

## Portuguese in Newark

### Factors of Emigration and Immigration

#### 1.

Portugal has been described as a picturesque country with varied scenery and a mild climate. According to the Encyclopedia Britannica "few small countries contain such a great variety of scenery as Portugal. The bleak and desolate heights of the Serra da Estrella are almost Alpine in character; at a lower level there are wide tracts of moorland, covered in many cases with sweet-scented cistus and other wild flowers. The lagoon of Aveiro, the estuary of the Sado and the broad inland lake formed by the Tagus above Lisbon recall the waterways of Holland. The sand dunes of the west coast and the Pinhal de Leira resemble the French Lands. The Algarve and parts of Alentejo might belong to North West Africa rather than to Europe."<sup>7</sup>

With such a variety of attractions at home, one might ask why Portuguese should seek homes among the tenements and factories of the Iron-bound section of Newark. The answer lies not in the scenic beauty of either place but in the relative over-population of Portugal resulting from the lack of development of its economy. Paradoxical as this may seem, it is borne out by such evidence as the importation of wheat into Lisbon and Oporto because there are not sufficient transportation facilities to bring wheat to these cities from the Alentejo province, where wheat is the chief product. Portugal is rich in natural resources which have not been utilized.<sup>4</sup>

Portugal has a death rate of 20 and a birth rate of 30 per thousand <sup>7</sup> and although the population density is only 152.8 per sq. mi., <sup>7</sup> the surplus population is unable to find employment in agriculture or in the small industries in the cities which do not possess the possibilities of greatly increasing in size at present.

Living conditions in Portugal are poor. Agriculture, which employs 60% of the population is carried on under the most primitive conditions; Peasant farming methods have been described as pre Roman (Ball p.49 Portugal of the Portugese). One-third of the available agricultural area still awaits exploitation.

In manufacturing, which employs only 45,000 workers, the principle industry is textiles. <sup>7</sup> Subsistence wages are paid and most industrial workers live in crowded tenements without sanitary facilities. <sup>5</sup>

These conditions are paralleled in the educational field where illiteracy is very high. In 1917 the percentage of literacy for men and women applying for marriage papers -- literacy being defined as ability to sign one's name was: men signing -- 53.68%, women 34.58%. <sup>5</sup>

In government a long struggle was carried on for the establishment of a republic, for education, and for social reforms. "In 1910 a provisional government was formed under the presidency of Dr. Theophile Braga. The subsequent political history of Portugal is a record of short lived ministries and of revolutionary outbreaks. The effects of the revolution fell most heavily on the poor of the country districts and emigration increased to an unprecedented extent." <sup>7</sup>

In 1927 revolution broke out and in 1928 General Garmona represent-

ative of the Right was elected president. Despite the constitution, the government became in fact, a dictatorship of the president and the prime minister. In 1935 Gen. Carmona was elected unanimously for a further term of 7 years.<sup>7</sup> The present government is described by Newark Portugese as a "Corporate State".

The above are the major factors influencing emigration during the Twentieth Century. During the Nineteenth Century the chief causes of emigration were colonization and trade. (At the beginning of the Twentieth Century was the transmarine possessions of Portugal were "still only surpassed in extant by those of three powers, Great Britain, France and Germany."<sup>7</sup>

The chief destinations of Portuguese immigrants have been Brazil and the United States. From 1820 to 1926 Brazil received 1,219,000 Portuguese. From 1820 to 1924 the United States admitted 249,019. Immigration to Brazil continues, to the United States it had almost ceased because of the stringent immigration law of 1924 which established a quota for Portuguese of less than 500 immigrants per year.<sup>8</sup>

Before 1900 portuguese annual immigration was under 5,000. It reached 9,608 in 1903 and climbed to 14,171 in 1913. After the war immigration increased and reached the all time high of 19,195 in 1921, thereafter declining sharply.<sup>8</sup>

The character of Portuguese immigration into the United States has undergone a gradual change to greater permanency of residence. The earlier immigrants came to the U. S. for the purpose of becoming "rich" as soon as possible and then returning to Portugal to

live on a higher standard than previously, This resulted in a lack of interest in citizenship and in the community. There was also a difference in purpose between emigrants from different parts of Portugal. The industrial workers and the peasants who came from the mainland held chiefly to the above outlook. Those who came from the Azores were more interested in securing farms or engaging in fishing and so usually looked upon themselves as permanent settlers.<sup>2</sup> The latter more frequently brought their wives and children with them.<sup>8</sup>

The early immigrants to Newark were chiefly of the former classification, namely, men interested in industrial work with a view of accumulating money and returning to the old country. This is shown by the fact that as late as 1930 the Portuguese had a male sex ratio of 363, the next highest being Spanish. It also explains the low percentage of Portuguese naturalized citizens in 1930 -- 9.2%.<sup>10</sup> The later immigrants who came to Newark by way of Massachusetts were mainly Azoreans and were more of a family group.--Newark Portuguese come chiefly from the northern provinces of Minho, Duro and Beira Alta and from the Azores and Madiera.<sup>2</sup>

The world wide economic depression had a powerful effect upon the attitudes of Portuguese immigrants causing them to give up the thought of returning to Portugal to live. This decision has resulted in making the Portuguese more interested in community affairs and in becoming naturalized citizens. It has also changed the character of the small immigration possible under the law of 1924 into almost exclusively the children and relatives of American Portuguese.

Since 1929 Newark Portuguese have become citizens in increasing numbers and have taken a growing interest in the life of the country.<sup>16</sup>

2.

They Came To Newark

As early as 200 years ago Portuguese came in contact with New Jersey and particularly with the cities of Jersey City and Newark. Later Portuguese traders engaged in slave trade, bringing captive Negroes from Africa and selling them in the South. From the South, the traders proceeded North to Jersey City, Newark and New York where they took on board various merchandise bound for Portugal and Africa. Portuguese cork was also an item in this early trade as it is of American Portuguese trade of today, cork being a principal ingredient in the manufacture of linoleum in plants in Kearney and Hillside.<sup>2</sup>

A few Portuguese, engaged in this early trade as sailors or merchants, settled in these American ports. In Jersey City one Portuguese family has maintained continuous residence for 200 years. The Newark Museum contains Portuguese coins dating back as far as 1737, 1797, 1810 and 1814. These coins are believed to have been spent in trade by Portuguese sailors or merchants. The Newark Directory of 1835-1836 contains the name of one Sebastian Kintina, mariner, resident of Water St. opposite the Lehigh Coal dock-- But these are apparently the only records of the earliest Portuguese to come to Newark.

A few individuals and a very few families settled in Newark before 1900. According to the 1930 census 38 Portuguese had come to Newark before 1900.<sup>10</sup> By 1912, the nucleus of the Portuguese settlement appeared as a boarding house and grocery store on River St. This boarding house served as the guide and interpreter for the Portuguese immigrant when he arrived in Newark.<sup>2</sup> Even after he became better adjusted and found himself a room elsewhere he continued to look upon this place as a head quarters where he could receive his mail from the old country and hear the news and gossip of his people. To this day, although this place has long been torn down to make way for a park, grocery stores on Ferry st. act in the capacity of such postal depots, and have slots in the beams of the walls where letters from Portugal can wait until their owners claim them.

By 1914 a Portuguese laborer had worked himself up to the position of foreman for the Public Service Corp. A strike broke out among the employees and the company was hard pressed to find scabs to take their places of the striking workers. The Portuguese foreman aided the corporation during this period by bringing in a number of his countrymen. After the company succeeded in breaking the strike the Portuguese were kept on and more were hired. It is said that the majority of workers now employed at the Public Service Plant and Gas Plant are Portuguese.<sup>2</sup> The relations of the company and the Portuguese during this strike are a commentary on the tactics of corporations in dealing their employees rather than a reflection on



the character of the Portuguese immigrants, many of whom are now loyal and devoted members of the unions in their industry, notably the Fur Dressers and Dyers Union, the Fur Workers Union newspaper contains a special Port. section<sup>17</sup>, the Delicatessen and Cafeteria Workers Union, and the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America.

During the World War industry in Newark boomed and while immigration from Portugal fell off, Portuguese from cities in Massachusetts migrated here. By 1920 there were 406 foreign born Portuguese in Newark<sup>10</sup>.

During the latter years of the 1920's textile mills of New Bedford, Lowell, Fall River, and Providence moved to the South in search of cheaper labor, thereby throwing out of employment thousands of Portuguese who were employed in these factories. When the depression came many of these cities became filled with unemployed. Hearing from their relatives and friends in Newark that business was prosperous here -- Newark because of its diversified industry felt the depression later than many cities-- numbers of these Portuguese textile workers came to Newark bringing their families. By 1930<sup>1</sup> there were 2,088 foreign born Portuguese in Newark and since then it is<sup>10</sup> estimated that the total number has increased to approximately 8,000<sup>2</sup>. In 1930 there were 1,589 Port. in ward 5 out of a total Population of 17,928; in the 12, 4, and 10 Wards there were respectively 63,110 & 151 Port.<sup>11</sup> As increasing numbers of settlers have come here, the Newark Portuguese community has extended itself along Ferry St. farther and farther from the railroad and has Penetrated up the various crossing streets. There has been some settlement in the hill section between High St. City Hospital.

### 3 MAKING A LIVING

The Portuguese who have come to Newark have been almost entirely agricultural and industrial workers. They were eager to take the jobs available for them which were invariably of the most menial and difficult kind. But judged by the standard of living to which they were accustomed in Portugal, the wages paid in America seemed like a great sum. They have established a reputation with employers for being docile, patient, and hardworking. Many of the Portuguese who first settled in Massachusetts before coming to Newark, came to America with the hope of engaging in farming or fishing. Some did secure such work but most of them were forced to seek employment in the textile factories and thus became industrial workers. There were also textile workers from Oporto and Lisbon who sought similar employment in the U.S.<sup>2</sup>

In Newark the Portuguese first secured work in the Linoleum factories and the Public Service Corporation. Those who came later found jobs with Western Electric, Federal shipyards, Construction Companies, and Novelty factories.<sup>2</sup>

A characteristic of the Portuguese has been their persistent thrift. By putting aside a part of each weekly pay and sending it to Portugal to be invested at seven or eight per-cent, they have managed to accumulate sizable sums. Workers who invested their money prior to the devaluation of the dollar; realized a profit in American money of Almost one hundred per-cent, unwittingly gaining by the maneuvers used by the greatest American financiers.

It is a dream of the Portuguese to accumulate enough money to be able to go into business for himself in some small capacity and to own a piece of land, even if it is only the aging dwelling in which he lives. Such ambitions, which stem from values acquired under the conditions obtaining in Portugal,



unfortunatley do not become easily realizable at the present time in metropolitan United States. Difficulties in credit financing, high pressure monopoly competition, rents, etc., have forced would-be entrepreneurs into bankruptcy. But by dint of hard work and self-sacrifice, the Portuguese of the Ironbound have managed to establish over one hundred small businesses, fifteen of which are located on the main street of the section, Ferry Street. These enterprises include stores, restaurants, taverns , and arevices such as laundries, barber shops, milk routes, dry cleaning, plumbing, carpentering, and etc.

The second generation, having absorbed American standards and habits are not satisfied to pursue the hard path of their fathers, but want better jobs, and a better standard of living, automobiles, good clothes, and entertainment. The second generation has taken full advantage of educational opportunities and, undoubtedly, the 1940 Census will show a considerable advance in the literacy rate over that of 1930. These people are securing jobs as sales people, clerks and other whitecollar workers. Soon they will be entering the various professions, in which as yet the Portuguese are represented by two doctor, Dr. Joseph Dias and Dr. Jhon S. Enos. Dr. Dias was born in New Bedford, Mass., the son of a whaling captain. He has been a resident of Newark for the past 35 years, and is a member of the St. Barnabas general staff. Dr. Enos came to Newark from Providence in 1926. He and his wife are active in Portuguese organizations .

Leaders in the Portuguese community proudly emphasize the fact that Portuguese tend to make their living quietly and industriously, and are not often criminals or "politicians", and that they have no "Portuguese lobby" at City Hall.

1-2-16

The surrounding Portuguese communities in Elizabeth (which had 658 Portuguese in 1930<sup>10</sup>), Jersey City, Perth Amboy, and Cartaret carry on commercial relations with Newark, particularly with one bank (the Bank of Commerce) which has excellent foreign exchange facilities with banks in Portugal. For business and social reasons the Portuguese of New Jersey regard Newark as their "capital".<sup>2</sup>

4

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

Numerous factors tend to bind the Portuguese of the Ironbound together and to mark off from the rest of the community.

Of these factors the Portuguese home life, language and traditions form the strongest bonds for Portuguese homogeneity and Particularism.

The Portuguese family is a strong institution, capable of competing successfully against the powerful attractions outside the home, it is a little island of Portuguese life amidst a world of customs and language that are still strange to the Portuguese. In his home the Portuguese, in addition to the qualities which the average American regards in his home, finds a place where he can speak his own language, where he can express himself without difficulty or embarrassment, where he can enjoy food prepared in the fashion to which he has been accustomed, and where he can take part in the social entertainment peculiar to his nationality.

The language spoken in the home is almost invariably Portuguese, even though all members of the family may be able to speak English with varying degrees of proficiency. There is a tendency, of course, among all immigrant families, for the children to tend use English, the language which they use

in school and at play, to a greater extent in the home than their parents. There is also evidence that the Portuguese second generation is making a more rapid adaptation to American language and ways than did the second generation of the older immigrant non-English-speaking nationalities. Numerous factors may be responsible for this; the radio the movies and the greater degree of Americanization of the surrounding community at present in comparison with the past.

Portuguese food is usually simple and satisfying. The national staple is the dried codfish, known as Bacalhao (pronounced with a nasal ending) which is boiled and served usually with greens, potatoes, and olive oil. An appetizer called Caldo Verde is made of greens cut small and boiled in salt water with olive oil. A rich stew is prepared of meat, cooked sweet potatoes and different vegetables. This is served with wine, and is known as Cosida Portuguesa. These are three favorite dishes of what is apparently an inexpensive and healthy diet.

As in similar cultures there is a tendency for women to remain in the background, in the family life. But there is little heard of the equivalent of the slogan, "The place of the woman is in the home", "Kinder, Kuchen und Kirche", etc. In the Portuguese peasant life, as in all similar agricultural cultures, a great deal of the work of plowing, planting and harvesting fell to the women. In Massachusetts Portuguese women were formerly employed in the textile factories in large numbers, and in Newark, although there are less opportunities, Portuguese girls seek jobs at least until they are married.

Because there are more men than women of marriageable age in the Portuguese community some marriages with girls of other nationalities have taken place, particularly with Italian girls.

As with other new immigrant groups, which are aware of the inferior position they occupy in present American civilization, the Portuguese cling to the traditions of their home country, seeking there in a justification and self-respect. They recall the great role played in history by Portugal, which in the last century was still of the greatest world powers, and that many of the great geographical discoveries were made by Portuguese navigators. The Cape of Good Hope was discovered in 1487 by Bartholomew Dias. In 1498 Vasco da Gama rounded the Cape of Good Hope and discovered the route to India. The coast of Brazil was first sighted by Pedro Alvarez Cabral in 1501. Magellan also a Portuguese, although sailing under the flag of Spain, was the first to circumnavigate the globe 1519-21.

American Portuguese are proud of the fact that the American Philippines were discovered by Magellan and that Portuguese were invited to the new American possession of Hawaii after the Spanish-American War.

Strongest of all traditions is the struggle waged by the Portuguese people for their independence. December 1, the holiday celebrating the freedom of Portugal from 60 years of Spanish rule (from            to            ) is one of parallel importance with the American Fourth of July.

Another great tradition has been the long fight of the people against the monarchy and the feudal lords in Portugal which still has many feudal characteristics. A principal celebration is the first revolution for the establishment of a republic, January 31, 1910.

After national interests religion plays an important part in Portuguese life. The first week of Lent is carnival week of fun making, similar to the

madri gras of France and New Orleans, although as carried out in Newark it takes on more of a family and less of a community aspect.

The week of April 9, is dedicated to a great battle won against the Germans in France during the World War.

In June there are the feasts of St. John, St. Anthony and St. Peter. June 12 is a double holiday because not only is it the birthday of St. Anthony who was born in Lisbon but it is also the birthday of Lous Camoes, the great national poet of Portugal, the author of the "Luisades".

October 5, 1910, when the king was deposed is honored as the date of the establishment of the Portuguese republic. This day is still kept as a holiday although Portugal is now ruled by a military Dictatorship as a corporate state. Newark Portuguese tend to emphasize the socialistic rather than the fascistic features of the government.<sup>2</sup>

Any Portuguese fiesta or party is sure of having some time devoted to Portuguese songs and dances. The three main folk dances are the Vira do Minho, Caminha Verde, and Chama Rita, which passes many of the elements familiar in American folk dancing.<sup>2</sup> The singing invariably includes a representative of the peculiar Portuguese song type known as the Fado, which its admirers regard as more than a type of song and almost as a philosophy of life in itself. The Fado is at once nostalgic, fatalistic, sad, naive, theatrical and wistful on rare occasions it is even humorous. It recounts the tragedies of love and life and at the same time shrugs its shoulders. The Fadista or Fado Singer is usually a woman and is accompanied by a guitar, or sometimes two guitars. She sings in a simple, slightly, hoarse

voice the endless four line verses of the Fado repeating the rising and descending notes of the music usually in a minor key, and at each repetition varies certain embellishments in the rhythm and melody. The technique used in swing is somewhat reminiscent of that originated over one hundred years ago.<sup>6</sup>

The center of social and community activity is the Portuguese Sport Club located at 65 Madison Street, (Community Activities,) which is the headquarters of several other Portuguese organizations and the location of a round of social and cultural activities. Two lesser centers of Portuguese life are the churches, St; Joseph's Mission for Spanish and Portuguese, at 212 Lafayette Street and the Portuguese Presbyterian church at Lafayette and Pulaski Streets.

The Portuguese Sport Club was organized April 17, 1921, in a hall on Mulberry Street. Shortly afterward it was moved to 15 Ferry Street, where it remained until 1927, when it was moved to its present location at 65 Madison Street. The Club is situated in the second floor of a warehouse, in spacious if slightly bare quarters, containing two pool tables, a bar for use during affairs, trophies and other equipment. It now has over 400 members.<sup>1</sup>

The sport for which the Sport Club is organized is soccer, a game of wide popularity in Portugal fados have even been composed in honor of great football heroes, as follows:

Foi um astro, foi um sol,  
Nos campos de futebol.

He was a star, he was a man,  
On the football field.

The Newark Club has won many honors on the soccer field, and has in its possession over 80 cups, trophies of years of play. From 1924-29 the



team was very popular and reached a semi-professional status. The team was affiliated with the American Soccer League for two years. During the depression the club declined but since 1936 it has been growing stronger. In addition to its two soccer teams, the club also maintains a drama group, with adult and children's sections, a boy scout troop, No.#56, an orchestra, which plays both Portuguese and American Music, and a class in the Portuguese language in the evening, which has reached an attendance of as high as 50 at times.

As the center of Portuguese life the Sport Club has been the place for receiving distinguished visitors from Portugal. In 1927 the club entertained the Portuguese minister to the United States. Miss Portugal visited the same year, the club when she was in this country, to participate in the beauty contest at Galveston, Texas, for the title of Miss Universe. Gago Coutino, the Portuguese aviator who in 1922 was the first to fly the Atlantic Ocean from Portugal to Brazil, also visited the club.

Ten years later in 1937 from December 1 to December 10 an exposition was held to celebrate the 299th anniversary of the restoration of the independence of Portugal. Portuguese art and industry were the features of this exhibit and thousands of pieces were displayed in fourteen booths. A number of the exhibits came from Portugal, but two booths contained manual work produced by residents of Newark, and there were paintings by Portuguese American artists of New York and New Jersey. In addition to the displays

lectures were given by the consuls of Philadelphia and New York. A total of over eight thousand people attended the exposition, including many non-Portuguese.

Also located in the same headquarters with the Sport Club at 65 Madison Street are Portuguese fraternal and social organizations. The largest of these is the Portuguese Continental Union of U.S.A., a national benefit society with headquarters at Plymouth, Massachusetts. The Newark branch was set up in 1932 and in addition to its meetings holds a large picnic once a year which is attended by many Newark Portuguese. Another benefit society a local organization, is the Uniao Portuguesa Beneficente, Also formed in 1932. These societies succeeded the Gremio Lusitano, a social and charitable club which existed between 1926 and 1931. In November, 1931, the Club Sociadamas Damas Portuguesa(The Portuguese Women's Club) a social group, was started at St. Joseph's church; it is now located at 65 Madison Street.

There is one political club the non-partisan Portuguese Citizens Club formed in 1930, which has no permanent headquarters and is active mainly during elections, when it takes a non-partisan stand in the interests of the Portuguese community. The club advises its members on how to become citizens helps them to get jobs and recommends them for relief when they are unemployed.

It seeks to advance the welfare of its members and the interests of the Portuguese in general.

The social and sports activities, the dramatic shows and dances attract visitors from the Portuguese communities in Elizabeth,(which has a

fine club house of its own), in Jersey City, Perth Amboy, etc.

Until 1928 the Newark Portuguese had their own Catholic church, but now they attend St. Joseph's Mission for Spanish and Portuguese, which is headed by Rev. Michael Vidal, a Spaniard. Two years ago Father Vidal helped to organize the Sociedade Portuguesa de Santo Antonio, a Portuguese Catholic society. The church also carries on a social and recreational program for the youth, with a basketball court, ping pong tables and a radio and phonograph for dancing.<sup>16</sup>

The thirty or forty families which have come to Newark by way of Brazil established in 1931 a Portuguese Presbyterian church, which is located at Lafayette and Pulaski. This building was purchased from a former English Speaking Presbyterian congregation and was rebuilt and refurnished by the Portuguese.<sup>2</sup>

In Newark the Portuguese have tried to maintain the religious habits acquired in Portugal, but have not found the same incentive to do so. Newark is not dominated by the Catholic church, but is on the contrary secular in its approach to problems. In addition although St. Joseph's mission has made the Portuguese very welcome, they still regret the inability to maintain their own church. These factors have tended to weaken the religious devotion of the Portuguese. Since 1928 there have been six weekly newspapers begun in the community, all of which have failed and passed out of existence. One daily language paper is read fairly widely the *Diario de Noticias*, published in New Bedford, Massachusetts, which maintains a local correspondent. This

is the only Portuguese daily paper in this country and has been in existence for twenty years. The following weekly papers are read:

- A Luta (the fight) published by a Priest in New York City.
- O Independente, established in 1897 at New Bedford, Mass.
- Novidades, a Catholic paper, printed in Fall River, Mass.  
(Established in 1897.)
- O Colonial, published at Fairhaven, Mass.2.

The Portuguese of the Ironbound have welcomed opportunities of a cooperating with other sections of the population. The Sport Club has close relations with the Ironbound Community house, in promoting sports and celebrations.

In 1936 at the Centennial of the city of Newark, the Portuguese participated in the program, and at a show at the Mosque presented a bill consisting of folk-songs and dances. Lomelino Silva, the world renowned Portuguese tenor was present and sang on this occasion.2.

At the present time(1939) Newark Portuguese are interested in the New York's World's Fair, which contains examples of the various products of Portugal.

1. Rodriguez (Port. Sport Club Silva)
2. Vasco Tardin---Diario de Noticias)
3. Priscilla ---Ironbound Community Center)
4. Eight Centuries of Port Monarchy, a political study V. de Braganca Cunha N.Y. James Pott and Co. 1911.)
5. Two Port. Communities in New Eng. (Donald R. Taft, P.H.D. New York U. 1923.)
6. Portugal H.U.K.G. of folkways, Rodney Gal'op Cambridge Union Press, 1936)
7. Encyclopedia Brittanica 14<sup>th</sup> Ed Vol. 18.)
8. International Migration, Vol 2 Nat. Bureau of Eco, Research Inc. Walter F. Willcox, 1931.)
9. International Migrations Voll National Bureau of Eco Research Inc. Walter F. Willcox.)
10. 15th Census 1930 3 New Jersey State Vol 2)
11. Social Data for community study, Exec Planning Cos. in York Service Community Study.
12. Newark Museum
13. Races and Ethnic Groups in American Life. By T.J. Woofter, Junior Research Prof. Institute for research in Soc. Science.

13. (Cont.)

Union of So. Carolina, McGrawHill, 1933

14. Portugal of the Portuguese, Bell.

15. Directory of Newark, 1835-6

16. Rev. Michael Vidal, St. Joseph's Mission for Span. and Port.

17. James Leonardi, Business Agent for Dresses and Dyers Union.