Melchoir Huebinger and the First Iowa Automobile Road Atlas

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How did I get onto this subject

• Took a cartography class at Montgomery College in 1992 where it was mentioned that the best cartographers steal from the best examples of the craft
• I was urged to collect maps of various styles and types to improve my cartographic skills
• So I started to collect maps.
• I’ve been collecting maps of Iowa and the Quad Cities for about 25 years.
• My father had a family copy of the 1905 Scott County Huebinger Atlas
• I kept on finding maps and county atlases by the Huebinger Map Company and the Iowa Publishing Company, but no biographies had been written about Mr. Huebinger. So, I started collecting notes about him, and tried to find out more about his career.
• Here is a presentation about what I have discovered so far:
Short Biography

• 1854 - Born in Limburg an der Lahn, Limburg-Weilburg Hesse, Germany (near Frankfurt in Western Germany)
• 1870s – Trained as a surveyor and civil engineer in German army
• 1880 - Emigrated to Davenport to work as Surveyor for Army Corps of Engineers at Rock Island
• 1882 - Produces his first commercial map of Scott County and publishes his first subscription Atlas of Scott County
• 1887 – Combines efforts with his brothers photography studio and publishes his Album of Davenport (in German and English)
• 1890 – Surveys the City of Davenport, and produces his first surveyed map of Davenport and issues a large scale atlas of the City of Davenport
• 1893 – Exhibits his oversize map of the Tri-Cities at the Chicago Worlds Fair
• 1902 – Starts work on Iowa State Atlas
• 1904 – Sells Iowa Atlas an displays huge Iowa Map at the St Louis Worlds Fair
• 1910 – Moves to Des Moines to start work on the Iowa Good Roads Automobile Atlas
• 1912 – Publishes the first automobile atlas of Iowa
• 1918 – Sells Iowa Publishing Co and moves to Peoria
• 1923 – Dies in Peoria
Examples of Corps of Engineers Maps

• In 1879 Congress created the Mississippi River Commission to oversee federal funds for flood control.
• Congress authorized the Army Corps of Engineers to participate in levee building on the Mississippi if matters of navigation were involved. Although the Commission was supposed to combine the ideas of both civilian and military engineers, in practice it was controlled entirely by the Corps.
• Huebinger was originally hired as a civil engineer surveyor to support mapping, planning and construction of flood control levees, from 1880 to 1882.
• He only lasted a couple of years in this highly political engineering job.
• Worked as a civil engineer and surveyor for Major Hoffman

Not Huebinger’s work, but a sample of what the Corps was producing at the time.
In 1882 Melchoir Huebinger had the opportunity to partner with Hugo Schmidt to produce their 1882 subscription atlas of Scott County, Iowa.

Hugo Schmidt was the city assessor in Davenport, Iowa and had issued several annual business directories for the City of Davenport. Schmidt had access to an accurate list of the city residents and businesses needed to sponsor and advertise in a possible Scott County atlas.

Huebinger provided the skills to compile accurate large scale maps needed to complete the atlas, and the camera expertise to take needed to publish them.

They combined their efforts and produced the first Scott County subscription atlas in 1882.

Huebinger kept the copyright to the maps he produced for the atlas. He was later able to produce several large scale maps of Scott County and the cities and towns in the county.

The atlas was successful and Huebinger was able to complete a separate small separately issued map of Scott County that he sold on his own later that year.

The atlas and map sold well enough for Huebinger to leave his Corps of Engineers position.
1883 Scott County Map

- This map was issued and produced solely by Huebinger
- He actually went out into the field to survey and compile the map
- Advertising was sold to help defer the costs of producing the map and help with his printing and publication costs
- The last similar map was published in 1869, and was published in a subscription county atlas, and not sold separately.

- He used this base map in several later editions
  - The Scott County map was later included in the historic bi-lingual Album of Davenport
  - It was also used as a base for his 1894 subscription atlas of Scott County
Mechoir partnered with his brother Adam, a professional photographer to compile the historic 1887 Album of Davenport.

He reused his 1882 Scott county map in the back cover.

The book was issued in German, with an English language annex and showed the actual photos of prominent businesses and residences.

This was at the birth of large scale photo reproduction, individual photos were photographically reproduced and pasted in the album, a few years later Huebinger would move on to advanced photo lithography, composing pages and rescaling them for publication.
Huebinger’s next major effort was to produce a large scale accurate plat map of Davenport.

This map was issued as a plat atlas and also had a supplement issued with it 9 years later.

Melchoir actually surveyed major points in the city and produced triangulated map and adjusted the map to the datum he defined.

Scale: One inch equals 350 ft (1:4200 scale) Very large scale, means lots of detail.

The map shows streets, parks, major buildings, fire hydrants, fire alarm boxes, street lights, police patrol telephones, and survey bench marks.

The atlas was drawn and lettered by hand and then photographically reduced to the correct size, the pages were hand colored lithos and Huebinger put his blue copyright stamp on each page.

He was able to sell advertiser space on the low run municipal atlas.

Huebinger then went on to produce similar maps for Rock Island and Moline, which he combined to produce a large advertising map presented at the Chicago Worlds Fair.

It was also published as a pocket map and went through several editions and was used in his 1894 Scott County subscription atlas.
1893 Tri Cities Map

• In the 1890s, Huebinger focused on producing maps of the Tri Cities area (now the Quad Cities), and produced a 1893 map of the Tri Cities (Davenport, Moline and Rock Island) which he proudly displayed at the Chicago World’s Fair in the Iowa Pavilion.
• The fair was a great marketing tool for his maps and subscription atlases.
• I suspect that he was paid to produce his wall map of the Tri-Cities, but I haven’t confirmed it.
• He gauged demand for another Scott County atlas, and the following year he produced another Scott County Atlas and then Clinton county in 1894,
• He later advertised and heavily promoted his Iowa State atlas at the St Louis Fair, 11 years later.
1894 Scott County Subscription Atlas

- He made money on the advertising in the atlas and the vanity publication of VIP subscribers
- Openly complains about the drudgery of surveying and updating the maps
- His 1883 map shows up again, but he then goes onto update much larger scale and more detailed maps of the townships
- He includes the set of maps he used to compile his historic Tri-City map displayed at the Iowa Pavillion at the Chicago Worlds Fair in 1893. He just reshot them and rescaled them to fit in the atlas.
- By this time he is living in a nice large new house on Kirkwood Avenue

Huebinger published 4 county atlases of Scott County 1882, 1894, 1905 and 1919.
Most of his business was centered in Eastern Iowa counties, and by 1902 he had decided to produce a state atlas of Iowa to sell at the St Louis World’s Fair.

His 1902 Topographic map of Scott County states "A Word to the User of This Map. The object of getting up and presenting these maps of your county is not one for immediate profit, but preparing for the grand state of Iowa one of the most unique and at the same time most instructive exhibits at the coming St Louis Louisiana Purchase Exposition.”

The text mentions that this folding map is a preliminary, or sample, county map for an upcoming "gigantic and complete map of the state of Iowa, to be 14 feet high in 19 feet wide". It further states that each county will be a complete map in itself, and when all of these county maps are placed together, they will form the largest complete map ever attempted and that at a later time, the maps will be available in atlas form.

He changed the name of his company to reflect his new goal of putting out a state atlas, the new name of the Huebinger Survey and Map Publishing Company was the Iowa State Atlas Publishing Company.
Subscription Ad for 1904 Iowa State Atlas

- Announces plans to produce a new large scale Iowa State Atlas to sell and advertise at the St Louis Worlds Fair
- Use existing county maps from his subscription atlases of Scott, Muscatine, Cedar, Johnson, Linn and Clinton Counties for source materials. He also has statewide contracts to produce geological maps of each of the Iowa counties.
- Started out by compiling maps of the high population counties and issuing separately as pocket maps to help advertise his atlas effort and defray the costs of publication.
- Prospectus lists endorsements from officials from head of the Rock Island Arsenal, City Officials, State Geologists, Engineers, and others
He mentions in the preface for the 1904 Atlas of Iowa that the atlas took his company 3 years to compile and that 99 litho stones were created, one for each county in the state.

He sent out crews to check and survey data in all 99 counties.

Subsidized by the state.

Produced bill board sized map of Iowa for display in the Iowa Building at the St Louis Worlds Fair.

Much larger than his Tri-Cities map at the Chicago Worlds Fair.
What did his shop look like in 1904?

This page was published in the 1904 atlas of Iowa and 1905 atlas of Scott County, and shows Huebinger’s Iowa Publishing Company busy at work making the billboard sized map of Iowa for the St Louis Worlds Fair.
Some of these composing boards used in the 1904 atlas were for sale a few years ago on Ebay
St Louis Worlds Fair Impact

- Advertised his Iowa Atlas at the Iowa Pavilion
- Saw large number of automobiles on display
- Started to get active in the Good Roads Movement and develop a Iowa State Automobile Road Atlas
- Expensive undertaking, moved his company to Des Moines and got backing of growing insurance industry to produce atlas, as well as other state wide advertising opportunities
- Got Iowa made Spaulding Motorcar Company to donate 2 cars to help map the dirt roads of the state
- Hired his sons to drive to drive and map roads
What did the other automobile maps that he was competing with look like?

1911 Scarborough Guide: The round trip from Davenport to Le Claire only took about 80 lines of turns and descriptions, this was bad enough, but look at the map they included. Driving directions without the GPS or good maps.
Driving directions were bad, but some maps were worse.

Go ahead and show me the way from Davenport to Le Claire on this map.
Show Slide of lack of detail on early automobile maps

In 1911, Havoline Tours couldn’t get you from Davenport to Le Claire, but they could get you to Newton in only 19 turns, and no other cross roads on the map.

Cheap maps usually skimped on detail!
Development of the 1912 Road Atlas

- In 1910, after publication of the Huebinger's Map and Guide for Des Moines for Resident and Stranger, Huebinger relocated to Des Moines, and renamed his new operation the Iowa Publishing Company.
- His Des Moines guide contained a large map of the Des Moines area with a guide book and local advertising. The map got the Iowa Publishing Company noticed by a prominent Des Moines business man, Frederick Hubbell.
- Hubbell convinced Huebinger to move his operations to Des Moines and to get active in producing a good roads atlas of Iowa.
- Hubbell was a founding member and chairman of the Equitable Life Insurance Company. His strong ties to the business community helped Huebinger sell advertising and generate subscriptions for the first true road atlas of Iowa and help underwrite the costs in compiling the atlas.
- Huebinger was hired as the president of the Iowa Publishing Company and his son Henning was the treasurer. His other son was hired as a field surveyor and sales agent.
- The move to Des Moines help Huebinger centralize the mapping effort needed for the good roads atlas effort. The maps borrowed heavily from his 1904 atlas, but he did send out crews to drive, survey and map roads in each county.
- They produced an incredibly detailed 124 page color and black & white large format atlas of the state.
- It was sold as a subscription atlas, and had an incredible array of advertising....
Example of Huebinger’s Road Maps

1910 Des Moines for Residents and Strangers
Color, highly detailed for use with automobile
Example of Huebinger’s Road Maps

Huebinger sold maps from his atlases separately to help defray costs.
Huebinger was politically active and supported candidates that pushed for higher road construction spending.
If you string several county maps together, you can publish a trail guide. By 1912, Huebinger had published 15 different road guides to resell his individual county maps as strip road guides. Nebraska tried to hire Huebinger to make a similar atlas for their state, but Huebinger declined the offer due to all the work involved in his Iowa Automobile Atlas. He did produce a Omaha to Denver Trail Guide to explore the idea.
Huebinger issued strips of county maps as a series of trail guides to help defray the cost of the development of the Iowa Road Atlas prior to mapping all of the counties in the state.
### 1912 Map Prices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vest Pocket Automobile County Maps</td>
<td>25¢</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topographical County Maps</td>
<td>15¢</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Road Guides</td>
<td>50¢</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Des Moines City Map</td>
<td>50¢</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinton, Davenport, Dubuque, Cedar Rapids, Burlington, Waterloo City Maps</td>
<td>25¢</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large Iowa State Map</td>
<td>$2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large Iowa Atlas</td>
<td>$10.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Iowa Atlas (more for leather cover)</td>
<td>$2.00 to $3.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Why are they selling Peoria, IL maps in their Iowa map display?**
In 1911, the Iowa Publishing Company made a marketing deal with the Spaulding motor car company of Grinnell, to use an Iowan built automobile to map the state. The map makers used a 5 passenger Spaulding 30 sedan, painted steel gray and decorated with Grinnell pennants and illustrated signs. This car was driven by Spaulding factory reps and the Iowa Publishing Company map makers over 800 miles on the Transcontinental and River to River routes across Iowa.
River to River Road

The routes the Spaulding cars traveled were issued as separate map book route guides and used in the 1911 Iowa Good Roads Atlas. This helped the company defray the cost of mapping each route needed for the state atlas. The Iowa Publishing company put out separate road guides for the River to River Road, the Blue Grass Route, the Waubonsie Trail, the Hawkeye Highway, and the North Iowa Pike. The 1911 Good Roads Atlas of Iowa was too large a book to easily use and store in a car, so in 1912 the Iowa Publishing Company started selling their Pocket Road Guides of Iowa. These were huge sellers, and went through many editions, until being bought out by the North American Publishing Company in 1918. The company expanded to publish folding maps for automobiles covering multiple counties at 1 inch to 3 miles, and issued large scale city maps for many Iowa cities during the 1910s. After selling the Iowa Publishing Company, Huebinger focused his efforts on the subscription atlas business and went on to publish county atlases for Scott County, Cedar County, Muscatine, and a city atlas of Davenport. In 1920, Huebinger moved to Peoria to work on a Peoria City and County atlas.
After 1917, the publication rights for the atlas was sold several times, but ended back in Huebinger’s hands in 1924, for the last issue of his atlas.
In 1912, blazed trail markers in their infancy, but were somewhat confusing. The modern numbered roads didn’t exist until the 1920s.
Example of Huebinger’s Road Maps

1908 Cedar Rapids Area

Rural maps were needed to navigate dirt and gravel roads.
Separately Issued City Pocket Maps

1900 map of Davenport issued for the GAR convention that year
Separately Issued City Pocket Maps

1913 Separately issued Davenport street map showing city wards. Red line updates. 2 colors.
Separately Issued City Pocket Maps

1918 Color map of Davenport and Bettendorf
Huebinger’s companies produced hundreds of state and county geological maps to support Iowa state geological and soil surveys. He was able to take advantage of existing accurate county base maps to support this effort.
Huebinger produced post cards, travel guides, souvenir books, posters and photos.
Local Address List of Huebinger’s Companies

Huebinger Brothers Photographers 1887,
Corner of 3\textsuperscript{rd} and Brady, Davenport

Schmidt & Huebingers 1882,
1124 Scott Street, Davenport

Huebinger Civil Engineering and Surveyor’s Office
1882,
1124 Scott Street, Davenport

Huebingers Photo Studio 1890,
119 West 2\textsuperscript{nd} street, Davenport

Huebingers Surveying and Map Publishing Company, 1899
417\frac{1}{2} West 4\textsuperscript{th} Street Davenport and 600 Main Street, Peoria

Iowa State Atlas Publishing Company 1902,
216-218 East 3\textsuperscript{rd} Street Davenport

Iowa Publishing Company
1910, 1912, 1913
4\textsuperscript{th} and Locust Street Des Moines

1918 North American Publishing Company
Davenport, sold copyrights to pocket guides and maps from Iowa Pub Co to North American Pub Co, moved back to Davenport

Huebinger Publishing Company Inc 1925,
Peoria, IL
Examples of how to be a thrifty map publisher

• Reuse maps where ever possible (political, geological, roads, elections)
• Diversify (post cards, photo albums, posters)
• Publish large scale maps first, and then use them to make smaller scale maps
• Sell advertisements in your maps and atlases
• Sell vanity to subscribers
• Nepotism works, get your kids to work for you
• Pursue government handouts
• Use color only where needed
• File for, use and honor copyrights and trademarks
By 1931, Iowa Has Stepped Out of the Mud
Front of the 1931 Official State DOT Map