



Part of an 1897 GLO Township Plat

MAPS, NOTES, AND RELIC HUNTING

By Chuck Marcum

My favorite maps are the GLO Township Plats. They are the most accurate of the 1800s and early 1900s maps drawn of Indian, Oklahoma Territory, and Oklahoma. They were the result of the surveys of 1895 to 1897, when the GLO (Government Land Office) contracted out the jobs of dividing up the Indian Nations for the anticipated allotments and the eventual selling and buying of those allotments. Some said the allotments given to every single member of the tribes would instill in them the pride of ownership for their land and that they would then adapt the white man's ways. I call it divide and conquer, but that's another story well worth telling. The Surveyors first divided the land into townships which contained 36 square miles. Then they split the township into individual square mile sections. All of the information they gathered when measuring around the township and sections was recorded into a field book. Upon completion of their surveys the field books were sent to the GLO in Washington DC. There, draftsmen drew the Township Plats from the survey notes in the books.

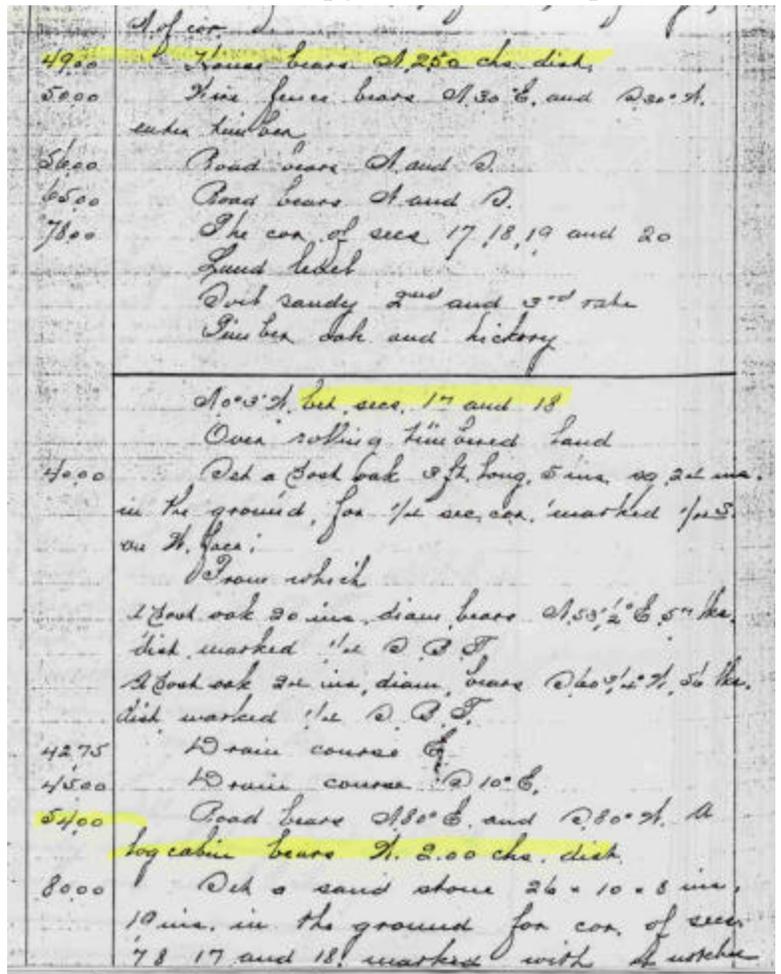
A good indication of a house being out there would be a road heading out into the section and not showing up on any of the opposite section lines. All roads led somewhere Most of the older 1830s to 1860s sites were long gone by the time these maps were made. It could be an old road leading to one of these older sites.

The Survey notes will sometimes reveal more details than the map shows. The notes are usually pretty easy to read despite of some of the handwriting. In

The Plats are right on the money along the section line. The surveyors physically located everything close to the lines such as houses, roads, fences, drains, schools, stores, and anything else close by was measured with their chain. They guessed a distance out to the houses further out in the section if it was a wooded

area and they couldn't see a house through the trees it didn't get located or put on the

the example below the numbers on the left is a distance from the section corner measured in chains. One Chain is 66 feet. They also used links abbreviated lks which is 0.66 of a foot, 100 lks in a chain. This 66 foot long chain was used for measuring around the mile sections and locating items. A quarter of the way down the page at 78.00 chains they're at the corner of sections 17, 18, 19, and 20. You can locate that corner on the map to the left. A little further down on the notes they say they headed north 0 degrees 3 minutes west, which is about due north between sections 17 and 18. At 40.00 chains (2,640 feet) they set the 1/4 Corner (half mile corner). Then continuing north they crossed a couple of drains. Here is where it gets fun. At 54.00 chains (3,564 feet) they crossed a road describing which way it went and west a distance of 2.00 chains (132 feet) there was a log cabin. From that section corner on the map you spotted where they took off from, you can see the drains and the road they located. The map just shows a black square which



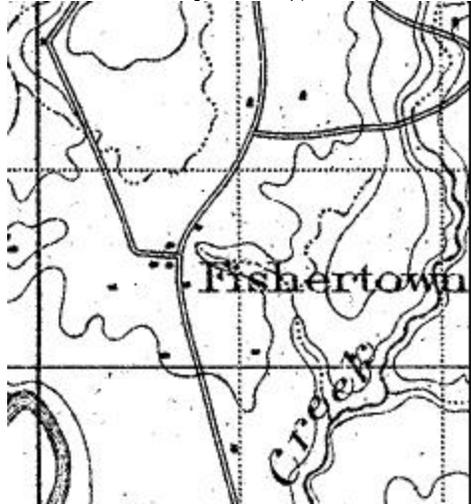
Partial page of Survey Notes from which some of the map above was drawn.

is a symbol for a house where the log cabin was. To me a log cabin is probably older than the standard 1890s houses on these maps. Years ago after reading these Survey Notes Terry, Marvin, my boy James and I decided to hunt the log cabin site. The north-south section line is now on a County Road but there is a parallel dirt road just west. Terry clocked a distance I gave him, 3.25 tenths on his odometer from the north section line. This is before I got my GPS and we had to think about where we were going. He stopped his truck and I pointed east to the location where the cabin was. Marvin walked over there and immediately popped up a seated dime. He also found a Great Coat Button. The site was in a thicket but James still dug some one piece slick buttons. It was an older site and the Survey Notes led us to it. We hunted some of the other house sites on the map but just found 1890s Indian Heads and an 1880s Shield Nickel except of course Marvin.

Some surveyors were better than others in describing houses and roads. They were all paid by the mile and some were under more stress by their employers than others to get finished. On the map you can see where a road was named by where it went and in section 19 the land owner was named next to his house. S. W. Farrill must have either talked to them, let them drink from his well, or maybe even put them up for the night. Some other features the plats show are fences which contain plowed fields in this example. The area is also heavily wooded as shown by all of the tree symbols. We hunted a little out in these woods. I saw Marvin spending a lot of time digging in one spot. Now Marvin doesn't dig with a shovel he uses a hand digger. I said something to him and he called me over there. He asked me to check his hole with my machine. I told him it sounded good one way and not to good the other, what I called an iffy signal. He ran his 1266 back over it and said "I know it's a good signal". Marvin knows that 1266 probably better than anyone else. Terry always says that it's like an extension of his arm. He had a good size hole there and started digging with his hand digger

again. I offered him my shovel and after a couple of scoops I saw the coin. It looked like a seated quarter and I swear it was about 18" deep. I even asked him about it last time I saw him to make sure, like a fish story I wasn't exaggerating about the depth of it and he assured me that it was that deep. We looked the quarter up in the red book on the way home. About an hour after I got home Terry called and said that it wasn't a quarter but a twenty cent piece. I believe the date was 1875. That was the first and last twenty cent piece I've ever seen. Real soon after that I bought me a 1266 but never had the patience to learn it.

This page of the Survey notes also mentions a house that was not put on the Plat but I did find it on the USGS Quadrangle map. Look near the top of the notes at 49 Chains. It says house bears N. 2.50 chs distance (chs is the abbreviation for chains). It's cut off where they said they were heading east between sections 18 and 19. At 49 chains or 594 feet east of the half mile and about where the 8 is printed for the bearing S 89 54' E is where the house was. I guess the draftsman had to put that bearing there deciding the bearing was more important than showing the house. Below is a piece of the 1896 USGS 30 Min. Quadrangle Map 1900



Edition showing the house on it. There are even other houses on this map that is not on the plat but our log cabin isn't there. I have found that the USGS Maps aren't as accurate. I have looked for houses on them that I couldn't find and some of the houses that I did find was

up to 300' off. The Township Plats show everything that crosses the section lines to the nearest 1/4 of a chain on this example and nearest tenth on others. The only maps that can get any closer to that are the ones that were generated by aerial data, satellites, or GPS.

To order the Township Plats and Survey Notes you have to know what Township and Range you want and between which sections for the notes. Township Numbers will be North for the north part of the state and South for the south part. Range Line Numbers will be East for the east part of the state and west for the west. The map we are using for the example is Township 10 North, Range 17 East. A map is the best place to find the Township and Range you need. Unfortunately most seamless maps on the internet will not show it since they are on the top and sides of the map. Paper or digital County Maps will have them and the paper 7.5, 30, and 15 Minutes USGS Quadrangle Maps will also have the Township and Ranges on them. You can buy Paper County Maps for 50 cents each or a CD of the whole state with city maps for \$75.00.

Plats show 36 square miles and are 18" x 24". The Survey Notes come on the same size paper and may show 2 miles of notes. The GLO Plats or Notes are \$1.50 each plus a handling fee if they are mailed to you. A word of caution about the Notes. Most Plats show everything mentioned in the Notes. At \$1.50 apiece the cost of notes can add up real fast. The Plats are well worth the price. Besides paper you can also get them on Microfiche for 50 cents the first copy and 25 cents for additional copies. You can order them by phone, mail, fax, or in person from the Department of Libraries, Archives Division. Their phone numbers are 800-522-8116; 405-522-3579; fax is 800-397-8116; 405-522-3583 and to order by mail:

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If you have any questions or need any help with anything just let me know.