



**Barry Lawrence Ruderman  
Antique Maps Inc.**

7407 La Jolla Boulevard  
La Jolla, CA 92037

[www.raremaps.com](http://www.raremaps.com)

(858) 551-8500  
[blr@raremaps.com](mailto:blr@raremaps.com)

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**A New Chart of the Gulf of St. Lawrence Compiled from the Original Drawings of Actual Surveys; following the Natural configurations of the Several Coast & Headlands; The whole adjusted by Astronomical Observations, by Thos. Wright Surveyor General of the Island St. John. NB. The Genuine Copies of this Chart, will have the Signature of the Proprietor.**

**Stock#:** 86204  
**Map Maker:** Wright  
  
**Date:** 1790  
**Place:** London  
**Color:** Uncolored  
**Condition:** VG  
**Size:** 41.5 x 49.5 inches  
  
**Price:** \$ 9,500.00



**Description:**

***The Most Detailed Chart of the St. Lawrence River to Date***

Fine example of Thomas Wright's definitive chart of the St. Lawrence River, based on his careful survey of the region.

Thomas Wright, patriarch of a family of surveyors, originally worked with William Gerard de Brahm in the Southern Colonies, before being appointed deputy surveyor to Samuel Holland in the Northern District. He would go on to become one of the foremost experts on the geography of eastern Canada, who continued to improve on the work of Holland's General Survey of North America. By 1773, he would rise to the level of Surveyor General of the St. John's Colony and was briefly taken prisoner by the Colonial



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Army in 1775, but was later ordered released by General George Washington.

Wright's chart shows the St. Lawrence River as it empties into the Gulf of St. Lawrence around Anticosti. It includes the coast of Labrador, in the north, to Cape Breton and Nova Scotia in the south. Near the center of the chart are the Magdalen Islands.

Shorelines and bays include sounding depths and variation measurements. Profile views of the shore are tucked inland near Chaleur Bay and are off the coast of Cape Breton. In the lower right is a table with coordinates that have been determined by astronomical observations. At the top is an inset of the Mingan and Esquimaux Islands. At the lower left is a depth table with notes on the tides. All of these additions would be useful to a navigator sailing in the area.

The cartouche in the upper right shows a small homestead through a natural archway. A ship is moored in a nearby harbor where fishermen spread their nets. In the foreground are walrus resting. The entire scene is a pastoral dream of what life in British Canada could be.

Wright served as a deputy surveyor under Samuel Holland during the first large-scale survey of British North America. He was integral to the surveys of New England and the Gulf of St. Lawrence, contributing to Holland's wall map of New Hampshire.

Wright privately published three charts concerning the St. Lawrence: "A new Chart of the Gulf and River of Saint Lawrence to the Southern boundary of Lower Canada" (ca. 1785), "A New Chart of the Gulf of St. Lawrence" (1790), and "A New Geographical and Nautical Chart of the Gulf and River St. Lawrence" (1807). This chart, the 1790 effort, is meticulously detailed and shows the considerable skill that was required to accurately and carefully depict such a crucial area.

### **Wright and the Survey of the Gulf of St. Lawrence**

Wright continued to improve on his survey of the St. Lawrence in the later-eighteenth century, adding details and the latest information concerning tides and navigational obstructions. The initial survey work was completed, however, in the 1760s, as part of Holland's monumental surveys of Canada and New England. The General Survey of North America was approved by the Privy Council on February 10, 1764 and was to be organized by the Lords of Trade and the Admiralty.



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The surveying teams were tasked with creating high-quality, high-resolution maps and charts that were precisely keyed to latitude and longitude. They also had to provide cadastral surveys for Cape Breton and St. John's Island, projects to which Wright contributed heavily.

Wright was one of several deputy surveyors to Holland. They sailed together for North America on the *Canceaux*, under Lieutenant Henry Mowat, reaching the Newfoundland Banks on June 27, 1764 and then heading for Quebec. After a quick stay there, Holland and his men sailed to St. John's Island, where Wright would later serve for decades as the Surveyor General.

At first, Holland thought he would survey the island by land. He sent out another deputy surveyor, Haldimand, but the party was soon stranded with no provisions. Wright was sent out to find Haldimand, but his groups also soon fell into distress. They were rescued by the ship's schooner, which had nearly sunk itself, and Holland decided to proceed with the initial survey from small boats instead.

Holland, Wright, their men and the ship's crew wintered at St. John's. Taking advantage of the frozen waterways, the surveyors circled the island in the coldest months of late 1764 and the first part of 1765. Wright was responsible for charting the westernmost parts of the island. By late summer, all parties had finished their work.

This process was repeated for Cape Breton in 1765-6, with Wright again surveying the western portion of the island. He was then sent to Anticosti, where he led the survey and wrote a description of his work, which was published in 1768, while he was on leave in England.

He returned in mid-1769. While in London, Wright met with Astronomer Royal Nevil Maskelyne and they discussed the best way to observe the Transit of Venus, the most anticipated astronomical event of the century. While traveling to rejoin Holland, Wright performed observations of the Transit at the Île aux Coudres in the St. Lawrence. He saw the internal movement of Venus across the Sun, but missed the moment of external contact. Both he and Holland submitted their findings to the Royal Society in London. Of Wright's work, Maskelyne wrote, "His observations seem to me to be made with proper care & knowledge of the subject, & likely to be useful, in conjunction with those made by Captn. Holland & the many other observers dispersed in various places, in determining the grand problem of the Sun's distance from the Earth" (as quoted in Hornsby, 64).



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After more than five years, Holland declared the survey of the Gulf finished in 1770. He took his deputy surveyors, including Wright, to their next challenge, the survey of New England.

**Rarity**

This important chart is rare. We locate examples in the National Maritime Museum (Greenwich), the Clements Library at the University of Michigan, and the Biblioteca Nacional (Madrid), and four examples at the British Library.

**Detailed Condition:**

Mounted linen.