

Spain in America

I. European Explorers and Conquerors

- Native Americans told the Spanish of tales of gold, silver and kingdoms that were wealthy beyond belief
- Spanish explorers (known as ***conquistadors***) were encouraged by the Spanish rulers to find any gold, silver and valuables they could and bring them back to Spain and also to create Spanish settlements.
- Conquistadors were promised a percentage of the wealth they found.

A. The Conquest of Mexico and Peru.

- Many of the Natives tales of gold and riches were false but two empires that did have riches were the Aztecs (Central America) and Incas (South America).
- Hernando Cortes will conquer the Aztec Empire in 1521 which resulted in large amounts of Aztec gold being shipped back to Spain
- Francisco Pizzaro will conquer most of the Inca Empire by 1533 leading to even more gold and silver being sent back to Spain

B. Why Spain Won

1. Spanish had superior weapons and horses (Natives had never seen horses)
2. To many Natives the Spanish seemed like gods - some didn't fight back at first
3. Some Native Americans helped the Spanish because of their dislike of the Aztecs & Incas.
4. Spanish (European) diseases killed large numbers of Native Americans

C. Other Spanish Explorers and Conquistadors

- Spain was hoping to find other lands filled with gold & silver in the Americas like they found in the Aztec and Incan Empires.
- Juan Ponce de Leon - built the 1st Spanish settlement in North America at St. Augustine, Florida. Was searching for the "Fountain of Youth"
- Spanish explorers also heard tales of the "Seven Cities of Gold" but never found these cities and didn't find much gold on the expeditions

II. Life Under Spanish Rule

A. Settlements - As Spain started to colonize the Americas they created three kinds of settlements

1. Pueblos - towns or centers of trade
 2. Presidios - military forts
 3. Missions - religious communities
- Spanish explorers wanted to convert all Native Americans to Christianity

B. Spanish Colonial Society - Spain set up a strict social class system in the Americas with four social classes

1. Peninsulares - highest social class (landowners, gov't officials, heads of the Catholic Church)
 2. Creoles - people born in America whose parents were Spanish
 3. Mestizos - people with one Spanish parent and one Native American parent
 4. Native Americans
- Conquistadors demanded that the Native Americans living on the land under Spanish rule pay taxes and some were forced to work for no pay. This was a form of slavery
 - Many Native Americans were forced to search for gold and silver under poor conditions
 - In 1542 a Spanish priest, Bartolome de Las Casas, spoke out about the poor treatment of the Native Americans so Spain passed the "New Laws of 1542" which forbade Spanish settlers from enslaving Native Americans. The laws though weren't always enforced.
 - Las Casas suggested that African slaves be used instead of Native Americans. As a result thousands of African slaves were brought to the Spanish colonies in the 1500s and by the end of the 1500s slave labor was an essential part of the economy of the Spanish colonies in the Americas

III. Effect on Native American Life

- Native Americans were greatly impacted by Spanish colonization in the Americas
- Native Americans lost their land, were enslaved and many died from European diseases