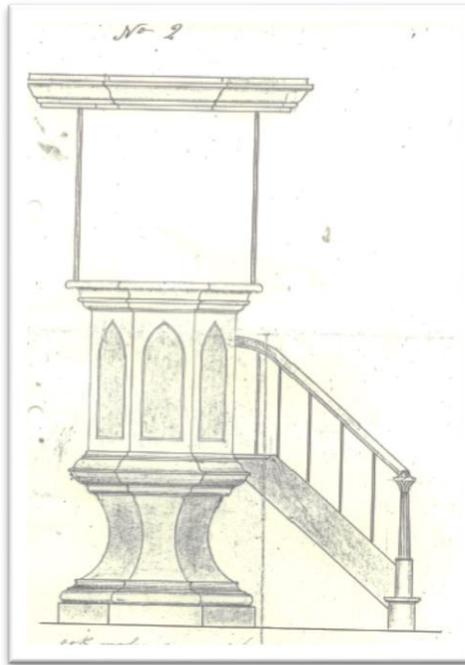


Figure 31: Side elevation of the pulpit, 1860²²⁰

²¹⁹ Msunduzi Museum Library, Pietermaritzburg: box file ‘Church of the Vow’, Letter dated 28 October 1860, addressed to the ‘Building Committee of the Dutch Church’.

²²⁰ Msunduzi Museum Library, Pietermaritzburg: box file ‘Church of the Vow’, Letter addressed to ‘Building Committee of Dutch Church’, 1860-10-28

J.D. Kestell remembers one Sunday when he accompanied his father to the Voortrekker church ('Tower Church'). He described how Rev. Huet used to come from the vestry, kneeling on the first step of the 'new pulpit' to do a silent prayer before climbing the rest of the steps. Kestell recalls how he himself sometimes climbed onto the pulpit and opened the big Bible on Sunday afternoons, before Sunday school.²²¹

The pulpit drapery was made by Miss M. Ferreira (the organist). In 1870, the Church Council decided that the pulpit needed lamps but nothing suitable could be found.²²²



Figure 32: Early photograph of the 'Tower Church'²²³

In 1938 the Museum Council offered the Dutch Reformed Church £100 for the pulpit and in 1940 it was proclaimed a historical monument. After the demolition of the 'Tower Church' (1955) the pulpit was moved to the Museum (Church of the Vow).²²⁴



Figure 33: Pulpit in the Church of the Vow²²⁵

²²¹ P.J. Nienaber, *Dr. J.D. Kestell: Vader van die Reddingsdaad*, p. 21.

²²² Dutch Reformed Church Archive, Pietermaritzburg: box G53/1, file on history of the congregation by Dr. Besselaar compiled from original minutes, 1926.

²²³ Killie Campbell Africana Library, UKZN, Durban, D12-011

²²⁴ B. Guest, *Trek and transition: a history of the Msunduzi and Ncome Museums (incorporating the Voortrekker Complex) 1912 – 2012*, p. 60.

²²⁵ Photo: E. Henning, 16/12/2012.

2.3.4 Furnishings

It was common in the early years for congregants to bring their own chairs or benches to church. Individuals often added their names to their chairs to reserve their seats for each sermon.²²⁶ According to one of Rev. Lindley's daughters, *riempie* chairs made of wood or cane were common, while elders had finely carved armchairs.²²⁷

Chairs and a harmonium (reed-organ) were donated to the then Voortrekker Museum in 1912 and reflect the style of furniture used in the church (see Figure 34).



Figure 34: Harmonium and *riempie* chairs used in the church²²⁸

In July 1841 the Church Council considered the need for pews and a gallery to serve the growing congregation.²²⁹

²²⁶ V. de Kock, *Our Heritage*, p. 215.

²²⁷ Guest, B. *Trek and transition: a history of the Msunduzi and Ncome Museums (incorporating the Voortrekker Complex) 1912 – 2012*, p. 32

²²⁸ Photograph from P.W.J. Groenewald & T.V. Bresler, *Gedenkboek: Herbevestiging van die Geloofte, Pietermaritzburg Desember 1955*, p. 24. The small folding chair was made by F. Pieters and accompanied J.T. Martens on the Great Trek. The chair on the left was made in 1800 by Paul Bester. The chair on the right was made in 1842 by I.H. Labuschagne for H.L. du Plessis. Their initials and the date appear on the backrest in ivory. It was sold in 1852 to J.A.N. Breytenbach; Msunduzi Museum Archive, Pietermaritzburg, old accession register, VMT 1-85, no. 230, p. 35; R. Carstens & P.W. Grobbelaar, *Voortrekkerlewe*, p. 234.

²²⁹ H.B. Thom, *Die Geloftekerk en ander studies oor die Groot Trek*, pp. 18-19.



Figure 35: Gallery later moved to the ‘Tower Church’ where this photo was taken²³⁰

In December 1841 the Church Council (elders Gert Rynier van Rooyen, Hendrik Petrus Nicolas Pretorius, Johannes H. Bruwer, Sarel A. Cilliers, Louwrence Badenhorst, J. Steenkamp and Rev. Daniel Lindley), discussed the installation and renting out of benches to members of the congregation.²³¹ They agreed to the installation of a new wooden pew in the right-hand corner next to the gallery.²³² Renting out of benches was also introduced, but was accompanied by difficulties. Thus in 1843 the church council was informed that the rent for seats was in arrears and the lay-reader was tasked to inform congregants that if the rent was not paid, seats will be taken away and added that in future rent had to be paid in advance.²³³

In 1846 it was decided that four three-seater benches could be made similar to those of Mr. Boshoff and Mr. Villiers to be placed on both sides of the church from the front to the back. In 1848 it was decided to have a bench made for the corner of the church and to order a new communion table. The communion table was usually located close to the pulpit in the liturgical space at the front. In 1849 the Council decided to relocate the door leading to the vestry in order to be able to move the pulpit further backwards as more space was needed for additional chairs.²³⁴

²³⁰ Copy in the Msunduzi Museum, Pietermaritzburg, Collection Centre.

²³¹ P.W.J. Groenewald & T.V. Bresler, *Gedenkboek: Herbevestiging van die Geloofte, Pietermaritzburg Desember 1955*, p. 14.

²³² Dutch Reformed Church Archive, Pietermaritzburg: book G53/2a, minutes of the Dutch Reformed Church Council.

²³³ Dutch Reformed Church Archive, Pietermaritzburg: book G53/2a, minutes of the Dutch Reformed Church Council.

²³⁴ Dutch Reformed Church Archive, Pietermaritzburg: book G53/2a, minutes of the Dutch Reformed Church Council.

After the inauguration of the ‘Tower Church’, the pews were sold except for one which was given to elder Gert Naudé. In 1862 the Dutch Reformed Church in Ladysmith purchased some of the pews.²³⁵ These were well cared for. In 2011 the Dutch Reformed Church in Ladysmith donated two of the last remaining pews to the Msunduzi Museum. They are now back in the Church of the Vow.



Figure 36: Two pews previously used in the Church of the Vow²³⁶

In 1938 the *Natal Mercury* reported on the discovery of a harmonium in Harrysmith also reputed to have been used in the church. This report was however received with scepticism in Pietermaritzburg. According to Mr. P. van As the harmonium was imported by his grandfather Hendrik Muller in 1855 and used in the church in 1856, because the new harmonium which was ordered for the new ‘Tower Church’ had not yet arrived. Muller was an elder in the church and made his harmonium available. It was allegedly used for nearly a year before it was replaced by a bigger one. During the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902) it was loaned to the German music teacher Professor A. Dendroth. The next day Mr. van As’ farm was captured by the British and the house with all the furniture was burnt down. Thus it happened that the harmonium was saved from destruction in the nick of time.²³⁷ It is not known what the eventual fate of the harmonium was.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, box G53/1, File on history of the congregation by Dr. Besselaar, compiled from original minutes, 1926.

²³⁶ *The Natal Witness*, 15/06/2011, p. 3.

²³⁷ *Natal Mercury*, 1938-07-05.



Figure 37: Music box barrel organ apparently used in the church in 1860²³⁸

2.3.5 Renovations

The building was continuously renovated from shortly after its inauguration. This at times involved changing the exterior:

Year	Reports about alterations to the building
1841	The original roof was poorly constructed resulting in the evacuation of the church during a rainstorm, soon after its inauguration, as the building leaked badly. It was reported in early July 1841: “ <i>Op de dag van voorbereiding is ere en regen gewees en de mensen moes alle toen uit de kerk gaan so als de kerk gelek heef</i> ”. ²³⁹ The Church Council decided in July 1841 to replace the flat timber roof with a thatch structure. It was also decided to add gables. Subscription lists were distributed asking for donations such as money, stones, thatch, nails, burnt bricks and services. ²⁴⁰
1841	Several individuals offered their services: C. Viljoen (three days work), S.P. Viljoen (two days work), C.P.F. Lotter (gave 400 bundles of thatch), C.P. van der Merwe and W. van der Merwe (each gave one plank), T.C. Bester (offered 600 ropes) ²⁴¹ and G. Roets (offered 300 bundles of thatch). A.W.J. Pretorius donated

²³⁸ Msunduzi Museum, Pietermaritzburg, Accession No. 1939.

²³⁹ H.B. Thom, *Die Geloftekerk en ander studies oor die Groot Trek*, p. 18.

²⁴⁰ H.B. Thom, *Die Geloftekerk en ander studies oor die Groot Trek*, pp. 18-19.

²⁴¹ Dutch Reformed Church Archive, Pietermaritzburg: box G53/1, File on history of the congregation by Dr. Besselaar, compiled from original minutes, 1926.

amongst others, 1000 bundles of thatch for the renovations.²⁴²

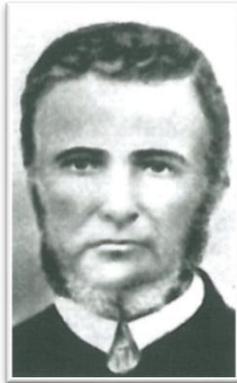


Figure 38: Christiaan Pieter van der Merwe²⁴³



Figure 39: C.P.F. Lotter (1804-1875) and Isabella Margaretha Nel²⁴⁴

C.P.F. Lotter served as elder in the church and member of the Volksraad. He assisted in building the church and donated 400 bundles of thatch to repair the roof.²⁴⁵

A booklet documenting possible donations to the Voortrekker Museum, contains an entry by the curator in 1980, stating that Commandant S.B.L. Buys wanted to donate a thatching needle which was used by his father who assisted with the

²⁴² P.S. De Jongh, *Sarel Cilliers*, p. 195.

²⁴³ J.C Visagie, *Voortrekkerstamouers 1835-1845*, (Pretoria, 2011), p. 514.

²⁴⁴ Msunduzi Museum, Pietermaritzburg, Accession No. 958.

²⁴⁵ L.J. Eksteen, *Die Voortrekkerbegravingplaas*, p. 39.

	thatching of the roof. ²⁴⁶
1843	<p>General alterations were carried out, as Colonel Henry Cloete of the British army recorded when he arrived in Natal. According to him the construction of the church was still in progress in the middle of 1843²⁴⁷ and that 21 Pietermaritz Street was used as a church in the meantime.²⁴⁸</p> <p>Jonas Bergtheil also reported that “In Pietermaritzburg ... a Dutch Church was being built.”²⁴⁹</p>
1844	Alterations continued throughout the year as indicated in receipts donated to the then Voortrekker Museum in 1912 by the Dutch Reformed Church Council. ²⁵⁰
1845	<p>In October the Church Council discussed repairing the vestry and roof thatch.²⁵¹</p> <p>On 23 January 1845, James Michiel Howell described the church as “... a handsome stone-built church...”²⁵²</p>
1846	Various improvements were made including repairs to the roof, gables and interior. ²⁵³
1847	Deacon J. Kriel reported that the front gable had been demolished and a new roof was added by Mr. A. Williams. Mr. Ferreira was allowed to construct an attic and supervise the repainting of the woodwork. The construction of an entrance porch in front of the church doors was also investigated. ²⁵⁴

²⁴⁶ Msunduzi Museum Archive, Pietermaritzburg: Curator’s booklet *Voornemende skenkings’ 1971-1981*, entry 11/9/1980. Although it seems that the needle was not donated to the Museum in the end, it provides some insight into the individuals who participated in the renovation of the church.

²⁴⁷ H.B. Thom, *Die Gelofterkerk en ander studies oor die Groot Trek*, p. 19.

²⁴⁸ P.W.J. Groenewald & T.V. Bresler, *Gedenboek: Herbevestiging van die Gelofte, Pietermaritzburg Desember 1955*, p. 14.

²⁴⁹ B.I. Buchanan, *Natal memories*, p. 125.

²⁵⁰ Msunduzi Museum Library, Pietermaritzburg: Voortrekker Museum booklet *Souvenir Voortrekkers Museum 16th December 1912*. Published 1912, p. 3.

²⁵¹ Dutch Reformed Church Archive, Pietermaritzburg: book G53/2b, minutes of the Church Council.

²⁵² The Natal Society Foundation, U.E.M. Judd, ‘The origins of the Natal Society, Chapter 1: Early Pietermaritzburg’ in C. de B. Webb (ed.), *Natalia* (2), December 1972, p. 31.

²⁵³ Dutch Reformed Church Archive, Pietermaritzburg: book G53/2b, minutes of the Church Council.

²⁵⁴ Dutch Reformed Church Archive, Pietermaritzburg: book G53/2b, minutes of the Church Council.

	Mrs. Stucki described the interior as modest and neat. ²⁵⁵
1848	It was decided that the vestry should be repaired and decorated, and to have a new stone floor laid in the vestry and in a section of the church. ²⁵⁶
1849	<p>The Church Council reported that renovations to the building had to be postponed due to the resignation of the Rev. Döhne.²⁵⁷</p> <p>In 1849 the Council decided to relocate the door leading to the vestry.²⁵⁸</p> <p>Thomas Phipson gives an indication of what the church looked like in 1849: “Our public buildings have at present not much to boast of in the way of architecture. The Court House and the Dutch Reformed Church are thatched and built of stone, both on the same model”.²⁵⁹</p>
1850	The Church Council decided that the church exterior had to be renovated and white-washed. ²⁶⁰
1851	The chairperson of the Church Council suggested that the gable should be rebuilt as it was disintegrating and that the thatched roof had to be replaced with tiles or galvanized iron sheeting. The council decided on the latter. ²⁶¹ Collection lists were sent out and even the English community contributed. ²⁶²
1852	On 15 January 1852 it was reported that the galvanized iron sheets they were looking for could not be obtained. Deacons Otto and Zietsman were appointed to oversee the renovations and they were also tasked to have the woodwork at the front of the church painted. ²⁶³ On 27 December 1852 it is reported that changes and repairs had to be carried out urgently. ²⁶⁴
1854	

²⁵⁵ A. Dreyer, *Eeufest-album van de Nederduits Gereformeerde-Kerk in Zuid-Afrika 1824-1924*, p. 27.

²⁵⁶ Dutch Reformed Church Archive, Pietermaritzburg: book G53/2b, minutes of the Church Council.

²⁵⁷ Dutch Reformed Church Archive, Pietermaritzburg: book G53/2b, minutes of the Church Council.

²⁵⁸ Dutch Reformed Church Archive, Pietermaritzburg: book G53/2b, minutes of the Church Council.

²⁵⁹ R.N. Currey (ed.), *Letters & other writings of a Natal Sheriff Thomas Phipson 1815-76*, p. 13.

²⁶⁰ Dutch Reformed Church Archive, Pietermaritzburg: book G53/2b, minutes of the Church Council.

²⁶¹ Dutch Reformed Church Archive, Pietermaritzburg: book G53/2b, minutes of the Church Council.

²⁶² Dutch Reformed Church Archive, Pietermaritzburg: box G53/1, File on history of the congregation by Dr. Besselaar, compiled from original minutes, 1926; Box: G53/7.

²⁶³ Dutch Reformed Church Archive, Pietermaritzburg: book G53/2b, minutes of the Church Council.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, Box G53/7.

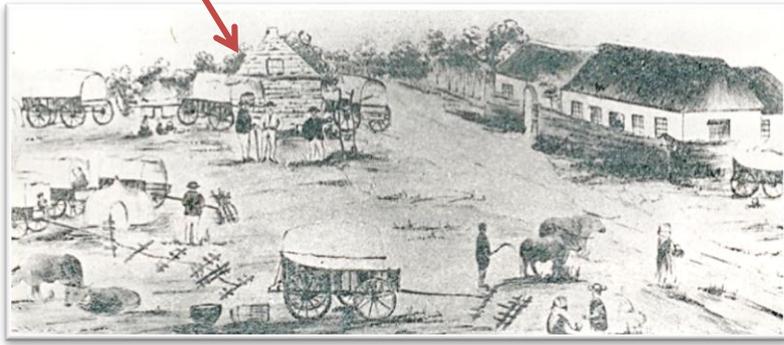


Figure 40: Sketch by Marianne Churchill on which the Church of the Vow (indicated by an arrow) is visible, 1854²⁶⁵

Later recollections of Martha Jane Lindley reveals that the church and the court house were the only public buildings of the Voortrekkers which had elaborate Cape Dutch gables and that the walls were constructed of stone (shale), the floors were paved and the doors and windows were painted dark green. Some doors and windows are still in their original positions, but the main entrance on Church Street was moved to the front gable.²⁶⁶

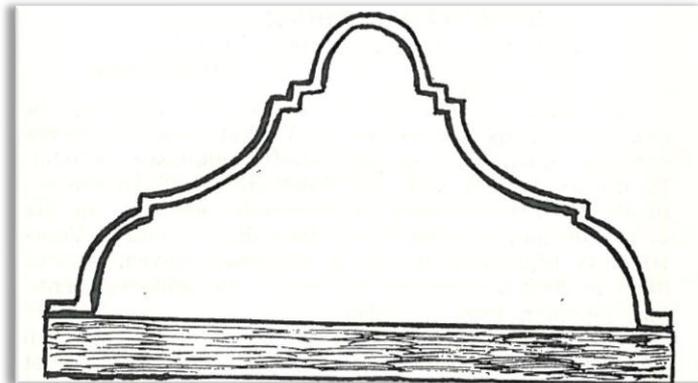


Figure 41: Gable of the church according to Prof. J.D. Kestell, who was born in Pietermaritzburg in 1854 and attended school in the building²⁶⁷

²⁶⁵ Laband, J. and R. Haswell (eds.), *Pietermaritzburg 1838-1988*, p. 23.

²⁶⁶ M.M. Basson, 'Die Geloftekerk in Pietermaritzburg', In *Byvoegsel tot die Volksblad*, 30-11-1938, p. 28; B. Guest, *Trek and transition: a history of the Msunduzi and Ncome Museums (incorporating the Voortrekker Complex) 1912 – 2012*, p. 31.

²⁶⁷ G.H. van Rooyen, *Kultuurskatte uit die Voortrekker-tydperk I*, p. 158.

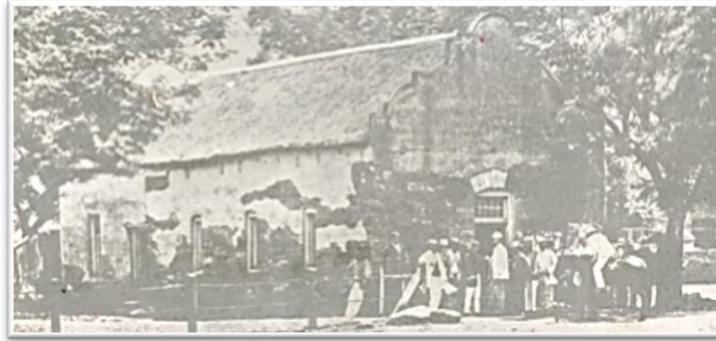


Figure 42: Photo of the Raadsaal built in 1840 and donated to the then Voortrekker Museum in 1912²⁶⁸

According to W.J. Pretorius the church was not the most beautiful or ornate but simple, with a front and back door and vestry. The curved gable had to be taken down, replaced and simplified because the gable wall could not support the weight of the first gable.²⁶⁹

2.3.6 The church bell

On Friday 27 September 1844 *The Natal Witness* reported that a large bell arrived on the ship *Louisa*. The newspaper stated that more contributions were needed from readers to purchase the bell in order to donate it to the church. Only half of the amount (50 rixdollars) had been collected.²⁷⁰ H.M. Wolhuter, C. Ohrtmann (original spelling) and S.A. Cilliers were among those who contributed money.²⁷¹

In 1847 the Church Council minuted their appreciation towards Mr. Landsberg for the donation of the bell.²⁷² Council expenditure lists indicate that W.J. Pretorius supervised work on the bell, but also did some of the work himself,²⁷³ perhaps referring to the erection of a structure from which the bell was suspended as Thomas Phipson describes in 1849: “The deficiency of a belfry to the church is supplied by two lofty poles supporting a bell which a

²⁶⁸ Msunduzi Museum Archive, Pietermaritzburg, old accession register: VMT 1-85, no. 307, p. 43.

²⁶⁹ Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository: A 1704, Handwritten manuscript in Dutch by W.J. Pretorius. s.l., s.a.

²⁷⁰ *The Natal Witness*, 1844-09-27.

²⁷¹ Dutch Reformed Church Archive, Pietermaritzburg: box G53/1, file on history of the congregation by Dr. Besselaar, compiled from original minutes, 1926.

²⁷² Dutch Reformed Church Archive, Pietermaritzburg: book G53/2b, minutes of the Church Council.

²⁷³ Dutch Reformed Church Archive, Pietermaritzburg: book G53/2b, minutes of the Church Council.

(native) rings during the intervals when the congregation within (the church) are engaged in singing.”²⁷⁴

After the congregation moved into their new ‘Tower Church’, the bell was presented to the congregation in Greytown and eventually it was given to the Dutch Reformed Church in Weenen in 1865.²⁷⁵

2.3.7 Fencing the site

In 1841 the Volksraad decided to erect a high wall around the church for protection against surprise attacks.²⁷⁶ M.J. Lindley recalls small slits in the wall used by guards during war when women and children had to sleep inside. However, heavy rains eventually led to the disintegration of the wall.²⁷⁷

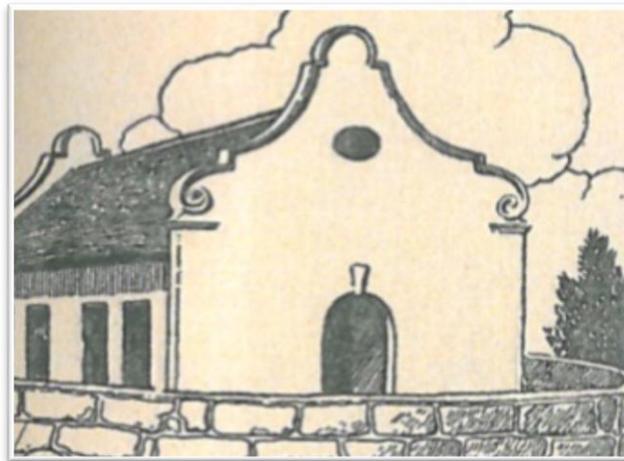


Figure 43: Depiction of the church with a protective wall around it²⁷⁸

In 1842 the British invaded Natal, resulting in conflict between the British and the Voortrekkers at Congella. The murder of two farmers raised panic. Farmers with their families and livestock fled to Pietermaritzburg, adding to the confusion. On one Sunday in

²⁷⁴ R.N. Currey (ed.), *Letters & other writings of a Natal Sheriff Thomas Phipson 1815-76*, p. 13.

²⁷⁵ Dutch Reformed Church Archive, Pietermaritzburg: box G53/1, file on history of the congregation by Dr. Besselaar, compiled from original minutes, 1926.

²⁷⁶ G.S. Preller, *Voortrekker wetgewing, notule van die Natalse Volksraad 1839-1845*. (1988 reprint of G. Preller's 1924 publication), p. 117.

²⁷⁷ B. Guest, *Trek and transition: a history of the Msunduzi and Ncome Museums (incorporating the Voortrekker Complex) 1912 – 2012*, p. 32.

²⁷⁸ L.J. Eksteen, Unpublished manuscript: *Die Geloftekerk as Volksimbool oor 100 jaar 1912-2012* (s.l, 2011), p. 18.

July the Volksraad held a meeting in the church-building (the courthouse was too small). The chairman later ordered the doors to be closed to the public after which the proceedings were ended with the adoption of some resolutions between the two parties.²⁷⁹

Eleven members including J.N. Boshoff (as chairperson of the Volksraad) signed a statement in which they accepted the authority of the Queen. Preliminary arrangements were made in order to prepare a final settlement.²⁸⁰

2.4 Conclusion

Since religion dominated the lives of the Voortrekkers, their church formed a crucial part of everyday life. The Church of the Vow originated from their vow to God in 1838 and was subsequently constructed in the centre of Pietermaritzburg, not only for practical reasons but also in acknowledgement of the importance of this institution in their lives. This clearly reflects the historical, spiritual and social significance of this building to this community. Prominent members of the community such as Voortrekker leader A.W.J. Pretorius as well as other communities contributed towards the construction of the church, adding to the cultural significance of the building.

As a tangible heritage object the building's physical attributes and development over the years forms part of its unique historical layering, further contributing to the building's heritage value and architectural significance.

This chapter only touched on the intangible aspect of the building – the associations and meanings of the place. The next chapter will discuss these aspects in more detail.

²⁷⁹ W. Brodrick-Cloete (ed), *The history of the Great Boer trek and the origin of the South African republics*, p. 164-165. (From lectures by Hon. Henry Cloete, High Commissioner for Natal 1843-1844).

²⁸⁰ E.W. Smith, *Die lewe en tye van Daniel Lindley 1801-80*, p. 151.

CHAPTER 3

THE CHURCH OF THE VOW AND ITS INTANGIBLE HERITAGE

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter dealt with the origins and developments of the Church of the Vow as a physical, visible, tangible, three-dimensional heritage object. This chapter will emphasise the building's intangible attributes – its use, associations and meanings, which also plays an important role in the process of determining the building's cultural significance.

This chapter introduces the clergy who were willing to venture into the unknown to serve the congregation; it expands on the congregation itself, including services and ceremonies that were held in the church and the building's use as a school.

The Church of the Vow formed an important part of the Voortrekker community's religious and social life. The building's history reflects their cultural and traditional practices and spiritual values and reveals the social interactions between the Voortrekkers and other cultural groups.

3.2. The Congregation

Finding ministers willing to come all the way to Natal to preach in the church and serve the congregation was not an easy task. There were not many ministers available at the time and those who were willing to attend to the congregation's spiritual needs came from as far as Germany and the United States. A number of ministers served the congregation.

3.2.1 Ministers

As early as 1837, subscription lists were sent out for contributions towards a salary for a minister by the first Church Council (elder J.S. Maritz and deacons Viljoen and S.A. Cilliers).²⁸¹

²⁸¹ A. Dreyer, *Voortrekkers en hul kerk, sketse uit die kerklike geskiedenis van die Groot Trek*, 1932, p. 91.

During the initial trek by the Voortrekkers to Natal, the Methodist (Wesleyan) Rev. James Archbell (1798-1866) of the London Missionary Society²⁸² and Erasmus Smit used to preach in Gert Maritz's laager. Archbell held sermons intermittently and Smit, who was not ordained, agreed to do marriages but not baptisms. When Piet Retief joined the trek he appointed Smit officially, even though Smit was not popular with everyone.²⁸³

The Voortrekkers realised that they needed a minister for the new church. Smit was not a suitable candidate, not only because he was not ordained, but because he was old and permanently in ill health. In a letter dated 13 May 1839 Jacobus Johannes Burger, J.S. Maritz and A.W.J. Pretorius appealed to ministers in the Cape Colony to assist them in their search.²⁸⁴

Early in 1840 it was suggested that Daniel Lindley, an American missionary, be asked whether he was interested in the position. The Volksraad agreed to appoint him if the necessary documentation was in order and if Lindley was willing to accept the teachings of the Reformed Church. They were unsuccessful and had to rely on Smit to serve as minister in the meantime. Their quest for an ordained minister continued.²⁸⁵

In March 1840 the Volksraad increased Smit's salary. They also discussed getting Rev. Pieter Kuipers Albertyn (1814-1878) from the Cape Colony. It was also decided that Smit could be retained as minister. Rev. Albertyn declined the position.²⁸⁶



Figure 44: P.K. Albertyn²⁸⁷

²⁸² J.C. Pretorius (red.), *Op Trek*, p. 166.

²⁸³ A. Dreyer, *Voortrekkers en hul kerk, sketse uit die kerklike geskiedenis van die Groot Trek*, 1932, p. 91; A. Moorrees, *Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde kerk in Suid-Afrika 1652-1873*, pp.706-712.

²⁸⁴ A. Moorrees, *Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde kerk in Suid-Afrika 1652-1873*, pp. 694-695.

²⁸⁵ A. Moorrees, *Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde kerk in Suid-Afrika 1652-1873*, p715; A. Dreyer, *Die Kaapse kerk en die Groot Trek*, pp. 19, 59.

²⁸⁶ G.S. Preller, *Voortrekker wetgewing, notule van die Natalse Volksraad 1839-1845*. (1988 reprint of G. Preller's 1924 publication), p. 31.

On 4 August 1840, a correspondent of the Cape Town newspaper *De Ware Afrikaner*, who was in Natal at the time, expressed his disdain about the lack of sympathy or compassion towards the Voortrekkers and that there was no effort to help them. The correspondent wondered why Afrikaans ministers did not want to move to Natal to serve the congregation.²⁸⁸

Services were conducted by Rev. Smit until January 1841, when the Volksraad appointed Lindley as their first ordained minister.²⁸⁹

3.2.1.1 Erasmus Smit – first minister in Pietermaritzburg (1839-1840)

Erasmus Smit (1788-1863) was born in the Netherlands. At the age of 8 he was placed in an orphanage in Amsterdam. He was trained as a missionary for the “*Nederlandsche Zendelingen Genootschap*”. He arrived in the Cape as the only survivor of the ship *Zeenimf* which had 250 passengers on board before it was wrecked.²⁹⁰ Smit served various non-White communities before he joined the Voortrekkers.²⁹¹



Figure 45: Erasmus Smit. His bible was donated to the then Voortrekker Museum²⁹²

²⁸⁷ H.B. Thom, *Die Geloftekerk en ander studies oor die Groot Trek*, p. 15.

²⁸⁸ A. Dreyer, *Voortrekkers en hul kerk, sketse uit die kerklike geskiedenis van die Groot Trek*, 1932, p. 76.

²⁸⁹ H.B. Thom, *Die Geloftekerk en ander studies oor die Groot Trek*, p. 18.

²⁹⁰ A. Dreyer, *Eeufeest-album van de Nederduits Gereformeerde-kerk in Zuid-Afrika 1824-1924*, p. 88.

²⁹¹ D.J. Potgieter (ed-in-chief), *Standard encyclopedia of Southern Africa Vol. 4*, p. 6.

²⁹² Msunduzi Museum, Pietermaritzburg, Accession No. 1024.

In 1813 Smit married Susanna Catharina Maritz (1799-1863), a sister of the Voortrekker leader Gert Maritz. He left the Cape for Natal in 1836 as minister to the Voortrekkers. Because he was never officially ordained, many Voortrekkers did not accept him as minister.²⁹³ Smit and his wife eventually settled in Pietermaritzburg. Smit has been described as someone with a good sense of humour.²⁹⁴ It is said that he used to preach with such a beautiful soft voice that congregants were not bored by his lengthy sermons.²⁹⁵

3.2.1.2 Daniel Lindley – first official minister of the Church of the Vow (1841-1847)

“If there is a human name that warms the heart of the Natal Trek Boer from the Port to the far distant interior, it is the ever to be remembered one of Lindley.”²⁹⁶



Figure 46: Portrait of Rev. Daniel Lindley²⁹⁷

Lindley (1801 – 1880) was born in the United States of America. He was admitted as a minister of the Presbyterian Church in 1831. On 20 November 1834 he married Lucy Virginia Allen. In 1835 he arrived at the Cape and settled among the Matabele in 1836 at the mission station at Mosega. It was later destroyed by a commando under Potgieter trying to recover

²⁹³ L.J. Eksteen, *Die Voortrekkerbegraafplaas Pietermaritzburg*, p. 35.

²⁹⁴ A. Dreyer, *Die Kaapse kerk en die Groot Trek*, p. 206.

²⁹⁵ J.C. Pretorius (red.), *Op Trek*, p. 166.

²⁹⁶ B.I. Buchanan, *Natal memories*, p. 91, quoting from *The Natal Witness*, July 1863.

²⁹⁷ Msunduzi Museum Collection, Pietermaritzburg, Accession No. 3352.

their looted cattle. He decided to join the Voortrekkers and after a visit to the Wesleyan mission at Thaba Nchu, he decided to go to Natal. The Voortrekkers still had no ordained minister so they approached Lindley to take up the vacant post in their newly built church.²⁹⁸

Lindley was hesitant to accept the position due to his inability to speak Dutch and because he preferred to work as a missionary.²⁹⁹ A commission was appointed to verify Lindley's documentation. On 16 January 1841 J.N. Boshoff, J.P. Zietsman and Louwrens Badenhorst reported that Lindley was indeed an ordained minister of the Presbyterian Church and that their teachings were no different to that of the Reformed Church. In February 1841 Lindley was formally appointed. After Lindley heard the news on the 25th he left for Pietermaritzburg and on the Sunday, he confirmed elders and deacons, baptised 27 children and married two couples.³⁰⁰

In October of that year, J. Boshoff wrote a letter to the American Board of Missionaries on behalf of the congregation to thank them for their assistance. The letter also expressed their gratitude towards Lindley for coming to them even though he was still learning their language, but, as Boshoff reported, their minister was doing well. R. Anderson, secretary of the American Board of Missionaries replied that they would have liked to keep Lindley as a missionary, but his interest in the Voortrekkers and the good he could do, made them gladly accept his new position in the Voortrekker church and hoped that Lindley would remain useful.³⁰¹

In 1842 the merchant ship, the *Brazilia* arrived from the Netherlands and anchored in Port Natal, bringing the congregation bibles and books. Those on board received a hearty welcome.³⁰² Pietermaritzburg was decorated with flags, flower wreaths and honorary arches.³⁰³ The congregation still needed a large bible; hymnbooks, sermon books (such as *Kist en Lier* and *Bybelhistorie van Van der Palm*), school books and stationary. A letter expressing their request was taken back to the Netherlands.³⁰⁴

²⁹⁸ A. Dreyer, *Euufeest-album van de Nederduits Gereformeerde-kerk in Zuid-Afrika 1824-1924*, p. 88; E.W. Smith, *Die lewe en tye van Daniel Lindley 1801-80*, pp.8-13, 26-29, 47-48, 53-54, 59, 64-65, 78, 97

²⁹⁹ E.W. Smith, *Die lewe en tye van Daniel Lindley 1801-80*, p. 113.

³⁰⁰ E.W. Smith, *Die lewe en tye van Daniel Lindley 1801-80*, p. 113.

³⁰¹ E.W. Smith, *Die lewe en tye van Daniel Lindley 1801-80*, p. 115.

³⁰² Anoniem, *Spore van die kakebeenwa: 'n terugblik oor die Groot Trek*, p. 264.

³⁰³ J.J Lubbe, *Lewensomstandighede en opvoeding van die Voortrekkerkind XXI*, p. 97.

³⁰⁴ A. Moorrees, *Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde kerk in Suid-Afrika 1652-1873*, p. 721.

Rev. Lindley did not want to stay permanently. A commission was formed in Amsterdam to assist the emigrants in finding a new minister. A ship returned in 1843 with Reverend Pieter Nicolaas Ham and the body of teacher L. Martineau, who died during the journey. British troops refused passengers to get off the ship and ordered the ship to leave for Delagoa Bay. Ham hoped that they would be able to travel to Natal from there. During Ham's stay, his wife died (after the birth of their child) and he was also affected by fever. He soon boarded a ship to Cape Town and subsequently became an assistant minister in Paarl.³⁰⁵

In 1843 Rev. Abraham Faure (1795-1875) visited Rev. Lindley and his congregation.³⁰⁶ Faure arrived with the British warship *The Thunderbolt* in Port Natal.³⁰⁷ The Special Commissioner of the Colony of Natal, Henry Cloete noted: "...I should have wished to have had the opportunity of in some measure preparing the minds of the people at Pietermaritzburg for this visit...yet I feel entire confidence both in the zeal and discretion of Mr. Faure...satisfied as I am that his prudence will prevent his clashing with the Rev. Mr. Lindley..." Cloete also describes Rev. Faure as: "...some discreet colonial reverend, of long standing, of high character – one whose name was in all the churches – well known and well beloved, with an intelligent head and an affectionate heart, might do much good and materially promote the interests, both temporal and eternal, of those who had been so long wandering and out of the way".³⁰⁸

After Faure's arrival, the elders and deacons thanked Faure for coming this far to visit them and to assist Rev. Lindley.³⁰⁹ In one of his sermons, however he offended the congregation by praying for the Queen of England.³¹⁰ Faure did not care much about the Voortrekkers' desire for independence. He referred to them as misled countrymen. He felt that they were unwise and even started doubting their religiousness. He had to leave Natal after this. Despite this, he later sent his son H.E. Faure to be their minister.³¹¹ Because of his recommendation, the

³⁰⁵ A. Moorrees, *Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde kerk in Suid-Afrika 1652-1873*, pp. 724-725.

³⁰⁶ A. Dreyer, *Voortrekkers en hul kerk, sketse uit die kerklike geskiedenis van die Groot Trek*, pp.27-28.

³⁰⁷ A. Dreyer, *Voortrekkers en hul kerk, sketse uit die kerklike geskiedenis van die Groot Trek*, pp. 29-30; A. Moorrees, *Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde kerk in Suid-Afrika 1652-1873*, pp. 726, 728.

³⁰⁸ A. Dreyer, *Die Kaapse kerk en die Groot Trek*, pp. 45, 49.

³⁰⁹ A. Moorrees, *Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde kerk in Suid-Afrika 1652-1873*, p.726.

³¹⁰ A. Dreyer, *Die Kaapse kerk en die Groot Trek*, p. 60.

³¹¹ A. Moorrees, *Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde kerk in Suid-Afrika 1652-1873*, p. 727.

governor affirmed Lindley's appointment as minister of Pietermaritzburg.³¹² In a report to the British Government, Faure stated that the Voortrekkers were attached to Rev. Lindley "...and I can bear testimony to the indefatigable labours of that excellent man... He deeply mourns over the ignorance and prejudices of the people, does everything to imbue their minds with sound doctrine..."³¹³

Lindley's congregation did not only include those who stayed in Pietermaritzburg, but also people from the surrounding areas. There were between 8 000 to 12 000 emigrants who did not have an ordained minister. On one of his journeys he confirmed Paul Kruger, who later became president of the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek (ZAR) from 1883 to 1900.³¹⁴

In 1847 Lindley announced that he was leaving to continue his missionary work amongst the Zulus. The congregation was saddened by this. The elders and deacons wrote him a letter expressing their gratitude for what he had done for the congregation. They expressed their wish that he and his wife could have stayed as she set a lovely Christian example to the ladies of the congregation.³¹⁵

On 17 June 1847 a letter was published in *Die Patriot* newspaper, asking readers to contribute 1 Shilling towards a gift for Lindley, such as a piece of silverwork or a special Bible.³¹⁶ In the following years Lindley was often invited to hold sermons and serve Holy Communion in the church.³¹⁷

In 1857 the Church Council decided to ask Lindley to preach in Pietermaritzburg on the first Sunday of every month. Lindley replied that he would be there on the first Sunday of October and added "...and however much I may be wanting in ability to serve the congregation as I could wish, of one thing I feel sure, that is, that I shall serve them with love which can never grow old". He indicated that it has been a long time since he has been their minister but that he has never lost interest in their spiritual well-being.³¹⁸

³¹² E.W. Smith, *Die lewe en tye van Daniel Lindley 1801-80*, p. 130.

³¹³ A. Dreyer, *Die Kaapse kerk en die Groot Trek*, p. 64-65.

³¹⁴ E.W. Smith, *Die lewe en tye van Daniel Lindley 1801-80*, pp. 114, 127.

³¹⁵ E.W. Smith, *Die lewe en tye van Daniel Lindley 1801-80*, p. 133-134.

³¹⁶ *Die Patriot*, 1847-06-25, p. 4.

³¹⁷ E.W. Smith, *Die lewe en tye van Daniel Lindley 1801-80*, p. 133-134.

³¹⁸ Dutch Reformed Church Archive, Pietermaritzburg: box G53/1, file on history of the congregation by Dr. Besselaar, compiled from original minutes, 1926.

Later Lindley went back the United States but returned to Inanda where he continued to work amongst the Zulus until 1873. At the age of 72 he finally left Natal and returned to the United States.³¹⁹

3.2.1.3 Arnoldus Coenraad Stucki (the new minister who never arrived)



Figure 47: Rev. A.C. Stucki³²⁰

Stucki arrived in the Cape in 1846. He left for Pietermaritzburg to replace Lindley in 1847. Unfortunately he died of a stroke on his way to Natal. His wife arrived alone.³²¹ A. Pretorius wrote her a letter in which he said that the congregation felt as if they were in a sea of disaster and tragedy and longed for a minister to preach to them in their mother tongue. Mrs. Stucki replied that there were many capable ministers in Holland who were prepared to come to South Africa if their travelling costs were covered. Pretorius then sent a request pleading for money for this purpose.³²² In the meantime Rev. Daniel Lindley was asked to assist but he was not interested.³²³

³¹⁹ A. Dreyer, *Voortrekkers en hul kerk, sketse uit die kerklike geskiedenis van die Groot Trek*, p.21.

³²⁰ A. Dreyer, *Eeufest-album van de Nederduits Gereformeerde-kerk in Zuid- Afrika 1824-1924*, p. 91

³²¹ A. Dreyer, *Voortrekkers en hul kerk, sketse uit die kerklike geskiedenis van die Groot Trek*, pp. 25-26.

³²² G.S Preller, *Scripta Africana reeks II, Die Groot Trek, Andries Pretorius*, p. 461. (1988 copy of G. Preller's work which was published in 1937).

³²³ *The Natal Witness* 1847-03-12; 1847-04-23.

3.2.1.4 David Dale Buchanan, assistant to Lindley, helps out (1846-1847)

David Dale Buchanan (1819-1874), who emigrated from Scotland and arrived in Pietermaritzburg in 1846, offered to assist the congregation. Buchanan used to conduct the Sunday afternoon services in English during the time when Lindley was minister of the church. In times when Lindley was absent, Buchanan used to give morning services in Dutch and afternoon services in English. After Lindley left for Inanda, Buchanan continued to conduct the services until an ordained minister arrived to take up duty.³²⁴

Buchanan was one of the first lawyers in Natal and he also founded *The Natal Witness* newspaper.³²⁵ He became the first mayor of Pietermaritzburg in 1854.³²⁶



Figure 48: D.D. Buchanan³²⁷

3.2.1.5 Jacob Ludwig Döhne – second official minister (1847-1849)

In the same year (1847) the three missionaries Karl Wilhelm Posselt, Ludwig Döhne and Friedrich Güldenpfenning arrived in Natal to do social and religious work amongst the Zulu people. They reached Pietermaritzburg on 25 January where they were warmly welcomed. They stayed for several months and during this time they also assisted the congregation. In June Rev. Posselt and Rev. Güldenpfenning left Pietermaritzburg but Rev. Döhne stayed

³²⁴ B.I. Buchanan, *Natal memories*, p. 92.

³²⁵ B.I. Buchanan, *Natal memories*, p. 92.

³²⁶ D.J. Potgieter (ed-in-chief), *Standard encyclopedia of Southern Africa Vol. 4*, p. 548.

³²⁷ Laband, J. and R. Haswell (eds.), *Pietermaritzburg 1838-1988*, p. 202.

behind to attend to the spiritual needs of the congregation.³²⁸ He conducted services in Dutch on Wednesday evenings.³²⁹

Jacob Ludwig Döhne (1811-1879) was born in Germany. He came to South Africa in 1836 serving as a missionary for the Berlin Missionary Society. He worked amongst the Xhosas for 10 years. In 1847 he arrived in Pietermaritzburg and took over from Lindley as minister of the Dutch Reformed Church. He translated the New Testament into Xhosa and Zulu and published the first major Zulu/English dictionary.³³⁰

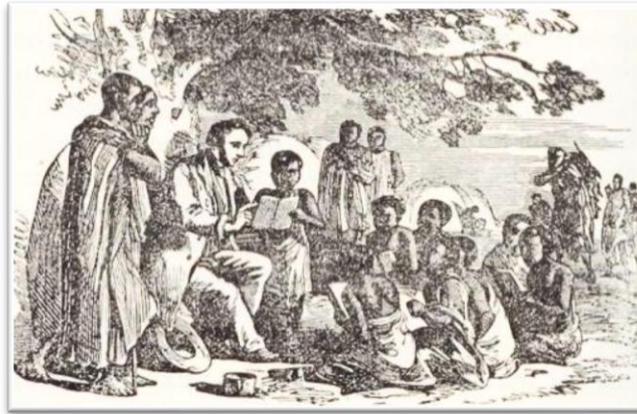


Figure 49: J.L. Döhne³³¹

According to the Church Council, Rev. Döhne was eager to strengthen the congregation's spirituality.³³² The Cape Synod however refused to appoint him permanently because he refused to accept the teachings of the Dutch Reformed Church unconditionally.³³³ On 24 December 1847 the Church Council decided to thank Rev. Döhne for his service to the congregation before giving him the bad news about the Synod refusing to appoint him permanently. On 10 February 1848 Council minutes report on Rev. Döhne's resignation. Fifteen members against four decided to request his permanent appointment from the Synod. It seems as if he decided to stay because in 1849 it was reported that the Minister had resigned. In the meantime Mr. Marquard was requested to read sermons on Sundays.³³⁴

³²⁸ Msunduzi Museum Library, Pietermaritzburg: filing cabinet, theme: 'Christianity, Lutheran Church', unpublished manuscript, E.S. von Fintel, *Chronicle of the 'Luterkirche' in Pine Street, Pietermaritzburg*, p. 3.

³²⁹ *The Natal Witness*, 1847-06-18, p. 3.

³³⁰ W.J. de Kock (ed-in-chief), *Dictionary of South African Biography I*, pp. 247; D.J. Potgieter (Chief ed.), *Standard encyclopedia of Southern Africa Vol. 4*, p. 57.

³³¹ Email from Eckhard von Fintel, 24/01/2012.

³³² A. Moorrees, *Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde kerk in Suid-Afrika 1652-1873*, p. 718.

³³³ Dutch Reformed Church Archive, Pietermaritzburg: box G53/1, File on history of the congregation by Dr. Besselaar, compiled from original minutes, 1926.

³³⁴ Dutch Reformed Church Archive, Pietermaritzburg, book G53/2b, minutes of the Church Council.

In September 1849 Rev. Lindley and Rev. Döhne were asked to preach for the congregation in October and to serve Holy Communion.³³⁵ After Rev. Döhne left to continue his missionary work, Rev. Albertyn was asked again to come to Natal, but turned them down because of ill health.³³⁶

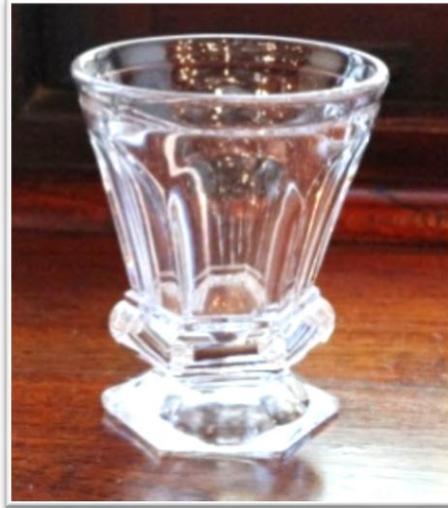


Figure 50: Glass cup used by Rev. Döhne during church services³³⁷

3.2.1.6 Dr. D. van Velden assists the congregation (1850-1852)

From 1850 to 1852 the Pietermaritzburg congregation were assisted by Rev. Dirk van Velden (1813-1878).³³⁸ His journey from the Netherlands to Natal was a 35 day ordeal during which the ship he was traveling on was leaking so badly that he lost most of his belongings. In March, when he arrived in Pietermaritzburg, he found the church packed with congregants.³³⁹ In 1853 Marianne Faure noted: “Dr Van Velden, like most Dutch reverends, had the habit of smoking all day long, either a pipe or a cigar”.³⁴⁰ He has also been described as pleasant and that he apparently preached like a saint and prayed like an Angel.³⁴¹

³³⁵ Dutch Reformed Church Archive, Pietermaritzburg, book G53/2b, minutes of the Church Council.

³³⁶ A. Dreyer, *Voortrekkers en hul kerk, sketse uit die kerklike geskiedenis van die Groot Trek*, 1932, p.76; Dutch Reformed Church Archive, Pietermaritzburg: book G53/2, minutes of the Dutch Reformed Church Council.

³³⁷ Msunduzi Museum Collection, Pietermaritzburg: Accession register, Accession no.1315 (glass cup).

³³⁸ A. Dreyer, *Voortrekkers en hul kerk, sketse uit die kerklike geskiedenis van die Groot Trek*, 1932, pp. 112.

³³⁹ C. Spoelstra, *Het kerkelijk en godsdienstig leven der boeren na den grooten trek*, p. 92.

³⁴⁰ The Natal Society Foundation, Ward, V., ‘My first African excursion’ in J. Frost (ed.), *Natalia* (36/37), December 2007, p. 36-37.

³⁴¹ C. Spoelstra, *Het kerkelijk en godsdienstig leven der boeren na den grooten trek*, p 56.



Figure 51: Rev. D. van Velden³⁴²

3.2.1.7 Dr. Hendrik Emmanuel Faure – third official minister (1853-1859)

Dr. Faure (1828-1898) married Maria Joanna Louisa (Marianne) Alewijn (born 1830) in 1851 and arrived in Durban in 1852. *De Kerkbode* of 1853 reported that when he arrived, the news spread so fast that wagons were promptly organized to welcome Faure. When he arrived at the parsonage in Pietermaritzburg he accepted to serve the congregation with an appropriate speech and served Holy Communion to the congregation.³⁴³ In the afternoon Faure delivered a sermon.³⁴⁴

Not long after Faure's arrival he left for the Cape (in 1853) without informing the Church Council, but wrote a letter to the congregation in which he explained that he left on recommendation from his doctor and Rev. Lindley because the Natal climate was too humid 'for his wife's throat'. He promised to return as soon as possible. This caused great unhappiness in Pietermaritzburg.³⁴⁵

³⁴² A. Dreyer, *Voortrekkers en hul Kerk, sketse uit die kerklike geskiedenis van die Groot Trek*, p. 112.

³⁴³ Rootsweb, <<http://news.rootsweb.com/th/read/GEN-BENELUX/2004-08/1093766338>>, Updated: 2012. Accessed: 2013-09-20; The Natal Society Foundation, Val Ward, 'My first African excursion' in J. Frost (ed.), *Natalia* (36/37), December 2007, p. 36-37; C. Spoelstra, *Het kerkelijk en godsdienstig leven der boeren na den grooten trek*, p 39.

³⁴⁴ C. Spoelstra, *Het kerkelijk en godsdienstig leven der boeren na den grooten trek*, p 39.

³⁴⁵ Dutch Reformed Church Archive, Pietermaritzburg: box G53/1, File on history of the congregation by Dr. Besselaar, compiled from original minutes, 1926.

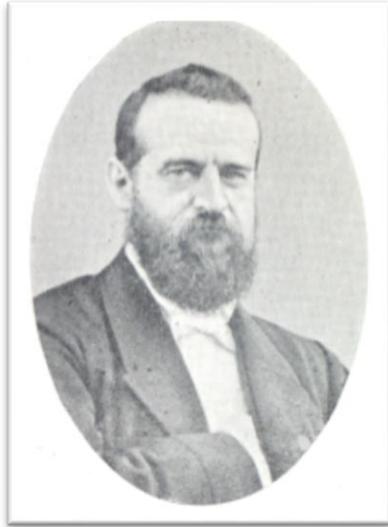


Figure 52: Dr. H.E. Faure³⁴⁶

Dr. Faure returned but ‘overworked’ himself to such an extent that he had to leave in 1859. In 1860 the congregation purchased a golden watch as his farewell present.³⁴⁷

3.2.1.8 William Campbell assists the congregation (1860)

Rev. William Campbell (born 1821) was brought up as a Presbyterian and later became a minister. He joined the Wesleyan Methodist Church and worked as a missionary.³⁴⁸



Figure 53: Rev. W. Campbell³⁴⁹

³⁴⁶ S.A. Maeder en C. Zinn (eds.), *Ons kerk album van Hollandsche kerken en leeraren*, p. 259.

³⁴⁷ Dutch Reformed Church Archive, Pietermaritzburg: box G53/1, File on history of the congregation by Dr. Besselaar, compiled from original minutes, 1926..

³⁴⁸ C.S. Shaw, *Stories from the Karkloof hills*, p. 45.

³⁴⁹ *Neon: Natal 1824-1974*, May 1974, p. 14.

Campbell settled in Pietermaritzburg in March 1851. He obtained permission for the use of the church for services while preparing to build the first Presbyterian Church (consecrated in 1854).³⁵⁰ Campbell dispensed the sacrament of the Lord's Supper for the first time to the Presbyterian congregation on 16 March 1851 in the Church of the Vow.³⁵¹ In 1860 Campbell assisted the Dutch Reformed congregation temporarily.³⁵²

3.2.1.9 Dames Pierre Marie Huet – fourth official minister (1860-1867)

Huet (1827-1895) was born in Amsterdam. He arrived in South Africa in 1854 and served in the church from 1860 to 1867.³⁵³ He has been described as a sweet and gentle person,³⁵⁴ and a fervent and faithful servant to the Lord.³⁵⁵ However, he sometimes caused unpleasant situations such as the occasion when he refused to serve Holy Communion because he deemed the congregation unworthy. He was also very uncharitable towards mothers who brought their young children to church and he resented those mothers who did not attend church regularly even if they stayed some distance away.³⁵⁶



Figure 54: Rev. D.P.M. Huet³⁵⁷

³⁵⁰ B.I. Buchanan, *Natal memories*, p. 254.

³⁵¹ A.F. Hattersley, *An illustrated social history of South Africa*, p. 125.

³⁵² Dutch Reformed Church Archive, Pietermaritzburg: box G53/1, file on history of the congregation by Dr. Besselaar compiled from original minutes, 1926.

³⁵³ W.J. de Kock (ed-in-chief), *Dictionary of South African Biography II*, pp. 323-324; Dutch Reformed Church Archive, Pietermaritzburg: box G53/1, file on history of the congregation by Dr. Besselaar compiled from original minutes, 1926.

³⁵⁴ A. Canisius, *Veritas: herinneringen van 1861-1902*, p. 33.

³⁵⁵ S.A. Maeder & C. Zinn (eds.), *Ons kerk album van Hollandsche kerken en leeraren*, p. 259.

³⁵⁶ C. Spoelstra, *Het kerkelijk en godsdienstig leven der boeren na den grooten trek*, p 56.

³⁵⁷ Msunduzi Museum, Pietermaritzburg, Accession No. 480.

Huet was convinced that, at the bottom of the cross, there was no distinction between people of different colour and he was not ashamed to express his viewpoint. He encouraged Dutch (or rather early Afrikaans) speaking Coloureds and Africans to attend services (if appropriately dressed) and encouraged the congregation to be ‘as one flock and one shepherd’.³⁵⁸

Huet was also a writer and poet. The Church council purchased and sold copies of his work. In one of his poems his opinion about all races being equal in God’s kingdom is stated:³⁵⁹

*“Daar zijn allen gansch gelijk,
Zwarte zondaars, Bruinen, Witten,
Wie Gods zin hier wil bezitten,
Wie niet met hen aan wil zitten,
Gaat niet in in’t koninkryk...”*

In one of Huet’s books he vehemently criticized the tendency to consider colour and non-Christianity to be synonymous. However not all congregants agreed with his viewpoints on racial equality.³⁶⁰

J.D. Kestell, who was a young member of the congregation, describes Huet as a well-spoken man and well-versed in the scriptures. The congregation was of the opinion that there was no equal for Huet on the pulpit. He was the first minister to preach in the new ‘Tower Church’ after it was built in 1861.³⁶¹

3.2.2 Elders and other significant individuals in the congregation

In 1841 Lourens Badenhorst (Senior) and C.A. Cilliers were elected as elders and G.R. van Rooyen, E.F. Potgieter, H.P.N. Pretorius and Johannes Bruwer as deacons.³⁶² In 1842 L.

³⁵⁸ E. Botha *et al.* (eds), *N.G Kerk Ladysmith 1854-2004*, p. 10.

³⁵⁹ E. Botha *et al.* (eds), *N.G Kerk Ladysmith 1854-2004*, pp. 10-11. Two copies of Huet’s work are in the Msunduzi Museum.

³⁶⁰ W. Kistner, ‘The 16th of December in the context of Nationalistic thinking in Colonial and Apartheid South Africa’. Transcribed and edited by B. Khumalo-Seegelken, 2004-04-27, p. 1. Article emailed by B. Khumalo-Seegelken to E. Henning, 2013-05-27.

³⁶¹ P.J Nienaber, *Dr. J.D. Kestell: Vader van die Reddingsdaad*, p. 21.

³⁶² G.S. Preller, *Voortrekker wetgewing: notule van die Natalse Volksraad 1839-1845*. (1988 reprint of G. Preller’s 1924 publication), p. 94.

Badenhorst and T.E. Steenkamp were elected as elders and J.H. Bruwer and C.F. Potgieter as deacons.³⁶³

In 1843 T. Steenkamp, C.A. Cilliers, E.F. (Evert) Potgieter and Bernard S. Rudolph were elected as elders and G.R. van Rooyen, P. Pretorius, J.H. Bruwer, H. Lemmer, G. Naudé and J. Boshoff as deacons.³⁶⁴ At the end of 1843 the elders were A. de Jager and S. Landman and the deacons were L. Fourie and F. de Jager.³⁶⁵

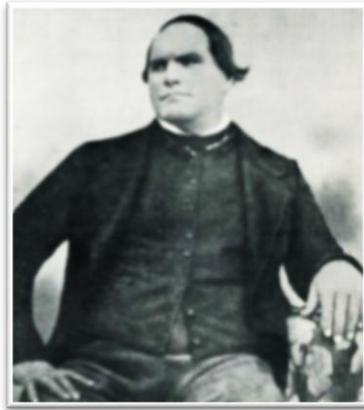


Figure 55: Evert Potgieter (1799-1863)³⁶⁶

After the British occupation of Natal in 1843 the congregation dwindled as many Voortrekkers migrated back to the interior Highveld of South Africa.³⁶⁷ In 1846 Rev. Lindley reported that the congregation was so small that the church had almost no income and could not cover its debts.³⁶⁸ In 1847 K.P. Landman and J.S. Maritz were elected as elders and J.D. Marquard, P. Ferreira, J.H. Kriel and T.J. Nel as deacons.³⁶⁹ In the same year a respected member of the congregation, Mr. J. Uys (Senior), took the Bible from the church and refused to return it. In 1848 the Church Council informed Uys that if he did not return the Bible, steps would be taken against him. He must have reconsidered since there is no further mention of the incident.³⁷⁰

³⁶³ A. Dreyer, *Die Kaapse kerk en die Groot Trek*, p. 47.

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

³⁶⁵ A. Dreyer, *Voortrekkers en hul kerk, sketse uit die kerklike geskiedenis van die Groot Trek*, p. 30.

³⁶⁶ **J.C. Visagie, *Voortrekkerstamouers 1835-1845*, (Pretoria, 2011), p. 362**

³⁶⁷ P.W.J. Groenewald & T.V. Bresler, *Gedenboek: Herbevestiging van die Geloofte, Pietermaritzburg Desember 1955*, pp. 15-16.

³⁶⁸ H.B. Thom, *Die Gelooftekerk en ander studies oor die Groot Trek*, p. 22.

³⁶⁹ A. Dreyer, *Die Kaapse kerk en die Groot Trek*, p. 213.

³⁷⁰ Dutch Reformed Church Archive, Pietermaritzburg: book G53/2b, minutes of the Church Council.

Commissariat Officer James Brickhill, who stayed in Pietermaritzburg for two years, met congregants J.N. Boshoff, Evert Potgieter, Gert Rudolph and Karel Landman. According to Brickhill, Lindley was loved by Afrikaners, the English and Africans and was highly respected by officers and soldiers.³⁷¹

The Karel Landman that Brickhill was referring to obviously was Karel Pieter Landman (1796-1875). He had left the Cape Colony on the Great Trek in 1837 and arrived in Natal in 1838. He was a prominent leader in the Voortrekker community. He took part in the battle of Blood River as Andries Pretorius' second in command and later became a member and chairperson of the Volksraad in Natal.³⁷²



Figure 56: G.J. Naudé³⁷³

Gerrit (Gert) Jacobus Naudé (1809-1890) arrived in Natal in 1838. He was a respected member of the community and played a leading role in the church. He was appointed as a member of the Church Council, was the lead vocalist and a lay reader. As an elder he assisted Rev. Lindley and accompanied him to the Free State three times in the 1840s as driver, interpreter and Assistant Scribe.³⁷⁴ Naudé became close assistant to Rev. Faure as well.³⁷⁵

³⁷¹ E.W. Smith, *Die lewe en tye van Daniel Lindley 1801-80*, p. 128.

³⁷² J.C. Visagie, *Voortrekkerstamouers 1835-1845*, p.127.

³⁷³ Msunduzi Museum, Pietermaritzburg, Accession No. 48.

³⁷⁴ L.J. Eksteen, *Die Voortrekkerbegraafplaas Pietermaritzburg*, p. 6.

³⁷⁵ W.J.G. Lubbe *et al.* *Die Sinode van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk van Natal: terugblik oor 100 jaar (1865-1965)*, p. 23.

When Naudé could not attend church, other members were asked to assist, as in 1844 when Gert Rudolph assisted as lay-reader and Johannes van Jaarsveld as lead vocalist. In 1846 Naudé asked permission to resign as lay-reader. In 1847 he was asked to stay on until another plan could be made. By this time they were waiting for Rev. Döhne to arrive and in the meantime the lay-reader had to read the commandments. In October 1847 K. van Heerden was appointed as the new lay reader.³⁷⁶

Naudé was married three times, to Christina Francina van Wyk in 1830, Johanna Christina Koekemoer in 1864 and Francina Margarietha du Preez in 1872.³⁷⁷ He kept a coffin in his loft for the day he died and in the meantime used it as storage space for apples.³⁷⁸

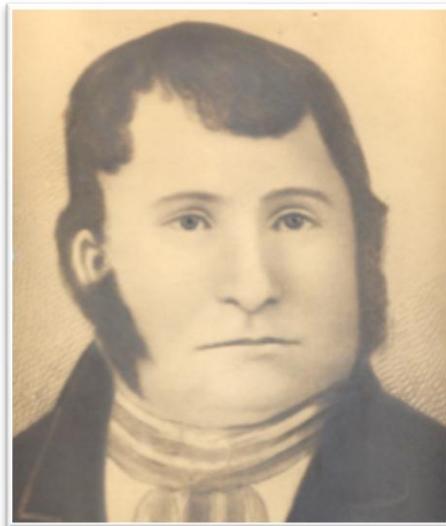


Figure 57: Sarel Cilliers³⁷⁹

Sarel Arnoldus Cilliers (1801 - 1871) was born in the district of Klein Drakenstein (close to Paarl, Western Cape). In 1823 he married Anna Francina Viljoen in Graaff-Reinet. He joined the trek group of Andries Hendrik Potgieter. He became known for leading the taking of the Vow before the battle of Blood River (1838).³⁸⁰ From about 1842 to 1847, he and his family stayed on a farm in the Houtboschrand district (now known as Curry's Post near Howick), situated north of Pietermaritzburg. It apparently took about five hours to get to town by horse, so Cilliers used to go to church only every fourteen days. He was a member of the committee who had to investigate the appointment of Lindley as a minister. Cilliers often used to

³⁷⁶ Dutch Reformed Church Archive, Pietermaritzburg: book G53/2b, minutes of the Church Council.

³⁷⁷ J.C. Visagie, *Voortrekkerstamouers 1835-1845*, pp. 150-151.

³⁷⁸ C.S. Shaw, *Stories from the Karkloof hills*, p. 107.

³⁷⁹ Msunduzi Museum, Pietermaritzburg, Accession No. 476.

³⁸⁰ J.C. Visagie, *Voortrekkerstamouers 1835-1845*, pp. 34-35.

accompany Lindley during his visits to congregants.³⁸¹ Cilliers served as deacon and later as elder in the church.³⁸²

One evening when Lindley was not feeling well, the elders had to attend to the rest of the congregants, including Special British Commissioner, Henry Cloete. Cloete was held in such high regard that one elder was too nervous to enter the house. They were later joined by clerks (also members of the congregation) and Cilliers scolded them for making fun of the ladies' bonnets in church. Cloete expressed his dissatisfaction and also reprimanded the clerks. With this, the visit came to an end.³⁸³



Figure 58: Henry Cloete³⁸⁴

Hendrik (Henry) Cloete (1792–1870) was born in Rondebosch (Western Cape). He completed a doctorate in law and practiced as an advocate at the Cape Bar before he was sent as Special Commissioner to Natal in 1843. He was instructed to get the Voortrekker Volksraad to submit to British authority. He stayed in Pietermaritzburg until 1844 and returned a year later to serve as a local district court judge. He was a prominent figure in Pietermaritzburg but left in 1855.³⁸⁵

³⁸¹ G.B.A. Gerdener, *Sarel Cilliers: Die Vader van Dingaansdag*, pp. 14-15, 19, 28, 32, 45, 81-82, 103.

³⁸² D.J Potgieter (Chief ed.), *Standard encyclopedia of Southern Africa* Vol. 3, p. 232.

³⁸³ G.B.A. Gerdener, *Sarel Cilliers: Die Vader van Dingaansdag*, pp. 14-15, 19, 28, 32, 45, 81-82, 103.

³⁸⁴ R. Carstens & P.W. Grobbelaar, *Voortrekkerlewe*, p. 101.

³⁸⁵ B. Guest, *A century of science and service: The Natal Museum in a changing South Africa 1904-2004*, p. 3.



Figure 59: J.N. Boshoff³⁸⁶

Jacobus Nicolaas Boshoff (1808-1881) served as an elder of the Dutch Reformed Church for many years. He moved from the Cape Colony to Natal in 1839. He was married to Adriana Petronella Gertruida van Aswegen (1811-1878) and they had eleven children. Boshoff was chairman of the Natal Volksraad and also the main compiler of the constitution of the Republic of Natalia. He was Landrost of Pietermaritzburg, registrar and master of the Supreme Court in 1845, and in 1855 he became the second president of the Orange Free State. He returned to Natal in 1859.³⁸⁷



Figure 60: J.N. Boshoff's wife, Adriana³⁸⁸

³⁸⁶ Msunduzi Museum, Pietermaritzburg, Accession No. 749.

³⁸⁷ L.J. Eksteen, *Die Voortrekkerbegravingplaas Pietermaritzburg*, p. 21.

³⁸⁸ Msunduzi Museum, Pietermaritzburg, Accession No. 1550.

J.D. Kestell remembers Boshoff living in Longmarket Street (now Langalibalele Street), not far from the church and manse. On Sundays Boshoff used to walk slowly from the vestry with other church council members.³⁸⁹ They used to meet every first Sunday of the month.³⁹⁰ Boshoff would then take his place on the pew reserved for elders where he used to sit very still, listening to the sermon with his eyes closed.³⁹¹



Figure 61: J.D. Marquard³⁹²

Johan David Marquard (1819-1880) was a government teacher and formerly a clerk in the Commissariat, and deacon in the Dutch Reformed Church.³⁹³ He was also a scribe of the Church Council and often accompanied Lindley on his visits to other towns.³⁹⁴

³⁸⁹ J.D. Kestell, 'Voortrekkers wat ek geken het', in J.M.H. Viljoen (red.), *Die Groot Trek Gedenkuitgawe van die Huisgenoot*, Desember 1938, p. 147.

³⁹⁰ J.C. Pretorius (red.), *Op Trek*, p. 169.

³⁹¹ J.D. Kestell, 'Voortrekkers wat ek geken het', in J.M.H. Viljoen (red.), *Die Groot Trek Gedenkuitgawe van die Huisgenoot*, Desember 1938, p. 147.

³⁹² Msunduzi Museum, Pietermaritzburg.

³⁹³ S. Haw, *Taking Stock: The Natal Education Department looks back*, p. 5; Pietermaritzburg Local History, S. Spencer, 'Nineteenth century Loop Street',

<http://www.pmbhistory.co.za/?showcontent&global%5B_id%5D=121>, Updated: 2013, Accessed: 2013-11-01.

³⁹⁴ A. Dreyer, *Die Kaapse kerk en die Groot Trek*, pp. 202-203, 262.



Figure 62: Charles Kestell³⁹⁵

Charles Kestell (1818-1905) arrived in South Africa with his parents in 1820. They came to Natal in 1845. In 1850 he became a member of the church. Kestell and his family were intimate friends of Erasmus Smit and his wife Susanna. He used to shave Smit's beard. In 1879 he became deacon and later an elder in the church.³⁹⁶ He was the father of J.D. Kestell.

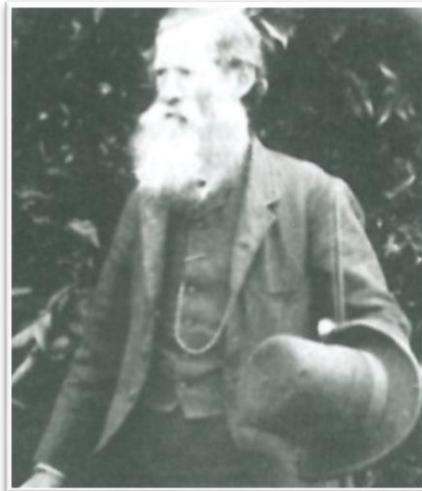


Figure 63: Dietlof Siegfried von Schönfeld Maré³⁹⁷

Dietlof Siegfried von Schönfeld Maré (1824-1890) settled as a wagon maker in Pietermaritzburg after the battle of Blood River (1838). He became a wealthy man. Not only was he a well-known businessman, but also a regular church attendee. He served as a council member and was good friends with Rev. Huet, who lived at his home for a short period of

³⁹⁵ L.J. Eksteen, *Die Voortrekkerbegravingplaas Pietermaritzburg*, p. 5.

³⁹⁶ L.J. Eksteen, *Die Voortrekkerbegravingplaas Pietermaritzburg*, pp. 4-5.

³⁹⁷ J.C. Visagie, *Voortrekkerstamouers 1835-1845*, p. 297.

time. In 1864 he and his sister Aletta Hansmeyer donated the bell for the new ‘Tower Church’. In 1865 he and his family moved to Schoemansdal.³⁹⁸



Figure 64: Jacobus Stuart and his wife³⁹⁹

Jacobus Stuart (1803-1878) came from a wealthy family of traders. He was married to Meinoude Elia De Vries Robbé. He served in various prominent government positions but lost his fortune in a land reclamation scheme. He arrived in Natal in 1851. In 1853 Stuart, his son Arnold and his daughter Cornelia submitted their church certificates as members of *Remonstrantsch Gereformeerde Gemeente* (Remonstrants Reformed Congregation or Dutch Protestants) Amsterdam to the Dutch Reformed Church, Pietermaritzburg. They later moved to the Transvaal but returned to Pietermaritzburg in 1856.⁴⁰⁰



Figure 65: J.C. Boshoff and his wife Maria van Niekerk⁴⁰¹

³⁹⁸ Rootsweb, <<http://wc.rootsweb.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/igm.cgi?op=GET&db=erasmussa&id=I85>> Updated: 2012, Accessed: 2013-09-20.

³⁹⁹ L.J. Eksteen, *Die Voortrekkerbegraafplaas Pietermaritzburg*, p. 54.

⁴⁰⁰ L.J. Eksteen, *Die Voortrekkerbegraafplaas Pietermaritzburg*, pp. 45-46.

⁴⁰¹ L.J. Eksteen, *Die Voortrekkerbegraafplaas Pietermaritzburg*, p. 22.

J.C. Boshoff was elected as deacon in 1854.⁴⁰²



Figure 66: M.P.C. Ferreira⁴⁰³

Marthinus Philippus Cornelis Ferreira (1811-1875) was an elder and Treasurer of the Church. In 1847 he assisted with the drafting of the first municipal regulations for Pietermaritzburg and in 1856 became the Mayor. Bank Street is named after him. He was a founder member of the Natal Bank and Victoria Club.⁴⁰⁴



Figure 67: C.P.F. Lötter and his wife Isabella Margaretha Nel⁴⁰⁵

Christoffel Petrus Francois Lotter (baptized 1804, died 1875) was an elder in the church and member of the Volksraad.⁴⁰⁶

⁴⁰² Msunduzi Museum Library, Pietermaritzburg: box file 'Church of the Vow'. Research article, Anonym, *The Church of the Vow*, p. 4.

There is a golden snuffbox in the Msunduzi Museum which was presented to him in 1887.

⁴⁰³ L.J. Eksteen, *Die Voortrekkerbegraafplaas Pietermaritzburg*, p. 13.

⁴⁰⁴ L.J. Eksteen, *Die Voortrekkerbegraafplaas Pietermaritzburg*, p. 13.

⁴⁰⁵ Msunduzi Museum, Pietermaritzburg, Accession No. 958.

⁴⁰⁶ L.J. Eksteen, *Die Voortrekkerbegraafplaas Pietermaritzburg*, p. 13.

J.R. Mostert arrived in Pietermaritzburg from Graaff-Reinet in 1856. He served as verger, teacher, lay reader and lead singer in the congregation. He received a good salary until he resigned in 1861 and started a bookshop in the vestry of the church after the congregation moved into the new 'Tower Church'. Before he left Pietermaritzburg in 1864, he donated his reader's podium to the church and in return received a snuff box (ordered from England).⁴⁰⁷ The podium would have stood in the liturgical space in front of the pulpit.



Figure 68: Possibly the podium Mostert donated to the Church which is now on exhibit in the Church of the Vow⁴⁰⁸

The minutes of the Church Council from the period 1850 to 1860 provide a glimpse into the life of the congregation at the time: in 1858 P. Ferreira and J.F. Berning submitted a petition to the Church Council after the minister expressed his dissatisfaction with the choir who stood while singing. Ferreira and Berning started the choir to improve the singing of congregants and were furious that members were asked to sit while singing. They requested the Council to speak to the minister about this issue.⁴⁰⁹

⁴⁰⁷ Dutch Reformed Church Archive, Pietermaritzburg: box G53/1, File on history of the congregation by Dr. Besselaar, compiled from original minutes, 1926. Mostert was apparently a bit deaf and sang off key.

⁴⁰⁸ Photo: E. Henning, 16/12/2012.

⁴⁰⁹ Dutch Reformed Church Archive, Pietermaritzburg: box G53/1, File on history of the congregation by Dr. Besselaar, compiled from original minutes, 1926.



Figure 69: H.F. Schoon⁴¹⁰

Herman Frederik Schoon (1851-1930) arrived in Natal with his family from Rotterdam on the ship *Hermanus Izak*. They moved to Pietermaritzburg in 1855. He remembers the ‘Tower Church’ being built and that he attended church services and Sunday school in this church. He had great respect for many Voortrekkers, especially Erasmus Smit. He became a teacher, minister and author.⁴¹¹

Information accompanying artefacts donated to the then Voortrekker Museum added significant value to the history of the congregation (the information was handed down from one generation to the next, relying on memory, and remained to be interpreted in the same spirit as oral evidence). For instance, a hymn book of Alfred Roberts that was donated to the museum reveals that he was a choir master from 1847 to 1856.⁴¹² Museum records also indicate that the first organist was Anna Magdalena (no surname provided). The Cadle Family at one time considered to donate a harmonium which she received as a farewell present to the Voortrekker Museum.⁴¹³

3.3. Services and Ceremonies

The history of the church must be contextualised by a brief history of the development of various ceremonies, events and church procedures. These include church services (for various

⁴¹⁰ A. Dreyer, *Eeufteest-album van de Nederduits Gereformeerde-Kerk in Zuid-Afrika 1824-1924*, p. 119

⁴¹¹ DBNL, E. Conradie, ‘Hollandse skrywers uit Suid-Afrika Deel 2 (1875-1905)’, <http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/conr002holl02_01/conr002holl02_01_0002.php>, Updated: 2009, Accessed: 2013-09-20.

⁴¹² Msunduzi Museum Collection, Pietermaritzburg: Accession register, Accession No. 2610 (hymn book, Alfred Roberts).

⁴¹³ Msunduzi Museum Archive, Pietermaritzburg: Curator’s booklet, *Voornemende skenkings 1971-1981*.

races and denominations), Sunday school, special services for Holy Communion, commemorations, baptisms, confirmations and marriages. Significant individuals were baptized, confirmed and married in the Church of the Vow.

3.3.1 Church services for various races and denominations

Weekly church services were very important to the Voortrekkers who diligently honoured the Sabbath. On these days they were not allowed to work. Services were held two or three times on a Sunday and sometimes on Wednesday evenings. Morning services were held at 07:00 or 09:00 and generally lasted two hours. If the minister was not available, an elder would conduct the service and would read from a book of sermons.⁴¹⁴ In April 1848 the Church Council decided that church services had to commence at 10:00.⁴¹⁵

Those who attended church services also knew that collections would be taken. In minutes of the Church Council of 24 December 1844 it was reported that collections taken on the last Sunday of each month had to go to the poor.⁴¹⁶

According to Martha Jane Lindley the congregation's singing was sad and slow.⁴¹⁷ In April 1846 *The Natal Witness* reports that the tunes were not only appropriate but sung in a taste which had not been heard for some time.⁴¹⁸ Later that year, on 11 December 1846, *The Natal Witness* reported quite the opposite, stating that singing could have been of better quality, however there were some efforts to improve the singing.⁴¹⁹

In 1847 Mrs. Stucki describes her amazement at the type of clothes women wore to church on Sundays. According to her, the ladies dressed very elegantly in the most beautiful clothes.⁴²⁰ The Voortrekkers wore their "kisklere" (directly translated it would be 'chest clothes' – during the Great Trek special clothes were kept in wagon chests) on special occasions such as

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid.*: box file 'Church of the Vow', Exhibition text: *Religion and education in the life of the Voortrekkers*.

⁴¹⁵ Dutch Reformed Church Archive, Pietermaritzburg: book G53/2b, minutes of the Church Council.

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁷ B. Guest, *Trek and transition: a history of the Msunduzi and Ncome Museums (incorporating the Voortrekker Complex) 1912 – 2012*, p. 32.

⁴¹⁸ *The Natal Witness*, 1846-04-11, p. 3.

⁴¹⁹ *The Natal Witness*, 1846-12-11.

⁴²⁰ G.S. Preller, *Scripta Africana reeks II, Die Groot Trek, Andries Pretorius*. (1988 reprint of G. Preller's 1937 publication), p. 461.

church services, baptisms and wedding ceremonies. These differed from everyday dress in that it was made of materials such as silk and velvet.⁴²¹

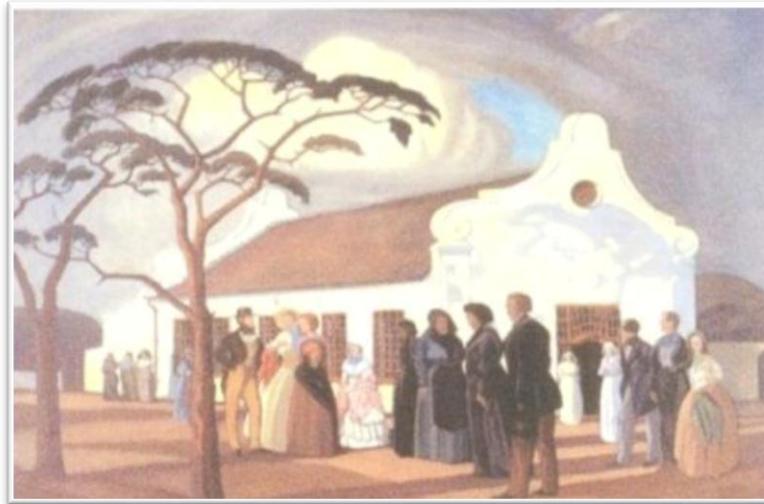


Figure 70: J.H. Pierneef’s 1938 representation of the church after a service⁴²²

In 1849 Thomas Phipson wrote: “There are four places of worship for the European population; the Dutch Reformed Church, the Government School Room, temporarily used as an Episcopalian church, the Wesleyan Chapel and the military chapel in the fort. Of the first of these little is necessary to be known by you and almost as little can be communicated by me. I have felt much pleasure in attending their Sabbath morning service, which is held at an early hour; and though my knowledge of the language is very imperfect I can apprehend enough to indicate that the declaimers of the ‘common salvation’ are made known there... Their only approach to a formal mode of worship is the reading of the Apostle’s Creed and the Ten Commandments.”⁴²³

The Natal Witness reported that when the first English immigrants arrived, people of different backgrounds and personalities gathered in the Voortrekker church ‘without hesitation, objection or desire for change’. They congregated in harmony, ‘one in heart and voice’.⁴²⁴ At that time, the only minister in Pietermaritzburg was Rev. Lindley. He preached in Dutch in the mornings and English in the afternoons. On Friday, 27 February 1846 *The Natal Witness* reported about the Sabbath: “At the usual hour in the morning the church was filled by a congregation to whom the Rev. Mr. Lindley delivered a most impressive sermon in Dutch...

⁴²¹ J.C. Pretorius (red.), *Op Trek*, p. 99.

⁴²² *Die Groot Trek Gedenkuitgawe van die Huisgenoot*, 1938, opposite p. 32.

⁴²³ R.N. Currey (ed.), *Letters & other writings of a Natal Sheriff Thomas Phipson 1815-76*, p. 21.

⁴²⁴ E.W. Smith, *Die lewe en tye van Daniel Lindley 1801-80*, p. 136.

In the afternoon the Rev. Mr. Lindley preached in English to what may be fairly termed, for the size of the town, a numerous and respectable congregation.”⁴²⁵

According to James Brickhill (officer of the Commissariat), Rev. Lindley’s English services were enjoyed by everyone. Those were the only services available to them at the time.⁴²⁶ Lindley also held services for other races: “Dr. and Mrs. Lindley went to Maritzburg where he was Predikant of the Voortrekkers’ Church and had a school for the Dutch people old and young. He held services also for the Natives. For the Dutch Mrs. Lindley had an infant school, sewing classes, mother’s meetings and a woman’s Bible class...”⁴²⁷



Figure 71: Wife of Rev. Lindley⁴²⁸

In 1849 Thomas Phipson reported: “For the (native) portion of the population there are several services held; some under the superintendence of the Wesleyan missionaries, either by themselves personally or by a native teacher...and one, I believe, by the Reverend for the Dutch Reformed Church”.⁴²⁹

Ministers from other denominations, whether they were Methodists, Presbyterians, and Lutherans were allowed to conduct their services in the Voortrekker church.⁴³⁰ In 1844 Rev. James Archbell (1798-1866), a Methodist (Wesleyan) missionary and later mayor of Pietermaritzburg⁴³¹, asked permission from the Church Council to preach to the English

⁴²⁵ *The Natal Witness*, 1846-02-27.

⁴²⁶ E.W. Smith, *Die lewe en tye van Daniel Lindley 1801-80*, p. 128.

⁴²⁷ B.I. Buchanan, *Pioneer days in Natal*, p. 40.

⁴²⁸ Msunduzi Museum, Pietermaritzburg, Accession No. C17, K30.

⁴²⁹ R.N. Currey (ed.), *Letters & other writings of a Natal Sheriff Thomas Phipson 1815-76*, p. 23.

⁴³⁰ E.W. Smith, *Die lewe en tye van Daniel Lindley 1801-80*, p. 136.

⁴³¹ D.J. Potgieter (Chief ed.), *Standard encyclopedia of Southern Africa* Vol. 1, p. 504.

community in the church on Sunday afternoons.⁴³² He was granted permission by J.B. Rudolph (1794 - 1875)⁴³³ on behalf of the Church Council.

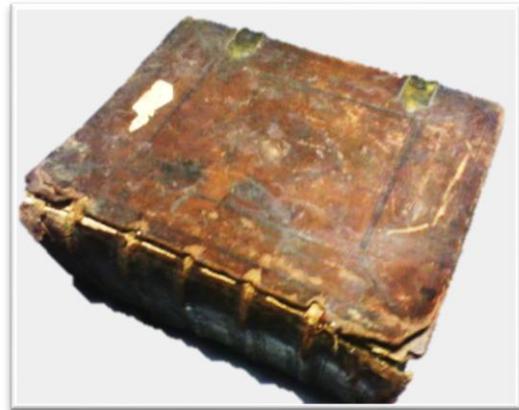


Figure 72 & 73: Johann Bernhard Rudolph⁴³⁴ (left) and his Bible (right)⁴³⁵



Figure 74: Rev. James Archbell was allowed to preach in the church⁴³⁶

Mrs. Stucki also describes how, after each church service, an English minister would preach to his congregation, after which children had to attend school managed by the minister's wife.⁴³⁷ Rev. John Richards was one such minister. He arrived in Durban in April 1846 aboard the

⁴³² Msunduzi Museum Library, Pietermaritzburg: Voortrekker Museum booklet *Souvenir Voortrekkers Museum 16th December 1912*, p. 40.

⁴³³ Msunduzi Museum, Pietermaritzburg: bible, Accession register, accession no. 5141 (bible, Rudolph).

⁴³⁴ Msunduzi Museum, Pietermaritzburg, Accession No. 1755.

⁴³⁵ Msunduzi Museum, Pietermaritzburg, Accession No. 5141.

⁴³⁶ Howick Museum, file 'Archbell - Rev. James'.

⁴³⁷ A. Dreyer, *Eeufest-album van de Nederduits Gereformeerde-Kerk in Zuid-Afrika 1824-1924*, p. 27.

Mazeppa. When he arrived in Pietermaritzburg he asked the Colonial Secretary, Donald Moodie, for permission to hold services for the English-speaking community in the Dutch Reformed Church. This was granted and the first service was held in April 1846.⁴³⁸

Services were often inter-denominational. The entire town's English inhabitants including the Lieutenant-Governor attended these services, which were not only held in English, but also in Zulu and Dutch for the Dutch-speaking Coloured people.⁴³⁹ Thomas and Ellen Fannin who arrived in Natal in 1847 also attended Wesleyan and other services in the church when Rev. Richards was minister.⁴⁴⁰



Figure 75: Ellen Fannin⁴⁴¹

William Hursthouse also attended these services as he reports in his journal on Sunday 28 January 1848: "Morning & Aft (afternoon) to chapel or church which ever you may call it. Our only Reverend at present is Wesleyan (Mr Richards)."⁴⁴²

⁴³⁸ The Natal Society Foundation, D. Buckley, 'The story of the Metropolitan Methodist Church, Pietermaritzburg (the chapel street society), 1846-1996', in J.M. Deane (ed.), *Natalia* (26), May 1997, p. 59.

⁴³⁹ The Natal Society Foundation, D. Buckley, 'The story of the Metropolitan Methodist Church, Pietermaritzburg (the chapel street society), 1846-1996', in J.M. Deane (ed.), *Natalia* (26), May 1997, p. 59.

⁴⁴⁰ C.S. Shaw, *Stories from the Karkloof hills*, p. 40.

⁴⁴¹ C.S. Shaw, *Stories from the Karkloof hills*, 2nd ed., p. 66.

⁴⁴² The Natal Society Foundation, S. Spencer, 'William Hursthouse's Pietermaritzburg Journal', in M.H. Steele (ed.), *Natalia* (34), December 2004, p. 6.

On 24 December 1847 Rev. Richards and his congregation made a contribution for the use of the church building⁴⁴³ following an appeal for contributions sent out by Rev. Richard in *The Natal Witness* in October 1848: “In an honest business point of view it is no more than fair that we should acknowledge the kindness of the Dutch congregation in allowing us the use of their ready furnished place of worship. From the expenses of repairs and improvements, and the responsibilities connected with the erection and maintenance of the building, the English congregation has been entirely relieved. During the last three years, no pew rents have been exacted or expected, so that the call now made is in every respect reasonable...”⁴⁴⁴ On 24 December 1847 the Church Council minuted that Rev. Richards should be thanked in writing for the English congregation’s contribution towards the church fund.⁴⁴⁵

Even though many Voortrekkers had left Pietermaritzburg by 1848, they still outnumbered the English inhabitants. According to the membership figures of 1848 of the Methodist District Meeting there were 13 English members, 3 Coloured members, and 15 African members. The 31 full members of all races were reported to be an increase of 16 from the previous year.⁴⁴⁶

In 1848, Rev. Döhne, minister of the Dutch Reformed congregation, offered to hand over his African congregation to the Methodist Church as soon as they have moved into their church. Whether this happened is not recorded.⁴⁴⁷ On Sunday, 31 December 1848 the Wesleyan congregation opened their own chapel. The afternoon of the opening day, Rev. Döhne preached in Dutch to both Coloureds and Europeans who were present,⁴⁴⁸ after which Rev. Lindley presented his sermon.⁴⁴⁹

⁴⁴³ Dutch Reformed Church Archive, Pietermaritzburg: book G53/2b, minutes of the Church Council.

⁴⁴⁴ *The Natal Witness*, 1848-10-13.

⁴⁴⁵ Dutch Reformed Church Archive, Pietermaritzburg: book G53/2b, minutes of the Church Council.

⁴⁴⁶ The Natal Society Foundation, D. Buckley, ‘The story of the Metropolitan Methodist Church, Pietermaritzburg (the chapel street society), 1846-1996’, in J.M. Deane (ed.), *Natalia* (26), May 1997, p. 60.

⁴⁴⁷ The Natal Society Foundation, D. Buckley, ‘The story of the Metropolitan Methodist Church, Pietermaritzburg (the chapel street society), 1846-1996’, in J.M. Deane (ed.), *Natalia* (26), May 1997, p. 60.

⁴⁴⁸ W.C. Holden, *A brief history of Methodism and of Methodist missions in South Africa*, p. 419.

⁴⁴⁹ The Natal Society Foundation, D. Buckley, ‘The story of the Metropolitan Methodist Church, Pietermaritzburg (the chapel street society), 1846-1996’, in J.M. Deane (ed.), *Natalia* (26), May 1997, p. 60.

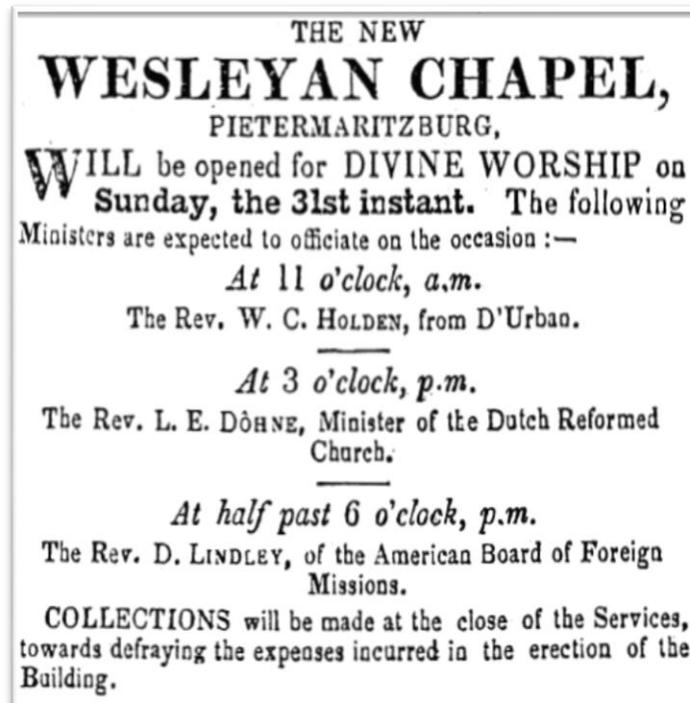


Figure 76: Notice of the opening of the Wesleyan Chapel⁴⁵⁰

Rev. W. Campbell also used the church as their congregation did not have their own building. In March 1851 Campbell served the sacrament for the first time to Presbyterian congregants in the Voortrekker Church.⁴⁵¹ In the same year John Fleming records that the sacrament was served to about 40 congregants.⁴⁵² On 22 September 1854 Rev. Campbell wrote a letter to Rev. Faure expressing their gratitude for the use of the Dutch Reformed Church and explained that they were moving to a new place of worship soon.⁴⁵³

In 1851 Rev. Carl Wilhelm Posselt (1815-1885) of the Berlin Missionary Society, who was living in New Germany (near Pinetown, Durban) held Lutheran services in the Voortrekker Church for German residents in Pietermaritzburg. He occasionally travelled to Pietermaritzburg to hold services, baptise children, confirm members and marry couples.⁴⁵⁴ His services were often advertised in the Press.

⁴⁵⁰ Natalia (26), May 1997, p. 60.

⁴⁵¹ A.F Hattersley, *An illustrated social history of South Africa*, p. 125.

⁴⁵² Campbell Collections, UKZN, Durban: Manuscripts, Fleming, John/diary extracts, 1850-1891, p. 22.

⁴⁵³ Dutch Reformed Church Archive, Pietermaritzburg: Box G53/7.

⁴⁵⁴ Msunduzi Museum Library, Pietermaritzburg: filing cabinet, 'Christianity, Lutheran Church' unpublished manuscript, E.S. von Fintel, *Chronicle of the 'Luterkirche' in Pine Street, Pietermaritzburg*, pp. 4-5, 37.



Figure 77: Advertisement in *The Natal Witness* inviting people to a German service⁴⁵⁵

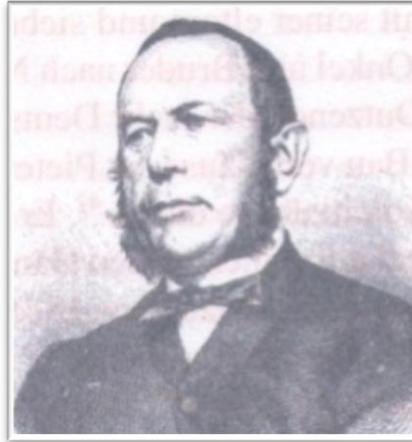


Figure 78: Rev. Wilhelm Posselt⁴⁵⁶

3.3.2 Sunday school

On Friday, 27 February 1846 *The Natal Witness* reports “At one o’clock the bell summoned a goodly attendance of children, Dutch and English, to the Sabbath School. The attention of parents is especially called to the importance of this institution. They should bear in mind that it is, in every respect – the child’s church.”⁴⁵⁷

Maria Petronella Nel recalled that on the Sunday when the church was inaugurated, the children were gathered to form a Sunday school and elders went around to see who can read. Rev. Lindley continued the Sunday school and instructed older pupils.⁴⁵⁸

⁴⁵⁵ E.S. von Fintel, Unpublished manuscript: *Chronicle of the ‘Luterkirche’ in Pine Street, Pietermaritzburg*, p. 4.

⁴⁵⁶ E.S. von Fintel, Unpublished manuscript: *Chronicle of the ‘Luterkirche’ in Pine Street, Pietermaritzburg*, p. 38.

⁴⁵⁷ *The Natal Witness*, 1846-02-27.

⁴⁵⁸ E.W. Smith, *Die lewe en tye van Daniel Lindley 1801-80*, p. 122.

James Brickhill (officer of the Commissariat), assisted Lindley to teach the English children in Sunday school. He remembered Lindley's children Mary, Mattie and Newton, and the children of Boshoff and Rudolph.⁴⁵⁹



Figure 79: Daniel Lindley and his family⁴⁶⁰

During the time of Rev. Van Velden (1850-1852), the Sunday school was attended by 50 to 60 learners.⁴⁶¹ Herman Frederik Schoon also attended services and Sunday school in the church somewhat later, but before the 'Tower Church' was built.⁴⁶²

3.3.3 Holy Communion

Holy Communion was usually served on the first Sunday of every third month. This was an important religious and social event. People travelled long distances to attend as Thomas Phipson writes in 1849: "...waggons bring in parties from a distance in the country, who cannot make it convenient to attend every week..."⁴⁶³ These events provided the opportunity to get together, socialise, to buy and sell goods or to catch up on the latest fashions.⁴⁶⁴ A preparation service preceded each communion with a thanksgiving service in the evening.⁴⁶⁵

⁴⁵⁹ E.W. Smith, *Die lewe en tye van Daniel Lindley 1801-80*, p. 128.

⁴⁶⁰ E.W. Smith, *Die lewe en tye van Daniel Lindley 1801-80*, Opposite title page.

⁴⁶¹ C. Spoelstra, *Het kerkelijk en godsdienstig leven der boeren na den grooten trek*, p. 93.

⁴⁶² DBNL, E. Conradie, 'Hollandse skrywers uit Suid-Afrika Deel 2 (1875-1905)', <http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/conr002holl02_01/conr002holl02_01_0002.php>, Updated: 2009, Accessed: 2013-09-20.

⁴⁶³ R.N. Currey (ed.), *Letters & other writings of a Natal Sheriff Thomas Phipson, 1815-76*, p. 21.

⁴⁶⁴ J.C. Pretorius, *Die geskiedenis van volkskuns in Suid-Afrika*, p. 35.

⁴⁶⁵ J.C. Pretorius (red.), *Op Trek*, p. 168.

During these gatherings for Holy Communion, new members were confirmed, couples got married and children were baptised.⁴⁶⁶

In 1846 *The Natal Witness* reported that a few days before the Sabbath, about 50 wagons arrived in town with families from the surrounding countryside. More than 120 people attended.⁴⁶⁷

In the historical novel *Voor land en volk*, a scene on Market Square during Holy Communion at the Dutch Reformed Church or ‘*de Boerenkerk*’ (as it was often referred to) in 1847, describes the tents and wagons, similar to that in the painting by Baines (Figure 80).⁴⁶⁸

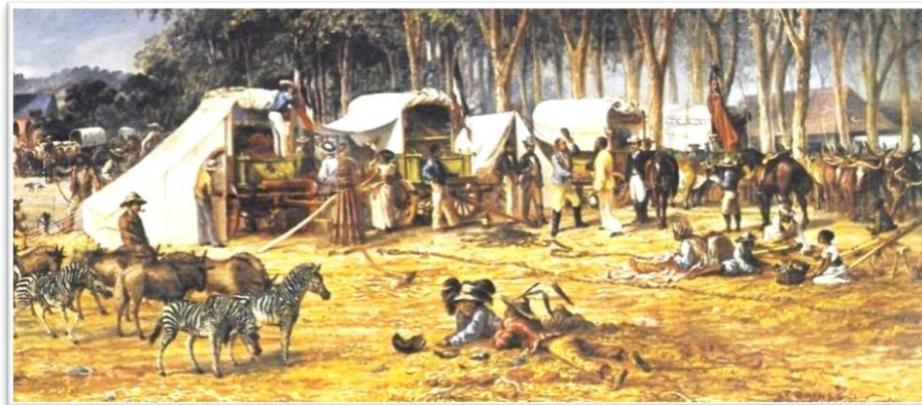


Figure 80: Scene on Market Square, Pietermaritzburg, by Thomas Baines, 1870⁴⁶⁹

John Fleming describes the attendance for Holy Communion in 1854: “...there is from 50 to 60 wagons in town”.⁴⁷⁰

3.3.4 Special services and commemorations

Services were also held during the week, such as those held by Rev. Döhne (in 1847) on Wednesday evenings at 19:00. A singing hour was held (in 1848) on Mondays, also at 19:00.⁴⁷¹

⁴⁶⁶ C.M. van den Heever & P. de V. Pienaar (reds.), *Kultuurgeskiedenis van die Afrikaner, deel I*, p. 331.

⁴⁶⁷ *The Natal Witness*, 1846-04-10.

⁴⁶⁸ D’Arbez (pseudonym for J.F. van Oordt), *Zuid-Afrikaansche historie-bibliotheek VII., Voor land en volk: een verhaal uit de jaren 1842-1848*, pp. 1-2.

⁴⁶⁹ D.J Potgieter (editor-in-chief), *Standard Encyclopedia of Southern Africa*, Vol 2, p. 21.

⁴⁷⁰ Campbell Collections, UKZN, Durban: Manuscripts, Fleming, John/diary extracts, 1850-1891, p. 74.

In 1852 a special service was held to commemorate the second centenary of the arrival of Jan van Riebeeck in South Africa. Rev. Döhne delivered his sermon. In the evening there was a large crowd in the church. Speeches were presented by the teacher J.D. Marquard, elder J.N. Boshoff and Presbyterian Rev. W. Campbell.⁴⁷²

Marquard thanked Rev. Döhne, their former minister and friend on behalf of the congregation for his presence and thanked those present who represented other denominations.⁴⁷³ Boshoff reminisced about how their ancestors established the church in which the festivities were taking place. During Campbell's presentation he recalled how he arrived in Pietermaritzburg in 1851 and that his congregation did not have a church, so services were held in the Voortrekker Church. He expressed his pleasure in taking part in the activities since it created a spirit of harmony among church members.⁴⁷⁴

3.3.5 Baptisms

Children were baptised whenever an ordained minister was available. Children were baptised on Sundays after the morning service. The child's name was entered into the register by an elder before the sacrament could be served. Babies were often dressed in special gowns for the occasion.⁴⁷⁵ According to the minutes of the Church Council of 3 July 1847, applications had to be submitted on Saturdays between 12:00 and 15:00. If an applicant belonged to another church they had to pay a larger fee. In 1848 it was decided that fees had to be paid to the Deacon Treasurer prior to the baptism.⁴⁷⁶

⁴⁷¹ Dutch Reformed Church Archive, Pietermaritzburg: book G53/2b, minutes of the Church Council, 1847-04-26.

⁴⁷² S.P. Engelbrecht, 'Die vierings van die eerste en die tweede eeufeeste ter herinnering aan die koms van Jan van Riebeeck', in S.P. Engelbrecht *et.al* (reds.), *Almanak van die Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika*, 1952, pp. 99-126.

⁴⁷³ C. Spoelstra, *Het kerkelijk en godsdienstig leven der boeren na den grooten trek*, p. 36-37.

⁴⁷⁴ S.P. Engelbrecht, 'Die vierings van die eerste en die tweede eeufeeste ter herinnering aan die koms van Jan van Riebeeck' in S.P. Engelbrecht *et.al* (reds.), *Almanak van die Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika*, 1952, pp 99-126.

⁴⁷⁵ Msunduzi Museum Library, Pietermaritzburg: box file 'Church of the Vow', Exhibition text *Religion and education in the life of the Voortrekkers*.

⁴⁷⁶ Dutch Reformed Church Archive, Pietermaritzburg: book G53/2b, minutes of the Church Council.

Before the inauguration of the Church of the Vow, 27 Children were baptised on Sunday 13 February 1841, just after Lindley was appointed.⁴⁷⁷ In a report to the British government, Rev. Faure states that Rev. Lindley had baptized 248 children in 1841, 244 in 1842 and 148 in 1843 in Pietermaritzburg.⁴⁷⁸ The *Kerkbode* of 10 August 1850 reported that Rev. Lindley baptised 1 080 children between 1841 and 1847 and that Rev. Döhne baptised 243 children between 1847 and 1850. Rev. Van Velden baptised 45 children from March to June 1850.⁴⁷⁹ It was not unusual for children to be baptised at the age of one or older and parents often baptised more than one child at a time.⁴⁸⁰



Figure 81: Baptismal font and bowl believed to have been used in the church⁴⁸¹

The following baptisms took place in the Church of the Vow. The focus is on those people who became significant individuals or who are associated with significant individuals, or had any other association with the Church of the Vow for other reasons such as attending school in the building, married there, or if their photographs are available:

Year	Individuals baptised in the Church of the Vow	Officiating Minister
1840's	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maria Petronella Nel (known as Mieta) who later attended school in the building.⁴⁸² 	Rev. Lindley

⁴⁷⁷ P.W.J. Groenewald & T.V. Bresler, *Gedenkboek: Herbevestiging van die Geloofte, Pietermaritzburg Desember 1955*, p. 14.

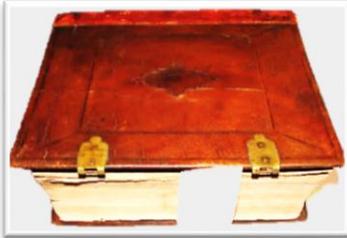
⁴⁷⁸ A. Dreyer *Die Kaapse kerk en die Groot Trek*, p. 62.

⁴⁷⁹ C. Spoelstra, *Het kerkelijk en godsdienstig leven der boeren na den grooten trek*, p. 93.

⁴⁸⁰ C.M. van den Heever & P. de V. Pienaar (reds.), *Kultuurgeskiedenis van die Afrikaner, deel I*, p. 331.

⁴⁸¹ Photo's: E. Henning, 16/12/2012.

⁴⁸² C.J. Visagie, *Voortrekkerstamouers 1835-1845*, p. 505; Msunduzi Museum, Pietermaritzburg: Accession register, Accession No. 1586 (23), 1367 (According to Mieta's own account).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ingenaas Michael Snijman (Snijman).⁴⁸³ <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;">   </div> <p style="text-align: center;">Figure 82: I.M. Snijman and his Bible⁴⁸⁴</p>	Rev. Lindley
1841	Regina Catharina Boshoff (daughter of J.N Boshoff and Adriana Petronella Gertruida). Born 1841 and died a month after her baptism. ⁴⁸⁵	Rev. Lindley
1842	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cornelis Janse (Kerneels) Wessels (1842-1914), son of Wessel Hendrik Wessels and Elisabeth Helena Uys. He was later a chief commandant in the Anglo-Boer War and a prisoner of war in India. Wesselsbron in the Free State is named after him.⁴⁸⁶ • Elsje Johanna Catharina Groenewald, (born 1842) went to school in the building and married there.⁴⁸⁷ • Johanna Christophora (grandchild of J.N. and Adriana Boshoff), born 1842. Johanna Christophora Auret (née Muller) and Johan Christoffel Boshoff were witnesses.⁴⁸⁸ 	<p>Rev. Lindley</p> <p>Not stated</p> <p>Not stated</p>

⁴⁸³ Msunduzi Museum, Pietermaritzburg: Accession register, Accession no. 1375 (photograph), 1374.

⁴⁸⁴ Msunduzi Museum, Pietermaritzburg, Accession No. 1375, 1374.

⁴⁸⁵ J. Ploeger, Besonderhede in verband met die geslag Boshof; met besondere verwysing na wyle Staatspresident Jacobus Nicolaas Boshof(f), *Historiese Studies* 4 (1), Maart 1943, pp. 39, 41.

⁴⁸⁶ Vaal triangle info,

<<http://www.vaaltriangleinfo.co.za/genealogy/individual.php?pid=I1538&ged=Wessels.ged>>, Updated: 2005, Accessed: 2012-01-24.

⁴⁸⁷ Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository: A982, Personal memories of Rev. F. de Kock, s.l., 1938.

⁴⁸⁸ J. Ploeger, Besonderhede in verband met die geslag Boshof; met besondere verwysing na wyle Staatspresident Jacobus Nicolaas Boshof(f), *Historiese Studies* 4 (1), Maart 1943, pp. 39, 41.

1844	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Henning Petrus Nicolaas Pretorius (1844-1897) was born and baptised in Pietermaritzburg (1844).⁴⁸⁹ He was the son of a brother of Andries Pretorius and later became an important figure in the ZAR.⁴⁹⁰ • Carl Frederik Godliep Erich (son of Casper Heinrich Heine, probably the same Casper who helped to construct the church pulpit).⁴⁹¹ • Johanna Francina Theodora (daughter of Joseph Hansmeyer, possibly the Hansmeyer who married in the 'Rietekerk').⁴⁹² • Theunis Christiaan (probably the son of Frans Matthys Wolhuter, a prominent figure in Pietermaritzburg, founder and director of the Natal Bank. A Street in Pietermaritzburg is named after him).⁴⁹³ • Josua Lourens Francois (son of Jan Thomas Martens, probably the Jan who brought the small folding chair with him on Trek which is on exhibit in the Msunduzi Museum).⁴⁹⁴ • Judit Jacoba (daughter of Casper Hendrik Badenhorst, probably the Casper who married the daughter of Hans Dons de Lange in the church. Hans Dons was a well-known Voortrekker commandant).⁴⁹⁵ 	<p>Not stated.</p> <p>Rev. Lindley</p> <p>Rev. Lindley</p> <p>Rev. Lindley</p> <p>Rev. Lindley</p> <p>Rev. Lindley</p> <p>Rev. Lindley</p>
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⁴⁸⁹ Rootsweb, <<http://wc.rootsweb.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/igm.cgi?op=REG&db=erasmussa&id=I1297>>, Updated: 2012, Accessed: 2013-11-01.

⁴⁹⁰ Morgenthal and Schoeman Genealogy Pages, <<http://morgenthal.co.za/getperson.php?personID=17715&tree=tree>>. Updated: 2014. Accessed: 2014-09-27.

⁴⁹¹ *De Natalier*, 1844-08-16.

⁴⁹² *De Natalier*, 1844-08-16.

⁴⁹³ *De Natalier*, 1844-08-16; J.C Visagie, *Voortrekkerstamouers 1835-1845*, p. 293; L.J. Eksteen, *Die Voortrekkerbegraafplaas Pietermaritzburg*, pp. 42-43.

⁴⁹⁴ *The Natal Witness*, 1844-09-06, p. 1.

⁴⁹⁵ *The Natal Witness*, 1844-09-20, p. 4; J.C Visagie, *Voortrekkerstamouers 1835-1845*, p. 52.

1852	Jacobus Nicolaas Boshoff (son of Jacoba Aletta and Joseph de Kock), born in 1852. His grandparents Jacobus and Adriana Boshoff were witnesses and Jacobus Johannes de Kock was also present. ⁵⁰²	Rev. Faure
1854	Anna Josephina (born 1854). Her grandparents Jacobus and Adriana Boshoff were witnesses at the ceremony as well as Sara Susanna van Soelen, the younger sister of Anna's mother, Jacoba Aletta. ⁵⁰³	Rev. Faure
1855	J.D. Kestell (1854-1941). ⁵⁰⁴ Karel Weyer and Mrs Smit, wife of Rev. Erasmus Smit, were witnesses at his baptism. ⁵⁰⁵ He later became a clergyman, author and cultural leader. ⁵⁰⁶	Rev. H.E. Faure
		
	Figure 84: J.D. Kestell⁵⁰⁷	
1859	Eldest daughter of Elsje Johanna Catharina Groenewald. ⁵⁰⁸	Rev. Huet

3.3.6 Confirmations

Children had to attend catechism as soon as they could read, learning about the Bible and Christianity. A child would be confirmed as a member of the church at the age of about 16.

⁵⁰² J. Ploeger, Besonderhede in verband met die geslag Boshof; met besondere verwysing na wyle Staatspresident Jacobus Nicolaas Boshof(f), *Historiese Studies* 4 (1), Maart 1943, pp. 39, 41.

⁵⁰³ J. Ploeger, Besonderhede in verband met die geslag Boshof; met besondere verwysing na wyle Staatspresident Jacobus Nicolaas Boshof(f), *Historiese Studies* 4 (1), Maart 1943, pp. 39, 41.

⁵⁰⁴ D.J. Potgieter (Chief ed.), *Standard encyclopedia of Southern Africa* Vol. 6, p. 370.

⁵⁰⁵ P.J. Nienaber, *Dr. J.D. Kestell: Vader van die Reddingsdaad*, p. 19.

⁵⁰⁶ D.J. Potgieter (Chief ed.), *Standard encyclopedia of Southern Africa* Vol. 6, p. P370.

⁵⁰⁷ <http://www.kestell.co.za/history.html>.

⁵⁰⁸ Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository: A982, Personal memories of Rev. F. de Kock, s.l., 1938.

Once confirmed, the new member could participate in Holy Communion and was considered ready for marriage.⁵⁰⁹ Sometimes adults were also confirmed. Books which had to be studied were the *Heidelbergse-kategismus* by Van der Kemp, the *Kortbegrip* which is a simpler and shorter version and *De Geloofsleer voor onze Christelijke jeugd* by Rev. Hellenbroek.⁵¹⁰

According to Maria Petronella Nel⁵¹¹ (Mieta), her husband Wessel Hendrik Uys, was confirmed by Rev. Lindley, who gave him a Bible with Wessel's name written in the front.⁵¹²



Figure 85: Wessel Hendrik Uys⁵¹³

Joseph Johannes Fourie⁵¹⁴ who assisted establishing Pietermaritzburg, was confirmed in the church,⁵¹⁵ as well as J.C. van den Berg, who assisted with the building of the church.⁵¹⁶



Figure 86: Bible of J.J. Fourie with an inscription in front⁵¹⁷

⁵⁰⁹ Msunduzi Museum Library, Pietermaritzburg: box file 'Church of the Vow', Exhibition text: *Religion and education in the life of the Voortrekkers*.

⁵¹⁰ J.C. Pretorius (red.), *Op Trek*, p. 172.

⁵¹¹ C.J. Visagie, *Voortrekkerstamouers 1835-1845*, p. 505.

⁵¹² E.W. Smith, *Die lewe en tye van Daniel Lindley 1801-80*, p. 122.

⁵¹³ I.S. Uys, *Die Uys Geskiedenis*, p. 88.

⁵¹⁴ J.J. Fourie was the grandfather of Jopie Fourie, so-called martyr of the 1914 Afrikaner rebellion.

⁵¹⁵ B.J. Leverton, 'The Voortrekker Museum', in V.C Wood (ed.) *Lantern 10 (3)*, March 1961, p. 263; Msunduzi Museum Collection, Pietermaritzburg: Curator's entry in old accession register VMT 1-85, no. 126, p. 20.

⁵¹⁶ H.B.Thom, *Die Geloftekerk en ander studies oor die Groot Trek*, p. 39.

⁵¹⁷ Msunduzi Museum, Pietermaritzburg, Accession No. 5020, Book No. 1170.

Maria Minnaar was interviewed in 1915 by Gustav Preller, and told him that she was confirmed in the little Voortrekker church by Rev. Lindley.⁵¹⁸ In a report from Rev. Faure to the British government, he states that Rev. Lindley had confirmed and married 214 people between 1841 and 1843.⁵¹⁹

3.3.7 Marriages

It was acceptable for couples to marry at a very young age. Both parties had to obtain letters of consent from their parents. They also had to announce their intent to get married in church, three weeks prior to the ceremony.⁵²⁰ As with baptisms, applications had to be submitted on Saturdays between 12:00 and 15:00.⁵²¹ They also had to read the Ten Commandments in church on three consecutive Sundays.⁵²² Two marriage ceremonies took place – one conducted by the marriage commissioner who would ask them various questions and the other in church. Couples usually married on a Sunday after the morning service. Sometimes four couples married at the same time. A fee had to be paid before they could get married.⁵²³

Two weddings took place on Sunday 13 February 1841, soon after Rev. Lindley's appointment.⁵²⁴ According to a report of Rev. Faure to the British government, Rev. Lindley had married 70 couples from 1841-1843, although none of the marriages were registered according to British regulations. The marriages of Mr. Eelhof and Paul Roos were consequently declared illegitimate by the Consistory of Pietermaritzburg.⁵²⁵

⁵¹⁸ G.S. Preller, *Old Pretoria*, pp. 10, 12.

⁵¹⁹ A. Dreyer, *Die Kaapse kerk en die Groot Trek*, p. 63.

⁵²⁰ Msunduzi Museum Library, Pietermaritzburg: box file 'Church of the Vow', Exhibition text: *Religion and education in the life of the Voortrekkers*.

⁵²¹ Dutch Reformed Church Archive, Pietermaritzburg: book G53/2b, minutes of the Church Council, 1847-07-03.

⁵²² J.C. Pretorius (red.), *Op Trek*, p. 194.

⁵²³ Msunduzi Museum Library, Pietermaritzburg: box file 'Church of the Vow', Exhibition text *Religion and education in the life of the Voortrekkers*.

⁵²⁴ P.W.J. Groenewald & T.V. Bresler, *Gedenkboek: Herbevestiging van die Gelofte, Pietermaritzburg Desember 1955*, p. 14.

⁵²⁵ A. Dreyer, *Die Kaapse kerk en die Groot Trek*, p. 63.

The following are some of the weddings that took place in the Church of the Vow. The focus is on those people who became significant individuals or who are associated with significant individuals, or if they are associated with the Church of the Vow for other reasons such as attending school in the building, or if their photographs are available:

Year	Individuals married in the Church of the Vow	Officiating Minister
1841	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marthinus Wessel Pretorius (1819-1901), eldest child of Voortrekker leader Andries Pretorius and Aletta Magdalena Smit. Pretorius fought at the battle of Blood River and later became president of both the South African Republic and of the Orange Free State. He also founded Pretoria.⁵²⁶ <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Figure 87: Marthinus Wessel Pretorius (left) and his brothers in old age⁵²⁷</p> </div>	Not stated
1842	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wessel Hendrik Pieters (1822-1901) and Magdalena Maria Malan (1825-1914)⁵²⁸ <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Figure 88: Wessel Hendrik Pieters and his wife M.M. Malan⁵²⁹</p> </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Casper Hendrik Badenhorst (1822-1892) and Gesina Johanna de Lange (daughter of Hans Dons) 	<p>Not stated</p> <p>Not stated</p>

⁵²⁶ Ancestry24, <<http://ancestry24.com/articles/orange-free-state/>>, Updated: 2010, Accessed: 2013-11-01.

⁵²⁷ J.C. Visagie, *Voortrekkerstamouers 1835-1845*, p. 391

⁵²⁸ C.J. Visagie, *Voortrekkerstamouers 1835-1845*, pp. 359, 372.

⁵²⁹ J.C. Visagie, *Voortrekkerstamouers 1835-1845*, p. 359

	<p>de Lange, a well-known Voortrekker Commandant).⁵³⁰</p>  <p>Figure 89: Casper Hendrik Badenhorst and Gesina Johanna de Lange⁵³¹</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pieter Hendrik Kritzinger and his second wife Cecilia Johanna Jacoba Nel (daughter of Voortrekker Louis Jacobus Nel)⁵³² 	<p>Not stated</p>
<p>1843</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marthinus Wessel (Swart Martiens) Pretorius (1822 –1864) and Debora Jacoba Retief (daughter of Piet Retief, 1815 –1900)⁵³³  <p>Figure 90: Debora Jacoba Retief⁵³⁴</p>	<p>Not stated</p>
<p>1844</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Widower Hercules Albertus (Bart) Pretorius (brother of Andries Pretorius) and his second wife Christina Catharina Bodenstein⁵³⁵ 	<p>Not stated</p>

⁵³⁰ J.C. Visagie, *Voortrekkerstamouers 1835-1845*, pp. 45, 52.

⁵³¹ Msunduzi Museum, Pietermaritzburg, Accession No. 1844.

⁵³² J.C. Visagie, *Voortrekkerstamouers 1835-1845*, p. 258.

⁵³³ J.C. Visagie, *Voortrekkerstamouers 1835-1845*, p. 391.

⁵³⁴ J.C. Visagie, *Voortrekkerstamouers 1835-1845*, p. 415.

⁵³⁵ J.C. Visagie, *Voortrekkerstamouers 1835-1845*, p. 383; *De Natalier* 1844-08-30.

	 <p>Figure 91: Hercules Albertus (Bart) Pretorius in old age⁵³⁶</p>	
1846	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The German, C.W.H. Pistorius (1819-1909) who arrived in Natal in 1840 and assisted with the inside work of the church,⁵³⁷ married Johanna Muller.⁵³⁸ 	Not stated
1848	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dietlof Siegfried von Schönfeld Maré (1824 – 1824) and Johanna (Hannie) Elizabeth Kruger (1828 –1874).⁵³⁹ He was an important member of the congregation. • Andries Wilhelmus Jacobus Pretorius (1825 - 1907) son of Voortrekker leader Andries Pretorius and Johanna Frederika Kemp (1832 –1878).⁵⁴⁰ • Pieter Jacobus de Waal and Maria Elisabeth Maritz (born 1831), who was a child of Gert Maritz’s brother.⁵⁴¹ 	<p>Rev. J.L. Döhne</p> <p>Rev. J.L. Döhne</p> <p>Rev. J.L. Döhne</p>

⁵³⁶ J.C. Visagie, *Voortrekkerstamouers 1835-1845*, p. 382.

⁵³⁷ L.J. Eksteen, *Die Voortrekkerbegraafplaas Pietermaritzburg*, p. 38.

⁵³⁸ Familysearch, < https://familysearch.org/search/record/results#count=20&query=%2Bgivenname%3A%20Johanna~%20%2Bsurname%3A%20Muller~%20%2Brecord_country%3A%20South%20Africa%20%20%2Bmarriage_place%3A%20Pietermaritzburg~> Updated: 2013, Accessed: 2013-11-01.

⁵³⁹ Rootsweb, <<http://wc.rootsweb.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/igm.cgi?op=GET&db=erasmussa&id=I85>> , Updated: 2012, Accessed: 2013-11-27.

⁵⁴⁰ J.C. Visagie, *Voortrekkerstamouers 1835-1845*, p. 139.

⁵⁴¹ J.C. Visagie, *Voortrekkerstamouers 1835-1845*, p. 139.

	 <p>Figure 92: Maria Elisabeth Maritz⁵⁴²</p>	
1851	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On Saturday 3 May 1851: John Fleming (1823-1902) and Ann Shackleton.⁵⁴³ John worked on the ‘Tower Church’. 	Rev. Campbell (during the time when his Presbyterian congregation used the building)
1854	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maria Petronella Nel⁵⁴⁴ (Mieta) and Wessel Hendrik Uys⁵⁴⁵ (1824–1877). He was a goods transport rider.⁵⁴⁶ They travelled on horseback to Pietermaritzburg for their wedding.⁵⁴⁷  <p>Figure 93: Wessel Hendrik Uys and his horse⁵⁴⁸</p> <p>There are pincushions in the Msunduzi Museum which belonged to Mrs. Uys, made in 1885 by C.E Potgieter from the silk of Mrs. Uys’ wedding</p>	Not stated

⁵⁴² J.C. Visagie, *Voortrekkerstamouers 1835-1845*, p. 139.

⁵⁴³ Campbell Collections, UKZN, Durban: Manuscripts, Fleming, John/diary extracts, 1850-1891, p. 22.

⁵⁴⁴ C.J. Visagie, *Voortrekkerstamouers 1835-1845*, p. 505.

⁵⁴⁵ Msunduzi Museum, Pietermaritzburg: Accession Register, Accession no. 1586 (23).

⁵⁴⁶ C.J. Visagie, *Voortrekkerstamouers 1835-1845*, p. 505.

⁵⁴⁷ I.S. Uys, *Die Uys Geskiedenis*, pp. 89, 95-96

⁵⁴⁸ I.S. Uys, *Die Uys Geskiedenis*, p. 95.

	<p>dress.⁵⁴⁹</p>  <p>Figure 94: Pincushions made from Mrs. Uys' wedding dress⁵⁵⁰</p> <p>Wedding dresses were often “<i>kisklere</i>” (special clothes kept in wagon chests during the Great Trek) worn on special occasions. These dresses were not necessarily made of white material.⁵⁵¹</p>  <p>Figure 95: Mieta (1834-1927), wife of Wessel Hendrik Uys and her children⁵⁵²</p>	
<p>1855</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christiaan Pieter Pretorius (1823 - 1904), son of Andries Pretorius and his cousin Johanna Christina Vorster (1829 - 1883).⁵⁵³ 	<p>Not stated</p>

⁵⁴⁹ Msunduzi Museum, Pietermaritzburg: Accession Register, Accession no. 1586 (23), 1367.

⁵⁵⁰ Msunduzi Museum, Pietermaritzburg, Accession No. 1586 (23) and 1367.

⁵⁵¹ J.C. Pretorius (red.), *Op Trek*, p. 100.

⁵⁵² Msunduzi Museum, Pietermaritzburg, Accession No. 1778.

⁵⁵³ Rootsweb, <<http://wc.rootsweb.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/igm.cgi?op=GET&db=buchroeder&id=I101737914>>, Updated: 2012, Accessed: 2013-11-01.

1856	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Johannes Stephanus Maritz (brother of Gert Maritz) and his third wife Cecilia Johanna Jacoba Nel.⁵⁵⁴  <p style="text-align: center;">Figure 96: Cecilia Johanna Jacoba Nel⁵⁵⁵</p>	Not stated
1858	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elsje Johanna Catharina Groenewald and Joseph de Kock (her parents Magdalena Potgieter and Jacobus Groenewald were also married in the church).⁵⁵⁶ An officer from a noble family fell in love with her while she was visiting Durban but nothing came of the courtship. She eventually returned to Pietermaritzburg where she got engaged to Joseph de Kock. The nobleman arrived one day to ask for her hand in marriage. He challenged her fiancé in a duel but lost. On the wedding day Elsje (then 16 years old), wore a white silk dress hand-stitched by herself and a frock that was worn by her mother and grandmother for their weddings. Elsje remembered the pulpit, simple stage and podium. The church was fully packed when the marriage formulary was read, followed by singing, a short speech and a prayer. The couple was showered with rice outside. The celebrations continued at 	Rev. Faure

⁵⁵⁴ J.C. Visagie, *Voortrekkerstamouers 1835-1845*, pp. 301, 377.

⁵⁵⁵ J.C. Visagie, *Voortrekkerstamouers 1835-1845*, p. 302.

⁵⁵⁶ Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository: A982, Personal memories of Rev. F. de Kock, s.l., 1938.

	her in-law's place. They were married for 53 years. ⁵⁵⁷	
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3.4 Multiple uses – as church and school

School education focussed on teaching children how to read and write and to prepare them for church confirmation.⁵⁵⁸ Although certain educational books were used to teach reading, writing and arithmetic, lessons mainly focussed on studying the Bible and other religious writings. Children also had to sing Psalms, hymns and other spiritual songs.⁵⁵⁹

Maria Petronella (Mieta) Nel⁵⁶⁰ went to the school in the church and was taught by Mr. Repsold. This is confirmed in minutes of the Church Council when in 1844 a decision was taken to allow Repsold to use the vestry as a school.⁵⁶¹ H.A. Repsold was born in Germany (1819). He married Johanna Elizabeth Helena Botha (1825 –1882) on 30 November 1840.⁵⁶²



Figure 97: H.A. Repsold⁵⁶³

⁵⁵⁷ Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository: A982, Personal memories of Rev. F. de Kock, s.l., 1938.

⁵⁵⁸ D.J. Potgieter (Chief ed.), *Standard encyclopedia of Southern Africa* Vol. 11, pp. 378.

⁵⁵⁹ Msunduzi Museum Library, Pietermaritzburg: box file 'Church of the Vow', Exhibition text: *Religion and education in the life of the Voortrekkers*.

⁵⁶⁰ J.C. Visagie, *Voortrekkerstamouers 1835-1845*, p. 505; Msunduzi Museum Collection, Pietermaritzburg, Curator's entry of memoirs of Mrs Uys (donor of the photo), Accession register, no. 1266.

⁵⁶¹ Dutch Reformed Church Archive, Pietermaritzburg: book G53/2b, minutes of the Church Council

⁵⁶² Msunduzi Museum Collection, bible which belonged to H.A. Repsold.

⁵⁶³ Msunduzi Museum, Pietermaritzburg, Accession No. 1266.



Figure 98: Repsold's Bible⁵⁶⁴

Elsje Johanna Catharina Groenewald, (born 1842), attended school in the building and remembered that they were taught in English.⁵⁶⁵

3.5 Conclusion

It is clear that the Church of the Vow has social and spiritual significance. The building contributes to our understanding of the Voortrekkers' belief system and religious practices, which forms an important part of this community's identity.

The history of the building reflects its importance as a religious and educational institution, but also as a social meeting place, where members from different cultural groups gathered for services and ceremonies. The congregation consisted of colourful characters such as Sarel Cilliers and J.N. Boshoff who were important figures within the community.

These intangible aspects of the Church of the Vow's history contributes to the building's historical, social and spiritual significance.

The next chapter will explore further developments relating to the use and physical appearance of the building.

⁵⁶⁴ Msunduzi Museum, Pietermaritzburg.

⁵⁶⁵ Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository: A982, Personal memories of Rev. F. de Kock, s.l., 1938.

CHAPTER 4

THE CHURCH OF THE VOW – FURTHER USES AND PHYSICAL TRANSFORMATION

4.1 Introduction

In 1861 the building became redundant after being replaced with a larger church, known as the ‘Tower Church’. This chapter focuses on the subsequent fate of the building when it was in turn used as a bookshop, school, soda-water factory, wagon factory, blacksmith, pharmacy, dining and refreshment room and wool shed. After almost being demolished, it was repurchased by the Dutch Reformed Church Council and turned into a museum.

These developments contribute to the historical layering and unique physical attributes of the building which adds to its cultural significance.

4.2 A new church for the congregation (1857-1955)

In 1854, Deacon J.C. Boshoff (brother of J.N. Boshoff) proposed to the Church Council that a new church be constructed as the present building was becoming too dilapidated. All male members of the congregation congregated in the vestry of the church in 1855.⁵⁶⁶ The meeting focused on whether a new church should be built. After a general agreement to the proposal, an intense debate about how to obtain funds followed. It was decided that the minister should visit Holland on condition that he was paid a salary and traveling costs. Objections and recommendations included that a commission must oversee the construction of the church.⁵⁶⁷

P. Ferreira, J.C. Boshoff, J.P. Zietsman, A.J. de Kock, G.J. Naudé, F.S. Berning and J. van Breda were elected as members of the building commission.⁵⁶⁸ In April 1855 it was decided that the church would be built next to the original church; the walls had to be of good burnt (red) bricks and it must have a steeple.⁵⁶⁹ However, after the British annexation of Natal in

⁵⁶⁶ H.B.Thom, *Die Geloftekerk en ander studies oor die Groot Trek*, p. 28.

⁵⁶⁷ Msunduzi Museum Library, Pietermaritzburg: box file ‘Church of the Vow’, document, Anonym.

⁵⁶⁸ Dutch Reformed Church Archive, Pietermaritzburg: box G53/1, File on history of the congregation by Dr. Besselaar, compiled from original minutes, 1926.

⁵⁶⁹ Msunduzi Museum Library, Pietermaritzburg: box file ‘Church of the Vow’, document, Anonym.

1843, the property adjacent to the old building, Erf 33 Longmarket Street, no longer belonged to the church.⁵⁷⁰



Figure 99: Johan Christoffel (Stoffel) Boshoff (1811–1889)⁵⁷¹

In July 1855 the Church Council instructed the minister to appeal to the government to return the property. Dr. Faure wrote a letter but received a negative response. He then wrote to the City Council in August 1855 and presented evidence that the property was intended for the erection of a church and that the old building will become a manse. It was decided that the property could be returned to the Church Council but in November 1855 the decision was revoked. Additional evidence was presented by Frederik Coenraad Scheepers (member of the Volksraad in 1840), P.H. van Rooyen, G. Maritz and P.A.R. Otto. Boshoff stated that if required, more evidence would be submitted.⁵⁷²

In the meantime, subscription lists were sent out and loans were agreed upon. In February 1856 the Council decided to erect the new church between the old church and the house of Mr. A. Coqui.⁵⁷³ A tender was advertised for the construction of a new church with 374 seats and the necessary comforts. The tender included the demolition of the old church,⁵⁷⁴ but it was later decided to retain the building.

The new church building was designed by Edmund Tatham and the contractor was John Fleming. In 1857 Fleming reported: “Tendered yesterday for the carpenters work of a

⁵⁷⁰ H.B.Thom, *Die Geloftekerk en ander studies oor die Groot Trek*, p. 27.

⁵⁷¹ L.J Eksteen, *Die Voortrekkerbegraafplaas Pietermaritzburg*, p. 22.

⁵⁷² *Ibid.*, pp. 27-30.

⁵⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp. 34-35.

⁵⁷⁴ Dutch Reformed Church Archive, Pietermaritzburg: box G53/1, File on history of the congregation by Dr. Besselaar, compiled from original minutes, 1926.

proposed new Dutch Church £135” and on the 7th of February: “Our tender has been accepted ...” and on 29 August: “At Hospital 3 days this week, 2 days making Gothic door frame for Dutch Church.”⁵⁷⁵

The building commission used orphanage funds to which the Church Council objected. The building commission accused the Council of objecting too late as building materials had already been purchased and ordered, workers were employed and tenders were advertised (of which the Minister was apparently aware).⁵⁷⁶

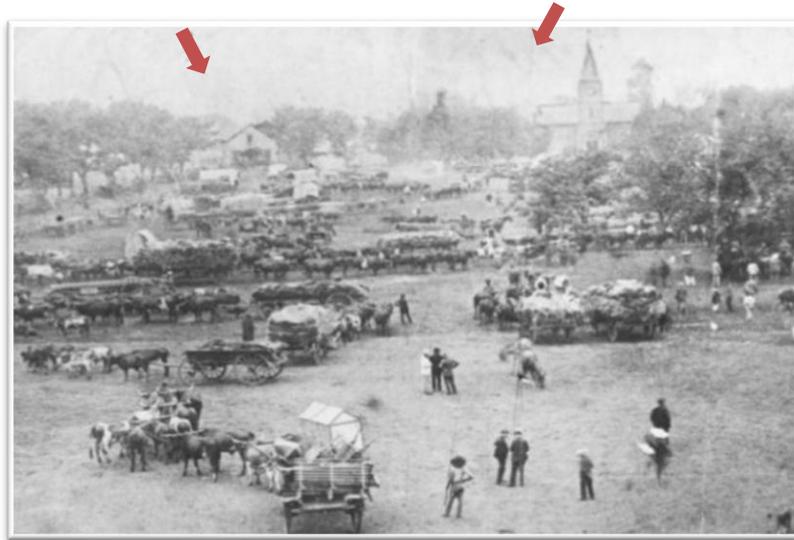


Figure 100: Old church (left), new ‘Tower Church’ (right) 1880’s⁵⁷⁷



Figure 101: ‘Tower Church’ (demolished 1955) depicted on a stained glass window in the Memorial Hall (built on the site where the ‘Tower Church’ once stood)⁵⁷⁸

⁵⁷⁵ Campbell Collections, UKZN, Durban: Manuscripts, Fleming, John/diary extracts, 1850-1891, pp. 97, 103.

⁵⁷⁶ Dutch Reformed Church Archive, Pietermaritzburg: box G53/1, File on history of the congregation by Dr. Besselaar, compiled from original minutes, 1926.

⁵⁷⁷ Msunduzi Museum, Pietermaritzburg, Accession No. 1517.

⁵⁷⁸ Photo: E. Henning, 16/12/2012.

The corner stone for the new church was laid on 5 October 1857. The service on this occasion was conducted by Rev. Lindley because Rev. Faure had already left Pietermaritzburg.⁵⁷⁹ Significant individuals in the community were present at the event. The church service was followed by a choir performance. The Minister gave a speech after which Rev. Campbell of the Scottish Presbyterian Church addressed the congregation and prayed.⁵⁸⁰ Entertainment was provided during the event by the music corps of the 45th Regiment.⁵⁸¹

Construction of the new church continued in 1858. The contractor John Fleming reported on 24 July: "...still at Dutch Church all week, have got most of the roof etc prepared...the walls are not yet level for the roof...". More than a year later, on 8 October 1859, he reports: "At Dutch Church most of week getting up spire..." and on the 15th: "The Dutch are finding fault with the spire ...we have been ordered to make it about 10 feet higher..."⁵⁸² This high spire was later described in 1876 as "...quite a feature in the landscape..."⁵⁸³

4.3 Bidding farewell to the old church (6 April 1861)

Before the inauguration of the new church on Sunday 7 April 1861, the congregation bade farewell to the old church building the previous evening. A final church service was held. Afterwards a report was presented by the building commission. The secretary, elder P. Ferreira, read this report. The chairperson, elder Gert Naudé gave a hearty speech before he handed over the key to the Minister and before another Bible text was read.⁵⁸⁴

The congregation was then reminded that the old and humble church contained many memories – sad ones, serious ones and comforting ones and that many important events had taken place there. The absence of Rev. Lindley, Rev. Döhne and Dr. Faure, who had spent many years there, was sadly felt. A choir sang the farewell song after which the Minister gave

⁵⁷⁹ B. Guest, *Trek and transition: a history of the Msunduzi and Ncome Museums (incorporating the Voortrekker Complex) 1912 – 2012*, p. 23-24.

⁵⁸⁰ Msunduzi Museum Library, Pietermaritzburg: box file 'Church of the Vow', copy from *De Gereformeerde Kerkbode*, 1861, p. 158-159.

⁵⁸¹ Dutch Reformed Church Archive, Pietermaritzburg: box G53/1, File on history of the congregation by Dr. Besselaar, compiled from original minutes, 1926.

⁵⁸² Campbell Collections, UKZN, Durban: Manuscripts, Fleming, John/diary extracts, 1850-1891, pp. 109,118.

⁵⁸³ Lady Barker, *A year's housekeeping in South Africa*, p. 57.

⁵⁸⁴ Msunduzi Museum Library, Pietermaritzburg: box file 'Church of the Vow', copy from *De Gereformeerde Kerkbode*, 1861, p. 158-159.

a speech and handed over the key to the two elders. The choir and congregation sung the last verse standing. There were more people than expected and they were too many for the small space. Some high ranking individuals such as the Governor and Chief Justice Harding were present at the event.⁵⁸⁵

<p>AFSCHIEDSLIED</p> <p>—</p> <p>AAN DE OUDE KERK</p> <p>van</p> <p>Pietermaritzburg</p> <p>OP DEN 6 DEN APRIL, 1861</p> <p>Koor</p> <p>Met een diep gevoelig harte Voor Gods goedheid, voor Gods trouw, Wel verheugd en toch met smarte, Scheiden wij van 't Kerkgebouw. 't Was een nederige Woning Maar toch d' eerst' in dezen Staat, En door U, o Christus Koning, Naar wij hopen, niet versmaad.</p> <p>Welk een tal herinneringen Zweeft voor onze harten niet In dit avond-uur, bij 't zingen Van 't aandoenlijk afscheidslied! Was 't niet hier dat wij te zamen, Hulpeloze zondaarschaar, Naar het woord des vredes kwamen, Week na week en jaar na jaar?</p>	<p>Menig hart werd hier bewogen, Menigeen in stil gebed Vond hier vrede in 's Heeren oogen, Meenge ziel werd hier gered. Menigeen, in vroeger dagen Met ons in dit huis vergaard, Is door ons naar 't graf gedragen, Sluimert nu in 't stof der aard.</p> <p>Koor en gemeente</p> <p>Op de Wijze van Gezang 21</p> <p>Ja Vaarwel, geliefde Tempel, Waar de prediking van 't kruis Voor zoo meenge ziel de drempel Werd van 't hemelsch Vaderhuis! En aan U, barmhartig Heere, Voor Uw goedheid, voor Uw trouw, Zij nog eenmaal dank en eere, Uit het Oude Kerkgebouw.</p>
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Figure 102: Farewell song written by Rev. Huet⁵⁸⁶

A member of the congregation, Anna Canisius, describes one of the Sunday services led by Rev. Huet in the new church. According to her the minister gave congregants a hearty welcome before he preached a solemn sermon. The service was well attended. She also describes the church as 'pretty' and 'large', with one organ accompanying the singing.⁵⁸⁷

Rev. Huet, an ardent poet, also wrote in one of his poems about how tasteful the church was built, but added that the atmosphere inside was chilly – the church and its walls, the prayer

⁵⁸⁵ Msunduzi Museum Library, Pietermaritzburg: box file 'Church of the Vow', copy from *De Gereformeerde Kerkbode*, 1861, p. 158-159.

⁵⁸⁶ Msunduzi Museum Collection, Pietermaritzburg: Curator's entry in old accession register VMT 1-85, no. 144, p. 23; P.W.J Groenewald & T.V. Bresler, *Gedenkboek: Herbevestiging van die Geloofte, Pietermaritzburg Desember 1955*, (Pietermaritzburg, 1955), pp. 22-23).

⁵⁸⁷ A. du Pont, *Herinneringe van Anna Canisius*, p.33.

and organ music and even the minister (referring to himself) and congregation were described as ‘cold’.⁵⁸⁸

After more than 80 years, in 1946, the church had become too small and dilapidated and in 1955 the building was demolished to make way for a new hall which was used for church services until 1962 and remain intact until the present (2014).⁵⁸⁹



Figure 103: A 1930 drawing by Charles Peers depicting the old church building after it became a Museum and prior to the demolition of the ‘Tower Church’⁵⁹⁰

4.4 The old church building reused

After the congregation moved into the ‘Tower Church’ the old church building was at first rented out and later sold. Over the years it was used for a variety of purposes. B. Buchanan, whose uncle assisted the Voortrekkers when they had no minister, recalls that the church was: “...built in fulfilment of the vow made before the battle of Blood River. After the present Dutch Reformed Church was built the Voortrekkers’ Church was sold and declined socially. It was in turn a wagon-maker’s shop, a mineral water factory, a tea room, a blacksmith’s workshop, a chemist’s shop, a school and the government considered using it for the Supreme Court but decided not to do so.”⁵⁹¹ It was also recorded that it was used as a boarding-house.⁵⁹²

⁵⁸⁸ P. Huet, *Afrikaansche gedichten*, p. 83.

⁵⁸⁹ Dutch Reformed Church Archive, Pietermaritzburg: box G53/1, File on history of the congregation by Dr. Besselaar, compiled from original minutes, 1926.

⁵⁹⁰ C.E. Peers, *Natal, a series of pencil sketches*, n.p.

⁵⁹¹ B.I. Buchanan, *Pioneer days in Natal*, p. 18.

⁵⁹² H.A. Chilvers, *The seven lost trails of Africa*, p. 211.

Historic documents confirms that the building was at some stage occupied by a blacksmith and wagonmaker's firm and then became a chemist shop for four to five years, after which it was yet again used by a wagonmaker's firm.⁵⁹³

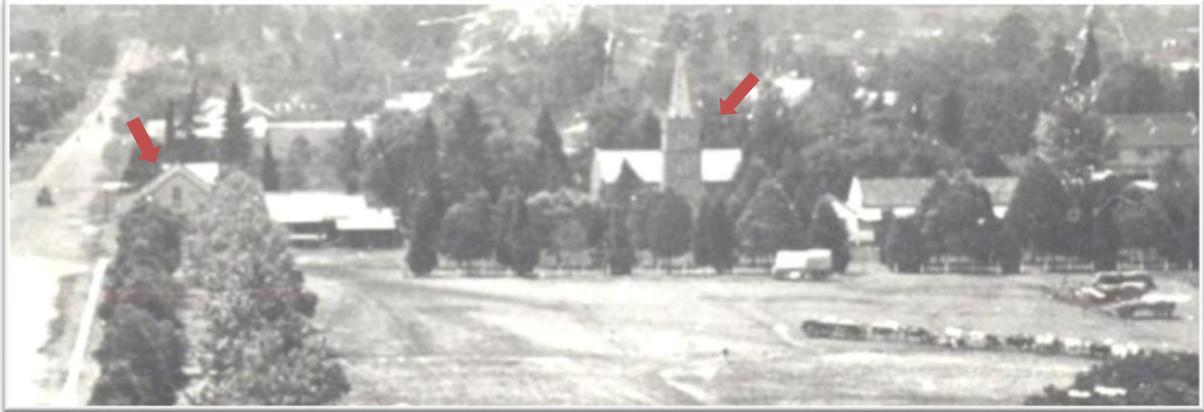


Figure 104: The new 'Tower Church' (right) and old building (left), 1880⁵⁹⁴

4.4.1 The building as a school and bookshop (1861-1862)

In 1861 it was decided to preserve and reuse the old building as a school. Permission was also granted to the Verger, Mr. Mostert, to use the vestry as a bookshop.⁵⁹⁵ However, maintenance such as repairs to the leaking roof had to be done at his own cost for which the Church Council would reimburse him, should he leave within a year.⁵⁹⁶

In 1862 the Church Council decided that the old building could be rented out as a meeting venue for the Legislative Council or as a government school on condition that no dancing or public entertainment was allowed. The next month the church was rented as a government school at £5 per month.⁵⁹⁷

In 1862 M.P.C. Ferreira was tasked to try and rent out the building again.⁵⁹⁸

⁵⁹³ Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository: A81, *Voortrekker Museum*, Correspondence, 1908-1938.

⁵⁹⁴ Msunduzi Museum, Pietermaritzburg, Accession No. C44.

⁵⁹⁵ P.W.J. Groenewald & T.V. Bresler, *Gedenkboek: Herbevestiging van die Geloofte, Pietermaritzburg Desember 1955*, p. 26.

⁵⁹⁶ Dutch Reformed Church Archive, Pietermaritzburg: box G53/1, File on history of the congregation by Dr. Besselaar, compiled from original minutes, 1926.

⁵⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹⁸ P.W.J. Groenewald & T.V. Bresler, *Gedenkboek: Herbevestiging van die Geloofte, Pietermaritzburg Desember 1955*, p. 27.



Figure 105: Copy of a watercolour by Gen. G.H. Gordon, titled “View of Dutch Church and school house”, depicting the ‘Tower Church’ (left) and old building (right)⁵⁹⁹

4.4.2 Sold to Vicar Brayhurst (1863-1865)

During a meeting in March 1863,⁶⁰⁰ the Church Council struggled to decide what to do with the building. They first agreed it could be reused as a school; then decided that it should be rented; then agreed that it should be sold to cover their debts. They were concerned that the building was in such a state of disrepair that a large amount of money would be needed to turn it into a dwelling which could be rented. It was also proposed that it be used as a mental institution, but this option was quickly abandoned. Rev. Huet then suggested that the congregation should also be involved in the issue.⁶⁰¹ In the end, Mr. Ferreira asked to sell the old church (34 Longmarket Street).⁶⁰²

On 17 June 1863 an advertisement appeared in *The Natal Witness*: “sale of original fine old Edifice, The Old Dutch Reformed Church – extensive and of gigantic strength – suited for warehouse, store, schoolroom – might be converted to commodious dwelling house. Will not be sold for Hotel, Canteen, House of Public Entertainment. Clause to be inserted in Deed”.⁶⁰³

On 26 June 1863 it was sold to Vicar Brayhurst on a public auction on condition that the

⁵⁹⁹ Msunduzi Museum, Pietermaritzburg.

⁶⁰⁰ P.W.J. Groenewald & T.V. Bresler, *Gedenkboek: Herbevestiging van die Geloofte, Pietermaritzburg Desember 1955*, p. 27.

⁶⁰¹ H.B.Thom, *Die Gelooftekerk en ander studies oor die Groot Trek*, p. 37.

⁶⁰² Dutch Reformed Church Archive, Pietermaritzburg: Box G53/7.

⁶⁰³ *The Natal Witness*, 1863-06-17.

building would not be used as hotel or canteen of any kind without the permission of the Church Council.⁶⁰⁴

On 3 July 1863 *The Natal Witness* reported: “Old Dutch Church bought by Vicar Brayhurst for £840. Edifice has historical associations.”⁶⁰⁵ However in 1865 Brayhurst was declared insolvent and again the building became the possession of the Church Council. It was then rented to the government as a school at £70 per year.⁶⁰⁶ “The fate of Brayhurst’s Longmarket Street property is not without interest. At a meeting of creditors in March 1865 Turnbill reported that he had let the Dutch ‘Kirk’ [sic] on 34 Longmarket Street to the Government Inspector of Schools.”⁶⁰⁷

4.4.3 A school again (1865-1873)

The building was rented to the government as a school until 1873. It was known as the Maritzburg Government School (later as the ‘Boys Model School’). The school was mostly attended by children under the age of 12 and managed by Rev. C.W. Nisbett, who seemed to have made a bad impression on some children. One of them later wrote: “...our school fell into the grasp of Rev. Canon William Nisbett. A lazy, evil-tempered incompetent, he was sycophant or bully as circumstances allowed. He remained in charge for just over fourteen years, during which time he succeeded in reducing it to such a level of inefficiency that a Superintendent of Education was led to suggest that it might have to be closed. It was under his regime that our school was finally removed from its original home and from 1865 to 1873 was quartered in the old Dutch Reformed Church, that is, in the building which is now the Voortrekker Museum”. After Mr. Richmond had been appointed headmaster, the old church was sold and the school relocated.⁶⁰⁸

⁶⁰⁴ Dutch Reformed Church Archive, Pietermaritzburg: box G53/1, File on history of the congregation by Dr. Besselaar, compiled from original minutes, 1926.

⁶⁰⁵ *The Natal Witness*, 1863-07-03.

⁶⁰⁶ Dutch Reformed Church Archive, Pietermaritzburg: box G53/1, File on history of the congregation by Dr. Besselaar, compiled from original minutes, 1926.

⁶⁰⁷ Email from B. & S. Spencer to E. Olivier, 2011-06-02; quoted by author from S. O’Byrne Spencer, *British settlers in Natal 1824-1857: a biographical register*, vol 3.

⁶⁰⁸ Anonym, *Boys Model School Pietermaritzburg centenary magazine 1849-1949*, pp. 18, 23, 29.



Figure 106: Rev. C. W. Nisbett⁶⁰⁹

John Daniel Kestell, born in Pietermaritzburg (1854), writes in *Die Volksblad* of 27 July 1938 that he attended the government school in the old church building when Rev. Nisbett was in charge. Nisbett was chaplain of the English regiments stationed at Fort Napier, on the outskirts of Pietermaritzburg. Nisbett travelled on horseback from the fort to the school every day, and a Zulu man used to lead his horse.⁶¹⁰

Kestell also remembers his strict teachers Ingraham, Hepworth and Judd. Classes were in English. His parents had to buy ‘copy books’ in which he had to write in ‘large hand’ progressing to ‘round hand’ and lastly ‘small hand’. Grammar consisted of definitions in “Lindley Murrays’ English Grammar”. They also did accounting. School hours were from 9:00 to 12:00 in the morning and then from 14:00 to 16:00 in the afternoon. After school the principal would stand at the door. When girls left they had to curtsy for him. Boys would follow, leaving with a nod of the head.⁶¹¹ Kestell carved his name on a wall of the church during his school days⁶¹² but the inscription did not survive.

Frank Johnston who was born in Pietermaritzburg in 1857, also attended school in the building at the time when Nisbett was principal. He refers to Nisbett as ‘old Nizzy’, a portly gentleman approximately 60 years of age. According to Nisbett, the textbook for all pupils was a sjambok. The school had an equal amount of boys and girls, all between 5 and 18 years old. Frank describes one of his teachers, Paddy Kelly, who was bad with foreign languages

⁶⁰⁹ Msunduzi Museum, Pietermaritzburg.

⁶¹⁰ P.J. Nienaber, *Dr. J.D. Kestell: Vader van die Reddingsdaad*, p. 18.

⁶¹¹ J. Nienaber, *Dr. J.D. Kestell: Vader van die Reddingsdaad*, p. 18.

⁶¹² R. Gordon, *The place of the elephant*, p. 6.

and was more concerned with teaching children the proper way to hold a pen. He used a ruler to rap them on the knuckles. According to Frank there was no Latin, Greek, French, Geometry, or Algebra classes.⁶¹³

In 1864 the school had 130 pupils.⁶¹⁴ The next year there were only 93. They were taught by D. Calder, J.R. Judd and C. Leask.⁶¹⁵ In 1870 the teachers were H. Shearman, J. Hepworth and Miss Leask.⁶¹⁶

According to Mrs. Louisa Carter who attended the school from 1865-1872: “My earliest recollection is that I was a pupil when the school was in the old Voortrekker Church about 1865. Mr. Nisbett was the headmaster and Miss Leask taught the girls. We sat on benches and used slates to write on.”⁶¹⁷

Rev. Nisbett put great emphasis on discipline and ambitiously embarked on a curriculum which included some classics, geography, algebra and geometry. ‘Nizzy’ and his little red sjambok reigned for just over 14 years (1859-1873).⁶¹⁸ By the time Nisbett left, school attendance was down to 73. “...William Nisbett whose disgraceful and incompetent management had reduced it to a condition of such chaos and disrepute that it was a school only in name... It was then attended by just over seventy nondescript children, slovenly and neglected in appearance, who knew little and cared less.”⁶¹⁹

4.4.4 Sold to D. Whitelaw (1873-1891)

In 1873 the building was sold to David Whitelaw⁶²⁰ after he wrote a letter to the Church Council offering £700 for the church and land for his workshop.⁶²¹ The deed of transfer (dated 11 July 1873)

⁶¹³ Anonym, *A South African Boy: Schoolboy life in Natal*, pp. 38-40.

⁶¹⁴ P. Davis & Sons, *Natal Almanac and directory 1864*, p. 107.

⁶¹⁵ P. Davis & Sons, *Natal Almanac and directory 1865*, p. 126.

⁶¹⁶ P. Davis & Sons, *Natal Almanac and directory 1870*, p. 196.

⁶¹⁷ Anonym, *Boys Model School Pietermaritzburg centenary magazine 1849-1949*, p. 35.

⁶¹⁸ R. Gordon, *The place of the elephant*, p. 38.

⁶¹⁹ Anonym, *Boys Model School Pietermaritzburg centenary magazine 1849-1949*, pp. 18, 29.

⁶²⁰ H.B.Thom, *Die Geloftekerk en ander studies oor die Groot Trek*, p. 38.

⁶²¹ Dutch Reformed Church Archive, Pietermaritzburg: Box G53/7.

states that the building was not to be used as a ‘public house’ (pub).⁶²² In his book *The story of an African City* (1898), J.F. Ingram list Whitelaw as “wagon and carriage builders...”⁶²³ The company was established in 1861.⁶²⁴



Figure 107: Advertisement of David Whitelaw⁶²⁵

It seems that Whitelaw occupied the building from 1873-1878. His advertisements and listings in *The Natal Almanac* indicate that his business was located at 34 Longmarket Street until 1879 when his business is listed as being in Commercial Road.⁶²⁶



Figure 108: The building was also used as a wagon factory⁶²⁷

⁶²² Msunduzi Museum Library, Pietermaritzburg: box file ‘Church of the Vow’, copy of transfer deeds, Natal Deeds No. 951, p. 2.

⁶²³ J.F. Ingram *The story of an African city*, p. xv.

⁶²⁴ J. Malan, *Rytuië van weeleer*, p. 72.

⁶²⁵ P. Davis & Sons, *Natal almanac & directory 1874*, p.29

⁶²⁶ P. Davis & Sons, *Natal Almanac and directory*, various pages from volumes 1874 – 1878 consulted.

⁶²⁷ Photo: www.voortrekkermuseum.co.za.

Whitelaw may have rented the building or sections of the building from around 1879. In his book *Portrait of a City*, A.F. Hattersley indicates that the building was used as a wagon-builder's shop and as a commissariat office during the Zulu War (1879).⁶²⁸ According to Geoffrey Chew, one of his ancestors, Andrew Dand (born 1856), established a chemist under the names George Gordon Sutherland MacPherson in the building during the 1880s.⁶²⁹

4.4.5 Sold to W.H. Buchanan (1891-1910)

In 1891 Whitelaw sold the building to W.H. Buchanan.⁶³⁰



Figure 109: W.H. Buchanan⁶³¹

William Herbert Buchanan (1848-1921) was born in Samoa, South Pacific. He came with his family to South Africa in 1850. He was educated in Pietermaritzburg and later became an agent for the Natal Navigation Collieries. He was actively involved in sports⁶³² and served as Town Councillor in 1896-1897.⁶³³

Under Buchanan's ownership, the building was extended and used as a mineral water factory, chemist and restaurant.⁶³⁴

⁶²⁸ A.F. Hattersley, *Portrait of a City*, p. 11.

⁶²⁹ Email from R. Coyne to E. Olivier, 2012-02-07.

⁶³⁰ P.J.J. Prinsloo, 'Die bewaringsaksie wat die Geloftekerrie in Pietermaritzburg van verwaarlosing gered het', in J.F.T Bartmann, *South African Journal of Cultural History* 9 (1) 1995, p. 3.

⁶³¹ *The Natal Witness*, 1908-06-22, p.3

⁶³² K. Donaldson (ed.), *South African who's who 1913*, p. 56.

⁶³³ S. Spencer, *British Settlers in Natal 1824-1857: a biographical register*, Vol 3, p. 82.

⁶³⁴ Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository, A81, *Voortrekker Museum*, Correspondence 1908-1938.



Figure 110: The building as a Dining and Refreshment room⁶³⁵

4.4.6 The building as a Soda-Water Factory (1896)

In the book *The colony of Natal* published in 1896, J.F. Ingram reports: “At the foot of the Market Square stands an old building, now used as a soda-water factory. This was the first church and one of the first houses erected in Pietermaritzburg...The new Dutch Reformed Church has been erected on a site close by the old building, which is now no longer the property of the religious body. Previous to its alienation, a provision was made in the title deed to prevent this historic structure ever being desecrated by the sale of alcoholic liquors.”⁶³⁶

When the pavement was recently constructed on the present site of the Msunduzi Museum, glass bottles and glass sherds were exposed in the garden next to the Church of the Vow which relates to the companies “Barnetts and Foster Sole Agents London” and “Central Aerated Waterworks PM Burg”. Barnetts and Foster were mineral water engineers, manufacturing chemists and providers for the aerated water, wine and beer trades in London during the 19th and early 20th century.⁶³⁷

⁶³⁵ P.W.J Groenewald & T.V Bresler, *Herbevestiging van die Geloofte Gedenkboek*, p. 26

⁶³⁶ J.F. Ingram, *The colony of Natal*, p. 174.

⁶³⁷ British Library, Barnett and Foster, <<http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/evanion/Record.aspx?EvanID=024-000002512&ImageIndex=0>>, Updated: s.a, Accessed: 2013-09-23.



Figure 111: Bottles found on the present site of the Msunduzi Museum⁶³⁸

4.4.7 Pharmacy and Blacksmith's shop (1897)

In 1898 in his book *The story of an African city*, J.F Ingram writes: “On the completion of the present church, which stands beside it, the original building became the manse, but later on was leased under special restrictions as a place of business. In the rapid advance of the rest of the City it was overlooked and fell into disrepair, until Mr. Thomas Hannah took it over for the purpose of establishing himself in it as a chemist and druggist. With indomitable energy he speedily transformed the historic, but nevertheless dilapidated, structure into a first-class pharmaceutical establishment. Doctors’ consulting rooms and work-rooms for the preparation of several valued proprietary medicines, such as Hannah’s sarsaparilla, headache powders, antibilious pills, croup syrup, etc., are added. Notwithstanding his apparent youth, Mr. Hannah has been connected with the dispensing and family chemist business for over twelve years. In every respect he is a worthy occupant of the celebrated structure he now holds”.⁶³⁹

A prospective donor to the Voortrekker Museum indicated in 1974, that she had a photo of her ancestor, John Banks and his wife Annie Packer. According to the donor the couple’s firstborn child, Ronald John Banks, was born in the Church of the Vow.⁶⁴⁰ It is possible that the event did indeed occur in the church because the date of birth was given as 1898. During this time the building was used as a pharmacy and contained doctors’ consulting rooms as described above.⁶⁴¹

⁶³⁸ Msunduzi Museum, Pietermaritzburg

⁶³⁹ J.F Ingram, *The story of an African city*, pp. 182-183.

⁶⁴⁰ Msunduzi Museum Archive, Pietermaritzburg: Curator’s booklet *Voornemende skenkings 1971-1981*.

⁶⁴¹ J.F Ingram, *The story of an African city*, p. 182-183.

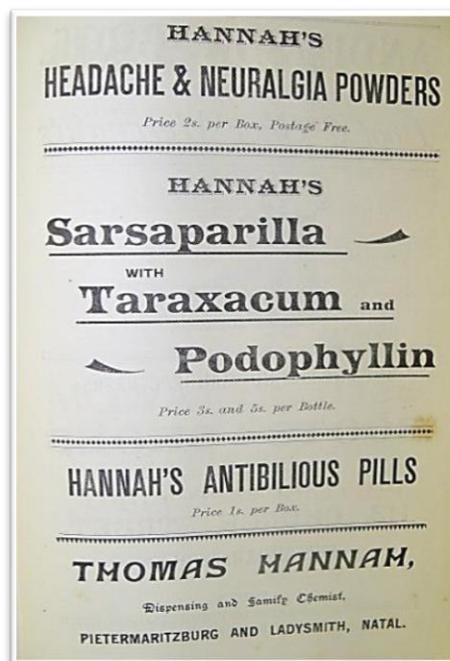


Figure 112: Advertisement for medicines sold by Thomas Hannah⁶⁴²

Hannah and Carolus Lourens van Breda rented the property from around 1897. They were selling a variety of medicines such as Hannah's hair restorer, compound crocodile oil for aches and pains, fever powders and nerve tonic. An insurance policy taken out during his lease states that the building, made of bricks with an iron and tile roof, situated at 34 Longmarket street, and which was the property of W.H. Buchanan, was insured as a chemist shop with hazardous materials. The business turned bankrupt and from December 1899 it was placed under the administration of R.J. Marshall. Hannah was later charged with perjury and fraudulent insolvency and he was arrested.⁶⁴³

J.W. Shepstone (brother of Theophilus Shepstone) arrived in Pietermaritzburg in 1846 and also remembers the Dutch church being converted into a chemist shop.⁶⁴⁴

Buchanan's property is described in 1906: "one part of his property has a history. On it are the shops of a chemist and a black-smith – a curious juxtaposition of trades..." "...the original building was turned into business premises and eventually passed into Buchanan's

⁶⁴² P. Davis & Sons, *Natal almanac & directory 1898*, p. 37.

⁶⁴³ Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository: file vol. 1/255, ref. 188, part 1.

⁶⁴⁴ A.F. Hattersley, *More annals of Natal*, p. 130.

hands.”⁶⁴⁵ E.G. Jansen (1881-1959), a prominent member of the congregation, also remembers the building used as a pharmacy and as part of a blacksmith’s shop before it was taken over by the Church Council again in 1909. Jansen observed how this historical building changed over the years, how it was neglected and left to deteriorate.⁶⁴⁶



Figure 113: Pieces of metal that were found on the present Msunduzi Museum site⁶⁴⁷



Figure 114: Advertisement of R.N Miller, who used the site for many years⁶⁴⁸

4.4.8 Sunday School (1906)

In 1906, on the recommendation of E.G. Jansen, the building was rented for an annual Sunday school end year function after persistent summer rains forced them to have the event indoors. This indicates that the building was no longer in possession of the church.⁶⁴⁹

⁶⁴⁵ Anonym, *Twentieth century impressions of Natal*, p. 268.

⁶⁴⁶ DBNL, ‘Ernst George Jansen’,

<http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/_jaa003196201_01/_jaa003196201_01_0030.php>, Updated: 2005, Accessed: 2013-09-23.

⁶⁴⁷ Msunduzi Museum, Pietermaritzburg.

⁶⁴⁸ Anoniem, *De Kondsapper* 3(11), Jan. 1912.

⁶⁴⁹ B. Guest, *Trek and transition: a history of the Msunduzi and Ncome Museums (incorporating the Voortrekker Complex) 1912 – 2012*, p. 27.

4.4.9 A wool-shed (1908)

According to Buchanan, whose uncle assisted the Voortrekkers when they had no minister, the old church building "...had become a wool shed in 1908 when the Council of the Dutch Reformed Church decided to convert it into the Voortrekkers' Museum..."⁶⁵⁰

4.5 Becoming a Museum

One of the more appropriate uses for the church was to change it into a museum with exhibitions about the life and times of the Voortrekkers. The building was purchased by the Church Council in 1909, saving it from demolition. After being renovated, it was officially opened as a museum in 1912. An entrance porch was added later.

4.5.1 Reclaiming the building (1909-1910)

In 1908 a committee was formed by the Dutch Reformed Church Council to negotiate getting the building back. The committee included G.M Pellissier, J.M.N.A. Hershensohn, E.G. Jansen and Mrs. F.D. de Beer.⁶⁵¹

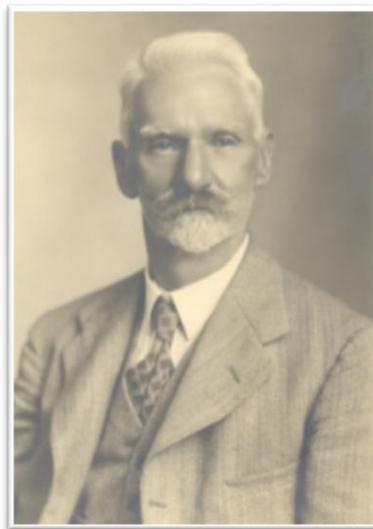


Figure 115: J.M.N.A. Hershensohn⁶⁵²

⁶⁵⁰ B.I. Buchanan, *Pioneer days in Natal*, p. 18.

⁶⁵¹ B. Guest, *Trek and transition: a history of the Msunduzi and Ncome Museums (incorporating the Voortrekker Complex) 1912 – 2012*, p. 27.

⁶⁵² Msunduzi Museum, Pietermaritzburg, Accession No. 2764.

John Matthew Nicholas Alexander Hershensohn (1867-1954) was a teacher, journalist, co-editor of *De Natalsche Afrikaner* and Provincial Secretary for Natal from 1918-1927.⁶⁵³



Figure 116: G.M. Pellissier⁶⁵⁴

G.M. Pellissier (1881-1954) was appointed minister of the Dutch Reformed Church in Pietermaritzburg in 1907.⁶⁵⁵

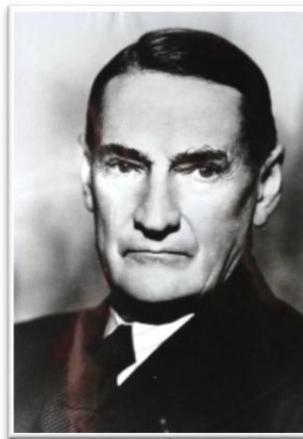


Figure 117: E.G. Jansen⁶⁵⁶

Dr. Ernst George Jansen (1881-1959) practised as an attorney in Pietermaritzburg from 1906. He served as deacon, organist and Sunday school teacher in the Dutch Reformed 'Tower Church'. In his subsequent career he founded various cultural organizations, was a Member of

⁶⁵³ L.J. Eksteen, *Die Voortrekkerbegraafplaas Pietermaritzburg*, p. 29.

⁶⁵⁴ S.A. Maeder en C. Zinn (eds.), *Ons kerk album van Hollandsche kerken en leeraren*, p. 260.

⁶⁵⁵ B. Guest, *Trek and transition: a history of the Msunduzi and Ncome Museums (incorporating the Voortrekker Complex) 1912 – 2012*, p. 28.

⁶⁵⁶ Msunduzi Museum, Pietermaritzburg, Accession No. C48.

Parliament, Speaker of the House of Assembly and Minister of Native Affairs and Irrigation before becoming the Governor-General of South Africa.⁶⁵⁷



Figure 118: Mrs. F.D. de Beer⁶⁵⁸

Mrs. F.D de Beer, wife of Rev. E.Z de Beer (who preached in the ‘Tower Church’), was instrumental in the raising of funds towards purchasing the building.⁶⁵⁹

In 1909 a committee was formed to collect funds. The list of committee members included T.C. Wolhuter, C.J.A. Scheepers, H.J. Martins, J.N. van der Westhuizen, G.M. Pellissier, J.M.N.A. Hersensohnn, E.G. Jansen, J.F. Tredoux, B.I. Vorster and W.J. Botes.⁶⁶⁰ In 1910 J.P. Odendaal and J.F. Maritz were added to the committee.⁶⁶¹



Figure 119: J.F. Tredoux (elder in the Dutch Reformed Church) and his wife⁶⁶²

⁶⁵⁷ D.J. Potgieter (Chief ed.), *Standard encyclopedia of Southern Africa* Vol. 6, p. 184; DBNL, ‘Ernst George Jansen’, <http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/_jaa003196201_01/_jaa003196201_01_0030.php>, Updated: 2005, Accessed: 2013-09-23.

⁶⁵⁸ Msunduzi Museum, Pietermaritzburg, Accession No. 1397.

⁶⁵⁹ B.J. Leverton, ‘The Voortrekker Museum’, in V.C Wood (ed.) *Lantern 10* (3), March 1961, p. 261.

⁶⁶⁰ B. Guest, *Trek and transition: a history of the Msunduzi and Ncome Museums (incorporating the Voortrekker Complex) 1912 – 2012*, p. 29.

⁶⁶¹ Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository, A81, *Voortrekker Museum*, Correspondence 1908-1938.

Money for purchasing the building arrived from all over the country, even from the Netherlands.⁶⁶³

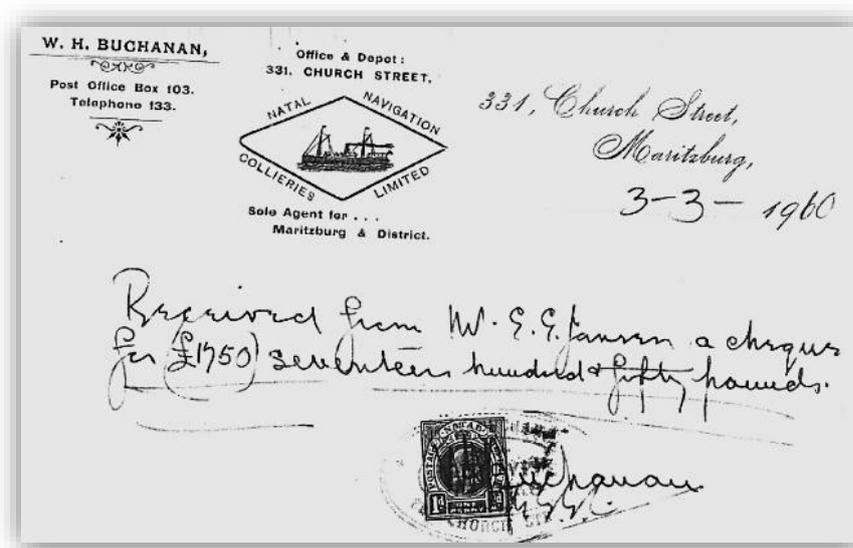


Figure 120: Receipt for the purchase of the building⁶⁶⁴

In February 1910 the building was purchased from William Herbert Buchanan⁶⁶⁵ who, as part of his contribution, allowed the committee to buy the building for less than its rated value.⁶⁶⁶ In a letter addressed to the *Volk van Zuid-Afrika* (the people or nation of South Africa, most probably mainly addressing the Afrikaner nation) from G.M. Pellissier, J.M. Hershensohn and E.G. Jansen (published in 1910), readers were informed that negotiations regarding the purchasing of the church was finalised.⁶⁶⁷ This happened in the same year South Africa became a Union and the Afrikaners were actively promoting the protection of their language and culture.⁶⁶⁸

⁶⁶² Msunduzi Museum, Pietermaritzburg, Accession No. E59. See also L.J. Eksteen, *Die Voortrekkerbegraafplaas Pietermaritzburg*, p. 33.

⁶⁶³ P.W.J. Groenewald & T.V. Bresler, *Gedenboek: Herbevestiging van die Geloofte, Pietermaritzburg Desember 1955*, p. 30.

⁶⁶⁴ Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository, A81.

⁶⁶⁵ P.W.J. Groenewald & T.V. Bresler, *Gedenboek: Herbevestiging van die Geloofte, Pietermaritzburg Desember 1955*, p. 30.

⁶⁶⁶ B.I. Buchanan, *Pioneer days in Natal*, p. 18.

⁶⁶⁷ Msunduzi Museum Library, Pietermaritzburg: box 'Church of the Vow', pamphlet: Jansen, E.G., *et.al. Het Voortrekkerskerkje te Pietermaritzburg*. 1910.

⁶⁶⁸ C.M.O. Rodéhn, *Lost in transformation : a critical study of two South African museums*, D.Phil. thesis, University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2008, pp. 92-93.



Figure 121: Photograph taken by T. Dickinson of the building around 1910, shortly before it was purchased back⁶⁶⁹

The letter also mentions that the interest in the building saved it from being demolished for the construction of a roller-skating rink.⁶⁷⁰

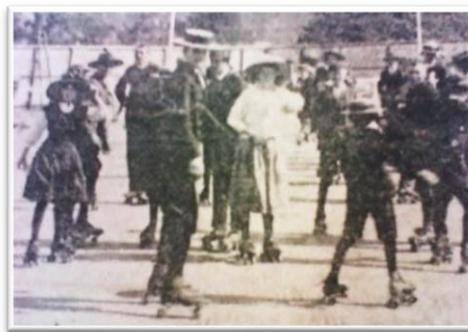


Figure 122: Roller-skating on the Imperial Skating Rink, Pietermaritzburg⁶⁷¹

There was not enough money to repair the building as a monument to the Voortrekkers and readers were asked to contribute money or by donating objects for the proposed museum.⁶⁷² The committee also appealed to the public for information about the original building. G.H. Steenkamp sent important details about the church, conveyed to him by his father. In response to a letter from the committee, Schalk Burger sent a drawing of what the gables of the church looked like according to ‘Outa’ Flink, who assisted with the interior when the church was constructed.⁶⁷³

⁶⁶⁹ Msunduzi Museum, Pietermaritzburg, Accession No. 2596.

⁶⁷⁰ Msunduzi Museum Library, Pietermaritzburg: box ‘Church of the Vow’, pamphlet: Jansen, E.G., *et.al. Het Voortrekkerskerkje te Pietermaritzburg*. 1910.

⁶⁷¹ *The Natal Witness*, 1909-08-28.

⁶⁷² Msunduzi Museum Library, Pietermaritzburg: box ‘Church of the Vow’, pamphlet: Jansen, E.G., *et.al. Het Voortrekkerskerkje te Pietermaritzburg*. 1910.

⁶⁷³ Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository, A81, *Voortrekker Museum*, Correspondence 1908-1938, Letter from Genl. Schalk Burger to Church Council. 1910-10-14.

Old Papers
Van die Kerk
Van die Voortrekkers

INTEKENLIJST

MET HET AANKOPEN VAN DE
Voortrekkers Kerk, te Maritzburg, Natal.

NAAM	WOONPLAATS EN POST ADRES	BEDRAG
<i>Recapitulatie.</i>		
<i>Collecte Lyst N^o 1</i>	1	1. 3. 6.
•	2	2. 15. 3.
•	3	8. 16. 3
•	4	1. 17. 9
•	5	2. 1. 0
•	6	• 6 6
•	7	• 8. •
•	8	1. 15. 6
•	9	• 16. •
•	10	2. 3. 9
•	11	1. 7. •
•	12	1. 17. •
•	13	1. 15. 6
•	14	1. 15. 6
•	15	1. 17. 6
•	16	1. 4. •
•	17	4. 0. 0
	<i>Totaal</i>	<i>£ 36. 0. 0</i>

Figure 123: Copy of a subscription list of funds collected for purchasing of the building⁶⁷⁴

From March 1910 the Dutch Reformed Church congregation rented the building for six months to W.G. Perry,⁶⁷⁵ deacon in the church.⁶⁷⁶ Subsequently the building was rented to P.J. Welman.⁶⁷⁷

An article in *The Natal Witness* in 1910 stated the objectives of the committee: to restore the building as far as possible to its original condition, to erect a monument of Piet Retief and other Voortrekker leaders, to install plaques with the names of all the Voortrekkers inside the building, and to use the restored building as a museum for objects associated with the Voortrekkers. Some items have already been donated towards the proposed museum and many others were promised.⁶⁷⁸

⁶⁷⁴ Msunduzi Museum, Pietermaritzburg.

⁶⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷⁶ Dutch Reformed Church Archive, Pietermaritzburg: minute book, *Notuleboek 1902-1926*, p. 95.

⁶⁷⁷ B. Guest, *Trek and transition: a history of the Msunduzi and Ncome Museums (incorporating the Voortrekker Complex) 1912 – 2012*, p. 31.

⁶⁷⁸ Msunduzi Museum Library, Pietermaritzburg: box File ‘Church of the Vow’, Research document, Anonym, *The Church of the Vow*, p. 5.

In November 1910 a 'Grand Bazaar' was held and the administrator of Natal, Charles Smythe, appealed for money and the donation of objects. Mrs Hendrina Joubert, the wife of the late Commandant-General Piet Joubert, was present at the occasion to assist.⁶⁷⁹ Some prominent Natal politicians also pledged their support.⁶⁸⁰



Figure 124: Mrs. H.S.J. Joubert⁶⁸¹

Lady Bale, wife of Sir Henry Bale, the then Chief Justice of Natal, led a committee of ladies (Mrs Muller, Van der Westhuizen, Adendorff, Scheepers, Maritz and Pellissier) which helped to collect the necessary funds for repairing the building.⁶⁸²

An appeal for subscriptions was distributed to all Dutch Reformed Churches in Natal. It was also published in various Dutch and Afrikaans newspapers distributed countrywide. Afrikaner organizations were also asked to assist. A similar request was published in English newspapers in Natal. The editor of *The Natal Witness* offered to publish articles with photographs.⁶⁸³

⁶⁷⁹ Msunduzi Museum Library, Pietermaritzburg: box File 'Church of the Vow', Research document, Anonym, *The Church of the Vow*, p. 5.

⁶⁸⁰ B. Guest, *Trek and transition: a history of the Msunduzi and Ncome Museums (incorporating the Voortrekker Complex) 1912 – 2012*, p. 29.

⁶⁸¹ E. Stockenstrom, *Die Afrikaanse vrou*, p. 121.

⁶⁸² B. Guest, *Trek and transition: a history of the Msunduzi and Ncome Museums (incorporating the Voortrekker Complex) 1912 – 2012*, p. 29.

⁶⁸³ B. Guest, *Trek and transition: a history of the Msunduzi and Ncome Museums (incorporating the Voortrekker Complex) 1912 – 2012*, p. 29.

Donations were made from all over South Africa, other countries and areas such as East Africa, Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and Holland. Lord Selborne, British High Commissioner at the time, contributed, as did M.T. Steyn, former president of the Orange Free State.⁶⁸⁴ John William Bews (1884-1938), an international plant ecologist and later principal of Natal University College, counted amongst the many prominent non-Afrikaners who contributed towards the renovation and conversion of the building into a museum.⁶⁸⁵



Figure 125: Prof. J.W. Bews⁶⁸⁶

Not all South Africans supported the idea. J.M. Rabie, of Bloemfontein, raised his concerns with regards to the use of the building and wanted to know what prevented the building from being sold again in future. In his opinion it would cost too much to establish a museum and to maintain it, and since the congregation did not need it, the building should rather be demolished, become a park, and a monument must be erected in honour of the Voortrekkers.⁶⁸⁷

4.5.2 Renovations (1910-1911)

At the end of 1910 Thomas Chaplin was contracted to, inter alia, remove partitions and repair the floor of the building.⁶⁸⁸ In 1911 instructions were issued to commence with full restoration.⁶⁸⁹

⁶⁸⁴ B. Guest, *Trek and transition: a history of the Msunduzi and Ncome Museums (incorporating the Voortrekker Complex) 1912 – 2012*, p. 29.

⁶⁸⁵ G.W Gale, *John William Bews*, p. 39-40.

⁶⁸⁶ G.W Gale, *John William Bews*, opposite p. 39.

⁶⁸⁷ B. Guest, *Trek and transition: a history of the Msunduzi and Ncome Museums (incorporating the Voortrekker Complex) 1912 – 2012*, p. 29.

⁶⁸⁸ Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository, A81, *Voortrekker Museum*, Correspondence 1908-1938.

In June, John Collingwood Tully (1855-1929) was asked to draft plans for tenders. Tully, who was born in England, had a distinguished career. In 1881 he was awarded a bronze medal for architectural design at the Plymouth Fine Art Exhibition in 1881, and in 1882 he was elected associate of The Royal Institute of British Architects. He came to South Africa in 1889.⁶⁹⁰ Tully designed a number of noteworthy buildings in Pietermaritzburg such as the house in 28 Coronation Road, Scottsville, the old main building of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, and the old Victoria Club.⁶⁹¹



Figure 126: John Collingwood Tully⁶⁹²

Specifications were drawn up by Tully for the planned changes to the building. The extensive list serves as an indication how extensive the renovations that was needed, were. It included the following:⁶⁹³

- a. To install a 4 inch cement concrete floor base with teak flooring boards
- b. To remove ceiling boards, replace defective beams
- c. Provide and fix teak window frames
- d. Allow for teak venetian shutters for windows
- e. Provide and fix teak door frames and teak door

⁶⁸⁹ Msunduzi Museum Library, Pietermaritzburg: box file 'Church of the Vow', Research document, Anonym *The Church of the Vow*, p. 5.

⁶⁹⁰ K. Donaldson (ed.), *South African who's who 1910*, p. 484.

⁶⁹¹ Msunduzi Museum Library, Pietermaritzburg: Filing cabinet 'Voortrekker/Zulu', B4004/11, L.J. Eksteen, Unpublished manuscript: *Die Geloftekerk as Volksimbool oor 100 jaar 1912-2012* (no page numbers).

⁶⁹² L.J. Eksteen, Unpublished manuscript: *Die Geloftekerk as Volksimbool oor 100 jaar 1912-2012*, p. 3.

⁶⁹³ Msunduzi Museum Library, Pietermaritzburg: file 069 VOOR, B1587/04, BRN 852813: J.A Labuschagné, 'Pietermaritzburg and preservation: a cultural geographic appreciation Vol 2, p 61.

- f. Strip plaster in and outside, replaster exterior with cement plaster and give 3 coats lime wash
- g. Build Dutch gables in brickwork finished in scrolled and moulded plaster, lime washed
- h. Examine roof timbers, make good the timbers and tiles
- i. Mount new cast iron gutters and down pipes
- j. To install a tile lean-to roof
- k. Demolish old buildings
- l. Allow for electric lighting

In May 1911 the following specifications were drafted (summarised):⁶⁹⁴

- a. The contractor must employ white skilled labour
- b. Buildings at the side and end of the church must be demolished
- c. Floors at the back to be lifted and existing ceilings to be removed
- d. Old materials such as hard burnt bricks to be used and timber for constructing roof at the back
- e. The tiles to be used must be old tiles to match the existing tiles on existing roof
- f. Remove all broken tiles and make good with sound tiles
- g. Teak to be of best Moulmein or Burmese
- h. Ceiling at the back (the curator's rooms) and church to be yellow wood
- i. Floors and skirtings to be done in teak
- j. Windows at the back will be the old windows and frames in the Church, scrape off all paint and make good broken panes of glass
- k. Form moulded cement cap to chimney
- l. Old door frames that are painted, will have the paint removed
- m. Beams and ceilings in church to be thoroughly cleaned of all paint and stains

Later some amendments were made to the specifications to save expenses, This included (summarised):⁶⁹⁵

- a. Doors and windows at the back (curator's rooms) and 'stoep' wood work to be painted green, ceilings painted white and walls papered with plain distemper paper

⁶⁹⁴ Msunduzi Museum Library, Pietermaritzburg: file 069 VOOR, B1587/04, BRN 852813: J.A Labuschagné, 'Pietermaritzburg and preservation: a cultural geographic appreciation Vol 2, p 61.

⁶⁹⁵ Msunduzi Museum Library, Pietermaritzburg: File 069 VOOR, B1587/04, BRN 852813: J.A Labuschagné, 'Pietermaritzburg and preservation: a cultural geographic appreciation Vol 2', p 61.

- b. Concrete, teak flooring and skirting will be omitted
- c. New floors and skirtings of yellow wood to be used

Those who responded quoted large amounts and new specifications had to be prepared, which were finally accepted.⁶⁹⁶ The contractors Cromwell and Carter supplied the material⁶⁹⁷ and the renovations could begin.

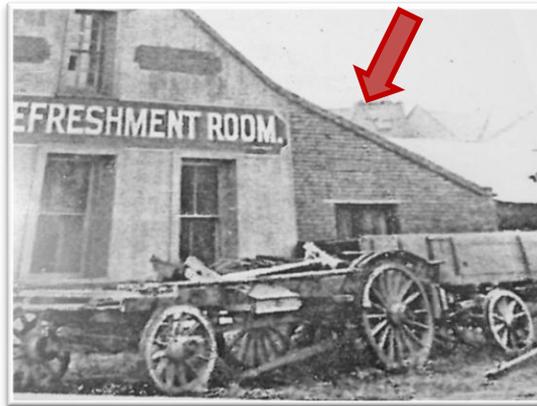


Figure 127: Extensions were demolished⁶⁹⁸

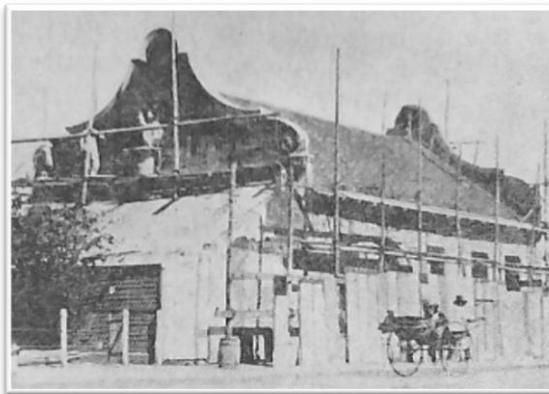


Figure 128: Restoration in progress, 1911⁶⁹⁹

In Figure 128 and 129 of the building, the replacement of the doors on the side facing Church Street with windows, and the replacement of the door and windows in the front with a larger door, can be seen.

⁶⁹⁶ Anoniem, 'Het Voortrekkers Kerkje' in *De Kondsapper* (4), 1911-06-21, pp. 156-157.

⁶⁹⁷ *The Natal Witness*, 1911-11-17, p. 1; Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository, A81, *Voortrekker Museum*, Correspondence 1908-1938.

⁶⁹⁸ P.W.J Groenewald & T.V Bresler, *Herbevestiging van die Geloofte Gedenkboek*, p. 26

⁶⁹⁹ *The Natal Witness*, 1911-08-22, p. 1.



Figure 129: Photograph of the building around 1910⁷⁰⁰



Figure 130: Sketch by Erich Mayer which appeared in *De Volkstem* (13 December 1912), before the official opening on 16 December 1912⁷⁰¹

Records indicate that old joists and plates were removed and replaced with new ones, sleeper walls were rebuilt and some work was done to the back “*stoep*” (veranda).⁷⁰² Minutes of a committee meeting held on 15 September 1911 reveal that Tully was asked to install electricity using the current candle holders. The ladies’ committee was tasked to find the necessary funds.⁷⁰³ In October 1911 work on the building was completed.⁷⁰⁴ *The Natal Witness* reported on the completion of the renovations to the building in November and added a photograph (Figure 131).

⁷⁰⁰ Msunduzi Museum, Pietermaritzburg, Accession No. 2596.

⁷⁰¹ L.J. Eksteen, Unpublished manuscript: *Die Geloftekerk as Volksimbool oor 100 jaar 1912-2012* (s.l, 2011), p. 13.

⁷⁰² Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository, A81, *Voortrekker Museum*, Correspondence 1908-1938.

⁷⁰³ *Ibid.*, files on museum Vol 1-3, Council minutes 1909-1979.

⁷⁰⁴ Msunduzi Museum Library, box file ‘Church of the Vow’, Research document, Anonym *The Church of the Vow*, p. 6.

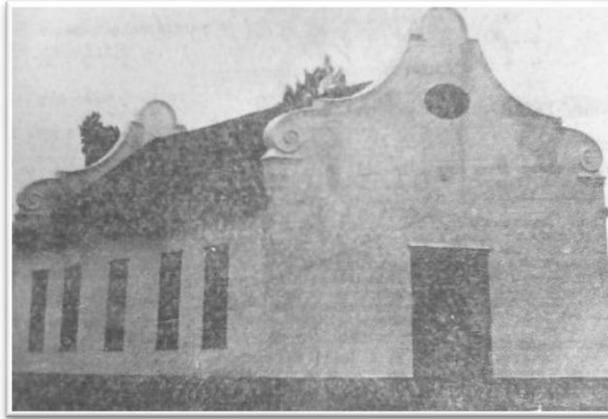


Figure 131: The renovated building⁷⁰⁵

De Kondschapper proudly reported: “When all the memories of the Voortrekkers of Pietermaritzburg have disappeared, this small white building will still lift its pointed gables high and call to every visitor, every traveller: "The Voortrekkers! Don't forget them!"⁷⁰⁶

The Natal Witness of 28 October 1911 reported that the building was “...almost a facsimile of the old church (built) in the days just after Dingaan...two Dutch gables have been built in place of the former gable parapets” making it an exceptional feature of the building.⁷⁰⁷

4.5.3 Establishing a museum collection

After the building was repurchased by the Dutch Reformed Church in 1910, the public was asked to donate items to the proposed Voortrekker Museum (opened in 1912). As it was soon after the Anglo-Boer War, the Afrikaner community wanted to celebrate their heritage in opposition to British imperialism, embracing their identity, accomplishments, independence, history and sense of belonging. The building was significant for the Afrikaners whose ancestors survived the battle of Blood River and subsequently built the church in honour of God. It has always been associated with the history of the Voortrekkers, and objects were donated by Afrikaner families, many being descendants of the Voortrekkers.⁷⁰⁸

⁷⁰⁵ *The Natal Witness*, 1911-11-17, p.1

⁷⁰⁶ P. Prinsloo, ‘Afrikaners in Pietermaritzburg: cultural patterns and political awareness’ <http://www.pmbhistory.co.za/?showcontent&global%5B_id%5D=147>, Updated: 2013. Accessed: 2013-09-23.

⁷⁰⁷ *The Natal Witness*, 1911-10-28.

⁷⁰⁸ C.M.O. Rodéhn, *Lost in transformation: a critical study of two South African museums*, D.Phil. thesis, University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2008, pp. 92.

It remains significant that African items such as Zulu spear blades, copper wristbands and neck rings, snuffboxes and San (Bushmen) digging stones, were also collected from 1910,⁷⁰⁹ although it was not intended to represent and educate visitors about the material culture of Africans, but was rather collected and exhibited to illustrate the relationship between the different groups at the time of the Great Trek.⁷¹⁰

Although most of the items that were collected during the early history of the museum relate to the history of the Voortrekkers, some objects and accompanying information reflect on the story of the building and the people associated with it, such as the photographs of ‘Outa’ Flink (assisted with some of the interior work of the church) and H.A. Repsold (a teacher when the Church of the Vow was used as a school);⁷¹¹ and a snuffbox of Frenchman Jean Samuel Laffnie (contributed towards the building of the church).⁷¹² These donations confirm the importance of museum objects as valuable sources of information. They reveal that the building was not only constructed by the Voortrekkers, but that individuals from other cultural groups also contributed. It also confirms that the church was used for various purposes.

4.5.4 Official opening of the museum (1912)

After completion of the renovations, the official opening of the museum was set for the 16th of December 1911, however President Steyn and General Botha who were invited, had other obligations. The date was postponed to the next year. Sadly they were also not able to attend on the 16th of December 1912 when the Church of the Vow was officially opened as the Voortrekker Museum by General Schalk Burger.⁷¹³

⁷⁰⁹ Msunduzi Museum Archive, Pietermaritzburg: Curator’s entries, old accession register: VMT 1-85, pp. 3, 5, 11, 15.

⁷¹⁰ C.M.O. Rodéhn, *Lost in transformation: a critical study of two South African museums*, D.Phil. thesis, University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2008, p. 252-253.

⁷¹¹ Msunduzi Museum Collection, Pietermaritzburg: Curator’s entry of memoirs of Mrs Uys (donor of the photo), accession register, no. 1266.

⁷¹² Msunduzi Museum Archive, Pietermaritzburg: Curator’s entry in old accession register, VMT 1-85, no. 31, p. 6.

⁷¹³ Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository, A81, *Voortrekker Museum*, Correspondence 1908-1938.



Figure 132: Official opening of the Museum, 1912⁷¹⁴

The Natal Witness reported on 18 December: “From country and town Natalians of both races assembled to show their appreciation of the Voortrekkers”.⁷¹⁵ ‘Both races’ referred to the Afrikaner and English community. The museum opened at a time when the Anglo-Boer War was still fresh in people’s memories, but despite the Afrikaner community’s negative feelings towards British Imperialism and similar British feelings towards Afrikaner Nationalism, they celebrated the opening of the museum together in memory of the Voortrekkers. Prime Minister Louis Botha was invited to open the restored building, but was unable to attend due to other commitments. Various other high-ranking officials, including General J.C. Smuts, J.B.M. Hertzog and M.T. Steyn also declined. After some persuasion, the Minister of Education and Agriculture, Mr. F.S. Malan agreed to officiate.⁷¹⁶



Figure 133: Official opening of the Museum, 1912⁷¹⁷

⁷¹⁴ *The Natal Witness*, 1912-12-19, p.1.

⁷¹⁵ J. & A. Verbeeck, *Victorian and Edwardian Natal*, p. 109.

⁷¹⁶ B. Guest, *Trek and transition: a history of the Msunduzi and Ncome Museums (incorporating the Voortrekker Complex) 1912 – 2012*, p. 35.

⁷¹⁷ J. and A. Verbeeck, *Victorian and Edwardian Natal*, p. 109.



Figure 134: Bonnet of Mrs. J.C. Prinsloo worn at the opening in 1912⁷¹⁸

On Friday 1 November 1912, *The Natal Witness* reported about the public meeting which was held in the Town Hall on the last day of October regarding the festivities planned for the opening of the Voortrekker Church as a museum. The following prominent Pietermaritzburg citizens were present (names written as printed in the newspaper): Mayor, Sir William Beaumont, Mr. Justice Hathorn, Mr. F.S. Tatham, Lt. Col. Hyslop, Lady Steel, Lady Bale, Mrs. De Beer, Mrs. Pellissier, Miss Wolhuter, Mrs. Vorster, Mrs. J. Hershensohnn, Mrs. Keytel, Mrs. Campbell Watt, Col. Wales, Rev. Pellissier, Mr. Justice Boshoff, Mr. C. Bird, Mr. J. Hershensohnn, Dr. Vrolik, and many others. At this gathering, the Mayor was asked to call another meeting to elect a committee to arrange entertainment for visitors.⁷¹⁹ This list indicates that both leading men and women from both the Afrikaans and English community were involved in the establishment of the museum.

The festivities attracted so many people that by early November it was reported that nearly every available room in boarding houses and less expensive hotels in Pietermaritzburg have been booked.⁷²⁰ On 16 December 1912 *The Natal Witness* reported that the streets were full of Dutch-speaking visitors (Afrikaans community) and that the town was very busy, especially Market Square. The programme that was arranged to interest visitors proved to be attractive and well-attended.⁷²¹

Festivities already started on 13 December, in the City Hall with a lecture by Mr. C. Bird on the history and achievements of the Voortrekkers. This was accompanied by a lantern slide show, musical performances and recitals. It was repeated the following day for school

⁷¹⁸ Msunduzi Museum, Pietermaritzburg, Accession No. 2479.

⁷¹⁹ *The Natal Witness*, 1912-11-01, p. 5.

⁷²⁰ B. Guest, *Trek and transition: a history of the Msunduzi and Ncome Museums (incorporating the Voortrekker Complex) 1912 – 2012*, p. 35.

⁷²¹ *The Natal Witness*, 1912-12-16, p. 6.

children. An exhibition of pictures reflecting Cape Dutch architecture and scenes of early times was opened by Mrs. P. Davis in the Museum.⁷²²



Figure 135: Programme of the opening ceremony and concert, 14 December 1912⁷²³

On Saturday the 14th of December a train arrived in Pietermaritzburg with hundreds of Dutch-speaking visitors. *The Natal Witness* reported that the streets were busy with people shopping and that shop owners were doing good business. Market square was the centre of attraction and all functions were well-attended. In the evening the City Hall was packed for the fundraising concert. There were various performances by individuals from both the Afrikaans and English-speaking community, which again underlines the unique historical solidarity that briefly took hold of Pietermaritzburg. The Natal Police Band opened the proceedings with ‘Songs of the Netherlands’. Mr. Richards Walker sang the ‘Bedouin Love Song’; there was a song by miss Purvis’ Ladies Choir; Hugh Lamond sang a song and presented a violin solo; miss Marjorie Lamond played the piano forte; Miss Florence Abraham recited the vow and ‘Desert Outspan’; organ recitals were presented by Prof. P.K. de Villiers and Mr. Dixon; the Natal Police band performed the Transvaal and Orange Free State anthem and Ms Ella Wolhuter recited ‘Piet Retief’ in Dutch.⁷²⁴ On Sunday evening Professor P.K. de Villiers played the organ again in the City Hall.⁷²⁵

⁷²² B. Guest, *Trek and transition: a history of the Msunduzi and Ncome Museums (incorporating the Voortrekker Complex) 1912 – 2012*, p. 35.

⁷²³ Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository, A81.

⁷²⁴ *The Natal Witness*, 1912-12-16, p. 6.

⁷²⁵ B. Guest, *Trek and transition: a history of the Msunduzi and Ncome Museums (incorporating the Voortrekker Complex) 1912 – 2012*, p. 35.



Figure 136: Ms Beryl Thrash and Ms Gladys Thomas of Mrs. Purvis' Ladies Choir⁷²⁶

Unfortunately for the organisers of the official opening of the museum, the opposite of the solidarity that existed in Pietermaritzburg at that time was the order of the day within the South African government circles at the very same time. This was as a result of a series of controversial public speeches by Genl. J.B.M. Hertzog.⁷²⁷ On the evening of 14 December it was announced in Pietermaritzburg that the Premier Louis Botha had resigned.⁷²⁸ Accommodation reserved for D.F. Malan (the future Prime Minister) at the Imperial Hotel was no longer required since he had to return to Pretoria and was unable to attend the festivities.⁷²⁹ Botha ultimately survived the turmoil, but politics had already marred the opening of the museum.

The political crisis necessitated a number of changes to the festivities. On Monday 16 December *The Natal Witness* reported on the amended programme. However, enthusiasm was not severely dampened. On 16 December the doors of the City Hall opened at 10:15 for a service which was conducted by Rev. D.P. Ackermann and Rev. M.W. Odendaal. At 11:00 the Administrator of Natal, Charles Smythe, welcomed the large crowd and announced that he received a telegraphic message from Genl. Botha informing them that Hon. Malan was not able to attend. He added that General S.W. (Schalk) Burger would open the building on behalf of the Government. This was appropriate because his father assisted with some work in the Church of the Vow when it was built.⁷³⁰

⁷²⁶ *The Natal Witness*, 1912-07-17, p. 1

⁷²⁷ L. Korf, *D.F. Malan: a Political biography*, D.Phil. thesis, Stellenbosch University, March 2010, pp. 125-127.

⁷²⁸ *The Natal Witness*, 1912-12-16, p. 6.

⁷²⁹ *The Natal Witness*, 1912-12-16.

⁷³⁰ *The Natal Witness*, 1912-12-16, p. 6, 36.



Figure 137: Tickets to the opening ceremony in Dutch and English⁷³¹



Figure 138: Programmes for the opening of the Museum in 1912⁷³²

Burger made a speech and then read D.F. Malan's speech as well as a telegram from President Steyn, who could not attend because of his poor health. Everything was translated into English by Rev. D. Rossouw. More speeches followed in the City Hall before procession was led to the Church of the Vow, where Rev. G. Pellissier prayed before handing a souvenir key to Burger, who officially opened the door and accepted the building on behalf of the

⁷³¹ Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository, A94.

⁷³² Msunduzi Museum, Pietermaritzburg, Accession No. 2377, 4165.

Government. A second key was presented to Hon. Smythe for the Museum.⁷³³ The keys were made by jeweller J. Sullivan, Pietermaritzburg.⁷³⁴



Figure 139: Pellissier (left) hands the key to General Schalk Burger (right) to officially open the Museum⁷³⁵

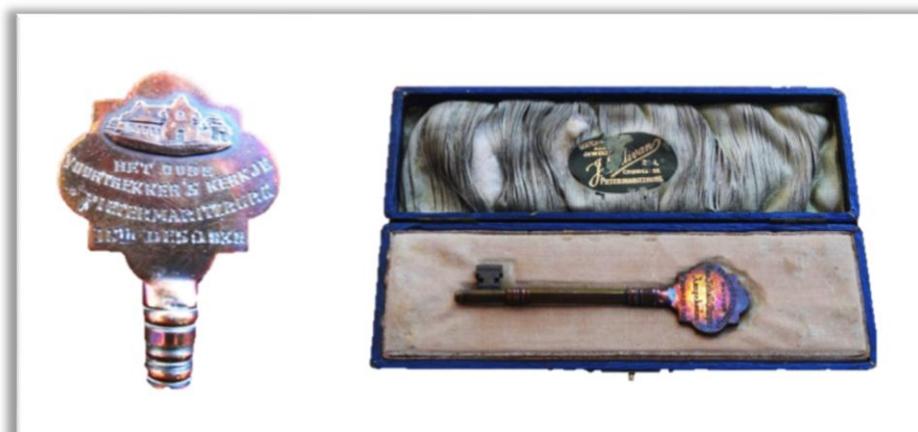


Figure 140: Keys in the Msunduzi Museum donated by C.J. Smythe, Accession No. 31⁷³⁶

Trees were planted by Genl. Burger, Mrs. J.F. Maritz, J.L. de Jager, J.G. Hattingh, Dirk Uys, the wife of Andries Pretorius, the wife of Genl. Piet Joubert, Genl. Piet Retief Viljoen, Hon. C.J. Smythe, Aia Jana, Potgieter and G.M. Pellissier.⁷³⁷

⁷³³ B. Guest, *Trek and transition: a history of the Msunduzi and Ncome Museums (incorporating the Voortrekker Complex) 1912 – 2012*, p. 36.

⁷³⁴ Msunduzi Museum, Pietermaritzburg: Printed on keys, Accession register, Accession no. 31.

⁷³⁵ *The Natal Witness*, 1912-12-18, p.1.

⁷³⁶ Msunduzi Museum Archive, Pietermaritzburg, old accession register: VMT 1-85, no. 292, p. 42. Photo: E. Henning, 16/12/2012

⁷³⁷ B.J. Leverton, 'The Voortrekker Museum', in V.C Wood (ed.) *Lantern 10 (3)*, March 1961, pp. 262-263; P.W.J. Groenewald & T.V. Bresler, *Gedenkboek: Herbevestiging van die Geloofte, Pietermaritzburg Desember 1955*, p. 32.



Figure 141: Position of the trees planted at the official opening of the Museum in 1912⁷³⁸

Sadly the majority of the trees did not survive, but remnants of the tree stumps were kept over the years and can today be seen on exhibit in the Church of the Vow.



Figure 142: C.J. Smythe⁷³⁹

The Natal Administrator, C.J. Smythe, planted a Eucalypt Eugenia (*Eugenia Eucalyptoides*) tree. Smythe had a distinguished public career. Born in Perthshire, Scotland in 1852 he came to Natal in 1872, where he farmed. In 1893 he became a member of the Legislative Assembly (Lions River district) and from 1897 to 1899 he was Speaker of the House of Assembly. From 1899 to 1903 he served as Colonial Secretary⁷⁴⁰ and as Prime Minister from 1906-1910.⁷⁴¹

⁷³⁸ P.W.J Groenewald & T.V. Bresler, *Gedenboek: Herbevestiging van die Geloofe, Pietermaritzburg Desember 1955*, (Pietermaritzburg, 1955), p. 32)

⁷³⁹ A.H. Tatlow (ed.), *Natal Province: Descriptive Guide and official hand-book* Durban, 1911), p. 523.

⁷⁴⁰ *The Natal Witness*, 1908-10-13, p. 6.

⁷⁴¹ B. Guest, *Trek and transition: a history of the Msunduzi and Ncome Museums (incorporating the Voortrekker Complex) 1912 – 2012*, p. 29.



Figure 143: Aia Jana at age 83 (left) and 93 (right)⁷⁴²

Aia Jana planted a Natal Mahogany (*Trichilia emetica*). This Coloured woman was adopted by the Voortrekker family Maré after the attack at Blaauwkrantz (1838). Found under a wagon and pile of dead children, she was about seven years old and had at least seven assegai wounds of which one was at the back of her head.⁷⁴³ She died on 24 May 1924.⁷⁴⁴

The festivities were concluded with a luncheon hosted by the Administrator in the Assembly Hall of the Provincial Council Building.⁷⁴⁵ A toast was given to ‘His Majesty the King’ and the Voortrekkers, followed by Gustav Preller’s lecture in the YMCA (Young Men’s Christian Association) Hall on the Voortrekkers at 3:30, and an evening reception in the City hall presided over by the Mayor Daniel Sanders and his wife.⁷⁴⁶

⁷⁴² Haveman, P.J., *My mother, a Voortrekker*, p. 50.

⁷⁴³ P.J. Haveman, *My mother, a Voortrekker*, p. 11.

⁷⁴⁴ Msunduzi Museum, Pietermaritzburg: box file, ‘Church of the Vow’, article: Anonym, *The historic garden at the Voortrekker Museum, Pietermaritzburg*.

⁷⁴⁵ Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository, A109, miscellaneous documents on the Voortrekker Museum’s history.

⁷⁴⁶ B. Guest, *Trek and transition: a history of the Msunduzi and Ncome Museums (incorporating the Voortrekker Complex) 1912 – 2012*, p. 36.

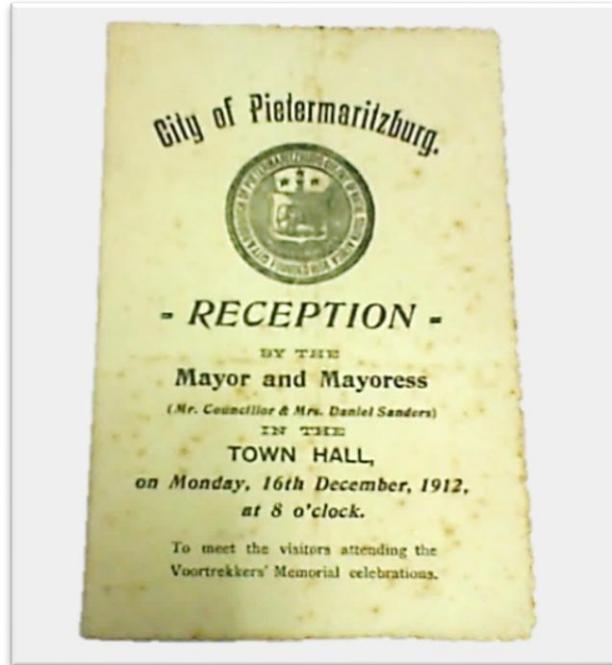


Figure 144: Programme for the 16 December 1912 dinner⁷⁴⁷

A souvenir catalogue and commemoration medals were produced. The lectures given by C. Bird and G. Preller were printed as pamphlets.⁷⁴⁸



Figure 145: Museum catalogue (1912) and medals donated by J. Sullivan⁷⁴⁹

⁷⁴⁷ Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository, A357

⁷⁴⁸ B. Guest, *Trek and transition: a history of the Msunduzi and Ncome Museums (incorporating the Voortrekker Complex) 1912 – 2012*, p. 36.

⁷⁴⁹ Msunduzi Museum Archive, Pietermaritzburg, old accession register: VMT 1-85, no. 287, p. 41; Msunduzi Museum, Pietermaritzburg, Accession No. 4713 and 26.



Figure 146: The Museum just after the opening in 1912. The boy in front is Danie, son of Rev. J.E. van Heerden of the Dutch Reformed ‘Tower Church’⁷⁵⁰

4.5.5 Adding an entrance porch (1917)

In 1917, an entrance porch was added to the front (western end) of the building. It was added to protect the door from damage by the sun and to prevent storm water from flooding the building.⁷⁵¹

At the same time a past mistake was corrected. During restoration of the building, the gables which were added did not match eye-witness accounts of the original. When the entrance porch was added, its gable was restored to replicate the original church.⁷⁵²



Figure 147: Photograph of the entrance porch with gable matching accounts of the original⁷⁵³

⁷⁵⁰ Msunduzi Museum, Pietermaritzburg, Accession No. 492.

⁷⁵¹ B. Guest, *Trek and transition: a history of the Msunduzi and Ncome Museums (incorporating the Voortrekker Complex) 1912 – 2012*, p. 46.

⁷⁵² G.H. van Rooyen, *Kultuurskatte uit die Voortrekertydperk I*, p. 159.

⁷⁵³ Msunduzi Museum, Pietermaritzburg.

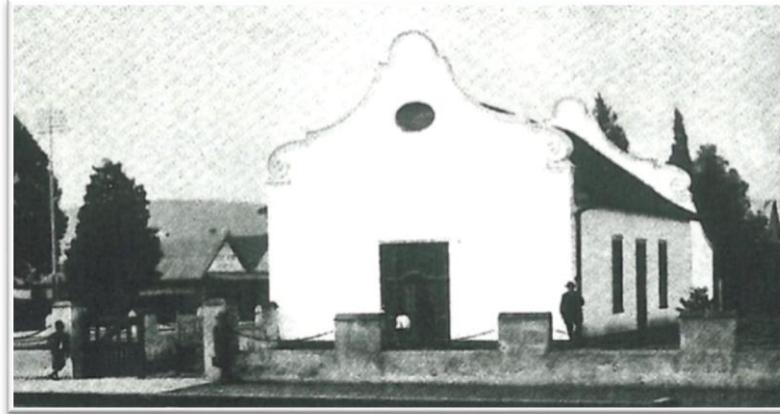


Figure 148: Before the entrance porch was added, 1916⁷⁵⁴

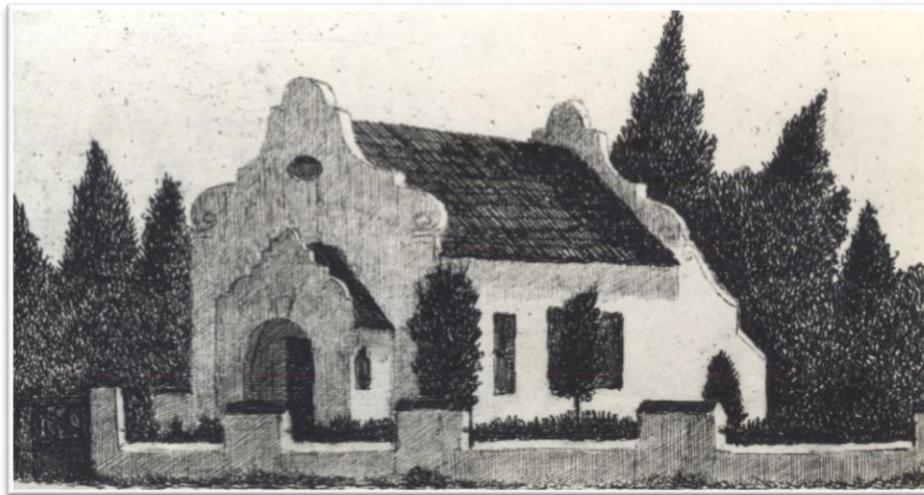


Figure 149: Building with the entrance porch, 1918⁷⁵⁵

4.5.6 Appointing the first caretaker (1917)

In 1917 Habdurmah Arthimulam was appointed as caretaker and gardener at the Museum. He lived on the premises with his wife and child. He worked for the Museum until 1940 when he retired.⁷⁵⁶

⁷⁵⁴ A. Dreyer, *Zuid-Afrikaanse Monumenten Album*, (Kaapstad, 1916), p. 27.

⁷⁵⁵ Msunduzi Museum, Pietermaritzburg, Accession No. 2428

⁷⁵⁶ B. Guest, *Trek and transition: a history of the Msunduzi and Ncome Museums (incorporating the Voortrekker Complex) 1912 – 2012*, p. 44.

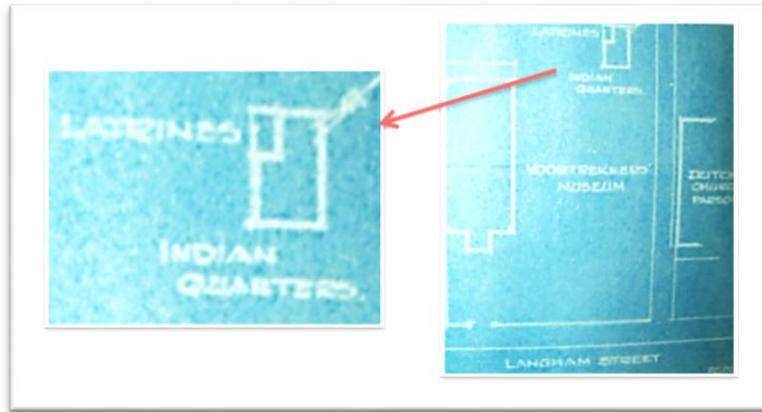


Figure 150: Architect drawing indicating the location of ‘Indian quarters’ adjacent to the Museum⁷⁵⁷

4.5.7 Early collections and exhibitions (1920’s - 1930’s)

In 1923 C.M. Ingwersen stated that there was a misperception that the museum was limited to the collection of objects relating only to the ‘Dutch pioneers’. He acknowledged that the museum was established to commemorate their struggle, but that the real intention was to establish an institution which embraced both the Afrikaans, English and German communities and other settlers who according to Ingwersen contributed to the development of the country, stating that: “In evidence of this I may mention that no works having any historical or scientific interest, even though the fruit of men who were regarded politically or racially as the bitterest foe to the conservative Dutchmen have been, or will be refused. We are seeking to have every shade of opinion in the political, social or religious arena represented”.⁷⁵⁸



Figure 151: The Museum in 1921 (photo: Fred Hamm, Estcourt)⁷⁵⁹

⁷⁵⁷ Dutch Reformed Church Archive, maps and plans section.

⁷⁵⁸ B. Guest, *Trek and transition: a history of the Msunduzi and Ncome Museums (incorporating the Voortrekker Complex) 1912 – 2012*, p. 40.

⁷⁵⁹ Voortrekker Museum Catalogue, 1921, inside of the cover page.

During the 1930s the museum actively tried to collect items. The policy was still focussed on acquiring objects related to the Voortrekkers, but not excluding other type of items of historical significance. Most donated items were accepted in order not to discourage donors. Eventually space constraints forced the museum to refuse donations which were not directly related to the Voortrekkers and the history of the Union. Some donations were even returned to their owners. Only during the late 20th century the Museum firmly established a multi-cultural approach and a new collections policy.⁷⁶⁰

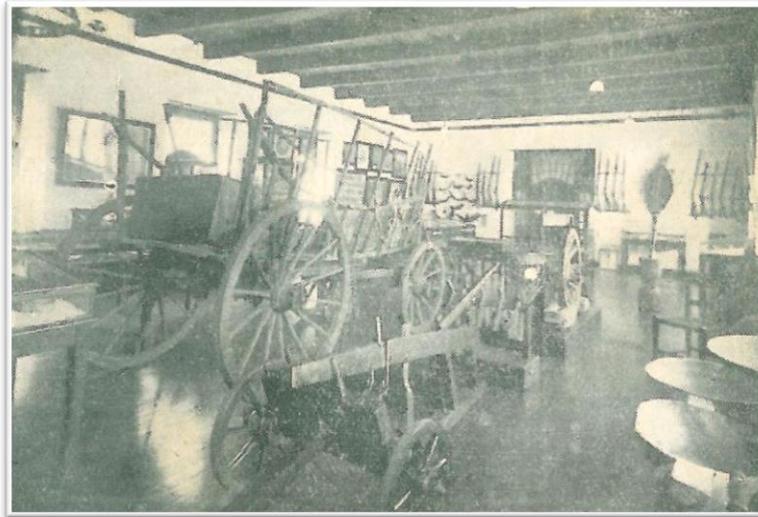


Figure 152: The Museum in 1932⁷⁶¹

4.5.8 The Great Trek Centenary (1938)

In 1938 the 100th anniversary of the Great Trek and Battle of Blood River was celebrated with a symbolic ox-wagon ‘trek’ across the country. Wagons were named after Voortrekker heroes and travelled on different routes, stopping in various towns on their way. All trek routes culminated at the laying of the cornerstone of the Voortrekker Monument in Pretoria.⁷⁶²

Two wagons, the “*Piet Retief*” and “*Vrou en Moeder*”, arrived in Pietermaritzburg on Friday 18 November 1938. They moved through Pietermaritzburg down Commercial Road (now Chief Albert Luthuli Road) then Church Street to the Church of the Vow,⁷⁶³ where two

⁷⁶⁰ B. Guest, *Trek and transition: a history of the Msunduzi and Ncome Museums (incorporating the Voortrekker Complex) 1912 – 2012*, pp.58-59, 86, 88, 144, 148-150.

⁷⁶¹ Msunduzi Museum Library Scrapbook, article from *The Natal Witness*, 1932.

⁷⁶² D.J. Potgieter (Chief ed.), *Standard encyclopedia of Southern Africa* Vol.11, p. P281.

⁷⁶³ Msunduzi Museum Library, Pietermaritzburg: filing cabinet ‘Voortrekker/Zulu’, B4004/11, L.J. Eksteen, Unpublished manuscript: *Die Gelofterkerk as Volksimbool oor 100 jaar 1912-2012* (no page numbers).

commemorative stones were unveiled. Approximately 18 000 people attended the event. Langham Street's name was changed to Voortrekker Street.⁷⁶⁴

A Bible with blood stains was at this time donated to the Voortrekker Museum. It was found on one of the wagons at Bloukrans where women and children were massacred in 1838.⁷⁶⁵ A model of the Church of the Vow in the Hartenbos Museum, was made in 1938 by boys of the Voortrekker High School in Pietermaritzburg and was handed to the leader of the symbolic oxwagon trek.⁷⁶⁶



Figure 153: Model of the Church of the Vow in Hartenbos Museum⁷⁶⁷



Figure 154: Great Trek centenary celebrations in Pietermaritzburg, 1938⁷⁶⁸

⁷⁶⁴ G.D.J. Duvenage, *Die Gedenktrek van 1938*, p. 137.

⁷⁶⁵ G.D.J. Duvenage, *Die Gedenktrek van 1938*, p. 141.

⁷⁶⁶ Photographs and information emailed to E. Olivier from the Curator, ATKV-Hartenbos Museum, 29/07/2010.

⁷⁶⁷ Photo: Curator, ATKV-Hartenbos Museum, 29/07/2010

⁷⁶⁸ Msunduzi Museum, Accession No. 1602.

The 1938 wagon exhibited in the Msunduzi Museum was built descendants of Voortrekkers. Lodewijk Nel was responsible for the woodwork using traditional wood types such as yellowwood, stinkwood and assegaiwood. Johannes Pretorius did the iron work. The wagon was completed within six weeks. In 1988 the wagon was used again for the 150th commemoration of the Great Trek in Natal.⁷⁶⁹



Figure 155: Mrs. Badenhorst with the wagon in August 2012. She travelled on the wagon during the 150th anniversary of the Great Trek in 1988⁷⁷⁰



Figure 156: Pin depicting the Church of the Vow, made for the 1938 commemorations⁷⁷¹

4.6 Conclusion

The Church of the Vow has experienced drastic changes over the years. Its multiple uses and renovation into a dynamic museum has contributed to its historical and social significance. These developments contribute to the historical layering and unique physical attributes of the building which adds to its aesthetic, architectural, scientific and spatial significance. These are all important criteria when determining the heritage value or ‘cultural significance’ of a place.

⁷⁶⁹ Msunduzi Museum, Pietermaritzburg, box file ‘Church of the Vow’, Copy from museum Brochure of 1979, Anonym, *Ons eie ossewa van 1938*.

⁷⁷⁰ Photo: E. Henning, 01/08/2012.

⁷⁷¹ <http://www.bidorbuy.co.za>.

CHAPTER 5

THE CHURCH OF THE VOW AND ITS CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

5.1 Introduction

In various ways the Church of the Vow is significant to different cultural groups in and around Pietermaritzburg and KwaZulu-Natal. Different values are attached to heritage and ‘cultural significance’ has become a key concept in determining the heritage value of historical sites, structures, buildings and objects.

There are various charters and declarations, each with their own criteria to determine cultural significance or heritage value.⁷⁷² South Africa is a member of ICOMOS and is signatory to the Australia ICOMOS (International Council for Monuments and Sites) Burra Charter. The South African National Heritage Resources Act (Act 25 of 1999) serves as mandate for the protection of heritage in South Africa.⁷⁷³ Both describe cultural significance as the historical, social, aesthetic, scientific and spiritual value or significance of a place. The Act also includes architectural value.⁷⁷⁴ These criteria will be used to assess the Church of the Vow as a place of cultural significance.

5.2 Historical significance

According to Australia ICOMOS practice notes on understanding an assessing cultural significance (supplement to the Burra Charter), historic value is intended to encompass all aspects of history, such as the history of aesthetics, art, architecture, science, spirituality and society, therefore underlying other values. A place may have historical significance because it has influenced or has been influenced by or have a strong association with a historic figure or

⁷⁷² South African Heritage Resources Agency, *Guidelines and policy for impact assessments*, 2004-06-24, p. 7.

⁷⁷³ J. Bruwer *et.al.* ‘Heritage Impact Assessment of the recommended route alignment for the proposed Gautrain rapid rail link project, Final report’, April 2003, p. 7.

<http://www.gautraineia.co.za/contents/report_april_2003/pdf/hia_final_report.pdf>, Updated: s.a. Accessed: 2014-09-23.

⁷⁷⁴ Republic of South Africa, *National Heritage Resources Act (Act 25 of 1999)*; Australia ICOMOS, *The Burra Charter: The Australia ICOMOS Charter for places of cultural significance*, 2013, p. 2, <<http://australia.icomos.org/publications/burra-charter-practice-notes/>>, Updated: 2014. Accessed: 2014-09-14.

group, event, phase or activity,⁷⁷⁵ whether religious, economic, social, educational or political. To help assess the historic value of a place, the following questions can be asked:⁷⁷⁶

- a. Is the place associated with an important event or theme in history?
- b. Is the place associated with a particular person or cultural group important in the history of the local area, state, nationally or globally?
- c. Is the place important in reflecting patterns in the development of history locally, in a region, or on a state-wide, or national or global basis?
- d. Does the place show a high degree of creative or technical achievement for a particular period? (This question will be answered under 5.7)

These questions address the criteria in the South African National Heritage Resources Act (25 of 1999) Section 3(3)(a, h):⁷⁷⁷

- a. its importance in the community, or pattern of South Africa's history
- b. its strong or special association with the life or work of a person, group or organization of importance in the history of South Africa

a. Is the place associated with an important event or theme in history?

The building is associated with an important historical event in the history of KwaZulu-Natal and South Africa – the Battle of Blood River, which took place between the Voortrekkers and Zulus on 16 December 1838. The church was built in fulfilment of a vow taken by the Voortrekkers before the battle.

b. Is the place associated with a particular person or cultural group important in the history of the local area, state, nationally or globally?

The Church of the Vow is in various ways related to historically significant people. The church was constructed by important individuals in Afrikaner history such as Voortrekker

⁷⁷⁵ Wikipedia, *Burra Charter*, <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Values_\(heritage\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Values_(heritage))>, Updated: 2012-06-06, Accessed: 2012-10-22.

⁷⁷⁶ Australia ICOMOS Practice Notes, *Understanding an assessing cultural significance*, November 2013, p. 3, <http://australia.icomos.org/wp-content/uploads/Practice-Note_Understanding-and-assessing-cultural-significance.pdf>, Updated: 2014. Accessed: 2014-09-14.

⁷⁷⁷ Republic of South Africa, *National Heritage Resources Act (Act 25 of 1999)*.

One principle in Section 3(3)(i) of the National Heritage Resources Act (25 of 1999) relates to the significance of the site in the history of slavery in South Africa. Slavery was abolished in South Africa in the early 1830's, thus the Church of the Vow has no significance with regards to this part of South Africa's history.

leader Andries Pretorius and used by people such as J.N Boshof who became the president of the Orange Free State in 1855. One of the main roads in Pietermaritzburg is named after Boshof. M.W. Pretorius was another significant leader. He became the president of both the South African Republic (Transvaal) and the Orange Free State. Important individuals in the English community also used the building, such as the Special Commissioner of Natal, Henry Cloete and D.D. Buchanan. Buchanan was the founder of *The Natal Witness* published since the 1840's and which is still in print today. Another noteworthy person associated with the church was the German minister Jacob Ludwig Döhne, who published the first major Zulu/English dictionary.⁷⁷⁸

The building was rescued through the initiative of E.G. Jansen who not only founded various cultural organizations but also became a Member of Parliament, Speaker of the House of Assembly, Minister of Native Affairs and Irrigation and ultimately Governor-General of South Africa.⁷⁷⁹

Another important person associated with the building is C.J. Smythe, a member of the Legislative Assembly for the Lions River district, Speaker of the House of Assembly and Colonial Secretary, who attended the opening ceremony and planted a tree at the occasion.⁷⁸⁰ Remnants of the tree stump can be seen in the museum today and has a plaque with his name on it.

c. Is the place important in reflecting patterns in the development of history locally, in a region, or on a state-wide, or national or global basis?

The building is associated with the early history of Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal and South Africa, and reflects the life and times of the early pioneers who settled in the interior and their relationship with other communities. The Church of the Vow is one of the first

⁷⁷⁸ B.J. Liebenberg, *Andries Pretorius in Natal*, p. 266; D.J Potgieter (Chief ed.), *Standard encyclopedia of Southern Africa* Vol. 4, p. 57; L.J. Eksteen, *Die Voortrekkerbegraafplaas Pietermaritzburg*, p. 21; B. Guest, *A century of science and service: The Natal Museum in a changing South Africa 1904-2004*, p. 3; Ancestry24, <<http://ancestry24.com/articles/orange-free-state/>> , Updated: 2010, Accessed: 2013-11-01; B.I. Buchanan, *Natal memories*, p. 92.

⁷⁷⁹ DBNL, 'Ernst George Jansen' <http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/_jaa003196201_01/_jaa003196201_01_0030.php>, Updated: 2005, Accessed: 2011-02-03.

⁷⁸⁰ *The Natal Witness*, 1908-10-13, p. 6.

permanent buildings and first permanent church building constructed in Pietermaritzburg, although it has been modified during its restoration in 1911.

The building's history assists the present generation in understanding the importance of religion to the Voortrekkers. It educates us about the life and times of the Voortrekkers, people's quest for land and how different cultural backgrounds, beliefs and traditions can lead to conflict and bloodshed, leaving scars in a society that can struggle to heal.

5.3 Social significance

Social value refers to the qualities for which a place has become the focus of spiritual, political, national or other cultural sentiment to either a majority or minority group.⁷⁸¹ Such places could also be a source of pride, education or celebration in the local, provincial or national community.⁷⁸²

According to Australia ICOMOS practice notes on understanding an assessing cultural significance, social value refers to the associations that a place has for a particular community or cultural group and the social or cultural meanings that it holds for them. To determine social value, the following questions can be asked:⁷⁸³

- a. Is the place important as a local marker or symbol?
- b. Is the place important as part of community identity or the identity of a particular cultural group?
- c. Is the place important to a community or cultural group because of associations and meanings developed from long use and association? (question b and c will be discussed jointly)

These questions address the criteria in Section 3(3)(g) of the South African National Heritage Resources Act (25 of 1999):⁷⁸⁴

⁷⁸¹ Wikipedia, *Burra Charter*, <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Values_\(heritage\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Values_(heritage))>, Updated: 2012-06-06, Accessed: 2012-10-22.

⁷⁸² South African Heritage Resources Agency, *Site management plans/guidelines for the development of plans for the management of heritage sites/places*, p. 5.

⁷⁸³ Australia ICOMOS Practice Notes, *Understanding an assessing cultural significance*, November 2013, p. 4, <http://australia.icomos.org/wp-content/uploads/Practice-Note_Understanding-and-assessing-cultural-significance.pdf>, Updated: 2014. Accessed: 2014-09-14.

⁷⁸⁴ Republic of South Africa, *National Heritage Resources Act (Act 25 of 1999)*.

- a. Its strong or special association with a particular community of cultural group or organization of importance in the history of South Africa

a. Is the place important as a local marker or symbol?

The Church of the Vow's is a prominent visual landmark in the city of Pietermaritzburg. Its white Cape Dutch gables are clearly noticeable against the red brick walls of neighbouring buildings. It is also an important historical landmark because of its link to the Battle of Blood River, an important event in the history of KwaZulu-Natal and South Africa. Its Voortrekker origins makes the Church of the Vow one of only a few buildings dating from this period that is still preserved in Pietermaritzburg.

The building is an important symbol in the Afrikaner community, reflecting their history and culture, but for some Zulus it is a symbol of oppression (see number 'b' below).

b. Is the place important as part of community identity or the identity of a particular cultural group and is the place important to a community or cultural group because of associations and meanings developed from long use and association?

This building is an excellent example of how different communities attach different values to heritage. The building's origins and history assists in understanding the divided past of the Voortrekkers and Zulus but also the elements which bring these two communities together.

The building has a special meaning for many within the Afrikaner community, not only in Pietermaritzburg but also in KwaZulu-Natal and South Africa, since it is an embodiment of their history, identity and faith. The building contributes to a feeling of belonging and pride within this community. There are many Afrikaners who value this landmark as a significant part of their culture and heritage. For some it is a space of spiritual significance and for some it is regarded as 'holy ground', although interest in the Church of the Vow has diminished over the years to some extent.⁷⁸⁵

⁷⁸⁵ Ncome Museum & Monument Complex brochure, *Ncome/Blood River: another point of view*, pp. 31-33.

One of the reasons is the Museum's name change. According to a public opinion poll in 2003 regarding a new name for the Museum, it led to many Afrikaners feeling alienated from what they believed was theirs. This may have contributed to a decline in visitor numbers from 2005 until 2013.⁷⁸⁶ Many assume that the Voortrekker history is no longer displayed. Another reason is that society is adapting to changing times. Younger generations have different interests than their ancestors and less emphasis is put on culture and traditions. The Church of the Vow and Battle of Blood River is not considered an important part of the school curriculum as in the past: "*While for some the covenant became a cornerstone of Afrikaner Nationalism, for others the monument became a symbol of Afrikaner domination that chimed closely with biased textbooks and other historical material produced under apartheid.*"⁷⁸⁷

For the Zulu community the building is part of 'Afrikaner heritage' and has negative connotations because of its link to the Battle of Blood River as Nathi Olifant reiterates when he referred to it in 2003 as "... a bastion of Afrikanerdom and a symbol of oppression."⁷⁸⁸ However, the building could now be potentially significant since research has revealed that people from different cultural groups built and made use of the same church which was a result of the same battle which led to the death of so many people.

Although there is no direct link between the Indian community and the construction and early use of the building, the building may have some significance to this community since one of the first caretakers of the Museum was an Indian man who was employed for more than 20 years and also lived on the premises. His living quarters still exist on the Museum property next to the Church of the Vow and the E.G Jansen Extension.⁷⁸⁹

Jan Gerritze Bantjes, a Coloured man and secretary to Andries Pretorius, also contributed money towards the building of the church.⁷⁹⁰ Members of the Coloured community attended

⁷⁸⁶ B. Guest, *Trek and transition: a history of the Msunduzi and Ncome Museums (incorporating the Voortrekker Complex) 1912 – 2012*, pp. 160,193.

⁷⁸⁷ Msunduzi Museum Library, Pietermaritzburg: B477/99, 'The report of the panel of historians appointed by the South African department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology', in *The re-interpretation of the Battle of Blood River/Ncome* (compilation of seminar papers, University of Zululand), 1998-10-31, p. 63.

⁷⁸⁸ C. Rodéhn, 'The Msunduzi Museum a contested place?', in S. Vawda (ed.) *Msunduzi Journal* Vol I, 2008, p. 67.

⁷⁸⁹ B. Guest, *Trek and transition: a history of the Msunduzi and Ncome Museums (incorporating the Voortrekker Complex) 1912 – 2012*, p. 44.

⁷⁹⁰ Dutch Reformed Church Archive, Pietermaritzburg, Box: G53/1, File on history of the congregation by Dr. Besselaar, compiled from original minutes, 1926; H.B. Thom, *Die Geloftekerk en ander studies oor die Groot Trek*, p. 2-3.

services in the church.⁷⁹¹ This was endorsed when in 1912, Aia Jana, a Coloured servant to the Voortrekkers, planted a tree at the Museum's opening ceremony.⁷⁹²

During the late 1840's, when the building was used as a church by various denominations, church services were also attended by Africans.⁷⁹³ However, in the apartheid era, when formal segregationist legislation was enforced, state-aided facilities such as the Voortrekker Museum, became 'Whites-only' institutions. The Curator at the time, supported by the Museum Council, refused to comply and allowed 'non-White' visitors to still visit the Museum. Thus the 'non-racial tradition' was still being maintained.⁷⁹⁴

The building has relevance in all the above-mentioned communities and should be considered an important part of South Africa's heritage.

Foreigners would not find the special significance of the building 'new' or 'odd' as similar events and structures are found globally. The building illustrates how many human beings, irrespective of nationality, race or religion, make promises to higher powers in time of need and build structures in fulfilment of these vows.

As a museum, the building is currently an important educational institution that could add value to the local community's understanding of the city's past but also in the province of KwaZulu-Natal and the history of South Africa.

This building can now be looked at from a new perspective to aid in the process towards reconciliation. The building is a visible, physical reminder of our past which we can learn from. It is a space where South Africans can meet and debate these various issues in order to move forward.

⁷⁹¹ The Natal Society Foundation, D. Buckley, 'The story of the Metropolitan Methodist Church, Pietermaritzburg (the chapel street society), 1846-1996', in J.M. Deane (ed.), *Natalia* (26), May 1997, p. 60.

⁷⁹² Msunduzi Museum, Pietermaritzburg: box file, 'Church of the Vow', article: Anonym, *The historic garden at the Voortrekker Museum, Pietermaritzburg*.

⁷⁹³ The Natal Society Foundation, D. Buckley, 'The story of the Metropolitan Methodist Church, Pietermaritzburg (the chapel street society), 1846-1996', in J.M. Deane (ed.), *Natalia* (26), May 1997, p. 60.

⁷⁹⁴ B. Guest, *Trek and transition: a history of the Msunduzi and Ncome Museums (incorporating the Voortrekker Complex) 1912 – 2012*, pp. 63, 203.

5.4 Aesthetic significance

Aesthetic significance refers to a building being important if it has sensual and appealing qualities or other qualities of nature or human efforts.⁷⁹⁵ It denotes the uniqueness, authenticity and distinctiveness of a place, meaning a place with a character of its own.⁷⁹⁶

Aesthetic significance is the sensory and perceptual experience of a place, meaning how we respond to visual and non-visual aspects such as sounds, smells, form, design, scale, material and other elements strongly impacting on human thoughts, feelings and attitudes. Expressions of aesthetics are culturally influenced and these aesthetic qualities may include the concept of beauty and formal aesthetic ideals. The Australia ICOMOS practice notes on understanding an assessing cultural significance, provides questions which can be used as guidelines to determine aesthetic value.⁷⁹⁷

- a. Does the place display particular aesthetic characteristics of an identified style or fashion?
- b. Does the place have special compositional or uncommonly attractive qualities involving combinations of colour, textures, spaces, detail, movement, unity, sounds, and scents? (question a and b will be discussed jointly)
- c. Does the place have qualities which are inspirational or which evoke strong feelings or special meanings?
- d. Is the place symbolic for its aesthetic qualities: for example, does it inspire artistic or cultural response, is it represented in art, photography, literature, folk art, folk lore, mythology or other imagery or cultural arts?
- e. Does the place show a high degree of creative or technical achievement? (Will be answered under 5.7)
- f. Is the place distinctive within the setting, or a prominent visual landmark? (Will be discussed under section 5.8)

⁷⁹⁵ Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment, *Assessing Historic Heritage Significance for application with the Historic Cultural Heritage Act 1995*, <http://www.heritage.tas.gov.au/media/pdf/Theshold_Guidelines_FINALv5_October_2011.pdf>, Updated: 2011, Accessed: 2013-08-16.

⁷⁹⁶ J. Bruwer *et.al.* *Heritage Impact Assessment of the recommended route alignment for the proposed Gautrain rapid rail link project, Final report*, April 2003, <http://www.gautraineia.co.za/contents/report_april_2003/pdf/hia_final_report.pdf>, Updated: s.a. Accessed: 2014-09-23.

⁷⁹⁷ Australia ICOMOS Practice Notes, *Understanding an assessing cultural significance*, November 2013, p. 3, <http://australia.icomos.org/wp-content/uploads/Practice-Note_Understanding-and-assessing-cultural-significance.pdf>, Updated: 2014, Accessed: 2014-09-14.

These questions also address the criteria in the South African National Heritage Resources Act (25 of 1999) Section 3(3)(g):⁷⁹⁸

- a. Its importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics valued by a community or cultural group
- b. Its importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period

a. Does the place display particular aesthetic characteristics of an identified style or fashion and does the place have special compositional or uncommonly attractive qualities involving combinations of colour, textures, spaces, detail, movement, unity, sounds, and scents?

The building has typical Cape Dutch characteristics and with its decorative gables, slate plinth on the outside, and wooden ceiling, floor, door and window frames, it can be considered an appealing and distinctive element in the urban landscape. The smooth white walls, uneven grey stone plinth and brown woodwork create an interesting contrast. Since the building is currently used as a museum, the displays compliment the old-style interior.

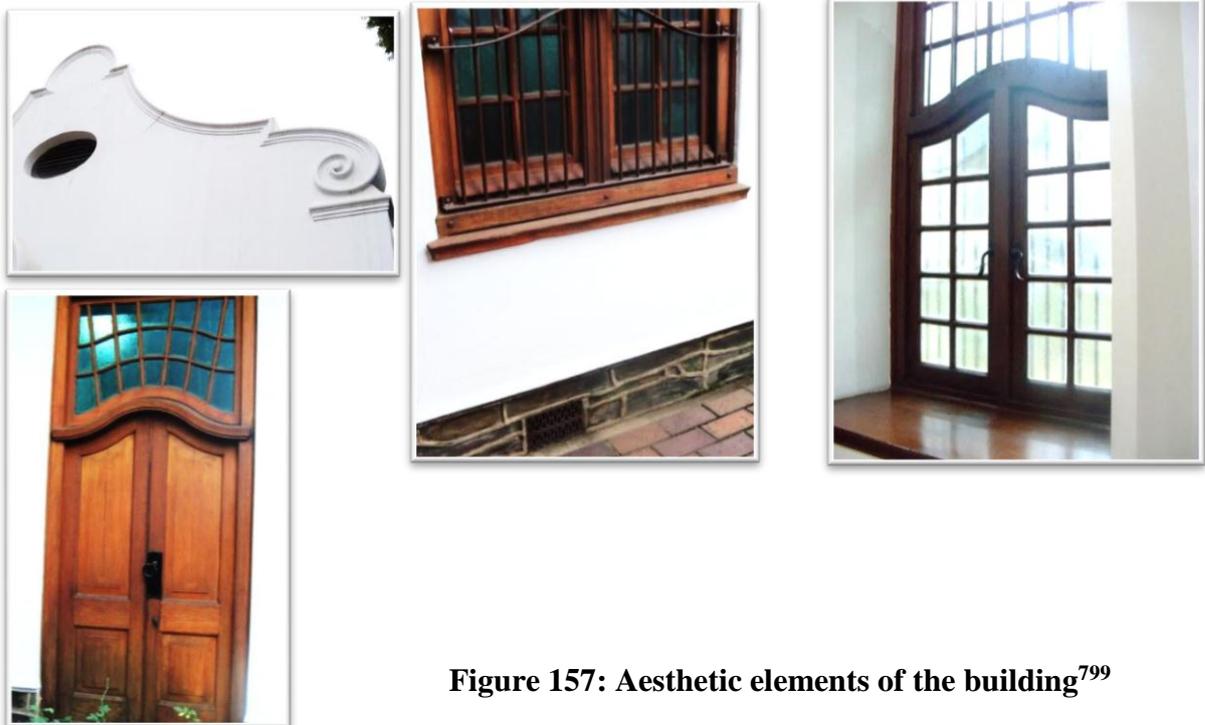


Figure 157: Aesthetic elements of the building⁷⁹⁹

⁷⁹⁸ Republic of South Africa, *National Heritage Resources Act (Act 25 of 1999)*.

⁷⁹⁹ Photo: E. Henning, 12/09/2014.

The site not only comprises of historical buildings, but it also has a garden with trees which are more than 100 years old. The garden contributes to the visual qualities of the place and surrounding landscape. Benches are located at appropriate locations in order for visitors to contemplate the sense of the place.



Figure 158: Two remaining historical trees next to the Church of the Vow⁸⁰⁰

b. Does the place have qualities which are inspirational or which evoke strong feelings or special meanings?

For many visitors who enter the building, the atmosphere inside can evoke strong emotions as a symbol of the struggles of their ancestors. For some visitors, especially from the Zulu community, it can conjure up negative feelings while for others, especially from the Afrikaner community, it can create a feeling of pride. The building is a religious space and often people from the Afrikaner community sit on the pews and pray during their visit.

c. Is the place symbolic for its aesthetic qualities: for example, does it inspire artistic or cultural response, is it represented in art, photography, literature, folk art, folk lore, mythology or other imagery or cultural arts?

The Church of the Vow's features and meaning within the Afrikaner community has resulted in the building featuring in various books, posters, photographs, tapestries, artwork, crockery and so forth. L.J. Eksteen undertook noteworthy research about the Church of the Vow as an

⁸⁰⁰ Photos: E. Henning, 12/09/2014.

important folk symbol in his unpublished manuscript: *Die Geloftekerk as Volkssimbool oor 100 jaar 1912-2012*, which illustrates how the building has served as inspiration in artwork, photography and literature. He found that some people even designed their post-boxes in the form of the Church of the Vow.

5.5 Scientific significance

Scientific value refers to the inherent information content of a place and its ability to reveal more about an aspect of the past through examination or investigation of the place, including the use of archaeological techniques. The relative scientific value of a place is likely to depend on the importance of the information or data involved, on its rarity, quality or representativeness, and its potential to contribute further important information about the place itself or a type or class of place, or to address important research questions. To determine scientific value, the following question can be asked (according to the Australia ICOMOS practice notes):⁸⁰¹

- a. Would further investigation of the place have the potential to reveal substantial new information and new understandings about people, places, processes or practices which are not available from other sources?

This question also relates to the criteria in Section 3(3)(g) of the South African National Heritage Resources Act (25 of 1999):⁸⁰²

- a. its possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of South Africa's natural or cultural heritage
- b. its potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of South Africa's natural or cultural heritage
- c. its importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a particular class of South Africa's natural or cultural places or objects
- d. its importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (this question will be answered under 5.7)

⁸⁰¹ Australia ICOMOS Practice Notes, *Understanding an assessing cultural significance*, November 2013, pp. 3,4, <http://australia.icomos.org/wp-content/uploads/Practice-Note_Understanding-and-assessing-cultural-significance.pdf>, Updated: 2014, Accessed: 2014-09-14.

⁸⁰² Republic of South Africa, *National Heritage Resources Act (Act 25 of 1999)*.

a. Would further investigation of the place have the potential to reveal substantial new information and new understandings about people, places, processes or practices which are not available from other sources?

The Church of the Vow may also be important from a Historical Archaeological perspective since the surrounding site has already yielded specific objects such as wagon parts, bottles, glass and ceramic shards and a metal trumpet. These items confirmed that the site was used inter alia as a wagon-maker's shop, a mineral water factory and restaurant. Further archaeological investigations might have the potential to reveal substantial new information that can contribute to a broader understanding of the use and development of the site.

This question also relates to some of the criteria as stipulated in Section 3(3)(g) of the National Heritage Resources Act (25 of 1999):

a. Its possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of South Africa's natural or cultural heritage

The Church of the Vow was constructed during the early 1840's and opened as a museum in 1912 – more than 100 years ago. The Pietermaritzburg Dutch Reformed Church congregation is listed as number 25 of 100 oldest Dutch Reformed Church congregations in South Africa, which adds to the significance of the building.⁸⁰³ There are not many examples of Voortrekker buildings left in Pietermaritzburg and even fewer with Cape Dutch gables.

b. Its potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of South Africa's natural or cultural heritage

The building's history contributes important information about the times and lifestyle of the Voortrekkers and address important research questions such as how and why the building's appearance changed over the years, what the building was used for and which cultural groups were involved in its construction and use. The history of the building also contributes to a

⁸⁰³ M. Van Rooyen, *Lys van eerste honderd NG gemeentes in Suid-Afrika*, <http://af.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lys_van_eerste_honderd_NG_gemeentes_in_Suid-Afrika> accessed, Updated: 2014. Accessed: 2014-12-02. (Information on the website was compiled from the book by P.L. Olivier, *Ons gemeentelike feesalbum*, 1952).

better understanding between different cultural groups as to the potential significance of the Church of the Vow within different communities.

c. Its importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a particular class of South Africa's natural or cultural places or objects

The Church of the Vow has is a good example of vernacular architecture. It reflects the Voortrekkers' skills and knowledge of local building materials, techniques and styles. It is one of the first permanent structures and one of the first permanent church buildings constructed in Pietermaritzburg.

The building was renovated during the early 20th century and the gables were reconstructed in the Cape Dutch revival style, influenced by the Arts and Crafts movement at the time. The building reflects a particular type of architecture and historical layering that provides some insight into life and times of a previous era.

5.6 Spiritual significance

Spiritual value refers to the intangible values and meanings embodied in or evoked by a place which give it importance in the spiritual identity, or the traditional knowledge, art and practices of a cultural group. Spiritual value may also be reflected in the intensity of aesthetic and emotional responses or community associations, and can be expressed through cultural practices and related places. The qualities of a place may inspire a strong and/or spontaneous emotional or metaphysical response in people, expanding their understanding of their place, purpose and obligations in the world, particularly in relation to the spiritual realm. Spiritual values may be interdependent on the social values and physical properties of a place. To assess spiritual value, the following questions can be asked (according to the Australia ICOMOS practice notes):⁸⁰⁴

- a. Does the place contribute to the spiritual identity or belief system of a cultural group?
- b. Is the place a repository of knowledge, traditional art or lore related to spiritual practice of a cultural group?

⁸⁰⁴ Australia ICOMOS Practice Notes, *Understanding an assessing cultural significance*, November 2013, p. 4, <http://australia.icomos.org/wp-content/uploads/Practice-Note_Understanding-and-assessing-cultural-significance.pdf>, Updated: 2014. Accessed: 2014-09-14.

- c. Is the place important in maintaining the spiritual health and wellbeing of a culture or group?
- d. Do the physical attributes of the place play a role in recalling or awakening an understanding of an individual or a group's relationship with the spiritual realm?
- e. Do the spiritual values of the place find expression in cultural practices or human-made structures, or inspire creative works?

a. Does the place contribute to the spiritual identity or belief system of a cultural group?

The Church of the Vow is of special significance to the Afrikaner community since it represents their history, culture and belief system. It was built by their ancestors after the Battle of Blood River (1838) in fulfilment of a vow to God and evokes strong spiritual meaning for them. Some Afrikaners still view the site as 'holy ground'.

b. Is the place a repository of knowledge, traditional art or lore related to spiritual practice of a cultural group?

The building is currently a museum – a repository of information with displays reflecting the history of the Church of the Vow and the Voortrekkers, and highlights their religious practices.

c. Is the place important in maintaining the spiritual health and wellbeing of a culture or group?

The atmosphere inside can evoke strong emotions for many visitors entering the building. Visitors who view the building as a religious space, often sit on the pews to pray. It becomes a calming space where visitors can reflect on the past and the present and think about the future.

d. Do the physical attributes of the place play a role in recalling or awakening an understanding of an individual or a group's relationship with the spiritual realm?

The Church of the Vow was one of the first permanent churches constructed in Pietermaritzburg and was initially used by different denominations.

Displays inside the building were done to highlight its history as a church. Upon entering, visitors will find a red carpet leading directly to the pews and grand pulpit in the centre of the building, which enhances the attribute of the building as a religious space.

e. Do the spiritual values of the place find expression in cultural practices or human-made structures, or inspire creative works?

The meanings and associations of the Church of the Vow to the Afrikaner community finds expression in their events commemorating the history and importance of the building. The Day of the Vow (now Reconciliation Day) is still celebrated by some Afrikaners on 16 December.

The religious importance of the building also inspired artists throughout the years, from ordinary citizens to famous artists such as J.H. Pierneef who created a painting in 1938, depicting Voortrekkers attending a service at the Church of the Vow.

5.7 Architectural significance

Architectural significance contains historic, structural and aesthetic aspects. Several sub criteria assist in assessing a building's architectural significance:

- a. Is the building an important example of specific building type and is the building an outstanding example of a particular style or period?
- b. Is it the work of a major architect, engineer or builder and does the building contain fine architectural details and reflect exceptional craftsmanship?
- c. Does it reflect a high degree of creative or technical achievement for a particular period and is it an example of an industrial, engineering or technological development?
- d. Were any alterations or extensions made to the original design and what is the state of the architectural and structural integrity of the building?
- e. Is the building's current use in sympathy with its original use (for which it was designed)?⁸⁰⁵

⁸⁰⁵ M. Naudé, 'Heritage Assessment (Architectural) of buildings on the farm Mooifontein – Middelburg-Arnot (Mpumalanga Province)', June 2013, pp. 28-41, <<http://www.sahra.org.za/heritage-reports/heritage-statement-farm-mooifontein>>, Updated: s.a. Accessed: 2014-09-14.

a. Is the building an important example of specific building type and is the building an outstanding example of a particular style or period?

The Church of the Vow was constructed shortly after the Voortrekkers moved from the Cape Colony to settle in Pietermaritzburg. The building is a good example of vernacular architecture and represents the modest efforts of a small community to cater for their religious needs. The building reflects the Voortrekkers' skills and knowledge of local building materials, techniques and styles.

It was initially built of stone and was later given a typical Cape Dutch gable and after that the building was plastered. The Cape Dutch architectural style was used in the Cape Colony from the 17th Century. Buildings in this style have a distinctive, recognizable design with the gable as a prominent feature. When the building was renovated during the early 20th century, the gable was redesigned by the architect and given an extra decorative 'flair' influenced by the Arts and Crafts Movement at the time. The movement represented change in political, historical, social and cultural ideas and opinions. In architecture it became a philosophy of having 'well-designed' environments with 'beautifully crafted' buildings as a 'positive influence' for social change.⁸⁰⁶

b. Is it the work of a major architect, engineer or builder and does the building contain fine architectural details and reflect exceptional craftsmanship?

The Church of the Vow was constructed by the Voortrekkers and the builders included prominent individuals such as Voortrekker leader Andries Pretorius. When the building was renovated in 1911, J.C. Tully was appointed as the architect. He was an associate of The Royal Institute of British Architects and received a bronze medal for architectural design at the Plymouth Fine Art Exhibition in 1881.⁸⁰⁷ He also designed prominent buildings such as the Stock Exchange in Johannesburg and the 'Raadsaal' in Bloemfontein.⁸⁰⁸ The building's gable is decoratively crafted reflecting exceptional skills and craftsmanship.

⁸⁰⁶ S. Adams, *The Arts & Crafts Movement*, pp. 9, 95.

⁸⁰⁷ K. Donaldson (ed.), *South African who's who 1910*, p. 484.

⁸⁰⁸ ARTEFACTS, 'Tully, John Collingwood',

< <http://www.artefacts.co.za/main/Buildings/searchframes.php>>, Updated: s.a., Accessed: 2011-02-28.

c. Does it reflect a high degree of creative or technical achievement for a particular period and is it an example of industrial, engineering or technological development?

The building is a good example of vernacular architecture. It required some skill by the Voortrekkers to construct the Church of the Vow using local materials. The Voortrekkers had to adapt to local conditions which also contributed to the building's appearance changing over the years. It was renovated several times, replacing some of the materials originally used in its construction. When it was renovated in 1911, the architect J.C. Tully applied his own creativity. This was more than a hundred years ago. The building has since then become part of the architectural history and historical layers of the building, making the Church of the Vow even more unique with a character of its own. There are only a few historical buildings from this period left in Pietermaritzburg, making the Church of the Vow an important part of the architectural heritage of Pietermaritzburg.

d. Were any alterations or extensions made to the original design and what is the state of the architectural and structural integrity of the building?

Over the years the building's appearance changed. There were various alterations and extensions adapting to changing times and circumstances.

In the early 20th century, the building was renovated in preparation of the building opening as a museum. Because it was to become a museum, the renovation and partial restoration was done in sympathy with the remaining original building. Written and oral accounts from those individuals who helped build the church or had seen it during its early years were collected in order to reconstruct what the building used to look like.

The extensions were demolished and the gable was supposed to be reconstructed however, the architect J.C. Tully changed the traditional Concavo-Convex type of Cape Dutch gable which the original building had by adding more decorative elements to the gable ends, giving it extra curves.⁸⁰⁹

⁸⁰⁹ARTEFACTS, 'Tully, John Collingwood',
< <http://www.artefacts.co.za/main/Buildings/searchframes.php>>, Updated: s.a., Accessed: 2011-02-28.



Figure 159: Gable ends were given a decorative flair⁸¹⁰

Tully's new design caused some dissatisfaction in the community, which led to an entrance porch being added to the building in 1917, with a gable matching that of the original church.⁸¹¹



Figure 160: Entrance porch added to the building in 1917⁸¹²

⁸¹⁰ Photo: E. Henning, 12/09/2014

⁸¹¹ G.H. van Rooyen, *Kultuurskatte uit die Voortrekkertydperk I*, p.159.

⁸¹² Photo: E. Henning, 12/09/2014.

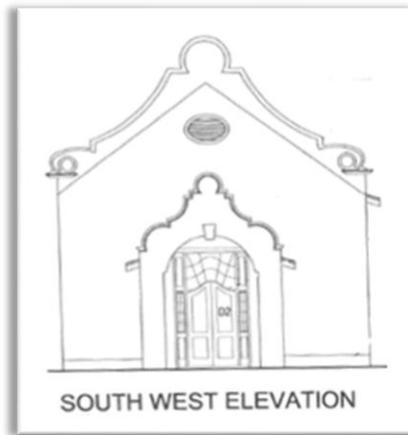


Figure 161: The front of the building showing the two different gables⁸¹³

The Church of the Vow's structural integrity is variable. The building has survived many years, however it seems that there has been a problem with the gable from early on in the building's history. Even today, cracks easily form in the gable but it has not posed a major problem. The floors have also been attacked by dry rot and had to be repaired in 2012.

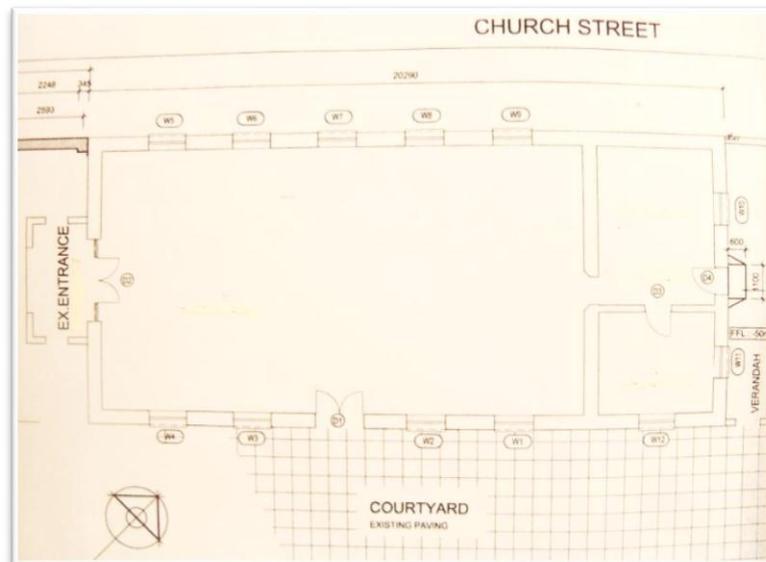


Figure 162: Floor plan of the Church of the Vow (2012)⁸¹⁴

e. Is the building's current use in sympathy with its original use (for which it was designed)?

⁸¹³ Adapted from drawing: Msunduzi Museum, Pietermaritzburg: *Church of the Vow, Church Street BDY*, 23/04/2012

⁸¹⁴ Adapted from drawing: Msunduzi Museum, Pietermaritzburg: *Church of the Vow, Church Street BDY*, 23/04/2012

The building's current use as a museum is in sympathy with its original use. Exhibitions inside reflect the history of the building since its construction to it becoming a museum in 1912. The pulpit and some pews are still exhibited to give visitors the feeling of what the building was originally used for.

5.8 Spatial significance

Although elements of spatial significance are listed under the criteria for determining aesthetic significance in the Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter's practice notes on understanding and assessing cultural significance, some heritage practitioners use it as a separate criterion.

The spatial significance or rather the physical context in which the building exists and how it contributes to an area, is important in determining the cultural significance of a heritage resource. Questions relating to this aspect are:⁸¹⁵

- a. Is the building a landmark in the city?
- b. Does it contribute to the character of the neighbourhood, streetscape or square?
- c. Does it form part of an important group of buildings?

a. Is the building a landmark in the city?

The Church of the Vow's status as a provincial heritage site and its history, especially its link to the Battle of Blood River, makes it an important tourist site in Pietermaritzburg. Within the context of Pietermaritzburg's history and architecture, the building is important. Its Voortrekker origins makes the Church of the Vow one of only a few buildings dating from this period that is still preserved in the city.

The Church of the Vow is also a prominent visual landmark in the streetscape because of its unique and notable physical features – its white walls and decorative gables are in stark contrast to the red brick walls of the surrounding buildings.

⁸¹⁵ M. Naudé, 'Heritage Assessment (Architectural) of buildings on the farm Mooifontein – Middelburg-Arnot (Mpumalanga Province)', June 2013, pp. 42-43, <<http://www.sahra.org.za/heritage-reports/heritage-statement-farm-mooifontein>>, Updated: s.a. Accessed: 2014-09-14.

b. Does it contribute to the character of the neighbourhood, streetscape or square?

Pietermaritzburg is well-known for its red brick buildings and although the white exterior of the Church of the Vow visually contrasts to the reddish colour of its neighbouring buildings, they each form part of this unique landscape, each having its sense of place within the neighbourhood.

The Church of the Vow is also one of the few buildings with gables still left in Pietermaritzburg which contributes to the character of the inner city. Instead of competing with neighbouring buildings, its aesthetic qualities and attractive garden compliments the surrounding streetscape where it is nestled in the hub of Pietermaritzburg, between contemporary shopping complexes and a taxi rank. The building still remains a feature in this living landscape and is still preserved in spite of the pressures and challenges posed by urban development.



Figure 163: The Church of the Vow today, between contemporary buildings in Pietermaritzburg⁸¹⁶

c. Does it form part of an important group of buildings?

The Church of the Vow forms part of the Msunduzi Museum's Voortrekker Complex, which consists of other historical buildings.

⁸¹⁶ Photo: E.E. Henning, 15/12/2013.

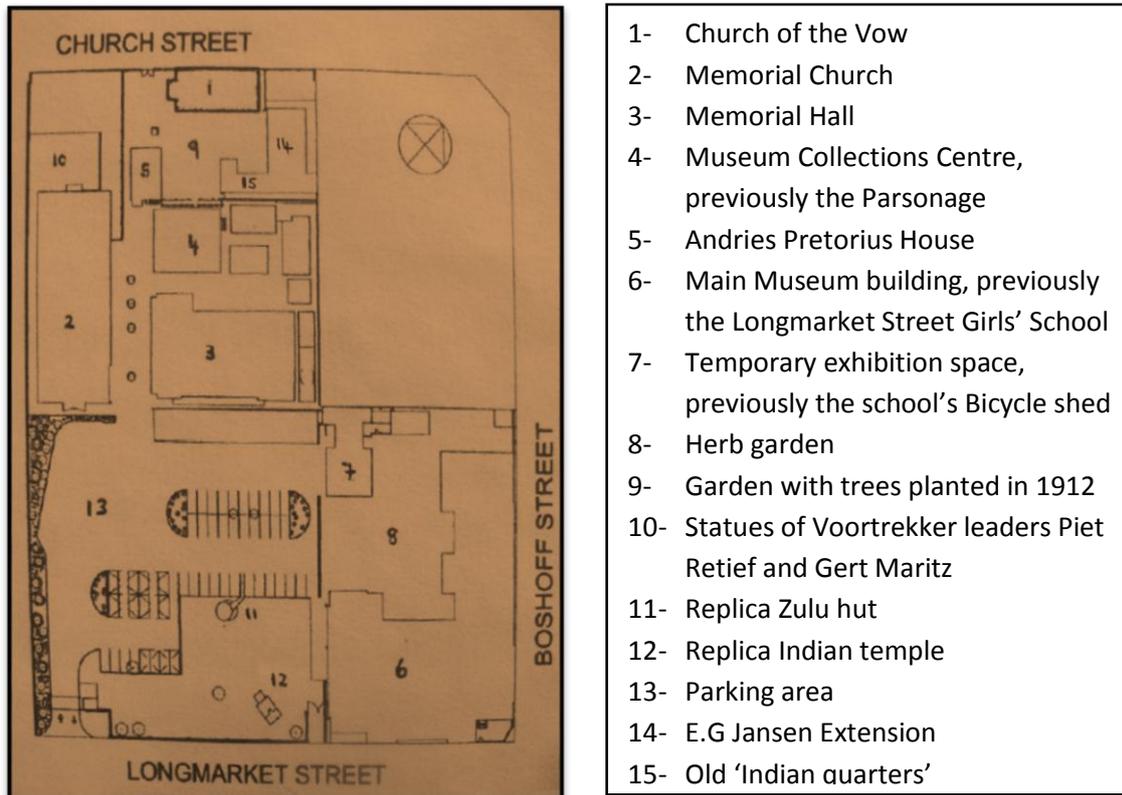


Figure 164: The Museum Complex⁸¹⁷

The E.G. Jansen Extension was built in the 1950's when the Church of the Vow became too small to accommodate the museum exhibits. It was done in sympathy with the architectural style of the Church of the Vow. It also contains a gable with a relief panel depicting the Voortrekkers.

The site also contains the Memorial Church (built early 1960's) with the Vow in large letters on one of its walls, the Church Hall (1950's), the dwelling of Voortrekker leader Andries Pretorius (dismantled in Edendale, just outside Pietermaritzburg, and re-erected on the Museum premises in the 1970's), and the old parsonage (1950's) that now serves as a storage area for the Museum collection. The building formerly known as the 'Indian quarters' is also located on the Museum site.

Statues of Voortrekker leaders Piet Retief and Gert Maritz made by the sculptors Coert Steynberg and Jo Roos respectively, have also been erected on the site.⁸¹⁸

⁸¹⁷ Adapted from drawing: Msunduzi Museum, Pietermaritzburg: *Church of the Vow, Church Street BDY*, 23/04/2012.

⁸¹⁸ M.J. Swart *et al.* (red.), *Afrikanerbakens*, pp. 244-247.

The Church of the Vow is bordered by an attractive garden with benches. Two of the trees date back to the opening of the Museum in 1912, when they were planted during the opening ceremony.



Figure 165: Garden next to the Church of the Vow⁸¹⁹

The Voortrekker Complex is situated next to the old Longmarket Street Girls' School building – its foundations dating back to the late 19th century and now houses museum exhibitions. One of the buildings that relate to the period when it served as a school is the old bicycle shed. The site also includes a beautiful herb garden and parking area for visitors.



Figure 166: Aerial view of the Museum Complex and the Church of the Vow (top left with red roof) within the Pietermaritzburg streetscape⁸²⁰

⁸¹⁹ Photo: E. Henning, 12/09/2014.

⁸²⁰ Photo: Google Maps, <https://maps.google.co.za>.

5.9 Conclusion

The Church of the Vow has high historical significance not only because it contributes to our knowledge about the Battle of Blood River as an important event in South Africa's history and that of KwaZulu-Natal. It has strong association with important historical figures such as past presidents J.N. Boshoff and M.W. Pretorius, Voortrekker leader Andries Pretorius, Special Commissioner Henry Cloete and many others. The building provides insight into the life and times of the Voortrekkers, the importance of religion, beliefs and traditions, people's need for land and the relationship between different cultural groups.

As a prominent historical landmark, the building has social significance as a space which teaches us about our past that we can learn from, where different cultural groups can meet and debate issues pertaining to history and cultural interaction in an effort to move forward. It is an excellent example of how different communities attach different value to heritage. The building's importance to the Afrikaner community contrasts that of other cultural groups who attach little or no value or negative value to the building. The building's history assessed within a new context, can contribute to bringing different cultural groups together, making this building accessible to all.

The building has aesthetic significance because of its appealing Cape Dutch features and other decorative elements, and its adjacent garden with historical trees makes it an attractive element within the centre of Pietermaritzburg in the midst of contemporary buildings. The atmosphere inside the building evokes strong emotions for different cultural groups. The building has become an important symbol in the Afrikaner community being used in books, posters, artwork and so forth.

The building has scientific significance from a Historical Archaeological point of view, since it was able to yield site specific information about its past use. As one of the oldest buildings from Voortrekker origins in Pietermaritzburg, and one of few left with Cape Dutch gables, it contributes to our knowledge about the life and times of a previous era. The building is also important within a broader context since the Dutch Reformed Church congregation in Pietermaritzburg is listed as number 25 of 100 oldest Dutch Reformed Church congregations in South Africa.

The building has spiritual significance as the first permanent church building constructed in Pietermaritzburg. It became an important space where people from different races and denominations came together for church services. The building still has the ability to evoke strong emotions and it is still an important religious space for some, especially within the Afrikaner community.

The building has architectural significance as one of the first permanent structures built in Pietermaritzburg and the oldest example of a church, particularly a Voortrekker church built in Pietermaritzburg, reflecting the skills and knowledge of this community of building materials and techniques. Its past renovations and current exhibitions were done in sympathy, skilfully blending in 'new' elements with the 'old', contributing to the architectural integrity of the building. The building has a unique character of its own because of its historical layering and forms an important part of Pietermaritzburg's architectural heritage. The building's Cape Dutch features and its association with other historical buildings within a complex is a definite landmark in the city.

The building has spatial significance as a provincial heritage site and as part of a group of historical buildings and an appealing garden, creating a feature in the surrounding neighbourhood and contributing to the character of the streetscape. It is a prominent visual and historical landmark.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUDING REMARKS

It is clear the Church of the Vow, as a heritage object and proclaimed provincial heritage site, is a place of cultural significance with special historical, social, scientific, aesthetic, spiritual, architectural and spatial significance value because of its recognized importance within the Pietermaritzburg community and KwaZulu-Natal, and its ability to contribute to our understanding of the city and province's past.

This study contributes to a better understanding of the building's development over time and provides some insight into the people who built and used the building. This attractive Cape Dutch building is a feature in the urban setting of Pietermaritzburg and one of the few structures of Voortrekker origins left in the city. It has been an important symbol in the Afrikaner community and can now potentially have significance to other cultural groups in Pietermaritzburg and KwaZulu-Natal.

This study is also important in understanding the building's cultural significance within a democratic South Africa, an assessment of its heritage value based on the Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter and South African Heritage Resources Act (Act 25 of 1999).

It is recommended that the management of the Msunduzi Museum draws up a heritage conservation management plan for the Church of the Vow. Currently maintenance and renovations are mainly carried out by the Department of Public works and such a plan could assist in retaining and protecting the significance of the site.

The Church of the Vow would not have been built if not for a determined community. It was built in times of hardship and barely survived the test of time. It has undergone many changes and threats by development over the years but was rescued with the same determination. Today we can appreciate the building as a testimony of a community's love for a humble structure and which contains within its walls many untold stories. Through this study, which covered the period 1838-1938, many of these stories are now documented through the use of primary and secondary sources, and can hopefully create a better understanding of the building's social value and significance as a historical landmark – a building constructed by

people from different races and nationalities and where at some stage, different cultures and denominations came together for one purpose only - to serve the same God. The building can also be appreciated by visitors from other provinces and countries because the making of a vow to God is not associated with the Voortrekkers alone and the Church of the Vow is not the only structure which had been built in fulfilment of a promise to an upper Being.

This study also shows that museum collections are an important source of information, such as the snuffbox of J.S. Laffnie and photograph of 'Outa' Flink, which revealed important details about the Church of the Vow and its cultural significance. They contribute to our understanding of the involvement of different cultures in the construction of the building. By thoughtfully developing museum acquisitions policies, they can lead the way in the shaping of collections and the contribution they will make towards South African historiography. Although the Msunduzi Museum collection has made a valuable contribution in the understanding of the history of the Church of the Vow and the people who formed part of it, there is a huge gap, especially regarding the involvement of other cultures in the building's past. There was no proper acquisitions policy developed during the early years of its existence and by now most people who would have had knowledge about the building's history are no longer alive.

From the Museum's origin in the little Church of the Vow in 1912, it has expanded and continuously transformed. A hundred years later it is, together with Ncome Museum, part of one institution – The Msunduzi Museum – housing the history and material culture of all South Africans in an effort to encourage reconciliation, nation-building and social cohesion.

I would like to conclude with the words of Prof. Jeff Guy in his article 'Reinterpretations of Zulu perceptions of the Boer/Zulu conflict in the 1830's':

“What is the lesson for us as we now reflect on this battle from a totally new perspective, as members of a democratic South Africa? That historical study is always a process, that our conclusions have always to be tentative and open to argument. That historians should look

carefully at the sources and always keep in mind that effective perspectives of the past require continual examination and reinterpretation.”⁸²¹

Much had been written about the Battle of Blood River which has over the years become a much contested issue, which includes the Church of the Vow which was a result of this battle, built in fulfilment of a vow the Voortrekkers made to God. This study may challenge some popular beliefs or views and provoke new debates. This study offers new perspectives on the history and meaning of the building and recognises those groups who have contributed to its existence and preservation. The study encourages respect and an appreciation for this building amongst South Africans, and as J. Maphalala emphasised at the Courageous Conversations Conference held at Ncome Museum for the 175th anniversary of the Battle of Blood River – “we should not shy away from unity in diversity”⁸²².

The Church of the Vow is a historic place and forms an important part in the history of South Africa. It has a lasting value and is part of South Africa’s unique, irreplaceable, and non-renewable heritage resources which needs to be preserved for future generations. The building can contribute significantly to research, education and tourism, playing an important part in understanding our divided past, from which we can all learn from. Although it is a monument from the past dealing with emotional and controversial issues, it can enrich our lives today and can assist to encourage understanding and respect between different cultural groups and beliefs.

⁸²¹ Msunduzi Museum Library, Pietermaritzburg: B477/99, J. Guy , ‘Reinterpretations of Zulu perceptions of the Boer/Zulu conflict in the 1830’s’ in *The re-interpretation of the Battle of Blood River/Ncome*, (compilation of seminar papers, University of Zululand), 1998-10-10, p. 54.

⁸²² J. Maphalala, comment during the Courageous Conversations Conference, Ncome 6-8 November 2013.

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