



The 500th Anniversary of the discovery of New York Harbor was marked in April 2024.

The credit for this achievement belongs to the Florentine Explorer Giovanni Da Verrazzano, who became the first European to sail into the harbor in 1524.

Verrazzano Day commemorates the discovery, and the celebration is held in the Italian town of Val di Greve in Chianti, Tuscany, where Verrazzano was born in 1485. The town was part of the Republic of Florence and the Verrazzano family owned a castle in Greve, located to the south of Florence in the center of the Chianti wine region.

Verrazzano sailed under the flag of France. He was commissioned by the king of France, to chart the eastern coast of North America, from Florida to Newfoundland. His main goal was to find a passage to Asia by way of the Pacific Ocean. In 1524 Verrazzano sailed into the reaches of New York Harbor. He was

the first documented European explorer to reach New York harbor. The Verrazzano Bridge in New York is named after him.

This was the period of the age of Discovery with explorations by Christopher Columbus, Giovanni Caboto (John Cabot), Amerigo Vespucci and Ferdinand Magellan and Giovanni Verrazzano.

It was only 27 years earlier, in 1497, that the first European landed in North America. He was Italian Giovanni Caboto (John Cabot) sailing in service of the king of England. Cabot claimed part of the North American continent for England.

When a community college history professor conducted a poll of her students asking the question "Who discovered New York harbor" students were given the choices of Giovanni da Verrazzano, John Cabot, Henry Hudson and Christopher Columbus. The overwhelming choice was Henry Hudson who garnered nearly 80% of the selections. In last place with just over five percent was Giovanni Verrazzano, who happens to be the correct answer.

Giovanni Verrazzano's 1524 arrival in New York harbor took place 85 years before Henry Hudson's 1609 expedition. Hudson's route was almost identical to that of Giovanni Caboto's 1497 voyage from England to Newfoundland.

Since the Middle Ages, maps created by explorers, most often from Venice and Florence and Genoa, were among the most highly treasured items sold to traders and explorers who plied the waters of the mediterranean and the coastal reaches of Europe and North Africa. This was especially true during the age of Discovery.

Verrazzano's maps as well as those created by other legendary Italian explorers: Christopher Columbus, Giovanni Caboto and Amerigo Vespucci, were highly sought after but readily available in Europe. Henry Hudson, Frances Drake, and

other 16th century explorers, like their Italian counterparts many years before, were trying to find a northwest passage to Asia. Hudson used Verrazzano's maps to chart his route to New York.

Verrazzano's legacy of discovery in the New World includes being the first explorer to map the entire coastline from Florida to New Brunswick.

A later Italian explorer, Alessandro Malaspina was the first to map the Pacific Coast of North America in 1789.

Even today, the Renaissance explorers, Verrazzano, Columbus, Caboto, Malaspina, and Vespucci, with a sextant in hand, could guide any ship to their desired location. They were the great Navigators and architects of the Age of Discovery.

Nota Bene:

EQUITY HISTORY BOOKS FAIL ITALIAN AMERICANS

On a recent episode of the popular game show Jeopardy in November 2024, the three contestants were asked the question of who America was named after. None could come up with the correct answer. Most Italian Americans know that it was named after the Italian explorer, Amerigo Vespucci.

The Renaissance Italian was the first to recognize a continent unknown to the rest of the world. A discovery which led to the Great Columbian Exchange of trade and culture between all the continents. The rest of the story is history.

American history books go light on the age of exploration. Even lighter is the coverage of European immigrants and white ethnicity. And non-existent is coverage of Italian