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**To Joseph de Mendoza Rios Esqr. F.R.S. &c&c. This Chart of the Pacific Ocean Is  
Dedicated, In testimony of Respect and Esteem by His much Obligated Humble Servt. A:  
Arrowsmith**

**Stock#:** 87621  
**Map Maker:** Arrowsmith  
  
**Date:** 1798 (1805 circa)  
**Place:** London  
**Color:** Hand Colored  
**Condition:** Good  
**Size:** 31 x 73.25 inches  
  
**Price:** SOLD



**Description:**

***The Western Pacific from Arrowsmith's Monumental Chart of the Ocean***

Three sheets from Aaron Arrowsmith's monumental nine-sheet chart of the Pacific, "the most authoritative up-to-date depiction of the Pacific and Australia" (Wood).



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Arrowsmith's chart of the Pacific is both a legendary rarity and highly important artifact of the age of Pacific exploration, providing a comprehensive graphical image of the modern Pacific Ocean. Its publications followed a half-century of exploration by English, French, Spanish, and Russian explorers which completely recast the knowledge of the planet's largest body of water, including encounters with numerous previously unknown (to Europeans) islands and Indigenous peoples and cultures. The Pacific represented the last, vast unexplored region of the planet in the middle of the eighteenth century; by the beginning of the nineteenth century, European explorers had largely pulled back the curtain on its hidden expanse, which Arrowsmith's chart of the Pacific, like no other of its time, reveals in a single (massive) image.

Arrowsmith's chart was first published in 1798. These three sheets are from an early state (ca. 1805), dateable by the lack of portrait of the dedicatee, Joseph de Mendoza Rios. The 3 sheets cover the western Pacific Rim in striking detail. Because of its size, the chart was also sold in sections such as this one, which would have been highly useful for illustrating the final legs of European ships sailing around the horn of Africa and through the Indian Ocean to China, Japan and the whaling regions to the north. One can easily imagine that the condition of this map reveals a useful life at sea.

The sheets range north to south from Kamchatka to Japan to Maritime Southeast Asia to Australia. They include the Carolines and a portion of New Zealand in the far southeast, as well of Vanuatu, then known as the New Hebrides, and New Caledonia.

On display is Arrowsmith's characteristic detailed, yet elegantly simple, style, with only coastal outlines included. As a general chart intended to aid navigation, the chart also includes depth soundings and compass roses, which would help to plot a course for a ship when paired with more specific charts of particular places. Many detailed notes pepper the chart, offering a history of European exploration and colonization in the area dating to the sixteenth century. The tracks of ships also zig-zag the waters, marking the area as European in knowledge and largely erasing the presence of Indigenous peoples.

A distinctive feature is the inclusion of the entirety of Van Diemen's Land to the south of Australia. The first state of this chart left the area of the Bass Strait empty and unlabeled. However, in the same year the chart appeared, 1798, Matthew Flinders and George Bass circumnavigated the island; the Bass Strait is named for Flinders' companion. Arrowsmith published charts showing this update on behalf of the Admiralty in 1800-01. From his ca. 1802 state of this chart, he also integrated the information there.

Making use of inland space, Arrowsmith dedicates the chart to Joseph de Mendoza Rios. Mendoza y Rios



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(1761-1816) was a Spanish astronomer and naval officer. Ill health pushed him out of active shipboard duty, but he continued his work on navigation, publishing a notable treatise on the subject in 1787. This work vaulted him into the upper echelons of Europe's scientific societies; he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1793, after moving to London. The rest of his career, he focused on developing tables and refining instruments that would let a navigator calculate their latitude and longitude while at sea in mere minutes.

#### **Arrowsmith's sources**

Arrowsmith's sources are hinted to in the notes on the chart. For example, he references William Dampier on the west coast of Australia. Dampier's books were bestsellers a century prior to the publication of Arrowsmith's chart and his observations were still used by hydrographers thanks to his rare encounter with the west coast of New Holland.

Voyage accounts, and their accompanying charts, can also help to explain the many ship tracks that are printed on these sheets. They include the famous Pacific voyages from the 1760s, including Byron, Bougainville, Wallis, and the most famous of all, Cook. Later voyages are also included, such as Vancouver, Bligh, La Perouse, and others. Not all the tracks mark very famous ships. For example, one details the voyage of the *Walpole* to Canton in 1794. Captain Thomas Butler of the *Walpole* led a voyage round the Cape of Good Hope, then around the entirety of New Holland, to approach Canton from the east. Another lesser-known vessel chronicled here is that of the *Duff*, a ship hired by the London Missionary Society to take their missionaries to South Seas islands in the 1790s.

To take the Philippines as an example, the famous Manila-Acapulco galleon track is marked, based in part on the chart and information made famous in Commodore George Anson's *Voyage round the World* (1748). More recently, La Perouse's doomed mission is marked as it sailed north just east of the northern Philippines in 1787. A year later, the *Boussole* and the *Astrolabe* would be wrecked on Vanikoro in the Santa Cruz Group, southeast of the Solomons. News of the wreck site would not be discovered until 1826, but La Perouse had sent back materials from his ports of call and, by the time this chart was originally published in 1798, his disappearance was still of great interest across Europe.

Besides English and French expeditions, Arrowsmith also references Spanish charts, for example in a note just west of the Ladrões, or the Marianas. Around the Philippines, tracks show the Spanish voyages of Pedilla (1710) and D'Egui (1712), who both sailed to the Palau Islands in the early eighteenth century.

Charts could be obtained through maritime contacts, but it is also known that Arrowsmith had special



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connections within the British charting body, the Hydrographic Office (HO), founded in 1795. Indeed, Arrowsmith worked for the HO from September 1795 to November 1796, where he saw the latest geographic sources from Royal Navy expeditions. He was also publishing charts privately at this time; his business was located on or near Soho Square from 1790.

Arrowsmith's boss at the HO, Alexander Dalrymple, was loath to share his precious Royal Navy charts, logs, and journals with private mapmakers like Arrowsmith. However, the HO under Dalrymple was barely able to organize their existing charts, much less print new, accurate ones. Thus, a committee was formed in 1807 to review privately-published charts which were precise enough for naval use and also to identify areas where new charts were needed. Arrowsmith was reviewed by and familiar with the Chart Committee.

Dalrymple, unsurprisingly, disliked this committee oversight, particularly for the opportunities it granted to private publishers. Soon after the committee was formed, Dalrymple refused to give over manuscript charts of Australia that had been captured in 1795 showing the findings of the D'Entrecasteaux expedition to the Pacific. By 1807, the French nor the British, who had returned the originals to the French, had published the works, making charts of the region outdated. Dalrymple belatedly handed over his copies of the charts, but the episode illustrates how information could languish between manuscript and printed chart.

In 1798, based on sources he accessed through his ties at the HO, Arrowsmith published his first state of the "Chart of the Pacific Ocean." It was approved by the HO's Chart Committee for use by navigators in the Pacific region, one of very few charts to be so approved for that area. Arrowsmith continued to improve the chart by adding the latest discoveries up to 1832, the date of the last state of the chart.

#### **The states of the Arrowsmith Pacific Chart**

Arrowsmith's chart were famous for their detail and, as the Pacific was being delineated at an accelerated pace after the 1760s, many new states of the chart were necessary to keep pace with geographic knowledge.

In a 2012 article, Greg Wood lists the known states, although the list is based only on a search of Australian and British archives. The years of these states are 1798, ca. 1802, ca. 1805, 1808, 1810, 1814, 1820, and 1832. There are also likely several states published between 1820 and 1832.

Based on the inclusion of Flinders' circumnavigation of Van Diemens Land, Bass's Strait, and Western



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Port, this would appear to be at least a ca. 1802 edition. However, the portrait of Mendoza Rios is also missing, pushing the date of this example to ca. 1805. This dating aligns with Arrowsmith's address, listed near the dedication at 24 Rathbone Place, a place Arrowsmith worked at from 1798 to 1808.

### **Rarity**

This chart was the most detailed chart of the Pacific to that date and is a marvel due to its size and features. These three sheets, including that which shows Australia, are especially important, as they show spheres of major interest for Europeans, Asians, and Oceanians.

Complete sets of the nine-sheet map are very rare and surviving examples suggest that Arrowsmith sold individual sheets as well as full sets. For example, the Library of Congress' first state includes only seven of the nine sheets; it lacks the two sheets covering Alaska and North America.

Complete sets of the map are very rare. For example, this circa 1805 state of Arrowsmith's chart is known in only 2 institutional examples (National Library of Australia and the Mitchell Library, New South Wales).

We note a single copy in a dealer catalog in the past thirty years (Shapero 2006; 1820 edition) and two copies offered at auction (Sothebys 2003—1801 edition; Sothebys 1992—1820 edition).

In the past thirty years, we have handled only [two sheets](#) of the map, which were bound into a French composite sea atlas, covering Australia and the Philippines, as well as being co-owners of the 2006 example referenced above.

### **Detailed Condition:**

Original color. Segmented and laid on linen, with some splits along fold lines and other minor stains and abrasions. Some dampstaining.