

Historical Maps Digitised



In 1884, the second USGS director John Wesley Powell briefed Congress on the need for a national mapping programme, stating, "The map once constructed should be enduring." In keeping with that spirit, the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) has publicly released more than 161,000 digitally scanned historical maps spanning in excess of 130 years and covering the conterminous (lower 48) states.

This [Historical Topographic Map Collection](#) provides a comprehensive repository of the landscape of the nation and tracks changes through time, providing essential clues critical in the understanding of the topography, geography and development in the US.

With the recent completion of the states of Massachusetts and Florida, the Historical Topographic Map Collection can offer, for free download, digital versions of the USGS legacy topographic map series which includes all scales and all editions originally published for the entire continental U.S.

As chartered, the USGS topographic mapping programme has accurately portrayed the complex geography of the nation through maps in the lithographic printed format. Since the official release of the digital, scanned collection in September 2011, more than 1.2 million historical topographic maps have been downloaded from the website— an average of more than 5,700 maps per day.

These chronological historical maps are an important national resource as they provide the long-term record and documentation of the natural, physical and cultural landscape. The history documented by this collection and the analysis of distribution and spatial patterns is invaluable throughout the sciences and non-science disciplines. Genealogists, historians, anthropologists, archeologists and others can use this collection for research as well as a framework on which a myriad of information can be presented in relation to the national landscape.

The maps are offered to the public at no cost in GeoPDF format or as a printed copy from the USGS Store and can be used in conjunction with the new USGS digital topographic map, the US Topo.

Similar historical maps for Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands and Pacific Territories will be available later in the summer of 2012.

<https://www.gim-international.com/content/article/historical-maps-digitised>
