



**Barry Lawrence Ruderman
Antique Maps Inc.**

7407 La Jolla Boulevard
La Jolla, CA 92037

www.raremaps.com

(858) 551-8500
blr@raremaps.com

(Pitt the Elder and the Stamp Act) Common-Wealth, The Colossus

Stock#: 66478
Map Maker: Ewart
Date: 1766
Place: London
Color: Uncolored
Condition: Good
Size: 8.5 x 6.5 inches
Price: \$2,400.00



Description:

Sedition in New York in 1766, The Stamp Act, "America's Nabob", and the Origins of "Yankee Doodle".

Rare engraved caricature of William Pitt the Elder, Earl of Chatham, represented as a Colossus straddling the Atlantic Ocean and attempting to gain favor with Americans by opposing the Stamp Act.

New York is shown at the bottom left, along with Dublin and London.

The map satirizes the repeal of the Stamp Act and provides criticism of Pitt for accepting a peerage. Pitt on crutches spans the Atlantic from New England to London. The administration is criticized for allegedly encouraging revolt against the Stamp Act. Images include: William Pitt, Earl Chatham, as the Colossus; Earl Temple as Fame; New York; London; St. Stephen's chapel. The Metropolitan Museum says of the print:

One of these [stilts] is marked "Sedition," has hooks on the end and fishes for colonists near New York. The other, marked "Popularity," rests on the Royal Exchange. The figure is supported by crutches, one marked "Pension" and the other hovering over St. Stephen's Chapel—the debating chamber of the House of Commons where Pitt had spent most of his political career. When this print was made, he had just been made Earl of Chatham and left the Commons for the House of Lords. In the background Ireland is represented, with a small figure rising out of the city of Dublin, saying: "Ah by Jesus, we will be independent too".



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The faux accent of the poem is rather strange; elements suggest the author's intention was to mimic a French speaker ("biene drole", "La Diable") whereas the rest of the poem reads like a racist caricature.

...but when the parliament re-opened in January, 1766, the gout was gone, Pitt reappeared, and delivered one of his grand philippics against the efforts to tax the Americans. Pitt was a sagacious man; he foresaw the injurious consequences of such an act as taxation without representation. He knew that the people in the Colonies of North America were of the same blood as Englishmen, and that no power on earth could make England pay taxes, unless she had a say in the matter. Pitt, in his attempts to show the injustice of taxing America, became the butt of attack from the opposition. He was reviled in verse, and accused of being ambitious of gaining the applause of the mob in the Colonies. A caricature, published at this period, represents him as "The Colossus." He stands on stilts, his gouty leg resting on the Royal Exchange, in the midst of London and Westminster, with one surrounded by a cloud of bubbles, inscribed "War," "Peace," &c. This stilt called "Popularity." The other stilt, called "Sedition" he stretches over the sea, towards New York --(the town is seen as made up of very few houses)--fishing for popularity in the Atlantic. The long staff on which he rests is called "Pension."

Appendix: The Poem

The poem reads as follows:

*Tell to me, if you are vitty
Whose wooden Leg is in de City
Eh biene drole, 'tis de great Pity
Doodle do
De broad brim Hat he thrust his Nob in
De while St Stephens throng are throbbing
One Crutch in America is Bobbing
Doodle do
But who de yonder Odd man there sir
Building de Castle in de Air sir
O! tis de Temple one may swear Sir
Doodle do
Stamp Act, La Diable. dats de Jobb sir
Dat Stamp't it in de Stiltmans Nob sir
To be America's Nabob sir
Doodle do*



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*De English dream vid leetel vit sir
For de French day make de pit sir
'Tis a pit for them, who now are bit sir
Doodle Noodle do*

Rarity

The print is quite rare. We locate examples at the Library of Congress, American Antiquarian Society, New York Metropolitan Museum, Morgan Library, Yale and the Wellcome Library.

Detailed Condition:

Laid on another sheet of paper. A small area of early graffiti imperfectly erased. Bottom edge trimmed with loss of imprint. Upper right corner wanting.