



Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

7407 La Jolla Boulevard
La Jolla, CA 92037

www.raremaps.com

(858) 551-8500
blr@raremaps.com

Le Canal Royal De Languedoc Pour la Jonction des desu Mers Ocean et Mediterranee . . .1722

Stock#: 29109
Map Maker: de Fer / Benard
Date: 1722
Place: Paris
Color: Hand Colored
Condition: VG
Size: 28 x 19 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

Detailed map showing the Canal du Midi, one of the biggest canal projects of the 18th Century.

The Canal du Midi was built to create a shortcut between the Atlantic and the Mediterranean, avoiding the long sea voyage around hostile Spain, the Barbary pirates, and a trip that in the 17th century took a full month to complete. The idea of a canal had been discussed for centuries, in particular when King Francis I brought Leonardo da Vinci to France in 1516 and commissioned a survey of a route from the Garonne at Toulouse to the Aude at Carcassonne. The major problem was how to supply the summit sections with enough water.]

In 1662, Pierre-Paul Riquet, a rich tax-farmer in the Languedoc region, who knew the region intimately, believed he could solve the problem, but he first had to persuade Jean-Baptiste Colbert, the finance minister of Louis XIV, which he did through his friendship with the Archbishop of Toulouse. A Royal Commission was appointed and in 1665 recommended the project which was finally ordered by Louis XIV in 1666. The canal plans were drawn up by France's leading military engineer, the Chevalier de Clerville. To help in the design, Riquet is said to have constructed a miniature canal in the grounds of his house, Bonrepos, complete with locks, weirs, feeder channels and even a tunnel.

Riquet sent his personal engineer, François Andreossy, and a local water expert, Pierre Roux, to the Montagne Noire to work on the water supply. Some of Clerville's men with experience in military engineering came, too, to build a huge dam, the Bassin de St. Ferréol, on the Laudot river. This massive dam was the largest work of civil engineering in Europe and only the second major dam to be built in Europe, after one in Alicante in Spain. It was connected to the Canal du Midi by a contoured channel. It



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was eventually equipped with 14 locks in order to bring building materials for the canal down from the mountains and to create a new port for the mountain town of Revel. This supply system successfully fed the canal with water where it crossed the continental divide, replacing water that drained toward the two seas. The system was a masterpiece of both hydraulic and structural engineering, and served as an early ratification of Riquet's vision. It was also a major part of a massive enterprise. At its peak 12,000 labourers worked on the project, including over a thousand women, many of whom came specifically to work on the water system.

Detailed Condition: