



## Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

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### Islandia [Unrecorded Early Edition!]

**Stock#:** 19105  
**Map Maker:** Ortelius  
**Date:** 1587  
**Place:** Antwerp  
**Color:** Hand Colored  
**Condition:** VG  
**Size:** 19.5 x 13.5 inches  
**Price:** SOLD



#### Description:

Fine example of Ortelius' classic map of Iceland, one of the most decorative atlas maps and the first relatively accurate map of Iceland drawn from indigenous sources. The color on the present example is the most beautiful we have ever seen on the map.

The map depicts Iceland in remarkable detail, including its mountains, fjords, glaciers and a graphic depiction of Mount Hekla erupting in a fiery explosion of flames and volcanic material. Along part of the coastline, Polar Bears can be seen floating on icebergs. The map includes over 200 place names, primarily Danish in origin, many of which are likely misread from the original map, owing to the different writing style employed in Iceland during the period. While the map is far from accurate, it depicts first time a meaningful depiction of all known settlements in Iceland and many other points of interest, including a number of glaciers.

The map illustrates a remarkable array of legendary and mythical sea monsters and creatures of the 15th and 16th Centuries, along with early depictions of the sea horse, manta ray, walrus and whale. Some of the more purely fanciful images may derive from tales of St. Brendan, a sixth century Irish missionary who, according to legend, journeyed to Iceland and whose name is associated with a mythical island of the same name. Others are traceable to Olaus Magnus's *Carta Marina* of 1539, although they were probably derived directly from Munster's *Cosmographia* of 1545 and most notably Munster's chart of the Sea and Land Creatures. See link for example: <http://www.raremaps.com/gallery/detail/17670> .

The dedication in the lower right corner notes that the map was drawn up and dedicated by Andreas Velleius to the Illustrious and powerful Frederic the Second, King of the Danes, Norwegians, Slavs, Goths etc., his most merciful Majesty. Andreas Sorensen Vedel (1542-1616) was an important Danish historian of



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the period who prepared, but apparently never published a treatise on history of Denmark, which he had intended to illustrate with maps. However, it is almost certain that Vedel was not the maker of the map and simply transmitted the map to Ortelius, without mentioning its source. The map is a vast improvement over all prior maps of Iceland and it is believed therefore that it could only have been drawn by an Icelander, most likely Gudbrandur Thorlaksson, Bishop of Holar, who studied mathematics and astronomy in Copenhagen. It is known that Thorlaksson made a map of the region in 1606. While no map of Iceland by Thorlaksson survives, there is other circumstantial evidence, including a list of churches and fjords which was available and perhaps prepared by Thorlakson, which were almost certainly used in preparing the map. While a privilege for the map was granted in 1585, the map first appeared in the 1587 French edition of Ortelius' *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum*, the first modern Atlas of the World, first issued in 1570 and expanded thereafter until 1612.

The example offered here is an unrecorded early example of the map. The text on the verso is in Latin. As with the first Latin edition of the map, there is no page number on the back, however, the text setting on the verso matches the 1595 edition, suggesting that the map was probably issued sometime between 1590 and 1595.

**Detailed Condition:**

Minor creasing in the left margin, far from the printed image, else a gorgeous and near flawless example. The best and most detailed color we have ever seen on Ortelius' map of Iceland.