

The Philippines- New Mexico Connection

and

The Filipino Migration to New Mexico

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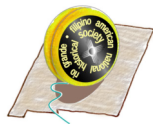
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Filipino Agricultural Workers in New Mexico



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The Philippines-New Mexico Connection

The Philippines and New Mexico share a long history, arising out of Spanish colonization which spanned for more than 300 years and American Territorial imperative for 50 years.

Hispanization of the Philippines

The year 1521 marked the beginning of this connection when the King of Spain sent a Portuguese mercenary, Ferdinand Magellan, to explore “spices and souls.” Magellan landed in Leyte, Philippines but his expedition was curtailed when he was killed by a Mactan chieftain, Lapu-lapu, the first national hero who defied colonization. After four more failed expeditions, Spain finally succeeded under the leadership of Miguel Lopez de Legaspi. The country was named after King Philip II of Spain; thus began the hispanization of the Philippines. The common history with Spain brought the Philippines and New Mexico into similar grounds, such as:

- **Christian Names.** Spanish law forced many Filipinos to take Spanish or Christian names.
- **Language.** The national language, Tagalog (or Pilipino) derives most of the words from Spanish such as: *Kumusta ka* (how are you) from “Como esta usted” and *kalye* (street) from “calle.” Currency in the Philippines is also called *pesos* and *centavos*.
- **Religion.** Spain sent the “soldiers of soul,” Spanish friars, and forced the Filipinos to convert to Catholicism. To date, Philippines is the only country in Asia which has the most (80%) Roman Catholics.
- **Common Rules.** Spain through the Viceroy of Mexico City once ruled New Mexico and the Philippines. The laws of the Indies governed both the establishment of permanent Spanish settlements.
- **Manila-Acapulco Galleon Trade.** By the mid-sixteenth century, Spaniards used Manila as the connecting point of trade between Asia and North American (Acapulco, Mexico) known as the Manila-Acapulco Galleon trade. This important route was tied to New Mexico through the Camino Real. Because of the galleon trade that lasted more than 200 years, Filipinos and Mexicans share some of the plants, animals, words and customs.
- **Catholic Education.** In the 17th century, Christian Brothers arrived in NM and helped found St. Michael’s College in Santa Fe. Many native New Mexican young men joined the Christian Brothers years later. One of them was Brother Daniel Ortiz, a native of Santa Fe, who later volunteered for a missionary work in the Philippines. He later became the President of La Salle College in Bacolod and later, Executive Director of La Salle College in Manila.

Spanish-American War

The United States’ growing desire for territorial expansion, their support of the Cuban revolution against Spain, and the sinking of the US warship *Maine* triggered the war between US and Spain. The battlegrounds were Cuba and the Philippines. United States defeated the Spanish Armada in the

Battle of Manila Bay. Thereafter, through the Treaty of Paris signed on December 10, 1898, the Philippines, Puerto Rico and Guam were sold by Spain to the United States for 20 million dollars. This ended the Spanish-American war which lasted only four months. After three decades of bloodshed to claim independence from Spain, the Filipinos were again subjugated to another master, the Americans.

Americanization of the Philippines

- **Education**

During the Spanish colonization, education was limited to the elite. Unlike Spain who brought religious friars, US brought 600 educators and transplanted a complete educational system available to all Filipinos. Although the Philippines has 85 to 90 dialects, English is used as the business language. Filipinos' excellent command of English made them competent in entering the world labor market. It made the Philippines one of the most literate countries in Asia.

The American Territorial Government in the Philippines drew heavily on its experience in setting up provisional governments in the American Southwest. Preference was given to administrators and government workers who had experience with American Indians. This was most evident among the schoolteachers known as the Thomasites. The American Territorial Government recruited heavily among teachers who had experience with Apache, Navajo, Pueblo children, and other American Indian tribes. The American regime believed that these schoolteachers had special skills necessary to teach the remote and exotic Filipino people.

- **Military/Political Leaders**



George Curry



Gen. Douglas MacArthur

Governor of Philippine Provinces and New Mexico.

During the American occupation, George Curry, a New Mexican, accepted the War Department's call to go to the Philippines to fight against the Filipino rebels. Curry became the Governor of Camarines (1901) and the Chief of Police of Manila (1901-02) under Gov-General William Taft. He later became the governor of Isabela (1904) and Samar (1905-07). When the New Mexico Governor Herbert Hagerman was removed, Curry was assigned by President Roosevelt to take over (1907-10).

MacArthurs. Arthur MacArthur, Jr. and his son, Douglas, were both residents of New Mexico and the Philippines. Arthur was the Commanding Officer at Fort Selden, present site of Radium Springs from 1884 to 1886 when Douglas was 4 years old. Arthur fought in the Spanish-American War

and became a military governor of the Philippines (1900). Son Douglas became a general and was also assigned to the Philippines and became the Philippine Field Marshal in 1936. During World War II, Douglas liberated the Philippines from the Japanese in 1944.



Bataan Death March (photo above). In 1941, Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor and simultaneously invaded the Philippines. The Filipinos and Americans had a common foe: the Japanese. Some 1800 New Mexicans were sent to the Philippines to help liberate the country from Japanese occupation. These New Mexicans were members of the New Mexico National Guard 200th Coastal Artillery. Many of them were killed prior to the surrender of Bataan and Corregidor. Many more perished in what is known as the Bataan Death March. Less than half survived to return to New Mexico. Less than 200 of these Bataan survivors are still alive, most in their seventies and eighties. Some of these survivors still maintain direct ties to the Philippines through marriage and friendship.

Independence

The Tydings-McDuffie Bill (1935) granted absolute and complete independence of the Philippines from the US. This was finalized on July 4, 1946. Although war brought tragedy, it also had benefits. Some Filipinos were able to migrate.

The Filipino Migration to New Mexico

The first Filipinos arrived in North America in 1584 when a Spanish ship with Filipino crewmen landed at Morro Bay, near San Obispo, California. In 2000, 2 million Filipinos live in the US.

In New Mexico, the presence of Filipinos was officially recorded in 1910 when 10 native-born Filipinos were counted by the United States Census. By 1930, this number increased to 27 native-born Filipinos. By 2000, census counted approximately 5000 Filipinos (one race or any combination with another race).

Several factors lured these Filipinos to New Mexico: work, marriage/family reunification, education, and special laws.

- **Agricultural Workers.** Initial findings from FANHS Rio Grande Chapter oral history research point to a large number of Filipino agricultural migrant workers between 1920 and 1977. They came from Washington, California, and Arizona to work in the carrot and lettuce fields

around New Mexico, specifically in the cities of Grants, Los Lunas, Moriarty, Estancia, and Jemez Springs. In Grants, Filipinos were credited for introducing a way of packaging carrots that took less time and minimized the damage to the produce. Some of these Filipinos stayed in New Mexico and intermarried with local New Mexicans.



Simplicio Galbiso of Vintar, Ilocos Norte was one of the migrant farm workers from California who went to Bluewater, New Mexico to harvest lettuce. He met Josephine Armijo from Corrales in the 1940's. They had seven children. (See "David Galbiso".)

- **Medical and Technical Professionals.** The influx of doctors, nurses, engineers and other professions came during a shortage of technical personnel in the US. There were also religious workers, businessmen, and students who were in the non-quota (immigration) classification.



Consuelo (Chol) Aquino from Barrio Caybiga near Manila was a nurse when she came to the US under the professional exchange program. She met her husband, Albert in Delaware. They have five children.

She is one of the first Filipinos in the public health profession to serve the southwest area including the native Americans (Navajo nation) in Arizona. When one of her daughters entered the Air Force Academy in Colorado, Chol was transferred by the US Public Health Service to the Indian Medical Center in Albuquerque.

Marriage and Family Reunification

Others Filipinos in the non-quota classification were: a) wives and children of Filipino servicemen who became US citizens under the War Bride Act (1945); b) Filipinos inducted into the US Armed Forces who filed for naturalization, and c) military personnel who were Philippine scouts in the US Army and their families.

Eugenio A. Zafra, Sr., a Filipino-Danish WWII veteran married Consuelo Pacheco, a Spanish-Filipina from Manila. They had seven children. While in the military, Eugenio was assigned to Sandia Army Base (now Kirtland Air Force Base) and liked New Mexico because of the climate and beautiful blue sky. They lived in the Philippines until he retired in the 1970's and came back to Albuquerque with his family.

Special Immigration Permit

This permit allowed a Filipino minor to be adopted by an American citizen.

Crisanto Castillo Underwood was working as a mess hall boy in the US Army in the Philippines after the war when he met US Army Lieutenant Gailey Underwood to whom he expressed his desire to come to the US. Cris

lived with the Underwoods since he was 11 years old. Lt. Underwood and his wife adopted Cris at the age of 14. The Underwoods requested Congressman Hernandez and Senator Clinton Anderson to sponsor a bill in the US Congress for a special immigrant permit to allow Cris to enter the US as a naturalized born child of the Underwoods. Two years after the bill was passed, the mess hall boy became Cris Underwood. His first and last stop: Albuquerque where the elder Underwoods lived.

Filipino Americans' Contribution to New Mexico

The Filipino Americans in NM occupy important positions in public and private sectors.



Rae Aguila Van Hoven is the highest ranking Filipino American in NM state government. She is the Chief Drainage Engineer of the NM Highway and Transportation Department.

David Galbiso, the son of migrant worker, Simplicio, and Fita, served in the US Army and later began a career in Federal government service. Currently, he is an intelligence research analyst with the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement of the Department of Homeland Security.



Sister Josephine de Gorostiza joined the religious congregation of the Daughters of Charity of Canossia and came to Albuquerque as a full time teacher at Annunciation Parochial School. She taught at other parochial schools including Isleta Pueblo.

Nenette Santos Boucher is the first Asian awarded the Freedom Award by the National Indian Youth Leadership Project. She was a teacher and counselor at the Navajo community. She worked at the Rehoboth McKinley County Health Center Services (Gallup) helping new Filipino nurses.



NOTE

More Filipino Americans will be featured in the book: *Filipino Americans in New Mexico* to be published by FANHS-RG.

Entrepreneurs

Celia Ruiz Tomlinson is the president and CEO of Rhombus Professional Associates, a full service engineering and environmental consulting firm. She is the first registered female professional engineer in NM and the first minority to found, own and operate an engineering company. She wrote an autobiography, *Don't Ever Tell Me You Can't*.



Lynda (right) is shown with daughter, Christine.

Lynda Berdin Bruce is the president of LHB Corp. dba (doing business as) RC Gorman/Nizhoni Gallery which features artwork of RC Gorman (the American Picasso), Guilloume (Bolismo founder), Lawrence Vargas (Southwest storyteller artist), and dealer of The Greenwich Workshop, world's biggest art publisher. She is a direct descendant of Lapu-lapu, chieftain of the Visayas Island, who killed Magellan, the world navigator who discovered the Philippines.

Teem Suelto, a Certified Public Accountant, is a financial advisor and regional Vice-Pres. of Money Concepts. In 2003, she won the Legend Award with seven successful associates. She was the only female and Filipino to get this award.



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Filipino American National Historical Society (FANHS) Rio Grande Chapter

Inspired by Dr. Fred Cordova's lecture "Remembering their Past for the Future" in celebration of the Centennial Celebration of the Philippine Independence from Spain, a core group of Filipino New Mexicans began to document their family histories and conduct research on Filipino pioneers. The nexus of energized group formed the core of the Rio Grande Chapter which was established on September 14, 1998.

As one of the 22 chapters of FANHS, the Rio Grande Chapter aims to:

- increase the visibility of Filipino Americans in New Mexico (NM);
- promote awareness of the history of Filipino presence in NM;
- highlight the shared colonial history of the Philippines & NM;
- highlight the significant contributions Filipino Americans have made in NM;
- encourage Filipino Americans to identify themselves with the Filipino community in NM; and
- encourage local-born Filipino Americans and others to share their experiences.

Since 1998, the Rio Grande Chapter has presented storyboards on oral history, published newsletters, presented PAMANA (heritage) Awards, and presented papers at the national FANHS conferences. It has also hosted the FANHS Trustees' meeting in 2003. It continues its quarterly activities: Oral History gathering & Tagalog class.

Founding President: Dr. Dely Alcantara (1998-2000)

Past Presidents: David Galbiso (2001-2002)

Evelio Sabay (2003-2004)

Officers (2005-2006)

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