

California's Long-Forgotten Historical Treasures

*Beautifully Engraved Federally-Issued
Copper Cartography Plates of California
Date To 19th Century*

LOS ANGELES, CA, USA, February 20, 2018 /EINPresswire.com/ -- From civilization's inception, mankind has sought to preserve its most important records via durable engraving. In Exodus, Moses descended Mount Sinai with the Ten Commandments engraved onto stone. NASA sent the Spacecraft Voyager on its deep space mission with greetings engraved on a solid gold disc. California has its own rich history similarly preserved, recorded on immense, forgotten copper sheets archived in government warehouses.



Santa Ana, CA 1894 map engravings

In 1879, the US Congress passed a law that established a division under the Department of the Interior to create area maps — “snapshots in time”. Completing the map for each geographical area, referred to as a Quad, was an herculean task that involved extensive field surveys, mapping, and finally, careful etching onto copper plates in a reverse intaglio method. The result: stunning master plates capable of reproducing the area maps via the most advanced technology of the period.

“

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Ben Benson

California, with its unique settlements and territories were a major focus of this project. Each Quad was titled to commemorate a then-prominent feature or place. Some titles are familiar today while others are novel.

In 2015 with little fanfare, the US Government decided to dispose of these historic treasures. Some plate sets went to governmental agencies or museums, while the remainder of the collection went for sale at auction; this is where Ben Benson comes in. Benson believes that when people learn of these unique, historical artifacts, they will find them important, meaningful as well as beautiful. The California Copper Map Plate collection can be viewed online at: BenBensonCollection.com. Examples of some of the plates featured are Capistrano, Golita, Santa Ana, Sacramento, Riverside and other less populous locations such as Boneyard Canyon, Camp Baldy or Esperanza.

Benson originally planned to bid only on the plates for New England where he was raised and he was not surprised when the Nantucket Island set sold for \$17,000 and Martha's Vineyard went for \$7,000 stating that “People in New England clearly treasure their history”. He was, however, bewildered when only a few bidders logged on to bid for their State's historical plates. Benson asks “Can it be that

people in California have less interest, or is it simply that no one knew of the obscure government auction and that the part of their amazing history could be theirs?"

If there was no interest on the part of the public, there was a high likelihood that the copper plates would be desired for their scrap – copper value and forever lost, Benson could not let that happen; he bid for each and every set that wasn't well-bid auction. Since then he has created a grassroots, get the word out campaign for California's plate collection.

In total, Benson acquired 83 California sets that can be seen online at: BenBensonCollection.com. In the first listing, for example, you will see "Santa Ana-1894" that covers the coastal areas around contemporary Newport Beach. If you look closely at the zoom photo of the paper map, you see a fledgling Newport Beach with a single railroad track and a few buildings along the shoreline.

The Quad names of the 83 California engraving sets (usually 2 or 3 plates per set) are: Acton, Adobe, Alder Creek, Banner Hill, Beartrap Canyon, Bell, Bidwell Bar, Black Butte, Boneyard Canyon, Bouquet Reservoir, Buena Vista Lake, Byron, Camp Baldy, Camp Bonita, Camp Rincon, Capistrano, Casa Desierte, Chico, Cima Mesa, Claremont, Coalinga, Covina, Davisville, Del Sur, Downieville, Dry Canyon, El Rico Ranch, Elsinore, Esperanza School, Fairmont, Goleta, Gorman, Grass Valley, Halls Flat, Harrington, Hi Vista, Hollister, Hueneme, Humphreys, Joshua, Kaiser, Kernville, La Cresenta, La Verne, Lang, Little Buttes, Little Rock, Little Tujunga, Llano, Manzana, Metz, Mokelumne, Mouth of Cantua Creek, Mt. Gleason, Mt. Lowe, Mt. Wilson, Oban, Ortigalita, Palmdale, Pearland, Piedras Blancas, Pozo, Quail, Randsburg, Ravenna, Red Mountain, Redrock Mountain, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Juan Bautista, Santa Ana, Santa Susana, Sierraville, Swarthout, Sylmar, Tierra Loma School, Trail Canyon, Triunfo Pass, Tujunga, Valyermo, Waterman Mountain, White Mountain, and Wilsona.



Closeup Santa Ana 1894 engravings



Newport Beach made from Santa Ana 1894 engravings

Benson believes Californians will indeed want to preserve these historical treasures. "I am not trying to make money at this, I will be happy to break even, my goal is simply to connect these artifacts with those who will appreciate them," Benson states.

The auction ends on March 14, 2018, with a minimum bid of \$200 per set. For more information, see the website at: BenBensonCollection.com or email us at: mapengravings@yahoo.com.

Finally, Mr. Benson kindly requests that those who possess local knowledge about the California locations and history that you please share your expertise so that we may enlighten others. Call Amy Novitzke, at: (302) 401-6639.

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