



Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

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[Manuscript Officers Map -- Siege of Atlanta]

Stock#: 36461
Map Maker: Anonymous / Merrill
Date: 1864 circa
Place: n.p.
Color: Pen & Ink
Condition: VG
Size: 15.5 x 12.75 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

Finely executed manuscript map of the area around Atlanta, drawn on the eve of the final march to Atlanta during the Civil War.

This remarkable artifact is apparently a manuscript section of William E. Merrill's rare and highly important, published by Merrill in Chattanooga On May 2, 1864 for use by commanding officers in the field. The original Merrill map was printed in a run of 200 copies, in the days before the commencement of the Atlanta Campaign and was produced in the field by a team of Army topographers and draughtsman. Merrill's map is one of the rarest and most important maps of the War, referred to by Stephenson as s "the principal reference map for all field commanders in the initial stage of the Union campaign to capture Atlanta." The importance of the map cannot be overstated.

The present manuscript map is an excerpt of a central section from the Merrill map, likely drawn by a junior officer for use in the field. With a relatively small number of Merrill's maps in circulation on the eve of the battle, and given the large size of the Merrill at 37.5 x 34.5 inches, the use of manuscript excerpts was a natural consequence of the need for additional copies of the map in the field, focusing on smaller regions.

While the map appears to be trimmed at the edges, a quick comparison of the map to the original Merrill makes it very clear that this manuscript is complete. Most notably, when looking at the town of Covington



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and the annotation above it for "Georgia Railroad 117 Miles," and comparing the same section of the Merrill, it becomes clear that drafter of the map was forced to squeeze in details which would have otherwise extended off the sheet. With the exception of a few omissions on the map, the map is virtually identical to the Merrill in both coverage, style and detail.

As noted by the Library of Congress in its exhibition of Civil War field maps:

The Topographical Department of the Army of the Cumberland, under the direction of Col. William E. Merrill, was chiefly responsible for providing the maps for the Atlanta Campaign. Thomas B. Van Horne in his History of the Army of the Cumberland (1875) notes that "The army was so far from Washington that it had to have a complete map establishment of its own. Accordingly, the office of the chief topographical engineer contained a printing press, two lithographic presses, one photographic establishment, arrangements for map-mounting, and a full corps of draughtsmen and assistants."

The lithographic presses were invaluable for quickly providing multiple copies of a map. However, the weight of the presses and stones made transporting them difficult, necessitating that they remain in a central depot near the front lines. . . the topographic engineers in the field had available to them a mobile "facsimile [sic] photoprinting device invented by Captain Margedant, chief assistant. . . The process, however, was expensive, and did not permit the printing of a large number of copies; therefore these maps were only issued to the chief commanders." . . .

In preparation for the coming campaign, the Topographical Department began the compilation of an accurate campaign map of northern Georgia. The best available map was enlarged to the scale of an inch to the mile. According to Van Horne, this was then "elaborated by cross-questioning refugees, spies, prisoners, peddlers, and any and all persons familiar with the country in front of us. It was remarkable how vastly our maps were improved by this process. The best illustration of the value of this method is the fact that Snake Creek Gap, through which our whole army turned the strong positions at Dalton and Buzzard Roost Gap, was not to be found on any printed map that we could get, and the knowledge of the existence of this gap was of immense importance to us."

Two days before the Atlanta Campaign began, the Topographical Department was informed of the date of advance. . . the single copy of the map of northern Georgia over which the Topographical Department had been laboring "was immediately cut up into sixteen sections and divided among the draughtsmen, who were ordered to work night and day until all the sections had been traced on thin paper in autographic ink. As soon as four adjacent sections were finished they were transferred to one large stone, and two hundred copies were printed. When all the map had thus been lithographed the map-mounters commenced their work. . . before the commanding generals left Chattanooga, each had received a bound copy of the map, and before we struck the enemy, every brigade, division, and corps commander in the



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three armies had a copy." Entitled "Map of Northern Georgia made under the direction of Capt. W. E. Merrill, Chief Topl. Engr.," the finished map measures 94 by 88 cm. It is lightly hand colored and indicates below the title and scale that it was "Lith. and printed at Topl. Engr. Office, Dept. Cumbd., Chattanooga, Tenn. May 2d, 1864." For ease of carrying in the field, the map was cut into 24 sections and mounted on cloth to fold to 16 by 23 cm. Pasted to the cloth mounting were cardboard covers to protect the map when folded (LC Civil War Maps no. S29-S30).

As noted by Michael Buehler:

The battle for Atlanta followed the Union victory at Chattanooga in November 1863. The first order of business was the preparation of an accurate field map, the result of which was this map of Northern Georgia, which was distributed to every commanding officer before the Army engaged in combat. Work on the map was carried out all through the winter of 1863-64 by engineers under the chief topographical engineer of the Union army of the Cumberland, William Merrill, "the most innovative and conscientious exponent of mapping during the Civil War."

Particular emphasis was put on the work of Sergeant N. Finegan and the Information Bureau, which expertly interviewed anyone who might be expected to have useful information on the region where the campaign was to be fought. So valuable was the intelligence he gleaned that the map was delayed while Finegan finished questioning his spies, scouts, refugees, travelers, prisoners, preachers, and peddlers -his 'motley crew,' in Merrill's words.

The map was completed and printed just five days before the campaign began on May 7 at the Battle of Rock Face Ridge. It depicts approximately the northwest one-third of the State of Georgia. Although imperfect due to the haphazard manner of its construction, it was undoubtedly the best map of northern Georgia then in existence, and a better map than any other Union command ever carried into a campaign.

As a testimony to the map's importance, it is reproduced . . . in virtually every study of Civil War mapping. General Sherman's two personal copies used during the campaign are in the Sherman Collection, Library of Congress. A special edition, printed in three parts on cloth, was issued for the use of cavalry officers "in the saddle."

While the map is highly accurate, it is not without its omissions. One of the most interesting omissions is Andersonville, site of a Confederate Prison, Camp Sumter, along with a supply depot. There are several other omissions on the map of place names, including several in the general area of Marietta. These omissions raise the curious prospect that this manuscript map may have been drawn from a manuscript pre-cursor to the Merrill or otherwise pre-dates its preparation, although this is at most speculation.



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A remarkable artifact of the Siege of Atlanta.

Detailed Condition:

Minor soiling. Sketch map on tracing linen.