Finding Origins: Cluster Research in Practice
Class 2: Finding the Ancestral Home

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Accessing Land Records
1. Establish location and timeframe
2. Understand jurisdiction
    a. FamilySearch Wiki
    b. Atlas of Historical County Boundaries – https://digital.newberry.org/ahcb/
3. Located at Register of Deeds or County Court House
    a. Look for corresponding websites
    b. FamilySearch.org
    c. Published abstracts or transcriptions

Indexes: Understand the Index - https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/United_States_Index_Systems

Abstracting Deeds
- Grantor
- Grantee
- Residences of grantor and grantee
- Volume and Page
- Location of the property
- Description of Property
- Abutters
- Acreage
- Witnesses
- Dates

Challenges in Locating Historic Properties
1. Antiquated language
2. No modern landmarks
3. Confusing vocabulary

Strategies
1. Trace historic ownership of property via deeds
2. Examine deeds of abutters
3. Utilize historic maps, atlases, and local histories
    a. Local collections
4. Embrace technology
    a. GIS and DeedMapper
5. Stay Organized
    a. Research log
    b. Abstract deeds

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Identifying the Location of an Ancestral Property

Analyze Deed
1. Acreage
2. Identify property features
3. Determine geographical features
4. Note the abutters
5. Abstract property description
6. Sketch boundaries to visualize geographic features and abutters

Research Abutters
1. Deeds of abutters can reveal historic ownership
2. Can often provide additional detail regarding your property
   a. Geographical or modern features
3. Always determine parentage, date of birth, date of death
   a. Ensures you are examining records for correct person
4. Examine probates – property can pass via probate

Pair your Deed Research with Other Sources
1. Tax records
2. Census records
3. Published histories
4. Court records
5. Newspapers
6. Town records
7. Published histories
8. City directories
9. Assessor's data

Stay Organized!
1. Keep a research log
   a. Cluster research involves many people
2. Abstract deeds

Embrace Technology
Geographic Information System (GIS) – Capture special and geographic data
- ArcGIS Online – arcgis.com
- GIS and Genealogy - https://www.esri.com/about/newsroom/arcuser/gis-and-genealogy/

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Google Earth
- Google Earth for Genealogy - https://www.newyorkfamilyhistory.org/blog/using-google-earth-genealogy-putting-your-ancestors-map

DeedMapper
- Direct line Software – http://directlinesoftware.com/

Sources for Maps

Library of Congress - www.loc.gov/maps
Norman P. Levanthal Map and Education Center - https://collections.leventhalmap.org
David Rumsey Map Collection - www.davidrumsey.com
American Geographical Society - https://collections.lib.uwm.edu/digital/collection/agdm/search/
Harvard University Scanned Maps - https://curiosity.lib.harvard.edu/scanned-maps
HistoryGeo.com - Historygeo.com
University of California Berkeley Geodata - https://geodata.lib.berkeley.edu/?utf8=%E2%9C%93&q=
Mapjunction – www.mapjunction.com

Bibliography and Helpful Sources

Patricia Law Hatcher, *Locating Your Roots: Discover Your Ancestors Using Land Records*, (Baltimore, Md.: Genealogical Publishing Company, 2019)

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Donald A. Wilson, *Interpreting Land Records* (Hoboken, New Jersey: Wiley, 2006)

E. Kay Kirkham, *The Land Records of America and Their Genealogical Value* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., c1964)

The Legal Genealogist – www.legalgenealogist.com

Black's Law Dictionary – https://thelawdictionary.org

Genealogical Dictionary of Legal Terms - https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Genealogical_Dictionary_of_Legal_Terms

Metes and Bounds - https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Metes_and_Bounds

Public Land Survey System - https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Rectangular_Surveys