

The Deccan Chronicle 11.10.2010

Madras' old boundary stones hark to city birth

Chennai, Oct. 10: The declaration of the Tamil Nadu government in December 2009 about the plan to merge nine municipalities and 25 village panchayats with Chennai, thus increasing the city area to 426 sq. km from the existing 174 sq. km had caught the imagination of Chennaiites by the enormity of the figures. It will thus come as a surprise to many that at one point of time, Chennai's 'city limits' ended at Esplanade.

Then called Madras, the city was in its infancy but nonetheless was fast emerging from a narrow strip of sandy beach to a metropolis under British rule.

"Six boundary stones shaped in the form of obelisks were placed in different locations like Popham's Broadway, Kondy Chetty Street, Linghi Chetty Street, Stringer Chetty Street, Badrian Chetty Street and adjacent to the Second Line Beach road to mark the boundaries of the city," said S. Suresh, Tamil Nadu state convener of Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH). "Now only the one at the Second Line Beach road near the Dare House remains among the 20-foot long structures. Inscribed on it are the words 'Boundary of the Esplanade, 1ST January 1773'."

He added that the markers were placed after the city survey of 1772. Unfortunately the marker's present condition proves the laxity of the city's administrators when it comes to heritage preservation.