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AN EARLY, STRIKING AND RARE AMERICAN CARTOGRAPHIC GAME

National Game of the Star Spangled Banner, Or Geographical & Historical Tourist through the United States & Canada

Author
Wallis, Edward [after] & Kollner, Augustus [litographer] & Sinclair, Thomas [printer],

Publication date
[1844].

Publisher
L. I. Cohen & Co,

Publication place
Philadelphia,

Physical description
Lithograph, hand coloured, dissected in two sheets and mounted on folding boards, boards backed with decorative paper and bearing large printed label, hand coloured.

Dimensions
510 by 422mm. (20 by 16.5 inches).

Notes
One of the earliest published American cartographic games and one of the earliest American pictorial maps, based on one of the same title published in London by Edward Wallis.

This fine pictorial map covers the eastern United States and Canada, the limits as then existed, from the northern shore of Lake Superior to the tip of Florida and northern coast of Cuba, and west to east from Vermillion Bay, Louisiana, to the Maine / New Brunswick boundary. Images within each state depict the principal towns, cultural features, local commerce, fauna and flora, and so on. 146 numbered circles dot the map, providing the way points for a roll-and-move style game.

Unfortunately, all known surviving examples of the game lack the playing cards and pieces called for in the pamphlet of directions, and the pamphlet is known in only two copies, neither of which has been digitised. However the rules can be reconstructed in part from those issued with the London edition, published by Wallis in or around 1842.

"The game begins out at sea, with the sighting of "The great Sea Serpent. Much astonishment was created in 1817, by accounts of this monster having been seen, 90 feet long, and rearing its head out of the water as high as the topmast of a ship!…". The travellers then make landfall on Long Island, and disembark at Brooklyn, before making a circuitous tour which ends back at New York where "Whoever first arrives at exactly this number, wins the Game."

"The tour includes each of the state capitals, and those of the new territories, as well as Washington, with a diversion into Canada, and includes important geographical features and landmarks such as Niagara Falls, Chesapeake Bay, the Great Lakes, the rivers Mississippi, Missouri, Tennessee, Ohio and others." (Baynton-Williams, 138)

However Wallis' version gives a generally negative, "British-tinted" view of America. To give a flavour of the British version, another writer summarises its narrative structure as follows:

"Players advance when the Empire does, particularly on the issue of slavery, which is a consistent topic in board games published in the first half of the century. In their tour of the United States in Edward Wallis' Game of the Star-Spangled Banner, players lose turns, enduring forced stasis to contemplate slave markets, slave labour, and even a lynching. Their progress in the game draws to a halt, effectively checking advancement because of this backward practice in the United States. Though the second half of the game bears the title "Emigration to the United States," the game's checks to progress effectively quash any plans a player may have to emigrate south of the St. Lawrence River." (Norcia)

In the description for stop no, 48 (in Virginia), Wallis's book of instructions comments about slavery:

"Slaves. The slave-holders of the southern states are extensively supplied from the markets of Virginia, where negroes are reared for the purpose of sale and traffic. While here, however, they are maintained in a state of comparative comfort. As many as four thousand have been sold in one year, and the least taint of negro blood subjects an individual to this degraded condition."

And for no. 90, in Arkansas, Wallis describes frontier justice:
"Lynch Law. (Arkansas) An odious practice, too frequently indulged in, in the states which are at a great distance from the general government. It is no other than a mockery of justice, by which persons who offend against the popular opinion, are tried and executed by illegal and self-constituted judges."

Surely Philadelphia publisher Philadelphia L.I. Cohen would have adapted the instructions to provide a more positive gloss on American culture of the period, but also to correct and update the notes.

The game is based closely on one published in London by Edward Wallis (1787?-1868), son and heir of John Wallis, Sr., (1745?-1818) and brother of John Jr. (1779?-1830). The three men were famed

map and game-makers, in their day the leaders in this field in England.

This version of the map was lithographed in Philadelphia, presumably by Augustus Kollner, who signed the title label, and printed by the lithographer Thomas Sinclair for publisher L. I. Cohen. Cohen is something of a mystery. He is recorded in Philadelphia, as a stationer operating on South Fourth Street in 1844 and 1845, while advertising as a manufacturer and wholesaler. Cohen sold the stationery business, including his premises, to Samuel Hart & Co., the partnership of Samuel Hart and Isaac Levy, in November 1845. Hart and Levy placed an extensive advertisement when they took over, noting that they

“have just published the laughable Game of What d’ye Buy, by Professor Punch; also the National Game of the Star Spangled Banner — they also have the agency for the following popular games which they offer to the Trade at publisher’s prices, viz: Dr. Busby; Mansion of Happiness; American Eagle… Game of American Revolution.” (Sunbury American and Shamokin Journal, November 22, 1845, vol. 6, page 4).

The map was advertised by Cohen, in the run-up to Christmas 1844, in two advertorials, one reading as follows:

“AMUSEMENT AND INSTRUCTION. Messrs. L. I. Cohen & Co., 27 South Fourth street, have hit on an admirable plan to win the attention of youth to the study of the Geographical and Historical peculiarities of the United States and the Canadas, by uniting with it an absorbing chance pastime or game, on a picturesque Map. It is called “The National Game of the Star Spangled Banner — or, Geographical and Historical Tourist through the United States and Canada.” Look to it, parents.” (Philadelphia Saturday Courier, December 21, 1844, p. 3)

Bibliography

Provenance

Price: £11500

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