



**Barry Lawrence Ruderman  
Antique Maps Inc.**

7407 La Jolla Boulevard  
La Jolla, CA 92037

www.raremaps.com

(858) 551-8500  
blr@raremaps.com

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**Map of the State of Louisiana With Part Of The Mississippi Territory, from Actual  
Survey By Wm. Darby. Entered ... 8th day of April 1816 . . .**

**Stock#:** 49116mp2  
**Map Maker:** Darby  
**Date:** 1816 circa  
**Place:** Philadelphia  
**Color:** Hand Colored  
**Condition:** VG+  
**Size:** 45.5 x 32 inches  
**Price:** \$39,500.00



**Description:**

***William Darby's Landmark Map of Louisiana and Adjoining Parts of Mississippi Territory***

Rare second and significantly revised and improved state of William Darby's map of Louisiana and a large part of Mississippi Territory, published in Philadelphia by John Melish in 1816.

Darby's map of Louisiana and Mississippi Territory is without question the most important map of Louisiana and Mississippi Territory of the period. Engraved by Samuel Harrison and published by John Melish, it was the first comprehensive map of the region, the work of Darby's 10 years as a public and private surveyor, much of which is drawn from Darby's tireless treks through the region between 1805 and 1814.

Prior to Darby, the most accurate maps of the region had been produced by Barthelemy Lafon and Arsene La Carriere de Latour. In 1806, Lafon produced a map which is fairly described as the first comprehensive map of the Territory of Orleans (later to become the state of Louisiana) and adjacent regions to the east. Lafon's *Carte Generale du Territoire d'Orleans* depicts the 12 original counties and includes some detail in the southeast part of Louisiana and along the Red, Ouachita, and Mississippi Rivers. However, it leaves blank large areas elsewhere, highlighting how little was known in the years following the Louisiana Purchase. The map's title cartouche conveniently covers much of southwestern Louisiana.

It was left to William Darby to create the first comprehensive modern mapping of the State. Darby began surveying land tracts for planters and speculators in Attakapas Country, Louisiana, in 1805. In 1806, Darby was appointed one of six deputy surveyors for the Western District of the Territory of Orleans,



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which comprised the area in Louisiana west of the Atchafalaya River. His surveying in the Atchafalaya Basin marked the beginning of Darby's detailed study of a specific region through field investigations. From 1806 to 1811, he worked as Deputy Surveyor for the Western District of Orleans Territory. From 1807 to 1809 he surveyed the swamps of the Atchafalaya Basin. He continued to explore the area within a seventy-five-mile radius of Opelousas until 1811

During this time, Darby likely conceived of and began compiling information for what would become his masterpiece, this remarkable map of Louisiana. In August 1811, Darby left his job as deputy surveyor and started his own independent exploration of Louisiana and the Gulf Coast. He augmented his own work by collecting maps and other materials on the region and spent the next years criss-crossing Louisiana, including the Mississippi Sound, the Gulf Coast from Sabine Lake to Mobile Bay, along the Red and Ouachita rivers, and up and down the Sabine River.

Darby's survey of the Sabine River in late 1812 was perhaps his most important single expedition, for he was apparently the first surveyor to undertake a detailed study of that river and to produce an accurate map of its lower sections. As described below, this work would ultimately be incorporated into John Melish's map of the United States and become the defining description of this portion of the boundary between the United States and New Spain in the Adams Onis Treaty of 1819, leading Darby to petition the Government for compensation for his work, which was finally granted in 1854.

In all, Darby claimed to have covered over 20,000 miles. Darby completed his manuscript map of Louisiana in 1814, just prior to the Battle of New Orleans, where he served as a topographical advisor to General Jackson. Historian Wilbert S. Brown notes that Darby provided Jackson access to the map and Jackson in turn commented that Darby's map was "more correct than any which had been published." Jackson stated

*I have no doubt whatever that Mr. Darby's map of Louisiana is more correct than any which has been published of that country. He has certainly taken extraordinary pains to acquire correct information; and, as far as my opportunities have enabled me to judge, I am induced to think his delineations very correct.*

After the conclusion of the War of 1812, Darby travelled to Philadelphia, arriving in June of 1815. In Philadelphia, he met with John Melish, who agreed to publish Darby's book and map of Louisiana, provided that Melish could incorporate Darby's information into Melish's monumental coast to coast map of the United States, which was first issued in 1816.

Darby's map was the first to accurately depict Lake Pontchartrain and Lake Grand (Chetimaches) and the first to show the "Great Raft" of the Atchafalaya, a 20 mile log jam which he surveyed in 1808.



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Darby's map is also a significant advance in the depiction of settlements, plantations, towns, etc. The plantations of Narcissus Prudhommes, Louis Derbane, General James Wilkinson, Wade Hampton and the Arceneauxes, are shown. The land grants to baron de Bastrop, marquis de Maison Rouge, and Edward Murphey (erroneously shown as Davenport's Land, on the road between Nacodoches and Natchitoches) are shown. The Caddo Villages on the Sabine River are identified.

Darby's efforts to compile his map are described in his "Explanation of the Map," which appeared in the expanded second edition of his *Geographical Description of the State of Louisiana*:

*The State of Louisiana south of Red river, and west of the meridian of Natchitoches, has never been surveyed except by myself. The waters of the Sabine, the mouth and western branches of the Calcasieu [Calcasieu] river, were surveyed by me in 1812 and 1813; and at my sole expense. The same process I was obliged to perform with many other parts of the country; particularly West Florida, Mobile Bay, the islands between Mobile Bay and the mouth of the Mississippi, and the numerous outlets of the latter stream. The Parish of Orleans, and the coast of the gulph of Mexico from the mouth of Lafourche to Baratavia inclusive, was laid down from a survey made by Mr. B. Lafon. Only to those who have ever been engaged in making geographical delineations from actual survey, need it be stated, the painful process of forming such a Map as mine. The whole work is from original document .... I visited in person almost the entire space represented upon my Map. Nearly all the observations made in my Statistics are founded upon personal observation; and whatever may be their merit as philosophical deductions, they are my own. Much of my Map, and with little exception all my geographical descriptions, are the fruit of my bodily and mental labour. I am the only man who ever did attempt and execute a survey of the Sabine and its confluent waters.*

#### **The Four States of Darby's Map**

The first state of Darby's map shows 25 Louisiana Parishes and 6 counties in Mississippi.

The second state included significant revisions in both the county configurations and the geographical information, a product of updates added by Darby after publication of the first state of the map. As quickly observable, Darby has added an additional 10 counties. In addition, we note the following significant geographical changes between the first and second states of the map:

- The Coastline of Lafourche Parish and Orleans Parish is completely revised
- Lafourche Parish is almost entirely revised, with significant changes in the rivers and topography
- Lake Patourde is completely changed



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- The details around Berwick's Bay, Renthrop's Ferry and the shape of the road is changed in the SE corner of St Mary's Parrish, as well as the details below, are completely redone.
- First state shows Indian Boundary Line. Second state shows a significantly revised line, now called the Choctaw Boundary Line.
- The Post Road from Natchez to Ft. Stephens is named.
- Choctaw Path is added (second North - South Road in Miss Territory)
- Course of the Alabama River is completely improved around Ft. Stoddard area and Mt Vernon removed.
- The Fuketchepoota Reserve in Clarke County Mississippi Territory is added
- Upper Alabama River is fully revised and Ft. Clairborne is new

Darby's map was unquestionably the high point of his professional career. Following its completion, he continued to publish local and regional geographical works and gazetteers. In 1838, Darby was appointed professor of history, geography, and astronomy at Jefferson College in Canonsburg, Pennsylvania. After teaching for two years, he left Canonsburg for Washington, D.C. From 1842 until his death twelve years later in 1854, Darby worked as a clerk in the General Land Office for an annual salary of \$1,000, during which time he was able to obtain an award of \$1,500 for his survey of the Sabine River.

Rumsey notes that two editions of this map were published in 1816, with 2 later editions of 1818 and 1819 published in New York by J. Olmstead and B. Long. The states can be identified as follows:

- State 1: 1816 -- only about 6 counties in Mississippi Territory
- State 2: 1816 -- Lafourche and Orleans Parish cartographic details completely revised. Extensive revisions in Mississippi Territory, including the addition of 10 new counties, new Choctaw Boundary Line, new Choctaw Indian path and Alabama River completely revised, with addition of Ft. Clairbourne and other information.
- State 3 and 4: 1817 or later. Alabama added to the title. Published in New York by James Olmstead and in New Orleans by Benjamin Levy and Company. Significant additional revisions to counties, etc.

#### **Rarity**

All states of the map are very rare on the market, but the second state would appear to be the rarest. We were unable to locate any other examples of the second state.

#### **Detailed Condition:**

Segmented and laid on linen. New linen, recently redone.

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