

The Maps People Collect

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The question that often gets asked here by new collectors is “What do you collect?” The answers are usually pretty general—oil company maps, small independent company maps, official maps, auto club maps, etc. Over the past 20 years of having a list of maps for sale, I have had the opportunity to deal with many collectors that have a bit more focus to their collecting habits. I thought some of these might be of interest to those of trying to make a decision on what to collect. Here are a few types of collectors that I am aware of:

- 1) **A specific state** – while this seems to be most common among collectors of official road maps, I know of a few collectors like myself that carry this theme through with all types of maps.



- 2) **One specific oil company only** – the more common ones that I have noted are Chevron, ESSO, Shell, Sunoco, and Pure.

- 3) **Auto club maps** – these seem to be becoming a more attractive group because they are readily available and more reasonably priced. There has been lots of interest in the California clubs like the Automobile Club of Southern California and the California AAA branch.

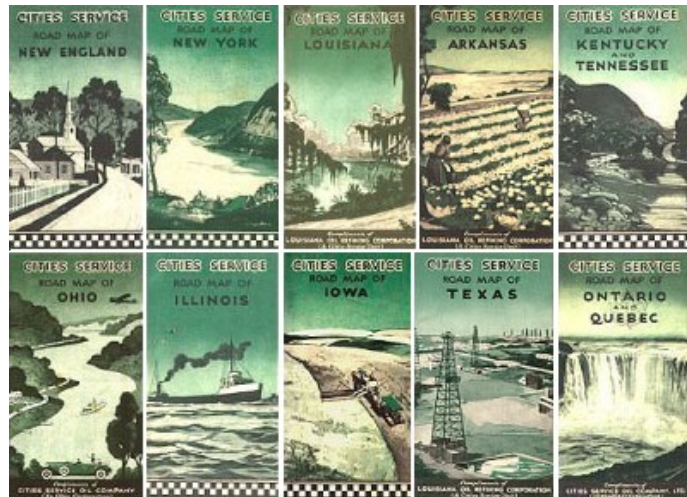




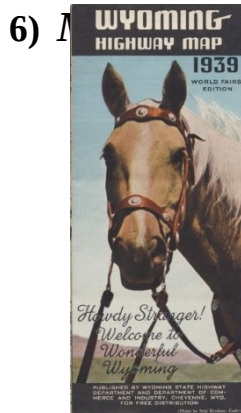
4) **Birth year runs** – this seems to be more prevalent among official map collectors, but know of few that extend this to

oil company issues. I know of collectors working on 1929, 1941, 1949, and 1978. Another group of collectors with the same focus base it on the year of their collectible car and display the maps along with their car at shows

5) **Scenic cover series** – these series provide lots of variation and can be a challenge to complete with each state and city having a different cover each year. Some of the more popular series are the Chevrons (1948-1965), ESSO (late 1930s-1965), the 1931 Cities Service, and the KYSO maps.



showing



like to know of other types. Any "pig" or "chicken" collectors out there finding maps with these on the cover?

7) *Promotional or theme based covers* – a couple examples are the Hy-Finn series done by



classic automobiles.

Chevron
and that
Gulf
series in



the mid-1970s showing different

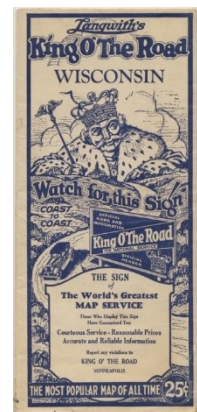
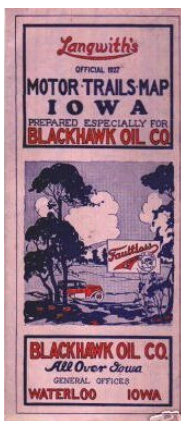


8) *Special event maps*

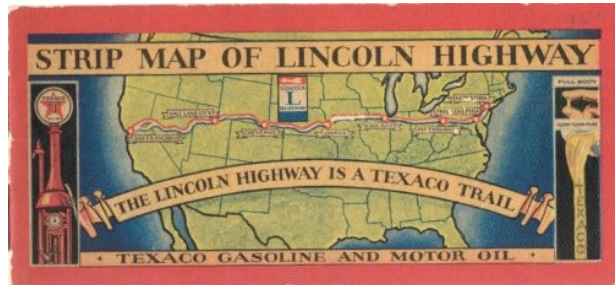
– some events that seemed to get lots of interest among collectors are Expos, World Fairs, World War II, Olympics,

and the 1976 Bicentennial.

9) *Maps by a specific publisher* – I know of a couple collectors who specialize in collecting just maps done by General Drafting and Ashburn. My favorite is Langwith and I have started a small collection of his atlases and maps.



- 10) **Maps of a particular highway** – most common roads seem to be the Lincoln Highway and U.S. Route 66. I would also place in this category the collectors of the tollway and turnpike maps



- 11) **Artwork covers** - probably the best of these are the Montana officials from the 1930s and 1940s by the western artist, Irvin Shupe. Another popular cover is the 1932 and 1933 Shell License Plate covers, which are also very popular among license plate collectors



12)



Non-oil company maps - Several years ago, I knew a collector in Arizona collecting maps issued from banks. For some reason, there were lots of banks in Arizona giving away maps in the 1950s and 1960s. A couple other areas of interest are maps issued by food-related companies, chambers of commerce, hunting & fishing maps, insurance companies, and airline route maps

14) *Special map types*

- I know one Florida collector who collects just cruising maps done by various oil companies and another that collects just maps of National Parks and Forests.



One thing that I have noticed about oil company map collectors over the years is the degree to which they collect. There are a few (many will know who these guys are!) who want every map ever issued by every oil company, while others are content with just one map from each company. In between are collectors that save just one map from each year or one map from each different cover design done by a company over the years.

Among official map collectors, there seem to be more collectors who are trying to collect the entire set since the total number issued is only a fraction of that issued by oil companies. While I have not totaled the number of official maps issued in the United States, I doubt that it exceeds 5,000 and there are a few collectors out there that have the majority of these in their collection. In this group, however, we most often find collectors collecting just their home state. What is the most popular state collected? I would have to say, based on my experience, that Michigan is easily the leader.

For those of you just starting to collect road maps, I hope that this might give you some different ideas for focusing your collection. If you know of any other special types or areas of map collecting interest, please share them with the group. Who has the most unique, or should we say “unusual” type of road map collection?

Website editor's note: There are also road map collectors who collect road maps for the cartography in them, some of which can be incredibly detailed and beautiful.

