

We now proceed to trace very rapidly and concisely a picture of the principal geographical data collected, at different epochs, in the bleak and barren regions of the two poles.

The first navigator who penetrated into Arctic America was Sebastian Cabot, who, in 1498, endeavoured to search out a North-West Passage from Europe to China and the Indies. Considering the epoch at which it was made, and the imperfect condition of the science of navigation, it was an enterprise of almost sublime audacity. A Scandinavian tradition attributes the same grand feat to a son of King Rodian, who flourished in the seventh century, to the Norwegian Osher (in 873), and to the Prince Harold and Magnus (in 1150).

Sebastian Cabot succeeded in reaching Hudson's Bay, but was then compelled by the insubordination of his crew to retrace his adventurous steps.

In 1500, Gaspard de Cortereal discovered Labrador; in 1553, Sir Hugh Willoughby Nova Zembla, and Chancellor the White Sea. The able and persevering Davis visited, in 1585, the western coast of Greenland; and, two years later, sailed up the strait which bears his name. Barentz discovered, in 1596, the frozen shores of Spitzbergen, which were surveyed in 1607 by Henry Hudson, as far north as the 82nd parallel. Three years afterwards, Hudson gave his name to the great bay or sea of Labrador, but here his progress was checked. His crew having revolted, he, his son, and eight sailors who remained faithful to him, were abandoned in a small boat without stores or provisions. Thus perished one of the greatest of the early navigators.

Jan Mayen's Island was discovered in 1611; the strait which Baffin mistook for a bay, and which still bears his name, was discovered in 1616. In his first voyage, in 1727, Behring caught sight of the strait which separates Asiatic Siberia from America; he traversed it in 1741, but his ship was wrecked, and he himself died of scurvy on its inhospitable coast.

Discovered in 1771, by a fur-trader, named Hearne, the Polar Sea was explored, some years later, by Mackenzie.