



Florida et Apalche

Cartographer: Cornelis van Wytfliet

Place / Date: Louvain / 1597

Size: 12 x 9 inches

Description: This is a highly important map of the southeast and Gulf Coast of North America, from the Rio Escondido, from Cornelis Wytfliet's *Descriptionis Ptolemaicae Augmentum*, the first atlas to focus on the mapping of the New World.

Wytfliet's map is one of the earliest to focus on the southeast and to name *Florida*. It is the second earliest regional map (after the smaller map by Ortelius) to focus on the region. The map is drawn from Geronimo de Chaves' map, which was copied by Abraham Ortelius in 1584. Wytfliet expands the coverage to include more of the Gulf Coast, as well as extending the map north to the Outer Banks of North Carolina and south to Cuba. The inland details are derived from the reports of Hernando de Soto, during his explorations of 1539-42, making it one of the few 16th century maps of North America to include significant inland detail from first-hand European accounts.

The Florida peninsula is altered in shape from Ortelius, in that it is more rectangular and has a pronounced "neck." The source of this delineation appears to be unknown. The *Rio del Spirito Santo* shown here is the Mississippi River. The map is known in only one state, but was also copied by Metellus in 1598.

This atlas is known as the first distinctively American one, since all its maps are of the New World. The map of Florida and Apalche with its Indian settlements reported

by the de Soto expedition, enlarges the area of and adds details to the Ortelius map of Florida, 1584.

The early geographers had no knowledge of the size of the Mississippi River; from the narratives of the de Soto expedition they believed that a range of mountains extended east-west above the Gulf, which would preclude a great river. Wytfliet's rectangular Florida peninsula, with a bottle-neck at the top, is unlike the V-shaped form of most earlier maps.

The pronged *Secco-Sola* (Savannah) River on the Georgia coast was probably based on reports of the network of islands and rivers there.

See also the monograph "The Evolution of Florida on Early Maps" on this website