

Atlantic islands that have sent population to Nantucket: Ireland, the Azores, the Cape Verde archipelago, and Jamaica.

Chapter Two

Portuguese Atlantic Islands

There are four groups of islands in the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of Portugal and Africa. From north to south they are the Azores Islands; Madeira, with its companions Porto Santo and Las Desertas; the Canary Islands; and the Cape Verde archipelago. All entered recorded history in the 1400s when Portuguese, Spanish, and Italian mariners put them on their maps and began using them as staging areas for further exploration. The Canary Islands, crucially important to the voyages of Christopher Columbus, came under Spanish rule in 1479, while the Azores, Madeira, and the Cape Verde archipelago were retained by Portugal.

Like the Portuguese explorers of previous centuries, Nantucket whalers of the 1700s and 1800s used the Azores and the Cape Verde islands as stopping points on their voyages, picking up provisions and crew members before sailing on. Eventually, some Azorean and Cape Verdean mariners landed on Nantucket and stayed. Later, economic pressures on their home islands sent Azoreans and Cape Verdeans to southern New England, where their concentration forged new connections among Providence, New Bedford, Fall River, and the communities of the Cape and Islands.¹ Resident Azorean

¹ The *Boston Globe* reported on July 16, 2000, that “Forty percent of the southeastern Massachusetts population is of Portuguese and Cape Verdean backgrounds.”

and Cape Verdean families contributed to Nantucket's already cosmopolitan mix the new elements of Portuguese language and culture—especially Portuguese foods—as well as the Catholicism they shared with the Irish who settled on the island.

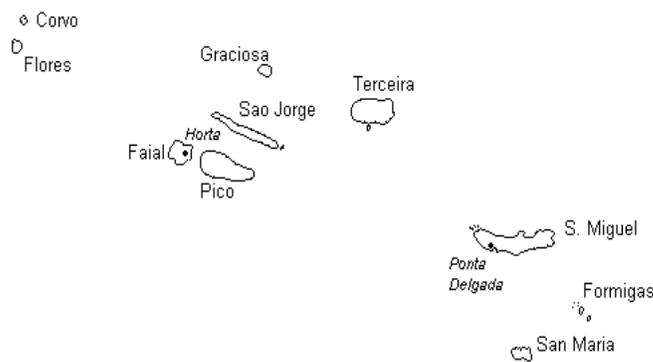
Azoreans

“It is said that always being in sight of the ocean gives Azoreans a vital sense of the possibility of going somewhere.”

Tides of Migration²

Come July, Nantucket yards are adrift with blue hydrangeas, but it has not always been so. Nineteenth-century photographs of the town show little in the way of gardens planted around its austere houses. In *Nantucket Wild Flowers* Alice Albertson and Anne Hinchman expressed Quakerly appreciation of the usefulness of plants and an equal measure of appreciation of their beauty.³ Admiration of spontaneously occurring native beauty was one thing for Nantucket's plain-living Friends, however, while affording space and effort to ornamentals was quite another. Meanwhile, more than two thousand miles east across the Atlantic Ocean, the mountain slopes of the Azores Islands were drenched with the blue of wild-growing hydrangeas.

The Azores archipelago consists of three groups of islands between seven and



eight hundred miles west of the Portuguese coast. No other North Atlantic islands lie so far from the European mainland, and to seafaring Nantucketers they were known as the Western Islands. The easternmost islands are Saint Michael (São Miguel) and Santa Maria. The central group includes Fayal (Faial), Pico, Saint George (São Jorge), Terceira, and Graciosa. To the northwest lie Flores and Corvo.

The Azores, known to Nantucket whalers as the Western Islands. Horta on the island of Fayal was port of call for Nantucket whaleships. Ponta Delgada later became the point of embarkation for emigration to the United States.

Like the Hawaiian Islands, the Azores are the summits of volcanoes thrust up from a geological hotspot. Situated on the

west side of the undersea Mid-Atlantic Ridge, Flores and Corvo are old and inactive, but earthquakes and eruptions shake the islands to the east, and from time to time new

² Chapin 1989, p. 70.

³ About mayflowers Albertson wrote, “In very few other places grow in so great a profusion, such large Mayflowers, so deep coloured or so sweet-scented! One can let one’s joy run riot over the beauty and odour of these waxy flower-cups, growing on long, woody branches in the midst of hairy, withered brown or dull green leaves, for parts of the Commons in the spring are covered with sheets of such flowers. From this plant is obtained an oil, valuable medicinally.” (Albertson 1921, p. 270)

volcanic cones break the surface of the sea only to be eroded away by surf. Pico is in no danger of such obliteration, however. Its cone rises nearly eight thousand feet above sea level, a towering landmark for ships seeking the islands.

The islands were uninhabited when the Portuguese discovered them. Settlement began on Santa Maria in 1432, then on Saint Michael in 1444. Terceira was the third island discovered and settled. By the end of the century, all the islands were occupied. Most of the early settlers—including a few Moors, Jews, and enslaved Africans—came from Portugal, but settlers were also recruited from Flanders, and it is believed that some Bretons settled on St. Michael.⁴

Saint Michael, the largest island, came to support the greatest population despite having its capital buried by a volcanic eruption in 1522. Within a dozen years of that catastrophe, the inhabitants of

the Azores had been subsumed into a Catholic diocese under the archbishop of Lisbon, and throughout their history the Azoreans have been dedicated participants in *festas*, community celebrations of dates in the annual liturgical calendar, especially the Feast of the Holy Ghost in June.

The volcanoes that trouble the islands also benefit them as volcanic ash and lava weather into fertile soil. From the beginning of human presence, hillside terraces on the islands' steep slopes have yielded abundant crops to sustain the local population and to provision ships passing to and from distant ports. Some of these crops—such as maize, tobacco, and pineapples—were introduced to the Azores from the Americas. Others, notably bananas, originated in Africa. Even Asian tea has found the Azorean mountainsides congenial. The naturalized hydrangeas also originated in Asia.

Some years before human settlement was initiated, seven of the nine islands were stocked with sheep that were left to multiply and serve as a source of meat for the humans who would soon follow. The settlers brought cattle, goats, and pigs with them and grazed them on the land they did not terrace. Cheesemaking and winemaking spun off from farming as local industries.

Offering fresh food and water, the islands became an ocean crossroads. Christopher Columbus, returning from his 1492 voyage across the Atlantic, made his first stop in the Azores on his way to reporting his discovery to King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella. Six years later, Vasco da Gama put in at Terceira on his return voyage from India. During the 1500s and early 1600s, while Portugal was under Spanish rule, convoys of treasure ships from Mexico and the Caribbean rendezvoused in the Azores on their way to Spain. Their presence attracted pirates, especially during the time of England's Queen Elizabeth I, but



The volcanic island of Pico in the Azores as painted in the Russell-Purrington Panorama of the New Bedford Whaling Museum. *Courtesy of the New Bedford Whaling Museum.*

⁴ Ludtke1989, pp. 146–48, is skeptical about settlement from Brittany.

the Azoreans were not intimidated into turning their backs on the sea. Instead, they expanded their economy by boldly fishing and whaling off their shores.

In the Azores archipelago it is never cold and seldom hot. Throughout the winter it rains every other day. In the summer a weather system, the Azores High, moves up from the south, bringing dry nor'easters to the islands. The islands would have been paradisiacal were it not for the spewing volcanoes, marauding pirates, surplus population, and attendant poverty. In time, as in every place with large families living on limited agricultural land, many adolescents and young adults could find no means of support, and they set out across the Atlantic, seeking opportunity elsewhere.⁵

Sharing a mild maritime climate with the Azores, Nantucket eventually proved to be a hospitable place for hydrangeas to take root. Despite differences in language, culture, and religion, it was also an attractive destination for transplanted Azoreans.

Marriages between Portuguese men and local women are documented before 1800. Around 1770 Anthony Swazey (Antonio Soares), "a Portuguese," married a Martha's Vineyard woman named Jerusha. They had at least eight children, and at some point the family moved from Edgartown to Nantucket, where Manuel Swazey married Elizabeth Bassett in 1795, Abigail Swazey married David Lumbert in 1797, and Charlotte Swazey married Portuguese Thomas Ray. Sons Henry and Seth appear in Nantucket death records. When Anthony Swazey died in Nantucket's asylum for the indigent in 1835, he was eighty-two years old.⁶

In 1796, John Sylvia Sr. married Susan Coffin, and twenty-one years later their son, John Jr., married Elizabeth Marshall, also of Nantucket.⁷ In 1831, John Lewis, "a Portuguese," married Maria Gibbs of Nantucket, who was soon left a widow when John was "killed by a whale, from the Ship *Baltic*, William Chadwick, master, round Cape Horn." A year later she married another Portuguese husband.⁸ None of those Portuguese early arrivals are specifically identified as from any one of the islands of the Azores, but

⁵ Moniz 1999 is a critical bibliography of nearly 800 publications concerning the Azores. Its preface and introduction (pp. xv–l) present a capsule history of the archipelago. Williams 1982 is a comprehensive survey of Azorean emigration from the early nineteenth century to the 1970s. It contains many useful maps and tables illustrating the causes of emigration, the destinations of the emigrants, and the consequences for the islands they left behind. Nantucket is barely mentioned, but New Bedford and Fall River, where textile mills attracted Azorean men and women, are treated in detail, as are California, where Azoreans carried on dairy farming, and Hawai'i. For general history of the Azores, see Rogers 1979 and Part III of Ludtke 1989. Francis Rogers, professor of the language and literature of Portugal at Harvard University, was the grandson of João da Rosa, a whaler from Horta, and his is a highly personal account with a great deal of family history and personal anecdotes. Chapter notes are limited to sources of quotes and information; the index is excellent. Ludtke, an anthropologist, wrote her book as an aid to travelers to the Cape Verde Islands, the Azores, and Madeira. It is full of practical information about transportation, lodgings, meals, and excursions, but her treatment of the history and culture of each island within each island group is scholarly. There is no index, but there are four appendixes: a guide to the pronunciation of Standard Portuguese, a guide to Cape Verdean Crioulo with glossary, a glossary of Portuguese nouns and acronyms commonly in use on the Atlantic islands, and an annotated list of references. Both books carry Azorean history forward to a few years short of their publication dates.

⁶ *Vital Records of Nantucket* IV, pp. 58, 273, 506, 559. *Vital Records of Nantucket*, V, p. 584.

⁷ *Vital Records of Nantucket* IV, p. 459.

⁸ *Vital Records of Nantucket* IV, p. 128, *Vital Records of Nantucket* V, p. 401.

by the middle of the nineteenth century the federal census and Nantucket vital records had become more precise.⁹

In 1850 there were twenty-seven Azores-born men resident on Nantucket. All but five had Massachusetts-born wives and some were approaching their twentieth wedding anniversaries. Most of their families were large, with seven or eight children at home. Forty-five more men from the Azores were serving on Nantucket whaleships.¹⁰ Two of the Azorean men living on land were identified as nonwhite as were five of the men onboard ships. The 1850 federal census categorized the other sixty-five Azoreans as white.

Some men anglicized their Portuguese surnames, turning Dias into Day, Reis into either Ray or King, Leial into Lee, Mello into Miller, Pereira into Perry. Moreover, they used English versions of their given names: Joseph, John, Edward, Andrew, Lawrence, William. Some had taken Nantucket surnames; in 1850 there were two Azorean Coffins, a Mayhew, a Swain, and a Worth. In time there were also Azorean families using the names Gardner, Macy, and Starbuck. By far the most common names in use in Nantucket were, however, combinations of Manuel, Joseph, Antone, Francis, and Sylvia: Manuel Sylvia, Joseph Antone, Joseph Francis, Francis Joseph, Antone Sylvia, and so on. The most striking name recorded in 1850 was Joe Citizen, a twenty-five-year-old seaman from Fayal.

The men had been Catholics when they came to Nantucket, an island without resident priests where the first Mass was not celebrated until 1849.¹¹ That their Nantucket wives had not been raised as Catholics and their children were growing up outside the church appears to have been a matter of indifference. In 1843 the pastor of the Congregational church married Joseph Sylvaro of St. George and Phebe Ann Fisher of Nantucket.¹² In 1864 Enos Sylvaro of St. George married Joseph and Phebe Ann's daughter Ellen. Also joined in matrimony by a Congregational pastor, they raised a family of six in a tiny house on North Centre Street, just half a block downhill from Sarah P. Bunker's home.



1835 - 1985

Hydrangeas and ears of corn on the coat of arms of an insular Portuguese town. *Courtesy of the Nantucket Historical Association* (photo by Frances Karttunen).

⁹ The rule was Azorean men marrying Nantucket women, but there was at least one exception. According to the Eliza Starbuck Barney Genealogical Record, Henry and Theodate Starbuck's son James B. Starbuck, born in 1819, married Maria C. Silvia of Fayal. The couple's twin daughters Ann Maria and Emeline also appear in the Barney record. James Starbuck lived until 1862, and Maria survived him until 1875.

¹⁰ Although most of Chapin 1989 deals with late twentieth-century migration to the United States from the island of St. Michael, pp. 35-39 contain a synopsis of Azoreans' engagement in U.S. whaling from the middle of the 1700s to the early 1900s.

¹¹ Mooney 1997, p. 2.

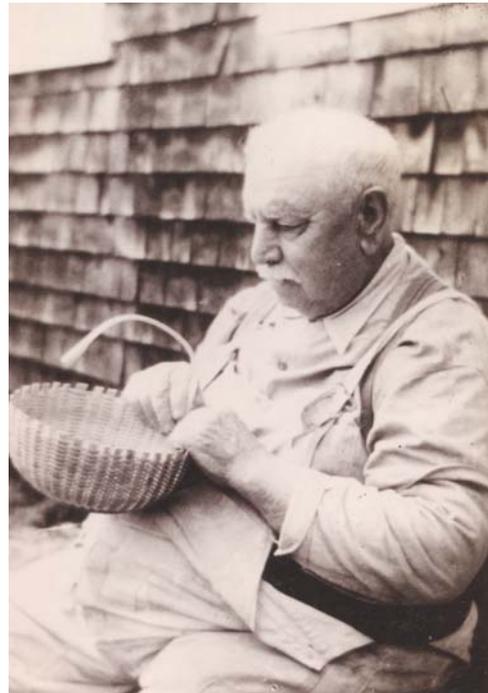
¹² Phebe Anne's sister Martha had married John Williams from Fayal four years earlier. *Vital Records of Nantucket* IV, p. 509.

The lightship baskets made by their son Ferdinand Sylvaro have become collector's items featured in Nantucket's Lightship Basket Museum.¹³

In the early 1850s the potato blight that had driven so many Irish into emigration affected the Azores, where potatoes were also a staple crop. Beginning at about the same time, two other plant diseases wiped out the Azorean vineyards and orange groves.¹⁴ By 1860, while the overall population of Nantucket was dropping sharply, the number of Azorean immigrants to Nantucket had nearly doubled. The same number of Azorean men had Massachusetts-born wives as ten years earlier, but now four Azorean couples and two Azorean single mothers were living on the island. Unmarried sisters, daughters, and boarders accounted for seven more Azores-born women.

The majority of the men were mariners: forty-year-old John Pease was a master mariner; George Enos, mariner from Flores, left the sea in 1855 to take over operation of Swain's Mill from Jared Gardner. Nine years later he sold the mill to Captain John Murray of Graciosa, who soon resold it to John Francis Sylvia, a miller from Fayal. Sylvia, who managed to keep on grinding corn for another twenty-six years, was romanticized as "The Last Miller" and was the subject of works by a number of artists.

Sylvia bequeathed the mill to his brother and a nephew in Fayal. Uninterested in taking over its operation, they engaged fellow Azorean John Murray Jr. as their agent to sell the mill at auction, where it was purchased for the Nantucket Historical Association. As a historic property since 1898, the Old Mill has been the very symbol of Nantucket's English history despite having been in Azorean hands during its last half century of private ownership.¹⁵



Ferdinand Sylvaro weaving a Nantucket lightship basket. *Courtesy of the Nantucket Historical Association.*

¹³ The family settled on "Sylvaro" as the spelling of their surname, but it appears in various records as "Sylvia," "Sylvara," "Silvara," and "Silvero." The marriage of Joseph and Phebe Ann on July 13, 1843, is recorded in Vol. IV, p. 459, where Joseph is identified as being from St. George in one source and from Fayal in another. The town clerk's office, however, records his birthplace as St. George. Joseph Sylvaro's parents are recorded as Joseph Antone and Rose Johnson, so it appears that he assumed Sylvaro as a surname when he emigrated. The 1860 census shows twenty-year-old Enos Sylvaro living in the Nantucket household of Joseph and Phebe Ann. The marriage on January 24, 1864, of Enos and their daughter Ellen is recorded on p. 54 of the volume *Marriages 1850-1889* at the office of the town clerk.

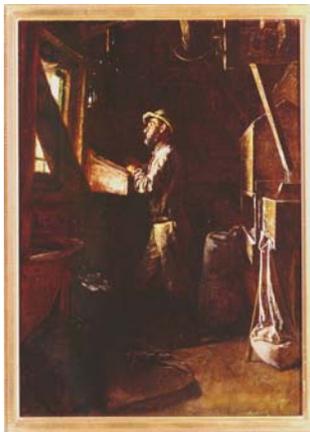
¹⁴ Williams 1982, pp. 7, 67.

¹⁵ Seager 2002.

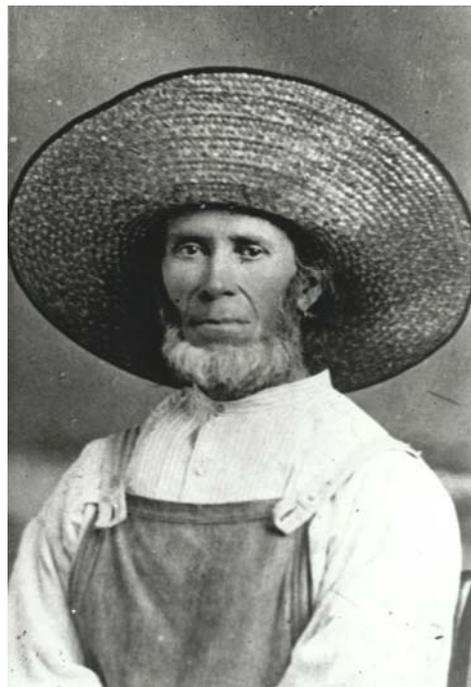
In the late 1800s operating a windmill on Nantucket was an anachronism. The most common onshore line of work was day labor and farm labor. By 1860 three Azorean men had acquired farms of their own, and Joseph T. Sylvia of Fayal was a gardener with real estate of about the same value as a small farm. He and his Massachusetts-born wife had six children, the four oldest in school. Two couples operated boarding houses, one man owned a liquor store, and one was a grocer. Two Azorean women did tailoring and dressmaking. Maria Starbuck was a milliner. Like the Irish who had taken up residence on Nantucket, the Azoreans were filling in for departed Nantucketers, with one striking difference. Azorean woman did not go out to work as domestic servants.¹⁶

Ten years later the number of Nantucket residents who had been born in the Azores had fallen, but the number of their Nantucket-born children and grandchildren was growing, making the Azorean community a substantial one within the greater community of Nantucket. The majority of Azores-born men were still considered mariners, but it was an aging population. More than half of them were past fifty years old and probably no longer went to sea. Azorean mariner George Folger was eighty-four years old. Joseph Francis, fifty-eight, and formerly a mariner, had turned to fishing. Francis Thomas, fifty, recently arrived with his family from the Azores, was also fishing with his seventeen-year-old son Manuel. Joseph Sylvaro had become a gardener. Joseph Enos, whose wife Sarah was Irish, was a cooper. Two men in their late sixties candidly admitted that they no longer had any occupation at all. Among the Azorean women, three were engaged in tailoring and dressmaking.

The census records are inconsistent between reporting specific island of origin or simply “Western Islands,” but the town death records generally record the home island of the deceased as well as the names of both parents. Insofar as



John Francis Sylvia, miller was romanticized by Eastman Johnson in the painting *A Falling Market*. Courtesy of the Nantucket Historical Association, F1758 & 2001.15.



islands are reported, Fayal seems to have contributed the most immigrants to Nantucket in the early years, when its harbor at Horta was port of call for whaleships. St. Michael took over in later years with the

¹⁶ The census records report only three exceptions in the course of seventy years. In 1880 the Cary family had nineteen-year-old Jennie Thomas as a live-in servant. In 1910 seventeen-year-old Germania Araujo was serving the Hussey family and eighteen-year-old Marie Joseph was living in with the Pollards.

institution of regular packet-boat service to New Bedford from its port of Ponta Delgada. Pico and Flores also contributed substantially, followed by St. George, Terceira, and Santa Maria. Tiny Corvo appears in the records only as the home of Francis Colha, who married Catrina de Gezers of Flores. The couple's daughter Filomena settled on Nantucket.

Around 1870 a family had arrived from Graciosa, changing its name to Murray somewhere along the way.¹⁷ Throughout the 1860s John Murray Sr. had captained the whaling schooner *Abbie Bradford* out of Nantucket and done a bit of buying and selling of shares in the vessel while maintaining a young son on Graciosa. In 1869 he took the *Abbie Bradford* on her last voyage, which was described as a "plum pudding voyage." (According to Herman Melville, a plum pudding voyage was a short one limited to the North Atlantic.)¹⁸ Having decided to retire to Nantucket, Captain Murray picked up his son John Jr. from Graciosa and brought him to the United States.

Settled on Nantucket, Captain Murray, his son, and his Graciosa-born daughter-in-law Anna took up the grocery business. The young Murrays soon were sworn in as naturalized citizens, the grocery store on Orange Street became an exemplar of Nantucket entrepreneurship, and the Murrays grew influential within the Azorean community and beyond.

In the meantime a second Azorean cooper had taken up residence on Nantucket. "Mariner" had become obsolete as a profession, replaced by "seaman" and "sailor." A few more men were fishing and farming. Two more had married Irish women. The number of Azores-born residents of Nantucket was holding steady.

In 1873 the Portuguese government tightened its requirements for army service. No longer was it possible to avoid conscription by paying a fee for a substitute. Young Azorean men had little desire to spend years as Portuguese soldiers, and they took every opportunity to flee. The government saw the consequences and changed its policy to permit young men to emigrate if they posted a deposit guaranteeing their return for future army service, but the change came too late. Men, boys, and whole families had boarded ships in Ponta Delgada and sailed for the United States.

Between 1880 and 1900, the fresh influx of Azoreans nearly doubled the number on Nantucket. One of them, sixty-five-year-old Peter L. Sylvia, gave his profession as "whaler." His Massachusetts-born son was listed as "boatman." Some of the newcomers were even older than Peter Sylvia. John and Mary da Costa had come to the United States in 1892 when they were both seventy. Despite their age, they bought a house on Nantucket and made a home for their son-in-law and two small grandchildren.

In addition to the old whaler and his son the boatman, one man was identified as a seaman and another as a sailor. Most of the men working on the water were fishermen, however. Their numbers were equaled by men working as day laborers, including eighty-six-year-old Francis Sylvia, who had once been a mariner. Only one Azorean farmer

¹⁷ In a letter to Frances Karttunen written on March 22, 1970, J. Butler Folger wrote that the Murrays had originally had the surname Santos and wanted to change it to Macy, but the Nantucket Macy family objected.

¹⁸ *Inquirer and Mirror*, April 13, 1899. Melville 1982, p. 181.

remained, but there were three grocers, a pair of carpenters, a cobbler, a cook, and a steward. An Azorean woman was running a boarding house.

There was another Murray on-island—Philip Murray, also of Graciosa, who was working at the time of the census as a day laborer. And there were now other Azorean grocers besides the Murrays. One of them was Manuel Mendonça, who had first come to the United States at the age of twelve as mess boy on a whaling ship. He met and married his Azores-born wife Louisa in New Bedford, and the couple had two Nantucket-born children, John and Mary, who would both grow up to be educators. When Mary Mendonça retired from teaching sixth grade at Nantucket's Academy Hill School in 1955, she had served the Nantucket public schools for thirty-nine years.

John Mendonça was recruited as a scholarship student at Exeter by his friend and classmate, J. Butler Folger, a thoroughly “descended Nantucketer.” From preparatory school he entered the Harvard class of 1922, while Folger went to Dartmouth College and then stayed on to teach Spanish and Portuguese at his *alma mater*. After graduation from Harvard, John Mendonça taught in the New York public schools until retirement, when he returned to Nantucket and became well known as Nantucket's oldest scallop fisherman. His love of life on the water was matched by a love of storytelling.¹⁹

In 1910, Nantucket's Azores-born population had doubled again. It now numbered over 160 out of a total island population of fewer than three thousand. Thirty of the Azorean immigrants were using the name Sylvia or Silvia. Seven of the Sylvias were named Joseph, five Antone, and five Mary. There were two Manuel Sylvias and two Isabella Sylvias. There were also eight Araujos (two named Beatrice), four Rays, and four Souzas with all their Nantucket-born children. Public-school teachers and the town clerk must have been hard-pressed to keep track of the many newcomers with so much duplication of names. The town death records show a much greater variety of names in use in the Azores prior to emigration. Names that would strike English speakers as exotic and unpronounceable had been jettisoned. Gone were Mariano, Seraphim, Leotino, Thomasina, Perpetua, and Delphina, replaced with familiar ones such as Joseph, John, and Mary. Gone were the surnames Pacheco, Amanacio, Colha, Frates, and Raposa, unless Raposa lived on transformed into the odd surname shared by Frank and Rosa Rabbit of Flores. Frank Rabbit's wife was Katie Jesus. In Nantucket these were not comfortable names.

During the early days when Azorean whalers had married Nantucket women and then left on long voyages to the Pacific whaling grounds, their children grew up speaking English in a New England cultural environment. They became, at least to people outside their immediate families, indistinguishable from their mothers' descended-Nantucketer relatives.

Commenting on Nantucket's early assimilation of Azoreans, John Mendonça remarked, “I imagine those who came first and married Nantucket girls, their names have been changed to something else.... Joe Starbuck and his father on Silver Street, well, they were Portuguese. Now where they got the name Starbuck from I don't know, because I never knew what their original name was. Yes, they took a Nantucket name.” J. Butler

¹⁹ See Appendix 2b for John Mendonça's family history as told to Frances Karttunen in 1973.

Folger gave other examples, “Ellenwood Folger in ’Sconset was no Folger at all. Eldred Gardner told me that Captain Frank Gardner ‘gave my grandfather his name.’ I had always thought of Eldred as a scion of the Gardner clan and doubtless related to my grandmother, who was Sara Emily Gardner. Genie Brooks’s grandmother, the wife of old Captain Clisby, out here at Surfside, was half-Portuguese.”²⁰

With the marriage of Enos and Ellen Sylvaro’s daughter Elizabeth to Edgar Ramsdell (son of Warren Ramsdell, for whom Warren’s Landing on Madaket Harbor was named) an on-island Azorean family was joined to an old-time Nantucket one. Their daughter Ellen Ramsdell was born in 1898, the same year as John Mendonça. Graduating from Nantucket’s Coffin School in 1917, she went on to the New England Conservatory of Music. Then, like John and his sister Mary, she became a teacher, serving the Nantucket public schools as music director for decades. A faithful Episcopalian, she was also organist for Nantucket’s St. Paul’s Episcopal Church.

With the arrival of Azorean women, however, the rapid assimilation of the earlier years had changed. During the last decades of the 1800s, Azores-born couples raised their children in more traditional Portuguese Catholic households that fostered the intergenerational use of the Portuguese language. Nantucket-born John and Mary Mendonça spoke Portuguese with their parents and grandmother, their cousins, and their boarder, fisherman Jacinth Leial.²¹ John Mendonça’s friend J. Butler Folger aspired to speak Portuguese, too, and he developed conversational skills with Nantucket-born Carrie and Emily Miller and their sister Mary Almeida. He wrote, “I still needed practice and once mentioned the fact to the Miller girls. I had gone to their house on Centre St. to say good-bye to Bill Almeida, who was just leaving for Brazil. The Miller girls told me to come and talk with them evenings if I wanted to practice. I used to go down twice a week. Mary Almeida was always there with her bedridden mother, who was then eighty-six. Carrie and Emily would come in from the movies and we would talk about everything, including neighborhood gossip.... I would leave the house with my sides aching from the fun and wit that Carrie especially evoked. Her description in Portuguese with an occasional admixture of English of Izzy Swain’s sister’s wedding or Irving Hatch selling gasoline were some of the funniest recollections that I still treasure.”²²

The Nantucket Azorean community’s strengthened sense of Portuguese identity was most public at the 1895 dedication of Alfonso Hall.²³ Houses along the way were illuminated, and fireworks were set off as members of the Portuguese United Benevolent Association and the Nantucket selectmen, led by the Nantucket Brass Band, made their way from Orange Street to the hall. More fireworks greeted their arrival. The hall itself was decorated with Portuguese and American flags, and the portraits of George Washington and King Alfonso I of Portugal hung side by side. The program began with the Portuguese national anthem, and in the course of the evening Lewis Marshall “delivered an address in Portuguese overflowing with patriotic affection for his native

²⁰ Interview with John Mendonça, July 1973. Letter from J. Butler Folger, March 22, 1970.

²¹ See Appendix 2c for John Mendonça’s account of his friendship with Jacinth Leial.

²² Letter to Frances Karttunen, March 8, 1970.

²³ Alfonso Hall, located between Williams Street and Cherry Street, has since been renamed Griffin Hall in memory of the Rev. Joseph M. Griffin, pastor of Nantucket’s St. Mary, Our Lady of the Isle church from 1913 to 1947.

land and grateful allegiance to the country of his adoption from which he had received such substantial benefit since he landed penniless on its shore.”

The chairman of the board of selectmen reciprocated by welcoming the Portuguese citizens to citizenship and complimenting them on their fine social hall. Another member of the board of the selectmen told of having acquired the Portuguese language as a child from crew members on his father’s ship and jocularly warned the audience that he still understood it. Arthur Gardner, “in behalf of the native Nantucketers,” expressed gratitude for the entertainment and praise for “their Portuguese friends.” The evening concluded with Portuguese dances featuring the *chamarrita* accompanied by singing, followed by American dances to Barrett’s Orchestra. This had all been accomplished before Nantucket Catholics and their missionary priest had received permission from the bishop of Providence to build a church on the island.²⁴

The Benevolent Society used Alfonso Hall to raise money with events such as the “grand masquerade ball” advertised in the *Inquirer and Mirror* for March 17, 1898. Money also flowed in from the auction of food at the annual Feast of the Holy Ghost held each June at the hall. The celebration featured Portuguese and American flags, a silver crown, processions of children dressed in white, and the cooperation of many men from Nantucket’s Azorean community.²⁵

Captain John Murray and his son John Murray Jr. had been instrumental in organizing Nantucket’s Azoreans, building Alfonso Hall and sponsoring the celebrations there. When Captain Murray died in 1899, his obituary stated that he “was a highly esteemed citizen, and his funeral... was very largely attended, many citizens, including the members of the Portuguese United Benevolent Association, accompanying the funeral cortege on foot, and the flags at Alfonso hall were displayed at half-mast.”²⁶ John Murray Jr. survived his father by two decades. When he died, his funeral services were held at his Orange Street home, and he was interred in Prospect Hill Cemetery with full Masonic rites. Members of the four organizations to which he had belonged—Union Lodge F. & A. M., the United Benevolent Society, the John B. Chace Engine Company No. 4, and the Portuguese Fraternity of the United States—served as pallbearers, and “as a mark of respect, the stores on Orange Street were closed during the hour of funeral services.”²⁷

Feasts, dances, weddings, and funerals brought Azorean families together and drew their New Bedford and Fair Haven relatives to the island, as did hog-butchering and sausage-making. John Mendonça conveyed the flavor of these family gatherings in the following story:

Portuguese used to make what they called morcela. It’s a blood sausage, you know. They cut up onions and—oh, I don’t remember—pieces of fat. I don’t remember what used to go into that stuff. They’d scour out the entrails of the pig,

²⁴ *Inquirer and Mirror*, December 26, 1895. Mooney 1997, p. 5.

²⁵ See Appendix 2d for the advertisement of the masquerade and descriptions of the feast of the Holy Ghost in 1908 and 1912.

²⁶ *Inquirer and Mirror*, April 13, 1899. The obituary mistakenly gives Captain Murray’s birthplace as “the Cape de Verde islands.”

²⁷ *Inquirer and Mirror*, February 21, 1920. For more about the Murrays, see Seager 2002.

you know, and fill it full of that stuff. They'd have a big wash boiler there, [and] they'd have a stick across the top. They'd hang them on there and put them in that, you know. Then they would keep a long time if you kept them in a cool place. Well, my aunt was making those, and my mother was down helping, and it came—oh, I guess it was getting late—and my mother said, "Look, you kids go to bed." So my three cousins and I went to bed upstairs. And they were all sleeping in the same room. There was one, two, three beds. So I said, There's no bed up there for me!" So my mother said, "Well, it won't hurt you. You're young. Sleep on the floor." So my aunt came upstairs and I remember she spread a quilt—you know, one of those down quilts folded in two—down on the floor for me.

The Nantucket kitchens of Azorean wives were rich with the aromas of baking sweet bread, kale soup on the back burner, *linguiça* sausage sizzling in frying pans. In Azorean kitchen gardens grew garlic and tomatoes in abundance. Hydrangeas, roses, and geraniums appeared in yards along with garden ornaments—birdbaths, grottoes, ducks, bunnies, and the occasional antlered deer—that bemused and sometimes outraged the descended Nantucketers. In time, Portuguese love of outdoor decoration found expression in lavish Christmas lighting, but the most widely accepted and emulated Portuguese gift to Nantucket has been flower gardens. When Ellen Ramsdell died at the age of 93, her obituary told of her life's passions: "Second only to her love of music was her love of horticulture. For decades her garden was a visiting point on walking tours of the island."²⁸



Ellen Ramsdell and her uncle Emerson Sylvaro in the yard of the Garden Gate Gift Shop on North Centre Street in the 1950s. *Courtesy of the Nantucket Historical Association* (photo from the Gibbs family collection).

Gardening was more than an avocation. In her garden Ellen Ramsdell built the Garden Gate Gift Shop where she offered garden-related items and preserves made with her home-grown fruits and vegetables.

²⁸ *Inquirer and Mirror*, June 27, 1991.

Joseph Viera, who came to Nantucket from St. Michael when he was twelve years old, operated his own gardening business for twenty years before his death in 1967 and was an active member of the Nantucket Grange.²⁹

In the summer of 2001, Nantucket lost another Azorean gardener, Philip Marks Sr. Born in New Bedford in 1909 to parents who soon went back to St. Michael, he returned to the United States as a teenager to live with relatives on Nantucket. In the midst of the Depression years, he married Mary Macy, and the couple raised six children on a small farm on the south edge of town, across the street from Alfonso Hall. Although he worked for four decades at the island's power plant and also as a baker, his devotion was to gardening, and he maintained an impressive flower and vegetable garden on his property until his death at age 91.³⁰

According to his son John, Manuel Mendonça's heart was never in the grocery business. It had been his wife Louisa who had insisted that he give up whaling, but his heart had never been in that either. Like most Azorean men, what he really yearned to be was a farmer, but circumstances prevented the realization of his dream.

Eugene Perry was another whaler who came ashore to run a business on Nantucket. He had been born on St. Michael in 1870, emigrated to Boston as a teenager, and arrived in Nantucket in 1891. Soon he was recruited by a New Bedford company that operated arctic whaling ships out of San Francisco. The *Inquirer and Mirror* reported his safe return from one such voyage on the ship *William Baylies* in 1904, a successful voyage despite the *Baylies* losing three whaleboats, becoming stranded by low water in one port, and having part of its crew desert in another. Five years later he was serving on the *Baylies* again when she was crushed in arctic ice off the Russian coast. The crew spent days camped out on the ice under makeshift shelter until they were picked up by another whaler and taken safely to Nome, Alaska. This was not the end of Eugene Perry's adventures at sea, however. Gold was discovered in the Yukon, and he immediately shipped as an engineer on a vessel carrying miners and their supplies from San Francisco to Alaska. When he finally returned to Nantucket, he operated a string of businesses: a tobacco shop in 1910, a poolroom in 1920, a fleet of fishing boats, and eventually the Dreamland movie theater, which he operated until his death in 1947. His wife was Annie Nevins, daughter of Catherine and Michael Nevins, and their marriage was yet another union of a Portuguese husband and an Irish wife.³¹

Over the years the Azores had enriched Nantucket. In their home harbors, the Azores islands had provisioned Nantucket ships with fresh water and food. From the islands Nantucket had received expert boatmen, husbands, hydrangeas, *morcela* and *linguiça*, music and dancing, and more. Nantucket had reciprocated with employment, land, wives, free public education, and more. In the early days of all-male immigration, Nantucket had simply absorbed Azoreans. In the later days of mass immigration, Portuguese ethnic solidarity had been tolerated, sometimes celebrated, on Nantucket.

During the years leading up to the First World War there was a change in American attitudes toward all the nation's ethnic minorities—immigrants and their American-born

²⁹ Obituary for Joseph Viera, *Inquirer and Mirror*, August 3, 1967.

³⁰ Obituary for Philip Marks Sr., *Inquirer and Mirror*, July 19, 2001.

³¹ *Inquirer and Mirror*, December 10, 1904, January 6, 1943, 1910 and 1920 federal censuses, and death records in the office of the Nantucket town clerk.

offspring. Postwar quotas put the brakes on immigration. The foreign-born already resident in the United States were pressed hard to break ties with “the old country,” and speaking any language other than English was discouraged.³² Schools, including those on Nantucket, initiated Americanization classes. Through the 1920s, prudent “foreigners” kept their heads down and their mouths shut. And then the Depression struck.



Joseph Indio looks over a copy of the *Town Crier* in August 1956. *Courtesy of the Nantucket Historical Association, P493.*

The Azores still had one more contribution to make to Nantucket—a newspaperman who cultivated democracy with the passion that other Azoreans brought to cultivating roses. The Nantucket political establishment didn’t see him coming and was still teetering off-balance when he left. Some Nantucketers were exasperated by him and wished he would go away. Many others were admiring friends. Hardly anyone was indifferent to what appeared in the pages of the *Town Crier*, whose owner/editor was dedicated to exposing every worm in the venerable fabric of Nantucket. In the nineteenth century there had been Joe Citizen. In the twentieth century there was Joe Indio.

Joseph Indio was born on St. Michael in 1911 of an Azorean father and a Brazilian mother. The family moved to New Bedford, where he and his sister and brothers grew up bilingual, speaking Portuguese at home with their parents and grandmother while speaking English in the New Bedford public schools. In high school he added three more Romance languages to his native Portuguese—Latin, Spanish, and French—accelerating through four years of French in three years. In 1930 he completed New Bedford High School’s college-preparatory curriculum and graduated with distinction. He had emerged from school into the Depression, however, with no resources to continue his education at a college or university. Instead, he went to work for the *New Bedford Standard-Times*, initially working without pay to prove himself to his future employer. In 1932 the newspaper assigned him to Nantucket, where he worked as a reporter for a decade, becoming adept at camera work and using airplanes to chase news

³² In 1917 Congress imposed a literacy requirement on immigrants. According to the 1920 federal census, at least a third of Nantucket’s Azores-born population were illiterate and would have been prevented from entering the country under the new restriction. Then, in 1921, an immigration quota system known as the Three Percent Law was enacted, which reduced the number of permitted immigrants from all of Portugal to all parts of the United States to just 2,500 people a year. Three years later, even more restrictive legislation was passed, ending Azorean immigration to Nantucket.

stories at sea. During that time he married Nantucket-born Constance Heighton, whose parents, originally from Nova Scotia, had come to farm in Polpis.

In 1942, as the war years descended on the United States, Joseph Indio became a naturalized citizen and moved on to a position covering the Massachusetts State House for United Press International. The following year he entered the U. S. Army and for three years served in the Counter Intelligence Corps and in Military Intelligence. At UPI and in his army service his language skills were an asset. According to Henry Minott, the UPI New England Bureau manager, "Because of his knowledge of several languages, we assigned him to tour with several visiting delegations of native South Americans. Here again, he served so diplomatically and well that we received compliments for the type of man we had assigned to represent us." For his work on undercover assignments, the army awarded him the equivalent of the Bronze Star, noting his careful attention to accuracy and his investigative and writing abilities. At the end of the war he would take these well-honed talents back to journalism.

Upon discharge from the army he gained more experience writing newscasts for radio station WHDH in Boston, while he and his wife were planning their return to Nantucket as founders of a weekly newspaper to compete with the island's venerable weekly, the *Inquirer and Mirror*. The name they chose for their paper was the *Town Crier*, a name appropriate to its mission to bring to readers' attention the way business-as-usual was conducted on the island. In the sixteen years of its existence the small newspaper campaigned against the Steamship Authority's unprofitable service to New Bedford; for the erection of a modern high school; for open meetings; and against bigotry, prejudice, ignorance, and injustice. Many an ox was gored, and many an indignant complaint called in, all to little avail.

In 1938, the editor-in-chief of the *Standard-Times* had written, "Joe is a fine reporter, and one of the best things about him is that he stands as firmly as a rock when the going gets hardest." In his wife Connie, he had found a kindred spirit. The Indios were attractive, personable, activist journalists who refused to be intimidated. For ongoing coverage of the Steamship Authority's business, the *Town Crier* was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize in 1960. Commendations also came from all quarters for the *Town Crier's* saturation coverage of Nantucket catastrophes, among them the collision of the ships *Andrea Doria* and *Stockholm* and the 1958 Northeast Airlines plane crash in which twenty-five people lost their lives.

The *Town Crier* was a small operation in which everyone, including one of Sarah P. Bunker's great-great-grandsons, pitched in at nearly every job as needed. Publication of the summertime guide *Nantucket Holiday* brought in revenue to augment subscriptions and advertising. Getting the newspaper out on time each week was both exhilarating and consuming, and sixteen years into the enterprise, Joseph Indio's health began to fail. The 1963 sale of the business, complete with *Nantucket Holiday*, to the publisher of the *Inquirer and Mirror* took Nantucketers by surprise. Letters, some from long-time antagonists, poured in to the Indios expressing shock and sadness. Consensus was that competition had improved the *Inquirer and Mirror* and that the *Town Crier's* passionate editorial voice had benefited Nantucket. Henry Beetle Hough, editor/publisher of the *Vineyard Gazette*, wrote, "I'd like you both to know how sad I am about the end of the

road for the *Town Crier*. It was a gallant venture and through its exciting years you have much to be proud of. There are not many strongly individualistic papers left.”

The words of praise were welcome, but Joseph Indio had wearied of the good fight. He had once advised his friend Jim Geggis, “Cynicism has a place in our makeup, particularly in news work, but it cannot replace faith in the future, even when the walls are crumbling.” Now, as the walls of his own future began to give way, he had done all he could do or wanted to do for Nantucket.

After the sale of the business and some European travel, he began drafting a personal memoir of the *Town Crier* and its Nantucket battles, but he laid the manuscript aside unfinished. As unyielding to terminal illness as he had been to public criticism, he took an off-island position at Southeastern Massachusetts Technical Institute, did some work in public relations, and became a licensed real estate dealer. Before he died in a New Bedford Hospital in 1968, he expressed his desire not to be buried on Nantucket, and so he was laid to rest in St. John’s Cemetery in New Bedford. A man who reflexively trusted and acted on the courage of his convictions, he had given Nantucket’s pot a mighty stir.³³

On the editorial page of the *Inquirer and Mirror*, the lightning rod for so much of the *Town Crier*’s criticism over the years, appeared the following tribute to Joseph Indio: “Always a journalist, he had a quick sense for the vital detail in a story. Sometimes his strong opinions inevitably led to controversy, but there was one thing to be sure—one always knew where he stood on a question. His passing removes not only a true newspaperman who was dedicated to his profession but a man who had made Nantucket a part of his life—a part which will not be forgotten.”³⁴

Cape Verdeans

“*We have been here for so many years.*”³⁵

Buffeted by dry winds blowing off the Sahara, the desert islands of the Cape Verde archipelago are seldom green. They derive their name from Africa’s westernmost point of land, a ‘Green Cape’ that juts out from the Senegal coast three hundred miles to the southeast. Seven hundred miles off to the southwest lies the coast of Brazil, and more than three thousand miles to the northwest are Massachusetts and Rhode Island, places important to Cape Verdean economic history.

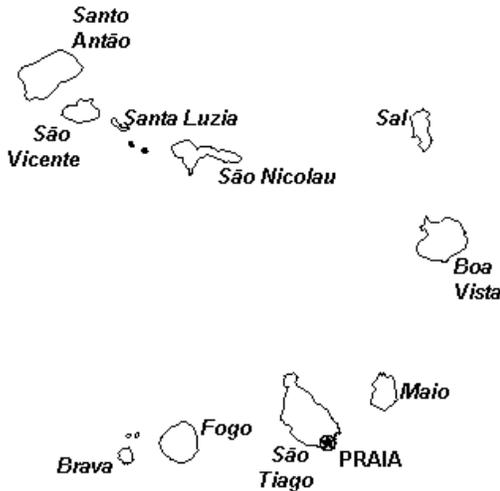
The northern, windward islands are San Antonio (Santo Antão), Saint Vincent (São Vicente), Santa Luzia, Saint Nicholas (São Nicolau), Sal, and Boavista. The southern,

³³ Edouard A. Stackpole’s obituary of Joseph Indio appeared in the *Inquirer and Mirror* on February 1, 1968. For access to his personal papers, I am grateful to Constance Heighton Indio.

³⁴ *Inquirer and Mirror*, February 1, 1968.

³⁵ December 19, 2001, interview with Viola Cabral Howard and Pauline Cabral Singleton, whose grandfather was a Cape Verdean whaler and whose father, Josefino Cabral, was naturalized as a U. S. citizen in 1925.

leeward group includes the major islands of Maio; Santiago (São Tiago), with the capital city of Praia; Fogo; and Brava



The Cape Verde archipelago. During whaling days Nantucket ships picked up additional crew from the islands of Fogo and Brava, islands that were later the main source of immigration to southern New England.

Most of the Cape Verdeans who relocated to Nantucket came from the leeward islands, particularly from Fogo and Brava. No matter which island had been their home, as immigrants they were collectively referred to as “Bravas.”³⁶

People from Fogo had, in fact, moved to Brava repeatedly, blurring the distinction between Bravans and Fogoans. Although much the larger of the two islands, Fogo is a single, active volcano rising from the sea. Over the centuries, residents living on its steep slopes and farming inside its crater have periodically fled for their lives and crowded onto little Brava. An eruption in 1680 turned the summit into a lighted beacon visible from far at sea, earning the island its name *Fogo*, which means ‘fire’ in Portuguese. Eruptions continued throughout the New England whaling era: in 1785, 1799, 1847, 1852, and 1857. Whaleships putting in to Brava’s bay of Faja d’Água for supplies found many men ready and willing to sign on as crew members. They had left everything

behind on smoldering Fogo and were prepared to sail away from Brava, even as far as New England.³⁷

When the Cape Verde islands were sighted and then charted in the mid 1400s, they were uninhabited, and with their scant rainfall and thin soil they did not offer good prospects for cultivation. Nonetheless, Portugal dispatched administrators, farmers, convicts, political exiles, and “New Christians” (Sephardic Jews who had been forced to convert to Christianity) to render the islands productive.³⁸ This improvised population

³⁶ Equal numbers of people from Fogo and Brava appear in the Nantucket vital records, with a few others from Santiago, San Antonio, and Sal. Nearly as many are simply labeled Cape Verdeans without reference to home island.

³⁷ See Carreira 1982, pp. 42–48, for more about New England whaling in Cape Verde’s history and economy. Almeida, ca. 1978, p. 15, states that “By the late nineteenth century Cape Verde’s principal export to the U.S. was her own young men.”

³⁸ There are Jewish cemeteries on several of the islands of the Cape Verde archipelago, including Brava. These date not from the early peopling of the islands, but from the 1820s, when some of the few remaining Sephardic Jews of Portugal sought political refuge in the islands, and from the 1850s, when Jewish men

organized the clearing of the land for sugar and cotton plantations, and enslaved Africans were imported to do the labor.

African slaves were also brought to process salt on the islands of Sal (Portuguese for ‘salt’) and Maio, to spin and weave cotton grown on the new plantations, and to gather indigo and other dyestuffs that grew on the islands.³⁹

In the long run, the islands could not be agriculturally self-sufficient. Too little of the land was arable, and periodic droughts wiped out crops, livestock, and significant percentages of the human population as well. Nor could the export of dyestuffs, salt, and salted fish support the residents of the islands. Profits derived overwhelmingly from the slave trade.

In the 1500s and early 1600s, the “raw” slaves brought to the Cape Verde islands for re-export came mainly from the Upper Guinea coast. Later, an increasing number were brought from Angola. These facts were reflected by names of places in Nantucket—New Guinea and Angola Street—long before Cape Verdean families came to live in the neighborhood.

In the early period, about a third of all slaves taken from the Guinea coast were sent to the Cape Verde islands where, in a “seasoning” process, they were baptized as Catholics with Christian names and were introduced to the work they would be doing in the future.⁴⁰ Most were destined to be sent on, but some were retained for local work, especially women and men of the Wolof people, who were valued for their skill in spinning and weaving. The labor of these specialists produced textiles known as *panos*, which were used by the Portuguese as currency for purchasing yet more slaves on the African mainland.⁴¹

Very soon a racially mixed population—offspring of the small number of European men resident on the islands and their slaves—emerged as the majority population on the islands. Within a century from the first arrivals, more than two-thirds of the population was of mixed African and European ancestry, with another quarter of African ancestry, and those proportions have remained more or less the same ever since.⁴² The population

from Morocco and Gibraltar arrived to work in the leather trade. Araújo 2000, p. 30, lists surnames of Cape Verdean Jewish families originating in both Lisbon and Morocco.

³⁹ Harms 2002 describes salt production on Mayo and the weaving of cloth “using African-type looms and weaving techniques.” (pp. 109, 112).

⁴⁰ “Missionaries on Santiago made a business out of transforming *bocales* (slaves who were not Christian and could not speak Portuguese) into *ladinas* by converting them to Christianity and teaching them the rudiments of the Portuguese language so that they would fetch higher prices.” (Harms 2002, p. 112)

⁴¹ The English translator of Carreira 1982 uses the term “country cloth” to refer to *pano*.

⁴² Lobban 1995, p. 55, table 3.4. This is in marked contrast to Nantucket, where the entire “colored” community of mixed Wampanoag, African, and white ancestry in the second half of the 1700s and on into the 1800s remained in the hundreds while the English population grew to a peak of nearly 10,000. Harms 2002 describes the economy of the archipelago and the racial continuum to be observed when the French slave ship *Diligent* put into the port of Praia on July 5, 1731 (pp. 109–114). He writes: “Although most of the land on Santiago was still owned by “whites,” free blacks and *mestiços* were moving into positions of authority. Most of the priests were black—the bishop valued them far above the mostly illiterate priests sent from Portugal—and the local officials were mostly blacks or *mestiços*. Even the governor’s militia had black captains and lieutenants.” (p. 113)

of Brava is exceptional in this. Despite its good harbors, which proved so attractive to New England whalers, Brava was not a station in the slave trade. With fewer Africans present, admixture with the descendants of Portuguese settlers—many of them from the Azores and Madeira—has been noticeably less.⁴³

While the African genetic heritage of the Cape Verdeans is obvious, the Portuguese made every effort to obliterate African cultural heritage. Not only were slaves given Portuguese Catholic baptismal names upon arrival in the islands, they were not permitted to maintain their African life-ways or languages, which were to be replaced immediately and as completely as humanly possible by Portuguese language and culture.

This was but a transitory experience for Africans who were exported from Cape Verde to Newport and Providence, Rhode Island, in the 1700s, but unrelenting pressure to self-identify as Portuguese was a permanent condition for those who remained in the Cape Verde islands.⁴⁴ For Cape Verde's mixed-race population, thinking, speaking, and believing oneself Portuguese was the route to freedom and even to personal profit from the slave trade. Within a generation, those *Crioulos* became middlemen in the trade both on the islands and on the African coast.⁴⁵ Meanwhile, West African languages and culture survived as substrata that distinguished Cape Verdeans from other Portuguese.⁴⁶

Nowhere has this been more evident than in the language of the archipelago. The local language, also called *Crioulo*, has been thought of generally as an imperfect, Africanized form of Portuguese.⁴⁷ It is as incomprehensible to speakers of other varieties of Portuguese as Jamaican Creole English is to English speakers, and for good reason. Cape Verdean Creole Portuguese and Jamaican Creole English are not simply extreme nonstandard varieties of Portuguese and English, respectively; they are separate languages. Cape Verdean Creole shares most of its words with Portuguese, but not only are they pronounced differently, and not only is the language spoken with a very different rhythm, but the grammar of the language is also different from Portuguese. The same can be said of Jamaican Creole with respect to English. Although they got their words from

⁴³ When Américo C. Araújo, who had emigrated from Brava in the 1960s, returned home for a visit after Cape Verde achieved independence from Portugal, he was discriminated against as a white Portuguese. Shocked that his identity as a loyal Cape Verdean should be denied, he eventually wrote an intensely personal polemic arguing that legitimate Cape Verdean identity is defined by birth in the islands, not by race or ancestral ethnicity. Araújo 2000 is illustrated with many family photographs, some old photographs of streets and houses in Brava, and excerpts of Cape Verdean poetry in Portuguese and Crioulo with English translations. It also contains descriptions of popular festivals celebrated on Brava (pp. 71–78, 109–15) and glimpses into the class stratification of Bravan and Fogoan society in the first half of the twentieth century.

⁴⁴ Lobban 1995, pp. 28–29, presents dates and figures for the Rhode Island slave trade with the Guinea Coast and Cape Verde.

⁴⁵ *Crioulo* is the Portuguese word corresponding to English “creole.” Its original meaning in Spanish and Portuguese seems to have been ‘someone of Iberian heritage born overseas.’ In practice it has come to be synonymous with “mestizo,” meaning someone of mixed racial heritage. See Araújo 2000, p. 29.

⁴⁶ For general history of the islands of the Cape Verde archipelago, see Part II of Ludtke 1989 and also Appendix B and the maps at the end of the book. A summary of Cape Verdean history, more maps and a Crioulo glossary are to be found in Irwin and Wilson 1998. Carreira 1982 is a comprehensive study of the historical circumstances that led to massive emigration from the archipelago. It is the one book on Cape Verdean history available at the Nantucket Atheneum at the time of this writing.

⁴⁷ Araújo 2000 takes this position on p. 12.

different languages, Cape Verdean Creole and Jamaican Creole are more like each other in how they put sentences together than they are like the languages from which their words have come. Whether this is because of their common African roots or because of the nature of creole languages worldwide is a matter of debate among people who study them; but in any case, Crioulo—the home language of most Cape Verdeans—is not substandard Portuguese. It is a creation of the people of the archipelago that at once defines their Cape Verdean identity and poses an obstacle to communication with speakers of Portuguese from other islands such as the Azores.⁴⁸ On Nantucket this noncommunication between Azoreans and Cape Verdeans was as significant as their shared Portuguese culture and Catholic religion.

The first Nantucket resident identified as Cape Verdean is Michael Douglass, who, despite his Scottish-sounding name, is described as “a Cape di Verde Portuguese Negro.”⁴⁹ Born in the mid-1760s, he took up residence in Nantucket when he was around forty years old, about the time a man would hope to be able to retire from work at sea. He does not appear in the 1800 census but is in censuses from 1810 through 1830. In 1809, he married Sally Smith of Nantucket, and they appear together in the 1810 census, but it seems he lost his wife soon after, because in 1811 he married Mary Boston.⁵⁰ Subsequently their names come up in records of the Boston family’s real-estate dealings. For a while their household grew, although it is not clear who the people were who shared their home. By 1830 Michael and Mary Douglass, both in their 60s, were living alone again.

Three decades younger than Michael Douglass, José da Silva was born on Brava in 1794. Sworn in before the Nantucket Court of Common Pleas in late October 1824, he was the first Cape Verdean to be naturalized as a citizen of the United States. Da Silva is described in the court documents as “an Alien, being a free white person and citizen or subject of the Kingdom of Portugal, but now a resident of Nantucket.” The court clerk wrote his name as “Joseph Sylva,” on both his renunciation of Portuguese citizenship and his oath of allegiance to the United States of America, which da Silva signed with a mark rather than with a signature. Over time in Nantucket, “da Silva” changed to Sylvia.⁵¹

Two years before assuming US citizenship, Joseph Sylvia had married a Nantucket widow, Mary Lyon, the mother of a young daughter, Rebecca. In the course of the 1820s

⁴⁸ See Holm 1989 for linguistic descriptions of Portuguese-based creole languages in general (pp. 259–73), Cape Verdean Creole Portuguese (pp. 273–74), and Jamaican Creole English (pp. 469–72). For a general overview of creole languages in plantation societies, see Karttunen and Crosby 1995, pp. 163–73. Brava was the home island of Cape Verdean poet Eugénio Tavares (1867–1930), who wrote in Crioulo rather than in Portuguese, initiating Cape Verdean literary tradition. See French 1984 about Cape Verdean Crioulo as an expression of popular culture.

⁴⁹ *Vital Records of Nantucket* V, p. 231.

⁵⁰ *Vital Records of Nantucket* III, p. 388.

⁵¹ Carreira 1982, p. 43, quotes an unpublished 1964 dissertation in Portuguese by José António Medina dos Santos providing this information about da Silva. Nantucket Court Records 6, p. 157, records the naturalization of Joseph Sylva, formerly a citizen of Portugal. According to Medina dos Santos, the third naturalization of a Cape Verdean as a United States citizen took place in 1849. According to the Nantucket list, another Portuguese citizen was naturalized on the island in October of that year, also using the name Sylvia. There is not enough information, however, to determine if the third, as well as the first, naturalization of a Cape Verdean took place on Nantucket.

Mary and Joseph had three children together.⁵² The family of six appears in the 1830 federal census for Nantucket. Mary died in 1847, and there are no Nantucket marriage or death records for daughter Elizabeth or for Joseph Jr., suggesting that after their mother's death they left the island. Middle daughter Delphina remained on Nantucket, however. She married, had four children, and lived until 1907.

There may have been other men making their homes in New Guinea with whom Michael Douglass could reminisce in Crioulo about the Cape Verdean archipelago. A couple of men named DeGross and a man named DeVert married African-Nantucketer wives even before Douglass married for the first time. The 1810 census identifies Manuel Antonia as black, and beginning in 1820, federal and local censuses register the New Guinea household of Michael DeLuce through two decades. Michael DeLuce was one of the trustees of the African Baptist Society at its inception in the 1820s, and his wife Sara signed the charter of the reorganized African Baptist Church in 1831. Nowhere are the DeGrosses, DeVert, Antonia, or DeLuce identified as Cape Verdean, and we know no more about how they came to Nantucket than we know how Michael Douglass arrived or how he came by his name. That they were all single men who, with the exception of Antonia, found wives in Nantucket's African community suggests that they came to the island as "single mariners," a category that does not appear on the census forms until decades later.⁵³

If that was the case, they may have all counted themselves lucky. On March 9, 1833, the *Nantucket Inquirer* printed an account of the horrific toll being taken by the drought and famine then afflicting the islands of the Cape Verde archipelago. The brig *Emma* had been sent from Philadelphia with a cargo of food for the famine victims. A passenger aboard the relief ship reported that as they made their first landfall at the windward island of San Antonio, men who appeared to be living skeletons rowed out to beg them to stop and sell them some food. When they learned that the ship had come to give them food, people onshore attempted to raise a cheer of thanks, but the only sound they could manage was a groan. The desperation on San Antonio, wrote the *Nantucket Inquirer's* correspondent, "was beyond the power of tongue or pen to describe."⁵⁴

Whichever island Michael Douglass had left so long ago, news of the situation on San Antonio in 1833 must have struck to the heart of the aging Cape Verdean. If, over the years on Nantucket, he had harbored the thought that in his lifetime he might revisit the place from which he had set out, that hope was now extinguished.

⁵² This information is from the Eliza Starbuck Barney Genealogical Record at the Nantucket Historical Association and from the *Vital Records for Nantucket* IV, p. 459. The Barney record is in error about the marriage date of Joseph and Mary. They were married in 1822, not in 1818, as stated. It also disagrees by two years with the Portuguese record about the birth date of José da Silva. The Portuguese source gives his birth year as 1794, while the Barney record gives 1792.

⁵³ As early as 1775 there were people identified as Portuguese living in New Guinea. In that year Abraham Williams of Sandwich reported to Colonel Nathaniel Freeman in Watertown that there had been "a considerable riot and affray there between the negroes and Portuguese on the one side and the inhabitants on the other, in consequence whereof many of our Indians and Molattoes are come off." (Nantucket Historical Association Manuscript Collection 197, item 1)

⁵⁴ See Appendix 2e for the full text of the report to the *Nantucket Inquirer* on conditions on San Antonio in 1833. For accounts of famines in the Cape Verde archipelago beginning in 1832, see Almeida, ca. 1978, pp. 13-15.

In 1834 Mary Douglass died, and two years later Michael followed, a solitary man who drowned at age seventy. The name Michael Douglass had never rested comfortably on his shoulders, or perhaps on his tongue. Over the decades of his life on the island Nantucketers had understood it and written it many ways: Mike, Micah, Michael and Douglas, Duglass—even Guglas. On Mary’s headstone, placed among the Boston family graves, she is identified as the wife of Mikel Dauglass. No grave marker is to be found for her husband.

Elsewhere in the cemetery is a broken stone for Peter Antone, born at St. Anthony (San Antonio). The date is obscured, but the initials C.V., for Cape Verde, are still discernible. Other markers in the cemetery bear Portuguese names, but they are from a later time. The censuses of 1850 and 1860 show almost no Cape Verdeans living in New Guinea. In 1850 Joseph Antonio, a single mariner, was there, and by 1860, Joseph Lewis, another black Cape Verdean mariner had established a household with his Pennsylvania-born wife and Massachusetts-born children. At some point, too, mariner John Bravo, born in 1796 and considered white, had settled on Nantucket, where he died at age 75, never having found himself a wife.

The list of transient seamen attached to the 1850 federal census lists a total of 76 men of Portuguese nationality serving on Nantucket ships. Of those, only eleven were from Cape Verde. Two were from Saint Nicholas and one from San Antonio. The home islands of the other eight are not identified. Four were classified as black, and the rest were not racially categorized. This runs contrary to accepted wisdom that Nantucket whaling ships were largely crewed by Cape Verdeans. By 1850 Nantucket whaling was in decline, while the New Bedford whale fishery continued strong for some time to come and afforded Cape Verdean seamen a way out of their islands’ desperate circumstances.⁵⁵

The 1860 federal census shows only one Cape Verdean resident on Nantucket, fifty-one-year-old Joseph Lewis. Lewis had been away from his homeland a long time. He had taken an African-American wife, and the oldest of their children, all born in Massachusetts, was already eighteen years old. In the course of a decade Lewis accumulated a significant amount of real estate in New Guinea, but by 1870 he had died, and his widow Julia, their son Joseph Jr., and their daughter Emma (perhaps named in honor of the relief ship sent from Philadelphia in 1833) were living-in with a white family. In 1900 Joseph Jr. and Emma had reached middle age still unmarried and were sharing a household. Julia survived to nearly the end of the century and Emma died in 1917. Both women were buried in the cemetery behind Mill Hill.⁵⁶ After his father’s death, Joseph Lewis Jr. had gone to sea, but in his later years, while living nearby on York Street, he served the Nantucket Historical Association as one of the custodians of the Old Mill. A newspaper article about the owners and subsequent custodians of the mill described Joseph Lewis as a veteran whaler.⁵⁷

After Joseph Lewis Sr., nobody Cape Verde-born appears in Nantucket censuses until 1910. In mid-April of that year 110 Cape Verdeans were resident on the island. Of them,

⁵⁵ See Greenfield 1985, pp. 219–29, and Busch 1985, *passim*.

⁵⁶ Information on the death dates of Julia and Emma Lewis from headstones in the cemetery.

⁵⁷ *Inquirer and Mirror*, June 11, 1949.

a dozen had been in the United States less than a year, and three had arrived since January.⁵⁸

Theirs must have been an exotic presence on Nantucket, where the African-American population had fallen to twenty-nine. Some of them had names to trip the Nantucket tongue—names such as Hermenegildo Rodericks, Roamo Araujo, Liberto Santos, Remicho Gomes, and Sabana Viera. There is no doubt the Cape Verdeans confounded local ideas about color. In the race column of the census sheets the enumerators categorized them as “B.” Subsequently someone went through and overwrote each “B” with “W.”

The newcomers were for the most part in their twenties or thirties and single. More than half were unable to read and write and a third did not yet speak English. Men outnumbered women by well over two-to-one, but there were, nonetheless, fifteen married couples, including a half dozen in which one spouse was not Cape Verdean. Among them, these families had twenty children under the age of fifteen. Many of the single men lived in shanties on the large commercial cranberry bog under development north of the road to ’Sconset, next to Gibbs’s Pond. Some, including two single mothers with their children, lived in the village of ’Sconset, and a dozen Cape Verdeans lived on North Wharf. Nearly everyone was renting or boarding. Only two couples owned houses on the island.

In mid-April, when they were counted for the census, the cranberry-bog workers were setting out new plants. Over the summer they would weed, and in the fall they could look ahead to working their way through the bog on their knees, the women harvesting the fruit by hand while the men worked with wooden cranberry scoops.⁵⁹

Millard Freeborn, whose grandfather was one of Nantucket’s earliest commercial cranberry growers, wrote, “I well remember the days when the cranberry pickers used to come and harvest what was then a great crop of cranberries, requiring eighty pickers and some times as many as a hundred, each day. Uncle Asa Coffin... was the one who kept the tally of the number of quarts gathered by each picker. Two cents per quart was the price paid the pickers, and my father was the boss of the job. I can see him now as he

⁵⁸ Halter 1993 is a comprehensive survey of Cape Verdean immigration from 1860 to 1965. Although Nantucket as a destination appears in only a single citation in her index, Halter’s presentation of the pressures driving emigration from the Cape Verde archipelago and the circumstances in which Cape Verdeans found themselves in Southeastern Massachusetts is highly relevant to the history of the cranberry workers who arrived on Nantucket shortly after 1900. Material from Halter 1984 and 1990 is repeated in broader context in Halter 1993, but the earlier publications contain photographs that do not appear in the 1993 book.

⁵⁹ Almeida ca. 1978, p. 53, states that, “By 1910 hundreds of Cape Verdeans were employed during the six-week harvest season. The pay for a seven-hour working day during the harvest was \$1.40 to \$1.75 for a hand picker and from \$3.00 to \$5.25 for a scoop picker. To the bog owners the Cape Verdeans provided a needed source of cheap labor who could be hired on a daily basis.” Thomas 1990, pp. 86–87, asserts that Portuguese men’s monopoly on harvesting with scoops reduced dependence on child labor in Massachusetts. Halter 1990, p. 101, includes a 1938 photo of Maria Gamboa working at the Ellis D. Atwood bog on the mainland. The caption states that she demanded the right to harvest with a scoop as the men did. By the 1940s women and men alike were harvesting with scoops. Mechanical picking became widespread beginning in the 1950s.

stalked up and down the line of pickers, making them come back and pick all the berries they had skipped for the rule was to pick them all.”⁶⁰

Work went on in all sorts of weather out on the bog, where there was no shelter or protection. In 1913 twenty-eight-year-old Ben Lopes was struck by lightning and died.

It was hard work that made one either love or hate the business. For every person for whom the very sight of cranberries off the job—much less the taste of the berries—was unendurable, there was another who wanted nothing more than to own a bog of his own.⁶¹ One of the people counted by the 1910 census was Peter Tavares. At the time he was twenty-three years old, single, illiterate, and as yet unable to speak English. In time he married and became an independent farmer and bog owner in Polpis. Late in life, after his Santiago-born wife Johanna died in Nantucket, he sold his land and returned to Cape Verde.

Not all Cape Verdeans resident on Nantucket worked the bogs, however. In 1910, Cape Verde-born Annibal Martin was at the Muskeget Life Saving Station. He had arrived in the United States at the age of fifteen, and thirteen years later he had not yet been naturalized. Apparently this was not an obstacle in the Life Saving Service; quite a number of Nantucket’s lighthouse keepers and telegraphers were also aliens. By age twenty-eight Martin had a white Massachusetts-born wife and a three-year-old daughter Evelyn, and they, too, were living on Muskeget. The 1910 census categorized Martin and Evelyn as mulattos. Ten years later, the Martins had moved to Fair Street, and there were five children, all of whom—from Evelyn, the oldest, to the youngest, a little girl named Blanche—were categorized as white, although their father continued to be categorized as mulatto. Still not naturalized, Annibal Martin was supporting his family by working as a harbor fisherman.

Like emigrants from many other countries, most Cape Verdeans had not come to the United States with the intention of staying permanently. Their aim was to accumulate enough capital from their labor to purchase land on their home islands to which they could eventually retire. In the meantime, they went back to visit whenever they could, and even when they could not go themselves, they sent back all sorts of American goods to their families. To connect the emigrants to their homes, enterprising seamen among them purchased old sailing vessels, often retired whaleships, and operated them across the vast stretch of sea between New England ports and the Cape Verde archipelago. Those vessels, known as packets, continued to make round trips as late as the 1960s. Their cargoes included all sorts of goods for the benefit of family members left behind and for the construction of future retirement homes, including cedar shingles that imparted a Nantucket look to the far-off Cape Verde islands. A memorial to the packet trade that brought workers to New England and carried the fruits of their labor back home is the restored schooner *Ernestina* which puts in to Nantucket from time to time as

⁶⁰ Freeborn 1929, p. 6.

⁶¹ Cecelia Perry Viera of West Wareham spoke for those alienated by the work: “I can look at cranberries, yes, but not eat them. It was so hard on your hands. It tore the skin off and got under your fingernails. And it hurt your knees to kneel there in the bogs for so long.” Halter 1993, p. 103.

she carries an educational program about Cape Verdean history along the New England coast.⁶²

In 1910 three of the Cape Verdeans living on North Wharf had left the labor of cranberry cultivation. Joseph Gomes had gone to work for Holland-born florist Herman Voorneveld, while his brother Frank worked in the coal yard and their younger brother Remicho was doing odd jobs. Frank had been the first to arrive in the United States from Fogo in 1902, and Joseph had joined him the following year. Remicho was just twenty years old when he left home for America in 1908. Over the next five years their sisters Pauline and Isabel and their young half-brother Peter came to Nantucket, too, and they all lived together in an upstairs apartment on North Wharf. Frank and Joseph had once gone to the Boyer Studio to have their picture taken together with their housekeeper, the widow Julia Pina. They had all dressed carefully for the special occasion, the young men dapper in suits and ties, arm-in-arm with Julia, who dressed in white and wore her hair upswept for the occasion. Joseph was known as a quiet person who still did not speak English after more than a dozen years of life and work in the United States.

During the summer of 1915 Joseph Gomes worked at a Nantucket golf course. On the evening of August 1, when he came home from a long, hot day of outdoor work, Frank offered him a cold beer, which he declined. Joseph was in a strange mood, and after Frank had gone to sleep, he began to beat their sister Pauline.

Luther Rose, a cranberry bog worker who lived in the apartment below, called out to Joseph to leave his sister alone. Shortly before midnight Joseph picked up a wooden club, went down to Luther's apartment, and hit him on the head. In the dark Luther attempted to defend himself with what came to hand and stabbed his attacker with a pair of scissors. As a crowd gathered, Joseph Gomes bled to death where he had fallen.

Witnesses, including Gomes's sisters and Julia Pina, agreed that Joseph Gomes had been behaving irrationally and had attacked Luther Rose without provocation. An autopsy revealed no evidence of alcohol, and speculation was that heat stroke was the precipitating cause of the incident.⁶³

The reporter for the *Inquirer and Mirror* wrote sympathetically of the painfully injured Luther Rose and the bereaved Gomes family, but he opened his piece by harking back to the murder of Phebe Fuller a half-century earlier, pointedly identifying Patience Cooper, the woman convicted of that crime, as "a Negro." He then went on to say that investigation of the circumstances of Gomes's death was difficult because everyone involved was "Brava Portuguese and unable to speak intelligible English." The newspaper printed the studio portrait of the Gomes brothers and Julia Pina.

⁶² Almeida, ca. 1978, devotes a chapter to the Cape Verdean packet boats, including the *Ernestina*, that sailed between New England and their home islands (pp. 28-47). He writes that the packets "usually arrived in the early summer before the cranberry season began and returned after the harvest in the fall carrying clothing, household goods, roof tiles, and other American made products back to the Islands." (p. 40) A long list of American exported goods appears on pp. 12-13, concluding with the statement that, "Wooden shingles from Massachusetts still cover many houses in Cape Verde."

⁶³ *Inquirer and Mirror*, August 7, 1915.

In court Rose was found to have acted in self-defense. He left the bogs to become a fisherman, and in 1938, at the age of seventy-two, he was living alone on Orange Street, still a fisherman. Apparently the stigma of having killed his fellow Cape Verdean isolated him for life. As a child, Arline Bartlett lived near Luther Rose's tiny house and had been warned to beware of him, because he was a murderer. She recalled him, nonetheless, as a gentle elderly man with a shambling walk who responded courteously to greetings.⁶⁴

The Gomes siblings weathered the storm and stayed on in Nantucket too. Five years after their family tragedy, Frank had married, and he and his wife named their infant son Joseph. Pauline, Isabel, and Peter married on Nantucket, too. Only Remicho remained single. They all finished their days on the island, far from their birth island of Fogo.

The year after Joseph Gomes died, Elsie Clews Parsons came to Nantucket to collect Cape Verdean folklore. Parsons was one of America's first anthropologists. In fact, the field of anthropology hardly existed at the time, and the doctorate she earned from Columbia University in 1899 was in sociology. When she died in 1941, it was on the eve of delivering her presidential address at the annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association. In the intervening years she had become famous for her landmark studies of the pueblo culture of the American Southwest and of the Zapotecs of Oaxaca, Mexico.

Her early work on Cape Verdean and Caribbean folklore is less well known. In 1915 Franz Boas, one of the founders of American anthropology, had appointed her associate editor for African-American folklore at the *Journal of American Folklore*. She soon found a wealth of material and also a skilled colleague among Cape Verdeans living in Newport.⁶⁵ Fogo-born Gregorio Teixeira da Silva was a laborer with connections in the factories and on the docks in Providence, Fall River, and New Bedford as well as in Newport. Together, Parsons and da Silva found people to talk to in churches, factories, tenements—even in alleys—and especially in the homes of other people who had been born on Fogo.

What Parsons liked best was collecting riddles. A person with an uncommon propensity for roughing it, she found getting out of the cities and going to the cranberry-bog shanties invigorating, as—in fact—some Cape Verdeans themselves did. Parsons, however, was a wealthy woman who could return home to great comfort whenever she pleased. Reality for Cape Verdean workers was quite otherwise. As Sarah P. Bunker's great-granddaughter observed, "I know out to the bogs here ten or a dozen would live in a twelve-by-fourteen-foot shack, and the bog owners paid them next to nothing, then sold them their food and took out for their rent, and when the end of the month came, they had nothing."⁶⁶ The 1910 census bears out her description of crowded living quarters. That year on the new bog there were families living together, couples sharing space with

⁶⁴ Interview with Arline Bartlett, March 16, 2002.

⁶⁵ Deacon 1997, p. 173.

⁶⁶ Interview with Esther Gibbs, March 10, 1970. Halter makes a similar statement: "The cranberry-picking chapter in their lives may bring up pleasant memories of bonfires and dewy mornings, or of storytelling and record-breaking scooping. But more likely, it is a reminder of backbreaking toil for low pay, or of ruthless overseers, of poor health and inadequate housing that gave a minimum of shelter and a maximum of profits to the bog owner." (Halter 1993, p. 102)

unrelated people, and groups of seven or eight men living together. One twenty-two-year-old man was listed as head of household for eighteen other men.

While engaged in fieldwork, Elsie Clews Parsons shared the pleasure of the Cape Verdeans in getting together to pose riddles and to tell traditional folktales. Her happy anticipation of taking a boat out to Nantucket with da Silva and collecting folklore on the island was, however, dashed. After the two of them had made a difficult six-mile buggy ride from town to the cranberry bog “through long stretches of sand or swamp,” the boss insisted that the men there had no stories to tell and sent them away. It was, she said, “our most signal defeat.” The following day, Parsons and da Silva had better luck in “a sunny little yard” in town, where people were more relaxed and open.⁶⁷ Parsons remained unaware of the trauma the Nantucket Cape Verdean community had recently experienced or that the boss at the bog may have been fending off the prying public curious about Luther Rose and his coworkers.

Although Parsons could participate in asking and answering riddles in Portuguese and Crioulo, her ability to understand and write down Crioulo was limited. In collecting stories, she had to depend on da Silva to make on-the-spot translations into English and later to recreate the original stories from his notes. She regarded the work they did together a joint project, and it was both a personal and a professional loss when da Silva died in 1919. Parsons forged on with publication of what they had done, first producing an article about Cape Verdean beliefs and practices in 1921, and then in 1923 bringing out a two-volume compilation of the stories, proverbs, songs, and riddles they had collected. She dedicated the volumes to Gregorio Teixeira da Silva, her “interpreter and teacher.”

Cranberry cultivation did not live up to expectations on Nantucket, and by 1920 the number of Cape Verdeans and their American-born children resident on Nantucket had fallen to seventy-two. In the meantime, the number of home-owning families had risen to nine. Eighteen people, three generations of one family, were living in a single household on Washington Street.⁶⁸

Migrant travel from place to place around southern New England to harvest strawberries, blueberries, and cranberries brought together Cape Verdeans who otherwise might never have met. The circle of on- and off-island marriages and friendships widened, and a great deal of visiting between Nantucket and the mainland has always been the rule. This moving back and forth has made the Cape Verdean community on Nantucket a fluid one. Only ten or a dozen of the people in the 1910 and 1920 censuses lived out their lives on Nantucket. Most Cape Verdeans listed in those censuses left Nantucket and were replaced by others coming from the Cape and the New Bedford area.

Former Nantucket dockmaster Joe Lopes was brought by his parents to Nantucket from New Bedford at the beginning of the Depression when he was seven years old, while New Bedford-born Augusto (“Augie”) Ramos, eventual owner of a construction

⁶⁷ Parsons recounts her experience on Nantucket twice, first in Parsons 1921, p. 89, and again in Parsons 1923, p. xii.

⁶⁸ John and Elsie Fernandes had living at home with them four unmarried children, three married daughters, three sons-in-law, and six grandchildren.

company and Nantucket selectman, arrived on his own at age seventeen. Retired nurse Jareesh St. Jean came to the island at age ten to live with her aunt after her mother's death. For her dedicated volunteer work she was named Senior Citizen of the Year 2001 by the Nantucket Council on Aging.⁶⁹

After 1920 many of the new arrivals in Nantucket were Massachusetts-born children of Cape Verdeans. The postwar restrictive quotas had nearly stopped the flow of new immigrants from the archipelago to the United States, a flow that did not resume until the 1970s.⁷⁰ From the Nantucket town records can be seen the result—an aging and diminishing population. Before 1950, Cape Verde-born people who died on Nantucket were for the most part in their 50s and 60s. After 1950, the Cape Verde-born who died were in their 70s and 80s. Annie Gebo—widow of Luther Gebo, mother of six, grandmother of fourteen, great-grandmother of fifteen—lived to the age of 100 and was featured in the *Inquirer and Mirror* twice: on her ninety-sixth birthday in 1967 and three years later on her ninety-ninth.

Both times the *Inquirer and Mirror* revealed a geographical confusion pervasive among non-Portuguese Nantucketers. In 1967 the newspaper reported, “Mrs. Gebo was born in the Cape Verde Island, Azores, on January 20, 1871, and came to this country in 1891 when she was 20. She took up her residence here in 1911, which means she has been living here for fifty-six years.” Three years later, the error reappeared uncorrected: “She was born in the Cape Verde Islands, Azores, and has lived in Nantucket since 1911.”⁷¹ To this day Nantucketers are prone to saying they know of someone from one island group and then naming an island in the other.

In view of their different histories and their profoundly different languages, it is hardly surprising that this confusion has injured the pride of Cape Verdeans and annoyed Azoreans—on Nantucket and off-island as well. More potent than geographical ignorance has been racial stigma. Azoreans have dreaded the assumption that they share any African heritage with Cape Verdeans. They make much of the Flemish and the putative Breton background of the Azorean population without acknowledging that among the early settlers of the Azores were also some Sephardic Jews, Iberian Muslims, and African slaves.

⁶⁹ *Inquirer and Mirror*, May 22, 1986; *Nantucket Magazine*, Early Summer 2000, Vol. 12, No. 2, pp. 56–66; *Inquirer and Mirror*, May 3, 2001.

⁷⁰ In the decade from 1910 to 1920 over 18,000 Cape Verdeans emigrated to the United States. After a law was passed in 1917 prohibiting illiterate would-be immigrants from entering the United States and following the imposition of immigration quotas, the number dropped precipitously. In the course of a quarter century beginning in 1927, fewer than 2,000 documented emigrants managed to leave the Cape Verde archipelago for the United States (Carreira 1982, p. 80, table 14, Almeida, ca. 1978, p. 57). Nantucket has not attracted recent Cape Verdean immigrants to Massachusetts. The work niche they might have filled on the island has been taken over instead by Jamaican contract workers.

⁷¹ *Inquirer and Mirror*, February 2, 1967; January 29, 1970. The confusion goes both ways. In 1899 the *Inquirer and Mirror*'s April 13 obituary of Captain John Murray stated that he “was a native of the Cape de Verde islands,” although he and his son, John Murray Jr., had both been born on the island of Graciosa in the Azores. The following week the newspaper printed a correction regretting “that an error on our part as to the place of his nativity should have caused his friends annoyance.”

When the first Portuguese Congress in America convened at Harvard University in early June of 1973 and passed a resolution demanding official recognition of Portuguese-Americans as a minority, the resolution contained a nondiscriminatory racial clause “to unify a community that has been long divided.” The Boston *Globe* went on to report: “Some immigrants from Portugal and the Azores don’t like to consider Cape Verde immigrants—part of Portugal’s African holdings—as Portuguese.” Arnaldo Cruz, a member of the steering committee of the Cambridge Organization of Portuguese-Americans, was quoted as saying, “Portuguese here will be welcome—whether they are black or white—if they want to join us.”⁷²

For Cape Verdeans before and since 1973, the resolution and the statement by Cruz have been contradicted by their unrelenting experience of racism. Back in 1856 *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* printed an unsigned essay entitled “The ’Gees.” In it Herman Melville describes for the entertainment of *Harper’s* readers the humiliating treatment of men from Fogo aboard Nantucket and New Bedford whaleships. He invents a fictional Nantucketer, “Captain Hosea Kean,” who chooses the crewmen he ships from Fogo by bursting into their homes in the dead of night to take them by surprise. He also describes the role of a “’Gee jockey” in weeding out potential troublemakers: “For notwithstanding the general docility of the ’Gee when green, it may be otherwise with him when ripe. Discreet captains won’t have such a ’Gee. ‘Away with that ripe ’Gee!’ they cry; ‘that smart ’Gee; that knowing ’Gee! Green ’Gees for me!’” Melville concludes that one needn’t go to Fogo to observe a ’Gee first hand, because they “are occasionally to be encountered in our sea-ports, but more particularly in Nantucket and New Bedford.” People to be met in these ports, however, are “sophisticated ’Gees, and hence liable to be taken for naturalized citizens badly sunburnt.”⁷³



When Josefino Lopes Cabral and Maria Gibian Roderiques were married in Nantucket on July 28, 1928, their wedding party included Frank Correia, Florence Roderick, Isabella Mendes, Dorothy Burgo, Elizabeth Mendes, and Isabella Burgo. *Courtesy of the Nantucket Historical Association*, (photo from the Cabral family collection).

One might take this as satire ultimately sympathetic to exploited and abused Cape Verdean seamen were it not for the relish with which Melville describes Cape Verdeans as the “amalgamated generation” descended from Portuguese convicts and “an aboriginal race of negroes, ranking pretty high in incivility and rather low in stature and morals,” further debased by the siphoning off of the most fit to serve as cannon fodder in

⁷² Boston *Globe*, June 4, 1973.

⁷³ Melville 1856.

Portugal's wars. This is just the beginning of a humorously intended defamatory catalogue characterizing Cape Verdeans' physical stature, hair, skin color, teeth, diet, intellect, and seamanship.

Such odious humor could hardly be published these days, but it was common fare in the 1800s and well into the 1900s. Cape Verdeans on Nantucket had to live with it and deal with it on an everyday basis. John Mendonça told a story of an occasion on which scornful racism proved costly to the steamship line:

There was a Captain Neves who owned his own [business] and ran a packet between the Cape Verde Islands and New Bedford. He was the man who was on the steamer with me that time old Captain Fishback was [on the bridge]. That was a terribly foggy day, and this Captain Neves said to me, 'You know, if he keeps running on this course for another five minutes, he's going to be on the rocks.' He said, 'Go up and tell him.' So I said, 'Why don't you tell him, Captain?' He said, 'I'm colored.' He said, 'I can't tell him anything.' So I went up and told the captain. The captain said, 'Who sent that message?' 'Captain Neves.' (I can't say what he said on a tape recording.) 'Go tell that G-D Negro (He didn't use that word.) to mind his own business.' Five minutes later he had crashed on the rocks with the old [steamship] Martha's Vineyard.⁷⁴

When Josefino Lopes Cabral and Maria Gibian Roderiques were married on Nantucket on July 28, 1928, their attendants included best man, maid of honor, bridesmaids, and a flower girl, but permission to have their wedding in St. Mary's church was denied, and they had to settle for being married in the rectory.⁷⁵ The elegant Cabral wedding portrait was finally published in the *Inquirer and Mirror* more than a half century after it took place.

Through the first half of the twentieth century, Nantucket newspaper reporting continued what can at best be described as a patronizing attitude toward Cape Verdeans, as illustrated in the coverage of Nantucket's original "underground man."

In December of 1998 the chief topic of conversation on Nantucket was the discovery of a commodious, well-appointed chamber constructed below ground in a pine grove on land owned by the Boy Scouts. Non-Cape Verdean Tom Johnson was said to have occupied it for a decade, and many islanders admired his ingenuity in living so comfortably for so long without detection. Health inspector Richard Ray described the dug-out as "a marvel of craftsmanship" but cited it for health-code violations, and it was demolished.⁷⁶

Johnson, however, was not the first to go underground. In 1932 Nantucket police located the subterranean distillery of Joseph Garcia in a pine grove between the

⁷⁴ Interview with John Mendonça, July 1973.

⁷⁵ Rectory weddings at that time were an embarrassment, because they were mandated for marriages of Catholics to non-Catholics and in cases of out-of-wedlock pregnancies. Denial of a church wedding to the Cabral and Roderiques families, all observant Catholics, is still recalled as an act of blatant racism.

⁷⁶ The Boston *Globe* printed a series of news stories complete with schematic drawings and interior photos of Johnson's home on December 3, 4, 6, and 11, 1998. Richard Ray was quoted in the December 6 story. Local admiration cooled when Nantucketers learned that Johnson was a fugitive from prosecution for transporting drugs.

Milestone Road and Polpis Road. It was at least the equal of Johnson's later construction. The wood-lined main chamber contained a kerosene stove, a wash boiler and copper coils for distillation, three hogsheads of fermenting mash, and a hundred gallons of finished product ready for delivery. A trap door let down from the chamber into a thirty-foot well tapping into a spring that supplied water to the nearby Mooney farm duck pond.

Nantucketers of the early 1930s were as admiring of Garcia's still as Nantucketers of the late 1990s were of Tom Johnson's domicile. According to the *Inquirer and Mirror*, "Had such a thing been possible, the outfit, just as the officers discovered it, would have been worth visiting and inspecting by the general public, even for a small admission fee." But just as Johnson's underground home was condemned and destroyed, so in the interest of public safety was the hidden still denied its potential as a paying attraction. "Owing to the fact that the cave might possibly be stumbled upon by someone out in quest of berries, or that some Boy Scout or child might accidentally come across it, the police officers decided that the place should be destroyed at once. So Sergeant Mooney and Officer Henderson went out Tuesday evening equipped with axes and shovels and demolished the whole thing."⁷⁷

With the demolition of the still ended a profitable enterprise for Cape Verdean entrepreneur Garcia, whose name was only revealed in the last sentence of the news story. Up to that point he had been identified as a "Brava Portuguese," "the Brava," "an ignorant Brava," "the man," and "the fellow." The *Inquirer and Mirror* report concluded: "The Brava? Oh, he was placed under arrest, brought before Judge Fitz-Randolph, fined \$100, declared he did not have the money, and has gone to the House of Correction at New Bedford to ponder over the situation. His name is Joseph Garcia and he has been there before."

Until quite late in the century most Cape Verdeans were excluded from positions in which they would meet the public; instead they were relegated to invisible and even inaudible jobs. Working as a telephone operator was considered excellent employment for a woman between high school and marriage, but according to Cape Verdeans, a young woman who applied encountered resistance even though she was Nantucket-born, educated in the Nantucket schools, and indistinguishable in speech from her classmates. Cape Verdean women seeking employment were instead relegated to cleaning and cooking. They recall compensation for janitorial work ranging from twenty-five cents an hour at the Maria Mitchell Association to a dollar an hour at the Nantucket Historical Association's Whaling Museum. Without islandwide public transportation, they walked from their homes far south of Main Street to jobs in places as distant as Cliff Road.⁷⁸ One of the most positive social changes of the last quarter of the century was the emergence of Cape Verdean women and men as professionals in businesses, health care, and politics.

⁷⁷ *Inquirer and Mirror*, July 30, 1932. An inventory of the contents of Garcia's cave made by Mooney and Henderson before they destroyed it was published as part of the news story. See Appendix 2f.

⁷⁸ "If you wanted a job, you went in and you worked in the kitchen or you worked as a maid. As a chambermaid, you made beds. Or you washed dishes. That was it. You were never up front. You were not visible." Interview with Viola Howard and Pauline Singleton, December 19, 2001.

In 1989, one hundred and fifty years after Absalom Boston first presented himself as a candidate for public office, Cape Verdean Augusto Ramos succeeded in his bid to be elected to the Nantucket board of selectmen, the first nonwhite to hold that office. His resignation from the board soon after his election remains open to conflicting interpretations, but it is undeniable that the town has been the better for electing him and vindicating its Cape Verdean community.

With doors shut to them for decades and many opportunities out of reach, Nantucket's Cape Verdeans actively looked out for themselves. With the *joie de vivre* that was so appealing to Elsie Clews Parsons, they kept traditional music and food—especially the Cape Verdean rice-and-beans dish called *jag*—central to their celebrations. Departing from the saints' day calendar of feasts observed in the archipelago, celebrations in the United States came to be centered on Thanksgiving and Christmas. The long Thanksgiving holiday gave families the opportunity to hold reunions large and small. In 1990, 160 members of the Correia family sat down to dinner together in the Knights of Columbus Hall, the old Alfonso Hall originally built by the Azoreans. Nantucket-born sisters Edith Correia Perry and Elizabeth Correia Campbell presided as the eldest members of the family, surrounded by younger relatives who had come from as far away as Texas and from as near as next door. Yvonne Barrows was quoted as saying, "Everyone looked alike. You knew who everyone was just by looking at them. It was all family, no intruders.... We'd talk about who got married first, how they lived, how they would cook, how they all sang Christmas carols, and helped name each other's children."⁷⁹

For Cape Verdean men fishing and hunting have been a source of great pleasure. In an interview Viola Cabral Howard and Pauline Cabral Singleton told about their father and his friends: "They knew the waters. Here on the island most of them are fishermen or scallopers, or they love to go out surf fishing or fishing on their boats, 'cause it's just handed down. Their friends or uncles or the older ones, they just enjoyed it so much, and that's their thing. When the bass are running or the bluefish are running or the scallops. . . . If they catch anything, they come home, . . . cook up all the deer meat and jag, sit around the table and talk. My father was a hunter. He had friends from sixty years old down to maybe twenty, because they loved him so. He taught them how to hunt. I remember Thanksgiving Day, that was the day to go out hunting. We would eat dinner about three o'clock. We'd have about twenty-five, thirty that went out hunting. And at Christmas we'd have venison, rabbit. We'd have duck, all the game, just about, and we loved it. It was delicious. . . . It brings back a lot of memories. They're getting old now. They took a couple of years off, but they went out this year and enjoyed it, and we enjoyed it as well. They had some good times hunting. Very close and just enjoyed each other's company."⁸⁰

Despite the inward family orientation characteristic of Cape Verdeans, Viola Howard and Pauline Singleton went on to express ideals of openness and reciprocity: "Our house, the homestead on Orange Street, is a very, very warm house. The door's always open, and so many nationalities that have come in that door. . . and they stay in touch, and they

⁷⁹ *Inquirer and Mirror*, November 29, 1990.

⁸⁰ Interview with Viola Howard and Pauline Singleton, December 19, 2001.

ask, ‘Are you still on Orange Street? Is your house still there? Oh, that’s wonderful!’ We had so many great times. So it’s a great feeling. My dad would always say, ‘Well, I’m not doing it for myself, actually. Because no matter where my children go, they’re Cabrals. And they might get stuck in Texas or Louisiana or wherever, and you mention Joe Cabral, and I know they will find a bed, a place to sleep until they get home.’”⁸¹

In December 2001, when the Cape and Islands public radio station was searching for Nantucket Christmas traditions, Cape Verdean Christmas caroling was clearly the most distinctive and also the least generally known. Viola Howard and Pauline Singleton recalled a Christmas in the early 1970s when they could not get together the full complement of singers and musicians from years past. That year they carried a record player from house to house to play old 78 rpm records of Cape Verdean *canta reis*, which they accompanied on a guitar. “People were so happy to hear them again,” they said. “It was the last time we did it, thirty years ago.”⁸²

As the Christmas caroling tradition passed into abeyance, a summer celebration took its place. In July 1988 the recently formed Sons and Daughters of Arquipelago de Cabo Verde held the first of a series of annual festivals featuring Cape Verdean food and music. Guest of honor at the first Cape Verde Heritage Festival was Consul-General Alirio Vicente Silva of the Republic of Cape Verde, who made a public presentation in the Unitarian Church. The next afternoon a Cape Verdean story hour was held at the Nantucket Atheneum, and in the evening there was yet another public event at the Nantucket Whaling Museum. Miguel Rose, “who has been a resident of Nantucket for over seventy-five years and senior member of the Cape Verdean community,” planned to take part but was prevented from doing so by ill health. The third day of the festival was given over to music and a feast at the old Alfonso Hall. The Nantucket Cape Verdean festivals continued for seven years, attracting hundreds of Cape Verdean visitors from southeastern New England until finally the burden of organizational work and cooking overwhelmed the local organization.

Although the Nantucket chapter of the Sons and Daughters of Arquipelago de Cabo Verde suspended the festivals after 1994, its members continued to advance its originally stated aims: “To revive interest in Cape Verde culture; assist Cape Verdeans in developing a greater sense of ethnic and national pride; and assist in providing Cape Verdeans with a growth-oriented environment that promotes a real spirit of togetherness/individual initiative/personal pride for all people.”⁸³

The primary focus of the organization’s initiative has been public education. Cape Verdeans’ experience with the Nantucket schools has not been an actively negative one, but over the years they have had to deal with low expectations on the part of teachers and administrators and the channeling of Cape Verdean students away from college preparatory courses into vocational tracks.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Statement of purpose by Joseph A. Cabral, president of the Sons and Daughters of Arquipelago de Cabo Verde, issued at the Cape Verde Heritage Festival on Nantucket, 1988.

The Cape Verdean cranberry-bog workers recruited to Nantucket in the first two decades of the twentieth century came from an environment in which anything beyond the most basic education was unavailable. For speakers of Crioulo, moreover, Portuguese—the language of formal education—was a language as foreign as English. As a result, more than half arrived in Nantucket unable to read or write. Even those who were literate were for the most part able to read only in Portuguese. Working long, hard hours on the bogs, they had little time for learning English, and they were handicapped in helping their children with school work. It is not surprising that of thirty-one children in “special classes” in 1930-32, half came from homes in which English was probably not spoken. One appears to have been Hungarian, and another Swedish, but fourteen had Portuguese names.

Between 1920 and 1925 the Nantucket public schools offered Americanization classes to the parents of these children, and the classes were popular with both Cape Verdean and Azorean men. About twenty-five enrolled in evening classes each year, progressing through a program of reading and writing English that included dictation and practice in letter writing plus arithmetic and geography. After that they moved on to courses in United States history and government required for taking out citizenship papers. Among Cape Verdeans in the classes was Miguel Rose, who sixty-five years later was to be a featured participant in the first Cape Verde Heritage festival, and his brother Peter Rose. Others were John Miguel De Luz, Joseph Mendes, Frank and Manuel Correia, Casimir Gomes, Peter and Remicho Gomes, John and Antone Roderick, Casimir Lopes, Joseph Perry, Antone and John Fernandez, Joseph Lobo, and “Mr. Pina.”

In 1924, women’s names appear for the first time on the enrollment list, but none are Portuguese. This does not mean that Cape Verdean women did not have English classes, however. A report for the year 1921 remarks that men’s class attendance declined during good fishing weather when they were busy dredging and opening scallops, and that women met for classes in their homes, because after supper, when the evening classes were held, they were busy with their families.

The Sons and Daughters organization has striven to advance this hard-earned basic education among Nantucket’s Cape Verdeans by presenting annual scholarships at Nantucket High School graduation. True to their goal of encouraging individual initiative and personal pride *for all people*, they have not limited scholarship eligibility to students of Cape Verdean descent.⁸⁴ Two of three Sons and Daughters scholarships awarded in 2001 went to non-Cape Verdeans. The third went to Falyne Correia, Cape Verdean and president of that year’s Nantucket High School graduating class. Falyne also took part in the Nantucket Junior Miss pageant in the fall of 2000, receiving scholarship awards in three categories. On graduation night she received a Sons and Daughters scholarship plus additional ones, making a total of six scholarships from Nantucket organizations to help her on her way through college.

Falyne Correia’s family and the Cape Verdean community take justifiable pride in her achievement. Successful competition for scholarships infused her with an air of great

⁸⁴ Over a period of a dozen years in which two or three scholarships were given annually, it has been estimated that ten were awarded to students of Cape Verdean heritage and the balance to other applicants (Interview with Viola Howard and Pauline Singleton, December 19, 2001).

self-confidence. In an interview given before she left for college, she envisioned herself as a manager, a successful entrepreneur, and eventually a CEO with a corner office. She also shared some thoughts about a perceived generation gap among Nantucket Cape Verdeans. In an *Inquirer and Mirror* article about a visit of the *Ernestina* to Nantucket in June 2001, James Duarte and Augusto Ramos lamented the fading of Cape Verdean culture from Nantucket. Ramos is quoted as saying, “The ethnicity is gone. The kids don’t know what it’s about any more.” Duarte added, “Today’s kids don’t grow up the way we did and it’s too bad. Now some of these kids don’t even know their cousins.”⁸⁵ Likewise, the burden of cooking for the festivals fell on the shoulders of aging women who, after several years, found it too much for them. Where were the young hands to help and—in time—to take over? Falyne Correia agreed that there is a division between generations, but she felt strongly that the older Cape Verdeans are mistaken in thinking the youngest Cape Verdeans have no interest in their heritage. She felt that there is a disconnect in the middle generation, that the people who are the bridge between the most aging members of the community and their grandchildren currently in school need to communicate more. She regretted that when the *Ernestina* made its visit to Nantucket there was no effort to gather young Cape Verdeans to visit in a group, and she described a situation in which young Cape Verdeans simply do not know which island their great-grandparents came from. Studying Portuguese, writing essays about Cape Verdean history, and making a trip to the islands with a grandparent would be the very first steps in the process of answering the question, “Who are we?” and coming to think of herself as Cape Verdean—not African-American, not simply of mixed race, but as a person with a distinct heritage.

⁸⁵ *Inquirer and Mirror*, June 28, 2001.