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## Carte Pour servir au Voyage de M. de Surville Capitaine de Vaisseaux Dressee sur ses Memoires Par M. de Laborde, 1791

**Stock#:** 54034  
**Map Maker:** LaBorde  
**Date:** 1791  
**Place:** Paris  
**Color:** Uncolored  
**Condition:** VG  
**Size:** 35 x 21 inches  
**Price:** SOLD



### Description:

#### ***Fine Map of the Pacific with Route of de Surville from Laborde's-a Victim of the French Revolution-Voyage Collection***

Good example of a map of the southern Pacific Ocean that featured in Jean-Benjamin de Laborde's 1791 collection of South Seas voyages. Laborde was a historian and musician famous for his operas and for being guillotined in 1794. The map shows many European toponyms and discoveries, but the only voyage's route to be shown is that of Jean-Francois-Marie de Surville, whose journey ended in Chile after he drowned off the coast.

The map shows the Pacific from 30° North latitude to 70° South, and from 70° East to 70° West longitude, underlining the immense size of the world's largest ocean. Antarctica is entirely absent from the map, revealing the continuing uncertainty about that geographic feature in the 1790s. Combatting this geographic ignorance, most of the islands shown are peppered with place names, emphasizing the flurry of European interest in the Pacific starting with Magellan in the 1520s and intensifying from the 1760s onward with Bougainville, Byron, Wallis, Carteret, Cook, and, as this map emphasizes, de Surville. New Zealand is drawn based on Cook's survey and Van Diemen's Land is still connected to the mainland.

The title is simply placed, without a cartouche, southwest of Australia, labeled here as New Holland, as it was then known. It is unadorned, as is the rest of the map, reflecting the simple style of maps from the late-eighteenth century onward that were supposed to communicate clearly that which was known and to leave blank that which was not.

Several expeditions are mentioned via place names. For example, both the *Detroit de l'Endeavour* and the *Detroit de Bougainville* are located to the northeast of Australia. The former refers to Lieutenant James



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Cook's ship during his first voyage (1768-1771), *Endeavour*. The latter is named for the French commander of a circumnavigation (1768-1769) that recorded the second European encounter with Tahiti, just weeks after the first contact by the British Samuel Wallis.

Farther east, the map includes notes that mention older expeditions. Off the coast of Chile are the islands of S. Ambor (Nabor, later Ambrose) and S. Felix, which Laborde cites as the "*deux infortunees*", or the two unfortunate islands of Magellan. It is unknown whether Magellan really saw these islands, but Juan Fernandez certainly did in 1574. Today, the islands are still known as the *Desventuradas* and are now part of Chile.

Another example lies in the belt of islands that stretch across the Pacific north of the equator. On La Mesa, or Table Island, a note explains that this island is likely the same one called S. Francis by Mendaña. Alvaro de Mendaña led two Spanish expeditions to the Solomon Islands; the first from 1567-9 and the second from 1595-6. The second voyage, however, failed to locate the Solomons as the islands had not been charted accurately. The confusion about discoveries is echoed here, as Laborde does not seem certain that La Mesa is really S. Francis.

#### **The Size and Shape and Politics of Australia**

While the notes highlighted above are scattered across the Pacific, most of the narrative notes are placed on New Holland and chronicle the numerous Dutch expeditions that were the first European contacts with the continent. Interestingly, while Cook's discoveries in eastern Australia are included with place names like Botany Bay and New South Wales, the rest of Australia is presented as still uncertain, perhaps suggesting that it is still open for a French claim.

The coastlines are based on seventeenth century Dutch encounters with the Australian coast. For example, in the north is *Terre d'Arnheim*, a reference to the *Arnhem*, a Dutch East India ship, which sighted the area in 1623. To the east is *Terre de Wit*, which recalls Gerrit Frederikssoon de Witt, captain of the *Vianen*, who sailed in 1628. Farther east is *Terre de Concorde ou d'Endracht*. The *Endracht* was the second recorded European ship to contact Australia (1616), and this date is extended to *Terre de Wit* on this map.

South of this is *Terre d'Edels*. Jacob d'Edel, in the *Amsterdam*, along with Frederik de Houtman in the *Dordrecht* came within sight of the western coast and called the stretch of land *d'Edelsland*. *Terre de Leuvin*, or *Terre du Lion* as written here, is named for the *Leeuwin*, whose crew charted some of the southwest coastline in 1622; Flinders would later name Cape Leeuwin, the southwestern most point on the Australian mainland, after the ship. Here it is labeled as *Cap de Partage*. *Terre de Nuys* is named for



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Pieter Nuyts, a Dutch navigator who commanded the *Gulden Zeepaert* along the southern coast in 1627.

The most notorious of the Dutch encounters with Australia noted here are the islands labeled *Houtmans Allobross ou Pilsart*. Houtman, mentioned regarding *Terre d'Edels*, was also responsible for naming the Abrolhos Islands, an archipelago. Houtman sighted the islands, or at least it was Houtman who reported the islands to the VOC. The name Houtman's Abrolhos, as used on this chart, was first used in Hessel Gerritszoon's 1627 chart *Caert van't Landt van d'Eendracht*.

The note on those islands mention a, "*naufnage en 1628*," a shipwreck. The rocks were extremely dangerous and have caused several shipwrecks. The most infamous of these was the wreck of the unfortunate *Batavia* in 1627, mislabeled here as 1628. The mutiny and massacre that became *Batavia's* fate fascinated all of Europe, but also flagged the islands as treacherous for ships, which is why they deserve such attention on charts. *Pilsart*, or *Pelsaert*, mentioned in the place name on this map, was the commander of the ship.

A final note worth mention on New Holland is not a reference to a Dutch voyage, but a much more recent French effort. Laborde writes, the south coast is the "*cote inconnue ou l'on soupconne que M. de la Perouse a peri*." That is, this is the unknown coast where it is suspected that Perouse has perished. Jean-Francois de Galaup, comte de Laperoise, commanded an expedition of Pacific discovery that left France in August of 1785. They were supposed to circumnavigate the world and to take scientific readings as they sailed.

By the time Laborde compiled his voyage collection which included this map, La Perouse had still not returned from his voyage and was presumed lost. In fact, this map and voyage collection was published as part of the Pacific-mania that was triggered by the loss of La Perouse. Hypotheses as to where he met his fate were rampant, and Laborde clearly thought southern Australia was the most likely site, as the mission's last recorded landfall was Botany Bay. Additionally, if La Perouse had disappeared in Australia it would support a French claim to part of that continent, a claim that would strengthen over the course of the 1790s until the British tightened their grip on the southern coast.

In September of 1791, the year Laborde's voyage collection was published, a rescue mission had been sent in search of La Perouse, commanded by Bruni d'Entrecasteaux. In reality, La Perouse had perished on Vanikoro, one of the Santa Cruz Islands, a fact that was only discovered in 1826.

**The voyage of Jean-Francois-Marie de Surville**

The map's main purpose is to show the route taken by Jean-Francois-Marie de Surville (1717-1770). De



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Surville was the son of a government official who took to the sea at the young age of ten. He joined the French East India Company and served in the Indian Ocean, visiting both India and China. During the War of Austrian Succession, he joined the French Navy and was captured twice. Later, he served in the Seven Years' War, for which he was awarded the Cross of St. Louis.

The French loss at the end of the Seven Years' War, combined with the failure of the French East India Company, left Surville at cross-purposes in India. He decided to embark on a voyage of discovery, which he largely financed in the hopes of opening new markets in the Pacific Islands and South America.

As the route on this map shows, he sailed to the Malay Peninsula, then to the Solomons. There, the crew was attacked by islanders who objected to their invasive presence. Desperate for fresh food and with his crew suffering from and dying from scurvy, de Surville made landfall in New Zealand. Laborde's map shows just how close de Surville was to sighting the coast of New South Wales, another hint at the imperial politics of Australian discovery.

In New Zealand, de Surville had another narrow miss, this time he just failed to sight Cook's *Endeavour*. They were the first European ships to sail in those waters since Tasman in the 1640s. Then, de Surville set out across the south Pacific for South America. He managed to arrive off the coast of Chile, but his ship and crew were in trouble. De Surville set out in a small boat to seek help from the settlers but drowned in the attempt. The place where he was buried is the end point of the route marked on this map, although some of this crew managed to limp back to France after having their ship impounded for two years by the Spanish.

#### **Jean-Benjamin de Laborde [La Borde]**

Although little known today, Jean-Benjamin La Borde (1734-1794) was a popular composer during his lifetime. Additionally, he was a tax collector, armchair traveler, and historian. His comic operas made his fame and he served as *premier valet de la chambre* to Louis XV. He also published essays on music and a four-volume collection of songs. In terms of travel writing, he published two volumes on Switzerland and his travels in the country in the 1780s.

The collection of South Seas voyages in which this map was included was published at the height of the La Perouse craze in 1791. Laborde was clearly up to date on the latest events and included a clear political position about the possibility of French expansion in the Pacific. Shortly after the publication of the South Seas collection, events overtook Laborde. He was guillotined as part of the reaction against the *ancien regime* during the French Revolution.



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Larborde did not survive the Revolution, but the interest in Pacific exploration did. In the late 1790s, the Buadin expedition sought to pursue possible French claims to New Holland, an idea suggested in this map. Other large French voyages were planned to glorify the nation and science in the nineteenth century, making this map part of a longer timeline of the past and future of the South Seas and imperialism.

**Detailed Condition:**

Minor fold split, repaired on verso.