

American Airlines

Left to Right:

1939, 1947, 1952, 1954, 1959

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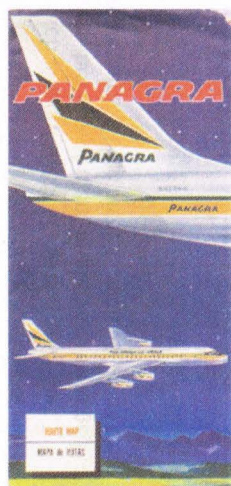
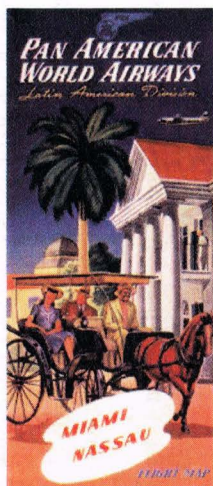
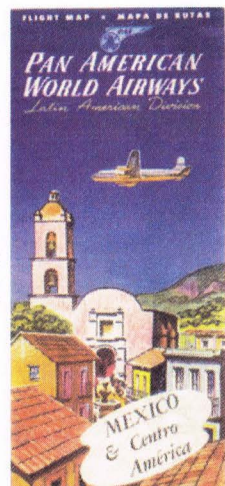


Airline Route Maps Legend #22



United Airlines 1963

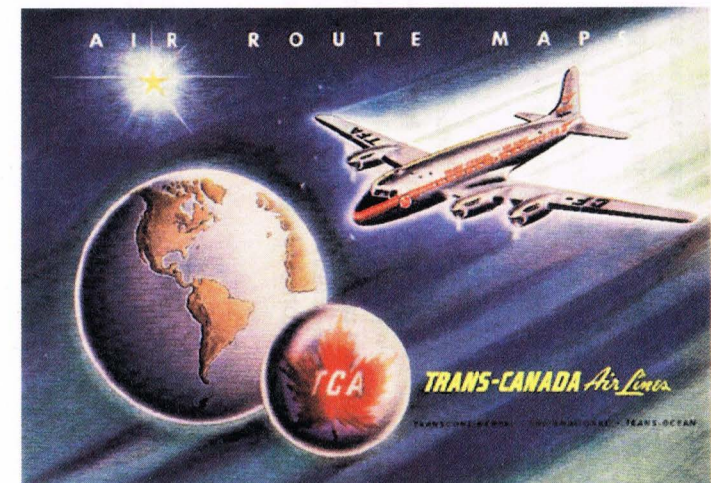
Eastern Airlines 1941 (front/back cover, inside)



Pan Am 1949 & 1951, Panagra 1961



Lufthansa 1958



Trans Canada Airlines 1954

Airline Route Maps

by Ken Brown

We have had a few recent articles about non-road maps, and I would like to continue that trend. While road maps make up the vast majority of my collection, I also collect other paper goods such as airline route maps, railroad and ocean liner brochures. All of it is related to travel and transportation.

Airline route maps have a lot of parallels with road maps. Most were prepared by the same cartographers. Often they had similar shapes and fold patterns. They often had wonderful graphics.

I say "had" because their heyday, like roadmaps', is over. Now they are generally just a page or two inside the airlines' magazine, hardly worth collecting. But from the 30's to the 70's they were often worth saving, so many are still available for today's collectors.

My earliest route map is a 1939 issue by American Airlines. It was prepared by Gousha and was folded to the well-known 4" by 9" shape. The cover graphic continued onto the back cover and showed passengers and a stewardess inside the cabin. The New York World's Fair was mentioned prominently at the bottom.

By 1947 American Airlines had switched to General Drafting, who continued to prepare their maps until at least 1954. By 1959 they were using Rand McNally. Their cover graphics were always appealing.

My collection is far from comprehensive, so I am unable to give a definitive list of which airlines used which cartographers. Eastern and TWA used Rand McNally, United and Panagra used Jeppesen & Co. of Denver, but any of them might have switched to other cartographers as was done by American and many of the oil companies with their road maps. Some airlines such as Trans Canada Airlines and Pan American appear to have prepared their maps in-house at one time.

Map Codes

The map codes we know for road maps are not necessarily relevant for airline maps. My 1939 American Airlines map is fortunately dated, because the code S.C.-304 in no way conforms to Gousha's road map letter of "M". On the other hand, my 1959 Rand McNally has the code 9-5727 3, which does conform with their road maps of that era. American's General Drafting map codes are new to me so I have had to do some assuming. The 1947 map date I have assumed from the middle letters of the code T-197-147-200M, and similarly for their other General Drafting maps. I could be wrong but the era of the planes shown on the maps generally agrees with my assumption.

Map Format

While many airline maps had a single folded sheet, some were in booklet form. This is similar to road maps where we find occasional booklets such as some of the Chevron maps and the Richfield strip maps. My favourite are the Trans Canada Airlines booklets from the mid-50's, which are 7" by 10" and have 28 pages. The 1954 booklet has a wonderful cover graphic (see colour sheet).

Strip Maps

My 1947 and 1939 American maps are a single folded sheet with a map of the United States on one side and a series of strip maps on the other. Lufthansa was similar in 1958. The Eastern Airlines booklet of 1942 used strip maps exclusively, similar to the Richfield strip maps of that same era. Many other maps were similar to the majority of road maps, having one or two large maps showing the airline's area of service.

Availability

Airline route maps are not as common as road maps but they can occasionally be found at shops and collectible shows. Ebay now makes it easier to build up a collection in a shorter period of time, as we can also do with road maps. Prices are not much different from road map prices, with 70's maps being available for a few dollars while the older ones get progressively more expensive. The most I paid for any of my maps was \$12.50 for my 1939 map on ebay.

My Interest in Planes

The 1950's were a good decade to be a boy interested in trains, planes, cars and pretty much all forms of transportation. Trains evolved from steam to diesel, cars evolved into sleek shapes with fins, and airplanes went from piston to turboprop to jet. I loved going to the airport and watching the planes from the observation deck. My favourite was the Super Constellation and I was fortunate to fly in it once. It is still one of my favourites and I love finding maps and other ephemera with images of that plane.

I will never forget getting a Trans Canada Airlines brochure that showed their fleet and the soon to be acquired DC-8 jetliner. Wow, the Super Constellation was dwarfed by it! I couldn't believe that such sleek things were coming.

Conclusion

I think a lot of us map people are interested in travel and transportation. We dream of going to new places and the roads, rail lines, air corridors and shipping lanes are the way to get there. We like the cars, trains, ships and planes, and the maps we collect reflect these interests.

Airline route maps are a lot like road maps. The graphics show old planes rather than old cars, but they evoke similar images of the past. The maps can be just as attractive and they both can stir our imaginations of places we have been or would like to visit.