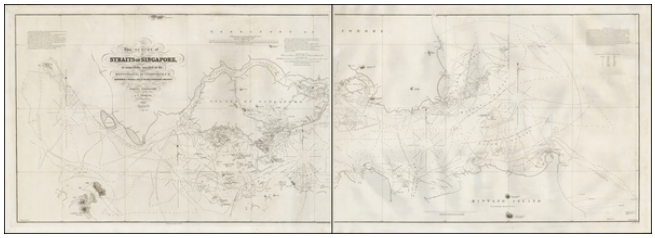
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This Survey of the Straits of Singapore is respectfully inscribed to the Honble Colonel Butterworth, C.B. Governor of Prince of Wales Island, Singapore and Malacca, by his most obedient Servants, Samuel Congalton. . . and J.T. Thomson, Government Surveyor, 1846. . . Additions to 1855.



Stock#: 45639am
Map Maker: Congalton & Thomson

Date: 1855
Place: London
Color: Uncolored
Condition: VG
Size: 36.5 x 24.5 inches (Each)

Price: SOLD

Description:

The First Modern Charting of Singapore and the Straits

John Thomson Thomson's hydrographic survey was the first detailed hydrographic survey to be conducted by a locally based surveyor and is the most important and detailed early hydrographic map of the Singapore Strait. Compiled by Captain Samuel Congalton and John Turnbull Thomson during Turnbull's 12 years as government surveyor in the Straits Settlement, the chart delivered to the merchant trade the first accurate and reliable charting of what would become one of the most trafficked waterways in the world.

Beginning in 1841, after 3 years mapping Penang and Province Wellesley, Thomson oversaw the first systematic survey of the Straits of Singapore, with the assistance of Congalton, as commander of the East India Company steamships *Diana* and *Hooghly*. The pair first conducted survey of the Straits and later the east coasts of Johor and Pahang. The surveys also led to the establishment of the Horsburgh lighthouse on Pedra Branca, following a report prepared by Thomson recommending this location on August 25, 1846.

Overview

Today, the Singapore Strait is one of the most heavily trafficked waterways in the world, and in the 1840s, it was not so different. As the British China Trade grew and Britain increased its influence in India, China, and Singapore, the Strait became an integral part of the empire.

The foremost surveyor in that area was a young man named John Turnbull Thomson, who had arrived in the Malay Straits in 1838 and began working as Government Surveyor in Singapore at the amazingly

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young age of 20. The present map is one of his great cartographic achievements; he was also responsible for the allotment and topographical survey of Singapore Island and for a number of important authoritative mappings of Singapore Town. Thomson also conducted surveys of Seebu Channel on the east coast of the Malay Peninsula and New Harbour in Sinagpore.

Thomson was a man of incredible enthusiasm and talent, and alongside his impressive output as a mapmaker, he was responsible for designing some of the early architectural landmarks in Singapore, including the Horsburgh Lighthouse on Pedra Branca, and the Masjid Hajjah Fatimah - a mosque that uniquely blends Western and Islamic elements. He was also an accomplished and prolific topographical artist.

In September 1853, with his health failing due to malaria, Thomson returned to England to recuperate. During his time back he studied modern engineering and surveying techniques and travelled in Europe extensively. Thomson returned to Singapore in November 1854. At this time he apparently made some updates to his 1846 chart of the Straits - hence ours with additions to 1855 - and sought out another government post. When no job was forthcoming, and his health still not fully improved, he decided to leave Singapore for good. He ventured back to England in February 1855, and when he arrived he had the present chart printed.

Early in 1856 he voyaged to New Zealand. There he played an equally important role in the early surveying of that nation. He died at home on October 16th, 1884.

Thomson's partner in this survey was Samuel Congalton (1796-1850), a sea captain who worked for the East India Company for nearly 29 years. He was commander of the paddle steamer *Diana* when she was brought to Singapore from Bengal in 1837. While there, he actively combatted piracy in the Strait Settlements, as well as helping to conduct surveys and soundings, and is credited with being largely responsible for clearning pirates from Malay waters.

Singapore Town is shown in some detail, and importantly it is placed in the context of the Island of Singapore as a whole. Thomson has laid out the usual approaches to the Harbor. The chart shows the range and location of several lighthouses, including the Raffles Lighthouse and the Horsburgh Lighthouse.

It is difficult to overstate what this map, and maps like it, meant to world trade at the time they were made. While rudimentary charts of the Singapore Strait had existed for centuries, the exacting detail and

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extensive soundings of the present chart far exceeded what had been available to British sailors previously. With the Second Opium War (1857-60) and the Indian Rebellion of 1857 on the horizon, as well as the continued development of British colonies in Australia, New Zealand, and Singapore itself, modern maps of key points in the empire were indispensable.

We find no records of this map being offered at auction. We have handled it only once before in over 20 years of business, as part of a larger chart archive.

Detailed Condition: