



Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

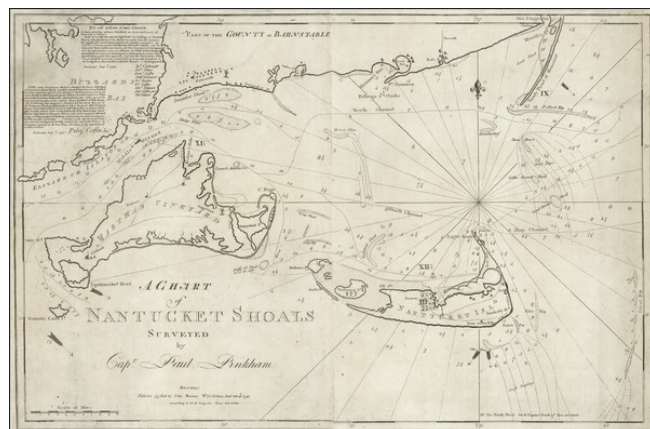
7407 La Jolla Boulevard
La Jolla, CA 92037

www.raremaps.com

(858) 551-8500
blr@raremaps.com

A Chart of Nantucket Shoals Surveyed by Capt. Paul Pinkham

Stock#: 71318
Map Maker: Norman
Date: 1791
Place: Boston
Color: Uncolored
Condition: Good
Size: 30.7 x 20 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

"The best and rarest of the old maps of Nantucket" -- With An Important 18th Century American Provenance

First state of this extremely rare early American chart of Nantucket, Martha's Vineyard and the contiguous coast of Cape Cod, published by the United States' first great chart maker, John Norman, in Boston in 1791.

The chart provides a comprehensive treatment of the area around Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard, with updated soundings and shoal information, useful notes on currents, rips and tides, anchorages and other important sailing information. Small icons are given for buildings, windmills, churches, lighthouses, and other structures and natural features of note.

Formerly owned by Captain John Sever, one of the first six American frigate captains in the US Navy, the chart is described in *Nantucket in Print* as "the best and rarest of the old maps of Nantucket." Whereas the previous mapping of the area was accomplished to a very impressive standard by the British military cartographers, the Norman/Pinkham Chart speaks to deep local knowledge of the area. While well surveyed, the earlier British charts lacked both the exacting knowledge of the waters around Nantucket and were in need of updating, as a result of the passage of time and the constant changes associated with strong currents and violent storms in the area.

The need to improve the charts of the region was also spurred by commercial insurers who serviced the New England shipping industry. Peleg Coffin of the New England Marine Insurance Company was both a prime catalyst for the construction of the Sandy Point Lighthouse in 1785 (Great Point), the retention of Paul Pinkham, a former whaling captain as its keeper, and finally in persuading Pinkham to undertake the



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creation of this chart. At the top left, a note from Coffin decries the problems with the inaccurate earlier charts, stating:

I have been induced to use my best Endeavors to obtain a New and Accurate Survey of the Shoals Eastwardly of the Island being taken from the Light House on Nantucket Point in 784 which eminence afforded a large and distant prospect of the Shoals and from which there true bearing was had with precision & Certainty.

Such a survey was extraordinary for its time, making the Norman/Pinkham chart of Nantucket one of only two charts from John Norman's famous *American Pilot* to be based on original cartography. The collaborative nature and local importance of the work is described in a second testamentary note signed by nine prominent local sea captains, who attest to that "there has never yet been Published and Accurate Chart of Nantucket Shoals," but that with the benefit of the newly constructed lighthouse "an opportunity never before had for so valuable a purpose . . . [and] by the help of the best Compasses and Instruments that could be procured," Pinkham and his unnamed collaborators were able to construct a chart whose accuracy "cannot fail to be greatly beneficial to all Navigators, who may fall in with said Shoals."

Paul Pinkham

Guthorn notes that Captain Paul Pinkham (1736-1799) was "a Nantucket Quaker shipmaster, ex-whaleman, and local pilot." In 1784, Pinkham was appointed the first keeper of the new lighthouse at Sandy Point (Great Point) on the northeast side of Nantucket. From the lighthouse tower, Pinkham and Captain Alexander Coffin undertook a detailed study of the waters around Nantucket, publishing their *Directions To And From the Light-House on the North-east Point of Nantucket*, circa 1788.

In 1797, Edmund Blunt, published Pinkham's *George's Bank including Cape Cod, Nantucket and the Shoals Lying on their Coast*, which was engraved by Osgood Carleton.

States of the Chart

The following are the known states of the map:

- State 1: 1791 -- "John Norman" imprint
- State 2: 1798 -- "Wm Norman" imprint, Outlines of Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket recut.
- State 3: 1803 -- "J. Norman" imprint
- State 4: Dated 1812.



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This is an example of the first state.

Rarity

The map is very rare on the market. This is the only example to have been offered at auction listed in RBH. No dealer catalog listings in AMPR going back more than 40 years.

Provenance: Brunk Auctions, 2020.

Detailed Condition:

2 sheets, joined, as issued. Some loss in upper left corner, expertly reinstated. Minor loss at lower right corner, expertly reinstated. Areas of paper thinning archivally reinforced on verso.