



# Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

7407 La Jolla Boulevard  
La Jolla, CA 92037

www.raremaps.com

(858) 551-8500  
blr@raremaps.com

## L'Amerique Septentrionale Dressee sur les Observations de Mrs. de l'Academie Royale des Sciences & quelques autres, & sur les Memoires les plus recens . . . .

**Stock#:** 64527  
**Map Maker:** Schenk  
**Date:** 1708  
**Place:** Paris  
**Color:** Hand Colored  
**Condition:** VG  
**Size:** 23.5 x 17.5 inches  
**Price:** SOLD



### Description:

#### *Rare Dutch edition of Guillaume De L'Isle's Highly Important Map of North America*

Finely colored example of the Peter Schenk this seminal map of North America.

De L'Isle's map of North America is a widely celebrated cartographic landmark. Because of De L'Isle's access to the information from French explorers in the New World at a time when the French dominated the explorations of the interior of the continent, De L'Isle's maps were invariably updated and innovative in their content.

This map represents De L'Isle's first work on America and was extremely influential on other maps of the period, both for what it includes and as a snapshot of the knowledge available to De L'Isle in the three years immediately prior to his issuing the regional maps.

### The Island of California

One of the most noted aspects of De L'Isle's map is that it is considered as the first map to revert to the treatment of California as a peninsula. Tooley referred to the map as "a foundation map...and the first to revert to a peninsular form of California" (Tooley, "French Mapping of the Americas" in *The Mapping of America*, p. 19).

However, it is more accurate to say that this map shows De L'Isle's evolving thoughts on California.



**Barry Lawrence Ruderman  
Antique Maps Inc.**

7407 La Jolla Boulevard  
La Jolla, CA 92037

[www.raremaps.com](http://www.raremaps.com)

(858) 551-8500  
[blr@raremaps.com](mailto:blr@raremaps.com)

---

**L'Amerique Septentrionale Dressee sur les Observations de Mrs. de l'Academie Royale  
des Sciences & quelques autres, & sur les Memoires les plus recens . . . .**

Careful examination shows that the Californie and Nouveau Mexique do not meet, and the coast north of C. Mendocin is left blank. Such calculated, conservative depictions highlight De L'Isle's skill and mark this map as a crucial linchpin in the re-evaluation of the geography of California from the late-seventeenth to mid-eighteenth centuries.

From its first portrayal on a printed map by Diego Gutiérrez, in 1562, California was shown as part of North America by mapmakers, including Gerardus Mercator and Ortelius. In the 1620s, however, it began to appear as an island in several sources, including Samuel Purchas' *Hakluytus Posthumus or Purchas his Pilgrimes* (1625).

This was most likely the result of a reading of the travel account of Sebastian Vizcaino, who had been sent north up the shore of California in 1602. A Carmelite friar who accompanied him described the land as an island and sketched maps to that effect. Normally, this information would have been reviewed and locked in the Spanish repository, the *Casa de la Contractación*, but the ship carrying the map and other Vizcaino documents was captured by the Dutch. Prominent practitioners like John Speed, Jans Jansson, and Nicolas Sanson adopted the new island and the practice became commonplace. Even after Father Eusebio Kino published a map based on his travels refuting the claim (Paris, 1705), the island remained a fixture until the mid-eighteenth century.

This is not to imply that all mapmakers were blindly accepting of the convention. In 1700, roughly the same time this map was initially produced, De L'Isle discussed "whether California is an Island or a part of the continent" with J. D. Cassini; the letter was published in 1715. After reviewing all the literature available to him in Paris, De L'Isle concluded that the captured Spanish map was not trustworthy, as other Spanish maps showed California as a peninsula. He also cited more recent explorations by the Jesuits (including Kino) that disproved the island theory.

He concludes:

*On my maps and globes I have taken the precaution of representing the coast as cut and interrupted in this place, as much on the side of Cape Mendocino as on the side of the Red Sea. I have left in these two places as though stepping stones during an interrupted work, and I have not believed it necessary to make up any mind about a thing which is still so uncertain; therefore I have made California neither an Island nor a part of the Continent, and I will stay with this point of view until I have seen something more positive than I have seen to date.  
(quoted from translation in Polk, 316)*



**Barry Lawrence Ruderman  
Antique Maps Inc.**

7407 La Jolla Boulevard  
La Jolla, CA 92037

[www.raremaps.com](http://www.raremaps.com)

(858) 551-8500  
[blr@raremaps.com](mailto:blr@raremaps.com)

---

**L'Amerique Septentrionale Dressee sur les Observations de Mrs. de l'Academie Royale  
des Sciences & quelques autres, & sur les Memoires les plus recens . . . .**

This description precisely describes California as shown in this map, and marks this map as an important declaration of De L'Isle's broader cartographic philosophy. Later, in his map of 1722 ( *Carte d'Amerique dressee pour l'usage du Roy*), De L'Isle would abandon the island theory entirely. However, his contemporaries and successors, including his son-in-law, Philipppe Buache, remained adherents to the island depiction. Despite such departures, this was the most influential maps in the transition from California as an island to a peninsula in the eighteenth century.

**Rarity**

The map is rare on the market. This is first example we have offered for sale in more than 20 years.

**Detailed Condition:**