

feedback

Meades Ranch

What is the significance of the ash filled bottle that was buried for the first marker? And why the coal around the marker?

Here in Arkansas, I am familiar with our corner boundaries on our farm, that have the iron plates hammered in the ground, so I understand the brass markers set into concrete for the historical markers later on, but have never heard of the things they did for that first set-up. Thanks again.

Will Leach

*Commissioner of State Lands
State of Arkansas*

Perry responds:

The ash filled bottle was a lower monument in case the surface monument was damaged or removed. Ashes are something that last a long time, so the bottle was a handy container. This was something that USC&GS developed early on for triangulation stations with setting two monuments directly above and below each other. Most of the modern-era brass disks in concrete have a lower monument of the same type. The coal was likely something copied from the General Land Office as another memorial. If the surface monument was removed, the outline of the coal could be found by random digging and then the ash filled bottle could be found based upon the position of the coal filled trench that was

uncovered. Again, the coal was placed as something that had a permanent lifespan.

Surveyor Poetry

I enjoyed Jerry Penry's article on the history and importance of the control monument at Meades Ranch, Kansas. My late friend and fellow surveyor George Burrell, (Oregon PS No. 638) wrote the following poem, lamenting the demise of the now forgotten monument:

*"Alas, I have been outclassed
by Earth's center of mass*

*The satellites have taken my fame
and left me to crumble in the rain*

*Should you pass my way
and recall the glorious day
of Bilby towers, theodolites, and tape
bow your head, all others stay away*

*My legacy has been forsaken
by the new gravity of the nation*

*My coordinates are no longer used
and Molodensky can not fit my shoes*

*In repose, I await the day
of the mathematician's delight
who again can set things right."*

Roger Roberts, PS

The Lost Art of Surveying

In many instances, when I have been retained to defend a surveyor or an engineer, one of the biggest problems is defending their field work. Invariably, for those who rely solely on electronic raw data files, their recollection is generally poor whereas for those who have a set of field notes, their memory is much better. If you ever present your files in a court of law, a judge and a jury will glean much more from a good set of field notes than a bunch of cryptic confusing computer printouts (as they all look the same). Just because we have access to all these electronic tools, it does not mean it is the best tool. It is merely that—another tool.

Mike Pallamary

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Amen! Ours is an evidentiary profession, and we must be aware that measurement is only one piece of evidence. Nothing beats a good set of field notes!

Tony Cuomo, PS

*Johnson-Frank & Associates
Anaheim, CA*

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Nice article.

It is tangent to one of my issues with surveyors: Show your work. I go to great lengths to depict on my final plans how I arrived at my boundary. My fathers' teachings led me to this practice.

He once had two partners. Then they split. The other two retained rights to several projects and took a survey project with them. They brought in a surveyor who revised our plan and made it his own (I would assume he ran his own fieldwork, but I really do not care). Instead of showing all those pesky monuments along the street, he froze or erased them. Instead of showing the ancient boundary out to the ring of stones, he merely showed the final results. You can connect back into it and you can add it to other data, but you cannot realize from his plan what was used to come to his conclusion.



The triangulation station at Meade's Ranch Kansas.

Photo Date: 1934?
Credit: NOAA National Geodetic Survey

I want to be able to pick up any plan in the registry and know the bulk of the story. So often I am only left with a floating parcel and a need to research to only be able to guess what the surveyor did. Then it becomes the game of finding where the surveyor did not properly tie to the road layout or the ancient boundary, likely because they were looking so close at the lot itself.

*J. Thaddeus Eldredge, PS
Eldredge Surveying & Engineering, LLC
Chatham, MA*



“Excellent, Mike. That is a really refreshing article to read versus the dry technical treatises so often encountered. May the practice of preparing detailed field notes and sketches never disappear from our profession!

*Paul Loska, PS
President
GIS Surveyors, Inc.
Poway, Ca. 92064*



Back in the day when I taught the *Surveyor in Court* and data collectors and PCs were first hitting the market (1990) I beat on field books as legal documents and how surveyors could take landowner affidavits right in them. “Remember folks most judges have people to balance their checkbooks. You go in there with technical data, one of two things will happen, both bad: 1) The judge/jury will get confused, then possibly embarrassed that they don’t understand it, and 2) they will be bored. Keep any exhibits as non- technical as possible. There is no such thing as an exhibit that is too simple for the court.”

Just my thoughts. Sometimes we dinosaurs might get it right.

*John Stock, PS
Flood Control District
Maricopa County, Arizona*



I wish more would bring this subject to the surface with force and mandatory procedure. I was always very critical of my own penmanship, detail, correctness, and thoroughness with my Field Notes and

Synopsis’. I had a lot of great teachers in the field as I was rising in the ranks—most of them were Party Chiefs the other Chainmen refused to work with because they were demanding, critical, confident and arrogant, all traits necessary to become a good Party Chief as I would learn later. I took pride in working with those Party Chiefs others didn’t want anything to do with. It not only taught me a lot but kept me on the job during those slow times. Our only historic trail is what our hand leaves behind for others to follow and understand. Still, to this day I’m trying to improve on my notes whether on sticky yellow pieces of paper or Company Letterhead, and sharing the importance to the field crews.

I wonder how many out there have muddled through old Field Books having Topo notes written in cursive & ink, with freehand sketches adequate to retrace 100 years afterwards. And some critical and useful information extracted from those field books in the way of adequately describing old fence lines, trees, ascending and descending hills, rock mounds, boulders, coal pits, outcroppings, etc. Many times the smallest bit of information can lend credence to your analysis and developing of procedure for a survey.

A layman would have a terrible time resolving or forming a graphic depiction from a digital raw data file regurgitated from a data collector or GPS receiver—as would a judge in court, or Surveyor for that matter. There’s no reason in my opinion why electronic information and modern technology should not be reinforced with well written notes and sketches. It forces us to look at our own work and discover not only errors and omissions but self-checks before they go to file. I not only make it necessary in my office but as a mandatory procedure whether I get paid for it or not. If you can’t follow and understand what I’ve done—my work and effort has become futile and useless. It’s the creative and artistic arm of our profession that is becoming extinct ... and dangerously missing.

*Michael J. Valenti
Southland Surveying Inc.
San Diego, CA*

Information from Arizona

Firstly, I would like to thank you for producing *American Surveyor*. You have a great selection of contributors who contribute very thought-provoking and informative articles.

Secondly, I would like to bring to your attention that the Arizona Board of Technical Registration recently issued a Letter of Concern to Chad Erickson regarding “Discovery Reports.” You published his article about them several months ago, and he alludes again to them in the recent “Location, location, location” article. Listen to the Board meeting here: <https://btr.az.gov/about/meetings-committees/board-meeting-minutes-agendas>. Look about halfway down the page, find the audio link for Tuesday, June 23, 2015, audio file 2 and start at 0:28 minutes. The meeting continues to the 3rd file.

Some mention of this needs to be made in your magazine. An explanation by Mr. Erickson would be enlightening...

I was not impressed by Mr. Erickson’s unprofessional portrayal of Realtors in the recent article, which was not well thought out. While I am certainly no fan of Realtors such language would be better presented in an opinion and not an article. Frankly, I was somewhat surprised you published this article. It certainly will not help Arizona Surveyors improve an already strained relationship with the Realtors. I don’t believe that Mr. Erickson was around in the 1980’s when Arizona Professional Land Surveyor’s attempted to implement mandatory recording laws. The Realtors were adamantly opposed. In the subsequent 30 years some progress has been made to bring them on board by educating them as to the importance of boundary surveys in reducing their liability. The requirement for surveys in land transactions would generate far more work than Mr. Erickson could possibly deal with. This article surely will not help things in that arena.

*James A. Folkers, PS
Woodson Engineering and Surveying, Inc.
Flagstaff, AZ*

The Ericksons respond

Mr. Folkers' negativism is puzzling in that his letter confirms every point that he objects to; the obstruction by the powerful realtor lobby and the windfall of work that would come our way if we could get around the realtors' filibuster. Which are my points in introducing Survey Reports and Buyer Oriented Ads; with these we can defend the land boundary infrastructure without new legislation, bank rules or title company requirements. Mr. Folker's only remaining point is that he doesn't like the way I write, which both the Arizona Board and Idaho Boards have also indicated. This reminds me of the pre-Civil War mantra: "This is the Bible; it is for those who love God. This is the U.S. Constitution; it is for those who love freedom. This is a bayonet; and it (as it is jabbed into the podium and quivers back and forth) is for those who do not believe in the Freedom of Speech."

As to the Letter of Concern issued to me by the Arizona Board of Technical Registration, into these a board can slip unfounded pet peeves and the victim has no recourse to appeal, no due process. Though a Letter of Concern is a non-disciplinary action, still it is a public document and is not appealable. The only recourse to this very public pillory was to place a Letter of Explanation in my file, and I think it only fair that the public see it:

To Whom It May Concern;

...Without question the vast majority of land transactions in Arizona are executed without the presence of visible property corner monuments, placing the buyers at great risk of litigation and loss. Because we can only think in terms of full surveys, the survey profession is as guilty as any for this dismal situation, having priced ourselves out of the market. Justifiably so, for most instances of non-visible monuments can be remedied with the wave of a magnetometer, yet there we are with our hand out for thousands when hundreds will do. In the current

housing market in Arizona surveyors are not even an afterthought.

The concept of the Discovery Report is to inexpensively reproduce an existing signed, sealed and recorded survey plat, to search and uncover the existing monuments and to note upon the plat of record which corner monuments are now present and which are now missing. This annotated copy is then presented to a client as a report. The purpose of the Discovery Report in the first instance is to open communications with the client, to be of service in preserving the land boundary infrastructure, to provide a means of educating the client of the importance of corner monuments and finally, if a monument is missing, or out of position, to entice the client to suffer the expense of a full survey.

Or we can continue on our irrelevant course, being of little service to the public, being a few firms when we could be many and allowing our State Boards to be obstructionists. George Orwell said it well when he wrote: *"The further a society drifts from the truth, the more it will hate those who speak it."* Or as "Woodstein" said in *The Secret Man*, *"Our best work is done when we are opposing management."*

For the purposes of the cabal of Boards and Societies the subject of my discipline is not important, what is important is that Erickson's mouth, and all mouths like it, be shut so the Boards and Societies can continue by redefinition their bastardization of the Land Boundary Survey profession.

Well, my legs don't tremble and my lips don't quiver; as for my hands, the gloves are off and for this war they hold a pen.

Chad Erickson

Got some feedback?

Contact us via www.amerisurv.com, or send a letter to: The American Surveyor, P.O. Box 4162, Frederick, MD 21705-4162. We reserve the right to edit letters for clarity and length. ■