



Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

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Atlas Coelestis

Stock#: 66646
Map Maker: Flamsteed
Date: 1729
Place: London
Color: Uncolored
Condition: VG
Size: 25.25 x 20 inches
Price: \$ 29,500.00



Description:

First Edition of the Most Important Celestial Atlas of the 18th Century, with the Engraved Portrait of Flamsteed.

Engraved portrait of Flamsteed, title, dedication to George II, 9 pages of text, 1 page "A LIST of the SUBRIBERS." [sic], and 27 engraved celestial maps by James Mynde and Abraham Sharp, plate 14 printed on two double-sheets joined and folded.

Flamsteed was the first Royal Astronomer. His other great accomplishment (in addition to the preparations for the present atlas) was the preparation of the 3,000-star catalog *Catalogus Britannicus*. As Astronomer Royal, Flamsteed spent some forty years observing and making meticulous records for his star catalog, which would eventually triple the number of entries in Tycho Brahe's sky atlas. Unwilling to risk his reputation by releasing unverified data, he kept the incomplete records under seal at Greenwich. In 1712, Isaac Newton, then President of the Royal Society, and Edmund Halley obtained Flamsteed's data and published a pirated star catalog. Flamsteed managed to gather three hundred of the four hundred printings and burned them. "If Sir I.N. would be sensible of it, I have done both him and Dr. Halley a great kindness," he wrote to his assistant Abraham Sharp.

One of Flamsteed's main objectives was to correct Bayer's grave errors in the representation of figures, the latter having overturned a large number of figures and showing them from the rear instead of the front. These new positions were at odds with traditional descriptions.

In 1719, Flamsteed died. Four years later, in 1725, Flamsteed's own version of *Historia Coelestis Britannica* was published. It had been edited by his wife, Margaret. This contained Flamsteed's observations and included a catalog of 2,935 stars at much greater accuracy than any prior work. It was



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considered the first significant contribution of the Greenwich Observatory, and the numerical Flamsteed designations for stars that were added to a subsequent French edition are still in use. In 1729 his wife published his *Atlas Coelestis*, assisted by Joseph Crosthwait and Abraham Sharp, who were responsible for the technical side.

The introduction to the atlas concludes with this fantastic passage, elucidating the motivations of his loved ones and associates in publishing the work:

And lastly, as the principal View of the Royal Founder of the Observatory was to obtain a good Catalogue of the fixed Stars, so it must be justly acknowledged that Mr. Flamsteed has fully accomplished that great End, having left behind him one of the largest and compleatest Catalogues that ever the World was enriched with, from which these Charts, are deduced, containing almost double the Number of the Stars in that of Hevelius's, to the Honour of the British Nation, and the last Reputation of the Author; a Work that will render his Name famous to the latest Posterity; and perpetuate his Memory 'till Time shall be no more.

Detailed Condition:

Folio. Early 19th-century half calf over blue and yellow marbled-paper boards. Small worm track at bottom edge in the first few leaves of the book - going no farther than the dedication.