

On October 12, 1492, Columbus stepped on land and claimed for Spain an island he named San Salvador. The people he encountered were peaceful, their only weapons being small wooden spears.



2.2 Spain Starts an Empire

Marco Polo's book continued to be read over the next two centuries. This was a time of great change in Europe. The rediscovered writings of ancient Greeks and Romans inspired a new interest in learning and art. This period of lively new thinking has become known as the Renaissance, a word that means "rebirth."

During this time, the invention of the printing press made books, including Marco Polo's, more available. As Europeans learned about the world beyond Europe, they became eager to explore these far-off lands.

Columbus's Discoveries One of the people who was inspired by Marco Polo's writings was an Italian seaman named Christopher Columbus. After studying maps of the world, which at that time did not include the Americas, Columbus became convinced that the shortest route to the Indies lay to the west, across the Atlantic Ocean.

Columbus looked for someone who could pay for the ships and men he needed to test his idea. Eventually, he was able to convince King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain to sponsor a voyage.

In August 1492, Columbus sailed west with three small ships. After more than a month at sea, his sailors raised the cry of "Land!" The land turned out to be a small island in what we now call the Caribbean Sea.

Columbus was thrilled. In a later letter, he wrote, "I write this to tell you how in thirty-three days I sailed to the Indies with the fleet that the illustrious King and Queen . . . gave me, where I discovered a great many islands, inhabited by numberless people." Mistakenly believing that he had reached the Indies, Columbus called these people Indians.

In reality, the islanders were native people who spoke a language called Taino (TIE-no). The Taino lived in a peaceful fishing community. Never had they seen people like the ones who had suddenly appeared on their shores. Yet they were friendly and welcoming. Columbus wrote, "They are so unsuspecting and so generous with what they possess, that no one who had not seen it would believe it."

Columbus promptly claimed the island for Spain and named it San Salvador, which means “Holy Savior.” From there, he sailed on to other islands. Convinced that China lay nearby, Columbus sailed back to Spain for more ships and men.

Columbus made four trips to the Caribbean, finding more islands, as well as the continent of South America. Each time he discovered a new place, he claimed it for Spain. Columbus died still believing he had found Asia. Later explorers quickly realized that he had actually stumbled on a world previously unknown to Europe—the continents of North and South America.

Columbian Exchange the exchange of plants, animals, diseases, and people across the Atlantic Ocean between Europe and the Americas

slavery the treatment of people as property. People who are denied freedom in this way are said to be enslaved.

The Columbian Exchange The voyages of Columbus triggered a great transfer of people, plants, animals, and diseases back and forth across the Atlantic Ocean. This transfer, which still continues today, is called the **Columbian Exchange**. The Columbian Exchange brought valuable new crops such as corn, potatoes, and squash to Europe. These foods greatly improved the diet of the average European. Many Europeans also found new opportunities by crossing the Atlantic to settle in the Americas. They introduced crops such as wheat and rice to these lands, as well as **domesticated** animals like horses, cows, pigs, and sheep.

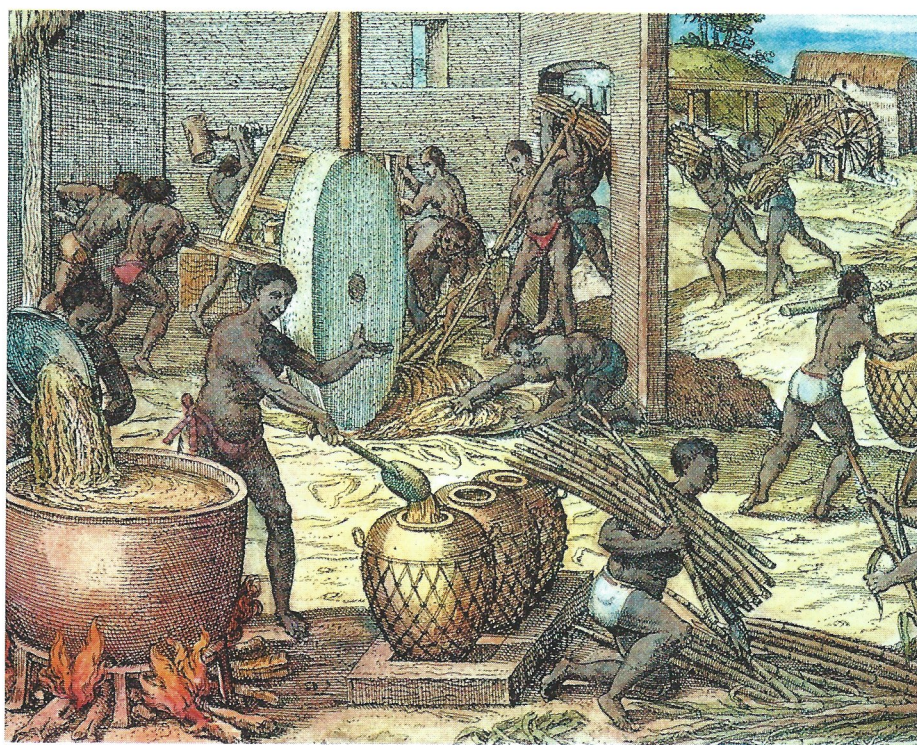
For American Indians, however, the exchange began badly. The Europeans who came to America brought with them germs that caused smallpox and other diseases deadly to Indians. Historians estimate that in some areas, European diseases wiped out 90 percent of the native population.

At first, Spanish settlers relied on the forced labor of American Indians to work their sugar plantations. When disease wiped out this labor force, the Spanish turned to African slaves to perform the backbreaking task of harvesting and refining sugarcane.

Slavery Comes to America

This high death rate contributed to the introduction of African slaves to the Americas. Many laborers were needed because some of the Spanish settlers in the Caribbean had started gold mines. Others raised sugar, a crop of great value in Europe. At first, the settlers forced Indians to work for them. But as native people began dying in great numbers from European diseases, the settlers looked for a new workforce. Before long, Africans were replacing Indians.

Slavery had existed around the world since ancient times. Often, people who were on the losing side in wars were enslaved, or treated as the property of their conquerors.



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conquered the native peoples of Mexico and Peru

In the 1500s, European slave traders began shipping slaves to the Caribbean for sale. Over the next three centuries, millions of Africans would be carried across the Atlantic in crowded, disease-infested ships. The terrible voyage lasted anywhere from weeks to months. Many died before it was over.

When the Africans arrived in the Americas, they were sold to their new masters at auctions. Many perished from disease and overwork. Those who survived faced a lifetime of forced labor as slaves.

Cortés Conquers Mexico After Columbus's voyages, Spain began sending soldiers called **conquistadors** (kahn-KEES-tah-dors), across the Atlantic. Their mission was to conquer a vast empire for Spain. The conquistadors hoped to get rich along the way.

In 1519, Hernán Cortés (ehr-NAHN kohr-TEHZ) arrived in Mexico with horses and 500 soldiers. There he heard about the powerful Aztecs who ruled much of Mexico. When Cortés and his men reached the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlán (tay-noch-teet-LAN), they could not believe their eyes. A beautiful city seemed to rise out of a sparkling lake. One Spaniard wrote, "Some of our soldiers even asked whether the things that we saw were not a dream."

The Aztecs were unsure what to make of the strangers. They had never seen men dressed in metal armor and riding horses. Some mistook Cortés for the great Aztec god Quetzalcoatl (kwet-zul-kuh-WAH-tul) and welcomed him as a hero. They would soon change their minds.

With the help of Indians who hated their Aztec rulers, and with the spread of smallpox—which killed large numbers of Aztec warriors—

Cortés, shown here with his translator, is trying to convince a group of Native Americans to help him conquer the Aztecs. With the help of Aztec enemies and smallpox, Cortés captured the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlán.



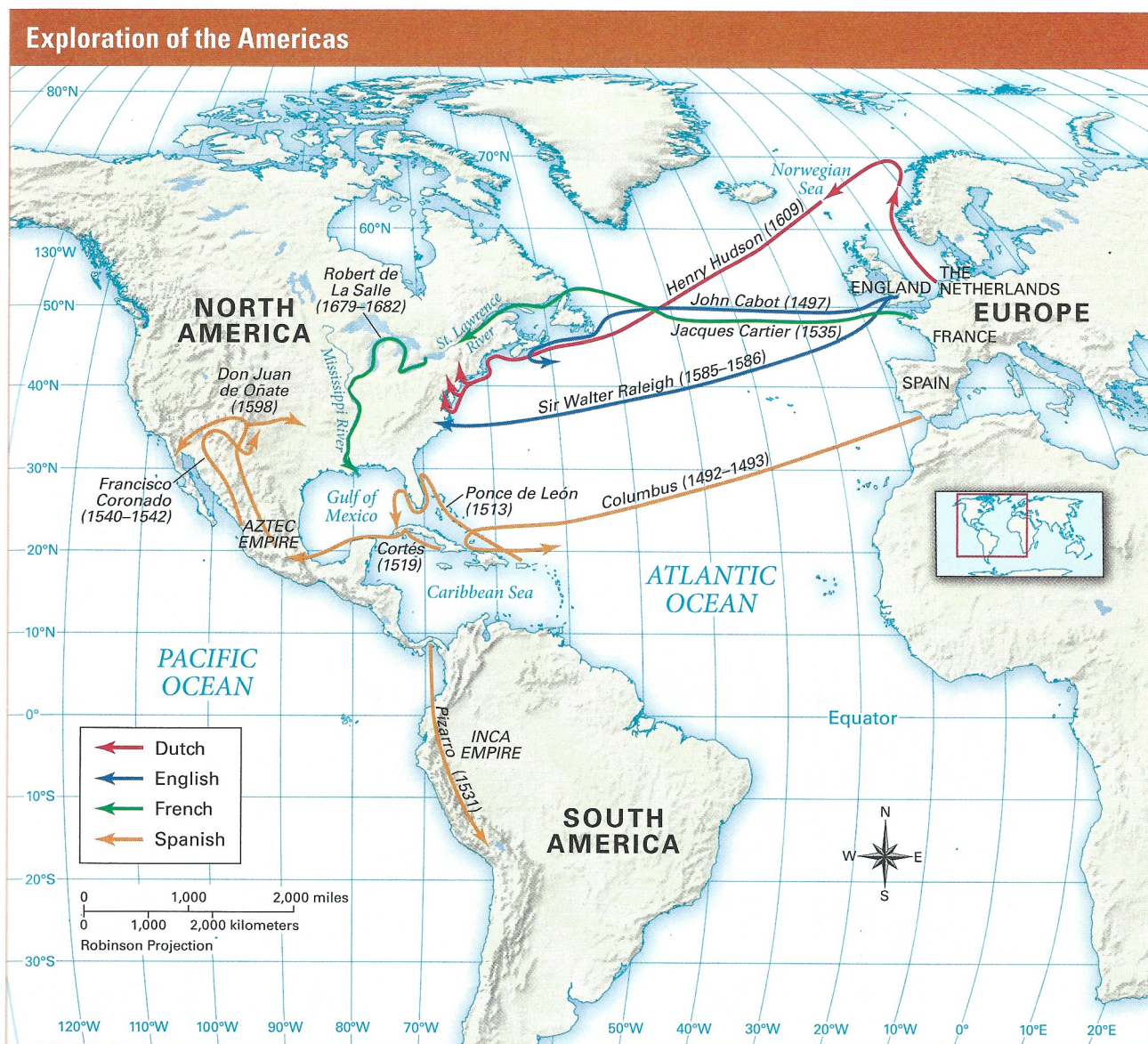
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Cortés conquered Tenochtitlán. The Spaniards pulled the city down and used its stones to build Mexico City, the capital of a new Spanish empire called New Spain.

Pizarro Conquers Peru Smallpox also helped another Spanish conquistador, Francisco Pizarro (fran-SIS-co pi-ZAR-oh), conquer an empire in South America. In 1532, Pizarro led an attack on the powerful Inca Empire in present-day Peru. Luckily for Pizarro, smallpox reached Peru many months before him, killing thousands of Incas and leaving their empire badly divided.

Pizarro captured the Inca ruler, Atahualpa (ah-tuh-WAHL-puh), but promised to release him in exchange for gold. To save their ruler, the Incas filled three rooms with gold and silver treasures. Pizarro killed Atahualpa anyway and took over the leaderless Inca empire. From there, Spanish conquistadors conquered most of South America.

Explorers from several European countries took various routes to the Americas. Voyages were long and difficult and often involved travel on both land and sea.



colony a new settlement or territory established and governed by a country in another land

In both Mexico and Peru, conquistadors found gold and silver riches beyond their wildest dreams. Hoping for still more, they pushed north into lands that are now part of the United States. Because these lands were located on the far edges of Spain's North American empire, they were known as the Spanish borderlands.

Florida One of the first Spanish expeditions into North America was led by a man named Juan Ponce de León (wahn PAHN-suh day lee-OHN). He had sailed with Columbus to the Caribbean and made his fortune by discovering gold on the island of Puerto Rico. Despite his wealth, Ponce de León couldn't stop thinking about Indian rumors of a "fountain of youth" that made old people young again. Restless for more adventure, he set off to find the truth about these tales of everlasting youth.

Ponce de León landed on a sunny peninsula of North America in April 1513. Because he had sighted this lush new land on Easter Sunday, he called it La Florida, meaning "flowery." (The name is short for "flowery Easter.") Eight years later, he returned to Florida with 200 men to establish a Spanish settlement, or **colony**. American Indians in the area used poisoned arrows to drive off the invaders. Instead of finding a fountain of youth, Ponce de León died from a poisoned arrow in his stomach.

Although Coronado never found the Seven Cities of Cibola, his explorations opened a new area for Spanish settlement.

The "Seven Cities of Cibola" Another legend sparked new Spanish expeditions into North America. An old European tale told of the "Seven Cities of Cibola" (SEE-buh-luh). These cities were said to be so fabulously rich that the streets and houses were decorated with gold and

jewels. When the Spanish heard Indians tell similar tales, they became convinced that the Seven Cities of Cibola were somewhere in North America.

Spanish explorers first looked for the seven cities in Florida and present-day Texas. They found plenty of adventure, but no golden cities. Then a Spanish priest named Marcos de Niza claimed to have seen a shimmering golden city in what is now New Mexico. He raced back to Mexico City with the news.



The Coronado Expedition In 1540, a famed conquistador named Francisco Vázquez de Coronado (VAHS-keh-z day kohr-uh-NAH-doh) set out from Mexico City with a large expedition and de Niza as his guide. Their goal was to find the legendary golden cities.

After traveling north more than 7,000 miles, the expedition found an American Indian *pueblo*. A pueblo is a village of apartment-like buildings made of stone and adobe rising four and five stories high. To de Niza, this might have looked like a golden city. But to Coronado, it was a “little, crowded village . . . crumpled all up together.” The enraged expedition leader sent the priest back to Mexico City.

The Coronado expedition continued north onto the Great Plains before giving up the search for golden cities. Disappointed, Coronado reported to Spain, “Everything is the reverse of what he said, except the name of the cities and the large stone houses . . . The Seven Cities are seven little villages.”

Settling the Borderlands As conquistadors explored new territories, they claimed the areas for Spain. By 1600, the Spanish borderlands extended west from Florida across present-day Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California.

At first, Spain did little to encourage settlement in these far-flung areas. But when rival European nations also began to show an interest in the land, small bands of soldiers were sent to these regions to protect the claims. The soldiers lived in walled forts called *presidios* (preh-SEE-dee-ohs).

In 1565, for example, a Spanish naval officer named Pedro Menéndez de Avilés (muh-NEN-dez day ah-vuh-LACE) was sent to Florida to protect the area from French explorers. Menéndez successfully drove the French out of their Florida base and built a fort on the peninsula’s Atlantic coast. Menéndez named the fort St. Augustine. Over the years, Spanish soldiers based at St. Augustine successfully defended the fort—and Spanish claims to Florida—from both French and English rivals. Today, St. Augustine is the oldest permanent settlement founded by Europeans in the United States.

St. Augustine was originally a *presidio*, or fort, built by the Spanish to protect their claim to Florida. It is the oldest permanent European settlement in the United States.





Missions were established to convert American Indians to Christianity and increase Spanish control over the land. Missions included a church and farmland on which the mission inhabitants produced almost all of what they needed to survive.

Catholic **missionaries** accompanied the soldiers to the borderlands. Missionaries are religious people, like priests, who try to persuade people to **convert** to their religion. The missionaries built settlements, called missions, where they taught local Indians new skills and preached the Christian faith. Each mission grew its own food and produced most of what the inhabitants of the missions needed to survive far from towns and trading centers.

Hardy bands of settlers also moved into the borderlands, where they established towns and farms. Juan de Oñate (own-YAH-tay), who had made a fortune mining silver in Mexico, led the settlement of New Mexico. In 1598, Oñate brought 400 settlers and

7,000 animals from Mexico to New Mexico. The long overland journey took a year and a half to complete.

At first, the Pueblo Indians of New Mexico welcomed the newcomers. Unfortunately, the Spanish repaid the Indians' kindness with cruelty. Indians were made to work for the settlers as slaves. Catholic priests ordered the whipping of Pueblo religious leaders who continued to practice their traditional rituals. Such treatment led the Pueblo people to rise up in **revolt** and drive the Spanish out. Twelve years would pass before Spanish settlers returned to New Mexico.

During the 1600s and 1700s, settlement of the Spanish borderlands proceeded slowly. But in time, the language, religion, and culture of Spain spread across much of the American Southwest.

Impact on American Indians The arrival of Spanish settlers had a great **impact** on the native peoples of the borderlands. The Pueblo people, for example, learned from the Spanish how to use new tools, grow new foods, and raise sheep for wool. In turn, the Indians introduced the Spanish to new **techniques** for growing crops in the desert soil.

From Florida to California, some American Indians converted to the Catholic faith. The converts often lived and worked in and around the missions, growing crops and helping to maintain the churches and other buildings. However, even converts often continued to practice their traditional religious rituals as well.

Unfortunately, wherever the Spanish settled, they brought with them diseases to which native peoples had no resistance. Smallpox, measles, and influenza often wiped out entire villages. Before Coronado's expedition, there had been more than 100 thriving Indian pueblos in New Mexico. By 1700, only 19 remained.

missionaries people who travel to a territory or community in order to make converts to their religion

2.4 New France

As Spanish colonies sent ships loaded with gold and silver home to Spain, all of Europe watched with envy. Every year, Spain seemed to become wealthier and more powerful. Other nations wanted their share of riches from the Americas. But none was strong enough to challenge Spain's American empire. Instead, they would have to seek their fortunes in areas not yet claimed by Spain.

Claiming New France In 1534, France sent Jacques Cartier (zhahk cah-tyay) to explore the Atlantic coastline of North America. His goal was to find a Northwest Passage, an all-water route through the North American continent to the Pacific Ocean. Such a passage would provide a shortcut for ships sailing west to Asia.

Cartier failed to find such a passage. But he did claim for France the land we know today as Canada. He later named this land New France. Cartier also discovered something almost as valuable as Spanish gold—beaver fur. Beaver hats were a fashionable item in Europe, and French hatmakers were willing to pay high prices for beaver pelts.

Settling New France The first settlement in New France was founded by Samuel de Champlain (duh sham-PLANE). In 1608, Champlain sailed up the St. Lawrence River and built a trading post he called Quebec (kwuh-BEK). For the next 150 years, Quebec would be a base for French explorers, soldiers, missionaries, traders, and fur trappers.

From Quebec, fur trappers pushed west in search of beaver. They called themselves **coureurs de bois** (kuh-RUR duh BWAH), which means “wood rangers” in French. Catholic missionaries followed the trappers, seeking converts among the native peoples.

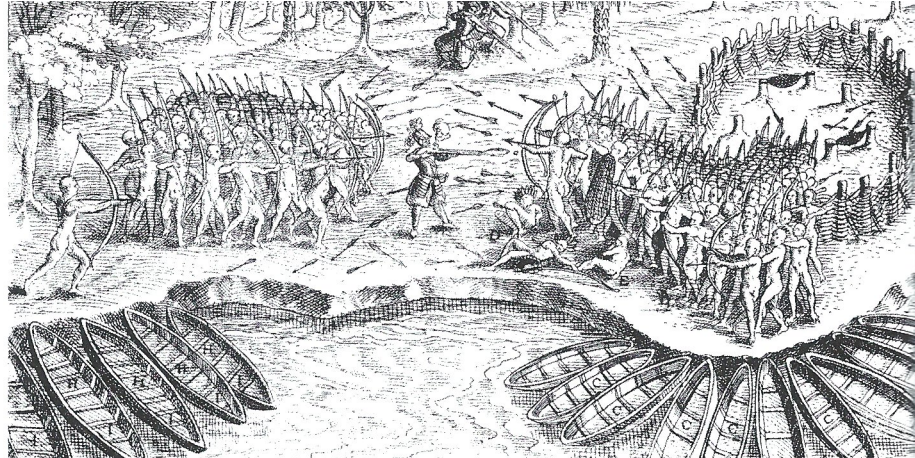
Like the Spanish borderlands, New France failed to attract large numbers of settlers. The harsh climate of New France discouraged French farmers from crossing the Atlantic. So did the colony's policy of granting the best land along the St. Lawrence River to French nobles who then planned to rent it out to farmers. The few settlers who did come soon got tired of renting and left their farms to search for furs.

coureurs de bois French fur trappers who learned many skills from the American Indians with whom they worked and lived

Coureurs de bois, or fur trappers, roamed New France in search of beaver pelts. They learned their trapping skills from the American Indians.



The French made friends with the American Indians in New France and often assisted them in battles with their enemies. Here, Samuel de Champlain, in the center, helps the Huron defeat the Iroquois.



American Indian Business Partners Because the French were more interested in furs than farming, they did not try to conquer the Indians and put them to work as the Spanish had done. Instead, the French made American Indians their business partners.

After founding Quebec, Champlain made friends with the nearby Indians, especially the Huron. Fur trappers lived in Huron villages, learned the Huron language, and married Huron women. From the Huron they learned how to survive for months in the wilderness. Unfortunately, the friendship exposed the Huron to European diseases, which swept through their villages and killed many of them.

Champlain even joined the Huron in an attack on their enemy, the Iroquois. He later wrote,

I marched some 20 paces in advance of the rest, until I was within about 30 paces of the enemy . . . When I saw them making a move to fire at us, I rested my musket against my cheek, and aimed directly at one of the three chiefs. With that same shot, two fell to the ground; and one of their men was so wounded that he died some time after . . . When our side saw this shot . . . they began to raise such loud cries that one could not have heard it thunder.

The astonished Iroquois, who had never seen or heard gunfire before, fled in terror. From that day on, the Iroquois would be the bitter enemies of the French.

Claiming Louisiana The search for furs led the French far inland from Quebec. In 1673, two explorers, Father Marquette (mahr-KET) and Louis Joliet (zhal-YAY), explored the great Mississippi River. They hoped this waterway would be the long-sought Northwest Passage. But they discovered that, instead of flowing west to the Pacific Ocean, the river flowed south toward the Gulf of Mexico. Disappointed, the explorers returned to New France.

Nine years later, Robert Cavelier de La Salle explored the entire length of the Mississippi River. On April 9, 1682, he planted a French flag at the mouth of the river and claimed everything west of the Mississippi River for France. La Salle named this vast area Louisiana for the French monarch, King Louis XIV.