

Why is the Centre named Centro Caboto Centre?

Giovanni Caboto was born around 1455 in Gaeta, Italy, near Naples; by 1461 he was living in Venice. In about 1482 he married a Venetian woman, Mattea, with whom he had three sons: Lodovico, Sebastiano and Sancio.

A merchant like his father, Caboto traded in spices in the ports of the eastern Mediterranean and became an expert mariner. Valuable goods from Asia (spices, silks, precious stones and metals) were brought either overland or up the Red Sea for sale in Europe. Venetians played a prominent role in this trade.

Caboto, like his fellow countryman Christopher Columbus, wanted to be part of the expanding frontier of exploration in the Atlantic Sea.

In 1495 Caboto moved to Bristol, England, where he settled with his family. The merchants of Bristol supported his scheme to reach Asia by sailing west across the North Atlantic. Furthermore, in England, Caboto received the backing he had been refused by the monarchs in Venice, Spain and Portugal.

On March 5, 1496, Henry VII issued letters patent to Caboto and his sons authorizing them to sail to all parts “of the eastern, western and northern sea” to discover and investigate “whatsoever islands, countries, regions or provinces, [...] in whatsoever part of the world placed, which before this time were unknown to all Christians.”

Caboto’s ship was named the *Mathew*, almost certainly after his wife Mattea. It was a *navicula*, meaning a relatively small vessel of 50 toneles. There were about 20 people on board. The *Mathew* left Bristol sometime on May 20, 1497. Approximately 35 days later, on June 24th, Caboto sighted land and accosted at Cape Bonavista in Newfoundland. Caboto was back in Bristol on August 6 after a 15 day return crossing. This means that he explored the region for about a month.

The year 1997 marked the 500th anniversary of Caboto’s discovery of Newfoundland. On this historic occasion, England, Italy and Canada joined in the celebrations. Since the bulk of the construction of the new Italian Community Centre in Winnipeg took place during 1997, it was decided to name the building ***Centro Caboto Centre***.

Giovanni Caboto

The First Italian in Canada

Il primo italiano in Canada

“Il miraggio di nuove scoperte, la sete di sapere sono l’essenza della natura umana e la base di ogni progresso.”