

"The Cartographic Vade-Mecum: The Spatial Work of Portable Maps"

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This paper examines the cultural significance of "traveling maps" in the literal sense of the term in the Atlantic world between 1700 and 1800. In particular it explores the emergent genre of the pocket map and pocket atlas. As by-products of Enlightenment cartography and commercial print culture, these maps attracted mixed responses as they were ridiculed for inaccuracies and shoddy craftsmanship while being simultaneously celebrated for their practicality in the field. Seeking to sort out the formal and functional implications of pocket maps this paper pursues two lines of inquiry: first, it addresses pocket maps on their own terms as material objects explicitly designed for the purpose of mapping transits while at the time being objects in transit. Second, by attending to the reception of pocket maps as documented by the visual and literary arts of the long 18th century it shows how such maps were popular props in early American performance culture where they actively shaped social rituals and spatial ideology.