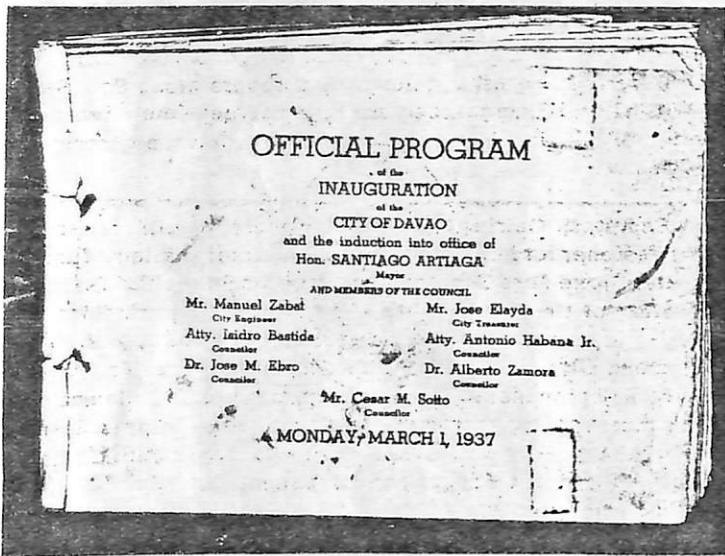


The Day Davao was Inaugurated as a Chartered City

by: Ernesto I. Corcino

Davaoños were up much earlier than usual that Monday morning. The sky was clear and the air cool, almost caressing the skin and penetrating deep into your lungs when you inhaled. The chirping of the gao-gao birds among the trees in the spacious backyards of the large Spanish-style houses and the tweeting of the tiny tamsis among the coconut grooves nearby seemed to augur the happy and bright atmosphere for the day.

It was typical of the early part of summer and even the soft glow of the rising sun behind the greenish silhouette of the Samal mountains appeared to herald a glorious day. For indeed Davaoños on that day - March 1, 1937 - were full of excitement and eager anticipation. The day was to be the climax of several busy days of preparation. It was the day for the inauguration of the municipality of Davao and the municipal district of Guianga combined, as a chartered city. People were up very early to prepare for the celebration and participate in the parade to manifest their joy on the birth of a city.



The frontispiece page of the Official Inaugural Program of Davao City, shows that Davao City was inaugurated on March 1, 1937

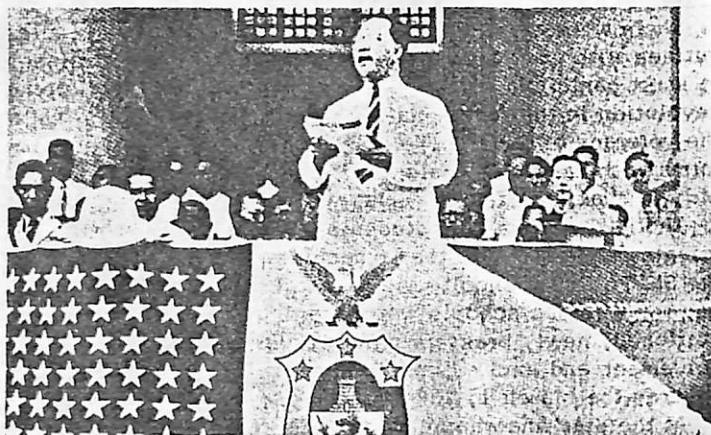
Monday, March 1, 1937, was the promised day to launch the much-talked of progressive town of Davao, with its lush Japanese and American plantations, into a new era of its political life. Its organization into a city was part of the vision of then President Manuel L. Quezon, who only a year before assumed the Presidency of the Commonwealth Government, and who declared in his inaugural address to "build a government that will be just, honest, efficient and strong... that must satisfy not only the passing needs of the hour but also the exacting demands of the future."

Thus it was that among the early acts of the National Assembly under the Commonwealth Government, Davao's first elected Assemblyman (previously the Representatives from Davao were appointive) the Honorable Romualdo C. Quimpó, introduced Bill No. 609 or An Act Creating the

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Secretary of the Interior, the Hon. Elpidio Quirino, as he delivered his major address on Inauguration Day of Davao as a Chartered City on March 1, 1937

City of Davao. It was the first legislation of the kind introduced in the National Assembly for the chartering of larger municipalities which were also provincial capitals. The bill in many ways became the model for the creation of other Philippine cities, including that of the charter of Zamboanga City which was patterned after the Davao Charter.

Bill No. 609 was officially titled Commonwealth Act No. 51, An Act Creating the City of Davao, and which was signed into law by President Quezon on October 16, 1936. Three months later, in Executive Proclamation No. 132, dated January 23, 1937, the President stipulated the formation and inauguration of the City of Davao as of March 1, 1937.

Preparations for an appropriate observance of the important event fell on the shoulders of the officials of the municipality of Davao, which then was headed by Dr. Alberto Zamora. With the full-hearted cooperation and active assistance of the municipal council, of provincial and national government officials located in Davao, of presidents and leading members of the various social, civic and religious organizations, of the schools, professional associations, business establishments, shipping companies, labor organizations in Davao, and representatives of the indigenous cultural minority groups, every aspect to make the celebration of Davao's charter day a memorable one was looked into.

The Executive Committee for the inaugural program alone had fifty members. In addition, there were the committees on Finance, on Fluvial Parade, on Ladies Fluvial Reception, on Land Parade, on Transportation, on Reception and Ball, on Dutch Lunch, on Decorations and Platform, on Illumination, on Fireworks, on Arches, on Athletics, on Music, on Invitation, on Invocation, on Popular Lawn Party and on Publicity, which altogether counted with 185 listed members.

The preparations for a fitting and successful celebration of the Cityhood Day of Davao had involved practically all those who counted then in the various sectors of the community and the government service. Even laborers both in

Source: SMAA Meet, Jan. 27 - Feb. 2, '74
(Souvenir program) 91