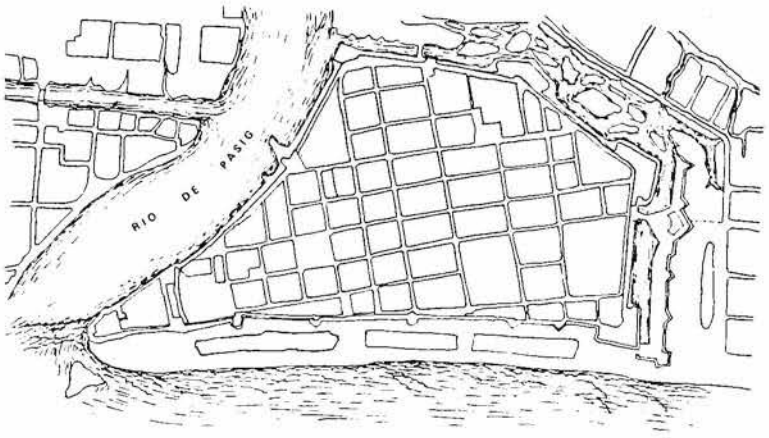
INTRAMUROS

Founded by the Spaniards, destroyed by the Americans during the war, the walled city is being restored by the Filipinos.

by Esperanza B. Gatbonton

In the summer of 1570, Martin de Goiti, Legaspi's master-of-camp, and Juan de Salcedo, the *conquistador's* grandson, sailed off for Manila from Panay, in search of a more congenial settlement than the Visayan island had been for their expedition. With them was a native Manilan, a trader newly converted to Christianity, who had followed the Spaniards to their new settlement from Cebu. He was to act as interpreter for the questing Spaniards. He probably guided them as well, northwards to Luzon and into Manila Bay, past Mindoro and Balayan Bay. The Spanish fleet consisted of one armed frigate, one junk and fifteen *praus.* The Spanish chronicler's account of the expedition's first view of Manila was little short of rapturous.



Map of old Intramuros

"The land all around this bay, in the part where we anchored ... the port of Menilla, was really marvellous. It appeared to be tilled and cultivated. The slopes were smooth, and had but little herbage. In fact, so excellent indications have not been seen in this land as were seen there... The town was situated in the bank of the river, and it seemed to be defended by a palisade all along its front. Within it were many warriors, and the shore outside crowded with people. Pieces of artillery stood at the gates, guarded by bombardiers, linstock in hand."

A Reprint from "Weekend," a Magazine of the Daily Express issued in Manila on 4 May 1980.

This was to be the Spanish promised land. On the very same site of this palisaded town that the voyagers came upon, the Spaniards built their city. They enlarged the original palisade which the displaced *indios* has built at the mouth of the Pasig River and encircled their new settlement with a defensive wall.

The Walls took 300 years to build. Beginning from Legazpi himself, up until 1872, successive governors-general sought to improve Manila's defenses — in between fighting off invasions from land and sea: the Chinese Limahong, the Dutch, rebels from the Chinese *Parian,* and the British. Each assault showed how formidable the Walls were in certain places and how vulnerable they were in others. Over the centuries, the Walls became a sophisticated fortress — surrounded by moats and ramparts, bastions and gates and look-out towers, which kept an enemy at bay and the Spaniards safe within.

Even Intramuros, the Spanish city within the Walls, took on the character of its Walls — turned in on itself, smug, brooding on gone glory and in the end, defenseless against the outside world. Until 1852, its eight gates closed at 11 o'clock in the evening to open only at dawn.

History of the Walls

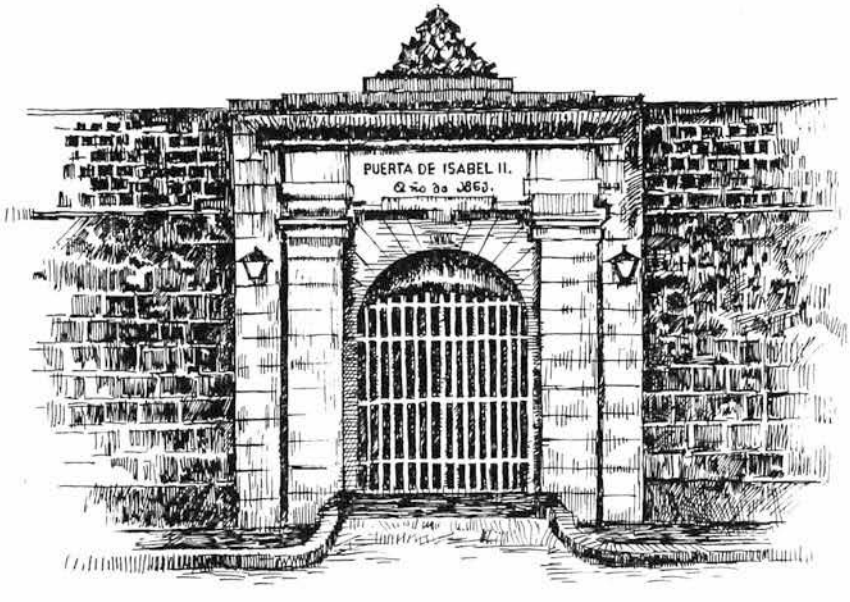
The first defenses which the Spaniards built were no better than Soliman's palisades of palm tree-logs banked with earth. Guido de Lavezares (1572-1575) strengthened this main line of defense along the seaside, adding boxes and barrels filled with sand. As a precaution against fire, he ordered all straw roofs removed from within the city limits. It was De Lavezares' fort which the Chinese pirate Limahong attacked in 1574. With some luck, it held.

The succeeding governor, Francisco de Sande (1575-1580), was appalled by the primitive conditions of Manila's defenses. He ordered the riverside staked in and the seaside filled in with earth. He joined the palisades with embankments and raised mounds. This gave the garrison a commanding view of the surrounding area. In those early years, the danger often came from the sea — from raiding "moros," and from Chinese and Japanese pirates. At times, these marauders were joined by the Portuguese, who were primarily interested in dislodging the Spaniards from the East.

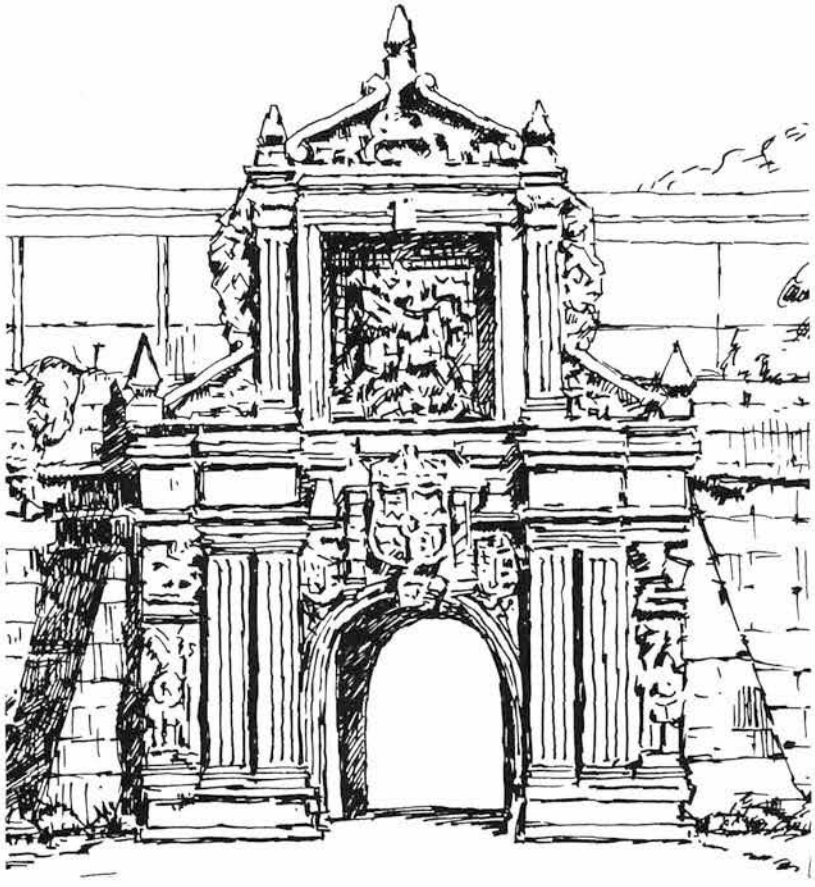
The following year, with another Governor General — Santiago de Vera (1584-1590) — and the services of Antonio Sedeño, a Jesuit who had once worked as a military engineer, a more lasting type of defense went up. De Vera wrote of his plans:

> "From this fort (Fort Santiago) and the beach near the sea, I have dug a deep ditch, 34 feet wide, which fills with the incoming tide and even at low tide has sufficient water to float several vessels used in carrying materials to the said work. This ditch extends from the sea to the river and at that side around the entire city in such wise that the latter is an island formed by sea, river and ditch. In the place of the wooden fortress, I am going to build a bulwark to defend the entrance to the river and beach which can correspond to the tower already built; and the new fortress will defend both sides of the ditch and the sea. Along the river bank I have ordered stone breastwork built, extending from the old wooden fortress, on one side, to the ditch on the other."

The material De Vera chose for his defenses was adobe or volcanic tufa, which he described as "so suitable that when it is wet, it can be worked like wood and when dry it is very strong and durable; and it is better than brick for artillery,"



Puerta Isabel, a gateway to Intramuros, has been restored and transformed into a small museum.



A more elaborate gate in Fort Santiago

Like Lavezares years before him, Santiago de Vera ordered all inflammable roof thatch huts in the Walled City brought down. With the new technology and the skill of Sedeno, roof tiles soon became fashionable in the Intramuros houses.

The fortification of Manila now took a more professional turn. Gomez Perez Dasmariñas came in 1590 (1590-93) armed with a letter from King Philip, and apparently accompanied by an engineer, Leonardo Iturriano, who designed the fortress and the buildings. (Whether Iturriano did come to the Philippines at all is still being disputed by historians.) Dasmarinas fortified Fort Santiago, raising its walls to double the height of a man, and greatly reinforced defenses on the landward side.

Resentment from overworked natives and exploited Chinese created uneasy times for the Spaniards. In fact, Dasmariñas was murdered by Chinese mutineers on an expedition to the Moluccas. De Vera's handiwork, the Fort of the Nuestra Señora de Guia (now the Bastion de San Diego located directly opposite the Manila Hotel), Dasmariñas supplemented with breastwork and ramparts. He added the bastions of San Andres (in front of ***Bulletin Today);*** San Gabriel (beside Letran); San Fernando Dilao or San Lorenzo (near Mapua). For some time Dasmarinas' Walls sufficed, and except for minor repairs and alterations, not much was done to change them.

The seventeenth century, however, saw many disturbances. Dutch raids were most frequent, and most fierce during this period, and Chinese disturbances endemic. Governor Sebastian Hurtado de Corcuerra, noting the inadequate protection of some of the strategic areas, introduced some remedies. On the southern portion, near the site of the old Fort of Nuestra Señora de Guia; and the Fundicion, Corcuerra built a moat which connected to an older one. He also demolished several houses which adjoined the Walls, but this decision was to be a very costly one for Corcuerra. For he incurred the ire of the Recoletos, whose convent outside the Wall, that of San Juan, only stood several paces away. But Corcuerra's foresight was to be vindicated, since the British used this weak spot for attacking the city's defenses in 1762.

Juan de Silva (1609-1616), Nino de Tabora (1626-1632), Diego de Fajardo (1643) and Manrique de Lara (1653-1663), successively worked on changes on the western side, adding bastions and redoubts: San Francisco, San Juan, San Jose, San Pedro. Fajardo, who completed the building of Bastion de San Diego, also finished what Tabora had begun. He enlarged and improved San Andres and Dilao far beyond Dasmarinas' concept of these bastions.

Dr Lara was kept busy by repairs and additional fortification. The ***Revellin de Parian*** is of this date. Two major earthquakes in 1645 and 1658 necessitated major repairs. Bastion de San Diego, which had just been completed in 1644, suffered heavy damage. It was said that De

Lara was so dedicated to rebuilding the Walls that he gave the work his own money and all his time. He practically lived in a little hut by the beach, so that he could always be on hand.

In the eighteenth century, the bastions of San Andres and San Fernando de Dilao metamorphosed into their final stages — a far cry from the breastwork in Dasmariñas' plans, but bearing traces of Silva's and Tabora's planning. The restoration of Fort Santiago was undertaken by Fernando de Valdez y Tamon (1729-1739). Its inner gate used to carry an inscription dedicated to this governor-general, who did much to rehabilitate and rebuild the old fort.

Succeeding governors-general heightened, modified, added to the Walls. The addition of the battery of San Gregorio just outside the Bastion San Diego more or less completed its development. The British took the city in 1762. They laid siege to Intramuros by training artillery fire on the Spaniards from the churches of Santiago and San Juan — both churches were situated across what is now Padre Burgos Drive on General Luna Street. Afterward, the British themselves destroyed the two churches, seeing the wisdom of Corcuerra and Pedro Manuel de Arandia, who had repeatedly advocated their relocation.

The British departure in 1764 marked the last phase in the development of the Walls. The Spanish engineer Miguel Antonio Gomez repaired Real Gate and changed the right flank of San Gabriel. He made several changes on the Parian Gate — starting with the bridge, which used to be flushed to the left of the inner gate. This was moved to the center and a ***revellin*** or outerwork added. Another Spanish engineer modified the ramparts facing the Pasig and converted them into a bastioned front. Then Plano Bastion(Bastion de Sta Lucia), San Francisco and San Pedro were improved. San Pedro, an outerwork, became a small fort, while San Francisco also became an independent unit, not an extension of the curtain (plain span of the Wall connecting two Bastions).

Work on the most continued and became more complicated. The Spaniards were confronted with the problems of constructing a ditch on wet and boggy soil. They dug as close to the wall as possible while working clear of its foundation. At the end of the scarp they built a long slope way below the water line and extending to the bottom of the moat.

But the end of the empire was now nearing for the Spaniards. They did no additional building, as though realizing the futility of hanging on to the four kilometers of terrain that the Walls enclosed. Even the city within, with its seven churches and beautiful homes, was sadly falling apart. The earthquakes also exacted a heavy toll on Spanish finances and Spanish energy. Extensive repairs were cumbersome. Some of the repairs done on damaged structures were done in patches, without regard for consistency with the old architecture. Typhoons and earthquakes were constantly damaging rooftiles, so that by the end of the nineteenth century, the familiar red roof, quite often moss-grown, had given way to more practical galvanized iron.

Intramuros architecture used methods and materials familiar to the Spaniards; but in spirit it reflected the realities of living in the tropics. Massive, squarish foundations of adobe that hug the earth gave buildings stability against tremors; wood tenoned and dovetailed together could absorb the earth's movement without splitting. Large windows let in the wind and sunlight; when drawn to shut out the excess sun and rain, translucent ***capiz*** shells lightened the gloom within.

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Intramuros homes had all the creature comforts of the East and imported goods from the West. Up till the turn of the twentieth century, popular shops in Intramuros sold fineries, wines, cheeses and sausages from Europe. At the same time, circumstances forced the breaching of Spanish exclusiveness — allowing a rich Chinese trader or two, or an ***indio*** servant or maid to reside within the Walls.

Intramuros After Spain

By the time the Americans came, Manila had grown well beyond the Walls. Extramural development left the Walled

City to the friars, to students and to a few aristocratic families clinging to the past. Slowly it became a city of dormitories and boarding houses. Impoverished mestizos shared the *entresuelos* of grand old houses their owners could no longer keep up in style.

Intramuros Churches still called the faithful to their doors for the pomp and pageantry of Holy Week processions and *novenas* to centuries-old images. The Recoletos' most famous image was a *Paciencia* or Christ at the Pillar brought from Mexico in the seventeenth century. The Augustinians had an image of La Consolacion, and the Dominicans a celebrated image of La Soledad (Our Lady of Solitude). Intramuros, despite its decay, kept its own charm and its nostalgic air.

During the Pacific War, Intramuros suffered heavily from bombardment and artillery fire, inflicted by the advancing American forces and the retreating Japanese army. The Spanish city, which the Walls had protected from threats from land and sea, proved vulnerable to attack from the air. When the bombings stopped, there were only shells of buildings and debris. The Walls themselves fared much better. Some 75 per cent of the network remained intact, though two of the most beautiful gates — Sta. Lucia and Fort Santiago — were rammed by American tanks.

After a long period of neglect, Intramuros is today being restored. A presidential decree issued on April 10, 1979 created an Intramuros Administration, which became responsible for the restoration and administration of Intramuros. Its chairman is the Minister of Human Settlements and Metro Manila Governor, Mrs. Imelda R. Marcos. Its Action Officer is the Minister of Budget Jaime C. Laya, a history connoisseur of Philippine antiquities.

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The Restoration Work

The restoration of Intramuros calls for the reconstruction of its Walls and rebuilding of the city. The word "restoration" implies reinstatement to its original state. Thus the immediate goal of the Intramuros Administration is to rebuild and complete the Walls, in places where no streets or buildings stand. Work has begun on the revellin of the Parian. Puerta Isabel, Bastion de San Diego, Puerta Sta. Lucia, Bastion de San Andres and Fort Santiago.

Rebuilding the Walls might seem fairly easy work to do — except that modern "restoration" is a very exacting science that is intrinsically related to archaeology, history and architecture. All three are interrelated disciplines. The first two provide the key to past history and reconstruction; architecture objectifies that past.

To rebuild the Walls, extensive research both by way of documentation and actual excavation of the structure is necessary. Besides historical and archaeological researches, laboratory control is crucial to restoration. In Intramuros, where the materials for restoration are mostly adobe, tiles and bricks, laboratory experiments analyze the composition of each, so that replacements for the missing parts may approximate the originals as closely as possible. A range of firing temperatures for the bricks and tiles used in Intramuros is recommended by laboratory technicians to control the coloring and texture of the new prototypes.

Typing of stones is also done to determine the "compatibility" of stones in terms of color, texture and porosity. A porous stone will suffer placed side by side with a non-porous type. Take only the action of rainwater. The porous stones will absorb a heavier amount of water than the non-porous one. If a porous stone is mixed with non-porous types, the water will not be able to drain off and evaporate. Excessive moisture will cause the growth of harmful organisms and fungi. Each type of stone also has distinctive mineral properties which, in contact with other substances, can cause adverse reactions.

Two types of reconstruction are being done in Intramuros. One is the restoration of structures which are in ruins. The other is the reconstruction of buildings and structures that have completely disappeared. Each type

poses specific challenges to the restoration team, which consists of archaeologists, researchers, architects and builders.

Where existing structures are concerned, the actual condition of the building has to be fully evaluated. Is it structurally sound? If not, how can it be reinforced by modern methods of construction, without altering the character of the building and its appearance? In judging its architectural members, one asks the questions: which belongs to what period, and how integral is each part to the spirit of the original structure?

These questions cannot be answered precipitately, but must be thought out with great deliberation. For mistakes made now will create difficulties for the future, affecting the entire pattern of historical detail.

Undoubtedly, there will be errors along the way. Hence the full documentation of each building by way of pictorial record and field documentation is done religiously, so that mistakes can easily be corrected. In matters where questionable decisions had been taken in the past, documentation may explain why such a decision was reached — and, justifying future generations in feeling some compassion for those who made it.

In the second type of restoration, where the plans of buildings are based on archival records, determining the accuracy of given details creates difficulty for the architect. He has to think instinctively into the construction methods of the past and evaluate details from the context. In both cases, restoration requires great humility from the architects and builders for their sensitivity and creativity must always be subservient to the character of the structure itself. Restoration requires of them a very strong sense of discipline and history.

Intramuros is a symbol of the Filipinos - the builders of the Walls.

The Walls in the Modern Era

In the process of rebuilding, one very hard but vitally relevant question is: How does one adapt these structures to modern use and modern times? Even the electrification of these ancient structures creates problems. Wiring that will deface the structure is unacceptable, so that what would have been a fairly straightforward installation in any other building becomes a problem in restoration work. The adaptation of the Walls to modern use has to take into consideration the character of the structure itself. And in the case of those portions of it that are being renovated into a museum site, one needs to evaluate as well the artifacts that such a museum will house. As they are, the bastions, *fortins,* and gates are not ideal locations for museums.

Atmospheric pollutants — dust and carbon monoxide from car exhausts — and a high degree of humidity necessitate a drastic correction of the museum environment. The introduction of dehumidifiers and airconditioning should normally solve the problem. But they do not. Most of the specimens involved — church vestment, images of saints, icons, architectural details — never existed in a dry atmosphere. A sudden change, instead of doing them good, can hasten their deterioration. One settles for cross ventilation, waterproofing of the structures and the extensive use of dessicants. Better answers might be in the years ahead. When that happens, the restorers of Intramuros will also be better qualified to judge their usefulness.

Why restore Intramuros at all? In the short time that restoration has been going on, various critics have come forward to criticize the Philippine government's decision to restore the Walls. The most common remark is that a developing country such as ours should not spend money on restoration, and should pour it instead on projects that will materially and demonstrably benefit the greater part of our national community. Besides these, critics add, Intramuros is a *colonial* symbol.

Rationale for Rebuilding

All of these points may be valid — but the reasons for restoring Intramuros transcend them all. The Walls may be regarded as a colonial symbol, because they were made for our conquerors. But they are as much a symbol of the Filipinos themselves — the builders of the Walls — signifying the fortitude and greatness of spirit of the thousands of workers who labored to build it. And whether we like it or not, the Spanish colonial period shaped us to be the people we are today.

Perhaps because we are constant victims of war and destruction, we often fail to see how relevant the past is to our present condition. "Colonial" architecture met that challenge of relevance with greater success than we are doing today. This is one reason why a whole block of period architecture will go up in Intramuros as part of the restoration project.

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