

EXCAVATION OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL FEATURES DISCOVERED DURING CONSTRUCTION WORK AT THE RAILWAY STATION CONCOURSE, CENTRAL CAPE TOWN

Magisterial district: Cape Town

Assessment conducted in terms of
Section 38 (8) of the National Heritage Resources Act (Act 25 of 1999)

Prepared for
Vidememoria

on behalf of
Arcus Gibb/Target Projects

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Report by

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1. INTRODUCTION

ACO Associates was contacted on 22nd February by Mr Adrian MacKay of Arcus Gibb with respect to the discovery of a well and other features during construction work on the concourse of the railway station in central Cape Town. A site inspection showed that a well was indeed present, but in addition, substantial stone walls were noted in two of the holes excavated by the contractors. In the third hole were also some in situ timber elements that immediately suggested the presence of a jetty or similar structure. Additional pieces of the timber had been removed by the contractor in the process of excavation and lay nearby. These elements appeared similar to the in situ material and I concluded that they probably represented parts of the same feature. I was informed about a ships anchor that was removed from a third hole that had already been covered by cast cement by the time I made my inspection. A report was prepared documenting the observations made during the site inspection, and recommendations were for further archaeological work to determine what the various features represented¹. To this end, I also suggested that an archival study be commissioned to understand and document the use of the site in the historical past as the investigation site lay in an area that at one time was on the old shoreline, and was later subjected to land reclamation.

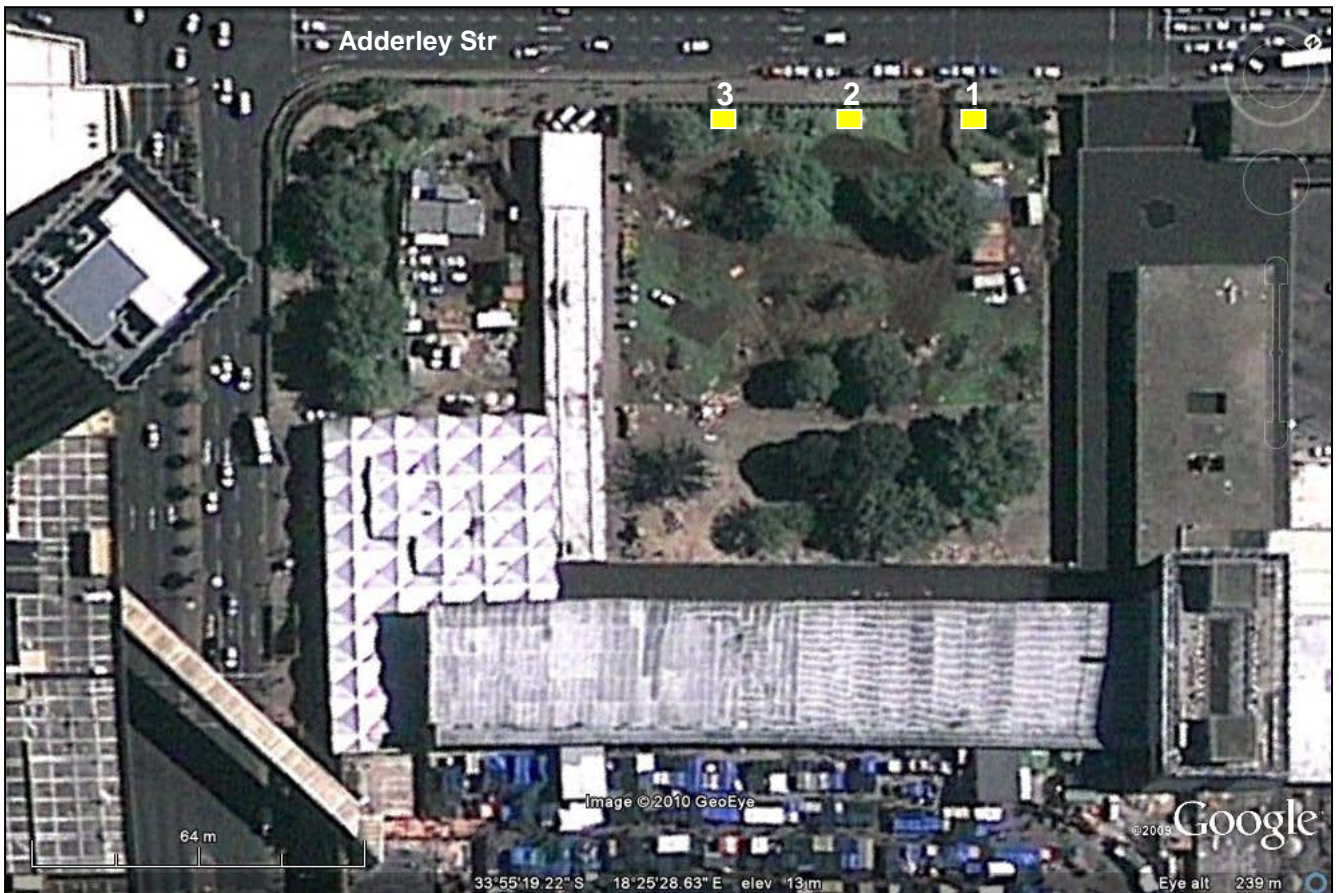


Figure 1: The approximate locations of the construction activities (yellow) at the station precinct in which structural remains have been found. Anchor from Hole 1, walling in Holes 2 and 3, well and timber in Hole 3.

¹Halkett, D. 2010. An inspection of archaeological features discovered during construction work at the Railway Station Concourse, central Cape Town. Prepared for Arcus Gibb. ACO Associates cc.

2. METHODS

Ms Harriet Clift was sub-contracted by the author to undertake an archival background study, at the same time that excavations were being undertaken. Despite our initial report recommending that archaeological work be conducted in both Holes 2 and 3, and an RoD and permit having been issued for that work, a concrete base was cast in Hole 2 before the archaeological work could be undertaken. Archaeological work therefore was limited to Hole 3 and concentrated on the stone wall and timber elements. As the well had been damaged during the contractors excavations, and as it was capped and covered by at least a meter of overburden, it was deemed unsafe to excavate and it was recommended that it be made good and protected during cement casting. We have however probed the shaft with a metal spike to determine if a base could be found. Excavations took place over 3.5 days in March 2010.

3. OBSERVATIONS

3.1 Contractors Excavation 2

A substantial wall footing of shale blocks held in place by mud mortar had been observed in the north east section during the initial site visit (Plate 1). A break in the layering of the fills to the north west (left) indicates that the wall was built after a land filling event and corresponds to a similar cut to the north west of the wall in hole 3. The stratigraphy of the opposite section indicated that the shale block wall did not extend to that point, although a shallower brick "footing" is on the same alignment (Plate 2). We would liked to have examined the foundation of the larger wall to gauge its relationship to the brick footing opposite, but since a cement base was already cast, this was not possible. After having surveyed the positions of the two stone wall sections, we have established that wall both appear to be in the same alignment, though not of equivalent width. As the brick footing was no longer visible, the position could not be accurately determined.



Plate 1: A wall footing made from shale blocks is clearly visible in section with the cut indicated with a dotted yellow line.

Plate 2: The opposite side of the hole showing a less substantial brick footing. Most sediments visible in section consist of introduced fill.

3.2 Contractors Excavation 3

Three features were recognised in this hole and were described in the original report. Recommendations suggested that the features be further investigated by a process of controlled excavation, informed by a detailed contextual archival study.

3.2.1 Stone wall footing

The course of the wall was cleared of soil revealing that it continued to just short of the nw section ending in a broader “plinth” (Plates 3 & 4, Figure 2). No other adjoining walls were observed suggesting that this was the end of the feature. To the south the wall continued into the section that we note runs at a slightly divergent angle with Adderley Street.



Plate 3: The remains of the stone wall extended almost all the way across the hole.

Plate 4: Looking from above, the wall ended in a broader “plinth”.

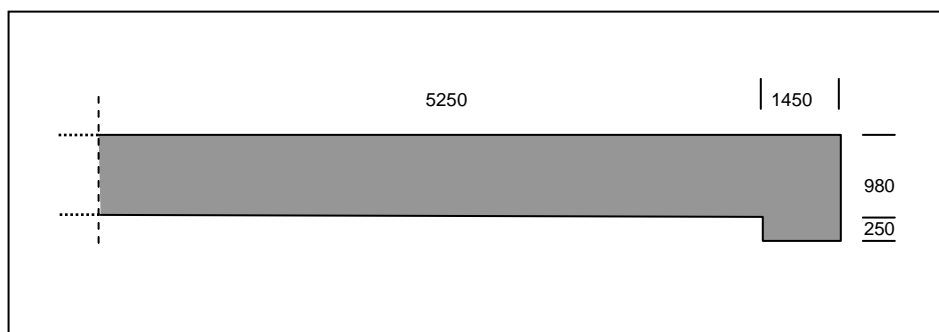


Figure 2: Schematic diagram of the stone wall with dimensions (not to scale)

Despite its appearance (resembling a Dutch wall made with dressed shale blocks held in place with shell lime cement) the stratigraphy of the surrounding deposits suggests that the construction dates to the 19th century. We have noted glass and distinctive transfer printed “willow pattern” refined earthenware ceramics at the top of the brick and rubble rich deposits at the lower part of the sequence. These deposits appear to be cut by a substantial (>1 meter wide) “trench” to the west of the wall (see Plate 5). A layer of brown gritty sand in turn covered by a layer of brick rubble, does not show evidence of the cut and suggests that it was deposited after the wall was constructed. Deposits to the east are substantially different and appear to post date the wall in their entirety (Plate 6).

Of interest is the fact that all the deposits observed are secondary fills containing substantial amounts of building rubble. As we know that the site would have been located offshore during the 17th and 18th centuries, the deposits are most likely to represent the earliest landfilling events that took place with intent from about the 1830’s. The large amounts of rubble would be consistent with a 19th century event since before that time there was considerably less development to supply rubble in these quantities.

Test holes on both the east and west sides of the wall showed well finished faces on both sides (Plate 7). The test hole on the east side was dug to the water table (approx 830mm below the remaining top of the wall), and a probe was hammered into the ground in 3 different positions to determine the depth of the foundation, where resistance occurred at depths ranging from 530 - 630mm below water table. We were unable to dig into the waterlogged clayey soil to determine the nature of the lower deposits and can therefore not say if the foundation was in *in situ* shoreline deposit or into rubble fill.



Plate 5: The section to the west of the wall shows an interruption of the deposit over a meter away from the wall (black dotted line). From the artefacts, we know the deposit below the yellow dotted line dates to the first part of the 19th century and suggests the wall is coeval or post-dates that time.



Plate 6: Deposits at this level to the east of the wall are distinctly different from those to the west and there is no evidence of a cut.

Plate 7: A test pit was excavated to the east of the wall revealing a well finished structure that probing indicated penetrated to a depth of 630mm below the water table.

3.2.2 Timber structure

Lying to the east of the stone wall we uncovered a series of wooden features, all of which seemed to have formed part of some form of structure. Based on their characteristics, we believe that several additional timber pieces that were recognised in the spoil heaps during the initial visit, and later collected and stockpiled at the contractors yard, also originated from this hole.

The size of the timber elements along with the associated metal bolts, suggests that all were at one point connected to form a structure (Plates 8 & 9, Figure 3). Considerable wear and degradation of the wood in places suggests that it has been exposed to water. The form of the timbers, wear patterns and context suggests that this was once part of a jetty or slipway.

All the linear timber elements are aligned at 90° to the stone wall and would seem to indicate a direct link between the two features. They were either erected at the same time or the timber alignment took its cues from the wall alignment at a later stage. This being the case, it would seem logical to deduce that the timber structure also dates to the 19th century. Also, the use of threaded iron connecting bolts and nuts was more common in the 19th century than before when forged and riveted fixtures were more common.

The wood is in poor condition and in places was represented by nothing more than a dark stains in the soil. In places there are marks suggesting that connecting timbers were recently removed, and are likely to be places where the stockpiled timbers were once positioned. We noted that timber continued into the east and south sections where because of the circumstances, we were unable to continue excavating. Three large square posts supported the visible structure Excavation of the bases however showed that they did not penetrate far into the soil, and no dark stains at the base showed that it was not just a case of the wood having rotted off. This was moderately troubling in terms of its use as a jetty as we had expected them to be much deeper set. If however we assume that the shoreline sloped upwards, we may have found the shallowest part of the structure where it lay partially on the shore (for example Figure 4). Truncation of the structure did not permit more observations to

be made to the north. The vertical connecting bolts projecting from the side timbers suggest that additional planking would have been attached possibly forming a surface.

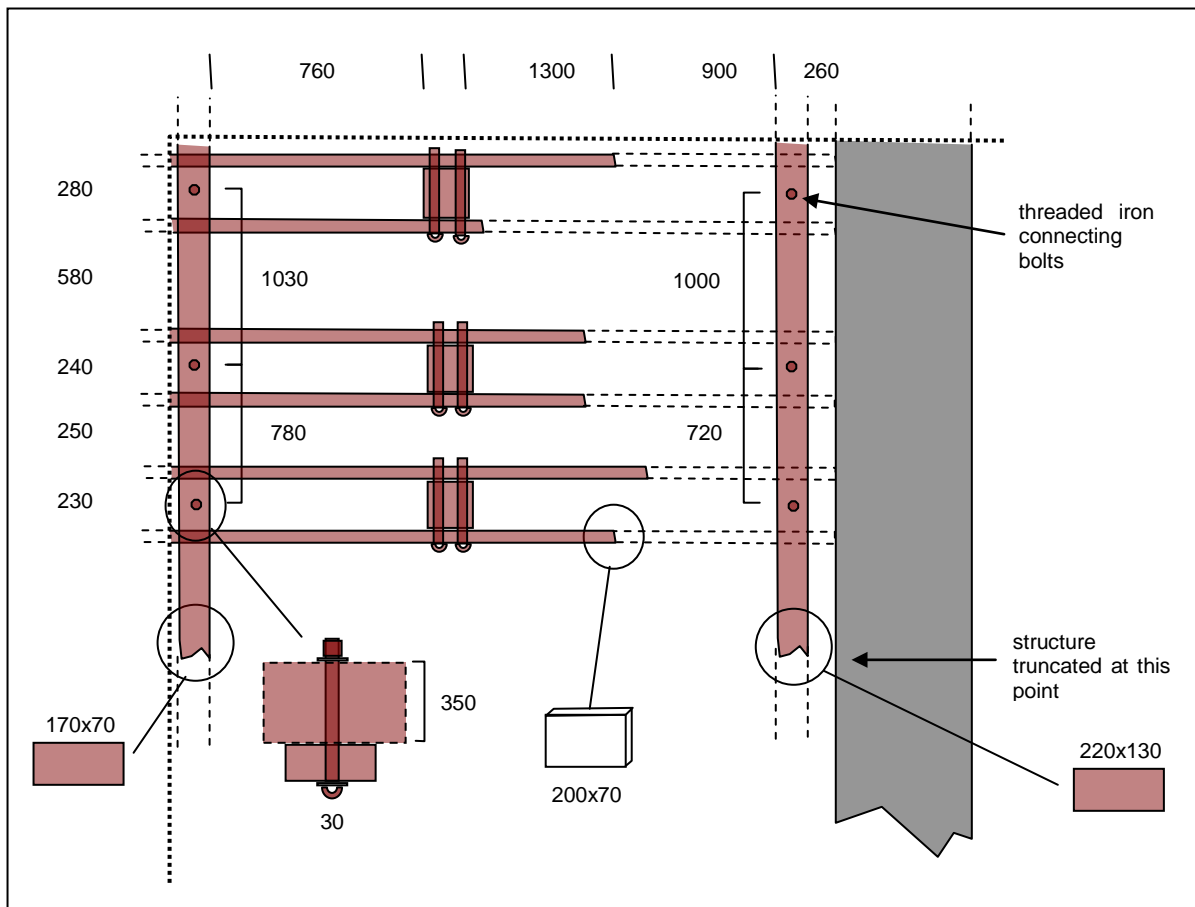


Figure 3: Schematic diagram of timber elements with dimensions in relation to stone wall (not to scale)

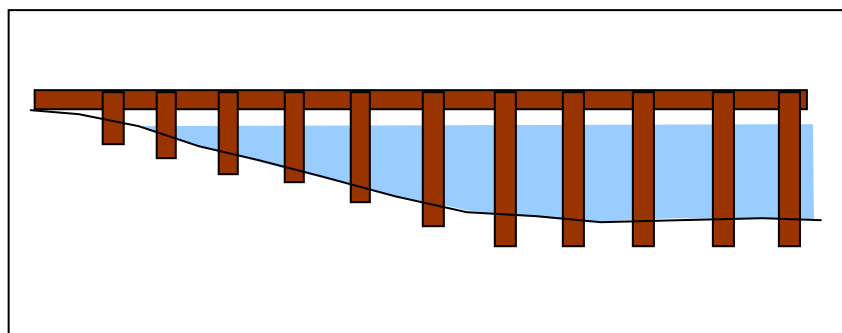


Figure 4: Schematic indicating variable pile depth on a sloping shoreline



Plate 8: The location of the timber features in relation to the stone wall. The timber plank immediately east of the wall lies exactly parallel to it and suggests some acknowledgement and links between the structures.



Plate 9: Detail of the timber elements and showing metal fixtures.

3.2.3 The well

When the well was encountered during the mechanical excavation of the hole, the side of the shaft was damaged resulting in the structure becoming unstable. As it had been capped by a metal sheet (presumably when it was no longer in use) and then covered by approximately a meter of soil, considerable weight was bearing down on the unstable structure and it was therefore too dangerous to contemplate archaeological excavation. Some observations of the structure were however made (Plates 10 & 11, Figure 5).

The walls of the shaft are made from a double course of fired bricks almost certainly of 19th century age. With an internal diameter of approximately 1250mm, bricks have a single frogged surface and are held in place by mud mortar. Brick dimensions are 240x105x70mm.



Plate 10: The damaged side of the well showing overburden.

Plate 11: Detail of the brick structure showing metal cap.

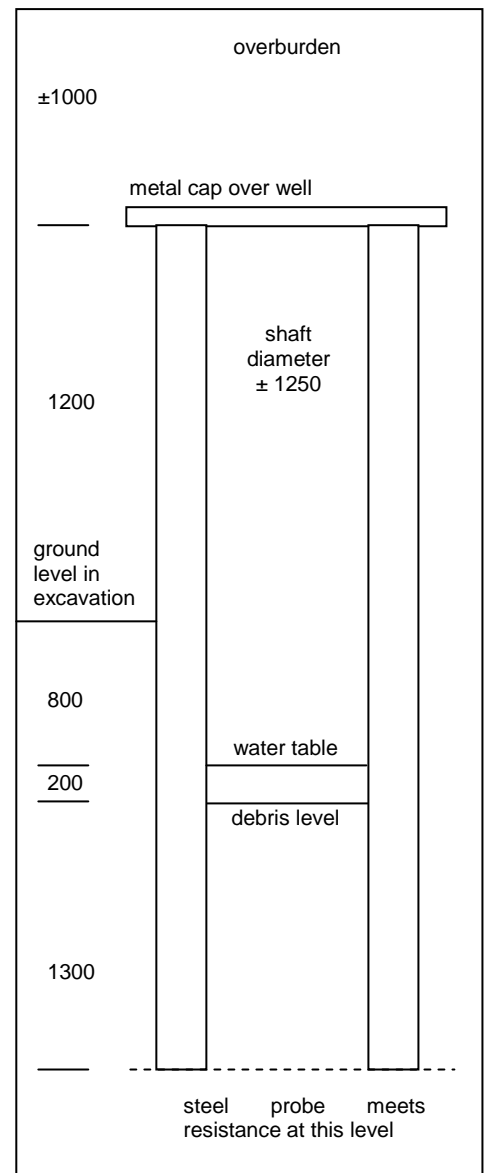


Figure 5: schematic diagram of the well structure with dimensions (not to scale).

Faint traces of a cut were visible approximately 1 meter to east and west of the shaft. By probing depth of the debris fill with a metal probe and adding the other measurable dimensions, we estimate that the well was 3.5 meters deep when in use.

The well

4. HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND CONCLUSION

The study of the historical context (see Appendix 1) has unfortunately not provided us with an unequivocal identification of the features that we have observed, largely due to the inaccuracy of the early maps not providing enough accurate points for georectification. That said, we have been able to narrow down the possibilities and believe that we have two possible candidates.

In short, there is no archival record of a jetty in this position and it is only by deduction that we believe a strong candidate for the stone walling is the “causeway” that appears to have been constructed sometime before 1859 (Appendix 1, Map 8). The causeway we believe formed a seawall to the west of which, deliberate landfilling took place in what was probably the first land reclamation in Cape Town. This eventually filled in what was known as Rogge Baai and there are some suggestions² (p102-107) that it was hoped that additional wharf space could be provided alongside the new sea walls. The later jetty known as Central Wharf (Appendix 1, Figure 7) would later be built at the end of the causeway, at what was later to become lower Adderley Street. The timber elements that can be seen in the photograph are not unlike the timber features that were uncovered at the station concourse. While these are the most likely candidates for the structures, one other map (Appendix 1, Map 9) places a little doubt on the conclusion. Shown on that plan which dates to c 1890, are two “goods sheds” at more or less the position of our features. They lie at a slightly divergent angle to Adderley Street, reminiscent of the angle of the observed feature in hole 3. It is difficult however to imagine what purpose the timber structure would have served in a railway context. Without having been able to examine more carefully the features in hole 2, there will always be an element of uncertainty in the identification of the features.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

- **The well:** Positioned as it is in the section means that it could be successfully avoided by the proposed building activities. An engineering solution should be found to accommodate the construction activities while maintaining the well into the future as a heritage resource. The engineer will have to resolve possible future collapse of the metal sheet capping in a way that is acceptable to the heritage authority. As this represents one of very few historic elements on the site, some consideration may be given to utilising it as a feature of the redevelopment. Engineering work and/or rehabilitation of the structure should be approved by HWC.

As it is, the old shoreline ran close to this point and could be highlighted as a point of interest on site through signage, or through some acknowledgement in the paving.

- **Wall footings:** The feature has been measured, surveyed and photographed and we do not believe the feature needs to be conserved.

- **Timber elements:** The feature has been measured, surveyed and photographed. The timber is in extremely poor condition and will not withstand exposure for long. We do not believe that the feature could be conserved.

- **Anchor:** Mr Jaco Boshoff at IZIKO visited the site and inspected the anchor which he believes to be of 19th century age and of some historical value. He indicated that the anchor could be stored at their storage facility at Wingfield. The contractor would have to provide transport and lifting equipment. If it is decided to use the anchor for display purposes, it could be recovered later.

² Soonike, H.E. 1974. The development of the port and harbour of Table Bay with special reference to the period 1825-1860. MA Thesis, Dept of History, UCT.

APPENDIX 1: HISTORICAL CONTEXT
RESEARCH NOTES: CT RAILWAY PRECINCT
HARRIET CLIFT
April 2010

BRIEF

The study area in which the archaeological features have been found during the course of construction work on the upgrade of the Cape Town Railway Station is located to the east of Adderley Street, between Waterkant and Riebeeck Streets. The aim of this research is to uncover any information which may shed light on the stone walling and portion of a well which was uncovered in the construction trenches. The study area has been subject to several phases of land reclamation.

FINDINGS

Based on the historical data, it is my impression that the stone walling and wooden features are the remains of the 1850 central jetty/wharf/causeway. It is possible that the central jetty had its origins in a slipway associated with the old port office/customs house boat yard. It is not shown on maps predating 1859 and by 1870 the land reclamations have already taken place and the central jetty is far removed from the study area.

Additional avenues for investigation: It is possible that information regarding the construction of the central jetty can be found in the Colonial Office minutes as well as the early City Council minutes. This may be a time consuming exercise.

OVERVIEW (Based on research notes by Jean Blanckenberg 2010)

The study area corresponds to the stretch of shoreline which lay in front of the old Fort. Even after the completion of the Castle in 1674, all the shipping activity associated with the refreshment station took place in this area. The Company's warehouses (corn store, butchery, wine store), loading yards as well as a small hospital (ziekenhuis) was situated here. The Heerengracht ran in a straight line from the Company Gardens to this locality. References to a jetty at the end of the Heerengracht are inconsistent and it is unsure as to the exact location of this structure. Maps 1 and 2, however, do show a jetty situated near the fort, but the exact location is unclear as the accuracy of these old maps do not allow for exact overlays on later maps.

Blanckenberg (2010) also makes reference to a stone-lined water furrow/channel c1693 as well as a slipway which was used to roll barrels to the mouth of the furrow to fill them with fresh water. The stone-lined furrow ran from Wagenaer's dam towards the jetty near the Fort, at the end of the Heerengracht (Picard 1968:5.10).³

As mentioned earlier, the study area appears to have been used consistently for purposes related to trade and shipping: during the VOC period as Company warehouses. It is not certain when the hospital fell into disuse, but by the 1780s the site was the locale of the Company's shipping yard, the town jail, as well as a number of warehouses. (In 1798 a number of the warehouse in this area burnt down (Worden et al 1998). The town jail remained at this site until 1859, when it was moved to the newly built jail in Roeland Street.

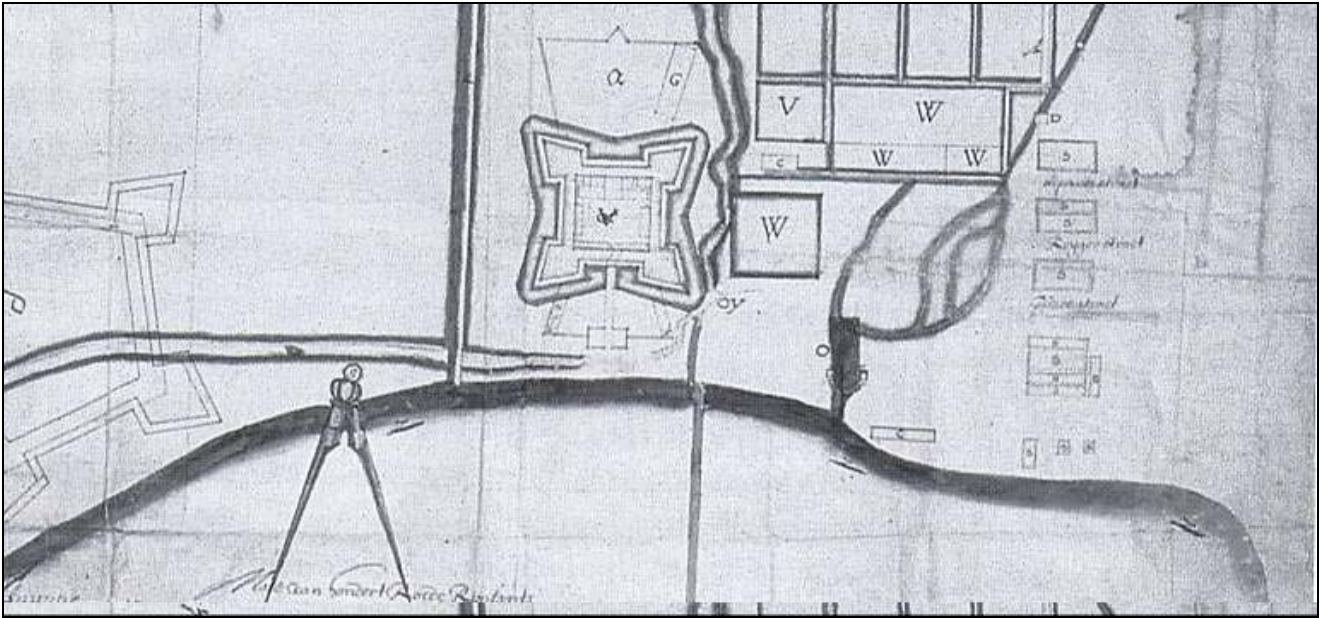
In about 1824, the Customs House was built. It functioned as a customs house until the new Table Bay harbour was constructed at the V&A Waterfront. The building itself was still standing until the mid 20th century, when it made way for the development of the new railway station precinct.

In 1850, a new jetty was constructed at the bottom end of Adderley Street, known as the central jetty/wharf or causeway. This was the central point of the harbour activity until the construction of the new Table Bay harbour. In 1870 the proposed closure of the Central causeway solicited much response from the merchants in Cape Town (CO 4161) – albeit a cause that they ultimately lost! The study area retained its characteristic warehouses, with the Customs House, Port Office and jail.

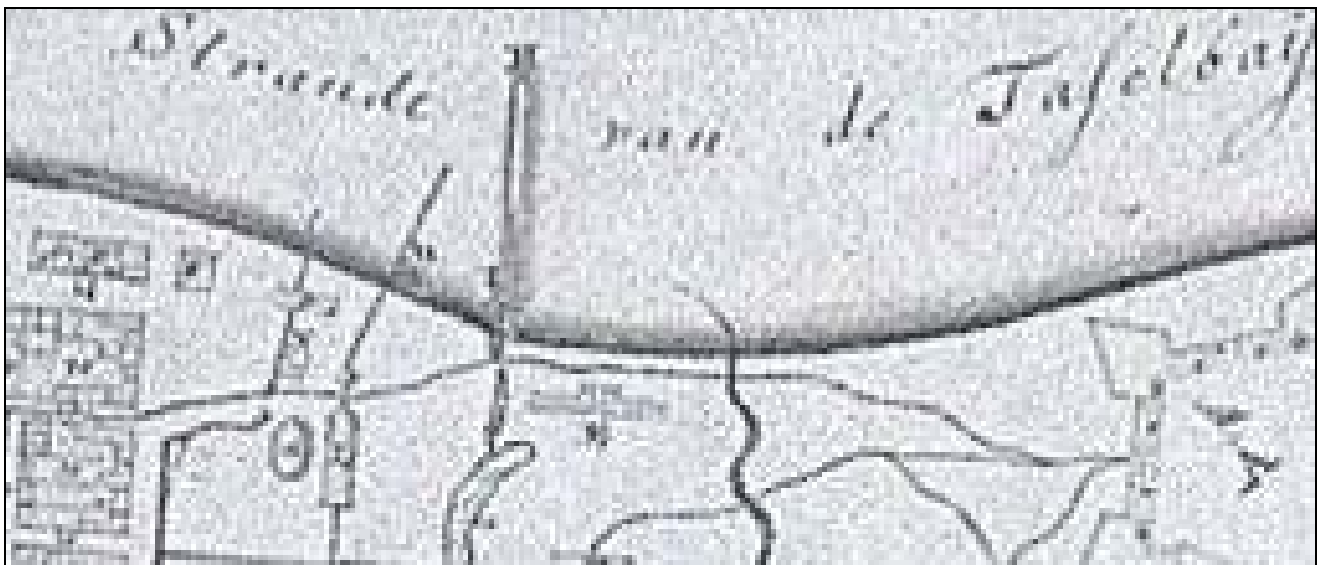
The construction of the railway line from Cape Town to Wellington and the subsequent railway developments fundamentally changed the character of the study area. By the early 20th century, it was alienated from the shoreline, lost its port function and was taken over by railway lines.

MAPS

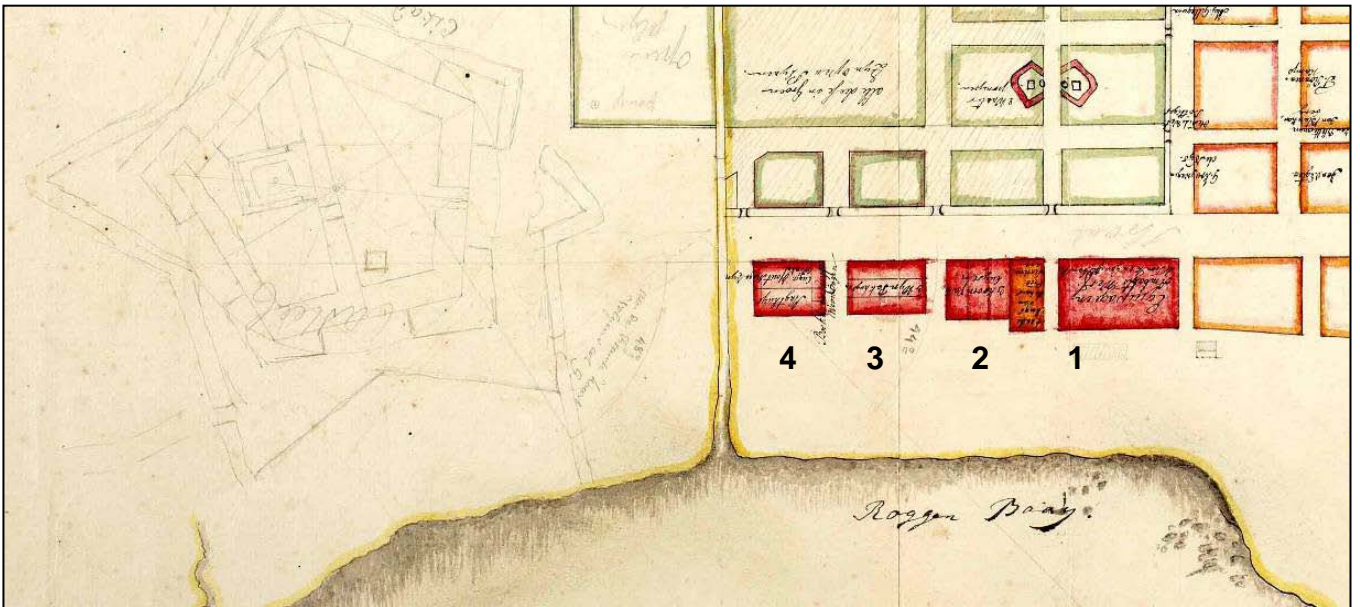
³ Picard (1969:128-129) mentions the uncovering of a 'postal stone' during the excavations of the foundations of the Garlicks building on Adderley Street. (The stone was found at 17 feet below the then present ground surface.) Apparently a few years earlier, the remains of an old jetty were also uncovered. (These finds happened c1909 under the mayoral term of Frederick Smith, the stone went to the Museum and was recorded in Smith's minutes - ?City Council?)



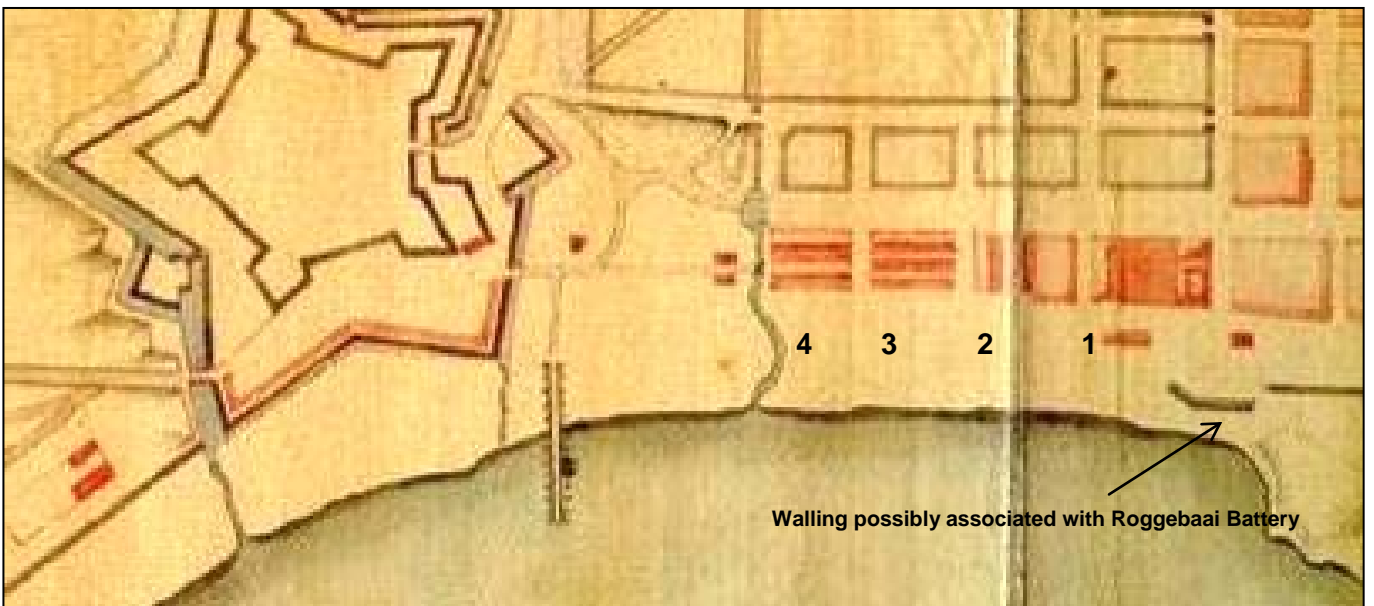
Map 1: Detail of Map of Cape Town c1665 (ACO map collection, original Rijksarchief Vel 825) showing the position of the old Fort in relation to the proposed Castle and the shoreline.



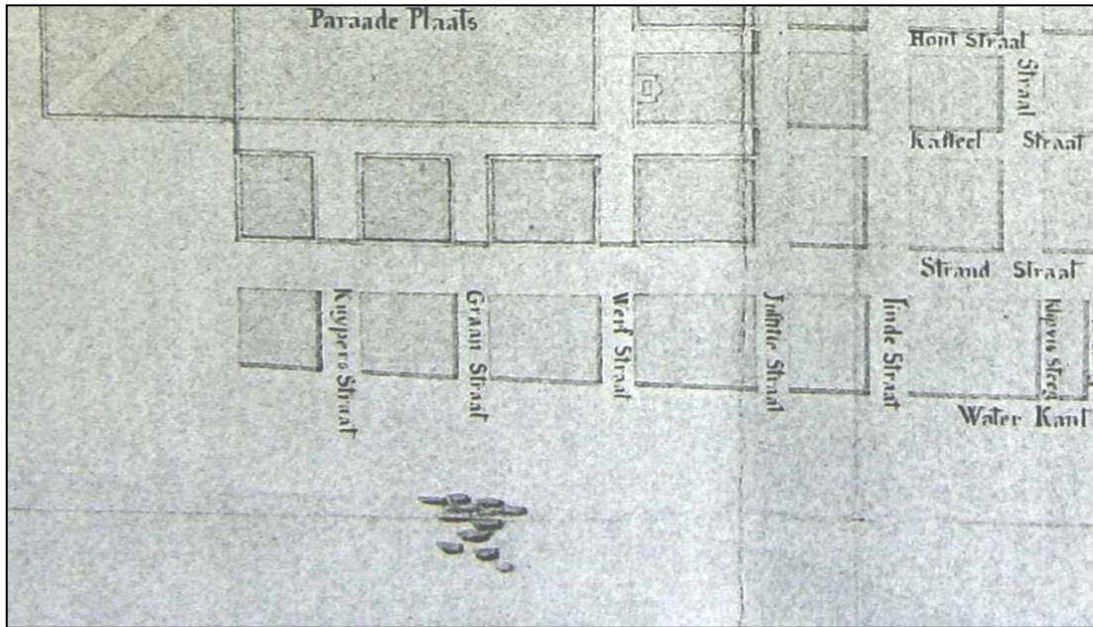
Map 2: Detail of map of Cape Town c1690 (ACO map collection, original Rijksarchief Vel 828). The Castle was completed and no traces remain of the old Fort. Interestingly, it appears as if the jetty still remained in use.



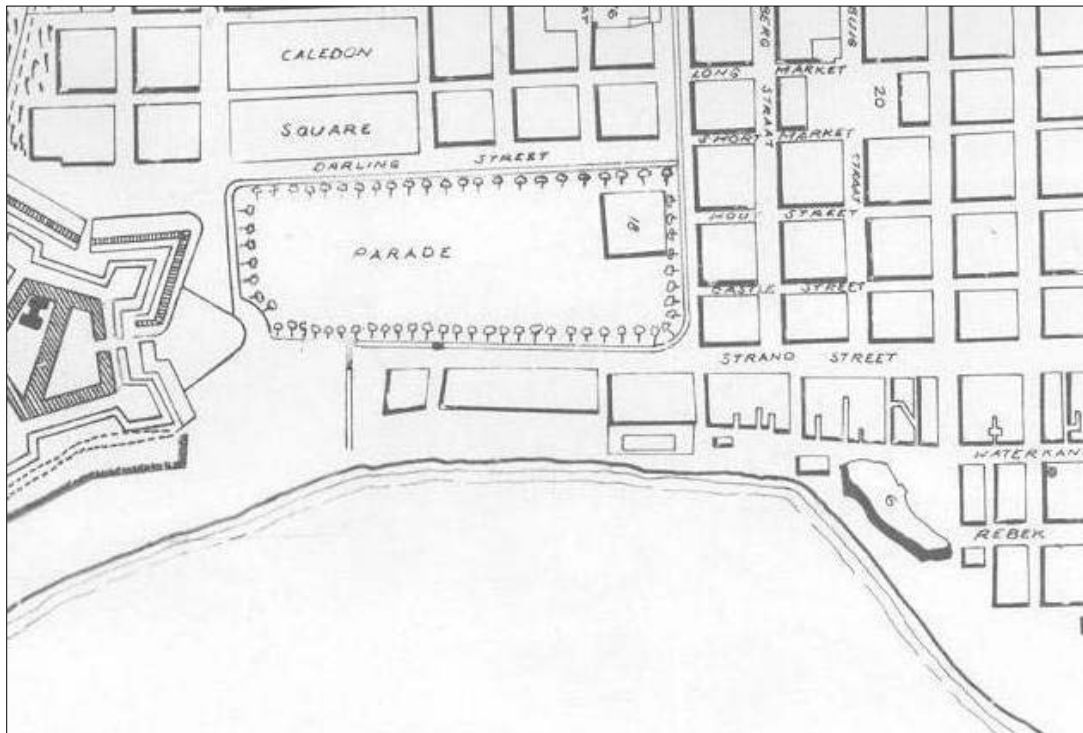
Map 3: Detail of map of Cape Town c1785 (www.tanap.net; photocopy CA M1/1024). The buildings shaded red are described as follows: (1) Equipment and trade yard/Jail and court of justice (2) ? /Grain warehouse (3) Wine warehouse (4) Butchery / Wood and ? store. The map is incomplete, but the outline of the rectangular structure to the north of (1) is visible. No jetties are shown.



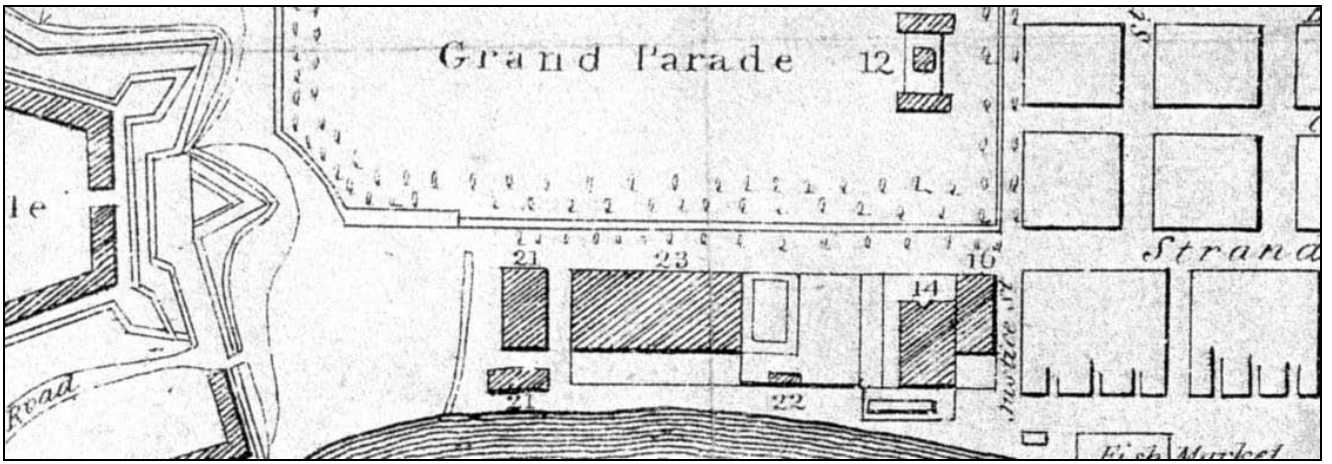
Map 4: Detail of map of Cape Town c1786 (vd Graaf, Thibault and Barbier – www.tanap.net; copy CA M1/399). The buildings numbered 1-4 would correspond to the description in the preceding figure. The wooden jetty adjacent the Castle is shown.



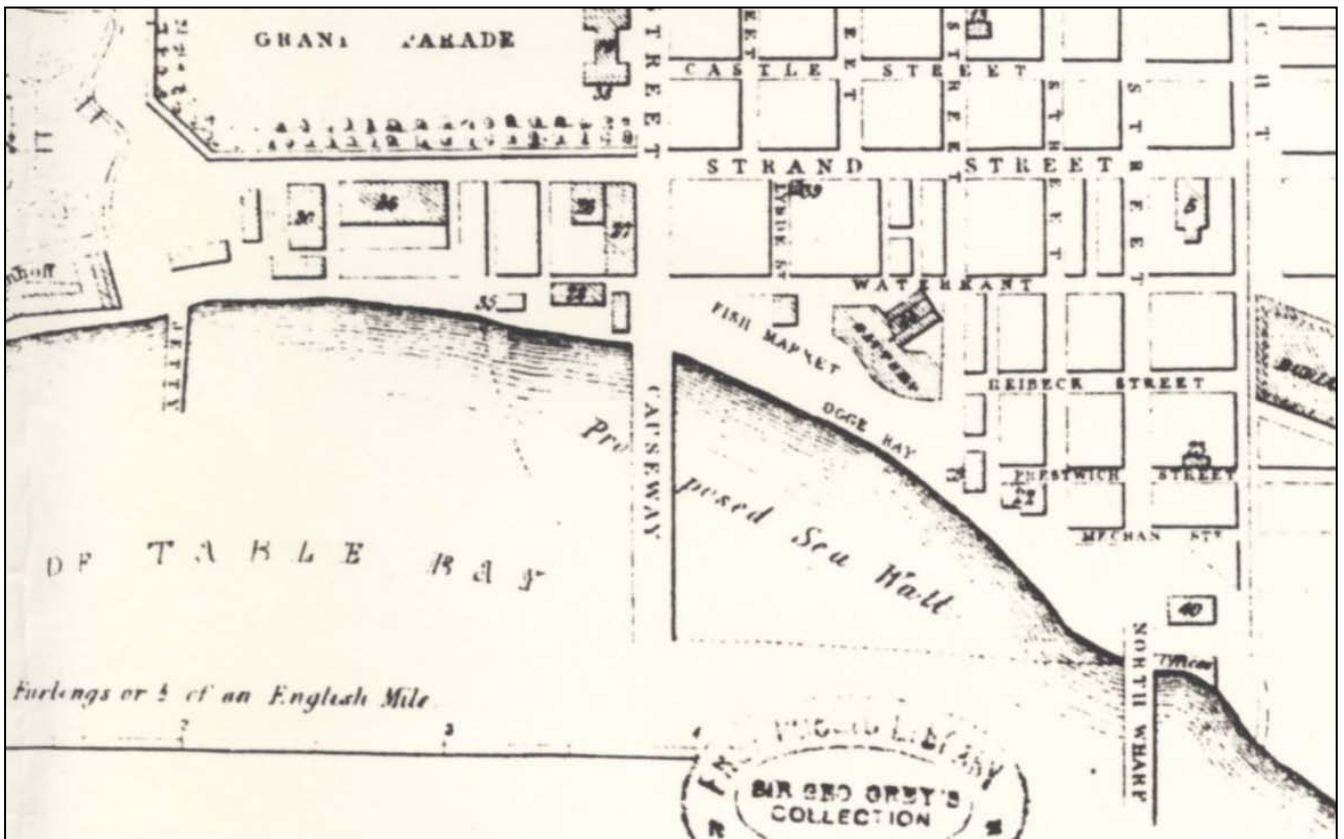
Map 5: Street plan of Cape Town c1800 showing street names (M1/68). Kuyper and Graan Streets are obviously named for the wine and grain stores. Justitie (Justice) street is named for the town jail that was located in this area from the end of the 18th century (at least) to 1859. Werf Street may relate to the Customs House's yard, and may have been later incorrectly translated as Wharf Str (See NLSA KCA.CT 1825)



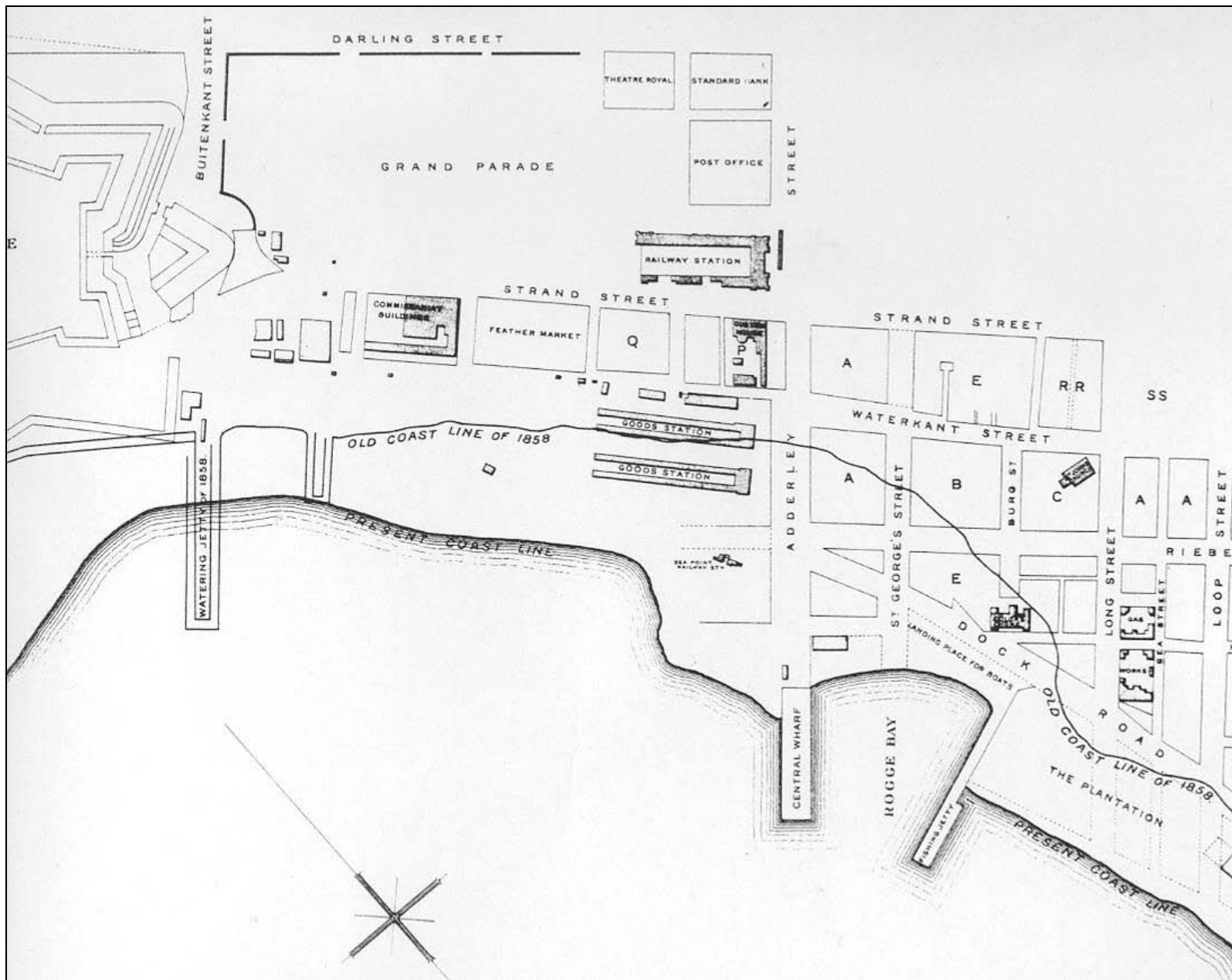
Map 6: Detail of copy of Eleman's map of Cape Town c1820 (ACO map collection; Original CA M5/16). Of interest is the enclosed yard associated with the Customs House and Jail in Block P. Justitie Str is to the west and Werf Str is to the east of the block (labeled on original map).



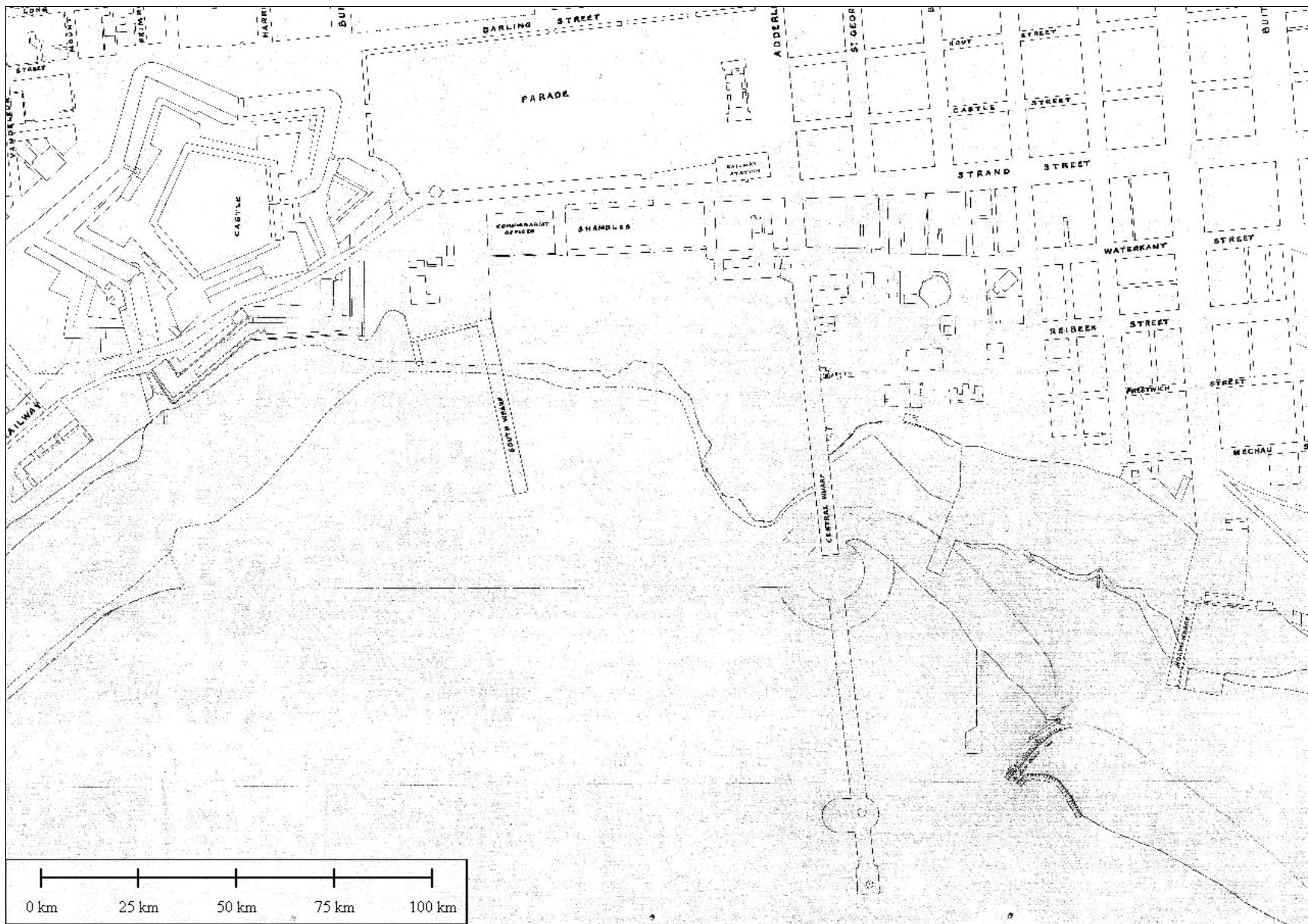
Map 7: Grieg's map of Cape Town c1838 (NLSA). Note the proximity of the shore line. The Grand parade has been 'consolidated', shown extending onto Strand Street. The key reads: (14) Customs House (16) Town prison (21) Commissariat Offices and Stores (22) Port Office (23) Butcher's shambles.



Map 8: Map of Cape Town c1859 (provenance unknown), similar to Grieg, but first time that causeway and north wharf are shown. The proposed sea wall extends from the (central) causeway to the base of the north wharf. (M4/32 c1859 (CA) shows the proposed railway lines).



Map 9: Detail of Map c1890 with the old shoreline indicated (ACO map collection). Note the proximity of the shoreline to Blocks P and Q.



Map 10: Detail overlay showing 1862 and 1938 shorelines (ACO map collection)

DEEDS OFFICE

The title deed history of the study area is not particularly informative as the area in which the archaeological features have been found are situated on what was historically the shoreline. Once the land reclamations in this area started, the land in question was by default, owned by the State. In the late 19th century and early 20th century, the development of the Table Bay Harbour and the Cape Railways were private enterprises. During this period, the study area had already been acquired by the Cape Railway Company and was the location of the Goods Station. By the time that the Foreshore reclamation scheme was started in the 1930s-40s, the study area was considerably removed from the shoreline.

The earliest title deeds in association with the study area, appear to relate to Blocks P and Q (according to Wentzel's map of Cape Town c1751 and corresponding to No's 1 and 2 in Map 3).

Two grants were issued in 1700 by Willem Adriaan van der Stel for land in the vicinity of the old Court of Justice, the old Hospital and the VOC's kraal in favour of Willem Mensing and Henning Hussing respectively. In 1709 Hussing was granted additional land adjoining the previous grant. The 1709 grant describes the erven as bounded on the SE by the beach behind the VOC butchery, NE by the beach and NW by the street leading to the beach.

In 1711 portions of 3 erven are re-granted to Henning Hussing. The property was bounded on the SW by the Plein (later the Parade); NW by the street leading to the beach; SE to the land of Jacobus van der Heyden and NE by the beach. Jacobus van der Heyden subsequently was granted additional land in 1722. Both Hussing and van der Heyden were involved in providing meat to the Company.

Subsequent maps suggest that these properties along the shoreline were (if not actually owned by the VOC) used for it's own purposes. The land in question was later re-granted in 1821 to Lieutenant Colonel Christopher Bird, Colonial Secretary (CF 1.3) (Figure 1). The erven marked 1-6 were sold to private individuals between 1834 and 1837. In 1892 the land was acquired by the Colonial Government.

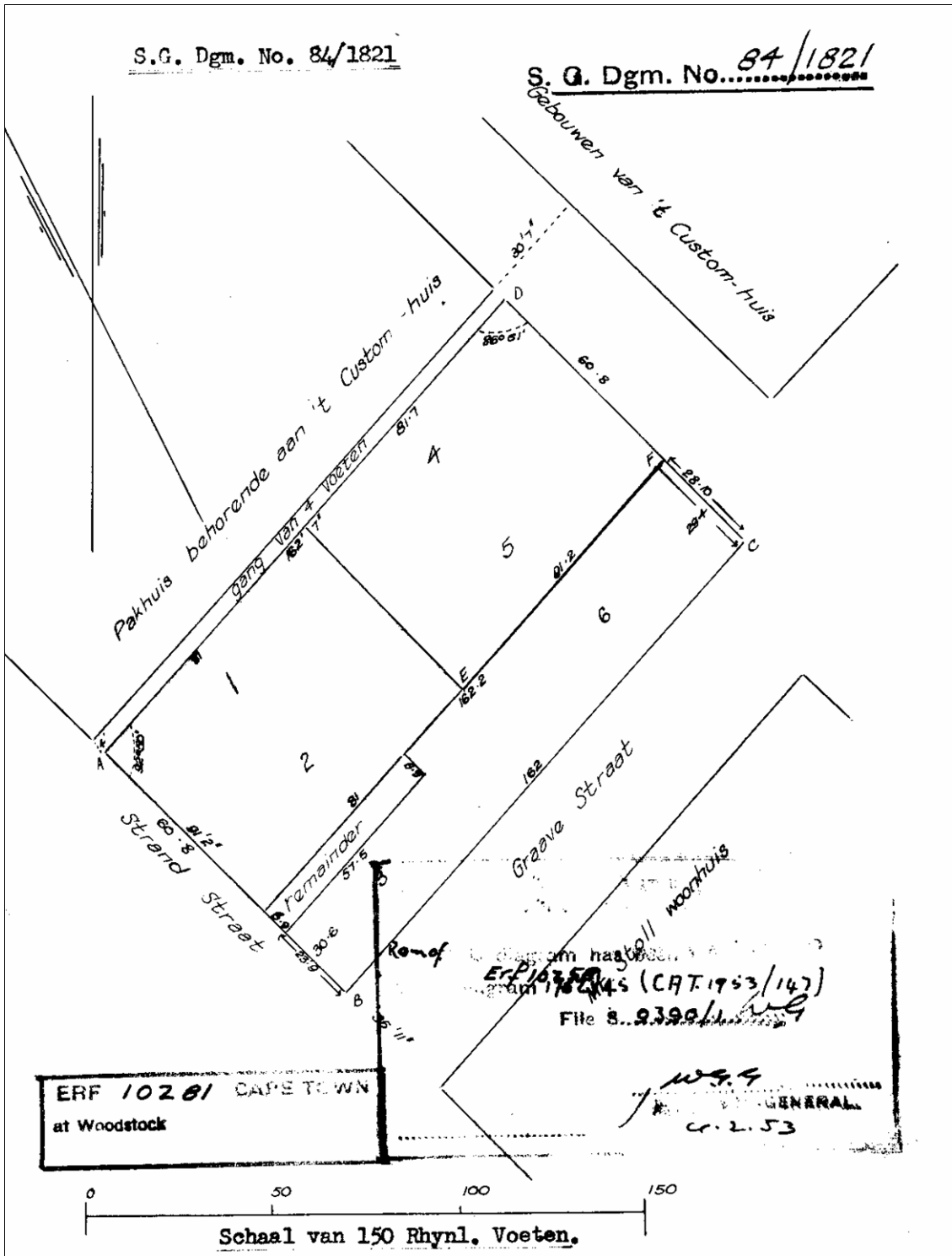


Figure 1: Survey diagram 82/1821 showing detail of the subdivision of Block P. Graeve Straat is shown on earlier and subsequent maps as Werf Straat and Wharf Street. Of interest is the buildings associated with the Customs House, situated on the shoreline.

IMAGES

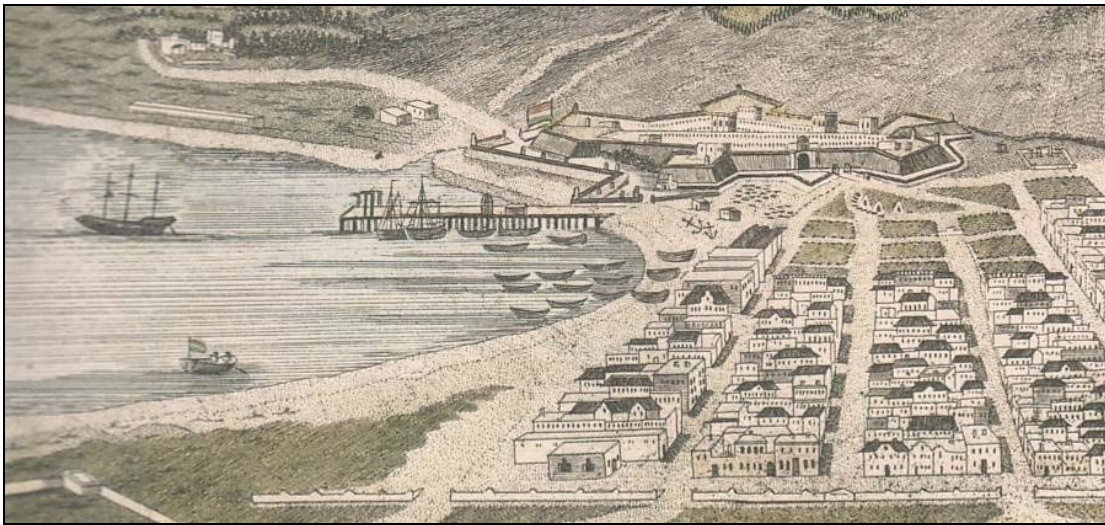


Figure 2: Detail of Schumacher's aquarelle of Cape Town c1778 (ACO image collection). The wooden jetty to the west of the Castle is clearly visible as are the rowing boats beached in front of the Company warehouses on the northwestern edge of the Parade.



Figure 3: Sketch by Lady Anne Barnard, of the Table Bay drawn from the Castle ramparts c1798. Flag in the distance indicates the location of the Amsterdam Battery.

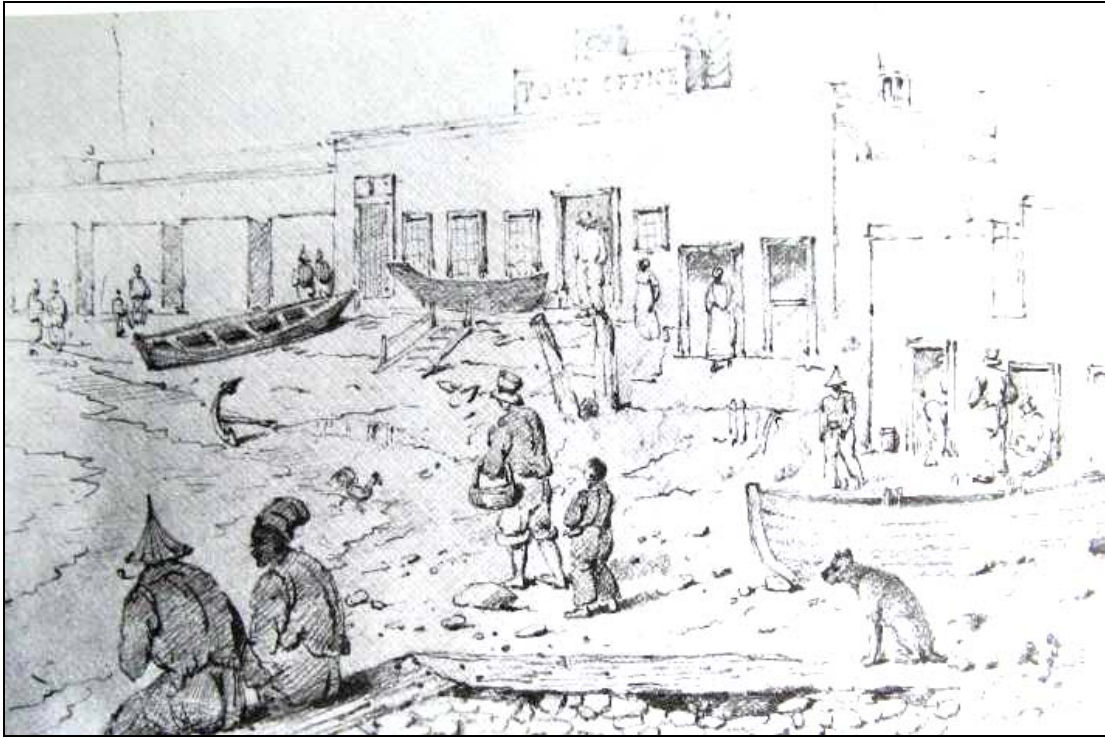


Figure 4: Sketch by D'Oly (c1830) of the Port Office (In Pama 1968). The Town Shambles are visible to the left of the image. This port office is the earlier one, which was situated in the same city block as the Shambles and which by 1842 was in ruins (GH28/20 p66).

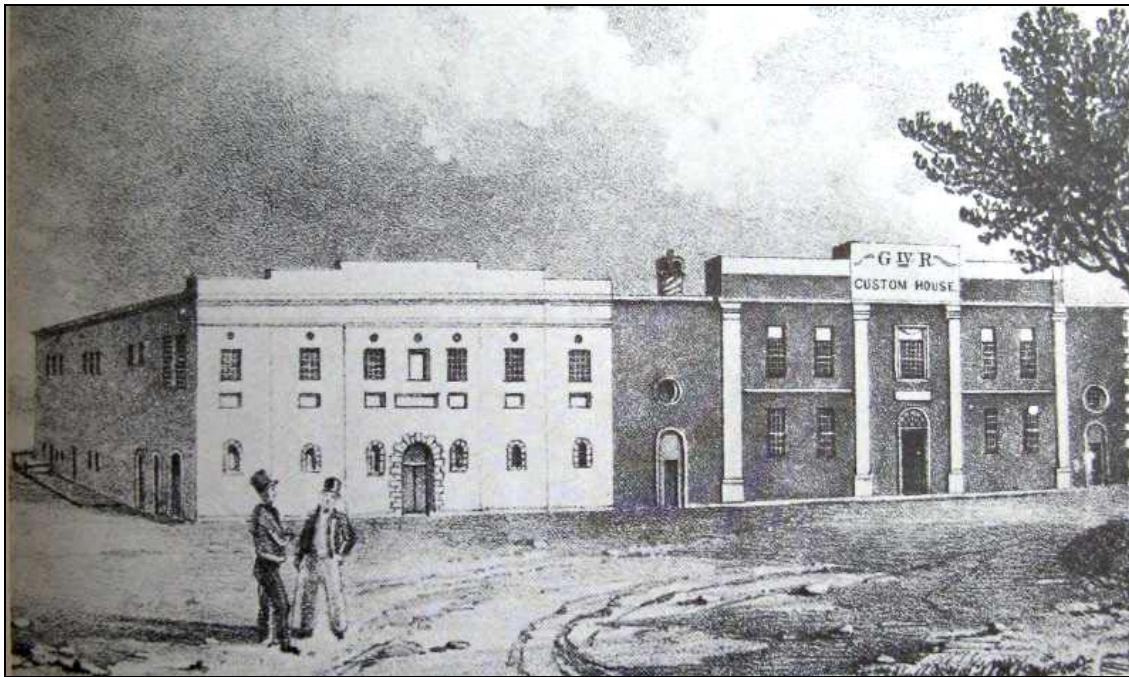


Figure 5: De Meillon (c1832) showing the town jail and the Customs House, fronting onto Strand Street (In Picard 1968). The Customs House, constructed in 1824 was previously housed near the Castle in what is now known as The Granary (Clift 2004).



Figure 6: The town jail made way for the new Cape Town Railway station in 1879 (Fransen 1993). The new jail was constructed in Roeland Street in 1859. The station platforms were situated in the building in the foreground (on the site of the present Golden Acre).



Figure 7: Photograph of the wooden jetty (Central jetty) at the end of Adderley Street c1902 (Picard 1969:118). The central jetty was constructed in the 1850's and became the central hub of harbour activities. In 1907 the jetty was extended to create a central pier and promenade. The pier was demolished in 1938 to make way for the Foreshore Reclamation Scheme (Patrick et al 2010). M4/12 c1910 shows the extent of the land reclamation as well as a dashed line to the NE of the Customs House – possibly showing the outline of the earlier wooden jetty.

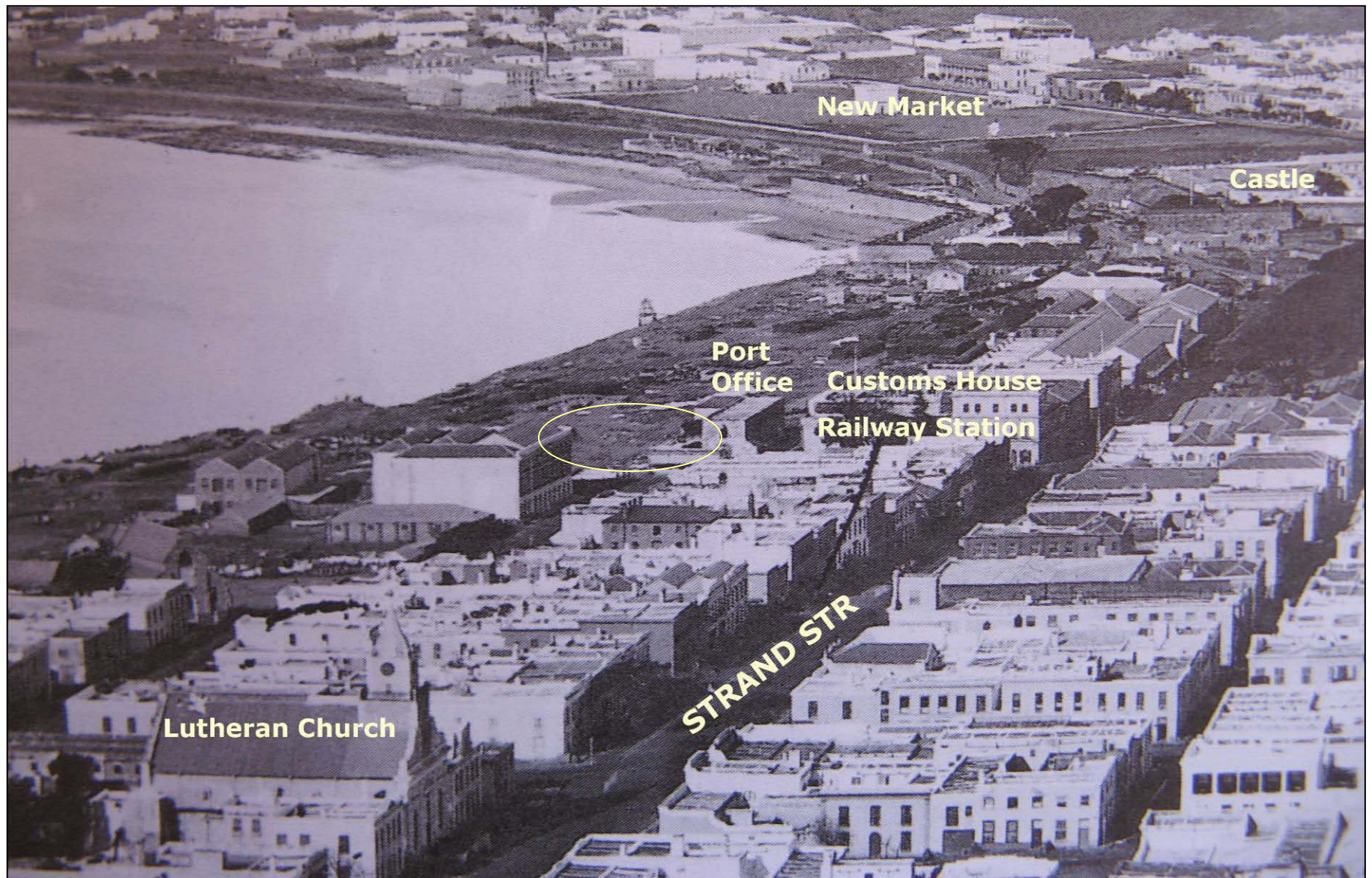


Figure 8: Panoramic view of Cape Town, taken by Arthur Elliot c1900. None of the jetties are visible. The study area is indicated by the oval.

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ACLT 540	7919	1945	Customs House Adderley Str
CHB 264	67	1900-1907	Land at Roggebaai/Lease of sites Central Wharf
CO 4161	C38	1870	Petition against closure of Central Wharf
GH 28/20	P65-66	1842	Map of existing location of Customs House and Port Office;
PWD 2/11/11	67		Plan of proposed Customs House and Port Office, North Jetty
M4/32		c1859	Plan railway
M1/1506-1507		(1892)	Plan of Table Bay Harbour land between Jetty and Castle

Deeds Office, Plein Str

OCF 1.344 1700
OCF 1.346 1700
OCF 2.164 1709
OCF 2.208 1711
OCF 1722
CF1.3 1821
CF 6.20 1840