

# REGIONAL HISTORICAL SOCIETIES

*Marié van Heerden*

To co-ordinate and promote regional historical research at a national level and to stimulate interest in local history, the Institute for Historical Research of the Human Sciences Research Council sent a circular to all local historical societies with the object of publicising its aims, making contact, and initiating discussions on matters of general interest.

The reaction was somewhat disappointing. In the Transvaal only 5 out of 25 bodies responded, in the Cape 16 out of 32, in Natal 6 out of 11, and of the 37 Regional Development Associations only 9 replied. As far as could be ascertained, there are no regional historical societies in the Free State.

A possible explanation for this apathy may be that only the active societies felt inclined to participate in the survey. Generally the societies take an active interest in their local history and are enthusiastic about making contact with the Section for Regional History of the HSRC and with one another.

It also became apparent that a considerable number of these societies work in conjunction with local museums. In such instances the societies appear to be more active, the urge to collect and preserve objects accompanying an interest in and love of the history of the particular area. Some societies aim exclusively at collecting objects for an existing museum while others direct all their efforts towards establishing one.

Events of historical importance have often helped to stimulate interest among local inhabitants and have eventually led to the establishment of historical societies. Such points in history are found in the arrival of the French Huguenots, of the German and British Settlers, or in the battles at Ladysmith, Colenso, Ulundi and Congella. The desire to preserve the historical character of a whole town has also given rise to the establishment of a society.

This journal hopes to induce historical societies to make contact with one another and with the Section for Regional History. To help these societies become acquainted, their activities will be reported from time to time.

## SIMON'S TOWN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Historical Society of Simon's Town was founded in 1960 by Mr H.C. Willis at the request of the Town Council whose object was to conserve the historical records of the town.

The society aims at achieving the following in Simon's Town and district: the collection, collation and preservation of any material of whatever nature; the preservation of buildings of historical interest; the placing of descriptive plaques on buildings and other places of historical interest; the establishment of a local museum. The results of the Society's work are published in the *Simon's Town Historical Society Bulletin*, which is published twice a year (the ninth volume appeared in January 1976).

Other publications are: two guides each suggesting a historical walking tour of Simon's Town; four very interesting and informative brochures covering such matters as a sketch-plan of historic Simon's Town, buildings which are recommended as national monuments, buildings whose history warrants a plaque, and an illustrated description of the Historic Mile of the town.

Through the efforts of the society many historical buildings have been restored, the most important being the Martello Tower and the Commandant's House. Some have also been saved from demolition.

Six historical buildings have been proclaimed national monuments. More than a dozen plaques have been placed, and this has completed the first phase of the plaque-placing project.

The society's main project at the moment is a campaign to take over the Residency (magistrate's court and residence) once the new magistrate's court is built. Another is to ensure that the main street of Simon's Town (at present known as the Historic Mile) is preserved.

The society with 450 members has a permanent locale made available to them by the Town Council, but the Residency, once it becomes available, will probably be turned into a local museum to which the society will be linked. A great deal of historical information and material has been collected and stored.

The President of the society is Councillor G.E. Ferry and the Vice-Presidents are Admiral H.H. Biermann, Dr R.F.M. Immelman, Dr J.B. Scott, Mrs H. Scott, Mrs B.D. Willis and Councillor L.J.D. Gay. The Chairman is Mr H.C. Willis and the Bulletin Editor Mr F.P. Chapman.

## HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF PORT ELIZABETH

The historical society of Port Elizabeth was founded in 1959 to promote interest in the historical past of Port Elizabeth and the Eastern Cape.

It also aims to assist in preserving historic buildings and in collecting relics, information and records of historical interest. It acts as a centre for the collection of historical documents which are then allocated to the appropriate centres such as the Port Elizabeth Museum or the Africana Collection at the Public Library. By this means the documents are made available for study and research.

The society has achieved a great deal towards preserving the cultural and historical heritage of its city: ten buildings have been proclaimed national monuments; No. 7 Castle Hill, the oldest dwelling in Port Elizabeth, has been saved and restored and proclaimed an historical museum; St Mary's Cemetery and Cradock Place have been restored by the City Council and the Sterley Cottages on Castle Hill by the Historical Homes of South Africa; the Memorial Obelisk which previously stood on the Market Square has been resited at the Port Elizabeth Museum.

Lectures and film shows are organised regularly and excursions to places of historical interest are frequently undertaken.

The society has published the following series of historical works:

- C.J. CENTLIVRES, *Old times and odd corners* (Port Elizabeth Series No. 1)
- D. SCHAUDER, *Historic village of Bethelsdorp* (Port Elizabeth Series No. 2)
- M.E. TROUGHTON (comp.) and A. PORTER (ed.), *Index to the registers of Holy Trinity Church, Port Elizabeth 1858—1898* (Port Elizabeth Series No. 3)
- R.S. DONKIN, *Letter-book of Sir Rufane Shaw Donkin* (ed. J.B. Scott, Port Elizabeth Series No. 4)
- C.M. BURTON, *Settlers to the Cape of Good Hope; organisation of the Nottinghamshire Party, 1819—1820* (Port Elizabeth Series No. 5)
- A. PORTER, *The loss of the ship Hercules 16th June, 1796* (Port Elizabeth Series No. 6)

The society also publishes a quarterly bulletin, *Looking Back*.

The Chairman of the society is Dr J.B. Scott and the Secretary is Mrs M. Chappell. The society employs a part-time clerical assistant and has a permanent office at No. 7 Castle Hill Museum.

## THE LADYSMITH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The society was founded in 1968 by Mr George Tatham. Its main aim is to administer the local museum and to protect its interests. Secondly, it encourages interest in the history of the area by organising guided tours to historical places, and to the battlefields in their vicinity, during weekends.

The society has already published five diaries on the siege of Ladysmith; a souvenir booklet on the lives of Sir Harry and Lady Smith; and a centenary publication on the Langalibalele Uprising (this is a series of accounts about the uprising).

As it has no permanent office, the society is linked to the museum. The income from publications is used to buy equipment for the museum. All services rendered by the society are completely voluntary.

The Patron of the society is Dr R.E. Stevenson, the President Mr Angus McLarty and the Vice-President Mr George Tatham.

# VOORLOPIGE INDELING VAN DIE RSA MET DIE OOG OP STREEKHISTORIESE NAVORSING

*A.G. Oberholster*

Elke dissipline wat hom aan streeknavoring waag, lê norme aan waarvolgens streekgrense bepaal word. Die besonder interdisiplinêre aard van streekgeskiedenis maak dit egter moeilik om norme vir indeling in streekhistoriese streke te vind. Die tradisionele streke wat in die loop van meer as driehonderd jaar hul beslag gekry het, blyk in die praktyk nie 'n bruikbare indeling te wees nie.

Die streekgeskiedenis is geïnteresseerd in daardie aspekte van die verlede wat betrekking het op die sosiale en ekonomiese ontplooiing in 'n spesifieke, identifiseerbare gemeenskap, en dus onder meer in die wisselwerking tussen so 'n gemeenskap en die fisiese en kulturele omgewing te voorsien in sy basiese en hoër bestaansbehoefes. As dit geïdentifiseer is, kan vordering gemaak word om 'n werkbare indeling te doen.

Die voorlopige streekindeling wat op die bygaande kaart aangedui word, hou rekening met bogenoemde faktore en moet dien as 'n leidraad by die verdeling van die gekompliseerde nasionale gemeenskap in eenvoudiger groeperinge. Uit praktiese oorwegings is daar by die maak van die indeling ook rekening gehou met sake wat op die oog af nie ter sake is nie, in die eerste plek met bestaande administratiewe grense, in hierdie geval landdrost-distriksgrense, omdat statistiek wat vir die navorser van deurslaggewende belang is, aldus beskikbaar gestel word. Hierdie grense is egter ook van meer direkte betekenis vir die streekhistorikus omdat dit die tussentydse resultaat van streekadministratiewe ontwikkeling verteenwoordig. In die mate wat dit moontlik was om dit te bepaal, is daar rekening gehou met toekomstige ontwikkeling, en in die verband is swaar geleun op die Departement van Ontwikkeling en die Omgewing se Nasionale Fisiese Ontwikkelingsplan.

Aangesien dit onmoontlik was om met alle belanghebbendes in verbinding te tree, ontvang die Afdeling Streekgeskiedenis graag gemotiveerde kommentaar op hierdie voorlopige streekindeling.

