Barry Lawrence Ruderman
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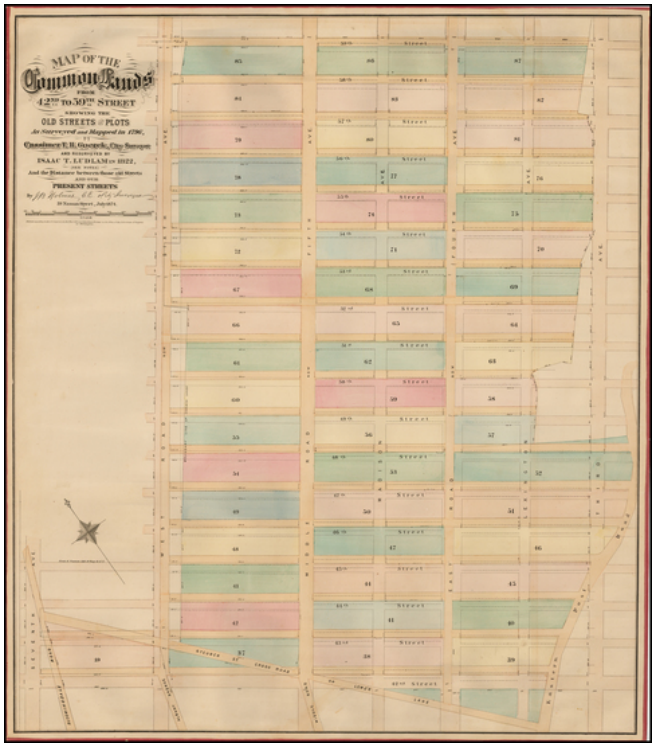
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Map of the Common Lands From 42nd to 59th Street. . . As Surveyed and Mapped in 1796, by Cassimer T. H. Goerck. . .

Stock#: 48205
Map Maker: Bute Holmes

Date: 1874
Place: New York
Color:
Condition: VG+
Size: 33.5 x 29 inches

Price: SOLD



Description:

Fascinating map of the Upper East Side by one of New York's most eccentric mapmakers.

Superb large format, separately issued map of part of the Fashion District in Manhattan, by one of New York's most fascinating mapmakers, John Bute Holmes.

This map is bounded by 42nd Street in the south, 59th Street in the north, Seventh Avenue (now in Central Park) in the west, and Third Avenue in the east.

The map shows the old grid of streets overlaying the current modern layout.

The map shows how the old thoroughfares of the Upper East Side became the streets and avenues we know today. The Middle Road became Fifth Avenue; the East Road became Fourth Avenue and then Park Avenue, etc. The map shows the Eastern Post Road, Steuben St. Cross Road or Lowe's Lane, Albany Avenue, and Bloomingdale Road.

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"Farm Maps"

Although it is now hard to believe, Manhattan, as recently as the early 19th century, was largely covered in open farmland. As the city rapidly developed during the 19th century, all hints of its previous bucolic state fell away. In the 1860s, this transformation became a fascination for City Surveyor John Bute Holmes (about whom, more later).

Holmes began gathering old surveys and documents that related to Manhattan's previous land use and landowners, transposing new lot and street detail over the previous geography.

There was a long history of mapping Manhattan's farms, both during the actual agricultural era and thereafter. One of the greatest cartographic feats was Randel's Farm Maps which are reminiscent of Holmes' without the "modern" overlay. http://www.mcny.org/content/randel-farm-maps

John Bute Holmes, surveyor, polygamist, etc.

City Surveyor John Bute Holmes (ca.1820-1887) was a compelling figure, as much for his scandalous personal life, as for his ingenious maps.

The details of his early personal life are difficult to trace, partially as he constantly changed his version of his biography. At one point he claimed to have been born on the Island of Mauritius in 1822, and to have moved from there to Cork, Ireland; according to his account he moved from Cork to the United States in 1838. He held the position of City Surveyor in New York in the 1860s through 1880s and eventually settled on a farm in New Jersey, where he died.

According to the cataloging of Lindsay Turley, of the Museum of the City of New York:

> *John Bute Holmes was married to at least four women during his life, sued by a fifth for "impeaching her chastity" as a result of "breach of promise of marriage," known to have lived with another "as husband and wife," and was reputed to have killed a policeman with whose wife he was involved. Some of these relationships appear to have overlapped, and most of the wives were unaware of the previous wives, even when the unions had been dissolved legally. It wasn't until Holmes's death in 1887 that the four legal (or at least to their knowledge) wives came face to face in an attempt to claim their inheritance. The dual nature of Holmes's maps strangely seems to reflect the duplicitous nature of Holmes's life.*
>
> *. . .*

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A few different accounts in the New York Times attempt to sort it out, and briefly, this is what I've come away with:

- *Wife # 1: Anna Maria Clear, married Cork Ireland 1838. Holmes left her in 1856, Anna filed for divorce in 1875. One daughter.*
- *Living as husband and wife: Ida Kerr, dates unknown.*
- *Wife #2: Hannah Wright Williamson (also his half-sister), marriage date unknown. Three children.*
- *Sued for breach of marriage promise: May Chamberlayne, 1874.*
- *Wife#3: Mary Sullivan Browning, marriage date unknown. One son.*
- *Wife#4: Katie Meadows, married ca. 1886.*

See the MCNY blog entry on John Bute Holmes here:
https://blog.mcny.org/2014/03/04/john-bute-holmes-surveyor-and-polygamist/

Holmes is thought to have produced a total of 21 maps of between the 1860s and the 1880s. We have not completed a total census of all map titles from Holmes' series, but we have handled over a dozen from one collection only.

The maps are very seldom seen in passable condition; the edges are often frayed, creased, and torn. The present example is substantially nicer than those encountered on the market.

Detailed Condition:
Edged with original red selvage complete, backed on original linen.