

Here, Minas was born.



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On July 16th the anniversary of Mariana is celebrated - the first city of Minas Gerais. Get knowing and pride of our history means also a reflection exercise for the future.

Thus, the history of Mariana began

The news of alluvial gold discovery at Sertão dos Cataguases (Hinterland of Cataguases), presently Minas Gerais, spread out Brazil reaching toward Portugal and motivating thousands of people coming to the region in haste of richness. Among those people, explorers, were members of an expedition from the State of São Paulo, the so called Bandeirantes Paulistas, (Vanguard Bannerets from S.Paulo) under the leadership of Salvador Fernandes Furtado de Mendonça, who had found alluvial gold in a river baptized Ribeirão Nossa Senhora do Carmo (Our Lady of Carmo Stream), with reverence to the Virgin of the Hill of Carmo.

Up to that, the Commission Chaplain, Father Francisco Gonçalves Lopes, in a Sunday afternoon on July 16th 1696, had raised the first altar in those lands of Minas Gerais.

Along the banks of the Carmo stream, the small village of Nossa Senhora do Carmo was raised and just after that had assumed strategic and political power game duties, determined by such event of gold. Therefore that region had been transformed into one of the main suppliers of gold ore for Portugal..

Between 1708 and 1710 many armed conflicts had happened in the gold region involving both inhabitants from São Paulo and Portugal and also people coming from many regions of Brazil. Conflicts were known as Guerra dos Emboabas (Emboabas War). The war episodes made the Metropolis (Portugal) separate, from Rio de Janeiro, the Capitania (former administrative settlements) of São Paulo and Minas Gerais, for the betterment of police actions, sending to the first settlement in 1709 - Village of Ribeirão do Carmo, the governor Antônio de Albuquerque Coelho de Carvalho, where he lodged his home and, in a short term, managed to make the "spirits calm down" and this way getting a stable order.

In 1711 the village now having already gained notable development, was by an act of the mentioned Governor, on April 8th. raised to the rank of Village under the designation of Nossa Senhora do Ribeirão do Carmo de Albuquerque. Later on changed by D. João V, on April 14th 1712, to Vila Leal de Nossa Senhora do Ribeirão do Carmo. (Loyal Village of Our Lady of the Stream of Carmo).

According to metropolitan instructions, such event demanded the implementation of an administrative and judicial structure under representation of the Town Council Hall and Jail, at Vila do Carmo. Thus on July 4th 1711, it was raised the first Town Council Hall of Minas Gerais, with equal status as to the Town Council Hall of Porto in Portugal.

Soon the village was transformed into a main commerce and educational center of Minas Gerais.

Albuquerque's successor, Dom Brás Baltazar faced many difficulties in solving the one fifth (1/5) kind of a tax collection for each bateia (gold mining panning). Fearing of a civil war he got in contacted with the Seat of the Metropolitan Government that, in turn, ordered taxes should be collected on the total gold amount extracted and also on industries and professional occupations. Such provisions, for a short while, had quieted animosities.

When Dom Baltazar in exiting his functions while Dom Pedro de Almeida Portugal, Conde de Assumar (Count of Assumar) was taking over, the balance being formerly kept by his antecessors, was arduously broken up thus ploughing in their souls the fire of rebellion. Assumar then requested the King of Portugal the sending of troops to refrain the great flow of people and the instability of the region.

In 1719 two "battallions of dragons" sent from Lisbon, arrived in Minas Gerais they, were later known, as the famous Dragões Reais de Minas (The Royal Draggons of Minas) or the Draggons' Troop of Count of Assumar. The Dragoons soldiers had a significant role in the rebellion of Vila Rica, a mutiny under the leadership of Filipe dos Santos, upon who had fallen the merciless governor's justice. In consequence of which on December 2nd of the same year, it had been raised the Capitania Independente de Minas Gerais (Independent Settlement of Minas Gerais).

On October 29th 1730, João Lopes de Lima set up a line of a Gold Walking Mail between Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, taking into consideration the largeness of demographic growth of the newly discovered land - the Eldorado of Minas Gerais, which attracted many adventurers caravans in the search for gold, could then have better and more quickly means of communication, having Mariana City as a convergent spot of all gold exploration activities.

In 1745, by order of D. João V, King of Portugal, the village of Nossa Senhora do Ribeirão do Carmo was up graded city with the name of Mariana, in paying homage to Maria Ana D'Austria his wife. In the very year and by the bula (Papal Edict) Candor Lucis Aeternae. (Candid of the Eternal Light) Pope Bento XIV, created the diocese of Mariana apart from Rio de Janeiro, together with the diocese of São Paulo and the jurisdictional dioceses of Goiás and Cuiabá .

Together with its implementation, a change of relations among many spheres of power, consequently had occurred. More complex became the political forces scenary, formed by the functional performances of brotherhoods, local City Council Halls, Clergy and authorities. .

The main Church devoted to Nossa Senhora da Conceição (Our Lady of Conceiving) was raised up to the rank of Catedral de Nossa Senhora da Assunção. (Our Lady of Assumption Cathedral).and so becoming the religious center of the Village of Minas do Ouro, (Minas of the Gold) and at the same time the city became the Seat of the First Bishopric of Minas. For this purpose the Bishop of the State of Maranhão, Friar Manoel da Cruz, had been sent for. His journey by land, between São Luiz, (Capital of the State of Maranhão) and Mariana, last one year and two months and had been considered an epic journey. The bishop arrival at Minas Gerais lands was greatly celebrated and considered the greatest feast of the colonial cycle: (The Golden Episcopal Throne) that had happened in Mariana as compliments to the First Bishop of Minas Gerais..

Then an Urbanization Project was in need for the First Capital Of Minas Gerais, that had been developed by the military engineer José Fernandes Pinto de Alpoim. - streets traced in straight lines with rectangular squares, distinguish the first city projected for Minas Gerais, and also one of the first in Brazil.

The book Termo de Mariana I (Terms of Mariana - Book I) published by the Department of History of the Federal University of Ouro Preto, makes a description of the new city urban area.

“Up to that time some principles and procedures of the portuguese military engineering “school” are shared into the royal letters to be observed as rules for the foundation of cities. Documents pointed out the determination of a site for a square and main public buildings and requirements as to the opening of “large and narrow” streets and, concerning to housing appearances, all houses should be built with identical external façade yet inside of them each one might do as it seems fashionable, provided that it should be kept within the same beauty of the Villa and in its streets, the same width as signed in the foundation”. Dom João V was not so demanding concerning to the houses’ shape of Mariana. At that time the idea was that all the houses were built in the same style yet the project of Mariana was not so detailed, as elsewhere, with regard to the façades measures of all buildings. .

There is an exception in Mariana, to the general rule, as to the houses façades: Rua Direita, the old “top path” had only got its present feature as of 1745, when it took a “street shaping” (regularization) under Alpoim’s Plan. There was an official document (City Concil Hall Sentence) determining that all solicitors for building edifications on the left side of the street, would make it with most noble feelings, that is to say, the rear of all houses should be toward Assumar’s Palace, when later on became the Episcopal. So till nowadays one can see that on this side of the street most houses have two floors and balconies while on the opposite side houses are mostly lower (one floor).The Map of Mariana City of the Maps Collection of Itamaraty (Brazilian Foreign Affairs Edifice) in Rio de Janeiro, indicates the blocks are in fact more numerous and alike But the most surprising detail is the evidence of a serial of buildings deluged by the Ribeirão do Carmo (Stream Of Carmo), what makes one think the graph may have been drawn by the time of disappearance of the street due to 1743 great highwater.

With the settlement of Mariana Diocese, the clergy concern for the education of clergymen and the need for an educational institution, made Bishop Dom Frei Manoel da Cruz, on December 1750, settle in Mariana the Seminar Nossa Senhora da Boa Morte,(Our Lady Of Our Good Death) first formal educational establishment of Village Minas of Gold.

The Lesser Seminar of Mariana rendered considerable services to education during colonial ages as well as along the entire XIX Century. Its building displays of two elegant blocks framing with the chapel the format of an E. Its construction is of such a remarkable simplicity with its numerous sash windows and interspaces with straight bars. A small entrance stairs, covered by a porch, set in at an angle with the flanks of the Seminar.

When in the late XVIII century the deposition of alluvial gold turned scanty the economical situation of the province deteriorates then starting a stagnancy period of subsistence farming economy on poor productive mountainous and stirred iron ore soil, cultivated with unskilled hands, led governments to weakness, inhabitants to impoverishment and to penury and partial abandonment of Mariana .

The abundance of gold ore incrustated in hard rocks formerly plenty on the rivers’ bed, became rare on the steepy mountains, then making difficult its extraction, under the lights of poor Lusitanian colonial technology.

The permanent presence of the Portuguese Court in Brazil as from 1808 and the policies imposed by D.João VI introduced deep transformation within the Colonial System such as mining technology. In 1811, seeking after an alternative of gold mining he then called Willein Von Eschewege a german engineer to Brazil to assign for the settlement of a metallurgical industry in the middle of Minas Gerais. In 1871 a Royal Letter, written with the advicement of Eschewege, disposing for legal procedures as to formal structure and as to mining societies operagtions in Brazil as well.

In 1819 Baron Eschewege, fixed home in Mariana and making good use of collected basis by his English associates of the Geological Royal Society, had acquired many scattered mining zones in the region. Until the middle of 1821 gold was ploughed under open sky and an underground mining started in the small old village of São Vicente, today Passagem de Mariana (Mariana Passing Quarter), and had settled there the first Mining Company of Brazil - Sociedade Mineralógica de Passagem (Mining Society of Mariana Passing) .

In 1859, the (Mining Society of Mariana Passing) when Eschewege gave away his rights to his English partner Thomas Bawden. Bawden, historically known as Senator Bawden, (due to his affairs at the Town Council Hall Senate of Mariana) in late XIX Century he had only devoted to forming the village of Passagem de Mariana, breaking up with the occupation of Morro de São Vicente (Saint Vincent Hill) and bringing the urban nucleus closer to the gold deposit and to Ribeirão do Carmo.

Gold mining during that cycle was indeed in "full steam ahead" and the region started flourishing again. Therefore a significant transformation in school education enterprising happened in Mariana on March 10th, 1850 with preliminary activities of Colégio Providência, (The Providence School) - the first High School institution in Minas Gerais addressed to young female students. Colégio Providência is part of sisterhood works of twelve (Charity Daughters) sent to Brazil on missionaries conditions, as request by Dom. Viçoso, Bishop of Mariana.

Mariana: The first discovery, the first Villa, the first City, the first Bishopsric and Archbishopsric, the first Judiciary District, the first City Council Hall, the first primary and teachers teaching school, the first Capital of Minas Gerais and the pioneering in communication services in Minas Gerais by the occasion of the Walking Mail implementation.

The search for gold within the crystalline waters of Ribeirão do Carmo, made arise the first population of Minas Gerais. The crowd's faith and the gold richness then originated one of the most important religious, and cultural and art scenery.

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Nota : Para a qualidade lingüística da versão inglesa teve o suporte dos dicionários: Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English e Merriam Webster's Seventh Collegiate Dictionary. Uso predominante do léxico e da sintaxe do inglês Britânico.