

Double-page engraved map, fine original colour in outline, contemporary annotation on verso in brown ink, some light marginal soiling.

THE FIRST PRINTED MAP OF NORTHAMPTONSHIRE, BEDFORDSHIRE, CAMBRIDGESHIRE, HUNTINGDONSHIRE AND RUTLAND

[Northamptonshire, Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire and Rutland] Northampton Bedfordiae Cantabrigiae Huntingdoniae et Rutlandiae Comitatuum Vicinarumq. Regionum partium adiacent nova veraq. Descriptio. A. D. 1576

Author
SAXTON, Christopher

Publication date
1579

Publisher
Christopher Saxton,

Publication place
London,

Physical description
Double-page engraved map, fine original colour in outline, contemporary annotation on verso in brown ink, some light marginal soiling.

Dimensions
420 by 550mm. (16.5 by 21.75 inches).

Notes

On this map are combined Saxton's surveys of Northamptonshire, Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Rutland, and then-county Huntingdonshire, marking the first time each county had been cartographically documented. It comes seventh in the series of 35 maps produced under the commission of Thomas Seckford and Lord Burghley, courtiers of Queen Elizabeth I, both of whom were interested in attaining precise representations of the English and Welsh counties. The rivers, forests, hills, settlements and estates of the counties are expressed here, as on all of Saxton's maps, by illustrations and names, written in English. While larger cities, such as Northampton and Buckingham, are illustrated with denser collections of buildings than the smaller towns, Cambridge stands out on this map as its most significant location. It is represented as a group of turreted buildings with a bridge leading to what must be the University Library on the opposite side of the River Cam. Due to the prestige of the university, where the cartographer himself may have studied, town plans of Cambridge had previously been produced, but there had never before been a survey of the entire county. Soon after its publication, Saxton's Atlas of England and Wales was known to be held at Peterhouse College, along with his great general map of England and Wales as the most valuable piece in its inventory. To the North of Cambridge in Huntingdon, there features a small hill labelled 'Begersbusshe', which is said to have been a particularly infamous meeting point from which the phrase 'go by beggar's bush' originated.

The names of the counties, in Latin, are recorded in an elaborate cartouche in the upper left corner of the map, surmounted by the royal coat-of-arms, although with the standard lion and dragon here replaced by winged cupids. Below, encircled by an olive wreath, is the Seckford crest accompanied by both its mottoes. Opposite this is found the map's scale, along with the banner identifying Saxton as the cartographer, but the name of the engraver is omitted. A much larger scale is used on this map than on most of the others in the atlas, due to the broad area covered across the five counties. Initially produced for defensive purposes, Saxton's work represents the vulnerable coastal areas in far more detailed, while the landlocked counties often grouped together. Additionally, like all the maps in Saxton's 'Atlas of England and Wales', this map bears his watermark, a bunch of grapes, to identify the work as original.

Bibliography

Brewer, 'A Dictionary of Phrase and Fable' (Cassell Ltd, 1868); 'Map of Northamptonshire, Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Huntigdonshire and Rutland' (The British Library Online Gallery, 2009); Delano Smith, 'Map Ownership in Sixteenth-Century Cambridge: The Evidence of Probate Inventories' (Imago Mundi, 1995); Evans, Lawrence, 'Christopher Saxton Elizabethan Map-Maker' (Wakefield Historical Publications & The Holland Press, 1979); 'Christopher Saxton's Five Counties Map 1576' (Beggars Bush: A Perambulation through the Disciplines of History, Geography, Archaeology, Literature, Philology, Natural History, Botany, Biography & Beggary, 2011).

Provenance

Price:

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