

Surveying

History of Surveying in Lafayette County

Late in 1831, Wisconsin was still part of the Michigan Territory. At that time, Lucius Lyon, US Commissioner who was surveying the northern boundary of the State of Illinois, set a post and erected a mound of earth six feet square and six feet high to mark the intersection of that boundary and the Fourth Principle Meridian. This became known as the "[Point of Beginning](#)" for the State of Wisconsin and later became the southwestern most point of Lafayette County.

In 1832, what was then part of Iowa County, and later became the present Lafayette County, began to be surveyed and divided according to the [Public Land Survey System](#) (PLSS). Tracts of land were divided into square mile sections, and section corner monuments were placed at every half mile. Sections were further divided into quarter quarter sections or "forties". This opened the region up for settlement. Today, all land descriptions for the County, and the State for that matter, are mapped from the PLSS and the Point of Beginning.

In later years, local professional land surveyors retraced the County and reestablished or remonumented many of the section corner monuments. For several years, Larry Schmit was appointed as the Lafayette County Surveyor. He assisted the remonumentation process with the County until his partial retirement in 2015. Beginning in 2016, Lafayette County officially appointed a new County Surveyor, Aaron Austin, who could assist and advise the County. The same year, Land Information began bidding out remonumentation and maintenance projects. These projects have continued to date and include updated survey monument records (tiesheets) and acquisition of survey grade coordinates on all section corners included in the projects. As whole townships are completed, the Real Property Lister/GIS Specialist is remapping all parcels using the survey grade accuracy and improving or enhancing the parcel listings within the county land records system. See the "[PLSS Remonumentation Status Map](#)" to view the progress made in the County.

Plats of Survey

The Land Information Office is appointed by the County Surveyor to house all Plats of Survey for the County. The office is currently in the process of mapping, indexing and making these records available online free of charge. You may visit the "[Survey and Tiesheet Viewer](#)" application to learn more. If you are not able to locate a document online, please contact the Land Information Staff or the County Surveyor.

Why You Should Get a Survey

When you buy property, it's a "Buyer Beware" situation. Handshake agreements from the past don't hold up in a Court of Law and "where you think the property line is" might not legally be where it truly is. Getting your land surveyed is common place in this day and age and may even be a requirement by your bank, local municipality, or to simply meet zoning requirements.

Hiring a Professional Land Surveyor should be done prior to any division or transfer of property and prior to the design and/or installation of property improvements. A surveyor will:

- Discuss what type of survey you need and how it will be used.
- Collect all the necessary data for the survey, such as: deeds, maps, easements, highway plans, etc.
- Find or set boundary corners and measure between them. Measurements are compared to those in the deeds and maps. Buildings, fences and other pertinent structures may also be located.
- Serve as an expert witness, on behalf of the survey, if testimony is desired by the court.

Types of Surveys

People are often confused by what type of survey they need or what they represent. The following is a brief explanation:

Plat of Survey - A property survey locating one or more boundaries of an existing property is one of the most common forms of survey. Existing boundary corner monuments are located, and if none are found, new corners are placed. The surveyor will file a "Plat of Survey" map with the County Land Information office. The plat of survey bears the official seal of the Professional Land Surveyor. A plat of survey does not automatically transfer property ownership or create a new tax parcel. Additional documents will still need to be recorded in the Register of Deeds.

Certified Survey Map - Also known as a "Minor Land Division", a CSM is used to create 1-4 new parcels of land out of an existing parcel. This survey is reviewed by the local government and County and is recorded at the Register of Deeds. Recording a CSM will trigger the creation of a new tax parcel, although deeds will still need to be recorded to transfer property ownership. Roads and other spaces may also be dedicated with a CSM. Rezone requests in Lafayette County frequently require the use of a CSM if the property being rezoned is not being sold.

Subdivision Plat - A subdivision plat is large map prepared when dividing a single parcel of land into five or more parcels. This map is reviewed by local, County and State level and commonly involves engineering and design of roads and utilities. Similar to a CSM, the subdivision plat is recorded at the Register of Deeds and may included dedications. A subdivision plat automatically creates new tax parcels.

ALTA/ACSM Survey - A highly detailed property survey often required by lending institutions. The surveyor must follow certain guidelines established by the American Congress on Surveying and Mapping and the American Land Title Association. A title commitment is required for this type of survey.

Web Links

- [SW Chapter of WI Society of Land Surveyors](#)
- [WI Society of Land Surveyors](#)
- [WI County Surveyors Association](#)
- [WI Dept of Administration: Plat Review](#)
- [Bureau of Land Management: Federal Land Records](#)
- [NOAA: National Geodetic Survey](#)
- [WI Land Information Association](#)
- [State Cartographers Office: Control Finder](#)
- [USGS: The Public Land Survey System](#)

Supporting Documents

Professional Land Surveyor List 93.78 KB

WI Corner Point Identification System (Romportl) 77.61 KB