

JOHN CABOT



John Cabot's real name was Giovanni Caboto. He was born in Genoa, Italy around 1455. Genoa was a major city on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. Spices, silk, precious stones, and metals from Asia were traded there. It is not surprising that John became a merchant. He also became an expert mariner or sailor.

John Cabot lived in an exciting and adventurous time. Many explorers were crossing the Atlantic Ocean and Cabot wanted to be part of it. He knew that the kings of Spain and Portugal had been sponsoring explorers. They provided ships and supplies. In return, the explorers would claim any land they found for the country that sponsored them. Cabot hoped that either Spain or Portugal would sponsor him. However, neither country was interested.

Cabot then went to England to ask the king to sponsor him. Cabot's plan was to find a quicker route to Asia than Columbus had charted. He would sail a more northern route across the Atlantic. The English king agreed to sponsor him. Whatever Cabot found, he would claim for England.

In May 1497, Cabot began his voyage. Unfortunately most of his logs and records have been lost. However, reports from England say that Cabot found two very large islands. He landed and claimed them for England. The accounts say that there were tremendous amounts of fish found in the seas surrounding these islands. These islands were Newfoundland and Nova Scotia.

Like Columbus, Cabot thought he had found a water route to Asia and was close to Cathay (China). He returned to England, but made a second voyage in 1498. Historians know little about the outcome of this voyage. Cabot's fame was short-lived. However, his discovery of the Grand Banks off Newfoundland with its huge schools of fish led to future voyages by commercial fishermen.

Most accounts of John Cabot's voyages do not include any information about encounters with natives in Newfoundland or Nova Scotia.

John Cabot died in England in 1499.