

# The New Map of Empire: How Britain Imagined America before Independence

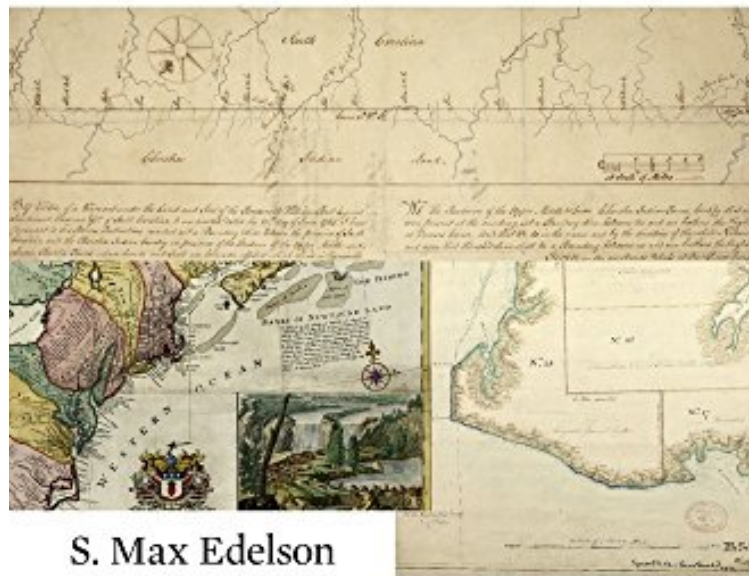
S. Max Edelson

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## The New Map of Empire

HOW BRITAIN IMAGINED AMERICA BEFORE INDEPENDENCE



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S. Max Edelson : The New Map of Empire: How Britain Imagined America before Independence before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The New Map of Empire: How Britain Imagined America before Independence:

2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. A Long Overdue BookBy Benjamin SacksI loved this book. If you have any interest in maps, cartography, or empire, this should be at the top of your list. "The New Map of Empire" is one of the best books on cartography I've read in years. Edelson clearly spent years painstakingly researching hundreds of maps to reconstruct how Britain's multitude of institutions, who often seemed more concerned with backstabbing their cross-town rivals than actually managing the colonies, tried - and, in the Thirteen Colonies, at least, failed - to extend and exert both familiar and new kinds of authority over their subjects. His chapters on Canada and the Caribbean are particularly illuminating. They certainly deepened my understanding of how other, non-Thirteen Colonies possessions in North America were mapped, controlled, and understood in the tumultuous years between the Seven Years War and the American Revolution. While the book could have done with more inset maps, especially to visualize some of Britain's economic and social plans (e.g., on the Rosalij Estate), I think his development of a website to store them is a useful alternative. I hope his work, too, spurs similar efforts on French and Spanish colonies.

2 of 13 people found the following review helpful. Utterly DreadfulBy RebeccaAs an academic Ive always had a high tolerance for books that most people would consider dull. Indeed, many of my favorite works books that I reread on a regular basis are a source of dread even to others in academia. This book This book taught me that there is a limit to what I can endure. Dry, jargon filled sentences that circle back on themselves. Probably to hide the fact that the author has essentially nothing to say. If you value your time, if you value your sanity, if you value good scholarship, please stay away from this dreadful book.

After the Treaty of Paris ended the Seven Years War in 1763, British America stretched from Hudson Bay to the Florida Keys, from the Atlantic coast to the Mississippi River, and across new islands in the West Indies. To better rule these vast dominions, Britain set out to map its new territories with unprecedented rigor and precision. Max Edelson's *The New Map of Empire* pictures the contested geography of the British Atlantic world and offers new explanations of the causes and consequences of Britain's imperial ambitions in the generation before the American Revolution. Under orders from King George III to reform the colonies, the Board of Trade dispatched surveyors to map far-flung frontiers, chart coastlines in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, sound Florida's rivers, parcel tropical islands into plantation tracts, and mark boundaries with indigenous nations across the continental interior. Scaled to military standards of resolution, the maps they produced sought to capture the essential attributes of colonial space: their natural capacities for agriculture, navigation, and commerce and give British officials the knowledge they needed to take command over colonization from across the Atlantic. Britain's vision of imperial control threatened to displace colonists as meaningful agents of empire and diminished what they viewed as their greatest historical accomplishment: settling the New World. As London's mapmakers published these images of order in breathtaking American atlases, Continental and British forces were already engaged in a violent contest over who would control the real spaces they represented. Accompanying Edelson's innovative spatial history of British America are online visualizations of more than 250 original maps, plans, and charts.

*The New Map of Empire* rests on massive archival research and a close and sensitive appreciation of more than 250 maps, presented online in an ingenious digital atlas. With great clarity and force, Edelson describes how an activist Board of Trade initiated this surge of mapping to forge a new sense of the connectedness of British empire. For all their promise as tools of imperial power, Edelson shows, these maps frequently camouflaged imperial weaknesses. In their turn, American Revolutionaries were able to convert this British cartographic bonanza to their own warlike, administrative, imperial, and ideological purposes after 1776. (Linda Colley, author of *Captives: Britain, Empire, and the World, 1600-1850*) *The New Map of Empire* makes a major contribution to our understanding of colonial America. Edelson has compiled an extraordinary collection of maps that illuminate the British Atlantic world, and puts them in context superbly to describe the empire's wider cartographic history. The companion website featuring these maps is quite simply spectacular. By telling the story of the officials, surveyors, and army and navy officers who mapped America, Edelson reveals the crucial role played by the Crown in the coming of the American Revolution. (Eliga H. Gould, author of *Among the Powers of the Earth: The American Revolution and the Making of a New World Empire*) About the Author S. Max Edelson is Associate Professor of History at the University of Virginia.