

November 29, 2020

Welcome to The Digital Gallery's exhibit on the Ferraris map of 1777. I chose this map because of its beautiful cartouches, amazing symbols and several intricate inset maps. Then, upon further research, I realized that the fascinating history of Belgium lies behind the map. Joseph de Ferraris, who made this map, was an Austrian general and cartographer. Why, I asked myself, was an Austrian general making a map of the area now known as Belgium? Austria and Belgium are separated by Germany. The answer is that for most of its history, Belgium was a territory of another country. And from 1492 to 1795, Belgium was part of the Hapsburg Empire, whose capital was Austria. In 1516, also Spain became part of the Hapsburg Empire and then, in 1556, the Hapsburg Empire was split in two and the Spanish Hapsburg's gained control of Belgium, all the way until 1714, when the Austrian Hapsburgs re-gained control of this area, which became known as the Austrian Netherlands. It was during this era of control, in 1777, when the Ferraris map. 18 years later, in 1795, Napoleon used the map to win control of the Austrian Netherlands and the current state of Belgium was established in 1830. It's a very complicated history, unlike what we Americans have experienced, which I would say is essentially one basic framework of fairness and justice for over 230 years.

This atlas is a summarized version, in 25 plates, and shows what the Southern Netherlands were like right before the Industrial Revolution...when the landscape was still similar to that of the Middle Ages. (see Wikipedia)

I put together a legend map to see the number of each detailed map.

My favorite parts of this atlas are:

- The composite map, made by Rumsey, where i've put DOTs on several cities.
- The map with all of the symbols on the maps. This is a fascinating and comprehensive list and you can see why this map is so valuable to historians.
- The detailed map of the area around Brussels, showing cities, forests, rivers, roads, canals, churches, lots of churches, water mills, and places where combat occurred. Although i couldn't find any gallows.
- Map 11, which honors the mapmaker, Ferraris, as well as showing crests of the provinces of the Austrian Netherlands, surrounded by cherubic figures and one lion.
- Map 12, with about 3 dozen windmills. I've wondered if Lille is considered windy today.
- Map 16, showing a map, probably this map, being presented to Joseph II, who was the Holy Roman Emperor, as well as the brother of Marie Antoinette; he was also considered by history to have been an enlightened monarch.
- Map 17, showing the scale of the map, adorned again by cherubic figures, although this time they are doing industrious things, like reading and painting and putting on a helmet.
- Map 21, a detail of Brussels, whose fortified shape is evident in maps of the city today.

I'd like to once again thank the David Rumsey Map Center at Stanford for these incredible images. I hope you enjoy the exhibit.