

# Archivo Histórico Provincial de Cádiz

## Historical Archive of Cádiz

Provincial Historical Archives were created in each province capital by the Decree of March 9, 1931. Nevertheless, the actions taken to launch the new institution, created by the only representative of the Management Body in the Province, Mr. Carlos Moya Riaño, Tax Office Archive's Director, did not work well.

It didn't help the later circumstances of the Civil War and the post-war period. In addition to that, it is necessary to point out the fact that the Archive's functions in the province of Cádiz -carried out by the Department of Treasury and the "unborn" Province Archive- were assigned to the Provincial Library Director, who was responsible for seven different centers.

Since 1969, the body of archivists was divided into Archives and Libraries; the first one was called Head of the Archives Services of Cádiz, which included the Department of Treasury Archive's and the Provincial Historic Archive (still to be set up).

Launching the Archive was possible thanks to the incorporation of an archivist the same year, María Auxiliadora Carmona de los Santos. Her hiring meant the urgent launch of the Archive as the increasingly documentary heritage's deterioration was alarming. Thanks to the collaboration of the notary-archivist of the district of Cádiz - D. Francisco Manrique Romero- and the generous contribution of the Provincial Deputation with a building that would later become the archive, everything was set in motion. Finally, the notary's protocols of Cádiz and the old real estate registrations of some districts were opened to the public in 1972.

The Provincial Historical Archive of Cádiz was created officially by the Decree 746/1975 of March 6.g

Thereafter, the collection of the Civil Administration of the government of the province documentation was accelerated at such rate that the premises of the Provincial deputation were soon swamped. Under these circumstances, the newly created Ministry of Culture in 1977 gave the necessary instructions to find a new seat for the Archive that would meet the appropriate requirements for a building of this nature. Although they weighted up different possibilities, la Casa de las Cadenas (the House of Chains) was finally acquired through a notarial deed granted before the Notary of Madrid, Mr. Julio Albi Agero, on July 10, 1980.

## History of the building

The building was a majestic sample of the architecture of a 17th-century Indies' merchant house . Nevertheless, its adaptation for the Archive turned out to be more complex than it had been thought. This task was given to two young Sevillian architects, Antonio Ortiz and Antonio Cruz. The works went on for too long due to problems arising from the restoration of this house, which led to the occupation

of the Archive in May 1987. Indeed, this last date could be considered as the starting date due to the fact that only since that moment an archive policy of collection, safekeeping, preservation, organization and documentation service was put in motion in coordination with all the provincial departments and other Administration bodies.

The building, where the Archive is now housed, is one of the most special in the city of Cádiz. It is located in Cristóbal Colón street, one of the most important streets of the commercial center from the 16th to the 18th century.

The Corpus Christi procession took place on this street until a few years ago. The events that happened on June 3, 1692 are precisely the origin of this house as we know it today. When the Custodia procession was happening in front of the house of a wealthy Portuguese merchant, Mr. Diego Barrios de la Rosa, there was a downpour. Since Mr. Diego had a private oratory with permission to guard the Blessed Sacrament and celebrate the mass, he asked the bishop to refuge the Blessed Sacrament until the rain stopped by quoting the same Latin words the Centurion said before Jesus Christ: *ego non sum dignus intres sub tectum meum...*

And so they did. When the rain stopped, the Blessed Sacrament left the house and the procession continued. Mr. Diego saw this as a providential event. Since it was rumored in the city that he probably had Jewish origins, he started to proclaim his strong and baroque faith to the world: he took the praise as his motto, thanked Lord's Supper and, what is most important, he decided to remodel his house and turn it into an eternal testimony of the extraordinary visit that he had received.

For that purpose, he bought the two contiguous houses and made a new building combining those three houses in which he spent a veritable fortune. The house was completed in 1706. Regarding the most significant elements of the house, it should be mentioned the magnificent Genoese marble façade, a work of the sculptor Andrea Andreoli and the lookout tower, which was built by Jacobus A. Ponzanelli, "architetto decoratore", native of Masa (Italy).

Mr. Diego asked Charles II to let him have the privilege to put chains on the façade as a perpetual testimony of the visit of the King of Kings. The monarch granted him that, and although the chains disappeared shortly afterwards, the building is popularly known in Cádiz as La casa de las Cadenas (the House of Chains).

Mr. Diego passed away in this house in 1712. Soon after, his family, in a clear economic decline, was forced to rent it. This house has had many uses for nearly three centuries: residential property, tenement, restaurant, store, hotel (under the name "Paraíso"), convent ("Esclavas"), monastery ("Paúles") and warehouse of pharmaceutical products, until 1980 when it was acquired by the Ministry of Culture.

The changes carried out for its adaptation into the Archive meant a radical transformation. Only the façade, the courtyard, the main stairs and the tower have been preserved.

In 1980, when the Ministry of Culture took over la Casa de las Cadenas, this was a ramshackle build-

ding, almost in ruins, that had suffered continuous and fundamental transformations inside. For instance, no remain of the old oratory was preserved. In short, its transformation required a big remodeling effort that would allow its adaptation to the new uses by preserving, at least, its original features and idiosyncrasy. The interventions carried out in the building have meant a radical change in its structure. Therefore, the façade, the courtyard, the main stairs and the tower have been preserved and a new concrete building with the necessary distribution for archival uses was built inside the building.

### **Building description**

Let's see the result:

a) Open area to the public. It is made up of an assembly hall of 175 m<sup>2</sup> on the ground floor for up to 100 persons that can be used at the same time as an exhibition room.

The reading room of 185 m<sup>2</sup> is on the first floor, it has 18 reading points distributed across three big work tables, management offices, technician personnel and secretary's office of the center.

b) The work area is made up of a loading bay of 17 m<sup>2</sup> (with direct and independent access from the street).

Fumigation room of 16 m<sup>2</sup>.

Restoration workshop: It covers a surface of 84 m<sup>2</sup> that is subdivided into 4 areas with its corresponding technical equipment.

Lamination area

Automatic laminator

Furniture and auxiliary equipment

Analysis and hand labor area

Machinery and equipment for analysis and restoration of documentation

Mechanical reintegration area

Leafcasting machine (Vinyector)

Machinery and auxiliary equipment

Binding area

Machinery for binding

Classification room of 51 m<sup>2</sup>



Microfilm laboratory of 21 m<sup>2</sup> on the mezzanine floor. It is made up of a planetary, developer and duplicator camera.

c) Warehouse area. The space for the warehouses covers a total of 1771, 89 m<sup>2</sup>, in which there are 10 213 linear meters of conventional shelves distributed in the following way:

Tower A: It has 5 floors covering a surface of 154, 36 m<sup>2</sup> and 2, each one being 20 meters high, except the ground floor (A1) that has 2, 90.

Tower B: It has 4 floors of 92, 48 m<sup>2</sup> and 2, 20 meters high, except the ground floor (B1) that has 2, 60.

The warehouses C1 and C2, which are situated over the reading room and the offices, are two large spaces of 344, 14 m<sup>2</sup> and 286, 08 m<sup>2</sup> and a height of 2, 20 meters, respectively. The warehouse C2 is smaller since it is set back from the façade, built in this way in order to not to break the façade's height.

The strength of the materials has been taken into account during the construction of the warehouses in order to use Compactus shelves if need be, thereby almost doubling the storage capacity. Furthermore, all the warehouse rooms have fire detection and extinguishing systems.

After ten years of work in the building, we have seen the great harmony created by the restoration between the 3 areas built around the central courtyard. The problem of the working areas that were not opened to the public and were isolated from the other areas, yet close to them, has been solved. The location of the warehouse towers in two of the courtyard corners allows an easy access to the documentation service as well as to the reading room, offices and working areas.

Nevertheless, it has not been possible to include the old lookout tower in the Archive services, especially its highest part. Its special configuration and the excess of humidity do not facilitate its use. Therefore, it is just the ending of the guided visits of the Archive rooms. From its terrace you can descry a beautiful view of the old quarter of the city of Cádiz, the port, the bay and the Atlantic Ocean.

The grace and beauty of the tower were vital in the decision to build a glass wall in the main floor alongside a new courtyard that didn't exist originally. This was made during the renovation process with the purpose of making it possible to see the tower from the central courtyard in the first floor, as happens today.

In the words of the architects of the building: "the work juxtaposes naturally with what already existed, trying that a different use from the original one can be a reinterpretation, or a new state, of what, essentially, remains the same". "