



The Portuguese in San Leandro

Meg Rogers

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The Gold Rush drew the Portuguese from the Azores, sweeping them across the Atlantic Ocean and around South America's Cape Horn to the California shore. When gold failed to pan out, many Portuguese moved to the hamlet of San Leandro on the San Francisco Bay where land was reasonable and the ground fertile. Gradually the post-Gold Rush settlers joined with former Portuguese shore whalers to farm the fields of San Leandro. San Leandro became a principal landing place for newly arrived Portuguese immigrants putting down roots on small farms. A steady stream of relatives from the Azores and Hawaii poured into San Leandro's fertile foothills, and by 1911 the Portuguese comprised over two-thirds of the city's population. The early days were rough--Portuguese immigrants banded together in fraternal societies to overcome a lack of resources and to help one another navigate a strange world whose language they did not speak. Today the Portuguese Immigrant monument in Root Park's plaza commemorates the journey of Portuguese settlers who left everything behind to start a new life in the new world.

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