



The search for the North West Passage

MORTIER, Pierre.

Carte Particuliere de L'Amerique Septentrionale ou sont Compris Le Destroit de Davids, Le Destroit de Hudson, &c.

Amsterdam, c.1705. Original colour. Two sheets conjoined, total 590 x 830mm.

£700

A fine example of this large chart showing from the west coast of Ireland, Iceland, Greenland and the bays of Arctic America. The abundance of English placenames is a testament to their efforts to find the North West Passage, hoping to reach the East Indies without having to pass the French and Spaniards! Of interest are the pair of channels traversing the tip of Greenland, the upper one called 'Destroit de M. Vorbischer' (Strait of Martin Frobisher). These appear as a consequence of the Zeno hoax of 1558, which put the mythical island of Frisland on most maps of the period. Martin Frobisher (1535-94) sailed across the Atlantic in 1576 to look for the North West Passage: he landed on Greenland but thought it to be the non-existent Frisland shown on his charts. When he sailed on and touched land he thought he had arrived in Greenland when in fact he was at what is now Frobisher Bay on Baffin Island in the Canadian Arctic. Entering the bay he believed he had discovered a strait on Greenland, and even two more voyages (1577 & 1578) did nothing to make him doubt himself. Over a century later this chart was published with his mistake still included. Frobisher did not have much luck: he also mistook iron pyrite for gold-bearing ore and a narwhal corpse for a unicorn. Fortunately his career as an English privateer



Altea Gallery Ltd. 35 Saint George St, London W1S 2FN
info@alteagallery.com - www.alteagallery.com
Tel : +44(0) 20 7491 0010

was more successful and his service during the Spanish Armada of 1588 earned him a knighthood. This chart was published in Mortier's issue of Jaillot's 'Atlas Nouveau', although it also appeared in Mortier's 'Neptune Francois' sea-atlas.

KOEMAN: Mor 1.

Stock ID :8709