



Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

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[Burke County, North Carolina] Plan of the 16,000, 22,680, 8,760, 99,200 & 59,000 acre Tracts in Burke County No Ca.

Stock#: 38616
Map Maker: Brazier
Date: 1831
Place: Raleigh, NC
Color: Pen & Ink with Wash Color
Condition: Good
Size: 26 x 17.25 inches
Price: \$8,500.00



Description:

Unique and historically important survival - one of Robert Brazier's original manuscript surveys used to compile the great McRae-Brazier map of North Carolina (1833), the second official map of the state.

This finely executed manuscript map represents a survey of approximately 200,000 acres of land in western North Carolina, executed by Robert Brazier, one of the most important North Carolina mapmakers of the first half of the 19th Century. He was the author of the McRae-Brazier map of North Carolina (1833), critically important as the second official state map and the first survey to embrace the entire state.

The present map represents the original manuscript draft of the first-ever accurate survey of the area and part of the first actual on-site survey of the Tennessee-North Carolina border. They are shown as the northwestern portion of what was then Burke County, one of the two original counties in the western part of North Carolina (formed in 1777), named after the leading patriot Thomas Burke (c.1747-1783), who served as the third state Governor of North Carolina. The topography is dominated by the Iron Mountains (a sub-range of the Great Smoky Mountains). At the time that the map was drafted, Burke County included all or parts of today's Caldwell, Alexander, McDowell, Madison, Mitchell, Avery and Yancey Counties. The area shown here is today only a short drive from Asheville.

As shown, the entire area of the survey was taken up by five large land patents (noted in the docket on the verso and distinguished on the map by their own wash colors), four of which had been granted to the Philadelphia merchant, William Cathcart, in 1795. Cathcart's estate in western North Carolina, which included these and other grants, had a great impact on the development of the region.



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During the time that the survey was conducted, in the 1820s, the land grants were only very lightly settled, with the first road into the area running along the upper part of the Nolichucky River, having only been recently completed. There were no towns or villages, only isolated frontiersmen's homesteads, being either tenants or squatters on the land grants.

The survey was made in anticipation of a wave of settlement into the Piedmont and Appalachian regions of the state. Later on, the area shown on the map would correspond to a significant portion of the future Mitchell County. Mitchell County was formed in 1861 from parts of Burke County, Caldwell County, McDowell County, Watauga County and Yancey County. It was named in honor of Elisha Mitchell, professor of mathematics, chemistry, geology and mineralogy at the University of North Carolina, from 1818 until his death in 1857.

The creation of Mitchell County was brought about by the question of secession during the build up to the Civil War. The northern half of the region strongly supported the Union and wanted to part company with the southern half, which favored secession. The opportunity that enabled this split came about when Jacob W. Bowman, a rising young politician from what is now Bakersville, was elected to represent Yancey County in the N.C. legislature. Eager to serve his constituents living north of Toe River, young Bowman was instrumental in the passage of an act that created the new county.

In essence, the present map is a careful 'Metes and bounds' survey, conducted by the chain and compass method, with base-points regulated by astronomical observations. The mountainous and heavily wooded countryside would have been too rugged to be commodiously surveyed by more advanced triangulated techniques, which required expensive equipment and clear sightlines. Instead, Brazier and his crew of surveyors would have designated the base-points and then measured the distances between them by the placement of a straight chain (66 feet long) directed by a compass. This process, while brutally labor-intensive and time consuming, produced relatively accurate surveys if done carefully.

As shown on the map, key points in such a frontier survey were often designated by prominent trees, such as "Buckeye" or "Sugar Tree". The tables in the upper left-hand portion of the map detail the lengths and compass directions of the various chained measurements. Mathematical equations would then be used to calculate the land area within each enclosure of measured bounds. While major rivers and creeks are shown, much of the survey is left bereft of detail. This was intentional, as superfluous detail was thought to impair the clarity of the survey (as well as take up much more of the surveyor's valuable time).

Historical Context

In the early 19th century, North Carolina underwent transformative demographic and economic changes.



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Following the American Revolution, North Carolina was a relatively sparsely-populated state with settlement concentrated in the coastal plains region. The state was moderately prosperous but did not enjoy the windfall profits yielded by the cash crops, such as in neighboring Virginia. The interior Piedmont and the Appalachian regions were scarcely settled and long-standing acrimonious relations with the indigenous Cherokee Nation discouraged European-American settlement.

From the 1790s, North Carolina's fortunes began to change. The invention of the Cotton Gin (in 1792), allowed the state's planters to earn vast revenues from bumper crops. Benjamin Hawkins, a North Carolinian who served as the U.S. Indian Agent from 1796 to 1816, succeeded on not only forging an enduring peace with the Cherokees but also managed to "civilize" them, such that the Cherokee formed communities and lifestyles along European-American lines (sadly the Cherokee Nation would be forcibly removed from the region following President Jackson's Indian Removal Act of 1830).

North Carolina saw steady population growth, rising from 393,000 in 1790, to 557,000 in 1810 and up to 738,000 in 1830. Increasing prosperity and security, as well as pressures from population growth, caused thousands of migrants (many of them Scots-Irish) to head into the Piedmont and Appalachian regions.

As was then the case in many U.S. states, the cartography severely lagged behind development. Civil administrators, landowners, the U.S. Army and state militia, all urgently needed an accurate general map of North Carolina, predicated on careful surveys. The problem was that such an endeavor could only be funded by government largesse, however, the North Carolina legislature was habitually parsimonious and loathe to finance such a large project. Until 1808, the state's stakeholders where relegated to relying on Henry Mouzon's *An Accurate Map of North and South Carolina With Their Indian Frontiers* (London, 1775), as the best available map of the state. Not only was Mouzon's work heavily outdated but it did not even include much of the western half of North Carolina, ensuring that the map was virtually useless.

The need for an official state map was acute, however, political wrangling delayed its production for many years. Finally, the North Carolina assembly voted Jonathan Price and John Strother funds to conduct and compile surveys leading to the publication of the first official state map, entitled *To David Stone and Peter Brown, Esq.: this first actual survey of the state of North Carolina* (Philadelphia, 1808).

While not to deny that the Price-Strother map was a great step in the right direction, the map was found to be deficient in seminal respects. While its coverage of the eastern part of the state was quite good, as one moved further west the quality of the sources deteriorated and the far western portion of the state was omitted altogether.

In 1819, Archibald Murphy, the chairman of the Board of Internal Improvements, reported that it was



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"very desirable" to have a new map; as when the Price-Strother map was published "little was known of the Geography of the Western Parts of the State..." However, state assembly members from North Carolina's eastern districts withheld funding for new surveys, fearing that the development of the western part of the state would come at the expense of their districts (though emigration and reallocation of state funds).

The Production of the McRae-Brazier map of North Carolina (1833)

Enter John McRae, the Mayor of Fayetteville. McRae was an ardent believer in the importance of creating a new accurate general map of North Carolina and was prepared to spearhead the project. He initially attempted to engage W. H. Hanford of the Army Corps of Engineers but was rebuffed. In 1821, McRae turned to Robert H.B. Brazier (c.1780-1837), who had, since 1820, been the Deputy Principal Engineer of the North Carolina Board of Internal Improvements. Brazier, who had emigrated from England, had received his professional training under John Rennie, the legendary Scottish Civil Engineer who is remembered as the designer of the London Bridge, the Plymouth Breakwater and the London and East India Docks. In his current capacity, Brazier had already conducted a number of cadastral and road surveys that would later be useful in composing the general state map. McRae managed to acquire sufficient seed money to allow Brazier to conduct further surveys, and the present working copy map lends an unparalleled insight to the nature of Brazier's work

McRae, who hailed from the center of the state, had the political pull to convince the state assembly to provide the funding to bring the project to completion. In 1826, the legislature authorized a grant of \$5,000 and over the next five years Brazier worked towards compiling his various field surveys (such as the present map) and notes, into a final manuscript, which was completed in Raleigh, in 1831. The map was published in Fayetteville in 1833, as *A New Map of the State of North Carolina Constructed from Actual Survey*. As a great wall map, it was by far the most impressive printed work of any kind published in North Carolina during its era.

The legislature was so impressed with the completed map that they authorized the Governor to purchase copies for presentation to the governors of each of the states and territories. It was also suggested that a copy be hung in every North Carolina Court House to "diffuse more generally among our citizens correct knowledge of the Geography of the State." Today, Brazier's map is considered to be one the truly great American state maps of the first half of the 19th Century.

Working field surveys leading towards the production of a printed map from the period, such as the present manuscript, were almost always discarded or neglected by the mapmaker once the finished map was completed. Thus their survival rate is exceedingly low. The fact that the present working survey



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relates to such an important printed map makes it all the more remarkable. The map gives a peerless and authentic insight into how important maps were created during the early Republican period in America. It is a unique artifact, with no parallel having been offered on the market during the last 25 years.

Detailed Condition:

Soiled and waterstained, as issued. Some restoration and stabilization. The map has been laid on old linen sometime after publication but was not original linen. The linen has been removed but was retained, as it had some additional manuscript annotations in an early hand.