



Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

7407 La Jolla Boulevard
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Map of the Missouri; of the higher parts of the Mississippi; and of the elevated Plain, where the Waters divide, which run, Eastward into the River St. Laurence; North East into Hudson's Bay; North North West into the Frozen Sea; and South into the Gulf of Mexico . . .

Stock#: 44883
Map Maker: Collot

Date: 1804 (1826)
Place: Paris
Color: Uncolored
Condition: VG
Size: 19 x 17.5 inches

Price: SOLD



Description:

Pre-Lewis & Clark French Espionage Map of the Transmississippi West

Striking example of this rare and highly important map of the Transmississippi West, extending from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean, drawn based upon information obtained during General Georges Collot's spy mission on behalf of the French Government in 1796.

Collot's role as a spy undertaking reconnaissance on behalf of France reflects the remarkable upheaval in French politics in the decade following the conclusion of the American Revolution. Collot's first American experience was as a French officer fighting alongside General George Washington, where he served as aide-de-camp and maréchal des logis under General Rochambeau, France's senior military commander during the Revolution.

Collot's map is the single most complete and comprehensive printed map of the region prior to the



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Louisiana Purchase, providing the best snapshot of the West at the time Lewis & Clark commenced their expedition in May 1804. As noted by Ralph Ehernberg:

Collot's [map] . . . summarizes on one sheet the most recent geographical information of the western interior then available. The delineation of the western interior of the northern plains was taken directly from Arrowsmith's map of 1795 and that of the Platte and Kansas watershed's from [Antoine] Soulard's upper course of the Missouri, however, was realigned to fit with Arrowsmith's segment of the Missouri. Several new tributaries of the Missouri, notably the Cheyenne and White Rivers, were derived from [Jean-Baptiste] Truteau's description. A large northeast-flowing tributary depicted west of the Mandan villages is suggestive of the Yellowstone. Its identification was probably derived from Truteau, who had interviewed Cheyenne Indians, and a Frenchman named [Pierre] Menard, who had resided among the Mandans for some fourteen years . . .

As noted by Ehrenberg, significant parts of the information contained in Collot's map derives from sources available to Collot when he arrived in St. Louis in the summer of 1796, including Soulard (whose maps were also used by Lewis & Clark) and Truteau. As noted by Wood:

The visiting Collot and the resident Soulard had access to the same general sources in St. Louis and one might suspect they would have created roughly equivalent maps, but for whatever reason, [Collot's] map of the course of the Missouri and the upper Mississippi was vastly superior in detail and configuration to that of [Soulard]. The two charts . . . both . . . confuse part of the lower course of the Platte River with that of the Loup River and show the forks of the Platte River-but Collot's version nevertheless was clearly the better representation. Collot portrayed the Grand Detour of central South Dakota in its proper proportion, although its orientation is reversed exactly 180 degrees. It was Aubrey Diller's belief that Collot's account and his map of the Missouri River were based in part on Soulard's map and in part on the voyage up the river by Jean Baptiste Truteau in 1794. Certainly, Collot's text for his description of the Missouri was taken from Truteau's own description of the river.

Collot's map extends from the Pacific Coast to the Mississippi River Valley and Hudson's Bay, providing a



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fantastic overview of the region between the Rocky Mountains and the Mississippi River. The imposing Rocky Mountains are depicted in a single unbroken spine, with a note:

Stony Mountains according to Mackenzie, or Yellow Mountains according to the Indians dwelling on the Missouri, and supposed to be a continuation of the Cordilleras.

Collot's map was compiled from observations made during Collot's clandestine reconnaissance of the West on behalf of the French Government in 1796, including manuscript maps and journal which he obtained during his stay in St. Louis in 1795. The suppression of Collot's map following France's sale of the Louisiana Territory to the United States in 1803, provides a fascinating historical footnote and parallel to a work which was suppressed by the US Government at nearly the same time, Nicholas King's *Map of the Red River in Louisiana from the Spanish Camp Where the Exploring Party of the U.S. was met by the Spanish Troops to where it enters the Mississippi*.

Overview of Collot's Spy Mission, Report & Maps

Acting under instructions from Citizen Adet, French Minister to the United States, General George Henri Victor Collot undertook a secret reconnaissance in 1796, of the western American frontier. Collot traveled from Pittsburgh down the Ohio to the Mississippi, up the Mississippi to the Missouri and Illinois Rivers, and then back down the Mississippi to New Orleans. During his journey, he constructed a large number of exceptionally detailed manuscript maps and views of the region that he traversed. Many of these were groundbreaking, containing never before recorded information about a wilderness that was just beginning to undergo settlement.

Completed at nearly the exact time that Lewis & Clark were departing St. Louis, up the Missouri River, Collot's maps were engraved in Paris in 1804, but publication was suppressed due to Napoleon's sale of Louisiana to the United States the previous year. The Louisiana Purchase effectively ended any possibility that the region could be acquired by France. As a result of the changing politics and Collot's death, his report and maps did not come to market until 1826, when they were issued in a limited number under the title *Voyage dans l'Amerique Septentrionale* . . .

A nineteenth-century bookseller called Collot's work "one of the most famous, most important, and rarest of all books of Mid-Western Explorations." Eberstadt pronounced it "extraordinarily rare." Its rarity is due to the supposed deliberate destruction of all but three hundred French and one hundred English copies by



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the publisher, who had purchased the edition from Collot's estate, hoping to increase its value.

Collot's Map of the Transmississippi West

Collot Map of the Transmississippi West is a remarkable amalgam of information, combining the most recent printed information from Aaron Arrowsmith and others, along with information derived from Collot's time in St. Louis and on the Missouri River and the Mississippi River. Ralph Ehernberg writes that during Collot's stay during St. Louis in 1796, he apparently ascended the Missouri River as far as the Osage River, while also obtaining from the French explorer and fur trader Jean Baptiste Truteau, an account of Truteau's prior ascent of the Missouri River toward the Mandan Villages from June 7, 1794 to approximately June of 1796.

The incorporation of information from Truteau's account is of special note, providing the first information in the region beyond the Platte River and on to the Big Bend of the Missouri River, and thereby the first significant cartographic updates in the region since Guillaume De L'Isle's seminal *Carte de la Louisiane*. . . , first issued in 1718. In 1794, Truteau led an expedition funded by a group of St. Louis merchants who came together as the so-called La Compagnie de commerce pour la Decouverte des Nations du haut Missouri (the Missouri Company). In preparation for the expedition, Truteau obtained a manuscript map compiled by Antoine Souldard, the first Surveyor General of Upper Louisiana. While the original Souldard map does not survive, Spanish, French and English copies were made, one of which was provided to Lewis & Clark, in 1804, 10 years after Truteau's expedition. Truteau's written instructions from the directors of the Missouri Company were:

to take note of the streams entering the Missouri and to mark their distance from St. Louis or from the Mandan. He was to keep a record of all knowledge and information that might come to him concerning Indian nations, and in particular the Shoshonean tribe. He was requested to obtain information concerning the distance to the Rocky Mountains "which were located west of the Missouri" and to obtain friendly relations with the Indians, especially those who resided to the west of the mountains, in particular the Snake. . . . (Nasatir, Before Lewis and Clark: Documents Illustrating the History of the Missouri . . . p.85)

During his 2 year journey, he achieved partial success. While he did not reach his final objective of the Mandan Villages,



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from the Indians and Menard, he derived accurate information concerning the Yellowstone River. From the Cheyenne, he learned of the Comanche who roamed the banks of the Platte and of the "Hahitannes" who occupied the territory beyond the Platte and as far as the banks of the Arkansas . . . (p.91).

Upon his return to St. Louis in the summer of 1796, Truteau met with Collot. Truteau apparently provided a full account of his expedition up the Missouri River to Collot, who thereafter incorporated the information from both Soulard and Truteau into this magnificent general map of the West, the earliest obtainable map to incorporate the work of these two important manuscript sources.

While Collot's *Map of the Missouri* . . . was not printed until 1804 (and not offered for sale until 1826, as noted below), it must be viewed in the context of its creation. As noted by Carl Wheat in his *Mapping of the Transmississippi West*:

The book was printed in 1804, but its publication was delayed by Collot's death. His "Map of the Missouri" was probably commenced while he was in Louisiana in 1796, and for our present purposes may be so dated so far as its representation of the Missouri Valley is concerned. . . .

Collot's Map . . . represents an important intermediate cartographic step between Soulard's highly rudimentary showing of the Missouri Basin, and the excellent charts of the river as far as the Mandan villages drawn by Mackay and Evans. (Vol. 1, p. 160).

Historical Context of the Map & Collot's Reconnaissance

In 1763, the territory west of the Mississippi River was ceded to Spain by France, while the lands east of the river were ceded to Britain. In 1783, the lands east of the Mississippi formally became territory of the United States, although American possession of the region was tenuous at best. The mainly Francophone inhabitants of the Mississippi Valley had little affinity for Anglo-American rule, and their frontier lifestyle made them virtually impossible to control.

It was in this context that the government of post-Revolutionary France, the 'Directoire', schemed to reacquire France's lost American territories. The Directoire had an acrimonious relationship with both America and Spain, and the possibility of supporting an insurrection by the region's Francophone inhabitants was considered by many to be a viable means for France to regain Louisiana and the Illinois Country.



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In 1796, the Directoire, acting through French ambassador Pierre August Adet, charged General George Henri Victor Collot (1750-1805) with undertaking a reconnaissance mission to the Mississippi frontier, in order to assess whether the region could be retaken by France. A former governor of Guadeloupe, he was an accomplished veteran of colonial service and an extraordinarily gifted mapmaker. Unfortunately, Collot was not as secretive about the purpose of his mission as Adet, and even before he commenced his expedition in March 1796, the American Government knew his intentions and appropriated \$500 to retain agents to shadow Collot.

While Collot's intellectual achievements were impressive, his mission was a political disaster. Collot was arrested at Fort Massac on the Ohio River by the American officer Zebulon Pike (himself soon to become an important Western explorer). Pike told Collot that "you have been indefatigable in surveying the Ohio, by taking the courses, distances, heights, etc., as well as reconnoitering the adjacent area for which you exhibit no authority". While he was well aware that Collot was a French agent-provocateur, Pike set him free, as he could not find any legal means of detaining him. Collot was, however, later shadowed by Spanish agents and arrested and deported as soon as he arrived in New Orleans. Fortunately, the Spanish governor allowed Collot to retain his maps and papers.

The Suppression of Collot's Report & Maps

Following his return to France, Collot set out to prepare his report and maps from notes and sketches taken during his journey. In 1800, Napoleon acquired Louisiana from Spain, Collot, and Adet were named two of the commissioners of the new French territory. However, before they could cross the Atlantic to take up their assignments, Napoleon had a change of heart and decided to sell Louisiana to the United States.

Napoleon Bonaparte's decision to sell Louisiana to America brought a practical end to Collot's work on behalf of the French Government. As a result, the impetus to publish Collot's work disappeared and, to the contrary, it became expedient to suppress his reconnaissance, rather than publish its results and overtly admit to the Americans the full scope and extent of Collot's espionage work during his visit.

Ironically, the suppression of Collot's maps has a simultaneous parallel during Thomas Jefferson's administration, when 4 expeditions were sent out by Jefferson to explore the Louisiana Purchase and the Transmississippi West (Lewis & Clark, Zebulon Pike, Dunbar-Hunter and Freeman-Custis expeditions). In April 1806, Thomas Freeman, surveyor, and Dr. Peter Custis, naturalist, undertook an expedition at the



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request of Thomas Jefferson's administration through parts of Arkansas, Louisiana, Texas, and Oklahoma. They were accompanied by a military escort under the command of Capt. Richard Sparks. At the same time that Zebulon Pike was exploring westward into the Louisiana Territory, Freeman and Custis traveled along the Red River to a site in present-day Texas in the vicinity of the old Caddo villages, where they were stopped by a force of Spanish cavalry protecting the Spanish claims to an ill-defined boundary of the Louisiana Purchase. After a brief skirmish, Freeman and Custis withdrew.

While a report of the 1806 Freeman-Custis expedition was published and a map prepared by Nicholas King, the political sensitivity surrounding the expedition was such that the report of this southern expedition into Texas was kept secret, with only a few copies printed. Nicholas King's map of the expedition, which provided physical proof of the US Government's encroachments into Spanish Texas, was suppressed completely, with no known examples of the map surviving until an example was discovered in about 1877 in the Custis papers and a second example was discovered in the past decade, which had been owned by another early American explorer, Washington Hood (1808-1840).

All of Collot's maps are rare on the market, this being only the first example we have offered for sale.

An essential map for Transmississippi West collectors and a perfect starting point from which to illustrate the discoveries of Lewis & Clark.

Detailed Condition:

Minor tear at left, just entering printed image, expertly repaired on verso. Lower left margin extended slightly for framing (no loss of printed image).