Archaeological Impact Assessment: Gateway Precinct
Victoria and Alfred Waterfront Company Pty Ltd

Prepared for Nicholas Baumann
on behalf of the Victoria and Alfred Waterfront Company

September 2014

Prepared by

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1 Introduction

This report is an archaeological impact assessment and sensitivity study of the proposed Gateway Precinct development (Victoria and Alfred Waterfront Company). This report will be incorporated into a broader Heritage Impact Assessment currently being prepared by Nicholas Baumann (Heritage Professional). The gateway precinct includes the ruins of the Amsterdam battery as well as erf 9588. Aside from the ruins of the battery, parts of the site lie on the old shoreline therefore maritime archaeology could be impacted.

The archaeological remains of the Amsterdam Battery will form a key heritage fix in the design of the proposed precinct. The intention is to conserve the remaining ruins of the battery and to conceptualise the new development in such a way that the significance of the Amsterdam Battery is explained and enhanced. The proposal involves acknowledgement of the footprint of the battery in the layout of the new development, as well as the possibility of reconstruction of a portion of the battery. These activities have the potential to impact both positively and negatively on the heritage significance of the site.

Figure 1. 1:50 000 topographical map of Cape Town showing the location of the Gateway Precinct.
Figure 2  The Gateway Precinct (after Neil Schwartz Town planning)
2 Historical overview

The Gateway Precinct falls within a stretch of a coastal plain which extended from the Buitengracht to beyond the Mouille Point. For most of the 17th and 18th century, the Buitengracht formed the western boundary of the settlement at the Cape and the land beyond it was a wilderness, used by Khoekhoe and colonists alike to graze their stock.

2.1 Dutch Period

Burial grounds

Figure 1, a map of the settlement dating to the start of the 18th century (CA M1/969), shows a gallows on the eastern edge of a dune cordon, and as early as 1710, it was recorded that the unclaimed dead were buried in the dunes outside the town boundaries. The slave burial ground was also situated to the west of the Buitengracht close to the Chavonnes Battery. Evidence of this 18th century informal burial ground has been found at Prestwich Street, Coburn Street and possibly at the V&A Marina Residential development.

In 1755 the first official burial grounds were established in the area to the west of the Buitengracht; an area which must have had a decidedly morbid miasma, as the victims of the major small pox epidemic of 1713 lay beneath those sandy dunes. Two more major epidemics were to follow in 1755 and 1767.

Fortifications

From the time that Cape Town was established as a refreshment station for the VOC ships en route between the East and Europe since 1652, the harbour has been protected by fortifications of some sort. The fortifications were a necessity, protecting the establishment not only from dangers from the hinterland, but also from aggression from rival trading companies owned by the English as well as the French.

From the mid 18th century onwards, the coastline of Table Bay was characterised by batteries and defence lines extending from the Mouille Point in the west to Fort Knokke in the east. The Chavonnes Battery was the first to be built in 1715, followed in 1787 by the Amsterdam Battery and the Mouille Battery and Kyk in de Pot Battery in 1795 along the western extent. The batteries and defence lines to the east of the Castle date to the mid 18th century and as they fall outside the study area are not detailed here.

There is a direct link between the increase in fortifications at the Cape of Good Hope and the renewal of hostilities between the English and the French at the end of the 18th century. The Cape held a strategic position at the tip of Africa as the mid point between the very lucrative trade between the East and Europe. The fear that the English would occupy the Cape in order to keep it out of the hands of the French was realised in 1795, when the English forces landed and Blouberg (well out of the range of especially the Amsterdam Battery).

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1 VOC being the acronym for the Dutch East India Company
2.2 **British Period: 1795-1827**

**Burial grounds**

During the first half of the 19th century, the area to the west of Buitengracht Street was still characterised by burial grounds, both formal and informal. The Dutch Reformed Church cemeteries were enlarged in 1801 and 1802. In 1813 the London Missionary Society was granted land behind the Amsterdam Battery for the burial of Christianised slaves and heathens. In 1818 the (old) Somerset Hospital was built in the vicinity of the burial grounds.

**Fortifications**

Having secured the Cape as a half way station for the English East India trade, the English set about upgrading the military defences of the Cape.

In 1827 a peace accord was signed between the English and French and many of the defensive works along the Cape were dismantled.

2.3 **British Period: second half 19th century**

**Burial grounds**

Form 1827 to about 1840 a number of denominational burial grounds were granted in the area between Somerset Road and the adjacent shore. As well as the formal cemeteries, at least one paupers’ burial ground in the vicinity of the Gallows Hill, known as the White Sands, was also to be found in this area. The extent of the paupers’ burial ground is unknown.

By the mid 19th century, the closure of the Somerset Road burial grounds was being considered: not only were these cemeteries over full, but the expansion of the town of Cape Town beyond Buitengracht Street meant that these cemeteries were a health hazard. The value of the land in terms of future harbour development was also a consideration. In 1894 the Somerset Road cemeteries were closed and over the course of several years, the bodies from the formal cemeteries were removed to Maitland Cemetery.

The White Sands/Paupers’ burial ground was exhumed by the Table Bay Harbour Board in the 1890s. The closure of the cemetery was advertised and the relatives of the recently dead could remove their dead. The remainder were reburied by the Table Bay Harbour Board.

**Fortifications**

In c1860, the American Civil War broke out, resulting in a return to duty for the Amsterdam Battery. When the Confederate ship, the Alabama docked in Table Bay in 1863, it was under the watch of the Amsterdam Battery.

With the advances of modern warfare and technology, it was soon realised that the 18th century fortifications around the shores of the Table Bay would not stand up to modern gun fire. The Amsterdam Battery was dismantled in 1898. Of the row of late 18th century fortifications stretching from the Mouille Battery in the west to Craig’s Battery in the East, only Fort Wynyard was still functioning, albeit in a much altered form.

The 20th century saw the modernisation of Cape Town as a harbour city. Amsterdam Battery was partially demolished in 1906-08 to make way for a rail line linking the harbour and the city. After the Second World War, massive land reclamation schemes were implemented, enlarging the harbour. By the 1970s, with the construction of the Ben Schoeman docks, the main thrust of the harbour had moved eastwards, leaving the old Victorian harbour behind. Since the early 1980s, plans were proposed to redevelop the old Victorian harbour as a tourist and commercial centre.

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2 In 2003 the Archaeology Contracts Office uncovered what seemed to be a trench in which articulated bodies and loose bone were dumped. It seems as if this may have been the reality of the so-called reburial.
These plans were finally realised in the late 1980s when the Victoria and Alfred Waterfront Company was established and the old harbour in the vicinity of the Pierhead was redeveloped. The old harbour buildings were restored and new buildings loosely followed the style of the older warehouses. At the same time, Fort Wynyard was restored and a coastal artillery Museum established at the site by the navy.

2.4 **Heritage resources directly or indirectly affected by the proposed development**

Three types of archaeological heritage resources exist or have the potential to exist on or within the immediate vicinity of the Gateway Precinct:

1) The archaeological remains of the Amsterdam Battery.

2) The remains of 18th and 19th century slave and/or pauper burials grounds. The Green Point burial area was provisionally protected in 2004.

3) Possible archaeological deposits and shipwreck material associated with the old shoreline of Table Bay.

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![Figure 5 Aerial photography c2000. The visible remains of the Amsterdam battery and archaeological reserve for human remains are shaded in red. The portion of the area of high probability of burials being uncovered, as set out in the Green Point Protocol (2004) is shown by the dashed line: Nos 1-3 show the erstwhile locations of the SA Mission Society cemetery c1813, the English Church Cemetery c1832 and the Lutheran Church Cemetery c1833. The area between 1 and 3 was granted to the Dutch Reformed Church to be used as a burial ground, but it was not used and in 1870, the church was given permission to sell the land. No 4 shows the location of the 18th century slave and/or paupers burial ground as evidenced by exhumations at Prestwich Street and Coburn Street. No 5 shows the location of the old Somerset Hospital built in 1818. The remains of the White Sands burial ground lie to the west/north-west of the enclosed Somerset Road cemeteries and remains have been found in the V&A Marina Residential, the BP site and at the Gallows Hill Traffic Station.](image)
3 Amsterdam battery

The Amsterdam Battery was built in 1784 on the site of an earlier fort known as Heeren Hendricks Kinderen. The Battery was designed by Lieutenant Colonel PH Gilguin, an English engineer in the employ of the VOC, with Captain L.M. Thibault. It was built of earth and masonry walls with vaults, casemates and magazines as well being able to provide accommodation for 200 soldiers. In 1787, Amsterdam Battery was armed with a variety of cannon (up to 80). These were positioned on the top ramparts as well as in a lower row of casemates with gun ports through the stone walls. The battery’s main function was to prevent enemy ships laying anchor in Table Bay harbour, as well as protecting the smaller forts along the harbour coast. It was partly owing to the fire power of Amsterdam Battery that the British landed at Blouberg and Muizenberg in 1795, when the Cape was wrested from the Dutch by the English to protect the trade route to the East from falling into French control.

![Amsterdam Battery](image)

Figure 6 Sketch view from the Castle by Lady Anne Barnard c1797. Note the massive edifice of the Amsterdam Battery (Cape Archives 15693b).

The inaugural firing of the battery became notorious - a cannon exploded injuring 5 soldiers as well as the then Governor, Van der Graaff. Remains of the damaged cannon can be seen at the Chavonnes Battery Museum.

In 1827, when peace was declared between England and France, many of the Cape’s defensive works were dismantled or allowed to go into dereliction. The Amsterdam Battery was converted into a prison which played a role in housing prisoners from the frontier wars. In 1858 a number of these prisoners escaped and only 14 were recovered. The Battery retained some of its defensive function and when the Confederate ship, the Alabama anchored in Table Bay during the American Civil War, the Amsterdam Battery was on full alert. Sometime in the middle 19th century the battery was altered in that 4 traversing platform gun emplacements were built on the battery wall and equipped in all likelihood with 68 pounder muzzle loaders.

As the importance of Table Bay as a harbour grew, more attention was given to its defence and the Amsterdam Battery was strengthened with the surplus material from the Breakwater quarry. Between 1880 and 1890 the fortifications around Cape Town and Simonstown were re-armed with rifled muzzle loaders capable of firing explosive conical shells.

The Amsterdam Battery in its 19th century configuration was effectively redundant and transformed into a “modern” Victorian gun battery with 4 concrete gun emplacements equipped with traversing guns. Photographs of the time (appendix A) show that a large earth berm (referred to as the “curtain” was constructed in front of the stone front rampart wall – no doubt to disguise the site and dampen the impact of the modern explosive shells that were in common use at that time. Bursting against the stone walls of the battery these would have had lethal consequences.
for personnel. Indications are that the older smooth bore muzzle loading cannons on garrison carriages were removed. By the 1890’s heavier guns were mounted. Photographs (appendix A) shows new circular emplacements being constructed for 7 inch (?) calibre rifled muzzle loaders or breach loading traversing cannons. In 1905 the battery was partially demolished to make way for the railway lines from the harbour to the city.

The Amsterdam battery was by any standards, a large fortification. It was built utilising a drop in elevation form the edge of the coastal plain to the beach. In other words the rear of the battery was quite high above sea level while the bottom of the front rampart was only a meter or two above sea level. Indications are that the front rampart wall was roughly 40 feet high containing two levels on which cannon were mounted.

![Figure 7 View of Table Bay harbour taken from Signal Hill c1900. The Amsterdam Battery is clearly visible in the centre foreground.](image)

3.1 Assessment of significance

National technological significance

Amsterdam Battery was the only true casemate battery to be constructed in South Africa. It was a massive structure however the existing archaeology of the site does not portray the size and scale of the place. It is suggested that the remains of the battery have a grade II –IIIA significance.

Significant as a landmark

Amsterdam Battery was a significant landmark during most of the 18th and 19th century and until its demolition in 1905 was consistently used as a landmark reference in historical texts. The landmark status was lost when the battery was demolished to make way for the harbour development.

The insensitive development encroaching on the site as well as the use of the site as parking area and informal store/dump has greatly diminished the Battery’s sense of place.

The opportunity exists to create a space that will make legible the height and scale of this historic landmark, by echoing the dimensions of the battery in the new development and so celebrate the defensive history of the harbour.

Local historical significance

Amsterdam Battery formed part of the 18th and 19th line of defence batteries which extended along the coast of the Table Bay. It was the single biggest defensive battery on the Cape Coast.
Local social significance

The use of the Amsterdam Battery as a prison which housed prisoners of the Eastern Cape Frontier War of the mid 19th century, which links the history of this site to another place of political imprisonment: Robben Island. The Chavonnes Battery also served as a part time prison and quarantine centre.

Archaeological significance

The archaeological potential of the Amsterdam Battery as largely been untested, but some exploratory work has taken place. Archaeology can be used to assist in re-exposing the remaining rampart wall, landscaping and exposing it in a meaningful way and in mitigating erosion of the exposed edge. It is possible that the base of the front battery wall may still exist in part under the concrete apron in the Gateway Precinct.

4 Burial grounds of the underclass and slaves

The burial grounds were subject to a provisional declaration between 2004 and 2006. This provisional protection has now lapsed. However there are agreements in place between the City of Cape Town and SAHRA with respect to the management of development projects within this highly sensitive area [map: burial area]

National and local social and political significance

These burial grounds have gained enormous significance in post-apartheid South Africa as many Capetonians see this as being a material manifestation of a lost heritage. As a result high social significance has been attached to these burial grounds. The political sensitivities of the findings cannot be under estimated as was showcased by the reaction to the Prestwich place Remains.

National and local archaeological and scientific significance:

The burials and their context have the potential to be highly archaeological significant in that they demonstrate elements of ways of life and conditions of living that are largely un-documentedd in historical writings.

4.1 Likelihood of impacts

Since the first identification of the fact that there were un-exhumed burial grounds in Cape Town, knowledge of their distribution has progressed a little. Recent electrical and fibre optic cable laying operations south of the gateway precinct has revealed that no human remains were impacted at this locality. Furthermore the renovation of the bus depot was archaeologically monitored (Patrick pers. com.). Little by way of skeletal material was recovered from this site.

Indications are that human remains are unlikely to be impacted by development activities at the gateway precinct, however vigilance with respect to the possibility of finds occurring needs to be observed.
5 Erf 9588

This portion of land would have been crossed by the shoreline of Table Bay. Indications are that originally the waves of Table Bay would have almost washed against the front of the seaward wall of the Amsterdam Battery however minor land reclamationstook place in the 19th century resulted in the creation of a formal sea wall and the construction of a number of jetties, the largest of which was the coaling jetty which projected out in front of the eastern most side of the Amsterdam battery.

![Image](image1.png)

Figure 8 Left, Snow survey of 1862. Right, Harbour Board of 1935 depicts the shoreline prior to the major land reclamation of the 20th century. The battery and its context are visible.

The two 19th century maps (Figure 6) show the position of the ocean relative to the battery. The implication of this is that any deep excavations for basements in front of the battery or on erf 9588 have the potential to impact remnants of the wharf-side and jetty as well as shipwrecks, of which several occurred close to the Amsterdam Battery according to the National Shipwreck Database. Unfortunately the database is not specific enough to give exact locations.

5.1 Likelihood of impacts

There is a possibility of impacts to archaeological material of a maritime nature on erf 9588. It is difficult to make a prediction about the significance of any finds needless to say that any archaeological material relating to shipwrecks, the old port could at value to the proposed new gateway precinct.

6 Recommendations

The Amsterdam Battery will need to be fully exposed and prepared for interpretation. The exposure of the site needs to be done by an archaeological team, while the presentation and conservation of the site within the proposed new gateway precinct should involve an archaeologist and architects/museologists with the necessary experience. This report will not state at this time how this should be done as the site will not realise its potential until archaeological exposure is achieved, however the concept of echoing the form and scale of the historic battery is supported along with limited strategic reconstruction. The use of scale models should also be explored.
It is not expected that human remains will be found in the gateway precinct, however in Green Point we can never rule out this eventuality. If a find is accidentally exposed, the emergency exhumation procedure will need to be invoked with the relevant heritage authority.

All basement excavations in the precinct will need to be monitored for shipwreck material, maritime artefacts or elements of the old harbour. Rescue excavations and recording may be required depending on the nature of the find.
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4/K/Kaa/15

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Appendix A
Comments on early images and photographs of the Amsterdam Battery.

This material is in the possession of the City of Cape Town. We thank that organisation for permission to use them.

The photographs depict the battery during the final 10 years of its existence and show how it was hastily reinforced and re-gunned a few years prior to its demolition.

Figure 9 A plan view of the Amsterdam Battery (circa 1792) by Thibault. A portion of the rear wall and sally-port is all that remains today.
Figure 10  An excerpt from the VOC Atlas showing the arrangement of the lower gun tier situated in casemate rooms in the front wall of the battery. There were two cannons per room placed on wooden platforms. Behind the gun rooms were inter-leading ammunition stores and preparation areas designed to allow maximum mobility, yet control the potential spread of accidental ignition of gunpowder.
Figure 11 Front and rear elevations of the battery with an enlarged cut-away section showing the arrangements of the casemate rooms. It is interesting to note that the natural topography will expeditiously used to locate the casemate rooms at a level just a little below the rear courtyard. There is a noticeable fall in elevation at this point.
Figure 12. This sequence of photographs depicts a series of alterations to the Amsterdam Battery. The upper image depicts a muzzle loading gun on a platform in 1889. The middle image taken a year later depicts demolition of the gun emplacement while the final image of 1990 shows construction work – the building of a new traversing platform emplacement.
In 1890 the new gun emplacements are built – the traversing rail has been set along with the central pivot. Concrete is about to be poured. Note the steel rings for hitching the training tackle.

The emplacement is reaching completion – concrete has been cast, munitions lockers are to the left and right and the hitching points for the tackle to train the cannon are in place. The traversing rail and pivot is now set into its concrete mounting.
Figure 15  This image of 1889 and the enlargement below depict the interior of the battery during its re-arming. There is a large muzzle loading cannon in place which has a profile very similar to a rifled muzzle loader (blow up). The insert below depicts a restored rifled muzzle loader at the upper north battery in Simonstown (Simonstown Historical Society). Note the discarded old garrison gun carriages in the foreground. The top rampart wall has been heavily modified while one of the magazines (pitched roof) and original ramp is still visible (right side).
Figure 16 The 19th century alterations of the battery included the construction of a large earthworks in front of the main wall. This is referred to as the “curtain”. Fortunately the original front wall is visible along with the casemate gun ports and at least one surviving shutter. The lower image depicts the “curtain” with an early rail line passing in front. By the time the curtain was built, the casemate cannons were redundant.
Figure 17. One of very few photographs that depict the interior of the battery. Visible on the right is the sally-port. Of interest is the height of rear inner wall which may have been a later intervention during the prison years. The foundations of the building under construction (left) are still present on site.
Appendix B

Chronology
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Associations/ People/Events</th>
<th>Nature of significance</th>
<th>Material evidence</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Precolonial</strong></td>
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<td>Open plain on the outskirts of the town. Granite and Malmesbury shale geological substrata result in grazing rich in trace elements (Hart 2003).</td>
<td>Early maps make reference to a Hottentot village on the outskirts of Cape Town (Malan n.d.).</td>
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<td><strong>Dutch:</strong></td>
<td>1652-1806</td>
<td>Grazing land</td>
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<td>Defensive batteries situated along its coastal edge eg Chavonnes, Amsterdam and Kyk in de Pot</td>
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<td>Execution grounds</td>
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<td>Along town’s edge – cemeteries, both formal and informal</td>
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<td>Common consisted of a flat coastal plain with some prominent dunes with a large seasonal vlei towards Mouille Point</td>
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<td>Place of 1813 Burgher Senate auctions of land along the Table Bay harbour situated to the north of the Castle: anchorage protected by at least 6 batteries</td>
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<td>1850</td>
<td>Defence/Detention Execution grounds</td>
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<td>Formal burial ground lower slopes of Signal Hill – start of residential fringe</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1813 Land near Amsterdam Battery granted to the SA Missionary Society for use as cemetery for baptised ‘slaves and heathens’ (Apollonio 1998)</td>
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<td>1818 Construction of ‘old’ Somerset Hospital adjacent to walled cemeteries.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1827 Peace declared between English and French. Many of Cape defence works dismantled in attempt to reduce maintenance costs. Amsterdam Battery converted to prison</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1835 execution place moved from Strand Street to Gallows Hill – chalk rise situated just over 90 metres to the east of the powder magazine. Hill was just over 18 metres high and the top was paved with bluestone [slate] flagstones. At either end of the paving were end sockets for erecting the crossbeam from which the executed bodies were suspended. The executed were buried below the eastern slopes of Gallows Hill [Murray 1964:22]</td>
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<td>1851 – 1900</td>
<td>Harbour development and modernisation of infrastructure</td>
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<td>Place of defence Medical The Chavonnes Battery was already partially demolished in the 1860s with the construction of the Alfred Docks.</td>
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<td>1859 Construction starts on the ‘new’ Somerset Hospital situated between Breakwater Prison and Fort Wynyard</td>
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<td>1860 Start of large scale harbour works. Convict labour used in construction works. The construction of the railway network also dates to this period.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1862 Kyk in de Pot Battery upgraded and renamed Fort Wynyard</td>
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<td>1863 Confederate ship, Alabama, anchored in Table Bay. Esp Amsterdam Battery kept watchful eye.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1864 - 1886 Closure of cemeteries along Somerset area to the west of Buitengracht</td>
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<td></td>
<td>C1858 prisoners of the Eastern Cape Frontier War held at Amsterdam Battery. A number escaped, of which only 14 were recaptured.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The Table Bay Harbour Board bought additional land in a strip situated between the Amsterdam Battery and the (new) Somerset Hospital effectively destroying large parts of the Gallows Hill, as well as the ‘White Sands’ paupers burial ground.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Gallows Hill systematically demolished: 1891 the hill was bisected by the Sea Point Railway track. 1897 the northern slope was destroyed by</td>
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<td>Road</td>
<td>1893 Green Point Common used as showground for military review. Amsterdam remodelled, fitted with heavier guns. Realisation that 18th century structure not sufficient to withstand modern artillery fire. Abandoned c.1898.</td>
<td>the construction of the Alfred Docks. The eastern side was levelled in 1900.</td>
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<td>1899: Anglo Boer War</td>
<td>The Anglo Boer War broke out in 1899 and lasted until 1902. Although most of the action took place in the erstwhile Boer Republics, Cape Town was an important transit point: British soldiers were landed and deployed from Cape Town and Boer prisoners of war were shipped to St Helena, Ceylon and Bermuda from Cape Town.</td>
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<td>1900 – end of WWII</td>
<td>Defence Role in British Empire Industrialisation</td>
<td>1905 Fort Amsterdam partially demolished</td>
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<td>Green Point Common granted to the Cape Town City Council – conditions regarding encroachment on Fort Wynyard. 'Buffer zone' already around Fort Wynyard. Powder Battery/Laboratory between Amsterdam and Chavonnes Battery demolished</td>
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<td>Modernisation and industrialisation of city – increased development along docks and growth of manufacturing areas/Industrial areas.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Expansion of harbour. Reclamation schemes c1937 does away with Roggebaai, the pier and in 1943 the new Duncan Docks opened</td>
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<tr>
<td>Post WWII Apartheid era</td>
<td>Industrialisation Place of defence</td>
<td>1948 Nationalist party comes into power. Group Areas Act</td>
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<td>1962 Robben Island Political Prison</td>
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<td>1977 Ben Schoeman Dock opened. Harbour's commercial potential cut by the reopening of the Suez Canal and containerism</td>
<td>Celebration of historical Victorian harbour in redevelopment of Waterfront as tourist attraction and commercial centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Event</td>
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<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>Fort Wynyard declared a National Monument</td>
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<td>1980</td>
<td>Proposal conversion of the old harbour into yacht basin and tourist area.</td>
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<td>1987</td>
<td>Fort Wynyard restored and opened as Coastal Artillery Museum 1987-1992</td>
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<td>1988</td>
<td>Establishment of V&amp;A Waterfront Company (stake holders incl Portnet) agreed to develop 83 hectares of the old harbour area in vicinity of the Pierhead. Old buildings restored. New buildings imitated style of older warehouses in deliberate attempt to recapture Cape Town's Victorian heritage.</td>
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<td>1989</td>
<td>Nomination for remains of Amsterdam Battery to be declared.</td>
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</table>

**Post-apartheid**

- Commerce & Trade
- Recreation & Tourism
- Place of liberation
- Scenic