



The History of the PLSS (Part 1)

By Rick Norejko, CMS, TEAM Consulting, LLC

The first of a series focusing on the history of the Public Land Survey System (PLSS) and the land ownership philosophy of Founding Fathers Jefferson, Washington, Franklin, and Hamilton.

The local assessment office's work can be divided into two principal categories: properly locating property boundaries to determine ownership rights to a calculated amount of acreage, and establishing a tax value for that estate. Possession of an estate of land has been innate in man throughout human civilization. George Mason, who was a Virginia landowner, planter, and politician, wrote the Virginia Declaration of Rights of 1776. Article 1 states:

All men are by nature equally free and independent, and have certain inherent rights of which... they cannot deprive or divest their posterity, namely the enjoyment of life and liberty, **with the means of acquiring and possessing property**, (emphasis added) and pursuing and obtaining happiness and safety.

This statement was later made internationally famous by Thomas Jefferson in the first paragraph of the United States Declaration of Independence:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights, that among

these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.

Fellow Virginian, and future President, James Madison said that man is driven by "self-love." That love takes many forms; however, he was speaking of the economic form of acquiring more and more property. This limitless drive is so natural to mankind that Madison goes so far as to declare that "the first object of government is the protection of these faculties." (Federalist Paper Number 10).

This article is the first of a series of articles focusing on the history of the Public Land Survey System (PLSS), as well as the land ownership philosophy of founding fathers Thomas Jefferson, George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, and Alexander Hamilton. It will also cover the contribution a few relatively unfamous men such as Rufus Putnam, Thomas Hutchins and Jared Mansfield.

Political and economic events leading to the public land surveying system

On October 7, 1763, King George III, the reigning King of England, issued a proclamation preventing the settlement and granting of estates of land west of the Appala-

chian Mountains. This natural, meandering mountain range generally follows the separation of the metes, and bounds legal description states with the rectangular land description system states. In-depth reasoning for this proclamation is covered in the TEAM workshop *The History of Land Ownership in the United States*.

Prevention of European settlers from moving or speculating in land in what was called the Northwest territory (present-day states of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Michigan) was a contributing factor leading up to the American Revolutionary War. Following the war, the Continental Congress faced a dilemma involving what was formally English Crown land. This region was of interest even prior to the end of the war. Colonial land claims regarding this region date back to the King's Grant of 1609 to the Virginia colony and a conflicting claim in 1620 to the New England colonies.

It seemed like everyone throughout the British colonies had an opinion about the western territory, from the landed gentry to the indentured servants. One such colonist was Pelatiah Webster, a wealthy, self-made merchant from Philadelphia. Webster wrote a series of essays published in Philadelphia.

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His April 25, 1781, essay "Extent and Value of our Western Unlocated lands, and the Proper Method of Disposing of Them," states, in part, that first the land should be surveyed in townships of six, eight or 10 miles square; then it should be sold at auction to the highest bidder, and the minimum price should be one Spanish dollar per acre; purchasers should be obliged to settle and improve the land within two or three years or forfeit the same; and, finally, the Township should be laid out in courses or tiers, and should be sold in that fashion—only when one tier was settled should the next be placed on sale.

That date, April 1781, is interesting. Military conflict with the England was still going on. The Americans were experiencing setbacks in the southern colonies, and Thomas Jefferson, then the Governor of Virginia, nearly escaped capture by British commander Lieut. Col. Banastre Tarleton on June 4,

1781. As you can see, debates and opinions regarding the Northwest territory were going on even as it looked like the Americans may lose the war to England.

With the war finally over, and an American victory, the Confederation Congress met to forge a new, independent country—the United States of America. Thomas Mifflin, a fourth generation Pennsylvania Quaker, was President of the Continental Congress when he sent a courier on March 2, 1784, to a boarding house in Annapolis, Maryland. The message was addressed to a lanky, recently widowed, 40-year-old landed gentry and politician from Virginia named Thomas Jefferson. The message appointed "Tommy," as his family and very close friends called him, chairman of a congressional committee to "devise and report the most eligible means of disposing of such part of the Western lands as may be obtained of the unions by the proposed treaty of peace and for opening a land office."

Besides Jefferson, the commit-

tee also consisted of Hugh Williamson of North Carolina, David Howell of Rhode Island, Elbridge Gerry of Massachusetts and Jacob Reed of South Carolina.

In the next TEAM Consulting newsletter, part two, *Thomas Jefferson and the PLSS*, will address the political and cultural obstacles Jefferson faced. ❖



Rick Norejko

Rick Norejko, CMS, has over 40 years of experience in all aspects of cadastral mapping. He is a nationally recognized keynote speaker, lecturer and teacher in the

field of cadastral mapping. Learn more about the series of classes Rick presents on the TEAM website at <http://bit.ly/2wALzZg>. To set up classes, contact Rick at richardnorejko@bellsouth.net or Fred Chmura, AAS, at fchmura@teamconsulting.cc

Winning Back the Title

By Rick Stuart, CAE, CDEI

In October my wife Holly and I spent a weekend in the Hill Country south of Austin, Texas. Several friends said we needed to go to Greune and especially to Greune Hall, a music venue. On a warm Saturday afternoon we were seated listening to a band and Holly pointed out the Budweiser sign (see right). Under Anheuser-Busch is the following statement: "Texas * Eighth * Largest * Tax * Payer."

Of course, my mind first went to property tax as Texas has no income tax. I wonder if they would still be "Eighth," but more importantly, I wonder if they would be appealing to make sure they are not paying at that level, let alone bragging about it.

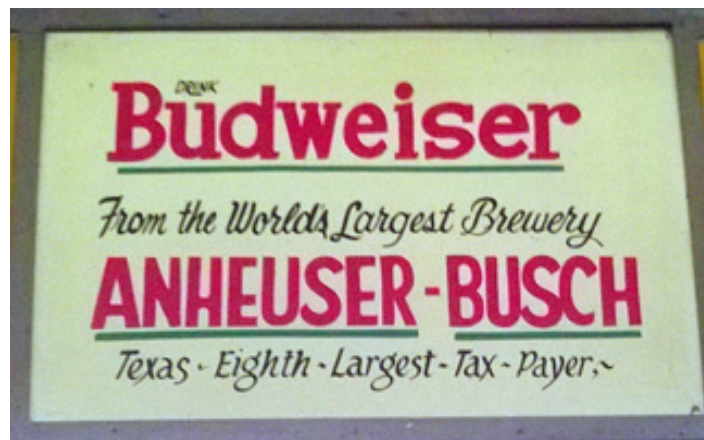
It also brought back a memory of my early days as a Missouri asses-

sor. About my third year, a very large farmer/dairy operator came in to complain after he had just paid his taxes. He was upset. Now, this is not a news flash for anyone reading this except for his comment:

"I just found out I was the second largest individual taxpayer on personal property in the county. I have always been number one and

next year when you go to set the value of my farm equipment, I want to sit and help you to make sure you get the values where they should be."

He stated he took great pride in being the number one taxpayer. So in the spirit of good public relations and customer service, I gave him the opportunity the next year to regain the title. ❖



Welcome TEAM Instructor Amy Rasmussen



Amy Rasmussen

A big TEAM welcome to our newest instructor, Amy Rasmussen, RES, AAS.

Amy has nearly three decades of experience working in the Polk County, Iowa, Assessor's

Office, where she currently serves as the Director of Litigation. She is an Iowa Certified Assessor and a State Certified Residential Real

Property Appraiser. She holds both the Residential Evaluation Specialist (RES) and the Assessment Administration Specialist (AAS) designations from the International Association of Assessing Officers (IAAO). She is past board member of the Iowa Real Estate Appraiser Examining Board, the Institute of Iowa Certified Assessors and the IAAO. Amy was recently elected Vice President of IAAO.

See all the TEAM workshops Amy instructs at <http://www.teamconsulting.cc/instructors.html>. ❖

Eldridge Earns CAE



Brad Eldridge

Bradley Eldridge, CAE, earned the Certified Assessment Evaluator designation in September. Mr. Eldridge serves as the Commercial Real Estate Manager for the Douglas County Appraiser's

Office in Lawrence, Kansas. He has held this position for 8 years after working 11 years in the private sector performing fee appraisals.

Mr. Eldridge holds a Bachelor of Arts in business administration from Baker University, Baldwin City, Kansas. He is an IAAO instructor and teaches for TEAM Consulting.

He co-wrote and co-instructed an IAAO webinar on subsidized housing and authored the Valuation of Senior Housing workshop for TEAM Consulting. Mr. Eldridge serves as 2017 chair of the IAAO Education Subcommittee. He holds the MAI designation from the Appraisal Institute. ❖

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Interesting Buildings

By Rick Stuart, CAE, CDEI

Over the years, I have collected a large number of "interesting building" photos. If you have picture(s) of building that have piqued your interest, email them to me and I will add to the file and the newsletter.

Rstuart17@cox.net

In this issue is a link to a number of buildings the author calls "under-rated showstoppers" located in the U.S. My thanks to Tim Wlimath, MAI, of the Palm Beach County, Florida, Property Appraiser's Office, who sent me the link. I love the title of the article, "The Most Badass Buildings in America You Probably Have Never Heard Of."

Find it here: <https://www.thrillist.com/travel/nation/coolest-buildings-in-america> ❖

Meet Our TEAM Consultants

Brent Bailey, ASA	Marion Johnson, CAE
Kishin Bharwani	Dan Muthard
Fred Chmura, AAS	Richard Norejko, CMS
Ed Crapo, CFA, ASA, AAS	Henry Riley, CAE, PhD
Keith Cunningham, PhD	Ron Schultz, CFA
Pete Davis	Rick Stuart, CAE, CDEI
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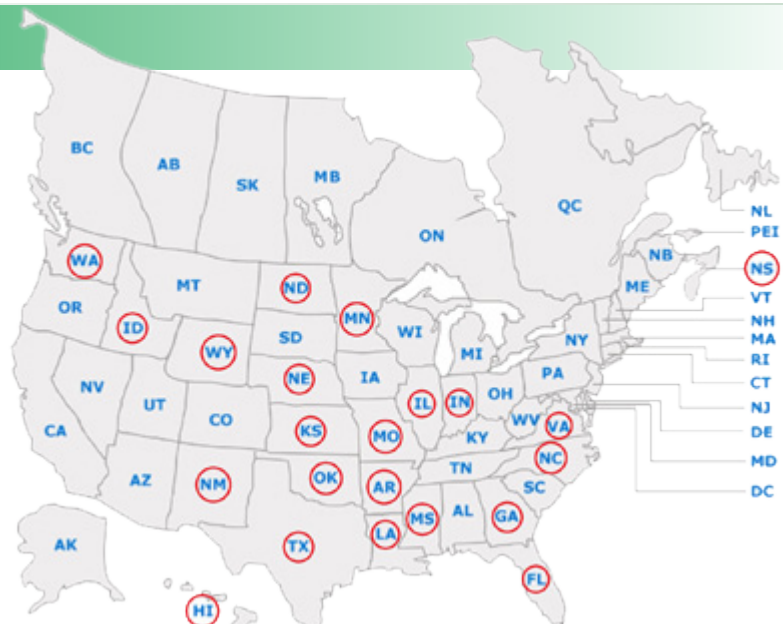
Travel Squad



Check out the map (right) showing where TEAM workshops were taught in 2017. Is your state missing? Let us know how we can help on teaching or developing

a workshop, series of workshops or professional assistance for your location. Visit our website at <http://www.teamconsulting.cc/>. You can also contact Fred Chmura at fchmura@teamconsulting.cc or 860.974.1354 or Rick Stuart at rstuart17@cox.net or 785.259.1379. ❖

—Map provided by Keith Cunningham.



Crazy About Education



Keith Cunningham, PhD

Here is your chance for a vacation/conference in beautiful Alaska. Keith Cunningham will be conducting a one-day workshop on "Unmanned Aircraft Systems" at the Alaska Surveying and Mapping Conference. Held annually, Keith has been a speaker and workshop leader since 2010. This year's conference is February 12-16, in balmy

Anchorage, Alaska. Topics to be covered include the issues of policy and regulation as well as an overview of the many applications drones are now commercially used, including cadastral mapping and property imaging

It is TEAM's goal to keep educational material current and topical.

► **New in 2018**

- **Valuation of Fast Food Restaurants Workshop.** A complete rewrite/update by Brad Eldridge, MAI, CAE

- **Valuation of Landfills, Quarries and Sand Pits.** A *NEW* workshop being written by Greg McHenry, AAS, RMA
- **Valuation of Commercial Land.** A *NEW* workshop being written by Lori-Ann Seethaler, RES, MIMA

► **New workshops in 2017**

- Residential Quality Rating Guidebook – One-day
- Residential Quality Rating Guidebook – Half-day

► **Updated in 2017**

- Mass Appraisal Analysis & Benchmarks
- Contamination & Valuation Issues Workshop
- Valuation of Barndominiums
- Senior Housing Valuation Workshop
- Valuation of Self-Storage Properties
- Valuation of Lodging Properties
- Valuation of Historic Properties
- Valuation of Big Box Workshop
- Valuation of High-End & Difficult Homes Workshop
- Low-End Residential Properties
- Public Relations & Customer Service ❖

"One of the best [classes] I have attended in the 25+ years I have been in real estate appraising..."

Best modeling class I have taken!

"I successfully completed the AAS Case Study Exam this year after completing the Team Consulting LLC review course."

"You give use real-life experiences not just theories."

"This course was great! I have a completely different outlook on quality that I didn't have before."

"Great one-day workshop on a very timely subject!"

TEAM Workshops Bring Out the "PRAISE" in Appraiser!

TEAM Consulting LLC is committed to improving the appraisal profession through education. Our experts in property assessment, valuation and mapping have developed a wide range of 1- and 2-day workshops for property assessors, appraisers and staff. Most workshops can be taught either by a TEAM instructor or by a member of your in-house staff. Or you can choose to study the materials on your own.

Find a complete listing of our workshops and instructors on our website <http://www.teamconsulting.cc>

Congrats to New AAS Designee



Rob Williamson

Rob Williamson, AAS, met the requirements of the Assessment Administration Specialist designation in September. Mr. Williamson is the Commercial Appraisal Deputy for the Allen County Assessor's Office, Fort Wayne, Indiana. He has been with this office for 10 years, after starting his assessment career with the Wayne Township Assessor's office as a Residential Rental Specialist. Mr. Williamson was a presenter at the 2016 summer Indiana County Assessors Association conference. ❖

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Editor's Note: Rob used TEAM's AAS Case Study Review material to help prepare for the exam. You can find out more about the material at <http://www.teamconsulting.cc/aasreview/aasworkshop.html>.

Class Coordinator Information

TEAM Consulting, LLC often has requests for classes and the dates are not available for TEAM members to instruct. Outlined below are the general concepts for instructors that will instruct TEAM materials and for the workshop sponsor. The instructor may also promote and set-up classes in which TEAM material will be used.

1. When a class date is finalized, the sponsor should contact Fred Chmura, AAS, and TEAM will develop an agreement with the class sponsor, if an agreement is required by the sponsor. Fred can be reached at fchmura@teamconsulting.cc or 860.974.1354.
2. The instructor will negotiate their own fee(s) and/or expense reimbursements. The instructor will be responsible for reporting the number of students in each class to TEAM and TEAM will then invoice

the class sponsor for the material. Instructor payment will be the responsibility of the instructor.

3. TEAM will provide, when requested, the material and PowerPoint presentation to the instructor.

General Workshop Sponsor Information

1. Responsibilities of the class sponsor:
 - a. The sponsor will select the instructor and establish the fees and/or expense reimbursements.
 - b. When a class date is finalized, the sponsor should contact Fred Chmura, AAS, and TEAM will develop an agreement with the class sponsor, if an agreement is required by the sponsor. Fred can be reached at fchmura@teamconsulting.cc or 860.974.1354.
 - c. TEAM will be reimbursed at the rate of \$25 per student per day.
 - d. The class sponsor will be responsible for any applications and fees for continuing education credits. TEAM will provide to the class sponsor all necessary data for the applications.
 - e. The class sponsor will be responsible for printing and binding all materials as they desire.
 - f. If an evaluation of the material and instructor is performed, TEAM requests a recap of the questions and ratings plus any written comments. TEAM does have an evaluation form if requested. ❖



More and more hospitals are being purchased and moving from exempt to taxable status.

But many appraisers lack the relevant experience to research, value, and defend the value of hospitals. There may also be separate structures to consider, such as doctors' offices, oncology, therapy, parking lots, storage, power plants, etc.

TEAM Consulting Can Help. TEAM can provide an MAI with extensive hospital valuation experience to ensure that you get an accurate valuation. For more information contact Fred Chmura, AAS, at fchmura@teamconsulting.cc or call 860-974-1354.



Leaders in property
assessment & valuation

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Visit the **TEAM website** for descriptions of all the workshops we offer.