

# Isabel Silvia, 105, dies; resided here 86 years

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3/7/83

Isabel (Martin) Silvia, 105, believed to be Taunton's oldest resident, died Saturday afternoon at her 81 Hart St. home. She was the widow of Manuel P. Silvia.

Born Nov. 27, 1877, in St. John, Pico, Azores, she was the daughter of the late Joseph and Maria C. (daSousa) Martin. She had been a resident of Taunton since coming to the United States in 1897.

At Mrs. Silvia's 100th birthday celebration in 1977, her daughter, Luty P. Silvia, helped the Gazette compile an account of her memories, which spanned horse and buggy days and spaceship travel to the moon.

Mrs. Silvia married her husband, a Provincetown fisherman, in 1898, one year after her arrival in the United States. Manuel Silvia would later work at the Brickyard and then for Weir Stove Company.

#### Teddy Roosevelt

In those early days, Mrs. Silvia rode the train to work at an East Taunton mill for a weekly salary of \$4.60. Later, she would walk to work at Nemasket Mills in the Weir, earning \$5.40 for a 56-hour work week.

From the beginning, Mrs. Silvia was determined to learn the ways of her new country. When horse-drawn trolleys were introduced, some were reluctant to ride, but Mrs. Silvia was willing, her daughter recalled.

One of the family's favorite stories was of a trip to a Somerset festa. The Taunton travelers, who missed their train home, were at the depot when Theodore Roosevelt came through from his Newport summer residence.

He invited the stranded Tauntonians to join him. The Silvias sat across the aisle from the 26th president of the United States, and recalled him playing with their baby son, Joseph.

#### Moon Landing

Silvia, who built the family's Hart Street home in 1900, died during the Spanish influenza epidemic of 1918. Mrs. Silvia was left to raise their eight children, the oldest of whom was 18.

Luty Silvia said her mother was "too proud" to accept the "widow's aid" available at the time. The younger children picked and sold blueberries to help the family, and all helped their mother with the wash.

"We were and are a good family, a unit," Luty told the Gazette. "If we had a problem, we worked it out together. Mom always asked, 'What do you think?'"

By the time Neil Armstrong took his first steps on the moon in 1969, Mrs. Silvia, at 92, was hard of hearing and had poor eyesight. "But she was determined to watch it anyway," her daughter said.

Mrs. Silvia was also an



ISABEL SILVIA

avid Red Sox and Bruins fan.

#### Great-Grandmother

She followed daily news accounts and voted in every election, by absentee ballot in later years. She was a communicant of Our Lady of Lourdes Church, and a member of the Holy Ghost Society of East Taunton.

She leaves her four sons, Joseph P. Silvia, John P. Silvia, Frank P. Silvia, and James P. Silvia, and two daughters, Mrs. Mary Medas Murphy and Luty P. Silvia, all of Taunton.

She is also survived by seven grandchildren, 20 great-grandchildren, nine great-great grandchildren, and several nephews and nieces.