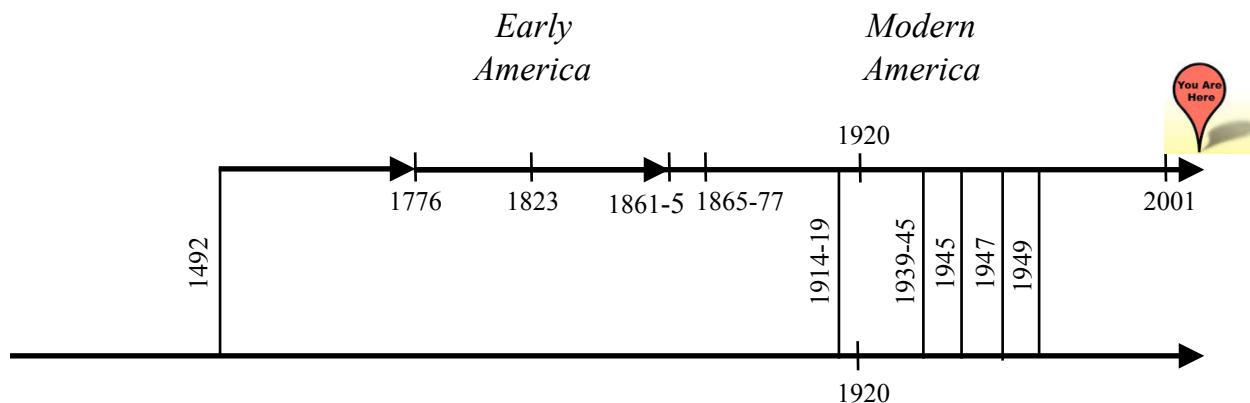


#### D. The European Discovery of America (1492)

1. We know that *early America* maintained its political separation from Europe, and that *modern America* became politically interconnected with it.
2. This is not an accident. It is because American civilization was created by Europeans after America was discovered by Christopher Columbus in 1492.
3. We will now add this connection between European history and American history on our combined timeline.



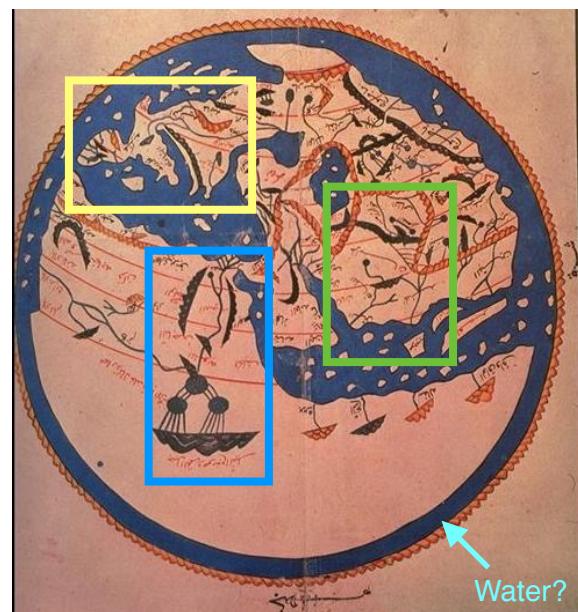
4. Many people today reject the idea that Christopher Columbus discovered America.
  - a) One reason is that we now know that a man named Leif Erickson sailed to America c.1000 BC. Some believe that this disqualifies Columbus's voyage from being called "the discovery of America."
  - b) A different reason for not saying Columbus discovered America is that people now called "native Americans" were already present in the Americas before he arrived. Some believe that this disqualifies any European expedition as a "discovery," because others were already there.
  - c) A final reason people do not want to say Columbus discovered America is that he and the Spanish conquerors who followed him were not respectful of the primitive natives they found. People today feel that this makes Columbus a bad person and they don't want to give him credit as an explorer.
5. The HistoryAtOurHouse approach to history says that the purpose of history is: *to reveal and explain the world we live in*. Leif Erickson and the "native Americans" did not make the world we live in, but Columbus did. Indeed no discovery was more important to changing the world into what it is than Columbus's discovery of **1492**. Without it the United States would never have existed. *That* is why we call it "the discovery of America."

## E. The Basics of Columbus's Discovery

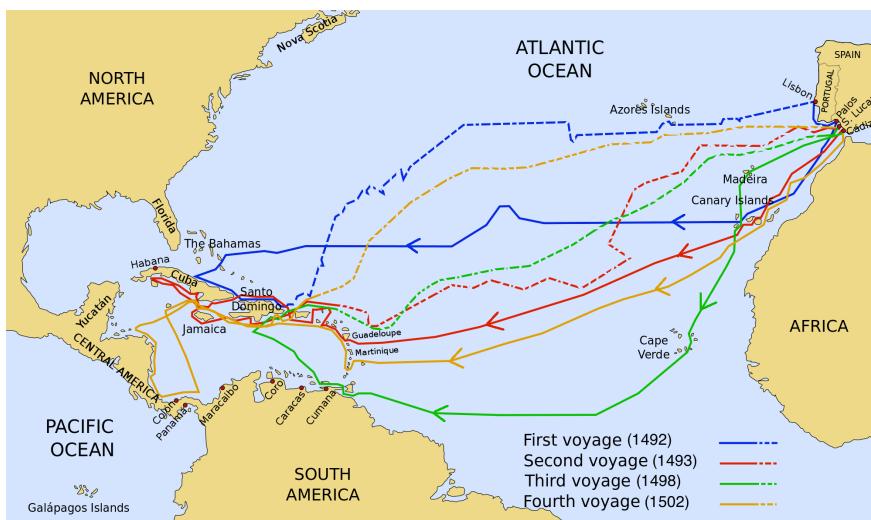
1. Prior to 1492, even the most educated men in the world had no idea that America existed. The most advanced maps of the world showed only Europe, Asia, and Africa.
2. Because of this view of the world, European explorers first set out to reach China and the rest of Asia by sailing around Africa.
3. They wanted to reach China because an Italian merchant named Marco Polo had been there. His book called "*The Travels of Marco Polo*" told of China's wonders.



An ancient Greek map by Ptolemy shows Europe (highlighted in yellow), the Nile river (highlighted in blue), and India (highlighted in Green). A medieval map by the Muslim geographer Al-Idrisi over a thousand years later shows the same basic outlook. One difference is the hint that Africa may be surrounded by water. Ptolemy's map suggests instead that the land wraps around to Asia. Of course, neither map shows America. As of 1492, all that would change.



4. Why travel around Africa? In between Europe and Asia was Islamic civilization, which since its advent had been an enemy of European Christendom.
5. By 1492, Portuguese explorers had discovered the southernmost tip of Africa, and were soon to make their way to India for the first time.
6. Columbus proposed to Isabella, the Queen of Castile (a part of Spain) that it would be better to sail west to Asia, because the Earth is a sphere.
7. Because America is where it is, that is *not* possible! Columbus reached the Bahamas and sailed around the Caribbean, thinking he had reached the "Indies" (near Japan). He only realized that he had found a new continent, or a "New World," after making multiple return voyages.



Columbus's four voyages to the Americas revealed more and more. The third voyage, in particular, when Columbus found the Orinoco river in Venezuela. It was such a big river that Columbus realized only the rain from a large area on a *continent* could produce so much water.