

Gold Coast's Elmina Castle, a Dutch-Ghanaian monument

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Photographs are not available.

See text on page 6 and 10

P.1 Elmina Castle from the east; Elmina Castle 2009



P.2 Dutch graveyard, tombstone from 1859; Elmina Centre 2009



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P.3 Upper wall to the north; Elmina Castle 2009
P.4 Modern Elmina Village to the north of Elmina Castle



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P.5 Residence of the Dutch governor; Elmina Castle 2009



P.6 Detail of the residence of the Dutch governor; Elmina Castle 2009

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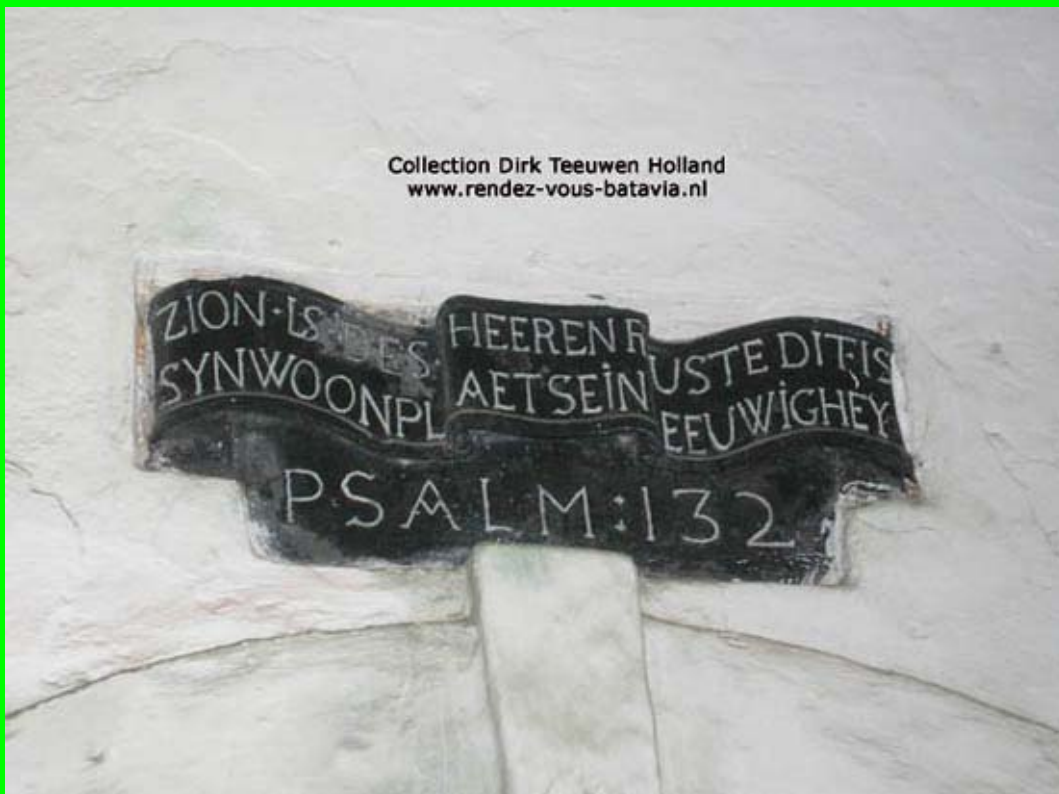


P.7 Detail of P.6: Tombstone of a Bewindhebber/Dutch Commander, 1758
Tombstone is not complete.

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P.8 At the left the cell for those, black as well as white, condemned to death, in the middle the cell for those with many drops too much and right the backdoor of the main gate; Elmina Castle 2009



P.9 A devout Dutch, melancholy protestant, psalm-text from 1679; Elmina Castle 2009
"Our final resting place is Sion, the residence of our Lord, for all eternity."

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P.10 Part of old Elmina town, Benya River to the north; Elmina 2009



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P.11 Entrance to the slave dungeons (males); Elmina Castle 2009

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P.12 Very old Portuguese chapel, later in the Dutch period, meant to auction slaves supplied by local African chiefs; Elmina Castle 2009

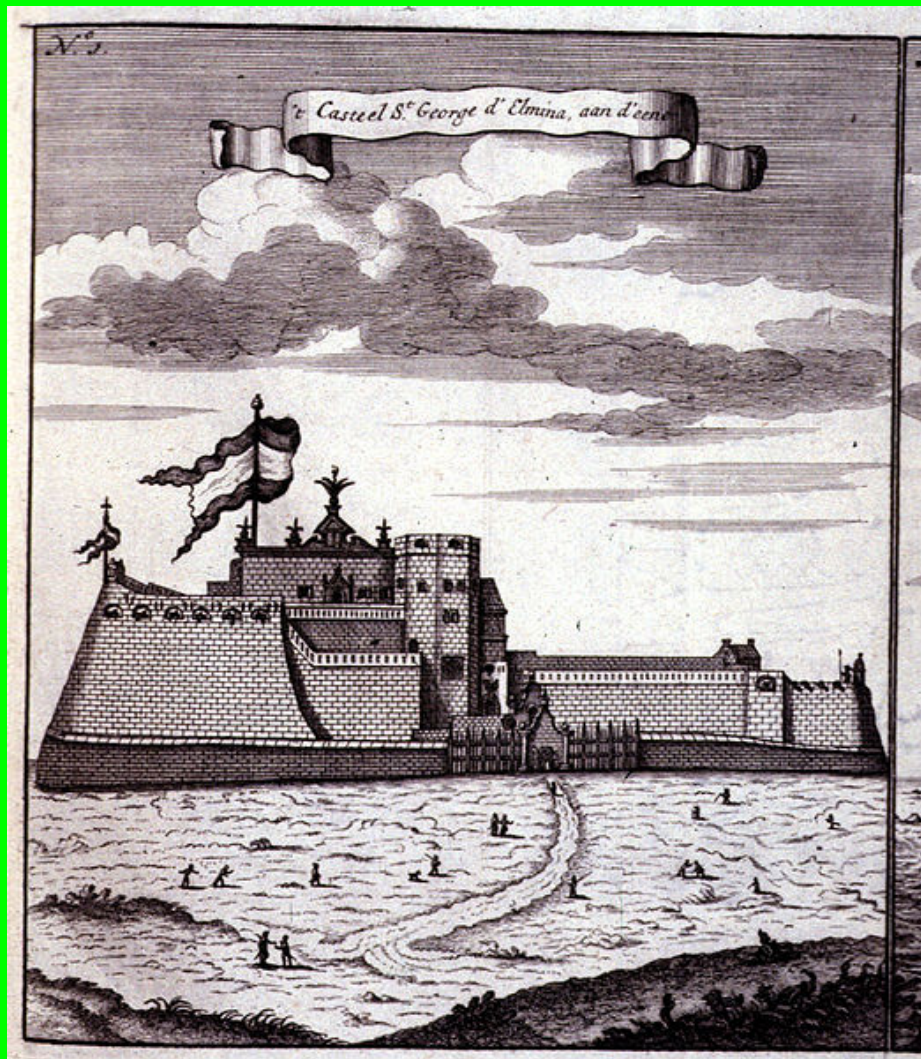
In 1482 the Portuguese founded Castle Sao Jorge da Mina, which means Saint George of the Mine, on a finger of land between the ocean and Ghana's Benya River. On this finger of land, north from the castle, a "native and mixed blood" trade-settlement came into being. The Portuguese were traders, who exchanged European and North African products against local gold and ornaments. Later the transport of gold from South America to Europe weakened the position of Portugal in Sao Jorge da Mina.

The Dutch conquered "Elmina Castle" in 1637 after the Portuguese had survived numerous attacks from Spaniards, French and English during the years before. The Dutch success came from a heavy bombardment of Elmina from Fort St. Jago – later named in Dutch Fort Coenraadsburg located on a hill opposite Elmina Castle – and several heavy assaults. In 1642 the Dutch West India Company owned all Portuguese castles and fortresses in the area.

Later, until 1872, Elmina became the headquarters of the Dutch possessions along the West African Coast. During that year the castle was ceded to the British, because the Dutch possessions in West Africa became loss-making. Elmina became an English police and military training centre for many years. From 1970 Elmina has become an official Ghanaese monument. As such in the first place and later Elmina as well as the other Gold Coast Castles and fortresses have been included on the Unesco World Heritage List.

Elmina was the first trading post built along the Gulf of Guinea and the oldest European fort in central and southern Africa. The trade-settlement grew rapidly due to gold and slave trade. In fact it became one of the most important stops on the route of the Atlantic slave trade within the trade triangle: Europe – West Africa – West Indies - Europe.

Text will be continued on page 14.

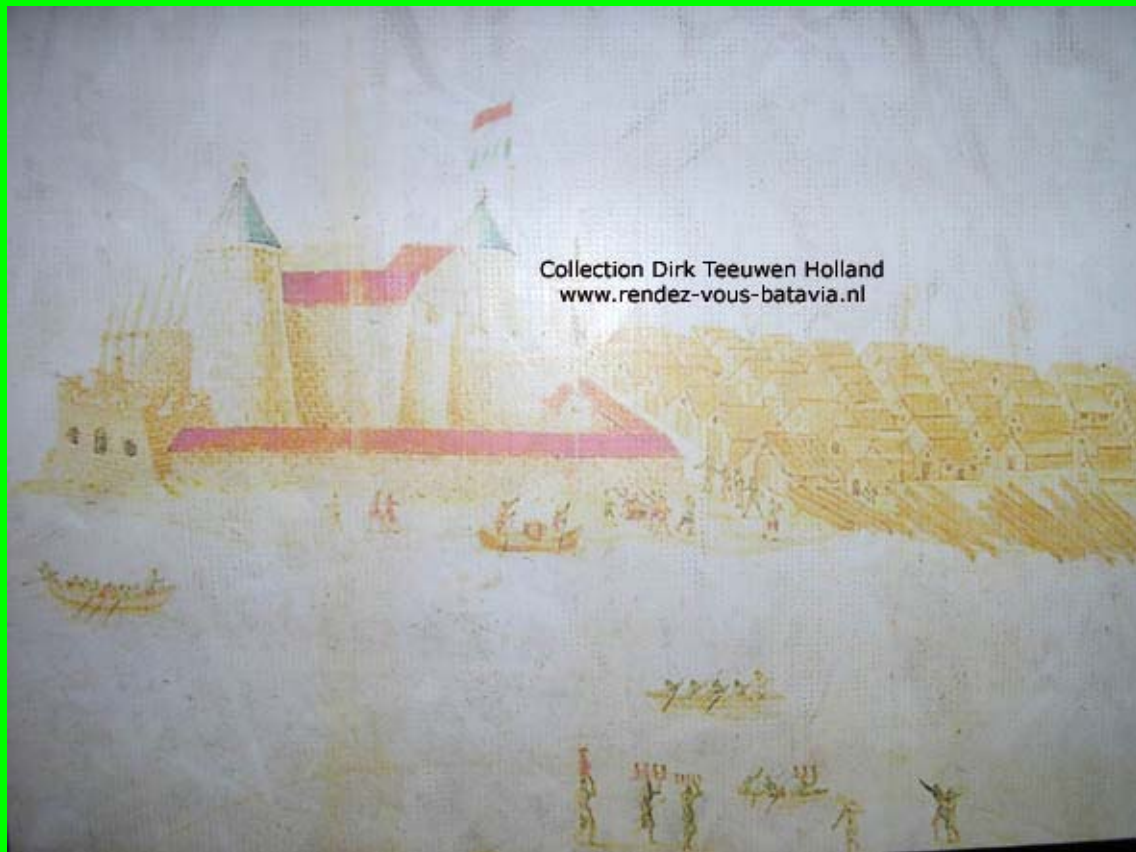


P.13 Elmina Castle from the north 1710; Cape Coast 2009
Museum Cape Coast Castle



P.14 Elmina Castle and Fort St. Jago / Fort Coenraadsburg from the west (ocean) in 1875; Museum
Cape Coast Castle 2009

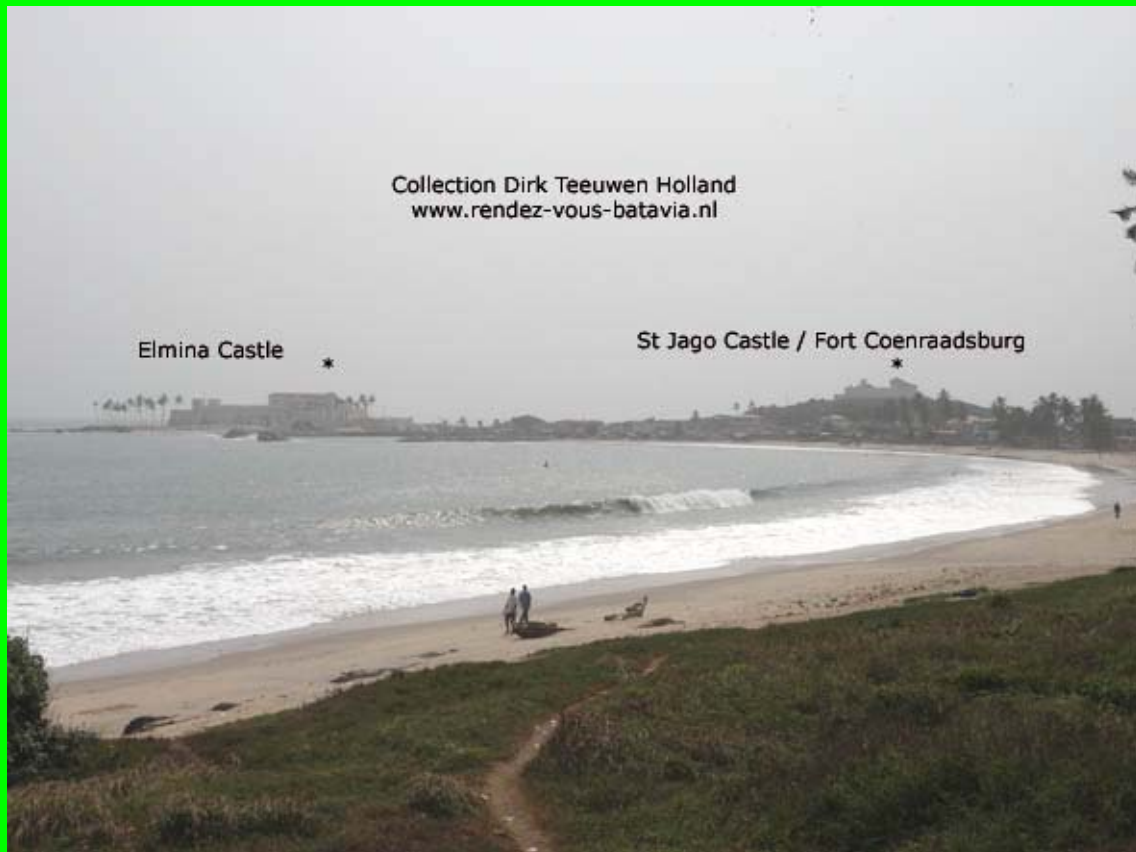
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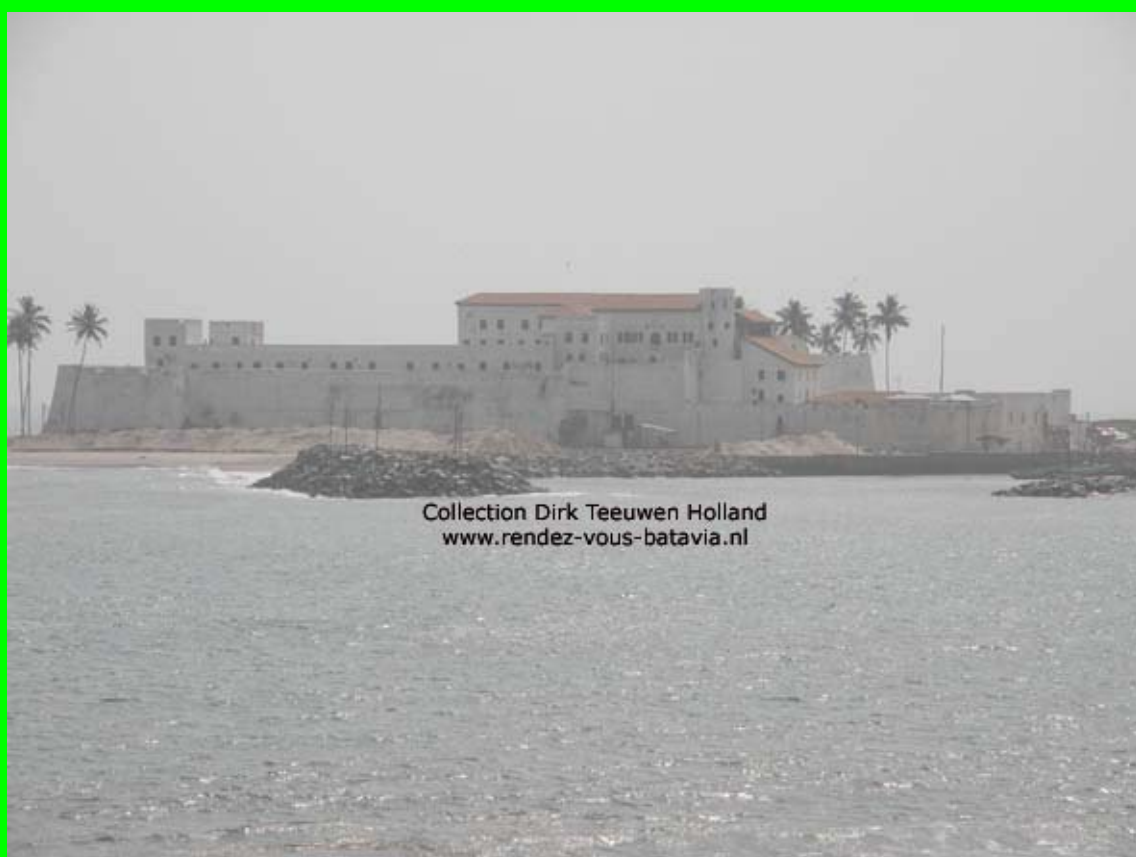
P.15 Elmina Castle on a strip of land seen from the south side of Benya River in 1690; Accra 2009
 National Museum Accra



P.16 Elmina Castle and Benya River in 1790; Accra 2009
 National Museum Accra



P.17 Elmina and St Jago Castle on a late afternoon; Ghana 2009



P.18 Elmina Castle from the south; Elmina 2009

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P.19 St Jago Castle / Fort Coenraadsburg; Elmina 2009

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P.20 St Jago Castle / Fort Coenraadsburg, main gate; Elmina 2009

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P.21 Elmina Castle and main gate from the north; Elmina 2009

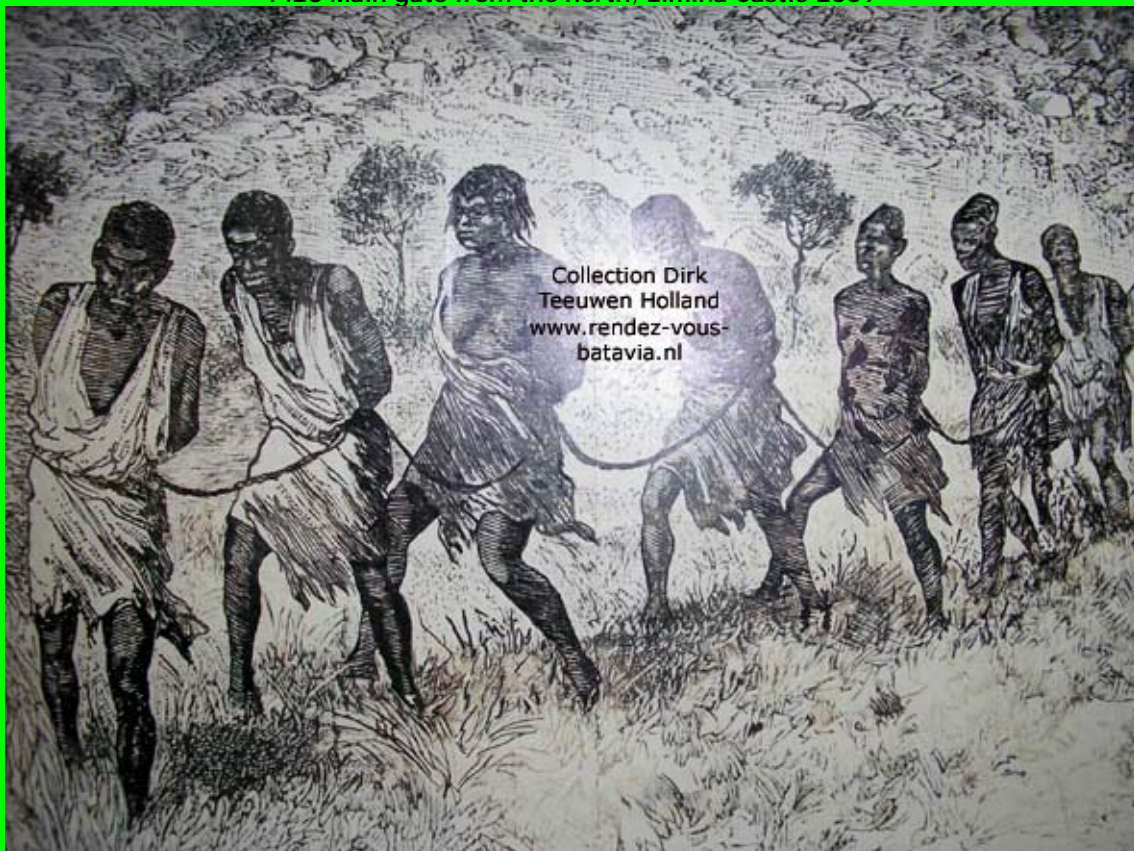


P.22 Elmina Castle and main gate from the north; Elmina 2009

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P.23 Main gate from the north; Elmina Castle 2009



P.24 Black Africans humiliating and torturing their own people, 1780; National Museum Accra 2009

The Gold Coast was an important market for slave traders. The demand came from Europeans on behalf of their American plantations. The supply came from black Africans. African chiefs captured slaves during their local civil wars and by simple attacks on peaceful villages. Those slaves were hostile aristocrats and warriors as well as women and children. Others were captured by black slave hunters in the interior of the Gold Coast. Trans Sahara slave routes had an notorious and awful reputation.

Men, women and children were shackled and had to march horrible journeys which could last hundreds of miles. Local guides at Elmina tell a lot of gruesome stories about European slave business, but are silent or lie about the stinking role of their black countrymen in the past. Anyway many of their stories are dreamed up. Captured slaves from the African mainland were stocked in warehouses owned by African traders along the coast. From there they were dragged to slave auctions in African coast villages or in the European castles.

The British outlawed slave trade with the Slave Trade Act 1807. However, despite of strict British control, Spaniards, Portuguese and others continued to carry on the trade. Slavery was officially abolished throughout the British Empire in 1834. However, black West African chiefs continued slavery until 1890-1910. In 1890 The king of Dahomey (now Benin) was the owner of 1200 slaves. Finally European and specially British imperialism made, more or less, an end to this crying abuses.



P.25 Dutch graveyard, tombstone from 1848; Elmina Centre 2009
In the memory of Martin Auguste Orth, military commander of the regular garrisons of the Gold Coast. Born in Yperen (then Southern Netherlands, now Belgium alas) May 10th 1819, died in St George D'Elmina 28 October 1848.



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P.26 Dutch graveyard, details from Dutch family graves; Elmina centre 2009

1. Lieutenant J. C. W. M. Joost died from an accident after the sale of the Dutch Gold Coast possessions to the British in 1872.
2. Governor Hoogenboom (misspelt as Hogenbom, the sign is of recent date), murdered in 1808. So, we know he departed from this life prematurely. But the reasons for the unknown scoundrel to knock the governor's brains out are still a mystery.

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P.27 Dutch graveyard, tombstone of the honorable Carel Hendrik Bartels 1850; Elimina centre 2009
 The tombstone tells us the following. Bartels was a member of the Dutch Gold Coast Colonial Council. He was born in 1792 and he died in 1850. His children placed this stone in his memory.
 R.I.P. means requiescat in pace. In case our visitor is not a Latinist, it means "may he rest in peace", which is a free translation.