

HISTORY OF THE PROMENADE ¹

1. SEA POINT, GREEN POINT & MOULLIE POINT PROMENADE THEMATIC

The Promenade and immediate context is discussed under different themes, which are arranged roughly chronologically, more or less corresponding to distinct periods.

1.1 COASTAL DEFENCE WORKS

Until the Suez Canal opened up (1869) the Cape was the key to Dutch, British and French possessions and interests in the Indian Ocean, the East and the Pacific. The study area is bounded by a generally rocky coastline, offering essentially only Three Anchor Bay as a viable place to put troops ashore. The Cape's main defences were trained on the Cape road in Table Bay, with the Castle of Good Hope at the core of the defence line.

Historical defensive works in the study area are located in three locations, namely Three Anchor Bay (from 1672 onwards), the old Moullie Point lighthouse site (at least 1781), and near the existing Green Point lighthouse (1890). None of the remains are visible above ground any longer, but the Three Anchor Bay and Green Point batteries are likely buried underneath the Promenade.

The study area defensive structures formed part of what became a chain of defensive works stretching from Table Bay to Camps Bay (and beyond). Key coastal works flanking the study area were the *Camps Bay Battery* (two small batteries by 1786) to the south, and to the east, up to the Castle of Good Hope, *Fort Kijk-in-de-Pot* (1795), renamed *Fort Wynyard* (1862), the *Chavonnes Battery* (completed 1726), the massive *Amsterdam Battery* (completed 1784), and the *Rogge Bay Battery* (1781). With the exception of the Castle and a portion of Fort Wynyard, very little remains of these early coastal defensive works today. The Amsterdam and Rogge Bay batteries were completely demolished. The Chavonnes Battery made way for the Alfred Basin (Hallinan, 2009; Seeman, 1997).

Three Anchor Bay

During the 17th century, Three Anchor Bay was known as *De Leewen Zantbaeijken* (Lion's Cove) due to its proximity to Lion's Head. During van



Figure 1: 1786 Map of Table Bay Settlement (after Map 839, ARA Hague)

¹ This Annexure is sourced from CCT: HIA: Sea Point and Mouillie Point Promenades Final report revision 2 13 April 2015 Heritage Consultants Bridget O'Donoghue and Peter Buttgens
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Riebeeck's time the vulnerability of this inlet to amphibious landing was already recognized.

The outbreak of the Franco Dutch War (1672-78), when the Dutch Republic faced the combined might of France and England, precipitated upgrades to the Cape's coastal defences. 25 Sailors under the direction of surveyor J Wittebol were diverted by the Council of Policy from the VOC ship *Saxenburgh*, to construct a small fort to cover the Lion's Cove inlet from amphibious landing. The fort was named the *Matrosen Schanz* ("sailor's redoubt"), and armed with four two-pounder guns (presumably to cut down landing infantry). It was likely the first historical structure constructed along the Promenade.

The battery was allowed to fall into disrepair during peaceful times, and then upgraded anew each time the Cape came under threat of an invasion – 1695, 1734, and 1743 when it took the form of a four-cornered redoubt with 6 cannon. The latter construction was overseen by the later infamous outlaw (then VOC Corporal) Jean Etienne Barbier.

In 1744. VOC Governor van Swellengrebel ordered demolition of the *Matrosen Schanz*, and removal of the cannons. Instead the inlet itself was fouled with boulders (Seeman, 1997) and three discarded anchors and chains (Hallinan, 2009).²

In 1779, with hostilities looming on the eve of the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War (1780-1784), the Cape authorities hastily constructed a small barbette battery in Three Anchor Bay, known as the *Kleine Battery*. The Dutch and French were on the same side, both also siding with the colonists in the American War of Independence. The French were supplying cannons to the Americans from arsenals in Mauritius on VOC ships via Cape Town provisioning port.

Denying the British the Cape was of key strategic importance to French interests, so from 1781 onward French Regiments helped to temporarily fill out the Cape garrison, and helped construct additional defences. The Dutch remained reluctant allies of the French until the First British Occupation (1795). The VOC also recruited mercenary regiments, such as the Swiss Meuron Regiment, with which Louis Michel Thibault arrived at the Cape in 1783. Thibault was to remain at the Cape until his death in 1815.

With the help of the French, the *Kleine Battery* was upgraded, and came to be known as *Heine Battery* (Hallinan, 2009), or *Three Anchor Bay Battery* (Seeman, 1997: 42). A French report from 1781 indicates a small barbette battery defending the Three Anchor Bay inlet.

When the Dutch were again strengthening coastal defences during the early 1790's, the breastworks of the battery were heightened with "cowhide sacks filled with sheep's hair" (Seeman, 1997: 51). By now the battery seems to have been known as the *Kleine* (or *Little*) *Mouille Battery* (Seeman, 1997: 54). A plan drawn up after the Second British Occupation indicates two placements at Three Anchor Bay – a two-cannon redoubt able to fire into the mouth of the bay, and a flanking three-gun emplacement to the south (Hallinan, 2009).

² The three anchors are mentioned in Holliman only, and according to him the event give rise to the name Three Anchor Bay. Other sources (e.g. CCT, 2009) state 1795, when three anchors suspended on chains were strung across the mouth of the inlet.



Figure 2: Three Anchor Bay battery December 1889, CCT EHRM 2015

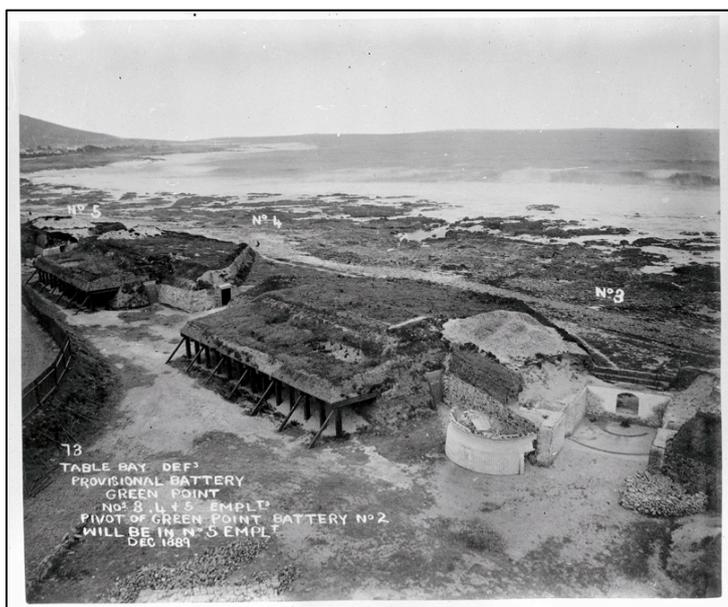


Figure 3: Green Point Battery December 1889, CCT EHRM 2015

After the conclusion of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815, these fortifications were allowed to fall into disrepair for a number of decades. The Snow survey from 1862 indicates a site marked “Three Anchor Bay Battery” located on both sides of the bay, between Stanley Place (north) and just to the north of the foot of Fort road (south). The Wilson survey (1878) indicates two batteries (not inscribed), one on either side of the bay.

The Three Anchor Bay fortifications were revived around 1890, following the findings of a Royal Colonial Defence Commission, headed by Lord Carnarvon (1882). From Hallinan (2009: 6) it would seem that an entirely new battery (*Three Anchor Bay Battery*) was constructed. The battery was located to the south and west of the bay, at the foot of Fort Road, and may still lie intact beneath the Promenade.

The battery north of the bay still appears on the 1900 Thom survey (not inscribed); the Thom survey did not cover the Sea Point municipal area, on which the site of the south battery is indicated as “Fort” in the 1905 Sea Point Municipal Survey. According to Hallinan, the batteries were likely simply filled over when the promenade was created (Hallinan, 2009: 14).

Mouille Point Battery

According to the French report from 1781 referred to above, a small battery consisting of three 18-pounder guns, the *Mouille Battery*, was located to the west of Chavonnes Battery by the early 1780's. This was known as the *Grote (or Large) Mouille Battery* by the early 1790's, and its breastworks were heightened in the same fashion as the Little Mouille Battery's at this time. This appears to be the earliest reference to defensive works for this location. This fort essentially covered the same part of the Cape road later to be covered by *Fort Kijk-in-de-Pot* (Seeman, 1997). A map of 1786 shows the battery equipped with two 36 and five 24 pounder guns (Halkett, 2004).

The Mouille Battery continued to be upgraded, and was later flanked by the Mouille Point light house (Halkett, 2004). The Snow survey from 1862 indicates a site marked "Great Mouille Battery" located to the south-east of the old Mouille Point lighthouse, and covering Granger Bay. The battery is still indicated in the Wilson (1878) and Thom (1900) surveys.



Figure 4: Green Point Battery Nr. 2 in process of demolition June 1890



Figure 5: Table Bay Provisional Battery Green Point December 1894

Green Point Battery

As part of the upgrade of defensive works following the Carnarvon Commission's recommendations, gun batteries flanking the Green Point lighthouse were constructed in 1890. The 1900 Thom survey indicates that "Green Point Battery No 1" was located approximately 400 m to the east of the lighthouse, while "Green Point Battery No 2" approximately 100 m to the south. As with the Three Anchor Bay battery, these were probably buried when the promenade was extended, by latest 1930 (Hallinan, 2009: 14).

1.2 LIGHT HOUSES

At least 50 ships have stranded off the promenade coast, a largely rocky stretch of coastline with submerged reefs and boulders, and subjected to lashing north-westerly storms in winter, and often fog-bound (Hallinan, 2009).

Three lighthouses have historically been located adjacent to the Promenade, namely the still existing Green Point light house (confusingly labelled the Mouille Point Light House on Surveyor-General maps), and two Mouille Point light houses, one of which completely demolished, and of the other only the base remaining.

Green Point Lighthouse

According to Hallinan (2009: 16), there are hints in the historical record that the primitive wood burning brazier placed as a shipping beacon on Minto Hill on Robben Island by order of van Riebeeck was supplemented by a counterpart near what later became the site of the Green Point light house. The Green Point beacon consisted of a lit barrel filled with pitch on top of a pole, and served the purpose of enabling pilots and skippers to better judge the width of the channel when entering or exiting Table Bay.

Thermopylae reef remained a treacherous obstacle, and increasingly became a hindrance to commercial shipping with the growth in international shipping after the Napoleonic Wars. The wrecking of the wooden vessel *Fennisowles* in 1819 prompted Acting Governor Donkin to commission the construction of a lighthouse at Green Point around 1821. Two tenders were received, of which that of local architect Herman Schutte was accepted. A severe storm in 1822 caused considerable damage (Hallinan, 2009). Construction was completed in 1823 at a cost of 6,420 pounds sterling and the Lighthouse was commissioned the following year, the earliest surviving functioning lighthouse on the South African coast³. The lighthouse structure has remained largely intact, and is currently a Provincial Heritage Site (Hallinan, 2009).

The original illumination was provided by two lanterns using a single wick Argand lamp that burned sperm whale oil and was visible for 6 nautical miles. This was improved in 1922 with the current 3rd order optic system, comprising three equally spaced dioptric panels which are mounted on a table floating in a mercury bath, using a 400 watt metal halide lamp, generating a 850,000 Candelas beam, visible for 25 nautical miles.

The Lighthouse was home to many Light keepers and their families over the decades and served as the training centre for the trade of Light keeping. In the early 1950's accommodation was moved to flats in Portswood Road and in 1990 the Lighthouse became a one-man station.⁴

A diaphone-type foghorn was installed in 1926, despite fears from local residents that it would disturb their sleep. This was replaced by an electrically operated nautaphone in 1986 (CCT, 2009).

Mouille Point Lighthouses

Despite the construction of the Green Point lighthouse, ships continued to be wrecked at the entrance to Table Bay. The then Port Captain, Mr Bance, recommended that an additional light be placed at Mouille Point to provide additional guidance to ships. A site was chosen at the (Great) Mouille Battery, and a pyramidal structure designed by Mitchell was constructed. The lighthouse was completed on the 1st July 1842, and consisted of a single white light as opposed to the twin lights of the Green Point lighthouse (Hallkett, 2004).

³ Green Point lighthouse information provided by the Transnet/ Ports Authority Lighthouse **Services Business Unit** at: www.greenpointlife.co.za/heritage.

⁴ www.greenpointlife.co.za/heritage.

The light was soon judged to be too weak, and to easily confused with other lights on shore. The structure was entirely demolished in 1865 to make way for a taller circular structure (Hallinan, 2009). The second lighthouse was located in close proximity to the first one, partly in order to allow for the use of existing stores. The light was first exhibited in January 1865. The lantern stood 44 feet above the high water mark, and was visible from about 10 miles. It was equipped with a red dioptric fixed light. The lantern apparently required 730 gallons of sheep tail oil per annum to keep the light burning (Halkett, 2004).

In a report by the Lighthouse Commission of 1890, it was recommended that the lighthouse should be demolished as soon as the new (Granger Bay) breakwater was completed. The breakwater with its own navigational light was completed in April 1906, and the Mouille light duly lost its operational status, but was only officially extinguished in 1908 (Halkett, 2004). All that remains of the structure is the circular base in the gardens of the CPUT Hotel School. During the Second World War the base served as a search light platform. It is currently used as a storage facility for gardening equipment (Hallinan, 2009).

1.3 SHIPWRECKS

With the exception of the *De Visch*, all readily accessible documentation relate to the stranding of ships after 1839, and even after this the record may be incomplete. The yearly transfer of anchorage facilities to Simon's Town (from May 15 to September 15) from 1741 onwards, and later the transfer of the Royal Navy headquarters and fleet to Simon's Town likely resulted in the promenade stretch of coastline claiming fewer victims than it otherwise would have.

The remains of at least four wrecks are still evident below water, while a portion of the engine block of the *RMS Athens* is still visible above water during low tide. Only the wrecks of the *Athens* and *Seafarer* are indicated on Chief Directorate Surveys and Mapping 1: 50 000 maps for the area (starting from Edition 3). These two sites seem to have accounted for most if not all shipwrecks in the study area, likely the effect of submarine topography, currents, etc.



Figure 6: Green Point Light House painted by HC de Meillon, 1830, MuseumAfrica, Jo 001

Thermopylae reef to the north-west of Green Point light house, where the *SAS Seafarer* stranded, also claimed the *De Visch* (likely), *Feniscowles*, *Thermopylae* and *George M Livanos*. The reef on which the *Athens* wrecked also claimed the *Juliana* (likely), *Prince Rupert* (very likely), and *Piscataqua*. Interestingly,

at least two ships – *Juliana* and *Prince Rupert* – were carrying prospective immigrants to Australia and New Zealand⁵, respectively, some of who chose to remain in South Africa.

De Visch (1740)

On 4 May 1740, contrary to standing orders, the VOC East Indiaman *De Visch* attempted to sail into Table Bay at night. Mistaking a light shining from the newly built fort at Three Anchor Bay for the familiar signal fire on the site of the existing Robben Island lighthouse, the captain drove his ship onto the rocks just west of today's Green Point lighthouse. While the money chests and most of the crew were rescued, the ship broke up after several days of pounding by the waves. In modern times, Dutch Silver Rider coins have been recovered from this site, as well as several bronze breech-loading swivel guns. *De Visch* carried a consignment of granite blocks as well as many large cast-iron cannon, which still litter the site today. An eyewitness account left to us by a German immigrant to the Cape, Otto Mentzel, recounts how "this lamentable shipwreck drew more than a thousand people to the spot where the ship was stranded". Mentzel further informs us that one of the men was the ship's "bottelier" or steward, and apparently a man of some means, who had filled his pockets with gold ducatoons, and who, as Mentzel sagely comments, "weighed down by the gold in his pockets, sank like a stone and was rowed. His wealth was his undoing."⁶

Juliana (1839)

The 549 ton barque *Juliana* left from London in October 1839 for Sydney, carrying 241 prospective immigrants to Australia on board. She ran ashore on Saturday, the 20th January 1839, in broad daylight, with a fine leading breeze. According to an article in the *Sydney Herald* at the time⁷, she stranded so close to the shore that she "actually passed through the long bamboos (kelp) which grow upon the rocks of Green Point (Mouille Point)". She seems to have ran ashore in more or less the same location where the *Prince Rupert*, *Athens* and *Piscataqua* would later run aground. Another ship, the *Hope*, came to her assistance, but the *Juliana* completely bilged before she could be towed off the rocks. All passengers were saved. 21 adults and 29 children chose to remain at the Cape, unwilling to risk a further sea journey (Hinton, 1992). The remainder continued their journey on to Sydney aboard the barques *May Hay* and *Morayshire*, reaching Sydney in April and May 1839.⁸

Prince Rupert (1841)

The New Zealand Company ship *Prince Rupert* en route from Portsmouth to New Zealand was driven ashore at Mouille Point during bad weather on the night of 4 September 1841, apparently more or less where the *Juliana* had ran aground. She was carrying 500 tons of cargo and 125 prospective immigrants to New Zealand. She had been at sea since April, and despite the bad weather decided to enter Table Bay, even though without any pressing need to do so. She was a total wreck after the stranding, but all passengers and crew were saved. According to an article in the *Sydney Monitor & Commercial Advertiser* at the time, the only fatalities occurred when the chief engineer (with the somewhat ironic surname of Merriwether) and three crew of another ship, the *Bucephalus*, accompanied by one of the *Prince Rupert's* previously saved passengers, Mr Frood attempted to return to the vessel a fourth time to make sure no passengers were left. Too traumatised to continue their voyage, about 70 passengers took up the offer of the Cape authorities to remain at the Cape. Cape Governor Napier arranged passage to New Zealand for the remaining immigrants on board the *Antilla*.⁹

Athens (1865)

The *RMS Athens*, of which a portion of the wreck is still visible above water at low tide, is probably the Promenade coastline's most famous victim. She went down in dramatic circumstances, with the loss of all people on board. The *RMS Athens* was an iron steam and sail ship (739 t) which belonged to the Union Steamship Co. of New Zealand, Ltd., London & Dunedin, and did service on the Southampton - Cape of

⁵ By 1848, the New Zealand Company had dispatched 82 vessels to New Zealand via the Cape (www.nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-Bre02Whit-t1-body-d1-d1-d27.html).

⁶ www.capetown.gov.za/en/EnvironmentalResourceManagement/publications/Documents/HID_Shipwreck_of_De_Visch.pdf.

⁷ www.trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/12856729 (*The Sydney Herald*, 22 April 1839).

⁸ www.archiver.rootsweb.ancestry.com/th/read/AUS-IMMIGRATION-SHIPS/2006-10/1160731293.

⁹ *South African Commercial Advertiser*, 8 September 1841; *Sydney Monitor & Commercial Advertiser*, 22 November 1841 – see Sources for links;

www.nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-Bre02Whit-t1-body-d1-d1-d27.html.

Good Hope passenger and mail line.¹⁰ On the night of 17 May 1865 she was anchored in Table Bay, en route to Mauritius, when what later came to be known as the Great Gale struck. The force of the storm soon found the *Athens* dragging anchors, so her master, Captain David Smith, decided to make a run for the open sea in order to avoid being driven ashore. Off Mouille Point, rough seas entering through skylights flooded the engine room, and extinguished the boilers, leaving the vessel at the mercy of the storm (Hallinan, 2009). She ran aground about 70-80 m north of the Mouille Point shoreline (end of Fritz Sonneberg Road). The seas were too rough to allow any successful rescue attempts, and Captain Smith and all 28 crew drowned. Only a pig survived. A small portion of her engine block is visible above water at low tide, while the rest of her remains are scattered 3-8 m deep, and reportedly include medicine and whiskey bottles. Her remains appear to be intermingled with those of the *Piscataqua*.¹¹

Piscataqua (1865)

Little is known of the *Piscataqua*, apart from the fact that she ran aground on the identical spot the *Athens* had ran aground earlier in the same year. The wreck of the *Athens* seems to have broken up by that time, so a collision with the wreck seems the unlikely cause¹². A number of diving and shipwreck enthusiast sites remark on the superimposition of the two wrecks, with remains not always distinguishable. Quite a few sources are under the mistaken impression that the *Athens* was wrecked on top of the *Piscataqua*.

Thermopylae (1899)

The *Thermopylae* (3711 t), a steam vessel of the Aberdeen Line en route from Sydney to London ran aground a few hundred meters north-west of the Green Point light house on the calm night of 11 September 1899. The *Thermopylae* was carrying general cargo, a crew of 84, as well as 52 passengers. No lives were lost, and some of the cargo was salvaged. The subsequent inquest concluded that the stranding occurred as a result of navigational error. The captain's certificate was suspended for six months¹³. The rocky reef on which the ship stranded has been known as *Thermopylae* reef ever since (CCT, 2009), and would later also claim the *SS George M Livanos* and the *SAS Seafarer*.¹⁴

SS George M Livanos (1947)

The Greek steam cargo vessel *SS George M Livanos* (5481 t) ran aground on *Thermopylae* reef on the night of 1 April 1947, and caught fire. There were no fatalities. A short Pathé newsreel film documented crowds gathering to watch the burning ship the next day from the promenade¹⁵.

SAS Seafarer (1966)

The *SAS Seafarer* was the last major catastrophe along the promenade shoreline (although there were some later lucky escapes, like the oil tanker *Sivella*). She was the first vessel lost by Safmarine. The *Seafarer* was carrying a mixed cargo of goods and passengers when she ran ashore on *Thermopylae* reef early on the morning of 1 July 1966 in calm weather. All passengers and crew were ferried to safety by means of 3 helicopters from 17 Squadron, Maritime Group, but the cargo was lost. She had been eagerly awaited, as she would have been the first vessel to arrive at the Cape following a lengthy period of industrial strikes in England. Nylon Processors of South Africa (Pty) Ltd. lost a complete processing plant worth nearly R 200,000, the Central News Agency were said to have lost 70 tons of periodicals, but the most serious loss of all to some people was a consignment of whiskey. It is said that for some time afterwards Cape retailers would conveniently blame the loss of the *Seafarer* to explain the lack of stock – to the extent that the *Seafarer*'s hold could have been filled many times over.

Less innocuous was the cargo of hazardous (toxic) tetra-ethyl lead, which caused the Green Point front to be closed for a few days until divers were able to locate the forty-four gallon drums (all intact.) She was also carrying insecticides, chemicals and special oils, which caused the death of rock lobster and perlemoen in the area. After an initial inquest by the Department of Transport, the captain Ian Branch, and

¹⁰ www.wrecksite.eu/wreck.aspx?58800.

¹¹ www.wrecksite.eu/wreck.aspx?58800.

¹² www.archiver.rootsweb.ancestry.com/th/read/MARINERS/2004-07/1090149271.

¹³ www.plimsoll.org/resources/SCCLibraries/WreckReports/17795.asp.

¹⁴ www.chavonnesbattery.co.za/blog/post/schermuly-rocket-lifesaving-apparatus/.

¹⁵ Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n1oy6zTmh8E>.

Second Officer were formally charged and prosecuted. The court found them guilty of setting an unsafe course and navigational errors, including not taking into account submarine fouling (boulders) which had been mapped by the Navy for this location in 1959. The captain's certificate was suspended for two years and the second officer was reprimanded.¹⁶

1.4 BEACHES AND POOLS

Victorian England made seaside bathing internationally popular by the 1850's. It simultaneously necessitated changing rooms, tidal pools and similar paraphernalia to preserve decency and decorum (Hallinan, 2009). By the mid-1880's Sea Point had become an established seaside vacationing resort for those making their fortune from the mineral wealth of Kimberley and the Rand (Worden et al, 2004). The Promenade shoreline is generally rocky, with a few small isolated beaches located in Mouille Point, Three Anchor Bay, and in Sea Point – essentially small coves with narrow strips of sand. The portion around the Green Point Lighthouse is rocky and inaccessible. Unlike the False Bay coastline, the Promenade is not protected from winter storms, and water in summer is considerably colder in summer as a result of upwelling. Early formalised bathing spots are therefore mainly associated with tidal pool structures and the old and new Sea Point pool complexes. The various beaches and pools in Sea Point and Bantry Bay seem to have catered for Sea Point's different social "sets" from early times. In addition, apart from the area around Sunset Beach, the coastline was reserved for White use.

Mouille Point beach and tidal pool

(Emdon, no date)¹⁷. Racial segregation, enforced by the City predated measures by the Apartheid government after 1948. A small strip of beach is located to the east of the formally laid out promenade, to the south of the *Athens* shipwreck site. A small tidal pool is also located here, but its date of construction is unknown. By the 1930's the wreck of the *Athens* was already a favourite "surfing" spot – with local surfers facing the waves on homemade boards constructed from wood, flattened corrugated sheeting and tar (Emdon, no date).

Three Anchor Bay

Historical defence works associated with Three Anchor Bay are discussed under Fortifications. No tidal pool structure is located here, but the cove does have a small sandy beach. In addition, it is a favourite put-in spot for recreational boaters, kayakers, etc. It is also a traditional starting point for swimmers swimming to Robben Island (CCT, 2009). Three Anchor Bay has been the key local launch site for recreational boaters since at least the 1930's (Emdon, no date). The small bay is further famous as the site of the Afrikaans poet Ingrid Jonker's dramatic suicide by wilful drowning on July 20th, 1965. At the time she was in the grip of an enormous emotional upheaval, not an uncommon state in her life. During the past half-century an icon for a number of reasons: her anti-establishment political views (as expressed in her poems) and perhaps for the passion and drama of her tumultuous love life. Probably the crowning glory of her fame came when President Nelson Mandela quoted her in his inaugural address to Parliament on May 24, 1994, when he read her poem, *Child shot dead by soldiers at Nyanga*. He went on to say: "She was both a poet and a South African. "She was both an Afrikaner and an African. "She was both an artist and a human being. "In the night of despair she celebrated hope. Confronted by death she asserted the beauty of life."¹⁸

Rocklands Beach

Rocklands takes its name from the original property, which stretched from the coast to Main road at this location. In 1870 the large house on the property was turned into the Rocklands Boarding house, which

¹⁶ www.historicalmedia.co.za/?p=848.

¹⁷ Leila Emdon - *A historical investigation into the beachfront as a public open space throughout the 20th century with special reference to oral sources. The project appears to have formed part of Emdon's research for Masters in Historical Studies at UCT. Portions of her report are available at: www.globalbuzz-sa.com/ct/wiki/sea-point/suburb-growth. The date is unclear, but it is post 2008.*

¹⁸ www.hemelensee.co.za/documents/ingrid_jonker_a_poets_life.php (Ampie Muller review of the recently published expanded English edition of Petrovna Metelerkamp's biography on Ingrid Jonker (*Ingrid Jonker – A Poets Life*, Hemel and See Publishers).

became a well-known landmark. The building was demolished in 1955 to make way for the offices of the SABC (CCT, 2009).

Graaff's Pool

The current Graaff's Pool is located on the site of an original natural tidal pool (Bam's Pool – Hallinan, 2009) opposite what today is the Bordeaux apartment complex between Marais and Oliver streets. The street block up to Main road was bought by Pieter Marais in 1865, and named Bordeaux. He constructed an elegant house on the site. To allow his invalid wife's wheelchair to negotiate terrain to the pool, Marais had a path constructed from his front gate (CCT, 2009). A concrete structure reserved for (White) men was constructed around Bam's Pool, in 1907 (Hallinan, 2009), comprising of a tidal pool and concrete walls shielding it from views from the Promenade. It was named after the new owners of the Bordeaux property. It started off as a bona fide nudist spot, but by the 1980's and 1990's it had gained a seedy reputation as a gay pick-up spot, also frequented by male prostitutes (CCT, 2009). The 1990's saw visual and written histories of CT's substantial gay culture make an appearance. These highlighted traditional outdoor meeting places like Graaff's Pool and Bachelor's Cove (Worden et al, 1999). By the 1990's the reservation of public coastal property for White males had become unconstitutional. Therefore, when the structure was damaged by a storm in 2002, the CCT decided not to rebuild the damaged portions, but rather to demolish additional portions, making the tidal pool visible from the promenade, and open to all (CCT, 2009).

Milton Beach and Pool

The originally fashionable and still popular tidal pool off Milton beach was constructed in 1910 (Hallinan, 2009). The structure appears to be unchanged since initial construction.

Brokenbath beach

Brokenbath beach is named after the original Sea Point Baths, which were located here at the foot of Church Street. The Sea Point Baths were built in 1895. Wooden structures with cubicles were constructed above the pool. The Baths were keenly patronized by men and women (at different times) until they were destroyed by rough seas in 1911 (Emdon, no date). By that time construction on the nearby Milton Pool had already started, and the Baths were not rebuilt, at any rate not in this location (CCT, 2009).

Sea Point Pool and Pavilion

The existing Sea Point Pavilion and Pool fall outside the primary study area, but have been included for contextual reasons. Construction of the complex started in 1913, and included dynamiting portions of the coastline (Hallinan, 2009). The Pavilion opened in 1914. An open-air cinema was located on top of the Pavilion, and above the pool change rooms were a tea room and an open air stage. According to a Sea Point resident interviewed by Emdon, the Pavilion (during the period 1930-1950) "had a restaurant upstairs, on the second level, and it had a smaller pool for kiddies surrounded by sand and the main sort of pool. Everybody knew everybody else because it was a much smaller community then" (Emdon, no date). The Pavilion was reserved for Whites, and local Coloured residents could only enter the Pavilion if they were servants of a patron White family or were doing work in the Pavilion. The City constructed a Non-European Pavilion in 1917 near Queen's Beach to accommodate non-White patrons (Emdon, no date).

Sunset Beach

Sunset beach is located to the west of the study area, west of the Sea Point Pool and the Marine and Coastal Management Sea Point Research Aquarium. While not part of the primary study area, the beach is significant due to its connotations with the small non-White minority living in Sea Point until 1961. Historically, the beach and coastline up to Queen's Road (Bantry Bay boundary) was reserved for use by non-Whites (Hallinan, 2009). The remains of a tidal pool, specifically built by the authorities for non-White use, are still visible (foot of Solomon's road). It is unclear when the structure was constructed, but is shown up on the earliest aerial survey (1945). The retaining walls were demolished a few years ago as the pool failed to flush properly, and was causing water quality and nuisance issues (CCT, 2009).

1.5 SEA POINT RAILWAY LINE

The development of Cape Town stimulated by the opening of the Alfred Dock in 1870 (the first sheltered harbour in Table Bay) and the discovery of diamonds in Kimberley and gold at the Rand (and subsequent railway links) greatly stimulated Cape Town's development. Land near the harbour became sought-after. Green Point accommodated more modest, close-packed housing, while larger properties were located in Sea Point and Bantry Bay, catering for the better-off (Hallinan, 2009). This stimulated the need for public transport to supplement the horse-drawn omnibus and tram system, the latter having been operational since 1862 (Emdon, no date).

A first line consisting connecting Cape Town to Sea Point was opened in 1892. The sea Point portion essentially ran along what today is Beach road. The 1905 Sea Point Municipal Survey indicates that the line was placed seaward and essentially parallel to Beach road. According to a then resident, tunnels underneath the line provided access to the beach. A second line was opened in November 1905. It appears that the first line had also been upgraded, and now extended to the end of Sea Point. The South African Railways had taken over operations from the City (Emdon, no date), and the line was served by five Sea Point stations (Hallinan, 2009).

The Sea Point Railway was a disaster from the start. The alignment necessitated the trains to slow around curves in order not to derail, and the locomotives were prone to breakdowns. In addition, the Tramway Company operating in Main Road started to upgrade their facilities. The Railway line was electrified in 1927, but after having run at a loss for 14 years, it was discontinued soon after. The last train ran on the 16th of April 1929. The lines were ripped up and the overhead pylons were removed soon after. (Emdon, no date; Hallinan, 2009). The tramway met a similar fate a decade later, with the last tram leaving Adderley Street for Sea Point in January 1939 (Worden et al, 1999).

1.6 SEA POINT BEACH FRONT HOTELS

In 1766 two prominent Cape citizens, Martin Oloff Bergh and Adriaan van Schoor approached VOC Governor Tulbagh for a grant of land at the present boundary between Sea Point and Bantry Bay (Hallinan, 2009). Here they established a men's only kind of country club, and constructed a clubhouse (*Sociteitshuis*) on the site of the current Protea President Hotel. The club's popularity waned over the next 30 years, and in 1835 the Society House was bought by Judge William Menzies and converted into a residence (Worden et al, 2004). It served as a residential site until the late 1880's when it was converted into the fashionable Queen's Hotel, the first of a number of hotels on the site (Hallinan, 2009; Worden et al, 2004). Although outside the primary study area, the Queen's Hotel deserves mention, as it was the first grand seaside hotel in the general area. Pieter Marais sold Bordeaux to Sir Jacobus Graaff in 1893. Graaff added a second story to the house, which eventually became the stately Bordeaux Hotel. Sea Point residents who were living there before World War II related to Emdon that the *Bordeaux* had fashionable restaurants and a dance hall. Like the other grand seafront hotels in the area, it was a large part of the social scene, and especially popular amongst young married women to meet and socialize (Emdon, no date).

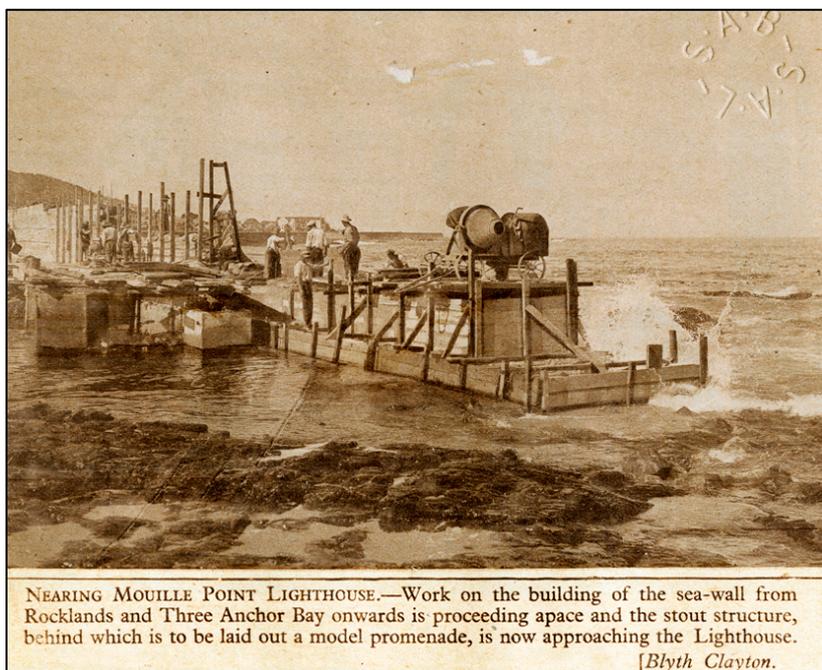
The 1930's saw demolition or conversion into hotels of many of the larger houses, which had lined Beach Road. New Hotels included the Milroy at the foot of Fort Road near Three Anchor Bay Road. For a while, it housed the Cape Town YMCA but then reverted to a hotel, popular for its Saturday night dances. The Atlantic was also on the Beach Road, on the corner of Rocklands Road. Both boasted tea gardens with lawns that reached down to the low walls that separated them from the Beach Road. There was the Rocklands Hotel on the corner of St James Road. Milton Manor on the Beach Road near Milton Pool was also a popular holiday hotel by the 1950's (Emdon, no date).

1.7 SEA MOLES, SEA WALL AND THE PROMENADE

Following catastrophic shipping losses from winter storms, the VOC in 1741 shifted the winter anchoring to Simon's Town, and also started construction of a sea mole (Dutch *moeilje*) or breakwater behind which ships could shelter at the western end of Granger Bay. Citizens were expected to contribute labour and

equipment to cut and transport stone from quarries on Signal Hill. Winter storms continued to sweep the structure away, until the project was abandoned in 1746. The French constructed a battery in 1781 on remnants of the mole, and named it the Mouille Battery (later the Great Mouille Battery), after the French for a sea mole (*môle, mouille*)¹⁹. Apparently remains of the mole are still visible at low tide (Hallinan, 2009; CCT, 2009).

The construction of the first stretch of modern seawall between Sea Point and Mouille Point was undertaken in the early 1920's by the erstwhile Sea Point Municipality in the area of Rocklands cove. The purpose of the wall was neither for erosion control nor coastal protection, but rather for "economic" and "aesthetic" considerations. The rocky and gently inclined shoreline here was prone to the accumulation of massive amounts of seaweed, which upon decomposition became a nuisance factor to the growing residential community. By building a wall between the low and high water marks this situation was resolved in that the average high tide served to carry this accumulation away. Meanwhile, gradual infill behind the wall would serve to fill in often stagnant rock pools and in effect reclaim this area for future gardening and a generally more user-friendly public open space (Hallinan, 2014), in other words what would become the Promenade. According to Hallinan (2014), no records of this initial work have come to light but a paper later presented by the City Engineer, Mr Fairweather, notes that this appears to have been "an ordinary uncoursed masonry retaining wall using the "bluestone" (Malmesbury shale) as quarried on site". Following the positive outcome of this initial development the decision was taken by the Council in 1924 to extend the wall the full length from the Sea Point Pavilion to Granger Bay at Mouille Point. Work commenced on the section from Rocklands to Granger Bay in 1926. Work progressed slowly over the next ten years, with the rate of progress governed by the amount of available fill to build up behind the advancing wall (i.e. the Promenade). Much of this fill was household rubbish from the surrounding urban community and from which a certain amount of decomposition and settling has resulted over the years. This has necessitated on going remedial actions to address the effect of this on the seawall as well as the paved and gardened areas behind (Hallinan, 2014).



NEARING MOUILLE POINT LIGHTHOUSE.—Work on the building of the sea-wall from Rocklands and Three Anchor Bay onwards is proceeding apace and the stout structure, behind which is to be laid out a model promenade, is now approaching the Lighthouse.

[Blyth Clayton.]

Figure 7: Sea Wall construction between Rocklands and Three Anchor Bay, CCT EHRM 2015

¹⁹ Some sources claim that the French corrupted the Dutch word sea mole. That is unlikely. More likely the original Dutch was derived from the French (as is the English "mole"), which was in turn derived from the Latin "moles" (mass of stones, etc.) – see the *Oxford Encyclopedic English Dictionary*, 1991.

empowered any person in charge of 'public premises', which were defined so as to include the sea shore, to reserve such premises for racially exclusive usage, and finally, the Sea Shore Amendment Act of 1972 which empowered the Minister of Agriculture to confer control of the beaches to local and provincial authorities. Although beach segregation was not uniformly implemented throughout the country, political pressure from central government, among other factors, ensured that by the early 1970s beach apartheid had become widely entrenched (Durrheim and Dixon, 2001).

High Apartheid and 1990s

The social significance of the Sea Point Promenade in post-Apartheid South Africa was made clear in judgement handed down in the High Court (Western Cape Division) on 26 March 2010 with regard to the then proposed major upgrades to the Sea Point Pavilion and Pool.

In Paragraphs 40-44 of his judgement, Justice JB Fourie made clear why the developer's failure to have considered alternatives during the EIA process had been a particularly fatal flaw in the case of Sea Point Pavilion. Paragraph 40 is worth quoting in full, as it encapsulates what the Sea Point Promenade and Pools had come to signify by 2010:

"The Sea Point Promenade has a long history of use as a public open space on a multi-cultural and non-racial basis. The City describes the area in the following terms: "It is used for religious purposes in Ramadaan, as passive recreation area, and is utilised predominantly by pedestrians, joggers, cyclists and sightseers". The swimming pool and its surrounding area are used extensively for recreational purposes, by people who come from all walks of life from all over the Peninsula. It is described as one of the few open spaces in Cape Town which seems to evoke the sense that social equality sought by democracy is in fact being fostered here" (Justice JB Fourie, judgement in *SEAFA and Rabinowitz vs. MEC, PGWC, On Track, CCT*, Western Cape Division on 26 March 2010.



Figure 9: Muslim men praying at the end of Ramadaan on Precinct 5 Sea Point Promenade, <https://www.google.com>
www.gettyimages.com