

*An Atlas of Early Maps of the  
American Midwest: Part II*

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## Plate 7

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Jacques-Nicolas Bellin

ca. 1755-7

Partie || Occidentale || du Canada || Contenant les Lacs Ontario, Huron, || Errie, & Lac Superieur. || Les Portages sont marquis en Rouge & soulignis || Les Direction du cours des Rivieres est marqué || par une Fleche.

Part of western Canada, showing Lakes Ontario, Huron, Erie, and Lake Superior. Portages are marked in red and underlined. The directions of rivers are marked by an arrow.

*Original:* Manuscript map in the private collection of Barry MacLean, Mettawa, Ill. Size: 76.5 by 52.5 cm.

*Scale Ratio:* Reproduced at 48 percent of original size.

Reproduced here from a photograph of the original in the MacLean Collection.

Jacques-Nicolas Bellin was the senior hydrographic engineer and chief of the French Dépôt des Cartes et Plans de la Marine from 1721 to 1772 and thus was a major figure in French cartography of the period. This manuscript map once belonged to General Jeffery Amherst, commander of the British forces during the conquest of French Canada (Buisseret 1991: 49).

Jacques-Nicolas Bellin (1703-72), educated in geography and hydrography, produced "some of the finest mapping of French America available in the eighteenth century" (Goss 1990: 124). He had a reputation for precise detail and rigorous cartographic standards. His duties as France's royal hydrographer focused most of his attention on maritime mapping, of which his output was prodigious. Most of Bellin's maps were released in atlases, such as his *Hydrographique Français* (1756-65), *Petit Atlas Maritime* (1764), and *Atlas de Corse* (1769). Bellin also drafted versions of his maps specifically to illustrate histories and journals, such as Charlevoix's *Histoire et Description Générale de la Nouvelle France* (1744a), *Journal d'un Voyage ...* (1744b), and the English-version *Journal of a Voy-*

age to North America (1761). An important atlas of 1757 maps was drafted to illustrate the Abbe Prevost's *L'Histoire Generale des Voyages* (Brown 1959: 69–70; Tooley 1979: 49; 1980: 208, 316).

Bellin's maps that include details of North America were produced between 1743 and about 1770. Bellin's detailed coverage of non-French portions of North America matured only after 1755, and by 1757 included a number of regional views of the East Coast and plans of various towns, harbors, and forts. Although the quality of Bellin's maps of French holdings can be assigned to his high standards and direct access to French surveys, details of some of his other North American maps can be credited to English cartographers such as John Mitchell (Portinaro and Knirsch 1987: 244; Schwartz and Ehrenberg 1980: 160–2).

Details of the Midwest are presented in three general views by Bellin: western New France or the Great Lakes, French Louisiana, and North America. Bellin's 1743 map of North America (see Table 1, 1743-A) was published by Charlevoix (1744a). This map gives a surprisingly distorted view of the Great Lakes region, leaving out much information known for over fifty years (for example, the presence of Lake St. Clair and the shape of Lake Superior). However, revised and more accurate maps of the Midwest by Bellin (Table 1, 1744-A, B) also appeared in Charlevoix's 1744 publications. With these maps as a baseline, Bellin's maps showing Midwest details were periodically revised through the next two decades as new information was received, thus making Bellin's maps especially useful for evaluating cartographically sensitive historical events. Peyser (1992: 75–8, 85) and Esarey (1997: 195–200) have used Bellin map sequences to investigate the geography of French and Indian activities and establishments in the Midwest.

Scholars wishing to use Bellin's maps to illustrate, or investigate details of, the history of the Midwest should be aware of subtleties in the sequence and dating of the maps, especially the 1755 series. In certain Bellin maps, the date can lead researchers into incorrect assumptions of equivalency with, or precedence to, other Bellin maps. For instance, the 1755 Bellin map *Partie Occidentale de la Nouvelle France ...* (Table 1, 1755-B) is very much like the previous (1745) map of the same name. It is also identical to the Bellin map of the same name and date, published by the heirs of the German mapmakers Homann (Table 1, 1755-C). However, the "Héritiers of Homann" version may not have been published until 1759, which Tooley (1979: 308) lists as the publication date of their next atlas after 1754.

More significant is that even though 1755 dates the base map for a draft of *Partie du Cours du Fleuve St. Louis ou Mississippi* that traveled to and from the Illinois Country (Table 1, 1755-D), the handwritten corrections on it must postdate the arrival of that draft in the Illinois Country. The handwritten addition to Bellin's open-ended phrase "Pour Joindre au Memoire de M. \_\_" shows that this map was designed to accompany the memoir of Neyon de Villiers, who assumed the role of commandant in the Illinois Country in the same year. Thus, Tucker (1942: 8) wisely referred to this map as "1755 and later." These hand-

Table 1. An Inventory of Jacques-Nicolas Bellin maps showing details of the Midwest and the Great Lakes.

Date	ID here	Title	References (portion published)	Comments
1743	1743-A	<i>Carte de l'Amerique Septentrionale ...</i>	Originally Charlevoix 1744a; Karpinski 1931:41 (part)	An awkward map, distorting and leaving out much information known for over 50 years.
1744	1744-A	<i>Carte de la Louisiane, cours du Mississippi, et Pty Voisins</i>	Originally Charlevoix 1744a; Brown 1959:69-70 (most); Karpinski 1931:42 (part); Balesi 1992:196 (part); Shea 1868	Created for Charlevoix. Many details revised from the 1743 North America map.
1744	1744-B	<i>Carte des Lacs du Canada</i>	Originally Charlevoix 1744b; Karpinski 1931:43 (all); Goss 1990:125 (all)	Differences from 1744-A imply this is a slightly later map.
1745	1745-A	<i>Partie Occidentale de la Nouvelle France ou Canada</i>	Karpinski 1931:44 (all); Vogel 1991:188 (part)	Original version of Bellin's classic map of the same name (1755-B).
1754	1754-A	<i>Carte de l'Amerique Septentrionale</i>	Cummings et al. 1974:240 (part)	
1755	1755-A	<i>Carte de l'Amerique Septentrionale depuis 28 degre de latitude jusqu'au 72</i>		Not reviewed. Referred to in Jolly 1991:99. Probably the same as 1755-H.
1755	1755-B	<i>Partie Occidentale de la Nouvelle France ou Canada</i>	Brose 1971:23 (all); Buisseret 1995:19 (part)	Very much like 1745-A.
1755	1755-C	<i>Partie Occidentale de la Nouvelle France ou Canada ( ... par les Héritiers de Homan en l'an 1755)</i>	Trudel 1973:120 (northern 3/4)	Probably published by Homann heirs well after 1755. Otherwise identical to 1755-B.
1755	1755-D	<i>Partie du Cours du Fleuve St. Louis ou Mississippi</i>	Tucker 1942:Plate 24 (all)	Assigned by Tucker to "1755 and later." Corrections were made before mid-1757. Labeled "Pour Joindre au Memoire de M. Neyon de Villiers."
1755	1755-E	<i>Partie du Cours du Fleuve St. Louis ou Mississippi</i>	Originally in de Villiers du Terrage 1904; Alvord 1920:154 (all)	Map drafted 1755-7. Postdates 1755-A, B, C, D (and probably G).
1755	1755-F	<i>Partie Occidentale de la Nouvelle France ou Canada</i>	Schwartz and Ehrenberg 1980:165 (all)	Drafted 1755-7. Same view as other two <i>Partie Occidentale</i> ... maps, but much changed. Postdates 1755-A, B, C, D (and probably G).
No date	1755-G	<i>Partie Occidentale du Canada, Contenant les Lacs Ontario, Huron, Erie, et Lac Supérieur</i>	Buisseret 1991:48 (all); Plate 7 in this folio.	An unsigned manuscript map, clearly by Bellin. Assigned by Buisseret to "ca. 1750." This map was drafted between 1755 and 1757 using information from 1755-D.

*continued*

Table 1. An Inventory of Jacques-Nicolas Bellin maps showing details of the Midwest and the Great Lakes (continued).

Date	ID here	Title	References (portion published)	Comments
1755	1755-H	<i>L'Amerique Septentrionale depuis 28 degre de latitude jusqu'au 72</i>	Map in the National Map Collection, Public Archives of Canada, and in the Bibliothèque Nationale in France.	This map shows the corrected location of Fort St. Joseph (Peyser 1992:85, fn 60) and incorporates changes from map 1755-D.
No date	1755-1	<i>Partie Occidentale du Canada, Contenant les Lacs Ontario, Huron, Erie, et Lac Supérieur</i>		A manuscript map in the National Map Collection, Public Archives of Canada. Unsigned and undated. Identical title and coverage as 1755-G, but many slight differences. Although the National Map Collection assigns a date of 1752, the map uses information from 1755-D.
1757	1757-A	<i>La Louisiane et Pays Voisins</i>		Not reviewed. Existence noted by Peyser 1992:85, fn. 61. Its correspondence to 1757-B is not clear.
1757	1757-B	<i>Carte de la Floride, de la Louisiane, et Pays Voisins, pour servir a l'Histoire General des Voyages</i>	Originally Prevost 1746; Anonymous 1959 (all)	A new configuration for Lake Michigan sets this map off from pre-1757 Bellin maps. Incorporates the 1755-7 map corrections.
1757	1757-C	<i>Carte des Lacs du Canada pour servir a l'Histoire General des Voyages</i>	Originally Prevost 1746; Portinaro and Knirsch 1987:243 (all); Anonymous 1959 (all)	
1758	1758-A	<i>Carte Reduite des Parties Septentrionales du Globe, situées être l'Asia et l'Amerique</i>		Not reviewed. Referred to in Jolly 1991:101.
No date	1761-A	<i>A map of the Western Ocean and Part of North America</i>	Originally Charlevoix 1761 (all)	Frontispiece to first London edition of Charlevoix 1761. Undated map, labeled in English, initialed "N.B." Probably drafted for 1761 edition.
1763-4	1764-A	<i>Carte des Cinq Grands Lacs du Canada</i>	Originally Bellin 1763 and 1764; Karpinski 1931:58 (all); Buisseret 1991:50 (all); Plate 9 in this folio.	Lake Michigan shape aligns this map with the pre-1757 maps, despite its late publication date.
1763-4	1764-B	<i>La Nouvelle France ou Canada</i>	Originally Bellin 1763 and 1764; Karpinski 1931:59 (part)	First Bellin map to shrink Isle Royale. Charlevoix's four fabricated Lake Superior islands continue.
1763-4	1764-C	<i>La Louisiane et Pays Voisins</i>	Originally Bellin 1763 and 1764; Trudel 1973:132 (all)	Fort Massac label slightly changed from previous maps.
ca. 1770	1770-A	<i>La Louisiane et Pays Voisins</i>	From Bellin 1769?	Not reviewed. Referred to in Jolly 1991:101.

written corrections provided Bellin with substantial revisions in Illinois Country geography. The courses of the Missouri and Ohio Rivers were corrected, as were the locations of St. Genevieve, the new Fort de Chartres, and various habitations near the mouth of the Kaskaskia River. Verification that this map could not date much earlier than 1755 can be seen in a notation describing the destruction of the Michigamea village “in 1753” (the attack was actually in 1752). The label *Fort François Projette, et commence depuis longtemps* on the lower Ohio River verifies that the handwritten corrections in Illinois must have been made before mid-1757, when Fort Massac was built. Also present is the earliest indication of a French post, mission, and Peoria Indian village on the lower reaches of the Illinois River. There is some evidence this establishment existed as early as 1750, although the Peoria Indian village there was abandoned by 1758 (Esarey 1997).

Subsequent Bellin maps, still dated as 1755, which incorporate the changes from the draft are the identically named published version (Table 1, 1755-E) and *Partie Occidentale de la Nouvelle France ...* (Table 1, 1755-F). The latter map has the same geographic coverage as the two earlier 1755 *Partie du Cours du Fleuve St. Louis ou Mississippi* maps (Table 1, 1755 E, F), but is much changed because of new information from the Illinois Country. In it, the French post and mission is present on the lower Illinois River, and, for the first time, Bellin has adopted a different configuration of “La Longue Pointe” in Lake Erie. Fort Massac and the lower Ohio River are added outside the map’s southern margin. A

1755 *L'Amerique Septentrionale* (Table 1, 1755-H) also includes the details of these "later" 1755 maps. Thus, four of the seven Bellin maps dated 1755 can perhaps be best referred to as his 1755-7 series.

\* \* \* \* \*

Plate 7 is an unsigned, undated manuscript map, *Partie Occidentale du Canada* (Table 1, 1755-G), that Buisseret (1991: 48) assigns to "circa 1750." A nearly identical unsigned, undated manuscript map in The National Map Collection of Canada (Table 1, 1755-I) differs only in a few label details and has been assigned to 1752. However, both of these manuscript maps have several features showing they are transitional between the original 1755 and the 1755-7 maps. Fort St. Joseph's incorrect placement persists, that feature being corrected only in the 1755-7 series (Peyser 1992: 75). Earlier, Bellin had misplaced Kaskaskia adjacent to the Tamaroa, but this was corrected in all maps after the draft 1755 *Partie du Cours du Fleuve St. Louis ou Mississippi*. As Buisseret (1991: 49) notes, these villages are curiously absent on the manuscript *Partie Occidentale du Canada* map (perhaps reflecting uncertainty on Bellin's part?). In any case, on both *Partie Occidentale du Canada* maps in question, we find that Bellin has altered his portrayal of La Longue Pointe in Lake Erie (which had remained unchanged since 1744) and added "Peourias" on the lower Illinois River. Both features show that this map unquestionably postdates the early versions of 1755 maps and written corrections provided Bellin with substantial revisions in Illinois Country geography. The courses of the Missouri and Ohio Rivers were corrected, as were the locations of St. Genevieve, the new Fort de Chartres, and various habitations near the mouth of the Kaskaskia River. Verification that this map could not date much earlier than 1755 can be seen in a notation describing the destruction of the Michigamea village "in 1753" (the attack was actually in 1752). The label *Fort François Projette, et commence depuis longtemps* on the lower Ohio River verifies that the handwritten corrections in Illinois must have been made before mid-1757, when Fort Massac was built. Also present is the earliest indication of a French post, mission, and Peoria Indian village on the lower reaches of the Illinois River. There is some evidence this establishment existed as early as 1750, although the Peoria Indian village there was abandoned by 1758 (Esarey 1997).

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are transitional to the 1755–7 series. No other maps take the 1755-D map's fuzzy handwritten placement of "Peoria" on the lower reaches of the Illinois River to indicate the post was on the east bank (the handwritten correction placed the east side reference label to a symbol on the west side).

The 1755–7 revisions to the Illinois Country are finalized in the 1757 *Carte de la Floride, de la Louisiane, et Pays Voisins ...* (Table 1, 1757-B). This map features a drastically revised shape for Lake Michigan, breaking a continuity that can be traced back to the 1744 Charlevoix map *Carte de la Louisiane, cours du Mississippi, et pays voisins*.

By far the best known series of Bellin maps was published in 1763 as *Petit Atlas Français* and reissued in 1764 as *Petit Atlas Maritime* (Tooley 1979: 49). This five-volume tour-de-force contained hundreds of maps from around the world. Interestingly, Plate 9, the 1763–4 *Carte des Cinq Grands Lacs du Canada* (Table 1, 1764-A) has Lake Michigan detail that firmly aligns it with the pre-1757 series of maps, illustrating, in the same fashion as could be seen in his 1743–4 maps for Charlevoix, Bellin's lack of aversion to incorporating contradictory material within the same volume or atlas. Another map in *Petit Atlas Maritime, La Louisiane et Pays Voisins* (Table 1, 1764-C), shows a cultural landscape much in continuity with his North American map of twenty years before, but with a noticeably more precise placement of features throughout the continent.

Following Bellin's death in 1772, his maps continued to be released, into the nineteenth century. Taken as a whole, the Jacques-Nicolas Bellin sequence of maps provides a backdrop of a quarter-century of cartographic continuity against which the historical significance of his minor, but frequent, revisions can be best understood.

—Duane Esarey

## Plate 9

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Jacques-Nicolas Bellin

1764

Carte || des Cinq Grands Lacs || du Canada.

Map of the five great lakes of Canada.

*Original:* Printed map from Bellin's *Petit Atlas Maritime*, Vol. 1, No. 6, in the Newberry Library, Chicago. Size: 33 by 21.5 cm.

*Scale Ratio:* Reproduced at 100 percent of original size.

Reproduced here from a photograph of an original in the Newberry Library.

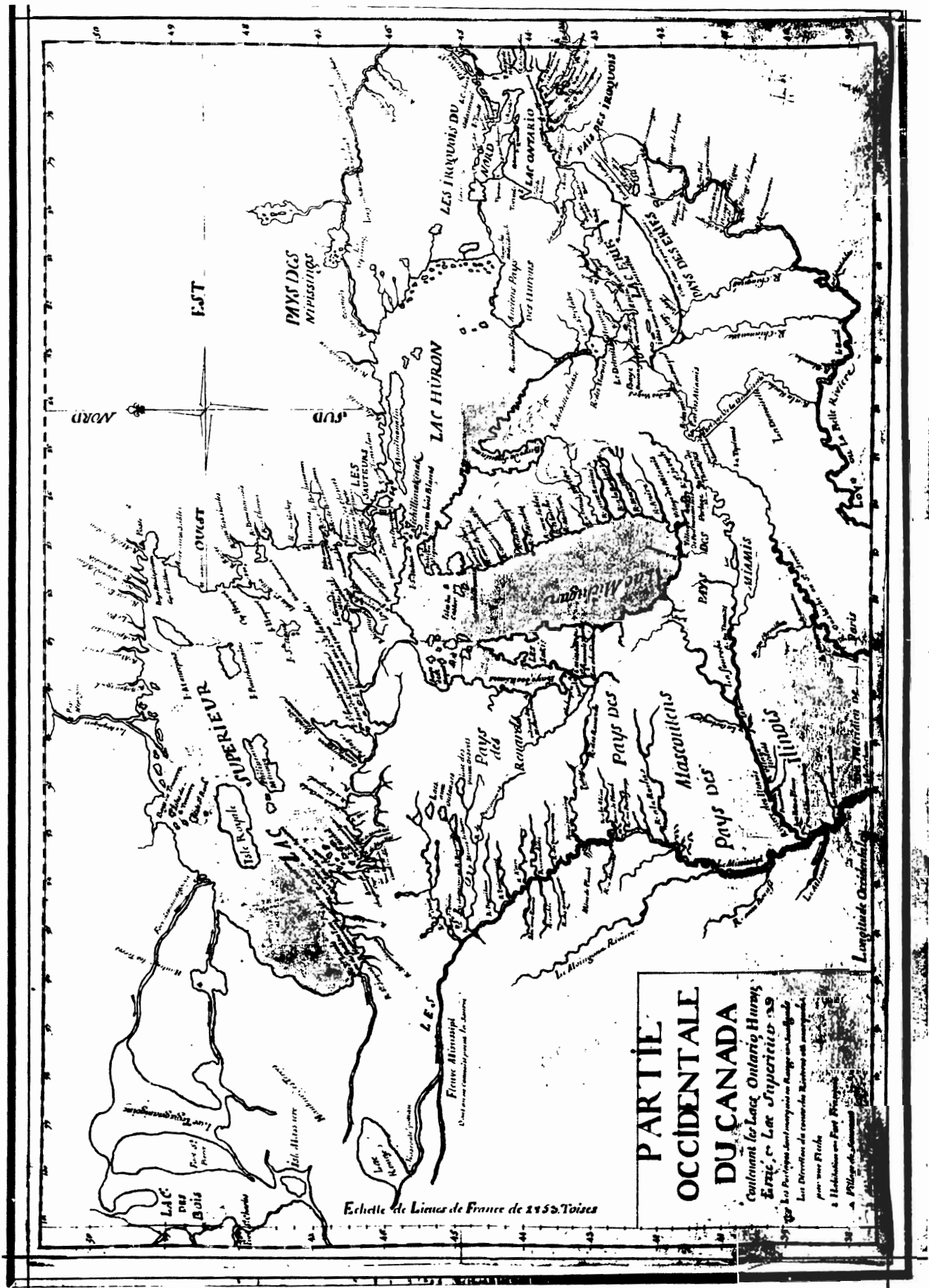
This map is one of the 102 charts published in Volume 1 (North America and the West Indies) of Jacques-Nicolas Bellin's five-volume atlas. Essentially the same topography is shown here as on his ca. 1755–7 manuscript map (Plate 7), but this chart excludes the regions west of the western tip of Lake Superior that are so distorted on that map (Buisseret 1991: 51; Karrow 1977). Plate 9 also has Lake Michigan detail that firmly aligns it with the pre-1757 series of maps, and illustrates, in the same fashion as could be seen in his 1743–4 maps for Charlevoix, Bellin's lack of aversion to incorporating contradictory material within the same volume or atlas. For additional details on Bellin, see the essay by Duane Esarey accompanying Plate 7, the Jacques-Nicolas Bellin map of 1755–7.

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