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Nova Francia alio nomine dicta Terranova, anno 1504, a Britonibus primum detecta circa sinum S. Laurentij, & anno 1524, à Ioanne Verazzano Florentino, qui ex portu Diepensi 17. Martij, solvens nomine Francisci Regis Galliarum ibidem appulit ad gradum 34. circiter latitudinis sive altitudinis Polus, plenius recognita usque ad promontorium dictum Cabo de Breton

Stock#: 70321
Map Maker: Plancius / Claesz
Date: 1594 circa
Place: Amsterdam
Color: Hand Colored
Condition: VG+
Size: 21.5 x 15 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

The First Printed Map of the Arctic Voyages of Martin Frobisher and John Davis In Search of the Northwest Passage - The First Printed Map to Show Compass Deviation

The Plancius-Claesz map of the North Atlantic and Maritime Canada is a map of landmark importance. Drawn by Petrus Plancius, engraved by Joannes van Doetecum the Elder, and published by Cornelis Claesz in Amsterdam in 1594, the map was the first to include the findings of the Arctic expeditions of John Davis and Martin Frobisher, as well as the first to translate the manuscripts of Bartolomeu Lasso in print. It is also the first printed map to show compass deviation.

Known to survive in only a few uncolored examples, the present example is exceptional, offered in scintillating original hand-color, completely unrestored and without embellishment.

The map stretches from North Africa, Spain, and the British Isles west to the Grand Banks of Newfoundland and the North American mainland. Greenland and Iceland are in the north. Many islands dot the waters, including mythical features like Frisland, Hy Brasil, Buss Island, and St. Brendan's Island. The actual island of Bermuda is tucked into the southwest corner. Both the coastal toponyms and those within the Saint Lawrence River have been substantially updated compared with those on previous maps, as has the configuration of Newfoundland.



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An inset shows the Davis Strait in detail, and this is the first printed map to show the discoveries of John Davis in 1585. The strait is also on the main map, in a slightly different configuration. This is to allow for differing understandings of the geography as described by Davis. Joining the inset in the top left corner is a triple scale bar. Both are set in attractive strapwork frames. A similar frame at the lower center recounts initial European encounters with New France.

The most striking inset is the finely-engraved vignette of whaling near the bottom border. Harpooners in small boats, led by a naked spiritual or deified guide, spear struggling whales in choppy seas. Their ships sit at anchor in the distance, while rendered oil is being rolled away in barrels onshore. Fishing off Newfoundland was common from at least the late fifteenth century. Whaling in the area was also a lucrative enterprise, especially in the hunt for the oil-rich Northern Atlantic Right Whale. It is based on an engraving by Hans Bol and Phillip Galle of 1582.

The final decorations of note on the map are the large ships and whales that are set into the Atlantic. Rhumb lines criss-cross the seas, suggesting this map, while not a seagoing chart, was intended for a maritime audience of merchants, captains, and their fellows.

There are two large compass roses included, one in the northeast and one in the center of the map. Near the center compass is a latitude bar set at a slant. This is an attempt to indicate magnetic variation, which affected compasses and, therefore, navigation. Magnetic variation is the difference in degrees between true north and magnetic north. Burden (85) explains that this is the "first attempt to show the deviation of the compass on a printed map."

As seen in the toponyms on the Canadian coast, the map is the first to translate the [manuscripts of Bartolomeu Lasso](#) to print. Cortesão and Teixeira da Mota (*PMC* III, pages 91-92) concluded that Plancius made specific errors when copying the toponyms from Lasso's manuscript maps, which help to definitively establish the lineage of this map. Lasso was an important Portuguese cartographer who also had a strong influence on Dutch cartography; in 1592 the States-General authorized Cornelis Claesz to copy Lasso's maps. One detail from Lasso that makes this map special is that this is the first printed map to show Newfoundland as one island, not two or more.

First map to illustrate English discoveries in the Arctic



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According to Schilder (*MCN VII*, pages 121-129), this was the first printed map to relate the Arctic discoveries of Martin Frobisher and John Davis, and as such was the earliest map to include English efforts to find a northern passage to China. Frobisher (ca. 1535-1594) was an English privateer and sometime pirate who led three voyages north (1576, 1577, and 1578). He sailed to the south of Greenland, into the Hudson Straits and up Frobisher Bay on Baffin Island. Davis (ca. 1550-1605), half-brother of Sir Walter Raleigh, led three voyages to the far north (1585, 1586, 1587), specifically to Greenland, Baffin Bay, and Labrador. Plancius would have learned of these findings from the Molyneux globe of 1592, the first terrestrial globe made in England.

A toponym of especial interest is *Norombega Pars* south of *Nova Francia*. This name first appeared as *Oranbega* on Giovanni da Verrazzano's 1529 map. The place would gain a mythic reputation based on the stories of David Ingram, a marooned English sailor. He described silver thrones and vast cities, but his story was doubted by both later travel writers such as Richard Hakluyt and Samuel Purchas.

Rarity

This is an example of the first state (of three, per Schilder's *MCN VII*), with the pasted-on title and text. Only seven examples of the first state are recorded, with none in the United States: Amsterdam Universiteitsbibliotheek; The American Museum in Bath; Badische Landesbibliothek, Karlsruhe; British Library; Conservatoire des Arts et Métiers, Paris; Bibliothèque de la Sorbonne; Germanisches Nationalmuseum.

The last example to appear at auction was a black and white example of a later state, sold in 1948 as part of the Harmsworth Trust Library Auctions. They listed it as, "A very rare and important map... There is no copy in America... The map is also of interest in bearing an 'oblique meridian', showing the magnetic variation off the N.E. Coast of America."

The mythical islands of the North Atlantic

The North Atlantic is especially prone to mythical or elusive islands, a result of the rich seafaring cultures that border it and the intensity of the expansion and commercial trade of European empires in the Atlantic World.

This map features several of these islands. The most noticeable is Frisland, near Iceland, whose



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fascinating story and association with the Zeno Map is told below. Nearby to Frisland is *Bus Ins.*, or Buss Island. This island originates in reports about Martin Frobisher's third voyage, specifically George Best's *A True Discourse of the Late Voyages of Discoverie of a Passage to Cathaya* (1578). One of Frobisher's ships, the *Emmanuel*, which was a busse, hence the island's name, supposedly sailed along the island on its homeward journey in 1578. Hakluyt included a description of the island in his *Principal Navigations* (1598). It was variably sighted and sought by seventeenth-century navigators and John Seller charted it in his *English Pilot* (1671). The Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) sent an expedition in search of it in 1675, but they found nothing. By the eighteenth-century, cartographers supposed the island was fabulous or sunken, demoting it to a navigational hazard. A further voyage in 1791 finally proved its non-existence.

Due south of Buss Island is another small dot, this one labeled *Brazyl*. Hy Brasil is an enduring Atlantic chimera emerging from Celtic folklore. It ranges on maps from just off the west coast of Ireland to the area around the Azores. The island was initially described as a rich paradise not unlike Atlantis; it emerged from the depths for a short period and then would disappear. It started to appear on portolan charts in the fourteenth century and continued to be a stalwart of maps and charts into the nineteenth century. The island was the subject of a fanciful pamphlet by Richard Head in 1675. Despite no accurate reports of its whereabouts, the island appeared on Admiralty charts and other reputable maps for centuries, usually in the latitude of 51°N and at a longitude of 17°W.

A final island of note is that of St. Brendan, here the center of a set of rhumb lines just south of Newfoundland. Like Hy Brasil, this island is also connected to Irish lore. St. Brendan, hearing of a promised land from St. Barrind, decided to take a group of monks to find the paradise in the sixth century. After 43 days the monks landed on a deserted island. This is only the first of a series of islands which they encounter, before facing a frozen sea. They have more adventures and eventually return home. The island itself initially appeared near the Canary Islands, but by 1570 Abraham Ortelius placed it near Newfoundland, where it stayed until slowly disappearing from maps in the seventeenth century.

Detailed Condition:

Exceptional sixteenth-century hand-coloring. Centerfold toned. Trimmed to the platemark at the left edge.