

County Maps

By Chuck Marcum

The first map that I look at after researching and locating a potential Hunt Site on an old map is a County Map. On these maps I can tell if there are any new houses around, if there is a road leading to the site, or if it is on private or public land. The 7.5 Minute USGS Topo maps are pretty much out of date nowadays as far as houses and roads. Most of these maps were made in the 1960s and 70s. Some were photoupdated in the early 80s, but that's almost 20 years ago. There's hardly anything worse than spending hours or days researching a spot then driving all the way there only to find that your site is in the middle of a housing addition. These County maps were made mostly in the 1990s which make them the most recent maps in Oklahoma with exception to the USGS Aerial Maps you can view on Terra Server. Most of these Aerials were flown in 1995. The 7.5 Minute Topos are great for contours, scaling, coordinates for your GPS, and for accuracy. Remember, when you are researching you can't have too many maps.

The Oklahoma County Maps are prepared by the Oklahoma Department of Transportation - Planning Division. They have been making these maps since the 1920s. They are free to the public except for copying and shipping charges. The maps are printed on 18" x 25" sheets. Most counties are on one sheet the bigger counties have two sheets and the biggest county that I know of in this state, Osage County has four sheets.

Besides being almost up to date another thing I like about them is that the scale is so big you can see the big picture. On this Nowata County Map you can look at 588 square miles all at one time. These maps are great for driving out to your Hunt Site. You can see all of the highways, county roads, and section line roads you can take. It even shows which roads are paved. It also has the North-South, East-West, and County Road numbers. Every section line road in this state is numbered. The North - South Roads begin at the west state line and are numbered going East increasing by one number for each mile. The East - West Roads begin at the north state line and are numbered south. Even half mile and odd distance roads are broken down into tenths. For example a NS road on a half mile line would be NS 410.5 and an EW road 1000 feet south of EW 80 would be EW 80.2. Most counties have put up street signs with the designated NS and EW numbers on them. All counties are different. Some counties don't have signs while some have them only in populated areas. There are even other counties with their own numbering systems. These are also shown on the maps. I remember Osage County street signs have CR numbers. I've even seen intersections with two signs and two numbers. One CR and one NS for the same road. Where these numbers really come in handy is way up in the hills on a curvy road. We were looking for a spot in Delaware County once. There were so many

winding roads they all looked alike and the only thing that gave us a clue was a street sign with a NS number like 408.7 which we could find on the County Map. Back to the big picture you can see how the rivers and the creeks lay. It's easy to see where the creeks dump into the rivers. You can pick up clues and spot ghost towns on these maps. Some ghost towns are still on the maps, you'll see a circle, a name of a town, and no houses around. They show Cemeteries which usually means a town or community was nearby. There are names describing areas in bigger type in the background. A lot of times these areas are named for nearby ghost towns or other historical places. You'll be surprised by how many hunt spots you can find by taking one of these County Maps, some 1896 GLO Township Plats, a 30 Minute USGS Map, and a 1936 County Map. Just by comparing all these maps you'll find more sites than you'll have time to hunt let alone get permission on.

To get a paper copy of a County map you can write to the DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION REPRODUCTION BRANCH 200 N. E. 21st Street Oklahoma City, Ok. 73105 Or call (405) 521-2586 and ask for the Reproduction Branch. If you want a digital copy you can Email me and I'll send you one.

