

Madoc the Welshman and the Irish sailor-saint Brendan as not yet proven, it is certain that the Icelanders planted a colony in Greenland as early as the tenth century. The colony perished, but its traditions remained and were the inciting cause of later voyages; for Bristol merchants trading with Iceland, heard thereof and sent out ships in search of the "new land" for seven successive years before the sailing of the "Matthew"—thinking to get by way of it to the Indies, or "far Cathay," the name given to all countries east of the Persian Gulf.

Unfortunately for the future historian, Sebastian Cabot not only "romanced" concerning his birth-place, but also concerning his voyages; in consequence of which he has been, for centuries, honoured as the commander of the "Matthew" and the discoverer of America. Thanks, however, to modern research among musty rolls and ancient charters, it has been proved beyond a doubt that the commander of the Bristol ship and discoverer of the Continent was John Cabot. Whether Sebastian ever sailed at all on that first voyage is entirely conjectural. The evidence that he did rests mainly upon a reported conversation held with a stranger at Seville, in which he appears to have mixed up the discoveries of the first expedition with those of later ones, and ignoring his father's share, himself claimed credit for the whole!