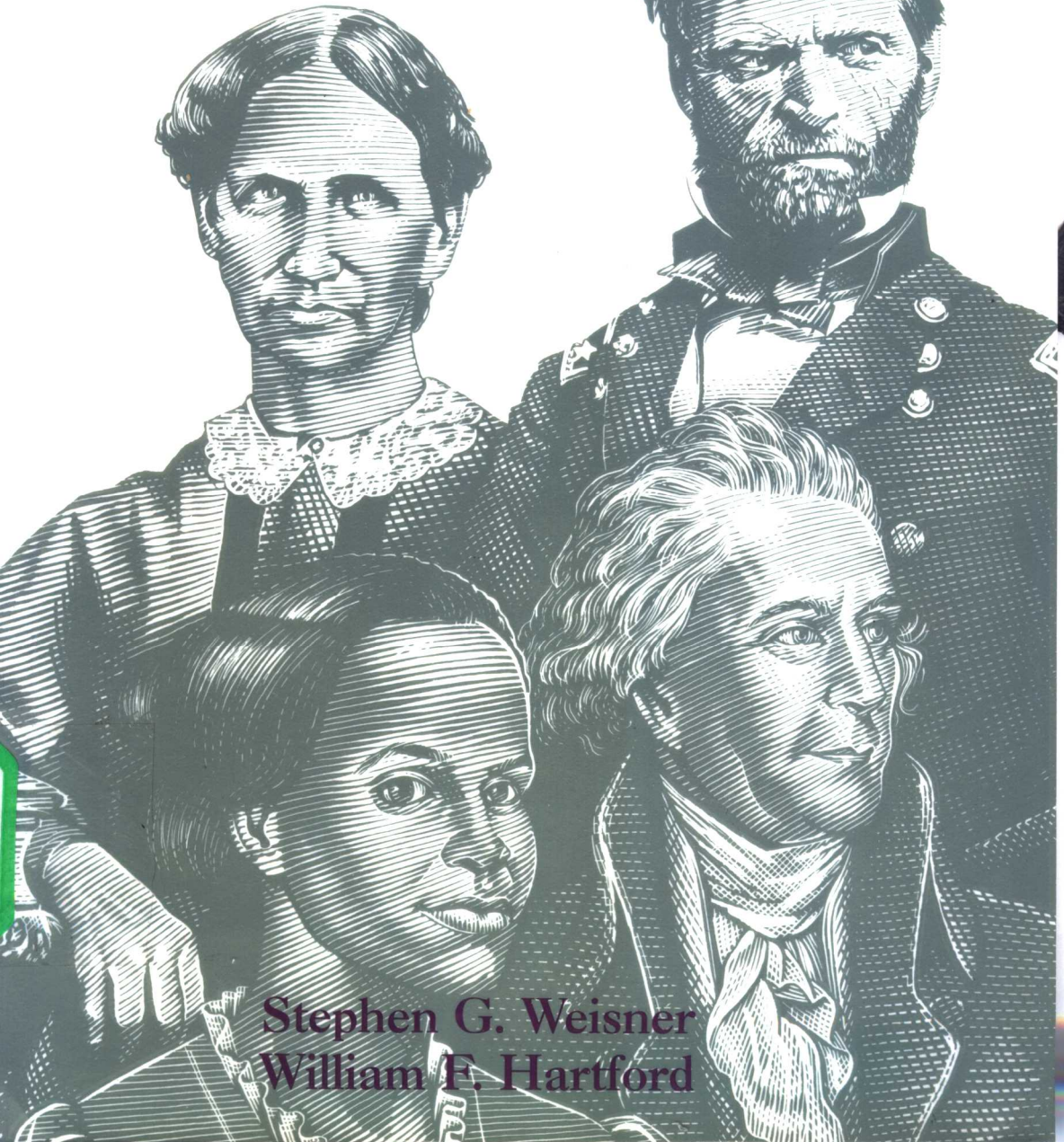


Volume I

American Portraits

Biographies in
United States
History



Stephen G. Weisner
William F. Hartford

American Portraits

Biographies in United States History

VOLUME I

Stephen G. Weisner
Springfield Technical Community College

William F. Hartford
Independent Scholar



Boston, Massachusetts Burr Ridge, Illinois Dubuque, Iowa Madison, Wisconsin
New York, New York San Francisco, California St. Louis, Missouri

McGraw-Hill

A Division of The McGraw-Hill Companies

AMERICAN PORTRAITS

Copyright © 1998 by The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc. All rights reserved.
Printed in the United States of America. Except as permitted under the United States Copyright Act of 1976, no part of the publication may be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means, or stored in a data base or retrieval system, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

Photo credits appear on page 322 and on this page by reference.

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 DOC/DOC 9 0 9

ISBN 0-07-069141-X

Editorial director: *Jane Vaicunas*

Sponsoring editor: *Lyn Uhl*

Developmental editor: *Monica Freedman*

Marketing manager: *Anne Mitchell*

Project manager: *Karen M. Smith/Alisa Watson*

Production supervisor: *Jan E. Christopher*

Designer: *Larry J. Cope*

Photo research coordinator: *Keri Johnson*

Compositor: *Ruttie, Shaw, & Wetherill*

Typeface: *10/12 Palatino*

Printer: *R. R. Donnelley & Sons Company*

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Weisner, Stephen G.

American Portraits : Biographies in United States History /
Stephen G. Weisner, William F. Hartford.

p. cm.

ISBN 0-07-069141-X (volume 1). —ISBN 0-07-069142-8 (volume 2)

1. United States—Biography. I. Hartford, William F.

II. Title.

CT214.W45 1998

973'.09'9

97-24794

[B]—DC21

<http://www.mhcollege.com>

For my mother, Anne Weisner, 1921–1993

Preface

American Portraits is a two-volume collection of biographical profiles designed to supplement the textbooks used in college-level survey courses. We adopted this format for several reasons. One is a belief that biography provides a particularly valuable tool for introducing students to the excitement and wonder of history. Life-writing forcefully reminds us that, beneath the abstractions, history is about the aspirations and struggles of flesh-and-blood human beings; it further enables us to identify with these individuals as they seek to give meaning to their lives. In so doing, biography restores a sense of immediacy to the study of the past that is often lost in textbook generalizations. Accordingly, the articles in this anthology have been selected not only for their readability—though that was certainly a consideration—but also for the interest they are likely to generate. It is our hope that, in reading these essays, students will learn more about themselves as well as the people whose lives are profiled.

We also believe that biography provides an especially effective means of exploring the social and cultural diversity that has figured so prominently in the American experience. In the not-too-distant past, U.S. history was largely the study of middle-aged white males who had attained positions of political, military, or social distinction and whose forebears hailed from the British Isles. This is no longer the case, and textbooks today devote increasing attention to both women and men from a variety of cultural groups and social classes.

Biography cannot expand the breadth of this coverage. It can, however, deepen our understanding of these people. To cite but two examples from this anthology, Alvin M. Josephy's examination of the obstacles Tecumseh encountered in his efforts to achieve Indian unity sheds light on the diversity of Native American life; and Cletus Daniel's portrait of Cesar Chavez shows how factors such as religion and ethnicity shaped the development of this leader's unique brand of trade unionism.

On a related matter, biography adds depth to our understanding of major historical themes. Most of the essays selected for this anthology thus have a dual purpose: to profile the life of a given individual and to explore how that person influenced and was influenced by broader historical forces. For exam-

ple, Patricia Horner's article on Mary Richardson Walker describes the trials and tribulations of a female pioneer in the Oregon Country; however, it also raises important questions about the ways in which environment and culture limited women's self-activity in frontier areas. Similarly, Lerone Bennett's essay on W. E. B. Du Bois not only examines the inner forces that drove the controversial black leader; it also shows how Du Bois adapted his views to perceived changes in domestic and international affairs.

As for the structure of *American Portraits*, we have divided the essays in each volume into three or four units. Each unit begins with an introductory essay that is designed to help put the portraits into topical and chronological perspective. To provide additional context for the lives profiled in the anthology, we have prepared headnotes for every article. We also have selected a document to accompany each chapter and thus broaden the scope of coverage. Discussion questions follow, to help focus attention on the main issues raised in each chapter's portrait. Finally, each chapter concludes with a brief bibliography that offers suggestions for further reading.

Acknowledgments

Thanks go to Chris Rogers for signing on to this project. At McGraw-Hill, History Editor, Lyn Uhl and Monica Freedman, Development Editor, provided encouragement and support. Former student Susan Wyzik, now a colleague, helped by critiquing articles. At Springfield Technical Community College Dr. Andrew M. Scibelli, President, and especially John H. Dunn, Executive Vice President, aided the cause with an adjustment in my teaching schedule. Also at STCC, the late Tom Boyle helped by just being a good friend. A final expression of thanks to my wife Jane, and daughters Sarah and Hannah.

Stephen G. Weisner
Springfield Technical Community College

William F. Hartford
Independent Scholar

Contents

UNIT ONE

Introduction	3
Christopher Columbus by <i>R. Jackson Wilson</i>	5
Anne Hutchinson by <i>Elizabeth Anticaglia</i>	21
William Byrd II by <i>Marshall Fishwick</i>	35
William Penn by <i>Norman K. Risjord</i>	46

UNIT TWO

Introduction	63
Daniel Boone by <i>Jo Tice Bloom</i>	65
Tecumseh by <i>Alvin M. Josephy</i>	78
Phillis Wheatley by <i>Paul Engle</i>	101
Thomas Jefferson by <i>Norman K. Risjord</i>	115
John Marshall by <i>Brian McGinty</i>	134

UNIT THREE

Introduction	149
Frances Wright by <i>Nancy Woloch</i>	151
Nat Turner by <i>Stephen B. Oates</i>	169
Sam Houston by <i>Joe B. Frantz</i>	186

Mary Richardson Walker by <i>Patricia Horner</i>	202
Elizabeth Blackwell by <i>Margaret Forster</i>	220

UNIT FOUR

Introduction	243
Harriet Beecher Stowe by <i>David McCullough</i>	245
John Brown by <i>Stephen B. Oates</i>	261
William T. Sherman by <i>Stephen E. Ambrose</i>	278
Emily Lyles Harris by <i>Philip N. Racine</i>	292
James T. Rapier by <i>Loren Schweninger</i>	306

American Portraits
Biographies in United States History

Introduction

The fifteenth century was a time of intellectual, economic, and political renewal throughout much of Europe. After centuries of stagnation and decline, Europeans were once again behaving as masters of their own destiny. As technological innovation flourished and economic activity quickened, powerful postfeudal monarchs began looking outside the continent for new sources of wealth and power. The resulting voyages of exploration soon brought Europeans to other hitherto unknown regions of the globe. As they did, colonization gradually displaced commerce as the main objective of European expansion.

The foundation for the European settlement of the Americas was established by a Genoese mariner named Christopher Columbus. This had not been his intention. Like most explorers of the period, Columbus sought to discover a trade route to the East. What set him apart from others was his belief that a western approach was not only feasible but more convenient than the customary route around the tip of Africa. He also had the self-confidence and determination needed to withstand the ridicule that often greeted his proposals and secure royal support for a western voyage. Yet, as the essay on Columbus selected for this volume shows, there was a darker side to the admiral's exploits. For many Native Americans, death and despair all too quickly became the most notable features of Columbus's legacy.

Although Columbus first reached the New World in 1492, it would be more than a century before English colonists established permanent settlements in the Americas. When they did, their main reasons for doing so varied from region to region. In New England, the Puritan migration led by John Winthrop hoped to create a "Bible Commonwealth" that would inspire the rest of humankind to better itself. As Winthrop put it, "We shall be as a City upon a Hill, the eyes of all people are upon us." Given the nature of their mission, Puritan leaders stressed the need for discipline and unity. But they soon found, as Elizabeth Anticaglia shows in her essay on Anne Hutchinson, that such singleness of purpose was more easily asserted than achieved. When Hutchinson raised the banner of freedom of conscience, she both challenged established religious beliefs and threatened the patriarchal foundations of political author-

ity in the Bay Colony. Hutchinson's convictions would later find recognition in the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. But that time was still far off. In Massachusetts Bay during the 1630s, her alleged heresy provoked harsh retribution from the colony's male elite.

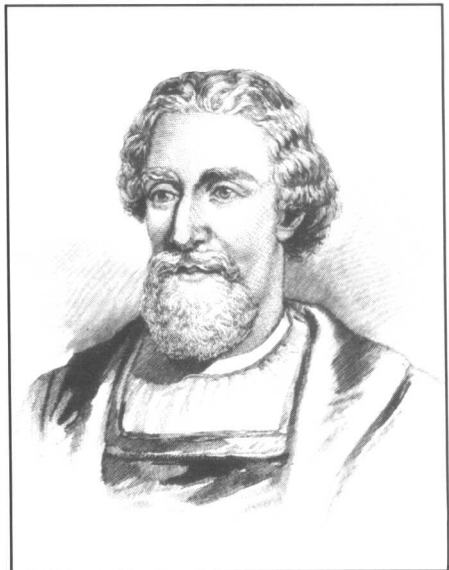
Far to the south of the Puritan Commonwealth, a much different sort of colony took shape during the course of the seventeenth century. The merchant directors of the Virginia Company were more concerned about lining their pockets than serving God. Accordingly, they expected settlers to undertake activities that would provide them with a suitable return on their investment: by mining gold and other precious metals and by establishing a commercial outpost where English manufactured goods could be exchanged for various indigenous products. These shortsighted goals distorted colonial development, and it was not until mid-century that stable government and economic prosperity replaced the chaos of earlier decades. In his essay on William Byrd II, Marshall Fishwick examines the life of a leading member of the newly established colonial elite who imposed some semblance of order on the Chesapeake region.

A third region of English settlement was the Delaware Valley. There, too, religion was a major factor in the decision to migrate, as English Quakers sought refuge from the often savage persecution they faced at home. And what John Winthrop was to Massachusetts Bay, William Penn was to the colony that bore his name. But as Norman K. Risjord relates in his essay on Penn, the Quaker leader was a much different sort of man than his Puritan counterpart. Where Winthrop governed Massachusetts with a firm hand, Penn adopted a much more flexible approach to colonial leadership. Likewise, where Winthrop dealt harshly with internal dissenters, Penn sought to conduct a "Holy Experiment" based on religious tolerance. Risjord's analysis of the transatlantic political developments that influenced Penn's efforts adds considerably to our knowledge of this complex man and the colony he founded.

Christopher Columbus

The last half of the fifteenth century was a period of nation building and commercial expansion in most parts of western Europe. Powerful rulers, often with support from an emergent middle class, cast aside lingering vestiges of feudal decentralization and formed strong national governments. In so doing, monarchs not only consolidated authority within their own countries, but they began looking for additional ways to enlarge their power. To some, this meant securing new territory through military conquest. The more ambitious also attempted to increase national wealth through the extension of existing trade routes.

For most people of the time, thoughts about commercial prosperity centered on the fabled riches of the East. The publication of Marco Polo's memoirs of his travels through the region several centuries earlier had aroused dreams of wealth that continued to exert a strong hold on the European imagination. Enterprising merchants believed that obtaining access to the silks, precious stones, and spices of China and India was the surest route to worldly fortune. There was only one problem: Europeans lacked direct contact with the main centers of eastern trade. Muslim middlemen, who controlled the land and water passages between the Mediterranean and India, demanded a substantial share of all profits earned by merchants traversing



their domain. An even more intractable barrier was the long, forbidding overland route through central Asia.

As they considered ways to overcome these obstacles, some Europeans looked south. Throughout the fifteenth century, Portuguese navigators set up permanent trading posts at various points along the coast of West Africa; then in 1486, a ship commanded by Bartholomew Diaz rounded the southern tip of the continent, thus opening the way to India. A dozen years later, when a fleet led by Vasco da Gama docked in Calcutta harbor, the Portuguese established the first direct contact between Europe and eastern commercial centers.

Meanwhile, other Europeans believed it was possible to establish a western route to China and India that would be both shorter and more convenient than alternative approaches. Among them was a Genoese mariner named Christopher Columbus. The Italian explorer was not the first European to propose reaching the East by sailing west. But unlike others who did so, he possessed a driving determination and sense of mission that enabled him to overcome the wariness of skeptical patrons. The essay that follows is from *The Pursuit of Liberty* by R. Jackson Wilson, et al. In addition to providing a stirring narrative of the trials and tribulations that Columbus subsequently encountered, the author also examines the disastrous consequences of European expansion for Native Americans of the New World.

Christopher Columbus

R. Jackson Wilson, et al

.....

On the decks of the three small ships, nearly a hundred sailors searched the tropical horizon. They looked for a sign of land—a piece of driftwood, birds soaring over the mainmast, clouds billowing in the distance—signs they had last seen thirty days before, when they lost sight of the Canary Islands. It was early October, and the sailors were becoming restive despite assurances by the captain of the flagship, *Santa Maria*, that they were near the legendary land of

Source: From R. Jackson Wilson, et al, *The Pursuit of Liberty*, Volume I. Copyright © 1984. Reprinted by permission of Alfred A. Knopf.

Cipango. The crew had lost faith in his vision. Some of the sailors talked openly of mutiny; of turning the ships eastward and heading back to Spain. The seamen's behavior, however, did not surprise the captain; he had seen it before on other cruises. Signs of land, he knew, would cure the sailors' sickness. And these signs appeared, as he knew they would. The men's faith was restored, and loose talk of insurrection melted away. The sailors were now consumed with thoughts of land and the prize that went with its first sighting.

But day passed into night without sight of land. Had the devil sea tricked them once again? Then, at 10:00 P.M. on the evening of October 11, the captain and a seaman on the *Santa Maria* spotted a light twinkling in the darkness. The captain knew this was a sure sign of land, but he squelched the cry of "*tierra, tierra*" ("land, land") for fear that a false alarm might revive the talk of mutiny. If it was land, confirmation would come soon enough from one of the other ships. At two hours after midnight, October 12, 1492, Rodrigo de Triana, a lookout on the *Pinta*, saw the light and shouted. "*tierra, tierra.*" Though Triana did not know it at the time, his shout had announced the break of a new day in the history of mankind. The *Pinta's* captain confirmed the sighting and ordered a cannon salute to the flagship. Overjoyed by the news, the captain of the *Santa Maria* maneuvered his vessel within earshot of the *Pinta* and called out the promise of a bonus of 5,000 maravedis—about \$200 in today's money. Yet no sum could adequately express his gratitude for the fulfillment of a lifelong dream.

In this moment of exhilaration, the captain's weariness and apprehension doubtlessly melted away. We may imagine his mind rushing with thoughts of tomorrow and what lay ahead; and of yesterday and the obstacles that he had surmounted. He had set out to do what no mortal had ever dared, and he had done it: he had sailed west into the Atlantic, beyond the Canaries, and stood on the threshold of the Orient, which he would claim for Spain. He had beaten the Portuguese to the Orient—a victory that doubly satisfied him since they had rejected his plan as wishful and visionary.

The days ahead promised to be busy. The courts of Cipango awaited him, and then the kingdom of the Grand Khan. Now, surely he deserved the title "Admiral of the Ocean Sea." All of the insults and humiliations suffered during his 41 years seemed to pale in the glow of his achievement. Lesser men had ridiculed his vision of sailing west to the Orient; they had portrayed him as a fool, a madman, a heretic—or all three. At times, his only source of strength had come from prayer. Now, though, he could afford the vanity of reflecting on the dunces who had made his life so miserable.

vortex Any state of affairs that resembles a whirling mass of water in its absorbing effect and irresistible power.

idiosyncratic A personal peculiarity or mannerism.

caravel A fifteenth-century sailing ship with broad bows and triangular sails.

On that morning of October 12, 1492, the memories of Cristoforo Colombo assuredly drifted back to his youth in his native Genoa—a busy Italian seaport at the head of the Ligurian Sea, which opens onto the Mediterranean. No doubt he recalled the fishing fleets putting out to sea; the humming of the dockside fish markets on their return; the merchant ships with their exotic cargoes, their seamen speaking languages unfamiliar to a young Italian. As the eldest of four children in the house of Domenico and Susanna Colombo, young Cristoforo was expected to work at the weaver's bench like his father. But the lure of the sea was too strong for him. At the age of ten (1461), Cristoforo was puttering about the wharves of Genoa, and by the time he was a teenager he had obtained work with the fishing fleets of the city. The sea had won.

Christofor's seafaring career began inauspiciously. Like so many other young men of the Mediterranean, he might have ended his days as an ordinary seaman had it not been for a happy accident. In 1476, in his twenty-fifth year, he signed on as a seaman with a Flemish vessel bound in convoy from Genoa to the marts of northern Europe. Just off the coast of Portugal, disaster struck. A French fleet attacked the convoy, destroying three ships, including the Flemish merchantman. Cristoforo was tossed into the sea 6 miles from the Portuguese coast. Latching onto a piece of wreckage, he paddled to the distant shore and stumbled into the small town of Logos (not 50 miles from Prince Henry's famous academy of navigation). After regaining his strength, he journeyed to the Portuguese capital at Lisbon, where, by good fortune, his brother Bartolomeo had a job as a chartmaker.

What luck! Having courted death and survived, Cristoforo made landfall in a mariner's paradise. Lisbon in 1476 was the seafaring capital of the Western world, the center for the maritime arts and sciences. For over 50 years, Portugal had nurtured the study of the sea. Prince Henry had assembled some of Europe's best mariners and scientists on a rocky cape in southern Portugal, and under his tutelage, Portuguese sailors explored the unknown reaches of the Atlantic Ocean. They discovered the Azores, colonized the Madeiras and pushed south to the Cape Verde Islands off the African coast, and sailed around the bulge of West Africa along the Guinea Coast. After the explorers came the merchants, who supplied Portugal with sugar and wine from the islands and ivory, gold, pepper, and slaves from the African coast. With the deliberateness and caution of skilled craftsmen, the Portuguese unfolded their plan of exploration. Inevitably, their explorers would reach the tip of Africa; they would round it and sail on to India and China—to the legendary land of Marco Polo.

Cristoforo had fallen into a **vortex** of exploration and discovery, and he made the most of it. He would become a mariner. But his chosen profession demanded a great deal, not least a sound education and good social connections. In Lisbon, the rude Italian refined his navigational skills, mastered Latin, and taught himself to read and write Portuguese. Marriage into one of Portu-

gal's finest families followed, as did important business connections. Out on the sea, he sailed from Africa to Iceland, all the while learning the moods of the Atlantic and the skills necessary for his greatest adventure. With his apprenticeship served, Christopher Columbus was ready for the dream—the vision that would consume the rest of his days.

As he stood on the deck of the *Santa Maria* on the morning of October 12, 1492, Columbus perhaps reflected on the source of his vision—that mariners might sail westward into the nothingness of the Atlantic Ocean, beyond the known world, and arrive at the Orient. The idea was not his own; he had learned of it chiefly through the speculative writings of a fellow Italian, the famed Florentine physician, Paola Toscanelli. Several years before Columbus arrived in Lisbon, Toscanelli had discussed the feasibility of a western sea route to the Orient. He reckoned that Cipango (Japan) was about 3,000 miles to the west of Europe and Quinsay (China) about 5,000 miles. In the opinion of mariners and maritime scholars, Toscanelli's geographical ideas were ludicrous—not because he envisioned a spherical earth (since virtually all maritime authorities were in agreement by then that the earth was round rather than flat), but because these authorities thought the earth's circumference was much larger than Toscanelli allowed, and they were right. Columbus, however, found Toscanelli's arguments credible. Further persuaded by correspondence with the **idiosyncratic** Florentine, Columbus launched a campaign in search of a sponsor for a western voyage to the Orient—a search that was to last ten years.

His campaign was filled with adversity. His wife died in 1485, and in that same year, the Portuguese crown flatly rejected his overtures for a western voyage to the Orient. The Portuguese were already committed to a deliberate plan of sailing around Africa and on to India; indeed, their mariner Bartholomeu Dias would reach the Cape of Good Hope in the next year. Rejected by the Portuguese, Columbus set off to peddle his eccentric geographical theory to the court of Spain. After six years of effort, the Spanish too rejected his vision.

These were embittering years, years of lengthy and fruitless negotiation, countless insults, and mocking whispers. Incapable of enduring further humiliation, Cristoforo made one final offer to Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand. His demands were extravagant—the kind of demands that one might expect of a frustrated man sensing the hopelessness of his case. He wanted a fleet to take him to the Orient, where he would become governor and viceroy of all he discovered. And he wanted 10 percent of the profits to boot. The crown of course rejected his demands. As Columbus trudged away from the royal court at Santa Fe, he wore the despair of a beaten man. Yet, for some unfathomable reason, the crown had a change of heart—most likely Isabella's heart since Ferdinand had never given a whit for this Genoese dreamer. All Columbus asked for was to be granted. His enthusiasm burned again, and he prepared to avenge the skeptics, doubters, and faint of heart.