

Developing a Cost-Effective Reference Library

(A primer for collectors of maps of New England and its parts)

Recent years have seen a rapid expansion in the diversity and number of reference resources devoted to antique maps. For those with a particular interest in “New England-iana,” we have compiled this article to highlight some of the more useful and accessible of these resources.

The upshot is that through judicious buying and use of on-line resources, one should be able to assemble a serviceable reference library for well under \$1000.

There are at least three types of reference, and an adequate library will include one or more of each.

- 🔗 *General references:* introductions to the history and methods of map production, assessing map condition and price, preserving and conserving maps, &c.
- 🔗 *Topical surveys:* broad historical overviews of topics in cartographic history, usually illustrating a cross-section of relevant maps
- 🔗 *Checklists and cartobibliographies:* attempts to catalogue every map fitting one or more boundary criteria

GENERAL REFERENCES

The best general reference is F.J. Manasek's *Collecting Old Maps* (available new for \$65). Manasek begins with a primer on antique maps and the various methods by which they were printed. This is followed by a survey of topics relevant to collecting, including determining authenticity, condition and conservation, collection development, and value. The extensive appendices include a list of mapmakers, a bibliography of reference material, a dictionary of foreign-language terms found on maps, and even an essay on “chemistry for map collectors!”

For on-line resources, try the “Map Collecting” subsection of the Map History web portal (<http://www.maphistory.info/collecting.html>). This subsection is further organized into subsections such as “Reading Matter,” “Buying Maps,” and “Conservation.”

The literature on early maps and map collecting pays scant attention to surveying methods and mapping techniques. One good resource designed for a more general audience is David Greenwood's *Mapping* (out of print, available used for less than \$20).

TOPICAL SURVEYS OF NEW ENGLAND MAPS

Topical surveys are useful for expanding one's understanding of the range of maps that are “out there.” The best of these also provide economic, political, scientific, and social context for understanding a category of maps.

The best survey of New England mapping is Peter Benes' *New England Prospect: A Loan Exhibition of Maps at The Currier Gallery of Art* (available new for \$18 from the Dublin Seminar for New England Folklife, <http://www.bu.edu/dublinseminar>). This superb little volume includes sections on regional maps, boundary surveys and disputes, town surveys, Boston, and “forts, mines, wharves, mills, and rivers,” to name a few. The presentation seamlessly integrates manuscript and printed maps and is quite well illustrated.

A good resource for early maps is Alex Krieger and David Cobb's *Mapping Boston*, chapter 3 of which reviews “The Mapping of New England before 1800” (paperback edition available new for \$41). This essay is complemented by a stunning suite of 22 plates illustrating milestones in the early mapping of the region. In keeping with its title, *Mapping Boston* is also far and away the best available survey of the history of the mapping of that city.

For 19th century mapping, one should start with Walter Ristow's *American Maps and Mapmakers* (out of print, available for \$250-300). In contrast to the traditional focus of carto-scholarship on the early European mapping of America, this seminal work was the first to highlight the contributions of the American map-making industry in the late 18th and

19th centuries. Two chapters focus primarily on topics of New England interest, with much other relevant information throughout. This work is invaluable for expanding one's sense of the richness of America's 19th century cartographic heritage.

The Osher Map Library's on-line exhibition “The Cartographic Creation of New England” merits a visit (<http://www.usm.maine.edu/~maps/exhibit2>). This is self-described as ‘An exhibition of early maps that chronicles the effects of European exploration and settlement in north-eastern North America in creating a spatial concept called “New England.” Maps of the 16th through 19th centuries are covered, including a number of items rarely encountered in such surveys.

CHECKLISTS AND CARTOBIBLIOGRAPHIES

These specialized tools attempt to catalogue every map fitting a set of criteria, such as “maps of Massachusetts published before 1800.” They provide basic information about each map, including author, title, publisher, publication date, and physical dimensions. They might also address editions or states, scale, unusual features such as insets or vignettes, and holdings at major institutions. Though the distinction is not firm, cartobibliographies tend also to be illustrated, include more descriptive information, and even provide brief essays about each map.

The two standard resources for early regional maps of New England are Philip Burden's *The Mapping of North America* and Barbara McCorkle's *New England in Early Printed Maps* (both out of print, Burden available used for \$250 and up, McCorkle for \$200 and up). The former describes maps of North America and its regions through 1670, with each listing including an illustration and a descriptive essay. McCorkle's work lacks essays and has fewer illustrations, but is the only

resource of its kind covering New England from 1670 to 1800. It has the added advantage of including checklists of maps of the individual New England states. A sequel by Burden covering the 18th century is expected in 2006-07.

The on-line magazine *MapForum.com* offers two useful checklists of early regional maps. “The Charting of New England” catalogues 102 charts of the New England coast issued between 1684 and 1785 (<http://www.mapforum.com/02/feb.htm>), while “Printed Maps of New England” describes hundreds of large-scale regional maps (<http://www.mapforum.com/13/13issue.htm>, continuing to issues 14 and 15). Both checklists provide detailed points for differentiating editions and states, though they include only a limited number of low-resolution images.

There are a number of specialized checklists available in print addressing the mapping of Boston and of individual New England states. The state checklists typically cover state maps, city and town plans, and more specialized items such as battle plans, usually terminating in the mid- or late 19th century. Almost all can be found used for less than \$50.

- 🌀 Boston: Boston Engineering Department, *List of Maps of Boston Published between 1600 and 1903*
- 🌀 Connecticut: Edmund Thompson, *Maps of Connecticut* (Ask for the 1995 1-volume reprint edition.)
- 🌀 Maine: Edward Thompson, *Catalogue Raisonne: Important Maine Maps, Books, Prints and Ephemera*
- 🌀 New Hampshire: David Cobb, *New Hampshire Maps to 1900*
- 🌀 Rhode Island: Howard Chapin, *Check List of Maps of Rhode Island*
- 🌀 Vermont: David Cobb, “Vermont Maps Prior to 1900” (in *Vermont History*, vol. XXXIX, nos. 3 & 4, Summer-Fall, 1971)

Three other specialized checklists offer much of interest, though they are not dedicated specifically to New England material:

- 🌀 American imprints: James Wheat and Christian Brun, *Maps and Charts Printed in America before 1800*
- 🌀 American Revolution: Kenneth

Nebenzahl, *A Bibliography of Printed Battle Plans of the American Revolution*
 Magazine maps: David Jolly, *Maps of America in Periodicals before 1800*

All are out of print. Nebenzahl’s work may be found used for under \$10, while Wheat and Brun as well as Jolly may cost \$100 or more.

For those unwilling to invest in an array of specialized references, an inexpensive though imperfect substitute is P. Lee Phillips’ monumental *A List of Maps of America in the Library of Congress* (out of print, available for under \$100). Phillips lists maps in strict alphabetical order by geographical area and covers regional, state, city and town, and other maps. In particular it is indispensable for those interested in Massachusetts maps, for which there is no separate checklist available. It should be noted, however, that it omits acquisitions after 1901 and is particularly weak in more obscure areas such as early 19th-century town plans.

Though not strictly checklists, two on-line resources are also useful for maps of all areas and periods. First, the Harvard Map Collection has uploaded entries for more than 1400 maps of New England and New England states, cities and towns to the University’s on-line catalogue. Hundreds of these listings include links to high-resolution digital images, with many more to come. To use this tool, navigate to <http://lib.harvard.edu/catalogs/hollis.html>, select the “Advanced Search” tool, and enter your parameters of interest.

Finally, the web site of the David Rumsey Map Collection includes more than 10,000 maps, with much New England material (<http://www.davidrumsey.com/collections/cartography.html>). Each entry includes a high-resolution image and bibliographical information.

Thanks to Joel Kovarsky of The Prime Meridian for commenting on a draft of this article.



Fig.3 Foster, New England, 1677 Courtesy of Martayan Lan Fine Antique Maps

Mapping Massachusetts (continued)

(fig. 1). When revised and reissued in the 1620s however, it became the first printed map to show an actual Massachusetts town, namely the settlement at Plymouth.

THE CARTOGRAPHIC DEBUT OF THE MASSACHUSETTS BAY COLONY

In 1629 the Company of Massachusetts Bay obtained from Charles I a charter to the territory between the Merrimack and Charles Rivers. The “Great Migration” began the next year, and by 1640 the Colony’s population approached 20,000 persons.

The first map to use the name “Massachusetts” was Hessel Gerritsz’ *Nova Anglia, Novum et Virginia* (1630). Whether this refers to the new Colony or the native American tribe inhabiting the Charles and Neponset River basins is unclear.

Though crudely executed, maps by two colonists give by far the best early depiction of Massachusetts’ interior geography and the new English towns. William Wood’s *The South part of New-England* (1634) shows eastern Massachusetts, including the complex coastal geography and the system of rivers emptying into Massachusetts Bay. His is also the first map to locate Boston, Cambridge (“New town”), Charlestown, Dorchester, Medford (“Meadford”), Roxbury, Saugus, Watertown and Weymouth (“Wessaguscus”). John Foster’s *A Map of New-England* (1677) depicts New England as far north as the

Continued on page 4

Mapping Massachusetts (1600-1750)

(continued)

White Mountains and just west of the Connecticut River. Foster documents the expansion of the Massachusetts colony by locating dozens of towns, including the first appearances of many towns in what are now the western suburbs of Boston and along Connecticut. (fig. 2).

DELINEATING BORDERS

For many years maps gave no indication of Massachusetts' extent or its borders. The first to attempt to do so were John Seller's *A Mapp of New England* and Robert Modern and William Berry's *A Map of New England New Yorke New Jersey Mary-Land & Virginia...* (1676). Both were based on a manuscript map compiled in 1665 by one William Reed for the Massachusetts General Court.

The purpose of Reed's map was to justify Massachusetts' claim to much of what are now Maine and New Hampshire, based on an aggressive and legalistic reading of its 1629 Charter. In particular, the Charter granted the lands

“... lying within the space of three English miles on the south part of the said Charles River, or of any, or every part thereof; ... and also, all those lands and hereditaments whatsoever, which lie, and be within the space of three English miles to the northward of the said river called ... Merrimack, or to the northward of any and every part thereof....”²

When a 1652 expedition revealed that the Merrimack made a sharp northward turn and had its source in Lake Winnepesaukee, Massachusetts interpreted the Charter as implying a northern border along a line of latitude running through the Lake. This brought it into conflict with proprietors of lands in Maine and New Hampshire, and the Reed map was intended to bolster Massachusetts' claim.

Though neither the Seller nor the Morden and Berry maps show an exact northern border, they clearly extend the Massachusetts Colony northward to or even beyond Lake Winnepesaukee. To the South, the border with the Plymouth Colony is shown on both maps as a concave curve extending from the North end of Plymouth Bay to a point below Springfield on the Connecticut River, which forms the western border (fig. 3).

John Foster's 1677 *A Map of New-England*, also based on the Reed map, depicts a clear northern border with a bold line running East-West through Lake Winnepesaukee, complemented by one just south of the head of the Charles (fig. 2). The western border is left indeterminate, but clearly lies somewhere well beyond the Connecticut River.

Daniel Neal's *A New Map of New England According to the Latest Observation* (1720) shows Massachusetts much nearer its modern configuration. The northern boundary is shown at a line of latitude a point a few miles North of the Merrimack's mouth. The colony is shown extending westward to roughly the present-day border along the Taconic Range. To the South, it now includes the territory of the Plymouth Colony, which had been annexed in 1691. The source of Neal's map is not clear, however, as it predates by many years the various agreements that established Massachusetts' boundaries with its neighbors.

CONCLUSION

This article has examined the first century of attempts to map Massachusetts. During that time the

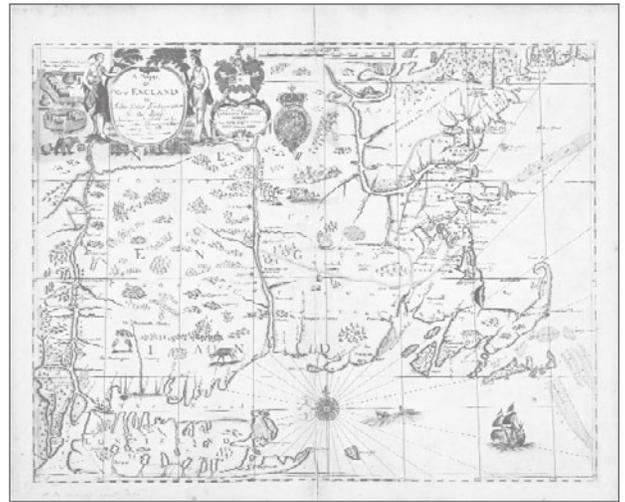


Fig.3 Seller, *New England*, 1676 Courtesy of I.N. Phelps Stokes Collection, Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations

emphasis shifted from piecing together the geography of eastern new England, to documenting the early years of settlement, and finally to supporting Massachusetts' aggressive territorial claims.

The second article in this series will address the cartographic history of Massachusetts in the late colonial and early statehood periods. It will document how the emphasis of mapping efforts shifted once again, as maps evolved into a critical administrative tool both produced and employed by the State.

NOTES

¹ It has been speculated that Cape Cod and Massachusetts Bay may be found on Juan Bellerio's *Brevis Exactaq Totius Novi Orbis Eiusq Insularum Descriptio* (1554). (Thomas Suarez, "A Selection of Fine Early Maps," June 2005)

² For the text of the Charter, see <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/states/mass03.htm>.

Thanks to David Cobb of the Harvard Map Collection for commenting on a draft of this article.

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