



Original pen and ink and colour wash on vellum, contemporary manuscript title on verso "Hudson Market", later inscription "Vesey Street Market", "3-S", old vertical folds.

ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPT PLAT MAP OF THE AREA IN LOWER MANHATTAN THAT WOULD LATER BECOME THE SITE OF THE WORLD TRADE CENTER, AND ULTIMATELY THE 9/11 MEMORIAL

Hudson Market Done by Order of the Corporation by John W. Comb Esq., City Surveyor, New York, 22nd December, 1784. Examined & Approved by the Common Council,... & ordered to be filed in the Clerk's Office. Rob.t Benson Esq.

Author

McCOMB, John; and Robert BENSON Esq.,

Publication date

this 7th March, 1785.

Publisher

Publication place

New York,

Physical description

Original pen and ink and colour wash on vellum, contemporary manuscript title on verso "Hudson Market", later inscription "Vesey Street Market", "3-S", old vertical folds.

Dimensions

285 by 315mm (11.25 by 12.5 inches).

Notes

The new Hudson Market, historically known as the Bear Market, is depicted in this map oriented with southeast to the top, bordered by Greenwich Street to the left, Vesey Street and "Corporation Dock" at the bottom, Partition Street along the top, and a "Dock" and a "Slip" extending into the Hudson River on the right. The survey is amongst the earliest work of the young City Surveyor, John McComb, and was prepared to record the auction of nine new lots, here coloured green, on land recently reclaimed from the Hudson River.

What is now the site of the 9/11 Memorial, first appeared in a survey of 1625, as one small corner of thirty-three acres set aside to grow food for the colony of the Dutch West India Company. In an effort to colonize Manhattan, the Dutch offered leases and land grants, and this acreage along the North River, was divided into farms, or "bouweries". In 1636, Annetje Jansen became the owner of one of the farms when she was widowed. In 1664, the British gained control of New Amsterdam, and in 1671, Annetje's heirs sold the Bouwery Farm, which extended from Broadway to the Hudson, and from today's Cortlandt Street to Fulton Street, to Colonel Francis Lovelace, the governor of New York. He renamed the Bouwery Farm, the King's Farm. In 1697, the Crown leased the King's Farm to Trinity Church for "60 bushells of winter wheat".

Over time, the King's Farm, became the Queen's Farm (for Queen Anne), and then the Church Farm (for Trinity Church), but, it was not until the eighteenth century, that this remote piece of land, bordered by swampland and waterfront, began to expand. The slips that appear in this map, were long a feature of the waterfront of lower Manhattan. They extend out into the water, creating small sheltered moorings for watercraft. Inevitably, the inlets silt up, and were opportunistically filled in. The adjacent streets were extended, and new slips created, along with new prime waterfront real estate.

"New York's landfill had begun in earnest in 1686, when Governor Dongan issued a charter that granted the city the right to raise revenue by selling "water lots." Buyers were able to build slips and create land between the high- and low-water marks. In 1730, the city was given even greater latitude: the Montgomerie Charter allowed the sale of land four hundred feet out into the river, past the low-water mark. The following year, the Common Council granted John Chambers "all the Ground under Water in the Rear of his Said Lott from high water Mark to Low Water Mark". For this he would pay an annual rent of six pence per foot of shoreline. He was also required to construct "A Street of five and forty foot in breadth at the foot of the Bank the Center of which Street to be at high Water Mark, and also Another Street next and fronting Hudsons River of thirty foot in breadth"" (Schine). The forty-five-foot-wide street became Greenwich Street, the left-hand border of this map.

Greenwich, Vesey and Partition, now Fulton, Streets, first appear on a map in 1754. In 1761, Partition and Vesey Streets were ceded by Trinity Church to the City, and the Church Farm soon became a hive of frantic commercial and maritime activity. In 1762, the property was surveyed and mapped, and on the 'Ratzen Plan' of 1766-67, the ferry to Paulus Hook, New Jersey, is clearly shown leaving from Cortlandt Street, at the bottom of the King's Wharf.

In 1771, the Bear Market was built between Partition and Vesey Streets. It was so-named because a local butcher shot and killed a bear crossing the Hudson River, and displayed it there. It became one of the most important markets in the city, but on September 21, 1776, a few weeks after the Battle of Brooklyn, when the British troops wrested Manhattan from Washington's Colonial Army, a fire swept through the City, destroying a quarter of its buildings, including everything on the area shown in this map.

The current map shows the area about one hundred years later, New York has risen from the ashes,

and the markets out on the western edge of lower Manhattan are stimulating commercial development on the western shore. The Hudson Market was established in 1784, even though locals still insisted on calling it the Bear Market: "The shore on the westerly side of this market-house ran almost up against it, when it was built, but after a period the wharf was docked out, so that "nine lots of 23 feet front, and from 60-90 feet in length fronting the river and slip", were sold at auction in 1784; a space of twenty-eight feet broad "should be reserved in the rear of and extending in length parallel to the market, from Partition to Vesey Streets"" (De Voe).

The Hudson Market, or Bear Market, flourished until 1812, when it became the Washington Market, only finally closing its doors in 1960, when the concept of a World Trade Center began to take real shape.

John McComb (fl1784-1792)

The initial survey for the new Hudson Market was conducted by John McComb, Sr, who began his career as a bricklayer, and was a city surveyor of New York from 1784 to 1792. He was active in the General Society of Mechanics and Tradesmen, serving as secretary from 1787 to 1791.

His son, John McComb Jr. (1763-1853), who initially trained under his father, became a renowned American, who first appears in the records in 1790, when he submitted designs for Government House in New York, the proposed residence for the president of the United States. He is best known for winning the competition in 1802, to design the New York City Hall.

Bibliography

De Voe 'The Market Book', 1862, page 314; Schine 'The Holy Ground', in the 'New Yorker', 2002

Provenance

Price: £10000

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