

CELEBRATING THE NAMING OF AMERICA AT ST. DIE

Page from Mathias Ringmann's Book.
(Photographs by Weick, St. Die.)

Four Hundredth Anniversary of the Death of Mathias Ringmann, Who First Suggested the Name of This Continent in His "Introductio Cosmographiae."

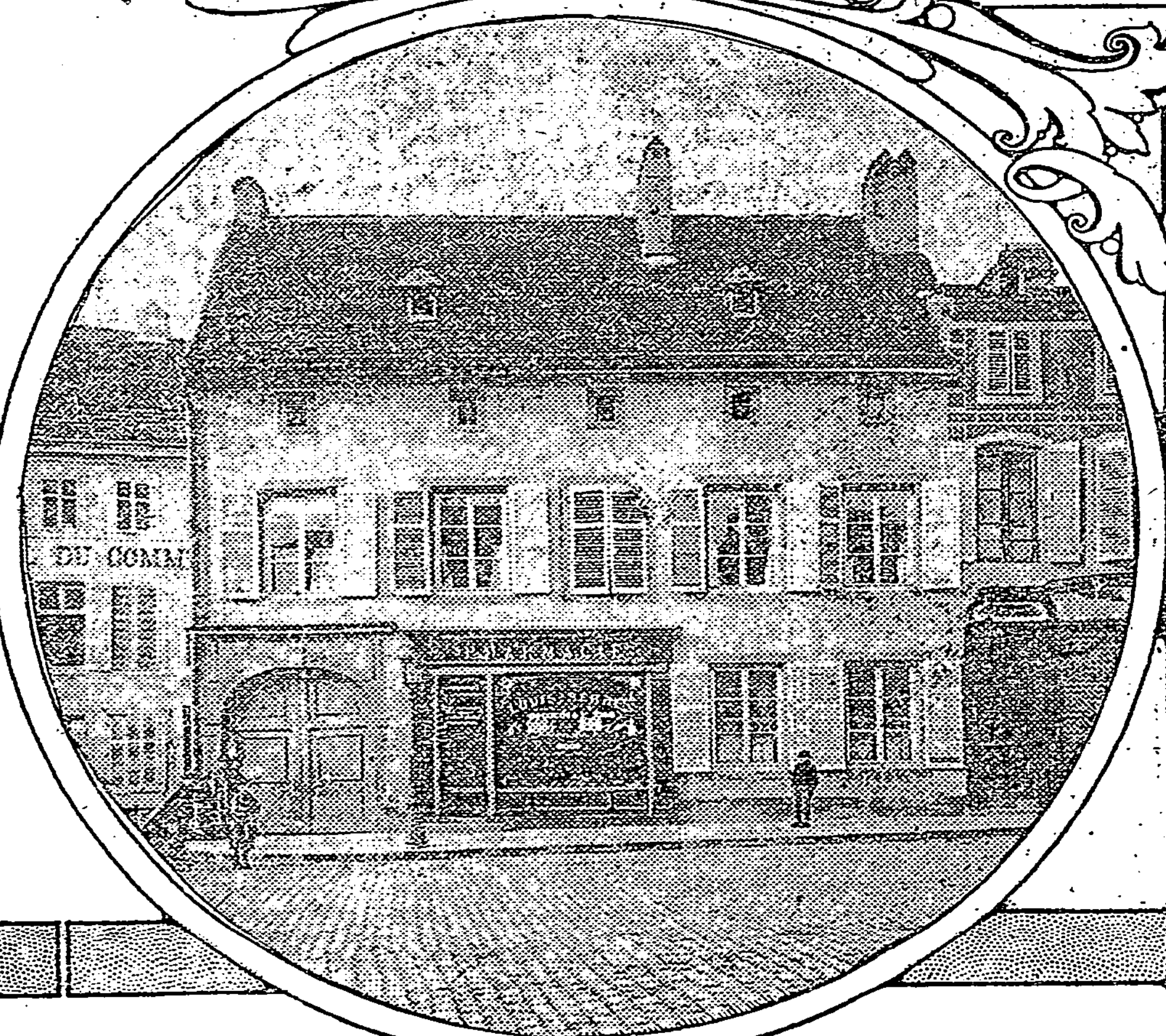
COSMOGRAPHIAE
Capadociam/Pamphiliam/Lidiam/Ciliciam/Armenias maiores & minores/Colchidem/Hircaniam/Hiberiam/Albaniam et praeterea multas quas singulatim enumerare longa mora esset. Ita dicta ab eius nominis regina.
Nunc vero & hae partes sunt factus illustratae & alia quarta pars per Americum Vesputium in sequentibus audientur inuenta est/qua non video cur quis iure veteri ab Americo inuentore sagacis ingenij viro Amerigeni quasi Americi terra / hinc Americam dicendam & Europa & Asia a multis suis fuerit nomina. Eius frater & gentis mores ex his finibus Americi navigationibus quae sequuntur liquide intelligi datur.
Hunc in modum terram quadripartitam cognoscit sunt tres primae partes continentis/quarta est insularum omni quaque mari circumdata conspiciat. Et licet mare vni sit quoadmodum et ipsa tellus/multis tamen sinibus distinctum / & innumeras repletum insulis varia sibi nomina assumit: quae in Cosmographiae tabulis conspiciuntur/ & Praeclarus in translatione Dionysii talibus enumerat veribus.
Circum Oceani gurgites tamen vndique vastus Qui quous vnus sit plurima nomina sumit.
Finibus Hesperij Atlanticus ille vocatur
Ac Boreae quae gens fuit Armis sub armis
Dicit ille piger uenit Saturni. Idem Morsus est alij:



Præfatus & ipsa cadē Christo monimenta fauente
Tempore venuro carera multa dremet.

Vbi Deo dante clarifera nomina praefata
Qua Vos signum sunt iura praefata opus

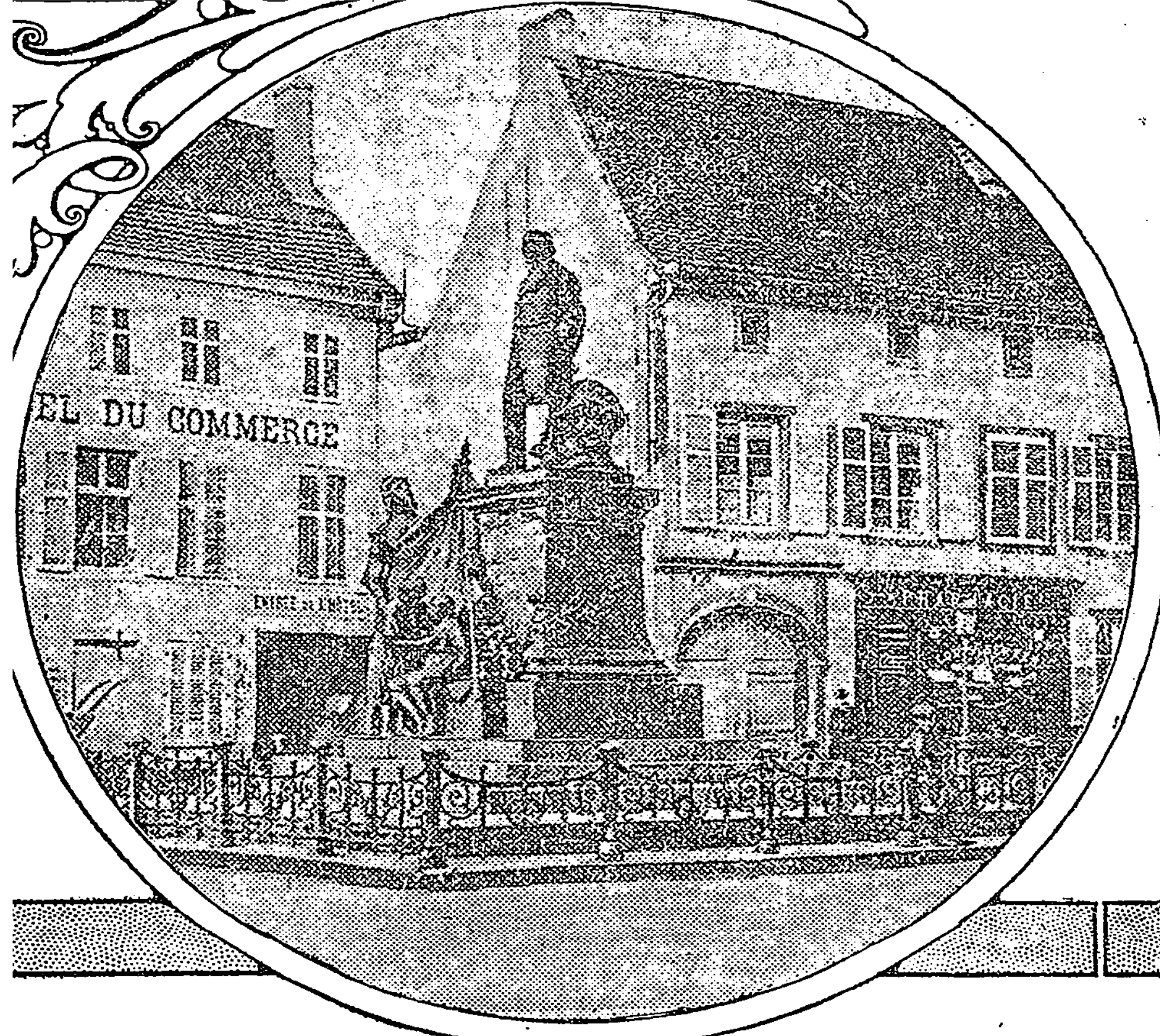
Finitū. vii. kl. Maij
Anno supra seculi
millesimum. vii.



In This House at St. Die the Book Named America Was Born.



Mathias Ringmann, Who First Used the Name America.



Place Jules Ferry at St. Die.

In the early part of June a little book printed four hundred and four years ago is going to rise into fame throughout the length and breadth of the United States, and will be more talked about than any volume of the moment. It is called "Introductio Cosmographiae: An Introduction to Cosmography," and in it the land America is mentioned for the first time.

This name, in the many-syllabled, sonorous Latin, is characteristic of the ponderous science of the middle ages, of the time when men put forth their knowledge in a dead tongue, speaking only to the learned, as if they were giving out secrets not to be divulged to the profane.

"Introductio Cosmographiae." If one came across this in a second-hand bookstore how quickly would one pass it by after a glance at the unattractive title!

But this is one of the "books that the world will not willingly let die." It is about to come into its own and receive the honor due it from all Americans who care at all for the history of their native land. Here is its full title:

"An Introduction to Cosmography, Together with Some Principles of Geometry Necessary to the Purpose. Also Four Voyages of Americus Vespucius. A Description of Universal Geography, Both Stereometrical and Planometrical. Together with What Was Unknown to Ptolemy and Has Been Recently Discovered. Printed at St. Die, the 25 March, 1507."

The author, after speaking of lands which were old when the Book of Genesis was written—Cappadocia, Pamphilia, Cilicia, Armenia the Greater, and Armenia the Less—continues:

"Now, these parts have indeed been most widely explored; but also a fourth part has been discovered by Americus Vespucius (as shall be told hereafter); and I do not see how we can justly refuse to call it America, or the land of Americus its discoverer, a man of knowledge and talent, when both Europe and Asia have taken their names from women."

The author wrote thus in his book, which went out among the learned men of Europe; his brother geographers and cosmographers had no fault to find with the nomenclature, and so it was taken into geography.

Thus America had its name.

And the author? His name was Mathias Ringmann, an Alsatian of great learning and one of the most remarkable intellectual lights of the France of his day. He lived at St. Die-en-Vosges, a quiet town in Eastern Lorraine; there he wrote his book, and there it was published. Not very much is known of Mathias Ringmann.

The year of his birth is uncertain; in youth he left his native place, Val de Ville; in Alsace, and studied at Strasburg and Paris. Afterwards he became a schoolmaster, and at last settled in St. Die, where he became the leading member of a learned society, the "Gymnase Vosgien," which had collected there. He was, say the old records, "a tireless and an ardent worker, ever bending over books to gather truth from them." A poet and a classical scholar, a lover of the old knowledge and a seeker of new things, he is one of a class of men abundant at the end of the Middle Ages, who called themselves humanists—those who are untriedly to nothing that is of human interest.

He died at St. Die in 1511, on June 3. And in 1911, St. Die is celebrating the four-hundredth anniversary of the death of its most illustrious son. A celebration began there yesterday, and continues, today and to-morrow, in which France and America unite in honoring the memory

of him who baptized the New World.

Cruppi, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs is presiding, and Ambassador Bacon is the guest of honor. On the high gabled house where the "Introductio" was printed in 1507 a commemorative tablet will be placed.

There is much oratory, of course, in French and English; and afterwards there will be a display of military aviation, not perhaps very relevant to the occasion, but an interesting way of returning from the sixteenth century, when aeroplanes were an undreamed thing to the present. But is it so irrelevant? It is another part of the world added to the white man's dominions since the day of Mathias!

There is to be a performance of a play written for the occasion by a local poet, and a battle of flowers; President Fallières will be there, and a brilliant gathering of French and American visitors, to do honor to Ringmann and St. Die.

For St. Die, Saint-Dié-en-Vosges, is the Godmother of America. "La Marraïne de l'Amérique," such is the title which this little town is so proud to bear. St. Die, founded in the year 600, and from him it took its name. In the thirteenth century cathedral lie his bones, which rise up and ring the bells when the enemy comes, say the knowing ones. Many mediaeval houses and churches are still extant, and give an old-world atmosphere to this quiet, but prosperous town on the banks of the river Meurthe.

It will be remembered that at the World's Fair at Chicago a special hall

was devoted to St. Die, and in it was exhibited, among photographs and sketches of the town, a copy of the "Introductio," open at page thirty where the name of America was put into print for the first time in history.

Nor was this the only work bearing on the discovery of the New World put

forth by St. Die. In 1410 Pierre d'Ally, Grand Provost of the town, wrote a book—also, of course, in Latin—called, in the manner of that age, "Imago Mundi," (the "Image of the World,") a book which, it is said, encouraged Columbus to persevere in those eventful Western voyages fourscore years after. For these

prophetic words are there written: "The whole world is habitable, and doubtless other lands exist, unknown to Europe but as thickly peopled. And to reach them you shall sail from a Spanish port by a favorable wind."

Two copies of this work, one in manuscript—for there were not yet any print-

ers in 1410—and one of a later printed edition, are to be seen at St. Die.

But to return to the book of Mathias Ringmann. The title page bears the following motto:

"Neither the earth nor the stars hold anything greater than God or Caesar; for God rules the stars and Caesar the climes of the earth."

It is not Julius or Augustus that is referred to here, but the Emperor Maximilian, who was also Kaiser of Caesar; to him the book is dedicated. The epistle-dedictory, so regular a feature of all serious works of the period, opens as follows:

"Having compared, with the aid of some collaborators, the books of Ptolemy with the Greek text, and in addition thereto having examined the 'Four Voyages' of Americus Vespucius, I have prepared for the use of studious men and as a preparatory introduction a figure of the whole earth under the form of a globe and planisphere, and I have resolved to dedicate it to your Majesty, who holds in your hands the dominion of the earth; persuading myself that under your aegis—like the shield of Achilles—I shall be protected from the intrigues of my rivals if I find that I shall have satisfied, at least partially, the mind of your Majesty, so wise and discerning in these things. Hail, illustrious Emperor!"

The passage is an admirable specimen of the florid and servile style, sprinkled with classical allusions, dear to the dedicators of books at that time.

That a widespread interest was taken

in the new discoveries and voyages is shown by the fact that four editions of this slim little volume of 80 pages were printed off at St. Die in five months, to be succeeded by others at Strasburg and Lyons. Of the St. Die impressions only thirteen copies are in existence, the United States possessing three—all of the second edition.

"With the aid of some collaborators," says Ringmann in his dedication. These were doubtless some of the other members of the celebrated "Gymnase Vosgien"—his confrères Vautrin Lud, Secretary to Duke René II. of Lorraine, who was the patron of the Gymnase; Nicolas Jores in a building which still stands and is to receive the memorial slab; Jean Basin, who translated the "Four Voyages" of Americus Vespucius from Italian, and Martinus Waldseemüller, who published in the following year (1508) a map of the world showing for the first time, far away on the left hand side, a vague distorted region with the name America slanting across it in small letters, as if the cartographer were only modestly suggesting the new name.

It would seem that this Waldseemüller (who learnedly used a Latinized form of his name, Hyalacomius, for literary purposes) was the chief collaborator with Ringmann in the preparation of the "Introductio," and indeed some modern students would ascribe the major share of the work to him.

Mr. Frank H. Mason, for instance, United States Consul General in Paris, wrote an article in October, 1832, in which he upheld Waldseemüller's right to be considered the namer of the Western Continent; but he told THE TIMES correspondent the other day that he is by no means so sure of his ground now as he was nineteen years ago. Mr. Mason, who has always taken a great interest in St. Die, and who organized the exhibits at the World's Fair mentioned above, is an honorary member of the Historical Society of that town.

It is only during the last three-quarters of a century that the importance of the "Introductio" has been recognized. For hundreds of years it remained an obscure question just how America got its name, and it was believed that Americus Vespucius had managed on his own initiative to get it called after himself, and had thus done his best to obscure the fame of Columbus and to usurp his place as the pioneer of the New World.

It was not until 1837 that Alexander von Humboldt, the universal scientist, all knowledge for his province, came across this little work and pointed out to the world the true origin of the name, while at the same time clearing the maligned Americus of the charge of unscrupulous ambition under which he had lain.

For Columbus left no written record of his voyages, and his achievements were kept as quiet as possible, for interested reasons, by the Spanish Court; while Americus published his "Four Voyages," which had a wide circulation. Thus it was that the savants of St. Die, knowing probably hardly anything about Columbus, "did not see how they could justly refuse to call it America."

There are already many places to which our countrymen make special pilgrimages when traveling through Europe; and after next week, when the fame of Saint-Die-en-Vosges will be noised throughout the world, it is certain that there will be few Americans passing anywhere near it but will turn aside to pay honor to the "baptismal font of the New World."