



Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

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A Map of the Military lands and 20 Townships in the Western part of the State of New York

Stock#: 50556mbfb
Map Maker: Anonymous / De Witt
Date: 1789 circa
Place: n.p.
Color: Uncolored
Condition: VG
Size: 12.5 x 11.5 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

A great rarity, being the first printed map of the New York Military Tract, established during the Revolution to provide compensation to the state's veterans of the Revolutionary War.

The Military Tract, also called the New Military Tract, consisted of roughly two million acres in what is now known as the Finger Lakes Region, set aside to compensate New York's Revolutionary War veterans. To encourage enlistment Congress had guaranteed each soldier at least 100 acres at the end of the war (officers received much more), but by 1781 New York had achieved only about half of its quota of enlistees. That year the state legislature authorized an additional 500 acres per soldier, using land from 25 Military Tract townships to be established in the central part of the state, in what is now known as the Finger Lakes region.

The townships were to comprise 100 lots of 600 acres each, with each given names from classical antiquity and associated writers such as Dryden, Milton and Virgil. Three more townships were later added to accommodate additional claims at the end of the war, Junius in 1791, Galen in 1792 and Sterling in 1795. The Tract covered the present counties of Cayuga, Cortland, Onondaga and Seneca and parts of Oswego, Tompkins, Schuyler and Wayne. Most of the original classical township names are still in use, but



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the original townships do not correspond exactly with the boundaries of any modern towns, each of which covers only a fraction of the territory.

The area was first mapped in detail in 1789 by teams headed by Moses DeWitt and Abraham Hardenbergh under the supervision of state Surveyor General Simeon DeWitt. It is almost certain that this printed map was derived from these surveys, the only detailed ones which had been performed to date. This accounts for the attribution of the map to Simeon DeWitt.

Wheat & Brun describe the map as follows:

Shown here are the primary land purchases and grants, as well as the several counties, townships, and settlements as they existed at this date. Only the larger streams are indicated and many not by name. The Oswego is noted as the Onondago River and among the townships are the following: Hanibal, Vergil, and Cincinnatus.

They date the map to 1795, but we disagree. This map identifies 25 townships in the Military Tract and omits the 26th and 27th, Junius and Galen, which were added in 1791 and 1792 respectively. Junius was formed on January 29, 1791, providing an approximate terminus ante quem for the engraving of the map.

The only other contemporary printed map of this region is the 1st sheet of DeWitt's State Map of New-York (Wheat & Brun #357). That map covers a somewhat larger area, extending well to the east to encompass other lands not in the Military Tract. It is also executed at a larger scale and depicts the area's watercourses in much greater detail than on our map. It shows both Junius and Galen but not Sterling, suggesting that it was published some time from late 1792 to 1794.

Rarity

The *Map of the Military Lands and 20 Townships* . . . is extraordinarily rare. Below is a summary of the other 3 (or 4) known examples

Wheat & Brun locates only a single copy, in the New York Historical Society (state not identified).

The archives of the Holland Land Company (SUNY Fredonia) includes an example of State 1 of the map. In 2016, we sold a copy of State 2 of the map to Yale.

We note also a copy of the map in a 1908 Anderson auction (Catalog 687, Item 84). It is possible that the Anderson auction copy is one of the above examples.



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OCLC 32240561 lists four copies. However 3 are identified as photocopies (Clements Library, NY Public Library, and Library of Congress). Cornell's on-line catalog indicates that its impression is very fragile, and thus may be an original.

Detailed Condition:

Minor fold splits and minor restoration.