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Submarine Telegraph Map of the World Shewing Existing Telegraph Cables Decr. 1876.

Stock#: 102096
Map Maker: Maclure & Macdonald
Lithographers
Date: 1876 circa
Place: London
Color: Color
Condition: Good
Size: 34 x 23 inches
Price: \$ 2,800.00



Description:

Transatlantic Cable Rarity

Striking promotional broadside map of the World, illustrating the existing telegraph cables as of December 1876, promoting the services of William Abbott, Sworn Broker, 10 Tokenhouse Yard, London.

The map is surmounted by a provocative ethnographic vignette at the top center, and a marvelous juxtaposed pair of nautical scenes on either side, one showing native war canoes in the foreground and steamships in the distance anchored in a tropical harbor at right and a classical European harbor scene at the left, with modern coastal buildings below an ancient fortified castle on hilltop.

The elaborate map details the world's network of telegraphs, with transoceanic cables in red and land based cables in black, with the 6 major Trans-Atlantic cables shown by date of completion and a projected Trans-Pacific cable via Hawaii shown, along with other shorter oceanic cables in planning.

The bottom of the map is embellished with an allegorical depiction of a globe, centered on Africa and the surrounding oceans, adorned with classical and mythical elements. Britannia, emblematic of British imperial power and maritime dominance, sits atop the globe. She is depicted in traditional classical attire, complete with a helmet and trident, symbolizing naval superiority and protection. The figure is seated next to a regal lion, an enduring symbol of British courage and strength. Surrounding the globe, two menacing sea monsters emerge from the ocean depths, embodying the unknown dangers of sea travel and the mythical creatures that were once thought to inhabit the world's uncharted waters. Below the sea is an image of a telegraph cable on the bottom of the sea.

The map includes a detailed table of shippers, with the stations serviced by each, distances, and



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transmission times associated with various telegraph companies from the late 19th to early 20th centuries. The table lists different stations across the globe, along with the distances, and the time it took for a message to be transmitted to these stations. The companies listed in the table are:

- Anglo-American Telegraph Company
- The Brazilian Submarine Telegraph Company
- Eastern Telegraph Company
- Eastern Extension Telegraph Company
- Great Northern Telegraph Company
- West India and Panama Telegraph Company
- Western and Brazilian Telegraph Company

Each company's entries include various global destinations, reflecting the international reach and strategic importance of telegraphy in global communications, commerce, and politics during this era.

Transatlantic Cable History

The transatlantic telegraph cable represents a monumental chapter in the history of communication, linking continents and heralding the dawn of global interconnectedness. This ambitious endeavor transcended vast oceanic expanse, laying the groundwork for instantaneous communication and significantly impacting social, economic, and political landscapes worldwide. The concept of a transatlantic telegraph was proposed as early as the 1840s, but it was not until the 1850s that serious efforts materialized. The project was largely propelled by Cyrus West Field, an American businessman and the driving force behind the Atlantic Telegraph Company. Field, alongside British engineer Charles Bright and other notable figures, championed the ambitious project against considerable odds.

The first attempt to lay a cable across the Atlantic occurred in 1857, employing the HMS Agamemnon and the USS Niagara, but this initial endeavor failed due to technical difficulties. Undeterred, a second attempt followed in 1858, using the same ships. This venture marked a historical achievement; on August 5, 1858, the first successful transatlantic telegraph connection was established between Valentia Island, Ireland, and Heart's Content, Newfoundland. However, the triumph was short-lived as the cable ceased functioning after three weeks, due to inadequate insulation and electrical faults.

The failure did not quell the determination to achieve a reliable transatlantic link. Following several years of technological improvements and financial recuperation, a more robust attempt was launched in 1865. The Great Eastern, a massive ship initially designed for passenger and cargo transport, was repurposed to lay the cable. Despite the ship's capabilities, the 1865 expedition failed when the cable snapped and was lost in the Atlantic.



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Persistence paid off in 1866 when the Great Eastern embarked on another mission, successfully laying a fully operational cable from July 27 to July 28, 1866. This success marked the beginning of reliable transatlantic communication, drastically reducing the time it took for messages to travel between Europe and North America from weeks to minutes.

The following summarizes the early cables:

1865: The Great Eastern, the largest ship afloat at the time, under the direction of the Telegraph Construction & Maintenance Company. This attempt ultimately failed when the cable was lost after it snapped deep in the Atlantic. Despite this setback, the expedition provided valuable lessons.

1866: The Great Eastern set sail again and successfully laid a cable from July 13 to July 27, 1866, connecting Valentia Island to Heart's Content, Newfoundland. This operation marked the first durable and reliable transatlantic telegraph link. Subsequently, the Great Eastern retrieved and completed the 1865 broken cable, establishing a second operational line by September 1866.

1869: A new cable was completed, adding to the network and increasing the resilience and capacity of transatlantic communications. This effort was primarily driven by the Anglo-American Telegraph Company.

1873: Another cable was successfully laid by the Anglo-American Telegraph Company, further enhancing the transatlantic communication infrastructure.

1874: Two additional cables were completed, further contributing to the burgeoning network of undersea communication lines.

Rarity

The map is extremely rare.

We note an example in the New York Public Library and a copy in the "Cable and Wireless Archive" (Kew, British Archives).

Detailed Condition:

Color lithograph on 19th century wove paper. History of old tape repair on verso, supported where necessary with thin archival tissue. Minor loss to top center, reinstated with period paper. Old repaired tear at lower right. Minor loss and soiling along several folds.