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Amerigo Vespucci

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The Life of Amerigo Vespucci

There have been many explorers and navigators, but my favorite is Amerigo Vespucci. Amerigo Vespucci was the third son born into a wealthy family in Florence, Italy on March 9 in 1451 or in 1454 as different sources site different dates. His family was friends with other wealthy and powerful families in Italy. He was educated by his uncle who was a Dominican friar. He tried lots of jobs including starting a business in banking, and he moved his banking business from Italy to Spain. It was in Spain that he became interested in exploration and met Christopher Columbus. In his 40’s his business was still not making much money, and he decided to ask King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella to allow him to lead an expedition (*Amerigo Vespucci*).

On Amerigo Vespucci’s first voyage he crossed the Atlantic Ocean and explored the northeastern coast of present day South America. On his second voyage, he explored the southeastern coast of present day South America. When he returned he believed that he did not land in Asia as Christopher Columbus had thought. He called it a new world and wrote a lot about it in his journals. At that time only Europe, Africa and Asia had been explored and named, and Vespucci added and described the Mundes Novus, or the New World (“Amerigo Vespucci for Kids”).

Amerigo was the first to discover and explore the Amazon River, and he went up the Amazon River as far as present day Cape St. Augustine. During his later voyages he sailed under a Portuguese flag. He discovered present day Rio de Janeiro and Rio de la Plata. He also explored the coast of Brazil. He mapped and wrote a lot in his journals about all of his explorations, and we know a lot about him and what he did because of his good records (*Amerigo Vespucci*).

In 1507, Martin Waldseemuller, a German cartographer, studied Vespucci’s journals and used them to draw a map of the world. On his map he labeled the land explored by Amerigo Vespucci “America” after him using an alternate and feminine spelling of his name. Years later, even though Amerigo had never explored or even set foot on North America or Central America, they too were named after him, and the lands he explored would be called South America.

Due to his many accomplishments Amerigo Vespucci became a naturalized citizen of Spain in 1505. In his later years, he worked for the Spanish government making maps and charting routes to the lands he had explored (“Amerigo Vespucci for Kids”). Amerigo Vespucci died in 1512 from malaria. Because of all he had done, his wife, Maria Cerezo, was honored with a pension from the Spanish government (“Amerigo Vespucci”). Other than being tutored by his uncle in his younger years, Amerigo was self-taught and accomplished all that he did without ever going to school. That is why Amerigo Vespucci is my favorite explorer.

Works Cited

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