

= Delphine LaLaurie =

Born Marie Delphine Macarty or Maccarthy , ( c . 1780 ? 1849 ) , more commonly known as Madame LaLaurie , was a New Orleans Creole socialite and alleged serial killer , infamous for torturing and likely murdering her household slaves .

Born during the Spanish colonial period , Delphine Macarty married three times in Louisiana , having twice been widowed . She maintained her position in New Orleans society until April 10 , 1834 , when rescuers responded to a fire at her Royal Street mansion and discovered bound slaves in her attic who showed evidence of cruel , violent treatment over a long period . LaLaurie 's house was subsequently sacked by an outraged mob of New Orleans citizens . She escaped to France with her family .

The mansion where LaLaurie lived is a landmark in the French Quarter , in part because of its history and in part because there were relatively few homes of such massive size in the Quarter .

= = Early life and family history = =

Marie Delphine Macarty was born 1780 , one of five children . Her father was Louis Barthelemy Macarty , originally Chevalier de Maccarthy ) whose father Barthelemy ( de ) Maccarthy brought the family to New Orleans from Ireland around 1730 , during the French colonial period . ( The Irish surname Maccarthy was shortened to Macarty or de Macarty . ) Her mother was Marie Jeanne Lovable , also known as " the widow Lecomte " , whose marriage to Louis B. Macarty was her second . Both were prominent in the town 's white Creole community . Delphine 's cousin , Augustin de Macarty , was mayor of New Orleans from 1815 to 1820 .

= = First marriage and death of husband = =

On June 11 , 1800 , Mlle. Marie Delphine Macarty married Don Ramón de Lopez y Angulo , a Caballero de la Royal de Carlos , a high @-@ ranking Spanish royal officer , at the Saint Louis Cathedral in New Orleans . Luisiana , as it was spelled in Spanish , had become a Spanish colony in the 1760s . In 1804 , after the American acquisition , Don Ramón had been appointed to the position of consul general for Spain in the Territory of Orleans .

Also , in 1804 , Delphine and Ramón Lopez traveled to Spain . Accounts of the trip vary . Grace King wrote in 1921 that the trip was Lopez 's " military punishment " and that Señora Delphine Lopez met the Queen , who was impressed with Mrs. Lopez 's beauty . Stanley Arthur 's 1936 report differed ; he stated that on March 26 , 1804 , Don Ramón Lopez was recalled to Spain " to take his place at court as befitting his new position , " but that Lopez never arrived in Madrid because he died in en route , in Havana .

During the voyage , Delphine gave birth to a daughter , named Marie @-@ Borja / Borgia Delphine Lopez y Angulo de la Candelaria , nicknamed Borquita . Delphine and her daughter returned to New Orleans afterwards .

= = Second marriage and death of husband = =

In June 1808 , Delphine married Jean Blaque , a prominent banker , merchant , lawyer , and legislator . At the time of the marriage , Blaque purchased a house at 409 Royal Street in New Orleans for the family , which became known later as the Villa Blaque . Delphine had four more children by Blaque , named Marie Louise Pauline , Louise Marie Laure , Marie Louise Jeanne , and Jeanne Pierre Paulin Blaque. Blaque died in 1816 .

= = Third marriage = =

Delphine married her third husband , physician Leonard Louis Nicolas LaLaurie , who was much younger than she , on June 25 , 1825 . In 1831 , she bought property at 1140 Royal Street , which

she managed in her own name with little involvement of her husband , and in 1832 had built a three @-@ story mansion there , complete with attached slave quarters . She lived there with her third husband and two of her daughters , and maintained a central position in New Orleans society .

= = Torture and murder of slaves and 1834 LaLaurie mansion fire = =

The LaLauries maintained several black slaves in slave quarters , attached to the Royal Street mansion . Accounts of Delphine Lalaurie 's treatment of her slaves between 1831 and 1834 are mixed . Harriet Martineau , writing in 1838 and recounting tales told to her by New Orleans residents during her 1836 visit , claimed Lalaurie 's slaves were observed to be " singularly haggard and wretched ; " however , in public appearances Lalaurie was seen to be generally polite to black people and solicitous of her slaves ' health , and court records of the time showed that Lalaurie manumitted two of her own slaves ( Jean Louis in 1819 and Devince in 1832 ) . Nevertheless , Martineau reported that public rumors about Lalaurie 's mistreatment of her slaves were sufficiently widespread that a local lawyer was dispatched to Royal Street to remind LaLaurie of the laws relevant to the upkeep of slaves . During this visit , the lawyer found no evidence of wrongdoing or mistreatment of slaves by Lalaurie .

Martineau also recounted other tales of Lalaurie 's cruelty that were current among New Orleans residents in about 1836 . She claimed that , subsequent to the visit of the local lawyer , one of Lalaurie 's neighbors saw one of the LaLaurie 's slaves , a twelve @-@ year @-@ old girl named Lia ( or Leah ) , fall to her death from the roof of the Royal Street mansion while trying to avoid punishment from a whip @-@ wielding Delphine LaLaurie . Lia had been brushing Delphine 's hair when she hit a snag , causing Delphine to grab a whip and chase her . The body was subsequently buried on the mansion grounds . According to Martineau , this incident led to an investigation of the LaLauries , in which they were found guilty of illegal cruelty and forced to forfeit nine slaves . These nine slaves were then bought back by the LaLauries through the intermediary of one of their relatives , and returned to the Royal Street residences . Similarly , Martineau reported stories that LaLaurie kept her cook chained to the kitchen stove , and beat her daughters when they attempted to feed the slaves .

On April 10 , 1834 , a fire broke out in the LaLaurie residence on Royal Street , starting in the kitchen . When the police and fire marshals got there , they found a seventy @-@ year @-@ old woman , the cook , chained to the stove by her ankle . She later confessed to them that she had set the fire as a suicide attempt for fear of her punishment , being taken to the uppermost room , because she said that anyone who was taken there never came back . As reported in the New Orleans Bee of April 11 , 1834 , bystanders responding to the fire attempted to enter the slave quarters to ensure that everyone had been evacuated . Upon being refused the keys by the LaLauries , the bystanders broke down the doors to the slave quarters and found " seven slaves , more or less horribly mutilated ... suspended by the neck , with their limbs apparently stretched and torn from one extremity to the other " , who claimed to have been imprisoned there for some months .

One of those who entered the premises was Judge Jean @-@ Francois Canonge , who subsequently deposed to having found in the LaLaurie mansion , among others , a " negress ... wearing an iron collar " and " an old negro woman who had received a very deep wound on her head [ who was ] too weak to be able to walk . " Canonge claimed , that when he questioned Madame LaLaurie 's husband about the slaves , he was told in an insolent manner that " some people had better stay at home rather than come to others ' houses to dictate laws and meddle with other people 's business . "

A version of this story circulating in 1836 , recounted by Martineau , added that the slaves were emaciated , showed signs of being flayed with a whip , were bound in restrictive postures , and wore spiked iron collars which kept their heads in static positions .

When the discovery of the tortured slaves became widely known , a mob of local citizens attacked the Lalaurie residence and " demolished and destroyed everything upon which they could lay their hands " . A sheriff and his officers were called upon to disperse the crowd , but by the time the mob

left , the Royal Street property had sustained major damage , with " scarcely any thing [ remaining ] but the walls . " The tortured slaves were taken to a local jail , where they were available for public viewing . The New Orleans Bee reported that by April 12 up to 4 @, @ 000 people had attended to view the tortured slaves " to convince themselves of their sufferings . "

The Pittsfield Sun , citing the New Orleans Advertiser and writing several weeks after the evacuation of LaLaurie 's slave quarters , claimed that two of the slaves found in the LaLaurie mansion had died since their rescue , and added , " We understand ... that in digging the yard , bodies have been disinterred , and the condemned well [ in the grounds of the mansion ] having been uncovered , others , particularly that of a child , were found . " These claims were repeated by Martineau in her 1838 book Retrospect of Western Travel , where she placed the number of unearthed bodies at two , including the child .

= = Escape from justice and self @-@ imposed , exile in France = =

Delphine LaLaurie 's life after the 1834 fire is not well documented . Martineau wrote in 1838 , that LaLaurie fled New Orleans during the mob violence that followed the fire , taking a coach to the waterfront and travelling , by schooner , from there to Mobile , Alabama and then on to Paris . Certainly by the time Martineau personally visited the Royal Street mansion in 1836 it was still unoccupied and badly damaged , with " gaping windows and empty walls " .

= = Later life and death = =

The circumstances of her death are also unclear . George Washington Cable recounted in 1888 , a then @-@ popular but unsubstantiated story , that LaLaurie had died in France , in a boar @-@ hunting accident . Whatever the truth , in the late 1930s , Eugene Backes , who served as sexton to St. Louis Cemetery # 1 until 1924 , discovered an old cracked , copper plate in Alley 4 of the cemetery . The inscription on the plate read " Madame LaLaurie , née Marie Delphine Maccarthy , décédée à Paris , le 7 Décembre , 1842 , à l 'âge de 6-- . "

According to the French archives of Paris , however , Marie Delphine Maccarthy died on December 7 , 1849 .

= = LaLaurie mansion = =

The New Orleans house occupied by Delphine LaLaurie at the time of the 1834 fires stands today at 1140 Royal Street , on the corner of Royal Street and Governor Nicholls Street ( formerly known as Hospital Street ) . At three stories high , it was described in 1928 as " the highest building for squares around " , with the result that " from the cupola on the roof one may look out over the Vieux Carré and see the Mississippi in its crescent before Jackson Square " . The entrance to the building bears iron grillwork , and the door is carved with an image of " Phoebus in his chariot , and with wreaths of flowers and depending garlands in bas @-@ relief " . Inside , the vestibule is floored in black and white marble , and a curved mahogany @-@ railed staircase runs the full three stories of the building . The second floor holds three large drawing rooms connected by ornamented sliding doors , whose walls are decorated with plaster rosettes , carved woodwork , black marble mantle pieces and fluted pilasters .

Subsequent to LaLaurie 's departure from America , the house remained ruined at least until 1836 , but at some point prior to 1888 it was " unrecognizably restored " , and over the following decades was used as a public high school , a conservatory of music , a tenement , a refuge for young delinquents , a bar , a furniture store , and a luxury apartment building .

In April 2007 , Nicolas Cage bought the LaLaurie House through Hancock Park Real Estate Company , LLC , for a sum of \$ 3 @. @ 45 million . The mortgage documents were arranged in such a way that Cage 's name did not appear on them . On November 13 , 2009 , the property , then valued at \$ 3 @. @ 5 million , was listed for auction as a result of bank foreclosure and purchased by Regions Financial Corporation for \$ 2 @. @ 3 million .

= = LaLaurie in folklore = =

Folk histories of LaLaurie 's poor treatment of her slaves circulated in Louisiana during the nineteenth century , and were reprinted in collections of stories by Henry Castellanos and George Washington Cable . Cable 's account ( not to be confused with his unrelated 1881 novel *Madame Delphine* ) was based on contemporary stories in newspapers such as the *New Orleans Bee* and the *Advertiser* , and upon Martineau 's 1838 account , *Retrospect of Western Travel* , but mixed in some synthesis , dialogue and supposition entirely of his own creation .

After 1945 , stories of the LaLaurie slaves became considerably more explicit . Jeanne deLavigne , writing in *Ghost Stories of Old New Orleans* ( 1946 ) , alleged that LaLaurie had a " sadistic appetite [ that ] seemed never appeased until she had inflicted on one or more of her black servitors some hideous form of torture " and claimed that those who responded to the 1834 fire had found " male slaves , stark naked , chained to the wall , their eyes gouged out , their fingernails pulled off by the roots ; others had their joints skinned and festering , great holes in their buttocks where the flesh had been sliced away , their ears hanging by shreds , their lips sewn together ... Intestines were pulled out and knotted around naked waists . There were holes in skulls , where a rough stick had been inserted to stir the brains . " DeLavigne did not directly cite any sources for these claims , and they were not supported by the primary sources .

The story was further popularized and embellished in *Journey Into Darkness : Ghosts and Vampires of New Orleans* ( 1998 ) by Kalila Katherina Smith , the operator of a New Orleans ghost tour business . Smith 's book added several more explicit details to the discoveries allegedly made by rescuers during the 1834 fire , including a " victim [ who ] obviously had her arms amputated and her skin peeled off in a circular pattern , making her look like a human caterpillar , " and another who had had her limbs broken and reset " at odd angles so she resembled a human crab " . Many of the new details in Smith 's book were unsourced , while others were not supported by the sources given .

Today , modern re @-@ tellings of the LaLaurie legend often use deLavigne and Smith 's versions of the tale to found claims of explicit tortures , and to place the number of slaves who died under LaLaurie 's care at as many as one hundred .

= = In popular culture = =

The former , now defunct , historically @-@ themed wax museum in the French Quarter , the *Musée Conti Wax Museum* , on Conti Street , traditionally included a scene depicting abused slaves in *Madame LaLaurie* 's attic .

Poet Jennifer Reeser has written a poem in terza rima titled " *The LaLaurie Horror* " , chronicling the mansion 's history and folklore , done as a poetic " ghost tour " .

In 2000 , Ted Nicolaou directed a found footage movie called *The St. Francisville Experiment* about people who spend the night in a disused Louisiana plantation house and encounter hostile ghosts . While not the LaLaurie house in New Orleans , the plantation house is one location LaLaurie is alleged to have fled to after the 1834 fire incident . The fictional camera crew finds physical and supernatural evidence suggesting , that LaLaurie did indeed flee to the house and continue her cruelty there .

In 2004 , James Merendino directed " *Trespassing* , " aka " *Evil Remains* , " about a grad student of folklore leading his friends on a research expedition to an old plantation estate near New Orleans . The site , once the home of a woman whose backstory is directly taken from the bio of LaLaurie , is reputed to mysteriously cause madness and death to all who enter it .

Kathy Bates portrays a heavily fictionalized Delphine LaLaurie in the 2014 third season of the American anthology horror television series *American Horror Story* .

Delphine LaLaurie is a character in the board game *Evil Baby Orphanage* .

Delphine LaLaurie appears as a character in *Deadtime Stories* , a PC game , ( *Deadtime Stories* ; developed by I @-@ play and distributed by Big Fish Games ) , as a voodoo queen , named Jessie

Bodeen , tells you her story of her commission by Delphine LaLaurie to drive away another socialite who was new in town and already more popular than Delphine Lalaurie , only for Delphine LaLaurie to renege on the deal when Jessie Bodeen had kept up her end of it . Jessie Bodeen seeks revenge on Delphine LaLaurie by invoking the Loa , ( who punish Delphine LaLaurie , and then Jessie Bodeen , 10 @-@ years @-@ later , for having taken on Delphine LaLaurie 's commission ) .

Delphine LaLaurie appears in the second of Barbara Hambly 's Benjamin January mysteries , Fever Season .

The story of the LaLaurie house is told and fictionally expanded on in issues 13 @-@ 18 of Serena Valentino 's Nightmares & Fairy Tales .

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" The conflagration at the house occupied by the woman Lalaurie .. " ( PDF ) . New Orleans Bee . April 11 , 1834 . ? The relevant text appears at the top @-@ left of the linked scan . A transcript of this article can be found here for ease of reading .

" The popular fury which we briefly adverted to in our paper of yesterday .. " ( PDF ) . New Orleans Bee . April 12 , 1834 . ? The relevant text appears at the top @-@ left of the linked scan . A

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