



## EXPLORING AMERICA

He was a man of three names: *Cristoforo Colombo*, for the family, *Cristobal Colon*, for Spaniards, among whom he decided to live in the most eventful and adventurous period of his life and *Christopher Columbus* for the rest of the world. He was a man of unwavering conviction and unruffled, iron will. In a way he could not have foreseen, he embodied what was yet to become a characteristic feature of the American society: to have the courage to dream and make these dreams come true, for everything is possible.

### Courage as a birthright

Indeed, everything seemed possible for Columbus. No doors, not even the doors of monarchs' castles, were closed before him, and he was just a wool weaver's son. Born in Genoa, probably in 1451, to Domenico Colombo and Susanna Fontannarossa, he was the oldest of five children. Two of his brothers, Bartholomew and Diego, shared the hardships and glories of his explorations. So did his sons: Diego and Ferdinand, who wrote an account of the last of Columbus' great voyages westwards.

### There must be a way

The idea which took such a complete possession of the world's greatest explorer was to find a safe and short route to the Indies (now India, China and Japan). Trading with this part of the world, profitable and desirable for the Europeans, had recently become hampered by the Ottoman Turks who controlled Constantinople, making the land route difficult or impassable. Columbus knew, like most educated men of his time that the world is round. He deduced that sailing westward would bring him to Asia from the other side.

### Christopher Columbus



*The Godspeed, a replica of one of the three ships that brought English settlers to America in 1607, passes the Statue of Liberty. Photo © AP Images*

### Green light to landing a dream

Now his task was to convince a monarch to sponsor his voyage. He first tried Portugal and sent his brother to the English and the French court, but it was finally Queen Isabella of Spain who agreed to send Columbus on his dream quest. On August 3, 1492 three caravels: *Santa Maria*, the *Pinta* and the *Niña* set sail across the Atlantic. On October 12 that year land was spotted. All 90 seamen and their captains thought they reached an island just off the coast of Asia. Columbus named the island San Salvador.

### "White" errors

Christopher Columbus' decade of exploration abounded in mistakes. Convinced that he was opening a passage to India, he called the native population of the islands he discovered Indians and the name remained. America, on the other hand, discovered and explored by Columbus, was named after another explorer Amerigo Vespucci, instead of its discoverer, Columbus. The reason for Columbus' mistake was his miscalculation of the distance between China and Europe. Had it not been for America that lay in his way, Columbus would not have returned from his voyage.

### The world made one

Though Columbus never actually learned what land he explored and, at least in the sense of achieving his goal, his four expeditions were a failure, in the years to come this discovery turned out to be of great importance. For both the Old and the New Worlds, which had not known about each other before, nothing was ever the same. The clock of the world's history started ticking at an entirely different rate.

*Text by AIRC, Krakow*



One of three stamps commemorating the 1804-06 Lewis and Clark Expedition. Photo © AP Images

# AMERICAN EXPLORERS

## LEWIS, CLARK and SACAJAWEA



One of three stamps commemorating the 1804-06 Lewis and Clark Expedition. Photo © AP Images

**Meriwether Lewis and William Clark are regarded to have been the greatest American explorers. Interestingly, behind the journey which made them so famous lay a dream similar to the one Columbus had 300 years before: to find a waterway westward. This time, however, the starting point was the U.S. South, not Europe, and the waterway - great American rivers, not oceans.**

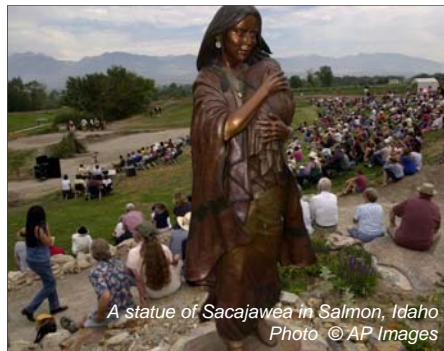
### Growing need for exploration

The beginning of the 19th century marks an important acquisition the United States made by purchasing the Louisiana Territory from France. A huge area of 800,000 square miles, now including 15 states, had been poorly explored. Planning future economic development of the territory, President Thomas Jefferson needed maps. But most of all he hoped for a waterway that would enable American traders to ship their goods north and then west to the Pacific Ocean.

### Preparation - half-way to success

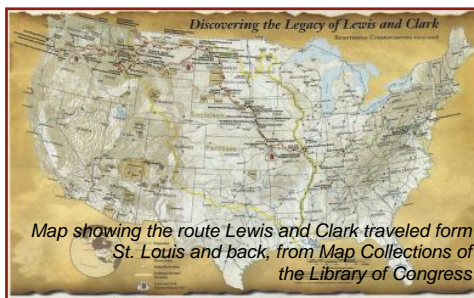
The most famous American inland expedition named the **Corps of Discovery** began on May 14, 1804 and lasted over two years. Meriwether Lewis, Jefferson's private secretary, was appointed the leader, but he recruited William Clark, his friend from the military service and a Virginian compatriot, to accompany him as the co-leader. They had been given scientific training to cope with the tasks that awaited them on the journey: draw maps, determine their position and direction by means of celestial observation and use scientific instruments available at the time such as the octant, chronometer, sextant and compass. Using some of these instruments re-

quired long and tiresome upkeep, for example a chronometer (or clock) had to be wound each day at noon, which must have been a nuisance for the travelers on their arduous journey.



### From soldiers to diplomats

An equally demanding task was to gather and store information about the fauna and flora of the territories traversed. And so the two men, educated in the soldiers' profession, had to become experts in natural sciences, navigation, organization and ... diplomacy, which was indeed of utmost importance during this expedition. The lives of the ninety members of the Corps of Discovery depended on their lead-



ers' skill to introduce themselves and present the goal of their mission to the Indian tribes, through whose territories they were passing.

### You live in the United States

The mission was a peaceful one.

One of its goals was to inform the Indians that the whole territory had passed from the French into the American hands. Lewis and Clark had with them American flags and Jefferson medals depicting two hands clasped in friendship. These were offered to the chiefs as presents.

### Indebted to Nez Perce

The Indians were friendly as well. Indeed, at the time of a crisis, when the group was exhausted and starving while crossing the Lolo Trail in the Bitterroot Mountains (Idaho), the Nez Perce Indians saved the explorers' lives by giving them food and shelter, and when the travelers had to leave their horses behind, they cared for the animals until they returned from the Pacific shores, where they spent the winter of 1805.

### A token of peace

And yet the most invaluable Indian, the "safe conduct" for the whole expedition was a woman named **Sacajawea**, one of the two wives of a French trader Toussaint Charbonneau who accompanied the Corps of Discovery as a translator. She gave birth to a son on the journey and she traveled with the explorers all the way to the Pacific and back. She was a warrant of safety for, as Clark wrote in his journal, "a woman with a party of men is a token of peace."

### Vital discovery

The explorers brought back maps, journals and materials for scientific analysis and the most vital discovery: a waterway passage to the Pacific does not exist.

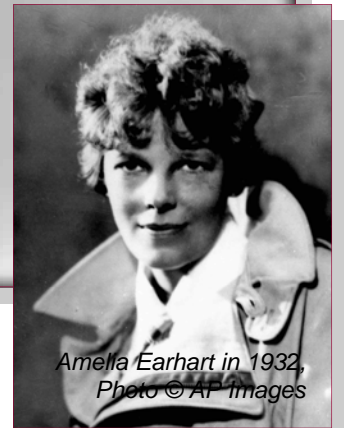
*Text by AIRC, Krakow*

# FIRST WOMAN TO FLY OVER THE ATLANTIC



Amelia Earhart, 40, stands next to a Lockheed Electra 10E, before her last flight in 1937 from Oakland, Calif., Photo © AP Images

## AMELIA EARHART & Her Last Flight



Amelia Earhart in 1932, Photo © AP Images

If Christopher Columbus is a man with two graves - one tomb in Seville, Spain and the other, in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic - **Amelia Earhart**, a great explorer of the skies, has none. The mystery of her disappearance about 7,000 miles before completing an attempted circumnavigation of the world, which no other woman had tried before her, has never been solved. Neither her body nor her plane, the twin engine Lockheed Electra, have ever been found though a huge rescue operation that cost \$4 million was launched promptly upon the loss of radio contact and many people since have tried to find a clue to her fate.

The 1930s was the time when Amelia Earhart achieved her most spectacular successes: she set a world altitude record of 5613 m, she was the first woman to fly solo across the Atlantic, and she was the first person to make a solo flight across the Pacific (from Honolulu to Oakland, California). The 1930s was also the time of great advancement in aviation and yet technological feats such as GPS systems were still a long way off. Pilots relied on navigators, who had to rely on celestial observation and maps, which were often inaccurate. Flying a plane and navigating a ship still had an element of uncertainty and adventure; a romantic tinge of being an explorer of the unknown and of challenging and having to fight the primeval forces of nature.

Successful and praised for her achievements, Amelia Earhart was preparing for the challenge of her life

- a flight around the world. As she was used to hardships and setbacks, she disregarded what a more superstitious pilot might have treated as a warning sign: her plane crashed on takeoff of the around the world attempt in March 1937. Instead of being put off, the aviatrix had her Lockheed Electra repaired. She said, "I have a feeling that there is just about one more good flight left in my system and I hope this trip is it."

In June that same year the plane was fit to fly and with navigator Fred Noonan, Earhart set off. A month later when they had covered about 3/4 of the distance the tragic moment came. They set course for the small Howland Island located southwest of Honolulu, Hawaii, but they never made it. A ship that was positioned near the island to serve as radio contact lost communication with the plane. Nine ships and 66 aircraft combed the area of the Pacific where Earhart's plane was supposed to have perished. Alas, in vain.

That Amelia Earhart realized what risk she was running is evident from a letter she sent to her husband George Putnam shortly before the fatal flight. The letter was published in a book "Last Flight": "Please know I am quite aware of the hazards...I want to do it because I want to do it. Women must try to do things as men have tried. When they fail their failure must be but a challenge to others."

Text by AIRC, Krakow

# Activity Page

## Win a Prize!

Find answers to activities on this page at [www.usinfo.pl/zoom/](http://www.usinfo.pl/zoom/)

**October 2006 contest:**  
What does a  
chronometer  
measure?

Send your answer to  
[zoom@usinfo.pl](mailto:zoom@usinfo.pl).

Give your name and  
address. The deadline  
is **November 5**

Answer to "Win a Prize"  
in the September 2006  
issue: The most popular  
musical instrument in  
America is the piano

Congratulations to the  
winners: Karolina from  
Częstochowa  
Edward from Radom,  
Sebastian from  
Poczesna

Book prizes will be sent  
to you by mail.

**EXERCISE 1** Three sentences have been removed from the text below. Put them back in the appropriate place.

Columbus Day is the annual U.S. commemoration of Christopher Columbus's landing in the New World (at San Salvador island, also known as Watling Island, today part of the British Bahamas) on October 12, 1492. .... **(1)** Viking sailors are believed to have established a short-lived settlement in Newfoundland sometime in the 11th Century, and scholars have argued for a number of other possible pre-Columbian landings.

..... **(2)**

A number of nations celebrate this encounter with annual holidays: Discovery Day in the Bahamas, Hispanic Day in Spain, and Día de la Raza in much of Latin America.

..... **(3)** In the United States, Columbus Day is typically a celebration of Italian and Italian-American cultural heritage, Columbus generally being considered a native of Genoa.

- Columbus, however, initiated the lasting encounter between Europeans and the indigenous peoples of the Western Hemisphere.
- In 1971, Congress moved the U.S. holiday from October 12 to the second Monday in October, to afford workers a long holiday weekend.
- Columbus was not the first European successfully to cross the Atlantic.

*Fragment from the text about Columbus Day on USINFO.STATE.GOV website*

## Glossary -

(in the order of appearance)

**unwavering** - strong and firm

**unruffled** - calm, not affected by surprising or frightening events

**embody** - symbolize or express an idea

**hamper** - make difficult

**deduce** - reach a conclusion based on the knowledge one has gained

**caravel** - a small, highly maneuverable, three-mast ship able to go up river

**abound** - be in a large number

**acquisition** - something that was bought or obtained

**compatriot** - person from the same country

**upkeep** - process of keeping something in good condition

**arduous** - difficult and tiring

**traverse** - go across

**depict** - show in a work of art

**safe-conduct** - allowed to travel safe

**token** - a small thing or action which is meant to show special intentions or feelings

**circumnavigation** - sailing or flying around the world

**altitude** - height above the sea level

**primeval** - from a very early period in history

**aviatrix** - a woman pilot

**EXERCISE 2** Here are some verbs connected with TRAVELING & EXPLORING. Make them into nouns :

- explore, 2. discover, 3. invent, 4. travel, 5. hike, 6. fly, 7. navigate, 8. survive, 9. sail, 10. cruise, 11. depart, 12. arrive, 13. board, 14. embark

**EXERCISE 3** Can you guess the meaning of these idioms:

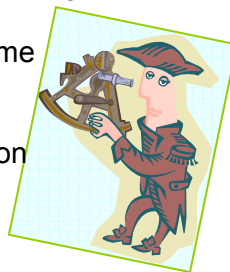
- travel light
- survival of the fittest
- with flying colors

## SPEAKING ACTIVITY:

On the world's map show:

- the route Christopher Columbus took in his famous voyage of 1492,
- the path Lewis and Clark traveled
- one of Amelia Earhart's flights.

While pointing the routes on the map talk about the trip: its goals, length, problems, achievements, etc.



**ZOOM**  
in on america

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