

Archaeological Site Report	SiteNo	9/2/018/0079
	Site Name	Evangelical Lutheran Church, Strand Street, Cape
	Date	Town
	Project	
	CaseNID	
	Coords	-33.918970, 18.419534

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Site Category: Building

SiteComments:

Archive Import History: This unique group of eighteenth century buildings stands in Strand Street, higher up and across the street from Koopmans de Wet House. It owes its attraction to the fact that these buildings were designed as an architectural entity to meet the needs of the Lutheran Church. It is also of outstanding historical importance because it symbolises the long drawn-out struggle of the Lutherans for the right to practise their religion. The Lutheran Church At first the Dutch East India Company allowed freedom of worship only to members of the Reformed Church. The number of German, Danish and Scandinavian officials and free burghers who belonged to the Lutheran Church increased rapidly, with the result that from very early times they demanded the . recognition of their beliefs and provision for their religious needs. Nevertheless all their petitions to the Lords Seventeen for permission to erect their own church and provide for the services of their own Minister were in vain. One of the bitterest opponents of the Lutheran Church during the middle years of the eighteenth century was Ryk Tulbagh who in other respects was one of the most popular of governors. Yet it was during his regime that Martin Melck, a member of the Lutheran Church and one of its strongest supporters, succeeded unobtrusively in starting to build the church. Martin Melck came to the Cape in 1746 as a soldier in 28 the Company's service. Four years later he became a free burgher and married Margaretha Hop. By this marriage he became the owner of the show farm Elsenburg and he soon became one of the richest and most influential wine- and stock-farmers in 'the colony. It was almost inevitable that he would acquire plots in the fashionable Sea Street (Strand Street). On this land near the top of the street he began on 6th April, 1774, to erect a building which he described to the government as a warehouse. It measured 28,6 m long by 19,5 m wide, and was built like a church with a domed ceiling, rows of thick, rectangular columns and large "English" sash windows. In 1776 the hall was transferred to the congregation by Martin Melck and used for holding services, and it already contained an organ, a communion chalice and a lectern in the form of a swan with outstretched wings— the symbol of Lutheranism. Another swan was proudly displayed above the entrance. Ryk Tulbagh was not unaware of these activities, but he is said to have told Melck that whenever he passed the place, he closed the eye nearest to it. At last, in 1779, the Lords Seventeen decided to give the Lutherans their own church and in the following year Andreas Kolver of Rotterdam began his ministry at the Cape as the first Pastor. During the next four years considerable improvements were made to the hall, but it was mainly during the years 1787 to 1792 that the building which had been "knocked up in the taste of a warehouse" was transformed and beautified. This was done by the leading Cape sculptor of the time, Anton Anreith. He designed the front elevation, but his main contribution was the decoration of the interior by his excellent wood carvings. The most important of these works were the magnificent pulpit supported by two great male figures and the choir-stalls with a carving of King David in high relief. During these years too, the consistory was added. In 1818 the church had to be rebuilt to a considerable extent be of the poor condition of the walls and the roof. At this time a spire was built, but unfortunately there were deviations from Anreith's design which robbed the façade and entrance of much of their former beauty. The new building was inaugurated on 20th December, 1820. There have been few alterations to the church since that time. The spire with its belfry rises almost from street level, while the original old railings offer brave resistance to the encroachment of the city. The same slate path which so many churchgoers have used over the years still leads from the gate to the paved entrance porch. Inside, the sense of devotion is enhanced by Anreith's incomparable pulpit, the historic old pews, the lovely copper basins and font. Here the Church Archives and

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the valuable communion plate are also preserved. Visual Description: Colours: Site Features: Condition:
 Construction Date: Materials: Catalogue: Rennie, Vol 2, No: 035.05, Significance Category:

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Bibliography archive: f & c, 01.005, p 43

Damage Types: