



Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

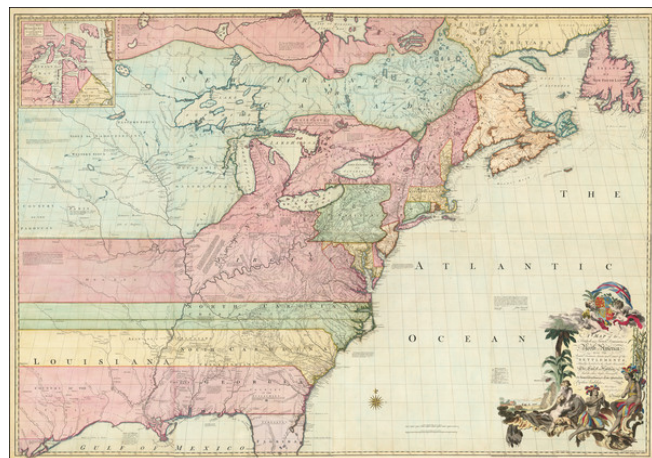
7407 La Jolla Boulevard
La Jolla, CA 92037

www.raremaps.com

(858) 551-8500
blr@raremaps.com

A Map of the British and French Dominions in North America, With the Roads, Distances, Limits, and Extent of the Settlements, Humbly Inscribed to The Right Honourable the Earl of Halifax, And other Right Honourable The Lords Commissioners for Trade & Plantations, By their Lordships. Most Obliged and very humble Servant Jno. Mitchell . . . 1755

Stock#: 78983
Map Maker: Mitchell
Date: 1755
Place: London
Color: Hand Colored
Condition: VG+
Size: 75 x 55 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

"Without Serious Doubt . . . The Most Important Map In American History" (Lawrence Martin, Chief, Library of Congress Map Division, 1924-1946)

A handsome example of the 1755 first edition of John Mitchell's monumental map of North America, widely regarded as the single most important and influential map in American history.

First issued in 1755, Mitchell's map holds a special place in American history as both a visual artifact that shaped American history and a central document in the treaties that defined the boundaries in the northern part of North America for the next 200+ years.

The present example is the extremely rare first edition, third state of the map, with two towns "Leicester" and "Worcester" in Massachusetts. The map was revised to the fourth state in 1755 to '57 with the addition of large tables and text panels in the Atlantic.

Map Overview

Mitchell's *Map of the British and French Dominions in North America* . . . is widely regarded as the most important map in American history. Prepared on the eve of the French & Indian War, it was the second large format map of North America printed by the British (after Popple's 1733 map) and included the best



Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

7407 La Jolla Boulevard
La Jolla, CA 92037

www.raremaps.com

(858) 551-8500
blr@raremaps.com

A Map of the British and French Dominions in North America, With the Roads, Distances, Limits, and Extent of the Settlements, Humbly Inscribed to The Right Honourable the Earl of Halifax, And other Right Honourable The Lords Commissioners for Trade & Plantations, By their Lordships. Most Obliged and very humble Servant Jno. Mitchell . . . 1755

up-to-date information of the region. Over the next 200 years, it would play a significant role in the resolution of every major boundary dispute involving the northern border of the then British Colonies, and later the United States. It was also the map-of-record at the birth of the United States and continued in this role through the early life of the country.

As noted by Benjamin Franklin in his April 9, 1790 letter to Thomas Jefferson, Mitchell's map was the central reference point in negotiating boundaries between Britain and the newly independent United States under the Treaty of Paris in 1783.

I can now assure you that I am perfectly clear in the Remembrance that the Map we used in tracing the Boundary was brought to the Treaty by the Commissioners of England, and that it was the same that was published by Mitchell about 20 years before."

Thomas Jefferson recommended that Nicholas King use Mitchell's map in preparing a new map for Meriwether Lewis prior to the Lewis & Clark expedition, saying: "it was made with great care we know from what is laid down in those western parts with which we have lately become acquainted."

Lawrence Martin, the second chief of the Library of Congress Geography and Map Division provided the following partial list of important uses of Mitchell's map:

- 1. [Mitchell's map] is thought to have been in use in the British House of Commons during the debate on the Quebec Act of 1774*
- 2. It is known to have hung in the halls of Congress in 1802 and several times subsequently.*
- 3. It was used ... in the discussions of British land grants in the Ohio and Mississippi valleys, and in scores of controversies involving the boundary lines existing at the time of its publication.*
- 4. Great Britain and the United States agreed to its official status in the Convention of September 29, 1827...*
- 5. It exerted substantial influence in the negotiation and ratification of the Webster-Ashburton Treaty of 1842.*



Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

7407 La Jolla Boulevard
La Jolla, CA 92037

www.raremaps.com

(858) 551-8500
blr@raremaps.com

A Map of the British and French Dominions in North America, With the Roads, Distances, Limits, and Extent of the Settlements, Humbly Inscribed to The Right Honourable the Earl of Halifax, And other Right Honourable The Lords Commissioners for Trade & Plantations, By their Lordships. Most Obliged and very humble Servant Jno. Mitchell . . . 1755

6. *Serious argument was based upon it by Great Britain before the Court of Arbitration at The Hague in 1910 in connection with the North Atlantic Coast Fisheries Arbitration.*

7. *It was submitted in evidence before the Law Lords of the British Privy Council in 1926 in the appeal of Price Brothers & Company, Limited, from a judgment of the supreme court of Canada, and in 1926-27 in the Canada-Newfoundland (Labrador) boundary case.*

8. *It was used as evidence before the Supreme Court of the United States in the Wisconsin-Michigan boundary case, in 1926-27 in the Great Lakes level case, and in 1932 in the New Jersey-Delaware boundary case.*

[numbering and paragraph breaks added]

Watch Geography Geek's video on this map:



John Mitchell

John Mitchell (1711-1768), a respected British physician, botanist, chemist, biologist, and surveyor, lived for a time in Virginia, but returned to England in 1746, where he remained until his death. Mitchell initially conceived of his map of North America in order to present the British public with a single large format image of all the colonies, in order to illustrate the extent of the French threat to the British claims in North America. Mitchell completed his first draft of the map in 1750. However, because Mitchell was limited to publicly available sources of information, this initial effort was rather crude, even in Mitchell's own opinion. As word of Mitchell's work spread, the Board of Trade and Plantations retained Mitchell to make a new map, using the official manuscript and printed maps and reports in the Board's possession,



Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

7407 La Jolla Boulevard
La Jolla, CA 92037

www.raremaps.com

(858) 551-8500
blr@raremaps.com

A Map of the British and French Dominions in North America, With the Roads, Distances, Limits, and Extent of the Settlements, Humbly Inscribed to The Right Honourable the Earl of Halifax, And other Right Honourable The Lords Commissioners for Trade & Plantations, By their Lordships. Most Obliged and very humble Servant Jno. Mitchell . . . 1755

including maps by Fry and Jefferson, Christopher Gist, George Washington, John Barnwell, and others. The Board also instructed all colonial governors to send detailed maps and boundary information for Mitchell's use.

Publication History

Mitchell's map was first published by Andrew Millar in 1755, one year before the start of the French & Indian War (Seven Years War). The map is decidedly pro-English in its interpretation of the various boundaries and geographical information depicted on the map, as would be expected for what amounted to thinly-veiled British propaganda. In addition to the geographical detail shown on the map, Mitchell included many annotations describing the extent of British and French settlements. He also submitted a report to the Board in 1752, listing the French encroachments and his ideas to encourage British settlement west of the Appalachian Mountains, as a means of combating French influence in the region. Mitchell is also the likely author of *The Contest in America Between Great Britain and France by an Impartial Hand* (1756), which addresses the same topic.

The first edition of the map was quickly followed by a second edition in 1757, which adds two large blocks of text in the Atlantic Ocean, providing Mitchell's data sources and an account of how he compiled the numerous provincial maps to create this map. After Mitchell's death in 1768, the plates were purchased by Jefferys & Faden, who revised the map and issued a third edition in 1773-74. Faden published a fourth edition in 1775, with the title changed to *A Map of the British Colonies in North America...*

The Map

Mitchell's map shows the British Colonial claims of Virginia, both Carolinas, and Georgia extending beyond the Mississippi to the Pacific Ocean.

In the West, Mitchell's treatment of the lower Missouri is a vast improvement over earlier maps. Regarding the source of the Missouri, Mitchell notes "Missouri river is reckoned to run westward to the Mountains of New Mexico, as far as the Ohio does eastward," reflecting his belief in symmetrical geography. Mitchell correctly shows the northern branch of the Missouri to be the main branch of the river, although his estimate of the latitude of the river's source is inaccurate. Nonetheless, the information Mitchell's map provided led Meriwether Lewis up the Marias River to determine the northern reaches of



Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

7407 La Jolla Boulevard
La Jolla, CA 92037

www.raremaps.com

(858) 551-8500
blr@raremaps.com

A Map of the British and French Dominions in North America, With the Roads, Distances, Limits, and Extent of the Settlements, Humbly Inscribed to The Right Honourable the Earl of Halifax, And other Right Honourable The Lords Commissioners for Trade & Plantations, By their Lordships. Most Obliged and very humble Servant Jno. Mitchell . . . 1755

the Missouri River basin.

Ristow noted twenty-one variant states and editions of the map appeared between 1755 and 1781 (7 English; 2 Dutch (Covens & Mortier); 10 French (Le Rouge) and 2 Italian (Zatta)). John Jay used a copy of the third edition during the negotiations of what would become the Treaty of Paris (1783).

Map States

The present example is the third state of the first edition:

- State 1 (1755): Publisher's name spelled "Miller" (not Millar). Publisher's street name spelled "Katherine" (not Katharine).
- State 2 (1755): Publisher's name correctly spelled Millar. Publisher's street name corrected spelled Katharine.
- State 3 (1755): First two states includes the town name Leicester in Massachusetts twice. This state corrects one of the Leicesters to Worcester.
- State 4 (1755-1757): Text panels in the Atlantic added. The scale of miles is now above the cartouche.
- State 5 (circa 1773): Millar's name deleted. Jefferys's and Faden's imprint added.
- State 6 (circa 1774): Printed boundary added in the middle of Lake Ontario.
- State 7 (circa 1775): Title changed to "A Map of the British **Colonies** in North America . . . "

Rarity

All states of the Mitchell are rare on the market. Prior to this example, which was acquired in 2021, there has not been a recorded example of the second state of the map at auction for over 30 years. We offered an example of the map for sale in 2011.

Detailed Condition:

Eight sheets joined as one. Original outline hand-color with later wash hand-color. Expert reinstatement of image at or below the longitude numbers in the bottom graticulated border. Imprint reinstated as well as a small amount of cartography around "B St Joseph" in the lower-left corner. Very small (~1/16 inch) paper extension between the leftmost top and bottom sheets.
