



Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

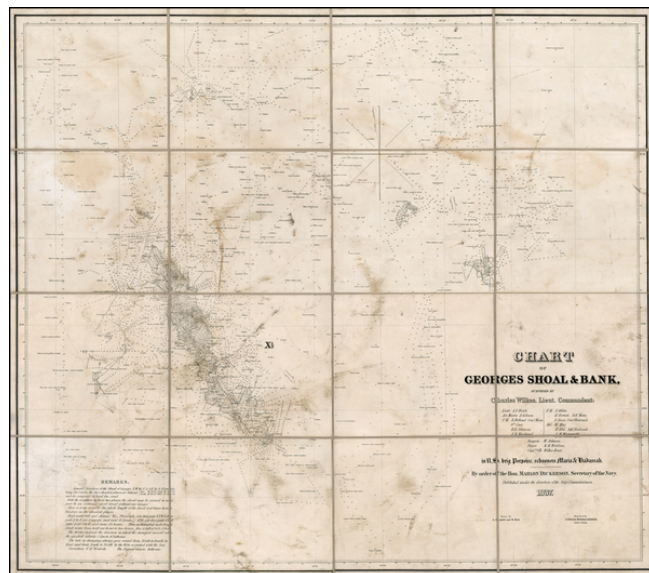
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Chart of George's Shoal & Bank, Surveyed By Charles Wilkes, Lieut Commandant . . . in the U.S. brig Porpois, schoolers Maria & Hadassah. By order of the Hon. Mahlon Dickerson, Secretary of the Navy. . . 1837

Stock#: 26159
Map Maker: Wilkes / Stiles, Sherman & Smith
Date: 1837
Place: New York
Color: Uncolored
Condition: VG
Size: 44 x 40 inches
Price: \$ 750.00



Description:

Rare chart of Charles Wilkes' final command prior to embarking upon his famous Expedition in 1838.

The first recorded contact with George's Shoal was by Giovanni da Verrazzano, a Florentine navigator, who sailed in 1524 under the flag of France in an attempt to find a mid-latitude passage to the Orient. On the homeward passage, he encountered Georges Bank and named it Armelline Shoals (after a villainous papal tax collector). Variouslly called the Great Rise, and the Great Bank of Malabarre, early English colonists re-named Armelline Shoals after St. George, the patron saint of England.

Over time, Georges Bank became an important fishery. By 1832, virtually every square foot of Georges Bank had been sounded and charted. Charles Wilkes' "Chart of Georges Shoals and Bank," with over 1,000 soundings, and multitude of bottom composition recordings, was so thorough (in the area surveyed) that not until 1930 was a new survey undertaken.

The present map is one of only two maps upon which Wilkes name appears prior to his departure on his famous expedition in 1838 (along with a 4 sheet charting of Narrangansett Bay, published in 1832) and the only map where Wilkes is identified as the leader of the expedition.

Lt. Charles Wilkes led the first U.S. Navy expedition to explore the Pacific Ocean in 1838. As commander



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of the first United States Exploring Expedition, Wilkes conducted one of the most important early scientific expeditions taken on by an American crew.

Wilkes joined the Navy as a mid-shipman in 1818 and became a Lieutenant in 1826. In 1833, he headed the Navy's Department of Charts and Instruments, out of which developed the Naval Observatory and Hydrographic Office and undertook a survey of Narrangansett Bay.

From an early point in time, Wilkes sought a command to explore and survey routes in the Pacific. In 1838, he took command of a small fleet of six vessels carrying up-to-date scientific instruments and experts in the fields of botany, philology (the comparative science of language), horticulture, conchology (the scientific study of shells), and mineralogy. The Wilkes Expedition surveyed Antarctica, visited Hawaii, and encountered the wild entrance to the Columbia River, in Wilkes' words, "one of the most fearful sights that can possibly meet the eye of the sailor." Unable to cross the bar, he decided to first chart Puget Sound, then return to the River of the West (Columbia).

After almost losing two ships, the Vincennes and the Porpoise, on the rocky Washington coast at Point Grenville, Wilkes' dropped anchor in (Port) Discovery Bay near the northeast tip of the Olympic Peninsula on May 2, 1841. Wilkes then commenced a detailed survey of Puget Sound, naming or re-naming dozens of landmarks, including Elliott Bay. Upon arrival in Puget Sound, Charles Wilkes visited his British counterparts at Fort Nisqually, then set his men to work surveying the Sound, and dispatched an expedition eastward to Fort Okanogan, Lapwai, and Walla Walla under the command of Lieutenant Robert Johnson. He also sent a party overland to California, which met with Captain John A. Sutter at his fortress on the American River.

Wilkes conducted overland explorations of the route south of Puget Sound. He crossed the portage to the Cowlitz River, rented a canoe, and paddled down the river, then up the Columbia to pay wher he visited the Hudson's Bay Chief Factor, Dr. John McLoughlin. He also visited Astoria and several Columbia River mission stations.

Detailed Condition:

Dissected and laid on linen. Minor to moderate soiling.