

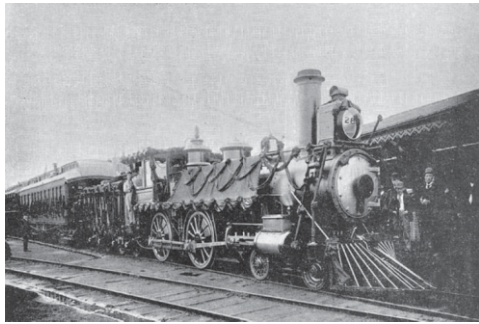
THE VOICE OF MALABAR HILLS

Altamont Road Carmichael Road Peddar Road Kemp's Corner Breach Candy Napean Sea Road Walkeshwar Mahalaxmi Temple Ridge Road Little Gibbs Road Chowpatty Gamdevi

Jewel in our midst

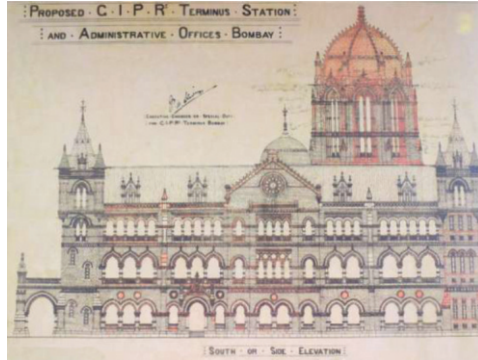
16th April 1853 large crowds gathered to see the first 'iron horse' in India and Asia to chug its way out of Bori Bundar to Thana. The officials cheered from the small platform and the citizens lined the route in wonder and awe. The journey of 34 kms (21 miles) was completed in 57 minutes. This was the first train of the Great Indian Peninsula Railway.

The words 'Bori Bundar' denoted the place where 'boris' or bales of cotton were stored for transportation along the eastern seafront, which had developed as the port for Bombay, the 'bundar'.



As trade with India grew the port expanded and so did the railways.

In 1857, after the Indian Mutiny, the Crown took over the ruling of India and appointed its own governors to report directly to the English Government. Fort St. George or Bombay Fort was its pride on the western coast, but it was very crowded. Sir Bartle Frere, who was Governor in 1862, took the decision to pull down the walls of the Fort and let the city grow beyond. Of course trade remained the main



purpose and thus a railway station to serve the new needs for transport of goods and people, took precedence over all else.

Designs for the large station were invited from renowned planners in England. The masterpiece watercolour sketch by draughtsman Axel Haig was selected and the commission to do detailed plans and work on this project was awarded to the consulting British architect Fredrick William Stevens.

The final design bore resemblance to St. Pancras Railway Station in London.

Work started in 1878 and took 10 years to complete. This was the longest time taken for construction of any building at that time. However, taking into consideration the details of the design, it was fast work! Today's buildings, with no particular features, take longer!

This building is an acknowledged famous architectural wonder, recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Centre. It is designed in the Victorian Gothic-revival style with embellishments from classical Indian palace architecture. Work on the wood carvings, tiles, brass and iron railings, and balustrades for the grand staircases were done by students of the Sir Jamshetjee Jeebhoy School of Art.

It is a C-shaped structure built with sandstone and limestone on an area of 2.85 hectares. The centre is covered with a large dome and houses a 330 foot long platform connected to a 1200 foot long train shed. The two sides are identical wings with turrets at each of its four columns to

balance and frame the central dome. The wings house the administrative offices in a series of large rooms with high ceilings.

The façades give it its magnificence. The freezes, the bas reliefs, the grotesque statues, the columns of the entrance gates, and the figures of the Lion to represent Great Britain and the Tiger to represent India. High quality Italian marble was used for the main decorative features. All add to the wonder of the large invaluable structure in today's Mumbai!

The original structure has seen changes over the years. Fortunately these were done with



sensitivity and care. The platforms grew from 1 to 9, to 18 today. They still do not suffice the transportation needs of this ever burgeoning city. Today it is the busiest train hub in the world, handling over 1250 local trains per day, carrying around three million passengers daily - more than the entire network of British Rail!

The name of the station has changed four times. Bori Bundar under the East India Company, Victoria Terminus to commemorate the Golden Jubilee of Queen Victoria, to Chatrapati Shivaji Terminus in 1996 in honour of the great Maratha Emperor, and yet again in 2017 to Chatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus.

Mystery still continues regarding the missing statue of Queen Victoria! There was a very regal white marble statue in the canopy below the clock on the eastern exterior façade. The canopy is still there, but when and who removed the statue remains a mystery. The railway officials have no clues, nor do the police and nor do the city's heritage lovers. Several statues in public places were removed in the 1950s and given new homes in the gardens of the Bhau Daji Lad Museum in Byculla, but not this one. Did the Empress of India sail to England or any of her other colonies? Was she smuggled out and sold? Till date she has not surfaced in any private or public collection.

Urge all to take the time on a Sunday morning, when the traffic is less, to stand on the opposite side of the road and marvel at one of the most beautiful buildings in the world, the city's treasure.



Anita Garware,
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Indian Heritage Society