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Map of the United States with the Contiguous British & Spanish Possessions Compiled from the latest & best authorities by John Melish . . . Improved to 1823

Stock#: 10511
Map Maker: Melish

Date: 1823
Place: Philadelphia
Color: Hand Colored
Condition: VG
Size: 57 x 42 inches

Price: SOLD



Description:

John Melish's map of the United States is the single most important and influential map of America published in the 19th Century and is rivaled only by John Mitchell's map of North America in 1755 as the single most influential map in American History. Described by Thomas Jefferson as a luminous view of the comparative possessions of different powers in our America, Melish's map, first issued in 1816, was the first indigenous attempt to map the United States from coast to coast and synthesized the works of Lewis & Clark, Humboldt, Pike, Arrowsmith and others for the first time in a single large format coast-to-coast mapping of the United States. Much as Mitchell's map influenced boundary disputes and treaties in North America for nearly a century after its publication, the Melish map similarly became the essential source map for the 19th Century. It has been described by several commentators as the visual embodiment of Manifest Destiny to an American public searching for a graphic depiction of America's territorial acquisitions from coast-to-coast in the early 19th Century. Following the Louisiana Purchase, Americans turned their attention westward to the great expanse from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean. While the explorations of Lewis & Clark and Zebulon Pike provided early regional snapshots of previously unknown regions in the West, it was left to Melish to tie together these works, along with Arrowsmith's map of Mexico and other available sources, into the first systematic and comprehensive map of the US. Prior to his map of the US, Melish had produced a number of other highly acclaimed regional maps and his rare Military & Topographical Atlas of the United States. However, this map of the US would become his masterwork, ultimately reissued in 25 known states of the map between 1816 and 1823. The most notable advance in the later states of the map is the addition of an extra plate at the bottom of the map, which provided coverage of Cuba, Jamaica, the Virgin Islands and the remainder of the Gulf Coast and the Yucatan to the map. The map, in its various editions, faithfully recorded the changing geography of the



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US, as various boundary disputes, treaties and explorations extended both the geographical territory of the US and a young nation's knowledge of its own territory. The US-Mexico boundary established by the Adams-Onís Treaty of 1819 was laid out on a copy the 1819 edition of the map. Melish reportedly released only 100 copies of each edition. Because of the map's size and its use as an official source, relatively few copies have survived. This is specially true for the later editions, this being the first example of the 1823 (and last) edition of the map to appear on the market in a number of years. These later editions are substantially revised, with extensive corrections along the entire Northern Border of the US and in the treatment of Lake Michigan. Beginning in 1820 Arkansas Territory appears and the Northern border of Tennessee is corrected per Act of Congress ratified May 12, 1820. Beginning with the 1822 edition, the US-Canada border is correctly shown to lie along the 49th parallel from the Lake of the Woods to the Rocky Mountains, correcting the erroneous treatment of the line as extending to the Gulf of Georgia (Puget Sound) which had been shown in prior editions, contrary to the Treaty of 1818. Chicago is now on Lake Michigan w/o the need of a panhandle in Illinois. Missouri appears as a state (admitted August 1821). In the 1822 edition, a number of new Western Roads have been included, including the Kansas Road, running into the Road to the Pawnees, which in turn joins the Great Spanish Trail. Lake Timpanagos appears for the first time in 1822, as does New Albion and New California. The present example is segmented and mounted on linen. All of the original silk edges are present, including the extensions for hanging the map. This example also includes unusually wide margins for the map, which is generally trimmed close to the neatline. There are none of the usual splits or damage to the linen, which includes an ornate large coat of arms printed on the verso. A bit toned, but with strong attractive color. A bit of soiling along the lower neatline and just entering into the map. In all, a very nice example of this seminal American map. Ristow, *American Maps & Mapmakers*, p446; Ristow, *A la Carte* pp 162-182; Schwartz & Ehrenberg pp 238-239, pl. 233; Wheat II, no 322, pp. 62-64.

Detailed Condition: