

The National Historical Institute

The National Historical Institute: Vanguard in the Preservation of Philippine History and Cultural Heritage
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Not all Filipinos know that a national agency tasked to promote Philippine history and cultural heritage exists in the country known as the National Historical Institute (NHI). The Institute by virtue of Presidential Decree No. 1 of September 24, 1972 was created following the abolition of several memorial and commemoration committees to streamline their diverse functions.

Forerunners of the Institute Looking back at its own history, NHI's forerunner was the Philippine Historical Research and Markers Committee (PHRMC) created in 1933 by virtue of Executive Order No. 451 signed by American Governor General Frank Murphy. PHRMC was directed to identify, designate and appropriately mark the many antiquities abounding in the Philippines so that they may not be lost to posterity. The chosen head of the committee was an American journalist Walter Robb, while other members of the committee included Fr. Miguel Selga, S.J., Prof. Otley Beyer, Prof. Jayme C. De Veyra, Prof. Conrado Benitez, Dean Edward Hyde and Eulogio B. Rodriguez. The PHRMC, however, was abolished following the inauguration of the Commonwealth Government. Philippine Historical Committee (PHC), though, was created by Executive Order No. 91, dated 23 January 1937, to assume the same responsibilities as that of its predecessor. The PHC performed its mandate for about five years, from its creation until the outbreak of the Second World War. When the country was occupied by the Japanese Forces, PHC was abolished and its functions were absorbed by the Commission of Education, Health and Public Welfare. On 20 January 1947, six months following the inauguration of the Third Philippine Republic, the PHC was reconstituted, and was placed under the Office of the President and later transferred to the Department of Education. During its 28 years of existence, the PHC was able to install about 444 historical markers all over the Philippines. It was also able to acquire historical shrines such as Mabini Shrine in Tanauan, Batangas and its counterpart in Manila and the Juan Luna Memorial Shrine in Badoc, Ilocos Norte. The PHC was also responsible in reconstructing the Rizal home in Calamba and collect about 600 rare Rizaliana items and took charge on concerns about naming and renaming of streets, plazas, towns and other public sites. Meanwhile, alongside with the PHC, the Jose Rizal National Centennial Commission (JRNCC) was also created by virtue of Executive Order No. 52 dated 10 August 1954. It was created to take charge of the preparations for Jose Rizal's birth centenary. For about six months, this commission published books on the works of our national hero. JRNCC was later converted and became Rizal Presidential Committee on 1 July 1962 after President Diosdado Macapagal issued Executive Order No. 14. Before 1962 ended, President Macapagal issued Executive Order No. 28 that amended EO No. 14 which paved way for the creation of the National Heroes Commission with the additional task of conducting preparations for the centennial birth celebrations of Filipino heroes and luminaries. The NHC was placed under the direct supervision of the Secretary of Education. Meanwhile, the Rizal Shrine in Calamba was placed under the supervision of the Director of the National Museum while research and publication works were directed by the Director of the National Library. In 1962, there was a social and political clamor for the creation of a historical body with functions and duties were broader than those of the existing PHC and NHC. In 1962 three bills were filed, one from the Congress and two from the Senate. The said bills possessed the same objective—the creation of a historical commission. Sen. Camilo Osias and Sen. Eulogio Balao co-authored Senate Bill No. 18 approved by the Senate on 9 March 1964 while House Bill No. 2241 sponsored by Rep. Salih Ututalum was approved by the Congress on 7 May 1965. To fuse Senate Bill No. 18 and House Bill No. 2241, a conference was held attended by members of both houses on 18 May 1965. Senator Francisco Rodrigo amended the title of the proposed historical body from Heroes Commission to Historical Commission. The fused bill was finally approved on 19 June 1965 as Republic Act No. 4368. From 1 July 1965, the NHC and the PHC were merged and named National Historical Commission which started to function as a separate bureau under Department of Education and Culture. Its functions were divided into research, administration of shrines, monuments and markers and general administration. Under the chairmanship of Mrs. Carmen Guerrero-Nakpil, activities were launched in full blast despite limited fund. One of the major projects of NHC was the floating museum dubbed as KASAYSAYAN that brought NHC to various places in the Philippines to reach the public. This effort was continued by the succeeding heads of the agency. In 1972, in accordance with Presidential Decree No. 1 of 24 September 1972 otherwise known as an Act Reorganizing the Executive Branch of the Government, the National Historical Institute was created. In line with this aim of streamlining government entities performing identical or parallel functions with that of NHI, agencies like National Historical Commission, Intramuros Restoration Committee, Roxas memorial Commission, Quezon Memorial Committee, Emilio Aguinaldo National Centennial Commission, Gomes-Burgos-Zamora Centennial Commission and the Pinaglabanan Commemorative Commission were abolished while transferring all of their functions, records, appropriations, records and properties to the NHI.

NHI: Its Mandate and its Structure Today, the NHI is mandated to undertake research and publication of Philippine historical works; administer educational activities on historical events and personages; restore, preserve and conserve movable and immovable objects of historical value and oversee the implementation of the National Historic Act of the Philippines (Presidential Decree No. 260 and Presidential Decree No. 1505) and of the Flag and Heraldic Code of the Philippines, otherwise known as Republic Act No. 8491. NHI maintains five divisions namely: Administrative Division, Research, Publication and Heraldry Division, Monuments and Sites Division, Historic Preservation Division and Historical Education Division. The Institute's Finance and Administrative Division takes care of all personnel matters including the extension of support services to other operating divisions, preparation of budgets and maintenance of accounting records, while Research, Publication and Heraldry Division takes charge in conducting historical researches, documentation, resolving of controversial and conflicting issues, publication of works in reference to our history and the implementation of laws related to heraldry and the Philippine Flag. On the other hand, the Historic Sites and Education Division takes responsibility in the maintenance of national and historical shrines, monuments, landmarks as well as memorabilia of eminent Filipinos and spearheads historical and educational activities like lectures, conferences, workshops, seminars and most importantly commemorative activities. Finally, the Historic Preservation Division undertakes conservation, preservation and restoration of structures declared as national landmarks, national shrines, including historical edifices and ancestral houses registered in the National Registry of Historical Structures.

NHI at Present The Institute is presently chaired by Prof. Ambeth R. Ocampo while the NHI Board is composed of distinguished scholars as members: Jose Cruz, S.J, Heidi K. Gloria, Benito J. Legarda, Serafin D. Quiason, Corazon S. Alvina (Director of the National Museum) and Prudenciana C. Cruz (Director of the National Library). The Institute is also administered by Director Ludovico D. Badoy and Deputy Executive Director Emelita V. Almosara. NHI, though not a very large institution with a relatively adequate budget, remains committed to its mission and mandate. It remains active in the promotion of historical awareness among the public, organization and implementation of meaningful national as well as local events in coordination with the local government units, protection and preservation of historical shrines and landmarks ad most of all extending its services to stakeholders and to the public.