



**Barry Lawrence Ruderman  
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**Map of the United States with the Contiguous British & Spanish Possessions Compiled  
from the latest & best authorities by John Melish . . . Improved to the 1st of January,  
1818.**

**Stock#:** 73775  
**Map Maker:** Melish  
  
**Date:** 1818  
**Place:** Philadelphia  
**Color:** Hand Colored  
**Condition:** VG+  
**Size:** 57 x 36 inches  
  
**Price:** SOLD



**Description:**

***The Adams Onis Treaty Edition of The Most Important Map of the United States Published in the 19th Century.***

John Melish's map of the United States is generally considered the single most important and influential map of America published in the 19th century and is rivaled only by John Mitchell's map of North America in 1755 as the single most influential map in American History.

Described by some scholars as the visual embodiment of Manifest Destiny to an American public searching for a graphic depiction of America's territorial acquisitions from coast to coast in the early 19th Century, Melish's map is a work of towering importance, being the first large map to incorporate the discoveries of Lewis & Clark, Alexander von Humboldt, Zebulon Pike and the early fur traders and explorers of the 19th Century into a large map of the United States. Over the next decade, it was the primary map utilized to depict and determine every important American Boundary Treaty of consequence and continued to be a source of determining boundary disputes until the end of the Century. During the remainder of Melish's lifetime, the map was meticulously revised and updated, with a total of 25 states of the map identified by scholars between 1816 and 1823.

The present edition (the second state of 1818 edition) has particular importance because of its use in the Adams-Onis Treaty, which saw the United States establish a new southern border between the United States and Spain, as well as gaining complete sovereignty and control over what had previously been East and West Florida.



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#### **Adams-Onis Treaty -- Texas History--The Red River Boundary Controversy**

The 1818 edition of Melish's map was the primary map for demarcating the Adams-Onis Treaty of 1819, establishing among other things the Southern Border between the United States and New Spain, extending from the Red River to the Pacific Ocean. As such, it would become the border between Texas and the United States, a border which would include an error deriving from the Melish map which led to a boundary controversy which lasted until the end of the century.

The Red River boundary controversy started when the United States purchased Louisiana Territory from France in 1803. Spain and the United States feuded over the exact boundary between Louisiana and New Spain. The Adams-Onís Treaty of 1819 used this 1818 Melish map to establish the Red River as the southwestern boundary between the two countries. Later, the Red River served as an international boundary between the United States and Mexico and, after the Texas Revolution, with the Republic of Texas. Unfortunately, the 100th Meridian on the Melish map was marked 90 miles east of its true location, and the Red River forked about 50 miles east of the 100th Meridian. Texas claimed the land south of the North Fork, and the United States claimed the land north of the South Fork.

After Texas joined the United States in 1845, new doubts arose over the legal boundary line when in 1852 Capt. Randolph Marcy discovered the North Fork of the Red River. Texas claimed the area called Greer County between the North Fork and the main branch. In 1867, Federal treaties further complicated the issue by creating a reservation with a southern border, "north of the middle of the main channel" of the Red River, for the Kiowa, Comanche, and Apache. The "Greer County War" began. In 1894 the dispute landed before the Supreme Court as the United States v. Texas. In the background hovered the Organic Act of 1890, which created the Territory of Oklahoma.

After hearing all the testimony and after examining all the documents, the Court held that the central issue was to determine what the negotiators of the Treaty of 1819 had believed the boundary to be at the time they presented the treaty for ratification by both national governments. In the end, the court ruled the old map of John Melish was the central piece of evidence, and the map showed the southern branch to be the understood boundary.

The exact language of Article 3 of the Adams-Onis Treaty provided:

#### **ARTICLE 3**

*The Boundary Line between the two Countries, West of the Mississippi, shall begin on the Gulf*



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*of Mexico, at the mouth of the River Sabine in the Sea, continuing North, along the Western Bank of that River, to the 32d degree of Latitude; thence by a Line due North to the degree of Latitude, where it strikes the Rio Roxo of Natchitoches, or Red-River, then following the course of the Rio-Roxo Westward to the degree of Longitude, 100 West from London and 23 from Washington, then crossing the said Red-River, and running thence by a Line due North to the River Arkansas, thence, following the Course of the Southern bank of the Arkansas to its source in Latitude, 42. North and thence by that parallel of Latitude to the South-Sea. **The whole being as laid down in Melish's Map of the United States, published at Philadelphia, improved to the first of January 1818** . But if the Source of the Arkansas River shall be found to fall North or South of Latitude 42, then the Line shall run from the said Source due South or North, as the case may be, till it meets the said Parallel of Latitude 42, and thence along the said Parallel to the South Sea: all the Islands in the Sabine and the Said Red and Arkansas Rivers, throughout the Course thus described, to belong to the United States; but the use of the Waters and the navigation of the Sabine to the Sea, and of the said Rivers, Roxo and Arkansas, throughout the extent of the said Boundary, on their respective Banks, shall be common to the respective inhabitants of both Nations. The Two High Contracting Parties agree to cede and renounce all their rights, claims and pretensions to the Territories described by the said Line: that is to say.-The United States hereby cede to His Catholic Majesty, and renounce forever, all their rights, claims, and pretensions to the Territories lying West and South of the above described Line; and, in like manner, His Catholic Majesty cedes to the said United States, all his rights, claims, and pretensions to any Territories, East and North of the said Line, and, for himself, his heirs and successors, renounces all claim to the said Territories forever.*

#### Updates in this State of the Map

Among the most important changes in this state of the map are the addition for the first time of 5 Land Districts on the west side of the Mississippi River:

- St. Louis District
- Lawrence District
- Howard District
- Cape Girardeau District
- Arkansas District



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These districts are holdovers from the formation of Louisiana Territory and thereafter. Originally Louisiana Territory had five subdivisions: **St. Louis District**, St. Charles District, Ste. Genevieve District, **Cape Girardeau District**, and New Madrid District. In 1806, the territorial legislature created **Arkansas District** from lands ceded by the Osage Nation. **Howard District** was created by an Act of Congress dated February 17, 1818, again reflecting lands obtained from Plains Indians following the creation of the Indian Boundary Line of 1816. The Lawrence District would seem to have been established in 1818 also, although we have located no definitive information on its creation.

The present map is also of tremendous importance for its revisions in Illinois Territory, including:

- The Illinois-Indiana Boundary has been adjusted further west.
- The Upper Course of the Illinois River is completely revised, with 9 place names removed and 6 names added for the first time along the River.
- The details along the Mississippi River in western Illinois are significantly revised, with 7 names removed and 2 new names added.
- The Little Wabash River is named for the first time.
- The course of the Wabash is significantly revised.

#### Melish's Map

Described by Thomas Jefferson as a luminous view of the comparative possessions of different powers in our America, Melish's map, first issued in 1816, was the first indigenous attempt to map the United States from coast to coast and synthesized the works of Lewis & Clark, Humboldt, Pike, Arrowsmith, and others for the first time, in a single large-format coast-to-coast mapping of the United States.

Much as Mitchell's map influenced boundary disputes and treaties in North America for nearly a century after its publication, the Melish map similarly became the essential source map for the 19th Century. It has been described by several commentators as the visual embodiment of Manifest Destiny to an American public searching for a graphic depiction of America's territorial acquisitions from coast to coast in the early 19th Century. Following the Louisiana Purchase, Americans turned their attention westward to the great expanse from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean. While the explorations of Lewis & Clark and Zebulon Pike provided early regional snapshots of previously unknown regions in the West, it was left to Melish to tie together these works, along with Arrowsmith's map of Mexico and other available sources, into the first systematic and comprehensive map of the United States.

Prior to his map of the United States, Melish had produced a number of other highly acclaimed regional



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maps like his rare *Military & Topographical Atlas of the United States*. However, this map of the United States would become his masterwork, ultimately reissued in 25 known states of the map between 1816 and 1823.

The most notable advance in the later states of the map is the addition of an extra plate at the bottom of the map, which provided coverage of Cuba, Jamaica, the Virgin Islands and the remainder of the Gulf Coast and the Yucatan, to the map. The map, in its various editions, faithfully recorded the changing geography of the US, as various boundary disputes, treaties and explorations extended both the geographical territory of the US and a young nation's knowledge of its own territory. As noted below, the Adams-Onís Treaty of 1819 was laid out on a copy of this 1818 edition of the map.

Melish reportedly released only 100 copies of each edition. Because of the map's size and its use as an official source, relatively few copies have survived.

**Detailed Condition:**

Original hand-color. Dissected and backed on original linen, with original blue silk selvage (partially frayed and lost, as usual). Housed in custom blue morocco box.