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Columbus Day: A History of Determination

It is hard to imagine a time when one could be laughed at for saying that the world was round, but in the fifteenth century, the belief that the world was flat was the accepted view. To think that the world was a sphere was to face ridicule or even imprisonment. However, there were people who believed that the world had to be round. One such person, Christopher Columbus, believed this notion so wholeheartedly that he decided to prove it by risking his life to sail around the world.



For Columbus, nothing about the journey came easy. The Italian tried to convince many monarchs that a trade route to Asia was possible by going west, rather than east. This easier route would be quicker and could lead to more gold and spices for the country that first discovered it. Queen Isabella of Spain eventually agreed, and Columbus began the journey on August 3, 1492, with three ships.

However, the hardships were not yet complete. After two months on the sea, the crew began to get worried that Columbus was wrong. They became sick and tired, and they tried to convince Columbus to turn back to Spain. Columbus, however, was sure that the route his fleet was on would lead to land. He encouraged the crew to continue. On October 11th, at ten o'clock at night, a light was sighted in the distance and the next morning the ships landed on the island that is now Cuba.

Columbus' success in finding land to the west did not reward him with fame or recognition. It took hundreds of years before celebrations of the discovery became popular. The first celebration honoring the discovery of America by Europeans took place in 1792 in New York and, soon after that, the city of Washington was officially named the District of Columbia and became the capital of the United States. In 1892, President Benjamin Harrison drew up a commemorative proclamation in honor of the 400th anniversary of the discovery. The enthusiastic response from the public led to the organization of school programs, theater productions and festivals across the country. It was during this event that the Pledge of Allegiance was recited publically for the first time. In 1937, President Roosevelt proclaimed October 12 as "Columbus Day" and in 1971, the federal government officially declared the second Monday of October a national holiday. On Monday, October 12th, we will celebrate the day that honors this historic and important voyage.

Our country's history is rich with hardship and triumph, and it all began with the perseverance of one Italian explorer. His discovery led to our great nation. When we celebrate Columbus Day, we are also showing our appreciation for the sense of adventure and exploration that still exists in the U.S. today. Moreover, another important lesson from Christopher Columbus is that when you have a dream, you have to be willing to truly dedicate yourself to it.



Contact Me

As always, I appreciate hearing your comments, opinions, and concerns. Please feel free to contact me in Jefferson City at (573) 751-2459. You may write to me at Jason Crowell; Missouri Senate; State Capitol; Jefferson City, MO 65101, or email me at: jcrowell@senate.mo.gov or visit me on the web at <http://www.senate.mo.gov/crowell>.

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