



# Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

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## Official Map Of The City Of San Francisco, California. Published by Josiah J. Lecount . . . Approved By Geo. R. Turner City & County Surveyor

**Stock#:** 36156  
**Map Maker:** Le Count / Britton & Co.  
**Date:** 1859  
**Place:** San Francisco  
**Color:** Outline Color  
**Condition:** VG  
**Size:** 28 x 24 inches  
**Price:** SOLD



### Description:

A very rare and important early map of San Francisco, based on official surveys and development plans, issued at the beginning of the Comstock Silver Rush.

Importantly, this map is the definitive plan of the city produced at the very beginning of the era of the 'Comstock Lode'. Notably, the map depicts both the block and street system of San Francisco as it already existed and also as it was projected to develop in the coming years. In devising the map, Le Count was given special access to the archive of city maps, property surveys and projected development plans held by George R. Turner, Surveyor of the City & County of San Francisco. While the map was a commercial publication, given the its large format and exacting detail, it would have been considered invaluable by Turner's office, the Board of Supervisors and property owners.

The map shows the area of the city bounded by the Bay and westwards to Divisadero Street and as far south as Alta Street. A striking aspect of the map is that underneath the city grid along the shoreline areas is the outline of the Bay's original shoreline as it existed in 1850, before a series of massive land



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reclamation projects extended the city. Most notable is the crescent of land that makes up the downtown core of the city, centered on the foot of Market Street. Also noteworthy, as the extension to the city along the shoreline to the southeast of Brannan Street, as well as to the north of Telegraph Hill and the Western Addition.

At the time, the built-up, or urbanized area of San Francisco barely extended westward to Larkin Street and the areas south of Market Street were still in development. The crescent of reclaimed land around the foot of Market Street, with its various wharfs, was the most densely populated part of the city, where every block had been subdivided into lots, as depicted by the diagram below the title, the "Original Division of Lots" between Sacramento and Clay Streets. The square colored in green identifies Portsmouth Square, the original center of the town as it stood in 1849, before the land reclamation projects commenced. The pink lines that divide the city denote the boundaries of San Francisco's numbered wards.

As far west as Larkin the streets had already been laid out and most blocks were already built-up, however, the grid of street with single numbered lots in the outer areas, such as the Western Addition and Potrero Nuevo were still in the 'projected' stage, and while the streets and lots had been surveyed, very little of that we see on the map actually existed at the time, although this development plan would eventually be largely followed. The diagonal numbered grid that appears beneath the street grid the northeastern part of the Western Addition outlines the cadastral divisions according to old disputed land titles. Another proposed, but unrealized, element can be found downtown, as the grid of streets (for example, Kearney, Montgomery, Filbert and Greenwich) are shown to extend over Telegraph Hill, when, in fact, the steep topography interrupts the grid.

The map shows the city at an especially interesting time, immediately before a period of explosive growth. While the Gold Rush had been responsible for the foundation of San Francisco, it was the great wealth brought by the exploitation of silver mines in Nevada, the 'Comstock Lode', starting from 1859, that made the city truly prosperous. That year, San Francisco had a population of approximately 55,000, but this would grow to 150,000 by 1870! This map is therefore the definitive blueprint for the city's development during this transformative period.

The map includes contemporary manuscript additions numbering the named streets in the downtown area south of Market Street. While the streets 'First' to 'Fifth' were known as numbered streets, the succeeding streets that are today known as numbered were still named after individuals. As denoted by the numbers in manuscript, Simmons Street (is noted as "6th"), Harris ("7th"), Price ("8th"), Johnston ("9th"), Thorne ("10th"), Wood ("11th"), Brown ("12th") and Ellen Street is "13th". During the 1860s, the new numbered system would gradually replace the archaic names.



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Josiah Le Count was one of the most important figures in the realm of printed culture in San Francisco during the 1850s. Shortly after arriving in the bustling Gold Rush town, he founded a lithography business in partnership with William B. Cooke, which was dissolved in 1852. That year he set up his own company 'Josiah J. LeCount, Manufacturer & Importer: Stationary, Law, School, Medical, & Miscellaneous Books', located in the Granite Building on Montgomery Street, in the heart of the city's printers' district. While primarily a stationer and bookseller, he was responsible for producing several important early maps of San Francisco, including an 1852 map of the city (with Alfred Wheeler) and a map that was included in *Le Count & Strong's San Francisco City Directory for the year 1854*. Around 1858, Le Count formed a close working relationship with the lithography firm of Britton & Rey, which was responsible for producing the present map.

This map is very rare, we are aware of only 2 examples in institutional collections (Berkeley and Stanford) and one other example in private hands. We are not aware of any other examples appearing at auction or in dealers' catalogs during the last 25 years.

**Detailed Condition:**

Minor restoration to lower right blank margin, just touching printed image.