



Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

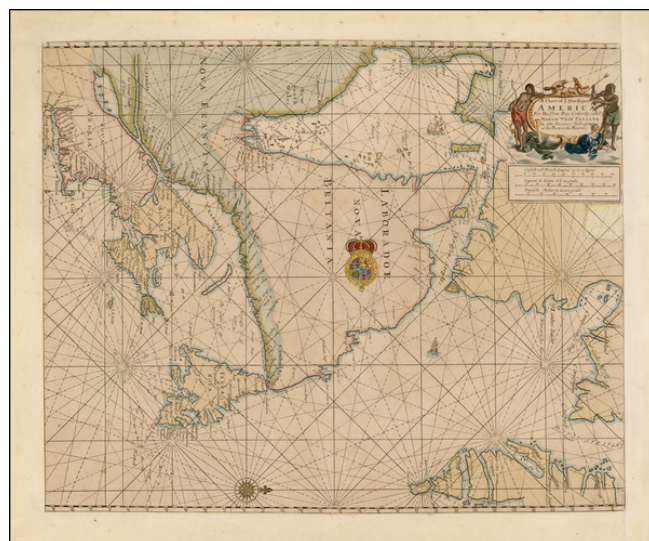
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A Chart of ye North part of America, For Hudson's Bay Comonly called ye North West Passage. By Iohn Thornton Hidrographer at the Platt in the Minories

Stock#: 38324
Map Maker: Thornton
Date: 1677 (1682 ca)
Place: London
Color: Hand Colored
Condition: VG
Size: 21 x 17.5 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

Rare and historically important sea chart of the Northeastern part of North America, showing the territory of the Hudson's Bay Company and the sea routes to the nearest English Colonies of New England, published in London by John Thornton, the first official cartographer to the HBC.

This fine sea chart is a highly important artifact relating to the early history of Canada and the activities of The Governor and Company of Adventurers of England trading into Hudson's Bay (better known as the Hudson's Bay Company, or simply the HBC), in particular. The map is of great historical import, as it is one of the first maps to accurately define the core territories of the HBC, an institution that played a dominant role in the history of Canada for 200 years. The map covers the region from New England in the south up to Labrador and includes the Maritimes, Quebec, Newfoundland and the region around Hudson Bay. The chart was devised by John Thornton, the first cartographer in ordinary to the HBC and one of the leading figures in the mapping of the emerging British Empire.

The present chart follows Thornton's exceedingly rare earliest printed map *A New Mapp of the north part of America from Hudson Straights commonly call'd the Norwest Passage* (London, 1673) and features groundbreaking cartography of Hudson and James Bays, recently acquired from adventurers working for the HBC. While far from scientific, the outline of these vast seas is impressively accurate and the chart sees the early appearance of many place names that were at the heart of the HBC's operations, including 'New South Wales', 'Port Nelson', 'Moesebe' (Moose River) and 'Ruperts R[iver]'. Importantly, the present chart is also the first printed map to include depth soundings in Hudson's Bay.



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The chart is all the more extraordinary, as it is one of the earliest to reveal the 'secret knowledge' of the HBC. The Company was founded as the world's most ambitious fur-trading venture in 1670, following the successful mission of Médard Chouart, Sieur des Groseilliers and Captain Zachariah Gillam. At first, the governors of the HBC were hesitant to disseminate the geographic intelligence of the Hudson's Bay region that their agents had newly acquired, fearing that it might encourage potential competitors. However, they eventually decided that printing accurate maps as devices to entice new investors outweighed these concerns and Thornton was authorized to include the latest discoveries on his printed maps.

This allowed Thornton to move far beyond the established mapping of Hudson's Bay done by Henry Hudson (1610-11), Sir Thomas Button (1612-3) and Thomas James (1630-1). Thornton's late-breaking sources, all of which were used to prepare the present chart, included the geographic intelligence provided by the scouting mission of Groseilliers and Gillam, of 1668-9, along the eastern shore of James Bay (around the mouth of the Rupert River) and the west coast of Hudson's Bay (around the mouth of the Nelson River). This was followed by further information collected by Groseilliers and Pierre-Esprit Radisson in 1670-1.

Most notably, Thornton had access to the carefully guarded manuscript maps done under the direction of Charles Bayly, the first overseas governor of the HBC, Radisson and the adventurer Thomas Gort, in 1671-2. These maps covered all of the shores of James Bay and most of Hudson's Bay and were based on careful, yet unscientific, reconnaissance. While Bayly was known to be a unpredictable religious fanatic, who was allegedly sent to Hudson's Bay by King Charles II in order to 'be rid of him', he proved to be a very intrepid explorer.

Further south, Atlantic Canada takes on a relatively progressive form largely after Samuel de Champlain's map of 1632, although detailed information on the St. Lawrence River is lacking, as since the region was the heart of New France and forbidden territory for the English, it was of little interest to Thornton. Further inland Lake Ontario is delineated, as is the northern water passage to Lake Huron. The outlines of coastal New England and Long Island are quite advanced and represent an improvement upon Thornton's map of 1673, being predicated on excellent recently published Dutch sources.

Most interestingly, the resented example of the chart is color-coded, in original watercolors of the period, to correspond to the contemporary English boundary claims in North America. For instance, the great bulk of the massive Labrador-Quebec Peninsula is colored pink, as is New England and the south shore of the St. Lawrence River, reflecting London's maximal (and frankly unrealistic) claims in these regions. France (whose territories are colored in a blue wash) is left with only a narrow strip along the north shore of the St. Lawrence. Nova Scotia (called Acadia by the French) and Newfoundland are both colored yellow and



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were both then disputed regions contested by France and England.

Throughout the chart, cartographic elements include rhumb lines, a compass rose, soundings and sea banks. Decorative embellishments include the royal English coat of arms of Charles II and ships, while the title cartouche is fittingly adorned with Native Americans with bow and arrow, angels, a deer, a beaver, and a fox.

John Thornton (1641-1708) was a chartmaker and publisher and along with John Seller, was the most important figure in English cartography during its ascendancy in the latter 17th century. Thornton first learned to draft manuscript charts as an apprentice to John Burston and soon became a leading member of the 'Thames School' of maritime chartmakers. The Thames School was noted for incorporating the latest overseas discoveries by London mariners into beautifully drafted manuscript charts but their influence was limited as they initially published very little of their work.

By the 1660s Thornton set out to change this and, in cooperation with John Seller and William Fisher, began to publish charts and atlases. However, Thornton proved to be the only Thames School alumnus who could make a financial success of publishing. His stock rose rapidly in rarified London circles and he was appointed to be the Official Cartographer to the English East India Company (EIC) and cartographer in ordinary to the Hudson's Bay Company. He also had a privileged relationship with the Lords of Trade, the official body which oversaw England's colonies in North America and the West Indies, which yielded access to important manuscripts.

Thornton issued several groundbreaking maps of North America in the 1670s and early 1680s and published *The English Pilot, Fourth Book* (1689), the first English sea atlas dedicated to Americas. This was followed by *The English Pilot, Third Book* (1703), the first English sea atlas of African and Asian navigation. Thornton's charts, with their progressive sources and elegant signature style, are today prized as amongst the most important maps of their era.

The present chart represents the second state of the map, which was first issued circa 1677, with the imprint of John Thornton, John Seller, William Fisher, James Atkinson and John Colson. An example of the first state is included in the "Blathwayt Atlas" at the John Carter Brown Library. This custom-assembled atlas was assembled by William Blathwayt, the Secretary of the Lords of Trade around 1683 and includes 48 maps (35 printed, 13 manuscript) that were held to be of especially great importance to contemporary English colonial interests. The map's presence in the atlas is indicative of the significance by which the present chart was imbued by key stakeholders of the time. The Blathwayt example of the map is illustrated here:

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part-of-America

The map is very rare, we are not aware of any examples appearing at auction or in dealers' catalogues during the last 25 years.

Detailed Condition:

Old color. Trimmed to neat lines and laid on a larger sheet of old paper. Small area of facsimile restoration below the scale of miles.