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An Inventory of the Public Land Surveys Records for Minnesota: The Special Instructions

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**AN INVENTORY OF THE
PUBLIC LAND SURVEYS RECORDS FOR MINNESOTA:
THE SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS**

FINAL REPORT

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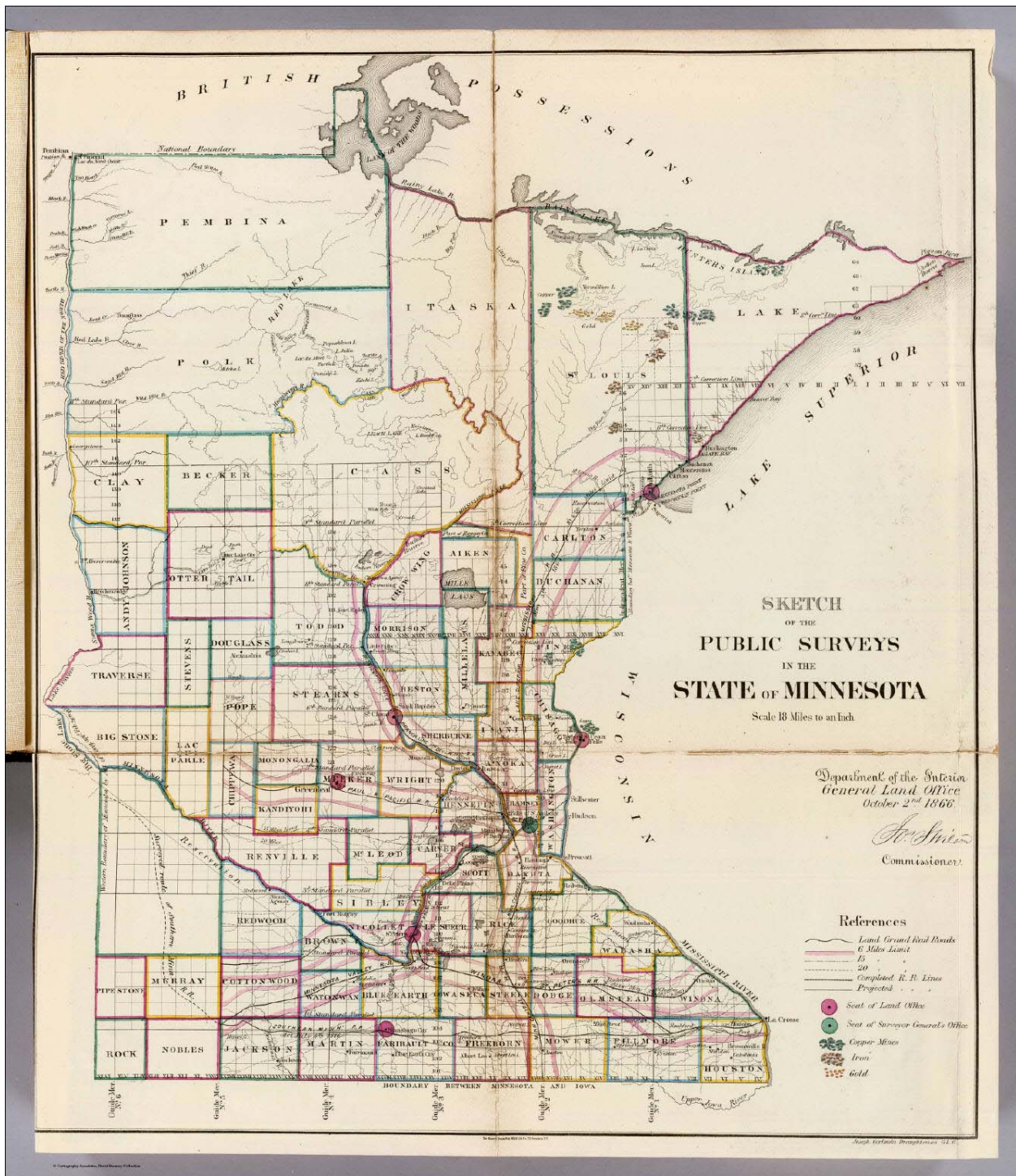
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The rectangular public land surveys in Minnesota were carried out by a cadre of deputy surveyors under contract with the Surveyor Generals of Wisconsin and Iowa (1847-1857) and the Surveyors General of Minnesota (1857-1908). In their work, the deputies were guided by the General Instructions issued to all deputies by the Surveyors General and under the Special Instructions each received along with his contract. At the same time, the Surveyors General received a variety of instructions from their superior, the Commissioners of the General Land Office. The Special Instructions and the Instructions from the Commissioners are not widely used by the modern land surveyors in their work reconstructing what the deputies did, in part because they are scattered through a variety of collections housed in several locations. This research makes a preliminary inventory of these records, particularly those housed in the voluminous correspondence files kept by the following individuals: the Surveyors General of Wisconsin and Iowa, which are now housed in the Iowa State Archives in Dubuque, Iowa; the Surveyors General of Minnesota, which are now housed in the Minnesota State Archives in the Minnesota History Center in St Paul; and the Commissioners of the General Land Office, which are now housed in the National Archives, Washington D.C. The research also makes recommendations regarding future efforts to make such records widely available in an electronic format.

The Instructions, along with the Township Plats and the Field Notes, comprise the public land survey records having the most important value to the modern land surveyor.



“Our country, unlike many others, was founded in a relatively literate era, and the records are there for all those who are willing to avail themselves of the written word.”

Barber Conable Jr. in Swartz, Seymour I This Land is Your Land.

The Geographic Evolution Of the United States
(Henry N. Adams Inc. New York, 2000) p.7

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

The research project was formulated in response to a Problem Statement (PS129) drafted by Jay Krafthefer of the Office of Land Management, Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT), “Bringing United States Public Land Survey Records into the Twenty-first Century.”

1.1 Objectives of the Research

The research had two objectives. The first was to find and categorize the instructions given the deputy surveyors who ran the lines and established the corner monuments that characterize the rectangular public land survey net in Minnesota. (Figure 1.1) These instructions are vital to anyone interested in the public land surveys, to the historical scholar wanting to describe the evolution of the survey net and to the modern land surveyor involved in remonumenting or restoring lost corners, conducting boundary surveys, or merely trying to understand the origins of a particular corner or line. Part of their importance is the light they shed on other records. Indeed, without these instructions, the field notes, on which the plats are based, may make no sense. The instructions are particularly valuable for understanding the surveying process and its outcomes, the physical evidence of its existence on the land surface – the lines and the corner monuments – and the documentary evidence of its existence – the township plats – comprising the first legal descriptions. The instructions, in fact, provide the basis for modern legal descriptions, and so have irreplaceable value for present surveyors “following in the footsteps” of the original surveyors, including those working at Mn/DOT. In the Preface to their book on special instructions in Iowa, Dodds et al stated, “The well-qualified land surveyor ...needs to know as much as possible of the instructions under which the earlier work was done so that he can correctly retrace and interpret the meaning of the original notes and plats.” [1]

A second objective was to look at the impediments to creating electronic versions of these records, now over 100 years old. This objective continues the recent attempts to “modernize” such records in Minnesota that will both diminish the need for handling any of the original material and allow more modern technology to be employed in their analysis.[2] This project, then, was designed as a first step in making such technological conversions practical and cost-effective, by locating the most relevant public land survey records.

The object of the project was not to find and catalog every piece of paper containing information about the public land surveys in Minnesota. [3] The focus, rather, was on a subset of the large volume of records kept by the General Land Office, the federal real estate agency, established in 1812, “to superintend, execute, and perform all such acts and things touching or respecting the lands of the United States.” [4] The subset, describing how the public land surveys were carried out, form the basis for all legal descriptions in Minnesota. Such records are critical not only to Mn/DOT’s work in acquiring land for Minnesota’s transportation needs but for any land surveyor concerned with the location of the original corner monuments.

Most of the surveying records, including those containing instructions are inaccessible, in part because they have never been inventoried in detail and in part because they are scattered in various places. This research was designed (a) to compile an inventory of the records and acquire illustrative samples of the instructions, and (b) to assess their suitability for digital

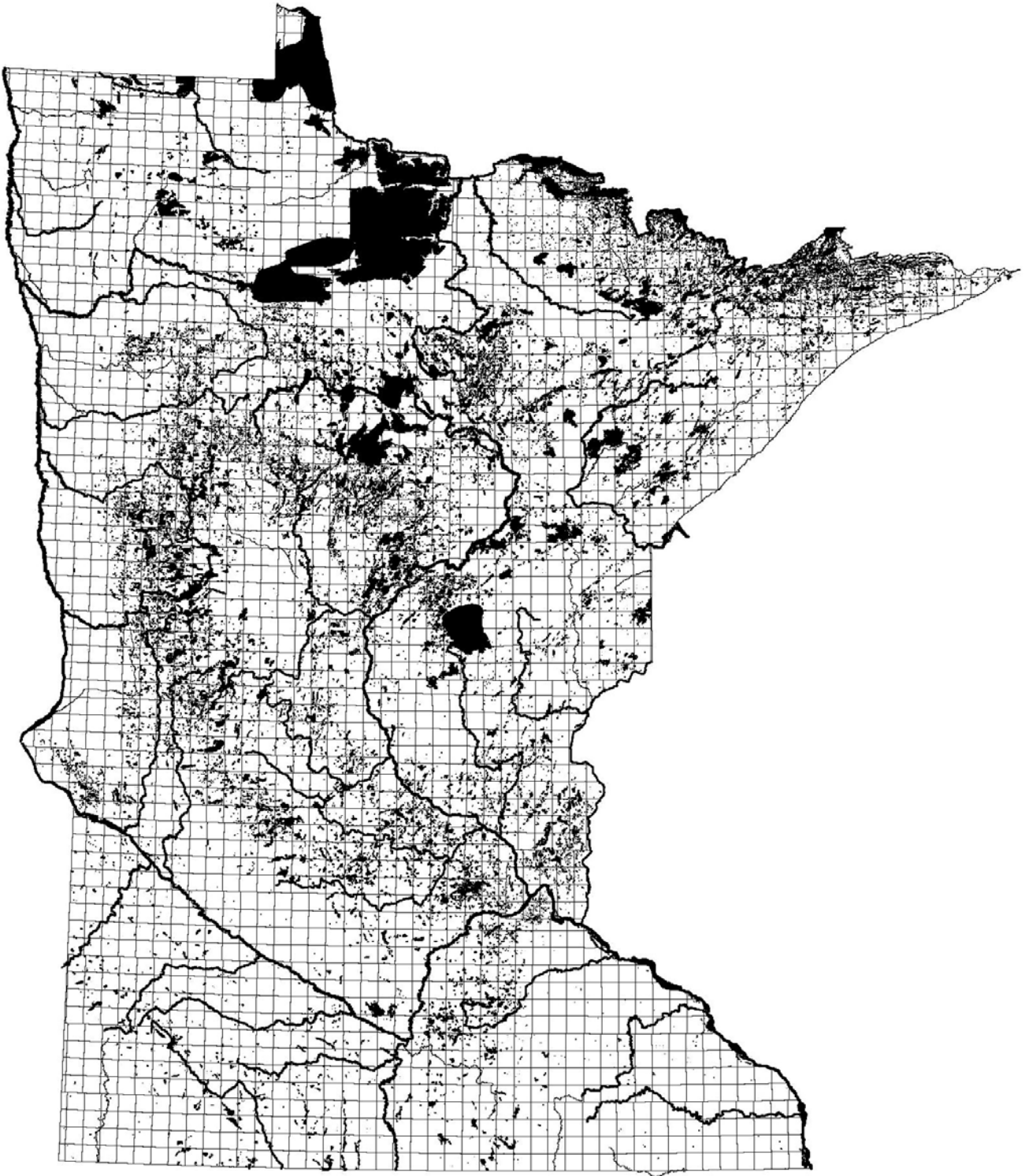


Figure 1.1 The Rectangular Public Land Survey Net in Minnesota

imaging. The inventory is necessary for greater access to, and greater use of, these records while at the same time preserving them.

These records are little used at present for a variety of reasons. They are all paper and are scattered in repositories across the country. They do not readily meet the demands of modern researchers interested in legal descriptions, such as surveyors, real estate or other land management professionals, and historians.

Increasingly some states are placing certain records – the plats and field notes, for example online There are a variety of digital resources depicting the surveying records described here, in particular the plats for Minnesota and other states, such as Michigan, Wisconsin, and Florida (the last two named also includes the deputies' field notes). There are also digital resources concerning the original corner monuments maintained by the county surveyors in Minnesota, see Dakota County Surveyor's Office and Carver County Surveyor. [5]

1.2 The Relevance of the Research

All of the paper records produced during the federal government's land surveying efforts in Minnesota in the second half of the nineteenth century have lasting value. As a collection they describe the actual surveying process. Singly, they describe particular facets of that process.

The records examined have great historical value. They are critical for anyone wishing to understand the public land surveys in Minnesota since they reveal how each deputy surveyor was supposed to carry out the duties specified in his contract. They are also critical for anyone examining more familiar surveying records. They provide a basis for examining both the field notes, in which the deputy described what he did and what he saw, and the township plats that were subsequently drafted from that description. Using the records described here, we can accurately reconstruct what happened over 100 years ago.

Because of their historical value, the records have great modern value.

The importance of a knowledge of special or other instructions which may have been given by the surveyor general to his deputies prior to the original survey cannot be emphasized too strongly. No surveyor should attempt to make a resurvey of a section without full government notes and be in possession of such instructions. [6]

They are relevant for the modern land surveyor, particularly those charged with preserving, restoring, or marking corners established by the deputies to mark section, quarter section, and meander corners, "prima facie evidence of the original United States public land survey corners." [7]

The surveyor shall make full and accurate notes and records from which the entire survey can be relocated, and shall, no later than one year after preserving, restoring, and marking the corners, file a certified copy of the same, with a filed plat, in the office of the county surveyor if an office is maintained in a building maintained by the

county for county purposes on a full-time basis, and if not, shall record it in the office of the county recorder. [8]

To accurately relocate a corner the land surveyor must consider all available evidence concerning how they were originally established by the deputy. This information includes the instructions given to the deputy as he was awarded a contract to carry out a survey as well as the information provided by the field notes that record what he actually did.

The letters containing these instructions are housed in the voluminous correspondence files kept by the Surveyors General who contracted with the deputies and the Commissioners of the General Land Office who were responsible for managing all the Surveyors General. The instructions are inaccessible, in part because they have never been inventoried in sufficient detail and in part because they are scattered, in various collections in various places. Because there is no comprehensive catalog of such letters and because they are scattered in various places there has been little opportunity for the modern land surveyor to use them to inform his work. As a result, many surveyors are forced to rely solely on the fieldnotes and township plats for their historical reconstructions. Today's technologies can provide digital images of these records and make them widely available. Such a collection of digital images would also enhance the utility of the instructions by making them amenable to modern analyses. At the same time they would diminish the need to handle the originals, many of which are fragile.

The purpose of this research was (a) to compile an inventory of the instructions contained in the letters and to acquire illustrative samples and (b) to assess their suitability to be digitally imaged. The inventory is necessary for preserving these vital records, by restricting public access while, at the same time, permitting more widespread use.

1.3 Outline of Report

The project was divided into several tasks;

- Providing a report and an index to the relevant records located in the Iowa State Archives at Des Moines, Iowa. An evaluation of these materials for imaging. (Chapter 3)
- Providing a report and an index containing an index to the relevant records located at the Minnesota History Center, St. Paul, and an evaluation of these materials for imaging. (Chapter 4)
- Providing a report and an index of the relevant records located at the National Archives, Washington D.C. and an evaluation of these materials for imaging. (Chapter 5)
- Producing an article for the Minnesota Surveyor, the magazine of the Minnesota Society of Professional Surveyors. (Appendix A)
- Providing a reports and an index to relevant National Archive microfilm collection M27 owned by the Principal Investigator. An evaluation of these materials for imaging. (Appendix E)

1.4 Deliverables not Contained in this Report

The research proposal called for several other deliverables that are not reported here.

1. Promotional materials
2. Finding aids for the relevant letters contained in the following National Archives Microfilms;
 - M25 Miscellaneous letters sent by the General Land Office, 1796-1889
 - M477 Letters sent by the Surveyor General to the Territory Northwest of the Ohio River, 1797-1901
 - M478 Letters received by the Secretary of the Treasury and the Commissioner of the General Land Office from the Surveyors General of the Territory Northwest of the Ohio River, 1797-1849
 - M479 Letters received by the Surveyor General of the Territory Northwest of the Ohio River, 1797-1856
3. Presentation at the 2007 Annual Meeting of the Minnesota Society for Professional Surveyors, titled “The Past as Prolog: Public Land Survey Records for Minnesota.”
4. Presentation at the Minnesota Department of Transportation Technical Conference March, 2007, titled “A Partial Inventory of the General Land Office Surveying Records for Minnesota.”

The promotional materials and the Powerpoint presentations are available from the Principal Investigator, Rod Squires, and from the Technical Liaison, Jay Krafthefer.

After a preliminary examination, all of the National Archives microfilm collections noted above were deemed less relevant for the purposes of the project than at first thought. They probably contain letters that would dramatically extend the historical and geographical scope of research into the public land surveys but probably do not contain the Special Instructions that would help explain how the deputy surveyors carried out their work in Minnesota.

CHAPTER 2. THE PUBLIC LAND SURVEYS

From the earliest days of the nation, the United States government adopted a policy of conveying title to the land it acquired from the original states, foreign nations, and Native American tribes. [9] Under the provisions of numerous statutes enacted between 1785 and 1935 the federal government conveyed title to 1½ billion acres of land to individuals, state, and corporations. Before title could be conveyed however, legal descriptions had to be created, establishing the boundaries of the tracts of land that were to be conveyed and their location in the United States. The public land surveys provided the necessary legal descriptions. (Figure 2.1)

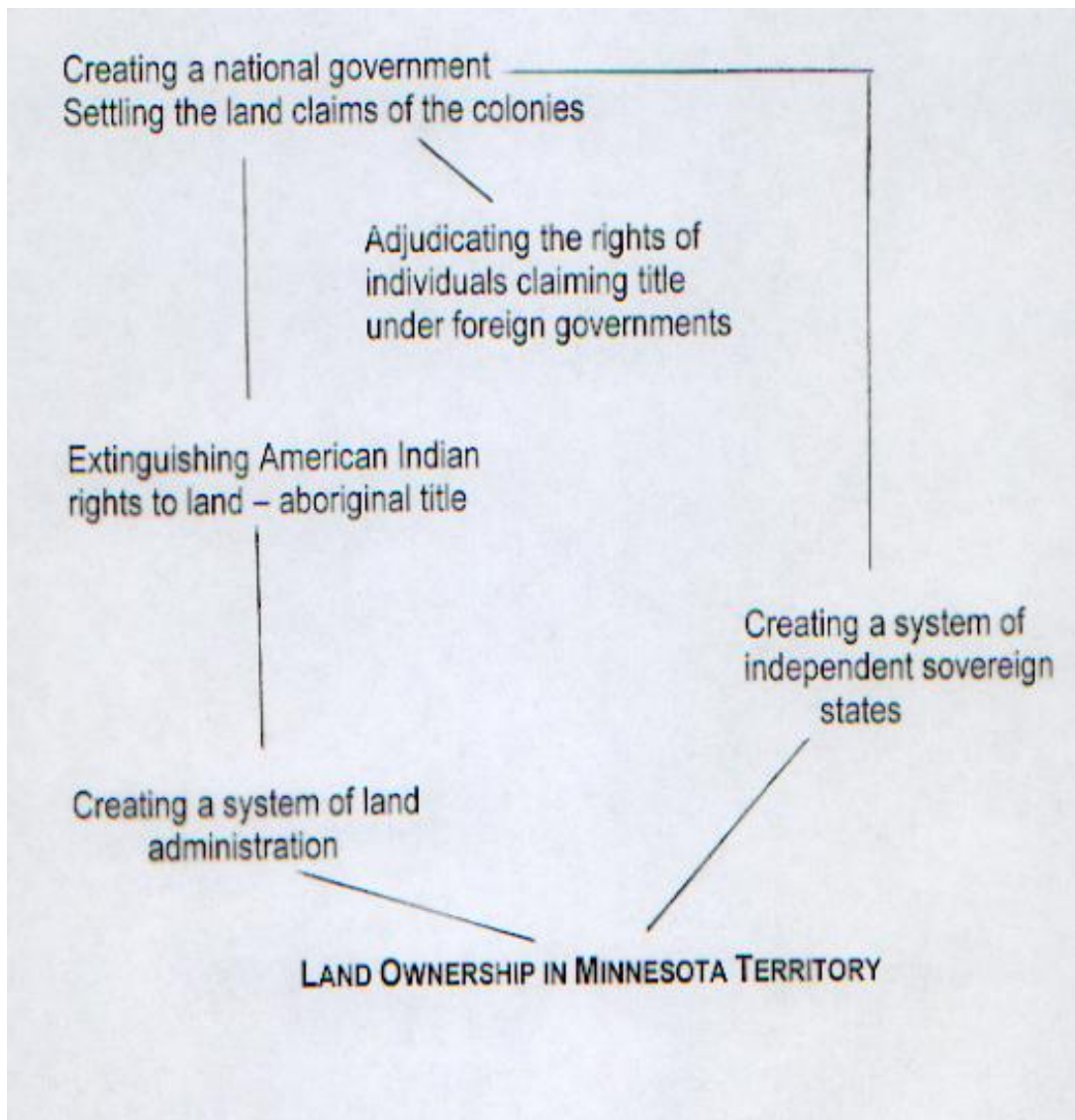


Figure 2.1 The Place of the Public Land Surveys in the History of Land in the United States

Across the land surface of Minnesota, then, lies a rectangular net comprising east-west and north-south lines along which every half mile is a monument. Largely invisible, except where

roads and local government boundaries coincide with the lines, this net formed the legal description for every parcel of land the federal government offered for sale in Minnesota. The net, created by a cadre of deputy surveyors working as contractual employees of the federal government under the guidance of the Surveyor General of Wisconsin and Iowa, between 1847 and 1857, and then under the guidance of the Surveyors General of Minnesota, from 1857 until 1908, created the first ownership boundaries throughout the state. The public land surveys, which created the net, were the first major systematic impact of European Americans on the land surface of the United States. They have proven to be among the most enduring cultural impacts.^[10]

2.1 The Process of Surveying ¹¹

Surveying records are produced during the surveying process so it seems appropriate to outline the process. What follows is necessarily general. Details of specific township surveys how they were established and subdivided, can only be discovered through the investigation of some of the sources described later in the report.

The process of surveying changed during the sixty years that Minnesota was being surveyed. There were technical changes; the solar compass was introduced as were new ways of avoiding, or at least containing, the errors associated with the earth's curvature. Most importantly, however, standardized way of carrying out the surveys were introduced.

Having received Congressional appropriations to survey the public lands, the Commissioner of the General Land Office wrote to the Surveyor General of a surveying district advising him of the amount of money available to his district, sometimes with suggestions regarding which lands to survey with the available money.^[12] The Surveyor General awarded deputies contracts to establish townships in a particular part of the surveying district, usually on the north and west margins of the area that had already been surveyed. He then awarded deputies contracts to subdivide those townships in which there was a demand for land and therefore a likelihood that it would readily be purchased at a subsequent government land auction. ^[13]

Before any deputy started on his contract he was required to sign an oath that he would faithfully execute the work set out in the contract and obtain two sureties who would guarantee the work. Most importantly, for this project, each was given two sets of instructions. The first, called "General Instructions," were given to all deputies who received contracts from a particular Surveyor General prior to the start of the work specified in the contract. The second set, given to particular deputies who received a contract, either prior to the start of the work specified in the contract or during the work, were called "Special Instructions," the focus of this research. (Figure 2.2)

Each deputy carrying out the duties specified in his contract and in his instructions was required to keep a field notebook in which he recorded what he did and what he saw. Following the fieldwork each deputy returned his notes to the Surveyor General's office where they were transcribed. The deputy awarded a contract to establish township exteriors was also required to make a diagram showing what he did and saw.^[14] The diagram he compiled was given to the

Special Instructions

To James M. March Esq
U.S. Deputy Surveyor
Viz.

By the terms of your contract of this day you are to survey and establish the following township boundaries, situated north of the Base line and West of the fifth principal meridian in the State of Iowa, viz: the South boundary of Town 68 of Ranges from 26 to 33 inclusive, the line between Ranges 33 & 34 of Township 68; the South boundary of Township 69 from Range 34, inclusive, to the Missouri river; the lines between ranges 26 & 27, 27 & 28, 28 & 29 & 29 & 30 of Townships from 68 to 70 inclusive; the line between townships from 68 to 70 inclusive of Ranges, 26, 27, 28 & 29, and the Perist Correction line from the South West corner of township 79 of Range 27, due West to the Missouri river.

You are to commence your survey at the South West corner of Township 68 of Range 25 and run and establish the said boundary due West to the South West corner of the same township in Range 33. From the last mentioned corner you will run and establish the line dividing Ranges 33 & 34, due North six miles and establish the corner of townships 68 & 69 of Range 33 & 34. Thence you are to run due West to the Missouri river, observing that the last half of every sixth mile, that is the last half of the closing mile of every successive township base both upon the South boundary of township 68 and 69, is to be forty three chains.

You are then to proceed with your survey in the manner prescribed by my printed general instructions, except that the line between ranges 25 & 26 is to constitute an indestructible meridian

Figure 2.2 An Example of Special Instructions

subdividing deputy, who was instructed to show on it what he did and the various topographic features. [15] Such requirements were described in the “General Instructions.”

After the fieldwork, in which a township was established and subdivided a township plat, depicting the information contained in the transcribed field notebook, was drawn. Then several copies of the plat were made. One, called the Commissioner’s Plat was sent, along with copies of the field notebook and the deputy’s financial account stating what was owed the deputy, to the Commissioner of the General Land Office. [16] A second plat, called the Register’s Plat was sent, along with a descriptive list, to the appropriate land district office where the land in a particular township would be offered for sale at public auction. [17]

2.2 The Paper Stream

All the paperwork generated during the surveying process just described, the contracts, oaths, bonds, instructions, field notes and sketches or diagrams of various kinds formed part of a paper stream, largely although not solely generated by the Surveyor General, connected the Surveyor General to each deputy. A similar stream of paperwork, increased with additional materials, such as township plats and a variety of administrative records, which he was required to send to the Washington DC headquarters of the General Land Office, connected the Surveyor General with his superior, the Commissioner of the General Land Office. [18] Each Surveyor General was further connected to the Commissioner of the General Land Office by letters he received from the Commissioner containing a variety of information directing virtually all of his activities. [19] (Figure 2.2) The letters sent by the Surveyor General to the deputy contain the instructions under which the deputy was to operate.[20] A second set of letters, from the Commissioner of the General Land Office to the Surveyor General, provided additional instructions. [21]

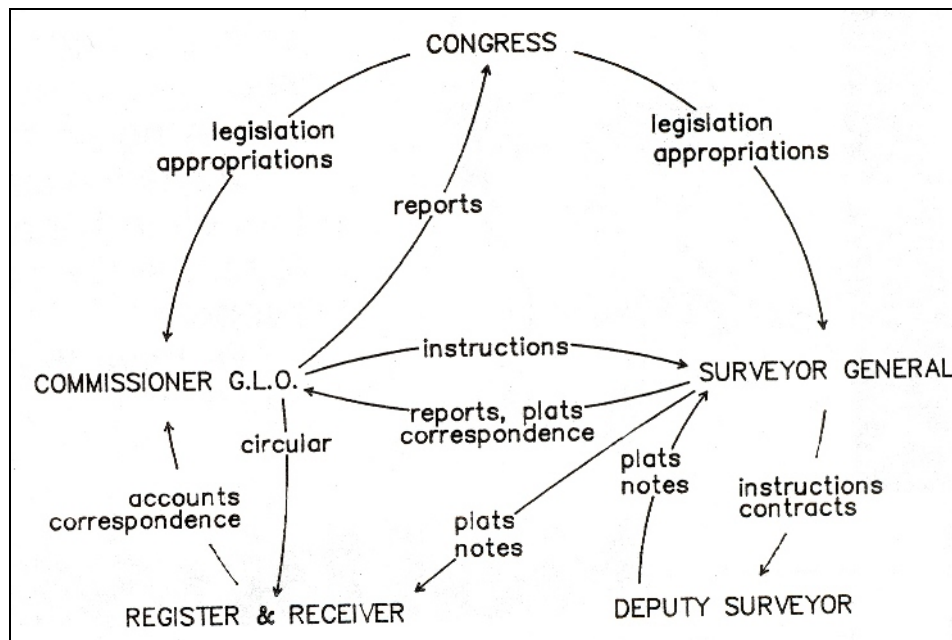


Figure 2.3 The Paper Stream between the Important Actors

The point of this short description of the paper stream between the various actors is to note that the information relevant for this project, the “special instructions” to the deputy surveyor, contained in a particular portion of this paper stream, can only be fully appreciated in the context of the entire paper stream. All instructions are important, not just because of what they say, but how they relate to other instructions. So, for example, a particular set of “General Instructions” may have been silent on a problem that was faced by a deputy in the field. He may have sent a query to the Surveyor General who responded with “Special Instructions.” To compile those instructions the Surveyor General may have sought the opinion of the Commissioner of the GLO, who may have given an answer that ultimately found its way to the deputy.

These instructions are included in the letters in the tremendous volume of correspondence between the Surveyor General and the individual deputies, and between the Surveyor General and the Commissioner of the General Land Office.^[22]

2.3 Instructions

Each deputy who was awarded a contract to survey was given instructions on how to carry out his work by the Surveyor General.

These instructions were of two types; General Instructions issued to all deputies who worked in Iowa, Wisconsin, and Minnesota when they were awarded their contracts, and Special Instructions issued to particular deputies carrying out particular surveys, such as state or Indian reservation boundaries, or working in particular areas. The instructions were issued either when the deputies were awarded contracts or subsequently when they were in the field.

2.3.1 General Instructions

The General Instructions, issued by the federal government, have been widely reprinted and are easily accessible ^[23]

Until 1851, individual deputy surveyors carried out their contracts to survey townships under instructions issued by George W. Jones, the Surveyor General of Wisconsin and Iowa, on May 28, 1846. ^[24]

Sometime in 1851 the new Surveyor General, George B. Sargent, issued new instructions. Just how many deputies carried out surveys under those instructions is not clear. On April 23rd 1851 the Commissioner of the General Land Office sent Sargent a set of instructions that had been issued as a Manual of Instructions to govern the surveys in Oregon Territory, and directed him to use it in establishing closing corners on correction lines. ^[25] The following year, on July 10, 1852, the Commissioner directed him to adopt the Manual for all surveys in Minnesota and the next year Sargent’s successor as Surveyor General, Warner Lewis, was given the same directive.

On February 22nd 1855 the General Land Office issued a revised version of the 1851 Oregon Manual. This revised and expanded Manual became the standard set of instructions for deputies

throughout the United States. In 1862, Congress enacted legislation that made the Manual part of every contract made between the Surveyors General and the deputies.

2.3.2 Special Instructions

Less well known are the special instruction that each deputy was given, directives from the Surveyor General to every deputy with whom he had made a contract, usually before the fieldwork began. [26] Special instructions, then, relate to a particular contract awarded to a particular deputy at a particular time to carry out a particular surveying task. A working definition of “Special Instructions” was adopted; “Any letter sent by the Surveyor General to a deputy while the deputy was engaged in fulfilling a contract.” [27] A distinct type of Special Instructions are those labeled as “special instructions” issued by the Commissioner of the General Land Office to the Surveyor General. [28]

Special Instructions are clearly identified with a particular contract and a particular deputy and a particular area. They would necessarily be issued during the time a deputy was engaged in that contract. [29]

The special instructions were each in the form of a letter to the deputy surveyor and contained: a list of the township and ranges included in the contract; whether township or subdivision; places of beginning and places of ending; instructions as to connections with adjacent surveys; diagram showing pertinent data for the areas already surveyed; copies of general instructions ... [30]

The instructions included the date the fieldwork was to be completed and the rate of compensation for the work. Most relevant, from the point of view of the modern land surveyor, they could include directives that complemented and supplemented other directives contained in the General Instructions that the Surveyor General gave all deputies to whom he awarded contracts. They may contain information that he received from the Commissioner of the General Land Office.

The special instructions are very elusive. They are contained in the correspondence files of the various individuals involved in carrying out the surveys, namely the Commissioners of the General Land Office, the Surveyors General, and the deputies who actually established the monuments in the ground and connected them with lines.

These instructions are contained in the voluminous correspondence files kept by the Surveyors General of Wisconsin and Iowa and the Surveyors General of Minnesota and correspondence files kept by the Commissioners of the General Land Office. The “Letters Received”, as the name suggests, contains original letters received by the respective officers. The “Letters Sent” contains transcribed copies of the letters that were sent. For every letter in “Letters Received” in the files of the Commissioner of the General Land Office from the Surveyor General there should be a transcribed copy in the “Letters Sent” in the files of the Surveyor General. (Figure 2.3.) The corollary is also true. Most importantly, the original letters often contain enclosures and are therefore much preferred in documenting instructions. [31]

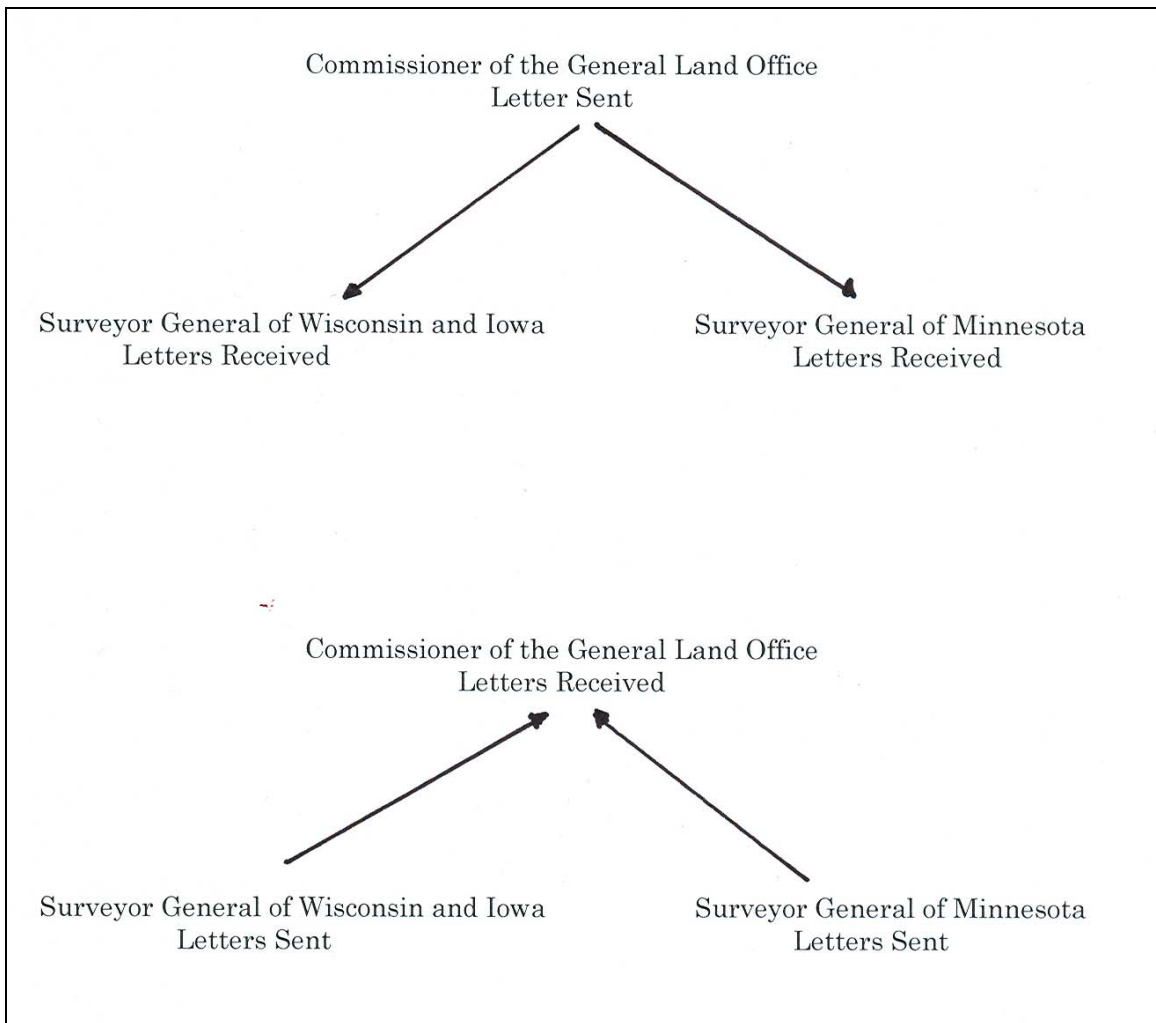


Figure 2.4 The Correspondence To and From the Commissioner of the General Land Office

2.3.3 Other Instructions

There is another set of instructions that need to be mentioned. The Surveyors General were in constant communication with the Commissioners of the General Land Office. Much of the correspondence between dealt with routine administrative matters but there were letters containing important instructions concerning how the deputies under the supervisions of the Surveyors General should carry out their surveying duties. Some of the instructions were sent to all Surveyors General. Some were limited to one particular Surveyor General.

The Act of 1862 clearly spelled out the role of these Commissioner's instruction, called additional instructions in Figure 2.4.

(T)he printed manual of instructions relating to the public surveys, prepared at the General Land Office, and bearing date February twenty-second, eighteen hundred and

fifty-five, the instructions of the Commissioner of the General Land Office, and the special instructions of the surveyor general, when not in conflict with said printed manual, or the instructions of the said Commissioner, shall be taken and deemed part of every contract for surveying the public lands of the United States.^[32]

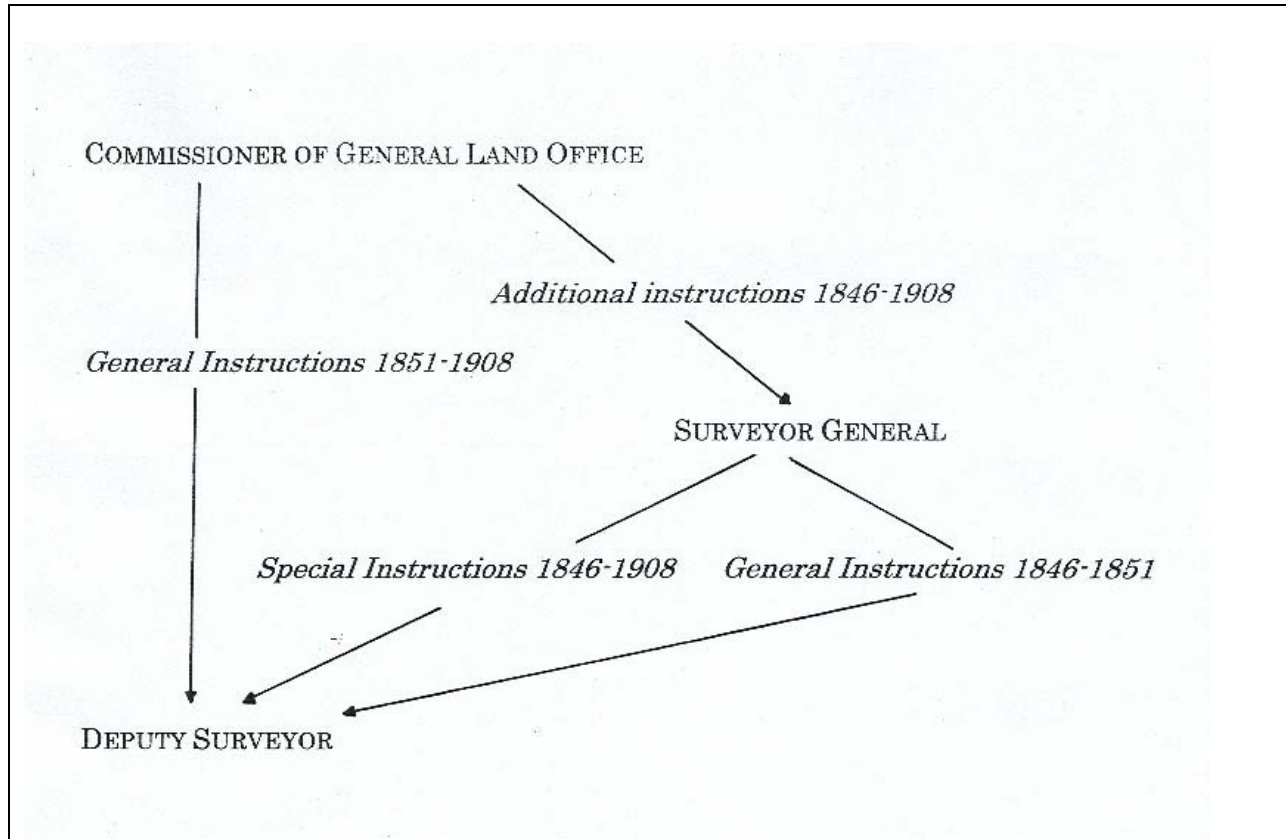


Figure 2.5 The flow of Instructions to the Deputies

The “Instructions Circular,” which supplemented the 1855 Manual of Surveying Instructions used exactly the same words as the statute. ^[33]

Clearly, then, there would seem to be a hierarchy of instructions; the Manual or general instructions, followed by the Commissioners instructions, and the special instructions. The difficulty is trying to ascertain whether particular special instructions derive from the Commissioner instructions.

2.4 Record Locations at Intervals

The records relating to the public land surveys in Minnesota are physically housed in the National Archives in Washington D.C., in the Iowa State Archives at the State of Iowa Historical

Library in Des Moines, Iowa, and in the Minnesota State Archives at the Minnesota History Center in St. Paul.^[34] In each repository, there exists a large variety of records that might contain instructions so the project necessarily involved making an inventory of relevant records to provide greater specificity in terms of what record collections might contain relevant instructions.^[35]

These records have been preserved and made accessible, through finding aids, catalogs or indexes, describing where they are stored in three locations.

The records were sampled and their condition and status for digital reproduction, such as quantity, quality, and accessibility, assessed.

CHAPTER 3. THE RECORDS AT THE STATE OF IOWA HISTORICAL LIBRARY



The relevant public land surveying records are those associated with the earliest public land surveys in Minnesota, those carried out from late 1847, when the deputies first crossed the St. Croix River under the supervision of the Surveyor General of Wisconsin and Iowa, until early 1858, after Congress established a surveying district that coincided with the future state of Minnesota. These records have previously been described. [³⁶]

Since then the records have been reorganized and now comprise part of the Secretary of State Land Records, Record Group 81, which includes all the records of the General Land Office for Iowa, including those concerning the Surveyors General of Wisconsin and Iowa. There is no electronic index to these material. The only written guide is a looseleaf binder Preliminary Guide to State Government Records (Iowa) Secretary of State Land Records. What follows has been extracted from that guide. The location information reflects the current arrangement of the records. The arrangement could be changed, particularly if they are used extensively. [³⁷]

The bulk of the relevant records comprise the correspondence between the Commissioners of the General Land Office and the Surveyors General and between the Surveyors General and the deputies employed to carry out the surveys. There are also letters to and from other individuals interested in various aspects of the surveys. [³⁸]

3.1 Correspondence Files. Letters Received by the Surveyors General

The letters received by the Surveyors General consist of letters, usually 1-3 pages, folded into three. (Figure 3.1) On the back of the folded material is a note describing the sender, the date, and the subject of the letter. (Figure 3.2) These are stored in eight file boxes, partly by date, partly by subject and partly by geographic area. The letters are legible but ease of understanding them depends on the handwriting of individuals.

The letters deal with a variety of subjects. Particularly relevant are those that concern the surveys in Minnesota. A few of these letters from deputies contain diagrams showing specific features of the surveys. (Figure 3.3, 3.4.) Some, obviously in response to a communication from the Surveyor General, make changes to the field notes that had already been submitted. The utility of these letters may depend upon finding the original field notes submitted by the deputy and comparing those with the changes made in the letters.

Current Arrangement

From deputy surveyors 1841-1850	Box 06 Location 35/49
From deputy surveyors 1851-1852	Box 04 Location 35/49
From deputy surveyors 1853-1880	Box 05 Location 35/49
From deputy surveyors 1839-1881	Box 53 Location 35/37
From the Commissioner of the General Land Office 1843-1849	Box 52 Location 35/56
From the Commissioner of the General Land Office 1850-1853	Box 63 Location 35/58
From the Commissioner of the General Land Office 1852-1856	Box 60 Location 35/58
From the Commissioner of the General Land Office 1857-1863	Box 61 Location 35/58

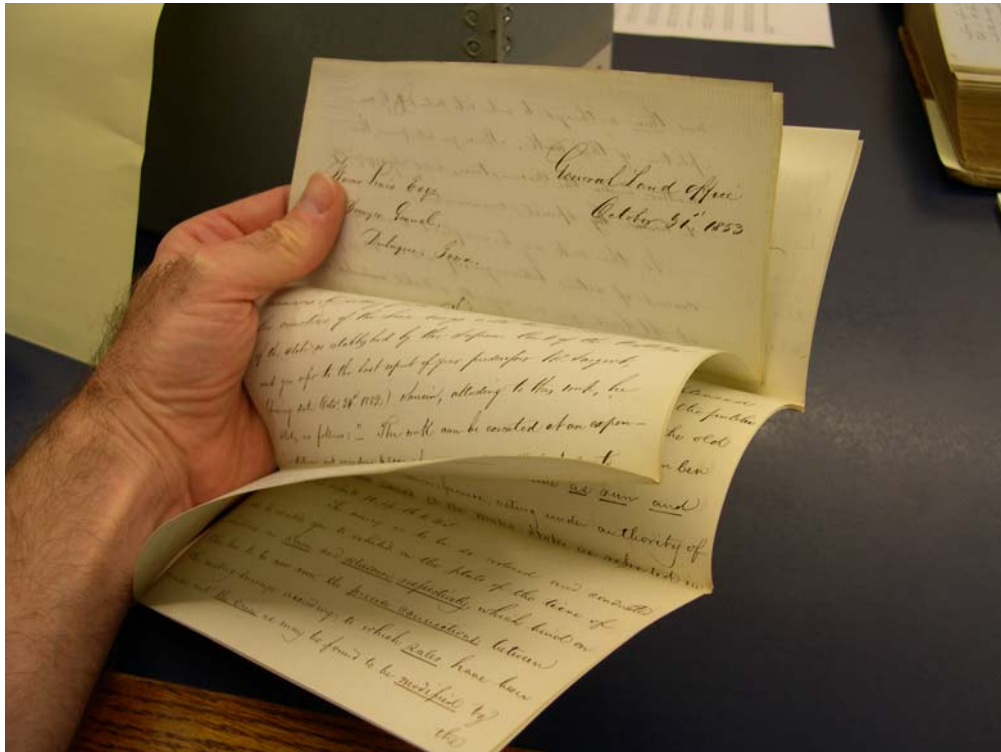
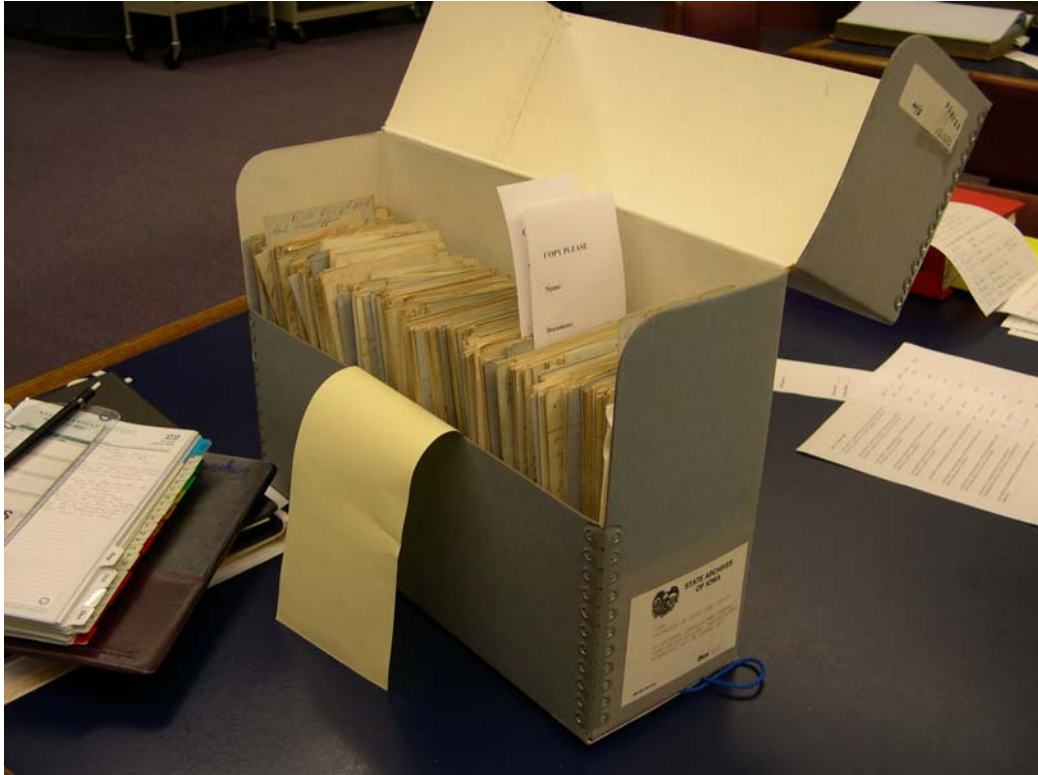
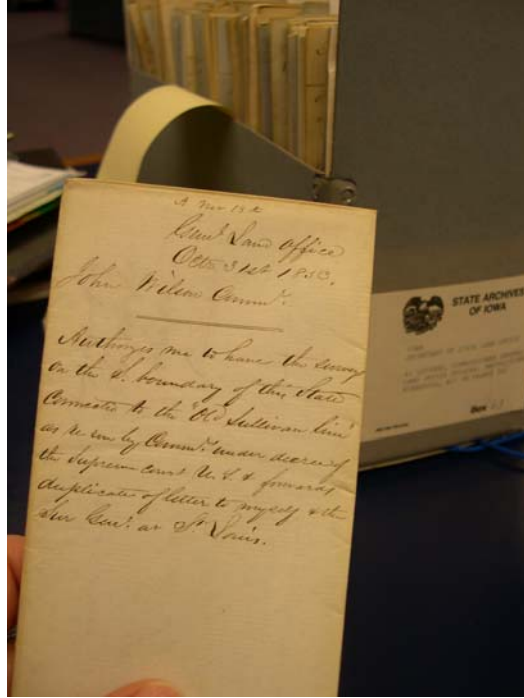


Figure 3.1 The Form of the Letters Received in the Iowa State Archives



CIRCULAR.

GENERAL LAND OFFICE,

APRIL 8th, 1847.

SIR:

All official returns, communications, and letters on business of every kind, sent to the General Land Office, will be folded in the form of this circular, and endorsed in a plain, neat hand-writing, with the name of the office; the place from whence sent; the date of transmission; a brief statement of the contents; and signed by the writer with his official title; as near as may be, in the manner indicated by the form endorsed hereon; and then enclosed in a separate wrapper, carefully sealed up, and addressed to the Commissioner of the General Land Office, at Washington City.

When there are more papers than one enclosed in the same wrapper, each paper should be separately endorsed, as to the nature of its contents, and numbered.

A strict observance of this rule will be expected in future, as it greatly promotes the convenience of the Department, and insures more prompt attention to the communications thus folded and endorsed.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

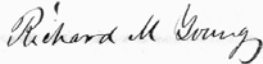

 Commissioner.

Figure 3.2 The Form of the Letters Received in the Iowa State Archives (back)

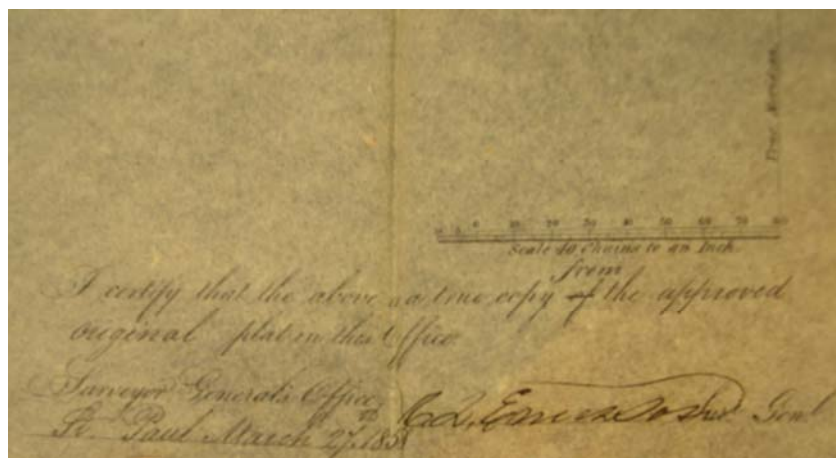


Figure 3.3 Maps in Letters Received in Iowa State Archives

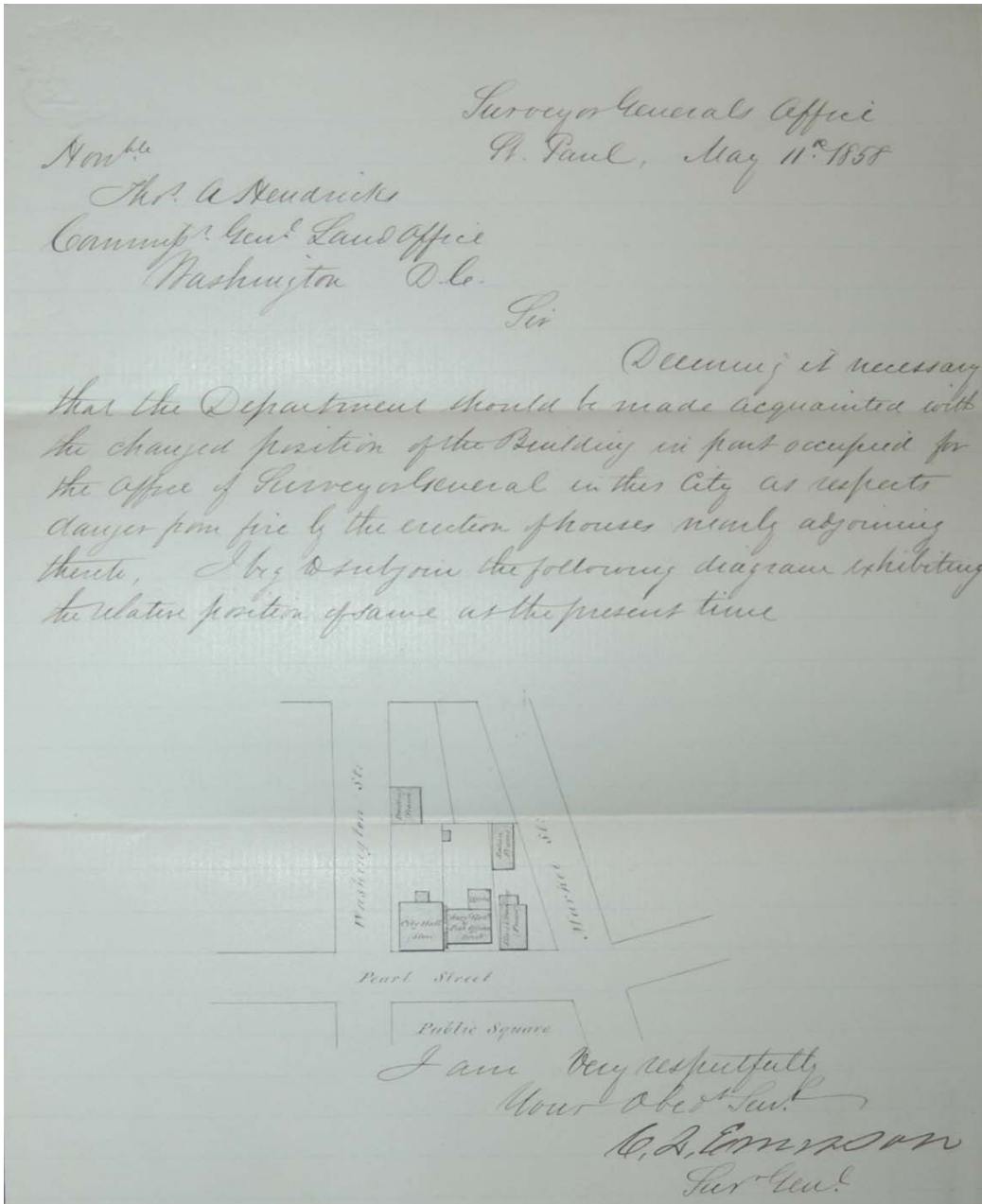


Figure 3.4 Letters Received Iowa State Archives. The First Surveyor General's Office in St. Paul

Example. Box 05 Correspondence Files letters received from deputy surveyors 1853-1880.[³⁹]

Date	Name/Subject
Aug 5 1853	County surveyor WI
Aug 17 1853	Neely*
Sept 22 1853	Neely examinations of Norris
Sept 23 1853	Ball returns
Nov 28 1853	E S Norris returns
April 1 1854	Neely report tsp exteriors
May 16 1854	Yerby
June 27 1854	Neely report township exteriors
July 10 1854	William H. Howard Marshall County IA
July 29 1854	G K Warren transcontinental railroad wants measurements
Nov 15 1854	GK Warren wants measurements
Nov 28 1854	Stuntz opinion of surveys
Dec 7 1854	Neely report tsp exteriors
Aug 10 1855	Yerby problems
Feb 5 1855	Location of ¼ posts on township lines, IA
July 23 1855	Islands determined as swamps
June 9 1856	Burt regarding MN reservation boundary surveys
Sept 27 1856	Burt contract
Oct 10 1856	Burt surveying with solar compass

*names refer to deputies who are known to have worked in Minnesota

3.1.1 Future Work

There is no impediment to scanning any of these materials except the need to handle them with care. These letters consist of sheets of paper and can be copied by Xerox and scanner. [⁴⁰] They can also be photographed with a digital camera. All should be photographed in color.

3.2 Correspondence Files, Letter Sent by the Surveyors General

The letters sent by the Surveyors General consist of leather-bound letterbooks into which were transcribed copies of the letters sent. (Figure 3.5) These letterbooks, measuring approximately 20 x 12 inches and containing 300 pages, are quite fragile although the individual letters are legible.

Most attention was focused on the letters sent to individual deputies that received contracts to work in Minnesota Territory. [⁴¹] This material was extensively used by J. S. Dodds and other to detail the special instructions given to the deputies who worked in Iowa. [⁴²] There are numerous letters relating to the surveys in Minnesota Territory in these materials. Taking Dodds inclusive approach virtually all such letters could be called special instructions. [⁴³]

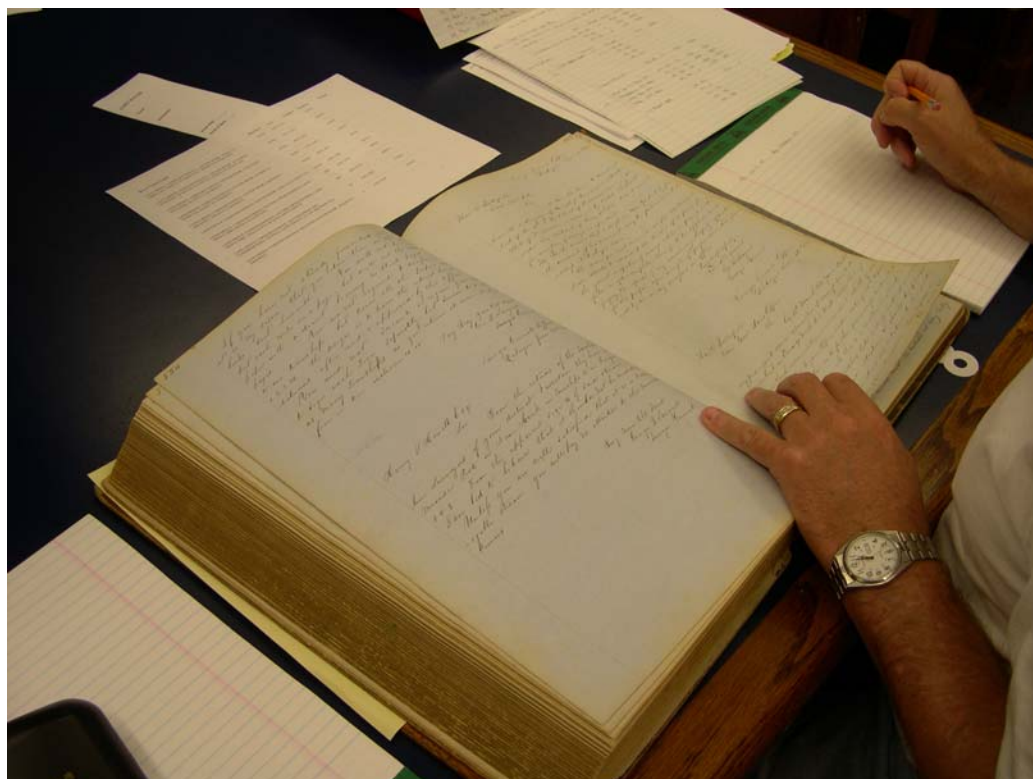
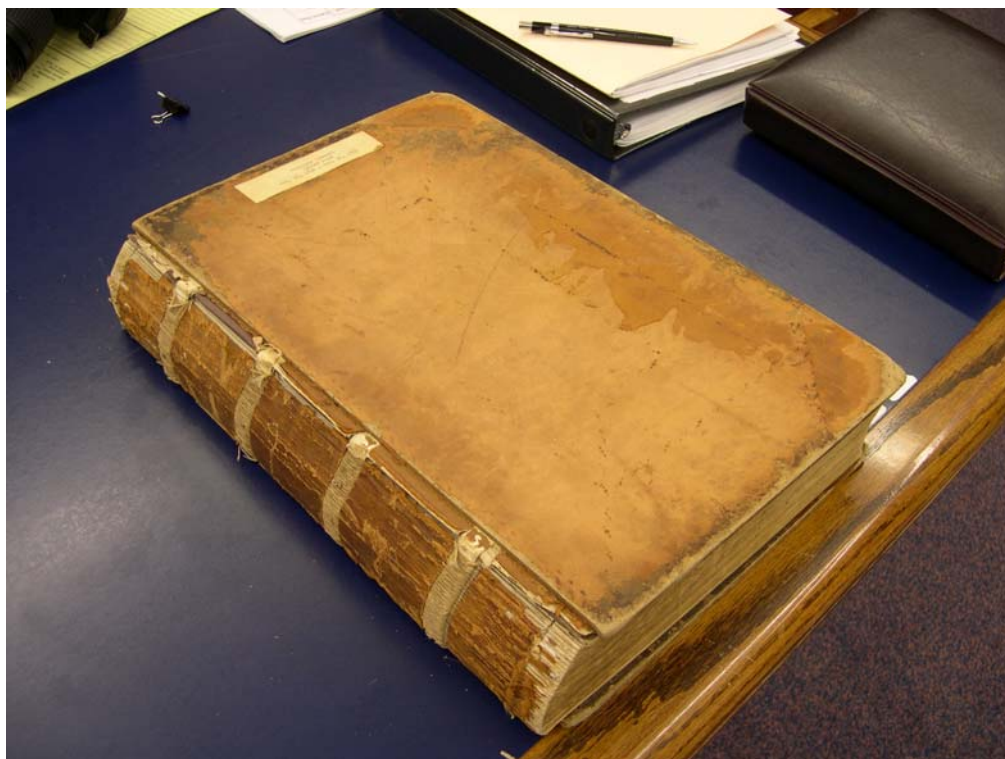


Figure 3.5 Letters Sent Letterbooks in the Iowa State Archives

Special Instructions

To
Theodore Conkey Esq
Deputy Surveyor
Iowa.

With this you will receive a Contract and Bond in triplicate, for the subdivision into sections of that part of township No 21 North of Range No 19 East of the 4th principal Meridian W. 5. which is situated N. W. of Fox River.

The said contract and Bond is to be executed on your part and returned to this Office before you enter upon the said Survey. The sufficiency of the two securities to your Bond, if not a matter of personal knowledge with me, must be certified to by one of the Judges of the Supreme Court of Wisconsin Territory or by the U.S. District attorney therefore it is important, in filling up and executing your said Bond, that the residence both of the Securis and Witnesses thereto, be stated.

The accompanying diagram represents by red lines that portion of the said township which you are to survey with the length of and corner upon the township lines bounding the same, also to much of the subdivisions South of the river (see said diagram) as occurs the same, with the length of the lines closing thereon from the South and East, together with a description of all the meanders of corners upon the right bank of said river within the said township.

It is understood that in executing the said survey you are to subdivide the subdivisions upon the North side of the river to the North and West boundaries of the said township, that is, you are to commence from the meander corner numbered 2, 3, 5 and 7 (see diagram) successively and in the order in which they are here named, and continue the lines, terminating at the last meander corner, to the North and West boundaries of the said township, so that the lines and corners throughout the entire township may harmonize as perfectly as though no river existed therein.

The foregoing copy of my printed general instructions will guide you in every particular except in your closing upon the township line in which instance you are to establish corners upon the said line or boundary, wherever you lines, run as before directed, may intersect corners within and for the sections adjoining that boundary upon the South precisely as directed for closing upon a correction line in section 11, page 13 of my said general instructions.

You are also to measure the North West or left bank of Fox River, from the point where the line of the North boundary

Figure 3.6 Letters Sent in the Iowa State Archives (The digital image is easily read)

In addition, there are other letters that may concern the surveys in Minnesota. (Figure 3.6) For example, there are several in which the Surveyor General provides instructions to individuals not in Minnesota on how to subdivide sections and find missing corners. There are also letters that concern islands surveys in general that may well apply to Minnesota. There are a large volume of letters through which the various parties communicated. Such parties include those involved in the actual surveys, such as the Commissioners of the General Land Office, the Surveyors General, and the deputy surveyors, and other interested parties, such as county surveyors, land district officers, and members of Congress seeking information about the surveys.

Some of the letters contain reference to enclosed information and diagrams, which were usually not found.

Arrangement [⁴⁴]

Volume C June 4, 1846 – November 2, 1848	Location 24/12
Volume D October 18, 1848 – October 16, 1851	Location 24/12
Volume E (missing) 1851 – May 9 1853	Location 24/12
Volume F December 5, 1853 – April 25, 1857	Location 24/12
Volume G April 9, 1857 – July 16, 1864	Location 24/12

Example. Letters Sent Vol. D

Page No	Date	Recipient	Subject
117	July 20 1849	Butterfield (GLO)	Separate records MN/WI
140	August 17	Ansell Briggs	Attack on Marsh also see p.146
178	Oct 4	GLO**	List of office workers.
179	Oct 5	GLO	Solar compass
184	Oct 15	GLO	Annual report
217	Nov 5 1849	John Smith*	Fort Gaines
226	Feb 5 1850	Whittlesey	Northern boundary IA also p.379 387 580
247	April 6		“Right and wrong”
250	April 9	GLO	Charges against Booth also p.255
261	April 31	Conkey	Problems
268	May 17	GLO	Standard chain
294	Aug 22	John Ryan	Falls of St Anthony
307	Nov 11	GLO	Annual report
335	Dec 2	GLO	Islands missed in original survey
345	Jan 13 1851	Owen	Geological surveys
361	March 20	Marshall	Special instructions island sec 23 T29NR24W (Falls of St Anthony) also p.362
368	April 17	GLO	Inventory of staff in office
382	April 28	GLO	Fire proofing
387	May 17	GLO	Commenting on where surveys should go
397	May 13 1851	Marshall	St Anthony
529	May 24	Wiltse	Examinations, see also p. 549 (instructions)
543	June 11	Marshall	Ditto

5 53	June 23	GLO	Deputies abandoning work also p.573
584	July 10	GLO	Insufficient appropriations
591	July 19	Marshall	Ditto
602	July 28	John M Gay	Taylor's Falls
603	July 28	Jarrett	Surveying lands overflowed by artificial means
627	Aug 11	GLO	More money
634	Aug 13	GLO	Surveying problem
641	Aug 13	McKean	Special instructions examiner
646	Aug 28	Dunn	Special and general instructions

* Names refer to deputies who are known to have worked in Minnesota

** GLO Commissioner of the General Land Office

3.2.1 Future Work

There is no impediment to scanning any of these materials except the need to handle them with care. The volumes of the fragile letterbooks in which copies of the letters sent have been recorded cannot be Xeroxed without an overhead copy machine and therefore scanning may be a problem without an overhead scanner. The books were easily photographed with a digital camera and this might be a viable alternative. The few maps will require high resolution. All images should be made in color.

3.3 Other Records that may have relevance to the early surveys in Minnesota

Surveyor General Account Books (5 volumes) 1838-1866	Location 24/12
Reports of Examining Deputy 1852	Box 69 Location 35/59
Estimates of Surveys, Recommendations & applications for positions	Box 21 Location 35/53
Estimates of Surveys, Recommendations & applications for positions	Box 21 Location 35/52
Recommendations (2 boxes) 1832-1852	Box 8,9 Location 22/2/7
Surveys, appraisals, and sales of abandoned river channels 1850-1935	Location 8/44
Contracts & Bonds (4 boxes) 1831-1864	Location not noted
Oaths, clerks 1840-1865	Box 7 Location 22/2/7
Oaths, deputies and assistants (6 boxes) 1833-1863	Box 1-6 Location 22/2/9
Instructions to Surveyors, IA/MN boundary 1850-1853	Box 63 Location 35/58

CHAPTER 4. THE RECORDS AT THE MINNESOTA HISTORY CENTER



The office of the Surveyor General of Minnesota was established in 1857. It was closed in December 1908 and the records transferred to the custody of the state.^[45] Today, the records comprise part of the Minnesota State Archives kept by the Minnesota Historical Society in the Minnesota History Center in St. Paul. ^[46] These records are described in A Guide to the Records of Minnesota's Public Lands issued by the Minnesota Historical Society in 1985, the relevant pages of which are attached to this report as Appendix D. ^[47] The records are catalogued under the heading "U.S. Surveyor General," in the State Archives Notebooks – the principal finding aid for virtually all archive material in the History Center. (Figure 4.1) The following report draws heavily on this finding aid.



Figure 4.1 The Minnesota State Archives

The majority of the records are stored in file boxes 14x10x12 inches. (Figure 4.2) Additional filing is provided by labeled, legal-sized folders. Plats and other maps are stored in flat boxes, sometimes in folder.

The Surveyors General of Minnesota, like other Surveyors General around the nation were in constant contact with the deputy surveyors, who carried out the fieldwork, and the Commissioner of the General Land Office, who supervised the activities of all surveyors general.

4.1 Correspondence Files 1854-1908 (11 boxes and 9 folders in partial box)^[48] These records comprise the correspondence between the Surveyors General and the Commissioners of the

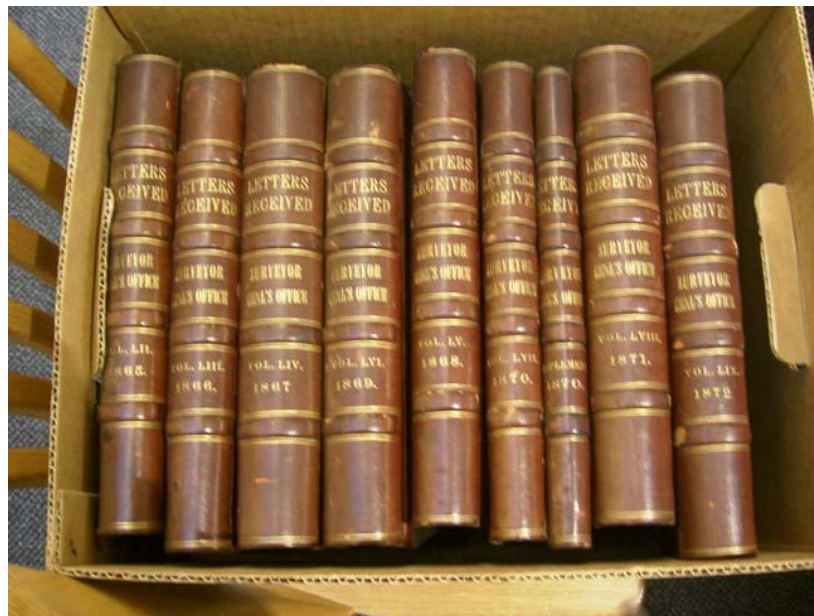


Figure 4.2 File Boxes in the Minnesota State Archives

General Land Office and between the Surveyors General and the deputies. There are also letters to and from other individuals interested in the process of surveying public lands.

4.2 Letters Received, 1857-1907 (50 v. in 7 boxes and 9 folders) Letters received by the Surveyors General in St. Paul. The letters were sent by three main groups, the General Land Office personnel – particularly the Commissioner, the deputy surveyors, and private citizens and corporations. The letters concern all aspects of the public land surveys. Most of them have been bound into letterbooks.

Letters from the General Land Office deal with such issues as; the annual appropriations for surveying in Minnesota, instructions to the Surveyor General and deputy surveyors, requests and authorizations to survey particular parcels, surveying Indian reservations and railroad lands, hiring and paying deputy surveyors and office staff; approving or rejecting completed surveys, timber harvesting on public lands, contested surveys, and a large volume of routine administrative correspondence – acknowledging letters and reports received and accounts paid. There are letters from the registers and receivers of land district offices.

Deputy surveyors' letters, often from field camps, include; reports on their progress, requests for instructions, or an extension of time, or advance payment, and inquiries about employment. Some letters from deputies contain diagrams showing features of a particular survey. Some, obviously in response to a letter from the Surveyor General, make changes to the field notes that had already been submitted.

Letters from others, individuals and corporations, consist of petitions to have particular parcels surveyed, allegations of inaccurate surveys, inquiries about the progress of the surveys, preemption rights, and the availability of land, and applications for employment. Letters also include inquiries from county surveyors, private surveyors, and land agents.

Several letters were photographed as examples of the materials.

111.E.8.10F Box 1. Vols. 44-51, 1857-1864. Letterbooks, 11 X 8 inches, cloth with leather corners and spine, comprising original handwritten letters stitched together as a book. One volume per year, no index. Very fragile and cannot be laid flat.

111.E.9.1B Box 2. Vols. 52-59, 1865-1872 Letterbooks, 11 x 8 inches, cloth with leather corners and spine, comprising original handwritten letters stitched together as a book. One volume per year, all indexed. Vol. 52 also contains an additional index of letters received from the Commissioner of the General Land Office. The binding obscures part of the text and will prevent the book from being laid flat The letters are written on a variety of paper types, white and blue, lined and unlined. The book includes a bound telegram.

111. E.9.2F Box 3. Vols.60-68, 1873-1881

111.E.9.3B Box 3. Vols. 69-75, 1882-1888

111.E.9.4F Box 4. Vols.76-80, 1889-1893

111.E.9.5B Box 5. Vols. 81-96, 1894-1899

111.E.9.6F Box 7. Vols. 87-93, 1900-1906

111.E.9.7B Box 8. 1857-1907 3 Folders [⁴⁹] Folder 1857-1899. Handwritten and typed letters not bound in letterbooks. Folder 1900-1901. Typed letters, various sizes. Folder 1902-1907. Typed letters, various sizes.

4.2.1 Future Work

There is no impediment to scanning any of these materials except the need to preserve them. Many of the books will not lie flat and the binding obscures some detail. Many of the important letter, from the Commissioner of the General Land Office, in particular the circulars, can be found in the microfilm M27 and in the National Archives collections. The microfilm images can be photographed with a digital camera but the images is poor although, for the most part, readable.

4.3 Letters Sent, 1854-1908 (4 boxes) Handwritten and letterpress copies of letters, all in bound volumes sent by the Surveyors General in Detroit (1854-1857) and St. Paul (1857-1908) relating to surveys in Michigan and Minnesota. (Figure 4.3, 4.4) Like the “Letters Received” the correspondence falls into three major categories; General Land Office personnel, deputy surveyors, and the general public.



Figure 4.3 Transcribed Copies of Letter Sent in the Minnesota State Archives



UNITED STATES
SURVEYOR GENERAL'S Office

St. Paul, Minn. August 14 1883

Charles C. Davis Esq
Deputy Surveyor

Sir: In executing surveys under your Contract No. 36 with this Office the following special instructions must in all cases be strictly complied with—

The work embraced in your contract must be executed by you in person or under your immediate personal supervision in the field. You will in all respects strictly adhere to the established system of public surveys and fully comply with the requirements contained in the "Instructions to Surveyors General" dated May 3, 1881, a copy of which has been furnished you.

By direction of the Commissioner of the General Land Office you are hereby advised of the following modifications in said Instructions viz: "The specimen field notes of subdivisional surveys contained in the Instructions to Surveyors General dated May 3, 1881, p. 10, shall be modified as follows:—"

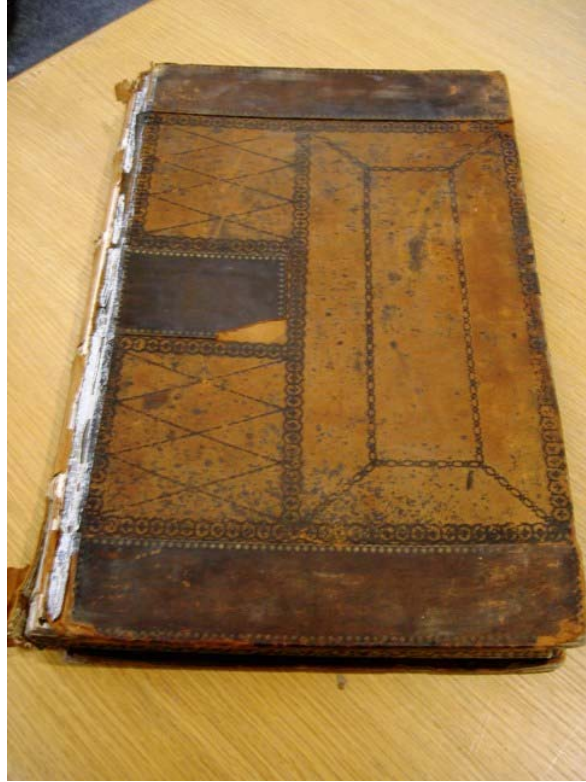


Figure 4.4 Transcribed Copies of Letter Sent in the Minnesota State Archives

Letters to the Commissioner of the General Land Office form the largest part of the material and cover the same topics as the letters received listed above. Some are reports on the progress of the surveys – including those involving Indian reservations and railroad lands; some accompany the quarterly and annual accounts. A large volume of the letters accompanied material which needed to be approved by the Commissioner, for example the field notes, plats and pay vouchers. Some contain requests to survey particular parcels in response to petitions from individuals. Some clearly respond to inquiries from the Commissioner concerning allegations of inaccurate surveys and illegal timber cutting. Other letters respond to the inquiries of the registers and receivers of district land offices. There is a great deal of routine office correspondence.

Letters to the deputy surveyors concern contracts, instructions on how to survey, payment for work completed, responses to request for an extension of time, and allegations of inaccurate or improperly conducted surveys.

Letters to individuals, such as county surveyors, private surveyors, and land agents, respond to requests; to survey particular land, especially islands, to inquiries about the progress of the survey, preemption rights, and the availability of land, to allegations of inaccurate surveys, and to requests for employment.

Vols. J-Q, 1854-1889 are leather-bound books, approximately 20 x 12 inches, containing 500 pages. They are heavy and the binding quite fragile. The letters in these volumes are handwritten on heavy paper and legible. Most volumes are indexed by recipient.

Vols. 1-19, 1884-1908 are cloth bound books with leather reinforced corners and spine. These books contain both handwritten and typewritten letters. The letters are written on onion-skin copy-paper. Some of the handwritten letters are legible, some are not. The typewritten letters are easily legible. Most volumes are indexed by recipient.

111.E.8.6F. Box 1. Vols. J-M June 1854 – January 1872 Leather letterbooks, 15 x 10 inches, containing 500 pages. Volumes contain handwritten copies of letters sent by Surveyors General to various individuals. Fragile binding. Indexed by name of recipient.

Vol. J 1854-1858. June 7, 1854 – April 13 1854 contain copies of letters from Leander Chapman, Surveyor General of Territory NW of the Ohio River, followed by copies of letters from Surveyor General Charles L. Emerson in Detroit (pp. 318-339) First letter from Emerson from St Paul, dated May 26, 1857. Some 80 pages in this volume were photocopied and given to the Technical Liaison.

111.E.8.7B. Box 2. Vols. N-Q January 1872 – November 1888/1889 Leather letterbooks, 15 x 10 inches, containing 500 pages. Volumes contain handwritten copies of letters sent by the Surveyor General to various individuals. Fragile binding. Indexed by name of recipient.

111.E.8.8F. Box 3. Vols. 1- 12 July 1884 –December 1900. 12 x 8 inches cloth letterbooks approximately 500 pages, onion-skin very fragile.

Vols. 1- 10 Handwritten,

- Vol. 1 Index, alphabetical by recipients,
- Vols. 2, 3, 4 No index,
- Vols. 5, 6, 7, 8 Index, alphabetical and chronological,
- Vol. 9 Index, alphabetical,
- Vol. 10 Index, alphabetical and chronological.

Vols. 11-12 Typewritten Index, alphabetical and chronological.

Also in the box is an untitled volume, described in finding aids as “Chief Clerk’s Book” Leather-bound volume, slightly smaller than the other books. Includes handwritten and typed letters on onion-skin from the chief clerk and the Surveyor General.

111.E.8.9B. Box 4. Vols. 12-20. March 1899 – November 1908 12 x 8 inch cloth letterbooks approximately 500 pages, onion-skin, very fragile. All typewritten.

Vol. 12 Index: Alphabetical. Separate chronological list of letters to the Commissioner of the General Land Office.

Vols. 13, 14 No index.

Vols. 15 – 20 No index. Some handwritten letters included.

The last letter was sent by Surveyor General Eli S. Warner on December 30, 1907. Subsequently, correspondence was handled by A. W. Barber, detailed Clerk General Land Office in charge, until February 11, 1908. Finally, name illegible, Clerk of Public Surveys, State Capitol answered letters until November 28, 1908.

The following examples of Letters Sent, all of which must be considered “special instructions”, would seem to cover the range of possibilities that the deputy received further instructions about how to carry out his contract from the Surveyor General.

At one end of the range is a letter suggesting that there were no additional instructions.

Surveyor General Charles L. Emerson to H. P. Van Cleve, June 26 1857,

As this is regular and plain work, you will require no instructions for your guidance, than the copy of printed General Instructions handed to you herewith, which you will carefully examine that you be able to fully comply with all of its requirements.

At the other end of the range is a letter stating that there are additional instructions. In this particular case, the instructions are attached to the letter.

Surveyor General Eli S. Warner to Albert T. Armstrong

In addition to printed instruction in Manual of Instructions to Surveyors General, dated January 1st 1902, furnished you, the following special instructions are issued for your guidance in the execution of surveys under your contract No. 124 of this date.

More ambiguous is a letter that suggests a situation in which the deputy might have received additional instructions but whether he did or not is not certain. Thus, Surveyor General Charles L. Emerson to Silas Barnard, June 22, 1857

This office not being in possession of the original field notes of the surveys that have been executed in the Territory, I am not able to hand to you with your contract of this date, notes of the section and quarter section corners on the township lines surrounding the several townships embraced in your (contract) for subdivision, but it is not supposed that you will suffer any consequence by not having such notes.

4.3.1 Future Work

There is no impediment to scanning any of these materials except the need to handle them with care. The binding of every book is quite fragile and the paper in many of them is also fragile. Digital images will require an overhead scanner. The books were easily photographed with a digital camera and this might be a viable alternative.

4.4 Other Surveying Records in the State Archives

The Letter Sent by the Surveyors General to the deputies are the most relevant records because they contain the Special Instructions. However, there are other records that give reference to the existence of instructions. These could be usefully imaged. No estimation can be given to the number of records that might provide such a reference. The following introduce collections of these records.

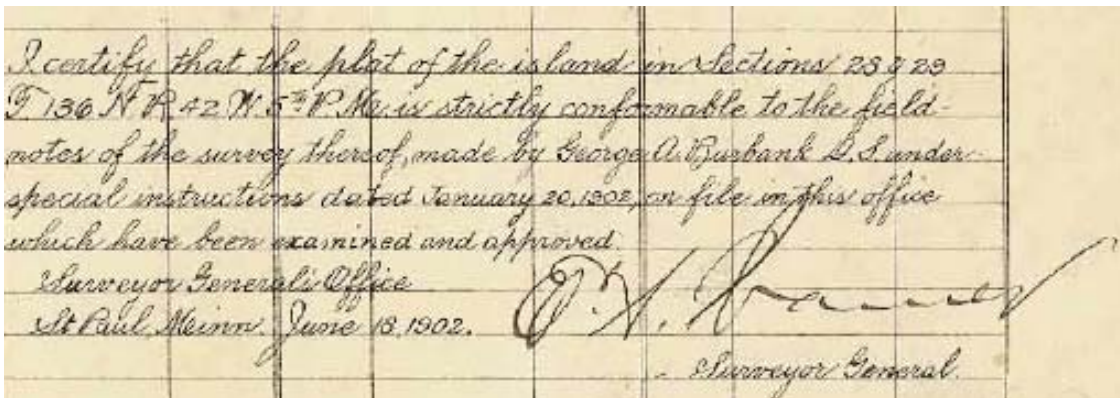


Figure 4.5 Notation regarding Special Instructions on Township Plat

111.E.10.1B Contracts for Surveys, 1857-1907 contains a bound volume and 10 folders. The bound volume, apparently an index to the contracts awarded and special instructions issued, 1857-1907.^[50] The 12 x 6 book contains blue-lined pages and is titled “Record of Contracts & Instructions for Surveys in Minnesota from June 1857 showing the Field Office Work” is clearly a workbook record, and only contains information 1858-1865.

The volume contains several tables.

- First table “Contracts for surveys in Minnesota under the appropriations for the fiscal year ending 30th June 1858.”
- Last table concerning the contracts under the appropriations for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1865.

Each table includes the following columns,

- Name of deputy,
- Date of contract or instructions,
- Description of work,
- Date notes returned,
- Date Commissioner's plats and transcripts of notes transmitted,
- Date Register's plats and descriptive notes transmitted.

There are several other columns which rarely contained information, labeled "record notes", "record descriptive sheets" and "remarks". Although there are references, by date, to special instructions, the instructions themselves are not contained in the volume.

Contracts for Surveys, 1881-1907 (10 folders) Contracts between the Surveyor General and deputies for surveying specified tracts of public land (1881-1907), and arranged in chronological order, some in numbered folders, approximately 14 x 10. [⁵¹] The folders do not include reference to all the contracts awarded. The number reflects the number appearing on the contract itself.

Some folders contain instructions with contracts and bonds.

Information contained in the contracts includes,

- Name of the deputy,
- Date the contract was issued,
- Date the survey was to be completed,
- description of the survey work to be done,
- Rate of pay,
- Estimated cost of the survey.

These records include contracts awarded and Special Instructions from the Commissioner of the General Land Office to the Surveyor General and the Surveyor General to deputy surveyors to survey islands or other designated parcels.[⁵²] Some contracts are accompanied by additional documents relating to the survey. These documents include petitions from settlers to the Surveyor General requesting that a particular tract be surveyed, correspondence between deputy surveyors and the Surveyor General, supplemental instructions – that could be termed Special Instructions, the oaths of the deputy surveyor, and diagrams of the area to be surveyed.

The contents of the folders vary. All contain contracts; many contain other information including Special Instructions. Not all Special Instructions are written on paper with the Surveyor General's letterhead. As examples;

1. Contract No. 1 June 30, 1881 George F Hamilton contains the contract only.
2. Contracts, No. 38, October 3, 1883 George F. Hamilton; No. 40, June 13, 1884 Day F Stacy; No. 43 September 15 1884 George A Klein, and No. 45 February 25 1885 contain contracts and special instructions. In addition contract No. 40 contains a General Land Office circular.
3. Contract No. 41 June 16 1884 contains letters but no special instructions.
4. Special instructions June 17, 1884 to N. G. Highstrom to survey an island.

5. Folder “Special Instructions April 30, 1884” concerns an island survey.

There are other letters concerning island surveys.^[53]

112.D.2.8F (ov) Record of Contracts and Instructions for Surveys, 1874-1907 (1 v.) Letterbook approximately 18 1/2 x 11 inches, leather-bound. Titled “Record of Contracts for Surveys in Minnesota showing progress of same and condition of office work pertaining thereto, ” it is apparently a complete, detailed listing all contracts awarded in Minnesota, July 13, 1874 to July 17, 1907. Notation of special instructions usually, but not always refers to island surveys.

Pages 1-14 lists contracts in the same form as 111.E.10.1B,

- Deputy,
- Date (of) contract or instructions,
- Description (of work),
- Date notes returned,
- Date transcripts and plats transmitted to GLO,
- Date of examination of register’s plat and descriptive notes.

There are three sequences of numbered contracts.

A. No. 1 January 3, 1881 to George F. Hamilton – No. 47 April 30, 1881 John W. Young
No contracts awarded April 1885-April 1887.

B. No.1 April 6, 1887 George A. Ralph – No. 28 May 20, 1891 A D F Gardner
(One contract to J B Salisbury March 21, 1889 to survey part of the 15th standard parallel, not numbered but clearly should be No. 5, contains a note “for substitution see special instructions July 5, 1889).

C. No. 1 July 31, 1891 Lyman Arm – No. 124 March 19, 1907 Albert T. Armstrong.

Also included are notations referring to special instructions to complete surveys that had been awarded previously e.g. John E. Mulligan and W. M. Everts were given Special Instructions November 24, 1903 to correct and complete contract No. 89 awarded to B. Keegan.

While these other records do not describe the actual Special Instructions they might provide a check on whether there are instructions or not. When combined with the published annual reports, which include tabular information regarding awarded contracts, a comprehensive list of awarded contracts by date and by deputy could easily be made.

Our “knowledge” of the public surveys comes from the records that have been preserved/stored and are accessible. If the records have not been preserved/stored or are not accessible then our knowledge cannot be complete. ^[54] Ideally, records are preserved/stored mimicking the organization that created them. In such cases, the catalog or finding aid also reflects the organization. Sometimes this is not possible to preserve/store the records that way because archivists cannot be specialists in every topic and because every archive faces practical

problems, especially concerning storage. Sometimes a portion of the record collection is housed in different places because of the jurisdiction over the records.

As this report describes, the Minnesota History Center houses a portion of the public land survey records for the state. Another portion is housed at the Iowa State Archives and a third portion housed at the National Archives. Some of the public land surveys records now at the Minnesota History Center were housed in the Secretary of State's office for many years and only recently, in late 2006, transferred to the History Center. Some of the records were housed in the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources vaults and transferred to the History Center when the DNR moved from the Armory to new offices on Lafayette Road. [⁵⁵]

CHAPTER 5. THE RECORDS AT THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES



The records of the General Land Office, the federal real estate agency which administered the public land surveys, comprise part of the Record Group 49, Records of the Bureau of Land Management, the agency that succeeded the General Land Office in 1946. Here I am concerned with a subset of that Record Group, those records concerning the public land surveys.

As in the previous two chapters, this chapter focuses only on a portion of those records, namely the correspondence files contained in Record Group 49. These records, comprising the “Letters Sent” from Division “E”, the Surveying Division of the General Land Office, and “Letters Received” by Division “D” (Mail and Files) and Division “E”, were identified as the most likely to contain the instructions relevant to the Surveyors General and their deputies.

The relevant records comprise four collections

A. Letters Sent by the Commissioners of the General Land Office.

Copies of letters sent to individuals, including the Surveyors General of Wisconsin and Iowa 1846-1857, and the Surveyors General of Minnesota 1857-1908. These documents are titled “Letters Sent by the General Land Office to Surveyors General, 1796-1901.” They have been photocopied as Microfilm Publication M27. [⁵⁶] Appendix E. contains an Index to the relevant reels containing information about Minnesota surveys along with a sample of the contents of one reel.[⁵⁷]

B. Letters Received by the Commissioners of the General Land Office from individuals, including the Surveyors General of Wisconsin and Iowa 1846-1857, and the Surveyors General of Minnesota 1857-1908.[⁵⁸]

C. Letters Received by the Commissioners of the General Land Office from individuals, including the Surveyors General of Minnesota 1879 -1908.[⁵⁹]

D. Other material. Records generated by the General Land Office personnel, either sent to various individuals or stored in the General Land Office and records received by the General Land Office from individuals.

These collections concern the various operating divisions of the General Land Office and have been catalogued and indexed in a loose leaf binder to be found in the Reference Room on the ground floor of the National Archives, see Appendix F. The catalog identifies the location of each record collection. It is important that the researcher checks these notations with an Archivist in the Reference Room. The numbers in this book may not be correct. As a consequence, anyone looking at this finding aid should check for the current locations in other looseleaf volumes and with the archivists.

- Division "A", also known as the Chief Clerk's Office, exercised general supervision over the activities of the General Land Office and its personnel, equipment, expenditures, and requisitions. The Chief Clerk also supervised appointments and promotions, leaves of absence, and officers' bonds and conducted correspondence with local land officers and the Surveyors General. He also inspected the offices of Surveyors General. (Appendix F pp. 6-7)

- Division “D,”
- Division “E”, headed by a Principal Clerk of the Surveys, exercised general supervision over all public surveys and resurveys, including those made of Indian reservations, national forests, national parks, reclamation projects, railroad land grants, private land claims, town sites, and military reservations. (Appendix F pp. 34-38)

Only the items circled in Appendix F were examined. Many of the other items in the Appendix concerned states other than Minnesota, or were created before 1840 or after 1908, therefore may have little relevance to the surveys in Minnesota.

5.1 Division A. Chief Clerk’s Division (Appendix F pp.6-7)

Only one record was examined.

Letters Sent to Surveyors General 1887-1903 (14 vols.) Letterpress books. Vol. 5 contains several letters dated March 1896-1899 to the Surveyor General of Minnesota dealing with administrative, personnel, and fiscal matters.

Absent any real information that could identify particular sets of documents being useful there seems to be no reason why the records of this division would be important.

5.2 Division D. These records were discovered late in the research project and what follows must be considered a very preliminary statement. [⁶⁰]

Index books organized by state. Each volume reviewed has a section for Minnesota. Pages are column formatted with the following column titles: When received; Division; Address; No.; Date of Letter; Subject. Letters received were apparently directed to the appropriate division of the General Land Office. Each letter was given an apparent document number.

Entry 175. Registers of Letters Received from Surveyors General of the Public Land States

- Volume 12 of 27 Sept. 1, 1879 to Jan. 17, 1881.
- Minnesota entry date range: Sept. 3, 1879 to Jan. 12, 1880. There were entries for 110 letters received from the Surveyor General in St. Paul. Of those 25 letters were directed to Division E.
- Volume 13 of 27 Jan. 17, 1881 to Dec. 15, 1881.
- Minnesota entry date range: Feb. 5, 1881 to Nov. 12, 1881.
- Volume 14 of 27 Feb. 15, 1881 to Oct. 31, 1882.
- Minnesota entry date range: Dec. 17, 1881 to Oct. 31, 1882.

Entry 180-A. Letters Received, Arranged by last name of Sender 1801-45 Segment (Miscellaneous Letters Received from Private persons, Land Entrymen, Attorneys, and Other Persons, 1801-1909).

Entry 180-B Letters Received, arranged numerically by Year 1845-53 Segment (Miscellaneous Letters Received from Private persons, Land Entrymen Attorneys, and Other Persons, 1801-1909).

Entry 180-C Miscellaneous Letters Received from Private persons, Land Entrymen Attorneys, and Other Persons, 1853-56 Segment (Miscellaneous. Letters Received from Private Persons, Land Entrymen, Attorneys, etc. 1801-1909).

Examples

Box	Year(s)	Document Number
215	1855	20500-21297
216	1855	21300-22299
217	1855	22300-23199
218	1855	23200-24199
219	1855-1856	24200-25199
220	1856	25200-26199
243-247	1856	47900-52698

Most of the correspondence in these boxes appears to be from District Land Offices and concerned issues dealing with the selling surveyed land and issuing patents, etc.^[61]

5.3 Division E. Surveying Division (Appendix F pp. 34-38)

473 Indexes to Letters Sent by Divisions “E”, 1844-1850 (4 vols.)

Chronological list of letters sent to Registers & Receivers, Surveyors General, and others.

M27 Letters Sent to Surveyors General of Public Land States, 1796-1901 (44 vols.)

Chronological Copies of letters sent. These records have been microfilmed (M27). For detailed indexes to the relevant volumes, see Appendix E.

475 Register of Letters received from Surveyors General, 1816-1907

List of letters received.

477 Press Copies of Miscellaneous Letters, 1883-1908 (123 vols.) ^[62]

Copies of letters sent to various individuals.

480 Departmental Letters Sent, 1864-1903 (23 vols.)

Departmental Letter record. Letters Sent January 5, 1864 to January 8 1869. Example Vol. 1. Division E. 19x11 Letterbook copy approx 570 pp. Incomplete alphabetical index. Mostly to officials.

484 Letters Sent to Examiners and Special Agents, 1882-1887 (1 vol.) Letterbook 11x15 containing approximately 500 pages. Letters sent to examiners and special agents 1882-1887. Alphabetical Index.

485 Special Letters Sent ,1876-1887 (2 vols.) Two volumes 11x16 leatherlike, each approximately 520 pages. Labeled on spine "Special Record Surveying Clerk" "Acts of 1840 & 1853" "GLO."

Volume 1 Feb 12 1853 – Sept 2 1876. Alphabetical Index, additional indexes noted by state and by subject. Apparently an additional letterbook of letters sent by the Division, mostly to Surveyors General. None of the letters are relevant to Minnesota though letters to Surveyors General in MI, IL, FL, WI. Special instructions to deputies working west of the Fox River June 5, 1868 pp 275-278.

Volume 2 1876-1887.

487 Report of the Operations of the Surveying Division and Estimates of Appropriations, 1857-1863 (1 vol.) Letterpress copies of letters sent by the Commissioner of the General Land Office, 1883-1903. 12x9½ book, linen cover containing approximately 494 pages. Alphabetical index. No entry for Surveyor General of Minnesota.

488 "Dallas's Index and Record of Special Files (1 vol.) Book containing Tabular Statement of and surveys and appropriated. Estimate for surveying FY 1860 by Stephen J Dallas, Clerk of Surveys.

491 Inventory of Property Charged to each Surveyor Generals Office and United States Land Office (1 vol.) Inventory. Mostly material concerning land district offices. Nothing noted for Minnesota.

493 Record of Office Examination of Surveys, 1899-1910 (2 vols.) Record of Office Examinations of Surveys Vol. 2 1899-1910. 1 volume, 12x8 linen. 177 pages of tables containing information on examinations. Some 140 notations regarding Minnesota. Special Instructions October 31, 1907 R. K. Whitely.

509 Letters Received from the Surveyor General of Public Land States, 1826-1883 (117 boxes). Minnesota 1857-1879. (4 boxes) [⁶³] Four boxes, approximately 300 letters in each box. Bundles of letters filed chronologically. Various numbers inscribed on each of them, presumably referring to the numerical order in some sequence. Usually noted whether and when answered. Folded with the usual notation on the face. (Figure 5.1)

Office of Survey General
 St Paul Nov. 23rd 1873
 # 74490
 Application for increase of
 Clerical force —
 Dan E. King
 Survey Genl

Miss
 Dec 3 - 73. Feb 2. 74

Jan'y 17 1874 The Commr says
 he authorized Dept to employ
 at 8th clock to support the survey
 on Indian l/c & of Indian Affairs
 was not legal, the witness who
 with to pay them the Surveyor
 has to furnish his paper to us
 to bring the expenditure within
 our law Appropriation being
 in the fiscal year

Nov 29 1873

79177

SURVEYOR GENERAL'S OFFICE,
 SAINT PAUL,
 MINNESOTA.
 Nov. 20th 1875

Explanation and additional
 field notes of W. Mulliken's
 survey in Township 164 N.
 on International Boundary
 Description of Iron Monuments
 &c.

Pioneer-Press.

Note on plats and refer
 to letter.

Corrections Ent on Sp Plats
 R.L.R

File

Nov 24, 1875

Figure 5.1 The Reverse of Letters Received in the National Archives

The letters contain information on a variety of subjects. Some merely accompany accounts or examinations, some contain references to diagrams and sketches, some contain such material, some do not. Also includes; requests for sketch of surveys, acknowledge receiving letters, receiving instructions for General Land Office, estimate of appropriations, establish salaries, and requests for contracts. In one letter, dated August 11, 1862 the Surveyor General of Minnesota asks whether the clerks in his office were liable to be drafted to serve in the Civil War. Some contain diagrams, sketches and other graphic information on separate pieces of paper folded in the letters, see Appendix C. Several of the letters were bundled together and labeled "Territorial Papers of Minnesota."^[64] Some of these materials may be duplicated elsewhere. The four boxes

are labeled; Minnesota 1857-1860; Minnesota 1861-1868; Minnesota 1869-1872; and Minnesota 1873-1879.

518 Field Notes of Examination of Surveys ca. 1870-1920. Minnesota (7 boxes) Box 12x13x6. The one examined contained approximately 40 reports of deputies awarded contracts to examine fieldwork. 8½ x 14 books containing approximately 24 pages. Time period covered late 1880s to 1893.

Omitted for this project were several records that might eventually prove useful. They were not examined for the reasons stated.

479 Press Copies of Letters Sent to Surveyors General, 1872-1908. (242 vols.) The relationship between these records and the records microfilmed as M27 is unknown.

501 Contracts and Bonds for United States Deputy Surveyors in Public Land States, 1850-1910 (109 boxes). All original material relating to the Wisconsin and Iowa surveying district and the Minnesota surveying district should be found in collections in the Iowa and Minnesota State Archives.

509 Letters Received from the Surveyor General of Public Land States, 1826-1883 (117 boxes). Iowa 1834-1868. The letters covering the period 1846-1860 or so should be useful to describe the Minnesota surveys. Copies of these materials relating to the Wisconsin and Iowa surveying district should be found in the Iowa State Archives.

520 Island files (67 boxes) Relevant boxes are not known.^[65]

5.4 Discussion of the National Archives Materials

I think it appropriate to discuss two of the letter groups found in the National Archives that appear to be key to understanding what the deputies did in Minnesota. From 1847 until 1908, the Surveyors General in St. Paul or elsewhere communicated with the Commissioners of the General Land Office in Washington D.C. through the mail and occasionally a telegram. Some letters, such as those accompanying the field notes, plats, and the deputies' accounts, were obviously required. Also required to be sent were letters that acknowledged or answered a letter received. Some letters were quite obviously discretionary. In most of these the Surveyor General either provided the Commissioner with information regarding the surveys or asked him for some information. Not surprisingly there is a relationship between these two groups and the records of correspondence housed in the Iowa and Minnesota State Archives, described above and depicted in Figure 2.2.

5.4.1 Letters Received from the Surveyors General of Public Land States, 1826-1883

A considerable amount of time was spent examining and making copies of the letters in the four boxes containing letters from the Surveyors General of Minnesota 1857-1879. These have been given to the Technical Liaison. Copies of each of them should be found in the records catalogued as U.S. Surveyor General Letters Sent housed in the Iowa and Minnesota State Archives.

These letters can be divided into those that were obligatory – acknowledging receipt of letters from the Surveyors General or asking questions about the oaths, contracts, bonds, field notes, or plats they sent – or discretionary – directing the Surveyors General to do something or informing them of something. The discretionary letters can be further divided into those that were sent to all Surveyors General – commonly called circulars – and those sent to the Surveyors General administering the surveys in Minnesota

5.4.2 The Appearance of the Letters

The reverse of each letter contained several pieces of information. (Figure 5.1) Most contain:

- The name of the sender, the date the letter was written, along with a summary of the letter's contents. This information was provided by the sender.
- The date the letter was received in Washington along with one, and sometimes several, numbers that relate to the letter's place in some, as yet unknown, sequence.
- A note whether the letter was acknowledged and/or answered and when.
- Additional miscellaneous notes, presumably thought appropriate by the filing clerk. Such a note might indicate the fact that a sketch was included in the letter.

5.4.3 The Purpose and Contents of the Letters

Many of the "Letters Received" were responses to, "Letters Sent", from the Commissioner of the General Land Office, or most likely the Principal Clerk of Surveys. Each letter refers to the letter to which it is responding. (Similarly, an answering letter, "Letters Sent" would identify the letter to which it was responding, "Letters Received", and any other "Letters Received" or "Letters Sent" that were relevant.) Thus chains of letters can be constructed. (Figure 5.2)

The contents of the letters are quite varied. Some letters were purely administrative. Many of these kinds of letter obviously accompanied the field notes, plats, and accounts that the Surveyors General was obligated to send to Washington. In every case the actual field notes, plats, and accounts are not in these records. Some letters request supplies. A considerable number contain information that would add detail to our knowledge of the actual surveys in Minnesota. Some even enclose corrections to field notes and original diagrams that amend township plats.

Several "Letters Received" have special significance, for example,

- The annual report sent by the Surveyors General [⁶⁶]
- The inventory of the Surveyor General's office when a new Surveyor General was appointed.

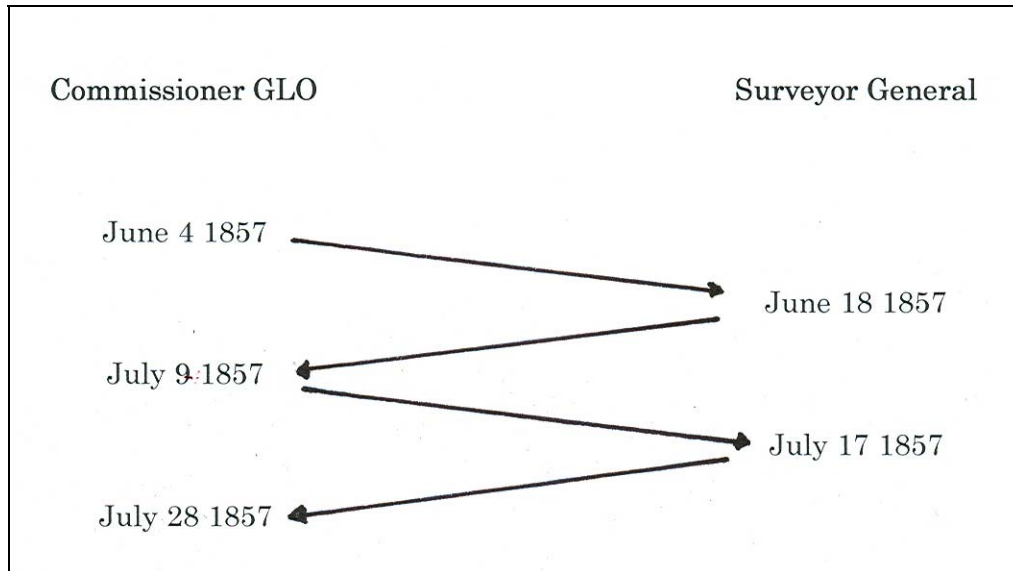


Figure 5.2 An Example of a Paper Chain

5.5 Letters Sent to Surveyors General of Public Land States, 1796-1901 (M27)

These are copies of the letters that were sent by the Principal Clerk, under the signature of the Commissioner of the General Land Office, to a variety of individuals.^[67] A majority were sent to particular Surveyors General and often concerned the myriad administrative details involved in surveying the public lands. Some concern the manner of carrying out surveys in a surveying district. Letters were also sent to a variety of others, to members of Congress and the Executive branch, including other General Land Office personnel, such as the register and the receiver of land district offices, to deputies and other individuals, including county surveyors, all with interests in surveying. The subject of these letters varies widely. Usually, these letters were in response to communications received from many of the same individuals. (Figure 5.3)

Several letters have special significance, for example,

- Specific instructions to surveyors general to do something or to order his deputies to do something.
- Annual Instructions, issued by the Commissioner to the Surveyors General after the appropriations were made by Congress. In it the Commissioner described what funds were available and what should be surveyed in the following year.

5.6 Circulars

Circulars were sent by the Commissioner of the GLO to all Surveyors General instructing them to do something. These circulars could concern any subject pertinent to surveying the public

lands. There is no comprehensive listing of such circulars although there is an index to them for particular years, see Appendix E. vols. 41-43. Often circulars arose out of a letter to a particular Surveyor General or deputy. [68]

The relationship of these circulars to the actual instructions given the deputies needs exploring. Clearly circulars were important but whether, as a result of receiving them, the Surveyor General issued special instructions to include the information they contained is not known.

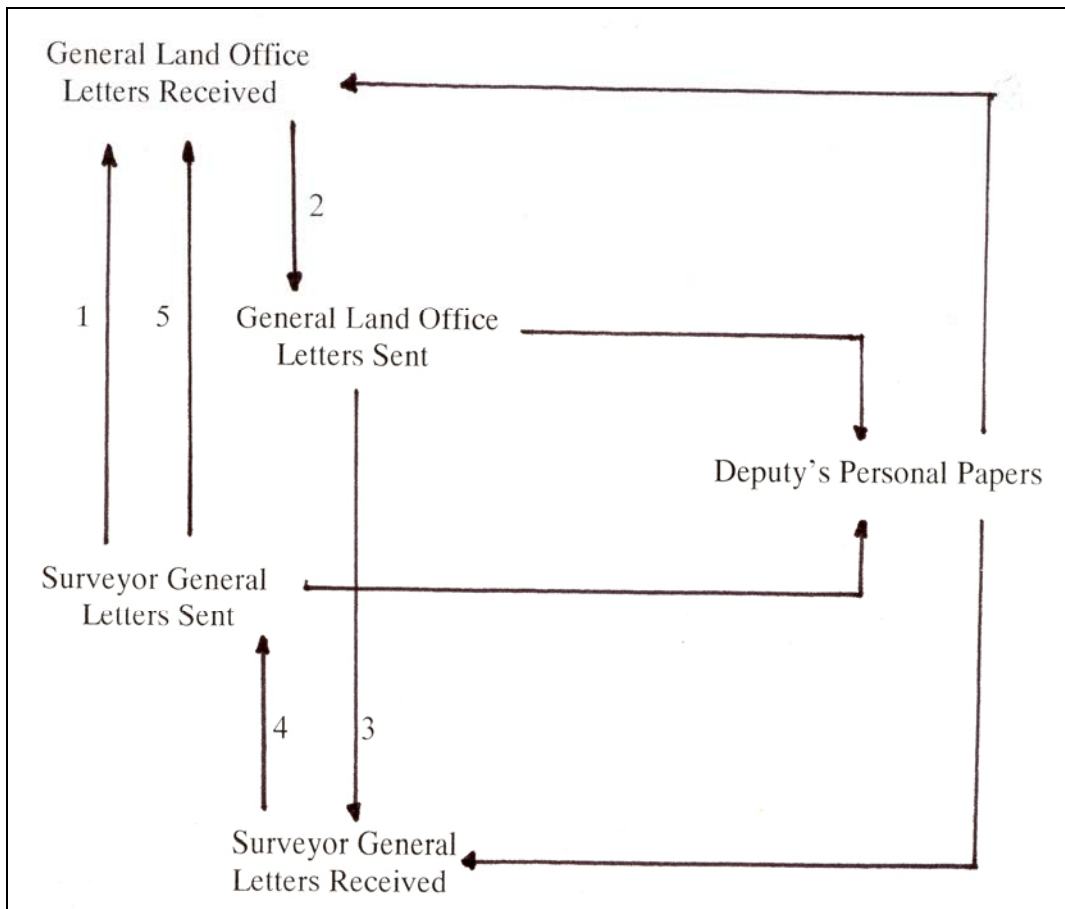


Figure 5.3 A Paper Trail Starting with a Query from the Surveyor General

C. Albert White has published a number of circulars some of which probably have relevance to surveys in Minnesota. Interestingly he described the Circular of June 1, 1864, directing that the 1855 Manual should be part of every contract and providing instructions supplementing the Manual, as “Instructions Circular.”[69] Other circulars printed in White and also found in M27 are,

- July 28, 1866. Numbering of fractional lots. [70]
- June 10, 1868. Island surveys when the Surveyor General’s office has been closed. [71]
- May 6, 1871. Deposit surveys.[72]

- July 13, 1874 Survey of meandered lakes when the Surveyor General's office has been closed. [73]
- April 17, 1879. When the plats are to be filed in the land district office. [74]
- November 1, 1879. The method of subdividing sections.[75]
- March 13, 1883. Restoration of lost and obliterated corners.[76]
- November 1, 1879. How to subdivide sections.[77]
- June 2 1887 How to subdivide sections.[78]
- October 16 1896 Restoration of lost or obliterated corners and subdivisions of sections.[79]

5.7 Letters to Individuals

Letters to and from individuals, other than the Surveyor Generals, are fairly numerous. Included are the deputies employed in Minnesota, for example George B. Wright, Ehud N. Darling, the Burts, and George Stuntz to name a few.

Letters to individuals not in Minnesota may have a bearing on Minnesota surveys. For example, on July 6, 1866, the Commissioner of the General Land Office J. M. Edmunds wrote to H. S. Hoover, Esq. of Waverly, Bremer Co. Iowa.

In your letter of the 16th ultimo you inquire how sections of the public lands should be subdivided. As you do not refer to any particular section, I assume that your inquiry does not relate to peculiar or anomalous sections but to the regular sections containing 640 acres. The law prescribes the following rules for subdividing sections:

The section and quarter section corners established by the U.S. Deputy must stand as the true corners. To divide the sections into halves or quarters straight lines must be run from the established corners to opposite corresponding corners, the intersection of the lines so run will be the legal center of the section. The quarters may be again divided into half quarters or quarter quarters by straight lines run from points equidistant from the center of the section and the quarter section post to their corresponding opposite points equidistant between the section corners, and intersection of lines thus run will be the legal center point of the quarter section.[80]

Just why there are a large number of letters to individuals who are not deputies, is perhaps explained in a passage from the Manual of 1894, describing the relationship between the General Land Office and county surveyors,

The General Land Office assumes no control or direction over the acts of local and county surveyors in the reestablishment of extinct corners of original surveys. It follows the general rule that disputes arising from uncertain or erroneous location of original corners are to be settled by the proper local authorities or by amicable adjustment and to aid in this result it furnishes a circular pamphlet which is merely advisory and explanatory of the principles which should prevail in performing such duties.

Surveyors who have been United States deputies should bear in mind that in their private capacity they must act under somewhat different rules of law from those governing original surveys and should carefully distinguish between the provisions of the statute which guide a Government deputy and those which apply to retracement of lines once surveyed. The failure to observe this distinction has been prolific of erroneous work and injustice to land owners.

The circular on “Restoration of lost and obliterated corners” dated March 13, 1883 and the circular on subdividing a section dated June 2, 1887 are furnished to applicants.^[81]

5.8 Carrying Out Research in the National Archives

Research in the National Archives is easy and convenient. While getting in and leaving through security and registering as a researcher is a little time-consuming, getting the original materials – retrieved at specific times throughout the day – and copying them is entirely DIY (Do It Yourself).

5.8.1 Future Work

There is no impediment to making digital images of any of these materials. The letterbooks that have been microfilmed are available for scanning with an overhead scanner. They can be photographed with a digital camera and this might be a viable alternative. Some of the original letters should be found in the Letters Received in the Iowa State Archives of the Minnesota State Archives. The individual letters and the letterbooks can be scanned or photographed as necessary.

CHAPTER 6. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE WORK

The recommendations are divided into two groups; those that will require a large commitment of time and money and those that will require less time and money. The latter should be completed before any attempt is made to the former.

First a caveat. There are two problems that must be overcome to produce a comprehensive digital collection of the Special Instructions relating to the public land surveys in Minnesota, which is the long range objective, one intellectual and one technical. Clearly not all letters between the Surveyors General and the deputies, should be considered Special Instructions and not all letters between the Commissioner of the General Land Office and the Surveyors General should be considered “additional instructions,” even with the most generous of definitions. All “Letters Sent” from the Surveyor General to Deputies are not Special Instructions and all “Letters Received” by the Commissioner of the GLO from the Surveyor General are not “additional instructions.”^[82] However to identify the relevant letters or the relevant pages in a particular letterbook would greatly expand the time necessary to copy the materials. Therefore a principal recommendation is that all correspondence between the Commissioners of the General Land Office, the Surveyors General, and the deputies be imaged.

Digital cameras are allowed in each of the Archives and should be used to provide images of the records. For the most part, there are no impediments to taking photographs.^[83] Digital photography is preferred over scanning because of the variety of the records – single page separate, single page bound in a book, multiple pages bound together with tape etc. Digital photography would avoid most questions of the preservation of the records.^[84] High quality color images of the letters and letterbooks are easily readable.

6.1 Long term

The following collections, from those described above, are considered most likely to contain the instructions controlling the operations of the deputies who surveyed the public lands in Minnesota between 1847 and 1908 and all relevant material – dealing with deputies carrying out work in Minnesota, should be photographed. The collections include Special Instructions sent by the Surveyor General to a deputy as well as “additional instructions” sent by the Commissioner of the General Land Office to the Surveyors General.

In the **National Archives**;

1. Four collections in the Administrative Records of the General Land Office, 1785-1955, comprising the records of Division “E”, the Surveying Division. ^[85]

A. Letters Received from the Surveyor General of Public Land States, 1826-1883 (117 boxes). Original letters, usually 1-3 pages, folded into three, and filed in boxes.

- Iowa, 1834-1868. Letters dated between 1846 and approximately 1860 would be relevant

- Minnesota 1857-1879. (4 boxes)

Transcribed copies of these letters should be found in letterbooks as Letters Sent in the Iowa State Archives or the Minnesota State Archives.

- B. Letters Sent to Surveyors General of Public Land States, 1796-1901 (44 vols.) M27, the relevant volumes of these transcribe copies of letters have been indexed, see Appendix E. The originals should be found as Letters Received in the Iowa States Archives or the Minnesota State Archives.
- C. Press Copies of Letters Sent to Surveyors General, 1872-1908. (242 vols.) The relationship between these records and the above collection is not known.
- D. Island Files (67 boxes) No description is currently available and relevant boxes are not known. These probably have little applicability to large parts of Minnesota.

2. One collection of letters in the files of Division “D”, the Mail and File Division of the General Land Office, has been discovered. Recent information, from Richard Fusick at the National Archives, indicates that the correspondence from Minnesota Surveyors General after 1880 are filed as miscellaneous letters sent to General Land Office Division “D”. Little information is currently available about this collection but the volume of material is likely very large and the information relevant to Minnesota surveys scattered throughout. [⁸⁶]

In the **Iowa State Archives** three collections are important,

1. Correspondence Files. Letters Received by the Surveyors General. Original letters, usually 1-3 pages, folded into three, filed in boxes.

- From deputy surveyors 1841-1850
- From deputy surveyors 1851-1852
- From deputy surveyors 1853-1880
- From deputy surveyors 1839-1881
- From the Commissioner of the General Land Office 1843-1849
- From the Commissioner of the General Land Office 1850-1853
- From the Commissioner of the General Land Office 1852-1856
- From the Commissioner of the General Land Office 1857-1863

Transcribed copies of these letters sent by the Commissioner of the General Land Office should be found in letterbooks as “Letters Sent” in the National Archives. Transcribed copies of the letters sent by the deputies to the Surveyor General should be found in letterbooks as “Letters Sent”. [⁸⁷]

2. Correspondence Files, Letters Sent by the Surveyors General. Indexed letterbooks containing transcribed copies of the letters sent.

- Volume C June 4, 1846 – November 2, 1848

- Volume D October 18, 1848 – October 16, 1851
- Volume E (Missing date) 1851 – May 9, 1853
- Volume F December 5, 1853 – April 25, 1857 [⁸⁸]
- Volume G April 9, 1857 – July 16, 1864

Original letters sent to the Surveyor General of Minnesota or the Commissioner of the General Land should be found as “Letters Received” in the National Archives or the Minnesota State Archives. [⁸⁹] Original letters sent to the deputy surveyors may not exist.

3. Contracts & Bonds (4 boxes) 1831-1864. Copies should be found in the National Archives.

In the **Minnesota State Archives**, there are four collections. These are filed under the Minnesota History Center catalog heading “United States Surveyor General.” See Appendix D.

1. Letters Received, 1857-1907 (7 boxes and 9 folders)

- Vols. 44-51, 1857-1864 [⁹⁰]
- Vols. 52-59, 1865-1872
- Vols.60-68, 1873-1881
- Vols. 69-75, 1882-1888
- Vols.76-80, 1889-1893
- Vols. 81-96, 1894-1899
- Vols. 87-93, 1900-1906
- Folders 1857-1907

Transcribed copies of the letters received from the Commissioner of the General Land Office will be found in National Archives and those from the Surveyor General of Wisconsin and Iowa in the Iowa State Archives. [⁹¹]

2. Letters Sent, 1854-1908. (4 boxes) Transcribed copies of letters. Some, or most, of the originals will be found at the National Archives and the Iowa State Archives. The location of most of the original letters sent to the individual deputies is unknown therefore this record collection has considerable importance.

- Vols. J-M June 1854 – January 1872
- Vols. N-Q January 1872 – November 1888/1889
- Vols. 1- 12 July 1884 –December 1900
- Vols. 12-20. March 1899 – November 1908

3. Contracts for Surveys, 1857-1907 (one volume and 10 folders) The bound volume record the contracts awarded and special instructions issued, 1857-1907. There are numerous notations that “special instruction” accompanied the contracts. Some folders, after 1881, contain the actual copies of instructions from the Commissioner of the General Land Office and the Surveyor General to deputy surveyors along with the contracts and bonds. A number of these concern

islands or other designated parcels. Duplicates of the actual contracts should be found in the National Archives.

4. Record of Contracts and Instructions for Surveys, 1874-1907 (1 volume) Apparently a complete, detailed listing all contracts awarded in Minnesota, July 13, 1874 to July 17, 1907. Notation of special instructions usually, but not always, refers to island surveys. Duplicates of the actual contracts should be found in the National Archives.

The biggest problem is not photographing the material but documenting the source of each image, cataloging it, and providing an index for the collection of images. This task is more onerous than the actual photographing. The records could be photographed in stages, whenever money was available, as long as adequate documentation of the source and location of the images was made. Indexes could be made later as funds became available.

I also suggest that some short term efforts take place to prepare for the long term process.

6.2 Short term

Before starting what will be a time-consuming and expensive undertaking the following actions should take place. [⁹²]

1. Compile a list of deputies employed in carrying out the surveys along with dates of contracts and maps to show where the contracts were carried out.
2. Compile inventories of letters associated with particular contracts from Letters Received wherever possible.[⁹³]
3. Compile an index of circulars, letters sent by the Commissioner of the GLO to all Surveyors General.
4. Show the way in which the records associated with the public land surveys can be linked together.
5. Establish a paper trail for particular deputies.
6. Create an inventory of all the records relating to the surveys in a particular area.

6.3 Conclusion

The volume of material needed to adequately describe the work of the deputies in Minnesota is large although there may be ways to limit the volume described here. Knowing where the relevant records are housed and how they are cataloged is a first step in producing an electronic version of the material commonly referred to as special instructions. Clearly, the general instructions and special instructions given to the deputies by Surveyors General are not sufficient. The instructions given the Surveyors General by the Commissioner of the General Land Office are important but how those instructions found their way to the deputies is not

always clear although, in some instances, the instructions were embedded in the letters sent by the Surveyor General to a particular deputy. Clearly each contract must be considered idiosyncratic in information while following certain rules about the form the information took.

A glaring absence in all of these materials is, of course, the actual letters the deputies received (see Figure 5.3). Some of these can be found in the personal papers of the more notable deputies in Minnesota, Thomas Walker, George Wright, William Marshall, George Stuntz. As a surrogate for those letters, containing any instruction from the Surveyor General to the deputy, the Letters Sent by the Surveyors General will have to be used.

REFERENCES

¹ Dodds et al Original Instructions Governing Public Land Surveys of Iowa (Ames, IA. Iowa Engineering Society, 1943), p. v

² Other survey records have been made electronically accessible, for example the recently completed digitization of the township plats, online at <http://www.lmic.state.mn.us/chouse/GLO/>, and the ongoing efforts to digitize the field notes of the deputies will allow surveyors to use various new analytical methods to investigate the spatial patterns in the records. **Krafthefer, Jay “The time will come” Minnesota Surveyor** These projects, focusing on the survey records, complements other land records modernization efforts in Minnesota, see Land Records Modernization Committee Report, June 1999 online at www.gis.state.mn.us/committe/land/lrm2000/

³ Neither was the project concerned with the many geographical and historical characteristic of the public land surveys in Minnesota about which the PI has written extensively. There is an assumption in this report that the reader is familiar with many aspects of the public land surveys. Terms that possess commonly accepted definitions are not defined here.

⁴ 2 Stat. 716

⁵ Dakota County Surveyor’s Office online at <http://www.co.dakota.mn.us/Departments/SurveyorOffice/default.htm> Carver County Surveyor online at <http://www.co.carver.mn.us/departments/PW/surveyor.asp>

⁶ Grimes, James. Clark on Surveying and Boundaries 4th edition, p.494 quoted in Harlan Onsrud. A Manual for the Resurvey of Public Land Corners and Sectionalized Subdivision Boundaries Within the State of Wisconsin online at http://matcmadison.edu/civiltech/onsrud/onsrud_manual.htm

⁷ Minnesota Statutes (2006) 381.12

⁸ Id. There are rules for ensuring obliterated and lost corner monuments are replaced where they were originally established see Chapter 5 of the U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management. Manual of Surveying Instructions (Washington D.C. Government Printing Office, 1973) online at <http://www.cadastral.com/73manlc5.htm>. In Minnesota, the county is responsible for maintaining the corner monuments. A common activity by many county surveyors is marking corners with sturdy, modern monuments, a process called remonumentation. In a number of counties, this work has been completed. In rapidly urbanizing Carver County, for example, there are approximately 1360 public land survey corner monuments. These corners, set by deputies between 1853 and 1858 and perpetuated by cast iron monuments, control the boundaries of every parcel of land in the county. Efforts to remonument Minneapolis in Hennepin County are currently underway, see Brown, William “An open letter to surveyors in Twin Cities Metro Area” Minnesota Surveyor (Summer 2007) p9, 11

⁹ There are several processes involved in here. Some of the original states relinquished their claims to an area beyond their boundaries based on their colonial charters. The federal government acquired jurisdictions over large areas from foreign nations. Then the federal government acquired title to the land in these ceded areas from Native American tribes who possessed occupancy and use rights.

¹⁰ The public land survey net still forms the basis for legal descriptions in Minnesota .

¹¹ An assumption is that many people reading the report will be familiar with some of the processes if surveying important to recount the basic surveying process because it is the process that leads to the records.

¹² Somewhat confusingly, these directions are often called Annual Instructions.

¹³ Sometimes the deputy would appear in person at the Surveyor General's office to receive his contract and instructions and to deliver his notes. Sometimes he would correspond with the Surveyor General by mail

¹⁴ This varied slightly between 1846, 1851, 1851, and 1855. In 1855 such diagrams were called plats.

¹⁵ Again, This varied slightly between 1846, 1851, 1851, and 1855

¹⁶ There were in fact two types of transcribed field notebook. The first type are the notebooks containing the notes of either the deputy who created the township exteriors or the notes of the deputy who subdivided the township. The second type is the one sent, with a copy of the plat, to the Commissioner which contained both exterior and subdivision information. The University of Minnesota has a microfilmed copy of this second type.

¹⁷ The descriptive list comprised tables containing information on the topography, land quality and plant cover at every corner and along every line in a particular township. They were, in fact, abstracted from the deputies field notebooks.

¹⁸ Additional materials included quarterly accounts and annual reports.

¹⁹ Some of these letters are termed "additional instructions," "annual instructions," "special instructions," or "supplemental instructions." Some letters were sent to all surveyors general, in which case they were called "circulars," and some were sent only to particular surveyors general. The Commissioners of the General Land Office sent "annual instructions" to each Surveyor General informing him of the appropriations made to his surveying district and thus available to him to carry out the surveys and directing him where to concentrate the fieldwork. The other instructions defy any such categorization. After 1851, however, each deputy was connected to the Commissioner of the General Land Office through the General Instructions, which although given to him by the Surveyor General were issued by the Commissioner of the GLO although probably written by the Clerk of Surveys.

²⁰ The major problem is how to isolate those letters containing instructions and those that do not.

²¹ In general, it is unclear whether the instructions from the Commissioner of the General Land Office to the Surveyor General were actually forwarded to the deputy.

²² The relationship between these individuals is key to understanding the records. The Commissioner of the General Land Office was in charge of the surveyors general across the nation, but his supervision was quite variable and perhaps not really entirely effective until a standard set of General Instructions, describing how all surveys would be prosecuted, was issued first in 1851 and then amplified in 1855. The surveyors general who administered the earliest surveys in Minnesota, were relatively independently minded. They were, however, dependent on Congress for funds that were appropriated each year and the surveys that were carried out in their surveying district in a particular year were authorized by the Commissioner of the General Land Office.

²³ For republications of the General Instructions see White, C Albert A History of the Rectangular Survey (Washington D.C. Government Printing Office, 1982); Dodds et al supra note 1. I have seen the General Instruction published in various books but I have yet to see an original copy that was issued by the government.

²⁴ See White supra note 23 pp 340-355

²⁵ See White Id.116. For a brief discussion of the Oregon Manual see Id. p.115

²⁶ Each deputy received some “special instructions,” along with his contract before he started his fieldwork. Occasionally he received “special instructions” during the fieldwork, usually in response to a question posed to the Surveyor General.

²⁷ This seems to be the definition used by Dodds et al supra note 1

²⁸ How such Special Instructions fit into the classification proposed is not clear at present.

²⁹ What are not regarded as “special instructions” are letters from the Surveyor General to deputies regarding the status of their contracts and when they might expect to receive payment. But there is still a problem if separating those letters that contain special instruction and those that do not. Some letters are clearly labeled special instructions some are not. Some letters, two or three pages long, contain one or two sentences that could be interpreted as special instruction.

³⁰ Dodds et al supra note 1 p.197

³¹ Using the original letter also avoids the possibility of a copying error.

³² May 30 1862 12 Stat. 409

³³ See White supra note 23 p.502

³⁴ From the earliest surveys in that part of Wisconsin Territory that would become Minnesota Territory in 1847 until 1857 the surveys were administered by the Surveyor General of Wisconsin and Iowa with an office in Dubuque Iowa. Those records that were not transferred to Minnesota when the new surveying district was established are housed in the Iowa State Archives.

³⁵ Archival records are preserved/stored as they were created and so finding aids usually reflect the organization of the legal entity that created them. The physical arrangement of the records and the finding aids were created by archivists, knowledgeable about preservation of, and access to, records but without any particular knowledge of the General Land Office that supervised the surveys. At a particular time an archival collection may be divided among several locations, because of storage or jurisdictional (ownership) problems, and finding aids may be incomplete, because archivists cannot be specialists in every topic. From time to time, the physical arrangement of records will change as will finding aids. Records can be found and/or made accessible at any time but records that have not been preserved or are not accessible leave gaps in our knowledge.

³⁶ Squires, Rod. "A Preliminary Inventory of Documents Relating to the Public Land Survey of Minnesota Territory, located at the Historical Building, Des Moines, Iowa 50319" Dis-Closures (Fall, 1993)

³⁷ Finding aids are often created for those records that are extensively used. These finding aids necessarily crystallizes the current arrangement of the records.

³⁸ There are other records in Record Group 81 that may be relevant to understanding the surveys but are not the focus of this project.

³⁹ The letters concerning the boundary between Iowa and Minnesota were not noted or copied.

⁴⁰ The folds, which prevent an individual letter from laying flat on a horizontal surface, may cause a problem.

⁴¹ Those individuals working in Iowa, Wisconsin, and Minnesota Territory are noted from the annual reports of the Surveyor General of Wisconsin and Iowa.

⁴² J. S. Dodds et al. *supra* note 1

⁴³ The letters described as "special instructions" are, in fact, very varied. There are only a few that provide additional instructions on how the deputy was to proceed, in essence modifying the general instructions a little to take care of special circumstances. A large number of them concern when the surveys were to be completed. It is surmised, without evidence to the contrary, that the surveys were all carried out under the General Instructions of 1846, 1851 and 1855.

⁴⁴ Note the gap between the end of Vol. E and the start of Vol. F. There appears to be some 160 pages missing from Vol. F

⁴⁵ After this date, questions relating to the surveys were answered by the Commissioner of the General Land Office

⁴⁶ Until, recently, the original survey field notebooks and township plats were kept by the Minnesota Secretary of State. They have now been transferred to the History Center although finding aids have not yet been prepared for them

⁴⁷ A caveat is in order. There may have been some materials added to some of the records since the publication of the Guide – see 111.E.6.3.B below

⁴⁸ Partial boxes means that the material is contained in a box that includes other material with a different catalog identifier e.g. 111.E.9.9B contains Accounting Records, 1850-1907 and Timber Agent Accounts and Correspondence, 1861-1877

⁴⁹ This box also contains Miscellaneous Records and thus is catalogued under that heading, The books in the box are part of those records rather than part of the Letters Received

⁵⁰ There are no special instructions here, merely a notation of the fact that there were some.

⁵¹ The origins of these folders is unknown.

⁵² Confusingly, some letters from the Commissioner of the General Land Office to the Surveyors General are labeled “Special Instructions.”

⁵³ Islands were apparently always surveyed under special instructions. Surveyed under agreements rather than contracts. Although the surveys are listed in the various indexes showing contracts, they are never numbered.

⁵⁴ Of course, records can be found or made accessible at some future time.

⁵⁵ Valuable material should be found in the Manuscript Collections in the Minnesota Historical Society Archives of particular deputies.

⁵⁶ The originals of these copies, sent to the Surveyors General of Wisconsin and Iowa and the Surveyors General of Minnesota, should be found as “Letters Received” in the Iowa or Minnesota State Archives respectively.

⁵⁷ M27 provided the bulk of the information in C. Albert White’s encyclopedic book A History of the Rectangular Survey System supra note 23

⁵⁸ Copies of these original letters should be found in “Letters Sent” in the Minnesota State Archives.

⁵⁹ In an answer to a recent query, the National Archives staff indicated there are other indexes for the correspondence after 1880 but attempts to track them down were not successful. Recent work by John Freemyer, however, produced the records grouped under Division D.

⁶⁰ Turnover in the Archives staff was one contributing factor in the omission of these records until the last few months of the project.

⁶¹ The title for the “Entry 180” series is very confusing. It indicates that miscellaneous correspondence ranges from year 1801 to 1909, but the last box in the series is dated 1856. I assume that the correspondence for later years may not be organized into archive box sets at this time. I asked the archivist for further information. He seemed uncertain and simply stated this record set is not organized by year. From the boxes I examined that seems to be an incorrect statement.

⁶² “Press” refers to the way in which the copies were made.

⁶³ Supra note 57.

⁶⁴ The Territorial Papers of the United States, edited first by Clarence Carter and then John Bloom, consist of 28 volumes, published between 1934 and 1969, containing a selection of papers concerning the history of the territories. The papers include petitions and documents relating to land titles along with other documents and letters relating to the territories, including correspondence from the President of the United States, Secretaries of State, Treasury, and War, the Attorney Generals, and the Postmaster Generals, military leaders in the territories, also of lesser officials such as judges, and receivers and registers of land offices.

⁶⁵ Almost certainly, there will be special instructions among this material since, as mentioned above, most island surveys were carried out under special instructions.

⁶⁶ Squires, Rod “The annual reports of the surveyors general” Dis-closures (Winter, 1992) pp.14-15.

⁶⁷ Not unusually, the initials of the clerk who wrote the letter can be seen in the margins.

⁶⁸ White supra note 23 p.153.

⁶⁹ Id. pp.501-506.

⁷⁰ Id. p.506.

⁷¹ Id. p. 507.

⁷² Id.

⁷³ Id. p.508.

⁷⁴ Id. p.509.

⁷⁵ Id p.509, p.153.

⁷⁶ Id. p.545.

⁷⁷ Id. p.553.

⁷⁸ Id.

⁷⁹ Id. p.683.

⁸⁰ Id. p.139.

⁸¹ Id p.662.

⁸² As noted, there is a large volume of records that are purely administrative, for example, letters accompanying the transfer of contracts, bonds, field notebooks, and plats between the Surveyor General and the Commissioner of the General Land Office.

⁸³ The Minnesota History Center frowns on flash devices.

⁸⁴ Using a camera to make a digital image of the letters would seem to be a better option than using a scanner – cheaper, quicker, and less harm to the actual letters. There are no impediments to photographing the record collections described above except the need for preserving them. In the National Archives and the Iowa State Archives the actual letters can be flattened. The letterbooks in the Minnesota Historical Society will need special care.

⁸⁵ see Conover, Milton The General Land Office : its History, Activities and Organization (Baltimore, Md. The Johns Hopkins Press, 1923).

⁸⁶ Infra note 59 and 60

⁸⁷ Only the first few volumes of the Minnesota State Archives will contain letters to the Surveyor General of Wisconsin and Iowa.

⁸⁸ Note gap in date between volumes E and F.

⁸⁹ Copies of letters relevant to the surveys in Minnesota were not sent to the Surveyor General of Minnesota when Minnesota became a separate surveying district.

⁹⁰ Earlier volumes of Letters Received are probably in the Michigan State Archives because the first Surveyor General of Minnesota closed the Office of the Surveyor General in Detroit before opening his office in St. Paul. For several years he responded to questions about the surveys in Michigan.

⁹¹ Only the first few volumes will contain letters from the Surveyor General of Wisconsin and Iowa.

⁹² Some letterbooks have as many as 600 pages and some have as few as 250 pages. Some single letters are on two or more pages but in some cases there are two letters per page. Let's assume the average book size is 350 pages and this is one letter per page, the total number of letters both sent and received by the surveyors general between 1847 and 1908 is $350 \times 2 \times 60 = 42,000$ letters. Someone systemically going through the books/boxes and review each letter for the purpose of copying letters dealing with requests, instructions, problems, and dealing with merely administrative matters would necessarily read 42,000 letters. If we assume that an individual could review and take a digital image of one book/box a day it would take 120 days, 24 working weeks, to make digital copies. Transferring the images and indexing them along with any required transcriptions would be far more time consuming.

⁹³ Most importantly, the original letters often contain enclosures and are therefore much preferred in documenting instructions. Obviously, Letters Sent by the surveyors general will have to be used in the case of the letters sent to a deputy.

APPENDIX A.

**A PRELIMINARY TYPOLOGY OF INSTRUCTIONS FOR
SURVEYING THE PUBLIC LANDS IN MINNESOTA**

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Prolog

In May, 2006, I received a grant from the Minnesota Department of Transportation to make an inventory of the public land survey records relevant to Minnesota, particularly those materials usually referred to as “special instructions”.¹ This article summarizes my thoughts after a three-day visit to examine the records of the surveyors general of Wisconsin and Iowa in the Iowa State Archives in Des Moines, a brief visit to look at the records of the surveyors general of Minnesota in the Minnesota State Archives at St. Paul, and countless hours reading microfilm from the National Archives. They will almost certainly change as I spend more time at the Minnesota History Center and visit the National Archives in Washington D.C. My purpose here is to tentatively advance the idea that we need to expand our view about which instructions are relevant for surveyors wishing to “follow in the footsteps” of the original deputies.

Introduction

Approximately 250 individuals, working on their own or in partnership with others, contracted to carry out surveys in Minnesota. Some ran the correction parallels, the standard parallels, and the guide meridians, some ran the township exteriors, and some subdivided the townships into sections.² With each contract the deputies received instructions for their work, from the Surveyor General of Wisconsin and Iowa, 1847-1857, and the Surveyor General of Minnesota, 1857-1908.³

These instructions have been conveniently divided into two sets, those given to all deputies operating in the surveying district, usually termed “general instructions”, and those given to particular deputies, termed “special instructions”.⁴ Rarely mentioned, because their relationship to the actual instructions given to the deputies is unclear, is a third set of instructions sent by the Commissioners of the General Land Office (GLO) to the surveyors general.⁵

On May 30, 1862 President Abraham Lincoln signed into law, “An Act to reduce the expenses and sale of the public lands in the United States.” (12 Stat. 409) Section two of the act stated,

(T)he printed Manual of Instructions relating to the public surveys, prepared at the General Land Office, and bearing date February twenty-second, eighteen hundred and fifty-five, the instructions of the Commissioner of the General Land Office, and the special instructions of the surveyor general, when not in conflict with said printed Manual or the instructions of said Commissioner, shall be taken and deemed a part of every contract for surveying the public lands of the United States.

The legislation mentioned three sets of instructions; the printed Manual of Instructions, also termed general instructions, the special instructions of the surveyors general, and the instructions of the Commissioner of the GLO. Importantly, the language seems to imply the special instructions from the surveyors general are subservient to the instructions from the Commissioner of the GLO.

General Instructions

General instructions consist of a series of directives concerning the way in which the surveys were to be carried out and were given to each deputy at the start of a contract. Two surveyors general issued general instructions that governed the earliest surveys in Minnesota Territory. In 1846, Surveyor General George W. Jones, issued one set and in 1851, his successor, George B. Sargent who had been a deputy in southwestern Iowa, issued another set. (Dodds et al, 1943 69-79, 102-115).⁶ This latter set could only have been used for a short period of time in Minnesota. On July 10, 1852, Sargent was instructed to adopt the “Manual of Field Operation”, issued by the General Land Office in 1851 to govern the surveys in Oregon, for surveying in Minnesota Territory. (White, 1982 116) ⁷ In 1855 the General Land Office issued a set of general instructions that was to govern all future surveys in the United States. These instructions titled “Instructions to the Surveyors General of Public Lands of the United States ...” was adopted several years later, in 1862, as part of the contract of every deputy surveyor.⁸

Not surprisingly, these general instructions changed over time, as a result of changed practices. So, for example, on July 28, 1866 the Commissioner of the General Land Office sent a Circular to the Surveyor General of Minnesota, Levi Nutting,

The experience of this office having demonstrated the desirability of a change in the system adopted for the numbering of fractional lots of the public lands illustrated on “Diagram B” accompanying the printed Manual of Surveying Instructions issued February 22 1855, it has been decided to substitute thereof a more simple and less inconvenient scheme.

It is now proposed to employ but one continuous series of number in each section containing fractional lots, to embrace all lots made fractional by any cause, and not containing the recognized legal quantity of some legal subdivisions; but those subdivisions in the exterior halves of sections in the north and west tiers of sections in a township, which contain eighty or forty acres, will not be numbered in the future preparation of plats. The printed instructions on pages 25 & 26 of the aforesaid Manual are hereby modified to that extent.

Accompanying this letter is a “diagram B” illustrating the proposed change in numbering and which is designed in red ink on the same. When island are situated in two or more sections the lots should be embraced in a series of number of the respective sections in which they are located. Islands situated with a section may be numbered as one lot unless the area exceeds 160 acre in which case they should be divided by extending the subdivisional lines across them and then numbered. (Minnesota Historical Society, State Archives, U S Surveyor General Letters Received 1866 vol. LIII 133-134)

An interesting research problem is to trace the source of such changes in the general instructions in the written record.

Special Instructions

Special instructions are instructions given a particular deputy by the surveyor general, at the start of his contract or during his surveys. They are extraordinarily varied in content and

should be viewed through two lenses. In one way, they supplement the general instructions as the surveyor general gave the deputy more directives on how to carry out the surveys. At the same time, they complement the general instructions as the surveyor general gave the deputy necessary administrative details about his contract. Dodds et al, in a book containing all the special instructions relating the surveys in Iowa, noted

The special instructions were in the form of a letter to the deputy surveyor and contained: a list of the townships and ranges included in the contract; whether township or subdivision; places of beginning and places of ending; instructions as to connections with adjacent surveys; diagrams showing pertinent data for areas already surveyed; copies of general instructions; innumerable special references; and others.

...these special instructions contained many items that were similar. In fact they contained identical paragraphs. (Dodds et al 1943 197)⁹

An expanded definition of special instructions would include letters from the surveyors general informing deputies how to proceed, letters in response to queries from deputies in the field, and also letters informing deputies of errors in the work. Perhaps, as a general rule, virtually any letter issued by the surveyors general to a deputy under contract should be considered special instructions.¹⁰ These instructions are contained in the voluminous correspondence files of the surveyors general. They can be found in the Iowa State Archives in Des Moines and the Minnesota State Archives, at the Minnesota History Center in St. Paul.¹¹ Those for Iowa have been reproduced by Dodds et al (1943).¹²

The surveys in Minnesota, like the surveys in Iowa, “were made under the general instructions current at the time of the survey and special instructions issued to the deputy surveyor holding the contract.” (Dodds et al 1943 21) The earliest surveys in Minnesota Territory were governed by the procedures described in the General Instructions of 1846, 1851, and 1855 and the special instructions contained in letters sent by the surveyors general of Wisconsin and Iowa to the various deputies contracted to carry out surveys in Minnesota Territory from 1847 until 1857.¹³

The Relationship between General and Special Instructions

In a letter preceding his General Instructions of 1846, George W Jones wrote to the deputy,

You are to survey in person, or by the assistance of some duly authorized Deputy Surveyor acting under your immediate direction and supervision, the district assigned you under contract of _____ 18__, conformably to such parts of the following instructions as apply to the character of the work for which you have contracted, except so much thereof as is modified or countermanded by manuscript special instructions, hereinafter written. (White, 1982 340)

The same letter preceded the general instructions of the Surveyor General of Ohio, Indian, and Michigan of 1850 and the 1851 general instructions of George B. Sargent. (White, 1982 360, 384) Clearly general and special instructions were complementary.

The early general instructions relevant to the surveys in Minnesota Territory contain several references to special instructions. In the 1846 instructions the Surveyor General Jones wrote, under the heading “How and What to Meander”, noted,

Whenever required by special instructions, to meander any stream or body of water, passing through or lying within your district, you are also to meander all islands situated therein, which are valuable for their soil or timber. (White 1982, 343)

In the general instructions of 1850 were several references to special instructions. Under the heading “Of Exterior Township Lines,”

“5. Variations from this order and mode of running township lines, will sometimes be necessary, to accommodate them to the situation and boundaries of the tract of country to be surveyed, or to connect with prior surveys. Such cases, as they occur, will be provided for in Special Instructions.” (White, 1982 364)

In the same instructions, under the heading “Of Subdividing Townships

“13. An act of Congress of the 24th of May, 1824, authorizes a departure from the ordinary mode of surveying the public land on any river, lake, or bayou, whenever, in the opinion of the President of the United States, the public interest would be promoted thereby; so as to survey such lands in tracts of two acres in width, fronting on such river, lake, or bayou, and running back to the depth of forty acres. But as no general rules could be framed to govern all such surveys, this branch of the service is left to be provided for in Special Instructions, as cases thereof may occur.” (White, 1982 367)

Interestingly, neither the Oregon Manual of 1851 or the Manual of 1855 included the letter preceding the 1846, 1850, and 1851 instruction. White (1982, 443) included a footnote in the Oregon Manual regarding special instructions.¹⁴ In the Manual the surveyor general is allowed to alter the mode of surveying “whenever, in the opinion of the President of the United States, a departure from the ordinary mode of surveying ... would promote the public interest” (White, 1982 437)¹⁵ The only mention of special instructions in the 1855 Manual was with reference to settlers claims in Oregon, Washington, and New Mexico. (White 1982 467)¹⁶

The 1864 general instructions, however made reference to special instructions as did all subsequent Manuals, issued in 1881, 1890, 1894, and 1902.¹⁷ They made reference to the Act of 1862 and recognized three sets of instructions; those contained in the printed Manual, those from the Commissioner of the GLO, and those from the surveyors general. The last named would only seem to control “when not in conflict” with the other instructions. (White, 1982 502-544, 514, 558, 627, 722) The 1890 Manual also contained the following, under a separate part headed “Special Instructions Issued by the United States Surveyors-General to United States Deputy Surveyors”.

One of the most important duties to be performed by the surveyor general is to provide the deputy surveyor with *Special Instructions*, in connection with the contract, prepared in accordance with the law, which instructions will draw attention to certain paragraphs in this Manual, reiteration of its requirements, and printed directions of a general nature; but they will be in all cases *specific* in

character, with all necessary *detailed statements* in setting forth *what* the deputy is to do and *how* the work is to be performed. (White, 1982 572)

This rather neat picture, of general instructions and special instructions, does not give the whole picture of all the instructions that might be relevant to the modern surveyor.

Instructions issued by the Commissioner of the General Land Office

These instructions comprise two groups, those issued to the various surveyors general and those issued to other individuals.¹⁸ Letters from the Commissioner of the GLO to the surveyors general contain an extraordinary volume of material addressing various surveying problems. It is not clear how, or even whether, the surveyors general passed the information on to the deputies.

The most important of the first group were those described as “Circulars”, sent to every surveyor general directing them to change their method of operation in some way or instructing them in the proper way of proceeding. White (1982) includes several examples (White 1982 506, 507, 509) Circulars sometimes modified general instructions, for example, the 1864 general instructions regarding meanders were modified by a Circular issued in 1876. (White, 1982 508)

On July 9, 1852, the Surveyor General George B. Sargent received a letter from John Wilson, Acting Commissioner of the General Land Office. The Acting Commissioner wrote,

The condition of the corner boundaries of the public surveys in many parts of the country admonishes that it is the duty of the Surveyor General to make it their special care in all future surveys to have such boundaries perpetuated in the most effectual and enduring manner. Evidences from time to time are continually being presented to the Department of the entire absence or disappearance of mound corners in prairie regions where none others could be employed to designate the surveys. The ground may be faithfully chained and the contracting deputy may make the oath as required by law, and yet, in a few years the practical evidence of the surveys may become utterly obliterated in a prairie country fro the want of establishing the mound corners after a judicious method.

The mound falls down, the stake is destroyed and nothing then remains to direct the eye of the enquirer to the place where it originally stood. Hence the ultimate object of the survey is lost when the boundary is gone, and there is no provision in the surveying laws for remedying the evil by restoring the evidence, and thus results a public calamity to the whole community concerned.

In the surveying operations instituted in Oregon and California the mound corners are required to be perpetuated after the method prescribed in the accompanying manual of Instructions to Deputy Surveyors, and which is illustrated by the accompanying diagrams. The mound is required to be conical in its formation, and to be enclosed with “a quadrangular trench”, conforming to the cardinal points (not a ditch) formed by spading up the earth while facing the line of the quadrangle and throwing up the clods in regular order so as to form an elevated margin along the lines of the quadrangular, which, when covered with

grass, will indicated a work of art, and arrest the attention in future time in the event of the destruction of the mound itself by time or accident.

This mode of perpetuating mound corners makes the quadrangular trench an essential part of the work and you are requested to require your Deputy Surveyors to adopt the same, and also the conical form in all future cases where mound corners are established. This course of proceeding has been required and adopted in Louisiana, Florida, and Arkansas. (M27 vol 15 1-2)

Included in this group of instructions are those often labeled “Annual Instructions” issued by the Commissioner which directed the surveyors general about what to survey.¹⁹ Also included are the letters concerning the myriad details of surveying at the time, including noting errors in the field notes and on the plats.

Another type of instructions involves explaining to surveyors general on how sections should be divided and how lost corners should be restored.²⁰ One, issued November 1, 1879 contained the following justification,

This Office being in receipt of many letters making inquiry in regard to the proper method of subdividing sections of the public lands and restoring lost corners of the public surveys, the following general rules have been prepared as a reply to such enquiries. (White 1982 509)

Another, issued on March 13 1883, was justified by,

The increasing number of letters from county and local surveyors at this office, making enquiry as to the proper method of restoring to their original position lost or obliterated corners marking the survey of the public lands of the United States, or such as have been willfully moved from their original position, have rendered the preparation of the following general rules necessary ... (White 1982 546)

There are several other types that need exploration, for example those that direct the surveyors to change operations.

Surveys carried out entirely under special instructions

Some surveys were made entirely under special instructions, island surveys, state boundaries, and Indian reservation boundaries, for example.²¹ Some surveys were initially carried out under special and then those special instructions were incorporated into the general instructions.²²

Conclusion

The sole conclusion is that the volume of material needed to adequately describe the work of the deputies in Minnesota is large. I suggest that the general instructions and special instructions given to the deputies by surveyors general may not be sufficient

The question arises, quite naturally regarding access to all these materials. How can we adequately catalog the various sources letters from the Commissioner of the GLO to the surveyors general and from the surveyors general to the deputies? Even more problematic,

how can we establish the paper link but can only do that via examples and we have to suppose that some of the time it worked and some of the time it did not.

Bibliography

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Caldwell Norman C. ed. Special Instructions to Deputy Surveyors in Michigan 1808-1854 (Michigan Museum of Surveying, Lansing, MI. 1990)

White C. Albert A History of the Rectangular Survey System (Washington DC. Government Printing Office, 1982)

Weber, Joe C. Early Public Land Surveys in the Northwest Territory and Procedures for the Retracement of Original Government Surveys in Illinois (privately published, 1981)

¹ I have previously written about these instructions, see Squires, Rod “Comments on the Instructions to Deputy Surveyors in Minnesota, 1847-1860” Minnesota Surveyor 1994)

² Some surveyed islands, the subject of future work.

³ “The contract system tended to encourage the deputies to use surveying methods that would produce results of the minimal acceptable precision.” (Dodds et 1941 1) Undoubtedly, the instructions contained in Dodd et al (1943), dated 1846-1857, have some useful information regarding the way in which the surveys in Minnesota were carried out, if only because some of the letters published in the book are to deputies that also worked in Minnesota (Dodds et al, 1943 292-350). But we should be careful not to overemphasize that fact. There were difference between the surveys in Iowa and the surveys in Minnesota. For example deputies running Iowa township exterior lines seem to have been given contracts encompassing larger areas than those in Minnesota. (Dodds et al 1943 198)

⁴ As Dodds et al (1943 21) wryly noted “Any apparent discrepancies appearing in the original notes for the survey ... will be found to comply with some requirement of the special instructions or with an earlier set of general instructions or will be an exception introduced by the deputy surveyor as his own idea.”

⁵ Copies of these instructions, contained in correspondence between the Commissioner of the General Land Office and various surveyors general around the nation, has been microfilmed by the National Archives. Microfilm M27 was used extensively by C. Albert White for his monumental book A History of the Rectangular Survey System (Government Printing Office Washington D.C. 1982) see page vii.

⁶ Dodds et al (1943 80-101) included the 1850 General Instructions issued by the Surveyor General for Ohio, Indiana, and Michigan. I am not sure of the relevance of such instructions to the surveys in Minnesota Territory.

⁷ In fact Sargent had been directed to use the 1851 Manual, “to run his range lines north to intersections with the correction lines and establish closing corners according to the Manual,” the previous year, on April 23, 1851 (White, 1982 115) Warner Lewis, who succeeded Sargent as surveyor general in 1853 was also directed to use the 1851 Manual. (White 1982 116) These instructions were adopted at a time the surveys were crossing the Mississippi River. Strangely, Dodds et al (1943) do not include these instructions.

⁸ The 1862 legislation is cited above.

⁹ The standard paragraphs contained in the special instructions issued by the surveyors general of Wisconsin and Iowa , 1847-1857, are contained in Dodds et al (1943 356-364) Some of these paragraphs are found in special instructions to deputies who worked in Minnesota Territory.

¹⁰ The exceptions might include letters from the surveyor general to the deputy that had no bearing on what the deputy did in the field. Such letters would include those that inform the deputy of the status of his contract, and thus when he might expect to be paid. According to Dodds et al (1943), not all deputies received special instructions. They noted, “It is quite likely that a number of contracts were sent out without any advice other than in the contract itself.”(1943 205).

¹¹ The National Archives in Washington D.C., almost certainly, possesses copies of the special instructions but at this point in the research I do not know. According to White (1982 155), special instructions for any contract were to be sent to the Commissioner of the GLO along with the contract for his approval after 1876.

¹² The special instructions for Michigan (Caldwell 1990), and Illinois (Weber, 1981) have also been published. How completely these books cover the instructions is unknown..

¹³ The letters containing special instructions to the deputies surveying in Iowa contained in Dodd et al probably have some useful information regarding the way in which the surveys in Minnesota were carried out. Some of the letters are addressed to deputies who also worked in Minnesota, see Dodds et al (1943 292-350).

¹⁴ White gave no further information so I am unsure of what the footnote means.

¹⁵ Presumably by special instructions.

¹⁶ It is tempting to suggest that the new manual was intended to cover all contingencies of surveying and special instructions to deputies to overcome problems were a thing of the past.

¹⁷ Strangely, White called the 1864 instructions “Instructions Circular” (White, 1982 501). I do not know whether he invented the phrase or whether the National Archives staff so described them.

¹⁸ Among the individuals to whom the Commissioner of the GLO wrote were such as county surveyors. Such letters contained information about how to re-establish lost corners, subdivide sections, and run meander lines, and how to survey omitted lands including islands

¹⁹ This instruction followed the annual Congressional appropriations for surveying

²⁰ The General Instructions of the Surveyor General of Illinois and Missouri contain an interesting appendix, not found in other general instructions, regarding the proper way of resurveying, including “renewing missing corners formerly established, and subdividing Sections.” (White, 1982 421-431) Unfortunately, these instructions are not dated, although a letter preceding them bears a partial date 185*. (the asterisk denotes a missing number) The instruction appear in White’s book between two instructions dated 1851.

²¹ Until 1881, general instructions concerned the way in which township exteriors and township subdivision lines were run, there was no mention of Principal Meridians, Base lines, Standard Parallel or Auxiliary Meridians (White 1982 524). Such lines were run under special instructions.

²² Instructions to survey correction lines, standard lines and meanders, for example. The instructions issued by George W Jones in 1846 mentions special instructions regarding meanders. (White, 1982 343). The same language was used by George B Sargent in his 1851 instructions. (White, 1982 391) In the 1851 Oregon Manual and all subsequent Manuals, meandering is treated with general instructions. (White, 1982 441) Another example, from Michigan is also described by White (1982 111, 356)

APPENDIX B.

EXAMPLES OF LETTERS SENT IN IOWA STATE ARCHIVES

Index to Letters Sent Vol. E

Page	Date	Recipient	Subject
46	Aug 25, 1851	Wm Dunn	Special instructions ?MN
183	Oct 24	GLO	Annual Report
212	Nov 25	GLO	Wiltse examination account suspended in part p.235
220	Sept 24	Marshall	Additional special instruction (photo)
226	Dec 4	John Ball	Re "plain township" no instructions WI p.241
255	Jan 8 1852		Northern boundary pp.270 276 278 279 290 318 354
303	March 11	Marshall	Island surveys pp.346 350 351 360 361 363 368 401 411 412
358	March 2		Marshall appointed examining deputy
364	May 20		Charles W Borup acquiring title to island
373	May 24	Norris	Special instruction WI (photo)
376	June 4	GLO	Higbee problem (photo)
385	June 7		George R Stuntz special instructions
380	June 7		Stuntz MN/WI boundary survey p.540
398	June 28	Conkey	Concerned at Conkey's work under contract Aug 6 1849 p.585
410	July 16	Marshall	Special instructions but named as such p.442
417	July 28	GLO	Re surveys in west Minnesota
446	Aug 30		IA deputy, problems with work (photo)
448	Aug 4	Marshall	Appointed examiner (photo)
458	Sept 11		Edwin James meander surveys
535	Nov 23	Marshall	Island surveys
580	Feb 18 1853	Higbee	Claim for more money
620	May 9		Inventory

Transcribed examples

Page 373 Special Instructions
 Surveyor General's Office Dubuque May 24th 1852

To E. S. Norris
 U.S. Dep. Sur.

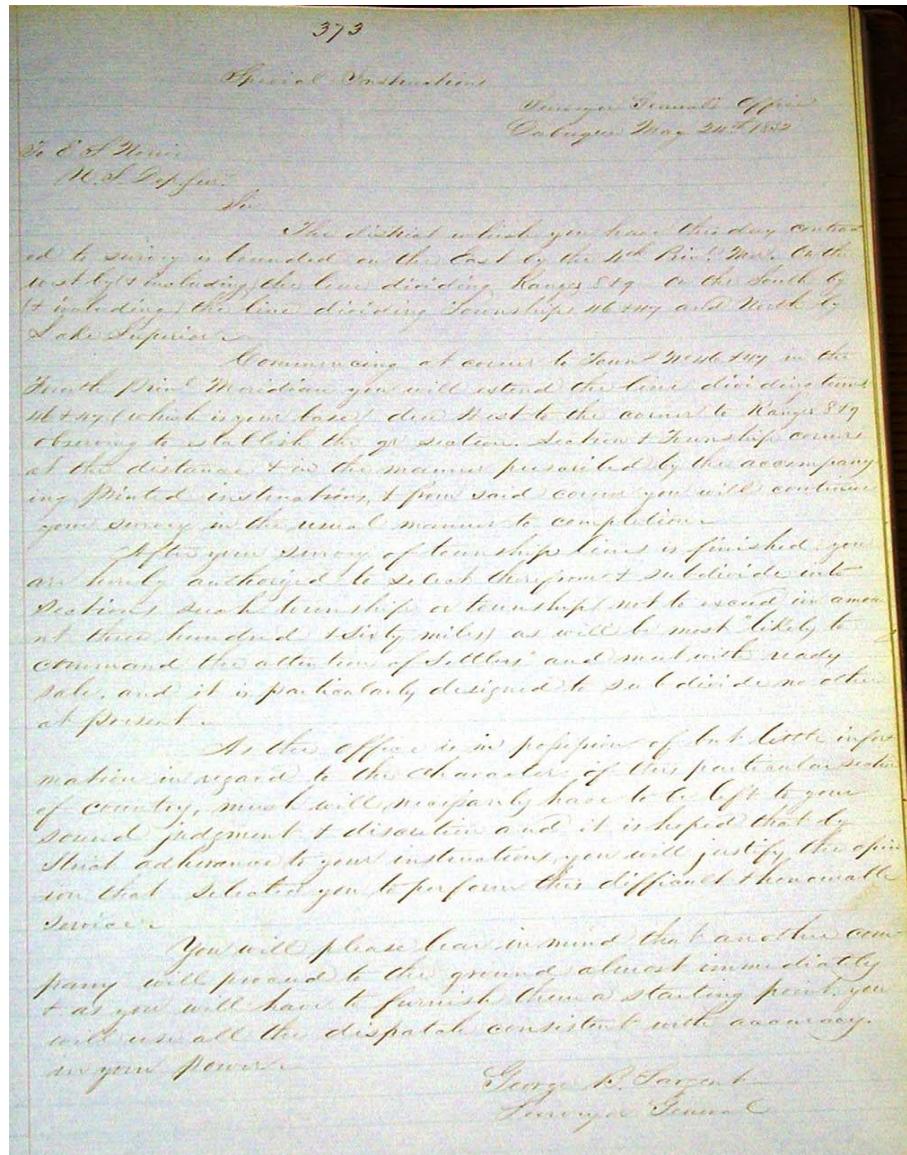
Sir, The district which you have this day contracted to survey is bounded on the East by the 4th Prin. Mer., on the West by & including the line dividing Ranges 8 & 9, on the South by & including the line dividing Townships 116 & 117 and North by Lake Superior.

Commencing at corner to Town 116 & 117 in the Fourth Prinl. Meridian you will extend the line dividing towns 46 & 47 (which is your base) due West to the corner to Ranges 8 & 9 observing to establish the qr. section, section & Township corners at the distances & in the manner prescribed by the accompanying printed instructions, & from said corner you will continue your surveys in the usual manner to completion.

After your survey of township lines is finished, you are hereby authorized to select therefrom & subdivide into sections such township or townships not to exceed in amount three hundred & sixty miles as will be most "likely to command the attention of settlers" and meet with ready sale, and it is particularly designed to subdivide no other at present. As this office is in possession of but little

information in regard to the character of this particular section of country, much will necessarily have to be left to your sound judgment & discretion and it is hoped that by such adherence to your instructions you will justify the opinion that selected you to perform this difficult & honorable service.

You will please bear in mind that another company will proceed to the ground almost immediately & as you will have to furnish them a starting point, you will use all the dispatch consistent with accuracy in your power.



Page 376 Special Instructions
Surveyor General's Office Dubuque June 4th 1852

To Hon J Butterfield

Commissioner of the General Land Office Washington DC

I have this day transmitted to your address a package containing copies of the original plats of six townships situated West of the Fourth Prinl. Mer. In the Territory of Minnesota representing the surveys executed by Daniel Higbee Dep. Sur. Under his contract of Sept 24th 1851 and numbered as follows;

Township No. 37 & 38 of Range 25 and
Ditto 37, 38, 39 & 40 of Range 26

Mr. Higbee requested that the amount of his account herewith enclosed may be forwarded in a draft on New York to his address Dubuque Iowa.

Great difficulty was experience by Mr. H. in the execution of this survey, not only from the nature of the country but form the defective manner in which the town lines were run. The lines between Town 37 & 38, 28 & 39 & part of the line between 36 & 37 of Range 25; lines between Towns 36 & 37 & 39 & 40 of Range 26; part of the line between Ranges 25 & 26 of Towns 37 & 38 and all the line between same Range of Town 39 were corrected by Mr. Higbee, as were the lines between Ranges 26 & 27 of Towns 38 & 39 & part of the lines between same Range of Town 39 by J Marshall Dep. Sur. Whose contract joined Mr. Higbee on the west.

As soon as the work of Mr. Marshall (which has lately been returned) shall have been platted &proved to be correct, an account will be made out against Mr. Conkey and forwarded for payment by him agreeable to your letter of instructions of the 22d of October last

Surveyor General's Office
 Dulques House 11th Nov

I have this day transmitted to your address a package containing copies of the original plats of six townships situated West of the South River within the Territory of Minnesota upon which the surveys executed by Daniel Heigler Dip. Sur. under his Contract of Sept. 24th 1831 are numbered as follows:

Townships N^o 37 & 38 of Range 25 and

37, 38, 39 & 40 " " 26

Mr Heigler requests that the amount of his account herewith enclosed, may be forwarded in a draft on New York to his address Dulques House

Great difficulty was experienced by Mr Heigler in the execution of this survey, not only from the nature of the country but from the defective manner in which the town lines were run. The lines between Towns 37 & 38, 38 & 39 & part of the line between 36 & 37 of Range 25; lines between Towns 36 & 37, 37 & 38 & 39 & 40 of Range 26; part of the lines between Ranges 25 & 26 of Towns 37 & 38 and all the lines between same Ranges of Towns 39 were corrected by Mr Heigler, as were the lines between Ranges 26 & 27 of Towns 38 & 40 & part of the line between same Range of Town 39 by J. M. Marshall Dip. Sur. whose Contract joins Mr Heigler on the West.

As soon as the work of Mr Marshall (which has lately been returned) shall have been plotted & proved to be correct, an account will be made out against Mr Heigler and forwarded for payment by him agreeable to your letter of instructions of the 20th of October last

I am very respectfully

Yours Obedt Serv^t
 George B. Sargent
 Surveyor General

Wmth Butterfield
 Commissioner of the Land Office
 Washington D. C.

APPENDIX C.

**SELECTED PAPERS PUBLISHED BY THE AUTHOR IN
DIS-CLOSURES AND THE *MINNESOTA SURVEYOR***

(The official Publication of the Minnesota Society of Professional Surveyors that use some of the records described in the report.)

Letters sent by surveyor general Charles L. Emerson, 1857 (Fall, 1994) pp.20-26

Comments on the instructions to deputy surveyors in Minnesota, 1847-1860 (Winter, 1995)
pp.12-16

George B. Wright, deputy surveyor, 1862-1865 (Summer, 1995) pp.10-17

George B. Wright, deputy surveyor, 1866-1869 (Spring, 1996) pp.16-19

The public land survey in Minnesota, 1875-1878 Part I (Fall, 1996) pp.12-19

The public land survey in Minnesota, 1875-1878 Part II (Winter, 1997) pp.12-29

The public land survey under Martin Chandler, 1883-1886. Part 1 (Spring 1998) pp.14-20

The public land survey under Martin Chandler, 1883-1886.Part 2 (Summer 1998) pp.18-22

Deposit surveys in Minnesota, 1881-1884 (Summer, 2000) pp.16-20

APPENDIX D.

AN EXCERPT FROM A GUIDE TO THE RECORDS OF MINNESOTA PUBLIC LANDS

Kinney, Gregory and Lucas, Lydia. *A Guide to the Records of Minnesota Public Lands* (St. Paul, Minnesota Historical Society, Division of Archives and Manuscripts, 1985) pp. 47-57.

A Guide to the Records of

Minnesota's Public Lands

by Gregory Kinney and Lydia Lucas

Minnesota Historical Society

Division of Archives and Manuscripts

1985

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U.S. SURVEYOR GENERAL OF MINNESOTA

The Office of Surveyor General of Minnesota was established in 1857 and was responsible for conducting the original government survey of the public domain in the territory and state of Minnesota. The surveyor general's primary duties were awarding contracts for the survey of specified tracts, supervising the field work of the deputy surveyors, preparing official plats and descriptive lists for each township from the field notes of the deputy surveyors, and managing the accounts of the office.

Congress created the position of surveyor general by an act of 1796 establishing the "Office of Surveyor General Northwest of the Ohio" and "Office of Surveyor General Southwest of the Ohio." The surveyors general originally served directly under the secretary of the treasury. In 1836 the supervision of the federal survey was placed under the jurisdiction of the General Land Office (GLO), then a bureau within the Treasury Department. The surveyors general became direct subordinates of the commissioner of the GLO although they continued to operate independently of the local GLO land offices.

As westward expansion proceeded and the survey of older areas was completed, Congress authorized the creation of new survey districts and the relocation of surveyor general's headquarters within the old districts. The Office of Surveyor General of Minnesota was a lineal descendant of the Office of Surveyor General Northwest of the Ohio. That office had been located successively at: Marietta, Ohio, 1797-1804; Vincennes, Indiana, 1804-1805; Cincinnati, Ohio, 1805-1814; Chillicothe, Ohio, 1814-1829; Cincinnati, 1829-1845; and Detroit, Michigan, 1845-1857.

An act of Congress of March 3, 1857, instructed the Secretary of the Interior "to cause the Office of Surveyor General Northwest of the Ohio to be removed [from Detroit] to St. Paul in the Territory of Minnesota." The Detroit office was closed May 11, 1857. In a letter of May 23, 1857, surveyor general C. L. Emerson reported that "notes, maps, papers, documents and furniture" had arrived in St. Paul from Detroit and that he "would soon be ready to conduct such field work as may be ordered."¹

The earliest surveys of land in Minnesota were conducted under the jurisdiction of the Surveyor General of Iowa and Wisconsin, headquartered at Dubuque, Iowa. These surveys, completed between 1848 and May, 1857, were primarily on land located between the St. Croix and Mississippi rivers or in the southeastern corner of Minnesota.

1. C. L. Emerson to Thomas Hendricks, GLO commissioner. USSG Letters Sent, vol. J, p. 337.

After the establishment of the Office of Surveyor General of Minnesota, copies of the field notes, plats, and other records relevant to these surveys were transferred from Dubuque to St. Paul.

The government survey, sometimes referred to as the "congressional," "federal," or "rectangular" survey, divided the state into a grid of townships, each six miles square. The federal survey was based on a series of north-south principal meridians and east-west base lines. Survey points were measured from these base lines and principal meridians, giving each township a unique location north of a base line and west or east of a principal meridian. Each township was subdivided into 36 sections of 640 acres, quarter sections of 160 acres, and quarter-quarter sections of 40 acres.

Because part of Minnesota had belonged to the Northwest Territory and part to the Louisiana Territory, land in the state was subject to two different surveys. Land east of the Mississippi was platted under a survey originating on the "Galena" base line (near the Wisconsin-Illinois border) and was controlled by the 4th principal meridian. The survey of land west of the Mississippi commenced on a base line running through Clarendon, Arkansas, and was controlled by the 5th principal meridian. Townships east of the river are numbered 22-70 north of the Galena base line. Townships west of the Mississippi are numbered 101-164 north of the Clarendon base line.

Congress annually appropriated money for survey work in Minnesota. The surveyor general and the commissioner of the GLO decided which tracts were to be surveyed in a given fiscal year. Contracts for survey work were awarded to deputy surveyors by competitive bid. The deputy surveyor, with a crew of chainmen, axemen, and a compassman, ran the survey lines in the field and was responsible for erecting survey monuments, blazing trees, and recording all measurements in his field notes. The surveyor general verified the accuracy and completeness of the deputy surveyor's work and then submitted copies of the field notes and plats to the commissioner of the GLO for approval.

The Office of Surveyor General of Minnesota continued in operation until December, 1907, when the survey of Minnesota was essentially complete. After 1907 the commissioner of the GLO served, *ex officio*, as Surveyor General of Minnesota, and questions relating to the survey were forwarded to the GLO. A congressional act of 1940 provided that the records of the Office of Surveyor General of Minnesota be turned over to the Minnesota secretary of state.

The records of the U.S. Surveyor General of Minnesota, most of which were transferred to the State Archives from the secretary of state's office in 1966, include deputy surveyors' field notes (copies) and related records, surveyor general's office correspondence and accounts, contracts for surveys, township survey plats, and miscellaneous related records. The original survey field notes and plats remain (1985) in the custody of the Minnesota secretary of state's office. The University of Minnesota holds a microfilm copy of the field notes and plats sent to the commissioner of the GLO.

List of Surveyors General of Minnesota:

Charles L. Emerson, March 24, 1857-April 13, 1861
William Drew Washburn, April 13, 1861-May 15, 1865
Levi Nutting, May 15, 1865-May 18, 1869
Chester E. Davis, May 18, 1869-Dec. 8, 1870 (died in office)
C. T. Brown, Feb. 7, 1871-Oct. 13, 1873
Dana E. King, Oct. 1873-April 30, 1875
James Heaton Baker, May 1, 1875-April 4, 1879
J. H. Stewart, April 14, 1879-May 2, 1883
Martin Chandler, May 2, 1883-April 2, 1887
John Freeman Norrish, April 2, 1887-April 22, 1891
James Compton, April 22, 1891-Nov. 27, 1895
Patrick H. Kirwan, Nov. 27, 1895-Feb. 6, 1900
Eli S. Warner, Feb. 7, 1900-Dec. 30, 1907

RECORDS OF THE U.S. SURVEYOR GENERAL

Accounting Records, 1850-1907. 0.8 c.f. (3 vols. and 10 folders)

Quarterly accounts of survey appropriations received and of expenditures for salaries, survey work, and incidental expenses by the St. Paul surveyor general's office, supplemented by vouchers that give additional details on expenses or that document work not itemized in the quarterly accounts. They include monthly or quarterly payrolls (incorporated into the accounts), expenses for surveying the Red Lake Indian Reservation, accounts for the surveyor general's office at Detroit, Michigan (1850-1857), and accounts of the surveyor general as federal timber agent.

Arrangement: By record type or format; roughly chronological thereunder.

Related Records: **Surveyors' Accounts.**

Contracts for Surveys, 1857-1907. 1.4 c.f. (10 folders and 2 vols.)

Contracts between the surveyor general and deputy surveyors for the survey of specified tracts of public land (1881-1907, 10 folders), and a record of contracts awarded and special instructions issued (1857-1907, 2 vols.). They include contracts awarded at bid and "special instructions" from the General Land Office (GLO) and surveyor general to deputy surveyors for the survey of islands or other designated parcels.

Information contained in the contracts includes name of the contracting surveyor; date the contract was issued; date the survey was to be completed; description of the survey work to be done, citing range and township and the type of lines to be run; rate of pay; and estimated cost of the survey. Beginning in 1896, the contract and surveyor's bond were combined on a single printed sheet. The bond lists the person or company acting as surety for the deputy surveyor. Some contracts are accompanied by additional documents relating to the execution of the survey, which may include petitions from settlers to the surveyor general requesting that a particular tract be surveyed, correspondence between deputy surveyors and the surveyor general, supplemental instructions, oath of the deputy surveyor, and diagrams of the area to be surveyed.

The record of contracts and special instructions cites the name of the deputy surveyor, date the contract or instructions were issued, tract to be surveyed, date the survey notes were returned to the surveyor general's office, and dates the plats and transcripts were transmitted to the GLO and the local land office.

Arrangement: Each subseries is chronological by date contract or special instructions issued.

Related Records: The type of supplementary material that accompanies some of the contracts also exists for most of the other contracts but is dispersed in several different series: **Petitions for Surveys; Letters Sent; Letters Received;** and **Surveyors' Accounts.**

Descriptive Lists of Survey Posts, 1849-1907. 6.0 c.f. (4 oversize boxes)

Compiled lists describing survey reference points and locations of section, quarter section, and meander posts for each township in Minnesota. They also include comments on the topography, soil quality,

and plant cover of each section. The lists were compiled by the surveyor general's office from information in the deputy surveyors' field notes and, in effect, are an abstract of the field notes. Some of the lists are dated and signed by the surveyor general. Lists for several townships are missing.

Arrangement: By county, thereunder by range and township. Records for a particular township may be filed under more than one county or, more often, under the county in which the largest part of the township is located.

Field Notes: Township Exterior and Subdivision Survey Lines, 1848-1907.
30.0 c.f. (30 boxes)

Handwritten copies of the notebooks kept by deputy surveyors as they laid out the exterior and subdivision lines of each township, recording survey reference points and the location of section, quarter section, and meander posts. They also include plat drawings and comments on the topography, soil quality, plant cover, and other natural features of each township. The field notes for each township also give the names of the deputy surveyor and his assistants, dates the survey was begun and completed, affidavits attesting to the accuracy of the survey, and the surveyor general's certification of the accuracy of the copied notes.

These copies were made by the surveyor general's office. Some were made immediately after completion of the survey; others were done much later. Several are identified as copies of copies. The series includes both bound volumes containing field notes for several townships and interfiled folders of unbound notes for single townships.

This is not a complete set of survey field notes. Notes for some townships are missing from volumes. The original notebooks are (1985) in the custody of the Minnesota secretary of state's office.

Arrangement: By principal meridian, then range, then township. Bound volumes containing several ranges sometimes slightly disrupt this sequence.

Related Records: **Descriptive Lists of Survey Posts; Township Survey Plats; Field Notes of Survey Examiners.**

Field Notes of Survey Examiners, 1857-1897. 1.0 c.f. (1 box)

Field notes of deputy surveyors commissioned by the surveyor general to examine the accuracy and completeness of surveys of township and subdivision lines, guide meridians and standard parallels, and boundaries of Indian reservations.

The field notes consist of 33 "pocket diaries" (1854-1888) and twelve folders of folios (1889-1897). Field notes include the name of the examining surveyor, the survey to be examined, and the name of the original surveyor and date of his contract. They report on the accuracy of location and quality of construction of survey posts, condition of the blazed survey lines, accuracy of the original survey notes and plats, and any corrections the examiner made in the original survey. Some field notes are accompanied by, or incorporate, a daily journal which may include an account of the trip to and from the survey site, a record of expenses, comments on the weather, and daily notes on the progress of the examination.

52 Guide to the Records of Minnesota's Public Lands

Field notes for 1854-1857 are copies of originals obtained from the surveyor general's office at Dubuque, Iowa. These include several volumes of field notes of original surveys of township lines, guide meridians, and standard parallels.

Also included are a journal (log) of survey examinations by Edward Atwater (1857-1858) and an account of expenditures by examiner George B. Wright (1862).

Arrangement: Chronological, by date examination completed.

Related Records: **Field Notes; Descriptive Lists of Survey Posts; Township Survey Plats.**

Letters Received, 1857-1907. 7.3 c.f. (7 boxes and 9 folders)

Letters received by the surveyor general's office in St. Paul relating to all aspects of the survey of public lands in Minnesota. The letters are from three main types of correspondents: U.S. General Land Office (GLO) personnel, deputy surveyors, and private citizens and corporations.

GLO letters predominate. They deal with annual appropriations for survey work in Minnesota; instructions to the surveyor general and deputy surveyors; requests and authorizations for surveys of particular parcels; surveys of Indian reservations and railroad lands; hiring and payment of deputy surveyors and office staff; approval or rejection of completed surveys; illegal cutting of timber on public lands; contested surveys and land claims; and much routine office correspondence such as acknowledgments of reports transmitted and accounts paid.

Deputy surveyors' letters, often from field camps, report progress of survey work; ask the surveyor general for instructions, extensions of contractual deadlines, or payment on contracts; and request information on employment and the awarding of contracts.

Letters from the public and corporations consist of petitions to have particular parcels surveyed; allegations of inaccuracies in completed surveys; inquiries to the surveyor general on survey progress, preemption rights, and the availability of land; and applications for employment.

Other correspondents include registers and receivers of local land offices, county surveyors, private surveyors, and land agents.

Arrangement: Primarily chronological (50 vols.); also includes loose papers (3 folders) and subject files (6 folders and 1 vol.). There may be additional letters relating to the subject files in the bound volumes.

Related Records: **Petitions for Surveys; Accounting Records.** Also, **U.S. General Land Office: Calendar of General Land Office Letters** (page 64) includes citations to letters sent to and received from surveyors general.

Letters Sent, 1854-1908. 4.0 c.f. (4 boxes)

Handwritten and letterpress copies of outgoing letters of the surveyor general's offices in Detroit (1854-1857) and St. Paul (1857-1908) relating to the survey of public lands in Minnesota and parts of Michigan. Recipients fall into three major categories: U.S. General Land Office (GLO) personnel, deputy surveyors, and the general public.

Letters and reports to the GLO form the largest part of the series and include annual reports on the progress of the survey; quarterly and annual accounts; transmissions of deputy surveyors' field notes and plats to the GLO for approval; pay vouchers for surveyors and office staff; responses to inquiries from the GLO concerning allegations of inaccurate surveys, contested land claims, and illegal timber cutting; reports and inquiries on surveying of Indian reservations and railroad lands; requests for authorization to survey particular parcels in response to petitions from the public; and much routine office correspondence.

Letters to the deputy surveyors concern the awarding of contracts; instructions for conduct of surveys; payment on contracts; extension of contractual deadlines; and allegations of inaccurate or improperly conducted surveys.

Letters to the general public include responses to petitions for the survey of particular parcels; to inquiries about the progress of the survey, preemption rights, and the availability of land; to allegations of inaccurate surveys and contested land claims; and to requests for employment.

Other correspondents include registers and receivers of local land offices, county surveyors, private surveyors, and land agents.

Arrangement: Chronological within three subseries: Vols. J-Q, 1854-1889 (handwritten); Vols. 1-19, 1884-1908 (letterpress); and Chief Clerk, 1853-1869.

Finding Aids: Most volumes are indexed by recipient.

Related Records: **U.S. General Land Office: Calendar of General Land Office Letters** (page 64) includes citations to letters sent to and received from surveyors general.

Miscellaneous Maps and Lists, undated and 1850-1914. 0.4 c.f. (7 folders)

Plat maps and sketches showing progress of the Minnesota land survey, Indian reservation boundaries, part of the Fort Ripley and Red River Road, plats available from Jewett and Son, a list of townships surveyed, and hand-drawn or blueprint plats of various towns and cities. Although they were found with the records of the U.S. Surveyor General, the actual provenance of many of the plats is unknown.

Miscellaneous Records, 1857-1907. 0.7 c.f. (13 vols. and 7 folders)

Miscellaneous reports, inventories, and manuals produced or used by the surveyor general's office. They include annual reports to the General Land Office (1896-1906), office inventories, reports to GLO inspectors, survey instructions, almanacs, a list of original land entries for parts of St. Paul, various office work records, and miscellany.

Arrangement: By record type, thereunder chronological.

Related Records: Annual reports prior to 1896 are filed in **Letters Sent**.

Petitions for Surveys, undated and 1858-1907. 1.0 c.f. (1 box)

Petitions and letters received by the surveyor general's office requesting that particular townships or islands be surveyed.

The petitions for survey of townships list the township and range number, names of at least three settlers in the township (General Land Office policy required that there be at least three bona fide settlers

before a petition would be considered), and a statement by the settlers as to the type and value of any improvements they had made and the length of time they had resided in the township. Some petitions include other descriptive information about the township and the extent of settlement. Most are signed by the petitioners and witnesses. The petitions for surveys of islands include descriptions of the island's location and approximate size, and usually contain affidavits listing the owners of adjacent shore property and stating the occupancy history of the island.

The petitions are in the form of personal letters, standardized forms, and letters from lawyers and land agents. Many petitions from the earlier years are included in the bound volumes of **Letters Received**.

Arrangement: Chronological.

Related Records: **Letters Received; Contracts for Surveys.**

Plats of Township Boundaries, 1857-1907. 0.75 c.f. (294 items)

Plats of various township boundaries drawn by the surveyor general's office from deputy surveyors' field notes. The surveyor general's office sometimes contracted for surveys of only the exterior lines of townships on designated range and township lines. These townships were subdivided under later contracts for survey. The boundary plats show survey reference points, bearings, and distances, and indicate the type of plant cover along the township boundaries.

Arrangement: A list of the township boundary plats in the order in which they are filed accompanies the records.

Related Records: **Township Survey Plats; Field Notes.**

Surveyors' Accounts, 1880-1884, 1896-1906. 0.4 c.f. (8 folders)

Accounts of deputy surveyors for work done under contracts or special instructions from the surveyor general. Accounts include the following information: name of the deputy surveyor, date the contract or special instructions were issued, description of the area surveyed, type of survey (base lines, township lines, etc.), proportions to be paid at the high and low rates depending on difficulty of the work, total cost of survey, surveyor general's approval of the accounts, and date approved.

Arrangement: Chronological by date the contract or special instructions were issued.

Related Records: **Contracts for Surveys, Letters Sent, and Letters Received** contain correspondence relating to payment of deputy surveyors and disputes over the cost of survey work.

Swamp Land Lists, 1863-1907. 9.0 c.f. (6 oversize boxes)

Lists of "swamp and overflowed" land compiled by the U.S. Surveyor General from the field notes of the deputy surveyors. All public land designated "swamp and overflowed" was granted to the state of Minnesota by congressional acts of September 28, 1850, and March 12, 1860.

As the general survey of public land was completed, the surveyor general determined which of the surveyed land fell within the definition of the swamp land grant. Copies of the lists were forwarded to the local land offices of the General Land Office (GLO) where the designated tracts were checked against the GLO records for prior

claims or reservations. Copies were also sent to the State Land Office for use in preparing swamp land selection lists. This series is a merged file of records from the GLO, State Land Office, and U.S. Surveyor General. There are duplicate copies of many lists but for some only one copy exists.

The swamp land lists are arranged by GLO land district and thereunder by date filed by the surveyor general. They contain the following information: land district in which the designated land was located; legal description of the swamp and overflowed tracts, citing the range, township, section, and fractional section; name of river, watercourse, or other cause that rendered the tract "swamp and overflowed" within the meaning of the grant; statement of the grounds for the surveyor general's designation of the listed tracts as swamp and overflowed; and date the surveyor general submitted the lists to the local land office. Some lists include annotations made by the register and receiver of the local land office indicating disposition of the land.

Related Records: **State Land Office: Swamp Land Selection Lists** (page 24).

Timber Agent Accounts and Correspondence, 1861-1877. 0.2 c.f. (2 folders and 1 vol.)

Records of the surveyor general acting as timber agent, charged with protecting the federal government's interest in timber on public and reserved lands.

Correspondence with the General Land Office, U.S. marshals, logging companies, private parties, and log scalers relates to alleged illegal cutting of government timber, issuing of logging permits, payment for logs cut on government land, and the appointment of scalers. Accounts include itemized records of expenditures by the timber agent and his deputies, vouchers, and receipts for sale of stumpage. A stumpage sale record (1874-1877, 1 vol.) cites the township on which timber was cut, the footage cut, log mark, by whom cut, and to whom sold.

Related Records: Accounts of expenditures for 1862-1877 are located in the volume titled "Quarterly Accounts" in the series **Accounting Records**.

Township Survey Plats (Official Set), 1847-1976 (bulk 1847-1870s). 2540 microfiche.

Microfiche reproductions of the plat drawings of Minnesota townships made by the U.S. surveyor general's office in St. Paul from the field notes of deputy surveyors.

Plats for each township show section and subdivision markers; acreage of some subdivisions; rivers, lakes, swamps, major land elevations, and other natural features; location and identification of any settlements or settlers' claims established prior to the completion of the survey; and any roads or railroads in existence at the time of the survey. Some plats include names of streams and lakes, notes on topography and vegetation, meander notes, and related data.

The plats also list the total acreage of the township; name of the surveyor(s); date of contract or special instructions under which the township was surveyed; date the survey was completed; and date the

plats were approved by the surveyor general. Some townships that are divided by a major watercourse have two plats, one for each bank. There are additional plats for some townships in which subsequent surveys were made to correct or reestablish section or subdivision markers, or for surveys of islands that were not included in the original government survey.

Filmed with each plat is a certificate of authenticity signed by the Minnesota secretary of state.

Originals of the plats are (1985) in the Minnesota secretary of state's office.

Arrangement: By principal meridian, then range, then township; one township per fiche. Each microfiche has an alphanumeric identification symbol that reflects the initial filming order of the plats.

Finding Aids: A computer-generated index, although not needed to locate the plat for a given township, contains summary data on each plat. See **Township Survey Plats: Index**.

Township Survey Plats (Supplemental Set), ca.1857-ca.1907. 3.0 c.f. (2
oversize boxes)

Plat drawings of Minnesota townships made by the surveyor general's office from deputy surveyors' field notes.

Plats for each township show section and subdivision markers; lakes, rivers, swamps, and other natural features; location and identification of any settlers' claims established prior to completion of the survey; roads and railroads in existence at the time of the survey; and boundaries of any Indian reservations crossing the township.

The surveyor general's office produced several copies of each plat. This set (some of which may in fact be the original drawings of the deputy surveyors) is not complete. It includes only a few plats for townships surveyed under the Dubuque surveyor general's office prior to 1857, and plats for various other townships are missing. The most complete set of plats is held by the Minnesota secretary of state. This official set is available on microfiche, listed as **Township Survey Plats (Official Set)**.

Arrangement: Primarily by range and township; one folder of miscellaneous plats.

Related Records: **Field Notes: Township Exterior and Subdivision Survey Lines; Descriptive Lists of Survey Posts.**

Township Survey Plats: Index, ca.1984. 2 microfiche.

Computer-generated index to the official set of Minnesota township plats filed in the Minnesota secretary of state's office. Each entry gives township and range, sections surveyed, month and year of survey, surveyor's code number, lines surveyed, comments, plat type (original, resurvey, or copy), and file reference (microfiche number). There may be several index entries for a single township or range if portions were surveyed, resurveyed, or annotated at different times.

The index was generated from a file residing at the University of Minnesota Computer Center.

Arrangement: One fiche for the 4th prime meridian and one for the 5th. Each is arranged by township number, then range number.

within groups of ranges: 4th P.M. ranges 12-21, 21-32; 5th P.M. ranges 3-28, 28-34, 35-41, 41-51.

Related Records: This series is an index to **Township Survey Plats (Official Set)**.

APPENDIX E.

THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES MICROFILM COLLECTION M27

Of the various microfilm records, only M27 comprising Letters sent by the Commissioner of the General Land Office to the Surveyors General, 1796-1901, was relevant to the project.



of the third convention line to be distributed and to the survey from that line as a basis of the timber land in the St. Louis and the adjacent streams, if you have sufficient funds left at your disposal for that purpose, it is my recommendation of the amount last. If you have not such funds it is probable that you can induce those Deputies also to engage on the St. Louis survey in subsequent years' contracts, when they have not commenced operations, and the new contracts embracing the same have been submitted. The importance to the Government of the early completion of this work will justify this measure, if it can be adopted with the consent of the Deputies and they will be willing to relinquish all their claims which might grow out of existing contracts; but if they will not, and you have not the means to conduct operations for that purpose, you will press with the Department of the Interior of the present, if you wish, to that object, in contracting for state surveys. It would be well to direct that the timber land should be sectioned, and of the rest, at least such as is not fit for sectionation, the Township only should be surveyed.

Very Respectfully
 your Obedt. Servt.
 James A. Rippe
 Acting Recorder

General Land Office
 December 15th 1846

In accordance with your request of the 5th inst I have this day drawn a requisition on your favor upon the Director of the Treasury for the sum of \$2000 for the payment of your own salary and the salaries of the Clerks in your Office for the quarter ending on the 31st instant.

Very Respectfully your Obedt. Servt.
 James A. Rippe

Lucius Lyon Esq.
 Surveyor at
 Belmont Michigan

**A Readable Copy!
 INDEX TO M27**

Alphabetical may include recipient (surname), position, location, subject

Reel	Vol.	Dates	Index
12	12	October 14, 1846 – June 30, 1848	None
13	13	June 20, 1848 – August 15, 1850	Alphabetical; Appointments; Dubuque Iowa
14	14	August 20, 1850 – July 9, 1852	Alphabetical; Appointments; Commissions
15	15	July 9, 1852 – December 7, 1853	Alphabetical; Dubuque; Lewis Warner
16	16	December 6, 1853 – December 11, 1855	Alphabetical; Dubuque (see also after “T”)
17	17	December 11, 1855 – April 24, 1858	Alphabetical; Dubuque; St. Paul
18	18	April 24, 1858 – March 10, 1860	Alphabetical; Dubuque; St. Paul
19	19	January 2, 1861 – July 7, 1862	Alphabetical; Dubuque; St. Paul
	20	July 8, 1862 – May 18, 1865	Alphabetical; St. Paul; Wiltse; Washburn
20	21	May 19, 1865 – February 5, 1868	Alphabetical;
	22	February 5, 1868 – March 4, 1869	Alphabetical;
21	23	March 27, 1868 – March 12, 1870	Alphabetical; Register & Receiver
	24	March 12, 1870 – March 14, 1871	Alphabetical; Register & Receiver
22	25	March 14, 1871 – March 9, 1872	Alphabetical; Surveyor General of Minnesota,
	26	March 9, 1872 – March 6, 1873	Alphabetical; Surveyor General of Minnesota
23	27	March 6, 1873 – January 10, 1874	Alphabetical; Surveyor General of Minnesota
	28	January 10, 1874 – September 24, 1874	Alphabetical; Surveyor General of Minnesota
24	29	September 24, 1874 – August 18, 1875	Alphabetical; Surveyor General of Minnesota
	30	April 20, 1875 – December 28, 1875	Alphabetical; Surveyor General of Minnesota
25	31	December 29, 1875 – December 14, 1877	Alphabetical; Surveyor General St Paul
	32	December 14, 1877 – September 10, 1878	Alphabetical; Surveyor General St Paul
26	33	September 10, 1878 – June 28, 1879	Alphabetical; Minnesota Surveyor General
	34	June 30, 1879 – April 24, 1880	Alphabetical; Minnesota Surveyor General
27	35	April 24, 1880 – April 16, 1881	Alphabetical; Minnesota Surveyor General
	36	April 16, 1881 – February 2, 1882	Alphabetical; Surveyor General of Minnesota
28	37	February 3, 1882 – August 23, 1882	Alphabetical;
	38	August 23, 1882 – March 31, 1883	Alphabetical;
29	39	March 31, 1883 – August 25, 1885	Alphabetical; Chandler Martin S.
	40	August 24, 1885 – October 2, 1890	Alphabetical; Chandler Martin S.
30	41*	October 2, 1890 – April 28, 1893	Alphabetical; Surveyor General of Minnesota
	42*	April 29, 1893 – July 26, 1895	Alphabetical; Surveyor General of Minnesota
31	43*	July 29, 1895 – August 26, 1898	Alphabetical; Surveyor General of Minnesota
	44**	August 26, 1898 – April 2, 1901	Alphabetical;

* Extraordinarily detailed index, which includes page numbers for a variety of subject headings. The page numbers of circulars are noted.

** An 18 page letter to the Surveyor General dated August 26, 1898 is indexed under Annual Instructions.

The collections consists of transcripts of letters sent by individuals employed in the General Land Office (GLO), especially the Commissioner of the agency, to the various Surveyors General around the nation. Neither the reorganization of the GLO in 1836 nor the transfer of the agency for the Department of the Treasury to the Department of the Interior produced a significant change in record-keeping practices and no break in the series of letterbooks. The letters are generally arranged in chronological order. There is an index for all volumes, except vol. 12, arranged by the initial letter of the surname or title of the individual to whom the letter is addressed showing the page on which a letter begins. Accompanying many of the letters are marginal notes giving the subject of the letter, the initials of the clerk who transcribed the copy, and the references to related records.

Relevant letters are those addressed to the Surveyor General of Wisconsin and Iowa and to the deputies who worked in Wisconsin, Iowa, and Minnesota Territory. There are also letters to other individuals, who are clearly not deputies and who do not reside in the surveying district, but may deal with issues important in understanding the Minnesota surveys.

Many of the letters involve the administrative details surrounding the work of the surveyors general and their deputies. They are extremely valuable in providing details about the surveying process, the dates of the start and end of the contracts, transmittal of the contract, bonds and plat and field notes to the Washington headquarters they are not very useful in explaining how the deputies carried out their contracts, the detail with which the modern land surveyor is interested.

There are some exceptions, and this of course causes the problems. Some letters for example talk about how a particular deputy should deal with meanders. Not really general instruction and not special instructions, the message is embedded in other material

Examples

Vol. 12 October 12, 1846 – June 30, 1848

p.37	Dec 18 1846	Surveys on St. Croix
p.38	Dec 18	Appropriations
p.38	Dec 23	Higbee contract, IA
p.43	Dec 20	Error in certification of plat
p.44	Jan 6, 1847	Finances
p.51	Feb 12	Ball's survey Iowa?
p.53	Feb 17	Finances
p.61	March 30	Conkey survey T21NR19W oath
p.61	March 30	Dunn's survey IA
p.62	March 30	Surveys on St. Croix
p.62	March 30	Lost books
p.76	April 22	Appropriations for fiscal year ending June 30 1848
p.80	April 22	ditto but includes directions for 4th pm and 3rd correction
p.87	April 29	Date of contracts
p.106	June 2,	Conkey survey T32NR19W meander instructions WI
p.110	June 19	Salaries
p.117	July 3	Contracts & bonds to survey 4th pm and 3rd correction
p.121	July 8	Prices paid in Iowa
p.143	Aug. 5	Wiltse survey
p.151	Aug	Pay
p.160	Sept. 6	Error in surveys
p.171	Sept. 30	Error in surveys
p.177	Oct. 7	Surveying St. Croix pinelands
p.182	Oct. 25	Payment for transcriptions see also Dec 8 p.197
p.198	Dec. 13	Corrections of survey T31NR24W
p.211	Feb 2 1848	Sales in mineral district wants plats
p.223	March. 3	Payment for exteriors and subdivisions
p.236	April 8	Instructions regarding correcting errors in IA
p.258	May 6	Higbee and Hewitt contracts also Fort Snelling reservation

Examples of a digital copies from M27

To Mr. Nathan, Esq
Surveyor General
St. Paul, Minn.

Department of the Interior
General Land Office
October 10, 1887

Application having been made to this office for the subdivision of the W 1/4 S.W. 1/4 Sec. 6, T. 74 North Range 27 West 5th P.M. Minnesota into north and south half, you are requested to transmit to this office, and to the Register and Receiver, authentic diagrams showing such legal subdivisions, with the area of each, and to show such legal subdivisions on the original plat on file in your office referring to these instructions by date for your authority for so doing.

In your reply please refer to this as "C" of this date.

I am Sir, Very respectfully
Your obt. servant
J. S. Wilson
Commissioner

b. b. B

Department of the Interior
General Land Office
Washington D.C. June 22, 1875

J. H. Baker Esq
U. S. Surveyor General
St. Paul, Minn.

Sir: I am in receipt of your letter of 1st inst. transmitting contracts and Bonds as follows viz:

William Bulliken S. I. dated June 7th 1875. Liability \$4,750⁰⁰

John P. Minshelburg S. I. June 7th 1875. Liability \$4,992⁰⁰, chargeable to the appropriation of March 3, 1875.

In reply I have to say that as the names of the above Deputies do not appear upon the records of this office, as not having been employed in the surveying service your attention is called to letter of instructions dated June 16, 1873 and the approval of the said contracts will remain suspended until the Deputies qualifications are received.

Yours respectfully
S. S. Burdett
Commissioner

b. o. B

St. Paul, Minn.

Department of the Interior
General Land Office
Washington D.C. June 23, 1875

J. H. Baker Esq
U. S. Surveyor General
St. Paul, Minnesota.

Sir: The balance accounts received with your letter of 21st ultimo, were forwarded to the Treasury for payment on the 16th inst. and with request that drafts be sent

APPENDIX F.

FINDING AID FOR DIVISIONS OF GENERAL LAND OFFICE

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*Jim M...
lands Law Historian, DLH
81-776-6645*

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THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES
WASHINGTON, D.C.
1973

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SE branch, 1884. 6710.

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B Rows 1, 2	RECORDER'S DIVISION (Pages 8-12)
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4. Departmental and Congressional Letters Sent. 1871-1888 (8-vols.) 1113: A
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6. Letters Sent Relating to Congressional Bills. 1881-1886. (2 vols.) 1113: B
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8. Letters Sent to the Civil Service Commission. 1896-1903. (8 vols.) 3 Boxes
9. Letters sent to the Secretary of the Interior. 1878-1886 (4 vols.) 1114: A
10. Press copies of letters sent to the Secretary of the Interior. 1879-1921 (72 vols.) 23 Boxes 1114: A-C
11. Letter sent to the Secretary of the Interior. December 24, 1906 (1 vol.) Shurs Box with Entry 12 1114: C
12. Annual Reports of the Commissioner of the General Land Office. 1902-06 (1 vol.) Shurs Box with Entry 11
13. Letters sent to Registers and Receivers of Local Land Offices. 1871-1887. (13 vols.)
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16. Letters sent to Surveyors General. 1887-1903 (14 vols.) 5 Boxes 1115: B
17. Letters sent to Special Agents. 1880-1903 (37 vols.) 10 Boxes 1115-1117: A
18. Letters sent to Inspectors. 1882-1887 (1 vol.) 1117: A
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23. Press copies of "Personal" letters sent. 1891-92 (1 vol.) 1:18:D
24. Telegrams sent. 1873-1887 (2 vols.) 1:18:D
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25. Press copies of telegrams sent. 1880-1909 (79 vols.) 1:18:E-1:19:A
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26. Letters sent relating to Forestry. 1900-03 (7 vols.) 1:19:B
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27. Letters sent relating to Reclamation Withdrawals. 1904-1907 (1 vol.) 1:19:B
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28. Notices to Registers of Local Land Office Relating to their Appointments. 1840-44 (1 vol.) 1:19:C
Sherris Box w/ E 27 and E 29
29. Notices to Receivers of Local Land Offices Relating to their Appointments. 1840-44 (1 vol.) 1:19:C
Sherris Box w/ E 27 and E 28
30. Notices of Commissions of Registers and Receivers. 1847-1869. (7 vols.) 1:19:C
31. Circulars sent to Receivers of Local Land Offices. 1850-54 (1 vol.) 1:19:C
32. Letters sent by the Receiving Clerk. 1871-1910 (6 vols.) 1:19:C
33. Special Orders. 1860-61 (1 vol.) 1:19:C
2 Boxes
34. Receipts for Specimens. 1868-82 (2 vols.) 1:19:C
35. Statistical Reports 1904 (1 vol.) 1:19:C

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- 461. Letters received from the Surveyor General of the Territory Northwest of the River Ohio 1787-1831 (8 vols.) ROW 10, SEC 13
- 462. Letters received from the Surveyor General of Alabama (Coffee) 1817-32 (3 vols.) ROW 10, SEC 13 11/10/17
- 463. Letters received from the Surveyor General of Florida. 1824-32 (1 vol.) ROW 10, SEC 13
- 464. Letters received from the Surveyor General of Mississippi. 1803-31 (9 vols.) ROW 10, SEC 13
- X 470. Letters received from the Surveyor General of Missouri, 1813-32, including Contracts for Surveying in Missouri, and Illinois. (7 vols.) ROW 10, SEC 14
- 471. Letters received from Surveyors General of public land states. 1910-23 (61 boxes) (No. 532-593) ROW 10, SEC 14 → ROW 11, SEC 21
- 472. Miscellaneous correspondence relating to the Office of the Surveyors General 1924-26 (3 boxes)
- 473. Indexes to Letters Sent by Division "E", 1838-~~1910~~ (3 vols.) ROW 11, SEC 23
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- 474. Register of letters sent to Surveyors General 1823-44 (1 vol.)
- 10. Letters sent to Surveyors General of public land states. 1796-1901 (44 vols.) ROW 11, SEC 27-29 11/27/29
- 176 11. Miscellaneous letters sent by Division "E", 1883-87 (6 vols.)
- 177 12. Press copies of miscellaneous letters 1883-1908 (123 vols.) ROW 11, SEC 29-34
- 178 13. Letters sent to Surveyors General of:
 - Alaska, 1884-1900 (1 vol.) ROW 11, SEC 34.35
 - Arizona 1863-1898 (3 vols.) ROW 12, SEC 1-4
 - California 1851-1898 (14 vols.)
 - Colorado 1861-1899 (8 vols.)
 - Dakota Territory 1861-1891 (4 vols.)
 - Idaho 1866-1903 (4 vols.)
 - Kansas and Nebraska 1854-76 (4 vols.)
 - Nebraska 1867-1887 (2 vols.)
 - Montana 1867-1903 (8 vols.)
 - Nevada 1861-1903 (4 vols.)
 - New Mexico 1854-1887 (4 vols.)
 - Oregon 1851-1899 (8 vols.)
 - Utah 1855-1905 (6 vols.)
 - Washington 1854-1905 (10 vols.)
 - Wyoming 1870-1892 (2 vols.)

Register of letters received from Surveyors General (1816-1907)

DIVISION "E"
SURVEYING DIVISION

1914. Press copies of letters sent to Surveyors General. 1872-1908 (24 vols.) Row 12, SEC 4-17
1915. Departmental letters sent 1864-1903 (32 vols.) Row 11, Sec 17-19
18. Press copies of letters sent to other Divisions in the General Land Office 1886-1916 (19 vols.) Row 11, Sec 19
17. Congressional letters sent 1883-87 (1 vol.) Row 11, Sec. 19
18. Letters sent to Registers and Receivers of United States Land Offices 1883-94 (2 vols.)
19. Letters sent to Examiners of Surveys and Special Agents. 1882-87 (1 vol.)
20. Special Letters Sent 1876-87 (1 vol.)
21. Record of Division "E" letters sent transmitting reports. 1870-73 (1 vol.)
22. Report of the operations of the Surveying Division and estimate of appropriations 1857-63 (1 vol.)
23. "Dallas's Index" and record of Special Files (1 vol.) Row 12 Sec 21
24. Inventory of the Archives of the Office of the Surveyor General of Arkansas, received by Edward Cross from Jas. Conway, June 21, 1838 (1 vol.)
25. Abstracts of papers transferred to the Surveyor General for Louisiana under the Act of March 3, 1831 (1 vol.) Row 12 Sec 23
26. Inventory of property charged to each Surveyor General's Office and United States Land Office (1 vol.)
27. Inventory of the Office of the Surveyor General for Louisiana for 1886, received by Benjamin T. Ledbetter from James Lewis, February 1, 1886 (1 vol.) - 1881-1886
28. Record of Office Examinations of Surveys, 1899-1910 (Serials 966-2705) (1 vol.) (Volume Number 2) Row 12 Sec. 21
29. Correspondence of Registers and Receivers relating to surveys 1914-26 (3 boxes) (Nos. 605-607)
30. Special Files of Division "E" 1910-42 (See list) 15 Boxes
31. Miscellaneous correspondence files of Division "E", 1927-38 (26 boxes) (No. 611-637) 24 Boxes

DIVISION "E"
SURVEYING DIVISION

- 497 32. Batchelor's correspondence files 1915-27 (13 boxes)
(Nos. 651-664) 15
- 498 33. Paine's Correspondence files 1913-18 (2 boxes) (Nos. 665-666)
- 499 34. Correspondence of D. K. Parrott, Assistant Commissioner of the General Land Office 1931 (1 box) (No. 667)
- 500 35. Special Files of Division "E", 1907-39, relating to Indian reservations, private land claims, boundary lines between states, ecological survey of Louisiana. (39 boxes) See list. Row 13, Sec 32, to Row 14, Sec 3. Series II 39 boxes
- 501 36. Contracts and Bonds for United States Deputy Surveyors in Public Land States 1850-1910 (129 boxes) States of Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Dakota Territory, Florida, Idaho, Kansas and Nebraska, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington and Wyoming. Additional small series, Alabama-Washington in 3 boxes) Row 14, Sec 4 to Row 15, Sec 15+16
- 502 ~~502 37. Surveying Group Files, Alabama-Wyoming (Boxes 1-348) now have in Archives Branch (NNG) (Suitland) > NNG then back~~
- 503 38. Homestead Surveys in National Forests, ca. 1910-38. (41 boxes) (Nos. 349-380) Row 15, Sec 20-21
- 504 39. Field Notes for State Group Files, ca. 1910-40 (24 boxes) (Nos. 426-450) Row 15, Sec 21 20
- 505 40. Military correspondence, maps and field notes relating to the United States Military Reserve in Ohio (1 vol.)
- 506 41. "Book No. 2, Chillicotte District", field notes and plats of townships in the District. (1 vol.)
- 507 42. Index of Plats and Field Notes, Louisiana, including the names of Louisiana Surveyors General, 1785-1910 (1 vol.) 12/23
- 508 43. Township plats and field notes for Kansas, Missouri, Iowa, Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, are in Cartographic Archives Division (NNS) 2W - NNS
- 509 44. Letters received from the Surveyors General of Public Land States, 1826-1883 (112 boxes) Row 15, Sec 16-19 15/16 117 boxes 15/19
Alabama, 1826-50; Arizona, 1863-79; Arkansas, 1832-59; California, 1851-79; Colorado, 1861-79; Dakota, 1861-79; Florida, 1827-79; Idaho, 1866-79; Illinois and Missouri, 1832-63, Iowa Contracts, 1843-48 and Iowa, 1834-68; *
UTAH 1834-68

DIVISION "B"
SURVEYING DIVISION

Iowa and Wisconsin, 1859-68; Kansas and Nebraska, 1854-76; Louisiana, 1831-79; Michigan, 1950-57; Minnesota, 1857-79; Mississippi, 1831-49; Montana, 1867-79; Nebraska, 1867-79; Nevada, 1963-75; New Mexico, 1854-79; Old Northwest (Ohio) 1832-49; Oregon, 1851-79; Utah, 1855-79; Washington, 1854-83; and Wyoming, 1870-79.

- AND 138-3023-19 Boxes
- 510 45. Alaska Surveys Numbered 0-4099 \ 1910-1964 (24 boxes) ROW 15, Sec 15-18
33
- 71 46. Letters received from important persons including Members of Congress, 1836-1879 (55 boxes) ROW 15, Sec 19-20
- 1 47. Rejected Surveys for public land surveys, rejected for errors, fraud, difficulties. 1870-1925 (States of Alaska-Wyoming) (36 steel drawers) See list. ROW 16, Sec 5-9
- 13 48. Field Notes State of Iowa, 5th PM. (1 vol.)
- 14 49. Statement of Tract of Land surveydd in Arkansas, claimed by Choctaw Nation of Indians under the 1st Article of the Treaty of January 20, 1825 (7 Stat.234) 137,500.12 acres. (1 vol.)
- 73 50. List of land surveyed in the States of California, Florida, Michigan, Minnesota and Oregon since the Act of March 12, 1860. 1860-78 (1 vol.)
- 51 51. Statements of contracts, surveys of mines, lists of land surveyed, accounts of appropriations for Surveyor General of California for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1882. (1 vol.)
- 77 52. Field Notes of Surveys in Indian Territory (Triplicate copies) ca. 1889-1910 (55 vols.) ~~ROW 15, Sec 22-24~~ 15/21/6-15/22/1
- 18 53. Field Notes of Examination of Surveys, ca. 1870-1920 ROW 15, Sec 22-24
- Alaska, Nos. 2-25, Surveys 147-1247 (3 boxes)
 - Arizona, Old Series Nos. 1-50, New Series Nos 1-163 (5boxes)
 - California, Nos.1-397 (6 boxes) - Boxes 9-14
 - Colorado, Nos. 375-873 (3 boxes) Rows 15-17
 - Florida, Nos. 1-61 (1 box) Boxes 18
 - Idaho, Nos. 1-334 (7 boxes) Boxes 19-25
 - Louisiana Nos. 1-22 (1 box) Box 26
 - Minnesota, Nos 1-602 (7 boxes) Boxes 27-33
 - Mississippi, Lists 37-54 (1 box) Box 34
 - Montana, Nos. 1-599 (14 boxes) Box 35-48
 - Nebraska (Miscellaneous) (1 box) - Box 49
 - Nevada, Nos. 1-270 (4 boxes) Boxes 50-53
 - New Mexico Nos. 1-434 (7 boxes) Boxes 54-60
 - North Dakota, Nos. 1-195 (6 boxes) Boxes 61-66
 - Oklahoma, (not numbered) (4 boxes) - arranged by township & Range Box 67
 - Oregon, Nos. 1-799 (8 boxes) Boxes 71-78

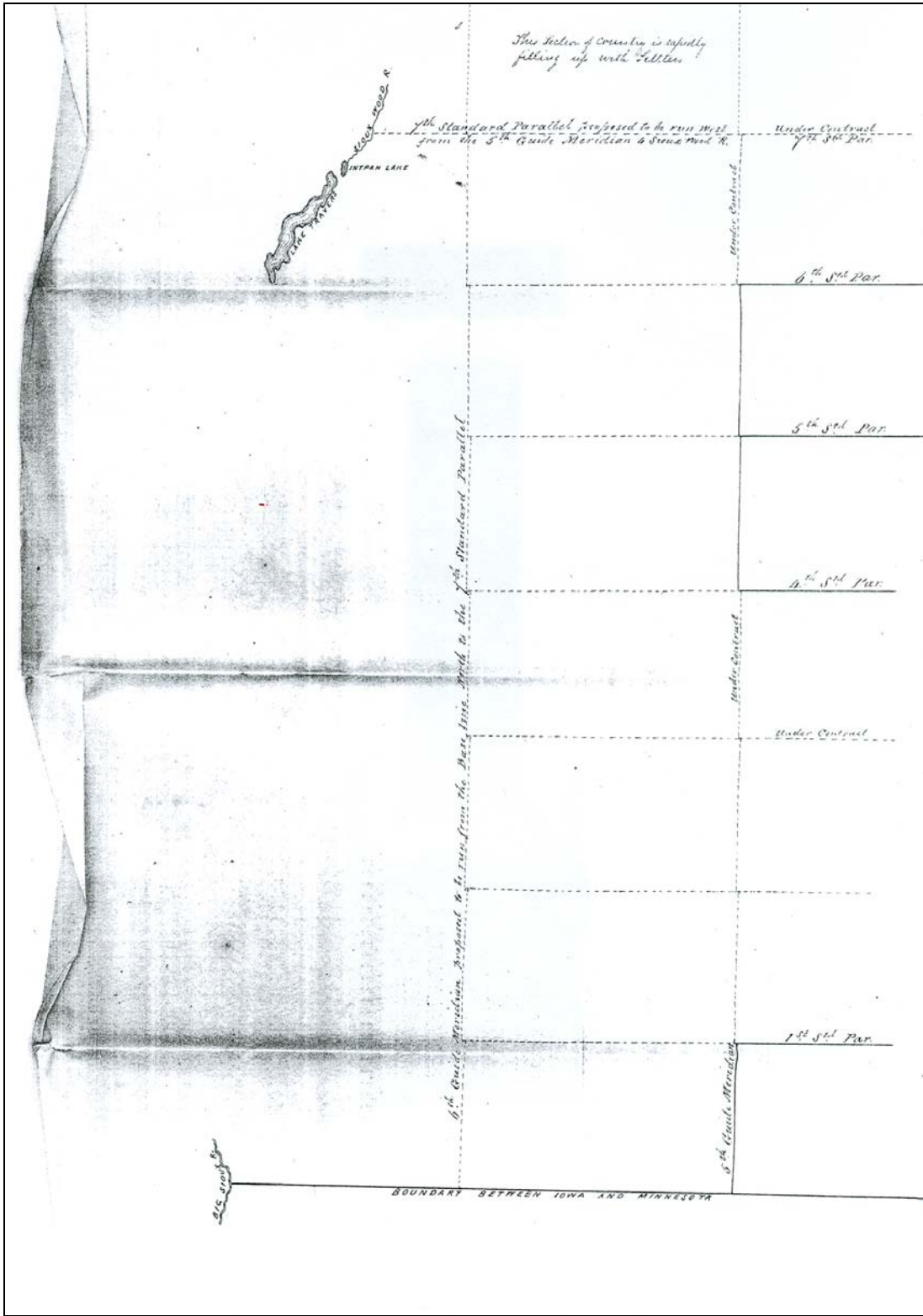
Division "E"
SURVEYING DIVISION

- South Dakota, Nos. 1-165 (4 boxes) *Books 79-82*
 Utah, Nos. 1-314 (7 boxes) *Books 83-89*
 Washington, Nos. 1-700 (11 boxes) *Books 90-100*
 Wyoming, Nos. 229-350 (5 boxes) *Books 101-105*
 Miscellaneous (7 boxes) *Books 106-113*
 518A ALASKA, CALIFORNIA, KANSAS-OKLAHOMA BOUNDARY, OKLAHOMA (Books 114-167)
 519. — 54. Alaska Surveys, Nos. 1-176 and 223-228 (1 vol) *Index*
 520. — 55. Island Files (~~66~~ ⁶⁷ boxes) Nos. 465-531 ROW 15, SEC 25-28
 521. — 56. Eastern District miscellaneous correspondence files,
 1914-26 (~~10~~ ⁴ boxes) Nos. 594-604 ROW 15, SEC 28
 522. — 57. Eastern District Field Survey Reports in connection with
 contest dockets. (~~44~~ ⁴⁵ boxes) Nos. 381-425 ROW 15, SEC 28
 523. — 58. Eastern District Field Surveyors Reports (3 boxes)
 Nos. 451-454
 524. — 59. Eastern District Field Assistants Reports (~~9~~ ¹¹ boxes)
 Nos. 454-464.
 525. — 60. Eastern District Work Reports (~~2~~ ¹ boxes)
 526. — 61. Time report of operations of Agents in the field (1 vol.)
 527. — 62. Bond Register of Deputy Surveyors Bonds (1 vol.)
 528. — 63. Ledger of Accounts of Surveyors General 1844-56 (1 vol.) *MISSING*
 529. — 64. Accounts Docket by number of Reports on Surveying Accounts,
 1896-1920 (1 vol.)
 530. — 65. Surveyors General Monthly Accounts of bounty land warrants
 delivered to bookkeepers. (3 vols) Nos. 2-5.)
 531. — 66. Surveyors Hand Book, District 7, Boise, Idaho. (1 vol.)
 532. — 67. Alphabetical Index of letters sent by the Surveyors General,
 Ohio, Indiana and Michigan, 1849-54 (1 vol.)

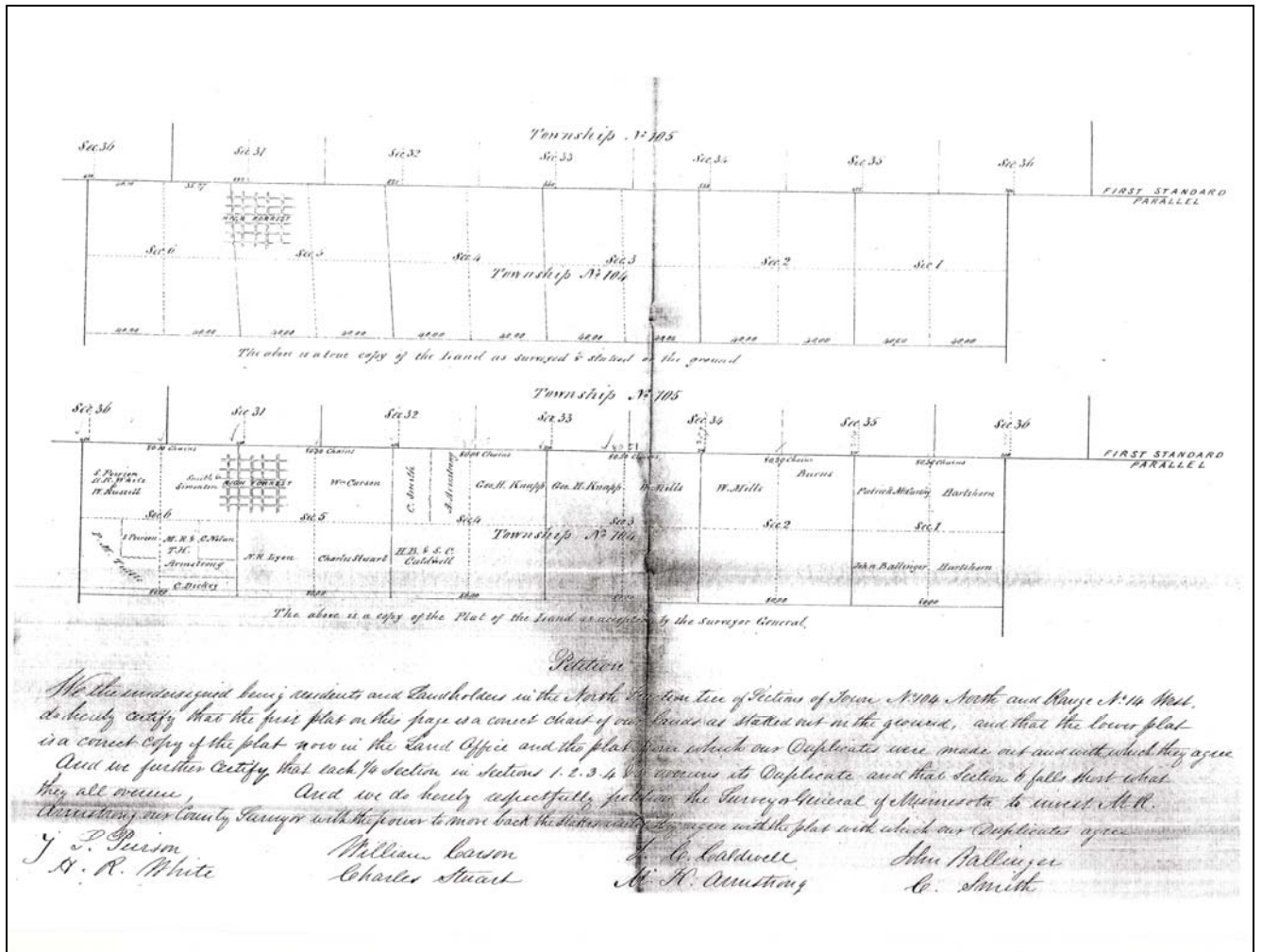
END OF DIVISION "E"

APPENDIX G.

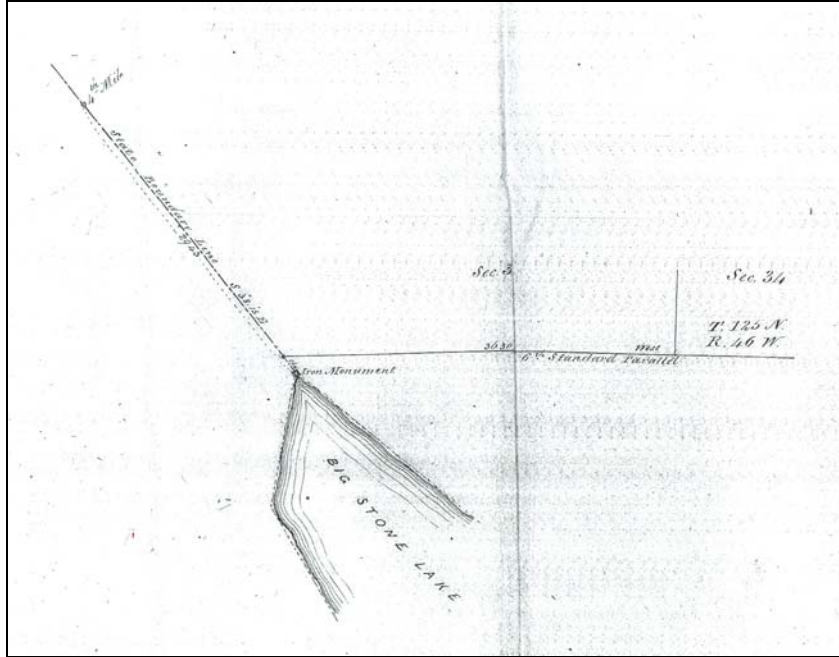
SELECTED EXAMPLE OF LETTERS RECEIVED, NATIONAL ARCHIVES



Accompanying letter dated July 17, 1857



Accompanying letter dated July 31, 1857



Accompanying letter dated July 7, 1862

Rec^d S. G. letter of Oct 23 1867

T. 119 R. 27 N. of 5th Mer.

<i>38.90</i>	<i>39.79</i>	<i>39.64</i>	<i>39.48</i>
<i>36.03</i>	<i>Sec. 6</i>		<i>35.10</i>
<i>35.39</i>	<i>East</i>		<i>34.56</i>
<i>34.73</i>	<i>East</i>		<i>34.12</i>
<i>34.20</i>	<i>East</i>		<i>33.56</i>

The West 1/2 of the South West 1/4 of Sec. 6 T. 119 R. 27 N. of the 5th Principal Mer. is divided into "North and South 1/2" under instructions from Commissioner of General Land Office bearing date Oct. 10th 1867 as shown on the gringzed diagram.

*Surveyor General's Office
S. T. Paul Oct. 23rd 1867*

*L. H. ...
Sur^g Gen.*

Accompanying letter dated October 23, 1867