

The background of the cover features a stylized American flag. The top left corner shows the blue field with white stars, and the bottom left corner shows the red and white stripes. The right side of the cover is a solid light gray.

**D. H. MONTGOMERY**

**THE AMERICAN  
HISTORY FOR  
BEGINNERS**

**David Henry Montgomery**

# **The American History for Beginners**

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# CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS

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(1436-1506).



COLUMBUS AS A BOY.

(From the statue in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.)

1. Birth and boyhood of Columbus.—Christopher Columbus, the discoverer of America, was born at Genoa, a seaport of Italy, more than four hundred and fifty years ago. His father was a wool-comber. Christopher did not care to learn that trade, but wanted to become a sailor. Seeing the boy's strong liking for the sea, his father sent him to a school where he could learn geography, map-drawing, and

whatever else might help him to become some day commander of a vessel.

2. Columbus becomes a sailor.—When he was fourteen Columbus went to sea. In those days the Mediterranean Sea swarmed with war-ships and pirates. Every sailor, no matter if he was but a boy, had to stand ready to fight his way from port to port.

In this exciting life, full of adventure and of danger, Columbus grew to manhood. The rough experiences he then had did much toward making him the brave, determined captain and explorer that he afterwards became.

3. Columbus has a sea-fight; he goes to Lisbon.—According to some accounts, Columbus once had a desperate battle with a vessel off the coast of Portugal. The fight lasted, it is said, all day. At length both vessels were found to be on fire. Columbus jumped from his blazing ship into the sea, and catching hold of a floating oar, managed, with its help, to swim to the shore, about six miles away.

He then went to the port of Lisbon. There he married the daughter of a famous sea-captain. For a long time after his marriage Columbus earned his living partly by drawing maps, which he sold to commanders of vessels visiting Lisbon, and partly by making voyages to Africa, Iceland, and other countries.



The light parts of this map show how much of the world was then well-known; the white crosses show those countries of Eastern Asia of which something was known.

4. What men then knew about the world.—The maps which Columbus made and sold were very different from those we now have. At that time not half of the world had been discovered. Europe, Asia, and a small part of Africa were the chief countries known. The maps of Columbus may have shown the earth shaped like a ball, but he supposed it to be much smaller than it really is. No one then had sailed round the globe. No one then knew what lands lay west of the broad Atlantic; for this reason we should look in vain, on one of the maps drawn by Columbus, for the great continents of North and South America or for Australia or the Pacific Ocean.

5. The plan of Columbus for reaching the Indies by sailing west.—While living in Lisbon, Columbus made up his mind to try to do what no other man, at that time, dared attempt,—that was to cross the Atlantic Ocean. He thought that by doing so he could get directly to Asia and the Indies, which, he believed, were opposite Portugal and Spain. If successful, he could open up a very profitable trade with the rich countries of the East, from which spices, drugs, and silk were brought to Europe. The people of Europe could not reach those countries directly by ships, because they had not then found their way round the southern point of Africa.



This map shows how Columbus (not knowing that America lay in the way) hoped to reach Asia and the East Indies by sailing west.

6. Columbus tries to get help in carrying out his plans.—Columbus was too poor to fit out even a single ship to undertake such a voyage as he had planned. He asked the king of Portugal to furnish some money or vessels toward it,

but he received no encouragement. At length he determined to go to Spain and see if he could get help there.

On the southern coast of Spain there is a small port named Palos. Within sight of the village of Palos, and also within plain sight of the ocean, there was a convent,—which is still standing,—called the Convent of Saint Mary.

One morning a tall, fine-looking man, leading a little boy by the hand, knocked at the door of this convent and begged for a piece of bread and a cup of water for the child. The man was Columbus,—whose wife was now dead,—and the boy was his son.

It chanced that the guardian of the convent noticed Columbus standing at the door. He liked his appearance, and coming up, began to talk with him. Columbus frankly told him what he was trying to do. The guardian of the convent listened with great interest; then he gave him a letter to a friend who he thought would help him to lay his plans before Ferdinand and Isabella, the king and queen of Spain.

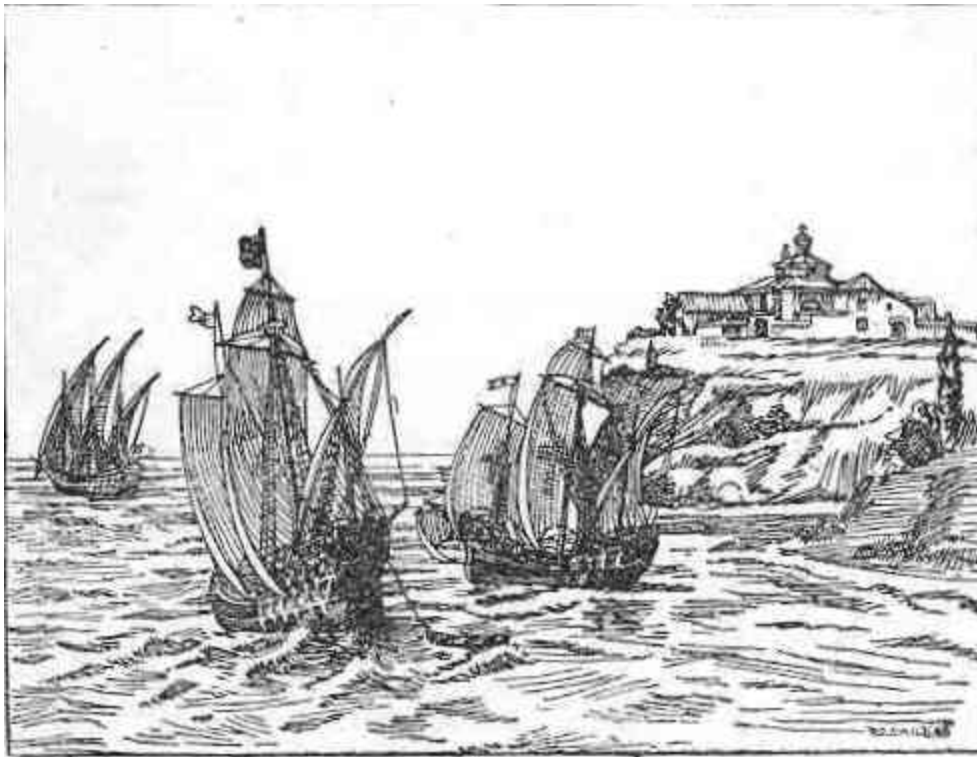
7. Columbus gets help for his great voyage.—Columbus left his son at the convent, and set forward on his journey full of bright hopes. But Ferdinand and Isabella could not then see him; and after waiting a long time, the traveller was told that he might go before a number of learned men and tell them about his proposed voyage across the Atlantic.

After hearing what Columbus had to say, these men thought that it would be foolish to spend money in trying to reach the other side of the ocean.

People who heard what this captain from Lisbon wanted to do began to think that he had lost his reason, and the



boys in the streets laughed at him and called him crazy. Columbus waited for help seven years; he then made up his mind that he would wait no longer. Just as he was about leaving Spain, Queen Isabella, who had always felt interested in the brave sailor, resolved to aid him. Two rich sea-captains who lived in Palos also decided to take part in the voyage. With the assistance which Columbus now got he was able to fit out three small vessels. He went in the largest of the vessels—the only one which had an entire deck—as admiral or commander of the fleet.



COLUMBUS LEAVING PALOS, AUGUST 3D, 1492.

8. Columbus sails.—Early on Friday morning, August 3d, 1492, Columbus started from Palos to attempt to cross that ocean which men then called the "Sea of Darkness,"—a

name which showed how little they knew of it, and how much they dreaded it.

We may be pretty sure that the guardian of the convent was one of those who watched the sailing of the little fleet. From the upper windows of the convent he could plainly see the vessels as they left the harbor of Palos.

9. What happened on the first part of the voyage.—Columbus sailed first for the Canary Islands, because from there it would be a straight line, as he thought, across to Japan and Asia. He was obliged to stop at the Canaries more than three weeks, in order to make a new rudder for one of his vessels and to alter the sails of another.

At length all was ready, and he again set out on his voyage toward the west. When the sailors got so far out on the ocean that they could no longer see any of the islands, they were overcome with fear. They made up their minds that they should never be able to get back to Palos again. They were rough men, used to the sea, but now they bowed down their heads and cried like children. Columbus had hard work to quiet their fears and to encourage them to go forward with the voyage which they already wanted to give up.

10. What happened after they had been at sea many days.—For more than thirty days the three ships kept on their way toward the west. To the crew every day seemed a year. From sunrise to sunset nothing was to be seen but water and sky. At last the men began to think that they were sailing on an ocean which had no end. They whispered among themselves that Columbus had gone mad, and that if they kept on with him in command they should all be lost.

Twice, indeed, there was a joyful cry of Land! Land! but when they got nearer they saw that what they had thought was land was nothing but banks of clouds. Then some of the sailors said, Let us go to the admiral and tell him that we must turn back. What if he will not listen to us? asked others; Then we will throw him overboard and say when we reach Palos that he fell into the sea and was drowned.

But when the crew went to Columbus and told him that they would go no further, he sternly ordered them to their work, declaring that whatever might happen, he would not now give up the voyage.

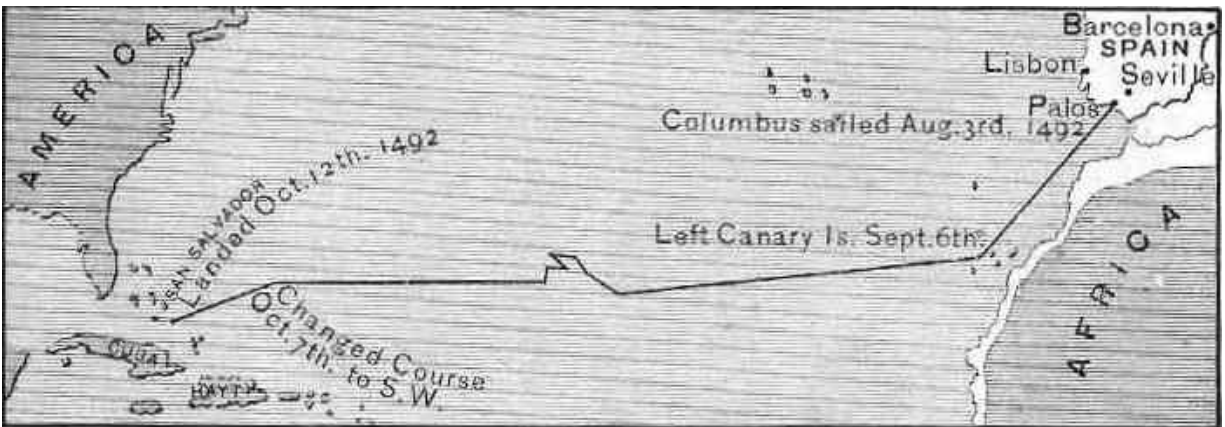
11. Signs of land.—The very next day such certain signs of land were seen that the most faint-hearted took courage. The men had already noticed great flocks of land-birds flying toward the west, as if to guide them. Now some of the men on one vessel saw a branch of a thorn-bush float by. It was plain that it had not long been broken off from the bush, and it was full of red berries.

But one of the crew on the other vessel found something better even than the thorn-branch; for he drew out of the water a carved walking-stick. Every one saw that such a stick must have been cut and carved by human hands. These two signs could not be doubted. The men now felt sure that they were approaching the shore, and what was more, that there were people living in that strange country.

12. Discovery of land.—That evening Columbus begged his crew to keep a sharp lookout, and he promised a velvet coat to the one who should first see land. All was now excitement; and no man closed his eyes in sleep that night.

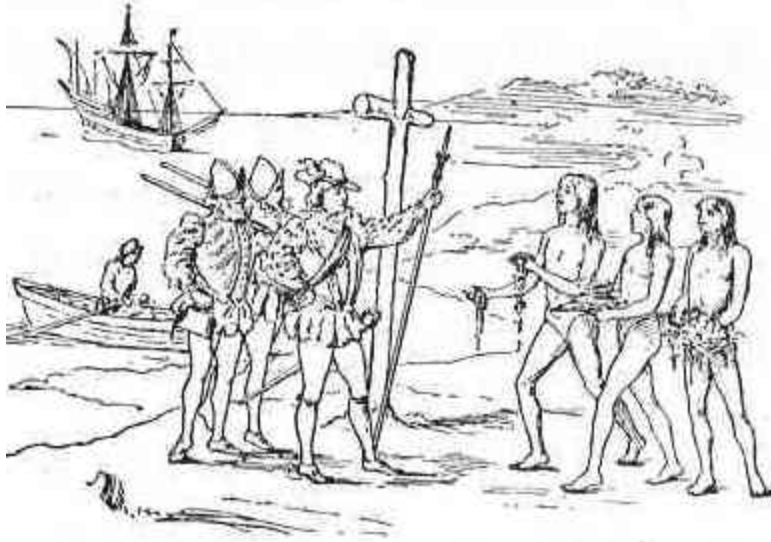
Columbus himself stood on a high part of his ship, looking steadily toward the west. About ten o'clock he saw a moving light; it seemed like a torch carried in a man's hand. He called to a companion and asked him if he could see anything of the kind; yes, he, too, plainly saw the moving light, but presently it disappeared.

Two hours after midnight a cannon was fired from the foremost vessel. It was the glad signal that the long-looked-for land was actually in sight. There it lay directly ahead, about six miles away.



Map showing the direction in which Columbus sailed on his great voyage across the ocean.

Then Columbus gave the order to furl sails, and the three vessels came to a stop and waited for the dawn. When the sun rose on Friday, October 12th, 1492, Columbus saw a beautiful island with many trees growing on it. That was his first sight of the New World.



LANDING OF COLUMBUS.

13. Columbus lands on the island and names it; who lived on the island.—Attended by the captains of the other two vessels, and by their crews, Columbus set out in a boat for the island. When they landed, all fell on their knees, kissed the ground for joy, and gave thanks to God. Columbus named the island San Salvador and took possession of it, by right of discovery, for the king and queen of Spain.

He found that it was inhabited by a copper-colored people who spoke a language he could not understand. These people had never seen a ship or a white man before. They wore no clothing, but painted their bodies with bright colors. The Spaniards made them presents of strings of glass beads and red caps. In return they gave the Spaniards skeins of cotton yarn, tame parrots, and small ornaments of gold.

After staying here a short time Columbus set sail toward the south, in search of more land and in the hope of finding out where these people got their gold.

14. Columbus names the group of islands and their people.—As Columbus sailed on, he saw many islands in every direction. He thought that they must be a part of the Indies which he was seeking. Since he had reached them by coming west from Spain, he called them the West Indies, and to the red men who lived on them he gave the name of Indians.

15. Columbus discovers two very large islands; his vessel is wrecked, and he returns to Spain in another.—In the course of the next six weeks Columbus discovered the island of Cuba. At first he thought that it must be Japan, but afterward he came to the conclusion that it was not an island at all, but part of the mainland of Asia.

Next, he came to the island of Hayti, or San Domingo. Here his ship was wrecked. He took the timber of the wreck and built a fort on the shore. Leaving about forty of his crew in this fort, Columbus set sail for Palos in one of the two remaining vessels.

16. Columbus arrives at Palos; joy of the people; how Ferdinand and Isabella received him.—When the vessel of Columbus was seen entering the harbor of Palos, the whole village was wild with excitement. More than seven months had gone by since he sailed away from that port, and as nothing had been heard from him, many supposed that the vessels and all on board were lost. Now that they saw their friends and neighbors coming back, all was joy. The bells of the churches rang a merry peal of welcome; the people thronged the streets, shouting to each other that Columbus, the great navigator, had crossed the "Sea of Darkness" and had returned in safety.



COLUMBUS RECEIVED BY THE KING AND QUEEN OF SPAIN.

The king and queen were then in the city of Barcelona, a long distance from Palos. To that city Columbus now went. He entered it on horseback, attended by the proudest and richest noblemen of Spain. He brought with him six Indians from the West Indies. They were gaily painted and wore bright feathers in their hair. Then a number of men followed, carrying rare birds and plants, with gold and silver ornaments, all found in the New World. These were presents for the king and queen. Ferdinand and Isabella received Columbus with great honor. When he had told them the story of his wonderful voyage, they sank on their knees and gave praise to God; all who were present followed their example.

17. The last voyages of Columbus.—Columbus made three more voyages across the Atlantic. He discovered more islands near the coast of America, and he touched the coast of Central America and of South America, but that was all.

He never set foot on any part of what is now the United States, and he always thought that the land he had reached was part of Asia. He had found a new world, but he did not know it: all that he knew was how to get to it and how to show others the way.

The light parts of this map show how much of America Columbus discovered. (The long island is Cuba; the large one to the right is San Domingo.)

18. Columbus in his old age.—The last days of this great man were very sorrowful. The king was disappointed because he brought back no gold to amount to anything. The Spanish governor of San Domingo hated Columbus, and when he landed at that island on one of his voyages, he arrested him and sent him back to Spain in chains. He was at once set at liberty; but he could not forget the insult. He kept the chains hanging on the wall of his room, and asked to have them buried with him.

Columbus was now an old man; his health was broken, he was poor, in debt, and without a home. Once he wrote to the king and queen, saying, "I have not a hair upon me that is not gray, my body is weak, and all that was left to me ... has been taken away and sold, even to the coat which I wore."

Not long after he had come back to Spain to stay, the queen died. Then Columbus felt that he had lost his best friend. He gave up hope, and said, "I have done all that I could do: I leave the rest to God."





### MONUMENT TO COLUMBUS.

(In the Cathedral of Havana, Cuba.)

19. His death and burial.—Columbus died full of disappointment and sorrow—perhaps it would not be too much to say that he died of a broken heart.

He was at first buried in Spain; then his body was taken up and carried to San Domingo, where he had wished to be buried. Whether it rests there to-day, or whether it was carried to Havana and deposited in the cathedral or great church of that city, no one can positively say. But wherever the grave of the great sailor may be, his memory will live in every heart capable of respecting a brave man; for he first dared to cross the "Sea of Darkness," and he discovered America.

20. Summary.—In 1492 Christopher Columbus set sail from Spain to find a direct way across the Atlantic to Asia and the Indies. He did not get to Asia; but he did better; he discovered America. He died thinking that the new lands he had found were part of Asia; but by his daring voyage he first showed the people of Europe how to get to the New World.

When and where was Columbus born? What did he do when he was fourteen? What about his sea-fight? What

did he do in Lisbon? How much of the world was then known? How did Columbus think he could reach Asia and the Indies? Why did he want to go there? What did he try to do in Portugal? Why did he go to Spain? Where did he first go in Spain? How did Columbus get help at last? When did he sail? What happened on the first part of the voyage? What happened after that? What is said about signs of land? What about the discovery of land? What did Columbus name the island? What did he find on it? What is said of other islands? What is said of the return of Columbus to Spain? What about the last voyages of Columbus? Did he ever land on any part of what is now the United States? What about his old age? What is said of his death and burial?

# JOHN CABOT

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(Lived in England from 1472-1498).



Map showing the city of Venice, Italy, where John Cabot had lived.

21. John Cabot discovers the *continent* of North America.— At the time that Columbus set out on his first voyage across the Atlantic in 1492, John Cabot, an Italian merchant, was living in the city of Bristol, England. When the news reached that city that Columbus had discovered the West Indies, Cabot begged Henry the Seventh, king of England, to let him see if he could not find a shorter way to the Indies than that of Columbus. The king gave his consent, and in the spring of 1497 John Cabot, with his son Sebastian, who seems to have been born in Bristol, sailed from that port. They headed their vessels toward the northwest; by going in that direction they hoped to get to those parts of Asia and the Spice Islands which were known to Europe, and which Columbus had failed to reach.



Early one bright morning toward the last of June, 1497, they saw land in the west. It was probably Cape Breton Island, a part of Nova Scotia. John Cabot named it "The Land First Seen." Up to this time Columbus had discovered nothing but the West India Islands, but John Cabot now saw the continent of North America; no civilized man had ever seen it before. There it lay, a great, lonely land, shaggy with forests, with not a house or a human being in sight.



22. John Cabot takes possession of the country for the king of England.—Cabot went on shore with his son and some of his crew. In the vast, silent wilderness they set up a large cross. Near to it they planted two flag-poles, and hoisted the English flag on one and the flag of Venice, the city where John Cabot had lived in Italy, on the other. Then they took possession of the land for Henry the Seventh. It was in this way that the English came to consider that the eastern coast of North America was their property, although they did not begin to make settlements here until nearly a hundred years later.

23. John Cabot and his son return to Bristol.—After sailing about the Gulf of St. Lawrence without finding the passage through to Asia for which they were looking, the voyagers returned to England.

The king was so pleased with what John Cabot had discovered that he made him a handsome present; and when the captain, richly dressed in silk, appeared in the street, the people of Bristol would "run after him like mad" and hurrah for the "Great Admiral," as they called him.

24. What the Cabots carried back to England from America.—The Cabots carried back to England some Indian traps for catching game and perhaps some wild turkeys—an American bird the English had then never seen, but whose acquaintance they were not sorry to make. They also carried over the rib of a whale which they had found on the beach in Nova Scotia.

Near where the Cabots probably lived in Bristol there is a famous old church. It was built long before the discovery of America, and Queen Elizabeth said that it was the most

beautiful building of its kind in all England. In that church hangs the rib of a whale. It is believed to be the one the Cabots brought home with them. It reminds all who see it of that voyage in 1497 by which England got possession of a very large part of the continent of North America.



Map showing how much of the continent of North America was discovered by the Cabots.

25. The second voyage of the Cabots; how they sailed along the eastern shores of North America.—About a year later the Cabots set out on a second voyage to the west. They reached the gloomy cliffs of Labrador on the northeastern coast of America, and they passed many immense icebergs. They saw numbers of Indians dressed in the skins of wild beasts, and polar bears white as snow.

These bears were great swimmers, and would dive into the sea and come up with a large fish in their claws. As it did not look to the Cabots as if the polar bears and the icebergs would guide them to the warm countries of Asia and the Spice Islands, they turned about and went south. They sailed along what is now the eastern coast of the United States for a very long distance; but not finding any passage through to the countries they were seeking, they returned to England.

The English now began to see what an immense extent of land they had found beyond the Atlantic. They could not tell, however, whether it was a continent by itself or a part of Asia. Like everybody in Europe, they called it the New World, but all that name really meant then was simply the New Lands across the sea.

26. How the New World came to be called America.—But not many years after this the New World received the name by which we now call it. An Italian navigator whose first name was Amerigo made a voyage to it after it had been discovered by Columbus and the Cabots. He wrote an account of what he saw, and as this was the first printed description of the continent, it was named from him, AMERICA.

27. Summary.—In 1497 John Cabot and his son, from Bristol, England, discovered the mainland or continent of North America, and took possession of it for England. The next year they came over and sailed along the eastern coast of what is now the United States.

An Italian whose first name was Amerigo visited the New World afterward and wrote the first account of the mainland

which was printed. For this reason the whole continent was named after him, AMERICA.

Who was John Cabot? What did he try to do? Who sailed with him? What land did they see? Had Columbus ever seen it? What did Cabot do when he went on shore? What is said of his return to Bristol? What did the Cabots carry back to England? What is said about the second voyage of the Cabots? How did the New World come to be called America?



# PONCE DE LEON, BALBOA, AND DE SOTO

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(Period of Discovery, 1513-1542).

28. The magic fountain; Ponce de Leon discovers Florida; Balboa discovers the Pacific Ocean.—The Indians on the West India Islands believed that there was a wonderful fountain in a land to the west of them. They said that if an old man should bathe in its waters, they would make him a boy again. Ponce de Leon, a Spanish soldier who was getting gray and wrinkled, set out to find this magic fountain, for he thought that there was more fun in being a boy than in growing old.

He did not find the fountain, and so his hair grew grayer than ever and his wrinkles grew deeper. But in 1513 he discovered a land bright with flowers, which he named Florida. He took possession of it for Spain.

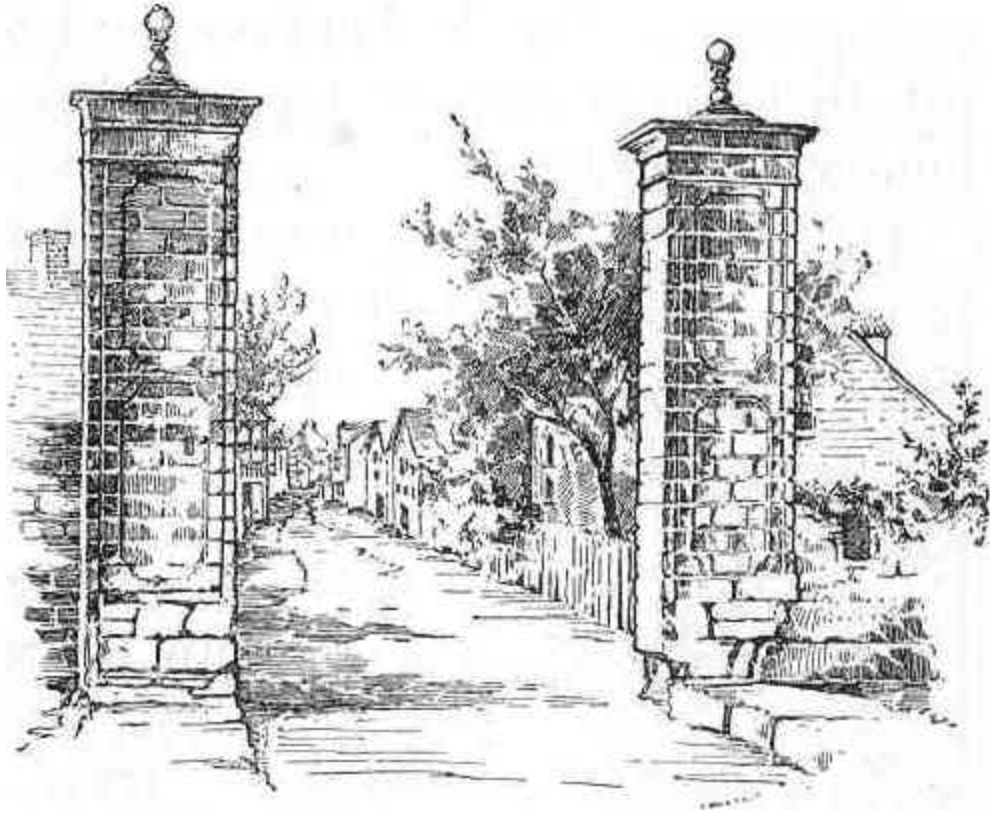
The same year another Spaniard, named Balboa, set out to explore the Isthmus of Panama. One day he climbed to the top of a very high hill, and discovered that vast ocean—the greatest of all the oceans of the globe—which we call the Pacific.

29. De Soto discovers the Mississippi.—Long after Balboa and Ponce de Leon were dead, a Spaniard named De Soto landed in Florida and marched through the country in search of gold mines.

In the course of his long and weary wanderings, he came to a river more than a mile across. The Indians told him it was the Mississippi, or the Great River. In discovering it, De Soto had found the largest river in North America; he had also found his own grave, for he died shortly after, and was secretly buried at midnight in its muddy waters.



BURIAL OF DE SOTO.



OLD SPANISH GATEWAY AT ST. AUGUSTINE.

(Called the "City Gate.")

30. The Spaniards build St. Augustine; we buy Florida in 1819.—More than twenty years after the burial of De Soto, a Spanish soldier named Menendez went to Florida and built a fort on the eastern coast. This was in 1565. The fort became the centre of a settlement named St. Augustine. It is the oldest city built by white men, not only in what is now the United States, but in all North America.

In 1819, or more than two hundred and fifty years after St. Augustine was begun, Spain sold Florida to the United States.

31. Summary.—Ponce de Leon discovered Florida; another Spaniard, named Balboa, discovered the Pacific; still another, named De Soto, discovered the Mississippi. In 1565

the Spaniards began to build St. Augustine in Florida. It is the oldest city built by white men in the United States or in all North America.

What is said about a magic fountain? What did Ponce De Leon do? What is said about Balboa? What about De Soto? What did Menendez do in Florida? What is said of St. Augustine?

# SIR WALTER RALEIGH

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(1552-1618).

32. Walter Raleigh sends two ships to America; how the Indians received the Englishmen.—Although John Cabot discovered the continent of North America in 1497 and took possession of the land for the English, yet the English themselves did not try to settle here until nearly a hundred years later.



Then (1584) a young man named Walter Raleigh, who was a great favorite of Queen Elizabeth's, sent out two ships to America. The captains of these vessels landed on Roanoke Island, on the coast of what is now the state of North Carolina. They found the island covered with tall red

cedars and with vines thick with clusters of wild grapes. The Indians called this place the "Good Land." They were pleased to see the Englishmen, and they invited them to a great feast of roast turkey, venison, melons, and nuts.

33. Queen Elizabeth names the country Virginia; first settlers; what they sent Walter Raleigh.—When the two captains returned to England, Queen Elizabeth—the "Virgin Queen," as she was called—was delighted with what she heard of the "Good Land." She named it Virginia in honor of herself. She also gave Raleigh a title of honor. From that time he was no longer called plain Walter Raleigh or Mr. Raleigh, but Sir Walter Raleigh.



THE FIRST PIPE OF TOBACCO.

(Raleigh's servant thought his master was on fire.)

Sir Walter now (1585) shipped over emigrants to settle in Virginia. They sent back to him as a present two famous American plants—one called Tobacco, the other the Potato. The queen had given Sir Walter a fine estate in Ireland, and