



## Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

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### **The American Atlas, or a Geographical Description of the Whole Continent of America.**

**Stock#:** 95391  
**Map Maker:** Sayer / Bennett / Jefferys  
**Date:** 1782 [1783]  
**Place:** London  
**Color:** Hand Colored  
**Condition:** VG  
**Size:** 21.5 x 15.5 inches  
**Price:** \$ 120,000.00



#### **Description:**

***The First National Atlas of the United States.***

***The Exceptionally Rare 1783 Edition of Jefferys's American Atlas.***

A virtually-unknown edition of Jefferys's essential *American Atlas*, the updated 1783 edition, which, crucially, illustrates the latest geopolitical transformation resulting from the Treaty of Paris, declaring the establishment of the United States in several significant maps of North America - and therefore standing as the first national atlas of the United States.

Thomas Jefferys' *American Atlas* was one of the four great atlases of the North American Colonies available during the Revolution - along with Faden's *North American Atlas*, Des Barres' *Atlantic Neptune*, and Jefferys and Sayer's *A General Topography of North America* - and it was certainly the most actively published and used. Jefferys was the leading British cartographer of his day, becoming Geographer to the King by 1761. He started producing maps relating to North America circa 1750, when he issued a series of important maps of the British American colonies. Although Jefferys died in 1771, the importance of his *American Atlas* can be seen in how it continued to be updated and issued by Sayer and Bennett. According to Pritchard and Taliaferro: "That Sayer and Bennett were publishing atlases under Jefferys's name five years after his death indicated the late map publisher's continuing influence in the market" - *Degrees of Latitude*, page 211. While the 1776 edition of the *American Atlas* was THE atlas of the American Revolution, having been one of the primary cartographic references for American, British, and French military officials during the conflict, the triumph of the American cause would be first enshrined in the maps of this very rare 1783 edition.

#### **This Edition and Its Maps**



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### **The American Atlas, or a Geographical Description of the Whole Continent of America.**

This edition of the *American Atlas* is of the greatest interest, as it is the first national atlas issued after the cessation of hostilities to proclaim the existence of the United States. Although the title page is dated 1782, in actuality it was almost certainly issued after the January 20, 1783 iteration of the Treaty of Paris, but before August 15, 1783.

The three key maps are Stevens & Tree's numbers 4(e) [map 1]; 49(h) [maps 5-6]; and 51(d) [map 7], all of which rank among the very first English-language maps to include "United States" (or some allusion thereto) in the title.

- Map 1. *A Chart of North and South America, Including the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans... According to the Preliminary Articles of Peace, Signed at Versailles, 20, Jany. 1783.* Imprint: Sayer & Bennett, 10 June, 1775. Dated by Stevens & Tree: 1775-[1783].
- Maps 5-6. *A New and Correct Map of North America, with the West India Islands. Divided according to the Preliminary Articles of Peace, Signed at Versailles, 20 Jan. 1783. wherein are particularly Distinguished, The United States, & the Several Provinces and Colonies, which Compose the British Empire.* 1783.
  - As described by Stevens & Tree this issue has the added dashed boundary line engraved on the plate, delineating the border between the United States and British Possessions. The lower sheet of this issue remains unchanged from the 1779 issue.
- Map 7. *The United States of America with the British Possessions of Canada, Nova Scotia, & of Newfoundland, divided with the French; and the Spanish Territories of Louisiana and Florida according to the Preliminary Articles of Peace. Signed at Versailles the 20th of Jany. 1783.* Printed for R. Sayer and J. Bennett, Map and Printsellers, No. 53, Fleet Street, as the Act directs, 9th February, 1783.
  - Printed just 20 days after the signing of the preliminary peace treaty at Versailles, Sayer & Bennett's map is one of the earliest maps to name and depict the newly formed Republic. The title of the previous edition of this map (*North America from the French of Mr. D'Anville*) was entirely erased from the cartouche, with the above title engraved in its place. The text of Article III of the Treaty was also added to the plate, immediately to the left of the cartouche. The boundaries of the United States are shown by a dashed line which is colored green. Phillips, *A List of Maps of America*, page 862.

### **The remaining maps are:**

2. Chart Containing the Coast of California, New Albion, and Russian Discoveries to the North, with the Peninsula of Kamtschatka...

3. Chart containing the greater part of the South Sea to the South of the Line...



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4. The Russian Discoveries, previous to the Year 1763.
8. The British Empire in America.
9. The River St. Laurence.
10. The Gulf of St. Laurence.
11. The Island of St. John, in the Gulf of St. Laurence.
12. The Island of Newfoundland.
13. The Banks of Newfoundland.
14. Nova Scotia, and Cape Breton, with Adjacent Parts of New England and Canda.
- 15 & 16. New England.
17. New York and New Jersey.
18. Lake Champlain.
19. The Province of Quebec.
20. Pennsylvania.
21. & 22. Virginia and Maryland.
- 23 & 24. North and South Carolina.
25. Florida, East and West.
26. The River Mississippi, from the Balise to Fort Chartres.
27. The Bay of Honduras.
28. & 29. South America.
30. The Straights of Magellan.



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### **The American Atlas, or a Geographical Description of the Whole Continent of America.**

#### **Rarity**

Sayer & Bennett kept the *American Atlas* up-to-date, quickly responding to the developments across the Atlantic, particularly the negotiations at Versailles (indeed they went to press before the thing was officially settled), however demand for the book must have been far weaker than it was during the actual fighting. Consequently it is understandable that fewer examples of this 1782-but-1783 edition were issued, making them much rarer than their wartime counterparts. Phillips Atlases 1169 is a 1782-but-1783 issue and while the example cited by therein lacked the important seventh map declaring the United States, Phillips's *List of Maps of America* clarifies that the 1783-dated *Map of the United States of America* properly belongs as map no. 7 in the so-called 1782 edition of Jefferys's *American Atlas*. The next post-war edition of the atlas would come more than a decade later, in 1794, when resurrected by Laurie & Whittle.

It is interesting to note that not even Thomas Jefferson owned an example of this up-to-date 1783 *American Atlas*, as he received the 1778 edition of the atlas from the bookseller Stockdale in Aug. 1787, while serving as Minister to France (see Sowerby's *Catalogue of the Library of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 4, 3961).

Other than the incomplete Library of Congress copy, we have found only the Newberry Library (Ayer 135 J46 1782) copy of this rare 1782-but-1783 edition of the *American Atlas*.

#### **Provenance**

William Pyne;  
Frederic Bronson.

#### **Detailed Condition:**

Folio. Half antique calf over contemporary marbled boards, rebacked and recorned to style. Spine in eight compartments, separated with raised bands, gilt-lettered title piece in the second. Gilt-lettered red morocco title piece onlaid to front cover: "UNITED STATES ATLAS". Marbled endpapers. Title, index, and 23 engraved maps on 30 sheets, many of which are folding and with original outline hand-color. The map sheets uniformly number-stamped on versos at upper fore-edge corners. A few minor faults expertly mended.