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Carte du Theatre de la Guerre actuel entre les Anglais et les Trieze Colonies Unies de l'Amerique Septentrionale dresse par J.B. Eliot Ingenieurs des Etats Unis 1778

Stock#: 33284op
Map Maker: Eliot
Date: 1778
Place: Paris
Color: Outline Color
Condition: VG
Size: 20.5 x 27.5 inches
Price: Not Available



Description:

First Appearance of the name "United States" on a Printed Map

Fine example of J. B. Eliot's map of the United States, generally regarded as the earliest map to include the title "United States" on a printed map.

Eliot's map, which is drawn from American sources not previously utilized on any printed map, is generally regarded as the first printed map to bear the name of the United States ("Etats Unis"). The map translates from the French as "Map of the Actual Seat of War between the English and the Thirteen Colonies' of North America, as described by J.B. Eliot, an 'Engineer of the United States'."

One of the great secrets of the map is that it exists in 4 states, the first two of which are virtually



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unknown, leading such authorities as Schwartz & Ehrenberg and Pritchard & Taliaferro to describe and illustrate the third state of the map as being the first state, as the earlier states were apparently to these well regarded writers. The present example of the map is the third state, which is misoriented, with northwest at the top of the map. The first and second states of the map are oriented correctly, with north at the top. Beginning with the third state, the entire map is re-engraved, except for the title cartouche, and the orientation of the map is shifted so that northwest is at the top of the map, apparently in order to illustrate the areas around Yorktown and the final battle ground of the Revolution.

Schwartz & Ehrenberg:

A highlight of 1778 was the French declaration of alliance with the Americans on May 4. This led immediately to French mapping of the American War of Independence, and that year "Carte de Theatre de la Guerre actuel entre les Anglais et les trieze Colonies Unies de l'Amerique Septentrionale" (Plate 122) by J.B. Eliot, an American Engineer, was published in Paris. It is the earliest known map to include the name "United States. . . [and] was published in Paris."

In an excellent essay about the map by Margaret Pritchard and Henry Taliaferro (*Degrees of Latitude*, Map 58), the importance of the map and Eliot, its mysterious maker are discussed at greater length.

*The MAP of the theater of war between Great Britain and America by J.B. Eliot is important because of its title, **les trieze Colonies Unies de l'Amerique Septentrionale**, may include the first reference on a map to the United States. The cartographer was identified as Ingenieurs des Etats Unis. On November 15, 1777, the Continental Congress selected "The United States of America," as the name of the thirteen colonies that formed a government under the Articles of Confederation. One month later, French authorities learned of the victory at Saratoga and decided to recognize American independence. By January 8, French foreign minister, Charles Gravier, Comte de Vergennes, informed American envoys that France was ready to engage in an alliance. It is not surprising that the name United States was first mentioned on a map published in Paris in 1778.*

Although the second state [actually fourth] of the map referred to Eliot as an aide-de-campe to General Washington, no references to him have been located in the Washington papers. It is also curious that he did not indicate on the map the general's 1777 winter headquarters at Valley Forge, misspelled Walay Forge. What Eliot did illustrate were the lines' march taken by the British and American forces during the campaign in 1777, including Lieutenant Colonel Barry St. Ledger's unsuccessful diversionary expedition down the Mohawk Valley, Burgoyne's



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march from Crown Point to Albany, and Howe's campaign to take Philadelphia.

As was usually the case, Eliot appears to have borrowed from several sources in compiling the geography. Some areas were designated by French place-names while others are predominantly English, specifically in the northwestern territories that the French knew best. It is clear they were aware of the latest intelligence relating to the Revolutionary War.

While Ristow speculated that J.B. Eliot may have been a liaison between General Washington and France, there is no record of any military officer of this name serving in such capacity in the Department des Cartes et Plans in the Bibliotheque Nationale de France.

States of the Map

There are four known states of the map, identifiable as follows:

- First State: [Oriented with north at the top] dated 1778
- Second State [Oriented with north at the top] dated 1778; 'MER DU NORD' named and additional troop details shown for the Battle of Saratoga
- Third State [Northwest at the top] dated 1778; every part of the plate, except the title and battle scene have been completely erased and re-engraved
- Fourth State [Northwest at the top] dated 1781 -- Eliot now called Washington's "Aide-de-Campe", with a numbered key showing 10 important Revolutionary War Battles.

Rarity

All states of the map are rare. The first and second states of the map have been considered essentially unobtainable.

- The first state is known in 1 recorded example (Princeton (see image #2): <https://catalog.princeton.edu/catalog/5925574#view> .
- The second state is also known in 1 recorded example, at the Library of Congress.

Detailed Condition:

Wide margins and a fine dark impression. Repair and minor stain at fold intersection in the Atlantic Ocean and repaired tear at the left margin, extending into the printed images just above the title cartouche.