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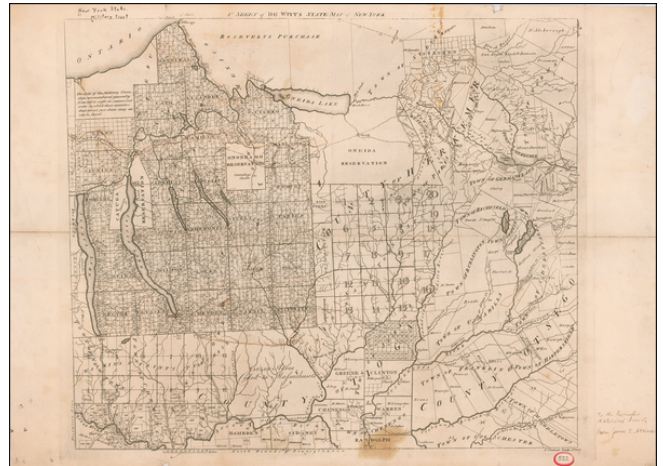
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1st sheet of De Witt's State Map of New-York (with contemporary manuscript annotations)

Stock#: 59182
Map Maker: De Witt
Date: 1793
Place: New York
Color: Uncolored
Condition: VG
Size: 22.5 x 20 inches
Price: \$ 8,500.00



Description:

Annotated Example of Simeon De Witt's Map of the New Military Tract: The First Detailed and Authoritative Map of Central New York.

Simeon De Witt's map of the New Military Tract is of great historical importance for the State of New York. Titled *1st Sheet of De Witt's State-map of New York*, the map covers central New York from slightly east of Little Falls on the Mohawk River to the west side of Seneca Lake, and from the Pennsylvania line to Lake Ontario.

De Witt's map is largely based on the manuscript maps created from the original surveys of the New Military Tract in 1789, prepared under De Witt's supervision. However, the map includes a significantly larger area. While it was intended primarily as a property map, De Witt's *1st Sheet* incorporates hydrography, towns, and Indian reservations.

As indicated by the contemporary manuscript annotations on this example of the map, the map would have been used both by De Witt in his work as surveyor general and to anyone buying or selling property in central New York. As discussed in detail below, the present example includes a remarkably detailed accounting of the roads which were just then being established and surveyed in the region. As such, it must be assumed that this example was most likely owned by either a major real estate speculator, regional land surveyor or someone else required to have the broadest possible understanding of the region. Given the map's rarity (only a few known surviving examples) and provenance (see below), there can be little doubt that this example was used by a person who was very active in influencing the early history of the region.



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The title reflects De Witt's plan to use this map as the first part of his long planned large format wall map of New York, which was not published until 1802 (discussed below). The township divisions shown on this map would become the source map for the next several decades and were widely copied on other maps published in the final years of the eighteenth century.

This "1st Sheets" provides the only contemporary printed record of the information then being compiled by De Witt, which was being synthesized into manuscript maps which were largely completed in 1792. As noted by David Allen:

*The extensive mapping of the New Military Tract in central New York, which was done under the supervision of Simeon De Witt, is shown on De Witt's published maps . . . However, additional light on the history and geography of this area can be obtained from the manuscript maps that preceded the printed versions. A spectacular example is A Map of the Military Lands by De Witt's assistant, Abraham Hardenbergh, which was probably drawn in 1792. This pen-and-ink map is drawn on a very large scale (two miles to an inch), and includes a minute depiction of the hydrography in the townships and ranges of the military tract. It appears to be a kind of "master map," which may have provided the basis for the smaller-scale maps that were published later. **De Witt himself drew A Map of the Military Tract and Lands Adjacent, (ca. 1792), which is an early draft of a map later published as the "1st sheet" of his map of the State of New York.** These drafts were produced over a period of two or three years, and show significant differences in detail.*

David Allen further notes the importance of *De Witt's 1st Sheet* in the preparation of the Ebeling-Sotzmann map of New York. Ebeling specifically noted his use of the map in correspondence with Noah Webster on October 4, 1796, and Allen observes that *De Witt's 1st Sheet* served as the primary regional source for Ebeling Sotzmann.

The lack of a consensus on the dating of this map is quite interesting. The Boston Public Library notes a date of 1792. The Antiquarian Society of America and New York Public Library put the date at 1793, with other sources suggesting a date as late as 1794. We have utilized David Allen's dating of 1793.

New Military Tract

The United States Congress had already guaranteed each soldier at least 100 acres at the end of the war (depending on rank), but by 1781, New York had enlisted only about half of the quota set by the U.S. Congress and needed a stronger incentive. The state legislature authorized an additional 500 acres per soldier, using land from 25 Military Tract Townships to be established in central New York State. Each of



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the townships was to comprise 100 lots of 600 acres. Three more such townships were later added to accommodate additional claims at the end of the war.

The 28 Townships were given classical Greek and Roman names, along with the names of English authors. The tract covered the present counties of Cayuga, Cortland, Onondaga, and Seneca, and parts of Oswego, Tompkins, Schuyler and Wayne. The names themselves have been attributed to Robert Harpur, a clerk in the office of New York's Surveyor General, Simeon De Witt. Harpur apparently had an interest in classical literature.

The portion of the Military Tract north of Seneca Lake (i.e. townships of Galen and Junius), was divided by the New Preemption Line from land to its west assigned by the Treaty of Hartford of 1786 to Massachusetts. The tract immediately to the west became the Phelps and Gorham Purchase. The west limit of most of the tract was Seneca Lake.

Two Indian reservations were included in the Tract, for the Onondaga and Cayuga. All of the Cayuga and most of the Onondaga (including the City of Syracuse) were taken a few years later by New York State by treaties whose legality has been repeatedly challenged, since following the Trade and Intercourse Act of 1790, only the United States could conclude treaties with Indians.

Manuscript Annotations

The most noteworthy element of the manuscript additions is the meticulous manner in which the roads have been added. At least 20 distinctive roads have been added in manuscript, criss-crossing the Military Tract Lands and connecting the more than 20 settlements that have also been added in manuscript.

These roads illustrate the earliest transportation grid upon which settlement would develop in the region. The broad distribution of towns within the New Military Tract and the meticulous addition of roads suggests that this map was almost certainly being used by a contemporary owner with broad speculative real estate interests in the region or perhaps a government or other administrator with a wider interest in the region, which at the time was entirely within Ontario County, New York. This conclusion is bolstered by the pencil check marks that can be seen in a number of townships around the map.

Roads can be seen originating from the following places:

- Lake Ontario at Sodus Bay
- Lake Oswego
- Lisle, New York, (Tioughnioga River)



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- Oxford, New York (Chenango River)
- Canaseraga Creek/Chittenenango Creek (south of Oneida Lake)
- Watkins Glen / Seneca Lake
- Geneva / Seneca Lake
- Lyons (Clyde River / later Erie Canal)

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The following place names have been added in manuscript:

- Port Watson (named for Elkanah Watson, who contracted Harvey I. Steward to survey and map Port Watson Village in 1800)
- Homer (settled by 1793)
- Ithaca (named and surveyed by Simeon De Witt, circa 1792)
- Three River Point (described by Elkanah Watson in 1791 as the point where Moses De Witt set up his camp while doing the Surveys for the Military Lands Tract)
- Seneca Falls (settled about 1790)
- Cayuga
- Montezuma (first settlers were Peter Clarke, Comfort Tyler and Abram Morgan in 1798, but the place name may pre-date the down).
- Waterloo (first settled by Jabez Gorham, who arrived in about 1795)
- Liverpool
- Troop Ville (Throopsville --earliest settlement about 1799)
- Jamesville
- Dryden
- Lisle
- Skaneateles
- Auburn?
- Milan
- Lyons
- Clyde
- Marcellus
- Onondanga
- Camillus
- Elbridge



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States of the Map, Rarity & Provenance

The map is of the utmost rarity. We are aware of only one other example on the market in the past 50 years, which we acquired in 2015 (now in the Library of Congress).

The present state is State 2, with the Town of Middletown and the river system in the "230,400 acres ceded to Massachusetts" at the bottom center added. Wheat & Brun record 1 example of State 1 (Library of Congress) and 2 examples of State 2 (Harvard Library, acquired prior to 1831 and Clements Library). Our research also shows examples held by American Antiquarian Society, Cornell University and New York Historical Society.

Provenance: This map was acquired from Cottone Auctions in December 2018, as part of a group of maps de-accessioned from the Rochester Historical Society.

The map includes a note at the bottom right that it was given "To the Rochester Historical Society From James F. Atkinson." We were not able to identify James F. Atkinson, although we believe he was an early settler in the region.

Detailed Condition:

Wide clean margins. Ex Rochester Historical Society, purchased at Cottone Auctions in December 2018. Backed with archival linen, with several stamps and labels from the historical society. One stain at bottom center and one marginal chip at the top and bottom. Minor loss along horizontal centerfold.