



Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

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View of the Town and Harbour of San Francisco, California From The Signal Hill

Stock#: 61183fb

Map Maker:

Date: 1851

Place: London

Color: Hand Colored

Condition: Good

Size: 29 x 14.5 inches

Price: SOLD



Description:

One of the Rarest Early Birdseye Views of San Francisco -- Drawn by a Famous British Arctic Explorer

Fine early view of San Francisco and San Francisco Bay, published in London by Ackerman & Co., based upon an original drawing by Captain Collinson.

The view is drawn from "Signal Hill" one of the early names for Telegraph Hill, which was also then known as Windmill Hill (the windmill can be seen in the foreground). With classic Californian attired men and tents in the foreground and harbor filled with ships beyond, the view captures the frenzied growth and activity in the harbor. Based upon the biographical data for Collinson, it must be assumed that the view was drawn in the first half of 1850.

This view is remarkable chiefly for its delineation of shipping in the cove. There is also an appearance of considerable detail and accuracy in the rendering of wharves and water lots. The shore buildings, however, may represent license by the engraver who worked from Captain Collinson's sketch. The array of peaked roof warehouses is more characteristic of London than of San Francisco at this period.

Captain Collinson

The attribution to Captain Collinson, R.E. is somewhat of a mystery. Captain Collinson in 1851 would refer to Richard Collinson, who from 1850 to 1854 was one leading of the two British teams searching for Sir John Franklin in the arctic regions. It is possible that Collinson briefly visited San Francisco some time between January 1850 (when Collinson left Plymouth) and August 1850 (when Collinson arrived in Hong Kong). From Hong Kong, Collinson would proceed to Alaska and into the Arctic Regions. Collinson had previously been an assistant surveyor during Beechey's survey of the west coast and was actively involved



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in the survey of San Francisco Bay between 1835 and 1838.

However, the designation of R.E. (Royal Engineers), rather than R.N. (Royal Navy) causes some confusion. If R.E. were correct, it could apply to Richard Collinson's brother, Thomas Barnard Collinson, R.E. Collinson departed New Zealand for Hobart Town, Van Diemen's Land, in March 1850 and thereafter returned to England beginning in May 1850. However, it would seem unlikely the return was via California.

It seems most likely that the R.E. is in error and that this was in fact the work of Richard Collinson.

Rarity

The view is extremely rare on the market. The present example is from the Credit Suisse First Boston Collection, which was sold at auction in April 2019. We find no other dealer or auction records.

Reps locates four examples in institutional collections.

Detailed Condition:

Evidence of a previous framing. Previous restoration, with some expert backing and repairs.