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The Basques of New Orleans

Koldo San Sebastian



The Port of New Orleans

The relationship of Basques with Louisiana antedates the independence of the United States, and, of course, incorporation of that territory into the Union. The Basque presence was most evident throughout the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth, when a significant community of Basque mariners resided in New Orleans. It declined there, as in other

seaports, as air transportation after the Second World War began, little by little, to displace maritime runs and “flags of convenience.”

Even in the colonial period, Basques have shown interest in that part of the world. The city of Bilbao wished to gain access to the Louisiana Territory towards the middle of the eighteenth century. The failure of a project in 1736 to create a navigation company linked with Buenos Aires prompted the Bilboa Consulate to try to extend its commercial trafficking to Louisiana after it was ceded to Spain in 1762. Between 1764 and 1767, Bilboa undertook an unsuccessful project to create a trading company dealing in foodstuffs and slaves.¹ With the support of the Consulate and of the Seignury of Bizkaia, the Bilboa resident of Flemish origin, Pedro Francisco de Goosens, and a merchant of Marseille, Henri Pouillard, promoted this project. The interest in opening new routes towards ports of the North American continent did not decline throughout the century, as is evident in the letter of the Consulate of Bilbao expressing its interest, between 1788 and 1800, in establishing a direct commercial route and trading company with the ports of Louisiana and Florida.

On the other hand, when Spain, in 1800, sold Louisiana to France, the last Spanish governor of the territory was the Bilboan, Juan Manuel Salcedo, a soldier who had begun his career in the Militia of the Seignury of Bizkaia.² Earlier, Luis de Unzaga y Amézaga had occupied the same position. It is certain that, with the failure of the trading company initiative, the Basque presence in the area did not transcend a handful of functionaries and soldiers, as was the case of the Araban, José de Orúe y Gorbea, who was a judge and royal controller in New Orleans. He built his house at the corner of Chartres and St. Anne streets (it was destroyed in a fire and rebuilt subsequently by José Javier de Montalba). Along with Orúe y Gorbea, those other Basques serving were the Brigadier José de Ezpeleta Galdeano, the Gayarres, Manuel Urrea, Miguel Irigoyen, Santiago Zaldivar and Jean Baptiste Labatut Echevarría.³

When, in 1803, France sold the territory to the United States, the only Basques that appeared in the census of Louisiana were Antonio Argoitia and the afore-mentioned Labatut, of whom more below.

After 1815, commerce in the Gulf of Mexico experienced a great expansion, with New Orleans serving as a major import and export center. The city traded with Santo Domingo, Cuba,

¹ Teófilo Guiard (1914), *Historia del Consulado y Casa de Contratación de la villa de Bilbao*. Bilbao, *La Gran Enciclopedia Vasca*, Vol. II, pp. 366-372.

² Eric Beerman, *El tratado de San Ildefonso (1800) y el último gobernador español de La Luisiana*. In Manuel Juan Salcedo, *Las Palmas* (2000): *Coloquio de historia canario-americano*, pp. 1121-1128.

³ Taken from José Montero de Pedro (2000), *The Spanish in New Orleans and Louisiana*. Gretna: Pelican Publishing Co, *passim*.

Veracruz, Campeche.... While less important than Veracruz, the city was a significant player in the maritime commerce of the Caribbean and the Gulf of Mexico. In their day, the city hosted Frenchmen, Spaniards, and merchant mariners who plied the trade routes of the Caribbean—slavers, smugglers--among them many Basques. One of them, a singular figure, was Jean Xavier de Arrambide, the “French Basque” countryman of the brothers Lafitte, the famous original buccaneers from Baiona (Bayonne). Another contemporary illustrious Baionan, was General Jean Baptiste Labatut Echevarría, who rose to become the adjutant of General Andrew Jackson in the defense of New Orleans from the English.

The Deportation of the Acadians

Acadia is the name given to the original colonies of the three maritime provinces of Canada (Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island), as well as a portion of Quebec (the southern Gaspé Peninsula) and a tiny part of the Isle of Terranova (provinces of Terranova and Labrador). It should be remembered that, in the mid-eighteenth century, there continued to be an intense Basque presence in Terranova in their majority mariners or devoted to other professions related to the sea, such as shipwright.

In 1755, due to the restart of war with France (the North American phase of the Seven Years War) and the doubtful loyalties of the Acadians, the British colonial authorities expelled the Acadians from their lands, seizing their property and dispersing them throughout the other British possessions in North America.

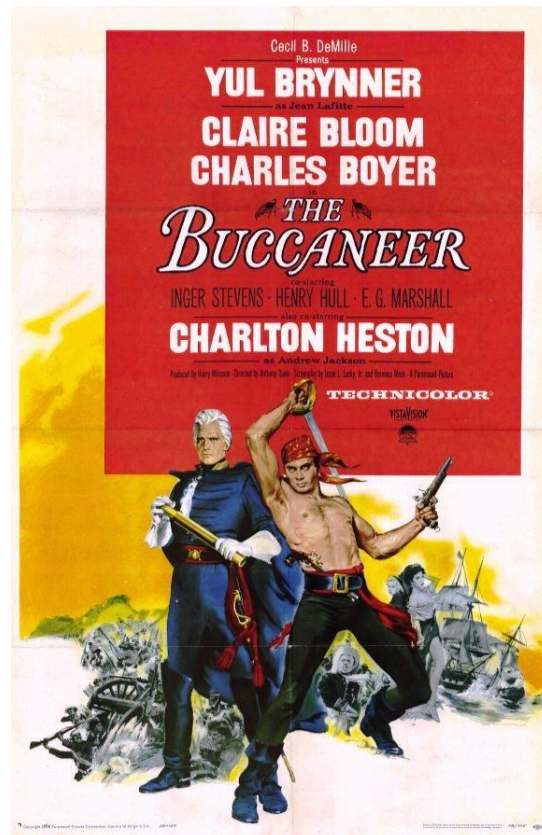
There were some Basques among these deportees. We know of the history of Michel Bastarache, “Le Basque” (or “Bask” in the English accounts) and his brothers Pierre and Jean Baptiste, descended from Baiona. It has been said of Michel that he was a filibuster.⁴ Michel Bastarache was captured by the English, and, after a spectacular escape, was recaptured and sent by the British to South Carolina, along with 960 fellow Acadians. From there he arrived in Louisiana. In New Orleans, he initiated, with his brother Pierre and twelve other Acadians, the

⁴ Jean-Claude Parronau, *Basques et Gascons en Amérique septentrionale aux XVIIe et XVIIIe*, Pau (2004): Centre généalogique des Pyrénées Atlantique. Also see Mario Mimeault, *Destins de pêcheurs. Les Basques en Nouvelle-France*. Quebec (2011), Septentrion. Certainly, there is confusion of Bastarache with another notorious Michel “Le Basque” (Etchegorria) who had his base of operations on the island of Tortuga.

long flight from Louisiana to Canada to reunite with his wife. This history is in part captured in the poem *Evangeline* (1847) by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.⁵

According to Placide Gaudet, Pierre died in 1796 and Michel at 89-years of age in Tracadie, New Brunswick, on January 15, 1820. He left many descendants, among them inhabitants of Canton-des Basques in the regional jurisdiction of Tracadie.⁶

The brother who stayed behind was Jean Baptiste (Jean Le Basque). He remained in the Bayou State, in an area now a part of Mississippi. He had three daughters, one of whom died in Baton Rouge.⁷



The Buccaneer (movie poster), Lafitte, the Buccaneer

⁵ Jennifer Andrews, *Acadian Identities, Acadian Dreams: Revisioning Evangeline North of the Border*. In Gillian Roberts (ed.), *Reading between the Borderlines: Cultural Production and Consumption across the 49th Parallel*. Montreal (2018): McGill-Queen's University Press.

⁶ Corinne La Plante, BASTARACHE dit Basque, Michel. In *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. V (1801-1820). OUT US. There is a Michel Bastarache who was on the Canadian Supreme Court until quite recently. He is descended from New Brunswick on his father's side, growing up in Mocton. New Brunswick. After retiring he was hired by the diocese of Bathurst to "investigate" child molestation by a priest of about ninety victims. There was much skepticism that it was an investigation rather than cover-up.

⁷ Steven A. Cormier, *Acadians Who Found Refuge in Louisiana, February 1764-early 1800s*. <http://www.acadiansingray.com/Appendices-ATLAL-JEANSONNE.htm>

There were other arrivals of Acadians in Louisiana. Some came from Santo Domingo. Fully 1,600 arrived from France in seven Spanish vessels during the period during which Louisiana was a possession of the Spanish Crown. It was trying to settle lands under its jurisdiction.⁸

In addition to the Bastaraches, other Basque-Acadians who settled in the United States were the Turbides (Iturbides), descended from Hazparne, the Aspirots (Aspirotz), from Baiona, the Arosteguys, from Ozelet....

At the end of 1814, a British fleet of more than fifty vessels were ordered by General Edward Pakenham, to enter the Gulf of Mexico in preparation for an attack on New Orleans. The American general, Andrew Jackson, in command of U.S. forces in the country's then southwest, and mainly comprised of militias and volunteers, defended his position successfully against an all-out British attack on January 8, 1815. Jackson's men were protected in trenches behind the besieged fortifications, whereas the British were exposed. The battle was brief and the American victory decisive, producing a British retreat and the death of General Pakenham. The encounter could be considered extemporaneous, given that the Treaty of Ghent, ending hostilities between the British and Americans, had been signed by both parties the previous December, albeit the news had yet to reach the belligerents of the Battle of New Orleans. Nevertheless, the victory raised American morale and converted Andrew Jackson into a hero and provided the political platform that eventually won him the presidency.

Several Basque participated in the Battle of New Orleans, such as General Jean Baptiste Labutat Echeverria and the mariner, Jean Lafitte, known by various titles and nicknames as "The Corsair," "The Buccaneer," "The Terror of the Gulf," and "The King of Barataria."

Lafitte was born in Baiona.⁹ He began navigating at age thirteen in boats based out of his natal town. It is said of him, "that he learned to navigate with his Basque countrymen." During the transition from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century, he lived with his elder brother in the New Orleans area.

⁸ Christopher Hodson, *The Acadian Diaspora*. London (2012): Oxford University Press.

⁹ In the Baptism Registry of the Cathedral of New Orleans there is the entry of the birth of Marie Josephe Lafitte, daughter of Pierre and niece of Jean. It states that Pierre is a native of Bayonne. Lyle Saxon, *Lafitte the Pirate*. Gretna (1999): Pelican/*Washington Sentinel*, January 10, 1854.



Jean Lafitte

Lafitte established the so-called “*Kingdom of Baratavia*” in 1803, or right after the Louisiana Purchase by the United States, in the bayou close to the city. It was there that he established a smugglers’ and corsairs’ base of operations, along with Pierre (with whom Jean had arrived in the United States). The first event informing Jean’s future legend dates from 1807. That year, on leaving Sand Heads, he captured and boarded a vessel of the East India Company, despite its forty cannons and 400-men crew.

Apparently, the Lafittes created an economic infrastructure that benefitted development and a degree of prosperity in the area, for which they were esteemed by the wealthy landowners and the poor alike. The latter found livelihood both in commerce and the opportunity to participate in the corsair activity of Lafitte and his fleet. In 1814, the Lafitte properties in Baratavia were confiscated by Louisiana governor, William C. Claiborne. Jean refused to fight against the American forces.¹⁰

At one point, a wounded Jean Lafitte was imprisoned in Puerto Príncipe, Cuba. He made his escape with the assistance of Jean Xavier Arrambide.¹¹ Cuban historians refer to Jean Xavier de Arrambide y Goicoechea as “French Basque.” In some documents he is said to be a native of Puerto Real (in the Cuban Oriente). In others, he is simply a resident of that place, although it seems that he was there rarely. In 1817, he was residing in Nassau, and, in his documentation, his signature is “John.” What is certain is that Arrambide was a spy (for the Spanish), a slaver, and a contrabandist. For his service to the Spanish Crown, the captain general of Cuba, Juan

¹⁰ Gaspar Cusachs, Lafitte, the Louisiana Pirate and Patriot, *The Louisiana Historical Quarterly* (1919), Vol. 2, no 1; Lyle Saxon, *Lafitte the Pirate*. Gretna (1999): Pelican Publishing Co.

¹¹ <http://gacetadepuertoprincipe.blogspot.com.es/2013/12/de-cuando-jean-lafitte-se-fugo-del.html>

José Ruiz de Apodaca, conceded to him 90.000 acres in Florida near Fort Lauderdale. When Florida became part of the United States, Arrambide initiated a lengthy judicial process to confirm his title to the land. When his claim prevailed, he sold the property for 20,000 dollars (\$350,000 in today's money).¹²



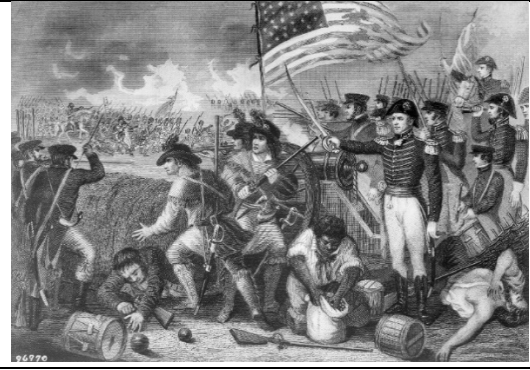
General Jean Baptiste Labatut

Another illustrious Baionan was Jean Baptiste Labatut Echevarria (1752-1839). He was the son of Baionan Jean Labutat and Cathalina Echevarria Elizalde of Errenteria. Before Jean Baptiste emigrated, he resided in Tolosa. He arrived in Louisiana in 1781, during its Spanish period, and engaged in commerce. He married Marie Félicité Saint-Martin. He served as the public prosecutor for the Illustrious City Government of New Orleans (between April and December of 1794) and was city treasurer when Louisiana was transferred from Spain to France. He was reelected treasurer in 1811.

¹² Henry S. Marks, A Forgotten Spanish Land Grant in South Florida, *Tequesta* (1960), pp.51-55.



Labatut Plantation



Jackson in the Battle of New Orleans

He was also the owner of a plantation four miles from New Orleans on the banks of the Mississippi. It had been established by the Basque Evaristo de Ibarra as a facility for his slave-running. Ibarra was married to the sister of Labatut's wife. It was about this time that Labatut became New Orleans's first banker.

He served as brigadier general in the Corps of Veterans and Fire Engineer,¹³ and distinguished himself in fighting the fire that engulfed the city in 1794. He became a general under the command of Andrew Jackson, who ordered Labatut to direct the city's defenses against the British. He commanded the First Brigade of the First Division of the General Militia of Louisiana formed by five regiments. In the main, it was made up of veterans too few to confront the enemy in open combat (hence the trench-war tactics that proved successful).



Charles Gayarré

¹³ Jack D. Holmes, The 1794 New Orleans Fire: A Case Study of Spanish Noblesse Oblige, *Louisiana Studies*, XV (1976). After the fire, the Basque recommended that the reconstruction entail brick buildings, which was done.

In 1859, after marrying Sarah Ann Sullivan, New Orleans native, Charles Gayarré purchased 533 acres in Tangipahoa Parish, ninety miles to the north of New Orleans where he constructed a plantation that he called “Roncal,” the Navarrese valley of his ancestors. He lived there until he sold it in 1881. Charles Gayarré was a lawyer, politician, and historian. He was a founding member of the Louisiana Historical Society and is regarded to be the founding father of the Louisiana State Library. He later became a novelist as well. Gayarré defended slavery, the inferiority of Blacks, and secession. He suffered severe financial adversity after the Civil War.¹⁴

The first Gayarré in Louisiana was Estebán. From Roncal, he arrived in 1766 as the bookkeeper (*contador*) of the Royal Patrimony under Governor Ulloa. He became mayor (*intendente*) after its incumbent, Juan José de Loyola, became ill. In this period, Esteban’s son, Juan José, who was but sixteen, held the position of the leading official in accounting. When his father returned to Spain, the son assumed his post. In addition, he was made the commissioner of war. He married a French woman, Charlotte de Granpré, and, in 1774, their first son, Carlos was born, followed by Antonio (1775) and Juan Luis (1777).

Juan was promoted and sent to Acapulco as bookkeeper. He died in Mexico in 1787. His widow and children returned to their birthplace—Louisiana.

In 1796, Carlos was named *contador* of Louisiana, a post that he lost when Spain ceded the area to France. He married a rich heiress, Marie de Boré. Her father, Jean Étienne de Boré, was the first mayor on New Orleans, after Louisiana became a state in 1812. Carlos died young, in 1813, and his children, Charles and Ferdinand, were raised on their grandfather’s plantation.

Charles Gayarré went further than simply naming his plantation “Roncal” after his Navarrese ancestors’ birthplace. In his *History of Louisiana* (1854), He underscored the influence of the Basque Fueros within democratic systems, while, at the same time, complaining of abolitionist legislation. Gayarré wrote:

It may, moreover, be no amiss here—to remark in a parenthesis—that the boasted privileges of English liberty existed in some parts of Spain, although destroyed since, before they were dreamed of in the noble land from which we have borrowed so much of our judicial and political organization.” (He refers concretely to Navarra while citing the *Encyclopedia Britannica*).¹⁵

¹⁴ V. Faye Phillips, Charles Gayarre, *64 Parishes* (2018). <https://64parishes.org/entry/charles-gayarr>

¹⁵ Charles Gayarre, *History of Louisiana. The Spanish Domination*. New York (1854): Redfield, p. 15.



José Antonio Aguirre

The Arrival of the Mariners: Aguirre and Zatarain

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the Gipizkoan economy collapsed a situation exacerbated by wars, first against the English and then the French. All of that affected commercial fishing, navigation, and, of course, the careers of seafarers who sought opportunity in foreign waters.¹⁶

One of those mariners was José Antonio de Aguirre (1799-1860) from Donostia. He arrived in New Orleans around 1815, after Andrew Jackson's famous victory over the British. He was fifteen when he left for Louisiana. From there, he proceeded to Mexico where he became involved in the sale of merchandise imported from Canton and Manila. He made a small fortune with which he bought a *hacienda* near Tepic. However, it was confiscated by the Mexican government, converting Aguirre into one of the thousands of persons expelled from the country for their continuing loyalty to Spain.

In 1826, he resettled in New Orleans, and, two years later, initiated the process to become a naturalized citizen. He signed his papers before the Parish and Municipality of New Orleans on January 29, 1831. He was thirty-two and with an impressive future before him.

¹⁶ Pablo Fernández Albaladejo, *La crisis del Antiguo Régimen en Guipúzcoa. 1766-1883: cambio económico e historia*. Madrid (1975): Akal.

He took its first step in 1833 when he bought the *Dolphin*, a boat whose name he changed to the *Leónidas*. With it, he sailed to San Blas on the Mexican Pacific Coast, which, during the Spanish colonial period, had been one of the most important ports of the Viceroyalty, along with Acapulco. He registered the vessel under the Mexican flag and began trading with Alta California in merchandise from China and Peru.¹⁷

José Antonio Aguirre was thirty-four when he arrived in San Diego Bay. Due to his corpulence, the Californians nicknamed him “Aguirrón.” He was accompanied by a negro domestic slave, which accorded Aguirre a certain aristocratic air. He always maintained close ties with his fellow Basque countrymen, whether in some businesses or as a member of the Brotherhood of Our Lady of Aránzazu (*Cofradía de Nuestra Señora de Aránzazu*) of Mexico City.



Zatarain's Mural on Poydras Street in New Orleans

Anyone lucky enough to visit New Orleans can't resist sampling the marvelous Creole cuisine (with its profound African roots), jambalaya (brought by Acadians from Terranova), and a bottle of papoose, the legendary local sarsaparilla. Well today, after a hundred and twenty-five years, the condiments of these dishes and the most famous brand of papoose bear the Basque name of Zatarain—the surname of a native of Pasai Donibane (Gipuzkoa).

¹⁷ Mary H. Hagland, Don José Antonio Aguirre, *Journal of San Diego History*. Vol. 29, no. 1 (Winter, 1983).



J.B. Zatarain

He was born on May 5, 1805, as Juan Bautista (Jean Baptiste) de Zatarain. He was a seafarer and arrived in Louisiana in 1827 aboard ships trading with ports in the Gulf of Mexico and Cuba. Years later, he worked in the shipyards of Algiers across the river from New Orleans as a caulker and carpenter. He married twice. The first time in 1837 to the New Orleans Creole Heloise Hotard. He had one son with her: Jules. He remarried in 1844 with Marie Conlon, with whom he had a son and three daughters: Jean Baptiste, María del Carmen, Elisabeth, and Catherine. He died at seventy-four of dysentery on December 9, 1882.



Jules Zatarain

In 1871, his son, Jules, ran a saloon at Rue Royal, 17.¹⁸ Soon thereafter, he added an oyster bar to the business.¹⁹ When the Civil War (1861-1865) began, Jules was a member of the Confederacy's Beauregard Battalion of the Louisiana Militia, notwithstanding that his cousin, Jean Baptiste, was in the Union's navy.

Juan Bautista's grandson, Emile, who self-identified as "Spanish Basque," founded "Zatarain's" in 1889, a company engaged in food and spices, along with the manufacture of sarsaparilla. He expanded his product line to mustards, spicy hot vegetables, and plant extracts. It was then that he got into the spice business and became famed for the ingredients in Cajun cuisine. In 1963, the family sold the business, and, in 2003, it was acquired by McCormick, the world's largest spice merchant.



Emile Zatarain and an Advertisement of His Grocery

In a similar vein, in the 1850 census of Saint Bernard Parish on the outskirts of New Orleans, or before the Civil War, there appear the names of Basque fishermen, such as that of Pedro Arana and José Archuleta. That same year, and, in this case, within New Orleans itself, the *Spaniard* "Pierre" Aramburu had a chocolate manufactory and the "Frenchman" José Borda ran a small store.²⁰

During this period, there were other Basque mariners present in the city, like Salvador Barrena, Miguel Gabiola, and José Larrondo. The last became a commercial fisherman in the Mississippi Delta. He was naturalized in 1846.

¹⁸ U.S. Federal Census, 1870.

¹⁹ New Orleans, Louisiana, City Directory, 1876.

²⁰ U.S. Federal Census, 1850.

Those Expelled from Mexico

After Mexican Independence, many Spaniards and Mexicans loyal to the Spanish Crown went to the United States. They selected Mobile, Baltimore, Charleston, Southport, New Providence, New York, and, above all, New Orleans.²¹ Some Basques travelled together. For example, on April 28, 1828, four Basques arrived in New Orleans from Tampico on board the schooner *Hound*, its only passengers: J. Sagastizabal, B. Osacar and Francisca Barrena (accompanied by a son and a maid servant). The last name of the fourth adult in the record is difficult to read. Coming from Mexico via Havana, Antonio María de Gurruchaga arrived in New Orleans June 22, 1830.

Thanks to notary registries, we know that a group of ex-patriot Basques settled in Baton Rouge. Among them were Antonio Altube,²² Matías Zabalbeitia, Juan Bautista Echevarria, Santiago de Urruticoechea and his wife, María de Arandia. Antonio Altube, originally from the Encartaciones of Bizkaia, left behind his possessions in Mexico. He named Zabalbeitia and Echevarria as the testamentary executors of his American estate.

Some arrived with the expectation of a quick return to Mexico,²³ under frightful stress to be sure, given that, in addition to their economic plight, between 1828 and 1830, there was a yellow fever epidemic in Louisiana that killed dozens of exiles. Many of the ex-patriots had to accept assistance. Others defended themselves by taking on all kinds of employment ranging from teaching Spanish to manual labor cleaning out the canals.²⁴ A significant portion of Basque exiles from Mexico found work related to seafaring. Simms has identified at least 89 such mariners.²⁵ For his part, Ruiz de Gordejuela identifies among the first immigrants 77 Basques engaged in commerce and business.²⁶

Some of the Basque newcomers had resources, as in the case of José María Basoco and Antonio Olarte. Although the majority of wealthy Basques fleeing Mexico went to Cuba, London, or Paris, some remained in New Orleans. According to Sims, "It appears logical that the arrival of

²¹ Harold D. Sims, *La expulsión de los españoles de México*. Mexico DF (1984): Fondo de Cultura Económica, p. 229. Also see Jesús Ruiz de Gordejuela, *La expulsión de los españoles de México y su destino incierto*. Seville (2006): Universidad de Sevilla.

²² Altube had come to New Orleans from Veracruz in 1830. In his same vessel there were the Basques Gabriel del Yermo, M. Solabarrieta, Manuel Echegaray, Manuel Alday, and the brothers Joaquín, Javier, and José María Ucelay.

²³ Harold Sims, *Descolonización de México. El conflicto entre mexicanos y españoles (1821-1831)*. Mexico DF (1982): Fondo de Cultura Económica, p. 52.

²⁴ Jesús Ruiz de Gordejuela, *Los vascos en el México decimonónico, 1810-1910*. Donostia/San Sebastián (2008): Real Sociedad de los Amigos del País, p.158.

²⁵ Ibid, p. 60.

²⁶ Ruiz de Gordejuela, *La expulsión...*, p. 82.

so many Peninsular Spaniards to New Orleans, well capitalized and with commercial experience in Mexico, gave new economic life to the economy of the United States within a short period of time, and it is evident that it revived.”²⁷



Marieult House Rebuilt by Lizardi in the 1830s.

Olazábal and the Lizardi Brothers

One of those Basque merchants was José Javier Olazábal Altuna (born in Azpeitia), who made a fortune in Veracruz. He arrived in New Orleans in 1833. He had been married in 1807 to María Nicolsa Migoni, widow of another Basque, Miguel Lizardi Echave (from Getaria) with whom she had had five children. When Olazábal married, the eldest of the Lizardi children was seventeen and the youngest five. So, José Javier became a stepfather, and, after 1829, the business partner of the Lizardis²⁸

With regard to Olazábal, it is known that, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Spanish government accused him of being a sympathizer with the Mexican insurgency.²⁹ Despite that, after the revolution triumphed, he was expelled along with other Spaniards, coming to reside temporarily with his family in New Orleans. He appears in the 1830 census of the city.³⁰ He lived for many years on Toulouse Street in the French Quarter. Although he anticipated being expelled, the American government granted him an exemption that he

²⁷ Sims, *Descolonización de México...*, p. 226.

²⁸ Linda K Salvucci and Richard J Salvucci, *The Lizardi Brothers: A Mexican Family Business and the Expansion of New Orleans, 1825-1846*, *The Journal of Southern History*, Vol LXXXII, (2016, November), number 4, p. 756.

²⁹ Ruiz de Gordejuela, *La expulsión...*, p. 120.

³⁰ US Federal Census, 1930.

rejected. Anticipating his deportation, in 1829 Olazábal swore before a notary that it was his desire to move to the United Kingdom. In 1832, his solicitation was translated and certified by a British consular official. The following year, in October, it was recorded in London by a notary public and finally approved in December. Once in the British capital, Olazábal used his excellent connections to increase his trade with Mexico. He was so successful that he managed to send, in a single shipment from Mexico to the United Kingdom, as much as a million pesos and 500 sacks of cochineal.

A VISO.—La junta patriótica instalada en Méjico para solemnizar el aniversario de su Independencia el 16 de setiembre ultimo, estendio sus miras benéficas a promover una subscripcion voluntaria en todos los Estados de la República para restituir á su Pátria á los hijos de los Españoles espulsos que se hallasen huérfanos y llenos de necesidades en este país; y habiendo reunido una cantidad moderada, se ha visto la misma junta encargarme del cumplimiento de sus loables ideas, y las hago saber á los interesados por el presente para que ocurran á mi casa calle de Tolosa entre Chartres y Lové, en concepto de que ha de pagarseles su pasage á Veracruz y tendran allí auxilios para trasladarse á qualquier punto del interior.

JOSÉ JAVIER DE OLAZABAL.

19 jan.—3

Call for Juanta Patriótica Members

In New Orleans, Olazábal headed the Patriotic Board—with its headquarters in his residence—to repatriate to Mexico orphaned children of Spanish exiles who were living in trying circumstances in the United States.³¹ He died on December 4, 1852, in New Orleans.

³¹ L'Abeille, New Orleans, January 21, 1833.



The Counting House, Headquarters of the Lizardis' Bank (1832-1857)

The Lizardi Brothers began their business activities with the support of their stepfather, Olazábal, and the assistance of their uncle, Francisco de Borja Migoni, the representative of Mexico (during the Empire and the First Republic) in London. The Lizardi brothers' businesses scattered to Paris (*Lizardi Hermanos*), London (*F. de Lizardi and Co.*), and, of course, New Orleans (*M. de Lizardi*).

In the American city, Miguel J. de Lizardi engaged in maritime endeavors, real estate (he had the capacity to mount an entire sugar plantation complete with refinery, animals, and slaves),³² and finance in relation with Lizardi operations in England and France, as well as Basque banking and commercial firms in Europe (*Aguirebengoa* and *Uribarren*) and Juan Ygnacio de Egaña in New Orleans. Angulo and Aragón, for example, refer to his dealings with Lucas de Lizaur.³³

After 1841, Lizardi initiated trade with Bilbao. That year, he dispatched the schooner, *Joven Eugenia*, under the command of Captain Villabaso, with merchandise for Bilbao. In this regard, Angulo and Aragón underscore that, "from 1843 until 1857 New Orleans would be the primary supply source for Bilbao."³⁴ For his part, Montserrat Gárate notes that, between 1855 and 1857, ten vessels from New Orleans arrived in Donostia loaded with sugar, cotton, and corn.³⁵

³² *New Orleans Argus*, September 28, 1832

³³ Alberto Angulo and Álvaro Aragón, No solo pescado y harina. Vascos en el comercio con los Estados Unidos en el siglo XVIII, *Boletín Americanista*. Vol. 1, VIII (2018), 2, no. 77, p. 158.

³⁴ *Ibid*, p. 155.

³⁵ Montserrat Gárate Ojanguren, Comercio exterior en el País Vasco (siglos XVIII y XIX), *Historia Contemporánea*, (1989), no. 2, pp. 163-178.



Juan Ygnacio de Egaña

Juan Ygnacio de Egaña

One of the streets in New Orleans is named Eganía Street (the tilde ñ was changed to facilitate English pronunciation); appropriately, it parallels Lizardi Street. Since 1876, it is dedicated to the Basque, Juan Ygnacio de Egaña, a merchant and planter who left a fabulous fortune when he died.³⁶ He was born in Itziar, Gipuzkoa, on May 23, 1809. His father, Juan Carlos, was from the same town. His mother, María Ygnacia Olazábal, was from Azpeitia.

Probably, he arrived from Mexico during the convulsive days of the Independence, establishing himself indefinitely in New Orleans where he began as an employee in commerce. When he was thirty, he entered into partnership with another storekeeper, creating the firm of Wylie & Egaña. Wylie, an experienced ship's captain, had been until then the partner of A. Gordon.

³⁶ Sally Asher, *Hope & New Orleans: A History of Crescent City Place Names*. Charleston (2014): The History Press.



The Rienzi-Egania Plantation

The source of Egaña's wealth was trade in cotton destined for Great Britain. It was also sent to Barcelona. Later, he entered into the sugar trade—becoming one of the biggest growers in the region, and, on a smaller scale, tobacco. When he died, he owned three plantations: in Thibodaux, Grand Isle, and Plaquemines.

His most famous property was called Rienzi Plantation, in Thibodaux Parish, where he lived until his death. There were no fewer than 168 black slaves working it, which gives an idea of its importance. Egaña maintained relations with other Basque merchants and bankers in New Orleans—such as Olazábal and his stepchildren, the Lizardi Brothers, and Goyeneche. On the other hand, he invested in his native Basque Country. Through his last testament we learn that he owned two farms in Itziar: Usabelartza and Gainza-erdikoa. He also held the mortgage on the farm Abendaño and its mill in Zarautz, another on a house and garden in Ondarroa, as well as one on a stand of chestnuts in Berriatua. He left all of these properties and interests to his siblings and their offspring, as well as to his friend and partner in the Americas, José María Caballero (who had moved to Cadiz).

Married to Marceline Cazenave, Egaña was father of four children: John Oscar, John, Leonie, and Victoire. He died in New Orleans on April 9, 1860. He left a fortune of two and a half million dollars. The liquidation of his estate led to litigation when Manuel Julián Lizardi, a Mexican Basque and stepchild of Olazábal and relative of Egaña's mother, sued. The Lizardi brothers had been Egaña's partner and considered that they were due a part of his estate. After years of litigation, interrupted by the War of Secession, a judge granted them a partial settlement.



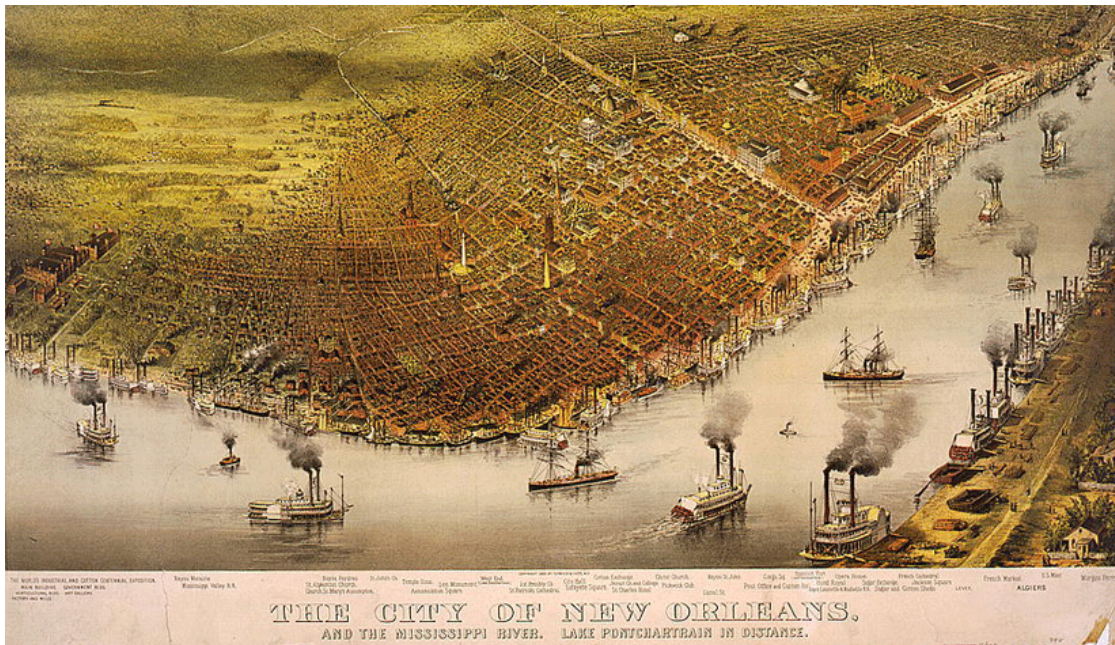
The Avinareta Conspiracy in New Orleans

One of the expelled Basques who reached New Orleans from Mexico aboard the frigate *Hibernia* was Eugenio de Aviraneta e Ibargoyen. This famous and voluble figure was immortalized by his novelist relative Pio Baroja in the work *Aviraneta o la vida de un conspirador* (1931). Álvaro de Albornoz underscores the “malice and cross-eyed skepticism” of the literary personage.³⁷ The historical individual differed. There are no traces in the archives or

³⁷ Álvaro de Albornoz, Introducción in Pio Baroja, *Aviraneta o la vida de un conspirador*. Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 1931, p. iii.

newspapers of the “conspirator’s” passage through New Orleans, albeit that this figure has moved from the literary to the academic realm.³⁸

Javier Mina, the famous guerrilla fighter of Navarra, was also in New Orleans; as a part of his struggle against the absolutism of King Fernando VII, he arrived there to support the Mexican insurgency.



Port of New Orleans ca. 1885 (Library of Congress Photographic Archives)

The Immigrants' Port of Entry

For a period, New Orleans was a preferential New World port of entry for French nationals (including, of course, French Basques) who arrived intending to proceed to California or Mexico.³⁹ The train trip from New Orleans to California was a shorter route than the more northerly one. The city was also a port of entry for Cubans intending to continue on to the

³⁸ See, for example, Salvador Méndez Reyes, *Eugenio de Avinareta y México*. Mexico DF (1992): UNAM; Harold Sims, *La reconquista de México. La historia de los atentados españoles (1821-1830)*. Mexico DF (1984): Fondo de Cultura Económica; Miguel Artola, *Vida en tiempos de crisis*. Madrid (1999): Real Academia de Historia, p. 315 and *passim*.

³⁹ Carl A. Breseaux, *The Foreign French: French Immigration into Louisiana*. 3 volumes. Lafayette (1990-1993): Center for Louisiana Studies, University of Southwestern Louisiana.

American West. The following table is an incomplete list of the numbers of late nineteenth-century Basques arriving in New Orleans from Bourdeaux on their way to California.⁴⁰

Nº emigrantes	Año	Puerto de Origen	Destino Final
1	1846	Bourdeaux	New Orleans
1	1879	Bourdeaux	Los Angeles
1	1880	Bordeaux	California
2	1883	Bourdeaux	California
14	1884	Bourdeaux	California
10	1885	Bourdeaux	California
13	1886	Bourdeaux	California
35	1887	Bourdeaux	California
15	1888	Bourdeaux	California
44	1889	Bourdeaux	California/Texas
29	1890	Bourdeaux	California
33	1891	Bourdeaux	California
2	1892	Bourdeaux	California
64	1893	Bourdeaux	California
1	1898	Bourdeaux	California

Basques arrived in New Orleans (non-exhaustive)

⁴⁰ In 1944, while the Second World War was still in progress, two Spanish vessels from Bilbao arrived in the port of New Orleans with numerous groups on board of intending Basque sheepherders for the American West (mainly Navarrese) contracted by Nevada sheep ranchers. Iker Saitua, *Basque Immigrants and Nevada's Sheep Industry*. Reno and Las Vegas (2019): University of Nevada Press, p. 200.

Bunker Hill Cigar Store,
No. 9 Camp street.

THE Proprietors of the above named establishment, just now opened, would respectfully invite the attention of their friends and the public to their splendid and well selected stock of HAVANA CIGARS, comprising all sizes and qualities; such as

Imperiales, Regalia—full size, Regalia—mediana, Cilindrados, Vegueros,	Cazadores, Brevas, Panetelas, Londres—millar, Damas, &c.,
--	---

Of the very best and well known brands of Cubaños, Ugues, Cabargas, Parlagas, El Duende, Sevillana, El Sol, &c., &c.

They hope by their exertions to please to merit a share of public patronage.

For Grocers and Cotton Factors having small orders to fill would do well to call on the undersigned; their favors will be thankfully received and promptly attended to.

J. J. LIBANO & CO.

Advertisement of J. J. Libano Cigar Store

Merchants, Storekeepers, Accountants, Blacksmiths

The brothers Líbano Menchaca, from Getxo, were merchants in New Orleans. The first to arrive was Juan Antonio, the eldest. He died young in 1855. He was followed by Juan José, who created a small enterprise that, for example, imported cigars and other products from Cuba. Besides, in 1870, he participated in the creation of the Louisiana state lottery and sold tickets as one of its agents.⁴¹

Before the American Civil War, in addition to those already discussed, many Basques lived in New Orleans. In 1850, Francisco Sarasqueta sold poultry there. That same year, Alexandre Goyeneche was a merchant and Pierre Uhalt a butcher (he had arrived from Mexico around 1840). There were also the Francisco brothers (grocer), Mateo Azcona (tavern manager), Antonio Ugarte, the Egusquizas, José Antonio Larrondo, the Larronde brothers, and Baptiste Borda. We also have, in 1850, Cruz Monasterio and José Arteta (both tavern owners). Then there is the odd mariner, like Ramón Echeverria, who arrived in 1860 and was naturalized in 1874, or fishermen like H. Menchaca, who was present in 1860.⁴²

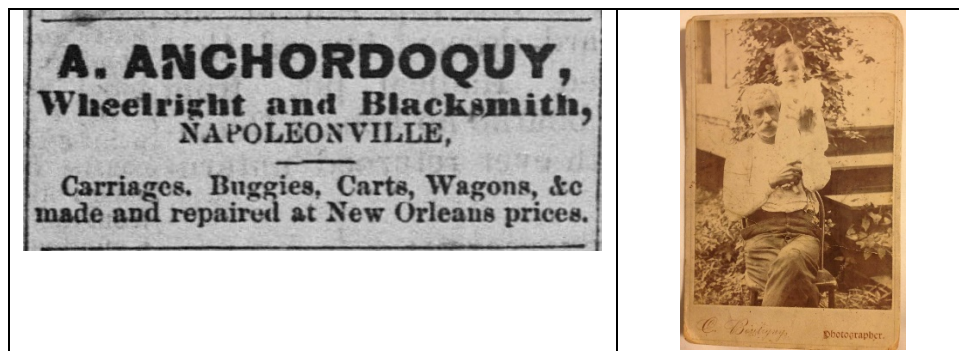
⁴¹ US Federal Census, 1870.

⁴² US Federal Census, 1860.



Antoine (left) in His Firefighter's Uniform) and Martin Anchordoqui (right)

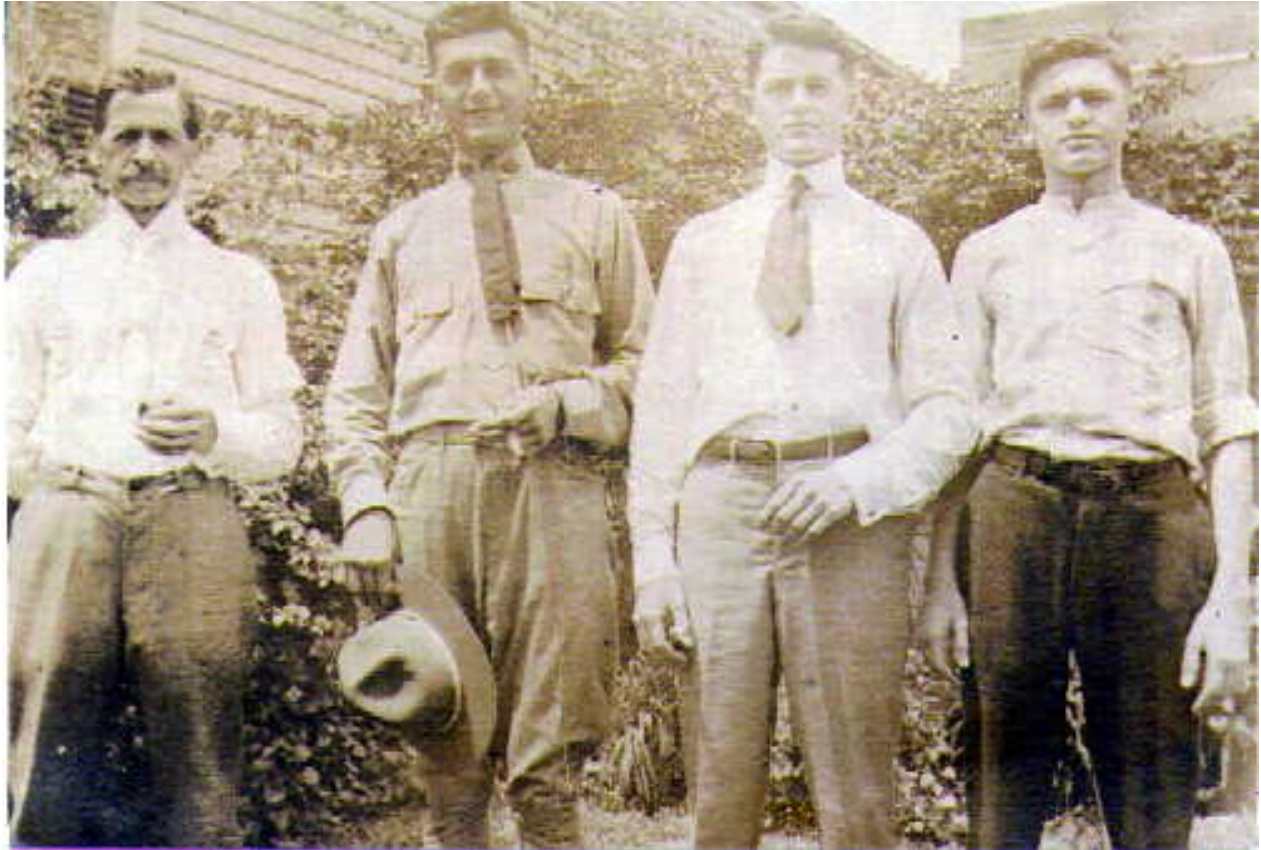
Among the French Basques who remained in the city, we have the brothers Antoine and Martín Anchordoqui from Bidarraí. The eldest, Antoine, arrived in New Orleans from Havana on July 7, 1869, on the brigantine *Hope*. He was twenty-four and a carpenter. Shortly thereafter, he became a blacksmith and carriage maker in Napoleonville. In 1873, he married Teresa Britsch, of Alsatian descent. Her father had fought for the Confederacy and spent time as a prisoner of war.



Antoine Anchordoqui with Granddaughter

Seemingly, things went well for Antoine, because, in 1877, he sent to Havana for his younger brother, Martín. Martín would appear in the next census as manager of a stable. In 1884, a fire destroyed Antoine's house and smithy. He then became a farmer in Plaquemines Parish. He also became a volunteer fireman to help others avoid his former fate.

During this period, there also lived in New Orleans the French Basques Louis Strauss of Baiona (chauffeur), Michel Lapeyre of Azkaina (store clerk), Jean Olaitz of Bildoze, Zuberoa, who brought out his two siblings: Baptiste and Marie.⁴³



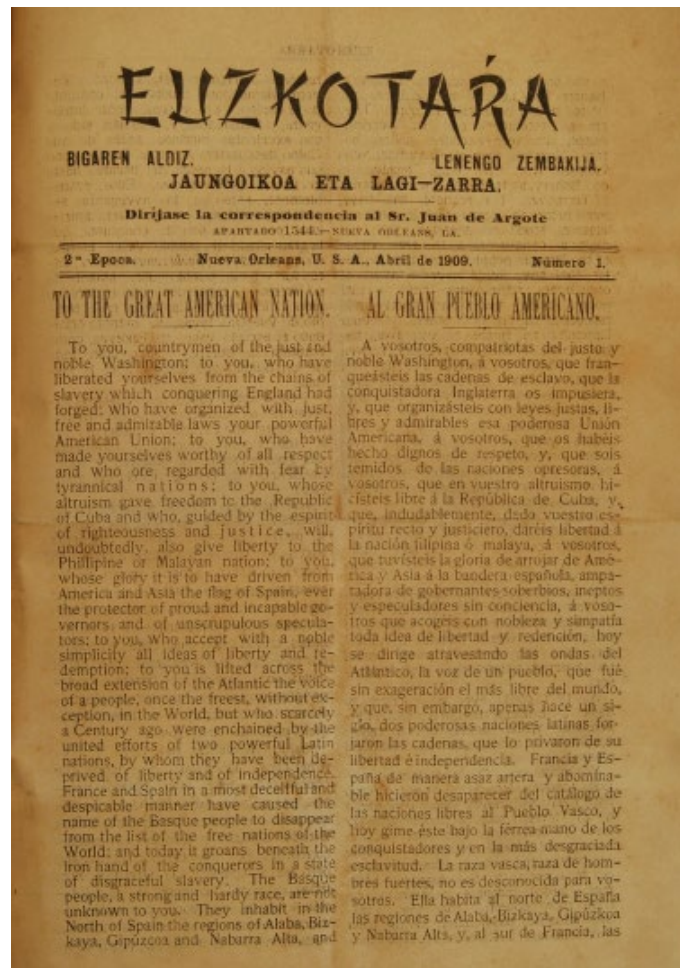
J . P. Mirandona (left) with his sons Henry, Albert, and Andrew

In 1879, (Juan) Policarpo Mirandona Goitia, from Kortezubi, Bizkaia, arrived in the city—he was barely twenty. He deserted the steamship on which he was a crewman. Twenty years later, he was owner of a grocery on Josephine Street. In 1913, he was vice president of the Consumer Biscuit Co. Three years later, he presided the Mirandona HY P & Co (importers and exporters of hides, wool, alligator skins, honey, beeswax, and shrimp). He was married in 1887 with a French woman, Hortense Fourment, born in Louisiana with whom he had seven children (some of whom entered the family businesses). Policarpo sent to Kortezubi for his nephew, Justo, who the worked with his uncle for a short while before going into business on his own in partnership with one of his cousins.⁴⁴

⁴³ US Federal Census, 1870.

⁴⁴ US Naturalization Records.

In June of 1903, twenty-five-year-old Juan Argote Arregui, from Donostia, arrived in New York. A short time later, he settled in New Orleans. He went to work for a firm trading with Mexico, Cuba, and Central America. In 1907, he founded *La Revista Comercial*, a Spanish-language magazine, detailing these economic relations.⁴⁵ The experience served him when he later published the Basque journal *Euzkotarra*.



First page of *Euzkotarra*

Thus, in April of 1909, the first issue of *Euzkotarra* appeared in New Orleans. It retained the name of the periodical first published in Mexico City and then Chihuahua before being outlawed by the government of Porfirio Diaz in response to a protest from the Spanish

⁴⁵ *Times Picayune*, January 12, 1906.

embassy. Nevertheless, the *Euskotarra* of New Orleans was born with its own format and editorial policy. Its main readers were the Basque mariners visiting the port city.

Argote later founded the firm Argote & Co with a series of local partners. Argote and his partners engaged in commerce and consignment of ships. Argote's interest in promoting trade with Latin America led to his appointment, in 1911, as honorary consul for Venezuela and, two years later, official representative of Bolivia in New Orleans.

The majority of Basque residents in New Orleans belonged to the Spanish Union Benevolent Association. Active since the middle of the nineteenth century, the organization included Catalans, Mallorquins, and Asturians. In 1913, The Events Commission of the Association was headed by Vicente Luzuriaga, and its board included the Basques J. P. Mirandona, C. Isasi, and Domingo Mintegui.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ *Times Picayune*, September 6, 1913, p.?



Colonel Juan Miangolarra

The Basques and the American Civil War

On the eve of the conflict, Louisiana was a slave state, and, on January 26, 1861, it seceded formally from the Union. Nevertheless, given the strategic importance of its port, the city of New Orleans was occupied by federal forces on April 25, 1862. This was made possible in grand part by the Union sympathies of the majority of its inhabitants, as well as due to their commercial interests.

When the war began, many Basque residents of New Orleans relocated to New York, Mexico, or, above all, Cuba. However, others remained in Louisiana. The majority of those who did so were mobilized by the Confederacy into regiments of the so-called Spanish Shooters (*Cazadores Españoles*) or the French Brigade.⁴⁷

Justo de Ybarra, from Bermeo, Bizkaia, served in the Confederacy's Company of the European Regiment until the city was occupied by the federal forces. In May of 1862, he left the Regiment and opened a store at 241 Julia Street.

Longstanding residents, like M. A. Lizardi and Jules Zatarain, belonged to the Militias of Louisiana at the outbreak of the war. Zatarain resigned from it. Another Zatarain, Jean Baptiste, served from the beginning of the war in the Union's Navy.

The Basque who achieved the highest rank was Juan Miangolarra. He had been an officer in the Spanish army, lived many years in Cuba, and then, in 1857, moved to New Orleans. In 1861, he was a major in Company S of the Regiment of Spanish Shooters-Louisiana Legion, later becoming a colonel in it.⁴⁸ He resigned as a colonel in the Shooters to transfer to Camp Benjamin.⁴⁹ He then joined the Livingston Defenders. After the fall of New Orleans, the entities within the Militias, including the Shooters, disbanded. However, Colonel Miangolarra was not willing to give up the fight. He left the city to organize a new entity: The Defenders of Louisiana. He and his men spent the rest of the war in Mississippi training to take back the city. It never happened.⁵⁰

He was a curious man. Even during the war, New Orleans was famed for the dances organized by the city's officials and exalted Creole personalities. The press echoed that which transpired in the Opera Theater, in which "Castilian" women with green eyes stood out.⁵¹ But, Miangolarra was stubbornly devoted to his strange war even after his compatriots had returned to civilian life. He died on April 18, 1878. His personal papers are deposited in the Louisiana State University library.

⁴⁷ John O'Donnell-Rosales, *Hispanic Confederates*. (Baltimore (2006): Clearfield.

⁴⁸ Carl Moneyhon, and Bobby Roberts, *Portraits of Conflict: A Photographic History of Louisiana in the Civil War*. Fayetteville (1990): University of Arkansas Press, p. 329.

⁴⁹ *Daily Crescent*, January 31, 1862.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, p. 93.

⁵¹ *Times Picayune*, February 14, 1862.

STEAMSHIPS.

LIVERPOOL.

 **FOR LIVERPOOL DIRECT—The**
new Spanish steamship

BUENAVENTURA.
J. B. Aldamiz, commander,
Will sail for Liverpool on or about the 15th inst.
For freight apply to
AVENDANO BROTHERS,
155 Common street,
or to J. H. ASHBRIDGE & CO.,
181 Common street.
F2—M&E.

1873 Advertisement . The SS Buenaventura belonged to Olano, Larrinaga & Company

Return of the Mariners

New Orleans had a significant contingent of Basque mariners during the early years of the twentieth century. The first began arriving at the end of the nineteenth. They arrived in boats with Anglo-Bilboan registration (Olano & Larrinaga, Serra, Arrotegui, Eizaga). Many of the vessels arrived empty from Cuba after unloading there were taking on cotton or sugar for the return voyage to Liverpool or other northern European ports.⁵² Basques constituted the largest contingent in these crews. There was a time when the exception was the machinist. But, then the Basques learned that trade also (first in Liverpool and afterwards in a navigational school established in the Basque Country).⁵³

⁵² Jesús M. Valdaliso, *Bandera y colonias españolas y marinos vizcaínos, y capital y comercio británicos. Las navieras anglo-bilbaínas en el último tercio del siglo XIX*. In *Itxas-Memoria*: Vol. 4. Donostia/San Sebastián (2003): Untzi Museoa, p. 2003.

⁵³ David Eccles, *Larrinaga Line, 1863-1974*. Windsor (2005): The World Ship Society, p. 6.



Loading of Cotton on a Steamship, ca. 1906. (Courtesy of the Library of Congress Photographic Archives)

Basque Wharves

The press announced the arrivals in New Orleans of vessels like the *Politena* and the *Euskaro*. In 1858, for example, there was news that the *Isabelita* (Captain Aguirre) and the *Industria* (Captain Larrinaga) were being loaded with cargo in the port. There were days in which more than one Basque vessel coincided in New Orleans: the *Alicia* (Captain Aldamiz), the *Niceto de Larrinaga* (Captain Ozamiz), the *Catalán* (Captain Guerricaechevarria), the *Castellano* (Captain Ozamiz), el *Gaditano* (Captain Goicoechea).⁵⁴ The last three of these steamships belonged to the Anglo-Basque company, La Bandera Española, a firm founded by the Englishmen John Glynn and Sons of Liverpool and Manuel María de Arrótegui and Enrique Soberón.

The presence of Basque shipping in New Orleans was such that, in March of 1891, the city ceded to Larrinaga and to Glynn (Arrótegui and Soberón) an exclusive section of 1524 feet (500 meters) of the Orange Street Wharf.⁵⁵ A few months later, the two companies, along with the likewise Anglo-Basque Serra one, acquired a rail link to its port facilities.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ *Times Picayune*, October 30, 1889.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, March 7, 1889.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, October 5, 1889.



The Spanish-American War (1898) was an interruption and disruption. In March of that year, the American gunship *Nashville* captured the *Buenaventura*, registered in Bilboa and belonging to the Larrinaga firm, coming from Havana to Pensacola where it was to receive a cargo for transport to Holland.⁵⁷ Other vessels of this shipping company suffered similar incidences: the *Telesfora*, the *Álava*, the *Ramón de Larrinaga*, and the *Niceto*. In 1898, in Liverpool there were constituted the Larrinaga & Company and the Miguel de Larrinaga Steamship Company firms so they could place their vessels under British protection. Shortly thereafter, Larrinaga reinstituted its runs to the United States. Consequently, in the midst of the Anglo-Boer War, the *Anselma de Larrinaga* was contracted to transport 889 mules from New Orleans to Capetown; 95 died during the month-long journey.⁵⁸ The vessels of the Serra firm were likewise affected during the Spanish-American War: the *Rita* was seized and the *Paulina* was fired upon.⁵⁹

After Cuban Independence, its ports no longer attracted these shipping companies and they diverted their traffic to Galveston. They became specialized in the Galveston-England run.

⁵⁷ *Times Picayune*, April 23, 1898.

⁵⁸ Eccles, *Larrinaga Line...*, pp. 17-19.

⁵⁹ Lino J. Pazos, *La Marina Mercante Española en la Guerra de Cuba, Puerto Rico y Filipinas: Compañía Transatlántica*. Pontevedra (2007): Damariñe Ediciones, p. 175.



The SS México in the Port of Veracruz, 1911

Nevertheless, New Orleans did not lose its attraction for Basque mariners. The city became an important focal point in the recruitment of captains and crews for the boats binding together the various ports of the Gulf of Mexico (Havana, Progreso, Tampico, Galveston, New Orleans, and others in Central America). Juan Argote played an important role in the recruitment of Basque mariners. Later, he would be joined in this endeavor by another Basque, Cándido Arregui, “Spanish correspondent” of Vaccaro Brothers & Co (Standard Fruit & Steamship Co). It should not be forgotten that United Fruit had its headquarters in New Orleans, as well as its own fleet that employed dozens of Basque mariners.

The majority of crewmen in the vessels mentioned by name above were Basques. For example, in the Alien Crew List of the steamship *Castaño* that entered the port of New Orleans on August 8, 1914, coming from Havana via Pensacola and captained by Guerrica, of the remaining 29 crew, 18 were Basques, including the petty officer and all of the others.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ US Department of Commerce and Labor. Immigration Service, “Alien Crew List,” SS *Castaño*, New Orleans, June 12, 1912.

For a variety of reasons, many of these Basque mariners deserted in New Orleans or various other American ports. The majority because they believed they could find better wages and working conditions.⁶¹ American law did not penalize such desertions if it could be demonstrated that conditions were better on a mariner's new ship. Many of these men signed on with the Ward Line, on its runs throughout the Gulf of Mexico, or on the fruit ships (United Fruit and Standard Fruit).⁶² But not everyone changed boat and flag.

On January 10, 1881, the steamship *Español* of the Glynn, Arrótegi and Soberón line arrived in New Orleans with the nineteen-year-old mariner, Juan Calzada (from Murueta), on board. He decided to desert. He crossed the Mississippi where he settled in Jefferson Parish. There, he met Margaret King, and they married on June 10, 1886. They lived in Gretna and had six children. With such a large family to support, he engaged in many occupations, initially related to his seafaring trade and on the wharves, but eventually as a hunter and trapper in the swamps. He ended up owning a grocery that he ran until his death in 1926. Many of his fellow Basques came there for information regarding pending ships' departures.



León Uribarri

In 1873, León de Uribarri, from Bermeo, deserted ship in New Orleans and made his way to Charleston, where he worked as a fireman aboard the small steamers plying the two rivers

⁶¹ Jesús María Valdaliso Gago, *Los navieros vascos y la Marina Mercante en España, 1860-1935. Una historia económica*. Bilbao (1991): Instituto Vasco de Administración Pública, p. 323.

⁶² After the First World War, the Mosad LeAliya Bet (an organism that arranged illegal emigration to the future Israel) purchased two boats, the *Pan York* and the *Pan Crescent* from the United Fruit Company to transport passengers to Haifa. The majority of the crew of the *Pan York* were Basques. Most boarded in Marseille, but some, like Santiago Zumaran from Lekeitio, made the journey from New Orleans. The crewmen of the *Pan York* ended up in the British Camp Famagusta on Cyprus after being detained.

flowing into Charleston Bay. He changed his surname to Oliver. He navigated until 1932. He married Elisa Montañese, with whom he had nine children. He died in Charleston on August 7, 1937.

Obtaining Citizenship

For years, the merchant mariners were affected by 1906 federal legislation whereby anyone who served continuously on an American ship for three years qualified for naturalization. The story was always the same. First, the man deserted the boat on which he had arrived, and, then he signed on to an American vessel. When it entered its next American port, the mariner filed a “declaration of intent” to become a citizen. Then, after three years of service, he solicited naturalization. The signatures of two witnesses sufficed to verify his claim. At times, they were his compatriots; at others, they might be fellow guests of his shoreside accommodations or fellow workers.

Some obtained American citizenship despite having a spouse and children in the Basque Country. There was the problem that the Spanish merchant marine was subject to Spanish military justice. So, many of these deserters could not return home. When the Spanish Republic was declared, in 1931, these mariners were granted an amnesty. Many were able to normalize their situation in Spain, although some retained their American citizenship as well.



Pablo (left) and Genaro Isasi (right)

A Basque District

The majority of Basque mariners resided in the French Quarter (between Ursulines and Esplanade Streets): on streets such as Burgundy, Dauphine, Bourbon, Royal, Decatur and North Peters. Others lived on North Peters, close to the main “Basque *Barrio*.” Some sent back to Europe for their Basque spouses. These families were the founders of several New Orleans’ Basque dynasties. In, or near, the *barrio*, there were three Basque pensions. The eldest, on Esplanade, was owned by Ramón Bilbao. Later, his wife ran the Capitol Beauty Shoppe on nearby Claiborne Street. The best-known pension, located at 1121 North Peters St., belonged to the Isasi family (from Mundaka). The brothers Celestino and Pablo ran it, assisted by their wives. Pablo Isasi had deserted from the *Esperanza de Larrinaga*. For many years, a third brother, Genaro, was a famous cook in the city’s hotels. A sister of the three brothers, Pilar, also lived in New Orleans, married to a Gallegan mariner, Francisco Pedreira. There was another Basque boarding house on 617 Chartres Street, and known as The Bosque House. But there were not just Basque pensions. At 904 Rue Royale, Narciso Apraiz, of Busturia, ran a second-hand store.

The Ships’ Captains

A vessel registered in a particular country is regarded to be a piece of its territory, and its command should be under a citizen of that flag. That captain should also be licensed. Despite the above, New Orleans became a focal point for contracting Basque captains, particularly for vessels sailing the waters of the Gulf of Mexico during the politically unstable revolutionary periods. Later, they navigated in the banana boats of the United Fruit Company and Cuyamel Fruit Company, both headquartered in New Orleans.

During the presidency of Porfirio Díaz in Mexico (1877-1911), his country underwent the expansion of its railroad grid and the improvement of ports and creation of new ones, all coinciding with the introduction of steam ships. It was in 1894 that the Mexican merchant marine was created, with its regulations regarding registrations, recruitment of crews, etc.⁶³ Then there was the “Vallarta Law,” which facilitated the attainment of Mexican citizenship by foreign mariners.

From the outset, the fleets officialdom and other critical posts were filled mainly by Basques. Many of them established their families in the country, particularly in the port city of Veracruz,

⁶³ Oscar Cruz Barney, *El derecho privado durante el Porfiriato*. Mexico DF (2016): Instituto de Investigaciones Jurídicas/UNAM, p. 24.

although in others as well, including on the Pacific Coast. While some remained in Mexico during the increasing political unrest, many resettled in New Orleans in order to continue sailing on those ships. Some sent their families home to the safety of the Basque Country, although they subsequently reunited in the New World.⁶⁴



Juan Bautista Aldamiz

In 1917, or during the First World War, some of those Basque-Mexican sea captains resident in New Orleans were recruited to serve in the U. S. Navy. These included Victoriano Bilbao, Lorenzo Bilbao, Domingo Ajubita, and Juan Bautista Aldamiz. Aldamiz, from Mundaka, served as “chief officer” of the USS *Dalgado*, a submarine hunter.

⁶⁴ In the exhaustive work of Jesús Ruiz de Gordejuela (*Los vascos en el México decimonónico, 1810-1910*. Donostia/San Sebastián 2008): Real Sociedad de los Amigos del País) there is only tangential mention of these Basque mariners.



Domingo Ajubita

Domingo Ajubita was the subject of one of the sagas of Basque mariners in New Orleans. He had studied in the Nautical School of Lekeitio, and, after a while sailing under the Spanish flag, he went to Mexico. He had married Matilde Aspiazu of Markina, and she accompanied him. In the Mexican port of San Blas, his eldest son, José María, was born in 1910. Then came Agustín (1914) and María Luisa (1916) both born in Markina, followed in New Orleans by Adolfo, (1921), Beatriz (1922), and Alfonso (1924). The family was reunited in New Orleans in 1920, which is where the youngest of the children were born.

Domingo was naturalized an American in 1923 and he began sailing for the Cuyamel Fruit Company. One day in January of 1930, in route to Nicaragua on the SS *Managua*, he died suddenly. He was buried at sea near Swan Island. The service was attended by José María Ajubita, Domingo's eldest son who was sailing as a junior officer for the same company.



José María, Agustín y Adolfo Ajubita Aspiazu

Four of Domingo's sons were merchant mariners, as were two of his grandsons—Vernon and Walter (sons of Adolfo). Adolfo was for many years pilot of the port of New Orleans, retiring at eighty-four.

Religious

From the beginning of the nineteenth century, there was a notable Jesuit presence in Louisiana. Earlier, in 1763 under French rule, they had been expelled, as was the case in the metropole a few years earlier (in 1767, they were expelled from Spain and its dominions, as well). There were some Basques in the ranks of Louisiana's Jesuit fathers. The most prominent was Father Jean Baptiste Leon Maisounave of Baiona. When he entered the order, he was already a priest and professor of theology at Larresoro. In 1847, he was sent to New Orleans as the superior of the mission of Lyon Province. But, Father Maisounave wished the mission to be truly American and not just a branch of the French colleges. That same year, he received recognition by the State of Louisiana for the Société Catholique D'éducation Religieuse et Littéraire, which is the foundation of the Jesuit Province in New Orleans. A year later, he purchased the land where he would begin construction of the College of the Immaculate Conception that opened in February of 1849. Against the advice of his bishop, Father Maisounave went to New Orleans to minister to the victims of yellow fever. He contracted it and died on September 12, 1848.

Another Basque Jesuit, Manuel Arrizabalaga, connected with Loyola University, left his mark on the city. Many Jesuits arrived in New Orleans after 1914 after the Mexican Revolution triumphed.



Nuns-nurses (Courtesy of Sisters Servants of Mary, New Orleans)

Among the religious orders of New Orleans that of the Sisters Servants of Mary stands out-- an order devoted to care of the sick. These nuns began to arrive from Veracruz in 1914, thanks to the mediation of the Jesuit Father Palomo and the archbishop of New Orleans. Some appear in the documentation as “exiles” or “refugees.” Some of the order’s nuns arrived from Cuba.

At first, their convent was at 1755 Prytania Street, and, later, on Esplanade Avenue, where a number of Basque Sisters Servants of Mary nuns resided (in the main Gipuzkoans and Navarrans). These included: Enriqueta Azcarate, Catalina Erro, María Gallardón, Ramona Goñi, Angela Indurain, María Martinas Lasa, Ignacia Sales, Josefa Aramendi, Antonia Ozcoidi, María Aracama, Fermina Lizarralde, Anunciación Ilundain, Gloria Machinena, Fernanda Olasagarri, Magdalena Iriarte, Encarnación Azpeitia.... One of these, Anastasia Gorostiaga, was the superior in 1920. In 1940, the superior and eight of the nuns were all Basques.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ US Federal Census, 1940.



The Nueva Orleans Jai Alai

A Professional Fronton

Another Basque element in the city's ephemeral collective life were the Basque *jai alai* players (*pelotaris*). The New Orleans Fronton was constructed in 1925 and opened on November 25, 1926. It was situated at 139 Friscoville Avenue of Arabi in Saint Bernard Parish. This inauguration of *cesta y punta pelota* in the city was witnessed by 2,500 enthusiastic spectators.

The majority of players came from the Hialeah Fronton, the first in Florida, destroyed when a hurricane hit Miami. A cohort of young *pelotaris*, trained by the mayor of Mutriku (Urrestarazu) had been contracted to play in Madrid/Havana. After competing in Miami for a while, they went on to Louisiana to become part of the newly inaugurated fronton in Arabi's offerings. These *pelotaris* included: Arana, Hernando, Lorenzo, Mateo, Pedro Mir, Osa, Ochoa, Olabeaga, Pistón, Segundo, Taboada, Ugalde and they lodged in the historical house in front of the Jai Alai and Ballroom of Friscoville. The Le Bau Mansion, as it was known, functioned as a hotel in the 1920s. The regular *pelota* matches were held for the next three years.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Basque Soldiers in the Confederate Army

Name	Rank	Company	Regiment	Notes
Allica, M		Spanish Guards	Mobile Home Guard, Louisiana Militia	
Amezaga, Domingo	Private	2nd Company	Spanish Regiment, European Brigade	
Aramburu, Juan	Private	New Orleans Fire Regiment	Louisiana Militia	Carpenter
Arosteguy, Jean	Corporal	4th Company	3rd Regiment European Brigade	Merchant
Ayerra, Vicente	Private	1st Company	Spanish Shooters Regiment	
Azcona, Mateo	Private	3rd Company	5th European Regiment	Coffee Shop Owner
Elosegui, Fernando	Captain		Spanish Shooters Regiment	
Elosegui, Francisco	Cadet	5th Company	Spanish Shooters Regiment	Clerk
Lizardi. M.A., de	Capitán	3rd Company	3rd. Louisiana Regiment (Garde Française)	
Garrastazu, Juan	Private		Spanish Shooters Regiment Louisiana Militia	
Gorrondona, Eugenio	Private		5th European Regiment: Spanish Brigade	
Goyenechea, Juan B	Private		Cazadores españoles, Louisiana Militia	
Miangolarra, Juan	Major Colonel		Spanish Shooters Regiment	
Monasterio, Ceferino	Sub-lieutenant		Spanish Shooters Regiment	
Ochoa, Juan	Sailor		CSS Alabama	
Sabalo, Auguste		5th Company	2nd Regiment,	

			French Brigade	
Sarasqueta, José	Private		Spanish Shooters Regiment Louisiana Militia	
Ugarte, B.	Private		5th European Regiment	
Uhalt, R.	Private	3rd Company	1st Regiment French Brigade	Only in New Orleans
Ybarra, Justo de	Private		5th Regiment, Spanish Brigade	
Zatarain, Jean B.	Sailor		US Navy	
Zatarain, Jules			Louisiana Militia	Resigned

Appendix 2: Basque Seamen in New Orleans

<i>Name</i>	<i>Origin</i>	<i>Born</i>	<i>Profession</i>	<i>Year of Residence</i>	<i>Address</i>
Aguirre, Enrique	Bilbao	3-12-1884	Oiler	1910/1918	332 N. Rampart St., Plaquemines
Ajubita, Agustín	Markina			1930	3129 Royal St.
Ajubita, Domingo	Lekeitio		Seamaster	1916	704 Frenchman St.
Aldamiz, Juan Bautista	Mundaka		Seamaster	1920	1213 Washington Ave. 1115 Louisiana Ave.
Amorrortu, Bernardo	Bilbao	1904	Seaman; Waiter	1923	601 Elmira St.
Andicoechea, Rafael	Mundaka		Maritime Fireman	1916	1121 N. Peters St.
Apraiz Bengoechea, Narciso	Busturia		Seaman; Cook	1923	613 Bourbon St.
Argote, Juan	San Sebastián			1922	7529 St. Charles St.
Arregui, Fabián	Bilbao	21-01-1892	Seaman-Cook	1927	
Arrien, Adrián	Elantxobe		Seaman	1920/1932	707 St. Peters St.; 617 Chartres St.
Asteinza, Antonio "Tony"		1853	Sailor	1900	1912 Independence St.

Asteinza, Antonio		1874	Seaman	1920	
Azpiazu Alcorta, Federico	Markina		Seaman-Cook	1916/1933	74 Frenchman St.; 2218 Chartres St.
Badiola, Antonio		25-05-1884	Maritime Fireman	1922	3210 Constance St.
Belzunegui, Gregorio		17-11-1893	Maritime Fireman	1926	
Bengoa, Luis	Bizkaia	22-10-1896	Seaman-Cook; Hotel Chef	1935	DORGENOIS ST.
Bilbao, Ramón	Bilbao		Seaman; Engine	1942	2839 ROCHEBLAVE ST.
Bilbao, Santos	Bilbao		Seaman; Barkeeper	1888	
Calzada, Juan	Murueta		Seaman; Grocer	1881	Gretna
Careaga, Juan		1883	Seaman	1910	Dumaine St.
Clemençot, Nicomendes	¿Bilbao?		Seamaster; Pilot	1933	Bourbon St./Ursulines Ave.
Erezuma, Silvestre	Busturia	12-1881	Seamaster/Ward Line	1918	
Fernández, Leopoldo	Bilbao	19-11-1893	Seaman	1928	
Gaztelumendi, León		8-04-1891	Seaman	1932	617 Chartres St.
Goitia, Antonio	Elgoibar		Oiler	1918	
Goñi, Julián C.	Falces		Maritime Fireman	1929	515 Satana St.
Goyenechea, Victorio	Bermeo	24-12-1889	Seaman; Cook		1121 N. Peters St.
Gurmendi, Frank	San Sebastián	29-08-1898	Seaman; Cook	1925	
Gurtubay, José		1894	Seaman; Cook	1920	1121 N. Peters St.
Ibarbeascoa, C.			Watchman	1920	W. St. Peters St.
Ichaso, José	Bilbao	28-05-1882	Seaman; Cook	1925	
Isasi, Genaro	Mundaka		Seaman; Cook; Chef	1932	534 N Dorgenois St.
Isasi, Celestino	Mundaka		Seaman; Boarding House and Restaurant Owner		1121 N. Peters St.
Isasi, Paulo	Mundaka		Boarding House and Restaurant Owner		1121 N. Peters St.

Landa, Tomás	Bilbao	28-12-1878	Seaman	1936	1003 Dauphine St.
Larrauri, León	Mundaka	9-04-1886	Seamaster	1919-1923	
Lecanda, Emilio	Bilbao	2-11-1886	Seaman; Fisherman	1918-1922	Dumaine St., Cabinash, Jefferson Parish
Líbano, John	Vizcaya			1931	
Llona, Vicente	Leioa	22-12-1873	Maritime Fireman	1926	1121 N. Peters St.
Lotina, Casimiro	Fruiz		Seaman	1942	1227 Chartres St
Lotina, Domingo	Fruiz	3-08-1903	Seaman; Cook	1934-1950	1227 Chartres St.
Lotina, José	Fruiz	4-03-1885	Chief Engineer		1227 Chartres St.
Lotina, M.			Waiter	1956	Lake Charles, Louisiana
Maguregui, Bruno	Bilbao	6-10-1890	Seaman	1924/1930	
Mirandona, Justo	Kortezubi	28-05-1887	Seaman; Merchant; Grocer		220 Tchoupitoulas St.
Monasterio, Benigno	Bilbao		Seaman; Cook	1922	N. Peters St.
Morales, José María	Bilbao	1901	Seaman	1929	
Naveran, José		1894	Seaman	1920	1121 N. Peters St.
Oleaga Bilbao, Juan	Plentzia	14-12-1888	Seaman; Waiter	1918	1121 N. Peters St.
Oliveros, Julián	Bilbao	10-01-1906	Seaman	1930	504. Madison St.
Ordorica, David	Mundaka	26-06-1887	Seaman	1926	
Ormaechea, José		03-1861	Sailor	1900	
Ortiz de Zarate Azkarate, Dionisio	Bilbao		Seaman; Cook	1905	
Plaza, Manuel		10-03-1898	Seaman	1920	
Rey Méndez, Manuel	Bilbao	18-05-1902	Seaman	1929	

Sapeno, Pedro	Sestao	12-08-1890	Seaman	1929	
Soto Bilbao, Jacinto	Bilbao	3-07-1886	Seaman	1928	
Uchupi. Faustino	Bizkaia	13-05-1895	Seaman	1933	617 Chartres St.
Urcelay, Leandro		1897	Seaman	1920	
Uribe, Tomás			Seaman	1928	
Uribarri Orube, León Sandalio	Bermeo		Seaman	1874	
Uribarri, José		1874	Maritime Fireman	1920	
Urresti, Juan Isidro	Elantxobe	15-05-1900	Seaman; Cook	1932/1940	1316 Burgundy St./1338 Kerlerec St.
Urresti, Juan Pedro	Elantxobe	2-IX-1872	Seaman	1930	Hotel Dieu Hospital/ 617 Chartres St.
Vizcaya Urquiola, Benito	Vizcaya		Fisherman	1893	Cabinash, Jefferson Parish
Ybarrola, Lorenzo	Mundaka			1921	1730 Ursuline Ave.
Zalduondo, Antonio de		1872	Seamaster	1916	Baco Rd.
Zarragoitia, Manuel	Plentzia	28-11-1892	Maritime Fireman	1934	617 Chartres St.
Zuriaga, José		1888	Maritime Fireman	1920	

[These appendices were constructed from entries in the following sources:

1. United States Federal Censuses
2. United States Naturalization Records
3. List or Manifest of Aliens Employed on Vessels as Crewmembers
4. 1930 Census of Merchant Seamen
5. United States Applications for Seaman's Protection Certificate
6. United States City Directories
7. *Times Picayune* Newspaper
8. *New Orleans Argus* Newspaper
9. *New Orleans Item* Newspaper
10. Charles R. Maduell, compiler, *Index of Spanish Citizens Entering the Port of New Orleans between January 1840 and December 1865*. New Orleans (1966): The Compiler.
11. John Rosales-O'Donnell, *Hispanic Confederates*. Baltimore (2006): Clearfield.