

Cartographic Collections

More than Just a Pretty Picture: The Map Collection at the Library of Virginia

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The Library of Virginia's map collection has grown significantly since the Library opened in 1823. Seven maps and four atlases are listed in the 1828 catalog and today approximately 65,000 maps are housed at the Library of Virginia. Rare manuscript collections, valuable "mother" maps of the state, and thousands of maps produced for commercial and federal publications are available for patron use. They are more than just pretty pictures, as this article attempts to show. In fact, this article is based on a presentation I gave in August 2008 at the Library of Virginia during the exhibition "From Williamsburg to Wills's Creek: the Fry-Jefferson Map of Virginia."

On August 19, 2008 I had the opportunity to discuss the Library of Virginia's map collection as part of the noontime lecture series "Mining the Treasure House." My presentation, "More than Just a Pretty Picture: The Map Collection at the Library of Virginia," was given in conjunction with the gallery opening of the exhibition "From Williamsburg to Wills's Creek: the Fry-Jefferson Map of Virginia." The Library's map collection has grown significantly since the Library opened in 1823, and researchers exploring Virginia's and the nation's history from the cartographic perspective should consider researching our holdings.

Through the years librarians and archivists have added to the collection, and today it includes important published maps of the state and nation, rare manuscript collections, and little known county plats and surveys. Seven maps and four atlases are listed in the Virginia State Library's first catalog (1828), and of those only John Melish's map of the United States, 1816, is still extant (31). Despite the ravages of the Civil War, the collection stands today as one of the best on Virginia cartographic history and continues to serve its varied users: scholars, treasure hunters, state workers, land and title researchers, map appraisers and map researchers. Recently, controversy arose over the location of a slave burial ground in Richmond City, Virginia. Researchers from all sides consulted the

Library's 1809 Young map of the city of Richmond and other area maps. Virginians have been consulting the colony's and state's map collection for centuries.

Prior to Virginia becoming a royal colony in 1624, the Virginia Company of London purchased reference materials for colonial councilors to use, and Virginians' desire for official reference material is reflected a 1666 Act of the Assembly requiring "the auditors" to obtain a complete collection of the laws of England as well as manuals on the "practice of law" (Henings 246). The Library's collections were added to during the eighteenth century. Since charts, maps and other reference works accompanied voyagers on the earliest English ships sailing to Virginia and were an essential part of the first histories of the Chesapeake Bay and the Atlantic Coast, it is likely that Virginia's first library included maps (Treadway and Campbell 3-4, 69).

Virginia's General Assembly passed "An Act Concerning the Public Library" in 1827, requiring the governor and council to set aside a room in the capitol to house books and authorized payment of an additional salary to the clerk of the council who would act as public librarian. Proceeds from the sale of the Herman Boye's 1826 *Map of the State of Virginia* supported the Library. William Harvie Richardson, clerk of the Council, quickly compiled and published a list of the Library's holdings that included eleven maps. The state librarian continued to acquire maps and by 1856 thirty maps were included in the Library's collections (Virginia State Library 1856, 270-271). This number does not reflect the number of atlases in the Library's collections.

The Civil War had a devastating effect on the Library, and many maps were taken from the state's collection. One well-known case involved Union soldier Frederick Lindal, who was on sentry duty April 4, 1865, when he "acquired" at least two maps and sent them to his friend who lived in Chautauqua, New York, for safe keeping. Ironically, two of the maps taken by Lindal were drawings of manuscript maps housed in the London State Paper Office. The documents had been copied for Colonel Angus W. McDonald who had traveled to London in 1860 to note and copy any documents and maps of Virginia and the Virginia-Maryland boundary line. Of the thirty-two maps he studied, five were copied. In 1942 the Library purchased William Mayo's *Map of Virginia* and Peter Jefferson's *Map of the Northern Neck* and the letter sent to Frederick Lindal's friend in 1865 from Mrs. Charles Lindal of Buffalo, New York (Stephenson and McKee

xvi). Soldiers were not the only ones absconding with Virginia's treasures; other curious visitors carried off books and valuable papers during those hectic days.

Following Reconstruction, the Library once more acquired materials for the general collection. In 1873 the General Assembly authorized the librarian and joint committee to purchase not only standard reference materials but also copies of any book, pamphlet or manuscript, work of art, and relic relating to the history of Virginia (Treadway and Campbell 16). Not much had been done with the collection since the war. The next year, William P. Palmer, the state librarian, asked all county clerks to report on public documents, seals, maps, and other valuable items in their offices. In 1911 the Library began to assess and organize its map collection. According to the 1911-1912 *Report of the State Librarian*:

Maps in the library have, up to the past year, been in a confused and almost inaccessible condition. Many were collected in bundles and stored and others were placed in a map case, but without order. The assistant librarian spent considerable time in examining the maps, in repairing them, and in pressing them so that they might be readily filed. Some of the maps from having been rolled for fifty or sixty years were in a deplorable condition. In fact, little could be done with them. Most of the maps in our collection have by this time been arranged in the map case. (Virginia State Library 1911-1912, 14)

Earl Gregg Swem published the first comprehensive list of printed maps of the colony and commonwealth in 1914. Swem's Index listed in detail maps published about Virginia from the fifteenth to the early twentieth century, including Board of Public Works maps, Revolutionary and Civil War maps, and county and city maps. He indicated in which institution the maps were located. Fortunately, librarians and archivists have annotated the Library's copy of Swem's publication, and staff members consult this to determine if a particular map is in our collection. Maps acquired by the Library have been recorded in the Library of Virginia reports since 1907 and in map accession notebooks since 1911; however, this has not always been done consistently, and staff stumble upon unrecorded maps housed on the Library's fourth floor. Today, accessioned maps are featured in quarterly reports and are available online for patrons to research.

The state library acquired its most impressive collection of rare manuscript plats, surveys, field notes, and maps when it obtained the Board of Public Works (BPW) Archives in the mid 1920s. The bulk of the agency's records pre-date the Civil War. Virginia was one of the first states to establish a state agency

to oversee the development of its internal improvements movement. In 1816 Virginia's Board of Public Works was established and oversaw the development of Virginia's transportation system up to and through the Civil War. Most of the agency's cartographic works consists of manuscript maps and field notes documenting the surveying, planning, and inspecting of individual transportation projects. Four-hundred and eighty-five separately filed maps document 191 companies, and 145 separately filed field note volumes pertain to fifty-two surveying projects. These records relate to river improvements, canals, roads, turnpikes and railroads supervised by the Board. Forty-five maps dated between 1817 and 1839 pertain to twenty-seven river surveying and navigation companies. Within the surviving papers of the BPW are eighty-nine maps related to canal construction. Maps exist for seventeen canal companies and projects and thirty-one railroad companies. Most were created prior to the Civil War. More than half of the Board of Public Works maps pertain to turnpike companies, and many others are related to road projects (Stephenson and McKee 128).

The Board of Public Works collection includes several early nineteenth century manuscript county maps created under the direction of John Wood, two state maps published in 1826 and 1859 and several that mark the work completed by the internal improvements movement within the state. The Library is extremely fortunate to possess the original copperplates for the 1827 and 1859 state maps of Virginia and the reduced sized plates. Recently, re-strikes were completed from these and are for sale from the Library of Virginia Foundation.

One of the largest collections in the Library of Virginia's cartographic collection is its topographical map collection. As a federal depository, The Library received these maps from the U.S. Government Printing Office. Today, each Virginia quadrangle in the map collection has been catalogued, and researchers can determine if we have a quadrangle map for their area of interest. Most libraries catalog their topographic map collections as a series and do not include an individual record for each. This concentrated effort to catalog our topographic maps has increased access to the map collection, and staff members can provide quality answers to map reference questions, especially those generated by genealogists who search for information by locality--specifically, by Virginia counties and cities.

Earlier in the decade the Library of Virginia, in partnership with the Library of Congress and the Virginia Historical Society, catalogued and made available online through American Memory their Civil War maps. Virginia's Civil War map collection includes maps accompanying governor's reports, Confederate imprints, manuscript maps, and a small group of field maps of

southwestern Virginia that belonged to Major General William W. Loring, C.S.A. The Library catalogued 298 maps and was the Library's first digital map collection made available for patron research online. Patrons can not only access our map collection through American Memory but also through the Library of Virginia's Web site by using the Virginia Memory portal.

Through gifts and purchase, the Library has acquired original manuscript plats and surveys for eighteenth-century towns and nineteenth-century county surveys for private and public lands and road projects that were completed by county and city surveyors. The historical map collection includes inkjet printouts and photostats of county plats and surveys from original items housed in the Library's Local Records Collection. The map collection includes the original Byrd *Plan of Richmond* surveyed and drawn by William Mayo and James Wood and the 1729 plan for the town of Fredericksburg completed by John Royster and Robert Buckner. In 1955 the Library purchased for thirty-five dollars the nineteenth-century survey of G.A. White's estate, Harts Bottom, in Rockbridge County, Virginia, drawn by C.W. Oltman. An index to dwellings identifying the overseer's house and other buildings on White's estate accompanies the map. Thirteen early nineteenth-century manuscript maps completed by surveyors for the Board of Public Works, most notably Hugh Taylor and Andrew Alexander, were located and catalogued. Taylor and Alexander mapped portions of Northern Virginia, the Blue Ridge, and the Central Piedmont, identifying county boundaries, roads, homes, taverns, and ferry stops within the region.

Librarians and archivists working with the Library's cartographic collections have compiled an impressive collection of published commercial, state and county sanctioned, and manuscript maps of the New World, North America, the United States, Southeast Virginia and Virginia's counties. Today, the Library owns three states of John Smith's map *Virginia*, the 1819 American reprint of Smith's map, and the copperplate used in printing the 1819 facsimile. Two states of Joshua Fry and Peter Jefferson's *Map of the Most Inhabited Parts of Virginia . . . North Carolina* were acquired by the Library in the 1960s: the fourth state and two copies of the sixth state. The rare third state of Fry and Jefferson's map was donated to the Library of Virginia in late 2006. Other acquisitions include the second state of Bishop Madison's map. Beginning in the late 1990s Alan M. Voorhees donated sixty-seven maps from his private collection to the Library; other institutions that benefited from his generosity include the Virginia Historical Society and the Library of Congress. The Voorhees Collection includes John Ogilby's *The Road from London to Harwich in Essex*, John Mitchell's *A Map of the British and French Dominions in North America*,

John Henry's *A New and Accurate Map of Virginia*, Lewis Evan's *A General Map of the Middle British Colonies in America*, Hartmann Schedel's *Secunda Etas Mundi*, and Lorenz Fries' *Orbis Typus Universalis*. This collection is in the Virginia Memory portal.

Within the last two years, the Library has received a collection of tactile maps by University of Maryland professor Joseph W. Wiedel and several sea charts published by Matthew Fontaine Maury. The donated Maury charts complement the donation made by Maury's daughter in 1912. In 2006 the Library hired a full-time map cataloguer, Leah Thomas, and we have been able to identify accession and catalog maps stored on the Library's fourth floor. As we have worked to identify these maps, we have found maps published by Dezauche and French maps the Library received from Alexandre Vattemare's *Système d'échange international*. Hidden in a box that staff labeled "the mystery box" were Jasper Nantiat's beautifully engraved map of Spain folded in its original cover, a composite atlas of maps from a children's atlas, several maps of the western United States published by the federal government before the Civil War, a bicycle map of France and Germany and several mid-eighteenth-century maps published by Thomas Jefferys. These have added to the breadth and depth of our collections and are excellent examples of the different cartographic genres.

Today, Leah Thomas and Deanna Chavez are working to classify our map collection by the Library of Congress classification system, and the Library of Virginia's map collection is increasingly more readily available to a worldwide audience. Shortly, maps exhibited by the Library of Virginia in "From Williamsburg to Wills's Creek: The Fry-Jefferson Map of Virginia" will be available for patron research in Virginia Memory, and we are working with the Library of Virginia Foundation to determine which map collection should be scanned, catalogued, and uploaded into Virginia Memory for patron access. One being considered is the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad Company maps and plans collection. The maps relate to a variety of subjects and most show railroad rights of way along the old James River and Kanawha Canal. Others contain surveys of routes through towns, plats of railroad depots and private property condemned for railroad use, and surveys of branch line routes. The plans relate to dams, sections through canals and water sheet pits, profiles of riverbeds, canal lock gates and their machinery, and a bridge over the Manchester Canal. The Library of Virginia's collection of maps and plans are more than just pretty pictures; they document Virginia's rich history.

Notes

According to the 1828 catalog the following maps were transferred to the Library from the executive department: 1) *Map of U.S.* by Bradley, 2) *Map of the U.S.* by Melish 3) *Map of Virginia* by Madison 4) *Map of South Carolina* 5) *Map of Missouri, Illinois and Arkansas* 6) *Map of Connecticut* 7) *Map of New Hampshire* 8) *Map of the U.S.* by Tanner. A total of eleven maps are listed.

Richardson divided the holdings into several classes: law, political economy, history and biography, agriculture and horticulture, miscellaneous subjects and maps. Of the 659 titles listed, 555 were works printed after 1776. Virtually all of the pre-1776 imprints appear to have come from the colonial Council's library.

Lindal's letter is filed in the Library of Virginia's archives, Personal Papers, Accession 21947, and correspondence relating to the gift is in the accession file under its assigned number, 438. Additional information is listed on page 13 of *The Annual Report of the Virginia State Library, 1941-1942*.

For more information on Virginia's internal improvement movement and the Board of Public Works, please consult Chapter Three, "Building Virginia: The Antebellum Years" by Ronald E. Grim in Stephenson and McKee's *Virginia in Maps: Four Centuries of Settlement, Growth and Development*.

For a complete listing of maps in the Library of Virginia's Civil War Map Collection, Voorhees Map Collection, and Board of Public Works Map Collection, please use the Library's online Books and Journals Catalog or the Virginia Memory portal, www.lva.virginia.gov.

Library of Virginia staff created an in-house finding aid to the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad Company Records of maps and plans which were donated by the Chessie System to the Virginia State Library and Archives in 1977-1978. There are 196 maps, sixty-seven plans and twenty-five charts and graphs.

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