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PRESS RELEASE

**Celebrating 500th Anniversary of  
Verrazzano's Discovery of New York Harbor**

Giovanni da Verrazzano, the renown Italian explorer and Renaissance Humanist, (1485-1528), was born into a noble family in Val di Greve, Tuscany. Under the patronage of King Francis I of France, Verrazzano made three exploratory voyages west, hoping to find a passage to the Far East. In 1524, after first landing off the coast of North Carolina and exploring southward, he sailed up the coast on his flagship, *La Dauphine*, and on April 17, 1524, he was the first European to enter the body of water, which is present day New York Harbor. Also, he was the first European to explore the entire East Coast of America. This was 500 years ago, and eighty-five years before Henry Hudson entered the New York Bay in 1609! Verrazzano continued to sail up to the area now known as New England, discovering Block Island and Narragansett Bay, and as far north as Newfoundland before returning to France.

During this voyage, he kept an amazingly detailed journal of the flora, fauna, geography, climate, and description of the Native Americans, including their appearance, customs, and society. This was a profound contribution to the knowledge of this unknown land and its inhabitants. A second voyage in 1527 followed the coast of Brazil. During his third voyage in 1528, exploring the Florida coast, the Bahamas and lower Antilles, among the Caribbean Islands, he encountered hostile Carib Indians, which ultimately led to his capture and death.

Of great significance is that Verrazzano added much geographic knowledge for the mapmakers of his time, which guided subsequent explorers. His *Cèllere Codex*, a letter written to King Francis I, describing America's eastern coastline with descriptions of its geography and inhabitants led to a definitive world map. A rare manuscript copy is in the collection of the Morgan Library & Museum in New York City, along with one of the earliest world globes, depicting the world according to Verrazzano's explorations.

Homages to Verrazzano can be found in his statue displayed in Battery Park, facing the NY Harbor. Other statues can be found at John J. Carty Park in Fort Hamilton, Brooklyn; Rehoboth Beach, Delaware; Newport, Rhode Island; and Greve, Italy. Three bridges, the famous Verrazzano Narrows over New York Harbor, and two other bridges, in Narragansett Bay and in Maryland, bear the name Verrazzano, as well as a commemorative plaque in Staten Island.

Beginning on April 17, 2024, the actual date Verrazzano entered New York Bay, events were held at Staten Island Borough President's office; and at the Verrazzano statue at Battery Park with the participation of Governor Hochul, Italian Consul General Fabrizio de Michele, French Deputy Consul General M. Laurent Brunet, Commissioner of Parks Susan Donoghue, France's former Prime Minister Mr. Edouard Philippe, President of Tuscany Eugenio Giani, and the Italian American Leadership Forum. Events dedicated to the IHCC-NY theme will be throughout October's Italian Culture Month, including the IHCC-NY DaVinci Award, proclamations at all government levels, symposiums, lectures, receptions, a viewing of the *Cèllere Codex*, and a special Postmaster General's commemorative Verrazzano cancellation stamp, along with Verrazzano posters and educational bookmarks.

Comm. Joseph Scieme, president/chair of the IHCC-NY commented that: "We have a great opportunity to salute this year a great Discoverer." April 17 and 2024 . . . important dates for Verrazzano, New York, North America, Italy and the world!

