

Analyzing Philadelphia's Historical Maps **Contributed by Marlene Brubaker**

Subject: Environmental Science/Biology

Suggested Grade Level: 9-10

Class length: 60 minutes

Summary:

On a field trip to historic Bartram's Garden, in conjunction with the Peopling of Philadelphia Project, Marlene Brubaker's class analyzes historic maps in order to understand how their city has changed over time. This activity helps them see how resources influence settlement patterns, and how land- and cityscapes change due to urbanization. This activity also develops map-reading and interpretation skills by asking students to evaluate the accuracy of maps, how intended use affects what is included on maps, and how accuracy may improve over time.

Procedure

Break students into groups. Provide each group an historical map or city depiction and ask groups to answer the following questions as appropriate:

- How does this map differ from what you know of your city today?
- Where would present-day landmarks be located on this map?
- What is the purpose of this map?
- If comparing two maps of differing time periods – What is different on each map? What do these differences say about urbanization, suburbanization, industrial development, agricultural development?
- What does your map say about area resources?
- What does your map tell you about the people who live in this city?
- How are the streets organized? How is the city organized? Is it a grid, is it a ring?
- How do the area's resources affect how the city developed, where people live?
- How accurate is your map? Do you see any inaccuracies? Why do you think the map might be inaccurate?

These questions are only a starting point.

After a period of analysis, ask each group to present their findings to the class.