



La Fiesta 2024: 125 Years of La Cámara



La Camara 125 year history

La Camara, as the organization is fondly called, predates all other business groups in the country including the Filipino-Chinese Chamber of Commerce, the American Chamber of Commerce and even the Rotary Club. It was the first Spanish chamber to be established in Asia.

La Camara was founded in 1898 and was originally called the Manila Chamber of Commerce. It will be recalled that Spanish-owned companies controlled the most important industries of the era including public utilities, shipping, food and beverage manufacturing, the tobacco trade and the sugar trade. It was vital not to disrupt these industries so as not to destabilize the economy.

In 1899, the name of the organization was changed to the Spanish Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines and was housed in Casa España in the financial district of Binondo. Early records dated 1917 show that La Camara's members were composed of the business elite of the time. Among them were Luis Llanso who was President, Santiago Elizalde, Juan Camahort and Anicieto Ruiz.

La Camara was noted for its quarterly bulletin called *El Boletín Oficial*. It was among the few publications that provided in-depth analysis of the economy and of various industries, opinions on public policy and recommendations on how to improve the country's business climate. Back then, La Camara had a strong sway over commercial legislation and public policy. It could be said that La Camara played an important role in the Philippines' ascent towards becoming the second most advanced economy in Asia from the '30s to the '60s.

The Second World War interrupted La Camara's operations. In 1946, however, La Camara was reincorporated upon the initiative of Tabacalera & Co., Ayala Corporation, Elizalde y Cia, Roxas y Cia., San Miguel Corporation and Philippine Airlines, which was then controlled by Andres Soriano.

In October 1951, President Elpidio Quirino visited Spain to mark the reestablishment of Filipino-Spanish diplomatic relations. The Philippine Chief Executive was welcomed by the Spanish government with full diplomatic honors and regale. The fact that the Philippine economy was growing at double-digit rates, and that companies of Spanish



La Fiesta 2024: 125 Years of La Cámara



origin were predominant in the business scene bolstered Quirino's profile and that of the Philippines. It was a proud moment for the country.

From the '50s to '90s, El Boletín Oficial continued but with decreasing gravitas. Publication eventually ceased in 1998. Since then, La Cámara's efforts have been focused on developing commercial relations between the Philippines and Spain, forwarding the interest of companies of Spanish origin, data banking and paving the way for Spanish investors into the Philippines.

La Cámara has evolved into one of the most vibrant chambers in the Philippines and Southeast Asia. It boasts a dynamic membership comprising leading companies across crucial sectors. In Infrastructure, notable names like Acciona, Aboitiz Construction, Idom, Tendagua, Indra, and Cemex, alongside MPTC, form a robust cohort. Similarly, in Energy, Grupo Cobra, Ayala Corp., Elecnor, Freya, Bluefloat, and Vector Renewables stand out. The financial realm sees participation from Caixabank, Sabadell, BBVA, BDO, Lhuillier & Co, Mapfre Insular, and Ibero Asistencia. Moreover, in Food & Beverage, Fundador and Jollibee make significant contributions, while Amadeus, Turkish Airlines, AHG, Mondial Tours, and Rayomar enrich the Tourism sector. Sanitas S.A / Keralty represents the healthcare domain.

La Cámara serves as a vital conduit between Spain and the Philippines, facilitating the entry of more businesses into the Philippine market and connecting them with key local stakeholders. The influx of Spanish companies can be attributed to the abundant opportunities arising from the government's infrastructure investment, policies opening to foreign investment in fields such as energy and water, and the robust consumer demand prevalent in the country.



La Fiesta 2024: 125 Years of La Cámara



Past presidents

YEAR	PRESIDENT
1917	Luis Llansó
1923-1924	Antonio Malveyh
1924-1925	Tirso Lizárraga
1925-1926	Carlos Ferrándiz
1927-1931	Joaquín J. Elizalde Sr.
1931-1932	Joaquín J. Elizalde Jr.
1932-1936	Andrés Soriano
1936-1937	Enrique Zóbel
1953-1954	Ignacio Planas
1954-1956	Manuel Rivera
1956-1961	Alfonso R. de Dampierre
1961-1962	Ramón Barata
1962-1964	Francisco de P. Martí
1964-1966	Ramón Barata
1966-1969	Pío Ma. Vergés
1970-1983	Alejandro Ros
1984-1987	Raúl Urra
1988-1991	Pedro Picornell
1992-1994	Ramón Balaguer
1995-1996	Pablo García Morera
1996-1997	Benigno Fernández Miramón
1998-2002	Javier Escat
2003-2008	José Luis Romero-Salas
2009-2010	Alfredo Roca
2011-2012	Miguel Romero-Salas
2013-2015	Javier Warleta
2015-2016	Jose Manuel Izquierdo
2016-2017	Francisco Moreno
2017-2019	Tomás Ibañez
2019-2022	John Peter Hager
2022-2024	Ruben Camba