

Martin Teofilo Delgado

Filipino Freedom Fighter, Census Bureau Supervisor, Governor

The U.S. Census Bureau has always highlighted American diversity through its decennial snapshots of the population. As the United States grew and the population became more diverse, the Census Bureau's workforce adapted to represent the country's people and needs. As immigration from non-European countries increased in the 19th century, the Census Bureau tried to hire enumerators who spoke the same language and lived in the same neighborhoods as the people they counted. Others were hired to help with operations in Washington, DC. From the first surges of Chinese immigration into California in the 19th century, immigrants of Asian and Pacific Islander heritage have long contributed to the Census Bureau's mission, both at headquarters and in the field.



Martin Teofilo Delgado

From the 1903 Census of the Philippines.

Born on November 11, 1858, in Santa Barbara, Iloilo, Martin Teofilo Delgado y Bermejo was the second son of Jacinto Delgado and Gabriela Bermejo, two members of local aristocratic families. As a young boy, Martin attended the Santa Barbara Parochial School before enrolling as a student at the Seminario de San Vicente Ferrer in Jaro and, later, transferring to the Ateneo Municipal de Manila. After earning his teaching degree, Martin taught at the public school in his hometown. Earning the respect of his neighbors and the Spanish colonial authorities, then 25-year-old Martin received an appointment to serve as the *teniente mayor* of his hometown and *capitán municipal*.



General Martín Teófilo Delgado marching into Jaro (Iloilo) on February 2, 1901, ahead of 30 officers and 140 men before surrendering to Brigadier General Edmund Rice, U.S. military governor of Panay, and Brigadier General Robert P. Hughes, regional commander of the U.S. occupying forces.

Beginning on August 24, 1898, in Manila, the Philippine Revolution lasted for a little over 3 years, with various provinces joining in at different times. On October 28, 1898, the people of the Iloilo Province revolted against Spanish authorities. As part of the uprising, Martin led a small force of volunteers and seized Santa Barbara's municipal building and, a little more than a month later, he earned a promotion to lieutenant general. With his new position, Martin led a series of military campaigns against the Spanish forces, eventually forcing the troops under General Diego de los Rios, the last Spanish governor-general of the Philippines, to surrender and evacuate Iloilo on December 24, 1898.

Four days after General Rios's troops surrendered and evacuated the Philippines, U.S. Brigadier General Marcus P. Miller arrived in

Iloilo and, with Admiral George Dewey's warships supporting his efforts, prepared to occupy Iloilo City. With Miller's impressive show of force, the commencement of hostilities between American forces and Philippine revolutionaries (February 4, 1899), and the fall of Fort San Pedro (February 11, 1899), Martin withdrew his military forces from Iloilo City and began conducting a nearly 2-year guerilla campaign against the American forces occupying the Iloilo Province. Despite an impressive military campaign in the province, Martin headed the pleas of Iloilo's leading citizens and surrendered to Edmund Rice, the American military governor, on February 2, 1901. While military leaders typically punished insurrectionist leaders, U.S. government officials described Martin as "the ablest leader" of the people in his community and appointed him as the Province of Iloilo's first governor under U.S. government's administration of the Philippines on April 11, 1901.

With passage of the Philippine Organic Act of 1902 (July 1902), U.S. government officials determined the Philippines would be governed in part by a representational Philippine Assembly but needed a census to do so. Additionally, the Organic Act stipulated that the census would not be conducted until the cessation of hostilities, and that the Assembly could only be formed if there was peace for 2 years after the census was completed. Accordingly, the 1903 Census of the Philippine Islands had major implications for the governance of the islands.



Presidentes of the Towns of Jaro and La Paz, with the Governor-Supervisor Delgado (bottom-center) of the Province of Iloilo (Visayans), c. 1903.
From the 1903 Census of the Philippines.

Because of this idea of a new government coupled with widespread illiteracy and mistrust of the American government, the Census Bureau determined that the provincial governors should be the district supervisors of the census. Although some of the governors were relics of the old Spanish system of cronyism, Martin won his local election to continue serving as Iloilo’s governor on March 3, 1902, and was thus prepared to serve as a census supervisor. In December 1902, Martin spent 2 weeks in Manila going over the district maps and learning how to conduct the census. In mid-January, all the governor-supervisors collected their materials in Manila and then distributed them to their enumerators and special agents—who passed on their training to the local *presidentes* (mayors). On March 2, 1903, the Philippine census began. Martin successfully spearheaded the count of 410,315 people in the Province of Iloilo.



Modern Statue of Martin Delgado located in the public plaza of Santa Bárbara in the Iloilo Province of the Philippines.

Courtesy of the National Historical Commission of the Philippines.

Martin continued to serve as the province’s governor until March 1904. After serving as Iloilo’s first elected-governor, Martin returned to his hometown of Santa Bárbara and served as the town’s fifth municipal president. In addition to his political career, Martin was married twice: first to Carmen Barra of Cabanatuan and then to Lucia Hisole and fathered four children. However, only his son from his second marriage, Jacinto Hisole Delgado, survived into adulthood and eventually became a municipal mayor of Santa Bárbara.

Martin made a series of political enemies during his time as Santa Barbara’s municipal president. This affected the course of Martin’s life because these enemies spread a rumor that Martin had leprosy while he was in Hong Kong being treated for a minor skin condition. When Martin attempted to return home to Iloilo, his ship was forced to drop him off at the Culion Leper Colony in Palawan. Exiled from his home, Martin served as the superintendent of a leprosy sanatorium until his death on November 12, 1918, at the age of 60.

Despite the tragic end of Martin’s life, he left an incredible legacy of service and sacrifice to both the Philippines and the employees of the U.S. Census Bureau. To honor Martin’s legacy as a freedom fighter and politician, the local government erected a statue of Martin in the main square of Santa Bárbara as part of the centennial celebration of the Philippine declaration of independence in 1998. Furthermore, in 2019, Spanish artist Gines Serran-Pagan designed an equestrian statue of Martin which stands in front of the Casa de Emperador at the Iloílo Business Park. The people of the Philippines and the U.S. Census Bureau remain grateful for his service.