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Carte Reduite du Golphe du Mexique et des Isles de l'Amerique. . .

Stock#: 90846
Map Maker: Depot de la Marine
Date: 1773 circa
Place: Paris
Color: Hand Colored
Condition: VG+
Size: 32 x 21 inches
Price: \$ 1,700.00



Description:

The Florida Archipelago in its Grandest Form - An Exceptional Chart of Florida, the Gulf Coast and Caribbean

Rare state of Bellin's important sea chart of the Gulf Coast and the Caribbean, which is substantially revised and updated from [the first edition of 1749](#).

The chart includes a sliver of the Pacific, with the Yucatan Peninsula and the large islands of Cuba and Saint Domingue at the center. The northern-most part of South America looms to the south, with the small dots of the Leeward Islands in the east.

The updates throughout the map are significant, from the changes in the interior of Texas, to the better understanding of the course of the rivers and contours of the coastline throughout the entirety of the Gulf Coast. This is particularly evident near New Orleans.

Throughout this chart are notes as to the whereabouts of colonial fortifications, an indication of how hotly contested this area was by European imperial powers. There is also an unfinished color code to indicate the status of each island with regard to its imperial master: blue for France, yellow for Britain, orange for the Danes, red for Spain, and green for the Dutch. The stakes were high in claiming territorial possessions. For example, Saint Domingue was the most lucrative colony in the world at this time, making France great wealth via enslaved labor working on sugar plantations.

This edition includes mountains in the interior of many landmasses. This gives the viewer an idea of the terrain, even if the purpose of the chart was primarily to share nautical information.



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The additions and alterations are also evident throughout Central America and the Caribbean. For example, the outlines of the Yucatan Peninsula and *Isle de la Trinite* have been reworked. The Leeward Islands are substantially more detailed.

Perhaps the most significant change, and the one which would continue to evolve on maps and charts over the next several decades, is the vastly different treatment of southern Florida. In this edition, Bellin has broken up the Peninsula into a vast archipelago of islands, beginning in the central part of Florida's east coast. Such a depiction is distinctive and reveals how little European navigators still knew of Florida's shores south of St. Augustine.

States of the chart

This map is apparently an early state of this second edition of the map, with the date of "*Annee 17.*" While some observers have noted that "*Annee 17*" could mean the seventeenth year of the French Republic, it is more likely this state was prepared with the latter part of the date unfinished, so as to be completed when the chart was completed and approved by the officers of the *Dépôt des cartes et plans de la Marine*.

Other evidence on the map supports this pre-revolutionary interpretation, namely the words "*Vaisseau du Roy*" which still appear in the title. Bellin is also referenced as "*Censeur Royale*;" both phrases strongly suggest that the French Revolution had not yet commenced.

The *Ministre de la Marine*, at who's behest the chart was made, is listed as the *Duc de Praslin*. César Gabriel de Choiseul received that title in 1763. He served as Secretary of the Navy from 1766 to 1770, when he retreated from public life after falling from political favor.

The inclusion of his name suggests that the chart was initially prepared in the late 1760s, perhaps in 1769. The date was left unfinished, most likely because it was unclear whether the chart would be published in 1769 or 1770. It remained unfinished, however, and then was added to in the early 1770s; the last date mentioned on the chart itself is 1773, when a new rock was discovered just south of the cartouche. This state was printed unfinished, hence the partial year.

However, the officers of the *Dépôt* quickly remedied their mistake. [They re-engraved the title cartouche to mention the 1749 first edition and removed Praslin's name.](#)

Detailed Condition: