

# Chapter I      HISTORY

## ABOUT BAGUIO CITY

### BRIEF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

#### Spanish Era

- The vastness and promising economic potential of the place lured the Spaniards to conduct series of expeditions. Early explorers included Juan Salcedo in 1572 and Don Q.M. Quirante in 1664. Series of attempts were made to pacify the *Igorots* but failed. Finally in 1846, Commandante de Galvey established his Commandancia at La Trinidad, Benguet (named after his wife). Galvey went to establish the province of Benguet with 31 rancherias. The first Kapitan of Benguet was Pulito of Kafagway, now Baguio, a minor Rancheria of about 20 houses.
- The presidentia of Baguio was first established in the house of the Campulet at the top of the new Tabacalera road at the lower end of Guisad Valley. Later, the presidentia of Baguio was moved to the present site of the Baguio City Hall.
- The Spaniard were able to establish order, built churches and schools, made trails and introduced coffee during their long occupation of the area.

#### The Arrival of the Americans

- The Americans came early in 1900 and established their government with Mr. H. Phelps Whitmarsh as the appointed Governor of Benguet and Baguio as the capital. This was the first provincial government to be established in the Philippines and this happened in a year prior to the inauguration of the civil government of the Philippines. Their best administrators and teachers were fervent boosters and promoters: Dean C. Worcester, Governor General Luke Wright, Cameron Forbes and others, who together with Filipinos committed to make the place haven.
- Renowned architect and city planner Daniel H. Burnham, the top choice of both William H. Taft and Cameron Forbes together with his assistant Pierce Anderson arrived in the Philippines from San Francisco on 13 October 1904. A brief period of only nine (9) days for necessary field work, Burnham interviewed numerous government officials, studied available maps, hiked and rode horse to most parts of the Baguio reservation and was really impressed by the topographical layout of the proposed urban site and the spectacular scenery of the surrounding mountain area.
- During his trip back home to Chicago, Burnham was able to

prepare a rough layout of Baguio called the *Plan of Baguio*, using his personal notes and materials provided by the insular government. This was presented to Secretary Taft on 05 October 1905, adopting the Garden City concept of city planning, a dominant and prevailing concept of urban development during the Beautiful City Movement era.

- Even with the evolution of the Baguio Plan by William E. Parsons, Warwick Greene and others who were responsible for actual layout and construction of streets, residences and public buildings, the Burnham Plan served as a powerful blueprint for the organization of space within Baguio City, and one of the pioneering endeavors in the country.
- Beginning 1909, a government fleet of Stanley steam autos brought up more than 2,000 passengers a season. The city was well-governed and well kept.
- The mines near Baguio were developed and productive. Business in the city flourished with commercial centers put up. Recreation facilities were installed. The city was growing before the outbreak of the war.
- History will tell us that the war in the Philippines began and ended at Camp John Hay. During the early part of the Second World War, Baguio was among the first places to be attacked by the Japanese Imperial Army.
- Camp John Hay was bombed in the morning of 08 December 1941. The city government continued to function even after the evacuation of Camp John Hay by the US Army on 23 December 1941. Japanese civilians were interned in Camp John Hay.
- Not long afterwards, on 27 December 1941, the Japanese columns arrived on Naguilian Road. Baguio was then declared an open city under the leadership of the Chief of Police Keith. The occupation of the city by the Japanese is affected without the firing of a single shot. The first Headquarters was set up at the Japanese school on Trinidad Road, then at the Baguio Hotel, and later at the Masonic Temple.
- The Nippon forces immediately organized the military police administration and third degree chambers. They also converted Camp John Hay into their Garrison and a part of it was used as a concentration camp. Most of the people of Baguio took to the hills for survival. The guerrilla movement figured prominently at this time. While the Japanese atrocities were mounting, the people's hatred was steadily reaching its breaking point.
- In 1944, when the American Forces lead by Gen. Douglas Mac Arthur landed in Leyte, General Yamashita moved his headquarters to Baguio. The puppet Philippine Government

## During the War

under President Jose Laurel was also set up in the city. Finally on 08 January 1945, American and Filipino forces advanced toward Baguio to liberate it from the Japanese force. In the process, Baguio suffered intensive artillery shelling and aerial bombardment.

- The City was destroyed as the liberating forces were flashing out General Yamashita and his army. Many of the residents of Baguio lost their homes and took shelter for about two (2) months at the Baguio Cathedral. Since there was an acute food shortage, Yamashita eventually allowed thousands of Baguio residents to leave the City. The American forces advanced toward the city from the south by way of Kennon Road and also from the North West through Naguilian Road. There was intense fighting along their way. When the Japanese defensive positions started to fall, General Yamashita quickly retreated north from Baguio. However, he left a small delaying force to cover his withdrawal from the city.
- Not aware of the withdrawal of the Japanese forces and still expecting a counter attack, the Americans and Filipino soldiers waited several days before their final assault of Baguio that led to its total liberation on 27 April 1945. Somehow, General Yamashita and his 10,000 strong army made good in their retreat from the city. It was about five (5) months later that the Japanese lost the war in the Philippines.
- The Americans and Filipino soldiers pursued General Yamashita and they captured him on 02 September 1945 in Kiangan, Ifugao. He was escorted by Colonel F.M. Smith back to Baguio and on 03 September 1945 he signed the unconditional surrender of the Japanese army. The honorable surrender took place at the residence of the US Ambassador at Camp John Hay. Upon their arrival at Camp John Hay, Major General Tomiyuki Yamashita and Vice Admiral Denhichi Okoochi handed over their samurai swords to Colonel George H. Bishop, G-2 of the armed forces in the western pacific (AFWESPAC). In equally fine fashion,
- Colonel F.M. Smith, the commander of Camp John Hay honored the rank of his prisoner by billeting ten (10) of the ranking officers at the High Commissioner's Residence.
- When the surrender ceremonies had ended, the Japanese were escorted to the New Bilibid Prison as prisoners of war (POW). Baguio experienced a memorable event in its history when it was made the site of the final surrender of the Japanese Forces. Allied dignitaries, soldiers and Baguio residents held a Cañao to celebrate the liberation of the city. A liberation festival was even held in 27 April 1946 to show the gratitude that every peace loving citizen of this wonderful city feels.

**After the War**

- From the ruins of World War II, the city of Baguio steadily grew into the commercial, educational and recreational center of the Cordillera and Northern Luzon. Although, Baguio ceased to be the official summer capital in 1976, people still continued referring to it as the *Summer Capital of the Philippines*.

**The Killer Earthquake**

- At exactly 4:26 p.m. on Monday, 16 July 1990, a killer earthquake unexpectedly hit and extensively devastated the City of Baguio. The powerful temblor measured 7.7 in the open-ended Richter scale and lasted for 45 seconds.
- It was said to be the most destructive earthquake on record within the Cordillera region.
- There were numerous aftershocks that followed and the strongest, which occurred at 3:15 a.m. of 18 July 1990, lasted for eight (8) seconds and measured 5.3 on the Richter Scale.

**The Progressive Baguio**

- Years after the killer earthquake, Baguio City has recovered and is standing firm and proud for its restored heritage.
- Until today, Baguio City as the Summer Capital of the Philippines is the most frequent destination in Northern Luzon by local and foreign tourists alike. The city is the first in the country to be named by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as one of the 64 worldwide in its Creative Cities Network. The city made it to the list under the Crafts and Folk Art category along with other 16 cities like Barcelos in Portugal, Cairo in Egypt, Tunis in Tunisia, Madaba in Jordan and Carrara in Italy.