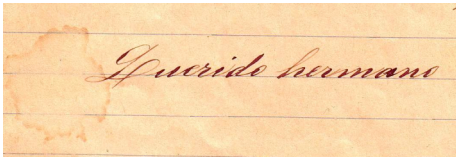


page 1
JMJ

Pinto 4 de Febrero 1,906



Esta es para decirte que estoy bien como supongo tú gozarás de igual salud.

Con mucha satisfacción y alegría cojo la pluma para indicarte que he recibido tu carta y tu postal, y no he podido por menos de expresar una sonrisa agradable todo lo que te puedas figurar es poco.

Estos días de Pascua he estado en casa y cuando estabamos

page 2

algunos días de sobremesa Manolo nos refería muchas cosas de esa y yo me acordaba mucho de ti y también por ser el primer año que no estabamos todos reunidos de lo que me dices que pida á Dios para que nos veamos pronto así lo hago y no dejo ningún día de hacerlo y perseveraré hasta que tarde ó temprano me lo conceda si es para bien supongo tú tendrás muchos deseos de verme.

Lo de las postales me agrada mucho pero harás el favor de que cuando me escribas postales mandamelas acompañadas de alguna carta

page 3

porque la última tarjeta que me escribistes me disgustó mucho porque casi me ponías nada así es que el mayor gusto que me puedes dar es ese al mismo tiempo te doy infinitas gracias por tu atenta felicitación lo que me dices de los retratos de Paco y mío cuando le vea ya se lo diré no por eso no dejes de mandarme el [palabra ilegible] pues recibiría una gran sorpresa ¿me la darás? me gusta mucho cuando me escribes á máquina y también me ha gustado muchísimo la última postal escribeme contestandome á esta diciendome muchas cosas. Antonio desearía me mandases dinero para comprar

page 1
JMJ

Pinto 4 February 1,906

Dear brother

This is to tell you that I am well as I suppose you enjoy equal good health.

With much satisfaction and happiness I pick up my pen to tell you that I have received your letter and your post card, and I couldn't help having a smile so happy that you couldn't imagine it.

These Christmas holidays I've stayed at home and over several days

page 2

after dinner Manolo told us many things about [presumably Havana] and I thought about you a lot and also because it is the first year that we weren't all together, of which you tell me that I should ask God that we should see each other again soon so that's what I'm doing and I won't miss a day asking him and I will persevere until sooner or later He will grant me this if it is for the best because I suppose you want to see me very much.

About the postcards I am very pleased but please do me the favor of sending them to me accompanied by a letter

page 3

because the last card you sent me made me very unhappy because you put almost nothing there for me so that is the greatest pleasure you could give me at the same time I give you infinite thanks for the attentive wishes that which you tell me about the pictures of Paco and me and when I see him I will tell him because of that don't stop sending me the [illegible word] because it will be a big surprise – will you give it to me? I like it a lot when you write me on the typewriter and also I liked very much the last postcard you sent me answer this one telling me lots of things. Antonio I would like you to send me money to buy

<p><i>page 4</i> varias cosas y también una que no sé lo digo á nadie para que recibas una sorpresa el dia de tu Sto parece que no pues ya se aproxima porque mientras vas y vienes las cartas tardan mucho tiempo ¿vendrás para esa fecha? Contestame diciendome todo lo que te pregunto yo me he enterado <i>[línea entera ilegible]</i> hace bastante tiempo se conoce que era la bariación <i>[sic]</i> de clima pero ya gracias a Dios y a la Sma Virgen <i>[ilegible]</i> dimelo todo y no me ocultes nada. Adios querido hermano recibe todo lo que quieras junto con muchos besos y abrazos de tu hermana</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Mercedes</p>	<p><i>page 4</i> various things and also one thing that I won't tell anyone so you receive a surprise on your saint's day it doesn't seem like it but it'll be here soon and between your comings and goings the letters take a long time – will you come for that date? Answer me telling me everything I'm asking I have become aware <i>[unreadable line over fold]</i> I have known for a long time that it was the variation of climate but now thanks to God and the Holy Virgin <i>[illegible]</i> tell me everything and don't hide a thing. Goodbye dear brother receive everything you wish for together with many kisses and hugs from your sister</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Mercedes</p>
--	--

This is a 1906 letter to her brother Antonio from Mercedes **Lagos Toledo**, aged 14 years one month. She wrote from a sanatorium in Pinto (province of Madrid) where she was suffering from tuberculosis (her parents had both already died from TB in 1900 and 1903). Her two oldest brothers Manuel and Antonio had left for Cuba the year before. Manuel, it appears from this letter, was back in Spain visiting. Antonio – my grandfather – was in Cuba (we don't think he returned to Spain at all prior to his 1909 marriage in Havana, and therefore would have never seen Mercedes alive again). She also refers to Paco, the youngest of her older brothers, who was to die in 1910 – we believe also of tuberculosis – at the age of 25. Mercedes was one of *at least* seven siblings, only two of whom (Manuel and Antonio) made it past the age of 25.

Mercedes died of tuberculosis 7 months later, on September 15, still just 14 years old.

Antonio kept this letter until his death – and it remains there still – in a small leather briefcase among many official documents from Spain, Cuba and the US dated from 1900 through the 1930s. It is the only personal letter among all these official documents.

Antonio always spoke with such fondness of his sister that his daughter Josephine named her first daughter, Mercedes Mary Baron, in her honor. It was the last of his grandchildren that he would know. Mercedes Baron would herself die young, before her 6th birthday, of an unknown illness.

Emilito Signes, 9 May 2003

P.S. I can't help but express my wonder as to which family members – if any – besides her 21-year old brother Paco were “looking after her” in her final year. . . Also, note, on the previous page, in the scanned image of her salutation “Querido hermano,” at the left we see what is surely a drop of water. A tear?