

Columbus - I



Dear Friends and brothers and sisters of the Sons of Italy in America:

It was 513 years ago this year that Christopher Columbus began the adventure that resulted in the opening of the continents of North and South America to European exploration. In all four of his expeditions to the “new world” he never did land on the mainland of either continent. Earlier Columbus had been circulating around western European capitals trying to interest moneyed people/royalty in his idea about sailing west to reach Cathay (China) and Japan. As we all know he was born in or around Genoa in either 1446 or 1451 and died in 1506.

The year 1492 was monumental for Europeans. It was in this year that Spain became a united country and finally expelled the Moors and Jews from their country. This freed the energy of the country toward exploring a new route to Asia. It was natural that a citizen of Genoa would be interested in this development. Both Genoa and Venice had become rich and powerful as ports controlling the trade of Europe through the Mediterranean with Asia. The Portuguese were already sailing further and further down the west coast of Africa.

The Spanish monarchs signed an agreement with Columbus on April 17, 1492. In this agreement he was given the title Admiral of the Ocean Sea and given a royal letter of introduction to the Grand Khan of Cathay (China). The monarchs commissioned three ships, Santa Maria (100 tons) (52 men with Columbus in command); Pinta (50 tons) (18 men with Martin Pinzon in charge); and the Nina (40 tons) (18 men with Vincente Yanez as Captain) all together 88 men. The town of Palos in Southern Spain was ordered to provide the ships and crews. It was difficult to find crewmen even accepting those in the lowest levels of society.

Finally on Friday, August 3, 1492, at 8 AM they set sail. By the 3rd day the Pinta has lost its rudder and it was necessary to put into the port of Tenerife in the Canary Islands off the coast of Africa in order to refit the Pinta.

On September 6th they set sail once again and in great haste as Columbus has heard that three Portuguese ships were after him.

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This information has been taken from the Encyclopedia Britannica¹. It seems appropriate to review this brief history as we intend to celebrate once again the accomplishment of our lodge's namesake.

¹ <http://www.britannica.com>