

David Ochterlony
12 February 1758 – 15 July 1825
(Neemuch connection)

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Sir David Ochterlony, 1st Baronet [GCB](#) ([12 February 1758](#) – [15 July 1825](#)), British general, was born in [Boston, Massachusetts](#), and went to [India](#) as a cadet in 1777. He served under [Lord Lake](#) in the battles of [Koil](#), [Aligarh](#) and [Delhi](#), and was appointed resident at Delhi in 1803. In 1804, having been promoted to the rank of major-general, he defended the city with a very inadequate force against an attack by [Holkar](#). On the outbreak of the [Anglo-Nepalese War](#) (1814-15) he was given the command of one of four converging columns, and his services were rewarded with a [baronetcy](#) in 1815. Subsequently he was promoted to the command of the main force in its advance on [Kathmandu](#), and outmanoeuvring the [Gurkhas](#) by a flank march at the Kourea Ghat Pass, brought the war to a successful conclusion and obtained the signature of the [Treaty of Sugauli](#) (1816), which dictated the subsequent relations of the British with Nepal. For this success Ochterlony was created [Knight Grand Cross of the Order of the Bath](#), the first time that honour had been conferred on an officer of the [British Indian Army](#).



Ochterlony column in Calcutta Maidan

In the [Pindari War](#) (1817-18) he was in command of the Rajputana column, made a separate agreement with [Amir Khan](#), detaching him from the [Pindaris](#), and then, interposing his own force between the two main divisions of the enemy, brought the war to an end without an engagement. He was appointed resident in [Rajputana](#) in 1818, with which the residency at Delhi was subsequently combined. When Durjan Sal revolted in 1825 against [Balwant Singh](#), the infant Raja of Bharatpur, Ochterlony acting on his own responsibility supported the [Raja](#) by proclamation and ordered out a force to support him. Lord Amherst, however, repudiated these proceedings. Ochterlony, who was bitterly chagrined by this rebuff, resigned his office, and retired to Delhi. The feeling that the confidence which his length of service merited had not been given him by the governor-general is said to have accelerated his death, which occurred at [Meerut](#) in 1825. The [Ochterlony column](#) at [Calcutta](#) commemorates his name.

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Ochterlony and his bibis

R.V. Smith



down memory lane

David Ochterlony, the much married British General still attracts the curiosity and interest of many among us, says R.V. Smith

David Ochterlony was no doubt a most amazing person, whose exploits colour the pages of Indo-British history. The man still attracts the curiosity and interest of soldiers, administrators and others. Not surprisingly among those who have done research on him is J.S. Gill, Director of the Central Reserve Police Force Academy, Gurgaon. The tall, athletic police officer is a virtual encyclopaedia on Ochterlony. Gill's interest in him goes back to student days and it has continued for 40 years, with him collecting all sorts of information on the 19th century general. ***As a matter of fact, the CRPF Academy mess in Neemuch is housed in what was once the British residency. It was built by Ochterlony in 1822 at a cost of Rs.50,000 (a huge amount in those days) sanctioned by the East India Company. Ochterlony lived there for three years before returning to Delhi.***

Gill has been in touch with Ochterlony's descendents abroad and their letters to him have provided intimate details of the General's family and its antecedents. It was this man's military genius which won

the Nepal war for the British. Earlier he had defended Delhi against the forces of Jaswant Rao Holkar, standing on the city walls and directing the operations during the long siege. Later Ochterlony, as the first British resident in Delhi, became known for his Indian mannerisms and his dozen-odd bibis, with whom he paraded on elephants in Kashmere Gate. He died after contracting a cold and fever at his summer house in Shalimar Bagh.

Gill has lots more information on Luni Akhtar (crazy star) as he was known to the residents of Delhi. Sitting in the suburbs of the Capital amidst mustard fields at Kadarpur on a Sunday afternoon, Ochterlony came alive at a lunch which heightened the appetite with beer fumes. A host of ex-CRPF commandants and their wives embellished the talk with their own observations. One was reminded of the nursery rhyme in which the Queen of Hearts “made some tarts all on a summer's day”. But here the tarts were stolen not by the knave of Hearts but by a galaxy of jovial beauties. S.A. Khan, a descendent of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, spoke enlighteningly of the *Nau Gaza Pirs* (nine-yard-long saints) whose graves in Delhi and elsewhere puzzle many.

Thirteen wives!

Gill produced a letter from Marius Keciejowski, the Polish-born descendent of Ochterlony, who marvels at the fact that besides Polish, American and English blood he also has some Indian blood, though he cannot fathom from which of the General's 13 wives. Ochterlony, incidentally, was born in Boston, Massachusetts, though he was of Scottish descent and came to India as a cadet in 1778. The most prominent among his wives was Bibi Mubarak-ul-Nissa, a Brahmin dancing girl of Pune who had converted to Islam. She bore two daughters and as the favourite wife was known as Generallee Begum. His grandson, Sir Charles Metcalfe Ochterlony died in 1891. Ochterlony also adopted a girl from the family of the Nawab of Laharu, who went on to marry a cousin of Ghalib. Amidst such talk the afternoon wore on, with Gill promising to enrich Ochterlony House, converted into a museum in Neemuch with more rare pictures and documents. The most colourful General of the 19th Century, who though buried at St John's Church Meerut, had a makbara built in Mubarak Bagh Delhi, which had been gifted to him by Shah Alam, the Moghul emperor His vacant tomb probably still exists in it.

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