Giacomo Gastaldi, *Nueva Hispania Tabula Nova*, copperplate engraving on paper, 13.5 x 17.5 cm., from *La Geografia di Claudio Ptolomeo Alessandrino* (Venice: Giacomo Gastaldi, 1548). *The University of Texas at Arlington Libraries Special Collections, Gift of Dr. Jack Franke*

Venetian Giacomo Gastaldi’s map *Nueva Hispania Tabula Nova* for his 1548 edition of Ptolemy’s *Geography* was one of the most important early printed maps to show the area that became Texas. It was the first printed map to focus on New Spain and the first map of the area to be printed by the new copperplate engraving method which would dominate the map trade for more than two and a half centuries.

The place names on the highly influential map reflected the latest discoveries in the region, including the explorations of Pineda, Cabeza de Vaca, DeSoto and Moscosso. The “R[io]. Spiritu Santu” (Mississippi River) appears. California is shown as a peninsula -- one of the earliest depictions of California on a printed map (preceded on a printed world map by Sebastian Cabot in 1544). The “R[io]. Tontonteanc” is either the Gila or the Colorado River. Florida and Cuba are named. The Yucatan peninsula appears as an island, which would later be corrected by fellow Venetian Girolamo Ruscelli’s map of 1561, which otherwise is quite derivative.

Gastaldi’s map was arguably the best printed map of the southwest dating from the mid-16th century and his maps for Ptolemy’s *Geography* made him one of the most influential mapmakers of this period – a time when Italians still dominated European map printing. Not until 1570, with the publication of Abraham Ortelius’ *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* in Antwerp did this begin to change, and not until 1597, with Cornelis Wytfliet’s map of New Spain, would there be a better regional representation on a printed map.