ANALYSIS OF THE SYSTEM

OF

United States Land Surveys

METES AND BOUNDS

Up to the time of the Revolutionary War, or until about the beginning of the present century, land, when parcelled out, and sold or granted, was described by "Metes and Bounds," and that system is still in existence in the following States, or in those portions of them which had been sold or granted when the present plan of survey was adopted, viz. New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North and South Carolina, Georgia, Tennessee, Kentucky, Texas, and the six New England States. To describe land by "Metes and Bounds," is to have a known land mark for a place of beginning, and then follow a line according to the compass-needle (or magnetic bearing), or the course of a stream, or track of an ancient highway. This plan has resulted in endless confusion and litigation, as landmarks decay and change, and it is a well-known fact that the compass-needle varies and does not always point due North.

As an example of this plan of dividing lands, the following description of a farm laid out by "Metes and Bounds," is given:

"Beginning at a stone on the Bank of Doe River, at a point where the highway from A to B crosses said river; thence North 40° West 100 rods to a large stump; thence North 10° West 90 rods; thence North 15° West of North 80 rods to an oak tree; thence due East 90 rods to the highway; thence following the course of the highway 250 rods due North; thence 5° North of East 30 rods; thence 45° East of South 30 rods; thence 10° North of East 200 rods to the Doe River; thence following the course of the river Southwesterly to the place of beginning." This, which is a very simple and moderate description by "Metes and Bounds," would leave the boundaries of the farm as shown in Diagram 1.

MERIDIANS AND BASE LINES

Diagram 2 shows all of the Principal Meridians and Base Lines in the United States, and from it the territory governed by each Meridian and Base Line may be readily distinguished. Each Meridian and Base Line is marked with its proper number or name. Diagram 3 illustrates what is meant when this method is termed the "Rectangular System," and how the measurements are based on lines which run at right angles to each other. The heavy line running North and South (marked A.A.) on Diagram 3, represents the Principal Meridian, in this case the 6th Principal Meridian. The heavy line running East and West (marked B.B.) is the Base Line. These lines are used as the starting points or basis of all measurements or surveys made in territory controlled by the 6th Principal Meridian. The same fact applies to all other Principal Meridians and their Base Lines. Commencing at the Principal Meridian, at intervals of six miles, lines are run North and South, parallel to the Meridian. This plan is followed both East and West of the Meridian throughout the territory controlled by the Meridian.
TOWNSHIPS OF LAND.

TOWNSHIPS are the largest subdiv

DIAGRAM 5 illustrates how a section may be subdivided, although the diagram only gives an idea of the many subdivisions into which a section may be divided. All Sections (except fractional Sections) are supposed to contain 640 acres—a number easily divisible. Each of these Sections is subdivided into 160 acres, a quarter-quarter, and a quarter. A Section contains 640 acres; a quarter-quarter contains 160 acres, half of which is a quarter-quarter, and half of which is a quarter. Section 160 acres, and a quarter of a quarter contains 40 acres, and so on. The entire area is made up of 36 of these Sections which are arranged as follows: As shown in Diagram 5, the sections are numbered consecutively from 1 to 36, and the names assigned to the sections are as follows: The sections are numbered as follows: 1 through 36. These numbers refer to the Section Survey which is the unit of land measured in the United States. Each Section is divided into 36 equal parts or fractional Sections which are designated by letters such as A, B, C, D, E, etc. These fractional Sections are further divided into tracts of 80 acres, 40 acres, 20 acres, and 10 acres, as shown in Diagram 6. These tracts are further subdivided into lots of 20 rods, 10 rods, 5 rods, and 2 rods, as shown in Diagram 7. The lots are further subdivided into survey monuments, survey points, and survey notes, as shown in Diagram 8. The survey monuments are established by the U.S. Geological Survey and are the official boundaries of the land. The survey points are established by the U.S. Geological Survey and are the official boundaries of the land. The survey notes are established by the U.S. Geological Survey and are the official boundaries of the land.