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A New Chart of the Bahama Islands And the Windward Passage . . .

Stock#: 51169
Map Maker: Mount & Page
Date: 1737 circa
Place: London
Color: Hand Colored
Condition: VG+
Size: 20.5 x 17 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

Scarce Early English Chart of the Bahamas from the Influential English Pilot, Fourth Book

This chart by Mount and Page includes the tip of Florida, the Cayman Islands, Cuba, Jamaica, the western part of Hispaniola and Cozumel to the far west. The treatment of Florida is quite distinctive, as there are two large bays on the west coast. The print itself is distinctive as well, as it is now quite rare as compared to other charts featured in the *English Pilot*.

The map is filled with rhumb lines, used for navigation, and has one decorative compass rose. In the upper right corner is a simple, yet attractive title cartouche proclaiming the area covered, the Bahamas and the Windward Passage, and the publishers' names and shop location.

The Bahamas-a reformed pirate haven

The Bahamas are shown in great detail, particularly with regard to the banks and sand bars that can be so treacherous for sailing vessels. Indeed, this is one of the largest scale treatments of the region to appear in the first half of the eighteenth century. The Bahamas garnered such attention due to their importance, or infamy, in the Caribbean region.

The Bahamas were one of the first places that Christopher Columbus landed in 1492, although the Spanish did not try to settle there. In 1629, Charles I granted Sir Robert Heath, his Attorney General, the Bahamas, but, again, they were not settled. Four years later, Cardinal Richelieu of France made a similar



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claim, but the islands continued largely uninhabited by Europeans. By contrast, the local Taino or Lucayan people had lived on the island since ca. 1100 CE. However, the approximately 30,000 Taino who inhabited the islands when Columbus contacted them were ravaged by disease and forced labor; they were all but wiped out by the seventeenth century.

This oversight ended during the English Civil War. Religious dissention was rife and two ships of Puritans left Bermuda to find a spot more tolerant of disparate religious practices. One wrecked, but the other found habitable islands. The Company of Eleutherian Adventurers, formed in London in 1647, planned to oversee settlement and a group left Bermuda in 1648 under the command of Captain William Sayle. They set up a community and declared considerable religious and political freedoms. After the war, however, many settlers returned to Bermuda. They were replaced by exiled criminals, free blacks and ex-slaves, and pirates.

In 1670, Sayle convinced the Duke of Albemarle and others to formalize the Bahamas' status within the nascent English Empire. King Charles II granted the island to the Lords Proprietors of the Carolinas, ending the constitutional experiment. The freedoms previously enjoyed by the island, and the location near other French and Spanish colonies, turned the islands not into a bastion of English economic success, as the Proprietors hoped, but into a haven for piracy.

In 1684, King Charles II outlawed piracy, but that affected little on the ground in the Bahamas, particularly in the town of Nassau. For thirty years, the Bahamas were synonymous with anarchy and alternative living outside the reigns of imperial power. It was perfectly located for quick vessels to prey on the Spanish shipping lanes and then to slip among the many islands, using the shallow waters and banks marked on this chart as cover from the large warships of France, Spain, and Britain.

In 1718, the British government attempted to halt the lawlessness by diminishing the Proprietors' powers and sending in a military governor. They chose Captain Woodes Rogers, a man famous for his recent circumnavigation and capture of a Spanish treasure galleon in the Pacific. Rogers was armed with a one-time pardon for the pirates; 1,000 outlaws took the offer while 8 who did not were hanged. By 1728, the Bahamas were considered a safe and potentially prosperous colony.

This chart was originally included in the *English Pilot* in 1689, during the height of piracy. This fourth state was included in 1737, just after the Rogers period, when the Bahamas were being integrated into the larger Caribbean economy.

The English Pilot

The *English Pilot, Fourth Book* is one of the most important American cartographic milestones. It was in



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the fourth book of the project that the American coasts were comprehensively detailed by English cartographers for the first time. Once printed in 1689, the *Pilot* continued to be used authoritatively for over a century. Each edition issued updates to the charts, meaning that there are many states to each—they offer a timeline of the hydrographic and geographic knowledge of a region from the late-seventeenth to the late-eighteenth centuries.

The *English Pilot* was originally a project hatched by John Seller (1632-1697), instrument maker to the Royal Navy and mapmaker. Seller knew that English sailors would prefer English charts, but to date had been dependent on the superior products of the Dutch geographers. Seller released the first volume of the *Pilot* in 1671. Shortly thereafter, he was granted a royal privilege that named him Hydrographer in Ordinary and protected his work against the import of foreign waggons for thirty years. Ironically, this English project with an English privilege was actually the result of the reissuing of altered Dutch plates, and worn ones at that!

To continue the project, Seller sought the support of his fellow mapsellers. In 1672, Seller, along with John Wingfield and William Fisher (1631-1692), released *The Coasting Pilot* and the second volume of the *English Pilot*. Later, and among other projects, Seller also produced his *Atlas Maritimus* (1675) and a second edition of the *English Pilot* (1677) with a combine, but he issued no further volumes of the *Pilot*. Instead, William Fisher acquired the rights to the plates of the *Pilot*. He, along with John Thornton, a cartographer involved in earlier combines with Seller, and later Mount and Page would bring out the third, fourth, and fifth volumes.

The *Fourth Book* was first published in 1689 under the direction of John Thornton and William Fisher. Thornton created the plates, while Fisher provided the financial backing and distribution network. Thornton used his experience and contacts as a mapmaker for the Hudson's Bay Company and Hydrographer to the East India Company to get the most up to date information on America's coasts. Some of the original manuscript charts of Thornton from this time survive in the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich.

When Fisher died in 1692, he was succeeded by Richard Mount (1654-1722), who continued the relationship with Thornton. Together, they released a second and third edition in 1698 and 1706, respectively. Thornton died in the latter year. Mount had been Fisher's apprentice and had married his daughter. His partner was Thomas Page (ca. 1680-1733), once his apprentice. Together, Mount and Page published 34 separate editions of the *Fourth Book*, a project that spanned four generations of each family.

This state of the Bahamas map, the fourth state, appeared in later editions of the *English Pilot*, *Fourth Book*. It debuted in the 1737 edition and was still in print in the 1764. However, the fourth state is relatively rare on the market today due to its smaller numbers as compared to earlier states and later



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replacements.

By the time this state was published, Richard Mount had died and his side of the business was run by his son, William (1689-1769). Thomas Page died in 1733, although his son, also Thomas (1704-1762), continued in his father's stead.

Detailed Condition: