

# Using Maps & Gazetteers To Tell Family Stories

Lyn Gesch

5/9/2016

## GAZETTEERS

Ancestry.com / Search Catalog / keyword: gazetteer

- Geographic Reference Library: <http://search.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=3018>

FamilySearch Wiki: [https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/Main\\_Page](https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/Main_Page)

- Enter “gazetteer” or “maps” in search field, or specific place name, US state, or country.

GNIS (the site for US place searching; includes historical places, post offices, geographic features)

- <http://geonames.usgs.gov/>

## MAPS

Federal source

USGS: <http://geonames.usgs.gov/apex/f?p=262:1:0>

1. Left side of page: choose state
2. Enter county or town name in “Title” field—don’t be too wordy
3. Hit list includes topographical and historical maps.
4. You can view a thumbnail by clicking on icon in farthest right column
5. To download a zip file of map, click on icon in “Download GeoPDF”. Most of these are large files so they will likely take a while to download.

Libraries

Library of Congress (broadest collection of historic maps): <https://www.loc.gov/maps/>

- Only 3.8% are digitized and online, but that’s over 15,000 maps
- To refine your hit list, use options in the left frame for date, location, collection (ex., cities and towns, cultural landscapes, civil war maps, etc.—in the “Part of” section).

Los Angeles Public Library databases (Research and Homework link) for Sanborn fire insurance maps (you’ll need an LAPL card to access remotely from home):

- <http://www.lapl.org/collections-resources/research-and-homework>

State and Local Historical Societies

- Ex. Chicago Historical Society hosts the Encyclopedia of Chicago website which has a large collection of digitized material, including maps:  
<http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/700011.html>
- New York State Library: <http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/scandocs/> (click on “maps”)

University Libraries

UCLA map library: <http://guides.library.ucla.edu/c.php?g=180224&p=1185347>

- Search catalog for maps in their collection
- Click on “Historical Maps” to link to digitized maps

University of Texas-Austin:

- Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/index.html>

David Rumsey Map Collections: <http://www.davidrumsey.com/> (now housed at Stanford U.)

1. View Collection
2. Launch LUNA browser
3. Enter search term in box upper right (or use advanced search)

Map Websites

Cyndi’s List: <http://www.cyndislist.com/maps/>

- Migration routes: <http://www.cyndislist.com/migration/>
- Railroads: <http://www.cyndislist.com/railroads/>

Historic Map Works: <http://www.historicmapworks.com/> (good for plat maps, T/R maps)