

HOW MY FATHER CAME HERE FROM BRAZIL

My father was born in Racife, Brazil, being brought there by his mother who immigrated from Portugal. She was married to a gambler and a womanizer who used to beat her up. When in a drunken rage, he would make her sign over land to him to be used for his many vices. Her family was wealthy and owned acres of farm land etc.

After one of the many beatings she received, she landed in the Hospital and she then decided to leave her husband and Portugal and move to Brazil. This is where my dad was born. They lived there for about 14 years and then my grandmother decided to send my dad to the United States where she thought life would be easier for him.

He arrived by boat in Boston, MA with only a bird cage, a suitcase and a note pinned to his lapel, telling the reader where he should be sent. Since he could speak no word of English it was difficult for him to communicate with anyone. He was supposed to go to a family in Dighton who in those days were called Masters. He was to work on their farm for food, clothing and board and room. His ship arrived at the Boston Pier, located in the North End and my grandmother told no one where she sent him. After he arrived, he was taken to a Boston Police officer who brought him to a Portuguese barber who in turn interpreted the note that was pinned to his lapel. It instructed where my father should be sent and they put him on a bus to Dighton where his Master met him and looked after him.

He was placed in the Second grade in school and the kids used to make fun of him because he couldn't put his knees under the desk, being so big. He would lift the desks right off the floor, taking out the screws as he did this. The teachers would get very aggravated with this and the kids would make fun of him and tease him by taking his hat and running away. Sometimes they would throw his hat over a small cliff where he would have to climb down to get it and, at times, the older boys would beat him up. He would go home to his Master with a bloody nose on occasion. Boys can be very cruel to other boys when they are foreign and don't understand their ways. This was the case with my dad.

As children, they played with wooden barrells and my father would climb inside so they could roll him. Of course his feet would stick way out, he was so big. One day they rolled him off a 20 ft. cliff, by the water, and the Coastguard had to come to rescue him before the tide came in or he would have drowned.

When my dad went into the 4th Grade, he was with bigger children and became stronger by all the hard work on the farm. He could wrestle anyone to the ground and many times he got beaten up but even if he was hurt he still had to do his share of work on his Master's farm, sometimes even after dark. He felt so all alone at times and it seemed to him that no one cared about him or his problems.

At this point in time he started to lift barrells that were along the beach. He lifted them up over his head to build up his strength. They were made of iron and were used by the Whalers for storing blubber oil which was used to burn lanterns. Sometimes the Whalers would sell these barrells of oil to the local hardware stores for money. They would sneak them out after dark.