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Carte du Havre Saint Jean dans l'Isle de Terre-neuve

Stock#: 58845
Map Maker: Bellin
Date: 1764
Place: Paris
Color: Hand Colored
Condition: VG+
Size: 6.5 x 8.5 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

The Oldest Settlement in North America?

An excellent map of the harbor of St. John, Newfoundland, from Bellin's *Petit Atlas Maritime*, prepared at the end of the Seven Years War.

The map locates important early forts and points within the harbor, which had figured in St. John's history over the prior 150 years.

There is a significant debate as to whether St. John is America's oldest settlement.

It is well documented that fishermen began setting up seasonal camps in St. John by the early 16th century. Sebastian Cabot's 1545 map notes that St. John's earned its name when he and his father, the Venetian explorer John Cabot became the first Europeans to sail into the harbor in June 1494, although the year and location have been disputed. A series of expeditions to St. John's by Portuguese from the



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Azores took place in the early 16th century, and by 1540 French, Spanish and Portuguese ships crossed the Atlantic annually to fish the waters off the Avalon Peninsula. In the Basque Country, it is a common belief the name of St. John's was given by Basque fishermen because the bay of St. John's is very similar to the Bay of Pasaia in the Basque Country, where one of the fishing towns is called St. John (in Spanish, San Juan, and in Basque, Donibane).

The earliest record of the location appears as São João on a Portuguese map by Pedro Reinel in 1519. When John Rut visited St. John's in 1527, he found Norman, Breton and Portuguese ships in the harbor. A letter to King Henry on Rut's findings during his voyage is the earliest known letter sent from North America. St. Jehan is shown on Nicolas Desliens' world map of 1541, and San Joham is found in João Freire's Atlas of 1546.

Sir Humphrey Gilbert claimed the area as England's first overseas colony under Royal Charter of Queen Elizabeth I in August 1583. There was no permanent population, however, and Gilbert was lost at sea during his return voyage, thereby ending any immediate plans for settlement.

By 1620, the fishermen of England's West Country controlled most of Newfoundland's east coast. In 1627, William Payne, called St. John's "the principal prime and chief lot in all the whole country." Sometime after 1630, the town of St. John's was established as a permanent community. Before this they were expressly forbidden by the English government, at the urging of the West Country fishing industry, from establishing permanent settlements along the English controlled coast.

The population grew slowly in the 17th century: St. John's was Newfoundland's largest settlement when English naval officers began to take censuses around 1675. The town's first significant defenses were likely erected due to commercial interests, following the temporary seizure of St. John's by the Dutch admiral Michiel de Ruyter in June 1665.

The inhabitants fended off a second Dutch attack in 1673, when it was defended by Christopher Martin, an English merchant captain. Martin landed six cannons from his vessel, the *Elias Andrews*, and constructed an earthen breastwork and battery near Chain Rock. With 23 men, Martin repelled the Dutch attack. The English government planned to expand these fortifications (Fort William) in around 1689, but construction didn't begin until after the French admiral Pierre Le Moyne d'Iberville captured and destroyed the town in the Avalon Peninsula Campaign (1696).

The French attacked St. John's again in 1705 (Siege of St. John's), and captured it in 1708 (Battle of St. John's). The final battle of the Seven Years' War in North America (the French and Indian War) was fought in 1762, in St. John's. Following a surprise capture of the town by the French early in the year, the British responded and, at the Battle of Signal Hill, the French surrendered St. John's to British forces under the



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command of Colonel William Amherst.

There has been some controversy regarding which European settlement is the oldest in North America. As mentioned above, while English fishermen had set up seasonal camps in St. John's in the 16th century, they were expressly forbidden by the English government, at the urging of the West Country fishing industry, from establishing permanent settlements along the English-controlled coast. As a result, the town of St. John's was not established as a 'permanent' community until after the 1630s. With respect to the oldest surviving permanent English settlements in North America, it was preceded by Jamestown, Virginia (1607), the Cuper's Cove colony at Cupids (1610), St. George's, Bermuda (1612) and the Bristol's Hope colony at Harbour Grace (1618).

Detailed Condition: