[Ostia, the Harbor of Rome] Antiqua Species Urbium Portus Atque Ostiae ab Diversis Rom: Imp Conditarum Item Duro Ampliss Portuum Claudii Traianiq Descriptio Per Pyrrhum Ligorium Neapolitanum Facta Et Ab Michaele Tramezino Ex Tabulis Aeneis In Quas Eam Incidit Excusa . . . MD LIIII

Stock#:   41683sb
Map Maker: Tramezzino / Musi

Date: 1554
Place: Rome
Color: Uncolored
Condition: VG
Size: 27.5 x 16 inches

Price: SOLD
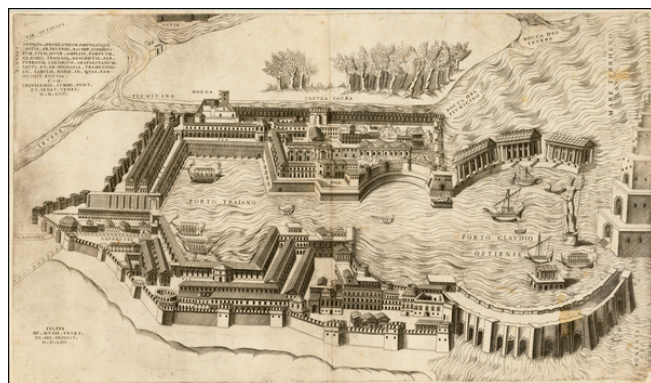
Description:

Rare large format plan of Ostia, the harbor of Rome, as it appeared during the Roman Empire.

This extraordinary variant includes the date of 1554 and the imprint of Tramezini. All other known examples with the Tramezini imprint are dated 1558.

The map extends from the mouths of the Tevere (Tiber) River and the Fiumicino River. The map shows both the original Harbor of Ostia, which dates to at least the 4th Century BC and which was created at the time of the Emperor Claudius (Porto Claudio Ostiense on the map), as well as the later harbor constructed under the directions of the Emporer Trajan (Porto Traiano on the map).

The harbor of Ostia was the primary harbor for the ancient city of Rome. Ostia may have been Rome's first colonia. According to the legend Ancus Marcius, the semi-legendary fourth king of Rome, first destroyed Ficana, an ancient town that was only 11 miles from Rome, which had a small harbor on the Tiber. Following the destruction of Ficana, he directed the establishment of a new colony 6 miles further west and closer to the sea coast. An inscription seems to confirm the establishment of the old castrum of Ostia in the 7th century BC. The oldest archaeological remains so far discovered date back to only the 4th century BC. In 68 BC, the town was sacked by pirates. During the sack, the port was set on fire, the consular war fleet was destroyed, and two prominent senators were kidnapped. This attack caused such panic in Rome that Pompeii the Great arranged for the tribune Aulus Gabinius to rise in the Roman Forum and propose a law, the Lex Gabinia, to allow Pompeii to raise an army and destroy the pirates. Within a year, the pirates had been defeated. The town was then re-built, and provided with protective walls by the Marcus Tullius Cicero.

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Ostia was expanded during the first century AD under the influence of Tiberius, who ordered the building of the town's first Forum. The town was also soon enriched by the construction of a new harbor on the northern mouths of the Tiber. The new harbor was excavated from the ground at the orders of the emperor Claudius. This harbor became silted up and needed to be supplemented later by a harbor built by Trajan finished in the year AD 113; it has a hexagonal form, in order to reduce the erosive forces of the waves. This took business away from Ostia itself (further down river) and began its commercial decline.

At its height, Ostia includes a famous lighthouse and the Ostia Synagogue, the earliest synagogue yet identified in Europe. In addition, Ostia had a large theatre, many public baths, numerous taverns and inns, and a firefighting service. Trajan also directed a widening of the naval areas, and ordered the building of another harbor, again pointing towards the north.

Ostia grew to 50,000 inhabitants in the 2nd century, reaching a peak of some 100,000 inhabitants in the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD.[6 Ostia became an episcopal see as early as the 3rd century, the cathedral (titulus) of Santa Aurea being located on the burial site of St. Monica, mother of Augustine; she died in an inn in the town. In time, naval activities became focused on Portus instead. A slow decline began in the late Roman era around the time of Constantine I, with the town ceasing to be an active port and instead becoming a popular country retreat for rich aristocrats from Rome itself. The decaying conditions of the city were mentioned by St. Augustine when he passed there in the late 4th century.

With the end of the Roman Empire, Ostia fell slowly into decay, and was finally abandoned in the 9th century due to the repeated invasions and sackings by Arab pirates, including the Battle of Ostia, a naval battle in 849 between Christian and Saracens; the remaining inhabitants moved to Gregoriopolis.

Detailed Condition:
Minor loss at lower left corner.

Drawer Ref: Italy 1   Stock#: 41683sb