

HOW OLD IS YOUR SCHOOL?



Can you imagine what schools looked like one-hundred years ago? Look around you. Do you think your school is greater than or less than one-hundred years old? Can your teacher tell you how old your school building is?

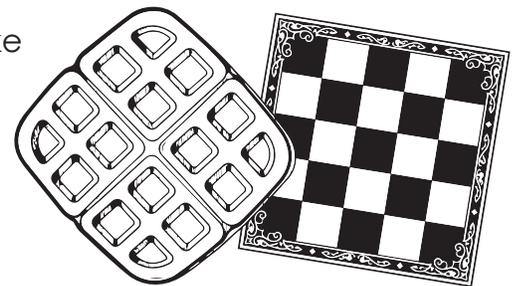
Look beneath your feet. What do you see? Probably carpet, wood or tile floors, right? But somewhere beneath that floor is soil. Soil, of course, is made of dirt and rocks, but soil also holds clues (called **artifacts**) that tell us a story about what happened before your school was built. Some soil even has buried treasure! Yes, buried treasure, right here in Nebraska!

But, before you ask your teacher for a shovel to search for buried treasure, let's do some investigating about the history of your own school and community. People who investigate history are called **historians**. Historians solve mysteries by finding clues about places using books, maps and artifacts. Historians also use the same skills you are learning in school; math, reading and science, to help solve mysteries about the past.

LET'S SOLVE A MYSTERY!

Can you solve the mystery of your school's history? What was here before your school? How have the **environs** changed? To begin learning about your school's history, we can look at old maps. The oldest Nebraska maps we can use are over one-hundred years old, they are called **township plat maps**.

Plat maps use a pattern called a grid. Grids look like waffles or checkerboards, and a grid pattern helps us find places on a plat map. Every plat map uses the same pattern and each square in the grid has a number. On the next page, let's see if we can solve the



DID YOU KNOW?

- Kids exploring in Red Willow county found long-forgotten gold coins buried along a creek.
- A well-known frontiersman living just north of Ashland, Nebraska, buried jars of gold and silver in his orchard. Some of these jars may still be there today!
- Two elderly brothers living just outside of Lincoln, buried over \$1 million in gold and silver coins on their farm!

PART I: PATTERNS ON A PLAT MAP

Before we can explore old maps about our school, let's learn about how numbers and grids work to help us identify places on a map. A plat map uses "big squares" called townships. Each township is given a name, and has numbered "smaller squares" in a grid pattern. The 36 smaller squares are called **sections**.

QUESTION 1:

What is the name of the township on this plat map? _____

QUESTION 2:

How many smaller squares (sections) are there? If there are six sections across, and six sections down, what does that tell us? Can we use a multiplication strategy we've learned in the past to solve for the total number of sections? _____

QUESTION 3:

Looking at the numbers provided, can you solve for the pattern of the numbers? Write in each square the missing numbers.

PLAT MAP for TOWNSHIP of
MUDDY CREEK

6 	5	—	—	2	—
7	8	9			12
—		16	15	14	13
19	—	—	—	23 	
—	—	—	27	—	—
—		—	—	—	36

QUESTION 4:

Can you find the section number for each of the following:

TRAIN _____

SCHOOL _____

FOREST _____

BARN _____

CREEK _____

QUESTION 5:

If every section is one mile wide, how wide is a township? _____

PART II: PLAT MAPS OF YOUR SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY

Let's explore old plat maps of your school and community! Your teacher will share a number of plat maps with you. Just like a historian, your teacher explored **archives**, libraries and museums in search of clues to what your community and school looked like in the past. Let's find out if we can learn anything new about your school.

Are there any mysteries, if so, can you solve the mystery using clues? As we explore your history, you can add unanswered questions to your "mystery list". These are the mysteries that you can try to solve using **primary sources**.

Before we begin exploring old plat maps, let's look at a modern map using Google Earth and find out where your school and surrounding community are located.

QUESTION 1:

What is your school's section number on the modern Google Earth map? _____

QUESTION 2:

What year was the old plat map made? _____

Have you learned a strategy that can tell us how many years ago it was made? What strategy did you use, and how many years ago was the map made?

QUESTION 3:

Does this old plat map have any geographic features we can still find in our community? If so, what are they (rivers, valleys, lakes, etc.)?

QUESTION 4:

Can we learn the names of anyone who lived or worked where your school now stands? If so, what did we learn about these people? What sources did we use to learn about who they were?

QUESTION 5:

Has your school building has always been in the same place? If not, can we learn where it was previously located? _____ Is the old school building still there? If not, what if anything has taken its place? _____ Did your school have the same name, or has it changed? _____

MYSTERY NEEDING SOLVED:

Definitions

Archives

A collection of historical records stored in a special place. These records are preserved because they contain rare or valuable information.

Artifacts

Physical objects made by humans, such as tools, pottery, or coins, that are of historical or cultural interest.

Environs

The surrounding area or district; the neighborhood or outskirts of a specific place.

Historian

A person who studies and writes about the past, often considered an authority on it. They analyze primary and secondary sources to interpret historical events.

Primary source

Books, diaries, letters, original photographs, or official records from an archive, library or museum.

Section

A unit of land that is one square mile. There are 36 sections in a township.

Township plat map

A map showing the divisions of a piece of land. It details boundaries and ownership.

Draw a picture about your school's history!



A large, empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for drawing a picture about the school's history.