

The Cover Story

A Simple Cover...Not a First Day Cover...An ONLY DAY Cover by Josh Furman

Mona Island lies some 50 miles west of Puerto Rico and east of the Dominican Republic, and is part of Puerto Rico. At about 20 square miles in area, it is a ruggedly beautiful but arid island, with only a few springs, seeps and lakes deep in the caverns which lace its mesas. Columbus landed here in 1493, and it became a port-of-call for Spanish galleons.

Its caves served as home for pirates for over three centuries. By 1584 most of the native indians had been exterminated. Interesting petroglyphs and artifacts tell some of the island's history.

In the 1930's there was a C.C.C. Camp Cofresi, and a fishing resort for sports fishermen, now in ruins. In W.W.II there was a U. S. Army anti-aircraft base; then in 1957 a tracking station. Then there was a contingent of Park Rangers, plus Conservation Corps youth, but no "facilities" for scientific research expeditions or the occasional other visitor, who must camp out, bringing their own food, water and other necessities. There was a lighthouse and radio-beacon of the U. S. Coast Guard on the east end. But there never was, nor is, any Post Office.

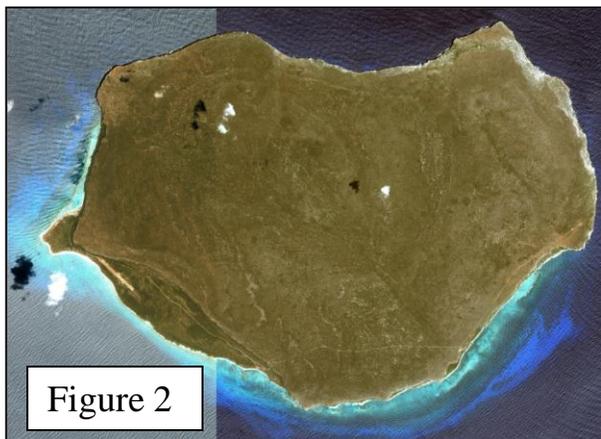
In early August of 1989 a ten-person team arrived aboard a 41-foot boat out of Cabo Rojo, Puerto Rico. The team leader was D. Scott Gallagher from Cincinnati, Ohio. Chief Scientist was Dr. Gale J. Raymond, F.R.G.S. from the Houston, Texas Explorers' Club. The MONA ISLAND RESEARCH EXPEDITION was to make special studies in archeology, particularly cave petroglyphs and artifacts, botanical studies, particularly palm varieties and sub-species, and marine biology.

With U.S.P.S cooperation, the expedition established a special one-day U. S. Post Office for Mona Island, Puerto Rico, U.S.A. stocking U. S. flag stamps with a special postmark for August 14, 1989 [Cover Figure 1]. Mail was turned over to the U. S. Postal Service in Mayaguez, P.R. for delivery via the U. S. Mail stream.

So here is indeed a unique item...not a First Day Cover, but an Only Day Cover. How many of these have you seen?

Source: <http://www.topuertorico.org/city/mona.shtml> [added by the Editor]

The island is about 7 miles long and 4 miles wide [Figure 2],



with an approximate area of 13,638 acres (twice as large as Culebra); its shape roughly that of a lima bean with the concavity toward the north. Its



climate is classified as semi-arid, sub-tropical climate, with temperatures fluctuating 80° to 90° all year long. The island has 200-foot cliffs riddled with caves [Figure 3].

The highest peak is about 300 feet above sea level. There is little vegetation, although there has been some reforestation. The island has no permanent inhabitants, except by the Puerto Rico Department of Natural Resources (DNR) personnel (resident biologist and rangers).

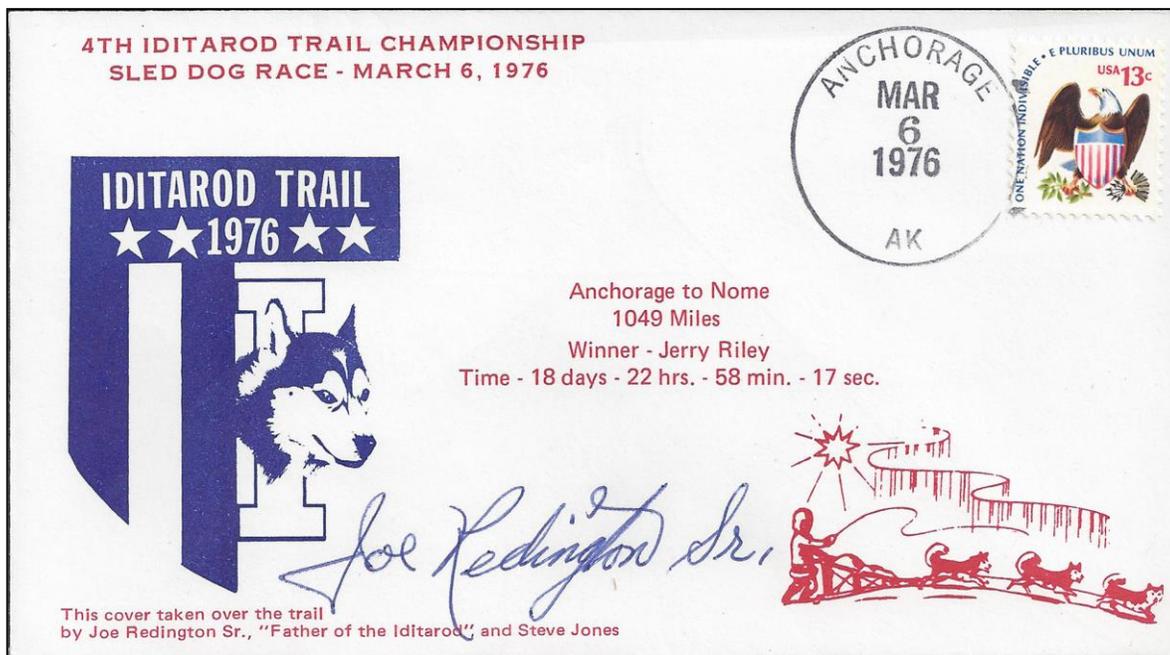
Mona is often compared to Galápagos, the island teems with giant iguanas, among them the *Mona Iguana* (certified as threatened by the Endangered Species Act of 1973) and the *Geco Oriundo*, three species of endangered sea turtles (the *Hawksbill* and the *Leatherback* sea turtle), red-footed boobies and countless other sea birds. The waters surrounding the island is home of over 270 species of fish and endangered sea turtles. Some species are so rare or endangered elsewhere on Puerto Rico that these islands can be considered their last significant refuge. During the winter humpback whales, usually several at a time with their young, are regular visitors.

The **Mona Iguana** [Figure 4] found nowhere else in the world, is considered the most spectacular single form of life on the island. It attains four feet in length but is harmless. Their nests, consisting of a tunnel burrowed into the soil, are commonly on the coastal plain. Their food is vegetable matter.

Unspoiled Mona also offers mangrove forest, coral reefs, 200-foot high cliffs and the world's largest marine-originated cave system. The beaches, some 5 miles in total length, are whiter than those of Puerto Rico.]



Dog Sled Delivery! By Josh Furman



Here's an unusual cover! As the fine print says, "This cover taken over the trail by Joe Redington, Sr., "Father of the Iditarod" and Steve Jones". The cover is autographed in blue ink by Joe Redington, Sr. and has a backstamp from Nome dated March 26, 1976.