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Maps in Promotional Brochures: Unpacking Questions of Format and Content

For the past several decades the Newberry Library has been collecting and processing travel brochures advertising tourist attractions, points of interest, and other localities of potential interest to leisure travelers. Most of the library's extensive holdings of these materials (numbering at least 100,000 items) are North American in origin and date from the late nineteenth to the early twenty-first centuries. They come in almost endless varieties and formats, from small and simply bound booklets to large single sheets that have been folded several times to a portable size. Most are printed in color and combine in various amounts blocks of text, images (photographs or sketches), and maps. It is the maps, of course, which most interest us here. They range from large images that fold out from booklets or occupy the entire side of an unfolded pamphlet to small, sketch maps designed simply to direct travelers from nearby highway to specific roadside attractions; and everything in between. The variety of the design, content, and purpose of these maps defy simple classification; and it would be inappropriate to analyze their qualities as maps without reference to the other elements of the brochures to which they are integral. The difficulties of unpacking these questions of format and content may explain in part why map historians have largely ignored them.

The publication of maps in promotional brochures is a truly global phenomenon. But we will draw here on approximately twenty examples, primarily from mid-twentieth century United States. This paper offers, in very preliminary way, a methodology for describing and drawing meaning from these ubiquitous yet widely disregarded sources at the intersection between mapping, cultural geography, and the history of travel and tourism. The paper will consider in turn three areas: (1) the physical relationship of the map or maps to the other elements of the brochure; (2) the authorship, design, and content of the map(s); and (3) questions of meaning and interpretation. These are by no means an exhaustive list of what might be drawn from these objects, but are offered as a starting point for conversation and further study.



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Map detail: Portland & Ogdensburg Railroad Company, *To and across the White Mountains via Portland & Ogdensburg Railroad*, American Bank Note Co., New York: 1879, Newberry Library, URL: <https://mappingmovement.newberry.org/item/and-across-white-mountains-portland-ogdensburg-railroad>