Barry Lawrence Ruderman
Antique Maps Inc.

7407 La Jolla Boulevard
La Jolla, CA 92037

www.raremaps.com

(858) 551-8500
blr@raremaps.com

[First Map of the American Continent] Tavola dell' isole nuove, le quali son nominate occidentali, & indiane per diversi rispetti.

Stock#: 66944
Map Maker: Munster

Date: 1558
Place: Basel
Color: Hand Colored
Condition: VG
Size: 13.5 x 10.5 inches

Price: Not Available



Description:

First Printed Map of the American Continent

Early state of Sebastian Münster's map of America, the earliest to show all of North and South America in a true continental form with a continuous coastline. It is also the first to use *Mare Pacificum* as a place name and one of the earliest depictions of Japan, as this map was published three years before Europeans contacted the islands.

The present map depicts North, Central, and South America in a recognizable, albeit distorted, form. Few place names or geographical features are present, aside from illustrations of trees, mountain ranges, and other scenes. North America is split into two almost separate land masses, with a large body of water cleaving in from the north.

The eastern portion, connected only by a thin strip of land, is labeled *Francisca*, after Giovanni di Verrazzano's 1524 voyage to the Americas in the service of King Francis I of France. The southeastern portion of *Francisca* is labeled *C.Britonum*, recognizing England's early exploration and fishing in the area. An island off the coast of *Francisca*, *Corterati*, likely corresponds to present-day Newfoundland.

The larger, western portion of North America is devoid of place names except for *Terra florida* in the southeast, making the present map the earliest to show the name Florida. In the southern part of North America, the name *Chamaho* refers to what is now Mexico. Off the east coast of Mexico, *Yucatan* is shown as an island.

7407 La Jolla Boulevard
La Jolla, CA 92037
www.raremaps.com
(858) 551-8500
blr@raremaps.com

[First Map of the American Continent] Tavola dell' isole nuove, le quali son nominate occidentali, & indiane per diversi rispetti.

To the east are Cuba, Jamaica, Hispaniola, and *Sciana* (Puerto Rico), with a large Spanish flag planted on it, indicating Spain's Caribbean possessions and the line defined by the Treaty of Tordesillas. A Portuguese banner is off of the coast of what is today Brazil. At the border between Central and South America, an area named *Paria* is indicated as having gold and pearls, as Columbus reportedly found during his voyage.

In South America, Münster includes an illustration of cannibals (*Canibali*) in the northeast, in present-day Brazil. To the northwest is *Catigara*, or *Cattigara*, a city originally referred to by Ptolemy as the most southeasterly point in the known world. Ptolemy placed *Cattigara* on his Great Promontory, or land bridge between Asia and Africa. This bridge between Asia and Africa having been disproven, Münster believed the Great Promontory to be America and thus located his *Catigara* on the coast of present-day Peru. To the southeast is the *Regio Gigantum*, a supposed land of giant Patagonian people as reportedly seen by Magellan on his circumnavigation. The Strait of Magellan is indicated at the southern tip of South America.

To the east of the American continent is the Atlantic Ocean, with the large Portuguese flag in the South Atlantic. Spain and the western edge of Africa can be seen at the eastern border of the map.

To the west of the American continent, the Pacific Ocean (*Mare Pacificum*) appears for the first time on a map using the modern name given to it by Magellan. The ocean is shrunk so that Japan (*Zipangri*) appears to be just off the coast of Mexico. Japan's presence on the map appears three years before Europeans' earliest known contact with the country, revealing the influence of Marco Polo's accounts. Many small islands around and to the west of Japan are labeled *Archipelagus 7448 insularũ*, referring to Polo's account of a series of 7,448 islands—the Philippines. A land mass in the northwest of the map is indicated as *India Superior*, with the regions of *Cathay* and *Quinsay* indicated in China.

South of Japan in the Pacific is a large illustration of the *Victoria*, the only surviving ship of five on Magellan's voyage. At the southwest border of the map is part of an island named *Calensuan*, whose origin is unclear, although it may be a variation of Ceylon.

The map title (one of the ways to identify the various states of this map) appears at top in sentence-case serif lettering, with red marks through the capital *T* in *Tabula*, *O* in *Occidentales*, and *I* in *Indianas*. A black leaf motif is printed on either side of the title.

Aside from being the earliest printed map to depict the Americas in true continental form, Münster's use of the name America (here seen as *Americam* in the phrase printed on South America) cemented it as the name for the New World. The name America had first appeared in Martin Waldseemüller's 1507 wall map of the world, derived from the name of explorer Amerigo Vespucci.

Barry Lawrence Ruderman
Antique Maps Inc.

7407 La Jolla Boulevard
La Jolla, CA 92037

www.raremaps.com

(858) 551-8500
blr@raremaps.com

[First Map of the American Continent] Tavola dell' isole nuove, le quali son nominate occidentali, & indiane per diversi rispetti.

Passage to the West and Verrazzano

Almost as soon as Europeans discovered the Americas, they eagerly searched for a passage that would allow them to traverse the continent by water. In the present map, North America is almost bisected by a large body of water jutting down through what is today Canada, leaving only a thin isthmus connecting it.

Münster's depiction of this misconception in the present map derives from Verrazzano's 1524 voyage. As he passed the Outer Banks of present-day North Carolina, Verrazzano thought he saw a vast "oriental sea," sometimes referred to as the Sea of Verrazzano, leading to Cathay and the Spice Islands. What he likely saw was the long sandbar from the Pamlico to Albemarle Sounds. This misconception is depicted in several sixteenth-century European maps, including Münster's.

This false idea of a vast eastern sea gradually transformed into the myth of a great Western Sea, centering on the story of Juan de Fuca, the Castilianized name of Greek navigator Ioánnis Fokás (Phokás). Little archival evidence survives of Fuca's career, but a chance meeting with an English financier, Michael Lok, in Venice in 1596 gave birth to rumors of Fuca's voyages in the Pacific. Fuca reported that he had been sent north from New Spain twice in 1592 in search of the Strait of Anian. Fuca supposedly traveled up a vast straight at the northernmost point of the west coast of America, around which he sailed for more than twenty days. The Spanish Crown failed to reward Fuca's discovery of an opening in the coast at roughly 47° N latitude and Fuca left the Spanish service embittered. His story lived on in Lok's letters and eventually was published in Samuel Purchas' travel collection of 1625. Fuca's account led to the depiction of a Western Sea in many maps of that time.

Watch Geography Geek's Video on Verrazano's Discoveries!



Publication of the map and states

The first state of the present map appeared in 1540 in Münster's edition of Ptolemy's *Geographia* in an added section of updated maps. Münster included a set of continental maps in this modern section, with

7407 La Jolla Boulevard
La Jolla, CA 92037
www.raremaps.com
(858) 551-8500
blr@raremaps.com

[First Map of the American Continent] Tavola dell' isole nuove, le quali son nominate occidentali, & indiane per diversi rispetti.

this map representing America.

Münster then included it in his *Cosmographia*, starting in 1544, which was very popular, with nearly forty editions published in the following 100 years. Münster's *Cosmographia* was the first influential German description of the world. The present map in its various states was the best known and most widely circulated map of the Americas until Abraham Ortelius' map of 1570.

States of the Map

There are thirteen known states, with differences in the spelling of *Atlantica* in South America, the use of *Temistitan* and *Penuco* in Mexico, as well as several changes:

- State 1 1540 Atlātica Temistitan NOVVS ORBIS in North and South America
- State 2 ca. 1544 *Atlātica Temistitan Regio Gigantium* in South America moved to the east of the small river
- State 3 1544 *Atlātica Temistitan NOVVS ORBIS* removed, *Die Nüw Welt* widely spaced
- State 4 1548 *Atlantica Temistitan*
- State 5 1550 *Atlantica Temistitan Die Nüw…* is moved lower down, and replaced by *Nouus orbis*
- State 6 1552 *Atlantica Temistitan* Latitude and longitude bars added outside the map
- Stare 7 1554 *Atlantica* (not present) Latitude and longitude bars removed
- State 8 1558 *Atlantica* (not present) *Sciona* from the foot of the flag is removed
- State 9 1558 *oua Insula…* (not present)
- State 10 1559 *oua Insula…* (not present) *Sciona* replaced, but in italics
- State 11 1561 *Nova Insula…* (not present)
- State 12 1569 *Nova Insula…* (not present) *Panuco* removed from the Gulf of Mexico
- State 13 1572 *Nova Insula… Temistitan Panuco* replaced

A significant addition to any collection of the Americas.

Detailed Condition: