



# Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

7407 La Jolla Boulevard  
La Jolla, CA 92037

[www.raremaps.com](http://www.raremaps.com)

(858) 551-8500  
[blr@raremaps.com](mailto:blr@raremaps.com)

## Novus Orbis Sive America Meridionalis et Septentrionalis . . . (California as an Island)

**Stock#:** 58012  
**Map Maker:** Seutter  
**Date:** 1730 circa  
**Place:** Augsburg  
**Color:** Hand Colored  
**Condition:** VG+  
**Size:** 23 x 19.5 inches  
**Price:** SOLD



### Description:

#### *Striking, Richly Engraved Map of the Americas*

Fine, decorative and detailed map of the Americas, with California as an island and two richly illustrated cartouches.

The present map depicts the Americas and parts of France, Spain, Portugal, and western Africa at its eastern border. In North America, California is depicted as an island, with the supposed Strait of Anian (*Fretum Anian*) separating it from the fabled *Terra Esonis* to the north, whose coastline stretches westward from North America. To the east of California, the Anian River, depicted in place of the Columbia River, hints at the longed-for existence of a Northwest Passage, together with the Strait of Anian. To the north of this river is the *Pays de Moozemleck*, another conjectural element also seen in maps of America by Seutter's contemporary, Johann Baptist Homann.

In contrast to the many place names, indigenous group names, and topographical features present in the rest of the map, the vast interior of northwestern North America is left empty, its northern and western borders undefined. Farther to the east, the Mississippi River is placed considerably west of its actual course, and the Great Lakes are oddly shaped, with large bays strangely added to the west coasts of Lakes Superior and Michigan.

In South America, which is given a wider shape than in reality, the voyage of Ferdinand Magellan



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(1519-22) is highlighted with *Terra Magellanica*. The island of Tierra del Fuego, at the tip of the continent, is also given the name *Magellanicae*. An abbreviated dotted line in the Pacific Ocean stretching to the northwest off the southern tip of *Terra Magellanica* traces part of Magellan's voyage.

Other dotted lines originating in this area trace parts of other important explorers' voyages. These include the 1615-1617 voyage of navigators Jacob Le Maire and Willem Corneliszoon Schouten to discover a new route to the Moluccas, an important center of the spice trade, and the exploration of the western coast of the Americas by Sir Francis Drake, part of Drake's 1577-1580 circumnavigation of the world.

Off the coast of Peru, a line represents Alvaro de Mendaña de Neira and Hernán Gallego's 1567-69 voyage resulting in their discovery of the Solomon Islands, depicted too far to the east in the present map. Another dotted line coming off the Peruvian coast traces Mendaña's next voyage (1595-97), with Pedro Fernandes de Queirós as pilot. This voyage aimed to colonize the previously-discovered Solomon Islands; however, the Solomons could not be re-located and Mendaña died of fever during the voyage.

Perhaps the most striking aspect of the present map is its two large, finely engraved cartouches. The cartouche in the upper left has text describing European exploration of America by Christopher Columbus and Amerigo Vespucci and the conversion of indigenous peoples to Christianity. Above this text, the Virgin Mary sits on a pedestal holding a large cross, a chalice, and open book. To her left, European men converse at a dining table. To her right, indigenous people in loincloths and feathered headdresses kneel before an altar laid with a crucifix, chalice, and urn.

The cartouche in the lower left depicts an indigenous person hanging a tapestry with the map's title on a rocky outcropping, over which exotic birds perch and fly. Indigenous people are seen fishing, cutting sugar cane, farming, and paying tribute to a chief. The richly illustrated scenes in these cartouches complement the detailed geographical content and reveal the European visual imaginary of America.

The present map appeared in Seutter's *Atlas Novus sive Tabulae Geographicae*; the atlas was first published in Augsburg in 1720. It is similar to earlier maps by Johann Baptist Homann and Adam Friedrich Zürner.

### **California as an island**

One prominent detail in the present map is the island of California. From its first portrayal on a printed map by Diego Gutiérrez, in 1562, California was shown as part of North America by mapmakers, including Gerardus Mercator and Ortelius. In the 1620s, however, it began to appear as an island in several sources.

This was most likely the result of a reading of the travel account of Sebastian Vizcaino, who had been sent



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north up the shore of California in 1602. A Carmelite friar who accompanied him later described the land as an island, a description first published in Juan Torquemada's *Monarquia Indiana* (1613) with the island details curtailed somewhat. The friar, Fray Antonio de la Ascension, also wrote a *Relacion breve* of his geographic ideas around 1620. The ideas spread about New Spain and, eventually, most likely via Dutch mariners and perhaps thanks to stolen charts, to the rest of Europe.

By the 1620s, many mapmakers chose to depict the peninsula as an island. These included Henricus Hondius, who published the first atlas map to focus solely on North America with the island prominently featured in 1636. Hondius borrowed his outline of California from another widely distributed map, that of Henry Briggs and printed in Samuel Purchas' *Hakluytus Posthumus or Purchas his Pilgrimes* (1625). Other prominent practitioners like John Speed and Nicolas Sanson also adopted the new island and the practice became commonplace.

Father Eusebio Kino initially followed along with this theory, but after extensive travels in what is now California, Arizona, and northern Mexico, he concluded that the island was actually a peninsula. Even after Kino published a map based on his travels refuting the claim (Paris, 1705), California as an island remained a fixture until the mid-eighteenth century, as can be seen in the present map.

### **Strait of Anian and Terra Esonis**

North of the island of California is the mythical Strait of Anian. This strait, believed to separate northwestern America from northeastern Asia, was related to the centuries-long quest to find a Northwest Passage connecting the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific. Appearing on maps beginning in the mid- to late-fourteenth century, the rumor of this strait and a Northwest Passage in general inspired many voyages of discovery, including those of John Cabot, Sir Francis Drake, Gaspar Corte-Real, Jacques Cartier, and Sir Humphrey Gilbert.

The term *Anian* itself comes from Marco Polo's thirteenth-century accounts of his travels. Polo used the term to refer to the Gulf of Tonkin, but cartographers at the time of Jansson thought it could refer to this supposed strait between Asia and North America. The Strait of Anian, so named, first appeared in a 1562 map by Giacomo Gastaldi, and was later adopted by Bolognini Zaltieri and Gerardus Mercator.

A few decades later, English financier Michael Lok advanced the story of Juan de Fuca (the Castilianized name of Greek navigator Ioánnis Fokás), who supposedly sailed the Strait of Anian. Little archival evidence survives of Fuca's career, but according to Lok, Fuca reported that he had been sent north from New Spain twice in 1592 in search of the Strait of Anian.

Fuca supposedly traveled up a vast straight at the northernmost point of the west coast of America,



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around which he sailed for more than twenty days. The Spanish Crown failed to reward Fuca's discovery of an opening in the coast at roughly 47° N latitude and Fuca left the Spanish service embittered. His story lived on in Lok's letters and eventually was published in Samuel Purchas' travel collection of 1625. Fuca's account helped to keep this chimerical strait on many maps of the time. It was not until 1772 that Samuel Hearne conclusively disproved the strait's existence.

North of the Strait of Anian is the vast, westward-stretching coastline *Terra Esonis*, here obscured by one of the large cartouches. *Terra Esonis* represents Portuguese explorer João da Gama's claim to have seen an uninterrupted coast northeast of Japan stretching from Asia to North America. The present map does not depict the northern extent of either *Terra Esonis* or the Strait of Anian, again leaving open the possibility of the existence of a Northwest Passage.

### **Legends of Gold**

This map also references the persistent European belief that the Americas were a land of gold. In South America, Lake Xarayes (also known as *Eupana*), is featured prominently in the northern part of the territory labeled Paraguay. Traditionally, this lake was one fictional location of El Dorado.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Europeans believed El Dorado to be a place of immense riches somewhere in the New World. Spanish explorers of South America in the sixteenth century heard legends of a ruler of a tribe in the Andes Mountains in present-day Colombia who was covered in gold dust; they referred to him as "the gilded one." Although this legendary tribe was never located, this did not end the belief in El Dorado. In the seventeenth century, Sir Walter Raleigh traveled twice to Guiana to search for El Dorado. This expedition was not fruitful and eventually led to the death of both Raleigh and his son.

In North America, south of the Anian River, the depiction of Quivira and Grand Teguaoio represents another legend of gold. Starting in the sixteenth century, the legendary Seven Cities were believed to be located in as yet unexplored areas of New Spain—the seven cities of Cíbola and Gran Quívira.

In 1540, this belief, likely combined with various indigenous legends, led Francisco Vázquez de Coronado to embark on an (unsuccessful) expedition to find these mythical cities. Coronado gave the name Quívira to parts of Kansas, Nebraska, and Utah. The mythical kingdom of Teguaoio, first mentioned in the mid-sixteenth century, seems to have emerged out of the legend of Cíbola. The location of these mythical kingdoms full of gold and silver continued to shift as more territory was explored.

These mythical and conjectural geographic elements are just some of the fascinating details in this finely-wrought map representing Europeans' perceived achievements in the New World.



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**Detailed Condition:**