



COLONIAL NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

JAMESTOWN
HISTORIC BRIEFS

DISCOVERIES AND EXPLORATIONS OF THE NEW WORLD BEFORE AND SHORTLY AFTER JAMESTOWN 1607

- 40,000 - 20,000 B.C. Humans first arrived in America via the land bridge over the Bering Strait (Russia to Alaska). Later these people (the Indians) diffused and settled throughout the Americas, reaching the bottom of South America around 9,000 B.C.
- 981 A.D. Eric the Red (Scandinavian/Viking) explored Greenland.
- 985 Eric the Red established a settlement in eastern Greenland.
- 1000 Leif Ericsson (Scandinavian/Viking), son of Eric the Red, possibly discovered and explored the coast of Newfoundland, Canada; little information is known about this voyage.
- 1492 Christopher Columbus (Genoese), sailing for Spain, discovered and landed on San Salvador Island, Bahamas, on October 12. Ships: *Nina, Pinta and Santa Maria*.
- 1497 John Cabot (Genoese), sailing for England, discovered either Nova Scotia or Newfoundland. Ship: *Matthew*.
- 1498 Christopher Columbus became the first European to discover the South American continent (Venezuela).
- 1499 Amerigo Vespucci (Spanish) explored the South American coastline; America was later named after him.
- 1501 Gaspar Corte Real (Portuguese) sailed along the coast of Labrador and Newfoundland.
- 1513 Ponce de Leon (Spanish) discovered Florida; sought the "Fountain of Youth;" landed near Ponce de Leon Inlet just below present day Daytona Beach.
- 1513 Nunez de Balboa (Spanish) crossed the Panama Isthmus; became the first European to sight the Pacific Ocean.
- 1516 Pedro de Quexos (Spanish) possibly became the first European in Virginia waters.

- 1519-1521 Hernando Cortes (Spanish) conquered Mexico and the Aztec Indian empire.
- 1519-1522 Ferdinand Magellan (Portuguese), sailing for Spain, commanded the first circumnavigation of the globe; set sail from Spain September 20, 1519; passed through the Straits of Magellan, November 1520; killed in the Philippines, April 1521, where his command was taken by El Cano, who reached Spain on September 7, 1522. Only 18 of the several hundred crew members survived. One ship remaining: Victoria.
- 1521 Francisco Gordillo and Pedro de Quexos (Spanish) discovered the Chesapeake Bay.
- 1522-1528 Panfilo de Narvaez (Spanish) explored the panhandle of Florida. He and most of his men died; Cabeza de Vaca, an officer, with three others manage to survive in Texas for eight years before arriving safely in Mexico in 1538.
- 1526 Lucas Vazquez de Ayllon (Spanish) attempted to settle at Winyah Bay, South Carolina; settlement fails.
- 1531 Francisco Pizarro (Spanish) conquered Peru and the Inca Indian empire.
- 1536 Jacques Cartier (French) explored the St. Lawrence River and the site of Montreal, Canada.
- 1539-1542 Francisco Vasquez Coronado (Spanish) explored the southwestern United States as far as Oklahoma and Kansas; one of his officers on a reconnaissance viewed the Grand Canyon (1540).
- 1539-1543 Hernando de Soto (Spanish) landed at Tampa Bay, Florida and explored much of the southeastern United States as far as southern North Carolina and west to the Brasso River in Texas. First European discovery of the Mississippi River (1541) near Memphis, Tennessee. De Soto died on the expedition (1542) and was buried in the river. Only 311 of the original 600 plus crew survived to reach safety in Mexico under the command of Luis de Moscoso.
- 1542 Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo (Spanish) landed at San Diego Bay and continued along the California coastline to Point Reyes; Bartoleme Ferrelo assumes command upon Cabrillo's death and sailed as far as the Oregon coast.
- 1562 Jean Ribault (French) established a settlement at Parris Island, South Carolina; it failed.
- 1564 Rene de Laudonniere (French) established a settlement at the mouth of the St. Johns River, near Jacksonville, Florida; it was destroyed the following year by the Spanish.

- 1565 Pedro Menendez de Aviles (Spanish) established a settlement at St. Augustine, Florida; it has become the longest continuing European settlement in the United States.
- 1570 Spanish Jesuits established Ajacan mission on the James York peninsula (near King's Creek). Indians destroyed it the following year; all eight priests were killed and only Almos de Olmos, a boy with the Mission, survived. He was rescued in 1572 by Mendendez de Aviles.
- 1577-1580 Francis Drake (English) circumnavigated the globe; possible landing spots include San Francisco Bay and Vancouver Island. Ship: Golden Hind.
- 1585 Walter Raleigh (English) sent out Ralph Lane in an attempt to settle and colonize Roanoke Island, North Carolina; colony was abandoned the following year.
- 1587 Walter Raleigh sent out John White with 117 men, women and children to reattempt settlement at Roanoke Island; 1590 an English supply ship returned but was unable to find anyone, due to movement of settlers to the Chesapeake Bay area; settlement became known as the "Lost Colony"; the birth of Virginia Dare (1587) became the first recorded English birth in America. Ships: Lion and two others.
- 1602 Bartholomew Gosnold (English) explored the coast of New England; would later become one of the original Jamestown settlers and a member of its first council. Ship: Concord.
- 1605 Christopher Newport (English) made a reconnaissance of the Chesapeake Bay; he commanded the three ships to Jamestown in 1607 and was a member of the first council.
- 1607 **JAMESTOWN WAS FOUNDED AND BECAME THE FIRST SUCCESSFUL ENGLISH SETTLEMENT IN AMERICA; IT WAS VIRGINIA'S FIRST CAPITAL, REMAINING SO FOR 92 YEARS UNTIL REPLACED BY WILLIAMSBURG. TODAY JAMESTOWN IS A NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE. SHIPS: SUSAN CONSTANT, GODSPEED AND DISCOVERY.**
- 1607 Raleigh Gilbert and George Popham (English), representing the Plymouth Company with 120 men, landed (August 19) and settled at the mouth of the Sagadahoc (Kennebeck) River in the present state of Maine. They built Fort St. George. The settlement was abandoned the following year, leaving only JAMESTOWN as a foothold for English settlement in America. Ships: Gift of God and Mary and John.
- 1608 Samuel de Champlain (French) established settlement in Quebec, Canada (New France).

- 1609 Christopher Newport, Sir Thomas Gates and Sir George Somers (English), with crew and passengers on the Sea Adventure bound for Jamestown, ship wreck on the reefs off the Bermudas (August); nearly all survive and arrive at Jamestown in May 1610. By July 1612, the English established Bermuda as a new colony in America.
- 1609 The Spanish founded Santa Fe, New Mexico.
- 1609 Henry Hudson (Dutch) sailed up the Hudson River, which is named after him. Ship: Halfmoon.
- 1620 The Pilgrims established Plymouth Colony with 102 settlers. Like Jamestown 13 years earlier, this settlement in Massachusetts suffered high mortality during the first several months, with only 50 settlers surviving by spring. Ship: Mayflower.
- 1624 Cornelius May (Dutch) established and commanded Fort Orange (Albany, New York).
- 1625 The English founded St. Kitts in the Caribbean.
- 1626 Peter Minuit (Dutch) purchased New Amsterdam (Manhattan, New York City) from the Indians.
- 1634 Lord Baltimore and Leonard Calvert (English) established St. Mary's, Maryland Ships: Dove and Ark.
- 1638 Peter Minuit, sailing for Sweden, established Fort Christina near the present site of Wilmington, Delaware.

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