

Prospectors

The New World's first prospectors came from all over Europe to board ships and cross the ocean for a chance to explore a new continent for "God, Glory and Gold!" Some, like Hernan Cortez and Francisco Pizarro, came looking for "Cities of Gold". Cortez and Pizarro were just the most famous of dozens of leaders of expeditions who came from the permanent settlements of Hispanola and Cuba to search for gold.

Some of these explorers may have said they were searching for a shorter route to India, that they were looking for a short cut to the Pacific, or they were spreading the word of the Lord, but what they were really doing was prospecting for gold and silver. Conquistador spelled backwards is prospector.

It was recorded that Cortez told Montezuma, "We have a disease of the heart which is only cured by gold."

Balboa was looking for gold when he crossed the Isthmus of Panama and became the first European to see the Pacific Ocean from the New World.

When Coronado came up from Mexico in 1539 with three hundred men and over five hundred horses he was prospecting. He spent three years exploring the southwest looking for the Seven Cities of Gold called Cibola.

On August 3, 1492 Christopher Columbus wrote in his journal:

“I cannot believe that I am the captain of my own voyage to find spices, gold, and precious jewels. I plan to sail to the Canary Islands and then make a long jump across the Ocean Sea to the gold treasures of the Indies.”

Captain John Smith wrote in 1608, that among some of his people, “[t]here was no talke, no hope, nor worke, but dig gold, wash gold, refine gold, load gold.”

Those are names that we all recognize but there were dozens of others who came to the New World seeking gold who didn’t make it into the history books.

Prospectors also led the way in the opening of the American West, not mountain men or cowboys - prospectors. The gold rush of 1849 sent hundreds of thousands of gold seekers across the West. In 1860 Montana had a population of zero White people, three years later there were over 30,000 White people in the territory as a result of prospectors.

Prospectors also drove the founding of many cities in the West, for example: Denver and Aspen, Colorado, Rapid City and Deadwood, South Dakota, Silver City and Cerrillos, New Mexico, Juneau and Cordova, Alaska, and Wickenburg and Tombstone, Arizona to name just a few. There are also dozens of ghost towns in the West and most of them were originally mining camps

<http://ghosttowns.com/>

When Arizona’s first territorial governor came to central Arizona’s Granite Creek in 1863 to select a site for a capital city that would be called Prescott, prospectors had already staked dozens of claims on the creek.

According to the United Nations World Food Program “Underground salt deposits are usually discovered by prospectors searching for water or oil.”

So much is owed to the prospector that there should be a National Prospectors Day with parades, gold panning, costume competitions, geocaching contests, music, food, games of chance, tee shirt sales... no, wait. No prospector would want anything to do with that; forget I said it.

Transparent and intangible as sunlight, yet always and everywhere present, [the desert] lures a man on and on, from the red-walled canyons to the smoke-blue ranges beyond, in a futile but fascinating quest for the great, unimaginable treasure which the desert seems to promise. Once caught by this golden lure you become a prospector for life.

- Ed Abbey