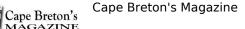


Page 57 - John Cabot's Landfall, 1497 - "It WAS Cape Breton!" ISSUE : <u>Issue 70</u> Published by Ronald Caplan on 1996/6/1

you to learn how his majesty here has won a part of Asia without a stroke of the sword. There is in this kingdom a Venetian fellow. Master John Caboto by name, of fme mind, greatly skilled in navigation, who, seeing that those most serene kings, first he of Portugal, and then the one of Spain, have oc? cupied unknown islands, determined to make a like acquisition for his ma? jesty aforesaid. And having obtained royal grants that he should have the usufruct of all that he should discover, provided that the ownership of the same is reserved to the crown, with a small ship and eighteen persons he committed himself to fortune; and having set out from Bristol, a western port of this kingdom, and passed the western limits of Hibemia, and then standing to the northward, keeping (after a few days) the north star on his right hand; and having wandered about considerably, at last he fell in with terra firma, where, having planted the royal baimer and taken possession on behalf of this king, and taken certain tokens, he has returned thence. The said Master John, as being foreign bom and poor, would not be be? lieved if his comrades, who are almost all Englishmen from Bristol, did not testify that what he says is trae. This Master John has the description of the world in a chart, and also in a solid globe, which he has made, and it shows where he landed, and that going toward the east he passed considerably be? yond the country of the Tanais. And they say that it is a very good and tem? perate country, and they think that brazil wood and silks grow there; and they affirm that that sea is covered with fishes, which are caught not only with the net, but with baskets, a stone being tied to them in order that the baskets may sink in the water. And this I heard the said Master John relate, and aforesaid Englishmen, his comrades, say that they will bring so many fishes that this kingdom will no longer have need of Iceland, from which country there comes a very great store of fish which are called stock-fish. But Master John has set his mind on something greater; for he expects to go farther on toward the east (Levant) from that place already occupied, con? stantly hugging the shore, until he shall be over against an island, by him called Cipango, situated in the equinoctial region, where he thinks all the spices of the world, and also the precious stones, originate; and he says that in former times he was at Mecca, whither spices are brought by caravans from distant countries, and that those who brought them, on being asked where the said spices grow, answered that they do not know, but that other caravans come to their homes with this mer? chandise from distant countries, and these again say that they are brought to them from other remote regions. And he argues thus, that if the orientals affirmed to the south? erners that these things come from a distance from them, and so from hand to hand, presupposing the ro? tundity of the earth, it must be that the last ones get them at the north toward the west; and he said it in such a way, that, having nothing to gain or lose by it, 1, too, belleve it; and what is more, the king here, who is wise and not lavish, like? wise puts some faith in him; for (ever) since his retum he has made good provision for him, as the same Master John tells me. And it is said that in the siting, his majesty aforenamed will fit out some ships, and will, besides, give him all



the convicts, and they will go to that country to make a colony, by means of which they hope to estabUsh in Lcmdon a great? er storehouse of spices than there is in Alexandria; and the chief men of the enterprise are men of Bristol, great sailors, who, now that they know where to go, say that it is not a voyage of more than fifteen days, nor do they ever have storms after they get away from Hibemia. I have also talked with a Burgundian, a comrade of Master John's, who con? firms everything, and wishes to return thith' because the admiral (for so Master John already entitles himself) has given him an island; and he has given another one to a baitier of his from Castiglione-of-Cienoa, and both of them regard themselves as counts; nor does my IOTd the admiral esteem himself anything less than a prince. I think that with this expedition there will go several poor Italian monks, who have all been promised bishoprics. And, as I have become a frend of the admiral's, if I wished to go thither I should get an archbishopric. But I have thought that the I)enefices which your excellency has in store for me are a surer thing; and, therefore, I beg that if these should fall vacant in my absence, you will cause possession to be given to me, taking measures to do this rather (especially) where it is needed, in order that they may not be taken frOTti me by others, who, be? cause they are present, can be more diligent than I, who, in this country, have been brought to the pass of eating ten or twelve dishes at every meal, and sitting at table three hours at a time twice a day, for the sake of your ex? cellency, to whom I humbly commend myself. In certain English documents, too, mention is made of Cabot's voyage of 1497, and official recognition is given for his achievement. For example, on 10 August 1497, a royal grant of ten pounds was made "to hym that founde the new isle"; and on 3 February 1498 supplementary letters patent were granted, au? thorizing John Cabot to requisition six ships for another voy- NO NEED TO OVERNIGHT WITH US TO ENJOY THE SPIRIT OF THE HIGHLANDS ATITSFINEST The Birch Tree Shop Fine crafts, distinctive gifts, and collectibles. KEITj'DGF The Highland Sitting Room A wonderftiUy comfortable lounge offering light food and beverages with easy listening live entertainment nighdy. INGONISH BEACH (902) 285-2880 The Purple Thistle Dining Room With spectacular views of the sea and a reputation for dining excellence, the Purple Thistle offers a superb variety of menu items appealing to every taste. Seafood is a specialty. The Atlantic Restaurant A casual eatery on the edge of the ocean overlooking North Bay. Serving attractively priced snacks and ftiU meals. Need a Radiator? RAD-PRO Specializing in Radiator Repair & Recores Heaters Water Pumps, Etc. i Muffler? Shocks? Brakes? FIVE LOCATIONS: Sydney Downtown 562-2300 and Grand Lake Road 564-5547 miDAS 'Specializing in Mufflers Brakes Shocks Springs Antigonish: 863-6090 Port Hawkesbury: 625-3781 New Glasgow: 752-8777