



Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

7407 La Jolla Boulevard
La Jolla, CA 92037

www.raremaps.com

(858) 551-8500
blr@raremaps.com

Amerique Septentrionale (with Gold Region, Panama Railroad and St. Thomas District Insets)

Stock#: 95514
Map Maker: Vandermaelen
Date: 1867
Place: Brussels
Color: Hand Colored
Condition: VG+
Size: 17 x 12 inches
Price: \$ 475.00



Description:

Highlighting The Belgian St. Thomas District, Flag of Poyais and other American Oddities

Fascinating map of North America, adorned with the seals and flags of a number of nations in the region.

Among the flags, some of the more interesting include:

- Texas (a curious depiction of the Lone Star Flag, which looks more like the flag of Liberia)
- Russian American Company (which controlled Alaska until 1867)
- Poyais (Belize) (the state of Poyais was promoted in the 1820's by General "Sir" Gregor MacGregor as a means of raising fraudulent loans -- see below)

Cartographically, the map would seem to date to about 1867, as the Territory of Montana is shown, but not the Territory of Wyoming. Nevada, Arizona and Idaho also appear, along with "Dagota" Territory. The route of the first transcontinental railroad is shown, with the proposed route of the Southern Pacific dipping into a pre-Gadsden Purchase Mexico.

The large inset of the California Gold region is drawn from the map of Duflot de Mofras.

The History of St. Thomas District in Guatemala: A Belgian Chapter

The inset of St. Thomas tells an interesting story of the history of Guatemala. In 1844, under the directive of King Leopold I of Belgium, a ship anchored off the coast of southern Izabal, Guatemala. The Belgians,



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under notable colonists such as Jean-Baptiste Corsange and Henri van der Elst, settled in Santo Tomás de Castilla, forging an uncommon alliance with the Guatemalan government.

With an agreement sealed with the President of Guatemala, the Belgians were granted the St. Thomas District in perpetuity, in return for an annual payment of sixteen thousand pesos. This settlement came with stipulations: the Belgians had to adopt Catholicism and Guatemalan citizenship but were allowed a semi-autonomous government. The Belgians' commitments extended beyond mere finances. They pledged significant infrastructural developments, including constructing a metal bridge over the Motagua River and establishing a port in the Bay of Amatique.

The colony, experiencing steady growth, underwent a pivotal change in 1877. The District of St. Thomas was officially sold to the Belgian government, turning it into a recognized colony. This transaction also transferred the responsibility of the annual payment to the Belgian state. This Belgian chapter in Guatemalan history serves as a testament to the intricate interplay of colonization, religion, and geopolitical aspirations during the 19th century.

The Poyais Scheme: A Brief History

The story of Poyais is one of the most audacious and infamous hoaxes in the annals of colonization. At its heart was Gregor MacGregor, a Scottish soldier and adventurer. In the early 1820s, MacGregor began promoting the land of "Poyais," allegedly located near the Mosquito Coast of present-day Honduras and Nicaragua. He painted a picture of a fertile and mineral-rich land, with established infrastructure, ready for British settlers to inhabit and prosper. Armed with forged documents, detailed maps, and even a fabricated guidebook, MacGregor managed to secure significant loans in London and attracted around 250 settlers to invest their fortunes and futures in Poyais.

In 1822, two ships departed Britain bound for Poyais. Upon their arrival, settlers found no bustling capital city, no infrastructure, and none of the promises MacGregor had assured them of. Instead, they found uninhabitable wilderness. Many settlers fell ill and died due to tropical diseases and inadequate provisions. By 1823, news of the Poyais hoax reached Britain. Of the initial 250 settlers, only around 50 managed to return home. MacGregor's deception was uncovered, but he managed to escape justice by moving to France, where he attempted similar scams before eventually settling in Venezuela.

Detailed Condition: