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Rand McNally Announces Winner of “Oldest Wall Map Contest”

Woodstock, Vt. school still using wall map from 1898

SKOKIE, Ill., June 2, 2010 – To mark its 130th year providing educational resources to U.S. classrooms, Rand McNally went in search of the oldest U.S. or World Wall Map in use in a classroom today. The winning map was found in the keeping of Jim Stehouwer, a thirty-eight year teacher of history and science, currently teaching at Woodstock Elementary in Woodstock, Vt.

The 1898 dated map was commissioned by the Hon. Binger Hermann, Commissioner of the U.S. General Land Office, Department of the Interior. What is unusual about this map -- besides its age -- is its construction: A layered paper-over-cloth map that includes a base political map, a historical map overlay listing the dates of acquisition of various land areas such as the Louisiana Purchase, and a small grid system that appears to be a plan to track land sales for the U.S. Government.

Stehouwer, a 5th and 6th grade teacher at the Vermont elementary school, figures the map was originally used to help portion out land for sale or grants in the Midwest and West.

“We use maps in all subject areas including history, math and social studies as a tool to better understand a time period or topic. Our children work to develop map reading skills and they are encouraged to be curious about maps – what’s on the whole map, the details it shows, the relation of one thing to the next,

and we challenge them to tell the story the map is trying to impart,” Stehouwer said. “There is not a map made that does not tell some type of story”.

Rand McNally’s cartographic editors shared a few facts about what changes one would see from a map produced in 1898 versus today. Historic differences include:

- Canada is now a country that extends across the continent, rather than being presented only in the east, and labeled "British Possessions"
- Oklahoma and Alaska are now states, instead of territories
- The State of Hawaii would not be shown on the older map – Hawaii was not annexed until July, 1898
- The older map would not have any interstate highways – construction on these highways didn’t start until after WWII, more than fifty years later
- Only the earliest National Parks, Yellowstone and Yosemite, would be visible in 1898

As the contest winner, Woodstock Elementary School has received a grant for \$10,000 in Rand McNally Education products to help offset the challenge of providing resources to meet 21st Century Skills.

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