Legal Descriptions 101.18
Overview

What is a legal description?
Different types of legal descriptions
History and origin of the modern Survey System
Terminology
Drawing a legal Description
“Legals”

What is a legal description?

A method of geographically identifying a parcel of land, which is acceptable in a court of law.
Types of legal descriptions

Lot and Block Survey aka Platted legal description

You are here
Metes (not Meats) and Bounds or Unplatted
Aliquot aka Rectangular, Quarter-Quarter or Brief Description.
Origin of Surveys

All property of the thirteen colonies was described by “Metes and Bounds,” the description usually running from the foot of some mountain or the mouth of some stream or river, and in many cases commencing at a tree or a stump. A landmark or permanent object, natural or artificial, marked by a surveyor to indicate a boundary is known as a monument.
Later, as additional lands were acquired, the Government found it necessary to prepare for the sale or settlement of various tracts known as public lands. These public lands had to be surveyed into smaller tracts suitable for sale, allotment and homestead.
In 1784 Continental Congress appointed a committee to devise a system of measurement. The first plan devised and used to some extent in Virginia, called for the subdividing of public lands into tracts 10 miles square. These 10 mile tracts were then subdivided into 100 smaller tracts numbered from 1 to 100 commencing at the Northwest corner and numbering to the East and then back to the West.
Sounding familiar?

In 1785, at the suggestion of Thomas Jefferson, the Continental Congress reduced the unit of measurement to 6 miles each way. These new units were numbered from 1 to 36, commencing at the Southeast corner, numbering West and then back East.
The Rectangular System

In 1805 the PRESENT SYSTEM known as the “Rectangular System” was adopted. This system was first used in the Northwest Territory and most of the territory West of the Mississippi (except Texas) was surveyed in this manner. The surveying of all public lands is done by the General Land Office of the Government.
In making a survey by the “Rectangular System” it is necessary to have a “Starting Point” and from such point a line is run due North to the North boundary line of the State, District or Territory to be surveyed. This North and South line is known as the “Prime or Principal Meridian”. In central Oklahoma this line is called the INDIAN MERIDIAN.
There is likewise established a “Base Line” running East and West, at approximately right angles to the “Prime or Principal Meridian”.
Meridians and Base Lines
Then What?

Lines are next run North and South parallel with the Prime Meridian 6 miles apart, beginning at the Meridian. These lines mark the country off into strips 6 mile wide; each strip being known as a "RANGE". Ranges, either East or West, are numbered from the Principal Meridian.
After the Range lines are run, the East and West lines are established. The first line so run being the “BASE LINE”, all East and West lines cross the Meridian at right angles. Every 6 miles there are East and West lines running parallel with the base line, cutting the ranges into sections. These are simply known as “TOWNSHIPS”.
The Earth, Sheza Round
Square or Round, Which Is It?

In order to keep these lines as near 6 miles apart as possible, usually every 24 miles North from the base line a correction line is established known as a “STANDARD PARALLEL”. “GUIDE MERIDIANS” are likewise established at intervals of usually 24 miles.
## Townships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>T4N R5W</th>
<th>T4N R1E</th>
<th>TOWNSHIP 4 NORTH</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T3N R2W</td>
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<td>TOWNSHIP 3 NORTH</td>
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<td>MERIDIAN</td>
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<td>BASE LINE</td>
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<td>TOWNSHIP 2 NORTH</td>
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<td>WEST PRINCIPAL</td>
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<td>RANGE 5 WEST</td>
<td>T2S R3E</td>
<td>TOWNSHIP 2 SOUTH</td>
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<td>RANGE 4 WEST</td>
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<tr>
<td>RANGE 4 EAST</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
After the establishment of a Meridian and a Base Line, and after Townships have been formed, it is then necessary to survey and number each TOWNSHIP into 36 Sections, containing approximately 640 acres each. These sections being numbered from 1 to 36 commencing with number 1 at the Northeast corner of the Township and numbering to the West and then back East.
Sections in a Township
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>36</th>
<th>31</th>
<th>32</th>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
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</tbody>
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Let’s Recap, Shall We?

- Rectangular System – Thomas Jefferson
- Indian Meridian and Cimarron Meridian in Oklahoma
- Two Base Lines
- Range Lines run North and South
- Township Lines run East and West
- 6 miles apart
- Earth round
Correction lines
Sections – Numbered 1 - 36
640 acres “approximately”
Okay, so you’re driving along on North May, you have Edgar Winter, Boston or REO cranked up, you run the yellow light at Wilshire and the next thing you know...you’ve jumped the curb and landed in the 7 Eleven parking lot. What the heck just happened?
Correction Line
As we previously learned all Sections do not and cannot contain 640 acres on account of the curvature of the Earth and the impossibility of absolute accuracy in surveying. Therefore we find correction lines every 24 miles allowing the surveyors to make corrections from the Principal Meridian to again set the Range lines at 6 miles apart.
Fractional Sections

To take care of this discrepancy the Sections on the North and West side of the Township contain an irregular number of acres known as “Fractional Sections”. Therefore we usually have a Township with 25 full Sections and 11 Fractional Section.
The Fractional Sections created by the corrections for the curvature of the earth and the inaccuracies in surveying are Sections 1-6 and Sections 7, 18, 19, 30 and 31. The lands created by the surplus or deficit in area of the above Sections are known as Government Lots. Fractional Sections containing Government Lots should not be described in the same manner as a full Section.
A Closer Look at Section 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>LOT 4</th>
<th>LOT 3</th>
<th>LOT 2</th>
<th>LOT 1</th>
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<tr>
<td>19.27 CH.</td>
<td>20 CH.</td>
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<td>20.75 CH.</td>
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<td>LOT 5</td>
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<td>SE 1/4 OF NW 1/4</td>
<td>SW 1/4 OF NE 1/4</td>
<td>SE 1/4 OF NE 1/4</td>
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<td>20 CH.</td>
<td>20 CH.</td>
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<tr>
<td>LOT 6</td>
<td>NE 1/4 OF SW 1/4</td>
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<td>20 CH.</td>
<td>20 CH.</td>
<td>20 CH.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOT 7</td>
<td></td>
<td>SE 1/4 OF SW 1/4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>19.27 CH.</td>
<td></td>
<td>19.27 CH.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Not so Fast

Government Lots are also found bordering or containing Indian or Timber Reservations, National Parks, Lakes and Rivers.
Interesting Note...Sort of

It was not uncommon to have a different surveying crew on each side of a River using the same Government Lot number to describe two different tracts of land within the same Quarter Section. Special attention must be paid to the descriptions of such lands as they will often refer to a specific bank and direction of the River as it flows through the Quarter Section.
Rectangular Survey System – A system consisting of squares formed by the intersecting township lines and range lines, which form adjoining six mile squares known as townships.
Sections – One mile squares numbered 1 to 36 within a township and divided into quarter sections.

Township – The basic unit of the rectangular system; six miles square consisting of 36 sections and numbered North and South.
Range – A six mile wide row of townships running North and South.

Principal Meridian – The main division line running North and South from a Base line.

1. Indian Meridian – Oklahoma except Panhandle.
Base Line – The main division line running East and West through a principal meridian.

Monument – Landmark or permanent object, natural or artificial, marked by a surveyor to indicate boundaries.

Correction Lines – The lines which compensate for the shortages or overages in a townships area due to the curvature of the earth.
Government Lots – Irregularly shaped parcels of land which usually front on water or rivers and on the outside of townships. These lots are usually placed on the North and West sides of a Section and are usually numbered progressively.

Metes and Bounds – Measurements and boundaries for land that cannot be described briefly.
Point of Beginning (POB) – The reference point designated in the descriptions as an initial point for beginning a description.

Degree – Geometric measure divided further into minutes and seconds.

Bearing – A relative direction from one object to another or a compass point.

Call – An angle and distance of a given line or arc, e.g., North 89 degrees 50’ 30” West.
**Platted** – Area divided into lots and/or lots and blocks and recorded in a book of plats. Unrecorded plats are not recorded in the plat books.

**Unplatted** – Area not divided into lots, as in a subdivision.
FINAL PLAT
OF
WOODVINE COMMERCIAL I
A PART OF THE NW QUARTER OF SECTION 31,
T 14 N, R 3 W, I.M., OKLAHOMA CITY, OKLAHOMA COUNTY, OKLAHOMA
LEGAL DESCRIPTION

A part of the Northwest Quarter (NW/4) of Section Thirty-one (31), Township Fourteen (14) North, Range Three (3) West of the Indian Meridian, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma County, Oklahoma, being more particularly described as follows:

Beginning at the Southwest Corner of said Northwest Quarter, thence from said point of beginning North 00°16'35" West along the West line of said Northwest Quarter a distance of 225.11 feet; thence North 89°43'25" East a distance of 350.00 feet, thence South 00°16'35" East a distance of 226.59 feet to the north boundary of Woodvine IV addition, a recorded plat; thence South 89°57'55" West along the north boundary of said plat a distance of 350.00 feet to the point of beginning containing 1.8147 acres more or less.
Lot Divisions

It’s important to identify the characteristics of a lot before plotting a partial description.

Is it square?

Is it rectangular?

Do the lot lines run due North and South, and East and West?

Is the lot odd shaped with various courses to describe the boundary?
"Un bon croquis vaut mieux qu'un long discours"

"A good sketch is better than a long speech" or "A picture is worth a thousand words"
The Whatchamacallit Round
Doohickey Thingamajig
Directional Characteristics

Boundary lines that are 20 degrees or less from due North and South can be considered the Easterly or Westerly lines.

Likewise boundary lines that are 70 degrees or more from North and South can be considered the Northerly or Southerly lines.
A Lot About Lots

- Boundary lines *between* N 20° E and N 70° E or S 20° W and S 70° W are considered the Northwesterly and Southeasterly lines.

- Boundary lines *between* N 20° W and N 70° W or S 20° E and S 70° E are considered the Northeasterly and Southwesterly lines.
1001 Words Is Worth More Than A Picture
The Rectangular Lot aka Abstractor’s Best Friend

North half of the lot.
South half of the lot.
The North 50 feet of the lot (if sold first).
All of the lot except the North 50 feet

*Parts are not interchangeable and your mileage may vary.*
Remember...

The chance of confusion or error increase when the methods of describing the lot are combined.

The “North 50 feet” is measured at right angles or perpendicular to the north line.

The “North half” means the north one half in area.
The Complex Lot

When a lot is divided into multiple parts, the divided parcel may be described either by its specific division, as the East 50 of the West 100 or by excepting those parts of the lot not included within its boundaries.
The Irregular Lots

The Westerly 50 feet.

The Westerly 50 feet measured along the North and South lines.
The lot except the East 100 feet.
The West 50 feet or all of the lot except the West 50 feet.
Conflicts in Lot Division

The North 50 feet and the South half. This indicates a shortage.

The Westerly 50 feet and East 100 feet. This shows both an overlap and a shortage.
The Westerly 50 feet, measured along the North and South lines, and the East 100 feet. This involves a shortage.
A. W 50'

B. W 50' MEASURED ON NORTH LINE

C. W 50' FRONT AND REAR
Aliquot Legal Description

The standard subdivisions of a section, such as a half section, quarter section or quarter-quarter section.
LET’S IDENTIFY LEGAL DESCRIPTIONS
CORRECTLY LOCATE THE FOLLOWING DESCRIPTIONS BY PARCEL NUMBER:

PARCEL #

_____ The NW ¼ of the SE ¼ of Section 2.

_____ The SE ¼ of the NE ¼ of the SE ¼ of the NE ¼ of Section 2.

_____ The E ½ of the SE ¼ of Section 2.

_____ The W ½ of the SW ¼ of the NW ¼ of the SW ¼ of Section 2.

_____ The S ¼ of the SW ¼ of the NW ¼ of Section 2.

_____ The SW ¼ of the SE ¼ of Section 2, excepting therefrom the South quarter.

_____ The NE ¼ of the NW ¼ of the SW ¼ of Section 2.
CORRECTLY DESCRIBE (ABBREVIATIONS ACCEPTABLE) THE FOLLOWING PARCELS IN SECTION 2:

Parcel “A”  __________________________________________________________
Parcel “B”  __________________________________________________________
Parcel “C”  __________________________________________________________
Parcel “D”  __________________________________________________________
Parcel “E”  __________________________________________________________
Parcel “F”  __________________________________________________________
Parcel “G”  __________________________________________________________

Indicate on Plat of Section 2 the dimensions and acreage of Parcels “A” through “G.”
Metes (Measurements) and Bounds (Boundaries) Legal Description

A description of a parcel of real property, using carefully measured distances, angles and directions.

These descriptions set forth the boundaries of a tract of land by describing its perimeter. A metes and bounds description starts at a beginning point and progresses along each boundary line until it arrives back at the point of beginning.
WRITE THE BEARINGS:

A. ____________________  D. ____________________  G. ____________________
B. ____________________  E. ____________________  H. ____________________
C. ____________________  F. ____________________  I. ____________________
Let’s Draw

A part of the Northeast Quarter (NE/4) of Section Nineteen (19), Township Fourteen (14) North, Range Four (4) West of the Indian Meridian, Oklahoma County, Oklahoma, being more particularly described as follows:

COMMENCING at the Northeast corner of the Northeast Quarter (NE/4);

Thence North 89°17’30” West along the North line of said NE/4 a distance of 412.12 feet;

Thence South 00°23’42” West a distance of 227.14 feet to the POB;

Thence continuing South 00°23’42” West a distance of 757.35 feet;

Thence North 89°17’30” West a distance of 287.58 feet;

Thence North 00°23’42” East a distance of 757.35 feet;

Thence South 89°17’30” East a distance of 287.58 feet to the POB.
Are You Feeling Lucky?

A part of the Southwest Quarter (SW/4) of Section Twenty-eight (28), Township Eleven (11) North, Range Three (3) West of the Indian Meridian, Oklahoma County, Oklahoma, more particularly described as follows:

COMMENCING at a point 33 feet North and 660 feet East of the Southwest Corner of said Southwest Quarter (SW/4) for a POB;

Thence North a distance of 287.33 feet;

Thence West and parallel with the South line of said Southwest Quarter (SW/4) a distance of 266.00 feet;

Thence South 16°06’25” West a distance of 215.80 feet;

Thence North 89°56’04” East a distance of 130.00 feet;

Thence South 00°03’56” East a distance of 80.00 feet;

Thence North 89°56’04” East a distance of 195.87 feet to the POB.
NOTE:
LINE C-D IS CONCENTRIC WITH A-B