

THE HISTORY OF CARTOGRAPHY

November 2022

Dear Friends:

The History of Cartography Project was founded in part on the idea that maps can help examine past societies through a new lens. I've recently been noticing the ways friends and colleagues refer to maps when talking about current events. This turned my attention to earlier uses of maps in the public sphere—a topic we cover fully in Volume 5. Here, I offer an introduction to the subject and a few nineteenth-century maps. Online, you will find a longer illustrated essay: geography.wisc.edu/histcart/2022-extras.



Fig. 1. Walter Crane, *Imperial Federation—Map of the World Showing the Extent of the British Empire in 1886*, celebrating the growth of British global power and advocating for a new partnership of nations. Courtesy of Cartography Associates, www.davidrumsey.com (8238000).

Consider private individuals in public arenas: What happens when we come together to discuss maps? Where do these conversations take place? How do maps inform, support, and influence discourse on the issues and ideas of our time? Can maps mediate between state and society?

The History of Cartography has always sought to address questions of fundamental importance to the humanities and social sciences. We first applied our innovative style of intellectual inquiry to the previously understudied cartographic traditions of ancient and medieval societies (Volume 1, published in 1987) and non-Western peoples (Volume 2, Books 1–3, 1992, 1994, and 1998). The interdisciplinary and dynamic approach expanded further to provide

broader coverage of the Renaissance (Volume 3, 2007), the twentieth century (Volume 6, 2015), and the Enlightenment (Volume 4, 2019). We are still asking incisive questions today, as we prepare the final volume in the series: Volume 5, *Cartography in the Nineteenth Century*, edited by Roger Kain. We are striving to make this last volume available in print in 2027, with free online access to the complete series by 2030.

Will you make a donation? You can help us reach these goals. Private gifts have become increasingly important because they allow us to direct the support where it is needed most. We welcome donations at every level.

I continue to be grateful to the Project's many generous supporters, and I hope you will renew or even increase your giving. To our newer friends, please consider donating this year. It is also easy to set up recurring monthly contributions. Many thanks, and all best for the coming year.

Sincerely,

Matthew Edney
Project Director

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Maps in the Public Sphere

by Matthew Edney

“Geography is in a peculiar manner the science of princes,” proclaimed the dedication to King George III of George Adams’s *Treatise Describing and Explaining the Construction and Use of New Celestial and Terrestrial Globes* (London, 1766). Yet, as with all such aphorisms, by the time it was made, the sentiment was already out of date. Regional and national maps had indeed been tools of princes and their chief officers in the Renaissance; they were works to be talked over and used in setting policy. By the middle of the eighteenth century, however, maps were tools in the hands of the middling sort. They were used by merchants, lawyers, and the lesser gentry not only to understand the world but also to inform their debates in coffee houses and masonic lodges about religious, military, diplomatic, social, and cultural policies that princes and ministers *should* follow. This is the essence of the public sphere: where the literal place and the metaphorical place of print—the map—come together allowing people to develop “public opinion” in order to shape and influence governmental decision making.

In the nineteenth century, “the public” grew to encompass not only the middle classes but also the working and deserving poor, as they too claimed a say in local and national politics. Maps were crucial to the growth of democracy, even recording the spatial aspects of attempts to gerrymander electoral districts. Newspapers and magazines included maps, especially in times of war and political change (fig. 1, front). Displayed in public places and homes (fig. 2), maps provided a framework for groups of people to understand emergent nations and empires and to come together as citizens of something more than their particular locale.

Fig. 2.

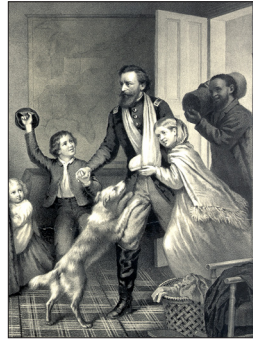


Fig. 3.



Fig. 4.

In the United States, wall displays of state and county maps were symbols of civic pride in local communities (fig. 3). During the U.S. Civil War, the northern press was especially active using maps to communicate information and commentate on battles and campaigns (fig. 4). Political broadsheets and pamphlets also made effective use of maps to argue for their cause and to shape public opinion. And while federal and state governments issued maps as part of their own deliberations, they published them to inform the public about the nature of the country and its inhabitants.

Fig. 2. Detail from Trevor McClurg, *Home Again* (New York: Endicott, 1866), showing a map displayed in the home’s front parlor (upper left). Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

Fig. 3. Detail from E. M. Harney, *Map of Winnebago County, Wisconsin, 1873*, produced and printed in Milwaukee. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Geography and Maps Division.

Fig. 4. “The United States in Black and White,” *New York Herald* (17 December 1861), distinguishing between the “loyal” and “rebel” states; the latter being shown in black, with stars marking sites still in Union hands. Courtesy of the Osher Map Library and Smith Center for Cartographic Education, University of Southern Maine (OML Collections, 12123).

More maps and history online at: geography.wisc.edu/histcart/2022-extras

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