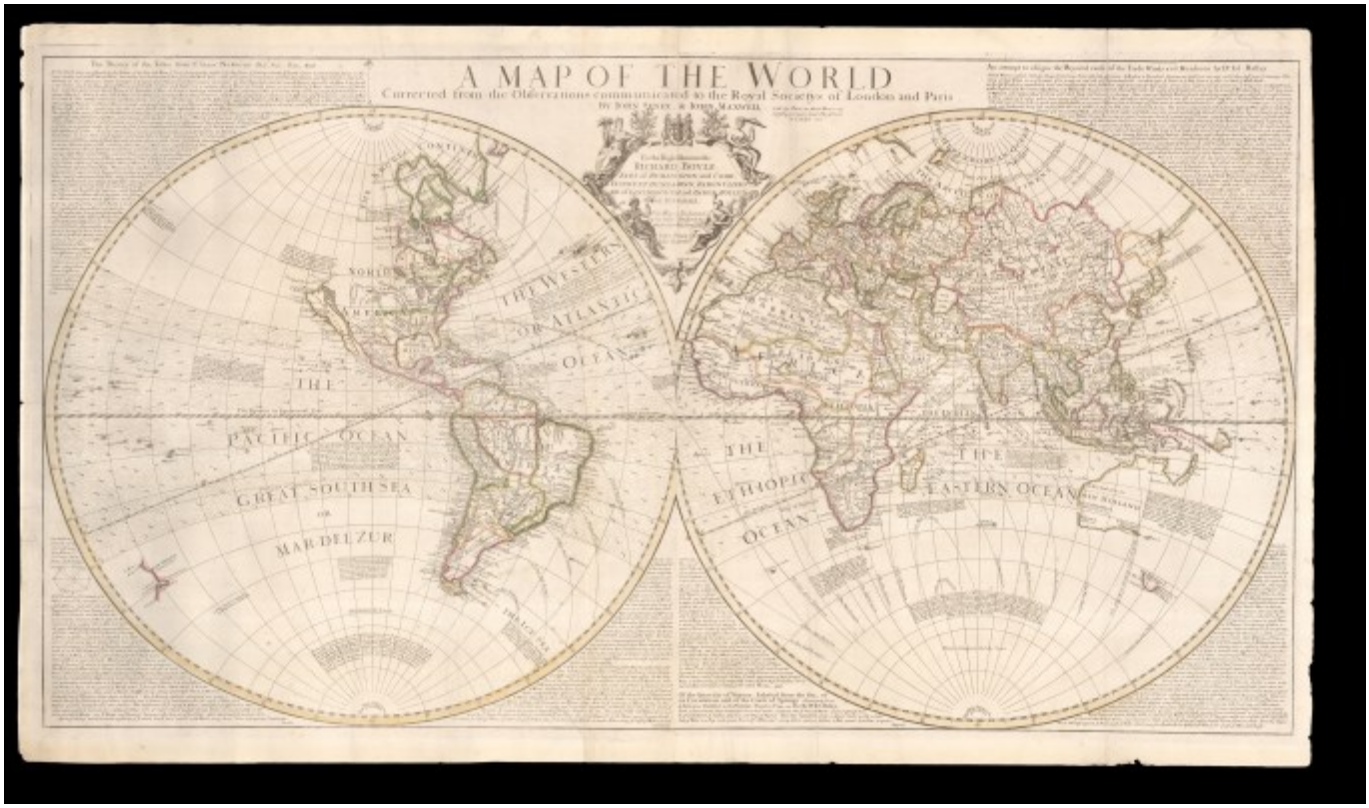

First issue. Large double-page engraved map on two joined sheets, with contemporary hand-colour in outline.

“A MOST DISMAL DESCRIPTION OF NEW HOLLAND” (BROWN)

A Map of the World Corrected from the Observations Communicated to the Royal Societys of London and Paris.

Author
SENEX, John; and John MAXWELL

Publication date
1711.

Publisher
Sold by Them at their House in Salisbury Court near Fleetstreet,

Publication place
London,

Physical description
First issue. Large double-page engraved map on two joined sheets, with contemporary hand-colour in outline.

Dimensions
586 by 1077mm (23 by 42.5 inches).

Notes
The scarce first issue of this magnificent double-hemisphere map of the world. On this early version, California is still shown as an island, New Albion is named, and Port Sir. F. Drake shown. Above

Cape Blanco is the supposed Strait of Anian, and there is a note that “These parts being as yet undiscovered, ’tis not certain whether America joins to the North-Eastern part of Tartary, whence it is most probable that it was peopled, being suppos’d to be separated, if at all, but by narrow straits”.

Within the map are “additional observations, notably a most dismal description of New Holland: “The Soil of Hollandia Nova is barren and Desart, no fresh but some salt water Rivers, no fourfooted Beasts except an Amphibious one as big as a Dog, with Sea Cows, and innumerable quantities of Rats as great as Cats, and black Swans and Parots; the Natives are Black and go naked; the Coast is low, foul and rocky, the inland parts high. Here abound Oysters, Lobsters, and Crabs, and vast numbers of troublesome Flies. Mr. Witsen. Phil trans No. 245″. This note is from Nicholaes Witsen’s paper ‘Observations in New Holland’, presented to the Philosophical Society in 1698. He was a knowledgeable and well connected Dutch statesman, once mayor of Amsterdam and administrator of the VOC” (Brown).

The map is surrounded in the margins with lengthy treatises: ‘The Theory of the Tides from Sr. Isaac Newton’s Phil. Nat. Pinc. Math’, ‘An attempt to assign the Physical cause of the Trade Winds and Monsoons by Dr. Ed. Halley’, and ‘An attempt to assign the Physical cause of the Trade Winds and Monsoons by Dr. Ed. Halley’. Senex’s partner, John Maxwell’s name is retained in the title.

The map was first co-published by John Senex and his then-partner, John Maxwell, in 1711, with both their names in the cartouche, and subsequently reissued, with variations, several times until around 1750.

The mapmaker
John Senex (1678-1740) was one of the most important English mapmakers and publishers of the first half of the eighteenth century. He was apprenticed to the important bookseller and publisher Robert Clavell, but an early association with Jeremiah Seller and Charles Price diverted him to a career as surveyor, cartographer, globemaker, mapseller and map publisher. Such was his contribution to the development of the British map trade in his lifetime, that he was honoured and recognised in 1728 by his election to the Royal Society, sponsored by some of the greatest scientists of the period.

His early career was relatively inauspicious; he worked in association with Jeremiah Seller and Charles Price for three years until the arrangement was ended by their bankruptcy around 1706. Between about 1709 and 1714 he partnered with John Maxwell (as here), and also, until about 1710, Charles Price; during this period, it is assumed that Price taught him surveying and engraving. Together Price and Senex announced proposals for an atlas of two-sheet maps of the world, a rival project to that by Herman Moll; when the partnership ended, Senex went on to publish his own version while Price worked with George Willdey on a similar atlas. Senex’s atlas, originally entitled The English Atlas (1714), was one of the most successful atlases of the day, remaining in print into the 1760s and possibly beyond.

Senex also worked as a jobbing engraver, and gradually became semi-official engraver to the Royal Society, to its printer William Taylor, with whom Senex was to work closely, and to leading figures within the Society, including Sir Edmund Halley and William Whiston; thus, Senex was to publish several important scientific maps, notably Halley and Whiston’s eclipse maps for the 1715 and 1724 eclipses, while this connection also provided the latest scientific data for his extensive range of terrestrial and celestial globes.

With this solid foundation, Senex’s business went on to become the most prestigious mapmaker and publisher in the 1730s, and one of the largest. He published a series of notable maps, and a sequence of posthumous catalogues issued by his widow and successor Mary Senex lists the most

important.

His stock-in-trade passed to his widow Mary, who continued the business until 1755, when she retired; William Herbert and Robert Sayer acquired the map stock, and James Ferguson the globe business.

Bibliography

Provenance

Price: £5000

Inventory reference: 22985