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## FRANCISCO ORTIGAS

President of the Code Committee

*By Judge W. L. Goldsborough.*

One of the most important posts which Governor-General Harrison has been called upon to fill is that of President of the Code Committee. The work of the position is exacting in the highest degree, and its efficient performance may result in immense benefit to the Islands. The choice was evidently carefully made by the Governor-General in consultation with the Speaker of the Assembly, the Secretary of Finance and Justice, and other prominent officials and members of the bar. It resulted in the selection of a gentleman of ability commensurate with the high duties of the office.

Hon. Francisco Ortigas y Barcinas was born in 1875 at Porac, Pampanga, where his father, Captain Ignacio Ortigas of the Spanish Infantry, was stationed as Comandante Político-Militar. Upon the death of Captain Ortigas in 1877 the family moved to Manila, where the subject of this sketch has ever since lived. In 1884 young Ortigas became a student at the College of San Juan de Letran, Walled City, and in 1885, a vacancy having occurred among the sons of deceased Spanish officers who were boarded at the college (plaza de huerfano), he secured it and went to live in the college buildings. In 1889 he began the study of law in the University of Santo Tomas, and in 1894, upon the beginning of the fifth period of the law course, he changed his living place from San Juan de Letran and was enrolled as assistant in the law firm composed of Messrs. José Juan de Yeaza and Rafael Del-Pan, whose offices were located in what is now the Delmonico Hotel, Calle General Luna. Hon. Gregorio Araneta, late Secretary of Finance and Justice, was at that time first assistant in the office of the firm. Mr. Yeaza was a man of great ability, and the unquestioned leader of the bar of Manila during the period in which Mr. Ortigas was with him.

In March, 1896, Mr. Ortigas graduated in law from the University of Santo Tomas and was admitted to the bar. In July of the same year, upon the death of Sr. Yeaza, Mr. Del-Pan established his law office in the Plaza del Carmen, Quiapo, with Mr. Ortigas as assistant, and this relation continued until the American occupation of Manila in August, 1898, shortly after which Mr. Ortigas opened an office of his own in Calle Solana, Walled City. In the latter part of 1899 the United States Military Governor appointed Mr. Ortigas Register of Property for that portion of the city of Manila south of the river Pasig, and at about the same time he moved his law office from Calle Solana to Calle Cabildo. From 1899, continuously until 1903, when his first partnership was formed, Mr. Ortigas practiced alone, maintaining a large office with six or seven assistants, among whom were Hon. Macario Adriático, now a member of the Code Committee and lately Assemblyman from Mindoro; Hon. Pedro Concepción, now a judge of the Court of First Instance; Hon. Lorenzo Fenoy, lately member of the Assembly from Pangasinan; Hon. Eusebio Orense, lately member of the Assembly from Batangas; Hon. Vicente Vera, lately member of the Assembly from Sorsogon; and Mr. Florencio Gonzales. In 1900 Mr. Ortigas married Miss Julia Vargas y Camus, daughter of Major Eduardo Vargas of the Spanish Marine Corps, who was the officer designated by the Spanish authorities to represent the Navy of Spain in the settlement of all questions relating to naval property in the Philippines with the American naval officers. Nine children have been born to them, four sons and five daughters, of whom two sons and five daughters are living, the eldest eleven years of age.

In August, 1901, Mr. Ortigas' office as Register of Property for the district south of the Pasig ended upon the transfer of the city from military to civil government, but in 1902 he was appointed by Governor Taft Register of Property for the entire city, which position he resigned in 1903 as it interfered with his extensive and continually growing practice. In the middle of 1903 he formed a partnership for the practice of law with Hon. Rafael Del-Pan under the firm name of Del-Pan & Ortigas, with offices on the Escolta. In 1904 Mr. Frederick P. Fisher joined them, and in the same year the firm, Del-Pan, Ortigas & Fisher, was appointed, by Act No. 1120 of the Philippine Commission, special attorneys for the Government to investigate and report on all questions of title arising in connection with the Government's purchase of the Friar Lands. In 1905 the offices of the firm were moved to Plaza San Gabriel. Since 1906 Mr. Ortigas has been the professor conducting the second course on the Civil Code in his alma mater, the University

of Santo Tomas. In the latter part of 1907, upon the withdrawal of Mr. Del-Pan, the law firm became Ortigas & Fisher, under which name it continued until the middle of 1909 when it was consolidated with Haussermann & Cohn under the name of Haussermann, Ortigas, Cohn & Fisher. Mr. Ortigas remained a member of this firm until March, 1910, when he withdrew from practice to accept the membership in the Code Committee tendered him by Governor-General Forbes.

During the years following the American occupation Mr. Ortigas was engaged in many of the most important litigations and in the settlement of many large estates. In the largest case which has ever arisen in the Philippines, that of the failure of Mendezona & Co., the liabilities of which amounted to about ₱6,000,000, he represented the Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation, the Spanish-Filipino Bank, and the Augustinian Friars. Since 1912, in addition to his Code Committee work, and his professorship in the University of Santo Tomas, he has been a lecturer in the University of the Philippines on the subjects of the mortgage law, obligations and successions. In December, 1913, upon the transfer of its first President to the Supreme Court, came his appointment as President of the Code Committee and his entry upon the duties of that office.

In addition to his varied and extensive professional work, Mr. Ortigas has taken a public spirited interest, and had a prominent part, in the establishment and development of various business enterprises which are now in a flourishing condition in his home city, including El Hogar Filipino, The Insular Life Insurance Co., and "Filipinas," Compañía de Seguros. He owns a handsome residence at No. 120 Calle Alix, and is a member of a number of clubs and societies, among them El Circulo Progresista, El Casino Español, La Sociedad de Tiro al Blanco, and the Baguio Country Club.

The most admirable qualities of mind and heart, coupled with a mastery of both Spanish and English, have made Mr. Ortigas deservedly and universally popular. He is held in the highest esteem by Filipinos, Americans, and Europeans alike.