Using West Virginia GeoExplorer’s Historical Gazetteer Feature

gaz - et - teer: a geographical index or dictionary

This Historical Gazetteer is a geographical database of place names found in historical documents. Instead of just helping you find locations in the present or recent past, it can guide you to them based on earlier names, alternate spellings, time period, and other criteria.

It currently contains about 3,500 place names for locations in Jefferson County, WV. It will be expanded to include other portions of the State as time permits.

Section I below describes the search fields and what they include. Section II shows you how to search the Historical Gazetteer.

I. Description of Fields

Gazetteer fields include:

- Place name: location name with variant names and spellings, date built, recorded, or destroyed;
- County Name and U.S.G.S. Quadrangle;
- U.S.G.S. Point Number;
- Description, Geolocator, Feature Type, and Subtype;
- Reference number(s) [in brackets]

Descriptions of Fields

The Place name field includes the location name with variant names and spellings, date built, recorded, or destroyed:

- Names and alternate spellings for specific locations.
  
  **Example:** Potomac River (recorded 1734) [5, 22] Bathommek River, Betomek, Brooke of Chesapeake, Chahongarooton, Cheneow-quoquey, Co-hon-go-roo-ta River, Cohongo River, Cohongoluta River, Cohongoronta River, Cohongoroota River, Cohongorooto River, Cohongoruton River, Potamack River, Potamack River, Potawmack River, Potomach River, Potomack River, Potomacke River, Potomak River, Potomeack River, Potomock River

- **Date recorded, altered, or destroyed:** construction dates are often poorly documented or estimated by comparing a structure to others having similar materials, construction techniques, or architectural styles. Dates in this field can be altered as new information is found.
- Type of structure on property (if available).
  
  **Example:** frame bank barn, brick farm house, block tenant house, tile dairy barn

If a structure has been reliably located on a property (e.g., sketch map of the location of a spring house on a National Register site), separate records for each significant structure may have been created.
Examples:

- Altona bank barn (built 1830, 1916; surveyed 2013) [5]
- Altona brick farm house (built 1832; recorded 2013) [5]
- Altona tenant 1, frame house (built ca. 1870; recorded 2013) [5]
- Altona tenant House, frame (built ca. 1900; recorded 2013) [5]
- Altona, four square frame farm house (built ca. 1925; recorded 2013) [5]

The County name is taken from those provided by the USGS, Graphic Names Information System: http://geonames.usgs.gov/. When the database expands to include locations outside of West Virginia, a State field will also be added.

The U.S.G.S. Quadrangle name as defined in the USGS Graphic Names Information System.

The Description field provides additional information on name, date, or location that may help the user distinguish among similarly named places.

The Geolocator is a unique code that identifies the location of the earliest recorded property within which a place falls. In the Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia, these codes refer almost exclusively to patents made by the Colony of Virginia or by Thomas Lord Fairfax, owner of the Northern Neck. Using measurements from the earliest documents, we have mapped the boundaries of these properties and recorded them using the ESRI GIS system. (Approximately 1,200 of these parcels were mapped for the Jefferson County, WV, area and they can be viewed through the Browse Resources | GIS Portal feature in WVGP.) Outside of this area, the same type of code can be used to identify the first deed recorded at a particular location.

For historians trying to develop a sense of place, knowing the location of a property, its boundaries, and geographic features is a good starting point. During the early stages of research, the boundaries of the original properties provide a useful framework for storing accumulated information. As research proceeds, the original boundaries, subsequent subdivisions, and information about the people and events within them provide the data we need to understand an area's social, cultural, and economic development.

Feature Type, Subtype, Function or Use, Architectural Styles, and Exterior Building Materials are not yet available. They will be added as time permits, with a goal of providing researchers a detailed structural inventory.

Reference number(s) are appended to the place name field and appear in a separate field, to indicate the source(s) of information. You can view the list of sources cited by clicking on the link just above the Gazetteer Search form.

Each row of search results begins with links to the Geolocator GIS and (when available) to Google Maps. The former displays a place's location within the boundaries of the original deed or land grant. The latter points to the specific location on a modern map. Use this Historical Gazetteer with the GIS search features found in Advanced Catalog Search and Full Search to find more extensive information about places of interest.

At present, this historical gazetteer focuses on places that fall within the boundaries of present day Jefferson County, WV. In the future it will be expanded to include other West Virginia counties and relevant adjacent locations. Soon, we will be adding separate, searchable maps for municipalities so you can locate specific structures, see where people lived, and view other demographic information.
II. Searching the Historical Gazetteer

A. Viewing a location

1. Click the Gazetteer button on the menu bar to reach the Gazetteer Search page (Figure 1).

![Gazetteer Search](image1)

Figure 1. Gazetteer Search.

2. Although you can use a variety of search criteria individually or in combination, most users start with a Place Name search and then add other fields to narrow the results. You can add a wildcard * symbol before or after a search term to include results containing words before or after that term.

Example: A search for Place Name = burr* produces the results set shown in Figure 2.

![Gazetteer Search Results](image2)

Figure 2. Place Name search with wildcard on right
A search for Place Name = *burr* generates the results showing in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Place Name search with wildcard on left and right
3. **To view the parent property of a specific item** (e.g., Peter Burr House Frame / Log Farm House), click the gold pushpin link to the left. A GIS tab will open with the appropriate county displayed and the parent property highlighted (Figure 4). Use the **Zoom to** feature to enlarge the map, or close the label box for the property and use the magnify wheel on your mouse to alter the image size. To close this map page, click the x on the tab. (You can leave it open if you want to view it later.)
4. To view the specific location of the item using latitude and longitude, click the orange pushpin link to the left. A Google map will open, with the orange pushpin marking the location (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Pushpin kink to Google graphic map.
(To display the Place Name information on the map, click the pushpin.) You can change to the satellite view by clicking the Satellite button on the upper right corner of the window (Figure 6).

![Figure 6. Pushpin view of GIS location, satellite view.]

**Searching by Lot**

WVGP also lets you search by lot within a village or municipality, such as Shepherdstown, Middleway, or Shenandoah Junction. (At present, it is available only for Harpers Ferry; i.e., Geolocation HF605.) Locations that can be viewed on the Harpers Ferry map have .X. following the Geolocation code in the results set.
For example, a search for *Hill Top House* yields the result shown in Figure 7. Selecting the icon displays the Harpers Ferry map with the specific lot highlighted (Figure 8).

Figure 7. Search result for Harpers Ferry map (Geolocator contains X).

Figure 8. Harpers Ferry map with lot highlighted.
B. Narrowing your search

1. Adding search criteria

Place Name searches often produce results that contain many similarities, and it's not unusual to find identical place names for different locations, even within the same county. For example, a Place Name search for **fairview** produces the results shown in Figure 9.

![Gazetteer Search Example](image)

*Figure 9. Similar place name results from multiple locations.*
If you know the general location of the place you seek, try adding the appropriate U.S.G.S. Quadrangle name to eliminate possibly irrelevant results. For example, if you think that the site your want to locate is near Shepherdstown, narrow your results to the Shepherdstown Quadrangle (Figure 10).

![Gazetteer Search](image1.png)

Figure 10. Place name search limited by U.S.G.S. Quadrangle

2. Although specific fields for building / location type, building materials, and building style are not yet available, you can currently create Place Name searches to find many of these features. For example, terms such as *cemetery*, *marker*, *tenant house*, *spring house*, *cabin*, or *ground barn* will produce significant results (Figure 11).

![Gazetteer Search](image2.png)

Figure 11. Place name search with limiters
III. Expanding your searches

Once you have located a specific property, you can use other types of searches to find more information about related locations, persons, or events.

For example, an **Advanced Catalog Search** on *Book or Journal Title or Caption (contains) York Hill* (Figure 12), produces a large results set that includes drawings, photographs, and documents related to your subject.

![Figure 12. Advanced Catalog Search on York Hill](image-url)
A Gazetteer Search for York Hill's parent property SHEP303 will display the locations of additional properties that developed within the original area (Figure 13).

![Gazetteer Search](image)

**Figure 13.** A Gazetteer Search for additional sites within the boundaries of the parent property.
An **Advanced Catalog Search** for the same **Geolocator** (SHEP303) yields results containing drawings, photographs, and documents of locations within the footprint of the parent property (Figure 14). (Examine the tutorials on the **Search Results** page to learn more about other search methods.)

*Figure 14. Advanced Catalog Search for a Geolocation (SHEP303)*