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## **A PILOT FOR THE SLAVE TRADE**

**The African Pilot: Being a Collection of New and Accurate Charts, on a Large Scale, of the Coasts, Islands, and Harbours of Africa, from the Straits of Gibraltar to Cape Negro; Including also The Atlantic and Southern Oceans. On Twenty Sheets. Compiled from the Draughts, Observations, Journals &c of Messrs. Robert Norris, William Woodville, and Archibald Dalzel, of Liverpool, and under their Inspection. The Whole interspersed with numerous Appearances of the Land, &c. &c.**

### **Author**

SAYER, Robert

### **Publication date**

[after 12th May, 1794].

### **Publisher**

Printed and Published by Laurie and Whittle, No. 53, Fleet-Street, successors to the late Mr. Robert Sayer,

### **Publication place**

London,

### **Physical description**

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paste-down. Contemporary marbled paper boards, backed with later tan calf, original maroon morocco lettering-piece.

### **Dimensions**

730 by 300mm. (28.75 by 11.75 inches).

### **Notes**

The earliest known example of Sayer's scarce 'African Pilot', with his imprint on the title-page "Robert Sayer, Fleet Street [Price £2. 12. 6. Half Bound]" obscured by his successors, Laurie and Whittle's, over-slip imprint. The charts date from 1788 to 1794. We can find no record of an example with just the original Sayer imprint; the British Library holds an example with Laurie & Whittle's imprint, and manuscript drafts/proofs of three maps, all dated 1799.

'The African Pilot' describes routes between West Africa, the West Indies, and the Americas, including the Middle Passage, the route by which ships crossed the Atlantic Ocean with their cargo of slaves. Much of the information on many of these charts is credited to a number of high profile individuals involved in the Slave Trade, for and against. They include Robert Norris, William Woodville and Archibald Dalzel. Other eminent people associated with these charts are Sir Thomas Boulden Thompson, Royal Navy; and Sir George Young, a campaigner with William Wilberforce against slavery. The large chart of the Atlantic Ocean, that opens this pilot, includes not only printed tracks of ships carrying slaves from the west coast of Africa, to the West Indies in the 1780s, via the notorious Middle Passage, but also the penciled tracks of 2 ships captained by John Knox, including one that specifies slaves as the cargo, in 1788. Although the second sheet of the first chart extends to the Cape of Good Hope, the last chart in the pilot, only goes as far as Cape Negro, on the coast of Angola.

The list of charts are as follows:

1-2. 'A New & Correct Chart of the Whole of the Atlantic and Western Oceans...Dedicated to Robert Preston, Trinity House'. Robert Sayer, June 2nd, 1788. 4 sheets joined to make 2 folding charts, with 2 insets of Port Praya, and the Harbour of Rio Janeiro with the Coast of Brasil from Cape Frio to Gavea (with a penciled track dated 17th and 18th February, 1829). "Track of the Ship James of Liverpool, Capt. John Knox in 1785", showing it leaving Liverpool on the 23rd of March, and arriving in Cape and River Sierra Leone on the 20th of April. Another track shows John Knox captaining the Lark from Cape Mount [south of Sierra Leone] with slaves to the West Indies in 1788". A separate track shows the route of a ship from the south coast of Ireland to the Virgin Islands

3. 'Chart of the Acores (Hawks) Islands, called also Flemish and Western Islands'. Laurie & Whittle, 12th May 1794.

4. 'A New Chart of the Coast of Africa from the Straits of Gibraltar to Cape Blanco with Madeira and the Canary Islands'. Robert Sayer, January 1st, 1789. 2 sheets joined, with an inset of Mogadore, and a penciled "track of the Ship James of Liverpool, Capt. John Knox in 1785" from 4th April, to the 13th.

5. 'A Chart of Madeira and the Canary Islands'. Laurie & Whittle, 12th May, 1794. With an inset of the harbor between Lanzarote and Graciosa.

6. 'A New Chart of the Coast of Africa between Cape Blanco and the River Gambia'. Robert Sayer, January 1st, 1789. With an inset of the coast of Goree, and another of the Bay of Portendick of Joura.

7. 'The Cape Verd Islands' and 'A View of Praya Bay', 2 engravings on one sheet. Robert Sayer, 20th

April, 1788.

8. 'A New Survey of the Coast of Africa from Senegal and Cape Verd to Cape St Ann'. Robert Sayer, January 1st, 1792. 2 sheets, joined and folding, with insets of 'The Road of Bissao', 'The Volcanic Islands...', and the east point of Bananas Island.

9. 'A New Survey of that coast of the part of Africa comprised between Cape Verga and Cape Formoso, including chiefly the Windward and Gold Coasts'. Laurie & Whittle, 12th May, 1794. 2 sheets, joined and folding, with insets of the entrance to the river of Sierra Leone, and the course of the Gato River.

10. 'A Survey of the Entrance to Sierra Leona River of Captain Thomson of his Majesty's Ship Nautilus'. Robert Sayer, 27th April, 1792.

11. 'A Plan of the River Sherbro with Yawry Bay. By Ralph Fisher in the Sloop Polly'. Robert Sayer, May 1st, 1789.

12. 'A New Chart of the Coast of Africa between Cape Formosa and Cape Negro. With the Adjacent Islands'. Robert Sayer, November 1st, 1792. 2 sheets, joined and folding, with insets of Anna de Chaves Bay, Bonny River, Old Calebar, Bimbia, Cameroons River, Mayumba Bay, Ambriz Road, Fish bay, and Benguela and Catumbela Roads (upper lefthand corner strengthened on verso).

The broadside on the inside front cover, advertises the business of Ann Smith, who continued her late husband Egerton-Smith's business and describing the atlases, charts and instruments she sold.

This atlas was sold by Ann Smith, widow of Egerton Smith, a Liverpool map and chart-seller and mathematical instrument maker, who died in 1788. She was joined by their two sons, Egerton jnr and William, sometime after 1796. She left the trade around 1800.

Robert Sayer (1725-1794) was a leading London print- and mapseller, mapmaker and publisher. He was apprenticed in the Stationers' Company, belatedly made free by redemption on 6th September 1748. In January 1747, his elder brother James jr. had married Mary Overton, widow of the print- and mapseller and publisher Philip Overton. It seems likely his freedom coincided with his joining Mary Overton; by 20th December 1748, he had taken over the firm. The Revolutionary War was a time of financial success for Sayer, and he became very wealthy; however, by about 1790 he was suffering from ill-health; in about 1792 he took on Robert Laurie and James Whittle as junior partners and sold them the business, again on favourable terms, with them taking control on 12th May 1794, after Sayer's death.

Robert Laurie (1755-1836) was apprenticed to Robert Sayer in 1770 and made free in 1777. He was a skilled artist, who exhibited at the Society of Artists from 1770, winning a silver palette for a drawing in 1770, and he was also an accomplished engraver of mezzotint portraits and produced views and other decorative items. In about 1792 he returned to the Sayer business and took it over from the ailing Sayer in 1794. James Whittle (1757-1818) was apprenticed into the Needlemakers' Company, evidently made free by 1792, and joined with Laurie to take over the Sayer business in 1794.

The foundation of their business was the existing Sayer stock of printing plates, both for maps and atlases and also decorative prints, but they continued to add new material to freshen up the atlases, as well as separately-published maps on topical issues, notably events during the Napoleonic Wars.

Rare: no examples with Sayer's original imprint recorded; only one example, with Laurie & Whittle's imprint, dated 1799, in the British Library.

## **Bibliography**

### **Provenance**

Provenance: 1. Early nineteenth century pencilled tracks of ships captained by John Knows in the late 1780s, from Liverpool to Sierra Leone, and across the Atlantic to the West Indies.

### **Price:**

**Inventory reference:** 14485