

*São Paulo*  
City Council

Historical Headquarters of  
the São Paulo Parliament



# Headquarters

## OF THE SÃO PAULO PARLIAMENT

The Village of São Paulo dos Campos de Piratininga was created through the charter<sup>1</sup> of September 5, 1558. However, its first Council was only created when Mem de Sá, third governor-general of Brazil, determined the merger between Santo André da Borda do Campo and São Paulo Villages, on March 31, 1560, during a visit to the São Vicente colonial province, besides transferring the administrative offices<sup>2</sup> and general population of Santo André to São Paulo.

Thus, the São Paulo City Council was born. During its first years of existence, sessions were held at the homes and lodges of town counselors. At that time, the small Village of São Paulo was surrounded by rustic adobe walls covered in thatch. There was a gatehouse and a guard in each entry, with the purpose of warning the population in case of indigenous attacks, which were common before the end of the 16th Century. Houses were made of rammed earth, with thatched roofs. Constructions were separated into three distinct areas. The City Council was located on one end, and a warehouse on the other end. On the center, a main building was used as the jailhouse. Over time, buildings started to collapse and the Council members started to theorize on a new headquarters.

From then on, the São Paulo City Council operated in several different addresses, whether owned or leased locations. There are records indicating headquarters at the Pátio do Colégio, at São Bento Street, São Francisco Square, José Bonifácio Street, Carmo Steet, Direita Street, São Gonçalo Square, XV de Novembro Street, Ramos de Azevedo Square, Líbero Badaró Street and Jacareí Viaduct, its current address.

1. Law charter which regulated the administration of a location, or granted privileges to individuals or corporations  
2. Locations where Legal matters were conducted.



According to illustrations on the book *Paço Municipal de São Paulo – Sua História nos quatro séculos de sua vida (São Paulo Municipal Palace – Four centuries of history)*, by architect *Wilson Maia Fina*, published in the 1960s, the *São Paulo Council* was headquartered on the following buildings, among others:



São Bento Street

1619

The City Council was accommodated in a dedicated building, purchased from Francisco Roiz Velho, probably located on São Bento Street. A sketch of such building was performed by dom Luiz Céspedes Xeria, governor of Paraguay, who visited the city in 1628. The oil on canvas painting (to the side), by W. Rodrigues, is based on Xeria's sketch.

1720

A new Municipal Palace was built, located on the corner between Ouvidor Street and former Adro de São Francisco (later renamed to Ouvidor Square). Operating on the second floor was the Council Senate, renamed due to São Paulo reaching the status of city, in 1711, granted by d. João V. The jailhouse and butcher shop were based on the ground floor. This

São Francisco Square



was the alternative found to solve improper meat supply and incarceration issues of the small town. In 1770, however, the building was in ruins. The Council decided to demolish the building, but didn't do so immediately. The building still held the jailhouse and, for this reason, the street was popularly known as "da Cadeia Velha" (Old Jail Street, currently named José Bonifácio).



Carmo Street

1770

In order to quickly solve the location issue, the Council, following the general magistrate's orders, rented two houses on Carmo Street, which was considered a prime location at the time, since Carmo Convent was also based on the same street. There are no records of the properties' owners.

The jailhouse was located at São Bento Street, until 1773 when a session ruled that it was to be transferred to the basement of the Carmo Street house.

In August 1775, due to increase in number of prisoners, houses next to the jailhouse, along with the Igreja da Misericórdia (Mercy Church), were used to expand prison facilities. In 1777, due to the Council being unable to obtain funding from the Municipal Treasury department, as well as high rent prices and terrible conditions at the jailhouse, the Council moved to a rented two-story house on the same street, and one year later, it moved to a property owned by Santíssimo Sacramento da Vila de Parnaíba, at Episcopal Square, currently known as Pátio do Colégio. The jailhouse was moved to a rented property on Direita Street.

1787

São Gonçalo Square



During the period between 1784 a 1787 the house on São Gonçalo Garcia Square (or Courtyard), currently known as João Mendes Square, was built with the purpose of housing the City Council, the jailhouse and the butcher shop.

The building was also inaugurated before it was finished, and construction activities only ended on 1788, with the definitive installation of the Hall, probably in 1789, after proper bureaucratic changes. The large two-story house facing the São Gonçalo

Square had nine windows, a balcony, a bell and the image of the Hall's patron on the upper floor, where the Council was headquartered. The royal crest was located directly above the latter. The jailhouse was held on the ground floor. Cell windows were protected by large and sturdy iron grids. This building was renovated

after São Paulo reached Province status, due to the creation of the United Kingdom of Portugal-Brazil and Algarve, by d. João VI, after the royal family's visit to Brazil. The Council was based on this building for 103 years.

João Mendes Square



1877

The City Council was responsible for significant urban developments. Teatro Square, currently known as João Mendes Square, was gardened (project in which Teatro Square and São Gonçalo Square were merged),

and the president of the Province, Sebastião José Pereira, renovated the Council's building, removing the jailhouse.

1897

Tesouro Street



On March 1897, the Council chairman informed its members that the State government had offered the building in which the State Treasury was headquartered, at Tesouro Street, on the corner of XV de Novembro Street. The exact date when the Council moved to this location is unknown, but according to newspaper publications, it would have occurred during the month of November of the same year. The building was constructed by João Teodoro Xavier, in 1874, for Escola Normal. It was a two-story classical building, with wide windows.

1914

Mayor Washington Luís signed a lease contract for the building located on Líbero Badaró Street, owned by Count Prates. The City Council and City Hall occupied one of the twin buildings which were part of the Vale do Anhangabaú redevelopment project (conceived by French city-planner Joseph Bouvard), designed by engineer Samuel das Neves and his son, the architect Cristiano Stockler das Neves. In addition to the Municipal Plenary Room and Executive offices,

Prates Mansion, at Líbero Badaró Street



several City Hall technical entities were stationed in the building, occupying the entire area from basement to attic. The 1930s were background to a political turmoil, which ended with the victory of the revolutionary forces lead by the Liberal Alliance party, who implemented a temporary Brazilian government headed by Getúlio Vargas, which deposed the Council and appointed intervening agents to run São Paulo.

1936

Trocadero Palace



The City Council's former headquarters, on the ground floor of the building located on Líbero Badaró Street, was entirely occupied with Executive offices and technical entities. At the time, the City Hall decided to rent rooms on Trocadero Palace, located next to Ramos de Azevedo Square,

to install the City Council and Legislative offices. Sessions were held every Saturday on this building. With the beginning of the Estado Novo (New State) period (1937 to 1945), City Councils throughout the country were closed.

1947

Back to Prates Mansion

In 1947, following the end of the Vargas Era, municipal elections were held. After the new City Council members were elected, the Executive sphere acquires locations on the building where the mayor's office was based, in Prates Mansion, to house all 45 town counselors and all Legislative offices. With less space, municipal authorities resumed discussions about the construction of the expected City Hall.



Anchieta Palace

In the location originally chosen to build the City Hall, the current dedicated headquarters of the São Paulo City Council was built in 1960, by Construtora Alfredo Mathias S.A. (Construction Company). The building was inaugurated on September 7, 1969.

1969



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August/2012

Images: Years 1619 and 1787 - In Santos, Délio Freire dos - Câmara Municipal: 1560-1998: Quatro séculos de história / Délio Freire dos Santos, José Eduardo Ramos Rodrigues - São Paulo: Imprensa Oficial, 1998; Years 1720, 1770, 1877, 1897, 1914, and 1936 - In Fina, Wilson Maia. São Paulo Municipal Palace: four centuries of history. São Paulo, Anhambi S/A Publisher, 1962; Year 1969 - Archive.