



## Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

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### Mapa de los Estados Unidos de Méjico, según lo organizado y definido por las varias actas del Congreso de dicha República: y construido por las mejores autoridades. . . . 1848

**Stock#:** 69752  
**Map Maker:** Disturnell  
**Date:** 1848  
**Place:** New York  
**Color:**  
**Condition:**  
**Size:** 39.5 x 29.5 inches  
**Price:** SOLD



#### Description:

#### *Fine Example of the Disturnell Treaty Map Used to Negotiate the End of the Mexican-American War*

This is a nice example of Disturnell's map of Texas, Upper California, and Mexico. Used in the negotiations to end the Mexican-American War (1846-8), this is one of the single most important maps in American history.

The large map shows Mexico at its fullest extent. The states of Mexico are colored and peppered with toponyms. They are divided by mountain ranges that are prominently marked.

In the lower left corner are tables of distances between Mexican cities and statistics on the area and terrain of each state. Below them is an inset of the road between Veracruz, Alvarado, and Mexico City. To the right, off the Pacific coast of Mexico, are two graphs (in English) showing the altitudes in the routes between Mexico City and Veracruz and Mexico City and Acapulco—from sea to sea. Off the Atlantic Coast, in the Gulf of Mexico, are four insets on scrolls: the actions near the Rio Grande on May 18 and 19, 1846; a chart of the Bay of Veracruz, Tampico and its Environs, and a Plan of Monterey.

Although the majority of the text is in Spanish, perhaps indicating an intended Mexican audience, some of the insets and graphs are in English. The Disturnell map was based on a previous map, the Tanner map (1825), published in English. It is made from the same plate as a second map, the White, Gallaher & White map (1828), which was in Spanish. On the Tanner map, the statistical table is in the Gulf of Mexico and



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the distance table and inset of the road between Veracruz, Alvarado, and Mexico City are in the lower left. Disturnell added the altitude graphs and the Gulf of Mexico insets to the White, Gallaher & White map. Disturnell's additions were in English, showing demand for a map that could explain the war as it happened to American consumers as well. Due to its popularity and detail, it was used in the negotiations at the end of the war, cementing its place in American history.

#### **The Mexican-American War and its aftermath**

The road to conflict for the United States and Mexico started a decade before the formal outbreak of war. In 1836, Texas won its independence from Mexico. Although they appealed to the United States for annexation, some in the US government balked at Texas' inclusion as it would tip the balance between slave and free states. In addition, Mexico threatened war if the US moved to annex the Republic.

This changed when James K. Polk, a dedicated expansionist, was elected President in the election of 1844. Polk annexed Texas and offered to buy the territory that is now the Southwestern United States. Mexico refused. In response, Polk ordered troops south of the Nueces River, which was recognized as part of the Mexican state of Coahuila. On April 25, 1846, the Mexican cavalry attacked the US soldiers, who were under the command of Zachary Taylor. Several skirmishes followed. On May 13, Congress declared war; the United States was involved in its first war fought mainly on foreign soil.

Although Mexico valued the lands north of the Rio Grande River, they were sparsely populated. The US Army easily overran the area while Taylor and his men pushed into the Mexican heartland. Desperate, the Mexican government recalled the disgraced General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna from exile in Cuba. Santa Anna had been in touch with Polk and promised the President to end the war on favorable terms to the US. Somewhat predictably, Santa Anna went back on his word as soon as he was on Mexican soil.

Installed as head of the Mexican Army, Santa Anna also assumed the Mexican presidency in March 1847. However, the Mexican forces were being pushed back. General Winfield Scott took Veracruz, the most important port city in Mexico, and advanced toward Mexico City. Following the path of Hernan Cortes three centuries before, Scott marched from the sea to the capital city. It fell in September 1847.

With the US Army on the streets of the capital, the war was over. Santa Anna resigned, forcing a new government to form and to negotiate the terms of a peace treaty. On February 2, 1848, the parties signed the Treaty of Peace, Friendship, Limits, and Settlement, better known as the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. The Rio Grande, not the Nueces River, marked the new boundary between the countries and it was decided based on scrutiny of the Disturnell map. Mexico finally had to recognize the loss of Texas and



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agreed to sell a huge swath of territory—the modern states of California, New Mexico, Arizona, and parts of Nevada, Utah, Wyoming, and Colorado—for a paltry 15 million dollars.

#### **The Disturnell Map and its effect on American and Mexican cartography**

The war had been followed closely by the American public in periodicals. Seeing an opportunity, John Disturnell (1801-1877), released this map of the United States of Mexico. Disturnell was a New York City-based publisher best known for his prolific output of geographic materials, particularly guidebooks, gazetteers, and maps. His guidebooks for travelers were based on his own travels in the US and the American West. In addition to his book dealing, he was also librarian of the Cooper Union Library.

The United States of Mexico map was an instant success, with seven issues in 1847 alone. The first of these had only two inset maps in the Gulf of Mexico, while later issues had four. The seventh edition of the map came to be known as the Treaty Map, as it was brought to the negotiations by US negotiator Nicholas Trist.

As previously mentioned, Disturnell based his map on two maps from the 1820s. White, Gallaher & White's map of 1828 was an adaptation of Tanner's English language map of Mexico published in 1825. The Disturnell was printed with few alterations from the same plate as White, Gallaher & White's map.

Based as it was on maps two decades old and portraying an area little explored or surveyed, the Disturnell map had many and considerable errors which would have profound ramifications for the peace process and for ensuring relations between Mexico and the United States. For example, the negotiators decided that the border would run along the Rio Grande River and then depart west overland from a point eight miles north of Paso (now Ciudad Juarez). The problem was that the Disturnell map placed Paso 42 miles north of its true position. In reality, it was two degrees farther west and thirty minutes farther south than shown on the map. Another agreement, the Bartlett-Garcia Conde Compromise, was completed to clarify the initial position of the border.

Recognizing the limits of existing cartography, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo called for the creation of a "boundary line with due precision, upon authoritative maps, and to establish upon the ground landmarks which shall show the limits of both republics" (as quoted in Dear, para. 9). After the war, both the Mexicans and Americans sought to better survey and establish the border. They each created four separate boundary commissions; the first three to survey the 2,000 mile border and the fourth convened jointly to map the border in 1856-7. The surveying alone took six years, from 1849 to 1855.



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During the surveying, the two governments continued to negotiate the border's route. Both were unhappy with the Bartlett-Garcia Conde Line and the US wanted a clearer passage for a southern transcontinental railroad route, i.e. they wanted land south of the border-defining Gila River. These talks concluded in the Gadsden Treaty, or Gadsden Purchase of 1853 (known as the *Tratado de la Mesilla* in Mexico), which transferred an additional 29,670 square miles to the United States in return for 10 million dollars and clarified the start point for a second time.

In Mexico, the dependence on the Disturnell map due to a lack of accurate Mexican-created maps was a source of shame. Mexican geographer Antonio Garcia Cubas characterized Mexican cartography at the time as, "a girl, deformed and wasted away" (as translated by Carrera, 46). However, the engineers of the Mexican boundary commission executed their work with skill and the later nineteenth-century became a Renaissance for Mexican mapping. The Disturnell map was a catalyst for this innovation.

Despite its flaws, the Disturnell map continued to be reprinted until the Civil War. In all, there were at least 24 editions. The twelfth state of the map, along with the seventh, was included with the written Treaty itself, the twelfth with the Mexican copy and the seventh with the American. Along with the White, Gallaher & White and Tanner maps, the Disturnell is exceptionally important in American History. It was crucial in making America a power that stretches from Atlantic to Pacific and therefore should be considered of equal status to the maps of John Melish and John Mitchell in American cartographic history.

#### **States and rarity**

Disturnell altered and re-issued the [White, Gallaher & White](#) map beginning in 1846, with twenty-two further states appearing by 1852. These states were printed in small runs that included minor changes and updates. The parties involved in the signing of the Treaty and in the subsequent boundary commission were oftentimes unaware that they were using different states. The US National Archives has the seventh state (1847), the Mexican government has the twelfth state (also 1847), Robert E. Lee used an unknown 1846 edition to determine if San Diego was part of Alta or Baja California, and the fifteenth edition (1848) was used by John Bartlett, Boundary Commissioner, in the field. The map is known in twenty-four total states, all uncommon but some rarer than others.

#### **Detailed Condition:**