

# Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

## Columbus Day 1892

Education scholar Diane S. Ravitch, Ph.D. concluded that instruction in patriotism should be integrated throughout school curricula. She correctly explained, "Since the earliest days of public education, the schools were expected to teach students about the history, culture, and symbols of America and to encourage them to feel part of the nation" (*Phi Delta Kappan*, April, 2006, p. 579).

Embracing a similar view, Chester E. Finn, Jr., Ed.D., President Emeritus of the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, asserted, "The solemn duty of all educators is to make certain that all our children know who they are. Part of that can be accomplished by teaching them about America's Founders, about their ideals, and about the character, courage, vision, and tenacity with which they acted. From that inspiring history, true patriotism cannot help but grow" (*Phi Delta Kappan*, April, 2006, p. 580).

Whether 21st century schools are effectively teaching patriotism is a matter of debate. Although widespread immersion of patriotism in classroom instruction today might be questioned, a lack of educational materials is not. One example of a curricular resource is *Patriotic Holidays of the United States* (Omnigraphics, 2005), authored by Helene Henderson.

Among the holidays identified in Ms. Henderson's book is Columbus Day. Not all organizations recognize it as a major American patriotic holiday, however. The National Archives at Boston and Blue Star Mothers of America exclude Columbus Day in their listings of patriotic holidays, as does the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Yet David G. Bancroft at USA Patriotism! ([www.usapatriotism.org](http://www.usapatriotism.org)) notes that the U.S. Department of State recognizes Columbus Day as a national holiday.

Historically, New York is credited with celebrating the first Columbus Day in 1792 on the 300th anniversary of Italian-born Christopher Columbus' historic landing in the New World. Other communities with Italian immigrants and Catholic (Columbus' chosen faith) organizations soon followed with parades and events commemorating Columbus.

The first nationwide observances of Columbus Day were held in 1892 on the 400th anniversary of Columbus' landing. At the direction of the U.S. Congress, a proclamation by U.S. President Benjamin Harrison charged schools, churches, and communities to pause on October 21, 1892 to acknowledge Columbus' discovery that led to the birth of our great nation:

"On that day, let the people so far as possible, cease from toil and devote themselves to such exercises as may best express honor to the discoverer and their appreciation of the great achievements of the four completed centuries of American life...Let the national flag float over every schoolhouse in the country and the exercises be such as shall impress upon our youth the patriotic duties of American citizenship. In the churches and other places of assembly of the people let there be expressions of gratitude to Divine Providence for the devout faith of the discoverer and for Divine care and guidance which has directed our history and so abundantly blessed our people...Benj. Harrison" (Washington, DC, July 21, 1892, John W. Foster, Secretary of State)

How Bucklesberrians and the greater community celebrated the first Columbus Day of 1892 will be shared in the next Bucklesberry article.