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Carte Reduite De L'Ocean Septentrional compris entre l'Asie et l'Amerique Suivant les Decouvertes qui ont ete faites par les Russes . . . 1766

Stock#: 36100
Map Maker: Bellin
Date: 1766
Place: Paris
Color: Uncolored
Condition: VG+
Size: 33 x 22 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

Important early map showing the area of Transmississippi West, Northwest Passage, River of the West and explorations for the source of the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers published in Paris by Nicolas Bellin.

This chart was produced by Jacques-Nicolas Bellin (1703-1772), France's preeminent maritime cartographer and the Premier Ingénieur of the Depot de la Marine (the French Hydrographical Office), as well as the Official Hydrographer of the King Louis XV, appearing in volume 2 of Bellin's *Hydrographie Francoise*, one of the most important compilations of Sea Charts published in the 18th Century.

Bellin's chart is the represents a significant step forward in the cartographic depiction of the region, being the first major French map to reject the Bay of the West information in favor of the the more accurate depiction of the region by Gerhard Freidrich Muller, based on information from Russian discoveries in the region during the so called Great Northern Expedition and also incorporating the French discoveries in Canada and the Great Lakes regions, including a fascinating depiction of the sources of the Mississippi River and attempts to retain the prospect of an interior network of rivers from the Pacific Ocean to the Atlantic Ocean.

The Great Northern Expedition was one of the largest and best organized voyages of exploration, the results of which completely remapped most of the Arctic coast of Siberia and some parts of the Northwest coast of America, filling in vast amounts of previously unknown coastal details, which had been previously the subject matter of myth and speculation. Originally conceived by Russian Emperor Peter I the Great, the exploraton was undertaken under the auspices of Russian Empresses Anna and Elizabeth, under the



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direction of Vitus Bering. The expedition lasted roughly from 1733-1743. The goal was to find and map the eastern reaches of Siberia, and explore and map the Northwest Coast of America. The important achievements of the expedition included the European discovery of Alaska, the Aleutian Islands, the Commander Islands, Bering Island, as well as a detailed mapping of the northern and north-eastern coast of Russia and the Kuril Islands. The expedition also ended the myth of a massive land mass in the North Pacific.

Bellin's map was the first major French map to incorporate the work of Gerhard Friedrich Muller and assimilate this information with the French discoveries in the interior of the North American continent. While Muller's map represented a significant leap forward for its coastal details, it was woefully lacking in content in the interior regions of the Pacific Northwest, etc. First published in 1754, Muller's map was the official Russian response to Joseph Nicolas Delisle's surreptitious publication of his map of the same region. The Russians believed that Delisle had improperly used the information he had gathered while serving in St. Petersburg at the Royal Academy. Moreover, they were aware of his incorrect delineation of the Northwest Coast of America. Thus they encouraged Gerard Muller, a German cartographer working in St. Petersburg, to issue a map to correct Delisle's mistakes, as the official mapping from the Imperial Academy in St. Petersburg. The first edition of Muller's map shows a dotted line suggesting the coast of America extending well to the west. The Russian explorations of the 1760s would later determine that the coastline was further to the east, leading to significant revisions of the map. At the same time, the Russian explorer Ivan Synd, reported the existence of a number of fictitious islands in the middle of Bering's Strait, which were incorporated into the second edition of the map.

Muller's map was noteworthy in its omission of Delisle's mythical "Sea of the West," although he does continue to hold out hope for a water route from the Pacific to the Atlantic via tentatively located "R. de l'Quest" connecting the northern California coast ultimately to Hudson's Bay. Bellin attempts to reconcile the details provided by Muller and the Russian explorers of the mid-18th Century with the information supplied by Jesuit Missionaries and Fur Traders in the first half of the 18th Century. Bellin drops the reference to the Sea of the West which he included in his 1755 map of North America, but continues to expand on the information derived from indigenous sources. The map also illustrates the supposed source of the Missouri River, based upon the reconnaissance of French Fur Traders in the second half of the 18th Century.

The map shows the tracks of the Russian voyages of Bering and his deputy Aleksei Chirikov conducted from 1728-43 that first defined eastern Siberia and touched upon the American northwest. Other than the bulge on the north coast of the Chuckchi Peninsula, the coasts of Siberia are extremely well-defined, attesting to Bering's enormous talent as a cartographer. Japan, whose rulers were known to be especially



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unwelcoming to foreign explorers, is not well understood, such that its large northernmost island, Hokkaido, does not appear at all on the map.

Bellin depicts Bering and Chirikov's contacts with the Aleutians and sighin Mount St. Elias. The Pacific northwest immediately south of that point is entirely conjectural noting apocryphal discoveries such as the 'River of the King's' encountered by the Spanish Admiral de Fuente in 1640, and the Strait of Juan De Fuca, discovered in 1592. Although the latter body of water does exist, it was probably first encountered by Europeans in the 1770s. Bellin does, however, note Sir Francis Drake's actual discovery of 'Nouvelle Albion' (northern California) in 1578.

The map is foundational map for collectors of the Northwest Coast of America and Northeast Coast of Asia. The map is quite rare on the market, as it was apparently only briefly included in the Hydrographie Francois. We note only a single example of the map offer in a dealer catalog reported by AMPR in the past 30 years.

Detailed Condition: