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Geographische Universal-Zeig Und Schlag-Uhr (Homann's Geographical Cabinet w/Celestial Images and California as an Island)

Stock#: 73985
Map Maker: Homann

Date: 1705 circa
Place: Nuremberg
Color: Hand Colored
Condition: VG
Size: 22.5 x 19 inches

Price: $ 750.00

Description:

A Universal Geographic Clock

Fine advertisement for Zacharias Landteck's universal geographic clock that tells the time around the world and shows the progression of the sun across the northern hemisphere.

The clock is a marvel of engineering, as the text explains. The standing table clock has a face that includes twenty-four hours, rather than the usual twelve. It also contains a concentric rotating ring with the months of the year and the signs of the zodiac. At center is a map of the northern hemisphere that can be covered by a rotating shaded glass disc. Together, the clock's rings would let a user see their own time, but also to calculate the local time, sunrise, and sunset of any meridian around the world.

The map shows California as an island. It includes a large landmass crossing the North Pacific; this *Compagnie Land* was supposedly sighted in the mid-seventeenth century and was later exaggerated by mapmakers into a continent-sized behemoth. A possible Northwest Passage is suggested, as the precise coastlines near the North Pole are unfinished.

The clock is not only a fount of information, but an aesthetically rich item as well. It is heightened in silver and the finest of woods and is meant to serve as a handsome addition to any parlor or office.

The clock is an instrument, however, not just a novelty. Based in Nuremberg, Homann was at the center of

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local and regional trade. The Holy Roman Empire had contacts across the globe, as did its merchants and officials. While never intended for travel, the clock, and this broadside, does engage with the ongoing discussion about differences in time over long distances, an observation that played into one of the most pressing scientific issues of the day, how to calculate longitude accurately.

While the answers to the longitude question were complex and multiple, clocks did prove an important part of that answer. If a clock could be made to tell time consistently while traveling—i.e. to not lose time due to jostling, the elements, or the mechanism—then a user could compare the clock's time to the local time and thus calculate their longitude relative to their point of departure.

John Harrison would develop just such a clock—several of them, in fact—over the decades of the mid-eighteenth century. The clocks were tested on a series of voyages, including those of James Cook and other Pacific explorers, in the later-eighteenth century. Eventually, every ship carried a clock based on Harrison's design that could keep time at sea.

Detailed Condition: