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Description

Historian Dr. Albert Hibbs discusses the early explorers of the Americas who search for a sea route to Asia. The countries of Europe send out many expeditions to stake claims and search for the legendary Northwest Passage.

Keywords

Christopher Columbus, New World, Explorers, Asia, Europe, Vasco da Gama, India, Portugal, Giovanni Caboto, John Cabot, Orient, Amerigo Vespucci, Ferdinand Magellan, Sir Francis Drake, Straits of Magellan, Giovanni da Verrazzano, Jacques Cartier, St. Lawrence River, Henry Hudson, Conquistadores, Hernan Cortes, Native Americans, Spain, Gold, Francisco Vasquez de Coronado, Mexico, Horses, Cattle, Columbian Exchange, Hernando de Soto, French, Samuel de Champlain, Great Lakes, Quebec, Rene-Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle, Mississippi River, Louis XIV
Exploring a New World

Dr. ALBERT HIBBS (historian): In the years when Columbus was making his voyages of discovery, the world looked like this to the geographers of the day. There was Europe, and then the Atlantic Ocean, and then Asia. As for the Western Hemisphere, it didn’t even exist on their map. There was no landmass over here, as for the Americas, wasn’t there.

In the year 1498 while Columbus was on his third voyage, Vasco da Gama set sail from Portugal, went down around the Cape of Good Hope at the southern tip of Africa, dashed across the ocean and landed in India. There amid the cries of protests of the Arab traders, he loaded his ships with the riches of the Orient, and sailed back to Portugal. In that same year the Italian captain, Giovanni Caboto, persuaded the merchants of Bristol, England to finance him on a voyage of discovery and he sailed across the cold northern seas and explored the land from Labrador down to Maryland. And this voyage established the English claims to that portion of the New World for the next hundred years. The struggle for empire began when as explorer after explorer tried to bind his way around this unwanted barrier to the Orient and planted the flags of his nation up and down the coast.

1498 was also the year that Amerigo Vespucci, flying the flag of Spain, coasted the land bordering South America and on up the Atlantic into the Gulf of Mexico. Finally, in the year 1519, Magellan, also flying the Spanish flag, broke out into the Pacific, to become the first man to sail around the world. Fifty-eight years later the Englishman Drake followed him through the Straits of Magellan to explore the western shores of the New World as far north as possibly the Oregon coast. Verrazzano and Cartier gave the French their first foothold in the New World along the St. Lawrence River. Hendrick Hudson established Dutch claim along the river that bears his name. A year later, flying an English flag, he discovered enormous Hudson Bay where he was put adrift by mutinous sailors.

Mounted on horseback and clothed in shining armor, they looked like gods to the Indians who had not
seen horses or armor before. What gold was not given to them freely, they took by force. They filled Spanish ships with their prize and Spain asked for more. Young men from Spain burning to see the wonders of the New World scarcely disembarked when they rushed inland searching for the elusive El Dorado’s, for the land of the golden implements, fountains of youth, and the seven cities of gold. In 1540 Coronado marched an army of thirteen hundred men with herds of horses, cattle, and pigs, from the heart of Mexico to the Kansas plains and back again, looking for the fabled cities of gold.