



JOHNSTON Historical SOCIETY

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NEWSLETTER

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TIME & 4:00 P.M. January 24, 1996
PLACE Crown Point Conference Room off Pioneer Parkway.
PROGRAM Discussion of naming a new school and whether Society wishes to submit a name. Generally a business meeting to give the direction - general discussion

ORIGIN OF LAND SURVEYS IN IOWA

The land surveys of Polk County are reckoned from the *Fifth Principal Meridian*. The point which fixes the location of this line is the mouth of the Arkansas river; it runs due north thru Missouri and the eastern part of Iowa and ends at the bank of the Mississippi river at the boundary line between Clayton and Dubuque counties. At a distance of 6 miles west of this line extends another line parallel to the principal meridian, and all the land lying between these two parallel lines is called *Range One, West*. At a distance of six miles from this second line extends another parallel line, and all the land lying between these two lines is called *Range Two, West*. And so on are these ranges numbered until we come to Polk County, the eastern boundary of which is the 22nd line drawn parallel with the principal meridian; 6 miles west of this extends another line and all the land lying between the two is called *Range Twenty-two, West*. (The West line of Range 22, W is Merle Hay Road.)

The point which fixes the location of the **Base Line** is the mouth of the St. Francis River in Arkansas. (The mouth of the St. Francis river lies 48 miles north of the mouth of the Arkansas river.) This line runs east and west and 6 miles north of it extends another line parallel to it; all the land lying between these 2 lines is called *Township One, North*. North of the 2nd line extends a third parallel line and the land included between them is called *Township Two, North*, and so on until we come to the line forming the southern boundary of Polk County, which is the 77th

numbering on the base line; 6 miles north of this extends the 78th parallel line and all the land lying between the two parallels is called *Township Seventy-eight, North* (T. 78 N). It will be observed that these lines cross each other at intervals of 6 miles, thus forming square parcels of land six miles square. Such parcels are called congressional townships and in the description of all real estate the name of the congressional and not the civil township is used, because the former is unchangeably fixed, while the latter is subject to frequent change of boundaries and name (By the Board of Supervisors).

Upon investigation we find that the township lines of all the townships in Polk County were run prior to 1847. (The present city of Johnston has been in several civil townships, but is in four congressional townships, the common corner of which is at 70th Ave. and Merle Hay Rd.) These are from the SE part of town clockwise T 79 N, R 24 W; T 79 N, R 25 W; T 80 N, R 25 W and T 80 N, R 24 W.

A PARTIAL LIST OF GRIST AND SAW MILLS IN POLK COUNTY JANUARY, 1850

Hickman's Saw Mill, on Beaver (*Creek*), 9 miles above Fort Des Moines; having a capacity of about 10,000 ft of lumber per day.

Stutzman's on Big Creek (*Polk City*) 15 miles up the Des Moines River from Des Moines; had capacity of 2500 ft of lumber per day.

Gilpin's Saw Mill, 8 miles up the D.M River from D.M.; had capacity of about 1000 ft of lumber per day.

Parmelee had two mills, one eight and the other ten miles from Des Moines. The capacity of the one was 2000 and the other 3000 feet per day. There were burs attached to each for the purpose of grinding meal.

The Snodgrass mill, about six miles from Des Moines, on Beaver (*Creek*) had a capacity of twenty-five hundred feet per day.

A. Grosclouse had a grist mill located on the Des Moines River which had a capacity of grinding about 150 bu. of wheat per day.

For more information see the Polk County History, 1880 at pages 396-397 and pgs 869-870.