



Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

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Map of the City of Benicia Founded By Mariano G. Vallejo, Thomas O. Larking & Robert Semple 1847 Surveyed & Drawn By Benjamin Barlow City & County Surveyor

Stock#: 47405
Map Maker: Britton & Rey
Date: 1850 circa
Place: San Francisco
Color: Uncolored
Condition: VG
Size: 33 x 22 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

One of California's Early State Capitals and the First California City to Be Incorporated Following Statehood

Fine early plan of the city on Benicia on the Carquinez Strait, published by Benjamin Barlow in San Francisco.

The map shows the town at about the time it was the Capital of the State of California.

This is one of two Barlow maps of Benicia, with a different map published in New York in 1851. The two maps are quite similar in the layout of the town, although this San Francisco published edition includes further land reclamation, creating south street on the waterfront, where there the island is shown.

History of Benicia

The Carquinez Strait was first visited by Europeans in the Spring of 1772, when Captain Pedro Fages and Father Juan Crespi arrived by foot at the southern end of the strait, as part of the first reconnaissance of San Francisco Bay. In 1839, the 13,000 acre Rancho Tolenas in the Suisun Valley was granted to Jose Francisco Armijo. Victor Castro-the son of Francisco Castro and son-in-law of Ygnacio Martinez-was granted Mare Island in 1841. The largest land grant of all, however, was made to Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo in 1844. Rancho Suscol (or Soscal), as it was known, encompassed some 84,000 acres-including all of the lands that presently comprise the cities of Vallejo and Benicia. The ranch took its name from a village of Patwin natives living along Suscol Creek, a tributary of the Napa River.



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As the Mexicans, Californians and English were all struggling to establish themselves in California, Robert Baylor Semple, a Kentucky born dentist who arrived in California in 1845, established himself in the region. One of the leaders of California's Bear Flag revolt, Semple began plans for establishing a town on a portion Suscol Ranch, on the north shore of Carquinez Strait. Semple acquired 50% of the subject land on December 22, 1846. Initially named Francisca, in honor of the other owner of Mariano Vallejo's wife, Francisca Maria Felipa Benicia Carillo de Vallejo. When San Francisco was selected as the name for Yerba Buena the following year, the name Francisca was changed to Benicia.

Semple partnered with William Colton (Mayor of Monterey) and Thomas O. Larkin (US Ambassador to the region). Jasper O'Farrell was hired to survey and plat the town. Beginning his work in May 1847, and assisted by William H. Warner. In doing so, they included a number of blocks that were tidelands maps, beyond the natural shoreline, as illustrated on the present map.

With the discovery of Gold in 1848, Benicia became one of the prime gateways to the Gold Regions in the Sierras. A thriving downtown, consisting of hotels, saloons and gambling halls followed. Semple's Ferry experienced delays of several days, it was so highly in demand and Semple established a mule stage between Benicia and Sacramento, with a connection to San Francisco by Sloop.

In 1850, Benicia and Monterey became the first two Cities in California to be incorporated. Benicia became the official US Port of Entry and the Capital of Solano County. The Pacific Steamship Company set up a wharf and support facilities for trade and a coaling station, repair shop and warehouse were also built in 1850, followed by a machine shop, blacksmith's shop and iron foundry. The US Arsenal and Barracks at Benicia was also established and was designated one of the five major US Arsenals in 1852.

Because of ill health, in Semple sold out his interests in the town to Thomas O. Larkin. Larkin determined that Benicia should become the California State Capital, which was ultimately successful, and Benicia was named Capital of California in February 1853. Significant building activity followed, but the legislature returned the capital the following year to Sacramento.

Rarity & Provenance

Provenance: Warren Heckrotte Collection. Formerly in the Bancroft Library, with ink stamps on verso and a few discrete ones on recto; withdrawn stamp in upper margin.

We locate 2 examples of the map. Bancroft Library and UC Davis. We have dated the map based upon the OCLC catalog entry date.



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Semple 1847 Surveyed & Drawn By Benjamin Barlow City & County Surveyor**

Detailed Condition:

Ex Bancroft Library. Laid on linen. Minor chipping in margins and decorative border and a number of minor tears, entering the printed image at the sides and bottom of the map.