



# El Observador Porteño

(The Observer of the City of Buenos Aires)

Monthly Newspaper of the Cultural-Historical Heritage Observatory

Year 1 / N° 1  
September  
**2017**

# Montserrat

## Cradle of the city



The *Recova Vieja* and 25 de Mayo Square in 1852 (Carlos Fredricks).

This electronic bulletin is aimed at promoting the activities carried out by the *Juntas de Estudios Históricos* [Historical Research Boards] and the *Gerencia Operativa de Patrimonio* [Heritage Operative Management] within the framework of Resolution 1534/GCABA/MCGC/2011, which created the Cultural-Historical Heritage Observatory of the City of Buenos Aires. We will publish information on every neighborhood of the city on a monthly basis, as well as relevant articles related the aforementioned Board.

## Montserrat: Cradle of the city

The avocation of Our Lady of Montserrat is one of the most popular within the Hispanic world, and it is specially worshipped in the homonymous Catalanian monastery, near Barcelona. The legend has it that when this image was rediscovered, it had taken a dark brown color. This is why it was called “*Morena*” or “*Moreneta*” [Brunette]. In mid 18<sup>th</sup> century, a temple in her honor was built in Buenos Aires, led by the Catalan Juan Pedro Sierra. It was built in what was known as the suburbs of the city, today’s Av. Belgrano, between Lima and Salta. In 1770, a bigger one was built, led by the Architect Antonio Masella and, between 1859 and 1865, the current temple was built. With time, Montserrat turned into the neighborhood where blacks, slaves and freedmen lived. They were faithful devotees of the “Brunette Virgin”, whose image used to be taken in processions. Around this area, a square-market was set up which, in the end, would turn into the first bullring of the city: Montserrat Square. However, the neighborhood of Montserrat, which was created under Ordinance N° 26.607 B.M. 16.087 of 04/05/1972, comprises

not only the poor area of Montserrat of late 18<sup>th</sup> century, but also the area that was historically known as “Cathedral to the South” (between Av. 9 de Julio and Av. Paseo Colón), which includes the area where Juan de Garay founded the City of Buenos Aires on June 11<sup>th</sup> 1580: today’s *Plaza de Mayo*. In this way, it is part of the city’s historical quarter. It witnessed the most important moments of the city’s and country’s history. The history of the current neighborhood of Montserrat began when Garay founded the city in 1580. He did it in what is now the *Plaza de Mayo* (*Plaza Mayor*), reserving the east block to be used as a fort and seat of Governor Juan Torres de Vera y Aragón. Subsequently, the Fort would be built near the block with the slope, where the “*Casa de Gobierno*” [House of Government] is currently at. Garay was also responsible for reserving the pieces of land of the *Cabildo* and the Cathedral in front of the square. With time, the *Plaza Mayor* turned into the center of the city’s life. Two of the first religious orders that came to Buenos Aires set up towards the south of the square: the Dominicans and Franciscans. There were

Montserrat Square, Isola, 1844.







The foundation of Buenos Aires in 1580, Leonie Matthis.

Jesuits as well, who came to the city in 1608 and set up towards the east of *Plaza de Mayo*. Years later, they set up permanently in today's *Manzana de las Luces* in 1661. Many important episodes of our history took place towards the south of the Cathedral, near the *Cabildo*, the fort and the *Manzana de las Luces*. After the expulsion of the Jesuits, it turned into a printer's, public library and the University of Buenos Aires (1821). By then, the city had already been divided in parish churches: two of them (Cathedral to the South and Montserrat) are included within the limits of what today is Montserrat.

On July 9<sup>th</sup>, 1894, the first avenue of the city was opened: Av. de Mayo. This avenue crosses the neighborhood from East to West, and it is a kind of municipal axis that joins the Palace of Congress in the neighborhood of Balvanera to the House of Government. At the time of its opening, the building of the most important commercial companies set up on this Avenue. In 1913, nineteen years later, the first metropolitan subway line was created parallel to this avenue: Line A. The first part of Av. 9 de Julio was finished in 1937. However, it reached Montserrat in 1940. *Plaza Montserrat* disappeared, located a block away from the homonym square. The building of the Ministry of Public Works survived, one of the only Ministries

located on the avenues and on one of the most emblematic constructions of this neighborhood, cradle of our city.

Opening of Av. de Mayo in its final stage, Kessler Collection, 1894



## Timeline

1580

Foundation of the City of Buenos Aires.

1595

Creation of the Fort.

1608

First Building of the *Cabildo*.

1661

Relocation of the Jesuits in the *Manzana de las Luces*.

1734

Opening of Saint Ignatius Church.

1755

Construction of the first Church in Montserrat.

1791

Bullring in Montserrat Square.

1806

British Invasions.

1807

British Invasions.

1810

May Revolution.

1822

The House of Representatives at the *Manzana de las Luces*.

1853

Demolition of the Fort.

1883

Demolition of the *Recova*.

1894

Opening of Av. de Mayo.

1910

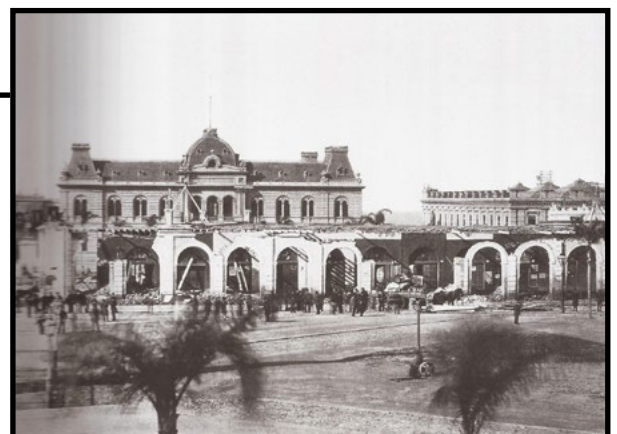
Opening of *Plaza del Congreso*.

1913

Opening of Line A.

1940

*Cabildo* Restoration.



## Did you know that...

... the structure of Hirsch Hardware Store was made at Gustavo Eiffel's factory?

... the two bronze figures at the top of the clock on the building that used to belong to Siemens in front of *Plaza de Mayo* were previously between two other buildings?

... Tortoni Café is the oldest in the City?

... there was a water tank in the middle of Lorea Square in late 19<sup>th</sup> century?

... Line A was the first subway line in Latin-America?

... under the *Manzana de las Luces* there is a tunnel network that the Jesuits had started to build before their expulsion?

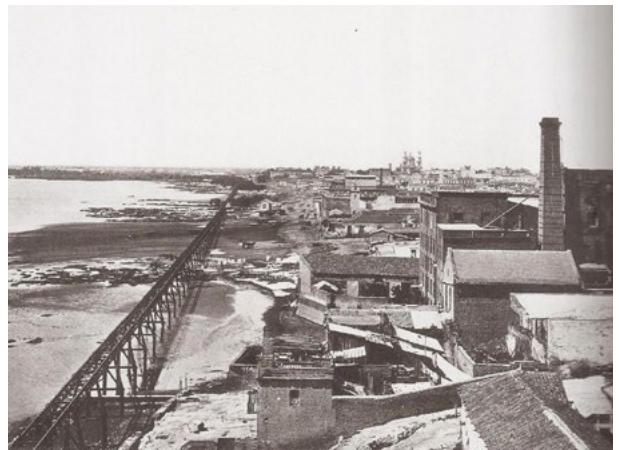
... the *Cabildo* had a higher tower between 1879 and 1889?

... there was a building called *Recova Vieja*, the first gallery of the city, in the middle of *Plaza de Mayo* (*Plaza Mayor*) between 1804 and 1884?

... the building of today's House of Government used to be divided into two

identical buildings: the Post and Telegraph Buildings?

... there was a railway to Ensenada which travelled through a viaduct parallel to today's Av. Paseo Colón in late 19<sup>th</sup> century?



View of today's Av. Paseo Colón to its south in 1876. On the left, you can see the viaduct of the railway to Ensenada and, on the right, the San Francisco Flour Mill (Christiano Junior).

Lorea Square with the water tank in 1876 (Christiano Junior).



### Former street names in Montserrat

<i>Before</i>	<i>Now</i>
Biblioteca	Moreno
Potosí	Adolfo Alsina
Victoria	Hipólito Yrigoyen
La Plata	Rivadavia
Reconquista	Defensa
Universidad	Bolívar
Representantes	Perú
Buen Orden	Bernardo de Irigoyen
Lorea	Pte. Luis Sáenz Peña



## Leyends of Montserrat

As in the most important cities of the world, Buenos Aires has a magical space: there are a number of myths, legends, and stories that make up a considerable part of its collective memory, and they took place in the city, in Montserrat precisely. Here are some of them:

- **Sin Street:** In late 18th century, there was a bullring in Montserrat Square. There was a street that was used as a bull pen. With time, it turned into the home of criminals, prostitutes and thieves. It was later called "Sin Street". In late 19th century, it turned into Aroma Narrow Street. It disappeared when Av. Belgrano was broadened and Av. 9 de Julio was opened. To-day, the Ministry of Public Works operates on one of these sidewalks.

- **Pierre Benoit:** this multifaceted important figure was the father of the well-known archi-

Sin Street towards 1880, Collection Witcomb.



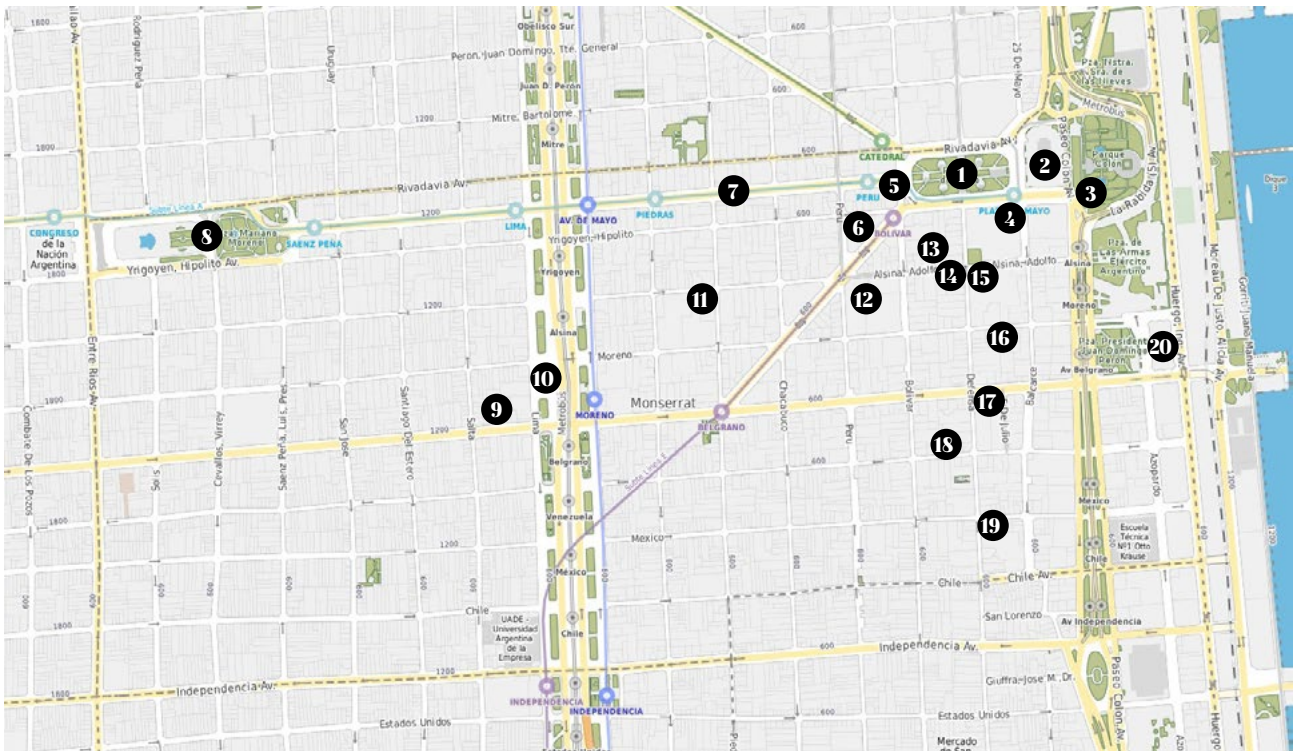
The Graf Zeppelin overflying the Barolo Palace in 1934.

tect, Pedro Benoit. He lived in Montserrat and people say he was Louis XVII, the successor of France, son of Luis XVI.

- **Ancient Ghosts:** the former National Library was located in today's National Music Center. There are people who believe that one of the premises of the black community in Buenos Aires gathered in this place. For this reason, the building is supposedly visited by the ghosts of black old people who are limited to remembering their past.

- **The Palace of Dante:** according to some theories, the Barolo Palace was built to house the remains of Dante Alighieri. It was built following a plan and respecting its gold section and number, which had ordination proportions and measurements, apart from following a structure based on the Divine Comedy, Dante's greatest work. Its three parts make reference to Hell, Purgatory and Heaven. Its 100 meters, to the cantos of the work, and its 22 floors, to the stanzas of its verses.

## Touring Montserrat



**1. Plaza de Mayo:** It is the city's main square and where Juan de Garay founded it in 1580. It was separated by a *Recova*, and it was unified in 1884.

**2. House of Government:** the National Government functions in this place. It is located where the fort had been since 1595, the city's main defense.

**3. Casa Rosada Museum:** houses the remains of what was the *Aduana Taylor* and a mural by Siqueiros.

Casa Rosada.



**4. Former National Congress:** the building where Congress used to operate between 1864 and 1906. It may be visited in the building of the Internal Revenue Federal Administration (AFIP).

**5. Cabildo and May Revolution Museum:** the *Cabildo* was the main institution of the Spaniard city. In our city, the building has survived, though it is quite deteriorated. Today, it is a museum.

Cabildo.





## Touring Montserrat

**6. Legislature:** former *Consejo Deliberante*, it was built with a monumental academicist style and it has a 97-metre-tall clock tower.

**7. Avenida de Mayo:** it was the city's main avenue and the civic axis that joins the Executive with the Legislative. It was opened on July 9<sup>th</sup>, 1894. (See Top 10 Emblematic Buildings).

**8. Congress, Mariano Moreno and Lorea Squares:** Lorea Square is one of the oldest squares of the city. It is called like this due to a citizen that died in the British Invasions. Towards 1909, this square joined Congress Square.

**9. Montserrat Church:** this church gave the neighborhood its name. The current building goes back to the 1850s.

**10. Social Development and Health Ministry:** it was built for the Ministry of Public Works. It was the first skyscraper

financed by the Argentine State. It is the only building on Av. 9 de Julio (See Skyscraper Box).

**11. Saint John the Baptist:** It was used as a chapel for the natives. However. The tomb of Viceroy Pedro Melo de Portugal lies in this church.

**12. Manzana de las Luces:** One of the most historical blocks of the city. It was the home of the Jesuits. After their expulsion, the University of Buenos Aires and the Deputy worked here. Saint Ignatius Church (the oldest building of the city) and the *Colegio Nacional de Buenos Aires* are located on Bolívar Street.

**13. Altos de Ezcurra y Altos de Elorriaga:** two of the oldest houses of the city.

**14. City Museum:** it is a late 19<sup>th</sup> century house. It has a shop where La Estrella Pharmacy operates.

Montserrat Church.



Altos de Elorriaga before its restoration.





## Touring Montserrat

**15. San Francisco Church:** it was the first church of Buenos Aires, even before the Main Church was built. The current building was finally finished in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

**16. Ethnographic Museum:** Academicist Italian style building, it used to be the Faculty of Law of the University of Buenos Aires.

**17. Santo Domingo Church:** Manuel Belgrano's remains rest in the atrium. The trophies of the English Invasions are in its interior.

**18. House of Liniers:** the house that used to belong to Santiago de Liniers's father-in-law. Today, National History Monument.

**19. Institute of Historical Research of the Army:** a building with an Italian Academicist



House of Liniers.

style. It was built for the Presidential Palace in the piece of land of the city's first hospital.

**20. Customs:** this building was opened in 1910, and it replaced the New Customs or Taylor.

Ethnographic Museum.



Santo Domingo Church



## Emblematic Buildings

### TOP 10 Emblematic Buildings of Av. de Mayo

**1. Barolo Palace (Av. de Mayo 1370):** it was opened on July 9th, 1923, and it was the tallest building in Latin-America. It is 100-metre-tall and it was designed by the architect Mario Palani.

**2. La Prensa Newspaper (Av. de Mayo 575):** with a beaux-arts style, it was built for the *La Prensa* Newspaper. There is a replica of a salon of the Versailles Palace. Today, it is the Ministry of Culture of the GCBA.

**3. La Inmobiliaria Building (Av. de Mayo 1402-1450):** it was built for the *La Inmobiliaria* Insurance Company. It was also called Heinlein Palace, since the homonym house had a shop on the ground floor.

**4. Majestic Hotel (Av. de Mayo 1317):** it was opened with its entire splendor in 1909 for the *Caja Internacional Mutua de Pensiones*. It has become the Majestic Hotel since 1910. Today it belongs to the AFIP.

*La Prensa Newspaper.*



*Crítica Newspaper.*

**5. Crítica Newspaper (Av. de Mayo 1333):** Today it belongs to the Federal Police. *Crítica* Newspaper used to operate in this art-deco building.

**6. Municipal Palace (Bolívar 1):** this beaux-arts style building was built to be used by the Municipality of Buenos Aires.

**7. Roverano Building (Av. de Mayo 560):** it was built in 1918. It used to be one of the first buildings of the avenue. It is directly connected to Perú Station, Line A.

*La Inmobiliaria.*





## Emblematic Buildings

**8. Vera Palace (Av. de Mayo 769-777):** art-nouveau style building, it was built in 1910 for the Díaz Vélez family.

**9. Drabble Building (Av. de Mayo 702/752):** It was one of the first buildings in the avenue. In the beginning, it used to be the Chacabuco Mansions Hotel. Beaux-arts style.

**10. Gath and Chaves Building (Av. de Mayo 591):** It was opened in 1910 as an annex of the biggest shop in the city. Today, London City Bar is located here.

Vera Palace.



### Skyscrapers

For many years, Buenos Aires stood out for its skyscrapers. Most of the tallest buildings outside the United States were in Buenos Aires and in Montserrat precisely.



Otto Wulf Building.

Towards 1940, these were the tallest from the neighborhood:

1. Barolo Palace: 100 m.
2. Public Works Ministry: 93 m.
3. Railway Building: 79 m.
4. Otto Wulf Building: 71 m.
5. La Inmobiliaria Building: 68 m.
6. Majestic Hotel: 57 m.
7. La Prensa Newspaper: 55 m.

Ministry of Public Works.





## Image Gallery



The *Cabildo*, *Plaza de la Victoria* and the May Pyramid in 1852 (Carlos D. Fredricks).



Construction of Line A towards 1911-12.



Avenida de Mayo towards the East in 1911.



Path down today's Hipólito Yrigoyen in 1867 (Benito Panunzi).



View of Av. de Mayo in 1925.



*Plaza de la Victoria* in 1867 (Benito Panunzi).



Snow in *Plaza de Mayo*, 1918.



## Central Board

### Central Board of Historical Research

by *Arnaldo Ignacio Adolfo Miranda*

The Central Board of Historical Research of the City of Buenos Aires was created on October 31st 1968 as a non-profit association dedicated to the rescue, preservation and promotion of the historical heritage of the city and its neighborhoods. Currently, it comprises seventy-three entities that, with special diligence and dedication, have reactivated the study of the city's past.

The institutions are divided into four statutory categories, such as, permanent members, acceding members, correspondents and institutional honorary members. In this sense, it is important to stand out that, from the aforementioned entities, forty-four act as permanent members representing each of the forty-four neighborhoods of the city. Currently, the presidency of the board is led by Prof. Nélide Rosa Pareja.

In order to provide the board with a definite institutionalization and better organization, towards 1997, a new statute that was presented to the General Inspection of Justice was passed on August 2<sup>nd</sup> 1999, and it has been operating as a legal entity since then. From then on, the membership was limited to the four categories that were previously mentioned. The president of each institution is the natural delegate. There can also be a permanent and substitute member for each federate member.

The coat of arms of the City of Buenos Aires has been used as a logo since 1981. It was created at the request of Governor Jacinto de Lázari in 1649. This coat of arms corresponds to the second Coat of Arms of the city-port, which was made official in the session of November 5<sup>th</sup>, 1649.

The long path of the Board can be guaranteed due to the fulfillment of a number of works carried out throughout its history with the

#### Central Board of Historical Research of the City of Buenos Aires

Federation

Non-profit association

Legal Entity C 1657583

#### Location and Library:

Piedras 1417, PB C (C1140ABE)

City of Buenos Aires

Tel.: 4307-3413

**Email:** [juntacentralbuenosaires@yahoo.com.ar](mailto:juntacentralbuenosaires@yahoo.com.ar)

**Webpage:** [www.juntacentralba.com.ar](http://www.juntacentralba.com.ar)

**Twitter:** @juntacentralBA

**Facebook:** Junta Central de Estudios

Históricos de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires

@juntacentralbuenosaires

assistance of all its members. Some of the activities are:

- Expert advice to public organisms.
- Library and newspaper library specialized in the history of the city and its neighborhoods.
- History Congresses of the City of Buenos Aires every 3 years.
- Institutional agreements with public and private entities dedicated to training, teaching education, exchange of publications, academic cooperation and fulfillment of investigation projects.
- Courses, seminars and conferences.
- Book Fair of the History of the City of Buenos Aires
- Magazine *Históricas de la Ciudad*, unique in its type.
- Various publications.

#### December 16th:

#### Annual Lunch of Historians of the City.

Email:

[juntacentralbuenosaires@yahoo.com.ar](mailto:juntacentralbuenosaires@yahoo.com.ar)

## Cultural-Historical Heritage Observatory

The Cultural-Historical Heritage Observatory was created under resolution 1534/GCABA/MCGC/2011 and its functions as an agreement between the *Gerencia Operativa de Patrimonio* of the DGPMYCH and the different Historical Research Boards of the neighborhoods, through the Central Board of Historical Research of the City of Buenos Aires. Its main goal is to work with the Historical Research Boards (through the Main Board) in different topics related to the Cultural-Historical Heritage of our city. Its responsibilities are: a) gather information and investigate on the heritage values of the neighborhoods of the City of Buenos Aires, b) cultivate knowledge and information related to the city and its neighborhoods, c) promote training lectures, archive courses, investigations related to our work at the *Gerencia Operativa de Patrimonio*, d) identify potential archaeological and/or paleontological sites and e) organize a



network that would identify and monitor buildings and/or a collection with heritage interest for a future preservation.

Among the actions carried out with the Boards of Historical Research, you can find:

- **Maps “Memory Tours”**: aimed at rescuing its valuable existing tangible heritage in the 48 neighborhoods of the City of Buenos Aires.
- **Cycle “Urban Prints”**: aimed at rescuing areas of the city’s urban layout with peculiarities worth highlighting.
- **Cycle “Football Landmarks”**: aimed at rescuing all the sites of the city used to create the history of the most popular sport of our city, which has the most stadiums in the world.



**Contact:** [observatoriopatrimonio@yahoo.com](mailto:observatoriopatrimonio@yahoo.com)

**AUTHORITIES** | General Director: Guillermo Alonso | Operative Manager: Graciela Aguilar  
**STAFF** | Texts: Leonel Contreras | Edition: Marcela Barsamian | Editorial Design: Fabio Ares  
Translation: Ximena Schiavón | Photographies: GOPat Photographic Archive



Gerencia Operativa Patrimonio  
Dirección General Patrimonio,  
Museos y Casco Histórico



Ministerio de Cultura  
**Buenos Aires Ciudad**