The Public Land Surveys in Minneapolis and St Paul

A Surveying Potboiler
A Surveying Potboiler
(Imagine seductive soap opera music)

Land ceded in three different treaties
Land surveyed under two sets of general instructions – townships even
Land surveyed using the 4th Principal Meridian but west of the Mississippi
A Surveying Potboiler

A military reservation without definite boundaries for three decades

- A reservation that was reduced in area, paradoxically before the actual area of the reservation was defined - unnecessary boundary survey
- A reservation on which non-military personnel were allowed to settle and who, when removed, cheekily asked for compensation and the right to preempt the land they occupied

Lost or Obliterated instructions and field notes = None
Periods of Interest

A. 1805 – 1823 – 1839

- Pike’s so-called treaty
- Fort Snelling finished
- The first map of the military reservation – land east and west of the Mississippi

B. 1840 – 1848 – 1852

- The first surveys east of the Mississippi River
- Federal legislation confining the reservation to land west of the Mississippi
Periods of Interest

C. 1853 – 1854 – 1857

• The surveys of the military reservation boundaries
• The surveys of township exteriors and subdivision
• Sale of land formerly included in military reservation east of the Mississippi
• Seth Eastman survey of reduced military reservation

D. >1857

• Sale of reduced reservation
"That the Sioux Nation grants unto the United States for the purpose of the establishment of military posts, nine miles square at the mouth of the river St. Croix, also from below the confluence of the Mississippi and St. Peters, up the Mississippi, to include the falls of St. Anthony, extending nine miles on each side of the river that the Sioux Nation grants to the United States, the full sovereignty and power over said districts forever, without any let or hindrance whatsoever. The United States promise on their part to permit the Sioux to pass, repass, hunt or make other uses of the said districts, as they have formerly done, without any other exception.”

Modern interpretation – what did the Sioux understand by that language?
The United States Military
The Earliest Map - 1823
No mention of Pike’s treaty in treaty of 1837
The “Basic” Map – May 6, 1839

- firewood
- grazing
- non-military personnel
Townships Subdivided by Isaac N. Higbee East of the Mississippi
General Instructions issued by the Surveyor General Wisconsin and Iowa, George W. Jones, May 28, 1846

- All east of the Mississippi River
- Area ceded in treaty of 1837 – no mention of the 1805 treaty
- All using the 4th Principal Meridian

Surveys at the end of 1851
Special Instructions issued by Surveyor General George W Jones
Henry A Wiltse contract May 28, 1847

Henry A Wiltse contract May 28, 1847

- 4th Principal Meridian to Lake Superior
- 3rd Correction from the PM to the Mississippi

Connecting surveys around Mississippi – St Croix – St Peter’s – confluence with those further east in Wisconsin Territory
Special Instructions to Marsh

On May 27, 1847 George W Jones, the Surveyor General awarded James M. Marsh a contract to establish townships in western Wisconsin.

His special instructions contained no mention of the military reserve.

“Herewith you are furnished a description of each of the existing township corners upon the south boundary of your district, with an accurate statement of the closing and magnetic variations of each several boundary thereof.”
Special Instructions issued by the Surveyor General to James M. Marsh contract dated May 28, 1847
On September 3, 1847 Surveyor General Jones awarded Isaac Higbee a contract to subdivide the townships adjoining the Mississippi that included a portion of the military reserve lying east of the River.

Again, there was no mention of the reservation in his special instructions.
Higbee Subdivisions

He ran random and correct section lines on east, north, and south tiers of sections
Special Instructions issued by the Surveyor General to Isaac Higbee contract September 3, 1847

Several township of the district of subdivisions assigned to you under contract of this date, are rendered fractional by the Mississippi river. In subdividing these townships, you are to regard the main channel of the said river as the boundary of your district upon the South and West, consequently you are to meander all islands in the said river within the said district, which are valuable either for their soil or timber.

You are to measure the left bank of so much of the Mississippi river as adjoins the district aforesaid. In executing this portion of your work you will please, as often as once in each of the said fractional townships ascertain by triangulation or otherwise the width of the said river and enter the same in its proper place in your meander notes.
In your survey of the fractional townships above named should any one or more of your East & West lines, in closing upon the Mississippi river, exceed the just length of the tier or series of which such line is a portion, you, are, from the point of the full measure of such line or lines to run as directed under the head of "township lines" in the foregoing printed instructions – due North & South respectively, until you intersect the said river in each direction. This line you are to establish at the proper Range line and you are to return the field notes thereof in a separate book, attested by yourself and assistants in the usual manner.
Origin of this portion of the Original Military Reservation Line?

Feb. 15, 1848
Plat certified by Surveyor General George Jones February 15, 1848

On May 6, 1848 the Commissioner of the General Land Office, Richard M. Young, wrote to Jones,

I … call your attention to the instructions from this Office of 29 July 1839 directing a reservation for Military purposes at Fort Snelling on the upper Mississippi; and to request that you will forward to this and the Register’s office a diagram showing the connection of the Reservation with the lines of the public land surveys.
May 19, 1848, the Surveyor General responded, writing,

In compliance with part of your communication of the 6th Inst., requiring me to indicate the connections of the public surveys with the Military reservation at Fort Snelling, I beg leave to transmit, for your examination, the enclosed diagram. The sketch of the said Reservation accompanying instructions from your office, dated 29th July, 1839, was not the result of a survey, and gives neither course nor distance (?Map of May 6, 1839)

Therefore ….I have ventured to propose a boundary made to conform to regular subdivisional lines. The boundary follows very nearly upon the track of the one originally proposed, and comprises, as nearly as can be ascertained, an equal amount of land. Its upper point of intersection with the Mississippi river is precisely the same, and its lower point of intersection with the river, the same within five chains
On June 30 the Commissioner responded to his actions, stating,

Yours of the 19th inst. has also been received enclosing a diagram of that portion of the Military Reservation at Fort Snelling which is situated in Wisconsin. In the absence of marks or monuments in the field, showing the boundaries of this Reservation, the course pursued by you in tracing it along the boundaries of legal subdivisions was perfectly proper. You will please forward a copy of the diagram to the Register.

Here we have another instance when the plat was altered after being certified. Question – does the plat sent to Washington contain the military reservation?
August 26 1852 “An Act to reduce and define the Boundaries of the Military Reserve at the Saint Peter’s River” 10 Stat 36-37

Directed the Secretary of War to “cause the lines of the present military reserve at Fort Snelling, in the Territory of Minnesota, to be so contracted as to embrace the following boundaries …” - restricted the reservation to land west of Mississippi

The legislation authorized the Commissioner of the General Land Office to survey “so much of the land heretofore included in the military reservation aforesaid, but without the limits of the military reserve aforesaid, as defined by this act as have not already been surveyed,” and the land sold
Two parcels of land outside the reservation boundaries, were reserved “for military purposes;”

- “a quarter section on the right bank of the St. Peter’s river, at the present ferry”
- a quarter section “on the left bank of the Mississippi river, at the present ferry across that river,” already surveyed by Isaac Higbee

Two weeks later, on September 3, 1852 the Commissioner of the General Land Office wrote to the Register at the Stillwater land district office requesting that the location of the ferry reservation be marked on a map
Jesse T. Jarrett

Contract 1853

1. To establish the Original Military Reservation Line west of the River – Why?
2. To run township exteriors
3. To subdivided the townships
Re-Survey of the Boundary of the Original Military Wards.

Jesse T. Jarrett

(Jesse T. Jarrett)

NOTE: Under the auspices of the Minnesota Land Surveyors Association (MLSA), Harley R. Schneider, MLSA Historian, spent considerable time researching archival records, located in Des Moines, Iowa, for documents relating to the Minnesota Public Land Surveys. At the time of research, records of this nature which were uncovered, were segregated in their respective Iowa Archives storage boxes. Subsequently, copies of the segregated records were made by Iowa Archives, and transmitted to the MLSA Historian for study and dissemination. This machine copy of Field notes, made from the original document on file and of record in Iowa State Historical Department, Division of Historical Museum and Archives, Box 13, and being a part of the Iowa Secretary of State Land Office Records, is one such document.

Harley R. Schneider
MLSA Historian
12 December 1936
Point of Beginning

Found a Post

Source Unknown
West of the Mississippi

Instructions of 1851

1852 Surveyor General George B. Sargent directed to use the Oregon Manual
1853 Surveyor General Warner Lewis directed to use the Oregon Manual

?Special Instructions for Jarrett
July 5-22, 1853
Starts on the west bank of the Mississippi
Intersects the OMR Line
Problem of setting posts?

1851 Instructions

Jarrett Sequence of Exteriors
Jarrett - Sequence of Subdividing

A July 22
B July 23-Aug. 3
C Aug. 8-17
D Aug. 19-27
E Aug. 29-31
F Sept. 1-6
G Sept. 8-13
H Sept. 14-21
Subdividing T27N R22W
Sept 8-13 1853
Townships & Subdivisions
Jesse T. Jarrett May 30, 1853

Township lines James M. Marsh May 22, 1847
Subdivision lines Isaac N. Higbee Sept 3, 1847
Completed Maps
1931 plat book showing Seth Eastman’s 1857 division of the Reduced Military Reservation – no field notes
Harper’s Weekly 1861
The End