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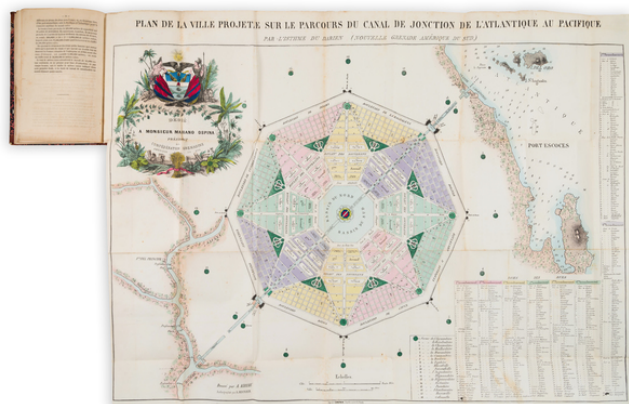
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Canal Interocéanique par L'Isthme du Darien, Nouvelle-Grenade (Amérique du Sud).

Stock#: 101985
Map Maker: Airiau
Date: 1860
Place: Paris
Color: Hand Colored
Condition: VG+
Size: 6 x 9.25 inches (binding size)
Price: SOLD



Description:

A Panama Canal Fantasy

This book and accompanying maps and plans, by Athanase Airiau and published in Paris in 1860, represent a pivotal moment in the conceptualization of an interoceanic canal through the Isthmus of Darien, now known as the Isthmus of Panama. The work comprises five chapters and six detailed maps and plans, aiming to support the feasibility and benefits of constructing an interoceanic canal to shorten sea journeys between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans more than 50 years before the eventual completion of the Panama Canal in 1914. The maps are noteworthy for their somewhat fantastical, fractal-like urban geography, bringing to mind similar geometrically complex colonial plans from previous centuries, such as [Sir Robert Montgomery's 1717 plan for the Margravate of Azilia](#).

Airiau aimed his proposal at the authorities of the Granadine Confederation, present-day Colombia. His vision was centered around the canalization and colonization of the Isthmus of Panama. Airiau's ambitious plan included founding 150 farms and a city to be populated by European settlers, who would engage in agricultural activities as well as contribute to the construction and maintenance of the proposed canal. The project envisioned by Airiau was not merely an infrastructural endeavor but also a utopian plan for colonization, featuring pre-defined sections for diverse crops such as vanilla, nopal, indigo, tobacco, cereals, cocoa, cotton, vineyards, sugar, sorghum, fruits, and vegetables, along with various types of livestock.

Many of the maps here are dedicated to notable political figures of the time, including Pedro Alcántara Herrán and Mariano Ospina Pérez.

Airiau published this work during a period of significant interest in and debate over the potential



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construction of a canal that would connect the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans and thereby revolutionize global trade routes and maritime navigation. The text underscores the urgency of establishing such a canal, as recognized by the European community, reflecting the geopolitical and economic ambitions of the time.

Airiau's advocacy for the Darien route over others is grounded in a comprehensive analysis of the region's geography, climate, and natural resources, positing it as the most favorable location for the canal's construction and for the establishment of a European colony. The narrative elaborates on the envisioned benefits of this dual project, which includes the creation of a maritime and commercial city, envisaging the canal not only as a feat of engineering but also as a catalyst for agricultural and industrial colonization.

Airiau's city plans are certainly engaging and include many noteworthy elements beyond their unusual shape. The Industrial City has quays and neighborhoods split between France, Russia, Great Britain, Austria, Spain, the Netherlands, Prussia, and the United States. The Agricultural City has roads the zig and zag without any particular purpose beyond top-down aesthetics, with some roads changing course in the middle of open fields where a straight line would have sufficed. Had they ever been completed the cities would have been something to behold, post-Hausmann grand European urban architecture carved out of the jungles of Central America.

Despite the innovative nature of Airiau's proposal, it did not come to fruition, attributed to its utopian character. Nonetheless, this historical episode illustrates the early and ambitious endeavors to improve global maritime routes and the development of the Panama region long before the successful completion of the Panama Canal in the 20th century.

Maps and Views

1. Carte Géographique de la République de la Nouvelle Grenade (Amérique du Sud) pour servir à la création d'Écoles Industrielles d'Agriculture, d'Arts et Métiers dans les Huit États de la Confédération.
2. Carte Planimétrique Indiquant l'abréviation des Parours Maritimes par les coupures des Isthmes du Darien et de Suez.
3. Carte Géographique pour servir à l'étude du canal interocéanique par l'isthme du Darién (Nouvelle-Grenade, Amérique du Sud).
4. Plan Geograpque a vol d'oiseau de la ville, des fermes et du canal interoceanique par l'Isthme du Darien (Nouvelle Grenade Amérique du Sud)
5. Plan de la ville projete sur la parcours du canal de jonction de l'Atlantique au Pacifique par l'Isthme du Darien (Nouvelle Grenade Amérique du Sud)
6. Plan-Portet. Ferme Coloniale et Stratégique de Canalisation Agricole, Industrielle, Commerciale et



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Maritime Propre à Recevoir 1,500 colons, sur le parcours du canal du Darien. (Nouvle Grenade, Amérique du Sud.)

Chapters

1. La Nouvelle Grenade.
2. Considérations générales sur l'opportunité de l'établissement d'un canal interocéanique.
3. Projet d'un canal interocéanique par l'Isthme du Darien.
4. Calcul du nombre probable de mètres cubes dans la tranchée du canal.
5. Exposition sommaire des moyens de réalisation pratique de l'entreprise projetée, principalement en ce qui regarde la colonisation du Darien.

Detailed Condition:

Octavo. Contemporary half-calf over speckled paper boards. Six lithographed folding maps, views, and plans all in original hand-color. Excellent copy.