

“JGL Eye” Column

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CHICAGO, Illinois (JGLi) – In the early 19th century, Filipinos, who hailed from Manila, Philippines, were entered in the United States Census records as “Provencia Manila, Spain” as their place of origin.

On the other hand a Filipino immigrant in the United States, whose loyalty was divided between the United States and Spain, before the Spanish American War and would rather remain neutral to evade going to war, had opted to change his family name by assuming his mother’s maiden name.

(Editor's Note: Mr. Lariosa is the Chicago-based representative of the National Press Club of the Philippines. He is also the correspondent of the Manila Bulletin and Tempo newspapers of the Philippines.)

To preserve the Filipino identity and culture like Catholic religion, Filipino women had to marry from among their own fellow Filipino descendants, not another race. These are some of the nuggets of information a family historian, who descended from the “Manilamen of Louisiana,” told this columnist.

Rhonda Lee Richoux may have a French name but she prides herself as a Filipino. She sent me an email two weeks ago after reading my column floating on the Internet during the last two years that discussed the sloppy account of Ms. Marina E. Espina about the “Manilamen of Louisiana” in her book, “The Filipinos of Louisiana” (1988, A.F. La Borde, New Orleans).

The Real First Filipino Settlers in Louisiana - MabuhayRadio

Written by Joseph G. Lariosa

Thursday, 03 April 2008 02:15 - Last Updated Tuesday, 07 December 2010 11:00

Editor's Note: Many historians and the MabuhayRadio editorial staff have concluded that the book about the supposed "Manilamen of Louisiana" is a hoax. We have said that Ms. Espina is one of the more-infamous "hoaxbalahaps" in the Filipino-American historical circles. This article validates the critics' claim that Ms. Espina antedated the arrival of Filipinos in Louisiana by at least one century. Ms. Espina's inclusion of "Bernard Ducusen (sic), the American boxer, who nearly defeated Sugar Ray Robinson," as a descendant of the Manilamen, drew fire from NaFFAA regional director Ed Navarra of Michigan, who happened to interview Mr. Docusen, himself, who provided him a copy of a 100-page journal. Mr. Docusen turned out to be a son of a Philippine Scout, who arrived much later than the Manilamen, and a French mother, who raised him in New Orleans.

Although, the Manilamen were said to have arrived in Louisiana in 1763, Ms. Richoux, a free lance writer and amateur genealogist, was only able to document the arrival of her Filipino ancestor only as early as 1860 while her French/Irish ancestor dates back before 1400.

While Ms. Espina claimed that the Manilamen were said to have arrived in Louisiana in 1763, Ms. Richoux, a free lance writer and amateur genealogist, was only able to document the arrival of her Filipino ancestor as early as 1860

When super typhoon Katrina struck on Aug. 29, 2005, she said, it "changed our lives forever. Most of us lived in the St. Bernard community, outside New Orleans, the entire community was destroyed by the floodwaters of Katrina that rushed in through failed levees.

CAMPS ARE NOW GONE

"The camps on the lake where we spent our summers together are now gone, lonely stilts jutting through the water are the only evidence that they ever existed.

"We are no longer living in our small community together. Most of us are relocated to other towns and states. Things will never be the same again."

Ms. Richoux, whose family was extensively cited by Ms. Espina in her book, said in the family tree she is building since 2005, her main sources of her family research are interviews with the family members, the family oral history and the existing government records, like the U.S. Census.

According to the records in her possession, she is a descendant of Felipe Madriaga of the Philippine Island and Bridgett Nugent of Ireland.

Felipe and Bridgett started their family in Southeast Louisiana back in the (late) 1800's, but because they have no sons, she traced a matriarchal family line.

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She said many “people in the 19th and early 20th centuries were illiterates, and records clerks, priests and census takers spelled the names phonetically.”

In her genealogy, she listed more than 600 names as part of her family tree. According to her findings, her ancestor, Felipe Madriaga, was born about 1815 in Ilocos Norte in the Philippines, and died in Louisiana. He married Brigette Nugent, who was born about 1832 in Ireland and died in Louisiana.

She said although her great grandmother pronounced the family name of Felipe as “Madrigal,” documents show that it is spelled “Madriaga.”

U.S. CENSUS RECORDS

According to family elders, Felipe and Brigett were likely buried near one of the fishing villages, where they stayed. They remembered a great storm that flooded the area, and that the coffins were dislodged from the ground and floated away.

According to the 1860 U.S. Federal Census, Parish of St. Bernard, State of Louisiana, Felipe was listed as “Philippe Madriaga Age 45 Occup Fisher Origin Provencia Manila Spain.” (Manila was actually a province of Mexico, or “New Spain.”)

“Brigett Nogant Age 27 relationship not shown Origin Ireland;

“Elizabeth Madriaga Age 2 Origin Louisiana.”

Rhonda Lee Richoux was born in New Orleans in 1952. Her father is Joseph Dudley Richoux, a Cajun (Canadian Indian), and her mother is Lilian Mae Burtanog Richoux, a fifth-generation Filipino descendant.

Rhonda Lee said her grandmother, Rosalie Borabod Martinez, told her about her husband, Benito Yabut. She said that Benito was a crewman when he was just 18 or 19 years old. When he learned that war between Spain and America was imminent, he decided to jump ship. He changed his name to Martinez, his mother’s maiden name, and found his way to the Filipino community in Louisiana. He became a fisherman, met her great grandmother and started a family.

She said the women in her family line married Filipino men up to her mother’s generation so the Filipino identity is evident and the descendants easy to recognize.

The next challenge Rhonda is facing is how to find out how her ancestor, Felipe Madriaga, managed to come to America.

She said the present generation has now become a “melting pot.” Yet her blue-eyed niece, Brooke Faxon, will proudly tell people, “I’m a Filipino.”

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(lariosa_jos@sbcglobal.net)

ORIGINAL ANCESTORS:

{ice 642 -link [ORIGINAL ANCESTORS:]}Photo of Rhonda Lee Richoux's original ancestor and his family, taken at Manila Village when Rhonda Lee Richoux's great grandmother was a child. On the back of the photo was written: "Great Grandfather Felipe from Ilocos North of Philippines", and "Great-grandmother Brigett Nugent from Ireland" and then it lists the recognizable people in the photo. It was written by Emile Lucien Lauria, her grandmother Lillian's first cousin. Felipe and Brigett are standing back row center in the photo. (Madriaga-Nugent Family Tree Photo)

FAMILY HISTORIAN:

{ice 640 -link [FAMILY HISTORIAN]}Rhonda Lee Richoux (daughter of Joseph Dudley Richoux and Lillian Mae Burtanog) was born 27 Sep 1952 New Orleans, Orleans, Louisiana, U.S.A. 177 . She married (1) Michael Dennis Hendrix on 22 Aug 1975 Chalmette, St. Bernard, Louisiana, U.S.A., son of Paul Hendrix and Betty Gamble. She married (2) Jerald Glenn Fox on 20 Jan 1990 in Slidell, St. Tammany, Louisiana, U.S.A.178, son of Jack Fox and Izora June Coleman. She married (3) Edward John Karajulles on 2002, son of Enver Mustafer Karajulles and May Leonard. (Madriaga-Nugent Family Tree Photo)

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LATEST GENERATION:

{ice 641 -link [LATEST GENERATION:]}Brooke Nikol Faxon (daughter of Todd Alexander Faxon and Christie King) was born 22 Aug 1993. (Madriago-Nugent Family Tree Photo).

JOSEPH G. LARIOSA

Journal Group Link International

P. O. BOX 805072

CHICAGO IL 60680-4112 U.S.A.

Telefax No. 773.283.5986

Email: lariosa_jos@sbcglobal.net

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