

Archaeological Site Report	SiteNo	9/2/018/0179/001
	Site Name	Egyptian building, Orange Street, Cape Town
	Date	26/09/2014 - 11:32
	Project	
	CaseNID	
	Coords	-33.930271, 18.413951
Page No: 1	SiteAutoID: 29202	

Site Category: Building

SiteComments:

Archive Import History: Just above Bertram House, also to the right of the Avenue, the so-called "Egyptian Building" of the University of Cape Town is situated. It lies concealed behind the old white wall of the Company's park for beasts of prey and a beautiful gateway gives access to it. ' This gateway was designed at the beginning of the nineteenth century by Louis M. Thibault, built by Herman Schutte and decorated by Anton Anreith. This building is one of the oldest situated on the vast area which the Company's gardens covered in bygone days. In 1829 the South African College, now the University of Cape Town, came into being. In 1838 Governor Sir Benjamin D'Urban granted part of the Company's park for beasts of prey here in the Gardens, to the College for erecting a building of its own. Already in the following year the College Council approved of a preliminary sketch for such a building, drawn by Dr. James Adamson, professor of English and Physics. The design, incorporating Egyptian columns, was carefully reviewed and worked up to full detail by Col. G. G. Lewis of the Royal Engineers. The building was planned as the three sides of an open square with an assembly hall in the back side and three small classrooms in each of the wings. Characteristic of the building would be the heavy colonnade of Egyptian columns in accordance with the Neo-Egyptian style of architecture which was so popular in the thirties and forties of the nineteenth century. In September, 1839, the plans for the building were approved of by the College Council and the cost was estimated to be £3 132 (+R6 264). Of this sum the Cape Government would contribute £2 000 as a loan. With Col. Lewis as architect and building supervisor, building operations began in the same month. The building was completed within two years and on April 13th, 1841, it was inaugurated by Dr. James Adamson. On all sides of the building there were still the ruins of the cages in which the beasts of prey were kept and also the ruins of the old slave quarters. In the square stood a few oak trees while an avenue of oak trees led from the new building to the terrain where the Little Theatre now stands. In the olden days a guard was regularly on duty at the entrance. With the exception of two classrooms which were added in 1883 behind the building near the boundary of Bertram House and a few dividing walls which were removed, the Egyptian Building has remained unchanged throughout the years and save for the Gymnasium in Upper-Paarl it is the only building in South Africa of this particular style of architecture. This building is not only the oldest building of the University of Cape Town, but it is also the first building which was erected for the purpose of higher education in South Africa and which has been used uninterruptedly for that purpose up to this very day. In this building many well-known men of learning have taught : Dr. James Adamson, Sir Langham Dale, Prof. Roderick Noble, Prof. William Ritchie, Pres. J. H. Brand, Prof. P. J. du Toit, Prof. M. C. Botha and others. Many students who received their training here were destined to play a leading role in South African affairs : Lord de Villiers, Chief Justice of the Cape Colony (1874-1910) and first Chief Justice of the Union of South Africa (1910-1914); Sir James Rose-Innes, politician and Chief Justice (1914-1927) ; W. P. Schreiner, Prime Minister of the Cape Colony (1898-1900) ; J. H. (Onze Jan) Hofmeyr, N. P. van Wyk Louw and others. Proclaimed 1969" Visual Description: Colours: Site Features: Condition: Construction Date: 1841 Materials: Catalogue: UCT, No: 4.09, Significance Category:

AdminComments:

Bibliography archive: Greig 1971:39; Radford 1979: 209 ; Hawthorne, Peter & Bristow, Barry 'Historic Schools of South Africa', 1993, pg 23

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Damage Types: