



The World

AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

ARTICLE BY CAROLINE WALLROCK OF WICK ANTIQUES

Nowadays it might seem incredible that, as late as the 1300s, Man believed the world was flat and that sailors departing for the unknown might drop off the end. Brave, enquiring minds were persecuted and even put to death for daring to think otherwise, despite the fact that the first known globe was made by Crates of Mallus in the 2nd century BC and Aristotle proved the world was round over 2,000 years ago by noticing the round shadow of the earth during an eclipse of the moon. In 1492 Martin Behaim of Nuremberg made the oldest western globe still in existence today but there were large expanses of sea to the West. Coincidentally Christopher Columbus and Amerigo Vespucci voyaged to the New World in that same year, although they initially hoped they had arrived in the Orient, and gradually some of the gaps in the known world's surface were filled in.

This heralded the beginning of the

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golden age of sail where immense political power, sovereign territorial gain and untold wealth would be concentrated in the hands of those who controlled the high seas, especially the routes to the West; Portugal, Spain, the Netherlands, France and Britain. The dawn of maritime dominance coincided with the development of the printing press and immediately posed the challenge of producing a constantly changing world in the round. Monarchs and statesmen, explorers and buccaneers, clergymen and merchants all wanted the most up-to-date information. In addition, alongside their charts and hand-held instruments, navigators needed a different set of maps - those of the stars.

Enter the globe makers. The earliest globes were hand drawn or sometimes incised by cartographers directly onto metal

spheres, often silver or gold. These were very costly, the preserve of royalty or the nobility. As demand grew scholars, scientists, engravers, printers and craftsmen combined to create a complex series of gores or elliptical strips of paper which could be printed in the flat, hand coloured and then carefully trimmed and pasted onto a globe which in turn was set into a stand which not only allowed it to be spun on its axis but also revolved to show both hemispheres. Meanwhile astronomers captured the scatter of constellations across the skies and translated it onto a corresponding sphere; initially these were concave to mirror the heavens as seen from earth.

For the next 400 years returning explorers and sea captains would provide globe makers with their ships' logs and detailed diaries leading to proud declarations of up-to-the minute papers for example "compiled from the most recent authentic surveys of British and foreign navigators and travellers," or "all the Fixed Stars, Nebulae and Clusterstogether with the additional Stars noticed in the recent Catalogue of the British Association", or "with

Fig 5. 'Philips' Thirty-Inch Globe, Rand McNally & Company, San Francisco, Chicago, New York. Circa 1910.
(Photograph courtesy of Wick Antiques)



Figure 3. Detail of a Celestial Globe by Loring and Joslin.
(Photograph courtesy of Wick Antiques)

added, civil engineer Miles Berry, and the company became Newton, Son and Berry. After 1841 ownership passed to the eldest son William Edward Newton (1818-79).

But what was happening on the other side of the Atlantic? Initially Americans relied on English maps and globes, but Independence and also greater mapping of central and western N. America required a domestic product. James Wilson (1763-1855) started the ball rolling, literally, with solid wood spheres covered in papers he researched in the Encyclopaedia Britannica. Having taught himself every aspect of globe making and even having made all the machines required, Wilson made his first “New American Thirteen Inch Globe” in 1810 and was running a full factory by 1815. Incidentally this was also the year in which Harvard College first listed a knowledge of Geography as an entry requirement. His globes charted the steady increase of States seeking entry into the Union and some have the prime meridian running through Washington.

So now globes had evolved from luxury status symbols to classroom essentials and educational tools. Two Boston booksellers, Joseph Loring and Gilman Joslin (Figures 3 & 4) seized the chance to market globes alongside their printed maps and atlases and rose to such prominence that the former was awarded a silver medal in 1838 (although the globes themselves were made and engraved by W. Annin and G. Smith.)

By 1872, in Chicago, Rand McNally were cutting production and labour costs, by using full colour printing and cerog-

raphy, an innovative wax-engraving print technique, so successfully that they quickly became, and remain to this day, one of the best known map publishing companies in the United States. Figure 5 shows a very impressive ‘Philips’ 30-Inch terrestrial globe c1910 in a walnut stand with four fluted columns joined by shaped stretchers carved with bold acanthus scrolls.

America also produced the first female globe innovator. In 1875 governess Ellen Eliza Fitz obtained a patent for a globe stand which was able to show the position of the sun and the length of days, nights, and even twilight for the whole year.

Cook’s voyages completed the gaps in our knowledge of the Earth’s coastlines. The great 19th century explorers filled in the blank spaces of central Africa and the Polar Regions and by the 20th century scientists and explorers were turning their energies to the moon, nearby planets and distant galaxies. Global satellite navigation systems and the internet have replaced globes as a means of navigation and education but the allure of these spheres as snapshots of a different era still remains. It is fascinating to find a globe where Australia is New Holland or there is no Lake Victoria. The rise and fall of nations and Empires are mapped out in changing names and borders, when did the Indian Territory become Eastern Oklahoma or Newfoundland and Labrador join Canada. When did Yugoslavia disappear or Myanmar emerge? Great milestones in our development are often noted on globes, sometimes by hand; like the position of the first transatlantic telegraphic cable,

the flights of the Graf Zeppelin and the Lindbergh, the construction of the Suez and Panama canals and even man-made islands in the shape of palm trees. Likewise as symbols of wealth and good taste, as examples of timeless elegance reflecting the style and fashions of bygone eras, globes have retained their cachet.

If you want to touch the stars, if you

want the world at your fingertips, invest in a globe. ■

Wick Antiques stock a whole host of globes, all shapes and sizes. Please enquire for more details. Find us at:

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Figure 4. A pair of Loring and Gilman globes on unusual tripod stands. Circa 1875

(Photograph courtesy of Wick Antiques)