

Summer 2026

THE NEBRASKA Surveyor



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Photo Credit:
Jerry Penry



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Editor: Gwen Higgins at 402-432-3444
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Professional Surveyors Association of Nebraska

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Articles and columns appearing in the publication do not necessarily reflect the viewpoint of PSAN, but are published as a service to its members, the general public, and for the betterment of the surveying profession. No responsibility is assumed for errors, misquotes, or deletions as to its contents.

Contact Information:

Gwen Higgins
The Nebraska Surveyor Editor
and PSAN Admin. Secretary
P.O. Box 83206
Lincoln, NE 68501
Phone: 402-432-3444
e-mail: PSAN@nebraskasurveyor.com
website: www.nebraskasurveyor.com

The Nebraska Surveyor
deadlines to submit
content for publication:

Winter: February 15
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Summer: August 15
Fall: November 15

President's Letter

October 2026

Hello all, Fall is definitely in the air. Cool mornings, the leaves are falling, and combines are moving in my area. I hope everyone had a productive summer and had time to enjoy some relaxation time.

I recently attended the WLT meeting at Southeast Community College, Milford campus. The number of students is around 30, which is great for our profession. Matt Tinkham also gave a report of the work in progress on getting a surveying program off the ground at Metropolitan Community College in Omaha.

Now is the time to volunteer to serve as an Officer or Board Member for PSAN. Please reach out to Warren Headlee, chair of the Nomination Committee, myself or any board member to ask questions or sign up.

Have a safe fall!

Sincerely,



Brian J. Foral
PSAN President



Don't forget to check out the PSAN website

— nebraskasurveyor.com

We would **LOVE** if you'd submit pictures from the field or articles to add to the website, etc.

The goal is to keep the website updated with information that's important to you! The website is also location for announcements and important information.

Send website content to: Administrative Secretary
Gwen Bowers at PSAN@nebraskasurveyor.com



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PSAN BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

Subject to approval by the PSAN Board of Directors

Meeting Date: June 22, 2026

1. Executive & Financial Updates

- **Financial Standing:** Treasurer Josh Borchers reported stable finances, positive performance in the Edward Jones account, and confirmed that a new accountant in Fremont is prepared for the upcoming year.
- **Vendor Policy for Seminars:** President Brian Foral clarified that vendor annual fees cover attendance at the Winter Conference only. Vendors wishing to attend the Summer Seminar must register and pay separately, noting that vendor booth space is not provided at summer seminars.
- **Virtual Election Services:** Administrative Secretary Gwen Bowers confirmed that the \$895 fee for Intelliscan virtual voting is locked for the 2026 annual election. Election materials must be submitted approximately two weeks prior to the voting launch.

2. Bylaws & Governance

- **Nomination Process Amendment:** The Board reviewed current bylaw requirements regarding nomination committee size and the rule mandating two candidates per office. A motion passed to vote on a bylaw amendment at the Sep 25, 2026 meeting to remove the two-nominee requirement and streamline committee requirements.
- **Historical Records Archiving:** Progress continues on scanning and organizing historical documents. Approval of vendor proposals was deferred to the September meeting for further due diligence.

3. Education, Outreach & Young Surveyors

- **Workforce & Community Outreach:** Education Committee Chair Dylan Campbell highlighted successful participation in SkillsUSA and the launch of the "Grow Your Own" job shadow program.
- **Licensing & Exam Resources:** State Surveyor Casey Sherlock outlined upcoming rule revisions, including the adoption of the PLSS exam and a new website flowchart to assist with license renewals.
- **Young Surveyors Network (YSN):** The Board approved establishing a YSN subcommittee under the Associate Committee. Led by Dylan Reese, the subcommittee will foster engagement, recruitment, and networking for early-career surveying professionals across Nebraska.

4. Historical Preservation & Initial Point

- **170th Anniversary Improvements:** In honor of the upcoming 170th anniversary of the Initial Point, Historical Committee Chair Jerry Penry presented a joint improvement plan with Kansas.
- **Funding Approved:** The Board approved \$2,000 toward Nebraska's contribution for site enhancements, including limestone posts representing five states, a picnic table, and visitor amenities.

5. Key Dates & Upcoming Events

- **Quarterly Board Meetings:** Sep 25, 2026 and Dec 04, 2026.
- **2027 Winter Seminar:** Feb 11, 2027 – Feb 12, 2027.

After the complete June 22, 2026 Board Meeting Minutes are approved by the PSAN Board of directors, they will be published to the PSAN website.

<https://nebraskasurveyor.com/meeting-minutes/>

6PM INITIAL POINT

Article by Jerry Penry

On September 9, 2026, the 6PM Initial Point site received some of the best attention it had been given since it was formed in 1987. Seven licensed surveyors from Nebraska and Kansas and a contractor from Missouri provided the labor to accomplish the improvements.

The main feature was the installation of five historical limestone posts that were from Kansas fence lines. Each stone was engraved with the state abbreviation and the outline of the state with a star at the location of the state capital. These posts represent the five states within the 6PM surveys. A picnic table was installed in the grass area to the north of the spire. The site originally had two cottonwood trees representing the state trees of both Kansas and Nebraska placed during the original construction of the site. These trees both died sometime in the 1990's. State Surveyor Casey Sherlock just happened to have two volunteer cottonwood trees growing in pots at his house that had grown to about 4 feet tall. He donated these trees to replace the original trees. Sherlock also fabricated a visitor registration box where people can now sign their names and towns when they visit the site. Unfortunately, this was never available at the site and there is no record of the thousands of people who have visited this important location during the past forty years.

Those attending were Casey Sherlock, Gene Thomsen, Denny Whitfield, Rex Heiden and Jerry Penry from Nebraska as well as Steve Brosemer and Tuff Hermreck from Kansas. Contractor Jared Brotherton representing Midwest Stone Fencepost of Oak Grove, Missouri, produced the posts and the crane to set them in place. ■



Photo Credits: Jerry Penry



Mapping India

How a chain of triangles, stretched by hand across two and a half thousand miles of jungle, plain, and mountain, gave the world the height of Everest — and cost several of its makers their lives.

Adapted from "Mapping India," Royal Society ([royalsociety.org/blog/2023/09/mapping-india](https://royalsocietypublishing.org/blog/2023/09/mapping-india)), with additional background from Wikipedia entries on the Great Trigonometrical Survey, George Everest, and Radhanath Sikdar.

In 1802, a British infantry officer named William Lambton set out from Madras with a theodolite, a chain, and an idea that bordered on obsession: measure the entire Indian subcontinent, peak to coastline, with a single unbroken web of triangles. The origin point was the Madras Observatory. The first baseline, carefully paced out and re-measured to guard against error, ran seven and a half miles. From that single line, the Great Trigonometrical Survey would eventually stretch a net of triangulation nearly the length of India.

The method itself was simple in principle. Fix two points a known distance apart, then sight a third point from each end and use the angles to calculate its position by trigonometry. Repeat that triangle outward, again and again, and a coastline observatory could eventually be connected, mathematically, to a peak in the Himalaya four hundred leagues away. In practice, it meant years of dragging brass instruments through forest, fever country, and princely territory that had barely seen a European surveyor before.

A Survey Measured in Lives

The scale of the undertaking is easy to admire and easy to understate. Everest's parties sometimes numbered in the hundreds, with elephants for the officers, camels for supplies, and towers built from scratch — some fifty feet tall — just so a theodolite could see over the flat haze of the Gangetic plain. When daylight visibility failed, his teams surveyed by night, using lanterns bright enough to be sighted from thirty miles off.

- 1802** ● **Lambton begins the survey at Madras**, measuring a baseline of 7.5 miles as his starting reference.
- 1818** ● **George Everest joins as assistant**, meeting Lambton in the Hyderabad office where the northward push toward Agra was being planned.
- 1823** ● **Lambton dies on the road** near Hinganghat, and Everest takes over as superintendent of the survey.
- 1830** ● **Everest becomes Surveyor General of India**, but keeps devoting himself chiefly to finishing the Great Arc.
- 1841** ● **The Great Arc of the Meridian is completed**, a chain of triangles spanning roughly 1,600 miles from Cape Comorin to the Himalayan foothills — still the longest meridian arc ever measured on foot.
- 1852** ● **Peak XV is identified** as the world's highest mountain, its height calculated in a Calcutta office, far from the mountain itself.
- 1865** ● **Peak XV is renamed Mount Everest** by the Royal Geographical Society, honoring a man who never saw the mountain up close and never claimed to have surveyed it himself.

(Continued on page 9)

An entire survey party could be lost to fever in a single season, and the work would simply continue under whoever was left standing.

Malaria and other fevers were a constant companion to the work, and Lambton's own death on the march near Nagpur was not an unusual event among the surveyors of that generation — it was closer to an occupational hazard. The Great Trigonometrical Survey has been described by later historians as one of the most demanding scientific undertakings of the nineteenth century, not for its mathematics, which were well understood, but for the sheer physical cost of collecting the data by hand, on foot, across a subcontinent.

The Names Left Off the Mountain

Radhanath Sikdar — a Bengali mathematician recruited by Everest in the 1830s for his expertise in spherical trigonometry. It was Sikdar, working from the survey's Calcutta office, who first calculated that Peak XV was the tallest mountain on Earth — not Everest himself, contrary to popular assumption.



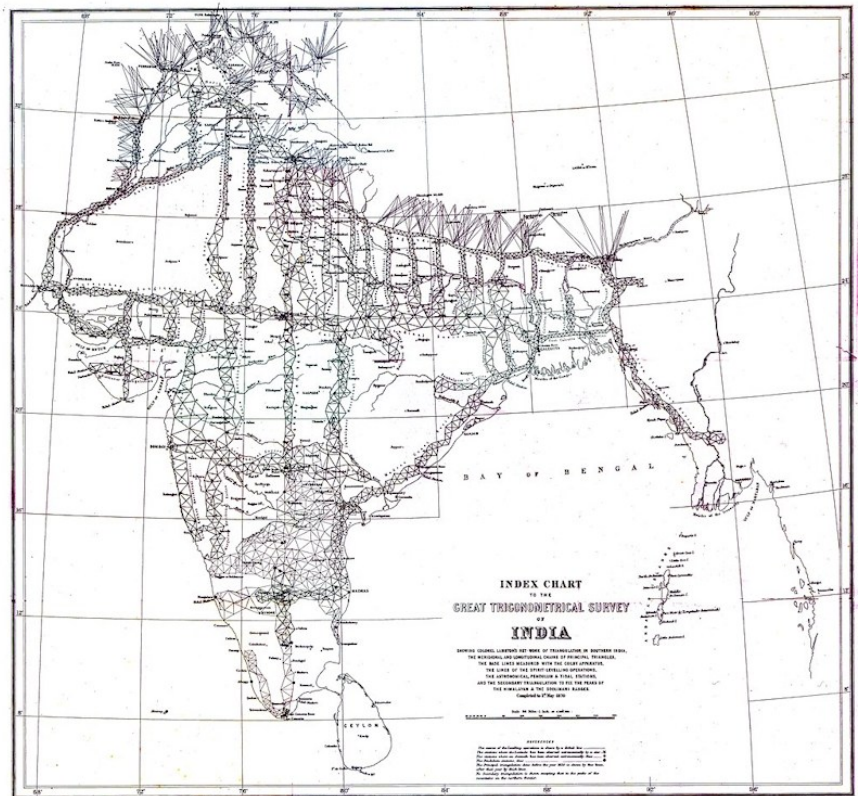
Radhanath Sikdar (public domain via [Wikimedia Commons](#))

Syed Mir Mohsin Hussain — noticed for his skill repairing delicate survey instruments, he was appointed Mathematical Instrument Maker in 1842, a role essential to keeping the entire operation's theodolites and chains functioning across years of harsh field conditions.

What the Triangles Left Behind

By the time Everest retired in 1843, the survey's chain of triangles covered an area estimated at nearly 57,000 square miles, and the Great Arc had become the baseline for mapping the Himalaya in the decades that followed. Later surveyors under Andrew Scott Waugh pushed the network further into the mountains, eventually measuring the heights of seventy-nine Himalayan peaks, Everest and K2 among them. In 1865, Waugh's protégé proposed naming Peak XV after his old superior — not because Everest had climbed it, or even seen it, but because the arc he'd spent a career completing was what had made the measurement possible at all.

For a survey profession built on precision, it's a fitting irony: the mountain now carries the name of a man who never set foot on it, while the mathematician who actually calculated its height is remembered mostly by those who go looking.



Index chart to the Great Trigonometrical Survey of India, 1870 (public domain via [Wikimedia Commons](#))

From High School to the Field

How a Career in Land Surveying Can Start Sooner Than You Think

Land surveying is one of the most foundational professions in the built environment, yet it remains one of the least talked about when students are exploring career options. Every road, bridge, subdivision, and infrastructure project begins with survey data. Without it, nothing gets built. And yet, many people don't realize that a career in surveying doesn't require a degree or years in the classroom before you ever set foot in the field.

The path into surveying is more accessible than most people think. Entry-level field positions allow individuals to begin working immediately, learning the craft hands-on while earning a paycheck. For those who want to pursue formal education, programs like Lamp Ryneerson's

SkillsUSA and Future Business Leaders of America, served as secretary for Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG), earned recognition as an award-winning 4-H participant, and lettered in basketball, football, and baseball. Those experiences speak to a young professional who knows how to show up, work with others, and take responsibility—qualities that matter deeply in the survey profession.

Oliver's signing day was a meaningful occasion, attended by his parents and several members of the Lamp Ryneerson survey leadership team. Survey Project Managers Dan Martinez, Matt Tinkham, and Todd Whitfield, were all present to mark the moment. Martinez also serves as Secretary for the National Society of



Oliver Ladehoff, Arlington High School graduate and newest member of Lamp Ryneerson's survey field crew.

for the Lamp Ryneerson Survey Field Technician Apprenticeship Program, a 2-year program developed in partnership with Metropolitan Community College (MCC). Participants in the program earn an Associate Degree in Civil Engineering Technology while continuing to work

“Their attendance wasn't just a formality. It was a signal of the investment Lamp Ryneerson makes in the people who join the team.”

Survey Field Technician Apprenticeship make it possible to work full time while earning a degree at the same time. This kind of non-traditional entry point is exactly what the profession needs, and it's exactly what firms like Lamp Ryneerson are building toward.

Lamp Ryneerson is proud to welcome **Oliver Ladehoff**, a recent graduate of Arlington High School in Arlington, Nebraska, as the newest member of its survey field crew. Oliver's high school career was defined by leadership and involvement. He was a member of

Professional Surveyors (NSPS) while Whitfield serves as Vice President for the Professional Surveyors Association of Nebraska (PSAN). Their attendance wasn't just a formality. It was a signal of the investment Lamp Ryneerson makes in the people who join the team, and the professional community that surrounds them from day one.

In his new role, Oliver will work alongside experienced field crews and licensed land surveyors, learning the fundamentals of land surveying and how to collect the precise data that every project depends on. As he builds experience, he could become eligible

full time. The curriculum goes beyond traditional surveying, covering AutoCAD, Civil 3D, Revit, GIS, and Civil Site Design, giving apprentices a skill set that adds value across the entire organization. Graduates of the program are well-positioned to advance into roles such as Party Chief, Project Manager, Subject Matter Expert, and become licensed land surveyors.

The Apprenticeship Program exists because Lamp Ryneerson recognizes a real challenge facing the

(Continued on page 11)

profession: finding candidates who have both an educational background in land surveying and meaningful field experience is increasingly difficult. By building a structured pathway from entry-level field work to a fully funded degree, Lamp Rynearson is investing in the long-term health of its Geomatics Group and opening doors for people who might not have seen surveying as an option. The program is designed to reach more applicants and strengthen our employees, reflecting Lamp Rynearson's broader commitment to the survey profession and communities we serve.



Oliver Ladehoff (seated) on signing day with Lamp Rynearson Survey Project Managers Dan Martinez, Matt Tinkham, and Todd Whitfield.

Oliver Ladehoff's story is a compelling example of what's possible when a firm commits to developing talent from the ground up. For students, recent graduates, or anyone looking for a career that combines technical skill, outdoor work, and real community impact, land surveying offers a path worth exploring. ■

MCC's Survey Program Is Growing — And They Need Instructors

Metropolitan Community College's Civil Engineering Technology program is seeing a surge in student interest, and PSAN members have a direct opportunity to help shape the next generation of surveyors.

This fall, MCC is running three sections of Site Layout, and enrollment has outpaced expectations — 43 students are currently registered, with roughly 15 more on a waitlist. Most are construction students, and nine high schoolers are also taking part through the Civil Engineering Academy dual-enrollment classes. The college's Surveying Sponsorship Program currently has four students enrolled, with more organizations reaching out to get involved.

To keep pace with that demand, MCC is expanding its course offerings. New classes in Surveying Fundamentals and Geomatics & Emerging Technologies are set to launch this winter, alongside continued high school academy coursework — all developed to give students a stronger foundation before they enter the field.

Here's where PSAN members come in. The program is actively looking for adjunct instructors to help teach these courses, and the applicant pool right now is thin — only one instructor has been approved to teach this year. Anyone in our membership with field experience, whether in boundary, construction, or GIS/UAS work, could make a real difference in how the next wave of surveyors is trained.

A word of caution for anyone considering it: MCC's hiring process takes time. Recent applicants have waited nearly a full quarter between applying and approval, so anyone interested should apply well before the term they'd like to start teaching.

If you've ever thought about giving back to the profession by teaching, this is a meaningful way to do it — and the program genuinely needs the help.

Apply here: [MCC Civil Engineering Technology Adjunct Instructor posting](#)

Questions about the program or what teaching involves? Reach out to a PSAN board member and we can help connect you with the right people at MCC. ■



PROFESSIONAL SURVEYORS ASSOCIATION OF NEBRASKA

October 8, 2026

Dear PSAN Member:

It is time to renew your PSAN Membership for 2027.

I understand that it is convenient to pay your dues at the Winter Convention however this creates a bookkeeping mess.

- Please submit your dues as soon as possible to the address listed under "MAIL TO" on the next page.
- Please complete the Member Information portion in its entirety. We are updating our records and want to be sure we have your most current and accurate contact information.
- You can renew your annual membership online! [CLICK HERE](#) or find it on the sidebar of the website.

Please **do not use Internet Explorer** when completing online renewals; the form isn't compatible with the Internet Explorer web browser.

We have several email addresses that do not work. If you have changed your email address and neglected to notify PSAN, please be sure to write it legibly on the sheet to be returned with your dues. If your email address has not changed, the security on your computer may have been set higher or set so as not to accept bulk emails. Also, if you are not receiving email from PSAN and I'm not getting the "not deliverable" message, you may want to check your "junk file" to make sure your computer isn't looking at PSAN as spam.

Your membership in PSAN is an investment in your professional future. We, as a group, make a larger impact on issues that affect each and every one of us. When there are important issues, we try to keep you informed. We provide educational services and information for professional development hours, pre-exam seminars and workshops.

If you have a question, an idea, or would like to get more involved in PSAN, please contact an officer or board member or our PSAN office at 402-432-3444. Our e-mail address is: PSAN@nebraskasurveyor.com

Thank you for your cooperation.

Josh Borchers, Treasurer, PSAN

PLEASE BE SURE YOUR DUES ARE PAID BEFORE November 30, 2026

Complete the form **in its entirety** and use only one form for each person.
Make your dues check payable to: Professional Surveyors Association of Nebraska and

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PO Box 83206
Lincoln, Nebraska 68501

<u>Class of Membership</u>	<u>PSAN Membership Fee</u>	<u>NSPS Membership Fee</u>	<u>Total</u>
Active Member – Nebraska Resident	\$175.00	Included	_____
Active Member – Non-resident	\$125.00	Optional - \$50.00	_____
Associate Member	\$75.00	Optional - \$50.00	_____
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Sustaining Member	\$500.00	N/A	_____
Student Member	\$10.00	N/A	_____
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Alternate Email: _____

Please help and volunteer to better serve your organization!

I would be interested in serving as a PSAN officer.	Yes	No
I would be interested in serving as a PSAN board member.	Yes	No
I would be interested in serving on a committee for PSAN.	Yes	No

PLEASE BE SURE YOUR DUES ARE PAID BEFORE November 30, 2026

Technology That Tracks



Mary Jo Wagner // 01.08.2026
xyht.com

A SINGULAR RAILWAY SYSTEM PROVIDES A LINEAR PATH FROM CONSTRUCTION TO MAINTENANCE ON THE TREN MAYA.

Mexico's Tren Maya (Maya Train) has been lauded as “the most important public work in the world” by former president Andrés Manuel López Obrador. Designed to boost economic and social development in the country's southeast—a decades-long underdeveloped region—the 1,500-kilometer railway connects cities and towns in the five states of Chiapas, Tabasco, Campeche, Yucatán and Quintana Roo, offering a never-before loop around the Yucatán Peninsula.

An ambitious endeavor in both scope and deadline, the progress of the estimated \$20 billion project has been followed in international news, it's been covered regularly in national news, and most importantly, its progression has been watched carefully by López Obrador as well as his successor President Claudia Sheinbaum.

That keen interest and

expectation has put “off the rails” pressure on the myriad construction companies feverishly working to complete their respective sections of the railway. Of critical importance was to have one particular section of the Maya Train ready for a first inaugural departure on Dec. 15, 2023, a deadline set by López Obrador.

“Given the completion schedule set by the president, we had about 18 months to build our 228-kilometer section,” says Juan Suarez, chief surveyor for Mota Engil, a construction company based in Porto, Portugal. “That in itself is incredibly challenging, but we also had to manage complex logistics and ensure the integrity of ecologically sensitive areas along the rail's path, all while delivering quality work on schedule. But, no pressure, right?”

Knowing they'd need reliable support to help meet exacting design

requirements and tight deadlines, and to sustain an intense pace, Suarez entered the field with technology that would provide efficiency and precision to survey crews and automated analytical and reporting tools to maximize efficiency in the office.

Proving just as critical as the ballast, sleepers and rails, Amberg Technologies' GRP System FX railway surveying solution, a modular field-to-office system for acquiring precise



The Amberg IMS 1000 enabled a single team to do the work of three crews.

(Continued on page 15)

track geometry and clearance analysis, provided Suarez and his teams the ability to steadily advance and complete section one of the railroad in record time, minimizing downtime, reducing costs and optimizing collaboration.

A TRANSPORTATION VISION

Funded through the National Fund for the Promotion of Tourism, FONATUR, the Maya Train conventional passenger and freight line links the southeast's main production and tourist centres. Combining both single and double track configurations, nearly the entire route is built on ballast with an international gauge of 1.435 mm and is designed for a top speed of 160 km/h for passenger traffic and 100 km/h for freight. With 34 stations and 42 trains, the government estimates the new network will reduce passenger travel times by 46 percent and increase the speed of freight transport by up to 72 percent.

Because of the sheer scope of the project, it was divided into seven

sections with development responsibility shared by FONATUR and the Ministry of National Defence (SEDENA). The first stage of the project (sections one to four) runs between Palenque and Cancún; the second stage (sections five to seven) runs from Cancún to Escárcega, bordering the Yucatán Peninsula in the south-southeast. Overall, about 44 percent—680 km—of the entire rail line is electrified.

Although López Obrador initiated the construction of the railroad in June 2020 with a completion date of October 2022, legal challenges and environmental concerns halted and delayed work for nearly two years.

TECH THAT TRACKS

“Depending on circumstances, constructing four kilometers of railway can typically take around nine months,” says Suarez. “We had a little over a year to complete nearly 230 kilometers. So we knew conventional methods of manual levelling, prisms, gauge bars and

measuring cords would not allow us to finish the railroad on time. We needed reliable and flexible technology that would let us be responsive, quick, highly productive and precise.”

Already equipped with one IMS 1000 railway surveying system from Amberg Technologies, a Switzerland-based leading provider of civil infrastructure solutions, Suarez acquired two additional IMS 1000s and one GRP 1000 railway surveying solution from ACRE Surveying Solutions, a local surveying equipment provider and Amberg distribution partner. Both modular, automated systems provide reliable and highly precise geometry information during the construction, maintenance and inspection of railway tracks. And with the field and office Amberg Rail software, crews can automate data capture, calculations and reporting.

“As this was the first railway project in Mexico for me, there was going to be a lot of unpredictability,” says Suarez. “So any source of predictable consistency would be an asset. On a scale of one to ten, I knew that Amberg’s reliable performance would be a ten.”

The challenge would be transitioning from manual, traditional approaches to automated measuring equipment and techniques—a training and tech support task that largely fell to ACRE. Although many of the international companies’ crews were familiar with Amberg Rail equipment, the GRP 1000, IMS 1000 and IMS Track Pro, a recent advancement for as-built rail surveys, would be new technology to Mexican survey teams.

“Going from using manual methodologies to these advanced

(Continued on page 16)



The oldest in Mexico and the American continent, the Cathedral of San Ildefonso is one of many heritage sites offered in Merida.



An Amberg survey team prepares for a rail inspection with their Amberg IMS1000.

trolley systems requires adaptability,” says Roberto Chinarro, a rail survey manager with ACRE. “These instruments are user-friendly and proven so users quickly see the efficiency, quality and productivity advantages they provide in the field. Interest in the machinery grows quickly, then.”

Indeed, although Suarez was the first to introduce the Amberg IMS system to Mexico, it wouldn’t be long before word of his section’s expedited progress travelled to the other sites. Calls for the same equipment would quickly result in about 40 of Amberg Rail systems being delivered to the field.

“The GRP 1000 and IMS 1000 not only provide highly precise geometry information during the construction and inspection of railway track, they can be optimally adapted to suit individual requirements,” says Suarez. “In addition, with the IMS solutions, they have one instrument that can be used for both construction and maintenance of the tracks once they’ve finished.”

LAYING TRACKS

Mota Engil was awarded two portions of the Maya Train project:

section one and part of section five. The most southern of the seven sections, section one runs north from Palenque to Escárcega and includes stations and stops in the states of Chiapas, Tabasco, and Campeche. Section five’s route is a 110-km stretch that connects Cancún and Tulum and has some of the most challenging

topography due to fragile karst terrain and intricate cave and cenote systems.

Suarez was responsible for coordinating and managing the surveying tasks on section one and supervising a ground and office crew of about 70. In addition to laying 228 km of single ballast track, they also had to construct four stations, two stops and three viaducts, as well as underpasses, overpasses, overhead water collectors and a lengthy bridge at Boca del Cerro. To bring the significant work site down to manageable size and cover more ground, Suarez divided the overall section into three relatively equidistant parts and centralized office operations at Palenque.

To ensure they stayed on track, he created three Amberg teams of four crew, including a surveyor and survey assistant, none of whom had used a GRP 1000 or IMS 1000 before. With help from ACRE, after two days of training, field crews were ready to use the trolleys and the in-field software.

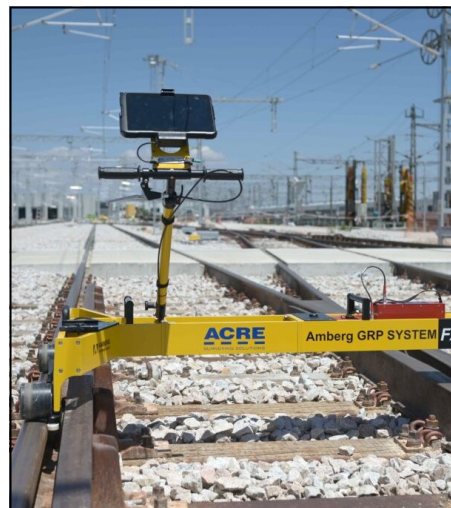
“ACRE’s dependable tech and training support was critical to aid our non-stop operations,” says Suarez. “It was particularly important to have reliable technology and on-

call support because we were so remote.”

With an approach that combined the steadfast precision and efficiency of the Amberg IMS 1000 and the GRP 1000 and the tailored Rail software platform, Suarez’s dispersed survey teams successfully supported and validated the daily routines of rail laying, inspecting, and reporting.

REAL-TIME RESULTS

Once a segment of rail was positioned, the Amberg survey crews inspected and verified the laid track predominantly using the IMS 1000 solution, a measuring trolley that offers precision sensors for gauge, superelevation, curvature, and distance, as well as a ruggedized tablet running the Rail software.



The Amberg IMS Track Pro is a rail measuring and inspection system for both construction and maintenance.

Placing the instrument on the track, the surveyor accessed the theoretical railway design loaded on the field tablet and used the on-board total station to collect a georeferenced control point from the pre-established network of over 3,000 control points. Pushing the

(Continued on page 17)

trolley along the 1,435-mm-wide rails, the machine's sensors continuously captured and measured the relative track geometry in 3D and instantly logged any defects or deviations according to EN-13848 or user-defined standards. With the movement and orientation advantage of the trolley's inertial measurement unit (IMU), teams could collect up to 60 m of data before needing to acquire the next control point. Consistently measuring to maximum accuracy, Amberg teams inspected and verified between 5-10 km of track each eight-



In the field with the Amberg GRP 1000 railway surveying system.

hour shift, seven days a week.

"Measuring the gauge, superelevation and curvature with traditional, manual methods would have required us to go over each segment three to four times to ensure relative accuracy, and the data wouldn't be in 3D," says Suarez. "With the IMS 1000, a single Amberg team can do the work of three crews. We have the theoretical layout on the field tablet, we obtain the measurement data in real-time in a single pass and we can compare it in real time with the theoretical data. It's seconds

compared to multiple minutes, greatly simplifying the workflow and eliminating mistakes."

The Amberg technology also enabled them to continue work through the night, with the only risk being unwanted snakes or other critters temporarily halting work.

"The IMS 1000 has its own LED lights so our crews could perform just as effectively as they did in daylight," says Suarez. "It not only allowed us to work eight hours on the rail nonstop, it enabled me to maintain 24-7 shifts, which was key to us delivering on time."

DATA LOOPS

At the end of each shift, the field data was sent electronically to the central office in Palenque for processing.

Using Amberg's customized rail software platform, the field measurement data was downloaded to run analyses and calculations for producing tailored reports. The software automatically analyzed data showing the track gauge, superelevation, curvature, horizontal position, and elevation and automatically calculated any deviations from the design. All of that data was compiled in a pre-designed reporting template and provided to the track production manager, who verified possible track deviations and corrected them if necessary. Once adjustments were made, the Amberg team then conducted another inspection survey to confirm its accuracy.

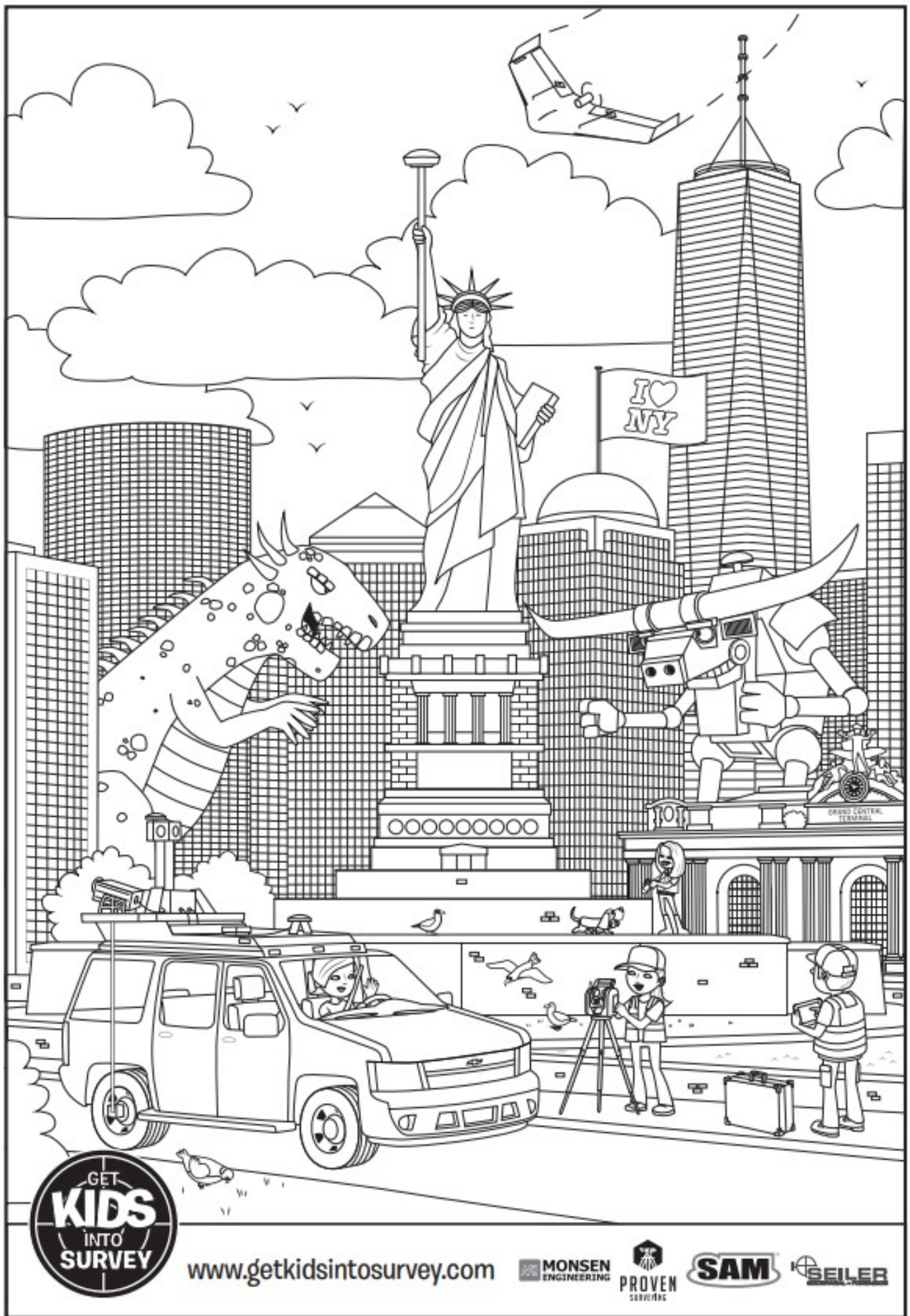
Daily reports showing progress and verified kilometers of track were also provided to the Mexican government for approval.

"What's so magnificent about the software is we have accurate data and answers immediately," says Suarez. "Without it, we'd be spending long hours calculating and re-calculating. With automated computations, it eliminates human errors and we can make decisions more quickly, even in the field if necessary. We can also export the data in whatever format the tamping machines need to ensure streamlined operations."

After a solid year of measuring, inspecting and verifying round the clock, Suarez and his crews successfully connected Palenque to Escárcega, just in time for López Obrador's first inaugural ride in December 2023. Although Suarez was not on board, he didn't need the ride to appreciate what they accomplished.

"We made many good calls on this project," he says. "But one of the best was choosing the Amberg equipment. We ushered in a new approach to as-built rail surveying—not a single surveyor has returned to manual methods. And without it, we wouldn't have met our deadline, and we would've needed an order of magnitude more crew, more equipment and more time."

By December 2024, the last remaining work on sections five, six and seven were completed, making the entire Tren Maya route operational. Since opening the passage, teams responsible for maintaining the completed railway have been benefitting from the continuity of the Amberg IMS 1000 and IMS Track Pro measuring equipment, creating a streamlined workflow as smooth as the train ride itself. ■



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Alaska—How Close We Came



ELIZABETH BECKETT, P.E. | NCEES PRESIDENT

ncees.org

August 2026

How close did Alaska come to losing its engineering and surveying licensure board this summer? The answer is uncomfortably clear: within days. The story of House Bill 314 is not simply about a veto and override; it is about how a foundational system of professional regulation nearly disappeared and what that near miss should teach all of us.

I experienced much of this history firsthand, having served on the Alaska State Board of Registration for Architects, Engineers, and Land Surveyors (AELS) from 2017 through 2025 and now as the president of NCEES. During my tenure, the board focused on the steady, often unseen work that underpins public trust: licensing qualified professionals, enforcing standards, and maintaining alignment with national practices. My board notes reflect continued attention to licensing processes, ethics, and supporting pathways to licensure while adapting to staffing and operational challenges. They also reflect requests from the interior design community to be able to take responsible charge for their own work and to partner with the other design professionals on regulations.

The policy challenges that ultimately led to HB 314 began to take shape in 2021–22 with House Bill 61. That legislation introduced the concept of recognizing registered interior designers within the AELS framework, following efforts by Council for Interior Design Qualification (CIDQ) professionals to collaborate with the board and establish a pathway to licensure. While HB 61 did not pass, it marked the beginning of a sustained and constructive dialogue about how overlapping design professions can be recognized.

This dialogue was grounded in the principle of mutual deference, the understanding that engineers, architects, surveyors, landscape architects, and interior

designers maintain distinct education, examination, and experience standards and should practice within their areas of competence while respecting those of others. Nationally, this approach is supported through the Interorganizational Council on Regulation (ICOR), where NCEES, the National Council of Architectural Registration Boards, the Council of Landscape Architectural Registration Boards, and CIDQ work together to address issues such as overlapping practice. ICOR's role is not to draw rigid boundaries but to promote clarity, accountability, and collaboration in the interest of public protection.

By 2024, the focus shifted from evolution to continuity. The statutory sunset review of AELS found the board to be operating effectively and recommended extending it for eight years. At the same time, the board identified needed statutory updates, many informed by years of discussion, that would modernize language, clarify exemptions, and better reflect current professional practice.

Those updates formed the basis of Senate Bill 54 in 2025. Despite legislative approval, the bill was vetoed based on concerns including claims regarding wastewater design restrictions, procurement practices, and the justification for expanding the board by recognizing interior designers. The result was immediate: AELS entered its wind-down period, creating uncertainty around licensure, enforcement, and the state's ability to regulate the professions effectively.

By 2026, the situation had become urgent. A separate bill to extend multiple boards was withdrawn on the last day of the regular session, eliminating an alternate path forward and leaving HB 314 as the only remaining

(Continued on page 20)

vehicle to preserve AELS. The bill reflected years of refinement and collaboration across professions. Yet even then, it was vetoed on June 18, bringing the state to the brink of losing its licensing board, which would officially sunset on July 1, 2026.

What changed the outcome was clarity of impact. The discussion shifted from statutory language to real-world consequences. In Alaska, where major infrastructure and energy development—including natural gas projects—are central to the economy, the question became unavoidable: Who will design these systems, and who will be accountable for their safety?

The legislature answered decisively, overriding the veto 45–15 the following day.

Alaska's experience highlights a fundamental truth: Licensure boards are essential infrastructure. They ensure public safety and trust, establish competency and accountability, and enable professional mobility across jurisdictions. Yet their value is not always well understood outside the professions.

That gap matters. What nearly happened in Alaska demonstrates how quickly a lack of understanding can place these systems at risk. The lesson is clear. We must do a better job explaining the value of licensure and connecting it directly to the safety of our communities, the reliability of our infrastructure, and the strength of our economy. The collaborative model advanced through ICOR and the principle of mutual deference show that professions can work together effectively. Now we must ensure that message is heard more broadly.

Alaska came within days of losing its licensing board. What happened in Alaska should not be viewed as an isolated event, but as a signal. Licensure systems remain strong only when their purpose is clearly understood and actively supported, and it is our responsibility to ensure that understanding is never in doubt. ■



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UNSUNG HERO: THE LOUISIANA- MISSISSIPPI LINE

Joseph D. Fenicle // 08.13.2025

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Northwest of Vicksburg, Mississippi lies a landlocked portion of Louisiana that you would think rightfully belongs to Mississippi.

When General Land Office (GLO) Deputy Surveyor Aaron Hitchcock was there in November of 1823, things looked a whole lot different. Hitchcock accurately located the banks and bends of the Mississippi River as well as Tullos Island. There was no question where Louisiana started and where Mississippi ended. Everything slowly changed over the next 89 years, by accretion and erosion, as Louisiana rightfully and lawfully expanded to the North and East by about five miles. This new bend, in 1912, was called Albemarle Bend and all was well between the States. That was until a violent act of avulsion created the Newman Cut-Off creating a ten-mile oxbow that would eventually, partially, silt in and appear to be that of the State of Mississippi. The Supreme Court got involved and brought in Samuel Stinson Gannett to mark where the river used to be — transferring a paper document to an on the ground survey.

Deputy Surveyor Hitchcock surveyed Township 9 North, Range 8

West of the Choctaw Meridian and Baseline. The South line of this Congressional Township would become the division line between Political Warren and Issaquena Counties, Mississippi. The other side of the river was surveyed in March of 1824 by Ephraim Ludlow. This was Congressional Township 19 North, Range 14 East of the Louisiana Meridian and Baseline. This became Political East Carroll Parish, Louisiana. The natural changes in the Mississippi River can be clearly traced in the scientific studies and artwork of Harold Fisk.

Dr. Fisk was a geologist and cartographer with the United States Army Corps of Engineers and the author of Geological Investigation of the Alluvial Valley of the Lower Mississippi River¹. There were fifteen maps, included in the pocket of the report that showed the current and historic twists and turns of the southerly portion, of the fourth largest watershed in the world². It is Plate 22, Sheet 10/15, File Number MRC/2588 Sh. 33-J, which shows the area in discussion. You can see, in vibrant color and detail, the remarkable way the Mississippi River has changed

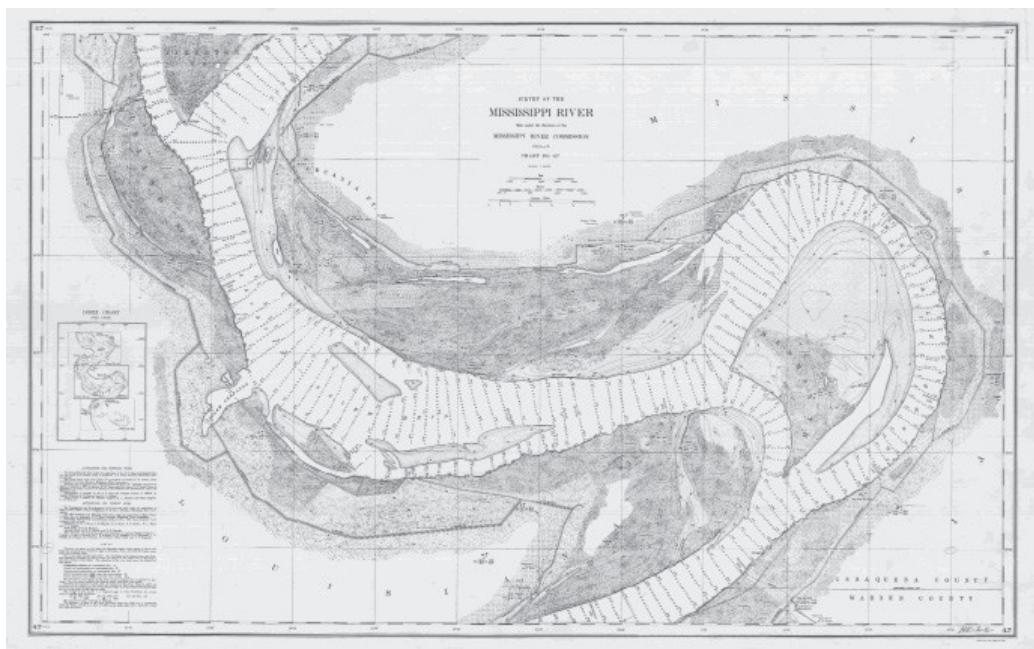
since it was first surveyed in 1765 by Lieutenant John Ross, surveyor of the 34th Regiment of the British Army.

The Ross map has been quoted as “The most influential map of the Mississippi River on the eve of the American Revolutionary War”³. Other historic meander lines, traced from old maps, are from 1820, 1880 and 1944. After that Dr. Fisk utilized aerial photographs to plot the meanders. When Samuel Stinson Gannett did his survey, he utilized the Fisk Maps but heavily relied upon the most detailed survey of the Mississippi River at the time, the Survey of the Mississippi River, Made under the direction of the Mississippi River Commission, 1913-1915, Chart No. 47. It was with this map that Gannett could retrace what the river’s thalweg looked like in 1912. The Supreme Court record states “The most reliable and accurate record of location of the thread of the main channel of the Mississippi River for the dates in the area specified in section 3 of the decree is that given on chart No. 47 of the Mississippi River Commission Survey of 1913-1915”⁴.

The State of Louisiana became the 18th State on April 30,

(Continued on page 22)

1812. According to the Louisiana Constitution of 1812, the portion of the boundary in discussion runs “...thence along the said parallel of latitude to the river Mississippi – thence down the said river to the river Iberville...”⁵. The State of Mississippi became the 20th State on December 10, 1817. According to the Mississippi Constitution of 1817, the portion of the boundary in discussion runs “...thence West along the said degree of latitude to the Mississippi River, thence up the same to the beginning...”⁶



Survey of the Mississippi River, Made under the direction of the Mississippi River Commission, 1913-1915, Chart No. 47.

Both States agreed on the common line, that is until it moved in 1912, and navigation fully stopped by 1916⁷. The Supreme Court decree from 1931, in Section 3, stated that the river was in the same place at the Westerly extension of the Political County boundary between Warren and Issaquena Counties, Mississippi⁸.

This is where Surveyor Gannett was to start his survey. According to Gannett’s final report, he did an incredible job retracing the County line. He found a wooden stake at the Southeast corner of Section 33, Township 9 North, Range 8 West. From

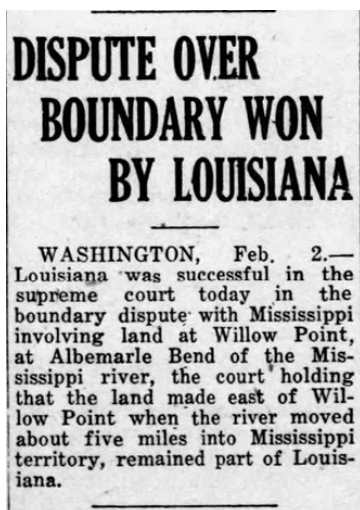
corner he ran his line West through two found line trees, a 24-inch plus Hackberry Tree and a 15-inch Oak Tree⁹. He replaced the stake with a six-foot-long section of iron angle bar, driven 3 foot deep, as acquired from Vicksburg Boiler and Iron Works.^{10,11} Gannett went on to perpetuate the Section line by placing four concrete reference monuments where the road and levee crosses.

These reference monuments varied in size, shape, and material, but most had a square concrete base with a conical frustum and bronze disks like the 1927 Oklahoma and Texas State Line Boundary.¹² The bronze disks were ordered from the Schoellhorn-Albrecht Machine Company in St. Louis, Missouri for \$2.75 apiece, the mixing materials for the concrete came from the Mississippi Lumber Company and the metal forms for the frustum came from Enterprise Plumbing and Metal Works.¹³

Today this road is Mississippi Highway 465, and the location of the East-West section line is a couple of miles Northeast of the old Brunswick

Store. The area is labelled as Bellevule (sometimes referred to as Bellevue) on the Warren County, Mississippi General Highway Map.¹⁴ For the other end of the silted in section of the old riverbed, things started easy. Gannett, and crew, started about 540 feet from the new bank of the Mississippi River at Monument Zero.¹⁵ This was a custom-built concrete monument with a 20-inch square base, 18 inches tall. A conical frustum, 36 inches tall, was placed on top with a bronze disk. Each concrete monument was not only referenced to local control triangulation stations but also referenced by scribing triangles on nearby bearing trees as well as documented by latitude and longitude in the final report.¹⁶

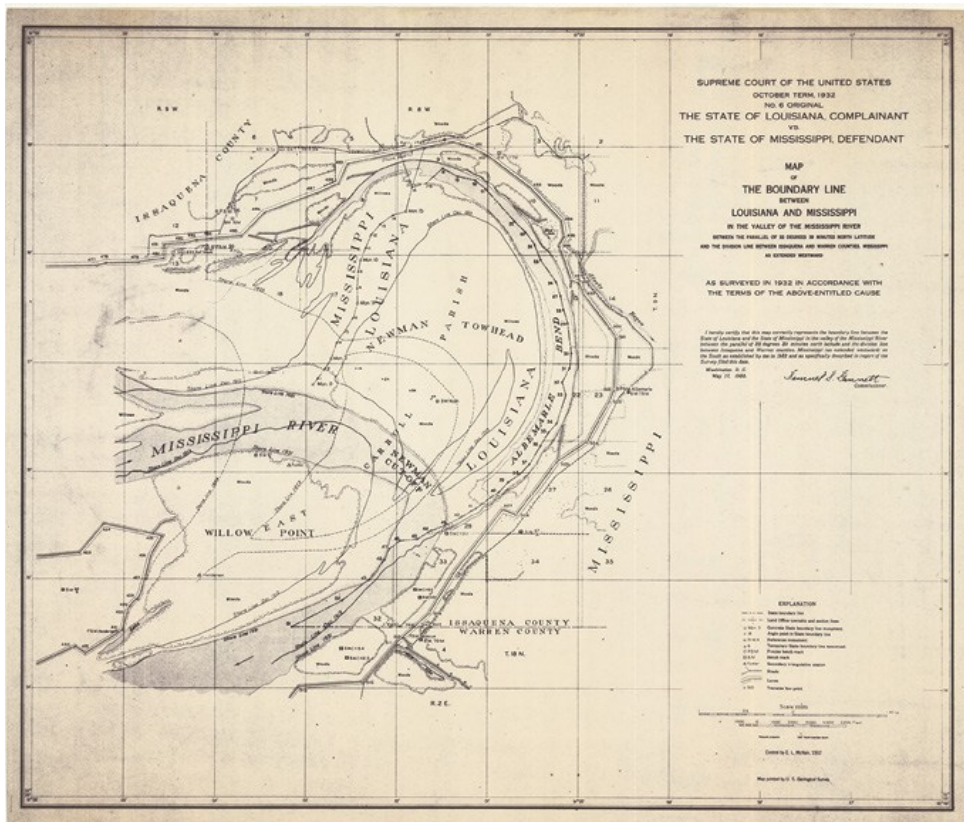
Intermediate monuments, identified as Temporary Boundary Line Monuments, were “Marked by a creosoted wooden post 39 inches long and 6 inches square, set 32 inches in ground and a small nail in top marking angle point”¹⁷. After the 16th



Dispute Over Boundary Won By Louisiana, The Winona Times, February 06, 1931

this

(Continued on page 23)



Map of the Boundary Line Between Louisiana and Mississippi In the Valley of the Mississippi River.

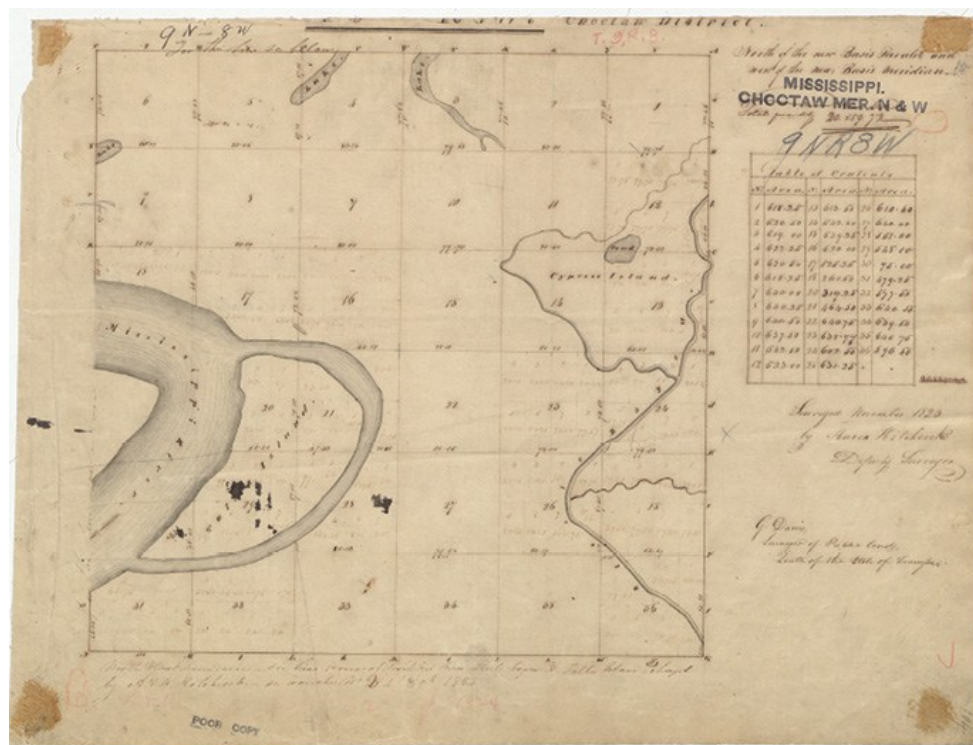
monument the old riverbed was evident and filled with water. After Post 16, the physical monuments with coordinates became only coordinates and lasted until number 51. Each calculated position was identified by true bearing and distance to the next station. The total measured distance from Monument Zero to Calculated Position 51 was reported by Gannett as 52,096 feet or just under 10 miles.¹⁸ If that wasn't enough though, an independent reference line was also run on top of the levee with true bearings and distances also tied to triangulation stations. There were 36 (477-513) of these stations that were marked by six-inch square wood posts.¹⁹

The fieldwork was started in October of 1932 and completed by the end of November the same year.²⁰ Although Gannett was appointed Commissioner of the survey, the fieldwork and calculations were

performed by his close friend Eugene Long McNair. McNair worked on many of Gannett's prior surveys, to include New Mexico-Texas, and most notably

Oklahoma-Texas. McNair was paid \$15 a day for his work as compared to \$3 a day for a chainman/rodman and a mere \$2 a day for a laborer clearing line and building the concrete monuments.¹³ All angles were turned at least four times using a transit with a 6.5-inch circle. The distances were measured with a 300-foot steel chain under 20 pounds of tension.²¹

All the geometry was tied to a true meridian by Polaris observations as well as ties to Mississippi River Commission triangulation stations, specifically the starting station B.M. Noah. The entire survey cost \$2,819.62 not counting the office, calculation and report work of Gannett that technically didn't wrap up until June 08, 1933.²² The report on the fieldwork was filed on May 17, 1933, and the report on all the expenses was filed on June 19, 1933. The final report on October 16, 1933, authorized the payment of \$2,600 to Gannett and approved and adopted his prior report



General Land Office Survey of Township 09 North, Range 08 West, Choctaw Meridian and Baseline showing Tullus Island.

(Continued on page 24)

and survey. The total cost was \$5,419.62 and was to be split equally by both States equaling \$2,709.81. The value that Gannett received from 1933 would have been equal to over \$62,000 in 2025.²³ This completed yet another disputed State line that

escalated to the United States Supreme Court.

Mark Twain always had a way of saying things the right way. He said that the Mississippi River "...is not a commonplace river, but on the contrary is in all ways remarkable".²⁴ I

think, by the time this survey was over, Gannett would have agreed.

Next time we will visit the New Hampshire-Vermont State Line. It will be the last for both Gannett and McNair.

Joseph D. Fenicle, MS, PS is the Program Director and Professor at the University of Akron for its award-winning Surveying/Mapping program. Immediately prior, he was the Chief Surveyor at the Office of the Fulton County Engineer in Wauseon, Ohio for 15 years. He also owns Angular By Nature, LLC, a company specializing in Continuing Education for Surveyors and Engineers across the Nation. Joseph has a MS from the University of Maine, a BS in Surveying/Mapping from the University of Akron and an AAS in GIS/GPS from Hocking College. He is currently working on his Doctorate at the University of Maine as well as his CFedS—Certified Federal Surveyor Certification.

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call for **NOMINATIONS**

*** To be awarded at the Winter Conference Awards Banquet & Benefit Auction ***

PSAN is seeking nominations for the following awards

Head Chainman Award

The Head Chainman Award was created in 1989 by PSAN to recognize individuals who have served the profession and/or enhanced its image. If you know someone who personifies the following statement, please consider nominating them for this award:

“The HEAD CHAINMAN shall take the front of chain and lead the party. He shall clear the way and mark the line of progress. He shall always be mindful of his relationship to the rear chainman so that he does not go too far ahead; to the instrumentman so that he does not stray too far from the true line; and to the ground so that he is able to make a true and accurate measurement. He is charged with responsibility to set the pace so that the task at hand will be accomplished with the greatest speed while maintaining the integrity of the results.”

Honorary Life Membership

Pursuant to Article III, Section 1b of the Constitution, an Honorary Life Member is defined as follows:

A person of acknowledged eminence in Surveying, who has rendered outstanding service to the Land Surveying or Engineering Profession and who has been an Active Member of the Professional Surveyors Association of Nebraska, may be elected as a Life Member of the Association by a two-thirds vote of the Official Board. Honorary Life Membership does include full membership voting rights.

Nomination Instructions: In order to highlight the accomplishments of our members, please share specific characteristics about the person or examples of their leadership in the nomination letter. The nomination letter/email could be read as an introduction to the award recipient at the Winter Conference banquet. A letter stating, “I would like to nominate Joe Best Surveyor...” will not be considered without supporting information. I know we have great members who do great things in the field of land surveying, so let’s take the opportunity to showcase these accomplishments amongst our surveying peers!

Nominations MUST be received by ***November 20, 2026!!***

If you know a member of PSAN who meets the requirements for one of these awards, please send an email to PSAN@nebraskasurveyor.com, with the subject line “Awards”.



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