

Dorothy Sloan - Books

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AUCTION 23

“THE MOST IMPORTANT CONTEMPORARY MAP OF THE MISSISSIPPI AND THE GULF REGION”—
STREETER

“FIRST MAP WITH THE NAME TEXAS”—SCHWARTZ & EHRENBERG

CARTOGRAPHIC FILIBUSTERING IN THE SPANISH BORDERLANDS

274. [MAP]. DELISLE, Guillaume [Insulanus]. *Carte de la Louisiane et du Cours du Mississipi. Dressée sur un grand nombre de Memoires entrautres. sur ceux de Mr. [François] le Maire par Guillaume. De L'isle de l'Academie R^{le}. des Scienc^{es}.* [below Gulf of Mexico at lower center, colored key and imprint] *Explication des Marques...* | *A Paris, chez l'Auteur le Sr. Delisle sur le Quay de l'Horloge avec Privilege du Roy Juin 1718. Eschelle de cent lieues Francoises* [inset map at lower right] *Carte Particuliere des Emboucheres de la Rivie. S Louis et de la Mobile.* Paris, 1718. Copper-engraved map on two sheets of laid paper, left sheet watermarked with a Strassbourg lily and initials AR, right sheet watermarked with cross of Lorraine (cf. Churchill, *Watermarks in Paper in Holland, England, France, etc.* #514); original outline hand coloring (yellow in border around map and mountain ranges; orange and green for roads and settlements); later sympathetic outline hand coloring (coast and waterways in blue and pale green wash applied to land mass), accompanied by report by McCrone Associates, analyzing and dating the colors; neat line to neat line: 48.8 x 65.2 cm; overall sheet size: 52 x 69 cm; inset of mouth of Mississippi: neat line to neat line: 12.7 x 15.5 cm. Paper expertly strengthened on verso at center and top margin. Exceptionally fine copy.

First issue, first state (New Orleans not yet located) of “the first detailed map of the Gulf region and the Mississippi, [and] the first printed map to show Texas” (Tooley, *French Mapping of the Americas* #43). Amon Carter Museum Exhibit, *Crossroads of Empire* 23. Brown, *The Story of Maps*, pp. 242-243: “Delisle undertook a complete reform of a system of geography that had been in force since the second century, and by the time he was twenty five he had very nearly accomplished his purpose.” Buisseret, *Mapping the French Empire in America* 12. Cohen, *Mapping the West*, p. 45. *Contours of Discovery*, p. 40: “Delisle’s 1718 map of Louisiana was one of the great milestones in the cartographic history of North America in general and in Texas cartography in particular.” Cumming, *British Maps of Colonial America*, pp. 6-12. Cumming, *The Southeast in Early Maps*, Plate 47, #170: “The cartography of this map is notable for the employment of new information and wealth of detail.” Cumming, *The Exploration of North America*, pp. 35-54 & 146-157. Harwood, *To the Ends of the Earth: 100 Maps that Changed the World*, pp. 109-111: “Delisle’s *Carte de la Louisiane et du Cours de Mississipi* of 1718...is thought to have been the oldest map to have been consulted in the planning of the Lewis and Clark Expedition.... The map’s remarkable topographical and geographical accuracy made it the template for American mapping for a half century, but it was also one of the most controversial maps of its day.” Jackson, *Flags along the Coast*, Plate 24, pp. 40-45 & footnotes on pp. 123-125 (exceedingly interesting discussion on some of Delisle’s sources for the present map and the truism: “To draw the most accurate map possible of Spanish waters, use Spanish sources”; see also Robert S. Weddle, *The French Thorn*, Texas A&M Press, 1991, pp. 318-323). Karpinski, *Maps of*

Famous Cartographers Depicting North America, pp. 133-134 (discussing the present map in relation to the cartography of Michigan): “The map of 1718 is the first map to impose upon a credulous public a high plain down through the center of the lower peninsula. This fanciful creation, based upon some false or misinterpreted records, continued for more than one hundred years to appear upon maps of the Michigan area.”

Kohl 238: “This map is the mother and main source of all the later maps of the Mississippi.” Lemmon, et al, *Charting Louisiana*, Plate 18, p. 58: “Guillaume de L’Isle’s 1718 map is politically, geographically, and historically one of the most important maps of the Mississippi Valley. Repeatedly copied and widely referenced, it was the chief authority for the Mississippi river for more than fifty years.” Lowery 288: “Earliest map by Delisle showing De Soto’s route.” Luebke, *Mapping the North American Plains*, p. 10 (Ehrenberg): “*Carte de la Louisiane et du Cours du Missisipi* included a more accurate rendition of the lower Missouri and the Osage rivers, the introduction of the Kansas and Platte rivers, and the extension of an elongated Red River.... In addition the French belief that one could reach New Spain by traveling up the Missouri...was supported by the Delisles, who depicted the headwaters of the Missouri in close proximity to those of the Rio Grande and a chain of mountains paralleling the Rio Grande.”

Martin & Martin 19: “This map served throughout the eighteenth century as the prototype for most subsequent renderings of that great river. It was, moreover, a politically provocative map.... Throughout the map appeared the ranges of many Indian tribes and the locations of their villages, while boldly displayed along the Texas coast is the legend ‘nomadic and man-eating Indians,’ presumably referring to the Karankawa tribes that caused La Salle so much grief. The most important notation to Texas history, however, was that appearing along the Trinity: ‘Mission de los Teijas, etablie in 1716.’ Referring to the earliest of the Spanish missions in East Texas, this phrase marked the first appearance of a form of the name Texas on a printed map and thus Delisle has received proper credit for establishing Texas as a geographic place name.”

Paullin, *Atlas of the Historical Geography of the United States*, Plate 24 & p. 24. Pelletier, “From New France to Louisiana: Politics and Geography,” pp. 85-89. Phillips, *America*, p. 367. Portinaro & Knirsch, *The Cartography of North America, 1500-1800*, p. 223, Plate CXII: “This splendid French map is the first accurately to chart the course of the lower Mississippi, and the explorations of de Soto, de Tonty, and de St. Denis.” Pritchard & Taliaferro, *Degrees of Latitude: Mapping Colonial America*, figures 95-96 & 97, #20, pp. 118-121 (four states identified): “One of the most significant maps of America ever made.” Reinhartz & Saxon (editors), *Mapping and Empire: Soldier-Engineers on the Southwest Frontier*, figures 1.4 & 3.2, p. 15 (Mathes): “Principal source for subsequent maps of the Gulf of Mexico from Tampa Bay to the Rio Grande produced in the eighteenth century”; p. 58 (Reinhartz): “A particular manifestation of European rivalry in the Americas was the French and British campaign of cartographic ‘filibustering’ against the Spanish borderlands.... Delisle on paper moved the boundary between Louisiana and New Spain westward from the Sabine and Red Rivers across Texas to the Rio Grande, as shown on his *Carte de la Louisiane*.”

Rumsey 4764 (citing an atlas version, in second state, showing New Orleans). Schwartz & Ehrenberg, *The Mapping of America*, pp. 142-43, 146 & plate 84: “Generally regarded as the

main source of all later maps of the Mississippi, first large-scale map accurately showing lower Mississippi River and surrounding areas, first map with the name Texas.” Short, *Cartographic Encounters: Indigenous Peoples and the Exploration of the New World*, pp. 41-44. Streeter Sale 113: “The most important contemporary map of the Mississippi and the Gulf region.” Tooley, *Landmarks of Mapmaking*, p. 229.

Wheat, *Mapping the Transmississippi West* #99: “Originally published as a separate, though in various forms it was included in several atlases”; Vol. I, pp. 58-59: “All in all, Delisle’s early eighteenth-century efforts, with their correct course of the Mississippi and many items farther west, are towering landmarks along the path of Western cartographic development”; pp. 66-68: “In 1718, Delisle published his celebrated *Carte de la Louisiane et du Cours de Mississipi*, which embraced the western country as far as the source of the upper Rio Grande... This great 1718 Delisle map was apparently reissued many times with only slight changes in the areas here under consideration, and during the remainder of the eighteenth century it was copied, in whole or in part, by most of the leading cartographers of Europe. Apparently Delisle obtained much of his information direct from the French explorers and administrators, in New France, and his efforts represented distinct advances in the mapping of the American West.”

As Delisle notes in the title, some of the information for the map was obtained from père François Le Maire (1675-1748), Jesuit missionary and geographer from Paris, who travelled to America and served as chaplain of St. Louis de la Mobile in Louisiana from 1706 to 1719. *Tooley’s Dictionary of Mapmakers* (revised edition), Vol. III, p. 114.

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In the present map Guillaume Delisle (1675-1725), a key figure in the development of French cartography (*Tooley’s Dictionary of Mapmakers*, revised edition, Vol. I, pp. 353-354) pushes the French geographical and political envelope as far as it could be pushed following the Treaty of Utrecht a few years earlier, whereby France was forced to cede some North American territories in Canada to the English, and Spain was somewhat weakened, although not substantially so, in her American holdings. To the northeast, the English colonies are marginalized at the Appalachians and shown hemmed in between those mountains and the the Atlantic coast. French territory still spills far north into Canada, the bulk of which is specifically named “Nouvelle France,” a distinction that would survive successfully for several decades until the French and Indian War stripped the country of those possessions. To the southeast, Spanish holdings in Florida are respected, but to the southwest a different picture emerges. Delisle seems to imply that French holdings stretch to the Rio Grande, encompassing even the famed mission to the Tejas that first put Texas on a map. As a reminder of who was really in the area first, Delisle pointedly locates La Salle’s Fort St. Louis and even marks the spot where the explorer was assassinated, well to the west of the Ceniz mission. Finally, the exploring tracts blazed by Denis and Cevalier are prominently located.

The true center of the map, both literally and figuratively, however, are the French possessions in lower Louisiana near the mouth of the Mississippi river, their importance emphasized by the inset showing the area in detail. Instead of a map indicating French influence radiating from Canada, one now has a map showing it radiating from the far south

in a cone that stretches from the East coast as far west and north as geographical knowledge can push it. The farther west and northwest one goes, the more vague the geography becomes, although that does not seem to alter the politics of the map in any real way. Large areas are shown empty except for Native American settlements, non-existent mountain ranges run through the Midwest, the source of the Mississippi stretches into the unknown, the Rio Grande runs practically into infinity until it hits the lands of the Paduchas, and vast plains dominate the landscape, as they would for cartographical decades following this map. Delisle knew full well that the Spanish had been in Texas for hundreds of years and that the English charters had given the eastern seaboard colonies western boundaries that stretched to the Pacific Ocean. In this map, such niceties hardly mattered. French knowledge of the area, and hence its claims to it, are painstakingly indicated in the locations and names of dozens of waterways and dozens of Native American settlements, some of which are noted as destroyed. Only the rightful owners of the territory could actually have had such knowledge, however inaccurate it may have been in reality. The map further served as a counterweight to the truth. The French settlements along the Louisiana delta were in fact slim and under populated, and New Orleans did not yet exist in this first printing. Whatever hold the French had on the area was tenuous at best and depended upon the continued good will of France's powerful neighbors.

Not to be cowed or outdone, England answered in a map a few years later done by Hermann Moll, which emphasized geography and politics to England's advantage by, for example, pushing the western boundaries of the East Coast colonies to the Mississippi River.

Full treatment of this map is found in the master's thesis of Andrew M. Balash, "How Maps Tell the Truth by Lying: An Analysis of Delisle's 1718 *Carte de la Louisiane*" (University of Texas at Arlington, December 2008). In the abstract, Balash states:

Maps do more than simply record geographical locations. Maps graphically display information that is at once geographic, economic, political, social, scientific, and religious. Through careful analysis, including the conscious and subconscious selections of map-makers, maps reveal a perception of the world. This is the subjective vision of the world buried beneath the seemingly 'objective' façade of the map—the hidden story that the cartographers did not even know they were telling. Such an analysis applied to Guillaume Delisle's 1718 *Carte de la Louisiane et du Cours du Mississipi*, which not only reveals the state of French geographic knowledge about the North American continent, but also reflects political, social, and economic aspirations as well as a culture in transition from a Catholicized classical Greek view of the world and humans' place in it to a view of the world through the emerging eyes of science in the service of the state.

Regarding Delisle's scientific approach and other motives and consequences his map, Balash opines:

Delisle's maps reveal that another source of cartographic authority had become even more important than the monarchy; this was the power of science. While Delisle used the trappings of science to bolster the credibility or authority of his maps, it is important to note that his cartography was not the more scientific

cartography of the late eighteenth century based on direct measurement, surveys, and triangulation. Yet Delisle's work, epitomized by this map of 1718, reveals a decisive shift towards this more scientific mapping as Delisle based his maps on astrologically determined latitudes and longitudes and then incorporated a multitude of other locations gleaned from the critical examination of primary and secondary sources. In this way, Delisle is both the culmination/epitome of the "géographe du cabinet" tradition as well as a precursor to the more scientific and imperial minded cartography of the later part of the eighteenth century.... Applied to the Delisle map of 1718, this type of man-centered pragmatism promoted a view of the world as open to capitalistic exploitation by competing European powers in which cartographic knowledge of a region became a license for claiming a territory, its natural resources, and even the people living there.... By their nature maps are abstractions of reality, "lies" as some scholars have called them, but it is precisely because they are social constructions that they cannot help but tell the truth about the people and culture that created them.

(\$12,000-18,000)