EDWARD LYNAM

THE MAPMAKER'S ART

LONDON: THE BATCHWORTH PRESS
THE MAPMAKER'S ART

Essays on the History of Maps

by

EDWARD LYNAM
D.Litt., M.R.I.A., F.S.A.
Sometime Superintendent of the Map Room
British Museum

With a Foreword by

SIR THOMAS KENDRICK, K.C.B.
Director of the British Museum

London
THE BATCHWORTH PRESS
First published in 1953 by
Batchworth Press Ltd.
54 Bloomsbury St., W.C. 1
most popular hand in Europe, is used for the descriptive legends on Fig. 31. The third, a bold-faced type, is illustrated in Throckmorton on Fig 31.

The lettering upon maps which imitated ordinary print was for long undistinguished, showing little of the engraver’s skill. But when, towards the end of the 17th century, printers began to design more artistic and varied types for their books, the map- engravers followed suit. Thenceforward the history of this type upon maps is closely linked with the history of printing, but the engravers usually produced more pleasing letters, with thick and thin lines delicately balanced (Figs, 31, 32). Capitals were always the predominant letters in titles. The Italians used them in combination with inscriptions in a handsome running hand. A variant was graceful Italic capitals, which was favoured by Flemish, English and Dutch cartographers in the late 16th century; from these developed the enormous flourished letters which were a naughtly habit of Dutch maps from about 1600 to 1660 (Figs. 6, 27). From 1690 onwards map-engravers began to set out a proud and varied display of lettering in the titles of their maps. Gothic capitals had been used, of course, very early upon German and Dutch maps; but after about 1735 they became increasingly common in the titles of English maps, obviously in consequence of the influx of Hanoverians. Hollow capitals had occasionally been used for names of provinces or cities as early as 1570, but after 1740 they became popular, with beaded stems. By the end of our period the lettering upon maps had, except for the ‘lower-case’ Roman script, come very close to that in the engraved copy-books of the time. How faithfully the draughtsman of maps had come to imitate engraved hands by 1789 is shown by the writing on Fig. 19, an extract from a manuscript estate plan of that date.

CARTOUCHES

The insertion of pictures and decorative design upon maps began very early. From the 12th to the 14th centuries the Garden of Eden was frequently represented at the top. As everybody knows, Paradise was formerly situated—though perhaps that is not so true now—in the Near East, so that all early maps were oriented with the East at the top (whence our words ‘to orient’). Besides, as most of them were drawn upon sheepskin, the projecting neck at the upper end provided a convenient blank space for edifying pictures. The Hereford map of c. 1300 has a terrifying representation of the Last Judgement along its upper edge, although the moral force of this is rather weakened by a pleasant drawing, some inches lower down, of the author of the map riding out a-hunting. On the earliest engraved maps the title appeared, very briefly expressed, in the upper margin, and later, during the early part of the 16th century, French and German cartographers inscribed it upon a flying scroll. It was the Italians who invented the ‘cartouche’, or panel bearing the title and other facts about the map, surrounded by an ornamental frame. The first form of the frame was a ‘strapwork’ design, imitating the ends of interwoven lengths of soft leather with edges curling forward all round the inscription. By 1550 it was a large rectangle, engraved to look like carved wood with curled pieces which projected
FIG. 27  Map of Hampshire, by Christopher Saxton, engraved by Leonard Terwoort, 1575
Fig. 8 The town of Hertford, inset on the map of Hertfordshire by John Speed
to hold the panel and supporting wings, posts and crockets at the ends. With Roman capitals and 'Italian' script in the titles, these cartouches had a great and simple dignity.

The Flemings and Dutch, when, after 1570, they displaced the Italians as the chief publishers of maps in Europe, were full of enthusiasm for Renaissance art and architecture, but understood very little about them. They had, however, a passion for ornament for its own sake; and accordingly for the cartouches of their maps they used indiscriminately, with an almost riotous joy, each and all of the many designs and motifs which they found in the pattern-books of Italian Renaissance sculptors, wood-carvers, stone-masons and plaster-workers. The result was highly ingenious, but bewildering. Around a stately frame imitating fretted and morticed wood-work, deriving from the hammer-beam roofing, corbels and panelling of late Gothic halls and churches, they hung a multitude of pseudo-classical figures, fauns, masks, nymphs and Neptunes, together with an amazing variety of naturalistic engravings of storks, fish, butterflies, lobsters and monkeys (Fig. 27). The startling effect of this artistic jungle was heightened by a lavish use of brilliant colours, which the Italians had almost completely avoided. In Flemish hands and in those of the Dutch, with whom, cartographically speaking, the Flemings merged about 1595, the cartouches of maps became a special branch of art, the sources of which were at first Renaissance, but later contemporary, handbooks of interior and architectural ornament. Many of them were beautifully engraved, for the Flemings and Dutch generally surpassed the Italians as line-engravers and for a long time the English and French had to learn from them; but the cartouches had little relation to the maps on which they appeared. Ornate cartouches rather smaller than those around the titles were introduced for the map-scales about 1580 (Fig. 8), and later also for the dedications. Inept caryatids, because the Romans used them, were carved upon the pilasters supporting the galleries and fire-places in dozens of Elizabethan mansions and were favourite figures on maps. Two appear in a design on the head of a bed used by Anne Hathaway's parents at Stratford. The English of the Elizabethan Age understood Renaissance art less than the Dutch, but these vivid pictures appealed to their love of colour and pageantry.

For nearly a century after 1595 Dutch cartographical engravers and publishers were the best in the world. Soon after 1600 the cartouche imitating large and intricate wooden frames supporting the panel was gradually abandoned for the old strap-work design, but in new forms and with additions which made it almost unrecognizable. At first the neat frame with its projecting curls, wings and volutes, which now resembled plaster-work rather than leather or wood, was garlanded with festoons of coloured flowers and ribbons. Very soon a swarm of plump cherubs, whose duty it was to hold up the festoons, carry surveyors' chains and other instruments along the scale and generally look ornamental. The first begetter of those unwanted infants has never been discovered; but they infested Dutch, English and German maps from about 1640 until after 1790. About the same time, in the 1640's, a geographical decorative theme was introduced. Groups of rustics, fishermen, milkmaids, bearded Muscovites and ebony-skinned Africans, in fact
the idealized inhabitants of the country depicted, were grouped, with their appropriate implements and domestic animals, around the cartouche and title, as if about to be photographed (Fig. 29). A Dutch alternative to strap-work, a large scalloped shell, became common, and around anything marine, from Neptune in his chariot with insipid nereids splashing him to a naval battle with porpoises heading the line, was engraved.

The increasing richness and colour of the interior decorations in Dutch houses, produced by unequalled craftsmen and artists, are reflected in map cartouches of the 17th century. Together the motifs make up the Baroque style, probably the richest ever evolved in its tremendous vigour and its capacity to include every kind of art. It was at its height about 1685, and its effect in the elaborate illustrations and cartouches on maps is almost overpowering. The console or tapering S bracket, enriched with colour, moulding and leafage, was popular as a flanking support to the title. It may still be seen in the gables and mantelpieces of houses built about 1695–1715. Allegorical representations of the Four Continents decorated maps occasionally from 1580 into the 19th century. They may be seen, carved, around the Albert Memorial; but they flourished upon maps of this period. Europe was richly dressed, bore a sceptre, crown or globe, or all three, and had a horse or a bull beside her, while Asia wore a turban and flowing robes, carried an incense-burner and was attended by a very nice camel. They had, however, serious rivals in the livelier ladies who represented the Four Elements, another Baroque theme on maps. All through the century the classical tradition pervaded many branches of art, and brought crowds of stage Romans into the vacant spaces on maps.

With the advance of the French after 1690 to the position of the world’s greatest cartographers, their fine sense of proportion and form came into play in the cartouches of maps. Fig. 30 shows Baroque materials—pendant foliage, symbolic figures of men and animals, and acanthus leaves curling outwards—disciplined into a really beautiful design. But decoration on European maps outside France went through a period of transition between 1700 and 1740. The English Baroque style favoured a mass of flowers with a few small classical figures around the panel, or pendants of fruit, leafage, animals and weapons in imitation of the carved work of Grinling Gibbons. On other maps the chief ornament was composed of classical deities grouped as in Verrio’s ceiling paintings, doing nothing in particular except perhaps thinking up love-affairs. On German and English maps these were sometimes replaced by the monarch of the moment, dressed in a fillet and buskins and reclining upon the clouds. Another, simpler, cartouche of the late 17th and early 18th centuries was a piece of tasselled brocade pinned up at the corners bearing inscribed on it the title of the map.

About 1740 the Rococo style of cartouche, which the French had been evolving for some years as a refinement upon Baroque, became general upon European maps. Its basis was a light frame composed of several (engraved) pieces of moulded wood shaped like inverted C’s. Swags of foliage hid their joints. The principal virtues of the style were lightness and elegance. Instead of the crown of muscular heroes and all too buxom ladies of the Baroque period a few trim and slender figures now accompanied the cartouche. The
Fig. 29 Valois, from W. J. Blaeu's Novus Atlas, 1635
Fig. 30  Canada, by Guillaume Delisle, 1703.
spirit of Rococo design can be studied in the mirrors and other pieces of furniture which made Chippendale famous in the middle of the century. In the 1750’s the Rococo cartouches for the titles of maps left the elegant drawing-room for the country. The panel bearing the inscriptions soon came to be engraved to look like an antique stone slab, enclosed in a Rococo frame draped with ivy or creeper, while beside it the people of the country or province depicted carried on their daily avocations. The influence of Piranesi’s engravings and, in England, of the Society of Dilettanti’s tastes are evident here, and still more in the cartouches composed of broken classic pillar and pediments forming a frame both for the title and for a view of local landscape. As the Romantic movement gathered strength a spreading tree or pictures of the natural features and products of the country took the place of the rococo frame. Yet even in its early, sophisticated days this frame had been completed by a fringe of delicate grasses or a shallow cascade.

BORDERS

Borders around maps were the exception rather than the rule, columns graduated to show latitude and longitude being preferred. Elizabethan and Jacobean manuscript maps were often surrounded by a plain coloured band, and a similar band, coloured terracotta, appeared upon a great many engraved maps between 1775 and 1810. Terracotta had been made a fashionable colour by Wedgwood and the Adam brothers. The colour-loving Flemings and English of the 16th century enclosed their engraved maps in a narrow border resembling a wood picture frame, coloured and moulded in various designs (Figs. 27, 36). The Germans, however, wanted something more sensational, and favoured a large border with rich Renaissance motifs (Fig. 26). During another colourful period, 1690 to 1710, wide borders filled with floral designs were not uncommon.

CHARTS

On sea charts one of the most decorative features, the compass-rose, was a necessary part of the chart. The Italians did not colour it, but during the 16th century it was found desirable to show the 32 points more distinctly by colours, reinforced by the initial letters of the names of the eight chief winds. On most early compass-roses a cross marked the East, where the sun rose and which also had holy associations. The flags of all nations were drawn above their territories, for, since a skipper might be forced by weather, accidents or lack of stores or even mutiny to put in at a strange port, it was very necessary for him to know to what monarch every port belonged (Figs. 22, 23). The interior districts interested sailors little (unless they were deserters), for even raids for slaves or gold (Fig. 23) would not bring them far inland. The artist who drew Fig. 23 filled in the inland cities and mountains merely to show his skill. But wonderful and thrilling tales were told about golden cities far away in the interior of other continents, from El Dorado to Quivira; and these dreams of the past have come down to us in vivid colours and loving detail on many an early chart.