

Building of the National Congress in Santiago

In 2021 was the 210th anniversary of the installation of Chile's first National Congress on 4th July 1811.



The idea of having its building led the authorities at that time to determine its construction in 1845, during the government of Manuel Montt. The chosen land was the block of Compañía, Bandera, Catedral, and Morandé Streets, on land where the Compañía de Jesús Church was also located.

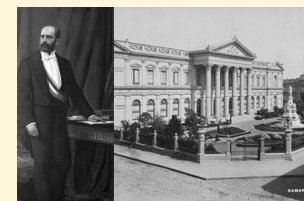


On 8th December 1863, after the fire of the Compañía Church, which cost more than 2,000 lives, the land became part of the gardens of the Congress, which were under construction.



The design and construction of the building, marked by a neoclassical style, involved the participation of prominent Chilean, French, and Italian architects, and engineers.

Finally, after 22 years of construction, the building was inaugurated on 1st June 1876, for the delivery of the presidential message of Federico Errázuriz Zañartu.



From the beginning, the National Congress seat was not exempted from misfortunes; a fierce fire in 1895 and the earthquake in 1906 produced considerable and invaluable losses.

After different stages of restoration, 1901 marked the beginning of the National Congress seat until 1973.

Throughout its 72 years, its galleries and halls were the stage of political activity that shaped the form of the modern democratic state in Chile during the 20th century.



After the coup d'état on 11th September 1973, the National Congress went into recess, and its building was occupied by the Ministry of Justice.

Upon the return to democracy in 1990, the legislative seat was moved to the city of Valparaíso, and the building in Santiago was used by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

In 2006, the definitive restitution of the building to the legislative authorities was sealed. Since then, the Santiago seats of the Senate, the Chamber of Deputies, and the National Congress Library have been located here. Moreover, the Hall of Honour is the place for public activities such

as tributes to prominent figures and national and international seminars such as the Congress of the Future, one of the world's most important scientific dissemination meetings.



As of June 2021, the Santiago seat of the National Congress has once again made history. Its halls were used for the work of the Constitutional Convention.



para comunicación



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Since 1876, housing the democratic tradition of Chile



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Chamber of Sessions

It began to be used in 1876 after the building was inaugurated by the President of the Republic, Mr. Federico Errázuriz Zañartu.

In the chamber, there are two entrance doors facing senators' chairs on the ground floor. On the first floor, there are galleries modulated by doric-order columns, and these are repeated on the second floor.

The luminaires, preferably located on the columns and the wall covering the dais, are golden and have a

characteristic vegetal style, imitating the form of a vine. Behind the dais is a painting by the painters Fernando Larocche and Nicanor González, which represents the installation of the First National Congress.

From 1901 until 1973, senators such as Eduardo Frei Montalva, Salvador Allende Gossens, Patricio Aylwin Azócar, Pedro Montt Montt, Ismael Valdés Valdés, Pablo Neruda, Gonzalo Bulnes Pinto, Eduardo Cruz Coke, María de la Cruz, Julieta Campusano, and María Elena Carrera attended sessions in this hall.



Hall of Presidents

In accordance with the original plans of the building (1857), this hall corresponded to one of the inner courtyards of the building, which, after the fire happened in 1895, was transformed into a meeting hall.

In 2004, under the presidency of Mr. Andrés Zaldívar Larraín and the Vice-Presidency of Mr. Carlos Bombal Otaegui, the Senate paid tribute to all the Presidents of the Republic. For this reason, since 15th March of that year, this hall has been called the Hall of Presidents, where the portraits of 10 senators who meet the requirement of having been Presidents of the Senate and Presidents of the Republic are displayed.

Nowadays, different activities are developed in this hall, both legislative, such as committee meetings, and activities related to relationships with citizens.

Pedro León Gallo Reading Room

The reading room was used by the senators to read newspapers and receive their guests. This hall was reinaugurated during the Senate Presidency of Mr. Adolfo Zaldívar Larraín and the Vice-Presidency of Senator Baldo Prokurica Prokurica.

The reading room bears the name Pedro León Gallo in honour of such an outstanding senator, a tireless advocate of regionalisation and the 1859 Revolution.

As an important fact, on the desk of Mr. Arturo Alessandri Palma (former President of the Republic and the Senate),

on 15th November 2019, the "Agreement for Peace and New Constitution" was signed, an act that initiated the constituent process.

Currently, this space is used for press conferences by the President of the Senate and ceremonial activities of the institution. President Vladimir Putin of the Russian Federation; President Jacques Chirac of the Republic of France; President Álvaro Uribe Vélez of Colombia; President Cristina Fernández Kirchner of Argentina; and the Kings of Spain and Norway, among other distinguished leaders, were received in this hall.



Desk of Mr. Arturo Alessandri Palma

Hall of Honour

Also known as the Plenary Hall, it was inaugurated by President Federico Errázuriz Zañartu in 1876. The political acts of greater importance for the country are performed, such as Presidential Inaugurations and their respective Public Account. This hall was re-inaugurated in 1901, during the presidency of Mr. Federico Errázuriz Echaurren.

The painting that is immediately behind the dais corresponds to the "Discovery of Chile," painted by Fray Pedro Subercaseaux, which represents the arrival of Diego de Almagro to Chile through the Copiapo Valley.

In that place, several illustrious dignitaries have been received. In 1964, in plenary session, Charles de Gaulle was received; in 1968, Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip of Edinburgh were received; in 1963, it was the turn for Mariscal Tito; and in 1960, General Dwight Eisenhower, among others.

Salvador Allende Gossens was the last President of the Republic to give a public account in this hall.



Hall of Honour

Architecture

The building, with four double-height facades, corresponds to the French Neoclassical style.

Its fundamental structure is brick masonry in walls of a thickness of 0.90 x 1.00 metres, stone foundations, a stone-cut foundation, an iron

roof framework, parquet flooring, carpet, and marble stairs.

The main entrance is from Cathedral Street, with a first portico with six tall corinthian columns and a triangular pediment that rises to 24 metres in height.



Construction

The chosen lands for this building had belonged to the Jesuits until their expulsion.

In 1848, the project was entrusted to the French architect Claude François Brunet des Baines. However, Lucien Hénault began the construction in 1857. In 1875, the Italian Eusebio Chelli continued the construction, which was inaugurated on 1st June 1876, by President Federico Errázuriz Zañartu.

On 18th May 1895, a large part of the building burned down, forcing its temporary closure. The reconstruction began with the project of the architect Carlos Bunot.

Finally, in 1901 the restored building was re-inaugurated during the government of Federico Errázuriz Echaurren.

