



# Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

7407 La Jolla Boulevard  
La Jolla, CA 92037

[www.raremaps.com](http://www.raremaps.com)

(858) 551-8500  
[blr@raremaps.com](mailto:blr@raremaps.com)

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## **The Strait of Magalhaens commonly called Magellan Surveyed by His Majesty's Ships Adventure and Beagle By Captain Philip King R.N. F.R.S. &c. and Captain Fitz Roy R.N. 1826-30, 1832-34.**

**Stock#:** 34568  
**Map Maker:** British Admiralty  
**Date:** 1837  
**Place:** London  
**Color:** Uncolored  
**Condition:** VG  
**Size:** 36.5 x 24 inches  
**Price:** SOLD



### **Description:**

Extremely rare example of one of the most historically important sea charts of the 19th Century, being the official chart showing the first detailed and scientific survey of the Strait of Magellan, undertaken in two separate expeditions by Captain Philip Parker King and Captain Robert FitzRoy between 1826 and 1834. An important artifact of 'Darwiniana', the chart is also the only original cartographic record of what was Charles Darwin's first overseas voyage.

The chart records the first and the most important efforts to scientifically map the Straits of Magellan, during which survey (on the first voyage), the Beagle Channel was discovered by Captain Robert FitzRoy.

### **The First Surveying Voyage to Tierra del Fuego**

Finding a safe passage around the southern tip of South America was one of the great imperatives of global shipping. Rounding Cape Horn itself was always fearsome, and while the Strait of Magellan held out the promise of a more sheltered route, its labyrinthine passages were not sufficiently understood. While the Strait itself had been surveyed in a cursory fashion by Captain James Cook, a far more exacting survey, employing the latest equipment was in order.

In 1826, the Royal Navy dispatched the *HMS Adventure* and its smaller companion, the *HMS Beagle*, to survey the coasts of southern Patagonia, and the Strait of Magellan in particular. The *Beagle* was commanded initially by Captain Pringle Stokes, while the overall command of the voyage fell under Captain Phillip Parker King, aboard the *Adventure*. The relatively nimble *Beagle* was charged with the far more treacherous aspects of the survey, essentially circumnavigating Tierra del Fuego. Highly advanced



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trigonometric surveys of the shorelines were conducted with theodolites, while copious soundings of the seafloor were taken, and navigational hazards noted. During this survey the Beagle Channel, the interoceanic passage which ran between Tierra del Fuego and Navarino Island, was discovered.

The voyage was not without mishap, however, as Captain Stokes committed suicide, only to be replaced by the energetic Lieutenant Robert FitzRoy. While only 23 years old, he proved to be a highly competent surveyor and leader. Towards the end of the voyage, a group of native Fuegians stole one of the *Beagle's* tenders. In response, FitzRoy took some Fuegians hostage, and while the situation was eventually diffused, it made for an unusually melodramatic surveying expedition.

Upon the *Beagle* and *Adventure's* return to England a chart was apparently published depicting the survey's findings. However, the only record we can find of the chart is in *The Nautical Magazine*, June 1832 (London, Fischer & Son, Jackson), where the following note appears at page 203, describing important charts published in 1832:

*The Strait Of Magalhaens, commonly called Magellan. Surveyed in His Majesty's Ships Adventure and Beagle. By Captain Phillip Parker King, R.N. F.R. S. 1826-1830. Price 6s. Size, Double Elephant. Admiralty. This is the first chart published of the South American coast, surveyed by Captain King. It contains the whole navigation of this extraordinary, and, we may add, dangerous Strait. Hitherto no chart has appeared, on which a ship could depend, nor a set of directions to consult; and thus have the dangers of this Strait remained as formidable as they were to the first navigators. Numerous channels and inlets have been discovered by Captain King, that are now distinctly defined, among which are the Otway and Skyring waters, places abounding in seals and sea elephants. To vessels employed in hunting these animals, the present chart will be most valuable, as well as the directions by which it is accompanied, and geographers will at length obtain a correct delineation of the southern parts of the South American continent, as well as the heights of the principal mountains. The southern limits of this chart extend to Lat. 55° 9' S.*

### **The Second Surveying Voyage to Tierra del Fuego, including Charles Darwin**

While the Admiralty was highly impressed with the surveys thus far, the project was far from complete. At FitzRoy's behest, the *Beagle* was dramatically retrofitted and kitted out with the most advanced scientific and navigational equipment. It also occurred to FitzRoy that while he and his men performed hydrographic surveys, someone should conduct a scientific appraisal of the land itself should be undertaken. Through an unlikely chain of inquiries they selected Charles Darwin, a brilliant but obscure amateur naturalist, who was otherwise on track to becoming a rural clergyman.



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The second surveying voyage of the *Beagle* departed England in December 1831. Over a two-year period FitzRoy and his crew painstakingly completed their surveying mandate, while Darwin combed the barren landscape "geologizing". Prefiguring the ingenious insights that would later make him famous, Darwin made highly important observations with respect to the geology, biology and anthropology of this mysterious land and its inhabitants. Once the surveying mandate was complete, the *Beagle* headed across the vast expanse of the Pacific, giving Darwin his first exposure to the unique flora and fauna of New Zealand and Australia. The expedition returned to England in October 1836.

The present chart, heavily updated from the apocryphal 1832 edition, was almost certainly published in the early months of 1837. It is nothing short of a masterpiece of scientific surveying, and one of the most technically impressive mapping achievements of the first half of the nineteenth-century. While the present chart is an extreme rarity, its influence was profound, as it became the basis for all subsequent charts of what was one of the world's most important shipping lanes.

Darwin published his intellectually brilliant and highly entertaining account of the voyage as his 'Journal & Remarks', the third volume of FitzRoy & Darwin's *Narrative of the surveying voyages of his Majesty's ships Adventure and Beagles between the years 1826 and 1836* (1839), which was subsequently popularized as the *Voyage of the Beagle*. His account became a best seller, and established his celebrity as a naturalist.

**Charles Darwin** (1809-1882) was history's greatest and most celebrated naturalist. He is most famous for his work *On the Origins of Species* (1859), in which he articulated the theory of evolution. While this revolutionary concept was highly controversial at the time, it has since acquired definitive scientific authority. While his participation on the Second Tierra del Fuego expedition of the *Beagle* set him on a course to fame, he developed his groundbreaking theories while studying the exotic wildlife on the Galapagos Islands. His engaging style of prose and his extraordinary subject matter was instrumental in popularizing the genre of scientific writing for a broader audience.

**Robert FitzRoy** (1805-1865) was a navigator, meteorologist and Colonial Governor of New Zealand. He began his command of the *Beagle* in 1828, at the commencement of its surveying work in Patagonia, Tierra del Fuego and the Straits of Magellan. The first survey concluded in 1830, with a second survey commenced in December 1831 and was completed in 1836. The voyage's interest was increased by the presence of Charles Darwin as naturalist, with whom FitzRoy collaborated in the *Narrative of the Surveying Voyages of HM Ships Adventure and Beagle*, FitzRoy being responsible for the first two volumes and Darwin for the third. In 1837, FitzRoy was awarded the Gold Medal of the Royal Geographical Society



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for his achievements.

**Philip Parker King** (1791-1856) was a noted early explorer of the Coasts of Australia and Patagonia. Between 1817 and 1822, King surveyed parts of the Australian coast not already examined by Matthew Flinders. In this work, he was at various times joined by John Septimus Roe and John Oxley. In his next major assignment, he was given command of the survey vessel *HMS Adventure*, and in company with *HMS Beagle*, spent five years surveying the complex coasts around the Strait of Magellan. The result was presented at a meeting of the Royal Geographical Society in 1831, which brought King great acclaim for his accomplishments in the scientific effort to chart the Strait.

The chart is exceptionally rare. No copies have been offered in reported auctions or dealer catalogs in more than 30 years. OCLC locates an 1865 edition of the chart and a reduced size copy of the chart which was bound into volume 1 of Robert FitzRoy and Charles Darwin's *Narrative of the surveying voyages of his Majesty's ships Adventure and Beagles between the years 1826 and 1836, Describing Their Examination of the Southern Shores of South America and the Beagle's Circumnavigation of the Globe*, published in London in 1839. *Mapoteca Columbiana* also notes a French edition of the chart, published in 1838.

Importantly, the present chart is the only original cartographic record of Darwin's first overseas voyage of discovery.

**Detailed Condition:**

Some minor soiling and abrasion, mostly at the left side of the chart.