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Plano Geometrico del Puerto Capital de la Isla de Puerto Rico Levantado en 1794 Por D. Cosme De Churucca Capitan de Nacio de la Rl. Armada

Stock#: 39561
Map Maker: Churruca y Elorza
Date: 1794
Place: Madrid
Color: Uncolored
Condition: VG
Size: 24 x 18 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

Nice example of this important Spanish chart of the Harbor of San Juan, Puerto Rico, prepared under the direction of Cosme Damian de Churruca y Elorza.

The present example lacks the stamp of the Deposito Hidrographico and includes the number 31, and may have appeared in Vicente Tofiño de San Miguel's *Coleccion de cartas de America publicadas por la direction de trabajos hidrograficos*, of 1801.

Beginning in 1783, Spain commenced an intense effort to chart its coastal waters. Following the completion of the *Atlas Maritimo de España* (1783-1788), the project was expanded to include Spain's Colonial possessions. In 1788, Churruca was sent by the Spanish Navy on the first of several scientific expeditions to chart the waters of Spanish America. This was part of Spain's push to survey the Gulf of Mexico and the Antilles, in order to better preserve and retain its trading stranglehold on the Spanish Colonies in America and protect against threats from rival European powers, most notably Great Britain.

This highly important chart of San Juan is based upon a detailed study of the harbor conducted by the Spanish Navy's hydrographical engineers, under the command of Churruca. The chart includes general notes on the harbor, a key noting numerous major landmarks, an extensive note on the various shoals identified on the map, and a lengthy set of notes and sailing instructions for entering the harbor, along with a wealth of other information derived from Churruca's survey.

San Juan was one of Spain's most important fortified harbors in the New World. With the intense secrecy



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regarding all of its Colonial possessions in the New World, early Spanish material on Puerto Rico is quite rare. The island was not opened to foreign trade for another 10 years after the publication of this chart (1804) and direct trade with the United States was not permitted until 1814.

Churruca's chart was subsequently copied by the French Depot de la Marine in 1801 and was almost certainly the primary navigational chart for San Juan Harbor at the time it was opened to foreign trade. Curiously, the map was not reprinted in England until 1805 (Faden) and later by the British Hydrographical Office (1824). The original manuscript for the chart may be in the possession of the Geography & Division of the Library of Congress, which acquired many of the original maps from the Real Escuela de Navegación, Cadiz, Spain, although there does not seem to be a map with a matching title in the collection. Churruca's map would also have been bound into copies of the very rare *Atlas Maritimo Espanol* (Madrid 1789-1814). A 16 map portion of this atlas, identified as Vicente Tofiño de San Miguel's *Coleccion de cartas de America publicadas por la direction de trabajos hidrograficos* (Madrid, 1800), was sold in the Frank Streeter Sale (Christies 2007, Lot 501).

Cosme Damian de Churruca y Elorza (1761 - 1805) was a naval officer in the Spanish Armada and scientist. Following his heroic service at the Siege of Gibraltar, Churraca devoted himself to the advanced study of mathematics, navigation, geography, astronomy and mechanics. Churruca was actively engaged in the survey of the Antilles until the mid-1790s. The official account of his expeditions and surveys was published in 1795, along with a book he wrote on Magellan's circumnavigation. Following his service in the Spanish Colonies in America, Churruca returned home to Motrico, where he served briefly as mayor. Once war broke out again with the British, Churruca served as Captain of the 74-gun San Juan Nepomuceno. He died during the Battle of Trafalgar, reportedly from injuries suffered when he was struck by a cannon ball.

Detailed Condition: