

Introduction

What Is the Scope of This Atlas?

The Letchworth State Park Atlas is a collection of thematic maps that provide a geographic perspective on the nature, human history, and tourism of Letchworth State Park. The atlas brings to light novel datasets and synthesizes existing data on the park in unique and meaningful ways. The atlas presents new maps on the park, rather than compiling existing maps; for those seeking historical and other maps, see the resources at the end of this introduction and in the bibliography. While this atlas attempts to provide a complete and well-rounded picture of the park, it supplements rather than repeats existing texts on Letchworth State Park. The atlas focuses on phenomena that vary across space within the park, yet many maps cover a wider geographic extent when more precise data are not available or when Letchworth State Park requires contextualization within a region. For example, Map 28 shows the number of rare species in New York state parks: precise locational data on these species are not publicly available nor shareable, and to manifest Letchworth State Park's relative value as a refuge for rare species the map compares the number of species in the park to other state parks.

This map atlas contains few “zoom-ins” (large-scale maps) of areas within the park. One reason is that much can change in the park at a fine scale in just a few years. More importantly, this atlas does not include detailed large-scale maps due to the archaeological and ecological sensitivity of the park. Including a detailed map of archaeological sites, such as former Native American camps or the former location of Gibsonville, might encourage individuals to explore those locations—in fact, some maps in this atlas intentionally move the locations of mapped phenomena to discourage such illegal activities. (If you should find an artifact, do not touch it: take a photo of it, record its location, and notify a park employee.)

What Are Some Characteristics of Maps in This Atlas?

The Letchworth State Park Atlas is a collection of thematic maps. A thematic map portrays a single topic or related topics within a single map. There are different types of thematic maps, many of which are found in this atlas. A *choropleth* map (e.g., Map 47) colors in geographical units such as towns or states to represent different numerical values associated with those units, typically with darker colors symbolizing higher values and lighter colors symbolizing lower values. Some maps use symbol sizes to represent a quantity: a *proportional symbol map* (e.g., Map 20) draws symbol sizes that are strictly proportional to the quantities they represent (larger symbol = higher amount), and a *graduated symbol map* (e.g., Map 28) draws larger symbols for higher amounts but using a finite number of symbol sizes. An *isopleth map* (e.g., Map 31) contains lines that connect locations with equal values, and then shades in areas between those lines. A *pie chart map* (e.g., Map 34), as the name suggests, superimposes pie charts at various locations on a map, and each chart represents different percentages of a whole as pie “slices” for its corresponding geographical unit—and sometimes the size of the “pie” is drawn proportional to a quantity. While other thematic map types exist, these five types are those that appear in this atlas. Despite the richness of the park’s nature, history, and tourism, no comprehensive set of thematic maps existed prior to this atlas.

Maps in this atlas often depict roads and trails to help atlas users determine the relative locations of certain park features, if they choose to use this atlas during a park visit. For example, someone interested in the locations of historical events in the park could use Map 63 to find a road that provides access to view Civilian Conservation Corps projects. Or a person interested in waterfalls of the park can use Map 42 to find a trail that leads to one.

Many maps in this atlas also include a semi-transparent “hillshade,” a technique that creates the illusion of a light source shining upon the terrain, and which creates a three-dimensional effect that helps readers see valleys, hills, gullies, and cliffs in a map. Hillshades often appear in maps given the importance of the complex terrain of Letchworth State Park on various phenomena mapped—and since the terrain can provide a reference to readers regarding the locations of mapped features. For example, a hillshade manifests how the terrain of the park dictated the placement of roads and buildings in the nineteenth century (Maps 46 and 54), and also helps convey the locations of ecological communities (Maps 26 and 27).

Readers should note other characteristics of maps in this atlas. The author strived to ensure that mapped features were as positionally accurate as possible—but minor positional errors do exist due to the impossibilities of in-the-field data collection for all maps, errors in datasets used for creating maps, and mapmaking decisions made to ensure the readability of maps. In maps where the park is spread over two or four pages, there is often just one legend to explain the symbols. Scale

bars are rarely provided in maps, but readers should refer to early maps for a sense of the scale of Letchworth State Park. The author made the latter two decisions regarding legends and scale bars to save space and reduce redundancy.

Aside from a few pages, this map atlas does not provide extensive reference maps. As opposed to thematic maps, reference maps assist with navigation and simply show the locations of and spatial relationships among common features such as roads, populated places, and water bodies. However, the atlas contains some historical reference maps, such as Maps 46, 54, 58, 60, and 69. While readers could use the modern reference map in this atlas (Map 2) for navigation by road or by trail, those seeking up-to-date reference maps of Letchworth State Park should obtain one at an entrance station on their next visit to the park, or click on the “Maps” tab on the official Letchworth State Park Maps web page (<https://parks.ny.gov/parks/letchworth>).

What Is a Geographic Information System (GIS)?

The author of this atlas created maps using geographic information systems (GIS) software. A GIS is a computer-based system for collecting, organizing, analyzing, and presenting geographic data. GIS software was ideal for creating maps of the park, given the large amount of geographic data presented in this atlas. Users of GIS software create maps chiefly through the “layering” of different slices of data. For example, Map 64 on the locations of historical structures in the park contains five layers of data: historical structures, roads, water bodies, the park boundary, and a hillshade. For those interested in understanding the GIS-format sources of data for maps in this atlas, or the GIS software used for creating maps, please consult the bibliography.

Some Notes on Language

This atlas uses the imperial system of units (such as miles and acres) given that most readers of this atlas are more familiar with this system. However, given that a fair percentage of visitors to Letchworth State Park are international—especially Canadians—the text includes conversions to metric in parentheses wherever possible, as well as a conversion list (see “Imperial to Metric Conversion for This Atlas” preceding this Introduction).

When presenting the park’s human history, this atlas uses the term “Native American” to describe cultures living in the present-day United States prior to the arrival of settlers of European descent. This atlas uses more familiar yet anglicized names of specific Native American groups, but

still gives the group name as they refer to themselves in parentheses—for example, upon the arrival of European-American settlers, the Seneca (Onöndowa’ga:’) lived along the Genesee River within and near the present park area.

This atlas frequently uses phrases such as the “present park area” or “within the present-day park boundary.” These terms describe the portion of land that would eventually become the present-day Letchworth State Park of 14,427 acres (5,838 hectares) as of 2020. The atlas avoids using the term “park” by itself since that term may incorrectly suggest that the park existed at certain moments in time. Readers should keep in mind that the first 1,000 acres (405 hectares) of the park were formally established in 1906 and should use other context clues in the accompanying chapter text to establish whether the park existed at certain times for some maps and chapter sections.

Finally, for the sake of brevity, “New York” refers to New York *State* in this atlas rather than New York *City*.

How Can I Learn More about Letchworth State Park— and Where Can I Find More Maps?

This atlas contains a bibliography that lists texts, documents, articles, reports, maps, tabular data files, GIS-format datasets, and photographs used for creating the maps and writing each chapter’s text. This atlas organizes the bibliography by chapter and chapter section to better allow readers to search for sources that provide specific pieces of data or information in this atlas. When maps were predominantly created from one or two key sources, they are listed on the map in its title or subtitle, or in credits at the bottom of the map. Note that this atlas does not present a detailed human history of the park. For those wishing to learn more, consult the many resources presented in the bibliography. Chapter 3, “Human History,” relies on two sources in particular. Written and assembled by a historian and a former park manager, the first is Cook and Breslin’s *Exploring Letchworth Park History* website, which is immensely valuable for its historical essays, primary documents, and historical photos. Second, the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, written by the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation in 2003, contains a detailed narrative of the park’s history and is available online. These two sources contain lengthy reference lists with additional historical resources on the park.

For those seeking more maps, online resources exist for viewing and downloading other high-resolution maps—both modern and historical—of Letchworth State Park and its surrounding

region, many of which provided important data for maps in this atlas. The following is a list of suggested map resources:

- For reference and special-purpose maps of Letchworth State Park, simply pick up copies at an **entrance station** or **visitor center**, or click on the “Maps” tab on the official **Letchworth State Park web page** (<https://parks.ny.gov/parks/letchworth/details.aspx>).
- The **USGS TopoView website** (<https://ngmdb.usgs.gov/topoview>) provides access to United States Geological Survey maps for the Letchworth State Park area dating back to the early 1900s. The maps are available in various computer file formats as free high-resolution downloads. Topographic maps show buildings, roads, railroads, water bodies, terrain, and (starting in the 1940s) forest cover in high detail.
- The **Letchworth Park History website** contains excerpts of historical maps from throughout the history of the park (www.letchworthparkhistory.com/doc.html). Note that this website is not affiliated with the park nor other state entities.
- The **David Rumsey Map Collection website** (www.davidrumsey.com) provides a vast collection of historical maps scanned at high resolution, such as maps of counties comprising the future park area in 1829 and 1895.
- The **Library of Congress online map collection** (www.loc.gov/maps) contains important maps, such as the 1852 Livingston County and 1853 Wyoming County “from Actual Surveys” maps that show roads, some businesses, and property owner names.
- The New Century Atlases of 1902 show roads, property owners, some businesses, and property owner names. The Livingston County atlas is accessible via the Monroe County Library System (<https://libraryweb.org>), and both the Livingston County and Wyoming County atlases are available as previews or for purchase on the **Historic Map Works website** (www.historicmapworks.com). Various other atlases of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are also available as previews or for purchase on this website.
- Those interested in Native American history should explore historical maps of Indian Reservations (i.e., Gardeau and Squawkie Hill) that overlapped the present-day border of the park on the **Iroquois Genealogy Society Map Gallery web page** (www.iroquoisgenealogysociety.org/map-gallery).

- More tech-savvy individuals interested in modern land use, land cover, infrastructure, and terrain in the park can explore the data layers available via **The National Map Viewer** (<https://apps.nationalmap.gov/viewer>).