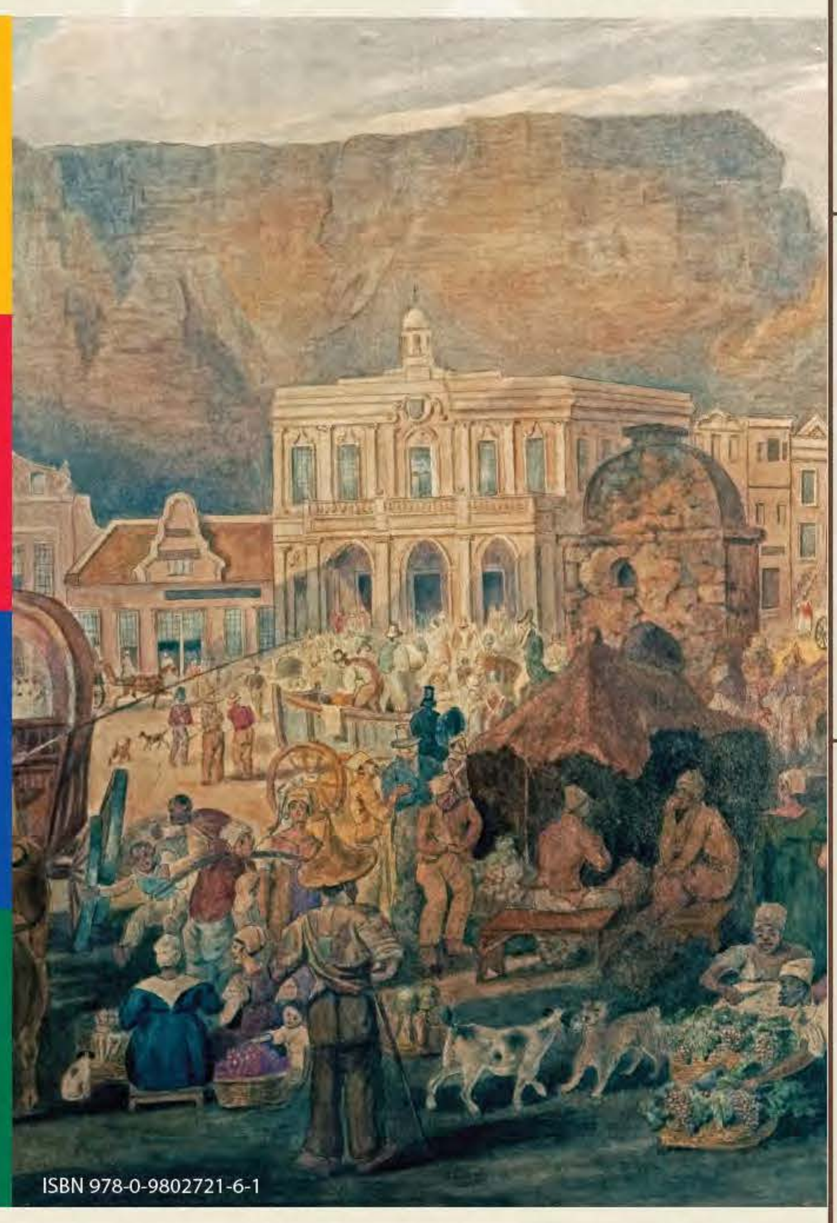
17 Slave Heritage Walks of Cape Town

City of Cape Town Heritage pamphlet no. 17

CITY OF CAPE TOWN | ISIXEKO SASEKAPA | STAD KAAPSTAD

THIS CITY WORKS FOR YOU



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The four walking trails of this guide trace the history of slavery in Cape Town from where the first slaves set foot upon these shores, to where they lived, the sufferings they endured and profound contributions they made to the building of Cape Town and the unique culture of the Western Cape.

ROUTE 1 – East City Circuit

1 Iziko Slave Lodge Museum

There is no better place to begin our slave walk than at the site of the Dutch East India Company's slave lodge which, at the corner of Adderley and Wale Streets, now houses the Iziko Slave Lodge Museum.

The first Dutch East India Company slaves to arrive at the Cape were housed at the Fort of Good Hope. Then in 1663 Commander Zacharias Wagenaer instructed that a slave lodge be built to accommodate them next to the Company's Garden, where many slaves worked. As the number of slaves increased the Company began construction of a more substantial structure next to the existing lodge. The first lodge burnt down in 1679 – the same year the new one was completed. The building today, however, bears little resemblance to that of 1679. The British colonial administration sold all the slaves housed here in 1807, and converted the building into government offices, including a post office and supreme court. City authorities then set the front of the building back to its current position in 1926, to allow for the widening of Adderley Street. Since this time it has served as the Cultural History Museum and from 1998, as the Iziko Slave Lodge Museum. Conditions in the lodge during the late 17th and 18th centuries were squalid. *Mandoors* (local supervisors) managed the slaves on behalf of the Company and could inflict harsh punishments on transgressors. The building had no windows to the street and at times nearly 1000 people, comprising about 600 slaves, as well as *bandieten* (convicts serving time at the Cape) political prisoners and a number of so-called 'lunatics' were confined here.

1798 Slave Lodge by Peter Laponser, Iziko Museum

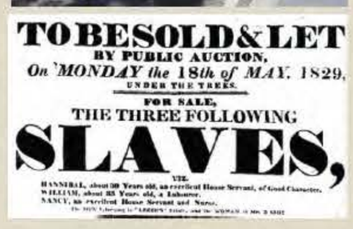
When you leave the Lodge, turn left and left again into Parliament Lane (between the lodge and the Houses of Parliament). Proceed to the end of the Lodge. Turn left into Parliament Street and continue across Spin Street to the Groote Kerk.

2 Groote Kerk

The Groote Kerk of the Dutch Reformed Church overlooks Church Square 4. The above 1830 water colour by H.C. De Meillon, shows the original church built on this site (1700–1704) of which only the clock tower remains today. Churchgoers would *outspan* their wagons and carriages on the square while attending services. This gave the slaves who accompanied them an opportunity to socialise while awaiting their owners. Ever fearful of opportunities such as this where disgruntled slaves might plot unrest, the Company issued a *placaat* or edict, forbidding slaves from gathering near the entrance of a church during services.

3 Slave Auction Tree

A plaque on the island in the centre of Spin Street marks the site of the Slave Tree where slaves were reputedly auctioned off. Thousands of kilometres from home and subject to the brutality and privations of human bondage, one can only imagine the sense of uncertainty and fear experienced by the captives sold on this site. An advertisement from May 1829 reads as follows: *'To be sold and let by public auction on Monday the 18th May, 1829, under the trees. For Sale, the three following slaves, namely, Hannibal, about 30 years old, an excellent house servant, of good character. William, about 35 years old, a labourer. Nancy, an excellent house servant and nurse.'* *Cross the road to Church Square.*



TO BE SOLD & LET
BY PUBLIC AUCTION,
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FOR SALE,
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SLAVES,

4 Church Square and 5 Slave Memorial

The slave memorial unveiled here in 2008 commemorates the contribution slaves made to the building of Cape Town and the 200 year anniversary of the Swartland Slave Revolt which ended at Salt River. Also found on the Square is a statue of former prime minister Jan Hofmeyer, who as a member of the *Taalbond* (language society) worked to have Afrikaans recognised as a distinct language. By the 19th century both slaves and their owners of Dutch descent spoke Afrikaans, the *lingua franca* of the Cape. Slaves contributed significantly to the development of the language. So much so that the first examples of written Afrikaans appeared in Arabic rather than European script. Examples of words with Malay origins in Afrikaans include *baadjie* (jacket), *baie* (a lot), *piering* (saucer), *sjambok* (whip), *blatjang* (chutney), *piesang* (banana), and *pondok* (hut), among others. From Church Square head north along Parliament Street. Two blocks along on the right, is the 13-storey Mutual Heights art-deco building completed in 1939. Just above shop level is a bas-relief sculpted on red 'Parys' granite commemorating the emancipation of slaves in 1834 6 and the rejoicing that accompanied this event. *Cross into the pedestrian mall further along Parliament Street and you will pass the Trafalgar flower sellers.*

7 Trafalgar Flower Sellers

With emancipation, many freed slaves struggled to find employment and turned to street vending which included flower selling. Women from Constantia and Protea Village have sold flowers and herbs on this site for over a century. It was also here that the first ground was broken for the Company's Garden in April 1652. On the opposite side of Parliament Street stood 8 the former Commercial Exchange, which housed the Cape of Good Hope Philanthropic Society for 'aiding deserving slaves and slave children to purchase their freedom'. Established in 1828 by concerned citizens, this society worked towards an end to slavery and a smooth transition from a slave-owning to a free society at the Cape. *Continue to the end of Parliament Street until the Golden Acre shopping centre. As you enter the building descend the flight of steps to Level 2 and continue forward and around the corner to your right, to the site of Wagenaer's Reservoir.*

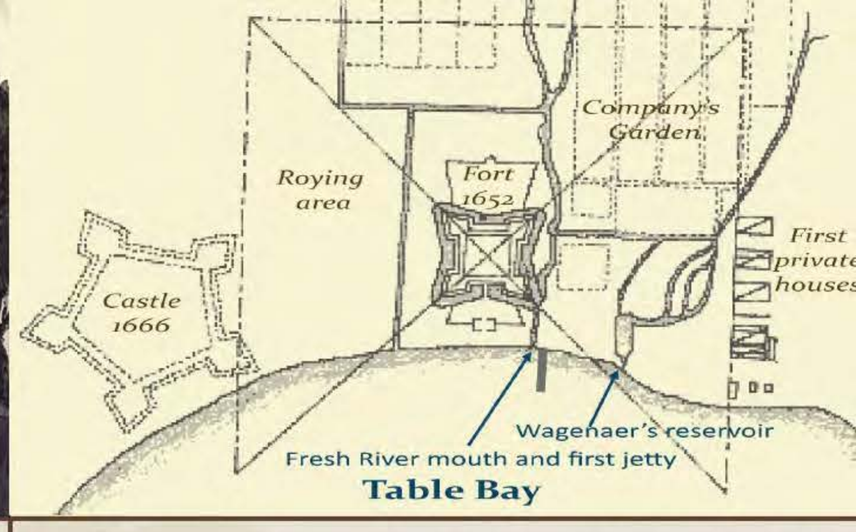
9 Wagenaer's Reservoir

In recognition of the need to provide a growing number of ships calling at the Cape with a dependable supply of fresh, clean water, Commander Zacharias Wagenaer employed 'all the gardeners, soldiers, labourers, boatmen, arquebusiers, clerks and slaves' to assist in the building of this reservoir on the 6th of August, 1663. It was a routine duty of slaves to fetch water for the households and business concerns of their respective owners from sources such as this each day. Archaeologists uncovered the remains of this structure in 1975. *Our walk now continues to the Plein Street exit of the Golden Acre.* Stepping outside, Strand or 'Beach' Street 10 is to your left and as the name suggests, it is here the sea lapped the shore in 1663. The entrance to Cape Town station in Strand Street marks the spot where the Fresh River entered the sea. It is also near here that the earliest jetty was built and the first slaves to arrive at the Cape, came ashore. 11 *Cross Plein Street to the grey cobblestone paving on the northwest (nearest) corner of the Grand Parade.*

Diorama of early settlement

12 Fort of Good Hope

The Dutch East India Company built the first fort at the Cape on this site in 1652. A line of grey cobblestones on this corner of the Parade marks the position of the westernmost or Reijger bastion of this four cornered fortification. When the first large group of slaves arrived in 1658, accommodation was found for them in a room beneath the grain storeroom. 'Groot Catrijn', a friend of Armosijn van der Kaap (see 18) lived here in the 1660s. The first female *bandiet* to be exiled to the Cape, Groot Catrijn washed the clothes of the military commanders. Her husband was Anthonij van Bengal (de Later). They moved to block D, St Georges Street where they lived from 1673 to 1683. Her freeborn son served as a VOC soldier and became *stamvader* or patriarch, of the Snijman family. The Fort of Good Hope was hastily built of earth and wood. It did not stand up well to the rainy Cape winters and soon proved inadequate for the defence



of the settlement. With the possibility of a second war with England looming in 1665, the VOC ordered the construction of a more substantial fortification in January 1666. This became the Castle of Good Hope 14 about 200 metres to the east. Walk to the trees in the middle of the Grand Parade in front of the City Hall.

13 Grand Parade

The Grand Parade evolved out of a 'roying' area of 50 Rhineland roods (approximately 190 metres) that the VOC insisted be kept clear of any obstructions that could provide protection to possible attackers - around first the Fort and later the Castle. After the demolition of the old Fort, the VOC excavated a canal – the Keizergracht (present-day Darling Street) to link the Heerengracht (present-day Adderley Street) to the Castle and thus improve the supply of water to the moat. Slaves levelled the area in between the Castle, the Heerengracht, the Keizergracht and the sea to create the space now called the Grand Parade. In 1761, Governor Ryk Tulbagh initiated further upgrades which proposed surrounding the Parade with oak trees and the addition of a water fountain. Such water collection points proved popular gathering places for slaves affording them a brief time away from the direct supervision of their owners and opportunity to socialise and renew acquaintances. *Carry on across the Parade to the Castle of Good Hope.*

Slaves fetching water, De Meillon c.1830

14 Castle of Good Hope

Commander Wagenaer laid the cornerstone of this pentagonal fort on the 2nd of January, 1666. Slaves laboured with soldiers, sailors and burghers to complete the Castle in 1679. The Castle was not only a fortification but the seat of government and residence for the Governor and *Secund* (Assistant Governor). It was also where the Court of Justice met to hear cases. Accused and convicted slaves and criminals were confined in the dungeon known as the *Donkergat* (Dark hole). The fate of the convicted was read out from the Kat balcony. The torture and execution of those condemned was then performed in public view on the Leerdam bastion. You can explore this renowned landmark which is recognised to be the best-preserved example of a VOC-period fortification in the world. Allow about two hours for the visit. *Leaving the Castle gate, turn left and follow the outer wall around the Leerdam bastion to the parking area and then on to the moat bridge near Darling Street.* In later years water to fill the moat came from the Capel *sluit* (stream or channel) which ran down from Platteklip Gorge on Table Mountain along the line of today's Harrington/Canterbury Streets. A path developed along this water course up to where the slave washerwomen did their washing at the *platteklip* (flat rock) and which is still known as the Slave Route – see 48.

Castle entrance

Kat balcony

The Leerdam bastion and footpath

Across Darling Street on the corner of Buitenkant Street (a new church stands here today) is the *Justitie Plaats* or 'Place of Justice' 15. As the population of the early settlement grew, this became the place of torture and execution in preference to the Castle. Here the public could more easily gather and witness the spectacle of executions and thereby (it was hoped by the authorities) achieve the desired effect of deterring crime on the part of wrongdoers and resistance on the part of slaves. (see 'Crime and punishment' overleaf). *From the moat bridge, turn right into Darling Street. Cross Darling Street at the Buitenkant intersection lights. Walk up Buitenkant Street, past the Old Granary 16 to the District Six Museum on the corner of Albertus Street.*

The Old Granary is a rare surviving example of a building worked on by slaves. It was built in 1814 as a domestic residence but soon became the first Customs House outside the Castle. As early as 1817 it was converted to serve as a granary and in 1824 to accommodate the Caledon Square Police Court. In each case slave labourers and artisans were employed.

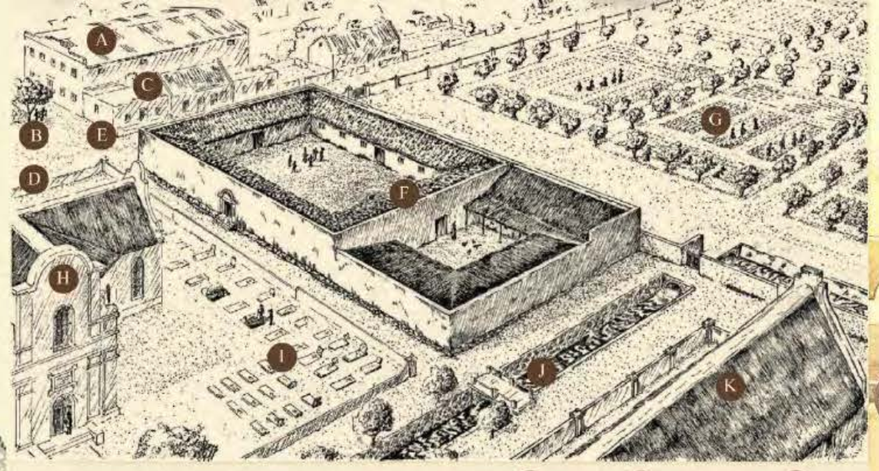
17 District Six Museum

Following the emancipation of slaves in 1838 speculative building and mass housing got underway in District Six as ex-slaves, immigrants, free-blacks and later black migrant workers came to settle on this edge of town. For the workers who settled here, the legacy of slavery lived on with the passing of the Masters and Servants Ordinance in 1838. This ordinance made desertion, neglect, insubordination and even the use of 'abusive or insulting language' to employers a criminal offence for workers. This legislation was only repealed in 1974, when Apartheid controls were in place and District Six was poised for destruction. The mind-set such legislation reflects only really came to an end with the establishment of a truly democratic South Africa, in 1994. The District Six Museum preserves the memories of many slave descendants who were forcibly removed from this area in the 1960s under the Group Areas Act. *Turn right into Albertus Street for one block and then take a quick right and left into Mostert Street . After crossing Plein Street, Mostert becomes Spin Street which in turn, becomes Bureau Street.*

18 Slave Lodge Matron's House, Silk Factory on Spin Street

Near the Slave Lodge and Gardens was the house of a remarkable woman, Armosijn Claasz van der Kaap – a Company slave who won her freedom and became the *stammoeder* or matriarch of some eminent Cape families. Armosijn means 'fine silk' – an unusual and beautiful name presumably 'given' by an owner. Her surname 'van der Kaap' shows that she was born at the Cape. She was matron to the children in the slave lodge and lived there until the age of 38. We know from the baptismal register that she had four children of her own. Her grandchildren married free burghers and came to own valuable farms (Raapenburg, Liesbeeck and Koornhoop). Spin Street derives its name from a silk factory 19 built here in 1727 in an attempt to establish a silk industry, using slave labour. Slave children from the lodge unravelled the silk worm cocoons. The path they trod between the factory and the front door of the lodge became Spin Street. The Parliament Street entrance was in fact the original front door of the Slave Lodge 1. *From Spin Street our walk continues straight on into Bureau and short left at Adderley - to the Slave Lodge Museum where Route 1 ends.*

END OF ROUTE 1



Artist's impression of the slave lodge precinct during the 17th century. A *Silk Factory,* B *Slave Auction Tree,* C *Lodge Matron's House,* D *Church Square,* E *Spin Street,* F *Slave Lodge,* G *Company's Garden,* H *Groote Kerk* I *Grave Yard,* J *Heerengracht and* K *Company's Hospital* courtesy Iziko Museum

Greenmarket Square, c.1830, by De Meillon

Riebeeck Square and St Stephens Church, c.1830, by De Meillon

ROUTE 2 – West City Circuit

20 Original Groote Kerk Steeple

Start from the Iziko Slave Lodge Museum 1. *As you leave the Lodge turn right into Adderley Street. Cross the intersection at Bureau Street and left to the opposite side of Adderley Street – walk down and turn first left into Church Street. Note the Groote Kerk* 2 *behind you.*

The thatch-roofed Groote Kerk (consecrated on the 6th of January, 1704) was reconstructed as seen today between 1836-41. From the Adderley/Church Street intersection the original 1704 steeple is visible to the left of the newer façade. Slaves were for the most part denied baptism into the Dutch Reformed Church since, by law, official conversion implied manumission. *Continue up Church (Kerk) Street which crosses over the site of the former VOC–period hospital.*

21 VOC Hospital

Completed in 1699, this cruciform-shaped structure covered nearly two city blocks. It was built, maintained and staffed by slaves and could accommodate a thousand patients. Smallpox was a particular scourge and an epidemic in 1713 killed over 200 of the Company's slaves and an estimated 90% of the indigenous Khoekhoen. Leprosy, attributed to the slave trade from the East, first appeared at the Cape in 1756. Wills of the deceased at this time provide valuable insights into the character of 18th century Cape society as well as the private lives of individual Capetonians, both slave and free. One ex-slave, Carel Jans van Bengal, who lived in a four-roomed house above St George's Street came to own three slaves himself. *Turn right into St George's Mall, to the corner of Longmarket (Langmark) Street.* In 1791, the tailor and slave-owner, Adam Siedel, lived at the corner of Longmarket and St George's Streets. 22 In all, 16 slaves worked in his household and for his tailoring business. Many held skilled positions. We know from Siedel's will that one of the 16 slaves had epilepsy. Siedel lived with the *vrye vrouwspersoon* (free married person) Margaretha Catharina and their 13-year old son but his estate in the end was divided between a further six children and another free black woman, Regina Margaretha Lourens, whose offspring were baptised with his name. The family sold draper's merchandise from their front room. Siedel also rented out properties in Leeuwen and Keerom Streets 39. *Turn left into Longmarket Street. One block away is Greenmarket Square. The Old Town House is on your left.*

23 Greenmarket Square and Old Town House

A thatch-roofed 'Burgher Watch House' was built here in 1696. Then in 1710, the Burgher Council decided to add adjoining land to this site and thus the future Greenmarket Square was established as Cape Town's second oldest public open space after the Grand Parade. Gradually the original Watch House fell into disrepair and was replaced with the flat-roofed Town House 24 in 1756. It remains one of Cape Town's most cherished Cape-style buildings showcasing the work of skilled slave artisans who are credited with producing the plaster relief mouldings. The square was a busy central meeting place for farmers and wagon-drivers from the countryside, hawkers, fishermen, travellers, slaves and slave-holders, free blacks, Khoekhoen, Company officials, soldiers and sailors. Slaves were sent to collect water at the public water pump which stood in the middle of the square. Proclamations and edicts were announced from the balcony of the Town House – such as the Slave Code of 1756. The Slave Code gives an idea of the constraints placed upon the lives of slaves:

De Meillon c.1830

Slaves must go barefoot and must carry passes.
Any slave who stops in the street to talk to other slaves may be beaten.
No meeting in bars, no buying of alcohol, no groups on public holidays.
No gathering near church doors during a church service.
Any slave out after dark must carry a lantern.
Curfew: all slaves must be indoors by 10 at night.
No singing or whistling or any noise at night.
No guns.
Any slave who insults a free man or makes a false accusation against him must be flogged and chained.
Any slave who dares to strike a slave-holder must be put to death without mercy.

Walk diagonally across the Square and go left one block along Shortmarket Street (Kortmark) to Long Street.

25 Long Street

Long Street became an underworld of slave leisure activities with access to gambling, cock fighting, *dagga* (cannabis), alcohol and opium. Gambling was illegal and when a slave named Catrijn van Bengalen lost 80 rix-dollars in a card game to two young officials – the court ordered them to pay the money back. Catrijn does not appear to have been charged. A free black, Angela van Bengalen and her three children were manumitted by a Company official. In turn she married the free burgher Arnoldus Basson and between 1680 and 1720 built up a wealthy estate including a farm and a property at the corner of Long and Castle Streets. *At the corner of Shortmarket and Long Street, cross to the opposite (north) side of Long and turn right. Walk two blocks to the South African Slave Church on your left.*

26 South African Slave Church Museum

This is the oldest existing mission building in South Africa and the third oldest church of any denomination preserved in its original form. This South African Sendinggestig building was dedicated in 1804 by Reverend J.P. Surrurier for the South African Missionary Society or Society for the Advancement of Christ's Kingdom. The work of the Society was focused on providing religious instruction and, in particular, classes in spelling and reading for slaves. *Continue along Long Street to the corner of Long and Strand and turn right where you will find the Koopmans-de Wet House.*

27 Koopmans-de Wet House

Koopmans-de Wet House is the oldest house-museum in South Africa and as such, a well-preserved example of a Cape house of the 1770s. Inside you are able to see the slave quarters above the stables. A household slave is said to have painted the mural of a ship on the wall here and is reported to have escaped as a stowaway. The coming and going of ships in the harbour (where the railway station is today) could be easily seen from this house. The museum gives clues to the everyday life of both slave owners and slaves living in a common household during this period. Cape architecture was very much influenced by slavery. An edict in 1686, for example, forbade low eaves which could easily be set alight by 'malicious slaves or Hottentots'. In 1688 a free black, Sante van Sante Jago (Cape Verde) led the first slave revolt in which it was the intention 'to burn one house after the other to ashes'. Following the 'great fire' of 1798 – also believed to be the work of slaves – a decree was passed in 1804 prohibiting thatch roofs in Cape Town. It was also decided that only inside shutters be allowed as fire was seen to easily jump from house to house via outside, wooden shutters. Water channels were also a feature in front of many homes, not only to provide water for domestic needs but in the event of fire. The provision of an external light or *bolig* was also made mandatory for homeowners to provide a measure of street lighting to discourage criminal activity. *Leave Koopmans-de Wet house and turn left up Strand Street. Two and a half blocks on is the Evangelical Lutheran Church Complex on the right.*

28 Evangelical Lutheran Church

This building first served as a warehouse donated to the Lutheran Church by the wealthy burgher, Martin Melck, in 1774. After five years of petitioning it became the first Lutheran Church in 1780. In fact, it was the first church of any denomination other than Dutch Reformed allowed to practise at the Cape. When it opened its doors, slaves found themselves as welcome as any free person and many baptisms and marriages took place. Five years later Anton Anreith was commissioned to convert the basic structure into a proper church and produced the exquisite carvings and pulpit that can be viewed inside. Martin Melck himself kept no less than 204 slaves on 11 different properties he owned and farmed. He is said to have begun the practice of naming his slaves after months of the year. To the right of the Lutheran Church is Martin Melck House 29, built as the parsonage for the church in 1781 with Louis Thibault as architect. It has the only surviving *dakkamer* or 'roof room' in Cape Town. Household slaves are said to have lodged in the cellar (now a restaurant) and in a room next to the kitchen. It now houses the South Africa Gold Museum displaying gold African jewellery and art. It also has an African time-line paralleling Africa's history with the more common Eurocentric history of the world. Following Martin Melck House on the right is the 18th century Company store/barracks 30 and finally, completing this complex to the left of the church, is the 1787 Sexton's House 31 (currently occupied by the Dutch Embassy and Consulate). *Our walk now proceeds to the left up Buitengracht or 'outermost water channel or canal' Street for three blocks, to a collection of historical buildings dating to 1771 when Buitengracht Street was the boundary of town. Many relics of slavery can be seen in the design and construction of these building such as slave quarters and elements of slave craftsmanship.*

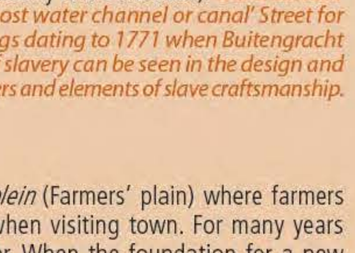
32 Riebeeck Square

Originally Riebeeck Square was the *Boerenplein* (Farmers' plain) where farmers could outspan their wagons and livestock when visiting town. For many years it was without a convenient supply of water. When the foundation for a new theatre was being excavated in the late 1700s a spring was discovered. To meet the needs of visiting farmers and surrounding residents it was decided (after a degree of political wrangling) to shift the intended location of the theatre and establish a well here. *Proceed to the middle of this square and St Stephen's Church.*

33 St Stephen's Church

St Stephen's Church was built originally as a theatre during the First British Occupation of the Cape. It opened on the 17th of November, 1800. With the final emancipation of the slaves on the 1st of December, 1838, an interdenominational church service was held in nearby St Andrew's Church to commemorate this event. The next year the theatre was purchased with the intention of turning it into a church for ex-slaves and also a school for 'coloured' children. Legend has it that persons opposed to the establishment of a church for ex-slaves stoned the church when it first opened and hence it was named after the saint who suffered the same fate. *Carry on up Buitengracht Street for one block and turn right into Wale Street for one block to the Bo-Kaap Museum.*

34 Bo-Kaap



Plots began to be parcelled out on the slopes of Signal Hill from the 1780s and from as early as 1800 free blacks lived in the Bo-Kaap. As many as one quarter of the people brought as slaves to the Cape came from the East Indies – bringing with them the Islamic faith. After 1681 the Cape also became a place of banishment for a number of high-ranking political and religious leaders from the Indonesian archipelago. Also included were so-called *bandieten*, whose only crime in many instances was resisting VOC oppression in their homelands. The Bo-Kaap Museum 35 with its wavy parapet, provides insights into this area and the contribution this community has made to the unique character of Cape Town. *Walk from the Bo-Kaap Museum down Wale Street, cross to the opposite side of Buitengracht and turn right. Walk to the corner with Dorp Street. (Look up Dorp Street).*

36 Mosques on the edge of Old Town

The earliest 'mosque' in the Bo-Kaap was not tied to a particular building. Initially the faithful gathered for worship around an Imam in an open space in upper Chiappini Street. Then in 1794, just as the rule of the VOC was coming to an end, the oldest mosque in South Africa – the Auwal Masjid Mosque (Dorp Street Mosque) – was built. Its location here on the outskirts of Cape Town is evidence of the marginalisation of Islam at this time. *Now walk down Dorp Street to the corner with Long Street. Turn right into Long (at the 1884 Noor el Hamedia Mosque)* 37 *and continue up Long to the Palm Tree Mosque.*

38 Palm Tree Mosque

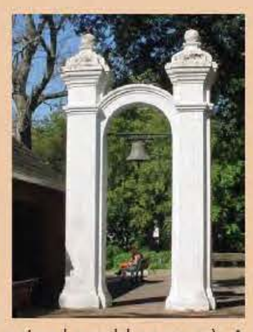
This mosque is of particular interest in that it was founded by a slave, Jan Bougies, whose freedom was purchased by Salie of Macassar – whom he married. Prior to this Salie had not only acquired her own freedom but had become a relatively wealthy woman as well. Throughout his life Jan Bourgies not only proclaimed the Islamic faith but used his wealth to buy slaves, convert them and set them free. He and Salie established this mosque on the ground floor of their house here in 1807.

Two blocks past the Palm Tree Mosque turn left into Green Street, passing Keerom Street.

39 Keerom ('turn back') Street

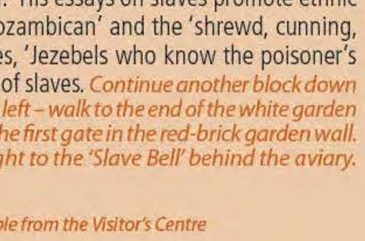
A single-storey house at the dead-end of Keerom Street is believed to have been owned by a free black. The 1700s façade is an example of slave period domestic architecture when thatch roofs were still allowed. In the 1820s, Samuel Hudson lived in Keerom Street. He was an 'upper-class gentleman' who came to the Cape in the 1790s and swore never to own a slave but in time bought one as an 'act of charity'. Soon he owned about 20 slaves, mainly Mozambican farm labourers. He said 'I treat them as my children and they return it with gratitude and affection.' His essays on slaves promote ethnic stereotypes: 'the mild, patient and faithful Mozambican' and the 'shrewd, cunning, treacherous Malay', and wicked women slaves, 'Jezebels who know the poisoner's art'. Hudson came to oppose the emancipation of slaves. *Continue another block down Green Street, cross Queen Victoria Street and turn left – walk to the end of the white garden wall and enter the Company's Garden through the first gate in the red-brick garden wall. Walk straight ahead to the sundial and turn right to the 'Slave Bell' behind the aviary.*

40 The Company's Garden *Brochure available from the Visitor's Centre*



To supply fresh produce for its scurvy-ridden crews was a primary reason the VOC established a half-way station at the Cape. Many slaves worked in this garden which by 1658 had been extended this far up the valley from the Fort. As many as fifty slave men and women worked here under VOC rule producing fruit, vegetables, herbs, the Cape's first wine and even rosewater (which gained world renown). A pear tree believed to be over 300 years old survives here (near the Sundial). On the opposite side of the aviary is a mulberry tree which dates to the time when slave children worked in the silk factory 19 on Spin Street. The slave bell in the Company's Garden is a replica of the one at the farm Elsenburg. Many farms had a slave bell to call slaves to work and regulate their lives. The bell itself was originally Cape Town's fire bell which, for many years hung in the back yard of Old Town House on Greenmarket Square. *Walk back to the Sundial, turn right to the gate in front of Tuynhuis, then left down Government Avenue.*

41 Governor's Pleasure House – Tuynhuis (Garden House)



The pre-1693 'Garden House' built on this site was extended in 1701 to become the Governor's Pleasure House and serve as accommodation for foreign VIPs to the Cape. Slaves were not only gardeners but also artisans and this grand house displays both their labour and craftsmanship. The water channels which diverted water from the Fresh River along the garden paths (avenues) would have been built by slaves as well as the small 'dam' in front of the Tuynhuis gates. Today the President resides here when in Cape Town.

Our walk continues down Government Avenue and concludes at the entrance to the Garden.

42 Emancipation celebrations

The emancipation movement was not just a moral outcome of the struggle between slaves and their owners. The industrial revolution in Britain and the need for cheap, expendable labour (that require no capital outlay) was an underpinning force. On December 1st, 1838, emancipation was celebrated across the Colony but nowhere more than here in the heart of Cape Town. Church bells rang and services of thanksgiving were held with street parades, marching bands, singing and dancing. Such scenes are still replayed each New Year when the Cape Minstrel Carnival passes the Slave Lodge.

END OF ROUTE 2

Entrance to the Company's Garden from Government Avenue, by De Meillon

St Andrews Church, by De Meillon

ROUTE 3 - Link to Table Mountain

This slave walk to the Platteklip stream washhouses and then on to Table Mountain is a substantial uphill hike – take water and refreshments, do not walk alone, arrange for transport back to town from the lower cableway station. START at the Slave Lodge – turn left as you exit the lodge and then up Government Avenue through to the top end of the Company's Garden.

43 Government Avenue

By the 1670s this 'garden path', originally planted with citrus trees, was used by slaves carrying produce down from the market gardens of upper Table Valley and washerwomen going up to work along mountain streams. Government Avenue was also a 'promenade' where the wealthier classes went to 'see and be seen'. 'Bold' free black women also took to promenading freely along the Avenue to the point that in 1756 and 1790 *placaats* (ordinances) were issued forbidding free black women 'to be as well dressed as respectable burgher's wives', and 'they must carry passes'. The Avenue was also an escape route from town and then along waterways to Table Mountain. After 1806 unsold slaves – the old and infirm – were retired to a building on the site of the old VOC-period menagerie (behind the Lioness Gateway) to live out what remained of their lives in the company of several lions and even a tiger, until the menagerie was closed in 1838. *At the top of Government Avenue cross over Orange Street at the pedestrian crossing and turn left in front of the Mount Nelson and right into Hof Street. Two blocks up, cut diagonally left (and up) across the park and you will pass the historic Hof Street Reservoirs* 44 *built in the early 1800s to meet the growing water needs of Cape Town. Above the reservoirs cross Camp Street and walk diagonally left and uphill across De Waal Park. Exit the park at the top-left (southeast) gate into Upper Orange Street. If you have time, a quick diversion from the corner of Upper Orange and Prince Streets – one block down Prince Street – is the Hurling 'Swaai' Pump.*

45 The Hurling 'Swaai' Pump

Fetching water from one of a number of fountains such as this was the duty of household slaves. This 1812 fountain is the last remaining *swaai* or 'swinging' pump and was designed by Louis Thibault and sculpted by Anton Anreith. *Continue up Upper Orange Street towards Table Mountain – a further two blocks to the site of the Oranjezicht farmstead (on the left).*

46 Oranjezicht Farmstead and Slave Bell

The small park on this site retains this 18th century farmstead's barn, the slave bell tower, a vault over the *Stadsfontein* or 'City's Fountain' and some walling. The slave bell is a remaining link to rural slavery. The Van Breda family owned this farm for over 200 years. It is said that when ships came into the bay, the slave bell was rung for slaves to come running, fetch baskets of fresh fruit from the farm and then head down and sell to the new arrivals. The bell is symbolic of control over slaves' lives – the hours they worked, child labour, the *dop* system of being 'rewarded' with alcohol, punishment for ignoring the bell, lateness or sleeping on the job. In the paddock at the bottom of the yard is the Stadsfontein which was one of the main sources of water for early Cape Town and from which water can still be heard gushing out of the ground. The original Oranjezicht farmhouse was demolished in the early 1950s. *Walk further up Upper Orange and turn left into Sidmouth Avenue. Walk for two blocks to the lower end of Van Riebeeck Park at Gorge Road. Just to your left is St Cyprian's school with the kramat (tomb) of Abdul Malik near the top end of Gorge Road.*

47 Abdul Malik Kramat and St Cyprians

This green and white mausoleum is one of a crescent of kramats around the Cape, known as the Sacred Circle of Islam. It is the tomb of Tuan Sayed Abdul Malik of Batavia. He arrived at the Cape near the end of the 18th century as a slave, won his freedom, became a businessman and owned three slaves, all Muslims. In 2001, when the St Cyprian's preschool was proposed, archaeologists uncovered a 'vault' on the property, possibly a burial tomb associated with the farmstead. The City, St Cyprian's and the Muslim Judicial Council agreed to establish a Slave Heritage Walk and a wall of memory commemorating the story of the slave washerwomen. *Walk uphill into Van Riebeeck Park following the footpath to the washhouses.*

48 Platteklip Washhouses

De Meillon c.1830

Slave washerwomen were low in status compared with house servants but ironically had more freedom working out of sight of their mistresses. They would carry their heavy bundles of laundry from the town up to the streams to wash, laying the clothes on the many boulders to dry. The washhouses here were built by the City of Cape Town and opened to the public in 1888 – many years after emancipation – for use by free women who still plied this trade. *The hike from here continues up a boardwalk and then a management track which turning to the right will take you up to Tafelberg Road. Then turn right and continue along Tafelberg Road to the lower aerial cableway station where there are refreshments and toilets and Route 3 ends. Taxis can be called here for the return trip to the central city. Alternatively one can walk from the washhouses back down Gorge Road and then Buitenkant Street, to the Castle.*

49 Table Mountain – Hoerikwaggo

Hoerikwaggo is the Khoekhoen name for Table Mountain meaning the 'Mountain of the Sea'. From the Platteklip washhouses, the hike follows in the footsteps of *drosters* (runaway slaves) who, via Platteklip Gorge, ascended to the heights of Hoerikwaggo and in the case of a fortunate few, found freedom.

END OF ROUTE 3

ROUTE - 4 Link to the Waterfront

START at the Evangelical Lutheran Church 28. *Walk up to Buitengracht Street and turn right and down one block to the pedestrian bridge. Cross over to the small park on the corner of Buitengracht and Riebeeck Streets where you can see St Andrews Presbyterian Church before you.*

50 St Andrews Presbyterian Church

Founded in 1828, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church openly welcomed slaves as congregantes. It was here that the Presbyterians and the neighbouring Lutherans held the first service for freed slaves on December 1st, 1838. Opposite the church was the Dutch Reformed Church cemetery.

51 Historic Burial Grounds and Prestwich Memorial Visitor Centre

During the rule of the VOC the only official burial grounds in Cape Town were those of the Dutch Reformed Church. Following the First British Occupation of the Cape, the Batavian Republic (1804–1806) brought a brief return to Dutch rule and with it many enlightened ideals sweeping Europe at that time. This included greater religious tolerance and in 1805, Frans van Bengal, a *Mohammedaansche Veldpriester* and freed slave, was granted a piece of land for a Muslim burial ground. This became the Tana Baru cemetery 57 on Signal Hill near where the growing Muslim community had been unofficially burying their deceased for years. With the Second British Occupation of the Cape in 1806, burial grounds for Christian denominations other than the Dutch Reformed Church began to be established in the Green Point area. This also included a burial ground for slaves and non-Christians – the 'Heathen Burial Ground' at the bottom of Ebenezer Road – established by the South African Missionary Society in 1818. In spite of this, informal burials – particularly of slaves and paupers – continued. In 1995, the remains of over 120 individuals were excavated by archaeologists from along Cobern Street, one with a broken manacle (iron leg ring and chain links). More recently, over 3000 informal burials were discovered outside the areas of the known formal burial grounds in the course of construction works in the Green Point and V&A Waterfront area. Close to 1800 of these were exhumed from one site 56 at the corner of Prestwich and Napier Streets. It is speculated that many informal burials in the surrounding area are those of slaves, ex-slaves, Khoekhoen workers, sailors and paupers who, dying without means, were hastily and often secretly buried. The City and heritage authorities along with community groups, have developed an ossuary, visitor centre and memorial park near St Andrew's Church on the site of the former Dutch Reformed Church cemetery 51 to house these remains and reveal the story of these marginalised people and their respective communities. *At the west end of this park our route turns right across Somerset Road and down Chiappini Street for one block. On your right is a remaining part of the 'blue stone' wall which surrounded the historic Dutch Reformed Church cemetery* 52 *while on the left were the cemeteries for the Roman Catholic and Scottish Church (St Andrew's Presbyterian)* 53. *Turn left into Prestwich Street and on your right is the site of the Old Somerset Hospital.*

54 Old Somerset Hospital

This site was granted by the Burgher Senate in 1817 for the purpose of erecting a hospital to serve the medical needs of a growing number of discharged merchant seamen and other impoverished people and slaves. The hospital operated from 1818 until 1937, when it was demolished.

Stop at the corner of Napier and Prestwich Streets. The Lutheran cemetery 55 *was on the right where the primary school is now. Opposite, on the left, is the slave and pauper burial ground uncovered in 2004* 56. *Continue straight along Prestwich Street to Ebenezer Road and turn right. Ebenezer Road was named after the Ebenezer Church cemetery* 58 *located here. On the left was Gallows Hill* 59 *which replaced the Justitie Plaats as the place of execution during the First British Occupation of the Cape. Also of interest along Port Road are the remains of the Amsterdam Battery* 60 *which can be glimpsed but is not publicly accessible.*

With a new war between England and the Netherlands in 1781, the original Heer Hendricks Kinderen redoubt on this site was further developed into a major fortification and named the Amsterdam Battery. Coupled with the Chavonnes Battery 61 to the north and Imhoff Battery in front of the Castle, the Amsterdam Battery with its cannons and mortars completed the fortifications of Table Bay. When the British arrived to take control of the Cape in 1806 they wisely chose not to face the guns of Table Bay. Rather they landed to the north at unprotected Blaauwberg beach and marched overland to approach Cape Town and these formidable defences from behind. *Continue under the flyover to the traffic circle. Cross the road and turn right into Dock Road, cross the canal bridge and turn immediately left onto the canal-side footpath. Cross the Bascule Bridge straight ahead and pass the Robinson Dry Dock (with the Alfred Basin on your right). Walk clockwise around the Alfred Basin, cross the swivel bridge to the Victorian clock tower and Nelson Mandela Gateway and turn right to the Chavonnes Battery.*

61 Chavonnes Battery

This battery was built with the labour of slaves, under the direction of Governor Maurice Pasques de Chavonnes between 1715 and 1726 to augment the firepower provided by the Castle over the Table Bay anchorage. In later years it served as a gaol for slaves and prisoners condemned to hard labour and convalescent wing for the old Somerset Hospital. It was demolished to make way for the development of the Cape Town harbour in 1861. Excavations for the adjacent BOE offices in 1999, revealed the remains of this fortification around which a museum has been developed detailing the history of this battery and early Cape Town.

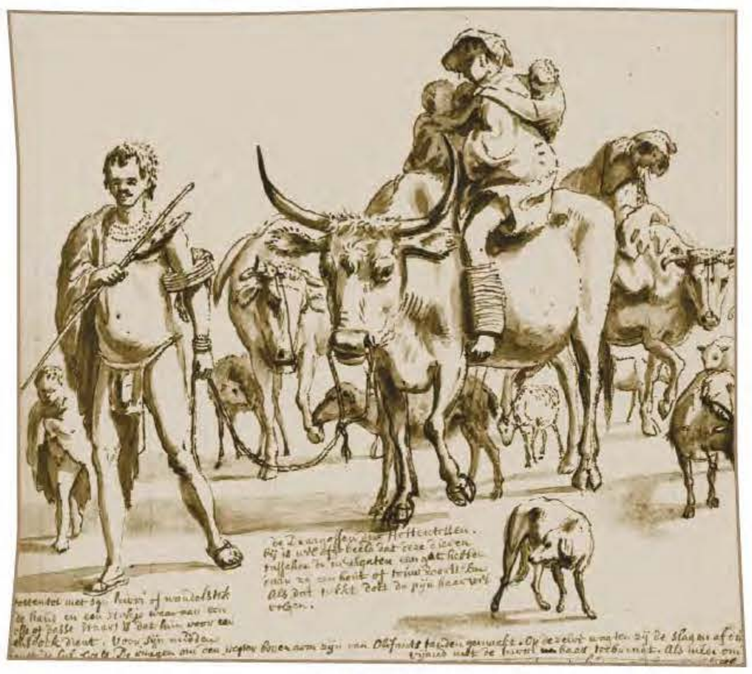
END OF ROUTE 4

SLAVERY AT THE CAPE

While few first-hand accounts of the lives of slaves have been handed down to us, significant elements of their varied cultures, along with physical evidence of their labour, ordeals and achievements are to be found infused into the culture and historical fabric of Cape Town and its environs. Indeed, when South Africa is referred to with pride today as the 'rainbow nation' it is good to remember that many of the people of the rainbow nation are descendents of slaves and thus share a common inheritance of displacement, bondage and exploitation. Slavery at the Cape was atypical. Generally slave-owning countries in the 18th and 19th centuries imported captives from East and West Africa. Here at the Cape, however, the more than 63,000 people brought to these shores in bondage between 1653 and 1806 came not only from Africa but also from as far afield as Madagascar, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia and China. This resulted in the Cape having the most culturally and ethnically diverse slave population in the modern history of slavery. Slavery at the Cape of Good Hope, therefore, has had not only a profound influence on the evolution of South African society but forms an important thread in the comparative history of slavery worldwide.

The earliest people at the Cape

The area around Cape Town was inhabited by hunter-gatherers for many thousands of years. Then around 2000 years ago these people were joined by pastoralists, known as the Khoekhoen who migrated here seeking assured sources of water and grazing for their large herds of cattle and sheep. To early callers at the Cape these herders were known collectively as the 'Saldanhars' because it was believed they originated from the area of Saldanha Bay to the north. In fact, they represented a number of distinct clans – the Gorachouqua, the Goringhaiqua and the Goringhaicona. To the Khoekhoen this was *Camissa* – the place of sweet water – in reference to the perennial sources of water which flow from the mountains of the Peninsula.



Khoekhoen family and livestock by unknown 17th century artist (National Library of South Africa: Cape Town)

How slavery developed at the Cape of Good Hope

To ward off the dangers malnutrition posed to the health of crews and thus ships and cargos on the long sea voyage between Europe and the trading centres of the East – the Dutch East India Company (*Vereenigde Oost-indische Compagnie)* or VOC, decided to establish a refreshment station at the Cape of Good Hope in 1651. The first Commander, Jan van Riebeeck and his small party of VOC employees arrived at Table Bay on the 6th of April, 1652. In this venture the VOC chose initially to employ contracted wage labourers from Europe rather than slaves as slaves represented a capital cost that the directors were not prepared to incur while the future of the settlement was still uncertain. As this undertaking proved to be far more difficult than first anticipated, the commander repeatedly petitioned the directors for slaves to do the 'dirtiest and heaviest work'. Van Riebeeck even suggested enslaving the local Khoekhoen. The directors, however, insisted that every effort be made to maintain friendly relations and encourage trade – particularly in livestock – on which the success of the settlement so much depended. Whether sanctioned by the VOC or not, slaves began to arrive at the Cape either discovered as stowaways, imported as personal slaves or presented as gifts by the captains of passing ships. The first of these was a young man called Abraham who arrived as a stowaway from Batavia (present day Jakarta, Indonesia) in 1653. Next came Maria van Bengalen, who Van Riebeeck arranged to have sent out from Batavia to work as a personal servant for his family.

Then in May 1654, Van Riebeeck received permission from the VOC authorities to dispatch a small vessel, the *Roode Vos*, to Madagascar for rice and other desperately needed foodstuffs and see whether or not any slaves might be acquired there. While this first attempt proved a failure, a second was made in July of the same year when the galliot, *Tulp*, sailed to Madagascar under the command of Frederick Verburgh. Here Verburgh was able to acquire three individuals – a woman named Eva and two children, one of them her own. A slave from Madagascar called Anthony also appears in the records around this time. Then came a small family consisting of Domingo and Angela from Bengal and their three children. Two Arab girls aged 10 and 12 (who came to be known as Cornelia and Lijsbeth) also arrived – presented as personal slaves to Maria van Riebeeck by the French Admiral De La Roche St Andre when he visited the Cape in March 1657. They were later claimed by the VOC and became Company slaves.

The first free burghers

The Cape settlement was not an immediate success, particularly with attempts to establish a grain supply. Van Riebeeck proposed to address agricultural and stock shortages by encouraging individuals to leave the Company's employ, accept grants of land along the valley of the Liesbeek river and take up farming. As a further incentive, the VOC also took action to provide slave labour for both the Company and these first 'free burghers'.

The origin of Cape slaves

The year 1658 saw the arrival of slaves in increasing numbers and the beginnings of an extended system of slave ownership at the Cape. In March the *Amersfoort* arrived from the Netherlands having captured a Portuguese slaver off the coast of Angola, bound for Brazil. Of the 500 slaves aboard, the Dutch took off 250 of the most 'promising individuals'. Only 174 survived this ordeal to reach the Cape and from where the greater number were sent on to Batavia. Some 75, mostly children, remained here. Of these, 43 were set to work in the fields and gardens or were assigned to various Company officials. Van Riebeeck in his journal entry of March 28th, 1658, bemoaned the fact that, 'the majority of the slaves are young boys and girls who will be of little use for the next four of five years'.

Slave at the Cape working as his master looks on (Iziko Slave Lodge Museum)

A few weeks later, on the 6th of May, the *Hasselt* arrived from Guinea in West Africa with 228 slaves surviving out of an original number of 271. Van Riebeeck would later describe them as 'very good-looking, strong and cheerful people'. From this group 80 were sent on to Batavia while the rest were sold to individuals at the Cape. In fact, this had been a secret poaching operation ordered by the VOC into the exclusive trading area of its sister company, the Dutch West India Company, which jealously guarded its trading interests. It also explains why, apart from isolated cases, slaves that arrived at the Cape after this time came from areas east of the Cape of Good Hope and generally in one of three ways.

1. Company-sponsored slave expeditions

The general policy of the VOC was to not purchase slaves from middlemen. Instead the Company preferred to arrange its own slaving expeditions and then profit from the sell of any captives in excess of its needs. Between Van Riebeeck's first exploratory mission in 1654 and the last in 1786, no less than 39 slaving expeditions were sent out from the Cape. The majority of these went to Madagascar. An example is the *Leidsman*, which was dispatched to Madagascar after 200 Company slaves succumbed to the smallpox epidemic of 1713. This expedition was regarded as particularly successful in that a greater proportion of men over women (136 to 43) was obtained.

Arrival of the slaver Leidsman, St Augustine Bay, Madagascar, 1715. From the original journal. (Cape Archives)

In 1724, the Dutch even attempted to establish a slaving outpost, Fort Lydsaamheit, at present-day Maputo. This resulted in such a high loss of life among Company employees deployed there and supplied such a disappointingly low number of slaves (280), that it was abandoned less than ten years later. After this, slaving missions resumed to the west coast of Madagascar, particularly the northwest port of Mazalagem Nova at Boina Bay and also slave ports along the east African coast from Mozambique to Zanzibar during the final years of Company-sponsored voyages (1776-86).

2. VOC fleets returning to Europe

Slaves also came to the Cape aboard VOC ships returning to Europe. From many far-flung outposts of the VOC these ships would gather each year at Batavia and Galle in Ceylon. From these gathering points they would then sail in the safety of convoy to the Cape. Returning aboard were Company officials and ships' officers who often took slaves to serve them on the voyage. Mindful that slavery was not allowed in Holland these owners expected to sell their slaves at the Cape where it was known they could command a high price.

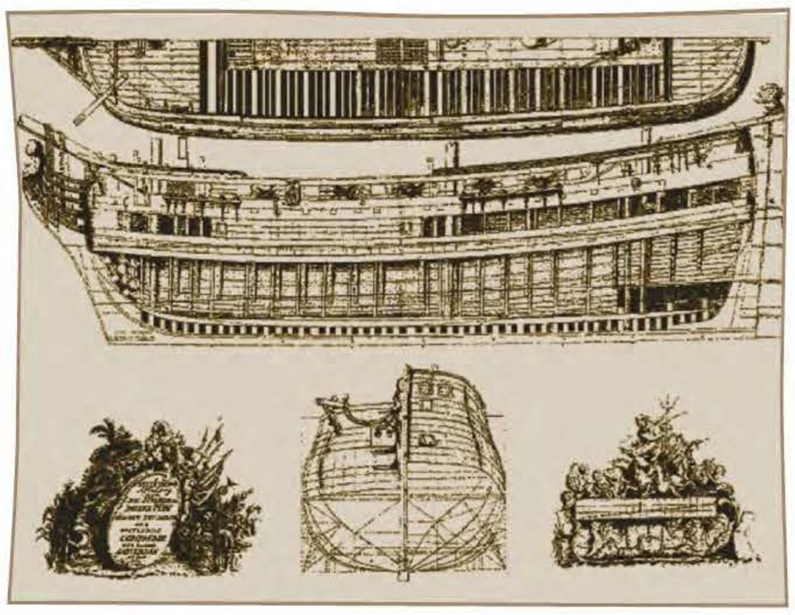
3. Foreign ships

There were also foreign ships engaged in the slave trade which regularly called at the Cape. While greater returns could be realized in the slave markets of the Americas, the captains of such ships often chose to sell their human cargoes here rather than risk the losses that could be expected on the lengthy Atlantic crossing. Mostly these slaves came from east Africa and Madagascar in the later years of the 18th century until 1808 when the oceanic slave trade was abolished throughout the British Empire.

The end result of these influences is that of the people brought in bondage to the Cape some 26% originated from regions of Africa, a further 26% came from the Indian subcontinent, 23% from the many islands of Indonesia and the East Indies and 25% from Madagascar alone.

Conditions on a slave ship: trauma of sea passage

Following their capture, slaves usually had to endure an arduous trek in chains to coastal slaving fortresses. Survivors were then likely to be forced into the dark holds of ships under the most inhumane and crowded conditions imaginable. It was not uncommon for a quarter of their number to die *en route* or soon after arrival, from weakness or illnesses contracted aboard ship. Captives, however, did not always resign themselves to this fate and where possible, attempted to claim back their freedom. In 1766, the slave lodge ship *Meermin* was returning to the Cape from Madagascar when the 140 intended slaves aboard managed to escape and take over the ship. In this uprising 30 out of the crew of 66 were killed. The Meermin then ran aground and was wrecked off Cape Agulhas. In the end 112 captives survived and upon recapture, were sent on to Cape Town to begin their lives in bondage far from the families, homes, language and customs they once knew.



The 450-ton 'hoeker' Meermin, built in 1759 and which was afterwards fitted out and employed at the Cape by the VOC as a slave ship. (Iziko Maritime Museum)

The work and life of slaves

From the 1650s to the 1830s the Cape was a slave-owning society. Early Cape Town can be said to have been built with slave labour. Very few records exist from which a clear picture of the lives of slaves can be drawn. Enough is known to conclude that slaves were the backbone of the early economy at the Cape and provided not only labour but also their skills as artisans. But whether artisan or labourer, slaves could not escape the reality of their subservient status and the ways their lives, personal aspirations and happiness remained subject to the whims of their masters.

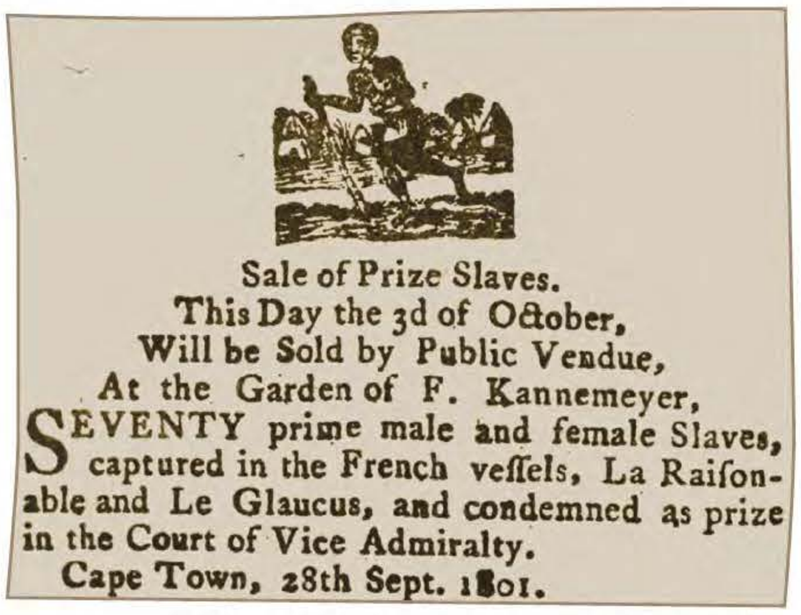
Household slave, believed to be August von Bengale, holding pipe while his owner, Hendrik Cloete of Groot Constantia, plays cards, c.1780. (Swellengrebel Collection, Hilversum)

Inhumane lodging

Company slaves were housed in the slave lodge alongside convicts, political prisoners, and even 'lunatics'. The eyewitness reports that exist describe conditions inside as overcrowded, foul and neglected. As for privately owned slaves – females engaged in domestic chores generally slept indoors in the kitchen while males were housed in outbuildings and often locked up at night to guard against escape or possible reprisal against their owners.

Slave owners

Throughout the VOC period there were essentially two categories of slave owners – the Company and private individuals. The latter included Company officials, free burghers, and also a group known as *vrije swarten* 'free blacks'. The number of slaves owned by free burghers surpassed those owned by the Company by 1690 – to more than ten to one by 1750 and over 30 to one by the end of Company rule in 1795.



Slave auction notice which appeared in the Cape of Good Hope Gazette, 3 October 1801. (National Library of South Africa: Cape Town)

Slaves were traded or sold as any other property might be. These 'sales' can be compared to livestock auctions where buyers could check the fitness, strength and general value of the 'goods'. Many Company officials came to own personal slaves to serve in their households and although not technically allowed – to provide the labour required on private farms and other enterprises they engaged in on the side. These

slaves were generally not reported in censuses to keep the Company from learning of such private trading and dealings. Often slave artisans were hired out by their owners as a means of recouping the cost of purchase and their continued maintenance. In many instances slave women became concubines of their owners or were coerced into prostitution. Children from such forced unions became the property of the slave's owner even if their fathers were free men. It should also be noted that there was a growing number of 'free blacks' consisting of slaves who had in one way or another been manumitted by their owners or won their freedom through a meritorious act. One such ex-slave, Catharina Anthonis van Bengal, was the first to gain freedom in 1656, when she married Jan Woutersz, a VOC employee. Free blacks also came to include political exiles banned to the Cape by the VOC and convicts or *bandieten* who, having served out their time, chose to remain here. Many became extremely successful in business and in turn, some came to own slaves themselves.

Although technically 'free', such free blacks were subjected to an increasing degree of discrimination. With their own first-hand experience of slavery they could strongly identify with those still in bondage, even assisting at times with acts of resistance.

Loss of identity: 'slave names'

Slaves owned by the VOC often retained versions of their real names (Sao Balla, Revotes, Kehang, Indebet, Chemehaijre) while privately owned slaves were more likely to be given new names and consequently lost this connection to the people from whom they were taken. Some were given names after the place of their capture (van Bengalen, van Batavia, van Ceylon, van Balij, van Mallabar, van Maccassar), their place of birth (van de West Kus, van de Caab), figures in classical mythology (Cupido, Mars), biblical names (Herodus, Salomon) or names as arbitrary as the months of the year (February, October, September).

Labour: the 'dirtiest and heaviest work'

The settlement relied on slave labour in virtually every aspect of life, both public and private. Slaves did the 'dirtiest and heaviest work' called for on virtually all of the public works – digging canals, building fortifications and working the harbour. Slaves served as woodcutters and water carriers, bricklayers and lime-burners, masons and carpenters, fishermen and vegetable hawkers, porters and street sweepers. They were grooms and coachmen, butlers and valets, musicians, cooks, furniture makers, tailors, and builders – a rich tapestry of abilities and skills. In the farmlands far from authorities and any threat of reprimand – owners could demand long gruelling days in the fields and vineyards and inflict terrible punishments for resistance or indolence. Slave women were mostly employed as domestic workers: cooks, cleaners, nurses, wet-nurses and washerwomen.

Washerwomen, watercolour by De Meillon, c.1830 (Brenthurst Press)

Slaves' religious practice denied

The Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) was the only religion recognised by the VOC and while accepting its duty to spread the message of Christianity to freemen and slaves alike, ran into a contradictory situation. The Dutch Reformed Synod of Dordt sat in the Netherlands in 1618 and addressed the question of rights bestowed on slaves through baptism. In 1621, the Synod declared that 'Baptized slaves should enjoy equal right of liberty with other Christians and ought never to be handed over again to the power of heathens by their Christian Masters either by sale or any other transfer of possession'. The hope of obtaining their freedom, if baptised, was an obvious incentive for slaves to become Christians. At the same time, however, it worked against them as slave owners were little encouraged to allow religious instruction if it could lead to possible manumission and thus the loss of their slaves. As far as slaves owned by the VOC – a provision was at least made by visiting Commissioner van Rheede in 1685 that children of Company slaves and white fathers be allowed to purchase their freedom after reaching adulthood, provided they were confirmed in the DRC and could speak Dutch.

Islamic school or madrasah at the Cape, early 1800s.
(National Library of South Africa: Cape Town)

Many slaves denied access to Christianity turned to Islam and were welcomed as converts. As early as 1694 political exiles under the leadership of Sheikh Yusef arrived at the Cape. Among the entourage of Sheikh Yusef were 12 Imams. Taking the many opportunities exile provided these revered religious leaders to profess their faith led to Islam being accepted by an estimated one third of the slaves at the Cape by the time of emancipation in 1834.

Slaves and the missionary societies

Missionary work in South Africa began with the Moravian Missionary Society in 1737 at Baviaanskloof (now called Genadendal) near Caledon, with displaced and homeless Khoekhoen. They were followed by others including the London Missionary Society (1795) and Netherlands Missionary Society (1797) which, inspired by the Evangelical movement, began the South African Missionary Society in 1799 for the purposes of converting the homeless to the Christian faith. The rise of the Evangelical Philanthropic Movement in England carried with it widespread revulsion for the continuing practice of slavery and finally resulted in the abolition of the oceanic slave trade in 1807. British authorities supported the work of missionary societies through grants of lands. Lord Charles Somerset, for example, granted the Groenekloof north of Cape Town to the Moravian Church as the site for a mission station in 1806 (known today as Mamre). With the full emancipation of the slaves in 1838, many slaves with no means of supporting themselves settled at mission stations.

A slave woman, believed to be nursing her mistress's child, while her own baby sits by, c.1798.
(Letters of Lady Anne Barnard)

Struggle for liberty

Resistance, uprising and escape for some

By the early 19th century slaves outnumbered free people at the Cape and fear of a possible slave uprising was pervasive. Any sign of insurrection was met with a swift and forceful response. Slaves nonetheless resisted their situation in both passive and violent ways. Some passive means included working slowly, playing dumb and engaging in petty theft. More overt ways included damage to property (often through arson), organised stealing, assault, poisoning, murder, suicide, and even armed revolt. In 1808 Louis van Mauritius and Abraham van de Caap led over 320 followers in a revolt and marched as far as Salt River before being turned back by the local militia. The ringleaders were captured and executed.

Some slaves formed runaway or *droster* communities hiding out in groups on Table Mountain and other isolated parts of the Cape Peninsula and surrounding hinterland. One group led by Leander van Bourgies escaped to Cape Hangklip in 1725 and gathered a following that grew to as many as 60 individuals. This group remained in existence until the emancipation of the slaves in 1834 by raiding surrounding farms, hunting and gathering and trading with slaves, free blacks and renegades. Many slaves escaped as far north as they could, moving beyond the reach of the local militia.

Crime and punishment

In response to slave resistance owners and the authorities employed both physical and psychological measures to preserve the master/slave relationship. The Company had the power of life and death over slaves. Close to the Castle was the place of execution originally called the *Justitie Plaats* (corner of Darling and Buitenkant Street) where brutal punishment was meted out. In the early days the customary penalty for what can be termed 'minor acts of defiance', was scourging. Slaves who absconded were commonly flogged and branded on one cheek. A second attempt at escape brought with it a flogging and branding on the other cheek, while a third could result in the nose and/or ears of the slave being lopped off. Hapless individuals maimed in this way became so common in later years that the authorities confined punishment to flogging and branding on the back. This was not out of concern for the slaves but 'in considering the abominableness… to those who see these mutilated persons'. Between 1680 and 1795 an average of one slave per month was publicly executed - often by being broken on the wheel, impaled, disembowelled or burnt at the stake for arson. The remains of those executed were left on display as a warning to others. At the beginning of the British occupation of the Cape in 1795, even the battle-hardened, Major-General Craig questioned the local Burgher Council over the greater severity of the punishments imposed on slaves over freemen and the use of torture in cases demanding the death penalty. To this the Council replied:

The Cape Hangman as sketched by Lady Anne Barnard, c.1798.
(Letters of Lady Anne Barnard)

'Experience has taught that gentle means are inadequate, even amongst free persons, to maintain law and order… consequently altho' strongly actuated by motives of humanity, and viewing the slave in the most favourable light, it becomes necessary to adopt severe measures to deter them from revolting against their masters and taking advantage of their superior strength'.

The following year, Governor Lord Macartney abolished the use of torture as part of the justice system at the Cape.

Emancipation

By 1806 the debate over the future of slavery in the British Empire was turning in favour of abolition. The oceanic slave trade was outlawed in 1807 (came into force in 1808) although in reality it was hard to implement such a decision. With British control over the Cape in 1806 also came ownership of the Company slaves and the decision on the part of the British colonial authority to divest itself of this responsibility in 1807. The remaining fit and young slaves were sold off while the old and infirm were retired to a new residence near the top of the Company's Garden.

At midnight on the 1st of December 1834, the Cape celebrated the formal end of slavery with church services including vigils held by slaves. Bonfires were lit on Table Mountain.

Slaves owners made predictions about anarchy and lawlessness. This never occurred and the slave population celebrated with religious ceremonies and went back to work as indentured apprentices. Celebrations and processions on New Year's Day each year still commemorate this legacy.

Ex-slave Katie Jacobs pictured here with some of her descendants in 1910. In her 96th year she could still recall events surrounding her manumission in 1834.(National Library of South Africa: Cape Town)

Tracing roots

The nearly two centuries of slavery at the Cape has often been referred to as the unwritten chapter in South African history. Many Capetonians, particularly of slave and indigenous ancestry, are striving to have this aspect of our history recognised and thus create a better understanding of how slavery influenced the development of South African society.

Picture taken in Elgin of this ex-slave, Jan Present, from Mozambique when reported to be 120 years old.
(Cape Times: 21 April 1916)

The UNESCO Slave Route Project seeks to better research and understand the nature and impact of slavery as a worldwide historic phenomenon. Cape Town's slave history is not only an important element of this story but has a unique contribution to make to this important global initiative.

Watercolour by De Meillon, c.1830. (Brenthurst Press

Access and safety

Parking

1) Clock Tower Precinct/ V&A Waterfront 61
2) Next to St Andrews Church (Corner of Waterkant and Buitengracht) 51
3) Castle of Good Hope (off Darling Street) 14
4) Hof/Curtis Street. (off Orange and just below the Hof St. Reservoirs) 44
5) Lower Cableway Station 49

Toilets and refreshments

1) Clock Tower Precinct/ V&A Waterfront 61
2) Next to St Andrews Church (Corner of Waterkant and Buitengracht) 51
3) Martin Melck House/Gold Museum 29
4) Castle of Good Hope 14
5) District Six Museum 17
6) Old Townhouse (Greenmarket Square) 24
7) Company's Garden 40
8) Lower Cableway Station 49

General security and telephones

While most of the city is monitored by CCTV cameras as well as regular foot, bicycle and horse patrols, it is wise to take the usual precautions. In the event of an emergency public telephones can be found at:

1) Clock Tower Precinct/ V&A Waterfront 61
2) Golden Acre 9
3) Company's Garden 40
4) Lower Cableway Station 49

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Contributing authors: Dr. Antonia Malan and Melanie Attwell.
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H.C. De Meillon paintings: *Courtesy of Brenthurst Press.*

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