

ALL IN THE FAMILY

—The Story of the Pinzón Brothers

by Christy Mihaly illustrated by Brad Walker

“Hear ye, townspeople of Palos!” In May 1492, the villagers of the Spanish port of Palos received an extraordinary royal order. Queen Isabella was sending Christopher Columbus on a voyage west, across unknown seas. She commanded the people of Palos to provide the ships and crew.

“We won’t go!” people must have said. “That Columbus is crazy!”

Palos was a busy port, filled with trading ships and fishing boats. Its sailors were the finest in Spain. But—sail west to India? “Foolishness!” they laughed. They refused to help Columbus.

Then Martín Alonso Pinzón stepped in. He was the oldest son of a well-known Palos family of sailors, pilots, and navigators. Martín Alonso first went to sea as a cabin boy. He journeyed along the eastern coast of Africa and beyond. Sailing the Mediterranean and the Atlantic for many years, he fought for Spain in great sea battles. There

were rumors that he’d even been a pirate. By 1492, he was a wealthy man. His brothers, too, took to the sea and became expert seamen.

Martín Alonso found Columbus’s plan to be very exciting. So he volunteered to captain the *Pinta*, one of Columbus’s three ships. He recruited both of his brothers too: Francisco Martín Pinzón would be the *Pinta*’s first mate. And Vicente Yañez Pinzón, the youngest, would be captain of the *Niña*. Martín Alonso also lent Columbus money for expenses. And he helped collect supplies for the long trip.

With the Pinzón brothers on board, other people paid attention. Martín Alonso was able to gather the strongest and bravest soldiers for the voyage. “We’ll find riches in the west,” he urged. That August, Columbus set sail with a fine crew. He knew he could rely on their skills and experience to sail into the unknown—and back.

Today, the town of Palos celebrates Pinzón Day every year, recognizing the important role those sailing brothers played in 1492. Without the Pinzón brothers, Columbus might have missed the boat!

