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## The Parish of Bretanha: Notable Sons



Bretanha has one of São Miguel's last windmills. It ceased operating in 1940 after a lightning strike. Now a regional landmark, it has been claimed for preservation by the local government.

The Parish of Bretanha is composed of the village of Ajuda and the adjacent hamlets of Pico Vermelho, Lombinha, Pacheca, Grotinhas, Assomada, Amoreiras, Lomba da Bica, Casa Telhada, João Bom and Lomba dos Homens. It once included the present parishes of Remédios and Pilar and a portion of Sete Cidades.<sup>1</sup> Even today this larger area is commonly called Bretanha. Remédios, Ajuda and Pilar are, respectively, approximately twenty-three, twenty-seven and thirty kilometers northwest of Ponta Delgada.

According to Gaspar Frutuoso, the archipelago's first historian, the parish got its name because of its resemblance to Bretagne or because a Breton had his farm in the parish.<sup>2</sup> The origins of the settlement are much debated even today. Records indicate that the area was populated at the end of the fifteenth century and the beginning of the next, with inhabitants settling along the coast from João Bom to Remédios in an area once called the north country. The name Bretanha appears after 1527.<sup>3</sup> When Frutuoso wrote *Sauadades* (1580), he reported eight-two households with an adult population of 312.<sup>4</sup> In 1646 there were 106 households;<sup>5</sup> in 1723 households numbered 226.<sup>6</sup> Between 1890 and 1950 Bretanha's population rose from 3,406 to 4,498. Today's Bretanha, now minus Remédios and Pilar, has approximately 230 families with 1,000 people in 200 households.

The historian Dr. Francisco Carreiro da Costa maintained that the parish had aspects indicating a French origin.<sup>7</sup> The name, some of the names of the hamlets, the architecture and other aspects strongly support his theory of a French origin. Yet, in the opinion of others, notably Eugénio Pacheco, the early settlers of Bretanha came from the Portugal's Estramadura and Alto Altenjo, areas once populated by French knights serving in the liberating army of Afonso Henrique, Portugal's first king.<sup>8</sup>

The parish (freguesia) of Bretanha is a civil parish. Some freguesias have the same name as the parish church. In Bretanha there are three churches: Nossa Senhora dos Remédios—Our Lady of Remedies; Nossa Senhora de Ajuda—Our Lady of [Perpetual] Help; and Nossa Senhora do Pilar—Our Lady of Pilar.

The original church of Ajuda Village was made of straw in the sixteen century; one of the lateral chapels of today's building, different in style from the remainder, occupies the original site. From 1640 to 1646 it was called Nossa Senhora de Natividade (Our Lady of the Nativity), but re-took its present name. Along the side of sacristy door of the 1770 baroque church, built under the direction of Vicar João Francisco de Vasconcelos,<sup>9</sup> a Bretanha native and founder of a grand entailed estate, are inscriptions, assumed by some to be the names of the first settlers. Tradition tells of a spring (still-running) next to the church that appeared after prayers to the Virgin for water. The church's wood statue depicting Mary cradling Infant Jesus is still venerated.

Nossa Senhora do Pilar originally was a 1680 chapel built by Captain Sebastião Álvares de Benevides and his wife, Ana de Araújo, of João Bom.<sup>10</sup> He was probably the son or grandson the earlier same-named captain and his wife, Clara da Fonseca, also of Bom João.<sup>11</sup> Nossa Senhora dos Remédios was a chapel built in 1720 by José Tavares de Oliveira and his wife, Maria de Viveiros.<sup>12</sup>

Water was first piped to Bretanha in 1869; some of the original fountains are still visible. One is on property once owned by pro-autonomy leader José Raposo do Amaral and bears his initials and date of construction—1882. When the fountain underwent restoration in 1950 a quatrain by Armando Côrtes Rodrigues was added:

Vim da serra aqui para  
No gosto de fazer bem.  
Ficar cantando a quem passa,  
Matar a sede a quem vem.

I came here from the mountain  
Wishing to do good.  
Singing to the passerby,  
Quenching the thirst of those who drop by.<sup>13</sup>

The local economy is based in farming and fishing. Lupinus (tremoço), essential for soil conservation, was first planted 1550 on São Miguel in João Bom.<sup>14</sup> Large amounts of enrame (taproot) are exported to Azorean communities in Canada and the United States.

Bretanha's first school wasn't established until 1874. Miquelina Zeferino dos Reis, a town native appointed in 1890, was one of the first primary school teachers.<sup>15</sup>

The parish has a poet, albeit adopted.<sup>16</sup> José de Vasconcelos César is the husband of Sara Miranda Ornellas, the daughter of a Bretanha doctor and Teresa de Vasconcelos Miranda.<sup>17</sup> The founders of Portugal's oldest extant newspaper, *Acoreano Oriental*, were Manuel António de Vasconcelos (once a deputy in the Câmara dos Deputados, the lower house of the Côrtes do Reino—Portugal's parliament) and José Maria de Vasconcelos, both Pilar natives.<sup>18</sup>

From Bretanha came philanthropist João Francisco de Cabral and Admiral Alfredo Botelho de Sousa. The latter was a brilliant student, military officer, historian, researcher, teacher, member of parliament and author of *Subsídios para a História Militar Marítima da Índia*. Sousa's roots, however, were not in Bretanha; he was born on 26 November 1880 to António Botelho de Sousa of Feteiras, São Miguel, and Theresa de Jesus of São José, Ponta Delgada. His grandparents were Manuel Botelho de Sousa of Feteiras and Leonor de Jesus of Relva and António José Viveiros and Theresa de Jesus, both of São José.<sup>19</sup>

João Francisco de Cabral, like many illiterate peasants, sought his fortune in Brazil where he earned the trust of his patrão and returned to "Ilha Verde" with a fortune by the standards of the day. Life in Bretanha, however, was much too quiet after life in Brazil, so he moved to a Ponta Delgada hotel to spend his days socializing and promoting charitable projects. He left his estate to the Santa Casa da Misericórdia to support its charitable mission.<sup>20</sup>

Bretanha has also produced sons for the Catholic Church. Among them are Very Rev. Henrique de Sousa, Pastor of St. Anthony of Padua, Taunton, Mass.,<sup>21</sup> and Rev. Luis de Medeiros Diogo, Pastor Emeritus of Santa Isabel, Bristol, R.I.<sup>22</sup>

Four names are intimately connected with the study of Micaelense (someone from or something of São Miguel) genealogy: Gaspar Frutuoso (1522-1591) is regarded as the father of Azorean history and genealogy. Born less than eighty years after its first settlement, he must have known some of the children and grandchildren of the first Micaelense. The chronicles contained in his *Saudades da Terra* were expanded and sometimes corrected by Ernesto do Canto (1831-1900), the historian and editor of *Arquivo dos Açores*. His collaborating friend, Carlos Maria Gomes Machado (1828-1901), charted the descendant second and succeeding generations of the *Morgados*. The fourth great Azorean genealogist was Rodrigo Rodrigues (1873-1956). Unfortunately, only a small portion of his work has been published and his original manuscript remains in private hands.

Among Bretanha's earliest settlers were the Ledos; they are among the prominent in Frutuoso's narrative. Afonso Ledo and Marquesa Afonso had several children who settled in Bretanha and Santo António alem Capelas. A grandson, Manuel Lopes de Sousa, married Isabel Cabral, daughter of Lope Cabral de Melo. Another grandson, Captain Sebastião Afonso de Sousa, married Guiomar de Oliveira Vasconcelos, daughter of João Manuel Pavão and Isabel de Oliveira, from whom the Vasconcelos of Bretanha descend. Their progeny are outlined on pages 259-261 of Carlos Machado's *Genealogias*.

The pro-independence leader and former member of parliament, Dr. José de Almeida, can trace his ancestry back to the Quaresmas of Bretanha. Born in Remédios, he is the son of António Almeida and Sarah Pacheco do Amaral and the grandson João d'Almeida, Francisca de Jesus, José Pacheco de Almeida and Antónia de Jesus Miguel.

Other sons of Bretanha have left to seek a better life, if not fame and fortune, in foreign lands. Some have found both. António Ferreira Tavares, a member of the Territory of Hawaii's House of Representatives for four consecutive terms beginning in 1911 and three consecutive senate terms beginning in 1923, was born in Bretanha to António Ferreira Tavares and Maria José da

Câmara. He was the grandson of José Tavares Ferreira, Ana de Jesus Carvalho, João José da Câmara and Ana Ricarda.<sup>23</sup>

Other emigrations from Bretanha brought eventual success to the immigrant's offspring. António Alves Ferreira, born there in 1882, was the son of António Alves Galego and Rosa de Espírito Santo and grandson of Francisco Alves Galego, Francisca de Jesus, Manuel Rodrigues and Joaquina de Jesus. In 1911 on the *S.S. Olinda* he emigrated to America and married Elisa Carvalho in Fall River. Elsa, the granddaughter of Jacinto Joaquim Carvalho, Joaquina de Jesus Botelho, Manuel Francisco Rocha and Maria Henriqueta, was born in Bretanha in 1888 to Manuel Joaquim Carvalho and Maria Filomena Rocha. António and Elisa's son, Manuel, served eighteen years in the Massachusetts House of Representatives.<sup>24</sup> A nephew, Joseph Alves Faria, born in 1911 in Pilar to Manuel Alves Faria and Ermelinda Augusta Raposo, capped his business success by becoming the CEO of the Fall River Trust Bank.<sup>25</sup>

Every Labor Day the people of Bretanha and their descendants living in the United States and Canada come together on alternating years (2002 was in the States; 2003 in Canada) to celebrate a pilgrimage of saudade and remembrance.

#### Endnotes:

- <sup>1</sup> Octávio Luis dos Reis, *Apontamentos: Pilar-Bretanha*, 1974.
  - <sup>2</sup> Gaspar Frutuoso, *Saudades da Terra*, Vol. IV, Books I, II, III, Ponta Delgada: Instituto Cultural de Ponta Delgada, 1985.
  - <sup>3</sup> Herculano Medeiros, "Subsídios para a Monografia de Bretanha." *Arquivo dos Açores: V*, Ponta Delgada: Instituto de Alta Cultura, 1980.
  - <sup>4</sup> Pe. António Cordeiro, *História Insulana das Ilhas a Portugal Sugeytas no Oceano Ocidental*, Lisbon:1917.
  - <sup>5</sup> Frei Diogo de Chagas, *Espelho Cristalino em Jardim de Várias Flores*, Universidade dos Açores, Braga: 1989.
  - <sup>6</sup> Francisco Afonso de Chaves Melo, *Descrição de Ilha São Miguel*, 1973.
  - <sup>7</sup> Carreiro da Costa, "O Caso da Bretanha Micaelense," *Esboço Histórica dos Açores*, Ponta Delgada: Instituto Universitário dos Açores, 1978.
  - <sup>8</sup> Eugénio Pacheco, "A Bretanha Micaelense," *Album Açoreano*, Lisbon: 1903 and Francis Millet Rogers, "Insular Portuguese Pronunciation: Alleged Breton Influence," *Romance Philology*, II, 1949.
  - <sup>9</sup> Breno de Vasconcelos, "A Bretanha Micalense," and "Os Meus Vasconcelos," Paz Cinzenta: *Os Açoresn Através de Algumas Figuras e Episódios de Uma Época*, Lisboa: 1979. and Manuel Ferreira, *Manuel António de Vasconcelos: O 1o Jornalista Michaelense e O Açoreano Oriental*, Ponta Delgada: Edição Impraçor, Lds. 1994.
  - <sup>10</sup> Octávio Luis dos Reis, Pilar: *Ibid*, 13-11-1974.
  - <sup>11</sup> Carlos Maria Gomes Machado, *Genealogias*, MS, Arquivo e Biblioteca Pública de Ponta Delgada, nd.
  - <sup>12</sup> Pe. António de Oliveira Nunes, *Notas Históricas-Remédios-Bretanha*, Ponta Delgada: 1975.
  - <sup>13</sup> Armando Côrtes Rodrigues, *Canção da Vida Vivida*, Ponta Delgada: Instituto Cultural de Ponta Delgada, 1991.
  - <sup>14</sup> *Apontamento Histórico Etnogáfico: São Miguel e Santa Maria*
  - <sup>15</sup> Octávio Luis dos Reis, *Ibid*.
  - <sup>16</sup> Breno de Vasconcelos, *Ibid*.
  - <sup>17</sup> Dr. Francisco Gomes de Ornellas of Madeira, d. 30-04-1939; m Teresa de Vasconcelos Miranda, daughter of Manuel António de Miranda (b. Fajã de Baixo, m. 02-07-1883, B.) and maria Helena de Vasconcelos; granddaughter of Luis Francisco Miranda, Maria Bernadette Clementina, João José Vasconcelos and Maria Isabel Reis on 27-01-1909.
  - <sup>18</sup> Breno de Vasconcelos, *Ibid*.
16. APGHS Newsletter, Vol. XXV, No. 2. (2004)



- 19 Freguesia da Bretanha, *Registos Paroquiais: Nascimentos*, Registo Civil de Ponta Delgada: 26-11-1880
- 20 Pe Octávio Luis Reis, *Ibid.* De Cabral, b 23-04-1818; d. 02-01-1888; son of Manuel Francisco and Miquel ina de Jesus, grandson Bernardo Cabral, Maria de Conceição, Clemente Viveiros and Luzia da Conceição.
- 21 *Ibid.* b. in Remédios; 16-11-1942; son of João de Sousa Arruda and Emilia dos Anjos Morrira. Ordained in Fall River, 20-05-1967.
- 22 *Ibid.* b. in Remédios on 11-12-1920; son of José de Medeiros Diogo and Helena de Sousa Faria
- 23 Joaquim Francisco Freitas, *Portuguese Hawaiian Memories*, Communications Concepts, Newark, CA: 1992
- 24 Belmira Tavares, *Portuguese Pioneers in the United States*, R.E. Smith, Fall River: 1973.
- 25 *Ibid.*

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# 1846 to 1948 Marriages of Portuguese People in Stonington, Ct.

Continued from the winter (Vol. XXV, No. 1) issue....

| DATE       | GROOM                                  | AGE | POB                | BRIDE                                  | AGE | POB              |
|------------|--|-----|--------------------|--|-----|------------------|
| 1926-06-09 | Henry M. Butten                        | 51  | Guernsey, England  | Clara E. Perry                         | 28  | Stonington       |
| PARENTS:   | Philip Butten & Rachel Hellman         |     |                    | Manuel J. Perry & Clara Sylvia         |     |                  |
| 08-13      | Joseph A. Santos                       | 25  | Lisbon, Portugal   | Palmeda Perry                          | 17  | Lawrence, Mass.  |
|            | Antone Santos & Mary Perry             |     |                    | Eugene Perry & Anna S. Barber          |     |                  |
| 08-16      | William V. Sylvia                      | 39  | Stonington         | Julia Regina Burns                     | 32  | Stonington       |
|            | Frank G. Sylvia & Bridget Quilty       |     |                    | Edward Burns & Annie M. Sheridan       |     |                  |
| 09-29      | Frank Roderick                         | 20  | Providence, R.I.   | Helen Frances Card                     | 18  | Westerly, R.I.   |
|            | Manuel Roderick & Rose Gill            |     |                    | Horace Card & Harriet Yost             |     |                  |
| 10-27      | Edmund Morerra                         | 21  | Azores             | Mary Rego                              | 18  | São Miguel       |
|            | Manuel Morerra & Mary Souza            |     |                    | Joseph Rego & Antoinette Castello      |     |                  |
| 11-25      | Joseph Barba                           | 24  | Boston, Mass.      | Mary Mello                             | 19  | São Miguel       |
|            | Pasco Barba & Louisa Carratura         |     |                    | Christie Mello & Mary Lema             |     |                  |
| 12-04      | Eugene Holland                         | 21  | Stonington         | Margaret Mulcahey                      | 20  | Plainfield, N.J. |
|            | John T. Holland & Theodora Sylvia      |     |                    | Thomas J. Mulcahey & Ellen Cervilmg    |     |                  |
| 1927-01-24 | James F. Hewitt                        | 22  | Washington, D.C.   | Elizabeth Pont                         | 16  | Boston, Mass.    |
|            | Aaron Hewitt & Mary Burr               |     |                    | Manuel Pont & Amelia Main              |     |                  |
| 04-26      | Joseph William Mayne                   | 33  | Stonington         | Alice Beatrice Dower                   | 29  | Westerly, R.I.   |
|            | Joseph W. Mayne & Mary Williams        |     |                    | John Dower & Mary J. Lindsey           |     |                  |
| 05-16      | Ernest F. Saunders                     | 25  | New London, Conn.  | Gertrude M. Smith                      | 23  | Mystic, Conn.    |
|            | John Saunders & Amelia Sylvia          |     |                    | Frank Smith & Minnie Lamphere          |     |                  |
| 05-18      | Clarence Cunha                         | 20  | Stonington         | Madeline C. Wood                       | 18  | Stonington       |
|            | Jesse Cunha & Marie Paul               |     |                    | Thomas Wood & Emily Alexander          |     |                  |
| 06-15      | Alfred S. King                         | 21  | São Miguel         | Rose L. Rezendes                       | 21  | São Miguel       |
|            | Joseph S. King & Mary J. Lutz          |     |                    | Manuel Rezendes & Mary Goulart         |     |                  |
| 06-30      | Manuel F. Morim                        | 21  | Lisbon, Portugal   | Mary Moniz                             | 20  | São Miguel       |
|            | Antone F. Morim & Reti Starr           |     |                    | John Moniz & Mary Angel                |     |                  |
| 08-25      | Antone Nixie                           | 23  | Stonington         | Stella Santos                          | 18  | São Miguel       |
|            | Antone Nixie & Josephine Pont          |     |                    | Marion Santos & Mary Guerrouxa         |     |                  |
| 09-01      | Joseph Madeira                         | 19  | Stonington         | Georgianna Santos                      | 23  | São Miguel       |
|            | Manuel Madeira & Constance Costa       |     |                    | Manel Santos & no mother listed        |     |                  |
| 09-22      | David Pacheco                          | 23  | Stonington         | Constance Rose                         | 24  | Stonington       |
|            | Manuel Pacheco & Augustine Pacheco     |     |                    | Manuel Rose & Mary Victoria            |     |                  |
| 10-08      | Jesse Adriano                          | 26  | Azores             | Mary Sylvia                            | 24  | Stonington       |
|            | Manuel P. Adriano & Mary Juner         |     |                    | Manuel Sylvia & Mary Sylvia            |     |                  |
| 11-10      | Manuel Dias deCastro                   | 25  | Azores             | Mary Roderick                          | 23  | Azores           |
|            | John D. deCastro & Mary Carmo          |     |                    | Manuel Roderick & Rose Gill            |     |                  |
| 12-24      | Charles L. Pearce                      | 24  | Saunderstown, R.I. | Clara Clay                             | 40  | Stonington       |
|            | Langworthy H. Pearce & Abbie Underwood |     |                    | Joseph Clay & Reita Perry              |     |                  |
| 1928-06-04 | Alfred L. Lewis                        | 22  | São Miguel         | Isabella Ann Thissen                   | 19  | Stonington       |
|            | Manuel Lewis & Wilhelmina Lawrence     |     |                    | Peter M. Thiessen & Annie Scharfhausen |     |                  |
| 06-25      | Arthur Sylvia                          | 25  | São Miguel         | Mary Travers                           | 23  | Stonington       |
|            | Manuel Sylvia & Amelia Maderia         |     |                    | Manuel Travers & Mary Travers          |     |                  |
| 06-25      | William George Robinson                | 26  | Stonington         | Mary Estella Santos                    | 21  | Fairhaven, Mass. |
|            | William C. Robinson & Julia A. McGowan |     |                    | John C. Santos & Mary Oliver           |     |                  |

To be continued...

Research by Henrietta M. Meyer, computer work by Gabriella P. Gaultney of Connecticut



# The Portuguese Worker

by Penn Reeve

The story of the Portuguese worker and the region's booming textile industry can be read in numbers. Few Portuguese immigrated to southern New England prior to 1870; the official census that year reported only 8,971 Portuguese-born individuals in the United States. Portuguese immigration soared with the expansion of the textile industry. By 1900, 17,855 Portuguese were living in Massachusetts alone. By 1920 the numbers increased to 50,294. Only a decade later, Massachusetts was home to more than 62,000 second-generation Portuguese.

Most settled in Fall River and New Bedford and took jobs in the textile mills. In New Bedford, merchant families had transferred their investments from whaling to the production of fine cotton textiles. By the beginning of the First World War, thirty-two New Bedford cotton manufacturing companies employed 30,000 people. New Bedford mills were built along the railroad tracks and the [Acushnet] River in the north and south ends of the city. To this day, these areas are largely Portuguese communities.

Fall River, the "Spindle City," was a leading cotton textile manufacturing city in the 1800s, but very few Portuguese lived there during that time. Of the total Fall River population 132 individuals were from southern and eastern Europe and only 104 were Portuguese immigrants. Although the new immigrant population in Fall River jumped to 1,017 in 1890, this number was barely perceptible in a population of 74,398.

Over eighty percent of Portuguese mill workers in Fall River arrived after 1901. As late as 1880, all but forty of Fall River's textile employees were either native-born or born in northern or western Europe. The Portuguese and Polish immigrants generally stepped into mill jobs held by departing English and Irish. By 1900, 6,000 originated from southern and eastern Europe; that number reached 10,000 five years later. Azoreans comprised half this total. According to Phil Silvia, "Fall River's entire Portuguese and Polish population were working in the mills by 1910."

## Transition to Factory Work

At the turn of the [twentieth] century, most of the Portuguese arrivals to southern New England were farmers from the Azores and Madeira with no industrial work experience. The transition from rural agriculture to urban industrial work was a shock for these immigrants. Some opted for life on small farms, but such opportunities were scarce. The jobs were in the mills.

Most of the island Portuguese lacked the skills to do factory work, but could quickly learn the less skilled jobs. They worked as bobbin boys, doffers, carders, combers, sweepers and spoolers and at jobs that demanded only brief training. One had only to be willing to endure ten-to-twelve-hour shifts, six days a week at monotonous, tedious tasks.

Textile work has always been difficult. As historian John Cumbler points out, "Nineteenth century textile workers in Fall River rose daily in the early dawn to face exhausting, intensive labor, long hours, and low pay." Constant, close supervision, speedups, "stretch-outs" and dusty, poorly ventilated mills plagued the textile workers. In the early twentieth century, conditions were only somewhat better, and periodic speedups and wage cuts led to great hardships.

In the face of such difficulties the Portuguese demonstrated their resilience. To cope with economic hardships they relied on family, religion and community. While seeking employment they often lived with extended family members and friends in the local Portuguese community, a "family" that sometimes arranged work for them. Today's Portuguese immigrants continue to rely on these social networks for economic and emotional support.

To adjust, they relied on their traditional culture, planting gardens and raising animals. They sought help from Portuguese mutual aid societies, attended parish churches and feasts and joined Portuguese social clubs. These activities reinforced their ethnic identity and helped them cope with *saudade* for the old life. As John Cumbler notes, participation in the community "helped integrate the textile workers into the urban industrial world or served as a buffer against those forces which the newcomers felt bearing down on them."

Many of these activities also helped the immigrant family economically. For example, gardens gave some relief from the costs of buying food. Families pooled their resources, and when conditions deteriorated financially, they obtained loans from local Portuguese merchants, family, friends and aid societies. These cooperative efforts were evident during strikes when Portuguese workers and their families joined union efforts to raise money and food for striking workers. The oral histories of Eula Mendes, Manny Fernandes and Tina Ponte reflect this solidarity.

## **Ethnic Prejudices**

Serious divisions arose between the "old immigrants," who arrived earlier in the nineteenth century and the "new immigrants," such as the Portuguese and Polish whose numbers increased significantly at the end of the century. The "old immigrants" from northern and western Europe held most of the highly skilled jobs, and resented the new arrivals. Some felt the Portuguese immigrants would work for lower wages and thereby threaten their jobs. Also, many "old immigrants" and American-born believed those from southern and eastern Europe were racially inferior.

However, even the Dillingham Commission Report in 1911, a document full of racial biases against the "new" immigrants, acknowledged that the main reason new immigrants hadn't advanced was a they hadn't been here long enough. The report also pointed out that management still preferred to hire "of immigrants." English, Welsh and Irish workers supported the hiring and promotion of experienced workers from their own groups. Ethnic animosity at times led English, Irish and French-Canadians "to quit if they had to work with the new immigrants, especially the Portuguese."

Mill owners and managers generally hired Portuguese immigrants for the lower-skilled jobs, but evidence shows some bosses respected Portuguese workers and they advanced. Figures compiled about textile operatives in four New England states reveal that Portuguese males and females over sixteen were "competent in proficiency and wages with French-Canadians and American born doffers, ring spinners, speeder tenders, and spoolers."

Surveys from a 1912 report on infant mortality in New Bedford rated the disposition of immigrants in this order: *General efficiency and progress*: American, English and Irish, French-Canadian, North Italian, Portuguese, Polish, South Italian, and Syrian. *Industriousness*: Portuguese, French-Canadian, North Italian, American, English, Irish, Polish, South Italian, Syrian."

Though the numerical of new immigrants on the textile industry was pronounced by 1910, they did not "take over" as many "old immigrants" feared. Many Irish and English were promoted or left the mills for other jobs; competition with "new immigrants" did not force them out of their jobs. Usually new immigrants could not compete with for the more skilled, higher-paying jobs reserved for the "old immigrants." Typically the "new immigrants" were qualified for only the lowest-wage jobs. But even if skilled, they were forced to take low end jobs because of ethnic biases.

## **Work and Labor**

Labor unrest was frequent throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth century. The goals of these "walkouts" and strikes were to pressure employers to improve the poor working conditions and low pay and secure the workers' rights to collective bargaining. Union became one basis of power and support for the immigrant.



The assumption that new immigrants acted as strikebreakers is largely erroneous. In fact, some Portuguese from the mainland had been involved in labor activities in the textile industry in Portugal. Even immigrants who lacked awareness of trade unions generally supported the right to unionize and the fight for higher wages. During the 1904 strike, John Golden commented, "I cannot help but compliment the French, Portuguese, Italian and Polish people for the splendid way they stood by their English-speaking brothers and sisters.

Portuguese immigrants played an active role in the 1928 New Bedford textile strike. They helped organize rallies, distribute food to striking workers, translate pamphlets and populate rallies.

However, friction continued between the older, more skilled, northern European immigrants and the newer, less skilled southern and eastern European immigrants. In 1920 the AFTO (American Federation Textile Operatives) consisted mainly of old immigrants who were skilled operatives. Though the union did not exclude Portuguese and Polish, it did not encourage them to join.

Both the New Bedford textile strike of 1928 and the national strike of 1934 underscored this rift among workers based on ethnicity and job skills. In 1928 and again in 1934 textile manufacturers cut wages and refused to improve working conditions. The federal government sided with the manufacturers. In 1934 the United Textile Workers (UTW), made up of less-skilled workers and many "new immigrants," urged the AFTO to join them in the strike. AFTO refused, and on the first day of the strike its members crossed the UTW's picket line. Despite this lack of support, the UTW got half of the work force to walk out including doffer carders, who were mostly Portuguese immigrants. The police arrested and teargassed many workers on the picket line, including the Portuguese.

Despite all the difficulties and hardships, from the 1920s on, many Portuguese immigrants joined the Fall River and New Bedford labor movement and its leadership. In Fall River, Mariano Bishop, Manuel Melo and Mike Botelho led CIO [Congress of Industrial Organizations] organizing drives from the 1930s to the 1940s. Mariano Bishop was typical of these new labor leaders, taken from the ranks of the recent immigrants. He emigrated from the Azores and entered Fall River mills as a doffer at age ten. He lived in the Portuguese south end and socialized at the Liberal Athletic Club. In the 1920s Mariano became president of the dyers unit of the UTW. He and an Irish immigrant, Mike Doolan, organized hundreds of immigrant workers and successfully united workers from different ethnic backgrounds. In the national textile strike of 1934, Bishop and Doolan led the local efforts in Fall River and the surrounding region.

## **Decline of the Textile Industry**

The movement of the textile industry south in the 1920 and the Depression of the 1930s created further hardships for immigrants. The Portuguese took a variety of jobs in the tight labor market. The garment shops hired only a fraction of the work force that had been employed in the mills. Some individuals left for other parts of the country, such as California and New Jersey, and others took whatever jobs were available locally.

Many more Portuguese immigrants in recent decades have higher levels of education and skills than in the past. The post-1965 immigration, with increasing numbers from the continent, represents a more skilled, educated population. Today, as the economy shifts from manufacturing to services, Luso Americans have increasingly entered the professions and service industries, including financial services, education, law, and engineering. Many have succeeded in business throughout the region. However, like most of the region's population, Portuguese without higher education often end up in lower-paid service and retail jobs.

Even after the decline in textiles led to a decline in textile union membership and power, the Portuguese continued to play an active role in the labor movement of southeastern Massachusetts. They built their local successes on tactics of earlier strikes—unity of the community, massive rallies, demonstrations, parades and efforts to unify the various skill groups and union groups.

In the 1980s, author Ann Bookman challenged the common stereotypes that women, particularly immigrant women resist joining unions. In the Boston electronic factory where she worked and conducted her research, she discovered that women, particularly Portuguese immigrant women, were instrumental in organizing and supporting the successful union drive.

Organizers faced many barriers. The factory was divided by ethnicity and race and between men and women. Even among the Portuguese, there were divisions—between Azoreans and “Continental,” between Azoreans from different islands, between urban and rural Portuguese, between more traditional and more Americanized immigrants. But these differences were less important than their dedications to improve their working conditions.

According to Bookman, “They tended to be neighbors, to have friendship and kinship ties which operated inside and outside work, and to see each other in stores, social clubs and churches on weekends.”

In the end, women joined the union drive in equal numbers to men, shattering the stereotype that women were more hesitant to join unions. Also, Bookman discovered that first-generation Portuguese immigrants joined the union in even greater proportions than non-Portuguese (73.5 percent of Portuguese, 61.4 percent non-Portuguese).

In recent years the labor movement nationally and locally is showing signs of a modest rebirth. This is especially true in the unions representing less organized sectors of the economy—government and service. The large number of current labor leaders of Portuguese descent reminds us that the legacy of the Portuguese contribution to the regional labor movement remains strong. As Peter Knowlton, United Electrical Workers Union organizer in New Bedford commented, “I can’t think of a single union local in this area that doesn’t have at least one person of Portuguese descent in its leadership.”

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*The Portuguese Spinner: An American Story*  
Marsha L. McCabe and Joseph D. Thomas, Editors  
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# American-Portuguese Genealogical and Historical Society, Inc.

The Society's year is July 1 to June 30.

## DUES SCHEDULE:

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| \$ 10.00 | Regular membership   |
| 2.50     | Spouse, no Surname Roster reception                              |
| 10.00    | Professional Membership, no Surname Roster reception             |
| 15.00    | Libraries, Societies, etc., no Surname Roster reception          |
| 150.00   | Life Membership for a regular member up to the age of fifty-five |
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Regular members are those who have submitted a pedigree chart; their known ancestor's life dates and place of birth are printed in the summer Surname Roster. Because the Roster omits the ancestor's place of death and the date and place of marriage, members who wish to impart that information in a ~~Bulletin Board~~ should re-submit a new chart, which confers permission to print.

Life Member dues are kept in a separate account. When it reaches \$1000, certificates of deposit are purchased. The interest from the CDs is withdrawn each June 30 and put into the Library Fund to continue our goals with the Special Collection.

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