



Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

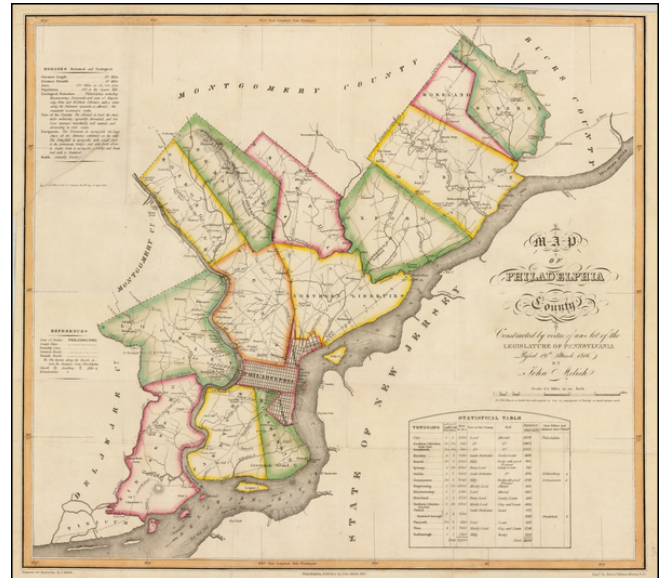
7407 La Jolla Boulevard
La Jolla, CA 92037

www.raremaps.com

(858) 551-8500
blr@raremaps.com

Map of Philadelphia County. Constructed by virtue of an Act of the Legislature of Pennsylvania Passed 19th March 1816, By John Melish

Stock#: 38818
Map Maker: Melish
Date: 1819
Place: Philadelphia
Color: Hand Colored
Condition: VG+
Size: 19.5 x 17.5 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

Fine example of the first edition of John Melish's rare map of Philadelphia County, engraved by the firm of Tanner, Vallance, Kearny & Co., in Philadelphia.

The genesis of the present map begins in 1814, when the Pennsylvania legislature adopted a resolution to produce a map of the state. In 1816, John Melish made a presentation to the Legislature to outline ways and means to produce a state map by compiling information from surveyor's around the state. This resulted in a further act authorizing Melish to undertake the compilation of surveys conducted in each county by qualified local surveyors. Over the course of the next 5 years, Melish would prepare specifications for the surveys, undertake the compilation and ultimately published his map of Pennsylvania on a scale of 5 miles to the inch, in 1822.

One of the primary guidelines for preparation of each county survey was the preparation of a map on a scale of 2.5 miles to an inch. In order to ensure uniformity, Melish published "Directions for Constructing the County Maps in Terms of the Act of Assembly," which contained detailed standardized specifications for production of each county survey map.

For Philadelphia County, Melish elected to rely upon his own survey work. As noted by the American Philosophical Society:



Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

7407 La Jolla Boulevard
La Jolla, CA 92037

www.raremaps.com

(858) 551-8500
blr@raremaps.com

Map of Philadelphia County. Constructed by virtue of an Act of the Legislature of Pennsylvania Passed 19th March 1816, By John Melish

In 1816, the legislature of the state of Pennsylvania commissioned a map of the county of Philadelphia. Scottish-American cartographer John Melish, then a Philadelphia resident, was selected to produce the map. While maps of the city had been published since its earliest days, Melish's map, published in 1819, depicts Philadelphia County before the 1854 Act of Consolidation, which incorporated the surrounding townships into the city limits. Many of the townships identified on the Melish map would retain their names when incorporated into the city. Philadelphia residents would be quick to recognize Germantown, Northern Liberties, Passyunk, Roxborough and Byberry as some of the more well known Philadelphia neighborhoods featured on the map.

Like much of Melish's other work, the map is brilliantly colored, highlighting the outlines between the townships. He included many roadways that would be recognizable today, including Old York Road, Germantown Avenue and Ridge Pike, which he commended as being "Generally Excellent." The table in the bottom right hand corner of the map describes the area of each portion of the county and includes information on population, soil quality and geographic features. Melish even notes the presence of four post offices within the county, and their proximity to the city itself. The table reflects the utilitarian nature of the map itself as Melish included space on the table for updated population figures.

John Melish (1771-1822) was a Scottish merchant who moved to Philadelphia in 1811, becoming a professional mapmaker. While his cartographic career barely lasted a decade, due to the groundbreaking nature of his work, Melish was inarguably one of the most consequential American mapmakers. Prior to making his monumental map of the United States in 1816, Melish produced a number of highly acclaimed regional maps, along with his rare *Military & Topographical Atlas of the United States* (Philadelphia, 1813, expanded 1815), considered to be the finest cartographic publication relating to the War of 1812.

Melish's map of Philadelphia County is very rare on the market. We note only the examples at Christies (April 27, 1994) and an example of the second edition of the map, published in 1830 by H.S. Tanner, which was offered at the Babinski Sale at Swann Galleries, in December 2005.

OCLC locates only a single example of the first edition of the Philadelphia County map at the Library of Congress, although we note other examples at the Huntington and Pennsylvania Historical Society.

Detailed Condition: