

# Memories of Columbus in the Nation's Capital



Landing of Columbus  
Painting by John Vanderlyn in the Capitol

By ELMO SCOTT WATSON



ON OCTOBER 12 we celebrate the four hundred and thirty-eighth anniversary of the landing of Christopher Columbus on the shores of the New World, and insofar as the daring voyage of this Genoese sailor led eventually to the foundation of the United States, it is appropriate at this time to inquire how, in addition to the annual celebration of Landing day, we honor his memory. What memorials to Columbus, for instance, are there in the Capital of the nation which bear his name in its personification of "Columbus?"

The visitor to Washington, who goes by train, sees one of the greatest monuments ever erected to the memory of Columbus the moment he steps out of the Union station there. On the plaza in front of the station is the nation's formal tribute to the Italian navigator—the magnificent Columbus fountain by Lorado Taft. The outstanding feature of the fountain is a stone shaft about 45 feet high, surmounted by a globe which forms the background for the statue of Columbus, who stands upon the prow of a vessel, with arms folded in an attitude of meditation. The figurehead of the ship is a beautiful female figure typifying the spirit of discovery.

On each side of the shaft are massive figures representing the New and Old worlds. The New world is an American Indian, reaching over his shoulder for an arrow from his quiver. The Old world is typified by a patriarchal Caucasian of heroic mold and thoughtful mien. The globe at the top of the shaft suggests the influence of Columbus on the growth of man's knowledge of the shape of the earth. It is supported by four American eagles, standing at the corners of the top of the shaft, with wings partly extended. On the rear of the shaft is a medallion representing Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain, the patrons of Columbus' voyage of discovery, and the group of figures is completed by two enormous lions which crouch on pedestals at the ends of the balustrade.

The plan for erecting this memorial was started by a fraternal order, the Knights of Columbus, who solicited contributions from the various councils of the order throughout the country. To the large amount of money which this organization raised was added an appropriation of \$100,000 by congress and the work of erecting the memorial was given to a commission composed of the chairman of the senate and house committees on the library, the secretary of state, the secretary of war and the supreme knight of the Order of the Knights of Columbus. The commission selected the plaza in front of the Union station as the site for the memorial and adopted the design submitted by Daniel H. Burnham, architect of the National Commission of Fine Arts, and Lorado Taft, sculptor, both of Chicago.

The Capitol contains two striking reminders of Columbus. In the rotunda is the magnificent painting by John Vanderlyn, an American artist and pupil of Gilbert Stuart, which depicts "The Landing of Columbus." This picture is so well known that it needs no further description here. In the lobby of the senate gallery is the



First Picture of the Discovery in a 1493 Book



Columbus Memorial, in front of Union Station

painting of another scene in the life of Columbus by another American artist. It is "The Recall of Columbus" by A. G. Heaton, a descendant of the famous painter, Rembrandt Peale. This painting, completed in 1883 from studies made in Spain, was sold to the United States government and copied by engraving on the 50-cent stamp of the Columbian series, issued to commemorate the World's Columbian exposition at Chicago in 1893.

This painting represents the historic scene on the Bridge of Pines, two leagues from Granada, when Columbus, having been refused the financial aid of King Ferdinand for his expedition, was riding sadly away from the capital, only to be overtaken by a messenger from Queen Isabella, who had decided to give her aid even though her husband would not. In the picture Columbus, sitting on a little white mule, has just been given the queen's letter by the richly-dressed messenger who has dismounted from his fine steed and is bowing impressively as he hands the all-important document to the future discoverer of the New World. It was the turning point in the career of Christopher Columbus and as such, the preservation of this historic scene in a painting deserves a place among the other pictured "great moments in American history" which adorn the walls of the Capitol.

In addition to these memorials to Columbus in Washington, there is in the Library of Congress a collection of original documents and rare books relating to the discovery of the New World which are of almost incalculable value and which form the most direct link of the United States with the valiant sailor who made it possible for this nation to be. They constitute a unique "literary memorial" to Columbus and the headlines of them all is the Columbus Codex which has been characterized as a "document of the highest historical importance and which will be better appreciated as time goes on."

To understand the historical importance of the Codex is necessary to review briefly certain facts about the stormy life of Columbus, especially those which brought this document into existence.

In 1492, while he was on his third voyage to America, his enemies at home in Spain were doing all they could to bring about his downfall. They succeeded in turning King Ferdinand, who from the first had not been nearly as enthusiastic concerning the venture as was his queen, Isabella, against Columbus. And even the queen seemed either disinclined to defend him, or was helpless to do so.

So Columbus, who had returned in 1493 from his first voyage as a national hero, now came home in irons and in disgrace. But almost as soon as he had arrived, Ferdinand and Isabella experienced a change of heart. Columbus was immediately set free and received an invitation to visit the king and queen, which he did and was warmly received. He told the royal pair of his adventures abroad and received commendation.

However, he was not so successful

in gaining restitution and property to which he was entitled. The best he was able to do was to secure a declaration from the throne fixing the extent and manner of restitution. The result was disappointing. More complications continued to pile up.

On January 5, 1502, he called into consultation two alcaldes, or city judges, and several notaries. They drew up and had transcribed a statement of the explorer's rights. Several copies were made, these to be deposited where they could be safely preserved. Thus Columbus hoped to protect himself against his enemies.

Thirty-five documents were included in this Codex. They were the discoverer's charter as an admiral, viceroy and governor general, his warrant, granted by Isabella, authorizing him to equip ships, to share in the expense and profits of the voyage to India, to adjudicate and distribute lands, and letters from various dignitaries.

Of the four copies of the Codex made in 1502, three are known to exist today, including the one in the possession of this country. One went to the republic of Genoa. Today it is highly treasured by the municipality, being contained in a bronze bust of Columbus in the municipal palace.

The other copy was misplaced after 1670. But in 1880 it turned up in Paris. It is believed to have found its way there when Napoleon ordered all archives deposited in the French capital in 1800, and documents were sent from all parts of Europe. Restitution was later made, but the Codex apparently was overlooked. It is in Paris today.

The fourth copy, which is unaccounted for, was on paper rather than parchment. It went to Don Alonso Sanchez de Carvajal, who soon after left for Hispaniola. The documents disappeared and may have been destroyed, for they have never yet been brought to light.

The story of how America came into possession of its copy of the Codex is a romantic one. In 1818 Edward Everett, the gifted New England orator, was rummaging through an old book shop in Florence, Italy, when he came across the manuscript of about 80 pages in characters which appeared to be those of Columbus' time. In 1823, the Codex at Geneva was published and Everett discovered that the manuscript in his possession coincided precisely with those in the Genoese volume.

After Everett made this statement in 1824 the manuscript again dropped from public notice and apparently was forgotten by all concerned. About 1880, Justin Winsor, engaged in his monumental "Life of Columbus," wrote to Dr. William Everett, whose father, Edward Everett, had died, asking whether he might inspect the relic. Doctor Everett was unable to locate it at that time, but in 1897 it came to light in the locked lower part of a bookcase. The Codex was finally sold to the Library of Congress by Doctor Everett for a sum which was nominal compared with what it would have commanded in the open market.

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## Red Men by No Means Lacking in Imagination

A recent visitor to the Agawa canyon, along the Algoma Central railway, was astonished to observe on the rock-face the well-defined head of an old man, as though roughly carved by some giant sculptor. The incident started a train of reflection covering the Indian legends of the Northland. Haughty white men, greedily depriving the Indians of their ancient empire, long fostered the notion that the red men were "untutored" and non-

sessed no imagination. As early as 1637, however, Father Le Jeune, a Jesuit missionary, found they were in the habit of entertaining themselves by fanciful tales, and wrote his opinion that "the savages, in point of intellect, may be placed in a high rank. Education, and instruction alone are wanting." Charlevoix said: "Their harangues are full of shining passages which would have been applauded at Rome or Athens." Modern

Canadian readers know the beauty of Indian oratory, such as those of Tecumseh, or the simple dignity and imaginative quality of the speeches of Crowfoot and other chiefs who met the whites in the seventies and made treaties for the surrender of the Canadian West.—The Globe (Toronto).

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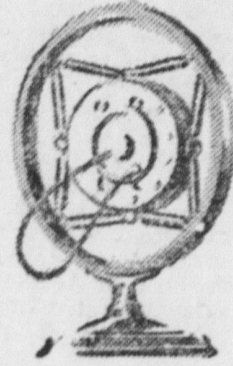
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### Ingenious Autoist

Harvey Truran, a garage employee of Stockbridge, Mass., discovered about 20 stones in the gas tank of a car after spending considerable time endeavoring to find the motor trouble. When questioned, the owner of the car, a resident of Albany, N. Y., said he could not get uphill in New Hampshire a few days before because his gas was low. In order to make a higher gas level he placed the stones in the tank.

### How They Accumulated

Prospective Bride (to visitor come to view wedding presents)—No, dear, all those alarm clocks aren't wedding presents. They are what I had given me by various mistresses when I was in service to get me up in the morning!—London Opinion.

### Old Acquaintances

Ned—Have you known Phyllis long?  
Ted—Oh, yes. I've known her ever since we were the same age!—Life.

### Outdoing Connecticut

The wooden nutmeg Yankee has been topped by a Detroit soap peddler. He sells 10 bars of pretty, pink soap for the amazing price of 25 cents. But the purchaser who puts the soap in the bathtub discovers in a very few minutes that the soap is only shell over a wooden core. Several North end apartment dwellers are seeking him with a cold look in their eyes and baseball bats in their hands.—Detroit News.

### Highway Farming

Farmer Cornshuck—How's yer watermelon crop this year, Hiram?  
Hiram—Oh, we're going to pick a 95 per cent crop this year. You see we ain't on the main highway.

### Reckoned by the Moon

Month really means "moon-th" and originally stood for the time from one full moon to the next.

New York state is replacing, without charge, trees burned in forest fires on private property.

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**A Little Bird Tells Them**  
"He's a clever boy," said the teacher, "but he's very much given to lying."  
"I don't know where he learned that," said the father, "his mother never tells lies and I'm so little at home."—Karlkatoren.

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