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[Spanish Main] *Insulae Americanae in Oceano Septentrionali cum Terris adiacentibus*

Stock#: 99669
Map Maker: Jansson
Date: 1640 circa
Place: Amsterdam
Color: Outline Color
Condition: VG
Size: 20.5 x 15 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

The Hotly Contested Caribbean from an Eminent Dutch Cartographer

Fine example of Jansson's edition of Hessel Gerritsz' rare chart of the Caribbean.

The present chart is based on Gerritsz' 1631 chart, which was also published in a separate edition by Jansson's rival, the Blaeu family (same title, 1635). Gerritsz' chart was based on information he had as the hydrographer to the Dutch West India Company, but also gathered on his 1628 voyage to South America and the West Indies. It was a considerable improvement on previous charts, especially amongst the islands of the Caribbean and in the Chesapeake Bay region.

The coverage of this chart is slightly wider than Gerritsz's, however, as it encompasses the west coast of Central America as well. It also has identical nomenclature with the Gerritsz and Blaeu charts, except that Jansson does not include Virginia as Blaeu does.

The chart stretches from the Chesapeake to Guyana, and from Central America to Bermuda. The central focus is on the Caribbean, with its many islands. The seas are filled with rhumb lines, ostensibly for navigation, and compass roses. There are also large ships sailing the waves.

The scale bar, flanked by cherubs with a cross staff and dividers, is set in northern South America. The title cartouche is also framed by cherubs, but there is also a menagerie of the region's animals, namely a turtle, snakes, lizards, and a bat.



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The Atlantic and especially the Caribbean at this time was a hotly contested arena amongst European empires. The English nominally controlled the area around Chesapeake Bay and farther north at this time, although New Amsterdam was a Dutch colony when this chart was made. The Spanish had colonies in Jamaica, Florida, New Spain (Mexico), Cuba, and along most of the north coast of South America (today's Venezuela and Colombia). Curacao passed from Spanish to Dutch hands in 1634, and they were soon to gain power in Suriname as well.

The Dutch Golden Age and the expansion of trade

The Dutch experienced what has been referred to by historians as a Golden Age in the seventeenth century, although this was achieved via investment and participation in the human slave trade. The term can apply to the extraordinary volume and quality of Dutch art in this period, to the prominence of Dutch traders in international commerce and finance, as well as to the dominance of Dutch geographers and publishers, who led the European map and atlas trade throughout the century.

Dutch trade focused both east and west. The Moluccas, just west of Papua, were of importance for they were the vaunted Spice Islands, originally the only source in the world for nutmeg, mace, and cloves. The Portuguese were the first Europeans to gain power in the East Indies, trading for spices in the Moluccas and controlling the spice market in Europe.

The Dutch wanted in on the lucrative trade, but they also had to contend with the Portuguese. The first Dutch expedition, led by Cornelis de Houtman in 1595, avoided India, the Strait of Malacca, and the Moluccas—Portuguese strongholds—in favor of the Sunda Strait. The Dutch set up their trade centers on the island of Java, at Bantam and, later, Batavia. After Houtman, the second Dutch expedition (1598-1600) quickly set sail for the East Indies. It was followed by five others. In 1602, the most powerful of these merchants and the Dutch government, the States General, created the Dutch East India Company (VOC), a monopoly to control the East Indies trade.

Meanwhile, other merchants had their eyes on the Atlantic. Here, the Dutch had to contend with the trade monopolies of the Portuguese and the Spanish. The Dutch began to strike at their colonies in the West Indies and in South America. Many of these privateers were funded by the West India Company, founded in 1621. Run by directors, like the VOC, the West India Company (WIC) was given its own monopoly over trade with Africa and the Americas. With the support of the States General, the WIC established outposts on the African coast and then ferried human cargo across the Atlantic.

The WIC gained footholds in the Americas thanks to captains like Piet Heyn, who seized a Spanish treasure fleet near Cuba in 1628. The company began to make settlements in Brazil in the 1630 but had to give them up to the Portuguese in 1654. They had more success in the Caribbean, where they set up



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holdings in Guyana, Aruba, Curacao, and Saint Martin. New Netherland, now New York, began as a company province in 1623 and was ceded to the English in 1667.

States of the map

There are two states of the map:

State 1: Jansson imprint, the plate was made in 1636 and used in the *Appendix Atlantis* throughout the seventeenth century.

State 2: Jansson imprint removed, replaced by that of Valk and Schenk in ca. 1696.

Detailed Condition: