



Delbert Scott
28th Senate District

MISSOURI SENATE
JEFFERSON CITY

CAPITOL BUILDING, ROOM 416
JEFFERSON CITY, MO 65101

A Weekly Column for the
Week of Oct. 6, 2008

Contact: Debbie Poire
(573) 751-8793

A Great Dream and Discovery — Celebrating Columbus Day

“In 1492, Columbus sailed the ocean blue.” Since our days in elementary school, we have been taught that Christopher Columbus set out on an adventurous and extremely dangerous voyage and as a result, discovered America. As we got older, we realize the great explorer never really “discovered” North America; instead, he landed in the Bahamas and later on sailed to Cuba and Hispaniola (now Haiti).

Despite where Columbus landed on that fateful October day, Columbus’ expedition — along with his dedication and perseverance — was unique and important because it resulted in the first intertwining of Europe with what is today North and South America. This interaction allowed the creation of the first permanent European colonies in the New World.

Columbus, who began his sailing career at the age of 14, made merchant voyages as far away as Iceland and Guinea between 1477 and 1482. He proposed his “Enterprise of the Indies” in 1484 to King John of Portugal, but his proposition fell on deaf ears.

However, Columbus didn’t take “no” for an answer. Shortly after his conversation with King John, Columbus moved to Spain, where King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella considered his voyage. With their approval, Columbus set sail in August 1492 with three ships — the *Nina*, *Pinta*, and the flagship, *Santa Maria* — in search of the East Indies.

Columbus had a far from easy task and voyage. After two months at sea, the crew began to worry that Columbus was steering them in the wrong direction. Many crew members became sick and tired, and attempted to convince Columbus to turn around and sail back to Spain. Columbus’ perseverance and dedication to his journey allowed him to rally his men and ensure them that his route and his fleet would lead to land and adventure. The rest is history.

Columbus' success in finding land in the west did not reward him with fame or recognition. As a matter of fact, it took hundreds of years before celebrations of his discovery took place. One of the first known celebrations marking the discovery of the New World was in 1792, when a ceremony organized by the Colombian Order was held in New York City honoring Christopher Columbus and the 300th anniversary of his landing in the Bahamas. To mark the 400th anniversary of Columbus's voyage, in 1892, President Benjamin Harrison made a commemorative proclamation. However, it wasn't until 1905 in Colorado when Columbus Day was first observed. Since 1920, Columbus Day has been celebrated annually, and in 1937, President Franklin Roosevelt proclaimed every October 12 as Columbus Day. It remained this way until 1971 when Congress declared the day as a federal public holiday on the second Monday in October.

There are many reasons to celebrate Columbus Day. We recognize the importance of this discovery because it led to the institution of our great nation. The bold and brash explorer also embodies a sense of adventure and exploration that still exists in our country today — from the latest in scientific breakthroughs to the leaps we have made in space discovery.

Columbus' dedication and perseverance also teaches each and every one of us to pursue our dreams and goals, and we have to be willing to dedicate our self to the cause we care about. Things might not unfold the way we'd like, but some things are truly worth fighting for. If you have questions or comments, please feel free to contact me at 573-751-8793 or by e-mail at: delbertscott@senate.mo.gov.

Senator Delbert Scott represents the people of Barton, Benton, Cedar, Dallas, Henry, Hickory, Pettis, Polk and St. Clair counties in the Missouri Senate.

