



Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

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Carta Esferica que comprehende todas las Costas del Seno Mexicano, Golfo de Honduras, Isla de Cuba, Santo Domingo, Jamayca y Lucayas. Construida en la Direccion Hidrografica con presencia de nuevas observaciones recientemte. practicads. en vario puntos de dichas Islas y Costas . . . 1808

Stock#: 71293
Map Maker: Direccion Hidrografica de Madrid
Date: 1808
Place: Madrid
Color: Uncolored
Condition: Good
Size: 34.5 x 22.7 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

Extremely Rare Spanish Sea Chart of the Caribbean—Unrecorded! With Manuscript Additions!

Exceedingly rare and possibly unrecorded sea chart of the Spanish Main, published in Madrid in 1808. We can find no other example in institutional collections or dealer catalogs.

This is the second chart of a series of three Spanish naval charts of the region. The first was originally published in 1799; this, the second, in 1808, and the third, in 1813.

This chart shows a larger area than the first; it includes the Gulf of Mexico and the Mexican coast east of the Yucatan Peninsula, as well as the islands of the Caribbean east to Puerto Rico.

The waters are surrounded with information vital to navigation. The shores are studded with soundings and obstructions, sandbars, and reefs are clearly marked. A legend at the top center explains a variety of symbols, including arrows for current direction, which shows the Gulf Stream. Next to the key is an inset of Scorpion Reef (*Alacran*), just to the north of the Yucatan Peninsula. These are both new to the chart since 1799.

There are also symbols for the route of the SM *Monarca* in 1798 (solid line), and the route of a search for a convoy in 1804 (dash and dotted line). A pointing hand symbol shows the direction of the route. The convoy search was part of the West Indies Campaign of the Napoleonic Wars, when French, Spanish, and British ships all plied the Caribbean. Both voyages yielded several new rocks and obstructions that had not



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been previously charted.

Hand-Drawn Sailing Notes

The chart has been annotated in an early hand, ranging from notes off the coasts of Florida, from south of Pensacola and Mobile, tracking around the west coast and the Florida Keys, then along the east coast north to Cape Fear, almost certainly following the Gulf Stream. Additional annotations can be found off the coast of Tabasco, Yucatan, Cuba, the north coast of Hispaniola and the Bahamas, with the dates of May 6 appearing east of Abaco Island. It is likely these annotations were made during the Napoleonic Wars, contemporary to the publication of the chart.

The inscription on the verso reads:

A Spanish Chart of the Gulph of Mexico, Gulph of Honduras, Islands of Cuba St Domingo, Jamaica & the Bahamas 1808.

The Dirección Hidrográfica's series of Caribbean charts

The present chart is the second in a series of sea charts of the Caribbean published by the Spanish Hydrographical Department. The series begins with a 1799 chart with a nearly identical title, [*Carta esférica que comprehende las costas del Seno Mexicano*](#). That chart was revised in 1803 and 1805 and is generally considered to be the first large-scale printed chart of the Texas coast based on actual soundings and explorations.

The second chart is the present example, offered here. Issued in 1808, we are unable to locate any examples other than the present chart. The chart would seem to have been very short lived, with a new copper plate issued in 1813, using the same name, but with an additional large inset map at the far left and the title shifted to the far right. This third chart was updated in 1814 and 1816.

This 1808 chart includes several features not present on the earlier chart, including:

- A reduced scale showing a larger area
- The directions of the current
- The routes of the *Monarca* and the convoy search ship
- The inset of Scorpion Reef (*Alacran*)



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While we note later Spanish charts with the same title, we believe that this example is unique, with the later editions of the map being printed from a different copper plate:

<https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph298393/>

We note the existence of this manuscript chart, which seems to be the transitional chart between the 1808 chart and the later charts:

https://www.europeana.eu/da/item/418/BVMDefensa_bib_BMDB20180039249

Rarity

The chart is unrecorded and apparently unknown. We were unable to locate any record of any kind in institutional collections, no auction and no dealer records.

Detailed Condition:

Segmented and laid on linen, with inscription on the verso in English. Soiled and dampstained.