

Antonio Zeno Encyclopedia Article

Antonio Zeno

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fl. 1300s

Venetian navigator who, with his brother and perhaps Scottish explorer Sir Henry Sinclair, is reputed to have followed the route of European fisherman to North America in 1398, nearly a century before Christopher Columbus, Amerigo Vespucci, and other "professional" explorers discovered the New World. Sinclair's voyage in the northeast Atlantic purportedly resulted in a visit to Nova Scotia, and was documented in letters written home. Zeno's letters remained unpublished until several centuries after his death, surfacing in 1558 when published by his great-great-great-grandson, Nicolo Zeno. The plausibility of Zeno's story was damaged by the imagination of Nicolo, who embellished the manuscript with maps and other editorial materials not originally included in Antonio's journals.