

HOW TO DATE MAPS FROM THE AUTOMOBILE CLUB OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

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INTRODUCTION

Collectors of Automobile Club of Southern California folding maps know the irritation that can come with attempts to date them, especially in the 45-year period from 1920 to 1966. Depending on the year, there may be an actual date, a code read left to right, a code read right to left, or no code at all. There are years when the coding system can differ from map to map. For years with no code, you try to use the address of the club's main office or the number of branches listed, the existence of or lack of certain roads and landmarks, comparisons with dated maps from other cartographers, and then make a best guess for the date.

The following is an effort to set out year-by-year examples of Auto Club issues and how to date the maps. (It does not apply to the Club's strip maps.) The guide is not foolproof; the Auto Club mapmakers insured that with their varying schemes. Rather, the guide is a modest stab to provide a 'road map' for deciphering most of their cartography. It's presented chronologically in sections as follows:

- Through 1919
- 1920 through 1928
- 1929 through 1941
- World War II, 1942-1945
- 1946-1965
- 1966 to present

THROUGH 1919

Through 1919, ACSC dating is straightforward. A map usually has a copyright date on the cover, inside as part of the legend box or along the lower left or right margins, or both on the cover and inside. Some maps have multiple-year copyrights, and the cartography must be compared with an earlier version to determine whether the map is a reprint or has been updated with road/landmark changes or index additions. Some examples:

- the Automobile Road Map touring Los Angeles and Vicinity, with a 1913 copyright on the cover and inside, and an office address of 758 South Olive (sometimes shown as 8th and Olive).
- an update of the above Los Angeles and Vicinity map with the club's new address, as of 1914, at 1344 South Figueroa, and with a 1915 cover copyright and a 1913-1915 copyright inside.
- a 1915 Principal Automobile Routes In and Out of Los Angeles, with a 1915 cover and the

1344 South Figueroa address, but inside with a 1913 copyright and the 8th and Olive address. This is a reprint of a 1913 map.

q—a 1917 Kern County map, with a 1917 cover copyright and a 3-15-17 margin date inside.

—the same Kern County map, with a 1919 cover copyright and a 3-15-17 margin date inside.

This is a reprint of the 1917 map.

1920 THROUGH 1928

From 1920 to 1928, accurate dating becomes somewhat of a game. With very few exceptions (such as a © 1921 map of Redlands, Ca.) the Club stopped the practice of putting dates on its paper maps. Nevertheless, there are some ‘rules of the road’ to narrow a map’s publication date.

For placing ACSC maps issued during the period 1920-1923, the first thing to look for is the 1344 South Figueroa address. The club moved from 1344 South Figueroa Street to the intersection of Figueroa and Adams in 1923. So any undated map with the “1344” address on the cover or inside is probably from the 1920-1923 period. There are numerous maps in this period with the 1344 address both on the cover and inside, and where the copyright date inside the legend box has been whited out. As examples, the ACSC reprinted © 1919 maps of Pasadena, Imperial County, Routes in and Out of LA, and Routes from LA and Orange Counties to Beach Areas using the “whiteout” technique. It is reasonable to conclude that the most reprints were two or three years after the 1919 originals, so they can be dated to 1921 or 1922.

After moving in 1923, the club initially used the headquarters address “Figueroa and Adams” on all maps until 1927. So depending on how the addresses read on the cover or inside, collectors can generally place maps between 1923 and 1927 using the following chronology:

—Maps with Figueroa and Adams on the cover, and 1344 South Figueroa still inside, indicate the map was reprinted with the new cover address, probably in 1923. Some examples include a San Bernardino County map and a Pomona map. With the Pomona map, however, the club’s cartographers left the 1919 copyright inside when reprinting it with the Figueroa and Adams address on the cover.

(There are at least two maps with 1344 South Figueroa on the cover and Figueroa and Adams inside—a Circle Tour Map and an In-and-Out of Los Angeles map. Their cartography seems to fit with 1923 or 1924 road depictions from non-ACSC maps.)

—Maps with Figueroa and Adams on the cover, and simply “So. Figueroa” inside, the 1344 having been dropped. Examples include a San Bernardino Mountain Resort Map and a Santa Barbara Map. These probably date to 1923 or 1924.

—Maps with the Figueroa and Adams address both on the cover and inside. The maps probably date between 1924 and 1927. Examples include maps of Santa Barbara, Imperial, San Bernardino and Kern counties.

Beginning in 1927, the club changed the way it listed the headquarters address to 2601 South Figueroa. Any map with that address should date to the 1927-1929 period, after which the club began using date codes for most, but not all of its issues. Examples:

—Maps with a Figueroa and Adams cover address but with a 2601 South Figueroa address inside date to 1927. Examples include maps of Riverside, Kern and Tulare and San Diego counties, and Los Angeles and Vicinity.

—Maps with 2601 South Figueroa both on the cover and inside date to 1927 or 1928 and include Los Angeles and Vicinity and San Diego County.

In addition to the address clues, many maps can be cross-checked against dated maps from other cartographers as well as by comparing a dam or new road on a map with their year of completion. The LA and San Diego maps above can be placed as 1928 by comparing them to dated non-Club maps.

1929 THROUGH 1941

The year 1929 saw the Auto Club begin to use date coding on a majority of maps giving the day, month and year of production. The codes were at first complicated and not always deciphered in the same way, but they allow collectors to accurately determine the year for most issues. They became simpler in the second half of the decade. In certain cases, the codes can be checked against completion dates of roads and landmarks shown on maps.

Here are some representative examples by year.

1929:

—Tulare County Map coded 92717 on cover. Read right to left as month, day, year, as July 17, 1929.

The above is the general coding pattern between 1929 and 1933.

But there are exceptions to the general pattern:

—San Diego City Map coded 29163 on cover. Read March 16, 1929.

—San Diego County Map coded 29143 on cover. Read March 14, 1929.

The above two maps have the codes read left to right as year, day, month.

1930:

—Los Angeles and Vicinity with three cover codes, 92116, 92511, and 03311. Read as June 11, 1929, November 5, 1929 and November 3, 1930.

This map is one example of several in this period, with two or more cover codes. With them, the safest assumption is that the map was issued on the latest date, either as a reprint or revision from the earlier dates. It is possible that the earliest date could reflect the date that cartography was completed, and that later dates show the first year of issue and subsequent

revision/reissues. (This was the case with coding in the late 1930s through the mid-1960s.) This November 3, 1930 issue appears to be a second revision as it shows Sepulveda Boulevard through the Santa Monica Mountains, which was opened on September 30, 1930. (If not for the inclusion of Sepulveda, the last date code could also be interpreted as January 13, 1930.)

1931:

—Auto Routes In-and-Out of Los Angeles with two cover codes, 0388 and 13229. Read as August 8, 1930 and September 22, 1931.

—Yosemite Map with two cover codes, 0396 and 13423. Read as June 9, 1930 and March 24, 1931.

—San Luis Obispo Map with two cover codes: 030301 and 1338. Read as October 30, 1930 and August 3, 1931.

—Ventura County Map with three cover codes: 03125, 033201 and 13037. Read as May 21, 1930, October 23, 1930 and July 30, 1931.

—Metropolitan Los Angeles Map with no code. The map shows the Lockheed Air Terminal completed in late 1930 but no infrastructure nor reference for the 1932 Olympics so reasonable dating would be 1931. Also, there is a 1930 Metropolitan LA Map in two-tone color.

—Imperial Valley Map with two codes, 033201 and 8331. Read as October 23, 1930 and August 3, 1931. Here's an example of the first code read right-to-left in the general pattern, but the second code is another exception, read left-to-right as month, day, year. The dates are in line with roads and features contained on the map.

1932:

—Orange County Map with cover code 32315. Read left to right as year, day and month, as May 31, 1932, the same exception as the 1929 San Diego maps to the general pattern.

—San Diego County Map with two cover codes, 13529 and 23921. The first is read as September 25, 1931. The second can be read as either as January 29, 1932, or December 9, 1932. These codes are not totally fool-proof!

I have not come across Auto Club maps with codes indicating 1933 or 1934 issue codes, although I have several Los Angeles City street and regional maps from the club that date to 1933-34 from road and other features. The club may have cut back significantly on maps during these years, which saw severe economic repercussions from the Great Depression.

When map issues resumed on a significant scale in 1935, they featured thinner paper, a simplified cover design (a white background with a black dot) and easier-to-decipher codes either on the cover or inside along the bottom left or right margins. By 1938 many maps were being produced in color. There are some cases where the Club reprinted or updated a coded 1936 or 1937 'black dot' cover map a year later without any coding. These undated 'black code' can only be dated by reference to earlier or later maps, noting changes. For example: a 1935 San Diego County Map has an ad for the 1935 Pacific International Exposition. An undated San

Diego County Map with the same cartography but without the ad is a year or two later, because by 1938 there is a dated new color map of San Diego County.

1935:

—Orange County, black dot, code 6-35. Read as June 1935.

1936:

—Riverside County, black dot, code 364. Read left to right as year, then month, as April 1936. The usual pattern for codes 1936 to 1942 was left to right as year, then month.

—San Luis Obispo County, black dot, code 364. Read as April 1936.

—Kern County, blue/white two-color cover, code 366, read as June 1936.

—Ventura County, black dot, code 436. Read left to right as month, then year, as April 1936.

Another exception!

1937:

—Eastern Sierra Map, Lone Pine to Bridgeport, black dot, code 373. Read left to right as year, then month, as March 1937.

1938:

—Mojave and Colorado deserts map, black dot, cover code 3811. Read left to right as year, then month, as November 1938.

1939:

—San Luis Obispo County Map, color, inside code 3812, read as December 1938, cover code 391, read as January 1939.

From 1939 on, a majority of maps until 1966 had both an inside code indicating the date of cartography completion and a cover code indicating the date of public issue

1940:

—Tulare County, color, cover and inside code 4010, read as November 1940.

—Mojave and Colorado deserts map, black dot, cover code 409, read as September 1940.

1941:

—Santa Barbara County, color, cover and inside codes 413, read as March 1941

WW II 1942-1945

The Club diligently followed the guidelines for map censorship from the U.S. Office of Censorship, which the Western Defense Command consistently enforced. The Club reprinted several pre-WWII maps, originally issued in 1940 and 1941, as WWII reprints masking airports and military facilities, but without making any code updates. Censored reprints included Los

Angeles and Vicinity, Metropolitan Los Angeles, and county maps for Imperial, Riverside, San Bernardino, Ventura, Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo, Kern and Tulare. The only way to determine if the map was an original 1940/1941 issue or a censored reprint is to check for airport and military base masking, and for gaps in the map index where names of these sensitive locations were removed. There are several maps where the Club masked airports and /or military bases but in haste mistakenly left some or all of the names and map grid coordinates in the indexes.

The WWII reprint for Kern County is particularly interesting because both the grid coordinates for a U.S. Army Bombing Range were left in the index and the masking of the range was not complete, so the type for its labeling can still be detected faintly when the map is held up to light.

For new maps produced during WWII, the club produced a masked version for the public and an unmasked version for military and other officials with security clearances. There was no difference in coding between the masked and unmasked maps nor difference in cover and cartography design. To determine whether a new WWII map was masked or unmasked, again the cartography and map index must be checked.

The codes for almost all *new* maps issued during WWII are read as follows from left to right: day of issue, year of issue reversed, and month of issue. The inside code was the date for completion of cartography and the cover code the date for the map's public issue. Examples:
—The Club produced both a 1944 censored and uncensored San Diego County map with an inside code of 223411, read November 22, 1943, and a cover code of 28441, read as January 28, 1944.
—The Club produced both a 1943 censored and uncensored Yosemite Quadrangle Map with an inside code of 1346, read June 1, 1943, and a cover code of 20349, read September 20, 1943.
—There is a California map with a 1942 cover copyright and the same map reprinted with no date; both are masked.

POSTWAR MAPS TO 1966

Read codes from left to right: day of issue, year of issue reversed, and month of issue. The inside code was the date for completion of cartography and the cover code the date for the map's public issue. Examples include:

1946:

—Metropolitan Los Angeles Map, inside code 275412 read as December 27, 1945, and cover code 1643, read as March 1, 1946.

—Riverside County map, inside code 205411, read as November 20, 1945, and cover code 5647, read as July 5, 1946.

1947:

—San Luis Obispo County Map, inside code 1744 read as April 1, 1947, and cover code 7747, read as July 7, 1947.

1948:

—Ventura County Map, inside code 37410 read as October 3, 1947, and cover code 5842 read as February 5, 1948.

1949:

—Santa Barbara County Map, inside code 218412 read as December 21, 1948, and cover code 1942 read as February 1, 1949. Many people confuse this code for 1942. Similarly the 1949 San Diego County Map has the cover code 1948, read as August 1, 1949 but commonly confused as 1948.

1950:

—San Diego City Map, inside code 49410 read as October 4, 1949, and cover code 15051 read as January 15, 1950.

1951:

—Riverside County Map, inside code 15158 read as August 15, 1951, and cover code 11511 read November 1, 1951.

1952

—Indian Country Map, inside code 151512 read as December 15, 1951, and cover code 15251 read as January 15, 1952.

1953:

—Hoover Dam Area Map, inside code 21351 read as January 21, 1953, and cover code 1352 read as February 1, 1953.

1954:

—Riverside County map, inside code 8457 read as July 8, 1954, and cover code 14511 read as November 1, 1954.

1955:

—Desert Area Map, inside code 4554 read as April 4, 1955, and cover code 1556 read as June 1, 1955.

1956:

—LA and Vicinity Freeway System Map Book, inside codes 46510 read as October 4, 1956, and cover code 16512 read as December 1, 1956.

1957:

—Desert Quadrangle Map, inside code 4554 read as April 4, 1955, and cover code 15751 read as January 15, 1957. Reprint of 1955 issue that had a cover code 1556 read as June 1, 1955.

1958:

—LA Area San Gabriel Map, inside code 4858 read as August 4, 1958, and cover code 15859 read as September 15, 1958.

1959:

—LA Area San Fernando Map, inside code 2954 read as April 2, 1959, and cover code 15956 read as June 15, 1959.

1960:

—Los Angeles and Vicinity Map, inside and cover codes 1064 read as April 1, 1960.

1961:

—Los Angeles and Vicinity Map, inside and cover codes 1165 read as May 1, 1965.

1962:

—Orange County, inside code 201610 read as October 20, 1961 and cover code 15261 read as January 15, 1962.

1963:

—Metropolitan Los Angeles, inside code 5361 read as January 5, 1963, and cover code 1363 read as March 1, 1963. This map also has on the cover a series of numbers 34567890. This means the map is in its third reprinting. For maps in the 1960s with similar series on the cover, the first number in the series represents the number of the reprinting.

1964:

—Riverside City Map, inside code 15464 read as April 15, 1964, and cover code 15465 read May 15, 1964 and a cover number series 1234567890 meaning the map is the first printing.

—California South Portion (San Diego to San Francisco). *Unusual example:*

Cover code 1268 with number series 6789, so it is read as August 1, 1962 with a sixth reprinting. Inside code is 1265, read as May 12, 1962. But the Los Angeles freeways inset map code is 15468, read as August 15, 1964. So map is sixth reprinting of 1962 main map with updated 1964 LA freeways map. The map is more accurately dated as 1964 despite cover code indicating only 1962 and sixth reprinting. Without the updated freeway code, it would not be possible to decipher the sixth printing indicator as specifically 1964, and the map would be listed as 1962.

1965:

—Metropolitan Los Angeles Map, inside code 104612 read as December 10, 1964, and cover code 15561 read as January 15, 1965.

1966 TO PRESENT

Beginning in 1966, the Club switched to a straightforward dating system, month followed by date. For example: 11-66. I have come across only one 1966 map that did not hew to the new coding: a 1966 California map with 1965 cartography (215612 read as December 21, 1965) and a 1966 cover date 3663 read as March 3, 1966.

To the present, the club has with very few exceptions kept to this straightforward coding system, printing the date either along the lower front or lower back cover. Once barcoding was added and the club began to sell its maps at retail to non-members, the date code is often found in the same location as the bar code.