CHAPTER 5

OFFICIAL BUILDINGS

Architecture would fulfill many functions for the British as they spread their empire throughout the world: whether to inspire away, or to remind British functionaries and settlers of a sentimentalized Britain that they had left behind. However, imperial architecture would also be modified and influenced by the cultures, environments and peoples that it came into contact with. There was no single, unified architectural style imposed on the colonies. Odd hybrid building styles could be widely different from one colony to another as the British sought to bring all of these disparate aims and influences together.

There is no doubt that of all the invaders of India the British were the least destroyer of heritage remnants. During their rule direct attack on art, architecture and culture of India was the least. This could possibly have been due to the fact that the British came from a part of the world when contemporary social thinkers were profounding theories on individual rights and freedom, humanism, adult franchise and the concept of nation state. However the economic exigencies back in Britain especially after the two world wars warranted that the British needed regular flow of raw material for their traditional industries to survive.
Colonization of other countries was the only way out for Britain. The British stay in India lasted for about three centuries and during this period they significantly contributed towards social reforms, transport and communication, education, architecture and planning. All these contributions were actually meant to further the interests of Britain in India.

A close examination of the planning imperative of Lutyens Delhi reflects imperialistic shortsightedness and biases. If the Muslim invaders had a critical approach towards Indian architectures to emphasize the power and glory of their regime the scientific temper needed for good city planning and architecture was always found missing. This was also true of the city plan evolved by Edwin Lutyens in Delhi for the British rulers of India.

The shift of the capital of British India from Calcutta to Delhi in 1911 necessitated the building of the imperial city of New Delhi. The design of this city and its principal buildings (official) was entrusted to Edwin Lutyens and Herbert Baker, both being architects well versed in the neo-classical tradition flowing from the European renaissance. Their
designs were expected to symbolize, the grandeur and power of the British Empire as evident at the beginning of the 20th century.\textsuperscript{169}

The modern city of New Delhi was founded in 1911. In 1911 George V of Great Britain ordered the establishment of a new administrative centre for India and appointed a commission to select a site. The site chosen was 5 miles, south east of the city of Delhi, the capital of India until the British moved it to Calcutta in 1858, New Delhi planned by Sir Edward Lutyens and Sir Herbert Baker, was formally inaugurated in 1931.\textsuperscript{170}

Lutyens finalized the city layout in 1915. The plan was derived from the best traditions of the European renaissance and was enlivened by an elaborate design of plantation composed of carefully chosen varieties of indigenous trees and other vegetations. The buildings and their compounds, as well as the roads, were laid out according to the very generous standards befitting an imperial city.\textsuperscript{171}

A great war had broken out in Europe in 1914 and as a consequence the budget for imperial Delhi was drastically reduced, even before its construction could be started. It is fairly apparent that the


architect’s response to the cut in budgetary allocation was reflected in the design of the housing, which forms the bulk of the built environment in any city. The official buildings and the overall layout were thus allowed to retain their generous standards, thereby allowing the architects to design some of the grandest ceremonial public spaces of any capital city of the world.172

New Delhi, among India’s most modern and best-planned cities, is one of the newest capitals in the world, the last of the government buildings was completed in 1930. The site chosen for the location of the new city was on the Jamuna plain at a point where a great rock rose 50 ft above the ground. The city planning commission laid out the city in a circular radiating from this rock. The rock itself was levelled off and on its broad, flat summit were constructed for secretariat buildings and government house, while the legislative building was erected at the foot of the rock, these three comprise the principal government building in the city. From this striking focal point, broad, tree-lined avenues run, as in Paris and Washington, to important or scenic locations within or near the city. One avenue runs to the Great Mosque of Jama Masjid in old Delhi. While another leads to the ancient walled city of Indraprastha. The trees of the city and series of canals, leaving a great central mall help to give

New Delhi its garden atmosphere, their demands for water, however, require a specially constructed irrigation system.  

The garden city planning of Lutyens Delhi has proved more influential than the Mughal houses of Shah Jahan’s India, new villas are a British legacy, together with many of the regulations which encourage their design. The new capital could not be enjoyed by the British for long, and in 1947 power was transferred to an independent Indian nation. While New Delhi was planned with a purpose to erase the Mughal myth and in turn, symbolize the permanence of the British rule in India. The official buildings of New Delhi then were meant to connect Britain’s rule with India’s own imperial past and at the same time to evoke a sense of pride in the unique accomplishments of the British Raj. The architectural symbolism of New Delhi had meaning primarily for the British themselves. The British, choose a classical style for their new capital buildings in same measure, simply because that was the medium through which Europeans apprehended empire.

Each of the official buildings mentioned below has a different history, architectural features and their utilitarian and symbolic

significances, that is of interest in order to better understand the place of administrative buildings in the building scheme. Following are the official buildings and its main architectural features:

**Viceroy's House:** It was designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens as a synthesis of eastern and western styles of architecture and was completed by 1929.\(^{176}\)

The formal Viceroy's House remains Lutyens's most significant achievement. It is befittingly the crowning glory of the British Empire and architecture in India. It is bigger than Palace of Versailles, it cost a whopping £ 12,53,000 and now houses the President of India. It is unquestionably a masterpiece of symmetry, discipline, silhouette, colour and harmony, of course, it has come in for much criticism too but that has mostly been limited to the imperial intent behind it rather than its architecture.\(^{177}\)

The former Viceroy's House now *Rashtrapati Bhavan* (President House), thus differed from all other official buildings. Viceroy House at 600 (long and 180 (wide is built on a giant scale. It is bigger than any palace of the Indian princes, presumably deliberately. It was designed


above all to impress and, like other new buildings of New Delhi, to re-affirm the British intention to hold on to the foreseeable future.\textsuperscript{178}

Thus, the length of each of its two main fronts was about 600 feet, the top of the dome is 180 feet from the ground the whole house covered four and a half acres and enclosed twelve courtyards.\textsuperscript{179}

In the Viceroy's House, the Principal fronts are 640 feet wide and the north and south fronts are 540 feet wide, the circumference at the base is over half a mile. It has four floors with some 340 rooms and loggias of varying sizes. The floor covers 200,000 square feet. Some 700 million bricks and three million cubic feet of stone went into the structure, with comparatively little steel and cement.\textsuperscript{180}

There are approximately 285 rooms ranging functions in the different wings of Viceroy's house. The main floor plan shows a clear functional division of five large areas. The central section with the Durbar Hall, the state dining room, the state ballroom, and three state drawing rooms are used exclusively for official purposes. In order to guarantee

sufficient light in such a large floor area, the staircase court was laid out as both stairwell and a light well.¹⁸¹

It is dominated by monumental copper dome, which rises over a vast colonnaded frontage. The main entrance is approached by a broad flight of steps, which leads to dodecastyle portico. The capitals are wholly original, a fusion of acanthus leaves and pendant bells. The enormous projecting cornice or *chajja*, a Mughal device, which provides a strong unifying element and throws a band of deep shadow around the perimeter. The Viceroy house is a masterpiece of symmetry, discipline, silhouette, colour and harmony.¹⁸²

The four wings, along with the central section were linked only by comparatively narrow sections, the southwest wing formed a self-contained English style. Country house with living, sleeping, and guest rooms, divided into three storeys and with direct access to the Mughal garden. The outer northwest wing, identical in shape to the southwest wing, consists of three storeys incorporating approximately twenty single rooms and suites for the viceroy’s guests with view over the surrounding gardens. Inner courtyards and shady loggias maintain a pleasant

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¹⁸². Philip Davies *op.cit.*, p. 141.
temperature in the rooms and were probably intended to increase cross-ventilation.\textsuperscript{183}

To the west of the palace overlooks an enormous Mughal garden designed by Lutyens. Here the principles of hierarchy, order, symmetry and unity are extended from the house into the landscape. A series of ornamental fountains, walls, gazebos and screens combine with scores of trees, flowers and shrubs to create a paradise so delightful that Indians called the garden \textit{Gods Ocean Heaven} the Irwins supervised the planting of the garden which grew in tropical profusion softening the formal pattern of lawns and waterways, popularly known as \textit{Mughal} garden.

In the narrow wings to the right and left of the great portico in front of the Durbar Hall, the rooms are, for the most part, offices for the viceroys personal staff and adjacent to these are more guestrooms for less important guests.\textsuperscript{184}

At the entrance to the forecourt, piers with sculptured elephants flanked the wrought-iron screen and stone sentry boxes sheltering mounted troopers of the bodyguard. One cannot appreciate the great length of the houses, until one has passed the Jaipur column and became aware of its height when one was close to it.

\textsuperscript{183} Ibid. p. 103.
\textsuperscript{184} Ibid. p. 103.
Immediately inside the portico is the circular throne room or Durbar Hall. The Durbar Hall in the Viceroy House is approached by thirteen feet high entrance door. Palladian influence is clearly evident in the four huge apses inset into the walls.\textsuperscript{185} The Roman Pillar arrangements as a visible preparation for the center of power and Durbar Hall as representative of this center (where investitures and Durbars take place) rising into the dome, its walls lined with white marble, its floor of porphyry and with columns of yellow jasper in the four apses. Indian marble of many colours adorns its walls. Apart from red and cream sandstone on the external façade, Lutyens used many other varieties of stone such as white from Makrana, grey from Kotah, green from Baroda, pink from Alwar and black from Bhaislana. The Hall is in the form of a circular marble court 75 ft (22.8 m) in diameter. The throne faced the entrance from beneath their canopy of Crimson Velver, this was the climax of the two-mile approach. From here onwards, the axis is divided, one corridor leading to the 100-feet long state dining room, with its teak panelling portraits of Viceroyys, display of gold plate and table for more than 100 people, the other to the ballroom. For all its great size the latter was originally rather dull, lady Willington, the second Chatelaine of the

\textsuperscript{185} Sunita Kohli, \textit{op.cit.}, B.P. Singh & P.K. Varma (ed.), \textit{op.cit.}, p. 74.
house, enlivened it with brightly – coloured arabesques and Mughal motifs painted on the walls and ceiling by Italian artists.

The entrance beneath the portico was in fact at first floor level and only intended to be used by personages arriving in state. All other guests as well as their Excellencies, and the household entered on the floor below driving through arches into the north and south court. When there was a large function, the guests drove along tunnels joining the two courts, which deposited then on either sides of a battery a cloak rooms situated beneath the center of the house, from which they ascended to the principal floor by choice of two ground staircase.

Lutyens incorporated many Indian motifs in Viceroy’s House. He used the Cobra for the fountain of South Court and engraved elephants on gates, on pillars, and in the entrances to the basement. The lotus motif was also used in the Jaipur column and the fountains in the Mughal garden. Inside the vast establishment of the palace, the Mughal garden is the element that Lutyens clearly acknowledged as a direct heritage from the Mughals.

Thus, in this house Lutyens worked with many quintessential elements of indigenous architecture. Realizing the crucial importance of light and shade, he introduced the loggias. These run rights round the

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186. Ibid. p. 74.
eternal faces of Viceroy House and mask the actual window and door openings.

They also provide a superb common repetitive theme. From Rajput and Mughal Architecture, Lutyens adopted *chajjas, chhatris* and *jalis*. Lutyens also acknowledged the vital role of colour and texture. He therefore, use the some red sand stone that the Mughals had used at Fatehpur Sikri and Old Delhi also. He interspersed this with cream stone from Dholpur, Bharatpur and Agra in Brilliant horizontal bands of colour. This accentuated the vast horizontal emphasis of the building as a whole.

The dominant feature of the building is the central dome, here a copper hemisphere rises from a white stone drum incised with railings, directly influenced by the great *stupa* at *sanchi*. Thus, it is the best proportioned building in New Delhi.¹⁸⁷ And the Viceroys House remains Lutyens most significant achievement. It is befittingly the crowning glory of the British Empire and the architecture in India.

**Secretariat** (North Block and South Block): As part of the collaborative agreement between Lutyens and Baker, the secretariat building were designed by Herbert Baker. At New Delhi, Baker similarly endued his work with symbolic meaning and import. His two vast secretariat

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buildings, built between 1914-27, each three storeyed high and nearly a quarter of a mile long, housed every administrative department of the Government of India.\textsuperscript{188} Presently serving as the offices of the central government, the Prime Minister’s Offices are located at one end of the South Block while defence ministry is at the other end with external affairs in the middle. North Block houses the ministry of home affairs and finance ministries.

Thus, the secretariat – two buildings (Blocks) lie each side of a wide avenue, dominating the new city escape. Designed by Herbert Baker, they are reminiscent of his Government Buildings of Pretoria, two huge ranges of classical buildings with Projecting colonnades and large baroque domes dominating the composition. Both are derived from Christopher Wren’s Royal Naval College at Greenwich.\textsuperscript{189}

Although criticized by comparison with Lutyens work they are magnificent pieces of civic design. The towers flanking the entrance from the Great Place were designed to be twice the height, to act as obelisks guarding the way to the inner sanctum but these were reduced in scale and lost their impact. The domes are embellished with lotus motifs and


\textsuperscript{189} P.N. Chopra and P. Chopra, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 33.
elephants. On the north and south elevation huge Mughal gateways centred on the horizontal axis between the domes.  

The secretariats were built without continuous verandahs or other such outside protection as is usual in India from the heat of the sun they have instead very thick hollow walls into which the windows are deepest, so that the high rays of the sun cannot shine on and heat the glass. Against the low sun of morning and evening they are protected by teak latticed shutters. By this means the lighting of the rooms can be better regulated and the offices are not so gloomy in the cooler weather; the sun-baked walls also sooner radiate during the cooler nights their heat, which usually clings to the stuffy verandah.

As at Viceroy’s House, indigenous architectural forms in the secretariats were a response to practical climatic needs as well as to the requirements of political symbolism. Baker employed the characteristics Indian features of the open canopied chhatri, an ancient royal emblem, the widely overhanging stone chajja, which protected walls and windows from driving rain and mid day sun, and the intricately carved stone and marble jali, which admitted air but not noon time sun. Unlike lutyens he also used the nashiman or recessed porch, a re-entrant vaulted portal that distinguished many Mughal buildings. In Bakers adaptations a

190. Philip Davies, op.cit., p. 141.
rectangular architrave enclosed around headed arch of two or more storeyed. Designed originally as cold season offices, the secretariats were constructed without the continuous verandahs, which normally served in India as sun shields. Instead windows were kept small in proportion wall area, and their glass was deep set in thick walls away from high rays of the sun. Teak jalousie shutters screened the low sun of morning and evening. Lightening of rooms could be better adjusted as a result, and offices were not as gloomy in winter as with verandah. A striking architectural peculiarity of the secretariats is columned porticos added to the building on all sides.

Thus, it is one of the greatest buildings of the British period, three storey high and extending over an area of 12,00x1300 feet. Baker’s secretariats by contrast show a more direct grafting of Indian motifs on to the classical surfaces. In large part this reflects Baker’s political concerns that the secretariat building’s, so visible on their high pediments, and so much more open to the comings and goings of Indians, should be seen to be distinctly Indian.

**Council Chamber/Legislative Building:** If it were not for the Montague Chelmsford reforms of 1919, the council chamber may not have been

built. Its corny how the building most indispensable to modern Indian democracy came up as an after thought. Earlier called the Circular House, it was added to the layout at a later stage following the reforms, which created a large legislative assembly.

The council chamber is one of the most magnificent buildings in New Delhi. Along with the nearby Viceroy’s House and the two blocks of the central secretariat, it forms one of the brightest clusters of architectural gems possessed by any country in the world. With its massive circular edifice it stands supreme amidst a number of multi-storeyed buildings which have came up in recent years around the central secretariat complex perhaps symbolizing the supremacy of the legislature which is located within its walls.

The building was designed by the architect Sir Herbert Baker who along with Sir Edwin Lutyens was responsible for the planning and layout of legislative building (Parliament House), New Delhi.194

The original plan for New Delhi prepared in 1911 did not provide for a legislature building. After the end of First World War and the introduction of the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms it was decided to have a Council House, Comprising a Legislative Assembly Chamber (later Lok Sabha Chamber), a Council of States Chamber (now Rajya Sabha

Chamber) and a chamber of Princes (Library Hall). The design of the building was approved by the end of the year 1919 and the Duke of Connaught laid its foundation stone on The 12th February 1921. “The foundation stone of the council house was laid by the Duke of Connaught with all the brightness and splendour of Indian ceremonial … Before the Delhi ceremony the Duke addressed the assembled members of both chambers; he spoke with a great and affecting earnest, appealing to them as an old friend of India to for go discord and unite for the common good of India.” It took about six years to complete this majestic building.

Council Chamber (Parliament House) is a huge circular building in red and buffed sand stone with open colonnaded verandahs encircling the entire circumference. Thus the huge circular colonnaded building comprises three semi-circular chambers for the legislatures and a central library count by a 27.4 m (90 feet) high dome. It is 173 m (570 feet) in diameter and covers 2.02 hectares (5 acres) in area with colonnaded verandahs enclosing the entire circumference.

Legislative building is a circular edifice with a continuous open verandah on the first floor, fringed with a colonnade of 144 creamy sand stone columns each 27 feet high. The area enclosed by this impressive building with 12 gates – 4 of them with porches – is six acres and its

circumference is one-third of a mile. The volume of dressed stone used in the building is 3,75,000 cubic feet.\textsuperscript{197}

Within the circular edifice are enclosed a big central hall, three chambers (\textit{Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha} and the Library Hall), Committee Rules and Office Rooms to run the machinery of parliament.

The central hall that attracts the attention of the visitors as he enters parliament house is itself a circular structure. On the three main assess facing the central hall are placed the three chambers and between them lie garden courts. The hall is circular in shape and its dome that is 98 feet in diameter is stated to be one of the most magnificent in the world.\textsuperscript{198} The committee rooms which are four in number are located on the first floor they are specially designed to suit the needs of parliament committees, which meet their from time to time.

The building is divided into three levels; there is a red plinth base, a middle storey surrounded by 144 buff colored pillars and a smaller attic storey. There is a central circular room with three semi-circular chambers at 120\degree surrounded by the outer circular ring of offices and a deep verandah almost 1 km in length.\textsuperscript{199}

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197. Lok Sabha Secretariat, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 4.
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The boundary wall has blocks of sandstone carved in geometrical patterns that echo Mughal *jalis*.  

The architect’s keen sense of appreciation of Indian art is widely evident in several features of construction of the parliament house. This is especially noticeable in its use of Indian symbols and in the carving of the typical Indian “*Chajja*” which shades the walls and windows. In the many varied forms of “*Jali*” adopted in the work of the building in marble, stone and wood, the architect has drawn inspiration from the traditional Indian art and architecture.

All the materials used in this building are indigenous the black marble used in the columns was procured from Gaya; the white and the various coloured marbles which line the walls of the library hall came from Makrana. The timber used for the doors came from Assam and Burma, while black wood (*Shisham*) obtained from South India.  

Extensive lawns surround parliament House and the entire parliament house estate (comprising the building and the outer lawns) is surrounded by an ornamental stonewall. There are fountains both within and outside the building adding to the charm of the parliament house.

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The opening ceremony for the building was performed on 18th January 1927 by the then Governor General of India, Lord Irwin, who at that ceremony read a message from the King. Referring to the circular edifice of the building, the message said –

“The circle stands for something more than unity. From the earliest times it has been also an emblem of Permanence, and the poet has seen in the ring of light a true symbol of eternity. May therefore we and those who follow us witness, so far as we may, the fruition of these twin conceptions. As our eyes and thoughts rest upon this place, let us pray that this Council House may endure through the centuries, down which time travels towards eternity, and that, through all the differences of passing days, men of every race and class and creed may here unite in a single high resolve to guide India to fashion her future well.”

**Museum & Record Office:** Now called the national archives of India, a fragment of one building in Lutyens ambitious scheme, it was designed in 1922. Of the four large buildings planned only the Imperial Record office was built in the original arrangement and, even then, only one wing was built.

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Watercolor perspectives depicting Lutyens monumental grouping of cruciform structures, as exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1922, displayed a pervasive classical vocabulary, skillfully adapted to Indian tradition and weather. The wide expanse of basement walls, their battered red stone punctured at intervals by shadowy entrances and recessed windows and semi-domes conveyed a calculated impression of timeless solidity and strength. The continuous sweep of cornices and stringcourses and the rhythmic beat of paired columns reinforced a dominant horizontally appropriate to a uniformly flat refrain. The airy central courtyard of each structure, its deep loggias thick walls and splashing rooftop fountains acknowledged the preponderantly hot and arid Delhi climate.²⁰⁵

All the elements of the record office stand in a harmonious relationship to each other similar buildings. The base is neither too high, as in secretariat, nor too broken up as in the residence of the Commander in chief. Edwin Lutyens was undoubtedly bringing his entire repertoire of neo-classical proportions to bear. The façade reflects, with matchless clarity, the two most important architectural clichés of the late Neo-classical building style in India, namely the hall with columns and the verandah with capitals of the Delhi order, each with a triple axis

triumphal arch at both sides of this stoa. The triumphal arches at each side are of extra ordinary grandeur and neo-classical simplicity.

In the record office, the reasons behind the significant height increase of the central stoa and with the triumphal sides arches on a high base of red sand stone is somewhat puzzling. Its undecorated doorways and window openings were obviously not intended to make their own architectural statement. Thus the base is to be perceived as a part of the similar red earth surrounding the area rather than belonging to the actual building itself.

Thus, we can see the building is built in red and buff-colored sandstone with the lower storey in red stone and the upper floor in buff stone. Twin column line the verandah, the corners have plasters to continue the symmetry. The lower storey has small openings as opposed to the upper storey, which has large openings.

**Western Court and Eastern Court:** Western and Eastern court designed by R.T. Russell in 1922, Chief Architect to the Govt. of India for use as hostels for legislators. Russell's two principal works at New Delhi other than Connaught Place were pair of stuccoed hostels for legislators that flanked Queens way north of Kings way and a princely residence for the

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commander-in-chief. Western Court still survives its original purposes as a hostel for legislators. The much more dilapidated Eastern Court is now the central telegraph office. They were part of Lutyens original scheme and were designed.

The scale of the three storey twin blocks, known as Eastern and Western court, reflected the importance accorded representative bodies under the reformed constitution. Russell treated the two floors above the massive, arcaded basement plinth as a single continuous verandah. Giant Tuscan columns rose through both upper floors toward the knife like shadow of a bold cornice, but the pillars proved as ineffective as those of the council house in shielding rooms from heat and glare. Moreover, the top floor balustrade intersected the columns, effectively breaking the depth of shadow between them.

Although these guests houses are first-class late neo-classical designs. The history of architecture unfortunately makes little mention of them, even less than Connaught Place. The reason is obvious; architects all over the world have long since felt determined to set aside the formal repertoire of classicism. Latecomers to India are in danger of losing contact with the modern age, in the same way as the British Empire

risked losing contact with political development in the western democracies.

**Government Press:** It is situated to the northeast of Minto Bridge. It was built in early 20th century near Minto Road, to the North East of the Minto Bridge. Formerly it was the office while at present press. It is a colonial building probably pre-connaught place, very strategically located between old and New Delhi. Thus, this building is an anachronistically early colonial style having been built before the creation of New Delhi.

It is a single storey building and has an almost rectangular plan structure has an identical entry porch on two sides flanked by windows. In the front there are six circular pillars, the building was built around a large courtyard. Decorative features of this building are mouldings, circular column etc. Brick masonry work is found and the floor is made of stone.

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5. Official Buildings
6. Ground Floor Plan: Viceroy’s House, New Delhi

Courtesy: Indian Summer: Lutyens, Baker and Imperial Delhi
7. Ground floor Plan:
Secretariat Building (North Block & South Block), New Delhi.

Courtesy: Imperial Delhi
Fig. 55 VICEROY HOUSE

Fig. 56 SECRETARIAT (NORTH BLOCK AND SOUTH BLOCK)
Fig. 57(a) Council Chamber/ Legislative Building (Parliament House)

Fig. 57(b) Council Chamber/ Legislative Building (Parliament House)
Fig. 58 Museum and Record office

Fig. 59 Western Court and Eastern Court
Fig. 60 Government Press Building