

History of Cartography Project

No. 4: Shutting a Map

Commentary

James Matthew Barrie, perhaps best known as the author of *Peter Pan*, began his career as a journalist—first as a “leader-writer” at the *Nottingham Journal* in 1883 and later writing sketches for the *St. James Gazette*, the *Edinburgh Evening Dispatch*, and the *British Weekly*. It has been suggested that Barrie’s early journalistic efforts, such as “Shutting a Map: A Note of Warning,” show evidence of his mature, later style: “a quaintness of expression, a simple directness of narrative, and an unflinching sense of humour—often as though the author were chuckling to himself as he wrote.”¹ Barrie’s ability to take mundane subjects and inject them with “as much cynicism and laconic humour as his spirits could muster,”² was to become his literary hallmark.

As to the subject matter of maps, we can only speculate. Robert Louis Stevenson, Barrie’s boyhood literary hero and later friend, inspired in him a love of exotic adventure, and perhaps, an appreciation of things cartographic (see our previous *Treasure Map* broadside). Whatever the roots of Barrie’s interest in maps, we know that maps appear in his later works. In *Peter and Wendy*, first published in 1911, Neverland is described as an island on the map of a child’s mind:

I don’t know whether you have ever seen a map of a person’s mind. Doctors sometimes draw maps of other parts of you, and your own map can become intensely interesting, but catch them trying to draw a map of a child’s mind, which is not only confused, but keeps going round all the time. There are zigzag lines on it, just like your temperature on a card, and there are probably roads in the island, for the Neverland is always more or less an island.³

“Shutting a Map: A Note of Warning,” first appeared anonymously in the *Edinburgh Evening Dispatch* and two years later under Barrie’s pseudonym Gavin Ogilvy in the *British Weekly*. The excerpt from “Shutting a Map” on our broadside is taken from *An Auld Licht Manse and Other Sketches*, published by John Knox and Co., March 11, 1893, pages 113-24. The volume is one of several unauthorized collections of Barrie’s work published in the U.S. and derived from Barrie’s contributions to British periodicals. Another pirated edition, *A Tillyloss Scandal*, published only two weeks later by Lovell, Coryell and Co., also contains this selection.

¹ J. A. Hammerton, *J. M. Barrie and His Books* (London: Horace Marshall & Son, 1900), 97.

² Andrew Birkin, *J. M. Barrie and the Lost Boys* (London: Constable and Company, Ltd, 1979), 13.

³ J. M. Barrie, *Peter and Wendy* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1927), 7-8.

Printed by Tracy Honn on Mohawk Superfine with a Vandercook No. 4 at the Silver Buckle Press, Madison, Wisconsin. The type is Gill Sans set by Michael and Winifred Bixler, Skaneateles, New York. The cover illustration is from Ordnance Survey Leaflets: No. 1, a series of marketing pieces drawn by Ellis Martin for the Ordnance Survey during the 1930s. Blocks by Royal Graphics, La Crosse, Wisconsin. 175 copies have been numbered and initialed.

Published 1995 by the History of Cartography Project, Department of Geography, University of Wisconsin, 550 North Park Street, Madison WI 53706-1491; (608) 263-3992; email: hcart@geography.wisc.edu; www home page: <http://feature.geography.wisc.edu/histcart/>