

UNITED STATES GEOLOGICAL SURVEY TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS

A Brief Guide to the Collection

1895-1992

United States Geological Survey (USGS) topographic maps show the shape and elevation of the land, mountains, valleys, water bodies such as lakes and rivers, transportation networks, drainage patterns, vegetation, and buildings. Contour lines are used to portray the shape and elevation of the land. The maps also show major works of humans, such as roads, railroads, transmission lines, buildings, and boundaries. Until the 1940s the principal method used was planetable surveying from high vantage points. Beginning in the 1940s surveys were done from the air, but supplemented by field checks.

Most of the maps in Crandall Public Library's collection of topographic maps are the 7.5 minute series, with a scale of 1:24,000. Each map is called a quadrangle and it is given a name. Most of these maps were published between 1966 and 1968, though there are a few maps dated 1944-1946, near the border with Vermont. Colors are extensively used in these maps: lakes and rivers are blue, forests are green, major roads are red, and cities and other heavily populated areas are shaded in pink. Some maps prepared using digital technology are also part of the collection. These are also 7.5 minute maps, using a scale of 1:24,000. They were published between 1991 and 1992 by the New York State Department of Transportation, but based on work of the United States Geological Survey. These 1991 and 1992 maps are not colored.

There are some 15 minute survey maps in the collection. These maps have a scale of 1:62,500. These maps were done from surveys from 1895 to 1903, though some were reprinted in the early 1940s. A revised group of 15 minute surveys was done from about 1947-1958, and these maps use colors like the 7.5 minute series described above.

A brief word about the geographical scope and filing arrangement of this collection. The main concentration of these maps is Warren County and northern Saratoga and Washington Counties. Many maps (though the coverage is not complete) can be found for the entire Adirondack region. All these maps are filed in drawers labeled A-F, and an index sheet can be found in drawer A. Quadrangles for other parts of New York State in the next three drawers. These maps are filed alphabetically by quadrangle name, and coverage is by no means complete for New York State. The bottom drawer has a few maps for Vermont.