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Map Your Ancestors by Barbara J Starmans

Are you looking for new ways to share your family history with the non-genealogists in your life? Entice the younger generation to discover their ancestors and a slice of history with these collaborative mapping websites.

Google Maps

Google Maps is a free and interactive way to map your family history. Take a half hour and sit down in front of your computer with your favourite beverage and put your family on the map.

1. Browse to the Google home page at www.google.co.uk or the Google home page for your country. Make sure that you are signed into Google. If you don't already have an account, click on the sign in link at the top of the screen and then click on 'Create an Account' and then follow the on screen prompts to create one. Click on the square apps icon at the top of the home page. Click on maps.
<Google Maps Classic Homepage.jpg>
2. Depending on the version of Google that your browser is running, you may see one of two screens. If you have a sidebar on the left side of your screen, click on "My Places". If the map fills your entire screen, click on the gear icon in the bottom right hand corner of the screen and choose "My Places" from the menu to see the left sidebar.
<Create map.jpg>
3. Click on "CREATE MAP". Click on "Create a new map".
<Create New Map.jpg>
4. Click on the words "Untitled map" to open a dialogue box where you can name your map and enter a description. Click "Save".
<Create Map Name Description.jpg>
5. Type the first location into the search box at the top of the screen. Click on the location marker and click on "Add to map". Click on the location marker again and choose the pencil icon to edit your location point. Type a name for this location point and enter a description. Click "Save".
<John David Taylor Birth.jpg>
6. If you have an online image associated with the location, you can enter the URL in the box located between the location name and description. Click "Add" to display the image. Continue adding additional location points in the same manner.
<Add photo URL.jpg>
<Photo Displayed.jpg>

7. You can change the colour and style of the location marker by hovering over the entry on the legend on the left side of the screen and then clicking on the paint can icon.
<John David Taylor Birth icon.jpg>
8. To vary the map appearance, click on the arrow beside "Base map" and choose the map appearance. The John David Taylor map in this tutorial can be viewed at bit.ly/1bQHyNE.
<John David Taylor Completed Map.jpg>

Data View

In addition to viewing the map legend, the detailed descriptions that you entered can be viewed by clicking on the data menu.

<John David Taylor Data view.jpg>

Layers

Add up to three distinct layers to your map with the free version. An example of mapping with layers is my direct ancestor map from the 1841, 1851 and 1861 census viewable online at <http://bit.ly/1eifqc7>.
<1841 to 1861 Census.jpg>

Sharing

To share your map with others, click the share button in the top right hand corner of the screen. If you want to share this map publicly, change the permissions by clicking "Change..." You can share the map publicly or share to anyone to whom you send the link. You can grant either view or edit access.

<Sharing Options.jpg>

<Sharing Options Detailed.jpg>

To invite people to view your new map, enter names, email addresses or groups and email a link to view or edit your map.

<Email message.jpg>

Importing from Excel File

Rather than plotting each point of your map manually, you can instead upload an Excel spreadsheet that contains all your data points. Your genealogy software may even have the option to export a report to Excel, saving you from the chore of data entry. To upload your spreadsheet, click on "Import" and simply drag your spreadsheet onto the web page. Google will try to map each of your locations. If it has trouble recognising any address, it will prompt you to enter an alternative description of the location.

<Import Data.jpg>

Exporting Your Map

Just below your map name and description is a folder icon. Click on it to see options to: Create a new map, Open a map, delete this map, embed on my site or export to KML. The first three options are self-explanatory.

The fourth option, “Embed on my site” will generate the HTML source code that will allow you to display the map on your website or blog.

The last option, “Export to KML”, will allow you to save and download your map as a KML file. KML stands for Keyhole Markup Language and a KML file will contain all the information required to view your map in any program that can read this type of file such as the free program Google Earth.

Other Fun Ways to Map your Family

History Pin

A free website, History Pin (historypin.com) was developed by the not-for-profit company “We Are What We Do” in partnership with Google and describes itself as a global community collaborating around history. The website boasts almost 321,000 materials, memories and contributions by over 52,000 users and over 1,500 institutions including The National Archives UK.

To get started, pull out those old family photographs and stories and then login using your Google, Facebook or Twitter account. After logging into History Pin, take a moment to set up your channel page to make sure that any new found cousins can get in touch with you!

To pin your first photograph, choose “Pin something” from the tool bar. If you have a lot of images to upload, you can find out more about the bulk uploader but to pin just one photograph, click the “Pin something” button. Choose to upload a photograph in jpg or png format up to 5 MB or add a video or audio clip from YouTube or Vimeo. Fill in a title, a description, some tags, the license and copyright information, the date and the place of the photograph. Agree to the terms and conditions and save your pin. You can even overlay your photographs against Google’s street view of the location juxtaposing history against the modern day landscape.

Search by place and time, to find pins posted by others.

<History Pin Leeville 1918.jpg>

What Was There

Another interactive website, WhatWasThere (whatwasthere.com) was created to leverage technology and connections to provide a virtual time machine. Although much of its content is from the United States, there are a growing number of photographs mapped from around the world.

To upload photographs to the WhatWasThere website, create a free account. Click on “Upload Photos” from the menu and browse to its location on your computer. Identify the year or the decade the photograph was taken and enter a title and description. Map your photo to the address, street or

intersection where it was taken and position it against existing buildings from Google's Street View where it is available.

Sepia Town

Another website that claims to help the world map the past is SepiaTown (sepiatown.com). Register for an account to upload your photographs. Select the media type of your photograph and if you know the precise location where the photograph was taken, zoom to the closest setting on the map and choose the direction that the photographer was facing, then click "set location". Otherwise, position the figure in a close location and check "precise location or view direction unknown". Give the photograph a title and a caption. Select the date and indicate if it is approximate. Fill in notes about the photograph and link to an online source to provide further information.

<Sepiatown.jpg>

Genealogy Mapping Software | Family Atlas by Roots Magic

Family Atlas is a standalone software program produced by the makers of the popular RootsMagic genealogy software. It allows you to import your genealogy data from RootsMagic or any other genealogy software that can produce a GEDCOM file. Whether places are imported or entered by hand, they are matched against a 3.5 million place name world database that is included with the software.

Use Family Atlas to add custom markers for family history events of your ancestors and then customise your maps by adding lines, text, photographs, bubble pointers, titles and legends and save them to edit or print later.

<Brown Family Emigration.jpg>

Family Atlas also lets you search your family history data for events that happened within a certain distance of a given place. This is a great tool to use before a research trip to the archives to look up parish records. Simply search for all events near the parish.

Visit the RootsMagic website www.rootsmagic.com/family-atlas/ for more details, screenshots and a free online tutorial.

Google Earth

Google Earth is a very powerful but free mapping program that lets you plot the events in your ancestor's lives, visit where they used to live using Street View and wander down the streets of your ancestral home town. Embed your old photographs or documents using location data and create an ancestral tour, recording your family stories as part of the tour. Save and share it with family members.

One feature not to miss are the historical imagery overlays available for some locations. These can be turned on by clicking 'historical imagery' in the view menu. Turn it on and fly to London, England to see a 1945 aerial view of the city.

Combine Google Earth with other historical maps by overlaying a scanned image of your old map within the program to see how the area has changed since your ancestors lived there. I scanned an 1841 tax map of my ancestor's holdings in the Yorkshire Dales and overlaid it on the current landscape. With

Street View, I'm able to drop down and meander down the road, viewing each of his properties as they are today.

<Google Earth map overlay.jpg>

Google Earth can be downloaded from www.google.com/earth/. It's available for PC, Mac, Linux and even iOS and android. For a quick lesson on Google Earth, visit Lisa Louise Cooke's website (www.lisalouisecooke.com) and look for her free video class under the video menu or for even more in-depth training, order her two DVDs under the store link.

Old Maps Online

The Old Maps Online portal (www.oldmapsonline.org) is an excellent finding aid for online maps. It was developed in a collaborative project between The Great Britain Historical GIS Project at the University of Portsmouth and Klokant Technologies in Switzerland. It includes searchable references to many historical maps located in libraries and institutions around the world.

Old-maps.co.uk

Landmark Information Group sells digital versions of many maps covering England, Wales and Scotland and dating from 1840 to 1995. View and purchase maps online in PDF format via email or in print and framed versions from their website www.old-maps.co.uk.

Geograph

Geograph (www.geograph.org.uk) is a project that collects photographs from all over Britain and Ireland with the goal of collecting images for every square kilometre. They currently boast of over 3.8 million images and have an online link to Google Earth. Click the link on the home page to "View on Google Earth" and then "View in Browser."

Building History

Building History is a website by building historian Jean Manco and is dedicated to researching historic buildings in the British Isles. View her finding aid to online maps at www.buildinghistory.org/images2.shtml

British Library Online Exhibitions

The British Library (www.bl.uk) has a number of online exhibitions of historical maps in their collection accessible at www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/onlineex/viewall/index.html. Notable recent additions include "Maps of the UK" with maps from the 19th and 20th centuries and "Fire Insurance Maps and Plans" created between 1886 and 1930.

Francis Frith

Francis Frith was a pioneer Victorian photographer. Originally founded in 1860, the Frith collection now contains over 330,000 photographs from throughout Britain. Search professional historic photographs and maps at www.francisfrith.com.

Cassini Historical Maps

Cassini Historical Maps (www.cassinimaps.co.uk) offers downloadable maps from 1805 to present day. Search for a location by postcode or place name, choose a map scale and then choose from a variety of maps in PDF format or order the printed version by post.

English Heritage Listed Properties

The English Heritage Listed Properties website (www.english-heritage.org.uk/) provides listing details for listed historic properties. Search the database by map location or place name. The properties search feature can be found under the Professional menu, Heritage Protection,, Heritage Protection Process. Then from the left menu, choose The National Heritage List for England, Map or Advanced Search.