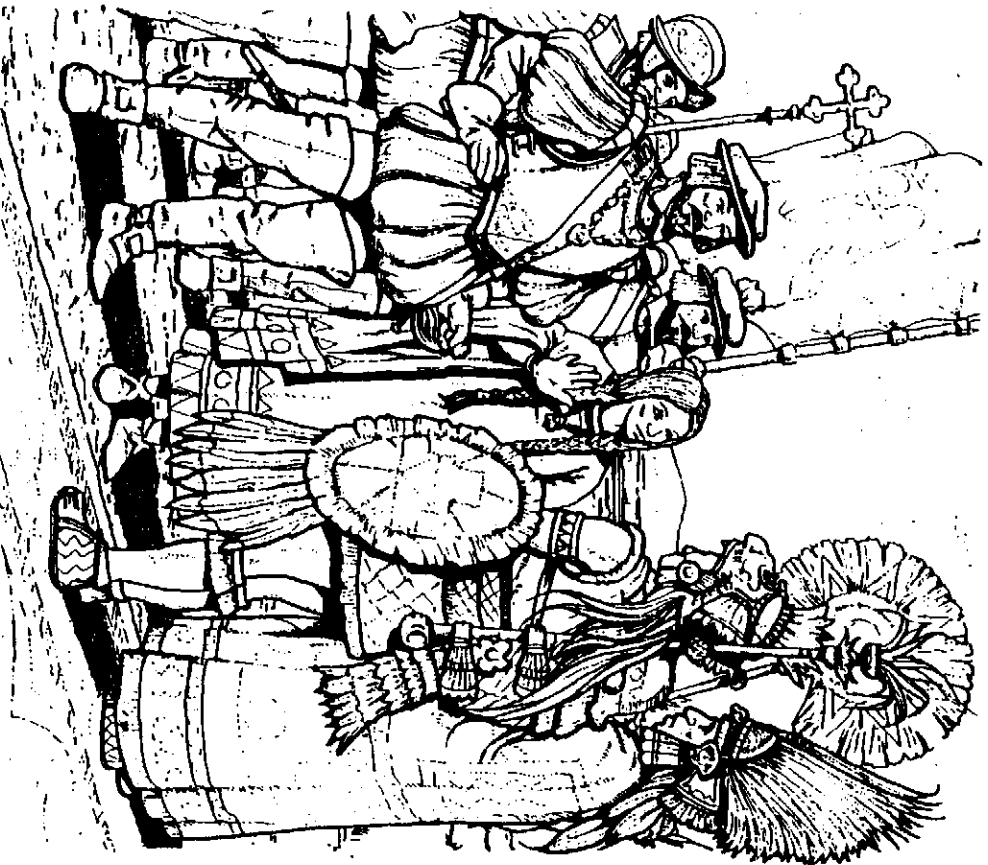


The Spanish Explorers



Herrán Cortés and Motezuma, Tenochtitlán
(refer to Vol. III, issue 2)

The Spanish Explorers

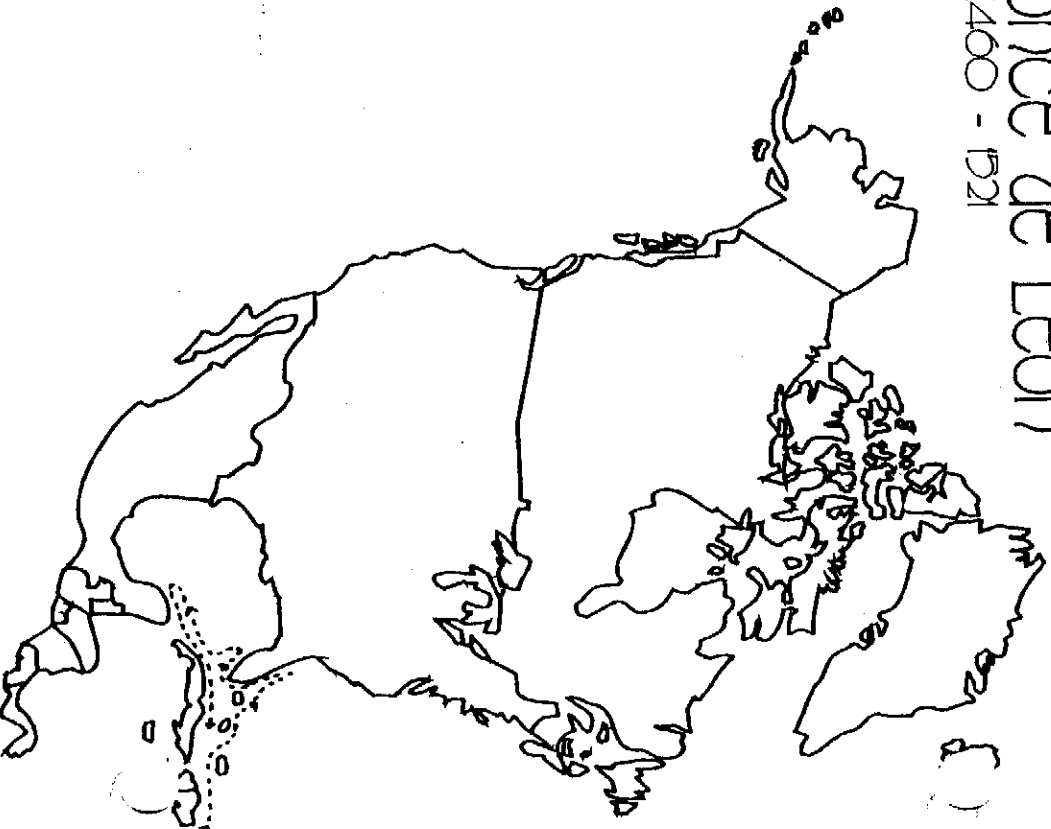


Juan Ponce de León
1460 - 1521

Juan Ponce de León was born in Tierra de Campos, Spain, in 1460. As a young man he joined the Spanish forces who expelled the Moors from Granada in 1492. He accompanied Christopher Columbus on his second voyage to the new world in 1493.

He was instrumental in suppressing the Indian uprising on the island of Hispanola and won favor in the eyes of Christopher Columbus. Upon hearing of gold in Puerto Rico he asked for permission to explore the island in 1508 and claim it for Spain. The settlement of Caparra was established and Juan Ponce de León became the first governor of Puerto Rico in 1510.

He set sail in 1513 in search of the Fountain of Youth. It was believed to be on the island of Bimini, north of Cuba. He sighted land on March 27 near what is modern day St. Augustine. He is known as the first European to set foot on the North American Continent. Since it was during the Easter season he named the land Florida from the Spanish *Pasqua florida* (flowery Easter). He believed the land to be an island and sailed south to explore the western end discovering the Florida Keys. In 1521 he was mortally wounded by the Indians while trying to colonize Florida under the Spanish flag. His expedition retreated to Cuba where he died. His remains can be found in the cathedral in San Juan, PR.



The Spanish Explorers

Francisco Pizarro

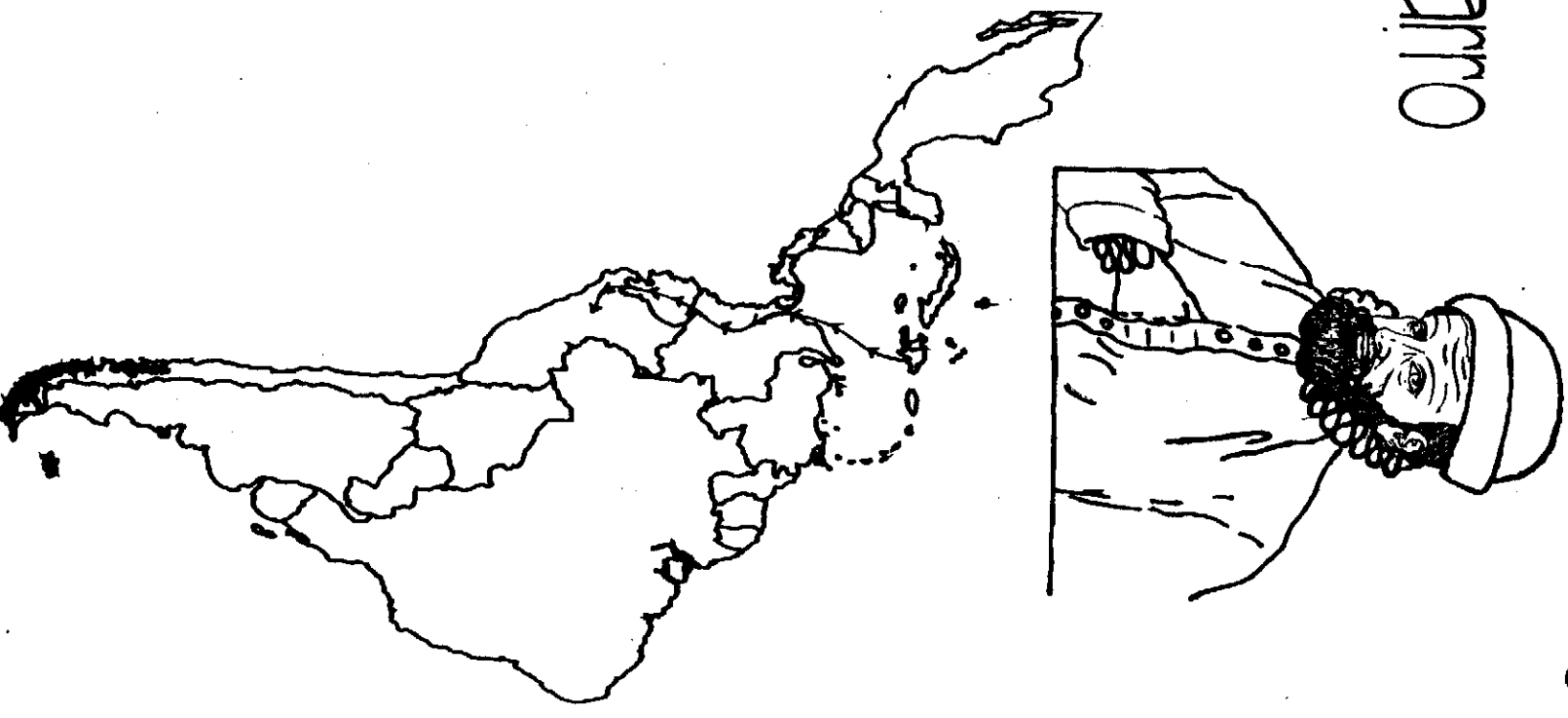
1475 - 1541

Francisco Pizarro was born in 1475 in the city of Trujillo in the province of Extremadura, approximately 132 miles southwest of Madrid, Spain. The city today still remains full of memories of the Spanish Conquistador who conquered the mighty Inca of Peru.

He was the illegitimate son of Don Gonzalo Pizarro who was known for his outstanding skill and bravery during his many battles against the Moors. Francisca Gonzales, his mother, was the daughter of a common laborer. He was never taught to read or write but spent most of his early childhood tending sheep. It is believed that young Pizarro left Spain and joined the Spanish army at age 19 and later, at age 25, sailed to America in 1502 in search of wealth. He spent the next 10 years in the midst of many battles during the conquest of the New World in which he gained recognition for his skills as a veteran in combat. At age 35 he was one of the Spaniards to make the crossing of Panama with Basco Núñez de Balboa to discover the Pacific Ocean and claim it for Spain. He became one of the first citizens of Panama, receiving land and wealth, and in his late 40's, headed to South America.

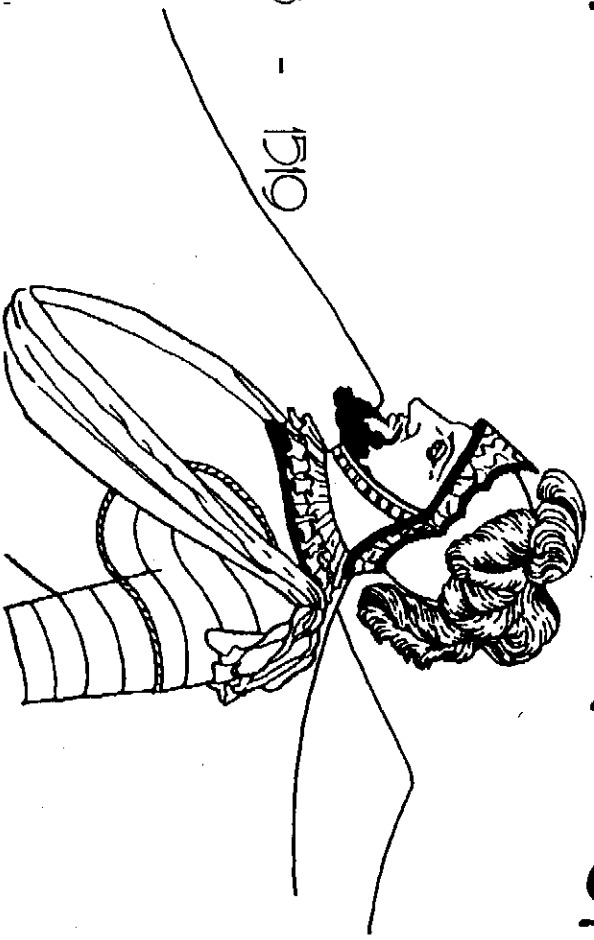
During this time the Inca Empire was in the midst of a bloody civil war that weakened the Inca forces. The motive was to determine a new ruler of the Inca. Atahualpa triumphed as the chief after killing his brother Huascar and restored peace to the area.

In 1532, Pizarro and 160 men, after exploring the coast of Ecuador and Peru, met with the new Inca ruler in the mountainous town of Cajamarca, Peru. They were invited to meet with Atahualpa because of their offer of friendship. The Spanish priests traveling with Pizarro tried to convince Atahualpa to convert to Christianity and give up their own gods. The king was unable to understand the religious books presented to him and threw them on the ground. The Spanish soldiers were then given orders to attack taking Atahualpa captive. The Incas paid a ransom for his release. He was killed nonetheless. On November 15, 1533 Pizarro conquered the Inca capital of Cuzco and later became the governor of Peru.

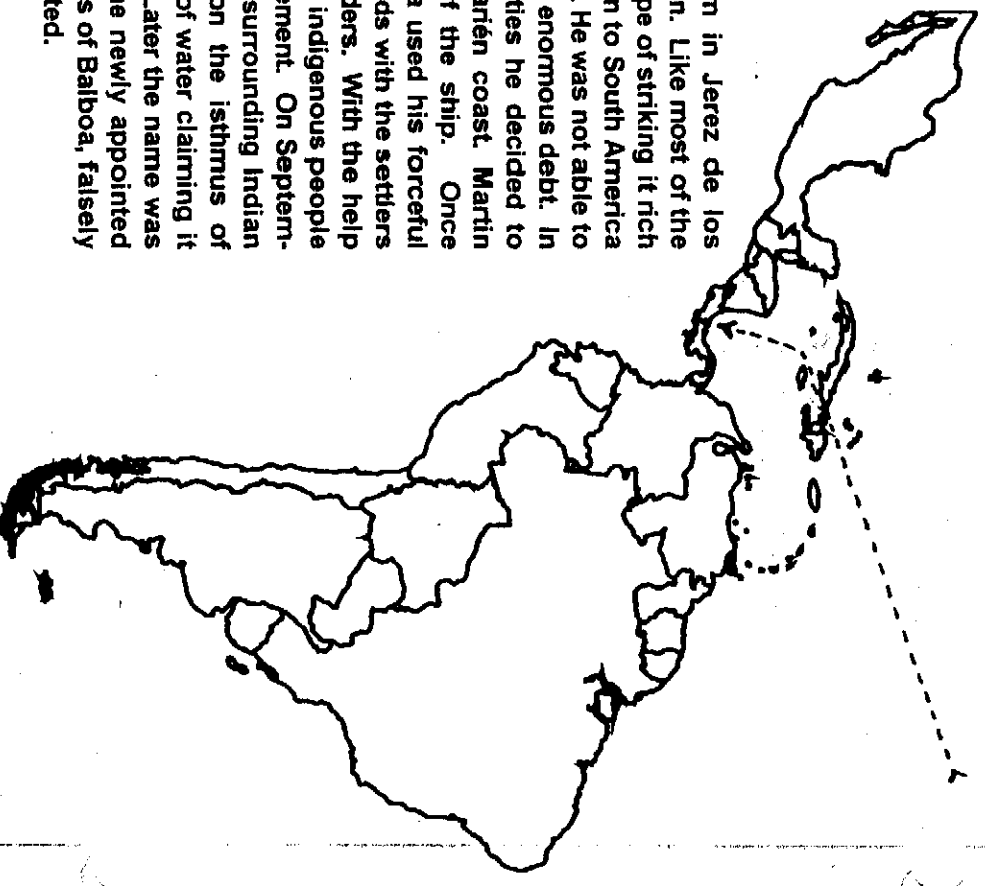


The Spanish Explorers

1475 - 1510

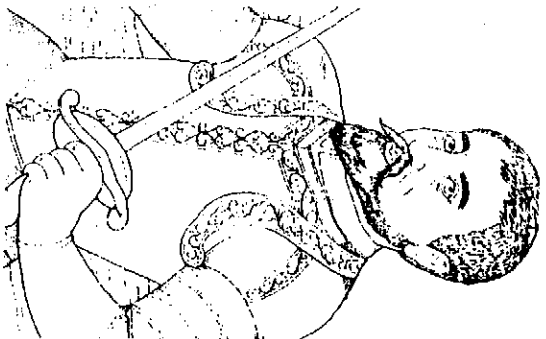


Vasco Núñez de Balboa



Vasco Núñez de Balboa was born in Jerez de los Caballeros in the province of Badajoz, Spain. Like most of the Spanish explorers he left Spain with the hope of striking it rich in the New World. His first voyage took him to South America after which he returned to Hispanola to live. He was not able to settle into colonial life and soon created an enormous debt. In order to escape his financial responsibilities he decided to hide away on a ship heading for the Darién coast. Martin Fernández de Enciso was the captain of the ship. Once arriving at the Spanish settlement, Balboa used his forceful personality and friendly ways to make friends with the settlers and natives soon becoming one of the leaders. With the help of the Spanish settlers and hundreds of the indigenous people he began exploring the area near the settlement. On September 25, 1513, after several battles with the surrounding Indian tribes, they climbed up over the crest on the isthmus of Panama and looked out onto a vast body of water claiming it for Spain. He named it "The South Sea". Later the name was changed to the Pacific Ocean. In 1519, the newly appointed governor of Darién sent from Spain, envious of Balboa, falsely accused him of treason and had him executed.

The Spanish Explorers



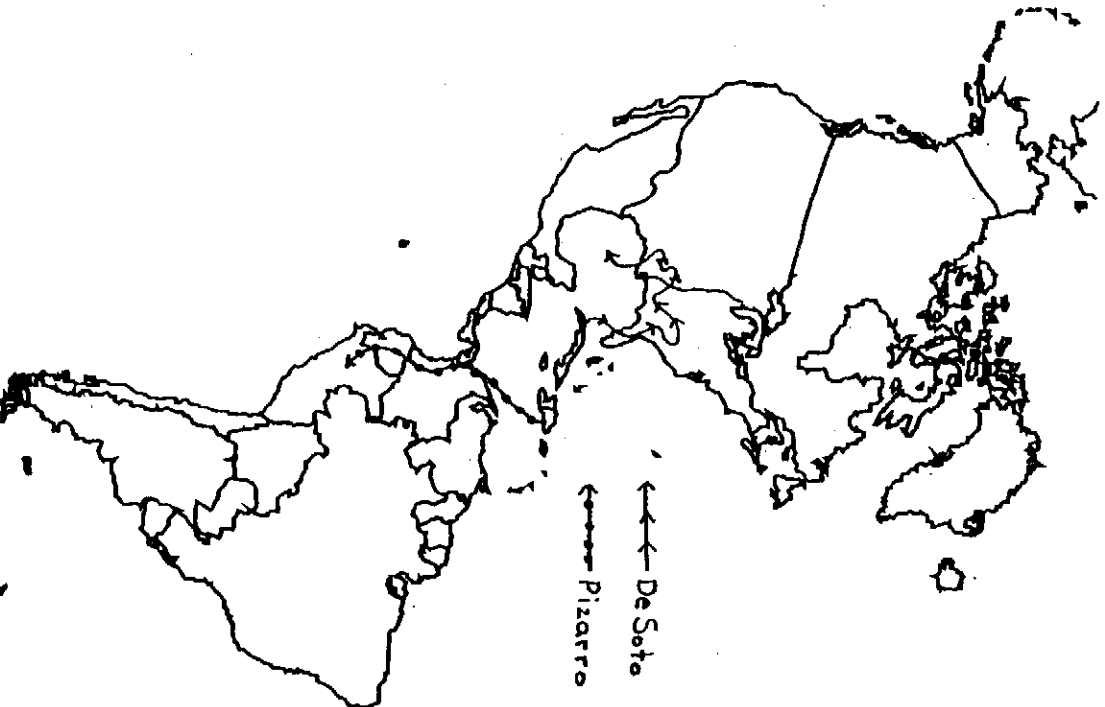
Hernando de Soto

1500 - 1542

Hernando de Soto was born in Jeréz de los Caballeros in the provincia of Badajoz in 1500. His early years of exploration were spent in Nicaragua, Central America under the direction of Pedrarias Dávila.

In 1532 he joined forces with Francisco Pizarro in search of gold and land in South America. He won favor with Pizarro and was chosen to ride on horseback into the Inca capital. He was the first European to meet Atahualpa, the Inca King, and was part of the Spanish army who helped defeat the Inca Empire.

He was not granted land in Central or South America but instead was made governor of Cuba in 1537. His continued desire to obtain land for himself led him to ask permission of King Charles of Spain to explore Florida. He and his men were the first Europeans to travel into the interior of the mainland. Their expedition began in 1539 on the west coast of the peninsula near present day Tampa Bay. They traveled north through Florida, Georgia, and North and South Carolina. They returned to Florida for the winter and then continued further north through northern Georgia to Tennessee then south into Alabama. They met with resistance along the way and after many bloody battles, only half of the expedition arrived at the Mississippi River on May 8, where they spent the winter of 1541. He was the first European to see the Mississippi River from within the mainland. He died on May 21, 1542 of a fever and was buried in the Mississippi River.



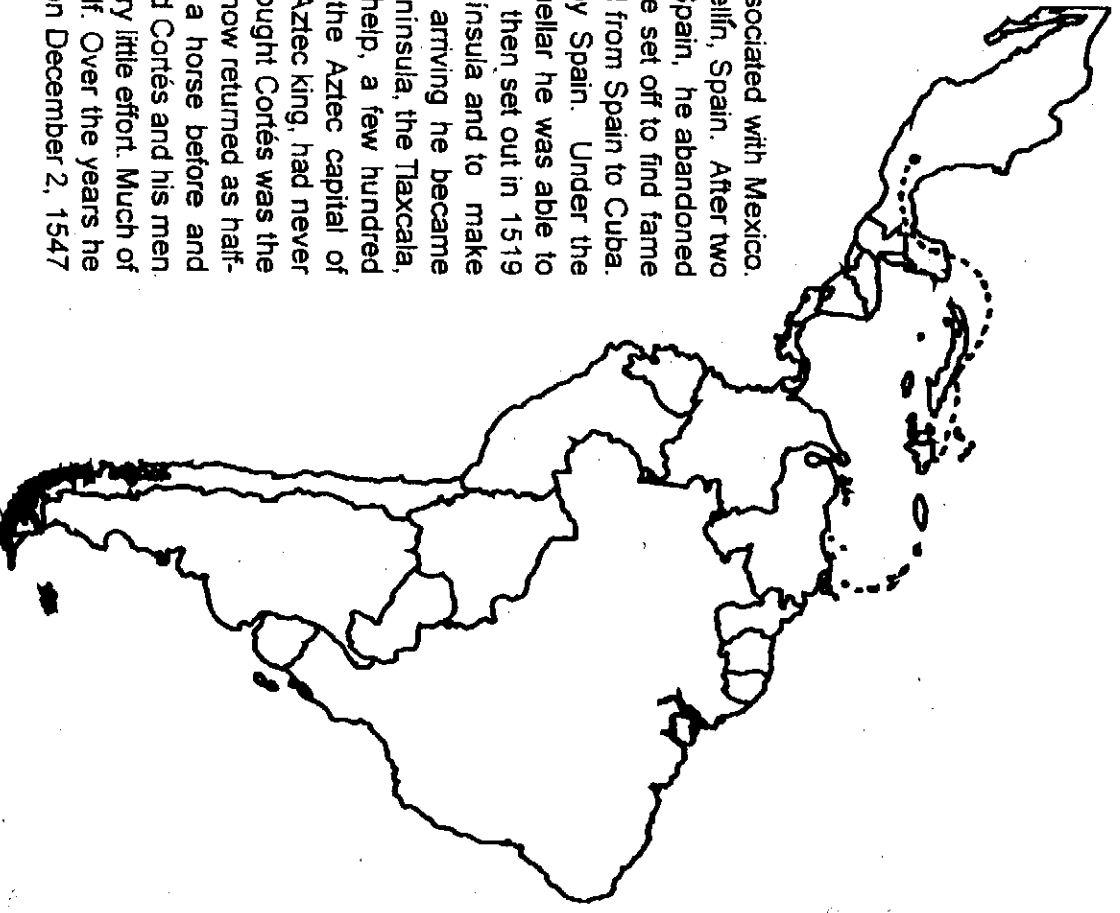
The Spanish Explorers



Hernán Cortés

1485 - 1547

Hernán Cortés is most often associated with Mexico. He was born to Spanish nobility in Medellín, Spain. After two years at the University of Salamanca, Spain, he abandoned his studies. In 1504 at the age of 19 he set off to find fame and fortune in the New World and sailed from Spain to Cuba. Hispanola had already been claimed by Spain. Under the direction of Diego de Velázquez de Cuellar he was able to participate in the conquest of Cuba. He then set out in 1519 on his own to explore the Yucatán Peninsula and to make contact with the Aztec Indians. Upon arriving he became aware that the Indians of the Yucatán Peninsula, the Tlaxcala, hated the Aztecs. Together with their help, a few hundred Spaniards and horses they rode into the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlán. Because Moctezuma, the Aztec king, had never seen a bearded white man before he thought Cortés was the returning god Quetzalcoatl, a god who now returned as half-man, half-beast. He had never seen a horse before and thought it to be one creature. Unopposed Cortés and his men were able to capture Tenochtitlán with very little effort. Much of the land in Mexico he claimed for himself. Over the years he returned many times to Spain. He died on December 2, 1547 near Sevilla, Spain.



The Spanish Explorers

Francisco Vásquez de Coronado

1510 - 1554

Francisco Vásquez de Coronado was born in Salamanca, Spain in 1510. He was the second born son of a wealthy family and because of birth right, the oldest son was to inherit the family fortune. Francisco, therefore, set out for the New World to make his own wealth.

Under the direction of Mendoza, The Viceroy of Mexico, Coronado was appointed governor of New Galicia, a province of northern Mexico. He was considered to be a very promising and capable subject and when Mendoza decided to send an expedition in search of the legendary Seven Cities of Cibola, he was chosen to command the exploration. In 1540 he along with some 250 Spaniards, 900 Indians and a considerable number of livestock journeyed to the Southwestern United States in hopes of finding gold.

They spent time in Santa Fe, New Mexico and during their three years of travel they crossed the Rio Grande and sent several different parties to different regions. They discovered the Grand Canyon, Colorado River, Hopi Indians of Arizona, and proceeded into Kansas. He is known as the Spaniard who penetrated furthest into the United States than any other Spanish explorer before him yet because he did not find gold his expedition was considered a failure. He returned to Mexico where he remained until his death in 1554.

