

ITALIAN HERITAGE & CULTURE
COMMITTEE OF NEW YORK, INC.

AMERIGO TO AMERICA



Amerigo Vespucci 1454-1512

The Legacy of Italians in the Americas

Amerigo Vespucci was an Italian financier, navigator, explorer and cartographer. Vespucci was the first to realize that the land to which he had voyaged westward was a separate land, *Mundus Novus*, a New World.

- **1454 March 9** Amerigo Vespucci born in Florence, Italy.
- **1483** Appointed as a steward at the commercial House of Medici.
- **1491** Sent to Seville, Spain, representing the business interests of the Medici family and becomes interested in cartography and exploration.
- **1495-1496** As executor of the estate of Giannotto Berardi, an Italian merchant, Vespucci fulfills Berardi's outstanding contract with the King of Spain by providing twelve vessels for the Indies. Vespucci continues as a provision contractor for Indies expeditions and secures beef supplies for at least one, possibly two, of Columbus's voyages.
- **1497 May 10** First voyage, under auspices of King Ferdinand of Spain, guided by the mariner's astrolabe, arrives at South American coast, but thought it was Asia.
- **1498 October 15** Vespucci returns to Spain.
- **1499 May 16** Second voyage departs from Cape Verde, accompanied by Fleet Commander, Alonzo de Ojeda, reaching Guyana and discovering St. Augustine and the Amazon River.
- **1500 September** Vespucci returns from his second voyage and reports to Medici family.
- **1501 May 14** Third voyage, from Lisbon, under the auspices of the King of Portugal, led by Portuguese explorer, Goncalo Coelho. Maps the stars Alpha and Beta Centauri, as well as the constellation Crux, the Southern Cross. **Realizes that this land mass is *Mundus Novus*, the New World, not Asia.**
- **1502** Returns from third voyage to Lisbon, Portu-

gal, and publishes *Mundus Novus*, a Latin translation of a letter sent from Lisbon to Lorenzo de' Medici about the third voyage.

- **1503** Fourth voyage (which is disputed), Vespucci discovers Bahia and the Island of South Georgia.
- **1504** Returns to Lisbon and publishes *Lettera al Soderini*, a letter in Italian addressed to Piero Soderini, Florentine statesman, about the four voyages made by Vespucci.
- **1505** Becomes citizen of Spain and marries Maria Cerezo.
- **1506** Columbus dies still believing that he had reached Asia.
- **1507** First time the Latin word "America" is used to represent the New World on a map, printed on the image of the future South America, by renowned German map maker Martin Waldseemuller.
- **1508** Becomes Spain's *Piloto Mayor*, Chief Pilot.
- **1512 February 22** Dies of malaria in Seville, Spain.
- **1538** Mercator, renowned cartographer, clearly depicts America on both the North and South Hemispheres of the New World.

LEGACY OF ITALIANS IN THE AMERICAS TIMELINE:

1600's, 1700's Exploration and Colonization of America with noteworthy accomplishments by Italian navigators, explorers, missionaries, traders and settlers, followed by contributions to the Founding Fathers and to America into the 1800's.

Late 1800's, early 1900's Massive Waves of Immigrants from Italy seeking better life and freedom arrive in North America but also in Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Venezuela and Peru where they were known as "birds of passage," voyaging back and forth between their work in the Americas and their families in Italy.

Some prominent Italians come to America to improve on their landmark discoveries in technology, such as Marconi's wireless.

Late 1800's, 1900's Expansion in Business and Science by Italians in America and Italian Americans.

To Present Great Accomplishments of the Italian creative, entrepreneurial, inventive, courageous spirit evident in all fields of endeavor.

Italian Heritage & Culture Committee of New York, Inc.

For more than thirty six years the IHCC has organized events, concerts, exhibits and lectures, celebrating Italian culture. Each year a theme representative of the history and culture of Italy and Italian Americans is highlighted.

The IHCC promotes Italian culture by focusing on schools and taking a leadership role in promoting Italy and its cultural contributions.

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