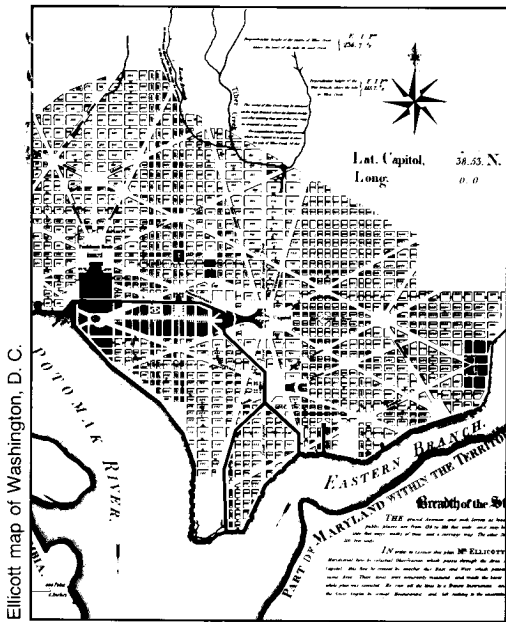


# Looking for An Old Map

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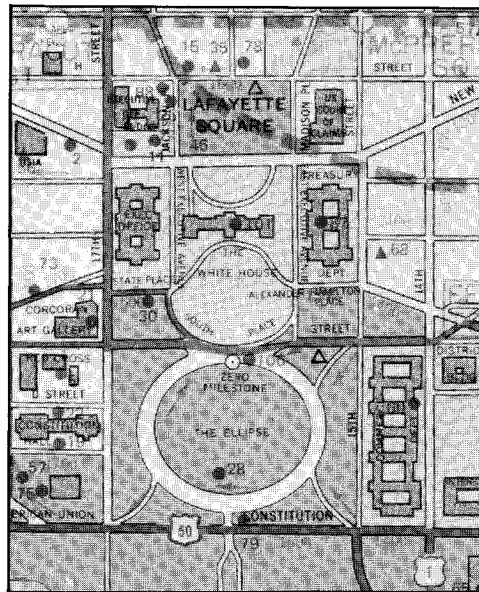


U. S. Department of the Interior  
Geological Survey  
National Cartographic  
Information Center (NCIC)

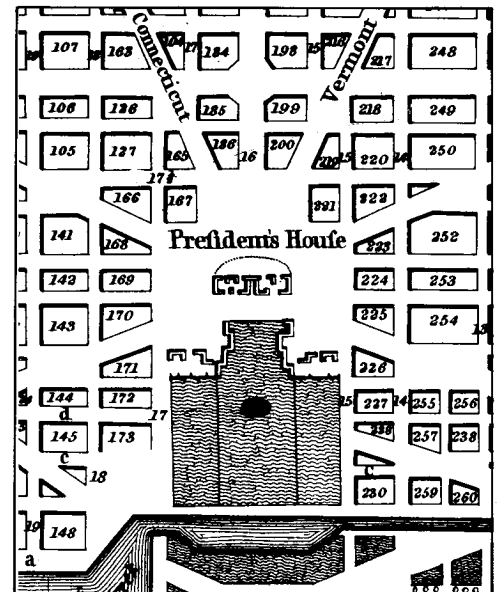
Many people want maps that show an area of the United States as it existed many years ago. These are called historical maps, and there are two kinds.

Most commonly, historical maps are special maps, recently published, prepared by commercial firms to show such features as battlefields, military routes, or the paths taken by famous travelers. Typically, these maps are for sale to tourists at the site of historical events.

The other kind of historical map is the truly old map, one compiled by a surveyor or cartographer many years ago. Lewis and Clarke, for example, made maps of their journeys into the Northwest Territories in 1803-1806 and originals of some of those maps still exist.



The Ellipse - 1980



The Ellipse - 1792

## Uses of Old Maps

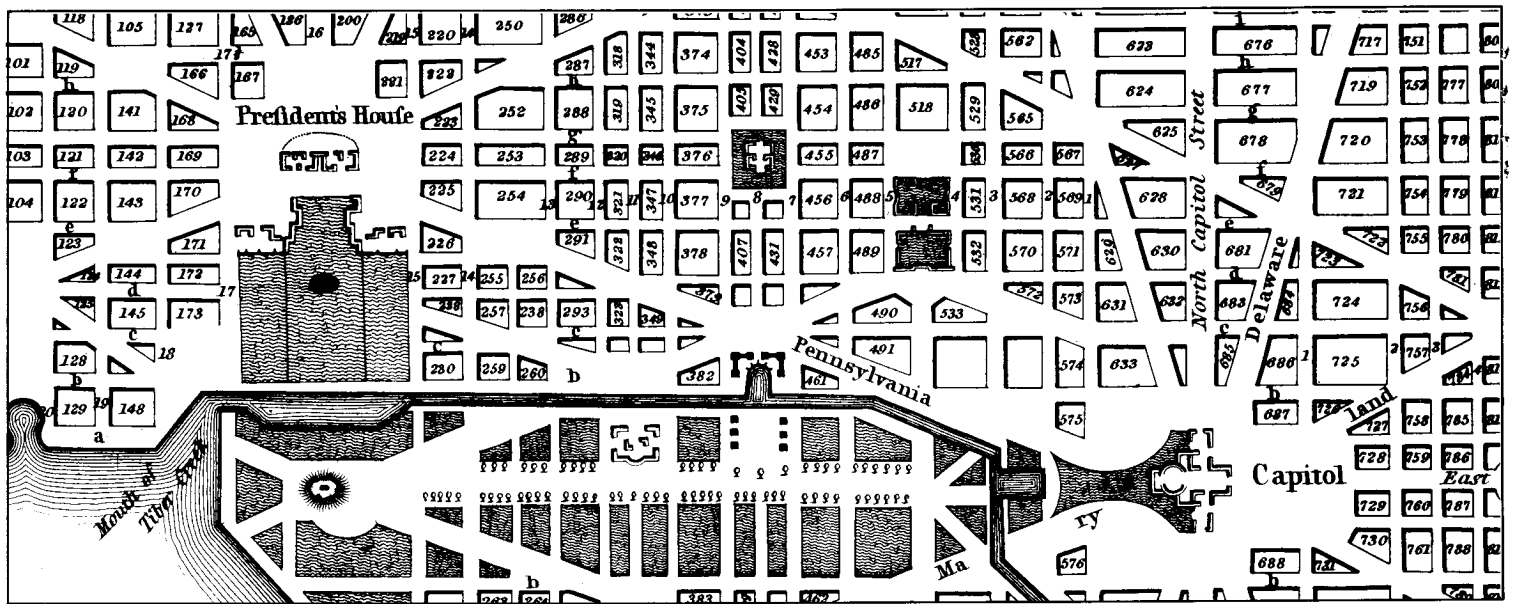
The old maps of the United States—and even of the Colonies—are useful for a variety of purposes. A hand-drawn map of a township, with the landholders' names marked on their plots, might supply a necessary clue to a genealogist. Local historians can compare a series of maps of the same area compiled over 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 a little imagination and a lot of perseverance, you can probably find just 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 for an old map 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 Societies in the United States and Canada* (edited by Donna McDonald; published by the American Association for State and Local History, Nashville, Tennessee; 10th edition, 1975). Sometimes these groups have valuable collections; almost always they can suggest other places for you to look.

Another good source of information for the map-hunter is *Map Collections in the United States and Canada: A Directory* (compiled by David K. Carrington and Richard W. Stephenson; published by the Geography and Map Division of the Special Library Association, New York, N.Y.; 3rd edition, 1978). This also may be available through your library's reference desk.



The Washington Mall - 1792

### The National Archives

The National Archives contain a large number of maps (Civil War maps, for example) compiled by Federal agencies. A leaflet entitled "Cartographic Records in the National Archives" lists a number of publications, many of them free of charge, that describe the map collections of the National Archives. If your library does not have a copy, you can order the leaflet (specify General Information Leaflet #26) from:

Publications Sales Branch  
National Archives  
8th and Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20408

One publication described in the cartographic records leaflet is the "Guide to Cartographic Records in the National Archives." This publication contains comprehensive descriptions of the National Archives map collections, including record group (file) numbers. It was designed to be especially useful to librarians, historians, and other professional researchers. If the guide is not in your local library, you can order a copy from:

The Superintendent of Documents  
U.S. Government Printing Office  
Washington, D.C. 20402

Specify the book's stock number (2202-0032) when ordering. The current (1981) price of the volume is \$10.25.

### Library of Congress

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  
Washington, D.C. 20540

Another helpful Library of Congress publication is "The Geography and Map Division: A Guide to Its Collections and Services." This publication goes into considerable detail about noteworthy items in the Library of Congress collection. It is available from the U.S. Government Printing Office (see address for Superintendent of Documents) at a cost of \$1.15. Specify stock number 030-004-00015-9.

### U.S. Geological Survey Maps

The U.S. Geological Survey was established in 1879, and its library began that year to accumulate its holdings of maps of the United States and the remaining territories. You can obtain copies of these maps by writing to the Survey and describing the map that you want.

A large number of historical topographic maps dating from 1879 on are contained in the reference holdings of the U.S. Geological Survey. If you are interested in obtaining a photographic reproduction of a particular map, please describe the map as completely as you can; include your name, address, organizational affiliation, and telephone number, and send to:

National Cartographic Information Center  
U.S. Geological Survey  
507 National Center  
Reston, Virginia 22092  
Telephone: 703/860-6045

### Followup Hints

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

Once 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.