



Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

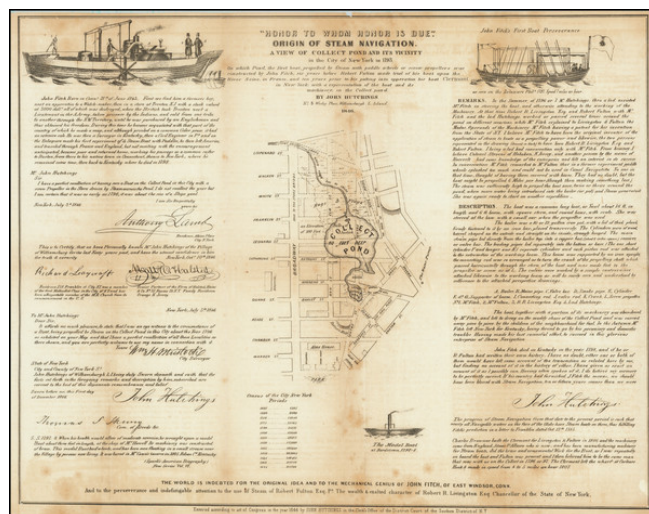
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"Honor to Whom Honor is Due." Origin of Steam Navigation. A View of Collect Pond and its Vicinity in the City of New York in 1793

Stock#: 76818
Map Maker: Hutchings
Date: 1846
Place: New York
Color: Uncolored
Condition: Good
Size: 18 x 14.5 inches
Price: Not Available



Description:

"The World is indebted for the original idea and to the mechanical genius of John Fitch, of East Windsor, Conn."

Interesting testimonial broadside published by John Hutchings in New York in 1846. As a young boy, Hutchings participated in the launch of John Fitch's famous steamboat on the Collect Pond in Lower Manhattan. With this work, Hutchings hoped to bring renewed attention and honor to Fitch, whom he saw as having made a major contribution to steam-powered transportation, which was so dominant at the time of publication.

In many ways, John Fitch was one of the foremost inventors in American history, though perhaps a few decades ahead of his time. His work on promoting steam-powered vessels resulted in some strange-looking contraptions, but he did produce concrete results and ran the first steam-powered boat route in the country. This did not result in business success and Fitch eventually moved westward to Kentucky where died shortly thereafter.

Interestingly, Hutchings constructs the broadside as if he expected to not be believed; he includes numerous facsimile signatures alongside testimonies to the events that he claimed occurred and to his own respectability.

Other versions of this image appeared around this time, though we have not seen a complete accounting of them.



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The Collect Pond

The original Collect Pond extended, roughly, from modern-day Franklin to Duane Street and to the east of Broadway. The pond was a natural depression with artesian springs and a drainage area that filled with water seasonally. Eighteenth-century engravings show picnickers enjoying the view from the nearby Potter's Hill, noted here below the pond. In the early 19th century Fitch tested one of the first steamboats on the Collect Pond. At the time, he would have been surrounded by slaughterhouses, tanneries, gunpowder storage, bogs and prisons, not exactly a pretty place for an afternoon boat ride. Around 1811, Potter's Hill was dismantled, and the debris used fill in the Collect Pond, over which residential buildings and a major 5-way intersection were constructed. Unfortunately, the artesian springs remained active, causing the new buildings to flood and sag, transforming the area into the notorious and poverty-stricken 'Five Points' district, one of the most desperate slums in American urban history.

Detailed Condition:

Toned. Especially at the folds. Minor wear to the edges.