The University of Massachusetts Lowell Saab-Pedroso Center for Portuguese Culture and Research and the Center for Lowell History are pleased to announce a $5,000 grant from Mass Humanities for the Community Exhibit, “Young Portuguese Immigrants in Turn of the Century Lowell, Massachusetts.” The exhibition, prepared in partnership with the Lowell National Historical Park, will be on view at the Boott Cotton Mills Museum from the middle of April to the end of September 2015. Other partners in this project are the Tsongas Center for Industrial History, the Lowell Historical Society, and the International Institute of New England, with additional documentation from the American Folklife Center and Saint Anthony’s Parish. The opening of the Exhibition at the Boott Cotton Mills Museum will be on April 18, 2015 at 2 p.m., and will include a lecture by Dr. Paula Rioux, who teaches History at UMass Dartmouth, and a reception. The event is free and open to the public.

Inspired by the recent discovery of an extraordinary archive of early 20th century “proof of age” immigration documents (letters, passports, photos, visas) in Lowell’s City Hall attic, the Exhibit Team—comprised of Martha Mayo, Frank F. Sousa, UMass Lowell History major Mark Rozzo, Paula Rioux, and David Blackburn of the National Park—will use their recent research on the Portuguese community to form an outline for this Community Exhibit around broad themes: Immigration, Work, Recreation, Church, Family, and Neighborhood. These materials, combined with additional historical and contemporary collections of photographs, maps, atlases, city directories, school department reports, local newspapers, labor records, cultural and religious artifacts, have resulted in dozens of individual and extended family stories revealing the challenges and opportunities and choices facing and made by young Portuguese immigrants and their families in the context of labor laws and education policies, areas in which Massachusetts was at the forefront of the American social contract. This Community Exhibit and its auxiliary programs, including lectures and performances, will enhance visitors understanding of immigration to Lowell since the late nineteenth century. The exhibit proposes to engage the general visitors to the museum and to reach the thousands of middle school and high school children attending Tsongas Industrial History Center workshops, while also welcoming immigrants and their descendants from the diverse neighborhoods of Lowell and elsewhere in the Merrimack Valley.

For more information, please contact the project co-directors:

Martha Mayo, director of the Center for Lowell History (martha_mayo@uml.edu; 978-934-4998),
or
Prof. Frank F. Sousa, director of the Saab-Pedroso Center for Portuguese Culture and Research (frank_sousa@uml.edu; 978-934-5591).