

Fourth Annual

Alice Louise Reynolds
Lecture

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Presented by

De Lamar Jensen

Professor of History

Brigham Young University

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Friends of the Brigham Young University Library

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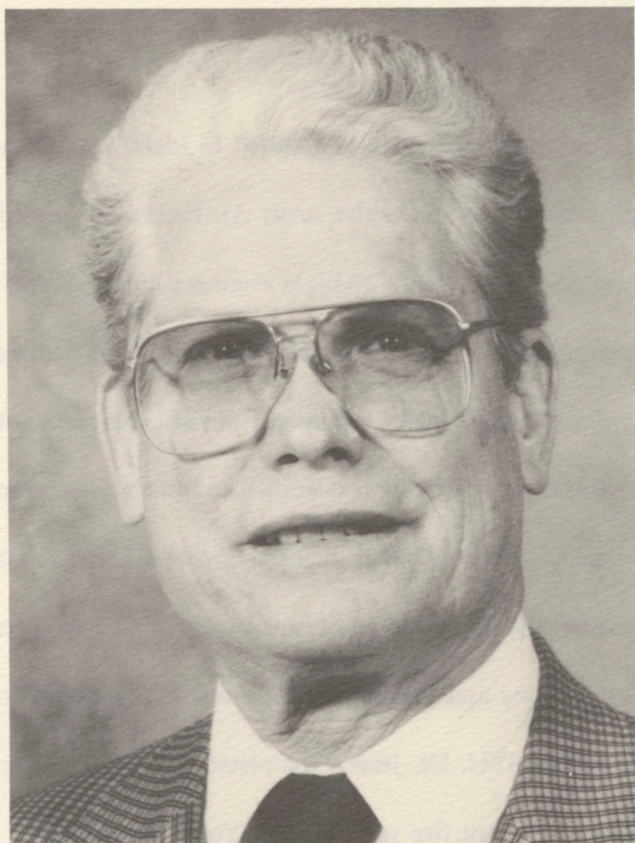
1992

De Lamar Jensen

De Lamar Jensen was born and reared in Idaho. After graduating from high school, he entered the Army Air Forces and served as a fighter pilot and later as a B-29 flight engineer during World War II. At the end of the war, he enrolled at Brigham Young University for one year. Returning to Idaho, he taught physics and aeronautics in high school until 1947 when he was called to serve a mission in Mexico and Guatemala for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. On his mission his life made an abrupt turn with the discovery that he preferred history and languages to science and mathematics.

Returning to BYU, Dr. Jensen completed a B.A. degree in history in 1952. He then spent five years in New York City, where he studied modern European history with a minor in Latin American history at Columbia University under the distinguished professor Garrett Mattingly. He received an M.A. degree in 1953 and a Ph.D. in 1957.

Since Dr. Jensen joined the BYU faculty in 1957, he has taught nearly every European history course offered, as well as courses in U.S. and Latin American history. He specializes in the Renaissance, the Reformation, the overseas expansion of Europe, European intellectual



De Lamar Jensen

history, and early modern diplomacy. Professor Jensen was chair of the History Department from 1967 to 1972, and he has directed or codirected six Study Abroad programs in Mexico and Europe.

Professor Jensen has been awarded numerous fellowships and research grants, including an Institute of International Education Fellowship to Spain and France in 1956; a Rockefeller Foundation Research Grant to France in 1964; a National Endowment for the Humanities Research Grant to Europe, 1970–71; a Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship to Europe, 1979–80; and a David M. Kennedy Center for International Studies Grant for research in Spain and England in 1988. In 1977 he gave the Distinguished Faculty Lecture at Brigham Young University entitled “Reflections from a Renaissance Treasury.”

Professor Jensen is cofounder and director of the International Organization of Historians of Early Modern Europe and was general editor of its newsletter/bulletin from 1965 to 1979. He served as a contributing editor for the newsletter of the National Foundation for Reformation Research, on the editorial committee of the *Sixteenth Century Journal*, as editor of *Forums in History*, and on a national committee of the Sixteenth-Century Studies Conference. Professor Jensen has presented more than 40 lectures and papers at national and international conferences.

Professor Jensen's extensive research in European archives and libraries has resulted in the publication of a number of books, including *Renaissance Europe: Age of Recovery and Reconciliation* (1981; 2d ed., 1992); *Reformation Europe: Age of Reform and Revolution* (1981; 2d ed., 1992); *Confrontation at Worms: Martin Luther and the Diet of Worms* (1973); and *Diplomacy and Dogmatism: Bernardino de Mendoza and the French Catholic League* (1964). Professor Jensen has also edited *The Expansion of Europe: Motives, Methods and Meanings* (1967) and *Machiavelli: Cynic, Patriot, or Political Scientist?* (1960). In addition, he has published 25 articles in a variety of national and international journals, a number of chapters in books, and over 50 book reviews.

From 1980 to 1983, Dr. Jensen served as president of the LDS Peru Arequipa Mission. After returning to BYU, Dr. Jensen became dean of the University Honors Program during a significant period of its development. Professor Jensen, although officially retired, is teaching a course this semester on "The Overseas Expansion of Europe." He is also writing several articles on Columbus and is serving as chair of the BYU Columbus Quincentennial Committee. Professor Jensen is married to Mary White, and they are the parents of five children.

The Alice Louise Reynolds Lecture

“Discovering Columbus’s Crew”

De Lamar Jensen

Brigham Young University, April 2, 1992

I am honored and somewhat overwhelmed by the invitation to give this fourth Alice Louise Reynolds Lecture. I am deeply impressed with the quality of the lectures that have preceded me, and more than a little intimidated by being the first man to participate in this capacity in what has hitherto been an all women’s affair. I’m still not quite sure what to make of it, but I am pleased to be numbered among such outstanding and respected people as Esther Peterson, Marilyn Arnold, and Madeleine Stern. I hope when I have finished that Dean Larsen and any others responsible for inviting me won’t be in trouble.

The honoring of Alice Louise Reynolds is a fitting gesture, for she was truly an outstanding person, intelligent, capable, stimulating, and devoted to promoting intellectual and spiritual growth. Although the title of my lecture, “Discovering Columbus’s Crew,” may seem to have little directly to do with Alice Louise Reynolds,

I am in part honoring the memory of another intellectual pioneer, whose name is also Alice—Alice Bache Gould—who more than any other person has made it possible for me to talk intelligently about Columbus's 1492 crew. Whether I do or not is another matter.

At one side of the principal entrance to the Archivo General de Simancas, located in an imposing medieval castle near Valladolid, Spain, is a white marble plaque with the following inscription, which translated reads: "To Miss Alice B. Gould, illustrious North American researcher and great friend of Spain [who] worked in this archive for forty years and died here as she entered it on the 25th of July, 1953." I learned just three years later, when I began my own researches in that same archive, that every July 25 the archive remains closed in her honor.

Alice Gould was born in Boston, January 5, 1868 (just five years before Alice Louise Reynolds), the daughter of the Harvard astronomer, linguist, and mathematician Benjamin Gould and his wife Mary Quincy, granddaughter of a former president of Harvard College. Alice's early years were spent in Argentina, where her father worked for a time at the National Observatory in Córdoba. There she learned to speak and write Spanish fluently and gained some appreciation for Spanish culture. When she was 12 years of age, her parents sent

her back to Boston to continue her education. At 18 she entered Bryn Mawr College. After graduating from Bryn Mawr she began graduate study in mathematics at MIT and later continued her studies at the University of Chicago. She spent the winter of 1903 in Puerto Rico, convalescing from a serious bout with influenza. Here she renewed her familiarity with Spanish and began her interest in Columbus; in particular, she was curious about the crew of his voyage of discovery. A short time later, she and a friend embarked on a voyage to Rome, but they got only as far as Gibraltar before her friend became ill and the rest of the trip was aborted. In the meantime, Alice changed her plans and decided to go to nearby Seville instead. There, at the Archivo de Indias, she began what turned out to be a lifetime labor of identifying and resurrecting, so to speak, the men of Columbus's crew, without whom there would have been no voyage.

For the better part of the next 40 years Miss Gould lived in Spain, dividing her time among the archives of Simancas, Zaragoza, Valencia, Madrid, and Seville, pouring over masses of manuscripts, following every lead and clue that might turn up information needed to identify and verify the people who sailed with Columbus. She was a perfectionist, and she would never stop in her quest until she had

read every letter, legal brief, payroll account, or random paper that might reveal some evidence.

As far as we can tell, no contemporary crew list of the first voyage was made—at least none has ever been found. The earliest authorities on Columbus and his voyages, Ferdinand Columbus, the discoverer's second son, who wrote a history of his father, and Bartolomé de las Casas, his contemporary chronicler, who had access to Columbus's papers, both say there were 90 crewmen. They do not name them, however, except for a few of the officers. Some other early writers had speculated up to as many as 120 crewmen, but without any evidence or names. In the nineteenth century, two or three lists were compiled by Cesáreo Fernández Duro and others, but always from inadequate or unreliable sources, or no sources at all.

Miss Gould's meticulous work with authentic primary documents—in the Archives of the Indies in Seville, the Columbian Library in Seville, the National Library in Madrid, the Archive of the House of Alba in Madrid, the National Historical Archive in Madrid, and the Simancas Archive in Valladolid—most of which are difficult to sort out and sometimes to decipher, revealed that the previous lists were almost useless. They contained names of many people who had nothing to do with the Columbus voyage and overlooked others who

were legitimate members of the crew. Her research, cross-checking, and verification of all the available data produced what is probably as close as we will ever come to a complete and accurate count, although she denied that it was definitive. Most Columbus scholars regard her *Nueva lista documentada de los tripulantes de Colón en 1492* (Madrid, 1984) as the most important piece of original research in the twentieth century relating to Columbus's voyage.

Her list contains the names of 87 authentic crew members, plus 28 others she calls *dudosos* (doubtfuls). From that "doubtful" list, three or more others probably participated in the voyage also. She includes every documentary citation for each individual and tries to resolve discrepancies when the sources show several people with the same name. My list is essentially a condensation of Miss Gould's *Nueva lista*, with some of my own research included whenever it seemed to add something, which wasn't very often. I have given what data I could find about the profession of each crew member, his function aboard ship, and his place of residence or origin. Where there are alternate spellings of the names as given in the documents I have included these in parentheses. The assigning of many of the seamen and ship's boys to particular ships is sometimes rather arbitrary, since we are sure of only the officers and petty officers, and not all of them.

* * *

Columbus's crusade to gain support for his "Enterprise of the Indies"—the proposal to sail west across the Atlantic to reach the rich lands of Asia—had occupied him for many years and had taken him from Genoa to Lisbon, to Porto Santo in the Madeiras, to the monastery of La Rábida in southwestern Spain, and for seven years had induced him to follow the itinerant Spanish court of Ferdinand and Isabel all over the country. A committee, known as the Talavera Commission, was appointed by the sovereigns to study Columbus's project and make recommendations regarding its feasibility. It is hard to say what caused the commission the most consternation, Columbus's contention that the earth was much smaller than most believed it to be or his declaration that he was called by God.

Columbus calculated the circumference of the earth at less than 20,000 miles (everyone else believed it was spherical too, but most learned opinion held it to be considerably larger than that). He also maintained that Asia extended much farther to the east than was commonly thought, and thus the sea distance from the Canaries to Japan was no more than 2,400 miles (the actual airline distance is 10,600 miles). He compounded his incredibility by claiming to be

divinely chosen to accomplish his enterprise. "God made me the messenger of the new heaven and the new earth, of which He spoke in the Apocalypse of St. John after having spoken of it by the mouth of Isaiah," Columbus wrote to a friend and confidant of the queen, "and he showed me where to find it."¹ Later he added, "I have found Our Lord very favorable toward my desire [to embark on the voyage] and I received from Him the spirit of intelligence to carry it out . . . encouraging me to go forward, and without ceasing they inflame me with a sense of great urgency."²

It was not until January 1492 that Columbus finally received royal approval and financial backing for his voyage, and it was four months more before he obtained the authorizing documents: articles of agreement, confirmation of the titles and offices he would be given if he succeeded, letters of introduction and credence to oriental potentates, passport, and orders for outfitting a fleet. With these credentials and contracts in hand, Columbus proceeded to the little port of Palos, near the mouth of the Río Tinto, where his fleet of three ships would be assembled. Because of an obligation owed to the crown, the city of Palos was required to furnish two fully equipped caravels. Columbus leased a third ship, the *Santa María*, from its owner, Juan de la Cosa. Equipping the three vessels was relatively

easy, but manning them was another matter. Most of the sailors from Palos thought they would never return from such a voyage, not that they would fall off the earth, but how far would they have to sail to reach land? What about the hazards en route? If the winds carried them westward, how would they return?³

To Columbus's rescue came a veteran sea captain from Palos, named Martín Alonso Pinzón, who was head of the best-known seafaring family in Andalusia. He was a courageous, ambitious, and experienced seaman, having been a ship owner for many years and a captain of vessels plying the waters of the Atlantic seaboard from the Azores to Cape Verde.⁴ He was obviously a valuable asset to the expedition—and dangerous, as later events were to prove. He also had many friends and relatives in the region who had confidence in him. So with Pinzón's active participation, the roster of crewmen was soon filled.

Who were these 90 men who made up the crew of the most famous voyage in history? For the most part they were ordinary men, not distinguished by any great achievements nor, as far as we know, by any unusual vices. There were a number of veteran seamen among them but also quite a few neophytes, that is, men and boys who had either never been to sea before or had very limited experience. These

we would probably call apprentice seamen. In the Spanish documents they are called *grumetes*, or grummets in English, which includes both ordinary seamen and ship's boys. Some were only boys—Diego Bermúdez, for example, was only 12 years old, “poco mas o menos,”⁵ and Pedro de Salcedo was 16. Many were older than that but equally inexperienced. The officers were capable men who knew how to sail under all kinds of conditions, and with very little to guide them except the smell of the air, the feel of the ship, and the sound of the wind in the sails.

The captain of each ship had final responsibility for the ship and crew. Columbus was both captain of the *Santa María* and captain-general of the fleet. The title of admiral, by which he was known the rest of his life, became official only after he returned from the first voyage. The master, or what we might designate as first officer (second in command), had direct authority for managing the crew and for making the daily sailing decisions dictated by the wind and the sea. He was responsible for getting the vessel underway, managing it at sea, and achieving a safe anchorage. It was necessary for him to be a competent seaman. The pilot assisted the master and drew the same pay. He was in charge of dead-reckoning calculations—for this is the way fifteenth-century ships navigated—and recording distances

and directions on the sea chart. He should have experience, be weather-wise, and if possible have some knowledge of astronomy, although celestial navigation was only in its infancy at this time. The marshall, or master-at-arms, was responsible for maintaining discipline and meting out punishment when necessary.

The pay for captains on Columbus's voyage was 2,500 maravedis per month, or 30,000 per year. That figures out to \$281.20 per month, or \$3,374.40 per year (at the present value of gold, \$340 per ounce). Masters and pilots received 2,000 maravedis per month (\$224.96), boatswains got 1,500 maravedis per month (\$168.72), able seamen 1,000 maravedis per month (\$112.48), and grummets about 660 maravedis per month (\$74.91). Of course, this has little to do with the purchasing power of 1492 money. To approximate that we would have to compare prices of goods and costs of services, which vary widely from our own.⁶

Columbus's fleet was organized for discovery and exploration, not for conquest or colonization. There were no soldiers aboard, no cannoneers or crossbowmen, no noblemen, no clerics, no lawyers or attorneys, no women. There were carpenters, plus a cooper (barrel and cask maker, for maintaining the all-important water storage), and a caulker, who took charge of the bilge pump and saw to it that

the decks, topsides, and bottom (when laid to) were properly caulked with pitch and tallow. He also supervised the ship's boys when they made up caulking material in their spare time. The fleet also carried a painter, a silversmith or assayer of minerals, an apothecary, and even a tailor, although his principal job was not fitting the crew with new clothes when they arrived but keeping the sails repaired. They also had a clerk or secretary, whose duty it was to record the crown's possessions and draw up whatever official communications might be necessary and, if the occasion demanded, write diplomatic correspondence. An interpreter, Luis de Torres, a *converso* (converted Jew) who knew a little Arabic, accompanied the voyage to communicate with the Great Khan or any other oriental potentate, because Arabic was thought to be the mother of languages.⁷ There was also a barber-surgeon on each ship. The stewards were responsible for provisions, especially water, wine, and food. They also were in charge of firewood, candles, trimming the lamps, feeding the fire on the galley hearth, and teaching the ship's boys how to box the compass (to name the points of the compass in their order), turn the sandglass, and sing out the proper ditties when doing so.

Three families from the Nieblas region of southwestern Spain were particularly prominent in the preparations for the enterprise and

the voyage itself. These were the Pinzóns of Palos, the Quinteros of Palos, and the Niños of Moguer, just upriver five miles from Palos. Martín Alonso Pinzón sailed as captain of the *Pinta*, a 55-ton, smart-sailing caravel owned by Cristóbal Quintero of Palos. Pinzón was an experienced seaman whose support of Columbus's enterprise contributed much to getting it seaborne. He was about 50 years of age at the time, or nearly 10 years older than Columbus, twice married, with five grown children from the first marriage—two boys and three girls.⁸ His younger brother, Francisco Martín, was master of the *Pinta*, that is, first officer. An older cousin, Diego Martín, also sailed on the *Pinta* as a seaman.

Martín Alonso was headstrong and ambitious, and before the little fleet reached its destination he and Columbus had already been at odds a few times over the course to be followed and how far they would have to sail to reach land.⁹ Later testimonies differ as to the content of these disagreements, but Bartolomé de Las Casas's transcript of Columbus's logbook says nothing about it until November 21, when Martín Alonso deserted the other two ships and wasn't seen again for a month and a half. Columbus charged that Martín Alonso departed without permission because of greed, thinking he would be first to find the island that the Indians had told them contained

much gold. Columbus also claimed that Pinzón “has done and said to me many other things.”¹⁰ When the two caravels were rejoined on January 6, Columbus confided to his journal that Pinzón had been arrogant, greedy, and dishonest. But the admiral chose not to charge him of such or make a scene of it “so as not to give an opening to the evil works of Satan, who desired to impede that voyage, as up to then he had done”¹¹—(probably referring to the loss of the *Santa María*).

The return home of these two caravels in February and March of 1493 was a race to see who would reach the ear of the sovereigns first. They were separated permanently in a violent storm in the mid-Atlantic, Columbus in the *Niña* eventually reaching Palos on March 15, via the Azores and Lisbon, and Pinzón arriving in the *Pinta* only a few hours later after being driven north to the Galician coast. Martín Alonso immediately retired to his home and died within a few days.

Vicente Yáñez Pinzón, captain of the *Niña*, was about 30 at the time of the voyage, or 10 years younger than Columbus. Like his older brother, he too was a veteran sailor, also married twice, with two young daughters.¹² Vicente Yáñez doesn’t seem to have had the difficulty respecting Columbus’s leadership that Martín Alonso had.

He demonstrated his loyalty on several occasions, and their return voyage together on board the *Niña* appears to have been cordial. Nevertheless, he did not participate in any of the subsequent Columbus voyages. But in 1499, when the restriction on sailing to the New World was lifted, Vicente Yáñez Pinzón was one of the first to obtain license and embark on an independent voyage of exploration. In November of that year he sailed from Palos with four caravels, taking a more southerly route than Columbus had. He crossed the Equator southwest of the Cape Verde Islands and reached the coast of Brazil on January 26, 1500, some months before Cabral, the Portuguese explorer, claimed the land for Portugal. For five months Pinzón coasted the shoreline in a northwesterly direction; he discovered the mouth of the mighty Amazon River, even sailed up it for some 50 miles (thinking it was the Ganges), and then sailed through the Gulf of Paria and thence to Santo Domingo. Before returning to Spain, however, he lost two of his ships in a hurricane and almost half of his crew.¹³ The remaining two caravels and their cargos were seized by his creditors in Palos.

Vicente Yáñez made a second voyage in 1502 over the same territory but in reverse direction, reaching Santo Domingo two years later just as Columbus arrived there following his rescue from being

marooned for a year at Jamaica on his final voyage.¹⁴ Vicente Yáñez's last voyage was in 1508, when he and Juan de Solís sailed as joint commanders to search for the elusive strait to the Indian Ocean that Columbus had sought six years earlier. Unsuccessful in finding a strait, they did explore 3,000 miles more of the South American coast, as far as 40° south latitude.¹⁵ The tribute paid him by Fernández de Oviedo is a fitting epitaph: Vicente Yáñez Pinzón "had the reputation of being the most skillful of the pilots of the King and of that time. I knew him and liked him; he was as fair-spoken as any seafaring man I have ever seen, and one of those who best understand their art."¹⁶

The Niño family of Moguer were equally prominent in Columbus's first voyage, as well as in subsequent voyages of exploration to the New World. Perhaps it is because they had no disputes with or complaints about Columbus, as the Pinzóns did, that they are less known. The social and economic status of the Niños in the town of Moguer seems to have been comparable to that of the Pinzóns in Palos. And, as with the latter, there were a lot of them. At least eight of the family participated in one or more of the Columbian voyages, and there were probably more. Their recruiting role in Moguer netted almost as many crewmen for the first voyage as those

from Palos. The unique feature about the Niños is their constant support of Columbus, during his lifetime and afterward. When called to give testimony in the *pleitos* they were uniformly loyal. "In these Niños," observes Samuel Eliot Morison, "one recognizes that competent and loyal type of seaman and officer whose work is essential to the success of any voyage; men who never lay claim to more than their deserts, or talk against their captain behind his back."¹⁷

The oldest member of the family was Juan Niño, owner and master of the caravel *Niña*. The official name of the vessel was *Santa Clara*, but it was nicknamed *La Niña* in honor of its owner. Juan Niño seems to have had no reservations about using his caravel on such an uncertain mission. He had been a seaman all his life and was willing to take the risks in stride. He was married to Marina González, and they had four children.¹⁸ Because of his steadfastness and ability, Juan Niño was Columbus's favorite shipmate; and when they returned after the first voyage, Columbus took Juan Niño with him on his triumphal trek to Barcelona to report to the king and queen. The gallant little caravel, with Columbus now as half-owner, returned to America as part of Columbus's 17-ship second voyage. It is not known if Juan Niño was on board. One account mentions a Juan Niño, from Moguer, going on the outward

voyage but does not indicate the ship. Little is known of him after that, other than that he did participate in other voyages to the New World and that he died there sometime between 1518 and 1522.

Although he was younger, Peralonso Niño (sometimes written Pero Alonso or Pedro Alonso) is better known than his brother. He was about 24 years of age at the time of the first voyage and was married to Leonor de Boria. They had two infant children, one girl and one boy. Peralonso Niño was pilot of the *Santa María*, sometimes given the title of pilot major, which would be chief navigator of the fleet.¹⁹ He must have had a good relationship with Columbus, because the journal of the first voyage reveals no friction between the two on navigational matters.

Peralonso again accompanied the admiral one way on the second voyage, returning to Spain in March 1494 with the fleet led by Antonio de Torres. In 1496 he commanded one of the ships in a "relief" voyage to Hispaniola, returning with a cargo of Indian slaves designated as "prisoners of war."²⁰ In 1499 he sailed in a small caravel to the pearl-rich island of Margarita, just off the northeast coast of Venezuela. In February 1502, Peralonso Niño sailed once more, this time as chief pilot of the flagship of the magnificent fleet of 30 ships carrying the newly appointed governor, Nicolás de Ovando,

to Santo Domingo, with 2,500 colonists, soldiers, and missionaries. On their return, ignoring a warning by Columbus of an approaching hurricane, the proud fleet was lost, along with its commander, Antonio de Torres, and his pilot major, Peralonso Niño.²¹

A young Francisco Niño also sailed on the first voyage, apparently as a seaman on the *Niña*. But since there were several men with this name, positive identification is rather difficult. If this was in fact the 19-year-old brother of Juan and Peralonso, he is the same who sailed on Columbus's second voyage as pilot of the *Niña*.²² Another Francisco Niño, a ship's boy on the second voyage, was probably the son of Juan Niño.

The Quintero family of Palos, who were related to the Niños, furnished the other caravel of the first voyage, the *Pinta*. Its owner was Cristóbal Quintero, although there is some slim evidence that Gómez Rascón, also of Palos, might have been part owner of the vessel.²³ Although Cristóbal Quintero was recruited by Martín Alonso Pinzón, there was bad feeling between them, probably because Quintero was degraded to ordinary seaman on his own ship, while Pinzón and his brother took over as captain and master. It is likely that Quintero was reluctant to go on the voyage in the first place but didn't want to see his ship go without him. Pinzón accused him

of trying to sabotage the voyage by fouling the *Pinta*'s rudder three days out of Palos.²⁴ Yet there is no evidence of any such malicious mischief. Quintero sailed again in 1498 as master of the flagship on Columbus's third voyage. When he died in 1503, he left his wife Leonor Benítez and three daughters.

Juan Quintero was 26 years old in 1492 and sailed as boatswain of the *Pinta*.²⁵ As such he was in charge of all gear having to do with the operation of the ship. Prior to departure, he directed the stowage of cargo, and when at sea he checked that its lashing remained secure. It was also his duty at sea to check the condition of the spars, sails, rigging, and pumps; to lead the seamen and ship's boys in making any repairs necessary; and to carry out the sail-handling and ship-maneuvering orders of the master or pilot. He also kept the ship's boats fitted out and ready for use and ensured that the wood fire was extinguished every night. Quintero was always a supporter of the Pinzóns and testified in Martín Alonso's behalf in the *pleitos*. Nevertheless, Juan Quintero was one of only two men to participate in all four of the Columbian voyages, albeit never on the same ship as Columbus. He was master of the *Gallega* on the fourth voyage.

Juan de la Cosa is one of the most elusive personalities in Columbus's crew. Historians have not only disagreed about his

place of birth, his early experience, his ability as a seaman and as a cartographer, but also whether he was one person or two. Alice Gould is of the opinion that there were two men by that name, one the *Santa María's* owner, who sailed on the first voyage as master of the flagship, and another Juan de la Cosa, who went on the second voyage as an ordinary seaman and later was the cartographer who made the first map of the New World.²⁶ Samuel Eliot Morison agrees with her, but the majority of historians today, including Paolo Emilio Taviani, Consuelo Varela, Antonio Ballesteros, and Carla Phillips, think they were one and the same.²⁷ The claim that he was a Basque entrepreneur from Santoña, near Santander in northern Spain, is strengthened by the presence of so many Basque crewmen on board the *Santa María*, some even from the same town, and the fact that his ship was a northern *nao*, built probably in Galicia (thus nicknamed *La Gallega*), and was engaged in the carrying trade between northern and southern Spain. It can be assumed that he was responsible for recruiting most of the northerners on the crew. At the time he met Columbus, however, Juan de la Cosa seems to have been living in Puerto de Santa María, a port town on the bay of Cádiz, 50 miles south of Palos.

Most accounts agree that it was largely due to the negligence of Juan de la Cosa, on the night of December 24, 1492, that his ship,

the *Santa María*, ran aground off the northern coast of Hispaniola. Furthermore, it appears that instead of helping to free the foundering vessel by using the ship's boat to tow it off the reef, Juan de la Cosa took the boat and, with several of his buddies, tried to escape to the safety of the *Niña*.²⁸ To his credit, Vicente Yáñez Pinzón refused to let them aboard, ordering them to return to the *Santa María* to help as they could. Pinzón sent the *Niña*'s boat to do likewise. Columbus accused la Cosa of negligence and cowardice, although he later helped him gain restitution from the crown for the loss of his ship. Thirty-nine men were picked from the two vessels and left to garrison a fort called *La Navidad*. The colony didn't last long; all 39 men were killed by the natives in 1493.

Juan de la Cosa participated in several more voyages to South America after 1499, including an expedition to the northwest coast of Colombia. He was killed there by the natives on February 28, 1510. Bartolomé de las Casas claims that la Cosa was the most experienced navigator in the Indies, and Peter Martyr, the contemporary chronicler, states that his maps were the most valued of their day. La Cosas's greatest contribution is his famous map of 1500, the earliest surviving world map to show both the Old World and the New.

It is impossible to talk about each of the crew, but I will say a little about a couple of the lesser-known men whose lives were so intimately related to the discovery of America. Three weeks after the Europeans arrived in the New World, Luis de Torres and Rodrigo de Xeres were chosen by Columbus to head an embassy into the interior of Cuba, which Columbus was convinced was China, to make contact with the Great Khan, who was thought to be in residence at the "noble city of Zaitun" or in Quinsay, both of which Marco Polo reported were located at the eastern extremity of China.²⁹ Las Casas thought Columbus was misled because he heard the natives talk about *Cubanaacán*—the interior district of Cuba—which he mistook for *El Gran Khan*. Torres and Xeres were chosen for the mission because the former had some acquaintance with Arabic and the latter had once met a black king in Guinea and so might be familiar with potentate protocol. Equipped with the necessary diplomatic paraphernalia, including Latin passport, Latin letter of credence from Ferdinand and Isabel to the Great Khan, and a royal gift, the two set off, accompanied by a native escort. The journey was short. Instead of reaching the imperial Chinese court, they found only a native village of palm-thatched huts and a couple hundred inhabitants.

On their return to the ships, however, they did make a remarkable discovery. For the first time they saw natives inhaling the smoke of a dried, rolled up leaf, one end of which was on fire and the other end inserted in their nostril. The natives called it *tobacco*. It was the first European contact with Cuban cigars. Columbus's comment was matter-of-fact: "The two Christians [Torres and Xeres] found along the way many people going back and forth between their villages, men and women with a firebrand of weeds in their hands to take in the fragrant smoke to which they were accustomed."³⁰

One of the modern myths about the Columbian voyage is that the crew was made up primarily of criminals. This was not true. However, the crown did issue a full or partial pardon to convicts who were willing to sign on. Only one "legitimate" criminal took advantage of this offer, along with his three cohorts. Here is the story. Bartolomé de Torres, a citizen of Palos, was involved in some altercation with the Palos town crier, Juan Martín, resulting in the latter's death. Torres was apprehended, accused of murder, and jailed. A short time later, three friends, Juan de Moger, Alfonso Clavijo, and Pedro Izquierdo, helped Torres escape. All four were then sentenced to death in absentia. Upon learning of the amnesty decree, they volunteered to join the expedition and seem to have served quietly

on board the *Santa María*. When they returned to Spain their sentences were promptly repealed. Torres sailed again on Columbus's 17-ship second voyage, as did Juan de Moger, who later became a successful pilot on the Indies run.³¹

I think one final point ought to be made, and that has to do with the crew's relationship to Columbus on the voyage and their reported mutiny on October 10. As far as we can tell, for most of the trip the crew cooperated fully with Columbus, and there was little if any murmuring on their part. Of course the voyage had been relatively easy sailing, but it was long and still uncertain—that was the rub. On October 10 the latent discontent of the men finally flared up. They had gone far enough and wanted to turn back. I like Morison's thoughtful and penetrating assessment of the situation:

It is unfair to present the issue between Columbus and his crew as one between a brave man and cowards. Nor was it one between knowledge and ignorance, education and superstition: for if Columbus had had a university education, or listened attentively to the best opinions of his day, he would never have expected Japan to lie 750 leagues west of the Canaries. It was, rather, the inevitable conflict between a man of one great, compelling idea and those who did not share it in anything like the same degree. Look back at the events of the voyage, think of the two false landfalls, the innumerable "signs of land" that failed to make good; glance at the fleet's position October 10 on a modern chart with America blotted out, and reflect that thirty days out, they had doubled all previous records for ocean navigation, that they had long passed the position where Columbus predicted land would be found, and that the men knew it; . . . so can we fairly blame the men? Their issue with

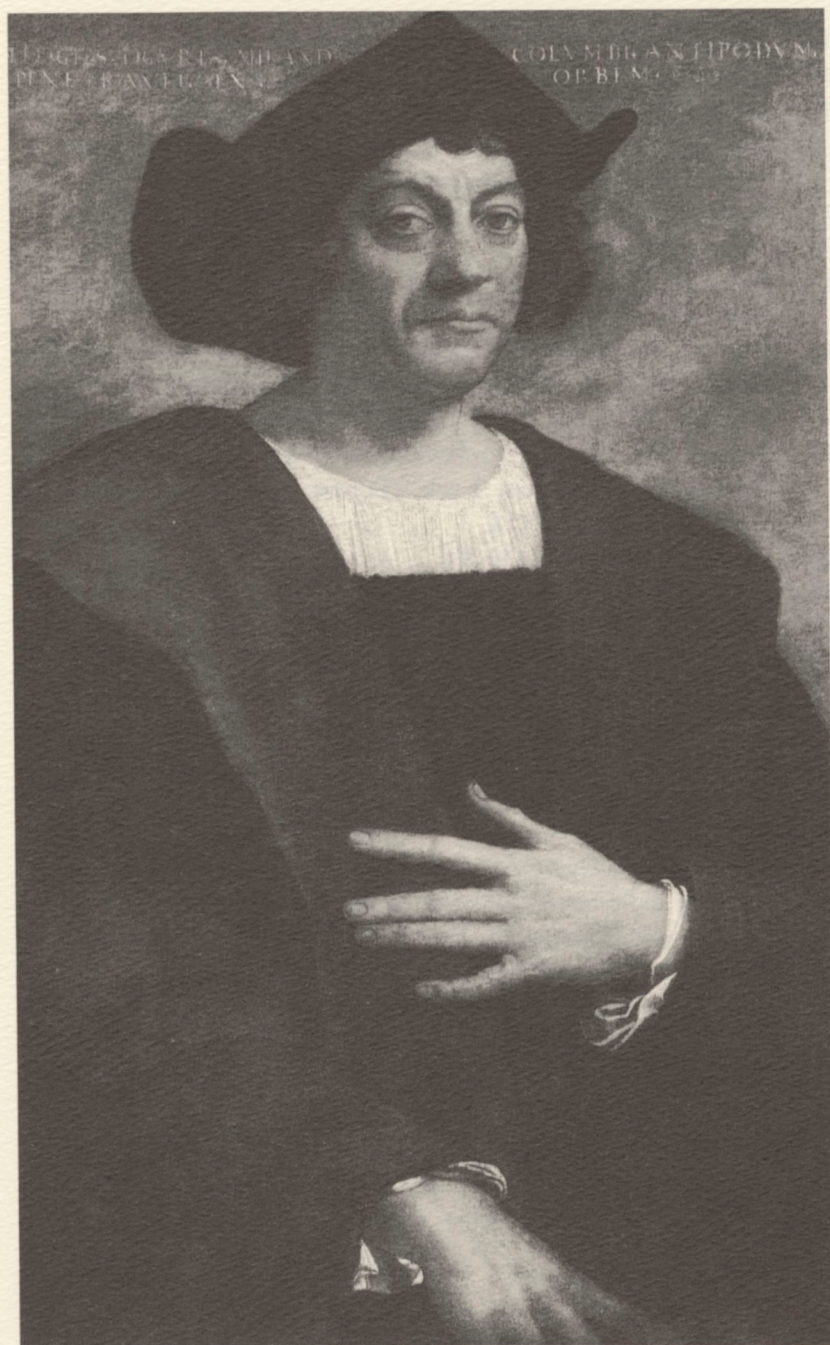
*their commander was the eternal one between imagination and doubt [I might interject, between faith in divine guidance and belief in human effort], between the spirit that creates and the spirit that denies. Oftimes the doubters are right, for mankind has a hundred foolish notions for every sound one; it is at times of crisis, when unpredictable forces are dissolving society, that the do-nothings are tragically wrong. There are tides in the affairs of men, and this was one of them.*³²

Las Casas's transcription of Columbus's journal entry for that date states simply: "Here the men could no longer stand it; they complained of the long voyage. But the Admiral encouraged them as best he could, giving them good hope of the benefits that they would be able to secure. And he added that it was useless to complain since he had come to find the Indies and thus had to continue the voyage until he found them, with the help of Our Lord."³³ Only two days later, they sighted the low silhouette of the island of San Salvador in the Bahamas. A prophecy was in the process of fulfillment.

Notes

1. Columbus to Doña Juana de la Torre, in *Raccolta di documenti e studi pubblicati della R. Commissione Colombiana*, Pt. 1, vol. 2, *I Scritti di Cristoforo Colombo*, ed. Cesare de Lollis (Rome, 1894), 66. Compare Cristóbal Colón, *Textos y documentos completos*, ed. Consuelo Varela (Madrid: Alianza, 1984), 264.
2. *Raccolta*, 79.
3. Paolo Emilio Taviani, *Christopher Columbus: The Grand Design* (London: Orbis, 1985), 203–5.
4. Juan Manzano Manzano, *Los Pinzones y el descubrimiento de América*, 3 vols. (Madrid: Cultura Hispanica and Instituto de Cooperación Iberoamericana, 1988), 1:5–13.
5. Alicia B. Gould, *Nueva lista documentada de los tripulantes de Colón en 1492* (Madrid: Real Academia de la Historia, 1984), 109.
6. *Ibid.*, 63 and *passim*. The maravedi was a copper coin valued at 375 maravedis to one gold ducat (which weighed 3.511 grams of 24k gold). This means that one ducat was worth approximately \$42.18 at today's price of gold (March 20, 1992), and one maravedi would be about 12 cents. To get some idea of what those salaries were worth in terms of purchasing power, the following can be used: A good house in Seville cost 70,000 maravedis, or \$7,873.60. Amerigo Vespucci rented a house in Seville (with 2 doz. laying hens) for 7,000 maravedis per year, that is, \$787.36, or \$65.61 a month. A good cow cost about 2,000 maravedis, or \$224.96. A pig cost 400 maravedis, or \$45. A bushel of wheat cost 73 maravedis in 1493, which amounts to \$8.21.
7. *Ibid.*, 239–50.
8. *Ibid.*, 252–60; Manzano, *Los Pinzones*, 1:5–7.
9. *Raccolta*, Pt. 1, vol. 1, pp. 90–94. Also *Pleitos colombinos*, ed. Antonio Muro Orejón, et al., 5 vols. (Seville: Escuela de Estudios Hispanoamericanos, 1964–89), esp. 2:127–28, 217–18; 3:200, 341–42, 373, 397.
10. *The Diario of Christopher Columbus's First Voyage to America, 1492–1493*, abstracted by Fray Bartolomé de las Casas, trans. and ed. Oliver Dunn and James E. Kelley, Jr. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989), 165.

11. Ibid., 313.
12. Manzano, *Los Pinzones*, 1:14-28; Gould, *Nueva lista*, 461-97.
13. Manzano, *Los Pinzones*, 1:207-97; Samuel Eliot Morison, *The European Discovery of America: The Southern Voyages* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), 210-14.
14. Manzano, *Los Pinzones*, 1:299-438; Morison, *The European Discovery*, 229-30.
15. Manzano, *Los Pinzones*, 2:283-421; Morison, *The European Discovery*, 230-31.
16. Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo, *Historia general y natural de las Indias* (1535), in *Bibliotecas de Autores Españoles*, nos. 117-21 (Madrid: Ediciones Atlas, 1959), 118:390.
17. Samuel Eliot Morison, *Admiral of the Ocean Sea: A Life of Christopher Columbus*, 2 vols. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1942), 1:118.
18. Gould, *Nueva lista*, 176-94.
19. Ibid., 279-349.
20. Ibid., 315-20.
21. Ibid., 344-49.
22. Ibid., 131-32.
23. Ibid., 88-95.
24. Columbus, *Diario*, 23.
25. Gould, *Nueva lista*, 196-99.
26. Ibid., 79.
27. See Taviani, *Christopher Columbus*, 507-8, and especially Antonio Ballesteros y Beretta, *La marina cántabra y Juan de la Cosa*, 3 vols. (Santander: Excma. Diputación en Provincial de Santander, 1968), 1:79-149.
28. Columbus, *Diario*, 277-79.
29. Ibid., 129.
30. Ibid., 139.
31. Gould, *Nueva lista*, 67-68, 84-85, 169-76, 273-76.
32. Morison, *Admiral of the Ocean Sea*, 1:284-85.
33. Columbus, *Diario*, 57.



Portrait of Columbus
painted about 1519 by Italian artist Sebastiano del Piombo

Crew of Columbus's First Voyage, 1492

SANTA MARIA

1. *Christopher Columbus (Cristóbal Colón; Cristoforo Colombo)*
Captain-general of the fleet, later admiral
Born in 1451 in Genoa; died in 1506 in Valladolid; 41 years old in 1492
Married Felipa Moniz Perestrella in 1479; she died before 1485
Children: Diego, b. 1480; Fernando, b. 1488 (to Beatriz Enríquez de Arana)
2. *Juan de la Cosa*
Maestre (master) and owner of the *Santa María*
Basque from Santoña, near Santander, in northern Spain
May not be the same Juan de la Cosa who made the first map of the New World
Died in 1510 near the Gulf of Uraba in the West Indies (?)
3. *Peralonso (Pero Alonso, Pedro Alonso) Niño*
Pilot of the *Santa María* (but possibly of the *Niña*)
From Moguer, near Palos
Referred to by several witnesses as pilot major
Younger brother of Juan Niño; about 24 years old in 1492
Married to Leonor de Boria; they had one son and one daughter
Died at sea in August 1502 in a West Indian hurricane
4. *Chachu (Chanchu)*
Contramaestre (boatswain [bo's'n]) of the *Santa María*
Basque from northern Spain
Mother was Catalina de Deva
Died in 1493 at La Navidad
5. *Diego de Arana (or Harana)*
Alguacil (constable or marshall) of the fleet
From Córdoba
Second cousin of Beatrice Enríquez de Arana
Captain of the garrison left at La Navidad
Died in 1493 at La Navidad

6. *Rodrigo de Escobedo*
Escribano (clerk, or secretary) of the fleet
From Segovia
Died in 1493 at La Navidad
7. *Rodrigo Sánchez de Segovia*
Royal *veedor* (inspector, comptroller) of the fleet
From Segovia
Returned to Spain on the *Niña*
8. *Pedro Gutiérrez*
Officer of the royal household
Lieutenant at La Navidad
Died in 1493 at La Navidad
9. *Master Juan*
Cirujano (barber-surgeon)
Died in 1493 at La Navidad
10. *Luis de Torres*
Interpreter (he knew Hebrew, Aramaic, and some Arabic)
Converso (converted Jew)
Sent with Rodrigo de Xeres on embassy to the "Great Khan of China"
Died in 1493 at La Navidad
11. *Rodrigo de Xeres*
Marinero (seaman)
From Ayamonte, near Huelva
Sent with Luis de Torres on embassy to the "Great Khan of China"
May have died in 1493 at La Navidad
12. *Antonio de Cuéllar*
Carpintero (carpenter)
Died in 1493 at La Navidad
13. *Domingo de Lequeitio*
Carpintero (carpenter) and boatswain's mate
Basque from province of Vizcaya
Died in 1493 at La Navidad

14. *Domingo (Vizcaíno)*
Tonelero (cooper and watercask maker) and able seaman
Basque from Vizcaya
Died in 1493 at La Navidad
15. *Lope (or López)*
Calafate (ship-caulker) and able seaman
Basque from northern Spain
Died in 1493 at La Navidad
16. *Pedro de Terreros*
Maestresala (master steward)
Went on all four Columbus voyages; a captain on the fourth voyage
Died in 1504 on the island of Jamaica
17. *Diego Pérez*
Pintor (painter) and able seaman
Died in 1493 at La Navidad
18. *Juan de Medina*
Sastre (tailor) and able seaman
From Palos
Died in 1493 at La Navidad
19. *Jácome el Rico*
Able seaman, and possibly financial agent
From Genoa
Died in 1493 at La Navidad
20. *Pedro de Salcedo*
Columbus's page
16 or 17 years of age in 1492
Possibly from Fuensaldaña, near Valladolid
Later became important trader and property owner in Santo Domingo
21. *Bartolomé Bives (or Vives)*
Able seaman
From Palos
Probably died in 1493 at La Navidad

22. *Gonzalo Franco*
Able seaman
From Seville
Son of Diego García Franco
Died in 1493 at La Navidad
23. *Juan de la Placa (or Plaza)*
Able seaman
From Palos
Probably died in 1493 at La Navidad
24. *Bartolomé de Torres*
Criminal (pardoned after sailing with Columbus)
From Palos
Sailed on Columbus's second voyage as a crossbowman
25. *Juan de Moger*
Able seaman and "criminal" (pardoned after sailing with Columbus)
From Palos
Sailed on Columbus's second voyage; later became a pilot
26. *Alonso Clavijo*
"Criminal" (pardoned after sailing with Columbus)
From Vejer
27. *Pedro Izquierdo (Yzquierdo)*
"Criminal" (pardoned after sailing with Columbus)
From Lepe
28. *Juan Ruiz de la Peña*
Able seaman
From the Basque province of Viscaya
Probably died in 1493 at La Navidad
29. *Juan de Xeres (or Jerez)*
Able seaman
From Moguer
With Columbus on second voyage; later became a pilot
30. *Pedro de Villa*
Able seaman
Basque from Santoña in northern Spain
Returned to Spain on the *Niña*

31. *Ruy García*
Able seaman
Basque from Santoña
May have been brother-in-law of Juan Niño
Returned to Spain on the *Niña*
32. *Cristóbal Caro*
Platero (silversmith) and *grumete* (ship's boy)
Probably died in 1493 at La Navidad
33. *Francisco de Huelva*
Grumete (ship's boy); possibly of the *Niña*
Died in 1493 at La Navidad
34. *Alonso (Chocero)*
Able seaman or ship's boy
Son of Francisco Chocero
Servant of Juan Rodríguez (de Guinea)
35. *Andrés de Yévenes*
Ship's boy
Possibly from Huelva
Relative or friend of Juan Reynal
36. *Diego Bermúdez*
Ship's boy or page
12 years of age, "poco mas o menos," in
1492
From Palos
Also sailed on Columbus's third voyage
37. *Diego Leal*
Ship's boy
Received small commendam in Santo Domingo in 1514
38. *Martín de Urtubía*
Ship's boy
Basque from Viscaya
Died in 1493 at La Navidad
39. *Pedro de Lepe*
Ship's boy
Probably from Redondela, in northwestern Spain
Died in 1493 at La Navidad

40. *Rodrigo Gallego*
Ship's boy
Servant of Gonzalo Fuego

41. *Juan*
Ship's boy

PINTA

42. *Martín Alonso Pinzón*
Captain of the *Pinta*
From Palos
Born between 1441 and 1446; died in Palos in 1493
First wife, María Alvarez; second wife, Catalina Alonso
Two sons and three daughters

43. *Francisco Martín Pinzón*
Master of the *Pinta*
From Palos
Brother of Martín Alonso Pinzón and Vicente Yáñez Pinzón

44. *Cristóbal García Sarmiento (Xalmiento)*
Pilot of the *Pinta*
Probably from Palos
Also went on Columbus's second voyage

45. *Juan Quintero (de Algruta)*
Contramaestre (boatswain) of the *Pinta*
From Palos
26 years of age in 1492
Accompanied Columbus on all four of his voyages

46. *Cristóbal Quintero*
Owner of the *Pinta*
Sailed as able seaman
From Palos
Master of Columbus's flagship on third voyage
Died in 1503, leaving wife (Leonor Benítez) and three minor daughters

47. *Juan Reynal*
Possibly *alguacil* (constable) of the *Pinta*
From Huelva
Also went on Columbus's second voyage

48. *García Fernández*
Despensero (steward) of the *Pinta*
From Huelva
49. *Master Diego*
Cirujano (barber-surgeon) and/or *boticario* (apothecary)
50. *Diego Martín Pinzón, the Elder*
Probably a cousin of the three Pinzón brothers
From Palos
51. *Francisco García Vallejos (or Vallejo)*
Able seaman
From Moguer
52. *Gómez Rascón*
Able seaman
Possibly part-owner of the *Pinta*
From Palos
53. *Juan Rodríguez Bermejo (Rodrigo de Triana)*
Able seaman (the first to sight land in the New World)
From Molinos, province of Seville
54. *Gil Pérez*
Able seaman
55. *Alvaro (Pérez?)*
Able seaman
Nephew of Gil Pérez
56. *Antón Calabrés*
Able seaman; servant of Martín Alonso Pinzón
From Calabria, in southern Italy
Also went on Columbus's second voyage
57. *Juan Veçano (Vezano)*
Able seaman
From Venice
58. *Juan Verde de Triana*
Able seaman
From Triana, near Seville
Also went on Columbus's second voyage

59. *Sancho de Rama*
Able seaman
From Palos
60. *Pedro de Arcos*
Able seaman
From Palos
61. *Alonso de Palos*
Ship's boy
Probably from Palos
Also went on Columbus's second voyage
62. *Fernando Medel*
Ship's boy
From Huelva
63. *Francisco Medel*
Ship's boy
From Huelva
Brother of Fernando
64. *Bernal*
Ship's boy
65. *Juan Quadrado*
Ship's boy
66. *Pedro Tegero (Tejero)*
Ship's boy

NIÑA

67. *Vicente Yáñez Pinzón*
Captain of the *Niña*
From Palos
Born ca. 1461; died ca. 1514; about 30 years old in 1492
Became one of the leading explorers; discovered Brazil and
mouth of the Amazon
First wife, Teresa Rodríguez; second wife, Ana Nuñez;
two daughters

68. *Juan Niño*
Master and owner of the *Niña*
From Moguer
Older brother of Peralonso Niño
Married to Marina González
Died in the Indies in 1521, "poco mas o menos"
69. *Sancho Ruiz de Gama*
Pilot of the *Niña* (or possibly pilot of the *Santa María*, but not likely)
70. *Bartolomé García*
Contramaestre (boatswain) of the *Niña*
From Palos
Also sailed on the second and fourth voyages
71. *Diego Lorenzo*
Alguacil (marshall, or master-at-arms) of the *Niña*
Married to Ynes Díaz (alias Franca)
Died in 1493 at La Navidad
72. *Master Alonso (de Morales)*
Fisico (physician) and able seaman
From Moguer
Died in 1493 at La Navidad
73. *Bartolomé Roldán*
Able seaman and apprentice pilot
From Moguer or Palos
About 35 years of age in 1492
Also went on third voyage
74. *Francisco Niño*
Probably brother of Juan and Peralonso Niño
About 19 years old in 1492
From Moguer
Pilot of the *Niña* on Columbus's second voyage
75. *Alonso de Morales*
Carpintero (carpenter)
From Moguer
Died in 1493 at La Navidad

76. *Pedro Arraes (or Arráez)*
Able seaman
From Palos
77. *Juan Arraes (Arráez)*
Able seaman
Son of Pedro Arraes
Also sailed on Columbus's second voyage
78. *Juan Martínez de Azoque*
Able seaman (possibly on the *Santa María*)
Basque from Deva, Guipúzcoa, in northern Spain
79. *Pedro Sánchez de Montilla*
Able seaman
From Montilla, province of Córdoba
80. *Juan Romero*
Able seaman
81. *Rodrigo Monge*
Able seaman
Probably from Palos
82. *Andrés of Huelva*
Ship's boy
Died in 1493 at La Navidad
83. *García Alonso*
Ship's boy
From Palos
Was 18 years old, "poco mas o menos," in 1492
Also sailed on Columbus's second voyage
84. *Juan Arias*
Ship's boy, possibly of the *Pinta*
Son of Lope Arias of Tavira, Portugal
85. *Miguel de Soria*
Ship's boy
Servant of Vicente Yáñez Pinzón

86. *Fernando de Triana*
Ship's boy

87. *Pedro de Soria*
Ship's boy

Other possible crew members of the first voyage, considered doubtful by Gould, but included on one or more of the lists of Fernández Duro, Nicolás Tenorio, or Henri Vignaud:

Pero Berúndez
Juan Bivas (or Vivas)
Diego Delgado
Alonso Medel
Alonso Niño
Alonso Pérez Niño
Andrés Niño
Bartolomé Pérez Niño
Cristóbal Niño
Juan Ortiz
Bartolomé Pérez

Hernán Pérez
Juan Pérez
Arias Martín Pinzón
Bartolomé Martín Pinzón
Alonso Hernandez Querido
Diego Rodríguez
Pedro Rodríguez
Alonso Pérez Roldán
Juan de Sevilla
Juan de Triana



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