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Chart of the West, South and East Coasts of Australia, extending from the Houtman Abrolhos Rocks to Moreton Bay and includes the Island of Tasmania Drawn Principally from the Surveys made by order of the British Government. . . . 1859

Stock#: 38222
Map Maker: Imray & Son
Date: 1859
Place: London
Color: Uncolored
Condition: VG
Size: 71 x 39 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

Rare large-format sea chart depicting the southern half of Australia, from the 'Gold Rush Era' of the 1850s, by the great chartmaker James Imray.

This magnificent chart represented the most accurate coastal mapping of the populated areas of Australia during the critical Gold Rush era, when Australia was suddenly transformed from an afterthought on the edge of the world to a thriving series of colonies with a prominent role in the British Empire.

The chart embraces all of the coasts of Australia from 26°S southwards and includes the entire coastlines of New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Tasmania, as well as much of Western Australia and the southern extremity of Queensland (which only became a separate colony the year that this chart was printed). It features what were then all of Australia's major centers: Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth. The depiction is exceedingly accurate, based on the latest Admiralty surveys, with innumerable bathymetric soundings, with the coastlines delineated according to trigonometric surveys. The main map is further adorned with 14 inset maps of key harbors and 12 coastal profile views. Interestingly, unlike many sea charts, this map features great detail with respect to the interior regions, including numerous towns, roads, jurisdictional boundaries and points of elevation (notably the mountains of the Great Dividing Range) and waterways (notably the Darling-Murray River system).

The chart appeared at a critical time in Australia's history, when a series of gold rushes, in Victoria and South Australia, literally altered the economy and demographics of Australia almost overnight. For instance in 1851, Australia had a population of around 440,000 but by 1861 this had increased to 1.5 million! In particular, the Victorian Gold Rush of 1851 to 1869 saw Melbourne transform from a sleepy agrarian town on Port Philip into a thriving metropolis and Australia's largest city.



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The present chart would have been highly important in its time, as it was the most accurate and detailed general chart featuring the ports leading to the gold regions made during the period. Australia saw a massive upsurge in trade and immigration and the increased shipping traffic would have ensured that such a chart would have been in high demand. Imray printed the first edition of this chart in 1853, with a subsequent editions issued in 1859 (the present example) and 1867. This way, he cleverly created a chart that specifically detailed only the populated and gold-bearing regions of Australia, in order to respond perfectly to the needs of the market.

Imray composed his chart from a wide array of Admiralty surveys. The overall outline of Australia appears to have been derived from updated versions of Phillip Parker King's *Charts of the Coast of Australia* (London, 1824-26). King completed the general hydrographic survey of Australia done by Matthew Flinders (1799-1803), from 1819 to 1822. However, Imray's chart updates Philips's template with new information supplied from both the Royal Navy and commercial shipping.

Many of the inset maps are based on Admirably charts by Commander John Lort Stokes. Stokes was the longtime master and later captain of the HMS Beagle, which famously transported Charles Darwin on his epic voyages of natural discovery. From 1840 to 1843, Stokes surveyed large sections of the coastlines of Southern Australia, in an effort to improve upon King's charts. He most notably surveyed the Bass Strait, which separated Tasmania from the Australian mainland, first published as the *Bass Strait Surveyed by Commander J.L. Stokes and The Officers of the H.M.S. Beagle 1843* (London, 1844). This groundbreaking survey is integrated into the present work. The insets 'Stormy Bay', 'Port Dalrymple', 'Portland Bay', 'Sketch of Port Fairy' and the critical chart of 'Port Philip' (the harbor of Melbourne) emanate from Stokes's Bass Strait surveys.

The inset, 'The Approaches to Adelaide', is based on Stokes's important mapping of the coast of South Australia, done not long after Adelaide was founded in 1836. Adelaide was then a major gateway to the goldfields and prime destination for new migrants. The inset 'King George Sound, located in western Australia, is another component of this endeavor.

Four of the inset maps are based on the work of John Septimus Roe, a Royal Navy hydrographer, who later became the Surveyor-General of Western Australia. The inset featuring 'Port Jackson', is based on Roe's 1822 survey of Sydney Harbor and is from a chart first published in 1824, while his charting of 'Botany Bay' and 'Port Stephens' (site of the Australian Agricultural Company settlement) also dates from this period. The inset of 'Cockburn Sound' details the waters near Perth, western Australia and is based on a chart first issued in 1831.



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The inset of 'Newcastle Harbour' (New South Wales), today the center of Australia's steel industry, was recently surveyed by Captain F.W. Sydney. Other insets on the chart include 'Moreton Bay' (Queensland) and 'Jervis Bay' (New South Wales).

An historically interesting location featured on the chart is 'Houtman's Abrolhos Rocks', on the far left, off of the coast of western Australia. In 1629, the Dutch East India Company ship *Batavia* ran aground, following which its supercargo launched a bizarre reign of terror upon the ship's survivors. This is considered to be amongst the most extraordinary incidents in the history of Australia.

James Imray (1803-1870) was the leading British maker of sea charts during the mid-19th Century. He is most famous for his 'blueback charts' featuring the latest information from the Royal Navy and merchant mariners. In 1836, Imray formed a partnership with the hydrographic publisher Robert Blanchford and in time they began to challenge the market dominance of the firm of Norie & Laurie. In 1846, Imray bought out Blanchford's share, becoming the sole proprietor. Imray was renowned for his marketing skills and his uncanny ability to gain access to the most up-to-date sources. He was the first hydrographer to print groundbreaking new surveys of many parts of Canada, India and Australia and was also able to quickly issue charts in response to current events, such as his works relating the Australian and California Gold Rushes. When James Imray died in 1870, his business was continued by his son, James Frederick Imray. In 1899 James Imray & Son merged with rival Norie & Wilson, before being purchased by the Laurie firm, which was henceforth named, Imray, Laurie, Norie & Wilson an establishment which continues in operation to the present day.

The present map is an important artifact relating the Australian gold rush era and is a highly impressive synthesis of the finest and most important 19th Century hydrographic surveys of the region. As such charts were heavily used aboard ship, their survival rate is very low. This chart is thus very rare, we are aware of only 1 example of the 1853 edition and a single example of the 1867 edition appearing on the market in the last 25 years. No examples of the present 1859 edition has been offered during the same period.

Detailed Condition:

Printed on 3 sheets and joined. A few minor spots and a puncture at the right margin but generally an exceptional example of this rare chart.