



Engraved view

KEY TO THE NEW WORLD AND RAMPART OF THE WEST INDIES' (SPANISH ROYAL DECREE)

Panorama de la Habana, Vista tomada desde Regla

Author

WILLMANN, Eduoard

Publication date

[1950].

Publisher

Rosendo Fernandez & Co,

Publication place

Havana,

Physical description

Engraved view

Dimensions

590 by 1175mm. (23.25 by 46.25 inches).

Notes

This sweeping panorama of mid-nineteenth century Havana, Cuba, taken from a hill above the town, shows the harbor in the middle distance with the entrance to the right, and was first published in Paris, in about 1855.

San Cristóbal de la Habana was founded in 1515 by the Spanish conquistador Diego Velázquez de Cuéllar, possibly near the present town of Batabanó on the south coast of the island. Since the

climate was poor, the region was swampy, and the mosquitoes voracious, the site was abandoned in favour of Havana's present location on the north coast of Cuba in 1519.

This natural deepwater harbour soon made Havana the most important port in the Caribbean. A Spanish royal decree of 1634 recognized its importance, calling it the 'Llave del Nuevo Mundo y Antemural de las Indias Occidentale', a phrase immortalised on the city's coat of arms. During the seventeenth century, eastbound fleets of Spanish treasure-ships from the New World anchored at Havana before embarking on the voyage across the Atlantic back to Spain. As a result, the port was under almost constant attack and frequently blockaded by competing foreign powers. The port's fortifications withstood all-comers until a three-month siege by the British under Admiral Sir George Pocock and the Earl of Albermarle, in 1763, took the city as a great prize. They held it for only six months until the treaty ending the Seven Years' War restored Havana to Spain.

Throughout the eighteenth century, Havana grew in importance as a port thriving on the sugar and slave trades between Europe and the Americas. By 1850, when this image was created by Willman, there was a small but important United States trading community established in Havana. Cuba became independent from Spain in 1898 with the aid of the U.S., and for six decades maintained a close economic and political ties with that country.

Edouard Willmann (1820-1877), remains a bit of an enigma: a German engraver, specialising in the burin.

Bibliography

Provenance

Price: £8000

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