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Americae Sive Novi Orbis Nova Descriptio

Stock#: 100533
Map Maker: Ortelius
Date: 1609
Place: Antwerp
Color: Hand Colored
Condition: VG
Size: 19 x 14 inches
Price: Not Available



Description:

Fine Example of Abraham Ortelius' Map of the Americas, One of the Most Iconic Maps of the Western Hemisphere

The map, which shows both North and South America, featured in Abraham Ortelius' *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum*, the first modern atlas of the world. Ortelius' *Americae Sive Novi Orbis Nova Descriptio* is without a doubt one of the most recognized and influential maps of the Americas from the sixteenth century and it had a profound influence on contemporary cartography.

The map went through three separate plates over the course of its printed life, creating three editions. Additionally, there are several states of the first and third editions. This is a first state of the groundbreaking third edition.

North and South America stretch across this single hemisphere map. To the north, North America somewhat resembles the continent we know today, except the area near Alaska is undefined and the northwest bulges westward. South America is a squat landmass. The title is decorated with the strapwork decorations common to the maps in Ortelius' atlas. In the ocean, off what is now Argentina, a sea monster lurks. In the Pacific, ships stream through the water, their sails filled with imaginary winds.

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The Straits of Magellan separate South America from a large southern continent that extends all the way to New Guinea. Tierra del Fuego, named by Magellan because he saw so many small fires burning there, is part of this continent. The name "Novae Guinea", or New Guinea, was coined by Spanish explorer Íñigo Ortíz de Retes in 1545, and it refers to his opinion that the appearance of the native peoples resembled the natives of the Guinea region of Africa.

Two place names in the northwest of North America are particularly interesting. Anian derives from Ania, a Chinese province on a large gulf mentioned in Marco Polo's travels (ch. 5, book 3). The gulf Polo described was actually the Gulf of Tonkin, but the province's description was transposed from Vietnam to the northwest coast of North America. The first map to do was Giacomo Gastaldi's world map of 1562, followed by Zaltieri and Mercator in 1567. The Strait then became shorthand for a passage to China, i.e., a Northwest Passage. It appeared on maps until the mid-eighteenth century.

Quivira refers to the Seven Cities of Gold sought by the Spanish explorer Francisco Vasquez de Coronado in 1541. In 1539, Coronado wandered over what today is Arizona and New Mexico, eventually heading to what is now Kansas to find the supposedly rich city of Quivira. Although he never found the cities or the gold, the name stuck on maps of southwest North America, wandering from east to west.

Ortelius' ability to locate and draw upon both Spanish and Portuguese sources is apparent throughout the map, and is quite remarkable, given the manner in which each nation guarded its cartographic information. Both nations kept their geographic knowledge locked in a single institution, with all cartographic knowledge maintained on a single master map. Copies of the master map were closely monitored, and pilots could be punished for not returning their charts; however, no vault is impenetrable and geographic secrets leaked out, including to Ortelius in Antwerp.

Importance of the third edition

The present example is a third edition, which was printed on a separate copper plate from earlier editions. This third edition incorporated several highly important new discoveries and firsts.

- ***The first appearance of Chesapeake Bay on a map:*** The inclusion of a large inlet in the east seaboard of North America, labeled with the Indian name "Wingandekoa", reflects the earliest unsuccessful attempts by the English to colonize the area.
- ***The first appearance of the Solomon Islands on a map:*** While the islands were first discovered by Álvaro de Mendaña de Neira in 1568, they did not appear on a printed map until Ortelius's third Americas map.
- ***New toponyms have been added in California:*** Ortelius adds the name "California". He also adds "Cab. Mendocino", which was discovered by Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo in 1542. "R. de los



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estrechos" is added.

Cartographic sources

The primary source for the map is Gerard Mercator's 1569 wall map of the world. According to Brandmair, Ortelius's revisions for the third plate were probably spurred on by the publication of Giovanni Mazza's map of the Americas, published in Venice by Rascicotti in 1583.

The three editions

Ortelius's map of the Americas first appeared in the 1570 edition of Ortelius' *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum*. It went through three completely separate plates, as noted in Van Den Broecke. This is Ortelius's third plate, most easily recognized by the lack of a large westward bulge on the west coast of South America.

- First Edition (1570): Bulge in the southwestern part of South America. Large ship in the Pacific above 220 degrees on the Equator, which is sailing with full sails. Large erasure area visible southeast of the Rio de La Plata.
- Second Edition (1579): Bulge in the southwestern part of South America. Large ship in the Pacific above 220 degrees on the Equator, with sails angled upward. Single degree gradations now appear along the equator. Strapwork outer border replaced with a series of half circles (triangular pattern used in border). Sea monster below Rio de la Plata is not as well engraved and the waves in front of the monster are much less obvious. The large erasure area visible southeast of the Rio de La Plata is now missing. Winged lions are atop the cartouche with more elaborate manes.
- Third Edition (1587): Major cartographic additions described below. Ortelius's name and date (1587) appear in the lower right corner. Bulge in the southwestern part of South America is gone.

There are two recorded states of the third plate of Ortelius's map of the Americas. This is an example of the first state.

- State 1. Standard issue, present in editions of the *Theatrum* from 1587 to 1612. (The second plate shows up in a few examples of the 1587 *Theatrum*.)
- State 2. Present only in post-1612 atlases, probably revised circa 1628. This state adds Tierra del Fuego and Fretum le Maire, removes the date. Extremely rare; only seven examples traced by Burden.

Detailed Condition:

Spanish text on verso (1609). Expertly repaired wormholes in bottom margin.