

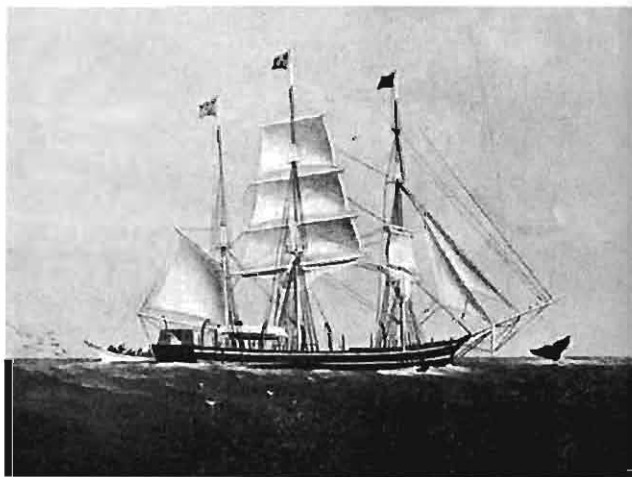
The Portuguese in Falmouth: 1870 to 1930

© Lewis A. White

The Portuguese are notably absent¹ from colonial and pre-colonial America, a surprising fact considering they launched the Age of Discovery and built an empire extending across more than half the globe, including parts of what are today fifty-three sovereign states, and lasting almost six centuries². They were excluded from the New World by treaties³ in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The only part of the New World available to them was eastern Brazil, and by 1760 — a generation before the American war of independence — 700,000 Portuguese were living there.

American immigration began in earnest when islanders from the Azores and Cape Verde⁴ islands arrived on American whaleboats like the barque *Kathleen* and some decided to stay. Most of these islanders were descended from immigrants of what is, in a sense, the first “New World”: the Azores, an early Portuguese discovery of nine islands 850 miles out to sea uninhabited at the time by man or any other land animal. The Azores were populated from Portugal, France, and England almost two hundred years before the Great Migration to Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay colonies⁵.

When the Pilgrims landed in 1620, the Portuguese had already been fishing off the Grand Banks for decades. It seems probable some individuals may have settled in the northeast before American whaleboats began calling on the Azores⁶ and Cape Verde⁷ islands, but it was not until then that Portuguese in any sizable numbers started immigrating in North America. Voyages typically lasted two to four years,



The barque *Kathleen*, built in 1844, stove and sunk by a whale on March 17, 1902.

¹With some exceptions like Revolutionary War hero Peter Francisco; see <http://www.historynet.com/peter-francisco-american-revolutionary-war-hero.htm>, as accessed 9/26/2012

²The Portuguese Empire began with Ceuta in 1415 and formally ended in 1999 with the turnover of Macau to China.

³In 1481, the Papal Bull *Æterni regis*; in 1493, the Papal Bulls *Inter caetera* and *Dudum siquidem*; in 1494, the Treaty of Tordesillas; in 1506 the Papal Bull *Ea quae*; and in 1529 the Treaty of Zaragoza. Collectively, these documents divided all lands not yet “discovered” between Portugal and Spain.

⁴Cape Verde became independent of Portugal in 1975.

⁵Approximately 20,000 emigrated from England and expatriate settlements in Holland between 1630, a year after King Charles I dissolved Parliament, and 1640, when it reconvened.

⁶Initially anchoring between the islands of Pico and Fayal to call on the deep-water port of Horta. Later some would also call on Ponta Delgada in São Miguel island, the only other natural deep-water port in the Azores.

⁷Initially near Bravo island.

and sailors did not get paid until the ship returned to port, unloaded its cargo, and paid each member of the crew a percentage of the profits. Many signed up for another voyage after spending some time ashore, some returned home, and some decided to stay. Initially, those who stayed lived primarily near whaling and fishing ports in New England and California, but some went to Hawaiian plantations and a few even journeyed to the California gold fields.

Falmouth

Like many ethnic groups, the intensely religious Portuguese tended to settle in areas with similar environments and familiar cultures. Waquoit village in Falmouth, bounded on two sides by rivers and on the third by the ocean, was a natural. At the time, Waquoit Bay was part of a thriving maritime economy. Falmouth itself, founded in a search for religious tolerance, had welcomed the Irish to Woods Hole, where St. Joseph Roman Catholic Church was built in 1882.

Falmouth's economy changed significantly in the nineteenth century. The topsoil had become less productive, and the availability of cheap farmland on the expanding American frontier lured many residents away from Falmouth. Increased competition from a growing America, collapse of the saltworks, bankruptcy of the Pacific Guano Company, the extension of the railroad to Falmouth in 1872 further opening the town to competition, and the decline of whaling all took their toll. Cranberries offered new opportunities but it was extremely labor intensive,

both in building the bogs and in harvesting the fruit, and Falmouth's labor supply severely limited its expansion. Portuguese islanders were a big part of the answer for cranberries, fishing, farming, trades, and building local infrastructure. It became a truly symbiotic relationship, beneficial to both Falmouth and the Portuguese.

The First Wave of Immigration

Until the mid twentieth century, Falmouth was rarely a destination for Portuguese immigrants. The first wave of Portuguese immigration triggered by whaling began around 1840, but it was about thirty years before this wave hit Falmouth: the earliest identified Portuguese living in Falmouth are recorded in the 1870 U.S. Census: there were three Portuguese families in Falmouth, all headed⁸ by men from Fayal, one of the nine Azores islands⁹.

The anchorage between Fayal and Pico islands was one of the whalers' favorites. It offered relatively calm waters between two islands less than four miles apart, a popular deep-water seaport in Horta (Fayal) with many merchants and an American consulate where they could exchange mail and make credit and shipping arrangements. Whaling ships had been stopping there since 1740 for provisions and increasingly to fill out their skeleton crews. It is not surprising that the first Portuguese residents of Falmouth were from Fayal. Nor is it surprising that all three men immigrated before they were married, all married women born in America, and all lived in Waquoit, then the home of many whaling captains.

⁸Based on US Census forms that define one individual as "head" of the family.

⁹Portuguese immigrants settled earlier in Cotuit; in 1836, four seamen (Joseph B. Folger, brothers George and John Williams, and Joseph Snow) jumped ship and swam ashore. All were from Fayal.

The three Portuguese families in 1870 Falmouth were a classic example of first wave immigrants attracted to America by whaling. Their numbers grew slowly but steadily over the years, and as they tired of a seafaring life, some moved elsewhere. Falmouth offered an environment much like their island homelands, where their experience in self-sufficient farming stood them well.

Falmouth's Portuguese population grew slowly over the next ten years, from seven people in three families to fourteen people in four families, plus one boarder who did not live with any relatives. Of the three families living in Falmouth in 1870, by 1880 only the

James Alexander family remained: his wife Harriet had died after the birth of their son John; his oldest daughter, Olive, kept house; and middle daughter Harriet worked in the Moonakis Woolen Factory. The three new families did not settle in Waquoit:

- Charles Childs, his wife Lucretia, and their son Herbert lived in North Falmouth.
- Charles Sullivan, his wife Harriet, and their four children lived in East Falmouth.
- Isabel L. Crocker, her husband August and daughter Nellie, lived in Teaticket with her father-in-law Silas J. Crocker. Isabel is the first woman born in Portugal to reside in Falmouth.



Steam-Sail Ships

Second wave immigrants travelled mostly on metal-hulled steamships that made Transatlantic travel increasingly faster and cheaper. However, during the early years of the second wave, many immigrants travelled on a short-lived type of Transatlantic ship that used both sail and steam power. The illustration is an example of such a steam-sail ship. These ships were generally too small to carry enough coal for the entire voyage and boasted a “service speed” of only 10 knots.

The *Benguella* provided cargo and passenger service between the Azores and the United States from 1885 until its abandonment at sea on June 24, 1890.

The *Benguella* was a typical steam-sail ship. It was 250 feet long by 36 feet wide and could carry up to twelve (12) first class passengers and two hundred and fifty (250) third class passengers. Originally named the *Saxon*, it was built in England in 1863 for packet mail service with South Africa. In 1885, as government contracts required larger and larger ships, it was sold to Impreza Insulana de Navegação of Ponta Delgada, Azores, where it began regular service between mainland Portugal, the Azores, and the United States. Joseph Sylvester was on the first of only six *Benguella* crossings to Providence and New York; it was abandoned at sea in 1890, fortunately without loss of life.

Ambrose Williams, age 7, born in Massachusetts of Azorean parents, is listed as a boarder with John Davis in Falmouth Village, with no known relatives in Falmouth.

The three male Azorean-born heads of household — John Alexander, Charles Childs, and Charles Sullivan — were all sailors. Isabel Crocker's Massachusetts-born husband Augustus was a laborer.

The Second Wave

The second wave of immigration began in 1870, spurred by the extremely rapid growth of American manufacturing and its appetite for more labor than local areas could supply. Portuguese immigrants were lured not just by the opportunities they heard about from family and friends, but also by agents of American businesses who actively promoted emigration. Unlike the first wave where immigrants were primarily single young men, the second wave consisted mostly of entire families of two and sometimes three generations.

Rapid industrialization in cities made the second wave of immigrants seem like a tsunami. New Bedford and Fall River grew from 19,000 when the mills first started to 48,000 in 1870 and 242,000 by 1920. Second wave immigrants generally arrived with little money but were hard working and thrifty. In many urban families, fathers, mothers, and children all worked for penurious wages, living frugally to save money for a better future. The mills were notorious for child labor, dangerous machinery, long hours, and in many cases stifling working conditions. After a few years in the cities, some took their family savings and moved elsewhere, often to areas they heard about from other immigrants, especially those that reminded them of their homeland. Like the first wave, this one also took about thirty years to reach Falmouth.

Falmouth was in an economic transition. Many factors tempted Falmouth residents, especially the younger ones, to move elsewhere. Cranberries had potential but required far more inexpensive labor



The Sylvester farm on Carriage Shop Road. When Joseph purchased the wooded land in 1910, he said “Before me, woods; after me, woods.” These strawberry fields have returned to pitch pines and scrub oak.

than Falmouth could provide. Many Portuguese were attracted by the combination of readily available land and Falmouth's need for cranberry workers. Whaling men Manuel Viera Martins and Francisco Perry Da Rosa used their savings to move to Falmouth and acquire land. Other immigrants, used to intensive labor in the mills, became successful cranberry bog workers. Eventually some families earned enough money to buy and clear their own land.

The influx of immigrants experienced in labor intensive farming, many attracted originally by cranberries, became interested in strawberries they could grow on their own land. While many also became businessmen, it was first cranberries (which peaked around 1900), and then strawberries (still a growing industry in 1920, peaking in 1937), that fueled the growth in Falmouth's Portuguese population from three families in 1870 to almost a third of the population in 1920. At first they were whalers, then fishermen, then farmers and laborers and then tradesmen and businessmen. In 1885, Falmouth shipped 2,234 barrels of cranberries; ten years later, the total was 15,000 barrels. In 1890, Portuguese farmers began growing strawberries and in 1920 the USDA declared it the highest yield producer in the country. Cranberries and strawberries provided good opportunities for people willing and able to leverage their meager resources with sweat equity.

We do know that between 1880 and 1900 Falmouth's total population grew from 2,420 to 3,500, while the Portuguese population grew from 14 to 276, and the number of Portuguese families grew from 4 to 47. In 1880, the largest ethnic group in Falmouth was the Irish, and most of them lived in Woods Hole where they worked for the Pacific Guano Company. By 1900, the largest ethnic group was the Portuguese and they lived (in decreasing order) in East Falmouth, Teaticket, Hatchville, Falmouth village, Waquoit, Quisset, Woods Hole, and North Falmouth. Unfortunately, the records from the 1890 United States Census no longer exist. They were destroyed in a fire¹⁰, and the surviving aggregated reports do not supply details on Falmouth, so less is known of 1890 itself.

In 1900 the Portuguese became almost 8% of the population, slightly exceeding the Irish, to make it the town's largest ethnic group. Ten years later it increased to 141 families and 678 individuals, more than 20% of the population. Their occupations are summarized in the table below:

1910 Census
Occupations of Portuguese residents of Falmouth

Farmers: 38%
Laborers (includes sailors and cranberrybog workers): 38%
Tradesman (carpenters, masons, plumbers): 7%
Groundskeepers: 5%
Domestics (chauffeurs, house workers, servants, waitresses): 4%

¹⁰A fire in the basement of the Commerce Building in Washington DC destroyed about 25% of the records. Another 50% was damaged by water and smoke. 25% damaged in a fire in the basement of the Commerce Building in Washington, D.C. in 1921. The remainder was destroyed on government order, after approval by Congress, by 1934 or 1935.

From today's vantage point, this occupational data has obvious problems caused by cultural differences between enumerators and residents. Many Portuguese families were self sufficient, using wood from land they cleared to build homes and outbuildings, raising crops seven or eight months of the year for their own use, and raising larger animals for sustenance primarily during the colder months; many fished almost year round. They also sold and/or bartered their produce and animals. Family members sometimes worked as laborers to provide hard cash for things they could not raise or obtain by bartering. Census assumptions cloud distinctions between those who already owned land they worked and those who worked the land while accumulating savings to acquire it. The census also shows a total of only nine (9) people involved in cranberries and two (2) in strawberries, numbers so ludicrously small that it is *prima facie* obvious that occupational labor — especially of women and children — is grossly understated.

By 1920, there were 1,104 Portuguese in 895 families, and these families were on average eleven years younger and almost 40% larger (typically 5.4 individuals versus 3.9). Overall the town's total population returned to 1900 levels, but in those twenty years the Portuguese had grown from 7.9% to 31.5%. Clearly, the Portuguese were moving in faster than the non-Portuguese were moving out, but what is not so obvious is that about 20% of the Falmouth Portuguese who immigrated between 1890 and 1910 also left. Many of them moved elsewhere in the United States in search of better opportunities. Others, however, decided to take their savings

and return home as relatively wealthy individuals, as witnessed by the dramatic construction of masonry *Impérios*¹¹ in the Azores in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Undoubtedly, for some the rising nation-wide tide of anti-immigration sentiment made some Portuguese feel unwelcome and accelerated their return.

Immigration Restriction Acts and A Delayed Third Wave

In 1921, after World War I and a growing public alarm about the effect immigrants were having on the United States, Congress passed an Immigration Restriction Act to “stabilize the ethnic composition of the population”¹². The number of immigrants allowed was allotted by nation of origin, based on 3% of the number of foreign born immigrants recorded in the 1910 census. In 1924 the number was reduced from 3% to 2% of the number recorded, and the baseline was changed from 1910 to 1890 when fewer immigrants — especially from southern Europe — were present. These draconian acts effectively slammed the door on Portuguese emigration to the United States.

However, at least in the short term, the Portuguese population in Falmouth continued to increase because these laws were passed when the mills in New Bedford and Fall River were just beginning a decades long death spiral. Between 1920 and 1930, the combined population of New Bedford and Fall River decreased by 4,617 and the Portuguese population from Falmouth increased by 350 to 1,454. Falmouth's total population had increased even faster,

¹¹A small ornate structure to store items used in the annual Feast of the Holy Ghost, and sometimes for the annual religious folk celebrations themselves.

¹²Jones, Maldwyn Allen (1960). *American Immigration*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. p. 277.

so while the number of Portuguese increased, the percentage was down slightly to 30.2%, and more of them were now second generation Portuguese. With immigration doors all but shut, the Portuguese population declined steadily for over thirty years.

On September 16, 1957, Fayal entered a cataclysmic year heralded by disastrous earthquakes¹³. Eleven days later, after 200 level 5 earthquakes, amid reports that the seas themselves were boiling, an offshore volcano exploded. For more than a year, volcanic eruptions and other seismic events destroyed homes, businesses, government buildings, and farmlands, causing mass evacuations. In the United States, a young senator named John F. Kennedy co-sponsored the Azorean Refugee Act which passed in 1958. Ultimately, this would result in the third and largest wave of immigration — and this time Falmouth was a destination, as helping hands reached across the ocean to beleaguered relatives, friends, and compatriots — but that's another story.

Considering their numbers and history, even in areas where they are concentrated, Portuguese immigrants have generally not been a particularly conspicuous minority. During the 1960's, for example, when ethnic and racial groups were identified on official Massachusetts government-sanctioned forms to ensure fair and equal treatment, prominent Portuguese citizens actively resisted special treatment and pressured legislators to exclude them. Many immigrants retained foreign-sounding names Silvia (aka Sylvia and Sylva), Sousa (aka Soza and Souza), Barrows (Barros), Ferreira (Feraira, Frara, Freira), Enos (Ignos) and Barbosa (Barboza, Barbos), Teixeira (Texeira), Moniz (Monis, Monese), and Peters, but many adopted or were assigned (by immigration officials) established American names like Perry, Martin, White, Davis, Rogers, and Andrews. While assimilation has always seemed to be a historical objective, they have also continued to publicly celebrate their uniqueness with centuries old traditions like the Feast of the Holy Spirit.

¹³<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Capelinhos>, September 7, 2012.

Manuel Rodrigues Gonçalves and Maria Caterina São Jose

Merchant Manuel Rodrigues Gonçalves and his wife Maria Caterina São Jose lived in Candelaria, Pico, between the port city of Madelana and the lava field vineyards that are now designated a UNESCO world heritage site. Manuel and Maria Caterina were born in Candelaria in 1822 and 1828 respectively, were married on April 30, 1849, and remained there until the end of their days. Little is known about them other than what is suggested by the surviving tintypes, and stories attesting to a comfortable life by contemporary Azorean standards.



Maria Caterina São Jose Rodrigues Gonçalves about 1890.



Maria Caterina (Rodrigues Gonçalves) Silveira Leal, about 1910.



Maria Josefa (Rodrigues Gonçalves) about 1893.

They raised six children, four daughters and two sons. Evarista, their fifth child, emigrated to America in 1878. That same year, Evarista's sister, Maria Josefa, married Manuel Viera Martins in Candelaria. In 1883, the Martins emigrated to America with their baby daughter, Mary. The Rodrigues Gonçalves' first-born daughter, Maria Caterina, married Manuel Silveria Leal and their firstborn daughter Rosalina later emigrated to America and lived in Taunton near her (aunt) Tia Varista.



Evarista (Rodrigues Gonçalves) Silvestre about 1899.

Manuel Vieira Martins and Maria Josefa (Rodrigues Gonçaves) Martins



Maria Josefa (Rodrigues Gonçaves) Martins and Manuel Vieira Martins, about 1893.

Manuel Vieira Martins (“Ti Calhau”) was born around 1850 on Pico Island in the Azores. Centuries earlier, his Catholic ancestors practiced their religion secretly in basements before finally fleeing England during a fervor of persecution. Before he reached the conscription age of 14 he joined the crew of a Nantucket whaler — probably the E.H. Adams. His granddaughter Ethyl Sylvia Borges remembered him saying that when the ship returned to Nantucket he thought “it would be a good place to live and [his] children would be better off there”.

On June 2, 1867 he signed on for another whaling voyage on the barque *Kathleen*, which returned to New Bedford on July 26, 1871. He was paid \$505.09 as his share of the profits after all of his expenses were deducted. He signed on for a second whaling voyage on the *Kathleen* on July 10, 1875. Captain Samuel R Howland recorded in the ship’s journal that Manuel Martins jumped ship while it was anchored in the passageway between Pico and Fayal.

Their first child, Mary, was born on May 29, 1883 and later that year they emigrated to New Bedford. Manuel went on another whaling voyage and talked about going on another after that, but Mary gave him an ultimatum: “either come home for good or stay at sea”. He never went to sea again.

Every Pentecost Sunday – seven weeks after Easter – they had a procession from one of the member's homes, past today's Waquoit Post Office, past yesteryear's Carriage Shop Manufactory, to the Holy Ghost hall in Fresh Pond. This society and celebration continue to this day.

They moved to Waquoit, buying the home described on page 409 of the "Book of Falmouth" as "Riverside Cottage, Moonakis River" on November 22, 1893. In the wintertime, he cleared trees from land he intended to farm, selling them as firewood. In the spring, he planted vegetables for their own use and also began growing strawberries to sell.

Manuel Martin was one of the founders of what is now called the Fresh Pond Holy Ghost Society. Originally, when Fresh Pond was often referred to as "Upper Waquoit", it was called the Waquoit Holy Ghost Association. Initially, local Portuguese celebrated the Feast of the Holy Ghost in member's homes, but around 1900 they built a hall on land donated by Francisco Perry da Rosa, one of the founding members. Manny Martin, then commonly known as "Ti Calhau", was also a founder and the Society's first auctioneer. His neighbors Joe Andrews (aka Jose Silveira de Andrade) and Joe White (aka Joseph Silva White) were also founders. Every Pentecost Sunday – seven weeks after Easter – they had a procession from one of the member's homes, past today's Waquoit

Post Office, past yesteryear's Carriage Shop Manufactory, to the Holy Ghost hall in Fresh Pond. This society and celebration continue to this day.

Their first son, Manuel, was born on February 11, 1887. He drowned accidentally while swimming in Waquoit Bay on September 1, 1902. Their third son, John G. would marry Joe Andrew's daughter Rosella and their son, Leonard E. Martin, would become the Chief of Falmouth's Police, retiring in 1982.

Ti Calhau's wife Maria Josefa died of cancer on April 11, 1919, and was buried in Saint Joseph cemetery on Gifford Street in Falmouth next to her son. Soon thereafter, he himself became seriously ill and moved in with his daughter Mary. His granddaughter Ethyl gave up her downstairs bedroom so he would not have to climb stairs. Towards the end, fading in and out of consciousness, Ethyl asked him "do you know me?" and Ti Calhau answered, "don't I know my Ethyl?" Those were his last words. Two days before the eighth anniversary of his wife's death – April 8, 1927 – he died and was buried next to his wife.

Joseph Sylvester and Evarista (Rodrigues Gonçalves) Sylvester

Evarista was born on October 15, between 1857 and 1866. She emigrated about 1878 and lived in Taunton, where she was married for a while and then divorced. Evarista and Josefa corresponded regularly until the Martins immigrated to New Bedford and they were able to visit.

Jose Silvestre was born May 28, 1871 in Fenais da Ajuda, Sao Miguel, the firstborn of Francisco de Medeiros Silvestre and Jacinta Rosa Pacheco. In his later years, Jose would sometimes tell his grandson about the difficult times of his youth. He described how he would fall asleep looking at the stars through the holes in the roof, and how he would walk the three miles to church

barefoot, carrying his shoes, not putting them on until he arrived at the steps of the Church.

He immigrated at Providence between 1885 and 1890 on the steam-sail ship Benguella, arriving in Providence in the winter time. He had never seen snow before, and always amusingly remembered the children on shore throwing harmless snowballs at the disembarking immigrants.

On November 9, 1893, Evarista and Joseph were married by Reverend F. L. Streeter in the East Falmouth Methodist Church, not far from the Manuel Martins family. In 1901 they moved to 188 Summer Street in Taunton, a little upriver from Weir Village, across the street from what is now the Taunton Oil station. Their first and only child, Mary Sylvester, was born on April Fools' Day in 1903. In 1905 they moved to Berkley, where Joseph found employment as a horse trainer.



Evarista (Rodrigues Gonçalves) Sylvester and Joseph Sylvester with their daughter Mary, about 1903.

On November 11, 1910, they purchased wooded land in Falmouth from Asa Small, clearing it mostly by hand, using a horse to pull stumps. In later years, this area would come to be popularly known as "Calico Town", referring to the colorful clothing residents wore in stark contrast to that worn by more staid New Englanders. They had a house built and were surprised when they returned to see it so close to the road, but they decided to let it stand.

They moved to Falmouth. Joseph continued to clear the land for farming, remarking to Eva, "before me woods, and after me, woods". During his first year he worked as a laborer for the town in the East End, on Church Street in Woods Hole, and on the Green and Great Harbor Bridges.

Joseph took his brother-in-law's advice and, in addition to growing vegetables for their own use, started growing strawberries as a cash crop. They planted Howard 17's, a new breed developed by Arthur B. Howard in 1904. By 1915, most of their 22 acres were producing strawberries. He never joined the East Falmouth Strawberry Association, instead acquiring his own truck and making daily deliveries to Faneuil Hall market in Boston. Every year he would revisit this decision; he kept records of his shipping expenses and compared them to other methods, always deciding to do it himself. Many of the strawberry pickers came from the cities; they built a simple "picker's shed" to house them during growing season.

They also had apple, pear, and peach trees and, of course, their own grapevine. Although he did not normally cook, when he planted the apple trees he boasted that he would personally bake a pie with the first fruit. When the first apples came in, he ordered everyone out of the kitchen until the pie was ready. Joseph, however, also had a sense of humor; he baked the pie with turnips instead of apples. He served it to Eva and Mary, bursting into laughter seeing the surprised look on their faces as they ate the first bite, then telling them what he had done as he brought out the real pie. Eva, who also had a sense of humor, took a bite of the apple pie, gave a sour look, and briefly pretended to reach for more turnip pie.

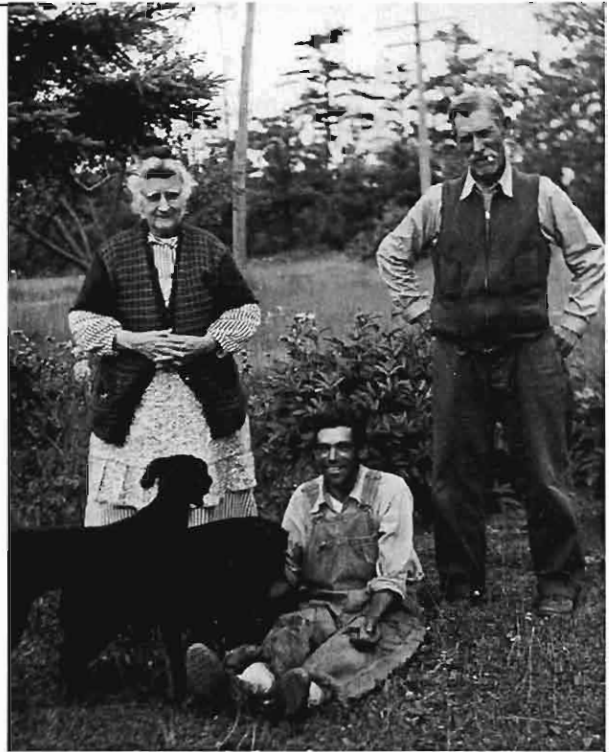
Joseph and Evarista were devout Catholics. Although they originally lived out of the area, because of their frequent visits to the Martins, they became one of the founders of the Fresh Pond Holy Ghost Association. The Association built a hall for their annual celebration of the Holy Ghost on Pentecost Sunday. Since the nearest Catholic Church was in Woods Hole, a traveling priest would come to the hall on Sundays to say Mass. Many strawberry farmers, including Joseph, began donating all proceeds (total sales, not just profits) from one Sunday's strawberries in June to a fund for building a Catholic Church. In 1924 their hopes were realized with the building of Saint Anthony's Church in East Falmouth, where at least one Mass each Sunday was said in Portuguese. For many years thereafter, during harvest season Saint Anthony's would send a priest to the

Holy Ghost Hall to say Mass early Sunday morning before the pickers went to work.

Joseph maintained a lifelong love of horses, building a barn to house them and keeping a team of horses and a wagon until his dying day. For years he had a trotter, and on the way back from town would stop by the cranberry bogs for water before their spirited sprint home. When one of Joseph's close friends died, he used his wagon and horses to carry the coffin to the cemetery. Afterward, Joseph was so distraught that he sold the horses and buried the wagon and harnesses because he never wanted to see any of them again.

They were godparents to Joseph and John Sylvia. In Portuguese communities of the time, that meant not only spiritual guardianship but also physical guardianship if something happened to their parents. When tragedy did strike, Joseph and Eva made good on their pledge that very day, driving their wagon to get the boys and their belongings and raising them thereafter as if they were their own sons. They loved children, and were especially empathetic to those living in cities; over the years taking into their home many wards of the state.

They also took in a fellow countryman, Luiz Benzeiro of Agua da Pao, Sao Miguel, as a field hand, providing him with room, board, and a stipend. They also treated him as a member of the family, including him in celebrations and family events.



Evarista and Jose Sylvester with Luiz Benzeiro and their two dogs, about 1950.

Joseph and Eva prospered as strawberry growers, adding adjacent farm land in 1924. He was still working the land when he died on May 3, 1952. Evarista moved in with her daughter's family, passing away on December 21, 1960. They are buried side by side in Saint Anthony's cemetery, the church their strawberries helped build.

Manuel S. (Silva) White and Mary S. (Sylvester) White



Manuel Silva White and Mary Evarista (Sylvester) White, about 1918.

Mary Sylvester was born on April Fool's Day in 1903, Evarista and Joseph Sylvester's only child. Little is known about her childhood in Taunton and Berkley. She would sometimes talk about riding the truck to Boston on strawberry deliveries, waking up to see the shiny grasshopper above Faneuil Hall in Haymarket Square. Her mother Evarista and her Aunt Mary Josefa Martins were very close, and there were frequent family visits. After her family moved to East Falmouth, Mary would sometimes walk to her aunt's home in Waquoit, and it was on these walks she eventually met Manuel Silva White. His parents, Joe White and Maria Rosa (Teixeira) White purchased the Antone Vera property just two doors down from her aunt's house on August 19, 1911.

Manuel White was born on River Street in New Bedford on September 13, 1897. His parents were both born in the town of Achada on Sao Miguel Island in the Azores. He was baptized in Saint John the Baptist Church, the oldest Portuguese parish

in America. The family moved to North Falmouth in 1902, where he started learning carpentry. The Falmouth Town Report records that at age thirteen Manuel worked on town roads. He also made money trapping muskrats and fishing. Initially he kept eels alive in traps underwater until he could bring them to Sam Cahoon's fish market in Woods Hole. Later, as suggested by his future mother-in-law Evarista, he began packing them in nail kegs and shipping them directly to New York by Railway Express.

Mary Sylvester and Manuel Silva White were married on December 28, 1918. Initially they lived with Joseph and Evarista, but soon built a two-story barn next to the Sylvester's home. In true Azorean fashion, they lived in two rooms on the second floor and kept animals on the first floor. During the six week strawberry season, they drove Jose Sylvester's strawberry truck to Boston every day, one sometimes sleeping while the other drove.

They were both also employed by the canning factory on Gifford Street. When the electricity failed and the factory was threatened with loss of production and potential food spoilage, Manuel connected three tractors in tandem with a drive belt to power the canning line, shortly thereafter becoming the factory's machinist.

In 1919 they purchased land adjacent to the Sylvester property for their own home. Their first child, Manuel S. White, Jr. was born in the Sylvester home in 1920, and through his toddler years was raised in the apartment over the barn. A few years later they built their own home with the help of relatives and friends; Mary dug much of the cellar with a scoop pulled by Manuel on one of his Fordson tractors. They remained in the new home for the rest of their lives. Their second child, Marianne, was born in 1923, and their third, Lewis, in 1927.

Manuel farmed his land and worked as a carpenter all his life. Mary ran the laundry at Camp Edwards during World War II. Their son Lewis died of appendicitis in 1940 and they had a fourth child, Vivian Louise, in 1942. Manuel S. White Jr would go on to be a decorated World War II veteran, state policeman, and businessman. Marianne married a WWII veteran from Texas, living there for many years before returning to establish an herb farm. Vivian, aka Reverend Louis, is an evangelist living in Kentucky. Mary died in 1970 and her still grieving husband followed her almost twenty years later. They are buried side by side next to Evarista and Joseph Sylvester, their son Lewis, and the family's faithful helper Luiz Benzeiro.

The Portuguese in Falmouth : 1870 to 1930, ©2013 Lewis A. White. All rights reserved.



Lewis A. White spent his childhood in Falmouth, where he attended public schools. He received his B.A. in Physics from Northeastern University and did graduate work in computer science at Worcester Polytechnic Institute. All of his ancestors are descended from Azoreans. He has two daughters, Julianna Marie of Hatchville, and Elizabeth Anne of New Bedford. Recently retired from a career in high technology and small business, he and his wife Amelia reside in Falmouth and New Bedford. Lewis recently published his second book, *Sopas - a brief history of Portuguese Islanders, the Cape Cod Town of Falmouth, and the Feast of the Holy Ghost*.