



Engraved map, with inset map and key, trimmed to neatline.

HOLLAR'S POST-FIRE SURVEY OF LONDON

A Map or groundplot of the City of London and the Suburbs thereof that is to say all which is within the iurisdiction of the Lord Mayor or properlie calld 't Londo[n] by whijch is exactly demonstrated the present condition thereof since the last sad accident of fire. The blanke space signifeing the burnt part & where the houses are exprest those places yet standi[n]g.

Author

HOLLAR, W[enceslaus]

Publication date

1666.

Publisher

Sold by Iohn Overton at the Whitehorse in little Brittain, next doore to little S. bartholomew gate,

Publication place

London,

Physical description

Engraved map, with inset map and key, trimmed to neatline.

Dimensions

265 by 342mm. (10.5 by 13.5 inches).

Notes

The Great Fire of London broke out in a bakery on Pudding Lane, on Sunday 2nd September 1666

and raged for three days destroying most of the City of London. By the end, the fire had consumed some 13,000 buildings from Temple in the west to The Tower in the east, and Cripple Gate in the north, with thousands of people being left homeless. Just five days after the flames had been tamed, the King commissioned Wenceslaus Hollar and Francis Sandford “to take an exact plan and survey of our city of London with the suburbs adjoining as the same now stands after the sad calamity of the late fire with a particular depiction of the ruins thereof”.

Hollar was an obvious choice as he had been preparing, since 1660, a large bird’s-eye view of the city, some “10 foot in breadth, and 5 foot upward”. Although his grand view was backed by the King, the project struggled for funding, and the Great Fire would make many of his endeavours redundant. Nonetheless, the two men worked quickly to survey the wreckage and by mid-November Hollar had engraved the first map showing the extent of the damage: ‘A Map of the Groundplott of the Citty of London with the Suburbes thereof...’.

Soon after, or more probably concurrently, he would engrave this map, for the map and printseller John Overton. The map is on the same scale as the former work, and bears an almost identical title. However, Hollar has slightly increased its extent to include Lincoln Inn’s in the west, and more buildings east of The Tower of London. The area devastated by the fire is shown devoid of house, only the street layout and the ground plans of the churches and principal public buildings are marked. The key, which has been moved to the lower right-hand corner, lists 101 churches, 82 of which had been consumed by the fire, together with a list of 24 public buildings and gates (A-Z), and 14 whares, staires, and docks (a-o). Hollar has also included, for the first time on any post fire map, an inset of the whole of London, ‘A General Map of the whole Citty of London with Westminster and all the suburbes...’, which puts into context just how devastating the fire was for central London.

This map together with John Leake’s survey of the city of 1667, which Hollar would also engrave, would form the basis for the reconstruction of the city. Hollar’s work was extensively used by the likes of John Evelyn and Robert Hooke, for the reconstruction of the city, and copied by many European mapsellers. The plan is even mentioned in glowing terms by Samuel Pepys in his diary, 22 November 1666:

“My Lord Boruncker did show me Hollar’s new print of the City, with a pretty representation of that part which is burnt, very fine indeed; and tells me that he was yesterday sworn the King’s servant, and that the King hath commanded him to go on with his great map of the City, which he was upon before the City burned, like Gombout of Paris, which I am Glad of.”

And by John Evelyn:

“I have since lighted upon Mr. Hollar’s late Plan, which looking upon as the most accurate hitherto, has caus’d me something to alter what I had so crudely don [sic]”.

The present example is the second state, which was printed and sold by John Overton.

Bibliography

NHG Hollar 1916 II; Pennington 1004ii; BM 1856,0607.6.

Provenance

Price: £10000

Inventory reference: 18354