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Browsing the Web: **The Gem-Studded Divide**

by J. Van Kird Wells

(This article started out as a “Yesterday in Stamps”—May 18, 1940—feature, but the subject lent itself to “browsing the web”. JFD.)

Down where the Atlantic and the Caribbean meet, a barrier lies; a gem studded divide between the waters of the two great deeps. Stretched in an arc these many islands, some great and some tiny, a few larger ones both inhabited and well-known, the greater number without name or



Use the pdf enlarge function for closer looks at this and other images

human inhabitant; yet around these islands, known as The Lesser Antilles, the waters gray and blue mingle. St. Thomas, of our Virgin Islands, is the most northern and smallest of those with name and fame; lying just east of Puerto Rico. The largest and most southern is Trinidad, near the coast of Venezuela. They are mostly volcanic in origin, many having volcanoes quite recently active; the latest serious eruption that of Pelee, on Martinique, in 1902. Many islands have “La Soufriere,” the sulphur mine, as the highest peak. These are lands of the colored people, few whites are seen; yet these stamp-issuing islands are not alike.

ST. THOMAS

The capital and port of St. Thomas, called Charlotte Amalie (U.S. Scott 802) by the Danes, stands in the crescent of an almost enclosed harbor; it has one of the three



HB Co FDC for U.S. Scott 802, Virgin Islands

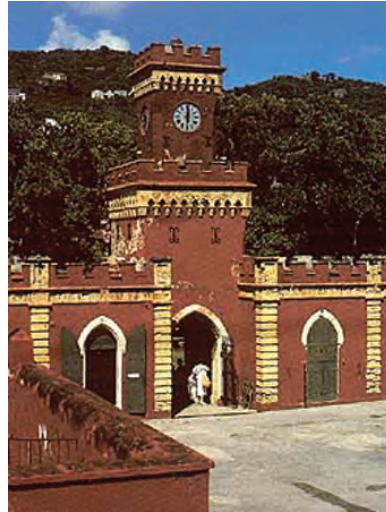
docks
to be
found in
all these
islands
where
ships
can tie-
up.



*U.S. Scott 802
Right, Cruise ships
docked in Charlotte
Amalie*



*Bluebeard's Castle, photo by Carol Fava, from
www.stthomassource.com*



*Fort Christian, from
www.nps.gov/nr/travel/prvi/*

The sturdy Danish homes, in pastel colors and red roofs, stand on a hillside and beyond the forest covered hills. The fine stores, the Danish "Christian's Fort," Bluebeard's Castle, the reputed haunt of an old pirate, the old Huguenot village of Che-Cha are all noteworthy. The Lindbergh Aviation Field, developed where the Colonel landed, makes the island easy of access.

ST. KITTS

One sails nearly half around St. Kitts, Saint Christopher if you must be formal to reach the port on an open roadstead in the southern part of the island. It is a view:



www.stkittstourism.kn/

first there is Mount Misery the highest peak of three groups of mountains in the central part of the island; the Black Rocks with the wild surf at their base—Brimstone Hill, on which are ruins of an old fort to guard British interests and the sulphur spring manifestly present at the base; Old Road Bay (St. Kitts-Nevis Scott 114) one of the landing places of Columbus in 1492 not far from the port Basseterre. People live in little hamlets and small towns near the coast, the interior is full of mountains. Nevis is in full view to the east, another forest crowned island.



Scott 114 and circa 1930 picture post card: Old Road Bay



ANTIGUA

A quite level island, the coast all points and bays; this is Antigua. One of the smaller islands, its

Below, St. Kitts 228, 1988
Tourist hotels: Royal St. Kitts Casino and Jack Tar Village



Above, now the St. Kitts Marriott Resort & The Royal Beach Casino, you can enjoy more views at

www.marriott.com/hotels/hotel-deals/skbrb-st-kitts



Beach & sailfish on Antigua Sc. 203



and from www.realtravel.com/dp-1013-0-antigua_and_barbuda_photos

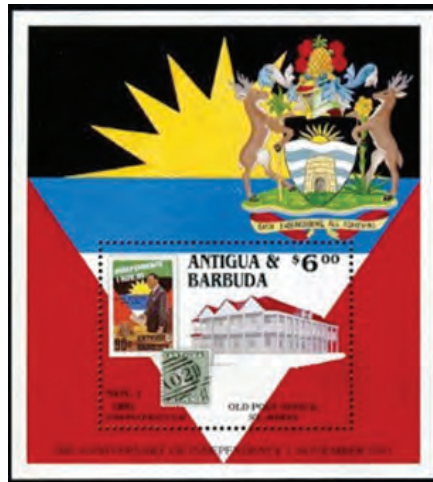


Ft. James, from Scott 89 and www.cdlands.com



Antigua Sc. 70, Government House. St. John's

shore-line is one of the longest. Among its many bathing beaches Fort James



10th Anniversary of Independence: Antigua Sc. 1487, Old Post Office, St. John's, Antigua Sc. 1 and 635 (Prime Minister Bird)

(Scott 89) holds a first place. Here are the ruins of an old fort, a mile further up the bay is the capital, St. John's (Scott 70), a city of wide clean streets and interesting buildings. The launches, *Lord Nelson* and *Lady Hamilton* take passengers from the ship to Fort James and St. John's. After the steep, rugged mountains and wild tangled jungles on most islands, the rippling water on the sands and the birds and flowers by the level roads was a welcome change.

MONTSERRAT

Far away there rises from the ocean Montserrat (Scott 75-84) a characteristic island of this group.

Montserrat Sc. 84 showing New Plymouth & Harbour; photo: Soufriere Hills Volcano with Plymouth in the foreground, much of it buried by volcanic ash from an eruption in 1995-97





Night and daytime views of Soufriere Hills Volcano eruption

Plymouth, the port and capital, is on the open sea; and is noteworthy for its Concrete War Memorial and the many casks of rum in the public square. A small island and one of the poorest, the houses are largely hovels; it was the one place where there was nothing to buy and no chance to



Montserrat Sc. 922a/i volcano scenes from sheetlet of nine (not shown, two birds stamps)



Montserrat Sc. 248, Concrete War Memorial, and a 1965 picture post card showing the Memorial



have a ride: no one who had ever seen this island or Dominica would call the Virgin Islands "Our Poorhouse."

GUADELOUPE

Two islands, separated by Riviere Salee, are called Guadeloupe. Basse-Terre is the larger, very mountain-

Guadeloupe Sc. B2, Harbor at Basse-Terre





Sc. 82, Pointe-a-Pitre,
Grand-Terre

ous, with wild luxuriant jungles and fertile. Grande-Terre is quite flat and dry; water is piped to the port and largest city, Pointe-a-Pitre. Here also is another of the scarce docks of the Lesser Antilles.

It is not surprising that a sugar cane mill (Scott All) is typical of Guadeloupe. The drive



Sc. 96, Sugar Mill



Sugar cane crushing equipment

from the capital, Basse-Terre (Scott A8), the same name as the capital of St.



Riviere Salee (Salt River) with
causeway across Grand-Terre and
Basse-Terre, from
www.photos-guadeloupe.net



Kitts, along the La Grande Rivive across the two islands to Pointe-a-Pitre (Scott A10) is one of the most beautiful. On all the islands are public markets where are sold meats, vegetables and all perishable things.

DOMINICA

Roseau, the capital and port of Dominica, is built on a curving shore; the green encircling arms reach out to protect the harbor on both sides. Ships anchor well inshore

and the view of the city and of the island is fine. The capital (Scott A6) on a river of the same name has a population of about 7,000; it is very poor. High above its dirty streets and mean shabby houses stands a shrine, its cross is illuminated at night, to which pilgrimages are made. This is one of the wildest and most mountainous of all the islands, yet passable roads lead to habitations and even plantations in many parts.



Sheltered Dominica harbor with mountain just behind Roseau



Dominica Sc. 46, Roseau along shore with mountains in background



Ship docked in harbor just off Roseau



Dominica Sc. 439, M.V. Geestscape in harbor



The National Shrine of Our Lady of La Salette, Pointe Michel

Dominica mountains rising from shoreline

To be continued



Dominica Sc. 1075, Mountainous interior

Browsing the Web: **The Gem-Studded Divide, Pt.2**

by J. Van Kird Wells

(Continued from Stamp News Online, February 4, 2011, page 7)

MARTINIQUE

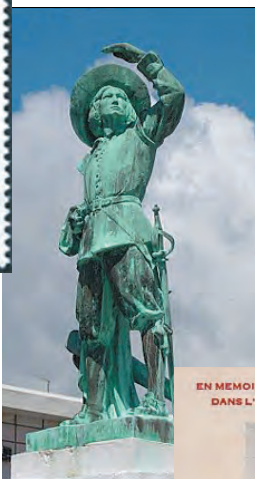
The mystery of Pelee and the glamour of Fort de France, the capital and port, makes Martinique an island of desire. Ships anchor far out to sea, nearly two miles; large boats, manned by



Fort-de-France¹



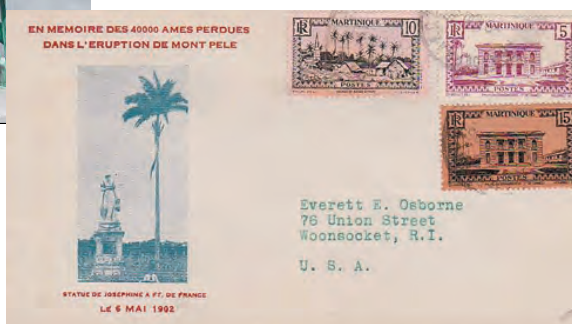
*Above, Marti-
nique Sc. 175,
Landing of
d'Esnambuc;
right, statue of
d'Esnambuc*



three men each with a large heavy oar, carry passengers to the landing dock; it is often a rough passage.

Facing the dock is a statue of Pierre Belain d'Esnambuc; who made the name of France great in these parts.

The gleaming white marble statue of Josephine dominates the nearby park. The beautiful residence section houses those of importance, most villas have a name, one is "Breath of



Statue of Josphine on a cover commemorating the 40th anniversary of the eruption; stamps, Sc. 137-139, show village of Basse-Pointe and Government Palace, Fort-de-France

1. <http://www.nycruiseinfo.com/Ports/Martinique.htm>

Right, Mount Pelee and Fort-de-France harbor



Fort-de-France harbor and Mount Pelee on a die proof of Sc. 228. For a closer view, use the pdf magnifier.

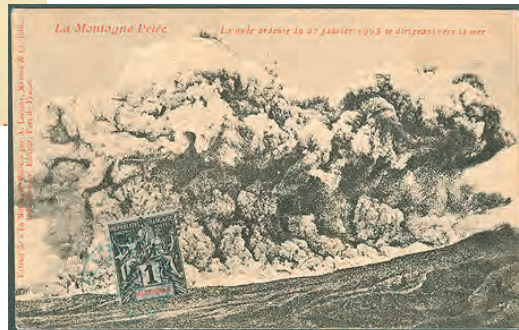


Photo postcard with Martinique Sc. 33, showing the Mount Pelee volcanic eruption, which killed approximately 30,000 people²

Spring”. This section is high above the harbor, as is the noted school to which come pupils from other islands, even far away Trinidad.

ST. LUCIA

The ship docks at Port Castries, in a harbor nearly enclosed by land. The excellent harbor of St. Lucia is a stopping place for the British Patrol boats. The mountains rise sharply from the dock.

On all these islands there are “Self-Help” stores, in charge of benevolently minded



Port Castries harbor, from <http://www.paradise-islands.org>



Sc. 297a-b: Castries yesterday in an old print, right, and “today” on a 1971 stamp

² *This and other Caribbean stamp images came from eBay and <http://www.caribbean-stamps.com>*



The Pitons, including as seen on Sc. 122



Castries dockside market place

w o m -
 en, where people may bring articles of home manufacture for advantageous sale. The store at Castries is one of the best, but many prefer to sell their wares on the dock. Here, rain or shine, at midday or midnight, a

happy cheerful crowd of people offer a variety of things to each incoming ship.

BARBADOS

The Custom-house stands as a barrier to the entrance of Bridgetown, the port of Barbados; unless



Bridgetown's deep water harbor and terminal in a current photo and in two 2000 stamps. The one on the right, Sc. 987, showed a reverse view, with the harbor opening to the right; Sc. 987A corrected that error. Scott describes the stamps as ships facing left or right, which is an easy identifier, but the reverse image is the design error. Sc. 252 celebrated the 1961 opening of the deep water harbor and correctly shows the harbor opening to the left.



one enters after four in the afternoon. At the sacred hour of four P.M., all business houses close on all these islands; it does not seem to matter who comes or goes after closing time. The ship anchors far out, passengers are landed by Company Tender on a small dock.

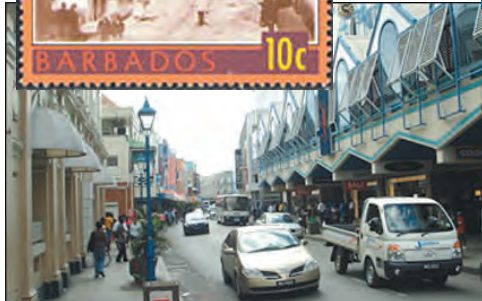
The return trip is made from the water-side of the “Careenage” where small vessels of many nations anchor,



The Careenage, on Sc. 245, an old postcard (top right), and a current photo (right)



Bridgetown's Broad Street shopping district in early days, on Sc. 1047, and in a recent photo



some are careened, turned on their sides, for repairs. Bridgetown is a winter resort of note; one of the most

comfortable and homelike cities to be found in all these islands. Here on this flat, very fertile and favorably situated island the population is mostly black, fifteen to one white.

ST. VINCENT

A huge red ball comes up out of a glassy sea and reveals the saw-toothed mountain-tops silhouetted



Sunrise photo, and on St. Vincent Grenadines Sc. 268.



Clockwise from left: Fort Duvernette from Kingstown; Fort Duvernette, Young Island and Kingstown; Fort Duvernette on Sc. 715; and a recent photo.

Fort Charlotte from Kingstown on Sc. 143 and photo, right; and in aerial view, below.



St. Vincent Sc. 433, sunbathing at Young Island

against the blue sky; this is St. Vincent. Fort Duvernette stands sentinel on a pillar of rock 260 feet above the sea, four miles from Kingstown, the capitol and port. The island rises sharply from a narrow shore; at one place a huge knoll juts out and is cut off, almost perpendicularly, across the end; like a huge green loaf sliced off by the sea. "Palm Beach" just by Young's Island is a beautiful bathing-beach. Fort Charlotte, the largest fortification of days long gone, is on a hill jutting out into the ocean and affords a wide view in two directions.

GRENADA



St. George harbor on Sc. 1598 and in two recent photos.

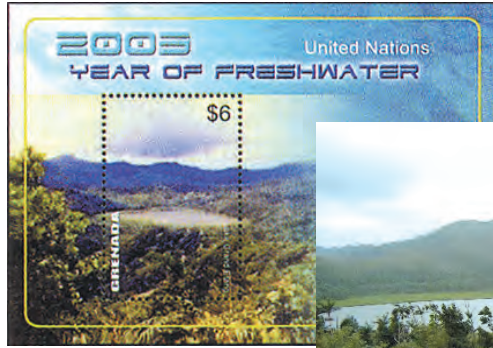
St. George, capital and port of Grenada, on its hill with the ancient French fort in the background and the secluded harbor to the right, is one of the loveliest views in all these islands.



Distant view of Fort George and cannon as seen on Sc. 2505 (commemorating U.S. liberation of Grenada, with Pres. Reagan in lower left) and in recent photo



The drives on this fertile island, “The Spice Island of the West,” are steep, rugged and beautiful. Here is one special feature, the Grand Etang (page 13). High up on an old volcano a large crater is full of water, forming a quiet lake. It is similar to the Blue and the Green lakes on San Miguel, in the Azores.



Grand Etang volcano lake on Grenada Sc. Sc. 3374 (above), Sc. 116, and a recent photo



It is not easy to decide whether Grenada or St. Vincent has more of natural beauty.

TRINIDAD

The largest and most southern of this chain of islands is Trinidad. From its southern end and from its northern coast, arms stretch out toward Venezuela; thus almost enclosing the Gulf of Paria.



Right, Port-of-Spain, in Northwest Trinidad; below, Maracas Bay, just 30 minutes away.



The northern arm ends in fragments, little islands, between which flow the waters of the Gulf of Paria



Bocas, Sc. 34



Boca 1, 2, and 3

into the Caribbean Sea.

These gaps are called “Bocas”; the First, Second and Third Boca.

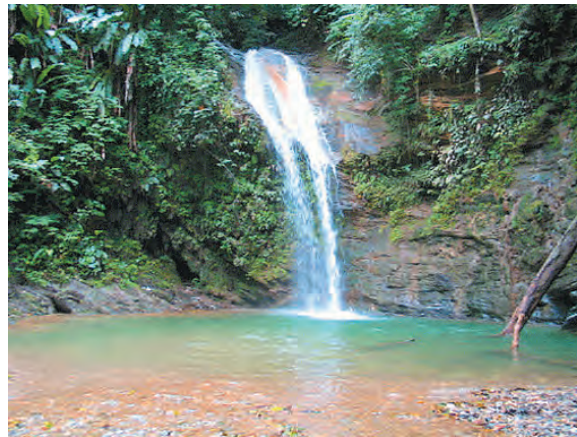
Trinidad is quite level with many attractive drives; possibly the best being to the “Blue Basin”. The road runs through tropical growth of great variety, up a steep ascent; the last mile or so on foot. The rather small pool is almost enclosed by steep banks of liv-



Columbus Sailing through the Bocas, Sc. 262



Blue Basin, on Sc. 42 and in a recent photo



ing green, from the far side of which the water gushes down more than one hundred feet.



Trinidad trolley, on a 1902 postcard

Port-of-Spain, the capitol and port, is a large cosmopolitan city. The clamor of tongues, voicing many languages, rises above the rattle of the wagon wheels, the clangor of the

trolley and the rush of the automobile; it is the dominant note of the streets.



The changing face of Trinidad: To the left we see the Port-of-Spain City Lighthouse, on Scott 678, part of a set of four 2002 Lighthouses stamps. Notice the boats. In the center we see the same lighthouse from a 2008 photo. Notice the road, which is South Quay Drive in downtown Port-of-Spain.

We learn from <http://www.unc.edu/~rowlett/lighthouse/tto.htm> that the original lighthouse was established in 1841 and was 43 feet tall. The lighthouse was built at the base of the St. Vincent Jetty, which can be seen in the stamp photo. However, since that time, the shoreline has been extended and the original purpose of the light has been lost, and it now is inactive.

In recent years, the lighthouse has been repainted from time to time. One example is seen in the rightmost photo, repainted in late 2005 in a wildly colorful pattern to honor Trinidad and Tobago's World Cup soccer team.