



Visualizing history through aerial photography

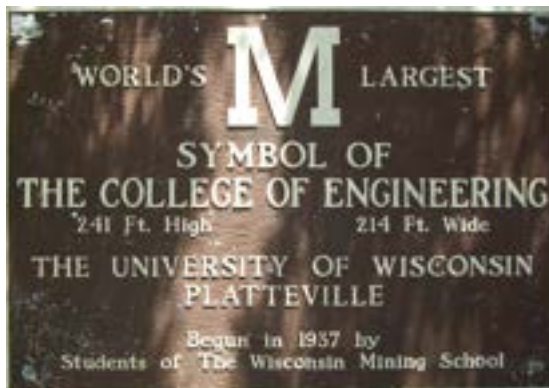
Collections in the Arthur H. Robinson Map Library

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Overview

- Introduction to the Arthur H. Robinson Map Library and collections
- Overview of U.S. Farm Service Aerial Photograph Programs
- Examples of aerial views in Wisconsin
- WHAIFinder – access to historic aerial photos online



Platte Mound "M" – October 30, 1937
Source: USDA



Historic Science Hall



Science Hall 1930s
Source: UW-Madison Archives



Science Hall 2005
Source: UW-Madison Geography Dept

Arthur H. Robinson Map Library

- UW Department of Geography
- Legacy of Professor Arthur H. Robinson
- ~500,000 items in the collection
- ~287,000 maps
- ~260,000 aerial photographs
- + other cartographic materials



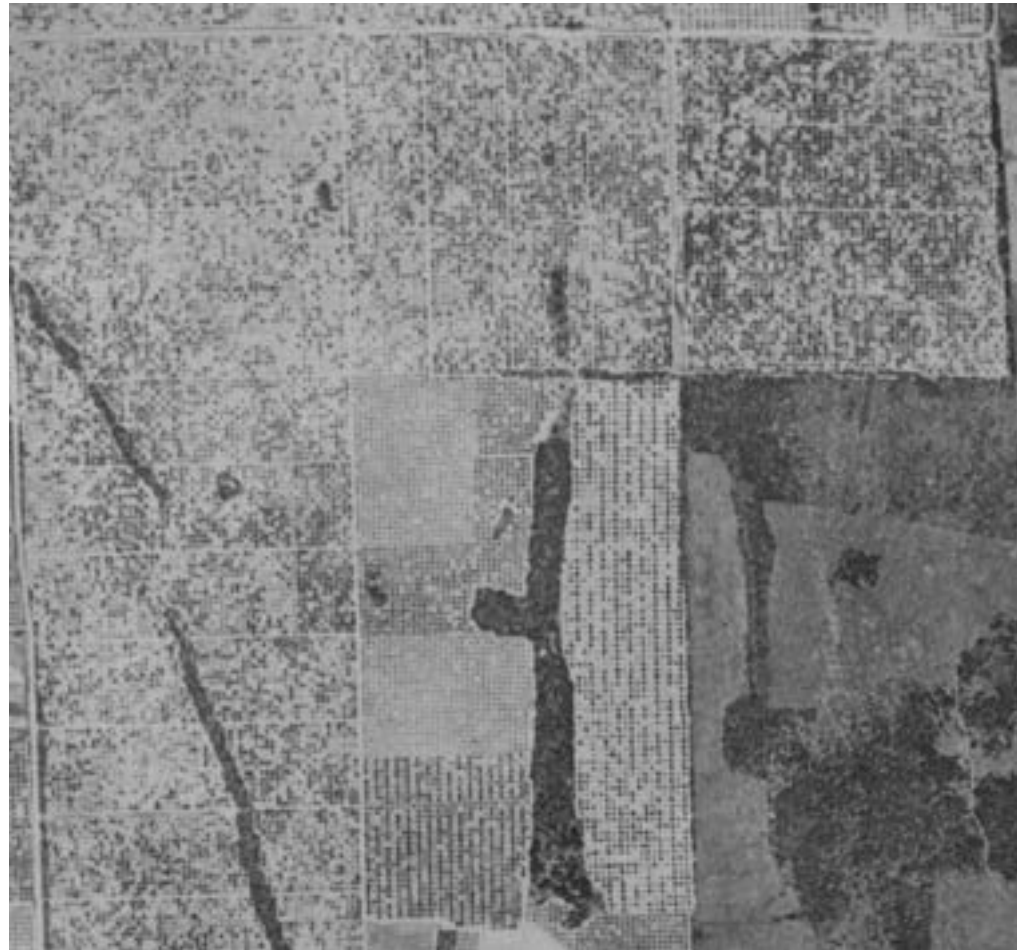
Collections

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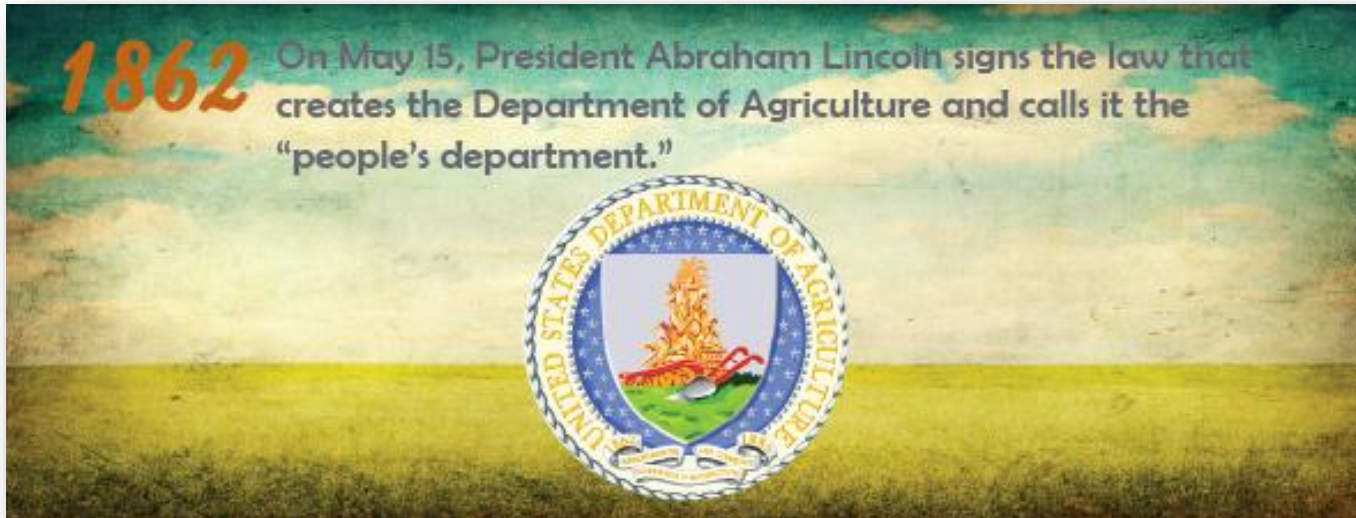
How do we use historic imagery?

- Land use/land cover change studies
- Environmental restoration projects
- Site selections
- Community planning
- Legal cases
- Genealogy/
personal Interest



*Door County Cherry Orchards
June 12, 1938
Source: USDA*

History: The USDA



The first Department of Agriculture Building on the National Mall (Washington DC) around 1895



The New Deal and the AAA

- FDR's New Deal: Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1933
- USDA-AAA (now Farm Services Agency, FSA)
- Aerial imagery was used to assess the nation's agricultural lands

Source: USDA



Source: Illinois Geological Survey

USDA Aerial Photography

- In 1936 the AAA commodity tax was ruled unconstitutional, but the program would continue with modifications and new conservation goals...
- USDA Farm Act of 1938 revives pricing goals with new incentive payments
- Wisconsin is a leader in soil conservation (Ex: Coon Creek Watershed)

1930s

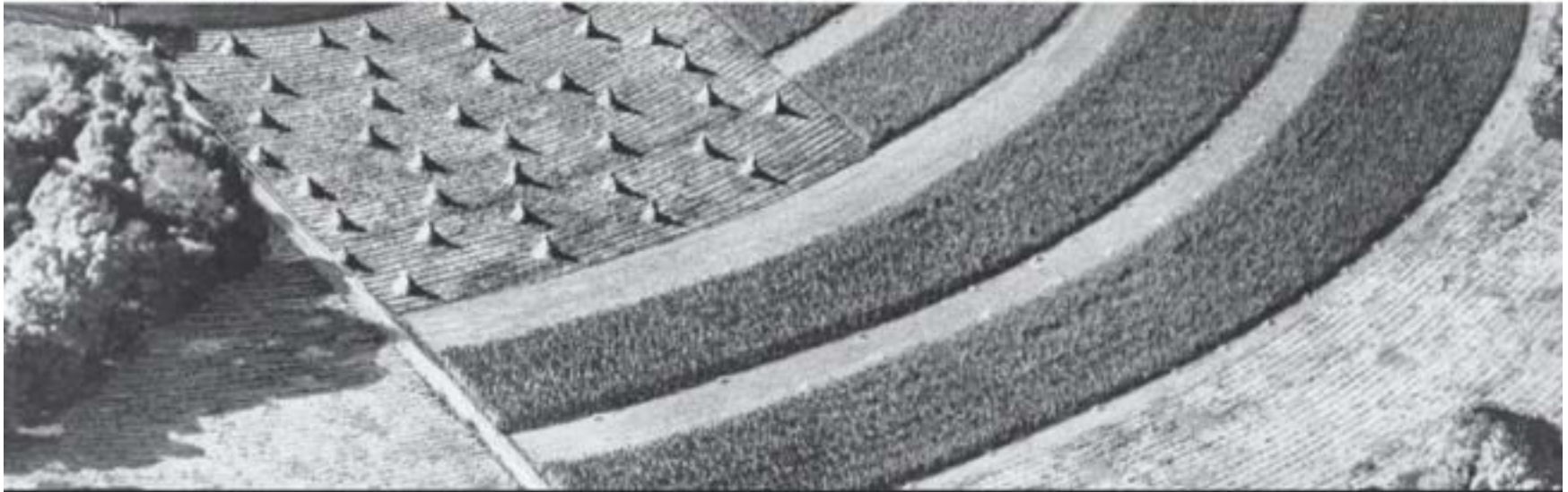
*Elmer Mauke Farm. One of the first to sign up and the first one to have terracing done. Farmer says he can notice a big difference in washing since fields were stripped and terraces built. Would not go back to the old system of farming.
Wis-39-B June 28, 1934 Photo I.K. Landon*



USDA Aerial Photography cont.

- Strip cropping becomes a popular practice
- Conservation programs led to 80% of farmland in SW WI in contour strip cropping
- Aerial photos were used to measure compliance with conservation programs
- First USDA aerial photos were taken from 1937-1941

Conservation strip-cropping depicts the American flag (early) Pierce County, WI WI-W-721



Conservation strip-cropping depicts the American flag, Pierce County, WI

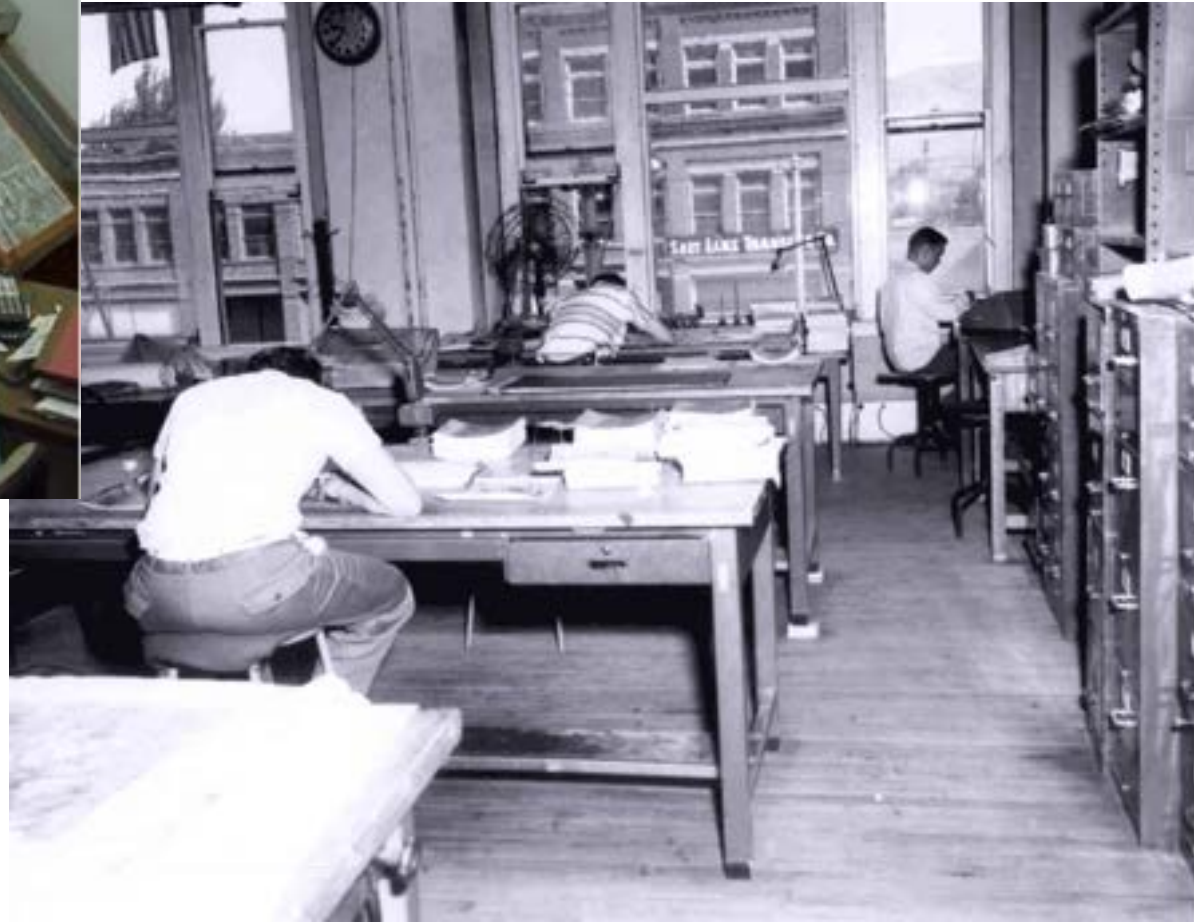
Source: Wisconsin Conservation History, NRCS 2010

Measuring fields using aerial photos

Planimeter



Inspecting photos at the Salt Lake City Aerial Photo Lab



Field measurements



What we can see...

Dane County

UW Arboretum “Lost City” then and now...



1937



2017

Image courtesy of Dane County DCiMap

Sauk County

WWII & the
landscape

1937

1949

2020

Badger Army
Ammunition Plant
(Badger Ordnance
Works)



Milwaukee County

Baseball...it was meant to be



2020



1963

Wood County

Unchanged beauty...



1938



2020

Image courtesy of Wood
County Land Records Viewer

Cranberry marshes
Town of Cranmoor

Sawyer County

Historic events uncovered...

November 18, 1966 – B52
plane crash in Stone Lake, WI



Sawyer County 1970
Source: USDA



View & download historic photos online

Download copies of Wisconsin's earliest statewide air photo collection

- ✓ Over 38,000 photos
- ✓ Complete state coverage
- ✓ Photos from 1937-1941
- ✓ Consistent 1:20,000-scale
- ✓ Easy-to-use web application
- ✓ Download to your desktop
- ✓ JPG and TIFF formats
- ✓ 150, 300, and 600 dpi
- ✓ No fees or use restrictions

Historic air photos of Wisconsin... delivered to your desktop.

Wisconsin Historic Aerial Image Finder
The Changing Landscapes of Wisconsin, 1937-1941

maps.sco.wisc.edu/WHAIFinder/

WHAIFinder

Wisconsin Historic Aerial Image Finder

<https://maps.sco.wisc.edu/WHAIFinder/>



In summary...

aerial photography provides...

- a view into the physical and cultural past
- a visual connection to the landscape
- context to help us plan for the future



*A work of art:
strip-cropping in Lafayette Co. WI – 1968
(Source: USDA)*

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*State Capitol, Madison – 1937
(USDA)*

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