LESSON 13  WHO OWNS THE LAND—A PLAT MAP COMPARISON

Overview
This unit is designed to help students recognize changes in ownership and land divisions by comparing local plat maps for their community over several years. Working in pairs, students choose a parcel in the oldest plat book, according to township survey information, and note the changes that have occurred in ownership and due to subdividing.

Objectives
Students will be able to:
1. Interpret a land description, and locate the area on a plat map.
2. Convert written data into a graphic form.
3. Analyze data and draw conclusions about ownership changes in their area.
4. Recognize legal transfer of property.

Procedure
1. Instruct students on history of land descriptions, surveyor’s role in dividing land for ownership and tax purposes, and system of township/range numbering within a township.
2. Develop color key that corresponds with each dated plat map used for comparison.
3. Using overhead transparencies, compare a sequential series of plat maps and note changes on a selected parcel.
4. Distribute highlighters and copies* of plat maps for each year available (plat books are generally updated every three to four years, and are typically available from a real estate office).
5. Once maps are completed, students should recognize the changes in ownership and size of their parcel.

*Permission to reproduce maps or images may be required on copyrighted material.
Assessment
Completed maps highlight changes using appropriate color code. Students should be able to answer comparative questions. (i.e. What period shows the most change?)

Extensions
1. Compare ownership changes on actual property.
2. Historical significance of the Northwest Ordinance and its pertinence to the local area.

Content Standards Addressed
Language Arts
   Standard 1. Meaning and Communication
   • All students will read and comprehend general and technical material.
   Standard 4. Language
   • All students will use the English language effectively.

Social Studies
   Standard 2. Geographic perspective
   • Students will use knowledge of spatial patterns on earth to understand processes that shape human environments and to make decisions about society.