

The Company & Its Early History

Annual Issue Dec. 1923





Visitors to Bombay and others who have the opportunity of reading the reports of the Bombay Government, Development Department, will have learnt how the process of enlarging Bombay is progressing, but many do not realize that as long ago as 1859, or seven years after the formation of the B. B. & C. I. Railway Company, the development of Bombay, in so far as it affected the B. B. & C. I. and G. I. P. Railways, was receiving the attention of the Bombay Government. In December 1852 a lengthy memorial was presented to the Court of Directors of the East India Company setting forth the objects of the Company and applying for Government assistance, and as the opening paragraphs of that memorial are of interest they are reproduced below.

1) That your memorialists are desirous of opening the cheapest and most effectual line of intercourse between Agra and Bombay, by the valley of the Chambul and Mhye rivers, Baroda and the Western Coast with such lateral branches from this line as the interests of adjacent districts require.

2) That they have selected this line of country consequence of its large population – its valuable production, including the most celebrated cotton in India, large quantities of opium, and inexhaustible supply of salt – its excessive deficiency, the ordinary roads requisite for commercial course, the directness of its course in connecting the nearest Anglo-Indian harbour (Bombay) with the ancient capital of Hindoostan, and with those provinces

which most largely consume British produce – its meeting at the most convenient point (Agra) the Railway in progress from Calcutta to the north-west of India – its running in the most direct line for carrying British and Indian produce towards Tibet and China, as well as for reaching Simla, which has for several years been the principal residence of the heads of the Anglo-Indian Government, and of the army, and the climate of which, with the extension of railways, must ere long establish it as the permanent residence of the General Government of India and of the European troops attached to the Bengal army. This line likewise is the shortest from England, by Bombay, bearing upon the north-west frontier, the most disturbed and threatening portion of our Indian possessions. Its structure, as regards levels for the formation of a railroad, is peculiarly favourable; and your memorialists cannot forget the liberal support and encouragement which, during the past three years, their investigations have received from His Highness the Guicowar, the enlightened and influential ruler of Goozerat, whose territories occupy an important position in their line.

3) In accomplishing the general objects set forth in paragraph I, your memorialists propose to take advantage of water carriage, by steamers, for the present from Bombay, whither to Tankaria Bunder, in the Gulf of Cambay, or to Surat, at the mouth of Taptee river, and to commence their operations at whichever of these points may seem most fitting to your Hon'ble Court.

4) That the consecutive execution of the several sections of the work proposed, should be carried on in the following order, viz.-

	Miles	Average estimated cost at £5,000 per mile.
1st Section to comprise the distance from Tankaria to Baroda	42	£ 210,000
Or Otherwise from Surat to Baroda, as your Hon'ble Court may decide ..	90	450,000
2nd Section, from Baroda to near Neemuch or Rutlam	210	1,050,000
3rd Section, from near Neemuch to Agra, the junction with the Calcutta and north-west line	300	1,500,000
4th Section, branch from Baroda through Goozerat, by Ahmedabad to Puttum ..	130	650,000
5th Section, branch from Surat by Tapti Valley, to Omrawutty.	370	1,850,000
6th Section, Baroda or Surat, to Callian or Tanna (Bombay) contingent on decision of Government as to 1st Section..	190	950,000
	1,332	£6,660,000

5) Your memorialists regret to be obliged to ask your Hon'ble Court for more than a general support with the land required, and the advantage of the same principle of close Government supervision of their expenditure, which has been so judiciously applied in Bengal to the proceedings of the East India Railway Company. But they feel that as yet the operations of Indian Railways has not been sufficiently matured, nor have they yet established that unflinching character for economy which it is the determined intention of this Company to obtain, and which alone could make any scheme of this nature acceptable in the English money market, without some guarantee such as has been accorded in the three instances of Railways now under construction in India, after the melancholy experience of railway extravagance which has been given at home.

6) Your memorialist; however, trust that the execution and results of the first section of their project, shall give such public confidence in their operations, as shall render unnecessary any future Government guarantee to shareholders.

7) Your memorialists; most fully admit the

fact that the progress of railway construction in India cannot be considered on a successful footing until the confidence of the public shall have been established by the judicious execution, and the successful results of particular lines, to such a degree as shall induce capitalists to invest their money hereafter without any Government guarantee, but under the existing and well justified doubts with which all railway enterprises are regarded, it would be out of the question to look for capital in the market without some guarantee.

8) Your memorialists, therefore, earnestly hope that, in addition to the land required, your Honourable Court will, upon the first section of their line, sustain their exertions by a guarantee of 3½, to shareholders, to the extent of a capital of £210,000 or £415,000, contingent upon the decision as to which shall be the first section selected by your Hon'ble Court, in consideration of which the Directors feel it to be just, that for the amount so guaranteed, there shall be a clause in their agreement with your Honourable Court, securing to the Government of India one-half of any surplus dividends which that section of the line shall produce over and above 5 per cent, per annum.

Within a year, a favourable expression of the views of the Government of India on the project having been received, sanction to the survey of the lines was obtained and this was carried out under the personal direction of Lt. Col. John Pitt Kennedy, formerly Consulting Engineer to the Government of India in the Railway Department, who had been appointed Managing Director and Engineer-in-Chief of the Company. The survey operations extended over a period of nearly two years, and the work done is shown in the following table:-

The first annual General Meeting of the shareholders of the Company was held in London on 16th day of June 1856, the Chairman of the Company being the Right Hon'ble the Earl of Devon and the Dy. Chairman Lt. -Col. Patrick Theodo French, Mr. C. H. Kennedy being

	Working section and plan	Trial section	Sectional reconnaissance by Engineers	Perambulation and report by Engineers.
Between Surat and Ahmedabad including alternatives	Miles. ..	Miles. 2043/8	Miles. ..	Miles. ..
Between Bombay and Surat ..	18	233	..	..
Between Baroda and Agra	..	5503/8	126	..
Between Ahmedabad and Delhi ..	..	..	460	83
Between Baroda and Saugor in the direction of Mirzapore; also Bhangli Ghat Branch	..	..	4836/8	..
Between Surat and Jalgaum	..	..	343	..
Between Jalgaum & Poonassa iron district, and between Chicklee and Jubhulpoor including examination of the Nerbudda iron and coal districts ..	..	..	68	426

Secretary. On the resignation by the Earl of Devon of his seat in 1857, Col. French became Chairman and held that position until 1885. His long connection with the Company was, however, exceeded by another of the original shareholders, Mr. Samuel John Wilde, who at the first meeting of the Company was made a member of a Shareholder's Committee, became a Director two years later, and retained his seat on the Board until his death in the year 1913.

The Company commenced its work of construction in 1856. One of the difficulties to be met appears to have been a shortage of labour, vide the following extract from Col. J. P. Kennedy's report, dated May 1857, to the Directors:- "It is strange that there should be any difficulty in obtaining adequate working parties in a country teeming with an abundant population, where the low scale of wages (3d. per day) proves the comparatively small demand for labour, yet such is the fact, and it has required the energetic support afforded to our Officers by His Highness the Guicowar and by Col. Davidson, the British Resident at Baroda, to enable us to cope with this difficulty." Government sanction was at first confirmed to a line from Surat to Ahmedabad, and it was not

until late in the year 1857 that the construction of the Surat-Bombay connection was conceded to the Company. The matter was referred to in the Directors' Report to the fourth General Meeting in the following terms:-

"This additional concession perfectly alters the character of our property, and places it on a sound and satisfactory basis. From an incomplete, it now becomes a perfect Railway system – second in importance to none in India. The original conception of the undertaking can now be realised. The rich products of the cotton and

other districts within the influence of the line, instead of being obliged to seek tedious, expensive and insecure conveyance to market by the ordinary open coasting boats of the country during the line season, commencing about cocoanut day in August, and terminating somewhere in March, all throughout the year be secured by constant cheap Railway carriage to their great emporium Bombay, an impetus will thereby be given to the people of those districts, which will tend materially improve the condition of the country, and enhance the value of the property of this company".

The first section of the line to be opened was isolated length of 29 miles from Amroli to Ankleshvar, between the Tapti and Nerbudda rivers. The working of this length commenced on the 10th February 1860, the Traffic Returns for the first few weeks being as follows:-

Within a year the length of open line was increased to over 80 miles, the construction of the Tapti and Nerbudda Bridges having been completed. It may be noted that in this year 1861 the construction of the first railway in India to be built by an Indian Prince- His Highness the Gaekwar of Baroda's Railway from Miyagam to Dabhoi – was commenced.

Week ending	Gross earnings per train per mile	No. of Passengers
	One train each way daily.	
	Rs. a. p.	
12-2-60 ..	1 14 6 3/6	693
19-2-60 ..	2 8 6 4/71/2	1,849
26-2-60 ..	2 14 5 5/33/4	2,157
4-3-60 ..	3 1 3 5/71/2	2,351
11-3-60 ..	3 0 0 5/61/2	2,255
	Two trains each way daily	
	Rs. a. p.	
18-3-60 ..	1 12 8 3/31/4	2,678
25-3-60 ..	1 11 4 3/11/4	2,595
1-4-60 ..	2 0 1 3/81/4	2,965
8-4-60 ..	1 10 11 3/01/4	2,475

By the end of the following year, the line was practically completed from Bulsar to Ahmedabad, a total length of 185 miles, and the remaining portion from Bulsar to Bombay (125 miles) was well advanced, but it was not until nearly the end of the year 1865 that the line was opened to Grant Road, and owing principally to the slow progress of the Back Bay Reclamation works, six years elapsed before the line reached Church Gate. Two years later, in 1873, railway communication with Colaba was established.

The route by which the B. B. & C. I. Railway should make its way into Bombay was for long a vexed question. The matter was settled in 1859 in the following Resolution of the Bombay Government:-

"The completion of these plans and the estimates based on them has established the following points in favour of the direct line from the Keturnee River, via Bassein to Dhadur, as compared with the line joining the G. I. P. Railway at Purseok:

- 1st. The direct line will cost less.
- 2nd. It is shorter by 8 miles.
- 3rd. Its curves are few and easy, while those on the other line are many and sharp.
- 4th. It maintains the gradient of 1 in 500, which rules the line from

Ahmedabad to the Keturnee River, while the alternative line presents a ruling gradient of 1 in 100.

"These advantages appear to his Lordship in Council quite conclusive in favour of the direct line between the Keturnee River and the Dhadur station of the G. I. P. and the Government sanction the adoption of that line accordingly."

Although in 1859 the Bombay Government came to a decision as to the route to be followed by the Railway into Bombay, it is of interest to see how many were the considerations which led up to that decision. The Court of Directors of the East India Company apparently pressed Lord Elphinstone's Government to come to a decision as in July 1858 Government issued a resolution stating that they found great difficulty in giving effect to the Directors' instructions since except on the Esplanade there was absolutely no ground in existence available for the purpose of a railway terminus and suited for the requirements both of goods and passenger traffic; that it was not to be supposed that Government were bound to reclaim an extensive tract of land for the purpose of the railway. This, as a matter of fact, was an erroneous view of the obligations of Government under the contracts. Also just prior to 1859 there was a scheme for bringing the B. B. & C. I. Railway across the flats to Back Bay and giving them a terminus to the south of the Fort, the workshops being situated a little to the west of the Byculia Race-course and abutting on Bellasis Road.

In 1861, the Managing Agent directed his Chief Engineer to submit route plans for the extension of the line south of the present Dadar Junction to Colaba, and in the same year the Government of Bombay wrote to the Secretary of State informing him that they intended to give sufficient land at Colaba for a goods terminus and at Marine Lines for a passenger terminus, ground being also given at Dadar for workshops and goods depot. In accordance with the Managing Agent's instructions the Chief Engineer submitted the necessary plans and report and said that the line had been laid out so

as to avoid house property and road crossings. The length of the line appears to have been seven miles and was estimated to cost 14 lakhs of rupees. A previous estimate formed in 1859 estimated the cost at 4½ lakhs of rupees. The line proposed skirted the Back Bay at a distance from the shore of from 100 to 200 feet and terminated at Grant's Buildings, Colaba. In considering this Government replied that they

approved of a passenger station at Marine Lines, and were of the opinion that to the northward of this a goods station might also be advisable, "that being the nearest point at which the Railway approaches the native town." Finally, after a voluminous correspondence, the Government sanctioned an extension of the line from Grant Road to Chaupati and thence along Back Bay shore to Colaba.

R. D.H.



NERBUDDA BRIDGE, BROACH
