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America Settentrionale Colle Nuove Scoperte Sin All'Anno 1688

Stock#: 59003
Map Maker: Coronelli

Date: 1688
Place: Venice
Color: Hand Colored
Condition: VG+
Size: 35 x 24 inches

Price: SOLD

Description:

Landmark Map of North America by Coronelli with California as an Island

Finely colored example of Coronelli's cornerstone map of North America, one of the most influential maps of the continent published in the late seventeenth century.

The map is cartographically similar to Coronelli's esteemed globe of 1688 and is richly embellished in his characteristic style. In the upper left is an elaborate title vignette featuring several gods who find themselves in the New World. They have sumptuous robes and voluptuous hair, but also a map, compass, ship, and other modern instruments. The title states not only the maker of the map, and his position as cosmographer of the Republic of Venice, but also lists the dedicatee, Felic Antonio Marsily, Archdeacon of the Cathedral of Bologna.

The other decorative element of the map is a large scale in the Atlantic Ocean, which is flanked by ribbon-clad branches. Additionally, a small text block in the Pacific Ocean is surrounded by a laurel and leaves. It explains how, even though some had thought California to be a peninsula, multiple Spanish voyages have shown it to be an island.

Several scenes are drawn into the geography of the continent itself, most depicting indigenous peoples acting as Europeans imagined they did—most likely a far cry from the realities of quotidian indigenous life and culture. For example, some naked men and women roast a human near Hudson's Bay, while a massive alligator is munching people in what is today Louisiana. More informative are the sketches of indigenous people drying fish and burning wood.

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In terms of geography, the map was one of the most updated representations of North America available at that time, even if some of that geography later proved chimerical. Much is still to be understood about the Arctic region, while the interior of the continent reflects the political divisions of the Spanish, French, and English empires.

Of particular note is the inclusion of *Nuevo Suecia*, wedged between Virginia and New York. New Sweden was a colony of the then-powerful Swedish empire from 1638 to 1655, when it was incorporated into the Dutch colony of New Netherland (which is not shown on this map). However, the settlers retained relative autonomy and, when this map was made, the area had been taken by the English. The colony was clearly well-enough known that Coronelli felt it important to include on his map.

Particularly in the west, Coronelli's map contributes a significant amount of new information. It draws heavily from the manuscript map by Diego Dionisio de Peñalosa Briceño y Berdugo, which included numerous previously unrecorded place names and divided the Rio Grande into the Rio Norte and the Rio Bravo in the south. The manuscript map was prepared by Peñalosa between 1671 and 1687 as part of his attempts to interest the French King Louis XIV in a military expedition against New Spain.

Sieur de la Salle

Coronelli's depiction of the Great Lakes is the most advanced to date, drawing on information from the explorations of Louis Jolliet and Jacques Marquette. The other explorer mentioned several times on the map is René-Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle.

La Salle was a Jesuit who had been granted land at the western End of Montreal. He learned from the local Mohawk peoples and became interested in riverine routes to the Gulf of Mexico. On his first expedition, of 1679-1682, La Salle and his men left Lake Ontario, went down the lower Niagara River, where they portaged over Niagara Falls. Then La Salle had a ship constructed, in which he sailed on Lake Erie and Lake Huron. The party then took to canoes in Lake Michigan and paddled down the Miami [St. Joseph] River; they eventually made it to Fort Crèvecoeur, marked on this map, which is modern Peoria, Illinois, before the expedition fell apart.

La Salle mounted another expedition, departing in 1682. He and his party left from Fort Crèvecoeur in canoes to sail down the Mississippi. While on the river, he named the basin *La Louisiane*; it is *La Louisiana* on this map. His men constructed a fort also marked on this map, Fort Prudhomme, which is the site of modern Memphis, Tennessee. Finally, they made it to the mouth of the Mississippi, and La Salle claimed the entirety of the river basin for France.

On later expeditions, La Salle attempted to found a French colony on the Gulf of Mexico and to locate the

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Mississippi again. On this map, the Mississippi basin reflects his discoveries and many notes mention his name. This map also depicts La Salle's misplacement of the mouth of the Mississippi, which he located some 600 miles to the west of its true location.

California as an Island

The most prominent geographical detail of the map is California's appearance as a massive island, this map being one of the best renderings of this beloved misconception. From its first portrayal on a printed map by Diego Gutiérrez, in 1562, California was shown as part of North America by mapmakers, including Gerard Mercator and Abraham Ortelius. In the 1620s, however, it began to appear as an island in several sources.

This was most likely the result of a reading of the travel account of Sebastian Vizcaino, who had been sent north up the shore of California in 1602. A Carmelite friar who accompanied him later described the land as an island, a description first published in Juan Torquemada's *Monarquia Indiana* (1613) with the island details curtailed somewhat. The friar, Fray Antonio de la Ascension, also wrote a *Relacion breve* of his geographic ideas around 1620. The ideas spread about New Spain and, eventually, most likely via Dutch mariners and perhaps thanks to stolen charts, to the rest of Europe.

By the 1620s, many mapmakers chose to depict the peninsula as an island. These included Henricus Hondius, who published the first atlas map to focus solely on North America with the island prominently featured in 1636. Hondius borrowed his outline of California from another widely-distributed map, that of Henry Briggs and printed in Samuel Purchas' *Hakluytus Posthumus or Purchas his Pilgrimes* (1625).

Other prominent practitioners like John Speed and Nicolas Sanson also adopted the new island and the practice became commonplace. Father Eusebio Kino initially followed along with this theory but after extensive travels in what is now California, Arizona, and northern Mexico, he concluded that the island was actually a peninsula. Even after Kino published a map based on his travels refuting the claim (Paris, 1705), California as an island remained a fixture until the mid-eighteenth century.

Atlante Veneto

Coronelli's map of North America featured in his famous *Atlante Veneto*, published in Venice between 1690 and 1701. The atlas was Coronelli's attempt to carry on the work of Blaeu and the *Atlas Maior*. The work was impressive in size (folio), detail, and length; it included many distinctive maps, with some, like this one, stretching over two sheets.

This is a significant map in the history of North American cartography, California as an island, and Italian

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mapmaking. It would be a foundational map in any collection of North America and would be an important addition to anyone interested in Coronelli, California, or early North American exploration.

Detailed Condition:
2-sheets, joined