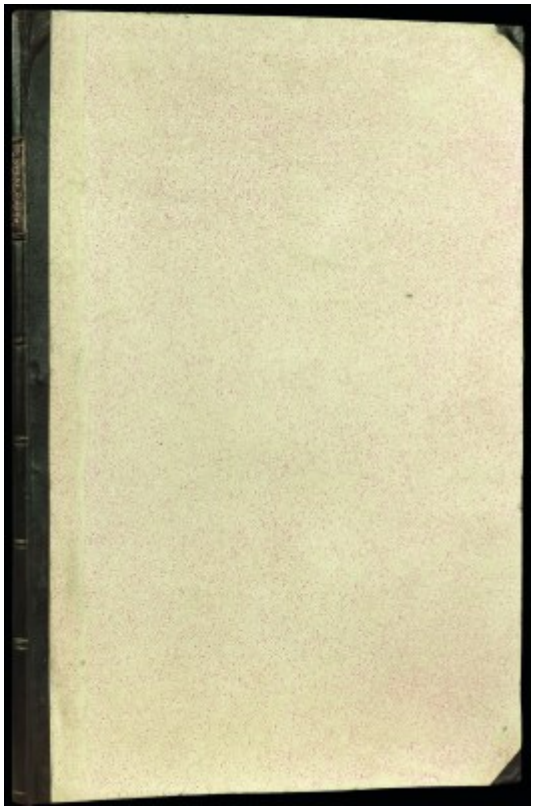


Large folio (650 by 450mm), large engraved chart on six sheets, manuscript inscription ‘Ship ann alexander… Lat 3-44 Long… 88-30, Josiah Howland’, to front endpaper, track of the Ann Alexander to the second, third, and last sheet, dated 1830, half-calf over marbled paper boards, spine in compartments gilt.

NORIE’S RARE CHART OF THE PACIFIC WITH A TAIL OF ‘MOBY DICK’

A New Chart of the Pacific Ocean, Exhibiting The Western Coast of America, from Cape Horn to Beerings Strait, The Eastern Shores of Asia Including Japan, China and Australia, and all the numerous Islands and known Dangers Situated in Polynesia and Australia, Correctly drawn and Regulated according to the most Approved and Modern Surveys and Astronomical Observations By J.W. Norie, Hydrographer &c., &c. 1825.

Author
NORIE, J[ohn] W[illiam]

Publication date
October 1st, 1825. Corrected to 1826.

Publisher
Published as the Act directs, by J.W. Norie & Co. at the Navigation Warehouse and Naval Academy No. 157 Leadenhall Street,

Publication place
London,

Physical description
Large folio (650 by 450mm), large engraved chart on six sheets, manuscript inscription ‘Ship ann alexander… Lat 3-44 Long… 88-30, Josiah Howland’, to front endpaper, track of the Ann Alexander to the second, third, and last sheet, dated 1830, half-calf over marbled paper boards, spine in

compartments gilt.

Dimensions

Notes
This particular chart was used aboard the whaler ‘Ann Alexander’, of New Bedford, during its Pacific voyage of 1828-1832. An inscription to the front endpaper gives the name of the ‘Ann Alexander’ together with a set of coordinates (33o 44mins Lat and 88o 30mins Long), and the name of Josiah Howland the master of the ship. The coordinates place her just north of the Galapagos Islands, and indeed the track marked upon the chart bears this out.

The ship ‘Ann Alexander’ had a long and fascinating history. It is first mentioned in 1805, when, during a voyage between New Bedford and Livorno she went to the aid of the victorious though battered British Fleet at Trafalgar. By the mid-1820s the ‘Ann’ was involved in the highly profitable Pacific whaling industry. It was an industry that would prove fatal for her, as in the August of 1851 she was holed under the water line by “a maddened [sperm] whale” just off the Galapagos Islands, and the crew was forced to abandon her. By coincidence, the first edition of Hermann Melville’s ‘Moby Dick’ was published some two months after the incident. Melville, never one for understatement commented on the fate of the ‘Ann Alexander’ in a letter to the famous publisher and biographer, Evert Duychinck:

“For some days past being engaged in the woods with axe, wedge, & beetle, the Whale had almost completely slipped me for the time (& I was the merrier for it) when Crash! comes Moby Dick himself (as you justly say) & reminds me of what I have been about for part of the last year or two. It is really & truly a surprising coincidence — to say the least. I make no doubt it is Moby Dick himself, for there is no account of his capture after the sad fate of the Pequod about fourteen years ago. — Ye Gods! What a commentator is this Ann Alexander whale. What he has to say is short & pithy & very much to the point. I wonder if my evil art has raised this monster.”

John William Norie (1772 – 1843) was a mathematician, hydrographer, chart maker and publisher of nautical books. His most famous work was the ‘Epitome of Practical Navigation’ (1805), which became the standard work on navigation and went through many editions. Norie began his career working with William Heather, who ran the Naval Academy and Naval Warehouse in Leadenhall Street from 1795, which sold navigational instruments, charts, and books on navigation. Norie took over the Naval Warehouse after Heather’s retirement and founded the company J.W. Norie and Company in 1813. After Norie’s death the company became Norie and Wilson, then in 1903 Imray, Laurie, Norie & Wilson.

All working sea charts from this era are rare, and the present chart is no exception; we were only able to trace one institutional example that in the Brown University Library; with corrections to 1844.

Bibliography
OCLC 54042340.

Provenance

Price:

Inventory reference: 1123

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