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(Rare California Gold Rush Map) Carte De La Nouvelle Californie Publiee par la Compagnie l'Aurifere et dressee d'apres les documents officiels les plus recents

Stock#: 53781
Map Maker: Housse
Date: 1850
Place: Paris
Color: Uncolored
Condition: VG+
Size: 17 x 14 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

Extremely Rare French Gold Mining Map Showing Routes for Prospectors en route to California

Fine, rare separately-issued map illustrating the Gold Regions of California. This map was intended to encourage French citizens to seek their fortunes in the California Gold Rush. It was also meant to drum up investors within France to support the company's projects in the territory.

The map shows a section of California from Baja California north to Oregon territory and "Colombie", where dwell French Canadians. This is one of the ways a French presence is inserted into the map in order to make the French viewers feel an affinity and a sense of familiarity. There is also a bit of education in the labels of the maps. For example, the American West is labeled as, "French Territory ceded to the United States in 1847," referring to the recent Mexican-American War.

The missions of Upper California are shown, along with El Camino Real, connecting each of the missions. The French and Russian colonies in California are also noted. A key in the lower left corner has symbols for missions and the foreign colonies, as well as for ten different kinds of mines. As noted by Wheat:

This interesting map bears the legend (in French) on the American River, "Mechanical sawmill of Captain Sutter, sole cause of the discovery of gold in May, 1848." The Sacramento River is named "San Sacramento," and the "Juba" appears to the north of the "Rio de la Plume." A line from San Francisco east across the present state of Nevada, south of Great Salt Lake and thence due east carries the legend "Route conduisant a New York suivie par les Carvanes." Another line shows the "Route de Santa Fe" to Los



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Angeles.

French Gold Mining Companies in California

The company became the preferred model of financing the Gold Rush for it allowed the miners advances of supplies and gave investors left in France and the eastern United States an avenue for involvement in the presumed bonanza. Such schemes were particularly appealing to French miners and investors, for the country was still reeling from the June Days of 1848. Government bonds were no longer trusted, national workshops had proven a failure, and many were starving. Emigration, particularly to goldfields, seemed the perfect solution and companies helped the travelers to start their journeys.

In the first five months of 1849, fourteen French California companies emerged, funded by French entrepreneurs. Together, their share offerings topped 28 million francs. French newspapers helped to advertise the calls for investors, as well as advertised the companies once they were formed-some companies even had their own newspapers. Each company used the money from share sales to fund initial expeditions. A company's reputation, important in a crowded field, could be gleaned from the make-up of the council of overseers.

Many companies never even sent ships. Of those that did, the company usually broke up by the time the ships reached California, with each man going his own way. Others, like the *Soci é t é Franco-Californienne*, voluntarily dissipated due to lack of funds generated. The *Soci é t é* was one of the first companies to form, in January 1749, and its dissolving shows just how quixotic the Gold Rush market could be.

By 1850, there were 83 French California companies. Between April and October of that year, 52 companies alone were formed with a share value of 200 million francs. This second boom in company formation, of which this map was a part, was due to the trickling back of favorable reports from the first 49ers to make it to the gold fields. Companies advertised for shareholders with a variety of tactics, including provision of a map.

Compagnie Franco-Californienne des Mines d'Or and theirMap

The *Compagnie Franco-Californienne des Mines d'Or* was established April 27, 1850. They put out a monthly publication, *Le Mineur*, or the miner, and also featured separately-issued publications such as this map. There is only one known run of *Le Mineur* in the United States, at the Bancroft Library at UC Berkeley. It continued from June 1850 to at least March 1853. This map is similarly rare.



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According to an advertisement in *Revue Britannique* (volume 27) for June 1850, the *Compagnie Franco-Californienne des Mines d'Or* advertised the map as one of the things received by share investors who were part of an expedition to California from Le Havre in June 1850:

accompanied by a director, chaplain, engineer, doctor, etc., houses, tools, clothing, weapons, food and Siberian tables; 100 men do the work of 2,000; a worker can earn 150,000 francs a year. A share of 10 francs can bring 450 francs. Any subscriber may take one or more share; 5 shares give right: 10 to the monthly newspaper: 2 ° to the map of California; 30 to the biannual bonuses which may be 550, 450, 350, 250, 200, 150, 100 francs.

Unlike some of the companies, the *Compagnie Franco-Californienne des Mines d'Or* did actually send a ship carrying roughly 100 men to California. The *Louis* departed Le Havre on September 4, 1850 and arrived in California February 6, 1851. However, upon arrival, the company's representative had to release the men from their contracts due to insufficient funds and transport to the placers.

Rather than fund men, the company turned to merchandize. The Parisian investors sent a mill to California, where it was to be erected on a creek the company had leased in Mariposa County. The mill parts arrived in spring 1852. However, this scheme also came to naught, and the later issues of the newspaper are filled with stories of racial and ethnic tensions between miners and the difficulty of finding enough water.

During 1851, the company merged with a rival and began a farming venture, but neither society ever found much gold. They met the fate of many of the French companies, whose lasting impact was not fortune, but the encouragement of immigration; over 20,000 French-speaking people traveled to and through California during the Gold Rush years. This map speaks to that phenomenon of immigration and wild hope that accompanies a gold rush.

Detailed Condition:

Minor toning.