

Memoria correspondiente al año de 1945, con algunos datos históricos desde 1899 hasta la vigencia de la ley número 6 de 7 de mayo de 1942. [Publicaciones del Archivo Nacional de Cuba, X.] (Habana: Archivo Nacional de Cuba, 1946. Pp. vii, 84. Photographs.)

After a long and dangerous peregrination, the papers in the Archivo Nacional de Cuba have come to rest at last. The history of the final leg of the journey is told in this *Memoria* for the year 1945, along with a sketch of the earlier stages. Especially graphic is the story told in pictures of the move from the old firetrap to the present home.

Although the institution was founded in 1840, it was not until September of 1944 that the Archivo Nacional was lodged in an adequate building. Its home until 1856 was the Real Fábrica de Tabacos; then some store rooms in the building occupied by the Treasury. After a few years, however, the Archivo was relegated to the third floor of the old Franciscan Convent, then occupied by the customs administration (now the central post-office of Habana). Here it remained until 1899 when the American military government sent it to the Castillo de la Fuerza. Information about the earlier moves are lacking, but they probably resembled that of 1899, when the movers, with a complete lack of appreciation of the valuable material they were handling, dropped the bundles from the upper-story windows into the wagons below. Many bundles were broken and some of their contents was forever lost.

La Fuerza was not designed as an archive, but as the oldest building in Cuba it had considerable claims to the honor of housing this valuable historical collection, and it could have been made safe and convenient, but before this could be done the Archivo was subjected to another move that was even more disastrous than the last. In November of 1905 a company of infantry presented itself at the castle with orders to take up lodgings. The protests of the director of the archive were unheeded; the papers shared the building with the soldiers until midsummer of 1906. When the infantry expanded, the archive director asked for another home with more space. The secretary of interior granted him the old Cuartel de Artillería. On July 30, 1906, the move began, this time under the oversight of the director and his subordinates. On August 9 the secretary of public works decided that the transfer was taking too much time and ordered that the work be completed within forty-eight hours. The order was carried out to the letter—by the sanitary department. The garbage wagons of Habana appeared before the Castle and with an improvised chute the bundles were disposed of. At the other end of the journey they were dumped on the flagging of the

patio of the Cuartel where a torrential rain deluged them during the night.

The Cuartel occupied a whole city block, and although it was built partly of wood, its spaciousness permitted a more or less satisfactory classification. Hardly had the employees begun to arrange the *legajos*, however, when, to the astonishment of the director, the war department began the transfer of the national armory to the same building. Again protests were unavailing. The army shouldered its way in and there remained; then as if to add insult to injury, another department of the government was installed—this time the Laboratorio Nacional, whose material was horses, dogs suspected of hydrophobia, rabbits, guinea pigs, etc. These, however, did not constitute such a threat to the papers as did the gasoline, guns, and explosives of the armory or the proving range for small arms set up between two wings of the Archivo. The day arrived when the threat materialized: fire broke out in a room of the armory where ammunition was stored. It would have seemed that the end had come, but such was not the case, and the episode made the director, Señor Joaquín Llaverías, redouble his efforts for a fireproof building.

Since 1911 there had been bills before the Cuban Congress for funds for a proper house for the Archivo and the Academy of History, and every president since that date had included the idea in messages to the legislative body. Not until 1940, however, did action begin. Taking advantage of the centennial year, Señor Llaverías enlisted newspapers, historians, scholars in general, and politicians in particular in a series of celebrations designed to impress the public with the necessity for preserving the valuable source material under his direction. Special efforts were made to enlist President Batista's aid. On December 12 of that year the House of Representatives passed a bill providing for the erection of the desired building. It looked as if the dream of scholars was to be realized immediately. But the Senate held it up until April 27, 1942. There were a number of reasons for this, but the principal hitch was the fact that the money for the building was to be raised by a stamp tax of ten cents each on a long list of documents, many of them of a commercial nature. It took considerable pressure from cultural organizations to offset that of the commercial world. When it became generally known that the tax would be lifted when the \$300,000 worth of necessary stamps were sold there was less opposition and the law passed the Senate. President Batista signed it on May 7, 1942, in a special ceremony held in the office of the Archivo Nacional.

As soon thereafter as plans could be perfected the old Cuartel was pulled down to make way for the new building. Again it was necessary

to move the precious documents, but for once it was done by their friends. They were housed temporarily in the rooms formerly occupied by the armory, on land destined to the patio of the new Archivo. By midsummer of 1944 it was possible to begin the final transfer to the long-sought home, which was formally inaugurated on September 23, 1944. The pictorial history of the last days of the old Cuartel and the dedication of the new modern edifice is to be found in the collection of photographs in this *Memoria*. The Irvings and Ticknors of the present may relax. This great collection of Spanish and Cuban lore of the last three and a half centuries is safe at last.

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