



Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

7407 La Jolla Boulevard
La Jolla, CA 92037

www.raremaps.com

(858) 551-8500
blr@raremaps.com

To The Right Honorable John Lord Sommers . . . This Map of North America According To Ye Newest and Most Exact Observations . . .

Stock#: 21593
Map Maker: Moll

Date: 1719 circa
Place: London
Color: Hand Colored
Condition: VG
Size: 38 x 22.5 inches

Price: SOLD



Description:

Herman Moll's Celebrated "Codfish Map" of North America, One of the Earliest Large-Format Maps of North America Printed in England

Highly decorative, large-format map of North America and the West Indies popularly known as the "codfish map" thanks to its vignette of fishermen catching and drying cod along the shores of Newfoundland.

It is one of the maps most beloved by connoisseurs and was first issued by Herman Moll in his atlas, *The World Described* (London, 1715). It would later be copied by George Grierson in ca. 1735 in Dublin.

Geographic content

This engaging map extends from Greenland in the north down to the Caribbean, with the tip of South America near the southern edge. It extends westward to include the Pacific coasts and eastward all the way to Ireland, on the opposite side of the Atlantic. The map is an excellent overview of how the British conceived of North America and the West Indies during the first half of the eighteenth century.

The British colonies along the Atlantic Seaboard are relatively well-mapped, based on late seventeenth-century cartography although, curiously, New England is exaggeratedly narrow; this is especially evident in Massachusetts.

The cartography becomes less confident as one moves north into the Canadian Maritimes, Quebec and Newfoundland, where Moll only had access to outdated French sources. Hudson's Bay is generally well formed due to early exploration and the charting done consistently since the 1660s for the benefit of the



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Hudson's Bay Company. The bay includes the tracks of two exploratory expeditions seeking the Northwest Passage.

The first of these is the final voyage of Henry Hudson. In the employ of the Dutch East India Company (VOC), Hudson sought a more southerly route than other explorers in 1609. He first ventured up the Hudson River; while this was certainly no Northwest Passage, it did help the Dutch to colonize New York, or New Amsterdam as they called the settlement. In 1610, the voyage shown here, Hudson tried again, this time entering the eponymous Hudson Bay. His ship was trapped in the ice, his crew mutinied, and Hudson, his son, and seven others were set adrift in a small boat, never to be seen again.

The other voyage, marked by a dotted line, is that of a Captain James. This refers to Thomas James' voyage of 1631-2. Funded by the Bristol Society of Merchant Venturers, his crew sailed into Hudson's Bay where they scuttled their ship in the fear the ice would break it up, wintered on land, raised their ship the following spring, and limped home. Together with the contemporary voyage of Luke Foxe, they showed that there was no obvious passage to the northwest via Hudson's Bay.

The Great Lakes and the Mississippi are recognizable to the modern eye, based on French and Jesuit sources. Inland, the mythical 'Long River' connects the Mississippi River to the far west. As stated on the map, this riverine detail is derived from Louis Armand, Baron de Lahontan, a notorious French adventurer and fraudster who claimed to have discovered this waterway in the 1690s. He included the detail on a map within his bestseller *Nouveaux Voyages dans l'Amerique Septentrionale* (1703). The 'Long River' was accepted and incorporated into the popular cartographic conception of the region by most of the leading mapmakers of the time, including Guillaume de L'Isle.

California is prominently shown as an island, including the note that "New Albion" was discovered by Sir Francis Drake in 1578. Moll included this detail because, as an ardent partisan of the British cause, he thought it gave the British a claim to the area, rather than the Spanish. Near to this chimerical island, the Pacific Northwest is labeled as "Parts Unknown", accompanied by the apocryphal "Straits of Anian."

The depiction of the West Indies and the Spanish Main is conventional for the period, and features the tracks of the Spanish 'Flota', or fleets of treasure galleons, from Veracruz, Panama and Cartagena, to Havana and then onwards across the Atlantic to Seville. Moll was personal friends with many of the leading British privateers of the era and maintained a particular interest in potential targets for state-sanctioned piracy. To this end, Moll includes an explanation in the bottom right corner outlining how the galleons operate.

A notable aspect of the map is the depiction of the prevailing trade winds, in the manner pioneered by the



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brilliant English scientist and thematic cartographer, Sir Edmund Halley (1656-1742). Moll, an acquaintance of Halley, was well aware that an understanding of this phenomenon was crucial to trans-Atlantic navigation and, therefore, to Britain.

At the bottom left are a series of ten vignettes of plans of key American ports, including: St. John's, Newfoundland; Boston; New York; Charleston, South Carolina; Port Royal & Kingston, Jamaica; Havana; Portobello, Panama; Veracruz, Mexico; Cartagena, Colombia and Acapulco, Mexico (importantly the eastern terminus of the Spanish 'Manila Galleons', which travelled across the Pacific between Mexico and the Philippines). All of these insets underline the commercial and national undercurrents evident on the map.

Decorative content

The left side of Moll's map features a veritable pageant of artistic embellishments. In the center is the famous aforementioned codfish view. Far beyond being a mere artistic conceit, it is symbolic of the important codfish industry of Newfoundland. Since 1713 this trade had been dominated by the British; it was the second largest source of wealth from North America, rivaled only by Virginia's tobacco crop.

The upper left corner is filled with a remarkable, large cartouche. It is framed by figures of Native Americans and Inuit, while the treasures of the continent lie below. The title and dedication are within a decorative frame. The dedicatee is Lord Somers (1651-1716), a prominent politician while Moll was making the map (although it was published after his death). A co-founder of the influential Whig Junto, he was the architect of the 1707 Acts of Union between Scotland and England and the Protestant Succession of 1714.

The cartouche was engraved by a "G. Vertue," or George Vertue (1684-1756). A skilled engraver, he was also an enthusiastic antiquarian. In 1717 he was named the official engraver of the Society of Antiquaries. Clients included the Duke of Portland, the Earl of Oxford, the Duke of Norfolk, and Frederick, Prince of Wales.

Detailed Condition:

Minor loss in Great Lakes.