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# GENEALOGY

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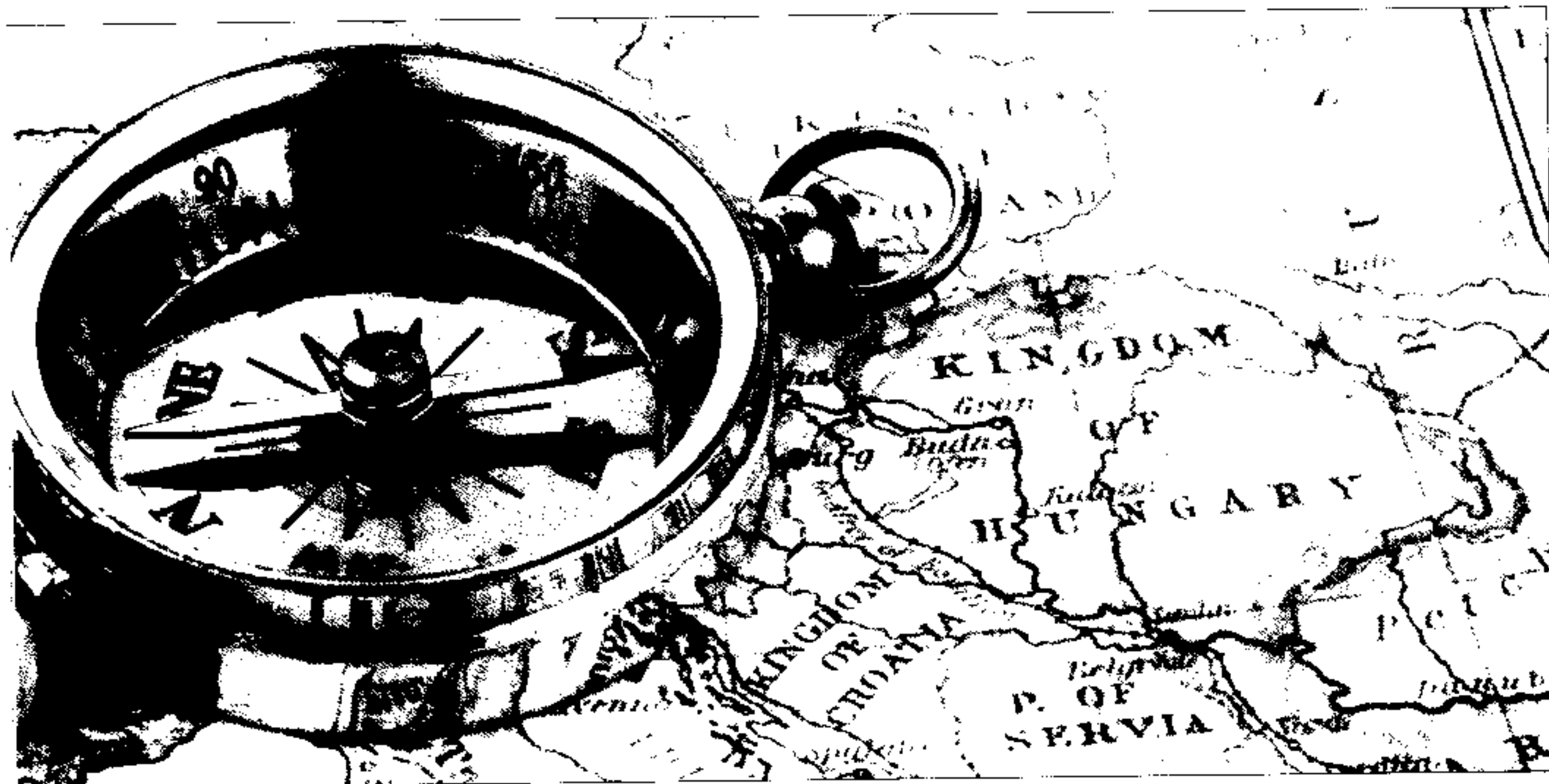
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# Mapping Genealogy: Ancestral Atlas



LOCATION. LOCATION. LOCATION. How many times have you heard this mantra from real estate agents trying to close a sale on a property? But, location is also a critical component in genealogy. When tracking our ancestors, we learn to ask where things happened in order to get a sense of place, to assist us in finding the key records we need, and to make sure we are tracing the right family (especially when searching for a common surname).

There's a new tool available to help genealogists with this task. Ancestral Atlas, [www.ancestralatlas.com](http://www.ancestralatlas.com), is an online community environment that allows people to create and share ancestry-based maps. It's useful for displaying locations of births, marriages and burials of your

ancestors, as well as the locations of other important places in their lives, such as the location of a family farm or business, or the locations of a military battle in which your ancestor was a partic-



*The historical map option uses the Ordnance Survey Revised New Edition maps for England and Wales, first published between 1893 and 1903.*

ipant. It has been dubbed "The social networking site for dead people". Ancestral Atlas supports locations anywhere in the world.

The basic Ancestral Atlas service is available free of charge although some of the more advanced features are fee-based. You'll need to register with a username and password (you do not need to provide credit card information to register).

A subscription costs only £15 (a handy link to other currencies is provided on the main page so you can see how much it will cost you) and offers benefits such as: unlimited access, saved searches, social networking, secure messaging, access to licensed data (such as access to historical maps of England and Wales) and the

opportunity to even generate an income if you have entered information that is of value to others. When I joined, it cost me \$24.76

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US, which included a special offer to receive a lifetime of subscription benefits at that price.

### WHY ANCESTRAL ATLAS?

According to their website, the company behind the idea deals with historical maps of Ireland and, at various conferences, its representatives were asked by customers for historical maps of the same location in Ireland. The mapping specialists set out to create a "dynamic" map to aid family historians in sharing information globally in real time, as well as collaborate through a secure messaging system. They could add family history data as well as contextual data, such as a map of a military battle or a history of a particular coal mine. Think wiki meets a map-based social network that's specifically designed for family historians.

The creators also note that an added benefit of using location is that it "dramatically refines the search". They use the example of trying to find Smiths born between 1890 and 1900 in England — practically impossible because of the sheer number of results. But, imagine searching for Smiths born between 1890 and 1900 in the small village of Chalfont St. Peter in England — a bit more manageable. The boundaries may be altered and place names may have changed, but the actual location of where something happened remains constant.

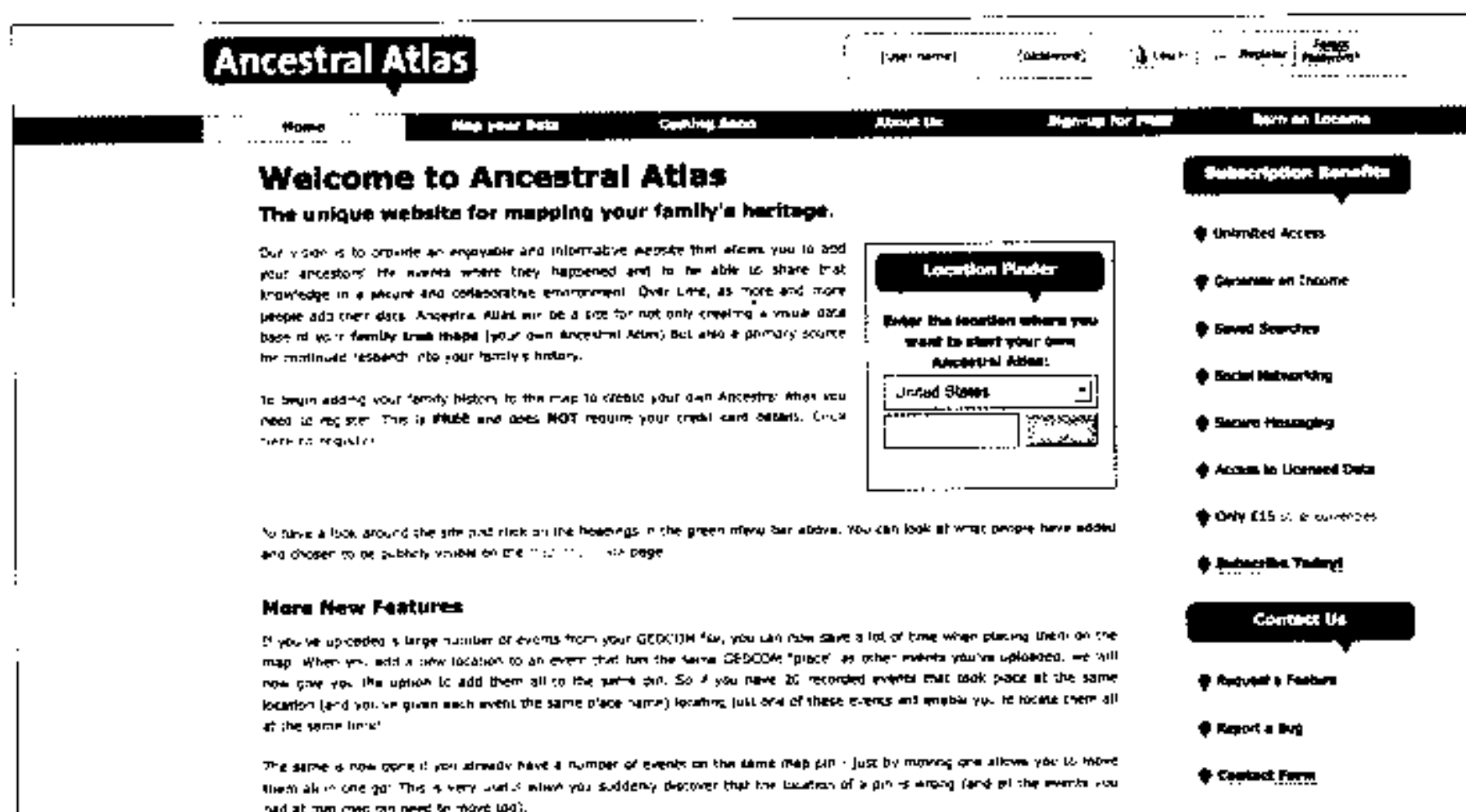
### HOW TO MAP

To simplify the mapping process, the site has a GEDCOM upload facility. You can first use your favorite genealogy program to export your database in GEDCOM format. Then, go to [www.ancestralatlas.com](http://www.ancestralatlas.com) and upload your GEDCOM data, confirm your locations. Do not post details on living individuals. You may need to create and save a sanitized version of your GEDCOM (I began with my grandparents because they are all deceased) and upload that version to the site. Currently, the site only allows one GEDCOM file

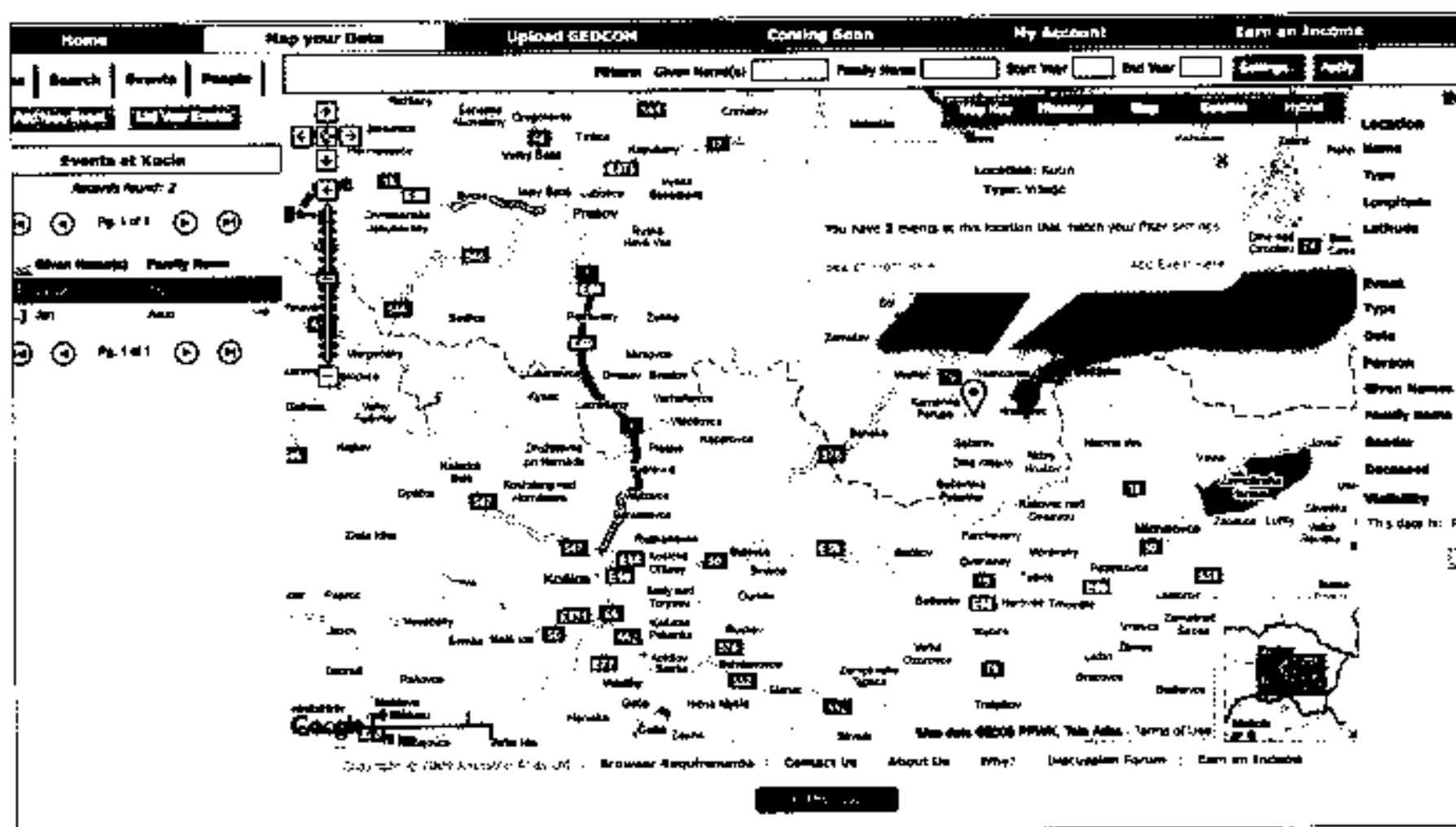
per user to be imported at a time. You can replace your existing file, but uploading a new GEDCOM file will remove all previously imported data. Once you've hit the upload button, there is a short waiting period for the data to be added to the site. You'll receive an e-mail notification from Ancestral Atlas once your GEDCOM has been successfully imported. Then you can begin

GEDCOM "place" as other events you've uploaded, the site offers the option to add them all to the same pin. For example, if you have 20 recorded events that took place at the same location (and you've given each event the same place name), locating just one of these events will enable you to find them all at the same time.

If you already have a number



Above: Registration for the basic service is free. Additional benefits are available via paid subscription. Below: Mapped locations for the author's ancestral villages of Kucin and Posa.



your mapping. When adding data to Ancestral Atlas, you can choose whether to allow all or part of the data to be viewed by any other user.

If you've uploaded a large number of events from your GEDCOM file, you can now save time when placing them on the map. When you add a new location to an event that has the same

of events on the same map pin, moving one allows you to move them all in one go! This is very useful if you eventually discover that the location of a pin is wrong (and all the events you had at that map pin need to move, too).

## Mapping Genealogy: Ancestral Atlas

### PLANNED FEATURES AND ENHANCEMENTS

The Ancestral Atlas team has a number of features in the works. These include:

- **Life Maps** — The ability to plot all the locations of the events associated with a selected individual. These events will be linked together to show that individual's journey through life. You will also be able to show the descendants or ancestors of a selected individual — each descendant/ancestor will be linked by a line to their children/parents.
- **GEDCOM Import** — A feature for uploading multiple GEDCOM files that will allow you to append them to files you previously uploaded.
- **Locate Events** — Automatically locate where uploaded events took place. If there is a unique place name specified, it will place a pin at that location. If a given place name is ambiguous, it will place a pin at the most likely location and notify you that you

should confirm the information. If a matching location cannot be found, you will need to locate it manually.

- **Default Map View** — A feature that will allow you to choose a personalized default map.

To learn more about Ancestral Atlas, watch Dick Eastman's interview with Nick Francis for RootsTelevision at [www.rootstelevision.com/players/player\\_conferences3.php?bctid=17062983001&bclid=14621417001](http://www.rootstelevision.com/players/player_conferences3.php?bctid=17062983001&bclid=14621417001).

### LOCATION MAPPING AND "CLUSTER" GENEALOGY

A popular technique for breaking down brickwalls during family history research is to employ the concept of "cluster genealogy" — here you go beyond your direct ancestors to research siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins, relatives, friends and neighbors for additional clues. Using online dynamic mapping can assist with identifying "cluster" communities and networking with others

who may be researching the same location — whether a coal mining community in the US or a tiny village in Europe. As the trend in genealogy continues to move toward global collaboration and data sharing, Ancestral Atlas is another tool which can help us pinpoint the path to our roots and hopefully offer a better understanding of the environment our ancestors lived in.

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