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A General Chart For the purpose of pricking off a Ship's Track from England, &c. Southward, and round the World. Drawn by J.S. Hobbs, F.R.G.S. Hydrographer . . . 1861

Stock#: 68601
Map Maker: Norie / Hobbs
Date: 1861
Place: London
Color: Uncolored
Condition: VG
Size: 63.3 x 32.5 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

Rare Survival -- Navigational Aid at Sea with Pricking Marks

Rare, separately-published Norie world map on a Mercator Projection, the preferred projection for tracking voyages at sea.

The present example includes the routes of several voyages, including:

- [SS *Armenian*] Calcutta to Singapore, April 1860
- Hong Kong to Singapore, Dec. 1860; continuing in Jan. 1861 through the Sunda Strait to the Cape of Good Hope to England (May 1861) [possibly a continuation of the *Armenian's* voyage]
- Hong Kong to Singapore, May
- Edinburgh to Dublin
- Canary Islands to Guadalupe
- Malta to Madeira to Halifax to Bermuda in 1872 (with a half year in Halifax)

The SS *Armenian* sank on January 25, 1865, so it is possible this chart was used on board at some point in its time of utility. Another voyage in 1872 is also marked, suggesting that the chart changed hands or, more likely, was used across a career in several vessels.

The geography of the world is minutely recorded, showing the detail achieved by the world's various hydrographic bodies to this date. One of the only unfinished coastlines is in Antarctica, where scattered peaks and ice islands are shown. A few points in the far north of Canada are also only vaguely drawn; the area was the major focus on many nineteenth-century voyages thanks to the ever-tantalizing search for the Northwest Passage.



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As noted below the title, the map was available in separate sheets. A navigator could buy the entire world set or just a section with specific routes/areas, depending on their needs. This set has been joined and would fold neatly, making it easy to carry on long voyages. A note below the title states:

GREAT CIRCLE SAILING and COMPOSITE TRACKS

On this Chart the Great Circle and Composite Tracks are laid down to those parts where such sailing is most practicable; against the Monsoons it is not available, excepting perhaps Steamers; & near to the Equator it becomes as Plane Sailing on the Mercator Chart.

A great circle track indicates the shortest distance between two points on a sphere, and therefore the most direct route. A composite, or modified great-circle, track consists of an initial great-circle track from the point of departure with its vertex on a limiting parallel of latitude.

Dead reckoning and pricking maps

When not navigating with celestial navigation, or in conjunction with it, mariners could estimate their position on a journey via dead reckoning. With dead reckoning, the navigator finds their position by measuring the course and distance they have sailed from a previous point. This is marked on a chart over several days, creating a running record of location at sea. Thus, effective dead reckoning depends on accurate, well-made instruments, as well as on correct calculation and recording by the mariner.

The speed of the ship can be measured using a lead and line and/or the ship's instrumentation, depending on the ship's type and technology. A magnetic compass will tell the heading, or direction, of the ship; the compass was invented in China and has been in use in Europe since at least 1183.

Once the speed and heading are known, and the time of travel is also known, the mariner can calculate the distance traveled in which direction. Starting from a known point, the navigator measures out his course and distance from that point on a chart, pricking/dotting the chart with the tip of a pair of dividers to mark the new position. Each day's ending position would be the starting point for the next day's course-and-distance measurement.

Dead reckoning would be only one of a variety of techniques available to the navigator in the mid-nineteenth century, when this chart was made. They would have also been able to take celestial navigation observations using intricately-made instruments, as well as consult tide, wind, and lunar distance tables. Dead reckoning would be used in addition to and in conjunction with these methods, making the routes marked here the best guess of the mariner.



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SS Armenian

The *SS Armenian* was a British cargo steamer of 763 tons built in 1855 by Smith & Rodger, Govan, for Potter & Co., Liverpool. In 1857, the Elder Dempster Line, Liverpool, purchased the vessel.

On January 25, 1865 the ship was under the command of Captain Thomas Leamon. It was carrying 28 first-class passengers, two second class passengers and eight deck passengers with a crew of forty. The weather was foggy and in the course of the afternoon the ship stopped twice to take soundings.

Despite such precautions, at midnight, when under full steam and canvas, the *Armenian* ran aground on the Arklow Bank off the coast of Wicklow. A fire began in the aft deckhouse, but this was extinguished by the heavy seas. The lifeboats were successfully launched, although one was stove in. Those remaining on deck had to take the main and mizzen rigging when the ship broke in two during the night.

The *SS Montague* rescued two of the lifeboats. The *Montague* managed to save those who were still clinging to the masts. Unfortunately, a lightship crew sent to help was capsized and its four men drowned. Eight people in all were lost in the wreck.

This was not the only time the *Armenian* had met trouble. On August 11, 1861, the *Armenian* ran aground at Lagos, Nigeria on a voyage from Bonny, Africa to Liverpool; the ship was refloated with assistance from HMS *Brune* and HMS *Prometheus* of the Royal Navy. The *SS Armenian* also appears to have been used to transport troops from Rangoon to New Zealand in 1864.

The owner of this chart likely served on the *Armenian* for a time, taking the chart with them when they served in or traveled on other vessels.

Rarity

We note a few institutional examples of the map with dates between 1854 and 1871, although several appear to be incomplete sets, lacking one or more of the sheets.

The survival of a complete set with manuscript additions is very rare.

Detailed Condition:

Dissected and laid on linen.