

Transcribed Excerpts from the Land Ordinance of 1785, May 18, 1785

An ORDINANCE for ascertaining the Mode of disposing of LANDS in the WESTERN TERRITORY.

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE UNITED STATES IN CONGRESS ASSEMBLED,

THAT the territory ceded by individual states to the United States, which has been purchased of the Indian inhabitants, shall be disposed of in the following manner.—

A surveyor from each state shall be appointed by Congress or a Committee of the States, who shall take an oath for the faithful discharge of his duty, before the geographer of the United States, who is hereby empowered and directed to administer the same; and the like oath shall be administered to each chain carrier, by the surveyor under whom he acts ...

The surveyors as they are respectively qualified shall proceed to divide the said territory into townships of six miles square, by lines running due north and south, and others crossing these at right angles, unless where the boundaries of the late Indian purchases may render the same impracticable, and then they shall depart from this rule no farther than such particular circumstances may require ...

The geographer shall designate the townships or fractional parts of townships, by numbers progressively from south to north, always beginning each range with No. 1; and the ranges shall be distinguished by their progressive numbers to the westward ...

The lines shall be measured with a chain; shall be plainly marked by chaps on the trees, and exactly described on a plat, whereon shall be noted by the surveyor, at their proper distances all mines, salt springs, salt licks and mill seats, that shall come to his knowledge, and all water courses, mountains, and other remarkable and permanent things, over or near which such lines shall pass, and also the quantity of the lands.

The plats of the townships respectively, shall be marked by subdivision into lots of one mile square, or 640 acres, in the same direction as the external lines, and numbered from 1 to 36 ... And the surveyors in running the external lines of the townships, shall at the interval of every mile, mark corners for the lots which are adjacent, always designating the same in a different manner from those of the townships.

The geographer and surveyors, shall pay the utmost attention to the variation of the magnetic needle; and shall run and note all lines by the true meridian, certifying with every plat what was the variation at the times of running the lines thereon noted ...

There shall be reserved for the United States out of every township, the four lots, being numbered, 8, 11, 26, 29, and out of every fractional part of a township, so many lots of the same numbers as shall be found thereon ...