INITIAL POINT DEDICATION

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE: This Post was the Initial Point for measurement of the Iowa Minnesota Border, which is the Baseline for all 5th Principal Meridian Surveys in Minnesota and the Dakotas. These surveys established the Township and Section Corners which defined the property lines for the homesteaders and are still used today as the basis for all property descriptions.

THE MONUMENT: The monument set at the Initial Point was an eight foot long “White Oak Post 12 inches square branded on the 4 sides as follows to wit -- Upon the sides facing S.E. & S.W. the letters (I. B. Iowa 43° 30' North) & upon the sides facing N.E. & N.W. the letters (M. B. Minnesota 43° 30' North)

RESTORATION CREWS:
Chief Restoration Surveyor: Donald Borcherding
Chief Restoration Scribe: Edward J. Otto
Houston County Surveyor: Richard D. Walter
Houston County Engineer: Brian Pogodzinski
Allamakee County Engineer: Brian T. Ridenour
Landscaping Crew: MSPS Chapter Three

CONTRIBUTORS:
Minnesota Society of Professional Surveyors, Minnesota Association of County Surveyors, Society of Land Surveyors of Iowa, National Surveyors Historical Society, Allamakee County, & Houston County

CORPORATE SPONSORS:
Ayres Associates, Davy Engineering, JHS Engineers Surveyors, Mohn Surveying, Otto Associates, Rani Engineering, Sunde Land Surveying, Ulteig, Westwood, Yaggy Colby Associates

INDIVIDUAL SPONSORS:
Tony Blumentritt, Russell J. Heiling, Steven A. Jobe, Theodore D. Kemna, Myron & David Landecker, Richard & Joyce Leu, Andy & Jill Luttchens, George & Tammy Mauss, MNDNR Survey Unit, Ronald J. Olson, John C. Peterson, Edward H. Sunde, Dick & Teresa Walter, Kenneth L. Whitehorn

CAPTAIN ANDREW TALCOTT (1797-1883)

Andrew Talcott
1835 Surveyed disputed Ohio Michigan Border with Lieutenant Robert E. Lee
1836 Resigned to private practice as Civil Engineer
1848-1855 Chief Engineer Richmond to Danville Railroad
1852 At request of General Land Office Commissioner Butterfield hired as Chief Astronomer and Surveyor of Northern border of Iowa

Born 20 April, 1797, Glastonbury, Connecticut, Died 22 April, 1883, Richmond, Virginia.

TERRITORIAL HISTORY

WISCONSIN TERRITORY 1836      IOWA TERRITORY 1838
STATE OF IOWA 1846      STATE OF WISCONSIN 1848
MINNESOTA TERRITORY 1849

SUMMARY OF IOWA MINNESOTA BORDER SURVEY

On December 28, 1846 the State of Iowa was admitted to the Union. The Iowa Constitution fixed the northern boundary of the state at the parallel of latitude of 43 degree 30 minutes north. This line became the southern border of the Minnesota Territory which was organized on March 3, 1849.

CAPTAIN LEE & CAPTAIN TALCOTT

Captain Thomas J. Lee was first sent by the Surveyor General to establish a monument on the parallel. Because of existing Indian Reserves and the outbreak of an epidemic of Asiatic cholera the survey of the line itself was delayed until 1852. At the recommendation of General Land Office Commissioner Justin Butterfield, Captain Andrew Talcott was hired by Surveyor General George B Sargent to be Principal Surveyor & Astronomer for the survey of the Northern Boundary of Iowa.

MEETING IN WASHINGTON

In February 1852 they met in Washington D.C. to make final arrangements for the survey. Isaac W. Smith was hired as First Assistant to be in charge of the field operations. David R. Isaac was hired as Quartermaster to supply and equip the 40 man crew for the expected 6 months of surveying across 250 miles of uncharted prairie.

INSTRUCTIONS

Their instructions from the Commissioner were to start the survey by projecting a line north from the nearest existing township corner in Iowa and intersecting the parallel as established by Captain Lee for the INITIAL POINT of measurement on the line. From this point they were to advance east to the Mississippi River and west to the Big Sioux setting Township, Section and Quarter section corners every half mile on the gradually curving parallel.

For more information on the survey visit the Initial Point which has been historically recreated (see photo at left) by the Minnesota Society of Professional Surveyors about 5 miles west of here. (See location map below.)
LEE’S IRON MONUMENT (Lee’s Notes 1849)

This is a hollow pyramid of Cast Iron. Six feet high, 11 inches at the base and 7 at the top, weighs nearly 600 lbs. It has upon the four sides the inscription, in raised letters as follows:
Iowa
Lat 45° 30’
1849
Minnesota
It was firmly planted, about a foot below the surface of the ground, upon an oak log having a large butt which was sunk 5 feet and rammed; the iron post being further secured by driving stout pegs with projecting heads along the flange at the bottom of the casting, and by earth thrown round its base.
It is conspicuously placed at the northern extremity of an open prairie of some 2 miles in extent, not far from high water mark. A well worn Indian Trail passes within a few feet of it.

INITIAL POINT MONUMENT (Talcott’s Notes 1852)

Between Ranges 4 and 5, West of the 5th Meridian North between Sections 1 and 6
Variation 8° 40’ East
4.35 Intersect the Boundary of Iowa and Minnesota, but White Oak post 22 in square located upon the 4 sides as follows to wit:
Upon the sides facing S.E. and S.W. the letters (L. S. Iowa 45° 30’ North) and upon the sides facing the N. E. & N. W. the letters (M. S. Minnesota 45° 30’ North) also marked with other characters designating the Range, Township and Section as required by instructions.
White Oak S. 57° 56’ W. 189.6a
Black Oak S. N. 37° 15’ W. 114.6a
White Oak S. N. 37° 15’ W. 395.8a
White Oak S. N. 28° 30’ W. 275.6a
The foregoing Range Line was surveyed north to its intersection with the parallel of 45° 30’ North Latitude that line range line might serve as a common meridian for the land surveys of Iowa & Minnesota. This intersection determined the initial points for the townships east to the Mississippi River and west to the Big Sioux.
Latitude of post marking intersection 45° 30’ 0.62”
1/19/11

WHEREAS: On April 18th, 1852, Deputy Surveyor James Marsh intersected the Range Line between Ranges 4 and 5 with the Boundary of Iowa and Minnesota. He set a White Oak post 12" in square and branded upon the four sides as follows, to wit: Upon the sides facing S.E. and S.W. the letters (I. B. Iowa 43° 30' North) and upon the sides facing N.E. and N.W. the letters (M. B. Minnesota 43° 30' North)

WHEREAS: According to Captain Talcott’s final report, “The foregoing Range Line was surveyed north to its intersection with the parallel of 43° 30’ North Latitude. The line was determined to be a common meridian for the land surveys of Iowa & Minnesota.”

WHEREAS: The Iowa Minnesota Border was used as a Baseline for all 5th Principal Meridian Surveys in Minnesota and the Dakotas.

WHEREAS: These surveys established all of the Township and Section Corners which defined the property lines for the homesteaders and are still used today as the basis for all property descriptions.

WHEREAS: The Minnesota Society of Professional Surveyors, Association with concurrence of the Society of Land Surveyors of Iowa, the Minnesota Association of County Surveyors and the Surveyors Historical Society deem this point to be historically significant.

WHEREAS: Allamakee County, Iowa, agreed to provide right-of-way and grading of the site, and Houston County, Minnesota, agreed to provide surveys and gravel for the site.

WHEREAS: The Minnesota Society of Professional Surveyors, Historical Committee, arranged for the recreation and setting of said White Oak Post, planning, construction and landscaping of the site, and designing, building and erecting an informational kiosk.

THEREFORE: The Minnesota Society of Professional Surveyors, Allamakee County, Iowa, and Houston County, Minnesota, proclaim their dedication to preserving this historic site.