

The Portuguese in Falmouth : The First Forty Years

by
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Introduction

In 1880 there were fourteen people in Falmouth with Portuguese ancestry¹, just 0.6% of the town's population. By 1920, Falmouth's Portuguese population had increased to one thousand one hundred four (1,104), constituting 31.5% of the population. This document summarizes some results of comparing data from the 1880, 1900, 1910, and 1920 United States censuses, augmented by other cited sources. The original data from the 1890 census is not available because they were mostly destroyed by a fire in 1821 (actually, 25% by fire and another 50% by water and smoke), and the remnants were destroyed in 1933 or 1934 as authorized by Congress in 1933.

Each successive census sought to improve on both the quality and type of data collected. Some examples:

1. The 1880 census did not collect data on year of immigration or parental birthplaces, limiting immigration year comparisons to the 1900, 1910, and 1920 census. Furthermore, with very rare exceptions, the year of immigration is only recorded for males.
2. Instructions to enumerators on allowable entries for race/color differ from census to census, and some enumerators invented entries not allowed by the instructions.
3. Instructions to enumerators on allowable entries for birthplaces (of the individual and the individuals natural parents) differ. In 1880, all Portuguese birthplaces were listed as "Western Isles". In 1900, entries included "Western Isles", "Portugal", "Faial", "Azores", and "Brava". Western Isles is an older name for the Azores, which is part of Portugal; Faial is one of the islands of the Azores; and Brava is one of the Cape Verde Islands, part of Portugal until 1975.
4. All four censuses collected data on occupation, but beginning in 1910 data on industry was added.

The quality of data in the census was high by the standards of the time, but there are other generic and specific qualifiers worth noting:

1. In 1880 and 1900, the census in Falmouth was conducted by a single person. In 1910, because of the additional data, it was conducted by two enumerators, they differed in terms of diligence, knowledge, linguistic ability, discipline, and even more markedly in legibility. Prior to 1910, errors caused by these factors were at least internally consistent.
2. As with all census surveys, people supplying the information are sometimes inaccurate. Year of immigration, for example, may be given as one year in one census and a different one for that very same person in another census. This is also true for marriage year (if determined by year of census minus number of years married) and ages, especially of adults.
3. Some information is entered by observation and census takers differ in judgement. The census incorrectly identifies the race/color of four individuals as Mexican(Latino), which is wrong on two counts: first, it is not on the list of allowed race/color entries allowed, and second, they are Azorean descendants.
4. The census enumerates families, loosely defined as all persons living under one roof, whether related or not. That should mean only one person can be listed as "head" under Relationship to Head, but in rare instances two people are listed as "head" within the same family; in other instances, they are listed as separate families as

¹ As used in this paper, Portuguese ancestry refers to anyone born in Portugal or with at least one parent who was born in Portugal.

provided by instruction #96. The collection sheet distinguished between dwelling places and families, and treats multiple family dwellings differently: a duplex home with two separate front entrances, for example, counts as two dwelling places, but a building with two apartments, one over the other, counts as one dwelling place. Presumably, a one story building with two apartments but a single entrance would have been counted as one dwelling place; if one of those apartments had two families living in it and the other, then the census would show one dwelling place and three families.

5. The census enumerates all children born of the same mother, regardless of whether or not they still live with the family. There is no enumeration of children born to fathers; thus, if a man marries a woman, has three children before he is widowed, and remarries without having children by the second wife, the census will show a count of zero children and then list three of them.
6. It is sometimes difficult to correlate relations between families because of name inconsistencies caused by limited census taker knowledge and language skills.

Despite the preceding, the United States Censuses referenced in this document are a valuable form of information, especially in the aggregate.

Summary of Basic Statistics

The following table summarizes some basic data for the population of Falmouth as a whole, and for the Portuguese part of that population, showing:

- a growth spurt from 1880 to 1900, a decline in 1910, and recovery in 1920.
- strong growth in Portuguese population on both an absolute and percentage basis. By 1920, almost a third of Falmouth's population was at least 50% Portuguese.
- Portuguese families are consistently larger and younger.

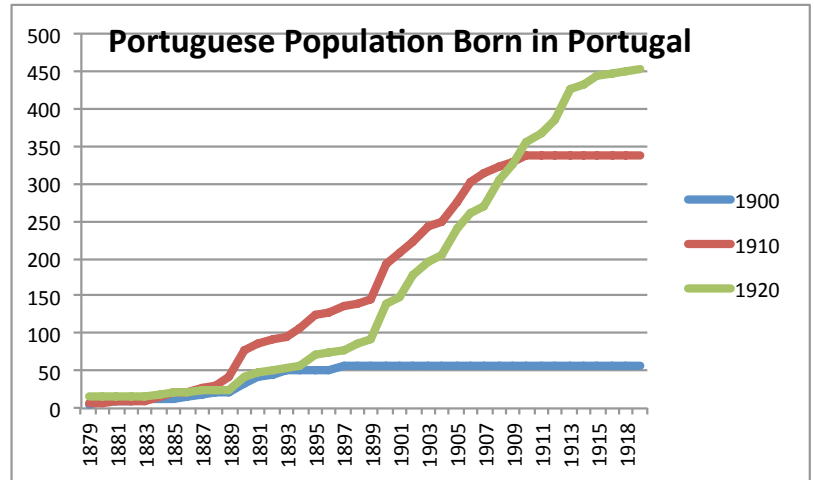
Note: the shaded areas are derivable from census data but were not relevant for the purpose of this document.

| | | 1880 | 1900 | 1910 | 1920 |
|-------------|--------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Population | Falmouth | 2,420 | 3,500 | 3,287 | 3,500 |
| | Portuguese | 14 | 276 | 678 | 1,104 |
| | % Portuguese | 0.6% | 7.9% | 20.6% | 31.5% |
| Families | Falmouth | 599 | 833 | ??? | 895 |
| | Portuguese | 3 | 47 | 141 | 217 |
| | % Portuguese | 0.5% | 5.6% | ??? | 24.2% |
| Family Size | Falmouth | 4.0 | 4.2 | ??? | 3.9 |
| | Portuguese | 4.7 | 5.9 | 4.8 | 5.1 |
| Average Age | Falmouth | 33.6 | ??? | ??? | 30.1 |
| | Portuguese | 16.6 | 21.1 | 22.0 | 21.1 |
| Median Age | Falmouth | 30.0 | ??? | ??? | 29.0 |
| | Portuguese | 13.0 | 18.0 | 14.0 | 14.0 |

A Surprising Question and Some Theories

Although the Portuguese population steadily and dramatically increased during this period, comparative analysis of male immigration years revealed a surprising pattern: both in 1910 and 1920, many of the immigrants longest in this country were leaving Falmouth:

- Between 1900 and 1910, there was a net loss of immigrants who entered this country between 1880 and 1883, inclusive, peaking at three (3) in 1880: the 1900 census showed a total of ten (10) foreign born individuals, but the 1910 census records seven (7). This is a drop of 30%.
- Between 1910 and 1920, there was also a net loss of immigrants who entered this country between 1880 and 1899, peaking in 1897 at fifty-eight (58): in 1910, there were one hundred thirty-six (1360 foreign born Portuguese residents who entered in or prior to 1897, but the 1920 census only records seventy-eight (78). This is a drop of over 40%.

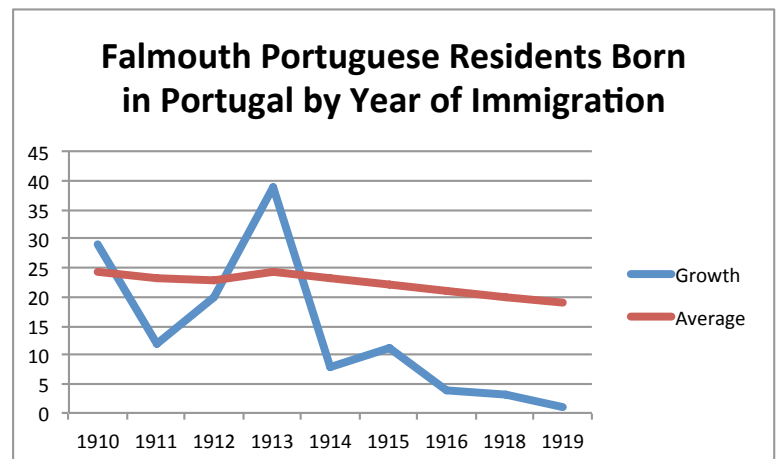


What happened ?

First, it's important to note that it's a net difference : some moved in, some moved out. Some possible theories:

1. **Death.** Given their age and good health required for immigration, and considering the numbers, this is unlikely to be anything but statistically irrelevant. It would have almost to be an epidemic, and there are none on record between 1910 and 1920 in Falmouth, Massachusetts. There were polio outbreaks in 1893 Boston (23 cases) and 1916 New York City (2,000 deaths).
2. **Better opportunities** elsewhere in the United states, either in New England mills or perhaps California. Probably a contributing factor.
3. **They returned to Portugal.** Many immigrants came to the United States, scrimped and saved their money, and returned home as relatively wealthy individuals. Construction of masonry Imperios to house the Holy Ghost dramatically increased in the late noneteenth/early twentieth centuries. Almost certainly a contributing factor. The rising tide of anti-immigration sentiment leading to the Draconian 1921 Immigration Restriction Act may also have been a factor.
4. Regardless, the continuing influx of newcomers resulted in more male immigrants in 1912 than there were in 1910, and this number continued increasing throughout the decade. However, the rate of increase in the number of Falmouth's Portuguese residents born in Portugal declined dramatically. In 1910, the average increase was in the mid-twenties, and stayed at this level until World War 1 was declared in 1914. There was a slight increase in 1915, possibly because Portugal did not enter the war until 1916 when it presumably took a dimmer view of emigration.

The United states' Immigration Restriction Act of 1921 effectively slammed the door on immigrations and these levels would not be seen again for another forty years.



Nativity

The following table summarizes the birthplace of each individual and their parents. The fifth column shows kinship affinity (by adding the three preceding columns) and, for comparison purposes, kinship affinity percentage. The strongest kinship affinity for Massachusetts is, not surprisingly, 51.%. The second strongest kinship affinity, at 24.6%, is for Portugal — greater than for all succeeding locations combined.

| | Self | Father | Mother | KA | KA% |
|-----------------|------|--------|--------|------|-------|
| Massachusetts | 2404 | 1552 | 1494 | 5450 | 51.9% |
| Portugal | 455 | 1083 | 1046 | 2584 | 24.6% |
| Northern Europe | 158 | 323 | 389 | 870 | 8.3% |
| Rest of NE | 215 | 215 | 202 | 632 | 6.0% |
| Rest of US | 152 | 132 | 151 | 435 | 4.1% |
| Canada | 80 | 130 | 151 | 361 | 3.4% |
| Eastern Europe | 15 | 38 | 37 | 90 | 0.9% |
| Southern Europe | 8 | 13 | 13 | 34 | 0.3% |
| USA | 3 | 7 | 3 | 13 | 0.1% |
| Western Europe | 2 | 5 | 5 | 12 | 0.1% |
| Other | 8 | 2 | 9 | 19 | 0.2% |

The Appendix includes a more detailed summary. For aggregation purposes, the locations are defined as:

Northern Europe Bavaria, Denmark, England, Ireland, London, Norway, Scotland, Sweden, Wales

Rest of NE Connecticut, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont

Rest of US Arkansas, California, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin

USA American Citizen, United states

Canada Canada, Canada NS, New Brunswick, New Brunswick, New Foundland, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, St. John's Newfoundland Canada

Eastern Europe Poland, Russia

Western Europe Austria, France

Southern Europe Greece, Italy

Other At sea, Bermuda, Brazil, Chile, China, Honduras, Turkey

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