



Carlyle House

Docent Dispatch

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Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority

Mapping John Carlyle's World

Maps have always been an integral part of defining societies. They establish the boundaries of territories, create national identities, define trade routes, and make political statements. Maps were particularly important in colonial America and it is not surprising that they are found on John Carlyle's inventory. According to Margaret Pritchard and Henry Taliadro, "For America, maps tell the story of how European's took possession of the land in the New World and fought to substantiate their claims."

Maps took on a very important role during the French and Indian War. As England and France vied for control of land in the colonies, mapmakers were an integral part of the debate. Conflict over the Ohio Territory was reflected in a cartographic war between England and France. In 1718 French mapmaker, Guillaume Deslisle published *Carte de la Lousiane et du Cours du Mississippie*. The map which was widely distributed in Europe and Virginia, reduced the western boundaries of the British colonies thereby claiming that land for France. Two years later, Herman Moll published the map *A New Map of the North Parts of America claimed by France*. This map directly challenged the boundary lines that Deslisle includes on his map. Moll includes on the map's legend,

The French Divisions are inserted on purpose, that those Noblemen, Gentlemen, Merchants &c. who are interested in our Plantations in those Parts, may observe whether they agree with their Proprieties, or do not justly deserve ye name of Incroachments



By the mid-eighteenth century, relations between France and England had become increasingly strained. In 1750, the Board of Trade requested that the Governors produce maps of their respective colonies that establish their exact boundaries. Only one year after the request was sent out, Joshua Fry and Peter Jefferson responded with the most comprehensive map of Virginia to date. Joshua Fry was a former professor of mathematics at the College of William and Mary and then surveyor of Albemarle County, VA. Peter Jefferson, father of Thomas Jefferson and close acquaintance of Fry's, worked with him previously on settling a land dispute for Lord Fairfax in the Northern Neck of Virginia. Their first map was published in 1752 and later modifications were made for a revised map in 1754. The Fry Jefferson map became the most comprehensive and popular map of Virginia during this time and exerted a strong influence on any future maps made of the area. An ad placed in the Virginia Gazette illustrates the maps importance:

Just PUBLISHED and to be sold at the Printing-Office, in Williamsburg, a New and correct MAP of the most inhabited Part of Virginia, containing also the whole Province of Maryland, Part of Pennsylvania, New-Jersey, and North-Carolina,

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surveyed in the year 1751, by Joshua Fry and Peter Jefferson, and now much corrected and enlarged from several later Observations; taken on the Spot, with the Waggon Roads from Williamsburg to Will's Creek, both thro' Fredericksburg and Alexandria, including the greatest part of the Ohio, with the Rivers Monongahela, Yawyawgany, New-River, Green-Briar. &c. &c.

Years later when other maps were produced, they were not as popular because people did not think they were as comprehensive as the Fry Jefferson map. For example in 1769, John Henry, the father of Patrick Henry and surveyor of Hanover County, produced a map of Virginia. Henry tried extensively to get the House of Burgesses to fund a new map but the popularity of the Fry Jefferson map prevented that. Eventually, Lord Botetourt paid ten pounds to subscribe to and publish John Henry's map. When the map was published in 1770, it was widely criticized and received poor reviews in the Virginia Gazette. Despite this, the Governor chose to hang Henry's map over the fireplace in his dining room. Some historians have hypothesized that this was a statement of support for John Henry's son, Patrick Henry, who was very active in resolves against the Stamp Act.

Maps were used for more than political reasons. Maps, charts, atlases and globes became important symbols of the enlightened gentleman. Maps were found in approximately 27% of elite households in Virginia and Maryland with an average of about 3 maps per household. In 1754, the probate inventory of Daniel Dulany lists *1 large Map of America and 4 small Maps*. The inventory for James Wardrope of Prince Georges County, Maryland lists *4 old maps on Rolers* in 1760. In 1751, Samuel Peachey's probate inventory lists *11 Small maps with rolers and 1 Mape of the world in a sheet*. John Carlyle's inventory lists *16 large & Small Maps*. We are not sure what types of maps they were, but it is likely that he would have owned the Fry Jefferson map, possibly a world map, and a variety of other maps that would aid him in his merchant business.

Where did John keep all of his maps? The practice of hanging maps in halls and over fireplaces was fashionable in the colonies, as well as England. Maps could appear either framed behind glass or on rollers. The advertisement in 1737 in the Virginia Gazette placed for Edward Mosly's map of North Carolina states, "a very large map, (being 5 ft. long, and 4 ft. broad, on two sheets of elephant paper) it's not only useful, but ornamental, for Gentlemen's Halls, Parlours, or staircases." Maps were also placed over mantels. In his 1679 catalog, London map-seller Jon Garrett had

described a map of the world in four sheets on linen and rollers as "a fit ornament for a chimney piece." Margaret Pritchard, curator of Maps and Prints at Colonial Williamsburg, thinks that it is probable that many maps were either rolled or folded and placed in drawers and therefore overlooked by inventory takers.

It is hard to imagine where in the house Carlyle would have hung all of his maps. It is also difficult to guess the types of maps that he owned. It is possible he owned a map of the world, a map of the Chesapeake region, and definitely the Fry Jefferson map. It is also very possible that Carlyle kept many of his maps in a desk drawer. One thing is very clear. By owning all of these maps, John Carlyle was placing himself among a group of elite gentlemen who relied on maps to place themselves within their expanding colonial world.

Thanks again to docent, Henry Desmarais, who donated the new book *Degrees of Latitude*, by Margaret Pritchard and Henry Taliaferro. The book was tremendously helpful in researching the article and will be very useful to us as we try and figure out which maps John Carlyle might have owned!