

**Virginia Beach Genealogical Society**

September 10, 2020

**Put Your Family History on the Map!**  
**Using Maps and Geography for Genealogy**

by Sara J. Kidd, MS, GISP

**What is Geography?**

The study of places and the relationships between people and their environment which seeks to understand where features (human or physical) are found, why they are there, and how they change over time and space.

**What is a Map?**

A symbolic representation and/or interpretation of a place.

**Using Geography for Genealogy**

- Geography as Evidence
- Geography as Context

**Using Maps for Genealogy**

- Maps are a tool to convey geographic information
- Need to evaluate just like any other source

**Finding Aids**

- Gazetteers
- [Geographic Names Information System \(GNIS\)](#)

**Types of Maps**

- Reference Maps
  - General reference
  - Boundaries (political, religious, etc.)
  - Land ownership (plat/cadastral)
  - Topographic
  - Transportation
  - Military
  - Panoramic/bird's eye view maps
  - Fire Insurance

- Thematic Maps
  - Surnames
  - Religions
  - Languages
  - Demographic information
  - Election results
  - Land cover/use
  - Geologic features
  - Natural Resources
  - Climate
  - Agriculture
  - Business/Industry

### Where to Find Maps

- Repositories with Maps
  - Library of Congress
  - National Archives
  - Federal Agencies
  - State Libraries/Archives
  - Local Libraries/Archives
  - Local Government onsite/websites
  - Genealogical/Historical Societies
  - College & University Archives
  - Commercial genealogy websites
  - Digital archives (Internet Archive, HathiTrust, Google Books)
  - Private collections
- Major Online Repositories
  - [National Archives](#)
  - [Library of Congress](#)
  - [DavidRumsey.com](#)
  - [HistoricMapWorks.com](#)
  - [Ancestry.com](#)
  - [FamilySearch.org](#)
  - [New York Public Library](#)
  - [Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection](#) (UT-Austin)

### OTHER RESOURCES

- [270 to Win](#) (Historic presidential election maps)
- [Ancestry Maps, Atlases & Gazetteer Collection](#)
  - [U.S. Enumeration District Maps and Descriptions, 1940](#)
  - [U.S., Indexed Early Land Ownership and Township Plats, 1785-1898](#)

- [Ancestry Surname Origins](#)
- [Atlas of Historical County Boundaries](#)
- [Census Enumeration District Maps](#)
- [DeedMapper](#)
- [Digital Scholarship Lab - Univ. of Richmond](#)
  - [American Panorama](#)
  - [Atlas of Historical Geography of the US](#)
- [Early American Roads & Trails](#)
- [GeoGen Surname Mapping in Germany](#)
- [Google Earth](#)
- [HistoryGeo.com](#)
- [How to Find Census Enumeration District Maps](#)
- [NOAA Nautical Charts \(historic\)](#)
- [OldMapsOnline.org](#)
- [ProQuest Digital Sanborn Maps](#) (with Library of Virginia card)
- [RailsandTrails.com](#)
- [Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps Guide](#)
- [Sanborn Maps available in LOC](#)
- [Surname Distribution Maps](#)
- [Topographic Map Symbols](#)
- [topoView](#) (Historic USGS Topographic Maps)
- [Understanding topographic map scales](#)
- [US Statistical Atlases](#)
- [Virginia Beach Public Library Map Collection](#)

#### **Gazetteers (Check FamilySearch Wiki for more)**

- [Geographic Names Information System \(GNIS\)](#)
- [JewishGen Communities](#)
- [Meyers Gazetteer for Germany](#)
- [GenTeam.eu \(Austro-Hungarian Empire\)](#)

#### **Webinars ([Legacy Family Tree](#))**

- Mining Washington-area Map Repositories by Rick Sayre, CG
- 50 Website for Finding Maps by Gena Philibert-Ortega
- Using Maps in Genealogical Research by Sara Scribner, CG
- A la Karte: Borders, Maps and Gazetteers for German Genealogists by James Beidler
- Finding and Using Land Ownership Maps by Rick Sayre, CG
- Many others - search for "maps", "migration", etc. in topics

#### **Books**

Board for Certification of Genealogists. *Genealogy Standards*, second edition. Nashville: Ancestry, 2019.

Greenwood, Val D. *The Researcher's Guide to American Genealogy, Vol. 3*. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 2000. List of useful books and atlases on pp. 92-93; Locality Analysis section pp. 58-64.

Kashuba, Melinda. *Walking with Your Ancestors: A Genealogist's Guide to Using Maps and Geography*. Cincinnati, Ohio: Family Tree Books, 2005.

Thorndale, William, and William Dollarhide. *Map Guide to the U.S. Federal Censuses, 1790-1920*. Baltimore: Genealogical Pub. Co, 1987.