

Seadogs of the Caribbean: The European Explorers' World on Maps For Grade 4

Students examine 16th century maps of the Caribbean for the sort of information they provided for explorers. By trying to create maps of islands described by Christopher Columbus in words only, students will experience how difficult it was to create an accurate map in this early period.

Images are included in this lesson plan for printing and distributing and they are also in an accompanying slideshow.

Session #1

Introduction- online class discussion

To orient students, point out the Caribbean on the **modern map (slide #2)**. The following explorers spent time in the Caribbean and South America:

Sir Francis Drake

Vasco Nunez de Balboa

Juan Ponce de Leon

Christopher Columbus

Tell students they will be discovering when and why each explorer went there and will examine the kind of maps available at the time. They will try their hand at making their own maps using one of the ways available to people in the 1500s.

Teaching the lesson

1. Divide the readings about the explorers among the class. Each student can read about one man and study the accompanying map of his travels. Give them each a copy of the "Explorers Worksheet" as well. These can be filled out at home or in class.

Session #2-online discussion

1. Students report out. As they report, write on the board or poster board each explorer's name, the years they were in the Caribbean, and reasons why they went. You might choose to show each explorer's journey map via the accompanying slideshow. (Drake- slide #10, Ponce de Leon- slide #11, Nunez de Balboa- slide #2, Columbus- slide #12)

Worksheet Answers

- Sir Francis Drake- 1572; Panama, Puerto Rico; to attack, get treasure, to get English ships to be able to use the Pacific Ocean
- Juan Ponce de Leon- 1493, 1502, 1508, 1513; Florida, Hispaniola, Puerto Rico, Cuba; to start new colonies for Spain, find the Fountain of Youth
- Vasco Nunez de Balboa- 1500, 1510, 1513; Hispaniola, Colombia, Panama; to start new colonies for Spain and rule them, find gold
- Christopher Columbus- 1492, 1493-1496, 1498-1500, 1502; Bahamas, Cuba, Hispaniola, Caribbean coast of South America, Central America; looking for a shorter route to Asia, to trade, to get treasure, to start new colonies for Spain

2. Ask what might be useful for an explorer to see on a map and list on the board or poster board. (harbors, a way to gauge distance, all pieces of land in the area, compass, etc.)

3. View the **d'Anghiera map from 1511 (slide #3)**

This map is written in Spanish, but some names are the same, such as Jamaica (the "J" looks like "i"), Cuba (Isla de Cuba), and Bermuda. The dotted areas might be shallow waters.

- Note that today, Hispaniola is divided between Haiti and the Dominican Republic.
- Who might have used this map? (Drake, Balboa, Ponce de Leon)
- Does the map show everything on your list of what the explorers might have wanted to see? Is anything missing that might have been helpful to them?

View the **d’Anghiera map** next to a **modern map (slide #4)**

- Do the islands seem to be oriented the right way on the old map? (No-the old map is sideways) Are they located in the right spots in relation to Florida? (No- in reality, Hispaniola is to the east of Cuba and Jamaica is below them.)

View **Tabula Terre Nove (slide #5)**

The dark area is the Atlantic Ocean. “Terra Incognita” means “Unknown Land”. That’s South America.

- Why would it be unknown? (Nobody had explored that area yet.)
- Who might have used this map? (Drake, Balboa, Ponce de Leon)
- Does the map show everything on your list of what the explorers might have wanted to see? Is anything missing that might have been helpful to them?

View **Tabula Terre Nove** next to a **modern map (slide #6)**

- Find Florida on the old map. Now find it on the modern blank map. Is it in the right place on the old map?
- Find Africa on the old map. Is it really that close to South America?

For now, hold any discussion about why this map is erroneous. It will be discussed at the end of this session.

View the **1554 map of North and South America (slide #7)**

- This map is about 40 years newer than the first two and it has more information added to it. What more do you see? (artwork, mountains, more towns, more in the interiors)
- There’s a pattern to where the most settled areas can be found. What is it? (The most settled areas are all along the coasts.)

View the map of **Cuba, Jamaica, and part of Hispaniola (slide #8)**

- Who might have used this map? (Drake)
- It is about 50 years newer than the first two maps. Why are there more features on it? (more exploration was done) What are they? (compass, mountains, more place names, legend, scale of miles, latitude lines)
- Does it show everything on your list of what the explorers might have wanted to see?
- Is anything missing that might have been helpful to them?

View the **map of the Caribbean from 1592 (slide #9)**

- This map is oriented differently. See if you can find Florida.
- Hint: look at the direction the “compass roses” point. (The blue 3-pointed part is the arrow on each.) Turn the map so that north is at the top.
- Why are the Caribbean Islands colored when the surrounding land is not? What do you think the purpose of this map might have been? (The islands are colored because they are the focus of the map. The purpose of the map was to get people to come to this area, possibly for trade.)

You noticed a lot of errors in the old maps. Why might this be so? What ways did people in the 16th century have to make maps? (They knew what the land looked like by standing on high places and looking down. They also did a lot of guesswork.)

Whose name is missing from our list of explorers who might have used these old maps? (Columbus). He was the first European to explore the Caribbean and there were no maps yet of that area to guide him. In your next session you will try drawing maps using only Columbus’ journal entries describing them.

Session #3

Remember that when Christopher Columbus first explored the Caribbean, no Europeans had been there before him and there were no maps of the area. Although he might have been a cartographer (mapmaker), Columbus did not create any Caribbean maps. Instead, he described in his journal what he saw.

1. This activity can be done at home or in the classroom. If students create their drawings at home, then step #2 should be a session for the following day. Tell students they will each try drawing one of the islands described in Columbus's journal. There are two islands- Fernandia and Isabella. Assign an island to each child, along with the appropriate journal entry about it. Students should also include on their maps the natural resources and geographical features that Columbus mentioned, and they should be prepared to tell why these resources might have been valuable to Columbus and his men.

Online Class Discussion (Steps #2-7)

2. Show the **map of the Bahamas (slide #13)**. Fernandia and Isabella are two of the many islands in the Bahamas. Fernandia is now called "Long Island" and Isabella is now called "Acklins/Crooked Island". Point them out on the map. (They are side-by-side, near the middle of the string of islands).

3. Ask the students who drew Fernandia to share their pictures, point out the natural resources and geographical features and talk about why they were important to Columbus and his men. (Harbor- safe place to anchor ships; green, flat, fertile land- good for crops; trees- for building and fuel; fish & whales- for food)

4. Show **Long Island (Fernandia) (slide #14)**. Ask for comments. How did students' work compare to the modern map?

Columbus claimed that Fernandia was more than 20 leagues long. In Spain, a league equaled 2.6 miles. $20 \times 2.6 = ???$ (52) He was right when he said the island was more than 52 miles long, but it was much longer- 80 miles long! How could his answer be so wrong? (He must not have had a way to measure the island, so he had to guess.)

Columbus described a harbor. Where might it be on the modern map? Remember that he said the harbor had two narrow entrances on either side of an islet in the middle. (it is the biggest harbor you can see- about 2/3 of the way down the island.)

5. Ask the students who drew Isabella to share their pictures, point out the natural resources and geographical features and talk about why they were important to Columbus and his men. (sandy beach- good for landing boats, trees-for building and fuel, fresh water- for drinking, cooking, & watering crops, higher land would be free from flooding)

6. Show **Acklins/Crooked Island (slide #15)**. Ask for comments. How did students' work compare to the modern map?

On Isabella, or Crooked Island, Columbus said there was a cape on the western side that he named Cape Hermoso. Where might it be? (It points toward Long Cay.)

7. Wrap-up discussion- Show again the "**Tabula Terre Nove**" map (slide #5). Do you remember the ways the explorers might have had to make a map? (sail all the way around the piece of land, if possible, and draw what they see, stand on a high point and draw what they see looking down). If you were to go back in time to redraw your map using only the ways available to the explorers, how would you do it? Where would you stand? How much better do you think your map would be compared to the one you drew using just Columbus's words?

Extension activity: explore ways maps are made today

Massachusetts History and Social Studies Frameworks
Grade 4

Topic 1. North America: geography and map skills [4.T1]

Supporting Question: What are the physical features and nations of North America?

1. On a physical map of North America, use cardinal directions, map scales, key/legend (symbols for mountains, rivers, deserts, lakes, cities), and title to locate and identify important physical features (e.g., Mississippi and Rio Grande Rivers, Great Lakes, Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, Gulf of Mexico, Hudson's Bay, Appalachian Mountains, Rocky Mountains, Sierra Madre, the Great Basin, Mojave, Sonoran, and Chihuahuan Deserts, the Yucatan Peninsula, the Caribbean Sea).
2. On a political map of North America, locate Canada and its provinces, Mexico and its states, the nations of the Caribbean, and the United States of America and its states; explain the meaning of the terms continent, country, nation, county, state, province, and city.

Topic 3. Early European exploration and conquest [4.T3]

Supporting Question: What were the reasons for European voyages across the Atlantic Ocean?

1. Explain how historians studying the European voyages to the Americas use archaeological evidence, maps, illustrations, and texts produced in Europe at the time, and that these materials are called primary sources.
3. Trace on a map European explorations of North America and the Caribbean Islands in the 15th and 16th centuries (e.g., voyages of Vasco Nuñez de Balboa, Jacques Cartier, Cristobal Colon [Christopher Columbus], Ferdinand Magellan, Juan Ponce de Leon, Amerigo Vespucci, Hernán Cortés), evaluate the reasons for the voyages, noting that they were part of an effort by European nations to expand their empires, find new routes for trade with Asia, new opportunities for colonization, and new natural resources; make a timeline of their landings and conquests.

Seadogs of the Caribbean Explorers Worksheet

Explorer's name _____

List the years he was in the Caribbean.

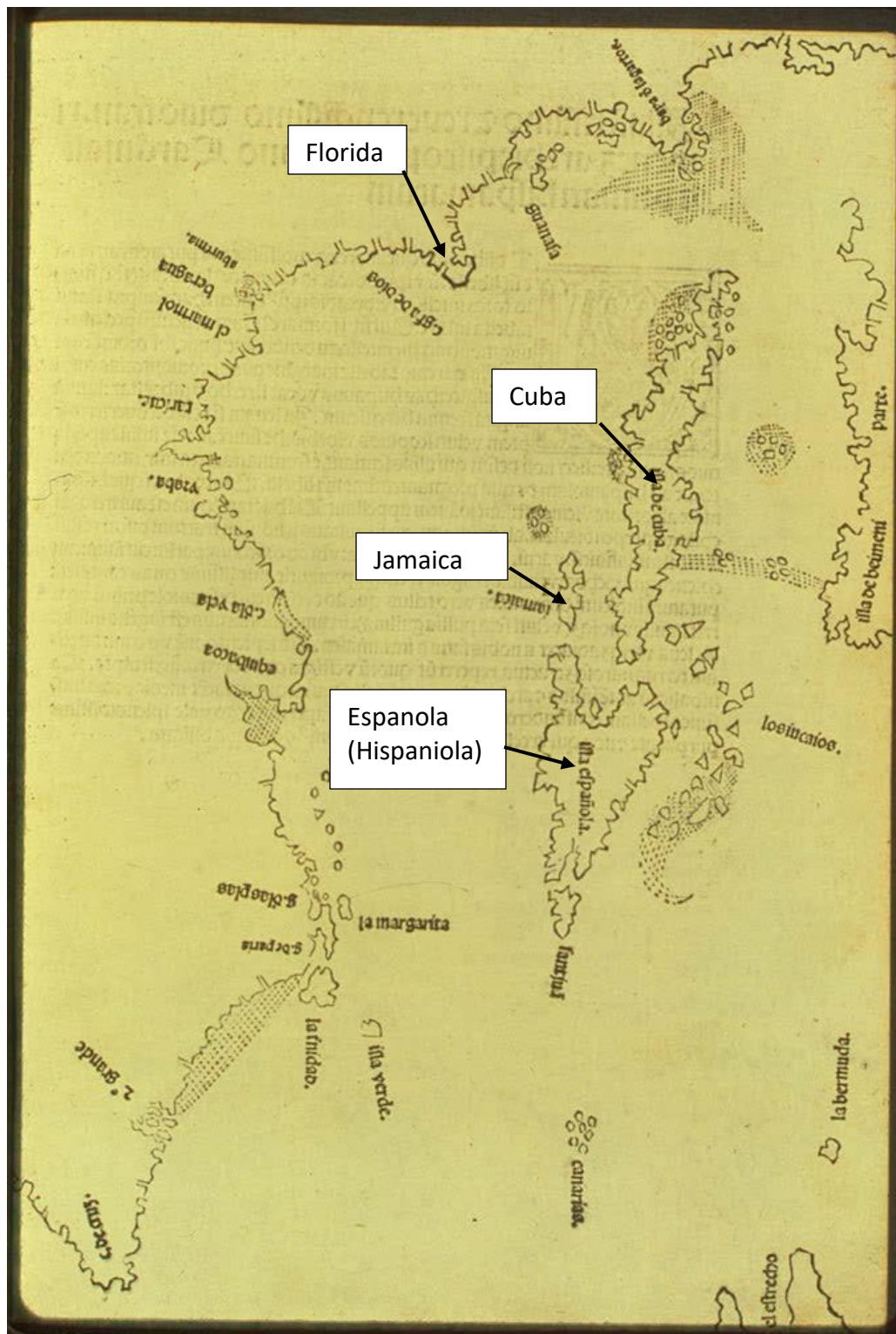
List where he went.

Why did he go there?

Central America and the Caribbean

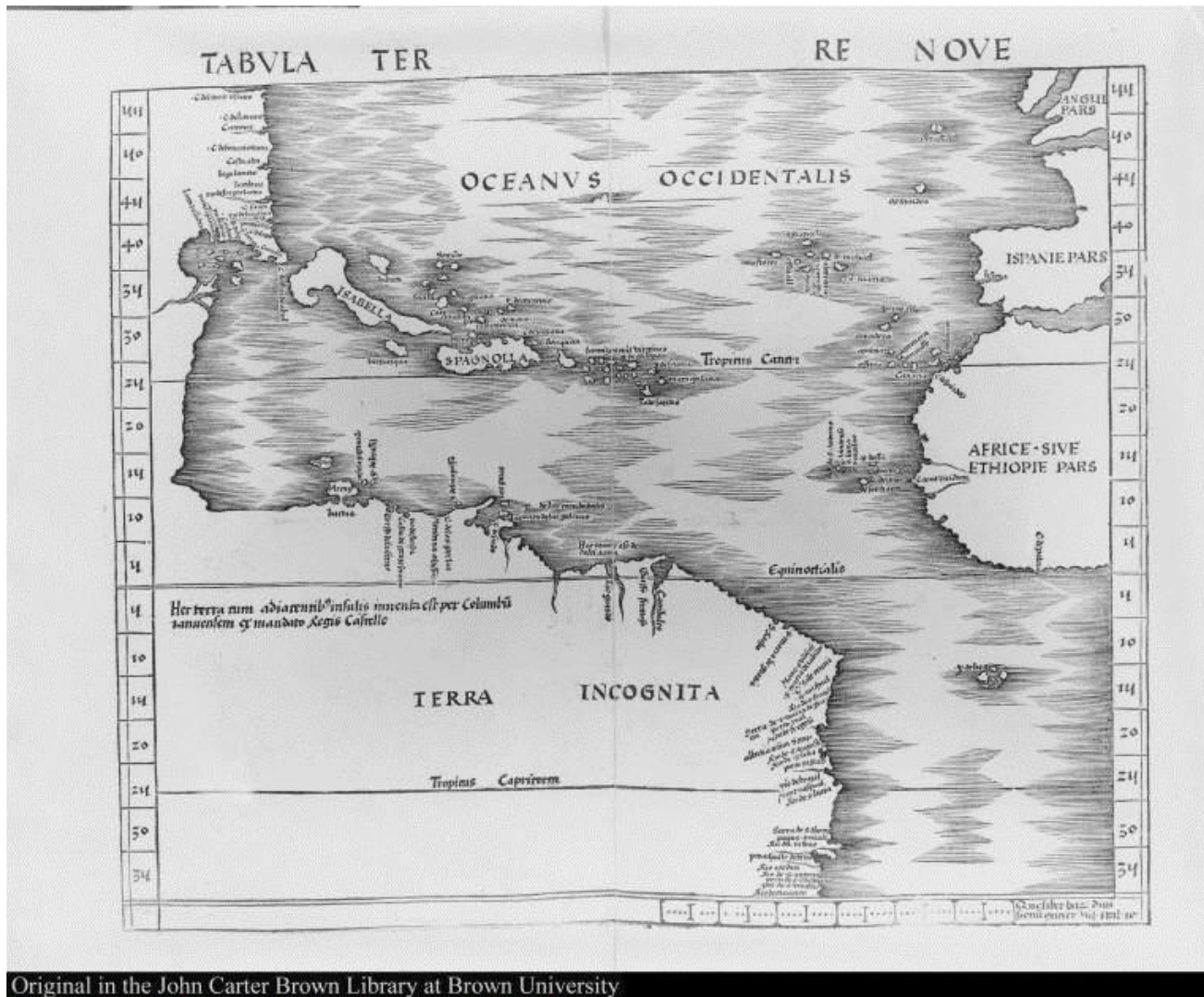


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Pietro Martire d'Anghiera, 1511
 Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library

This map is written in Spanish, but some names are the same, such as Jamaica (the "J" looks like "i"), Cuba (Isla de Cuba), and Bermuda. The dotted areas might be shallow waters. Today, Hispaniola is divided between Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Who might have used this map?



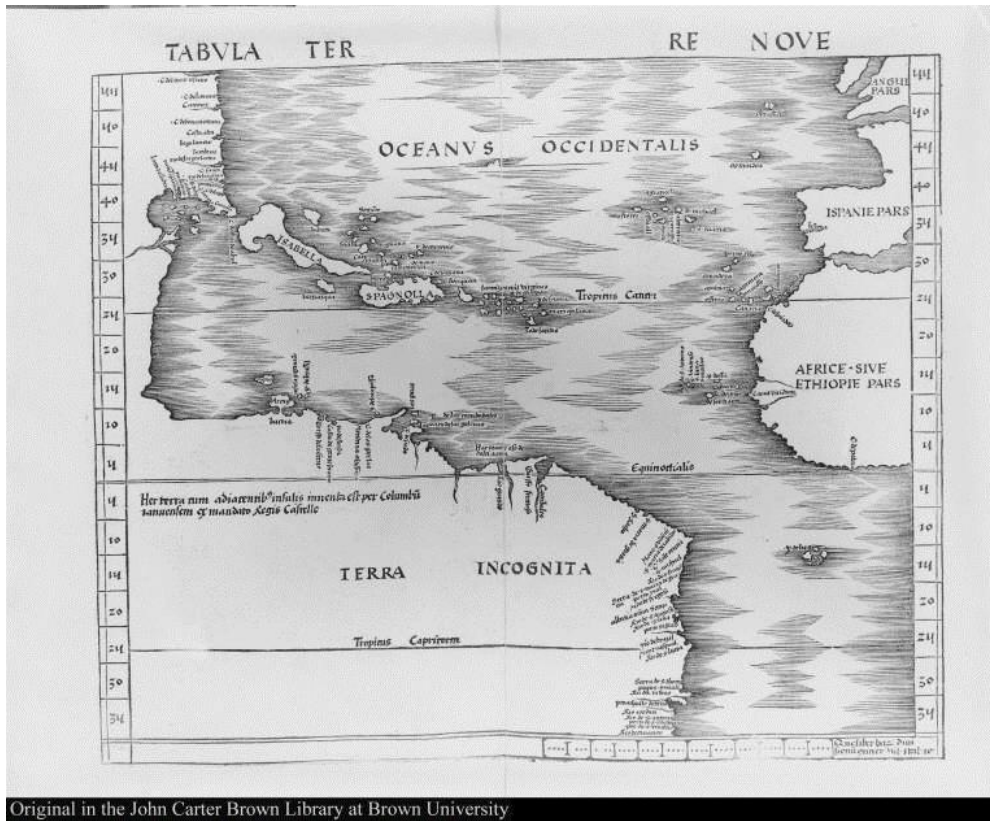
Original in the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University

Tabula Terre Nove

By Ptolemy, 1513, Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library

The dark area is the Atlantic Ocean. "Terra Incognita" means "Unknown Land". That's South America. Why would it be unknown? Who might have used this map?

Does the map show everything on your list of what the explorers might have wanted to see? Is anything missing that might have been helpful to them?



Find Florida on the old map. Now find it on the modern blank map. Is it in the right place on the old map?
Find Africa on the old map. Is it really that close to South America?



Original in the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University

1554

Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library

This map is about 40 years newer than the first two maps and it has more information added to it. What more do you see?

There's a pattern on this map to where the most settled areas can be found. What is it?



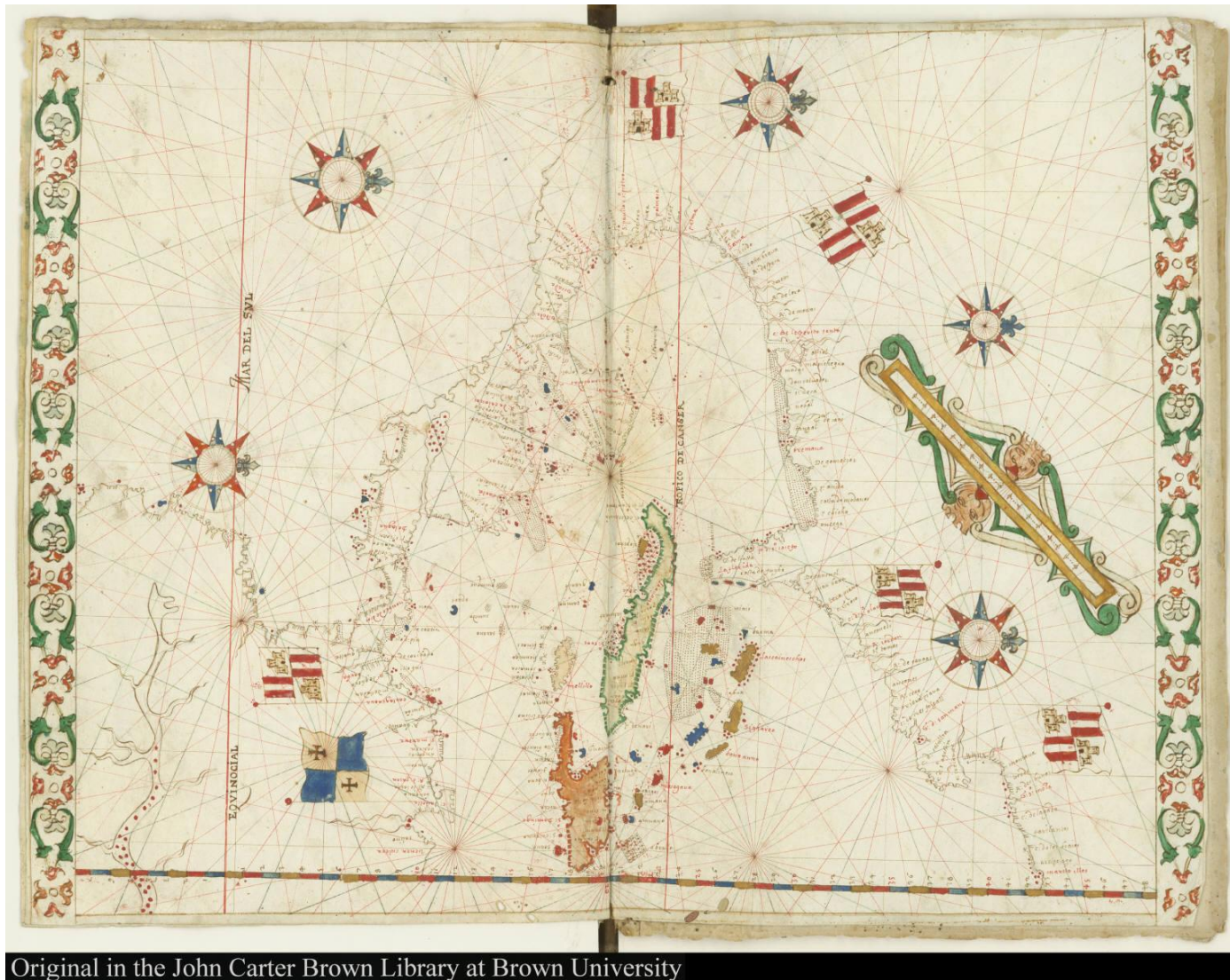
Cuba, Jamaica, and part of Hispaniola
Paolo Forlani, 1564
Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library

Who might have used this map?

It is about 50 years newer than the first two maps. Why are there more features on it? What are they?

Does it show everything on your list of what the explorers might have wanted to see?

Is anything missing that might have been helpful to them?



Original in the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University

1592, Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library

This map is oriented differently. See if you can find Florida.

Hint: look at the direction the “compass roses” point. (The blue 3-pointed part is the arrow on each.) Turn the map so that north is at the top.

Why are the Caribbean Islands colored when the surrounding land is not? What do you think the purpose of this map might have been?

Sir Francis Drake

Francis Drake was born in about 1540 in England. At about age 13 he first worked as a sailor. In his early 20s he joined a slave-trading fleet. Off the coast of Mexico, the Spanish attacked the fleet. Drake disliked the Spanish from that time on.

In 1572 Drake attacked a Spanish settlement in Panama and took much treasure. Then he marched across Panama and saw the Pacific Ocean. Spain controlled travel in the Pacific. Drake wanted English ships to be able to use the ocean.

In 1577 Queen Elizabeth sent Drake on an around-the-world voyage. Drake left England with five ships, but only his ship completed the trip. He passed through the Strait of Magellan, at the southern tip of South America, and into the Pacific. He then sailed up the coasts of South and North America. In 1579 he crossed the Pacific and Indian oceans. In 1580 he returned to England. His ship was loaded with treasure. Queen Elizabeth rewarded Drake by making him a knight.

<https://kids.britannica.com/kids/article/Francis-Drake/353065>

He died of dysentery in January 1596 after unsuccessfully attacking San Juan, Puerto Rico. His exploits were legendary. He was a hero to the English but a pirate to the Spaniards. King Philip II was reported to have offered a reward of 20,000 ducats, about £4,000,000 English Pounds (About \$6.5 Million US Dollars) by modern standards for him to be assassinated.

https://kids.kiddle.co/Francis_Drake



by Giovanni Battista Boazio, 1589, Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library

Juan Ponce de León

Juan Ponce de León was an early Spanish explorer of the Americas. He was the first European to visit Florida. He is also famous for his association with the legendary **Fountain of Youth**.

Ponce de León was born in about 1460 in the Spanish province of León. He may have sailed to the Americas with Christopher Columbus in 1493. In 1502 he helped to conquer the island of Hispaniola, in the Caribbean Sea. [Today Hispaniola has been divided into two countries- the Dominican Republic and Haiti.] In 1508, he founded Puerto Rico's earliest European settlement. In 1509 he became governor of the island.

In March 1513 Ponce de León left Puerto Rico to continue to search for new lands. He may also have been looking for an island he had heard about. It was said that a spring on this island flowed with water that kept people young. In April 1513 Ponce de León landed on the mainland of North America, though he thought he was on an island. He named the territory Florida.

Ponce de León had landed near what is now Saint Augustine, in the northeastern part of the state. He did not find the spring, so from there he traveled south along the coast. He continued through the chain of islands called the Florida Keys to Florida's west coast. On the way he discovered the Gulf Stream, a warm ocean current that flows northward.

Ponce de León returned to Spain in 1514. The king gave him permission to start colonies in the areas he had visited. In 1521 Ponce de León sailed again to Florida. He was wounded in an attack by Native Americans. His crew took him to Havana, Cuba, where he died.

<https://kids.britannica.com/kids/article/Juan-Ponce-de-Le%C3%B3n/390049>

Fountain of Youth- a spring that didn't really exist. It was believed that if someone found the Fountain of Youth and drank its water, their health would be restored, they would become young again, and they would live forever.



Vasco Núñez de Balboa

The Spanish conquistador (conqueror) Vasco Núñez de Balboa was the first European to see the Pacific Ocean from the Americas. He also helped to found the first successful European colony on the mainland of the Americas.

Balboa was born in Spain in 1475. He left for America in 1500 and settled on the island of Hispaniola, in the West Indies. [Today Hispaniola has been divided into two countries- the Dominican Republic and Haiti.] In 1510 he sailed with a group headed for a colony in what is now Colombia. When they arrived, they discovered that the colony had been abandoned except for a few people. Balboa persuaded them to go with him to Darién, in what is now Panama. There they established a stable colony.

Indians told Balboa about a great ocean with gold on its shores. Balboa asked for a large expedition from Spain to search for this ocean, but before it arrived, he set out on his own with a smaller group. In September 1513 he reached the Pacific, which he called the South Sea, and claimed it for Spain.

The expedition from Spain arrived in 1514, with Pedro Arias Dávila at its head. Balboa and Dávila competed for power. As governor of Darién, Dávila eventually charged Balboa with various crimes. Balboa was found guilty and beheaded in January 1519.

<https://kids.britannica.com/kids/article/Vasco-N%C3%BA%C3%B1ez-de-Balboa/351397>

Central America and the Caribbean



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Balboa lived on Hispaniola, which is the island on the map that is half green and half yellow. Haiti and the Dominican Republic are the two countries that are on the island today.

Panama is the mustard-colored country between Colombia and Costa Rica. That's where he started a colony. He walked across Panama to reach the Pacific Ocean.

Christopher Columbus

Cristoforo Colombo was born in Genoa, Italy, in 1451. He is known as Christopher Columbus to English-speaking people. He was the son of a weaver and had little schooling.

In about 1476 Columbus settled in Portugal. In the 1480s he started planning a voyage to discover a sea route to Asia. Europeans were eager for Asian goods. However, these goods were costly because they had to be brought to Europe over a dangerous land route. Columbus knew that the Earth was round. He thought that Asia must lie to the west, across the Atlantic Ocean.

The Portuguese king refused to pay for Columbus's voyage. Columbus then turned to King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of the Spanish kingdoms of Aragon and Castile. In January 1492 they agreed to support the expedition. They provided three ships: the *Niña*, the *Pinta*, and the *Santa María*.

On August 3, 1492, the ships set sail. On October 12, Columbus reached the Bahamas, an island group east of Florida. He thought he had reached the East Indies in Asia. Columbus therefore called the islanders Indians.

Columbus reached Cuba on October 29. On December 6 he reached the island of Hispaniola. [Today Hispaniola has been divided into two countries- the Dominican Republic and Haiti.] He built a fort on the island and left some men there. In January he returned to Spain. He took with him parrots, plants, gold, cloth, and several Native Americans.

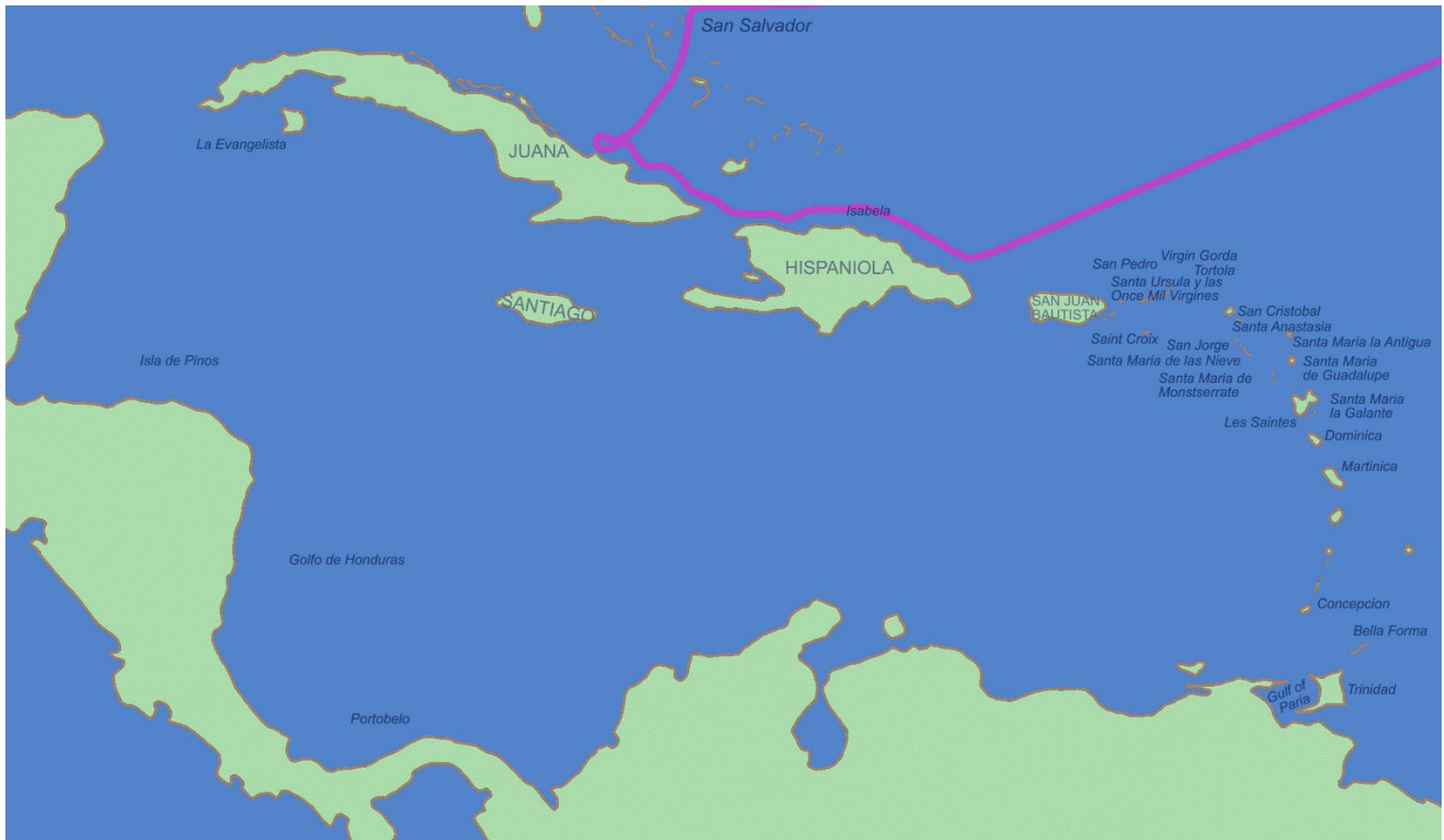
Ferdinand and Isabella were pleased with Columbus and his discoveries. They soon sent him back for a second trip. On his second voyage, from 1493 to 1496, Columbus had 17 ships and about 1,300 men. He found that the men he had left behind on Hispaniola had been killed. He then started a new colony and explored island coasts. He left his brothers in charge of the new colony when he returned to Spain.

On the third voyage, from 1498 to 1500, Columbus explored the Caribbean coast of South America. During this time, many people in the Hispaniola colony became angry with the rule of Columbus and his brothers. They complained to Spanish authorities. Columbus was eventually arrested and sent back to Spain in chains.

Upon his return, however, he was freed. He convinced Ferdinand and Isabella that he would find them treasures if he was allowed to return to the Americas. Columbus's last trip started in 1502. He explored the Central American coast but lost all four of his ships. He had to be rescued.

Columbus returned to Spain in November 1504. He died on May 20, 1506. Until his death he remained convinced that he had reached Asia.

<https://kids.britannica.com/kids/article/Christopher-Columbus/352985>



Christopher Columbus's First Voyage, 1492

<https://kids.britannica.com/kids/article/Christopher-Columbus/352985>



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Fernandia is now Long Island and Isabella is now Acklins/Crooked Island

Fernandia

"The island is eight **leagues** west of Santa Maria and from the **cape** where I touched, the coast runs north-north-west and south-south-east; I saw quite twenty leagues of it and it still continued.

...when I was about two leagues from the island's cape I saw a marvelous harbour with an entrance, or rather two entrances, since there is an **islet** in the middle. Both entrances are very narrow...

This island is very green, flat and **fertile** and I have no doubt that they **sow and reap** Indian corn and other crops throughout the year. I saw many trees unlike ours.

The fish here are surprisingly unlike ours. There are some of the shape of **dories** and of the finest colours in the world, blue, yellow, red and every other hue and others variously **flecked**. The colours are so marvelous that everybody wondered and took pleasure in the sight. There are also whales. But I saw no kind of land animal at all except parrots and lizards."

Vocabulary

cape- a point of land that sticks out into the ocean (like Cape Cod)

dories- fish:



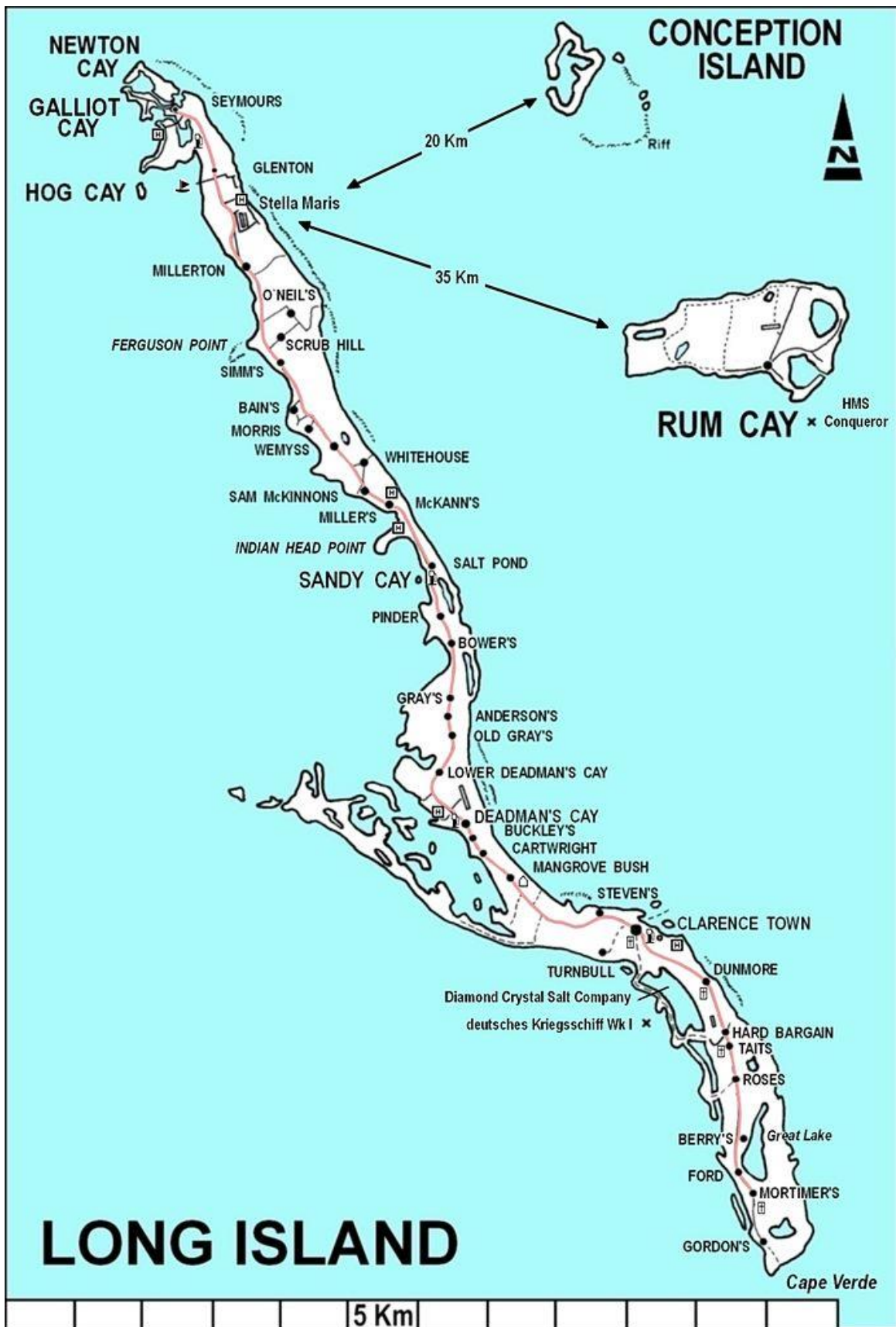
fertile- good for growing plants

flecked- speckled

islet- (pronounced EYE-let) a little island

league- a Spanish league is 2.6 miles

sow and reap- plant and harvest



wikidata.org

Fernandia is now Long Island

Isabella

“...we saw an island to the east, towards which we steered, and all three vessels reached its northern point before midday. Here there is an **islet** and a **reef** of rocks, on the **seaward** side to the north and another between this and the island itself.

I then followed the coast of this island westwards for twelve **leagues** as far as a **cape** which I named Cape **Hermoso** which is on its western coast. It is indeed lovely, rounded and in deep water, with no **shoals** lying off it. At first the shore is low and stony, but further on there is a sandy beach which continues along most of this coast...The whole of this coast and all of the island that I saw is more or less beach, and, beautiful though the others are, this island is the most beautiful I have seen. There are many trees, very green and tall, and the land is higher than on the other islands. On it there is a hill which cannot however be called a mountain, but which makes the whole island more beautiful. There seems to be a lot of water in the middle of the island. On this north-eastern side the coast turns sharply and is thickly covered with very large trees.”

Vocabulary

cape- a point of land that sticks out into the ocean (like Cape Cod)

Hermoso- (pronounced air-MO-so) means “beautiful” in Spanish

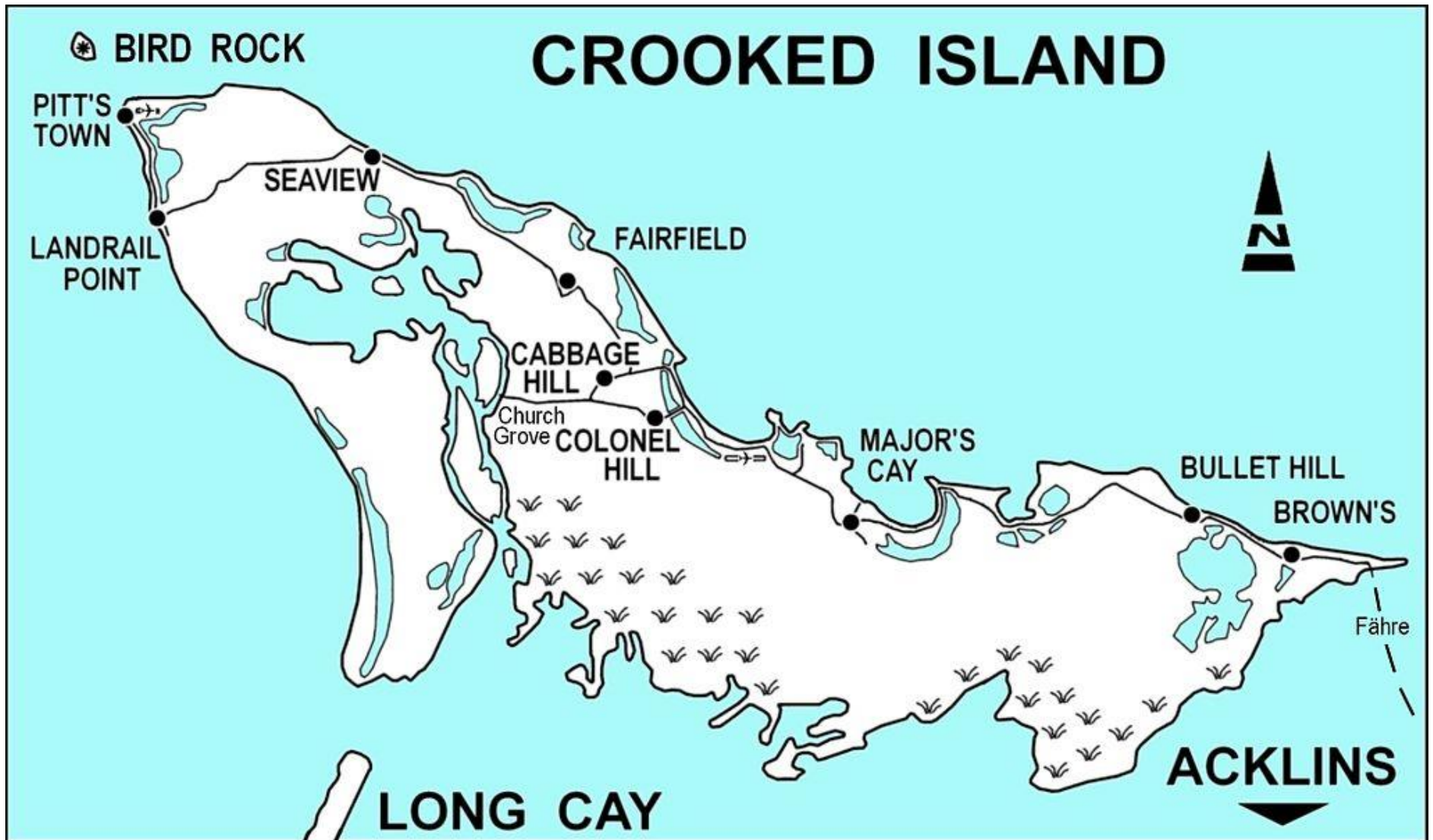
islet- (pronounced EYE-let) a little island

leagues- a Spanish league is 2.6 miles

reef- a rock, coral, or sand ridge just below or above the water

seaward-toward the sea

shoals- sandbars in shallow water



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Isabella is now Acklins/Crooked Island