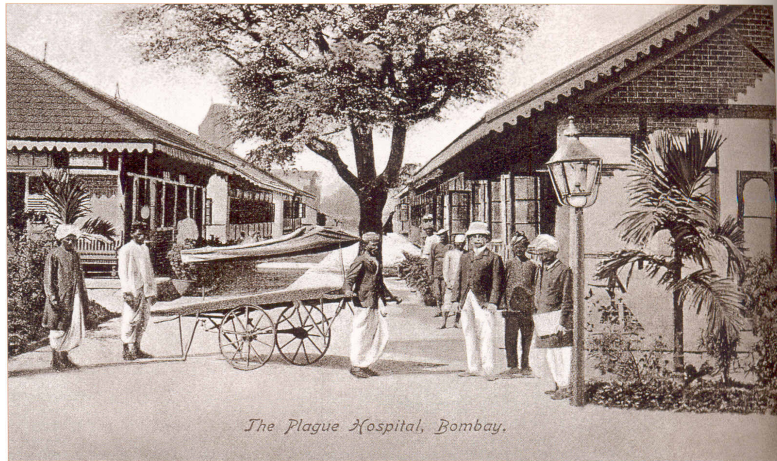


At a lecture given in 1905,
G Owen Dunn,

Chairman of the Improvement Trust, described the degrading conditions the poor lived in. "The wonder is not that the death rate is exceedingly high, the infant mortality terrible and plague so prevalent, but that so many human beings manage to exist at all, and that the ravages of disease and pestilence are not far greater. In many quarters the houses are jammed so closely together that free circulation of air is prevented, the sun can barely get lower down than the roofs and the atmosphere is thick with foul odours. There are no proper roads, only narrow tortuous lanes and passages and horrible gullies and the older houses have generally been built without any regard to light and air." Owen Dunn reminded the Trust's critics that a committee appointed in 1883 had considered allocating the entire Marine Lines maid an to the builder but the Trust had dedicated it for ever to the public.



to the ventilation of densely inhabited areas, removal of unsanitary dwellings, better means of sanitation and prevention of overcrowding.

The first step undertaken by the Government to combat the plague, however, was the setting up of a Plague Research Laboratory by Dr W M Haffkine, initially housed at the J J Hospital in 1896 and three years later, moved to the abandoned Government House at Pare!. For the long term

implementation of proposed improvements, the Bombay City Improvement Trust was constituted on 9 November, 1898 under the City of Bombay Improvement Act (Bombay Act IV of 1898) - which was to dramatically alter and improve Bombay's physical state in the coming years.

City Improvement Trust

The challenging tasks placed before the Improvement Trust included the reclamation of more lands from the sea to provide room for expansion, making new streets, opening out crowded localities and constructing sanitary dwellings for the poor and for the police! For the successful implementation of its schemes, the Municipality and Government handed over to the Trust all their vacant lands in order to create an income for the Trust by the raising of rents. This income was to be supplemented by a yearly contribution from the Municipality. The Government and the Municipal Corporation thus constituted the Improvement Trust as a statutory authority with specific financial support.

In addition, the Trust had exceptional provisions in its structure to ensure speedy procedures, mandatory financial allocations for schemes formulated and undertaken and a mandatory time limit for buildings to be commenced in its schemes. For example, the Trust's policy ensured that each