

Voortrekker Monument

Bloemfontein's Claims Pressed

BACKED BY SOUTHERN FREE STATE

Sub-Committee Visits Town to Inspect Possible Sites

Bloemfontein, backed by the entire southern Free State, put forward strong claims for the erection of the Voortrekker Monument in the Free State capital, when the National Voortrekker Monument Sub-committee, who are inspecting potential sites and centres throughout the Union, visited the town yesterday.

The members of the sub-committee—consisting of Mr E. G. Jansen (chairman), Senator F. S. Malan (Cape Province), Mr C. M. Booysen (Natal), Mr I. M. Lombard (Transvaal), and Mr B. H. J. van Rensburg (Free State), with the secretary (Mr J. J. Scheepers), and the architect (Mr Gerard Moerdyk)—were shown possible sites on the koppie immediately adjoining the Women's National Monument, on a koppie just beyond the cemetery, on Naval Hill and on Signal Hill.

The members were particularly impressed by the Signal Hill site, almost in the heart of the town, with its fine view and excellent setting for a great monument. Mr Moerdyk referred to it as "entirely suitable, but not the only entirely suitable site in the country."

BLOEMFONTEIN'S GEOGRAPHICAL SITUATION

On arrival in the morning, the sub-committee visited the Women's National Monument and the South African War Museum, where they were entertained to tea by Mrs B. J. H. van Rensburg. The Rev. I. J. D. Kruger, chairman of the Museum committee, urged Bloemfontein's claims upon the sub-committee, laying particular stress on Bloemfontein's favourable geographical situation which, he said, should be the real criterion in the selection of a site for a national monument.

After lunch they were met by Mr L. W. Deane (chairman of the finance committee of the Town Council), Mr J. B. Dersley (chairman of the public works committee), the Town Clerk (Mr S. Fawcett-Peck) and the City Engineer (Mr Usher); and at the same time also by a committee representative of the southern Free State towns, consisting of the Mayor of Reddersburg (Lieut.-Colonel H. F. Venter), Mr S. J. du Plessis (Town Clerk of Reddersburg), the Rev. H. F. V. Kruger (Fauresmith), Mr F. W. Coetzer and Mr D. A. Lambrechts. The whole party were taken in motor-cars as the guests of the Municipality, to inspect the sites.

CAPITAL OF A VOORTREKKER PROVINCE

At a subsequent conference in the Council Chamber, presided over by Mr Deane, Bloemfontein's representative, pointed out that Bloemfontein, besides being the most central of all the big urban centres of the Union, and the venue of most national gatherings, was exceptionally well connected by road, rail and air. It was the capital of a Province inhabited largely by Voortrekker descendants, and had numerous Voortrekker associations. They considered the Signal Hill site the best local site, and offered to provide water, light and sanitary facilities if the Monument was erected on the hill. It was the intention of the Council to construct a water conservation scheme on the hill, but the Council was prepared to depart from this intention, even though preliminary steps had been taken, if the Central Monument Committee decided on the hill as the site for the Monument.

BACKED BY SOUTHERN FREE STATE

The southern Free State representatives stated that Bloemfontein, Bethulie, Fauresmith, Jagersfontein, Koffiefontein, Philippolis, Reddersburg, Smithfield, Trompsburg and Zastron were working in co-operation in trying to get the Monument erected in Bloemfontein.

They held that the Monument should rightly come to the Free State, and that Bloemfontein should receive preference within the Province, for the following reasons:

(1). The Free State was the first territory entered by the Voortrekkers after leaving the Cape.

(2). The Free State had played an important rôle in Voortrekker history, and had memorable Voortrekker associations, particularly at places such as Vegkop, Boomplaas, Thaba N'ehu, Winburg and Harrismitth.

(3). The population of the Free State still largely consisted of Voortrekker descendants.

(4). Bloemfontein was a Voortrekker town which became the capital of a Voortrekker Province.

(5). Bloemfontein was the most centrally situated of all the places claiming the Monument, and, as the hub of the railways and the roadways of the Union, the most convenient to reach.

(6). The Women's National Monument was erected in Bloemfontein.

In the selection of a site for that Monument practical reasons, now applicable also to the proposed Voortrekker Monument, had decided the issue in favour of Bloemfontein.

PLACES STILL TO BE VISITED

The places still to be visited by the sub-committee were: Winburg, the first Voortrekker town to be established in the Free State.

Vegkop, in the Hellbron district. Potchefstroom, the former capital of the Transvaal, established by the Voortrekkers.

Pretoria, named after Andries Pretorius.

Ohrigstad, in the northern Transvaal, where many Voortrekkers suc-