

Believed by some historians as the place where the first Christian mass in the Philippines was celebrated, Agusan was first referred to by its Malay settlers as “agasan”, a word in the dialect meaning “where water flows”. This alluded to the presence of a mighty river that traversed the whole area. With the coming of the Spanish conquistadores, the area where flowed a mighty river came to be known as “Agusan” to the civilized world.

The aborigines of Agusan were the ancestors of the present day Mamanwas who were driven to the hinterlands by the first wave of Malay immigrants coming from Borneo and Celebes. These people, in turn, sought the protection of the interior jungles because of the forays and the constant raids of “Moro” pirates.

The “Moros”, being seafaring people, confined themselves to the coastal areas where they started settlements, leaving the forestall areas to the Manobos.

Agusan del Norte’s claim to being the province where the first mass was held is perpetuated in oral historical traditions whose beginnings date as far back as the latter part of March and early part of April, 1521. Rajah Siagu, the ruler of Agusan, was said to have left his settlement in order to visit his friend Rajah Humabon of Bohol. Together, they visited the ruling rajah of a place called Limasawa where a fleet of Spanish galleons headed by a Portuguese navigator called Fernao Magallao (Fernando Magallanes in Spanish) had just dropped anchor. Rajah Siagu invited the navigator to visit his place, to which Magallanes went and had a mass celebrated on Easter Sunday in what is now called Magallanes (formerly Masao). It is said that Magallanes’ ships were given provisions by Siagu for which, in gratitude, his people were exempted later on from paying tribute to the King of Spain. This boon lasted only for sixty years and was taken away when the people rose in revolt against the conquistadores.

With the occupation of Spanish troops, came the priest and scholars who immediately started converting the natives. Of the missionaries sent here, the most outstanding was Rev. Saturnino Urios, a Jesuit, who indefatigably set about converting some 23,000 natives during his 28 years in the province. He is oftentimes called the “Apostle of Agusan” for his missionary zeal and to honor him, the parochial school of Butuan was named Father Urios College, and presently is called Urios College.

Agusan took arms against Spain during the revolution. With Aguinaldo’s revolutionary

government, a small native unit was organized in Butuan under the leadership of Senor Gumersindo Flores. This small force put to task the American soldiers stationed in the place. Spears being no match to the powerful guns of the Americans, Agusan yielded to the might of the American soldiers in January 1900.

Until 1911, Agusan, under the name of Butuan, was part of Surigao province, formerly known as Caraga district. However, following the passage of Act 1693, creating the non-christian provinces, it was separated from Surigao, with the Diwata Mountains as the boundary lines. Before the approval of Republic Act No. 4979 on June 17, 1967 and its proclamation as a province on January 5, 1968, Agusan del Norte was part of the former province of Agusan.

The province was under the military rule until 1913. When the Department of Mindanao and Sulu was created under the Secretary of Interior, Agusan became one of the seven provinces comprising the department with Frank W. Carpenter as the first civil governor. In 1914, the first Filipino governor of Agusan was appointed in the person of Teofisto Guingona. The first elected governor of Agusan was Apolonio D. Curato in 1923, holding this position for three terms. Jose Rosales followed him and stayed as governor for two terms. In 1936, Mariano C. Atega was elected governor and was succeeded by Agustin O. Casiñas.

Then, war broke out. During the Japanese occupation, General Aguirre occupied the governor's post for five months. Liberation came and Curato was again the governor. However, he stayed in the position only for a year. Servando D. Jongko who was elected in 1947, stayed as governor until 1951. From 1952 to 1959, Felixberto C. Dagani occupied his post. He was succeeded by Democrito O. Plaza who served as governor from 1960 to 1963. Jose C. Aquino took over in 1964 and resigned in 1966 when he ran for Congress. His vice governor, Consuelo V. Calo ran for governor in 1967 and won.

On June 17, 1967, R.A. 4979, authored by Congressman Jose C. Aquino was passed by congress dividing Agusan into two (2) provinces, namely Agusan del Norte and Agusan del Sur. Agusan del Norte joined the ranks of fast developing provinces on July 1, 1974 when it became a Provincial Development Assistance Project (PDAP) province through the efforts of Governor Consuelo V. Calo. She remained as Agusan del Norte's Chief Executive until 1986 when the revolutionary government of President Corazon C. Aquino made a complete revamp on the national and local government units throughout the country.

The province then, was administered by OIC Governor Jose T. Gonzales but his term was

short live due to his death on the same year. OIC Governor Jesus S. Delfin was appointed to fill in the vacancy of governorship until he decided to ran for a gubernatorial candidacy which he lost to Candidate Eduardo L. Rama, Sr., who won in the 1988 election. Governor Eduardo L. Rama, Sr., served the province for two terms and after which he ran for Congressman and won.

On February 23, 1995, R.A. 7901 was approved by His Excellency President Fidel V. Ramos creating the four (4) provinces of Agusan del Norte, Agusan del Sur, Surigao del Norte, Surigao del Sur and the two (2) cities of Butuan and Surigao as Region 13 or CARAGA Administrative Region.

Maria Angelica Rosedell M. Amante got elected as governor in 1995 and served until June 2004.

Erlpe John M. Amante got the post in the 2004 elections and now steers the province to its desired development.

## **BUENAVISTA**

In the year 1887, a group of Manobos from the frontier of Agusan found an ideal place for a fishing retreat and rendezvous which was later on named "Tortosa" by Adolfo Calo who visited the village and found the place abundant with tortoise.

Soon, another group of immigrants who were attracted by the abundance of fish in the place and its good prospects in agriculture settled in Tortosa, later on renamed Lihaw-an after a white deer believed sacred by its pagan dwellers. This deer was found dead by the natives not far from the river bank which encircled the village and its remains placed on the table and allowed to rot. Because its odor spread over the area of the village, the place was named Lihaw-an, meaning "baho-an" (bad smell).

In the year 1920, the village known as Lihaw-an was changed to Buenavista meaning "good view", a name given to it by an emissary of the Governor-General who was impressed by the picturesque view of the village.

On January 1, 1937, by virtue of Executive Order No. 65 issued by the Commonwealth President Manuel L. Quezon, the barrio of Buenavista became a municipality.

### **CABADBARAN**

“Reunion”, the former name of Cabadbaran in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, was a new settlement rising along the mouth of the Cabadbaran river. The place was then only a barrio of the municipality of Tubay. Among its early inhabitants were the manobos.

After a short time, a handful of Christians like the Raras, Jamboys, Doldols and others came and settled there. Not long after them, came another group like the Daganis, Cabonces, Curatos, Jongkos and others who also resided permanently in the place. Together, these people began to clear the area along the coast while the natives were moving inland to occupy the interior area which later on became the town site.

Later on, the barrio “Reunion” was named “Tolosa”. There are no records available to indicate the reasons for the change in name but it is believed that the settlement was named after a town in Spain. The same name is now retained by a barrio in the municipality, what once was the town proper. The change of Tolosa to Cabadbaran was believed to be attributed to an incident where the local chiefs ordered the release of two captives who were bound by ropes and were then untied. The word Cabadbaran, therefore, came from the vernacular word “Badbad” meaning to untie. Others, however, said that it was derived from the phrase “Badbaran sa Kawad-on” which in English means to “release from want”. Persons who faced hardships and suffered from want in other places had found solace and comfort in the locality.

Under the leadership of Mayor Dale B. Corvera, the municipality of Cabadbaran became a component city of Agusan del Norte on July 28, 2007 by virtue of Republic Act 9434. The new city has high hopes of attaining higher levels of progress in the years to come.

### **CARMEN**

Formerly called “Kabayawa” by the Manobo natives, Carmen got its present name from the miraculous image of the Virgin of Mount Carmel, believed to have been instrumental in killing the leader of the bandits who used to inhabit the place. A Spanish soldier named Juan Cardoniga was supposed to have fired his rifle at the leader of the outlaws who possessed an amulet of some sort. Since his rifle did not work, Cardoniga got the image of the Virgin from his necklace and placed it inside the hole of the barrel, after which he succeeded in firing the rifle and in killing the outlaw chief. It was Father Saturnino Urios, the famous Jesuit priest of Agusan, who suggested that the name Kabayawa be formally changed to Carmen in honor of the sacred image.

On July 1, 1949, barrio Carmen became a municipality by virtue of the provisions of Republic Act No. 380 sponsored in the Philippine Congress by the late Congressman Marcos M. Calo.

### **JABONGA**

Jabonga traces its origin to a village formerly occupied by Negritos and a few Christian immigrants. Led by a Manobo Negrito the mestizo Angelecio Montante, also called Agaras, the village became known as Celopan, a name derived from the bamboos growing along the bank of the river that were made into smoking pipes called “celopan”.

Sometimes during the middle part of the nineteenth century, the increasing number of inhabitants who were joined by other Christian immigrants from other places transferred to a new settlement which is the present site of Colorado.

By this time, the Spanish government was already sending missionaries to all parts of the island and the group that went up the Calinawan River reached the settlement of Colorado, a name derived from the word “colorado” meaning colored, because of the white-spotted arms of Domingo Monoy, the brave settler who dared to face the newcomers.

Proceeding upstream, the missionaries reached Celopan and seeing a native inside a hut, the floor of which was just one meter above the water, they asked him what the place was called. Thinking that the Spaniards were referring to the hut, he answered “Habongan”. Thus, Celopan was renamed “Habongan” which later became Jabonga.

### **KITCHARAO**

Legend has it that Kitcharao was once ruled by two powerful kings, Mangipikan who ruled the north and Busaylan who ruled the south. A dispute over their respective hunting territories eventually broke out into an open war wherein each side fought furiously until the subjects of King Busaylan were driven to the hills. The victorious King Mangipikan ordered his mighty boars to uproot crops and other plants on their way, crushing, biting and scattering their stems on the ground to show their victory. “Kit, Kit ug Isarao,” (Bite and scatter the plants) the king’s orders, thus, became associated with the name of the embattled plain of abundance. Time has shortened this famous battle cry to Kitcharao, the name by which the same place is known today.

The municipality of Kitcharao was created by Republic Act No. 3842 sponsored by Congressman Guillermo R. Sanchez. It was once a barrio of Jabonga but through the initiative of the then Vice-Mayor Francisco Tuzo of Jabonga, who sponsored a resolution petitioning Congress for the creation of the Municipality of Kitcharao, Republic Act 3842 was passed.

Kitcharao is the northernmost town of the province and lies on the boundary line between Surigao del Norte and Agusan del Norte. It has a land area of 225 square kilometers and owes its abundant fresh-water fish supply to the famous Lake Mainit, a top tourist attraction in the area.

The inhabitants of the municipality come from various regions in Luzon and the Visayas, hence, you can find Ilocanos, Tagalogs, Ilonggos, Warays, Cebuanos, Boholanos, and a few aborigines called Mamanwas or Kongking, peacefully living side by side in this coconut-and banana-rich town.

### **LAS NIEVES**

Las Nieves was formerly named “Pinana-an,” meaning a place for hunting, by its early inhabitants. The natives or Manobos with their bows and arrows (pana) went to Pinana-an to catch wild pigs, birds and other animals.

Soon, some people from Butuan and other places of Mindanao began to settle and establish permanent residence in Pinana-an.

At night time, however, the inhabitants shiver from the intense coldness of the area. On early mornings, thick fogs and dews blanket the whole place as if ice were constantly and silently falling upon the inhabitants. Because of this, the name "Pinana-an" was changed by the new inhabitants into "Las Nieves" means ice.

### **MAGALLANES**

The written history of Magallanes is traceable to a monument with the Spanish inscription which reads:

ALIMMORTAL

EL PUEBLO DE BUTUAN CON SU PAROCO Y ESPANIOLES

EN EL RESIDENTES

PARACOMMEMORAR

ISU ARRIBO Y CELEBRACION DE LA

PRIMERA MISA EN ESTE SITIO EL DIA

8 DE ABRIL DE 1521

ERIGIDO EN 1872

SIENDO GOBERNADOR DEL DISTRITO

D. JOSE MARIA CARAVALLO

It is believed by some writers that the first Catholic Mass in the island of Mindanao and in the Philippines for that matter was celebrated in Magallanes. This is disputed by other writers, however, who assert that such incident happened in Magallanes which is in Cebu. Nevertheless, a midway point is accepted which states that Magellan was not with the group that celebrated the mass in Magallanes although his men on an exploratory mission were there.

The present site of Magallanes was previously called Ba-ug meaning "bad-odor" in the Butuan dialect. There are several explanations why Magallanes was originally called Ba-ug and all explanations were plausible. One version states that this area was thickly surrounded with nipa palms and mangrove trees and because of the fermentation of the dead leaves, roots and branches, bad smell permeated the area, hence, the name Ba-ug.

As time passed, Magallanes emerged as the new name of Ba-ug as it gained popularity by its assertion that the first Catholic Mass in the Philippines was celebrated there.

During the early times, Magallanes was the poblacion for settlements along the river bank especially when inhabitants were on the war path. In peaceful times, the people went to other areas where farming was better and this led to the neglect of Magallanes.

Around the end of the last century, nine families from Butuan decided to stay in Magallanes permanently. They were Macario Butil, Juan Plaza, Pedro Duncano, Wulegio Burias, Andoy Curilan, Jose Dumaplin, Prospero Dumdum, the Sumili Brothers and one known as Captain

Santo, with Macario Butil acting as leader of the group.

As time went on, many residents came back to Magallanes, oftentimes with their families, relatives or friends and in due time, Magallanes became a permanent barrio of Butuan.

The Municipality of Magallanes became politically independent from Butuan City by virtue of Republic Act No. 5660 which was passed by Congress on May 5, 1969 and finally approved on June 21, 1969. This Republic Act fixed the boundaries of this newly-created municipality.

### **NASIPIT**

Perched on a promontory overlooking the picturesque Nasipit Bay is the progressive industrial town of Nasipit. From the open sea approaching the town, one would readily notice the pall of heavy smoke emanating from giant smoke stacks, evidence of industrial activity within the sprawling compound of the Nasipit Lumber Company and the Philippine Wallboard Corporation.

The shoreline of Nasipit assumes a claw-like form from which the word "Nasip-it" was derived. Until 1929, Nasipit was a barrio of Butuan. The then Governor Guingona proposed to change the name "Nasipit" to "Aurora". Due to the strong opposition of the early inhabitants, however, the word Na-si-pit was retained.

Little is known about the historical events that took place in this town during its early days. But legend has it that three women were abducted by marauding moro pirates who occasionally came to this place to rob and plunder. It was said that the villagers were terrified whenever the pirates came ashore and they went into hiding for days atop the thickly-forested hill which they later on settled and developed as the present-day poblacion. Because of this danger, the early settlers constructed a watchtower at the site presently occupied by the Catholic Church, to watch out for and warn the people of an impending pirate raid.

The earliest settlers of this town were immigrants from Bohol. Later, immigrants from Cebu, Leyte and the different parts of the archipelago threaded their way into this town to settle permanently.

The administration of the late Mayor Catalino Atupan saw the beginnings of industrial activities in this once sleepy town. During his nine years in office, Mayor Atupan strove to increase tax collection and encouraged the establishment of factories on account of the town's strategic geographical location and ideal shipping facilities. At the end of his term in 1946, the Nasipit Lumber Company, Inc. controlled and operated by the Fernandez Hermanos started its operation. Thus, began Nasipit's march to progress.

### **REMEDIOS T. ROMUALDEZ**

The new town of Remedios T. Romualdez is composed of barangays: Agay, Tagbongabong, Humilog, Basilisa, Panay-tayon, Balang-balang and San Antonio, all previously a part of the municipality of Cabadbaran. These barangays were the principal sources of Real Property Taxes of Cabadbaran and the primary supplier of Agricultural products, notably rice. They were appropriately named the rice granary of Cabadbaran.

The seven barangays slowly but steadily progressed as more migrants came and settled permanently to till the fertile soil. Agriculturally oriented and industrious new comers found the place a productive haven for an idyllic life. Situated along the Maharlika Highway, the inhabitants were convinced that their place could become a half-way town between the city of Butuan and Cabadbaran later.

When Atty. Antonio R. Tupaz was elected Assemblyman of Agusan del Norte in 1978, he brought to the Interim Batasang Pambansa the proposal to make Agay as a municipal corporation. Acting on the petitions of the Agayanons and other neighboring barangays to be separated from its mother municipality, the assemblyman sponsored Parliamentary Bill No. 1291, an act creating the municipality of Remedios T. Romualdez.

Having qualified with requirements provided under the law, Batas Bilang 336 was passed making Remedios T. Romualdez the eleventh town of Agusan del Norte. It officially became a local government unit on January 1, 1984 with Mr. Euquerio A. Dominise, a former Sangguniang Panlalawigan member, serving as its first Municipal Mayor.

### **SANTIAGO**

A group of natives fleeing from the municipality of Jabonga settled in a new place recognized by the municipality of Cabadbaran as Barrio Santiago in the latter part of 1898.

However, in 1924, the existing Aciga River swelled its banks, destroying all properties, plants and animals and forcing the inhabitants of Santiago, Cabadbaran to transfer to barrio Jagupit. In 1936, the same river brought havoc to the barrio and the barrio folks again decided to transfer to Sitio Paypay at the foot of the hill. Long before the migration, the place was inhabited by the Manobos and the Mamanwas, but when the national government constructed highway cutting through Sitio Paypay, the influx of people to the place began.

In 1936, through a bill in Congress sponsored by the late Congressman Marcos Calo, Paypay was changed to Santiago in honor of Saint Santiago.

In the latter part of 1964, the barrio officials of barrio Santiago indicated their desire to become a municipality. Finally, in 1969, a bill sponsored by Ex-Congressman Jose C. Aquino and approved by the Sixth Congress of the Republic, gave birth to Republic Act 5242, which created the new municipality of Santiago.

### **TUBAY**

Tubay, which was named after its brave founder Datu Tabay, lays claim to being the second Spanish settlement in Agusan. Formerly, the people settled in the wilderness of Ilihan, then transferred to sitio Malubog and later to tubay-tubay and Sebang near the mouth of the Jabonga River. However, the danger of constant inundation and Moro attacks convinced the succeeding leaders of the place to move the pueblo Daan Lungsod where now survives the massive magkuno posts of a once strongly built spacious church. And it was here the settlement firmly took roots.

Since 1898, Tubay was a prosperous town but when the Americans visited Tubay and Cabadbaran, they were convinced that the latter was the better seat of government. Therefore,

in 1903, Tubay was reduced to a barrio to give ways its equally thriving neighbor Cabadbaran. Although reduced to a barrio status, it still remained a center of commercial activities due to the presence of Chinese merchants there. Boom in business in Tubay was still noticeable until the early and fabulous 20's when the navigable Jabonga River was still the chief artery of its copra and hemp traffic. However, when the provincial road connecting Cabadbaran to Butuan and Cabadbaran to Santiago was finished, business in Tubay began to decline and business through the Jabonga River slowly disappeared.

On October 20, 1947, Tubay regained its township by virtue of Presidential Proclamation No. 44 of the late President Manuel A. Roxas.