



Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

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[Atlas of Russia - Atlas Rossiyskoy] Атласъ Россійской, состоящей изъ девятнати специальныхъ картъ представляющихъ всероссійскую имперію съ пограничными землями, сочиненной по правиламъ Географическимъ и новѣйшимъ observaціямъ, съ приложенною притомъ генеральною картою...

Stock#: 64948
Map Maker: de L'Isle

Date: 1745
Place: St. Petersburg
Color: Uncolored
Condition: Good
Size: 13 x 20.25 inches

Price: SOLD



Description:

The First Atlas Devoted Solely of Russia. The Magnum Opus of Joseph-Nicolas Delisle, Nearly 20 Years in the Making.

Joseph-Nicolas Delisle's atlas of Russia, published in Saint Petersburg in 1745, is one of the most important national atlases ever published. It was the first modern atlas of Russia and was largely based on new surveys conducted at Delisle's behest over the course of some 20 years. "The atlas gave the European public a knowledge of the vastness and complexity of the Russian Empire" (Whittaker). Leo Bagrow in his *Russian Cartography to 1800* (Chapter 10) provides a very well-researched summary of the development of the atlas:

In 1729, Delisle submitted to the Academy a paper explaining how he planned to prepare a general map of Russia - a report which was not published. The essential points of his proposal may be inferred from a letter which he wrote to Kirilov on March 24, 1729: there he states that he has abandoned his plan to publish a map of Russia on 30 sheets, and intends to restrict himself to an atlas of 12 sheets, plus a 4 sheet general map of the Empire, so that the entire atlas would consist of 16 sheets. On November 5, 1730, he repeated his proposal, adding, by the way of explanation, that the 12 sheets of the atlas would be at a larger scale, and the 4 sheet map would be at a smaller scale. Another year or so passed but nothing was heard about Delisle's intention. In 1732, he reported that the map was nearing completion, but still no map was presented.

Delisle complained constantly about the difficulties besetting his work and the lack of assistance.



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Accordingly, in 1729, Schoessler was placed under his direction for the drawing of maps. In 1735, Delisle succeeded in obtaining a ruling that the entire cartographic effort of the Academy should be concentrated in a special Geographical Department which he was to head. Actually, this department existed even before, but only now it received official status. At Delisle's insistance [sic], Professor Le Roy was attached to the Geographical Department for the registration of incoming maps, drawings, instruments, books, etc. A few days later the Senate assigned geodesists I. Khanykov, F. Grigoryev, S. Arsenyev, D. Mordvinov and F. Trofimov to aid Delisle in speedily completing the general map and the atlas. In turn, Delisle undertook to train the geodesists and to teach them the determination of longitude and latitude. Two months later, Professor Euler, a well-known mathematician and member of the St. Petersburg Academy [see Eyler(1935)] was asked to aid Delisle. All this was in vain. The assignment of Euler, an expert in mathematics, was evidently contrary to Delisle's wishes; he quarreled with the Academy's Conference, failed to attend its meetings, and announced that he refused to head the Geographical Department as long as Euler worked there. For work on astronomical observations, Gensius was invited from abroad. At an earlier date, in order not to distract Delisle from his work on the general maps of Russia, the preparation of other maps was entrusted to other members of the Academy. It was thus decided to publish a world atlas in the Russian Language and the Academy charged Winsheim with this task. In 1728, maps of the different parts of the world were handed to the engravers; by 1734, Winsheim had 13 sheets ready and in 1737, the whole work was completed. The "Atlas compiled for the benefit and use of youth and of all readers of the news and historical books" was composed of 27 maps. The 2-sheet general map was based on Kirilov's material. A few years later, as a kind of text to the atlas, there was published a "Short political geography for the explanation of the small Russian language atlas, compiled for use in the grammar school of the Imperial Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg, 1745.

...

Twenty years had elapsed since the task of making a general map of Russia was set. It is still not possible to say why Delisle retarded its preparation. Was he sincere in his desire to produce a first-class map, which required a series of observations, the establishment of triangulation network, an increased number of geodesists working in the field, etc.? Or did he intend to prevent the publication of a general map in Russia and to put out such a map in France where he had sent all the cartographic material needed for the purpose? We are inclined to assume the second alternative. From the very outset he choose for his assistant his step-brother de la Croyere, a man of inadequate education and of poor qualifications for the work envisaged. Could Delisle not be aware of this? He



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did send maps abroad and did slow down the work by forever presenting new plans and inventing new tasks allegedly needed for a perfect map. When he went to Obdorsk, he did not leave any materials or instructions with which the Department could continue to function normally. When experts were assigned to assist him, he refused to cooperate with them; such was the case with Euler, an outstanding mathematician. At one point, Delisle refused to come to the Department and to attend the Academy's Conference. Finally, when he saw that the publication of the atlas was imminent, he hastened to return to France with the possible intention of publishing there his own general map of Russia before it appeared in Russia. This would have been quite easy, as he had the map ready. Indeed, he did so with the map of the northern part of the Pacific, showing all Russian discoveries; he published it in Paris although he knew that the Russian authorities desired to be the first to do so.

Still, Delisle's contribution to Russian cartography was great. He educated a large number of astronomical observers and prepared a pertinent instruction. His scheme of setting up a trigonometrical network in Russia would have involved very heavy expenses and required scores of years and was therefore impractical. But his ideas concerning a secant, conic projection with two standard parallels of 47°30' and 62°30' (Delisle's projection) were useful and were accepted. It would seem that Russian geodesists owe Delisle yet another development: their early tendency was to give preference in goniometric or trigonometric [*uglomernoy*] land surveys to calculations with the aid of chains, compasses, astrolabes and other such instruments. They apparently retained and consolidated this practice and resisted all attempts to introduce mensural survey methods into Russia. In addition, Delisle personally determined a number of astronomical points.

Be it as it may, on September 2, 1745 Delisle submitted to the Academy's Conference the Atlas - "Delilius Atlantem mapparum geographicarum Imperii Rossici produxit". The Atlas appeared in two separate editions with Russian and Latin inscriptions on the maps (place names are in Russian only), four title pages and an index with an explanatory text in Russian, Latin, German and French. A total of eight base triangles were used for the maps of the territories west of Tobol'sk. The vertices of many of the triangles had been determined by de la Croyere. In addition, the distance from St. Petersburg to Moskva had been measured by Lieutenant Geodesist Safanov in December 1744 and found to be 734 versts [Materialy(1895)VII, 365-367]. In the Duchy of Estonia and Livonia, distances calculated by Lubberas and Farwharson were utilized. The map of Mezen' and Pustozersk used materials of the discoveries made by Dutch and British sailors which must have been quite out of date. The map of the Ufa province also utilized astronomical observations made by "an Englishman



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of no mean experience"(Elton?).

The first thirteen maps (Figure 69) of the Atlas might be described as representing European Russia. It would seem that they were based on a 12-sheet map which was prepared earlier and which was now supplemented with a 13th sheet covering the Urals, primarily the eastern slope. All 13 maps have the same scale of 1:1,527,000. There is a small amount of overlap between most of the sheets. Minor gaps exist only in the lower Ural river and the region of the Kama-Pechora divide. The six maps of Siberia, Nos. 14-19, also overlap each other and embrace the whole of Siberia. Each is at a scale of 1:3,360,000. It is stated that they were based on special astronomic observations and on data obtained during special journeys by land or sea. The 2-sheet general map, at a scale of 1:8,400,000, represents the extent of the entire Russian Territory (from the island of Oesel to the northeastern extremity of Asia) as 166°, when actually it is 167° (Kirilov represented it at 174°). An explanation of the conventional signs and of physical-geographical terms was appended to the atlas.

Sent out to the various governments and provinces of Russia and to foreign countries, the Atlas met with praise everywhere. Naturally, the Academy received a number of letters pointing to certain shortcomings. Indeed, those responsible for the reparation of the Atlas invited attention to the incompleteness of the material, stressing specifically the fact that the short time at their disposal precluded the utilization of information collected by the Academy's scientific expeditions to Siberia.

The well-known cartographer d' Anville, an honorary member of the St. Petersburg Academy, wrote a detailed critique noting that no one could expect an atlas to include all the desirable material for otherwise no atlas would ever be put out. Euler, who had meanwhile returned to Berlin, said in a letter to Schumacher that with a clear conscience he felt proud of this atlas of which he had prepared the plan. Euler gave due credit to Gensius, who directed the operation to a successful end, and to Delisle who had laid the scientific foundations. Euler went on to say that by his and Gensius' efforts, Russian geography "is now in better shape than the geography of the German lands". Busching, in turn, complained that in the middle of the 18th century there still existed no decent map of Germany, that true positions and distances were known for only about twenty places, and that on the old maps, Germany had been moved east by a full degree. In contrast, almost every map in the Russian Atlas of 1745 was based on several astronomically determined points or on the sides of geodetically computed triangles. Finally, before passing on, we should again mention Ivan Kirilov, the man who initiated the systematic gathering of cartographic material, who possibly suggested inviting Delisle to Russia, and who himself first attempted to prepare an atlas of Russia. By now



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Russian cartography occupied its due place in the European map-making field. We have already mentioned maps by European cartographers which were based on maps published by the *Akademiya nauk*. Individual maps from Kirilov's atlas had also been copied abroad and his general map of Russia left particularly deep traces. A specific reflection is seen in Hasius' map of Russia, prepared in 1738 and printed by Homann's heirs in 1739 together with a text. All features relating to Russia have been derived from Kirilov; the Caspian Sea has been slightly revised according to Soymonov. The northeastern sector has been supplemented by references to Bering's first expedition. On the other hand, Japan is based on Western European data and this lowers the quality of the map. While Kirilov followed Chinese maps in the delineation of the coast from Korea to the Amur, Hasius was unable to free himself from the spell cast by de Vries and by other earlier conceptions; he joined the extreme points of Sakhalin and "Yeso" to the mainland and did the same with the "Compan Land". Moreover, he extended Novaya Zemlya too far eastwards, joining it to the mainland in the same way as did Witsen.

After 1741, there appeared maps of the northern and the southern hemispheres in Delisle's and Buache's atlas. The northern hemisphere map was considerably revised from an earlier edition of 1714 in which the entire northeastern corner of Asia is represented according to Witsen. In the new edition there is a statement, after the title, that it is based on I. Kirilov's map of 1734 showing Kamchatka, and on the new discoveries by Captain Spanberg; in addition, there is appended a letter from Schwartz, a Dutch resident of St. Petersburg, who states (on January 24, 1740) that "last Saturday there arrived a courier from Kamchatka, bringing Spanberg's report about his discovery of 34 islands and about Bering's departure on an expedition". However, the publisher put the map into circulation later, as is shown by the fact that it has the voyage routes of Bering and Chirikov traced on it and contains a statement that the two navigators reached the coast of America in 1741. It is highly significant that the delineation of what was supposed to be America (the Aleutian Islands) strongly suggests the outline which Muller later presented in his map. It may be assumed that this map of the northern hemisphere was actually revised in the light of Muller's Work. If this were so, the publisher would have used Muller's map as a whole and would not have copied the coast of Kamchatka from Kirilov's map. By the same token even the whole Siberian north coast would have been taken from Muller. Yet the publishers of the map of the northern hemisphere did not use this data, which means that they did not know about the Russian discoveries in the Arctic. Likewise, they had not seen Delisle's map which appeared on April 8, 1750. This suggests that Covens and Mortier used some other material. While they knew the results of the navigation of Bering and Chirikov, they were not aware of Spanberg's discoveries and his cartographic material had not reached them.



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Incidentally, this material was not used in Delisle's map of 1750 either. This indicates that the results of Bering's 2nd expedition had become known before the publication of Delisle's map and the accusation that he [Delisle] had divulged this secret therefore lacks foundation. Muller's map was ready in manuscript form much earlier, and when he submitted it in 1746 to the *Akademiya nauk* for publication, he was refused Imperial permission to print it. The material on which he based his map, concerning the discoveries made east of Kamchatka, had evidently reached Amsterdam in or about 1741-42.

As we have stated, most maps that were appearing in Western Europe were either copies of Russian originals or were based on Russian materials. Trust was also placed in Russian sea charts, and new maps were prepared abroad on their basis. For example, the well-known London cartographer Senex published a new map of the Gulf of Finland²⁵ with a supplementary maplet of the Neva Bay. Facing Hango, there is a description of the victory of Peter the Great over the Swedish fleet. Russian materials were likewise used in Swedenborg's map appended to his books on iron-ore deposits [(1734a) and (1734b)]. Presumably Swedenborg received the necessary material from Tatishchev when the latter came to Stockholm to study mintage. Swedenborg had just (in 1722) published his treatise on the rise and fall of the value of coins in Sweden. Academician Krafft, who analysed Swedenborg's work and reported on it to the *Akademiya nauk*, stated that the map had been copied from the maps of persons who participated in the Kamchatka expedition and therefore did not include anything new; Krafft said that the Academy had more recent maps by Delisle and Kirilov.

Rarity

The atlas was issued in a Russian-language edition, a German edition, and a French edition, a Latin edition. Sometimes the text is seen in combination. The Russian-language edition seems to be the rarest (and arguably most desirable); an example was sold at Sotheby's in 2010 for 23,750 GBP and in 2019 Sotheby's sold another example (lacking the large folding map of Russia) for \$22,500.

Provenance

The atlas bears an early label in old Cyrillic that translates: "From the Library of the Imperial Moscow Archaeological Society". In June 1923, the Moscow Archaeological Society and its commissions, except for the Commission for the Study of Old Moscow, were closed. The atlas was acquired by an American professor who worked in Moscow in the middle of the 20th century.



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Detailed Condition:

Letterpress title printed in black and red, 20 pages (the pagination skipping pages 11 and 12, as issued), 19 double-page engraved regional maps (maps 14-19 constitute one large map of Siberia and northern China) and one large engraved folding map of all of Russia. Folio, 20 1/2 x 13 inches, publisher's calf with title blocked in blind ("Атласъ російской имперіи") to front cover, worn, especially in the lower right corner where some of the board is lacking from below the calf; scattered dampstaining, four small points of worm-hole throughout, lower corners damaged affecting margins at the beginning of the book only. Early printed label in archaic Cyrillic on front pastedown, translated to English: "From the Library of the Imperial Moscow Archaeological Society".