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Carte Reduite De L'Ocean Septentrional compris entre l'Asie et l'Amerique Suivant les Decouvertes qui ont ete faites par les Russes . . . 1766

Stock#: 67778
Map Maker: Bellin
Date: 1766
Place: Paris
Color: Hand Colored
Condition: VG+
Size: 33 x 22 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

An Important Early Navigational Chart Which Shows Alaska

This is a foundational chart of Alaska, the Pacific Northwest, and the northeastern coast of Asia, published in Paris. The Port of San Francisco is named, three years before the supposed discovery of the bay by the de Portola.

This chart was produced by Jacques-Nicolas Bellin (1703-1772), France's preeminent maritime cartographer and the Premier Ingénieur of the Depot de la Marine (the French Hydrographical Office), as well as the Official Hydrographer of King Louis XV. This chart appeared in volume two of Bellin's *Hydrographie Francoise*, one of the most important compilations of sea charts published in the 18th century.

Bellin's chart represents a significant step forward in the cartographic depiction of the region, being the first major French map of the era to not portray the Sea of the West, a supposed massive inland sea in western North America. Bellin had previously portrayed it in his 1755 map. It must be noted that the idea of a Bay of the West is not completely rejected in the present map, with the entrance supposedly discovered by Bartholomew de Fonte in his 1640 voyage portrayed trailing off into the interior. However, Bellin only represents this as a broken line and notes that the channel is doubtful. Across North America, the map incorporates the French discoveries in Canada and the Great Lakes regions and includes a fascinating depiction of the sources of the Mississippi River. The map also illustrates the supposed source of the Missouri River.

The chart shows the many voyages undertaken to map this area. Most prominent are the paths taken by



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Bering and Tschurikow during their 1733 Great Northern Expedition. Additional references are made to the First Kamtschatka Expedition, the voyages of Drake, De Fonte, De Fuca, and many others. A reference to a 1648 Russian expedition appears to circumnavigate Kamtschatka and go off the map, this likely relates to Semyon Dezhnev's ill-fated expedition, in which he reached as far as the Kolyma along the northern slopes of Siberia.

The depiction of Alaska is very intriguing. Parts that have been mapped accurately are shown with unbroken lines, while much of the coastline is conjectured. Various bays and islands, including many of the Aleutians, are shown in detail and fairly accurate. The Gulf of Alaska can be seen, and various landmarks, including Mount St. Elias, are noted. To the south, the coastline starts to become more identifiable again, with the Juan de Fuca Strait and northern California coastline recognizable. The conjectures Bellin makes are informed, in part, by the accounts from native inhabitants of Kamtschatka.

The detail in northeastern Asia is extensive and fairly accurate. The Kuril Islands, Kamtschatka Peninsula, and other features are all recognizable. The many mountains and rivers of the area are named, along with the relatively few settlements of the area.

Gerard Muller's Map

First published in 1754, Muller's map was the official Russian response to Joseph Nicolas De L'Isle's surreptitious publication of his map of the same region, following his departure from Russia and return to Paris. The Russians believed that De L'isle had improperly used the information he had gathered while serving in St. Petersburg at the Royal Academy. Moreover, they were aware of his incorrect delineation of the Northwest Coast of America. Thus they encouraged Gerhard Muller, a German cartographer working in St. Petersburg, to issue a map to correct De L'Isle's mistakes, which became the official map of the Imperial Academy in St. Petersburg.

Muller's map was first issued in 1754, then reissued in 1758, 1773, and again in 1784. The 1758 edition adds a route across the Mer D'Ochozk but is otherwise largely unchanged from the 1754 edition. The 1773 and 1784 editions were significantly updated, especially to show the discoveries of a number of Russian explorations, beginning in 1764, which produced new information on the Aleutian Islands and the western coast of Alaska. This included the expedition of Ivan Synd, sent by Catherine the Great to map the Aleutian Islands. Of this expedition, little is known, but its confused reports are believed to have influenced later states of Muller's maps.

The Bering Strait and Russian Depictions of Alaska



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The present map shows the tracks of the Russian voyages of Bering and his deputy Aleksei Chirikov conducted from 1728-43, that first defined eastern Siberia and touched upon the American northwest. Other than the bulge on the north coast of the Chukchi Peninsula, the coasts of Siberia are extremely well-defined, attesting to Bering's enormous talent as a cartographer.

Bellin depicts Bering and Chirikov's contacts with the Aleutians and cites Mount St. Elias. The Pacific northwest immediately south of that point is entirely conjectural noting apocryphal discoveries such as the 'River of the King's' encountered by the Spanish Admiral de Fuente in 1640, and the Strait of Juan De Fuca, discovered in 1592. Bellin notes Sir Francis Drake's actual discovery of 'Nouvelle Albion' (northern California) in 1578.

The Great Northern Expedition

One of the largest and best-organized voyages of exploration, the Great Northern Expedition completely remapped the Arctic coast of Siberia and some parts of the northwest coast of America. Vast amounts of hitherto unknown detail were filled in, which was previously represented following myth and speculation.

The idea of a land bridge from Siberia to America was long-held, appearing in maps since the fifteenth century and being the subject of academic speculation as to the origins of the indigenous peoples of America. To seek out the possibility of this land bridge, Peter the Great sent two unsuccessful land surveys to the area, before sending the First Kamtschatka Expedition in 1727. This expedition made it slightly further than Cap Chutotsky and St. Lawrence island, and was celebrated as proving the absence of a land bridge between Russia and North America. This expedition made Bering, its commander, a national hero.

The logical next step was to try and reach North America. Empresses Anna and Elizabeth were both interested in continuing Peter the Great's legacy of exploration and sponsored a Second Kamtschatka Expedition. The expedition comprised of three separate groups, two divisions (one headed by Bering himself) crossing the Pacific, while an academic expedition explored Siberia. The academic interest in this expedition was great, and several leading scientists and geographers of the day were involved in its planning, including the cartographer Gerhard Muller.

This expedition, later known as the Great Northern Expedition, filled in vast amounts of previously unknown coastal details. The important achievements of the expedition included the European discovery of Alaska, the Aleutian Islands, the Commander Islands, Bering Island, as well as a detailed mapping of the northern and north-eastern coast of Russia and the Kuril Islands. The expedition also ended the myth of a massive landmass in the North Pacific. It would be this expedition that sparked the intriguing period of Russian settlement in North America.



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The Sea of the West

Many European maps of North America in the early seventeenth century depict a massive inland sea, hundreds of miles in diameter, with a small inlet and many interior islands. The origins of this myth can be traced to several different sources, and it would not be until the great Russian expeditions of the mid-eighteenth that knowledge to disprove the idea would be obtained. Like many cartographic myths, the Sea of the West persisted for decades after it was proved wrong.

The 1592 voyage by Juan de Fuca is celebrated as discovering the Salish Sea for Europeans. Of course, de Fuca's travels are little known, and it is uncertain if he ever even sailed into the straits which now bear his name. Contemporaries such as Cook doubted him, but it now seems that de Fuca's account of his voyage matches strongly with the geography of this area. De Fuca describes a large bay with numerous archipelagos which he spent many days sailing. Intriguingly for those seeking a Northwest Passage, he described a vast inland sea which he saw but did not reach.

This idea of an inland bay was picked up by De L'Isle, who drew several conjectural maps which included a Sea of the West, though these were never printed. A copyright battle prevented competitors from following up on this idea, though it had commenced gaining traction.

The myth of the Sea of the West was picked up again at some point in later in the eighteenth century following the supposed discovery a long-lost letter regarding the Spanish admiral Bartholomew de Fonte's travels to the region. It would be this iteration of Sea which would make its way onto later maps. The exact nature of this Sea varied from map to map, but the grandest ideas depicted a vast body of water stretching nearly to the Mississippi.

While not all maps of the period depicted such a sea, many did. Russian exploration to the northwest was the primary reason this short-lived myth was dispelled, even though initial voyages had not ruled out such a bay. Gerhard Muller's map is perhaps the most influential of the period to not show this bay, and his work was responsible for laying the cartographic foundations for a Pacific Northwest we now recognize today.

"The Port of Francis Drake, Falsely Named the Port of San Francisco"

Following Muller's example, Bellin portrays a small indentation, roughly halfway between Point Conception and Cape Mendocino. Bellin annotates this bay, ascribing its discovery and name to Francis Drake, as commonly accepted, but he also indicates that the port was popularly referred to by the name of St. Francis. This highlights a little-understood controversy regarding the discovery of the San Francisco



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Bay, and the origins of its name.

The Drake voyage to California has taken on mythical proportions, repeatedly becoming politicized in the early days of a state which was grasping for an Anglo-centric story of origination. Drake discovered "New Albion" (northern California) during his 1577-1580 privateering circumnavigation. After claiming to have reached 48 degrees north, which would have placed Drake nearly at the entrance of the Salish Sea, Drake was forced to turn the *Golden Hinde* southwards due to unfavorable winds. His crew spent a month harbored at a good bay supposedly at 38° 30', during which he interacted extensively with the indigenous peoples.

The description for this bay is unusually vague in primary sources. In his *The World Encompassed*, Drake spends twenty pages discussing the many days spent at this bay, but provides few indications of where this spot might actually lie. Two of the only hints in this passage mention that "Not farre without this harborough did lye certaine Ilands (we called them the Illands of Saint *James*) having on them plentifull and great store of Seales and birds..." and "This country our generall named *Albion* [an alternative name for Great Britain, with the same root as the Gaelic *Alba*], and that for two causes; the one in respect of the white bancks and cliffes, which lie toward the sea...."

Using these two pieces of information, alongside the latitude given and the indigenous practices described, which appear to suggest that Drake encountered the Coast Miwok peoples, it has been accepted that Drake landed slightly south of Point Reyes. While this debate is far from resolved (with arguments that Drake arrived in various bays from Washington to even Alaska), it is unlikely that Drake discovered the San Francisco Bay proper, as his text never mentions an inland port.

Drake's was not the only voyage to the region in the late 16th century. Sebastião Rodrigues Soromenho, the Portuguese explorer made landfall at Drake's supposed location. A Spanish Galleon sunk at the site, leaving definitive proof of Soromenho's location. He named the bay San Francisco. Curiously, Soromenho had been sent north to search for a large inland body of water in the area, rumors of which had already reached the Spanish.

Drake's Bay appeared on maps at some location north of Monterey throughout the next century and a half, labeled, for example, as "P. du. S. Fracisque Drac." This can be traced back to Brigg's 1625 *America Septentrionalis*, with his depiction of California based on "a Spanish Charte taken by ye Hollanders." It is likely that Briggs renamed the bay after Drake in his remapping, though whether this was done erroneously or consciously is unclear. It may be to this false name that the present chart refers.

Curiously in the present map, the shape of the bay as shown appears to be a closer match to the San



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Francisco Bay (especially in Muller's version) than it is to what is now known as Drake's Bay. In addition, the relative location of the "I. St. James," once known as the "Islands of the Dead" but now referred to as the Farallon Islands, further supports this San Francisco Bay identification. While these two pieces of evidence may appear convincing, the evidence is conjectural at best.

It is commonly accepted that Juan Crespi named the San Francisco Bay after St. Francis of Assisi, the founder of his order. However, surviving documents are few which describe the earliest days of European exploration in the bay. It was also believed by explorers that the native population had seen European ships in the harbor prior to Portola's arrival, which was why they went to the bay in the first place. These many lines of evidence make one wonder if the name of San Francisco, transliterated from the name of Sir Francis Drake, was already in use regarding the bay prior to 1769.

Rarity

The map is scarce on the market, as it was apparently only briefly included in the *Hydrographie Francois*.

Detailed Condition: