



Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

7407 La Jolla Boulevard
La Jolla, CA 92037

www.raremaps.com

(858) 551-8500
blr@raremaps.com

Regiones Sub Polo Arctico . . . [1st State]

Stock#: 80132
Map Maker: Blaeu
Date: 1638
Place: Amsterdam
Color: Hand Colored
Condition: VG+
Size: 21 x 16 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

Searching for the Northwest and Northeast Passage--First State!!

Fine example of Blaeu's signature map of the Arctic Region, with distinctive cartouches.

Blaeu's well-known map of the North Pole includes Arctic North America, Scandinavia, and northern Asia. It was one of the most accurate seventeenth-century polar maps and is remarkable especially for the mesmerizing loxodromic lines that radiate from the pole.

The information for this map is based on the discoveries of Barentsz, Baffin, Frobisher, Hall, Davis, and others. In particular, this map incorporates the discoveries of Thomas James along the southern and western shore of Hudson's Bay in 1631-32.

While these men sought the elusive Northwest or Northeast Passage, the map as shown here suggests a diminishing number of possibilities through which such a passage could travel. However, there remain unfinished coastlines in Greenland, Spitzbergen, and Nova Zembla. The east coast of Asia is also rounded, suggesting a passage around it.

The geography shown here is quite exacting for the time. It does not include popular North Atlantic cartographic chimeras like Frisland or Hy Brasil. However, it does plot *Bus* or *Buss* Island. This island originates in reports about Martin Frobisher's third voyage, specifically George Best's *A True Discourse of the Late Voyages of Discoverie of a Passage to Cathaya* (1578). One of Frobisher's ships, the *Emmanuel*, which was a *busse*, hence the island's name, supposedly sailed along the island on its homeward journey



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in 1578. Hakluyt included a description of the island in his *Principal Navigations* (1598). It was variably sighted and sought by seventeenth-century navigators and John Seller wrote charted it his *English Pilot* (1671). The Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) sent an expedition after it in 1675, but they found nothing. By the eighteenth-century, cartographers supposed the island was fabulous or sunken, demoting it to a navigational hazard. A further voyage in 1791 finally proved its non-existence.

The map includes eight compass roses. These are connected with the loxodromic lines. Loxodromes, also known as rhumb lines, are lines of consistent bearing—they intersect meridians (lines of latitude) at the same angle. On a Mercator projection, rhumb lines appear straight, hence the utility for navigators of that type of chart. Here, on a polar projection, they are curved. That is because, although they can appear straight on a chart, to actually approach meridians at the same angle, one would sail a curved line that arced toward the pole, eventually arriving at the pole itself.

The map is also highly decorative. Ships can be found at sea, and there are two especially intriguing cartouches. In the upper left corner is a large cloudbank; windheads protrude from the edges, blasting the Arctic with icy gusts. To the left is a naked man gnawing at a hunk of meat, an association of the region with wildness. To the right is an aged man leaning over a stew, old man winter tucking in for the season.

In the lower right two Inuit men with bows and quivers of arrows point to a bear and two foxes. Map cartouches like this would have been some of the only visual information available to readers about Arctic peoples.

States

The map appeared in three known states:

1. c. 1638 Without the dedication on the left-hand side
2. 1645. With dedication to GVILIELMO BACKER DE CORNELJI , signed by Joan Blaeu. No other alterations.
3. undated in Burden. c. 1650? With Groenlandia named.

This is an example of a first state of the map.

Detailed Condition: