



Sheetlines

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“The tale of the Hagstrom gift-wrap”

John Davies

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The Charles Close Society was founded in 1980 to bring together all those with an interest in the maps and history of the Ordnance Survey of Great Britain and its counterparts in the island of Ireland. The Society takes its name from Colonel Sir Charles Arden-Close, OS Director General from 1911 to 1922, and initiator of many of the maps now sought after by collectors.

The Society publishes a wide range of books and booklets on historic OS map series and its journal, *Sheetlines*, is recognised internationally for its specialist articles on Ordnance Survey-related topics.

pies, 20% off everything and surrounded by maps of every description. And then I discovered the wrapping paper! Reprints of old map sheets offered as gift-wrap for a few pence each. These were too good to miss – and certainly too good to waste on wrapping presents, even for nearest and dearest.

One of the sheets was *Hagstrom's House Number and Transit Guide Map of New York*. It was undated, but from the typography it looked very 'forties' and I started looking for clues. With my limited tourist knowledge of Manhattan and the aid of modern maps and some frantic googling I discovered a few pointers. It showed the Queens-Midtown Tunnel (opened 1940) but not the Port Authority Bus Terminal (opened 1950). It showed both the Third Avenue elevated railway and the Hoboken Eire Railroad station (closed 1955 and 1956 respectively). The Brooklyn-Battery Tunnel was marked as 'under construction' and that turns out to have been started in 1940 and completed in 1950. So far, so vague. Then after a little more googling I struck gold at <http://myrecollection.com/christianog/hagstromcode.html> and here is what I learned:¹

For many years a code was used internally to identify the publication date for pocket maps. This was done for marketing and copyright security reasons. The practice has been abandoned since 1978. Anyone who has a Hagstrom map before that date will notice there is no date on the map anywhere to be found. Usually appearing in the lower right hand corner of a map are letters: e.g. HH-ST

The code is as follows:

H	A	G	S	T	R	O	M	C	X
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	0

To decipher simply refer to the chart above to locate the letters and corresponding numbers below each letter. In this instance HH is 11 and ST is 45.

The first letter or letters in the code refer to the month, the next two letters refer to the year, therefore HH-ST is 11-45 or the eleventh month, November, 1945.

My map does indeed have a code, but it is X-SR-R, which doesn't quite seem to fit the rules. It appears to translate as 0-46-6, possibly suggesting a date of June 1946.

Intrigued, I consulted the oracle. I e-mailed the author of the website, Gregory Christiano. He agreed that the code is odd, but that I could determine the date by studying the content of the map. Which rather brings us back to where we started!

Has any member any further information? Or does anyone know the dates of construction of Manhattan features of the forties!

¹ Information from the website reproduced by kind permission of the author.