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Plan d'Auxonne 1816

Stock#: 60421
Map Maker: Anonymous
Date: 1827
Place: n.p.
Color: Pen & Ink with Wash Color
Condition: VG
Size: 21 x 11 inches
Price: \$ 325.00



Description:

Detailed Plan of Auxonne, where Napoleon Studied to Become a Gunner

Fine plan of Auxonne, a Burgundian fortification on the banks of the Saône. The stronghold, which housed an artillery school for France's army, had Napoleon as a student and resident.

The plan shows the walled city with its star-like bastions, the product of design and oversight by the famous military architect Vauban. The road system is laid out, with important buildings blocked in color. The plan is oriented roughly to the east, with the river Saoné at the bottom, or west. The surrounding countryside, with small clusters of buildings, is also shown.

A key that runs one either side of the plan explains the various features shown in such detail. These are grouped into categories including those associated with the castle, those associated with diverting and containing the waterways, the entrances and exits, and the military buildings.

A note on the right side adds that, although the plan shows the fort as it was in 1816, more construction has gone on since. The note is dated August 1827. It explains that the curtain walls of several bastions, identified by their numbers in the key, have been strengthened, although the casements will take longer to repair.

Auxonne as a fortified town

The first official mentions of Auxonne date from the twelfth century, although it is possible a settlement was on the site as early as the ninth century. It became a border town between the Duchy of Burgundy and the County of Burgundy, and, later, the border between France and powers to the east. This liminal place necessitated the fortification of the town.



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The city walls were threatened several times in the fourteenth century due to noble infighting, and again in the fifteenth century during the civil wars. The city was under near-constant threat until 1444, when peace reigned until 1467. After the defeat of the Duke of Burgundy in 1477, the town passed its tribute to the King of France.

Under Louis XI, the town built the Chateau d'Auxonne, the first category in the key to the left, to guard against rebellion as well as invasion. Conflict continued in the region, with new strife inspiring new portions of the fortifications. For example, by the early sixteenth century the town was a border between the French monarchy and Hapsburg lands; in 1503, the Comté (county) Door, located near the Comté Bastion (15) was built in response to Hapsburg interest in Burgundy and infighting within the Hapsburg Empire. Auxonne repulsed an attack by the Hapsburgs in 1526. Later in the sixteenth century, the town was a battlefield in the Wars of Religion. Most of the buildings shown here are sixteenth century constructions.

Under the reign of Louis XIV, the County of Burgundy became part of the French Crown, alleviating Auxonne of its border status. The bastions seen here were begun during the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648). These were finished by Sebastian Le Prestre de Vauban, the Marquis of Vauban (1622-1707).

Vauban's skills for designing fortifications became the dominant model of siege craft and fortification in the late seventeenth century and continued to influence fortress architecture well into the eighteenth century. In addition to finishing the star-shaped bastions, Vauban built the Porte Royale (20). His most important building today is the town's arsenal (33, 48), which continued to manufacture and store weaponry until 1845.

In the eighteenth century, the town and its formidable fort became a training ground for the French Army. It housed the artillery school, thanks to Vauban's arsenal. Its most famous student was none other than Napoleon Bonaparte, who as a young lieutenant studied to be a gunner in Auxonne. The year this plan depicts, 1816, was just months after Napoleon had been imprisoned on St. Helena after leading Europe in two decades of war. He died on the Atlantic island in 1821, just before this plan was finished with its additional note.

This plan shows one of the most important fortified towns in France and has a tie to the most famous military commander in history. It also depicts buildings designed by the celebrated military architect Vauban, making it an important addition for a collection of military plans, French maps, and Napoleon militaria.

Detailed Condition:



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