A View of America
A View of America
An Exhibition at the
John Carter Brown Library
Providence, Rhode Island
on the occasion of the
41st Annual Meeting of the Associates
May, 1984
A VIEW OF AMERICA

In 1974 the Library published a pamphlet entitled, *A Selection of 101 Books, Maps, and Prints not in the John Carter Brown Library*. We were gratified to discover that book dealers and friends of the Library accepted the challenge of the treasure hunt implied by the pamphlet, which was presented as a serious but necessarily esoteric want list. Over the last decade, three "101" items were added to the collection, and this year we were fortunate to acquire a fourth, Samuel Copen's view of Bridgetown, Barbados. "101" is now reduced to "97."

To celebrate this notable acquisition, the exhibition on the occasion of the Forty-First Annual Meeting focuses upon early views of the Americas. The prints have been arranged geographically, but they represent general categories of purpose as well---there are pictures that illuminate, pictures that announce events of interest, and those that seek to entice settlers by showing spacious, ordered, "European-like" urban centers in the New World. Many of the most important early views of settlements (sometimes no more than outposts) are an integral part of published accounts of explorers' and colonists' descriptions of life in the Americas; the strength of the Library's written primary source materials insures equivalent strength in the pictorial record.

While great treasures are found in books, others fall into a category called "separates." Intended to stand alone, these prints were designed to capture the attention of an audience and often present a subjective view of events that can be of great value to the scholar. John Carter Brown acquired the Library's first separately published view in 1868 (Savannah, Georgia. Case 2, item 19), and our purchase of the Copen prospect of Bridgetown (Panel 4) continues that tradition. Acquisition of separates has always offered a challenge: unprotected by the covers of a book and often large in format, these pictures have suffered from their
unmanageability and from man's pride in display. Exposure to light and fireplace smoke has taken its toll.

Another category of prints is the "collection." Examples of three very different types are on display in this exhibition—imaginary vues d'optiques from the Collection des Prospects illustrating prospects from the Scenographia Americana that are almost pastoral in feeling; and William Birch's vivid, visual report on the thriving city of Philadelphia.

Maps also are an important source for the documentation of the early years of American urban centers. The earliest published views of New York City and strategically-placed Halifax, Nova Scotia, are an integral part of the cartographic records on which they appear.

These early, sometimes awkward pictures are charming to the modern eye, and it is an easy matter to smile at the gullibility of an audience that accepted crude, often imaginary representations as real. But the difficulty of assimilating the wonders of the New World, of translating the accounts of early discoverers and settlers into graphic representations, should not be underestimated. Managing the unknown and the exotic must have been no easy task for a European eye, and this process of accommodation demonstrates the difficulty of placing new information within traditional frameworks. No matter what the limitations of these prints, it is true that in many cases a picture is, indeed, worth a thousand words.

Exhibition and Catalogue by Susan Danforth.
A View of America

European cities. The origins of only a few of them, however, have actually been identified. The prints shown here were copied from William Woollett's engraved view of the Royal Dock Yard at Deptford, England. Half of that engraving was transformed by Leizel into a view of New York, the other half into a view of Philadelphia.

The North


Crude as it is, this is the foremost item in the iconography of Canadian cities. Drawn by Samuel Champlain, founder of Quebec, the engraving depicts the settlement soon after its establishment in 1608. The first published view of the first permanent settlement in Canada. (See Case 4, item 34 for manuscript drawings by Champlain)


There are very few views that portray Quebec between its founding in 1608 and General Wolfe's siege of 1759. The latter event, however, occasioned many commemorative and "news views." This one, the work of Thomas Johnston of Boston, has been called the earliest and most important American engraved view of the city. Although the advertisement for this print states that it was done "from the latest and most authentic French original," it is actually based on an inset on a map by Nicolas de Fer, published in 1718.


Hochelaga, a fortified Indian town about five or six miles from the St. Lawrence River, was observed by the French to be "near a great mountain, tilled round about, very fertile, from the top of which you may see very far; we called it Mont Real." The plan is based upon the description written by Cartier after his first visit in October, 1535.


This view, the frontispiece in volume two of Edmund Burke's *An Impartial History of the War in America* (Boston, 1781-1784) shows the destruction of Portland, Maine, by British troops. The townspeople had offered no resistance and Moet's apparently unprovoked burning of the settlement outraged Americans. In the author's words, "The burning of churches and libraries is a new species of warfare ... In the most barbarous ages, churches, colleges, and seminaries of learning were held sacred by all parties, and it was never known, that either in the civil wars or in any foreign ones that Englishmen waged war with learning or religion before." In the English edition of the book the narrative remained the same, but this plate did not appear.


In 1603, seventeen years before the Pilgrim settlement, Martin Firing's two ships landed in Plymouth Harbor. He and his men built a "barricado" and stayed seven weeks loading sassafras. One of the seamen played a "gittern," which so attracted the Indians that they came in large numbers to dance to the music.
10. [Paul Revere] *A View of the Town of Boston with Several Ships of War in the Harbour.* [Boston, 1774].

This is the last of three views of Boston drawn and engraved by Paul Revere. It is based on the first, a woodcut that appeared in the Edes and Gill Almanac for 1770, and the second, an engraving issued in 1770. This one made a political statement, obvious from its title, and was executed for the first issue of the *Royal American Magazine.*


Bernard Romans—civil engineer, naturalist, cartographer, and historian—was responsible for an important group of maps of the Revolutionary period. In 1774 and 1775 he was in Boston and engraved this eyewitness report of the Battle of Bunker Hill showing the towns of Boston and Charlestown. The outcome of the battle was of interest to a European audience, and this view was re-engraved in England for British circulation in the following year. Our copy is unusual in that there is an uncolored impression of the plate on the reverse side.

**CASE 2**

**Mid-Atlantic**


A Susquehanna Indian village in what is now Pennsylvania.


Called the "Hartgers view" after the printer of the book, this engraving was for many years regarded as the earliest representation of New Amsterdam (New York). Scholars have determined, however, that this print is essentially an imaginary representation, probably based upon certain plans for the city that were not completely carried out.


This crude woodcut is generally regarded as the first attempt at a view of Philadelphia. It appears at the head of the title page of the initial issue of Andrew Bradford's *American Magazine*, the first periodical published in the British colonies.

15. John Carwitham. *A View of Fort George with the city of New York from the S.W.* [London, after 1764].

The views of American towns engraved by Carwitham were included in the collection of scenes called *Scenographia Americana* (see Panel 1). Although this view was published after 1764, the scene itself dates from about 1731, as can be determined by the locations and appearances of the prominent churches.


This view shows Philadelphia as it was in about 1735.
Carolina and Georgia


Although a plan of Charleston, South Carolina, was printed twenty-eight years before as an inset on a map by Edward Crisp, this plan of the city was the first to be issued separately.


One of the reasons for the settlement of Georgia in 1733 was to provide military outposts along the sensitive frontier with Florida. Sixteen years earlier a similar scheme had been proposed and set forth in this pamphlet by Montgomery. The fortified town shown here was intended to be a part of a buffer zone called the Margravate of Azilia, a feudal scheme that was never realized.


This view of Savannah, the first of its kind, shows the town a year after General Oglethorpe, founder of Georgia, landed in 1733 (his headquarters are shown in the tent near the waterfront). On July 7, 1733, Oglethorpe called the recently arrived settlers to a meeting where he revealed the plans for this, the capital of the new colony. The town grew rapidly; in 1745 the *London Magazine* reported “very near 350 houses ... besides the public buildings ... Many of the Houses are large and handsome.”


Close on the heels of Oglethorpe came a group of German Protestants from Salzburg. In 1736 they established the town of Ebenzer some twenty-five miles above Savannah. After two years, the town was moved six miles to the banks of the Savannah River in order to secure better lands, a more healthful location, and reliable water transportation. New Ebenzer was the center of German culture in Georgia and by 1740 claimed a population of “77 men, 70 women, 60 girls, 42 boys, and 7 maidservants.”

CASE 3

Florida


This engraving of a fortified town of the Florida Indians is taken from a drawing made on the spot by Jacques Le Moyne. “The chief’s dwelling stands in the middle of the town, and is partly underground, in consequence of the sun’s heat. Around this are the houses of the principal men, all lightly roofed with palm branches.”


This is the apocryphal city of Melilot, capital of the Indian kingdom of Apalache. Although usually assigned a location in present-day Florida, it was sometimes placed in
Georgia. According to Rochefort, the kingdom was home to a mysterious band of European Protestants who had been driven from their Virginia colony. This is probably the first printed illustration of a North American utopian city.


Although Spain claimed Florida from the time of its discovery, early attempts to colonize had been unsuccessful. It was left to René de Laudonnière, leader of a group of French Huguenots, to begin the process which was to result in the first permanent settlement in what is now the United States. In 1564 he constructed Fort Caroline just a few miles east of present-day Jacksonville. The plan of the fort in this anonymous account of the colony is probably the first published picture of a European building in this country. Fort Caroline flourished for four years, but in 1568 the Spanish, operating from the newly founded St. Augustine, destroyed the French settlement. This is the only known copy of the book.


This view of the attack on St. Augustine by Drake during his West Indian foray of 1586-1586 is the earliest known view of the oldest continuing European settlement in the United States.


St. Augustine, as it appeared about eighty years after Drake’s attack.

26. Christopher Columbus. De Insulis inventis. [Basle, 1493].

After the wreck of the Santa María off the north coast of Hispaniola on Christmas Day, 1492, Columbus ordered that a "tower and fortress" be built, which he named La Navidad. This was the first European settlement in the New World, which some scholars believe was probably located on a sandy beach about eight miles east of Cap-Haïtien, Haiti. The view shown here, from the illustrated "Columbus Letter," is the earliest representation of that settlement.

27. Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo y Valdés. La historia general de las Indias. Seville, 1535.

These drawings of Indian huts are among the first pictures of buildings on the island of Hispaniola. Oviedo visited America and this general account of the Indies was based upon his personal observations. He also executed other drawings for the book, among which are some of the earliest pictures of the flora and fauna in the New World.


The raid by Sir Francis Drake on the Spanish West Indies in 1585 and 1586 resulted in some of the most widely circulated general views of American cities. This map of Santo Domingo, or Ciudad Trujillo, as it is known today, is one of the earliest plans of the first permanent European city in the New World.

Cap-Haitien is the modern city that stands nearest the site of Columbus’s La Navidad. Founded by the French in 1670 as Cap-François, it became known as the “Paris of the Antilles.” This plan and view of the city was published by the Jesuit missionary Charlevoix in his *Histoire* of 1731.

CASE 4

Mexico

30. *Neue zeittung von dem lande das die Sponier funden haben ym 1521 iare genant Yucatan.* [Augsburg, 1522].

Illustrating a German news plaquette that contains the first printed account of Cortés’s invasion of Mexico, this woodcut is probably the first representation of Mexico City to appear in print. The artist has taken particular pains to show the lake and five bridges of the “Great Venice,” as the Aztec capital was often called.


The Aztec temple is shown here as the center of activity for Mexican Indian civilization. Dancing, burial customs, cooking, astronomical observations, fishing, worship, and human sacrifice are all represented in this composite view.

32. Juan de Tovar. *Historia de la benida de los Yndios apoblair a Mexico de las partes remota de Occidente.* Manuscript executed ca.1583-1587.

One of the prophecies long-remembered by the Aztecs was that their wanderings would cease and a permanent home be established at the place where they should find an eagle perched upon a cactus, devouring either a snake or a smaller bird. About the year 1325 this prophecy was fulfilled on an island in Lake Texcoco. This is an emblematic representation of the event, which later inspired the design of the seal of the City of Mexico.


Mexico City, Tenochtitlan as it was called by the Aztecs, was completely destroyed by the Spanish in 1521. This plan of the city as Cortés saw it is the earliest map of an American city. It appears in the Latin edition of Cortés’s report to Charles V.

34. Samuel de Champlain. *Brief Discours des choses plus Remarquables que Sammuel Champlain de Brouage a Reconeues aux Indes occidentales.* Manuscript executed about 1602 or 1603.

Mexico City as it appeared about 1600 is shown in this original watercolor drawing by Samuel Champlain, better known for his later exploits in Canada. Champlain first visited the New World in a voyage (1599-1601) which took him to the West Indies and Mexico about eighty years after the Spanish conquest. Champlain was a competent artist, and this manuscript journal is filled with his illustrations.

When this view was engraved in about 1670, Mexico City was already more than 350 years old. Shown here is the result of 130 years of Spanish building on the ruins of the earlier Aztec civilization.

Peru

36. Francisco de Xeres. *[Verdadera relacion de la conquista del Peru.]* Seville, 1534.

In contemporary reports of the conquest of Peru, the event that most impressed Europeans was the Christian instruction given the Inca King Atahualpa by Fray Vicente de Valverde. The event is depicted on the title page of this account of the conquest written by Pizarro's secretary, Francisco Xeres. The fortress on the rise of ground is part of the defenses of the town of Calamarca in northern Peru, where the Spaniards captured (and ultimately executed) the king. Described by Xeres, this is probably the earliest picture of a building in South America.


A view of Cusco, the remarkable capital of the Inca civilization, was printed for the first time with a report by Pero Sancho, an official of the new Spanish possessions. Although it was written in 1534, it remained unpublished until its appearance in Venice in Ramusio's account of 1556. Based on verbal descriptions of the city rather than actual observation, it served as the prototype for illustrations of Cusco for many years to come.


Throughout the sixteenth century the "treasures of the Indies" played an important role in the Spanish economy. The most important single source of that treasure was the silver mine at Potosí in Bolivia, discovered in 1545. This is the earliest picture of the most famous mine of the New World.


In 1535 Pizarro founded the city of Lima and gave it the impressive name Ciudad de los Reyes. This view of Callao, the port of Lima, may also contain the first printed view of Lima itself. The buildings edging over the hills could represent nothing else. The engraving appears in the Dutch account of Joris van Spilbergen's voyage around the world in 1619 in the section describing his raids on the west coast of South America.


Pizarro laid out Lima with a great deal of care. It became the leading city of South America, and its position as the principal port of the west coast made it one of the wealthiest and handsomest of the Spanish colonial cities. Unfortunately, it was built near one of the world's major earthquake faults. Damaged a number of times, it was almost entirely destroyed on October 23, 1746. This map
A View of America

shows the city at the height of its glory just before that event.

CASES 5 and 6

The West


This has been called "the second known view" of Pittsburgh, and it may be the earliest one engraved. It was drawn in 1796 by a member of the party of General Victor Collot, a French officer who was instructed by his government to survey the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers. His account and the accompanying atlas of maps and plates were not offered for sale until 1826. The printing had been completed before the General's death in 1805, but the unbound sheets were suppressed for political reasons.


The first permanent European settlement in Texas, modern San Antonio originally consisted of the standard three elements that made up a Spanish frontier town: *presidios* for the military establishment, *pueblos* for the civil population, and *misiones* for the Indians. On this map, drawn forty-six years after its founding in 1718, are shown the string of missions which grew up along the river. The first and best known, the Mission of San Antonio de Valero, or "The Alamo," can be seen directly across the river from the *presidio*.

43. Thomas Pownall. *A Design to represent the beginning and completion of an American Settlement or Farm*. London, 1761.

The progress from primitive surroundings on the left to the mansion and gardens and plowed fields on the right bank of the river provides a graphic portrayal of the American dream.


A view of Bethlehem by Governor Thomas Pownall shows the rich Pennsylvania countryside settled some years earlier by the Moravian followers of Count Zinzendorf.

Panel 1 - Scenographia Americana

In 1768 John Bowles published a collection of views of American scenes. Although some of them had been issued earlier as separates or as parts of smaller sets, this group of twenty-eight prints is known collectively as *Scenographia Americana*, or a Collection of Views in North America and the West Indies. Engraved in the somewhat romantic English landscape manner and often out of date when issued, these views were based upon drawings that were done on the spot, usually by military artists. One of the contributors was Thomas Pownall, governor of the colony of Massachusetts from 1757 to 1760. An enlightened and sympathetic administrator, Pownall's other talents included a taste for scientific observation (ocean currents and the Gulf Stream) and artistic ability (See Case 6, items 43 and 44).
45. Captain Ince. *A View of Louisbourg in North America*, taken near the Lighthouse when that City was besieged in 1758. [London] 1762.

Called the "Gibraltar of America," Louisbourg on Cape Breton Island was the scene of a number of bitter military actions between France and England during the eighteenth century. This view shows the final siege by the British in 1758.


Montreal as it appeared when it passed from the possession of France into the hands of Great Britain.


A view of the town of Boston drawn about 1760 from the vantage point of Castle William, later known as Fort Independence.


This picture of New York City was drawn in about 1764 by Captain Howdell at a point near the East River in the approximate location of the La Guardia housing project. The particular view of lower Manhattan chosen by the artist is now effectively obstructed by the East Side Highway and the approaches to the Manhattan Bridge.


A View of Charleston as it was about 1760.

50. Elias Durnford. *A View of the Market Place in the City of Havana.* London [ca.1768].

Havana as it appeared in about 1760.

Panel 2 - Birch Views of Philadelphia


The Birch views of Philadelphia constitute one of the most complete pictorial records of an eighteenth-century city in existence. The twenty-eight engravings in this series document the beginning of a new nation and the coming of age of its most successful urban center. This is the first collection of American city views ever published. Celebratory in intent, Philadelphia is shown as a modern, thriving, commercial center.

51. The City & Port of Philadelphia, on the River Delaware from Kensington.

52. Preparation for War to defend Commerce. The Swedish Church Southwark with the building of the Frigate Philadelphia.
53. State-House Garden, Philadelphia

54. South East Corner of Third, and Market Streets, Philadelphia.


57. The Water Works, in Centre Square Philadelphia.


59. Pennsylvania Hospital, in Pine Street Philadelphia.

Panel 3 - City Views on Maps

Many significant views of American cities appear on maps. Decorative enhancement of the cartographic record, they also serve to "inhabit" the wilderness while placing often sparsely settled territories within a social context. Growing civic pride is expressed in the architectural renderings of important buildings such as Scull and Heap's elevation of the Philadelphia State House (Independence Hall). By the nineteenth century, this kind of detail had become a necessary requirement for "proper" cartographic presentation.

60. Nicolas Visscher. Novi Belgii Novaque Angliae nec non Partis Virginiae Tabula. [Amsterdam, ca.1651].

The inset at the bottom of this map is now generally regarded as the earliest known view of New York City. Called the "Visscher view" after the publisher of the map, it depicts the city as it must have appeared about 1650. It is possible to date the delineation because of the absence of Fort Rasmus on the Delaware, which was not built until 1651. It has been suggested that the view may be the work of Augustine Herrman, who lived in both New York and Maryland during the seventeenth century.

61. Joachim Ottens. Totius Neobelligii Nova et Accuratissima Tabula. [Amsterdam, ca.1740].

This view of New Amsterdam was probably drawn about 1673, just after the recapture of the city by the Dutch from the English in August of that year. It is called the "Restitutio" view after the name given to the map. The twenty-year development of the city can be traced by comparing this with the Visscher view of 1651.

The French fortress of Louisbourg on Cape Breton Island was captured by the British in 1745 but was returned in 1748 under the terms of the treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle. To offset this threat to security, the English established the town of Halifax, Nova Scotia, in 1749. About 1750 James Turner, an English engraver newly arrived in the colonies, satisfied Bostonians' need for news of events to the North by publishing this map. The cartouche shows the building of Halifax.


The general map shows the strategic location of Halifax with its superb natural harbor. The "View from ye Topmasthead" pictures the newly built town with trees still growing close to the palisades, a dangerous condition that was soon remedied. This view was probably drawn by eighteen-year-old Moses Harris, a naturalist and artist who later published several books on entomology illustrated with his own drawings.


This, the most popular early map of William Penn's "Greene Country Towne," has two claims to distinction. Published in 1752, it is the first printed map to show how Philadelphia developed from the original plan. It also contains the first view of the State House, or Independence Hall. The building had not yet been completed, which accounts for the precarious manner in which Heap drew the as yet unfinished belfry.

Panel 4 - Bridgetown, Barbados


This is the first large panoramic view of an English colony in America. Among the most perishable printed Americana are the large panoramic views of colonial towns; their very size made survival difficult. This one of Bridgetown was executed by a Dutch artist showing the settlement after it had been well established and had become a flourishing colonial center. Only two other copies of this print have been recorded.
The picture depicts a harbor scene with various ships and buildings in the background. The text in the image reads: "The shoar of the Mouth of the Hoole."