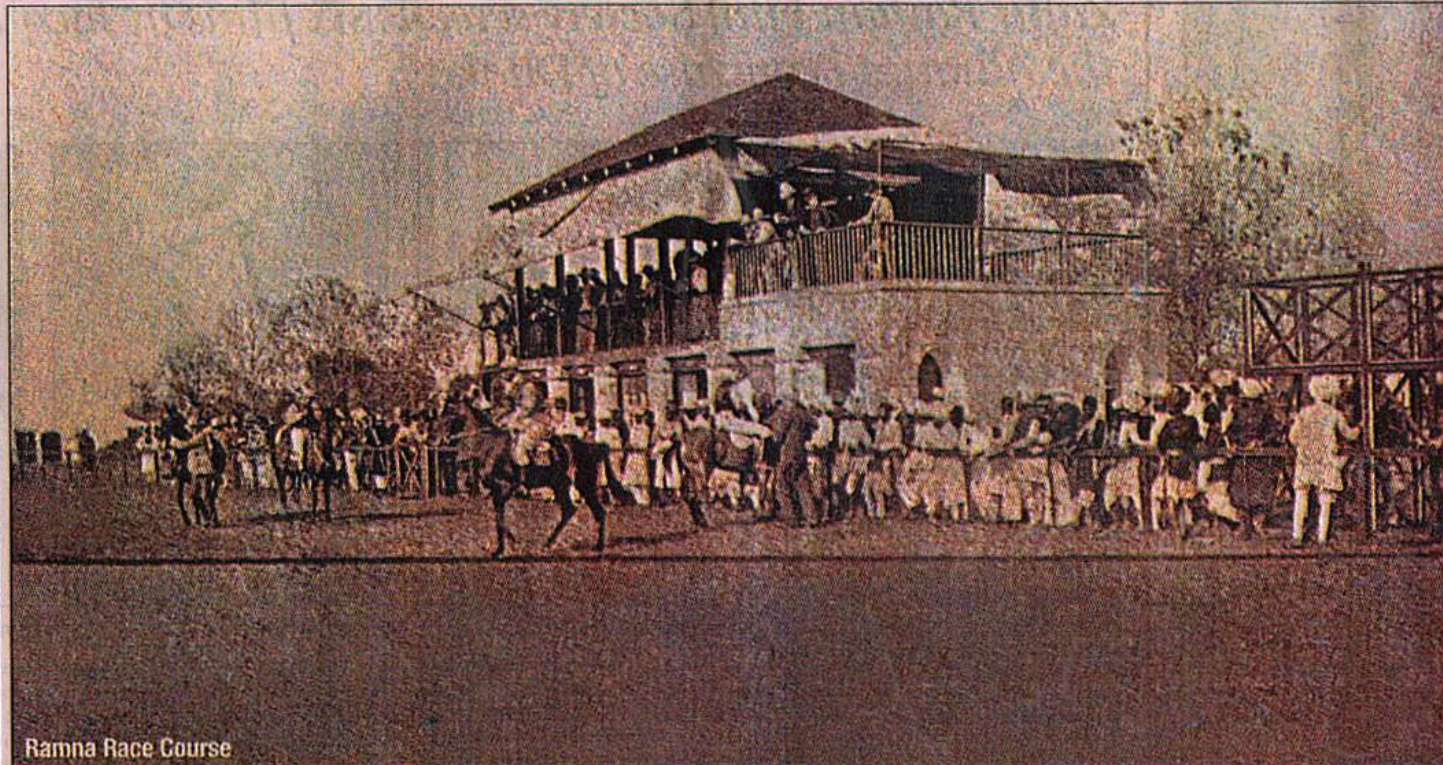
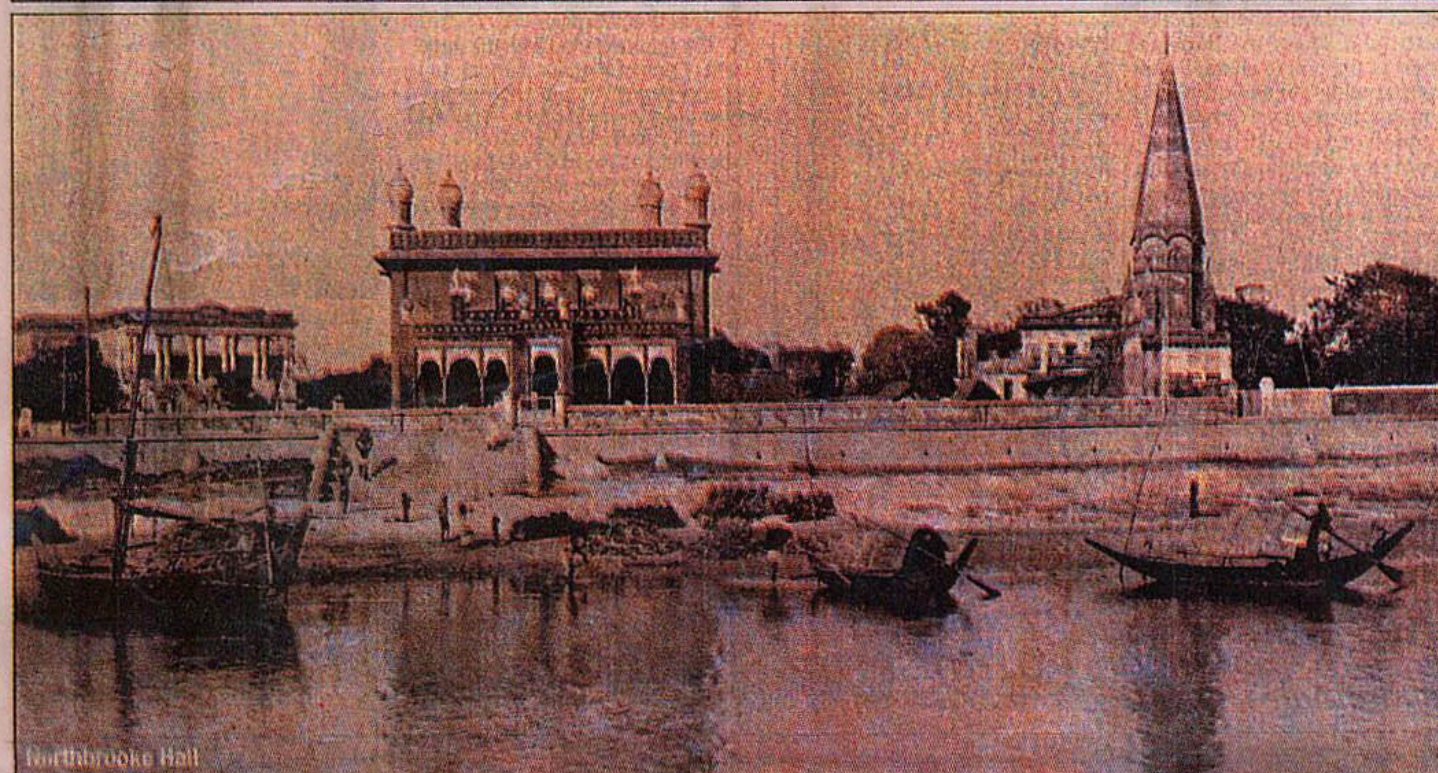


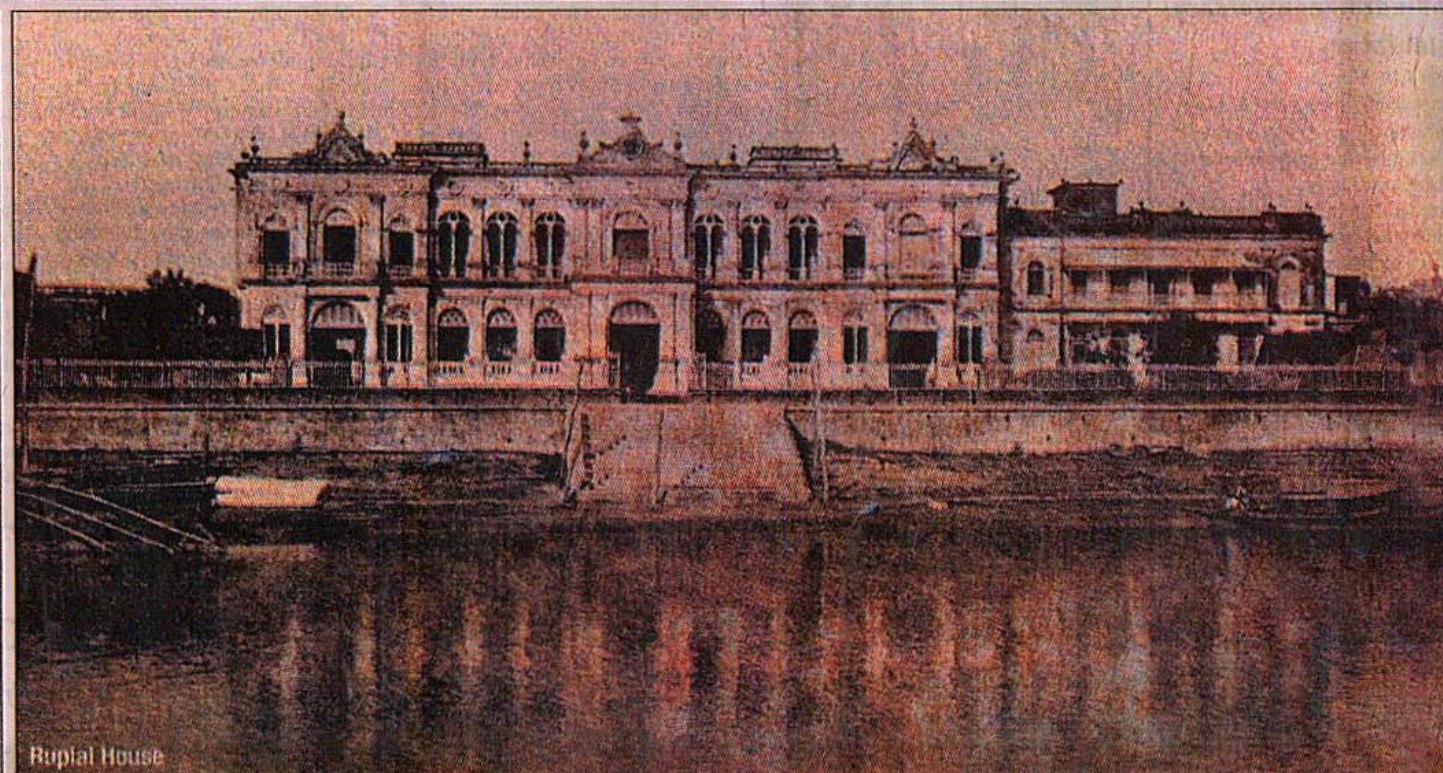
Dholai Khal



Ramna Race Course



Northbrooke Hall



Ruplal House

Dhaka smiles - capturing the heritage image

With a 400-year heritage, the Buriganga with its age-old wrinkles still flows beside Dhaka. But the present generation would not believe how gracefully the coastline of young Buriganga adorned it. Nor would those who belong to this generation be able to comprehend what vibrant images or the declined states Dhaka possessed in the course of history.

The phases of Dhaka's life testify different faces of history as time flows on with garlands of memoirs. Through the wear and tear of time and nature, Dhaka has aged. Books with photographs, other images and digital archives are the most effective ways which can keep written and visual records with which we can go back to

Dhaka's colourful past and venture into the different times.

The National Museum of Bangladesh has published the "Photographic Album of Old Dhaka", making it possible to excavate visual records of Dhaka's past. Besides photographs that still exist, we are also indebted to some Europeans who left images of Dhaka in drawings and sketches as they had seen in their time.

In this regard we may mention Charles D'Oyly's "Antiquities of Dhaka" which consisted of folio volumes of illustrations accompanied by a brief account of the city and vignettes based on George Chinnery's sketches of the city (Images of Dhaka's past,

Muntasir Mamun). Further information revealed that the Folio photographs were the contribution of James Atkinson.

To historians and people who try to discover our heritage D'Oyly's book is of great importance. It gives us ideas of a time when Dhaka was undergoing a phase of decline after the collapse of the Mughals. Apart from this, Irishman George Chinnery who came to Dhaka in 1808 and stayed here for three years also drew many pictures of the city. He was a professional artist and was invited by D'Oyly himself. John Atkinson, a surgeon was the one who wrote the text for the book.

In 1840, an unknown artist painted an exquisite series of

water colours depicting the Buriganga riverfront view of Dhaka. It included the row of elegant houses and palatial mansions that were erected in the colonial style. These mansions usually belonged to wealthy merchants -- indigo planters, zamindars who were both native as well as foreign and also the British officials of the East India Company. The book "Panorama of Dhaka" published in mid 19th century in London lacked the artist's name mysteriously.

The Photographic Album published by the National Museum has revealed many of Old Dhaka's images. Today's story presents some of the photographs like the Ruplal House, Northbrooke Hall, Husaini Dalan, Dhaka College,

Dholai Khal and the Ramna Race Course etc taken from the album.

Ruplal House is one of the graceful buildings that formed the riverfront skyline. This impressive mansion of early 19th century stands picturesquely on the Buckland Bund within Farashganj locality of old Dhaka presents a grand riverfront of about 300 feet long. The Northbrooke Hall presently known as "Lalkuthi" is situated also on the bank of Buriganga river in Wiseghat Road. Originally built as a Town Hall and named after the viceroy of India Lord Northbrooke, this building was converted into a public library, extended with a clubhouse and subsequently was known as Johnson Hall. Built with a

blend of Mughal and European Renaissance style, this presented a magnificent view of the riverfront.

Hussaini Dalan, the Imam's house of the Shiah group is said to be built by Mir Murad who was the inspector and supervisor of buildings during the time of Sultan Mohammad Azam. The festival of Muharram as well as some religious rites of the Shiahs were associated with these structures. But as the original building faced destruction, it was initially rebuilt by Dhaka's Nayeb Nazim Jesharat Kha and later again restored by Nawab Ahsanullah after being destroyed by the earthquake in 1897. The Dhaka College was built in Old Dhaka in 1841. On November 20, Rev. Daniel

Lord, Bishop of Calcutta laid the foundation stone.

The building was later known as the Collegiate School and then the State Bank. The Dholai Khal, another old feature of Dhaka was one of the main waterway and the defense moat of the city. Later it turned into a place for garbage disposal. The Mughals had built several pools or bridges on this canal. James Taylor in his writings has described that Dholai Khal divided the city in two. Besides through writings of Dani, Mirza Nathan, Hridoy Nath Majumdar we can have an idea on this historical canal. Today's Suhrawardy Uddyan has a long heritage of itself.

The Ramna Race Course was however developed by the

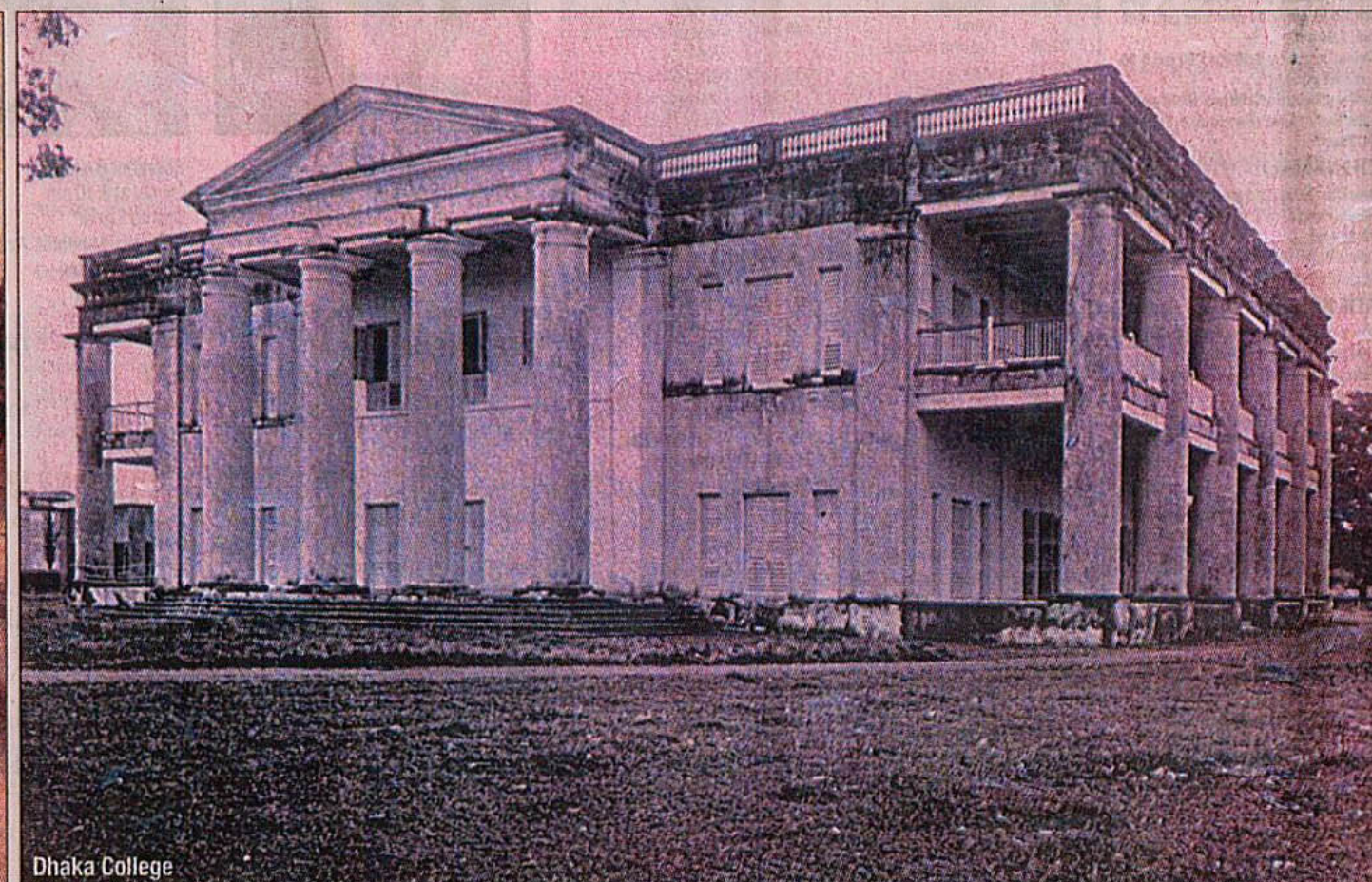
Magistrate of Dhaka, Charles Doss who in 1825 cleaned the overgrown forest of Ramna by the help of prisoners and fencing the oval shaped cleaned part formed the Racecourse.

Thus, photographs and historical records like frozen facts enable us to know the answers of many whys, whens, hows and whats. As the ageing Dhaka enriches with the past blooms with the present to go ahead with dreams of glory to be fulfilled in time, we wait for new and newer history to be written ...

Story: ZAKIA RAHMAN, architect
Photo Courtesy: PHOTOGRAPHIC ALBUM OF OLD DHAKA
Published by The National Museum of Bangladesh



Husaini Dalan



Dhaka College