



Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

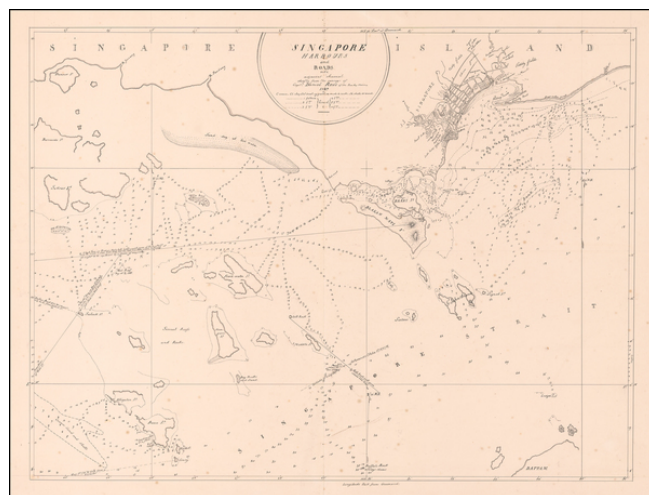
7407 La Jolla Boulevard
La Jolla, CA 92037

www.raremaps.com

(858) 551-8500
blr@raremaps.com

Singapore Harbours and Roads with adjacent channels chiefly from the surveys of Captn. Daniel Ross of the Bombay Marine 1827

Stock#: 59937
Map Maker: Anonymous
Date: 1841 circa
Place: n.p
Color: Pen & Ink
Condition: VG+
Size: 24 x 18 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

Finely Executed Manuscript Chart of Singapore Harbours and Roads, Drawn from the Work of Renowned Maritime Surveyor Daniel Ross

Drawn with precision and skill, this manuscript chart traces one of the most important harbors in the world during its early decades. Likely drawn from the same manuscript source as an extremely rare printed chart published by the Admiralty in 1840, this manuscript example is a unique survival.

The Admiralty was particularly interested in Asian waters at this time as hostilities had recently ramped up with China over access to their ports and the illegal opium trade fed by the East India Company. In 1839, Britain and China entered the First Opium War, which resulted in China having to open more of its ports to European trade. Singapore was a crucial staging point for British troops during the war. This manuscript, [one of pair](#) focused on the port, was likely drawn by someone interested in or connected with the war.

The chart shows the several approaches to the burgeoning young city of Singapore. Sounding depths show the watery shipping lanes that made the city, and its occupants, wealthy and cosmopolitan. Sandbars and other obstructions are also marked, along with the many islands that dot the waters in this area. There are even a few notes added to convey sailing direction to the would-be navigator.

Most revealingly, the chart covers part of Singapore Island, showing many details of the city that are not included so minutely elsewhere. It includes glimpses of the physical landscape including land use,



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vegetation, sugar and cotton plantations, and rice paddies. There is a Chinese Garden, brick kilns, mangrove marshes, and other features in and around the Singapore River, the Kallang River and the Rochor River.

In the town itself, the police station and battery are identified, as are churches, a mosque, the sultan's house, and the governor's house. The latter buildings are an indication of the mixture of cultures that lived together in the city. More evidence of this is in the neighborhoods that are labeled: China Town and Malay Town.

As the title indicates, this chart is based on the surveys of Captain Daniel Ross. Ross was a famous surveyor for the East India Company. Born in Jamaica, Ross joined the Bombay Marine and eventually was appointed Marine Surveyor General. He made many surveys of Southeast Asia and the coasts of China throughout the 1810s and 1820s, a service for which he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society (learn more about Ross in the biography below).

Comparing the manuscript and printed charts

The manuscript chart includes different details in several places. Most notably, on Blakan Mati Island, there is an indefinite coastline and only one contiguous small island, whereas the printed chart shows "Fresh Water" on a definite coastline, two islands and additional soundings. Similarly, on the manuscript chart, the name "Linti Point" is given, but it is shown as "Sinki Point" on the printed chart.

Within the plan of Singapore, the manuscript chart has less detail than its printed counterpart. For example, the printed version includes a Bughis [Bugi] Town, indicating an ethnic group that controlled the island prior to the British. These differences strengthen the argument that this chart was drawn from a different, earlier source that was also the basis for the printed chart, which was likely corrected further prior to production.

This chart, along with [another](#), was advertised for sale in *The Nautical Magazine* of 1840:

NEW CHARTS.

(Published by the Admiralty, and sold by R. B. Bate, 21, Poultry.)

The Straits Of Singapore, Durian and Rhio

We perceive by the title that the former Strait is from the several surveys of Capt. Daniel Ross, in 1827; that Durian Strait and Philipps Channel is by Lieutenants Collinson and Moresby in 1822;



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Pisang and Cocob Islands, by Lieut. F. A. Cudlip in 1821; and Batoo Hadji Strait, or the Strait of the Pilgrims Rock, an entirely new feature, by Mr. L. C. Bailey, master, II.N. For Rhio Strait there is no good authority. The limits of the chart comprehend a vast deal of internal and important navigation, being the high road from India to the China Sea.

Singapore Harbours And Roads, with the adjacent Channels.

The surveys of Capt. Daniel Ross, of the Bombay marine, have formed the data for these harbours, and their approaches are laid down as far as known It will prove a most useful chart to vessels visiting that important station Singapore.

As the advertisement explains, both charts were central to the successful navigation of these all-important waters. The area was of especial importance in the 1840s as the British were consolidating their hold over the crucial harbor of Singapore.

Singapore in the mid-nineteenth century

In the beginning of the nineteenth century, Singapore was controlled, at least nominally, by the Sultanate of Johor. The Sultan, in turn, answered to Dutch trading interests and the Bugis. The British, determined to challenge the primacy of the Dutch in the islands of southeast Asia, were looking to establish a port in the area of the Straits of Malacca, the pipeline between China and British India.

Sir Stamford Raffles, Lieutenant Governor of the British colony at Bencoolen and employee of the British East India Company, recognized the strategic value of the island of Singapore, as well as its potential as a port. Supported by Lord Hastings, Governor-General of India, approved of an expedition and Raffles landed in Singapore in late January 1819. Raffles manipulated local politics and struck a deal to financially back his preferred leader in return for a trading post on the island. He signed a treaty on February 6, 1819 approving the British free port and marking the beginning of an official British presence in Singapore. In 1824, the Sultan ceded the island to the East India Company in perpetuity.

When Raffles landed, there were roughly 1,000 people living on the island. By 1871, there were 100,000. Thanks to its status as a free port, Singapore quickly became a prime stopping point for explorers, traders, and officials. These included now famous explorers, like Hyacinthe de Boungainville, Auguste Nicholas Vaillant, and Dumont D'Urville. By 1840, when the two Admiralty charts were printed, a new harbour became necessary to handle the volume of shipping that was crowding the island.

Ross and his fellow East India Company surveyors conducted the initial surveys of Singapore just as it was



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coming under British rule, in the 1820s. With a strategic toe-hold in the marine road from India to China, more hydrographic information was needed to be able to exploit the opportunity granted by Singapore. Ross and his associates surveyed the entirety of this route between China and India by 1826, laying down the dense strata of sounding depths, measurements, and views that were the building blocks for these charts.

The charts were initially published by the James Horsbrugh, hydrographer of the East India Company, and, eventually, corrected and reprinted by the Admiralty, who admired Ross' precise work. The Admiralty's Hydrographic Office had been publishing their own charts since 1800, when they acquired a printing press, but for certain areas of the world they were still dependent on other sources, such as the East India Company. The Admiralty started selling charts to the public in 1822 and the two Singapore charts advertised above would have been available via registered agents.

Singapore and the First Opium War

Precisely when the Admiralty chart was printed and this manuscript example was drawn, Singapore was the primary staging area for the British during the First Opium War, a conflict which originated three centuries earlier. The Portuguese made their way to China in the early sixteenth century. Previously, Europeans had traded with China via middlemen and over the Silk Road, although a few, like Marco Polo, supposedly visited China in the late medieval period. After a half century of tension and conflict, the Portuguese were eventually allowed to trade with select Chinese ports, but with severe restrictions. From the late seventeenth century, the Qing Dynasty loosened their restrictions on foreign trade somewhat, allowing a few ships each year from several Western Empires. However, Westerners were still not allowed within the walls of port cities and were restricted to factories near the waterline.

From 1757, the Chinese employed what became known as the Canton System, which made Canton the sole port of entry for Western goods into China. A cohort of Chinese merchants, the *Cohong*, mediated between the Chinese government and Western traders. Though the Western empires tolerated the Canton System, they did not like it and wanted more open access to Chinese goods, especially tea, and markets. By the late-eighteenth century, the British had accumulated a massive trade deficit as China had no interest in Western goods; they only accepted silver as payment. The East India Company began to bring opium from its Indian plantations to China instead of silver, causing a massive increase in the number of Chinese addicted to the substance.

Although the Chinese banned the import of opium, the trade continued. When China attempted to halt the trade in 1839, the British responded with force. During this conflict, the First Opium War, the British captured the factories in Canton in March 1841. The war ended with the Treaty of Nanking (1842), which



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forced the Chinese to allow British, and eventually other, traders to live in several Chinese ports unmolested. It also granted them the liberty to trade with whomever they chose. Additionally, Britain was granted a colony at Hong Kong.

Rarity and purpose

The Admiralty's system of selling charts might suggest why this manuscript example exists. Perhaps there were not enough charts printed in the initial run, necessitating hand-drawn alternatives. Perhaps the author needed an example quickly and could not wait for more to be printed. Alternatively, this example might be a training exercise for an aspiring draughtsman.

This manuscript example is apparently unique. Its related printed chart survives in only two known institutional examples, at the British Library and the National Library of Singapore. There is also a later edition (1845) updated by John Turnbull Thomson, also known in a single example at the Singapore National Library.

OCLC also locates a copy of the map in a composite atlas of 53 nautical charts of China and Southeast Asia published by the Hydrographic Office in 1841; its maps are dated between 1770 and 1841. The bibliographic note indicates that it was possibly created for the British Navy during the first Opium War (1839-42) and is held at Yale University Library.

Provenance

A blindstamp in the upper right corner suggests a royal maritime collection, with an octagon surrounding an anchor which is topped by a crown and flanked by the initials "M R".

The chart is drawn on wove paper and watermarked "J Whatman | Turkey Mill | 1841". James Whatman the Elder invented wove paper in 1756. "Wove" refers to the lack of chain lines that characterized paper before this time, called laid paper. Wove paper is made with a uniform wire mesh mould, creating unblemished and more uniform sheets of paper. In 1807, the invention of a paper machine allowed for the mass production of wove paper. Whatman moved his paper mill, founded in 1733, to Turkey Hill in 1736. The business was carried on by his son of the same name, as well as new business partners, the Balstons.

This chart shows striking details of Singapore in its early days of growth. It reveals the vibrant diversity of the early city, as well as the detailed surveying work that went into safely navigating the approaches to the island. A unique document that is even rarer than its printed relative, this chart would make an impactful addition to a collection of Southeast Asia, East India Company, or Singapore charts.



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Detailed Condition: