



FIELD WORKBOOK LEAFLET

A service of the Young Yorker Program. Young Yorkers are junior members of the New York State Historical Association.

TEACHER EDITION

New York State Historical Association.

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Unlocking the Mysteries of the Past

Using Maps to Learn About a Community's History

Overview

Maps are most often used to help us locate places. However, maps do much more than show us how to get from one place to another. They are also rich resources for learning about a place's history. You can discover a great deal of information about a community just from studying an old map. For instance, the types of businesses and cultural institutions that were part of a community, where individuals of that community lived, and even their ethnic backgrounds can often be determined just by studying an old map. You can also trace the growth and development of a community by comparing maps from different periods in a community's history. In this lesson, students will develop general map-reading skills and will learn how to use a map to uncover a community's past. Students will observe that maps provide a great deal of information about the landscape and the spatial relationships of man-made and natural features in a given place at a given time. They will also see that past features of a community may no longer be in existence, since maps reveal changes that have occurred in a community over time.

Objectives/Performance Indicators

Students should be able to:

- identify and explain various symbols and/or terms on a map.
- identify various places on a map.
- compare the geography of a place to its growth and development.
- trace the changes in a community that have occurred over time.

Curriculum Concepts

- change
- culture
- environment

Skills

- making observations
- drawing inferences from information
- map reading
- working cooperatively in groups

Words to Know

atlas – a collection of maps in a book

community – the people living in a particular area; your neighborhood or town

county – a governmental subdivision of a state

legend (or key) – a list that explains the meanings of the symbols used on a map

map – a flat representation of all, or part of, the earth's surface

scale – the relationship between the distance on the earth and distance on a map (e.g. one mile on the earth is equal to one inch on the map)

rod – a unit of measurement; one rod is equal to 16.5 feet

symbol – a picture, letter, or design used to represent something else

town – a subdivision of a county; it may include villages within its boundaries

village – a community smaller than a town

Background Information

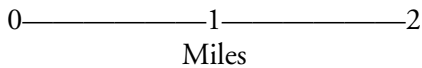
Map Essentials

A map is a flat representation of all, or part of, the earth's surface. A map should generally possess certain elements. These elements are title, legend, direction, scale, date, and sometimes latitude and longitude.

The **title** of a map is as important to its user as the title of a book is to a reader. There are many different kinds of maps; the title contains an essential clue to the user to help him or her determine, without detailed investigation, whether the map contains the information being sought.

A **legend** (or **key**) should define or explain the symbols or colors used on a map. Without a legend it would be difficult to decipher the meaning of the symbols used on a particular map.

The **scale** on a map can be defined as the relationship between the distance on the earth and distance on a map. Scale is often shown as a representative fraction. For example, 1:62,500 means that one unit on the map represents 62,500 units on the earth's surface. Sometimes linear or graphic scales and verbal scales are used to show scale. **Linear scales** use a line or a bar of given length to represent certain earth distances like this:



The bar shown above means that one inch on the map is equal to one mile on the earth's surface. **Verbal scales** state the existing relationship between map distance and earth distance something like this: *one inch equals approximately one mile.*

Sometimes the scale on a map is not given in terms of inches and miles. Some maps, for instance, may use measurements based on the metric system, such as *one centimeter equals approximately ten kilometers.* Older maps were often measured in units called rods; one rod is equal to 16.5 feet, and 320 rods are equal to one mile.

Maps are often categorized as **large-** or **small-scale** maps. A large-scale map usually covers a small amount of area, but shows a great deal of detail, such as a map of a city or town. A small-scale map covers a large amount of area, but in relatively little detail, such as a map of an entire nation or a map of the world.

Direction is important on a map and is generally shown by a directional indicator—a northerly arrow or a compass rose. It is important to remember that north is not always at the top of the map, nor is north always *up*. The directional configuration of a map may vary depending on the purpose of the map.

Every map should contain a **date**. Unfortunately the date is often the piece of information most likely to be omitted. Without a date, it is nearly impossible to determine if the information is accurate for the intended use of the map.

Latitude and longitude are important elements on maps which require exact locational addresses. Small-scale maps are more likely to use latitude and longitude than are large-scale maps. Because large-scale maps cover a small amount of area, it would not be practical to place them in the context of latitude and longitude.

Using Maps to Learn About a Community's Past

Maps are of great value in the study of history. Maps show important elements of the landscape and the spatial relationships of manmade and natural features in a given place. They show past features of a community which may no longer be in existence. Maps record the patterns of growth and other historical developments over time.

A variety of maps from the recent past are fairly common. The earliest explorers of what later became known as the United States, drew maps. By the end of the colonial period, there were maps numbering in the thousands, ranging from crude sketches to detailed surveys based on careful fieldwork and other research. Individual map sheets of locations, regions, and states were fairly abundant.

The first American atlases begin to appear around 1800. It was not until the 19th century that there was some sort of systematic standard national mapping. In 1807 Congress authorized a survey of the nation's coastline to aid navigation. In 1879 it mandated a topographical survey of publicly owned lands. Between 1934 and 1943, the introduction of aerial photography allowed federal agencies to complete an accurate survey of approximately 85 percent of the nation.

Localities have been mapped over the years by a variety of agencies for many different reasons. Governmental units and land developers produced maps to show land subdivisions and record individual property ownership for tax purposes and sales promotion. Bus and rail companies made sketches of their routes, just as oil companies issued road maps to encourage travel. Businesses, convention bureaus, parks and recreation departments, churches, and planning agencies have all published specialized maps to serve their own purposes.

Commercial interests led to the creation of a variety of maps that can be useful to individuals interested in the history of a community. County maps and atlases were produced in much the same way as commercial histories. Atlases were being published in the 1860s and 1870s in New York State. Map publishers solicited subscriptions from individuals. For a fee, a picture of one's home or business could be used as a border illustration. Since this enterprise proved to be profitable for map publishers, and since space was limited on a sheet map, cartographers began to shift to the atlas format, which allowed for more space.

At the turn of the century, new county atlases were published. Known as the New Century series, these atlases provided updated maps of counties, townships, cities, and villages. Thus, when comparing two maps of the same place from these two areas, the 1870s and the 1900s, changes can be noted that reflect the history of the place compared, over perhaps a generation or more. Are

there businesses that have developed? Have names of homeowners changed or remained the same? Is the railroad still there? Has the community grown in size?

Maps can raise many ideas and questions about a community's past. For example, towns have been laid out in different patterns. New England towns were laid out informally around an open space, or common. William Penn laid out Philadelphia in a grid form, which featured rectangular blocks, straight streets, right-angle intersections, and the systematic naming of streets. This pattern was copied by many other cities including Cleveland and Chicago. Maps also show city growth. They show whether a town was laid out along a river, trail, the railroad, or around the city courthouse. Maps can indicate how a city's development was influenced by geographic features, such as waterways or mountains. The names of streets, schools, and churches can reveal original ethnic groups that settled in that community.

County maps and atlases are generally readily available in local libraries. If you would like to study the history of your own community using maps, it is fairly easy to obtain photocopies of the map of your community in a county atlas. You may also wish to obtain copies of maps from different time periods in order to trace the growth and development of a community and any changes that may have taken place.

About Richfield Springs

Richfield Springs, the community depicted on the map in the student's edition, is located 65 miles west of Albany on U.S. Route 20 near Lake Canadarago in northern Otsego county. The community was settled in the late 1700s. At one time, the entire area in which the village is located was known as *Brimstone Swamp* because of the odor and taste of sulphur in the water. Nevertheless, the growth and prosperity of the area can be attributed to its many mineral springs.

During the 1800s, Richfield Springs became a popular summer resort. It was known to have some of the strongest sulphur springs in the United States. At that time, mineral springs were thought to have great medicinal qualities, and places such as Richfield Springs drew many people. The springs were considered healthy both for drinking and for bathing. By the mid-19th century, Canadarago Springs (present-day Richfield Springs) was a thriving resort town with hotels and bath houses. People came from all over the world to sample the mineral waters there.

The settlement was incorporated in 1861, and its name was established as Richfield Springs. In 1865 the population of Richfield Springs was almost 500. In 1870 it was almost 700, and by 1880 the population had almost doubled to 1,307 inhabitants. The resort business increased during this time and resulted in the construc-

tion by 1870 of at least ten hotels and many boarding houses. During the 1870s, there were as many as six trains per day bringing visitors to the resort town. Banks, blacksmith shops, and stores were also located in the village.

At the end of the 19th century, Richfield Springs offered its visitors many forms of entertainment, such as a summer theater; daily concerts given by musicians from the symphony orchestras of New York, Boston, and Utica; tennis; golf; and horseback riding. There were also coaching parades: horse-drawn coaches lined up daily at 4:00 p.m. to go for a drive around Canadarago Lake.

During the 1920s, the resort business in Richfield Springs and elsewhere began to decline. The end of the resort era came about for a number of reasons—the popularity of the automobile, advances in medicine, changing social trends, and the out-of-date condition of many of the hotels. Finally, the 1929 Stock Market Crash and the Depression which followed ended the resort era in Richfield Springs.

Today, Richfield Springs is a small middle-class community of about 1,600 inhabitants. There remain few signs of the splendor of the resort town of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Many people find employment in small local businesses or in industry in the Mohawk Valley and surrounding areas.

About the 1868 Map of Richfield Springs

The map of Richfield Springs, found in the student edition, was taken from the 1868 *Atlas of Otsego Co[unty] New York*. The title of the map, in this case the name of the village, is in the left-hand corner of the map. The scale, found under the title, is measured in rods—30 rods to the inch. The directional indicator is also found close to the title. Notice that north does not point to the top of the map. This map does not contain a separate legend, common on many maps today. It does have a section referred to as References which identifies some places by number. You will note, however, that most of the symbols are explained right on the map itself. You may want to have the students create their own legend for this map. You will also notice that the date does not appear on this map. This is because the map came from an atlas in which the date was printed on the front cover, not on each individual map.

It might be interesting to point out to the students that Lake Clements was formed during the 1800s by a dam on the Ocquionis Creek for the Tunnicliff-Dana Mills. It covered about 20 acres in the area which is now the Richfield Springs Central School grounds. The lake was drained in 1885 in order to improve the sanitary conditions in Richfield Springs, then a summer resort. This was one of the most important engineering projects ever

completed in Richfield Springs.

Located to the right of the map is the Richfield Springs Business Directory. The directory identifies the different kinds of businesses that are located on the map. It might be interesting to see not only what types of businesses were found in Richfield Springs in 1868, but to see how many of those listed in the directory can be located on the map by the students.

Lesson Activities

Getting Started

Begin the lesson by having students discuss what they already know about maps. Ask students to identify different kinds of maps and explain how and why different maps are used. You may want to have samples of different kinds of maps to show to the students.

After students have had a chance to share what they know about maps, ask them if maps can be used to study the history of a place. Help students to understand that maps tell us more than just where places are located. Because maps show made-made features as well as natural features, they can tell us a lot about a community's past.

Activities

1. Reading and Reviewing the Lesson

- a. Before students read the lesson, *Unlocking the Mysteries of the Past*, help them to understand important terms and concepts associated with maps. In addition to going over the *Words to Know* section found in the teacher's edition, you should discuss *Map Essentials* with the students (this section is also found in the teacher's edition). You may want to use some sample maps from textbooks or wall maps to help students understand the following elements found on most maps: *title, legend, scale, direction, and date*. If students are already familiar with the use of maps, you may not need to spend as much time on this activity.
- b. Have students read the lesson and examine the map of Richfield Springs in the student edition. Then have students complete the section titled *Map Exploration*. You may want to divide the class into small groups for this exercise.

2. Then and Now Class Project

This class project will compare a map of your community from the past with one from the present. Divide the class into two working teams—*Then* and *Now*. The *Then* team needs to find a map of your community from the past, perhaps around 1900 or 1910 or even earlier. The local library should be able to help you find this information. The *Now* team should also find out where they can find a map of their community today. The local chamber of commerce or local library might be helpful in locating a modern map.

Divide each team—*Then* and *Now*—into smaller working groups, with each group assigned to a street on their map. For each street, list all the information you can about your community then and now. What has changed? What has remained the same? Make an exhibit in your classroom comparing the two maps; or you may wish to show how two streets have changed. You may also find in your library a business or city directory from the past along with one from today. List the different kinds of businesses for each map and time period.

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Answers to Map Exploration

1. a. Richfield Springs
b. There is not a legend, but there is a list of references. Most of the symbols are identified on the map itself, instead of in a separate key.
c. 30 Rods to the Inch.
d. The arrow indicating north, located under the map's title, should be circled.
e. The date does not appear on this map because the map is from an atlas. The date would be found on the cover of the atlas itself, not on the individual maps. The reading indicates that the date of this map is 1868.
2. Otsego County
3. North
4. 180 rods—On the map it is approximately 6" from Elm and Main Streets to Johnson and Main Streets. Since 1" on the map is equal to 30 rods you must multiply 6×30 or 180 rods. To convert to the number of feet you must multiply $180 \times 16.5 = 2970'$
5. Presbyterian Church, Universalist Church
6. Yes. The map shows two schools. One was located on Lake Street and the other on Monticello Street.
7. Main Street
8. 2; N. Getman, H. Manley
9. They were dealers in hardware and manufacturers of tin and copper ware
10. Horse Shoer and Blacksmith; located on James Street
11. Attending trotting matches was a popular pastime during the late 19th century. This form of horse racing involved the use of a sulky—a light two-wheeled vehicle that is pulled by a horse and has a seat for a driver.
12. Elm and Church Streets; Elm St.
13. Richfield Hotel (West Main St.), National Hotel (West Main St.), Tunncliffe Cottage (West Main St.), Spring Hotel (Corner of Church and Main Streets), American Hotel (East Main St.), Tuller House (East Main St.), Davenport House (East Main St.), Washington Hall (Main St.)
14. 2; They were used by those who bathed in the mineral (sulphur) springs.
15. Richfield Springs became a famous resort community because of its mineral springs (thus the name Richfield Springs). This accounts for the large number of hotels and other businesses related to the tourist industry.

This leaflet is based on Finding your Place: Using Maps and Atlases published by the New York State Historical Association in 1989, and has been revised by Christine E. Malmgren, Associate in Education at NYSHA. Special thanks to Ruth Redjives for her assistance with the map and information relating to Richfield Springs.



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