

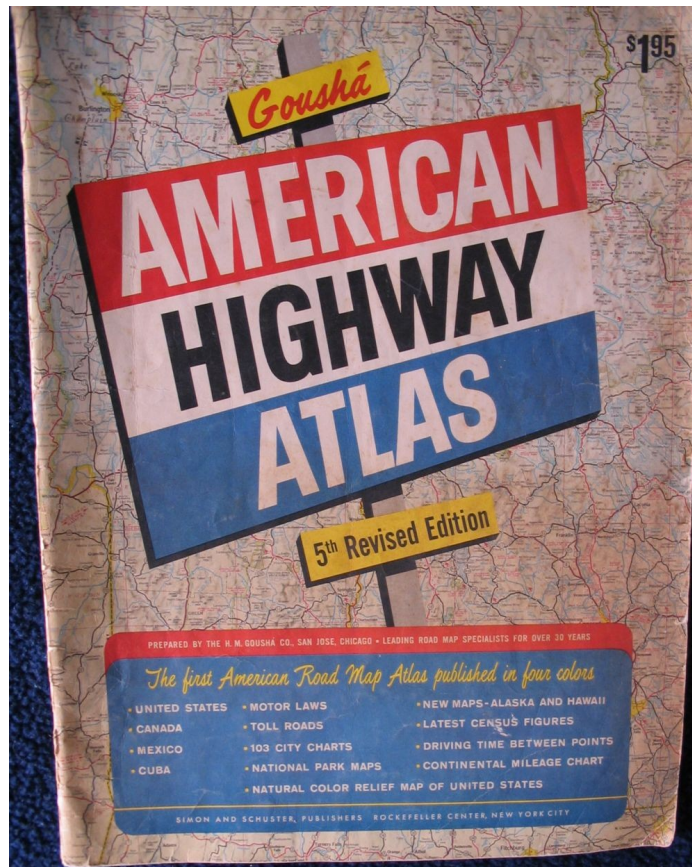
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## ***Post World War II US Road Atlases***

by *Stan DeOrsey* (RMCA #76)

Prior to World War II there were many companies producing road atlases covering all of the United States. Unfortunately, most did not survive to the post war period. On the other hand, new companies emerged while some older companies entered the atlas market. Those either going out of business or dropping their road atlas line included Clason, Cram, Gallup, Langwith, Mid-West Map, and National Survey. Rand McNally was the one company which continued to produce road atlases and indeed is very strong in the market to this day. Their products are well known and will not be covered again here.

H.M. Gousha became well established in the road map business by the late 1920s. However, they were not significant in the atlas market until the 1950s. I have been told they produced atlases in the 1930s for specific customers, but I have never seen one and do not know if it covered the entire US. In 1955, they released their American Highway Atlas which continued to be published under different titles until Gousha's demise. Early editions of this atlas measured 13" x 16½," the largest page size of a standard US road atlas. Gousha also published medium sized road atlases of tile design from at least 1952 until the mid-60s, possibly later.



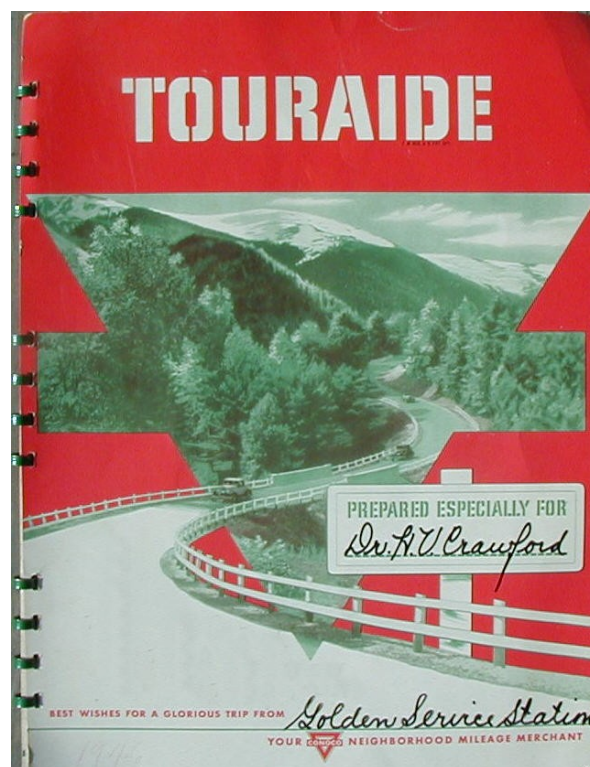
1960 Gousha American Highway Atlas, Stan DeOrsey collection

Beginning in the 1930s and continuing at least to the 1960s, Gousha bound their standard folded road maps into a large hard bound atlas, most often seen for Shell Oil. These also exist for Conoco and in a boxed set for Cities Service, probably other companies as well. It is not clear why these were issued or how they were distributed. Since some are found with a person's name embossed on the cover, it is possible they were retirement gifts for oil company people. If anyone knows the full story of these intriguing atlases, do let us know.



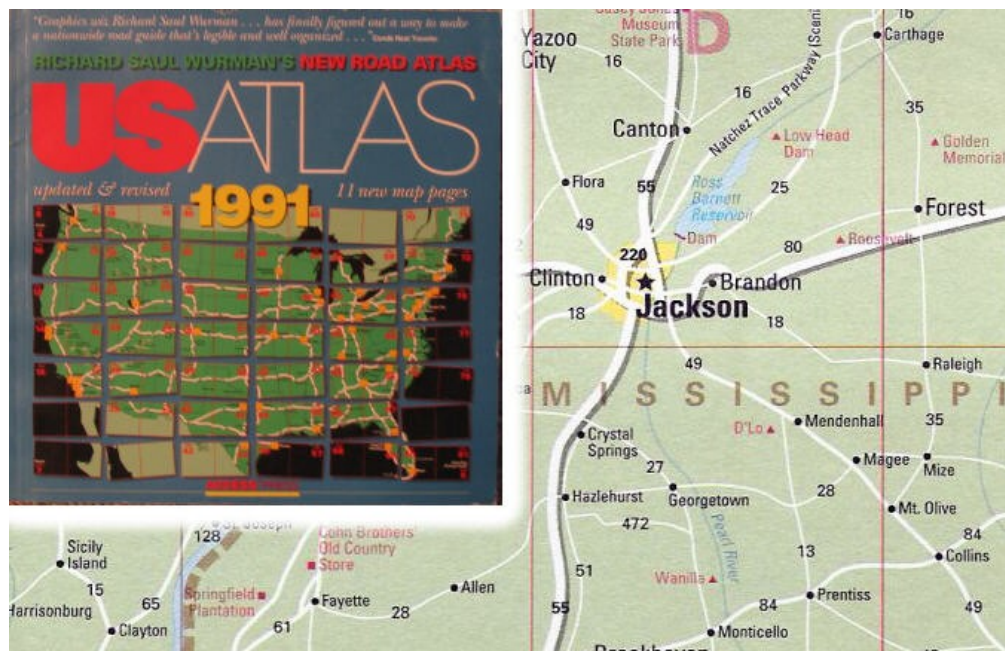
1954 Cities Service boxed set, Stan DeOrsey collection

Also from the 1930s to 1960s Gousha published individual 12"x 9" sheets of the US in sections for the Conoco Travel bureau to custom assemble, spiral bind, and route mark, often for cross-country trips. Effectively a custom made road atlas. (Editor's note: for more details on Conoco Touraides, see Legend No. 14, April 2000)



1946 Conoco Touraide, Mark Greaves collection

Lastly, in 1990 and 1991 Gousha shared their name with "Richard Saul Wurman's US Atlas." This wins the prize as the oddest recent road atlas. It has white roads on a colored background, minimal detail, and tile format. It was an early use of digital cartography. Maybe this helped do in Gousha-who was bought by Rand in 1996.



1991 Wurman Atlas, Stan DeOrsey collection

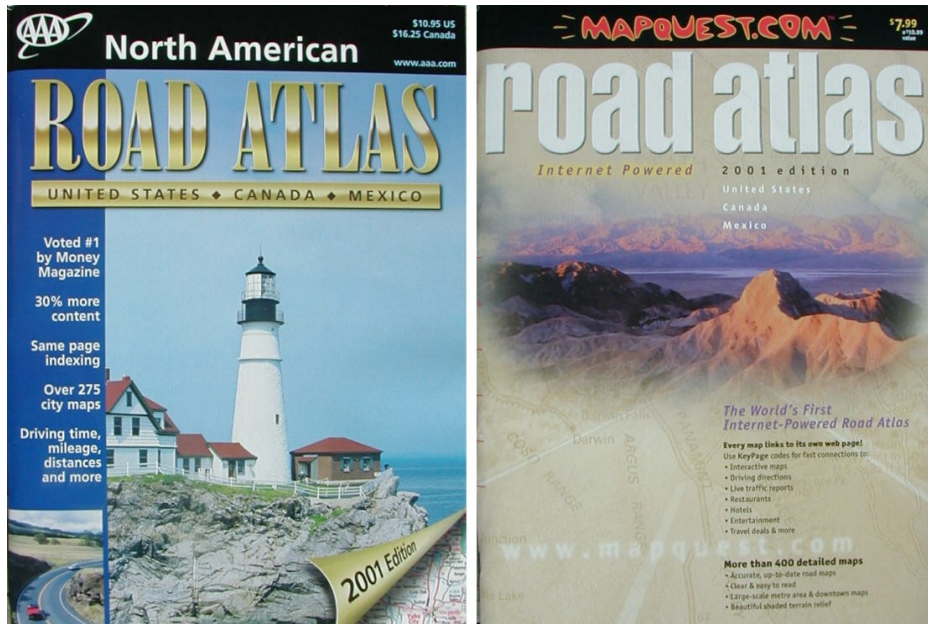
C.S. Hammond entered the US road atlas market about 1962 but with a rather undistinguished medium size Road Atlas. The 1962 atlas was printed in red and black only, later ones were in color. They had published sectional atlases in the 1920s, but no full US atlas is known from that period.

General Drafting Co. was another established map company which first issued road atlases in the post war period. Their first was for the Humble, later Exxon Travel Club in 1965. The 1965 atlas was larger and nicer than in following years. A more extensive road atlas, with approximately 150 city insets, was issued for American Express in 1981. Unfortunately, GD did not pursue the atlas market although they did release the Exxon atlas under the TravelVision brand. It is now published by the American Map Co. who bought General Drafting in 1992.

The last of the established companies was AAA. Their history of atlases is not well understood, but their first US road atlas was apparently around 1981 with Gousha maps. By 1987, likely earlier, they were publishing US road atlases of their own drafting, which they continue to do.

In the 1960s, R.R. Donnelley & Sons began drafting their own maps and in the 1970s published medium sized atlases for both Holiday Inn and Best Western Motels. In the early 1990s they formed GeoSystems Global Corp. which was renamed MapQuest.com. They have published a variety of excellent road atlases since 1997, many utilized a spiral binding which had seldom been used for US atlases. They also issued the first recent European style tile format detailed US atlas for Michelin, although of a smaller page size than their regular US atlas.

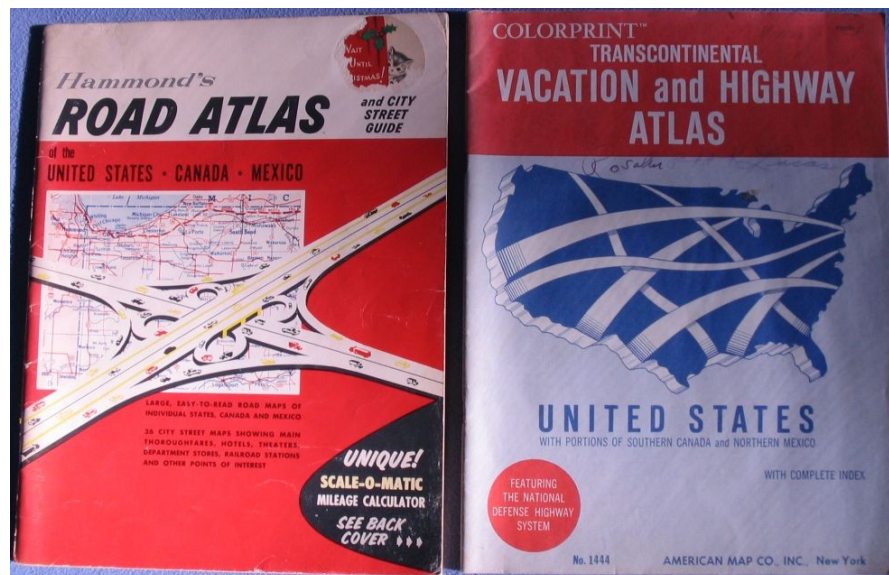
Another new company is Universal Map, begun in 1976 to exploit the absence of free oil company maps. They published a road atlas from at least 2000. In 2001 they purchased the old National Survey Co. Both Universal and MapQuest continue to offer atlases in their own name and through various sponsors.



2001 AAA and MapQuest Road Atlases, Mark Greaves collection

Other companies have issued United States road atlases during the post war period, but none did so for very long and few of their products were particularly distinguished. They included:

- Automobile Travel [sic] Map Road Atlas drafted by Adam Windus Maps of Mentor, Ohio in the early 1950s. I can find nothing on this company.
- National Geographic's Atlas of the Fifty United States, a subset of their world atlas, published only in 1960. They have the only index which includes mountains, rivers, etc.
- "Colorprint" Transcontinental Vacation and Highway Atlas by American Map Co. in 1969 with blue and red ink only.
- Diversified Map Corp. was not around for long but did issue a road atlas for the American Oil Co. in 1970. After their bankruptcy, their maps appear with Amoco (American Oil) as the owner.
- DeLorme Mapping, known for their computer mapping, published one large road atlas in 1994, in tile format to complement their Map 'n Go software.



1962 Hammond and 1969 Colorprint Atlases, Stan DeOrsey collection

Lastly, another odd "atlas"-Adventures in Travel, Illustrated Strip maps, US Highways by Travel Mat. This is a 1959 spiral bound collection of restaurant place mats, reduced in size, and each showing stops along a route. It covers over 200 turnpikes, US highways, and state highways.

As the new century begins, AAA, American Map, MapQuest, Rand McNally, and Universal Map all produce United States road atlases, generally in three sizes-a traditional large, a medium in either tile or state format, and a small pocket size. Not all companies produce each size, indeed some cross issue with other companies. The large size has a few variations such as large print, truck or business editions, and occasionally one is issued with added tourist or scenic routes data. Just like the 1930s, competition is back.