

## Facsimile Maps and Forgeries

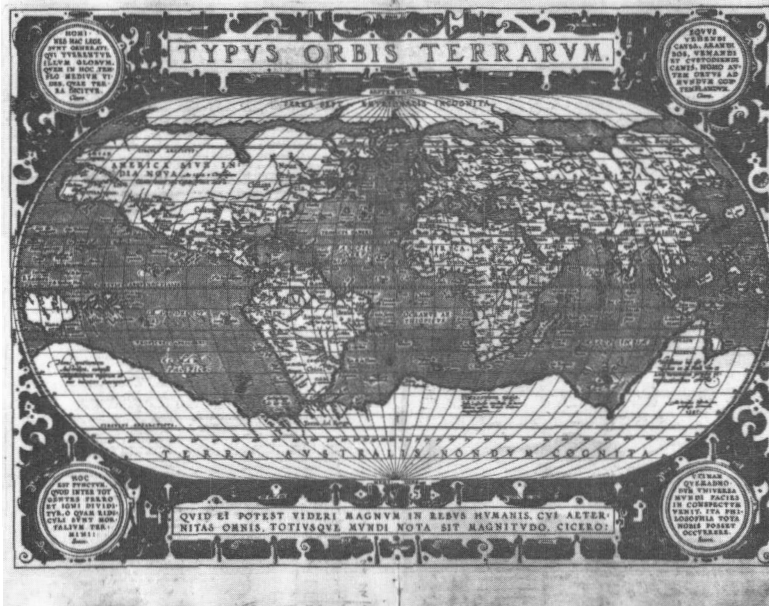
Little has appeared in the pages of *Archivaria* to alert archivists to the existence of forged documents on the market or perhaps already in their collections. Archivists are a trusting lot; a little suspicion would probably help ensure that acquisition funds are always wisely spent and that the archival record left for posterity is unadulterated with forgeries.

A distinction should be made between forgeries or fakes, and reproductions or facsimiles. Reproductions make no pretensions of being originals, whereas forgeries are specifically made to deceive in their close resemblance to the original. Forgeries lack any statement indicating that they are not in fact an original document and the forger attempts to ensure his success by adding an aura of authenticity to the forged document in numerous ways. This note describes a recent experience with a reproduction of a map offered for sale to the National Map Collection of the Public Archives of Canada. The map in question was not purchased but the lessons learned in the examination led the Collection to seek out and buy another reproduction of the map at a nominal price from a European dealer.

The episode began when an Australian map and print dealer sent to the Collection a xerox copy of a well-known 1587 Dutch map of North and South America by Orteluns, stating that the original was available for approximately three hundred dollars. The National Map Collection held an original of the map but, since the map sells for prices up to eight times the amount requested, the information was passed on to a major Canadian map dealer for his consideration. Shortly thereafter, the National Map Collection learned that reproductions of this particular map made to resemble the original were circulating on the market in Europe. The National Map Collection alerted the Canadian dealer to this and when the map arrived, he sent it to the Collection for closer examination. Such an examination provided clear evidence that the map was indeed a reproduction rather than an original. (The dealer decided in spite of this to purchase the map in order to publicize the matter and to display for clients in his shop.)

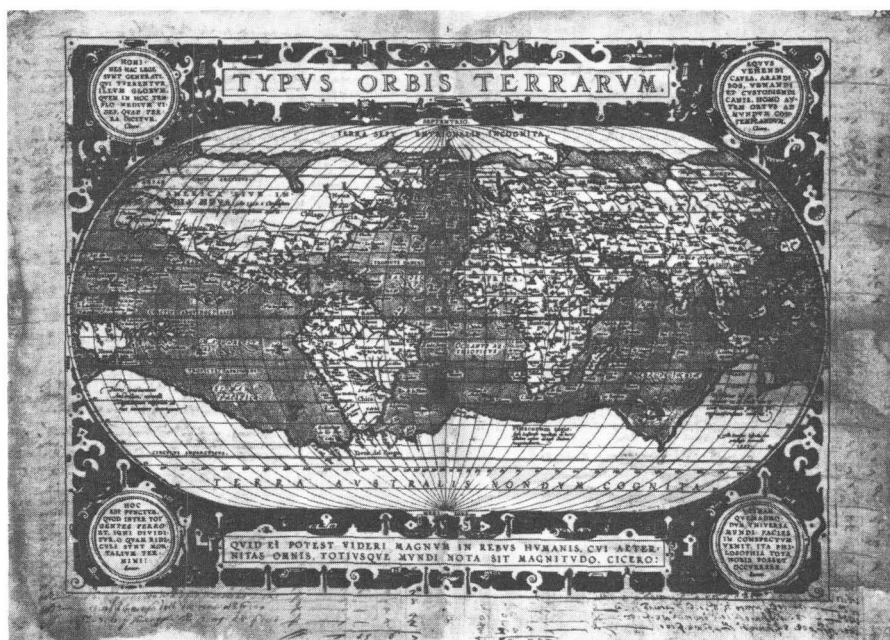
The National Map Collection has acquired another example of this map along with the world map which accompanies it in the atlas *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* by Abraham Ortelius, published from 1570 to 1612. The research done to date on these maps together with some observations and conclusions which may be drawn are detailed below.

1. The map was examined under ultraviolet light. From this it was apparent that writing had been bleached out of the paper before this map was printed onto it. The paper, although old but of indeterminate age, is appropriately laid rather than wove paper, the latter coming into prominence only around the middle of the eighteenth century. That the ink was bleached out is not proof that the map is a reproduction. The high cost of paper for early mapmakers led them to re-use sheets at times and therefore it is conceivable that this paper had been used and bleached before 1612 for re-use.
2. In order to determine whether the paper was produced later than 1612, both sheets were examined on a light table for watermarks. Conveniently, perhaps, neither sheet has a watermark, suggesting that only sheets of paper without a watermark were used. Paper with a watermark well after 1612 would be telling evidence against the map's authenticity.
3. The printed lines on the maps were examined with raking light under high magnification. Maps printed from copper plates have lines which form ridges, caused by the ink which was in the vee-shaped grooves of the copper plate. These lines appear markedly different from the flat lines produced by modern offset printing processes. Flat lines rather than the ridges which should have been present appeared on the maps. A comparison of the lines rendered by the two processes also shows a significant qualitative difference; engraved lines are much crisper and cleaner than lines produced by the offset process (see illustration).



*The reproduction of the 1587 Ortelius map photographed under normal light. (Public Archives of Canada, National Map Collection)*

4. The map image of each map was measured. Although paper shrinks and expands when wetted and dried, the difference of 11 mm. over a width of less than 500 mm. seemed like a suspiciously large difference, although this did not provide any conclusive evidence.
5. The paper on which both maps were printed has sets of holes about four inches apart along the centre fold, indicating that the paper had been sewn into a binding at one time. This would be unusual for maps since they are almost invariably glued to strips of paper or guards which are in turn sewn into the binding. This technique allows maps to lie flat when the volume was open.
6. The plate mark, which is the depression line caused by the pressing of the copper plate against the paper in the printing process, was measured on the maps being examined and the originals in the Collection. The fact that the maps being examined had plate measurements one-quarter of an inch larger than those of the originals provided the final critical evidence that the maps were reproductions. Plates have in some circumstances in the past been reduced in size and although conceivable in this case, it was highly unlikely. Another small piece of evidence related to the plate mark was also found. When a plate is inked, some may adhere to the edge of the plate and leave a fine line when printing occurs. On an original, this line would of course coincide with the plate mark. Here, however, the plate mark occurred one-eighth of an inch beyond the line, indicating that a photographic process was used in preparing the reproduction of the map. The plate mark was added later by simply pressing a metal plate slightly larger than the map image against the paper. Without a plate mark, the producer of the map or a vendor could have had little success in passing it off as an original engraving.



*The same map, photographed under ultraviolet light. The writing, which had been bleached out of the paper before the map was printed, becomes apparent under this light. (Public Archives of Canada, National Map Collection)*

One major piece of research still to be undertaken is an examination of the ink used to print the map. It will probably prove to be twentieth-century ink. In conclusion, the map is not a forgery but a good photographic reproduction. The producer did his best to produce a map that was only with difficulty distinguishable from the original. For example, the map carried no statement indicating that it was a reproduction. Whether the producer was fraudulent cannot be determined; the vendor's role is therefore one of either fraudulence or ignorance.

Perhaps the best stance for archivists to take in these matters is to assume that every map acquired is a forgery, and to relinquish this assumption only when adequate evidence has been found to warrant it.

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