

THE ARADER GRADING SYSTEM FOR MAPS, BOOKS AND PRINTS



3. Grynaeus-Holbein. World. 1532.

W. Graham Arader III

*Historically important and aesthetically pleasing
maps, books and prints in the finest condition*

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ARADER GRADING SYSTEM

A grading system for rare maps, books and prints is needed today to guide the rapidly expanding group of collectors. An understanding of the differences in conceptual importance, aesthetic quality, condition, and rarity of this material should be made readily available. This brief essay introduces preliminary guidelines.

CONCEPT

After consideration over many years, examining our own collections and those of client-collectors, we have found that CONCEPT is the most important element to explain about a map.

In the field of cartography the primary reason maps are made is to give information. While maps made during the fifteenth to the nineteenth century can have extremely decorative features, aesthetics usually is the secondary consideration in their production and use.

Traditionally, one of the first attractions that maps have had for collectors is their beauty, but as time progresses, the history involved in the map becomes much more important. Eventually most connoisseurs see beyond the first impressions and appreciate the CONCEPT factors almost exclusively.

A collector's priorities will change because a map with just surface attraction will not hold much interest if the information is long out of date or regressive *at the time of its publication*. Good examples are the post-1740s editions of Delisle's great maps depicting North America in 1703 and 1718. Another example would be the Dutch copies of Jansson and Blaeu maps made after 1660 when far better information was available.

In the field of historical cartography the appeal of a map with a Primal impact concept rating is that it illustrates, for the first time, information gained from discoveries made over a wide area of land. A classic example is Abraham Ortelius' "La Florida" engraved and first published in Antwerp in 1584. It was the first printed map to show Hernando DeSoto's discoveries in the interior of what is now the southeastern United States (item 40). Another good example of a Primal impact concept map would be the map of the West made by John C. Fremont and Charles Preuss published in Washington, D.C. in 1845 (item 70). The map presented information from Fremont's first two expeditions that radically improved any previous knowledge. Beyond the fact that it gave a considerable amount of new information, the map was the basis for those used by settlers during the great emigrations caused by the discovery of gold in California. Thus it was a map that provided new information over a large area and influenced thousands of people for decades after it was printed.

Thus, the object was made to be used; its development, use, and fame are the major grading considerations. We write here in terms of the universal collector, but the local history researcher or specialized scholar can adjust these principles to his own scale. These factors are grouped under the heading of CONCEPT. Unless an object was made chiefly for aesthetic reasons, the primary grading factor will be CONCEPT.

CONCEPT is gauged by the effect that the object had when it was made, the amount of new information that is presented and the historical importance today. The rating system is as follows: Primal impact, Major impact, Considerable impact, Important, and All other material. If a piece falls into this last category, we do not rate it.

AESTHETICS

The AESTHETIC consideration is based on the perception of a work of art. When analyzing a map as a work of art, the critic is faced with various styles, designs, and decorations which on the most simplistic level can be listed as Medieval, Renaissance, Enlightenment, and post-Kantian. Within each of these variables are differing national tastes, degrees of regional maturity, and techniques and materials available to or selected by artisans and craftsmen. All these factors must be taken into consideration, and the resultant disagreement among students about these elements has been wrongly interpreted as a growing subjectivism. We are really experiencing an increase in *a priori* modes of thought in the world led by Western intellectuals, and therein lies the method of aesthetic judgement emanating from a true idea of concept.

Understanding the concept governing a map provides the key to whether all factors contribute effectively toward that end. The connoisseur has a favorable or unfavorable attitude toward a map, not because certain people are born with intuitive feelings, but because a wealth of information provides a knowledge about the temporal and material components involved in the creation of a work of art.

Consider the process for either appreciating or criticizing a historical map. The examiner realizes that all maps are and were difficult to create; therefore, someone had a strong reason for executing it. The prime purpose for creating any map is not always apparent, and at this point we turn to the works of scholars for information on identity of who made the map, where, and when. Here is the work of the cartobibliographer, and we can be grateful to a host of scholars who have assembled lists and sequences of maps, books, and atlases for the use of posterity. Once the primary documents are properly identified, then the historian can place them into perspective in the scheme of ideas.

Very few historians have mastered the use of maps and other graphic sources as primary material for understanding events, but we hail one scholar as particularly innovative and accurate in his approach to this work. William P. Cumming first introduced his concept of mother maps in the classic combination of history and cartobibliography entitled *The Southeast in Early Maps*, first published in 1958 and reissued three times since. His profound sense for using contemporary graphic art for historical documentation is found in the two volumes that he co-authored with R.A. Skelton, David B. Quinn, S.E. Hillier, and G. Williams entitled *The Discovery of North America* and *The Exploration of North America* respectively. Many other scholars have contributed greatly to this field; we offer Dr. Cumming as an outstanding example.

Once we have examined the literature describing maps of a place during a time period and by various cartographers we must ask how representative it is of the finest work of the era. Then the enumeration of elements present should be graded on whether they contribute positively toward the ability of the map to teach and delight.

These elements can be classified by two types which determine much about the ability to make a judgement. One type is composed of elements which must be in a map. Certainly, the work must have a design, use paper or parchment for its base, and have ink applied for the desired lines. The effectiveness of these elements is relatively easy to recognize. Qualities such as balance in design and appropriateness of paper grades with various inks are generally known as characteristic of particular times and places. For instance, we can only expect a limited amount of information per square inch for a Medieval woodblock map, with proportionately more in a copper engraved map, more still in a steel engraving, but not quite as much in a lithograph

or wood engraving. In the seventeenth century, we would expect better quality and lasting ink of European manufacture as opposed to American. We would expect black letter gothic calligraphy on a Homann map of Germany and italic lettering on a Lafreri map of Italy; the opposites would be distasteful. Similar expectations can be applied to the arts of printmaking and binding. These principles apply to a large body of works.

The second group of principles have in common the quality of not being necessary, but when they are present, they lift the aesthetic value greatly. Ornament and color are factors which we measure with a great deal of difficulty. Ornament must be evaluated with each map, because the graphic pictures and designs should include the most inspiring allegory, accurate pictures of people, places, flora, or fauna, and exemplary motifs of great art. The ornamentation must be appropriate to the region shown in the map, and, above all, have a pleasing position and size working with the rest of the graphic surface.

The other unnecessary factor, but one which lifts maps toward sublimity is the element of color. After a map was pulled from the press it was issued as either colored or uncolored. It could have been sold separately, but those that have survived for us to see were preserved inside the safe confines of an atlas, usually with many pages and strong vellum bindings. This snug housing preserved the bright colors to such a pleasing extent that many people exclaim about the age of a Renaissance or Enlightenment map while admiring the freshness. These maps exist splendidly due to stable paper, ink, and dyes. Uncolored maps originally sold for half of what most colored maps brought, and the plainer copies were used for practical purposes. Colored maps appeared in a great variety often due to the desires of the buyer. Some had a light, pleasing outline color that facilitated reading the political boundaries or lines of rivers and coasts. Others had a sumptuous opulence that included gold leaf laid on top of colors so thick that they obliterated the engraved lines to accentuate brilliance. Typical of this approach to coloring would be artistic care taken for more wealthy clients as opposed to a casual application for a series in atlas production. We recommend Jan Jansson's World map of 1641 (item 8) as an example of a map which has aesthetic value superior to concept.

Thus, aesthetic consideration judges the *original* design and elements which contributed toward it. Concerns with later repairs and new color must be considered under the heading of condition. Five categories for aesthetics are: Superb, Excellent, Very Good, Good, and Not rated. The category of "Not rated" would apply to the more theoretical and scientific studies which should not be rated for a criteria to which it did not aspire. For instance, the government publication by Fremont has a colloquial "beauty" of concept, and the few found in excellent condition are beautiful when compared to the usually battered and incomplete copies found. An aesthetic consideration is exactly what these nineteenth century map makers were trying to avoid. So we will rate aesthetics where it is planned.

CONDITION

The CONDITION grading factor is based on the wear that occurs to an object from the time that it is published until it reaches the present buyer or reader. With maps and prints variables would include accidental loss such as: trimming of margins, rubs to the surface, tears into the margin and the printed surface, and discoloration from the sun. Planned alterations would include: improper paper restoration, coloring that was applied in subsequent years, and staining. The quality of the patina on each item would determine much in its valuation.

The John Disturnell "Map of the United States of Mexico" (item 71) provides an

object lesson on CONDITION as a grading factor. Disturnell's map was first published in 1846 as a result of keen American interest in the Mexican War. Each of the subsequent 23 editions was issued folded into small simulated buckram cases into which the map was attached by a hinge. A few would have been mounted on cloth and attached to spindles as wall maps. Both uses insured that present-day acquisition of a mint condition Disturnell map is impossible. Opening the case led to tears along the folds, small holes where the folds intersected, and tears where the hinge pulls the map from the binding. Wall maps were usually hung near windows for ease of reading, but the sunlight would fade them or other climate changes would take a toll. Within a few decades after issue, the maps were usually seen as obsolete and would suffer further deprivations from neglect.

In the twentieth century the map collector or curator finds challenges in handling such a map. If the original state is folded into a case, should additional tears be inflicted each time the map is used? Should it be completely flattened or partially flattened? Should the paper be deacidified? Can repairs be made to tears and margins replaced? Should missing surface be replaced with India ink by pen? Does new color add to the appeal or value of the map? If dirt is on the surface, should it be cleaned?

Absolute answers to these questions cannot be given because each document must be considered separately, and sometimes the degree of treatment is more important than the decision on whether to alter the map or not. Antique maps develop a patina with age, and a judgement on where grime begins and patina ends is ultimately a decision for the connoisseur.

Grading categories for CONDITION are as follows: Mint (10), Very fine (9), Fine (8), Very good (7) or (6), Good (5) or (4), Fair (3) or (2), and Less than fair (1).

RARITY

The final grading factor is RARITY. Here a combination of absolute and comparative rarity is taken into consideration. A splendid example of rarity applied to a grading system is found when examining Ortelius' map of "La Florida, Guastecan, and Perue" (item 40). This map was once considered a common artifact of historical cartography. It could be found in most dealers' catalogues priced at less than \$200, and not many people enjoyed it because they only recognized Florida, but not the other sections without study. Some entrepreneurs cut the map into three pieces in order to sell the "La Florida" for twice the cost of the other two, and theoretically, they were providing three aesthetically balanced maps.

This former mode of thought should be seen as wrong because the relative commonness of this map has no relation to its value. In fact, it was printed in most editions of Ortelius' *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* after 1584 because it was so important. The historical concepts reflected in the maps on one page has an appeal derived from a scientific concern with efficiency that is characteristic of the greatest cartographers.

This map's depiction of the interior of the present-day Southeastern United States coupled with its efficient and enticing picture of the most important part of America for Europeans is explained in our text to follow. For now, keep in mind that these factors determine its value, or lack thereof. No wonder the map appeared in quantity — it was so important! The great demand would have created a major impact on human thought besides its primal impact on historical cartography. To measure the value of the map in terms of scarcity is foolish because the showing for the first time of information gained from discoveries over a wide area of land is far more important. Rareness is a false evaluator. Compare two manuscripts: a signed

letter between two famous persons containing great ideas, or a handwritten laundry list. Both are unique, but the former has the greater value. So too does this mildly rare map have a greater value than many oddities with one or two recorded locations.

Due to this train of thought being part of the Arader Grading System, we have removed the term "rare" from our letterheads and advertisements. The true measure of quality is to be found primarily in concept with aesthetics, condition, and finally rarity as appropriate considerations. Grading designations for rarity are: One known example, Superlatively rare, Exceedingly rare, Very rare, Quite rare, Mildly rare, Very scarce, Quite scarce, Mildly scarce, and Common.

CATALOGUE 28

This catalogue has been designed to exemplify the Arader Grading System for maps and prints. The pieces listed here deserve full descriptions and profuse illustrations, so this catalogue was long in preparation and difficult to produce. Thus, we are including here only items which we consider gradable. Future catalogues will contain some graded items, but also works that are not to be graded. Many pieces which have commonly been accepted as leading artifacts have been rejected and thus not graded after our studies.

Like any book, this catalogue needed parameters within which to work, and our emphasis is Americana, because we know it best and also enjoy it. The grading system allows other parameters and ideas, depending on the subject, so collectors and curators should use this study as a prototype. For instance, a collector devoted to the history of postal services in Europe will find few explicit items to buy here, but a framework of ideas for collecting is provided. Nevertheless, the history of cartography focusing on the New World, from the modern to the scientific age, is the most exciting revelation of the cutting edge of man's knowledge.

We list here many of those maps. In the sixteenth century works such as the world map of Ruysch (item 1) and Finé (item 2) illustrate a great lack of knowledge about the size of the earth and the proper relationship of America to the Orient. These two maps also show some surprisingly new and accurate information. Vast improvements came with the work of Sebastian Munster (item 23) whose quaint woodcut maps appear as transition pieces using Medieval technology to show Renaissance information. Then the golden age of mapmaking was begun when Abraham Ortelius and Gerhard Mercator initiated the Dutch preeminence in European cartography. Certainly their maps were beautiful, and obviously so from first glance at their mannerist decorations, but careful inspection reveals more. Ortelius initiated the scholarly practice of comparing sources, recognizing his authorities, and compiling his geographical knowledge in systematic studies. As examples, the Ortelius maps of "La Florida" (item 40) and the Pacific Ocean (item 74) both compile new knowledge from the best sources. Mercator, on the other hand, was the greater theoretician and a practicing surveyor. His world map and other studies in longitude and latitude (item 7) established his reputation as the outstanding cartographer of the age and set the standards for all cartography through most of the next hundred years.

The major printed maps depicting the present-day United States in the seventeenth century are listed here. For the East Coast we find the prototype map of the Carolinas by John White (item 41) and its combination with the LeMoyne Florida map by the Mercator firm in the famous "Virginiae Item et Floridae..." map by Jodocus Hondius (item 42). The area of the Chesapeake Bay and up to New England was accurately mapped by John Smith as noted in items 43 and 44. The interior

mapping required a few more decades as exploration and reports expanded man's knowledge so that all the Great Lakes finally appeared in Nicolas Sanson's map of 1650 (item 33), and the Venetian, Coronelli, first published a map with one mighty Mississippi River system down the middle of North America (item 36). Fascinating refinement and political turmoil would follow.

The father of scientific cartography was Guillaume Delisle whose 1703 map of North America would place the Mississippi at a proper meridian for the first time and account for vast river systems in the upper waters (item 37). This map was further refined and printed on a larger scale with the 1718 map (item 38) which ignited tensions among the three principal European powers and stimulated the other two great maps of the eighteenth century—the Popple (item 53) and the Mitchell (item 55). Further expansion and greater accuracy were stimulated by the American Revolution, and J.F.W. DesBarres' *Atlantic Neptune* is a prime example of this improvement (item 14). Of course, the world knowledge of Alaska and Hawaii were simultaneously enhanced by the narratives of Captain James Cook (item 15). The culmination of mapping of North America came after the establishment of the United States with the production of Aaron Arrowsmith's huge map of North America featuring the best information to date (item 59).

The leading maps of the next century were responding to the demands of a vigorous frontier mentality that expanded to the West. The same precise qualities of Arrowsmith's 1796 map of the United States soon appeared in 1810 on his map of Mexico, which included most of the present-day Southwestern states (item 64). Fascinating thrusts to the Rocky Mountains were reported and illustrated by Mackenzie in 1801 (item 63), Pike in 1810 (item 65), Lewis and Clark in 1814 (item 66), and Stephen Long in 1822 (item 67). These engraved maps would be replaced by larger, lithographed charts extending their pictures farther west. Examples of these would be the Emory of 1844 (item 69), the Fremont of 1845 (item 70), and the Disturnell editions (item 71). The Pacific was reached, and the overland mapping of the area between it and the Atlantic well illustrated the extensive topography as it changed in the minds of man.

Besides maps we offer a great many prints which illuminated the land through pictures. Some day we should write a catalogue entirely devoted to prints, but for now we are listing two major pieces with pictorial interest. Ramusio's *Navigations* (item 11) is a splendid set of books containing maps and prints that set the standards for Renaissance compilations of voyages. The appeals to the natural scientist as well as the cartographer are evident in the pictures of plants and animals as well as plans and maps. The other set is a great achievement by an Englishman during the Enlightenment Age. Mark Catesby's *Natural History of the Carolinas, Florida, and the Bahama Islands* is a sumptuous presentation of birds, beasts, and plants in a style that is distinctly empiric (item 18). Ramusio used woodcuts; Catesby used beautifully colored copper engravings. Both men's work had the impact of showing the new life and places to an Old World dying to be reborn. We are proud to offer these outstanding examples to our clients.

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