

EXPERTS NOT SURPRISED VINLAND MAP IS FAKE

By DAVID NORRIS and PATRICK CLANCY

A LONDON firm of dealers played a major part in the sale to America of the Vinland map, dated 1440 and believed to be the first to depict the new world. The map was confirmed to be a fake yesterday after stringent scientific tests.

The map, given to Yale University in 1965 by an anonymous benefactor, was hailed at the time as "the most exciting cartographic discovery of the century."

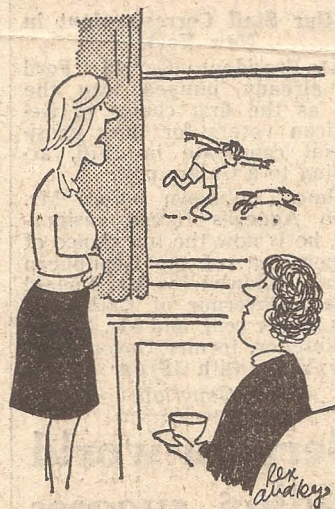
It came to light in 1957 and purported to confirm the discovery of the North East American coast, or "Vinland," by Lief Eriksson, the Viking explorer, long before the arrival of Christopher Columbus in 1492.

The London firm involved in

the deal was Davis and Orioli. It was run by Mr. J. L. Davis, who acted as an agent in the sale of the map to America in 1957. Mr. Davis has since died and the firm is now extinct.

'Far too good'

Last night a leading cartographic expert, Mr. Ronald Vere Tooley, of London, said: "I said all along that this map was a fake. The outline of Greenland was far too good. It could not possibly have been made by Norsemen in their small boats."



"He's definitely a chip off the old Spock."

"Another aspect aroused my suspicion was that the seller refused to allow any chemical tests. He claimed these would damage the map."

Mr. Davis, who was known to travel widely in Italy and Spain buying antiquities, had been acting as agent for Mr. Enzo Ferrajoli de Ry, an Italian

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Vinland map fake

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book seller, based in Barcelona.

The full story of Mr. Davis's links with the map was related last night by Dr. Helen Wallis, head of the map room at the British Museum, where "Vinland" was on display in 1966.

She said: "It first came to light in 1957 when Mr. Davies, acting for Mr. de Ry, brought the map to London. Dealers in London and other European centres to which he took the map were not happy about it at that stage.

"It eventually arrived at the Geneva shop of Mr. Nicolas Rauch, who has since died, where it was bought by Mr. Lawrence Witten, an American dealer for, it was rumoured, about \$3,500 (now about £1,600).

"Mr. de Ry and Mr. Davis were linked with the sale. Mr. Davis was believed to have sold to Mr. Witten for £75 another document, which gave added weight to the authenticity of the map."

Jailed in Spain

Mr. de Ry was later jailed in Spain for selling Greek manuscripts, stolen from the Cathedral of La Seo, in Saragossa. He died soon after his release in the late 1960s.

Dr. Wallis said one rumour was that the Vinland map was linked in some way with the stolen Cathedral documents.

Dealing with the movements of the map after it arrived in America, Dr. Wallis said Mr. Witten sold it to a man, believed to be a Yale benefactor. The sum was never disclosed, but was believed to be about \$100,000 (now about £45,000).

The purchaser donated the map to Yale in 1965. Mr. Witten had never disclosed where the map and other documents with it came from.

New tests

Dr. Wallis said the newly developed tests, used to discover the Vinland forgery, are likely to be used in Britain on any ancient document of doubtful origin.

The tests, carried out by a Chicago firm for Yale, involved the analysis of small particles of ink. An electron microscope examination showed that the pigment contained a form of titanium dioxide, first used in the 1920s.