

<b>Archaeological Site Report</b>	<b>SiteNo</b>	9/2/060/0004
	<b>Site Name</b>	Mission station, Mamre
	<b>Date</b>	
	<b>Project</b>	
	<b>CaseNID</b>	
	<b>Coords</b>	-33.506029, 18.470971

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Site Category: Building

#### **SiteComments:**

Archive Import History: The Mission Station was founded in 1808 by Moravian missionaries on the site occupied by the Dutch East India Company's military outpost, "t Groenekloof", from 1701 to 1791. The old farm house (now the parsonage) was certainly built before 1770, and the original gable of the church building bears the date 1818, although later it was slightly altered. Mamre is a well-known mission station situated in a fertile green valley on the road to Darling, barely fifty kilometres from Cape Town. When Jan van Riebeeck arrived at the Cape this attractive valley and the surrounding country right up to Saldanha Bay was the home of a Hottentot tribe called the Cochoquas or "proper Saldanhars". Because it was so fertile and so near to the town, it soon aroused the interest of the Cape cattle farmers and it became known as the "Groene Kloof". In 1700 Henning Husing, the well-to-do holder of the right to trade in meat, was given permission to use "the three springs on this side of Groene Kloof" and to graze his cattle as far as Saldanha Bay. Henning Husing, the farmers round Riebeeck Kasteel and the Hottentots had so much trouble with the thieving Bushmen that Willem Adriaan van der Stel was obliged to send a sergeant and ten men to Groene Kloof in November, 1701, to establish a permanent military outpost there. This outpost was called "De Kleine Post". The Company gradually transferred its cattle from the Stellenbosch area to "the Company's post in the Groene Kloof". Quarters were built for the soldiers and barns for the cattle, and lands were cultivated. At the same time an unsurveyed piece of land adjoining Groene Kloof known as Louwsplaas was reserved for the Hottentots. "De Kleine Post" remained an outpost of the Company until 1791 and, like all the other Company posts, it in reality became a supply store from which the officials helped themselves illicitly. When the Company was on the verge of bankruptcy at the end of the eighteenth century, all the outposts, including De Kleine Post, were abolished and the cattle sold. However, Groene Kloof remained government property and was put out to lease. In 1806 the Cape passed into the possession of Great Britain for the second time and the Earl of Caledon was appointed as Governor of the colony. He had a great deal of sympathy with the missionaries and was particularly impressed by the work of the Moravians of Herannahutters at Genadendal. He asked them to establish a second mission station amongst the Hottentots at Groene Kloof, where about a hundred Cochoquas, Goringhaiquas and Gorrachouquas were still living. With this in view, Caledon in December, 1807, gave the Moravian Brothers the government farm "De Kleine Post" with the buildings on it as well as the adjoining Hottentot reserve Louwsplaas and the farm Crujwagens kraal. Two missionaries, J. F. Kohrhammer and J. H. Schmitt, were appointed to work there. Since the lease of De Kleine Post had not yet lapsed, the buildings were not immediately available to the missionaries and it was only in March, 1808 that the authorities informed them that the lessee had been instructed to leave the farm as soon as they arrived. On 27th March, 1808, they commenced their work at "Groene Kloof". They changed the name of Kleine Post to the biblical one of Mamre, which means fatness. Caledon's successors, especially Lord Charles Somerset, were less well-disposed to this mission settlement. In his opinion it would be better if this ideal piece of land were reserved as a desirable rural residence for governors. During his visit in 1814 Lord Charles levelled serious charges of laziness and immorality against the inhabitants and in the same year he requested the missionaries to suspend their activities and to move to Genadendal with their followers. Fortunately this threat was warded off by Bishop Latrobe who was on a visit to the Cape. He came to an agreement with the Colonial Secretary whereby the permanence of Mamre was assured. During the years that followed the mission station suffered serious material setbacks. The crops failed for two successive years and the settlement was

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threatened with a shortage of food. In 1822 heavy and continuous rains caused many houses and even one of the gables of the newly-completed church to collapse. Under the able guidance of the missionaries the community of the mission station gradually achieved greater prosperity through their own industrious efforts. The population increased rapidly and grew from 300 in 1815 to nearly 700 in 1835. The emancipation of the slaves added extra strength to this increase. At this time the village began to take shape. The inhabitants built their little houses scattered about the valley at fair distances from the original farmstead. At first there was no order in the layout and the houses varied greatly in size, finish and in architecture. Gradually however there developed a greater degree of uniformity. The houses were built in long rows, in the style adopted by the majority of the colonists—whitewashed, thatched cottages, most of them with half-hipped roofs and consisting of two rooms and a kitchen. Although the inhabitants were allowed to keep a few cattle, they concentrated mainly on gardens and agriculture, in which the Moravian missionaries with their practical approach to life gave them good guidance. In 1830 a horse-mill was built so that they could grind their own wheat. Besides teaching the inhabitants to farm, the missionaries also taught them a variety of trades, including carpentry, brick-laying, blacksmithing, tanning and millinery. Rapid progress was also made in the religious and educational spheres. The fine old farmhouse with its concavo-convex gable which is still standing was occupied by the missionaries and at first services were held in the spacious front room, while a school was started in one of the outbuildings. Soon, however, they started to build a church in the immediate vicinity of the other buildings, for which purpose artisans were recruited in Cape Town. This church, which graces Mamre to this day, was completed in 1818, a date which can be read on the original pediment. Education was provided for adults as well as children, so that by 1812 there were 150 pupils ranging in age from six to 30 years. After the emancipation of the slaves in 1834 nearly all mission stations experienced difficult times. The exaggerated philanthropy of some missionary leaders and the thronging of labourers in the mission stations caused many colonists to raise objections. There was a real danger that the mission stations for coloured people might be abolished, but the Moravians did not allow this to worry them. Their main stations at Genadendal, Mamre and Elim made steady progress, and at Genadendal they were able, with the support of the government, to train their own teachers and missionaries. Outlying stations were established and in the case of Mamre a subsidiary congregation came into being on the farm Modderivier. Farmers began to appreciate the positive approach of the Moravians and Mamre became the base for missionary work on eight of the surrounding farms. On these farms the owners placed small buildings at the disposal of the missionaries for their work. The local administration of Mamre was managed for a century by the missionaries themselves. At the beginning of the present century, however, just after the Anglo-Boer War, conflict arose between the inhabitants and the white missionaries. At Mamre a faction led by Johannes Adonis openly opposed the missionaries. Because similar movements arose at other mission stations the Cape Government introduced the "Mission Land Bill" in Parliament. By this legislation the secular control of the missionaries was replaced by a Board of Management consisting of a civil servant and a board of nine members, of whom six were chosen by the registered owner and three were nominated by the Governor-General. This meant that the inhabitants now had control of their affairs to a considerable extent, but the new arrangements did not have the desired effects. The community of Mamre deteriorated and this created opportunities for agitators to sow unrest. In order to combat the obvious social and economic deterioration of the area, the government in 1944 transferred the control and administration of Mamre and other mission stations to the Department of Social Welfare. White superintendents were appointed and, with the co-operation of existing Boards, the communities soon recovered. In 1949 government loans were made available to these communities, which enabled the Boards of Management to improve agriculture and cattle farming, housing conditions and water supplies. At the same time a post office was built, school buildings were renovated and a clinic was started. Mamre has had a long and colourful history, but it is not only notable for its history. The eighteenth century Cape Dutch house, the old church, the surrounding buildings give the village a particular architectural content and attraction. Add to this a community with its own particular composition, way of life and approach to life. Visual Description: Colours:

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Site Features: Condition: Construction Date: Materials: Catalogue: , No: , Significance Category:

### **AdminComments:**

Bibliography archive: Oxley, John 'Places of worship in South Africa', 1993, pp 69-71

Damage Types: