

Metes and Bounds

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(If printing, use legal)

Two types of land measurement systems in the US are found in State Land States and Public Land States.

State Land States: States that use metes and bounds to measure and describe the land.

- In the original 13 colonies land measurement was based on the English practice of metes and bounds.
- After independence from England, owners in those states continued to hold their land (Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, South Carolina, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Virginia).
- States that were added prior to the Land Ordinance of 1785 used the same system (Maine, Vermont, Kentucky, and Tennessee).
- When Texas, West Virginia, and Hawaii were added, they had already distributed their land, using a metes and bounds system.
- See FamilySearch Wiki for links https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/State_Land#State_Land_States

Public Land States: States where the Federal Government distributed the land using the Public Land Survey System (PLSS) of Townships and Ranges, a grid based on rectangular surveys.

- In all states that were not state land states, the land was distributed under the PLSS.
- Some lands in Ohio, Florida, California, and the Louisiana Territory used a metes and bounds system prior to statehood, but in the rest of the area in those states the PLSS was used after statehood.

Metes and Bounds Using directions and distances between physical features to describe land boundaries.

Example: North forty one East sixty four poles to a White oak

Metes: the direction and distance of a line which formed the boundary of a property.

Direction: North forty one East - a compass was used indicating north, south, east, west as well as the degree of direction between 0 and 90. This showed the angles.

Distance: sixty four poles - various forms of measurement (see chart below).

Bounds: to a White oak - the naming of physical features in the landscape.

Metes and Bounds Measurements

- 1 link = 7.92 inches
- 1 pole/rod/perch = 16.5 feet = 25 links = 1/4 chain = 198 inches
- 1 chain = 100 links = 66 feet
- 1 chain = 4 rods/poles/perches
- 1 mile = 80 chains
- 1 acre = 10 square chains
- 1 square mile = 640 acres
- 1 furlong = 664 feet

Here's a metes and bounds description from a land record in Tennessee:

Beginning at a hickory and white oak on the North east side of Wolf River a Corner to John Huffs land Thence N 62 W 50 poles to an Elm a Corner to said Pleasant and William Millers land N 26 West 32 poles to a stake and pointer on Alexander Huffs line and with the same W 38 poles to a black Walnut and elm S. 60 E 38 poles to an Ash N 30 E 15 poles to an Ash S. 80 E 58 poles to white oak S26. W 50 poles to the Beginning by a Cave

Calls: To read a metes and bounds description, list each measurement separately.

These are **calls** (from the description above).

- Beginning at a hickory and white oak on the North east side of Wolf River a Corner to John Huffs land
- Thence N 62 W 50 poles to an Elm a Corner to said Pleasant and William Millers land
- N 26 West 32 poles to a stake and pointer on Alexander Huffs line
- the same W 38 poles to a black Walnut and elm
- S. 60 E 38 poles to an Ash
- N 30 E 15 poles to an Ash
- S. 80 E 58 poles to white oak
- S26. W 50 poles to the Beginning by a Cave

Omit: Next, *omit* all of the physical features, the things that probably no longer there.

N 62W	50 poles
N 26W	32 poles
N 26W	38 poles
S 60E	38 poles
N 30E	15 poles
S 80E	58 poles
S 26W	50 poles

That's all you need!

Drawing the map:

You can plot this using pencil and paper and compass, or you can use software. There are many software programs out there for surveyors – expensive and more complicated than I'm interested in!

The free software choices shown in the presentation are:

Metes & Bounds (download)

Sandy Knoll Software, LLC

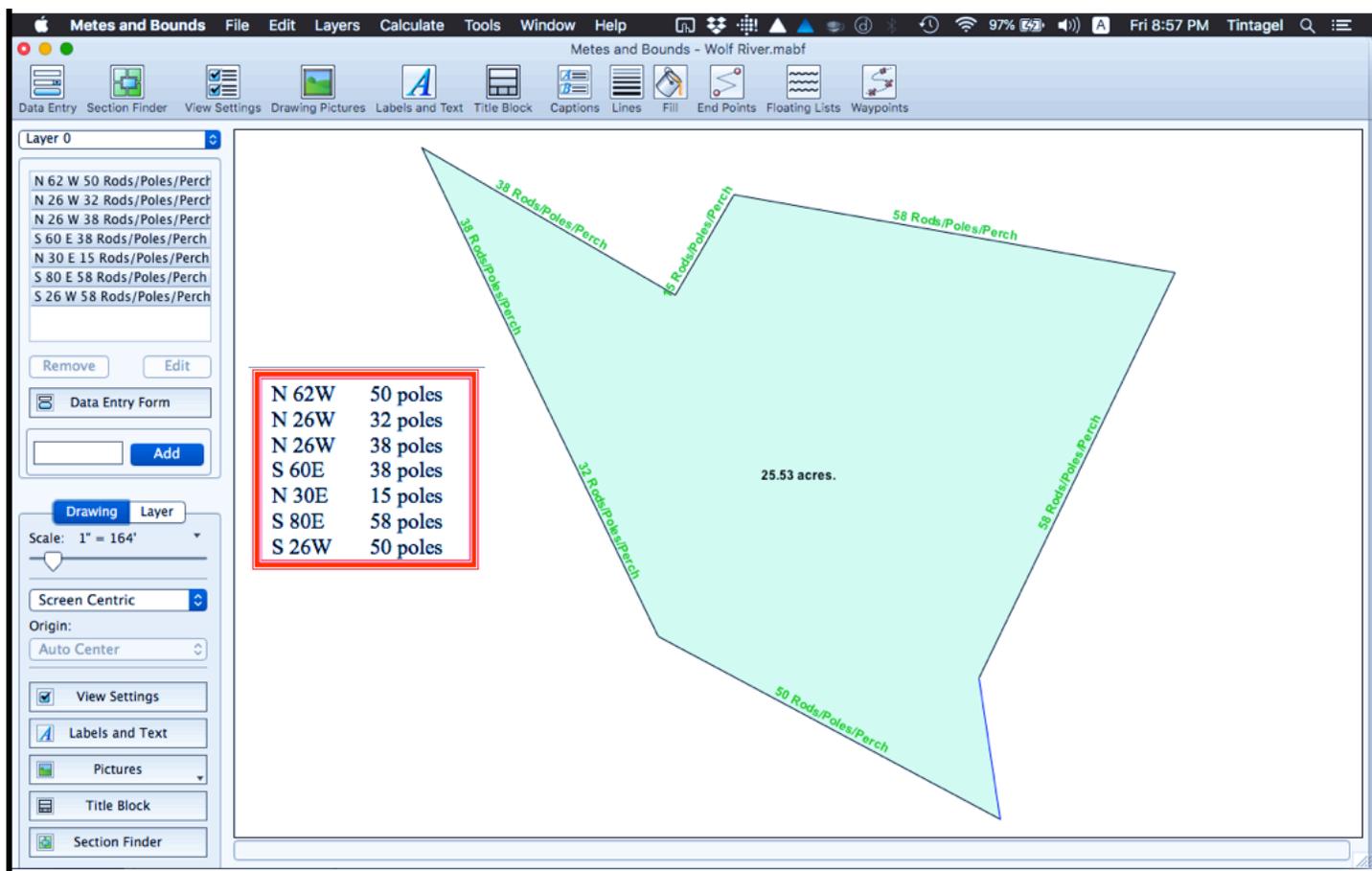
<http://tabberer.com/sandyknoll/more/metesandbounds/metes.html>

Tract Plotter (online)

Has some good tips for entering calls

<http://tractplotter.com>

Enter the basic information from your land description. You may need to play with it for a while. Here's the land as described in the example, using Metes & Bounds software:



Homework:

Using a land record from your ancestors who lived in a state land state, try these:

- Find a metes and bounds record and reduce it to calls
- Plot a metes and bounds record using software

Now that you have learned the shape of the land, your next challenge: go to the area and find the actual land. If the boundaries haven't changed much since the land was plotted, this may help: Huntstand.com.

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Good luck!

