



**Barry Lawrence Ruderman
Antique Maps Inc.**

7407 La Jolla Boulevard
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**(Presentation Copy to the Author's Daughter) Travels in Mexico and California:
comprising a Journal of a Tour from Brazos, Santiago, Through Central Mexico, by way
of Monterey, Chihuahua, the Country of the Apaches, and the River Gila, to the Mining
Districts of California.**

Stock#: 69367
Map Maker: Clarke

Date: 1852
Place: Boston
Color: Uncolored
Condition: VG
Size: 4.5 x 7 inches

Price: \$ 3,500.00



Description:

Author's Own Copy - Presented to His Daughter

California Gold Rush Overland Via Brazos Pass (Texas), Northern Mexico, Arizona & Los Angeles

In the Rare Publisher's Cloth Binding

This classic western overland narrative, rare in any state, is almost always described as bound in printed wrappers. All the standard bibliographies describe it as bound in paper wrappers, with only Wagner-Camp mentioning "a few copies known in cloth." The present example is one of those very few copies bound in cloth, likely for the author's own use. Indeed, the neat written ownership inscription on the front flyleaf supports our assertion, as Virginia M. Clarke was the author's daughter, who was born on September 6, 1852 in Westfield, Hampden, Massachusetts and died in Independence, Buchanan, Iowa. At the time of the 1861 Christmas day inscription she would have been nine years old, which stands to reason that her father gifted the book to her. A. B. Clarke lived in Independence, Iowa until his death in 1882.

Clarke, a native of Conway, Massachusetts, sailed from New York on January 29, 1849, as a member of the Hampden Mining Company. After arriving in central Mexico [first via Brazos Pass in Texas],



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he proceeded westward via Arizona and the Gila River. He arrived in Los Angeles on July 9. In the Gila area, he met Dr. Field, one of the two survivors of the infamous Fanning massacre. By August 2, the New Englander labored in the Tuolumne Diggings. He spent the winter of 1849 and 1850 in San Francisco and, in the summer of 1850, worked on the Yuba River - Kurutz.

Thomas Streeter, whose own copy of the book was in the standard printed wrappers, called Clarke's overland narrative "one of the most interesting, as the route was from Camargo, Mexico, on the south side of the Rio Grande through Chihuahua and Sonora to the Gila River of Arizona, then the Mexican-United States boundary. This route had not been previously described. The party reached Los Angeles July 9, 1849." In fact, another noted traveler who followed a similar southern route to California during the Gold Rush was John Woodhouse Audubon, son of the famous artist-naturalist, whose extremely rare illustrated work, *Illustrated Notes of an Expedition Through Mexico and California in 1849-50*, was also published in 1852. While the great desert bibliographer E. I. Edwards, bemoaned that Audubon's journal contributed "but little material that is directly associated with the California desert territory," he highlight's Clarke's book as excelling in this regard:

Clarke's description of the desert crossing is dramatically impressive... On June 26, 1849, they crossed the Colorado River and started over the desert. On July 3 they arrived at Warner's. Death threatened them constantly, day and night, during this punishing mid-summer week on the relentless desert - Edwards.

Entirely a first-hand account, the book also includes fascinating descriptions of life in northern Mexico, with numerous mentions of hostile tribes:

The Apaches, and Camanches [sic], two wandering tribes, are scattered over the extensive country...The Apaches are better warriors than the Camanches. They generally fight on fleet horses, which they manage skillfully. They make their attacks by charging furiously into the ranks of an enemy, shooting rapidly with their guns or bows... They make excursions for robbing, every year, into several states in Mexico, and always carry terror and desolation with them... They, every year, steal from the Mexicans, and drive into their own wild country, large numbers of horses, mules, and cattle.

Here follows an interesting passage concerning horsemanship in Chihuahua and mezcal production, certainly one of the earliest published descriptions of mezcal by an American traveler:



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Leaving Mapimi, we passed over a plain, then through a notch of a mountain, where we picked up several specimens of copper ore in our path, and arrived at Carana, a large rancho strongly walled in and defended by two brass cannon. There are here a copper furnace and a distillery for making mescal. Mescal is an aromatic kind of spiritous liquor, made from maguey or agave Americana, a species of aloe similar to that which grows in Spain, the leaves of which are six or eight feet long. A mild fermented liquor called pulque, much esteemed among the natives, and which is considered by them a panacea for many diseases, is made from the same plant... Many of the ranchos in the State of Chihuahua are built like forts, and may be considered as such....We had a striking exhibition of the superiority of Mexican horsemanship to that of the Americans... As a number of us were walking from camp into town, a Mexican with a splendid wild horse, was prancing along the street, and although the horse showed great spirit, he seemed held in very good subjection.

Crossing into Arizona, Clarke describes conditions along the Gila, including "very ancient" adobe houses, irrigation by *zequia* (i.e. an irrigation ditch system more elaborate than a zanja, and often spelled *acequia* or *séquia*). He also comments on the various Native Americans in the region including the Coco Maricopas and Pimas. He presciently declares that the country "will doubtless before long be settled by Americans." There is a good description of Tucson (which Clarke spells "Teuson").

Once in Southern California, the author stopped in Warner's Rancheria, but Mr. Warner was not home, so the traveling party was unable to obtain provisions from him.

Los Angeles "oozing petroleum"

Clarke devotes a couple of pages to describing the Pueblo de Los Angeles, where he met several other Americans, including a Mr. Cole, and noted that the town's adobes were "of a better kind than is common in Mexico, and there is more use made of lumber." Interestingly, on page 120, there is a very early notice of oil in Los Angeles:

Leaving town we passed, a few miles out, several places in and near the road, from which were oozing petroleum. I noticed large beds of it that had become hard. The people in town make use of it to cover the tops of the walls that surround their vineyards, gardens &c.

His first sight of the Pacific, somewhere south of Santa Barbara, is set forth in evocative, almost poetic form:



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Its wide waves can be observed at a considerable distance, following each other, and gathering force from their long career until they run far upon the beach, and again recede. But still there is a calmness, and a quiet grandeur in it, and its whisperings and murmurings seem to speak of hidden things.

Once in Northern California, Clarke stayed at Marysville, Sacramento, and along the Yuba. It appears that Clarke was scouting out trading opportunities more than working the mines, and at least one He eventually established a general store in Marysville, a prime location for distribution of supplies to the northern and eastern mining districts. He returned East in March 1851, leaving the store to be managed by his brother-in-law William Bartlett. By the fall of 1854 the Clarke family had settled in Independence, Iowa, where A. B. Clarke worked in real estate, farming, and the grocery trade.

Rarity

This book is rare in any binding, and is almost always found in printed wrappers. Such an association copy from the author's family, in the superlatively rare publisher's cloth binding, is nearly impossible to find in the market. We know of only one other example in publisher's cloth, which was sold by Dorothy Sloan in 2006.

Detailed Condition:

12mo. Original publisher's binding of blue blindstamped cloth, gilt spine title and decoration (slightly dulled by age). Head and toe of spine bit frayed. Corners frayed as well. Some moderate scattered foxing. Withal, a very nice copy, in the very rare publisher's cloth binding (see below). 138, [8, blank] pages. Complete. Ownership inscription of author's daughter on front free endpaper: "Virginia M. Clarke, Independence Iowa, Dec. 25th 1861." Additional early ink ownership stamp of W. H. Kint, Iowa, probably William H. Kint (1841-1916), buried in Hazleton, Buchanan County, Iowa. Laid in mid-20th-century bookseller's description states: "This copy is evidently one of a few copies bound for the author's own use. That it was the author's own copy is almost beyond doubt...Mr. [Henry R.] Wagner says this is the only copy with cloth binding he has ever seen."