

thoughtleader

Death by Neglect

The land surveying profession remains under assault. Hobbyists continue to infringe on the profession through the development of drone technology, photography, and GPS equipment. What once used to be the exclusive province of the Land Surveyor—aerial imagery and positioning—have now become available for purchase in Walmart or online. I recently drove by an automobile accident where a police officer was mapping the scene with a robotic station.

Companies hire young folks to operate a LIDAR device while sipping their double latte drink while googling something on their cell phone; the latest in push-button mapping.

Technology permits the gathering of survey data at a nominal cost and little, if any experience. Certainly no license is required.

I recently bought a drone with imaging technology for \$99.00 and my grandson does a better job at operating it than I can. What then is left for the Professional Land Surveyor to do?

While these advances occur, sadly, far too many Land Surveyors have given up on what remains of the profession. The one area where we should preserve and protect has to do with the interpretation of boundary related documents such as plat maps, property lines and all of the exhibits related to this area of surveying. Most state boards have done a poor job of protecting the profession. GIS anyone? Remote controlled grading equipment?

I recently inspected a land surveying document, one that disclosed monuments, metes and bounds, and the plotting of deeds. Instead of it being stamped and certified as a survey document, it was simply labelled an “appraisal map.” Perhaps this is a new trend in the degradation of the profession.

Why do so many firms publish documents like this wherein they do not identify the name and license number of the person who prepared such a document? If Land Surveyors are licensed, what good is it if they do not use their stamps? Why does one need a Land Surveyor? Indeed, far too many companies issue these documents and, instead of identifying the person in responsible charge of the work, they simply state, prepared by XYZ Engineering. Documents like this do more to harm the profession than anything else. Surveyors complain all the time that they are not paid enough and they don't get the respect they deserve, all the while harming themselves and the profession by not claiming pride of ownership in their own work product.

And Land Surveyors wonder why their services are not needed.

When the late Curtis Brown developed the national definitions for land surveying some fifty years ago, he and others did their best to assure that the surveying profession was clearly defined and the practices well protected. His words from then are just as poignant as they are today.

Within the last 30 years we have seen the transit and tape decrease in importance as the camera, Electrotape, and Geodimeter have developed. It is probably true that the transit and tape surveys will not be completely eliminated, just as it is true that the horses were not completely eliminated by the automobile. The private property surveyor in the United States depends heavily upon the transit and tape to determine property lines. Even in this area, it is my expectation that in the not too distant future photogrammetric methods will be used extensively. Many of the old ways of the surveyor are gone; many more will soon be supplanted by advancing technology. If the surveyor fails to advance with the advancing technology, he will be like the village blacksmith with no place in modern society. ■

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