

same Bannerji family still runs it. (*Makaihari Archives*). Captain Samler's pioneering work in tea was never given any recognition. According to official records therefore, in 1841, after he shifted to Darjeeling, for the record, it was Campbell who successfully experimented with tea cultivation in his *Beechwood Estate* just below the present Municipality Building of Darjeeling Town. So the Darjeeling hills proved to be ideally suited for growing tea on a commercial scale.

Once this was proved, Britishers swarmed the hills to start tea plantations. But with no previous experience, they had to rely on information obtained hearsay and it was a pure learn-as-you-earn industry or go-broke-as-you-work business. The Brits were unable to recruit local labor, the Sikkim Rajah had forbidden his subjects to work for the Gora, and at any rate the Lepchas were far too independent to bother about jobs – their needs were few, their wants even fewer and they could easily live off the land. Tea plantations in Darjeeling desperately needed labor *in large numbers*.

To do this the British forcibly rounded up “natives” from the Chotta Nagpur hilly regions of the Deccan Plateau and brought them to Darjeeling to work as bonded labor on the tea plantations. The logic was that they came from the same altitudes, about 4000 feet above sea level, so presumably they could adapt, they were docile and they were hard workers. But these Chotta Nagpur folk simply couldn't cope with the cold and damp of the Darjeeling hills so when nightfall came they ran away – all of them, and too far away from home. they settled in the jungles of the Darjeeling Terai where their descendents still live today. Some of these were the *Mundas and the Uraons* enumerated in “*The Final Report on the Darjeeling Tract Settlement*” by the Settlement Officer in 1898. A great deal more settled in the Dooars areas – the further away from the *Goras* the better.

In the second half of the 1800's, fed up of being forcibly rounded up as labor.

two brave  
lads, Birsa  
Munda and  
his younger  
brother, led an  
unsuccessful  
“*Santhal Uprising*”  
against the  
British. But  
with only  
bows and  
arrows, just  
[ 86 ]





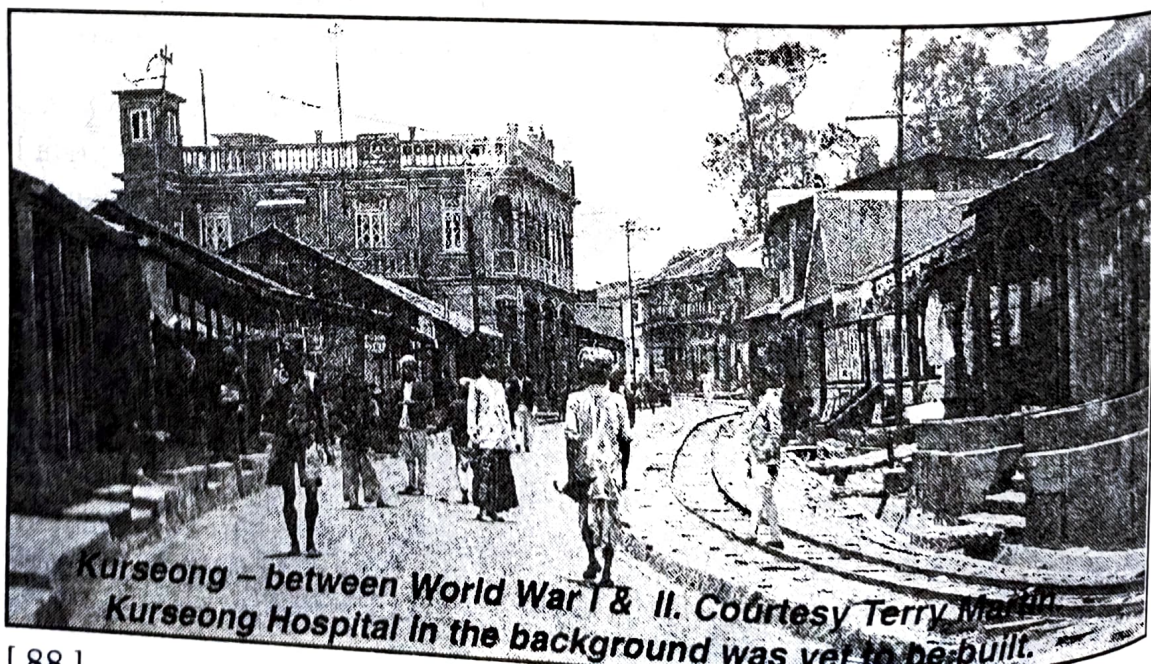
By 1856 tea plantations began at Tukvar, at Canning and Hopetown below Sonada, and at the Kurseong flats. In 1856 the Makaibari and Aloobarie Tea gardens were opened by the *Kurseong and Darjeeling Tea Company*, on the Lebong Spur a garden was set up by the *Darjeeling Land Mortgage Bank*; the Dhutooria Tea garden was started in 1859. Between 1860 and 1864, Cedars and Rungmook, Margaret's Hope, Ging, Ambootia, Takdah and Phoobtshering gardens opened up, soon followed by Via Tukvar, Badamtam and Stienthal. In 1862 the first tea garden in the Terai was opened up at a place called Champta, near the present day military base at Khaprail, Sukna.



*Official Darjeeling Tea Logo*

Within 10 years there were 39 tea gardens in Darjeeling. By 1870 the number rose to 56 and by 1905 there were 79 gardens employing labor all of whom were Nepali, more than half the entire population of Darjeeling. The Lepchas and Bhuteas flatly refused to work in the gardens – they didn't think it was their cup of tea.

*By 1874 there were 113 tea estates covering 7,400 hectares under tea. By 1905 there were 148 tea estates comprising approximately 19,928 hectares". (Harish Mukhia - retired Tea Planter). By 1914 there were 156 tea gardens with 53,778 acres under tea (total area of 132,860 acres "waste land") employing 30,167 permanent and 12,141 temporary workers, with a total output of 17,990,786 lbs of tea. (Department of Statistics for 1915, Bengal Government)*



*Kurseong – between World War I & II. Courtesy Terry Martin  
Kurseong Hospital in the background was yet to be built.*