

The discovery and colonisation of america



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In 1492, America was discovered by Christopher Columbus. It had, however, already accidentally been discovered by Scandinavian Vikings about 500 years earlier. The Vikings were not alone when they discovered America. It was an unknown fact that Native Americans had come to America and inhabited it much earlier. Because this wasn't acknowledged, the Native Americans were never seen as the original discoverers.

In 986, Bjarni Herjolffson set out from Norway in an attempt to reach Iceland and eventually Greenland. Greenland was the land Bjarni's father, also an adventurer, had failed to completely colonize on his fleet, led by Erik the Red. Bjarni got lost on the way to Greenland because of fog and storms. Eventually, he did find the land he was searching for.

Bjarni did not discover America, but he was the first to make it out while he was at sea. Back in Norway, one of Erik the Red's sons, Leiff, became interested in the story Bjarni told. He decided he wanted to continue the adventure and find out which land Bjarni had seen on the horizon.

In search of the best landscape to land on, Leif Eriksson and his crew sailed along the eastern coast of America. After passing the Baffin Island and what is now Labrador, they picked the best environment. They named it The Wineland. Leiff Eriksson's crew inhabited the area, where they found grapevines and other products to bring home. They built houses, stayed for the winter and returned home with wine and food.

The Discovery of America: The Spanish and Portuguese

The first explorations and conquests were made by the Spanish and the Portuguese. In 1492, a Spanish expedition lead by Christopher Columbus

sailed to the continent America and introduced the New World to the Western World of that time. He began studying the civilizations that he had encountered : the friendly Native Americans. After this, European conquest, exploration, and Colonisation quickly followed and expanded.

After the 1494 Treaty of Tordesillas, approved of by the Pope, Spain and Portugal divided the entire non-European world between themselves, with a line drawn through South America. This first occurred along the Caribbean coasts on the islands of Hispaniola, Puerto Rico and Cuba, and beginning in the early 16th century, extended into both North and South America. In 1498, Columbus's third trip reached the South American coast.

With help from their powerful Indian allies, the Spanish rapidly conquered territory. As a result, they gained control of much of western South America, Central America and Mexico by the mid-16th century. Over this same period, Portugal colonized much of eastern South America, which is now Brazil.

The Colonisation of America

During the early and mid-sixteenth century, the English tended to view North America as a base for piracy and harassment of the Spanish(In the late 1560s a rebellious act broke out in the Netherlands, and the rebels were Protestant. British Queen Elizabeth aided these rebels. Spain, being Catholic, saw these rebels as a threat. Because of the fact that the British helped the Dutch Protestants, Spain became resentful towards England). By the end of the century, the English began to think more about North America as a place to colonize: as a market for English goods and a source of raw materials. The English claimed that New World Colonisation offered England many

advantages. Not only would it enrage Catholic Spain, it would supply England with raw materials and provide a market for finished products. America would also provide a place to send the English poor. America also satisfied more personal needs : rigorously religious English felt that they were not accepted in England, and America would create a more liberal environment.

Spain and England were hostile towards each other over trade and colonisation. On August 8th, 1588, the English defeated Spain in the Spanish Armada. England was now able to colonize North America.

English Joint Stock companies founded Jamestown in 1607. They failed because they were looking for gold, didn't farm, and drank contaminated water. They came during spring, which was deceiving. They didn't plan for winter. Many died the first winter. John Smith, who had been to America in the winter before, saved them. He said, " Work or Starve. " So, they started farming, and everybody was fed. The English Joint Stock company sent over 50 women to help repopulate Jamestown.

The Pilgrims weren't called Pilgrims until 150 years later. These strictly religious immigrants called themselves " Saints. " The Saints left England because they were not accepted for their religion. They went to the Netherlands, but they didn't want their children growing up being non-Englishmen. For this reason, they came to the New World.

Early other European Colonisations in North America included the French colonies of Acadia and Canada, the Swedish colony of New Sweden, and the Dutch New Netherland. Also Sweden participated in occupying North America.

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As the colonies started to grow, Britain decided on the policy of salutary neglect : the British American colonies were to be obedient towards Great Britain.

Conflicts between Britain and America

The Seven Years War resulted in the decisive turning point in British-colonial relations. The Treaty of Paris in 1763 criticized Britain's control of the seas and trade, as well as its sovereignty over much of the North American continent.

To fund this war, Britain, unable to borrow any more money from other countries, raised its taxes. This had a very heavy effect on the citizens. Also, bureaucracy arose in England in order for the government to get all the money they could.

Britain found it North America's responsibility to aid them in their war expenses. However, New world institutions of self-government and trade, used to the policy of salutary neglect, refused and rebelled against this demand. The war developed and Britain became more dependant on North America : Military supplies and an increased demand for goods contributed to the wealth of the North American Colonies.

The 7 years war had put Britain into great debt, so the Parliament insisted on a raise of taxes once again. The British government believed the colonies should pay their fair share to the nation's expenses.

Because the colonies were not represented in the Parliament, the North Americans found the raised taxes intolerable. The orthodox British view,

dating from the Glorious Revolution of 1688, was that Parliament was the highest authority in the empire, and so anything Parliament did was constitutional. In the colonies, however, the idea had developed that the British Constitution recognized certain fundamental rights that not even Parliament could violate.

The American Independence

The concept of American Independence began when many more colonists began to reject the authority of the Parliament, since they weren't represented, but were expected to pay taxes. They believed this violated their rights as Englishmen. The colonies petitioned King George III for intervention with the Parliament. To force him to do so, they boycotted British goods but kept their loyalty to the British crown. These acts were ignored. The colonists proceeded to create an army. Following acts to achieve the same goal were seen as rebellion and treachery. In 1776 the Colonies responded by declaring their independence

France's government secretly provided supplies to the revolutionaries. France eventually entered the war in 1778 along with the Spanish and Dutch. They threatened to invade Great Britain and put the English army, which wasn't so strong, to the test. Due to Great Britain's naval power, it was able to occupy coastal cities in America. The more rural areas, where most of the population lived however, were less easy to control. The French involvement proved to be beneficial when the French naval victory at Yorktown in 1781 to the surrender of a British army occurred. In 1783, the Treaty of Paris ended the war and recognized the sovereignty of the United States.

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