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TAMIL NADU ARCHIVES

GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL NADU

REVENUE DEPARTMENT

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GOVERNMENT OF MADRAS.
PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT.

7th July 1877, No. 372 W.

Buildings and Roads.
Civil Works.

Read the following paper:—

No. 87. From W. S. HARRINGTON, Esq., District Engineer, Madura, to the Chief Engineer, Public Works Department, dated Madura, 21st June 1877, No. 59.

I HAVE the honor to forward copies of correspondence as per margin, and, with reference to the action taken by the Court of Wards, and to my letter to the Collector, respectfully to request the orders of Government as to whether the repairs and improvements to the Bodinaickanoor Minor Zemindar's house at Madura are to be completed under my superintendence. If it is ordered that they are to be my best efforts shall be applied to the task, and I trust that the work may soon be completed in a tolerably satisfactory manner; but I earnestly beg that I may be allowed to employ such extra hands as I may find to be absolutely necessary for the purpose—altogether independent of the Range Officer and Overseer whose services, I with all deference submit, cannot be made available for this altogether extraneous work.

From W. S. HARRINGTON, Esq., District Engineer, Madura, to W. McQUHAE, Esq., Collector of Madura, dated Madura, 21st June 1877, No. 74.

Your Miscellaneous No. 47 of the 9th instant.

The query put by the Court of Wards as to who is responsible for the grave defects in the construction of the Bodinaickanoor Zemindar's house is a somewhat difficult one to answer. After wading through the mass of correspondence connected with it, I find that Colonel Roberts, when Superintending Engineer of the then 8th Division, originally undertook at your request in April 1872 the repairs to the "bungalow," then estimated to cost Rupees 1,780 only. On the 19th of that month, in reply to your letter, No. 680, dated 16th idem, placing this sum at his disposal, Colonel Roberts states that, on inspecting the building, he found it in such an

* M. Chockalingam Pillai now employed as a Sub-Overseer in the Meylur Taluk.

unsatisfactory state that the sum provided in the estimate prepared by the Overseer* was insufficient, and requests to be informed if a further sum of Rupees 2,000 "or so" could be allotted. I do not find your reply to this letter; but that it was replied to is mentioned by Colonel Roberts in his No. 2,281, dated 12th August 1872, with which he forwards for sanction a third estimate, this time for Rupees 12,000 "for making the place a proper and fitting residence for a young gentleman of the minor's social position and means." This sum was sanctioned by the Court in the following month (September), and they approve of the plan. In December 1873 Colonel Roberts forwards to you with his No. 3,899 a fourth estimate, amounting to Rupees 28,100, in lieu of that just alluded to; the excess over it "is principally due," he states, "to the thorough reconstruction of the front building instead of the additional story as was originally intended." The Consulting Architect

to Government now first appears upon the scene, for Colonel Roberts states in paragraph 5 of his letter that he "thinks it right to add that the new design for the frontage has been kindly furnished to me" by this officer. In your No. 41, dated 14th January 1874, you ask whether this large estimate cannot be reduced, adding that when you approved of the undertaking you "had no idea that any such sum as Rupees 23,100 would be asked for from the Court of Wards." Colonel Roberts in his No. 4,415, dated 26th idem, states that any reduction of the estimate is impossible, and gives his reasons, adding that "all the details of the estimate were very carefully gone into by Lieutenant Greer, R.E., who took particular pains in preparing a superior description of brick for the main buildings." The Court of Wards in their Miscellaneous Proceedings No. 1,437, dated 25th February 1874, sanction this estimate, which on the 21st of the following month is forwarded to Supervisor Mooneappah Pillai, then in charge of the Madura Range, "for vigorous prosecution," the remark being added that, "considering the large amount of the sanctioned estimate, it must be distinctly understood that there must be no excess on the estimate." On the 2nd of February 1876, Colonel Fischer, who had succeeded Colonel Roberts as District Engineer, submits with his No. 434 a comparative statement showing that a further sum of Rupees 4,815 is required to complete the building, and remarking that "Colonel Roberts had ordered several changes to be made." He was unaware on what grounds, but in paragraph 3 Colonel Fischer states that, at the request of the minor and ago as May 29th, 1875, he directed a revised estimate to be prepared, which was only sent to him on the 18th instant" (*sic*), and he concludes his letter by requesting sanction for the amount of Rupees 4,815, "so that the work may go on at last." For these two last years Mr. Paynter has been the officer entrusted with the execution of the work, "Soobroyaloo Naidoo," a very careless and extravagant man, being the working Overseer.

2. On the 8th May 1876 your successor, Mr. Bliss, forwarded this estimate of Rupees 4,815 to the Court of Wards, who in their reply say that "before sanctioning it they desire to be informed if it provides for everything required." Mr. Paynter is desired by Colonel Fischer on the 18th idem to answer this query which he does on the 21st to the effect that it would have provided for everything required, but that some damage was done (by a storm) on the night of the 15th May, necessitating a further expenditure of Rupees 480, for which accordingly an estimate is submitted; this sum Colonel Fischer informs Mr. Paynter in reply should be met again on the 28th of June he says, in reply to a question from that officer dated the 7th idem, that the revised estimate of Rupees 33,460 "provides for everything required towards completing the Bodinaikanoor Minor Zemindar's bungalow at Madura," though he evidently explainable state, as he remarks that "the comparative statement shows the omissions in the original estimate, the alterations made by Colonel Roberts, and the additions made at the request of the Zemindar," and that he has "endeavoured to get a full account of the exact cost above sum." From the above date the work appears to have dragged its slow length along of November last when Colonel Fischer visited it, and remarking on the dilatory way in which it was being conducted requested the Range Officer (Mr. Paynter) to explain how it was being carried out. I do not find any answer to this question, but on the 6th March last, I having taken charge of the district from Colonel Fischer on the 18th December previous, I was requested by you "to state when the Bodinaikanoor Minor Zemindar's house will be ready for occupation." On the 9th of March I forwarded copy of your memorandum to Mr. Paynter for immediate report; that officer replying on the 23rd idem states that "the work was stopped by him last January at the personal request of the Consulting Architect. Being much harassed with other work at the time I did not inquire what Mr. Chisholm's powers were, and if he was in charge of the work; but from his authoritative action I concluded that he, and not I, had charge of it."

3. After this long preamble, which I have deemed it necessary to make for the full information of Government to whom I refer the entire question as I cannot think that they are acquainted with it in its various phases, I have now to state that I have not understood, and do not now understand, my position with regard to the construction of this building. The District Engineer is apparently held responsible by the Court of Wards for defects in it, but the Consulting Architect comes to Madura on three different occasions (perhaps on more) and gives his own orders to the Executive Engineer of the Range and the Departmental Overseer, the more important work for them to attend to not being even referred to. I am sure that the Consulting Architect who is a personal friend of mine and whose work and general talents I hold in high estimation deemed that he was not out of order in giving these instructions; but I do not find any where on the records that he had the authority of Government for giving them.

4. I presume that when Colonel Roberts was first asked (apparently as a kind of favor) if he would undertake the repairs originally estimated to cost but Rupees 1,780 he acquiesced because the work was trifling and could be done and supervised by this department. It seems to

have entirely escaped his notice, and I may add that of the Court of Wards and yourself that the extensive improvements and alterations afterwards estimated for and amounting first to Rupees 2,000 extra, then to Rupees 12,000, then to Rupees 28,100, and finally to Rupees 33,460, and on which Colonel Roberts would appear to have entered *con amore*, taxed far too much of the time of the one Public Works Department Officer and the Departmental Overseer who was then in charge of the town works. A few months after Colonel Fischer took charge of the district; this one man was ordered to look after both town and taluq works, and from that time the expenditure gradually decreased, Rupees 16,170 having been spent while Colonel Roberts was Superintending (or District) Engineer, and but Rupees 9,530 during Colonel Fischer's incumbency. Both officer and subordinate had their own legitimate duties to perform, and very heavy and multifarious they were and are; and I presume to state positively my opinion that, to absolutely ensure the proper construction of the building, it should have had the undivided time and attention of an officer or superior upper subordinate specially deputed for the purpose, even when the first revised estimate of Rupees 12,000 was sent in. Had this been done, and his salary charged in whole or in part to the Zemindar's estate, the work should have been quickly carried out to completion, the cost would not have been what it is now likely to be, and the Zemindar would have been safely housed in his new domicile long ere this.

5. I do not consider that merely because I am District Engineer of Madura I am bound by any action of Colonel Roberts, and I think it due to myself to notice the results that have ensued from that officer's action; neither can I think that I am under the orders of the Court of Wards, the Consulting Architect, or yourself. I say this in no carping or cantankerous spirit, but I say it nevertheless; and in soliciting the orders of Government regarding the completion of this building, I have respectfully requested them, if I am ordered to supervise it, to allow me to employ such extra superintendence as I may find to be necessary—the work to be directed by a thoroughly good and experienced upper subordinate or overseer who shall have this work and this only to attend to.

6. I can only reply to the question put by the Court of Wards as to who is responsible for the grave defects in the construction of the building by stating that the upper wall of the back verandah alluded to in the first part of Mr. Chisholm's letter to the Court as unstable in the highest degree was built in 1876, at which time Mr. Paynter was the Range Officer who supervised its construction, and Overseer "Soobroyaloo Naidoo" the working subordinate.

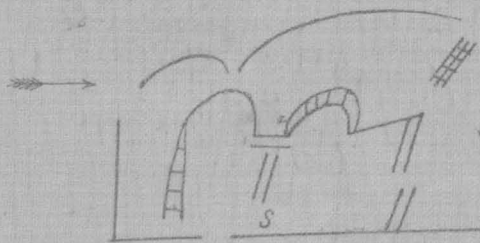
7. With regard to the remark made by the Court, as per margin, if I am the District Engineer referred to, I must entirely disown the impeachment; as already stated the work was stopped immediately after my arrival in the district by Mr. Chisholm's orders and has never been resumed. I paid only one, and that quite a non-official, visit to the building with you on the 1st of February last, but I did not examine, much less "personally inspect," it. I may have remarked casually to you that some of the work was fairly done, which it was; but as I knew nothing whatever of the building and had not looked at any part of it, nor even at the plan and estimate, conceiving as I then did that it was entirely under Mr. Chisholm, any remark I may have made was not made in my official capacity. I was not asked for my opinion on the whole work as an Engineer, Civil or District; had I been I should of course have called for plans and estimates, and have gone very minutely into the question, and I hope and believe that in that case the defects which have attracted Mr. Chisholm's notice could not have escaped mine. I in fact noticed others on a somewhat careful inspection of the work this morning.

Proceedings of the Court of Wards, dated 31st May 1877, No. 2,505.

From R. F. CHISHOLM, Esq., Consulting Architect to Government, to the Secretary, Court of Wards, dated Madura, 4th May 1877.

With reference to the Court's Proceedings, dated the 12th ultimo, I have the honor to state that I minutely inspected the Bodinaikanoor Rajah's residence both yesterday and to-day. The particular point which caught my eye as being unstable during my last visit I have now no hesitation in pronouncing unstable in the highest degree. It is the upper wall of the back verandah. I enclose a sketch elevation and section in order that the Court may themselves judge of the instability. The verandah consists of semi-circular arches in a 15-inch wall supported by upright stone columns rough dressed varying in diameter from 8 inches to 10 inches and set on end. I learnt on the work that this portion actually fell in May 1876, and I regret to say that it has been built up again without any alteration of design. The official

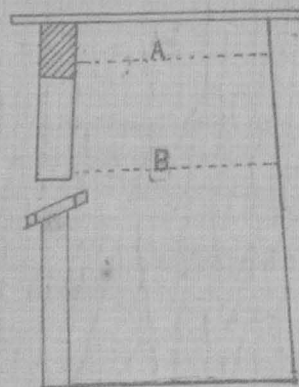
report states that the wall was "blown down," but the meteorological observations both before and after the 16th of May do not appear to exhibit anything unusual. The Overseer states that the verandah fell because the roof was not on, probably assisted by a gust of wind.



Date.	RAIN.		WIND.	
	Inches.	Velocity in 24 hours.	Direction.	
8th	...	0.000	85	S.S.E.
9th	...	...	53	E. by S.
10th	...	...	63	S. by E.
11th	...	...	46	S.W.
12th	...	0.340	64	South.
13th	...	0.000	54	S.E. by S.
14th	...	...	59	S.W.
15th	...	0.188	75	S.W.
16th	...	0.106	68	West.
17th	...	0.000	84	W. by S.
18th	...	...	81	...

The roof will hold the top of the wall and by its weight will prevent any catastrophe until the centre of gravity moves without the base when the whole thing will again collapse.

That this action is slowly going on I am convinced from the following measurements accurately taken by myself. There are four of these columns and piers. I measured the point A at the top of the verandah and the point B above the pillar cap over every column.

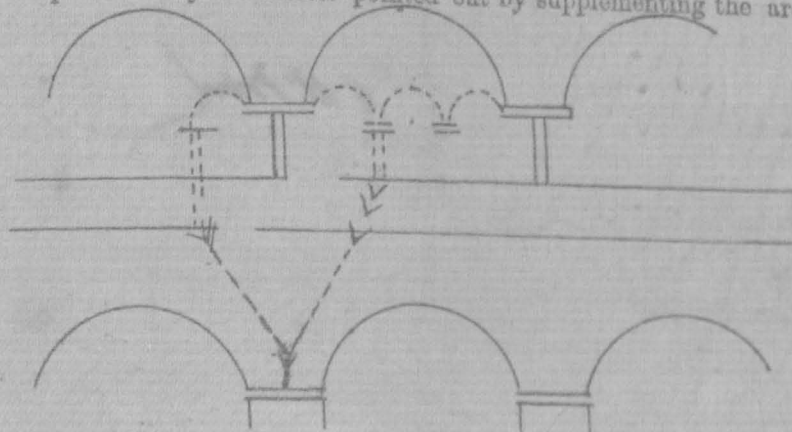


Above the first pier A measured 8' 8 1/2" & B 8' 10 1/2"
 " second " 8' 9 1/2" " 8' 10 1/2"
 " third " 8' 9 1/2" " 8' 10 1/2"
 " fourth " 8' 9 1/2" " 8' 11 1/2"

applying a plumb = bob for confirmation, I found every pier "buckling" to the extent of from 1 1/4 inches to 2 inches.

The plan which shows no details of any kind nevertheless has circles marked for this verandah 1 foot 6 inches in diameter, and the Overseer could not satisfactorily explain why these dimensions were departed from.

Considering that the piers of the lower back verandah are now bearing 2 1/2 tons per foot superficial (3 tons I consider the maximum safe weight for country brick) I would not advise the Court to attempt to remedy the defects pointed out by supplementing the arches with triplets,



and so throwing more weight on the lower piers. I would recommend the substitution of the plan which I now submit for wooden supports and venetians. The specification describes the work in detail.

The original drawing is so meagre that it will be impossible in my opinion to turn out a neat piece of work. I have therefore made out a drawing correcting as far as possible defects which I noticed. The staircases are thrust away in corners, and at present the Overseer has a somewhat vague idea of how the roof is to be reached. The ends of the house are dead walls which convey the idea of a State Prison. As the object of the Court is to get the work out of hand without additional cost, I have allowed these matters to stand unaltered.

Pending the decision of the Court I have requested the Executive Engineer and the Overseer to go on with the work of the bungalow within the compound.

COMMUNICATED to the Collector of Madura who will report who is responsible for the grave defects in the construction of the Bodinaickanoor Zemindar's house. The Court were recently given to understand that the building had been carefully inspected by the District Engineer and the work pronounced to have been "very fairly done." The Court cannot reconcile this statement with Mr. Chisholm's report, and consider that the execution of the work is not at all creditable to the officials who have been engaged on it.

2. The Court are much obliged to Mr. Chisholm for his inspection and report, and direct that his suggestions be adopted and his instructions strictly adhered to.

(True Copy and Extract.)

(Signed) C. A. GALTON,
Sub-Secretary.

Miscellaneous No. 47.

COMMUNICATED to the District Engineer who is requested to answer the question asked by the Court of Wards and to follow the directions contained in paragraph 2 of the Court's Proceedings.

SHAMBAGANOUR,
9th June 1877.

(Signed) W. McQUHAE,
Collector.

No. 88.

ORDER THEREON, 7th July 1877, No. 372 W.

THE Government do not consider that the District Engineer can properly or satisfactorily supervise such work in addition to his legitimate duties. They will not, however, object to the Government Architect being asked to scrutinize any drawing or specification which may be prepared for the building.

2. The establishments already employed under the supervision of Public Works Officers have, it is presumed, been paid for by the estate.

(True Extract.)

E. A. M. Colonel, R.E.,
Secretary to Government, P.W.D.

To the District Engineer, Madura.
 " Consulting Architect.
 " Court of Wards.
 " Revenue Department.

Erd. C. Howarth.
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