

Pierre Mortier (1661–1711), *Téâtre de la guerre en Amérique* (The Theater of War in America) (Amsterdam, 1703).

The grandson of French refugees, Pierre Mortier of Amsterdam used Dutch production techniques with French exploration knowledge to create vivid maps. This colorful map shows the route of the annual Spanish treasure fleet, or *flota*, as it entered and then left the Caribbean Sea. The fleet might number as many as 50 vessels, and after entering the Caribbean north of Trinidad; it called at Cartagena, Portobelo, Vera Cruz, and finally Havana before heading back to Spain. This fleet was critical for its yearly supply first of gold and then of silver, obtained primarily from mines in Peru and Mexico – a small vignette (lower left) shows the mining of these precious metals. Both Spanish Florida (“Floride”) and the Mississippi River, which emerges from “French Louisiana” (“Luisana aux François”), retain inaccurate shapes and locations – Florida extends almost to Mexico.

Who is the Cartographer?

The name attributed to this map is the publisher Pierre Mortier. First a bookseller, and then a map collector, Mortier eventually established a successful map production company. As a publisher, he accumulated the rights to the work of many distinguished mapmakers. It has been said that he produced some of the finest examples of map engraving with his copies of original works. “In his copies Mortier adhered closely to the originals but usually perfected them by the fineness of his engraving. [...]and so well done as engravings that they are often preferred to the original.” -Verner and Stuart-Stubbs

Pierre Mortier had critics, many of them the mapmakers whose work he copied. It is estimated that he gave credit to the original cartographer about 10% of the time. Some mapmakers were offended that he made the changes to their maps, and many did not agree with the changes he made. Mortier did not include the name of the cartographer on this fine map.

Essential Questions

As Pierre Mortier legitimately acquired the rights to the maps he copied, how do you view his omission of tribute to the original artists?

What do you think Pierre Mortier hoped to accomplish with his publication of *Theatre of War in America*?