

AMERIGO VESPUCCI AND THE NAME AMERICA

BY

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At a time when the American countries are seeking to know each other better, in order to establish proper relations and to cooperate in enterprises that concern the whole of the New World; when they are beginning to recognize not only their common interests, but also their common origins and history, and the fact that many names ought to be cherished by all the peoples of these continents, it is not out of place to study intelligently the series of accidents, symbolized by Amerigo Vespucci, which led to the vast and enduring injustice that robbed the discoverer of America of the glory of bestowing his name upon an entire hemisphere. The author enables us to do this in a very comprehensive and illuminating manner.—THE EDITOR.

THE new continent, having received by an unwitting error the name of a navigator other than Columbus, we shall now relate succinctly the causes that led to the mistake or injustice.

Amerigo Vespucci, the scion of an honorable Italian family that had been rich, was born in Florence, on March 9, according to some, or on March 18, according to others, of the year 1452.¹ He was the third son of Nastugio Vespucci, a notary public of the city, and of Isabella Mini, a much esteemed lady of the high aristocratic circles.

The education of the young Amerigo was left to the charge of his paternal uncle, the Dominican friar, Giorgio Antonio Vespucci, of the congregation of San Marco, a man of vast culture, a consummate Hellenist and a great friend of the celebrated preacher, Friar Girolamo Mario Savonarola. When Amerigo left college, upon terminating his studies, he entered the commercial house of the Medici, who did business not only in Italy but also in Spain.

The mathematical knowledge he acquired in the halls of learning, he increased later by practice and continuous study, to such an extent that he soon became a specialist both in astronomy and in the art of calculating latitudes and longitudes, not being excelled in these subjects by

any of his contemporaries. Besides, he was a great collector of maps, marine charts and geographical globes.

He came to Spain with a letter of recommendation from Lorenzo de' Medici, upon business connected with the affairs of the house; he resided some time at Barcelona, and then he went to Sevilla, in 1493, to find employment in the commercial house of a great friend of Columbus, the Florentine Gioganni Berardi, established there from 1486. Such was Berardi's credit that in 1495 he made a contract to deliver to the government twelve ships well equipped for the trade to the Indies, engaging to have four ready in April, four in June and the other four in September. The first and second deliveries were made at the stipulated time, but not so with the third delivery, on account of the sickness of Berardi, who at length died in the month of December. The family of the deceased Berardi having put Vespucci in charge of the business, he was able to deliver in February of the following year the four remaining vessels, which weighed anchor some days later for their destination. It fell to his lot to fit out subsequently the ships for the third voyage of Columbus.

The news of the voyages of discovery, and the vicissitudes of commercial life, impelled Vespucci also to take part in them in order to accomplish some laudable undertaking. "I wished to see the world," he wrote to his intimate friend, old fellow-student and countryman, Pietro Soderini, and to this end he embarked in the expedi-

¹The date of his birth, according to Irving (*Life and Journeys of Christopher Columbus*) and Gaylord Bourne (*Spain in America*), was March 9; according to Fiske (*The Discovery of America*), March 18. We adhere to the date indicated by the first two historians.

tion of Alonso de Ojeda, who set out from Spain for the purpose of discovering lands in the new continent, it being suspected, says Irving, that he aided with his money in equipping and supplying a part of the vessels, in order to have a right to share in the gains or the losses of the expedition, since Isabel, as queen of Castilla, did not permit foreigners or even the natives of the kingdom of Aragón, the subjects of her husband, to trade in the Indies.

When Vespucci returned to Spain in 1500, he wrote a letter to his old patron, Lorenzo Pietro Francesco de' Medici, in which he gave an account of this voyage. At the end of the same year or the beginning of 1501, he passed over to Portugal, upon the invitation of the king, dom Manuel, and he made a voyage to the coast of Brazil, where he discovered the two bays which he called Todos los Santos and Rio de Janeiro, and, besides, the cape of Santa María. The course which he followed up to this point was toward the south; then, turning to the southeast, he went as far as latitude 54°, and this accomplished, he returned to Lisboa, in which port he cast anchor, September 7, 1502, after having touched at Sierra Leona and the Azores.

He had described, says Fiske,² an arc of 93°, more than a fourth part of the circumference of our globe, and lost sight not only of the Pole star and the Great Bear, the Swan and the other constellations visible at Lisboa; Castor and Pollux, Arthur and the Pleiades could be seen, but in strange places, while in the heavens, everywhere, revolved unknown stars; the Milky Way changed its form and mysterious black points, lost in the distance of the horizon, seemed to make signals to the traveler to advance into the regions of frost and eternal ice.

These panoramas produced a profound impression on the mind of the Florentine navigator, who, being unable to believe that the continental extension of what he had just discovered could form a part of Asia, conceived the idea that it was a new world unknown to the ancients, if indeed this region were not joined to the Taprobana (Ceylon), or were not the *terra*

incognita of Ptolemy or the antichthones of Pomponius Mela.³

Regarding this voyage Vespucci wrote, in the capital of Portugal, about March or April, 1503, a letter to Lorenzo Pietro Francesco de' Medici, in which he related to him, among other things, the following:

Days ago I wrote thee at sufficient length of my return to those regions, which in vessels, at the cost and by order of the most serene king of Portugal, I sought and explored, the which it is proper to call the NEW WORLD, since the ancients had no knowledge of it, and it appears new to every one who speaks of it; because it goes beyond the ideas of the ancients, the larger number of whom said that to the south of the equinoctial there was no other continent, but only the Atlantic ocean, and if any one affirmed that there might be a continent, it was denied with many arguments that it might be habitable. That their opinion was false, however, and even contrary to every point of fact, this last voyage of mine serves to establish, since in those southern regions I have found a continent inhabited by more different peoples and animals than Europe, Asia and Africa, and in like manner the air is much more temperate and benign than that of any other region known to us.

This voyage produced transcendent results for civilization, as it completely altered the geographical ideas of the period, when it was taken into account that the newly discovered regions did not belong to Asia, as had been believed until then, but to a different continent, the "Fourth Quarter of the World," for the other three worlds already known were Europe, Asia and Africa. Lorenzo de' Medici died in June, 1503, while Amerigo was again sailing to Brazil in company with Captain Gonzalo Coelho. At the end of the same year or at the beginning of the following, there was published a Latin version, with the suggestive title of *Mundus Novus*, of the letter that had been written by Vespucci, and, a few months later, another version in German. When this took place, Ves-

³Pomponius Mela, who was born at Tingentera, Spain, flourished in the first century: a geographer and the author of three books *De Chorographia*, upon geography and manners and customs, the earliest extant account of the ancient world in Latin.—THE EDITOR.

²*The Discovery of America*, Vol. II, p. 107.

pucci was on the coast of Brazil, and Columbus in Jamaica.

The Latin version formed a pamphlet of four pages. Its translator was a friar named Giovanni Giocondo de Verona, an eminent mathematician, the first publisher of Vitrubio, and so famous and accredited an architect that he merited the honor of having confided to him the construction of the dome of the church of Saint Peter, along with Bramante and Michelangelo. When Giocondo, for the purpose of spreading it, translated into Latin the celebrated letter of Vespucci, he then resided in Paris, engaged in constructing the bridge of Notre Dame.⁴ The success produced by the publication of this letter in almost the whole of Europe was so great that, in 1504, there had already been brought out eleven editions of the Latin version, and, in 1506, eight of the German. Vespucci, disillusioned at not beholding his services recompensed by the king of Portugal, abandoned the kingdom in 1505, arrived at Sevilla, had a long talk with Columbus, and, some days later, he set out to the court of Castilla, in search of employment, and with a letter from the admiral to his son don Diego, from which we extract the following sentences:

I have conversed with Amerigo Vespucci, the bearer of the present letter, who goes thither (to the court) summoned upon affairs of navigation. Fortune has been adverse to him, as to many men. His labors have not brought him so much profit as they ought reasonably to have produced him. He goes on my account and with the desire of doing something that may result in advantage to me, if it be in his power. I can not know from here in what way I may be able to employ him that will be useful to me, because I do not know what is needed there. He goes with the determination to do everything for me that may be possible. See in what way he may be of advantage to us, and cooperate with him, that he may say and do all and put into practice his plans, and that all this be done secretly in order that he may not be suspected. I have told him all I can tell him regarding the affair, and I have informed him of the payment I have received, of what is owing to me, etc.

It went relatively well with Vespucci at the court, as the king, don Fernando,

granted him, April 24, 1506, papers of naturalization, "in consideration of his fidelity and of certain good services which he had rendered and which it was hoped he would render in the future;" and he then spontaneously gave him a bounty of 12,000 *maravedis*,⁵ and finally he appointed him, in 1508, chief pilot of the kingdom, with an annual salary of 50,000 *maravedis*, his duties being as follows: to make record of the new discoveries; to indicate to future discoverers the itinerary they ought to follow, to examine the qualifications of pilots, to correct and arrange charts of navigation and astrolabes.⁶

According to Pérez de Gomar:

In his narratives may be seen the modesty of his character as he presents himself as one who is going simply to help in discovering, while, from the acts of themselves, it is evident that these discoveries would not have been carried to a conclusion without his astronomical and cosmographic knowledge.

So, in drawing a parallel between Columbus and Vespucci, he says:

Vespucci has neither genius nor ambition: therefore there remains to us from him nothing more than the disjointed history of his discoveries. He interrogates the stars, surprises the conjunction of the heavenly bodies and coldly calculates distances; he engraves upon paper the profile of the coasts he discovers, and he accepts resignedly the mission of pointing out to new discoverers the itinerary that they ought to follow. On this account Vespucci does not rise to the heights of glory, nor does he descend to the abysses of contrariety.

⁵The *maravedí* is an old Spanish coin, the smallest denomination of the money of the period, sometimes of real and sometimes of imaginary value: the last in use (circulating until the end of the eighteenth century) was of copper, worth a thirty-fourth of a *real de vellón* (equivalent to five cents) or about one-sixth of a cent. *Maravedí* is used like farthing or baubee in such phrases as: "it is not worth a farthing," "a mere baubee," to express what is of trifling value.
—THE EDITOR.

⁶In the letters patent of August 6, 1508, written in Valladolid, the king says: "And because it is necessary that, for said voyage, as for all other voyages, which, with the help of our Lord, we expect to command to be made in order to discover other lands, there be more expert persons . . . it is our will that all pilots in our kingdoms and dominions shall be instructed and shall know what it is necessary to know as to the quadrant and astrolabe . . . that they be not received by the ships unless they shall be examined beforehand by you, Amerigo Vespucci."

⁴John Fiske, work cited, Vol. II, pp. 11 and 12.

No one can rob him, however, of the merit of being one of those who labored most for the discovery of America, and his name, although it should not designate a great continent, ought always to be placed beside the names of Toscanelli and Columbus.

Vespucci was a notable scholar, a distinguished cosmographer, a capable mathematician and an illustrious sailor, not an obscure adventurer or a fortunate pretender, as he is considered by some superficial writers or impassioned historians.

He died in 1512. To his widow, María Cerezo, was extended for life the pension which he enjoyed.

The expression New World, stamped on the private letter made public by the press, moved in such a manner the spirit of the thoughtful groups of Europe that they accepted it as setting forth a real fact. Therefore, in many of the geographical globes of that time, the western hemisphere was thus denominated; but, as a little later this name gave place to that of America, we are going to explain briefly the causes that led to the change.

Saint-Dié, a little village of the Vosges, in which, in 1410, Cardinal Pierre d'Ailly wrote his book *Imago Mundi* that exercised so important an influence upon the cosmographic ideas of Columbus, possessed a college whose existence dated from the tenth century. In it resided, besides, the court of Renaud II of Vaude-
mon, Duke of Lorraine and titular king of Sicily and of Jerusalem. A studious monarch, a fosterer of arts and letters, he gathered at his side a small group of scholars, who, imbued with the ideas of the Renaissance, devoted themselves to studying with profit the Greek and Latin classic authors, in order to diffuse their writings among studious persons. In this group of scholars, two excelled: the ingenious poet and elegant humanist of the Vosges, Mathias Ringmann (whose literary pseudonym was Philesius), a professor of Latin, and the surpassing mathematician of Friburg, Martin Waldseemüller (whose pseudonym was Hylacomylus), a professor of geography, at that time both recently arrived from Paris. The latter was an admirer of Vespucci on account of his letter to Lorenzo Pietro de' Medici, and he was

perhaps a friend of Giocondo.⁷ In order to facilitate and to extend literary labors, the chaplain and secretary of Renaud, the canon, Walter Lud (Ludovicus), established in 1500 a printing-press, and having resolved to bear the expense of a new edition of Ptolemy's geography, revised and augmented by the last discoveries of the Spaniards and the Portuguese, he commissioned Ringmann and Waldseemüller to take charge of the enterprise. Ringmann having direction of the literary and philological part, and Waldseemüller of the scientific part, especially of the elaboration of the geographical charts to illustrate the text.

Vespucci's letter to Soderini was published in Florence in the year 1506, and a Spanish translation was at once made and a copy of it was sent to the college of Saint-Dié. The canon, Jean Basier de Sendacour, was instructed to translate it into Latin, the universal literary language of the period. He, by error or malice, made a change in the letter, which consisted in causing it to appear as if directed by Vespucci to Duke Renaud, instead of to Soderini.⁸

The work confided to Ringmann and Waldseemüller was terminated on April 24, 1507: it consisted of the geography of

⁷It was not Vespucci who first used the designation New World, but Martyr de Angleria (Peter Martyr), as is proved by the following transcriptions:

"This Columbus, the discoverer of the *New World*, made by my sovereigns admiral of the sea of the West Indies." (Letter to the Viscount Archbishop of Braga, dated November 1, 1493).

"From day to day this Columbus of La Liguria, whom my sovereigns made admiral of the sea, on account of his great deeds, brings marvelous things from the *New World*." (Letter to the count of Borromeo, dated October 25, 1494.)

"From the *New World* our admiral Columbus has brought many strings of oriental pearls." (Letter to Cardinal Bernardino de Carbajae, dated October 5, 1496.)

Also the Florentine, Simone del Verde, in a letter written in Cádiz, about January, 1499, says: "The admiral had great courage and genius in having discovered *another world* opposite to ours (*l'altro mondo* opposto al nostro)."

Finally, in a map prepared by Bartolomé Columbus, in 1503, to interest the public in his plans regarding the colonization and Christianizing of Veragua, he gives to the land situated south of the Caribbean sea the name of *Mondo Novo*.

⁸There are, however, those who believe that Vespucci himself sent the same letter to Duke Renaud and to Pietro Soderini.

Ptolemy; the letters of Vespucci to Lorenzo Pietro de' Medici and to Soderini, but the latter appearing as if directed to Duke Renaud; some verses by Ringmann in eulogy of Vespucci; and a work by Waldseemüller, entitled *Cosmographiae Introductio*, where, for the first time, appears the name America. The whole formed an opuscle of fifty-two sheets, small quarto, printed on good paper and in beautiful Roman characters. The filigrane represented the head of an ox, with a figure above in the form of a T, and, as a countersign, a star. There accompanied the pamphlets two charts, traced after the Portuguese originals of a map of the world and a globe in the form of a spindle which passes for the best of that period.

The name America he placed on the map about 28° of south latitude, that is to say, exactly where we find at present the northern part of the Argentine republic.

After Waldseemüller had treated of the division of the terrestrial surface of the earth in three parts—Europe, Asia and Africa—he says on folio III:

In sexto climate Antarcticum versus, et pars extrema Africae nuper reperta et Zanzibar, Java minor et Seula insulae et quarta Orbis pars (quam quia Americus invenit Amerigen, quasi, America terram, sive Americam nuncupare licet) sitae sunt.

(In the sixth climate, toward the south pole, are situated the southern part of Africa, recently discovered, and the islands of Zanzibar, Java Minor, Seula and the fourth part of the world, which it is proper to call Amerigen, that is, America land, Amerigo or America, because Amerigo discovered it.)

Then, on folio XV, he says again:

Nunc vero et hec partes sunt latius lustratae at alia quarta pars per Americum Vesputium (ut in sequentibus audietur) inventa est, quam non video cur quis jure vetet ab Americo inventore sagacis ingenii viro Amerigen quasi Americi terram sive Americam dicendam cum et Europa et Asia a mulieribus sua sortiea sint nomina. Ejus situm et gentis mores ex his binis Americi navigationibus quae liquide intelligi datur.

(Now since these regions—Europe, Asia and Africa—have been explored with all latitude, another fourth part has just been discovered by Amerigo Vespucci, as may be seen by the attached charts; in virtue of which I believe

it very just that it should be denominated Amerigen, that is to say the land of Amerigo or America after its discoverer, a man of sagacious genius, just as Europe and Asia bear also the names of women. Its situation, uses and customs will be easily understood by the reading of the repeated voyages of Amerigo that are inserted here.)

Such a denomination, proposed to geographers in general, obtained enthusiastic welcome in Germany, Holland, France, Portugal, Italy and England; which may be easily explained, since, while the voyage of discovery by Bastidas, Ojeda, Pinzón and by *la Cosa a Tierra Firme* were slightly known, even by Spain itself; while only Pope Alexander VI and the Catholic sovereigns knew the charts of Columbus relative to his voyages to Central America, Paria and Veragua (which were not published until the dawn of the nineteenth century), Vespucci held the attention of Europe in suspense with the revelation, by means of his private charts, published without his knowledge, of the voyages of the Portuguese to the southwest, where they had just discovered, along with him, a great region distinct from Asia; in virtue of which, Waldseemüller carried away by the erroneous belief that Columbus had only discovered a few islands and that Vespucci was the true discoverer of the recently found continent, proposed to call it by the name of the fortunate Florentine.

Waldseemüller, having recognized later his error, labored to correct it, and so, in the edition which he made of his work in 1513, it does not appear with the name of America given to the new continent, but instead of it the following note:

Hec terra cum adiacencibus insulis inuenta est per Columbus inannuensem ex mandato Regis Castellae.

(This country, with the adjacent islands, was discovered by Columbus of Genoa in the service of the king of Spain.)

Nor does the geographical chart that was published in 1515 bear the name America, but other authors, it should be said, began to use it; thus, in 1509, it appears on a terrestrial globe and on a geographical chart printed in Strasburg by Güniger; in 1510, in one by Henry

Glareamus; in 1514, on one by John Stobnicza of Cracow; in 1515, on several globes by Louis Boulanger, by Shoner, and by Leonardo da Vinci; in 1520, on one by Aspián and by Vadián; in 1524, there was published in France a copy in which the name America was given to the region of the Atlantic coast comprised between Bocas del Toro and the gulf of Urabá.⁹ The first to give the name America to the entire western hemisphere was Gerhard Mercator (Kremer), on his celebrated globe produced in 1541.

Some blind admirers of Columbus affirm that he in his last two journeys recognized that he had discovered a continent distinct from Asia, and they base their belief upon the following paragraphs of a letter he wrote in 1500, when he was being taken from Española (Hispaniola) as a prisoner to the Peninsular, to doña Juana de la Torre, a distinguished lady of the court, and nurse to prince don Juan:

The effort of our Lord and of your Highness caused me to continue, and in order to mitigate somewhat the anger in which your Highness was because of the death, I made a new journey to a *New Heaven and World*, which until then was hidden.

I ought to be judged as a captain who went

⁹Of the first edition of the opusculum a thousand copies were printed; but it being quickly exhausted, another was brought out in September of the same year. The only map existing to-day of the workmanship of Waldseemüller was discovered in 1901 in the library of Prince Maximilian Waldburg Wolfegg by the Jesuit father, Fisher, and Professor Wieser.

Prince Maximilian inherited the library from his older brother, who lived a long time in the United States, not with the title that belonged to him as the head of the house of Waldburg, but under the humble name of Father Frederic, as he was a Jesuit priest. An unhappy love was the cause that drove him to abandon the vanities of the world and enter the society of Jesus, in which he soon won a chief place by his notable eloquence and vast culture. Upon his death in England, he left to his brother Maximilian the title of prince, a moderate fortune and the castle of Wolfegg on the Danube, with the numerous library, famous for the great number of works that were difficult to secure, among them the famous treatise of Waldseemüller, with its celebrated marine chart.

In 1903 the opusculum and map were reprinted with the aid of the Royal academy of Science of Vienna.

The North Americans, desiring to possess both of them, but principally the map, made tempting offers to its owner, such as the sum of 1,200,000 marks, which he refused roundly to accept. The only thing he did was to offer to lend the famous geographical chart to the government of the United States if it would send a war vessel for it.

from Spain to the Indies to conquer a warlike and numerous people, and with customs and doctrines very contrary to us, who live among sierras and forests, without a settled town, any more than we, and where by divine will I have placed beneath the dominion of the king and the queen our masters, *another world*; and because of which Spain, which was called poor, is the richest.

Also the phrase of this other letter, addressed to the Catholic sovereigns:

Your Highness won these lands, which are *another world*, and in which Christianity will take such delight, and our faith in time so great a growth.¹⁰

We consider that Columbus employed the word *world* in a figurative sense, and he died convinced that what he had discovered were lands of Asia.

In truth, upon his return from his first voyage, in a letter which he wrote to Santángel, in February, 1493, he says:

In thirty-three days I passed to the *Indies* with the fleet that the most illustrious king and queen, our masters, gave me, where I found many islands inhabited by people without number, and of them all I have taken possession for their highnesses with proclamation and the royal banner outspread, and I was not opposed.

In the second voyage, upon arriving anew at the island of Cuba, he required that the notary, Fernán Pérez de Luna

. . . with good witnesses should go to each one of the three caravels mentioned and compel the master and company and all the other people who are publicly in them to say if they had any doubt whether this land (the island of Cuba) was not the mainland at the beginning of the Indies and the end to which one might desire to come from Spain by land to these parts; if they had any doubt or knowledge of it, that he besought them to declare it, in order that at once he might remove the doubt and make them see that this is certain and that it is the mainland. And if any one should contradict him at any time, there should be imposed upon him in behalf of the admiral a fine of a thousand *maravedis* for each occasion, and that his tongue should be slit; and if he were the ship's boy or a person of such degree, he should be prepared for this penalty by receiving a hundred lashes.

From the letter written in 1502 to Pope Alexander VI, we extract the following paragraphs:

¹⁰Navarrete: *Colección de viajes*, Vol. I, p. 412.

The king and queen my master and mistress send me again in haste upon the enterprize of discovering and taking possession of everything; and thus my coming to your Holiness could not be effected. I discovered in this way and took possession of a thousand and four hundred islands and and three hundred and thirty and three leagues of the *terra firma* of Asia, without including other very famous islands, great and many, to the east of the island Española (Hispaniola), in which I established a seat.

In it there are miners (mines) and all metals, especially of gold and copper; there are brazil, sandal and aloe wood and woods of many other species, and there is incense; the tree from which it comes is the myrobolan. This island is *Tharsis*, it is *Cetbia*, it is *Ofir* and *Opbax*, and *Cipango*, and we have called it Española.

Afterward it was necessary to come to Spain in haste, and I left there two brothers, with many people in much necessity and danger. I returned to them with succor and I made a new navigation toward the inside, where I found infinite lands, and a sea of fresh water. (Columbus refers to the gulf of Paria and the Orinoco river). I believed what all holy and wise theologians believed and believe, that there in that region is the earthly paradise. The necessity in which I had left my brothers and those people was the reason why I should not linger to make further experiment in those parts and should return at all speed to them.

As may be seen by the transcription, Columbus clearly affirms that he discovered fourteen hundred islands and three hundred and thirty-three leagues of the mainland of Asia, that the island of Española is Cepango, that is, Japan, and that there is found in Paria the earthly paradise that the theologians and commentators of the Bible located in Asia.¹¹

In a letter to the Catholic sovereigns, dated also in the same year of 1502, he says that in Cariay he saw large sheets of cotton and in the inland country toward the *Catayo*, there were some woven of gold. When he heard the Indians speak of *Ciguare*, he took it for granted that it must be some city or province of the Great Khan, and that from there a ten days' journey was the river Ganges. He says:

¹¹A curious detail: while Columbus was taking steps in Spain regarding the case, in order to go to discover lands to the west of Europe, people laughed at him, saying that he was a dreamer, as he pretended to discover another new world.

It seems that these lands are related to Veragua as Tortosa is to Fuenterrabía or Pisa to Venice.

He continues:

I arrived on May 13 at the province of Magu (that is to say, Mangui, southern China) which borders on that of Catayo (Cathay or northern China), and thence I set out for Spain: I sailed for two days with good weather, and afterward it was contrary.

Upon his final return to Spain he believed—and he continued to believe so until his death—that Puerto Rico was Cipango, and Cuba the mainland of the Asiatic continent, situated between Zaitón (Canton) and Quinsay (Nanking), famous cities of which Marco Polo treats.

The western hemisphere being just discovered, certain islands were erroneously taken for the continent, and vice versa, the continent for islands: this being a reason why Spain should vascillate at the beginning regarding the definitive name that ought to be applied to the new regions made known to the world by her intrepid navigators.

The commonest thing was to call them simply Indies. In proportion as the coastal lines of the continent were extended, thanks to the successive discoveries that were being made, it was given the name of *Terra Firma*, in order to distinguish it from the insular portions, which were supposed to be less firm. Under this name was designated first the coast of Paria, then all the region embraced in the republics of Venezuela, Colombia, Panamá and Costa Rica; afterward the isthmus of Panamá, with a part of Costa Rica and Colombia, was included.

The name America, as applied to the new continent, passed at the beginning so unobserved in Spain that it was only after years that some writers began an outcry against it. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries supreme efforts were made to replace the name America by another, which, as it was said, would be more in accord with justice. The priest Tomás Serrano, a Jesuit, proposed the name *Isabela*, in honor of the illustrious queen doña Isabel the Catholic; Pizarro y Orellana, in his *Varones Ilustres*, that of *Fer-Isabélica*, in homage to

Fernando of Aragón and Isabel of Castilla; Damariz, that of *Orbe Carolino*, in honor and memory of the Emperor Charles V; the Jesuit priest, José de Acosta, that of *Antillania*; Calancha, that of *Colonia* or *Columbania*; Ortelio, that of *Amazonia* or *Orellania*; others, in short, the names of *Colombeida*, *Columbiana*, *Atlantic Islands*, *land of the Holy Cross*, *Hispanida*, etc. When it was seen that the name proposed by Waldseemüller had already received letters of naturalization in all Europe, and that it was impossible to dislodge it, some proposed, although in vain, to call the northern part of the new continent *Columbana*, and the southern part, *America*.

The point relative to the origin of the name America being explained, it is not superfluous to say that there have not been wanting isolated voices, anxious to display originality, which have attempted to becloud the subject.

The first who began the task was Friar Montesinos, a writer of the sixteenth century, according to whom *Hamérica* (the word written thus with *H*), is the anagram of *Hec Maria*; and that just, as the other parts of the world were called Europe, Asia and Africa for three pagan women, the other part ought to be called *Hamérica*, in honor of the mother of Jesus Christ.

In the nineteenth century appeared the English engineer, Thomas Belt, the French geologist, Jules Marcou, and his fellow countryman, the writer T. H. Lambert de Saint Bris, affirming roundly that the name America is of indigenous origin, and that consequently it does not come from the celebrated Florentine navigator.

Thus Mr. Belt, in his book entitled *The Naturalist in Nicaragua*, published in the year 1873, says that in his scientific explorations through Central America he had observed that the chain of mountains situated between Juigalpa and La Libertad (*departamento* of Chontales), which separates the lake of Nicaragua from the coast of Mosquitos, is called *Amerric* by the Indians; that the first Spanish discoverers said they heard from the lips of the Indians this name, which, as a consequence, passed to Europe, and thence

the knowledge of the professors of the *gymnase* de Saint-Dié, who applied it to the New World, thinking it came from the name of Amerigo Vespucci.

Commenting upon this thesis of Belt's, don Juan Pérez de Guzmán, a distinguished Spanish writer, says with much reason that in spite of the supposition being wholly absurd, it secured for its author enthusiastic proselytes a short time after being launched upon the public.

Lambert de Saint Bris affirms on his part, without adducing proofs of his assertion, that the name America comes from *Amarca*, a sacred word of the Peruvians, diffused throughout South America, known to the first Europeans who touched upon its shores and immediately carried by them to Europe.¹²

Making jest of such arbitrary etymology, the illustrious Doctor E. T. Hamy says humorously that with reasoning of this kind it is easy to demonstrate also that America comes from *Armorico*, and that the Amharas of Ethiopia are cousins of the Aimarás of the Andes.

The one who indeed showed himself to be proceeding in good faith, adding besides to the discussion a great wealth of curious data, was the already mentioned Marcou. With all modesty he prints in one of his monographs, relative to the defense of the word America as indigenous, the following ideas:

I do not pretend to be an Americanist nor much less to erudition; I am only a traveler who, making investigations in order to improve the different editions of his attempt at a geographical chart, has happened accidentally upon the name of the place *Amériques* and therefore upon the place of the *Amerisque* Indians.

The congress of Americanists, gathered in Paris in the year 1890, included, among the subjects that were themes for discussion, the thesis of Professor Marcou relative to the indigenous origin of the name America, those who took part in the debate being Marcou himself and the delegates Thomas H. Lambert de Saint Bris, Julio Calcaño, E. T. Hamy, Vicente de Mestre Amábile, Gustave Hellmann,

¹²*The origin of the name of America: Bulletin of the American Geographical Society, year of 1883, No. 1.*

Désiré Pector, Marco Jiménez de la Espada and Mademoiselle Lecoq.

Marcou in his first article (*Sur l'origine du nom d'Amérique*) and in the second (*Nouvelles recherches sur l'origine du nom d'Amérique*), published respectively in 1875 and 1888, maintains that the baptismal name of Vespucci was Alberigo and not Amerigo or Americo, since the latter two forms were, according to him, unknown in Italy. In order to combat this assertion, Marco Jiménez de la Espada presented in 1889 a text from the *Libros de cuentas y despachos de armadas de Indias en 1495* with the signature of Amerigo Vespucci, and the engineer Gilberto Govi also proved the same by the publication of the facsimile of a letter written by Vespucci in 1492, and which Govi found in Mantua. Finally, Doctor Hamy took to the congress of Americanists a document still older, a map of the world constructed in the fifteenth century by Gabriel de Valsequia, the most celebrated of the Mallorcan cartographers of the period, a map that shows the following writing: QUESTA AMPLIA PELLIDI DI GEOGRAFIA FUE PAGATA DE AMERIGHO VESPUCCI CXXX DUCATI DI ORO DI MARCO.

It was proven therefore that the Florentine navigator used as his Christian name not only the form Alberigo, but also that of Americo and Amerigho.

Contending as he retired, Marcou then presented to the congress, a final memorial with the title of *Amerrique, Amerigho Vespucci & Amerique*, a résumé of almost all that had been written previously in favor of his thesis: he maintained that the word *America*, following, according to him, but one of the dialects derived from the Nahuatl group, was formed by the component elements *meric*, mountain, and *ic, ique*, large, elevated, prominent (in 1875 he believed that it meant windy mountain); that the name *Amerrique* was heard by Columbus and the mariners who accompanied him on his fourth voyage to the New World, from the lips of the Indians of the Mosquitos coast; that the crews, upon returning to Spain, spread it among the seafaring people of the ports as being equivalent to an auriferous country, whose

inhabitants possessed as their only ornament certain plates of gold suspended from the neck; that from Spain the name was disseminated to the interior of the continent, thus reaching the knowledge of the professors of the college of Saint-Dié.

Jiménez de la Espada and Professor Hamy completely overthrew the reasoning of Marcou, proving that his were hypotheses without foundation, and that no other origin could be accepted for the name imposed in 1507 upon the New World than that which is clearly indicated in the *Cosmographiae Introductio* of Waldsee-müller.

In fact it was proven that the termination *ic, ique*, does not mean great, elevated, prominent, but in, within; that the assertion that Columbus and his crews heard, upon reaching Mosquitos, the name *Amerrique* from the mouth of the Indians, and that the Spaniards then carried it to Europe and spread it through the continent was no less than a romantic story of Professor Marcou's; that the form *Americ* applied to *Américo*, is Portuguese, as that of *Emeric* is French; and, finally, that the Nicaraguan Indians do not call the Cordillera *Amerisque*, but *Amerrisque*.

It then fell to the lot of the secretary of the congress, the delegate Désiré Pector, to speak. He said that he had been only a few moments before a partisan of the theory of Professor Marcou; but that immediately, in view of the allegations and convincing proofs by don Marco Jiménez de la Espada and Dr. E. T. Hamy, he passed over to the camp of these gentlemen, since in it, according to him, was the truth to be found. He said:

Three reasons have confirmed me even more in the new opinion I have adopted:

1. The name of the mountains mentioned is neither *Amerique*, nor *Amerrique*, but *Amerrisque*. (In support of his affirmation the speaker presented the report of the proprietor of the lands of *Amerrisque*, the señor Ramón Morales, signed in Juigalpa, August 11, 1885, and a copy of the *Diario Nicaragüense*, a newspaper of Granada, Nicaragua, of August 20 of the same year.

2. The learned geologist of Cambridge says that this name of *America* is in no way surprising, since the suffix *ique* is encountered in many other names of localities in Central

America, and that, on the contrary, the suffix *isque*, does not exist anywhere. To this I shall say *isque* is indeed found in many names of Central American localities, but that the suffix *isque*, although rarer, also exists, and therefore the name Amerisque has a reason for being. I shall cite the following names of localities with the suffix in *isque*:

Cunimisque, a village of Honduras in the *departamento* of Tegucigalpa, a municipality of Curarén.

Quisque, a village and hamlet of Guatemala, *departamentos* of Jutiapa and Socatepeque; this name is written also Quequesque, Quequésquez, Quiquesque.

Tempisque, three localities of this name (a valley, port and countryseat) are to be found in Nicaragua, in the *departamentos* of Chinandega, Matagalpa and Rivas; a river and valley in the province of Liberia, Costa Rica; a valley in the *departamento* of Cubanos, El Salvador; a village in the *departamento* of Jutiapa, in the jurisdiction of Agua Blanca, Guatemala.

The Spanish historian Oviedo says that this name of Tempisque came from the Indian name *tembixque*, a kind of tree.

3. The accent is not placed upon the same syllable of the words América and Amerisque: the former is accented on the antepenult and the latter on the penult; also the pronunciation of these two words is entirely different.

Three considerations confirmed me in the conclusion that the name America does not come from the locality of Amerisque, still existing in Nicaragua. This opinion does not prevent me, however, from finding very original and curious the reasons given by M. Marcou, nor from admiring the great erudition with which he has made us perceive in his memorials certain aspects little known in the history of the discovery of America in the sixteenth century.¹³

The debate was terminated by the illustrious scholar Alphonse de Quatrefages, the president of the congress, in the following words:

After such conclusive communications as those of Messieurs Jiménez de la Espada and Hamy, the question of the name *America* stands closed forever, and I hope it will not be made to figure again in the programs of future congresses.

Permit me to make a brief remark, or rather to propose a question. I have a little French book, rare and curious, which contains a

¹³ Congrès International des Américanistes, Comptes-Rendu de la huitième session tenue à Paris en 1890, p. 182.

passage upon the name America that for me is enigmatic. It is Focart's *Periphrasis del Astrolabio*, the first edition of which appeared in Lyons in the year 1546, and the second, eight years later in the same city. In the last chapter, after having described the land known to Ptolemy, the author concludes his description of the *Imago Mundi* with America, and he says finally; "Such is the description of America (which is also called Amec.)"¹⁴

The most of the delegates considered that *Amec* was an abbreviation of the name America.

Besides, with the exception of Marcou, all were convinced that the word America came from Amerigo or Americo, the first Christian name of Vespucci, and not from any region of the New World.

In virtue of this it was resolved not to treat further of this subject in the succeeding congresses of Americanists.

It is not strange therefore that on July 15, 1911, on the occasion of the four hundredth anniversary of the death of the poet Ringmann, the collaborator and friend of Waldseemüller, a pilgrimage was made to Saint-Dié participated in by important personages, such as the minister for the colonies, Albert Lebrun; the ambassador of the United States, Robert Bacon; the counselors of the embassy of the same nation, Bailly-Blanchard and Henry Vignaud; and other gentlemen, all of whom visited the place where stood the press that printed the *Cosmographiae Introductio*, and then witnessed the placing of a commemorative tablet in the wall of the edifice with the French inscription, which translated into Spanish (English) says textually:

HERE, ON APRIL 25, 1507, IN THE REIGN OF RENAUD II, THE *COSMOGRAPHIAE INTRODUCTIO*, IN WHICH THE NEW CONTINENT RECEIVED THE NAME AMERICA, WAS PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY MEMBERS OF THE VOSGES GYMNASSE WALTER LUD, JEAN BASIER, MATHIAS RINGMANN AND MARTIN WALDSEEMÜLLER.

¹⁴ Congrès International des Américanistes. Comptes-Rendu de la huitième session tenue à Paris en 1890, pp. 174-5.

Inter-America

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE



Contents:

BIOGRAPHICAL DATA	322
AMERIGO VESPUCCI	ENRIQUE J. ARCE 323
<i>La Revista Nueva, Panamá, Panamá</i>	
OUR WAR: ITS POLITICAL AIMS AND SOCIAL EFFECTS	
<i>Revista Americana, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil</i>	
AGUSTÍN ÁLVAREZ	ARTURO DE LA MOTA 342
<i>Ideas, Buenos Aires, Argentina</i>	
AN EPISODE IN A HOTEL	PAULO BARRETO 350
<i>Plus Ultra, Buenos Aires, Argentina</i>	
MARIANO MORENO	M. DE VEDIA Y MITRE 355
<i>Caras y Caretas, Buenos Aires, Argentina</i>	
A POOR DEVIL	LUIS ORREGO LUCO 357
<i>Revista de Artes y Letras, Santiago de Chile</i>	
MAIPÚ: 1818-1918	BARTOLOMÉ MITRE 363
<i>La Nación, Buenos Aires, Argentina</i>	
THE ANCIENT RACES AND CIVILIZATIONS OF PERÚ	
<i>Variedades, Lima, Perú</i>	
THE INNOVATOR, JOSÉ BATLLE Y ORDÓÑEZ	FOLCO TESTENA 384
<i>Nosotros, Buenos Aires, Argentina</i>	
THE FIRST BOOK BY AN AMERICAN WRITER PEDRO HENRÍQUEZ UREÑA	389
<i>Boletín de la Biblioteca Nacional de México, México, México</i>	

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NUMBER 6