



**Barry Lawrence Ruderman
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**Entrance to Mobile Bay From a Trigonometrical Survey Under the Direction of A.D.
Bache . . . 1851. [Rare Thick Paper Electrotpe Edition!]**

Stock#: 36682mb
Map Maker: United States Coast Survey
Date: 1851
Place: Washington
Color: Uncolored
Condition: VG
Size: 27 x 19 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

Fine example of this rare early edition of the US Coast Survey chart of the Entrance to Mobile Bay, published separately on thick paper as a presentation copy.

The map shows Mobile Point, Daphin Island, Little Dauphin Island, Mississippi Sound, and Cedar Point, along with the barrier islands. Provides remarkably detailed depiction of the soundings, hazards and other details.

Lengthy set of sailing directions, notes, tidal observations, current notes, etc. Printed on thick paper and never folded.



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The present example pre-dates the chart which was included in the US Coast Survey's Annual Report, which bears the note at the top that it is Electrotpe Copy No. 3. The present chart is Copy Number 2, which does not include the presentation information at the top center and was engraved for individual distribution, as noted by the line "Presented to _____ under the authority of the Act of Congress . . . " at the top right corner.

The United States Coast survey was responsible for several major printing innovations, including electrotyping and photography as applied to cartography. Neither of these technologies were invented within the Coast Survey. However, because of the electrical and mechanical genius of George Mathiot, both of these methods were improved and applied to the rapid production of charts and maps with great effect by the end of the 1850's.

As noted by NOAA,

Electrotyping was an electro-chemical method of producing an exact replica of an engraved copper plate. This was a vitally important procedure as first-class copper engravings took years to produce and would be ruined after a few hundred impressions on a printing press. The Coast Survey began experimenting with electrotyping in 1846. Selmar Siebert, a senior engraver, conducted these experiments; in 1847 Bache reported, "Several of the plates have been copied by the electrotpe process, preserving the originals from injury, and rendering possible an unlimited multiplication of copies from a single engraved plate." This early work was not without its risks, as the lower plate of the chart of Delaware Bay was destroyed by the adherence of copper to the original plate in 1849. Perhaps it is just coincidence, but the following year George Mathiot was first mentioned in the annual report as being in charge of the electrotyping division.

Under Mathiot, the electrotyping division prospered. At the end of 1851, Major Stevens reported:

"The electrotyping department has improved so greatly the past year in all its arrangements and processes, that at my request its chief, Mr. Mathiot, has made a general report on the subject of electrotyping, (Appendix No. 55,).... The advances which have been made through the agency of the Coast Survey have scarcely been equaled in the history of any art. Not a single failure has yet occurred in Mr. Mathiot's process. A single plate has again been reproduced from the junction of plates with complete success.

"The time for reproducing a plate has been greatly abridged. Time has been saved, and a greater certainty



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given to the process ..."

The time saved was significant. During the first electrotyping experiments, no more than six plates a year could be reproduced. By the end of 1851 the time for producing a first reproduction of a plate was reduced to four days with all subsequent duplications reduced to three. The significance of this advance was that for the first time virtually unlimited printings of map sheets could be accomplished. In Stevens' words, "... in fifty days the plates can be made for fifteen thousand sheets of any Coast Survey map, however large and elaborate it may be."

Detailed Condition:

Chip at lower right left corner.