beautifully arranged gardens and drive-ways and a multitude of hotels, many of which compare favorably with the finest establishments of their kind in any part of the world. Montevideo is in fact not merely a great commercial port, but a seaside resort, to which the wealth and fashion of South America repair in the hot season. The municipality is growing rapidly and the numerous suburban towns and villages, which are connected with the older city by an excellent system of electric tramways, are increasing in size, as shown by the large number of new and unfinished buildings, about which workmen were swarming at the time of our visit. The population of the main city and its suburbs amounts at present to over three hundred thousand inhabitants, and it is therefore reckoned as fourth in the list of great South American municipalities, being only out-ranked by Buenos Aires, Rio de Janeiro, and São Paulo.


**IMMIGRANTS’ VIEW OF THE CITY**

_In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, there was a wave of immigrants from Europe into Latin America. The largest number, mostly Italians and Spaniards, poured into Argentina. Almost all settled in Buenos Aires. The following are selections from the letters of the Sola family._

**IMMIGRANT BUENOS AIRES, FROM ONE FAMILY, TWO WORLDS**

Buenos Ayres, 17 August 1901

Dearest parents,

I have been here since the 5th of this month; I am in the best of health as are my two companions. As soon as we got here, we went to the address of Godfather Zocco, who then introduced us to several people from Valdengo who have been in America for some years and all are doing well more or less. The language here is Castilian, quite similar to Spanish, but you don’t hear anyone speaking it. Wherever you go, whether in the hotel or at work, everyone speaks either Piedmontese or Italian, even those from other countries, and the Argentines themselves speak Italian.

This city is very beautiful. There is an enormous amount of luxury. All the streets—they call them _calle_ [sic] here—are paved either with hard wood or in cement as smooth as marble, even too smooth since the horses, tram horses as well as carriage horses, which run here, keep slipping constantly. It is not unusual to see twenty or more of them fall in one day.

There are some buildings beautiful beyond words, only five stories high, six at the most, but with ornamentation the equal of which you won’t find in all of Turin. The most beautiful building is the water reservoir, built by the English, and, what is surprising, it is all marble for half its height but with
certain small columns sculpted and decorated with exquisite workmanship. The other half of it is also enchanting; it occupies 10,000 square meters.

The piazza Victoria (Plaza de Mayo) is also beautiful, where all around on two sides there are only banks. They are of all nations: English, French, Italian, Spanish, North American, etc., etc. On another side is the government building where the president of Argentine Republic resides. He is Italian, Rocca by name, the third Italian president in a row who sits on the Argentine throne. There is also the railway station of the south, which is something colossal. With workshops, offices, and all the station itself it will cover one million square meters. Now they are at work on a government building for the Congress (Parliament). The architect was an Italian, as is the chief contractor, who is supervising all the work. It is a job which in the end will cost more than 700 million lire. It will occupy an area of a block which is 10,000 square meters and will be surrounded by a square, which, along with the building, will constitute an area of about 100,000 square meters. This work will be better than the first [the railway station], but perhaps I shall not be able to see it finished.

All of this is inside the city, but if you should go outside for a few hours, it's worse than a desert. You only find houses made solely out of mortar, with only a ground floor and a door you have to enter on all fours. Outside you don't see a plant; everything is desert. The plains stretch as far as the eye can see, it takes hours on the train before you come to the mountains. There are a few tracts of land, sort of green, where they may let a few horses loose to graze. Here they let the animal go out no matter what the weather might be. Here you can't find a rock, though you pay its weight in gold for it. All the ground is black like manure, thick and muddy. When it doesn't rain, it gets hard, and if you try to dig, it shoots out as if it were rock.

The food here is pretty good, but it doesn't have much flavor. This is true for all Argentina.

All the guys here are jolly as crazy men. In the evening when we get together before going to bed we split our sides laughing. They would all like to go back to Italy, but they don't ever budge. Perhaps I will do the same. Here we eat, drink, and laugh and enjoy ourselves; we are in America.

IMMIGRANT BUENOS AIRES, FROM ONE FAMILY, TWO WORLDS

Mendoza, 18 September 1901

Dearest Parents,

I am in still good spirits and happy that I am in America. I am now at Mendoza instead of Buenos Ayres. I didn't like Buenos Ayres too much because you don't get good wine there; and then every day the temperature changes twenty times, and I was always chilly. Otherwise it was fine.

One day I got the idea, knowing that Secondino's brother-in-law and sister were in Mendoza. Since the boss advanced me the money for the trip. I made up my mind to come here, where you see nothing but hills and mountains in the
distance, like at home. You drink very well here; the wine costs half what it does in Buenos Ayres and is pure and delicious. I am living here with Carlo and his wife and a man by the name of Luigi Ferraro from Chiavazza, who has been here for seven years traveling around in America. There are few people here from Biella, but there is no shortage of Italians. I still haven’t learned a word of Castilian because, everywhere you go, they speak Italian or Piedmontese.

I am better off here than in Buenos Ayres. I am only sorry to be so far from my friends—they didn’t want to come—and from Godfather and the rest.

This city is ugly; it never rains even though it is close to the mountains. I have written a friend to send me the address of my schoolmate Berretta, and I might just go and see him in Peru; it takes four days or more on the train. From Buenos Ayres to Mendoza takes two nights and a day on the railroad without ever changing trains or getting off. The longest stop is a half hour. In the entire journey you don’t see a plant. [There are] two or three rivers about 400 meters wide. They are all in the plain, so calm that you can’t tell which way the water is going, and yet they flow on in an imperceptible way.

Throughout the journey one meets only horses, cows, and goats, none of which have stables. On the rail line you don’t see a house for three hours or more, and everything is like that. The first night an ox was sleeping on the tracks; the train hit it so hard that it knocked it for a distance of more than fifty meters. It gave a long bellow and then died. There are also ostriches in great number. You find carcasses of other animals who have just died; the owners of these vast tracts don’t go looking for them. They leave them there to rot as food for the vultures, which are abundant. All of Argentina is like that. From Mendoza it takes fifteen hours by mule to get to Chile. My trip cost more than thirty scudos.

Everyone, Carlo, Cichina, and Luigi, give their regards to you. Tell Secondino to come and see America, to drink and eat and travel.

Time is pressing since I have to work every evening until ten. I work at home after work.

You should write me at:
El Taller del Ferro Carril G.O.A.
Mendoza

Goodbye everybody. Kisses to Able and Narcisa. Tell Able to study hard and to learn to work. Send him to the technical schools; I imagine he has been promoted. Goodbye, Mom and Dad. Be in good spirits as I am.

Yours always,

Orestes

IMMIGRANT BUENOS AIRES, FROM ONE FAMILY, TWO WORLDS

Buenos Ayres, 19 July 1908

Dearest parents,

Please excuse me if since the month of this past March I have not written you at all, nor shown any life in my promise to write to you. Here is the reason.
The Argentine government is far from prompt in its salaries; they can even fall behind by years. Only this month, after many protests, which leave them cold, have they paid us for November and December. As for the months of 1908, they are not even talking about them yet. However, toward the end of the year, when they start to deal with the proposed budget of 1909, I think they will have to talk about that concerning 1908, which has remained at the mercy of the individual ministers. I have spoken with some deputies, and it looks as if they will try to intervene on my behalf.

I have delayed so much because from one day to the next one kept hoping for a solution. But now we have all resigned ourselves to the situation, and we wait. For many, almost all, who have no other resource than their government money (not everyone can hold two jobs?!?) life is a bit grim, and they are scraping by on the strength of borrowing.

The salary I get from the firm working on the Congress enables me to live with security enough, but now in part because of the increase in the cost of living, and in part because of our private affairs, and then you must realize that now I am a man with a wife to support, everything slips away without any big expenses.

Please excuse me then if so much time has gone by since I have carried out my promises. In the months to come, until I am able to get full salary from Congress, I shall send you about 100 lire a month. I know it’s not much, but for now bear with me, dearest parents, and don’t think badly of me in your hearts. It is not because of stinginess or carelessness; it’s just that I can’t come up with anything more. I’ll send it to you then all at one stroke at the start of next year. In the meantime I am enclosing in this letter a check for 400 lire.

This week I have sent you two postcards which you will get a few days before this. I sent the same to Abele in Sardinia; tomorrow I’ll write him a letter, giving him the news in detail. I am glad that he has found something better. I think he will be able to do what he has to and become a man. Traveling a bit from one region to another will stimulate him, and so he will gain a lot of things that will be useful to him. It is, however, necessary for him to study, to study always and hard.

Today it is five months that I’ve been married, and I do not regret it at all. She is sweet; she talks to me often of you and Biella (she hasn’t been here long and still misses it). She takes care of the house—and all the domestic tasks—efficiently and with good taste. I am delighted with her. In the evening we enjoy a laugh together, and sometimes we go to the theater or to a concert. On Sundays, if the weather is good and not cold, we make an outing outside of town with different couples we know, and so we spend the time contentedly. She is eagerly looking forward to the Exposition of 1911 to see her own dear ones and you, for whom she makes my affection grow every day. As to any new addition, she gives no promise of one so far, but there is no hurry. Next month I’ll send you our pictures, long since promised. Count on it.

Enrico Ferri landed yesterday; he came for a lecture tour. I saw him last night at about eleven at an Italian club (l’Unione e Benevolenza), which today celebrates its fiftieth anniversary. He seems to have aged a lot; perhaps the cash he will take home will rejuvenate him. I have taken a subscription for the first
eight lectures. If there is anything interesting, I'll send you the newspapers. I am sending you one, in Italian, the one about his arrival.

Accept, dearest parents, so many, many kisses from your loving son and his wife, who looks upon you with the same respect as I do. One more big kiss for Mom from my wife.

Bye. Keep in good spirits.

Your dearest son,

Oreste


MEXICO CITY

Perhaps the greatest of the giant metropolises is Mexico City. Carlos Moncivais, Mexico's acerbic pundit, makes the following observations.

MEXICO CITY, FROM CARLOS MONCIVAI S, MEXICAN POSTCARDS

Visually, Mexico City signifies above all else the superabundance of people. In the capital, the multitude that accosts the multitude imposes itself like a permanent obsession. Intimacy is by permission only, the "poetic license" that allows you momentarily to forget those around you—never more than an inch away—who make of urban vitality a relentless grind.

Turmoil is the purpose of the city-dwellers, a whirlwind set in motion by secret harmonies and lack of public resources. How can one describe Mexico City today? Mass overcrowding and the shame at feeling no shame; the unmeasurable space, where almost everything is possible, because everything works thanks only to what we call a "miracle"—which is no more than the meeting-place of work, technology and chance. These are the most frequent images of the capital city:

- Multitudes on the Underground (where almost six million travelers a day are crammed, making space for the very idea of space);
- Multitudes taking their entrance exam in the University Football Stadium;
- The "Marías" (Mazahua peasant women) selling whatever they can in the streets, resisting police harassment while training their countless kids;
- The underground economy that overflows on to the pavements, making popular marketplaces of the streets. At traffic lights young men and women overwhelm drivers attempting to sell Kleenex, kitchenware, toys, tricks. The vulnerability is so extreme that it becomes artistic, and a young boy makes fire—swallowing it and throwing it up—the axis of his gastronomy;
- Mansions built like safes, with guard dogs and private police;
- Masked wrestlers, the tutelary gods of the new Teotihuacan of the ring;
- The Templo Mayor, Indian grandeur;