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The Washington Family (with early image the first map of the District of Columbia)

Stock#: 56026
Map Maker: Hoffy
Date: 1858
Place: Philadelphia
Color: Uncolored
Condition: VG
Size: 24.5 x 19 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

George Washington and his Family Viewing Pierre L'Enfant's Plan for Future City of Washington, D.C.

Fine family portrait of George Washington and family, with the Potomac River in the background, based upon a painting by Edward Savage.

The Washington Family by Edward Savage is a life-sized group portrait of U.S. President George Washington, First Lady Martha Washington, two of her grandchildren, and a fifth person at the top right. Based on life studies made early in Washington's presidency, Savage began work on the oil painting in New York City during 1789-1790 and later completed it in Philadelphia during 1795-1796. The National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., presently displays the large painting.

Upon the table, the map laid out before Washington and his family depicts a map drafted under the direction of Pierre L'Enfant, which laid out the future District of Columbia, bounded by the Potomac River and the Eastern Branch (later the Anticosta River), which would become the future capital of the United States by Proclamation dated March 30, 1791. One of the questions which has plagued historians over the years is the identify of the fifth person in the portrait. While it has generally been though that this was either a slave or servant, one intriguing possibility is that the person shown is Benjamin Banneker, a free African-American almanac author, surveyor, naturalist, and farmer. Banneker worked with Andrew Ellicott while the latter was leading the survey team laying out the future capital. While the idea is intriguing, there is no evidence to support the image as Banneker.



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L'Enfant presented the earliest draft map of the future City of Washington, D.C. to Washington on June 22, 1791, suggesting that the map must have been incorporated by Savage at a later date. The image of the map in the original Savage Portrait is a very clear depiction of the actual map of Washington DC, whereas Hoffy's image is a stylized caricature of the original map.

To Washington's right, a large terrestrial floor globe is shown with a compass below the globe.

A remarkable piece of lithography by Philadelphia printer and portraiture artist Alfred Hoffy.

Detailed Condition:

Minor soiling and repairs at lower right. Backed with a thin sheet of archival paper. Several tears and abrasions, expertly repaired on the verso.