

Many people want maps that show an area of the United States as it existed many years ago. These are called historical maps, and there are two types.

The most common type consists of special maps prepared by commercial firms to show such historical features as battle-fields, military routes, or the paths taken by famous travelers. Typically, these maps are for sale to tourists at the sites of historical events.

The other type is the truly old map—one compiled by a surveyor or cartographer many years ago. Lewis and Clark, for example, made maps of their journeys into the Northwest Territories in 1803-6, and originals of some of these maps still exist.

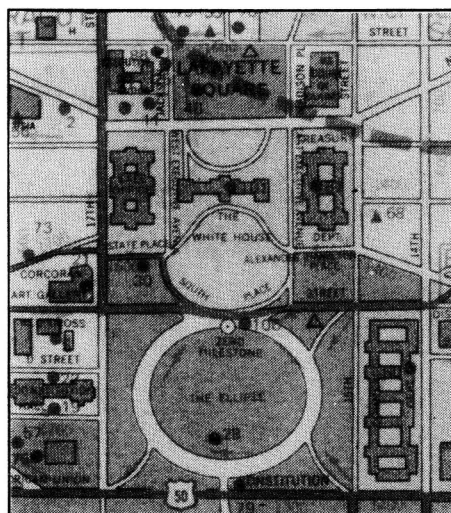
Uses of Old Maps

Old maps of the United States—and even of the 13 Colonies—are useful for a variety of purposes. A hand-drawn map of a township, with the landholders' names marked on their plots, might supply a necessary clue to a genealogist. Local historians can compare a series of maps of the same area compiled over a long period of time to learn how the area developed. In studies of military history, a knowledge of the cartography of the period is indispensable.

Researching Old Maps

Because there are many different kinds of old maps stored in many different collections, they are difficult to research. However, with perseverance you can probably find the map you want. There are many sources for you to investigate, ranging from historical societies to the cartographic offices of your State or local government to the National Archives and the Library of Congress.

The best place to begin a search is your local public or college library. As a first step, the reference librarian can help you make a list of historical associations in your State, using the *Directory of Historical Organizations in the United States and Canada* (published by the



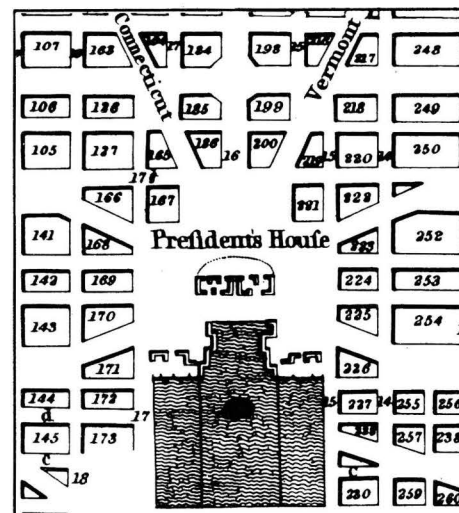
The Ellipse—1980

American Association for State and Local History, Nashville, Tenn.; 14th ed., 1990). These groups may have valuable collections and can suggest other places for you to look.

Other good sources of information for the maphunter are *Map Collections in the United States and Canada: A Directory* (compiled by David K. Carrington and Richard W. Stephenson and published by the Geography and Map Division of the Special Library Association, New York, N.Y.; 4th ed., 1985) and *Guide to U.S. Map Resources* (published by the American Library Association, Chicago and London; 2d ed., 1990). These may also be available through your library's reference desk.

The National Archives

The National Archives contains about 2 million maps produced by the Federal Government since 1774. A leaflet entitled "Cartographic and Architectural Branch" lists a number of publications, many of them available free, that describe the map collections of the National Archives. If your library does not have a copy, you can order the leaflet free (specify *General Information Leaflet #26*). One publication described in the leaflet is the "Guide to Cartographic Records in the National Archives." This book contains comprehensive descriptions of



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the National Archives map collections, including record group (file) numbers. It was designed to be especially useful to librarians, historians, and other professional researchers. The current price of the book is \$25 for customer pickup or \$28 for mail orders.

If the publications mentioned above are not available from your library, contact:

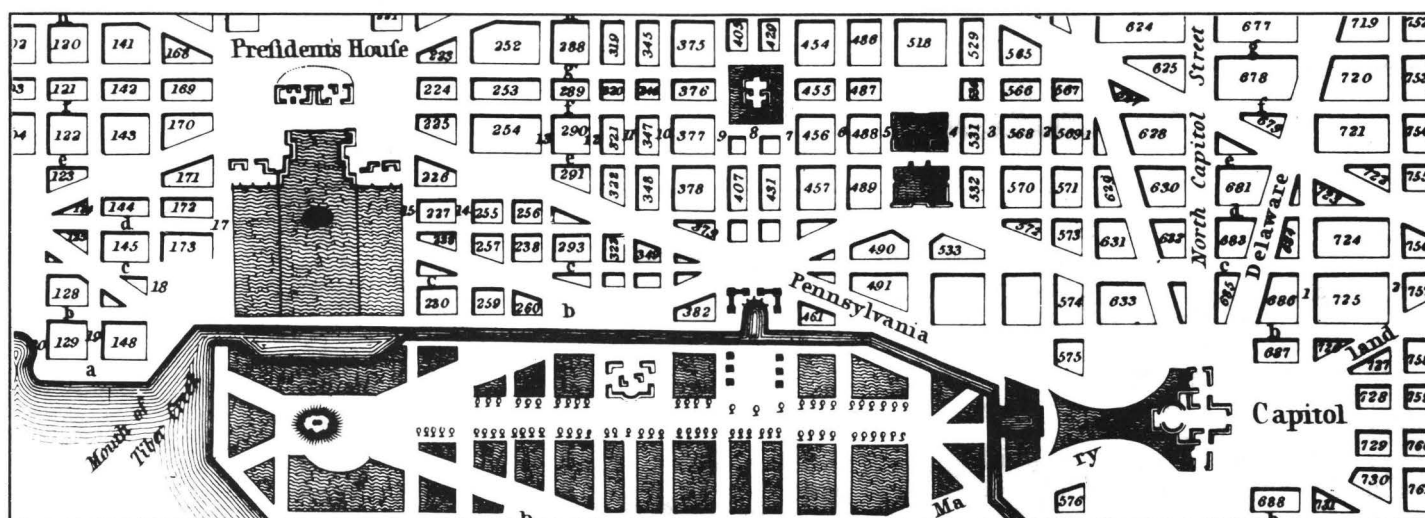
Publications Sales Branch
National Archives
8th and Pennsylvania Ave., NW.
Washington, DC 20408
202-501-5235

Mail orders for "Guide to Cartographic Records in the National Archives" can also be sent to:

National Archives Trust Fund
NEPS
Department 630
P.O. Box 100793
Atlanta, GA 30384

For information on map record holdings, contact:

National Archives and Records
Administration
Cartographic and Architectural Branch
(NNSC)
8601 Adelphi Rd.
College Park, MD 20740-6001
301-713-7040



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U.S. Geological Survey Maps

The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), established in 1879, began its library that same year to accumulate its holdings of maps of the United States and the surrounding territories. To obtain information about the availability of copies of these maps, describe the map you want and contact:

USGS Library
Cartographic Information Center
952 National Center
Reston, VA 20192
703-648-5555

A large number of historical topographic maps dating back to 1879 are contained in the reference holdings of the USGS Earth Science Information Centers (ESIC). Black-and-white paper reproductions of individual microfilm frames are available. Each reproduction costs \$12 with a \$3.50 handling charge per order mailed. The reproductions are nearly true to scale and of reasonable legibility, but they can fade.

If you are interested in obtaining a paper reproduction of a particular map, describe the map as completely as you can; include your name, address, organizational affiliation, and telephone number, and send to:

Reston-ESIC
507 National Center
Reston, VA 20192
703-648-6045

Library of Congress Maps

The Geography and Map Division of the Library of Congress has one of the world's great collections of maps and atlases. There is no single comprehensive catalog of the Library of Congress cartographic collection, but you can order two free pamphlets that will set you on the right research track. These are entitled "The Geography and Map Division" and "The Geography and Map Division List of Publications." Look for these in your library, or order copies from:

The Geography and Map Division
Library of Congress
James Madison Memorial Building
101 Independence Ave., SE.
Washington, DC 20540
202-707-6277

Additional Information

Researchers visiting the Washington, D.C., area may wish to refer to the "Scholars Guide to Washington, D.C.—Cartography and Remote Sensing Imagery" (by Ralph E. Ehrenberg; published by the Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, DC, 1987). The guide contains descriptions of more than 200 collections, organizations, and agencies, including available services. This book is usually available at your local public library.

All of the directories and pamphlets listed here are only general guides, but they will help direct you to the right map collection to suit your needs.

When you have decided which source to investigate more fully, you are ready to begin inquiries. Your letter of inquiry should give as much information as possible—including the geographic coordinates of the area. You should give the State, county, and town or township; the publisher, year, and place of publication; and the edition of the map or volume of maps, if possible. You also should specify the kind of information that you want on the map, and the approximate size. The map researcher then will be able to tell you if that particular map—or one like it—exists in that particular collection, whether copies are available, or if photographic reproductions can be obtained.

For information on other USGS products and services, call 1-800-USA-MAPS, e-mail: esicmail@usgs.gov, or fax 703-648-5548.

The EARTHFAX fax-on-demand system is available 24 hours a day at 703-648-4888.

The address for USGS home page is <URL: <http://www.usgs.gov/>>