



PRIOR to the Revolutionary War, most maps of the American colonies were published in England. Following the conclusion of hostilities, recognition of the United States as an independent Nation stimulated demands for new and up-to-date maps. In 1784, Abel Buell, a Connecticut gold- and silversmith, engraver, and jeweler (and convicted counterfeiter) published the first map of the new United States produced by an American: "A New and correct Map of the United States of North America Laid down from the latest Observations and best Authorities agreeable to the Peace of 1783." Like most of his fellow contemporary cartographers, Buell borrowed heavily from existing maps to compile his large (43 x 48-inch) wall map, which shows the United States immediately prior to the writing and ratification of the Constitution. The original image was engraved on copper plates and was printed in four sections. All coloring on the map was applied by hand using water colors.

The copy of the second edition of the Buell map which is reproduced at left is from the collection of the New Jersey Historical Society in Newark. It was photographed by the National Geographic Society and is used here courtesy of that organization. Only a handful of copies of Buell's map survive - perhaps because its intended use as a wall map exposed it to dirt and light, and because it would have been replaced when it became outdated.

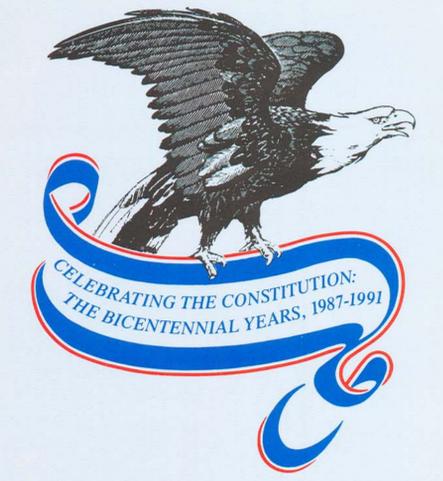
Longitude values along the north edge of the map are based on the Greenwich, England, Prime Meridian; those on the south edge are based on the meridian of Philadelphia. The practice of using one's own nation's capital or principal city as a reckoning point for longitude was common until the adoption of Greenwich as an international standard in 1884.

The extensive claims by the original States on western lands were boldly delineated by Buell. Many of the claims conflicted, as is evident from his depiction of the boundaries of Connecticut's claim, extending as far east as the Susquehanna River and as far west as the Mississippi River. This area also was claimed in whole or in part by Pennsylvania, New York, Massachusetts, and Virginia. (Buell's inscription to "this Excellency the Governor and Company of the STATE OF CONNECTICUT" clearly reveals his allegiance.) Disagreements over the validity of the claims and the argument that the western lands should become resources of the Federal government led to the passage of a Congressional resolution in 1779, resulting in the transfer of these areas to the central government between 1781 and 1802.

The intricate title cartouche at the lower right is a celebration of the new Nation and is rich in symbolism, including the newly adopted Stars and Stripes, and the figure of Liberty with the words "INDEPENDENCE/JULY IV/MDCCLXXXVI." Throughout the western lands, Buell included notes on geographical features and Indian tribes, including a description of the valley of the Illinois River: "Extensive Natural Meadows on this River, near 300 Miles in length, and from 10 to 40 miles wide where there large Herds of BUFFALO and other Beasts resort for Grass and Salt." In what today is western Minnesota, Buell reports, "Unbounded Plains supposed to extend to the South Sea." Buell's map and other contemporary cartographic images of the United States and the North American continent helped shape the "mental maps" of the framers of the Constitution as they converged on Philadelphia for the convention of 1787. In turn, their efforts created a framework for the Nation's geographic growth and development, summarized on the reverse of this sheet.

- SUGGESTED FURTHER READING**
- Ristow, Walter, W. *American Maps and Mapmakers: Commercial Cartography in the Nineteenth Century*, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1985)
 - Schwartz, Seymour I. and Ehrenberg, Ralph E., *The Mapping of America*, (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1980)
 - Thompson, Morris M. (U.S. Geological Survey), *Maps for America*, 2nd Edition, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1981)
 - Van Zandt, Franklin K. (U.S. Geological Survey), *Boundaries of the United States and the Several States*, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1976)

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Maps of
An Emerging Nation
 The United States of America
 1775-1987