

American-Portuguese
Genealogical and Historical Society, Inc.



Bulletin Board

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Fall 2005

Three Lives for Labor

Eula Mendes, Manny Fernandes and Tina Ponte

by Penn Reeve

Professor Reeve's account continues with:

Tina Ponte and the UAW

Tina Ponte grew up in New Bedford. She worked for forty-four years at John F. Pauldings Co., a wiring company. Along with Henry Dunham and others, she helped organize the United Auto Workers at Pauldings. Both Tina and Henry became recognized for their contribution to the local labor movement. When Dunham died in 1978, the SMU [Southeastern Massachusetts University] Labor Education Center created the Henry Dunham Award, presented annually to the rank-and-file union member for "promoting the cause of economic and social justice for working people" in southeastern Massachusetts. The following year Tina Ponte was the first recipient of this award.

Tina's parents grew up in Portugal, fifty miles from each other, but they first met in the New Bedford textile mills. Her mother worked as a spinner at the Wamsutta and Beacon mills. Her father started at the Beacon Mill, doing assorted jobs but later shifted to construction work.

As a young girl, I remember taking their lunches to the Beacon Mill because we lived so close. My mother used to tap bobbins. She would have her lunch and I would tap the bobbins for her so she could make her amount. We were taught at a very young age to be independent.

Three of Tina's four siblings died from influenza. When Tina was fifteen her mother became ill and her father had an accident, so she was taken out of school to work part-time in a laundry and to care for her parents.

In those days Portuguese girls didn't have much opportunity to go to school. That was left to the men in the family. The women had to work and take care of the household. There were very few Portuguese girls that went to college—very, very few. But there's so many now it's great.

In 1940 at age seventeen, Tina began working for Pauldings. She earned forty cents an hour as a mold press operator, pressing plastic wall plates for receptacles. She did that job for thirty-two years.

The reason there were women pressers was because of the war. They couldn't get the men so they hired the women. We thought it was the same pay but it was a few cents less. We never knew of the pay scales until the union came.

Because of the seniority rules through the union, she was able to become stock clerk and tool crib attendant, handing out tools to machine shop clerks.

It was a little difficult, but I learned it. It had been a man's job and they didn't want a woman. They made it very difficult. But we were unionized and now I had the right to bid on jobs.

In 1948 Tina left to give birth to her daughter. When she returned to Pauldings they hired her at the same pay rate she had received in 1940.

Even though I was one of the seniors, I had to wait five years to get a nickel raise. When the union came in it was equal pay for equal work. Before the union, if you were a friend of a boss, you would get a nickel raise. If you weren't, you wouldn't. If you were a man and did work for him at his home, then you received a raise much quicker. That happened a lot. All overtime was given to men—in my lifetime and in my mother's. I remember my mother carrying bags of potatoes to keep her job.

Union organizing

In 1948 Tina helped to organize Pauldings. About 150 of the 250 workers signed cards to be presented to the National Labor Relations Board for union certification elections. But it wasn't easy. Then workers were on strike for six and a half months to get the company to recognize the union. Hired strikebreakers (scabs) prolonged the strike.

The strike lasted from July through January. We knew all kinds of weather, all but the springtime, the best time. When we got extremely cold, we would stamp our feet or go into someone's car for a little while and then go back out and picket. It's not too bad when your in a gang, and of course this was twenty-eight years ago. We were younger and we could stand the cold. I doubt if I could do that today.

We had fun too. We became united and very together. Some of the people suffered, but the longing for that kind of union kept them going. The UAW took care of our insurance problems and hospital bills. We had union representation. They helped some of the people with mortgage payments and getting food baskets.

During the strike, Tina became active in organizing Portuguese workers.

My job was to explain to the Portuguese people what the company's offer was and what we wanted. I would get up and say, "The company is trying to take away our vacation rights. They want us to become co-payers for our insurance plan, and they only wanted to give us a few pennies. Please support the union committee." I would take questions from them if they didn't understand the language in the agreements.

But this role as interpreter and organizer was difficult.

We had people who were dissatisfied, but others would come over and say, "Thanks a lot; you did a hgood job." The Portuguese workers were very appreciative. After the strike the workers recognized that without the union they wouldn't have anything. They became members. Part of the agreement with the company was the establishment of a closed shop. Quite a few received a retirement pay, thanks to the union. It's true, no company gives anything without a struggle. We struggled!

As union steward, Tina handled many grievances. The following involved Harry Dunham, who was suspended for calling the personnel director a liar.

I was called to the personnel office and when I got there, a shouting match was going on between Harry and Arthur Tabor.

Arthur said, "What did you say, Harry?"

Harry said, "I said you wre a liar."

"Say it again, Harry."

"You're a liar."

"What did you say?"

"You're a God damn liar."

"You're fired!"

I said, "You can't fire him."

Arthur said, "I just did; get out of here."

Arthur then told me I couldn't go downstairs with Harry. They escorted me out one way; Harry another. But, as he was driving out of the driveway, I handed him the grievance pad through the window. He signed it, gave it back and I filled it out. He was reinstated in three days. They didn't like Harry, but they respected him because he was honest and sincere.

Tina relates another situation, involving her and Harry Dunham; this time the issue was the treatment of Portuguese workers.

At Pauldings we had what was called a kiln or oven. All these porcelain pieces had to be put in the oven to be cured. I remember one foreman sending Portuguese people into the kiln before it was cool enough. He would say to me, "What the hell are you fighting for them for? They're only greenhorns." which would upset Harry and me to no end. That foreman was Portuguese, too. Harry would say, "What in the hell do you think your parents were? They are human beings, not greenhorns." We straightened him out. The Portuguese people did all the bull work, the work nobody else wanted to do. Later on I would say to that foreman, "Hey, I've got regards from Harry Dunham." He'd say, "Why, that SOB!"

The plant closed in 1985, two years after the union obtained a decent wage settlement.

We had negotiated good pays, \$6 or \$7 an hour, not bad in New Bedford at that time. These same people were now forced to work out of town for \$4 an hour. To think we had fought so hard and to have it go down the tubes because of two greedy men. They stuffed their pockets with the money instead of putting it into the company. I think the Portuguese people hurt more than anyone.

Penn Reeve is Professor of Sociology and Anthropology at UMass Dartmouth. He received his Ph.D. in anthropology at Washington University in St. Louis and came to UMass Dartmouth in 1974. Dr. Reeve specializes in social inequality, ethnicity and labor issues. He has done research in the Alentejo, Portugal. He is a member of the Steering Committee of the Center for Portuguese Study and Culture, and the Arnold Dublin Labor Education Center at the UMass Dartmouth.

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The Portuguese Spinner: An American Story
Marsha L. McCabe and Joseph D. Thomas, Editors
Spinner Publications, Inc. pp. 243-245

From the ~~Bulletin Board~~ editor:

The italicized portions in the above story were italicized in the original.

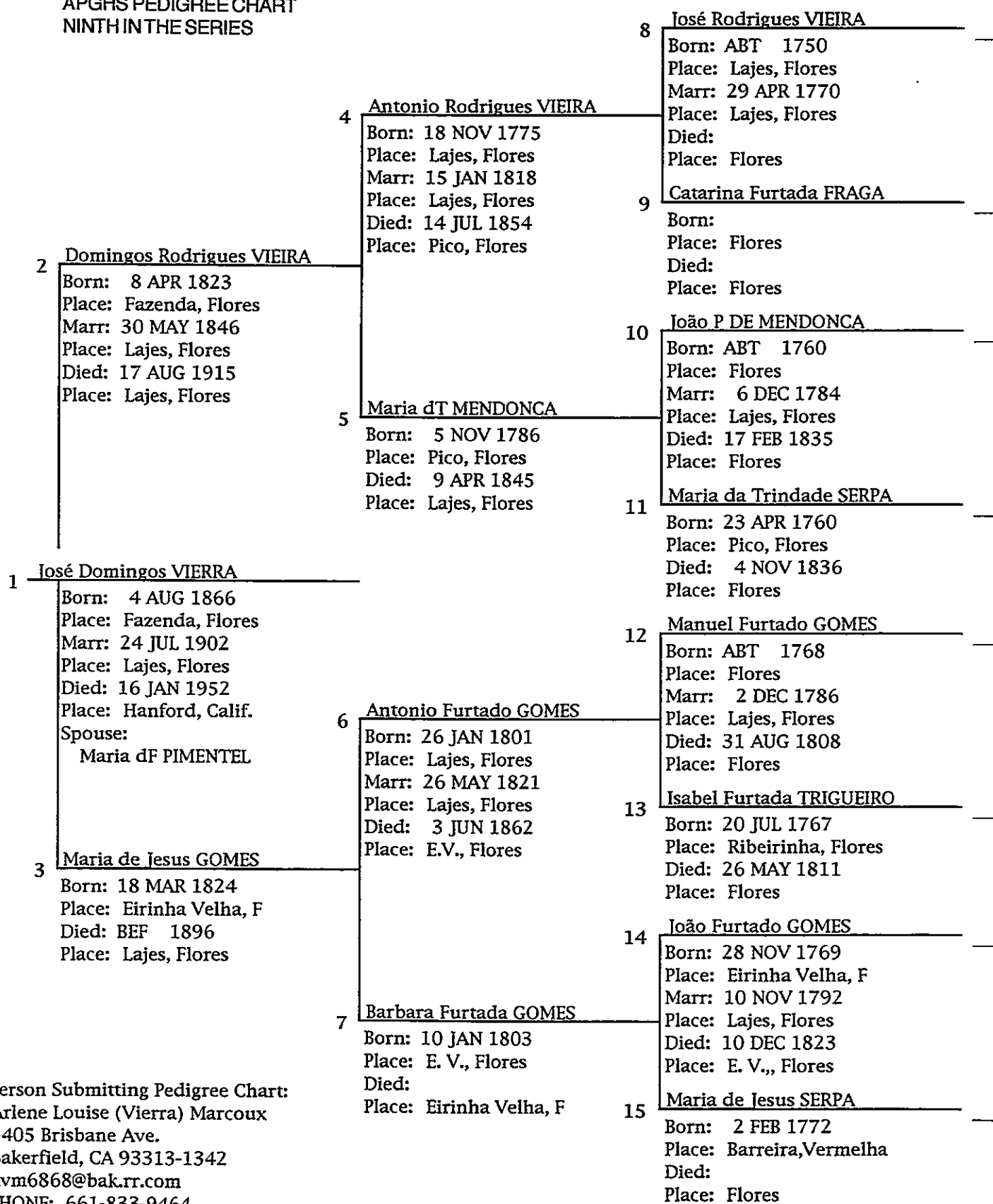
1846 to 1948 Marriages of Portuguese People in Stonington, Ct.

Continued from the spring (Vol. XXVI, No. 2) issue....

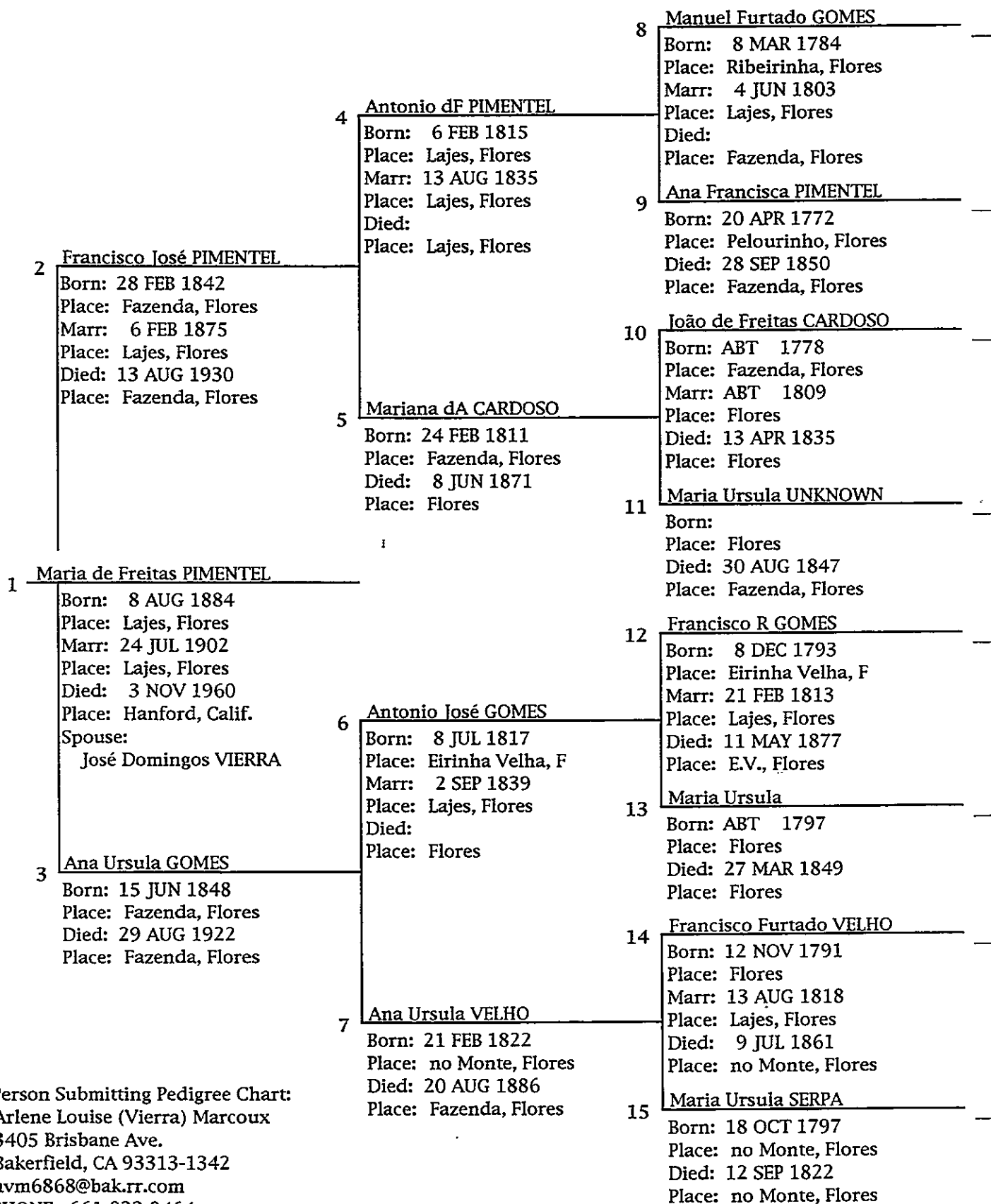
DATE	GROOM	AGE	POB	BRIDE	AGE	POB
1933-11-25	Lawrence Mello	28	São Miguel	Ida Longo	24	Pawcatuck, Conn.
PARENTS	Christopher Mello & Mary Vincent Lema			Antonino Longo & Frances Locascio		
11-29	Anthony J. Santos	23	Stonington	Mary C. Souza	17	New Bedford, Mass.
	Anthony J. Santos & Mary Perry			Manuel Casma & Mary Sylvia Furtado		
1934-02-05	John Jesse Arruuda	23	Stonington	Irene Mary Moniz	20	Stonington
	John Arruda & Wilhelmina Cunha			John Moniz & mother not listed		
06-21	Curt Paul Morgenstern	28	Chennitz, Germany	Maria Gilda Gomes	19	São Miguel
	Julius Morgenstern & Selma			Jose Gomes & Mary Vasconcellos		
07-28	Edward Manuel Lamb	32	Edgwood, R.I.	Ester Ann Gratto	22	Trenton, Nova Scotia
	Manuel S. Lamb & Mary Frates			George Grotto & Minnie Roberts		
09-01	John M. Levy	27	Westerly, R.I.	Mary Frances Clay	29	Stonington
	Manuel Levy & Jesse Sisson			Manuel Clay & Philomena Cardoza		
09-10	Frank Vendola	25	Bar, Italy	Alice Souza	19	Stonington
	John Vendola & Fortuna C. Delatore			Carl Souza & Mary Metis		
09-19	Clarence Cunha	28	Stonington	Esther DeWitt	19	Lincoln Center, Me.
	Jesse Cunha & Mary Paul			Linwood DeWitt & Hattie Sparrow		
10-25	Manuel DeCastro	32	Azores	Laura Mello	25	Providence, R.I.
	John DeCastro & Mary Caro			Manuel V. Mello & Wilhelmina Enos		
11-24	Joseph Pimental	21	Fall River, Mass.	Mary Costa	21	Fall River, Mass.
	Manuel Pimental & Emily Moniz			Mariano Costa & Mary Souza		
11-24	Antone L. Roderick	21	Providence, R.I.	Mertis Irene Jones	20	Hyde Park, Vt.
	Manuel Roderick & Rose Gills			Leon H. Jones & Vista Cross		
1935-01-09	Edward Duarte Laurence	22	Stonington	Helen Elizabeth Ross	21	New London, Conn.
	Joseph Laurence & Mary Duart			Louis A. Ross & Helen Casgnane		
01-14	Izidona Fonseca	24	Aveiro, Portugal	Maria Elvira deCruz	22	Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
	Manuel Fonseca & Anna deJesus Tavares			Antonio Laurence deCruz & Maria Joaquim Oliveira		
03-18	Antonio Pinto Rocha	34	Elhino, Portugal	Grace Isabella Wheaton	19	Stonington
	Louis Rocha & Maria Jesus			Clinton Cavarly & Etta Brow		
03-26	Manuel Medeiros	21	Stonington	Dorothy Taylor	21	Nantucket, Mass.
	Antone Medeiros & Mary Santos			James G. Taylor & Ethel Mitchell		
04-25	Eugene Boillan	34	Thompson, Conn.	Mary Souza	22	Fall River, Mass.
	Desire Boillan & Carrie LeGare			Carl Souza & Mary Medeiros		
06-14	Anthony Perry Sylvia	21	Stonington	Louise Esther Dotalo	27	New London, Conn.
	Joseph Sylvia & Marion Martine			Angelo Dotalo & Maggie LaVita		
06-19	William H. Mayhew	23	Centerville, R.I.	Isabel G. Costa	20	Stonington
	William A. Mayhew & Bertha Burdick			Alvara B. Costa & Mary L. Mendoza		
06-21	Andrews S. Holland	19	Stonington	Elizabeth J. Shelley	17	New London, Conn.
	John Holland & Dora Sylvia			Walter H. Shelley & Grace Dart		
07-14	Tony Alex Oliver	18	Stonington	Stella May Denison	18	Groton, Conn.
	Manuel Oliver & Mary Gloria			Charles H. Denison & Carrie M. Burrows		
08-11	Joseph Rezendes	30	Lisbon, Portugal	Irene Mildred Arruda	23	Stonington
	Manuel Rezendez & Anna Mary Barboza			John Arruda & Wilhelmina Cunha		
08-31	William Joseph Thomas	28	Manchester, England	Mary Janeiro	22	Bristol, R.I.
	John Thomas & Mary Omrod			Joseph Janeiro & Mary Pacheco		

To be continued...

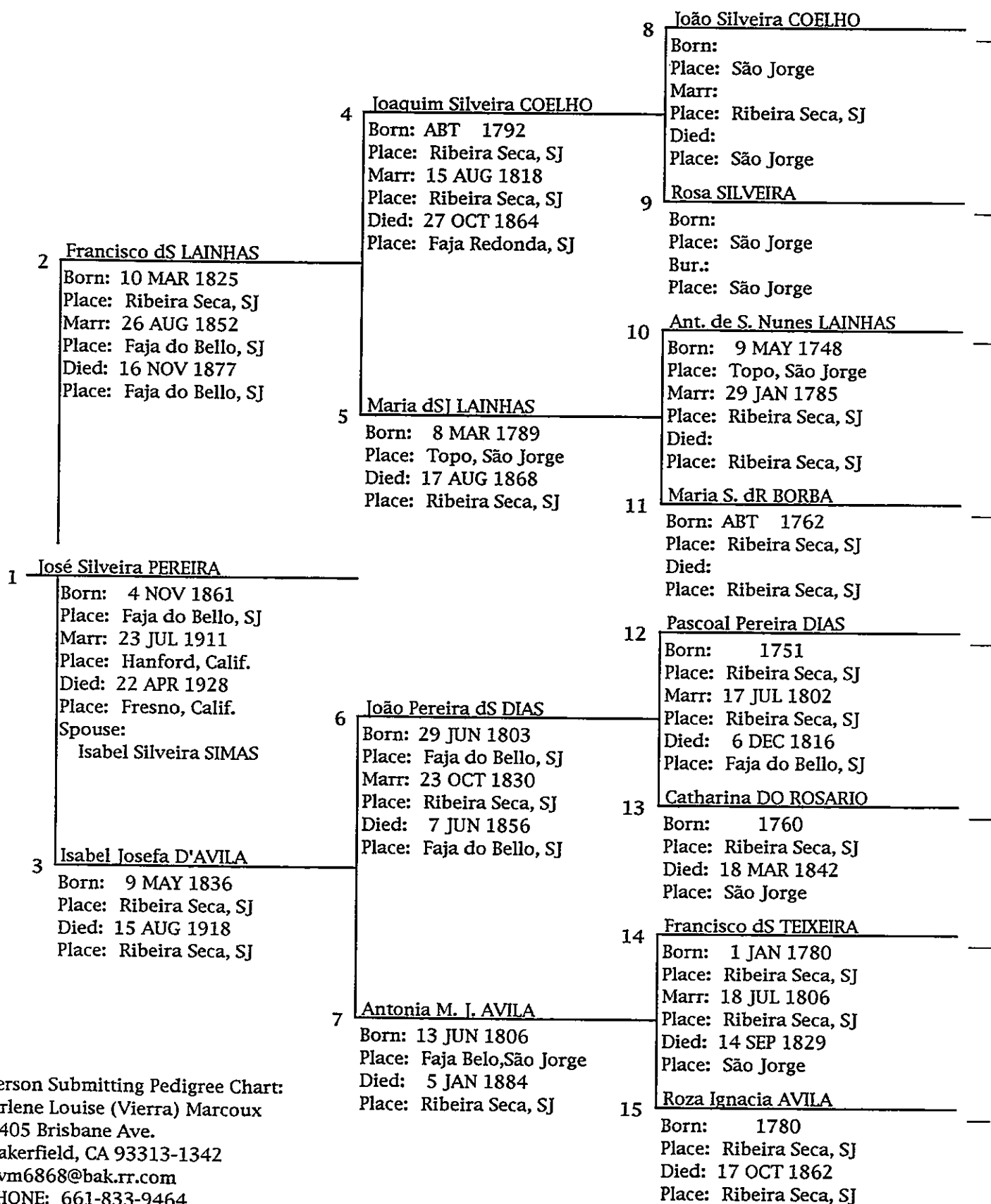
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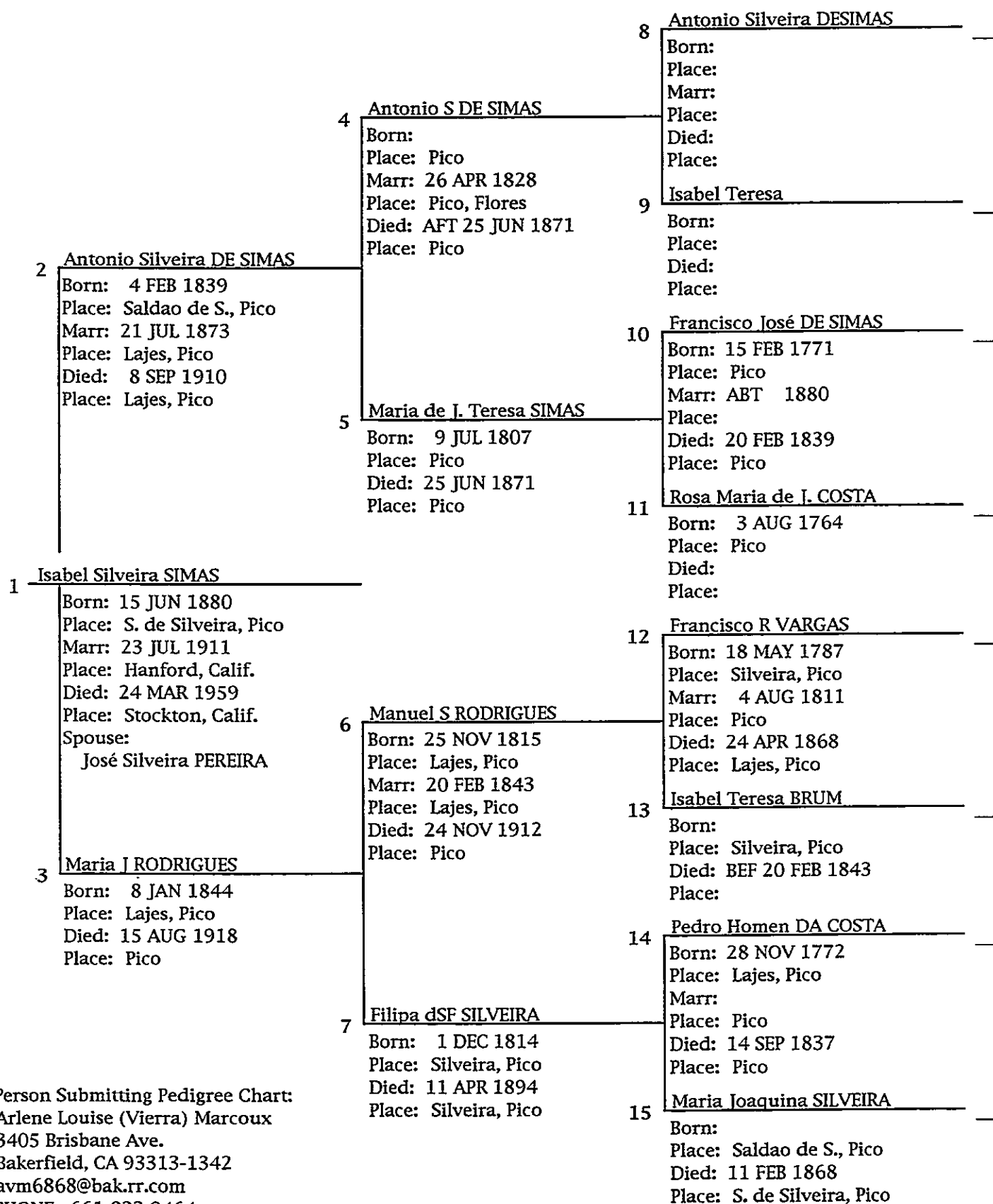
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Azorean Ancestors: Making the Connection

(Part 4)

Rui Gonsalves da Câmara

was the son of Madeira's discoverer, João Zarco (i.e. dos Arcos) of Câmara dos Lobos. The family did not have noble origins, Zarco being granted a coat of arms in 1460 by Afonso V. As a younger son, Rui stood to inherit nothing from his father, so when the João Soares de Albergaria, the second Capitan-Donitary of São Miguel and Santa Maria found himself in financial difficulties in 1474, Rui purchased the capitancy of São Miguel from him. It was under Rui Gonsalves da Câmara's administration that the systematic colonization of the island began.¹

He died in 1497 leaving no legitimate children, but his four illegitimate children have left a multitude of descendants throughout the Azores. He is the ancestor of the Counts of Vila Franca and the Counts of Ribeira Grande and his descendants succeeded to the captaincy of São Miguel until the title was abolished in 1766.²

More on his descendants can be found on pp. 213-239 in Rodrigo Rodrigues's *Genealogias de S. Miguel e Santa Maria*, Carlos Machado's *Genealogias*, pp. 253-254, Cordeiro's *História Insulana*, pp. 168-171, and Henrique Henriques Noronhas's *Nobilário Genealógico das Famílias que Passaram para esta Ilha da Madeira depois do seu Descobrimento que foi em 1420*.

The Sá Bettencourts

descend from Gaspar Bettencourt, the nephew and heir of Maria de Bettencourt, the barren wife of Rui Gonsalves da Câmara. The family was of noble French origins, tracing its ancestry back to the Middle Ages. Gaspar was born in Madeira and went to Azores at his aunt's request to begin the process of arranging his succession to her estate. His father was Henri de Bettencourt, brother of Maciot who was governing the Canary Islands for his uncle, Jean, the so-called *King* of the Canary Islands. Gaspar's mother, Marguerite, was Maciot's daughter. In 1502 Portugal's Manuel V granted a coat of arms to Gaspar. He married Guiomar de Sá, a daughter of Henrique de Sá of Porto, whose lineage can also be traced back to the Middle Ages. Gaspar died in 1522; Guiomar in 1547.

The above lineage can be traced in Felgueiras Gaió's *Nobiliário de Famílias de Portugal*, J. Moniz de Bettencourt's *Os Bettencourts, das Origens Normandas à Expansão Atlântica*. Bettencourts, Sá's and their descendants also can be researched in the above-named works by Machado (pp.13, 91 and 489), Rodrigues (pp. 161-170), and Noronhas.

Velho Cabral

The most prominent family name in the Azores is that of its discoverer, Gonçalo Velho Cabral.³ The knight commander of a military order was unmarried and left no direct descendants, but the Velho Cabrals, Mello Travassos and Soares de Albergarias are all descendants of his sisters.

Violante Velho Cabral was married to Diogo Gonsalves de Travassos, a knight in the service of the Prince Regent. His service to the Regent and King must have been noteworthy, for his is the most ornate of three tombs just outside the royal mausoleum in the Batalha Abbey. Above his tomb is the following inscription:

...Beneath this great stone was buried the body of Diogo Gonsalves Travassos a knight of the great King D. João of the highest, shining and enduring memory, whose soul eternally reigns with the Holy Trinity, and of the great council of the most powerful Lord, King Afonso V, and of the Council of the most magnificent and grand Lord, of laudatory prudence, the Prince D. Pedro, Duke of Coimbra, overseer of the lands of the said Lord, and guardian of the children of the most excellent Prince, the Lord D. Pedro of Aragon, Constable of the kingdom of Portugal, and of the illustrious Lords D. Jaime and D. João, his brothers...

To be a guardian and godfather the royal princes, Diogo had to have come from a distinguished (but not yet discovered) lineage. At the time of his death he must have been held in high esteem by the king because burial close to the sovereign was a mark of royal favor and esteem.

One son, Diogo Velho Cabral, married Zarco's daughter and lived in Madeira. He died on 15 December 1496. His descendants are documented in Noronhas's work.

Another son of Diogo and Violante, Nuno Velho Cabral, was twice married. His wives were Isabel Afonso and Africa Anes. Nuno and another brother, Pedro Velho Travassos, were brought to the Azores by their uncle (Velho Cabral) to assist him in the administration of the islands. They were his intended successors, but for political reasons, the captaincy was given by the crown to their cousin, João Soares de Albergaria, son of Velho Cabral's sister, Teresa. Pedro and his wife lived in Remédios, near Lagoa, and built the Chapel of Nossa Senhora dos Remédios as their final resting place. More on the chapel and their descendants is contained in Manuel Ferreira's *Pedras que Fallam*. Research on Pedro and Nuno's descendants is also on pp. 61-62 and 151; in Cordeiro's *História Insulana*, pp. 110-111 and 180-183; and in *Famílias Antigas da Povoação*.

Teresa, Velho Cabral's sister, was married to a nobleman from the Soares de Albergaria family. Their son, João Soares de Albergaria, was rewarded by Prince Henry the Navigator* for faithful service by being appointed to succeed his uncle. After João assumed office as Captain-Donatary of São Miguel and Santa Maria, his wife, Beatriz Godiz, became ill and sought treatment in Madeira, where they became indebted. Following her death, João sold the office to Rui Gonsalves de Câmara to liquidate the debt. With his second wife, D. Branca de Sousa, João fathered four children. The captaincy of São Miguel passed on to their son, João Soares de Sousa, and on down to succeeding descendants in the male line until the title's abolishment. On pp. 110-121 in Cordeiro's work the descendants of João Soares de Albergaria are documented.

The Velho Cabral genealogy can be extracted from aforementioned work of Gaio and Luís de Melo Vaz de Sampaio's *Subsídios para uma biografia de Pedro Alves Cabral*.

Endnotes:

¹ *Arquivo dos Açores*: I:18 and Francisco de Atayde e Faria e Maia, *Capitães dos Donitários*.

² Francisco de Atayde e Faria e Maia, *Ibid*.

³ Marquês Ayres Jacome Correa, *História da Descoberta das Ilhas*.

Submitted by John Miranda Raposo of Massachusetts
E-mail address: Marralha@cs.com

* Editor's note:

English historians called Henry "the Navigator." He founded a school of navigation in Sagres and planned voyages of exploration, but did no navigating. In Portuguese history he is Infante Dom Henrique. Infante(a) is sometimes mistaken for infant. Infante(a-female) was the title given to Portuguese and Spanish royal children not destined to inherit the throne. Henry was the fourth son of D. João I.

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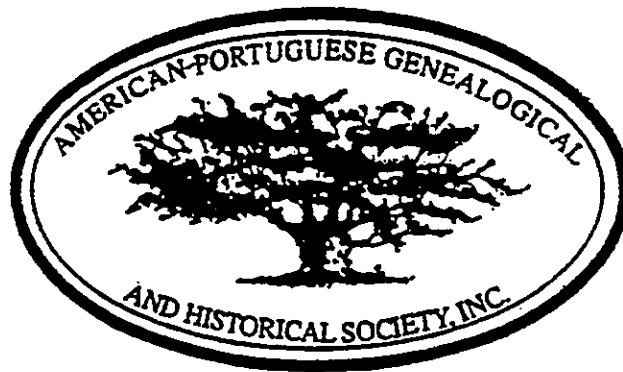
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