

## Catherine Margaret Varela

(6 Dec 1850 – 28 Dec 1939)

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*The Evening Star*, December 29, 1939, p. A8

### **Mrs. C.M. Varela, 89, Sister of Sousa, Dies in Chevy Chase**

#### **As School Girl Here She Attended Union Wounded During Civil War**

Mrs. Catherine M. Varela, 89, older sister of John Philip Sousa, died yesterday at the home of her son, Osmund L. Varela, 18 Williams Lane, Chevy Chase, Md. She had been ill since Christmas Eve.

No musician herself, Mrs. Varela nevertheless followed with keen interest the career of her famous brother, four years younger. She had recently attended the ceremony at the opening of a portion of the new John Philip Sousa Bridge over the Anacostia River.

Born in Brooklyn, N.Y., Mrs. Varela came to Washington when she was two years old. As a school girl she took food to the Union wounded brought to the Capitol during the Civil War. With the exception of six years spent in California, she had made her home here since 1852.

Mrs. Varela was the widow of Alexander C. Varela, War Department employe, who died some 25 years ago. For 84 years she attended Christ Protestant Episcopal Church, 622 G street S.E., taking a great interest in religious affairs.

Another son, Edmund A. Varela of Washington, and a sister, Mrs. James McK. Bower of Chicago, Ill., survive, as do eight grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

Funeral services will be held at 3:30 p.m. tomorrow at Christ Church, with burial in Congressional Cemetery.

Paul E. Bierley, **John Philip Sousa, American Phenomenon**, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1973, p. 243

Catherine Margaret was the first of John Antonio and Marie Elisabeth Sousa's ten children and was born on December 6, 1850, in Brooklyn, New York. "Teeny," or "Tiny," as she was called, is the only one of Sousa's brothers or sisters mentioned in his autobiography, "Marching Along." This tends to strengthen the belief that she was his favorite. As the eldest child, she had to help bring up the younger children. One of her familiar sayings was "Mother had the babies, and I raised them." She was married to Alexander C. Varela, a chemist and photographer, in 1869. Except for six years in California, she spent most of her life in Washington, D.C. She died on December 28, 1939 and is buried in Congressional Cemetery.