

Interactive Map, with Instructions

[Link to map.](#) Be patient! It can take some time to load.

Using the map: There are two controls at the top. You can zoom in and out by mouse scrolling or using a touchscreen, but the buttons in the upper left often give more control over how fast the zoom level changes. Hover over or click on the layer control icon in the upper right to open a panel that allows you to change the layers that are displayed (should look like the image at the bottom of this page).

courtesy [US Geological Survey](#). Parcel data from Wisconsin State Cartographer's Office. PLSS and vegetation map from Wisconsin DNR. Development of this map was supported by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (AA-289974-23)



The layers are in groups, starting with two large groups (Base Layers and Data Layers), and several smaller groups within Data Layers. A + sign means the layers in a group are displayed, while a - sign hides the layers in that group; click on the + or - to toggle back and forth. Individual layers have buttons for turning them on and off. **Some layers are used in the Module 2 project, others only in the Module 3 project.** Here is a brief summary of what the layers represent and how they can be used:

- ♦ **Background Layers.** This changes the background map that all the other layers are displayed in front of. The map opens with the OpenStreetMap layer, which is useful for most purposes. However, one of the Topo layers or the satellite layer may be better for seeing some features of the landscape
- ♦ **Data Layers.** Some of these are statewide and some are for individual townships.
 - **Statewide**
 - **PLSS sections:** This is the Public Land Survey grid down to the level of sections (one square mile each). It shows up as a green grid when it's made visible. Clicking anywhere on this layer will bring up a popup telling you what township you clicked in, by Township (T) and Range (R) numbers. **It will also give you a link to all land patents in that township, and a link to public land survey notes in that township.**
 - **Morrill Act Parcels.** This is a layer showing all land parcels that benefited land grant universities under the Morrill Act, from the High Country News project that you read about earlier in this module. The parcels show up as blue rectangles when they are made visible. The universities involved include not only the University of Wisconsin, but many others from other states (those that had little remaining public land within their boundaries in

1862). The single largest beneficiary of Morrill Act lands in Wisconsin was actually Cornell University in New York.

- **PLS Vegetation.** This is a map of vegetation types at the time of the public land surveys, based on the land surveyors' notes that you used in the Module 1 Project.
- **Property Parcels.** Shows property ownership as of 2023. This layer originated as a statewide dataset but is clipped to the part covering part of Sawyer County, with a lot of the information other than property ownership removed, in both cases to keep it from slowing down map operation. All counties in Wisconsin have apps displaying information from the same dataset for their county. This is public information, often used by realtors.
- **Individual township layers** identified by Township (T) and Range (R) numbers. These are for selected townships in Sawyer County, not the entire county.
 - For each township there are three **plat maps**, from 1897, ca. 1925, and 1957. Plat maps are printed maps (often grouped in county-wide books) that show current land ownership by township. In recent years, their use is being replaced by online property map apps, but the older plat maps are an valuable source of information on changing ownership over time. The plat maps used here were scanned from printed copies, and approximately aligned with the PLSS Grid dataset. It is difficult or impossible to align the plat maps perfectly with the PLSS Grid, because the plat maps were not drawn accurately enough. So, don't worry about minor discrepancies: A section on the plat map corresponds to a section in the more accurate PLSS Grid.
 - For each township there are also **Bordner Survey** maps. These are very detailed maps of land cover (different forest types, for example) and land use (cropland, pasture, etc.) produced by a state survey in the 1920s and 1930s. In Sawyer County, the Bordner Survey maps are dated 1932, though possibly completed a year or more earlier. The different land use/land cover types are indicated by labels (A1, C2, etc.), with a legend at the bottom of the map. The Bordner Survey Maps are also approximately aligned with the PLSS Grid. For more on the Bordner Surveys, [see this web page.](https://www.library.wisc.edu/steenbock/collections/wisconsin-land-economic-inventory-the-bordner-survey-land-cover-maps/)
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