



# Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

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## Mapa de los Estados Unidos de Méjico, Segun lo organizado y definido por las varias actas del Congreso de dicha República: y construido por las mejores autoridades. . . . 1847

**Stock#:** 95002  
**Map Maker:** Disturnell  
**Date:** 1847  
**Place:** New York  
**Color:** Hand Colored  
**Condition:** VG+  
**Size:** 41 x 29.5 inches  
**Price:** SOLD



### Description:

#### ***The Map Used to Negotiate the End of the Mexican-American War—One of the Most Important Maps in United States History***

An excellent example of John Disturnell's "Treaty Map" of Texas, Upper California, Mexico, and contiguous regions, one of the seminal maps in American History.

Disturnell's "Treaty Map" is considered to be perhaps the single most important map of the American Southwest, having been used and specifically referenced during the treaty negotiations between the United States and Mexico, the subsequent execution of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, and the boundary commissions created thereunder following the Mexican-American War. This map is so notable in American and Mexican history that examples are held by both the US National Archives and the Mexican Government alongside their respective copies of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.

Disturnell's Treaty Map was originally engraved [by White Gallaher & White in 1828](#), drawing cartographically from Henry Schenk Tanner's 1825 English-language map of Mexico. Following a long hiatus, the map was then reissued by John Disturnell starting in 1846 during the Mexican-American War, with twenty-two further states appearing by 1852.

These states were printed in small runs that included minor changes and updates. The parties involved in the signing of the Treaty and in the subsequent boundary commission were oftentimes unaware that they were using different states. The US National Archives has the seventh state (1847), the Mexican



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government has the twelfth state (also 1847), Robert E. Lee used an unknown 1846 edition to determine if San Diego was part of Alta or Baja California, and the fifteenth edition (1848) was used by John Bartlett, Boundary Commissioner, in the field.

The map was constructed to show Mexico at a time when it included California, the Great Basin, Utah, Texas, and the southern states. Northwards, the map extends to the boundary between Alta California and the Oregon Territory established by the Treaty of 1818. Insets of the roads between Mexico City and Veracruz, as well as distances, are provided. Adjacent to the title is the Mexican symbol of an eagle sitting on a cactus on which the names of all the Mexican states and territories are inscribed.

As the map was primarily based on outdated 1826 sources and rapidly updated based on new information during the war, it is unsurprising that this map contains a number of mistakes. One of the most important of these, the erroneous location of Paso (now El Paso and Ciudad Juarez), lead to the US-Mexico border being pushed over forty miles further south than originally intended. Brigadier General Randall Marcy, noted explorer of the Great Plains who fought in the Mexican-American War said of the map:

*One of the most inaccurate [maps] of all those I have seen, so far as relates to the country which I have passed. He makes a greater error than most others in laying down the Pecos, and has the Colorado, Brazos, and Red River all inaccurately placed. Upon the Red River he has a very large branch coming from the far west, near El Paso, which he calls 'Ensenado Choctow.' This is altogether an imaginary stream, as no one who has been in the country ever heard of it; neither does any branch of the Red river extend to within three hundred miles of the Rio del Norte."*

These inaccuracies only add to the importance of the map, as it shows that this map was single-handedly responsible for shaping the southern US border that we know today. It is no exaggeration to place this map, alongside the maps of John Mitchell and John Melish, as among the most important and influential maps in shaping the modern borders of the United States as it was one of the primary maps upon which the American Boundary Surveys were influenced and demarcated.

Quite remarkably, the 1846 edition (sixth state) is also the first map to name both the city of Miami, Florida and the city of Atlanta, Georgia (using the name Atalanta).

#### **The Eleventh State**

This is the eleventh state of the map. A summary of the updates following the second state shown on this state include:



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- A circle is added for Laredo, Texas, next to Loredos, Coahuila.
- A new road connects Loredos to Presidio de Rio Grande
- The road from Loredos to Revilla has been moved westward
- The locations of Revilla and Presidio de Rio Grande have been slightly moved

These changes are all to be found in the border states of Coahuila, Nuevo Leon, and Tamaulipas, suggesting that this information was published by Disturnell shortly after the acquisition of new knowledge in the region.

#### **The Disturnell Map and its effect on American and Mexican cartography**

The Mexican-American War was followed closely by the American public in periodicals. Seeing an opportunity, John Disturnell, a New York City-based publisher and librarian of the Cooper Union Library, issued this map of the United States of Mexico in 1846.

The early editions of the map, printed just as the War was getting started, are rare, but interest evidently grew rapidly. By 1847, the map was a major success, with seven issues in 1847 alone. As previously mentioned, Disturnell had reused an earlier copperplate for this map, published by White, Gallaher & White's map in 1828 (itself an adaptation of Tanner's English language map of Mexico published in 1825). The Disturnell was printed with few alterations from the same plate as White, Gallagher & White's map.

Based as it was on maps two decades old and portraying an area little explored or surveyed, the Disturnell map had considerable errors which had profound ramifications for the peace process and for ensuing relations between Mexico and the United States. For example, the negotiators had decided that the border would run along the Rio Grande River and then depart west overland from a point eight miles north of "Paso" (now Ciudad Juarez and El Paso). An act of Congress even stipulated that:

*For running and marking the boundary line between the United States and Mexico, under the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, one hundred and twenty thousand dollars [will be earmarked]: Provided, That no part of this appropriation shall be used or expended until it shall be made satisfactorily to appear to the President of the United States that the southern boundary of New Mexico is not established by the commissioner and surveyor of the United States further north of the town called "Paso" than the same is laid down in Disturnell's map, which is added to the treaty.*



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The problem was that the Disturnell map - prior to being corrected in 1848 - placed Paso forty-two miles north of its true position, while it was updated only after the Treaty (in the fifteenth edition) to reflect the town's true position. This led to massive confusion on the matter, a refusal to fund the boundary commission, arguments carried out in tabloids, and presidential orders. A compromise (the Bartlett-Garcia compromise) was reached in 1851 that would have followed the location shown on the pre-1848 Disturnell map, but it was unpopular on both sides. Eventually, the Gadsden Purchase, completed in 1853 and ratified in 1854, resolved the matter and re-extended the border back down to the true location of Paso.

The dependence on the flawed Disturnell map showcased the lack of accurate Mexican-created maps. Mexican geographer Antonio Garcia Cubas characterized the Mexican cartography at the time as, "a girl, deformed and wasted away" (as translated by Carrera, 46). However, the engineers of the Mexican boundary commission executed their work with skill and the later nineteenth century became a renaissance for Mexican mapping. The Disturnell map was a catalyst for this innovation.

#### **The Mexican-American War and its Aftermath**

The road to conflict for the United States and Mexico started a decade before the formal outbreak of war. In 1836, Texas won its independence from Mexico. Although they appealed to the United States for annexation, some in the US government balked at Texas' inclusion as it would tip the balance between slave and free states. In addition, Mexico threatened war if the US moved to annex the Republic.

This changed when James K. Polk, a dedicated expansionist, was elected President in the election of 1844. Polk annexed Texas and offered to buy the territory that is now the Southwestern US. Mexico refused. In response, Polk ordered troops south of the Nueces River, which was recognized as part of the Mexican state of Coahuila. On April 25, 1846, the Mexican cavalry attacked the US soldiers, who were under the command of Zachary Taylor. Several skirmishes followed. On May 13, Congress declared war; the United States was involved in its first war fought mainly on foreign soil.

Although Mexico valued the lands north of the Rio Grande River, they were sparsely populated. The US Army easily overran the area while Taylor and his men pushed into the Mexican heartland. Desperate, the Mexican government recalled the disgraced General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna from exile in Cuba. Santa Anna had been in touch with Polk and promised the President to end the war on favorable terms to the US. Somewhat predictably, Santa Anna went back on his word as soon as he was on Mexican soil.

Installed as head of the Mexican Army, Santa Anna also assumed the Mexican presidency in March 1847. However, the Mexican forces were being pushed back. General Winfield Scott took Veracruz, the most



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important port city in Mexico, and advanced toward Mexico City. Following the path of Hernan Cortes three centuries before, Scott marched from the sea to the capital city. It fell in September 1847.

With the US Army on the streets of the capital, the war was over. Santa Anna resigned, forcing a new government to form and to negotiate the terms of a peace treaty. On February 2, 1848, the parties signed the Treaty of Peace, Friendship, Limits, and Settlement, better known as the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. The Rio Grande, not the Nueces River, marked the new boundary between the countries and it was decided based on scrutiny of the Disturnell Map. Mexico finally had to recognize the loss of Texas and agreed to sell a huge swath of territory-the modern states of California, New Mexico, Arizona, and parts of Nevada, Utah, Wyoming, and Colorado-for a paltry 15 million dollars.

#### **The Republic Configuration of Texas**

Nearly exactly in the center of the map is the state of Texas, shown in an oversized configuration. The map shows Texan claims to the Upper Rio Grande in present-day New Mexico and extending in a narrow configuration all the way to the border with the Oregon Territory near the Snake River. This was based on the Treaties of Velasco. These claims were eventually given up as part of the Great Compromise of 1850, in exchange for the U.S. Federal Government's assumption of Texas' public debt carried over from its time as an independent republic.

#### **Detailed Condition:**

Original hand-color. Copperplate engraving on two sheets joined as one. With original covers. Small areas of expertly reinstated loss at intersecting folds. Very small amounts of offsetting.