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## **Recognizing and Naming a New Continent**

Martin Waldseemüller's 1507 world map grew out of an ambitious project in St. Dié, France, during the first decade of the sixteenth century, to document and update new geographic knowledge derived from the discoveries of the late fifteenth and the first years of the sixteenth centuries. Waldseemüller's large world map was the most exciting product of that research effort, and included data gathered during Amerigo Vespucci's voyages of 1501-1502 to the New World. Waldseemüller christened the new lands "America" in recognition of Vespucci's understanding that a new continent had been uncovered as a result of the voyages of Columbus and other explorers in the late fifteenth century. This is the only known surviving copy of the first printed edition of the map, which, it is believed, consisted of 1,000 copies.

Waldseemüller's map supported Vespucci's revolutionary concept by portraying the New World as a separate continent, which until then was unknown to the Europeans. It was the first map, printed or manuscript, to depict clearly a separate Western Hemisphere, with the Pacific as a separate ocean. The map represented a huge leap forward in knowledge, recognizing the newly found American landmass and forever changing the European understanding of a world divided into only three parts--Europe, Asia, and Africa.