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## Lewis Robinson—Entrepreneur

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SCHOLARS have long been intrigued by a small group of early nineteenth-century cartographic artisans who made their maps and earned their livings in the then recently settled towns of east-central Vermont. That the graphic arts flourished in such places geared to an agricultural economy is a measure of the ingenuity of the practitioners and a recognition of the continuing local demand for knowledge. Printing presses were established in the infant towns and from them came newspapers, pamphlets, and books; small water-powered industries sprang up along the river valleys; sheep grazed on the hillsides; and the new nation was moving westward. It was certainly a time for the making and using of maps.

Windsor and Orange Counties became the locale of several craftsmen skilled in engraving who eventually joined the tide of New England people seeking their fortunes elsewhere. Lewis Robinson of South Reading, the subject of our sketch, became the leading purveyor of such art, although he was by no means alone in the field, and unlike his peers did not leave the home place. Before examining his activities in detail, it may be well to look at his fellows.

Isaac Eddy<sup>1</sup> seems to have been the progenitor of iconography in this immediate region. He was a native of the west part of Weathersfield, called Greenbush, and from that unlikely place sent forth his first dated work, seven plates for the 1812 Windsor edition of *The Holy Bible*. In the same year he engraved an "Oblique Front View of the Vermont State Prison" which served as the frontispiece of John Russell's *Authentic History* of that institution, also published

1. Harold G. Rugg, "Isaac Eddy, Printer-Engraver," *Bibliographical Essays, a Tribute to Wilberforce Eames* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1924), 313-329.

in Windsor. In 1813 Eddy and James Wilson engraved a large folio chart entitled, *Chronology Delineated to Illustrate the History of Monarchical Revolutions*. *The Hypocrite's Looking Glass* was engraved and issued in 1815. Another print, possibly executed by Eddy, is *Maria*, a typical mourning piece of the period. The present authors are inclined to regard this as a later production of Lewis Robinson's in as much as he sold numbers of them in the 1840s. Although Eddy's engraved production was small, his influence was vital to the spread of graphic arts in the area. His son, Oliver Tarbell Eddy, Lewis Robinson, and George White were all trained in his office. Eddy was also a printer. In 1813 he purchased from Alden Spooner of Windsor an old press, latterly and erroneously called the Stephen Daye Press, and went into the printing business. Over the next three years he, either alone or in association with his sometime partner, Samuel Patrick, Jr., issued fourteen imprints from the Weathersfield office.

Another well-known engraver in the region was James Wilson,<sup>2</sup> blacksmith of Bradford, who manufactured the first American globes about 1810. A competent, essentially self-taught engraver, he executed the revisions appearing in the 1810 edition of James Whitelaw's large map of Vermont, which was engraved originally by Amos Doolittle of New Haven, Conn. In 1813 Wilson engraved the *Map of the Northern Part of the United States and the Southern Part of the Canadas*, by James Whitelaw. Another important example of his work is the already mentioned *Chronology Delineated*.

Ebenezer Hutchinson, a copperplate printer of Quechee Village in Hartford, Woodstock, and West Randolph, was a near neighbor of Robinson's and a contemporary publisher of maps. His earliest known is the *Map of Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island. Humbly submitted by M. M. Peabody, Jan. 1819. Printed and published by E. Hutchinson. Hartford, Vt.* The Hartford entry in Zadock Thompson's *Gazetteer of the State of Vermont*<sup>3</sup> alludes to the fact that Hutchinson bought the plates and copyrights to Whitelaw's

2. Leroy E. Kimball, "James Wilson of Vermont, America's First Globe Maker," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, n.s., XLVIII, no. 1 (Apr. 1938), 29-48. Richard J. Fowle, "James Wilson's Globes," *Vermont History*, xxviii, no. 4 (Oct. 1960), 244-249.

3. Zadock Thompson, *A Gazetteer of the State of Vermont* (Montpelier: E. P. Walton and the author, 1824), 153.

maps, "In this village is an iron copperplate-printing press, at which is printed Hutchinson's edition of Whitelaw's large map of Vermont." Maps bearing Hutchinson's name as publisher include the 1821 edition of the Vermont map; another edition of the same in 1824; an 1829 revision and extension of the 1813 Whitelaw map of the United States and Canada; a New York, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey map engraved by John G. Darby, published in Woodstock (as was the 1829 map) in 1830; another corrected version of the same in 1843; Vermont by Whitelaw, Woodstock, 1838, and corrected in 1851; and finally a map of the Western Reserve, Windsor County, 1843.

Moody Morse Peabody must have come to work in Hutchinson's shop in 1818, for in January 1819 Hutchinson printed and published Peabody's map of Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island. He was born in Peterborough, New Hampshire, in 1789, but it is not known at this time where he was apprenticed. His earliest known work is the frontispiece to Susanna Rowson's *Charlotte Temple*, Windsor, 1815, which leads us to speculate that this man may also owe his career to Isaac Eddy. Without doubt Peabody executed a good many plates for Hutchinson, but few are extant at this writing. About 1820 they issued the *Freemasons Heart*, an attractive, colored engraving. Hutchinson advertised in Abell's *New England Farmer's Diary and Almanac* for 1823 (printed in 1822) that, "He likewise gives notice that Copperplate Engraving is still carried on at his factory in Queechy Village, Hartford, Vermont, by Mr. Moody M. Peabody," but the engraver had moved on to Reading in 1823. In that same year *The Unjust Sentence of the Jews Against Jesus Christ, the Savior of the World*, from the burin of Peabody, was probably published by Lewis Robinson. Peabody did not engrave the other plates of the "Sett of Scripture Paintings," but he did engrave the map and three plates for Thompson's 1824 edition of his *Gazetteer of the State of Vermont*. In 1826 he was in Whitehall, New York, and from 1828 to 1840 he was listed in the Utica city directories as an engraver and copperplate printer. He died at Wilton, Ontario, in February 1866.

Another Greenbush engraver was George White,<sup>4</sup> who possibly

4. Gilbert A. Davis, *History of Reading, Windsor County, Vermont* (Windsor? 1903), 307.

was Isaac Eddy's successor. He was born in Cavendish in 1797 and died in Felchville in 1873. Both places are contiguous to the Greenbush area of Weathersfield. He was apprenticed to Eddy and later operated a shop about which Thompson wrote, "There is a paint and printing-ink establishment, where is manufactured a very superior quality of engraving ink."<sup>5</sup> One is led to the conclusion that this business was begun by Eddy prior to his departure in 1826 for Troy where he also had a printing ink factory. Only two publications of White's have been identified. They are a small map of Vermont and another of New Hampshire which were published in the early 1850s.

In the heart of this activity, Lewis Robinson prospered in South Reading as a publisher and distributor of maps and prints, storekeeper, and manufacturer. He was born August 19, 1793, in Reading, the eldest child of Ebenezer and Hannah (Ackley) Robinson, and died there on November 16, 1871. Lewis was raised on his father's farm a half mile below the village of South Reading. His schooling was limited but probably average for farm boys of his era. His son Calvin, to whom we are indebted for nearly all of the biographical data about our man, wrote of him, "Soon after he came 'of age' . . . he engaged in the business of book publishing, establishing a printing office at Greenbush. He published a number of works there, mostly educational, which were well up to the times in merit, and style of finish."<sup>6</sup> Only two of these works have thus far been discovered. They are listed in the appendix to this study. Both were printed in Weathersfield in 1816 in Isaac Eddy's office, where Lewis had been apprenticed. He was then twenty-three years old and for some reason using the pseudonym of "Roberson." About this same time Robinson produced Masonic regalia. The Vermont Historical Society has an engraved Freemason's apron, printed on silk and published by "Roberson" in Weathersfield.

Calvin Robinson writes further, "he soon after went into the copper plate printing, and the publication of maps and scripture

5. Zadock Thompson, *History of Vermont, Natural, Civil and Statistical* (Burlington: C. Goodrich for the author, 1842), pt. 3, 185.

6. Calvin Robinson, "Lewis Robinson," in Gilbert A. Davis, *Centennial Celebration, together with an Historical Sketch of Reading, Windsor County, Vermont* (Bellows Falls: A. N. Swain, 1874), 144-146.

paintings, at South Reading, which proved much more remunerative." Although he sold the Peabody and Hutchinson scriptural prints, as noted above, the earliest known signed and dated venture into the publication of engravings is the small, colored *Improved Map of the United States Corrected and Published by Lewis Robinson 1825*. This map is actually a resurrection and revision of that "Published by Shelton & Kensett Cheshire Connect. Nov. 8th. 1813. Engraved by A. Doolittle New Haven  $\text{\textit{Æ}}$  60." In Robinson's edition, corrections are made for the new states in the west and south, the Shelton & Kensett imprint is replaced by his own, and the engraver's signature is removed.

The first map which we may attribute wholly to Robinson appeared in 1828. *A Map of Vermont & New Hampshire published by Lewis Robinson, 1828* has been found with twelve different dates, the last of 1859. The assumption has been that all editions of this map were printed in South Reading, but the following letter of E. H. Ball of Boston to George Robinson, Lewis's son, suggests that at least in the later years some of the map printing may have taken place elsewhere.

Boston May 31, 1851

Mr. Geo. O. Robinson Redding Vt.

Dear Sir,

I have to say to you that I will print your Map Plate of Vermont and New Hampshire and furnish the paper (a sample of which you will find enclosed) for *nine* cents per copy the size of my paper is 29 × 34 inh. the waste would be but a trifle.

Yours Respt.

E. H. Ball

116 Washington St.

In addition, an entry of January 3, 1855, from Robinson's account book charges one of his peddlers, John Emery of Andover, New Hampshire, \$20 for the use of plates in printing 100 New Hampshire and 50 Vermont and New Hampshire maps. The first editions of Robinson's separate maps of New Hampshire and Vermont appeared in 1834, while the Maine map was issued in 1835.

The only religious engraving signed by Robinson is *The Resurrection of Jesus Christ*, published in 1831, although Calvin Robin-

son claimed that many were produced. One account book, covering the period 1840-1855, survives and is now in the Vermont Historical Society Library. The following table shows the titles of maps and prints and the numbers sold during each year. From an inspection of this chart it is quite obvious that many publications which were produced elsewhere passed through Robinson's hands. We have no knowledge that the South Reading establishment published any lithographs yet they figure prominently in his stock. We have not made an exhaustive search of American lithographic collections to try positively to identify these prints, yet many of the titles appear to be coincident with the work of Henry R. Robinson of New York City. On the other hand, prints which seem to be engravings and which were sold over a number of years might have been the work of his shop, for example: *Crucifixion*, *Gospel Trees*, *Lord's Prayer*, *Napoleon Bonaparte Death*, *Solomon's Temple*, *Ten Commandments*, and *Life & Age of Women*. It is also likely that the "Sett of Scripture Paintings" refers to the folio prints entitled, *The Unjust Sentence of the Jews* (called the "Trial" in the chart), *The Crucifixion of Jesus Christ*, and *The Resurrection of Jesus Christ*.

In 1833 Robinson issued an ambitious *Map of the United States*, engraved by J. G. Darby of Burlington, Vermont. This wall map was engraved on four sheets, totaling 47.5 × 39.5 inches. The first edition is without the insets which were added to later editions of 1835, 1836, and 1846. Darby, "of the State of Vermont," engraved the 1830 Hutchinson *Map of New York Pennsylvania and New Jersey*. Later this engraver worked in Buffalo, New York, during the years 1835 through 1839 and with Samuel Manning and Edward Yeager engraved the large *Map of the United States* published by Manning in Akron, Ohio, in 1845. Hathon's 1849 map of Detroit places him in that city as an engraver and in 1855 J. D. Johnston published another Detroit map also engraved by Darby.

"In 1836, with two of his brothers-in-law, [Levi and Samuel Manning] Robinson established a large map publishing business in Akron, Ohio, and his maps were sold throughout the western states."<sup>7</sup> Maps of Indiana, 1836, Ohio, 1837, Connecticut Reserve, 1837, Illinois, 1838, and Akron, c. 1836, were issued from this

7. Robinson, *op. cit.*, 145.





