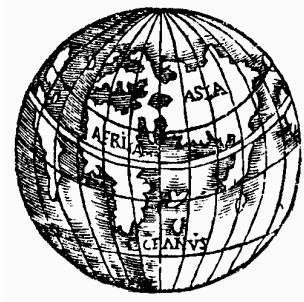


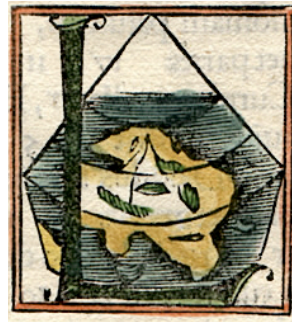
Jodocus Hondius II, Amsterdam, 1616

Many kinds of antique collecting may be pursued in miniature and there is no doubt that little items are more convenient in every way than the larger ones. Collectors are fascinated by the information on old maps and love them for their decorative and aesthetic qualities. However, there is something magical about miniature maps and atlases that is difficult to explain: rather like sipping whisky in the firelight, or watching Justine Henin's backhand. To paraphrase Tony Campbell describing two miniature atlases (see 1758 & 1759a) and Roger Mason describing miniature maps (see 1744): those produced in miniature, with that precision which makes little items so attractive and charming, can have a special interest and appeal; the best, bear just the same relationship to the finest folio versions, as a Nicholas Hilliard bears to a Hans Holbein.

Miniatures are undoubtedly the smallest of maps but over the years the term seems to have acquired a certain cachet. Whereas it used to exclude anything much larger than paper size A6, there seems to be less consensus today, and it is now sometimes even applied to those larger than A5. For the scope of this website, the upper limit has been set at around 150 square centimetres. Viewing a collection of such miniatures leaves little doubt that they are a cohesive group, in which larger items would look out of place. At the other end of the scale, thumbnail maps have not been excluded. Tiny and rudimentary, they are usually to be found as diminutive, decorative devices on playing cards, title-pages, portraits, mileage tables, initial letters and much later on postage stamps and cigarette and other trade cards.



Johann Honter, Zurich, 1546



Johann Grüninger, Strasbourg, 1525

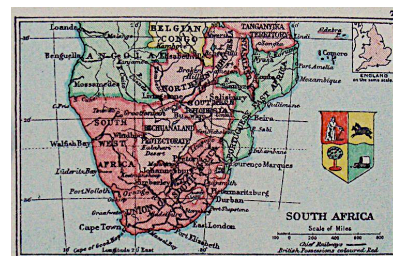
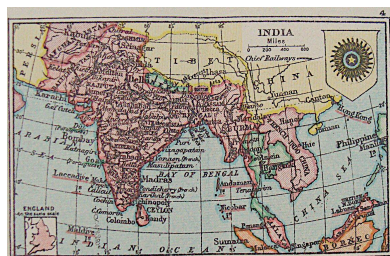


Jan B. Vrients, Antwerp, 1601

Dimensions for maps and atlases given throughout this website are often prefixed with the word ‘about’, as they do vary. This is because map paper is affected by age and humidity, and books were individually bound by craftsmen prior to mechanization and standardization. The measurements of plates in uniform series also usually differ a little. A common misconception with books is to regard the terms quarto, octavo, etc. as sizes, whereas in reality they relate to the format or the make-up of the sections. Atlases often have no sections, being sewn collections of individual plates from cut up sheets.

The term ‘pocket atlas’ seems to have arisen in the seventeenth century when smaller versions were described as ‘reduced to a size portable for the pocket’. However, they were not particularly small by modern standards, as pockets were much larger then than now, and many contained small rather than miniature maps. The golden age of miniature atlases was around the second half of the eighteenth century. Many were published in Paris but others also appeared in Augsburg, London, Madrid, Philadelphia and Venice.

What is possibly the smallest atlas of them all? In 1924 the London firm of Edward Stanford Ltd., Cartographers to the King, was required to produce one to go in Queen Mary’s doll’s house. According to the firm’s website, it published a facsimile in 1925: *Atlas of the British Empire: reproduced from the original made for Her Majesty Queen Mary’s doll’s house*. This tiny little atlas in limp red leather, measures 44 x 34 mm. and has the title in gilt on the front and gilt page edges. Following the title-page and contents list are twelve numbered double-page chromolithographic maps, mostly with heraldry:



*The World showing the British Empire; The British Isles; Canada; India; Australia; New Zealand; South Africa; West Africa; East Africa; Anglo-Egyptian Sudan; West Indies; Pacific Islands.*