



## Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

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### Americae Sive Novi Orbis Nova Descriptio

**Stock#:** 94682  
**Map Maker:** Ortelius  
**Date:** 1584  
**Place:** Antwerp  
**Color:** Hand Colored  
**Condition:** VG  
**Size:** 19.5 x 14 inches  
**Price:** \$ 5,400.00



#### Description:

#### ***Scarce Second Edition of Abraham Ortelius' Map of the Americas, One of the Most Iconic Maps of the Western Hemisphere***

Important map of America, featured in Abraham Ortelius' *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 from the sixteenth century and it had a profound influence on contemporary cartography.

The map was published for over 40 years, with Ortelius utilizing 3 different copper plates (the 3 editions of the map), each with important cartographic updates. As noted in Van Den Broecke. Additionally, there are several states of each edition of the map, with the dating most easily identified by the text on the verso.

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 to the east. South America is a squat landmass; early editions have an extension in the southwest that would disappear in later editions of the map.

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.

The Straits of Magellan separate South America from a large southern continent that extends all the way



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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 so 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, shifting 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.

### 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.

- 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.



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**Americae Sive Novi Orbis Nova Descriptio**

- 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.

**Detailed Condition:**

Old color. Latin text on verso.