

“Thousands Visit Shrine at Desert Christ Park” (*The Desert Sun*: December 20, 1955)

Photo caption: A scene of the first completed group in the Desert Christ Park, top photo, is the chapel and scene known as the “Sermon on the Mount.” Tourists travel from all over the nation to visit the fabulous park. The first figure in the park, lower left, is called “The Unwanted Christ” and stands 9 ½ feet tall. The second largest single group, lower center, is the huge figure of the Desert Christ in the portrayal of “The Sermon on the Mount.” The designer and sculptor, lower right, is Antone Martin, whose years of work on the Desert Christ Park is rewarded by the thousands of visitors who come to see his work. It is estimated that it will take better than [sic] five years to complete the project.

By: Carlette Wolf

On the northern slope of the foothills bordering the village of Yucca Valley, glistening white figures catch the eye as the traveler approaches The Desert Christ Park. Nestled snugly among the Joshua Trees at the entrance to the park, you will find the trailer home of Antone Martin, artist, designer and sculptor of these oversize figures of man made stone.

These several groups of figures depict well known scenes from the life of Christ with the largest and perhaps best known, The Sermon on the Mount group. The first figure to be placed on the hill was the huge 9 ½-foot figure known as “Unwanted Christ,” which three years ago was accepted by the Rev. Edward Garver and placed on his five acre government tract. At this time Antone Martin retired from his aircraft job in Inglewood and came to the desert to live and continue with the park project that has been so much enjoyed by the public.

Martin was born in Ohio and reared in the East where he studied and worked in the science of paleontology. In the museums where he worked the scientific accuracy required in the art of restoration of prehistoric animals developed a thoughtful attitude toward the history of the world and mankind. Meeting and talking to scientists, archaeologists, and people interested in these related subjects awakened a desire to do something to benefit mankind and thus, Martin conceived the big Idea.

During World War II, through the 1940's, Martin became convinced that the biggest need in the world was World Peace. And, as this nation was founded on the idea of Freedom of Worship and is known over the world as a Christian nation, the best contribution he could make to the people of this world would be a reminder of that Great Teacher who taught men that Love is better than Hate.

Thus the figure of Christ came into being and the problem of finding a place for it was much publicized; the result was that Yucca Valley, through the Rev. Garver's generosity, became the home for the statue that is now known as The Desert Christ. Many people became interested in this little park and in the last three years, Martin has added four more

groups of figures. The second and largest group is “The Sermon on the Mount,” the third setting, “The Woman at the Well,” the fourth, “Suffer the little Children to come unto Me,” and the fifth group, “The Garden of Gethsemane,” and now, as his final and largest effort, “The Last Supper” is to be sculptured in bas-relief.

It will take perhaps five more years to finish this and also many thousands of dollars.

The little Chapel is the only modernistic scene on the hill site. Built of native stone, it blends into the desert theme color and does not clash with the many gleaming white figures in the park. Services are held here on Sunday and many young couples choose this little house of worship for their wedding.

So, at this time of the year, when people of the Christian world give more thought to the old but ever new words, “Peace on Earth, Good Will Unto Men,” let us remember that Love is better than Hate and with the symbols of these thoughts, universal in scope, so readily in view at the Desert Christ Park in Yucca Valley, if possible make a visit to this beautiful desert hillside and view the fruition of one man’s dream, an ideal given form that will show that in Mankind, there must be a union of the Material, Scientific and Spiritual qualities.