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[Eastern Virginia / Tidewater] A Map of Virginia Formed from Actual Surveys, and the Latest as well as the most accurate observations (southeastern sheet)

Stock#: 34658
Map Maker: Bossler / Madison
Date: 1807
Place: Richmond, Virginia
Color: Uncolored
Condition: VG+
Size: 23 x 22.5 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

The Tidewater sheet of Bishop James Madison's *A Map of Virginia Formed from Actual Surveys, and the Latest as well as the most accurate observations* (1807), the first accurate general map of the Old Dominion State, and one of the most important and valuable American maps made during the decades following the Revolution.

The present map is the lower right sheet of Bishop Madison's monumental 8 sheet work, and depicts the critical southwest section of the state, including all of Virginia's coastlines and the Chesapeake Bay estuaries of the Potomac, Rappahannock, York and James rivers. Also included are the state capital, Richmond, the old colonial capital, Williamsburg, and the key naval port of Norfolk. All roads, towns, and the locations of plantations (with their owner's names) are finely engraved. The copyright imprimatur, reading "Richmond Published 4th March 1807" is located to the upper right of the sheet.

For the first generation following the American Revolution, Virginia lacked an accurate general state map. In the years following the Revolution, landowners, road-builders and administrators had lamented that the lack of such a map had hindered the state's development, especially as new counties were founded across the Blue Ridge. The best map available was the excellent, but outdated *Map of the Most Inhabited Part of Virginia* by Joshua Fry and Peter Jefferson (the latter being the father of Thomas Jefferson), which was



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first published in 1753 and last updated in 1775.

James Madison (1749-1812) was the Episcopalian Bishop of Virginia and the President of the College of William & Mary. A towering intellect, he was the first-cousin of President James Madison. He was a keen enthusiast of cartography and surveying and had long recognized the need for a sophisticated new map of Virginia. However, the great cost of the project and the technical challenges of mounting scientific surveys of such a mountainous land inhibited progress. In spite of these challenges, in 1802, Madison was able to muster his resources and contacts, commencing work on the project in 1802. Employing the most advanced scientific methods of surveying, Madison was the first to accurately delineate the state's road system and he took accurate readings of latitude and longitude coordinates of key sites, predicated on astronomical observations. He was also the first person to accurately chart the Trans-Appalachian regions of the state. Local surveyors from across Virginia honored requests to send copies of their most recent surveys. In his endeavors, Madison was materially assisted by President Jefferson, as well as his cousin Secretary of State James Madison (who would ascend to the presidency in 1809).

Madison recruited William Prentiss, of Petersburg, Virginia, to analyze and compile the information and William Davis, "a neat, correct and intelligent draughtsman" to draw the map itself. Frederick Bossler was charged with engraving the plates. In 1805, the finished manuscript was presented the state legislature, for Madison hoped to gain official funding for its publication. Unfortunately, the legislature of the cash-strapped state refused to support the project, so the well-connected Madison was compelled to raise the necessary funds by subscription.

The printed map, published in Richmond in 1807, is a masterpiece of scientific cartography and artistry. The complete is a monumental construction, in eight sheets, measured an overall dimension of 46 x 71 inches (when joined). The upper right corner features a lovely view of Richmond, by Charles-Balthazar-Julien Fevret de Saint Memin, the focus of which is the state capitol building designed by Thomas Jefferson. The upper left corner features an inset map of Ohio, a region that had long been the focus of land speculation schemes backed by wealthy Virginians. A second edition of Madison's map of Virginia was published in 1818.

The complete map is very rare on the market.

Detailed Condition:

Very fine, with full margins and strong, black engraving impression