An early edition of both of Napier's ground-breaking works on logarithms

John Napier, *Mirifici logarithmorum canonis descriptio.* Lyon: Barthélemy Vincent, 1620. 8 3/5 inches x 5 4/5 inches (220 mm x 147 mm), 160 pages. *Mirifici logarithmorum canonis constructio.* 1620. 8 3/5 inches x 5 4/5 inches (220 mm x 147 mm), 66 pages

John Napier (1550–1617), eighth Laird of Merchiston known as "Marvellous Merchiston," was a Scottish mathematician and theologian noted for the invention of logarithms and Napier's bones, a calculating device for multiplication and division. He was a well-educated man who sought solutions to practical problems, making improvements to agricultural methods, inventing military devices, and facilitating mathematical calculations. Napier was respected by many of the leading mathematicians and scientists of his time, and his publications were eagerly anticipated. He was a fervent Protestant and authored *Plaine Discovery of the Whole Revelation of Saint John* (1594), the first book of biblical interpretation to emerge from Scotland.

Mirifici logarithmorum canonis descriptio (A Description of the Admirable Table of Logarithms) contained both the the first appearance of the term logarithm and the first table of logarithms. *Mirifici logarithmorum canonis constructio,* published posthumously (although written before the *Descriptio*) in 1619 by Napier's son Robert and edited by Henry Briggs, explained the method used in Napier's calculation of his logarithms. His original logarithms are not the variety now in use; Napier and Briggs modified the earliest logarithms to create decimal logarithms, the first tables of which were calculated by Briggs.

Both of Napier's treatises are contained in this volume at the Bancoft Library at the University of California, Berkeley, and are bound in tan leather over boards with handwritten spine label with titles, author, and publication dates.

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