Wow! It's been almost a whole year since I posted any articles to my site. But that doesn't mean I haven't been busy with genealogy. I have been hard at work adding **Google Maps** to my online data.
**Family Tree Maker 2010/2011**
has a nice mapping feature which gives you a visual representation for all those crazy place names. But getting those maps to show in my online tree proved to be quite a hassle.

FTM 2011 helps you "resolve" place names by using Bing maps to pinpoint locations and assign them longitude and latitude coordinates. This helps enforce naming conventions which in turn helps consolidate redundant place names. So MD, Md., Maryland, etc. can be easily replaced with Maryland. FTM generally uses the format of City, County, State, Country. This works well for the USA but sometimes not so well for other countries.

For place names in the USA, if you see a place with 2 names then it refers to a state. If it has 3 names then it refers to a county, ie. Seminole, Florida, USA. 4 names generally refers to a city or town such as Chuluota, Seminole, Florida, USA. And 5 names refers to a specific place like a cemetery, hospital, estate, etc.

There are a few exceptions to the rule. If a specific location isn't located in or near a city/town then it will only have 4 names and may look like it is a city. Some people insert commas to represent missing names (like ,,Florida, USA) but I think this looks weird. Also, places like New York City with its boroughs complicate things a little.

Baltimore, Maryland is another problem for FTM. Baltimore City and Baltimore County are two separate entities, but the city shows as Baltimore, Baltimore, Maryland, USA and the county shows as Baltimore, Maryland, USA. This implies that Baltimore City is in Baltimore County which is false. I'm leaving it this way for now because I haven't found another solution.

So now I have GPS coordinates for almost all of my 2716 places in FTM, but getting them uploaded to my website was practically impossible. My online software, **The Next Genealogist** (TNG), supports importing of long/lat cordinates in gedcoms, but FTM won't export them. It seems kinda silly that FTM supports the storage of data that can't be extracted. Some FTM/TNG users bypass this limitation by importing their FTM file into a second genealogy program which is capable of exporting a gedcom with long/lat data. But then why use FTM at all?

I decided to take the tedious approach and entered the GPS coordinates manually in TNG. This isn't quite as hard as it sounds. Sure, I have to edit 2700+ places, but TNG can use Google Maps to search for the place name. If it finds it then the coordinates are entered automatically. This worked for most places, but not all. Google Maps has a hard time finding counties correctly, so I have to copy the coordinates manually from FTM. I also assign zoom levels so it takes a few seconds. Currently, I have 454 places to go.

Hopefully the time spent on this won't be for naught. TNG protects any place names that have coordinates during gedcom imports. Since I always do a full replace this is extremely important. I have spent many hours adding maps to my data and it would be heartbreaking to lose anything.