

MAPPING A CONTINENT: HISTORICAL ATLAS OF

North America, 1492-1814

by Raymonde Litalien, Jean-Francois Palomino, and Denis Vaugeois,
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This impressive book is a good introduction to the historical cartography of North America. Written by a trio of distinguished Canadian historians and historical cartographers, it offers a synoptic view of a lengthy period in the history of cartography. This edition is a translation of the French original.

The best thing about this book is the reproductions, which are, with a few exceptions probably due to excessive magnification, excellent. Of course, the quality of each map depends to a great extent on the quality and state of the original; these improve in the later chapters. The book includes, in addition to the many maps, many side illustrations that add much to the feel of the book and the immersion into the time period. The text is ably and vividly translated by Käthe Roth, and preserves the lively flavor of the French original.

The book is divided into four sections:

1. Landing in North America, about the discovery of the Americas and early explorations
2. Exploring and Mapping North America, about settlement during the Seventeenth Century
3. Conquering North America, about the settlement up until the time of the British Conquest
4. Crossing North America, which covers a few special topics of later interest.

Thus, the coverage is effectively limited to the time period before the British conquest of French Canada.

The limitations of the book are minor and two-fold. First, the selection of materials in the first three sections seems to favor French-made maps of French North America. This may be a result of the maps available, the research proclivities of the authors, or some combination of the two. Also, the Anglo-American and perhaps the Spanish maps of this era are more widely accessible, and concentrating on those maps that are not readily available elsewhere is an understand-

able allocation of resources. The second, and related limitation, is that the text seems to favor to some degree the French side of the historical story. Positive aspects of the French relations with the First Nations are emphasized, while the English and Spanish are portrayed in a more negative light. Although these limitations restrict somewhat the utility of the book, the excellence of the reproductions and the selection of many undeservedly obscure maps make this book a positive experience.

It is obvious from the moment you open the book that this is a work of love and respect for the field of history and historical cartography. This book is highly recommended for libraries and for anyone who is interested in the cartography of North America.