

Guadalupe: Philippine Monastery Older Than Jamestown

Great Mission Trail Series: Second Paper on Augustinians

Before going on to the Jesuits and the friars that followed the Augustinians to the Philippines, it is desired to devote a little space to the first permanent mission structure built in the islands, which the authorities seem to agree was the Augustinian sanctuary of *Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe*. The sanctuary, built in 1601, was demolished by Wheaton's Flying Brigade, March 13, 1899, supported by fire from the *mosquito fleet* in the river. This fleet was made of light-draft boats acquired in the victory over Spain and designed for coast and river patrol purposes. Wheaton's brigade was organized "to clear the enemy from the country to the Pasig and to strike him wherever found," and the sanctuary had been utilized as an enemy stronghold and rendezvous. The Augustinians were, of course, later reimbursed for the damage to their property, undertaken solely as a necessary act of war.

The JOURNAL is fortunate in being able to reproduce an engraving from a photograph taken by the authors of *Campaigning in the Philippines*, showing Guadalupe prior to the bombardment. It is typical of the Philippines, forever hiding their light under a bushel, that the noble ruins are now enclosed by a high barbed wire fence, tagged with no-trespassing notices, instead of being, as they ought to be, open and advertised to the public. It should be the business of a caretaker to see that the walls do not pen-knife their immortal names on the historic walls, but such is not the case. However, in visiting the place do not be dismayed by either the fence or the warnings to keep out. Go in:

watchman wanders
to explain the
purpose of your
visit.
The ruins dominate the
near Fort Wm.
y. The road leads
e right of the
the fort, a little
beyond San Pedro
and if you go out by
the road they will let you
at the Guadalupe station
and you will have an interest-
ing stroll through the village,
which straggles up the hill.
Workmen employed in Ma-
nila live here, building their
own houses and paying ground rent to the
administración. Such, in times gone by, was
one of the sources of regular revenue to the friar
missions, but it is said that the income from
the Guadalupe estate never exceeded P1,000 the
year, for which reason the original purpose to
use it as a theological seminary could not be
carried out.

But to the reader of today, the sanctuary had
even a better use made of it, as will be seen
immediately.

Under the guidance of a courteous young friar
of the present Augustinian community in Manila,
the writer has often rummaged in the dusty
shelves of the shadowy basement of the monas-
tery in the old walled city of Manila—seeking
volumes about the Philippines. On one such
excursion he picked up a paper-back: *Viajes por Filipinas, de Manila a Tayabas*, by
Juan Alvarez Guerra, who made Philippine
collections for world expositions in Europe and

was at one time governor of Camarines Norte.
He wrote about his Philippine travels in the
1870's. Going to Tayabas by river boat (for
there were no roads straight through, as now),
he noted the following about Guadalupe:

"The sanctuary of Guadalupe was the first
Philippine temple in which brick and stone were
employed for the walls. It was constructed by
an Augustinian friar, a relative of the immortal
Herrera, to whom the world is indebted for the
Monastery of the Escorial. He who directed
the Guadalupe sanctuary later gave his genius
wider rein in the magnificent works of St. August-
tine's in Manila, truly a laurel leaf in the illu-
strious name of Herrera."

There it was, in a dark corner of a moldy shelf
careening in rickety fashion from pillar to pillar
of a foundation arch of St. Augustine's, that this
old and saffron copy of *Guerra* was found.

buildings constructed for that purpose in the
village of Malabon."

Fray Buzeta's *diccionario* came out in 1851,
giving still another glimpse of Guadalupe.

"The Augustinians always have at Guadalupe
a prior, who is usually a priest superannuated
in the mission work. The elevation of the place
is notable; it is reached by the ascent of hundreds
of steps hewn from the rock. It dominates the
whole province of Tondo (now Rizal) and is one of
the most picturesque places in the islands. The
health and spaciousness of the sanctuary, together
with the character of the instruction given by
the prior, bring many persons there for conva-
lescence, and youths to pursue their studies.

"It is also notable for the famous Fiesta of
St. Nicholas of Tolentino. On this saint's day,
September 10, the infidel Chinese, established
(in business) in Manila, hold a celebration at
Guadalupe. It is very significant to a thought-
ful man, who knows how to appreciate and value
the customs of peoples, to see, on this day, those
infidel votaries of the sanctuary arriving in their
gayly decorated boats from Manila, whence they
attract the entire city. They fetch along the
military band and make a thousand prepara-
tions for the festivities. They form a gala
procession at the river and elaborately manifest
their veneration for their patron saint."



Touch the pages and they crinkle to pieces.
Unfortunately a rather priceless commentary
on later Spanish times in the islands was printed
on very inferior stock; yet JOURNAL readers are
assured of further quotations from this rare and
excellent authority—especially on rural customs.
Fray Juan de Medina, O.S.A., wrote of Guada-
lupe early in the 17th century.

"It is," he said, "the most frequented house of
devotion in the islands, both by Spaniards and
by natives." A recent authority adds, "The
father provincial of the Augustinians, repre-
senting his order, took under his charge the
support, education and teaching of abandoned
and orphan children. They transferred the
children to the lower part of the convent at
Guadalupe, which was spacious and well ven-
tilated. There they opened workshops of sculp-
ture and ceramics, painting and modeling, and
there they remained until 1892, when the schools,
workshops and children were transferred to the

Buzeta doubted their sincerity; he deplored
the fact that their gaming, during three days
and nights, and their carousals, polluted their
ostensible devotions. San Nicolas district in
Manila, notoriously a Chinese quarter, is named
for their patron saint. Early in the Christianiza-
tion of the Philippines, some Chinese, voyaging
in a sampan about to capsiz in a typhoon,
appealed to St. Nicholas to save them, at the
same time pledging him their future fealty.
So the bargain was struck. Nor was this the
only miracle in their benefit. Washings of
the Pasig along its western bank in Santa Ana,
up the river from the parish church, have recently
uncovered relics of an old Chinese burial ground.
It was here that their village of San Nicolas
existed, and here the celebrated *perla* stood—
a crocodile turned into stone at the saint's
command. The reptile had pursued a Chinese
who was crossing the river at that point. Find-
ing himself about to be devoured, the celestial

appealed to the saint, who cursed the reptile, with results as stated.

From this the fame of the saint's image, then in the village chapel, grew amazingly; and the account of what ensued shows a very human side of the friar's character.

The receipts from the annual festa in the saint's honor were very lucrative, and were equally claimed, says Fray Zuñiga, writing about 1805, by the parishes of San Pedro Macati and Guadalupe. The archbishop of Manila settled the matter by ordering the image taken up to the sanctuary, where it should henceforth

all losses incurred by the government's order. But it was long ago when San Nicolas on the Pasig was destroyed, back indeed in the days when even Protestant bishops in England had, and exercised, the power of hanging. In a quite striking way, Guadalupe links the past with the present: there was absolute power, but the industrial school for orphans was maintained.

"The printing plant," says Fray Medina, "was bought by the voluntary donation of some religious (friars) through economies practiced in the missions by dint of privations and a life

uted to it were innumerable. It was, of course, more famous than the image of St. Nicholas of Tolentino, but both were in the chapel when the revolution of 1806-1808 drove the friars from the provincial missions into Manila or into prison, according to their luck. It is said, even, that the image of Our Lady was still in the chapel when the American troops shelled and burned the place, and that it remained undamaged. Nothing is definitely known of what eventually became of this image and that of St. Nicholas, but the Augustinians believe the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe was taken away by devoted Filipinos, who probably have preserved it as an object of veneration, and that in the same spirit the image of St. Nicholas of Tolentino was taken away by devout Chinese.

Quaint legends abound in all regions of the islands. Now that we are in the vicinity, have you heard of the sinful but beautiful creature of merry 17th century days in Manila, Doña Jeronima, the sybarite? No doubt this fabled wanton was a royal governor's favorite. No doubt, too, boatmen on the river can still point out the cave named after her. Her sumptuous home, where much wickedness took place nightly, stood on an eminence on the opposite bank of the river from Guadalupe, in the outskirts of the town of Pasig. In those days, as well as much later, wealthy Spaniards and highcastes had country places on the river. Such a place was Doña Jeronima's. Being the woman she was, she of course coveted a luxurious bath: she had workmen here one out of the live rock at the base of the cliff, and turn the river through it. Down to this Roman pool she had stone steps cut. Doña Jeronima lived her gay day and journeyed on to face the penalty. The river washed endlessly at the heaved rock, giving it in time the appearance of the mouth of a cave instead of a courtesan's bathing place. Legend at last connected it with the gigantic caves of San Mateo, and awful tales were told of it as the lair of both highwaymen and evil spirits. Doña Jeronima splashes along its slippery caverns, falling on the slimy stones, rising and walking again; and ringing her hands and moaning with remorse for her dissolute life.

An old wives' tale, to curb youth's too brazen propensities—the prototype of modern sermons on vice.—W. R.



Guadalupe Before Its Destruction

be worshiped, and that the chapel be torn down, the village abandoned and the houses either removed or destroyed.

Such grave matters, one perceives, were then held to be within the sole power of the spiritual administration to dispose of; the secular authorities were not consulted, nor did they interfere.

Times are changing. More than the secular authorities, the people themselves would now be consulted about the abandonment of a village. Their complaints would have merit in the courts; at the least it would be necessary to reimburse

of poverty and mortification. * * * Fray Francisco Mercado, who took his vows in Manila in 1611, gave generous sums to the province from his own funds, showing special favor to the convents of Guadalupe and Bantay." Another Augustinian (to whom the example of charity is set by St. Augustine himself, who gave the poor the bed on which he died) gave the sanctuary all he had, \$1,000 Mex.

The image of Our Lady that was in the sanctuary chapel was a celebrated replica of the one in Guadalupe, Mexico, and the miracles attrib-



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