Logan Bamburg

(Mr. Johnson)

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American History Explorer Report

Explorer John Cabot was born in Genoa, Italy around the year 1450 under the name Giovanni Caboto. Although, the man was an Italian citizen he would go on to be a key person in the history of English trade. Cabot is commonly referred to as the “Man of Mysters” as little is known about his life before his English voyages. Although only one of three were successful he is most noted for his contribution to the transatlantic trade routes, the discovery of Newfoundland, and the groundwork he laid for England’s future claim to Canda.

John Cabot’s early life may be a mystery, but we do know he was the son of a spice merchant word married a young woman named Mattea. Cabot and Mattea went on to have three sons Ludovico, Sancto, and Sebastiano. Cabot moved his family to Venice around the year 1461 where he visited the Mediterranean coast and became a skilled merchant with excellent navigation techniques (Britannica). From about the mid-1480s to mid-1490s, the explorer’s whereabouts are in doubt, however, he is next heard from when he moved to England and received a patent for his first voyage from King Henry VII. The patent was issued on March 5, 1946, to Cabot and his son’s. They were authorized to search from unclaimed land and return the merchandise they found to the port in of Bristol, England. Depending on how successful they were, they would be compensated accordingly by sharing in the wealth of the found merchandise. However, John Cabot’s first voyage was made with one ship but was cut short due to food shortage, bad weather, and crew disputes.

One year later in 1497, Cabot set sail on his ship *Matthew* with 18 men in hopes for a successful journey. He sailed around Ireland then North and West eventually making land fall in the northern capes of present-day Newfoundland. He laid claim to the area in the name of King Henry VII and went on to name several of the surrounding areas, including, Cape North, St. Paul Island, and Cape Ray which are all in the areas of the Cabot Strait. Cabot’s 1497 voyage is his most notable because of his discoveries and what they would mean for the future. His route to this new land was pivotal in the formation of Transatlantic trade routes from England to the Americas. Within this trip he also helped lay the groundwork for England’s later claim to Canada because due to the northern coordinates of the land King Henry believed it was out of the sphere of Spain’s control (Encyclopedia). The explorer returned to England in August of 1497 and was greeted in high regards from the King. He was granted a yearly pension and was patented for another voyage.

In 1498, Cabot set sail with a larger group, about five ships and three-hundred men in search for more land and merchandise. Unfortunately, once Cabot set sail he was never heard from again. Many reports say that several ships returned with claims of not knowing where Cabot’s ship was lost. Evidence from Spanish explorers, seems to state that the ship made it to the present-day Caribbean and implies that Cabot was trying to follow the continents coast south (Encyclopedia). Cabot’s son Sebastiano or Sebashtian then went on to follow in his father’s footsteps taking voyages throughout the earlier 1500s. He became an influential cartographer and went on to train other ship captains for voyages to come (Encyclopedia).

Although Cabot only had one true successful voyage his contributions to the English trade system will always be notable. The “Man of Mysters” may not have much of a history but his pivotal role in the late 1490s English expeditions helped form much of the history we know today. Whether its viewed through his contribution to trade routes, the land he found, or through his son and his expeditions after his father’s death John Cabot is an explorer of note.

Works Cited

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