

How did America get its Name?



Today America is regarded as the most affluent and powerful country of the world. Its development is mainly a story of last two hundred years. Earlier it was divided into 13 small colonies. We know that America was discovered by Columbus. Then why was it not named after him? It is a matter of chance. The story as to how America was named is very interesting.

The world famous Italian traveler Columbus set out on a sea voyage in search of India. He reached some island in the morning of October 12, 1492. He landed over and named it after the name of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain as “San Salvador”. This island was just a small part of America. Now it is called the Watling Island. He misunderstood it to be India and started calling its inhabitants as Indians. Even today they are called Indians. From there he wanted to go to Japan, but, instead, he reached Cuba and Hispaniola. Disappointed with his failure to locate India, Columbus returned to Spain on March 13, 1493.

On his second voyage, which he started on September 24, 1493, he discovered several Virgin Islands like Puerto Rico and Jamaica. But he did not succeed in locating India. In his third journey in 1498, he discovered Trinidad and touched South America.

During this period a Spanish sailor named Amerigo Vespucci announced that he is the first person to have landed at the main land of South America which he did on June 16, 1497. However, experts are of the opinion that Amerigo had not gone on a voyage till 1499. In 1499 Alonso de Ojeda accompanied by Florentine Amerigo Vespucci sailed up to the Orinoco straits and discovered Venezuela. During 1501—1502

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Vespucci' himself directed, a sea voyage under the Portuguese banner and discovered the shores of Brazil. It became clear to Vespucci that part of the land considered by Columbus as a portion of Asia was in fact a continent of the New World in the beginning of the year 1500, Vespucci's writings got wide circulation and he got the credit of becoming the first European to have discovered South America. A German geographer — Waldsee Miller, named the territory of Brazil as America in honor of 'Amerigo' Vespucci. This very name caught people's attention and the entire world started using this name.

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