Translating History Through Maps

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Dennys River Historical Society Online Map

Introduction

"Mapping the Dennys River Over 9,000 Years"

The Dennys River Historical Society (DRHS) was motivated by the Covid-19 Pandemic to think differently about social engagement with historic material. Based on a new normal of digital access, the DRHS hopes to provide a web-based map for exploration by the public. The map will focus on the history of the Dennys River and its connections to the surrounding region. The title of this overall project is, "Mapping the Dennys River Over 9,000 Years."

The northern most point of this project begins in Meddybemps Lake and follows the Dennys River to its terminus at Dennys Bay. There are seven local townships whose histories are inextricably linked with the river. This map will serve as the first map associated with a series detailing six different time periods critical to this area. The DRHS was awarded a grant which secured the funds to create this map series. The maps will serve as a platform to be populated with local historical sites orienting their viewers in space and through time. The six maps are titled;

- Settlement: From the Last Ice Age to the Columbian Encounter
- Colonization: From 17th Century Acadia to 18th Century New England
- The Age of Revolution: Natives and Yankees from 1783 to 1818
- Lumbering: Working in the Woods, 1818-1920
- From Exhaustion to Conservation: The Dennys River Corridor, 1920-2000
- People of the Dennys River: The Census, 1790-1950

The hope is that thru multidisciplinary expertise and cooperation, a clearer picture of history and geography may be relayed to the public.

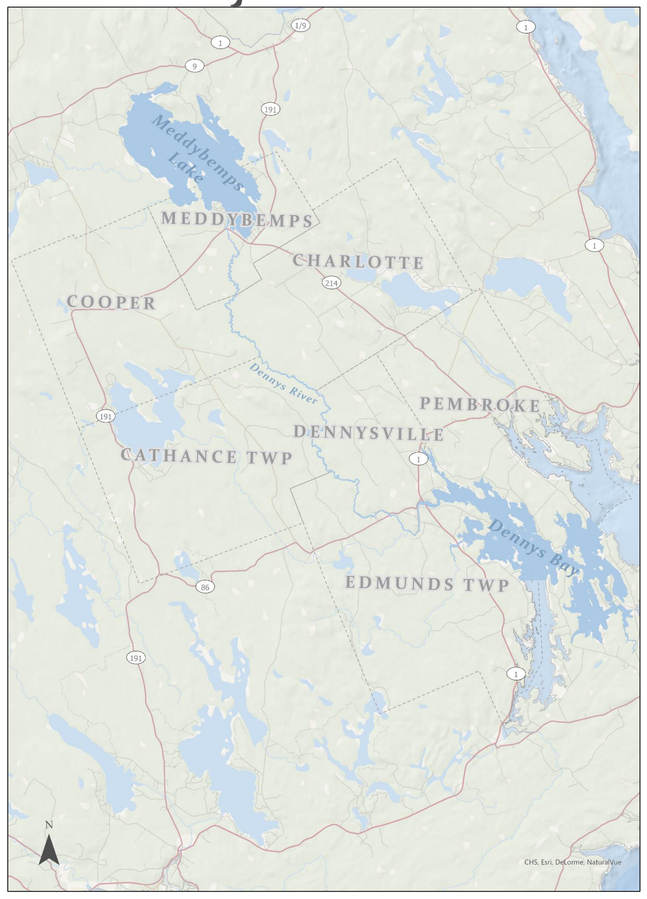
Goals and Going Forward

The challenge of this project was trying to create a foundational map for an ongoing project. I had to create a map that will be passed through many hands before it is finished. It was important to consider what features are relevant at this stage, and how the map will adapt to changes. Further, I had to understand how future project members will access and interact with this map.

Understanding my client's overall vision for this endeavor was a priority. While talking with Dr. Windhorst, I learned bits of local history important to this project, and gained an appreciation for the area I would be mapping. Most critically, I think I better understood my role as a GIS practitioner. Dr. Windhorst's goal is to find avenues to translate his knowledge of an area's history into a visual and interactive medium. My objective is to be useful to a project needing GIS capabilities. The clarity and openness in our communication should allow for our respective fields to influence one another, and together create an enhanced result that could not be achieved in isolation.

With success in this project, Dr. Windhorst can see a use for this method of historical communication moving into broader regions, and finding new audiences. I can see this as a means of connecting historic information and artifacts among, what were, isolated collections. The potential to share and enrich a map of a given area with history-tied locations produces an opportunity to display what was, is and what could be. Seeing how places have changed through time will never cease to be a useful perspective. This project can provide incredible context to places and times.

Dennys River Area



This is the map detailing the extent of the area to be addressed throughout this project with the Dennys River Historical Society. It is currently simple, but it will ultimately be enriched by the work of the many people to be involved moving forward.

Acknowledgments

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Artifacts, photographs, historic maps and other features of the region will be located within the maps for orientation and context. Dennys River Dam Site - Photo By John P. Sheahan c. 1890 (Dennys River Historical Society, 2016)

Data Considerations

This map was built primarily within ArcGIS Pro, but needed to an online element to function within ArcGIS Online (see QR Code above).

There is a single layer, "LakeRiverandBay", that was made within ArcGIS Pro using the USGS National Hydrography Dataset and modifying polygons to create the relevant water imagery. This layer was then published online for use by the public. As it was partially hand drawn, the accuracy is limited.

The remaining layers are exclusively sourced from the Maine GeoLibrary. These layers were based upon the Maine Town Points, Maine County Boundary Polygons, Maine E911 Roads, Maine Town and Townships Boundary Polygons, and Maine State Boundary Polygon. Each layer was filtered using definition queries to display relevant features for this project. This process keeps the web-hosted layers intact but removes all excess data.

The map utilizes the WKID 102100, or Web Mercator, projection. As this map is strictly for reference, and will not be used for spatial analysis or calculations, there should be no issues with distortion. Maine GeoLibrary layers are mapped at a 1:24,000 scale. The Oceans Basemap, in the United States, is mapped from 1:72,000 to 1:9,000, where data exists. Layers containing bounding coordinates are accurate to six decimal places. The web-hosted layers are reliant upon their providers for updates. Information about their latest updates can be found in the metadata.

Visibility of the layers will be contained within 1:750,000 and 1:10,000. This scale allows for an overview of the area of focus, the seven towns, and all waterbodies featured.

Due to labeling limitations for online maps using ArcGIS Online, annotations were created for each map feature.

Beyond the ESRI Oceans Basemap, I used conventional map coloration. This map has a limited color palette and limited complexity. The map is primarily driven by contrasting elements and should be acceptable for color blind viewers.

Citations

Dennys River Historical Society, 2016. *Dennys River Dam Site*. [image] Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/Dennys-River-Historical-Society-504863432933491/photos/1094196287333533> [Accessed 1 May 2022].

Colin, W., n.d. *AHA-NEH Grants to Sustain and Advance the Work of Historical Organizations*. Dennysville: Dennys River Historical Society.