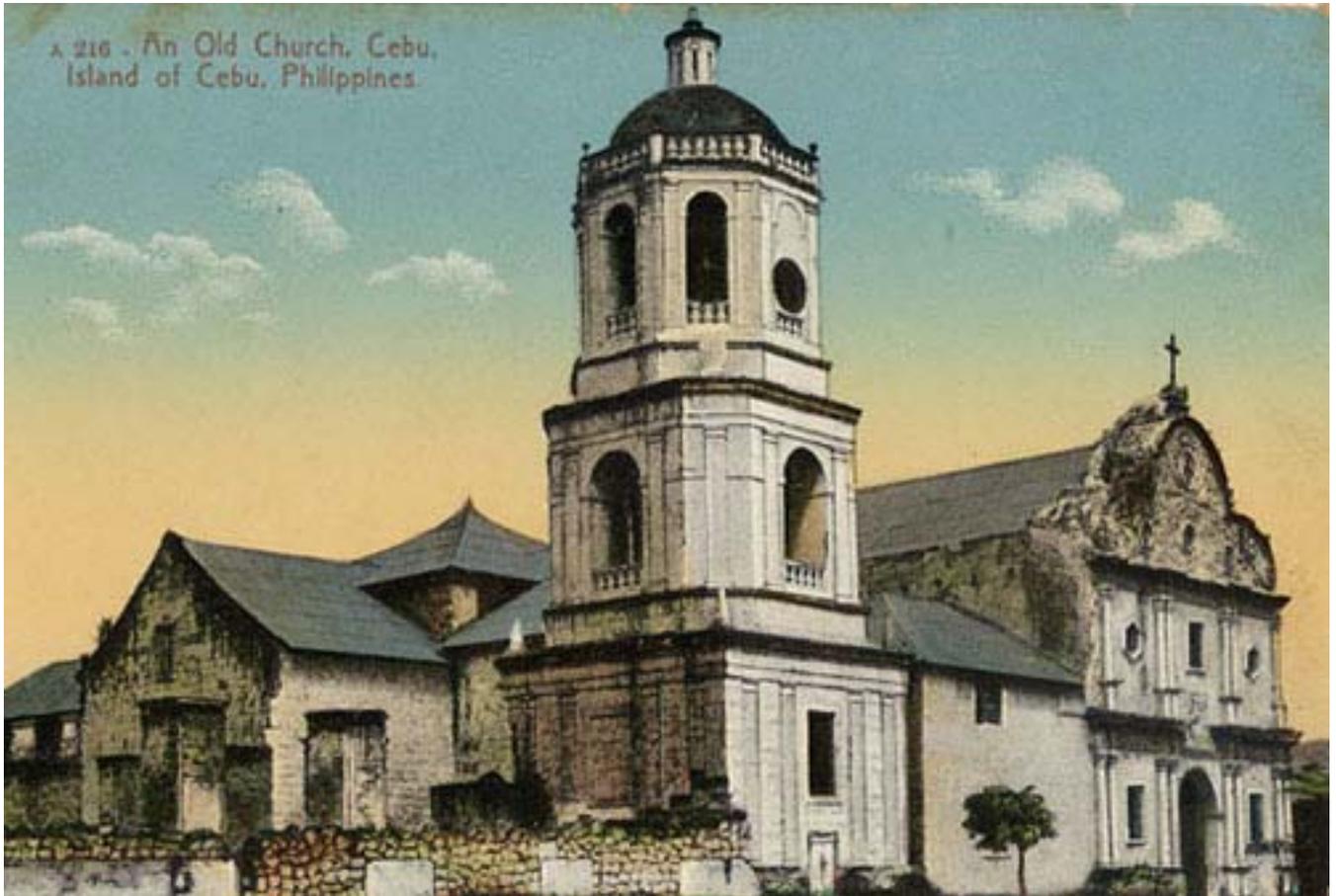


### The Cebu Cathedral through the years

Posted: 20 Feb 2009 07:59 AM CST



“This is the **first** of three parts featuring old photos of the Cebu Cathedral...”

The renovation works at the Cebu Metropolitan Cathedral in time for the 75th anniversary of the Archdiocese of Cebu on April 28, 2009 is nearing completion. As of this writing, the facade now looks very clean and the plaza has been remodeled and redeveloped. A new comfort room, away from the church, is also now open for public use.

A few weeks from now, a new retablo carved from wood by a Pampanga artist will be installed. Thanks to Fr. Brian Brigoli and the team behind the preparations for the archdiocese’s diamond anniversary, the cathedral has now been brought back to its old grandeur worthy of the title as the seat of the archbishop of one of the greatest archdiocese in the country

In this connection, I will be dedicating three series to commemorate the cathedral of Cebu through the years through vintage photos that show how it used to look before.

All credits to these wonderful photos go to the [Southeast Asia Digital Library](#), a collaboration of the Cebuano Studies Center and the University of Northern Illinois.

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**Below:** *The Cathedral in the early 1900s.*



**Below:** *The Cathedral in 1905, shot during the visit of William Howard Taft.*



**Below:** *Sometime between the years 1920 and 1930, the plaza of the cathedral was redeveloped. In the middle was installed a statue of Christ the King.*



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**Below:** *The cathedral was heavily damaged by the USAFFE aerial bombings during World War II. Only the facade, the thick walls, and the belfry remained intact. In this photo, the facade of the cathedral has already been expanded towards the belfry thus making it look bigger.*



*“This is the **second** of three parts featuring old photos of the Cebu Cathedral...”*



**Above:** *An early 1900s photo of the interiors of the cathedral showing the 19th century main altar retablo.*

The cathedral of Cebu underwent a lot of changes even during the Spanish colonial times. In the 1930s, the cathedral underwent a major renovation in preparation for the elevation of the then diocese of Cebu into an archdiocese with Gabriel Reyes as the first archbishop. The facade of the cathedral was expanded towards the belfry thus making it look bigger.

Inside, the 19th century retablo was torn down and replaced with a simple altar made of Carrara marble from Italy. Above it were three stained glass windows featuring Jesus Christ at the middle and the archangels Michael and Gabriel on each side. The chair of the archbishop was then located near the main altar.

**Below:** *The main altar of the cathedral during the jubilee celebrations for Archbishop Gabriel Reyes.*



During the USAFFE bombings of World War II, the cathedral was heavily damaged and only the belfry, the facade and the thick walls remained of it. The cathedral though was quickly rebuilt by Archbishop Reyes. With Reyes being transferred to the archdiocese of Manila, Julio Rosales, who later became a cardinal, took over as the new archbishop.

A lot of projects were undertaken during the reign of Rosales. Among these were the new Arzobispado in D. Jakosalem Street. It was to be the new home of the archbishops of Cebu since the old Spanish-colonial episcopal palace across the cathedral was destroyed by the USAFFE air raids and never rebuilt.

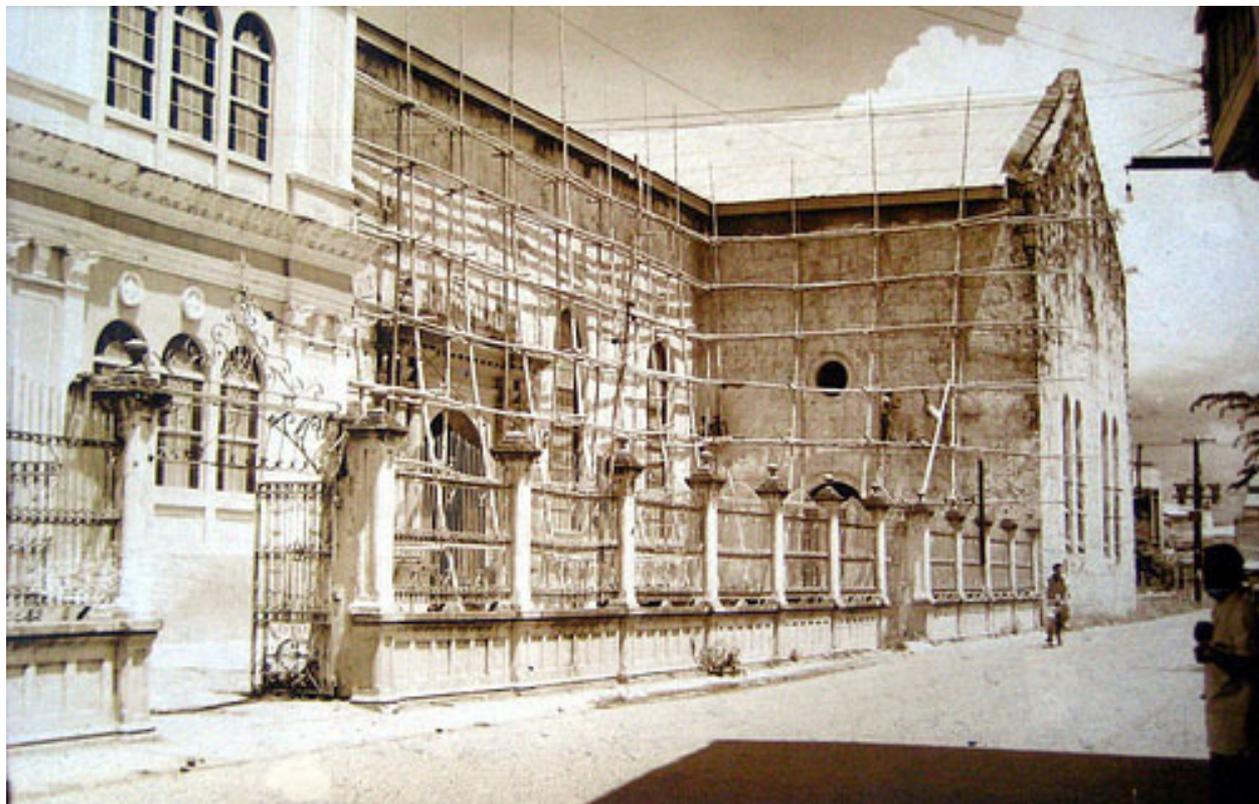
**Below:** *A circa 1970-80s photo of the interiors.*



Throughout the years of Cardinal Rosales' watch, the cathedral underwent new developments one at a time. From having a simple altar set against a very simple reredo, a baldachino was added which also matched with the baldachino over the archbishop's throne. A new pipe organ was also installed. The exteriors of the cathedral especially at the sides were also improved.

Upon Rosales' death came Ricardo Vidal, who in turn also became a cardinal later on. The cathedral was expanded on both sides in anticipation of Pope John Paul II's second visit to the Philippines in the early 1990s (the great pope though was not able to visit Cebu in particular). A new pipe organ was also built by the Diego Cera Organbuilders of Manila to replace the previous one which have been heavily damaged through time.

**Below:** *Improving the exteriors of the cathedral at the sides, circa 1960s.*



**Below:** *Another early 1900s photo of the interiors of the cathedral.*



**Below:** *Inside the cathedral during the consecration of Juan Gorordo as the first Filipino bishop of Cebu. Notice the balconies.*

