



# Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

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## **The Theatre of the Empire of Great Britaine... Together with a Prospect of the most famous Parts of the World.**

**Stock#:** 52714  
**Map Maker:** Speed  
**Date:** 1676  
**Place:** London  
**Color:** Uncolored  
**Condition:** VG  
**Size:** 17.5 x 11.75 inches  
**Price:** SOLD



### **Description:**

***The Best Edition of the Most Influential Atlas by England's Greatest Cartographer, John Speed. The First World Atlas Published by an Englishman in England.***

2 works, comprising 5 parts in one volume. Folio (17.5 x 11.75 inches). Contemporary panelled calf (rebacked, corners repaired, rubbed).

68 + 28 double-page engraved maps, i.e., complete. Engraved title with facing frontispiece of the arms of the kingdoms, title printed in red and black, the *Theatre* with 68 double-page engraved maps of England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland, and 5 letterpress tables, the *Prospect* with 28 double-page engraved maps, the whole mounted on guards.

### **John Speed**

John Speed (1551 or '52 - 28 July 1629) was the best known English mapmaker of the Stuart period. Speed came to mapmaking late in life, producing his first maps in the 1590s and entering the trade in earnest when he was almost 60 years old.

John Speed's fame, which continues to this day, lies with two atlases, *The Theatre of the Empire of Great Britaine* (first published 1612), and the *Prospect of the Most Famous Parts of the World* (1627). While *The Theatre ...* started as solely a county atlas, it grew into an impressive world atlas with the inclusion of the *Prospect* in 1627. The plates for the atlas passed through many hands in the 17th century, and the book finally reached its apotheosis in 1676 when it was published by Thomas Bassett and Richard Chiswell, with a number of important maps added for the first time.



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### **The Theatre of the Empire of Great Britaine... Together with a Prospect of the most famous Parts of the World.**

#### **The 1676 Edition**

"The 1676 edition of John Speed's famous atlas marked the high point of its publishing history" -- Burden

The present atlas combines both *The Theatre* and *Prospect* and was published posthumously in 1676 with eight new maps not previously available:

- New England (Burden 455)
- Virginia and Maryland (Burden 456)
- Carolina (Burden 457)
- Jamaica and Barbados
- East India
- Russia
- Canaan

The American suite is of particular importance as it represents some of the most up-to-date information about the English colonies during that formative time in their history, at the end of the 17th century.

#### **Lineage of the Speed Plates**

John Speed's maps were incredibly popular in their own time and were published by numerous firms in the 17th and 18th centuries. A chronology of those firms follows, but is not necessarily comprehensive:

- John Sudbury and George Humble. Published the Speed's atlas from 1610.
- William Humble. Acquired plates from his father George, published Speed maps in the 1640s and 1650s.
- William Garrett. Acquired plates in 1658 or '59. Did not publish.
- Roger Rea. (Elder and Younger) Acquired plates from the above. Published the maps in 1662 and 1665.
- Thomas Bassett and Richard Chiswell. Acquired plates from the above and published the maps in 1676.
- Robert Walton. Unconfirmed.
- Christopher Browne. Acquired plates sometime in the last quarter of the 17th century.
- John Overton. Acquired the plates in 1700.
- Henry Overton. Acquired plates from his father in 1707.
- Cluer Dicey. Acquired plates and published Speed county maps in 1770.



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**Provenance**

Acquired from a private English collection;

Thomas Tatton, with his ink ownership inscription on the title.

**Detailed Condition:**

Rebacked. Engraved title repaired at margins, a number of maps with repairs to lower gutter and into central creasefolds extending into plate image most without loss, one map chipped at corner just into plate image, some leaves with marginal repairs and staining, a few occasional spots in plate image, one plate trimmed into plate. Overall a clean and very good, solid example.