



Honoring Our Origins

BY RICHARD LEU, PLS

If you can survey in Ohio, you can survey anywhere (or so the saying goes). The Surveyors Historical Society (SHS) Surveyors Rendezvous '08 was held Sept. 11-13 in Akron, Ohio, and was jointly sponsored by SHS and the Gathering of Potential Surveyors, a University of Akron student group. The theme of this year's rendezvous was Ohio: Birthplace of the Public Land Survey System, and the focus was on early attempts to perfect the system of survey outlined in the Land Ordinance of 1785.

Rendezvous '08 participants pay homage to the birthplace of the Public Land Survey System.

The event began on Thursday morning with presentations by Dr. Kevin Kern, Roger Moore and Milton Denny. Kern, professor of history at the University of Akron, discussed settlement patterns in the Ohio country. He illustrated how regional origins, constant low-grade warfare and surveying affected architecture and town layout patterns in Ohio. Roger Moore has appeared in numerous films and television documentaries, most recently as Chief Hendrick in the PBS program "The War That Made America." Moore, who is of Melungeon descent, discussed the role of the Indian nations in the conflict between the French and British, the American Revolution, and the settlement of the Ohio country. He

paid particular attention to the Indian Removal Act of 1830 and how the refusal to leave forced some native people to live in hiding and isolation for more than 70 years. Milton Denny followed with a presentation on Colonial surveying and how the tools and techniques of the day affected the results of surveys conducted in the Ohio country. He also provided some preliminary information on the surveying laboratory sessions he planned to conduct that afternoon.

Hale Farm and Village

Following the morning sessions, participants traveled to Hale Farm and Village, an outdoor living history museum in northeast Ohio, where they enjoyed a barbecue lunch followed by a Colonial fashion show presented by Renee and Scott Rathfelder,

owners of Smiling Fox Forge, a provider of 18th century reproductions in Fremont, Ohio.

The afternoon was spent in a variety of activities at Hale Farm, including a surveyors swap meet and a surveyors antiques road show. Set up about the grounds was a variety of surveyor's encampments ranging from the Colonial-era Surveying Academy of the Northwest Territory to the U.S. Army Corps of Topographical Engineers (1838-1863) to Vietnam-era artillery surveyors. Milton Denny conducted his Surveying School Laboratory sessions, in which teams of surveyors were given a compass and chain and invited to run a traverse around a preset course. This seemingly simple



Opposite: William Schenk (aka James Williams) stands on the remains of Ludlow's "bottom oak" and points the way to Loromie's Store. Left: Voyageurs search for the "crossing place."

The Portage Path was also part of the boundary between the United States and the Ohio Indian nations as defined in the treaties of Fort McIntosh (1785), Fort Harmar (1789) and Greenville (1795). The portage was rendered obsolete in 1827 by completion of the Ohio and Erie Canal. Modern-day construction in Akron, Ohio, has obliterated any trace of the path, although two Akron streets, Manchester Road and Portage Path, generally follow the route of the old path.

In 2002, a program was initiated to research, resurvey and permanently mark the route of the Portage Path. Fifty 2-foot-high bronze arrowhead markers were made, and 49 were placed along the route. Today, it is believed that only 45 markers are still in place.

Following lunch on Friday, rendezvous participants formed into teams of two to four to search for the Portage Path monuments. They were given Akron street maps showing the locations of the north and south termini of the path and told that the monuments are generally in a straight line. Then they were turned loose to wander the streets of Akron until suppertime. The average rate of recovery fell in the range of 25-30 with the winning team—Lorna Hainesworth (Maryland), Chas Langelan (Maryland), Steve Okuley (Ohio) and Roland Trietsch (Arkansas)—finding 35. Each was awarded a chain-carrier's tally belt consisting of a leather thong strung with 10 buckeyes.



From left: Mike Besch, James Williams, John Sibila and Dave Broemsen sign a plat of survey to monument the point of beginning of the eastern line segment of the Greenville Treaty Line.

The Crossing Place

The Treaty of Greenville, signed Aug. 3, 1795, opened the southern portion of Ohio to survey and settlement. Article III of the Treaty of Greenville reads as follows:

The general boundary line between the lands of the United States and the lands of the said Indian tribes, shall begin at the mouth of Cayahoga river, and run thence up the same to the portage, between that and the Tuscarawas branch of the Muskingum, thence down that branch to the crossing place above Fort Lawrence, thence westerly to a fork of that branch of the Great Miami river, running into the Ohio, at or near which fork stood Loromie's store, and where commences the portage between the Miami of the Ohio, and St.

task is actually a diabolical scheme to demonstrate to the participants how utterly unprepared they are to be Colonial surveyors. To top it off, there were rumors that American Indians in the area were none too happy to see surveyors at work and a confrontation with Chief John Logan (aka Dan Cutler) was likely.

Surveying in Ohio

On Friday morning, Ann Besch, instructor in the Surveying and Mapping Technology program at the University of Akron, presented a two-part lecture on the surveying of Ohio.

Ohio has a greater variety of original survey methods than any other state. One map included with the handouts indicates 20 different surveying districts, but a brief perusal of the book "Original Ohio Land Subdivision," by C.E. Sherman, indicates that figure to be a conservative estimate. The number and variety of different methods used is fascinating. For example, the Old Seven Ranges is similar to the now-familiar 6-mile-square township containing 36 sections. The main difference is that numbering of the sections starts with section 1 in the southeast corner and runs south to north in each tier until reaching section 36 in the northwest corner.

Townships in the western portion of the Connecticut Western Reserve (an area known as the Firelands) were 5 miles square, and many were subdivided into four lots each containing 4,000 acres. Others were subdivided by the purchasers into lots of various sizes and patterns.

The survey of the Virginia Military District ignored the sectionalized system of survey altogether and reverted to metes and bounds surveys, which predictably created numerous gaps, overlaps and other conflicts of title. One parcel, Number 12566, requires 118 courses to enclose 1,324 acres. Another parcel, Number 15890, was based on a warrant calling for 450 acres. It was surveyed and patented for that amount, yet by the year 1900, parcels totaling over 1,650 acres had been sold out of the original.

It seems likely that a number of rendezvous participants, upon returning home, fell to their knees, kissed the ground and gave thanks that they do not have to survey in Ohio.

The Portage Path

Waterways were a vital part of the preindustrial American transportation system. In the Ohio country, two important rivers were the Cuyahoga, which provided access to Lake Erie and the Great Lakes, and the Tuscarawas branch of the Muskingum, which provided access to the Ohio and Mississippi river systems. Connecting the Cuyahoga and the Tuscarawas was an approximately 8-mile trail known as the Portage Path.



Rendezvous participants dressed as 18th century surveyors.

Mary's river, which is a branch of the Miami which runs into lake Erie; thence a westerly course to Fort Recovery, which stands on a branch of the Wabash; thence southwesterly in a direct line to the Ohio, so as to intersect that river opposite the mouth of Kentucke or Cuttawa river.

The success of Rendezvous '08 can be attributed to numerous groups and individuals. Rick Hunsicker, John Patrick and Marie Combs and members of the Western Reserve Chapter of PLSO hosted the hospitality room. Donations from the Western Reserve and Tuscarawas Valley Chapter of PLSO and local vendors helped make it possible. Eric and Denise Hodgkinson prepared the guest program, and members of the Tuscarawas Valley Chapter of PLSO researched the location of the point, prepared the plat, built the canoe dock and cleared the path and site to help make the Saturday trip to the beginning point of the Greenville Treaty Line a success.

A special debt of gratitude is owed to Mike and Ann Besch of the University of Akron Surveying and Mapping Technology program who organized Rendezvous '08 and to the Gathering of Potential Surveyors, the University of Akron student group whose members were an ever-present resource throughout the event.

One highlight of the rendezvous, at least for the Surveyors Historical Society board of directors, was the adoption of a new mission statement. It reads as follows:

The Surveyors Historical Society documents the evolution

of surveying and mapping through the collection and preservation of artifacts, records, and accumulated knowledge. The society seeks to use its unique and comprehensive repository of surveying material and the knowledge of its members to develop educational opportunities and support others engaged in similar efforts.

Surveyor General Rufus Putnam contracted with Israel Ludlow to survey the portion of the Greenville Treaty Line between the crossing place and Loromie's Store. The survey commenced on July 9, 1797 "at the crossing place of the Tuscarawas branch of the Muskingum river above Fort Lawrence at a bottom oak 10 inches in diameter standing on the west bank of said fork or river."

On Saturday morning, 29 intrepid voyagers set out in canoes to travel down the Tuscarawas in search of the "crossing place" and the "bottom oak." Thanks to their finely honed surveying skills—and the fact that the Tuscarawas Valley Chapter of the Professional Land Surveyors of Ohio (PLSO) had built a dock there—the group had no trouble locating the site. They also had no trouble locating the bottom oak, which today is, as might be expected, much larger than 10 inches. It is also much deader than it was in Ludlow's day. Having been struck by lightning, the tree is now a rotting hulk, which brings us to the purpose of the visit.



Dave Broensen (left) and John Sibila monument the location of the bottom oak.

John Sibila and other members of the Tuscarawas Valley Chapter of PLSO have conducted extensive research and collected considerable evidence to support their opinion on the location of the beginning point of the treaty line segment between the crossing place and Loromie's Store. They are "99.99-percent certain," certain enough, in fact, to invite more than 40 people (some canoe-challenged individuals having hiked in to the spot through the brush) to witness the setting of a large golden pin (OK, it was a spray-painted re-rod, but who cares). Then David Broensen, John Sibila, James Williams and Mike Besch all signed a "Plat of Survey for Monumenting the Point of Beginning of the Eastern Line Segment of the Greenville Treaty Line."

relief program for young men from unemployed families established by President Franklin D. Roosevelt and the surveying work of the "CCC Boys." Hope to see you there. 🌐

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Success

Following the ceremony, the voyageurs set out once again on the Tuscarawas for the return trip to the canoe livery. A box lunch was served, and Rendezvous '08 was declared closed.

Rendezvous '09

Rendezvous '09 will be held at Camp Caesar near Cowen, W.Va., Sept. 24-26, 2009. It will focus on the Dividing Line surveyed in 1785, which separated Harrison and Greenbrier counties and stretched completely across present-day West Virginia. We'll also take a look at the Civilian Conservation Corps work-

Author's note: *I am indebted to Ann Besch for her help in clarifying certain details in this article.*

Web Exclusive: *A brief history of "The Ohio Country" can be found in the online version of this article at www.pobonline.com.*