

First Across the Ocean Blue

Patrick Huyghe attempts to set history straight.

Columbus Was Last

By Patrick Huyghe '76
272 pp. Hyperion. \$22.95.

These are hard times for Christopher Columbus. In recent years he has come under attack from several quarters, been denounced as a bringer of disease, death, and slavery, a despoiler of a virgin continent, and a sadistic ogre. With his reputation already in darkest eclipse, Columbus's place in history as discoverer of the New World is further disputed by a new book that chronicles some 15 pre-Columbus visitors to America. According to journalist Patrick Huyghe, author of *Columbus Was Last: From 200,000 B.C. to 1492, a Heretical History of Who Was First*, the notion of Columbus as discoverer of America is a sham, perpetuated by historians and governments with much to lose.

"Any single claim to the discovery of America may . . . be regarded as fraud, myth, or misinterpretation," Huyghe writes. "There can be little doubt that others were here before Columbus. . . . History obviously likes its Columbus and sees no need to muddy the clear waters of official history with a puzzling parade of potential predecessors."

America was probably the last continent on Earth to be inhabited. It is said that modern man, *Homo sapiens*, first appeared in what is now Africa 200,000 years ago, and later migrated to southeast Asia and Australia. According to Huyghe, long before 1492, America was visited by Celts, Chinese,

Japanese, Hindus, Jews, Libyans, Phoenicians, Polynesians, Romans, and Vikings.

These early travelers came by boat and on foot (the Bering Strait, linking Siberia and Alaska, was then a land bridge) to the west coast of what is now the United States. (Huyghe suggests these Asians are the ancestors of Native Americans.) He also presents evidence of Japanese traveling by boat to what is now Chile.

Pre-Columbus explorers often took one-way, quite unplanned, trips. "They were motivated by survival—hunger, most likely—not the acquisition of spices, gold, or virgin territory," Huyghe writes.

Not so with Columbus. Well funded by the Spanish throne, he kept extensive—if inaccurate—records of his voyage, and afterward promoted himself by exploiting an emerging medium of mass communication, the printing press. Thus, the Great Navigator—who, when landing the New World, mistook Cuba for part of Asia—managed to effectively blot out historical mention of discoverers preceding him,

save an occasional grudging mention of the Vikings.

Columbus has quite an advantage over earlier arrivals, who left behind only tools, skeletons, and the odd coins or inscriptions, many of which Huyghe cites. Probably the best known of the pre-Columbus explorers are the Norseman Leif Ericson and the Irish monk St. Brendan. The voyage of the latter, in the sixth century, is widely regarded as mythical. Huyghe, though, gives it more credence.

They were but two of the many obscure transoceanic commuters Huyghe has uncovered: the Welshman, Madoc; the Buddhist missionary, Hui-Shen; the Mandingan emperor, Abubakari II; the Italian, Antonio Zeno; and the Portuguese, Joao Vas Corte Real—"all of whom may have squeezed into America just under the 1492 wire," Huyghe says.

On the east coast, in Maine and Canada, ancient stone tools, harpoons, objects buried in ritual patterns, and skeletons of Scandinavians dubbed the "Red Paint People"—deriving

from red ochre, an iron ore used as a pigment—provided evidence of a 4,500-year-old seafaring and trading culture.

Few of Columbus's predecessors have received their historical due, and to this day Columbus has inescapable political ramifications. Not only historians but governments strive to keep the Columbus myth intact. Huyghe notes the consternation in the Brazilian government when a ship, likely of the Roman



MICHAEL PRINZO

era, was located off the coast of Rio de Janeiro in the seventies.

If the ship were found to be Roman, "Columbus and Cabral, who had claimed Brazil for Portugal in 1500, would be displaced as discoverers of the New World," Huyghe writes. "The Italian ambassador even put the Brazilians on notice that if the ship proved to be Roman, the government would be obliged to extend immediate Brazilian citizenship to all Italians in that country, just as they did to all Portuguese immigrants."

Columbus Was Last is lively, and if it occasionally reads like undigested research, it provides glimpses of mysterious and little known chapters of misty prehistory. Huyghe makes a strong case against Columbus's claim on the New World: the explorer's public relations nightmare deepens.

A 1976 graduate of the Newhouse School, Huyghe is the author of *Glowing Birds* and *The Big Splash with Dr. Louis A. Frank*. He has contributed articles to *Science Digest*, *Omni*, *Psychology Today*, and *Discover*.

—GEORGE LOWERY

OTHER ALUMNI BOOKS

The Limits of Power: The Nixon and Ford Administrations

By John Robert Greene G'83
320 pp. Indiana University Press. \$29.95.

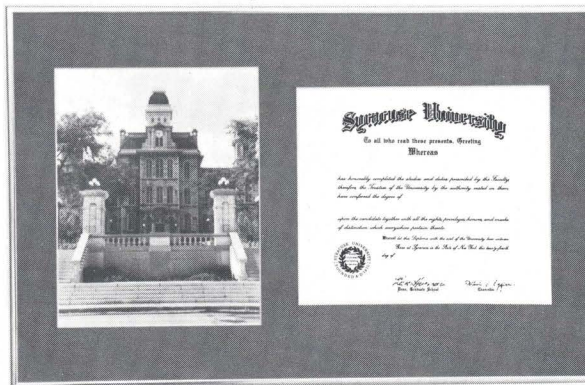
Greene chronicles how Vietnam hobbled the power of the presidency during the Johnson Administration, and how Richard Nixon failed to grasp the new limits of his power. A professor at Cazenovia College, Greene sees the 1992 elections as a reaction against the power Congress assumed from the presidency after Watergate.

J. B. Hunt: The Long Haul to Success

By Marvin Schwartz '70
162 pp. University of Arkansas Press. \$16.95.

This rags-to-riches biography chronicles the remarkable achievements of the Hunt Corporation and of trucking giant Johnnie Bryan Hunt, from Arkansas cotton fields to *Forbes* magazine's list of the 400 richest Americans.

Distinctive Diploma Frame™



Order one for yourself—or for a perfect gift for a graduate.

Unique and attractive - these frames come ready for you to insert a diploma next to a vibrant color spring-time photograph of the Hall of Languages in a premium quality metal frame with golden finish, and an orange mat which represents one of Syracuse's colors with an opening for your 8½" x 11" diploma.

Where is your diploma now?

Tucked away in a drawer? Or in a plain frame?

Purchase this distinctive frame, insert your diploma and display with pride—and recall those fond memories at Syracuse.

\$69.95 ea. Michigan residents add 4% tax. Please include \$6.00 ea. for shipping and handling - Continental USA only. Payment can be by check, money order, **VISA** or **MasterCard**. Include full account number and expiration date for credit card orders.

Call toll free 1-800-437-2634



Satisfaction Guaranteed

PbR Photography, Dept. SY
603 Woodingham Dr., East Lansing, MI 48823

FINALLY

A PUBLICATION COVERING JUST SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY SPORTS!

INTRODUCING... THE BIG ORANGE

- ✓ **32 Issues a Year**
- ✓ **Personal Interviews**
- ✓ **Football Recruiting**
- ✓ **Basketball Recruiting**
- ✓ **Weekly During Football and Basketball**
- ✓ **Game and Conference Statistics**
- ✓ **Weekly Lacrosse & Non-Rev. Wrap-ups**
- ✓ **Schedules, Rosters, and Action Photos**

For a one year subscription send \$40 to:
The Big Orange, Eastern Sports Publications
P.O. Box 1238, Morgantown, WV 26507

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
For VISA or MC Orders:
Card Number _____
Exact Name on Card _____
Signature _____
Exp. Date _____ Phone _____
or call **1-800-929-SUGO**

Make checks payable to The Big Orange