

# WEEKLY Philatelic Gossip

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WHOLE NO. 659

## LA MORENETA--PATRON SAINT OF CATALONIA

BY TED PLATT

SOME time ago I was the recipient of a set of stamps from Spain, issued in 1931, and known as the Montserrat issue. A letter was enclosed asking if I would dig up a little information relative to the various scenes depicted. At the time I was feeling rather low, and hence, the request was not complied with.

A week later I ran across an old schoolmate in town. I invited him home for dinner and a chat. He had changed, radically, since our last meeting. From a meek, placid youth, he had changed to a boisterous adventurer. He had been in all parts of the world, seen things that were hardly known outside their particular limits—in other words, he deemed this a far better education than dry text-books.

During the course of the evening I asked if he had been in Barcelona.

"Why, yes," he replied. "And to a very interesting place just out-

side there, called Montserrat . . ."

Of course at such information I became quite interested.

"Well," I said, "that's an odd coincidence. A friend of mine recently asked me for some enlightenment on the various things connected with Montserrat, but I have found very little of interest. Perhaps you, as an eyewitness, can give me a better idea of the place."

"I don't know whether I can or not, but if it will be of any use to you I'll tell you what I saw.

"From Barcelona, where I was staying, to Mt. Serrat, there's a 35 or 40 mile ride, either by way of auto or railroad. I decided to go by rail, for reasons of my own.

"As we got up speed, the train began to sway, restless like, and the scenery changed gradually from nice green fields to dusty cactii and date palms, and then to rocky and irreg-

ular hills and valleys. When the brakes were slowly applied, I shoved my head out the window to see the reason, and as I did so, I caught a momentary glimpse of Montserrat. Then we stopped, and were informed that we had to change to the rack-and-pinion railway.

"I was amazed when told that we had still five miles to go. But making myself as comfortable as possible in my new compartment, we chugged off. As we began our ascent the tiny locomotive tilted so that its boiler

stream of what I took for devotees making their way to worship. I looked at my watch and noted that it was a few minutes to ten; this must be the 10 o'clock Mass then, I thought. So I decided to join in and see what would happen.

"Finally I reached a shrine where everyone seemed to be going. As usual, the interior was bleak and bereft of any decoration, save that of the altar. This, on the other hand, was very showy with its jewels, its silver plate, and its bright vestments. All eyes seemed to be directed to a small stage slightly above the altar; so I watched and waited.

"As the chanting grew louder the curtains on the small stage were drawn apart. If you can imagine leaving a room brilliantly lighted and entering a dark cavern and seeing piles of jewels reflecting a concealed beam, you may get a slight idea of the dazzlement of

those drawn curtains. I was stunned. The white raiments and the light background emphasized the very dark hands and face by revealing them with an Ethiopian brilliance. For a silent moment I gazed and then the curtains dropped; for only so long is the image exposed.

"On leaving, I went to a shop I had noticed when arriving, containing books and papers in the windows. I went in and discovered a booklet entitled, "La Moreneta," as the Black Virgin is called. I paid the shopkeeper and returned to the Monastery, very eager to understand this statue.

"Upon reading I found that St. Luke had carved the image and that St. Peter had brought it to Barcelona some time in 50 A. D. But when the Moors invaded Spain it was hidden by Christian Monks in one of the caves of Montserrat near the present location of the Monastery. A while later



Two Views of the Black Virgin



Planning



Mt. Serrat

would remain level on the steep grades. As I was wondering how it was possible to scale these steep, smooth walls, we entered a tunnel and emerged at the very gate of the Monastery, some 3,000 feet above the sea.

"After alighting, I stood about and looked. Disregarding the shouting porters, I wandered toward the Monastery. I was not alone, for many of the people, who had been on the same train as I, were walking in the same direction.

"At length I arrived at an office where a priest took my name and place of residence. His next words were astonishing. He informed me that I might stay for three days without charge! Forthwith, he assigned me my room and gave me an armful of linen. A lay brother directed me to my room and then left.

"I looked out of the window and saw in the courtyard below a steady

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### Mint U. S. & Philippine Is.

Philippine Olympic (3 var.), 20c. O.B. Sure. (11 var.), \$1.20. Postage Due (7 var.), 55c. Reg. Issue 10 var.), \$1.00. Pictorial Set (4, 12, 20, 24, 32 centavo), 60c. Imperf. 1 peso, 70c. 2 pesos, \$1.30. 4 pesos, \$2.50. 10 pesos, \$5.75. Used No. 363, 40c. 369, 40c. Set, 70c.

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Cash with order. Postage extra.

WILLIAM WEINSTOCK

166 West 75 St., New York City

some shepherds heard music high in the hills and, on investigating, discovered the image.

"And despite efforts to move this not quite life sized statue it would not be taken from where it now stands. So they built the Basilica to protect it and erected the Monastery to care for the many pilgrims who climbed the mountain to worship. And it seems a good omen for young couples to come to Montserrat for blessings.

"That is all I can tell you. I've lost the book or otherwise you might glean more from it than I. Oh, yes. There's one thing more that may interest you. They have erected a garage for modern pilgrims and completed an aerial approach to the gate of the Monastery. This latter is somewhat like an incline, only without the ground under it. It goes almost straight up and swings at a dizzy height."

There is still one stamp to account for. This one symbolizes the mountain itself. Mt. Serrat is a remarkable group of conglomerate rocks, consisting of jagged pinnacles and spires rising abruptly from the base and cloven by numerous ravines bordered by sheer vertical precipices. Its appearance would lead one to think it had been cut with a gigantic saw, hence the outline of a saw above a mountain peak.

### Cacheting Along

The New United States Post Office, Hattiesburg, Mississippi, will be dedicated on or after July 10, 1934, and a special cachet will be sponsored by the Junior Philatelic society. Send 6¾ size envelopes, ready to go, to Malcolm F. Dickson, Cachet Director, Junior Philatelic society, 410 Southern Ave., Hattiesburg, Mississippi.

The George Washington Camp No. 1 of New Orleans, of the Patriotic Order Sons of America, are sponsoring a cachet for their Fourth of July celebration at Shushan Airport. Mail covers ready to go to G. S. Veith, 5224 Coliseum St., New Orleans, La. Commemoratives on wrappers appreciated and limit is ten covers.

Cachet for 100th anniversary of the organization of Indian Territory. Send covers to W. K. Cunningham, 917 N. Morton Ave., Okmulgee, Okla. Commemoratives on wrappers appreciated.

Inasmuch as Monroe's air mail service will continue in the next fifteen or twenty days, Earle M. Tate, Box 338, Monroe, La., will handle covers for a cachet for the first day flight

under new contracts and flight number. Previous covers sent to Monroe for first night flight will be sent and carefully cacheted, as the first night flight was never flown. Commemoratives on wrappers will be appreciated.

The Cincinnati Branch of the A.A.S. is cooperating with the C. of C., of Covington, Ky., in sponsoring a cachet in connection with the 100th anniversary of the incorporation of Covington, to be celebrated on July 4. Address covers in lower right-hand corner in order to have room for the cachet and address them to the Chamber of Commerce, Pike and Madison, Covington, Ky. Postage dues will be refused and 1½c covers will not be cacheted—must be first class or air mail, only.

The San Jose Philatelic club and the C. of C., are sponsoring a cachet for the opening of the new post office, date uncertain, but it will be between July 2nd and 10th. Send covers ready to go to Chamber of Commerce, 85 West Santa Clara St., San Jose, Calif.

J. J. Mattes, 113 Cornelia St., Chicago, Ill., will hold covers for events in and around Chicago. Collectors should specify type of covers interested in. (Two City Bulletin.)

Michael Sussman, 520 West 158th St., New York City, will hold covers sent him for the Macon, which did not participate in the Fleet Review, for some worthwhile event. (Two City Bulletin.)

Scott Nixon, 128—8th St., Augusta, Ga., will be glad to mail covers for the opening of the new CAM route from Charleston, S. Car., to Fort Worth and Dallas, which includes Augusta. (Two City Bulletin.)

T. M. Holcomb of Southampton, Pa., advises that he has about fifty covers received too late for his last Historical cover and that these covers will be released from Newtown, Pa., with their cachets. (Two City Bulletin.)

Emil Thurman, 1366 Laharpe St., New Orleans, La., advises that collectors still have time to send in covers for the first flight New Orleans to Houston route. It will take place in the next two weeks or so. (Two City Bulletin.)

P. J. Ickeringill, Box 85, Edgewood, R. I., will hold air mail covers for, if and when Quonset Field Point is dedicated for use of naval planes. (Two City Bulletin.)

John D. Long, 3326 Fulton St., San Francisco, Calif., will hold covers for special events in the San Francisco locality, only. (Two City Bulletin.)

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