

AMERICA ON THE MAP



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AMERICA'S *BIRTH CERTIFICATE*, THE WALDSEEMÜLLER MAP OF 1507

By Volker Woesner

On April 12, 2007, the German Federal Chancellor of the Exchequer issued a commemorative stamp for the 500th anniversary of Waldseemüller's map. The stamp shows the 12 woodcuts sheets that make up the map. It was designed by Werner H. Schmidt from Frankfurt am Main, Germany, and was printed in a combination of offset and engraving intaglio by Joh. Enschedé Security Print in Haarlem, The Netherlands.



Waldseemüller is considered to be the father of the term “AMERICA” as this map was the first with this name. The map was lost for 350 years, rediscovered in the Waldsburg-Wolfegg castle in Germany in 1901, and sold for 10 million US dollars to the Library of Congress in Washington in 2003.



“America” is a word that is now part of our everyday language. Indeed, in Germany we often speak of “America” and the “Americans” when talking about the “United States.” In 1507, the cosmographer and cartographer Martin Waldseemüller of Freiburg drew and published a huge world map which, when the 12 sections are assembled together, measures 128 x 233 centimeters. He included locations from Rio de la Plata northward gathered by the explorer Amerigo Vespucci. On this map Waldseemüller wrongly attributed the discovery of the New World to the explorer Amerigo Vespucci and named the continent “America.”

By the way, the first time ever North and South America was referred to, was on a map by Mercator around 1538.



Unaccepted competitive designs:



by Klein & Neumann



by Andrea Voß-Acker



by Angela Kuhn



WALDSEEMÜLLER NAMES THE NEW WORLD *AMERICA**

By Walter Klinefelter

In the year 1954, the Italian postal administration issued two stamps of identical design in commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the birth of native son Amerigo Vespucci, the navigator after whom the continents of the Western Hemisphere were named. The portrait showing him with a partially unrolled chart may be a copy of the original painting from life which has been attributed to Angel Bronzino, or of one of the several copies known to have been taken from it. The background consist of a portion of the world map published by Martin Waldseemüller at St-Die in Lorraine in 1507, a map in which the components of the New World are represented by two long and rather narrow island continents. The parts reproduced in the design extend from the coasts of Venezuela to southern Patagonia and only vaguely reflect the shape of the eastern shoreline of the southern continent. The only identifying designation Waldseemüller applied to them in the map proper was *TOTA ISTA PROVINCIA INVENTA EST PER MANDATUM REGIS CASTELLE*. The word *AMERICA* was inserted by the designer.



SC no. 665



SC no. 666



The stamp provides a faithful rendition of South America from Waldseemüller's map. It also includes the only two graphic elements from the map proper: a parrot, mentioned in one of the Vespucci letters, and a caravel, on which he supposedly sailed.

Waldseemüller entitled his composition *Universalis Cosmographia Secundum Ptholomaei Traditionem et Americi Vespucii Alioru[m]que Lustrationes*, and thus gave credit to his source for the information on which he based his delineation of the New World. He was referring here to Vespucci's account of four voyages in which he described extensive discoveries made on the eastern coasts of the southern land mass. The last three voyages have been pretty well authenticated, but the first one, stated to have taken place in 1497-98, when as he claimed, he discovered *terra firma*, has been suspected by historians to have been fabricated out of whole cloth. Waldseemüller had become familiar with

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