



From Deeds to Dirt: Case Studies in Analyzing Research With Maps

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Our ancestors lived in a specific time and place. Putting them in context with their neighbors and communities can give us a greater understanding of their lives and may help solve some of our genealogical mysteries. Research you may have already collected can give you the information needed to analyze your data using a map. Documents such as censuses, deeds, tax lists, directories (both city and rural), newspaper articles and more, can be analyzed using maps.

Geography

A simple understanding of the geography our ancestors lived in and traveled through will give you a greater understanding of why they did the things the way they did.

Without consulting a map, we may make poor assumptions and the information may not make sense. Look for mountains, rivers, lakes, and anything that may have determined an ancestor's migration route or choice of property.

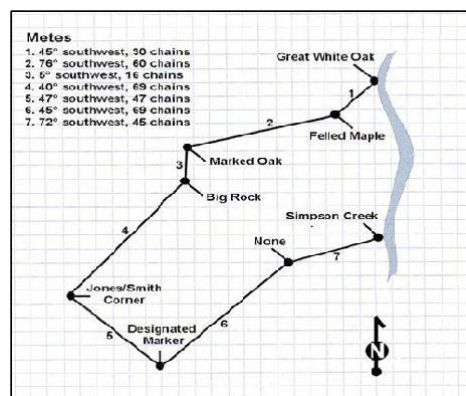
Types of Maps

- Borders - boundaries of nations, states, counties, townships, cities
- Topographical - contours, elevation and resources of the land
- Plat maps - land ownership
- Migration - railroads, canals, waterways, roads

Land Records- Two types of land records and survey systems:

State Land States - the earlier states in the Union and Hawaii

- The land was given to the individual by the colony or the state
- The records were kept at the state level and can be found usually at the state archives.
- This land system uses **"Metes & Bounds"** for surveys, measurement
- Metes & Bounds created irregularly shaped parcels of land and used landmarks that were not permanent.



Federal Land States - sometimes called "Public Land States"

- The land was given by the Federal Government usually as payment for military service or through Homesteading Acts.
- Made up of the rest of the U.S., except Texas.
- This land system uses the **“Rectangular”** survey system.

SECTIONS IN A TOWNSHIP

6	5	4	3	2	1
7	8	9	10	11	12
18	17	16	15	14	13
19	20	21	22	23	24
30	29	28	27	26	25
31	32	33	34	35	36

DIVISIONS OF A SECTION

NW ¼ NW¼	NE ¼ NW¼	NE ¼ Section 160 acres	
SW ¼ NW¼	SE ¼ NW¼ 40 acres		
N ½ SW¼		W ½ SE¼	E ½ SE¼ 80 acres
S ½ SW¼ 80 acres			

Mapping Resources

The following is a collection of resources to direct you to a variety of mapping tools, websites, online map collections and more.

Mapping Software

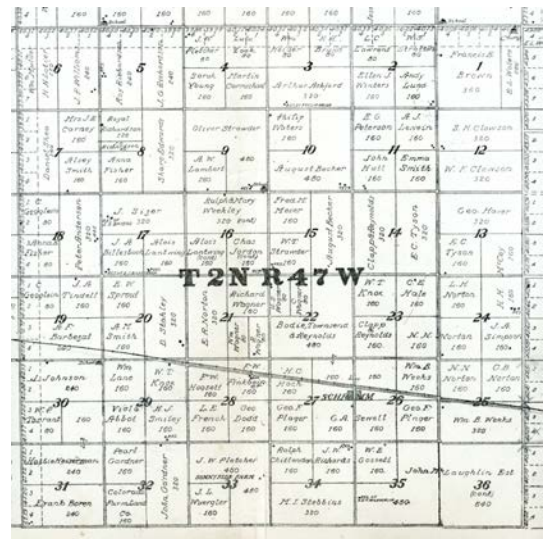
- DeedMapper - www.directlinesoftware.com
- Metes and Bounds - www.tabberer.com/

Mapping Websites

- Google Maps - maps.google.com
- National Map - nationalmap.gov
- Atlas of Historical County Boundaries – <http://publications.newberry.org/ahcbp/>
- EarthPoint - <https://www.earthpoint.us/>

Online Map Collections

- David Rumsey Map Collection - davidrumsey.com
- Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection - www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/
- Library of Congress Geography & Map Reading Room - www.loc.gov/rr/geogmap/
- Sanborn Maps available through some libraries and archives, and Library of Congress - <https://www.loc.gov/collections/sanborn-maps>
- State-sponsored collections - Missouri Digital Heritage (www.sos.mo.gov/mdh/) or Arkansas Digital Archives (<https://ar-digital.contentdm.oclc.org/>)
- Texas General Land Office - www.glo.texas.gov
- Historic Map Works - www.historicmapworks.com (\$)
- HistoryGeo - www.historygeo.com (\$)



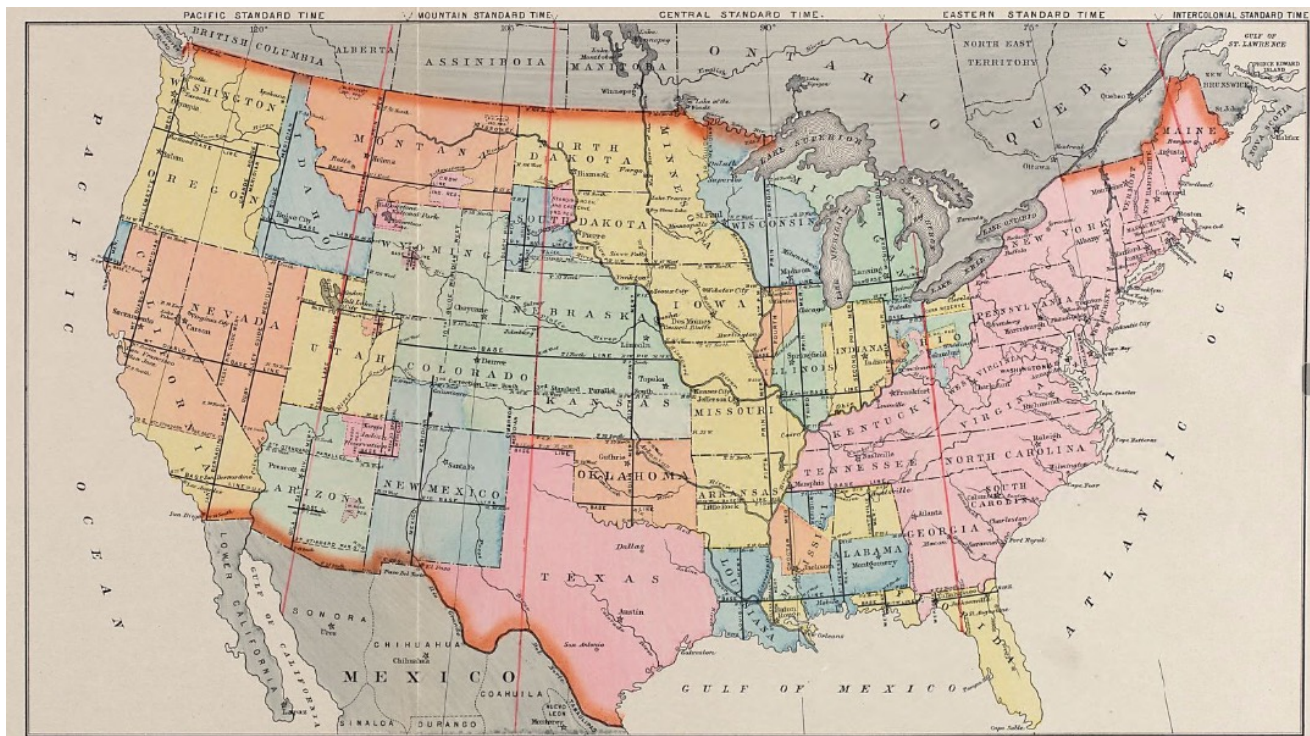
Using Maps to Analyze Research

- Identify all places from documents on maps. Try to locate a map that is as close to the appropriate time frame as possible.
- Some genealogical software programs have map features. Check the help files for your program to see what is available.
- You can use technology or paper maps. Don't be afraid of drawing your own!

Google's My Places

- Google's "My Places" is a handy tool for creating custom maps.
- Find historical locations in modern maps.
- Place pins, draw lines, create shapes, make notes and add photographs to tell a story.
- You can create: visual research log, cemetery tour with results and notes, a genealogy research trip indicating the repositories to visit with information on hours in the notes, a timeline of an ancestor's documents or migration, a visual biography or autobiography, and more!
- YouTube tutorial on using "Create a Custom Map with Google My Maps (No Code)"

<https://youtu.be/3uxVy1O8yaM?si=Xu6W91U8bLJaJvzr>



Library of Congress, "Map Showing the Principle Meridians and Baselines of the United States,"; digital image, from *Plat book of Fayette County, Ohio : compiled from county records and actual surveys*, (<https://www.loc.gov/resource/g4083fm.gla00015/?sp=39&r=0.232,0.153,0.73,0.448,0> : accessed 18 January 2025).

