

Archaeological Site Report	SiteNo	9/2/018/0149
	Site Name	Company Gardens, Cape Town
	Date	03/07/2014 - 07:00
	Project	
	CaseNID	
	Coords	-33.927445, 18.416663

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Site Category: Place

SiteComments:

Archive Import History: The settlement at the Cape began with a fort and a garden. "Choose . . . a place for the fort . . . Then choose good soil for the gardens . . . Also plant fruit trees." These were some of Jan van Riebeeck's instructions. So he built his Fort of Good Hope close to the Sweet or Fresh River, a little southwest of the present Parade, and Hendrick Boom, the Master Gardener, laid out the first garden between the fort and the river. Even before the end of 1652 the land across the river, that is the land just west of modern Adderley Street, was cultivated. Gradually the garden was shifted and extended towards the mountain. By 1660 it lay entirely to the west of the Fresh River. Here, opposite the top point of the fort, in the rectangle today formed by Adderley, Longmarket, St. George's and Church Streets was the "Compagnies miedericq thuijn" or medicine-garden, occupying about 100 roods or about 18 hectares of land. It extended from Tuin Street (now Church Street) towards Table Mountain and must have coincided more or less with the lower part of the present gardens. It was enclosed by a thick hedge of ash trees and brambles. By 1670 Cape Town gradually began to take shape, with a tendency to expand in the direction of Table Mountain, with the result that the lower end of the gardens became involved. First a small portion was cut off to provide a site for the new church and graveyard, and later more garden land was sacrificed at the top of the Heerengracht (Adderley Street) for the Slave Lodge on the left and for the hospital on the right, on the site now occupied by Syfrets Trust building. Up to 1679 the garden was used exclusively to supply the needs of visiting ships for fruit and vegetables, but the arrival of Simon van der Stel brought about a gradual change. The free burghers and the Company's garden at Newlands now produced so much that the garden in the town was no longer essential as an orchard and vegetable garden. Consequently Simon van der Stel converted it into a botanical and ornamental garden, and this policy was continued by Willem Adriaan van der Stel and later governors like Ryk Tulbagh and Van de Graaff. In this they enjoyed the services of master gardeners who in reality were botanists, such as Fleinrich Oldenland (1692-1697), Jan Hartog (1689-1715) and Johan Andreas Auge (1747-1785). Descriptions by the travellers Peter Kolbe and Francois Valentyn enable us to form a very good picture of what the garden was like during and immediately after the time of the Van der Stels. At that time the whole garden occupied a mere 16 hectares and, according to Valentyn, measured 1 020 metres by 273 metres. It was divided into rectangular blocks by hedges which also served as windbreaks. In some of the blocks vegetables were grown; others were devoted to herbs, and yet others to all sorts of fruit trees as well as indigenous and exotic trees and plants. Special journeys into the interior were undertaken to collect indigenous plants, and exotics were imported from all parts of the world. Three beautiful avenues, equally spaced, divided the garden lengthwise and also transversely. At the top of the garden there was a water mill, and from it the water of a mountain stream was led by neat masonry furrows to irrigate the entire garden. The northern side was enclosed by a high wall in which there was a fine entrance gateway, and Simon van der Stel had a small summer-house built on the site now occupied by the State President's residence. Here he entertained and accommodated foreign visitors in two fine rooms, and here also the head gardener lived. The decorations included several stuffed animals such as a lion, hippopotamus, a bushbuck and a "gevlamden schoonen Wilde Ezel" or zebra. In the course of years the garden became a veritable pleasure garden, the pride of the residents of Cape Town. It became famous for its beauty and the variety of its trees, shrubs and flowers, and gained the admiration of visitors. Paul Hermann exclaimed ecstatically: "Oh, Lord, how many, how rare and how wonderful were the plants that on this single day presented themselves to Hermann's eyes

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!"" The French Roman Catholic priest, Father Guy Tachard, referred to it as one of the finest and rarest gardens he had ever seen, while the well-known traveller Francois Valentyn compared it with the famous gardens of the world, but maintained ""that none of the celebrated gardens of ancient times, or of modern garden-lovers could be compared with this astonishing and beautiful garden in respect of the layout and the rare trees from the four corners of the earth"". During the eighteenth century the garden was extended in the direction of the mountain. This process had probably started during the governorship of Willem Adriaan van der Stel who established a zoo at the top of the garden. A oomparison of a drawing by Josephus Jones in about 1790 with Kolbe's plan reveals the great developments that had taken place during that century. The gardens must by then have reached up to the modern Orange Street. Apart from this expansion, a fine orna mental gateway, designed by the famous architect L. M. Thibault, was built during the time of C. J. van de Graaff. This provided an imposing entrance from the city, that is, from the Heerengracht. The summer-house had by this time been so improved that it had become a little palace with its own private garden and had for years served as a governor's residence. During the second British occupation of the Cape the garden was neglected, and besides this Sir George Yonge decided to close it to the public and to reserve it for his private use. This high-handed action raised such a storm of public indignation that the Governor was obliged to re-open the garden. Then it was that the well-known trio- Thibault the architect, Herman Schutte the builder, and Anton Anreith the sculptor-combined their talents to build the southern entrance and the so-called ""Lion Gateway"" to the zoo. The 19th and 20th centuries were less kind to the historic old garden. The expansion of the city demanded repeated encroachments, to such an extent that it lost some of its character and charm. First, Lord Charles Somerset considerably enlarged Government House and the land attached to it at the expense of the garden, and in 1827 the Governor granted 0,4 ha of the garden which later became the site of St. George's Cathedral to the Anglican Church. In 1832 and 1833 Thibault's lovely entrance to the garden from the city was demolished and although it was replaced by another, all traces of a structure there have disappeared During the 1880's further inroads were made on the garden when, amongst other buildings, Parliament House and the Public Library were built on the lower portion. Later the central and upper portions also suffered when the Museum, Art Gallery, the South African College and a number of monuments, statues and other structures were erected. One may hope that by being proclaimed as a monument, what is left of the historic garden will be protected against any further damage. Proclaimed 1962 Visual Description: Colours: Site Features: Condition: Construction Date: Materials: Catalogue: , No: , Significance Category:

Damage Types: