

## Contemporary letters referencing the Price-Strother map

Aaron Burr was most renowned for being Vice President during Jefferson's first term, and while in that office, killing Alexander Hamilton in a duel.

A lesser known fact is that Burr was very nearly president. He and Jefferson were tied at 73 electoral votes apiece in the 1800 election. The election was sent to the House of Representatives where it took 36 ballots before Jefferson was elected President. In 1805, Burr ventured west where he was preparing to lead an unauthorized invasion of Mexico in case of war with Spain. He was arrested, tried for treason, and acquitted. He then spent a few years in Europe to escape the animosity directed towards him.

On August 19, 1808, Burr wrote from Barrow Green (UK) to a friend in Boston, requesting that Burr's maps, including "A map of North Carolina, four sheets", be shipped to him. Burr did receive his maps at Barrow Green.

On December 5, 1809, Burr wrote from Altona, Germany to Jeremy Bentham at Barrow Green, asking that Burr's map of North Carolina, "in three or four sheets" be delivered to Professor Ebeling, once it was extracted from a locked trunk.

That same day, Burr wrote to the Professor in Hamburg,

*Enclosed is an order for the map of North Carolina. The engraving is superior to anything which had theretofore appeared in the United States.*

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Professor Christoph Ebeling never visited the United States, yet he was smitten by its history. He had a long career as a professor at the Hamburg Gymnasium, and subsequently as head of the Hamburg Library. Concurrently, he spent nearly 40 years working on a history of the United States. A total of 7 volumes

were published between about 1791 and 1816, most of which pertained to northern states, and the last, relating to Virginia, published shortly before his death. The Napoleonic Wars and the War of 1812 blocked communications with his American friends for a number of years, else more progress would have been made.

Did Professor Ebeling receive Burr's copy of the Price-Strother map? I think we can say with reasonable confidence that he did not. In April 1809, Professor Ebeling wrote to Rev. Dr. William Bentley, in Salem, MA,

*My Description of America is interrupted because I absolutely want some new Books and Maps before I can proceed. I hope to get them but am uncertain tho' I have applied to several persons.*

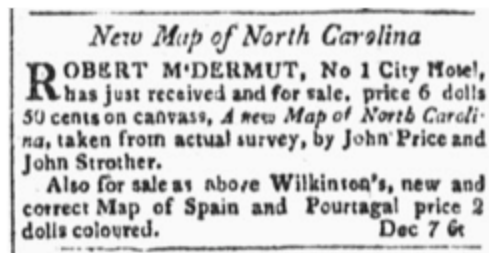
Amongst the maps listed are Bishop Madison's 1807 Map of Virginia and

*...the new map of North Carolina. ...As to the Map of Carolina, Colonel Burr whose acquaintance I made when he was here two months ago gave me a direction through one of his friends in England, who had his copy of the Map of N. Carolina with orders to deliver it to me, but as I don't like to have any dealing with England or to occasion a loss to Mr Burr, so I cannot profit thereby.*

Apparently, he did not profit thereby, for 3 years later, in April, 1812, the Professor wrote to Joel Barlow, again listing maps and books he needed for his research, among them the Bishop James Madison map of Virginia and

*...New Map of North-Carolina from actual Survey by John Price and John Strother. 1809. It was once announced to be at sale in New York by Robert McDermut, in Broadway.*

Here is the ad to which the professor referred as it appeared in the American Citizen newspaper published in New York City:



The professor eventually did receive the Virginia and North Carolina maps. Upon his death, Professor Ebeling's collection of over 3200 volumes and 10,000 maps was purchased in 1818 by Colonel Israel Thorndike of Boston for \$6,500. Col. Thorndike donated the collection to Harvard. Although Harvard's copy of the Price-Strother map was not procured by Professor Ebeling until 1812, it is interesting to note that the western sheet of their copy is in a very early state, as is the middle sheet.

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John Randolph of Roanoke was a famous Virginian, a descendant of Pocohontas, and a leader of Congress. He was spokesman for a faction of the Democratic-Republican party that wanted, as specified in the Constitution, to restrict the role of the federal government. He was also the foreman of the grand jury that considered the indictment of Aaron Burr and others for treason.

On April 10, 1809, Randolph wrote from Georgetown to his nephew, Theodore Dudley,

*A new map of North Carolina has lately appeared. It is said to be very accurate; and, in point of engraving and workmanship, puts the new map of Virginia to shame.*

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Thomas Ruffin was a lawyer and farmer who settled in Hillsborough near the Eno River. After several terms in the legislature, he served two terms as a

Superior Court Judge. He was Chief Justice of the NC Supreme Court from 1833-1852.

During his second stint as a Superior Court judge, Ruffin wrote to his daughter, Catherine, from New Bern on March 14th, 1826:

*It would afford me some satisfaction to suppose that my footsteps were weekly traced on my various journeys by my family. To think, that at the beginning of every week, you were saying, "Mama and Girls, Here Papa is now;" and, on friday and saturdays, "He is probably now travelling, solitary and slow, along this road or crossing that River: He is thinking of us and every time he crosses Neuse River he says, that he is upon his own waters and, tho fantastically, yet pardonably indulges in the search for a drop of our own Spring Water mixed with the mass of that which now sustains his boat or majestically flows by him. It is but a fancy, I allow; but it would be a pleasing thought to me if you would hang up your map of No. Ca. in the dining room and thus follow me... In that way, you can see the spot on Shachleford's Banks on the Sea-Shore, about fifteen miles from Beaufort and about six miles to the North-East of Old Topsail Inlet, where I was gratified last week with the sight of a large whale.*

Although Ruffin does not provide more specifics regarding the map, the Price-Strother map is the only logical conclusion, since the next wall map of North Carolina did not appear until 1833.

The information in this post is referred to in [Footnote 78](#) in the [Price-Strother article](#).