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OLD MASERU



by

James Walton

1958

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With the compliments of James Walton

OLD MASERU

by

JAMES WALTON



PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

TO THE BASUTOLAND SCIENTIFIC ASSOCIATION - MASERU

1958

MORIJA PRINTING WORKS

MORIJA - BASUTOLAND

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OLD MASERU

Maseru, the capital of Basutoland, is one of the oldest Colonial capitals in Southern Africa and as such it has an eventful history which is extremely well documented. It originated as a result of a decision by the Colonial Office on the 9th July, 1868, to place Basutoland directly under the authority of the High Commissioner for South Africa. Sir Walter Currie, the first High Commissioner's Agent, established his "camp" at Mokema and when he was replaced later in the same year by Commandant James Henry Bowker, the latter also had his headquarters at the same place. On March 11th, 1869, as a result of a request by Chief Moshoeshoe, Bowker moved his "camp" to Maseru, the "Place of the Red Sandstone", and established his headquarters on the prominent *kopje* where the Officers' Mess now stands.

Some kind of settlement already existed, for even in 1864 a certain Mrs. Klerie had a store at Maseru and she was responsible for a boat ferry service across the Caledon at Jackman's Drift. The site of the High Commissioner's Agent's headquarters was occupied by a trading station, built in 1868, and the buildings of the store were taken over as offices. In April, 1874, it rained continuously day and night for sixteen days and as a result a portion of the walls of the Government Offices collapsed. The roof timbers and roofing were removed to save them from further damage and the Governor's Agent, Colonel Charles D. Griffith, requested permission to spend £100 on rebuilding the walls in stone. The previous structure had been of sods and raw bricks and Griffith commented that "it is quite evident to me that sods or raw bricks are not sufficiently strong to withstand the heavy rains and storms of the mid-summer and autumn months in this Territory".

These simple structures continued to serve as Government Offices and brought forth a bitter complaint from Colonel Griffith in 1878. "The Governor's Agent's and Resident Magistrate's offices are in adjoining rooms, which are very small, stuffy, and very inadequate. Hot in summer and icy cold in winter. No privacy is attainable and things are apt to get inextricably muddled. The clerks' offices, two in number, are at a distance in a separate building. When the Governor's Agent or the Resident Magistrate wishes to communicate with his clerk, he has to go out in sun or rain or cold or wind - or else shout in an undignified manner, unless the orderly happens to be at hand. The present buildings are entirely unsuitable in them-

selves, falling into disrepair and quite unworthy of being the head-offices of Government. They were originally the premises of a Kafir trader, built in the first year of our occupation, and are shabby and paltry beyond description. The Court Room is very insufficient, dark and close and when densely crowded, as it is three or four times a week, is something like a second "Black Hole of Calcutta". To build proper offices on a more suitable and less exposed site would cost about £2,000. I would therefore suggest that this Department should take over the Model School building and teacher's residence for a Court Room and Offices. They are just what is required and are a failure as a school, being placed in a position where there is no spring and much too far away from any centres of native population ever to become successful or useful to the Tribe. A very limited day school is all that will ever exist here under the present arrangements. These buildings have cost a sum of nearly £3,500 and would make splendid and commodious offices, leaving nothing to be desired. The Education Department could then be credited with £2,000 for the erection of a Model School and residence on some spot better calculated to supply the wants of that Department." The Model School, which had only just been completed, was situated on rising ground behind the Old Gaol and was destroyed during the attack on Maseru in October, 1880.

When the "camps" were first established the Resident Magistrates were required to build their own houses and this was done by Commandant Bowker at Maseru. When Bowker left, his successor, Colonel Griffith, was compelled to take over the house at a yearly rental of £100, as Government at that time could not afford to purchase the house. This was a considerable source of grievance to Colonel Griffith who wrote in 1878, "This house is, of course, the same which I occupied for six years during my first term of office here and I then suffered greatly from its smallness and its many inconveniences. Of the seven rooms in it, two are six feet by nine feet, and two eight feet by nine feet. At that time my family was young and it was possible to stow a number of children into one room. Now, however, that most of them are grown up, common decency requires that they should be accommodated in separate rooms and that the building, which is an old one, should be put into thorough repair."

Griffith did not actually occupy the house; he crowded his family into a small five-roomed building loaned to him by Dr. Daumas and he himself lodged with friends. Government did eventually buy Bowker's house in February, 1879, for the sum of £1,100 and specifications and estimates for the necessary alterations and improvements were submitted during the same year. I have no record of the subsequent development of these buildings,

if any, and practically nothing now remains which can be identified with certainty.

As a result of their labours on the Kimberley diamond fields many Basotho became prosperous and most of them returned from the mines with guns and ammunition. Accordingly, in May, 1880, they were ordered to surrender their arms; an order which caused grave dissatisfaction and resulted in the Gun War.

One of the most interesting accounts of Maseru life in those days is provided by an unpublished letter written by George Hobson to John Irvine on the 9th November, 1880, describing events in the town during the Gun War. "Things did not become more alarming", he wrote, "until the 18th July, when we were threatened with an attack for the purpose of looting the stores: we had a few hours notice and Colonel Griffith, considering our stores were in the best position for defence, had the place fortified as strongly as possible in the time at his disposal. Fortunately, however, they did not come, as we should have had hard work to hold our own, only numbering some 20 white men, with a very bad supply of arms and ammunition."

During the lull which followed Colonel Griffith made such arrangements as he could for the defence of the town and, after several weeks of urgent telegraphing, he managed to obtain a quantity of Snider carbines and ammunition. He also secured the services of Commandant Schermbrucker, a German soldier of fortune, as officer in charge of the police, and the Government buildings, the Model School, "Fort Irvine" and "Fort Trower" were loop-holed and fortified in readiness for the expected attack. In September Colonel Bayly arrived in Maseru with 200 Cape Mounted Rifles and 20 Cape Field Artillery with a 12-pounder gun, and a fort, named "Fort Gordon" after the subaltern responsible for the work, was erected on the site of the old tennis courts, where the foundations can still be traced.

The long awaited arrival of the C.M.R. did not provide the protection which was anticipated. In his letter to Irvine, George Hobson wrote, "At last the C.M.R. came and relieved us and we all thought we should then be tolerably safe and began to bring our goods back which had been moved across the river for safety at the time of the first scare. We were to be disappointed again, however, as instead of encamping in such a position that they might protect the town, the C.M.R. built their fort on the hill behind our cottage, and about half way between it and the hospital, thus placing themselves in such a position that in the event of an attack they would be of little use except for their own protection.

"This naturally necessitated the civilians remaining under arms for the protection of the stores and private property and we have

remained pretty much in that state ever since. I have scarcely slept with my clothes off for nearly four months and all of us are tired and weary of the long anxiety of constant watching.

"For a long time after the arrival of the C.M.R. we were very quiet, and began to think we should not be attacked. An occasional skirmish between the rebels' piquets and our own, however, told us that they were keeping a pretty close watch on our movements and it was unsafe to go even a short distance out of Maseru, in the direction of the Little Caledon, as the rebels were in possession of the three *kopjes* behind the residency, and fired upon anyone attempting to travel that road; our communication was therefore entirely confined to the Free State side.

"Our first attack was on Sunday, the 10th October, commencing at daybreak and lasting until midnight. The alarm was sounded at half past five and, on going outside the store where I had been sleeping, I could see nothing but a few rebels under the Berea, exchanging shots with our native piquets at long ranges. Soon after sunrise, however, they began to come on in small parties, taking cover as they advanced, and keeping up a continual fire on the C.M.R. camp on the one side, and on the residency and town from the opposite quarter. The C.M.R. and loyal Basotho returned the fire pretty briskly, and now and then the 12-pounder sent a shell into the rocks behind which they were hiding. Notwithstanding this, however, they gradually crept up until about five o'clock in the afternoon, when they commanded the place from three sides, and in great force, pouring a continual fire on all parts of Maseru and compelling us to take cover, as whenever they caught sight of any of us, a dozen shots were sent in that direction.

"Colonel Bayly gave me 18 Basotho for the defence of our stores, but I ultimately succeeded in getting 11 more, and with the help of all our hands, we felt tolerably secure. We were, however, compelled to retire from the *schanse* in the front of the new Retail Store into the yard until dark, when we again took possession of it, and made it more secure against the heavy cross fire which raked us from the direction of the Native Police Camp, and from the opposite quarter, the Doctor's house, which fell into the enemy's hands early in the evening, and from which they poured an incessant fire into our front position, but, under cover of partial darkness, I instructed the men to build a *schanse* of bales of grain bags to cover us from the fire from that quarter, and we were thus enabled to hold our position throughout.

"About six o'clock in the evening the schoolroom and Rolland's house adjoining were taken by the enemy, and from there they gradually crept down towards Trower's house and store. By ten o'clock they were actually in possession of Sidwell's house and

garden, which cannot be more than thirty yards from Trower's house and garden walls, and I feared for some time he would have to abandon his place. He was wounded in the neck and taken up to camp by Mr. Brummage Senr., but just then a reinforcement was sent down and the enemy driven back, but not before they had fired a portion of his stores and swept off all the cattle and horses from his kraal.

"About eleven o'clock a few of them got possession of Davis's house and the two round hovels nearer our stores, but a few volleys from our place quickly dislodged them from there."

"The school, Rolland's house, Police Camp buildings, Hospital, Gaol, Doctor's house, part of Trower's store, and several cottages were burnt from time to time, the last place as late as between two and three in the morning, but the main body of rebels must have retired about midnight, as firing ceased almost entirely at that time. I gave up all hopes of saving our cottage and stables, and cannot now understand why they did not set fire to them, and the Government Offices, as for some hours they had almost complete possession of that part of Maseru. Mahon's house was looted, but being an iron roof would not burn.

On the 9th October, the day before the attack, Richard Trower was, by Garrison Order, placed in charge of 12 Europeans and 22 Basotho levies with instructions to defend "Fort Trower". The attack, as George Hobson states, was largely directed towards surrounding Trower's position and by about 6.30 p.m. Trower decided to abandon the little knoll and retired into the house which had previously been well fortified. The little knoll, around two sides of which "Fort Trower" was built, was immediately behind the present Lancers' Inn but has since been quarried away. At one stage the battle actually developed into a hand-to-hand encounter over the wall.

In a letter to Richard Trower, Schermbrucker wrote, "On the 10th October last an engagement was fought at Maseru, in which you took a prominent part, by defending one of the positions determined upon by the officer commanding troops at Maseru, to be held as one of material importance in the general defence of the place.

"Unlike any of the other engagements fought in Basutoland since the outbreak of the rebellion, the fight at Maseru was sustained chiefly by European civilians and Basotho refugees, not belonging to any of the regularly organized corps of the colonial forces, whose services were given cheerfully to maintain the prestige of the Government of the country at a most critical moment.

"In point of its severity, as well as in point of its results, the fight at Maseru, of October 10th, bears comparison with any other engagement fought either before or after that day in Basutoland,

but it would stand singularly alone, were the services of the civilian Europeans and Basotho refugee defenders of Maseru, passed over in silence by the Government of the country on whose behalf the battle was fought.

“Having had the honour of holding immediate command over the non-military part of the garrison of Maseru on the day in question, I beg, therefore now, in the name of the Government, to thank you for the valuable services you performed on that day, and in doing so, I cannot better discharge a duty I owe personally to men who fought a gallant fight, than by enclosing a copy of the official report which I furnished to the proper authorities on the day after the fight, with a request that you will be good enough to make the contents known to both Europeans and natives who, under your direction, held so bravely the position of ‘Trower’s Stores’.”

During this attack Bayly set fire to the hospital, which stood near the present burial ground, in order to provide light to assist the defenders.

“The second attack on the 28th October”, wrote George Hobson, “was a much shorter one, though very sharp whilst it lasted. A body of footmen made a feint to attack in the direction of the Hospital and Three Kopjes, whilst a party of horsemen dashed through the neck between Guading and Kutsing, and charged down to the river with the intention of capturing the C.M.R. horses which were being watered at the drift. They failed in getting the C.M.R. horses, but succeeded in capturing about 50 head of cattle belonging to the wagons, and some native horses, but they had to pay a terrible price for their booty, for a party of C.M.R., supported by some Zulus, took up a position at the ruined school buildings, and waiting for their return, poured a murderous fire into them as they retreated. The force holding the residency, also Trower’s and our own, were also able to take part, and they bolted in awful confusion, but as their horses were by this time nearly knocked up through their long gallop, they could hardly go above a walk, and suffered very heavily. Since then we have been very quiet and I trust they have learnt a lesson and will leave us alone in the future.” Apart from sporadic encounters the residents were left untroubled and in April, 1881, the war was brought to a very unsatisfactory conclusion.

The years following the Gun War were years of poverty, unrest, and anarchy in Basutoland and all efforts to establish a peaceful system of government seemed doomed to failure. On the 18th March, 1884, Basutoland was formally taken over by the Imperial authorities and the day previous Lieut. Col. Marshall James Clarke arrived in Maseru as the first Resident Commissioner. He had been refused the money necessary to make a ceremonial entry and he was escorted to the Residency by the Basutoland Mounted Police and Chief

Lerotholi with his bodyguard. The High Commissioner offered him nothing but his moral support and he was expected to govern largely by his own personal influence without any supporting show of force.

He took up residence at the old "camp" established by Bowker but shortly afterwards he transferred to the house of the Resident Magistrate which has been the Residency ever since. The house which was to become the "British Residency in Basutoland" consisted of a living room and two bedrooms with a kitchen and small pantry and larder (*Fig. 1*). The walls were of ant-heap and the living room and bedrooms had calico ceilings, which were general at that time. In 1886 tenders were called for to considerably extend the building and this was done by Messrs. Cooper Brothers of Ladybrand during the following year. The extensions included a new dining room and drawing room, two additional bedrooms, a bathroom and dressing room, and an office and library.

Seven years later further additions were made by Stefano Massa, who had then adopted the name of Stephano Moss. These were largely designed to provide a symmetrical front by building a room, now used as a study, at the south end, to balance the room built by the Cooper brothers at the opposite end. A new kitchen was added in its present position and the entire south-west gable wall was brought forward a distance of four feet (*Fig. 1*).

The Residency survived in its modified form, apart from very minor alterations, until 1918, when, as the outcome of requests by the Resident Commissioner, Mr. R. T. Coryndon, further improvements were made, resulting in the structure as it stands to-day. The architects responsible for the new additions were Herbert Baker and Fleming, but as Sir Herbert Baker was in Delhi at the time, the work was actually carried out by his partner. Permission to make the alterations at a cost of £4,000 was given in December, 1916, and plans for a very pleasing building were drawn up. Unfortunately, when the work was submitted to tender it was impossible to find a contractor willing to undertake the proposed alterations at the stipulated figure and during the following twelve months prolonged negotiations ensued in an effort to cut down the extensions in keeping with the money available. Eventually the finalized plan provided mainly for the building of the guest wing and a corresponding wing for the Resident Commissioner, the provision of an entrance hall with a porch, and the laying-out of the delightful gardens and fore-court.

Even with these modifications to the original plan many last-minute reductions of a minor nature had to be made; reductions nevertheless which considerably detracted from the beauty of the building. The architect designed the fireplaces in the drawing room

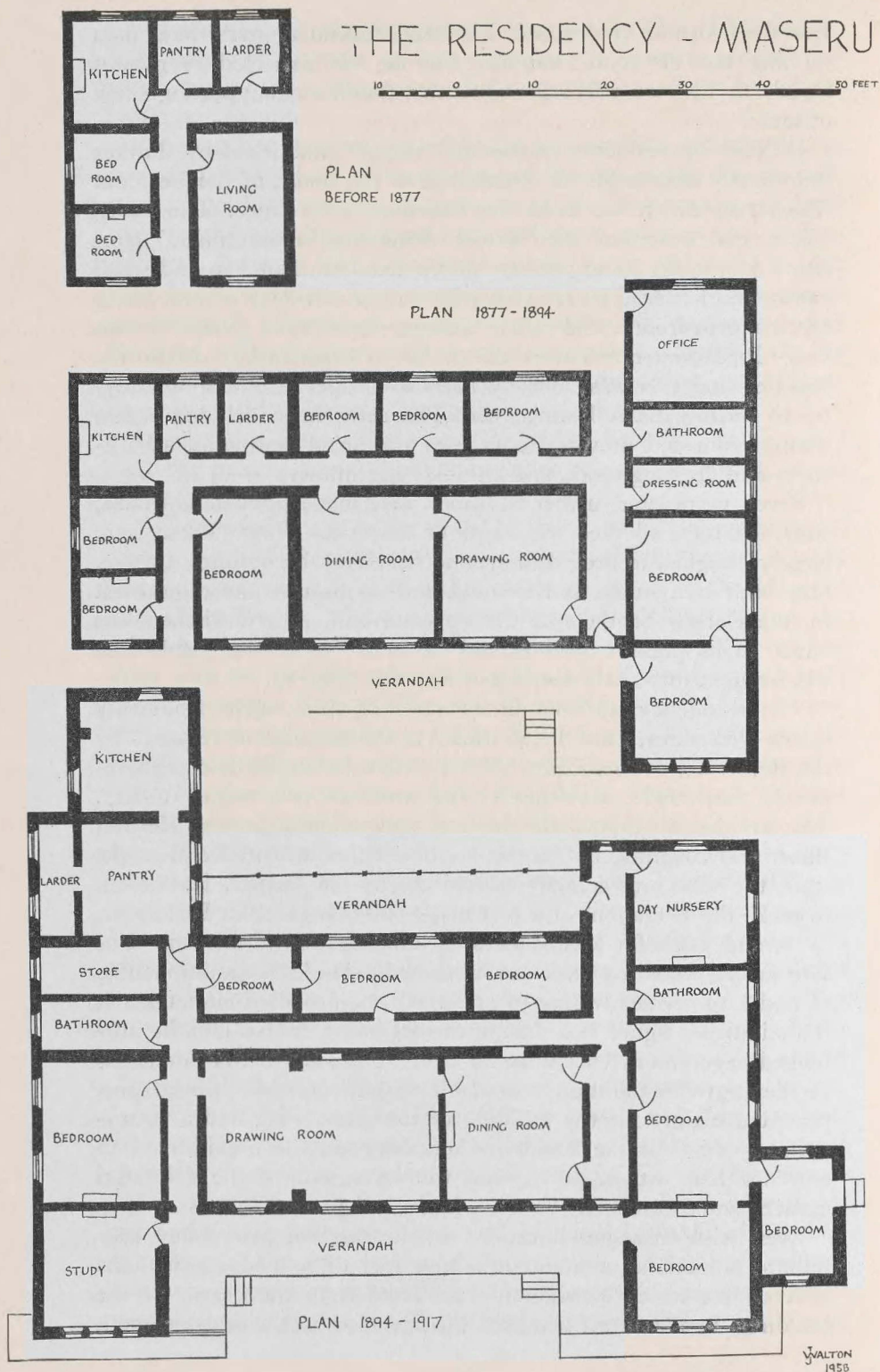


Fig. 1. - PLANS OF THE RESIDENCY, Maseru. Shewing its development from 1877-1917.

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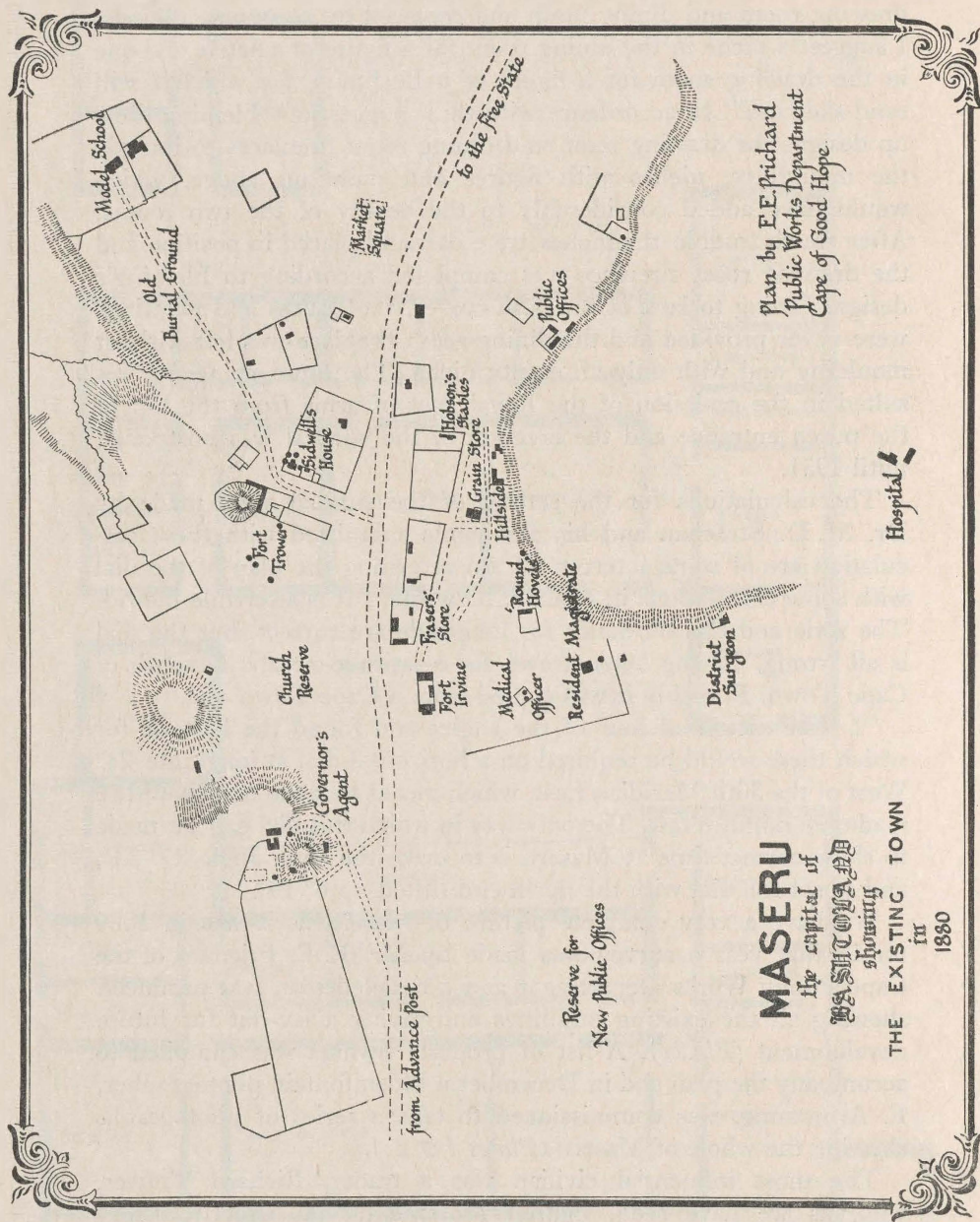
and dining room with overmantels but Coryndon would have none of this. In a letter to Fleming he wrote, "I don't like overmantels except in bedrooms and I suggest that they be removed in the hall, drawing room and dining room and replaced by plaster mouldings. I suggest a niche in the dining room for a figure of a native and one in the drawing room for a figure of a Bushman, for which I will send sketches." In accordance with these suggestions Fleming drew up designs for drawing room and dining room fireplaces to include the mouldings, niches with figures and paintings above, which would have added considerably to the beauty of the two rooms. After much trouble the niches were cast and placed in position and the drawing room fireplace was completed according to Fleming's design. Owing to lack of funds, however, the figures and paintings were never provided and the dining room fireplace was left without moulding and with only an empty niche. The same stringency resulted in the omission of the Royal coat of arms from the top of the porch entrance and the erection of the sundial was postponed until 1931.

The calculations for the setting of the sundial were made by Dr. M. D. Strachan and his comments submitted with these calculation are of some interest. "I am returning the plan of the dial with some calculations in pencil", he wrote. "It is a terrible hybrid. The style and the allowance for longitude are correct, but the dial is all wrong, having been drawn for a latitude nearly 1° south of Cape Town. Probably it was copied from a Cape Town dial.

"I have measured four of the angles and found the latitude for which these would be required on a horizontal dial at longitude $2\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$ West of the 30th Meridian East, which means that the dial should be made ten minutes fast. The only way in which this dial can be made to show correct time at Maseru is to make the style angle $35^{\circ} 33'$, and to set the dial with the north end tilted up $6^{\circ} 19'$."

We have a very complete picture of Maseru as it was in 1880 for in that year a survey was made by Mr. E. E. Prichard of the Cape Public Works Department and a detailed plan was produced shewing all the existing buildings and giving a lay-out for future development (*Fig.2.*). A list of property owners was compiled to accompany the plan and in December a Bloemfontein photographer, F. Armstrong, was commissioned to take a series of photographs shewing the whole of Maseru (*Plates 1 & 2.*).

The most influential civilian was a trader, Richard Trower, who, as we have seen, figured prominently in Maseru history during the first twenty years of its existence. He arrived in Maseru in 1869, when the "camp" was first formed and he established a trading station, to be known later as "Fort Trower", on the site of the present Lancers' Inn. His own dwelling was a simple thatched



Plan by E.E. Prichard
Public Works Department
Cape of Good Hope.

MASERU
the capital of
THE SOUTHERN AFRICA
showing
THE EXISTING TOWN
in
1880

Fig. 2. - PLAN OF MASERU IN 1880. Drawn by E. E. Prichard.

Plate 1.
Showing Fort Tower
Grain Store (left)

Plate 2.
Showing Tower's
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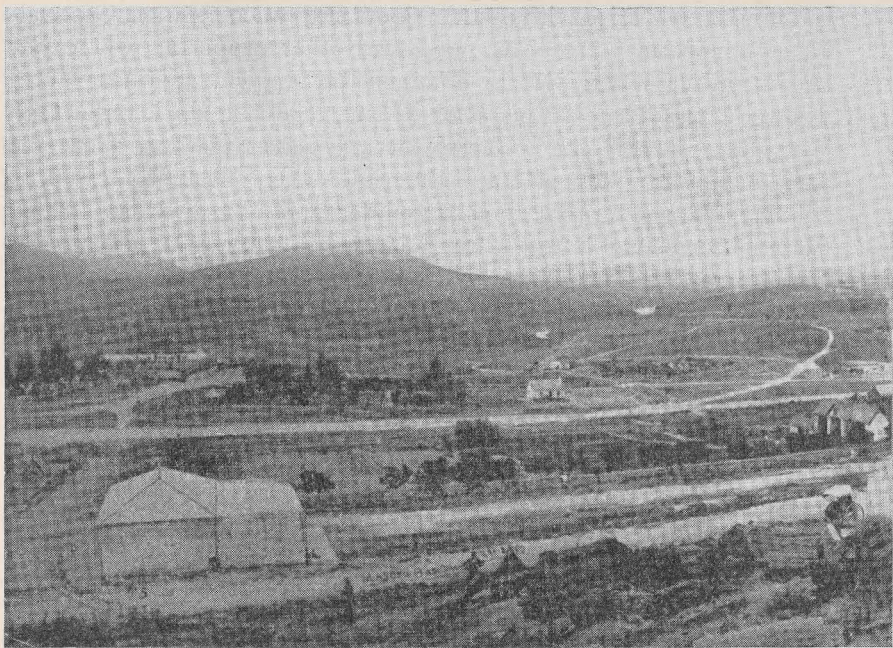


Plate 1. - MASERU IN DECEMBER, 1880. Photographed by F. Armstrong.
 Shewing Fort Trower (left centre), Sidwell's house (to right of Fort Trower), Trower's Grain Store (left foreground), George Hobson's stable (right centre) and Model School ruins (right distance).

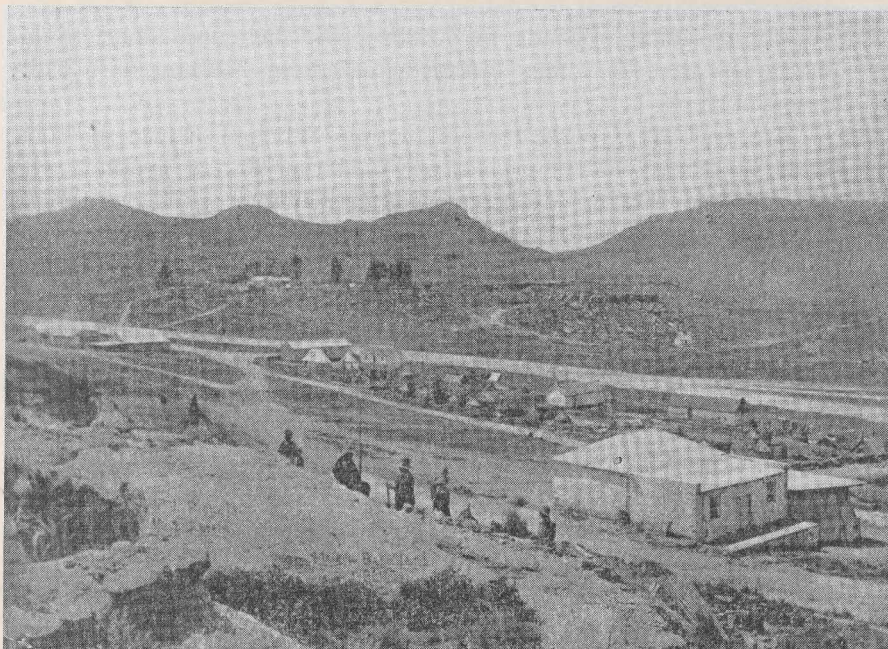


Plate 2. - MASERU IN DECEMBER, 1880. Photographed by F. Armstrong.
 Shewing Trower's Grain Store (right foreground), Fraser's Store (left centre), Fort Irvine (extreme left centre) and Governor's Agent's quarters (in trees on kopje).

Plan by E. E. Richard
 Public Works Department
 City of Cape Town

Height 2

MASERU
 THE CAPITAL OF
 THE PROVINCE OF
 THE CAPE PROVINCE
 THE EXISTING TOWN
 1880

building of raw brick with earthen floors and calico ceilings. Gradually, as opportunity arose, he purchased other properties when they became available. In 1874 he obtained the property adjoining "Fort Trower", the house of his book-keeper, Sidwell, during the Gun War, and in 1876 he acquired the site across the road from the present library. Almost from the time when he first arrived in Maseru Trower employed as a builder and carpenter an Italian, Stefano Massa, who had a hand in building many of the houses and public buildings in the town. On the site opposite the present library Massa built for himself a thatched, mud-walled dwelling of three rooms which ultimately became incorporated in the present dwelling. By 1880 Trower held most of Maseru between Thorn's Corner and the old parsonage and in addition to his store he also had a butcher's shop and a boarding house.

The other important trading concern was that of John J. Irvine and Company who, during the Gun War, held the trading station called "Fort Irvine", which was situated in Hobson's Square. When this was established I have not been able to determine but it appears to have been conducted by Thomas W. Irvine until December, 1879, when George Hobson signed an agreement to become the manager. George Hobson had left England as a young man in December, 1873, and in January of the following year he was employed by J. J. Irvine and Company at King Williams Town. His service as manager at Maseru was not particularly happy. Apart from the anxieties of the Gun War, his main trouble was the poor supply of suitable goods for trading and he complained to his employers that "it is very unsatisfactory doing business with badly assorted stocks".

In May, 1881, George Hobson, acting on behalf of John J. Irvine and Company, sold "Fort Irvine" and the plot of ground, with store and house which Hobson called "Hillside", to Richard Trower for the sum of £2,500. The front block of "Fort Irvine", comprising three corrugated iron stores, was handed over on the 1st October and the remaining buildings on the 1st November, but George Hobson continued to manage the store on behalf of Richard Trower. Trower, however, suffered considerably from over-stocking and during the troubled years which followed the Gun War, which coincided with a period of insecurity throughout South Africa, he had to sell much of his property to pay his creditors. His hopes of receiving compensation for the heavy losses which he suffered during the Gun War, in common with those of other Basutoland traders, were dashed by the findings of the commission, and he appears to have abandoned "Fort Trower" as a trading establishment. He continued to use it as a boarding house but in May, 1882, the manager, Walter Brummage, left to look after his own trading station.

In June, 1882, Trower wrote from Grahamstown requesting Hobson to "see Orpen and ask him if the Government will buy any or all of my property, that is, all the buildings where you live and my old homestead. For the former I would take as low as £1,200, if they will not give more, and for the latter I would take £1,000 rather than lose a chance to sell." But the Government was not willing to purchase the property although Orpen offered £14 per month for "Fort Trower". This Trower accepted with the request that Orpen would see that "the trees were taken care of".

The buildings of Fort Trower were put to various uses by the Government but, on the arrival of Sir Godfrey Lagden as Government Secretary to Sir Marshall James Clarke in 1884, Trower's house became the home of the Government Secretary and continued to serve as such until the end of September, 1895. In November, 1892, H. S. Sloley, then acting Government Secretary, wrote to George Hobson "with reference to the premises in Maseru known as Fort Trower, rented by the Basutoland Government for the use of the Government Secretary". "I beg to draw your attention", he continued, "to the condition of the buildings and to point out that it appears probable that there will shortly be a period of non-occupancy, during which necessary repairs might be made, as my family will in all probability be leaving the house at the end of this month and Mr. Lagden's family will not return until the end of December. In the main building the thatched roof leaks considerably in the drawing room, nurseries, study and bathroom. Large cracks have during the time I have been in the house (since April) made their appearance in the wall of the drawing room and other smaller rooms."

Trower's fortunes continued to deteriorate and in April, 1888, he authorized "Sir Marshall James Clarke, Resident Commissioner of Basutoland, to transfer and make over unto Herbert Henry Coles Baker and Thomas Burnham King, trading as Baker, Baker and Company, all my right, title and interest in and to certain eight plots of ground, with all buildings and erections thereon, situate at Maseru and marked on the General Plan of Maseru numbers 7, 8, 10, 15, 17, 18, 18a and 19, and for which I have received full settlement". Thus passed out of the life of Maseru the one man above all others who may be regarded as its founder.

His place as leader of the commercial community in Maseru was taken by George Hobson who later became the first Chairman of the Basutoland Chamber of Commerce. In August, 1881, he was granted permission to purchase the "Round Hovels", "lately in possession of Mr. F. E. C. Hall", but he did not actually purchase this site, which is now occupied by the Residency stables, until the middle of 1883. His rectangular mud-walled house still stands

at the back of the stables. In 1888 he obtained from Baker, Baker and Company his own store, "Fort Irvine", and the house which he called "Hillside". He apparently sold the "Round Hovels" about this time, for in 1890 the site belonged to the Government and Allen Charles Harries obtained the contract to build there the upper of the two stables now standing.

The other store in Maseru in 1880 was that of Donald and Douglas Fraser, leased to C. C. A. Adcock, which stood on the present site of Frasers Limited and comprised a shop with store attached, a dwelling house demolished in 1931, and a stable and outhouses. The Fraser brothers had obtained a site in June, 1880, but, owing to the unsettled state of the country at the time, they did not commence building until later in the year.

Further development in Maseru was limited owing to the control which Trower held over most of the sites in the town but when he sold out to Baker, Baker and Company in 1888 the new owners were anxious to dispose of their sites and opportunities arose for new comers. As a result, 1888 witnessed a marked change in the pattern of Maseru settlement and many families who have since played an important part in Basutoland life commenced business about this time.

Alf. Sterley was in Basutoland in 1885 when he applied for permission "to erect an iron store for the purpose of trading", but his application was rejected on the grounds that sufficient trading facilities already existed. In 1888, however, he rented part of "Fort Trower" and in July of the following year he was granted a trading licence. In 1904 he built a new house where the main block of Lancers' Inn now stands and his name may still be seen in black letters over the entrance. About the same time he built the store now owned by Collier and Yeats on the site which had been originally allocated for a church (*Cover illustration*). George Thorn built his blacksmith's shop in October, 1886, and in July, 1889, J. B. Tully obtained a trading licence but he did not build a store in Maseru. J. S. Yeats was already trading at Thaba Bosiu in 1887.

During the years of the Anglo-Boer War Maseru was the only "camp" through which traffic could pass across the Caledon and in addition large numbers of refugees flocked into the town. As a result the three stores in Maseru, D. & D. H. Fraser Limited, Alf. Sterley and George R. Hobson, enjoyed a relatively prosperous period and others applied for trading licences to take advantage of the boom. These applications were strongly opposed by the existing traders and George Hobson summarized their feelings when he contended that the improvement in trade was mainly due to "the advent of a large number of Dutch refugees and Natives from the Orange River Colony, but, on the return of peace, all these people

will return to their homes and the local trade will resume its usual hum drum character". Alf. Sterley stated that "during peace times there has not been sufficient business done in Maseru to support the present existing stores, without an additional one, as during the last three years my business has not shown a profit and in consequence I persuaded Mrs. Sterley to open a Boarding House to assist me in keeping expenses down, thereby lowering her position". The boarding house which Mrs. Sterley opened is now part of the Lancers' Inn. The adjoining "Fort Trower" buildings also served as a boarding house from 1901 under the management of Mrs. Lacey and eventually the two were amalgamated as Stephen's Hotel. Although these objections did stem the influx of new traders into Maseru, a double-storeyed store was built in 1901 by H. Hickling and Company on the site where it still stands.

The Government Offices, about which Colonel Griffith complained so bitterly in 1878, were apparently replaced by new buildings some time before 1880 for on the Plan of that year "Public Offices" are shewn to the north of "Hillside" (Fig.2). The Public Offices, now used as the offices of the District Commissioner, were built by Edwin Taylor in 1890-91 for the sum of £470. They consisted of the present central block, comprising one room 15 ft. by 18 ft., one 15 ft. by 15 ft., one 15 ft. by 12 ft., and four rooms 15 ft. by 10 ft. The two wings were added later. This building was the headquarters of the Resident Commissioner, the District Commissioner occupying a two-roomed building of unburnt bricks which still stands behind the Legal Secretary's offices. The site for the old District Commissioner's office was originally occupied by a grain store belonging to Richard Trower, from whom it passed to Baker, Baker and Company. The store figures prominently in the foreground of Armstrong's photographs of Maseru in 1880 (Plates 1 & 2.). In April, 1888, it was purchased by Government and the post office and District Commissioner's office were erected.

The present Secretariat block was not built until 1912, when the Resident Commissioner's previous offices were occupied by the District Commissioner. Although this building, with its pseudo-Dutch gables, can lay little claim to architectural beauty, the ornamental railings, which were erected around the grounds in 1913, are particularly good examples of their craft.

Of the other public buildings, the first hospital was built in 1875 at a cost of £500. The first medical officer, appointed in the same year, was Colonel E. B. Hartley, who became famous for his bravery during the attack on Mount Moorosi on the 5th June, 1879, for which he was awarded the Victoria Cross. Colonel Brabant wrote at the time, "It is impossible to speak in too high terms of the

courage of Dr. Hartley, who, when he heard that there were wounded men who could not be carried to a place of safety, went at once to their assistance, under a storm of bullets, cheered by every man who saw him." He was Principal Medical Officer of the forces during the Gun War and later of the Cape Colonial forces until after the Anglo-Boer War. His hospital in Maseru, which stood near the present burial ground, was destroyed by fire during the attack on Maseru in October, 1880.

It has often been stated that "Fort Trower" served as a hospital and it is probable that when the property was leased by Government in 1882 part of it may have been so utilised. A dispensary was opened in Maseru in 1887 and in 1890 a new hospital was built by Allen Charles Harries at a cost of £470. It was a long rectangular building comprising a waiting room, 12 ft. by 15 ft., a dispensary, 12 ft. by 12 ft., two wards, with calico ceilings, of the same dimensions, and a kitchen, 12 ft. by 12 ft. The first real hospital accommodation was not provided, however, until 1904 when the Maseru hospital, with 30 beds, was erected. The dispensary was built in 1907 and in 1910 the hospital was enlarged to accommodate 46 beds.

Whenever matters of policy were announced, either by a local chief or by the Paramount Chief or by Government, it was the Basotho custom for the chief to call a *pitso*, or gathering of the people. The most important gatherings were held at established *pitso* grounds such as Thota ea Meli, on the slope below Mokema store, at Thaba Bosiu and in Maseru itself. In 1883, however, Sir Thoms Scanlan, the Cape Premier, proposed the establishment of a Council of Advice of Chiefs, and in 1890 Paramount Chief Letsie submitted a petition on the same subject but it did not receive the whole-hearted approval of the chiefs and it was left in abeyance until April, 1898, when Lord Milner, the High Commissioner, stated that he would welcome such a Council. It was left to Sir Herbert Sloley, with the co-operation of Paramount Chief Lerotholi, to formulate proposals for the establishment of a Council in 1903. The final constitution was laid down in 1910 and the octagonal National Council building, one of Maseru's best known architectural features, was erected. It came to be regarded by the Basotho as the replacement of the national *pitso* ground and it was known amongst them as Thota ea Meli, although in actual fact the National Council meeting does not really replace the *pitso* at which any person, of whatever status, could voice his opinion.

Maseru is in such a position that in the early days it could be almost isolated by swollen rivers; by the Caledon in the west and by the Little Caledon in the south. Two drifts afforded a crossing of the Caledon at low water; the Hospital Drift below the old hospital and Jackman's Drift below the present bridge. When the

river was running high passengers were ferried across at Jackman's Drift where, as we have seen, Mrs. Klerie had a boat in 1864. Goods were conveyed across by raft.

In 1888 Stephanus Moss constructed a pont across the river at this point but it met a disastrous end in 1899 when it was cut adrift by a Free State commando. At the same time they contemplated seizing the Government officials and taking control of Basutoland for the duration of the war. This attempt was thwarted but the Resident Commissioner, Sir Godfrey Lagden, decided to take all possible precautions against any recurrence of such an emergency. A small stone fort was erected almost on the site of the old "Fort Gordon" and a stone tower was built on the edge of the scarp looking eastwards, a town guard was raised, and Chief Lerotholi brought in a force of Basotho to line the border. The fort itself was demolished some years ago but the tower still remains. A bridge was eventually constructed across the Caledon to carry the new railway and the road into Maseru, and this was officially opened in 1906 by Lord Selborne, the High Commissioner, who also laid the foundation stone of the Lerotholi Technical School at the same time. The very pleasing stone bridge across the Little Caledon, erected by the Government Engineer, Harrison Gibson, was opened by Sir Herbert Sloley two years later.

In any town or village the church is usually one of the most historic buildings but the present St. John's Church is a relatively new structure built in 1911-12. The first Anglican services in Maseru were held in one of the buildings of "Fort Trower", largely through the efforts of George Hobson, who made the continuance of the services his personal responsibility, and a minister from Masite conducted the services. In 1890, however, funds were raised to erect a church of burnt brick, consisting of a church, 27 feet by 17 feet 6 inches, and a chancel, 7 ft. 6 ins. by 12 ft., separated by a chancel arch having a span of 12 ft. The mason's work was executed by Richard Cole and the carpentry by Stephanus Massa at a total cost of £355. This church stood in the same grounds as the parsonage, which was built nine years later, and the foundations can still be traced. The railings around the parsonage grounds are those which surrounded the original church and the bell is the same which called Maseru residents to worship 67 years ago. It still hangs in the original wooden bell tower.

During the ninety years of its existence Maseru has witnessed a distinctive architectural development and three successive styles are recognizable. Prior to the Gun War of 1880 all the buildings had walls of sods or raw bricks on solid stone footings, thatched roofs, calico ceilings and stamped earth floors, offering only shelter and the minimum of comfort. This type of dwelling was general through-

out the adjoining areas of the Free State during the early years of European settlement and several Maseru examples have survived in Sidwell's house, the old District Offices, Massa's house, the old Post Master's house behind the Agricultural Offices and the house at the Residency stables (*Fig. 3*).

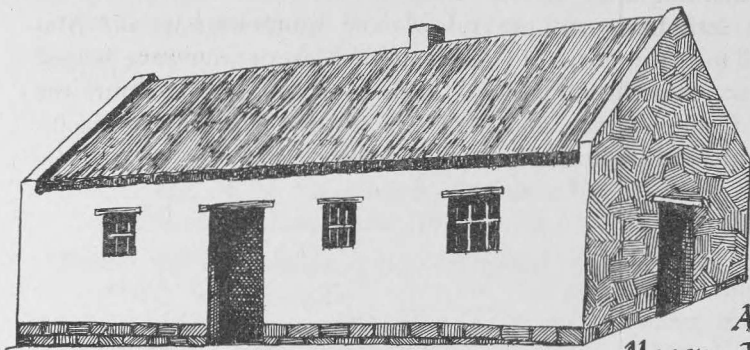
Towards the end of the nineteenth century a definite change is noticeable. The walls continued to be built largely of unburnt brick but the quoins and lintels were of dressed stone, providing a very distinctive character which can still be seen in Caledon House, the Masonic Lodge, the old Barclay's Bank, and in the group of buildings at present serving as a parsonage (*Fig. 3*). Corrugated iron roofs, boarded ceilings and fretted fascia boards, brackets and barge boards also became fashionable about the same time (*Fig. 3*). Dressed stone buildings, which are such a delightful and characteristic feature of Maseru to-day, appear to have been introduced with the additions to the Residency in 1887 and this medium grew in popularity, partly owing to the availability of suitable stone locally and partly because from 1906 the Lerotholi Technical School produced a steady stream of trained stone dressers. Many of Maseru's most important stone buildings have been built by the School's students during the past half century.

In this address I have given a brief historical account of Maseru's most important buildings and of the people who erected them. Lagden and Tylden have written excellent historical studies of Maseru from the administrative and military aspects but the life of a people is reflected most clearly in their homes. The majority of the early buildings in Maseru were simple thatched structures of mud brick, offering only the most meagre accommodation and facilities, but they afford us a vivid picture of the trying conditions under which traders and administrators lived and worked during the early years of the town's growth. They provide, too, a striking indication of the development which has taken place, most noticeable when one compares the old mud-brick courtroom behind the Legal Secretary's office with the new High Court or Harries's hospital with the new Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

In compiling this record I owe a great deal to many people but particularly to my wife, for all the information she has gathered during the time she has been employed as Government Archivist, and to Mrs. Howard Hobson for the two photographs of Maseru in 1880 and for many valuable papers of George Hobson, including his account of Maseru during the Gun War. I am also very much indebted to Mrs. Tully for her reminiscences and for photographs; to Miss Peggy Thorn for the most interesting photograph of the Maseru Town Guard which her father was so anxious to preserve; to Mr. Langham Hobart for allowing me access to old plans of



A late 19th

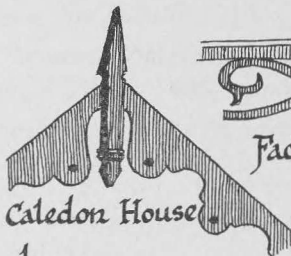


Sidwell's House

A Typical Maseru Dwelling, 1880



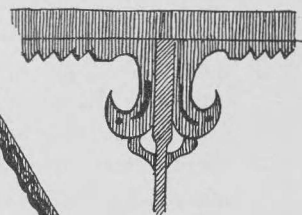
Old Barclay's Bank Barge Boards



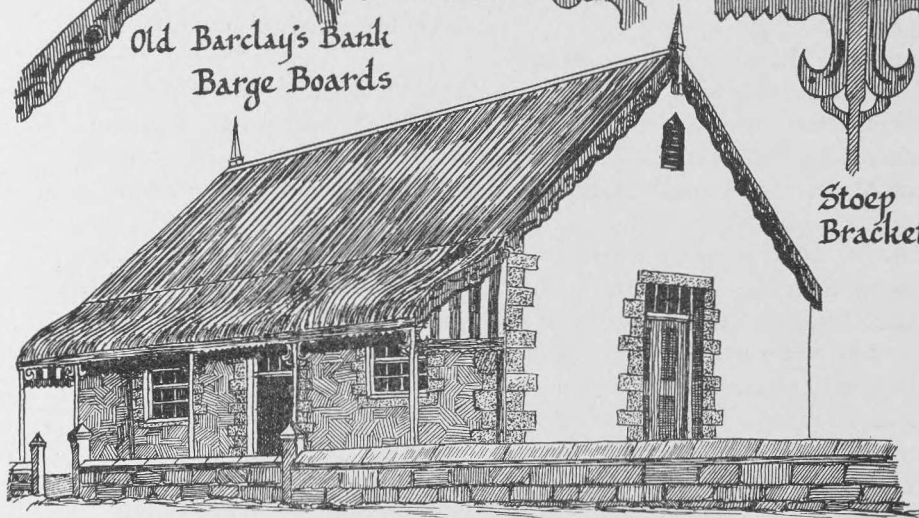
Caledon House



Facia Board, Caledon House



Stoep Bracket



A late 19th century building - Old Barclay's Bank

Fig. 3. - Early Styles of Building in Maseru.

Government buildings; to Mrs. Collier, Mr. R. K. Murry, O.B.E., and Mr. Cecil Damant, O.B.E., for their information on old Maseru; and to many other old residents of Maseru who have helped me in my researches. Finally I wish to thank His Honour, the Resident Commissioner, and Mrs. Chaplin for affording me facilities to study and photograph the Residency.

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