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The Union Buildings: reflections on Herbert Baker's design intentions and unrealised designs

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When assessing the architectural merits of the Union Buildings the design thinking of Baker should be considered. He expressed himself on these matters in various texts throughout his productive years. Not all of these have been available to the critic. This article attempts to make his thinking available to the critic and researcher, especially in terms of applying the tenets of the Grand Manner, as well as abortive aspects of the design, particularly as regards the proposed Temple of Peace and Via Sacra.

Die Uniegebou: bespiegelings oor Herbert Baker se ontwerpbedoelings en onverwesenlike ontwerpe
As ons die ontwerpmeriete van die Uniegebou wil waardeer, moet die ontwerpendenkyse van Herbert Baker in ag geneem word. Tydens sy produktiewe jare het hy homself in verskeie tekste ten opsigte hiervan uitgedruk. Nie al hierdie tekste was voorheen tot die kritieks se beskikking nie. Hierdie artikel poog om sy denkyse aan die kritieks en navorser beskikbaar te stel, veral wat die toepassing van die Grand Manner betref, asook gebrekkige aspekte van die ontwerp soos dit op die voorgestelde Tempel van Vrede en die Via Sacra betrekking het.

The Union Buildings is the most public artistic endeavour in South Africa. For any assessment of its architectural merits it would be prudent to revisit Baker’s own writings rather than later interpretations.¹ Many of these have previously not been available for review when making such assessments, leaving much to the interpretation of the critic. Therefore, some are offered here for the first time to researchers.

In Baker’s essay in The State of 1909 (p. 512), he states that the purpose of the paper:

... is to plead for the revival in the laying out of and designing of our cities and buildings on those principles of largeness of conception, restraint, and subdivision of detail to a central idea which inspire what has sometimes been called ‘the grand manner’.

His resorting to a style

which may perhaps suggest the affection and stiffness into which architectural style crystallized at the end of the eighteenth century (Baker, 1909: 512)

was prompted by his reading of Reginald Blomfield’s (1856-1942)¹ The Mistress Art (1908), “one of the most useful books on architecture that has been written for many years” (Baker, 1909: 516). It might thus prove fruitful to look at the examples covered by this book, since these are the same as those called upon by Baker in his article, other than those of which he himself had had first hand knowledge.

The first cited by Blomfield (1908: Chapter V) is the “Grand Manner” as expressed in Egypt and Greece. In the Egyptian examples cited, such as the Temple of Ammon (Amun) at Karnak (1520-323 BCE)³ or the Temple of Hathor at Denderah (110 BCE-68 CE)⁴, Blomfield uses these as an almost terrifying persistence of tradition right through to the Ptolemeic Temple of Horus at Edfu (116 BCE)⁵ of a grand manner of symmetry and monumentality with sharply delineated light and shadow.

I call your attention to this tremendous architecture ... in order that you may learn the lesson it teaches of finely considered mass, and of the effect it got by the simplest forms of construction properly handled. Here then, in this monumental simplicity, in this reliance on grand scale and the cumulative effect of a series of buildings set out on an ordered plan, we find one of the elements of the ‘grand manner.’ The central idea is predominant everywhere, it is never sacrificed in detail, but serenely maintains its
In the examples of Pergamon and Hellenistic art (Blomfield, 1908: Chapter VI), he speaks of the Hellenes' evolution of Greek art as a response to the site, the development of the picturesque in the assembling and composition of different elements, and the synthesis of sculptural embellishment, ritual and architecture.

The example of Rome (Blomfield, 1908: Chapter VII) provides lessons of architecture as "means to an end ... not in the least oppressed by the burden of styles" (Blomfield, 1908: 247) and a certain largeness of conception as one of the principal elements ... a certain distinction of mind which rises clear of details to some predominant idea. (Blomfield, 1908: 250)

No obstacle seems to have daunted her [Rome's] architects; rocks were cut away, valleys raised, immense engineering works were carried out to form the substructure of their buildings. (Blomfield, 1908: 254)

Blomfield (1908: 256) finds sufficient evidence left of the Roman world to suggest the principles by which her architects worked:

1. They attached vital importance to symmetrical planning. Hemicycle and exedra balanced each other on either side of the courts, canted angles necessitated by one side of the ground were reproduced on the other, whether necessitated or not.

2. The planning proceeded on main axial lines.

In *The Grand Manner: France* (Blomfield, 1908: Chapter VIII) comes the remarkable passage:

...French architects had definite principles to guide them in dealing with the multifarious problems in laying out a city. They were habituated by their training to consider the whole as greater than the part, [my emphasis] they had learnt from the first to consider buildings not as units, but as parts of a larger scheme, they were trained in the faculty of realising in imagination vast perspectives, the blocking out of great masses of building and their linking up in consecutive design. (Blomfield: 1908: 278-9)

In conclusion Blomfield (1908: 294-295) summarises that what binds all these expressions of the grand manner:

... is to be found in a lofty ideal and a power of imagination that rises superior to the entanglements of detail. Each of these works [of the examples cited] was the embodiment of an intellectual conception, far-reaching in its range and unaltering in its purpose. This I hold to be the true interpretation of the Grand Manner in Art. ... Great architecture ... has been great in so far as it has set itself to realise noble aims, and to embody in concrete form noble thoughts, and aspirations which lie beyond the reach of fashion. It is for the artist to devote his life to this high and austere ideal. It is thus that he must justify his place in the splendid succession of art:

Still nursing the unconquerable hope
Still clutching the inviolable shade.

[Sir Edwin Arnold (1832-1904) The Scholar-Gipsy I. 211]

Obviously this text both challenged and inspired Baker. Its publication was timely for he was about to receive the first large commission of the twentieth century anywhere in the world, then known as the New Government Offices. And the Colonial government (1906-1910) of the Transvaal Colony (1902-1910) was inspired to be extravagant in funding the project.

His paper submitted to The State in May of 1909 was either directed by prescience or inside knowledge of his appointment to the commission, since this was not formally made until the project had been given parliamentary sanction as last of the business of the Transvaal Colony (1909) but before the first sitting of the Parliament of Union in Cape Town (1910).

In this essay Baker refers to all the examples given by Blomfield but lays particular emphasis on the example of Pergamos, which informs us of his thinking when selecting Meintjeskop for the sitting of what came to be known as the Union Buildings. In this he directly quotes Blomfield (Baker, 1909: 516):
The general result, as seen from the plain, was this: the Royal Palace and garden, the temple of Athene, and the immense altar of Zeus formed an immense composition on the segment of a curve, lining the ridge and encircling the theatre in the hollow of the breast of the hill below; and then, to form a line of arrest, to check as it were the sense of slipping down the hill, the architects set this terrace along the face of the hollow.

He states provocatively that:

Table Mountain would dwarf any work of human hands which attempted to vie in scale with it. It would be easier to imagine Pergamos or Halicarnassus growing out of any semi-circle of cliffs that stretch from Muizenberg to Simon’s Town, or rising from any of the encircling hills of Pretoria or Bloemfontein. (Baker, 1909: 520)

Here he seems to be allying himself directly with the proponents of having Pretoria as a single capital, a position from which he later distanced himself (see later).  

In reference to the Romans, Baker (1909: 517) says that

... their vistas were not such as we are accustomed to in our gridiron colonial streets, with nothing at the end to see but a maze of wires and poles, but were a continual perspective of alternate light and shade, with centralised features of beautiful architecture.

... Here [in South Africa] the landscape is so bare in detail, and so vast and grand in its general features; that the design and disposition of buildings and their surroundings must be conceived on a monumental scale to be in harmony with the work of nature. Our cities and buildings – like our constitution – should be conceived on a comprehensive scale as a whole.

We hear in this conception of wholes echoes of Blomfield’s writing - “They were habituated by their training to consider the whole as greater than the part” (cited above) - and a resonance with the philosophy of “Holism” (1926) of Jan Christian Smuts (1870-1950).  

Baker, at that time had close dealings with Smuts, although he held that:

He has, it is true, little appreciation for the decorative qualities of art; he has given little thought to such delights. ... (Baker, 1944:190)

Smuts, through his duties as Minister of both Education and Finance, featured large in Baker’s life at the time of the Transvaal Colony. Baker had been instrumental in advising Lord Alfred Milner (1854-1925) in the re-establishment of the Department of Public Works and the making of recommendations as to appointments in the architectural division.  

By the time the Transvaal Colony was granted Responsible Government (1906) Piercy Eagle (1875-1932) was Superintending Government Architect.  

At this time those projects inaugurated by Smuts were royally funded.  

The last project of the period where Smuts’ authority held sway was the Union Buildings.

Smuts himself was one of the architects of Union. He had too, in 1908, compiled his paper Suggested scheme for South African Union (Smuts, 1908). Smuts’ scheme was probably more than that. He seems to have had a sense of systems within systems, and probably held political systems to be socially cohesive. His ambition for Pretoria as capital of a united South Africa was, at that time, already being concretised in the offices of Public Works. The young George Esselmont Gordon Leith (1886-1965) was taken into the Department in 1906.

He spent his energies and talent on the huge project for a civic center in preparation of a time soon, it was believed, that Pretoria would become capital of the united South Africa. The Colony (under self government since the installation in Britain of the Liberal Party under Sir Lionel Bannerman), had purchased the extent of land where the Old Town Hall now lies at its centre.

When Union came, Smuts and the Prime Minister, General Louis Botha (1862-1919), were persuaded to abandon the idea of Pretoria as sole capital. Instead Baker was asked to identify a site for a new administrative headquarters for Pretoria as Administrative Capital. Baker (1927:
63) later reminisced:

... the question of temperature came to the aid of those who advocated the rejection of a site in the centre of the town first chosen for the purpose - and the selection of a more ambitious position on the surrounding hills. A tempting site to the south, with a northern or sunlit aspect for the buildings, was rejected in favour of a kopjie on the other side of the valley, facing south and nearer the centre of the city, on the other end of which, a mile or so away, Government house had been already built.

We may ask as to why temperature should be the overriding concern. Baker does not make overt his considerations but it would appear that the prominent visual aspect of the site was in fact the determining factor so as to create the impact of the Grand Manner, and arguments as to the role of temperature and climate only used later.

A further justification (Baker, 1927: 63) was the pragmatics of locality in terms of the most recently constructed seat of authority in the Transvaal Colony, done to Baker's design, the then Governor General's House (later the Presidency, now the Presidential Guest House). 14

He gives a further clue as to the arguments for the selection of the site that

appealed to the scholarship and imagination of General Smuts, and to the wisdom and will of the Prime Minister, General Botha. ...(Baker, 1927: 63),

which no doubt alludes to discussions he would have had to classical antiquity as precedent, as it served Greek democracy and Roman republicanism.

An unpublished reminiscence, probably by Clelland,15 (s. n.; s. p.) recalls:

The Union Buildings was the next [after the Pretoria Station] work of magnitude and the names of those responsible for the conception of this magnificent building will go down to posterity, for their imagination and forethought in choosing a beautiful site. ... There was some criticism of the site, and in this connection it may not be amiss to quote the words of the Earl of Selborne [William Palmer, 1859-1942]16:

"The site of the Union Buildings has been criticised, but I have no sympathy with the critics. I say that the people who chose this site have imagination and that they have chosen one of the finest sites in the world and when those buildings are erected - those most important buildings - of the new and greater Pretoria, people will come from all over the world to wonder at the beauty of the site, and to admire the forethought and courage of the men who selected it."

As the project developed, Smuts was consulted and kept closely informed of developments17:

I showed some rough sketches to General Smuts, and then he went with me to the site. He, with his quick insight and imagination, at once visualized the idea and its power to give dignity and beauty to the instrument of Government and the symbol of Union. ... General Smuts told me there and then to go ahead with my sketch plans. (Baker, 1944:58)

Baker relieved Leith from Public Works and employed him to prepare many of the sketch plans for the project. Rees-Poole (see endnote 12), who had been one of Baker's first articled pupils at the Cape during the South African War (1899-1902), was tasked with the construction drawings.

Baker (1927: 64), with possibly some sense of having trumped a nation, remembers:

... The engineering work and the foundations were, fortunately, well advanced before the first Union Parliament had assembled at Cape Town and the public quite knew what had happened. A scheme which, when it was known, was considered so extravagant and fanciful for Government offices, to be built, moreover, in the Transvaal of which the other poorer Provinces were a little jealous, might otherwise have had some difficulty, even under such a strong Government, of withstanding an attack of parliamentary and journalistic criticism.

The completed design had its critics, not least of whom was Sytske Wopkes Wierda (1839-1911), the ousted head of Departement Publieke Werken under the old Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek (1856-1902).

Later, when presenting his scheme to an audience in Britain, Baker
(1927: 64) felt again the need to defend the amphitheatre:

The amphitheatre is formed for the main part on the natural levels inherent in the site and the design. Between the level of the ground floor terrace and that of the upper or back road, rising steps and platforms fit naturally into amphitheatre form round the outer portion of the semi-circle under the colonnade. The inside portion of the semi-circle facing the central rostrum has been deliberately sunk as a little amphitheatre. ... All over the empire, where the climate can generally be depended upon, such out-of-door meeting places do and will, I believe, still more in the future, become of public and national importance. I have seen many such open-air durbars, as they are called in India, and two indabas recently in Rhodesia [now Zimbabwe]. The place is sometimes temporarily built, if built at all, and therefore lacks the dignity, which an ordered architectural form can give. Surely, too, with the advent of loud speakers, large stadia or amphitheatres may become in the future essential architectural necessities in all countries.

Then late in life, in his autobiography, Baker (1944:59) returns to the issue:

When the designs were made public the chief criticism ... concentrated round the 'amphitheatre' ... What was the use of this expensive and unheard-of thing? It had been adopted on the authority of Botha and Smuts - backed by some influence from Milner's young men - and its value was surely proved when a large crowd gathered there to welcome Botha back from the conquest of South-west Africa\footnote{15}; and a second time when Smuts returned victorious from the long campaign in East Africa.\footnote{16} He told me that from the tribune he spoke to 8,000 people there, all of whom could hear.

Baker found himself vindicated and although the Union Building was extravagantly expensive - some £1 500 000 (today estimated to be more than R300 000 000) - each contemporary presidential inauguration proves him even more so.

When it comes to stylistic influences Blomfield's injunction that this be subsumed in the greater vision should not be forgotten. Baker (1909: 522) had expressed his own opinions in *The State*:

We hear much nowadays of an original South African style, but it will never be achieved through copying and imitating borrowed detail, but only through impersonal subordination to the larger ideals and conceptions of architecture. We must choose the primitive and more eternal instruments of the art of building, either using the column and lintol alone, as the Greeks did, or combining the column with the arch and the vault and the dome, as the Romans. Then we must use these features, or whatever others we may choose, sparingly and only where necessary, without fear of repetition, which is often the best means of obtaining the most valuable quality of architecture, namely rhythm. We must welcome rather than shun bare wall-surface, which is a quality of all great architecture, though rare chances of it are given by the exigencies of modern buildings. 'Great spaces washed with sun' are a characteristic of our landscape. It is the south African architect's privilege ... to have always to hand the most valuable of all materials for his craft... warm sun bathed wall surfaces contrasted with deep cool shadow.

And so we have it all in the Union Buildings as described later by Baker (1927, 66):

The southern, or sunless in that hemisphere, aspect of the front façades, which are of great length as demanded by the steep contours, when seen from below and at a distance, does indeed tell against its beauty, especially at mid-day, when the side elevations are nearly sunless also on the other hand at the building itself the long shadows that never forsake the front terraces and the amphitheatre, afford coolness and absence of glare, so invaluable in a hot bright climate, and the beauty of contrast of light and shade. These are more than compensation for the loss of effect from the distant view.

The design of the building without continuous verandas, with only moderately thick walls, and rooms not very high, as rooms are wont to be in the tropics, its shutters and deep eaves, seems to suit the climate of Pretoria, where altitude counterbalance latitude.

Over and above the climatic response of the design, the other issue that required attention was the selection of materials for construction, and again Baker (1927: 66-67) was sensitive to the local needs:

The basement and ground floor of the buildings above the granite plinth are faced with a local light-coloured sandstone, which, when the work was some way advanced, was
found to contain nodules of iron pyrites. Fearing discoloration and possible decay from this cause, the stone was changed above the ground floor. But after the test of 18 years our fears have fortunately not been justified, as the iron has caused no decay and has dyed the stones with an infinite variety of light tints of yellow and red amid the natural cream white of the stone, with only an occasional strong patch of brown green iron stain. This colour effect on the rounded punched surfaces of the masonry is surprisingly beautiful. In some of the retaining walls only, not sufficiently protected from damp behind, there is some flaking of the stone due presumably to the crystallisation of the earth salts and some excessive discoloration from the iron pyrites.

Inside, the main corridors, courts, and staircases, are faced with hard red sandstone. It is the best building stone perhaps in the Transvaal, but its red colour was not thought to be pleasant in a land where red is the prevailing colour of the earth and its dust.

The roofs are covered with convex concave tiles made in the Transvaal. The rainwater gutter is hidden by being sunk into the tiles, the under tile being omitted while the protruding conceals the metal gutter from most points of view. The joinery is generally of Indian teak but some of the panelling and all the furniture are of South African woods.

An additional aspect that needs to be examined is that of the setting of the gardens. Here Baker’s hand is lighter although his intentions are clear:

The slope of the hill below the tram road down to the level of the valley has been terraced with walls, steps, and paving built of the rough stone of the neighbouring kopjes, a coarse, iron-stained slate blue-grey and warm brown in colour. On the terraces are beautiful gardens well cared for by the botanists, foresters, and horticulturists of the Department of Agriculture and the Public Works.

The rich dark colour of the masonry of the terraces forms the background for the yellows, oranges, and scarlets, the prevailing colours of the aloes, corydons, mesembrianthemums, and many other, African sun-loving plants which thrive on the hot terrace walls. (Baker, 1927: 67)

As regards the gardens, the memories of Samuel Baikie Cunningham (18 [year of birth unknown]-1974) had also made proposals for broader incorporation of his design into the city:

Baker (1911 in Greig, 1970: 175) had also made proposals for broader incorporation of his design into the city:

I am bringing over to Pretoria a drawing showing a town planning scheme in relation to the Union Buildings.

If you go up to the site, and stand on what will be the West terrace, you will see that there is a magnificent view westward, over the town lands, across the river and up [Struben Street].

A high road and the foreground trees, will hide most of the small villas below the building; and if you can keep open a broad road in a line with the spot where the deep quarry now is, and carry this through the town lands, where it can be brought to the river and connected with the street beyond, we shall have a most magnificent effect some day in the future. I will try and make a place for a memorial of the terrace in front of the building, on the axis of this vista. ...

It should also always be borne in mind that the buildings as they stand are an incomplete project, perhaps
thankfully so. Even in the rapid phase of its conceptualisation there were dramatic changes to the buildings that would comprise the complex and the handling of the building itself.

From a memorandum by Baker (undated) we have the following:

On some first ideas for the Union Buildings which I had sketched out, I showed a low dome on the ridge of Meirjes Kop over a hundred feet above them, and on their central axis between the two domed-towers. Some object I felt was wanted there to perfect the design of the whole as seen between the towers from below and across the valley.

Such a low dome might, in the designer’s fancy, have been a Heroon or National Memorial, or a Temple of Peace dedicated to the ultimate consolidation and happy union of the two races of South Africa. Some ardent Transvalers like to think of it as a Parliament House if ever, as they then hoped, the Parliamentary Capital were removed from Cape Town where it was ordained as a compromise under the Act of Union. From the point on the ridge where this dome might have been, the idea was conceived of a Processional Way or Via Sacra up the narrow saddle-back of the ridge to the apex of the kopje where it sloped on three sides steeply down to the old City of Pretoria lying in the valley below. On this apex a little circular temple was planned.

He later reminisced:

Smuts shared the idea with me of Temple of Peace on the apex of the kopje overlooking Pretoria ... (Baker, 1944:190)

He continues:

The fancy of the Via Sacra and a little Temple of Peace crowning it was revived by General Smuts as a National War Memorial to consecrate the sacrifice of the Great War (known now as the First World War, 1914-1919) in which the two once rival races [Those of Dutch and British European descent in South Africa] fought side by side. He asked me to make detail designs of it with steps and platforms, simple and massive for great sculpture, leading up to a small eight-columned temple.

John Tweed [1869-1933], the sculptor chosen as a young man by Cecil [John] Rhodes [1853-1902] to make the landing of Van Riebeek relief on the front of Groote Schuur and later those on the Matoppos Memorial, was commissioned to make studies and for the purpose it was arranged that he should go out to General Haldane’s Army Headquarters at the front in the last year of the War.

There were to be groups of mounted Burgbers, Gunsners and Airmen upon the pedestals flanking the steps, and friezes of war scenes and types of those who fought, like those he made so well on the podium of the Temple of Pergamos. These subjects were suggested to Tweed for study. His uncompromising independence, which carried too far, had caused his rift with Rhodes, made difficulties, which all General Smuts’ reasonable-ness could not easily overcome. But at a long meeting at his Chelsea studio between the three of us, he consented to the ideas and to collaborate in the general character of the suggested architectural and sculptural design. Shortly afterwards, however, he wrote to say that he withdrew his consent.

In spite of this refusal Smuts sent him to the Army Headquarters at the front as he had arranged. But in six months he produced nothing, neither sketches nor designs, except a small scale slight model resembling the relief on Trajan’s Column at Rome [112 CE], which was totally unsuitable for our site on the kopje top. This famous column was in a court surrounded by torrid arcades, from the different levels of which the reliefs as they rose spirally on the column could be seen. It reminded me of Rhodes’ description of the model, like the Tower of Pisa as he said, made by Alfred Gilbert as his idea for the Matoppos Memorial, which Rhodes thought, so unsuited to the vast scale of the far stretching granite mountains. Tweed was chosen by Rhodes in place of Gilbert as the sculptor of the Memorial. Tweed seemed to repeat the great sculptor’s misconception in his art of the scale of an African background. Tweed never developed his talent for creative composition in sculpture since the early promise of his Landing of Van Riebeek at Groote Schuur and his groups on the Memorial on the Matoppos [1902]. He was content with his well-deserved reputation for portrait sculpture; and like his friend and master, Rodin, rejected the dependence and collaboration necessary when sculpture in its noblest manifestation is allied to architecture.

Smuts was very disappointed, as he had expected much from this direct sculptural expression of the heroism of war. But my designs without a sculptor’s help remained.

The details were beautifully drawn by Gordon Leith, a South African and a valued assistant of mine; himself a good soldier and one of the best of the junior architects employed in the service of the War Graves Commission. Perspectives were made and sent out to General Botha in South Africa. They were sunk, alas! In the torpedoed Galway Castle. Copies had been kept, however, and were sent out to him. But Smuts on his return to South Africa, disheartened by Botha’s death [27 August 1919, shortly after the Convention at Versailles to which he was an active
participant] and by political hostility amongst his own people, the jealous reaction to his greatness, - had to abandon this noble conception of a South African War Memorial. Sadly he saw his ‘solemn temples dissolve into thin air like the baseless fabric of a vision’ [Source of citation unknown]. It might have been one of the greatest of War Memorials; the Via Sacra on the kopje top, between the heroic sculpture leading to the circular temple enshrining a statue of Peace overlooking the hills and valleys round the Capital, and on all sides the receding veld and kopjes vanishing in the blue distance. Smuts, like Rhodes, had a reverence for hill-tops and mountains. The slope of Table Mountain was Rhodes’ ‘church’; on its summit Smuts spoke his famous ‘sermon’ at the unveiling of the memorial to the mountaineers who fell in the War.30

The vision of Meintjes Kep was abandoned and its place taken by the South African War Memorial at Delville Wood, - to overcome perhaps the rivalry of Provinces in the Union, - so eloquently promoted and brought to its successful issue by Sir Percy FitzPatrick [1862-1931].

While Baker here seems dismissive of the idea of Pretoria as the national capital, it is more than likely that this is the wisdom of hindsight, considering his enthusiasm for the scheme and closeness to Smuts at the time of the creation of Union, he being an ardent advocate of this plan.

The “Two Nations” symbolism is also probably a later concoction, as noted by Cunningham:

Perhaps a somewhat fanciful idea of the general conception of the Union Buildings design might be interpreted as symbolizing the position at the time of Union. The great twin rectangular blocks like the two great virile sections of the people, each standing square and strong, with the towers, as their aspirations, pointing up towards the skies - each supporting its ‘Atlas’ with its load of this world’s cares on its shoulders - both securely linked together with a strong bond.

We may be sceptical of certain later interpretations, yet the Union Buildings remains a significant piece of international architecture. While Baker’s Pretoria Station may be seen as a flawed progenitor of the style to be termed “Empire”, which should more rightly be known as “Commonwealth”, the Union Buildings is the prototype and exemplar of the style, equaled - perhaps bettered - by the Legislature and Secretariat complex of New Delhi 31

Since this text is mainly that of Baker himself, we permit him the courtesy of a last word:

The South African Dominion is yet young, and who knows what may yet come there? A capital expressing some great national, Greater-African, or Imperial ideal, or a Parliament House, when the centre of gravity moves northwards with the Union. (Baker, 1927: 67).

We now know that it is to serve the “Greater-African” ideal.

Notes

2 See Fellows, 1996: 157-158
3 See Musgrove: 53, 63; 52, 54
4 See Musgrove: 63, 60B
5 See Musgrove: 63, 51G. 61A.B
6 In the settlement of the discussions of Union, one of the concessions was the agreement to the tripartite capitals – Cape Town as Legislative, Pretoria as Administrative, and Bloemfontein as Legislative, a situation which persists to this day. (See Cameron, 1994: 46).
7 He had conceived the philosophy of “Holism” as a student at Cambridge (1891-1895), but persuaded not to publish by his mentor, H. J. Wolstenholme, a reclusive Cambridge don of Smuts’ student years with whom he corresponded up to his death in 1917. He criticized Smuts’ quest of “Holism” and expressed his own atheism, a belief in a lack of universal system of unity, reason or purpose. (See Cameron, 1994: 46).
10 These include what is now the Pretoria High School for Boys (1902) and the University of Pretoria (1910).
11 Walker, [ongoing]: Leith, George Esselmont Gordon
13 Residuals of the schemes survive. It is possible that the new Pretoria Station building (Baker, 1908)
was envisaged as part of this. The Transvaal Museum was initiated at this time ascribed jointly to Vivian Sydney Rees-Poole (1885-1963) (Walker) and Leith (Greig, 1971: 197-198).


15 See Walker (ongoing) John Stockwin (1879 - 1950).

16 Successor of Milner as British High Commissioner to the Transvaal Colony in 1906 and author of the Selborne Memorandum (1907) which help pave the way to Union.

17 The depiction held in Museum Africa is thought to have provenance from the Smuts Collection (Kennedy, 1966: B448:111)

18 In 1915, after commanding 300 south African troops in the South West African Campaign of the First World War.

19 1916-1919, as Commander of 20 000 British troops in the East African Campaign in the First World War.

20 When the Pretoria Station was commissioned Baker required Roman-type pan tiles. A factory in Vereening was especially commissioned to start manufacture. The same was used again for the Union Buildings, and the venture aiding a gaining of independence by the South African construction industry from foreign suppliers.

21 Was working as an architect in the Public Works Department in Pretoria from about 1908 and was part of the PWD team, with George Sydney Herbert Bradford (1883-1953) and Hendrik Siemerink (18_[year of birth unknown]-1944), working on the Union Buildings (Walker, [ongoing]: Cunningham, Samuel Baikie).


23 Baker was officially appointed on 22 January 1913, with Sir Edwin Lutynes as principal architect, to the Secretariat of the New Delhi administrative complex in India.


25 Probably prepared for Pearse (Geoffrey Eastcott, 1885 - 1968), first Head of School of the Department (1921-1948) of Architecture and Planning, at the University of the Witwatersrand, for a proposed biography, not published (Unfinished draft manuscript in the archives of the Department of Architecture, University of Pretoria).

26 These were ancient funerary monuments of a millennium BCE, also termed a heroum.

27 By this is meant to be understood those of Anglo Saxon and Germanic Dutch descent respectively.


29 He served with the Royal Artillery as Captain and was awarded the Military Cross. After the War he was employed by the Imperial War Graves Commission to lay out cemeteries and design war memorials in France (Howie, 1977: 507).

30 See Smuts (in Blanckenberg), 1951: 222-225

31 Irving, 1981.

Sources cited

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