

Juan de Fuca

Juan de Fuca was a Greek sea captain who sailed for the Spanish king. In 1592, he set off from the west coast of Mexico with two ships, sailing up the coast to try to find the Northwest Passage from the Pacific side of the continent. He claimed to have found the Strait of Anian (now called the Strait of Juan de Fuca).

There are no records of his journey, leading many to doubt his claim. He told other people stories of his journey later in his life. Some parts of his story match locations in the Strait of Juan de Fuca and Puget Sound, while other parts of his story describe locations that are very different.

There is still considerable debate whether or not Juan de Fuca was the first non-indian to explore the coast of the Pacific Northwest. He *may* have been the first, but there is no documented evidence to support his claim. Nevertheless, his stories continued to bolster the idea of a Northwest Passage.

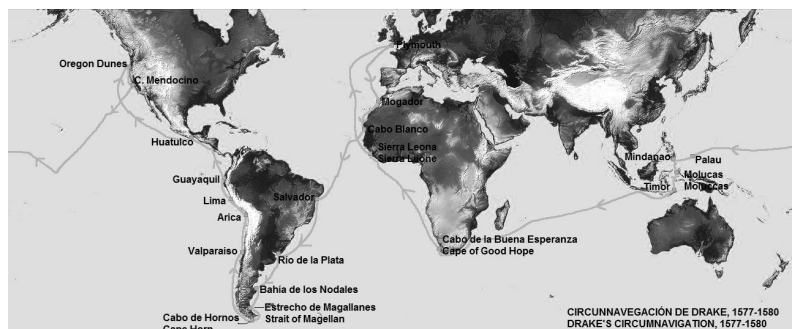
The Strait of Juan de Fuca is named after him, whether he discovered it or not.

Francis Drake: Explorer or Pirate?

Francis Drake was the first British sailor to circumnavigate the globe on a 3-year journey from 1577 to 1580. Queen Elizabeth awarded him a knighthood. The king of Spain labeled him a pirate for capturing a Spanish ship full of gold and silver.

While sailing up the Pacific coast, he made it at least as far as central California before setting off across the ocean toward Asia. In 1579, he stopped in a port along the Pacific coast, and stayed long enough to do repairs on his ships and restock supplies. The exact location of this port is unknown (his ships logs and charts burned up in a palace fire in 1698), but may have been as far north as the Oregon coast.

Drake claimed California for England, further enraging the Spanish, who had a prior claim. This led to an era of conflict over who owned the Pacific Northwest. All of these claims ignored the rights of the Indians who already lived there.



Perez, Heceta, and Quadra

After hearing about British and Russian explorations of the Pacific coast in the late 1700s, Spain sent Juan Perez to the Pacific Northwest in 1774. Juan Perez was the first European to accurately record and map islands off the coast of British Columbia, including Vancouver Island. Perez traded with Indians in Nootka Sound (on the central coast of Vancouver Island on the Pacific side).

In 1775, Perez joined a second expedition, led by Bruno de Heceta, along with another captain, Bogeda Quadra. These explorers mapped and named parts of the Pacific coast, from California to Alaska.

In 1779, Quadra returned for a 3rd expedition, to search for the Northwest Passage and capture the British explorer James Cook. He did not find either. However, he did further explore the coast of British Columbia and Alaska.

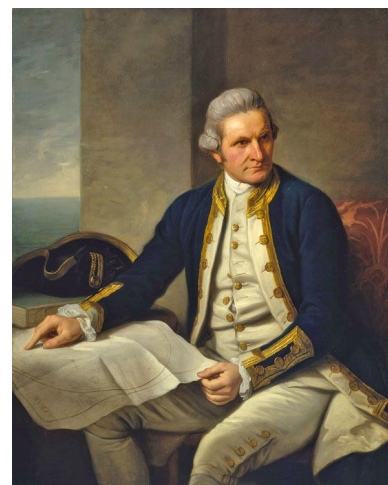
Nootka Sound was later used by both British and Spanish sailors, leading to numerous conflicts until a treaty was signed in 1790.

James Cook

James Cook was a British sailor. He explored the Pacific 3 times, beginning in 1768. His first two voyages, he stayed in the south Pacific. On his 3rd voyage (1776-1780), his mission was to find the Northwest Passage. He discovered Hawaii on his way (which he called the *Sandwich Islands*). He mapped much of the Pacific coast for the British in 1778, from Oregon up to the Bering Strait. He missed the Strait of Juan de Fuca, but made detailed maps from Vancouver Island northward. He spent more than a month in Nootka Sound (on the coast of Vancouver Island), trading with Indians.

Cook was the first person to make a claim to the Pacific Northwest in the name of the British.

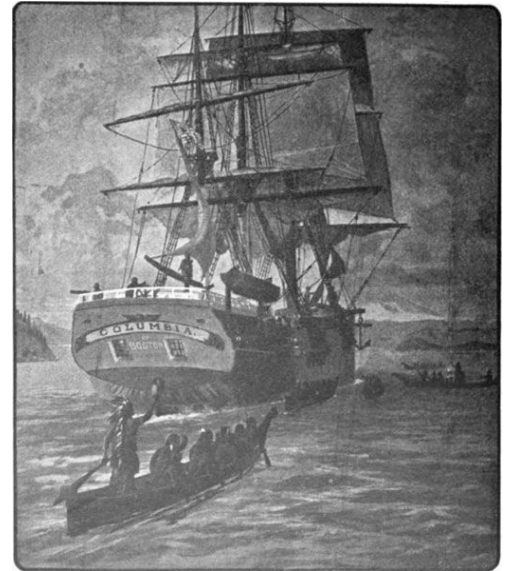
He then returned to Hawaii, where he was killed during a dispute with native Hawaiians. His expedition returned to England without him, but all his maps and logs were preserved.



Robert Gray

Robert Gray was an American merchant sea captain. He twice explored the Pacific Northwest, and was the first American to do so. He was not looking for the Northwest Passage; he was seeking to open trade with China using furs or pelts obtained from NW Indians. On his 1st voyage (1787-1790), he explored and mapped many bays and inland waters of the Pacific coast, and spent the winter of 1788 in Nootka Sound (on the coast of Vancouver Island). With pelts he had traded along the coast, he continued to China.

On his 2nd voyage (1790-1793), Gray set out to repeat the success of his first voyage. He is most remembered for discovering the Columbia River (named after his ship, the *Columbia*). He sailed about 13 miles upriver in 1792. This exploration gave the United States a claim to the Pacific Northwest.



George Vancouver

George Vancouver was a British naval officer. He is most known for his 1791-1795 expedition, exploring Australia, Hawaii, and the Pacific coast of America. In 1792, he spent more than a month exploring the Puget Sound, creating maps so accurate that they continued to be used for more than a century.

Many places in Washington are named after him (or his friends and crew) such as Puget Sound, Mt Baker, Mt Rainier, Mt St Helens, Whidbey Island, and of course Vancouver WA, Vancouver BC, and Vancouver Island.

