



# Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

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## General Map of the Course of the Ohio from its Source to its Junction with the Mississippi.

**Stock#:** 49669mp2  
**Map Maker:** Collot  
**Date:** 1804  
**Place:** Paris  
**Color:** Uncolored  
**Condition:** VG  
**Size:** 29.5 x 40 inches  
**Price:** SOLD



### Description:

#### *A French Spy's "Superlatively Rare" Map of the Ohio River Watershed.*

Fine large map showing the Ohio River from western Pennsylvania to its junction with the Mississippi (incorrectly spelled "Mississippi" in the title) at Fort Jefferson. The map was prepared by Victor George Henri Collot, a French Military Officer who had most recently served as the Governor of the Island of Guadalupe, from his overland reconnaissance of the region in 1796, in order to assess the prospects of fomenting rebellion among the French aligned populace of the Mississippi Valley against the United States.

Collot's map of the Course of the Ohio is a landmark map, representing a significant advance beyond the earlier mapping of the region by Thomas Hutchins. Intended as a reconnaissance map and prepared by Collot during his spy mission into the interior parts of North America, the map was intended to provide both the best possible cartographic detail of the primary watercourse from the Eastern United States to the Mississippi River and allow for a proper military assessment of France's prospects for inciting insurrection and taking back Louisiana Territory and the Mississippi Valley from the United States.

The map focuses closely upon the location of forts, the major (navigable) rivers, towns, Indian Villages and the roads in the region (Post St. Vincent to Cincinnati, Greenville to W(h)eeling, and a number of unnamed roads), sufficient information for evaluating the military prospects for an invading force.

The map extends from Lake Erie and Fort Franklin (Fort Machault, now Franklin Pennsylvania) to Fort Jefferson, at the confluence of the Ohio River and the Mississippi River, showing the location of the fort



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established in 1778 by George Rogers Clark, in order to control access to the Ohio River. The Fort was occupied until 1781.

This is the most authoritative view of the Ohio River and its riparian towns from the second half of the 18th Century and a remarkable piece of frontier reconnaissance.

#### Overview of Collot's Spy Mission, Report & Maps

Acting under instructions from Citizen Adet, French Minister to the United States, General George Henri Victor Collot undertook a secret reconnaissance in 1796, of the western American frontier. Collot traveled from Pittsburgh down the Ohio to the Mississippi, up the Mississippi to the Missouri and Illinois Rivers, and then back down the Mississippi to New Orleans. During his journey, he constructed a large number of exceptionally detailed manuscript maps and views of the region that he traversed. Many of these were groundbreaking, containing never before recorded information about a wilderness that was just beginning to undergo settlement.

Completed at nearly the exact time that Lewis & Clark were departing St. Louis, up the Missouri River, Collot's maps were engraved in Paris in 1804, but publication was suppressed due to Napoleon's sale of Louisiana to the United States the previous year. The Louisiana Purchase effectively ended any possibility that the region could be acquired by France. As a result of the changing politics and Collot's death, his report and maps did not come to market until 1826, when they were issued in a limited number under the title *Voyage dans l'Amerique Septentrionale* . . .

A nineteenth-century bookseller called Collot's work "one of the most famous, most important, and rarest of all books of Mid-Western Explorations." Eberstadt pronounced it "extraordinarily rare." Its rarity is due to the supposed deliberate destruction of all but three hundred French and one hundred English copies by the publisher, who had purchased the edition from Collot's estate, hoping to increase its value.

#### Historical Context of the Map & Collot's Reconnaissance

In 1763, the territory west of the Mississippi River was ceded to Spain by France, while the lands east of the river were ceded to Britain. In 1783, the lands east of the Mississippi formally became territory of the United States, although American possession of the region was tenuous at best. The mainly Francophone inhabitants of the Mississippi Valley had little affinity for Anglo-American rule, and their frontier lifestyle made them virtually impossible to control.

It was in this context that the government of post-Revolutionary France, the 'Directoire', schemed to



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reacquire France's lost American territories. The Directoire had an acrimonious relationship with both America and Spain, and the possibility of supporting an insurrection by the region's Francophone inhabitants was considered by many to be a viable means for France to regain Louisiana and the Illinois Country.

In 1796, the Directoire, acting through French ambassador Pierre August Adet, charged General George Henri Victor Collot (1750-1805) with undertaking a reconnaissance mission to the Mississippi frontier, in order to assess whether the region could be retaken by France. A former governor of Guadeloupe, he was an accomplished veteran of colonial service and an extraordinarily gifted mapmaker. Unfortunately, Collot was not as secretive about the purpose of his mission as Adet, and even before he commenced his expedition in March 1796, the American Government knew his intentions and appropriated \$500 to retain agents to shadow Collot.

While Collot's intellectual achievements were impressive, his mission was a political disaster. Collot was arrested at Fort Massac on the Ohio River by the American officer Zebulon Pike (himself soon to become an important Western explorer). Pike told Collot that "you have been indefatigable in surveying the Ohio, by taking the courses, distances, heights, etc., as well as reconnoitering the adjacent area for which you exhibit no authority". While he was well aware that Collot was a French agent-provocateur, Pike set him free, as he could not find any legal means of detaining him. Collot was, however, later shadowed by Spanish agents and arrested and deported as soon as he arrived in New Orleans. Fortunately, the Spanish governor allowed Collot to retain his maps and papers.

### **The Suppression of Collot's Report & Maps**

Following his return to France, Collot set out to prepare his report and maps from notes and sketches taken during his journey. In 1800, Napoleon acquired Louisiana from Spain, Collot, and Adet were named two of the commissioners of the new French territory. However, before they could cross the Atlantic to take up their assignments, Napoleon had a change of heart and decided to sell Louisiana to the United States.

Napoleon Bonaparte's decision to sell Louisiana to America brought a practical end to Collot's work on behalf of the French Government. As a result, the impetus to publish Collot's work disappeared and, to the contrary, it became expedient to suppress his reconnaissance, rather than publish its results and overtly admit to the Americans the full scope and extent of Collot's espionage work during his visit.

Ironically, the suppression of Collot's maps has a simultaneous parallel during Thomas Jefferson's administration, when 4 expeditions were sent out by Jefferson to explore the Louisiana Purchase and the



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Transmississippi West (Lewis & Clark, Zebulon Pike, Dunbar-Hunter and Freeman-Custis expeditions). In April 1806, Thomas Freeman, surveyor, and Dr. Peter Custis, naturalist, undertook an expedition at the request of Thomas Jefferson's administration through parts of Arkansas, Louisiana, Texas, and Oklahoma. They were accompanied by a military escort under the command of Capt. Richard Sparks. At the same time that Zebulon Pike was exploring westward into the Louisiana Territory, Freeman and Custis traveled along the Red River to a site in present-day Texas in the vicinity of the old Caddo villages, where they were stopped by a force of Spanish cavalry protecting the Spanish claims to an ill-defined boundary of the Louisiana Purchase. After a brief skirmish, Freeman and Custis withdrew.

While a report of the 1806 Freeman-Custis expedition was published and a map prepared by Nicholas King, the political sensitivity surrounding the expedition was such that the report of this southern expedition into Texas was kept secret, with only a few copies printed. Nicholas King's map of the expedition, which provided physical proof of the US Government's encroachments into Spanish Texas, was suppressed completely, with no known examples of the map surviving until an example was discovered in about 1877 in the Custis papers and a second example was discovered in the past decade, which had been owned by another early American explorer, Washington Hood (1808-1840).

#### **Laramie's Store (Fort Loramie)**

North of Greenville and Dayton, Ohio, the map locates Laramies Store, a misspelling of Loramies Store, which had, in 1795, just become Fort Loramie, under the command of Mad Anthony Wayne.

In 1769, Pierre Loramie came to the Ohio Country as one of its earliest European settlers. Loramie's exact reasons for coming to the Ohio Country are unclear. He may have been a religious missionary seeking converts among Ohio's American Indians, a merchant seeking his fortune from the fur trade, or an agent dedicated to keeping a French presence north of the Ohio River.

Upon arriving in the Ohio Country, Loramie constructed a trading post on the portage between St. Mary's River and modern-day Loramie's Creek in Shelby County, Ohio. American Indians commonly traveled this route as they moved south to the Great Miami River and then into southern Ohio and Kentucky. The Shawnee were especially frequent visitors to the outpost. During the American Revolution, American Indians loyal to the British used Loramie's Store as a staging area for attacks against the Americans. In 1782, George Rogers Clark, during a raid against the Shawnee, dispatched Benjamin Logan to destroy the trading post. Logan succeeded in this mission.

With his trading post lost, Loramie moved west with a band of Shawnee. The site remained abandoned until 1795, when Anthony Wayne ordered the American military to construct a blockhouse and a few



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additional buildings for storage. He named the site Fort Loramie. Eventually, Fort Loramie evolved into a village as settlers moved into west central Ohio to take advantage of the fertile land available for farming.

**Rarity**

Collot's maps are very rare on the market. This is the first example of this map to appear on the market in several decades.

**Detailed Condition:**

Soiled in several areas. Fold splits, expertly repaired on verso.