

## **Early Patterns of Survey and Settlement**

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The boundaries of the Western Reserve to be surveyed and marked with posts were fairly definite. The Reserve was to begin at the western border of Pennsylvania, between 41° and 42° plus two minutes north latitude, and extend westward for 120 miles. The Connecticut Land Company had instructed the surveyors to run the boundary line as far west as the Cuyahoga River and to lay off the land into townships five miles square. Thus their baseline was the border of Pennsylvania, the so-called "Ellicott Line", after the surveyor who fixed and marked that border in 1786, ten years before Moses Cleaveland and his party of surveyors began their own similar work in the Western Reserve. Once this line was found by the latter party, it took them only two weeks to trace the line south to Ellicott's cornerstone at the 42nd parallel, almost 68 miles to the 41st parallel.

With the corner so located, the surveying parties separated to run the range lines from the 41st parallel back to Lake Erie. The ranges, erected on the south base line five miles apart, were numbered sequentially to the west. The townships were numbered from south to north.

The surveying party discontinued their task in the Western Reserve on October 17, 1796, but were replaced the following year by another group to continue the work left by the initial party. Before the winter of 1797, this group completed surveying the township lines in the Reserve east of the Cuyahoga River. They had laid out the town of Cleveland into lots of varying sizes, some of a hundred acres, and had staked out the principal streets. They had laid out in lots of 160 acres four of the best townships which were to be sold for the general benefit of the Company (namely, Northfield, Bedford, Warrensville and Perry). None of the townships in the Reserve was set apart for the support of churches or schools, however, for this was a speculative land venture.

Additionally, they had devised an unusual yet elaborate method for the allocation of the land by lot and by shares to Company stockholders, in order that an equalization of the distribution might be met, for

the land was so uneven in its worth. Parcels of land, as surveyed into lots, townships and ranges, were numbered and classified according to value and desirability. Corresponding numbers were entered on slips of paper and placed in a box. Shareholders drew their lots according to the value of their investments. The result was that one might find his property not in one contiguous allotment, but scattered about the Reserve. After the distribution each proprietor was responsible for his own lands. Inevitably, the settlements were widely scattered. They did not begin solidly at the Pennsylvania line and move west as neighborhoods developed, nor did they start along the lake and move south. Instead, each settler had to find his way through the wilderness along the township lines until he came to his assigned plot, and then commence with building a new home and living a very different lifestyle. It was a colossal gamble, to say less of its complications and inconveniences. But in spite of this, it did guarantee to each stockholder his rightful share of both the good land and the poor.