

# The American Revolution in Maps

PATRICK McLAUGHLIN

THE SCHOLARLY RESEARCH AND PUBLICATION stimulated by the upcoming United States bicentennial celebration already has produced a number of valuable works on source materials. Maps, ordinarily one of our most neglected classes of documents, have been receiving something like their fair share of attention. The six works reviewed here are a mixed bag, varying greatly in length and content, but all of them are valuable for the light they shed on the acquisition and documentation of geographic intelligence during the Revolutionary period. Included are a detailed study of one of the most important of those mapmakers, Lewis Evans; a campaign memoir richly illustrated with contemporary maps; catalogs describing two American map collections notable for their Revolutionary War materials; an index to maps used as illustrations in books and journal articles on the Revolution; and finally, a folio of Revolutionary War map and chart facsimiles, accompanied by an extensive gazetteer of contemporary place names culled from the maps.

Walter Klinefelter's monographic study, *Lewis Evans and His Maps*, brings to light a number of obscure, but significant, aspects of surveying and mapmaking in the colonies. Particularly interesting is the picture we get of the mapmaker as entrepreneur and political arbiter. In those days before industrial specialization the

Assistant director of the Cartographic Archives Division of the National Archives, the author has published several cartobibliographical aids as well as several articles on military history. The works he examines here are Walter Klinefelter, *Lewis Evans and His Maps*, *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, New Series, vol. 61, part 7 (July 1971); Howard C. Rice and Anne S. K. Brown, *The American Campaigns of Rochambeau's Army, 1780-1783* (Princeton: Princeton University Press and Brown University Press, 1972); *Research Catalog of Maps of America to 1860 in the William L. Clements Library*, Univ. of Michigan (Boston: G. K. Hall and Company, 1972); *The Library Map Collection: Period of the American Revolution, 1753-1800*, Department of the Army, United States Military Academy (West Point, N.Y.: U. S. Military Academy, 1971); David Sanders Clark, *Index to Maps of the American Revolution in Books and Periodicals* (Washington, D.C.: mimeographed by the author, 1969); and *The American Revolution, 1775-1783: An Atlas of 18th Century Maps and Charts*, Department of the Navy, Naval History Division (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1972).

commercial cartographer not only had to compile and draft his maps, but oftentimes as well was involved in the engraving, printing, and marketing of the product. The author quotes an Evans newspaper advertisement for a new edition of one of his maps:

The Erecting of four new Counties in Pensilvania, and the Correction of some Mistakes which had escaped the former Impression, have made this Edition necessary. The Purchasers of the first Impression may have their Copies, tho' torn or defaced, exchanged for new Ones; the colour'd Ones at Five Shillings, and the plain Ones at Two Shillings and Six-pence each. And note, that no Copies shall be exchanged after the last day of August next.

An occupational hazard for the cartographer was the controversial delineation of disputed boundary lines. Many of the colonial boundaries were moot, having never actually been surveyed on the ground; the hapless mapmaker, regardless of the interpretation he gave those lines, was likely to find himself subject to the wrath of one colonial dignitary or another. Evans's unfortunate involvement in such a dispute between Thomas Penn, Proprietor of Pennsylvania, and Lord Baltimore of Maryland was typical.

Though Lewis Evans died twenty years before the Revolution, his maps of the Middle Atlantic region not only continued to be reprinted and widely used during the war, but they remained in print, in various revisions and editions, for several decades thereafter. Beyond the important cartographic work he accomplished, however, Evans deserves close study for the relationships he maintained with prominent scientists, businessmen, and political figures of the period. In researching this biography, Klinefelter has made excellent use of the papers and publications of those men, as well as of the Pennsylvania colonial records. Altogether, this monograph is an admirable piece of work, though it cannot be considered the successor to Lawrence Henry Gipson, *Lewis Evans* (1939) as the definitive Evans biography. The earlier work also was well written and researched, and it included as well a number of very useful facsimile reproductions of Evans maps and treatises.

In *The American Campaigns of Rochambeau's Army: 1780, 1781, 1782, 1783*, the university presses of Princeton and Brown have given us two volumes of very substantial documentary editing graced by illustrative plates that are as fine as anything produced by the American book industry today. This handsome work, printed by the Meriden Gravure Company, Meriden, Connecticut, does particularly well by the extensive series of maps, which are always difficult documents to reproduce in facsimile. These are in volume

two, the work of principal interest here. Included are 177 color and black-and-white plates showing views, town plans, and maps relating to the French Army's operations during the Revolution. Many of these maps have seldom, if ever, been reproduced in facsimile or book form, and the volume, consequently, is a valuable addition to the relatively sparse literature on Revolutionary War mapping, much of which has been concerned with the work of British and American cartographers.

The graphics section of the volume is preceded by translations of the army's marching itineraries from Rhode Island to Virginia and by a very knowledgeable introductory discussion of the development during the eighteenth century of a corps of topographical engineers (*ingénieurs géographes*) in the French army, separate from the traditional military engineers (*Corps Royal du Génie*). This emphasis on surveying and mapping, and the growth of a separate agency for those functions, foreshadowed and strongly influenced identical developments in the United States Army during the following century. In the decades before the Civil War, West Point graduated scores of trained engineer officers who were to be instrumental in solidifying the nation's grasp on its continental empire and in uniting its far-flung territories with vast transportation and communications networks. Those officers learned their surveying and mapping directly from French texts and from at least one actual veteran of the French military engineers—Claudius Crozet, a founder of the engineering curriculum at the Point.

The editors, Howard C. Rice, Jr., and Anne S. K. Brown, indicate that in devoting almost an entire volume to maps, they hope to present a work that "may henceforth serve as a starting point for any serious study of the French participation in the American Revolution by bringing events closer to the realities of time and place." This perceptive approach reveals an insight that unfortunately is still uncommon among historians—that contemporary graphics can lend an immediacy to an historical study not so easily elicited from the printed page.

Historians of colonial and revolutionary America owe philanthropist William L. Clements an immense debt of gratitude. At a time when it was still possible to acquire major collections of early maps, he invested great sums of his own time and money in helping build for the University of Michigan a cartographic collection that, as its curator Douglas Marshall rightly points out, can no longer be duplicated at any cost. It is easy to take for granted the few large map collections we have in America, but historically maps have had a notoriously poor survival rate, and we have been left, consequently,

with large gaps in the history of cartography, exploration, and the development of man's geographic perception.

Much of the geographic dimension of the American Revolution, fortunately, is preserved for us in the rich collections of the Clements Library, which include maps and sketches from the papers of several prominent British generals and statesmen. These materials are described in the *Research Catalog of Maps of America to 1860 in the William L. Clements Library*. This massive four-volume work describes over 20,000 maps, many of them from the colonial and revolutionary periods. Volumes one and two are a combined cartographer/title catalog, while volumes three and four form a geographic area catalog. In the latter the geographic areas are arranged in straight alphabetical sequence, with no hierarchical breakdown by region and locale. This system is less than congenial to a professional geographer, but the consequent problems of access to maps of adjacent and related areas are diminished by the liberal use of tracings and cross-reference cards. Physically these volumes are no esthetic triumph, using as they do the now-familiar technique of photoreproducing batches of actual catalog cards laid out in sequence and reducing or enlarging each image to a suitable page size. The method is, however, functional, relatively quick, and inexpensive. If the Clements staff had waited to arrange and edit this catalog for a letterpress edition, we might not have seen it for another five or ten years, if indeed they could find the funds for such an expensive project. I, for one, am happy to have works like this available at the earliest possible time, regardless of format.

In citing next the U.S. Military Academy's eighty-two-page list *The Library Map Collection: Period of the American Revolution, 1753-1800*, no invidious comparison with the very extensive Clements catalog is intended. Logical organization and clear presentation, rather than size, should be the measure of any finding aid, and this competent list meets those criteria easily. A small but valuable collection of 185 maps is described by geographical region; the breakdown includes maps of North America, Canada, New England, and the Middle Atlantic region, West Point and vicinity, the South Atlantic region, and the area west of the Appalachians. A final section describes and lists the individual sheets in four important contemporary atlases—the Jefferys atlas, Sayer & Bennett's *American Military Pocket Atlas*, volume 1 (North America) of the 1764 French *Atlas Maritime . . .* by J. N. Bellin, and John Rocque's *A Set of Plans and Forts in North America. . .* The individual sheets in these atlases are described also under the regional categories and are cited in the index. Marie T. Capps and Theodore G.

Stroup are to be commended for their work on this list; the library of the Military Academy, though well known as a source of materials for American military history, is one of a number of institutions with valuable collections of maps that might go unnoticed by researchers were it not for the publication of finding aids like this one.

Though David Sanders Clark's *Index to Maps of the American Revolution in Books and Periodicals* has been around for four years, it still, as a private issuance lacking national advertising and distribution, merits notice; it is likely that many librarians and scholars are not yet aware of this work, which has considerable reference and research value. An expanded edition of the volume will be published in the spring of 1974 by the Kennikat Press. Clark has surveyed over five hundred major Revolutionary War histories and a large number of journal articles, selected pertinent maps, and indexed them by date, subject, and author, under an overall geographical scheme. The New Jersey entries, typically, include a section of general maps of the colony, followed by sections on "Towns and Localities," "Roads," and "Military Operations." The last is further subdivided by years, 1776 through 1781, and thereunder by specific campaigns and battles. A sizable index facilitates quick reference to specific topics and locales.

The virtue of this volume is that it provides the Revolutionary War researcher, assuming he is near a large library, ready access to maps of most aspects of the conflict, particularly the military operations. Like all good bibliographical aids it is a time-saver, and it exhibits a great deal of skill and perseverance on the part of the author.

As I have noted earlier, collections of early maps in America, particularly from the colonial and revolutionary periods, are few and scattered. It therefore behooves those of us who have custody of such materials to make them as widely available as possible, through the compilation of finding aids and the publication of facsimile reprints. The Naval History Division's *The American Revolution, 1775-1783: An Atlas of 18th Century Maps and Charts* is an excellent example of the latter. This folio of twenty printed facsimiles of maps and charts obviously was developed for the naval historian, but, as it includes complete or partial copies of a number of the maps most widely used during the war, it should be of interest to any scholar concerned with the Revolution. The selection and annotation of the maps by W. Bart Greenwood was well conceived and executed, and the physical production of the facsimiles is superb. The Naval History Division wisely contracted the printing job to a private firm familiar with the intricacies of map reproduction—the

Meriden Gravure Company, cited earlier for its work on the Rochambeau volumes. The resulting facsimile sheets are clean and crisp and virtually as legible as the originals.

A big bonus in the package is Barbara Lynch's gazetteer to colonial place-names appearing on the maps. Only another bibliographer or map librarian can appreciate the effort involved in selecting and indexing names directly from maps, but I am sure historians will be grateful to Lynch for her painstaking work on this project. An informative state-of-the-art essay on eighteenth-century surveying and mapping, by Louis DeVorse, Jr., prominent historian of cartography, introduces the atlas and gazetteer.

If this folio is, as I hope it will be, the first in a series by the Naval History Division, I offer two small suggestions. The cardboard map folder with the general distribution set is flimsy and unworthy of the overall production; a more substantial leatherette folder would be a great improvement and would be worth a reasonable price increase. Also, the initial press run of 1,500 seems exceedingly short considering the potential demand in the United States for historical facsimiles, particularly of maps and charts. I suspect that next time the division will need to triple or quadruple that number.

At the beginning of this essay I noted that Bicentennial studies had helped stimulate renewed interest in graphic historical documents in America. Considering the antiquity of the event, as American history is measured, we are fortunate that the cartographic survivals of the Revolution are as numerous as they are. In addition to the holdings of the West Point Library and the Clements Library, discussed above, valuable collections of Revolutionary maps also exist in the Geography and Map Division of the Library of Congress; the Map Division of the New York Public Library; the New-York Historical Society; the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University; the American Philosophical Society; and the Newberry Library in Chicago. The National Archives has a modest collection of Revolutionary period maps, which are described in its Special List No. 26, *Pre-Federal Maps in the National Archives*. This list will be revised soon to include additional items, among which will be a number of maps turned up during the indexing of the papers of the Continental Congresses. Source materials, therefore, though widely scattered and undoubtedly incomplete, are available to the researcher attracted to the rewarding and relatively untilled field of cartographic history (and the history of cartography, a related but somewhat different field). Several developments of recent years lead me to believe that by 1976, perhaps a little later, we may have a fairly substantial cartographic history of the Revolution. The geo-



graphic profession in America, logically a major source of expertise in the history and use of maps, turned away in the early 1970's from its preoccupation with statistical manipulation, model-building, and other stylish abstractions, and began to display a renewed interest in the geographical dimensions of historical problems. The annual meeting of the Association of American Geographers, held in Boston in April, 1971, featured a series of sessions on historical geography that were attended by surprisingly large and enthusiastic audiences. Many of that same group of geographer-historians met again in the fall of 1971 at the Conference on The National Archives and Research in Historical Geography, held in Washington. Several papers on early American mapping were presented at the Archives conference, and the attendees took home with them a series of resource papers describing cartographic documents in the custody of The National Archives.

An outgrowth of these two meetings and the subsequent renaissance of historical geography studies in the United States was the establishment at San Fernando Valley State College in California of the *Historical Geography Newsletter*, which features descriptive and analytical articles on early maps and facsimile reproduction of particularly significant items. A group of longer standing, the Society for the History of Discoveries, began publishing its journal—*Terrae Incognitae*—in 1970. Drawing its membership from a wide range of academic disciplines the Society has the history of cartography as one of its major interests, and at its Washington meeting in November, 1973, the Society's members presented a number of papers on the mapping of the Revolution and other periods of early American history. A third focal area for the study of early cartography is the Hermon Dunlap Smith Center for the History of Cartography at the Newberry Library in Chicago. Though the Center's fine series of monographs on early mapping, begun in 1971, has concentrated thus far on the 15th and 16th centuries, the Newberry is also the home of Lester J. Cappon's *Atlas of Early American History*, a project both historians and geographers are following with great interest. With sources available, then, and interest in this neglected field accelerating, we have good reason to expect the mapping and charting of the Revolutionary period to receive considerable scholarly attention in the next few years. The works reviewed in this essay will, hopefully, be followed by other valuable graphic and cartographic studies to accompany and illuminate the more conventional histories of the Revolution that will be rolling off the presses.