

## THE AGE OF EXPLORATION 1492-1650

### BACKGROUND MOTIVATION

**Economic and political motives.** Long before the sixteenth century the Crusades had introduced European people to the goods and luxuries of the East. Some goods, such as spices, became necessities, but they were becoming increasingly costly. They had to be transported over long and sometimes dangerous overland routes, and several middlemen each took their profits before the goods reached European merchants. What Europeans needed was a new, less costly route to Asia. Before the route was actually traversed, however, a New World was opened for conquest. This led to intense economic and political rivalry among European powers to see who could first secure the prizes it offered and who could hold the others away.

Individuals went to the “New World” for many reasons, but most commonly to seek their fortunes. Young Spaniards expected to get rich through ventures connected to land and commerce. Indentured servants looked optimistically toward the end of their terms of service, when they could obtain land of their own and become independent.

**Religious motives.** For rulers and common people alike, religion was also a powerful motive. Even the Catholic rulers of Spain, Portugal and France were bent on building empires and gaining wealth, they were also sincerely committed to converting the heathen peoples of the world. The Spanish conquerors in the New World were required to take priests with them on every expedition. The English and Dutch were just as committed to spreading the Protestant gospel, and actively encouraged missionary enterprise among native Americans. Some colonists went to America specifically to escape restrictions on their religious practices at home. They sought places where they could worship freely according to their own forms and consciences.

**Adventure and Myth.** Love of adventure, curiosity and a fascination with the possibility of locating peoples and places popularized in the mythology of the time were also factors. Some searched for Prester John, a legendary Christian king believed to rule somewhere in Africa. Others were fascinated by fables of exotic peoples – some with tails, others with no heads but with faces emerging from their chests. There were also tales of Amazon women on the mythical island of California, of a fountain of youth in Florida, of exotic plants and animals, and of the seven golden cities of Cibola. On a more realistic level, explorers also returned with accurate descriptions of plants, animals and people (Columbus brought many examples back with him from his first voyage).

**Technology.** Technological innovation contributed significantly to European expansion, for it finally made venturing farther out to sea more practical. Ships became faster and more maneuverable. By the fifteenth century the use of the magnetic compass had become widespread. Other important developments included the astrolabe, a device for observing the position of the sun and stars, and the quadrant, which measured the altitude of these heavenly bodies. Techniques for map making and charting the seas also continually improved.

### THE PORTUGUESE AND SPANISH PHASE

#### PORTUGAL

**Prince Henry the Navigator.** The success of the Portuguese was due largely to the work of Prince Henry, a skilled and experienced navigator. Intrigued with stories of the Kingdom of Prester John, he hoped to discover the fabled Christian empire by sailing around Africa. As he laid plans for successive voyages he conducted considerable research on navigation and trained many young mariners.

**Early Explorations and discoveries.** In the late fifteenth Portuguese seamen gradually moved down the coast of Africa, established stations, and brought back gold and slaves. In 1487, while on a voyage to locate the southern tip of Africa, Bartholomew Diaz and ships were caught in a storm. When it subsided they found they had actually rounded the Cape of Good Hope, thus opening the way for later voyages to India. Vasco da Gama became the first European to reach India by sea during his voyage of 1497-1499. After that, Portuguese trading posts were quickly established in India.

**Significance of the contact with India.** When da Gama entered Calicut harbor at the southern tip of India in May 1498, he was treated by coolly by the Arab merchants who already had a monopoly on the Asian trade. They saw him, correctly, as a threat. He also discovered the Indians were not particularly interested in the trinkets he brought from Europe. He was able to gather up a cargo of pepper and cinnamon, however. Upon his return to Portugal, da Gama found his cargo to be worth sixty times his

initial investment. There was no turning back – the Portuguese were determined that the Indian and Asian trade would be theirs.

**The Discovery of Brazil.** The Portuguese also made the first European contact with Brazil. The coastline was discovered in 1500 when Pedro Alvares Cabral, sailing toward India, veered off course. Cabral claimed the territory he found for Portugal; later it was discovered that Brazil lay on the Portuguese side of the line drawn by the Treaty of Tordesillas.

#### **The East Asian Trading Empire**

The Portuguese were determined, at first, to replace the Muslims in the Indian Ocean arena. The Muslims had controlled the spice trade there for too long. The Portuguese soon began seizing and destroying Muslim forts along the coast.

**Extent of the Empire.** Alfonso de Albuquerque, one of the great navigators of the age, was the architect of the vast Portuguese trading empire. Albuquerque, who was the governor-general of the Portuguese colonies from 1509-1515, planned a strategy for expansion and carried it out. Earlier the Portuguese had established a colony in Calicut, on the southern tip of India. In 1510 they wrested Goa, farther north along the western coast, from the Muslims. They also took Malacca, on the Malayan peninsula, and then gradually extended their trading posts toward East Asia. In 1513 the Portuguese reached China. There, they obtained the right to establish a warehouse, and the East Asian operations proceeded; in 1543 they reached Japan.

By the early sixteenth century the Portuguese had laid claim to (though they did not fully control) most of the African coast and the west coast of India. They also dominated Ceylon and had established themselves in Madagascar, Malacca, Macao, Canton and Java. As far as land mass was concerned, the Portuguese empire was small; however, their few islands and coastal ports were so strategically located that they gave Portugal control of trade routes covering half the world. Portuguese fleets sailed annually around Africa and on to India and China, with Portuguese posts available to them all along the way. The Arab monopoly was broken.

**Reasons for Success.** The Portuguese were successful in their quest for commercial domination despite the fact that the countries they encountered were civilized, had far greater human resources and did not particularly want many of the European trade goods the Portuguese originally brought with them. There were several possible reasons, besides the masterful planning and organization of Albuquerque. For one thing, they had superior naval power. In addition, Portugal was able to take advantage of the silver, sugar, and their Indian and Asian trading partners wanted other goods that poured in from South America and that. At the same time, the people of India were having political problems and were not united, making it relatively simple for the Portuguese and other Europeans to overwhelm them while ousting the Muslims.

**Still Some Competition.** The Arabs were not completely gone from the East-West trade, however. In some cases corrupt Portuguese officials accepted bribes to allow Arab shipping to allow Arab shipping in the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf. Old overland routes remained in use; the Arabs and Venetians continued to compete successfully throughout the sixteenth century. In the following century, the Dutch and English helped change the nature of East-West trade permanently.

## **SPAIN**

**Christopher Columbus.** In 1484 a Genoese mariner by the name of Christopher Columbus appeared before the king of Portugal asking for financial support to explore what he believed was the shortest route to India – across the Atlantic. The issue was not the shape of the earth (almost everyone knew it was round), but its size. Columbus believed it was only about 3,000 miles (actually about 6,650 miles). The Portuguese, however, were convinced that the world was much larger (they were right), and that the African route was still the shortest. They therefore rejected Columbus' plea. Two years later he was in Spain, where he won the support of Queen Isabella.

**Spain's advantage.** One reason for Spain's ability to expand its economic interests was the consolidation of several kingdoms of Spain, under Isabella of Aragon and Ferdinand Hapsburg of Castille, in the fifteenth century. With the increased political and financial strength of the monarchy, Spain could bear the costs of supporting exploration.

**Pre-Columbian Contacts.** Columbus was not the first to "discover" America. Norse explorations and conquests in the North Atlantic eventually took Leif Ericsson to Newfoundland about 1001. Over the next few years the Norsemen made at least three different attempts at colonization. Claims have been made for other explorers arriving even earlier. These voyages, however, had no lasting effects.

No one was aware of them by 1492. The importance of Columbus' voyage is that it resulted in the first contact with America to have meaningful worldwide consequences.

**Columbus' motives.** Columbus set sail for Asia on August 3, 1492, with three small ships. He was carrying a letter to the Great Khan of China and was armed with a commission that would make him governor of any lands he might discover. Columbus had visions of personal wealth, but he also dreamed of opening up opportunities to take the Christian gospel to the heathen. Nearly all the elements leading to exploration and colonization were bound in this one man: religious idealism, mythological geography, a search for personal glory, and strong economic motivation.

**His discoveries.** In mid-October Columbus landed at the island of San Salvador, in what is now the American West Indies. He thought he had discovered the islands west of India, and that on another voyage he would find China or Japan. With the continuing support of the Spanish crown, he made three more voyages, believing until his death in 1506 that he had found the shortest route to India. He discovered all the major islands of the Caribbean, including Haiti (originally called Hispaniola by the Spanish), San Salvador, Puerto Rico, Jamaica and Cuba. Other hardy explorers soon followed. It soon became clear that what Columbus had discovered was a new world – new, at least, to Europeans.

**Treaty of Tordesillas.** As soon as Columbus publicized his claim to India, Portugal did the same. In order to resolve the conflict, the pope issued a proclamation in 1493 dividing the discoveries of the world between the two countries. The next year, however, Spain and Portugal signed an agreement, the Treaty of Tordesillas, that moved the line farther west (this line is drawn in the Pacific). It was on the basis of this agreement that Portugal eventually claimed Brazil, which they believed to be part of Asia for a period of time.

Later, Spain and Portugal made another agreement with respect to Asia. In a 1529 the Spanish king gave up all claims to the Moluccas, or the Spice Islands, and a demarcation line was drawn to the east, which gave Portugal rights to the Orient and Spain the rights to the Americas. The Spanish, however, continued to show interest in the Philippines and conquered them in 1571.

**Magellan.** Columbus touched off a continuing scramble to find and alternate route to India. Voyages of discovery were conducted by Italian, Portuguese, Spanish, French and English mariners. Ferdinand Magellan, a Spaniard, finally found the prize. Sailing from Seville with a fleet of five ships in September 1519, Magellan reached the straits that now bear his name in October. The seas were so rough that it took him a month to cross to the Pacific. Reduced to three ships (one had been lost and another deserted), he continued his epic voyage to the Philippines where, in mid-March 1520, he and forty of his crew were killed. The survivors, in two remaining ships, went on to the Spice Islands, where the Portuguese attacked them. One ship was eventually captured but the other, the *Victoria*, damaged, leaking and the crew ravaged by hunger and stress, limped into the harbor at Seville on September 3, 1522. It had been a heroic voyage and despite the tragedies some positive good had resulted. In addition to proving that such a voyage was possible, the trip also demonstrated once again the economic value of the Asian trade. The single cargo of spices the *Victoria* had been able to obtain paid all the expenses of the entire two-and-a-half year voyage.

#### **The Spanish Empire in Latin America**

The Spanish explored and conquered most of the Caribbean, killing, absorbing and exploiting the labor of the native peoples. The area eventually provided sugar, coffee, spices, and tropical fruits for the tables of the Europe, but as Spanish adventurers looked for greater fields to conquer, the Caribbean islands became ports of supply for going to the mainland.

**Conquistadors.** The most advanced and complex civilizations in Central and South America were the Aztecs and Maya in the Yucatan peninsula and the Inca in Peru. These other people were conquered for Spain by a number of conquistadors – adventurers and soldiers of fortune who were on a quest for wealth. During this quest, the conquistadors established the first great European empire overseas.

**Cortes and Mexico.** Hernando Cortes was the first to conquer a native civilization on the mainland. In 1519 he left Hispaniola leading an expedition of 600 men. They had with them seventeen horses, a cannon, and some muskets. He landed at present-day Vera Cruz, on the southeastern coast of the Yucatan peninsula, and scuttled his ships. His men had no choice but to conquer.

He moved toward the capital city, Tenochtitlan (now Mexico City), fighting and then making alliances with some of the tribes hostile to the Aztecs and their emperor, Montezuma. It may seem strange that Montezuma would allow this foreign force to enter the city peacefully, but apparently a few Aztec superstitions and religious traditions (the return of Quetzecotl) caused him to hesitate. In addition, the fact

that some of their subjugated tribes were friendly to Cortes may have helped persuade the Aztec ruler to welcome the Spaniard into his capital city.

Treacherously, however, Cortes immediately took Montezuma captive. This, in turn, stirred the native priests into whipping up rebellion against the foreign intruders. During one uprising the Spaniards executed Montezuma in retaliation. Much of the Spanish force was lost; the rest had to leave the city. It was not long before they returned with about 800 well-armed soldiers and 25,000 native allies. The capital city was reduced to rubble. In August 1521 the Aztecs finally surrendered.

It took the Spanish somewhat longer to conquer the rest of Yucatan and northern Mexico, but by 1550 they had done so.

**Pizarro and the Conquest of the Inca.** If it seemed reckless for Cortes to think of conquering the Aztecs with 600 men, it was even more so for Francisco Pizarro to try to take the Inca empire in Peru with only 180 men, 27 horses and 2 cannons. But the Inca, with 50,000 troops available, were overconfident. They had been told the white men's weapons were harmless, they had no basis for understanding Pizarro's real power, and they believed there were only a few of the invaders anyway. They had no idea that the Spaniards could be reinforced from the sea.

Pizarro set out in 1531, reaching the city of Cajamarca on November 15, 1532. He found it deserted, for the Inca believed they could lure the Spanish into a trap and defeat them easily. The next day, however, believing he had little to fear, the ruler, Atahualpa, accepted Pizarro's invitation to ride into the city unarmed. Like Cortes, Pizarro then captured the Inca ruler and killed many of his people. Atahualpa offered a huge ransom of gold and silver articles – piled seven feet high in seventeen-by-twenty-two-foot room – for his freedom. Pizarro took the booty; then executed the king anyway. With the loss of its ruler, the Inca empire fell into a civil war. Pizarro easily made it to the capital, Cuzco where he played both sides of the civil war. Eventually, the Inca were weakened enough for Pizarro's army to loot and destroy the city in 1533. The next year he moved on to the coast where he founded the city of Lima, which became Peru's permanent capital.

**Expansion.** The search for wealth led Spanish explorers and conquistadors into both American continents. They found nothing to compare with the treasure troves of the Aztec and Inca, but the fact that such wealth had been discovered in one place gave them incentive to follow almost every fabulous tale they heard. Ecuador was seized in 1533. Central Chile was conquered in 1540-1541. The Spaniards traversed the coast of most of South America and a large and a large part of its interior – including tracing the Amazon River from the mountains of Peru to its mouth on the northeastern coast of Brazil.

They also expanded into North America. Juan Ponce de Leon, governor of Puerto Rico, explored the Florida coast in 1513 searching for a fountain of youth, and tried unsuccessfully to establish a colony there in 1521. Hernando de Soto went from Florida to South Carolina. In 1540 Francisco Vasquez de Coronado, compelled onward by rumors of gold and of the fabulous lost cities of Cibola, went from Mexico through New Mexico and as far east as Kansas. In the 1580s missionary efforts began in New Mexico, followed by a drive for colonization; Santa Fe was founded about 1610. Eventually the Spanish claimed nearly two-thirds of the present United States, though they did not establish permanent settlements in Florida, Texas, and California until the eighteenth century.

#### **Structure of Spain's American Empire**

The conquistadors were not administrators. They soon lost their influence, to be replaced in conquered provinces with what amounted to a Latin American feudal system. At the top were the royal administrators. Next came the encomenderos (roughly similar to feudal lords), who ruled over but presumably protected the laborers (comparable to serfs). (The encomienda social structure)

**The Viceroyalties.** General jurisdiction over colonial affairs was held by the Council of the Indies, located in Spain and under the supervision of the crown. At first the American empire was divided into two parts, New Spain, under a viceroy in Mexico City; and the viceroyalty of Peru, in Lima. Each was subdivided into smaller units, administered by audiencias, or courts, consisting of twelve to fifteen judges. By 1776 there were five viceroyalties: New Spain, New Granada, Brazil, Peru, and La Plata.

**Mercantilism.** The Spanish empire was the ultimate example of mercantilism – the idea that colonies existed for the benefit of the mother country. One-fifth of all the gold and silver mined in the colonies went to the crown. In addition, the colonies were discouraged from developing their own manufacturing and other industries, for the Spanish shipped manufactured goods to them. Mercantilist policy also forbade transporting in ships other than those of the mother country. This policy also followed by other European colonial powers, particularly the English.

### **Social and Economic Impact of Spanish Colonization.**

**Changes in Society.** It was inevitable that the coming of the conquerors would result in fundamental changes in native society. Immediately the Indians were placed under new forms of government, required to speak a new language, and were converted to a new religion. Their culture was practically destroyed, and they were exploited by a new labor system.

**The Great Plague.** The greatest human tragedy accompanying Spanish colonialism was the death of millions of Indians during the first century. It is estimated that the native population of Peru dropped from 1.3 million in 1570 to 600,000 in 1620. In central Mexico, the population is said to have dropped from about 25.3 million when Cortes arrived to 1 million in 1605.

One reason was simply the murder and carnage that accompanied conquest and subjugation. However, the most important cause of the devastation was disease. As natives were exposed to European viruses that they had no immunity to, epidemics spread like wildfire. Smallpox was the worst of all.

**Black Slavery.** All this contributed to the introduction of another trade item in the Americas: African slaves. Beginning in the sixteenth century, native Africans were captured and shipped by the thousands in order to replace the native populations who were dying off in the mines and on the *campaneros*.

**The Economy of the Empire.** The mainstay of the Spanish empire's economy was the gold and silver that native laborers or slaves pulled from the mines of Mexico and Bolivia. It was all supposed to be stamped and registered; 18,600 tons of registered silver and 200 tons of registered gold had arrived in Spain in 1660. Additional amounts were smuggled in.

Latin America also had an important agricultural and stock-raising economy. Indian labor employed at the *campaneros* produced food for sale to cities and mining communities. Meanwhile, black slaves imported from Africa were employed on the huge *haciendas*.

**The Pacific Trade.** The Spanish empire also developed a vigorous seaborne trade in the Pacific. It was centered on Manila, which served as a link between Spanish America and the Oriental trade. Annually a huge galleon sailed back and forth between the Mexican port of Acapulco and Manila, trading for Chinese silk and other items that had been brought to Manila by the Portuguese.

### **THE NORTHERN EUROPEAN PHASE**

**Challenge to Spanish Hegemony.** Spain and Portugal reigned almost supreme in the Americas and in their Indian and Oriental trading empires throughout the sixteenth century. They were not unchallenged, however, as three other European powers became increasingly dependent upon developing their own trade and, eventually, colonies. At first they avoided intruding on the Spanish and Portuguese empires, instead turning to the North Atlantic. As early as 1496 John Cabot, sailing for England, discovered rich fishing waters off the coast of Newfoundland. In the long run the bounteous harvests reaped there proved to be of more long-lasting value than Spain's gold and silver from Central and South America. Eventually fish from this area became one of Europe's chief staples.

**In Search of the Northwest Passage.** Fish, however, could hardly satisfy the insatiable appetite for the potential wealth offered by the spice trade. Northern Europeans, therefore, anxiously extended their search for an alternate route – the legendary northwest passage that would take them through the American continent, which they misunderstood to be narrow, and on to the Orient. In 1524 an Italian, Giovanni da Verrazano, sailing for France, sailed along the North American coast from the Carolinas to Maine. His hopes were so high that at one point he looked across North Carolina's Outer Banks, saw Pamlico Sound, and deluded himself into believing it was the Pacific Ocean. Several English explorers conducted expeditions along the northeast coast and inland as far as rivers could carry them (the fall line of the Appalachians). All of these explorers failed to find the passage, but their work resulted in an understanding of the new lands and their possible uses.

#### **Direct Confrontation: The Privateers**

**The French and the Dutch.** If a new route to India and Asia could not be discovered, then direct confrontation was the only way to undermine Spanish and Portuguese dominance. The first serious challenge came from France when, as early as 1524, a French privateer (pirate) plundered a Spanish treasure ship in the Azores, in the North Atlantic. Next came the Dutch "sea beggars," whose activities grew directly from the protracted struggle by the Netherlands for independence from Spanish rule (see reformation). The war ended in 1609, although the Spanish did not officially recognize the Dutch Republic until 1648. In the meantime, in the latter part of the sixteenth century Dutch privateers continually

plundered Spanish ships in the Atlantic and conducted illegal trade with Spanish colonies – illegal because it violated the rules of Spanish mercantilism.

**English Sea Dogs.** Next came the English “Sea Dogs.” Queen Elizabeth of England encouraged both Dutch and English privateers to engage in smuggling and piracy as an attempt to weaken Spain involvement in the Dutch Wars of Independence. The first great Sea Dog was John Hawkins, who in 1652 profitably smuggled African slaves into Hispaniola. He conducted a similar exploit two years later in Venezuela and Panama that netted him a cargo of silver that, it is said, made him the richest man in Europe. On his third voyage, from 1567 to 1568, the Spanish caught him at Vera Cruz. Three of his five ships were captured or destroyed. He escaped with his own ship and another commanded by his cousin, Francis Drake. Hawkins returned to Europe and retired to enjoy his great wealth.

The exploits of Drake soon exceeded those of Hawkins. In 1577 he set out on his famous voyage around South America. Having abandoned any pretense of peaceful competition, he raided Spanish towns from Florida to California and plundered a Spanish treasure ship. He sailed north as far as California, then turned west and sailed the rest of the way around the world. After his triumphal return to England in 1580 the queen, who had secretly financed the expedition in the first place, knighted him.

**The effect of political rivalry in Europe.** In the meantime, the major states of Europe were squabbling both internally and with each other over a variety of issues that had both religious and political overtones. These would have a direct effect on their rivalry for overseas empire. In the case of England and Spain, for example, the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588 helped bring about the independence of the Netherlands from Spain. In the following century the Dutch would become the first to challenge the commercial power of Portugal and Spain. Even though Spain eventually rebuilt and improved its fleet, the defeat of the Armada created a surge of national pride in England and signaled the beginning of England’s eventual supremacy on the high seas.

## THE ENGLISH

**Incentives.** In their economic and political rivalry with France and Spain, the English hoped that America would yield gold. This proved to be a false hope, but they also took seriously the pleading of Richard Haklüt, who was enthralled with the discoveries of the sixteenth century. He published books on them, and pleaded with the queen for the establishment of English colonies. The multiple benefits of a colonial venture, he argued, would include extending Protestantism, expanding trade (thereby increasing tax revenues), providing employment for England’s “lustie youths,” providing English ships with timber and other supplies, providing bases in the event of war with Spain, and enhancing the search for a northwest passage. He argued persuasively; in the end, many of his objectives were realized. However, the first few attempts at colonization by Sir Humphrey Gilbert and Sir Walter Raleigh failed miserably.

**Virginia: The First Successful Colony.** The first permanent English colony in America was Virginia, founded by the London Company in 1607. Unfortunately, the venture seemed ill fated from the beginning; even though the colony survived, the stockholders made no profits. In 1622 the company had sent over 10,000 colonists to Virginia, yet at the end of that year fewer than 2,000 were still alive. There were several problems, including malaria that the Europeans had never been exposed to, lack of survival skills on the part of the colonists who had initially hoped simply to look for gold, and poor management of supplies by the company. In the first year the colony survived only because the talented and strong-willed John Smith took over and forced the colonists to work instead of engage in speculative activities. The original settlers were practically all male; the only people who made any profits in the first few years were a group of enterprising entrepreneurs who brought volunteer women from England to be selected as wives (in exchange for a handsome fee, of course). In the end, Virginia’s salvation came from a completely unexpected source. It was discovered that tobacco, previously only grown in the Orient, and could be sold in England and the rest of Europe for a handsome profit. England had found their gold source in the new world.

## THE DUTCH

**The Carrying Trade.** The Dutch took their initial steps into the rivalry for world power as carriers of commodities for the northern European powers. At first they shipped fish, preserved by new techniques, to various parts of Europe. They traded for corn, timber, and salt. Soon they were taking on cargoes of Spanish and Portuguese goods from their Latin America empires. The Dutch developed larger, slower, but more spacious ships, without cannon, that could carry more cargo than others did. These ships helped them begin to dominate the carrying trade of the world. By 1600 their merchant marine, by far the

largest in the world, numbered as many as 10,000 vessels. They developed a virtual monopoly on the Arctic whaling industry, compete successfully in the Russian area with the English Muscovy Company, and dominated the carrying trade in the Baltic region. One of their key advantages was the fact that they provided other maritime powers with naval stores (i.e. various items necessary to maintain a ship, such as tar, pitch, timber, hemp, and flax used for canvas sailcloth).

**New Amsterdam.** Besides its vast commercial empire, Holland also began to establish colonies in the seventeenth century. The first was in North America. The Dutch East India Company had hired an Englishman, Henry Hudson, to search for the illusive northwest passage. His contact with the Iroquois Indians in the Delaware Bay area resulted in a lasting trade relationship between them and the Dutch. In 1614 the Dutch West India Company established fur trading posts on Manhattan Island. Ten years later it began a permanent establishment there. The governor, Peter Minuit, soon purchased Manhattan from the Indians. This became the basis for the settlement of New Amsterdam, the capital of the colony of New Netherlands. The company's chief interest was the fur trade, though it also encouraged agriculture. In 1664, however, New Amsterdam fell to an English fleet. The English had been harassing Dutch shipping elsewhere (Dutch had no military navy), and as part of this intensifying international rivalry King Charles II of England simply granted the Dutch colony to his brother, the Duke of York. The Dutch were powerless to resist when the fleet sailed in.

**South Africa.** The East India Company established the most permanent Dutch colony in South Africa, on the Cape of Good Hope, in 1652. Its purpose was to be a provisioning port for ships bound to the Orient. It provided fresh fruit, meat, water and other goods for Dutch ships, which helped prevent scurvy and saved thousands of seamen's lives and made a priceless contribution to Dutch commercial power in its "golden age." But the colony became more than a port of call. Former company employees and other settlers established farms in the area. Although they had some conflict with the native people, they nevertheless prospered and spread. In the process, as every other European incursion into previously inhabited areas, they also changed the way of life of the native people.

## **FRANCE**

**New France.** The French claim to North America was established by the explorations of Jacques Cartier. In the three different voyages between 1534 and 1542 he followed fanciful tales that led him to explore the Gulf of St. Lawrence and part of the St. Lawrence River. The first permanent French settlement was Quebec, established in 1608, the year after the English settled Virginia. Its founder was Samuel de Champlain, who then pushed French explorations out into the Great Lakes. His encounter with the Iroquois Indians, however, was less than friendly. Although the French got along reasonably well with other tribes, the Iroquois were always allied against them, acting as kind of a buffer between the French and the expanding English colonies.

Champlain was the first governor of New France, which became a great fur trading empire. The colony's charter, however, stipulated that only French-speaking Catholics could settle – a provision that had important consequences in later years, especially after England took over the French possessions in America.

**Louisiana.** From the Great Lakes the French sent explorers in several directions. One was Robert Cavalier, sieur de la Salle, who paddled all the way down the Mississippi in 1682 and named the vast region Louisiana. The first settlement in that area was at Biloxi, Mississippi, in 1699. New Orleans was founded in 1718 and soon became the capital of Louisiana.

**Relations with the English.** French and English rivalry became intense, yet until the French and Indian War (or the Seven Year's War), which began in 1753 and left England and France in virtual state of war until 1815, there were no major hostilities. Each side had advantages. By the mid-eighteenth century England had some 1.5 million people inhabiting its colonies, while the French had no more than 80,000 in Canada and Louisiana. Nevertheless, the French generally got along better with the Indians, except for the Iroquois, offering them better trades goods and encroaching far less upon their lands. In addition, the French offered good markets for some colonial goods. Even in wartime, English colonists found the French trade to be lucrative to pass up. They continued to provide foodstuffs and other supplies to French buyers.