

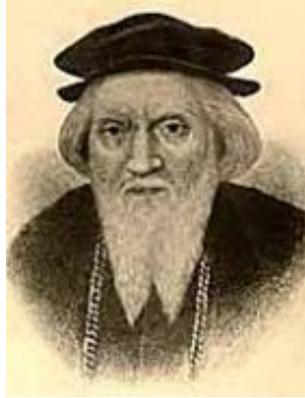


Name _____

John and Sebastian Cabot

By Mary Lynn Bushong

It was the beginning of the race to reach Asia. Who was better suited to lead this race than the Italian traders and merchants who already held the monopoly? They had proven themselves in their seamanship. You already know the name of Christopher Columbus. One of the other great navigator-explorers of the time was Giovanni Caboto-- or John Cabot as he became known in England.



No one knows for sure when Cabot was born in Italy, but most historians guess the year to be about 1450. As a young man, he lived in Venice and learned to be a trader. Traveling around the Mediterranean Sea and the Middle East, he bought and sold silks, spices, and precious stones.

He hungered to find a more direct route to Asia, but no one in Italy wanted to pay for exploration. The leading countries willing to fund exploration were Spain and Portugal. In about 1490, Cabot moved his family and business to Spain. If he wanted to be hired, he had to move where the jobs were.

Unfortunately, no one in Spain wanted to listen to his ideas. No one wanted to pay for the cost of that exploration. Columbus' triumphant return in 1493 did not make things easier. Finally, Cabot found the support he craved in England.

Cabot settled in the port of Bristol. There the merchants were willing to support him in a bid for opening up access to markets in the east. Then when King Henry VII became involved, Cabot's success seemed assured.

In 1496, Cabot made his first attempt to reach Asia by going west. He got as far as Iceland before problems forced him to turn back. The next year, he took a small fast ship to Ireland and went southwest from there, until they reached the coast of North America. Most

people think he landed between Labrador and Nova Scotia.

He stayed along the coast for almost a month, while he explored to be able to make a claim on the land later. He reported on the temperate climate of the new land and the wealth of fish. As soon as they heard, fishermen from Brittany, Basque, and Portugal went to take advantage of the bounty.

In 1498, Cabot again planned to reach Asia. This time he had five ships and 200 men. Little is known about them after they left Bristol. The ships stopped briefly in Ireland, and one was left behind because of damage. The other four continued on but were never seen again.

John Cabot's son Sebastian followed in his father's footsteps nine years after that fateful voyage. He was the first to attempt to find a Northwest Passage over the top of Canada. According to records, he appears to have found the entrance of Hudson Bay, but had to turn back. His crew refused to go farther, and he was forced to return to England again.

Sebastian was hired by Spain in 1512 and continued to sail under her flag until 1547 when he retired. He died in England in 1557 at the age of 63. Together, the Cabots helped establish England's claim to Canada and a large portion of coastal United States.

John and Sebastian Cabot

Questions

_____ 1. What was John Cabot's country of origin?

- A. Portugal
- B. Italy
- C. Spain
- D. England

2. Why did Cabot move to Spain?
