



PROJECT LIFESAVER

NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2020

THANK YOU

FROM PROJECT LIFESAVER

Project Lifesaver extends a thank you to all of those that attended the Project Lifesaver 2020 Hybrid Conference. This year's conference, "Our Vision for the Future", was one of the best conferences we have ever had in spite of the many obstacles and unprecedented changes we all faced this year.

With that said, we intend to make your 2021 Project Lifesaver Conference: "The Impact of You" even better! As first responders you have the tough task of assessing life & death situation within minutes. All of us at Project Lifesaver are extremely proud of the PLI member agencies that respond to hundreds of calls each year, and always demonstrate an incredible ability to de-escalate and resolve sensitive situations. Your ability to respond effectively and professionally to such a wide range of situations, while simultaneously being sensitive and compassionate is amazing. You provide so many invaluable, yet so often, unrecognized, support services in your communities.

Today, recognizing and reinforcing the incredible and yet difficult job you do every day has never been more important! That's why we have already begun planning this important program that looks to both acknowledge and thank you for what you do in the face of so many obstacles! In the coming months, you will be hearing many more details about the 2021 conference, the agenda, the venue, and the networking opportunities. And although the 2020 Hybrid Conference was a great success, what we most missed, was YOU! We thank you and hope to see you at next year's conference!

-Chief Gene Saunders



COLUMBUS DAY

The Ambassador's Column

Ron Yeaw

I. INTRODUCTION

On Monday, October 12th, Columbus Day will be observed as a holiday in all of the states except California, Hawaii, and Nevada. Annually celebrated on the second Monday of October, the day commemorates the arrival of Christopher Columbus in the Americas on October 12, 1492. The first observation of the holiday was on October 12, 1866 by a group of Italian-Americans in New York City as a celebration of their heritage. Columbus Day was popularized as a holiday in the United States through the state lobbying of Angelo Noce, a first generation Italian living in Denver, Colorado. The first regular official holiday was proclaimed by Colorado governor Jesse F. McDonald in 1905. In April 1934, as a result of national lobbying by the Knights of Columbus, Congress and President Franklin Roosevelt made October 12th a federal holiday. The 1971 Uniform Holiday Act established the Columbus Day holiday as the second Monday in October.

II. THE FIRST INHABITANTS OF THE AMERICAS

Also referred to as “the New World”, the “Americas” are all of the lands in the Western hemisphere. These lands comprise the continents of North and South America, with all of their associated islands and regions including all of the islands in the Eastern Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea. Per the definition of the word, Columbus did not “discover” the Americas. Through archaeological findings and records, it is clear that the Americas were both already inhabited by tens of millions of native people and had been visited by Europeans long before 1492. Although the absence of early records, combined with myth and legend, leaves plenty of room for speculation, there is ample proof that Columbus was neither the first human to set foot in the Americas nor was he the first voyager to do so.

There are several possible models of human migration to the New World. Through the integrated disciplines of archeology, physical anthropology, DNA analysis, and linguistics, the one agreement among scientists and historians is that the migration originated from northeast Asia. The specific dates and routes of the initial Paleo-Indian migration are the subject of ongoing research and discussion. The most widely accepted theory is that the earliest migrants moved across the Beringia land bridge (what is now the Bering Strait) between eastern Siberia and present-day Alaska between 40,000 – 17,000 years ago when sea levels were significantly lower due to the Quaternary glaciation. These people are believed to have followed herds of mammals, reptiles, and flocks of birds who traveled along the ice-free corridors that stretched between the Laurentide and Cordilleran ice sheets during the end of the last glacial period.

There is a consensus among scholars that the first Europeans to arrive in the Americas were the Scandinavian Vikings. Science and archaeology conclusively prove the timeframe for the Viking arrival on the northern tip of what is now the Canadian province of Newfoundland to around 1000 AD, approximately five centuries prior to the voyages of Christopher Columbus. Possibly outnumbered and menaced by the local population, Leif Erikson and his family abandoned their settlement after about ten years.

There are myths, legends, and speculations surrounding possible pre-Viking visits by seafaring Chinese and Irish Monk travelers, however there is no real evidence that representatives from either of these two groups ever reached the shores of the Americas.

III. CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS

A navigator, colonizer, and explorer, Columbus was born in Genoa, Italy between 25 August and 31 October, 1451. A seafarer for his entire life, Columbus claimed to have first gone to sea when he was ten. In the 1470s, he served on various Genoese ships that traded along the coastline of Northern Europe. Between 1482 and 1485, he traded along the coast of West Africa, as far south as the Ivory Coast. His days at sea and his readings convinced him that the earth was round and that Europe and Asia were connected to the west by the Atlantic Ocean (which was then called the Ocean Sea) and that the journey could be made in a few days to a week. Columbus died on May 20, 1506 still believing that he had found a new route to Asia and that China and Japan lay just beyond the islands that he had explored.

IV. PRELUDE TO COLUMBUS' FIRST VOYAGE

By the late 1400s, a series of events were unfolding that made the time right for an exploratory voyage westward across the Ocean Sea acceptable to European monarchs and businessmen. In particular:

a. For centuries, European businessmen had enjoyed lucrative trading relationships with Asian nations due to the safe land passage between the two continents. There was growing national imperialism and economic competition at the time between the developing nations on both continents that were seeking wealth from the establishment of colonies and alternate trade routes to the rest of the world. Both China and India were providing sources of valued goods such as silk, spices, and opiates to the Europeans. With the fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman Turks in 1453, the land routes to and from Asia had become much more difficult and dangerous.

b. Through advancements in scientific thought, the idea that the earth was spherical and not flat was gaining more widespread acceptance. In addition, similar scientific advancements were indicating that the world was significantly smaller in diameter than had been previously thought.

c. Voyagers to Greenland were reporting the existence of westerly winds in the North Atlantic. Prior to that time, potential explorations across the Atlantic had been spurned as, although the easterly trade winds might take the sailing ships westward across the Atlantic, the question was whether or not there were westerly winds that would propel the ships back home before the food and drinkable water onboard would have been exhausted.

In 1485, Columbus first presented his plan of exploring a voyage to Asia westward across the Ocean Sea to King John II of Portugal. The King's experts rejected the plan as they considered Columbus' estimation of the distance to be far too short. From Portugal, Columbus traveled to Italy and received a similar rejection from the Italian authorities. He then petitioned the English monarch Henry VII for support of his plan, and was again rejected.

On May 1, 1488, Columbus presented his plan to King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain. The Spanish court pronounced his idea as being impractical. In 1489, he again petitioned the Spanish monarchs for their support. After being denied for a second time, but after he threatened to take his plan to the King of France, to keep their options open and prevent him from presenting his plan elsewhere, Ferdinand and Isabella gave Columbus an annual allowance and ordered all Spanish citizens to provide him food and lodging at no cost. In 1492, following four years of continuous lobbying by Columbus, the Spanish monarchs finally agreed to sponsor his plan and gave their approval for his voyage.

V. COLUMBUS' FOUR VOYAGES

On August 3, 1492, the Niña, Pinta, and the Santa María sailed from Palos, Spain with a crew of 90 Spanish sailors and food and water for a year. After a month layover in the Canary Islands to repair the rudder on the Pinta, they set sail across “The Sea of Darkness” on September 6. Onboard Santa María, Columbus kept an hourglass to mark the passage of time, a compass, and an astrolabe (an instrument for calculating latitude by observing the movement of the sun). He also kept two logs. One, kept in secret, contained the true record of their daily advance. The second one, that showed smaller progress, was used to keep the crews unaware of the great distance they were from Spain. After three weeks at sea the three crews started to become restless. By the end of September, with the combination of a rumor that Columbus’ compass was faulty, calm weather that was slowing progress, bird sightings that should have signaled nearby land that were proving to be false, erroneous sightings of land, and a growing distrust of their Italian leader, word of a mutiny spread throughout the Spanish crews. However, on October 8, crew spirits began to rise with the sightings of birds, ducks, and fish that signaled that land was close at hand. Finally, on the morning of October 12, ten weeks after they had first sailed, the worried crews finally sighted land. Columbus first set foot in the New World in what is now known as the Bahamas. He was greeted by people known as the Tainos. Thinking that he had landed in India, Columbus referred to them as Indians. After spending several days on the island, and having received gifts of gold bracelets, Columbus set sail searching for the source of the gold. After landing on several other islands in the Bahamas chain, he landed in Cuba. On December 5, the Santa María was wrecked on a sand bank off Haiti. Columbus used the wood from the ship to build a fort and left 39 members of his crew to start a settlement. The two remaining ships set sail for Spain on January 16, arriving in back in Palos on March 15.

During the next 11 years, Columbus made three more voyages to the New World:

- a. September 14, 1493 – June 11, 1496. With 17 ships and 1500 men, Columbus visited Hispaniola, Cuba, Jamaica, Puerto Rico and the Lesser Antilles as far south as Dominica.
- b. May 30 – November 25, 1498. With 6 ships and 200 men, he visited Hispaniola, the Netherlands Antilles, and Trinidad.
- c. May 9, 1502 – November 7, 1504. With 4 ships and 150 men, he cruised the coastline of Central America from Honduras to Panama and visited Hispaniola, Martinique, and the Cayman Islands.

VI. CONTROVERSIES SURROUNDING THE HOLIDAY

The following controversies surround the Columbus Day holiday and document the reasons why the holiday is not celebrated throughout the United States.

- a. He was neither the first European to visit, nor did he “discover”, the Americas.
- b. There is no record that he ever landed on mainland North or South America.
- c. The arrival of the European settlers led to the demise of a large proportion of the native inhabitants. Columbus, and subsequent explorers, brought devastating diseases to the Americas, tortured, terrorized, and killed numerous natives, and transported many back to Spain as slaves.

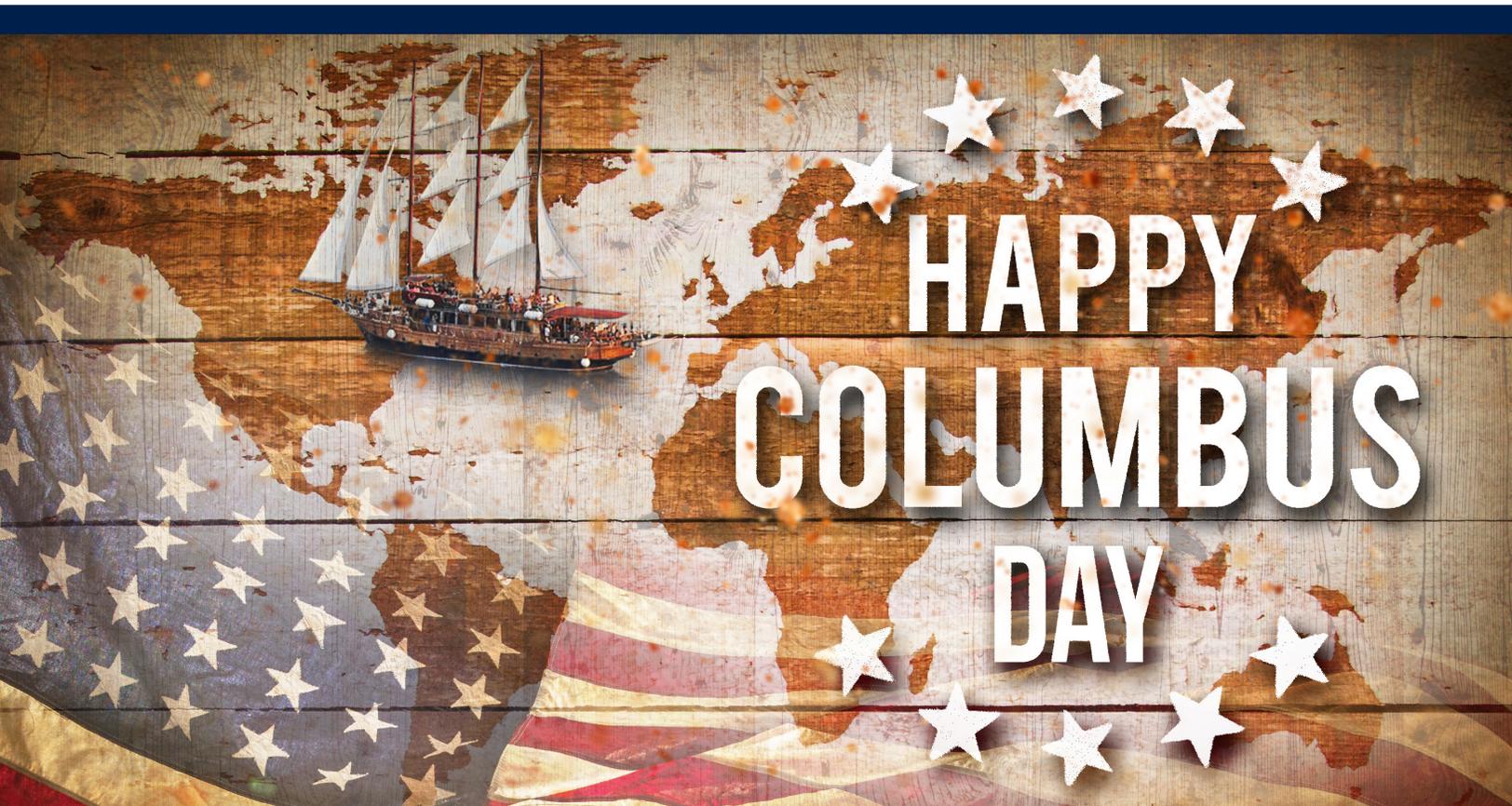
VII. CELEBRATIONS

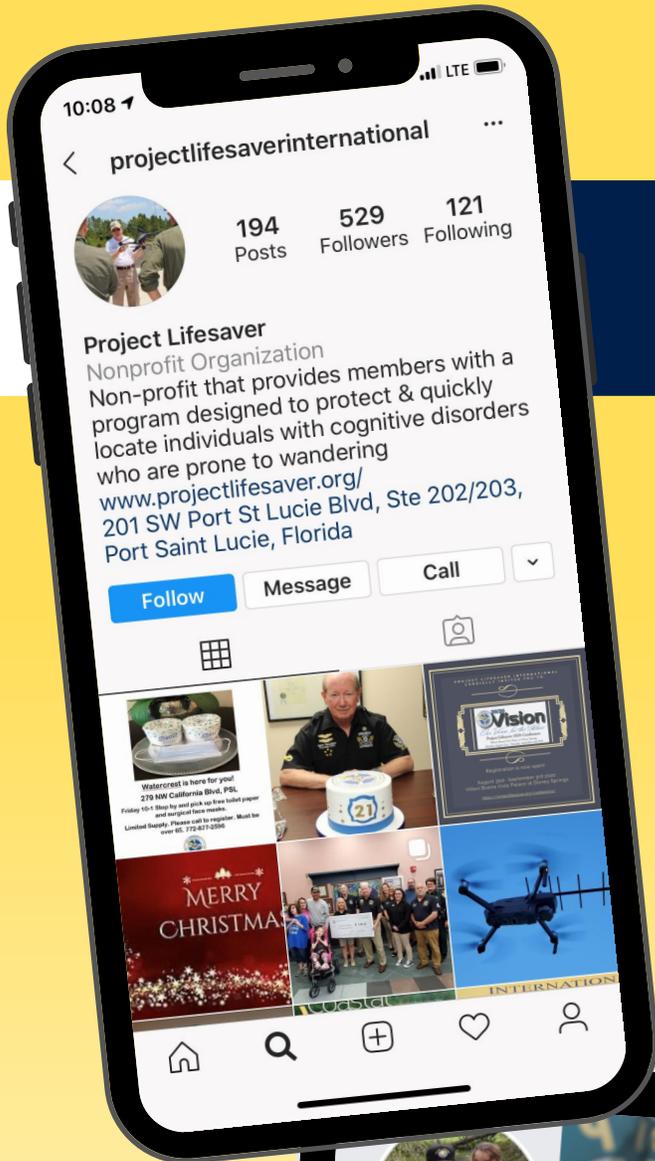
In some towns and cities across America, Columbus Day is celebrated with special church services, parades, and other large events. Such celebrations are concentrated within the Italian-American communities and are often framed around such themes as patriotism and social progress. The celebrations in New York City and Denver are particularly noteworthy. The oldest continuously-existing celebration is the Italian-American community's parade in San Francisco, which was first staged in 1868. As a public holiday, government offices and schools are generally closed, but many businesses remain open. The United States flag is displayed on all government buildings.

VIII. SUMMARY

Over the course of countless generations the Americas have been thought to have been "discovered" time and again by different peoples coming from different parts of the world. Columbus was not the first explorer to "discover" America but was, in fact, one of the last to do so. He is primarily credited with "discovering" the Americas as he opened the door to frequent subsequent visits by both himself and others. By the early 1500s, advances in communications, shipbuilding, mapmaking, weather forecasting, and navigational aids facilitated the spreading of the news of the results of his voyages that resulted in decisions by monarchs to approve, businessmen to sponsor, and sailors to offer their services to man the ships on subsequent voyages. His voyages opened a much more frequently traveled pathway from the Old World to the New, paved the way for the European conquest and colonization of the Americas, and changed life forever on both sides of the Atlantic.

The first map of the world to show the lands that Columbus had explored appeared in 1507, a year after his death. The German geographer and mapmaker Martin Waldseemüller named the New World "America" after the Italian Amerigo ("Americus" in Latin) Vespucci, who had explored the coastline of South America and was the first to realize that it was a separate continent and not part of Asia.





CHECK US OUT!

We enjoy interacting with you on social media!
 We also post articles, events, and updates so it's a great way to stay informed!

Twitter: @Projectlifesavr

Instagram: @projectlifesaverintl

Facebook: Project Lifesaver International

