

Framing Spaces: Bringing Boundaries to the Western Reserve

The Ohio-Pennsylvania Retracement Survey

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The line between Ohio and Pennsylvania was first established as the westerly line of Pennsylvania in 1786 by Andrew Ellicott. It is sometimes referred to as the "Ellicott Line". A 20 to 30 foot vista was cut by a large corps of axemen, allowing stones at hand to be inscribed with a "P" on the east side and placed on the line. Over the years, the vista disappeared along with many of the stones.

Due to the uncertainty of the position of the line a commission was appointed in 1878 by the states of Ohio and Pennsylvania to jointly ascertain and re-mark the line established in 1786 known as the 1881 survey. The work began on November 6, 1878 to retrace the line. Although the line was originally a meridian or straight line there were determined to be two angles in the line from the monuments recovered during the resurvey. To perpetuate the position of the line, the 1881 survey also set monuments along the line. Granite monuments marked the northern and southern terminus' of the line, with sand stone monuments being placed at the end of each mile preceding southerly from the northern terminus or "0" monument. The survey was completed and a report printed in 1888.

The report has been a valuable tool in the current retracement by volunteers from the states of Ohio and Pennsylvania. The Professional Land Surveyors of Ohio have been the driving force behind the work. The Ohio Senate passed a resolution acknowledging the valuable work being performed by this group. The current survey involves recovering, repairing, placement of access boxes and extensions for the monuments located beneath roadways and the placement of a disk noting the 1996 survey in the top of the index monuments. The Global Positioning System is being utilized to reference the location of the monuments to National Geodetic control establishing Ohio State Plane coordinates on the monuments for use by private surveyors in the future.