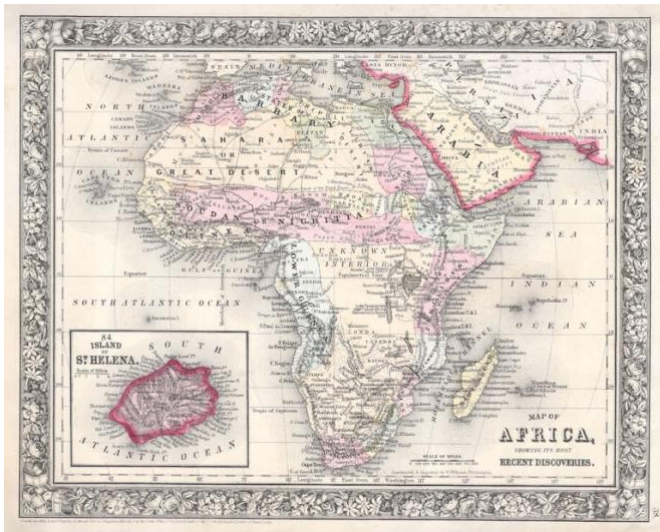


Map Information Sheet

Map of Africa Showing its Most Recent Discoveries



Author:	Samuel Augustus Mitchell (1792-1868)
Date of	1864
Publication:	
Publisher:	Samuel Augustus Mitchell (Philadelphia)
Original Size:	27.9cm x 34.2cm

Description

Samuel Augustus Mitchell Jr.'s **1860 Map of Africa Showing its Most Recent Discoveries**, published in *Mitchell's New General Atlas* in Philadelphia, reflects the mid-19th century moment when fresh reports from explorers were rapidly reshaping knowledge of the continent. Presented on a single folio sheet with Mitchell's distinctive ornamental border, the hand-coloured map outlines Africa's colonial possessions, kingdoms, and tribal regions, while cautiously incorporating the latest geographic information from figures like Heinrich Barth, David Livingstone, and Burton and Speke - most notably partial depictions of Central and East Africa's lakes and the speculative sources of the Nile. Though the map leaves much of the interior blank or tentative, its emphasis on "recent discoveries" catered to an American audience fascinated by commerce, exploration, and missionary work. Issued decades before the Scramble for Africa, it underscores coastal European footholds while illustrating a cartographic transition away from inherited speculation toward evidence-based geography, making it both a decorative household reference and a record of Africa on the cusp of modern mapping.

Cartographic Content

- **Format & engraving.** Hand-coloured, lithographed map on a single folio sheet, surrounded by Mitchell's characteristic ornamental floral border used throughout his atlas series.
- **Geographic coverage.** The map presents the entire African continent, including Madagascar and adjacent islands, with colonial possessions and political divisions emphasized by contrasting colours. Major kingdoms, tribal regions, and coastal settlements are marked.
- **"Most recent discoveries."** The interior features the latest mid-19th-century geographic knowledge, including routes of explorers and partially delineated lakes and rivers in Central and East Africa. Some features - like the beginnings of the great lakes region and speculative sources of the Nile - reflect reports of expeditions by Heinrich Barth (1850s), David Livingstone, and other contemporaries.
- **Insets & detail.** While less elaborate than some European maps, Mitchell's editions often included **inset notes or coastal enlargements**; in the Africa plate, the emphasis is on broad continental coverage, designed for an American readership interested in geography, commerce, and missionary activity.

Historical Context

- **Mitchell's publishing house.** Samuel Augustus Mitchell Jr. inherited the atlas business from his father. By the 1860s, *Mitchell's New General Atlas* was among the most popular affordable reference atlases in the United States. Its decorative borders and practical, updated maps made it a staple in American homes and schools.

- **Mid-19th-century African exploration.** The 1860 map was issued at a moment of intense European and American fascination with the “dark continent.” News of Barth’s multi-year travels across the Sahara (published 1857), Livingstone’s Zambezi explorations (1850s), and Burton and Speke’s expeditions toward the Great Lakes (1857–59) was filtering into atlases. The map’s title - “most recent discoveries” - signalled Mitchell’s commitment to incorporating this fresh knowledge.
- **Colonial and commercial framing.** While the “Scramble for Africa” had not yet begun, the map underscores European presence along coasts (Cape Colony, Algeria, Portuguese Angola/Mozambique, etc.). It visually situates Africa for an American audience during a period when debates about slavery and African missions were prominent in U.S. discourse.
- **Cartographic significance.** Compared with earlier Enlightenment-era maps (d’Anville, Tirion, Boulton), Mitchell’s 1860 version reflects the transition from speculative interiors to evidence-based geography, though gaps and blank spaces remain. Within two decades, later atlas editions would begin to show the Great Lakes more accurately and delineate colonial spheres as the Scramble accelerated.

This is a reproduction of a historical map.
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