



# Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

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## [Memphis / Chickasaw Bluffs] Plan of Fort Des Ecores at Margot

**Stock#:** 50054  
**Map Maker:** Collot  
**Date:** 1804  
**Place:** Paris  
**Color:** Uncolored  
**Condition:** VG  
**Size:** 11 x 8 inches  
**Price:** SOLD



### Description:

#### *The Earliest Printed Map of Chickasaw Bluffs, near Memphis Tennessee*

Finely engraved plan of the area around Ecores a Margot, at Chickasaw Bluffs (Fulton), Tennessee.

In 1686, Henri de Tonti established a trading post known as Poste de Arkansa at the Quapaw village. It was the first semi-permanent French settlement in the lower Mississippi River Valley. Due to flooding, it was moved several times and became a fort. In 1751, the fort was moved to a site near Grand Prairie called Ecores Rouges (Red Bluffs). This fort was constructed in 1751 by Lt. Paul Augustin le Pelletier de la Houssaye, who was given a five-year concession on Indian Trade for his work. Over time and with flooding, the fort decayed, and was moved from time to time due to flooding. The first initiative for improving the Post came from Captain Balthazar de Villiers in 1778. De Villiers's plan was to move the fort back up the river to its earlier location at the Ecores Rouges, which he claimed was still close enough to the Mississippi River to provide security.

A new settlement was established at the Ecores Rouges and a new fort, Post de Charles trios (Charles III) de Arkansas was constructed. The fort was a subject of controversy during the Spanish occupation after the close of the Revolution. It remained difficult to maintain, although it was reconstructed in 1790 and renamed Fort San Esteban (St. Stephen).

Although French General Victor Collot traveled through the Ohio and Mississippi River valleys in 1796, his two-volume account was not published until 1826. During his inspection tour, Collot observed the topography, resources, and people of these American and Spanish-held lands, which he illustrated with regional maps, town plans, and views in an accompanying atlas. His plan of St. Louis displayed the town's



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military fortifications, which he found sadly lacking. But the image also reveals the town emerging as the gateway for the fledgling Missouri River fur trade. The work was completed in 1804 but delayed 20 years by the death of Collot. The work represented a significant step forward in the mapping of the regions explored.

This is one of 23 maps which appeared in the Atlas volume, of which only 100 were printed in English. The work is of extreme rarity and very important in the history of American Cartography.

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

#### **The Supression 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.



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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 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).

**Detailed Condition:**

Repair in the Mississippi River, as illustrated.