

NOTES ON FINDING THE MAP THAT YOU NEED

by Robert S. Davis, Jr.
Wallace State College
Hanceville, AL 35077-2000

Several guides to maps have been published. We have Joel Makower, *The Map Catalog: Every Kind of Map and Chart on Earth and Even Some Above It*, with addresses and information on ordering copies of county highway maps (ordered from state departments of transportation), historical maps, federal topographical maps etc. For background on maps see R. A. Skelton, *Maps: A Historical Survey of Their Study and Collecting* and our copy of *Guide to Cartographic Records in the National Archives*. Also see our vertical subject file on maps. County maps, often found at state archives and map repositories for their respective states, usually were not published until the late 1800s and early 1900s. However, as early as the 1600s, wide maps were drawn that gave such detail that they are good substitutes for county maps. Such maps frequently show roads, creeks, post offices, churches, communities, and major land owners. Be careful of out dated information repeated in later maps, decade after decade.

Historical maps on every level are being made available in full color and for free on the Internet. Alabama's historical maps, for example, can be accessed from the University of Alabama at

<http://alabamamaps.ua.edu/historicalmaps/index.html>

and for Georgia at the University of Georgia at

<http://www.cviog.uga.edu/Projects/gainfo/gamaps.htm>

Giant bibliographies of free web sites for historic and some modern maps include the Air University at

<http://www.au.af.mil/au/aul/lane.htm>

and the Perry-Castaneda Map Collection of the University of Texas

<http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/>

Many other sources exist for finding locations in Alabama, such as the indexes to federal topographical maps discussed below. For historical locations see W. Craig Remington and Thomas J. Kallsen, *Historical Atlas of Alabama* (2 volumes to date, Tuscaloosa: Department of Geography, 1997-). Volume one covers historical locations and volume two maps cemeteries and identifies the most prominent families buried therein. A third volume, dealing with place names on Alabama rivers, is being prepared for publication. Other works include Virginia O. Foscoe, *Place Names in Alabama* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1989); W. Stuart Harris, *Dead Towns of Alabama* (University: University of Alabama Press, 1977); *The Encyclopedia of Alabama* (St. Clair Shores, MI: Somerset Publishers, 1999); Works Projects Administration, *Alabama: A Guide to the Deep South* (New York: Richard D. Smith, 1941); William A. Read, *Indian Place Names in Alabama* (rev. ed., Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1984); and J. Carlyle Parker, *City, County, Town and Township Index to the 1850 Federal Census Schedules* (Detroit: Gale, 1976).

The most popular maps for genealogists are the county road maps. In Alabama these maps even include townships, ranges, and sections, allowing the researcher to pin point a piece of property described in deeds. County road maps, however, are often inexact on distances and locations of rural roads, churches, etc. We have a list of Alabama county maps for sale. Each state has a department of transportation that sells such maps for its respective state:

<http://everythingfordrivers.com/highwaymaps.html>

Much more precise are the topographical maps published by the U. S. Geological Survey. These color maps can be searched and copied on the Internet from the Topozone web site. They can be ordered from the National Cartographic Information Center, U. S. Geological Survey, 507 National Center, Reston, VA 22092 or from state offices and sometimes even in area sporting goods and hardware stores. These maps are arranged by districts created arbitrarily by the Geological Survey. They include elevations, water ways, roads, cemeteries, towns, and even individual buildings. Historical locations of many years ago are still on topographical maps. We have copies of the DeLorme topographical maps for every state in the United States.

An every name index to the Federal topographical maps is *Omni Gazetteer of the United States* (we have these books for the southern states). The index is also on the Internet at mapping.usgs.gov. Aerial photographs used to compile topographical maps (starting late 1930s) and out of date maps (starting late 1800s), can also be ordered from the National Cartographic Information Center. Modern aerial photographs can viewed and copied from <http://www.terraserver-usa.com/>. Many major university map rooms, such as the Department of Cartography at the University of Alabama (Tuscaloosa) also have aerial photographs.

The Sanborn Fire Insurance Company and their lesser competitors began a program of mapping buildings in cities and towns in the late 1800s. Many towns and cities were mapped several times. On some maps, changes and additions were pasted onto earlier maps. A Sanborn map included each building's floor plan, fire hazards, and street address although almost never any information on the owner. (Identities of owners, however, can usually be learned through deeds and city directories.) Fire insurance maps are notoriously inaccurate on proportions and other details. The larger historical state map repositories have their respective Sanborn maps. The Geography and Map Division of the Library of Congress, Washington, DC 20540 has the largest collection of Sanborn maps. However, the publication *Union List of Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps* is so grossly incomplete, even for the holdings of the Library of Congress. We have the Sanborn maps for the cities of Birmingham, Cullman, and Tuscaloosa. A microfilm copy of all Alabama Sanborn maps is in the Birmingham Archives of the Birmingham Public Library. The libraries of the University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa has these for the whole United States.

The American Civil War (1861-1865) produced detailed and highly accurate maps of the parts of the country where the major campaigns and battles took place. Civil War maps have been scanned from the Library of Congress at

http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/collections/civil_war_maps/

Bibliographies of Civil War maps such as *A Guide to Civil War Maps in the National Archives* exist. The most useful published collection of Civil War maps is George Davis, et al, *The Official Military Atlas of the Civil War*, although some land owners, roads, etc. depicted on these maps were not actually there until after the war. An index to the *Atlas* is Noel S. O'Reilly, *Civil War Maps: A Graphic Index to the Atlas to Accompany the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, which we have pasted inside our copy of the *Atlas*.

Post office maps were required each time that a post office was created or moved from c1837 to c1950. Since for most of the history of the United States seemingly every cross roads and mud hole had a post office and most of these post offices were a person's home, these maps give to the foot locations for thousands of extremely obscure locales. We have National Archives Micropublication M1126 Post Office Department Reports of Site Locations for Alabama, Alaska, and Georgia. Related to these maps are "gazetteers," post office directories, guides to place names, and related works that will identify a location. The best of such books have been published by state and should be sought at the respective state archives and state libraries although the above mentioned *Omni Gazetteer* has been found to be a more complete place name listing than almost any state book. We have on our general collection: Henry Gannett, *The Origin of Certain Place Names in the United States*; George R. Stewart, *A Concise Dictionary of American Place-Names*; Marion R. Hemperley, *Cities, Towns and Communities of Georgia*; William S. Powell, *The North Carolina Gazetteer*; Claude Henry Neuffer, *Names in South Carolina* (volumes 25-30 only); A. D. Mills, *A Dictionary of English Place Names*; and Mike Darton, *The Dictionary of Scottish Place Names*. Also see our map collection for indexed maps of specific states. Many other such books are on various web sites on

the Internet.