

# Mapping Your Migrating Ancestors

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## What types of property records exist?

- Property sales and transfers
- Wills and probate
- Chancery court/small claims
- Tax assessments
- Land surveys/subdivision plats

## Where can I find property records?

- County courthouse
- Local historical society or library
- University library/archives
- State archives
- National archives
- Land & Property Records

## County/Municipality Records

### Recorder of Deeds

- Deeds
- Incorporations
- Mortgages
- Maps
- Wills/Affidavits
  - Seattle City Archives [www.seattle.gov/cityarchives](http://www.seattle.gov/cityarchives)
  - Washington State Digital Collections <https://digitalarchives.wa.gov>

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County of Lewis Washington  
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Deed and Purchaser's Assignment of Contract

WASHINGTON TITLE INSURANCE COMPANY  
SEATTLE, WASHINGTON  
Mail to: *Raymond Paul & Co.*  
City: *Seattle*  
Send Tax Statement to

726772

Deed and Purchaser's Assignment of Real Estate Contract

THE GRANTOR WILLIAM O. WATSON and ALMA P. WATSON, husband and wife, 272  
for value received do hereby convey and quit claim to  
LEONARD F. FISKE and ZELMA B. FISKE, husband and wife, the grantees,  
the following described real estate, situated in the County of Lewis  
State of Washington including any interest therein which grantor may hereafter acquire:  
Beginning at a point on the east boundary of the Pacific Highway, which is 2385.35  
feet west and 1386.70 feet north of the southeast corner of Section 25, Township  
15 North, Range 3 West, W.M., Lewis County, Washington, and running thence north  
4°57' west along the east line of the Pacific Highway 192.26 feet; thence east  
1340.22 feet to the west line of the Northern Pacific Railway Company's right of  
way; thence south 18°39' east along the west line of the Northern Pacific Railway  
Company's right of way 126.84 feet; thence south 57.9 feet; thence west 1405.85  
feet to the point of beginning.  
Being part of Government Lots 1 and 2 in Section 25, Township 15 North, Range  
3 West, W.M.  
SUBJECT TO: Mortgage dated July 18, 1968, by William O. Watson and Alma P. Watson,  
his wife, to Eugene C. Steinbrener and Erlise C. Steinbrener, his wife, to pay  
secure payment of \$13,000.00; recorded July 19, 1968, in vol. 7 of records, page 655,  
under auditor's file No. 725306; of which purchasers assume and agree to pay  
and do hereby assign, transfer and set over to the grantees that certain real estate contract dated the 26th day of  
February 1951 between Ben Kietzman  
and Elvin H. Hamill, a single man, and assigned to William O. Watson and  
Alma P. Watson, his wife, of the above described real estate. The grantor hereby assumes and agrees to  
fulfill the conditions of said real estate contract.

Deed this 22nd day of August, 1968  
William O. Watson (REAL)  
Alma P. Watson (REAL)

STATE OF WASHINGTON, 36143  
County Lewis  
On this day personally appeared before me William O. Watson and Alma P. Watson, his wife,  
to me known to be the individual described in and who executed the within foregoing instrument, and  
acknowledged that they signed the same as their free and voluntary act and deed, for the  
use and purpose therein mentioned.

GIVEN under my hand and official seal this 22nd day of August, 1968  
Notary Public in and for the State of Washington,  
Residing at

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When an estate is settled, and property is sold/divided, a copy of the will is typically filed with the Recorder's Office and within the deceased's probate at the Circuit Clerk's office.

If the deceased owned land in multiple counties, the will would need to be filed in each location where ownership occurred.

Property deeds will often give you an exact legal description of the property helping you to identify it on a map and assist in searching tax and assessment records.

## Tax Collector/Treasurer

- Taxes on real estate and personal property

## Township/City Assessor

- Address
- Legal description of property
- Age of the structure
- Additions or remodels

## Circuit Court Clerk

- Wills
- Probate
- Chancery lawsuits (division of property)

## Land Use

- Building permits
- Historic property landmarks
- Highway Commissioner's reports and early road maps

## Local Historical Societies and Libraries

- County plat and atlas books
- Old city maps or directories
- Indexes to property owners and tax payers
- Old newspapers (tax rolls, land sales etc.)
  - Seattle Public Library Digital Collections  
<https://cdm16118.contentdm.oclc.org/digital>
  - [www.seattle.gov/cityarchives/search-collections/research-tips-and-tools/resources-for-property-history-research](http://www.seattle.gov/cityarchives/search-collections/research-tips-and-tools/resources-for-property-history-research)
  - Eastside Heritage Center  
<https://eastsideheritagecenter.org/requests>
  -

## State Archives <https://digitalarchives.wa.gov>

- Land Patents/Surveys
- Taxable lands
- School land sale records

### IS MOVING DAY IN PLAINFIELD VILLAGE

Plainfield, Ill., March 3.—Many changes are taking place in Plainfield. The following is a list of the changes: Edward LeVan is moving to the Spangler house on the Joliet road; J. Russell to the Earl Norton house in Main street; J. E. Bressler to the Olin Keene house in Fox River street; Frank Gilbert to the Herren house on Joliet road; Fred Jahnke to the John Needham house in Main street; E. R. Gaylord to the Foran house in Lockport street; Frank Eaton to his home purchased of the Evarts estate in Bartlett avenue; Mr. and Mrs. William Lockwood to the home purchased of the Barron estate in Bartlett avenue; Edward Day to the Tyler house in Main street; J. E. Andrews moves to Hammond, Ind.; J. Broderick of Wilton Center moves to the L. H. Darling house in Lockport street; John Imery is moving to the Siegel house.

- Local sources for maps & property

## National Archives [www.archives.gov](http://www.archives.gov)

- Bankruptcies
- Census records
- Military records
- Land patents

## Homestead & Other Land Grants

National Archives: [www.archives.gov/research/land](http://www.archives.gov/research/land)

Bureau of Land Management: [www.glorerecords.blm.gov](http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov)

## City Directories

Directories are typically printed yearly

Address changes are often recorded side-by-side for 1 year

City Directories or “crisscross” directories can be searched by Street address, phone number & surname

Lists those who are gainfully employed, widowed or enrolled in school

Some directories will include the non-working spouse’s name in parentheses e.g. (Marie)

### Things to look for when viewing old city directories and road maps

- Names of streets can change from block to block
- Street name can change over time
- Address changes happen frequently

<http://stevemorse.org/census/changes.html> includes a national listing of street name changes.

New Orleans City Archives <https://nolacityarchives.org/street-names-and-street-numbers>

Chicago Street Name Changes 1912 <http://chsmedia.org/househistory/nameChanges/start.pdf>

Chicago Street Number Changes 1909 <http://chsmedia.org/househistory/1909snc/start.pdf>

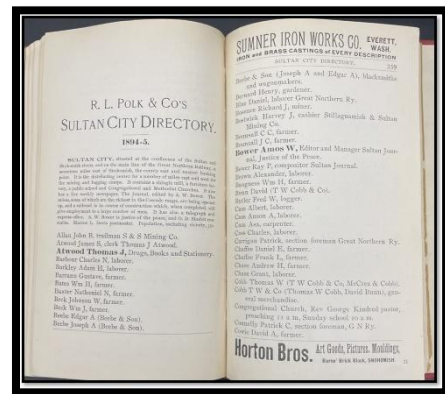
Rob Ketcherside’s Seattle street renaming tables

[www.writesofway.org/rob-ketchersides-seattle-street-renaming-tables](http://www.writesofway.org/rob-ketchersides-seattle-street-renaming-tables)

Sorting Out Seattle Street Name Changes

<https://wedgwoodinsattlehistory.com/2021/03/03/sorting-out-seattle-street-names>

Seattle Street Renaming <https://ba-kground.com/1895-seattle-street-renaming-searchable-table>



# Maps

- Aerial & Birdseye Maps
- Cadastral Maps
- County and State Maps
- Enumeration Maps
- Fire Insurance Maps
- Road Maps
- Rail Road Maps
- Modern Day Mapping



## Aerial Maps

These maps are a great source for visual geographic data such as mountains, rivers, lakes and valleys. Useful for seeing property in relation to its surroundings like other homes, businesses, and roadways. Identifying changes in development and land usage patterns for an area over a period of time.

## Birdseye Maps

Birdseye maps are hand-drawn and red maps typically done in the 19th century. An artistic rendition of what a particular town or region look like from above. These perspective maps are not true to scale, but they are highly detailed.

- Washington State Historical Society Collections  
[www.washingtonhistory.org](http://www.washingtonhistory.org)
- Library of Congress Panoramic Map Collection:  
[www.loc.gov/collections/panoramic-maps](http://www.loc.gov/collections/panoramic-maps)
- Minnesota Historical Society Birdseye Maps  
[www.mnhs.org/iwm/sets/birdseye](http://www.mnhs.org/iwm/sets/birdseye)

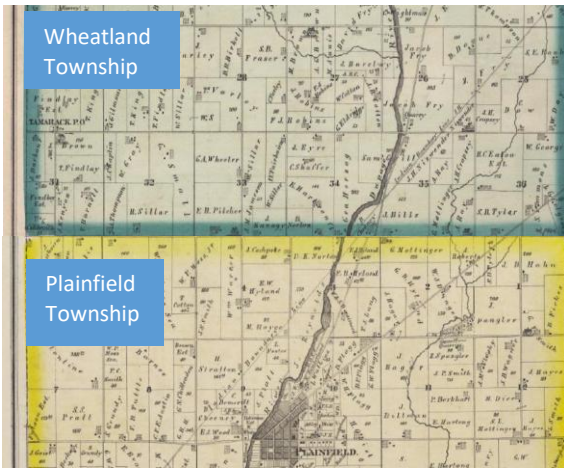


Whatcom Birdseye Map WSHS

## Cadastral Maps

Early maps originally recorded in metes & bounds. The purpose was recording owners & tenure of land.

The term cadastral map has since come to include any map that includes property boundaries. Examples of cadastral maps are plat maps, city/town/ village maps, and subdivision plats.



Be sure to align land maps to see if properties carry over into other townships/counties.

These maps frequently include landmarks like rivers, lakes, churches, cemeteries, other points of interest.

Cemetery maps are considered cadastral because they show owners/boundaries of grave lots.

Most municipalities use cadastral maps in their GIS planning departments. This computerized mapping system creates layers of maps for different topics like homes, roads, utilities, sewer systems etc.

When reading cadastral maps be sure to look across township, county, and state boundaries for names and familial connections

## Census Enumeration Maps

Census Enumeration maps are helpful in locating family through the U.S. Federal Census

Boundary lines change over time. Census maps help you pinpoint the exact district of your ancestors at a specific time and place

Ancestors that lived on or near the county or state line may have been counted under these nearby locations due to line changes

HeritageQuest has state census maps for years 1790-1920

Modern census maps are also available to download from the U.S. Census Bureau:  
[www.census.gov/geo/maps-data/maps/reference.html](http://www.census.gov/geo/maps-data/maps/reference.html)

## Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps cover misc. years from 1867-1970

Detailed descriptions of individual properties including size, shape, location of windows & doors, construction materials etc.

Street level descriptions of towns and cities including location of streets, sidewalks, trolley lines, railroad tracks, wells and more

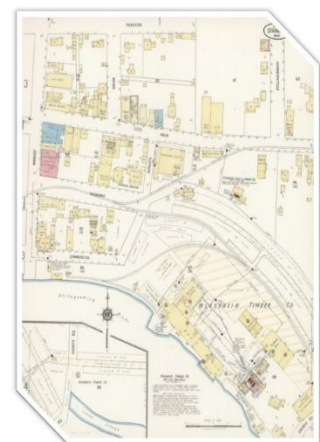
Locations and descriptions of businesses & industry

Documents changes to an area over the years

Maps can be saved and printed

Library of Congress Sanborn Maps: [www.loc.gov/rr/geogmap/sanborn](http://www.loc.gov/rr/geogmap/sanborn)

University of Pennsylvania online fire insurance maps:  
<http://guides.library.upenn.edu/content.php?pid=387313&sid=3190707>



Stanwood WA 1918

## Historic Road Maps and Guides

[www.us-highways.com](http://www.us-highways.com)

WSDOT <https://wsdot.wa.gov>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/County\\_highway](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/County_highway)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Numbered\\_highways\\_in\\_the\\_United\\_States#State\\_highways\\_and\\_other\\_similar\\_systems](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Numbered_highways_in_the_United_States#State_highways_and_other_similar_systems)

Old Maps Online [www.oldmapsonline.org](http://www.oldmapsonline.org)

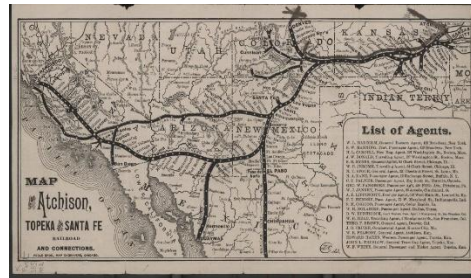
## Railroad Maps and Records

Railroad maps are extremely useful for plotting your migrating ancestors. Schedules, maps, and ticket fares help tell the story of your ancestral past

Dozens of railroad companies operated over 200,000 miles of track by the start of the 20th Century. These companies employed thousands of employees nationwide

Hundreds of towns sprang up as railroad stops and some disappeared just as quickly. Old railroad maps are important to locating these abandoned towns

Railroad maps can be used to find right-of-way land sales



## Railroad Websites

Railroad Gazetteer Collection: [https://archive.org/details/smithsonian?and\[\]=subject%3A%22Railroads%22](https://archive.org/details/smithsonian?and[]=subject%3A%22Railroads%22)

Newberry Library: [www.newberry.org/collection/research-guide/railroad-archives](http://www.newberry.org/collection/research-guide/railroad-archives)

Chicago & Northwestern Historical Society: [www.cnwhs.org](http://www.cnwhs.org)

Atchison, Topeka, Santa Fe: [www.kshs.org/p/railroad-research/15983](http://www.kshs.org/p/railroad-research/15983)

Union Pacific Railroad Historical Society: <http://uphs.org>

[www.historicmapsrestored.com/old-railroad-maps.html](http://www.historicmapsrestored.com/old-railroad-maps.html)

Library of Congress Railroad Maps <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gmdhtml/rrhtml>

Central Pacific Railroad Maps [www.cpr.org/Museum/Maps](http://www.cpr.org/Museum/Maps)

## Modern Day Mapping

GIS: Graphic Information Services

Mapping system that allows a governmental body to create an “overlay” over an existing map to highlight a specific service

<http://lib.guides.umd.edu/c.php?g=326454&p=2192920>

## Google Maps

You can build your own interactive maps, plot your family history, and share it with others <http://www.google.com/maps>

MapsGL interactive 3D imagery for buildings and landmarks

GPS: Global Positioning Systems

A space-based satellite navigation system that provides location and time information. Those coordinates can be plotted on a map to identify your position anywhere in the world



## Interactive Mapping

Many museums and archives are creating interactive google maps, overlaying historic maps with modern images and vice-versa. Here are a few really cool examples:

Google Earth <https://earth.google.com>

[www.smithsonianmag.com/history/what-did-chicago-look-great-fire-180947929](http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/what-did-chicago-look-great-fire-180947929)

<http://maps.nls.uk/os/6inch/index.html>

<http://rumsey.geogarage.com/maps/g0140000.html>

Newberry Library Chicago [www.chicagoancestors.org](http://www.chicagoancestors.org)

<http://historypin.com>

Snohomish Interactive Map <https://snohomishcountywa.gov/1943/Interactive-Maps>

U.S. Township Maps

<https://teva.contentdm.oclc.org/customizations/global/pages/collections/maps/maps.html?srchTerm=township>

## National & World Map Websites

- ArcGIS Historical Topo Map Explorer <https://livingatlas.arcgis.com/topomapexplorer/#maps=&loc=-98.54,40.15&LoD=4.00>
- Atlas of the Historical Geography of the U.S.: <http://dsl.richmond.edu/historicalatlas>
- Bureau of Land Management survey maps [www.geocommunicator.gov/blmMap/MapLSIS.jsp](http://www.geocommunicator.gov/blmMap/MapLSIS.jsp)
- Cornell University Persuasive Maps <https://persuasivemaps.library.cornell.edu>
- David Rumsey Map Collection [www.davidrumsey.com](http://www.davidrumsey.com)
- FamilySearch <https://familysearch.org/int-std-ui-research>
- Library of Congress Map Collection <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gmdhtml/gmdhome.html>
- New York Public Library Map Collection <http://maps.nypl.org>
- U.S. Geological Survey [http://geonames.usgs.gov/pls/gnispublic/wwv\\_flow.accept](http://geonames.usgs.gov/pls/gnispublic/wwv_flow.accept)
- U.S. Geological Survey Historical Topographic Maps [www.usgs.gov/programs/national-geospatial-program/historical-topographic-maps-preserving-past](http://www.usgs.gov/programs/national-geospatial-program/historical-topographic-maps-preserving-past)
- North Carolina State Library Map Collection [www.lib.ncsu.edu/maps/citingmaps.html](http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/maps/citingmaps.html)
- [www.geocaching.com](http://www.geocaching.com)
- U.S. Global Positioning Service [www.gps.gov](http://www.gps.gov)
- Canadian County Atlases (Ontario): <http://digital.library.mcgill.ca/countyatlas/searchmapframes.php>

- New Zealand Archives: Map Collections <https://natlib.govt.nz/collections/a-z/cartographic-collection>
- Scotland <http://maps.nls.uk/index.html>
- Slovakia Historical Map Overlay <https://visualisations.ehri-project.eu/neatline/fullscreen/slovakia-historical-maps>
- Washington State University Early Maps <https://content.libraries.wsu.edu/digital/collection/maps>

## Helpful Books

- Dollarhide, William and William Thorndale. Map Guide to the U.S. Federal Censuses, 1790-1920. Genealogical Publishing Co. Baltimore, MD. 1987.
- Dollarhide, William. Map Guide to American Migration Routs 1735-1815. HeritageQuest. Bountiful, UT. 1997.
- Hatcher, Patricia Law. Locating Your Roots: Discover Your Ancestors Using Land Records. Better Way Books, Cincinnati, OH. 2003.
- Kashuba, Melinda. Walking With Your Ancestors: A Genealogist's Guide to Using Maps and Geography. Family Tree Books. Cincinnati, OH. 2005.
- Light, Sally, House Histories. Goldenhill Press. Spencer Hill, N.Y. 1989.