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MOUNTAIN PASSES, ROADS & TRANSPORTATION
IN THE CAPE:
A GUIDE TO RESEARCH

GRAHAM ROSS

Fourth Edition

**MOUNTAIN PASSES, ROADS & TRANSPORTATION
IN THE CAPE:
A GUIDE TO RESEARCH**

Compiled by

GRAHAM L.D.ROSS

**Fourth Edition
February 2009**

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It seemed a pity to stop at 1994!

Initially this edition is being issued in electronic format only.

Western Cape Archives reference CDC 1/2/15.

PREFACE – A SUMMARY

This research document has been divided into **four main parts**:
Section A: **INDEX OF CAPE MOUNTAIN PASSES**
Section B: **SCHEDULE OF CONSTRUCTION DATES**
Section C: **CHRONOLOGY**
Section D: **ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY**
all preceded by an explanatory **INTRODUCTION**.

These data have been collected in an effort to **list** (and hence also **record**) some of the documentation and other information available to those interested in the history of mountain passes, roads and transportation generally.

The aim was to produce a Guide for the use of future researchers in this field.

Generally speaking, the study has concentrated on the history and records of the Dutch East India Company period, of the short Batavian Government interlude, of the Cape Colony and of its successor, the Cape Province. **It thus covers the period from mid 17th century to 1994.**

SECTION A: INDEX OF CAPE MOUNTAIN PASSES

Mountain passes were priority items in the original research. The Index provides an **alphabetical** listing of the 500 or so mountain passes and poorts in the Cape Province discovered using the sources and time available. This list is without doubt the most complete in existence at this time.

All those passes about which histories and/or details could be found have opposite their names the date of an entry in the Chronology. Further dates (if any) are shown at the end of this Chronology entry as "See also" dates. Where applicable alternative pass names and/or spellings have been noted.

SECTION B: SCHEDULE OF PIONEERING AND CONSTRUCTION DATES

The Schedule is not a listing of all items included in the Chronology: it covers only mountain passes, and major roads and bridges. It is a **chronological** one-line-name-and-date type of schedule, a sort of historical summary of major roadmaking activities in the Cape. The dates the project was completed were recorded; these also indicate where the reader may find further information in the Chronology.

SECTION C: CHRONOLOGY

Entries in the Chronology summarise information about the subject being considered. The various references from which each bit of information was gleaned are recorded, so that the researcher will know where to read further about the subject, if so desired. "See also" annotations list the dates of other chronological entries, or indicate sources where further information may be found.

SECTION D: ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

The bibliography lists those of the many publications and other items relevant to the area of interest which it was felt could be helpful to those wishing to do further research in this area. The annotations are intended to indicate the field covered in an item where this is not obvious from the title. And to maintain the emphasis on mountain passes, the names of passes referred to in the text have been noted.

FOREWORD to the THIRD EDITION

(Ross P-D gave me permission to use this again for the fourth edition.)

The name Graham Ross is synonymous with the design and construction of roads in what used to be the Cape Province, stretching from the Orange River boundary with Namibia in the north-west to the Mtanvuma River in the east, the old border with Natal. When I returned to the Cape in 1997, I became aware, in Civil Engineering circles, of a certain Graham Lindsay Drury Ross known colloquially as “Mr Roads”, and it is a privilege for me to write the Preface to his magnificent dissertation on roads in the Cape, for it affords me the opportunity of paying tribute to both the man and his work.

Graham Ross has called this production “A Guide to Research” on “Mountain Passes, Roads and Transportation in the Cape” but in fact it has been a huge research programme in its own right, having taken over ten years of careful and meticulous investigation, checking and cross-checking to ensure accuracy and comprehensiveness. It is a monument to the man himself and his dedication to the field of Civil Engineering with which he has been associated for over fifty years, and in which he has gained an enviable reputation as a road builder or, in local terminology, a “padmaker”.

The document is comprehensive and covers road construction from the construction of the first road to haul timber from Kirstenbosch in 1653 and the first mountain pass over Constantia Neck in 1666, until 1994 – over 300 years of records of our roads. It covers approximately 500 passes and poorts, and is an invaluable tool for the researcher into roads and their ancillary features and structures in the Cape. However, it also provides a solid basis for further detailed investigation for the more serious researcher, such as the Civil Engineer who needs to upgrade existing roads or who has to build additional roads or road structures. It enables the researcher to find where to look for the problems to be anticipated in building new roads, or in improving or modifying existing roads – an historical record of what has happened in the past is vitally important when planning any new or supplementary work on an existing construction. The “Guide” explains where to look for the sort of information needed during the planning phase. Local and Provincial authorities, when producing their tourism brochures, can gain most useful information from this store of data, which also tells them where additional information may be found.

Each of the Sections has its own particular function, in a practical and professional manner, in guiding the researcher towards finding the information sought. The Introduction tells how the document evolved from the earliest research studies, and explains the four Sections and Graham Ross’ approach in the preparation of these Sections. This leads on to the Index of Cape Mountain Passes, then to the Schedule of Construction Dates, followed by the Chronology which summarises the information researched and references the various sources from which this information has been gleaned, and finally the huge Bibliography which gives details of these sources. These researches have taken him from various Archival records of South Africa’s history to an enormous number of engineering records and papers and other published and unpublished documents in this country, and to information stored in such far-flung places as Scotland, the World Bank and the Highway Research Board in USA, the Public Records Office in London, and a host of other sources of information.

Graham Ross quotes John F Kennedy as saying “*You pay for good roads whether you have them or not... It is not the wealth of a nation that builds roads but the roads that build the wealth of a nation.*” What may be added is that the wealth of a nation is built by the road builders themselves, and we as a nation owe a debt of gratitude to Graham Ross, not only for his contribution to the wealth of our Country, but also for his willingness to share his experience and accumulated knowledge with us in the form of this document.

Ross Parry-Davies PrEng, PhD
(February 2004)

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Anita Holtzhauzen of the C.P.Nel Museum, Oudtshoorn,
Bertdene Laubscher of the Togryers Museum, Ceres,
Suzanne O'Reilly of the George Museum, and
Gordon Richings, researcher, of Durban.

The **SECOND INTERIM EDITION** was dated November 1999. Copies are held by:

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African Studies Library, University of Cape Town,
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Fransie Pienaar Museum, Prince Albert.

Danie Ackermann, retired Assistant PRE, Cape Province,
Pieter Ackermann, Klein Karoo Tourism Board, of Uniondale,
Nigel Amschwand, Vernacular Architecture Society of SA,
Pieter Baartman, author, retired C.P.Roads Chief Surveyor,
Elvin Bowker, enthusiast, of Port Elizabeth,
Joe de Beer, retired geologist, now of Cape Town,
E.H.(Lil) Haigh, Institute for Water Research, Rhodes University,
George Low, retired engineer/researcher, of Oudtshoorn,
Ilse Meyer, researcher/author, of Oudtshoorn,
Roy Petersen. ex-Cape Provincial Roads Engineer,
Max Pike, retired padmaker, of Velddrif,
Claus Riding, tracer of old roads, of Ceres,
Frans Theunissen, mountain biker, University of Stellenbosch,
Kirstin van Tonder, of SA Heritage Resources Agency,
Willem J.van Zijl, researcher, of Strand,
Harry Viljoen, The Bridge Design Engineer, PAWC,
E.S.(Teddy) Whitlock, local historian, of Graaff-Reinet,
Rose Willis, Central Karoo Regional Tourism Co-ordinator,
and by the compiler.

/The third edition....

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