

*Javier Marín López (ed.)*

# Músicas coloniales a debate

Procesos de intercambio euroamericanos



Colección  
MÚSICA HISPANA  
TEXTOS. Estudios

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Colección MÚSICA HISPANA

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22. *Músicas coloniales a debate. Procesos de intercambio euroamericanos*

Editor: Javier Marín López

Ediciones del ICCMU

Facultad de Geografía e Historia, UCM

Edificio Filosofía B

C/ Profesor Aranguren, 5, 4.<sup>a</sup> planta

28040, Madrid

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Cubierta:

“Al pueblo americano”, dibujo de Henry Corbould grabado por Georges Cooke.

Andrés Bello y Juan García del Río, *La Biblioteca Americana*, Londres,

Imp. de G. Marchant, 1823

Impresión: Imprenta Gofer

Depósito legal: M-40144-2018

ISBN: 978-84-89457-55-3

*Javier Marín López (ed.)*

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*TEXTOS. Estudios*

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## 29. PORTUGUESE GUITAR-MAKERS IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY RIO DE JANEIRO\*

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One might say that the guitar, like people of flesh and blood, had a body and a spirit, a pulse of its own, perturbing fragile spirits and hearts with its vibrations, tending to lead them to crack, like fine china or glass<sup>1</sup>.

### *Introduction*

Many are the testimonials to the presence and importance of the guitar in Portuguese culture. The earliest references to the instrument are to be found in the illuminations of the *Cancioneiro da Ajuda*, a manuscript dated 1280 in which hand-held chordophones are represented in eight out of sixteen images contained in the codex. The enormous expansion and popularity of the guitar –even allowing for the vast exaggeration of the numbers involved– may be seen in the long-held tradition that ten thousand guitars (of the kind used in those days) were found abandoned by the Portuguese on the devastated fields after the battle of Alcácer Quibir (Ksar El Kebir). Stripping away the fantasy from this monumental serenade, what is left of this report is a testimonial to how widespread the instrument was in Portugal. Gil Vicente, in the farce *Inês Pereira*, presented in 1523 to the “most high and mighty” King João III, described the eagerness of the protagonist to find a husband who was discreet and played the guitar:

That he should be a man ill-made  
ugly, poor, ill-humoured,  
and should also have discretion,  
I want nothing more from him.  
And that he should know how to play the guitar,  
and eat bread and onion.  
At least a little song  
discreet, made of flour,  
because that liberates me<sup>2</sup>.

A taste for the instrument, both among the nobility and ordinary people continued for many decades. King João III had a personal guitar-maker –Diogo Dias, nominated by decree of 24 May 1551.

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\* This research was made possible thanks to a CAPES Foundation Grant, Ministry of Education of Brazil, Brasília, D. F.

<sup>1</sup> Manuel Ferreira: *A viola de dois corações*, Ponta Delgada, [s.e.], 1990, p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Cleonice Berardinelli: *Introdução e estudo crítico. Antologia do teatro de Gil Vicente*, Rio de Janeiro, Grifo, 1974, p. 221: “Que seja homem mal feito / feio, pobre, sem feição / como tiver discrição / não lhe quero mais proveito / E saiba tanger viola / e coma eu pão e cebola / Sequer uma cantiguinha / Discreto, feito em farinha / Porque isto me degola”. Translations in this article are of the author.

As is well known, at this time music was one of the most esteemed arts and the monarch was likewise held in consideration, which is attested by the works that various Spanish musicians dedicated to him, “a demonstration perhaps of how greatly he valued the art, or proof, at least, that the name of João III was highly regarded abroad”<sup>3</sup>. Among these, mention should be made of both Juan Bermudo in his *Declaración de instrumentos musicales* (Osuna, 1555) and Luys Milán in *El Maestro* (Valencia, 1536), “dedicated to the most high and most mighty and unconquerable prince João; by the grace of God, King of Portugal and of the islands”. The guitar is also mentioned by Camões in his play *Filodemo*; it is not by chance that this is the only dramatic work in which the author weaves his plot around a Portuguese theme:

The guitar, Sir, comes  
without firsts or lasts.  
But you know what you need?  
If you want to play well, Sir,  
there have to be thirds<sup>4</sup>.

At first sight, these lines simply explain that the guitar lacks the highest strings –*primas*– and the lowest ones –*derradeiras*–, and so to play properly it is necessary to use the middle-range strings, neither low nor high, known as *terceiras*. Freitas Branco provides another possible meaning for this passage: he tells us that at this time, *terceiras* was a common term for go-betweens, who played a fundamental role as intermediaries of hidden love affairs. We can also conjecture, through the reference to first and thirds, that Camões had some practical knowledge of playing string instruments, as was usual for poets of his time.

### *The guitar in Brazil*

Though it seems likely that the instrument had arrived earlier, unequivocal news of guitars only appears, in fact, in the letters of the Jesuits, who arrived to Brazil with Tomé de Souza in 1549. They were the ones who first introduced guitars and other European instruments there. Father Fernão Cardim, travelling through Bahia, Pernambuco, Espírito Santo, Rio de Janeiro and São Vicente (São Paulo) between 1583 and 1590, provides information about what he saw in the Jesuit missions that he visited, in letters addressed to the Provincial in Portugal. Everywhere, the visitors were received by Indians, “some singing and playing in their manner”, others “with a shield dance in Portuguese fashion, and dancing to the sound of guitar, tambourine, small drum and flute”<sup>5</sup>. In some villages, “there are schools for learning to read and write, where the priests teach reading, counting, singing and playing; they take to all of these well, and there are already many who play flutes, guitars and harpsichords”<sup>6</sup>.

The guitar spread. Mário de Andrade, referring to colonial inventories from São Paulo, mentions a fine guitar, valued at two thousand *réis*, left by the explorer Sebastião Pais de Barros in 1688. In the eighteenth century there are abundant references to the instrument, which made a definitive entry to the history of colonial music, by constituting the basis for the accompaniment of the genres that were

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<sup>3</sup> Souza Viterbo: *Artes e artistas em Portugal*, Lisbon, Ferin, 1920, p. 184.

<sup>4</sup> João de Freitas Branco: *A música na obra de Camões*, Venda Nova, Instituto de Cultura Portuguesa, 1979, p. 22: “A viola, Senhor, vem / Sem primas nem derradeiras / Mas sabe que lhe convém? / Se quer, Senhor, tanger bem / Há de haver mister terceiras”.

<sup>5</sup> Fernão Cardim: *Tratado da terra e gente do Brasil*, São Paulo, Editora da Universidade de São Paulo, 1980, p. 145: “Uns cantando e tangendo a seu modo”, outros, “com uma dança de escudos à portuguesa, e dançando ao som da viola, pandeiro, tamboril e flauta”.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 155: “Há escolas de ler e escrever, onde os padres ensinam a ler, a contar, a cantar e tanger; tudo tomam bem, e há já muitos que tanger flautas, violas, cravos”.

disseminated at the Portuguese court by the Rio poet Domingos Caldas Barbosa (1738-1800). In Rio de Janeiro, Father José Maurício Nunes Garcia (1767-1830), at his music school at the Rua das Belas Noites (today Rua das Marrecas), used a guitar for practical exercises. He himself studied on one in the class of his teacher Salvador José, as did José Maurício's most celebrated pupils, such as Cândido Ignácio da Silva and Francisco Manuel da Silva, the composer of the Brazilian national anthem.

In order to be able to play the guitar it was first necessary to make the instrument. The art of guitar-making found fertile soil for its development in Portugal and the first references to master guitar-makers (the name given to designate this craft) go back to the fifteenth century. Portuguese emigrants who moved to Brazil brought their traditions and customs, their ways of living, their building practices, their entertainments and feasts and, naturally, the guitar. The singers' companion had its very own place: "Not even the babe just days before birth had as much, the middle of the state bed, on top of a woven bedspread or throw interlaced with red or wrapped within a bag with the opening closed by a ribbon, protected from the damp and from this and that, just like a glass dome and the saints"<sup>7</sup>.



Illustration 29.1. Anonymous, The black woman and the priest [Negra ao violão, padre dançando], c. 1829<sup>8</sup>

### *The tradition of guitar-making*

Though it has not yet received due attention, the tradition of making string instruments in Rio de Janeiro is recorded ever since the eighteenth century and, as is to be expected, the first craftsmen were Portuguese. In the city almanac, *Almanak da cidade do Rio de Janeiro-1792/1794*, various guitar-makers are listed: Antonio José Tavares, José Correia de Paiva, João Francisco Viana, José Dias de Castro Guimarães and Manoel Gonçalves Toledo<sup>9</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> José Alfredo Ferreira de Almeida: *A viola de arame nos Açores*, Ponta Delgada, Ed. do autor, 1990, p. 51.

<sup>8</sup> Coleção particular, Fundação Bienal de São Paulo, Nelson Aguilar (organizador): *Mostra do redescobrimento: negro de corpo e alma*, São Paulo, Associação Brasil 500 anos Artes Visuais, 2000, p. 251. Foto: André Ryoki.

<sup>9</sup> "Almanaques da Cidade do Rio de Janeiro para o ano de 1792 e 1794", *Anais da Biblioteca Nacional do Rio de Janeiro*, vol. LX, 1940, p. 347.



Illustration 29.2. Guitar Street in Rio de Janeiro

The popularity of the guitar in Rio de Janeiro at the end of the eighteenth century can be confirmed from the establishment of makers in the city centre, for the area where their activity was centred even came to be named after them (Illustration 29.2). Rua das Violas (literally, Guitar Street; bold line on the map) began at the former Praia dos Mineiros and ended with a section of Rua da Conceição, between the present-day Avenida Presidente Vargas and Avenida Marechal Floriano. Next to Rua do Peixe (literally, Fish Street), later known as Rua do Mercado (literally, Market Street), a name evidently connected to the kind of commerce situated there, Rua das Violas was frequented by the lower echelons of society. It was on these streets that various persons with famous names lived. Brasil Gerson tells us that in 1787, during the time that he spent in Rio de Janeiro, Bocage lived there. We also know that the father of Caxias, from the time he was captain in 1811, lived in Rua das Violas, principal backdrop to the childhood of the Brazilian hero. It maintained its name until 1869, when the City Council changed it to its current denomination, Rua Teófilo Otoni.

Documents show that throughout the entire nineteenth century the so-called guitar workshops peppered the streets of the centre of Rio, with craftsmen making guitars of various kinds. Later, they moved into the traditional music shops, such as the Rabeca de Ouro –literally, Golden Fiddle– and the shop Ao cavaquinho de Ouro –literally, the Golden *cavaquinho* (the *cavaquinho* being a small guitar-like instrument), for the making of instruments.

In the *Almanak Laemmert* (1844-1889), certainly the most wide-ranging source of information on commercial and manufacturing activities in Rio de Janeiro, the principal and virtually only references to the activity of string-instrument making in the city are to be found (Illustration 29.3). The first references to these makers, as announced in the publication, began to appear in 1845, the year in which Antonio Machado Lourenço, José Alves de Carvalho and Manuel José de Lima advertised the addresses of their workshops.

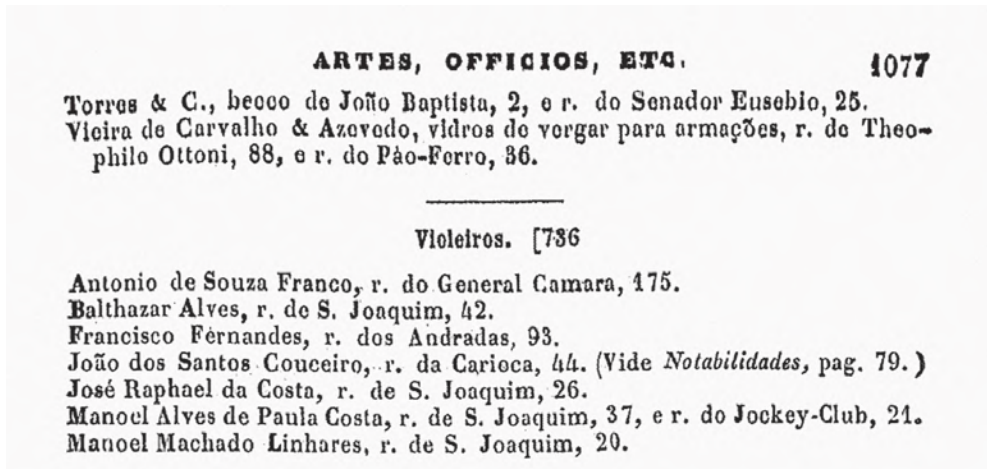


Illustration 29.3. List of guitar-makers advertising in the Almanak Laemmert, 1875, p. 685

It is noticeable how, in the course of the nineteenth century, instrument makers formerly localised in Rua das Violas moved to Rua de São Pedro and Rua de São Joaquim, both in the city centre. Rua de São Pedro disappeared in 1943, as a result of the works for the opening of Avenida Presidente Vargas; Rua de São Joaquim was not, in fact, one street but two: the “narrow” and the “broad”. They were united in the period of Pereira Passos, becoming what came to be popularly known as Rua Larga, present-day Avenida Marechal Floriano. Trade of guitars took place in the narrow São Joaquim, described by Vieira Fazenda as one of the most sordid streets in nineteenth-century Rio, home to brothels and gaming houses, frequented by vagabonds and representatives of the lowest of the low.

On the list of advertisers, José Alves de Carvalho was one of the names that appeared with greatest frequency in the Almanac. He is to be found in the publication from 1845 to 1886, always situated at 50, Rua de São Joaquim, an address that probably became a point of reference for the trade in the city. The workshop of Pedro José Gomes Braga, who also advertised from 1845, remained in activity until 1889; he himself directed the firm until 1864, the year in which he died; the following year his widow took up the reins, which later passed to the hands of José Moreira Dias Braga, a member of the family who maintained the continuity of the business, always at the same address. Some of these makers were responsible for the establishment of music shops that were to become meeting points for Rio instrumentalists in the early twentieth century.

This was the case of the Portuguese João dos Santos Couceiro, son of Antonio dos Santos, an important instrument maker in the city of Coimbra, who arrived to Rio de Janeiro in October 1871 at the age of 23. Two years later, in an advertisement placed at the periodical *Vida Fluminense*, we find information about his workshop, “a grand factory of guitars, fiddles, cellos, double basses and bows”, then established at 31, Rua Sete de Setembro (at the bottom of the street)<sup>10</sup>. In 1877, now working with his brother Joaquim, who had arrived to Rio de Janeiro in April 1872, he began to advertise on the *Almanak Laemmert*, where the following year he publicized the shop, the Rabeca de Ouro, situated at 44, Rua da Carioca (Illustration 29.4):

<sup>10</sup> *Vida Fluminense*, 6, n.º 271, 8-3-1873, p. 1329: “Grande fábrica de violões, rabecas, violoncelos, contrabaixos e arcos”.

João dos Santos Couceiro & Brother –maker of fiddles, cellos, double basses and bows, cavaquinhos and various kinds of guitars. A specialist in repairing and selling strings for all of the instruments; the products of this factory have been awarded medals at the exhibitions of Portugal, Brazil and Philadelphia<sup>11</sup>.

Indeed, in subsequent advertisements, specific reference is made to the medals won in these exhibitions: he received the silver medal in Brazil in 1869, and the second class medal in 1873; he also received an award in Philadelphia in 1876. In a document found at the Junta Comercial do Rio de Janeiro, dated 24 October 1890, Couceiro declares that the firm A Rabeca de Ouro began to trade on 15 December 1879<sup>12</sup>; thus, it is one of the earliest firms making and selling materials for string instruments for which we have information. Santos Couceiro, as well as being a craftsman, also had a musical training and played an important social role in Rio de Janeiro as a concert organiser, in which he himself took part, playing the mandolin.

Another major instrument maker working in Rio de Janeiro was Francisco Garcia de Andrade (1827-1864). Born in the Azorean island of Faial, he came to Brazil when he was 13 years old. He was employed in a guitar workshop belonging to a fellow Azorean by the name of Linhares, situated at the narrow São Joaquim. Shortly afterwards, he moved on to work with the Couceiro brothers, founders of A Rabeca de Ouro. In 1889, at 92, Rua da Carioca he set up the instrument factory known as Ao Cavaquinho de Ouro, which transferred initially to 168A, Rua da Alfândega and later to 137, Rua Uruguaiana.

The shop Ao Cavaquinho de Ouro did much to promote the use of the modern guitar in Rio de Janeiro. In a rare promotional brochure published by the establishment to commemorate its participation at the First Samples Fair, which took place on 30 June 1928, Alvaro Cortez de Andrade, director of the shop, stated: “since its Foundation, the Cavaquinho de Ouro has been a centre for great artists, who received their entire training there, many of them still appearing there regularly, and thus it has been a constant promoter of the art of music”<sup>13</sup>.

In taking in popular instrumentalists, the Cavaquinho de Ouro made its address on Rua Uruguaiana a meeting point for Rio musicians (Illustration 29.5).

Even at the end of the nineteenth century, Porfirio Martins & Co. opened the shop, A Guitarra de Prata (The Silver Guitar), situated at 37, Rua da Carioca. In this workshop three main models of guitar were made –Carioca, Valenciano and Robledo. The last one was made in honour of the Spanish guitarist Josefina Robledo. Other than details of their external features, it is impossible to assess the characteristics and quality of



Illustration 29.4. Couceiro's advertisement, Almanak Laemmert, 1878, *Notabilidades*, p. 68

<sup>11</sup> *Almanak Administrativo, Mercantil e Industrial do Rio de Janeiro- Almanak Laemmert, ano 1878, Notabilidades*, p. 68. "João dos Santos Couceiro e irmão, fábrica de rabecas, violoncelos, contrabaixos, e arcos, violões, cavaquinhos, guitarras e violas. Especialidade nos concertos; vende cordas para todos os instrumentos. Os produtos desta fábrica tem sido premiados com medalhas nas Exposições de Portugal, Brasil e Filadélfia".

<sup>12</sup> Arquivo Nacional do Rio de Janeiro, Couceiro, João dos Santos, Documentos da Junta Comercial, 1890.

<sup>13</sup> *Histórico do Cavaquinho de Ouro e o ressurgimento do violão*, Rio de Janeiro, 1928: "O Cavaquinho de Ouro tem sido, desde sua fundação, um centro de grandes artistas, que aí tiveram a sua completa formação, muitos dos quais ainda o frequentam assiduamente, tendo sido, portanto, um constante incentivador da arte musical".

these instruments. With the death of Santos Couceiro in 1905, his principal assistant, Senhor Cunha, left to work at A Guitarra de Prata. Research on the documentation that will enable us to know the scale and range of these craftsmen's work is still underway. However, the number of professionals involved in this craft underlines the popularity and enormous diffusion of string instruments in the context of urban music in Rio.

If the first years of the twentieth century marked the shift from craftsmen's workshops to the manufacture of instruments by the music shops, in the second half of the century we notice a curious fact: the re-emergence of the tradition of the craftsman in the making of instruments. Great musicians have come to use guitars of different kinds specially made to suit their abilities. In this way, in the late 1970s the "fine" crafting of instruments came to find a place in the work of the *luthier* Sergio Rebello Abreu (1948), a reputed international performer, who resolved to abandon his career as a practising musician in order to dedicate himself full-time to fashioning guitars. This decision, which came as a surprise to many, in reality brought closure to a circle. His grandfather, Antonio Rebello, a Portuguese musician who had arrived to Rio de Janeiro in 1920, as well as being one of the pioneers of teaching classical guitar in Rio (his pupils included Turibio Santos and Jodacil Damaceno), was a maker of guitars, a profession that his grandson retains to this day.

This brief description makes it possible to assess how significant the presence and making of guitars in the musical life of Rio de Janeiro has been.



Illustration 29.5. Ao Cavaquinho de Ouro, promotional brochure

Appendix 29.1. Guitar makers in Rio de Janeiro (Almanak Laemmert, 1845-1889)

Guitar makers	1845	1846	1847	1848	1849	Address
Antonio José de Sampaio				x		São Joaquim, 21
Antonio Machado Lourenço	x		x	x		Latoeiros, 69
		x	x	x	x	São Pedro, 91
Clemente da Costa Dias			x			Prainha, 50
José Alves de Carvalho	x	x	x	x	x	São Joaquim, 50
Manoel José de Lima	x					São Pedro, 91
Manoel de Mattos Guimarães		x	x	x		São Pedro, 132
Pedro José Gomes Braga		x		x	x	São Pedro, 116

Guitar makers	1851	1852	1853	1854	1855	1856	1857	1858	1859	Address
Antonio Machado Lourenço	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	São Pedro, 91
							x	x	x	São Pedro, 105
Cazal e Brazão						x	x	x	x	São Pedro, 108
Custódio J. Teixeira de Paul		x		x	x	x				São Joaquim, 37
João Pedro Alves da Fonseca				x	x	x	x	x		São Joaquim, 26
Joaquim Carneiro da Silva						x	x			São Pedro, 109
José Alves de Carvalho	x	x	x	x	x	x				São Joaquim, 50
							x	x	x	São Joaquim, 42
Manoel Alves da Costa							x	x	x	São Joaquim, 37
Manoel Antonio da Silva	x									São Joaquim, 37
Manoel José dos Santos						x	x			São Joaquim, 53
Manoel de Mattos Guimarães										São Pedro, 132
Pedro José Gomes Braga	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	São Pedro, 116

Guitar makers	1860	1861	1862	1863	1864	1865	1866	1867	1868	1869	Address
Antonio Machado Lourenço	x	x	x								São Pedro, 98
				x	x	x	x				São Pedro, 105
Antonio de Souza Franco						x	x	x	x	x	Sabão, 193
Francisco Machado Linhares										x	São Pedro, 108
Francisco P. A. Macedo									x		São Pedro, 108
João Pedro Alves da Fonseca	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	São Joaquim, 26
João Vieira Brazão								x	x	x	São Joaquim, 7
Joaquim Carneiro da Silva											São Pedro, 109
José de Barros Casal	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			São Pedro, 108
José Alves de Carvalho						x	x	x	x	x	São Joaquim, 42
José Moreira Dias Braga									x	x	São Pedro, 116
Manoel Alves da Paula Costa	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	São Joaquim, 37
Manoel Antonio da Silva	x	x	x	x	x						
Manoel Mattos Guimarães											São Pedro, 132
Pedro José Gomes Braga	x	x	x	x	x						São Pedro, 116
Viúva Braga						x	x				São Pedro, 116

## Portuguese Guitar-Makers in Nineteenth-Century Rio de Janeiro

Guitar makers	1870	1871	1872	1873	1874	1875	1876	1877	1878	1879	Address
Antonio Rodrigues da Costa						x					São Joaquim, 11
Antonio de Souza Franco	x		x	x	x						G. Câmara, 193
						x	x	x	x	x	G. Câmara, 175
Balthasar Alves									x	x	
Eduardo Reilly, Soares & C.							x				G. Câmara, 23
Francisco Fernandes Farinha		x	x	x	x	x					São Joaquim, 35
Francisco Machado Linhares	x	x	x								São Pedro, 108
J. J. Rodrigues Loureiro			x								Quitanda, 7 B
João Pedro Alves da Fonseca	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x		São Joaquim, 26
João S. Couceiro & irmão								x	x	x	Carioca, 44
José Alves de Carvalho	x	x	x	x	x	x	x				São Joaquim, 42
José Moreira Dias Braga	x	x							x		São Pedro, 116
José Pedro G. de Oliveira			x	x	x						São Joaquim, 119
José Raphael da Costa											São Joaquim, 26
Manoel Alves da Paula Costa	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	São Joaquim, 37
Manoel Machado Linhares						x	x	x	x	x	São Pedro, 104
Viera de Carvalho e Azevedo							x				T. Ottoni, 88

Guitar makers	1880	1881	1882	1883	1884	1885	1886	1887	1888	1889	Address
Antonio Rodrigues da Costa											São Joaquim, 11
Antonio de Souza Franco						x	x	x	x	x	G. Câmara, 175
Balthasar Alves	x								x	x	
Eduardo Reilly, Soares & C.							x				G. Câmara, 23
Francisco Fernandes Farinha		x	x	x	x	x					São Joaquim, 35
Francisco Machado Linhares		x	x								São Pedro, 108
J. J. Rodrigues Loureiro			x								Quitanda, 7 B
João Pedro Alves da Fonseca			x	x	x	x	x	x	x		São Joaquim, 26
João dos Santos Couceiro	x							x	x	x	Carioca, 44
José Alves de Carvalho	x	x	x	x	x	x	x				São Joaquim, 42
José Moreira Dias Braga	x	x							x		São Pedro, 116
José Pedro G. de Oliveira			x	x	x						São Joaquim, 119
José Raphael da Costa											São Joaquim, 26
Manoel Alves da Paula Costa	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	São Joaquim, 37
Manoel Machado Linhares						x	x	x	x	x	São Pedro, 104
Viera de Carvalho e Azevedo							x				T. Ottoni, 88