



Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

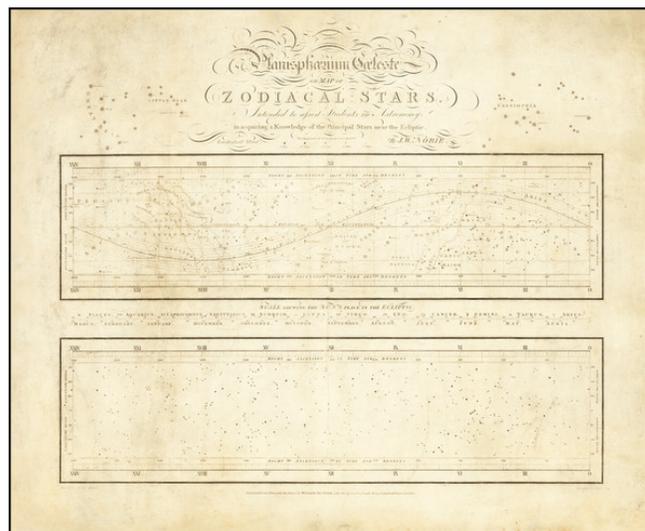
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Planisphaerium Coeleste or Map of Zodiacal Stars

Stock#: 67679
Map Maker: Heather / Norie
Date: 1801
Place: London
Color: Uncolored
Condition: VG
Size: 25 x 21 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

Using the Stars to Understand Latitude—A Rare Instructional Star Chart

Rare, commercially-published star chart, made for teaching constellations and the path of the sun through the celestial sphere, the ecliptic, to students of astronomy. Once these constellations and their patterns were understood, they could be used to find latitude, among other navigational calculations.

Drawn by J. W. Norie, who worked for William Heather, the publisher, the chart shows two parallel expanses of stars. The top strip shows the constellations as they relate the ecliptic, which waves through the strip chart. At top and bottom are the right ascension given in time and degrees, that is the east-west coordinate by which a celestial body (including constellations) is measured (i.e. the angular distance of a body's hour circle east of the vernal equinox, measured along the celestial equator). The other axis measures north and south declination, that is the angular distance of a point (or constellation) north or south of the celestial equator.

Within the top strip, each constellation is outlined with dotted lines and a title. The actual stars are also included, drawn at specific sizes to show the magnitude, or brightness, of each star. By contrast, the bottom strip has only the stars with no labels, so that a student could compare the two.

Between the chart strips is a table that shows the progression of the sun along the ecliptic as related to months; these are the zodiac signs which are still in use today. It begins in March, at the time of the vernal equinox.



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The following advertisement appeared in J.W. Norie's *The Description and Use of Hadley's Quadrant and Sextant . . .* (1803):

Just Published—Price Five Shillings

PLANISPHAERIUM COELESTE; - OR, MAP OF ZODIACAL STARS:

Intended to assist Students in Astronomy in acquiring a Knowledge of the Stars near the Ecliptic, and peculiarly adapted to the purpose of finding the Stars proper for ascertaining the Latitude & Apparent Time at Sea; the Longitude by Lunar Observations, &c.

Latitude, one's position north or south of the equator, could be ascertained by measuring the altitude, degrees above or below the equator of Polaris, the North Star (associated with but not always directly in line with the celestial north pole, depending on epoch and location). However, if one knew the position of constellations relative to the ecliptic and the equator, as this chart shows, those constellations could also be used to measure one's latitude.

Rarity

This chart was accompanied by an *Explanation*, which was printed in 1802. OCLC locates only the example of the chart in the British Library. The explanatory text is also very rare, with only the British Library, University of Kwazulu Natal, and the Boston Public Library, and the University of Aberdeen (1810 printing) noting copies in their collections.

Detailed Condition:

Some soiling and a few expertly repaired tears.