

# The NEATLINE

A NEWSLETTER OF THE TEXAS MAP SOCIETY

Fall 2010

## Fall TMS Meeting: Part of International Cartographic Extravaganza



An example of one of the Dutch atlas maps in the current exhibit at Special Collections: Blaeu's, *Americae Nova Tabula* Engraving (hand colored), 36 x 46 cm., first published in 1617. Virginia Garrett Collection, UT Arlington Library Special Collections.

The **Fall Meeting of the Texas Map Society** on **Saturday, October 9th** will be held at the University of Texas at Arlington Library's Sixth Floor Parlor in conjunction with two other major cartographic events. A wide variety of maps will be discussed, ranging from those depicting the most distant and exotic places to those of more regional and local interest. Thanks to generous grant money from Humanities Texas and the Summerlee Foundation, the TMS secured an outstanding scholar from outside the United States: **Peter van der Krogt**, Professor on the Faculty of Geosciences at the University of Utrecht, Netherlands,

and a world-renowned authority on Dutch globes and atlases as well as many other aspects of cartographic history. He will speak on "North America in Dutch Atlases, from the 16th to the 20th Centuries."<sup>1</sup> Also presenting at the TMS meeting is **Alex Chiba**, Curator of maps in the Archives and Records Division of the Texas General Land Office in Austin.<sup>2</sup> His presentation's intriguing title "The Draftsman's Angle: 19th-century Map Makers of the Texas General Land Office from 'Pegleg' to the *Vaterland*

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to an ‘O. Henry Ending’” certainly projects to be an interesting look at a number of colorful Texan characters and their maps. **Andrew Torget**, Assistant Professor of History at the University of North Texas and an expert on the use of innovative digital methods in historical scholarship will speak on “Slavery and the Southwest: Mapping People and Ideas in Early Texas.”<sup>3</sup> **Gene Tucker** Ph.D. candidate at UT Arlington will present “Explorers, Charts, and Borders: La Salle, Delisle, and the French Mapping of Texas.”<sup>4</sup> To conclude the meeting, TMS Neatline Editor and NBC 5 Chief Meteorologist **David Finrock** will again serve as moderator of the ever popular TMS Members’ Map Forum.<sup>5</sup> We encourage members to call ahead(?) and bring a map to share with others at the meeting.

Although the TMS portion of the cartographic extravaganza officially ends Saturday night with a visit to **Billy Bob’s Texas**, we encourage TMS members to sign up for as many cartographic and social events as they want. They may also notice a number of international visitors in their midst this year, and we know that TMS members will not only show each other but also these visitors some good old-fashioned Texas hospitality. Your

Saturday night ticket to Billy Bob’s includes transportation from the Arlington Hilton to Billy Bob’s Texas, the world’s largest honky-tonk, and an all-inclusive evening of fun, food, fellowship, and entertainment, including bull-riding shows and Texas guitarist Jack Ingram.

Mapping festivities actually begin the day before (**Friday, October 8th**) with the **Seventh Biennial Virginia Garrett Lectures on the History of Cartography**. This year’s theme is “**Charting the Cartography of Companies: Company Mapping, 1600-1900.**” The lecture series and accompanying exhibit will focus on maps and how they reflect and shaped the histories of chartered companies, which are considered precursors to modern corporations. Please come to find out how we define a chartered company and how they relate to maps. People who think the combined histories of companies and maps sound boring should think again. This is actually a huge and fascinating topic that covers the entire globe. Even several days of speakers and an exhibit of over sixty items at UT Arlington Library’s Special Collections drawn from the collections of TMS stalwarts Virginia and Jenkins Garrett, Lewis and Virginia Buttery, the DeGolyer Library at Southern Methodist University, and others will merely serve as an introduction to this vast topic. It should stimulate a few theses, dissertations, websites, books, articles, exhibits, and collections in the future.

Among Friday’s speakers is **Jack Nisbet**, Spokane, Washington-based historian and author who will focus on contributions to cartographic history by employees of the British Northwest Company and the Hudson Bay Company in his presentation “Unremitting Perseverance: Mapping Western North America in the Fur Trade Era, from Peter Pond to David Thompson, 1770-1823.”<sup>6</sup> Representing railroad company mapping is **Carlos A. Schwantes**, Mercantile Endowed Professor for Transportation Studies at the University of Missouri-St. Louis. His presentation “Railroad Images Claimed the American West: The Map Curiosities of the Northern Pacific” promises to be full of visual interest and should particularly appeal to rail fans.<sup>7</sup>

**Imre Josef Demhardt**, Professor and Garrett Endowed Chair in the History of Cartography, UT Arlington (who first suggested the general theme of chartered company mapping) will present “Ex Africa Semper Aliquid Novi (Always Something

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A chartered railroad company map from the exhibit: *Map of the Houston and Texas Central Railway. The New Avenue of Travel and Transportation Between the United States and Mexico*, Color cerograph (relief line engraving), 50 x 50 cm., folds to brochure, 21 x 9 cm., has timetable on back. (Chicago: Printed by Rand, McNally and Company for the H.&T.C.Railway, 1880). UT Arlington Library Special Collections.

New Out of Africa): Privileged Companies and the Unveiling of a Continent.” The European “scramble for Africa” includes not only stories of exploration and colonial exploitation but also some of the most fascinating chapters in cartographic history, and Professor Demhardt is highly qualified to recount them.<sup>8</sup> **Ben Huseman**, Cartographic Archivist, UT Arlington Library Special Collections, TMS secretary, and author of this article will discuss the accompanying exhibit and offer exhibit tours.

People attending both the Virginia Garrett Lectures and the TMS meeting will notice a decided Dutch bias this year – this is in part because of the enormously successful chartered company example of the Dutch East India Company, founded in 1602.

Perhaps no one knows this company’s cartographic history better than the keynote speaker for the Virginia Garrett Lectures **Kees Zandvliet**. Professor Zandvliet is formerly a research curator at the *Rijksmuseum* (among the world’s greatest art museums) and now Head of Presentations at the Amsterdam Historical Museum in the Netherlands.<sup>9</sup> Hearing the author of the acclaimed book *Mapping for Money: Maps, Plans and Topographic Paintings and their Role in Dutch Overseas Expansion during the 16th and 17th centuries* (1998) should be a memorable event for all who can attend. Professor Zandvliet will present “War, Colonization, and Selling Maps: Mapmaking in the Context of the 17th-century -Century Dutch West India Company.”

Following the TMS Saturday meeting, the **International Cartographic Association’s Commission on the History of Cartography** officially begins their **Third International Symposium on the History of Cartography on Sunday, October 10th**, with a social gathering and cultural tour of Fort Worth, but many of the international guests (including participants from the United Kingdom, South Africa, Belgium, Croatia, Brazil, and Russia) will have arrived earlier to attend the other lectures. ICA paper presentation sessions begin Monday, October 11th and continue through Tuesday, October 12th. These presentations, held in UT Arlington Library’s Sixth Floor Parlor, reflect, but are not necessarily restricted to the overall theme “Charting the Cartography of Companies: Company Mapping, 1600-1900.” The conference will be open to all cartographers, geographers, historians, map collectors, academics and lay persons interested in the history of cartography, especially but not restricted to the period from the mid-18th to the mid-20th centuries. That includes every TMS member willing to pay and sign up to attend. The ICA event concludes on Wednesday, October 13th with a visit to the DeGolyer Library and the Edwin J. Foscue Map Library at Southern Methodist University in Dallas.<sup>10</sup> To see a schedule and

register online for any of these events see this website: <http://library.uta.edu/spco/Garrett2010/index.html>. Be sure to follow the “Programs” links to see schedules for the TMS, Garrett Lectures, and the ICA, and to click on “Register.” We of course encourage everyone to attend all events, but a wide variety of options for attendance are available.

#### **Ben Huseman**

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#### **Should you have program and registration questions, you may also contact:**

#### **Carolyn Kadri**

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#### **Endnotes**

- <sup>1</sup> Among Professor van der Krogt’s achievements is a major revision of *Koeman’s Atlantes Neerlandici* (New Edition; ‘t Goy-Houten, Netherlands: Hes & De Graaf, 2005) and the massive catalogue co-written with Erlend de Groot titled *The Atlas Blaeu-Van der Hem of the Austrian National Library*, ed. by Günter Schilder (6 vols.; ‘t Goy-Houten, Netherlands: Hes & De Graaf, 2005). See Prof. van der Krogt’s curriculum vita: <http://cartography.geog.uu.nl/vanderkrogt/cv.html>, and his personal homepage: <http://cartography.geog.uu.nl/vanderkrogt/>.
- <sup>2</sup> For information on the Texas General Land Office Map Collection, see: <http://www.glo.state.tx.us/archives/mapscol.html>.
- <sup>3</sup> Professor Torget’s website: <http://www.hist.unt.edu/faculty/Torget/Torget.htm>.
- <sup>4</sup> Mr. Tucker’s homepage: <http://students.uta.edu/gr/grt2833/>.
- <sup>5</sup> Those from outside the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex may underestimate the celebrity status of Mr. Finrock. See: [http://www.nbcdfw.com/station/about-us/David\\_Finrock.html](http://www.nbcdfw.com/station/about-us/David_Finrock.html).
- <sup>6</sup> The two books by Mr. Nisbet to which I refer are *The Mapmaker’s Eye: David Thompson on the Columbia Plateau* (Pullman, Washington: Washington State University Press, 2005) and *Sources of the River: Tracking David Thompson across Western North America* (Seattle, Washington: Sasquatch Books, 1994). See Mr. Nisbet’s personal website at: <http://jacknisbet.com/>.
- <sup>7</sup> Prof. Schwantes has written or edited fifteen books on transportation and U.S. history, including the American West. See his vita on the University of Missouri Center for Transportation Studies website: <http://www.umsl.edu/~cts/people/schwantes.html>, and on the University of Missouri History Department site: <http://www.umsl.edu/~umslhistory/faculty/schwantes.html>.
- <sup>8</sup> Prof. Demhardt has authored several books and articles on German colonial mapping in Africa, most of them in German. View his profile at: <http://www.uta.edu/ra/real/editprofile.php?onlyview=1&pid=2512>, and at: <http://www.uta.edu/history/transatlantic/Demhardt.htm>.
- <sup>9</sup> For a visual “Dutch treat” visit the Rijksmuseum website at: <http://www.rijksmuseum.nl/index.jsp?lang=en&gclid=Cl2gydGxtKICFQUlnQodombWA>. For information (in English) on the Amsterdam Historical Museum see: [http://www.codart.nl/291/institutions/details/?institution\\_id=366](http://www.codart.nl/291/institutions/details/?institution_id=366).
- <sup>10</sup> Visit both the DeGolyer Library website at: <http://smu.edu/cul/degolyer/> and the Foscue Map Library’s site at: <http://smu.edu/cul/gir/maps/>.



Attendance of keynote speaker **Peter van der Krogt** of the University of Utrecht, Netherlands at the TMS fall meeting will be made possible in part with a grant from **Humanities Texas**, the state affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

## Map of Texas to Illustrate Olney's School Geography

For a country with a population of only 17 million, there were no less than 15 competing school atlases in the United States from 1836 to 1850. Jesse Olney was one of the most successful authors of these atlases and associated geography books with a run that started in 1828 and ended in 1859.

Olney's school atlases of this period have two different maps that are dedicated to the State of Texas. Both are full-page state maps that are titled, "Map of Texas to Illustrate Olney's School Geography" and are printed on the same size plate (8.5x10.5") and page (9.5x12"). Both depict the Texas counties of 1848 and appear to have been published in late 1848 through 1849. One of the maps is truncated, cutting off most of West Texas, but it adds details of the War with Mexico.

The other apparently had a very short run, perhaps just in the latter part of 1848, and it's my favorite. It depicts a large locomotive-shaped stovepipe supported by an irregular Trans-Pecos region formed by the Rio Grande del Norte. The map is colored with a pale yellow wash similar to the more common Mitchell School Atlas maps, but sometimes adds red, green, and/or blue washes for the small Indian Territory in modern Oklahoma, the oversized Nebraska and California Territories, and Mexico.

This unusual shape of Texas is not quite like any other but appears to borrow the stovepipe shape from Emory's 1844 "Map of Texas and the Countries Adjacent," and the map that appeared in the 1848 book by Frederick Wislizenus, "Memoir of a Tour to



*Map of Texas to Illustrate Olney's School Geography. Published by Pratt, Woodford & Co. in New York in 1848.*

Northern Mexico." The relative rarity of individual, full-page maps of Texas in pre-1850 School Atlases, combined

with the unusual stovepipe shape contribute to my never-ending fondness for this particular map.

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If you would like to submit an article about your own favorite map for a future issue of *The Neatline*, contact the editor David Finfrock at [editorTMS@aol.com](mailto:editorTMS@aol.com).

# 2010 TMS Spring Meeting in Austin

By Walt Wilson, Robin Bischof, Rebecca Rice and LaVerne Knezek

The 2010 Spring Meeting of the Texas Map Society, *People, Power and Maps*, was held in Austin the second weekend in April. The University of Texas at Austin, Department of Geography and the Environment co-sponsored the event that had over 60 members and guests attending.

## Friday, April 9

The Texas Map Society held its Spring Meeting in Austin on April 9-11, 2010. On Friday, we had the privilege of taking part in two map collection tours. The first facility we visited was the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center (HRC, <http://www.hrc.utexas.edu/>) at the University of Texas at Austin, where we viewed an assortment from the Wrenn Library Map and Globe Collection. The selection consisted of a variety of atlases dating back to the fifteenth through the eighteenth centuries, including a Ptolemaeus Atlas and a Mercator Atlas. Professor Emeritus Ian Manners from the Department of Geography and Environment at UT Austin spoke to the group. Had there been any fear of a dry lecture on maps, it was dissipated when Dr. Manners began his talk with a quote from Tom Stoppard's play *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*. The quote charged that England was a "conspiracy of cartographers," thereby highlighting the importance of maps and cartography as providing a visual of places hitherto unseen. Dr. Manners further addressed the history of cartography and discussed the different atlases which were displayed for our group. The collection exhibited many original atlases, such as the Bertelli Atlas that had belonged to John Locke and a smaller Mercator Atlas. In addition to these printed and bound maps, the Wrenn Library also boasted celestial and terrestrial replicas of the Corinelli Globes. Though facsimiles, the two globes were an impressive work of art and cartography that had originally been commissioned under Louis XIV. The Map and Globe Collection provided an interesting and informative look at the history and development of cartography.



Part of the spectacular Map and Globe Collection at the Ransom Center.

While our morning involved examining the work of Old World cartographers, our afternoon brought us into contact with New World map makers. The second facility we visited was the Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection, also at UT Austin. The Benson Collection holds a considerable variety of Latin American material, including 19,000 maps. Our tour focused on the maps of the *Relaciones Geográficas* collection. Dr. Michael Hironymous, librarian at the Benson Collection, spoke with the group. He provided descriptions and backgrounds for each of the *Relaciones* brought before our eyes. The *Relaciones Geográficas* were originally composed in response to census questions issued by the Spanish Crown in the sixteenth century, and consequently they offer a glimpse of the local culture as well as the Spanish influence on Middle America during this time. The Benson Collection's maps are originals and the only copies that had been sent to the Spanish crown and preserved in their royal archives.

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Atlases on display at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center.



TMS members arrive at the Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection.



Dr. Michael Hironymous discusses the maps of the *Relaciones Geográficas* collection.



TMS members listen attentively to Dr. Michael Hironymous.



One of the many fascinating maps in the *Relaciones Geográficas* collection.



TMS members examine a huge map of South America at the Benson Collection.

Dr. Hironymous displayed a varied and interesting selection of the *Relaciones Geográficas*, providing a vibrant depiction of the villages they portray and the period in which they were crafted. Some of the villages are portrayed in a clearly Spanish style, showing villages with lush green hills and lakes. Other maps, drawn in a predominantly indigenous style, use symbols along a circular path to depict the attributes of the village, and incorporate the traditional drawing of shells on a river's border. For a glimpse of the *Relaciones Geográficas* Collection go to: <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/benson/rg/>; a few of the other early maps can be seen at <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/benson/historicmaps/>.

The last tour of the day was an impromptu visit to the Texas General Land Office (GLO) archives collection, courtesy of Mark

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Map Storage area at the General Land Office.

## TMS Spring 2010 Meeting *continued from page 6*

Lambert and his staff who graciously volunteered to work late and fill in for an unavoidable cancellation. The GLO's impressive collection includes over 80,000 maps and sketches, many of which have been digitized and are available at nominal cost. The GLO's map cabinet has to be seen to be believed, as it would fill a small garage. For more information on this invaluable and readily available resource go to: <http://www.glo.state.tx.us/archives/mapscol.html>.

The day concluded with an informal buffet dinner at the historic George W. Littlefield House on the campus of the University of Texas.



Exterior of the historic George W. Littlefield House.



TMS members enjoy an informal buffet dinner at the Littlefield House.



Dr. Bill Doolittle gives a presentation featuring petroglyphs and other art of indigenous peoples in the Southwest.

### Saturday, April 10

TMS President Diane Powell opened the meeting with brief introductions of all the members and guests in attendance. Dr. Bill Doolittle, our host and Program Chair, spoke on "Ancient Cartography in the Greater American Southwest." Peppared with personal photographs from his research, Dr. Doolittle's presentation featured the arts of indigenous people, particularly petroglyphs (symbols that were chipped, pecked, worn, or carved into rock surfaces) and pictographs (painted features on rock surfaces). These petroglyphs and pictographs often include images of geographic features such as rivers, islands, fields, homes, direction, and other cultural features. These images and representations of place also were drawn using an aerial perspective, much like the city maps of early Western cartographers.

Dr. Bella Bychkova-Jordan introduced the next speaker who covered an unexpected topic, but one that was wholly consistent with the theme of the Spring meeting: People, Power, and Maps. Major Thad M. Thome, U.S. Army, a graduate student at

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Major Thad M. Thome, U.S. Army, discusses "Natural and Urban Terrain and the Battle of Stalingrad."

## TMS Spring 2010 Meeting *continued from page 7*

the University of Texas Center for Russian East European and Eurasian Studies, discussed “Natural and Urban Terrain and the Battle of Stalingrad.” Major Thome described the elements of military terrain analysis that affected German and Russian tactics on this urban battlefield in the summer of 1942. Through the use of Geospatial Information Systems (GIS) and perspective views, Major Thome demonstrated the impact of terrain on the German (Wehrmacht) and Soviet Armies. He also discussed the historical and current importance of “Human Terrain,” i.e., accounting for civilian ethnic, political, religious, and infrastructure elements that are on the battlefield.

At lunch, President Diane Powell conducted a brief Business Meeting that paid tribute to our recently retired secretary-treasurer Kit Goodwin and the many volunteers and coordinators (e.g., Ben Huseman, Shirley Applewhite, Laverne Knezek, Gerald Saxon, and Tom Davis) who support the TMS. In a very positive report, the TMS remains fiscally solvent with over \$24,000 in assets, an ever-improving website that is moving from “libraries.uta.edu/txmapsociety/” to “texasmapsociety.org,,” and a *Neatline* Newsletter to be proud of. The Board has created a new position, VP for Programs as a possible stepping-stone to 1st VP and President. Drs. Gerald Saxon and Imre Demhardt announced the program for the Fall meeting (October 8th) which will held in conjunction with the Garrett lectures (October 9th) and the International Cartographic Association. (ICA). (October 10-13). Details are available via the TMS website for an event that will undoubtedly be the premier cartographic event of the year.

The first afternoon session was presented by Peter H. Dana, Visiting Professor at Middlebury College from UT Austin, who discussed how “Participatory mapping by Indigenous People of Central America” could be used to counter the power of the state and claim rights to territory. Through the involvement of indigenous people, GPS, and on-site training, it is possible to maintain historical, cultural and spiritual sites, protect communities, and create conservation zones based on land significance categories. These nominally “unclaimed” lands might otherwise be sold or exploited for their natural resources. Such projects also run the risk of creating contested territory, serving propaganda activists, and being generally misused: lines on maps

become territory. Peter also observed that, “There are no empty lands. Anywhere. Indigenous people are using them and have been with nobody caring, since before the time of Columbus.”

Next was Dr. Alberto Giordano. Associate Professor, Department of Geography, Texas State University at San Marcos who discussed “Historical GIS of the Holocaust: Challenges and Opportunities.” Through collaboration with the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, Dr. Giordano has been extracting historical GIS data related to the locations and movement of Jews in the Budapest Ghetto and Italy. Using static and dynamic geovisualization media, Alberto is searching for patterns in the dispersion and concentration of individuals, camps, and places related to victims, perpetrators, and bystanders. Quantitative GIS methods have been useful for sorting the vast quantity of detailed data and plotting the “individual trajectories” related to the 58,000 Jews in Italy, about 9,000 of whom were deported, 91% to Auschwitz.

Troy M. Kimmel, Jr. Senior Lecturer, Department of Geography and the Environment, UT Austin, and Chief Meteorologist, KVET/KASE/KFMK Radio and KEYE, CBS 42 Television, provided an animated discussion on “Mapping Weather through the Years.” Troy provided a quick history of Meteorology and the importance of mapping in telling the story. The first weather charts were created in England in 1861 and it wasn’t until 1871 that the U.S. Signal Corp produced daily weather maps. WWII led to the use of upper air balloons and the daily plotting of surface fronts, but it wasn’t until 1949 that upper air wind patterns started to be mapped. TV weather maps have come a long way since the advent of radar (1957), weather satellites (1960), and sophisticated computer modeling. The use of Doppler radar, 3D perspective views, and computer animation in weather mapping have shifted the emphasis of meteorologists

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TMS members enjoy their buffet lunch between sessions.



Troy Kimmel speaks on “Mapping Weather through the Years”.



from weather forecasting to the creation of cartographic and graphic art that can entertain as well as inform the varying needs of geographically-challenged customers. After the conclusion of the day's lectures, TMS members were transported by vans to an elegant reception and dinner at Austin's Tarry House, Inc.

### Sunday, April 11

The Sunday morning Collectors' Breakfast session was entitled "How to Care for and Conserve your Maps, Books and Documents." Karen L. Pavelka, Conservator, The School of Information, University of Texas at Austin, contributed her expertise on conservation of old paper documents conducting a lively question and answer session. The 22 attendees put forth a multitude of questions to Ms. Pavelka, a well-known paper conservator, who provided professional responses to the variety of interests expressed by participants.

More details on the session can be found in the Conservation Corner article below.



TMS members enjoy a reception on the patio at the Tarry House.

All images from the Spring Meeting are courtesy of Imre Demhardt.

## Conservation Corner

By Laverne Knezek

At the spring meeting of the Texas Map Society, the Sunday morning Collectors' Breakfast consisted of a question and answer session on "How to Care for and Conserve your Maps, Books and Documents." Karen L. Pavelka, Conservator, The School of Information, University of Texas at Austin, explained conservation of old paper documents.

Questions included patching holes in maps; the ethics of removing maps from books; discolorations such as brown lines on maps; conserving maps having scotch tape or masking tape; coloring of maps not originally colored; forgeries; and watermarks used for supposedly authenticating maps.

Of particular interest are the following questions/responses:

### 1. What types of paper were used in old documents?

Pre-1800, Western paper (often called rag paper) tended to be made of linen and cotton fibers and is very good; later, acidic wood-pulp paper was used, which can become discolored and brittle.

### 2. Is acid-free paper reliable?

No, it is best to buy material of high quality by an indication it has passed the Photographic Activity Test (PAT), a worldwide standard.

### 3. What about framing?

Light damage (including artificial light) is cumulative and irreversible, causing paper to darken and become brittle.

### 4. Are wood map cabinets satisfactory for storing papers?

No, avoid wood (or modify how one uses it); use metal cabinets for reasons Ms. Pavelka identified.

### 5. Are there conservator classes offered for the novice?

Yes, she teaches such a class at UT Austin, School of Information.

### 6. Where can a person find a list of conservators?

The American Institute for Conservation website has a link to finding conservators with a wide range of specialties.

### 7. Where can one find archival materials?

The Gaylord Catalog is a good interface and easy to use online at Gaylord.com.

After the Q & A session, all attendees were invited to Karen Pavelka's paper conservation labs in the School of Information. She further explained processes and activities undertaken there and showed equipment, special work areas, and other items of great interest.

On July 4 following this TMS presentation, Professor Pavelka traveled to Haiti almost six months after its devastating earthquake, spending 10 days in Port-au-Prince helping conserve the country's archives.

## The Fourth Part of the World

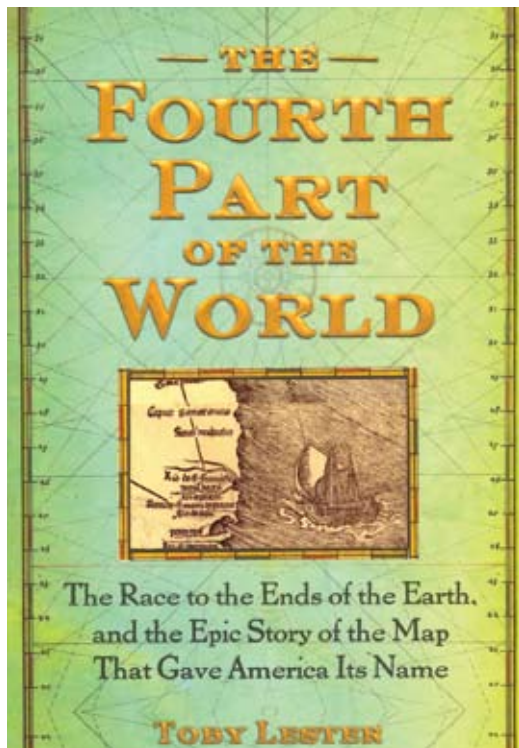
The Race to the Ends of the Earth, and the Epic Story of the Map That Gave America Its Name

Last Christmas, my wife Shari presented me with a copy of *The Fourth Part of the World*, by Toby Lester. Lester is a contributing editor to *The Atlantic*, and has also been featured on the radio program *This American Life*. He is currently an invited research scholar at the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University.

Lester's newest book begins "Old maps lead you to strange and unexpected places, and none so more ineluctably than the subject of this book: the giant, beguiling Waldseemüller world map of 1507". That is most certainly true. But the "subject of this book" includes much more than just the history of that map itself. Indeed, it is a history of discovery. Lester states that the Waldseemüller map was the first "to depict the western hemisphere roughly as we know it today. And mysteriously, for reasons that have yet to be satisfactorily explained, it did so years before Europeans are supposed to have first learned of the existence of the Pacific Ocean in 1513".

Ancient T-O maps, while crude, acknowledged the existence of Europe, Africa and Asia. But occasionally, maps and documents hinted at a mythical "fourth part of the world". Lester's book is a well-researched and detailed telling of the story of European exploration, across Asia, around Africa, and ultimately to the fourth part, the New World. Appearing in the tale are medieval monks, Marco Polo and the Great Khan, Prester John, Amerigo Vespucci, Christopher Columbus and even Nicolas Copernicus. It is an enthralling, wide-ranging and well-told story of discovery.

The first sections of the book on Old World and New World discoveries provide the background for the following section: the making of the map itself. Martin Waldseemüller is identified as the primary cartographer. But his partner Matthias Ringmann is identified by Toby Lester as the author of the *Introduction to Cosmography*, which accompanied the map when originally published. Lester writes: "Why dwell on this question of authorship? Because whoever wrote the *Introduction to Cosmography* almost certainly coined the



name America... Consider the famous passage in which the author steps forward to explain and justify the use of the name.

*"These parts have in fact now been more widely explored, and a fourth part has been discovered by Amerigo Vespucci. Since both Asia and Africa received their names from women, I do not see why anyone should rightly prevent this from being called Amerigen - the land of Amerigo, as it were - or America, after its discoverer, Americus, a man of perceptive character."*

Lester's epilogue explains how the Waldseemüller world map of 1507 brought together a synthesis of more than a thousand years of geography, history and culture: as Plato imagined it, as Ptolemy mapped it and as generations

of explorers discovered it. "It's the world viewed as a whole from above, a godlike vision of the earth suddenly accessible to all. It's a supplement to Ptolemy, and an introduction to cosmography. It's a record of the past, a commentary on the present, and a dream of the future; a world at once ancient and medieval and modern... It's a birth certificate for the world that came into being in 1492 - and it's a death warrant for the one that was there before... The Waldseemüller map helped usher in the modern geographical era, an achievement for which it deserves an important place in the history of ideas".

After reading Lester's book, I find myself in complete agreement with the blurb on the back cover of the volume from author Simon Winchester:

*"The complex artistry of the beautiful German map that first identified 'America' five centuries ago provides, for a truly imaginative writer, the opportunity to tell a wonderful and exciting story. Toby Lester, seizing this opportunity, has risen to the occasion brilliantly, creating a masterpiece of cartographic literature that will be of lasting importance".*

## FROM THE EDITOR

During the past year, Max Gross has done a complete overhaul of the website of the Texas Map Society.

The new web site has moved to [www.TexasMapSociety.org](http://www.TexasMapSociety.org).

If you have bookmarked the old site, please update your favorites list with the new address above.

Many of the past editions of *The Neatline* will soon be available in electronic form on the website. Just click on the "News" button to reach an index page to all available editions.

Under the "Community" button you will find the Texas Map Society Message board where important announcements as well as messages and replies from members of the society can be found. You need to register on the system in order to post, just click on the "Register" link in the center of the page to sign up and check back often.

The TMS Board of Directors has voted to continue printing paper copies of each issue of *The Neatline*. So you will continue to receive those. But be aware that while the paper version is restricted to 8 or 12 pages for each edition, the online version has no such restrictions. So by checking the electronic version, you may find some articles in longer, unedited versions, and frequently more photographs to go along with the articles. So check out the web version, even if you have a paper copy.

– David Finrock

## TMS Officers and Board, 2010 OFFICERS

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A **Neatline** is the outermost drawn line surrounding a map. It defines the height and width of the map and usually constrains the cartographic images.