

GIOVANNI DA VERRAZANO



G*iovanni da Verrazano* was born in 1485 in Italy. Because his family was wealthy, he received a good education. He was a good student and had a special interest in mathematics. After he finished school, he became a navigator and made several voyages to countries east of the Mediterranean Sea. He became an excellent sailor.

Some wealthy Italian bankers and merchants who lived in France were interested in finding a western sea route to China. They hired Verrazano to help them. The French king supported these men to explore the lands to the west.

In 1524, Verrazano with 50 crewmembers sailed from Madeira, Spain in search of a new western water route to China. Two months later, Verrazano sailed along the coast of North Carolina. He landed and found friendly Indians. When he explored just a bit inland off the North Carolina coast, he sighted the wide waters of a bay. He mistakenly thought that it was the Pacific Ocean.

He continued northward up the coast and entered New York Bay. From there he sailed a smaller boat up as far as the Narrows. He then sailed up the coast past present day Block Island and anchored at Newport, Rhode Island. This time the Indians were not as friendly.

Verrazano and his crew continued up the coast along Narragansett Bay and to the coast of Maine. The natives of Narragansett Bay were friendly and traded with Verrazano. However, those in Maine were less friendly. He went as far as Newfoundland's coast, but his supplies ran short. He returned to France in July 1524.

Verrazano thought that his discoveries would be of great value to France. He provided the first European description of the North American coastline. As a result of his explorations, Verrazano believed that a completely new world lay between Florida and Newfoundland. He also believed that somewhere there was a water route to China.

In 1528, Verrazano sailed across the Atlantic and into the Caribbean. He landed on the island of Guadeloupe. He thought the natives would be friendly. Instead, he encountered the Caribs who were cannibals. They killed and ate him.