

# Using Google Earth Pro for Genealogy

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Google Earth Pro is now free and simply known as Google Earth. It's available in three forms: Google Earth Web (in the Chrome browser), the Google Earth app, and downloadable desktop computer software which offers the most robust set of tools. This session focuses on the desktop software.

Google Earth provides a 360-degree, 3-dimensional way to view your ancestor's world! It's a tool that can be used for solving genealogical questions as well as visually telling the stories of your ancestors' lives.



## Google Earth Pro is Ideal for Genealogists

Features & Benefits:

- FREE
- Video and HD imagery capability
- Old historical maps built in.

## Getting Started with Google Earth

Download the free software by following these steps:

1. Go to <http://www.google.com/earth/download/gep/agree.html>
2. Click the blue download button
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 *Run Google Earth* (Your computer must be connected to the Internet.)

Features of Earth Pro:

- View demographic, parcel, and traffic data layers
- Print high-resolution images
- Make compelling offline videos to share

## Navigating Google Earth

The Google Earth software is comprised of the following components:

### 3-D Viewer

View the globe and its terrain in this window. Use the navigation tools in the upper right corner to zoom in and out and view the map from different perspectives.

### Toolbar

The toolbar above the 3-D Viewer provides one click access to Google Earth tools such as placemarks, polygons, overlays, paths, tours, historical imagery, emailing, printing, and more.

### Search Panel

Locate a geographic location by typing the address, latitude and longitude coordinates, or names of the location (ex. Library of Congress) in the search box.

### Places Panel

Save, organize, and revisit your placemarks and maps in the Places Panel. These are your private files, stored on your computer.

### Layers Panel

Access a collection of points of geographic interest that can be displayed on the 3-D Viewer. Includes features such as roads, cemeteries, churches, and historical maps.

## **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, voter 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 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.



## **Exploring Your Ancestors' Lives with Historic Maps**

## 1. Rumsey Historic Maps

- Historic Maps are found in the *Layers* panel. Click to open *Gallery*, then click the box for *Rumsey Historic Maps*. You should see Rumsey icons appear on the screen. If you don't, zoom farther out until you do. Click the desired Rumsey icon on the map. Click the map thumbnail image in the pop-up box to overlay the map. Also, click the link for *Download more Rumsey maps* to download several hundred more to the Temporary folder at the bottom of the *Places* panel. Drag and drop the file onto *MyPlaces* at the top of the *Places* panel. Then save your work in the menu: *File > Save > Save MyPlaces*.
- Download more free historic maps from the David Rumsey website at [www.davidrumsey.com](http://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 Google Earth's toolbar. This means you can create a collection of your own historic maps in Google Earth and save them to your *Places* panel. Create a new folder in the *Places* panel (right-click *My Places > New > Folder*) to keep your historic map overlays organized.

## 2. Land Patents

- Conduct a Land Patent Search at the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Web Site: [www.gloreCORDS.blm.gov](http://www.gloreCORDS.blm.gov). Export the original land patent and clip or print the legal description.
- Pinpoint legal land descriptions on Google Earth by entering the legal description found on the Bureau of Land Management Online Records website (or other sources) into the *Convert Township and Range* free tool at the Earthpoint website: [earthpoint.us/TownshipsSearchByDescription.aspx](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 *Fly to on Google Earth*, Google Earth will either automatically open on your computer or the file will be saved to your Downloads folder (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 on to the map for street view (where available). The modern-day street address will appear in the upper right corner of the screen.

## 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 Google Photos or Dropbox. Add a Placemark (found in the Google Earth toolbar) to the desired location and copy & 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 select *Save Place As* to save it to the desired location on your computer. These files can be emailed and shared with others.

## Resources: Save 20% on Lisa's book and Premium Membership

### The Book:

Cooke, Lisa Louise, *The Genealogist's Google Toolbox*, Genealogy Gems Publications, print. [www.ShopGenealogyGems.com](http://www.ShopGenealogyGems.com)

### Website Premium Membership:

Includes a full year's exclusive access to all of Lisa's video classes and downloadable handouts, premium podcast and more.

**Use 20% Discount Coupon Code: TOOLBOX20**

[Genealogy Gems Store](http://www.ShopGenealogyGems.com)

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