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A New Map of North America Shewing its Principal Divisions, Chief Cities, Townes, Rivers, Mountains &c. Dedicated to His Highness William Duke of Gloucester [California as an Island]

Stock#: 37429
Map Maker: Wells

Date: 1701
Place: Oxford
Color: Hand Colored
Condition: VG
Size: 19.5 x 15.5 inches

Price: SOLD



Description:

Fine Instructional Map of North America, Emphasizing the English Holdings and Latest Discoveries

Nice example of Edward Wells' map of North America, intended as an instructional map for students. Wells produced the school atlas in which this was included in 1700 and it was reprinted and highly recommended by educators at the time.

The map shows the entirety of the North American continent, or as much as was then known to Europeans. In general outline, the map follows Louis Hennepin's *Carte d'un tres grand Pays entre le Nouveau Mexique* (1697) and his *Carte d'un tres grand Pais* (1697). Hennepin's influence is especially evident in the Mississippi River area, which its origin in Texas, and the eastern seaboard; Hennepin's name is directly mentioned near the Great Lakes.

However, Wells also called on other sources, so as to include recent details like the French settlement at Biloxi in 1699, marked here as "New French Settlement" near the Gulf of Mexico. He also deviates from Hennepin in the shape and course of the Ohio River. Here it is called the Hotico River and runs east-west, alongside the also east-west, and surprisingly long, Appalachian Mountains.

The Eastern seaboard contains the latest settlements and is split into colonies including Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, New York, New England, and continuing north to New Scotland and New

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Foundland. Towns include Charlestown, Jamestown, Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York, Milford, Plymouth, Boston, and others.

French presence is downplayed on the map in favor of English, as can be seen with the small size of New France and the blocking of the French from access to the Gulf of Mexico. The territories are drawn so as to maximize English possession. For example, the island of California is labeled New Albion, after the point named by Francis Drake on his circumnavigation in 1577. Mainland New Mexico is “of a barren soil and little known.” To the north, New Brittain, New South Wales, and New North Wales squish New France, allowing English access to the “Northern Unknown Continent” and the “Parts as Yet Unknown” in the Pacific Northwest.

Besides the geographic features there is a quaint abbreviations cartouche to help the young reader discern the various bays, mountains, and archbishoprics. There are also helpful annotations around the map, citing dates of first European contact and demarking which monarchy nominally controlled which areas.

In the Pacific Northwest, covering the parts unknown, is an elaborate cartouche topped with the coat of arms of Prince William, Duke of Gloucester, second in line to the throne of England when this map was originally drafted. Gloucester, who was tutored at home in Windsor, studied geography, so he is a likely subject for Wells’ attention. However, Gloucester died of a sudden fever in 1700, bringing about a succession crisis which was resolved with the Act of Settlement of 1701, the legislation that made way for the House of Hanover. Later editions of the atlas retained the dedication, despite Gloucester’s death.

California as an Island

Wells’ map is a fascinating mix of contemporary information and what we now recognize as inaccuracies. In identifying California as an island, Wells was soon to be behind the times, as the island myth was largely dispelled when Guillaume Delisle published Eusebio Kino’s map showing California as a peninsula in 1705. From its first portrayal on a printed map by Diego Gutiérrez, in 1562, California was shown as part of North America by mapmakers, including Gerardus Mercator and Ortelius. In the 1620s, however, it began to appear as an island in several sources.

This was most likely the result of a reading of the travel account of Sebastian Vizcaino, who had been sent north up the shore of California in 1602. A Carmelite friar who accompanied him later described the land as an island, a description first published in Juan Torquemada’s *Monarquia Indiana* (1613) with the island details curtailed somewhat. The friar, Fray Antonio de la Ascension, also wrote a *Relacion breve* of his

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geographic ideas around 1620. The ideas spread about New Spain and, eventually, most likely via Dutch mariners and perhaps thanks to stolen charts, to the rest of Europe.

By the 1620s, many mapmakers chose to depict the peninsula as an island. These included Henricus Hondius, who published the first atlas map to focus solely on North America with the island prominently featured in 1636. Hondius borrowed his outline of California from another widely-distributed map, that of Henry Briggs and printed in Samuel Purchas' *Hakluytus Posthumus or Purchas his Pilgrimes* (1625).

Other prominent practitioners like John Speed and Nicolas Sanson also adopted the new island and the practice became commonplace. Father Kino initially followed along with this theory, as previously stated, but after extensive travels in what is now California, Arizona, and northern Mexico, he concluded that the island was actually a peninsula. Even after Kino published a map based on his travels refuting the claim (Paris, 1705), California as an island remained a fixture until the mid-eighteenth century.

States of the map

The map was first published as part of a *Treatise of Antient and Present Geography*, first advertised in 1700 and completed in 1701. There are four known states of this map, according to Burden. This is an example of the second state.

State 1 (1700) has no plate number under the cartouche.

State 2 (1701) has a number 39 below the cartouche. Frobishers Straits have been added near Greenland and the Great Lakes have names.

State 3 (1704) has additional toponyms near the Great Lakes.

State 4 (ca. 1743) has the colony of Georgia added, with additional settlements labeled in New Foundland, Labrador, and Nova Scotia. The north of Hudson's Bay has been reworked and California has additional named places, including the Strait of Anian.

This is a fascinating mix of geographic instruction and fancy intended for a student audience. It is an instructive glimpse into eighteenth century instruction.

Detailed Condition: