

EXCAVATIONS IN DISTRICT SIX: A RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY AT THE CORNER OF STUCKERIS AND ROGER STREETS

Prepared for

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Prepared by

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Contracts Office was requested by Professor Hall of RESUNACT (Research Unit for the Archaeology of Cape Town) to identify the location of a residential building dating to the first half of the 19th century within the area known as District Six in Cape Town. A requirement of the selection was that some documentary records pertaining to that erf existed. As most of the buildings in District Six were demolished during the 1960's and 70's , and some areas have been redeveloped subsequently, finding a site which matched Halls' criteria and had the foundations preserved sufficiently to allow excavation turned out to be a lengthy process culminating in the identification of one site at the corner of Stuckeris and Roger streets. The site was excavated between May and September of 1995.

2. METHODS

Our initial objective was to identify buildings which were in existence by the middle of the 19th century. The Snow Municipal Survey of 1862 proved most useful in this regard and enabled a number of potential sites to be identified. Before establishing if there was any documentary material available for the various targets, it had to be established which of the targets were potentially excavatable. Various transparent overlays were produced which enabled portions of the Snow survey to be superimposed on a municipal survey dating to 1957¹. An additional factor to be considered was the fact that not only buildings were demolished during the sixties but much of the street system was abandoned at the same time. New roads were added often on different alignments and redevelopment of some areas obliterated any trace of roads and buildings alike. It was therefore necessary to overlay the combined Snow and 1957 survey information onto the present landscape to finally identify feasible targets. Between 1862 and the 1960's, some targets were lost as residential buildings were turned into commercial premises, in some cases requiring the old buildings to be demolished. It was for this reason that the 1957 information was important as this showed which of the sites had changed substantially.

To gauge which sites could be excavated, an inspection was made in loco. To be able to excavate, the sites needed to be mostly clear of overburden but not so exposed that damage could have occurred to the foundations and in situ deposits. A number of potential sites had to be eliminated as mechanical excavators would have been required to clear rubble. This was too costly to contemplate with the available budget.

Information regarding documentary material on the surviving targets was provided by Karen Strohm, a post-graduate student in the Department of Architecture at UCT. She had managed to track down several house plans at the Cape Archives which dated to the 19th century. From about the middle of the 19th century town planning was becoming more formalised. Prior to this it was not a necessity to submit plans for approval to the planning authorities before erecting or altering an existing building although this did happen from time to time (K. Strohm, pers comm).

Of the eighteen targets that had been identified on the Snow survey, only three were left after all criteria were met. One of these is the building that will form the basis of this report². The location of the excavation is shown on Figure 1. The map of the area is as it

¹ Cape Town City Council.

² The floor plan seems to indicate that the building was semi-detached. The adjoining building is reproduced on the same plan and shows a smaller building only one room and passage wide but otherwise duplicating the layout. The front room of this house was also excavated.

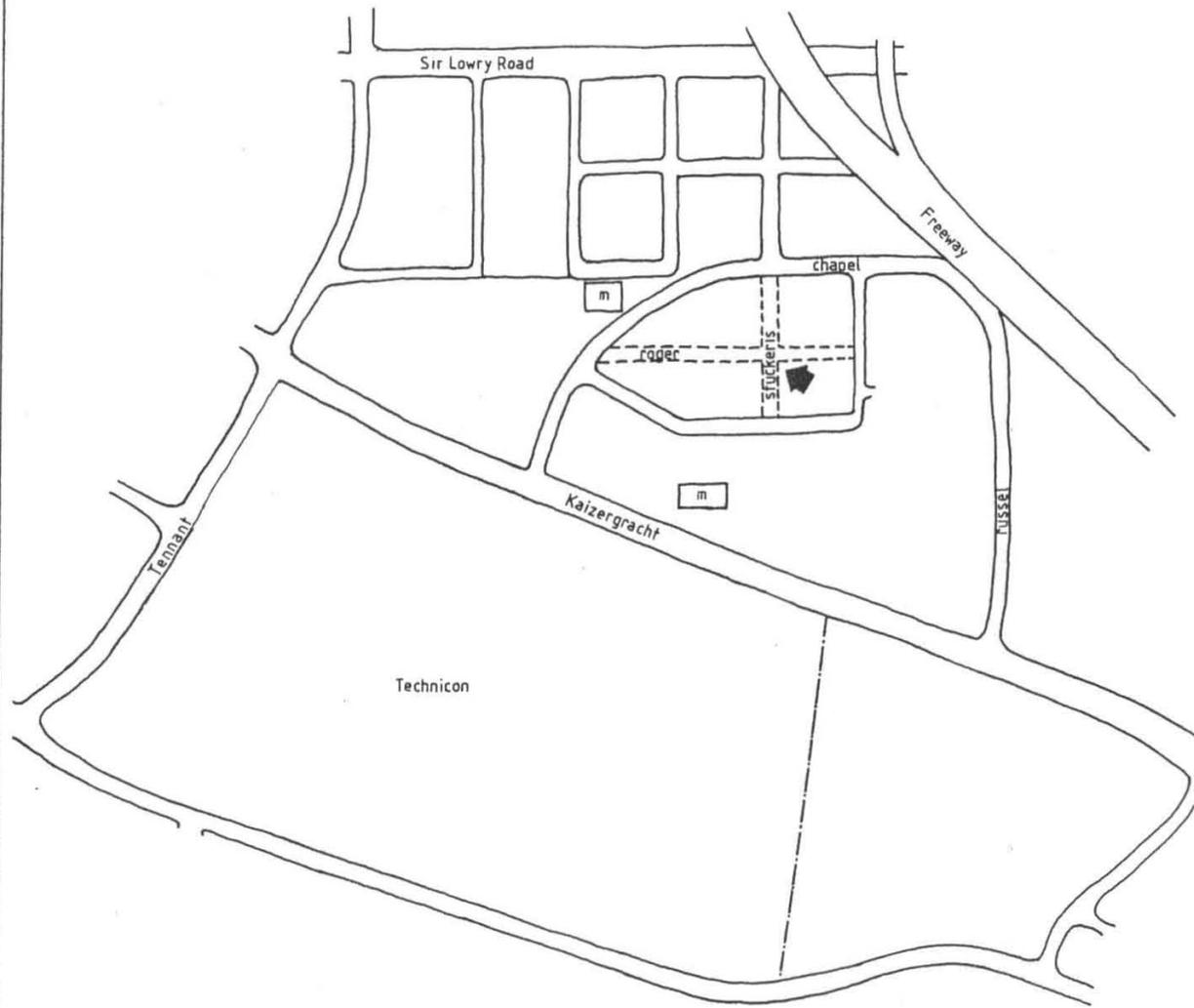




Plate 1 Site in context. Roger street in foreground and Stuckeris at right.



Plate 2 Site in context. LDV parked in Stuckeris street.



appears today. Plates 1 and 2 show views of the excavation showing Stuckeris and Roger streets. Excerpts from various historic survey diagrams are presented in Appendix 1.

3. EXCAVATIONS

Previous work in District Six³ has shown that certain archaeological techniques are useful. Firstly, it is most useful if the entire area of the building is cleared of obvious rubble overburden in order to establish the pattern of the walls or foundations. Rooms and other internal residential divisions form the basis for the collection of artefactual material and reconstruction of spatial patterning. In the case of Stuckeris Street we had a floor plan and could therefore predict where the various divisions should be (which turned out to be problematic as will be seen). Prior to excavation we had produced a copy of the plan with the house subdivided into units and we stuck to this set of divisions even though some of the internal walls and foundations seemed not to exist.

To enable spatial patterning to be assessed within the various rooms, each was divided into four quadrants. This division took place regardless of the shape of the room so that quadrants are not always the same shape or size though in some cases this does occur. A floor plan of the house drawn after excavation is presented in Figure 2. This shows the way in which the rooms and quadrant subdivisions were labelled. A montage of photos taken from the top of a telephone pole at the front of the house (Plate 3) shows the excavation after completion.

A list of excavated areas and units can be found in Appendix 2.

3.1 STUCKERIS HOUSE A

ROOM 1

Loose rubble overburden lay immediately on top of a dark brown lens of material representing the aeration gap below the floorboards. This in turn lay on top of a compacted and uneven brick and brown sandy clay unit covering the natural substrate. The sequence has been interpreted thus: the brick fragments and sandy brown clay relate to the building of the walls of the house prior to the installation of wooden floors. The dark brown lens represents the material which collected below the floorboards and includes numerous artefacts such as coins, pins, marbles, buttons etc. Aeration material has been found in all four quadrants.

The outline of the room is marked by stone foundations (TMS with some shale). Part of the passage and the entire rear foundation is missing except for a few stones. A brick lip is present along the south wall and presumably served as a beam rest. An informal pile of stones in the center of the room presumably provided additional support for the joist.

The underlying surface of brick fragments and clay was smooth and compacted but not even. Various small depressions existed and had been filled with aeration material. The smoothing and compaction may well be due to use of the surface by builders and other tradesmen before the floors were added. The natural substrate lies immediately below this and consists initially of ferruginous gravel in a soily matrix overlying dense yellow clays.

ROOM 2

³ *Horstley street excavations*

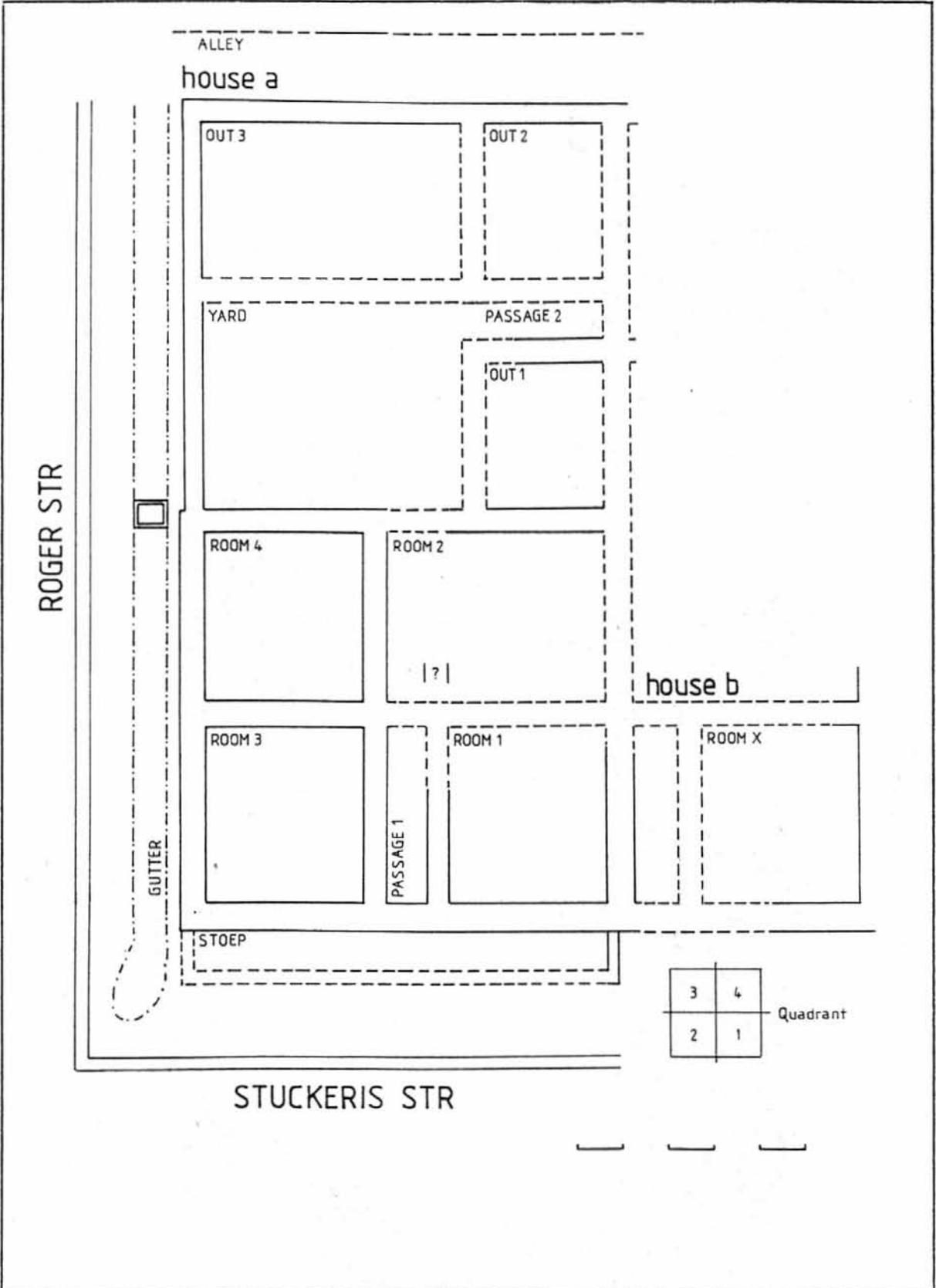




Plate 3 View showing the foundations. Roger street at left.

Stratigraphy is somewhat different to what we expected. Instead of aeration material underlying rubble overburden, we found rubble all the way down to the substrate. The rubble does appear layered and various units can be peeled apart. These do however grade into one another making it difficult to isolate any particular level. We have established the layers, "rubble overburden" and "below rubble" and "between rubble". Some modern material is found throughout and suggests that some disturbance has occurred here. In quadrant 1 the rubble overburden lies directly on the substrate and also indicates that disturbance has occurred. The presence of a depression in an area where the dividing wall between Room 1 and Room 2 should be indicates that foundation stones have been removed. The south wall foundation is also missing and a slight depression indicates that stones have been removed. While no passage is indicated on the floor plan, some traces of what appears to be a foundation is found where the passage wall should be but no trench or depression is present to assist with the interpretation of the feature.

PASSAGE 1

Passage 1 was not subdivided into quadrants. Not much artefactual material was recovered most likely as a result of their not having been a wooden floor here. The floor level in the passage is ~100mm above the base of the aeration gap in Room 1. The surface of the passage is marked by a layer of crushed brick. Perhaps a surface of quarry tile existed here at one stage? The small amount of material that was recovered, came from the surface of the crushed brick. While it resembled aeration gap material the context suggests that this could not be the case. Part of the dividing wall foundation between Passage 1 and Room 1 is missing.

ROOM 3

After the remaining rubble overburden was removed from the room a lens of aeration gap material was detected in all quadrants, thicker in some than in others probably due to undulation of the substrate. The context was virtually identical to that in Room 1. Isolated stones lying on the base may have supported the joists. Base consists of brick fragments and brown clay with inclusions of lime plaster. Foundations of all walls are preserved.

ROOM 4

Two rubble layers are present. These underlie the ubiquitous rubble overburden. They are characterised by brick and lime plaster fragments and are similar in makeup to the base of Room 3. There is no sign of any aeration material in its dark brown dusty context. In this room some material lies sandwiched between the two rubble layers but while glass and earthenware fragments are present there is a lack of small brass and copper items which seems to make up part of the true aeration assemblages. The lower compacted rubble lies on the ferruginous gravel substrate.

All of the wall foundations are present. Noticeable is the fact that the foundation stone type has changed from TMS to shale in this room. The dividing wall between Rooms 3 and 4 is TMS and a portion of the dividing wall between Room 4 and Passage is composed of TMS cobbles.

YARD

While clearing rubble overburden a patch of cobbles was noticed straddling quadrants 2 and 3. Some cement had been applied at some stage to form a shallow drainage channel

(Plate 4). Overburden was removed to the approximate level of the top of the cobbles. Two layers were used to describe the lower deposits namely "rubble below cobble level" which consists of large chunks and is a continuation of the overburden. Lying below this is a more soily deposit containing some artefactual material which we have called "below rubble". Under this is a very compact surface of fine brick and plaster fragments mixed with clay. This may be an old yard surface. The cobbles were left in place.

The layer called "below rubble" is variable and while soily in some areas it grades into a more gravely matrix in quads 1 and 4. Some disturbance seems to have occurred around a ceramic sewer pipe which lies at the edge of the cobbled area toward the centre of the yard. The most noticeable feature of the yard is a shallow depression lying mostly in quads 1 and 4 but extending into quads 2 and 3 as well. This deposit contains numerous fragments of refined earthenware (some quite big) and glass. A piece of corrugated iron was found buried in the depression as well. The fill in the depression did not appear to have been disturbed. While the immediate conclusion is that this feature represents a small household dump, it seems to lack the other components such as bone, charcoal, metal, ash etc which are usually found in these contexts.

The dividing wall between the Yard and Outbuilding 3 has experienced severe disturbance. This foundation was constructed relatively recently as it consists of concrete and the wall itself was made from brick and modern cement. During the demolition, this wall being much stronger than the usual mud and brick constructions, was pulled out of its original position rather than breaking off at the foundation (Plate 5). It now lies next to a shallow depression that marks the true position. The foundation of the wall that divided the Yard from Outbuilding 1 is no longer present but a trench marks its position.

OUTBUILDING 1

A layer of rubble and plaster was removed and termed "below rubble overburden". This is to a certain extent a continuation of the rubble overburden but is a means of providing some vertical stratigraphic control. Although there is no recognisable aeration gap matrix, artefactual material does occur towards the in situ substrate. The type and size of material is similar to material found in the Yard and has clearly not slipped through cracks in the floorboards. Additional material is found in the foundation trench left by the foundation wall between the Yard and Outbuilding 1. This was collected as OUT1/III "stuff from depression".

The foundation of the wall which divided Outbuilding 1 from Passage 2 is present. The foundation of the wall between the Yard and OUT1 is marked by a trench as the stones have been removed. No trace of the foundation which divided this house from the adjoining one could be found at this point.

PASSAGE 2

This appears as a small gap on the plan between what have been termed Outbuilding 2 and Outbuilding 1. The passage has been divided into two quadrants (I and II) for the purposes of the removal of the lower deposits i.e. "below rubble overburden". As no foundations are visible between Passage 2 and Outbuilding 2 this was interpolated from the plan. Similarly, no foundations of the side wall of the house are noticed here either. While the stratigraphy in Quad I is normal, Quad II seems to have been subjected to disturbance. Artefactual material in Quad II, particularly the ceramics, resembles that found in the Yard.

OUTBUILDING 2

No visible foundations of any walls dividing OUT2 from OUT3 or Passage 2 were noticed and therefore the size of the room was interpolated from the plan. Only the lower deposits (below rubble) was subdivided into 4 Quadrants. No trace of the foundation of the house side wall was found adjacent to this room either although the back wall is visible.

OUTBUILDING 3

Only a relatively thin rubble overburden existed in this area. Very little material was found in it and therefore it was decided that both the "rubble overburden" and "below rubble" would be collected together. Some disturbance has occurred as a result of the foundations of the Yard wall being pulled out of the ground. The back wall separating the property from the alley, and part of the side wall adjacent to Roger Street also formed part of OUT 3.

STOEP

After the rubble overburden was removed it was clear that little of the old stoep surface remained. Only a small portion of some of the old surface remained in the form of brick paving at the southern end (see photo). The base of the stoep wall is also preserved here. Clear evidence of surface disturbance is indicated by the kerb stones which have been pushed back from the edge of Stuckeris Street.

Some artefactual material was recovered from the overburden but is unlikely to be in situ.

GUTTER

An old cobbled gutter runs down the Roger Street side of the house. This was covered by a layer of gravel hardcore which indicates that a modern pavement (probably with a tarred surface) had been constructed here in more recent times. The gutter probably dates to a time when the road was similarly constructed of cobbles and these may indeed still exist below the surviving road. Some apparently in situ material had been trapped below the hardcore in the base of the gutter and this was collected. No subdivision into smaller spatial units was done here.

3.2 STUCKERIS HOUSE B

Time and budgetary constraints only allowed us to excavate one room of this house which is immediately adjacent to Stuckeris A and appears on the early plan which we have used. As such the implication is that the two properties were somehow connected in more ways than simply the physical sense. In any event this house consists of a passage and single line of rooms at the south and is therefore much smaller than Stuckeris A. The location of rooms and yard duplicates the arrangement at the other house.

ROOM X

This is the front room facing onto Stuckeris Street. Clear evidence exists for the presence of wooden floors in the remains of a brick beam rest along the south wall (Plate 6). Foundation is present along the south and part of the north and west walls. No trace of the wall of an entrance passage that appears on the plan can be found. The pattern of missing walls suggests that a bulldozer might have made a low scrape through a portion of this room. Rubble overburden was removed to reveal a thin aeration deposit in parts of the room but thicker where it had banked up against the brick beam rest.



Plate 5 Detail of the rear of the *erf*. Concrete foundation of the wall of Outbuilding 3 can be seen at center. This has been shifted out of its original position which is marked by the slight depression at right.



Plate 6 Detail of the brick beam rest in Stuckeris house B, Room X. The ferruginous substrate can be seen clearly.

4. DISCUSSION

Excavation of this building was aided by an existing plan drawn up at the time that a second storey was added, probably after 1890. As described above, the divisions as they appear on the plan were utilised as a means of spatially separating the different areas. It was noticed however that the correspondence between the plan and the actual remains was only partial. The possible explanation for this may be the result of modification of the structure over time having removed the deeper, more substantial foundations. To this end it would be useful to see a succession of plans (if these exist) to examine the floor plan as it appeared during the 1950's. A complicating factor in the assessment of the layout is the fact that some obvious disturbance has occurred as a result of the demolition. This is particularly noticeable along the south side of the house where the partition wall as well as other walls are missing. Foundation is absent in places either as a result of the demolition in the 1970's or as a result of modifications prior to the demolition.

Aeration gap assemblages were recovered from the front rooms of Stuckeris A and B. Other rooms did not produce equivalent samples quite possibly as a result of disturbance. Whereas the two front rooms had wooden floors the passage might have been tiled.

The type of material used in the foundations provides a clue to the evolution of the house. Table Mountain Sandstone at the front, and darker shale at the rear. Briefly we think the evolution takes place from a small two room building, probably having part stone and part brick walls and develops through the addition of two rooms at the rear and a central passage. As the foundation of the passage between rooms 1 and 3 also consists of Table Mountain Sandstone it is not as easy to assess the age of the addition. According to the floor, plan no passage was in existence between rooms 2 and 4. Fragments of shale were however found on an alignment which suggests that a wall was present here at some stage and may have been added later.

Outbuildings at the very rear of the plot are constructed partly on concrete foundations and are therefore not very old. It is not clear if these replaced older structures. The foundation of the rear wall is stone in patches and is probably part of the original foundation separating the erf from the service alley. A large amount of leather and rubber soling off cuts in the alley at the rear of the house suggests perhaps that the outbuilding was used for the purpose of shoe repairs and manufacture. As the material is not in primary context it is not possible to confirm this. The material may have been dumped after the demolition. This is a point to bear in mind if a more detailed history of the inhabitants is compiled.

A small part of the yard was cobbled and a drainage channel had been plastered. The rest of the yard showed no sign of any surfacing apart from compacted earth deposits. The central and eastern areas showed evidence of a slight depression and this contained quite a large amount of artefactual material, particularly refined earthenwares and glass mixed with similar deposit to the rest of the yard. These deposits are not full of ash and bone as one would expect from a household dump and the presence of the material is somewhat enigmatic. Sorting and analysis of the artefactual material was not included within the brief and thus no comment can be made on this aspect.

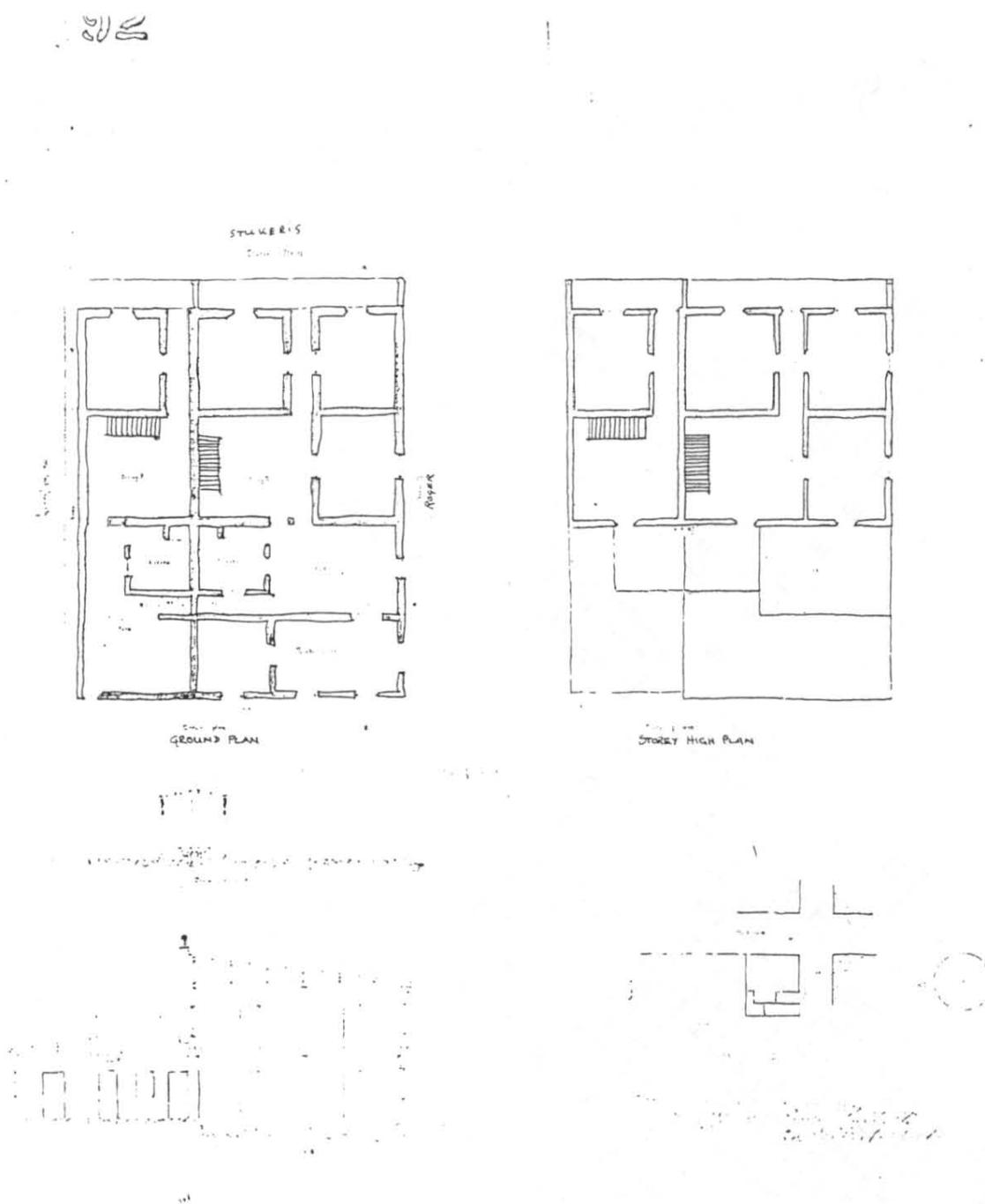
It is most unfortunate that the foundations and the in situ deposits were not as well preserved as we would have hoped. This has made it difficult to draw too many conclusions about the precise nature of the alteration of the original structure although

some suggestions have been made. Perhaps a more detailed architectural study would reveal how this building corresponds to others in similar socio-economic circumstances.

5. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

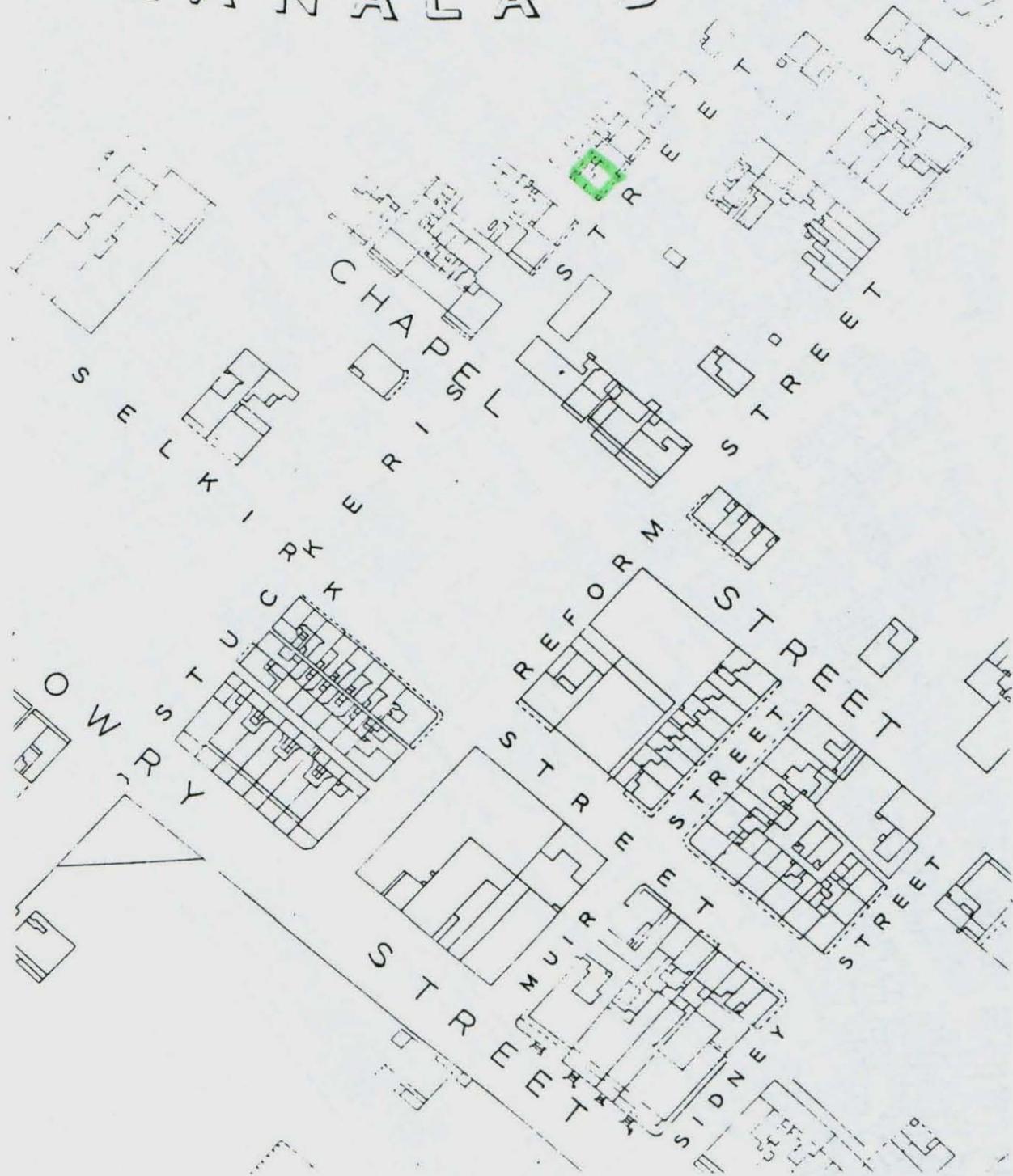
The Cape Town Community Land Trust gave permission to carry out excavations on land administered by them. Nick Mavradinov helped with the initial site clearing. Mr Black at the City Planners Department who assisted with plans.

APPENDIX 1

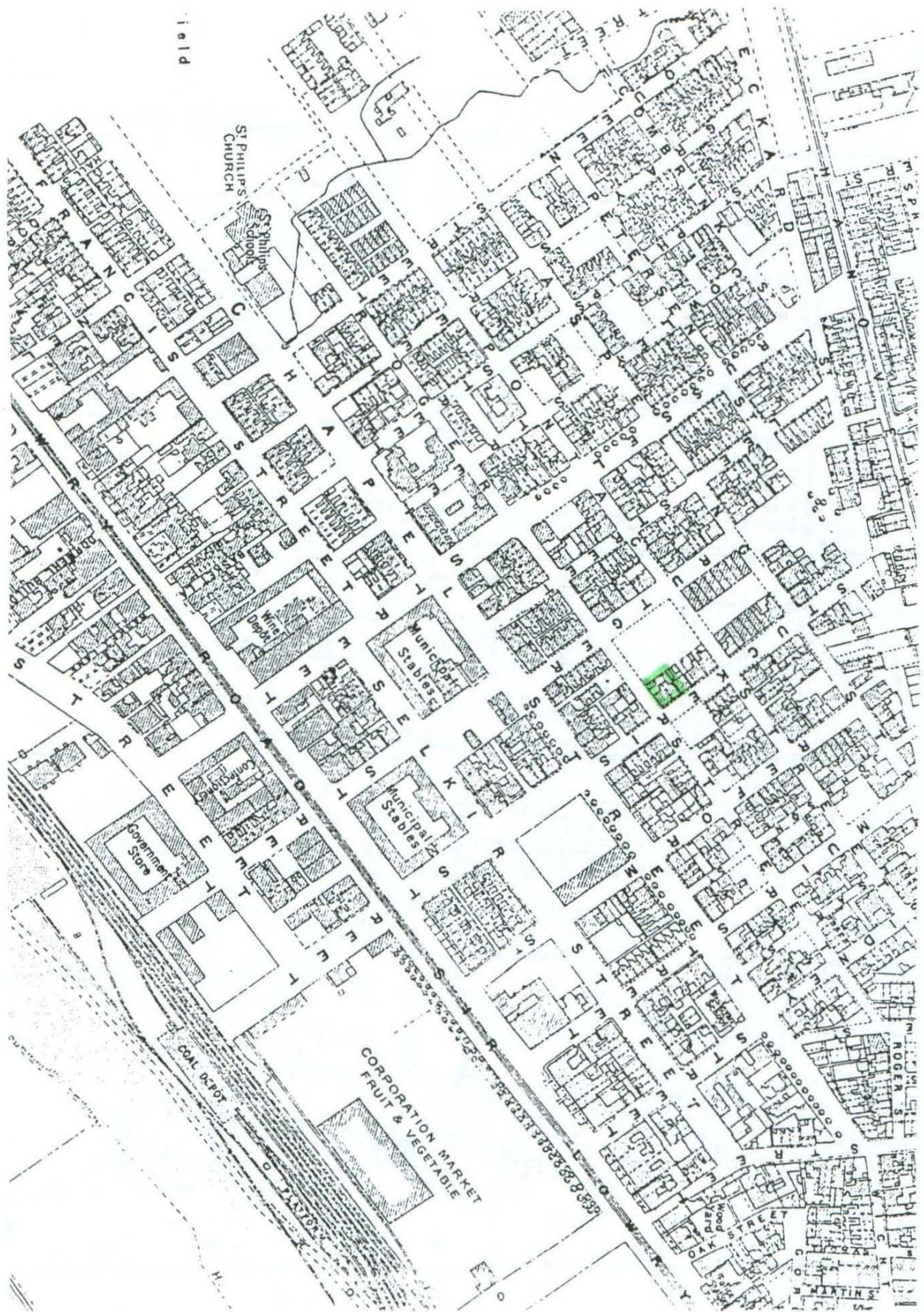


Early plan of the house at the corner of Stuckeris and Roger streets. (Lines have been inked in as original is faded and does not copy well.)

KANALA DORP



Extract from the Snow municipal survey c1862 (City Planners Dept)



Extract from the Thom municipal survey c1900 (City Planners Dept)



Extract from municipal survey c1957 (City Planners Dept)

APPENDIX 2

INVENTORY OF EXCAVATED MATERIAL

(Figures in brackets indicate multiple bags)

STUCKERIS: HOUSE A

Front Room Area	Loose Rubble Overburden
Backyard Area	Loose Rubble Overburden
Middle Area	Loose Rubble Overburden (2)
Adj Back Alley Wall	Loose Rubble Overburden (2)
General Area	Surface Rubble
Stoep	Overburden
Gutter (Roger Str)	Fill
Passage 1/all	Aeration?
Passage 2/all	Rubble Overburden
Passage 2/i	Below Rubble Overburden
Passage 2/ii	Below Rubble Overburden (2)
R 1/ii/iv	Surface After Rain/aeration
R 1/i	Aeration Gap
R 1/ii	Aeration Gap (2)
R 1/iii	Overburden
R 1/iii	Aeration Gap
R 1/iv	Overburden
R 1/iv	Aeration Gap
R 2/i	Below Overburden (2)
R 2/i	Overburden
R 2/ii	Overburden
R 2/ii	Below Rubble
R 2/iii	Overburden
R 2/iv	Rubble Overburden (Between Rubble Layers) (2)
R 3/i	Overburden
R 3/i	Aeration Gap
R 3/ii	Overburden
R 3/ii	Aeration Gap (2)
R 3/iii	Aeration Gap (2)
R 3/iv	Overburden
R 3/iv	Aeration Gap (2)
Out 1/iv	Overburden
Out 1/i	Below Rubble Overburden
Out 1/ii	Below Rubble Overburden
Out 1/iii	Below Rubble Overburden
Out 1/iv	Below Rubble Overburden
Out 1/ii	Stuff From Depression

Out 2	Rubble Overburden (3)
Out 2/i	Below Rubble Overburden
Out 2/ii	Below Rubble Overburden
Out 2/iii	Below Rubble Overburden
Out 2/iv	Below Rubble Overburden

Out 3/i	All Layers
Out 3/ii	All Layers
Out 3/iii	All Layers (2)
Out 3/iv	All Layers

STUCKERIS: HOUSE B

Room X	Rubble Overburden/surface
R X/i	Aeration (3)
R X/ii	Aeration
R X/iii	Aeration
R X/iv	Aeration