

Archaeological Site Report	SiteNo	9/2/111/0101
	Site Name	Rustenburg House, Rondebosch, Cape Town
	Date	
	Project	
	CaseNID	
	Coords	-33.962125, 18.472400

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Site Category: Building

SiteComments:

Archive Import History: When Jan van Riebeeck granted land at "'het ronde doornbosje'" in 1657 to the first free burghers, he reserved a piece of land for an orchard for the use of the Company. It extended from the Liesbeek River right across the old wagon road up to what is now Rhodes Avenue below the University of Cape Town. In February of the same year the first bricks were made for a house to be built on this land just above the road. Jan van Riebeeck must have completed the house during his regime because Commissioner van Overtwater and a party of ladies and gentle men visited the new house in 1663. This farm, this "pleasure-garden", that later became known as Rustenburg, was used by the as an out-of-town or country residence where they entertained important visitors. The ailing Commander Hakius died here in 1671. Two years later the house is described as consisting of "'front-room, small side room, large upper chamber, small room below it, another smallroom'". In the 1680's Simon van der Stel showed a special liking for Rustenburg. In September 1683, in fact, Simon van der Stel went to live at "'t Rondebossie'". He went to the Castle on Sundays to attend divine services, but only went to Cape Town during the week when he was forced to do so by the arrival of ships. When he had to attend meetings of the Council of Policy or attend to other business he rode to the Castle in the morning and returned to Rustenburg the same evening. Here at Rustenburg he devoted himself to the propagation of oak trees and the planting of vines. In 1687 there were as many as 100 000 vines in full bearing. In his instructions to his son and successor, Willem Adriaan van der Stel, he recommended Rustenburg as a place for propagating oaks. In spite of this, Willem Adriaan soon built a new country residence at "'Nieuweland'" (now Newlands House) and although travellers like Kolbe, Valentyn and Stavorinus continued to speak highly of Rustenburg, it gradually lost its popularity. However, the estate was not allowed to fall into complete neglect and, at least according to a sketch plan of it, it was still a model farm in the middle of the eighteenth century. This sketch plan contains the first reference to the summer-house at the upper extremity of the land. A second storey was added to the house in about 1780, when the façade was also altered and provided with four pilasters. In 1790 Rustertburg was given to the secunde as a residence but on account of pressing financial burdens, the Company was forced to let both the house and the gardens. In 1794 Commissioner Sluijsken reported "that the house Rustenburg at Rondebosch is bad and in a ruinous condition" and that it would cost at least 2 000 riksdaalclers to repair it. When the invading British fleet appeared in False Bay in 1795, the house was occupied by Gerard Munnik. After the Company's troops and the burgher forces had been dislodged from Muizenberg by the British bombardments and the surrender of the Cape to Britain had become inevitable, General Craig met the representatives of the Council of Policy, J. J. le Sueur and W. S. van Ryneveld, at Rustenburg to conduct negotiations. Thus it happened that the terms of surrender were drafted in this house, and signed there on Wednesday, 16th September, 1795, after they had been accepted by the Council of Policy. During the short-lived first British occupation, General Dundas, who was a bachelor, gave up his quarters in the Castle to Lady Anne Barnard and took up residence at Rustenburg. When the Batavian regime took over the control of the Cape, the farm, including the house and the summer-house, was sold to Johannes Hoets and it was probably Hoets who built the four columns in front of the house to correspond with the pilasters. The house was destroyed by fire in the middle of the nineteenth century. It was then rebuilt and although the columns and certain parts of the building were retained, it was now given a neo-classical appearance. During the twentieth century the house came into possession of the Cape School Board. In 1939 the School Board decided to demolish the building, but Dr. Mary Cook persuaded

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the Historical Monuments Commission to intervene. in this way the house was saved. The original summer-house higher up the mountainside with its two masonry garden seats on either side, has also been proclaimed as an historical monument. Visual Description: Colours: Site Features: Condition: Construction Date: Materials: Catalogue: , No: , Significance Category:

Damage Types: