



Fig. 1: "A New Map of Kansas," drawn in 1859.

FOR THE RECORDS

Genealogical Implications of Changing Boundaries

Introduction

For the most part, geography remains a constant - modified only by the occasional river changing its course.

But for historical research in 18th-19th century America, administrative boundary changes are an all too familiar occurrence. Unlike geographic areas, administrative boundaries changed with the wind as new territories

opened, populations increased, and political subdivisions redrew the lines of civil authority.

As new land was acquired through acquisition or treaty, new territories were formed, and from these territories, states were created, and from these came counties – and from counties, more counties, and from them, even more counties. Cities were not immune. Many cities withdrew from their parent counties. An example of such is St. Louis, where in 1876 the city separated itself from the county in what is affectionately known to St. Louis researchers as “The Great Divorce.”

With all of this districting and re-districting comes genealogical implications. As if knowing what records to look for and interpreting and analyzing the records available wasn't enough of a challenge, the consequences of constant boundary changes means locating those records can prove an incredibly daunting task!

What is going on here?

Administrative boundary changes are a constant in the work of genealogy professionals. But for most budding family historians, the knowledge of an administrative boundary changing even just once can be jarring. What if a boundary changed three, four, five times in a relatively short period?

Administrative boundary changes may not be common knowledge outside of a particular region. While occasionally one may have been taught something of the more well-known changes through a high school or college history class – or perhaps enjoyed the television program “How the States Got Their Shapes” – most probably aren't well-versed in all the treaties and transactions of the federal and colonial governments – and certainly not in the county-by-county development of every state.

Some researchers may not realize that portions of Colorado were once in Kansas. (Fig. 1) Many more may not know that the southeastern corner of Indiana (known as “The Gore”) was originally in Ohio. (Fig. 2) Others may not realize that portions of Pennsylvania once belonged to Connecticut, Virginia, and Maryland, and Virginia – so many counties and so many states have formed over the centuries from Virginia, it can (and will!) make your head spin.

Implications

So what are the genealogical implications of changing boundaries?

The most obvious implication is that researchers cannot just search for records and expect to find what they are looking for. Immersion in the historical context of a place is vital to successful genealogical research. This means uncovering the local history, military events, treaties; exploring whom the settlers were and when they settled; and constructing a timeline of settlement and development.

The other major implication is that people might settle in a place – never move – and yet their records are recorded in two-three-four-five or even eight different administrative districts!

Case Study: McGinley Family

In 1743, James McGinley, with three other Scots, purchased 5000 acres from the Carroll family of Annapolis, Prince George’s Co., Maryland – a tract recorded as Carroll’s Delight. (Fig. 3)

This land was held by the McGinley family without deed – Maryland operated under a feudal system whereby annual payments were made to the Carroll family for ownership. According to the Carroll family, Carroll’s Delight was a part of the Maryland Colony.

The McGinleys filed their early records in the town of Frederick, at first Baltimore Co. and later Frederick Co., MD. However, based on its location north of the 39th parallel, the actual authority over the land was of great debate. The Proprietors of Pennsylvania believed Carroll’s Delight was in Lancaster Co., PA. In 1749, York Co. separated from Lancaster Co. and Carroll’s Delight was in the new administrative district. (Fig. 4)

After decades of debate, a survey of the boundary between Pennsylvania and Maryland was ordered – to be performed by Charles Mason & Jeremiah Dixon. (Fig. 4) Conducted from 1763-1767, the Mason and Dixon Survey (For more on Pennsylvania Land Records and the Mason Dixon Survey, consult [PastPorts, September 2020, New Warrants: Researching Early Pennsylvania.](#)) firmly established the McGinley’s property in Pennsylvania – Not Maryland. This did not prevent McGinley Records from appearing in Maryland.

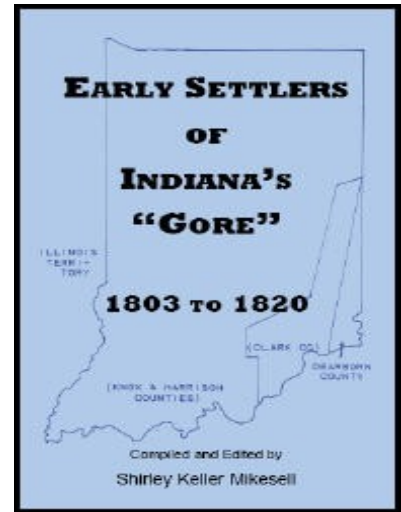


Fig. 2: The Gore in Ohio, from the cover of *Early Settlers of Indiana's Gore* by Shirley Keller Mikesell.

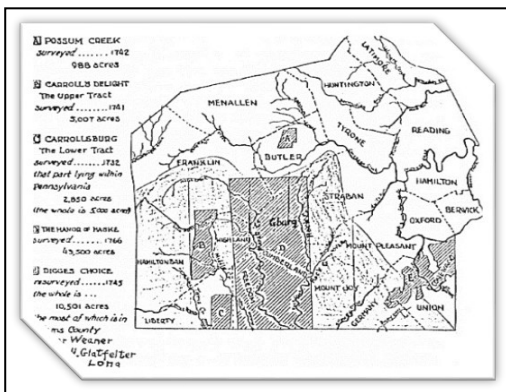


Fig. 3: James McGinley's “Carroll’s Delight”

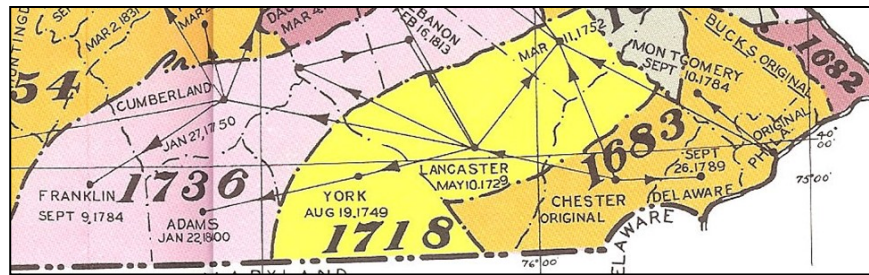


Fig. 4: York County separated from Lancaster County in 1749

James McGinley died in 1769, and his sons found themselves living in Pennsylvania without a deed. They went to the Carroll Family, and in Frederick Co., a warrant was drawn up by an agent of Charles Carroll, releasing Amos McGinley from his quit rents in exchange for an alienation fine. But this is not the end of the story. Amos had one brother, John. At the time, the two split their father’s property. Amos died intestate in 1792 and John died testate in 1798 – leaving his property to two of his sons – Ebenezer and James. With no adult children, Amos’ widow Anne became the official property holder until the children of both estates came of age.

In 1800, Adams Co. was formed from the southwestern portion of York Co. and once again the McGinleys, living near Fairfield, west of Gettysburg, found themselves in a new administrative district. In 1805, when John’s sons Ebenezer and James were of age, Anne conveyed to them their inheritance. This was the first McGinley deed of record for Carroll’s Delight. In a roughly 70-year period, records for the McGinley family and their property appear in six different counties in two colonies – they never moved.



Fig. 5: Mason-Dixon Line markers. Photo courtesy of visitdelaware.com.

Navigating Boundary Changes

Because of changes in administrative boundaries, genealogists often find themselves looking in the wrong place. If a county formed in 1790 and records are needed from 1770, the research approach must be modified to resolve the query. There are a number of sources family history researchers can turn to in order to inform themselves on county formation, city formation, and boundary changes.

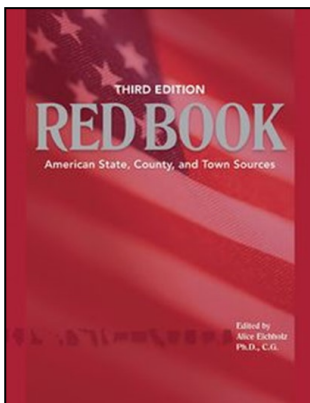


Fig. 6: The RED BOOK: American State, County, and Town Sources

The *RED BOOK* is one of the top sources in the genealogists’ toolkit. (Fig. 6) It provides comprehensive dates for vital records, land, probate, and court records for all U.S. Counties. The *RED BOOK* outlines the formation of counties – as well as serves as a guide to information on courthouse fires and records losses, history of record keeping practices, outlines of the local legal system and the records of probate and court, land records, maps, church records, and other regional source material.

Map Guide to the U.S. Federal Censuses, 1790-1920 is another useful tool in identifying administrative boundary changes. (Fig. 7) You can use this in conjunction with the *RED BOOK* to see how counties changed between each census period.

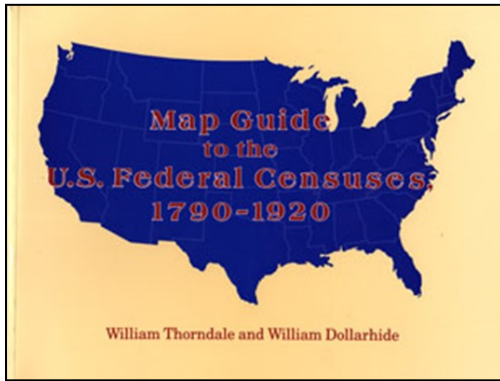


Fig. 7: *Map Guide to the U.S. Federal Censuses: 1790-1920* by Thorndale and Dollarhide.

The Newberry Library in Chicago has developed a mapping database – Atlas of Historical County Boundaries [digital.newberry.org/ahcb/]. (Figure 8). This comprehensive tool illustrates every US county boundary change. It takes some practice getting used to, but once you figure out the basics, it is perfect to bookmark and utilize in your research. In addition, the Newberry has also provided county chronologies and a bibliography of sources to inform your research.

Another online resource for information is the [FamilySearch Research Wiki](#), which provides county-by-county information, including information on boundary changes. (Fig. 9)

Many books have been published documenting the more complicated boundary changes. Works such as “*The Boundary Controversy between Pennsylvania and Virginia*”, “*Early Settlers of Indiana’s Gore*” can prove extremely helpful in informing one’s research. There are also books that have been published on specific states or colonies – such as the “*Atlas of County Boundary Changes in Virginia, 1634-1895*” which can be extremely useful. County histories are also a great place to extract information regarding administrative boundary changes. And if all else fails, contact the library! Our staff are experts in identifying and resolving complicated administrative boundary challenges.

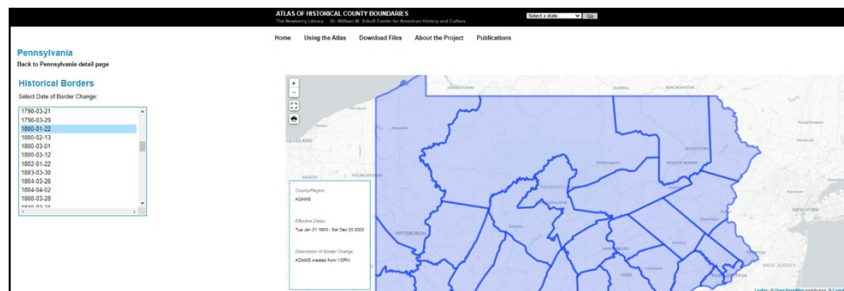


Fig. 8: The Newberry Library’s “Atlas of Historical County Boundaries” page for Pennsylvania

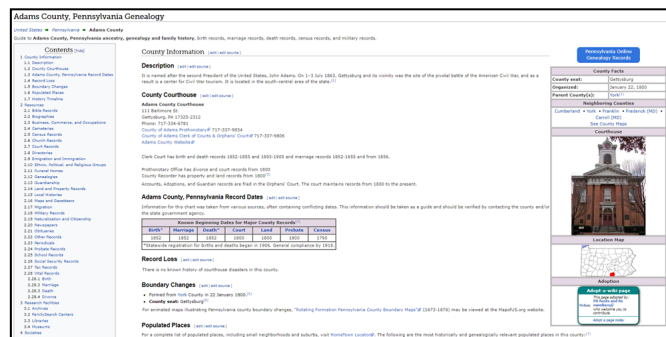


Fig. 9: FamilySearch Wiki page for Adams County, PA

BIBLIOGRAPHY**Books:**

Eichholtz, Alice. *RED BOOK: American State, County, and Town Sources*. 3rd Ed. Ancestry: Utah. 2004. R 929.1 R312

Thorndale, Wm. & Dollarhide, Wm. *Map Guide to the U.S. Federal Census, 1790-1920*. Genealogical Publishing Co.: Baltimore, 1987. R 911.73 L498M

Online Resources:

Atlas of Historical County Boundaries. Newberry Library. (digital.newberry.org/ahcb/) accessed 6 March, 2023.

Maps:

Figure 1: Mitchell, Samuel Augustas. *A New Map of Kansas*. Philadelphia: Charles Desilver, 1859. Image Copy, David Rumsey Historical Map Collection. (www.davidrumsey.com/luna/servlet/detail/RUMSEY~8~1~246724~5515066:A-New-Map-of-Kansas-) accessed 3 March, 2023.

Figure 3: *Townships and Large Grants in Adams County*. Adams County Historical Society.

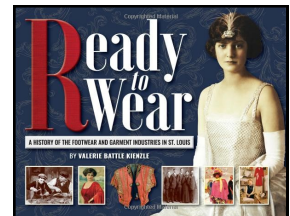
Figure 4: *Pennsylvania. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania: Genealogical Map of the Counties*. Pennsylvania Bureau of Land Records: Harrisburg. Digital images, Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission (www.phmc.pa.gov/Archives/Documents/Pennsylvania-Genealogical-Map-Counties.pdf) accessed 3 March 2023.

Shelf Life

SAMPLINGS FROM THE PRINT COLLECTION

Interested in the history of fashion in St. Louis? Check out *Ready to Wear: A History of the Footwear and Garment Industries in St. Louis* (977.866 K47R). Circulating copies available, see the [SLCL card catalog](#).

St. Louis was founded as a fur trading village in 1764. Located on the banks of the Mississippi River, it became a center of fur trading, cotton and wool distribution, footwear, and ultimately clothing production in the 19th century. Few today would believe that the junior dress market segment was born, developed, and flourished in St. Louis from the 1930s through the 1960s. Buyers for high-end New York retailers flocked to St. Louis twice a year to view and order dresses and footwear. But The River City was a leader in shoes and clothing long before it introduced the junior clothing trend. *Ready To Wear* is the story of the birth, growth, decline, and rebirth of two wearable industries in St. Louis, Missouri footwear and garments, alike in their end products but drastically different in their production processes. It takes a unique look at footwear and clothing through factual narrative, seldom-told stories, and detailed vintage images.—Reedy Press



H&G Classes & Programs

The following History & Genealogy classes and programs are offered for April 2023. Register at www.slcl.org/events.

Exploring FamilySearch.org

Monday, April 10, 6:30 pm, Virtual

FamilySearch.org is a free website offering access to millions of records for genealogy and family history research. Learn how to search for ancestors, navigate the catalog, and take advantage of other features.. Adults. Registration required.

Capturing Family Stories with Oral History

Tuesday, April 18, 2:00 pm, Jamestown Bluffs

In partnership with the Old Jamestown Association. Discover tips, tools, and techniques for recording your family's oral history. Adults. Registration required.

History A'Brewin

Thursday, April 20, 6:30 pm, Daniel Boone

For thousands of years, brewing alcohol has been a hobby, profession, and an obsession. Come learn more about the history of beer and its impact on St. Louis. Adults. Registration required.

April 24-28 is National Preservation Week!

Getting Started with Digital Preservation

Monday, April 24, 10:00 am, Virtual

Learn how to care for and protect digital files and photos. Techniques for saving and preserving your digital memories will be shared. Adults. Registration required.

If These Walls Could Talk: Researching a House History

Tuesday, April 25, 2:00 pm, Oak Bend

Presented by Dennis Northcott, Associate Archivist for Reference at the Missouri Historical Society The Missouri Historical Society Library and Research Center has a wealth of resources to help you learn about the history of your house and its former inhabitants. See examples of them and learn how they can help you research the history of the place you call home. Adults. Registration required.

Basic Preservation and Cleaning of Gravestones

Wednesday, April 26, 7:00 pm, Lewis & Clark

The stones that mark the graves of our loved ones serve to identify their final resting places for hundreds of years to come. Join the History & Genealogy Department for an introduction into cleaning and preserving these markers for future generations. Attendees will receive instruction in proper cleaning techniques, gaining permission, and selection of equipment/supplies for saving the stones within cemeteries.

History & Genealogy Scanning Day

Thursday, April 27, 12:00-7:00 pm, Daniel Boone

Do you have historical documents, letters, or photos? Would you like to preserve them for future generations? The History and Genealogy Department will have scanners available from 12:00 to 7:00 pm for your use. Please bring your own storage method, for example a flash drive. You may arrive at any time during the window, scanners will be available on a first-come, first-served basis. Located on the lower level. Adults. Registration required.

TECH TALK

Need more digital storage for your family history files?
Check out the following SLCL offering:

Tech Talks: What is the Cloud?

April 20, 1:30-3:30 p.m., Prairie Commons

April 20, 2:00-4:00 p.m., Grand Glaize

April 27, 10:00-11:00 a.m., Virtual

Learn about different cloud services like Google Drive, Microsoft OneDrive, Apple iCloud and Dropbox to backup and share files from all of your devices. Adults. Registration required.

HOLIDAY CLOSURE

All SLCL locations will be closed on Sunday, April 9, for a spring holiday.

PastPorts is published by History & Genealogy at the St. Louis County Library

Subscribe at slcl.org/pastports. Current and past issues can be downloaded from the web.

Contact us:

History & Genealogy
St. Louis County Library
Temporary Location–Daniel Boone Branch
300 Clarkson Rd.
Ellisville, MO 63011

314-994-3300
genealogy@slcl.org
slcl.org/genealogy

NEWBooks

History & Genealogy has recently cataloged several new Ortssippenbücher/Familienbücher/Hofgeschichten, including those for the following towns/parishes:

Gersweiler
Weisenhaid
Hofweiler
Batschalmasch
Oberfranken
Wolgrams-Eschenbach
Heiningen
Markersbach
Kandel
Rheinbreitbach
Bendorf
Niedertiefenbach
Gescher
Bietzen
Untermosel
Linz am Rhein
Unterschönau
Eutingen an der Enz
Kirchweiler
Bonn-Endenich

These books may be requested by emailing H&G at genealogy@slcl.org. They will be sent to the H&G at the Daniel Boone Branch for viewing. Please allow for a one week turn-around time.

History & Genealogy services

The following H&G services are free and available to researchers who are unable to visit the library.

Lookup service

H&G can provide photocopies, prints, or digital scans of many library materials from indexed sources or when given a specific citation:

- Up to 30 pages from one book or one article from a journal issue. Staff can also photocopy or scan tables of contents and index pages.
- Microfilmed records—A list of microfilm available in the H&G collection can be viewed [online](#).
- Print outs from database records if patrons cannot access the database at home.
- Please use the [online lookup request form](#) to submit requests.

*Some items may be temporarily unavailable due to construction

Print collection

More than 27,000 books in the collection can be checked out. The entire collection is included in the library's [online catalog](#). Books with call numbers that do not begin with "R" are available to check out. Patrons can request books online or by calling 314-994-3300.

*Some items may be temporarily unavailable due to construction

Research guidance

H&G staff members can provide research assistance by phone.

Book-a-Genealogist

Researchers encountering brick-walls or who would like assistance in developing a plan to achieve specific research goals can schedule a consultation with an H&G staff member. Requests can be made using the online [Book-a-Genealogist form](#).

Database access

Many library [databases](#) can be used at home by St. Louis County Library card holders living in the metropolitan area. For more information, please contact the History & Genealogy Department at 314-994-3300 or genealogy@slcl.org.

STLGS Events

Monthly Meeting: Veterans' Records at the National Archives at St. Louis: Understanding the 1973 Fire and its Impact on Research

Saturday, April 8, 10:00 a.m., STLGS Office/Hybrid
Speaker: Eric Kilgore

The National Archives at St. Louis is home to the largest repository of government records outside of Washington, D.C., including the official Military Personnel Files (OMPFs) of veterans who served during the last century. However, the aftermath of the catastrophic fire that occurred in 1973 presents a variety of challenges for researchers. We will examine the fire and the losses and myths surrounding it, as well as explore alternative records for learning more about the twentieth-century veterans in your family. This meeting will be held at the STLGS office and livestreamed via Zoom.

Irish Special Interest Group Meeting: Irish in St. Louis

Tuesday, April 25, 7:00 p.m., STLGS Office/Hybrid
Speaker: Patrick Murphy

Author, Patrick Murphy, will discuss his two books on the Irish in St. Louis and their unique journey from being one of the most despised ethnic groups in the city to one of the most beloved. This meeting will be held at the St. Louis Genealogical Society office and livestreamed via Zoom.

The St. Louis Genealogical Society's Monthly and Special Interest Group meetings are free and open to the public. See stlgs.org for more information.

Coming in May. . .

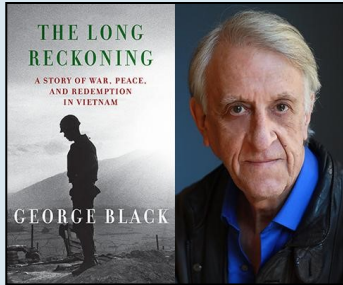
The StLGS 51st Annual Family History Conference: Explore Unique Pathways to Smash Brick Walls!

Featuring Judy Russell, JD, *The Legal Genealogist*®

Live at the Maryland Heights Community Center and via Zoom

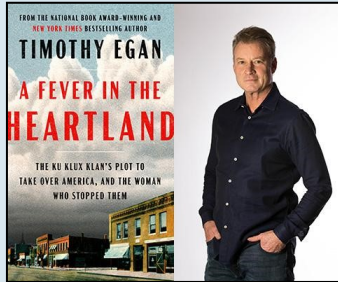
Saturday, May 6, 9:30 a.m.–3:30 p.m.

SLCL AUTHOR EVENTS

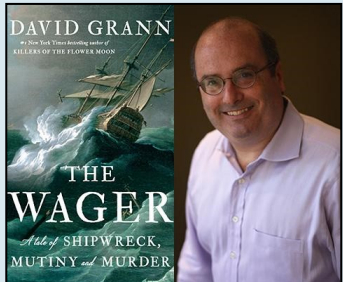


Monday, April 10, 7:00 p.m.
 The J's Staenberg Family Complex Mirowitz Performing Arts Center
 2 Millstone Campus Drive,
 St. Louis, MO 63146

Wednesday, April 19, 7:00 p.m.
 Ethical Society of Saint Louis
 9001 Clayton Rd., St. Louis, MO 63117



Monday, April 24, 7:00 p.m.
 Ethical Society of Saint Louis
 9001 Clayton Rd., St. Louis, MO 63117



See slcl.org/authors for more information.



SLCL HISTORY PROGRAM

SLCL Adult Programming presents:

This Day in History

- Friday, April 7, 11:00 am-12:00 pm, Rock Road
- Saturday, April 8, 10:30-11:30 am, Bridgeton Trails
- Saturday, April 15, 2:00-3:00 pm, Daniel Boone
- Friday, April 21, 2:00-3:00 pm, Grand Glaize
- Friday, April 28, 2:00-3:00 pm, Samuel C. Sachs

Using library resources, we will explore this day in history through the arts, world politics, sports, sciences, facts, major events, and people through time. From where you sit to 30 years back and beyond, we can have lively discussions on how the world has changed all through the lens of one day. Each program will be different, so consider attending the series! Adults. Registration required.

RECORDSEEK

Frustrated by citations? Check out recordseek.com.

Record a website as a source, with virtually no effort! We take any website on the net, and convert it to a source citation automatically. With the help of our technology, recording sources becomes a joy, rather than a struggle. RecordSeek automatically creates a MLA format source citation for you, so you get the benefit of an official citation, without the frustration.—RecordSeek



History A' Brewin'



**Thursday
April 20, 6:30 p.m.**

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Adults. Registration required.



Daniel Boone Branch

300 Clarkson Road | Ellisville, MO 63011 | 314-994-3300

Program sites are accessible. With at least two weeks' notice, accommodations will be made for persons with disabilities. Call 314-994-3300 or visit www.scl.org.



National Preservation Week

Join History & Genealogy at St. Louis County Library in celebrating National Preservation Week. Learn about resources available to help you preserve important written material and artifacts for future generations.

Pick up a flyer for a complete schedule of events or visit www.slcl.org/events.



St. Louis County **Library**

Program sites are accessible. With at least two weeks' notice, accommodations will be made for persons with disabilities. Call 314-994-3300 or visit www.slcl.org.

