TEACHER'S GUIDE: OUR SCHOOL, OUR STORY

Our School, Our Story
Nebraska State Historical Society Foundation presents:

Introduction

Thank you for taking part in Nebraska State Historical Society Foundation's "Our School, Our Story" program. The goal of this program is simple: to introduce children to some of the basics of historical research, and encourage children to be curious about their own local history.

      The challenge of this learning experience is that there are oftentimes, an uneven distribution of historical resources across the state of Nebraska. Some communities have an abundance of historical resources that are readily available, while other communities do not. This lesson plan attempts to rely on readily available on-line databases, available to all communities.

This program is designed around three principles:

1. Children will be more engaged in a collective experience that is shared: such as their school. Their school's location (and connected community) are something all students can relate to.

2. Historical maps as a foundation of learning: Unlike many other primary sources, maps are generally readily available online (and locally if need be). Maps can describe the landscape of your school's locality, and how it has changed. Even without historical photos, newspapers or documents, children can use their imagination to envision the changing landscape (both literal and the human landscape) of one's immediate location.

3. Solving mysteries means asking questions: Once questions are asked-the mysteries are identified, secondary sources can be introduced to help solve those mysteries. The foundational map resources open the door to questions, and secondary resources (historic newspapers, photos and documents) are cited as the solution.

Setting the Stage

Because your planning time is limited, we hope that this guide will help prepare your lesson plan in an efficient and practical way. Naturally, you needn't use the activity sheets provided, feel free to use all, some or none of the material. However, we have attempted to incorporate meaningful lessons that cross-over into other areas of learning. The activity sheets provided are built on the premise that classroom discussion will result in questions (mysteries) needing solved. That is to say: the worksheets themselves will not adequately foster this result. Robust discussion and observation of the maps are the key to students having stimulated internal curiosity. The fundamental basis of this lesson plan is the use of historic maps overlaid on Google Earth.

The end goal of this lesson plan is to develop a series of questions (mysteries) and possible solutions provided through either direct research, or teacher-led research demonstrating how primary sources are found, where they are found, and how they answer the question (solve the mystery).

Additionally, the finale of the lesson plan may result in a tangible "end-product" (if you so choose). This end-product can be students simply drawing what they learned, or, it can result in a "mini exhibit" in the form of a classroom bulletin board with photos and other material demonstrating what was learned. *The choice is yours, and if you should decide to produce an end-product from the learning experience, please visit nshsf.org to learn how you can submit that end-product for a chance to win a classroom scholarship.*

You can also refer to the "Example Lesson Plan" to see a real-world example of how this lesson plan can play out!

Preparing Materials for Lesson Plan

The following demonstrates how to easily prepare material for the lesson plan. The following resources and steps will produce historic maps for use in Google Earth, and the basis of the lesson plan.

1. **Google Earth:**
   Download Location: https://www.google.com/earth/about/versions/
   (This lesson plan presumes a projected desktop viewed by the entire class)

   The desktop version (button "Download Earth Pro on desktop") provides the necessary tools to maximize the lesson's potential. Download and install as indicated.

2. **Earth Point Township and Range:**
   Download Location: https://www.earthpoint.us/Townships.aspx

   This file (.KML) will provide the needed geographic data for Google Earth. If it doesn't   automatically open in Google Earth, follow the following steps in Google Earth: File>Open>Select the download file. With the file now installed in Google Earth, enter the address of your school in Google Earth's search bar.

   You will now see the Public Land Survey System overlaying the Google Earth map. Clicking the round button located in the center of the section square will produce your Section, Township and Range location (as an example "S16 T10N R7E"). Record this information for use in the next step.

   The one caveat to using this file is that Earth Point encourages, but doesn't require, a subscription. To prevent subscription request messages you can either subscribe, or, turn off the subscription messages using the check box in Google Earth's Places file-tree on the left.

3. **Nebraska State Surveyor's Office:**
   Download Location: https://sso.nebraska.gov/maps/search-glo.html

   Using the Section, Township and Range location (as an example "S16 T10N R7E") you recorded from Earth Point, enter accordingly. In our example here, we enter *10* for Township North, and *7* for Range. We select either East or West, in our example we enter East based on *R7**E**.* You can now download the historical section map for your location, choosing either full color or black and white.

   The General Land Office (GLO) maps are fairly comprehensive, however you can also check the BLM files located at the same website if needed.

   Now that you have the file downloaded. It needs to be converted to an image file for use in Google Earth. This can easily be done in Adobe Acrobat by selecting "export" and then "image", saving as a .JPG, or, you can simply take a screenshot of your pdf file.

4. **Sanborn Maps:**
   Download Location:
   https://www.loc.gov/collections/sanborn-maps/?searchType=advanced

Download Location:
https://webpac.lincolnlibraries.org/login

Sanborn maps are a wonderful learning resource. However, they are highly monetized, and therefore more difficult to find at no cost. The Library of Congress has Sanborn maps, but the collection isn't fully digitized. The scale of the maps allows students to view their school and community at a "building level" of scale. Downloads from all sources listed can be selected as .JPG.

Lincoln Public Libraries:
This is the most comprehensive collection of Sanborn maps available. In order to utilize this resource, you can apply for a Lincoln Public Library 90-day library card remotely. The Nebraska State Historical Society Foundation will reimburse the $15.00 cost. Typically, one must apply in person for a library card, however, we have arranged for remote application. Please see the "Sanborn Map Access" document for more information.

Historic County Level Plat Maps (if desired):
Download Location:
https://www.loc.gov/collections/sanborn-maps/?fa=location_country:united+states%7Clocation_state:nebraska&searchType=advanced&sp=2 (download as .JPG)
Download Location:

https://historicmapworks.com/Browse/Maps/ (a monetized website, but using a full screen view on the map viewer, along with

"Prt Sc" on PC or "Command (⌘) + Shift + 4" on Mac, will provide a .JPG for use on Google Earth.)

Historic county plat maps are great resources, particularly for rural schools. These maps feature "block level" scale for cities, and "section level" scale for rural areas. The challenge is the uneven coverage available. Most counties will be found, if not with the links provided, then through a search engine. Local libraries will often have these available as well. These plat maps use section, township and range.

Putting Together the Historic Map Presentation for Your Class

****Please see our "Guide to Creating JPGS and Screenshots" if you need help converting maps to images to place in Google Earth****

At this point in the process, hopefully we will have two or more maps to use for the lesson plan. Ideally, we may have something that looks like this:

1. A Government Land Office (GLO) original plat map (1850's-1880's) image in a .JPG format
2. A Sanborn map of the immediate area surrounding the school (1870's to 1950's) in a .JPG format
3. A historic county plat map image of the neighborhood, community or township of the school's area in .JGP format

Now, with our map images we've collected, let's import those into Google Earth for viewing with the class!

Step 1: Open Google Earth and locate your area of interest

Step 2: Go to: Add>Image Overlay. Select Browse, and select your image file to insert.

Step 3: With the image now loaded into Google Earth, note the green "handles" that appear around the inserted image. Also note the diamond shape handle on the left-center, this is the rotation handle. Using the Earth Point provided sections, you can now adjust the image's section boundaries to match. Adjust the image's transparency on the slider bar to facilitate this match. You can also toggle layers off and on as needed (Figure 1/2).
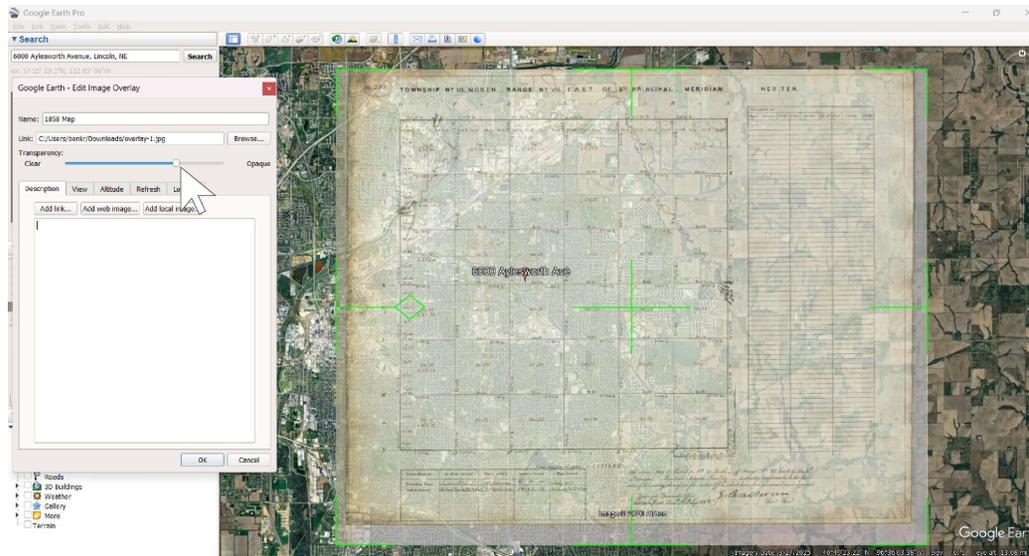
Figure 1: Opacity
You can adjust the opacity of images when the image is inserted, or, more importantly, you can adjust the opacity back and forth for your students while sharing the map. This can be done by right-clicking (Mac: Ctrl+click) on the layer name.

This feature allows us to move back and forth from modern to historic maps in a dynamic way.

Figure 2: Alignment
Clicking the check-boxes toggles the layers off and on. We can toggle the Earth Point boundaries to help align the maps nearly perfectly. This will provide students a birds-eye view of the changes to the landscape. We can open each layer's Properties dialog box, and adjust alignment and opacity at any time.

Presentation:

We can find our map files on the left-hand side "file tree". These files are stored locally on the hard drive of the device you are using.

You can use your discretion as to how you choose to proceed with the lesson. However, the formula used for our example lesson, uses the following chronology:

1. Introduction: "How Old is Your School?"
   a. Shared Reading
   b. Buried Treasure? Discussion
   c. "What we will learn" statement
   d. Definitions review

2. Part I Activity: "Patterns on a Plat Map"
   a. Present Google Earth projection to class with Earth Point toggled on.

b. Students can partner to answer questions one through six. Guided learning is useful when applying any previously learned math strategies for solving multiplication using tables, patterns and so forth. (Coincidentally, the pattern of numbers used on a township map is called a *Boustrophedon* pattern (pronounced boo-struh-FEE-don). It's just a fun word to say!
c. Definitions review
d. As a final learning piece, students can help identify the section their school building currently resides in using landmarks and the S/T/R grid. (This serves to transition onto the next activity page's question #1)

3. Part II/III Activity: Plat Maps of Your School and Community & Sanborn Maps of Your School and Community

This is the portion of the lesson plan that relies heavily on students' engagement and curiosity. This activity is challenging in terms of presentation, whereas every school has a unique history. As such, not every question will be relevant to the school's situation. For example, not all county maps will feature property owners' names (see Question 4). However, this is beneficial in that the absence of information will provide our first mysteries needing solved. The classroom collectively, or teams of students can go about investigating primary sources. Depending on the scaffold upon which the students generally sit, teachers may want to consider preparing primary sources ahead of time. For example, presenting a whole page of a historical newspaper through which the students read to find the answer appearing on that individual page. Generally speaking, the primary sources' functionalities are very much geared towards adult-level learning.

Compiling a list of mysteries to solve is key, and the teacher may want to "lead" the students into a prearranged field of questions (.i.e mysteries to solve). These questions can be agreed upon collective mysteries to solve, or, some students may devise their own mysteries to solve. In either case, the questions asked during Parts II and III, formulate the "The Mystery List", and provide a basis for primary source research.

Scholarship Contest

This is where the students can shine! Students can find photos and so forth with simple keyword searches at the primary sources. In the "example lesson" you'll see it is essentially a collage of clues found. But there are a number of ways students can participate.

Draw a Picture About Your School's History!

This activity gives students a creative outlet to show what they've learned about the history of their school and community. This project encourages creativity, strengthens connections to local history, and celebrates the unique stories of Nebraska schools.

Students are invited to draw a picture inspired by:

- *Their school's past*
- *A historic event, person, or tradition connected to their school*
- *How their school has changed over time*

Teachers may collect student artwork and submit scanned copies of the drawings to nshsf.org as part of a statewide contest.

Teacher Prizes

-Five (5) $200 gift cards to be us-d for classroom art or history materials
OR
-A class pizza partyHow to Submit

1. Collect student drawings (individual or class submissions welcome).
2. Scan or photograph each artwork clearly.
3. Submit the images online at nshsf.org by the posted deadline

Student Prizes

K–2 Students

Draw a Picture About Your School!

Can you draw a picture about your school?

Think about:

- What your school looks like
- Something fun or special at your school
- What you think your school was like long ago

Use crayons, markers, or colored pencils to draw your picture. There is no right or wrong—just do your best and have fun!

Your teacher may send your picture to a statewide contest where your class could win:
A pizza party
or
Art supplies for your classroom

Grades 3–5

Draw a Picture About Your School's History!

Show what you've learned about your school's history by creating a drawing.

Your picture might show:

- What your school looked like in the past
- A person or event important to your school

- How school life has changed over time

Use details, labels, or symbols to help tell your story through your artwork.

Your class could win:
One of five $200 gift cards for classroom materials
or
A class pizza party

Upper Elementary (Grades 5–6 or 6–7, as appropriate)

Illustrate Your School's Story

Use your creativity to illustrate an important moment, memory, or change in your school's history.

Consider showing:

- A historical event connected to your school or community
- A comparison of "then and now"
- How your school reflects its community over time

Your artwork should tell a clear story using images, details, and thoughtful design. Labels or short captions are welcome.

Selected entries may earn:
🏆 $200 gift cards for classroom materials
or
🍕 A class pizza party

ALL SUBMISSIONS MUST BE SUBMITTED WITH

SCHOOL NAME

TEACHERS NAME

CLASS / GRADE

CONTACT INFORMATION:

email address and phone number of teacher

Leslie   Fattig
Executive   Director
Nebraska   State   Historical   Society   Foundation
Century House, 1201 Lincoln Mall, Suite 100

Lincoln, NE 68508

p: 402.435.3535

c: 402.209.9140