



*Totius orbis descriptio tam veterum quam recentium geographorum . . .*

**Cartographer:** Juan Vespucci

**Date:** 1524

**DESCRIPTION:** This large planisphere represents the first cartographic record of exploration in North America after the portrayal of the Cabot landfall on the la Cosa chart (#305). The mapmaker Juan Vespucci, nephew of Amerigo Vespucci, had made several voyages to American waters, according to Peter Martyr, first Spanish historian of the Indies. After Amerigo's death at Seville in 1512, Juan, who had inherited his famous uncle's maps, charts, and nautical instruments, was appointed to Amerigo's former position as official Spanish government pilot at Seville.

Juan soon became as important as his uncle in the management of geographical information from Spain's overseas activities. Juan was a member of the council to improve existing charts and the Badajoz Elvas Commission of 1524, which attempted to resolve Portuguese Spanish claims in the East Indies. During the same year that Vespucci produced this map he was appointed Examiner of Pilots replacing the ubiquitous Sebastian Cabot who was then leading an expedition in Brazil.

From the headquarters they had maintained at Santo Domingo on Hispaniola since 1497, the Spanish reported little progress in the exploration of North America during the following two decades. Juan Ponce de Leon had been in Florida in 1513 searching for the legendary Fountain of Youth and had made an important contribution by describing the Gulf Stream. Freelance slave-raiding trips in the Bahamas and perhaps on the Florida coast were the main activities until 1520. In that year Lucas Vasquez Ayllon, a prominent Santo Domingo leader, organized an expedition to explore lands thought to exist north of Florida. He sent out a ship under Francisco Gordillo that was joined by another under Pedro de Quexos. In June 1521 they landed at the mouth of a large

