

*It is only with the heart  
one sees rightly.  
What is essential  
is invisible to the eye.*

# early history united states

We all know that Christopher Columbus, sailing for Spain, was an Italian Catholic who discovered America in 1492. Spain asked for and received permission from the Pope to explore, colonize, trade and convert heathens. The explorers pushed on, opening ever widening new areas. They not only brought tender, loving, Christianity to the shores of the New World, but also greed and torture, the likes of which the Indian natives probably never witnessed before. But man will be man as evidenced by the recent atrocities in our own lifetime.

England entered the picture when John Cabot, an Italian sailing for England, explored Newfoundland in 1497. He claimed all of his discoveries for England, sailing as far south as Maryland. Ponce de Leon, Spanish soldier of fortune, sailed from Puerto Rico and on Easter Sunday in 1513 reached Florida, *a Land Beautiful With Flowers*. He was the first white man to touch that soil and was very disappointed to find no magic fountain of youth. Balboa, another Spaniard, explored and gave to Spain in 1513, the Isthmus, that land connecting North and South America. Hernando Cortez, a Spaniard, in 1519 sailed from Cuba and captured the Aztec Emperor, Montezuma and all of Mexico.

France joined the competition for the New World in 1524, when King Francis I sent the Italian Giovanni de Verrazano, to find a northwest passage to Asia. Instead he found present New York Bay and its surroundings. France claimed a lot of North America because of Verrazano. Alvar de Vaca, a Spaniard, in 1527 explored the southwest region of the United States and walked from Texas to the Bay of California, a journey that took 9 years. In 1534, the Frenchman Jacques Cartier explored the St. Lawrence river to what is now Quebec and Montreal. In 1537, Hernando De Soto, a Spaniard who tramped through Florida, Georgia, Alabama and Mississippi discovered the Mississippi River in 1542. His explorations gave Spain the basis for its claims to the entire southeastern part of North America. Coronado in 1540 explored Mexico, New Mexico, Texas, Oklahoma, and Kansas.

All these explorers gave to the New World the

beginnings of the white man's civilization. Spain held vast territories in the West Indies and North and South America. Catholic priests often accompanied the Spanish and French explorers to preach to the Indians and try to convert them. Many Catholic missions were built in early America almost 100 years before Jamestown and the Mayflower.

The first city built north of the Mexican border, St. Augustine, Florida, was established in 1565 by order of King Phillip II of Spain. St. Augustine was burned by English invaders on two separate occasions. A chain of Catholic missions was built to convert the Indians.

In 1632, King Charles the First of England gave to Lord Baltimore, his personal friend, outright ownership of a large expanse of land which he named Maryland in honor of the Queen. Lord Baltimore, a devout Catholic, planned that Maryland would be a refuge for other English Catholics.

The Mississippi River was explored by the French 132 years after De Soto discovered it. Louis Joliet and Father Jacques Marquette were sent on the mission in 1673. They traveled 2500 miles paddling and carrying canoes all the way and preaching christianity. The French language and customs were deeply rooted in Canada, Louisiana, Florida, and many Great Lakes communities. Missionary work by devout priests, who accompanied most French explorers, established Catholic centers of activity. Residence in many French villages was restricted to Catholics. As early as 1749 French explorers in the Ohio country brought Jesuit priests along with them. These missionaries taught among the Indians and even set up a Catholic settlement near what is now Sandusky.