

KARACHI: A HISTORIC CITY OF SINDH AND ITS PLACES DURING BRITISH REGIME

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Greeks called Karachi with the name of Krokola, Alexander had camped on the spot for short span of 24 hours, on his way back to home. It was known as the port of Debal, where Mohammad bin Qasim led his force in to South Asia in 711 A.D. (Lari, Yasmeen, Pakistan Studies, Dual City).

The present City started as a fishing settlement where Mai Kolachi, a fisherwoman, along-with her family lived. With the passage of time the settlement grew into a village known as Kolachi-jo-Goth (Kolachi's village).

Karachi changed from hands to hands. It originally belonged to Khan of Kalat. The Khan of Kalat handed it to Kalhoras as blood money for one of his brothers. In 1983, the city switched to Talpurs after two years siege.

In 1797, Talpurs constructed a fort on Manora as a defence against attack by Sea. The fort was armed with canons which were imported from Muscat. It had two main gateways, one facing the sea, known a Khara Darwaza, and the other facing the Lyari River known as Meetha Darwaza. Kharadar and Meethadar are now important vicinities in the old city around where these gates once stood (Arif Hassan: understanding Karachi).

Historically speaking out about this time the British started taking an interest in Karachi. They opened a small factory in September 1799, but it was closed after a year due to the disagreement with the Mirs of Sindh on trade tariff.

Karachi being a nerve line-line of Sindh often gave expansion to British Empire. In 1838, British East India Company occupied the town and it served as the landing port for their troops during the first Afghan War. In 1843 Charles Napier conquered Sindh and shifted the capital of province from Hyderabad to Karachi. The independence of Sindh was sub merged under Bombay Predency. They made Sindh a Part of Bombay Presidency and Karachi was made a district headquarter.

The British realized its importance as a Military cantonment and a port for exporting Sindh's Agricultural produce to Great Britain. They also developed its harbour for shipping. During this period, the foundations of City Municipal Governments were established for Karachi. It was done first time in British India.

The Population of the town started rising rapidly, the Karachi port gave boost to its trade, commerce which flourished rapidly. Karachi quickly turned into a city, making true the famous quote by Napier who is known to have said, you will be the glory of the East "would that I could come again to see you Karachi in your grandeur!" (Ansari Nuha Karachi Edge of Empire, p.13).

In 1838, Karachi had about 14,000 inhabitants this number rose, 117,000 inhabitants by the time of 19th century, Karachi had become one of the biggest and best port of the world. The population comprised the 55% of Muslims and 41% of Hindus. Karachi was now a city of metropolitan character attracting the prosperity of the port city sizable population of Goans, Parsi, Bohras, Lebanese, Iranian, Hindu merchants and European traders. The multi lingua population of the city had by this time grounded the status of city from metropolitan to cosmopolitan.

In 1857, the first Indian War for independence broke out in the sub-continent. They faced trouble in Sindh too. Soon it was crushed by the British and they took control over Karachi. Seven freedom fighters were publically hanged in artillery ground and

three other were blasted in the mouth of canons. An eyewitness accounts state: "their remains were immediately collected by sweepers and carted away to a pit at some distance. After this those who had been hanged were cut down like so many dead dogs and taken away in the same manner. One week later another 14 freedom fighters were hanged in a similar manner. Ram Dev Pandey, the ring leader of the Karachi revolutionaries, was blasted from the mouth of cannon. Karachi has not honoured these freedom fighters and no monuments have been built on them, nor have any road been named after them. (Arif Hassan: understanding Karachi).

In 1861, Karachi got its first railway line a hundred mile-line stretching from Karachi to Kotri. In 1878, the railway line from Karachi to Kotri was extended to join the Dehli-Punjab railway system at Multan, connecting Karachi with rest of the British India by railway line. By this time in 1876 Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan was born in the city, which by now had become a bustling city with railway stations, churches, mosques, court houses, markets, paved streets stone made magnificent beautiful buildings, gardens, broad and straight streets with planned cosmopolitan look and a magnificent harbour.

In 1864, the first telegraphic message was sent from India to England, when a direct telegraph connection was laid down between Karachi and London. The modern telecommunication link with Europe which revolutionized trade and Commerce of Karachi.

The Karachi city with the growth of population now had a traffic problem because of the number of carts and carriages on the street and roads. In 1885, a public tram service was started which commenced from Saddar Cantonment Karachi. These trams were driven by steam. The improved communication system of transport made Karachi the "Queen of Asia".

By 1914, Karachi had become the largest grain exporting port of the British Europe. A new building for the Karachi port

trust was constructed in 1915 which was soon after a month converted into a 500 bed hospital due to the out break of the First World War (1914-1918). Karachi became the military base as it was the first port of called for ships coming through the Suez Canal. It was the gate to the Russian empire north of Afghanistan too. In 1924, the first Airport in British India was constructed in Karachi. At this time Karachi has acquired the reputation for having a healthy climate and most suitable for TB and asthma patients. This reputation also added to its population. In 1936, Sindh was separated from the Bombay Presidency and Karachi was made the capital city of new province. Law courts, revenue departments, social sector departments were established, thus increasing its population and importance. Sindh's landed aristocracy started building homes in the city and merchants who previously had there head offices in Bombay shifted to Karachi to be near the new seat of Power.

During the Second World War Karachi again became the military base and port for supplies to the Russian Front troops stationed and trained here, military intelligence services functioned from here and telegraph and telecommunication system were developed as a result. It is estimated that 90% of Karachi's population growth between the years 1921 to 1941 was a result of migration. In 1947, Pakistan came into being as a new country made by the partition of British India. Karachi became the capital city and prime port of the new state. At that time the population of Karachi was 450,000 of which 61.2 percent were Sindhi speaking, 6.3 percent were Urdu Hindi speaking, 51 percent were Hindu, and 42 percent were Muslim. By 1951, all this had changed and Karachi's population increased over whelmingly to 1.137 million because of the influx of 600,000 refugees came from India. In 1951 Sindhi speaking population was 8.6 percent and Urdu speaking population was 50 percent. The Muslim population was 96 percent and Hindu population was 2 percent. This situation had major impact on the development of Karachi.

During the British Regime, a number of beautiful classical and colonial European styled buildings were introduced in the city. These buildings included:

1. Saint Patrick's Cathedral, Karachi, 1845

The first church in Sindh, it is located near Empress Market, saddar bazaar, Karachi. It is built in Gothic style and can accommodate at least 1500 worshippers. It covers an area of two acres. This church is still in use for the prayers.

2. Government House 1848-49

Just opposite to the main entrance of Holy Trinity Church is the Government House. It was built by Sir Charles Napier and covering an area of 40 acres of land. It was plain single story building. After the retirement of Sir Charles Napier it was purchased by the government for the Commissioner's residence in 1847. The Commissioner at that time was Mr. Pringle. In 1856, Commissioner of Sindh 'General Jacob' added 1st floor to the central block of the house

3. Collector's Kutcherry 1850-1860

This was the earliest office and treasury of the collector of Karachi. It looks like a large barrack. It was built in the house the Revenue Officers or Collector's Office. There is just one staircase at the backside of the building which is opened. This building is still in use for the same purpose.

4. Karachi Civil Hospital 1854

One of the oldest British construction in Sindh and there is no clear record of its origin but its central part which is situated in the Raunchore lines was built by the government in 1854.(Gazetteer of the Province of Sindh, vol-I, 1919). The hospital had the capacity of 75 beds. This hospital was directly under the control of civil surgeon of Karachi. The hospital of Karachi is still present and renovated and serving people as a medical centre.

5. Holy Trinity Church, 1855

Its exceptionally tall tower was used as a beacon for ships approaching the Karachi harbour. This was the first protestant church built in Sindh. It stands between the Victoria road and Elphinstone Street and just opposite to the Governor House. The building of the Church still vindicates its glory.

The foundation stone of the Church was laid down by Mr. Sir Bartle Frere in 1852. It accommodates 800 sitting capacity.

6. European Cemetery 1858-59

This burial ground is known as "Gora Qabristan" and contains the most authentic records of the history of Karachi. It is between bunder road and preedy tank. The ground belongs to the time when reserve forces encamped near the old town of Karachi before the conquest

7. St: Joseph's Convent School 1864

It was built by the Catholics in 1864. Initially co, education, system of education was introduced in the St: Joseph's Convent School in 1961. Later 1962, the girls were separated and the charge of the girls' school was given to the Nuns. These nuns were also accommodated at the school building. In 1870, the upper portion was added to the school's imposing structure. St: Joseph school is still imparting educational services.

8. Cantonment Station 1865

It is known as Frerre Station. There is a triangle of bungalows in South of Frerre Station which is known as Frerre Town. Cantonment railway station was built to serve the civil liner area of Karachi. It also serves as a terminus for Karachi's tram way System which is being operated from 1885 using horse pulled tramcars which were later driven by steam and diesel engines.

9. Frerre Hall 1865

Frerre Hall is fine, beautiful and most notable building in Karachi. It was built in the honour of Sir H. Bartle, E. Frerre, a

popular commissioner of the province of Sindh from 1851 to 1859. It is made of familiar yellowish Karachi limestone and it is in a gothic style. This is a Town Hall of Karachi for public meetings, lectures, balls, concerts etc the building added beauty and grandeur to the city. The people of Sindh cherish the memory of Sir B. Frerre who had indeed modernized Sindh by introducing reforms during British rule in Sindh.

On the ground floor there are four large rooms, out of those two are occupied by the Karachi General Library which was established in 1851, and became a part of the Frerre Hall in 1965. The frerre hall is used for the book and card exhibitions and for different conferences and seminars now a days.

10. Indo-European Telegraph Office, 1866

It is situated on the McLeod Road. It consists of two wings in two separate buildings in a large walled enclosure. The style of this telegraphic building is Italian. It was commenced in 1864 and finished in 1866.

The building consists of a storeroom, a workshop, a library and a billiard room etc. All these are made of stone. It consists of different offices i.e. Superintendent's Office, Accounts' Office, Traffic Manager Offices and Director's Office. It also includes quarters for the workers also.

11. Post Office, 1867

This building is on the west of the Indo-European Telegraph building on three to four acres. It is also in a Italian Style. It consists of lower and upper floor. The postmaster resides in the lower floor and the upper floor was reserved for the post office. There are quarters for 12 persons, 6 houses and 6 mail carts. There is a compound wall but the rain and water flow had broken it.

12. St: Andrew's Church 1867 – 1869

This is between Elphinstone Street and Victoria Road and half a mile from Holy Triuty Church. This is also in Gothic style

and designed by Mr. T.G. Newnham the Chief Engineer Scinde railway of that time. The Church can accommodate 400 worshippers. The foundation stone of this church was laid in 1867 by Robert Napier K.B.C Commander-in-chief of Bombay Army and it opened in 1868.

13. Sindh Madressah-tul-Islam 1868 -1887

This is the first Muslim educational complex built in Sindh. The Site was previously Municipal Committee Ground, Carvan Serai. The building was designed by James Strachan and foundation stone was laid by Viceroy Lord Dufferin in 1887. It was founded by the late Khan Bahadur Hasan Ali B Effendi as president of the Sindh Muhammadan Association. The Madressah is a brilliant style of Islamic Architecture. It contains 2 large halls and 32 rooms for classes. The founder of Pakistan Mohammad Ali Jinnah had his early education at the Madressah. Sindh Madressah is one of the renowned educational institution of Karachi.

14. Sindh Club 1871

It is situated on Victoria road and to the north of Frerre Hall. It was originally housed in a small bungalow on Elphinstone street. In 1882 a competition was arranged to sketch out the design of Sindh club. The winning design was submitted by James Strachan. It is in gothic style, entire building is of light limestone. The present building was erected in 1883.

15. Edulji Dinshaw Dispensary 1882

It is named after its Parsi Donor, Edulji Dinshaw who was Banker and paid half of the cost of construction. It was designed by James Strachan and was completed in 1882. It is in Italian Style and agave free medical services for many years. Now this dispensary is known as a K.M.C. Dispensary and serving the people of Karachi

16. Max Denso Hall 1886

This Hall is situated on the Bunder Road. This Hall was constructed to honour Max Denso a prominent citizen of Karachi who occupied the chair of president of the Chamber of Commerce

and industry for six times 1870 to 1871. The Municipality provided the site for the Hall. It was designed by James Strachan. It includes a public Hall, Library, a reading room and some small rooms on the ground floor. The upper / 1st floor consists of a large Hall accommodating 500 persons and was used for different social gatherings. It is in Gothic Style.

17. Karachi Gymkhana 1886

The Gymkhana is situated at scandal point road since 1886. It is the point where European population of Karachi used to meet in the early days of the conquest. As the European population in Karachi increased they felt a need of a place for social gathering and meeting places at that time they built Karachi Gymkhana in 1886 near the rifle range. Karachi gymkhana is still serving the same purpose for the people of Karachi.

18. Dayaram Jethmal Science College–D.J. Science College 1887

It was originally Sindh Arts College which was started in a hired bungalow. In 1887, the Viceroy Lord Dufferin laid the foundation stone of the present college building. The college was named as "Dayaram Jathmal Science College" in the memory of the late Mr. Dayaram Jethmal whose family contributed Rs.25000/- for that purpose. Site for the college was granted by the Municipality free of cost. The college is one of the most striking buildings of Karachi. It is designed by James Strachan and this college is still providing education.

19. Empress Market 1891

Again credit goes to James starchan a Scot, who was Official Engineer of Karachi Municipality. His design has a magical quality. This market was named after queen Victoria. It was built on preedy road in Saddar Bazar in the year 1891; the foundation stone was laid by Sir James Fergusson, Governor of Bombay nearly seven years before but work legged for the shortage of funds. Empress market is serving as a whole sale market now a day.

The market contains 280 stalls for fruits, vegetables, flowers, meat, spices etc and 258 shops for the different kind of goods.

20. Merewether Memorial Tower 1892

It is a fine building, built in the memory of former Commissioner Sindh Sir William Merewether from 1867 to 1877. It is situated at the point where Bunder (M.A. Jinnah) Road meets with McLeod Road (I.I. Chundrigar Road). It was also designed by the James Starchan and it is Gothic Style of Architecture. Its foundation stone was laid in 1884 and was completed in 1892. Merewether Memorial Tower is prominent point in the city. Its standing height is 102 feet above the ground.

21. Victoria Museum 1892

Adjacent to D.J. Science College is the Victoria Museum. Sir Charles Napier wanted to store the collection of artifacts, but there were no proper place to store them. In 1886 the foundation stone was laid by the Duke of Cannaught and the building was named after his mother queen Victoria. This Museum was designed by James Starchan and it was completed in 1892 and all the artifacts were transferred to it. Its control passed to the Municipality and that resulted in the loss of many valuables. The Museum consists of a main hall as well as ten small rooms. This Museum was used as a state Bank of Pakistan for some years after independence. Now this is a Supreme Court Office.

22. Lady Dufferin Hospital 1898

This building begun on November 12, 1894 with its foundation stone laid by 'Lady Elgin, the wife of the Honourable Viceroy Lord Elgin. The Hospital was named of Lady Dufferin. Lady dufferin hospital is serving as the maternity hospital now a days.

23. Khaliq Dina Hall, 1906

Ghulam Hussain Khaliq Dino has left an amount of Rs.18,000, with a desire to utilize the amount on some

philanthropic activity. His family honoured his will and put that amount for construction of Hall. The Municipality added Rs.15,000/- and the hall was built, it opened in 1906. It consists of one big hall for public meetings and two rooms. This building is maintained by the Municipality. This Hall is famous because of the Trial of Maulana Mohammad Ali Johar and Maulana Shaukat Ali, who were held here during Khilafat Movement. This hall is used for the seminars and exhibitions now a day.

24. City Courts 1906

This building was originally built for the Bank of Bombay. It was then acquired by the government in 1868 and since then it is performing variety of law enforcement roles. It is a two story building with many windows.

25. Karachi Port Trust Building, 1915

In 1914, Karachi had become the largest grain exporting port of the British Empire. A new building for the Karachi Port Trust was constructed in 1915. It was designed by G. Wittet, consultant architect to the Government of Bombay. The building was built on a very large scale and dominates its surrounding. It is a three story splendid & elegant building. This building was converted into a 500 bed military hospital just after a month of its opening due to the out break of First World War 1914 – 1918. This building still occupies prominence in the big buildings of Karachi.

26. Sindh High Court Building 1920

The Sindh High Court Building is situated between King's and Queen's road. It was built in a classical style and designed by G. Wittet, the same architect who have designed the Karachi Port Trust Building. The foundation stone of the court was laid by the Governor of Bombay Sir George Lloyd in 1920. It was built with red sandstone. This is one of the beautiful building of British Empire and serving the same purpose now a days.

27. Jehangir Kothari Parade 1920

This Parade provides access to the sea at Clifton. An eminent citizen of Karachi Jehangir Kothari gifted it along with handsome donation to the Municipality for the development of recreational facilities. It is made of Gizri limestone and red Jodhpur sandstone. The foundation stone was laid by the Governor of Bombay, Sir George Lloyd in 1919 and formally open by Lady Lloyd in 1920. This parade has been renovated by the sindh government in 2006-07 and opened for the public.

28. State Bank Building 1923

This building was originally built as a branch of the Imperial Bank of India. It is a two story building in Jodhpur Sandstone and still serving as a state bank of Pakistan.

29. Chamber of commerce 1923

This was also built in dusky pink Jodhpur Sandstone. This building is relatively small but attractive. It is a double story building. And still in use for the same purpose.

30. Hindu Gymkhana 1925

The Hindu Gymkhana is influenced by the Mughal buildings in the subcontinent. Its architect was Agha Ahmed Hussain who completed it in 1925. Seth Ram Gopal Gourdhana Mohatta gave big amount of the money for its construction. This club was for upper Hindu Community who was a strong commercial and business elite of the Karachi before independence. This gymkhana is still present and has been renovated from time to time.

31. Karachi Municipal Corporation Building 1932

This building is situated on Bunder Road. This building is designed and planned by James C. Wynes of Edinburgh. Its design is hotchpotch of European and Mughal architecture. This is a three storyed handsome building of Karachi. KMC building is still in the use of the municipal corporation.

32. Mohatta Palace 1935

This palace belonged to an ambitious self-made Hindu Shivarattan Chandraratan Mohatta. He was a businessman from Marwar and he used this palace for his Summer House. However, he could enjoy his building only for two decades before the partition of subcontinent, which forced him to leave Karachi. This palace is built in traditional Rajesthani Stone palaces. It is made of pink Jodhpur stone and giziri yellow limestone. There are nine domes on the palace. It is a beautiful palace with all the necessities of luxurious life. After Mohatta's departure to India, Government of Pakistan used it for the office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs but soon after it was handed over to Mohtarma Fatima Jinnah and it became Qasr-e-Fatima. After her death her sister moved in and occupied the ground floor for many years. Later it was sealed for many years. Recently it is renovated by the Government and opened for the historical exhibitions for the public.

33. Sindh Assembly Building 1935

It is a attractive double story building. It was used as the Assembly for the elected members of the Sindh Province. After Independence in 1947 when Karachi became the capital of Pakistan this building was used as a National Assembly Building, but in 1962 when capital moved to Islamabad the building again used for its original use as Sindh Assembly.

CONCLUSION

Karachi, which is now a days on the zenith of its glory had acquired this prominency in evolutionary way. This evolutionary development was brought as realized in practical sense by Charles Napier. He realized the strategic importance for the town and seaport to the British Empire and its interests. The Karachi Harbour was the nearest point to Europeans in the subcontinent. As the seaport developed and grew, so did the town under Napier Administration from 1843 to 1847. After him, Sir Barlle Frerre the famous commissioner of Sindh developed the town with many residential, commercial and administrative buildings. At the time of Pakistan independence, Karachi consisted of four distinct areas,

one the old Pre-British City. This area was occupied by native merchant classes and the proletariat that worked for them. The area had large number of Dharamshala, Mosque and Hindu temples. Second is Sadder Bazar which was European's shopping area and also residential area which was dominated by Goan, Parsis, and Europeans who owned much of the business in the Bazar. The Saddar Bazar was dominated by Churches Mission Schools, community halls and civic buildings. The third area between these two consisted of administrative and civic buildings and educational institutions and fourth the Layari and Machi Miani where the working classes live. A diesel tramway connected these of Karachi was 450,000. The influx of 600,000 refugees² from India increased the City's population to 1.137 Million.

Pakistan's first civil and military bureaucracy was housed in the city and Karachi served as the capital city of Pakistan until 1958. Afterwards the city went through a period of governmental negligence and ethnic crises. Commercialization has greatly damaged its character and heritage. Karachi had become a busy metropolitan and cosmopolitan city with beautiful classic and colonial European styled buildings in the city. The demographic of the city has drastically changed. But the spirit of Karachi always lived on, it still maintained a great cultural diversity as its new habitants arrived from all parts of the subcontinent and other countries of the world.

After the first election were held under the Government of India Act of 1935, all the Sindh Assembly's sessions from 1937 up to the creation of Pakistan in 1947 had been held in this building. Particularly to Sindh Assembly's historic session of 1943 was held here in support of historic Lahore Resolution, 1940. Further it was another historic Resolution moved by Sindh Assembly's in the same historical Assembly's building in which the Province of Sindh opted for Pakistan and it was annexed to Pakistan on 3rd June 1947.

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