



Madison County Genealogical Society



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November Program: Using Aerial Photos as illustrations with your Genealogy Papers Presented by Dale Masters

While serving in the U.S. Army during World War II I was assigned to the 29th Engineers topography division, where I served for my entire enlistment. After about a years time had passed our entire division was changed to a separate unit renamed as the 2766th Base Topographic Battalion, where our work was then confined to making maps from aerial photos, provided to us by the Army Air Corps, (which later became the The United States Air Force.)

Although "flat" maps, where no elevation markings were shown, were still very important to the troops, a need for information regarding the terrain that would be fought on would prove to be extremely valuable. The development of topographic maps, with the use of photographs, was rapidly becoming refined to the point they could be produced much easier than previously. Surveying of the lands over most of the world had been done and that information could be identified, from that data that was available, by the use of aerial photographs, in many of the areas that needed more refined data available for the armed forces. With elevations identified by contour lines drawn around the changes of the terrain, "hills and valleys".

It was this type of work that I was working with while my army group was in the United States. Later we were transferred to the Philippines, to be closer to the area that needed our maps. After our arrival we had been mapping the East coast of Okinawa when we received word that we had to immediately map three major cities in Japan and drop work we were doing and provide new maps of the three cities. The results are known to everyone now.

The training that I received, while in the armed forces made me aware of the importance of having another view of the lands we live on and the addition of another viewpoint of lands our forefathers came to in order to start new settlements and build for the future.

Because of this I felt that I would enhance my putting together another book on my family's genealogy with photos of the lands I am writing about. Aerial photos are available for almost the entire surface of the United States that are available for a small charge to any interested parties. I have obtained most photos, that I am making use of, from Soil Conservation Service and County surveyor Offices. If you are fortunate enough to have a friend that has an airplane or you can afford to pay for flights from an air service you can take the pictures you want yourself.

As an example, both of my parents were living in the Turkey Creek Canyon area, just Southeast of Norden, Nebraska and just North of the Niobrara River, where they met, grew to adulthood and married. The canyons area is well covered with woods and the canyon walls are quite steep. Because of this, unless close, farm buildings and houses are not visible from photos taken on land but are visible from aero photos. Some times you might be lucky and see a photo of the area you are interested in in some publication, magazine or newspaper that you might be able to use in your work that could enhance our writing.

All pictures of the persons incorporated in your writings, homes, farm buildings, animals and related events are important. The use of aero photos adds another dimension that gives an additional lift to your work that might make it a little more interesting to the readers.