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Americae Novissima Descriptio 1589

Stock#: 86199
Map Maker: Hondius / Le Clerc
Date: 1589 (1602)
Place: London? (Paris)
Color: Uncolored
Condition: Good
Size: 18.5 x 12.5 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

First Map of America To Report The Discoveries of Sir Francis Drake

Exceedingly rare map of America, the Pacific Ocean, Japan, New Guinea and the mythical Terra Australis, bearing the imprint of Jodocus Hondius (the elder) and dated 1589 and 1602.

The map is one of a set of 6 maps engraved by Hondius which survive only in examples published between 1602 and 1605 by Jacques Le Clerc, including two world maps, a set of 4 continental maps and a map of England. This map of America is dated 1589. This world maps and this map of America have fascinated scholars for nearly a century, both for their remarkable content which can only be ascribed to a contemporary knowledge of the voyage of Sir Francis Drake and the mysterious path travelled by the copperplates from Hondius to Le Clerc in Paris in 1602.

Includes a near continuous watercourse from the St. Lawrence to the Rio Grande River (then called Rio Hermosa), which flows into the Mar Vermeio (Gulf of California). Cibola is mentioned, as are Totontec and a number of early California place names, extending to Quivira and Grandes Corientes, north of C. de Mendocino.

On the East Coast, Norumbega, Nova Francia, Canada, Port Royal, C. de S. Helena, La Florida and Sorrochoe appear, along with numerous Indian names in the interior. Notably absent is any sign of the discoveries shown in the maps of Le Moyne and White in the Southeastern US, which is one of the first of many clues leading to the conclusion that the map was engraved in 1589. The mythical islands of Brasil and S. Brendan appear, along with Frisland. Bermuda is also shown. The map is richly embellished with numerous ships and sea creatures.



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This separately published map has been the subject of much speculation regarding its history. As discussed by Burden, the great mystery is whether the map was engraved and published in 1589, during Hondius' stay in London or during his later residence in Amsterdam. While the map is dated 1589 in the cartouche, the only known state of the map bears the imprint I. Le Clerc excu. 1602. The map is part of a set of four continents of similar style, but is the only one of the four to bear the date of 1589. The cartography of America significantly pre-dates 1602, and is consistent with Hondius' world map of 1595 and his wall map of America of 1598. These maps also include the discoveries of Drake, along with later information from Cavendish. Burden further notes that the treatment of Japan and Greenland date to an earlier period, as does Hondius' classic Flemish engraving style and embellishments.

The most telling detail in the maps which dates the creation of the map to 1589 is the inclusion of Drake's discoveries while rounding Cape Horn, including the reference to the Elizabeth Islands. Burden notes that the map bears a striking resemblance to Hondius' small world map of 1589, which also reported Drake's discoveries.

The map is full of other clues which would strongly suggest the earlier date. The appearance of Port Royal on the map would make it the earliest appearance of this place name on a map, predating De Bry in 1591. It is worth noting that no reference to Virginia appears. Given the available knowledge in London in 1589 regarding the failed English Colony, this is a curious omission. If the map dates from 1589, Burden notes that it must be examined in the context of maps of the Pacific by Hogenberg, Mazza, and Ortelius, all published in the same time period. Burden notes similarities in the four maps, but observes that it is not possible to determine which would predate the other, based upon the information present. While the primacy issue and whether an earlier undiscovered 1589 edition may exist, the map's rarity is beyond question.

Jodocus Hondius as the Map Engraver

Jodocus Hondius was resident in London from 1584 to 1593. During this time, it is well known that Hondius had contacts with Sir Walter Raleigh, John Smith and Francis Drake among other English explorers and mapmakers. Toward the end of his time in London, Hondius engraved the gores for the Molyneux Globes, as well as his small world map (Typus Orbis Terrarum) of 1589, which shows both the route of Drake's circumnavigation and the islands and open water south of Tierra del Fuego. The same details also appear on his later "broadside" map dated 1589, but believed to have been engraved in the early 1590s.

While this map of America map has been described by some as having been re-engraved by Le Clerc, the evidence suggesting that the map was not originally engraved by Jodocus Hondius in London is circumstantial. Most recent scholars have concluded that this map is in fact the work of Hondius in



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London. Most recently, Gunter Schilder makes the case for London in *Monumenta Cartographica Neerlandica* Vol. 8 (2007).

It should also be noted that while Le Clerc was active as an printer and engraver in Paris in 1602, there appear to be no extent maps actually engraved by Le Clerc until 1617, other than the 2 world maps, 4 continents and map of England, all of which are dated between 1602 and 1605. Le Clerc and his cohort of French printers and engravers in this period are known to have had contact with Hondius prior to his departure from London. At least one modern scholar has opined in correspondence with this firm that Hondius likely sold the plates shortly after 1600 in anticipation of buying the Mercator atlas copper plates, and, in fact, a number of other plates attributed to Hondius began to circulate in France with other engravers and printers shortly after 1600.

Francis Drake Information via Jodocus Hondius

The map is most noteworthy for its identification of Sir Francis Drake's theories of Islands off the south coast of South America, 15 years before its actual discovery. The present map does not show the "Fretum Magellanicum" as simply a narrow strait between two continents, but instead shows a large group of islands, including the "Insulae Reginae Elisabethae ab Anglis detectae Anno 1579" (Islands of Queen Elizabeth detected by the English in 1579), the names used by Drake. All other maps of the period showed the straits of Magellan as the only navigable watercourse from the Atlantic to the Pacific, with a massive southern continent below the Strait. The path around the Horn was critical to European powers eager to circumvent Dutch claims of control over the Strait and therefore access from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

Contemporary reports put Drake in this region in August-September 1578, during the period he attempted to round Cape Horn into the Pacific in search of Spanish ships to attack. Various accounts report that Drake named an Island for Queen Elizabeth on August 24, 1578, with some early sources calling all of archipelago of Tierra del Fuego the Elizabeth Islands.

A second note on the mainland, reads "exstrui curavit ao. 1582," referencing the fortress constructed in the region by the King of Spain in 1582, a note which also appears on Ortelius' *Maris Pacifici quod vulgo Mar del Zud*, first published in 1590, as well as Hogenberg's *Americae et Proximarum Regionum Orae Descriptio* (1589) and Mazza's *Americae et Proximar Regionum* of 1589. Of the four maps, only the Hondius-Le Clerc map references the Elizabeth Islands and only the Hondius-Le Clerc map fails to show the narrow passage between continents.

According to Norman Thrower, the plates were likely engraved by Jodocus Hondius between the two Drake reports



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Although the map was probably initially prepared in England, it was never given a privilege there (almost certainly because of the sensitive nature of the Drake content). As such, Hondius would not have been able to publish the map until his return to the continent, by which time the cartographic content would have been outdated, and therefore the sale of the copper plate logical.

Rarity

Burden noted only 2 known examples in private US collections and no known examples in any American institutional collection.

This is the third example we have offered in the past 25 years.

Detailed Condition:

Restoration along the left and right sides of the map, including loss of printed image, which has been expertly reinstated on the verso.