

Giovanni da Verrazzano Biography

Explorer (c. 1485–1528)

Giovanni da Verrazzano was an Italian explorer who charted the Atlantic coast of North America between the Carolinas and Newfoundland, including New York Harbor in 1524. The Verrazano–Narrows Bridge in New York was named after him.

Who Was Giovanni da Verrazzano?

Giovanni da Verrazzano was born around 1485 near Val di Greve, 30 miles south of Florence, Italy. Around 1506 or 1507, he began pursuing a maritime career, and in the 1520s, he was sent by King Francis I of France to explore the East Coast of North America for a route to the Pacific. He made landfall near what would be Cape Fear, North Carolina, in early March and headed north to explore. Verrazzano eventually discovered New York Harbor, which now has a bridge spanning it named for the explorer. After returning to Europe, Verrazzano made two more voyages to the Americas. On the second, in 1528, he was killed and eaten by the natives of one of the Lower Antilles, probably on Guadeloupe.

When Was Giovanni da Verrazzano Born?

Giovanni da Verrazzano was born around 1485 near Val di Greve, Italy.

Cause of Death

In March 1528, Verrazzano left France on his final voyage, yet again seeking the passage to India (after not having found it via a South American voyage the year before). The expedition, which included Verrazzano's brother, Girolamo, sailed along the coast of Florida before drifting into the Caribbean Sea. This turned out to be the last mistake the explorer would ever make. While sailing south of Jamaica, the crew spotted a heavily vegetated, seemingly unpopulated island, and Verrazzano dropped anchor to explore

it with a handful of crewmen. The group was soon attacked by a large assemblage of cannibalistic natives who killed them and ate them all as Girolamo and the rest of the crew watched from the main ship, unable to help.

When Did Giovanni da Verrazzano Start Exploring?

Verrazzano and Francis I met between 1522 and 1523, and Verrazzano convinced the king that he would be the right man to undertake exploratory voyages to the West on behalf of France; Francis I signed on.

Verrazzano prepared four ships, loaded with ammunition, cannons, lifeboats, and scientific equipment, with provisions to last eight months. The flagship was named *Delfina*, in honor of the King's firstborn daughter, and it set sail with

the *Normanda*, *Santa*

Maria and *Vittoria*. The *Santa*

Maria and *Vittoria* were lost in a storm at sea, while the *Delfina* and the *Normanda* found their way into battle with Spanish ships. In the end, only the *Delfina* was seaworthy, and it headed to the New World during the night of January 17, 1524. Like many explorers of the day, Verrazzano was ultimately seeking a passage to the Pacific Ocean and Asia, and he thought that by sailing along the northern coastline of the New World he would find a passageway to the West Coast of North America.

After 50 days at sea, the men aboard the *Delfina* sighted land — generally thought to be near what would become Cape Fear, North Carolina.

Verrazzano first steered his ship south, but upon reaching the northern tip of Florida, he turned and headed north, never losing sight of the coastline. On April 17, 1524, the *Delfina* entered the Bay of New York. He landed on the

southern tip of Manhattan, where he stayed until a storm pushed him toward Martha's Vineyard. He finally came to rest at what is known today as Newport, Rhode Island. Verrazzano and his men interacted with the local population there for two weeks, before returning to France in July 1524.

Early Years

Giovanni da Verrazzano was introduced to adventure and exploration at an early age. He first headed to Egypt and Syria, places that were considered mysterious and nearly impossible to reach at the time. Sometime between 1507 and 1508, Verrazzano went to France, where he met with King Francis I. He also came in contact with members of the French navy, and began to get a feel for the navy's missions and building rapport with the sailors and commanders.

During this period, [Christopher](#)

[Columbus](#), [Amerigo](#)

[Vespucci](#) and [Ferdinand](#)

[Magellan](#) were making names for themselves with their explorations on behalf of Spain and Portugal, and Francis I grew concerned as France fell behind in the exploration of the West. Reports were coming back of riches in the New World, and paired with the idea of expanding his empire overseas, Francis I began planning an expedition on behalf of his country.

Accomplishments

Giovanni da Verrazzano added greatly to the knowledge base of mapmakers in terms of the geography of the East Coast of North America. In honor of the famed explorer, the bridge spanning the Narrows between Brooklyn and Staten Island now bears his name. The Jamestown Verrazzano Bridge in Rhode Island is also named in honor of the explorer.

Samuel de Champlain Biography

Diplomat, Explorer (d. 1635)

Samuel de Champlain was a French explorer and cartographer best known for establishing and governing the settlements of New France and the city of Quebec.

Synopsis

French explorer Samuel de Champlain was born in 1574 in Brouage, France. He began exploring North America in 1603, establishing the city of Quebec in the northern colony of New France, and mapping the Atlantic coast and the Great Lakes, before settling into an administrative role as the de facto governor of New France in 1620. He died on December 25, 1635, in Quebec.

Early Life

Samuel de Champlain was born in 1574 (according to his baptismal certificate, which was discovered in 2012), in Brouage, a small port town in the province of Saintonge, on the western coast of France. Although Champlain wrote extensively of his voyages and later life, little is known of his childhood. He was likely born a Protestant, but converted to Catholicism as a young adult.

First Explorations

Champlain's earliest travels were with his uncle, and he ventured as far as Spain and the West Indies. From 1601 to 1603, he was a geographer for King Henry IV, and then joined François Gravé Du Pont's expedition to Canada in 1603. The group sailed up the St. Lawrence and Saguenay rivers and explored the Gaspé Peninsula, ultimately arriving in Montreal. Although Champlain had no official role or title on the expedition, he proved his mettle by making uncanny predictions about

the network of lakes and other geographic features of the region. Given his usefulness on Du Pont's voyage, the following year Champlain was chosen to be geographer on an expedition to Acadia led by Lieutenant-General Pierre Du Gua de Monts. They landed in May on the southeast coast of what is now Nova Scotia and Champlain was asked to choose a location for a temporary settlement. He explored the Bay of Fundy and St. John River area before selecting a small island in the St. Croix River. The team built a fort and spent the winter there. In the summer of 1605, the team sailed down the coast of New England as far south as Cape Cod. Although a few British explorers had navigated the terrain before, Champlain was the first to give a precise and detailed accounting of the region that would one day become Plymouth Rock.

Establishing Quebec

In 1608, Champlain was named lieutenant to de Monts, and they set off on another expedition up the St. Lawrence. When they arrived in June 1608, they constructed a fort in what is now Quebec City. Quebec would soon become the hub for French fur trading. The following summer, Champlain fought the first major battle against the Iroquois, cementing a hostile relationship that would last for more than a century.

In 1615, Champlain made a brave voyage into the interior of Canada accompanied by a tribe of Native Americans with whom he had good relations, the Hurons. Champlain and the French aided the Hurons in an attack on the

Iroquois, but they lost the battle and Champlain was hit in the knee with an arrow and unable to walk. He lived with the Hurons that winter, between the foot of Georgian Bay and Lake Simcoe. During his stay, he composed one of the earliest and most detailed accounts of Native American life.

Later Years and Death

When Champlain returned to France, he found himself embroiled in lawsuits and was unable to return to Quebec. He spent this time writing the stories of his voyages, complete with maps and illustrations. When he was reinstated as lieutenant, he returned to Canada with his wife, who was 30 years his junior. In 1627, Louis XIII's chief minister, Cardinal de Richelieu, formed the Company of 100 Associates to rule New France and placed Champlain in charge.

Things didn't go smoothly for Champlain for long. Eager to capitalize on the profitable fur trade in the region, Charles I of England commissioned an expedition under David Kirke to displace the French. They attacked the fort and seized supply ships, cutting off necessities to the colony. Champlain surrendered on July 19, 1629 and returned to France.

Champlain spent some time writing about his travels until, in 1632, the British and the French signed the Treaty of Saint-Germain-en-Laye, returning Quebec to the French. Champlain returned to be its governor. By this time, however, his health was failing and he was forced to retire in 1633. He died in Quebec on Christmas Day in 1635.