



Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

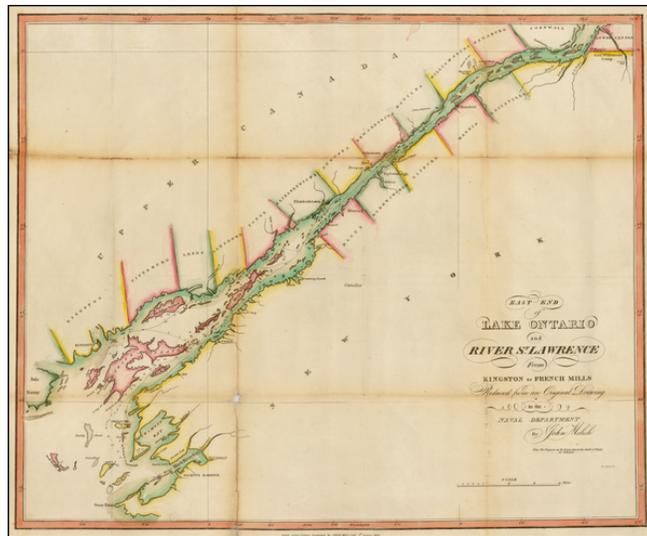
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[Thousand Islands, New York / Ontario] East End of Lake Ontario and River St. Lawrence From Kingston to French Mills Reduced from an Original Drawing in the Naval Department By John Melish.

Stock#: 36759
Map Maker: Melish
Date: 1814
Place: Philadelphia
Color: Hand Colored
Condition: VG
Size: 22 x 18 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

Fine example of John Melish's rare and historically important War of 1812 map of the Thousand Islands region, along the U.S.-Canadian border.

Melish's map is a fascinating historical record of the dramatic action that played out along the Thousand Islands region, a critical theatre during the War of 1812. It embraces the area from the eastern end of Lake Ontario, down the St. Lawrence River to the border of Lower Canada (Quebec). The areas to the north of the river are part of Upper Canada (now Ontario), while the areas to the south form part of New York State. The various townships on each side of the river are distinguished by their own colors, while various settlements and forts are labelled.

The War of 1812 (1812-5) remains the focus of much academic controversy, and is often misunderstood by both professional historians and the public alike. It pitted the United States, a young but ambitious republic, against the forces of Britain Empire, which in this theater included a small detachment of army regulars, Canadian colonial militia and their various Native American allies. While the British Empire was exponentially more powerful than the United States, Britain was then preoccupied by the larger war against Napoleon in Europe, so could spare only limited resources to defend Canada. While greatly outnumbering the British-Canadians, the American forces generally failed to press their advantage, ensuring that Canada would persevere against the designs of 'Manifest Destiny'.



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Early in the war, American strategists realized that the thin line of Loyalist townships along the St. Lawrence River, in theory, represented the weakest link in the defenses of British North America. The St. Lawrence corridor represented the only viable military route from Montreal (and access to the sea) to Upper Canada. If this corridor was severed by an American invasion, it would be practically impossible for the British to resupply Upper Canada with troops and ordnance, ensuring that it would only be a matter of time before the province would fall to U.S. forces. At the eastern end of Lake Ontario is Kingston, heavily defended, Britain's main naval base on the lake. Its American counterpart, immediately to the south, was Sackett's Harbor, a fine neutral port which hosted the U.S. lake fleet.

The British-Canadian forces were the first to take the offensive. In July 1812 and May 1813 they mounted two unsuccessful attempts to seize Sackett's Harbor. However, in February 1813, they managed to cross the frozen-over St. Lawrence to take the American fort of Ogdensburg, New York (directly opposite the British fort of Prescott).

In the autumn of 1813, the Americans mounted an expedition to the region, which on paper, should have annihilated the British presence in the region, and so tipping the balance of the entire war. General James Wilkinson led a force of 8,000 U.S. regulars to a point at French Mills, New York, marked on the map as 'Genl. Wilkinson's Camp', just inland from St. Regis. On November 11, Wilkinson led 4,000 men across the river to engage a much smaller British-Canadian force of 900 regulars and militiamen at Crysler's Farm (marked on the map, with British and American troop lines). While severely outnumbered, the British-Canadian force was highly motivated and better-disciplined than the invaders. Amazingly, they broke the Americans' lines, forcing Wilkinson into a humiliating retreat across the river. Never again would the region see significant military action, as a tense stand-off was maintained for the duration of the war.

This map was included in John Melish's magnificent work, *A Military and Topographical Atlas of the United States* (1813-5), which is considered to be the finest printed cartographic work on the War of 1812. Engraved by a young Henry Schenk Tanner, the present example, features Melish's signature color scheme, with vivid hues distinguishing terrestrial boundaries, while a brilliant blue full wash runs through the waterways.

John Melish (1771-1822) was, at the time, by far the most esteemed and influential American mapmaker, soon to be famous for his epic Map of the United States of America with the contiguous British and Spanish Possessions (1816), the first map that showed America as extending across the continent from sea to sea.



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Lawrence From Kingston to French Mills Reduced from an Original Drawing in the
Naval Department By John Melish.**

The map very rarely appears separately on the market, and we are not aware of any listings in dealers' catalogs or in auction records since 1991.

Detailed Condition:

Copper-engraved map, with original hand color, minor repairs and small loss at fold intersection.