The book is divided into two main parts. Part I, comprising six chapters, outlines the process of White settlement in the Graaff-Reinet area and gives a general picture of the main springs of political, social and economic life in the district. Part II consists of nine chapters, and deals with the various important areas of contact between the different groups in the town and district.

During the first half of the eighteenth century, development of stock farming made dispersal into the interior inevitable and led to the expansion of the Colony. In the introductory chapter this migration of White colonists and the ultimate founding of a drostdy at Graaff-Reinet are discussed. The next two chapters give a vivid description of the early days of farming in the Graaff-Reinet district. This marked the beginning of the changes that were to transform the frontier to a midland society.

The period between the Great Trek and the opening up of the diamond fields was, with some exceptions, a time of considerable prosperity, and Graaff-Reinet became the leading district in the midlands. Chapters four, five and six deal with the golden age of this district (1857–1861), the era of political rise and economic decline (1861–1889), and the outbreak and aftermath of the Anglo-Boer War (1899–1910). These chapters describe among other things the development of the wool industry, farming in general, transport, educational and religious activities, and the impact of the war on the inhabitants.

Municipal government came to the town in 1845, to be followed by representative government in 1854 and the creation of Divisional Councils a year later. The first three chapters of Part II are grouped under the title “The municipal barque” and deal with matters such as the establishment of the municipal board, the water scheme and problems involved, the collapse and re-institution of municipal government and municipal representation.

Graaff-Reinet played a leading rôle in the formation of White attitudes to colour. In this frontier district White and Black frontiersmen first made meaningful contact and set the pattern for trading, employment and conflict. It was here that White South Africans first grappled with the problem of securing themselves against Black competitors by advocating separation while, at the same time, relying increasingly on Black labour (see p.559). Chapters nine (“Farm labour”) and ten (“Black and White in town”) give an account of these relationships between Whites on the one hand, and Hottentots, Bushmen and Xhosa on the other.

The last four chapters deal with political relationships and include inter alia political grouping and divisions, parliamentary representation, and the influence which the Afrikaner Bond, the Jameson Raid, the Anglo-Boer War and the unification of South Africa had on the history of the Graaff-Reinet district.

In order to achieve a balance and avoid giving the impression that the events in this vast district took place in isolation with no reference to the wider community of which Graaff-Reinet was just a part, the author has attempted to relate local events to the general situation obtaining at the Cape (p.XVII). This study is based on original documentary records, together with valuable sources like local newspapers, and records of the municipal board and the town council.

The source list and exhaustive index at the end will prove useful to the researcher as well as to the reader of local history. Some seven maps and several nineteenth century photographs of Graaff-Reinet are included in the book, which is a valuable addition to the library of Social and Economic Research, Rhodes University, Grahamstown.

Although the author has succeeded in arranging the bulky information, stretching over a period of more than a century, into a meaningful synthesis, he has neglected certain aspects of the history of Graaff-Reinet, e.g. cultural organisations and their activities, the enforcement of law and order, the development of communication, and trade relations. In addition, perhaps too little attention has been paid to matters such as farming, education (especially in the district) and the various religious denominations.

C.C. ELOFF
Human Sciences Research Council


Soos die titel aandui, is hierdie publikasie van die RGN opgestel om genealogiese navorsers van hulp te wees. Aangesien die navorsingsmetodes vir die genealogie verband hou met die van algemene geskiedenis en dus ook met streekgeskiedenis, sal die streekhistorikus ongetwyfeld daarby baat vind.

In die eerste hoofstuk, Genealogie en Genealografie, word onder meer die wese, doel en geskiedenis van die Genealogie bespreek. Belangrik is om te onthou dat wanneer die genealoge in ’n register opstel elke naam ’n persoon verteenwoordig wat ’n bepaalde betekenis en plek in sy familie en samelewing gehad het. Hier kome die streekgeskiedenis van pas, veral wanneer die genealoge die herkoms en die rol van pionier- en ander families in ’n bepaalde omgewing ondersoek (streekgenealogie). Die ooreenkomst tussen die streekhistorikus en die genealog is dat hulle beide die mens en hulle omgewing beoordeel, maar hulle hanteer verskillende benaderings. Waar die streekhistorikus die mens in sy verhouding tot sy medemens en sy omgewing bestudeer, gee die genealoge hoofsaklik aandag aan ouerlange verwantskappe tussen mense met ’n geneemaklike herkom.


At a time when the world seems to be more involved in global problems and space exploration than in everyday life, many question the rôle and importance of local history. And yet it is a microcosm of the larger scene; it is the history of people, events and institutions in a specifically designated and geographically circumscribed area — local history is, after all, the true beginning of all history.

In this booklet, consisting of seventeen pages, the author endeavours to answer some of the questions most asked by those writing local history, which she maintains should be collected and preserved because it is an essential part of the national heritage. It is not necessary for a person to be a professional historian to write local history. On the contrary, most of it is written by amateurs who are usually as well trained in basic methods as the professional historian.

Among the special aptitudes required are an enthusiastic zeal and a tremendous interest in the subject, the mind of a detective, and plenty of patience — because collecting and writing local history takes not only tact but time.

The author lists some of the public sources which might contain useful information, e.g. telephone directories, local and regional maps, newspapers and magazines, school records and annuals, state and regional histories, census reports, anniversary booklets and council or commission minutes. Private sources are family albums, diaries and journals, letters, genealogies and scrapbooks.

BOEKBESPREKINGS, BOOK REVIEWS

A. E. NELL
Raad vir Geesteswetenskaplike Navorsing

Local and regional newspapers, however, constitute the major source of contemporary local history, recording, as they do, an area, its people, their customs, economic conditions, festivities and tragedies. In addition, advertisements in newspapers provide invaluable historical information.

Oral history as a means of collecting information is analysed and evaluated by the author in the light of questions such as: How is oral history collected and preserved? How do I use the tape recorder when interviewing? How can oral history be used? What should be avoided in oral history?

Written to help the researcher to create better articles, this comprehensive guide offers many practical hints for publication. It also deals with matters such as the importance of local history organizations, legal implications in using diaries and letters, indexing information by using file cards, copyright, etc., etc.

To those who are interested in collecting and writing local history, this informative publication is extremely useful and can be recommended as indispensable.

C.C. ELOFF
Human Sciences Research Council


A 1972 survey of historical geography in Africa by Kwamina B. Dickson (see A.R.H. Baker, Progress in historical geography (New York, 1972), pp.187–206 and 273-274) suggests that very little attention is given to this subject on the African Continent and it makes no reference to a single work produced in Africa south of the Zambezi. It is therefore safe to assume that the study of historical geography is comparatively new in South Africa. Because of this people interested in how the cultural landscape of southern Africa had evolved were largely dependent on A.F. Hattersley’s Illustrated social history of South Africa (Cape Town, 1969).

Dr Christopher has changed this situation by publishing the results of his research on the historical geography of southern Africa; he has done this in local and overseas journals and in this his first comprehensive work on the subject. Apart from the fact that it introduces into South Africa new concepts in the field of historical geography his book is important for its interdisciplinary and human approach to geography, an approach which makes his book valuable also for historians, particularly those specializing in urban and regional history.

It is quite clear that the author does not pretend to describe in detail the way the southern African landscape has been transformed through White settlement. The book is, instead, a broad introductory study of the process, the details of which can be worked out later. The first three chapters deal with the factors which determined the settlement of Whites in the interior of South Africa during the Dutch and English periods (1652–1806) and the latter constitute perhaps the most important and valuable chapter in the book. There are practical guidelines on projects such as locating historical information in libraries; where and how to collect local historical material and how to index the information obtained; how to record historical information from cemetery inscriptions, place names, historic sites, and how to make historic maps. Projects could also be made of subjects like the community, the schools, the senior citizens, local fairs, bazaars and film shows. If historical societies were able to put into effect even just a few of these projects the task of the researcher who is to write a local history of a region would be considerably eased.

The chapter on collecting Oral History has interesting information and guidance on how to prepare and conduct an interview and how to transcribe and file the recording.

The next few chapters deal with buildings — the permanent marking of historic sites, the preservation and restoration of buildings and the part which historical societies can play in these activities. Other subjects dealt with are the arranging of tours (where, what, how?); the establishing of a historical library; how to make use of volunteers from the society; how to set about publishing a manuscript (sources, footnotes, index), or a periodical, or a monthly publication; and finally how to distribute a publication.

In another chapter the writer deals with the local museum which is run by a historical society. Only broad outlines are given about instituting a museum, the display and labelling of objects and the problem of maintaining it.

There are five Appendices, unfortunately not applicable to the South African researcher as they refer to institutions, societies and research addresses in the United States of America. The index, however, is well compiled and helpful.

One of the most valuable assets of the book is a fairly extensive bibliography at the end of each chapter which makes possible more extensive reading on particular subjects. Unfortunately there is no comprehensive alphabetical bibliography.

The book is illustrated with very ordinary photographs some of which, unfortunately, serve little purpose.

Anybody who, until now, has doubted the purpose of a historical society or its right to exist is bound to alter his opinion after having read this book. Enthusiasm, imagination, ingenuity and the time needed to raise money by various means are the main ingredients for a successful society. Apart from preserving local history such a society will contribute harmony and cohesiveness to the community.

By and large the book is basically intended to be practical and instructive; this makes it a real asset to local historical societies, which can only benefit by having it within reach.

M. VAN HEERDEN
Human Sciences Research Council


Even apart from the title, the front cover of Dorothy Weyer Creich’s book is sure to interest by its conspicuous red apple crowning the silhouette of an old-fashioned chair.

Her enthusiasm for her subject, local history, is evident throughout the book. The purpose and functions of a historical society take on a new meaning when one has read it, for it becomes clear that local history can virtually become "a way of living, really, wherein we think, plan, talk even dream about..." She starts her subject by stating the important factors which have to be kept in mind before a historical society is even founded, and then continues with advice on how to establish it.

The chapter on finance deals with all the problems of money-raising and gives very practical advice on handling the funds of a society.

The writer goes on to deal with the publicity aspect and with projects for limited budgets. The latter constitute perhaps the most important and valuable chapter in the book. There are practical guidelines on projects such as locating historical information in libraries; where and how to collect local historical material and how to index the information obtained; how to record historical information from cemetery inscriptions, place names, historic sites, and how to make historic maps. Projects could also be made of subjects like the community, the schools, the senior citizens, local fairs, bazaars and film shows. If historical societies were able to put into effect even just a few of these projects the task of the researcher who is to write a local history of a region would be considerably eased.

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