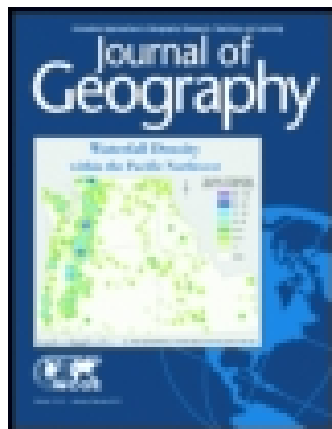


This article was downloaded by: [University of Oklahoma Libraries]

On: 18 January 2015, At: 00:32

Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



Journal of Geography

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rjog20>

Cape Verd Islands; A Visit to San Vicente in 1890

Mark Jefferson ^a

^a Normal College , Ypsilanti, Mich

Published online: 07 Feb 2008.

To cite this article: Mark Jefferson (1915) Cape Verd Islands; A Visit to San Vicente in 1890, Journal of Geography, 13:7, 224-226, DOI: [10.1080/00221341508983946](https://doi.org/10.1080/00221341508983946)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00221341508983946>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

CAPE VERD ISLANDS; A VISIT TO SAN VICENTE IN 1890

By Mark Jefferson

Normal College, Ypsilanti, Mich.

WE were steaming through an expanse of long oily swells off the West African coast. The awnings and the *Aquila's* sixteen knots an hour alone saved us from scorching between the tropic sun and its reflex in the glassy sea. All the afternoon there had been a haze to the north-east, where Captain Lavarello said we should sight San Antonio about six o'clock. This had been a source of great expectancy to all the passengers, as we had seen no land since leaving Fernando Noronha, off the Brazilian coast, and were all ready to hail the Cape Verde Islands as a variation of our daily scene of sea and sky. However, just as the gong rang for dinner, came the expected cry of *Terra*. Sure enough, the haze had cleared away and there, somewhat to the northward of where we had been gazing, rose a faint blue cloud far into the sky. There was nothing definite about it to look at long, so, after expressing doubts as to whether land could be so high, we went to dinner.

You see many of us had lived beside the lofty peaks of the Andine system; yet the effect of the mountain heights, where they rise sheer from the ocean, is so surprising that Aconcagua's twenty-two thousand feet seem less actually than San Antonio's five or six thousand. You may see the same effect in Green Mountain, Mt. Desert.

That night little more was to be seen than the lights of the Port and the village of San Vicente. We had to defer our sight-seeing till morning. Then we found ourselves lying in a circular bay, nearly surrounded by queer red and black crags of volcanic rock. Here and there a beach or hillside of bright yellow sand varied the scene, while to the right of the town, a long hollow swung back from the bay, carpeted with what seemed at first sight low firs, but on nearer approach, turned out to be plants peculiar to the islands. They are apparently maintained by the moisture of an underground water-course that follows the hollow.

Excepting a fine double row of shade-trees on the street along the water front, this is all there is of green on the island, fruit and vegetables being brought from San Antonio, that looms blue and hazy before the entrance to the harbor.

Nearer, dividing in two the harbor's mouth, stands an odd-shaped jagged rock, bearing the chief lighthouse high above the waves. The whole rock foundation of the island is so soft that the sea and weather readily work it into fantastic forms. The most notable illustration of this fact is seen looking seaward from the centre of the town. It is a huge face profiled in the hill-tops, gazing skyward. We climbed some lesser heights behind the town and

The above notes were written down in 1891, one year after the event, excepting the parenthesis near the end, which I am adding from memory.

found the firmest of the rock crumbled beneath our feet. Driven down to the shelter of the town by the sun's glaring rays, our attention was attracted by the throng about the public well, and we stopped to peer in. Without, it is a circular structure of volcanic rock, faced with lime, as are all the buildings on the island. Walled up for about ten feet from the ground, open arches, supporting the broad roof above, allow a free circulation of air within. The building is about thirty feet in diameter and is entered through a broad door to the north. Within, the actual well occupies the centre, being enclosed by a parapet about breast high opening on the side side to a sort of balcony over the water. There the women stand to lower their cans to the water. The form of this balcony and of the masonry brackets that support it is sufficiently graceful to lend a certain beauty to the otherwise simple lines of the building. The cans once filled, were lifted in true southern style to the heads of women and balanced nicely on a sort of turban of wet rag that is applied to the crown of the head for this purpose. Those who have not seen can hardly appreciate the ease with which even unstable loads can be carried in this manner. For instance, I have seen a South American Indian girl carry a quart bottle filled with milk, simply standing it upon her head. To them it is an every day matter. One recalls the English contractor on an Indian railway-cutting who thought humanely to substitute wheelbarrows for the baskets in which the coolies carried the excavated earth on their heads. On visiting the cut, to observe the result of his innovation, he found the navvies *carrying the loaded barrows on their heads!*

The well, as a centre of common necessities, is one of the liveliest points on the island. Of course women predominate as drawers of water.

The physical types vary between pure African and Portuguese, but visitors of every nationality may be met with at any time, as all the English, German and Italian steamship lines take this convenient place for their coaling station on the South American voyages. The French, of course, prefer their own station at Dakar on the African coast opposite.

Passing down the well-paved streets—there are no horses nor carts—we were invited by a sentinel to visit the jail. We stepped in. The building differed from the usual residence only in having wooden and iron bars across its doorways. Standing in the corridor, we could converse with the prisoners inside about the reason and length of their imprisonment. They were cheerful and no worse appearing than the usual run of the inhabitants, nor did they seem to feel shame at being thus made objects of curiosity, rather availing themselves of the opportunity to beg the visitor for small coins or tobacco. Of course the impassive jailors expect to share in this bounty.

But most striking among the sights of San Vicente to our eyes was the Cammoens school, where an aged negress, dressed in the most spotless white, presided over two rooms full of bright, neatly dressed little girls, daughters of the richer class among the islanders. There were no benches; only chairs in no fixed order.

The height of the room, occupying the whole one story of the building, the size of the windows, hung with curtains of matting, and the contrast of coolness and neatness within to the heat and dirt of the street without, combined to make the school one of the most attractive I ever saw. The little girls in one room seemed to be having a recess as we entered, and crowded fearlessly about us, eager to know from what country we came and in what steamer, being too well acquainted with such visitors to wonder at our presence. We were a party of a dozen gentlemen, Spaniards all except myself, and all a good deal older than I. Doubtless the teacher thought the party was all of Spaniards. I am sure the lesson that followed would not have been given had she known that a North American was present. It turned on the character and disposition of the English people, apparently part of a Geography lesson. It came out that the English were cruel and bloodthirsty. As evidence was cited the habit of English boys who differed in opinion of going off behind the school, as like as not under the escort and advice of some of the older boys, to beat each other about the face with their bare hands until their eyes were blackened and their noses bled. So too the grown up people paid large sums of money to see savage, half naked men fight with their fists for a prize. And the Americans had much the same habits. Prize-fights there attracted great numbers of wealthy and influential people, the governors of many states never failing to attend!

(Ten years later I was visiting a school in the town of Concord, Massachusetts and chanced into the geography class where the teacher was bringing out the inherent savageness and brutality of the Spaniards. She cited the bull-fights as evidence; how the people enjoyed seeing the angry bull tearing open with his sharp horns poor old horses that had not spirit enough to escape, only to be slain in his turn by a highly trained and well armed man, who gave him equally little chance for his life! How the occasion was a holiday one, the day being Sunday or some other festival and the world of society turning out in its gayest attire to see the event, even the queen of Spain herself. Both teachers ladies of dignity and charm and both instilling into children's minds the poison of an elementary contempt and hatred of the foreigner.)

A nod to the teacher, an *Adios* to the children, and we are off to the bay, where the Aquila lies darkly silhouetted against the pale blue outline of distant San Antonio.

The area of California, 158,297 square miles, is approximately equal to the combined area of Roumania, Bulgaria, Serbia, Albania, Montenegro, Belgium, and Turkey in Europe.

The population of California, according to the latest census, was 2,377,000, as against 28,532,000 for the European countries named.

Of California's total area, it is of interest to note that 70 per cent has already been topographically mapped by the United States Geological Survey.