

Postcards from Falmouth Oral History Transcript

Recorded: May 20, 2022

Oral Historian: Barbara Burgo

Interviewer: Troy Clarkson

Topic: Cape Verdean History in Falmouth

0:00	[Music]	
0:45	I am Troy Clarkson today is Friday May 20th 2022	
0:50	and we are interviewing Barbara Burgo	
0:52	the co-founder and curator of the Cape	#capecodcapeverdeanmuseumandculturalcenter
0:55	Verdean Museum	
0:57	so welcome glad to have you here uh the	
1:01	Cape Verdean culture is so richly	#capeverde
1:03	enmeshed and the soul of our community	
1:06	here in Falmouth so I'm glad to have the	
1:08	opportunity to talk about that with you	
1:11	before the camera came on we were	
1:13	discussing that I recently was at the	
1:15	Cape Verdean Embassy in Washington D.C	
1:18	and so we already find some	
1:20	commonalities here so you've been uh to	
1:23	Cape Verde three times and have some	
1:25	mementos from that visit so why don't we	
1:27	start our visit together with your	
1:30	recollections of those trips thank you	
1:32	so much for that and I'm so pleased to	
1:34	be here I know this was called Postcards	
1:37	like I just mentioned to you I had an	

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1:40	older postcard of the cranberry industry	#cranberries #agriculture
1:44	um the Cape Cod Cape Verdean Museum and	
1:47	Cultural Center exists because when I	
1:51	came here to semi-retire my mom was born	
1:53	in Harwich I came back right off of a	
1:57	couple of trips to Cape Verde and I	
2:00	wanted folks to understand that we are	
2:03	so much more than cranberry pickers okay	
2:07	so when I went over to Cape Verde in	
2:11	1997 I was a	
2:13	I was a senior in college but I was also	
2:16	a grown woman I hadn't been able to go	
2:18	to college as a young person	
2:21	funding and family needs like many of us	
2:25	and so at 45 while I was working at	
2:28	Wheaton College I met folks on the	#wheatoncollege
2:31	Schooner Ernestina Traudi Coli Dr.	#ernestinamorrissey #traudicoli
2:33	Richard Lobban in	#richardlobban
2:36	Rhode Island	
2:37	that	
2:39	inspired me to want to not only learn	
2:41	more about my own culture but to go to	
2:45	Cape Verde	
2:46	so I brought a couple of - they're	
2:48	already mounted -	
2:50	they are postcards from Cape Verde that	
2:55	actually show us a little bit not only	
2:57	about the rich colors and the rich	
3:00	fabric of Cape Verde but also how modest	
3:04	and the fact that well I guess even	

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3:07	before cranberry pickers we were	
3:10	seafarers you know they know about the	
3:12	whalers many of them from hailed from	#whaling
3:15	New Bedford but we have just welcomed	
3:20	all of the elementary school second	
3:23	graders to the museum this past month	
3:26	and a half and what we try to let them	
3:29	know is	
3:31	Cape Cod is so familiar	
3:35	to Cape Verdeans Cape a word should be	
3:38	so familiar to Cape Codders we have some	
3:42	of the same fish some of the same sea	
3:44	life we talked about	
3:46	um	
3:48	the ecology the economy the endangered	
3:52	species I wore a necklace and I taught	
3:55	the children that it's called tataruga	
3:58	in Creole and it was a sea turtle we	#capeverdeancreole
4:02	talked about the sea turtles here in	
4:05	Falmouth that were cold stunned here on	
4:08	Cape Cod	
4:09	but what they really wanted to know more	
4:12	about was being in Cape Verde so I of	
4:17	course didn't bring a small postcard I	
4:20	would love to have so many of these	
4:21	pictures that I took there become	
4:24	postcards so I thought from a brand new	
4:27	Museum and Cultural Center and a culture	

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4:30	that has not had all the wealth and	
4:35	opportunity maybe that some others have	
4:37	when I was going I purposely got the	
4:41	photo album that showed a picture of the	
4:44	world the globe we are global people	
4:47	what I thought I would open up with not	
4:50	the airplane as we took off and not the	
4:53	students as they got there but some of	
4:57	the life in Cape Verde that people would	
5:00	be able to see as familiar to the people	
5:05	on Cape Cod	
5:08	um	
5:09	here we have	
5:13	Santa Catarina	#santacatarina
5:15	I just said we welcomed the school	
5:17	children this was back in 1997 modest	
5:22	playgrounds modest um	
5:28	school books modest amounts of school	
5:30	books and paraphernalia but we went to	
5:33	study and learn something about Cape	
5:36	Verde which I would hope everyone did	
5:38	the school children were glad to hear	
5:41	that we have come a long way since 1997	
5:46	but mostly they were thrilled to see	
5:49	some of the sea life that we were	
5:53	talking about right here	
5:55	depicted in some of these pictures and	

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5:58	other photographs that I had brought	
6:00	back from Cape Verde so there's a quite	
6:03	a few I didn't want to pull them all	
6:04	apart but I parceled some of them out to	
6:08	show you	
6:09	so of course here's the students that	
6:11	went abroad to visit Cape Verde but	
6:15	here	
6:16	is the beach	
6:18	maybe not what we're used to we actually	
6:21	saw pigs on the beach what I'd like you	
6:24	to note is that when I was a young child	
6:27	coming to visit my uncle here in	
6:29	Sandwich	
6:31	had a hog farm	
6:33	it was wealth to them it was food	
6:38	the ocean is wealth to us not only food	
6:43	but resources for a job	
6:48	for getting out of Cape Verde which	
6:53	beautiful place but very very dry as I'm	
6:57	sure you know so the droughts in the	
7:00	early 1900s had folks coming over here	#immigration
7:02	in droves and people were dying but what	
7:08	I also wanted you to see	
7:10	is the size of the fish	
7:13	that they caught that day while we were	
7:17	there forgive me I don't know what kind	
7:21	of fish this is	
7:23	um	
7:23	I'm wondering it couldn't probably be a	
7:26	codfish I don't know no but it's	

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7:29	certainly not a cod	
7:31	no so since your trip in 1997 some 25	
7:35	years ago the strength of the	
7:38	relationship between this region the	
7:40	Cape and Southeastern Massachusetts and	
7:42	Cape Verde has only strengthened and	
7:45	I know that part of that uh is the part	
7:49	of that influence has led to the	
7:50	creation of a university uh over there	
7:53	in Cape Verde which was largely	
7:55	supported by folks in this region	
7:57	including the folks at Bridgewater State	#bridgewaterstateuniversity
7:59	University exactly it so when I went in	
8:02	'97 I was a student at Rhode Island	#rhodeislandcollege
8:06	College it was the URI RIC summer	
8:10	seminar abroad we were one of the first	
8:12	group of students to go there I did meet	
8:16	Pedro Pires the Institute of course at	#pedropiresinstituteforcapeverdeanudies #pedropires
8:19	Bridgewater State U is called the Pedro	
8:23	Pires Institute for Cape Verdean	
8:26	Studies one of the things that I want to	
8:29	say about the Institute is that not	
8:34	only has it helped grow	
8:37	our own students and scholars to assist	
8:42	with teaching about the Cape Verdean	
8:44	culture and learning about the Cape	
8:46	Verdean culture we just funny you would	
8:49	say this we just had a Zoom meeting here	

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8:53	at the museum from Bridgewater State	
8:56	U Institute of Cape Verdean Studies	
8:59	Pedro Pires Institute and we are going to	
9:03	try to begin a sister school program	
9:07	with folks here students here in	
9:11	Falmouth and Cape Verde this was	
9:15	inspired by conversations and visits	
9:18	with especially the director of the	
9:22	Institute Angelo Barbosa	#angelobarbosa
9:25	I met him last summer	
9:28	he came to visit in the fall I showed	
9:31	him a cavaquinho a four-string guitar that	
9:36	was made by a man named Tony Barbosa for	#tonybarbosa
9:39	me in 1997 when I came back from Cape	
9:42	Verde he was an engineer	
9:44	he fashioned it at home	
9:47	soaking the wood I wish I thought to	
9:49	bring it to you come see it at the	
9:51	museum and it just so happens that Tony	
9:54	Barbosa was Angelo's brother	
9:56	25 years ago we also started these	
10:00	connections that Bridgewater State you	
10:03	you got you know money from	
10:06	um	
10:07	Former President Pires and started	
10:10	the Institute this is not just an	
10:13	offshoot of that we've been on parallel	
10:15	paths for a long time	
10:18	yes indeed it and	
10:20	a lot of those connections have their	
10:24	roots here in in Falmouth of course uh	
10:28	in the United States and the entire	
10:30	country the two largest	
10:34	municipalities uh with Cape Verdean	

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10:37	populations the two largest Cape Verdean	
10:38	populations I should say I believe are	
10:41	Boston	
10:42	and Brockton and not too far behind them	
10:45	as a region the Cape but Falmouth	
10:48	really uh is the heart of the Cape	
10:51	Verdean population here on Cape Cod here	
10:53	on Cape Cod I try I started this a bit	
10:57	in Harwich because that's where my like	
10:58	I said my mother was born I used to go	
11:00	visiting my grandmother but when I	
11:03	started talking to my nieces who are	
11:05	part of the Cape Verdean Club here in	
11:08	Falmouth	
11:10	um we've done research purported to be	
11:12	the oldest of its kind in America so it	
11:17	was owned started and owned by Cape	
11:19	Verdeans the building was built they	
11:20	owned the property it's gone on for all	
11:23	of these years since the 1940s I was	
11:27	amazed at the rich rich heritage and	
11:31	deep roots that the Cape Verdeans have	
11:34	here I was amazed to find out so like	
11:36	Andrews Farm people always know about	#tonyandrewsfarm
11:38	Andrews Farm the strawberries here what	
11:40	I didn't realize they call us the	
11:42	cranberry pickers Judge Leighton used to	#georgeleighton [George Neves Leighton, US District Judge, 1912-2018]

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11:45	say berry pickers because it's not just	
11:46	cranberries strawberries and blueberries	
11:49	Falmouth I'm told if I say it correctly	
11:52	was fourth in the nation	
11:55	for producing strawberries distributing	#strawberries
11:58	strawberries yeah that wouldn't surprise	
12:01	me because uh and actually much of	
12:04	the land where the museum is now on	
12:07	Davisville Road uh was strawberry farms	#davisvilleroad
12:10	this predates me but the neighborhood I	
12:12	grew up in is directly across from your	
12:15	Museum Fisherman's Cove and we're told	
12:18	that in times before that was subdivided	
12:21	in the early 70s those were strawberry	
12:24	farms right there so it's it's special	
12:26	that the museum is in the particular	
12:28	location where it is because it's	
12:31	proximate adjacent to where a lot of	
12:35	that agricultural heritage occurred	
12:38	exactly and you know there's the Emerald	#emeraldhouse
12:41	House Community Gardens right behind us	
12:45	um Rep. David Vieira I'll have to put that	#davidvieira
12:47	name out that he always says there's no	
12:49	I in team it wasn't just me the whole	
12:51	town has welcomed us immensely amazingly	
12:55	well but he was the one who said to us	
12:58	let's let's take a look at the Emerald	

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13:00	House it was vacant for a while and	
13:04	um we've got the flags out there	
13:05	Portuguese Cape Verdean American and	
13:09	people will say well this was Portuguese	
13:11	you're not really we won't get into all	
13:14	the debates about who and what we are	
13:16	but I said to them I am	
13:19	a cultural anthropology major I get my	
13:21	BA in anthropology	
13:23	we are Cape Verdeans like with the	
13:26	indigenous you honor those who came	
13:28	before us okay the Emeralds someone	
13:33	showed me	
13:34	an article from a paper way back when	
13:38	when somebody was maligning something of	
13:41	what the Cape Verdeans were doing and he	
13:44	supported Cape Verdean worked in an	
13:47	among Cape Verdeans that is their	
13:50	property so when you go into that house	
13:52	the first thing you see at the entryway	
13:55	is a whole wall full of old pictures	
13:59	that I would love to be able to turn	
14:00	into photographs of the Emeralds and the	
14:03	farm and then the strawberries and then	
14:06	Andrews Farm and strawberries and then	
14:09	Colonel's Farm Cricket Hill and	#colonelsfarm #crickethill
14:12	strawberries and then you go into the	

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14:13	room and you discuss some of the history	
14:16	of Cape Verde and how we got here and	
14:19	before we complete this I would be	
14:22	remiss if we didn't talk about the	
14:24	Schooner Ernestina okay because she is	
14:26	another thing another major gem in our	
14:30	history that many people don't know	
14:32	about they will very very soon because	
14:34	you know here we come she I learned was	
14:39	built in 1894 Essex Massachusetts and	
14:44	dubbed the Effie M. Morrissey	#effiemorrissey #tallship
14:48	she served so many lives the Grand Banks	
14:52	1894 the Effie M. Morrissey the polar	
14:55	expedition and war services	
14:57	1926	
15:00	1947 a man named Henrique Mendes found	#henriquemendes
15:04	her languishing in New York she had	
15:07	caught on fire she's an all wooden	
15:10	schooner two-masted schooner he	
15:13	purchased her with money he borrowed	
15:15	from his sister I might add and	
15:19	they repaired her enough to get her here	
15:22	to Massachusetts Rhode Island and	
15:24	Massachusetts	
15:25	and from the 50s and 60s we know her as	
15:31	our Cape Verdean Mayflower she literally	
15:33	brought folks here from Cape Verde to	
15:38	America I have a friend named Montero	

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15:41	who lives up in Boston and he remembers	
15:43	coming over here is an eight-year-old	
15:44	with his mother he said it took 31 days	
15:49	his mother was sick the whole way the	
15:51	Atlantic is rough	
15:53	so for people to care that much and for	
15:56	a ship like this to support that	
15:59	when she was bought by Henrique Mendes	
16:03	he named her Ernestina after his	
16:06	daughter	
16:07	she was of course in bad disrepair uh	
16:10	several times in her life because of	
16:12	being a wooden schooner Cape Verde then	
16:15	repatriated her to the United States and	
16:19	what most people don't know is that she	
16:21	is the official vessel of the	
16:24	Commonwealth of Massachusetts	
16:27	Schooner Ernestina's next life will be	
16:31	right here at the tip of Cape Cod she's	
16:35	coming to Mass Maritime to be an	#massmaritimeacademy
16:38	educational schooner I worked on her in	
16:42	2004 when it was the ECHO program	#echoprogram
16:44	Education through Cultural and Historic	
16:47	Organizations and they brought students	
16:49	from all over to see the Schooner	
16:52	Ernestina and now we say Ernestina -	
16:54	Morrissey this will be a phenomenal tie	

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16:59	into what we're doing here at the Museum	
17:01	what Brockton is doing what Brockton has	
17:03	always done the first president of the	
17:07	Brockton Cape Verdean Association was my	#brocktoncapeverdeanassociation
17:09	sister's father-in-law Rudy Santos God	#rudysantos
17:12	rest his soul that was in the 70s so	
17:16	this is a culmination of decades upon	
17:18	decades and for us	
17:21	at the Cape Cod Cape Verdean Museum and	
17:23	Cultural Center we will be eternally	
17:26	indebted to Falmouth for helping us grow	
17:30	wonderful and and so today	
17:35	that rich culture and those decades of	
17:37	collaboration are on display at the	
17:40	museum tell us just a little bit about	
17:42	the museum operation itself and how the	
17:45	public can access it certainly so we're	
17:48	a small staff we're all volunteer I'm a	
17:51	board member like you said a co-founder	
17:53	myself president Wesley Leite Wayne Lobo	#wesleyleite #waynelobo
17:57	who was our former Treasurer and now a	
17:59	board member the three of us together	
18:01	all had this dream of someday having a	
18:03	museum I added the "and Cultural Center "	
18:06	just so that we could do the things like	

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18:08	I said to you learn about uh you know	
18:11	the marine life help with agriculture so	
18:16	the gardens is behind the museum and it	
18:20	actually has a 100 year old grapevine my	
18:24	grandmother had a grapevine in her yeah	
18:26	I didn't her mother had a grapevine in	
18:28	their yard we are now growing there	
18:31	strawberries	
18:33	so that we can make that connection from	
18:35	a hundred years ago to now inside the	
18:38	museum we're only open Thursday Friday	
18:40	and Saturday ten to two	
18:43	I take Fridays off from my paid job	
18:45	every week to be here do things like	
18:47	this anyone's welcome to give us a	
18:50	contact go on the website go on a	
18:52	Facebook page if you put in Cape Cod	
18:54	Cape Verdean Museum and Cultural Center	
18:56	you'll find us I didn't say Cape Verdean	
18:58	Museum because there is a museum in	#capeverdeanmuseum
19:00	Rhode Island but it's not a cultural	
19:03	center they were started much before us	
19:06	they're doing a wonderful job but here	
19:08	we are going to inspire all of the	
19:11	things that people want to learn we have a	
19:14	an educational a historical room when you	
19:17	first come in the front door	
19:20	um it is a timeline of the history of	

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19:23	Cape Verde because many people don't	
19:25	know it then we have what we call Nana's	
19:27	Kitchen it brings you back in time to	
19:31	what the kitchen would have looked like	
19:33	a hundred years ago maybe for the	
19:35	Emeralds and probably certainly for the	
19:37	Cape Verdeans people get so emotional	
19:39	looking at the artifacts that are in	
19:42	that kitchen that their grandparents	
19:44	used to use it is heartwarming then of	
19:47	course we have a nautical room and	
19:49	Schooner Ernestina has a major part in	
19:51	that nautical room and then we said to	
19:55	remind folks how much more than just	
19:57	cranberry or berry pickers we were or	
20:00	just whalers or seafarers then we added	
20:03	a room that's called the military room	
20:06	my niece the one I was talking about the	
20:09	folks that are at the um the Cape	
20:12	Verdean Club	
20:14	she is actually a senior master sergeant	
20:18	at Otis and she's been there for 25	#otisairnationalguardbase #jointbasecapecod
20:20	years I had not even paid attention to	
20:24	what she was doing in her life growing	
20:26	up if you went there to see so many of	
20:30	the valuable	

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20:32	resources and gifts our folks have been	
20:37	giving to America for over 200 years	
20:40	because they were on Nantucket in the	
20:42	1700s you would realize that we are so	
20:45	much more than cranberry pickers	
20:49	most certainly and that's why it's great	
20:52	that you and the other volunteers with	
20:55	the support of folks like Representative	
20:57	Vieira celebrate that rich heritage which	
21:00	has become as I said it the beginning of	
21:02	our visit an important part of the	
21:04	fabric of this community	
21:07	very much and thank you for mentioning	
21:09	to me that you've just been to the	
21:10	Embassy in Cape Verde so many times	
21:13	people will come to us	
21:15	so right now we've just the Sea	#seagrant
21:17	Grants down at Woods Hole has just written	
21:20	a grant to take a Bridgewater State	
21:23	student State University student to	
21:28	under our wing	
21:30	a paid internship for the summer she	
21:33	lives in Wareham she's a student at	
21:36	Bridgewater and what she said summed it	
21:39	all up everywhere I go people asks me	
21:42	what ask me what is a Cape Verdean and I	
21:46	have to try to explain she said I said	
21:48	yes to this grant and I've got so many	

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21:51	or more opportunities because to see a	
21:54	museum and cultural center dedicated to	
21:58	the Cape Verdeans where I don't have to	
22:01	explain what we are and who we are and I	
22:04	actually can go there and learn more	
22:06	about who my parents were and my	
22:09	grandparents is	
22:11	immeasurable the value is immeasurable	
22:14	so we will start working with a	
22:16	collaboration with the university and	
22:19	with Sea Grants and with Falmouth	
22:22	everyone here has been helpful	
22:24	um the Select Board the town the	
22:26	lease we they were just so thrilled	
22:29	that we were taking this on and we are	
22:31	thrilled to be the next occupant of the	
22:36	historic Emerald House on Davisville	
22:38	Road wonderful well thank you for your	
22:40	visit today and thank you for sharing	
22:42	that experience because through events	
22:45	like this that rich cultural heritage	
22:49	can be shared now with future	
22:51	generations so Barbara it's been a	
22:53	pleasure to spend a few minutes with you	
22:54	and thank you for your willingness to	
22:57	share this story totally my pleasure and	
22:59	so postcards will be made of some of the	
23:02	pictures that we have done so everyone	

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23:04	can share in the richness of Cape Cod to	
23:06	Cape Verde wonderful thank you	
23:08	[Music]	