



# Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

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## [Cape Town] Africa S.W. Coast Table Bay surveyed by Captn. Sir Edwd. Belcher C.B. 1846.

**Stock#:** 78202  
**Map Maker:** British Admiralty  
**Date:** 1849  
**Place:** London  
**Color:** Uncolored  
**Condition:** VG  
**Size:** 25 x 19 inches  
**Price:** \$ 2,400.00



### Description:

#### *The Admiralty Survey of Table Bay and Cape Town*

Rare and early harbor chart of Table Bay, with an important town plan of the area around Cape Town.

The area was surveyed by the British Admiralty in 1846, engraved by J. & C. Walker, and sold by authorized chart dealer R. B. Bate.

The chart includes numerous soundings in Table Bay from systematic grid surveys and running surveys. These are augmented by fathom lines that indicate the deepening of the harbor. A simple compass rose allows for the easy plotting of courses on a set bearing. As this is a high-resolution harbor chart, rather than a grid of latitude and longitude there are two astronomically-derived positions given, for the southeast bastion of the Amsterdam Battery and, farther inland, the Royal Observatory.

Notably, this chart also includes a detailed plan of Cape Town, including the Parade, with its Library and Commercial Rooms, the Castle, Fort Knockle, and the Royal Observatory. The road to the observatory is still unfinished. The chart also includes a fine treatment of the topographical features to the north of Cape Town, including the Lion's Rump.

This chart is the result of the Admiralty's modern survey of the area around the Cape of Good Hope, which began in 1840. It built on the work undertaken by Captain William Fitzwilliam Owen between 1822 and 1826. Previous, partial surveys were completed with less precise instruments and without adequate



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support, meaning that even the best privately-available charts by Arrowsmith, Wyld, and others were not sufficient for navigation. The present chart was based on the survey of 1846 by Sir Edward Belcher, captain of the *H.M.S. Samarang*, who had recently completed one of the earliest chartings of the waters around Hong Kong.

#### **The British in the Cape**

The Cape had been occupied by Europeans since 1652, when the Dutch East India Company established a refreshment post there. During the Napoleonic Wars, both France and Britain attempted to take the strategic colony; the British succeeded in 1795. They then returned the colony to the Dutch in 1802, but took it again in 1806. It was permanently ceded to Britain in the Anglo-Dutch Treaty of 1814.

Vitally located on the route from the Atlantic to the Indian Oceans, it was an important base before the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. Many more British settlers came after 1820, and Boer settlers migrated north in the 1830s, part of the Great Trek, putting more strain on land and raising tension levels with Indigenous groups. Local peoples were made to work in the colony, beginning the pass law system that would become notorious in the twentieth century.

The Cape Colony was granted its own parliament in 1854 and their own Prime Minister in 1872. In 1910, the Cape Colony was consolidated with the Boer Republics, following their victory in the Boer Wars. Cape Town was named the capital of this Union of South Africa and the later Republic of South Africa.

#### **Sir Edward Belcher**

This chart was surveyed by one of the most notable surveyors in the Royal Navy in the nineteenth century. Belcher was born in Nova Scotia in 1799. His merchant father moved the family to Surrey in 1811. Young Edward joined the navy in 1812, serving in the English Channel and on the Newfoundland station. He was a midshipman on HMS *Superb* at the bombardment of Algiers in 1816.

Belcher made lieutenant in 1818. His surveying career began with his appointment as assistant surveyor in HMS *Blossom*, which sailed for the Bering Strait in 1825. He spent three years in the Pacific. Upon his return, in 1829, Belcher was promoted to commander and he led the HMS *Aetna* from 1830 to 1833, and in which he surveyed the coasts of west and north Africa. He then served on the home survey in the Irish Sea before being appointed to HMS *Sulphur*, which spent three years on the west coasts of North and South America.

He arrived at Singapore in 1840, when he was ordered to China as part of the First Opium War. In 1841,



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Belcher led one of the first surveys of the waters near Hong Kong. Belcher returned the *Sulphur* to England in 1842, after seven years away. During this cruise, Belcher was promoted to post rank and awarded a CB and a knighthood. He also published an account of his circumnavigation in 1843.

The now celebrated Belcher was given command of HMS *Samarang*, from which he was to survey the coast of China, now open to British trade. He was diverted to Borneo, the Philippines, and Taiwan, where he surveyed and fought pirates. En route back to England, he surveyed near the Cape of Good Hope as well. Back in England again by 1847, he published another voyage account the following year.

In 1852, Belcher was commanded to join the search for Sir John Franklin. This proved to be a mistake for Belcher, as his abilities as a survey commander did not translate well to the demands of the largest Arctic voyage to date. Belcher was given a squadron of five ships—HMS *Assistance*, HMS *Resolute*, HMS *North Star*, *Pioneer*, and *Intrepid*.

Belcher quickly became nervous about his men and ships. He ordered four of the five ships abandoned (all but the *North Star*) and returned to England in October 1854 with *Phoenix* and the *Breadalbane*, who had come to assist them. Upon his return, Belcher was court martialed for the loss of the ships and never received another command. He did, however, publish another account of his time at sea, this time bombastically titled *The Last of the Arctic Voyages* (1855).

While no longer in active command, Belcher did reach flag rank by seniority in 1861, vice admiral in 1866, and admiral in 1872. He was made a KCB in 1867. In retirement, Belcher turned to writing. He died in 1877.

#### **Rarity**

OCLC locates only one example of the chart, in the British Library.

We note that Susanna Fisher offered an example of the chart in map dealer catalogs between 1989 and 1992 for about \$700.

#### **Detailed Condition:**

Soiled at left side of the map, having been stored rolled.