

The Bishop's Estate

*A Century of Real Estate, Bureaucracy, and Covert
Operations in Colonial Calcutta (1824–1849)*

Criminological Insights

by

Dr. Mridul Srivastava

Synthesised from the Records of C.R. Wilson, 1903.

Finding a Home for the See:

The Episcopal Residence in Calcutta (1824–1849)

1824–1831: An Era of Structural Uncertainty

1832–1849: Bishop Wilson and the Final Resolution



The 1826 Safety Crisis

Archdeacon Corrie declared the residence unsafe, sparking a multi-year debate over structural integrity.



The Irrevocable Lease

Despite safety fears, the Advocate General ruled the government could not cancel Pattle's lease.



18 Years in the "Old Palace"

Bishop Wilson resided at Russell Street from 1832 until the final exchange in 1849.



The Great 1849 Property Exchange

The "Old Palace" was traded for Mr. Bird's house, creating a permanent episcopal residence.

Permanent "New Palace"
Established (1849)



Bishop Heber's Constant Migration

Heber moved through four residences in months, seeking comfort and proximity to the Cathedral.

Financial Comparison (1824-1838)



Harrington Street:
500-600 Rupees
(Monthly Rent)
1824



**Pattle's House
(Old Palace):**
75,000 Rupees
(Sale Price)
1838



Wilson's Business Aptitude

The Bishop used "utmost secrecy" during negotiations to prevent artificial spikes in property prices.



**Mr. Bird's House
(New Palace):**
55,000 Rupees
(Purchase Price)
1849

After a 25-year struggle with rented properties and safety concerns, Bishop Wilson successfully negotiated the acquisition of a permanent episcopal residence, ensuring stability for the Bishops of Calcutta.

The Forgotten Mandate of 1823

“

The Company had promised him a house, but forgot to send out any orders to that effect.



- **The Arrival:** Bishop Heber arrives in Calcutta in October 1823.
- **The Stopgap:** Lodged temporarily in Government House at Fort William.
- **The Resolution:** On November 27, 1823, the Government explicitly *postpones* building a palace, offering an interim allowance of 500 to 600 rupees a month for rent.

The Nomadic Bishop (1823–1824)

Location	Rent	Duration	Bishop's Verdict
Government House, Fort William	Free	Oct-Dec 1823	Stopgap accommodation amidst the heat and dust of the Fort.
Dr. Wallich's House, Titaghur	Unstated	Jan-Feb 1824	"Unhealthy" — forced to leave to escape the heat and finery of the town.
No. 3, Harrington Street	Rs 500/mo	Mar 1824	"Decidedly too small" — too far from the Cathedral and Free School.
Mr. Leycester's, Middleton Row	Rs 600/mo	Apr 1824-Onward	"Lost in a dining room" — excessively large, difficult to please.

EAST INDIA COMPANY
Wednesday, Jan. 1, 1923.

Synthesis Note: Bishop Heber reported feeling “almost lost” in a house so large it exceeded all his ideas of comfort, highlighting the massive spatial demands of Calcutta’s “City of Palaces.”

The Shrinking Estate of Dhee Birjee

Outer Boundary (1782):
819 Bighas.

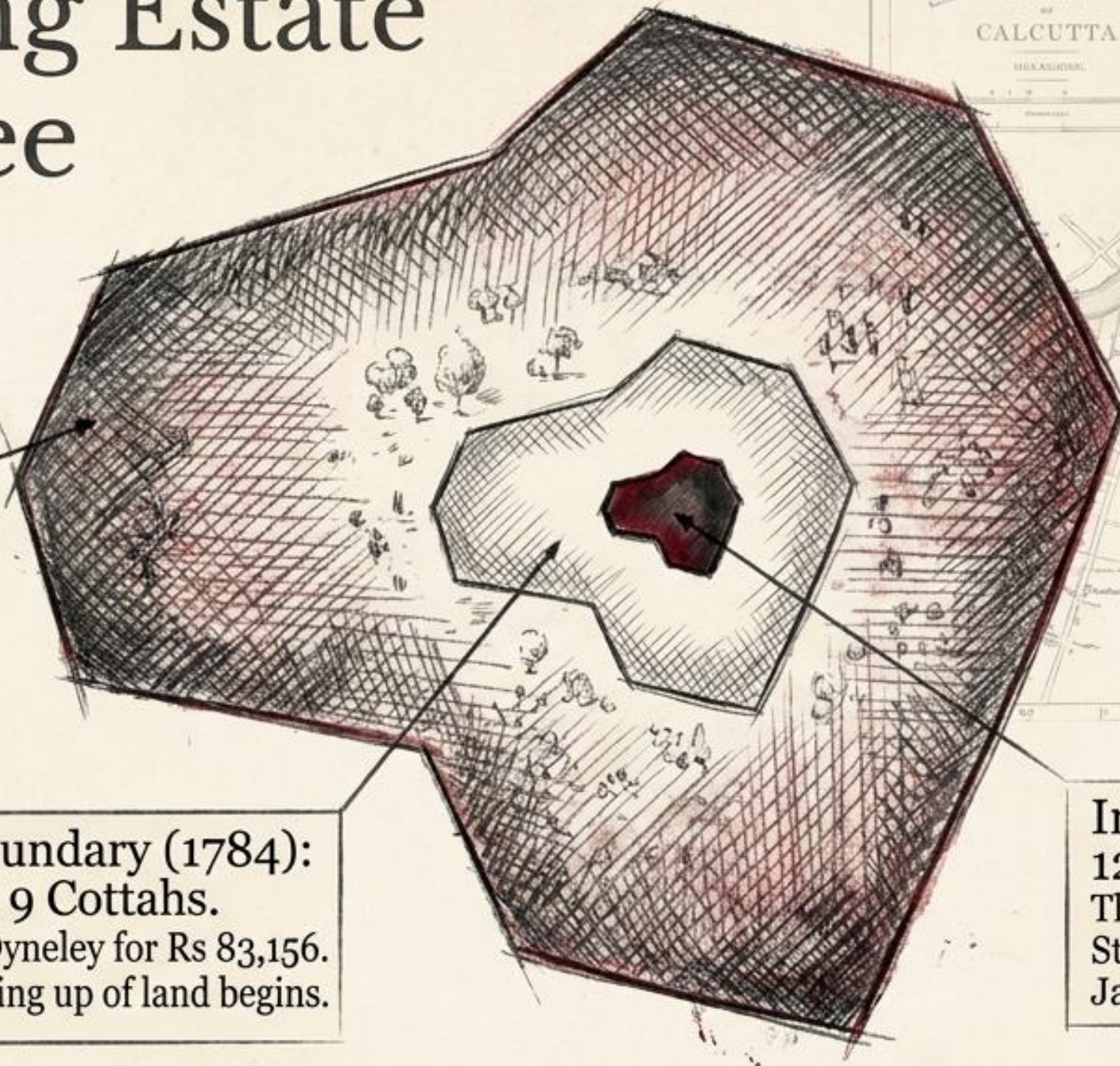
Purchased by Charles Short,
occupied by Sir Elijah Impey.
A sprawling, massive colonial
garden estate.

Middle Boundary (1784):
43 Bighas, 9 Cottahs.

Sold to John Dyneley for Rs 83,156.
The rapid carving up of land begins.

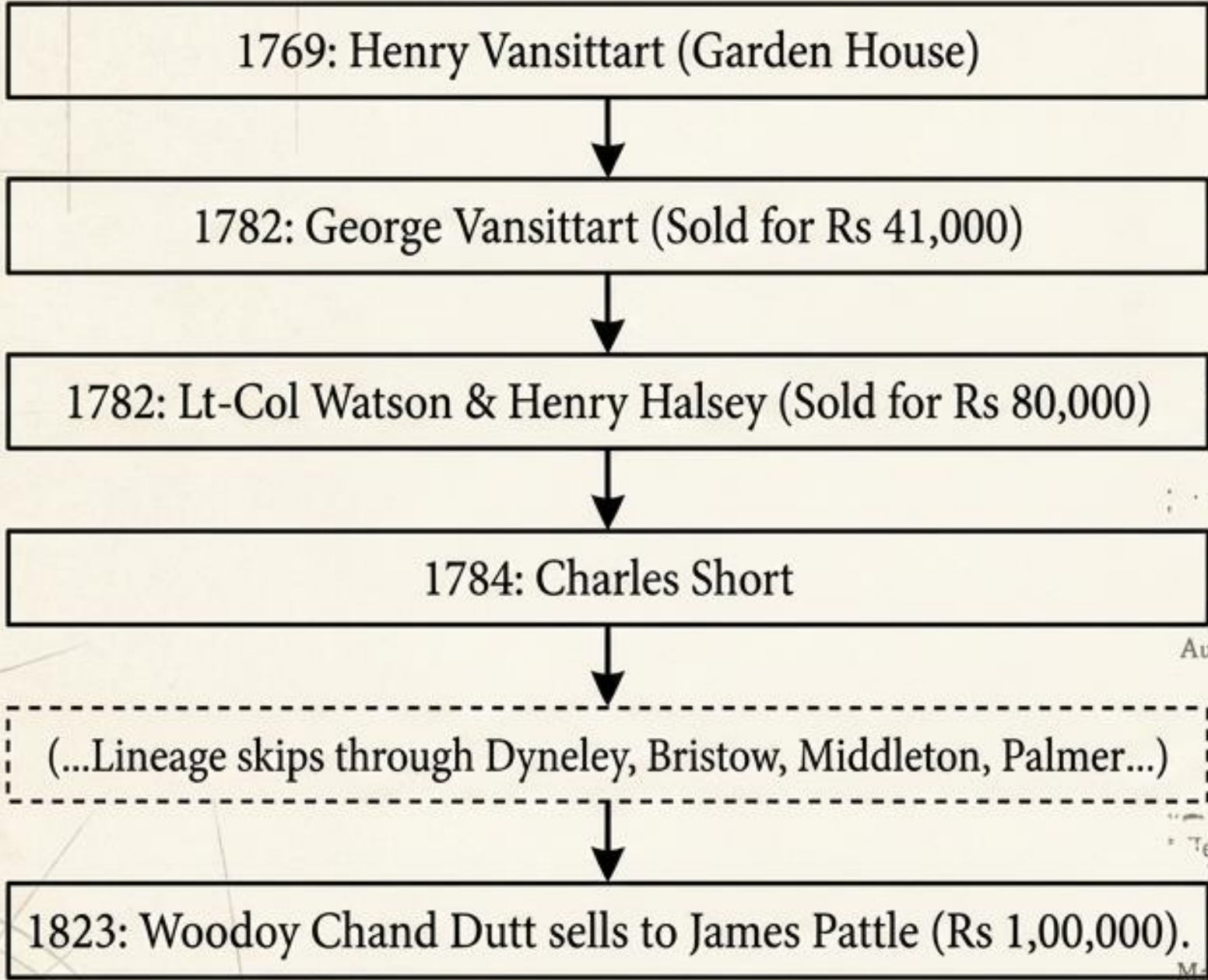
Inner Boundary (1823):
12 Bighas.

The final footprint of the Russell
Street property purchased by
James Pattle for Rs 1,00,000.



Synthesis Note: In just 40 years, the original estate was aggressively subdivided by a factor of 68, reflecting Chowringhee's transformation from rural outskirts to prime urban real estate.

The Title Deed Lineage (1769–1823)



APPENDIX.

LIST OF PAPERS IN CONNECTION WITH THE EPISCOPAL
RESIDENCE IN CALCUTTA.



Conveyance.

1769. Nov. 1. 1. HENRY VANSITTART to GEORGE VANSITTART.—George Vansittart, Lionell Darrell and William Holland, attornies to Henry Vansittart for and in consideration of the sum of C. Rs 1,000 paid by George Vansittart of Calcutta have bargained, sold and delivered the above named Henry Vansittart's Garden House with the out houses and lands thereto belonging.

1782. July 31 and Aug. 1. 2. mess

Aug. 19 and 20. 3. occur

1784. Aug. 11 and 12. 4. upper- belong Impey. Orig

The EIC Enters the Market:

In 1826, the East India Company officially leases this heavily-traded Russell Street property from James Pattle for Rs 600 a month to house the Bishop.

Lease and Release.

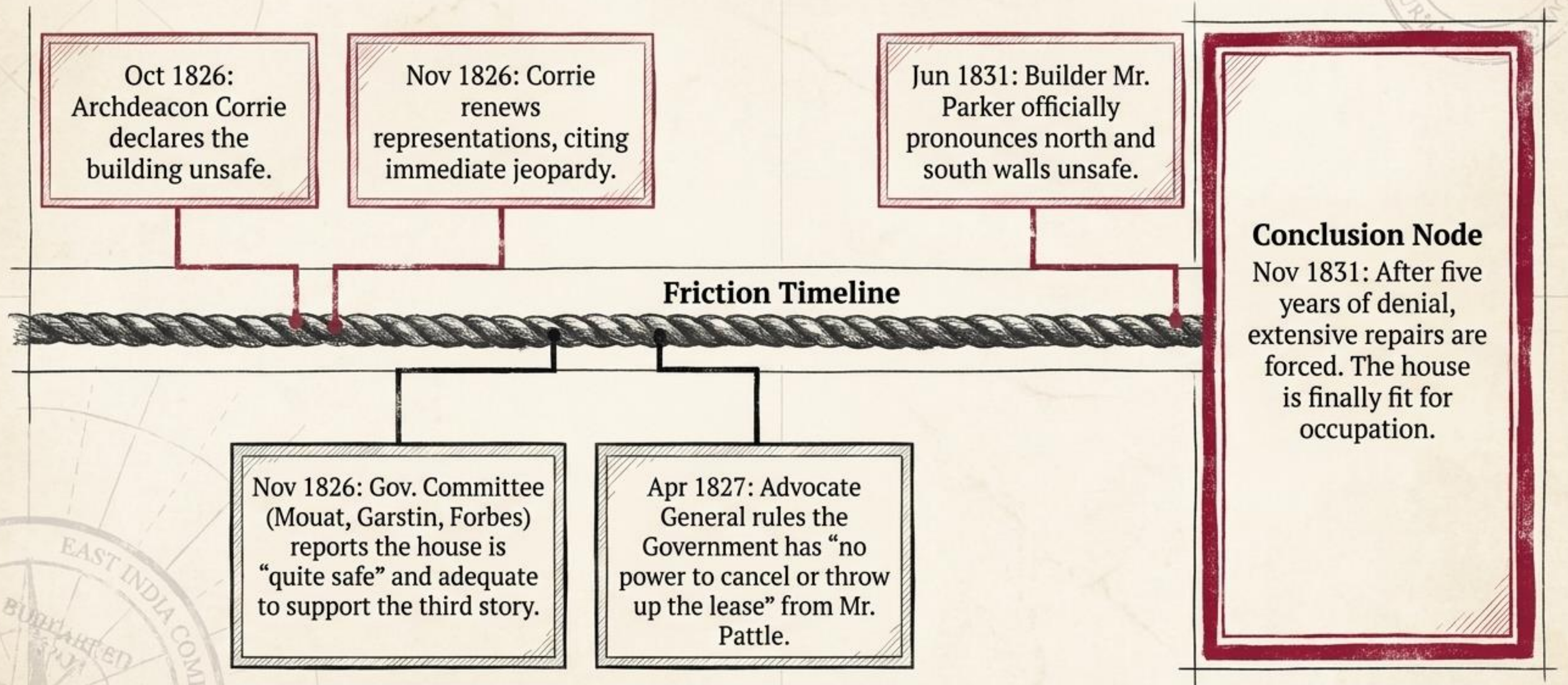
1785. Feb. 28 and Mar. 1. 5. JOHN DYNELEY to JOHN BRISTOW, and Captain John Ulric Collins his trustee. Original.

Lease and Release.

1786. May 3 and 4. 6. FROM MAJOR MARKWOOD TO JOHN ULRIC COLLINS.—House sold for Rs 61,480. Original.



The Crumbling Manor: A Bureaucratic Tug-of-War



Stalemate Over Iron and Plaster



The Landlord: James Pattle

- Refused to pay more than half the cost of structural repairs because complete repairs were “not due till 1829” under the lease.
- Submitted a formal, itemized list of “lost iron bars and bolts” demanding the Government make good on them.

The Government

- The Advocate General confirms the Government is locked into the 11-year lease (expiring 1837).
- Left the house vacant for long periods, allowing places where the Committee had stripped walls in 1826 to fall into very bad order.

Synthesis Note: The Episcopal Palace was legally trapped between a negligent tenant (the Government) and an opportunistic landlord.

Enter Bishop Wilson (1832)

Landing in Calcutta in November 1832, Wilson inherits the troubled Russell Street property, which the Company finally purchases outright from James Pattle in 1838 for Rs 75,000.

Wilson sets his sights on a far superior property: Mr. Wilberforce Bird's late house on Chowringhee Road.



Lord Dalhousie considered Bishop Wilson “one of the best men of business he had ever met.” Wilson’s next move would prove it.

The Covert Operation of 1849

CONFIDENTIAL

Heist/Deal Flowchart

Step 1

The Secret Hold

Bishop Wilson privately secures the refusal of the Chowringhee house for Rs 49,000.

Step 2

The Government Guarantee

Wilson writes to the President in Council, guaranteeing the Government against any expense or loss if they execute the swap.

Step 3

Secrecy & Despatch

Wilson demands the Military Board carry out the design secretly, "lest rumours should get abroad, and the price be heightened."

The Execution: The Advocate General approves the deal; the Government agrees to the purchase at a moment's notice.

The Advocate General's Balance Sheet



Column 1: The Old Palace (Russell Street)	Column 2: The New Palace (Chowringhee Road)
Original Government Cost: Rs 80,000	Appraised Value: Rs 79,000
Current Valuation (1849): Rs 60,000	Negotiated Purchase Price: Rs 55,000
	Bishop's Private Improvements: Rs 24,000
<i>Asset Status: Depreciating.</i>	<i>Asset Status: Instant Equity.</i>



Synthesis Note: Wilson handed the Government a mathematically perfect deal—trading a depreciated asset for a superior property below market value, funded partly by the Bishop himself.

A Tale of Two Palaces

The Old Palace

Location: **Russell Street**

- **Acquisition:** Forced 11-year lease, later bought for **Rs 75,000**.
- **Condition:** Plagued by structural fears, collapsed walls, and missing iron bolts.
- **Ultimate Fate:** Conveyed to the Bishop in the swap, later sold by his executor to Prince Golam Mohammed in 1863.

The New Palace

Location: **Chowringhee Road**

- **Acquisition:** Covertly secured by Bishop Wilson for **Rs 55,000**.
- **Condition:** A superior residence befitting the prestige of the position.
- **Ultimate Fate:** Registered in the Civil Architect's Books at a soaring valuation of **Rs 81,718** by September 1849.

The Cost of the Mitre

Core Thesis

“The Episcopal Residence was never just a house. It was a microcosm of the East India Company’s evolving administrative footprint in Calcutta.”

From Afterthought to Asset

What began in 1823 as a forgotten promise and a rented stopgap evolved by 1849 into a carefully negotiated, state-owned asset worth nearly Rs 100,000.

The Bureaucratic Maturation

The shift from fighting landlords over broken locks to executing sophisticated, covert property swaps mirrors the EIC's transition from traders to entrenched rulers.

The City of Palaces

The constant quest for larger, grander dining rooms and arcades reflects the spatial demands of imperial prestige in a rapidly urbanizing colonial capital.

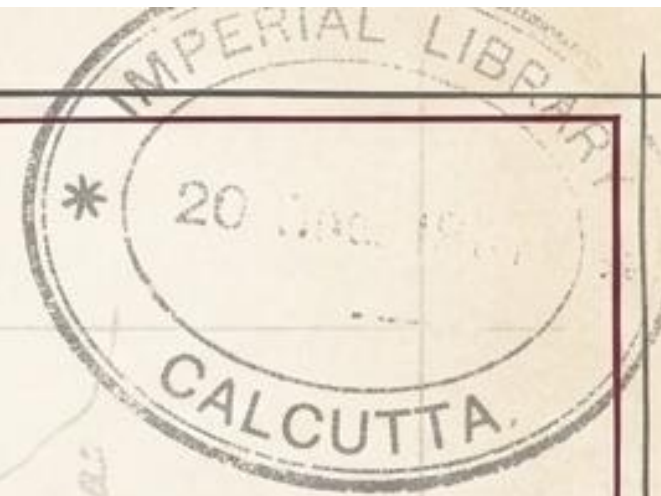
Epilogue: Changing Hands



1863: Following Bishop Wilson's death, the original Russell Street house is sold by his executor to His Highness Prince Golam Mohammed.

1903: At the time of C.R. Wilson's compilation of this archive, the property rests in the hands of Mr. J. E. D. Ezra.

The great estates of the East India Company slowly fractured, absorbed back into the shifting mercantile and royal tapestry of a modernizing Calcutta.





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