



# Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

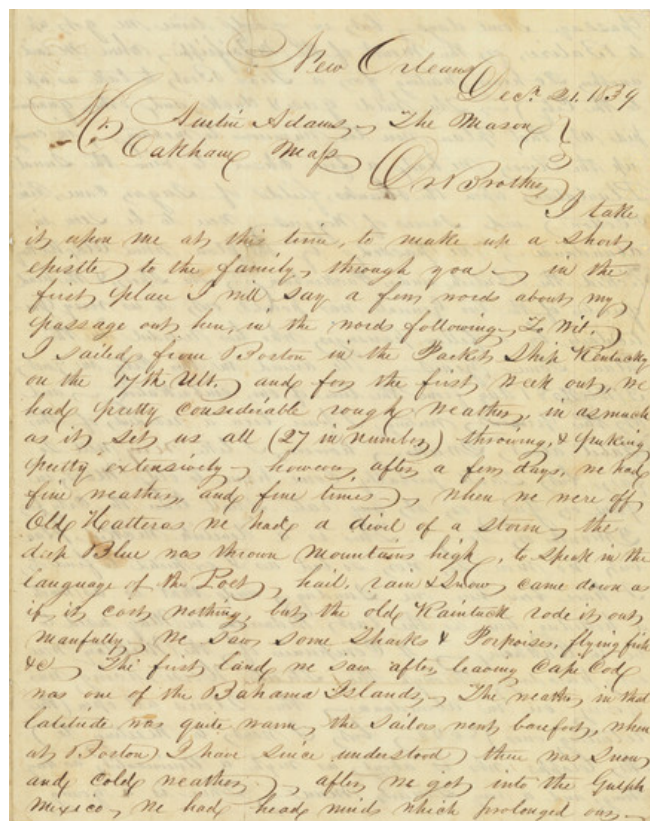
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## [ New Orleans, Louisiana / Southern Travel Letter ] Lyman Adams letter to Austin Adams, December 21, 1839

**Stock#:** 96629  
**Map Maker:** Adams  
**Date:** 1839  
**Place:** New Orleans  
**Color:** Pen & Ink  
**Condition:** VG  
**Size:** 7.63 x 9.63 inches  
**Price:** \$ 2,800.00



### Description:

Fascinating 4 page letter written from New Orleans, Louisiana, on December 21, 1839, by Lyman Adams (1815-1859) of Oakham, Massachusetts to his brother Austin Adams (b. 1811), capturing his initial observations of the city.

Lyman, as an agent for Layton & Co., sailed from Boston in November 1839, in the Packet Ship *Kentucky*, arriving at New Orleans after laying over for 20 hours at La Balise, waiting for a steamship to take the passengers the final miles to the city. Lyman makes a series of colorful observations on the ethnic diversity of New Orleans, unusual clothing and habits of the locals and other colorful observations.

Lyman Adams was the son of Dr. Charles Adams and Sarah McAllister (1790-1868). The letter is written two weeks after his arrival in the city, providing a fresh perspective on his surroundings and the people he encountered. Lyman had relocated to New Orleans for work with the firm Layton & Co. In 1839, Layton



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Adams, December 21, 1839**

& Co. was offering for sale in New Orleans newspapers:

*A full assortment of hardware and ship chandlery, always on hand, and which are offered for sale at whole sale or retail, on the most favorable terms, by LAYTON & Co. 53 Old Levee.*

The firm was likely also supplying the Republic of Texas Navy at the same time and had been trading land scrip in Texas for ship chandlery and similar material.

Lyman Adams would later co-found a venture with Frederick Brand, establishing Brand, Adams & Co., a ship chandlery and hardware store also situated at 53 Old Levee and No. 16 and 18 Conti Street.

*Full Transcription:*

*New Orleans [Louisiana]  
December 21, 1839*

*Mr. Austin Adams, the Mason  
Oakham, Massachusetts*

*Dear Brother,*

*I take it upon me at this time to make up a short epistle to the family through you. In the first place I will say a few words about my passage out here, in the words following, to wit: I sailed from Boston in the Packet Ship Kentucky on the 17th ult. and for the final week out, we had pretty considerable rough weather, inasmuch as it set us all (27 in number) throwing & puking pretty extensively. However, after a few days, we had fine weather and fine times. When we were off Old Hatteras, we had a devil of a storm. The deep blue was thrown mountains high, to speak in the language of the poet, hail, rain & snow came down as if it cost nothing, but the Old Kaintuck rode it out manfully. We saw some sharks & porpoises, flying fish, &c. The first land we saw after leaving Cape Cod was one of the Bahama Islands. The weather in that latitude was quite warm. The sailors went barefoot, When at Boston I have since understood there was snow and cold weather.*

*After we got into the Gulf of Mexico, we had head winds which prolonged our passage some*



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*days but in good time we got to [La] Balize or the mouth of the Mississippi where we laid another 20 hours waiting for a steamboat to take us up to the city. The wild geese and ducks and other quadrupeds at that place were too numerous to mention. In coming up the river, we had a fine chance to view the several plantations upon the banks, fields of sugar cane, rice and cotton, and scores of niggers were to be seen in abundance. We passed by the place where Old Hickory licked the British under Pakenham. The spot and the headquarters of the two generals was pointed out to us very particularly by a fellow passenger who has resided in this place some years.*

*We arrived in the city in just 3 weeks & 1 say from the time of our embarkation and at this present writing, I have been a resident of this Babel about 2 weeks. However, I like it very well so far, but shall probably come home to Old Mass. in June or July or at any rate shall leave the city for 3 months or so.*

*This is a devilish, wicked place but no more so nor so bad as I expected to find it. I have been here one Sunday and that is as much a holiday here as the last Wednesday in May used to be in Oakham. Four companies of the military were out parading through the streets, horse racing was going on in abundance, the stores [were] all open (the retailing ones), &c. &c. but I went to meeting to Mr. [Theodore] Clapp's 1 who is about as nigh a Universalist as anything, and a very smart man. There is a young man here by the name of Battles who I used to board and room with in Boston and we are together here which makes things very pleasant. There are lots of other Boston people here that I am acquainted with.*

*Secondly, the inhabitants of this place are made up of people of all Nations, and from all quarters of God's earth, and of all colours from White to jet black, speaking all languages & tongues, dozens of Indians are daily ramifying the streets from the north with game and skins for sale, dressed in the style of blankets & leggins, thin noses hung full of ear-rings, and packs on their backs as big as old blind Crawford's Show Box. We have lots of venison, wild ducks &c. every day where I board which are very comfortable to the teeth. The best water there is here is the Mississippi River water which is the best in the world to drink after one gets used to it. The city at this time is quite healthy. The weather like June in Massachusetts and I never was better than at the present date.*

*Such a bustle of steamboats, piles of cotton and herds of niggers as there is here is a caution. Steamboats are arriving or departing at every hour of the day.*

*I wrote Charles when I first arrived here and I have also written John Howard which will*



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*probably reach them ere you get this. I want you or Clarinda or Horr or John or your father or mother or all of you to write a feller, stating news, &c., and occasionally drop in and Old Spy, Barre Gazette, or Philadelph & direct all communications as follows:*

*Mr. Lyman Adams, Care of Layton & Co., New Orleans, La.*

*Omitting the dash line under his honor's name. I shall send this by the ship Carolina to Boston, which sails tomorrow, thence to Oakham by mail which is all will cost you for ship 06, mail 10 = 16 which is cheap enough.*

*I have time and rom for no more but remain truly yours in all cases, — L. Adams*

*P. S. The above has been written in great haste and you will please excuse the bad chirography of the same.*

**Detailed Condition:**

4 pp. letter is datelined from New Orleans in late December 1839