

Engraved map, hand-coloured, dissected and mounted on linen.

NEW YORK “THE CAPITAL OF THE 13 UNITED STATES OF AMERICA”

Bowles’s Geographical Game of the World, in a New Complete and Elegant Tour through the known parts thereof, laid down on Mercator’s Projection.

Author
BOWLES, Carington

Publication date
[c.1790]

Publisher
Printed for the Proprietor Carington Bowles, No.69 St. Paul’s Church Yard,

Publication place
London,

Physical description
Engraved map, hand-coloured, dissected and mounted on linen.

Dimensions
490 by 850mm. (19.25 by 33.5 inches).

Notes
Rare cartographic game of the world.

The game begins in the Azores, and heads down the west coast of Africa, passing St Helena, and the Cape of Good Hope were you “stay 3 turns to survey the Dutch Settlement”, from there the player

heads up the east coast and into the Red Sea to Mecea (Makkah or Mecca) “to which the followers of Mahomet are to make a pilgrimage once in their lives”. The player leaves the Arabian Peninsula, journeying through Iran and into India, where one must stay a turn in Calcutta, the capital of Bengal, “to see the richest country in the world, but take care to avoid the Black hole”. From here they head south to Bencoolen on Sumatra, the “principal British Settlement in the East Indian Islands”, hence to Australia and Botany Bay “the first European Colony in New South Wales”. From there they head north through the Philippines and on to Canton “the only sea port in China, where European’s are suffered to trade, and the Grand mart of Tea”. The player then turns their attention to Russia, Nova Zembla. The player arrives in the New World through Baffin’s Bay “discovered by an Englishman in quest of a North West Passage”. From there, they journey to Hudson’s Bay, the Baring Straits, to the Society Islands in the Pacific; then to Central and South America, stopping at Mexico City, Buenos Aires, and up to New York “the capital of the 13 United States of America”. From hence they travel to the Old World via Greenland, “noted for its Whale Fisheries”. After an enjoyable tour through Europe, the player finishes in London “the Greatest Commerical City in the World”.

The Bowles Family

The family business was established by Thomas Bowles (I) (d1720). The core of his business, and that of his successors, was print-selling and publishing, with a sideline in maps that might be of interest to visitors to his shop, found at the Corner of “Paul’s Alley”, next door to the Chapter-House in St. Paul’s Church Yard, a bustling thoroughfare in the heart of the City of London, by St. Paul’s Cathedral.

He was followed into business by his two sons, Thomas (II) and John; the business was transferred to Thomas (II) in about 1714, with the agreement that he would pay a total of £1,000 to John when he came of age, so he could set up his own business. Thomas (II) (1688-1767) went on to become a leading, and highly successful, London printseller and publisher. As a retailer, he also catered to map buyers; he published what might be termed “good shop stock”: separately published plans of London and environs, including an early pocket plan of the city, maps of England and Wales, Scotland, the British Isles, the world and so on. He was also a partner in a number of atlas projects, notably Owen and Bowen’s road-book, the ‘Britannia Depicta’, (1720), Moll’s ‘New Description of England and Wales’ (1724), ‘The World Described’ (1726 onward) and the ‘Large English Atlas’ in the 1750s.

Then, often working in conjunction with his brother, he published a number of interesting broadsheet maps depicting important events of the period, such as theatre of war maps, siege-plans, and battle-plans that would interest and inform his customers, to supplement the brief accounts in the news-sheets of the day, which were mostly unillustrated. Much of Bowles’s broadsheet output is rare today.

His brother John Bowles (1701-1779), in map terms at least, is the more interesting of the brothers; without the benefit of an existing stock to exploit, he had to rely on producing new and interesting maps for his clients. He is generally to be found as a co-partner with his brother on atlas projects, and they sometimes shared other publications. They were also avid buyers of existing plates, which could be put back into service, but John was a prolific publisher of original material, sold separately over his shop counter, whether detailing the latest discoveries in Arctic Canada, Spanish sieges of Gibraltar, maps of London with the latest developments, or wall maps of the world, Americas, and so on.

In about 1753, he was joined in partnership with his son Carington, and they worked together for about ten years as John Bowles & Son; by 1762, Thomas (II) had retired in favour of his son Thomas

(III), but in that year Thomas (III) died suddenly. His father was compelled to return to trade, but with no intention of remaining; a deal was struck, and Carington left the partnership with his father to take over from Thomas (II) and thereafter they maintained separate businesses. The break does not seem to have been entirely a happy one; they continued to co-operate on existing stock, but generated little new together; when John died in 1779, the business went to Robert Wilkinson, who continued it on into the eighteenth century, content to reuse the existing plate stock with little interest in improving it.

Carington (1724-1793) was a printseller in his uncle's tradition; he published interesting and rare maps, suitable for shop stock, notably capitalizing on the new genre of cartographic game maps and the new demand for road-books, with his 'Post-Chaise Companion' (c1780), while blending map and caricature print in publishing Robert Dighton's drawings of England and Wales, Scotland and Ireland depicted as human figures. He was succeeded, in turn by his son, Henry Carington Bowles (1763-1852) and Samuel Carver, who exploited, rather than replenished, the existing plate stock.

Rare. We are only able to trace one institutional example: Mc Gill University Library, Quebec.

Bibliography

Provenance

Price: £3500

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