

Google Earth for Genealogists

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Google Earth is a 360 degree 3-dimensional way to view your ancestor's world! In this class you will learn how to unlock mysteries in your research – from unidentified photographs to migration patterns. Google Earth has the power to geographically document your ancestors' lives, and lends itself very well to collaboration with other researchers. It's one of the best online genealogical tools available, and best of all, it's FREE!

I. Google Earth is Ideal for Genealogists

Features & Benefits:

- FREE
- 3 Dimensional
- Video & Sharing
- Gallery of Layer Features
- Gives you a visual look at your ancestor's lives

Blast to the Past
with Google Earth



II. Getting Started with Google Earth

Download the free software by following these steps:

1. Go to <http://earth.google.com>
2. Click the blue Download Google Earth button.
3. On the "Install Google Earth with Google Updater" page unclick the "Include Google Chrome" box if you don't wish use install Google Chrome
3. Read the Terms and Conditions
4. If you agree to them, click the Agree and Download button
5. Follow the installation guide
6. When complete click the Run Google Earth button

Google Earth Pro is also now available for free at
<http://www.google.com/earth/download/gep/agree.html>

Features of Earth Pro:

- View demographic, parcel and traffic data layers
- Use advanced GIS data importing features to your advantage
- Measure area, radius and circumference on the ground



- Print high-resolution screenshots
- Make compelling offline movies to share

III. Navigating Google Earth

3D Viewer

View the globe and its terrain in this window

Toolbar Buttons

Provides one click access to Google Earth tools

Search Panel

Locate a geographic location by typing the location in the “Fly To” Search Box.

Places Panel

Locate, save, organize, and revisit your placemarks.

Layers Panel

Provides a collection of points of geographic interest that can be displayed over your viewing area.

IV. Solving Photograph Mysteries

If you have an old family photograph and don’t know where it was taken, Google Earth may be able to help you solve the mystery!

Steps:

- Turn to genealogical records for locations and clues. (Census, Voters Registrations, vital records certificates, city directories, etc.)
- Zoom in on Street View by clicking, dragging and dropping the yellow “Street View Peg Man” (found in the upper right hand corner of the screen) directly on to the blue lines that appear on the map.
- Utilize Layers such:
 - “Borders and Labels”
 - “Roads”
 - “More” > “Place Categories” > “Places of Worship,” > “Cemeteries”
 - “Gallery” > “Rumsey Maps”
- Side-by-Side Comparison – open a second window to display the photo.
- When all else appears the same, look for the unique details.
- When you find a match, find at least one more way to confirm it.



V. Exploring Your Ancestors Lives with Historic Maps

1. Rumsey Historic Maps

- Historic Maps are found in the “Layers” panel
- Under “Gallery” select “Rumsey Historic Maps”
- Click the Rumsey icon on the map
- Click the map thumbnail image in the pop up box
- Download more free historic maps at the David Rumsey website at www.davidrumsey.com. Use the “Map Rank Tool” at the bottom of the home screen to search by timeframe and location. Export the highest resolution for the clearest definition when zooming up close.
- Digitized map images can be added to Google Earth with the Overlay tool found in the Google Earth’s toolbar. This means you can create a collection of your own historic maps in Google Earth and save them to your My Places panel. Create a new folder in your Places panel (Right-click “My Places” > NEW > FOLDER) to keep you historic map overlays organized.

2. Land Patents

- Conduct a Land Patent Search at the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Web Site: <http://www.gloreCORDS.blm.gov/>. Export the original land patent and clip or print the legal description.
- Pinpoint Homesteads on Google Earth by entering the legal description from the Bureau of Land Management Online Records website into the “Convert Township and Range” free tool at the Earthpoint website: <http://earthpoint.us/TownshipsSearchByDescription.aspx>

(Note: while some of the features of the Earthpoint site do require a paid subscription, this tool currently is free.)

- When you click the “Fly to on Google Earth” either Google Earth will automatically open on your computer or the file will be saved to your Downloads file (depending on your system). Run the file to have it automatically plot the legal land description in Google Earth.
- The outer orange colored lines represent the Township, and the inner purple colored lines represent the Section. Click the dot in the center of each for more detailed information including total acreage.
- Drop the Peg Man (*image right*) on to the map for street view (where available). The modern day street address will appear in the upper right corner of the screen.



VI. The Sky's the Limit

Consider the vast array of potential Google Earth family history projects you could create: Plotting Cemeteries, Family History Tours, Immigration Journeys...

Record a Family History Tour that includes:

- Old Family Photos
- Videos
- Old Historic Maps
- Postcards and Ephemera
- Genealogical Documents



Each digitized item should be hosted on the Cloud / Web (either on your own website or a free content hosting site such as www.photobucket.com) Add a Placemark (found in the Google Earth toolbar) to the desired location, and copy and paste the unique URL address or embed code for the item into the placemark. This is the information Google Earth needs to display the digitized content. Placemarks can be collected in a new folder that you create. When your project is complete, right-click on the folder and click "SAVE PLACE AS" to save it to the desired location on your computer. These files can be emailed and shared with others.

For more info on using Google Earth watch the free video: *Google Earth for Genealogy* at <http://tinyurl.com/op8pxk2> or refer to the Resources section.

VII. Resources

Cooke, Lisa Louise, *The Genealogist's Google Toolbox, Second Edition*, Genealogy Gems Publications, 2015, print. www.lisalouisecooke.com

Cooke, Lisa Louise, *Google Earth for Genealogy DVD Series*, Volumes I & II, 1st ed. Genealogy Gems Publications, www.lisalouisecooke.com

