



Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

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Sketch Map of Part of the British Possessions to the West of the Rocky Mountains.

Stock#: 69579
Map Maker: Topographical Depot, War Office
/ Elphinstone
Date: 1858 circa
Place: London
Color: Outline Color
Condition: VG
Size: 36.5 x 22 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

The First Survey of the Interior of British Columbia -- A Cornerstone Pacific Northwest Rarity.

A foundational map of British Columbia, being the first map of the region produced by the Royal Engineers, and the map on which the earliest growth of the colony was planned.

This important early map shows British Columbia in 1858, effectively at the inception of the colony, and just as the Fraser Canyon Gold Rush was getting underway. Several far-flung forts and Indian villages are labeled. A few Hudson Bay Company trading forts are still shown in U.S. territory. The map includes extensive notes (particularly by way of a coded key in the lower-left corner) on the agricultural prospects and wild game of the region.

There are a total of 43 letter-symbols that the map deploys to explain where, say, wheat or tobacco could be grown, or where one might find porcupine, trout, carp, or antelope. In addition to the coded notes, there are printed annotations with still more detail. For instance, at the mouth of the Fraser in what is now Vancouver, BC, it says: "Very fertile Soil like Vancouvers Island." or farther afield "A good waggon road can be cut along either bank of the Lillooet Riv. it being level and well timbered."

In general, the map embodies the orders of the Royal Engineers who were sent to the area to "survey those parts of the country which may be considered most suitable for settlement, to mark out allotments of land for public purposes, to suggest a site for the seat of Government, [and] to point out where roads should be made."

The Royal Engineers in British Columbia

Upon the discovery of gold at the fork of the Fraser and Thompson Rivers in 1858, tens of thousands of



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prospectors quickly left California and parts farther afield for what was at the time a fur-trading backwater. There was immediate concern in London that the meager resources of the local authorities would be completely overwhelmed by the immigrants. Therefore, the decision was made to formally create the Colony of British Columbia, and furthermore to send a detachment of Royal Engineers to the region to plan and build the new colony.

One of the prime instigators of this was Sir E.B. Lytton. In July of 1858, Lytton wrote to Governor James Douglas, of the Vancouver Island Colony, that he was "sending to British Columbia by the earliest opportunity an officer of the Royal Engineers (probably a field officer with two or three subalters) and a company of Sappers and Miners, made up of 150 non-commissioned officers and men." In a letter of July 31, 1858, Lytton explained the duties of the Royal Engineers:

It will devolve upon them to survey those parts of the country which may be considered most suitable for settlement, to mark out allotments of land for public purposes, to suggest a site for the seat of Government, to point out where roads should be made, and to render you such assistance as may be in their power... This force is sent of scientific and practical purposes, and not solely for military objects. As little display as possible should therefore be made of it.

In a letter of October 16, 1858, Lytton expounded upon the merits of the Royal Engineers:

The superior discipline and intelligence of this force, which afford ground for expecting that they will be far less likely than ordinary soldiers of the line to yield to the temptation to desertion offered by the goldfields, and their capacity at once to provide for themselves in a country without habitation appear to me to render them especially suited for this duty; while their services as pioneers in the work of civilisation, in opening up the resources of the country, by the construction of roads and bridges, in laying the foundation of a future city or seaport, and in carrying out the numerous engineering works which in the earlier stages of colonisation are so essential to the progress and welfare of the community, they will probably not only be preserved from the idleness which might corrupt the discipline of ordinary soldiers, but establish themselves in the popular good-will of the emigrants by the civil benefits it will be in the regular nature of their occupation to confer.

The soldiers who arrived in British Columbia in late 1858 were a crack group; Frederic W. Howay says in *The Work of the Royal Engineers in British Columbia 1858-1863*:

It must not be thought that the detachment sent to British Columbia was simply one of the forty companies into which the Royal Engineers were then divided. No greater mistake could be made. It was a picked body--selected out of a large number of volunteers for this service, and chosen with the



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view of having included in their ranks every trade, profession, and calling which might be useful in the circumstances of a colony springing so suddenly into existence as British Columbia had done.

Once they arrived in British Columbia, the Engineers were put to work planning settlements, roads, and ports, surveying the mountains and forest of B.C., and eventually enforcing law and order in the unruly prospecting towns.

The present map depicts the region before the work of the Royal Engineers was really underway. As such, it depicts the canvas on which the Royal Engineers drew the outline of modern British Columbia. This would seem to be the first of a number of "Sketch Maps" produced by the Royal Engineers, with all others dated 1859 to 1864 and showing the progress of the mapping of the region.

This is a cornerstone map for British Columbia and it is by far the earliest non-atlas map of British Columbia that we have had.

Dating the Map

The map depicts British Columbia in 1858. A variety of facts establish this dating.

- The town of Lytton is not printed (but here is shown in pencil manuscript); this town was founded in 1858.
- The town of New Westminster, the first colonial capital, is not shown; that city was founded on February 14, 1859.
- Curiously, the map does not show the gold discoveries, which points to a dating in early 1858, before the Royal Engineers arrived in the area.
- The town of Lillooet is labeled, but the road along the Lillooet River has clearly not yet been built, though there is a note proposing it.
- Fort Okanagan was in use by the HBC after the Oregon Treaty but was abandoned in 1860, it is still shown on this map.

It is possible that the gold workings were left off the map, as they were superfluous to the Engineers' mission.

The map notes that it was "Lithographed and Printed at the Topographical Depot, War Department, under the direction of Captain Elphinstone, RE; H James, Col RE, Superintendent. About 23 miles to 1 inch. Author, Publisher, &c.: War Office, London."

Rarity



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The map is exceedingly rare, apparently unknown to Wheat, Streeter and the major cartobibliographers. No examples of the map appear to have ever been offered for sale at auction or in a dealer catalog.

OCLC locates only the examples in the Staatsbibliothek Berlin and British Library.

The only illustrations of the map appear on the following website, which seems to be a compilation of examples in the "National Archives of the UK." <https://bcgenesis.uvic.ca/mapGallery.html>

We note that these images reveal two variants of the map, one of which lacks the words "Compiled From The Best Authorities" below the title.

Detailed Condition:

Embossed stamp to the lower-right of the title. Backed on linen closing a few edge tears. Purple ink stamps "DUPL[ICATE]" twice in the upper blank margin.