

## What the Archives Say of Mehan Gardens

The following is translated from the Spanish certified to by Manuel M. Miranda, chief of archives of the Philippine government:

"*Jardín Botánico* (now Mehan Gardens).—Decree of the Superior Government of September 13, 1858. As of this date I have decreed the following:

"Taking into consideration the proposal of the town council of this city in the conference of July 16 ultimo, concerning the convenience and utility that would come of establishing a botanical garden in the extensive field of Arroceros, which would at the same time be a school of practical agriculture and the acclimatization of exotic fruits; . . .

"Noting the opinion of the subinspector of engineers of August 8, that also of the committee of commerce and the director of the economic society of September 6;

"Noting the endorsement of the superior directorate of finance of August 25, ordering the compliance of this body with the decree of September 4;

"Believing that from the viewpoint of hygiene and ornamentation of the city devotion of the field of Arroceros to plants and making it a park and place of recreation for the public, and that evident advantages will derive from the planting and cultivation of plants with the object of acclimatizing those which are not now being grown here and teaching the better utilization of others, so that a certain number of Filipinos of the provinces, supported in Manila by general funds, may be returned periodically to their respective provinces to put into practice the knowledge they have acquired;

"Having heard and being in conformity with the ruling of the senior general assessor, I hereby decree:

"Art. 1.—There is hereby created a School of Botany and Agriculture in Manila under the patronage of the superior government and the immediate supervision of a board to be created for this purpose to include an officer of engineers and other persons from the different corporations administering or having to do with the funds from which this new establishment will be supported.

"Art. 2.—Within the boundaries to be indicated by the aforementioned subinspector of engineers, the field of Arroceros is hereby set aside for the practical work of said school, as a botanical and acclimatization garden and demonstration plot, it being understood that the property pertains to the town council under the limitations which govern within the polemical one of a fortified plaza.

"Art. 3.—The permanent personnel of the school shall include: one professor of botany with a salary of ₱1,500 a year; two teachers of horticulture with a salary of ₱500 a year each; ten students selected among the young farmers of the provinces, who shall be changed every three years and be aided during their term of study with ₱100 a year each; and the necessary number of prisoners, chosen among short-term men who are industrious laborers, to whom a gratuity of ₱500 shall be yearly distributed.

"Art. 4.—For the acquisition of plants and tools, there is hereby set aside the sum of ₱1,500 a year, reimbursable when the planting and seeding is complete.

"Art. 5.—The products of the botanical garden and school of agriculture shall go, as far as they will, toward covering the foregoing appropriations, but in case they are insufficient the sums shall be made up from special funds in the following form and according to the degree of interest which for its inauguration must be taken in this important improvement: the town council, ₱1,000; consular funds, ₱1,000; *Amigos del País* (a corporation for the fomentation of Philippine agriculture), ₱500; Filipinos' community fund, ₱3,000; total, ₱5,500.

"Art. 6.—Until the personnel necessary for the undertaking of the artistic work upon a scientific basis is organized, the sum of ₱2,500 yearly shall be employed in proportion to the sums set forth in the preceding article for the preparatory work and the planting of rows of trees which border

the streets and pathways for the use of the public.

"Art. 7.—If it becomes necessary to build cottages, sheds, and railings for the purposes of the school, and sentry boxes, porters' lodges and other structures conducing to the better administration of the botanical garden, due permission of the captain general must be requested, on the understanding that all construction must be of light material and subject to the general conditions obtaining in the polemical zone.

"Art. 8.—The board of inspectors of the botanical and agricultural school shall agree upon and submit to me such other measures as conduce to the fullest realization of this project; and the rules for instruction and work of the personnel provided in Art. 3, subject to the approval of the professor of botany; but meantime and as a preliminary step, the board shall propose to me



This girl that "Mac" drew in *Judge* is telling "Junior" she's That Way about him and "Mac" because they always make the cocktails with

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it's always best!

Cop (to loiterer at the *Rialto* after the last run of "Broadway"): Say, what's the big idea in hanging around here? The show's over.

Loiterer: 'S all right, Chief. I'm waitin' for that girl in the chorus, Billie Moore, that's all!

That's a longer wait than you have for your favorite whisky, which of course is—

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the most useful and advantageous employment of the fund set aside in Art. 6, for the initial preparatory work.

"Notify all concerned and return to the executive secretary the instructions submitted for the approval of the finance department August 25, in order that the department may have proper authority for the disbursement from the community fund in accordance with Art. 6 of this decree, which shall also be published in the *Official Gazette*."

Thus was the *Jardín Botánico*, Manila's spacious central park, created by Lieutenant General Fernando de Norzagaray, a Spanish governor and captain general of the Philippines, 71 years ago. Sebastian Vidal y Soler, a naturalist, from Barcelona, became the director of the park, where his statue, donated by his admirers in Barcelona, now stands. "Sr. Vidal y Soler, a native of Catalonia, was married to an American lady, of Philadelphia, very beautiful and beyond dispute the most elegant lady of her time in Manila. Her name was Ella." Vidal died July 28, 1889, and his statue was erected in May 1892. When the Americans came to Manila six years later, the park was in a very repulsive and insanitary condition; it soon became the work of John Mehan to improve this and all other public grounds of Manila, notably including the *Cementerio del Norte*.

The park's name was changed from *Jardín Botánico* to *Mehan Gardens*, but remains popularly called the botanical garden. The original purpose of establishing it has never been carried out, the plant life there shares the neglect to which the zoological specimens are subjected, and—no monument to Mehan is found in all the park. This is one of the circumstances of which visitors to Manila ask *why*? Someone must know the answer. There is a calle Norzagaray in Manila, also two calles Soler.

## The Ayuntamiento

The word *Ayuntamiento* means town council and in Manila applies to the public building on the northeast side of Plaza de McKinley in the walled city, a building two stories high and nearly, if not quite square, extending over an area of some 6,000 square yards (6,240 *varas cuadradas* being the exact area). Our data are kindly furnished us by Manuel Miranda, keeper of the Ayuntamiento archives—documentary records dating back to 1561 and beginning with Legaspi's commission from Philip II of Spain, to occupy and govern lands he might discover in this region of the world.

The Ayuntamiento was built in 1735, Marshal Fernando Valdéz y Tamón, then governor and captain general of the Philippines, laying the corner stone January 31 of that year. When built it was the finest public building in the islands; it remains one of the best and is excellently suited to be converted into a museum of art and history. It is of stone, and of the European type of architecture; the old clock tower that formerly topped the façade was thrown down in the earthquake of June 3, 1863, at which time the building suffered such general damage that the town council and other bodies using it for a meeting place had to abandon it for a time and hold their meetings in what is now, and has been for a score of years, the *Corregidor Bar*. During Spanish times the Ayuntamiento was generally known as the *Cabildo* (the capitol), from which fact calle Cabildo takes name. The town council, aside from holding meetings there, assembled there to view from the upper balconies the fiestas celebrated on the occasion of the arrival in Manila of a new governor general, or a new archbishop; and in the halls the great receptions and balls of the period took place, as many do today.

The original structure being damaged beyond use and eight years having elapsed, on May 30, 1871, Sr. Botella, the municipal architect, submitted plans for a new building, but the town council rejected them because the space allotted and its distribution were inadequate to the city's requirements. Botella became occupied with

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