

History of America's Maps in One App



Two of the United States' most authoritative mapping sources, the U.S. Geological Survey and Esri, have partnered to put the rich tapestry of U.S. historical maps into the hands of everyone. Available in time for the Fourth of July "Independence Day" and able to be accessed on all digital devices, the USGS Historical Topographic Map Explorer brings to life more than 178,000 maps dating from 1884 to 2006.

In the past, the USGS historical maps were available only as printed lithographic copies. More recently, the legacy quadrangles were made available as free, downloadable GeoPDF versions as part of the USGS [Historical Topographic Map Collection](#). The USGS Historical Topographic Map Explorer application allows users to access the historical maps as high-resolution georeferenced images for use in web mapping applications, and

features a timeline to easily select the desired maps.

USGS is pleased to see these historic topographic maps being made more accessible to the nation, said Kevin Gallagher, associate director of Core Science Systems for the USGS. They recognise the fundamental role of government in acquiring mapping information and putting it in the public domain. At the same time, they recognise the tremendous benefits of the private industry adding value through innovative approaches to access and distribution.

Using the app is quite simple:

1. Go to the weblink: <http://historicalmaps.arcgis.com/usgs/> (no need for a download from an app store)
2. Find/search the place of your choice and click on the map.
3. Select maps in the timeline.
4. Move the slider bar to see the changes over time.
5. Share it with friends.
6. Save a copy of the maps to your desktop.

Later this month, the app will be available in [GitHub](#), allowing the GIS community to create their own scanned and georeferenced collection, configure the app, and see these digital collections come to life.

Esri is pleased to partner with the USGS on this app to bring this national treasure to life, said Jack Dangermond, president, Esri. This application provides an easy way for anyone to explore the historic map collection by both place and time. The ArcGIS platform supports the building and sharing of amazing maps and content, such as this wonderful collection.

The USGS Historical Topographic Map Collection was officially launched on 12 September 2011. The project has been largely successful, with more than 6.8 million downloads to date. The project goal was reached in September 2012 for the lower 48 states, Alaska in mid-October, 2012, and periodically adds new historical maps when discovered and scanned.

For more information, go to: <http://nationalmap.gov/historical/index.html>