

# Discovering Map Resources

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**RootsTech ♦ 2016**

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## CLASS DESCRIPTION

In this session, attendees will discover historic GIS systems such as English Jurisdictions on FamilySearch and new tools such as New York Public Library's map warper. Subscription sites Historic Map Works and HistoryGeo will be featured in a demonstration, and examples of locating historic land records with the help of online county GIS websites will be shown.

## INTRODUCTION

The availability of online maps and the deployment of map-based applications have been expanding dramatically. Hundreds of thousands of maps are online. But don't get too excited—of 6 million maps held by the Library of Congress, only 40,000 are online. Applications such as the New York Public Library Map Warper, English Jurisdictions, and other historical geographical information systems applications help the genealogist manage spatial data, visualize relationships, and understand a place or locality.

## HISTORICAL GIS APPLICATIONS

A geographic information systems (GIS) application is a database of geographic data linked to myriad other data. Computer programs allow a variety of options to display and analyze the data. Generally, many applications take the form of a base map display with the ability to overlay data linked to location. Google Earth is an example of a large and very sophisticated GIS application. A historical GIS essentially links spatial data with historic data. Examples include applications that display census data, boundary information, historic maps, or information from archives. In fact, some specialized genealogical applications already exist, such as Map My Family Tree and Family Atlas. Below are some other examples.

### ASK ABOUT IRELAND ([www.askaboutireland.ie](http://www.askaboutireland.ie))

A source of learning information about Ireland. Of particular interest is the ability to perform a free search of Griffith's Valuation and then link to geo-referenced Ordnance Survey (OS) maps. Other paid sites such as Ancestry and FindMyPast also have Griffith's Valuation and OS maps.

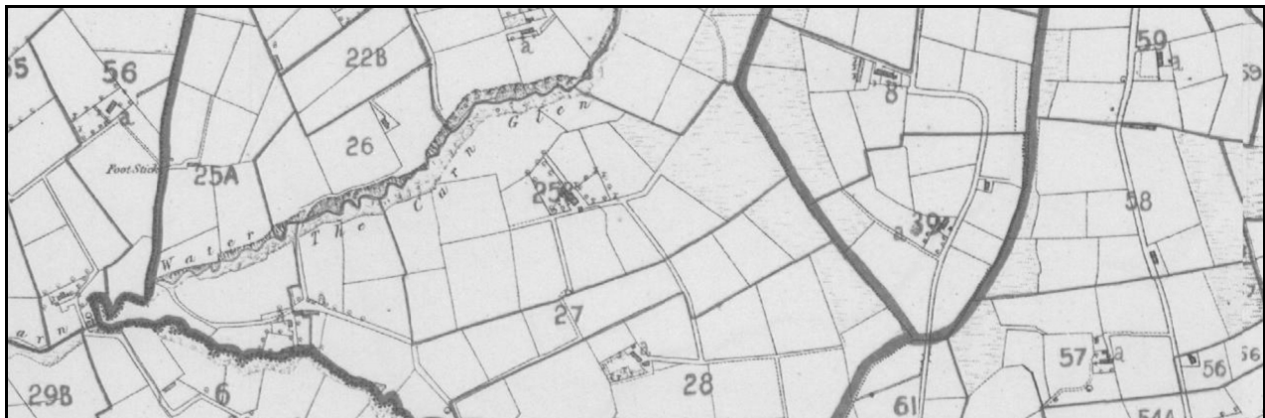


Figure 1. Griffith's Valuation Ordnance Survey Map, Carnavanaghan, County Armagh

**ATLAS OF THE HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY OF THE UNITED STATES** ([dsl.richmond.edu/historicalatlas](http://dsl.richmond.edu/historicalatlas))

This historical GIS application reproduces nearly 700 maps from the 1932 atlas created by Charles O. Paullin and John K. Wright. This tool is a great source for historical, cultural, and geographic information.

**ENGLAND JURISDICTIONS 1851** ([maps.familysearch.org](http://maps.familysearch.org))

This application, designed and created by FamilySearch, is designed specifically to help genealogists researching in nineteenth-century England. Users can toggle between a map of jurisdictions and the Ordnance Survey map. From the jurisdictions map, researchers can link to smaller divisions such as parishes. Religious denominations are identified and the date records begin is provided. Links are also provided to search the Family History Library Catalog or the FamilySearch Research Wiki.

**GREATER PHILADELPHIA GEOHISTORY NETWORK**

(<https://www.philageohistory.org/geohistory/index.cfm>)

As described by the developers, this project is “a web-based repository of geographically organized historical information about Philadelphia, its geography, its buildings, and its people.” There are a wealth of historical land resources about the greater Philadelphia area available from this website. Of particular interest is the application “Mapping West Philadelphia Landowners in October 1777” ([www.archives.upenn.edu/WestPhila1777/map.php](http://www.archives.upenn.edu/WestPhila1777/map.php)).

**HISTORICAL CENSUS BROWSER** ([mapserver.lib.virginia.edu](http://mapserver.lib.virginia.edu))

Not only does this website enable users to examine census categories data on a county-level basis from 1790-1960, but the data can also be mapped for visual impact and study.

**MAPPING THE JEWISH COMMUNITIES OF THE BYZANTINE EMPIRE** ([www.byzantinejewry.net](http://www.byzantinejewry.net))

This project seeks to map with a GIS the Jewish presence in the Byzantine Empire, as documented in literary sources, letters, maps, etc.

**THE NATIONAL MAP** ([nationalmap.gov](http://nationalmap.gov))

The National Map provides public access to a consistent framework of geographic knowledge. High-quality geospatial data and information is provided from multiple partners (federal, state, local, and private). Items of interest to genealogists include the Public Land Survey System (PLSS), the topographic map index, and topographic map layers. The map is linked to the Geographic Names Information System (GNIS) to allow location searching. All of the United States Geological Survey (USGS) scanned topos and the new U.S. Topo are available through the National Map. Of special interest is the new TopoView application that allows users to view and download topographic maps in GEOPDF, GEOTIFF, JPEG, or KMZ formats.

**NORTH CAROLINA HISTORIC OVERLAY MAPS** ([www2.lib.unc.edu/dc/ncmaps/interactive/overlay.html](http://www2.lib.unc.edu/dc/ncmaps/interactive/overlay.html))

The North Carolina Maps project includes maps from three major state collections. The Historic Overlay Maps page features maps from as early as 1770 overlaid on Google Maps or viewed on Google Earth.

**NYPL MAP WARPERS** (<http://maps.nypl.org/warper>)

This is a recent tool from the New York Public Library to rectify maps (locate them on a current map) in their collection. The tool is user friendly and available to the public. Users can download a KML file (a file that will launch in Google Earth) that will properly position the map on Google Earth.

## VISION OF BRITAIN THROUGH TIME ([www.visionofbritain.org.uk](http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk))

This project provides detailed historical information on places in Britain. From this site, users can also link to a companion application, Old Maps Online. This site is a portal to maps in libraries around the world. Vision of Britain through Time is useful in conjunction with England Jurisdictions 1851.

## ONLINE LAND OWNERSHIP MAPS

Land ownership maps in this country are generally focused on the county level. Produced largely beginning in the later half of the nineteenth-century as wall maps or in atlas format to commemorate events such as the centennial of the American Revolution, the atlases were sold by subscription. Although advances in printing, such as lithography, increased availability, maps were still expensive. Consequently, these earlier land ownership maps will be found in more affluent areas. Additionally, property owners can be found on military maps and other government-published maps. Land ownership and residence can often be determined by correlating city directories with fire insurance maps. Examples of online resources include the following:

### THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS GEOGRAPHY AND MAP READING ROOM ([www.loc.gov/rr/geogmap](http://www.loc.gov/rr/geogmap))

The map collection of the library includes almost 8,000 maps that show landowners; more than 1,700 are online at their website ([www.loc.gov/maps/?fa=subject%3Alandowners](http://www.loc.gov/maps/?fa=subject%3Alandowners)). The collection includes individual sheets, county and town wall maps, cadastral atlases, and military maps. Some of these maps have been indexed by Ancestry in its collection “U.S., Indexed County Land Ownership Maps, 1860-1918.” The Ancestry indexing effort is valuable as it allows researchers to find landowners. However, the effort does not cover all of the cadastral maps held by the Library of Congress, since Ancestry’s collection was made from a microfilm that was created many years ago.



Figure 2: Portion of Map of Pike County, Illinois, 1860, Library of Congress ([www.loc.gov/item/2013593092/](http://www.loc.gov/item/2013593092/))

## PROQUEST ONLINE DATABASES—SANBORN, SANBORN GEO CODE, HISTORIC MAP WORKS LIBRARY EDITION [PAID SUBSCRIPTION WEBSITES]

Historic Map Works Library Edition is offered in the Family History Library. This product provides access to more than 1,505,206 cadastral maps. About ten percent are geo-referenced to Google Maps. The core collection consists of some 27,000 atlases of cadastral maps. The collection includes many twentieth-century atlases. In many counties the coverage extends over multiple years.

### HISTORYGEO.COM ([www.historygeo.com](http://www.historygeo.com)) [PAID SUBSCRIPTION WEBSITE]

The antique maps project at HistoryGeo provides access to 4,000-plus cadastral maps representing 33 states. Many of these maps have been indexed.

**DAVIDRUMSEY.COM** ([www.davidrumsey.com](http://www.davidrumsey.com))

Within David Rumsey's collection of 64,000 online maps is a large collection of county atlases and city maps. The site provides high-resolution imagery of more than 3,000 individual maps that depict property owners. Users may utilize tools on the website to geo-reference these maps to a Google Maps base map.

**ONLINE COUNTY GIS WEBSITE RESOURCES**

Many of the 3,144 counties in the United States have established GIS Departments, sometimes called IT (information technology) departments. Generally, the purpose of these activities is related to taxation and property ownership. Many of us have found a satellite image of our house on the county website. Some counties have included historic buildings and properties as an enhancement to the basic functionally required by the taxing authorities. Below are a few examples of online county GIS website resources and other sites that use this county data for various purposes. Many of these resources will help in land research by establishing a starting point.

**MYTOPO** ([www.mytopo.com](http://www.mytopo.com))

MyTopo offers custom printed private land maps for about 85% of the counties in the United States. These maps show the parcel maps with the current landowner's name. Customers can select a map scale as large as 1/10,000 allowing a great amount of detail to be displayed. These custom maps may be useful in determining where an ancestor's land would fit on a current plat map.

**ANCESTOR TRACKS** ([ancestortracks.com/Dauphin\\_Co\\_blurb.html](http://ancestortracks.com/Dauphin_Co_blurb.html))

Ancestor Tracks provides a series of products relating to Pennsylvania landowners, and the website has a variety of free maps useful in Pennsylvania land research. Their CD atlas in the series "Early Landowners of Pennsylvania" superimposes the 24 original township warrantee maps on modern maps of Dauphin County. Researchers can easily find the location of the land of the earliest settlers. This work was done on contract by the county GIS department. Although this is the only one in the Ancestor Tracks series of county early landowners with this level of integration, researchers may, with the advent of tools such as Google Earth, do this superimposition on their own. Additionally, researchers can download individual townships from the *The Combination Atlas Map of Dauphin County, Pennsylvania Compiled, Drawn and Published From Personal Examinations and Surveys* by Everts & Stewart (Philadelphia, 1875) free.

**FAIRFAX COUNTY, VIRGINIA** ([www.fairfaxcounty.gov/histcomm/1860maps.htm](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/histcomm/1860maps.htm))

The County GIS department has annotated the 1860 landowners on a recent county plat map.

**MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND** ([www.montgomeryplanning.org/gis/interactive/historic.shtm](http://www.montgomeryplanning.org/gis/interactive/historic.shtm))

Find historic properties within this county GIS application and then click a link to view the historic sites survey, information about the land and house, and even a picture of the dwelling.

**NEWBERRY LIBRARY'S ATLAS OF COUNTY HISTORICAL BOUNDARIES**  
(<http://publications.newberry.org/ahcbp>)

For every U.S. state, this GIS provides a demo of changing state and county boundaries over time. Users can also download KMZ files showing U.S. historical counties from 1629-2000 and states and territories from 1783-2000. Functionality of an interactive map at the website was disabled in mid-2015, but it is expected to be restored by spring 2016.