



# Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

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## [Southwestern Poland] Ducatus Oswieczensis et Zatoriensis

**Stock#:** 67827  
**Map Maker:** Blaeu  
**Date:** 1662 circa  
**Place:** Amsterdam  
**Color:** Outline Color  
**Condition:** VG+  
**Size:** 20.5 x 16 inches  
**Price:** \$ 795.00



### Description:

An attractive antique map of southwestern Poland, which appeared in Blaeu's *Atlas Maior*. Focused on the border between the historical regions of Silesia and Lesser Poland, the map preserves a detailed layout of the area. While the map is named after the Duchy of Oswiecim, this entity was, in fact, extinct for at least one hundred years prior to the production of this map. The map is very detailed, showing cities, towns, rivers, forests, mountains, and more, and naming many of these features.

This map is highly detailed, portraying an area no more than a few tens of miles wide. Cutting through the center of the map is the Vistula River, pictured just upstream from Krakow. In the map, the river can be traced to its source in the Silesian Beskids. The towns of Wadowicze [Wadowice] and Ozwioczin [Oswiecim] give their name to the title of this map, while other prominent cities of the region can be located, including present-day Bielsko-Biala and Skoczow.

The distinction between Silesia and Lesser Poland is complex, at present running through Bilkson, subparallel to the upper Vistula. This distinction has changed over time, for example, the Duchy of Oswiecim was part of Silesia during Medieval times, but is now administratively part of Lesser Poland. While Silesia until World War II preserved a complex culture with Polish, Czech, Slovak, and German heritage, Lesser Poland was the dominant region in the 17th century Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and is at the heart of what is now considered traditional Polish culture.

This small region pictured is now infamous for being the location of the Auschwitz concentration camp, located just outside of Oswiecim. Wadowice is also remembered as the birthplace of John Paul II.



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#### **Blaeu's *Atlas Maior***

The *Atlas Maior* represents the apex of the Blaeu family's publishing empire and is one of the masterpieces of the Golden Age of Dutch Cartography. Comprising 594 maps and 3,000 pages of text, its history spans decades and a bitter family rivalry.

Willem Janszoon Blaeu, the head of the Blaeu publishing family and the official cartographer of the Dutch East India Company (VOC), first published a world atlas in 1630, titled *Atlas Appendix*, with 60 maps. He steadily expanded the atlas in the following years, until in 1635 the book became so large that it would not fit in a single volume. The new atlas was to be known as the *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* (or *Theatre du Monde* in French). The history of this book, and its eventual development into the greatest atlas ever published -- Blaeu's *Atlas Maior* -- requires an appraisal of the rivalry between the firms Jansson and Blaeu.

In the middle of the 17th century, the firms Jansson and Blaeu were engaged in ongoing one-upmanship in the atlas market. If Blaeu published a two-volume atlas with 210 maps, Jansson would closely follow with a three-volume 300-map atlas. After the death of Willem Jansz. Blaeu in 1638, the competition sped up; both firms issued larger versions of their multi-volume atlas: the *Atlas novus*. By the end of 1658, Blaeu had published an *Atlas novus* with six-volumes and 400 maps, while Jansson had published a six-volume *Atlas novus* with 450 maps.

Jansson attempted to solidify his primacy when he issued his 11-volume German-language *Novus Atlas absolutissimus*. The set had a huge compliment of maps, between 500 and 550, and when combined with Cellarius's celestial atlas, and Jansson's eight-volume town book, his firm was the first to realize a complete description of the countries, towns, oceans, and heavens.

Johannes Blaeu was not to be outdone, however. In 1662, Blaeu issued his *Atlas maior* (Major Atlas) in eleven volumes, with approximately 600 maps. He would follow it with French and Dutch editions and attempted to complete a Spanish edition. The Americas volume was the last volume included in the *Atlas maior*. The set was the largest, most impressive, and most expensive publication of the 17th century, and it stands as the pinnacle of printed atlases.

In 1672, a fire broke out in the Blaeu firm workshop, decimating the stock and the business, and bringing an end to the in-progress publication of the Spanish language edition of the *Atlas Maior* at 10 volumes -- it was originally supposed to run to 12. Johannes Blaeu died the following year, and the family business declined thereafter.



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**Detailed Condition:**

Old hand-color.