

Family Maps

Introduction

Throughout history family groups tend to live in a relatively small geographic area. Studying the spatial distribution of a family and of the various families in a family tree can assist in identifying a family group. The more the family map shows actual distances between family members or groups the more useful the map will be. For example, two families with the same surname may live in the same county and be separated by more than 100 miles, or they may be in separate counties or countries and be next neighbors.

The advent of digital genealogical data and database and mapping tools has greatly facilitated creating a family map.

Using map software to visualize the distribution of family names

We experimented with Autodesk's AutoCAD Map, Microsoft's MapPoint, and other mapping products to provide a picture of the distribution of family names across a region.

With the combination of AutoCAD MAP, Microsoft Access, and CD ROM Libraries software we are able to create various surname distribution maps. To accomplish this we:

1. Extract the surname and geographic location data from the CD ROM Libraries.
2. Import this data into Microsoft Access.
3. Summarize the data based on geographic boundaries (parish/city, county, state, etc).
4. Create a map in AutoCAD MAP or utilize a MapPoint map.
5. Link the data to the map and view the results.

Once we have created or selected the map for a particular geographic region, we can produce maps to show family distribution for any cross section of the population where we have data in that geographic area.

MapPoint

Microsoft MapPoint provides a ready map of North America and parts of Europe. MapPoint has a good correlation to the US 1880 Census place names at the state or county level. The Eastern US counties have a better correlation than the Western counties for 1880.

Preparing family maps in the US is now quite simple. Within minutes we can have a county level picture of the distribution of a family across the entire US. With this picture we can estimate which counties we should research to optimize our family history work. We may also know which counties we may eliminate at that time period from our search because of few or no people with our family name living there.

Case Study

The Washburn family had grown to nearly 9,000 in the US by 1880. The yellow dots on the MapPoint map show the 3 main settlement areas of my forefathers. Through MapPoint we can automatically build a county level map. The MapPoint counties in the Northeastern US nearly match the 1880 Census, not only by spelling but also by geographic boundary.

At the town or city level the automation goes away, although I could manually correlate a large majority of towns in Westchester County, New York, which is the principle settlement county of my forefathers.

AutoCAD Map

Preparing family maps in Europe can also be successful. However, you must first prepare a base map. You must also correlate the database place names with the map place names. Once you have prepared the base map, you can search the map and attach data to show the distribution of a family.

Case Study

The Esplin surname is derived from the forename Absolom, as is also the Soundex partner Asplin. By creating a county level map in the UK, we could show that these 2 groups were very distinct geographically and so are probably well distanced in relation also. By mapping the older generation, we get a truer picture of the origin or the substantial settlement area of the family. While the Asplins were settled in Southern England, the Esplins were primarily settled in Forfar (Angus) County, Scotland; several hundred miles away.

Within Forfar County, the Esplins tended to settle in 2 parishes about 20 km apart. The most common parish is Arbroath, next is Forfar. Most of the older generation was proximate to these 2 parishes.

The attached maps show the Esplins on the county level. The necessary records to extract this small family of about 430 people in the UK should mainly be found in only about 10 parishes. Since the population tripled from 1800 to 1881, we may assume that the Esplins were only about 150 people or perhaps 30 families in 1800 and are closely related to each other and to our direct line ancestors.

Conclusion

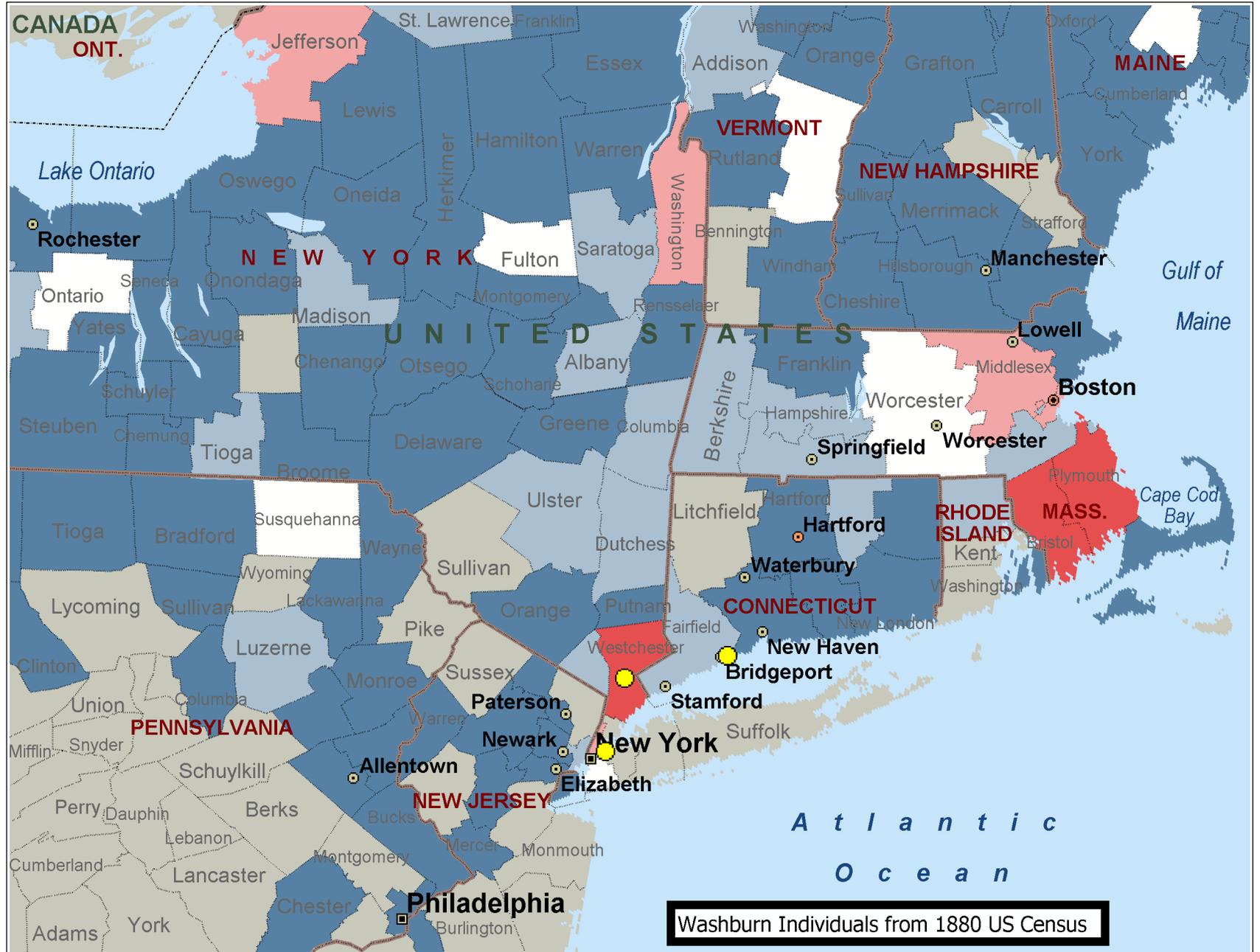
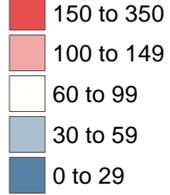
With the right combination of mapping and database software we can study the geographic distribution of families. The smaller the geographic entity the map represents the more useful the map may be. Based on Family Maps we can select the most cost effective family to research and the most cost effective geographic areas in which to research that family.

WASHBURN NE

Pushpins

 My Pushpins

NumberInCounty by County



Washburn Individuals from 1880 US Census

