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Banco Santander Historical Archive photographic collections

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Over the last two decades or more the culture of images, together with the possibilities of diffusion afforded by new information and communication technologies, have reached heights difficult to ignore by even the most ardent defenders of traditional and conceptual forms of thought and culture. Consequently, the role of images in our society is continuously being reassessed. The role images play in archives is changing, as photographic collections are being assigned increasing importance by those responsible, but also by researchers. Thus, photography from the archive has become not only the main resource for an essentially visual form of knowledge that supports and complements information derived from other documentary formats, but also a fundamental tool for communication and social visibility.

The evolution of the Banco Santander Historical Archive's photographic collections illustrates the increasing importance attached to image by archivists, researchers and society more generally. When the initial fonds of what was to become the Banco Santander Historical Archive were brought together at the University of Cantabria in 2000, not a single photograph was found among them. Twenty years later, the number of photographs in this archive—which includes a wide variety of formats: positives on paper, negatives on film, glass plates and slides—totals just under 10,000. All of them have been sourced by transferring material from private collections to the archive and through acquisitions.

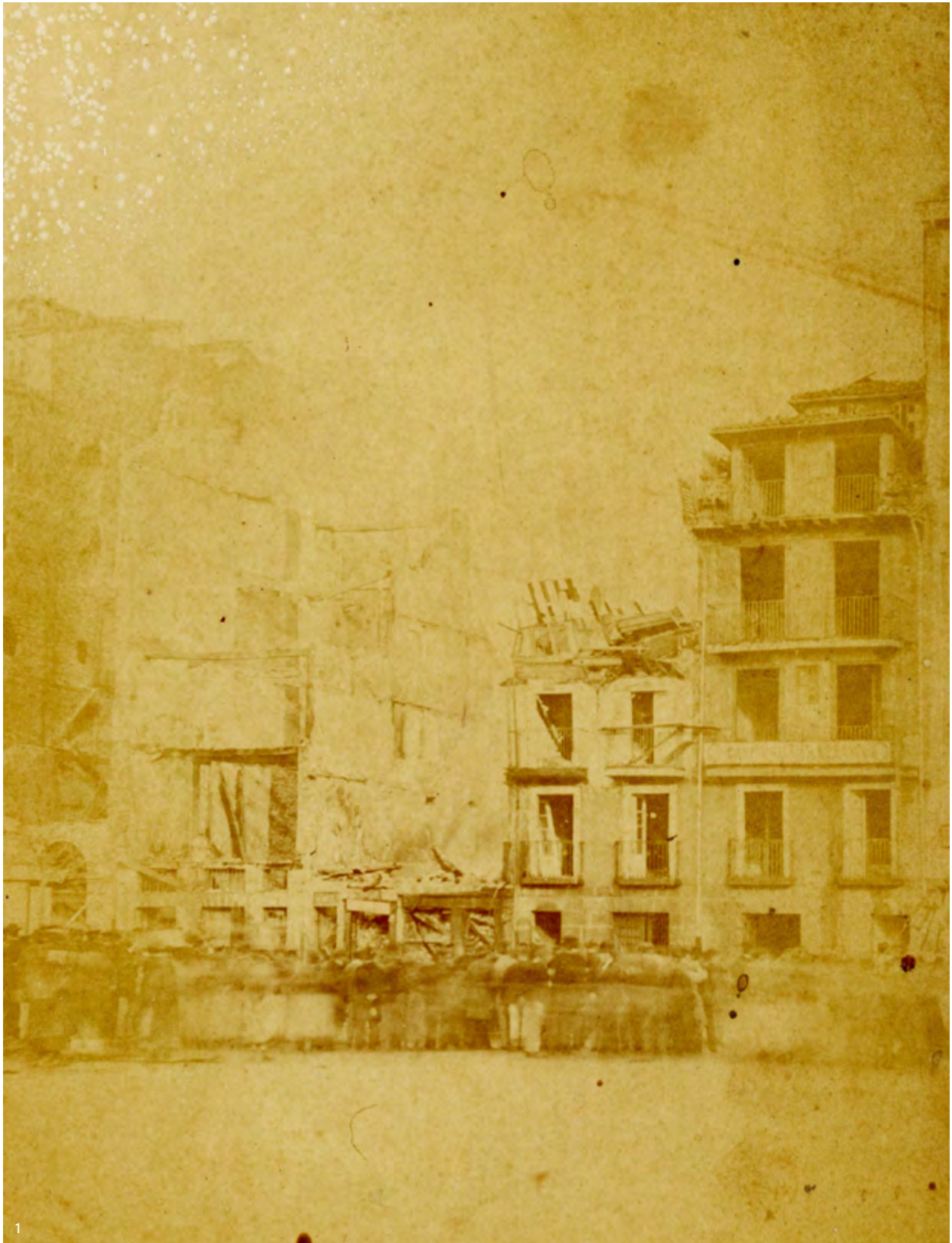
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The archival team have been kept busy, registering the entry of an item or, in some cases, researching the potential acquisition of a collection because of its suitability for the archive. Once the collection is part of the archive, it must be classified, the authors and copyright holders identified, and any data that helps contextualise the image and its production collected. Following this, a multilevel description and inclusion in the catalogue system is undertaken, in compliance with ISAD(G) (General International Standard Archival Description) provisions. The most physical part of the process includes treating

the items to ensure their preservation or, if necessary, restoration, and conserving them using materials that will protect them: parchment paper sleeves adjusted to the size of the photographs and acid-free cardboard boxes for photographic storage. The final step that culminates the process is to change the format of certain

photographs to be digitized. This is done to improve their preservation and to facilitate dissemination.

There are sometimes unavoidable legal considerations to be addressed, to do with copyright and the rights of the people who appear in the photographs. As a general rule and complying with data protection law, we subscribe to the criteria limiting publication of and access to images according to whether the individuals appearing in them are living, or the images have been previously published.¹ Banco Santander Historical Archive regulations also apply to its photographic collections, especially



1. Remains of the fire that occurred between La Blanca and La Ribera streets in Santander (1877) © Leandro Desages



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- 2. Portrait of Emilio Botín López (circa 1900) © Viuda de Edgardo Debas
- 3. Pantheon of Antonio López y López in Comillas (1881) © Zenón Quintana
- 4. Aerial view of Santander, with the Banco Santander head office in the foreground (1965) © Fotografía Aérea y Terrestre (FOAT)
- 5. Portrait of Emilio Botín-Sanz de Sautuola y López (circa 1985) © Gyenes János
- 6. Portrait of Francisco de Ussía y Cubas (circa 1910) © Kaulak

with regard to the minimum age of documents that can be consulted, which is generally fifty years.

The diverse origin of the archive's photographic material means that a variety of different organizational methods have been used to categorize the collections rather than any single approach common to the entire archive. As there are photographs from many different banks scattered throughout the fonds in the archive, we thought the best way to organize it would be to assign each fond its own collections.

Since in most cases it was impossible for us to know the exact organic origins within the producer entity of the fond, we used an exclusively functional criterion to classify, such that each photographic collection is described as a separate section within each fond. To ensure uniformity, this has been done even in the few cases where we know the source of the production and owners of the photographs. Consequently, the series contains a variety of photographs or groups of photographs that are classified in a generic way, regardless of whether they exist as single photographs or as part of an album or other formats.

The photographic collection of the **Banco Santander** fond is the most prominent collection housed in the archive. Covering a broad chronological range (1877–2013), this substantial collection covers a number of interesting subjects. The series of photographs collected by María Sanz de Sautuola (1871–1946)² includes the oldest photograph in the collection. It is a positive on paper taken on 12 December 1877. It shows a crowd of curious observers looking at the remains of a fire which just burnt down twelve houses on La Blanca and La Ribera streets, a few metres from the Banco de Santander head office earlier that day (Photograph 1).³ The photographer was French, a certain Leandro Desages, who had recently moved to Santander two years previously. This photograph is categorized within the series of urban perspectives. The series includes nine anonymous positives on paper showing different perspectives of El Sardinero—the famous beach that flanks the city of Santander—and a single print of Las Caldas de Besaya—the famous thermal baths in the Cantabrian spa town—captured by Ruiz, a photographer from Torrelavega.

The series of María Sanz de Sautuola contains five portraits that have been printed as *carte de visites*. They depict her either alone, or with her daughters Elena and Concepción. The fifth is a portrait of her husband, Emilio Botín López (1866–1923), the first Chairman of the Banco de Santander who was elected to the board of directors on a non-rotating basis in 1920. López was the founder of the banking dynasty that continues to serve

in the management of the Bank today.⁴ The portrait was taken circa 1900, in the Viuda de Edgardo Debas studio, in Madrid (Photograph 2).

A third series comprises fifteen photographic prints that record the visit of King Alfonso XII to the López family residence in Comillas during the summer of 1881.⁵ Apart from one photograph signed by Ruiz from Torrelavega, the images were taken by the photographer Zenón Quintana (1848–1929), from Santander. The most curious among them shows the pantheon built by the chairman's father Antonio López y López (1817–1883), the first Marquis of Comillas, now a controversial figure because of the way he amassed his fortune in Cuba. A short time after the King's visit, the Marquis commissioned the Gothic-revivalist architect, Joan Martorell, to build the magnificent Palacio de Sobrellano (Photograph 3). In 1883 he commissioned the famous architect Antonio Gaudí to build a summer villa in an orientalist style, that came to be known as *El Capricho de Gaudí*. The other photographs in the report show the arches raised in honour of the monarch, views of various properties owned by the López family, including the interior of the pantheon, and scenes from everyday life in the town of Comillas.

The landscapes series completes the set of photographs collected by María Sanz de Sautuola. This series comprises three positives on paper by Zenón Quintana showing the Solares bridge, La Hermida path and Ándara lake—all famous Cantabrian picturesque spots. The last two photographs show the area that King Alfonso XII visited when he travelled to the Picos de Europa to hunt in the summer of 1881, and thus probably date back to the summer of that year.

All these series form part of the collection dedicated to the former chairmen of the Bank. The 'Chairman' collection contains another two series of photographs. The first one comprises portraits of Emilio Botín-Sanz de Sautuola y López (1903–1993), chairman of the Board of Directors of Banco Santander (1950–1986) and his wife Ana García de los Ríos y Caller (1909–1994). The oldest in this group is a negative on glass circa 1948 showing the banker when he was managing director of the entity (1934–1950). However, the most artistically valuable portraits are those taken of Emilio Botín by the Hungarian photographer Gyenes János (1912–1995), during his last years as chairman, circa 1985 (Photograph 5). The second series is entitled 'Events' and comprises 58 positives depicting the visit of Juan Carlos de Borbón y Borbón to the Banco Santander Main and Central Accounting Offices in Madrid on 29 April 1966. Forty-two colour slides complete this series, of which thirty-three were taken at the inauguration of the Banco Santander representation



7: Portrait of Ignacio Villalonga Villalba (circa 1960) © Banco Central Photography Service

8: Banco Hispano Americano, Correspondence Section (1933) © Estudio Vidal

9: Exterior view of Banco Hispano Americano head office (1940) © Cristóbal Portillo



10: Group portrait of the Banco Hispano Americano board of directors (1946) © Cristóbal Portillo
11: Banca Soler y Torra Hermano Archives, Barcelona (1927) © Adolf Mas Ginestà
12: Group portrait of the Banco Español de Crédito Board of Directors (1946) © Cristóbal Portillo
13: Los Previsores del Porvenir, Vigo section (circa 1920) © F. Pacheco
14: Staff and management at the Banco Popular Barcelona branch (1943) © Carlos Pérez de Rozas

office at 38 Lombard Street, London, in October 1955. The remaining nine slides show the chairman and deputy chairman of the Bank, accompanied by their families and other directors, on a holiday to the French coast around the same time.

Along with the 'Chairman' collection, the 'Property' collection is worth mentioning. It is almost entirely made up of 697 large-format negatives acquired in 2012 from the company Fotografía Aérea y Terrestre (FOAT), which captured the interior and exterior the bank's head office in Santander, as well as many of its Spanish branches between 1961 and 1981. A selection of these photographs was stored in separate albums with 62 positives prints, and there are several copies in the archive. Worth noting from this collection is an aerial view of Santander taken around 1965, with the bank's head office in the foreground and the Cantabrian Sea embracing the city from both the north and the south (Photograph 5).

A third series appears under the title 'Press'. It contains the 261 positives and 195 negatives of the photographs used for the magazine *Carácter* (2002–2004), published by the Banco Santander

Communication, Corporate Marketing and Studies Division. This series also includes 12 black and white positives that the photojournalist Manuel López Bustamante took between 1979 and 1992 during his coverage of events in the bank and of its senior management.

The Banco Santander fond photographic collection is completed by two series of the 'Universities' (1997–2014) and 'Communication, Corporate Marketing and Studies' (1985–2014) divisions, which still have restricted access because they have only recently been created. Standing out in the first of these series is a group of photographs related to events (university, directors' and rectors' meetings etc.); in the second are portraits of members of the bank's senior management.

The Banco Santander photographic collection is a continuous project, so new photographs continue to be added to it.

The second fond to have a photographic collection was the **Banco Central fond**, a bank established in 1919 and absorbed by the Banco Santander in 1999 after having merged with the **Banco Hispano Americano** eight years earlier.⁶ The collection, which is arranged in a chronological order from 1910 to 1985, comprises eleven series. The most interesting is probably that of 'Chairmen', as it

includes portraits of those who have led the entity since its creation. The oldest photograph in the entire collection is found in this series: a portrait of Francisco de Ussá y Cubas (1880–1931), second Marquis of Aldama and, as director of the Aldama banking house, one of the founding partners of Banco Central (Photograph 6). The photograph, printed on paper, was taken circa 1910 by the photographer Antonio Cánovas del Castillo y Vallejo, better known as 'Kaulak' (1862–1933). Within the same series, the portrait of Ignacio Villalonga Villalba (1895–1973) also stands out, probably the most decisive chairman in the history of Banco Central during the twenty-seven years he chaired the board of directors (1943–1970). The portrait was taken by the Bank's own photography service circa 1960; there are numerous copies on paper of it kept in the archive (Photograph 7).

Worth noting from the series 'Events' are the 69 black and white positives where the city of Valencia pays tribute to Ignacio Villalonga in his native city, in 1956. The 'Economic Studies' series is made up of 77 black and white positives depicting presentations of statistical and economic publications made by

Banco Central between 1955 and 1975. Only those occurring between 1959 and 1961 have been included in this series. Of note in the 'Inaugurations' series is the Segovia branch in 1965, taken by a number of different photographers, of which 66 black and white positives have been preserved.

The rest of the series in Banco Central's photographic collection are less interesting: 'Properties' (Camorritos' holiday residence, Pinar del Rey building in Madrid, 1960–1970), 'General Shareholders' Meetings' (1960), 'Corporate Events' (1979–1985) and two small reports on the head offices of the Hispano-Colonial bank in Barcelona, and the Urquijo bank in Madrid in the 1990s.

The photographic collection of the Banco Hispano Americano fond spans the period between 1933 and 1989. The oldest and most interesting photographs are found in the 'Staff' series: a photographic report made by the Vidal studio in 1933 depicts all the senior management of the entity and the staff working in its different departments at the Madrid head office in 24 black and white positives (Photograph 8).

From the 'Properties' series, the first images of the bank's head office deserve special attention. The exterior view of the building in Madrid's Plaza de Canalejas,

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taken around 1940 with a mass of cars and buses in the foreground, depicts one of the leading banks in the Spanish financial system (Photograph 9).

Because of its continuity over time (1942–1991) and its usefulness in identifying senior management personnel and directors, the ‘General Shareholders’ Meetings’ series is also worth noting; it is usually separated into two types of reports: group photos of the directors and the events held after the meeting itself. The group portrait of the directors, with the chairman Ignacio Herrero Collantes (1881–1961) in the centre, taken by the photographer Cristóbal Portillo (1920–1997) in 1946 illustrates this group (Photograph 10). In the background can be seen the tapestry woven between 1669 and 1675 at the Gobelins Manufactory from cartoons by Charles Lebrun. The tapestry, which represents *The Surrender of Marsal*, with the figure of King Louis XIV on horseback, has presided over the Banco Hispano Americano boardroom since its purchase in the early 1940s.⁷ This series is completed by a group of colour positives that depict the HISPAMERSA—a securities subsidiary of Banco Hispano Americano—general shareholders’ meetings held between 1977 and 1980.

The last series that completes the Banco Hispano Americano photographic collection is categorised as ‘Tributes and Events’ and includes photographic prints taken between 1957 and 1982. The subject matter of these photographs is varied: the opening of branches, tributes to directors and senior management, meals and receptions or signing of corporate agreements such as the Europartner singing event in 1973.

The **Banca Soler y Torra Hermanos** fond is from an entity created in Barcelona in 1917 that specialised in securities and was acquired by Banco Santander four decades after its founding.⁸ The Banco Comercial para América was established on its base in 1967 as a joint operation between the Banco Santander and the Bank of America. When this fond was transferred to the Banco Santander Historical Archive, it did not have its own photographic collection, that was only formed with the 2011 acquisition of a report on the facilities of the bank building located on Barcelona’s Rambla de los Estudios. It consists of 31 albumen paper copies made in 1927 by the Catalan modernist photographer Adolf Mas Ginestà (1860–1936) and its production was a gift from the bankers to the firm Riva y Garcia; the partners were related through family ties and 1927 was their 50th business anniversary. The images, which are skilfully rendered and whose compositions are carefully thought through, provide a record of the physical context, furnishings and facilities with which a small banking house operated during the 1920s. Pictured here is an image of an interior with a poster which reads: ‘A place for everything

and everything in its place’ (Photograph 11).

The photographic collection of the **Banco Español de Crédito** is, unfortunately, not as important as the bank itself which has been a key player in the Spanish financial system since it was founded in 1902. It was derived from the former Crédito Mobiliario Español, which had been established in Madrid in 1856 by the French Péreire brothers to cover the government budget deficit and offer loans to private companies.⁹ There are no photographs from its period as Crédito Mobiliario Español nor from its first three decades of activity as the Banco Español de Crédito. The oldest photograph in our catalogue belongs to a board of directors meeting held in 1932 and is included in a series on general shareholder and boards of directors’ meetings and banquets which runs into 1980. Seen here is a group portrait of the members of the board of directors at the 1946 shareholders’ meeting at the Madrid Stock Exchange, a positive on paper taken by the photographer Cristóbal Portillo (Photograph 12). In the centre of the group, just below the portrait of General Franco, can be seen the most distinctive chairman in the entity’s history, Pablo Garnica Echevarría (1876–1959).

There is an obvious gap in coverage between the years 1980 to 1994, coinciding with the worst years of the banking crisis in Spain. This period was the most turbulent in the history of this institution, and ended with its acquisition by Banco Santander, at which point photographic documentation resumed. All the photographs from this second period of the collection (i.e. from 1994 up until the liquidation in 2013) can be dated; the main series are: ‘Material for the preparation of annual reports’, ‘Meetings and boards of directors (2007 and 2009)’, ‘Presentation of results’, ‘Presentations by Banesto Banca Privada’, ‘Banesto Cycling Team (1989–2003)’ and ‘Property’ (historic head office in calle de Alcalá, the main office in Seville, presidential complex in Mesena, etc).

The **Banco Popular Español** collection (1926–1997), the last of the collections to be incorporated into the Banco Santander Historical Archive, covers a longer period of time and is more varied in its subject matter. This bank was created from the insurance company Los Previsores del Porvenir, that specialised in tontine and chatelusian investment plans,¹⁰ and was founded in 1904.¹¹ The archive holds one photographic print dating from the 1920s, which was taken by F. Pacheco of the bank’s branch in Vigo (Photograph 13).

Although the Banco Popular Español photographic collection has still only been partially described, the photographs from the main series have been identified, and categorized into the usual series of ‘General shareholders’ meetings’, ‘Signing of corporate agreements’



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Photograph 14: Inauguration of a Banco Popular branch (circa 1928) © Fotografía López



Photograph 16: Inauguration of the Banco Popular San Sebastián local branch (1957) © Unknown



(such as the one established by the European Business Bank on 17 April 1964), 'Events' and, above all, 'Branches'. The early expansion of the bank, which had already opened 15 branches before its second anniversary, is depicted on a print with a photograph by López, where the then chairman of the bank, Emilio González-Llana Fagoaga, can be seen inaugurating an unidentified branch (Photograph 14).

The Barcelona branch was one of the Banco Popular's most important and active during its initial years, and especially after the end of the Spanish Civil War. A photograph of Carlos Pérez de Rozas (Photograph 15) shows staff and senior management in 1943 posing on the stairs and in the lobby of the branch. Darío García de Leániz, José María Ramón de San Pedro and Nicolás Rubio García-Roby can be seen sitting in second, third and fourth from the left.

Once Luis Valls-Taberner (1926–2006) assumed the helm of the bank in 1957 the bank grew over the next few decades. The archive holds a photograph taken by

an unknown photographer, showing the bishop of San Sebastián, Jaime Font y Andreu (1894–1963), leaving the recently inaugurated Banco Popular first urban office in San Sebastian in 1957, while Luis Valls stands on the right of the image (Photograph 16). In addition, extensive reports on the inaugurations of branches in Barcelona (1961), Castellón (1972), Granollers, Malaga and Tortosa, as well as other cities, are also included in the series.

Another interesting series in the collection worth mentioning covers the close relationship between the Banco Popular and other Spanish financial institutions, specifically the Banco Central, from the end of the 1950s. Banco Popular had access to other large national banking entities through the monthly meetings of the so-called *Siete Grandes*, 'Big Seven', the informal body responsible for limiting competition between the main players in private banking. A photograph taken by Portillo and preserved as a print depicts one of those meetings in 1980 (Photograph 17). From left to right we see the chairmen of

Photograph 17: A meeting of the Siete Grandes [Big Seven] in Spanish banking (1980) © Portillo

Photograph 18: The trading floor in the Abbey Road and St John's Wood Mutual Benefit Building Society, London (circa 1930) © Walsham's Limited

Photograph 19: Director of the Monte Piedad y Caja de Ahorros de Santander local branch (circa 1946) © Unknown

the Banco Central (Alfonso Escámez), Banco de Vizcaya (Ángel Galíndez Celayeta), Banco Santander (Emilio Botín-Sanz de Sautuola y López), Banco Español de Crédito (José María Aguirre Gonzalo), Banco Bilbao (Gervasio Col-lar y Luis, Honorary chairman), Banco Popular (Luis Valls Taberner), Banco Hispano Americano (Luis de Usera) and Banco Exterior de España (Fermín Zelada de Andrés). It is a redolent 'family' photograph of the private banking system in Spain before the profound changes entailed by Spain's entry into the European Economic Community in 1986 were ushered in.

A review of the Banco Santander Historical Archive photographs would not be complete without mentioning three small collections that have been integrated into the Banco Santander fond. The first—Santander UK collection—comes from a 2013 transfer from the London Metropolitan Archive, the assignee of the historical fonds produced by entities, which are today grouped under the Santander UK brand. It is a series of 16 photographic prints that feature portraits of the senior management, the bank's facilities and its employees. Seen here is a photograph taken by Walsham's Ltd. circa 1930, showing the interior of the main office of The Abbey Road and St John's Wood Mutual Benefit Building Society, probably located at 16 Finchley Road, in north London (Photograph 18). The Electra de Viesgo collection is the second small one, recently acquired from that power company's main office in Santander. It contains nine slides, whose photographer is unknown, depicting the Cares River and various installations of this electricity company in Camarmeña, Ujo, Oviedo and Aguilar de Campoo circa 1960.¹² Finally, in order to develop our coverage of financial life in Santander we acquired a batch of two black and white prints, showing the first urban office opened in the city by Monte de Piedad, (the institutional pawnbroker, lit. 'Mount of Piety') and the Santander saving bank, Caja de Ahorros de Santander, taken by an anonymous photographer, circa 1946 (Photograph 19).

The Banco Santander Historical Archive photographic collections continue to grow every year. Very few of the images catalogued in it have been published and we will add new photographs from existing fonds or from other fonds that are yet to be created. Irrespective of this, we are certain that the increasing interest in such images by researchers, the media and the public will help the archive to make a contribution to the visual history of Spanish banking in the coming years, thanks to the diversity, variety and interest of its photographic collections.

All photographs: © Archivo Histórico Santander

Author's profile

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- 1 Civil protection of the right to honour and personal and family privacy, and image rights are guaranteed in Spain by Organic Law 1/1982. A 2001 Constitutional Court ruling (STC 156/2001) approved the publication of images in a format other than the one for which their reproduction was consented, as they have already been published with permission from the owner.
- 2 María Sanz de Sautola was the daughter of the naturalist and prehistorian Marcelino Sanz de Sautuola y Pedrueca, who discovered the Altamira cave paintings, and the wife of the first Chairman of the Banco Santander.
- 3 *La Ilustración Española y Americana*, vol. XLVII, 22-XII-1877, p. 388.
- 4 Martín Aceña, Pablo. 2007. *Banco Santander, 150 años de historia: 1857–2007*. Madrid: Turner, p. 73.
- 5 Sama García, Antonio: "El sueño de unas Jornadas de verano: arte y metamorfosis en la celebración de los veraneos regios de Comillas (1881 y 1882)", in *Actas de las I Jornadas Internacionales de Investigación Arte y Ciudad, Facultad de Ciencias de la Información, Universidad Complutense de Madrid*, (November 24–25, 2011), 2012, pp. 75–91. Madrid.
- 6 Regarding the Banco Central and Banco Hispano Americano, see. Tortella Casares, Gabriel and García Ruíz, José Luis. 1993. *Una historia de los bancos Central e Hispanoamericano, 1901–1991: Noventa años de gran banca en España*. [Unpublished work].
- 7 Fundación Central Hispano. 1996. *Colección Central Hispano: del Renacimiento al Romanticismo*. Madrid, pp. 216–217.
- 8 Martín Aceña, Pablo. 2007. *Banco Santander, 150 años de historia: 1857–2007*. Madrid: Turner, p. 153.
- 9 A complete monograph on the history of the Banco Español de Crédito has not been published, but its first years can be consulted in: García Ruíz, José Luis. 2007: "Nacionalizando el capital bancario: Banesto y Paribas (1902–1927)". *Investigaciones de Historia Económica*, 3 (9), pp. 79–108. Until 1952, for a partial and very superficial review, see. Banco Español De Crédito. 1952 : *Bodas de oro, 1902–1952*. Madrid: Banco Español de Crédito.
- 10 Investment schemes by which several subscribers accumulate and invest a common fund out of which they receive an annuity. Shares of deceased investors were divided among the surviving members.
- 11 Tortella Casares, Gabriel, Ortiz-Villajos, José María and García Ruíz, José Luis. 2011. *Historia del Banco Popular. La lucha por la independencia*. Madrid: Marcial Pons.
- 12 *Electra de Viesgo: 75 años*. 1981. Santander.