



Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

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Poly-Olbion or a chorographically description of tracts, rivers, mountaines, forests, and other parts of this renowned Isle of Great Britaine

Stock#: 92111
Map Maker: Drayton
Date: 1613 and 1622
Place: London
Color: Uncolored
Condition: VG+
Size: 7.5 x 11 inches
Price: \$ 14,500.00



Description:

"[T]he first part of this Poeme, [...] went not so fast away in the Sale, as some of their beastly and abominable Trash, (a shame both to our Language and Nation)..."

Poly-Olbion, written by Michael Drayton between 1612 and 1622, is composed of thirty songs written in alexandrine couplets, totaling almost 15,000 lines of verse. The songs describe between one and three counties each, offering details about their topography, traditions, and histories. The book includes maps of each county, drawn by William Hole, featuring anthropomorphic depictions of places.

Drayton intended to write a further part of the book to cover Scotland, but no known part of this work has survived.

Additionally, the first book was accompanied by historical and philological summaries written by John Selden.

Despite the length and conflicting goals of the book, the *Poly-Olbion* remains an important source for the period. Drayton attempted to merge accurate scientific information about Britain (mostly contained in Selden's commentary) with his desire to provide memorial anchors to ancient Celtic Britons, Druids, Bards, and King Arthur.

Drayton's Screeed

At the beginning of the 1622 second part, Drayton lays forth an exceptional self-pitying diatribe against his critics and publishers, which an early cataloger of this copy called "probably more extraordinary than any



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other in the English language."

To any that will read it.

When I firft vndertooke this Poeme, or as fome very skilfull in this kind, have pleased to tearme it, this Herculean labour. I was by fome vertuous friends perfwaded, that I fhould receiue much comfort and incou- ragement therein; and for thefe Reafons: Firft, that it was a new, cleere way, neuer before gone by any; then, that it contained all the Delicacies, Delights, and Rarities of this renowned Ifle, interwouen with the Hiftories of the Britanes, Saxons, Normans, and the later Englifh: And further that there is fcarcelly any of the Nobilitie, or Gentry of this land, but that he is fome way or other, by his Blood interreffed therein. But it hath fallen out other. wife, for inftead of that comfort, which my noble friends (from the freedome of their Spirits) propofed as my due, I haue met with barbarous Ignorance, and bafe De- traction; fuch a cloud hath the Deuill drawne over the Worlds Iudgement, whofe opinion is in few yeares fallen fo farre below all Ballatry, that the Lethargy is incurable; nay fome of the Stationers, that had the Sel- ling of the first part of this Poeme, becaufe it went not fo faft away in the Sale, as fome of their beaftly and abo- minable Traff, (a fhame both to our Language and Na- tion) haue either defpightfully left out, or at leaft care leffely neglected the Epiftles to the Readers, and fo haue coufoned the Buyers with vnperfected Bookes; which thefe that haue vndertaken the fecond Part, haue beene forced to amend in the firft, for the fmall number that are yet remaining in their hands. And fome of our out-landifh, vnnaturall Englifh, (I know not how other-wife to exprefse them) fticke not to fay, that there is no- thing in this Ifland worthy ftudying for, and take a great pride to bee ignorant in any thing thereof; for thefe, fince they delight in their folly, I wifh it may be heredi- tary from them to their pofteritie, that their children may bee beg'd for Fooles to the fift Generation, vntill it may be beyond the memory of man to know that there was euer any other of their Families: neither can this de- terre mee from going on with Scotland, if Meanes and Time doe not hinder me, to performe as much as I haue promifed in my firft Song:

*Till to the fleepy Maine, to Thuly I haue gone, And feene the Frozen Ifles, the cold Deucalidon,
Amongst whofe Iron Rocks, grim Saturne yet remaines, Bound in thefe gloomy Canes with
Adamantine Chaines.*

*And as for thofe Cattell whereof I fpake before, Odi profanum vulgus arceo, of which I account them,
bee they neuer fo great, and fo I leaue them. To my friends, and the louers of my Labors, I wifh all
happineffe.*

Michael Drayton.



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It should be noted that although he was adamant that he would finish the Scottish part, he did not, in fact, do so.

Provenance

Extensive 19th-century auction sale description pasted onto the first blank:

4319 DRAYTON (Michael) POLY-OLBION, OR A CHOROGRAPHICAL DESCRIPTION OF TRACTS, RIVERS, MOUNTAINES, FORESTS, AND OTHER PARTS OF THIS RENOWNED ISLE OF GREAT BRITAIN, WITH INTERMIXTURE OF THE MOST REMARQUABLE STORIES, ANTI- QUITIES, WONDERS, RARITYES, PLEASURES, AND COMMODITIES OF THE SAME, DIGESTED IN A POEM BY MICHAEL DRAYTON, WITH A TABLE ADDED, FOR DIRECTION to those occurrences of Story and Antiquitie, whereunto the course of the volume easily leades not. London, printed by H. L., for Matthew Lowne, J. Browne, J. Helme, and J. Busbie, 1613.-THE SECOND PART, OR A CONTINUANCE OF POLY-OLBION FROM THE EIGHTEENTH SONG, CONTAINING ALL THE TRACTS, RIVERS, MOUNTAINES, AND FORRESTS, INTERMIXT WITH THE MOST REMARKABLE STORIES, ANTIQUITIES, WONDERS, RARITIES, PLEASURES, AND COMMODITIES OF THE EAST AND NORTHERNE PARTS OF THIS ISLE, LYING BETWIXT THE TWO FAMOUS RIVERS OF THAMES AND TWEED. London, printed by Augustine Mathews for John Marriott, John Grismand, and Thomas Dewe, 1622. FIRST EDITIONS OF BOTH PARTS, with the beautifully engraved frontispiece, rare leaf of explanation opposite, the fine engraved portrait of Prince Henry, and all the curiously engraved maps by WILLIAM HOLE, folio, a very fine copy in brown morocco extra, gilt edges, by RIVIERE, [price obliterated]

This is a fine copy of this valuable and important volume, BOTH PARTS BEING IN THE FIRST STATE, AND IN THIS CONDITION EXCEEDINGLY RARE. The copies generally offered for sale contain the second issue of the first part, dated 1622, and the fine library of Mr. Locker Lampton only contains a copy of the second edition. The above copy, besides containing all the maps, engraved title, and explanation, the two printed titles, and portrait of Prince Henry, has also the "Table," which is often wanting.

The address to the reader affixed to the second part is probably more extraordinary than any other in the English language. To those who had spoken ill of his book he says: "I wish their folly may be hereditary from them to their posteritie, that their children may be beg'd for fooles to the fifth generation, until it may be beyond the memory of man to know that there was any other of their families.



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The bibliography of this book seems to have been somewhat confounded by its popularity in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, which resulted in much careful restoration, rebinding, and "perfecting" of copies by the addition of leaves and plates that might not have otherwise belonged. This seems to have resulted in the creation of extra-complete copies and rendered other copies "lacking" elements which they were published without. This example, very expertly restored (probably with some leaves supplied), and luxuriously bound by Riviere & Son, is a deluxe book of the fin-de-siècle collecting era.

Detailed Condition:

Folio (7½ x 11 inches). Full brown crushed levant morocco by Riviere & Son (signed in the lower border of the inside front cover), spine in six compartments separated by raised bands, lettered in gilt in the second: "POLY-OLBION" and in the third "M. DRAYTON - 1613". (Front hinge barely starting at the bottom.) Woodcut and letterpress leaf "Upon the Frontispiece" (very expertly repaired and possibly supplied), engraved frontispieces by William Hole, title, dedication to Prince Henry of Wales, engraved portrait of the Prince by Hole, [A4], [□4], 303 pages. 18 engraved maps. Letterpress title page, [A4, including letterpress dedication to Charles, Prince of Wales, and letterpress address to the readers], 168 pages. 12 engraved maps. Complete.