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The North part of America Conteyning Newfoundland, new England, Virginia, Florida, new Spaine, and Noua Francia...and upon ye West the large and goodly Iland of California . . .

Stock#: 46597
Map Maker: Briggs

Date: 1625
Place: London
Color: Uncolored
Condition: VG+
Size: 14 x 11 inches

Price: SOLD



Description:

The Most Important Map of North America Published in England in the Seventeenth Century

Fine example of Henry Briggs' famous map of North America, one of the most important and influential printed maps of the seventeenth century. It was included in Samuel Purchas' voyage collection, *Hakluytus Posthumus, or Purchas his Pilgrimes*, one of the most well-known travel books ever published in English.

Briggs' map was the first to include a number of important features:

- first map to name Cape Cod
- first map to name Delaware Bay
- first map to name Hudson Bay
- first map to name Hudson's Strait
- first map to name Hudson River
- first map to name Nantucket as "*Caupaw*," based on the Indigenous settlement at Capaum
- first map to name San Diego (along with Goos)
- first map to name Monterey (along with Goos)
- first English map to show California as an island

The map also includes very early appearances of Plymouth and James Citti (Jamestown) on the East Coast.

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The map shows the entirety of North America, with a large title cartouche covering the unknown Pacific Northwest coastline. Hudson's Bay and Button's Bay seemingly empty into an *Oceanus Japonicus*, a suggestion of the existence of the Northwest Passage, which was sought especially by the English in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

This emphasis on the Northwest Passage is reflected in the notes included in the interior of North America, which explain how the height of the tides observed by Thomas Button throughout Hudson's Bay strongly suggested the existence of the much-hoped-for passage. Button had recently completed a voyage of discovery in the west of Hudson's Bay in 1612-3. The focus on the Northwest Passage was also underlined by the location of the map in Purchas' edited work. It was included alongside *A treatise of the North-West Passage,* also by Briggs, in volume three of Purchas' collection.

Among the many interesting firsts on this map, the name given for Nantucket is of interest. Here it is written as *Caupaw*. There was a Native village on the island called Capaum, which was then a harbor (today it is an inland lake) and the center of local life. In 1619-1620, Thomas Dermer, an English explorer, visited Cape Cod; it is likely he also made it to Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket. As a guide and translator, Dermer traveled with Tisquamtum, often referred to as Squanto. Dermer carried out correspondence with Briggs in Oxford; he likely provided the place name *Caupaw*, as well as information about the entire East Coast, which made it into print on this map.

In the Southwest, a number of important locations are given. The *Real de Nueva Mexico* (Santa Fe), and *Pueblos de Moqui* (Moqui Villages) derive from the expeditions of Juan de Oñate, a Spanish conquistador, explorer, and colonial governor of the Santa Fe de Nuevo México province in the Viceroyalty of New Spain. He led early Spanish expeditions to the Great Plains (1601) and the Lower Colorado River Valley (1604), the latter being the only recorded European travels into the region between the expeditions of Hernando de Alarcón and Melchior Díaz in 1540, and the visits of Eusebio Kino beginning in 1701.

California as an island

Whereas the location and extent of a Northwest Passage was certainly of immense interest to contemporaries, Briggs also includes a note about the "large and goodly Island of California". Indeed, of all the "firsts" listed above, the most fascinating is perhaps the role this map played in the story of California becoming an island on early modern maps.

Briggs writes in the lower left corner:

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> *California sometymes supposed to be a part of ye westerne continent but scince by a Spanish Chart taken by ye Hollanders it is found to be a goodly Islande: the length of the west shoare being about 500 leagues from Cape Mendocino to the South Cape there of called Cape St Lucas: as appeareth both by that Spanish Chart and by the relation of Francis Gaule whereas in the ordinarie Charts it is sett down to be 1700 Leagues.*

Briggs is giving an overview of how California became an island in the eyes of European geographers. From its first portrayal on a printed map by Diego Gutiérrez, in 1562, California was shown as part of North America by mapmakers, including Gerard Mercator and Ortelius. In the 1620s, however, it began to appear as an island in several sources, including this one.

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 geographic ideas around 1620. The ideas spread about New Spain and, eventually, most likely via Dutch mariners and the stolen chart mentioned by Briggs, to the rest of Europe.

This map, by dint of being widely distributed, was an influential source of the island myth for other geographers. For example, in 1636, Henricus Hondius published the first atlas map to focus solely on North America, and featured the island based on the Briggs outline. Other prominent practitioners like John Speed and Nicolas Sanson also adopted the new island and the practice became commonplace.

Father Eusebio Kino initially followed along with this theory, 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.

Interestingly, California as shown here strongly resembles that of Dutch geographer Pieter Goos, published just before this map in 1624. However, experts believe that Goos actually used Briggs' work as a source map and that this map was simply delayed by the cumbersome publishing process involved in producing a large voyage collection like Purchas'. Both maps include similar errors, while the East Coast and the English nomenclature are very similar, especially for New England. Briggs had already written of California as an island by 1622. North American map expert Philip Burden concludes that either the Briggs map was issued first or that the maps have a common English source.

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As Wagner points out, this map presents a significantly revised Rio Grande River. Earlier maps, those that do not show California as an island, tend to place a confluence of rivers in the southwest at the head of the Gulf of California. Here, with California as an island, only a single river is featured, flowing from the north past Santa Fe (*Real de Nueva Mexico*) and locating an outlet at 30 degrees north latitude. This Rio Grande, or *Rio del Norte*, would be a frequent feature on other maps showing California as an island until a 1660 map by Nicolosi would correctly show the Rio Grande flowing into the Gulf of Mexico.

This is one of the most influential maps of the seventeenth century, especially with regard to the myth of California as an island. It is a vital map for any collection focused on California or North America.

Detailed Condition: