This large undated, unsigned manuscript map, oriented with South at the top, approximately 4 x 8 feet, which derives its name from a former owner, Edward Harley, Earl of Oxford. Its style is that of the Dieppe school of mapmakers; and, based upon that distinctive style, it was probably made about 1544 by either Pierre Desceliers or Jean Rotz. The St. Lawrence River shows the discoveries of Jacques Cartier on his second voyage of 1535; it may be based on Cartier's own map, now lost, of that expedition. The river and Chaleur Bay are represented too large; the Gulf of St. Lawrence too small; thus indicating that possibly the maps from which they were drawn may have been of different scales. The older assumption that the central figure in the group below the river is an actual portrait of Cartier is now disputed. The coastline from Cape Briton to the south of Cape Cod is probably based upon a copy of the lost *pardon general* of Alonso de Chaves, 1536. So strong was the hope among European merchants and sovereigns that a convenient passage be found connecting an easy sea route from Western Europe to the *Spice Islands* and *Cathay*, we find the cartographer of the *Harleian* map obliging this desire by going beyond previous representations by Maggiolo (#340) and Girolamo da Verrazano of a false *Verrazanian Sea*. The *Harleian* map provides the belief that an actual strait had been discovered cutting through the north isthmus to the broad waters of an unnamed gulf recognizable as the aforementioned *Verrazanian Sea* (another false strait had appeared on earlier maps, farther to the south, on the Darien peninsula). The strait on this map carries the legend, *Gofanto mer osto*, which may be freely translated as “Gulf before [or leading to] the South Sea”. Another manuscript map, *La Virgenia Pars*, by John White in 1585, shows a similar strait (#370).

**Date:** 1542-4  
**Location:** British Library Add. MS 5413
Detail: North America, Sea of Verrazano (re-oriented with North at the top)

Re-oriented with North at the top