



Frederick de Wit's masterpiece wallmap. A Cartographical Landmark of America. The legendary large wall nap of America by Frederick de Wit, first published in 1662, here in its final state by Reinier and Josua Ottens ca 1730. Printed on six sheets, total size 101.5 x 124 cm.

A very detailed wall map of the new world. Here in its final state with completely updated geographic rendering of the original colonies, at a time of rapid discoveries and settlements inland. While nearly all wall maps suffer from severe damage, this example is in perfect condition.

This exceptionally rare and important map of America constitutes the final state of the set of wall maps of the four continents, first published by the famous and successful Amsterdam publisher and map seller Frederick de Wit (1629-1706). Only the Europe map carries De Wit's *impressum* and the date 1662 (example in Sächsisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, Dresden).

Of this set of wall maps, the America (1662 first state examples in Boston Public Library and Dresden) was re-issued in 1672, showing De Wit's address with this 1672 date (2nd state, Burden's 1st state; examples in National Maritime Museum, Greenwich and Town Hall of Enkhuizen). Both of these early states show for the Great Lakes one big lake only, open to the west. The copperplates went through a new issue in 1700 (3rd state, Burden's 2nd state; examples University Library, Amsterdam and Institut Cartogràfic de Catalunya, Barcelona). The folio map by Sanson played an important role

in the revision of the geography. In *Nova Francia*, five lakes are now shown in the region of the Great Lakes, with the two westernmost lakes only partly drawn.

In 1710, a few years after the death of Frederick de Wit, a fund auction was held by his widow, including the sales of the copperplates of the four continents. They came in the possession of Pieter Mortier (1661-1711) who did not use them. In 1721, the copperplates were sold in auction by the heirs of his widow, and were acquired by the Ottens publishing house in Amsterdam. The brothers Reinier and Joshua Ottens worked in partnership 'in de Weerelt Kaart' (In the World Map) on the Nieuwendijk, from 1726 until Reinier's death in 1750. With this address also appeared a re-issue of De Wit's wall maps of the four continents. Furthermore – as in the previous states – these maps were issued with city views in the side panels. It is possible that it concerns an unaltered re-issue of the De Wit state of 1700.

Josua and Reinier Ottens were not satisfied with the outdated geography of the America map. The copperplates went through a complete make-over transformation and the geographical content was substantially updated and changed. Many modifications were based on America maps published by Guillaume de l'Isle, including the *Carte du Canada de la Nouvelle France* (1703 and later). The Hudson Bay with neighboring areas and the Great Lakes region were heavily transformed, as was the Mississippi Valley. Notable is the insertion of the *Rivière Longue*, a fictitious western tributary of the Mississippi that was introduced by Baron de Lahontan in 1703.

On the De Wit states of 1662, 1672 and even 1700, the east coast of North America is dominated by Dutch toponyms, based on the early Dutch explorations and the Dutch province of New Netherland. The states of 1662 and 1672 even ignore the British colony of New England altogether, that British colony is not recognized by the Dutch at the time, in contrast to Virginia. The 1700 state does introduce *N. ANGLIA*, but still retains *Nieu Nederland* and *Nieu Amsterdam*, and dozens of Dutch names, even though it had been conquered by the British decades earlier.

In the final state offered here, New Netherland has disappeared. Little trace is left of the earlier Dutch presence, and dozens of Dutch names have disappeared. *Adm. Blocx eyland* remains, named after its first discoverer Adriaan Block in 1614. *Cap Hinlope* has however been added, as well as Orange. We now see the appearance of the British cities of Portsmouth, Boston, Cambridge, Providence, N. Iork and Philadelphia. Inland hundreds of Indian and French names appear that would later find their way into modern names. The French *le Detroit [du Lac Érie]* is where Detroit would be founded later, and *F. S. Louis* is a remote French fortress.

Some old ideas survived in the geography, like the concept of California as an Island. In the lower left of the wall map, south of the Salomon Islands, Pedro de Quiros' *QUIRI REGIO* now has a wide southern coastline resulting in a huge island. In the southernmost Atlantic Ocean, the mythical and fictitious *Insula Saxenburg* is drawn, with the explanation that this was discovered by the Dutchman Jan Leenderts Lindeman in 1670. The oceans are now augmented with trading routes (from the East Indies and West Indies to Europe; from China to Nova Hispania) and ocean tracks of famous explorers including Drake, Vespucci, Magellan, Cortez, de Mendana, de Sarmiento, van Noort, Schouten and Le Maire. The youngest dated track is Halley with year 1700. East of Magellan's Strait are two little islands referring to recent discoveries of 1701 and 1705.

De Wit's beautiful and elaborate title cartouche contains an explanation of an important navigation tool: an elegant mathematical procedure to calculate the distance on a sphere (the earth-surface) between two arbitrary places, given their coordinates of

longitude and latitude. The paradigm uses Euclidean geometry with simple linear chords to replace and approximate spherical trigonometry, which in itself was well-developed but involved calculations that were too complex and time-consuming for most steersmen and navigators.

The Ottens brothers did not want to include the archaic city views panels of De Wit, that no longer fitted in the modern layout they envisaged. The result is a magnificent wall map of the Americas, with a complete transformation of the old geography, a geography that was still heavily in development by further explorations of the coasts as well as the interior. This final state must therefore be regarded as one of the benchmarks in the cartography of America.

References:

Burden, P., *The Mapping of North America II* (2007), Entry 428 (showing in Plate 428 erroneously the De Wit state (1672) of the copy in the NMM, Greenwich)

Koeman, C., *Atlantes Neerlandici* (1967-71) pp. 85-86 and 191-192.

Shirley, R., *The Mapping of the World* (1983) Entries 453 and 500.

Werner, J., *inde Witte Pascaert* (1994) pp. 52-54.