Historical

This rectangular system of surveying government lands, termed the Land System of the United States, was adopted by an act of Congress on the 23rd of August, 1812. The provisions provided that each township, six miles square, contain thirty-six sections of one mile square. The region embraced by the surveys under this law forms a part of the present states of Ohio, and some parts of Michigan and Old Schools. The townships, six miles square, were laid out in ranges, extending northward from the Ohio River, the townships being numbered from south to north, and the ranges from east to west. The townships were surveyed and mile corners were established on the township lines, but the plats were marked by sublines into sections of one mile square. The sections were numbered from one to sixty-four inclusive, commencing at the southwesterly corner of the township, and running from south to north in each tier to number thirty-six in the northeasterly corner of the township. These first plats were made under the direction of the Surveyor General.

The act of Congress approved May 19, 1796, provided for the appointment of a surveyor-general, and directed the survey of the lands north and west of the Ohio River and above the mouth of the Kennebec River, "in which the titles of the Indian tribes have been extinguished." Under this law one-half of the townships surveyed were subdivided into sections by "running through the same, each way, parallel lines at the end of every two miles, and by making a corner on each of said lines at the end of every twenty miles, and it is further provided that "the sections shall be numbered, respectively beginning with the number one in the northeast section, and proceeding west and east alternately, through the townships, so as to have the number thirty-six fill the third section of each one."

This method of numbering the sections is still in use.

The act of Congress, approved February 11, 1803, directs the subdivision of the quarter sections and the corners of the townships, and the corners marked in the public surveys shall be established as the proper corners of sections or subdivisions of sections which they are intended to designate, and the surveyors are required to be "at the expense of the United States to have them marked so as to be done or performed in the office of the Secretary of State, of the Secretary and Register of the Treasury, and of the Secretary of War, or which shall hereafter by law be assigned to the said office.

The act of Congress approved July 4, 1830, provided for the reorganization of the General Land Office, and that the executive duties of said office be committed to the appointment by the Commissioner of the General Land Office of the President of the United States, and that the Commissioner of the General Land Office under the direction of the President of the United States.

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The sections are divided into quarters by straight lines from the northeast corner of each section to the southwest corner of the adjacent section. In some cases, the corners of the sections are designated as northeast, southwest, southeast, and northwest, according to their location with regard to their common comer.

The original corners, where they can be found, must stand as the true corners they were intended to represent, even though not exactly where strict professional care might have placed them in the first instance.

Mistakes of survey should be re-established in the identical locations they originally occupied. When the point cannot be determined by the existing landmarks in the field, resort must be had to the field notes of the survey. The law provides that the lengths of the lines, as stated in the field notes shall be considered as the true lengths thereof, and the distances between corners set down in the field notes constitute proper data from which to determine the true location of a missing corner; hence the rule that all such should be restored at distances proportionate to the original measurements between existing original corners. That is, if the measurement between two existing corners differs from that stated in the field notes, the excess or deficiency should be distributed proportionately among the intervening section lines between the two points set down in the field notes.

The distances of standard townships and range lines should be restored by proportionate measurement between the nearest existing original corner. Lines running through the center of sections and quarter sections in such manner as to be parallel to the section lines, should be restored proportionately to the adjacent sections and quarter sections, each corner of such lines being restored proportionately to the adjacent sections.

In the subdivision of quarter sections, the quarter corners are to be placed at points equivalent between the sections and quarter sections. In the subdivision of quarter sections, the quarter corners are to be placed at points equivalent between the sections and quarter sections. In the subdivision of quarter sections, the quarter corners are to be placed at points equivalent between the sections and quarter sections. In the subdivision of quarter sections, the quarter corners are to be placed at points equivalent between the sections and quarter sections.