

= Agustín Ross Cultural Centre =

Agustín Ross Cultural Centre ( Spanish , Centro Cultural Agustín Ross ) , previously known as Casino Ross ( Ross Casino ) , is the cultural center of the city of Pichilemu in Libertador General Bernardo O 'Higgins Region , Chile . It was constructed between 1906 and 1909 at the request of politician Agustín Ross Edwards . The structure of the cultural center is very similar to that of the Grand Trianon in Versailles , France .

It is best known for housing one of the first casinos of Chile ; a casino operated in the building between 1917 and 1931 . After 1931 all casinos , except the newly opened Casino de Viña del Mar , were declared illegal . The building has also been used as a post office , a store selling imported goods , a hotel , a discotheque , and a bar . There were two attempts by the local government to purchase the building ; the first time in 1982 failed while the second in 1995 succeeded . The former casino was declared a National Monument of Chile along with the Agustín Ross Park in February 1988 .

Over time , the building deteriorated , and a project was approved in January 2007 for it to be renovated for use as a cultural center . The restored building opened in January 2009 and houses the local library . In January 2010 , the cultural center was inaugurated by President Michelle Bachelet and Mayor Roberto Córdova .

= = History = =

= = = 1885 ? 1906 : The idea = = =

Agustín Ross Edwards was a wealthy Chilean writer , member of parliament , government minister and politician . He reportedly had the dream of " creating a port which could be an alternative to the Valparaíso port , " but this would turn later into " creating a touristic place , an elite resort , collecting the most important characteristics of European places , which would make it unique . "

For this purpose , Ross Edwards bought Fundo Pichilemu , a farm , from Juan Esteban Torrealba Maturana in 1885 . There was a little hotel in Fundo Pichilemu called La Posada , which he converted into a first @-@ class hotel called the Gran Hotel Pichilemu ( now the Agustín Ross Hotel ) . Following the development of the Gran Hotel Pichilemu , Ross Edwards saw the need of creating " a seaside resort with all the comforts and luxuries capable of seducing the Chilean aristocracy ; " for this purpose , he conceived the idea of creating a park , and a post @-@ office building . Afterwards , Agustín Ross installed amenities such as a laundry , stables , and stairways , among others , according to local historian José Arraño Acevedo , turning Pichilemu into a summer resort town for affluent people from Santiago and Mendoza , Argentina .

= = = 1906 ? 1930 : Construction ; the casino = = =

According to Washington Saldías González , editor of Pichilemu News , the construction of the building lasted from 1906 to 1909 , while Jorge Godoy Rojas , architect of the University of Chile , states that it was built between 1904 and 1906 . Ross wanted it to look similar to the Grand Trianon of the Tuileries Palace in Paris , France ; he imported building materials and furniture from France and England . After its opening , the building included a post office with telegraph service and a store for imported goods , exclusive to clients of the Gran Hotel Pichilemu .

The National Monuments Council asserts that the first casino in Chile was opened in the building in 1906 ; however , historians Antonio Saldías and José Arraño Acevedo have pointed out that it was inaugurated as a de facto casino in the summer of 1917 , after Agustín Ross rented the building to Argentinean businessman Alfredo Master . Saldías also noted that there were casinos in Chile before Agustín Ross 's arrival in Pichilemu , in towns such as Constitución . The casino operated until 1931 , when the Casino de Viña del Mar , the first official casino of Chile , opened ; all others were declared illegal . Ross died in 1925 at age of 82 in Viña del Mar , just months before " one of

his greatest " dreams was accomplished : the railway from Palmilla and the local railway station .

= = = 1930 ? 1995 : The discotheques ; the National Monument = = =

After the casino closed , the building was mostly left unused until the 1940s , when the González Pérez family purchased it from Agustín Ross de Ferrari , a descendant of Ross Edwards . The family converted the building into a hotel , and in the late 1940s , the underground floor was remodeled and made a clandestine casino . Twenty years later , in the late 1960s , Gustavo González Pérez , then a pilot in the Chilean Air Force , along with another member of the Air Force , created an American @-@ style discotheque called La Caverna ( The Cavern ) in the basement . Years later , González Pérez transferred the business to other members of his family , who renamed the discotheque Los Tijuana ( The Tijuanas ) . Finally , the González Pérez family decided to close the discotheque in the late 1970s . Shortly afterwards , Rancagua businesswoman Carmelita Tello installed a boîte called Carmelita in the main room . Later , Pichileminian Roberto Álvarez decided to run a discotheque called Master in the same place , while at the same time , there was a grill bar called Wa @-@ Na in another room ; both businesses operated until the 1990s . The condition of the building gradually deteriorated , and its use became restricted .

During the administration of Mayor Julio Waidele Wolff ( 1981 ? 1983 ) , an attempt was made to buy the building with municipal funds ; however , Waidele was not allowed to complete the purchase because the price of eight million pesos ( approximately US \$ 16 @,@ 000 ) was " too high for the municipal budget , and would leave many things without financing . " The building would finally be purchased in 1995 by Mayor Orlando Cornejo Bustamante with the support of the Pichilemu City Council , then composed of Aldo Polanco Contreras , Jorge Vargas González , Mario Bichón Cáceres , Mariano Polanco Galarce , and Raúl Tobar Pavez , for 30 million pesos ( approximately US \$ 60 @,@ 000 ) .

In 1987 , after the re @-@ inauguration of another work of Agustín Ross , the Ross Park , a request was made to the National Monuments Council that both the park and the former casino be declared Monumentos Históricos ( National Monuments ) ; they were so designated on 25 February 1988 .

= = = 1995 ? 2008 : Restoration = = =

After the former casino was purchased by the government of Pichilemu , the building was used to hold meetings , exhibitions of paintings , sculptures , theater , and for launching books . In 1997 , the Club Aéreo de Pichilemu ( Aero Club of Pichilemu ) requested the building to host the fiftieth annual reunion of the Air Federation of Chile . Permission was granted , but the Club Aéreo had to purchase toilet fixtures , as the ones in the building were seriously damaged . This prompted the government of Mayor Jorge Vargas González ( 1996 ? 2007 ) to begin restoring the deteriorated former casino , but it was not until 2004 that the Regional Government of Libertador General Bernardo O 'Higgins Region approved financing for a restoration design study . The study by the Department of Architecture of the Ministry of Public Works began in 2005 and lasted until mid ? 2006 . Afterwards , on 15 December , Intendant of Libertador General Bernardo O 'Higgins Region Héctor Leiva Polanco unveiled to the community of Pichilemu the design and announced that he would present a financing proposal during the next year to the Fondo Nacional de Desarrollo Regional ( National Fund of Regional Development ) . The project was approved on 23 January 2007 ; the budget , according to architect Jorge Godoy Rojas , was 513 @,@ 125 @,@ 000 pesos ( US \$ 1 @,@ 026 @,@ 250 ) . On 12 June 2007 , the budget was increased to accommodate additional restoration work , by 100 million pesos to 663 @,@ 702 @,@ 000 pesos ( US \$ 1 @,@ 327 @,@ 404 ) .

On 14 February 2007 , the Regional Secretary ( Seremi ) of the Ministry of Public Works , Beatriz Valenzuela , wrote in an article in the online newspaper El Rancahuaso , " The current state of the historic monument is bad , because of the deterioration of the roof , which over the years has had permanently leaked water and humidity . This can be easily seen in the damaged wood of its inside enclosure and the great frame of the mansard roof , which is of oak wood . " Some months later , on

23 August , Valenzuela announced that the restoration of the building would begin that same day , after it was authorized by the Regional Government ; the building would become a cultural center , housing the local public library and art galleries . The restoration work was the responsibility of development firm Atelier Consultores .

During the restoration of the casino , a number of historical items were found . Those included newspapers , specifically a copy of Las Últimas Noticias from February 1941 , during the time the building served as a hotel ; a US telephone battery from 1909 ; and a tile from the casino 's ceiling with signatures and drawings by casino workers in 1915 .

= = = 2009 ? present : Cultural center = = =

The completely restored building opened on 23 January 2009 , one hundred years after its original construction . An exhibition of photographs by Ana María Encina Lemarchand was the first to be staged in the restored building . In June 2009 , a non @-@ political organization called the Corporación Cultural de Pichilemu ( Pichilemu Cultural Corporation ) was formed to manage the cultural center , in coordination with the local government . The center 's inauguration was supposed to take place in March of that year , with President Michelle Bachelet Jeria in attendance ; however , it was postponed until 27 January 2010 . Bachelet toured the rooms of the cultural center with Mayor Roberto Córdova , and later said that the center " [ is ] to merge itself with the origins of modern Pichilemu , restoring the facilities to do what is so necessary : to make room for the creativity , talent , imagination , dreams of so many young and many people . "

After the earthquakes of 27 February , and 11 March 2010 , the cultural center was " slightly " damaged . The balaustrades of both the northwest and southeast towers of the building fell down after the earthquakes ; in the northwest tower , a pole broke ; and there were some cracks and minor damage to the walls . Repairs took place in February 2011 , with an investment of fourteen million pesos ( US \$ 28 @,@ 000 ) by the government of Pichilemu .

= = Organization = =

The Centro Cultural Agustín Ross houses the local public library , and has four exhibition rooms , an auditorium , a music room , and several other rooms in which workshops take place for yoga , acrobatics , theatre , and other disciplines for people of all ages . The restoration of the cultural centre prompted the creation of an independent organization called the Corporación Cultural de Pichilemu ( Pichilemu Cultural Corporation ) .

= = = Public library = = =

The Biblioteca Pública de Pichilemu ( Public Library of Pichilemu ) is the public library of the city of Pichilemu , and its director as of 2011 is María Angélica Yáñez Cortés . The library was created on 16 May 1989 , under the leadership of Mayor René Maturana Maldonado .

The library was previously located in a dedicated building on Santa María Avenue from 1989 until 16 January 2009 , before relocating to the Centro Cultural Agustín Ross . In September 2010 , the library received a donation of 150 music and culture @-@ related books with the help of Alejandra Domedel , the cultural center 's communications and cultural management officer .

= = = Pichilemu Cultural Corporation = = =

Jorge Godoy Rojas , architect of the University of Chile , suggested in an January 2007 article he wrote for the online newspaper El Cachapoal that a semi @-@ autonomous legal entity be set up for the management of the cultural center . Such a legal entity had also been suggested to the authorities previously by local cultural organizations for several years , but they had been largely ignored . On 20 November 2008 , fourteen local organizations , including the Tourism Chamber of Pichilemu , the Agrupación Ciudadana por un Pichilemu Limpio ( Citizens Group for a Clean

Pichilemu ) , and Canal 3 Pichilemu , sent a letter to the Pichilemu City Council requesting the creation of the Corporación Cultural de Pichilemu ( Pichilemu Cultural Corporation ) for the third time .

In May 2009 , municipal employee Jorge Torres Avaca reported that the Cultural Corporation had been approved by the City Council , and its constitution was to be drawn up on 2 June ; it was approved on 11 June . Of the seven directors of the corporation , two are elected , two are appointed by the Pichilemu City Council , and another two by the regional or provincial government , and the mayor presides as the seventh member . Longtime Pichilemu resident sculptor Macarena Irrarázabal Correa and Professor Carlos Leyton Labarca , native of the nearby village of Ciruelos and creator of the Museo del Niño Rural ( Museum of the Rural Child ) , were elected .

= = In popular culture = =

There is a popular myth surrounding the former casino which tells of " underground caves " between the Gruta de la Virgen ( also known as the Gruta de Nuestra Señora de Lourdes ; Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes ) and the building , crossing Agustín Ross Park . During the restoration of the building , in December 2007 , it was reported that " two great walls constructed with flagstone , very wide and very close together " were found , but nothing was confirmed afterwards .

Before the former casino building was completed , in 1908 , Agustín Ross Edwards and Evaristo Merino reported to historiographer José Toribio Medina the existence of indigenous remains in the cave now called the Gruta de la Virgen . Medina asked Argentinean ethnographer Félix Faustino Outes to inspect the remains , and subsequently Medina wrote the book Los Restos Indígenas de Pichilemu ( The Indigenous Remains of Pichilemu ) , using the report Faustino Outes gave him .

American writer Trudy Larkin Forster wrote the book Los Gatos del Casino : la Historia de Don Agustín Ross Edwards y la Brigada de los Gatos Negros ( The Cats of the Casino : the History of Sir Agustín Ross Edwards and the Brigade of the Black Cats ) in 1999 . The book is set in Pichilemu and the Agustín Ross Casino , and it was premiered in the Children 's Book Fair of Santiago in June 1999 , and then in the Agustín Ross Art Room ( in current Centro Cultural Agustín Ross ) on 18 September of that year .