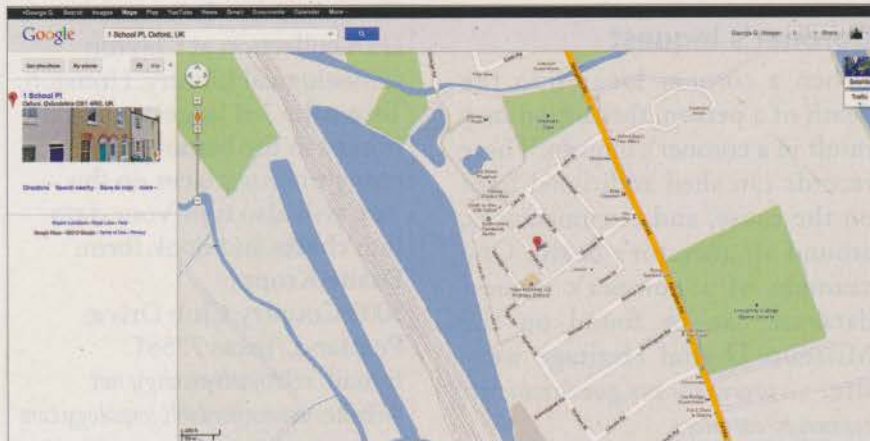




Google Maps

George G. Morgan shows us how to visualize our ancestors' environment

I'VE ALWAYS ENJOYED STUDYING GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY to understand how my ancestors and their families were involved. Where were they located at the time of a particular event? What events did they experience and how did they participate? How were they influenced by a particular event? Each of us likely recalls where they were on September 11, 2011, when the World Trade Center towers were destroyed. Perhaps you also remember November 22, 1963, when President John F. Kennedy was assassinated. Looking back into history, some of us may remember living through World War II, the Great Depression, an election, a special sporting event, or some other notable occasion.



Google Map of residence in Oxford, England.

More important, the daily lives of our ancestors can tell us a lot about their lives. That's why we strive to locate and digest the details we find in documents, such as censuses, vital or civil registration records, land and property records, tax lists, military service records, wills and probates, and many, many more.

Genealogy is always about context. Our ancestral quest, however, can frequently be enhanced by the use of family photographs. We can see the actual faces of family members, the clothes they wore, the cars they drove, the pets they may have owned, and the places where they lived. If you want to expand your perspective, you will also want to seek other types of visual resources to gain a better feeling for the community in which your ancestors and their families lived. Let's explore some of the most interesting of these.

Google Maps and Street View

The introduction of online mapping websites has been a boon to researchers who are interested in seeing more detailed views of the areas

where their ancestors lived. A topographical map is now interchangeable with a satellite view of an area.

Google Maps is a leader in providing online maps, and its Street View facility is the most extensive available. You will find that it can be a useful tool to complement your census research, particularly with your ancestors who lived in towns and cities. Use it to potentially see views of the buildings in which your ancestors, their families, and their friends lived. While these images offer only a contemporary view of the location, you will sometimes find that some places have remained little changed from the time your ancestors lived there. Street View can, therefore, provide you with a visual image to help you understand the physical context of your ancestors' family lives within their community.

I often use Google Maps when researching my urban ancestors both in the U.S. and overseas. Here is a recent example. My great aunt, Flora May Wrenn Morgan, died in New York City on 29 June 1949. Her husband, my great uncle, John Allen Morgan, died thirteen days later in Caswell County, North Carolina. Their place of residence at the times of their deaths was recorded on each of their death certificates as 25 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY. On the recent release of the indexed 1940 U.S. federal census for New York, I located the couple at this address and learned that they

225	90	Morgan John	Head	M	W	56	m	90	C5	Carolina
		Mae	Wife	W	W	52	m	70	C4	Carolina

1940 census entry for the Morgans on Fifth Avenue, New York, New York.



Google Maps Street View of the exterior of 25 Fifth Avenue.

rented an apartment there for \$90 per month.

I then searched for the address on Google Maps. The map view shows the address located on the east side of Fifth Avenue just north of East 9th Street, and just a short walk north of Washington Square. This geographical context reveals that the couple lived in a good neighborhood in the city. Next, however, I wanted to see their residence. I invoked Street View by clicking and dragging the

little man icon to the street. By clicking on the building on the east side of the street and its entranceway awning, I focused on the building's façade. By using the navigation control in the upper left corner of the photograph, it is possible to pan the image. I was able to determine that 25 Fifth Avenue is a multi-story apartment building. I next explored the area south of the apartment building to Washington Square and its graceful arch.

My curiosity about the area got the better of me. I also performed a simple search in Google for "25 fifth avenue new york ny" and was rewarded by a number of interesting links. At www.trulia.com, I found a listing for a 955 square foot loft condominium listed for sale at the address. I learned that the neighborhood is Greenwich Village, and that the building was built in 1921. The current selling price for one of the units is \$1,575,000! Another real estate site, www.newconstructionmanhattan.com/buildings/25-fifth-avenue, includes current photographs of the interior of one of the apartments. This visual insight is invaluable to my understanding of the lives of the couple!

You can even search Google maps in foreign countries. I obtained the death certificate for Marjorie Shepard Sissons Anderson, the mother of my brother's first wife. She died on 28 December 1989 in Oxford,



Street View of 1 School Place residence.



Real estate photo of an apartment at 25 Fifth Avenue.



Oxfordshire, England. Her residence at that time was listed as 1 School Place, New Hinksey, Oxford, Oxfordshire. I quickly recalled having received cards and notes from her with this return address. I opened Google Maps again and entered "1 school place, new hinksey, oxford, England" in the search box. Google displayed a map of the area. I quickly navigated into street view and soon had a photo of the front of the home on my screen; the left-hand door was her residence.

It's great to find such details through some simple steps. What happens, though, when you search for an address and find that Google Street View shows a vacant lot? Buildings are destroyed and sometime not replaced with other structures. In those cases, you may be able to find other visual materials elsewhere. These might include some of the following resources.

- I have long collected vintage postcards of the places where my ancestors lived. I expanded my collecting to include stereographic cards and a viewer. I locate postcards and stereographs in antique stores, on eBay and other online auction sites, at genealogical conferences, and from other collectors.
- Many vintage postcards have been reproduced in book form in recent decades. Search at Amazon.com or other online booksellers for the name of the place and the word postcard. (Ex.: "madison nc postcard") If you are seeking books about vintage postcards in other countries, be sure to search the Amazon website in that country. For example, when searching for such books in the

Build Your Personal Google Maps Resource

Gaining a physical perspective of the area where ancestors lived and worked can be valuable to the research process. Google Maps allows us an easy way to create, maintain, and share personalized, interactive maps. All you need is a free Google account. Simply sign in and, on the Google Maps screen, click on the button labeled "My places". Click on the red "Create Map" button to begin, or take the interactive tutorial to learn more. You begin by assigning a title to your map, and you can add a description to help remember what the map is all about. You have the option of collaborating with others or you can keep control all to yourself. You can also decide whether to make your map publicly available or to keep it private and only share the URL with selected people. You can always change this later if you choose. Once you're finished with this step, click on the "Done" box.

Next, use Google Maps to search for a specific address or locate a place on a map. Once there, click on the link labeled "Save to map" and a drop-down list with names of all your maps will be shown. Locate the map name and click the "Save" button. A confirmation window will appear and includes a link to allow you to view your map. You have a great deal of flexibility in what you can save and how you can add comments, web links, and more. The tutorial will explain each function in detail.

Whenever you want to revisit your map, return to "My places" in your Google Maps page, click on the Maps tab, then highlight and click on your map. The title and all of the text from your map will be shown on the left side of the page and a map with pushpins will be displayed on the right.

You can always share the map. If you want to provide it to someone else, display your map in your browser and click the chain link icon. A URL for use in an email or instant message is shown. (Click the box beside Short URL to create an abbreviated URL.) Copy and paste the URL into an email or into an instant message. You can likewise embed the map in a webpage you have created. Simply copy and paste the code provided into the HTML for your webpage.

Google

Get directions My places

Collaborate Import Done Save

Explore making custom maps in an interactive tutorial.

Title
Madison, Rockingham County, NC, Locations

Description
These are the locations associated with our family's lives in Madison, North Carolina.

Privacy and sharing settings Learn more

Public - Shared with everyone. This map will be published in search results and user profiles.

Unlisted - Shared only with selected people who have this map's URL.

The Create Map Title and Description panel.

Get directions My places

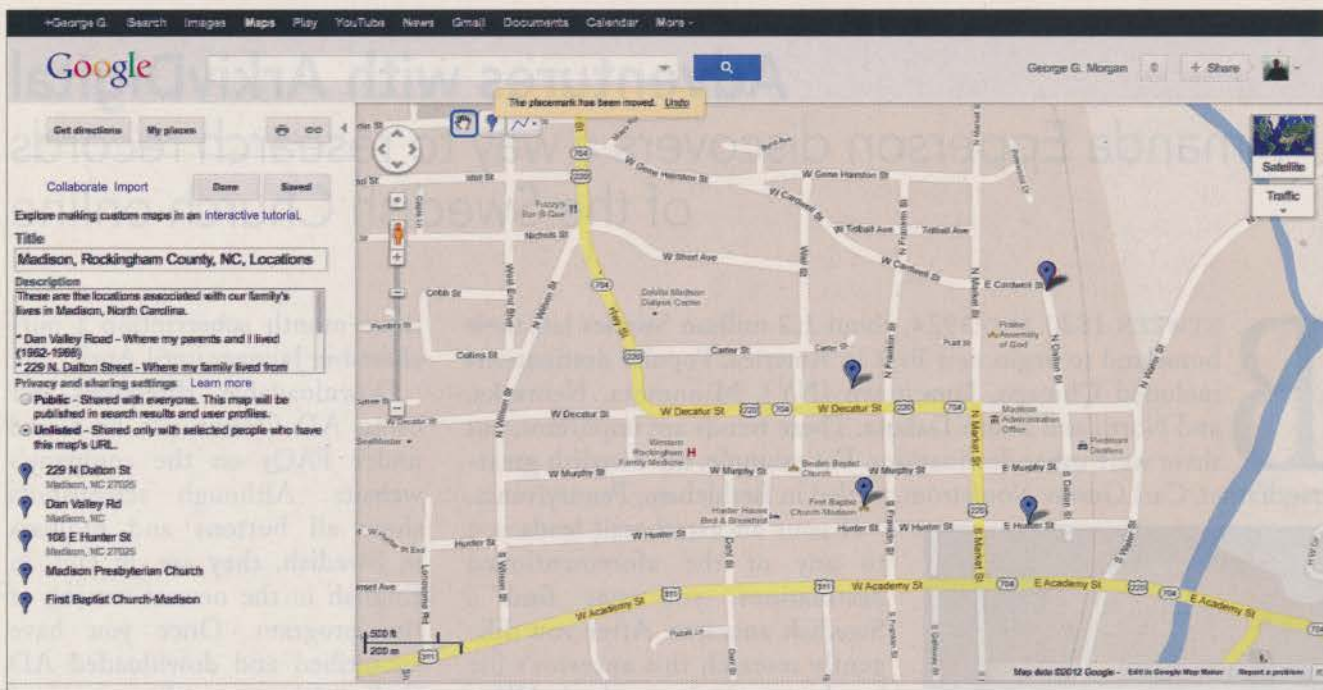
229 N Dalton St
Madison, NC 27025

Directions Search nearby Save to map more

Save to My Maps
Which map do you want to save to?
Madison, Rockingham County, NC, L... Save

Report a problem - Maps Labs - Help
Google Maps - ©2012 Google - Terms of Use - Privacy

Example of the Save to Map panel.



Your Personal Map.

United Kingdom, I use the site at www.amazon.co.uk. The chances are much better that you will find those domestic publications on that website. You can visit the different Amazon websites for Canada, China, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States by scrolling to the bottom of any Amazon page and click on the country link.

- eBay (www.ebay.com) is a source for vintage postcards if you want to collect them for yourself.
- Local public libraries and academic libraries may have collected vintage postcards and/or local photographs. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill has compiled an impressive collection at www.lib.unc.edu/dc/nc_post, and you can browse by location across the state.
- Check with the libraries' websites to learn about their specific collections of graphic materials, such as photographs, postcards, posters, ad advertising pieces. While some materials may be digitized, catalogued, and possibly available on the library's website, it is probable that most items have not been published in this manner. I encourage you, however, to make direct contact by telephone and/or email to determine if there are collections of materials in file folders or boxes.

Get the Big Picture

Genealogical research into the host of record types can be very satisfying. However, the addition of the visual perspectives of people's faces, their locations, and the communities in which they lived can really bring them and their lives back to life. Google Maps and its Street View facility can become an important tool when working with other record.

Creating personal maps will help you organize what you learn about locations. With a little practice, you will soon be a master of Google Maps and all it has to offer. ⑩

GEORGE G. MORGAN is the president of Aha! Seminars, Inc., and an internationally recognized genealogy expert who presents at local, state, national, and international genealogical conferences. McGraw-Hill published his tenth book, the third edition of his *How to Do Everything: Genealogy*, in 2012. He is Vice President of Membership for the Federation of Genealogical Societies, and a member of the Association of Professional Genealogists and many other societies in the U.S. and the U.K. George and Drew Smith produce The Genealogy GuysSM Podcast on the Internet at <http://genealogyguys.com>, the longest running genealogical podcast in the world, with thousands of listeners around the globe.