

Quaid-i-Azam House Museum Karachi

Dr. Qasim Ali Qasim

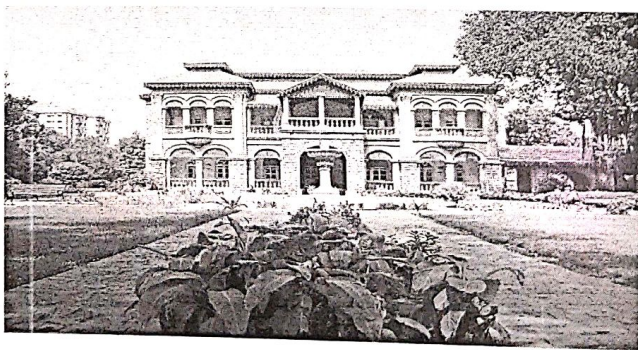
Director, Southern Circle of Archaeology, Government of Pakistan
Quaid-i-Azam House Museum, 241-Fatima Jinnah Road, Karachi

The Quaid-i-Azam House Museum, commonly known as the 'Flagstaff House' is one of the rare examples of historic buildings in Karachi that have been properly maintained and used for public consumption. It is in the heart of the city and ideally located at the junction of Shakra-e-Faisal and Fatima Jinnah Road. The corner location of this building gives it an additional edge, as one simply cannot pass-by without noticing it. The major hotels of the city are located in its close vicinity, and also many commercial officers and educational establishments are located nearby that are thronged with people the whole day.



The 'Quaid-i-Azam House' is a modest but attractive double storeyed bungalow, built in the 1890's, and said to have been designed by the architect Moses So make. Since 1940 the house was rented by British Indian Army to serve as the residence of General Officer Commanding and thus became known as the Flagstaff House. The ideal location and surrounding open spaces

with tall trees, add a sense of grandeur to the building. It was visited by Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah in 1943 with the intention of acquiring it. At that time it was owned by a Parsi business magnate Sohrab Kavasji and his wife Din Katrak. The deed of purchase was registered in March 1944 in the name of Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Barrister-at-Law, Bombay, for Rs.115,000/- From 1944, onwards these army commanders became the tenants of the Quaid-i-Azam. After partition in 1947, the belongings and furniture of Jinnah from his Delhi and Bombay residence were shifted to this bungalow and kept in readiness for his retirement. The Quaid never had the chance to live here, but after his death in 1948, his sister Mohtarma Fatima Jinnah moved into this house and lived here till 1964. During the general election of 1965 this place served as the headquarters of combined Opposition Parties. With the death of Shirin Jinnah the last surviving sister of the Quaid-i-Azam, Flagstaff House became the property of Quaid-i-Azam Trust, from whom the Government of Pakistan purchased it at a cost of Rs.51,07,000/- on February 14, 1985 (Star Nov, 25, 1993). The inauguration of this museum was done in December, 1993 by the then Governor of Sindh Hakim Muhammad Said. The museum is managed by the Department of Archeology & Museums. The entrance for visitors is free.



The policy decision taken at the beginning of restoration work was carried out. In this regard the stone required for repair work was brought from old (demolished) buildings to match the original stonework of Flagstaff House. Tiles for the repair of sloping roofs (which had cracked at several places) were taken also taken from old structures.

Restoration and Renovation

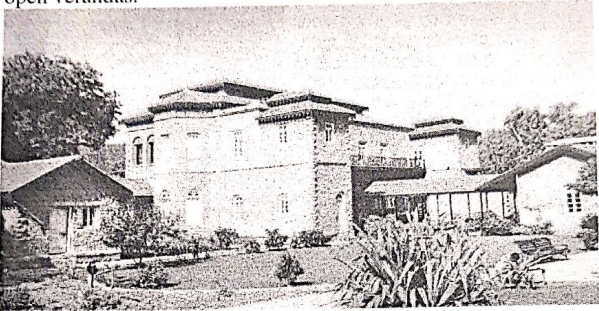
Prior to its conversion into a museum the flagstaff house remained deserted for some years, as a result of which it underwent deterioration. Once it was acquired by the Government of Pakistan, repairs work was initiated with Lari Associates appointed as the restoration consultants and architects, and the Department of Archeology, Government of Pakistan, their clients. Due to several years of desolation immense repair work was needed both externally and internally. Cracks and open joints due to slip of masonry, cracks in slabs, broken plasters and missing elements of architectural ornamental detail, etc, were all to be dealt with.

Before the actual restoration work started, the whole building was completely documented to ensure that no changes are done that would alter the external outlook of the structure. It was decided, as a policy, not to interfere with the actual essence of the building and try to retain its character as original as possible. Thus all external works and repairs were done with special care to their detailing, for the building to retain its architectural character.

The policy decisions taken at the beginning of the restoration work were carried out thoroughly. In this regard the stone required for repair work was brought from old (demolished) buildings to match the original stonework of Flagstaff House.

Tiles for the repair of sloping roofs (which had caved-in at several places) were also taken from old structure. The flooring tiles had to be replaced but their original colour and size, as well as

arrangement of border were retained. The wooden jafry [honey comb] along the verandas, which were a later addition to the structure, were removed to bring back the original character of open verandas.



The out-houses, which included servant rooms, stables and garages were in bad state of repair, but since their quality of construction, originally was not very good, it was decided to reconstruct them. However, their footprint and profiles were not altered, and no new structures were added to the complex. Thus all the open spaces around the buildings were retained with special consideration given to save the old trees.

As for the interiors, they were also treated in a manner, which portrays the character of the building. However, to make the building serve effectively as a museum, it was necessary to bring about certain subtle modifications and changes.

Objects on Display at the Museum

The Quaid-i-Azam House Museum constitutes an impressive display of the personal belongings and furniture of the Quaid and his sister Miss Fatima Jinnah. The displays are organized in a manner that they give an impression as though the

rooms are still in use by them. The ground floor has his study and office a drawing room/lounge for guests and the dinner area. The space adjoining the dinner room is the old service room where the dinner sets, and other related objects are on display.

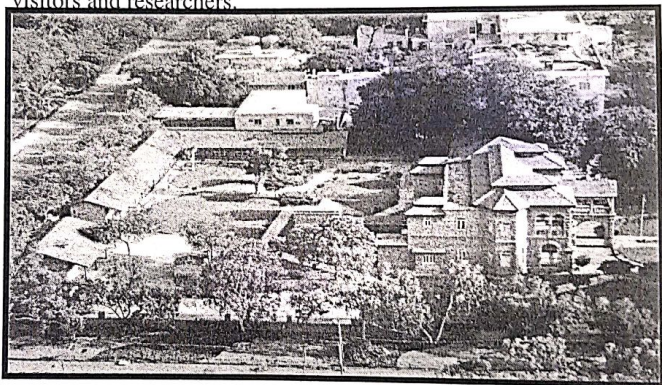
The first floor has the bedroom suites of the Quaid at one end and that of Miss Fatima Jinnah on the other end. Both of these have adjoining dressing areas. The bed, dressing table, cupboards and some other personal objects, used by them, are displayed over here. The area that connects the two wings has a family lounge and a breakfast room that overlooks the open space on the back side, having a small table and two chairs. Thus the spatial organization of the house is maintained as it was when in use by the Jinnahs.

The display does not only portray the lifestyle of Quaid-i-Azam but gives the visitors an idea of his refined tastes, reflected in his choice of furniture. The delicately carved wood work, the ornate showcase, the tastefully decorated dressing table and the luxuriously comfortable sofas, all take the visitor back to the good old days when emphasis was on details and on each and every object, no matter how small. Many of the items on display are gifts received by the Quaid from various heads of countries and their diplomatic offices. Along the staircase landings there is a small display of photographs of the Quaid and Miss Fatima Jinnah.

Need for an Interactive approach

The conversion of Flagstaff House into Quaid-i-Azam House Museum is not only a commendable attempt to pay tribute to the Father of our nation, but for those who have the ability to appreciate the finesse in life, it is also a tribute to our heritage, and an experience of tasting the essence of life in the bygone days of Karachi. A visitor can visualize the persistence of Quaid's spirit, endorsing the fact that the past can continue to have its niche in the present, helping us in maintaining a link with our history.

The building of the Quaid-i-Azam House Museum stands in the centre of a large open space that has old trees and lavish gardens. With this ideal setting the grounds are well suited for anyone seeking some solitary moments away from the hustle and bustle of city life. But, unfortunately, there is rarely a soul to avail this opportunity. The Department of Archeology and Museums has recently shifted the head office of its Southern Circle into the outhouses of this museum, there is also a small portion of the archeology library that is shifted here, but owing to lack of staff and non-availability of a librarian this facility is not available for visitors and researchers.

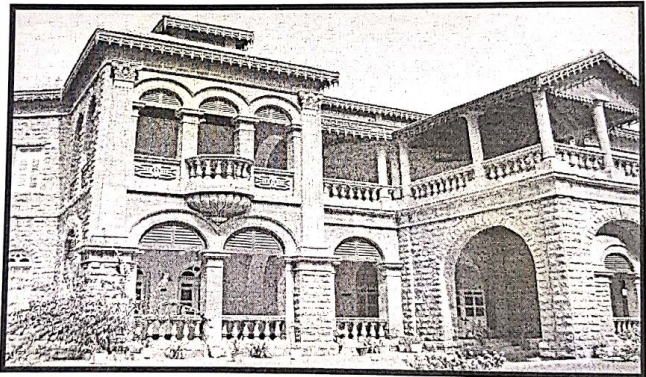


With all the efforts put into the restoration of this building and the maintenance of the place, it is a pity that the facility is being so underutilized. There is a need for developing this museum on more interactive methods, in order to attract and encourage visitors. Museums of important personalities all over the world are developed, managed and run on such concepts; where they are also able to sustain themselves partly through the visitor incomes. A small souvenir shop, small scale refreshment booths, periodic special events and exhibitions, screening of historic documentaries and movies, etc, can be provided through which the museum can

become a more sought for educational cum recreational facility for the otherwise culturally starved citizens of Karachi.

Situated at the crossing of Shahrah-e-Faisal and Fatima Jinnah Road is a gorgeous yellow stone double storeyed building in the middle of a vast open piece of land which is popularly known as the Flag Staff House.

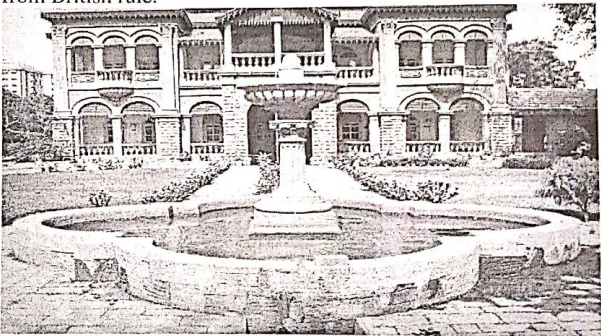
Built on plot No. 241, Staff Lines, Karachi Cantonment, the House was purchased by Quaid-i-Azam for Rs. 11,500/-, with a down payment of Rs. 5000/-. The sale agreement was made on 14th August 1943, with Mr. Sorab Kavasji Katrak, a former Mayor of Karachi. At that time the House was situated on Bonus Road, an extension of Elphinstone Street, which are both now called Fatima Jinnah Road and Zaib-un-Nisa Street respectively.



It is not known when this house was built, except that it was in the fading years of the 19th century. Available records show that until 1922 the owner was Mr. Ramachand Hansraj Kachi Lohana. The house was later obtained on rent by the British Indian Army and from 1940 onward Brig, Hartwell, Major Gen. C. Durnfort, Maj. Gen. N.G. Hindu and Gen. Douglas D. Gracy who

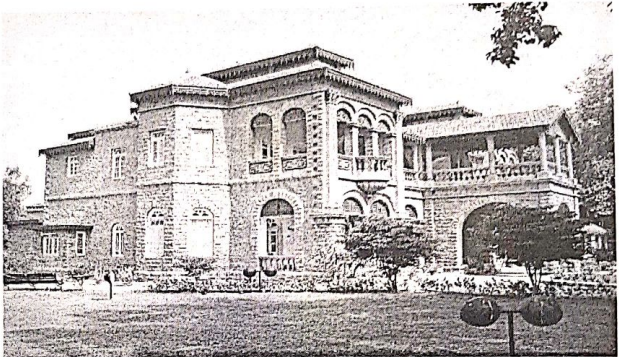
later on became the Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Pakistan Army resided here.

Obviously, from 1943 onward, these army commanders were tenants of the new owner. Rent receipts have been retrieved which show recipient Quaid-i-Azam (between January and April 1947) and payee the then General Officer Commanding, Lt. Gen. D.D. Gracy .The one dated 18th April 1947 might be the last one as in September 1947, a month after the creation of Pakistan, Quaid-i-Azam's personal belongings were transferred to Flag Staff House from his house at 10 Aurangzeb Road, New Delhi, where he had lived during the intense political activities leading to independence from British rule.



At the time of the sale to Quaid-i-Azam, the Flag Staff House was owned jointly by Mr. Sorab Kavasji Katrak, his wife Mrs. Dina Sorab Kavasji Katrak and daughters Virbaiji, Khorshedbai and Parinbai, In the Deed of Sale, Mr. and Mrs. Katrak and their eldest daughter, Virbaiji, were shown as the Trustees duly registered under an Indenture of Trust dated 31st May 1931. It was from these Trustees that the Cantonment Board had rented the house for residential use at Rs.435.50 per month. There are letters of army top brass, as well on display.

The Quaid, did not get time to live in this house. There is no authentic record which could show when he visited this place but there are otherwise reliable traditions indicating that he visited this house quite often.



After his demise, his sister and political companion, Mohtrama Fatima Jinnah, who had lived with him in the Governor General House, moved in Flagstaff House on 13th September 1948. She lived here until 1964 where from she shifted to her own house, the “Mohatta Place” (Qasre-e-Fatima), at Clifton.

The Madir-e-Millat, Mohtrama Fatima Jinnah, died on 9th July 1967 where after a commission was set up, by a Presidential Decree, to identify the Quaid’s personal belongings of historical significance. The identified relics which were found in poor state were scientifically treated and restored for public display.

With the death of Quad-i-Azam’s last surviving sister Shirinbai, the ownership of Flagstaff House reverted to the reconstituted “Quaid-i-Azam Trust”, comprising Mr. Hashim Raza and Mr. Liaquat Merchant. From these Trustees the Government of

Pakistan purchased the Flagstaff House for Rs. 5, 107000/- by a Deed signed on 14th February 1985. Restoration and renovation work was taken in hand earlier on 14th June 1984 and, the Quaid-i-Azam House, as it is now named, was declared open to public on 25th November, 1993. Spread on 10,241 sq. yds. the building itself is not too large. There are three rooms on the ground floor and three rooms on the first floor. Two exterior rooms are 16 feet 10 inches wide. The same dimensions are of the rooms on the first floor, each with openings to the verandah.

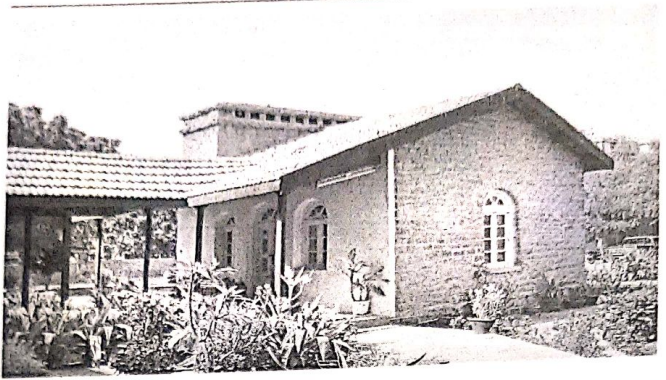
There is an annexe, which is now converted into an auditorium-cum-exhibition hall for debates, educational lectures, audio-visual shows etc.

There were also 18 out-houses, 4 garages, 3 guard rooms and a kitchen which have now been converted into the administrative block.

The structure is built in lime-stone masonry with wooden trusses supporting the roof. Red ceramic Manglore tiles are used at the top to cover the roof. The staircase is all wooden and is in dark brown colour. Beautifully coloured tiles are used in the ground floor and wooden planks are used on the first floor as covering.

Each room is decorated with those relics which Quaid-i-Azam used during his lifetime. A finely carved cigarette box of good quality sandalwood is one of the antiques now placed in the house and a big camphorwood box which is skillfully carved on the sides is also placed in the bedroom on the first floor. The sofa sets are preserved in their original form. The study room consists of a reading table, chairs, table lamp and some stationery items.

A resting sofa is placed at one corner of the room. The shelves made of wood and fine quality glass are decorated with high standard crockery which were used by Quaid-i-Azam.



The Quaid-i-Azam House is now renovated. It is centrally air-conditioned and there is a full fledged fire extinguishing unit. Other facilities include burglar alarm system, close circuit TV and film projection facility. A restaurant and washroom are also to be built to provide additional facilities to the domestic and foreign tourists.

The Department of Archaeology and Museums, Government of Pakistan and Public Works Department jointly prepared a comprehensive scheme for the renovation and restoration of the Quaid-i-Azam House. The scheme was approved by the Government of Pakistan for an estimated cost of Rs. 18.666 million. The approved scheme envisaged the following items of works:

- a) Cost of the Acquisition of House.
- b) Protective works like termite control and moisture resistant.
- c) An architect was engaged to supervise the entire work of Quaid-i-Azam House.

The main House has been completely renovated and restored but its general character and profile have been kept intact.

Only the roof of the ground floor was changed and laid in cement concrete but was provided with false wooden ceiling and wooden floor on top similar to the original design, using almost 80% old material. The roof over the first floor has been done according to its original plan and finished with red clay tiles. On the exterior, missing and damaged portions of columns, baluster and balconies have been restored to match the original style and colour. A damaged stone member of the building has been replaced with new ones to strengthen the structure. The main building has been made centrally air conditioned and concealed electric wiring has also been provided with the old original style fittings. All electric controls have been placed in two control rooms where fire alarm systems are in place.

B. THE ANNEXE

The Annex originally consisted of four small rooms with a verandah which provided access to the rooms. The concrete lintels in the verandah indicate that it was an addition of some later date. The dividing walls of the rooms have now been removed to provide a large hall to serve as an Auditorium and Projection Room. The verandah has been retained which opens towards the front garden. Though the roof has been changed, it follows the original profile of the sloping roof and has been finished with clay tiles.

C. OUT HOUSES

The profile and clay tiles fixing has been maintained according to the original construction. The front verandah has also been maintained as in the original building. The Out Houses have been converted into reserves, offices, library etc.

D. SLIDES

PROPERTY

GOVERNMENT OF PAKISTAN PURCHASED THIS HOUSE AT A COST
OF RS.5107000/- FROM ITS TRUSTEES IN 1985

AREA

10241 Square Yards

STRUCTURE

Lime Stone Masonry with Wooden Trusses and Mangalore Tiles

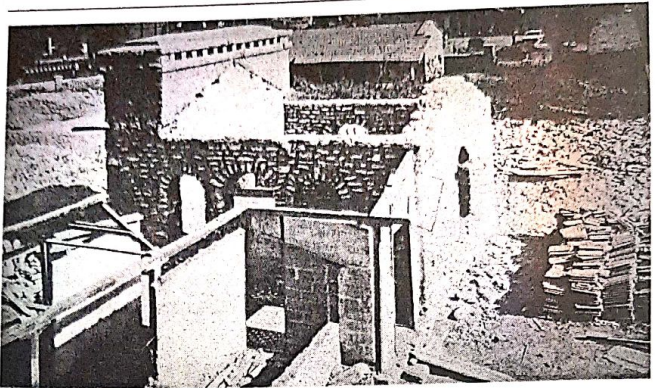
FACILITIES AVAILABLE

- a) Auditorium cum Exhibition Hall
- b) Reference Library
- c) Brochures
- d) General Public Wash Room
- e) Cold Drinking Water
- f) Benches

ENTRY

FREE

CONDITION OF FLAG STAFF HOUSE BEFORE IT DECLARING
AS NATIONAL MONUMENT IN 1983



**THE PC-I:
PRESERVATION, RESTORATION AND UP-GRADATION OF
QUAID-I-AZAM HOUSE MUSEUM, KARACHI**

APPROVED BY: DDWP ON 22-1-2007

**APPROVED COST: 3.606 Million
RELICS**

Displayed :585 Nos.

Reserve Collections :597 Nos.

**ACTIVITIES AT
QUAID-I-AZAM HOUSE**