

# THE CHC SCHOOL JOURNAL

IN COLLABORATION WITH

## INDUS VALLEY WORLD SCHOOL



### HERITAGE DIARIES: THE DALHOUSIE SQUARE WHAT WAS AND WHAT IS...

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# St. Andrew's Church.

The place where St. Andrews Church now stands was once occupied by the Old Court House. It may have originally been a charity school, which then became the Mayor's Court, and finally the Supreme Court. This was the same courthouse where Maharaja Nandakumar was tried and sentenced to death in 1775.

The East India Company contributed Rs1,00,000 to the building fund. The builders were Messrs Burn, Currie and Co. Dr Bryce is recorded as having had a dispute with the Customs authorities on the customs duty for the marble flooring. He was apparently finally allowed to import this duty free, but we unfortunately do not know how. What resulted was a main plinth about seven feet above ground level in Grecian style. Both North and South porches are supported by massive Doric columns and have white marble floors.

The foundation stone of the church was laid with full Masonic honours by The Honourable Archibald Seton, a member of the Council of India and Acting Provincial Grand Master, at the north-east corner of the Church on 30th November 1815 in the presence of naval, military and civil dignitaries.

The ceremony was attended in state by the Countess of Loudon and Moira, wife of the Governor General, The Marquess of Hastings – leading to the Church being popularly referred to as Lat Sahib Ka Girja.

St. Andrew's Church is also known as The Scotch Kirk - stemming from that fact that it was built to serve the Scottish Presbyterian community of Calcutta.

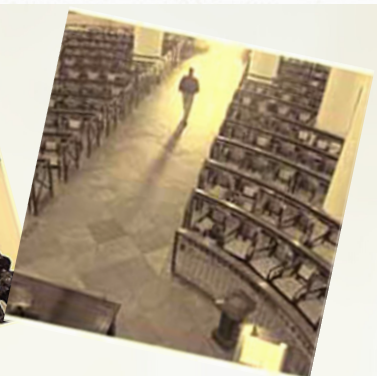

A euharmonic organ was installed in the church, which was one of the first instances of music forming a part of the austere services of the church on a regular basis. It was replaced in 1858 with a modern one by Messrs. Gray and Davidson.

The vestibule holds a brass plate in memory of the Cossipore artillery volunteers who were martyred in the Great War. A photo of Reverend T. Scott, the Chaplain from 1900 - 1906, an engraving of the Kirk in 1825 and Queen Victoria signing the oath of security of the Scottish Church are also on display.



**TALES FROM THE SQUARE**

A major controversy erupted over the Church's spire. Bishop Middleton firmly believed that the Anglican Church should have the monopoly with regard to spires, not only in England, but in all British territories. He was most annoyed when Dr. Bryce announced that not only would his new Church have a spire higher than that of St. John's, but he would also put a cock on top of it, to crow over the Bishop! The weather cock was blown and shattered to bits by the Amphan cyclone. It is being restored by INTACH on the basis of the original drawing with measurements.

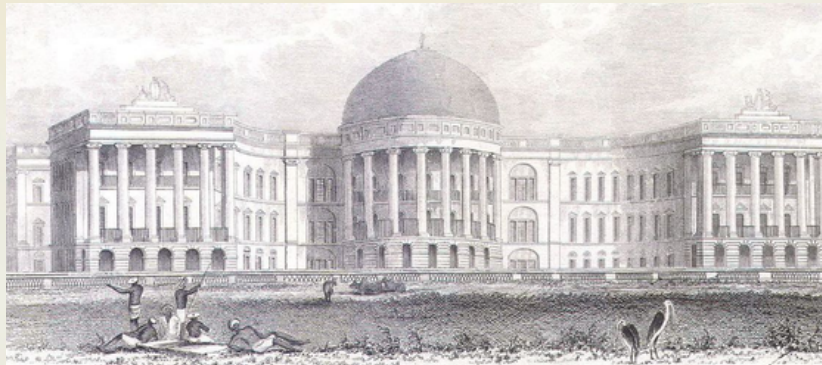


[For additional pictures, please click here](#)

# Raj Bhavan

Raj Bhavan (or Government House as it was called) owes its existence to Marquis Wellesley, Governor-General from 1798 to 1805. When he assumed office, he occupied the Government House of those days, generally known as Buckingham House, which stood practically where the South-East wing of the present house stands. Lord Wellesley was dissatisfied not only with the state of disrepair in which he found the building, but also with the unsuitability of the rooms which he considered to be too few in number and too small in size. Within a month he had decided to build a more suitable residence without consulting or even informing the Court of Directors for he declared that "India should be ruled from a Palace and not from a Counting House."

When Lord Wellesley assumed office as the Governor General of India in 1798, he took it upon himself to construct a palace fit to house the ruler of the British Empire. Built between 1799 - 1803, the Raj Bhavan was designed by Captain Charles Wyatt after the majestic Kedleston Hall in Derbyshire, the ancestral house of Lord Curzon who later lived here as the Viceroy exactly 100 years after Wellesley. Lord Curzon described Raj Bhavan or the then Government House as "without doubt the finest Government House occupied by the representative of any Sovereign or Government in the world."



GOVERNMENT HOUSE - 1842

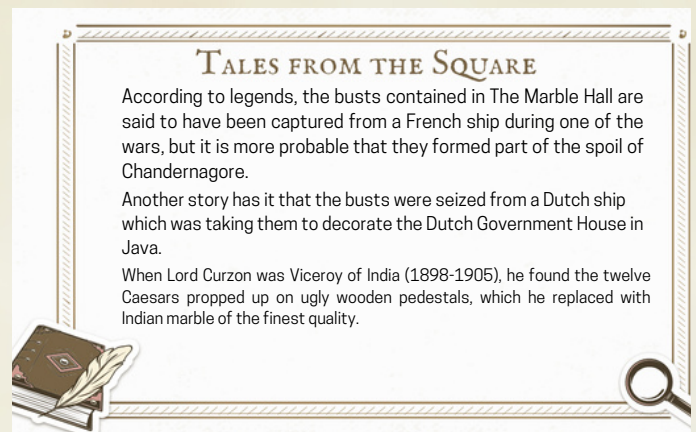
Such was Lord Wellesley's impatience to live in a home worthy of a ruler of the British Empire in India, that he moved in even before the construction workers had wrapped up their work. Ironically, his stay proved to be rather short lived. The Raj Bhavan (Governor's House) was completed in 1803 and Lord Wellesley was summoned back to England just about a year later for misusing the East India Company's funds.

23 Governors-General and Viceroys lived in this house, until the capital was shifted to Delhi in 1912. After that it served as the official abode of the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal. Post-independence, it is serving as the official residence of the Governor of West Bengal and its name was also changed to Raj Bhavan. This meticulously structured building was specially created away from the rest of the metropolis, magnificently proportioned amidst acres of formal gardens. The abode of the Governor General symbolized the power and might of the Monarch and the Throne. Tall intricately patterned wrought iron gates with massive lions perched atop reiterated the same regal majestic message. The Government House retained this awe-instilling quality even after the departure of the last British incumbent, Sir Frederick Burrows, and the assumption of office by the first Indian Governor, the illustrious Shri C. Rajagopalachari in 1947. But the imposing gates gradually began to open for a steadily increasing stream of visitors from all walks of life.

The Raj Bhavan occupies a total area of 27 acres and consists of five buildings, four of which in four corners are connected by a central building. There is a grand dome on the southern building. The front gate has a majestic Chinese cannon mounted on a dragon and flanked with minor cannons placed in front of it. This cannon was taken as a war trophy from the Nanking massacre in 1842.

The Raj Bhavan has six gateways, one each on the north and south and two each on the east and west. The four gates on the east and west have grand archways topped with lions, while the minor archways on the side are topped with sphinxes.

The Raj Bhavan boasts of a floor space of about 84,000 square feet. The plan of Raj Bhavan comprises a central core along with four radiating wings. There are about sixty rooms besides public halls, verandas, porticos and banquets. The first social engagement here was a breakfast for 700 guests held in May 1802, to mark the third anniversary of the Battle of Seringapatam where Tipu Sultan was killed. Important spaces include the Prince of Wales suite, which is used for the accommodation of the President, the Vice President, the Prime Minister and visiting Heads of States. The exquisite Marble Hall on the ground floor contains the busts of Rome's first twelve leaders (also called the Dreaded Dozen) from Julius Caesar to Domitian. The Throne Room contains the throne of Lord Wellesley and Tipu Sultan. From the time of Lord Wellesley, the Raj Bhavan had undergone a number of changes. Lord Hastings imported the finest gravel from Bayswater for the paths. During the 1860s, Viceroy Elgin added the metallic dome to the building. Lord Curzon introduced electricity and the famous "Bird Cage Lift" which operates to this day.



[For additional pictures, please click here](#)

## Dead Letter Office

The Old Telegraph Office stands at the corner of Dalhousie Square East and Dalhousie Square South and is popularly known as the Dead Letter Office. This remarkably beautiful building was designed in 1868, and completed in 1876, during the tenure of Lord Lytton, the then Governor General of the British India. A striking feature of the building is the 120-foot-tall bell tower, which has ornate detailing, which reminds us of the iconic British style of architecture but is oddly without a clock.

The eastern part is the oldest part of the sprawling Telegraph Office Complex of Calcutta. It served as the central sorting office for incoming mails to Calcutta. But when a letter could not be delivered due to an incorrect postal address or if the addressee could not be located and when the letter could not be returned to the sender due to the absence of the sender's proper address, the letter ended up here.



To do away with the morbidity of the terminology used to describe this office, the Dead Letter Offices in India were renamed Return Letter Offices or R.L.O.s in 1954. In popular jargon however these offices are still referred to as Dead Letter Offices or DLOs.

Now, letters are kept here for three months after which they are shredded and destroyed. Articles and parcels are kept for a year, after which they are auctioned off to the general public with a base price decided by the office.



[For additional pictures, please click here](#)

## Calcutta High Court

The Calcutta High Court is the oldest High Court in India. The High Court building was designed by Mr. Walter Granville, the same architect who later also built the General Post Office and The Indian Museum in Kolkata on the model of the Cloth Hall at Ypres in Belgium.

Formerly known as the High Court of Judicature at Fort William, it was brought into existence by the Letters Patent dated 14th May 1862, issued under the High Courts Act, 1861. The High Court of Judicature at Fort William was formally opened on 1st July 1862, with Sir Barnes Peacock as its first Chief Justice.



### TALES FROM THE SQUARE

Some popular items that find their way to the Dead Letter Office include wedding invitations that never made their way to the guests, greeting cards and pamphlets with various advertisements. Letters to God, Santa Claus and friends lost in time frequently find their way to these offices. Here is an example -

*"Dear Santa, I wish this letter finds you well. My name is Neha and I am sure you know who I am... Can you please find me a soulmate who would keep me happy always? Please make him meet me soon. I am very lonely. Santa, I love you and believe in you. Please grant me my wishes...please...pretty please. Oh, and last wish, I want to be happy."*



Appointed on 2nd February 1863, Justice Sambhunath Pandit was the first Indian to assume office as a Judge of the Calcutta High Court, Romesh Chunder Mitter was the first Indian officiating Chief Justice and Phani Bhushan Chakravarti was the first Indian permanent Chief Justice of the court. Other legal luminaries associated with the Calcutta High Court include Justice Dwarkanath Mitter, Sir Chunder Madhab Ghosh, Sir Gooroodas Banerji and Sir Ashutosh Mookerjee.


The Calcutta High Court has the distinction of being the first High Court and one of the three High Courts to be set up in India, along with the High Courts of Bombay, Madras by Letters patent granted by Her Majesty Queen Victoria in 1862. It has jurisdiction over the state of West Bengal and the Union Territory of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

Click on this link to watch a documentary on the Calcutta High Court

<https://www.calcuttahighcourt.gov.in/page/Documentary>

**TALES FROM THE SQUARE**

Stories abound about disembodied presences that are said to lurk around the gossip-rich corners of the Calcutta High Court. One of the earliest such stories is about a 19th century poet, Tapis, who had protested against the tyranny unleashed by the British East India Company, as a result of which he was tried and later executed. While in jail he was denied food and water and, by the time he was marched off to the gallows, Tapis was almost completely dehydrated. After his death, stories spread that his ghost roamed the High Court premises in search of water. There are rumours of multiple sightings of a headless lady. While some claim to have heard the tinkle of her anklets, others say they have seen her headless body appear out of nowhere and then vanish as suddenly - a shadowy shape with long slender legs gliding down the corridors of the Court. Legend attributes this figure to a prostitute Nistar who was denied justice.



[For additional pictures, please click here](#)

## St John's Church

St. John's Church is the third oldest Church in Kolkata and was closely modelled after St. Martin-in-the-Fields in England. Land for the proposed building was donated by Raja Naba Krishna Deb, of Sobhabazar Raj family and the foundation stone was laid by Warren Hastings, the then Governor General of India, in April 1784. Designed by architect, James Agg, its construction started in 1784 and it was consecrated on 24th June 1787.

It served as the main presidency church for quite some time, until the mantle was handed over to St. Paul's Cathedral in the year 1847. The impressive 174 feet tall clock tower was built in the neoclassical style, with stone blocks. Since stone was rarely used as building material in this part of the country, the blocks were collected from the medieval structures of Gaur,

near present Malda, and were shipped to Calcutta down the Hooghly River. The use of stone gave the church its native name "Pathure Girja". The minute book in the church testifies to the fact that the ruins of Gaur were practically robbed to build the Church!



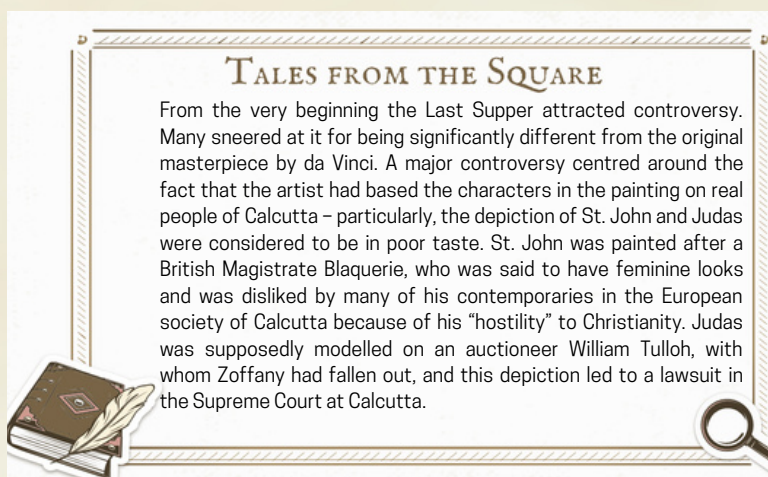
The Church itself was built on an old cemetery. Members of the church were required to pay three rupees per month to be assured a seat at the church – a fairly large amount for the time but people paid, nonetheless.

The pipe organ, which was placed in the early 1800s, is still the largest in Kolkata. It was made by William Hill & Son & Norman & Beard Ltd – a major pipe organ manufacturer based in Norfolk famous for building such instruments for cinema theatres.

One of the most important monuments in the Church compound is the tomb of Job Charnock which was built by his eldest son-in-law Charles Ayer in the octagonal Moorish style with stones brought all the way from Pallavaram near Chennai. This stone later came to be known as ‘Charnokite’.

Other significant memorials in the compound are the memorials of James Achilles Kirkpatrick - the protagonist of William Dalrymple’s novel “The White Mughal”, Lady Charlotte Canning, the wife of Lord Canning, Governor-General and Viceroy of India and Frances Johnson (famously known as Begum Johnson)- a colourful character of Bengal who married four times and lived up to the ripe age of 89! Also in the Church compound is a monument dedicated to the memory of those who perished in the so-called “Black Hole Tragedy”.

One of the most famous objects in the church is the painting of The Last Supper by Johann Zoffany, a British artist of German origin. The painting suffered terribly due to its exposure to heat and humidity and the dampness of the walls of the Church. It was moved from its original place as an altarpiece to different parts of the church for better protection and there were several attempts to conserve it over the 250 years. Finally, in 2010, the painting was painstakingly restored by a joint team of German and Indian experts brought together in a collaborative project between INTACH and the Goethe Institute.

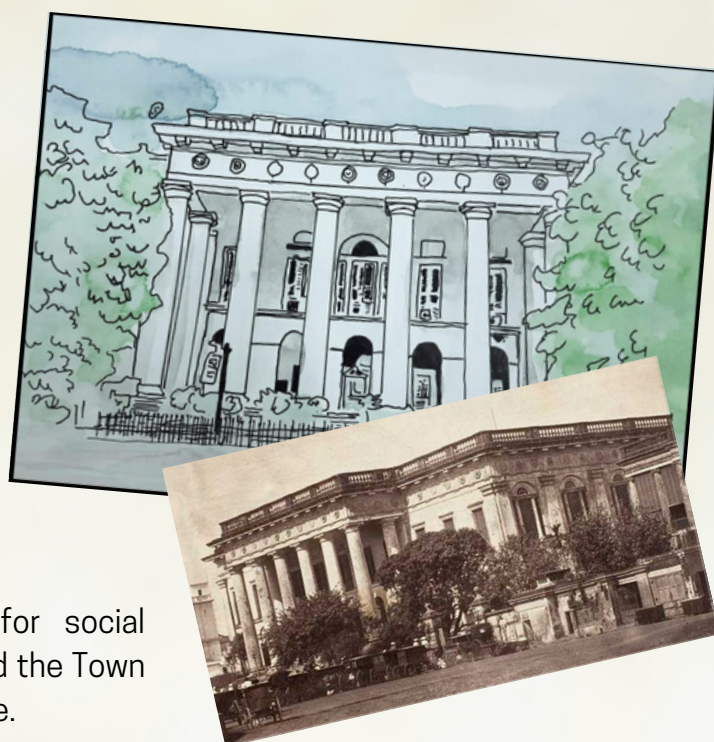


[For additional pictures, please click here](#)

## Town Hall

The foundation stone of the Town Hall of Calcutta was laid by Lord Minto, the then Governor General of British India, on 1st December 1807. Designed by the military engineer Colonel John Garston, the structure represents a mix of neo-classic and Palladian styles and is said to be an imitation of the architecture of the majestic Roman Senate. The construction of the Hall was completed in 1813 and it was opened to the public on 22nd March 1814.

At that time there was no proper place for social gatherings of the British working in Calcutta, and the Town Hall was constructed mainly to serve the purpose.



The public was allowed to visit the ground floor hall to see the statues and the large portrait paintings, (which subsequently, apart from a few exceptions, were moved to the Victoria Memorial Hall) but indiscriminate access to the upper storey was prohibited. The Hall came under the management of the municipal authority in 1867.



It was temporarily used for judicial purposes in the 1870s, when the present building of the High Court was under construction.

In 1919, the Hall was used as the chamber of the Bengal Legislative Council until it moved to its new building in 1931. During the Second World War, a Rationing Office was temporarily opened in the Hall. At various points of time, the Town Hall was converted into the Municipal Magistrate's Office, the office of the Municipal Service Commission and the West Bengal Public Service Commission.

The Town Hall acted as a prominent centre of the nationalist movement. In 1898, when the Government tried to pass the Sedition Bill to silence the growing criticism of various government policies, a protest meeting was held in this hall in which Rabindranath Tagore was present. In the days of the anti-Partition movement, it was associated with a massive public protest meeting headed by Surendranath Banerjee, that was held on August 7, 1905.

Following independence, this magnificent building sank into oblivion. In the absence of proper maintenance, it became shabby and derelict and in the early 80s, the Left Front Government decided to demolish this beautiful edifice. However, the drastic attempt was shelved after strong protests from eminent persons, including Satyajit Ray. In 1998 by the timely intervention of the ASI and the Calcutta High Court, this heritage building was saved from further damage and ultimate destruction. Funds were gathered through auctioning of paintings and external support for its restoration, and it was renovated.



In 2002, a museum named Kolkata Panorama, was opened to the public which comprises 19 enclaves depicting the history of Calcutta, the story of the freedom movement, along with the city's contribution in the fields of education, literature, music, performing arts, science, and technology. In 2004, a library of rare books and journals was also opened which is accessible to the public and draws scholars and researchers from all over the world. With its revived magnificence and grandeur, the Town Hall is recognized as one of the landmarks of the city.



[For additional pictures, please click here](#)

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### TALES FROM THE SQUARE

The Town Hall has witnessed many significant social and political events. In 1878, the Hall witnessed a vociferous revolt against the leadership of the Brahmo leader, Keshab Chandra Sen on the issue of his eldest daughter's marriage with the minor Maharaja of Cooch Behar.

The Hall also proudly hosted the 50th and 70th birth anniversary celebrations of Rabindranath Tagore, and other memorable events such as Acharya Jagadish Chandra Bose unveiling his experiment on wireless communication.

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