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Americae Sive Novi Orbis Nova Descriptio

Stock#: 92275
Map Maker: Ortelius
Date: 1571
Place: Antwerp
Color: Hand Colored
Condition: VG
Size: 20 x 14.5 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

Rare Early State of Abraham Ortelius' Map of the Americas, One of the Most Iconic Maps of the Western Hemisphere

Rare early state of Ortelius's defining 16th-century map of America, from the rare early 1571 state of his *theatrum Orbis Terrarum*, the first modern atlas of the world.

Americae Sive Novi Orbis Nova Descriptio is without a doubt one of the most recognized and influential maps of the Americas, which had a profound influence on the development of contemporary cartography. Its cartographic impact was of tremendous importance, with publication lasting for over half a century, with the last revisions to the the final edition of the map being made roughly 50 years after its original publication.

North and South America stretch across this single hemisphere map. To the north, North America roughly resembles the continent we know today, except that the area near Alaska is undefined and the northwest bulges to the east. South America is a squat landmass; the bizarre extension in the southwest would disappear in later editions of the map.

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.



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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 place name first appeared on a world map in 1562, shortly followed by this map. The Strait then became shorthand for a passage to China, i.e. a Northwest Passage and 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, shifting from east to west.

Ortelius's 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.

The title is decorated with the key-like geometric decorations common to the maps in Ortelius' atlas. In the ocean, a sea monster lurks. In the Pacific, ships stream through the water, their sails filled with imaginary winds.

Ortelius' atlas and the states of *Americae Sive/Novi Orbis*

The influence of this and other Ortelius maps stems from the popularity and dominance of his atlas in the European market. In 1570, Ortelius published the first modern atlas; that is, a set of uniform contemporary maps with supporting text gathered in book form. Previously, there were other bound map collections, specifically, the Italian Lafreri atlases, but these were sets of maps—not necessarily uniform—selected and bound together on demand.

Theatrum Orbis Terrarum, Ortelius' atlas, outperformed competing atlases from other cartographic luminaries like the Mercator family. Between 1570 and 1612, 31 editions of the atlas were published in seven languages.

The first plate was updated twice before it was replaced with a second plate in 1579, and can be recognized as follows:



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- 1570: First state mislabels the Canaries as the Azores
- 1570: Second state: Error in first state corrected
- 1575: Third state: The top longitude number 230 erased.

Detailed Condition:

1571L text setting on verso. Expert reinstatement of margins and repair of small closed tears at bottom and to right of map. Very small area (less than 1/4" by 1/4") of expert and invisible facsimile in the upper left corner of the map.