



1a

AGUSTÍN MARTÍNEZ SOLER SQUARE The origins of Peñaranda

When the re-populating movements began in Spain, during the 11th, 12th and 13th centuries, many thought that staying in this place was a good idea: **this is the exact place where the livestock path** that joined Medina del Campo with Plasencia crossed the roads that went from Ávila to Salamanca, and from Arévalo to Alba de Tormes.

After the king gave the town a weekly market concession - which is still running - its oldest square, the one you are standing in, **became a trading place** for those buying and those selling, those bringing and those carrying away, those who wanted something and those who had something to trade. Anything could be found there, and the merchants and mule drivers coming from Zamora and Salamanca to Ávila and Madrid did their best to get to it; meanwhile thousands of Merina sheep that went up and down the Cañada Real (Royal Livestock Path) to and from Extremadura.

On one of the sides of this square is the San Miguel church, with its classical façade. In 1971, a violent **fire** destroyed the inside of this temple, taking with it the beautiful altarpiece in the main altar, which was a Baroque masterpiece and one of the most noteworthy in the province.



1b

THE WEEKLY MARKET Buying, selling, swapping

There is no question that Peñaranda's location, in a crossroads frequented by mule drivers and merchants going from Zamora and Salamanca to Ávila and Madrid had a lot to do with its **commercial spirit**. Another undeniable influence was the passing of millions of livestock heads by the Royal Path, going from north to south, and which were mostly Merina sheep from Extremadura.

All these comings and goings, these meetings, encouraged the exchange of merchandise and news, that the village eventually became a perfect place for trading. And even more so when King Juan I, towards the end of the 14th century, granted it a license for a **weekly market** that is still thriving every Thursday in its squares.

As a feudal village, the **monopoly of the market exploitation** belongs to the local lords. Since they owned the weights and measures, they also received a good part of the benefits of the buying and selling taking place in the market.

The constant success of these activities, and the ever increasing need for space to shelter it and organise it, are the reasons why Peñaranda ended up growing around its **three squares**.



2a

CONSTITUCIÓN SQUARE Arcades and grilled windows

The Peñaranda market was so popular in the Middle Ages that in the early 16th century new spaces were needed to organise the stalls in a better way. **This was the origin, successively, of this Constitución square** you are at, **and the next one along, España square.**

Constitution square, formerly known **as “del Ganado” (livestock square) or “de Arriba” (upper square)** was part of the urban reforms driven forwards by the counts Alvaro and Juan de Bracamonte. Their intention was to create **a public area beside what was then their palace**, located on the southern side of this square.

The arcades that surround almost the entire square are testament to this intention, since they are essential to guarantee commercial activities all year round, regardless of the weather conditions. The existence of wrought iron windows tells us something about the bourgeois class who liked to discreetly look at the intense social life that took place a few feet below them.

Very close to the alley connecting the Agustín Martínez Soler square and this one is the **Town Hall** building, the first that was built with public funds for this purpose in 1647.



2b

THE PEÑARANDA ESTATE A county with French roots

Even though Peñaranda had made a name for itself in the Salamanca map as a market place and crossroads, it was not to reach its **heyday until the arrival of the Bracamontes**.

Of French origin, this surname appears in the Peninsula carried by Mosén Rubí de Bracamonte, Major Admiral of France, who came so often to deal with the Crown of Castile in charge of important diplomatic or military support missions that ended up staying there. One of his daughters, Juana de Bracamonte, married Álvaro de Ávila (or Dávila), Chief Steward of King Fernando I of Aragon, founder of what would eventually be the County of Peñaranda and, most relevant for this story, by those times, already the lord of Peñaranda and Fuente del Sol. With this marriage, the lineage and the village became linked from the 15th century, until in 1703 Peñaranda became part of the Frías house.

The history of this estate climbed to a new level when King Felipe III granted **Alonso de Bracamonte** the title of Count **of Peñaranda** in 1602. But, undoubtedly, the most relevant character in the history of this town was Don Gaspar de Bracamonte y Guzmán.



3a

ESPAÑA SQUARE

Where the past and the future come together

The third of these four-sided squares, which form the urban heart of Peñaranda, is **España square, formerly known as “de la Corralada”**, and was in the past the venue for **bull-related celebrations**. Nowadays it's still used, not just for the traditional markets, but also for the various festivals that take place throughout the year. The bandstand in its middle tells us about the interest of the local people in all sorts of music.

The southern side of the square is presided by the singular porticoed building that in the 17th century was the **Town Hall**, the Court and the Jail. Since 1989, this has been the seat of the Centre for Sociocultural Development of the **Fundación Germán Sánchez Ruipérez**, where the historical building has been finished with a new construction, work by architect Pablo Andrés. The Fundación, whose main purpose is to promote books and reading culture, was a present from editor and patron Germán Sánchez Ruipérez to his hometown.

On the eastern arcade, beside the plot where the old Count palace used to stand, there are some noteworthy **Plateresque capitals**, carved with faces and other ornaments, which come from the San Leonardo convent in Alba de Tormes.



3b

DON GASPAR DE BRACAMONTE **A Count who loved paintings**

Peñaranda wouldn't be what it is today without the key role **Don Gaspar de Bracamonte, III Count**, who was born in this town in 1595, played in its history.

A statesman and diplomat of great political relevance in the 17th century, he occupied a long list of high positions during the reigns of Felipe IV and Carlos II. Among his most important jobs was the diplomatic mission he developed in Münster, which marked the end of the Thirty Year War. In his endless curriculum there are also positions like that of Archbishop of Toledo, president of the Council of Military Orders, president of the Council of the Indies or member of the Council of State and War.

But it was his designation as **Viceroy of Naples**, a position he held between 1658 and 1664, which had the most direct consequences for Peñaranda, since this was the reason that so many Italian and Neapolitan works of art made their way to the town, with **the purpose of embellishing the Discalced Carmelites convent** he had founded in 1664.

The Count died in Madrid on the 14th of December, 1676, and was buried in the cloister of the Discalced Carmelite Mothers, in Peñaranda de Bracamonte.



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INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR ADVANCED TECHNOLOGIES From Peñaranda to the world

The Fundación Germán Sánchez Ruipérez is set on the **elimination of any obstacles between people and culture**, and this objective becomes real in the creation of several technical centres from where this task is undertaken. One of these is the International Centre for Advanced Rural Technology (CITA, in Spanish), a space devoted to the training and dissemination of the use of new technologies.

Its main purpose is to prevent the rural world from being left out of the new communication highways. Similarly, among its objectives is to help get the information society becoming the knowledge society, and that this new literacy opens access to new action opportunities, even for those who live in rural areas.

The CITA was opened in 2006. Its **three modern buildings** have been designed by architects Álvaro Siza and Juan Miguel Hernández León. In their 2,300m² there are three main areas: the auditorium, the crystal cube and the classrooms. Each one of these spaces has all the necessary infrastructure to cover the training needs of the centre and its users.



CARMELITE MOTHERS CONVENT **Devotion for God and love for Italian art**

The Carmelite Mothers convent in Peñaranda, houses the best collection of 17th century Neapolitan art in Castile and Leon. If this comes as any surprise, it's certainly due to the taste, wealth and insistence of Count **Gaspar de Bracamonte**. The fact that he was, between 1658 and 1664, the viceroy of Naples by appointment of King Felipe IV also has a lot to do with this.

From that time and until his death, both he and his wife did all they could to enlarge and enrich the monastery's artistic collection by **importing large numbers of artistic works from Italy**. That's how these very relevant **Baroque works of art**, from the Venetian, Bolognese, Roman or Florentine schools, have made it here, including some signed by J. Bassano, Guido Reni, Andrea Vaccaro and Luca Giordano, among many others.

At the time, the count decided that the first part to be built would be the Nuestra Señora de Loreto chapel, nowadays the main room in the museum. There are some other surprises there, awaiting the visitor, such as its **rich collection of bronze pieces**, the splendid **Calvary scene**, known as Oratorio del Conde (the Count's chapel) or the **urns holding relics from saints**.

The building was designed in the **Baroque style**, as befitted the aesthetics of the 17th century.



6

HUMILLADERO CHAPEL Popular devotion

Very often, the intensity of the people's religious feeling does not match the magnificence of the building housing the object of their devotion. A very common situation is that of the chapels, or "ermitas", **small buildings housing saints**, Christs or Virgins to which the local people feel closer than to those worshipped in the larger churches.

The Humilladero chapel is one of these cases. The building can be **traced back to the 16th century**. However, what we can see is the reconstruction done in the 20th century, after the devastating explosion of an ammunition dump, which took place in Peñaranda in 1939, and which destroyed a good part of its urban area.

The inside of the temple is a small, simple nave ornated with several paintings and some carvings, although the main interest of the place is the **intense devotion** that people manifest on the statue of Christ humiliated before the crucifixion, the Cristo del Humilladero, who presides the altar, and the Dolorosa Virgin statue, beside it.

A legend tells the **origin of this devotion**: apparently, a cart pulled by oxen was carrying the statue towards a nearby village and stopped for no reason in this place, where the chapel now stands. The oxen would not move until the statue was taken off the cart, after which the oxen just walked on and continued their journey.

On the atrium there is a **Calvary** that was originally in the now disappeared Franciscan convent of Nuestra Señora de Gracia.



CALDERÓN DE LA BARCA THEATRE CASINO **A stage for plays and for social life**

In line with the strength of commerce, industry and agriculture of Peñaranda in the late 19th century, with time, the need arose to provide the town with a **centre where theatre plays and other social gatherings could be enjoyed**. A number of actions were taken in order to raise the funds to build the Calderón de la Barca Theatre Casino, "A temple where dramatic genius will have a decent place to receive the admiration of its followers", as the "La Voz de Peñaranda" newspaper put it at the time of its opening, on 15th of August, 1881.

The architect who designed it was José Secall. The main façade is decorated with medallions featuring the portraits of Tirso de Molina, Calderón de la Barca, Lope de Vega and Pedro de Alarcón y Moreto, all of the classical Spanish playwrights. Inside, the ground floor is where the theatre was, and the casino was on the top floor of the premises.

The building actually **housed a theatre until 1963 and a casino until 1983**. After a thorough renovation, it was opened again in 1991. These days the theatre is also a cinema and a recreational centre for the elderly.



8

SAN LUIS CHAPEL

An out-of-walls seat for a brotherhood

This chapel was built in the **mid 17th century** by the **Third Order brotherhood**, a secular order that thrived in Peñaranda and was wealthy enough to afford a building like this for its seat.

In architectural terms, its eastern side was built in mud-plastered brick, while the western side is made of exposed brick work. The north-facing portal is from the second half of the 18th century, and its finished with a niche where the patron saint is surrounded by Rococo decoration.

Inside, there is a main altarpiece with two horizontal sections and three vertical panels, crowned by an Immaculate Conception statue from the 18th century.

However, the statue in this temple that arouses the main devotion from the locals is that of the **Santo Cristo de la Agonía** (Christ of the Agony), whom some link to the Gregorio Fernández school and which is taken out for a parade both for Easter and during the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross.

In 1939, the explosion of the ammunition dump greatly affected the building, similar to what happened with the Humilladero chapel, and it had to be rebuilt.