

Falklands or Malvinas?

The philatelic contest for the islands

1927-2002

Objective

This historical and social exhibit examines the philatelic manifestations of the contest for the islands, starting in 1927 and continuing up to 2002, the 20th anniversary of the 1982 war.

Background

The *Falklands* were named for Anthony Cary, the 5th Viscount Falkland (Fife, Scotland), when an English sea captain on a voyage sponsored by Cary was driven off course by bad weather and landed there in 1690. The Spanish name, *Islas Malvinas*, is derived from the French, *Îles Malouines*, after the first known settlers of the islands, mariners and fishermen from the port of Saint-Malo in France, landed there in 1764.

Two years after the arrival of the French, the British constructed their own settlement, in 1766. Spain acquired the French settlement as part of an alliance between the two countries and placed it under a governor subordinate to the Buenos Aires colonial administration. The Spanish then expelled the British in 1770. This action brought the two countries to the brink of war. Fortunately military action was avoided with the establishment of a peace treaty and the return of the British settlement. Unfortunately, the contradictory claims were left unresolved.

In 1774 the British withdrew from their settlement. The Spanish withdrew from theirs in 1811. Both countries left behind plaques asserting their continued claims.

In 1820, a storm damaged ship from the United Provinces of the River Plate (independent forerunner of the Argentine Republic) took shelter in the islands, where her captain claimed them for his country. This became publically known in Buenos Aires (capital of the United Provinces and later Argentina), in 1821. After several abortive attempts, Luis Vernet established a settlement in 1828, after seeking authorization from both the British and United Provinces authorities.

After a dispute over fishing and hunting rights with some American ships in 1831, a US Navy warship destroyed Vernet's settlement and declared the islands free of all government. This action left the islands in a state of anarchy and finally convinced the British Foreign Office to reassert its sovereignty claim over the islands. In the mean time, the Buenos Aires government (now the Argentine Confederation) attempted to establish a penal colony on the islands. This action failed when the British arrived in January 1833 and asked the Argentines to leave, which they did as the Argentine forces were outnumbered and consisted mostly of British mercenaries who could not be relied upon to fight their own countrymen. Britain has held the territory ever since, except for the period during the 1982 Falklands War.

After 1833, relations between Britain and Argentina improved. Before WWII, many British companies invested heavily in Argentine projects, especially railroads and meat production, with Argentina becoming part of the Sterling Area. In 1971 an agreement was reached that improved communication links between Argentina and the Falklands. Besides reduced postal charges, the Argentine military was permitted to construct a temporary airstrip outside Stanley (capital of the Falklands). This was followed by the construction of a permanent airfield that the Argentine state airline, LADE, used to establish a regular service between Comodoro Rivadavia (on the Argentine mainland) and Stanley. Another pre-war agreement gave YPF, the Argentine national oil and gas company, a monopoly over the supply of the islands' energy needs.

Despite these demonstrations of cooperation between the British and Argentines, the tensions over the islands increased. In the late 1920s, an Argentine postal worker started annotating/defacing Falkland mail that passed through his control. By the 1930s, this had escalated into a full blown philatelic "war" that continued up to the outbreak of military hostilities in 1982 and beyond to the present day.

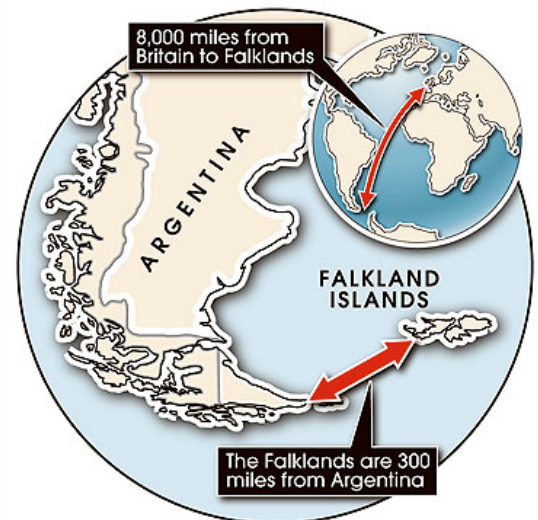


Exhibit Plan

- | | |
|----------------------|------------------|
| Opposing Claims | - Frames 1 and 2 |
| Prelude to War | - Frame 2 |
| Argentine Invasion | - Frames 2 to 4 |
| Falklands Occupied | - Frame 4 |
| British Repossession | - Frames 5 and 6 |
| War's Aftermath | - Frames 6 and 7 |