

Archaeological Site Report	SiteNo	9/2/018/0242
	Site Name	Government Avenue, Cape Town
	Date	
	Project	
	CaseNID	
	Coords	-33.926930, 18.417919

Page No: 1 **SiteAutoID:** 29150

Site Category: Building

SiteComments:

Archive Import History: The Government Avenue which even today gives its own particular character to the Gardens and, indeed, to Cape Town, was mentioned as early as 1685 by Chavalier de Chaumont : "The main walk, which is fourteen hundred and fifty paces (about 1 305 metres) long, is almost completely planted with lemon trees." It is clearly shown on an old plan of 1700 where it is described as "the main road of the garden planted on both sides with orange trees". It commenced a short distance below the Groote Kerk, followed the line of modern Adderley Street and continued in a straight line through the Company's Garden. With the expansion of the city and the cutting off of the eastern portion of the garden, the lower part of the "road" became Heerengracht and the upper portion, the Avenue. It was now only 1 020 metres long. Simon van der Stel, in his great eagerness to plant oak trees, replaced most of the orange trees with oaks. In 1726 the traveller Francois Valentyn wrote that high hedges grew on either side of the Avenue and went on: "Within these hedges which I judge to be 23 or 24 feet (about 7 m) high, many oak, lemon, citron, orange and various other trees have been planted in rows . . . but the oaks in this road are not more than an average leg in thickness." This avenue was changed little during the eighteenth century. According to Jan Stavorinus, an admiral of the Netherlands fleet, the oaks by now had grown so big that "they . . . afford a very agreeable shade by their foliage, uniting overhead". About 1790 the well-known architect Thibault provided the garden with a fine entrance from the town, on the instructions of Governor Van de Graaff. Up to this time, the Avenue ended at the zoo which was situated at the upper end of the Garden and its length was estimated by various visitors at about a 900 metres. During the Batavian regime, however, it was extended to pass through the zoo. Here Schutte built walls, designed by Thibault, on either side. This meant that the old division of the zoo into two, with an aviary and an enclosure for antelopes on the left and predators on the right, was established. Two lovely gateways, decorated by the sculptor Anton Anreith, gave access to these enclosures, and at this time, too, the Avenue was given an attractive entrance at what is now Orange Street. In the same year, 1804, Captain Robert Percival wrote: "At the entrance of the garden is a pair of very handsome gates fronting the grand walk, which runs the whole length of the garden, and is as broad as the Bird Cage Walk in St James's Park. It is neatly rolled and gravelled; and each side is planted with oak, low elms, myrtle, laurel, and geraniums. On the left side is a canal, which is always filled with water from the Table Mountain, and runs from the garden into the town." During the nineteenth century the Avenue, though it did not suffer any major changes, began to lose some of its character. The entrance gateways at both ends were removed; at the lower end buildings were erected on both sides and the garden of Government House was extended right up to the Avenue. Notwithstanding this, the old Avenue with its neat gravel roadway on which vehicles are prohibited and its shady oaks, some of which have reached a venerable age, remains one of the places that recall old Cape Town of the days of the Dutch East India Company. Public opinion has often in the past defended it stoutly against those who planned to make inroads upon it. Proclaimed 1937 (c) Entrances and gates in Government Avenue On an old map of Cape Town the letter Z indicates "the Entrance to the Company's Garden". The entrance was then still situated somewhere near the top end of the present Adderley Street. By 1679 this entrance from the town had already been moved to the back of the slave lodge or the present Old Supreme Court. On a plan of the Garden in Valentyn's description of his journey published in 1726, the entrance is shown at the lower Corner of the eastern side, that is, in the modern Parliament Street, just above the slave lodge. He writes as follows: "One enters this garden on the E. side through a large

Archaeological Site Report	SiteNo	9/2/018/0242
	Site Name	Government Avenue, Cape Town
	Date	
	Project	
	CaseNID	
	Coords	-33.926930, 18.417919
Page No: 2 SiteAutoID: 29150		

gateway . . . This gateway has two pilasters. On the front there is the emblem G VOC 1679. For practical reasons this entrance was later moved to the top of Adderley Street. In about 1788, during the time of Van de Graaff, this entrance was provided with a fine gateway, with a guardhouse to the right, by the architect L. M. Thibault, but. unfortunately it was demolished in the l830's. There were also fine gateways at the top of the Avenue. Under the Batavian government Gen. J. W. Janssens instructed the aforementioned L. M. Thibault to bring about certain changes and improvements. First of all he extended the Avenue, which at that time ended at the zoo, to pass through the zoological gardens and enclosed it between walls on both sides. In collaboration with the sculptor Anton Anreith, he provided beautiful gates in each wall to give access to the two sections of the zoo. The gate on the west, famous for its couchant lionesses, led to the camp for predators, while the one opposite it on the east side led to the antelope enclosure and aviary. The gateways were built of bricks, cement and fine lime, and Thibault s total account for these fine works was 300 riks dollars or about R45. In the course of years the lionesses on the western gateway were damaged, but they were restored at the request of the Commission and the eastern gateway will shortly be restored by the Provincial Administration. The extension of the Avenue and the building of the two gateways made it necessary for Thibault to give attention to the top entrance. There he built an ornamental Chinese bridge over a stream and a “guardhouse for the new bridge”. In time these structures also fell into disrepair and have disappeared completely. Visual Description: Colours: Site Features: Condition: Construction Date: Materials: Catalogue: , No: , Significance Category:

Damage Types: