



As we near our nations Columbus Day National Holiday this October 12th, the Knights of Columbus are giving away a set of commemorative coins dated 1892 and 1992, commemorating both the 400th and 500th anniversary of Christopher Columbus' landing in the New World.

A Little History

-by Richard Narkevic



The 15th and 16th century brought in an age of exploration for European Nations. Portugal, Spain, and England, all embraced the "Age of Discovery". Among the men that were excited by this was a man named **Christopher Columbus**. Although born in Genoa, Italy, the son of a wool merchant, he embraced this exploration and as a teenager set to the sea. After his ship was sunk, he ended in Portugal. There he studied mathematics, cartography, astronomy, and navigation. There he also began to forge a plan that would change the course of history.

The Age of Discovery

During this period of history, there was limited trade between the "Far East" (Asia) and Europe. The land route was almost impossible, being long and dangerous with hostile armies along the way. Portuguese sailors solved this by taking to the sea. Sailing south along the west African coast and around the Cape of Good Hope, they could reach the Orient.

Christopher Columbus had a different idea that one could reach these lands by sailing west, across the Atlantic. By his calculations, using the circumference of the earth, the route should be some 3,000 miles, whereas some other scholars had calculated it some 7,300 miles. Thus, he believed this route should not only be possible, but relatively easy using the yet undiscovered "Northwest Passage".

He presented this plan to Portugal and England, but they were not interested, and it was not until 1492 that the Spanish monarchs, King Ferdinand, and Queen Isabella, found interest and agreed to sponsor his voyage.

Nina, Pinta, and Santa Maria



On August 3, 1492, Christopher Columbus and his crew set sail from Spain. His three ships, the Nina, Pinta, and Santa Maria sailed west for 10 weeks sighting land on October 12th. Although this was not the East Indies, as he had planned, it was most likely the island of San Salvador in the Bahamas.

He sailed among the islands searching for riches such as gold, silver, and spices to take back to the Spanish monarchs to fulfill his promises. But he did not find much. He left the island of Hispaniola in January of 1493 to sail back to Spain.

Columbus made three other voyages to the "New World" never really finding the riches that he and the Spanish monarchs had dreamed of. After his 4th voyage in 1502 he returned to Spain empty handed and died in 1506.

Although Christopher Columbus really did not discover the Americas, he did set off centuries of exploration on the American continents. He is remembered as a daring and path breaking explorer who enabled the connection of the "Old World" to the so called "New World".