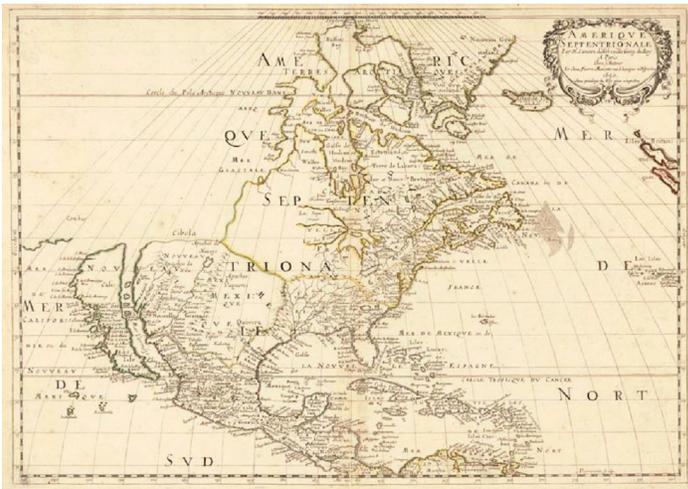


Sanson and Mariette - A Complicated Partnership

by Eliane Dotson, Old World Auctions

Nicolas Sanson was one of the foremost French cartographers of the 17th century, and is often considered as the "father" of French cartography. By around 1640, the French market in maps and atlases surpassed that of the Dutch, thereby initiating the Golden Age of French cartography. Born in Abbeville in December 1600, Nicolas Sanson was educated by the Jesuits in nearby Amiens. He studied history, and it is believed that he turned to cartography simply as a means to illustrate history. One of his first cartographical enterprises was a 6-sheet map of ancient Gaul, published in 1627, although Sanson apparently had begun drafting the map as young as 18 years of age. His maps soon came to the attention of Cardinal Richelieu, King Louis XIII's chief minister, and Sanson was asked to tutor the king in geography. Louis XIII later appointed Sanson "Geographe Ordinaire du Roy" (Geographer to the King). This appointment helped both expand and protect Sanson's role in the French map market.



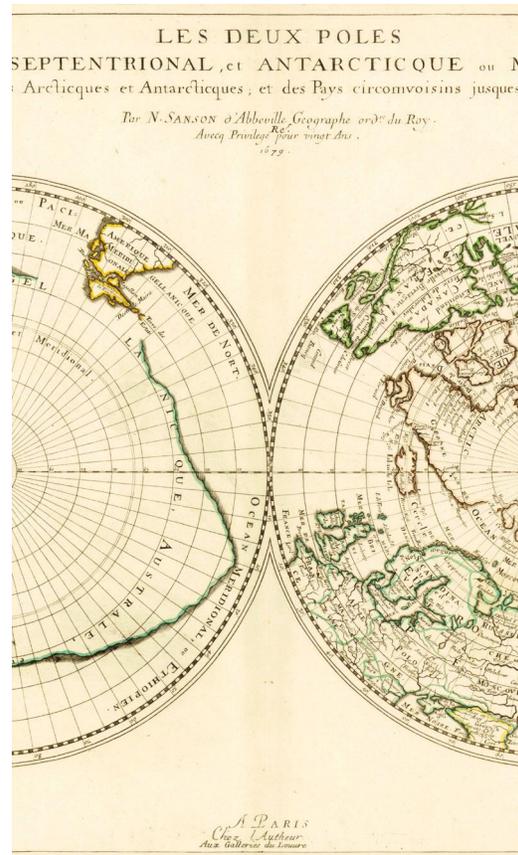
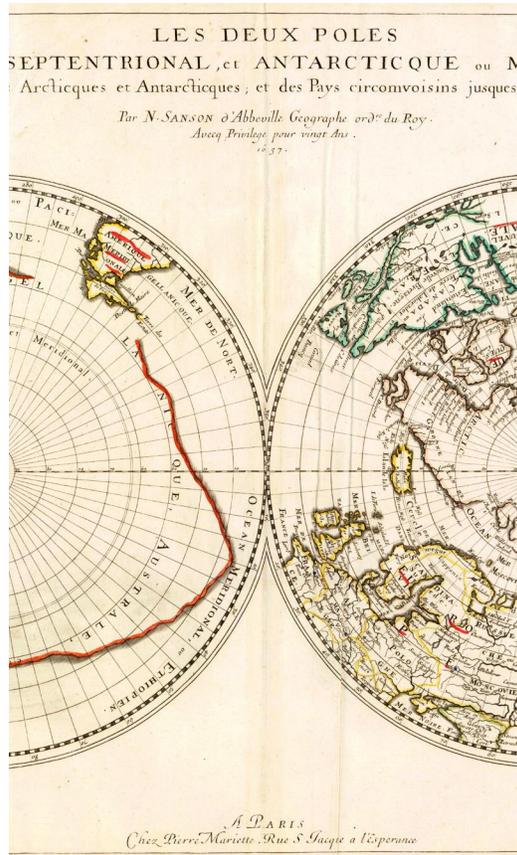
Of course Sanson did not work alone, and developed several important partnerships over the years. His first important collaboration was with Melchoir Tavernier, an engraver and dealer of maps in Paris. Tavernier wished to compete with the Dutch map publishers and partnered with Sanson to publish an important map of the post roads in France in 1632 and of the rivers and waterways in 1634. The two partners continued to work together until

Sanson discovered that the unscrupulous Tavernier had begun to put his own name on Sanson's maps. Sanson moved to Paris soon thereafter to protect his interests and authorship, and began to edit and publish his work on his own. The most significant works that Sanson edited on his own were his quarto atlases of the four continents - L'Europe, L'Asia, L'Afrique, and L'Amerique - which he published between 1647-57.

However, around 1644, Sanson formed a new partnership with Pierre Mariette, an engraver and printseller who had purchased Tavernier's stock after he left the business to become Contrôleur de la Maison du Duc d'Orléans (Controller of the House of the Duke of Orléans). Due to his bad experience with Tavernier, Sanson formed formal contracts with Mariette. The duration of each contract lasted 3 years, and Sanson and Mariette completed 4 such successive contracts with one another, beginning in 1648. The key terms of their contract stated their respective roles, the ownership of the work produced, and the responsibility of any liabilities. Sanson's role was to obtain the rights and to draw the folio-sized maps, while Mariette was required to engrave the plates and print the maps at his own cost. All completed folio plates were shared equally between them. The "sharing" of plates was a complicated matter, in that Sanson and Mariette divided the plates equally so that each had possession of half of the total. They were allowed to exchange plates between one another and could also buy plates from each

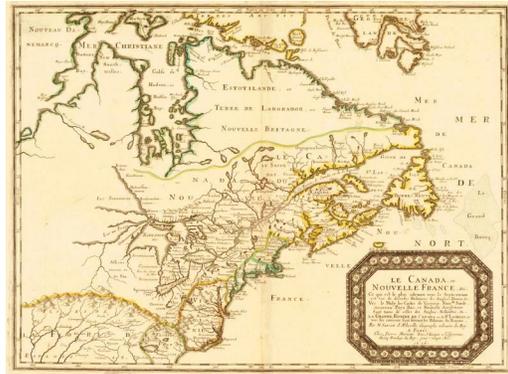
other at the price of six Sols. As a result, some of the plates bore the address of Sanson, while others were inscribed with Mariette's address. Each was allowed to sell his own maps printed from the plates in his possession. However, neither could publish a world atlas on his own, as neither possessed a complete set of geographical plates.

Their intricate arrangement began to unravel when Sanson, poorly versed in commercial matters, began leaving his own folio plates with Mariette for storage purposes. Mariette's address was then added to those plates. Mariette died in 1657, and his business was passed to his son, Pierre Mariette II. When Mariette's son took over the business, he was still bound by the initial contract with Sanson. Sanson subsequently made claims that Mariette had abused his rights to the sale of the maps from Sanson's folio plates, which had been left in Mariette's possession. The dispute remained unresolved until well after Sanson's own death in 1667. After his death, Guillaume and Adrien Sanson assumed control over their father's business. Guillaume, a cartographer in his own right, succeeded in the role of Geographer to the King, while Adrien served as a silent partner. Finally, in 1674 the sons of Sanson and Mariette agreed to meet in court with a prosecutor in the Chamber of Accounts to settle their disagreement. Under pressure, Mariette's son agreed to divide the stock again and gave the Sansons the larger portion of the folio copperplates. Once again, the imprints on the plates returned to the Sansons were changed from "chez Mariette" back to "chez l'auteur."



By this time, both the contract and the partnership between the Sansons and Mariettes had long since concluded. Sanson's sons had already begun working with Alexis-Hubert Jaillot in 1670, a collaboration which served both families well.

Over his career, Nicolas Sanson created around 300 maps, two of which were of particular importance: *Amerique Septentrionale* (1650) and *Le Canada ou Nouvelle France* (1656). Sanson's complete stock of copperplates was eventually reunited. Pierre Moullart-Sanson, nephew of Guillaume and Adrien Sanson, purchased the stock of over 180 plates from the Sansons in 1692, and left the plates to three faithful friends upon his death in 1730. One of these friends was Gilles Robert de Vaugondy, who later purchased the remaining stock from Mariette's son, thereby reassembling the entire work of Nicolas Sanson. Robert de Vaugondy continued to sell Sanson's maps, but the maps were never again published in atlas form.



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