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*Cover taken from an engraving of a Bed in the Chinese Taste from
Chippendale's Directory 3rd Edition*

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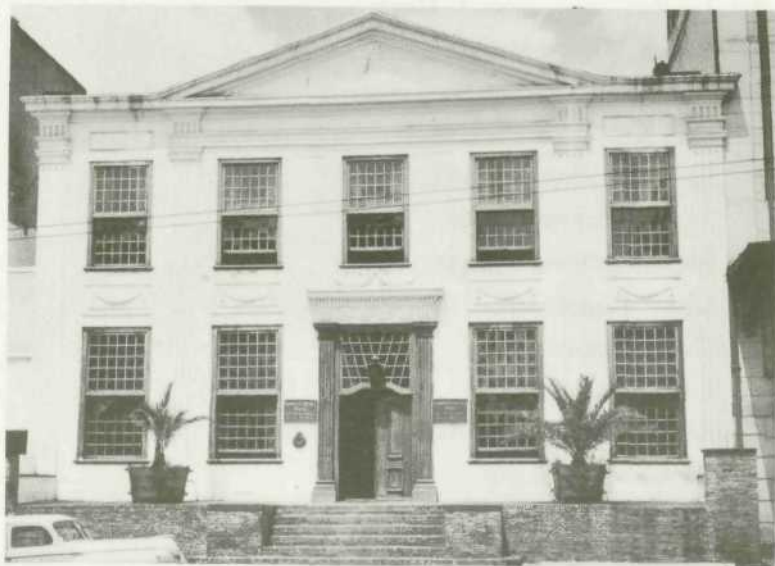
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CAPE DUTCH ARCHITECTURE

by Sir Alfred Beit

Manifestations of old European architecture outside of Europe are scattered and rare. The richest field, one imagines, must be in Central and South America, where churches, palaces and even streets in the baroque style are not uncommon. But there are also the eighteenth century small towns, villages, churches and manor houses of New England, Virginia and the Carolinas, the Georgian churches, forts and cemeteries of Madras, Calcutta and Bombay, the Portuguese churches of Goa and the traces—alas! only traces—of French architecture in Canada, Louisiana and Martinique.

Amongst the great colonising powers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was Holland, shadows of whose architectural wealth are still to be seen in the West Indian Island of Curacao, in Ceylon and the Philippines. Batavia, now Djakarta, is (or was) a monument to the good taste of the Dutch in its happy juxtaposition of Western Town in Oriental setting, as is Penang to the British.

Dutch architecture at the Cape falls into a different category, nearer to the American experience. When Jan van Riebeeck and his small following landed at Cape Town in 1652 with the intention of planting vegetable gardens for the relief of scurvy on board ships making the long voyage to India, he only found a small population of a nomadic yellow race, the Hottentots, just as the early settlers in America found only the Red Indians, who were no more settled in the modern sense than the Hottentots. There was no question therefore of imposing, as in the Far East, European architecture and customs upon a flourishing and ancient civilisation, or of seeking to come to terms with it. A virtually vacant

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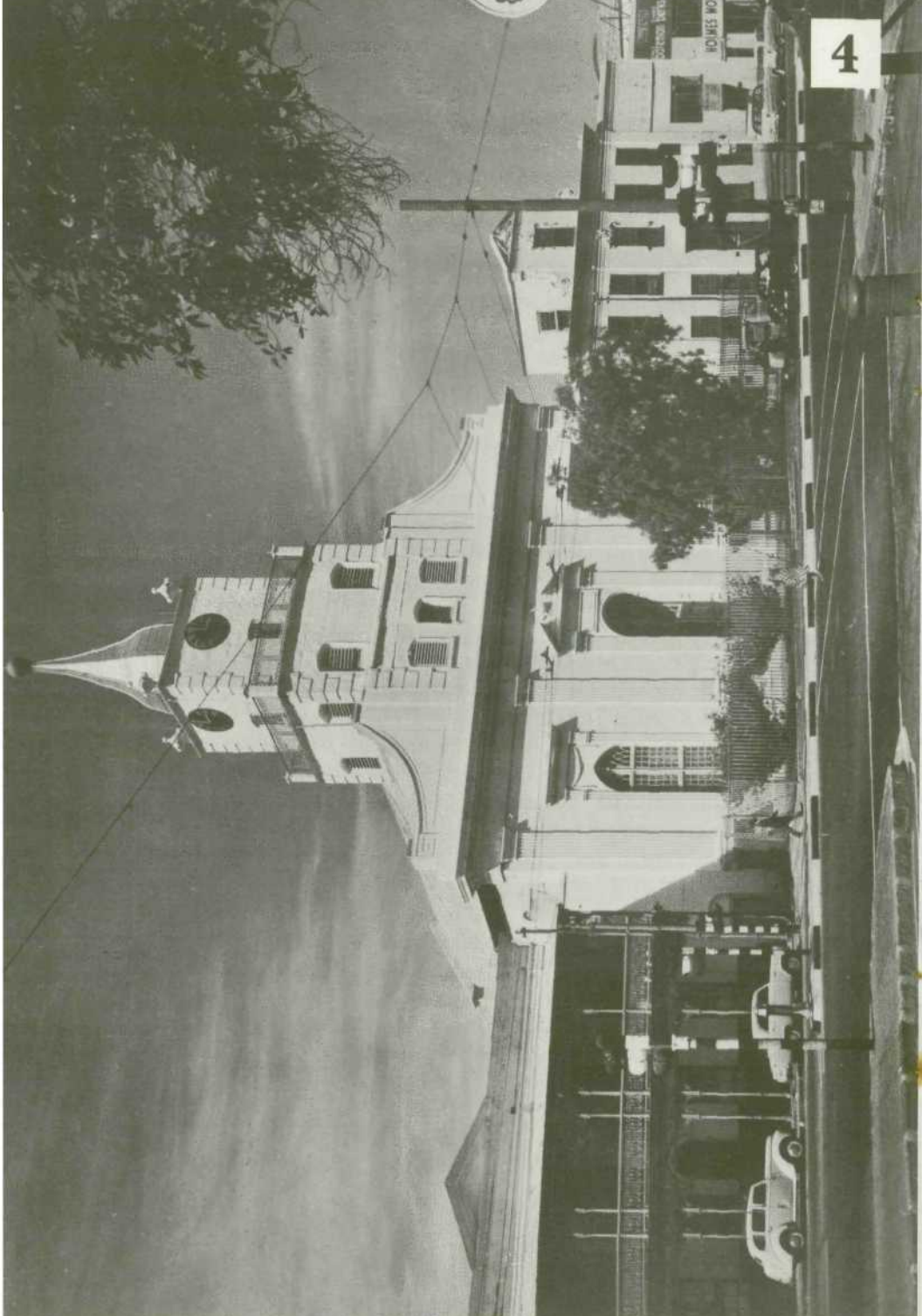


country lay at the feet of the settlers for the asking. The resident tribes, when not exterminated, could, and did, become slaves and concubines.

It is consequently not surprising that van Riebeeck's successors gradually decided to take up grants of this empty (and fertile) land and to become permanent settlers rather than temporary residents in the service of the Dutch East India Company. The original vegetable gardens grew into farms and more and more ships of all nations called at the Cape for supplies. Other settlers came too. The first were some 200 Huguenots, driven out of France after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. German mercenaries, on completion of their service, settled in increasingly large numbers. Indeed, among the Afrikaners of present-day South Africa there are more French and German names than Dutch.

From the point of view of the early settlers the Hottentots did not provide a satisfactory working class any more than did the Red Indians of America. They were for the most part unreliable and lazy and rarely applied themselves faithfully to a task. They copied the faults of the newcomer more readily than his virtues. Consequently the Dutch introduced Malay slaves from Java, just as the Americans introduced negro slaves from West Africa. But these Malays made a far greater impact on the culture of the Cape than ever the negroes did on the American. Many were, or became, skilled joiners, masons and artisans. The evolution of Cape Dutch architecture owes almost as much to them as it does to Europe.

Few architects, sculptors or draughtsmen are known by name prior to the latter part of the eighteenth century. Thibault, a Frenchman, Schutte and Anreith, both German, are well known and certain works can be attributed to them, but not before about 1785. Prior to this, farmers with their imported slaves themselves evolved a style of architecture based on that of Holland, but differing more and more widely



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from it in the use of materials (no bricks being available) and ornamentation. Sun-burnt mud bricks and rubble made the foundations—such as they were—and walls, the latter being plastered. The gable came from Holland but the dashing use of plaster ornamentation gave it a very different look from its counterpart (usually of brick) in the old country.

The louvred screen (see fig. 1*) which generally separated the hall (voorhuis) from the main living-room (agterkamer) was a purely oriental conception and it, together with floors and ceiling beams were made not of European wood but of mahogany or the beautiful but rare South African yellow-wood and stinkwood. Furniture, mostly made by Malays, was based mainly on European models and was made of these woods and others such as beefwood and ironwood, all found in the forests 300 or more miles east of the Cape Peninsula.

The early years of the Dutch Settlement saw little in the way of permanent building. The only building of importance prior to 1700 is the Castle in Cape Town, begun in 1666 and finished in the 1680's. It is in the form of a regular pentagon with a bastion at each point (see fig 2*) and was influenced by the fortifications of Vauban, Louis XIV's military engineer. The bastions were named after the chief titles held by the Prince of Orange: Orange, Nassau, Leerdam, Buren and Catzenellenbogen.† It was embellished in the late eighteenth century, the most beautiful addition being the Kat balcony (see Plate 1) by Anreith, from which Government ordinances were promulgated.

It is sad to relate that in Cape Town itself, once one of the most charming of colonial cities, and always enjoying a site which makes it quite unnecessary to die after seeing Naples, little of the old architecture remains. As elsewhere, it is only in comparatively recent years that a public conscience about, and desire for, the preservation of old buildings has shown itself, and more recently still that the Government has lent a

* From G. E. Pearce. *Eighteenth Century*

Architecture in South Africa, London, 1933.

† C. de Bosdari, *Cape Dutch Houses and Farms*, Cape Town 1953.

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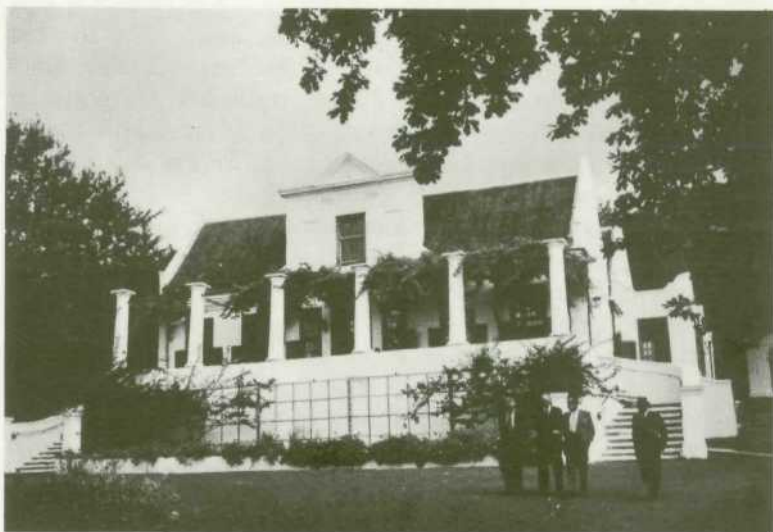
hand in this uphill work. The first book, and a very modest one at that, on the subject was Mrs. Trotter's *The Early Colonial houses of the Cape of Good Hope*, published in 1903 and illustrated with sketches by the authoress. Interest had begun to be awakened when Cecil Rhodes, as Prime Minister of Cape Colony, commissioned Herbert Baker in about 1898 to rebuild Groote Schuur, recently destroyed by fire, as an official residence. Baker's real masterpiece are the Union Buildings at Pretoria dating from the first war, which are anything but Dutch in style. In the opinion of this writer, his adaptation of the Dutch style to modern needs (mainly in the form of private residences) was not at all happy. Other considerations apart, the building of gabled houses of the types which will be illustrated in this article, with two floors instead of one, entirely upsets the balance. It was not until the gabled house gave way to the influence of the Louis XVI style, introduced by Thibault, that the two storied house came into its own. A fine example is the Koopmans de Wet House in Cape Town (see plate 2), now a charming Museum.

Nevertheless, the services of Baker as a fashionable architect were much in demand and the richer residents of South Africa, from about 1910 onwards commissioned him to build their houses, or better still bought old Dutch houses, most of which were in a dilapidated condition or altered out of all recognition, and restored them.

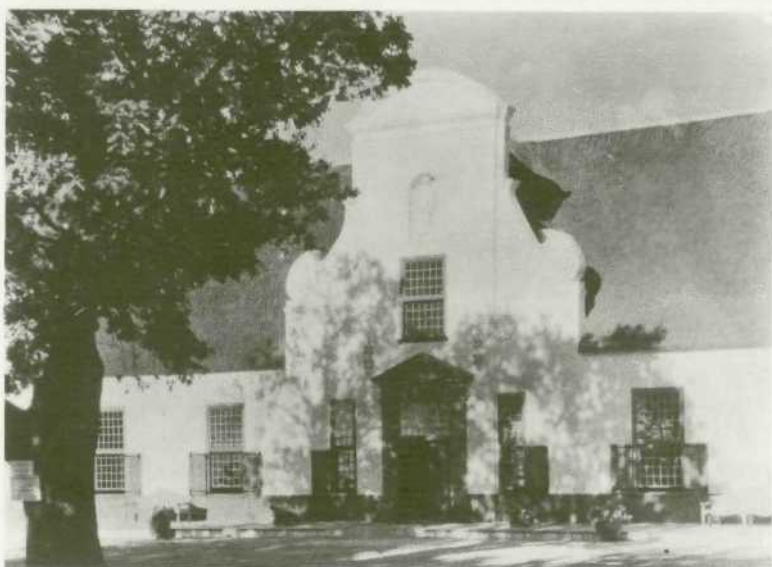
Although little of the old architecture of Cape Town has been preserved a few fine buildings remain. They cannot all be described or illustrated here but I would pick out the Normal College, formerly an official residence, then a high school and now about to become a Museum (see Plate 3). On the plain facade of this late eighteenth century house is encrusted the most lavish enrichments of door and window and a balcony, all in teak. Except for certain gables, to be described later, nothing so baroque as the first floor balcony door (see fig. 3*) exists at the Cape.

* From G. E. Pearce. *op. cit.*

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As a facade group, the Lutheran Church, flanked by the former parsonage on the right (also known as the Martin Melck house) and the sexton's house on the left (see plate 4), is unparalleled in Cape Town. Since the photograph shown here was taken the ugly iron balconies in front of the sexton's house have been removed and the facade restored greatly adding, not surprisingly, to the beauty of the whole. The church was built by Martin Melck, a rich German burgher, in 1776, for the benefit of the growing Lutheran community. The parsonage followed five years later and the sexton's house six years after that. In the 1790's Anreith added a new facade to the church and embellished the parsonage, on both of which can be seen, in plaster, Luther's emblem, a swan. The interior of the church, rebuilt in 1820 in the Gothic style, nevertheless retains, in Anreith's pulpit and organ loft, the finest woodwork in the country. Plate 5 gives a more detailed view of the parsonage, or Martin Melck house, now an antique dealer's showroom and residence.

The country houses now to be described are all, with the exception of those at Tulbagh, within a radius of 40 miles of Cape Town, some being in the peninsula itself, and therefore much nearer. They present a great variety of gables which can be divided into the following classifications:—†

- (1) The plain curvilinear, around 1750.
- (2) The early florid, 1750-1775.
- (3) The late florid, or baroque, 1770-1800.
- (4) The segmental, around 1790.
- (5) The early neo-classical, 1800-1810.
- (6) The middle neo-classical, 1810-1820.
- (7) The late neo-classical, 1820-1840.
- (8) The flat pitched, 1825 and after.

Illustrations are given of all these gables except the first, the curvilinear. La Provence, a property granted in 1694 to the Huguenot Joubert (now a common Afrikaans name), has a beautiful exterior in an exceptionally beautiful setting in

† C. de Bosdari, op. cit.



the French Hoek valley (see plate 6). The side gables are an excellent example of the early florid, while the main gable, dated 1800, is an equally good example of the early neo-classical.

Another good example of the early neo-classical with a gable dating probably from just before 1800, is Rhone (see Plate 7). This beautiful house is on the site of a property granted to Jean Gardé, a Huguenot, in 1691. He died childless, so the name is extinct. Inside is the fine louvred screen of which a drawing is given in fig 1. As stated earlier these internal screens are an importation from the Dutch East Indies, suitable for a hot and not a Northern European climate. With the louvres open a draft can be provided through the house, which is very welcome in these fruit-growing valleys where temperatures of 100-110° F. are common in summer.

At the same time readers will probably have noticed that these gabled houses all have thatched roofs. Apart from the beauty of thatch as a material, and the skill with which it is laid at the Cape, there is no cooler roof in summer nor warmer in winter. But it carries a great fire risk and many Dutch houses have been destroyed as a result. Others, unfortunately, have had their thatch replaced by that curse of modern Africa, corrugated iron. In Cape Town itself, fires in the eighteenth century were so severe that towards the end of the century, and coincident with the arrival of Thibault and others, thatch was forbidden. But instead of using an ugly or unsuitable substitute, gabled houses disappeared and the modified Louis XVI style with flat roof made its appearance as already shown in plates 1-5.

Very close to Rhone is Boschendal (see plate 8). Both are the property of Rhodes Fruit Farms Ltd., and their beautiful condition is due to that company and its founder, Cecil Rhodes, who bought a great number of farms in the Drakenstein Valley towards the end of the last century and amal-

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garnated them into one large fruit-growing venture which still flourishes. He had all the old houses well restored and today they are lived in by the section managers, few of whom, however, are fortunate enough to possess the contemporary furniture such houses need to show them off to best advantage.

Boschendal's main gable is an illustration of the middle neo-classical period. Its *façade* is longer than Rhone's, has solid rather than louvred shutters and *plaster* mouldings which give the impression of a much later date than Rhone, although, in point of fact, there are not many years between them.

Another house with a middle neo-classical gable, though of utterly different design, is Nektar, near Stellenbosch (see plate 9). This gable bears the date 1815 and has a somewhat French appearance. This is one of the houses whose thatch has unfortunately disappeared and has been replaced by corrugated iron.

Two examples will conclude our consideration of the neo-classical gable. Lanzerac (see plate 10) near Stellenbosch, with a late neo-classical gable dated 1830, provides an interesting contrast to Nektar. In the latter the relative shortness of the facade gives the gable the appearance of great height. The Lanzerac gable, although probably not much different in height, appears lower owing to the length of the facade, which is indeed so long that it needs *plaster* mouldings and pilasters between the windows to relieve it. Lanzerac has fine rooms, a good screen and admirable woodwork and it is now a hotel.

The last example of the late period is Tokai (see plate 11) in the Cape peninsula. Here the gable is the flat pitched type and the house is much embellished by a white pillared pergola in place of an open stoep, or terrace. The land, formerly part of Governor Simon van der Stel's[†] grazing rights, was re-granted to a Prussian, Andreas Rauch, in 1792 and the house is now the residence of the principal of a

[†] He died in 1712.



reformatory. It was probably built about 1800, and the flat pitched gable is therefore a particularly early example of a type which only became common after 1825, and which declined in quality in later years.

The architectural sequence sketched above has led to omission of some of the earlier and intermediate types of gable to which reference must now be made. The Cape is particularly rich in examples of the late florid, or Baroque, of which the most perfect is probably the gable at Morgenster (Morning Star), near Somerset West, (see plate 12). Jacobus Hermanus Malan, grandson of the Huguenot founder of this well-known family, built the house in 1786. The back gable, not illustrated here, is as fine as the front one.

The segmented gable, capped more by a chord than by a segment of a circle, is only found in peninsula and not country houses. The most famous are at Groot Constantia (see plate 13) and at Stellenberg, a house actually in the suburbs of Cape Town, (see plate 16). Groot Constantia is unique in having segmented side gables, just as much decorated as the main gable (see plate 14). It is, of course, well known to tourists in South Africa as the original home of Governor Simon van der Stel. It was bought in 1778 by Hendrik Cloete who enlarged and rebuilt it, possibly with the help of Thibault, in the 1790's. It is by far the largest of the gabled Dutch houses; the great width of the rooms is the reason for the huge side gables; their span necessitates the extra decoration on them. The house was completely destroyed by fire in 1925, except for gables and parts of the outer walls, but it was rebuilt and is now a museum, containing interesting contemporary furniture, pictures, china and glass.

But the glory of Groot Constantia is the large wine cellar behind the house. Although Constantia wine does not now enjoy the reputation it had in Jane Austen's day, good wine is made on the property and the great cellar contains a noble double row of vats of French oak. One of Jane Austen's

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heroines found that one glass of the finest Constantia was enough to mend a broken heart!†

The sculptor Anreith's masterpiece are the glazed plaster reliefs in the pediment of the cellar (see plate 15), dated 1791 and representing a bacchanalian scene with Ganymede and *Putti* with grapes, with the hoops of wine-barrels in the background. The effect of these figures in high relief, white on white, in the bright sun is stupendous.

A final word must be said about the later houses, particularly the two-storied houses in the classical style without gables. The latter are by no means common, and illustrated here is one of the best known, *Alphen*, at Wynberg, in the peninsula (see plate 17). It has been in the possession of the Cloete family for several generations, but in 1962 was converted into a hotel. In its present form the house dates from about 1790 but parts of it are older.

At Tulbagh, a charming village 75 miles from Cape Town, in an exquisite fruit-growing valley surrounded by a circle of Dolomite-like mountains rising to 7000 feet are two interesting houses by Thibault. The first is De Wet house, a small house in the village street built in 1812 (see plate 18) which was restored in 1950 by the author of this article and made into an historical monument. It was illustrated in Dorothea Fairbridge's book *Historic Houses of South Africa*, which was published in 1922. When it came to be sold in 1949 it had been completely ruined. The sash bars had gone and the windows were solid glass, while a hideous corrugated iron roof over the stoep bit deep into the facade (which had lost its pilasters) and cut the upper half of the ground floor windows and front door jambs in two, presumably with the object of providing afternoon shade on the stoep, which faces West. Inside, and preserved by ugly paint, was found a pretty screen and some original yellowwood floors and beams, but the entrance hall and the rooms on either side of it retained their original Batavian tile floors.



The second and more important Thibault house in Tulbagh is the Drostdy, or former residence of the magistrate, built in 1804 (see plate 19). Rather strangely for Thibault it does have a gable, but of a very nondescript type, and not altogether happy. The facade in the form of a loggia, providing a shady stoep, is an original feature not seen elsewhere at the Cape.

Those who know South Africa may not be in entire agreement over the choice of houses for this article. Everybody has his favourites but few will disagree over the choice of such outstanding examples as Groot Constantia, Stellenberg, Rhone and Morgenster. But in spite of the ravages of time, neglect and vandalism (as in Ireland) there are many other houses and buildings of beauty, too many to mention in this article. If this description and the accompanying photographs have succeeded in arousing an interest among readers, no better recommendation can be made than to visit the Cape to see this heritage at first hand.

RHONE, GROOT DRAKENSTEIN



Fig 1 Elevation of Internal Access.

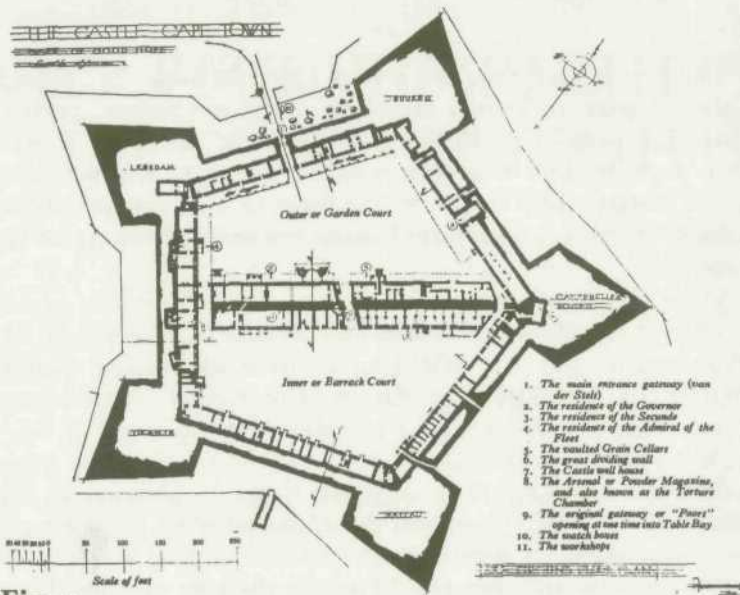


Fig 2

RUST-EN-VREUGDE CAPE TOWN
 DOOR OF FIRST FLOOR BALCONY

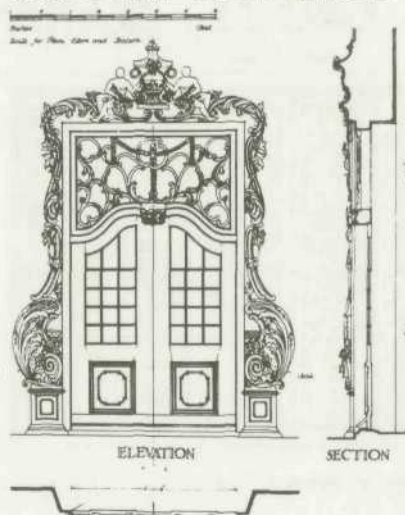


Fig 3

THE PROBLEMS OF HOUSE OPENING

by Hon. Mrs. Oliver Colthurst

(Mrs. Colthurst's family home is Penshurst Place, Kent, which is open to the public and attracts thousands of visitors every year. She is also a great niece of Lord Gort who bought and restored Bunratty Castle so that it could be seen by visitors to Ireland. She lives in the stables of Lough Cutra, Lord Gort's estate near Gort Co. Galway for part of the year. The penalty in rates for moving into the JVash Castle of Lough Cutra, now empty, would eat up the half-crowns of about 4,000 visitors each year, supposing it were opened to the public. An empty house pays no rates, which is the reason so many have fallen into ruin).

Opening a Stately Home to the Public at first sight seems a comparatively simple matter. Merely a question of employing someone to take the half-crowns. But if you take more serious stock of the situation, you begin to realise that there are a great many pitfalls.

Firstly is your house large enough to avoid the Public trudging round your own bedrooms, sitting room etc.? One unfortunate family who live in an open house, have to lunch at breakneck speed in order to leave the dining room clean and crumbless by 2 p.m.

Is your drive in good repair? It will have to be in reasonable order to take coaches thundering up it, and when the same coaches reach your front door is there anywhere for them to park?

Did you realise that you will have to provide lavatories? This will probably mean that you will have to install them specially. You may also have to provide catering facilities, unless you live in or near a village or town that has an ade-

quate supply of restaurants and tea-shops. Even so you must still be prepared for an unending demand for cups of tea and soft drinks.

Organizing a Stately Home is much like running any other type of business; it requires staff. Can your present arrangements cope with all the extra cleaning and maintenance that will be necessary after a great influx of muddy or dusty feet have tramped over your floors? Will you have to buy more electrical cleaning equipment in the form of vacuum cleaners and polishers? Have you got anyone in the house who can answer the telephone, deal with bookings for coach parties, arrange the advertising and answer hundreds of letters of inquiry?

What about Guides? These should be well spoken and educated as they will have to answer questions on the background history connected with the house. Printing costs are very high for Guide Books, Advertising leaflets, Posters, and Postcards. You must be prepared for your telephone bill to soar to alarming proportions.

At the end of this list, which is really only the bare outline of all there is to do, a very gloomy conclusion could be reached. If you are forced to employ extra staff, Guides, Secretary, Cleaners and possibly a Gardener is it not possible that your takings will be exceeded by your increased costs?

In Britain Houses of Historical Interest which are open to the General Public are allowed several major tax benefits. Often this results in an interesting house being maintained and preserved which might otherwise have perished. The main advantage is that in Britain a Stately Home may be run as a business in the eyes of the Tax Authorities. Rates, Repairs and reasonable maintenance may be set against profits. Tax relief is then allowed on losses. Each case is judged on its own merit and naturally the House in question has to be open for a reasonable part of the year. Thus the British Stately Home Owner with a certain amount of capital or

earned income is able to meet his expenses before tax, instead of from his net income.

Unless the Irish Government is prepared to make similar concessions to owners of comparable houses in Ireland, it would be inadvisable to forfeit privacy with no compensation and the strong risk of extra expenses.

HOUSE OPENING AND THE TOURIST TRADE IN GREAT BRITAIN

The following extract from Country Life, March 1962, may interest Bord Failte. In Ireland, tourism is not a sideline but our main source of revenue—all the more reason surely for our tourist attractions to be cared for.

This year's complaints of "Winter lingering in the lap of Spring" must have been checked momentarily by the announcement of the British Travel and Holidays Association that even in January 69,000 overseas visitors came to Britain—nine per cent. more than in the same month of 1961. These statistics followed hard upon the Association's report for the whole of last year, during which the number was no fewer than 1,823,700. By their coming Britain earned an estimated £298 million, of which the dollar-content was equal to £48,400,000. Even more came from the Commonwealth than the United States, contributing £89 million to the total earnings.

In assessing the benefits accruing from this movement, priority should be given to the promotion of international understanding and goodwill that must result from the mixing and mingling of this vast number of guests, from almost all countries, with our own people. There may be cynics who find it incredible that visitors from France, where the cuisine ranks high among the fine arts, could return with friendly feelings towards a people content with the meals typical of some of our hotels and restaurants. Others will not be persuaded that American and Canadian tourists could encourage

their neighbours to come to a land where central-heating is still not regarded as a necessity. But even those who are sceptical of the fostering of goodwill must acknowledge that an invisible export trade worth £300 million a year is something to be encouraged by all reasonable measures for improving the attractions of Britain as a tourist resort.

There may be some people who still look askance at the Historic Buildings Act of 1953 under which £3,700,000 has been expended in eight years in grants towards the acquisition, repair or maintenance of buildings of historic or architectural interest. Some of the buildings approved for grants by the council advising the Government are the property of corporate bodies or local authorities, but the majority belong to families unable to meet the whole cost of repair or maintenance. The spending of public money on privately owned property is obviously a transaction that invites critical scrutiny. It is therefore pertinent to point out that the advisory council require conclusive evidence of the inability of such owners to do the necessary work, the cost of which may run into tens of thousands of pounds, and require in return the regular opening of the house to visitors. Proof of the existence of genuinely hard cases in stately homes is the fact that, because the Minister has not more funds at his disposal, many fine old buildings are lost. Such possessions are unquestionably among the attractions that draw these millions of overseas visitors. Incidental testimony to this fact was provided at the opening last week of an exhibition entitled *Britain's Landscape of Buildings* at the London headquarters of the National Book League. Here are on view no fewer than 200 current books devoted to British buildings. Some of these works are concerned with those stately homes which, having been opened to visitors, have demonstrated their powers of attraction not only to large numbers of tourists from overseas but also to hosts of British residents who come from all parts of the country to see them. As a result of this post-war development

more and more people are realising how rich Britain is in possessions that do not appear in any industrial balance sheet.

*Station:
Tonbridge Wells Central.*

*Hungershall Lodge,
Tonbridge Wells,
Kent.*

18. VI. 63.

Dear Sir,

In the sculptor John Flaxman's account book from 1808 to 1826 are the bills for two monuments he sent to Ireland. They are for the Earl of Massereene, which was shipped to Belfast in 1821 and for Lord or Lady Dunally, which was sent to Ireland in the same year. If any of your readers could tell me where these monuments are I should be deeply grateful.

Yours faithfully,
RUPERT GUNNIS