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Map of the Country between Washington & Pittsburg refering to the contemplated Chesapeake & Ohio Canal and its General Route and Profile. October 1826

Stock#: 58595
Map Maker: United States War Dept.
Date: 1826
Place: Georgetown, DC
Color: Uncolored
Condition: VG
Size: 25 x 17 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

Rare separately issued map showing the route of the proposed Chesapeake and Ohio Canal, likely published as a presentation piece.

After the Revolutionary War, George Washington was the chief advocate of using waterways to connect the Eastern Seaboard to the Great Lakes and Ohio River. Washington founded the Potowmack Company in 1785, in order to make navigability improvements to the Potomac River. The Patowmack Company built a number of skirting canals around the major falls including the Patowmack Canal in Virginia. When completed, it allowed boats and rafts to float downstream towards Georgetown. Going upstream was a bit harder. Slim boats could be slowly poled upriver. The completion of the Erie Canal worried southern traders that their business might be threatened by the Northern canal.

The earliest plans for a canal linking the Ohio and Chesapeake were drawn up as early as 1820. In 1824, the holdings of the Patowmack Company were ceded to the Chesapeake & Ohio Company. Benjamin Wright, who had served as Chief Engineer of the Erie Canal, was named Chief Engineer of this new effort, and construction began with a groundbreaking ceremony on July 4, 1828, presided over by President John Quincy Adams. The available land along the Potomac River from Point of Rocks to Harpers Ferry caused a legal battle between the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal and the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad in 1828. Following a Maryland state court battle involving Daniel Webster and Roger B. Taney, the companies later compromised to allow the sharing of the right of way.

The planned canal route to the Ohio River followed the North Branch Potomac River west from Cumberland to the Savage River. Via the Savage, the canal route crossed the Eastern Continental Divide



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at the gap between the Savage and Backbone Mountains near where present day O'Brien Road intersects Maryland Route 495, then via the valley of present day Deep Creek Lake, along the Youghiogheny River and ultimately to Pittsburg.

While the Canal's planning and backers were formidable, its completion was never achieved. Despite the grandiose intentions and backing of important southern interests (including Washington's heirs), the progress of the Canal lagged the construction of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad. The last 180 miles of the Canal as never constructed and it quickly slipped into a secondary role in the transport of goods and was ultimately abandoned by the early 20th Century.

Rarity

The map is very rare. This is only the second example we have ever seen on the market, the other example having been a presentation copy, given by Baron Simon Bernard to Eliza Custis, granddaughter of George Washington.

Detailed Condition:

Minor soiling along folds.