

# MAURITIUS ISLE MAY BE BRITISH NAVAL OUTPOST

### Island 716 Square Miles In Area In Strategic Loca- tion From African Coast And In Ethiopia Vicinity.

WASHINGTON, D. C. — (Sp) — Mauritius island, England's chief possession in the South Indian ocean and strategic point on the route between South Africa and India, is being considered as a possible naval base for Great Britain. Interest in making use of the island in this way has been aroused by the naval activity in the waters of the middle east in connection with the Italo-Ethiopian war. The island, about 716 square miles in area, is approximately 1,400 miles from the east coast of Africa and within four days steaming distance of ports used by Ethiopia.

"Port Louis, largest town of the densely populated island of Mauritius is an excellent harbor, protected at its entrance by two strongholds, Fort William and Fort George," says a bulletin from the Washington, D. C., headquarters of the National Geographic society.

"This port, one of the finest in the Indian ocean, is the only navigable and accessible approach to the island, which is surrounded by a chain of coral reefs.

Discovered in 1507  
"When the island was first discovered in 1507 by the Portuguese it was uninhabited. They made no permanent settlements, nor did the Netherlands which took possession in 1598. The latter gave the island its present name, Mauritius, in honor of Count Maurice of Nassau. They deserted the island in 1710 after several futile attempts at colonization.

"The French then took control and, renaming the island Ile de France, made a successful settlement at Port Louis. They introduced sugar planting as the principal industry and imported thousands of Africans to work the large plantations. The French also built roads, railways, and buildings which are still used. The French language, laws, and customs also prevail today, although the island has been under British control since the Treaty of Paris in 1814. When the British assumed control they changed very little except its name: Mauritius it was, to be called once more.

"Port Louis, melting pot of French, English, Indians, Africans, Chinese, Malays, and others, has been modernized by contact with the outside world. Regular steamship services and telegraphic and postal systems connect it with the principal cities of Europe, Africa, and Asia. Railways and motor highways bring it in constant touch with the main communities of the island. Port Louis is the seat of the government and business of Mauritius, but its most prosperous and prominent cit-

izens live in the fashionable residential town of Curepipe, 1,800 feet above the sea and about 15 miles from Port Louis. Commuting trains every morning carry Mauritian suburbanites to the heart of the city and in the evening back to the beautiful town in the highlands.

"July and August are the fashionable social months in Mauritius, as then the weather is at its best. In Port Louis a French opera company gives performances in the municipal theater during these months, and balls and concerts are frequent forms of entertainment. Sports also have a prominent place at this time, and tennis, golf, football, cricket, and racing are popular. The yacht clubs hold regattas in Tombeau bay and 'a chasse' of deer hunting, holds sway as the favorite national pastime.

Famed in Literature  
"Mauritius has been called the 'garden spot' and 'gem' of the Indian ocean by writers; others have compared her beauties to the Riviera and the famed South Sea islands. The tropical picturesqueness of the island is the background of the well-known French romantic novel, 'Paul et Virginie,' by Bernardin de St. Pierre, who lived on Mauritius three years as a government engineer. The Pamplonaises botanical garden in the district by that name has been made famous as the scene of the unhappy lovers' grave.

the coast. Two peaks form a rugged background to the harbor of Port Louis and guide ships to its entrance. The interior, the crater of a one-time volcano, was, until the arrival of the French on the island, covered with ebony and bamboo trees; it is now a fertile valley of sugar cane, cotton, and tobacco. A single peak, however, rises abruptly from the fertile plains in the center of the island. This peak is known as the Piton du Milieu de l'Ile.

"The rainy season in Mauritius is, approximately, from January to mid-April, during which time the island is swept by severe wind storms accompanied by great downpours of rain. These hurricanes last for about eight hours at a time. In recent years, however, the storms have been less violent owing, it is thought, to the deforestation of the island and the resulting drier atmospheric conditions. This is one reason why England can now more safely establish a naval base at the island.

"The Maurittians are particularly successful in the raising of sugar cane and the production of sugar. In spite of heavy rainfall and wind during the wet season, over 200,000 tons are produced yearly in an area of about 138,000 acres. Many other tropical products are also being raised with success, such as cotton, tobacco, pineapples, tea, coconuts and aloes. Although England receives the greater amount of its goods, the island also trades with India, Burma, and South Africa.

"Because of the island's position in the Indian ocean between Africa and India, and also because of the lack of any so-called 'native' population, the inhabitants are chiefly Indians and Africans, together with

## FAMOUS PAINTING FOUND IN CELLAR

WINTHROP, Mass. — (UP) — Sought for 30 years, Charles Russell Sturgis' painting of Point Shirley in pre-revolutionary days has been found in the cellar of the town library.

At first thought to have been hidden in the town hall, the water color painting, valued at \$1,000, was discovered by the head librarian rolled in a metal tube.

The painting was done in the style of the much-sought American primitives and depicted the houses of Governors John Hancock and William Shirley and Samuel Sturgis, owner of the old salt works and father of the artist.

THE DALLES, Ore., Nov. 29. — (AP) — The Selma-Helmer Co., engaged on the \$400,000 Columbia river channelization project between Celilo and Unstilla, now has 40 men at work and will employ 70 at peak operations.



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