Nikolaus Federmann Encyclopedia Article

Nikolaus Federmann

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1501?-1542

German conquistador and explorer who led two expeditions (1530-1532 and 1533-1539) into South America for the Weslers, a powerful German banking family. In 1530, the Wesler family sent Federmann to South America to explore the interior of a new colony granted to them by King Charles I of Spain (in present-day Venezuela), seeking the fabled city of gold, El Dorado. In 1533, after a brief return to Europe, Federmann returned to Venezuela to begin another search for El Dorado, during which he explored present-day Colombia, making the first east-west crossing of the Andes, to Bogota. In 1539, he, along with two Spanish explorers, sailed to Spain to submit claims to the land in the region, which eventually was granted to Spain by the Council of the Indes. Federmann died in Madrid in 1542.