

# Joseph Costa Recalls Voyage on Canopic

They treasure them almost like gold ingots. The tarnished fork with the legend: Nordeutscher Lloyd. And the spoon with the inscription: SS Bremen.

These are the mementoes that some of the older generation of Azorean immigrants, those who came in the 1900s to work in the city's cotton mills, have of the ships that brought them to these shores.

For Joseph E. Costa, who arrived with his mother and sister in 1909, the memories are re-kindled by photos of the White Star liners — SS. Canopic and its sister ship, the SS Cretic.

He was only seven when, like many other immigrants, he left his native village of Agua do Pau. The Canopic was on the New York-Mediterranean run. By the time it stopped at Ponta Delgada, on the big island of St. Michael, the passenger list was already overwhelmingly Italian. They had come aboard at Naples and Genoa.

By mid-Atlantic, there was no communication gap between the Azoreans and the other passengers.

After all, Italian and Portuguese have a similarity and the goal of both ethnic groups was the same. The common bond was the challenge of beginning a new life in a new world, and in the interim, making the best of a two-week crossing of the Atlantic.

Like the other Portuguese immigrants who came before him, with him and after him, the future was in Fall River.

For Costa, it was the McDonough elementary school, Evening High School and work in the mills.

And Costa left his mark in civic and labor circles

migrant life in 1901. Santo Christo parish was the religious and social bond. The street had its Portuguese bakeries, stores, fish markets, grocers and knick-knack shops. The Portuguese enclave began around Canal Street.

Radiating from it were the three-decker areas where the immigrants lived and the clubs in which the male populace gathered to talk about their jobs, families, soccer and the lotteries. The Tennessee Boys A.C. and

Acoreana Clubs were important places.

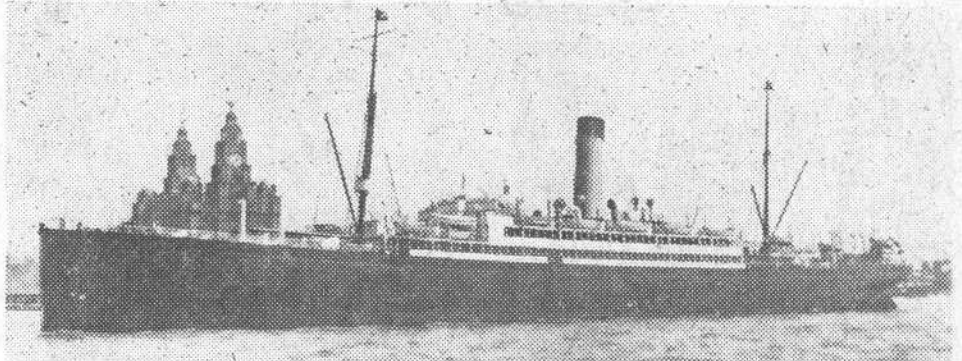
"There's a lot of immigrant history wrapped around Columbia Street," says Costa, "along with the history of the city's labor movement." He says he's going to write it someday, before his recollection falters.

And what of the Canopic and Cretic? The Canopic, built in 1900 and the Cretic, commissioned two years later, were originally owned by the Dominion Line. White Star took

over Dominion's Liverpool/Boston and Boston/Mediterranean service in 1902. With it came title to the Dominion steamers — Canopic, Cretic, Republic II and Romanic.

The Cretic was bought by Leyland's in 1923 and renamed the Devonian. It was scrapped in 1929.

The Canopic went on the Liverpool/Quebec/Montreal run in 1922 and was scrapped in 1925.

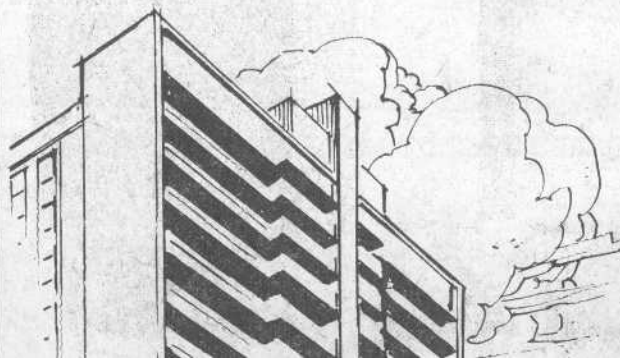


The SS. Canopic brought Joseph E. Costa and thousands of other Portuguese and Azorean emigrants to the United States.

## On This Special Occasion

# 50<sup>th</sup>

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And Costa left his mark in civic and labor circles along the way. He is one of the pioneers in the city's labor movement. He helped to organize the textile workers and later joined the Teamsters, retiring as the local's business agent on his 70th birthday.

His youth counseling activities at the Boys Club and Housing Authority level were other memorable highlights of his long years of dedicated service to the city.

But this isn't a story about Costa as much as it is a recollection of the way the first sizeable wave of Portuguese immigrants reached Fall River.

Costa ventures to guess that most of them in the period between 1900 and 1914 and for a couple of years after World War I came on either the Canopic or Cretic. Most debarked in New York, and were processed at Ellis Island. A few came ashore in Providence or Boston.

Of his own voyage on the Canopic, Costa recalls that he and his widowed mother and a sister traveled in steerage. And because of the dominance of Italian passengers, everyone ate a lot of pasta.

His father, Jose Inacio da Costa, was a band leader and composer in Rabo do Peixe and was also involved with the organization of a musical unit in Agua do Pau.

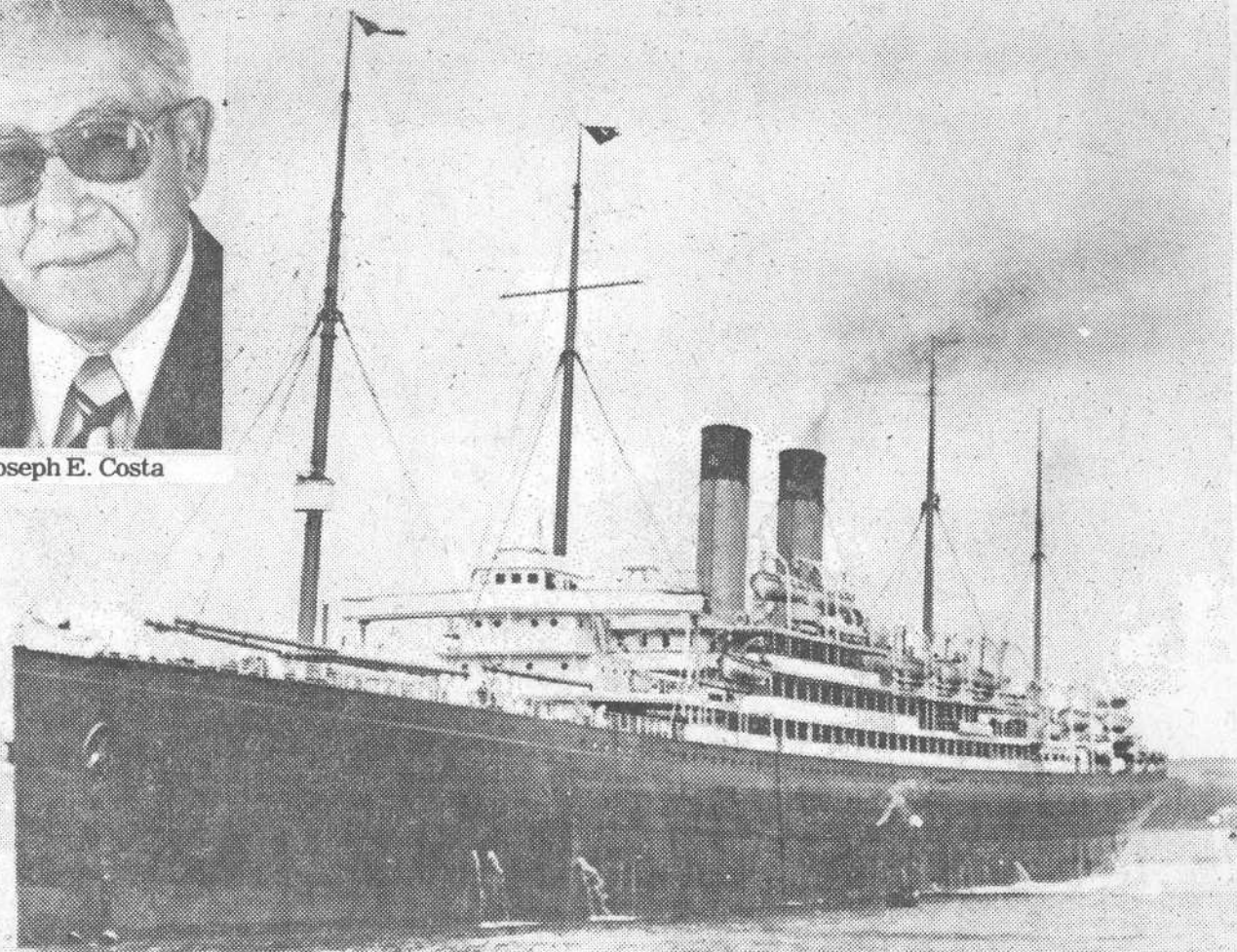
The Costa family was met at Ellis Island by travel agent Frank Silvia. He was dispatched by Franco Lisboa to meet immigrants and arrange for their transportation to Fall River on the New York boat.

March 17, St. Patrick's Day, has a special significance for Costa. It is more than just the day on which tribute is paid to an Irish saint. March 17 is the day Costa was born, it is also the date on which he arrived in the United States, 77 years ago.

Columbia Street, much as it is today in the lives of immigrants who came here in the new wave leaving the Azorean archipelago since 1966, was virtually the center of im-



Joseph E. Costa



The SS. Cretic was assigned to New York-Mediterranean service in 1912 and resumed it following World War I. The ship was purchased by Leyland's in 1923 and scrapped in 1929.