



**Barry Lawrence Ruderman
Antique Maps Inc.**

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**Plan of the City of New-York. The greater part from actual survey made expressly for
the purpose By Thos. H. Poppleton 1829 . . .**

Stock#: 51029ml
Map Maker: Poppleton
Date: 1829
Place: New York
Color: Uncolored
Condition: VG
Size: 22 x 26.5 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

The Most Important Plan of New York City of its Time -- Printed on Silk!

Very rare plan of New York City by Thomas Poppleton, printed on silk, recording the city's early march northward.

Poppleton became the New York City Surveyor sometime after October 1812, when he arrived to the City from Baltimore for the express purpose of undertaking an official survey of the City, aided by Robert Fulton and Eli Whitney. When his map first appeared in 1817, it was to our knowledge the first printed plan to show development in the city along the grid plan mandated by the city and set forth on the Commissioners' Plan of 1811. Further, it reflects the city's growth spurt occasioned by the opening of the Erie Canal in 1825. This 1829 edition, owing in part to it having been printed on silk, shows the extent of this development with exceptional clarity.



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The plan is rich with information. Its legend lists 133 locations, all keyed to map, in which identify the city's commercial, religious, recreational and cultural entities at the time. Many individual residences and their owners are indicated as well as the owners of wharves and piers. It depicts lower Manhattan from 31st Street south to the Battery. A somewhat poignant feature is that north of the developed portion of the city on the plan only faint traces of Manhattan's original topography can be discerned.

The first edition of the map was published in 1817 by Prior & Dunning and was engraved by Peter Maverick. In 1827, William Hooker revised the original copperplate of the map with numerous additions and the map was again published by Prior & Dunning. The present issue, published by Prior and Brown, is noted for having been produced on silk or muslin. The differences among the editions of the plan have not been closely studied, owing perhaps to the rarity of each of them.

Thomas Poppleton

Thomas Holdsworth Poppleton was born in 1765 in London. In 1780, at the age of 15, he was apprenticed to a member of the Honorable Company of Vintners. It is not known how or when he became a land surveyor.

By 1805, Poppleton had taken on an apprentice and was working as a house, land, and timber surveyor at 1 Bloomsbury Square, London. About the same time he took on architect Henry Ashley Keeble as a partner which would lead to his financial ruin. In 1807, the partnership was dissolved and Poppleton ended up for a brief time in King's Bench Prison as a debtor.

He remained in London for a brief time, but was pursued by another apprentice who claimed that he had not fulfilled his obligation to train him in the trade, which led to a judgement against Poppleton.

Poppleton left London for Baltimore by April of 1812 where he opened an office on North Howard Street, and offered to survey the City in response to a notice soliciting proposals that he had read in the newspapers. At the time, Baltimore was seeking a survey of the town in the style of Robert Horwood's survey and map of London.

It is unknown why Poppleton chose Baltimore, but it is possible that he was aware of John Eager Howard's need for a surveyor of his extensive urban properties, and the city's desperate need for an accurate survey of its boundaries, streets, and alley ways. The mystery figures in Poppleton's attraction to Baltimore are the Quaker Assurance broker and friend of the Howard's, Joseph Townsend, and Cornelius Howard, Jr., Governor John Eager Howard's brother. Joseph Townsend, initially a bookbinder and teacher by trade and an early opponent of slavery, established the most successful building insurance company in the city



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(Baltimore Equitable Insurance Society). Cornelius Howard, Jr., a land surveyor by trade, was the brother of Governor John Eager Howard, revolutionary war hero and friend of Washington's, who owned significant areas of the city and the surrounding countryside. In the years before Poppleton, he had been called upon to sort out the ancient surveys of the land that encompassed the city and may even have participated in the abortive 1785 attempt to map the town.

Poppleton's work was initially well received. But by the summer of 1812, internal fighting within the Baltimore political hierarchy resulted in Poppleton's quitting. Poppleton relocated to New York City with the assistance of Howard, working under the direction of New York City co-commissioners Robert Fulton and Eli Whitney.

While most of Poppleton's Baltimore papers have long since disappeared, his journal for the first New York project survived as it was purchased by the New York Public Library in 1905. In it, he details his work with the other two commissioners until all three signed off on their plans and recommendations. Once signed, the plans were submitted to the city and to Governor Clinton in Albany. Poppleton did the survey and the accompanying plats. Robert Fulton prepared the perspective drawings. Whitney attended all the decision meetings and was consulted on the engineering aspects of the proposed solution to the open sewer that was Canal Street.

The three began with the idea that they would be proposing a canal with sewers underneath, but concluded that the best treatment was to abandon the canal and concentrate on an elaborate covered sewer. The city fathers found their proposal too expensive and, over time, all of the drawings and plats disappeared from the City Surveyor's office. Eventually, their advise was finally taken. Poppleton's work was exemplary. It landed him the post of one of the City Surveyors and a partnership with another surveyor that brought him significant business including surveying and mapping parts of Brooklyn as well as the opportunity to produce the best survey map of Lower Manhattan, first published in 1817 (the present map), that continued to be used in defining streets and property lines well into the 19th century.

Rarity

Three known copies of this edition: NYPL, NYHS, Amer. Ant. Soc. The only market record of an example of any of the three editions of the map was this very example 17 years ago.

Detailed Condition:

Printed on silk. A few abrasions with losses but very good for a map of this kind.