

AMERICA by Ian Hackett © IH 2017

““I think I’ll call it America”, I said as we hit land” Bob Dylan, “115th Dream” on *Bringing It All Back Home* (1965).

Cast (in order of appearance)

John (Giovanni Caboto/ John Cabot) – a seaman

Chris (Christopher Columbus/Christobal Colon) – a seaman

Rich (Richard ap Merike/Richard Amerike) – an entrepreneur

Court Officer

David, Alison & Anna – a local family

Magistrate

Prosecuting Counsel

Defence Counsel

Prisoner, Thomas Croft

2 Guards

John Jay – a merchant adventurer

Rich’s Secretary

San – John Cabot’s son, Sancius

Angelo – a European refugee in the beach scene

Cuba – a Caribbean refugee in the beach scene

Nicar – a local chief in the beach scene

Ho (Alonzo Hojeda) – a Spanish admiral in the beach scene

Al (Alberigo Vespucci/Amerigo Vespucci) – an adventurer and writer

Martin Waldseemuller – a mapmaker

Lud (Gautier Lud) – secretary to Duke René II of Lorraine, Waldseemuller's main sponsor.

SCENE 1: Bristol Magistrate's Court, 4th July, 1482.

The magistrate's bench is empty. The court officer stands next to it. The rest of the court is filled by a crowd including John, Chris, Rich, David, Alison and Anna. Prosecuting and Defence counsel enter.

Court Officer: This court is now in session. Pray silence for his honour, the magistrate.
(Magistrate enters and sits.)

Magistrate: Bring in the prisoner. (Thomas Croft enters, flanked by 2 guards, & stands in dock.)

Crowd cheers.

Magistrate: You are a popular man, Mister Croft.

Alison (whispers to David & Anna): He's selling cod for a penny a pound. Of course he's popular.

Magistrate: Mr Thomas Stanley Croft, customs officer of the City of Bristol, you are charged with non payment of customs duty on the importation of over 1,000 tons of dried salted cod between the years of 1480 and 1481, a crime so detrimental to the interests of His Majesty King Edward IV and to the legitimate fishermen of this city, that it would normally attract the penalty of execution, but which, in this case, is further aggravated by the fact that you are His Majesty's trusted customs officer in this city. How do you plead?

Croft: Not guilty your honour.

Magistrate: Thank you Mr Croft. I now call upon the prosecuting counsel to conduct the crown's case against you.

PC: Mr. Croft, you have seen the written evidence of countless citizens of Bristol to whom you have sold dried salted cod and re-soaked salted cod during the years of 1480 and 1481, yet even your own records show that no import duty on this cod has ever been paid. How do you expect this court to accept a plea of “not guilty”?

Croft: I am not guilty, sir, because none of this cod has been imported. It has all been caught by my own men in the Bristol-built ships, *Trinity* and *George*, leased from the Bristol ship-owners, Mr Richard Amerike and Mr John Jay. This, sir, is an all-English enterprise.

PC: But how can this be, Mr Croft? We are not just talking about fresh cod here, or even salted cod, but DRIED salted cod, and, as any fisherman knows, it is totally impossible to dry cod on board a ship sailing on the high seas. I put it to you, sir, that you have been supplementing your catch by buying dried cod from Reykjavik or some other foreign port, and that this dried cod is therefore liable to import duty. How could it be otherwise?

Croft: Some of our cod has, indeed, been dried on land, your honour, but by my own crews on uninhabited land to the west of Iceland. It cannot, therefore, be deemed to be imported.

PC: But, Mr Croft, this court knows of no land to the west of Iceland apart from the permanently ice-covered and ill-named Greenland and, of course, Cathay. Do you expect this court to believe that you could dry cod in the cold climes of Greenland, or that you have sailed across thousands more miles of the western sea to dry your cod on uninhabited islands off the coast of Cathay?

The prosecution rests its case.

Magistrate: You have heard the case against you, Mr Croft. It would appear that any defence must depend on the presentation of evidence of hitherto unknown lands in the western seas. Are you in a position to present such a defence?

Croft: I am your honour and would refer you to my counsel.

Magistrate: Very well, please proceed.

DC: Thank you, your honour. The defence calls Mr John Jay. (Jay enters witness box.)

Court Officer (offering Jay bible): Please place your hand on the bible and repeat after me, “I promise to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help me God.”

Jay (hand on bible): I promise to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help me God.

DC: Thank you for attending this court Mr Jay. What can you tell us of hitherto unknown islands in the western seas?

Jay: These islands may be unknown to the court your honour, but I was first alerted to them around the public houses of Bristol as early as 1470. Sailors from Iceland often talked not only of visiting Greenland, but also Helluland, Markland and Vinland – the lands of stones, wood and vines – all to the west of Greenland; and others from Ireland talked of Hi Brasil, an island named for a fisherman from the north eastern Irish clan of Brasil or Ui Breasail. I also heard talk of Basque and Breton fishermen finding new sources of cod in far west, so, after armed ships of the Hanseatic League and Kingdom of Denmark sought to prevent my ships from fishing in the North Sea or Icelandic waters, I went to London to find out more. While I was there, I saw charts produced by Angelino Dulcert of Majorca and by Andrea Bianco of Venice. Both charts showed Brasil and other islands in the western seas.

Magistrate: Are you able to present these charts, or even copies of them, in evidence, Mr Jay.

Jay: No, your honour. The charts turned out to be rubbish anyway. But they did inspire me to equip 2 ships – my own *George* and Richard Amerike’s *Trinity* – in order to allow Mr Croft to assess the possibility of fishing for cod in the far west, and these ships did find both cod aplenty and the land that we have been using to dry the cod.

Magistrate: And do you have charts showing us exactly where this land is, Mr Jay?

Jay: I do, your honour, but as they contain commercially sensitive information, I have not brought them to court. But Mr Croft has used them to make several fishing expeditions and I can offer the court this statement (hands document to magistrate) swearing that this land has not only

been found, but also returned to several times and used for the purpose of drying cod caught by the *George* and the *Trinity*. You will see that it has been read and signed by 4 of Croft's men, and that it also bears the marks of 30 more confirming that it has been read to them and that its contents are true.

Magistrate (reads document): Thank you Mr Jay. As you are under oath and as I also know you as a man of your word, I am fully satisfied by this evidence. Mr Croft, I see no purpose in taking up any more of this court's time. I find you innocent of all charges against you. You are free to go. (Crowd whoops and cheers.)

Chris: Whoa! E fantastico!

John: E Stupefacente!! (Magistrate exits; followed by court officer, guards and PC; Amerike, Jay, DC and several others surround Croft in a congratulatory huddle. Chris approaches John as the crowd thins out.)

Chris (to John): Sei Italiano?

John: Si. Anche tu?

Chris: Sure am. Born in Genoa.

John: Wow! Me too. So what brings you here?

Chris: Just making a crust on the sherry and dried cod run: Cadiz, Bristol, Reykjavik, Bristol, Cadiz. You know the drill.

John: I do, indeed. I'm stuck in the same rut. But I'm guessing that there's more to you than dried cod and sherry.

Chris: You may be right. I grew up over an Inn in Genoa, helping out with my folks' wine and wool businesses back in the 1450s then started sailing in the Med when I was around 14. Got my first Genoa-Bristol gig in 1470, but our ship was attacked by pirates and I was dumped on a beach in Portugal, with a few other crew members. Anyway, we made it to Lisbon and, while I was there, I heard a vague tale about a Portuguese ship making landfall in the west after being blown across the Mar Oceana – that's the Western Sea in English ...

John: ... or the Atlantic Ocean, as Jay has suggested calling it.

Chris: Whatever! Anyway, it got me thinking about sailing west to reach Cathay, so I've been sailing the Western Sea and keeping my eyes and ears open ever since – mostly between Lisbon, Madeira, Cadiz, Southampton, Bristol and Reykjavik on wine and dried fish runs; all without learning much more – until today!

John: So you want to sail west to Cathay. Me too. I've already been trying to tell Jay and Amerike that their islands would make excellent staging posts and that the profits on silk and spices would soon cover their costs, but they're totally obsessed with their cod and keeping their islands secret.

I had hoped that this case would force more information out of them.

Chris: So how did you get in to all this?

John: Born into it, I guess. My dad was a seaman – mostly carrying salt across the Med from Africa when I was young, but he moved us from Genoa to Venezia in 1461 to try to get in to silks and spices in a big way. That didn't really work out, but it meant that I did get to see the Levant and the Black Sea as a kid and, after he retired, I moved to London and then here. It was me that put Jay on to the Dulcet and Bianco charts. I'm Giovanni Caboto, by the way, but I call myself John Cabot here.

Chris: Christopher Columbus. Pleased to meet you. Maybe we could go to see Jay together.

John: Or Richard Amerike. I think he'd be more promising.

Chris: OK. But how much do you know about him?

John: Quite a lot. He comes from a rich family with lots of land around Ross-on-Wye on the Welsh borders. He's been financing shipbuilding & cod fishing from an office in the city since the 1450s. His

Trinity's a 360 tonner, launched in 1463, and he was a founder member of the Bristol Fellowship of Merchants in 1467. He's also a debt collector; and he owns Clifton Manor, just north of the city.

Court Officer: Come on you guys. You can't stand around here chatting all day. We've got lots more cases to deal with after lunch.

Chris (as he and John are leaving): Do you think we could catch up with Jay or Amerike today?

John: No problemo. They usually hang out at the Coach & Horses.

Chris: So what are we waiting for? I've got loads of research on this and if we put my stuff together with yours, I can't see how they could resist us.

SCENE 2: The Coach & Horses, a Bristol Tavern, later the same day

Croft, Jay and Richard Amerike are sitting around a table drinking. Chris and John enter, loaded down with charts and documents.

Croft (to Jay): Here comes John Cabot again. I think he's in love with Amerike.

Jay: He's got somebody with him. Looks like another Italian. And what's all that stuff they're carrying?

John: Gentlemen, congratulations on this morning's verdict. May I introduce Mr Christopher Columbus. He shares my view that it could be both possible and profitable to sail west to Cathay for silks and spices. Between us, we have lots of evidence to support our case. We'd be happy to show you all of ours if you will show us some of yours, and we could take it from there. Chris, this is Mr Thomas Croft, Mr John Jay and Mr Richard Amerike. (All shake hands.)

Rich: Pleased to meet you Mr Columbus.

Chris: You can call me Chris.

Rich: And you can call me Rich, Chris, but I didn't get where I am today by sharing secrets with foreigners. Your friend John already knows this very well. Good day sirs.

Chris (to John on leaving): That went well. Not much point in sticking around here. Anyway, my ship's leaving for Lisbon soon. I'd like to get back to my wife and little boy in Madeira; then I'll get back to trying to sell my Cathay idea at the Portuguese court – AGAIN. I may even tout it in Spain if that doesn't work out. Ferdinand and Isabella are doing pretty well against the Moors there. If I can get to them when they're feeling flush, who knows? How about you?

John: I haven't given up on Amerike yet. I think that we were just unlucky today. He and his mates were just too high on their cod court case victory.

Scene 3: Richard Amerike's Office, 1494

Rich: Come on in John. It's been a long time.

John: Thank you for seeing me Mr Amerike. Congratulations on your new role too. I hear that one of Earl Henry's first acts as King Henry VII was to make you his Customs Officer for Bristol.

Rich: Yes indeed, John. But you can still just call me Rich. What have you got for me this time?

John: News from Spain, Mr Amerike. You remember Christopher Columbus, the guy I introduced to you just after the Croft case; well, it seems that he lost his wife, moved to Spain and finally managed to persuade King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella to sponsor a voyage west in the hope of reaching Cathay. Anyway, he's back now and claiming that he's got there, but the fact is that all he's found are islands. They are calling them Los Indios. He's left a garrison on the largest, which they've called Hispaniola, but my calculations suggest that they're nowhere near either the Indies or Cathay.

Rich: Yes. I had heard rumours; some mention of gold even; and yes, it has got me thinking about your old proposals again; but what have **you** been up to since our last meeting?

John: I went back home again for a while and travelled to Marseilles, Genoa, Milan, Savoy, Rome, Venice...; had no better luck in finding a sponsor for a west-bound voyage to Cathay, so I decided to try going east: sailed from Venice to Alexandria then travelled overland to the Red Sea, but, by the time I'd got as far as Mecca, I was totally appalled by the desert, the heat, the windstorms, the disease – God knows how Marco Polo coped – and I became even more convinced that the future has to be by sea, and not eastbound. The Portuguese have got that all sown up anyway and the westbound route could be much shorter, although nothing like as short as Columbus still claims. I actually saw him in Valencia on my way back from the east. He totally blanked me. Riding through the city in a fancy carriage, he was, at the head of a huge cavalcade. The whole town turned out for him. The guy's a hero, even though only one of his three ships made it back to Palo. He'll be in Barcelona with Queen Isabella by now, probably planning a much bigger expedition. I can picture a Spanish fleet gathering in Cadiz already. And Pope Alexander has issued a Bull awarding all new found lands in the west to Spain and all in the east to Portugal. They've all got people meeting in Tordesillas now, arguing about how far west of Portugal to draw the dividing line. Crazy, I know, because they've got no idea what's out

there. That's why you need me to clarify what's yours before the Spaniards take it off you. I can do that on my way to Cathay.

Rich: Well, John, I think you've sold me. We can claim the land in the name of King Henry VII and England, and I have just acquired an excellent new ship, the *Matthew*; only a 70 footer, but the sturdiest little ship that you could ever imagine. Let's see if that can get you to Cathay and back with your silks and spices – and with some reliable charts and land claims for me and the king. I don't think that we'll have a problem getting the king to license your voyage.

Scene 4: Richard Amerike's Office, 6th August, 1497

Secretary: Mr Amerike, Mr Amerike. Go to your window now. The *Matthew* is sailing up the river with all its flags flying. John Cabot is home!

Rich (goes to window): Yes, I can see him disembarking. It looks as if he's coming straight here. He looks pretty excited.

John (entering and breathless): Mr Amerike! Mr Amerike!

Rich (turns from window): Yes, John. So you made it to Cathay? I saw you disembarking, but there's not much action at the dock now. Where are our silks and spices? Where are my new charts?

John: No silks or spices, I'm afraid, Mr Amerike, but we did find your islands, and much much more. There's a large mountainous land just to the north of the islands you had charted. We mapped nine hundred of miles of its coast (unrolls map on Rich's desk) but didn't come close to circumnavigating it. It must be thousands of miles around. Every place that we tried to cross it turned out to be just a deep bay or an estuary, and there were always mountain ranges ahead of us. We had to abandon mapping the coast of this New Found Land when we were blown back out to sea. Then we followed another coast to the south-west as far as we could, but it just went on forever – more forests and mountains than you could ever imagine. I think that we've found

the Markland and Vinland of the Icelandic sagas! We must go back as soon as possible to follow the coast to Cathay.

Rich (holding the map down with John): This looks impressive John. You should certainly go back. The king and I have already decided that we want to send a much bigger expedition – maybe 5 or even 6 ships and up to 300 men. The latest news from Spain is that Columbus did make that second voyage that you predicted. He actually took 17 ships and over a thousand colonists. Word is that he found that his garrison on Hispaniola had been wiped out by the natives; but he had the fort rebuilt and the first ships that he sent back from there were loaded with gold, and more ships were already being equipped in Spain when Columbus himself got back a few months ago. Apparently he looked totally dejected. It seems that he's saying that there's no gold left. He just unloaded hundreds of natives instead. He reckons that the natives on the islands are all savage cannibals, but says that the ones that he's brought back are tamer – and that they could make good slaves.

Did **you** find any natives?

And, after what's happened to Columbus, do you still want to go back?

John: We did see lots of movement in the trees and bushes that could have been natives or bears or other wild beasts – or all of these. And, yes, I would certainly like go back, but we will need to take supplies for a much longer expedition – months or years rather than weeks – and we'd need more arms; and plenty of knick-knacks to attract the natives and maybe to trade for furs. But with the king already behind us, it sounds like a good bet.

Rich: No question about it John. You've got the whole Bristol business community excited about what you're doing. The king wants to see you in person though, so you'll need to go to London first, but I'll be getting everything organised while you're away, so you should be sailing west again by the spring.

Scene 5: A Tropical Beach, 1499-1500

John is sitting with his charts, held down by large stones outside a tent. San is looking out to sea and skimming small stones.

John: Come and look at this son, I've got all of our coastal maps lined up together (San joins him over the maps); a year's work set out along nine feet of beach. (He sticks them all together to make one gigantic map and rolls it all up). I can't wait to show all this to Amerike – and to the king. We've discovered a whole new continent. It's going to blow their minds! Time to head home, I think, son. How are the ships looking?

San (looking back out to sea): Still bobbing around as happily as ever, dad. (He takes the map and unrolls it.) I see that you've given names to all the capes, islands and inlets along the coasts that you've mapped, dad, but what are you going to write in that big empty inland space? If we've really discovered a new continent, we should give it a name. Even I know that we can't keep calling it Cathay any more. It's far too close to home.

John: Yes, I have given that some thought, son. Other people have come up with names already, of course. The Ancient Greeks wrote of Atlantis. Mr Jay likes that. Then the Vikings called it Vinland in their sagas. Some of the Bristol cod fishermen call it Brasil, after old Irish references, and the Spanish have already come up with Hispaniola for their island in "Los Indios", which, by the way, I've calculated must be a few hundred miles to the east of where we are now. I've had several ideas of my own too: New Genoa or Veniceola, for example, or even Cabotoa, but I don't think I'd get away with any of those. Back in England, I'd also thought of calling it Crofta or Jaya or Amerika or King Henry the Seventh's Land to honour my sponsors, or maybe New England to honour their country. I even discussed that with the king, but he suggested that we should just stick with New Found Land.

San: New Found Land? That's a bit of a mouthful. What would he call his settlers? New Found Landers, like their neighbours, the Icelanders and Greenlanders?

John: Or Newfoundlish, like the English? That's a bit easier.

San: Or maybe just Newfies?

John: Newfies, son? Now you're being ridiculous. Shush! Did you hear anything just then? I think there's something moving in the jungle.

Angelo (emerging from the jungle with Cuba and Nicara): It's OK we're harmless. We just heard you talking and thought we'd come to say hello.

John (taken aback): You speak English?

Angelo: I do. And Spanish and Portuguese; and I'm currently learning Nicari too! My name's Angelo, and this is Cuba, recently arrived from Hispaniola, and Nicar, who lives here. Nicar is the chief of his people.

John: You caught us by surprise there. We've had problems communicating with the few indigenous people that we've managed to see over the last couple of years.

Angelo: I'm not surprised. Seeing ships like yours, they'd be heading for the hills like deer from a puma, especially those who have heard the stories of the Spaniards. Cuba here rowed her canoe all the way from Hispaniola to get away from them. I left Hispaniola in a caravel, but I'm the last survivor of that escape.

John: Really? So what's happening in Hispaniola?

Angelo: It's total chaos mate. It was chaos before I left and I know from Cuba that it's just got worse and worse ever since. I was with Columbus on his first voyage. I got left on Hispaniola when he sailed back for Spain. Lots of Tainos, Caribs or Haitians – that's what the native groups call themselves – visited our stockade with food and gold at first, but the Spaniards just kept demanding more and more, taking hostages to enforce their demands and killing them when the deliveries faltered, so, in the end, all the Haitian groups just got together, stormed the stockade and wiped out the whole garrison, except for a few of us who managed to sail away. We landed a few miles west of the stockade, fixed up our caravel and just kept heading west; thought we might make it to Cathay, but just got as far as here; and then all but me died of fever or starvation before Nicar here found me and took me in. Nicar tells me that the jungle goes on forever, both north and south, but that there's a big lake just west of here and, beyond that, another western sea that goes on forever – but (pointing east across the Caribbean Sea) without any of the islands that this sea has.

John: So, you knew Columbus. I met him once, years ago in Bristol, and I saw him again in Valencia just after his first voyage. He was a hero back in Spain then, and I heard that he was coming back. Do you know what happened?

Angelo: Yes, thanks to Cuba, I do. He made a second voyage alright. He brought hundreds more Spaniards to colonise Haiti – or Hispaniola as he calls it – then he sailed west along the south coast of the next island, but he turned back before establishing that it **was** an island. The idiot still thinks that he's found Cathay, but we know that he was just mapping the south coast of another island, don't we, Cuba? (Cuba nods.)

John: So where's Columbus now?

Angelo: Well, the Spanish had named him Governor of Hispaniola, but he soon ended up being arrested and the last time Cuba saw him, he was in chains being put aboard a ship going back to Spain.

John: And where are we?

Angelo: Oh, we're definitely on the mainland mate. But it sure ain't Cathay!

John: Does the place have a name?

Angelo: I guess that we'd just call it the land of the Nicari People, but I'll ask (whispers to Nicar).

Nicar: Ahua nahuatl ahua aheaca amatapetl america.

Angelo: He says that they call this place the beach and over there (pointing inland) are the misty mountains.

John: I thought that I heard him say “Amerike”.

Angelo: America, Yes. That’s just Nicari for misty mountains.

John: That’s amazing! Richard Amerike is the name of one of my sponsors.

Angelo: And America also sounds like “I love being rich” in Spanish.

John: And Rich is what Amerike likes us to call him.

San: So it looks like our continent’s name is sorted already!

John: You’re right, son. We’ll have to call it America (crouching down over his maps). I must write that down (continues scrawling all over the maps). Mr Amerike will love it. And if he sends any settlers, he can call them Americans. That rolls off the tongue very nicely. Forget about Newe Founde Land and Newfoundlanders and the rest. I’m sure that the king won’t mind either; not when he sees how big his new continent is!

San: Dad (pointing out to sea). Look! Our ships are on fire! And there are more ships in the bay. It looks as if there’s a landing party heading this way.

John: Can you recognise any of them? Are they our men?

San: No, dad. They look like Spanish soldiers. (Angelo, Cuba and Nicar disappear into the jungle; John starts to roll up his map again.)

Ho (leading soldiers from the landing boat and brandishing his sword): Detener! Enemigos de España! Dónde está tu oro.

John: Señor. Somos hombres pacificos. We have no gold.

Ho (cutting John & San to pieces and grabbing the map): Hey Al. Tengo algo para ti.

Al (following from the landing boat and looking at the maps): E fantástico. Gracias Ho.

Ho: Vamos! Vamos! Let's find the gold!

Al: Hey Ho! Have you looked at that jungle? We're more likely to die in there than to find any gold. Besides, this map is amazing – far more precious than gold. We should get it straight back to the ship.

Ho: And then what will you do with it?

Al: I'll make copies and send them to the king & queen, and to Martin.

Ho: Martin? Who's Martin?

Al: Martin Waldseemuller. He's the most famous mapmaker in the Holy Roman Empire. He'll be able to make more of all this stuff than anyone else that I know of.

Scene 6: Martin Waldseemuller's Study, 1507, a pile of maps on a table and a printing machine

Lud: (knocks at door and enters) Hey, Martin. How's the big one coming along?

Martin: The plates are all done. I'm just about to print the first copy now (pulling lever on machine). I've also got to look through all this stuff to pick out what Vespucci has sent me. He's here in St. Dié, you know. I'm expecting him to drop by this afternoon. It should be an interesting visit. Come and have a look through this lot while we wait for him. (Both sit over the pile of maps.) These are the islands that Columbus mapped on his first voyage in 1492; that one's Hispaniola. (He slides it away). This is from his second voyage, just a few miles of the Cuban coast. I got that in 1496. We know a lot more about Cuba now. (He slides it away). The next one is from Columbus's third voyage. We got this in 1501, while he was still in jail? Or was it a sanatorium? Anyway, he called those islands Trinidad and Tobago, but he was very confused by the land behind the coast line. He knew from the rivers and mountains that it was a large

landmass and marked it “Cathay”. See (pointing); there; but Cathay’s been crossed out and replaced with “Terra Incognita”. (He slides it away). And this one’s from his last voyage. We’ve only had it a couple of months, but it’s probably his best. Pity he died so soon. You can see Trinidad and the coast next to it again, but he’s also mapped that coast for a thousand miles to the west; and that links up with a further four thousand miles of coastline that Vespucci sent me back in 1500. I’ve got that here somewhere too. (He digs it out.) America. This is it.

Lud (looking at the 1500 map): This is amazing. It takes the coast all the way up north to Greenland and Iceland! And you got this from Vespucci in 1500? That doesn’t make sense. I read Vespucci’s *Mundus Novus* and *Three Voyages* as soon as he published in 1503; and I read his updated version – *Four Voyages* – in 1504. They are all about going **south**. In 1500, he was sailing south-east along the coast from Trinidad. That’s when he discovered a huge estuary that he called the Amazon; then he kept following the coast south-east until it became south-westerly. He named that point Cape St Augustine and sailed back from there to Lisbon in 1501. In his latest voyages, he’s followed the same coast south-west as far as another estuary that he called Rio de Janeiro and then another that he called Rio de la Plata – always going south. This 1500 map is all about going north! It doesn’t make sense at all. And what’s this “America” scrawled all across it? Vespucci called his continent *Mundus Novus* originally then changed it to *Quarta Orbis Pars* in his last book, probably to make a point of how big it was.

Martin: It’s certainly big, Lud. And we now know quite a lot about its east coast, but nothing at all about how far south it goes; or how far north; or about its west coast. I’ve just put that in as a long straight line with a few little curves thrown in here and there. And I’ve called the whole thing America.

Lud: The whole thing America?! You mean that you’ve taken one strange word scrawled across one dubious map and given it to a whole new continent! What about all the maps Vespucci has sent you since 1503?

Martin: I don’t think Vespucci will complain. After all, I’ve just named a continent after him.

Lud: Oh, so there’s a Vespuccia too is there?

Martin: No, just America. His Christian name is Amerigo . . . Amerigo/America – get it. And I’ve put his picture on the map too – up at the top, alongside Ptolemy.

Lud: Slight problem there, Mart. Vespucci’s first name is **AL**Berigo. And whoever heard of giving a man’s Christian name to a place, unless he’s a king or a saint? And I don’t think that Vespucci is either of those. He’d never have the gall to suggest naming a continent after himself. And if he did, it would have to be Vespuccia, not Alberiga, and certainly not America. His visit should be interesting. (Knock on door.)

Lud: Maybe that’s him.

Martin: Come in (Vespucci enters, holding hand out to Martin).

Al: You must be Martin Waldseemuller. I’m a great fan of your work. I’m Alberigo Vespucci, but you can call me Al.

Martin: I’m a great fan of yours too, Al, but I thought that your Christian name was Amerigo. Look (lifting lever on printing machine). There’s a picture of you, up with Ptolemy. I’ve called you **AM**erigo Vespucci, and the new continent America. I thought that that was your idea. But that was when I thought your Christian name was **AM**erigo.

Al: So you thought my name was Amerigo. It is now! And a continent named after me! I love it!

Lud: Sorry mates. You’ll never get away with this. The emperor won’t let you call Mondus Novus anything like America, especially if he thinks that you’re naming it after Vespucci and using the Christian name of an ordinary seaman, who’s not even dead yet. He’s already accepted the Pope’s Bull giving it all to Spain and that King Ferdinand has called it Nueva España, New Spain (referring to printed map). Florida’s OK for this bit to the north of Cuba; and Venezuela’s OK for this bit to the south. But America for the whole thing! No way! It’s got to be Nueva España. Fernando Columbus tried to sell the idea of calling it all Columbia. That would probably have got him executed if his dad hadn’t died first; and even now that Chris Columbus is dead, King Ferdinand wouldn’t dream of naming more than one or two small settlements after him. Anyway, Vespucci – I mean Al – if it’s not a variation on your name, where did the idea of calling it America come from?

Al: Oh, it's a long story. And who are you, anyway?

Lud: I'm Gautier Lud, first secretary to Duke René II of Lorraine, Martin's main sponsor and a good friend of His Excellency Emperor Maximilian I. And I have plenty of time for your story.

Al: No, Lud, really. You don't want to know.

Lud: Oh, yes, I ...

Martin (interrupting): Look, Lud's right. I wasn't thinking.

Lud: Damn right, you weren't thinking. If the Pope and King Ferdinand both say that it's Nueva España, then Nueva España it is. And Duke René will insist on that too. He knows that the emperor's son is married to King Ferdinand's daughter, Mad Juana, and, with Queen Isabella already dead, and Ferdinand and Max both getting on a bit, it won't be long before Prince Charles will be King Carlos I of Spain AND Holy Roman Emperor. If your Quarta Orbis Pars is not Nueva España, it's going to be Habsburgia!

Martin: Heaven forbid! I'll change it back to Nueva España, but you don't mind if I run off a few copies of this version first – just for my mates. I've spent a lot of time on these plates. It would be a shame to waste them.

Lud: I'll pretend I didn't hear that. (Curtain closes.)

Narrator: The official version of Waldseemüller's World Map was published later the same year. It shows a new continent called Nueva España with a lot of "Terra Incognita", but it makes no mention of America; and it has no picture of Vespucci up with the picture of Ptolemy. But at least one copy of the unofficial version survived and, when the Fleming, Gerhard Mercator,

produced a much improved world map thirty years later, the new continent was presented as two large landmasses linked by a narrow isthmus. Mercator called the large landmasses North America and South America and, around the narrow isthmus, he acknowledged the existence of an entity called New Spain. You won't find New Spain on any maps of today's America; and even Central America has been divided into several countries. One of them is called Nicaragua. It surrounds a great lake, also called Nicaragua; and, between the lake and the Caribbean coast, there are a range of misty mountains known as Los Sierras de Amerrisque. If you were to dig deeply enough on the beach beneath those misty mountains, you may find the bones of a Bristol-based explorer and his eldest son, the men who discovered and named America.

SOME KEY DATES NOT SPECIFIED IN THE PLAY

1501 Richard Amerike was made Sheriff of Bristol.

1503 Richard Amerike died.

1504 Queen Isabella died. King Ferdinand ruled Spain, the West Indies and New Spain alone.

1506 Christopher Columbus died.

1511+ Further editions of Waldseemuller's World Map were published. They contained no reference to Vespucci or America.

1512 Vespucci died. Mercator was born.

1513 Vasco Núñez de Balboa crossed the isthmus of New Spain and saw the Pacific Ocean.

1516 King Ferdinand died.

1517 Prince Karl Habsburg had mad Juana put away and ruled Spain etc, as King Carlos I.

1519 Waldseemuller died. Emperor Maximilian I died. Karl H became Holy Roman Emperor.

1538 Mercator's World Map was published with no reference to where the name, America, originated.

1583 Sir Humphrey Gilbert visited Cabot's Markland and claimed it for England as Newfoundland.

1585+ The English began settling the east coast of North America. Walter Raleigh called it Virginia.

1587 The English navigator, Francis Drake, mapped the west coast of North America. He called it New Albion.

1594 Mercator died.

1600s 12 more English colonies – Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia – were among those founded north and south of Virginia along the coast between Gilbert’s Newfoundland and Spanish Florida.

1760s Rebellious British colonials in these 13 colonies began referring to themselves collectively as Americans, founding the United States of America in 1776.

1770s Loyal colonials in Newfoundland and the mainland north of the USA started referring to themselves as British North Americans.

1800s Rebellious colonials in New Spain began referring to themselves collectively as Central and South Americans or Latin Americans, but New Spain was split into many different countries.

1867 The British North America Act united the mainland colonies as Canada (the Huron name for village, which some colonials had adopted decades earlier); the mainlanders all began referring to themselves as Canadians and to Newfoundlanders as Newfies.

1949 Newfoundland became part of Canada, but its settlers are still called Newfies.

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