

*The European Discovery of America/The Northern Voyages | Samuel Eliot Morison*

Bookplate reads:

Presented by the citizens of New Bedford, Mass on the dedication of the monument to Estevan Gomez, October 11, 1999

Gomez was a celebrated Portuguese mariner who emigrated to Spain. Charles V originally considered him to captain the circumnavigation, a job that eventually went to Magellan, with Gomez serving as pilot. In Strait of Magellan, Gomez mutinied, took over his ship and turned back, deserting Magellan. Upon arriving back in Spain, he told Charles he could find a better northern route, but he was jailed. Eventually Charles relented because he heard the French were setting out to find a northern passage, let him out and set him up to try. The way the voyage was financed influenced his compulsion to bring back something of value - part of Gomez's salary was advanced in the form of the cargo he carried on the ship. Any riches discovered during the voyage came back and was divided up thusly: 75% to be shared between the crown and those who put up the initial stake (i.e. Gomez's advance) first and the remaining 25% for officers and crew.

He landed at Cape Breton in February 1525 and made his way down the coast, reaching the Penobscot Bay around June 1525. On the banks, he encountered the Abenaki people who came to the coast each summer to fish and dig for clams. In a letter back to Spain recounting his landing at Bangor, he said the land was well forested with oak, birch, olive and wild grapes, but no gold, so he continued south.

His detailed notes and drawings of the coastline were formative in early attempts to map the east coast of North America, but he didn't find passage through, nor did he find any gold to take back with him. He reached Newport RI in July of 1525, was disgusted by his failure to find anything of value and so kidnapped a "load" of natives so as not to return empty handed, though Charles V had explicitly forbidden the capture/enslavement of people.

When he returned to Spain in August 1525, he announced that he had a cargo of "esclavos" (slaves), which was initially misunderstood as "clavos" (cloves) and word spread that he had brought valuable spices. When the truth was discovered he was scorned and any natives who survived the journey were liberated.

*The New York Colony | Thelma Nurenberg*

Refers to Gomez as a Negro explorer from Portugal who explored the eastern shores of America, says he was the first European who bore evidence of having sailed the shores of Maine and that he reached the site of New York on January 17, 1526

Dictionary of Canadian Biography (website)

Contradicts the book, says Gomez sailed south-north (apparently this is something that scholars debate about regularly), kidnapped the natives in Maine or Nova Scotia and that 58 arrived in Spain alive

Hidden Hispanic Heritage (website)

A project of journalist Miguel Perez who wants to reframe our concept of American history by looking at the explorers that came before the British, who were largely sailing for Spain. He calls it his "pilgrimage in search for America's hidden Hispanic heritage". He definitely takes a very positive view of Gomez's contributions and glosses over the less savory bits.