**JOHN CABOT biography**

**Synopsis**

Explorer and navigator John Cabot was born Giovanni Caboto in Italy around 1450. By 1495, he had moved to Bristol, England, with his family. He made a voyage in 1497 on the ship Matthew and claimed land in Canada—mistaking it for Asia—for King Henry VII of England

**Early Years**

Italian sailor and explorer John Cabot was born Giovanni Caboto around 1450. In 1497, Cabot traveled by sea to Canada, where he made a claim to land for England, mistaking the North American land for Asia.

Cabot was the son of a spice merchant, Giulio Caboto, in Genoa. At age 11, his family moved to Venice, where he learned sailing and navigation from Italian seamen and merchants. In 1474, John Cabot married a girl named Mattea and eventually became the father of three sons: Ludovico, Sancto and Sebastiano. Sebastiano would later follow in his father’s footsteps, becoming an explorer in his own right

In 1476, Cabot officially became a Venetian citizen and began conducting trade in the eastern Mediterranean. Records indicate that he got into financial trouble and left Venice as a debtor in November 1488. During this time, Cabot became inspired by the discoveries of Bartolomeu Dias and Christopher Columbus. Like Columbus, Cabot believed that sailing west from Europe was the shorter route to Asia. Hearing of opportunities in England, Cabot traveled there and met with King Henry VII, who gave him a grant to "seeke out, discover, and finde" new lands for England

**North American Voyages**

In early May of 1497, Cabot left Bristol, England, on the *Matthew*, a fast and able ship weighing 50 tons, with a crew of 18 men. Cabot and his crew sailed west and north under Cabot's belief that the route to Asia would be shorter from northern Europe than Columbus's voyage along the trade winds. On June 24, 1497, 50 days into the voyage, Cabot landed on the east coast of North America, though the precise location of this landing is subject to controversy. Some historians believe that Cabot landed at Cape Breton Island or mainland Nova Scotia. Others believe he may have landed at Newfoundland, Labrador or even Maine.

Though the *Matthew*'s logs are incomplete, it is believed that John Cabot went ashore with a small party and claimed the land for the King of England. The ship sailed for England in July 1497 and arrived in Bristol on August 6, 1497. Cabot was soon rewarded with a pension of £20 and the gratitude of King Henry VII. In February 1498, he was given permission to make a new voyage to North America.

**Mysterious Ends**

In May 1498, John Cabot departed from Bristol with five ships and a crew of 300 men. The ships carried ample provisions and small samplings of cloth, lace points and other "trifles," suggesting an expectation of fostering trade with indigenous people. En route, one ship became disabled and sailed to Ireland, while the other four ships continued on. From this point, there is only speculation as to the fate of the voyage and John Cabot.

For many years, it was believed that the ships were lost at sea. More recently, however, documents have emerged that place Cabot in England in 1500, laying speculation that he and his crew actually survived the voyage. Historians have also found evidence to suggest that Cabot's expedition explored the eastern Canadian coast, and that a priest accompanying the expedition might have established a Christian settlement in Newfoundland.

What can be said with some certainty is that John Cabot claimed North America for England, setting the course for England's rise to power in the 16th and 17th centuries.

**[John Cabot biography](http://www.mrprokop.net/resources.cfm?subpage=165334)**

1. How did Cabot get interested in being an explorer?

2. Who were the people who inspired him?

3. What was the mission Henry VII of England gave him?

4. How long did it take Cabot to reach land in the West?

5. How was he rewarded for the discoveries he made?

6. How did his second trip differ from his first? (give specifics)

7.  What happened to Cabot on this voyage?

8.  What new theories propose a more detailed account of what happened to him