

OTHER EARLY DISCOVERIES

On the 5th day of March, 1496, John Cabot (Giovanni Cabota, a Venetian), and his three sons obtained a patent from Henry VII, king of England, authorizing them to search for islands, provinces, or regions in the eastern, western, or northern, seas. Under this charter, in May, 1497, he embarked in a single vessel, accompanied by his son Sebastian, sailed west, as he said, 700 leagues, and on June 24 following, came upon land which he reported to have been part of a continent. He sailed along the coast for about 300 leagues, landed at several places, and planted the banners of England and Venice. He returned to Bristol in August of the same year, and his discoveries are said to have attracted the admiration of the city and the favor of the English king. But for reasons that can only be conjectured, he did not make another voyage, and the place and time of his death are unknown. He was more of a practical navigator than a scholar, and it is evident that he did not have a proper conception of the nature and importance of his discoveries.

Sebastian Cabot, who had been associated with his father's expedition of the year previous, led forth, in May, 1498, two ships, and a company of English volunteers, on a voyage in search of a short western passage to China and Japan. He sailed so far to the north, that in the early part of July, the light of day was almost continuous. Finding the sea full of icebergs, he turned more to the south, and arrived at land which is generally supposed to have been Newfoundland. Pursuing his search, he reached the main land of North America, landed in many places, and saw natives clad in skins of beasts. He coasted along the shore as far south as Florida; but his object had been to find a passage to the rich continent of Asia, and though he had discovered an immense territory under a temperate sky, his voyage was considered a failure. A navigator named Vasco da Gama had reached India by way of the Cape of Good Hope, and filled the world with his fame. From this cause, the discoveries of the Cabots were considered of little value. Though spoken of in English annals as "Sebastian Cabote, the great seaman," he does not seem to have possessed sufficient learning and powers of description to impress upon the leading minds of the world, that the new one, which he had discovered, was of such vast importance to the ultimate welfare of mankind.

Amerigo Vespucci (Americus Vespucius), an Italian navigator, obtained the glory of associating his name with that of the new found world. He came of a noble but not wealthy family, and received a finished education. Later in life he was engaged in commerce at Seville. He was in that city when Columbus returned from his first voyage, and became enamored with a career of nautical adventure by occasionally meeting with the latter and listening to his accounts of his new discoveries. He subsequently entered the service of the king of Portugal, and sailed on his first voyage in the year 1499. The expedition reached the coast of Brazil and other points of the South American continent, and he subsequently made other successful voyages of discovery. Being a man of literary attainments, he was enabled to write descriptions of his discoveries in such a manner as to attract special attention from the learned men of Europe, and in this particular possessed great advantage over his predecessors and contemporaries. One of his narratives was published at Strasbourg in 1505, under the title of *Americus Vesputius de Orbe Antarctico per Regem Portugallicae pridem inventa*. His vivid and glowing accounts were highly interesting, and being the earliest published description of the new world, was called by his name, Amerigo, or America.

Pinzon, a companion of Columbus on his first voyage, discovered the mouth of the Amazon, in the year 1500.

In 1513, Juan Ponce de Leon, a Spanish cavalier, fitted out a little squadron at his own cost, put to sea from Porto Rico, and directed his course to the unexplored west. On the 27th of March, Easter Sunday, called in Spanish, Pasqua Florida, the *Feast of Flowers*, he came in sight of a region which he named Florida.

The Spaniards boldly pushed their explorations around the entire coast of the Mexican Gulf and the South American Continent, and in 1521 sent out the memorable expedition which resulted in the conquest of Mexico.

In 1524, the French nation sent out an expedition under the command of Giovanni Verazzano, a Florentine. After a stormy voyage of fifty days, he reached the main land of North America, in latitude 34°. He traced the Coast southward for fifty leagues and then, returning, sailed northward as far as Nova Scotia. He entered and explored the harbors now known as New York and Newport, gathered knowledge concerning the products and inhabitants of the region, and claimed, for the French King, the whole country along the shores of which he had ranged, under the name of New France. On his return to Europe he prepared a written account of his voyages, which contains the earliest description extant of the eastern border of what is now the United States.

Ten years later, in 1534 the French dispatched Jacques Cartier to explore and colonize the new world, and he made the coast of Newfoundland in twenty days. He sailed up the St. Lawrence, made extensive discoveries, and made persistent attempts at colonization; but sickness, scarcity, and severe weather long defeated all efforts to plant a permanent French colony in America.

In 1539, Hernando de Soto set sail with his expedition of 600 men for exploration and conquest. He traveled the vast wilderness from the Florida coast to the Mississippi river, and after two years of hardships and misfortune, met his death and was consigned to the bosom of the mighty stream he had discovered.

In 1562 and 1564, the Huguenots, French Protestants, planted their feeble colonies in Florida.

In 1564, the Spaniard, Pedro Menendez, made his expedition to Florida, destroyed the Huguenot colony, and laid the foundation of St Augustine, the oldest town in the United States.

In 1578, Sir Humphrey Gilbert obtained a patent from Elizabeth, Queen of England, to plant a colony in North America. He led his expedition to Newfoundland, but failed to establish a colony, and on his return voyage he and his crew were lost at sea.

About the year 1580, Sir Francis Drake accomplished his celebrated voyage around the globe. This was an event highly auspicious to mercantile enterprise, and stimulated the English in their attempts at colonization.

In 1584, the famous Sir Walter Raleigh, a step-brother of Gilbert, received an ample patent from Elizabeth, and renewed the effort to establish an English colony in America. He sent out an expedition which sailed with two vessels, made land near Cape Fear, coasted northward along the Carolina shore, and visited the sounds of Pamlico and Albemarle, and the neighboring islands of Wococon and Roanoke. The voyagers were delighted with their discoveries, gave glowing descriptions of them on their return to England, and the Queen named the region Virginia. Raleigh, possessing great wealth and influence, then made vigorous efforts to colonize, and in 1585, a squadron of seven ships, commanded by Sir Richard Grenville, conveyed his first company of emigrants to Virginia. A colony of 110 men was landed on Roanoke Island; but discouraged and homesick, they all returned to England the next year. A second band of 15 men left on the island, was totally destroyed by the Indians. A third company of 89 persons, men, women, and children, organized to found "the city of Raleigh," came to Virginia in 1587; but in 1590, when an expedition landed at their place of settlement with supplies, not a single person could be found, and nothing could be learned of the fate of the colony. In 1602, an expedition sent out by Raleigh's assignees, visited the American Coast, named Cape Cod and the Elizabeth Islands; and the next year a similar one, sailing in the employ of some merchants of Bristol, entered Penobscot Bay and coasted as far southward as Martha's Vineyard.