

# Map Corner

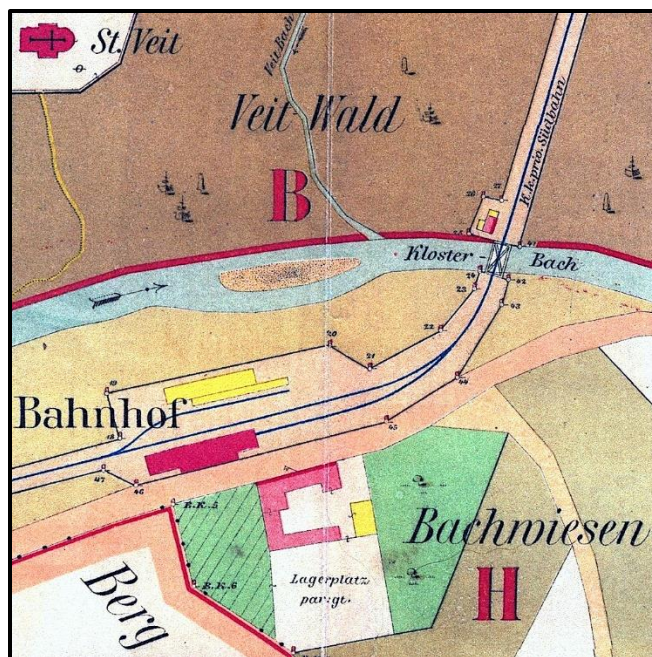
## Cadastral Map Legends

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**MAP LEGENDS WERE** introduced in the tutorial “Understanding Cadastral Maps” in the March 2021 issue of the *Galitzianer* as an aid to interpreting symbols seen on the detailed historical cadastral maps of Galicia. Although the tutorial illustrated many symbols from cadastral maps, the legends themselves were not covered in detail. This article takes a close look at a full map legend and gives examples of the changes made in map symbols over time, reflecting the evolving technical and administrative skills of the Habsburg empire. It also highlights why these legends have been valued as useful tools by both the original cartographers and the family historians of today.

### Creating the Maps of the Empire

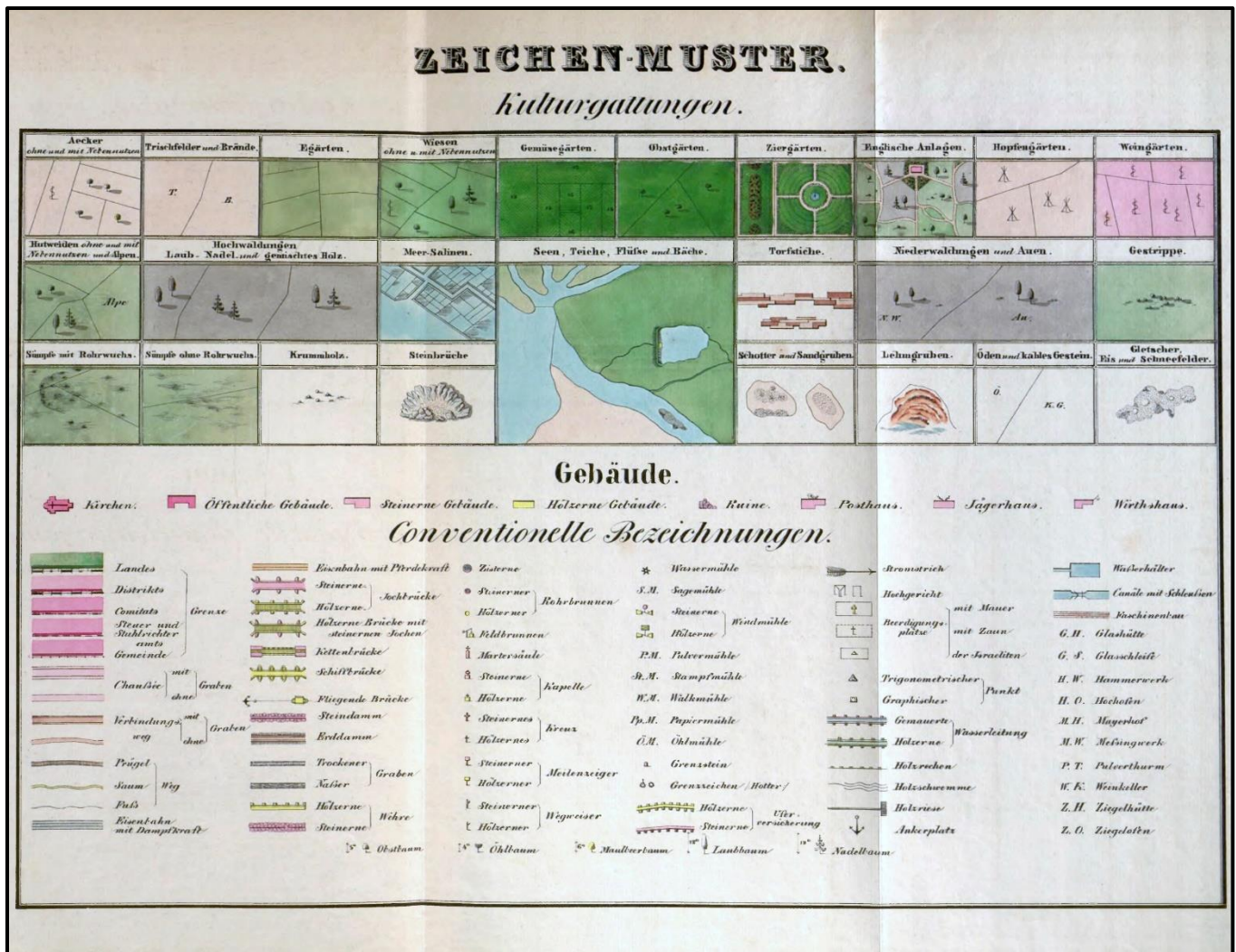
The production of the comprehensive cadastre (*Kataster*), or land survey records, of Galicia and the rest of the Habsburg territories was tightly controlled by imperial officials through a set of formal instructions, defining standards for all the required steps, often with written and graphical examples. The instructions defined the ever-important management and financial aspects of the project, as well as methods for survey triangulation, trigonometric calculations, sketching, inspection, and the registration of land and building parcel boundaries for the valuation of real property — one of the key objectives of the whole process.



*A compact sample of many map symbols, lettering styles, and colors for a hypothetical town included on an undated late-19th-century map legend*

Some of the instruction manuals ran to almost 200 pages, with typically more than a third of those being comprised of tables and figures. Every manual included one or more large-format fold-out pages that defined graphical standards for creating cadastral maps, including symbols for map legends, as well as a lettering guide for the labels on the maps. Both maps and legends were lithographed for mass production and consistency, and hand-painted to match a standard color scheme. Color was important in map legends because of its symbolic significance on the maps themselves.

The manuals and map legends were created in or translated to several languages (at least, German, Czech, and Hungarian) and printed in royal cities from Vienna to Brno to Buda. The names of surveyors and other officials recorded on the cadastral maps of Galicia suggest that those working in the field were of Austrian, Bohemian, and Polish backgrounds, but we have yet to find instructions or map legends written in Polish or printed in Galicia's capital of Lemberg.



A complete map legend from 1856

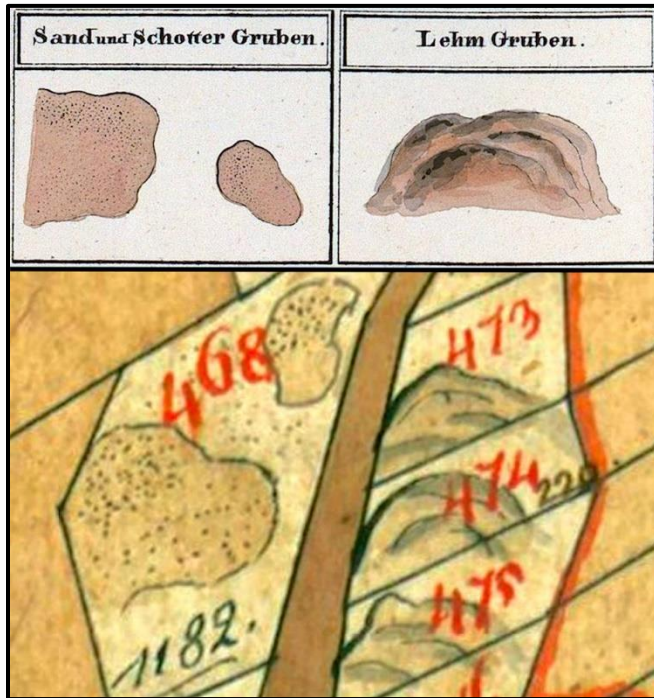
## Coding and Decoding the Maps

Historical map legends are as useful for interpreting cadastral maps today as they were for standardizing maps more than a hundred years ago. Just like modern cartographers, imperial map legend designers aimed to make their symbols intuitive and representative of real objects and land use. They created and adapted simple pictograms for several types of buildings, roads, and bridges, and for many natural and developed land types, from forests and rivers to agricultural fields and clay pits. As an example, the symbols for clay pits, sand, and gravel are shown on the following page, both on a map legend and on a cadastral map.

A glance at the 1856 legend above gives us an idea of the breadth of the conventional map features that surveyors and cartographers were expected to identify and document. Color, shading, and sometimes abbreviated text marked on maps helped to refine feature identification, for example, between high and low forests, mixed woodlands, and orchards. An example of how symbols and colors were used for land use distinctions is depicted in a group of four land symbols on the next page.

Several symbols, colors, and labels that are directly relevant to genealogists are well documented in the legends. For example, the shape or footprint of a building was carefully drawn to



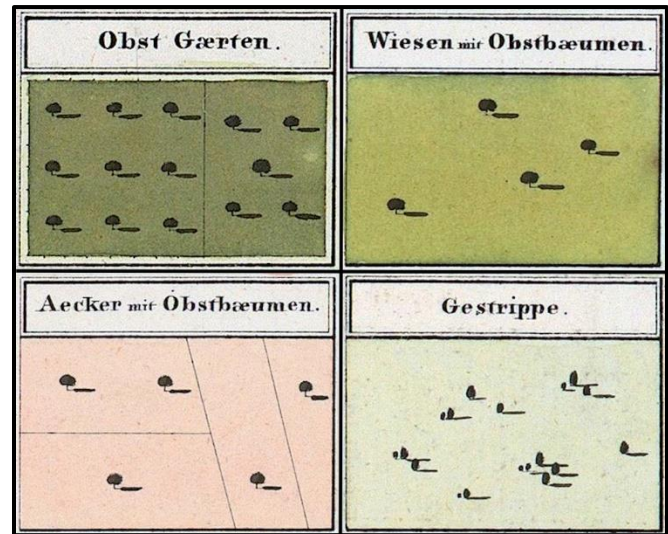


Depictions of sand, gravel, and clay pits on the 1824 map legend (top) and on an 1829 cadastral map of Tarnopol (bottom)

scale on historical cadastral maps. This was true for family homes as well as for religious buildings (synagogues, churches, bathhouses, schools), civic and public buildings, fortified castles, and even significant ruins. As noted in past Map Corner articles and on map legends, the color of a building on a map carries meaning: a pink building depicts masonry construction (dark pink indicating a prominent stone or brick structure), while yellow buildings are defined on legends as wooden or “economical.” Looking at the number and color of buildings in the residential core of any town shown in the Gesher Galicia Map Room provides a quick visual understanding of the town’s development at the time of the survey, and for family historians, an indication of the relative wealth of the neighborhood surrounding their ancestral home.

## Evolution of the Map Symbols

Cadastral survey and mapping instructions, as well as map legends, were printed by the state at



Symbols and color make land use distinct: fruit orchard (top left), grassland with fruit trees (top right), farm fields with fruit trees (bottom left), and scrubland/brushwood (bottom right)

least in 1824, 1840, 1856, and 1869. Gesher Galicia has a separate undated legend for indication sketches, perhaps from an even later year, provided to us by the Polish State Archives. The map legends evolved as the monarchy and its officials gained experience in the creation and use of the maps, resulting in new symbols as well as the elimination of rarely used symbols. Demands for new types of information and accounting on real property continued to influence standards.

Technical developments in drafting and printing over the decades also led to more refined and complex symbols. By the latter part of the 19th century, there were a dozen distinct symbols for different types of mills. The evolution of map symbols was also illustrated in a prior Map Corner article contrasting cemetery symbols from the early and late 19th century (Osborn, Jay, “Map Corner,” *Galitzianer*, March 2019, p. 30).

Significantly, the number of symbols for various places of worship also increased, with the 1869 map legend listing as many as six symbols depicting churches of several denominations, small

chapels, and synagogues. This attention to detail likely reflected the improved technical accuracy of cadastral maps. It also coincided with the constitution of 1867 for the Austrian part of the empire (thus, including Galicia), which guaranteed civil equality and reaffirmed freedom of worship.

## What the Map Legends Omit

One important standard that was not illustrated on historical cadastral map legends was the numbering system for land and building parcels. This system, which is a common source of confusion for Galician family historians, was defined in detail in the instruction manuals. We have also covered this topic before in past Map Corner articles, including in the tutorial in the previous issue.

Of course, the legends only illustrate standard symbols for printed official maps, but occasionally, surveyors left us with unexpected surprises. On the red-lined revision map for Monasterzyska, updated after its original survey of 1847, there are some flamboyant signatures by the field officers. In addition, someone on the crew seemed to be dreaming of a career in architecture (or perhaps hat-making?) and left some unofficial doodles on the map for us to enjoy more than 170 years later.



*Doodles on the 1847 revision map of Monasterzyska*

For more information on cadastral map legends and links to images of complete examples, see the References Page on the Map Room tab of the Gesher Galicia website.

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