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From Oquawka to Atlanta: Using Viewshare to Map A Civil War Journey



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Abstract

Viewshare is a free data visualization tool created and maintained by the Library of Congress. It provides libraries and other cultural heritage institutions with a way to make use of linked data sources to showcase collections in a new way. Viewshare can generate maps, timelines, galleries, and other visualizations to help patrons interact with digital collections in a more user-friendly way. The University of Northern Colorado Libraries used Viewshare to create a map visualization of a collection of Civil War letters written by a Union Army soldier and some of his comrades. Approximately 60 handwritten letters dated 1861 through 1865 chronicle the soldiers' experiences in battle and the hardships they faced during a campaign that spanned several states.

Introduction

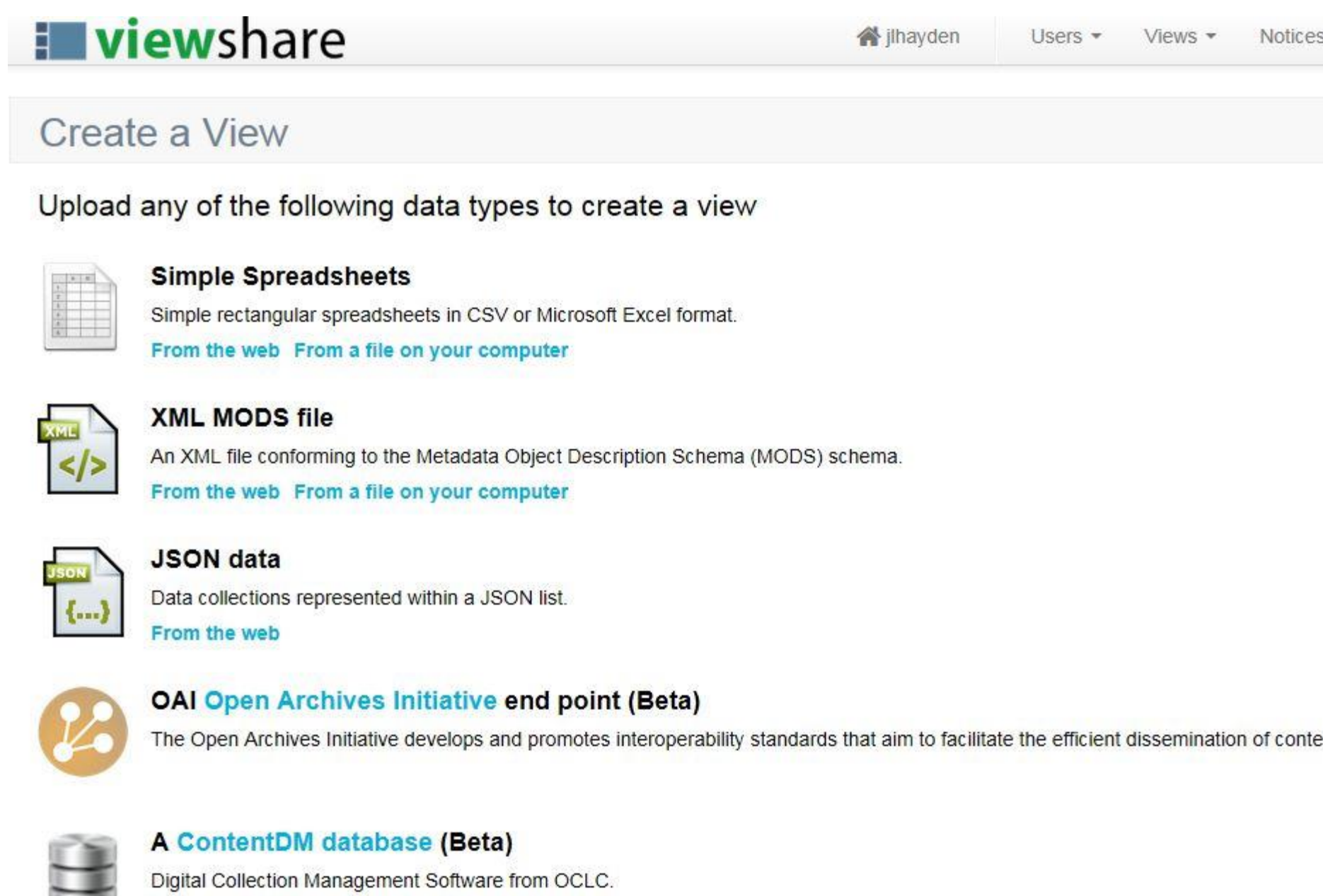
In 2014, the UNC Libraries was approached by the director of the Teaching With Primary Sources program on campus, who inquired about having a collection of sixty Civil War-era letters digitized. The letters were penned primarily by Union Army soldier Daniel Parker to his family in Oquawka, Illinois; a number were also written by other relatives both at home and in the army. They span the length of the entire war, dating from 1861 to 1865, and follow the movement of regimental troops across ten states and the District of Columbia. Various military maneuvers and major battles, including the siege of Atlanta, are recounted, as well as details about daily life in the field and the hardships and deprivations the soldiers faced.

The letters were scanned and uploaded with MODS metadata and full-text transcripts into Digital UNC, the library's digital repository. The metadata includes geographic place names for each location where a letter originated. The free online platform Viewshare, created by the Library of Congress, was used to generate an interactive map based on this location metadata. Viewshare utilizes linked data to present dynamic customized visualizations in the form of timelines, facets, tag clouds, charts, graphs, and maps.

Screen-shot of a letter in Digital UNC.



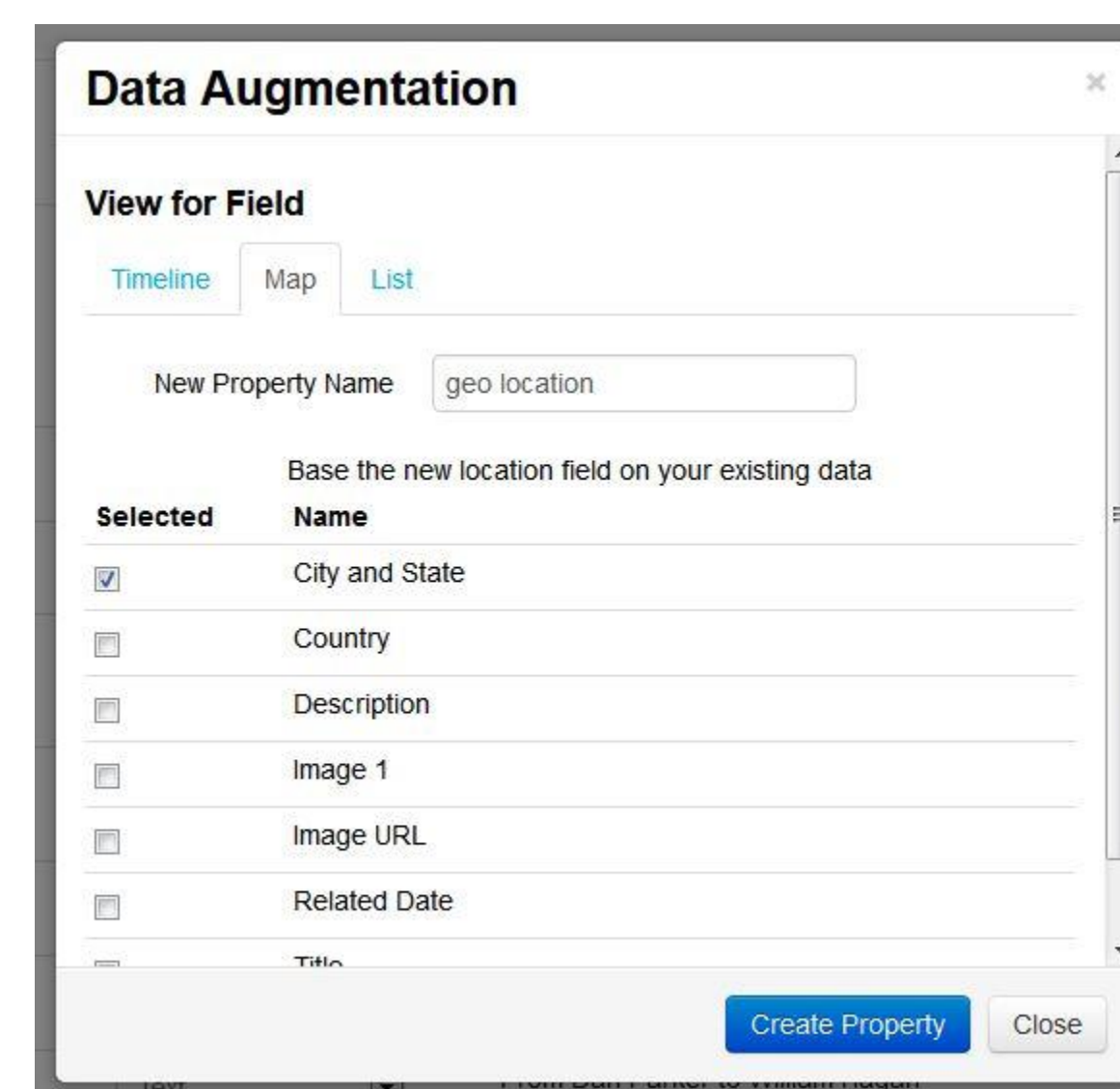
Data can be loaded in a number of metadata file types, including MODS XML, JSON, and OAI-PMH.



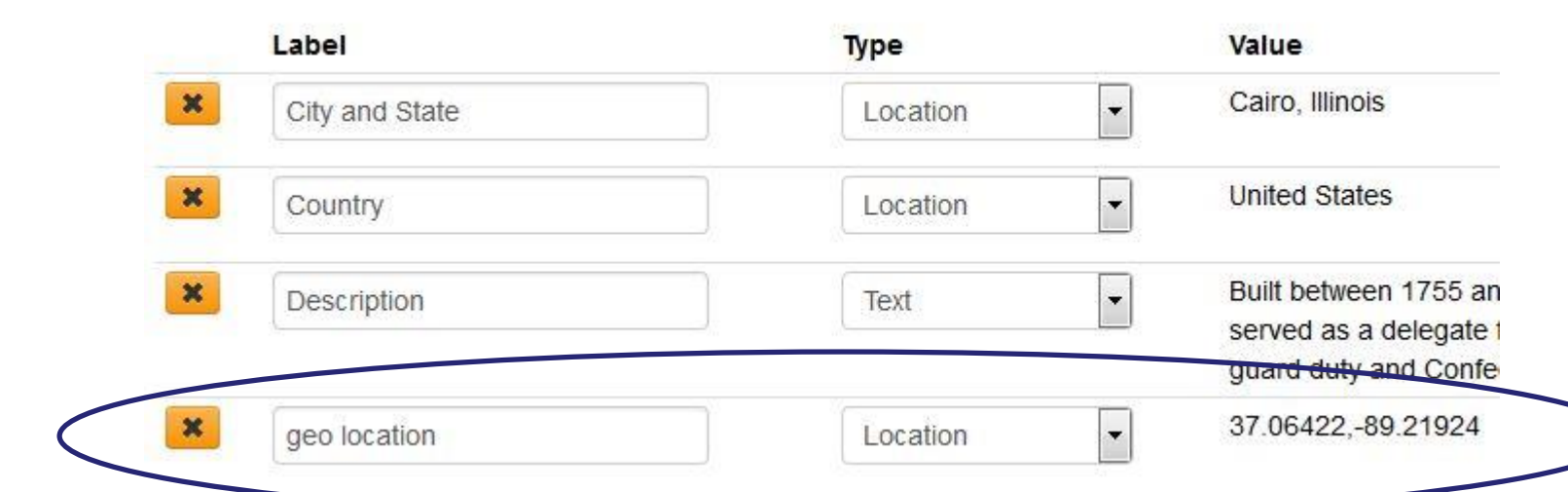
For our collection of Civil War letters, we used a simple Microsoft Excel spreadsheet.

Title	City and State	Related Date	Description	Category	Image URL	Image 1	Country
1	From Dan Parker to William H. Caro, Illinois	1861	Built between 1755 and 1759, Gunston Hall was the home of George Washington.	United States	http://hdl.handle.net/11362/101		United States
2	From Dan Parker to sister Mound City, Illinois	1861-10-24	Dan Parker writes to his sister with news of a fellow soldier's death.	United States	http://hdl.handle.net/11362/102		United States
3	From Dan Parker to father in Columbus, Kentucky	1862-01-12	Dan Parker writes to his parents about scouting for a regiment.	United States	http://hdl.handle.net/11362/103		United States
4	From Dan Parker to parents Mound City, Illinois	1862-01-23	Dan Parker writes about marching between Kentucky and Illinois.	United States	http://hdl.handle.net/11362/104		United States
5	From Dan Parker to brother & Mound City, Illinois	1862-02-04	Dan Parker writes to his brother and sister with good news.	United States	http://hdl.handle.net/11362/105		United States
6	From Dan Parker to parents Bird's Point, Missouri	1862-02-22	Dan Parker writes to his parents about Union casualties.	United States	http://hdl.handle.net/11362/106		United States
7	From Dan Parker to parents Bertrand, Missouri	1862-03-08	Dan Parker writes about his regiment's movements.	United States	http://hdl.handle.net/11362/107		United States
8	From Dan Parker to parents New Madrid, Missouri	1862-03-23	Dan Parker recounts skirmishes with Confederate troops.	United States	http://hdl.handle.net/11362/108		United States
9	From Dan Parker to parents Pittsburg Landing, Tennessee	1862-04-21	Dan Parker writes to his parents about his multi-day march.	United States	http://hdl.handle.net/11362/109		United States
10	From Dan Parker to parents Farmington, Mississippi	1862-05-09	Dan Parker recounts skirmishes with Confederate troops.	United States	http://hdl.handle.net/11362/110		United States
11	From Dan Parker to brother & Farmington, Mississippi	1862-05-22	Dan Parker writes to his brother and sister from Mississippi.	United States	http://hdl.handle.net/11362/111		United States
12	From Dan Parker to father Farmington, Mississippi	1862-05-22	Waldo Pickett, a soldier in Dan Parker's regiment, describes his father's death.	United States	http://hdl.handle.net/11362/112		United States
13	From Dan Parker to father Farmington, Mississippi	1862-05-25	Dan Parker writes to his father of skirmishes with Confederate troops.	United States	http://hdl.handle.net/11362/113		United States
14	From Dan Parker to parents Booneville, Mississippi	1862-06-04	Dan Parker writes about skirmishes with Confederate troops.	United States	http://hdl.handle.net/11362/114		United States
15	From Dan Parker to parents Tuscumba, Alabama	1862-07-31	Dan Parker writes about getting paid, acquaintances, and news from home.	United States	http://hdl.handle.net/11362/115		United States
16	From Dan Parker to parents Tuscumba, Alabama	1862-08-18	Dan Parker writes to his parents with news from his regiment.	United States	http://hdl.handle.net/11362/116		United States
17	From Dan Parker to parents Nashville, Tennessee	1863-01-08	Dan Parker writes about the Battle of Murfreesboro.	United States	http://hdl.handle.net/11362/117		United States
18	From Dan Parker to parents Nashville, Tennessee	1863-03-03	Dan Parker and Luther Ensign write about their experience.	United States	http://hdl.handle.net/11362/118		United States
19	From Dan Parker to parents Nashville, Tennessee	1863-01-11	Dan Parker and Luther Ensign write about the Battle of Nashville.	United States	http://hdl.handle.net/11362/119		United States
20	From Dan Parker to parents Nashville, Tennessee	1863-05-19	Dan Parker writes of his feelings about the anti-war Democrats.	United States	http://hdl.handle.net/11362/120		United States
21	From Dan Parker to parents Nashville, Tennessee	1863-06-20	Luther Ensign, Dan Parker's cousin, writes about life in the army.	United States	http://hdl.handle.net/11362/121		United States
22	From Dan Parker to parents Nashville, Tennessee	1863-07-07	Dan Parker describes a Fourth of July celebration in the field.	United States	http://hdl.handle.net/11362/122		United States
23	From Dan Parker to parents Nashville, Tennessee	1863-08-02	George Pickup, a soldier in Dan Parker's regiment, writes about his father's death.	United States	http://hdl.handle.net/11362/123		United States
24	From Dan Parker to parents Fosterville, Tennessee	1863-08-16	Dan Parker writes to his parents about acquaintance with a Confederate soldier.	United States	http://hdl.handle.net/11362/124		United States

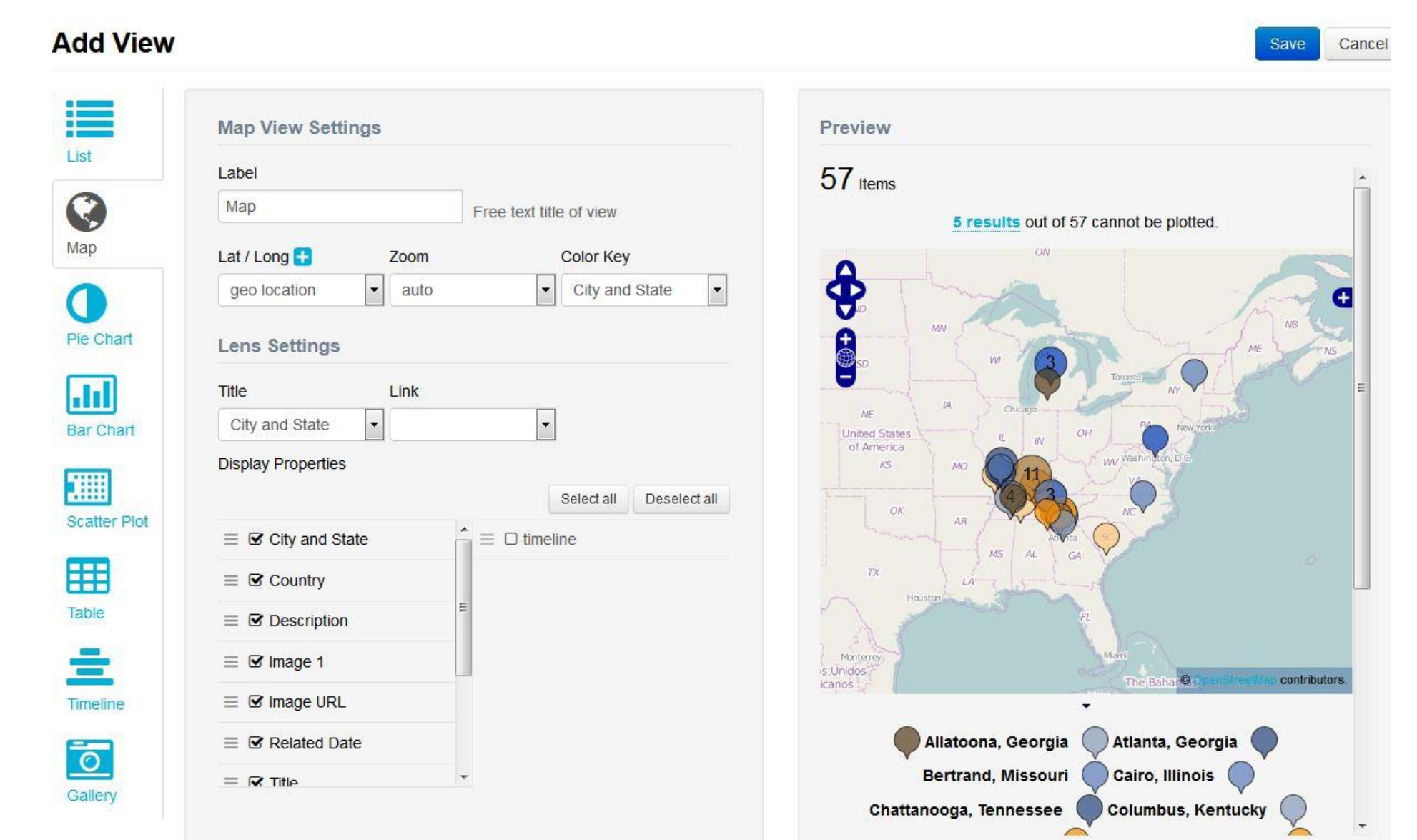
Once you have loaded your data, you can augment a number of fields to create views. To generate a map view, we augmented our city and state location data. Viewshare is able to automatically convert the city and state names to geo coordinates during this process.



Steps



You now have a newly created field with geographic coordinate values. With this data, it is a simple process to add a map view built on these coordinates.



Results

The resulting view displays the letter locations on an interactive map. Clicking on an individual location causes a pop-up box to appear showing selected metadata and a link to the original object in the digital repository. A search box and faceted browse are two of a number of possible "widgets" that have been added to the display.

