



Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

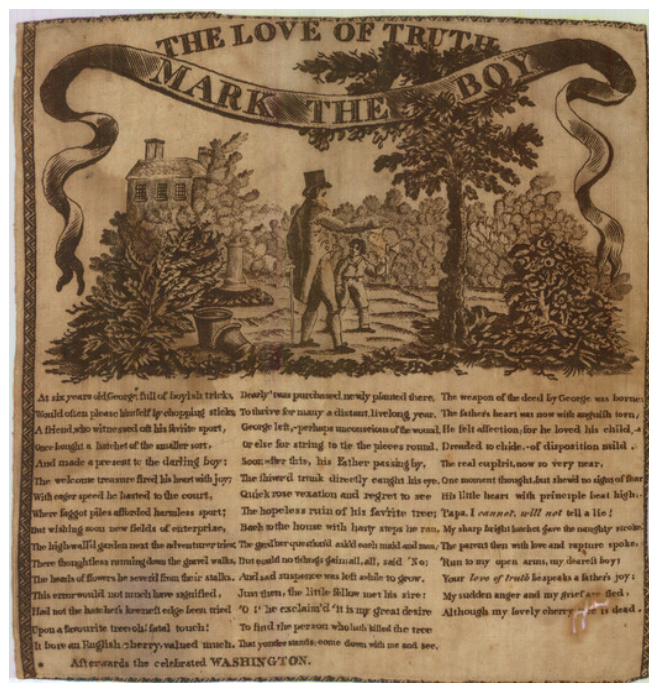
7407 La Jolla Boulevard
La Jolla, CA 92037

www.raremaps.com

(858) 551-8500
blr@raremaps.com

(George Washington - Cherry Tree Legend) The Love of Truth Mark the Boy...Afterwards the Celebrated Washington

Stock#: 96516
Map Maker: Weems
Date: 1806 circa
Place: [Germantown, Pennsylvania]
Color: Uncolored
Condition: VG
Size: 11 x 11.25 inches
Price: \$ 2,800.00



Description:

Washington and the Cherry Tree : Early Printed Pictorial Handkerchief

"I Cannot, Will Not, Tell a Lie"

One of several variant handkerchiefs illustrating George Washington's character through the famous cherry tree story, printed circa 1806 by the Germantown Print Works. The legend originated with the fifth edition of Mason Locke Weems's *Life of Washington* (1806). This handkerchief is noted as the first appearance of the famed story in verse, and its printing date has been attributed to the same year as Weems's fifth edition.

Herbert Ridgeway Collins identified two versions of this handkerchief (printed in brown or blue ink), and we have seen it printed in red ink. The present example is printed in black ink. There does not seem to be an established order of precedence to the variant editions. The American Antiquarian Society has copies printed in brown, blue and black ink, ranging from fragments to nearly complete copies. AAS has uncut examples, i.e. two copies of the same title printed top to bottom, as well as copies printed side-by-side with "The effect of principle behold the man" (Collins, *Threads of History*, no. 38), suggesting that the two texts



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were companion pieces originally printed together on rolls of muslin, intended to be separated.

Washington and the Cherry Tree Iconography

The handkerchief is illustrated with an iconic scene depicting a young George Washington wielding a hatchet as his father points to the hacked trunk of his cherished cherry tree in a rather lush garden setting. The text printed below the engraving is likely the earliest published verse form of Parson Weems's famous tale of Washington and the cherry tree. Although Weems's biography of George Washington first appeared in 1800, many of Weems's most famous anecdotes about Washington's early career - including the cherry tree incident - did not appear in print until the 1806 fifth edition of the biography.

Ascribed to the press of the Germantown Print Works and dated ca. 1806 by Herbert R. Collins in his *Threads of History* (1979), page 63, item no. 39.

The first lines of verse:

At six years old, George, full of boyish tricks,*

Would often please himself by chopping sticks

A friend, who witnessed oft his favrite sport,

Once brought a hatchet of the smaller sort,

And made a present to the darling boy:

The welcome treasure fired his heart with joy;

With eager speed he hasted to the court,

Where faggot piles afforded harmless sport...

The final lines:

One moment thought, but shew'd no signs of fear

His little heart with principle beat high:



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'Papa, I cannot, will not tell a lie!

My sharp bright hatchet gave the naughty stroke

The parents then with love and rapture spoke,

'Run to my open arms, my dearest boy'

Your love of truth bespeaks a father's joy:

My sudden anger and my grief are fled,

Although my lovely cherry tree is dead.

A wonderful Washington item, perhaps one of the earliest visual artifacts of the cherry tree story, and rarely found in such nice condition.

Rarity

Collins notes two examples, those at Cornell and Western Reserve Historical Society. The American Antiquarian Society has several copies, uncut and cut, in various colors of ink. OCLC adds five others: Boston Athenaeum, Brown, Michigan State, the Free Library of Philadelphia, and Yale.

Detailed Condition:

Printed pictorial handkerchief on muslin cloth. Hand-sewn rolled edges. Engraved title banner and illustration above three columns of text, entirely printed in black ink. Printed zigzag border. Small closed tear in lower right corner, affecting one printed word. Another small separation tear (at base of illustration). Old neat 2 1/2-inch repair (stitching visible on verso only). Two tiny pinholes in lower left area. Very minor old staining. Withal, very good.