

Everything is Somewhere



By Angus W. Stocking, LS

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A Surveyor's Own Conspiracy Theory

One of the problems with not being a conspiracy theorist is that one has no easy explanations when faced with some of the more glaring oddities of the world around us. It is, for example, passing strange that the dollar bill features an all-seeing eye and pyramid, but the fact that it *can* be explained does not mean that it *has* been explained, if you follow my drift. Similarly, the non-conspiracy theorist is forced into some fancy mental gymnastics when considering glaringly obvious phenomena, such as the presence of two Yale Skull-and-Bonesmen in the current presidential election, the screwy layout of Washington D.C., and the pentagonal shape of the world's most powerful military headquarters. Mundane explanations exist for all of these, but since they are bizarre facts to begin with, the mind is more comfortable with bizarre explanations involving the Illuminati, aliens, or the occult.

My own personal example of this began one morning when I was considering the GLO township layout, the 6x6 boustrophedonic square (*boustrophedonic*, incidentally, is the word for the right-to-left, left-to-right layout of the township—it's from the Greek, and means 'as an ox plows') that numbers the squares from 1 to 36. I've always wondered about it. Why, for instance, is it boustrophedonic, and why is it 6x6, and not some other number? Idly, I added up the columns and rows, to see if there were any 'magic square' properties in the design. The columns all add up to 111—you try it. A little experimentation showed that this is a feature of boustrophedonic squares with even, but not odd, numbered sides, so this is not mysterious. The rows, on the other hand, seemed to yield no pattern of interest... until I took one more step. I 'reduced' the numbers numerologically to

yield a one-digit number. That is, I added together the digits of the multi-digit numbers, and if the result was multi-digit I added again until a one-digit number resulted. As seen below, the numerological sum of all the rows is three, and it takes no special flash of insight to see that the numerological sum of 111, the column sum, is also three. Curious.

6	5	4	3	2	1
7	8	9	10	11	12
18	17	16	15	14	13
19	20	21	22	23	24
30	29	28	27	26	25
31	32	33	34	35	36

GLO Township layout. All columns add up to 111; 1+1+1=3.

I should say here that I am not a numerologist. I don't work out year numbers, or look for numerological significance in the dates of my life. But I did read a book about it once, and took away a habit of numerological reduction as a sort of 'mental fidgeting'. And number mysticism has a history in the West that goes all the way back to Pythagoras and his followers. Many great minds have succumbed, and the results are not always pretty. Isaac Newton, for example, spent at least as much time on numerical Biblical exegesis as he did on scientific work and his writings on those topics strike modern readers as deranged. Two modern movies, *Pi* and *A Beautiful Mind* explore the tendency of the mind to project numerological meaning onto complex phenomena. It's something that brains do.

Be that as it may, and ignoring, for the moment, the possibility that I was succumbing to number mysticism, the undeniable fact remained that the GLO township is a numerological magic square. And I believe it is unique in this way; I worked out boustrophedonic squares from 2x2 to 9x9, and only the 6x6 square has this property.

=21; 2+1=3

=57; 5+7=12; 1+2=3

=93; 9+3=12; 2+1=3

=129; 1+2+9=12; 2+1=3

=165; 1+6+5+12; 2+1=3

=201; 2+0=12; 2+1=3

So, now what? Well, not having all that many facts at hand, I immediately began to theorize. Eventually, I came up with rather an elaborate scenario involving Thomas Jefferson, the Illuminati, and aerial photography—it was good for at least 20 minutes of happy hour conversation. But, upon investigation, the hypothesis broke down. Jefferson, for example, preferred a 10x10 township and there is no evidence of Illuminati involvement—but then, there wouldn't be, would there? So I began to tire of the whole thing; not that I disbelieved my nutty theory, necessarily, but I began to bore even myself.

Kaballah?

Two actual facts got me interested again. First, when reading a book about the Jewish system of mysticism known as Kaballah (or Cabala, or Qaballah, or

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36	5	33	3	2	31

Kaballah magic square. All rows and columns and the major diagonals add to 111; 1+1+1=3.

any of several variants—take your pick) I happened across the figure above.

It turns out that conventional (not numerological) magic squares are important in Kaballah, and are associated with the planets and astrological magic. The 6x6 square is associated with the sun, and is therefore the most powerful of these. The *Liber de Angelis* (a book of Western occultism dating to at least the 1400s) says of it, “*The figure of the Sun is appropriated for kings and princes of this world, and it is square and has a grid of six, and it is the figure of total power.*”

Now I don’t believe in astrological magic myself, and I suspect that precious few of our readers do, but people have apparently always used the progressions of the night sky for mystical purposes, and after thousands of years, astrology remains very much part of our world—something about it is irresistibly seductive to some human minds. And interestingly, amazing feats of engineering have a long association with astronomy and astrology. The Pyramids and Stonehenge are just two of the many examples of major ancient accomplishments that appear to have been largely motivated by astrological concerns. But considered as a whole, the township system is easily this planet’s most significant manmade feature—it would swallow thousands of Great Walls. Which leads to the rather strange thought that future archaeologists, investigating the wonder that was America, will uncover the whole system of townships and naturally conclude that early Americans were determined to stamp the ‘figure of the Sun’ across the entire continent—and nearly succeeded.

An Apocalyptic Sum

I’ll admit, I could have done without the second actual fact that got me interested again in township oddities. Late in 2003, after I had been musing about these things for a couple of years, I was looking at a township layout (they are, after all, a major feature of my job) and suddenly wondered what the numbers 1 through 36 add up to. That is, what is the sum of the 36 township squares? I’ve learned since that there’s an easy way to sum up long series of numbers, but I didn’t know it at the time so I just took out my trusty HP and cranked out an answer. Then, hoping I’d made a mistake, I added them up again... and then I did it one more time just to be sure. The sum is—and some of you are probably way ahead of me here—666, also known as “The Number of the Beast,” as recorded in the New Testament: “*Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.*”

—Revelation 13:18, *KJV*

Another translation reads: “*Here is the key; and anyone who has intelligence may work out the number of the beast. The number represents a man’s name, and the numerical value of its letters is six hundred and sixty-six.*”

—Revelation 13:18, *New English Bible*

Now What?

To sum up then, the GLO township is a boustrophedonic numerological magic square, very similar to squares associated with the Kaballah and used in Western occultism for hundreds of years. In fact, it is similar to the magic square considered most powerful. In a major feat of surveying, it has been stamped across much of the United States. The sum of its individual squares is 666, a number of apocalyptic significance to many.

Now what is the poor non-conspiracy theorist to do, faced with such a rich source of peculiarity? Probably the best thing to do is to ignore such things, but instead I began to wonder about possible motivations. That is, if there *were* some shadowy group behind all this, what might their motives have been?

Because the GLO square definitely transformed the United States in a major way, quite aside from its impact on surveying. Fly over the United States, or look at aerial photos. You will see a grid, a chessboard; square fields or developed blocks bounded by straight roads. No other sector of the Earth is laid out like

this. Fly over any part of Europe, or Asia, or South America, or... anywhere but here, really. You will see roads and fields that follow contours, that give way to hills and mountains, that nestle up to forest edges and creeks. You will see a human landscape that is *shaped by the natural world*; but in the United States, most of us live in a landscape that is *imposed upon* the natural world, laid over it like graph paper on a map. The township system is part of the structural underpinning of U.S. culture, part of every American’s mental furniture. It may not be, quite, the air we breathe but it is certainly the ground we walk on. It shapes our visible world and it shapes us.

Is it too crazy, too speculative, to say that Americans are a different people as a result of our different environment, that our national culture is partially a product of our national landscape? As a nation, we do tend to ride roughshod, at times, over the natural world. Could our straight roads and square fields be shaping us as much as we shape them?

Now here I speculate wildly, but bear with me. One word for the tendency to impose order on nature is ‘Apollonian’. The sun god, Apollo, has long been associated with classical order, control, discipline and masculinity—as opposed to the moon goddess, traditionally associated with wildness, paganism, and femininity. These two poles of human nature are older than history. As a nation, the United States is considerably more ‘solar’ than ‘lunar’.

But since the 6x6 square is a solar device, a fascinating—and, yes, nutty and conspiratorial—possibility comes to mind. There is the interesting, unlikely, crazy possibility that some person or group manipulated the choice of GLO township layout in an attempt to cast a Kabbalistic spell over an entire nation... and there is the disturbing possibility that it worked. **A**

Author’s Note: As this column was going to press, it was brought to my attention that Benjamin Franklin, a considerably gifted mathematician, was fascinated by magic squares and in fact made important contributions to the theory of their construction. I have no idea how this fits into the story I tell above (a feeling I am getting used to) except that Franklin was, of course, a contemporary of many of the GLO prime movers and was no stranger to secret societies. It also nicely illustrates a noted feature of conspiracy theories—they tend to expand unexpectedly.