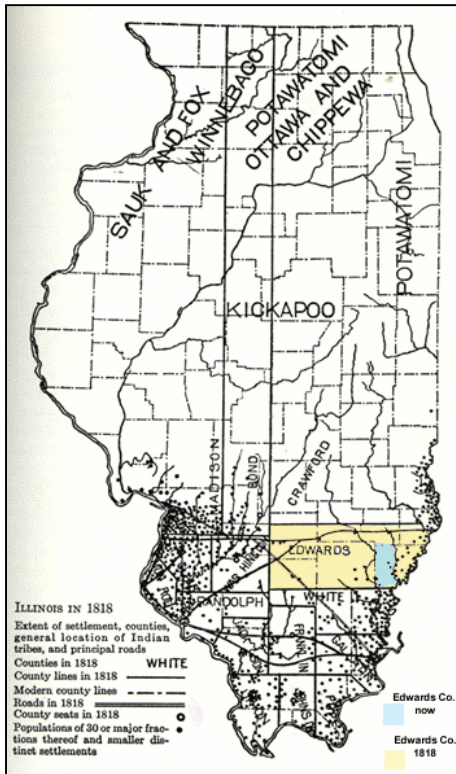


## Research Activity Four B: Finding a Parcel of Land on a Plat Map



### Objectives:

Students will:

Locate land parcels (1814–1880) for the farmer they are researching.

Understand how the land description system works.

Relate a plat map to other types of maps of the same area.

*Image: 1818 map of Illinois with Edwards County marked in yellow.*

### Opening:

The idea of this lesson is to learn how land came into the hands of farmers and others in the early 1800s when the government was surveying the state and creating counties. Students will be learning how surveyors divided the state into townships using meridians and baselines. They will learn that parcels of land are described with a ‘legal description’ rather than an address like the ones we use everyday. The students may become exposed to this system legal description when they buy their first

house.

### How did early settlers get land to create a farm?

There were two ways to get land in the early 1800s.

- 1) Before 1814 settlers could ‘homestead’ on Illinois land. This means they could pick out land that was not being used and start to build a farm by clearing some trees, building a cabin, and starting some crops. This method was a little risky because they did not have legal title to the land. Land sales offices were not open, and most land had not been surveyed. (See the 1818 map of Illinois to the left. It shows that only the southern part of the state had been mapped out in detail. This would map would change many times in the next 40 years.)
- 2) After the land sales offices opened, a settler could buy land, either from the government or from a person who had land for sale, and register the sale at the office. This made his settlement legal. People who had homesteaded earlier had a chance to register their land by proving they had been there five years and had improved the land.

### Procedure:

Using the Web site link below, go through the land description sections with your students.

## How is Land Described?

1. When the West was surveyed, it was laid out in a grid of imaginary lines by latitude and longitude along base meridians. A parcel of land was 'described' by its location in relation to these meridians. This Web site shows you how the 3rd Principle Meridian and the Centralia Base line divided Illinois.

[http://www.rootsweb.com/~ilmaga/landmaps/range\\_map.html](http://www.rootsweb.com/~ilmaga/landmaps/range_map.html)

2. The next land divisions are called range lines and township lines. On the map of Illinois, the surveyors drew vertical lines every six miles. These are called **range lines**. They are numbered as to their location east or west of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Meridian. Each township is numbered with a range number (R2E = range 2 east of the 3<sup>rd</sup> meridian).

The surveyors also drew horizontal lines every six miles on their map. These lines are called **township lines**. They are numbered for their relationship with the baseline. Each township has in its number a township number (T1N – township 1 north of the baseline). See all the townships in Illinois on this map

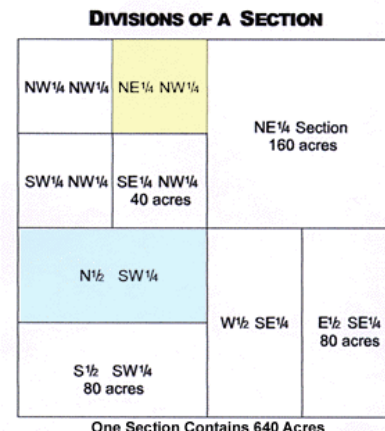
([http://www.rootsweb.com/~ilmaga/landmaps/county\\_files/tmap2.gif](http://www.rootsweb.com/~ilmaga/landmaps/county_files/tmap2.gif))

3. The townships are in the shape of squares. A township measures six miles on each side. It contains 36 **sections**, each measuring one mile on each side. They are numbered in the manner shown in the diagram to the right.

SECTIONS IN A TOWNSHIP					
6	5	4	3	2	1
7	8	9	10	11	12
18	17	16	15	14	13
19	20	21	22	23	24
30	29	28	27	26	25
31	32	33	34	35	36

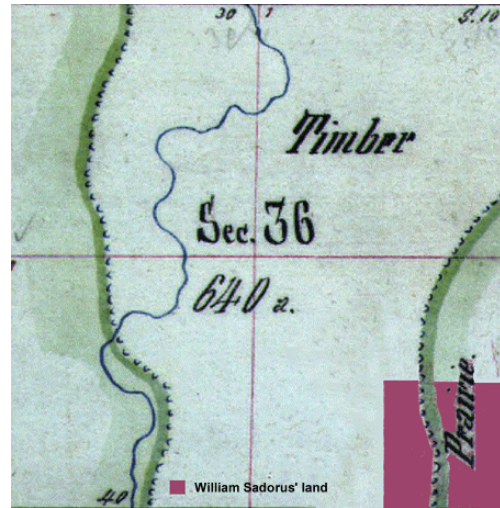
4. Each section is divided, too. Not many people wanted to buy a whole township in the early 1800s. Study the diagram of a section and do the arithmetic to answer the questions. (Print this out or redraw it on the board.)

- How many acres are there in a section?
- How many acres are there is a quarter section?
- How many acres are represented in the yellow square?
- How many acres are represented in the blue rectangle?



The actual **original plat map** is hand drawn and hand tinted to show prairies, timber, streams, and other features. You will find and mark the exact portion of the section that was bought by the person you are researching.

We will be searching these plats and printing out sections in our next lesson after we get our person's land description, the subject of our next activity.



#### EXTENSION AND PRACTICE:

We will search the Plat Map Web site for a parcel of land. Plat maps are located at <http://landplats.ilsos.net/Flash/Welcome.html>

Enter the Web site and read the instructions or go to “Viewing the Plats.”

1. We are searching for **Henry Sadorus, Sr., the first settler to Champaign County**. We know that Champaign is in Central Illinois, so we choose that map. Then we click on Champaign County.

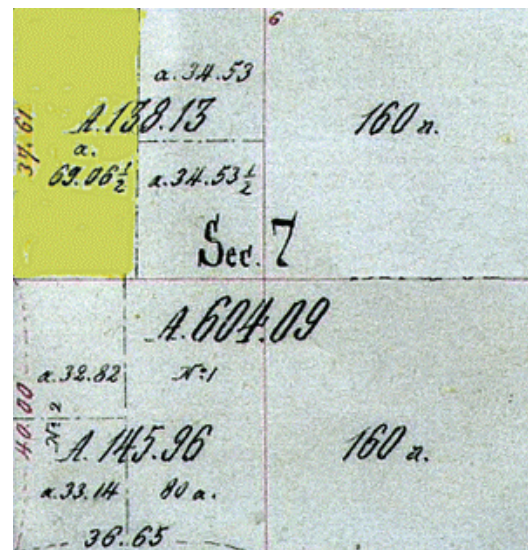
2. Now we need to locate the Township; the legal description says it is 17North and Range 08East. The top and right margins of the pop-up map are marked. **T17N, R08E** is the **second square from the left in the bottom row**.

(Notice the township next door is named Sadorus. Henry and others bought land there, and the little cut-in shape in Pesotum Township was taken into Sadorus Township later because the town of Sadorus was there and had political links to Sadorus Township - see the Sadorus area map in Lesson 4A).

3. Next we look at the Township and try to find Section 7. Knowing the townships are six sections wide and start numbering on the top right, we expect to find section 7 at the first section of the second row. It looks like this:

The W2NW (West half of the Northwest Quarter) is shaded yellow.

4. Notice what other information is on the map: number of acres in each part, the total acreage of the section, and the section number. The plain blue-green color of the map tells us that all the land in that section is prairie, probably, as timber areas and their edges are marked when found. There are no streams in



this section. Owners would have to dig wells.

**Here are two of Henry's other purchases (the first two on the list).**

5. Let's practice with another section of Henry Sadorus, Section 1 of Township 17N (the first and second entries in the sales list in lesson 4A.). Henry bought the areas colored yellow on the map to the right.

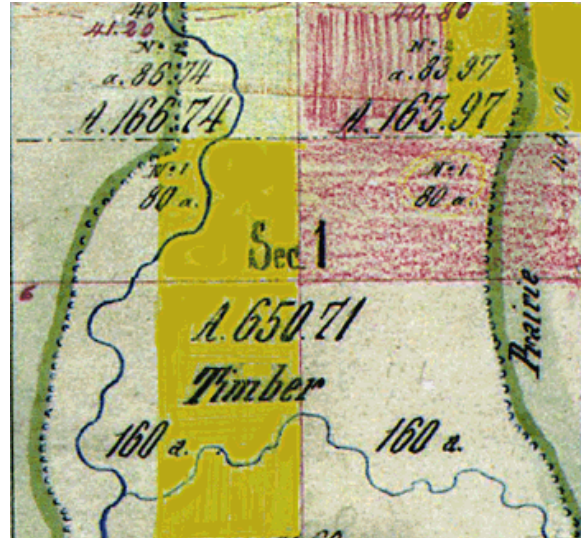
What kind of land does this section contain?

Why is this good?

Is there a source of water?

Why is it a prime piece of land?

This little map gives us information about him and about how his farm looked, and can give people information about their ancestors that perhaps they can't find anywhere else.



### **CHALLENGE:**

Which member of the Sadorus family bought the land marked in red?

Use your research tools to find out. Report as much new information about it as you can. If you can meet the Challenge Question, you will be able to find the land your research subject or his ancestor bought. The search may not be easy, but that is the nature of historical research. If a search does not produce results, try again with other parameters. When you hit gold, it is exciting!

### **Closing:**

This is how we will locate our person's parcel of land. We will use the numbers of the townships, ranges, sections, and parts of sections when locating the land that our subjects or ancestors bought. The online resources help us find information quickly, but we still have to pay attention and search carefully.

### **Assessment Suggestions:**

Students will find given parcels of land online by following the instructions given in the legal description of the parcel.

Students will be able to read orally a written legal description.

Students will be able to describe the character of a given parcel.