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Affonso Gil Ferreira Mendes January 23, 1899—May 18, 1992



Affonso Ferreira Mendes — on the air at radio station WPEP in Taunton.

“Voice of Portugal”

Providence Journal-Bulletin Photo by Reynold R. Paniccia
August 12, 1973

By SHARI POLIKOFF
Gazette Staff Writer

TAUNTON — For Portuguese immigrants starting life in a new land, it was a comforting reminder of home and cherished traditions. For their children and grandchildren more than a half-century later, it was itself a tradition.

It was the "Voice of Portugal," the longest-running Portuguese-language radio program continuously broadcast by the same director and his family.

Begun in 1933, "Voice of Portugal" was broadcast on various radio stations by Affonso Gil Ferreira Mendes of Taunton until 1979, when he suffered a stroke which severely impaired his speech. After that, the program was continued by his daughters Otilia and Justina, until last month, when Otilia reluctantly brought the family's radio tradition to a close.

The conflicting demands of her full-time teaching job in Cambridge and the weekly Sunday morning broadcasts had become too difficult to juggle, Otilia said.

Recent management changes and proposed scheduling revisions at radio station WPEP brought the situation to a head, she added, but she didn't know beforehand that this past Nov. 11's broadcast would actually be the last one.

"A lot of people have seen me since then and asked me why I didn't say good-bye," said Otilia. "This article will be my way of explaining the situation and softening the break."

Otilia noted that since taking over broadcasting duties for her father, who is a patient at Morton Hospital, she had focused on "friendly talk," a kind of informal conversation with her listeners, rather than hard news or a structured talk show format.

"I felt that the station management had a more elaborate talk show in mind, and they would have extended the time slot beyond what I could handle," said Otilia. "So it was best that I break it off now."

She had previously discontinued the show's Providence broadcasts in 1983, when "Voice" reached the half-century mark. Sept. 11 of that year was celebrated as "Ferreira Mendes Day" in Taunton.

Among the tributes heaped on the long-time radio man were proclamations from the State House and City Hall and the naming of the Portuguese literature room at



OTILIA FERREIRA

the Taunton Public Library in his honor.

Also in 1983, Ferreira Mendes was honored by the government of his native country by being named Commander of the Order of Prince Henry the Navigator. The Order, Portugal's highest decoration, was conferred by Dr. Anabela Cardoso, Portuguese consul in Providence.

Otilia commented that she is happy that her father, despite his illness, is still alert and able to realize how highly regarded he is both by the Portuguese community and others in his adopted country.

"He hasn't been able to speak very much since his stroke," Otilia said, "but he understands, and can communicate somewhat by hand and eye movements."

Helping out

In addition to praise for his role as a communicator and commentator, Ferreira Mendes has received recognition for his fund-raising efforts on behalf of victims of earthquakes, floods, and other disasters.

He was considered instrumental in effecting changes in the American immigration laws which facilitated the entrance of thousands of "sinistrados," victims of a severe earthquake in Fayal, Azores, in the early 1960s.

He also helped two shipwrecked Azoreans reach the United States, raised funds for building drives to aid victims of fires and floods, and helped defray the cost of education for a crippled child studying to become a teacher.

"My father was never too busy or too tired to personally accept and acknowledge a charitable dona-

tion from one of his radio listeners," said Otilia. "They might only be able to afford to give a dollar, but he knew it was very important to them that they personally present that dollar to him, to send on to the relief drive."

Through his radio program he helped boost the career of many Portuguese entertainers, including Amalia Rodrigues, now a well-known fado singer who recently gave a concert at New Bedford's Zeiterion Theatre.

"He worked hard to bring Portuguese-language films to the State and Casino movie theaters in Taunton," said Otilia, recalling her father spending hours working side by side with the projectionist throughout several showings during the day.

"He often said that it didn't matter how large or small the audience was," she continued. "If there was only one person in the theater to view the film early in the afternoon, I think he would have made sure that it was run for that one person."

Ferreira Mendes's career also included print journalism. He published a Portuguese-language newspaper, *O Heraldo Portugues*, biannually at Christmas and Easter from 1925 to 1976, the year his wife Maria Rosa dos Santos died. Besides Justina and Otilia, both of whom became teachers, the couple had another daughter, Esther, who died several years ago.

Ferreira Mendes is a native of Barroca, do Zezere in the Beira Baixa region of Portugal. In his early teens, he worked as a clerk in Lisbon before coming to America in 1920.

"From all accounts, my dad was quite a 'character' even as a young man, when he was one of the first people around here to sport a raccoon coat," said Otilia. "He picked up the nickname 'Tom Mix' during the 1920s," perhaps because he resembled the flamboyant cowboy star of that era.

"Even on the boat coming over, apparently, my dad helped his fellow passengers, talking to them about home, cheering them up and giving them encouragement," said Otilia, sharing some recollections that her father's friends and fans have relayed to her. "So you might say his career as a radio host really began at that time."

Taunton Daily Gazette
December 7, 1990

Continued from the winter 2009 (Vol. XXX, No. 1) issue...

I can record that, according to the respective certificates, that 2nd degree companion, 3rd degree master and 9th Master elected from the Nine, in 1911, were conferred upon him. He was elected sublime prefect in 1913 and 18th Sovereign Prince Rosicrucian in 1928.

His “symbolic” name was Bezelius³⁸; he was a member of the 2nd Purity, Purity and Sympathy and Union Lodges.

The circumstances of Masonic life during the Salazar regime are possibly the explanation for the lack of any certificates higher than the 18th degree found among his personal belongs at the time of his death. The lack of certificates for intermediate degrees is either explained by circumstances in the Masonic functioning, unknown to me, or by loss³⁹.

Frederico António Ferreira de Simas was married in the Lisbon parish of Santa Isabel on 28 December 1901 to Maria da Assunção Formosinho Patrício Álvares, born on 1 April 1874 in the Parish of São Clemente de Loulé and deceased in the Lisbon parish of Santa Isabel on 15 June 1954. She was the daughter of António Maria Patrício Álvares (from Vila Nova de Cerveira), a clerk in the Boa Hora Court, and formerly in Loulé, and Luzia Formosinho (from Taveira), paternal granddaughter of Manuel Patrício Álvares, a clerk in the Boa Hora Prison and previously in the Barcelos Court, a journalist and a battalion major, president of the Association of the Liberation Veterans, an officer in the Order of *Torre e Espada*, etc., whose biography is known⁴⁰ and Maria Clara da Assunção Pujol⁴¹ and maternal granddaughter of Sebastião Rodrigues Formosinho and Ana Gomes Pablo⁴².

They had an only daughter:

6 - *Maria Frederica Patício Álvares Ferreira de Simas*, was born in the parish of São Mamede on 2 January 1905. She completed the intermediate high school curriculum in the sciences and a curriculum in painting from the *Sociedade de Belas Artes*.

She married Francisco Alberto Alves de Azevedo, with a degree from the *Escola*

³⁸ The name of a famous 19th century chemist, a choice which speaks to the aforementioned taste for that science.

³⁹ His copy of the *Ritual do grau de Aprendiz* (1st degree) is n.º. 895 of the 1910 edition. It is in the possession of his grandson. Grandson of a mason and not the son of a mason, the author is not a “wolf cub.”

⁴⁰ If the great-grandmother of Frederico de Simas was imprisoned by the *Miguelistas*, his wife’s great-grandfather, Manuel’s father, also imprisoned by them, died in the Lamego jail.

⁴¹ His father was styled *Dom* José Pujol in a parish registry. He was from Aragon.

⁴² Both families are from Andalusian families established in the Algarve. To the first there are many people with distinguished family names in Portuguese society.

Out of curiosity I will add that Ana’s mother, Lúcia Rodrigues Tenório, born in 1794 in El Almendro, used as we see, names of literary resonance. And not just literary resonance, for there was a brand of canned good named Tenório, on whose packages was reproduced the portrait of Francisco Rodriguez Tenório, likely a close relative of Lúzia’s, and another example of the Andalusian fixation in the Algarve.

Superior Colonial, a retired functionary of the Overseas Ministry, writer and journalist, etc. They are the parents of the author of this article.

§2

- 3 - A brother of António Ferreira de Simas (1800-1863) was, according to traditional family conviction, the father of the following, for it is affirmed that he was first cousin to António do Carmo Ferreira de Simas (1847-1920), and in no other way could he be nor could he be named Ferreira de Simas.

It has not been established if this brother was Francisco, Cândido or still another, of whom nothing further is known.

- 4 - *António Ferreira de Simas*, manager (today we would say administrator) of the newspaper *Diário de Notícias*, being cited as such in 1865 and 1874⁴³. He married Margarida...of whom nothing further is known.

They had an only child:

- 5 - *Laura*, married first to Dr. José Pocarica da Costa Freire and then to an Englishman, of whom nothing further is known.

From the first marriage she had:

- 6 - *Maria*, died single, and of whom nothing else is known.
6 - *Berta*, married to a Brazilian, Dr. Henrique Esteves, with many descendants in Brazil.

From the second marriage she had:

- 6 - At least one child of whom nothing further is known.

APPENDIX

In view of the fact that the article on the Simas family in the *Enciclopédia Verbo*, authored by the office of heraldic studies, refers to only one person of that name, from the 19th century, and declares that there is nothing else available on its origins, I think it helpful to bring to my modest contribution, for its further study, a small list of others of

⁴³ According to *Diário de Notícias, edição comemorativa do cincoentenário do Diário de Notícias - 29-12-1864 to 29-12-1914 A fundação e Fundadores, alguns factos para a história do jornalismo português*, by Alfredo da Cunha, editor, p. 270 and the photographs between pp. 270-271.

this name who have achieved some notability, elaborated from references in various works.

Persons not belonging to the Ferreira de Simas family, although very probably some of whom have ancestors in common:

Joaquim José da Costa Simas (1806-18710), a jurist from Lisbon;
João José de Simas (1813-1879), a physician from Olhão;
Cristiano Augusto da Costa Simas, military officer, Governor of Diu from 1853 to 1856;
José Augusto de Simas Machado (1859-1927), a military officer and politician from Braga;
Manuel Soares de Melo Simas (1870-1934), a military officer and politician from the Azores;
Father António Maria de Castro e Simas (1884-?) from the Azores;
Manuel de Simas, created Count of Simas by decree dated 14 November 1901;
Mário Simas (1922-?), swimmer.



Without pretending even for a moment to exhaust the subject matter which I propose to take up again, if God grants me health and life, and without wanting in any way to insinuate claims of which I have no information, I believe that a few lines on the coat of arms which Santos Ferreira, but not Braamcamp Freire⁴⁴, nor the more recent *Armorial Lusitano*⁴⁵ attribute to the Simas, would be justified.

“Of gold, four red bands” is its description, coinciding with those of the Azambujas, Barahonas, Botelhos, Calados, Pegados and Privados. The figure of the crest, appears represented in a manner which is easily confused with that on the crests of the Baronhas or Calados.

It appears possible that Santos Ferreira had news of a Simas descended, by chance, from the Barahonas and Calados, who made use of their coat of arms, considering them, or the herald considering them, as being those of the name which concerns me.

It is a simple presumption which profound research will either confirm or reject.

About the Author

Francisco de Simas Alves de Azevedo was born in Lisbon on 21 July 1933 and took a degree in history from the Universidade Clássica de Lisboa. He was a secondary school teacher for more than 30 years and is now retired. He is the author of hundreds of studies, published in Portugal and abroad, on the auxiliary sciences to History, especially

⁴⁴ *Armaria Portuguesa*, 1908-1921.

⁴⁵ Zúquete, Afonso Eduardo Martins, Sérgio, António and Machado de Faria, António. *Armorial Lusitano-Genealogia e Heráldica*, Editorial Enciclopédia, Lisbon: 1961.

Heraldry. He is a member of various scientific Portuguese and foreign associations and has been awarded prizes and other distinctions for his research.

About the Translator

John Miranda Raposo, the son of Azorean immigrants, was born in Fall River in 1952. He took a degree in Portuguese and Secondary Education from the University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth (1974). Following a brief career in teaching, he has been a social worker with the Massachusetts Department of Social Services since 1979. He is a frequent contributor to *The Bulletin Board*.

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

Continued from the fall 2008 (Vol. XXIX, No. 3) issue....

DATE	GROOM	AGE	POB	BRIDE	AGE	POB
1940-03-25	Willard Henry Collins	26	Stonington	Wilhelmina Theresa Mello	23	Providence, R.I.
	Willard Andrew Collins & Lillian Emily Collins			Manuel V. Mello & Wilhelmina Enos		
06-01	Emanuel King	45	Rehoboth, Mass.	Christina M. Kuppers	44	New York, N.Y.
	Manuel King & Rose Sylvia			John Kuppers & Maria Nestors		
06-08	Alfred Thomas Santos	25	Plymouth, Mass.	Mary Constance Carreira	22	Fall River, Mass.
	Marion Santos & Marion C. Guerraoncha			Joseph Carreira & Edna Vieira		
07-20	John Francis Getchell	33	Stonington	Evon Lorraine Fratus	20	Stonington
	Frank Getchell & Mary Craddocks			George Fratus & Jesse Moniz		
08-07	Antone Edward Henry	28	Stonington	Mary Anne Nixe	24	Stonington
	Antone A. Henry & Mary Costa			Antone P. Nixie & Josephine Pont		
08-10	John Joseph Vieira	No record	Stonington	Ida Mary Majeika	23	Norwich, Conn.
	John Vieira & Mary Cravinho			Simon Majeika & Josephine Konikowski		
08-31	Manuel Jerry Travers	22	Stonington	Rose Ida Visgilio	24	Westerly, R.I.
	Antone Travers & Sylvia Fretard			Thomas Visgilio & Roseanna Perri		
09-09	Stanley Travers	27	Stonington	Victoria Teresa Millard	25	Brockton, Mass.
	Aersino Travers & Mary Santos			Tofie Millard & Rosalean Nyime		
09-14	Antonio Delicato	23	Westerly, R.I.	Mary Stella Vincent	24	Stonington
	George Delicato & Angeline Florie			John Vincent & Mary Maderia		
09-28	Frank William Bryer	44	Stonington	Sarah Dempster Ferguson	41	Glasgow, Scotland
	Frank S. Bryer & Violenta Cunha			John G. Ferguson & Sarah Dempster		
10-18	Clarence Silva	25	Fall River, Mass.	Hazel Dans Nerone	33	Norwood, N.Y.
	Joseph Silva & Louise Oliver			Rhodes Davis & Elizabeth Lovgale		
11-23	Manuel Fretard Sylvia	24	Stonington	Mariana Santana Faillace	24	Lawrence, Mass.
	John F. Sylvia & Annie Avellar			Vincent Faillace & Santana Dragsta		
1941-02-22	Alfred Edward Carreira	24	Fall River, Mass.	Irene Helen Almeida	18	Lonsdale, R.I.
	Joseph Carreira & Edna Veira			Manuel Almeida & Mary Medeiros		
02-26	Manuel Tavares Rebello	29	Murtosa, Portugal	Elsie Theresa Oliver	22	Stonington
	Jose Emilio Tavares Rebello & Maria Jose Esteves			Julius F. Oliver & Mary E. Roberts		
05-01	Donald Keith Holland	24	Stonington	Mary Escobar	21	Azores
	George W. Holland & Arabella Wild			Anibal Escobar & Florence Sylvia		

DATE	GROOM	AGE	POB	BRIDE	AGE	POB
1941-05-06	Joseph Kessler Frank Kessler & Mary Mikuta	33	New York	Mary Josephine Moniz Manuel Moniz & Mary Moniz	30	Azores
05-19	George William Sylvia Antone Sylvia & Mary Costa	30	Stonington	Helen Mary Mendonca Joseph Mendonca & Mary Vargas	23	Stonington
07-19	Benjamin Augustine Souza Manuel Souza & Mary Elizabeth Rocha	28	Fall River, Mass.	Elsie Marguerita Machado John Machado & Mary deCarniel Soares	22	New Bedford, Mass.
07-29	Manuel Edward Sylvia Antone Sylvia & Mary Conda	30	Jamestown, R.I.	Lena Elizabeth Megbaccia Joseph Megbaccia & Ruth Castanza	22	Westerly, R.I.
09-01	Joseph Adriano Jr. Joseph Adriano Sr. & Felisbina Sylvia	20	Stonington	Elizabeth Tudisco Sabatino Tudisco & Mary Miceli	23	Stonington
09-01	David George Telage George David Telage & Elucaya Simon	21	Willimantic, Conn.	Rose Helen King Anselmo King & Rose Deveau	19	Stonington
09-06	Frank Edward Prachniak Joseph Prachniak & Anna Benarczyk	20	Worcester, Mass.	Annie Elizabeth Lema Manuel Lema & Mary Arruda	25	Stonington
09-06	John Edward Sylvia Jessie P. Sylvia & Mary Cunha	21	Stonington	Yolanda Margaret Trumpetto John Trumpetto & Mary Frances Spezano	23	Westerly, R.I.
09-13	Antone Edward Lawrence Joseph Lawrence & Mary deWarte	32	Stonington	Florence Elizabeth Turano Sylvester Turano & Mary Puci	29	Westerly, R.I.
09-13	Antone Rose Louis Rose & Mary Victoria	29	New London, Conn.	Isabel Cruz Joseph Cruz & Mary Travers	25	New Bedford, Mass.
09-27	James Henry Manuel Henry & Mary Star	26	Somerville, Mass.	Virginia Jean Amato Nicholas Amato & Annie Colosi	18	Norwich, Conn.
10-09	Walter Main Erastus Wm. Main & Mabel Dewey	26	Stonington	Belmeda Pont Geal M. Pont & Mary Arruda	24	Stonington
10-11	Luzitano Silva Joseph Silva & Mary Starr	21	Cambridge, Mass.	Agnes Constance Madera Manuel Madera & Mary Constance Costa	20	Stonington
10-17	Frank Souza Manuel Souza & Elizabeth Rocha	35	Fall River, Mass.	Ethel Priscilla Chapman Robert Chapman & Marey York	24	Mystic, Conn.
10-30	Michael Leo Martin Joseph Martin & Ida Souza	26	New Bedford, Mass.	Margaret Olive Croteau Francis Croteau & Marie Riley	19	Colchester, Vt.
10-30	Bernard Edward Sylvia Francis E. Sylvia & Jennie Secor	20	Stonington	Alice Irene Wilson Everett F. Wilson & Helen Perigo	21	Mystic, Conn.
11-25	Manuel Henry Arruda John Arruda & Wilhelmina Cunha	24	Stonington	Elvira Ann Sacco Ralph Sacco & Nancy Praise	19	Westerly, R.I.
12-31	Manuel Moniz Joseph Moniz & Frances Costa	26	Stonington	Mary Giordano Joseph Giordano & Josephine Ruggusso	25	Westerly, R.I.
1942-01-01	Donald Irving Sheldon Adin Sheldon & Alice Freestone	21	Stonington	Mary Frances Andrews Manuel Andrews & Mary Rose Pearson	20	Worcester, Mass.
02-05	Frank Pickering Alfred Pickering & Catherine Edginsiton	21	Camden, N.J.	Madeline King Emanuel King & Leahnore Francis	24	Stonington
02-14	George Marshall Carleton Lynwood Carleton & Nellie Siminson	22	E. Longmeadow, Mass.	Constance Margaret Sylvia Antone Sylvia & Mary Viera	26	Stonington
03-07	Joseph Richard Henry John Arruda Henry & Wilhelmina Cunha	28	Stonington	Bertha May Anthony Frank & Bertha Chapman	20	Groton, Conn.
04-11	Thomas Rose Goulart Tony Goulart & Rose Clara	40	Faial	Myrtle Ettabelle William Bogue & Minnie Dewey	25	Groton, Conn.

To be continued...

Research by Henrietta M. Mayer, computer work by Gabriella P. Gaultry of Connecticut.

Down on Columbia Street

By Ken Chapman

Birth of a Neighborhood

A brisk wind sweeps up Columbia Street from Mount Hope Bay. Loose sand and pulverized tile are blown across a depression in the street. Below, a telephone pole rises like Christ crucified; other poles and wires are arranged like the masts of ships in port.

Columbia Street runs a quarter-mile up-and-down hill, a stretch of urban thoroughfare replete with bakeries, fish markets and groceries, restaurants, coffee shops, small shops selling women's and children's clothes, a furniture store, a credit union, a funeral home. The street is alive with people and cars.

It was not always so. Over a century-and-a-half ago, a man on the hillcrest stood smoothing out a sheet of onion skin paper. The wind had folded over his survey plans. He'd just traced the lines of the new streets, Washington and Columbia, he had plotted out for Mr. Charlton Shearman Pearl. He shifted the board beneath his papers and wrote, "Simeon Borden, 1828"

In 1850, Andrew Robeson, who owned the hillside, smiled as he slammed the door on his vacant granite residence. Big doings. Surveyor Joshua Brown had divided the whole hill into house lots of about twenty-four rods each. The lots formed a keyboard encircling his former home, on a block bounded by new streets—lower Columbia, Eagle, Hope and Fountain. A new tune would be played here soon.

Streets crisscrossed the hill in haste. Union Street intersected Columbia before plunging northward to arrive at Mr. Robeson's Print Works on Pocasset Street. Ferry Street skirted the Fall River Iron Works property. Pearl, Washington and Canal dashed headlong into Anawan Street. One street over was Pocasset, lined with Quequechan River mills, most of them erected between 1820 and 1850.

South from Columbia, uphill, newborn streets reached like fingers toward open land. Columbia Street straddled the state line until the border dispute with Rhode Island was resolved in 1862. After that, the expansion of Fall River, southward along the hills above Mount Hope Bay was uninhibited.

In 1870s Fall River, tired ex-whalers from Newport and New Bedford mingled with Azorean families who recently arrived aboard commercial transports. Eventually they became rooted in the fifteen-block area bounded by Broadway, Hunter, Columbia and Division streets. Close by, linguistic cousins, French-speaking Canadians had already settled in the area of Broadway, Division and Bay streets.

The American Linen Company, at the foot of Ferry Street, recruited French-Canadians to perform unskilled labor—and to counteract the militant trade unionism of English and Irish textile workers.

Santo Cristo dos Milagres

The First Baptist Church erected a community house in the midst of this non-English-speaking population, making a substantial number of converts among the Portuguese Catholics. The Catholic Church responded by sending a priest from the Portuguese community in New Bedford. Reverend António de Matos Freitas, the Azorean-born pastor of St. John the Baptist Church in New Bedford, initiated the first mission to Fall River on March 10, 1874.

Fall River's Portuguese immigrants attended mass in Irish churches, St. Mary's, St. Louis and St. Joseph's, conducted by New Bedford priests. Masses were also held at Hibernian Hall. In 1899 the diocese acquired the Baptist Community House on the corner of Columbia and Canal streets and converted it into the first Portuguese Catholic church in Fall River, Santo Cristo.

Around this time there were 600 Portuguese in Fall River six years later over 1700. Some 10,000 Portuguese, mostly Azoreans, were living in the city by 1909. Pastor Cândido d'Avila Martins called his church "Santo Cristo Milagres."

The Feast of Santo Christo

Today, the majestic Santo Christo Church is Columbia Street's centerpiece. Designed by Providence architects Murphy and Hindle, its Greek Revival splendor is a focal point during the Feast of Santo Christo, a three-day celebration culminating in a solemn mass on the last Sunday of June.

For the 40,000 visitors, this is a feast of lights and colors as well as food. As the church's yellow brick facade fades with approaching evening, an illustrated brocade emerges from the darkening walls. Hundreds of colored lights form patterns similar to those on the front of the cathedral at Ponta Delgada, São Miguel, where the feast originated in the 1700s.

The statue of Christ (Ecce Homo) carried through the neighborhood is a replica of one kept at the Convent of Hope in Ponta Delgada. Feastgoers point and cameras click as they take note of the stained-glass windows and tracery, the tiled roof with copper coping and the cast stone pinnacles. The doors and stairs could serve as a setting for medieval pageantry. The smells of Portuguese and American food draw visitors to an adjoining parking lot.

Feast of the Holy Ghost

In previous decades, Holy Ghost feasts had been held locally in various locations. In 1986, the Portuguese community decided to bring all the area churches and Holy Ghost organizations from throughout New England to Fall River. The single feast of the Holy Ghost is now celebrated in the Columbia Street neighborhood during the last weekend in August.

Though it originated elsewhere in Europe, the feast gained popularity during the reign of Queen Isabel. During one feast a poor man was crowned at a mass attended by royalty and nobility. According to tradition, the man dined at the palace and was served by the king and queen. Portuguese navigators later brought the festival to the Azores, and Azorean immigrants in Fall River have kept the tradition alive.

The *Bodo de Leite*, a small parade of floats (decorated ox carts or *carros de bois*), brass bands and other contingents move down South Main Street, down Columbia Street, along Broadway and up Middle Street to Saint Anne's Church and Kennedy Park. When the procession reaches the site of the feast at the park, the gathering crowds are served milk and Portuguese sweetbread.

From "Colony" to "Cultural District"

The route of the Holy Ghost procession encloses a "Portuguese Cultural District" created by the city in the mid-80s, bounded by Washington, William and Broadway streets and a few blocks north of Columbia Street. At the turn of the [twentieth] century, this area was referred to as the "Portuguese Colony," a colony that suffered greatly during the mill strike of 1904.

In July of that year, mill agents posted notices of a 12.5 percent reduction in wages and union officials responded by striking. As the dispute went into January, nonunion and largely unskilled Portuguese workers from the "colony" appealed in desperation to the unions for aid. Faced with dwindling resources, the union suspended aid to the Portuguese pending a review of their situation. Angered, residents met union officials with hostility and derision when they appeared on Columbia Street. Finally, Governor William Douglas met with both labor and management. Two days later the strike was "settled." The union accepted the wage reduction but won amnesty for the strikers.

Today the neighborhood looks ahead as the former "colony" works to become a full-fledged cultural district. The city's 2.5 million dollar plan for revitalization includes the creation of three city squares—Columbia, Santo Christo and Medeiros.

Dedicated in 1987, Medeiros Square occupies the former site of a basketball court in front of the John J. Doran School. Near a set of concrete benches is a monument dedicated to William R. Medeiros, Business Agent for the Laborers Union (AFL). The inscription reads: "A man who devoted the best years of his life to the American Labor Movement. It can be rightly said that as a result of his untiring efforts the working man and his family have lived a happier and healthier life."

A Bustling Commercial District

During the late nineteenth century, Columbia Street emerged as a small-scale commercial district tangential to South main Street. By 1895, the Globe Street Railway's new electric cars were running on Columbia Street, on Broadway, near the Ferry Street railroad station and along William Street. The presence of the streetcar line insured Columbia Street's viability as a commercial thoroughfare.

Substantial mansard-roofed tenements with stores beneath were erected along the street. Housing the Sagres Bar & Restaurant at number 179 is an elaborate Italianate structure with colonnaded porches. A nineteenth-century brick warehouse rises over Irene's Dress Shop. Near the foot of the street, a woman emerges from a Greek Revival tenement to retrieve her mail.

Street numbers begin at the bottom and climb with the hill toward the center of the city. At number 49 is Chaves' Market, its walls a gleaming weave of gray and black ceramic brick. Manuel S. Chaves Sr. migrated to Fall River from São Miguel, Azores, in 1954 and three years later opened Chaves' Market and Gift Shop near the top of Columbia Street. His customers were the aging residents of the neighborhood who sought out the old-style foods—blood pudding, marinated pork, salted fish and sardines.

In 1966, when Chaves opened his new market on the site of the old Silver Dollar Cafe, it was a time of change. New immigrants from the Azores brought younger people into the neighborhood. Highway construction and urban renewal had eliminated much of the old housing stock north of the upper half of the street. The southern border of the old Portuguese "colony" shifted uphill toward Kennedy Park. The area became inhabited by people from different Azorean islands, now living within the same neighborhood and parish.

Manuel Chaves was the first to pattern his sidewalks with gray and white concrete pavers, an idea incorporated in the city's revitalization plan for Columbia Street. Mr. Chaves died in 1986, the same year the trees and shrubs were planted and new tile sidewalks showed under recently erected street lamps.

The trees along Columbia Street have grown, upsetting some of the tiles, and automobiles have worn their own patterns over the street. Manuel Jr. and his brother, Octavio, now run the market. The bold Sagres has become less salty and more refined. The Cinderella Coffee Shop has found its glass slipper, having traded old red vinyl and chrome for more elegant attire. And the wind still sweeps in from Mount Hope Bay.

With permission.

Portuguese Spinner: An America Story
Marsha L. McCabe and Joseph D. Thomas, Editors
pp. 166-172

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American-Portuguese Genealogical and Historical Society, Inc.

The Society's year is January 1—December 31

Dues are:

- \$ 10.00 Regular membership
- 2.50 Spouse
- 15.00 Libraries, societies and members not submitting pedigree charts
- 150.00 Life membership (Regular) after age fifty-five
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~~PIMENTEL, RICHARD P~~
~~62 JACOBS WEL RD~~
~~LEWISVILLE, NH 03042-2517~~

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