

# History of the life and deeds of christopher columbus



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From the date of his birth to the amount of schooling he received as a child, to the final resting place of his remains historians are simply not sure. It is even claimed that he was, at the age of 21 a privateer. " Columbus's son Ferdinand stated in History of the Life and Deeds of Christopher Columbus that in 1472 Columbus was given command of a ship on a privateering expedition to Tunis in northern Africa. In a lost letter, Columbus supposedly related to his son how Rene I, duke of the French province of Anjou, had commissioned Columbus to make a surprise attack on a large Spanish ship sailing off the coast of North Africa.

4 However Ferdinand's claim is the only proof available and the claim is largely believed to be false. There is a lot of information that is well known, and well documented. Christopher Columbus completed four sea voyages. Starting with his most famous in 1492 and ending in 1506.

Although he took to the sea at the age of 14 he was not commissioned to his own ship until much later. At the age of 41 he made his historic voyage to the new world. Although Columbus is given credit for discovering America it was not named for him, it was named after Amerigo Vespucci. The name America was given to the Western Hemisphere by European writers and mapmakers after Columbus's death. Nothing in their experiences had led the first explorers to realize that they had come into contact with a vast and unrecorded continent, many times the size of Europe. Previously there had been no accounts, or even rumors, of the " unknown" peoples of this " new" continent in European scholarly literature and discussion or in popular chronicles. " 5 If Christopher Columbus had one true purpose, it was not to find the new land or even riches for King Ferdinand V and Queen Isabella I.

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His true calling which led him to the sea was to travel to the East by going west. He wanted to find a direct trade route to Asia, and to explore the region discovered by Marco Polo. His obsession to find this region was so intense it actually led him to believe that Cuba was part of Asia. In an ironic twist of fate, the closest Columbus would ever come to reaching Asia was on one of his earliest voyages. In 1474 Columbus, hired on as a sailor, set off for Khios, an island in the Aegean, this was to be the first long voyage Columbus would ever take and the closest he ever came to Asia. Columbus spent a year on this island and was able to become economically independent from his family. <sup>7</sup> To truly understand why someone would be obsessed with finding a direct trade route to Asia, you must understand why this was necessary. “ The event that had the most far reaching effects on Europe in the 15th Century was the fall of the city of Constantinople (modern Istanbul, Turkey) to the Muslim Ottoman Empire. Constantinople had been the capital of the Orthodox Christian Byzantine Empire for centuries, and it was an important center for trade between Europe and Asia.

In 1453 the Ottoman Empire, which had already conquered much of southeastern Europe, captured the city, closing an important trade route from Europe to the east. European merchants could still buy Asian goods from Muslims in places such as Alexandria, Egypt. However, Europeans longed for a sea route to Asia that would allow them to bypass the Muslims and purchase Asian products directly. In addition, European princes and kings quickly realized that the first nation to find such a route could become very wealthy by monopolizing the highly profitable Asian trade. <sup>8</sup> Although Columbus never found that direct route to Asia, he did find recognition and

wealth from his travels. " The widely published report of his voyage of 1492 made Columbus famous throughout Europe and secured for him the title of Admiral of the Ocean Sea and further royal patronage. " 9 Christopher Columbus was also a family man. He had two sons; his first was with wife " Felipe Perestrello e Moniz, the daughter of a well respected, though relatively poor, noble family. " 10 They had a son Diego in 1480 or 1481, historic records are unsure of the exact date. Felipe died shortly after.

Diego was boarded in a Spanish Monastery where Columbus found great support for his voyages in the monks who lived there. They introduced him to nobility, share ancient maps and vital information about sea currents and the size of the oceans themselves, and for a short time he was " maintained at the expense of the queen. " 11 His second son Fernando was born out of wedlock to a young peasant woman named Beatriz Enriquez de Arana, in 1488. Beatriz is believed to be the great love of Columbus' life and his love for her helped him through the toughest portions of his life as he awaited the end of the war to take Granada.

Christopher Columbus was an entrepreneur, as well as an opportunist; on his second voyage he carried with him African slaves to the new world. 12 Columbus also claimed a dowry offered to the first person to see land on his maiden voyage. During his first voyage, on October 12, 1492 a lookout spotted land a couple hours after midnight from the crow's nest of the Pinta. The lookout's name was Rodrigo de Triana for his sighting; he should have received a pension of 10, 000 Maravedis per year.

That was roughly what an able sailor could make in a year at the time, however Columbus pocketed the money himself, claiming he saw lights the

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night before. <sup>13</sup> This however would not be a onetime occurrence, in 1491 Columbus made a final appeal to Spanish Monarchs but his plan was rejected. In the past his plan was rejected for technical reasons, such as his assessment of the size of the ocean, it was believed to be too large to cross or the distances and measurements that Columbus came up with were not accurate.

This time, the request was denied due to simple greed. “ Columbus had asked for one tenth of all the riches in the indies, and his demands for the titles of admiral, which would give him the right to judge commercial disputes; of viceroy, which would make him the personal representative of the monarchs; and of governor, which would enable him to act as supreme civil and military authority in any new lands he discovered. ” <sup>14</sup> However, “ Columbus had successfully won over many of the learned scholars and scientific advisers, and Ferdinand’s treasurer, Luis de Santangel, interceded on Columbus’s behalf. Arguing that the investment was small considering the potential reward, Santangel convinced the king and queen to reverse their decision. A court official was dispatched on horseback to bring Columbus back. After several more weeks of negotiating a contract, in April 1492 Columbus left for Palos de la Frontera and his rendezvous with history. ” <sup>15</sup> On August 3, 1492 Columbus sets off for the Canary Islands with his three ships, the Nina, Pinta and the Santa Maria.

The Canary Islands were a necessary stop over for two reasons, first the rudder of the Nina needed repair and secondly Columbus had studied the swift moving currents that were found off the Canary Islands. <sup>16</sup> September 6, 1492 the armada left the Canary Islands via those swift currents in search

of a direct route to Asia, what he found instead would change mankind forever. Columbus' second voyage was his largest in size. In his first voyage Columbus had three ships, but in his second he had 17 ships.

This time he was taking provisions to set up colonies as well as soldiers and livestock designed to stay on the island and establish colonies. His first voyage consisted only of enough provision and personnel for a year long voyage based on exploration and discovery. In September 1493 the fleet sets off from Cadiz, Spain for the Canary Islands. Once again utilizing the swift currents of the Canary Islands, the fleet reaches Hispaniola in November 1493, an island Columbus discovered in his previous voyage. Columbus' third voyage leaves Sanlucar, Spain with six ships on May 30, 1493.

For the first and only time Columbus purposely splits his ships and sends half his fleet to Hispaniola and takes the other half on a more southerly route to the Cape Verde Island. In August 1498 Columbus returns to Hispaniola and assumes the role of governor. HE resides as governor for two years before he is arrested for misadministration, and was arrested, bound in chains and returned to Spain. Columbus, in an act of defiance refused to have his chains removed until the monarch gave the orders to do so. 17 " On December 17, 1500, Columbus went before the royal court.

The king and queen instructed that whatever items were taken from Columbus at his arrest be restored to him. The monarchs would not reinstate Columbus's titles, however. This was, however, neither victory nor vindication for Columbus. With his titles annulled, the former governor spent the next two years in despair and humiliation. " 18 Columbus had another  
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chance to win back his good name, and on his fourth voyage in May of 1502, he would leave Cadiz, Spain with four ships. 19 In June of 1503 Columbus' ship is marooned and beach on the island of Jamaica.

It suffers a severe case of sea worms and is no longer sea worthy. The crew is spends a year on island and in November 1504 Columbus heads back to Spain. On May 20, 1506 Columbus dies in Valladolid, Spain. 20 “ both of his sons, his brother Bartholomew, and his faithful friend Diego Mendez were at his side when the admiral murmured “ Into thy hands, O Lord, I commit my spirit” and passed away. His body was buried initially in Valladolid, but in 1509 his son Diego transferred the remains to the monastery of Las Cuevas in Sevilla. The current location of Columbus's remains is still debated.

They were moved to the Americas in the middle of the 16th century, first to Santo Domingo and then, in 1795, to Havana, Cuba. Then his remains supposedly traveled back to Spain in 1899 where, it is claimed, they are interred in the Cathedral of Sevilla. ” 21 So in death, as in life, Christopher Columbus is a noble man, and spirit, and a true explorer, entrepreneur and mystery. Although his accomplishments have recently been criticized by modern historians as untrue, making claims that the Vikings discovered America long before Columbus, the credit still goes to Christopher Columbus.