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Map of the United States with the Contiguous British & Spanish Possessions Compiled from the latest & best authorities by John Melish . . . Improved to 1822

Stock#: 66241
Map Maker: Melish
Date: 1822
Place: Philadelphia
Color: Hand Colored
Condition: VG
Size: 57 x 42 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

The Visual Embodiment of Thomas Jefferson's Vision of American Manifest Destiny

Highly important 1822 edition of John Melish's map, generally regarded as the most important map of the United States issued in the 19th Century. The present example is the first to incorporate the information derived from Stephen Long's expedition to the Rocky Mountains, which resulted in a major reworking of the contents of the map in Northern Texas, Indian Territory, Kansas, Nebraska, Eastern Colorado, etc., making this edition the most desirable for Transmississippi West collections.

John Melish's map of the United States is the single most important and influential map of America published in the 19th Century and is rivaled only by John Mitchell's map of North America in 1755 as the single most influential map in American History.

Described by Thomas Jefferson as a luminous view of the comparative possessions of different powers in our America, Melish's map, first issued in 1816, was the first indigenous attempt to map the United States from coast to coast, synthesizing the works of Lewis & Clark, Alexander von Humboldt, Zebulon Pike, Aaron Arrowsmith and others for the first time in a single large format coast-to-coast mapping of the United States.

Much as John Mitchell's 1755 map of the British and French Dominions in North America became the template upon which major American Boundary Treaties were laid, and influenced boundary disputes and treaties in North America for nearly a century after its publication, the Melish map similarly became the



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essential source map for the 19th Century. It has been described by several commentators as the visual embodiment of Manifest Destiny to an American public searching for a graphic depiction of America's territorial acquisitions from coast-to-coast in the early 19th Century.

Following the Louisiana Purchase, Americans turned their attention westward to the great expanse from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean. While the explorations of Lewis & Clark and Zebulon Pike provided early regional snapshots of previously unknown regions in the West, it was left to Melish to tie together these works, along with Arrowsmith's map of Mexico and other available sources, into the first systematic and comprehensive map of the United States.

Prior to the publication his map of the US, Melish had produced a number of other highly acclaimed regional maps which included his rare Military & Topographical Atlas of the United States. However, this map of the US would become his masterwork, ultimately reissued in 25 known states of the map between 1816 and 1823.

Beginning 1820, Melish extended his map further south, adding several additional plates, which provided coverage of Cuba, Jamaica, the Virgin Islands, and the remainder of the Gulf Coast and the Yucatan to the map. However, without doubt, it was the 1822 edition which was Melish's most important revision, incorporating the information contained in Stephen Long's monumental 1821 manuscript map of the region between the Rocky Mountains and the Mississippi River, pre-dating the first appearance of Long's expeditionary report.

The map, in its various editions, faithfully recorded the changing geography of the US, as various boundary disputes, treaties and explorations extended both the geographical territory of the US and a young nation's knowledge of its own territory. The US-Mexico boundary established by the Adams-Onís Treaty of 1819, was laid out on a copy of the 1819 edition of the map.

Melish reportedly released only 100 copies of each edition. Because of the map's size and its use as an official source, relatively few copies have survived. This is specially true for the later editions, this being the first example of the 1823 (and last) edition of the map to appear on the market in a number of years. These later editions are substantially revised, with extensive corrections along the entire Northern Border of the US and in the treatment of Lake Michigan. Beginning in 1820 Arkansas Territory appears and the Northern border of Tennessee is corrected per Act of Congress ratified May 12, 1820.

Beginning with the 1822 edition, the US-Canada border is correctly shown to lie along the 49th parallel from the Lake of the Woods to the Rocky Mountains, correcting the erroneous treatment of the line as extending to the Gulf of Georgia (Puget Sound), which had been shown in prior editions, contrary to the



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Treaty of 1818. Chicago is now on Lake Michigan w/o the need of a panhandle in Illinois. Missouri appears as a state (admitted August 1821). In the 1822 edition, a number of new Western Roads have been included, including the Kansas Road, running into the Road to the Pawnees, which in turn joins the Great Spanish Trail. Lake Timpanogos appears for the first time in 1822, as does New Albion and New California.

The present example was issued joined as a wall map and is not cut into smaller sections, as is the case with most examples of the map.

Detailed Condition: