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[Virgin Islands] Carta Esferica De Parte De Las Islas Virgenes Desde La Culebra a La Tortola . . . 1859

Stock#: 39608
Map Maker: Direccion Hidrografica de Madrid
Date: 1859
Place: Madrid
Color: Uncolored
Condition: VG+
Size: 35 x 24.5 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

Masterful Spanish Chart of the Virgin Islands

Rare, separately-issued Spanish sea chart of the Virgin Islands, published by the Spanish Hydrographical Department, or *Dirección de hidrografía*, in Madrid.

The chart is based on an Admiralty chart of 1856, with updates by the Spanish to 1859. It extends from Culebra and Culebrita in the west through St. Thomas, St. John, and Joost Van Dyke to western Tortola in the east.

The chart is thickly blanketed with soundings, suggesting the high volume of shipping that sails near the islands, as well as the tricky navigation of the passages between them. Lines show the easiest passage between landmasses, with obstructions like sandbars and shoals clearly marked. Letters indicate the quality of the bottom, ranging from sandy to rocky. The topography of the islands is also shown in detail, especially settlements and ridges.

The Virgin Islands in the early modern period

The group of islands that make up the Virgin Islands, to the east of Puerto Rico, were originally inhabited by the Arawak and then the Carib peoples. These populations were decimated after European contact; practically all perished from disease, enslavement, and extermination by the end of the sixteenth century.

Columbus landed on the islands in 1493, naming them after St. Ursula and the 11,000 virgins. Although the islands changed hands many times, most of the Virgin Islands were controlled by the Danish, British,



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or Spanish from the late-fifteenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries.

As an example, Tortola was settled in 1648 by Dutch buccaneers who were then displaced by English planters. They set up plantation agriculture worked by enslaved people of African origin and descent. The descendants of the enslaved make up the bulk of the population today.

St. Thomas, by contrast, was claimed by the Danes in 1666 and they declared the island a colony five years later. They introduced slavery to the island; enslaved Africans produced cane, indigo, sugar, and cotton. In 1684 the Danes claimed nearby St. John and began to colonize it in 1717. However, the Danes abandoned St. John after a slave uprising in 1733.

The British briefly occupied the Danish West Indies in the early nineteenth century, as part of the Napoleonic Wars, and the slave trade was abolished in 1803. The British returned from 1807 to 1815, when the Danes again won control. Slavery was abolished in 1848.

Detailed Condition: