

## THE SILVER CONNECTION

*The Holy Rosary Parish*



According to my brother Daniel Antonio Henson-Dizon, on December 8, 1829 – the Feast of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, the Barrio of Culiat became the town of Angeles and this was accomplished through the efforts of the founder, Don Angel Pantaleon de Miranda and his only son-in-law, Dr. Mariano Henson y Paras, L.L.D. It was given the beautiful name of “EL PUEBLO DE LOS ANGELES” (official Spanish name, i.e., “The Town of the Angels”) in honor of the Christian name of the founder and the titular patrons of the town: “Los Santos Angeles Custodios”. The first mayor was Don Ciriaco de Miranda, the only son of the founder. The first town parish priest was a Pampango named Rev. Fr. Macario Paras.

In 1877 the decision to construct a permanent and bigger church was reached among the hierarchy of the Catholic Church, the Augustinian Order and the leaders of the town led by Don Mariano Vicente Henson y de Miranda, grandson of the founders. The parcel of land where the church was to rise was donated by Don Mariano Vicente along Santo Rosario Street, where the Holy Rosary Parish Church now stands, together with the land occupied by the present Parish Rectory or “CONVENTO”, the present Parish Hall, and the campus grounds of the present-day Holy Family Academy. Construction of the church edifice started in the same year under the direction of the Spanish friar priest, Muy Reverendo Padre Fra Ramon Sarionandia, O.S.A. (Orden de San Agustin), an Augustinian friar. The architect and builder was Don Antonio de la Camara, a Spaniard from Manila and an architectural graduate from Spain.

The church edifice was constructed through the “POLOS Y SERVICIOS” labor system – a kind of forced labor imposed on the Filipinos by the Spanish colonial government. Whether the Spaniards imposed forced labor on the Angeles Church

workers harshly or leniently cannot be ascertained. At any rate, it would be safe to say that the Angeles church workers worked willingly, in obedient diligence and out of piety since it was to be the House of God, and their church they were building. Also, many of them were the direct descendants of the original settlers and in turn were led by Don Mariano Vicente Henson y de Miranda and other wealthy landowners, who likewise were mostly the direct descendants of the original settlers of the town. It must be remembered that the relationship between the landowners and the tenant farmers at that time can be likened to that of solicitous parents to their children and vice-versa.

The actual construction work lasted 29 years and in all probability. Many of the workers who finished the job in 1896 were already the children of those who began working in 1877. It is said that a few top foremen and stone carvers were experienced church builders from Manila. Some master carpenters were from the Barrio of Betis, Guagua, and many expert stonecutters were from the town itself and from Barrio Mancatian in Porac. In fact, the boulders used were quarried from Barrio Mancatian. The massive and thick walls of the church and its tall belfries were entirely made of chipped Mancatian adobe stone (they say these stones came out during the last eruption of Mt. Pinatubo) and were cemented together with a mixture of pulverized and cooked white sea shells or "CABIBI" that were gathered from the waterways of the town of "MACABIBI", now Macabebe, where the sea shells were plentiful, lime, fine Mancatian sand (later found to be the best in the Philippines), the white of eggs and water. At that time, concrete cement, as we know it today was not yet invented. It is because of this that famous Kapampangan sweets like yemas and tocino del cielo thrived, as the housewives did not want the egg yolks to go to waste. The testimonies of old folks disclose that in the entire duration of the church construction, most of the barrios of Angeles, Porac, Mabalacat and Magalang were required by Spanish church and civil authorities to submit a quota of 200 chickens a month to the church construction in Angeles for about 27 years. On the other hand, Don Mariano Vicente Henson initiated and led other Angeles wealthy landowners in providing additional daily subsistence and pocket money for the workers for the entire duration of 29 years.

The wood used for the pillars and wooden structures was mostly "BULAUN", one of the sturdiest hardwoods in the Philippines, The thick corrugated and galvanized metal roofing and plain sheets were manufactured in England. The etched colored glasswork on some of the windows came from Spain. Angeles Historian, the late Don Mariano A. Henson y Sadie, as per old records of the vital statistics of the 1877 church construction are: "Depth of tower excavation we 5 meters; the elevation of the central nave was 13 meters; the two laterals – 9 meters; the façade – 21 meters; the towers – 35 meters. The superficial area of the interiors – 24 meters in width and 77 meters in length plus 12 meters in width and 46 meters in length in both transepts with a total area of 2,424 square meters or 26, 091.45 square feet. It has a capacity of 3,700 standing persons. It was finally and successfully completed on February 12, 1896."

Accordingly, the floor plan and original structural design is of Central European Romanesque. The structure of the original main altar and the four "Retablos" (side altars) on both laterals, and their ornamentations, were of Spanish Baroque.

Don Mariano Henson y Sadie eulogized: "The Holy Rosary Parish Church is a living monument not only to the engineering and architectural skill of the Spaniard, Don Antonio de la Camara, but also to the unselfish and untiring cooperation of the townspeople of Angeles during the church construction of 29 years. The splendid spirit

of cooperation was shown by all – by the parish priest, Muy Reverendo Fra Ramon Sarrionandia, O.S.A., the landed families under the leadership of Don Mariano Vicente Henson y de Miranda and, above all, the small farmers and tenants, without whose patient labors the edifice would not have become a reality.”

Don Mariano Vicente Henson y de Miranda and his spouse, Doña Maria Asuncion y Leon Santos, together with their children, notably Don Jose Pedro Henson y Leon Santos and his spouse, Doña Maxima Rosario Sadie y Henson de Henson, and Don Jose’s sister, Doña Maria Carlota Concordia Henson y Leon Santos de Ganson and her spouse Don Jose Ma. Fermin Ganson y Gonzales, Don Mariano’s sister, Doña Agustina Henson y de Miranda de Nepomuceno and her spouse, Don Pio Rafael Nepomuceno (a Filipino-Chinese from Quezon Province) and their descendants took it upon themselves the responsibility in extending continued and considerable financial, material and moral support for the needs of the church and succeeding parish priests including the procurement of liturgical materials, priests’ vestments, church repairs and innovations, catechetical and missionary projects, serving as living examples of Christian piety up to the last days of their lives.

My brother Dan said that my grandmother, Carlota Henson de Ganson narrated to him that sometime in the late 1880’s Doña Ma. Asuncion Henson y Leon Santos had the good fortune of winning the first prize of the Spanish sweepstakes in Madrid, Spain, amounting to 2,000 Spanish Pesos, an extraordinarily large sum in the Philippines at that time. The cash prize of silver coins arrived in a wooden box. Immediately, the pious lady contacted and engaged the services of a famous and expert Italian silversmith named Don Giuseppe Lammoglia who was popularly known as “Peping Capampangan” because he spoke Pampango fluently and was married to a Pampango lady.





Doña Ma. Asuncion donated all her prize money to the Holy Rosary Parish Church by having all her silver coins melted and applied as silver plating for the three main altar panels, for the tabernacle, for the main tabernacle top crucifix and its rays, the many long rays radiating from and around the center cubicle of the main altar (a sunburst décor) for the incenser, for the pontifical chair, for the two tall candle holders or “CERIALES” and the third one holding the crucifix, for the 3 large and 3-faced “CANDELABRAS”, for the two large panel covers of the second tier of the main altar, for the large sanctuary lamp container, and a lot of other liturgical items too numerous to mention here. Signore Lammoglia had indeed accomplished a magnificent job!

***In the year 2003, I finally realized my life-long dream of visiting Rivello, the hometown of Don Giuseppe Lammoglia up in the Appenine Mountains near the coastal town of Sapri in the Gulf of Policastro in the Tyrrhenian Sea, South of Naples. I went there together with my husband, Ben and my only first cousin on my father’s side Signora Elisa Lammoglia de Bueno, a great granddaughter of Don Giuseppe Lammoglia. I never imagined that my maternal great grandmother, Ma. Asuncion Leon Santos y Henson who commissioned Signor Giuseppe Lammoglia to make the silver items for the Holy Rosary Parish would one day have a connection through the marriage of my father’s sister, Luz Dizon to Signor Carmelino Lammoglia, a grandson of Don Giuseppe Lammoglia. So our great grandparents met in the 1880’s never imagining that one day, we would be able to visit the hometown of Don Giuseppe and sleep in the very room where he was born.***

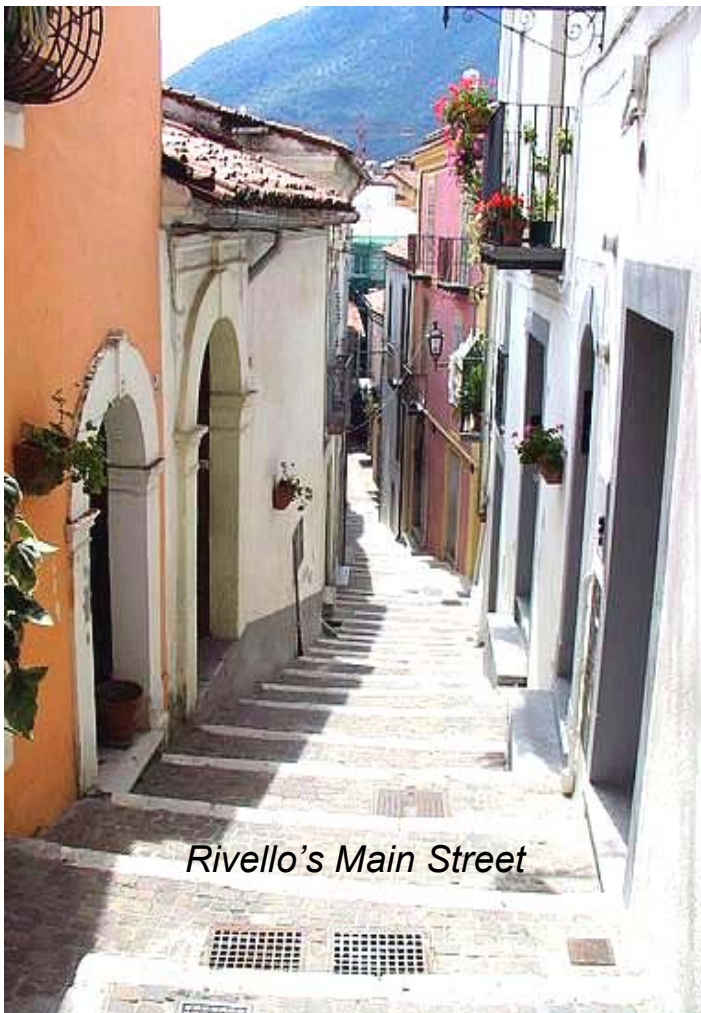
***We took the express train from Rome passing through the various provinces of Italy like Latium, Campania, and Basilicata until we reached the small city of Lagonegro in the province of Potenza. There, we were met by a cousin of Elisa, Zaccaria Lammoglia who was the caretaker of the more than 500-year old 5-story house that Elisa and her brother, Lino inherited from their father, Signor Carmelino Lammoglia, a grandson of Don Giuseppe.***





***From the train station, we rode in Zaccaria's car and we took the winding road through steep mountains filled with chestnut and apple orchards, vineyards with ripening red grapes drooping from the vines and patches of vegetable gardens that hung precariously along the mountain slopes. In the distance, I finally caught a glimpse of the historic medieval town of Rivello. Ever since I was a little girl I used to imagine how Rivello looked and I was not prepared for the beautiful and breath-taking sight that greeted me and slowly unfolded before me, with every turn of the car. I could not contain my excitement and craned my neck trying to glue my eyes onto the distant houses that sat on top of each other.***

***According to Elisa, who used to go there since she was a little girl, the town has remained unchanged for more almost a thousand years. Rivello started as an early Greek settlement and gradually grew into a town surrounded by walls. At an earlier tour where we visited Florence, the tour guide told us that the reasons why these medieval walled towns were deliberately built on top of high mountains, was to get away from invaders as well as from mosquitoes that brought malaria.***



*Rivello's Main Street*



***I can only best describe Rivello as the steepest town in all of Italy. Nestled high up in the Apennine Mountains its small piazza could only accommodate about a dozen cars. The cars could only park up to the piazza, and from there we had to get down from the car to carry our luggage and back-packs up and down***



*the maze of steep stone staircases that were only about 2 meters wide up till we reached the four-story house of Don Giuseppe Lammoglia. For a small town, Rivello boasted of 3 beautiful churches. I could view the church of St. Anthony from our bedroom balcony window, and two others from the dining room balcony.*



*We stayed in Rivello for 6 glorious days, going up and down its narrow cobbled stone steps. Our days were filled with fun visiting and dining with Elisa's cousins Zaccaria, Assunta, Vincenzo and other relatives and also doing our own cooking after purchasing the day's catch and fresh meat (brought up by a truck onto the piazza thrice a week) some fresh pear-shaped red tomatoes, crisp lettuce, basil, other vegetables and luscious apples, pears, figs and grapes freshly picked from yonder orchards and vegetable gardens. I also had my first taste of stewed rabbit and yellow squash flowers deep-fried in olive oil.*

*When we didn't feel like cooking we dined at the only restaurant near the piazza. All the men ordered one round of beer, and then our Insalata Capreze made with sliced luscious pear-shaped red tomatoes topped with fresh Mozzarella cheese made of buffalo milk and sprinkled with fresh basil. With the bread we had sobresata, Rivello's famous produce that was a fist-sized salami. I usually ordered my favorite delicious ravioli dish. I was always assigned the task to ask for the bill and I said "Il conto por favor".*

*Above left: Side façade of Don Giuseppe Lammoglia's 5-story house and its main entrance at right*





*Top center: The Post Office & Pelegino's Restaurant with Juan Antonio, Rodrigo, Elisa, Maria and Ben in the foreground. Below right: The main piazza with Bar Resigno on the right (the only bar in Rivello) Below, left: Ben, Rodrigo and Maria on their way home after shopping for supplies*





*Above left: Josie posing beside remnants of Rivello's ancient Greek wall; Above right, the quaint stairway entrance to Vincenzo (Elisa's cousin) and Asunta Lammoglia's house; Above, view of the church of San Michele near the dining room staircase leading to the upper floor bedrooms*





*Above: Maria & Elisa ready to cook lunch as Josie slices plum tomatoes for the insalata with lettuce and arugola Below: Don Giuseppe's famous balcony from the fifth floor bedroom which served as our room in Rivello during our stay (this balcony is featured in the Website of Rivello)*



***On our last night in Rivello, it rained quite hard and we had to hurry up to our room's balcony as our daily wash was still hanging out there. When I went back inside the room, I heard Elisa calling me from their room below to look outside the balcony. The dark sky was gradually clearing up and to my astonishment, white mist was slowly creeping into my balcony. I touched the cloudy mist and it felt so cool! Some of it even crept inside our room. I looked out towards the distant houses; they were still shrouded in wisps of mist that moved swiftly through the dark mountain. This heavenly feeling lasted only for a few minutes but I think this must be how God feels when He is sitted on his favorite perch in heaven watching the clouds drift by beneath Him.***

***Whenever I feel low, I just leaf through our photos and recall the wonderful times we had with Elisa and her cousins. Our visit there was indeed very timely; who knows if I will ever go back to Rivello again because a year ago, Elisa and her brother Lino decided to sell their beloved house.***





*Above: Panorama of Rivello in the summer of 2003, Lower photo: Rivello Innevato (Rivello, taken in the winter of 2004)*



Made on a Mac

