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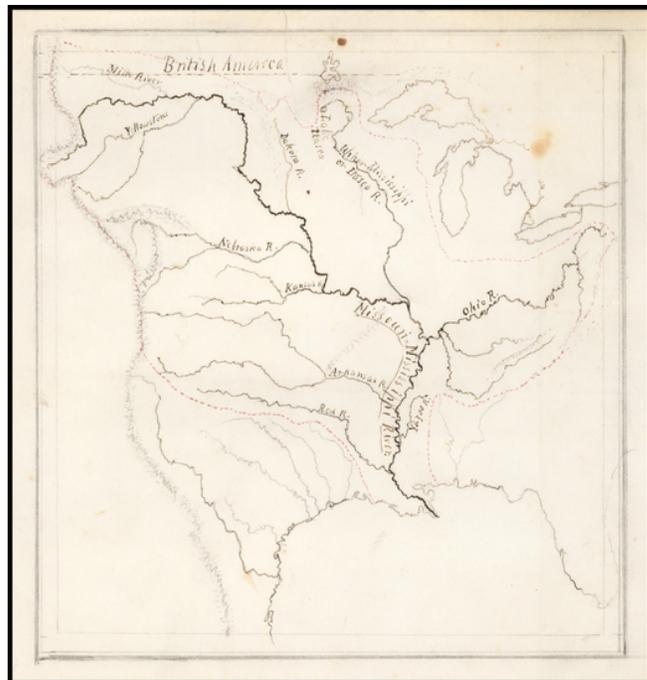
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[The Mississippi-Missouri: A Geographical Blunder -- An Illustrated Argument For Renaming The Lower Mississippi River Put Forth By A Prominent American Educator To The Author of a Best Selling American School Geography]

Stock#: 56241
Map Maker: Fay / Pradt
Date: 1868 circa
Place: n.p.
Color: Uncolored
Condition: VG
Size: 6.3 x 6.5 inches (map -- with manuscript archive)
Price: \$1,900.00



Description:

"The Geographer who shall first have the boldness to teach the truth . . . will be opposed for a time by interested book publishers and conservative pedagogues, but will triumph as Galileo did in the end."

The Mississippi-Missouri: A Geographical Blunder -- An Argument For Renaming The Lower Mississippi River Put Forth By A Prominent American Educator To The Author of a Best Selling American School Geography

Fascinating manuscript map, manuscript draft article (lacking pages 6 and 7) and letters addressing the question of whether the principal river system of North America should be called the Mississippi or Missouri River, exchanged between Theodore Sedgwick Fay (American Author and Diplomat) and John B. Pradt (Wisconsin Educator and President of the Wisconsin Teachers Association). The map and letters, etc., would seem to have been collected and retained by Pradt.

As illustrated, the map proposes that the Mississippi River be renamed the "Upper Mississippi or Itasca



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River", with the Missouri River, extending from the Rocky Mountains to the Gulf of Mexico, renamed as the Missouri-Mississippi River.

This offering consists of a manuscript map, a draft of an article later published by the Wisconsin Journal of Education in 1876 and group of letters, representing an archive of correspondence, with noteworthy letters between Theodore Fay and John B. Pradt, an ordained minister in the Episcopal Church and career educator.

The core of the collection is an exchange between Fay, (who had authored *A Great Outline of Geography* in 1867), and Pradt (who takes exception to the *Great Outline's* description of the relationship between the two rivers) regarding the latter's submission of an article to the *Milwaukee School Monthly*, wherein Pradt puts forth his position that the Missouri River (not the Mississippi) should be treated in text books as the principal American River system, with the Mississippi re-defined as a tributary. In his article, Pradt methodically lays out his explanation of how the major school geographical texts (most notably, Faye's *Great Outline*, along with books by Guyot and the Mitchell Series) teach the subject and his belief that the conclusions should be rethought and the river system renamed for the Missouri.

Pradt's thesis can be set forth in the following excerpt of his 14 page article, where he begins:

It should be more generally understood that a serious error exists in the ordinary conception and description of the principal river-system of the great central plain of North America. This error consists in diverting the designation of the main river, 1250 miles from its mouth, and giving it to one of its larger tributaries, leaving the principal stream, above the confluence, to be regarded as an affluent merely, and giving it a new name. In other words, the "Lower" and "Upper" Mississippi are described together, as the "Mississippi River," and the "Missouri," which is unquestionably the continuation of the main stream, is treated as a tributary. This error is perpetuated in all our School Geographies, including the most recent.

Pointing out that the Missouri is the longer of the two rivers and twice as wide as the Mississippi the confluence of the two rivers Pradt makes his case for change, including an historical account of the naming of the river (regrettably, pages 6 and 7 are missing).

In a humorous and eloquent response to Pradt, Fay offers the following thoughts:



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Your idea may be correct, but what is the charge you bring against us School Geography writers? That we have diverted the designation of the main stream. To this I plead not guilty. The rivers have long since received their names by the mistakes of others (if mistakes they be), by Indian tradition, and by the assent of mankind . . .

If the world would accord me such authority, I might perhaps decree this and other changes in geographical nomenclature. I would, for instance, transform the Gulf of Tartary into a Channel and the Arabian Sea into a Bay, or the Bays of Bengal and Biscay into Seas. I would confer a name (say the G. of Sahama) upon that bend in the western Coast of S. America, intersected by the 25th S. parallel, which has remained in patient obscurity, while its neighbor, over the way, the G. of Guinea, enjoys the distinction of a celebrated title; and every schoolboy speaks even of the Great Australian Bight.

The misnomer of the Missouri is not the only immorality which shocks the geographical student. If we open up this question, it may be taken as a precedent, and other objects of commiseration may demand their rights. The republic, of which we have the happiness to be citizens, has cause to complain that it has not been honored with a more appropriate denomination than the complex and commonplace one so little in harmony with its pre-eminence. . . . [apparently Fay was a Fredonian!] But a School geography is not the tribunal to correct these errors

The objections stated in your article are well worthy attention, and I commend them to the proper authorities. But I invite you not to throw the responsibility of the error, if one there be, upon us innocent School-Geography writers, who have troubles, and faults enough of our own . . .

If the Missouri is not satisfied, let her carry up her case to a higher court, namely the Geographical Societies. She will stand a good chance to establish her claim. but it would be a mistake to suppose that nothing could be said on the other side. The counsel for the Mississippi might advance several arguments not wholly without reason. He might, first plead possession (a great point in law!). He might ill-naturedly add that the Missouri is a muddy stream and polutes the purity of the "Great Water" at the very moment when aspiring to usurp his place. He might argue that more length and volume ought not to outweigh navigability, commercial importance and utility to man. He might cite the dying words of the father of Bonaparte to his sons: "You, Joseph, are the elder, but Napoleon is the head of the



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family." . . .

Should she, however, contemplate an appeal of this kind, I recommend her first to clear away the sandbars, snags and rapids -- to protect her banks from the encroachment of timber -- to calm, if possible, the impetuosity of her current and to improve herself in those noble qualities, by which rivers can become veins of life, roads of thought, and channels of civilization. She will thus render it more easy for her friends to procure for her the desired pre-eminence as the greatest American stream. She might then aspire even to be called the Queen of Rivers." Like Joseph among his brethren, she might stand upright among the greatest streams of the globe, and the Amazon, the Nile, the Niger, the Yang-tse-kiang and the Mississippi himself, would be obliged to bow themselves before her. . . .

Pradt's earnest 5 page reply continues his appeal, invoking Galileo's name for the import of "standing tall" against the tyranny of lesser minds:

Before Galileo's time it was held and taught that the sun revolves around the earth. And all men -- writers teachers and pupils -- had the evidence of their senses and the authority of the church, in favor of their belief. But Galileo was satisfied that they were all in error; and without waiting for the consent of mankind or the decree of Astronomical Societies, taught the truth, and finally truth prevailed. The Geographer who shall first have the boldness to teach the truth in regard to this point before us, will be opposed for a time by interested book publishers and conservative pedagogues, but will triumph as Galileo did in the end.

In the end, Fay seems to score the literary victory, with Pradt's earnest writings a bit hyperbolic. Nevertheless, Pradt's article, *The Mississippi-Missouri: A Geographical Blunder* would ultimately be published in the *Wisconsin Journal of Education* in 1876 (p. 103-107), with an entry noting that it was condensed from an 1868 article (perhaps in the *Milwaukee School Monthly* where Pradt initially sought publication).

Theodore Sedgwick Faye

Theodore Sedgwick Fay (1807 - 1898) was a writer from the United States who spent much of his life in Germany.



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Fay initially worked as a clerk for his father, an attorney. His father died in 1825, and he continued long enough in law to be admitted to the bar in 1828, but he quickly left the legal profession for periodical journalism, where he made a name for himself for some years. He married Laura Gardenier in 1833, and went traveling in Europe for three years, while sending back articles to the

He served with ability in the United States diplomatic service, first as secretary of the legation at London briefly (1837), then at Berlin (1837-53), and next (1853-61) as Minister at Berne, Switzerland. He retired from his diplomatic career in 1861.

His major cartographic and Americana works include:

- Views in New-York and its environs, from accurate, characteristic & picturesque drawings, taken on the spot, expressly for this work (New York: Peabody & Co., 1831). With James H. Dakin. A collection of engravings with commentary by Fay.. (DEÁK, PICTURING AMERICA 399. STOKES, ICONOGRAPHY OF MANHATTAN 102.)
- A Great Outline of Geography (2 vols., 1867) A textbook.
- First Steps in Geography (1873) A textbook.
- Die Sklavenmacht: Blicke in die Geschichte der Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika ("The slave power: a look into the history of the United States of America," Berlin, 1865) Written to respond to criticism.
- Die Alabama-Frage ("The Alabama Question," Leipzig, 1872) Also written in response to criticism.

John B. Pradt

The following is excerpted from Vol. XIV of the *American Journal of Education* (1864) at p. 394

JOHN B. PRADT.

John B. PRADT, the sixth President of the [Wisconsin State Teachers'] Association, was born in Winchester, N. H., June 26, 1816. He was prepared for college when twelve years of age; but circumstances not allowing him to enter, he enjoyed further advantages of private study and instruction, alternated with other occupations, including some months not unprofitably spent in a printing office; and after two years spent in the study of law, chose the sacred ministry as his profession.

Having passed through the usual three years' course of theological study, he was ordained in



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the Protestant Episcopal Church, in Vermont, in 1838. He made his first attempt at teaching while a law student, in 1829-30, in Rockingham, Vt., and taught three winters and three terms of select school in Vermont, and two winters in New Hampshire. Removing to Pennsylvania in 1842, he taught five terms, in 1843-4, in the Coudersport Academy, and in 1845, one term of a select school at Jersey Shore. In 1854, being then again resident in Vermont, he was invited to return to Pennsylvania and fill the newly created office of County Superintendent in the county of Potter. Accepting the invitation, he remained in the place till 1856, when he removed to Wisconsin.

Just before removing West, he was appointed principal of the normal school at Millersville, Lancaster county, Pa. In Wisconsin, Mr. Pradt was one year principal of the Union school at Sheboygan, in 1859-60, and for four years past has been the resident editor of the "Wisconsin Journal of Education." In 1862, he was examiner of the "normal classes" of the State, and for some years past has been a member of a standing committee of the State Teachers' Association on the revision of the school laws, and in that capacity has made three reports to that body.

Detailed Condition:

Map, Handwritten Journal Article, multiple letters (some incomplete) and other writings.