



Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

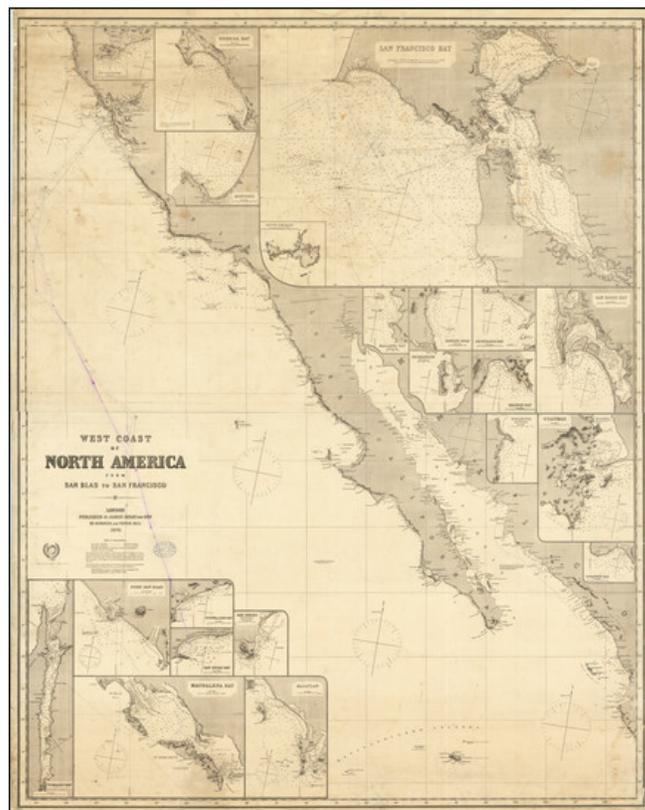
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West Coast Of North America From San Blas To San Francisco . . . 1870

Stock#: 83313
Map Maker: Imray & Son
Date: 1872
Place: London
Color: Uncolored
Condition: VG
Size: 50.5 x 40 inches
Price: \$ 2,200.00



Description:

A nice example of Imray's chart of the West Coast of North America, extending from Blas on the mainland of Mexico to just beyond San Francisco Bay, with the focal point of the chart being the California Coastline, from San Francisco to Cabo San Lucas, one of the last non-American published sea charts of the West Coast of North America to be widely used by merchant seamen working the California Coastline.

As part of the chart, Imray has included insets of the most important harbors in California, most notably plans of Santa Barbara, San Diego, San Francisco, Monterey, and Bodega Bays, along with a number of important harbors and Bays within Mexico, including Guaymas, Amortajada Bay, Pulpito, Ballena Bay, Mangles Road, Pichilique, Salinas Bay, Port San Blas, etc.

The second half of the 19th century is an interesting time for the mapping of the West Coast of North America. Beginning as early as the late 16th Century, the Spanish had active commercial routes between Asia and California. While it was relatively easy to sail from California eastward, the return trip was much more complex. What would come to be known as the Manila-Acapulco galleon trade began when Andrés



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de Urdaneta, sailing in convoy under Miguel López de Legazpi, discovered a return route from Cebu City to Mexico in 1565. By sailing northward, he discovered the prevailing winds necessary for a faster transit eastward to California, which terminated on the California Coastline near Mendocino. Over time, a slightly more southerly landfall became the prevailing practice. Unfortunately, California's coastline was mostly inhospitable and weather patterns and prevailing winds (plus a lack of exploitable indigenous wealth), left the Spanish with little incentive to make the trek northward. For nearly 250 years, California saw seasonal one-way traffic only.

By the eighteenth century, it was understood that a less northerly track was sufficient, but galleon navigators steered well clear of the forbidding and rugged fogbound California coast. The ships generally made their landfall well down the coast, somewhere between Point Conception and Cape San Lucas. For merchant ships, the goal was to get home safely. One of the more remarkable facts of this route is that no Spanish ship discovered Hawaii, so intent was the Spanish in maintaining the most practicable course.

However, with the Russians increasingly exploring the more northerly portions of the West Coast, the voyages of Cook, Vancouver, La Perouse, and others through these waters, the establishment of the Alta California missions, and a host of other factors, by the beginning of the 19th Century, fog shrouding California Coast was ready to lift. From about 1800 onward, English, French, Spanish and Russian charts began to provide increasing detail along the California Coastline, just as the Americans were pressing westward by land. With Mexico's independence from Spain, the new possibilities for colonial expansion and/or trade alliance along the west coast became even more compelling. Until the end of the war with Mexico firmly fixed Alta California as part of the US, control of the coastlines was still in flux. And yet with all this intrigue, where were the maps?

From 1850 onward, the mapping of the West Coast became an increasingly American obligation, yet the lack of an active coastal trade in California meant that there was still relatively little commercial impetus for working sea charts. With the exception of Ringgold's mapping of the area around San Francisco Bay, the development of the nautical charting of the California Coastline was left to the US Coast Survey, which was then attempting to survey the east coast, west coast, and Gulf Coast of North America. The few active commercial chart makers in America, most notably Blunt and later Eldridge, apparently found little incentive to produce charts of California.

As such, the charts produced by the English, French, and Spanish mapmakers from the first half of the 19th Century were still being updated with new information and distributed to seamen working the California Coastline. At the time of the Gold Rush, the best commercial sea chart available for ships was Imray's 1849 *Chart of the Coast of California from San Blas to San Francisco Drawn Chiefly from the Spanish Surveys, the Charts of Vancouver &c. the Whole Much Improved by Recent Observations Made by English and French Naval Officers*. The closest effort by an American map maker to a competing chart was



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Blunt's 1848 *West coast of North America from the Gulf of Dulce to San Francisco*, but the name of this map is misleading, as the treatment of the Alta California Coastline is little more than an inset map on a larger map of the Mexican mainland.

It is indeed curious that despite the passage of an additional 20 years, there was not a significant attempt to commercially update Imray's map until the present chart, issued in 1870, by Imray & Son. With the 1870 chart, the British firm Imray & Son utilizes a competent synthesis of the commercially available information published by the US Coast Survey to create a useful general chart of the coastline from Cabo San Lucas to San Francisco Bay, with an inset harbor plan. Not surprisingly, Los Angeles (San Pedro) is still completely ignored, demonstrating just how little importance as being attached to the region as late as 1870.

Imray's chart would be updated for the next 20 years and remain the standard commercial map for the region until nearly the 20th Century. Curiously, this 1870 edition of Imray's chart does not appear frequently in the antiquarian market, and it is more normally the 1879 and later editions that appear. As such, Imray's chart is one of only a few collectible late-19th-century sea charts of the California coastline available to collectors and an essential part of any such collection.

Detailed Condition:

Blue-backed sea chart. Some repaired tears and wear to edges. Sea tracks traced in pencil and purple pen, as illustrated. Ink stamp of "Imray & Son London 1872".