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On this day: Christopher Columbus

Gerelyn Hollingsworth | Oct. 12, 2011 NCR Today

On this day, in 1492, after 70 days at sea, Christopher Columbus stepped out of his boat and onto an island in the Bahamas.

On the previous evening, "when, according to invariable custom on board of the admiral's ship, the mariners had sung the *Salve Regina*, or vesper hymn to the Virgin, he made an impressive address to his crew. He pointed out the goodness of God in thus conducting them by soft and favouring breezes across a tranquil ocean, cheering their hope continually with fresh signs, increasing as their fears augmented, and thus leading and guiding them to a promised land."

--*The Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus,* [1] by Washington Irving, 1828. Search term: Salve Regina. Page 107, ff.

"They continued their course until two in the morning, when a gun from the *Pinta* gave the joyful signal of land. . . . The land was now clearly seen about two leagues distant, whereupon they took in sail, and laid-to, waiting impatiently for the dawn.

"The thoughts and feelings of Columbus in this little space of time must have been tumultuous and intense. At length, in spite of every difficulty and danger, he had accomplished his object. The vast mystery of the ocean was revealed; his theory, which had been the scoff of sages, was triumphantly established; he had secured to himself a glory durable as the world itself."

"It was on Friday morning, the 12th of October, that Columbus first beheld the New World. As the day dawned he saw before him a level island, several leagues in extent, and covered with trees like a continual orchard. Though apparently uncultivated, it was populous, for the inhabitants were seen issuing from all parts of the woods and running to the shore. They were perfectly naked, and, as they stood gazing at the ships, appeared by their attitudes and gestures to be lost in astonishment. Columbus made signal for the ships to cast anchor, and the boats to be manned and armed. He entered his own boat, richly attired in scarlet, and holding the royal standard; . . .

"As he approached the shore, Columbus, who was disposed for all kinds of agreeable impressions, was delighted with the purity and suavity of the atmosphere, the crystal transparency of the sea, and the extraordinary beauty of the vegetation. He beheld, also, fruits of an unknown kind upon the trees which overhung the shores. On landing he threw himself on his knees, kissed the earth, and returned thanks to God with tears of joy."

Click here [2] for Google News of Christopher Columbus.

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