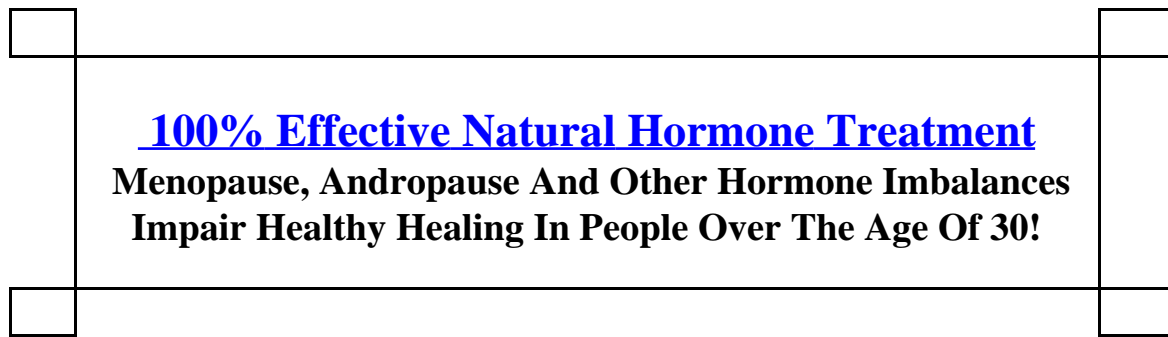


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ANTIQUÉ MAPS & PRINTS - UNIQUE HOLIDAY GIFTS WITH A PERSONAL TOUCH

By Neil Street

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Stumped this holiday season for what to give that "person with everything?" One category of gift that can be found in almost every price range is a genuine antique map or print. Presented framed or matted, or simply "as is," an antique map or print is a gift that can be tailored for any individual on your list, and it's a gift that will stand out for its thoughtfulness and uniqueness.

Sound expensive? Well, it can be of course, but you may be surprised to learn that antique prints of all kinds can be quite affordable, sometimes starting as low as \$25. And yes, they are still the "real thing" - antique, printed works of art on paper, usually hand-colored at the time of publication, and generally more than 100 years old.

The collecting of antique maps and prints is an old pursuit, and one that has been practiced for centuries. This is one of the reasons why there is a well-established worldwide market. Most antique maps and prints on the market today began life as a page in a book - perhaps an atlas, or a book of botanical prints, or a natural history book. But don't be put off by the fact that these prints (plates, as they are known in collecting circles) are derived from books. Antique books are very different from the books of today. The pages were printed by a less automated method, sometimes even on a hand-operated press. Illustrated pages (the prints we collect today) were printed separately from the text pages, and, if color was needed, each page was individually hand-colored. These very small print runs were then collated and bound into books, often with a beautiful leather binding. Over the centuries, books were broken apart, and the prints have been circulated ever since. In terms of origin, there is no substantive difference between a large, genuine Audubon print selling for tens of thousands of dollars and a fifty dollar antique print from a lesser known bird book.

The most compelling reason for considering an antique map or antique print as a gift is that it can truly be personalized for just about anyone on your list. First, it's obvious that everyone is from somewhere, which means that an antique map of a hometown or country is always a fascinating gift for the recipient. For the United States, it is almost always possible to find a mid-19th century state map, and

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frequently, town and regional maps as well. If you are looking for an antique map from overseas, choices abound, with country and regional maps from every part of the world (or the known world, depending on the year of publication) and from all time periods.

Antique maps of the home town or "the old country" are just the beginning when it comes to personalizing a gift. Different genres of maps appeal to different people - for example, antique harbor charts or sea charts for the sailors on your list, antique geological maps for rock collectors, antique island maps for travelers, and so on. Turning to antique prints, another world opens up. Antique botanical prints - often with gorgeous hand coloring - are perfect for gardeners and plant lovers; antique exploration prints for outdoor enthusiasts, antique historical prints, antique fashion prints, antique architectural prints, antique racehorse prints, culinary prints, butterfly prints, nautical prints, sporting prints, even shimmering, illuminated manuscript pages, and much more, are all available. The list, in effect, is almost endless. It is difficult to conceive of the person who, when presented with an

antique print that reflects their special interest, could fail to be gratified and made to feel a little more special.

Be creative about your gift list. When choosing an antique map, hometowns and states are the most popular, but also consider college towns, honeymoon spots, favorite vacation places, and so forth. If you're considering a print, then just think about your recipient's favorite hobby, food, sport, avocation, or other pastime. It is guaranteed that over the centuries, other people have enjoyed the same things, and the perfect, hand-colored print will be out there.

Where to find antique maps and prints and what to look for? Without question, the internet has revolutionized this field, which for centuries was conducted in dusty old bookshops, antique stores, and by dealer catalog. Dealers abound on the internet, and search engines such as Google or Yahoo. will allow you to access hundreds of antique map and print websites. Begin by visiting a variety of dealer sites. A site such as

, an internet-based antique map and print dealer since 1997, will

give you a feel for the type of material available. When visiting sites, you should feel free to contact the dealer and ask questions about maps or prints that interest you. Make sure that the dealer will provide a signed statement of authenticity, and that the condition of the print is at least "very good." A "money-back" guarantee of satisfaction is also usual practice among reputable dealers. If you are considering buying in an online auction, you need to be very careful. You can't be sure that the seller is providing accurate information, and there is no question of returning an item if it's not satisfactory. When it comes to buying from an online auction, it's "buyer beware."

If you plan to frame an antique print as a gift, the work is best done by a local framer whom you trust. Ordering your framing job over the internet is usually not a good choice - the appearance of the frame and the quality of materials are hard to judge on a screen. So leave an extra three weeks for the framing work. Finally, remember that the more specific the requirements you demand of an antique map or print, the earlier you will want to begin searching for it. Dealers are at their busiest around holiday times, so start your shopping early. Happy hunting.

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Neil Street is owner of VintageMaps.com, based in Wilton, CT., an antique map and antique print website selling antique maps from around the world and a wide variety of antique prints. His website is at

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About Antique Maps

By David Evermon

The antique collector has many items he can treasure and appreciate, there are many different antiques and collectables that are uniquely favorites of different collectors niches. One such very special niche is the antique map collectors, a group that is interested not only in the item and its antiquity but also in many other fields such as history, military and cartography through the ages.

Maps have been the main tool with which the world has been discovered and colonized, starting as a unique craft in the ancient world map making had a combination of the skills in arts and painting as well as the ability to correctly describe a landscape for navigation and trip planning. This art of map making had evolved even further when navel history started making its mark on the exploration of the world and its new frontiers.

One reason why antique maps are so special and unique is their close connection with specific events, when an antique map is well traced and you can estimate who was the owner and on what general purpose it was used, it is only a question of research that will lead you to the owners personal history and with it you will also probably know more about the maps history as well. It is sometimes an amazing travel in time to find an owner of a map and than trace his activity with that map over a period of a few years.

The map collector will be interested not only in the historic value of the map but also in the quality of the map making, as some maps from earlier time can clearly show a less developed skill in map making the map can also be used to point to a certain point in cartography history and development. In some cases the collector will be also interested in the overall quality of the map as it will be used on display in a living room or other place, in these cases the historic value is not so much a consideration.

Antique maps are also an item many institutes and businesses look for as an art like item to fit on their walls or offices, these antique maps usually have some kind of relevance to the business or establishment in which they are placed, and demonstrate some kind of connection between the company and its past or geographic roots. Some antique maps are especially wanted in businesses and industries which involve travel like world transport and delivery services.

In any case the market for antique maps is a very busy one with a lot of new buyers entering the

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market every year, the excitement of antique map searching and the connection to naval and military history as well as the development of the craft and art of map making make this a unique niche in antiques and historic item collecting, even the most experienced art or antique collector will always be interested in learning more about antique maps.

Simon Oldmann has been experimenting with internet auction sites for some years now, he is writing about his experience in researching and buying Antiques online, Simon writes articles about Antique Maps at

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