

L. A. Co.

11-28-05

4TH FLOOR  
900 S. FREMONT  
ALHAMBRA, CA.

SURVEY DIVISION PUBLIC COUNTER/FILE ROOM

By law the Survey Division has copies of all the Tract Maps, Parcel Maps and Records of Survey recorded with the Counter Recorder's office. Also contained in these files are various Official Maps, Record File Maps, Clerk File Maps, County Surveyor Maps and Filed Maps. Since the merger of the County Engineer, the Road Department and Flood Control in 1985, the Survey Division also has all the field notes created by these three agencies in their 100+ years of operation plus all the new notes created by Public Works since 1985.

The most typical request for information is for record data necessary to perform a boundary survey on a piece of private property. Most of these requests come from the Engineer or Land Surveyor who has been hired by the property owner to perform the field survey. State law in both the Professional Engineer's Act and the Land Surveyor's Act states that the Engineer or Surveyor is in "responsible charge" of all aspects of the project. This includes the research that starts the project all the way through to the filing of the maps that completes the project.

While some of the Public Counter Employees are quite capable, they are not licensed. Their main function is to pull the public records that are being requested. It is up to the requestor to compare, contrast and analyze those records and to decide which will apply to his particular need.

Research starts with the client. The client has the Grant Deed that describes his property. The first step in any survey is to obtain a copy of that Grant Deed. If the client does not have it, he can obtain it from his title company. Once the surveyor has a copy of the Grant Deed, he can read it to determine if other deeds or maps are called out. The surveyor then needs to obtain copies of all those records before he comes to the Survey Division to begin his research. Please note that property information is not filed by address or by Assessor's Parcel Number. All information is recovered based on the legal description in the Grant Deed. (It is helpful to have a copy of the Assessor's Map that covers the property. This gives the Surveyor a clue to the location and to what other information may be in the vicinity of the project.)

Recovery of information is keyed to the Index Maps (or wall sheets). The County Engineer first created these Index Maps in a one and two digit numbering system (7, 9, 13, 22, 23, 30, 40, 41, 69, 70, 88 etc.) to cover the entire county. In the 1970's, the County Engineer began transferring information to a new series of Index Maps. These maps were rectangular in shape (covering 15,000 feet in a North-South orientation and 20,000 feet in an East-West orientation). There would be a total of 410 maps to cover the entire county. However, at this time, only about 280 of these have been completed. These "new" maps have a six digit number system (069-157, 144-357, 369-337 etc.) The first three digits show the relative north-south location within the county, while the second set of three digits shows the east-west location.

There is a mixture of "old" and "new" maps for record map indexes, another set to recover Public Works/Road Department Field Notes and a third set to recover County Engineer Field Notes. (Usually, unless the property is located adjacent to a Flood Control Facility, there is no need to research the Flood Control field notes. In either case, these notes are recovered in a completely different system which will not be addressed here.)

After obtaining a copy of the Grant Deed and any other deeds referenced in the Grant Deed, the researcher comes to the Public Counter. At the Counter, the first step is to locate the property on one of our specially marked Counter Thomas Guides. The colored lines on our Thomas Guides indicate which Index Maps cover which areas of the County. Once the Index Map number has been determined, the map is pulled and the researcher then finds his property location on that map. The researcher determines which maps may be important to the Surveyor to do a proper boundary survey. This may include not only the map referenced in the Grant Deed, but any adjoining maps (even across the street or down the block) which may have information pertinent to the recovery of sufficient monumentation to enable the Surveyor to begin his work. After the researcher makes a list of the maps he wants to look at, the Counter Employee pulls the aperture cards on that list. The researcher then views the maps and determines which ones to copy. This determination is based on his professional skills and judgment.

Once the maps are copied, the researcher can turn his attention to the field notes. Not all field notes for each city are on file with the County. Many large cities (Los Angeles, Long Beach, Burbank, Monrovia, Arcadia, Santa Monica, etc.) have their own files of field notes which will have to be researched separately at their locations.

Both Road Department and County Engineer did street surveys for which they created center line ties. Although the County Engineer ceased to exist in 1985, in many parts of the county, the field notes created by that agency are the most recent. In other parts, those created by the Road Department are the most recent. Since 1985, all field notes created by the Department of Public Works have gone into the Road Department system. This includes all Corner Records filed with the County by private surveyors. Therefore, both systems have to be researched to determine which notes will be most pertinent to the survey project.

There is a mix of "old" and "new" index maps for Public Works/Road Department field notes. Those are pulled and the property location determined. The county is divided into squares each 10,000 feet by 10,000 feet. These squares are field books (0616, 0920, 1923, 3025 etc.) Once the field book (or books) has been located, it is necessary to determine the location within the field book. Each book is divided into sub-squares, or modules, each 1000 feet by 1000 feet. These are numbered:

90 91 92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99  
80 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89  
70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79  
60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69  
sequentially through  
10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19  
00 01 02 03 04 05 06 07 08 09

The microfilm cards, regardless of their sequential page number are filed together in their geographical location. Once the book and module have been determined, the counter worker pulls the cards that fall in that location. Sometimes there are no cards. Sometimes there are 100. Sometimes the researcher will only have to look at one or two modules in one book. Sometimes he will have to look at two or three modules in each of two or three books. The researcher must then view each card and determine by the date and content whether or not it applies to his project.

The County Engineer Field Notes are recovered in a different manner. Each map is divided into grids (A1 through A6, B1 through B6, up to D/E1 through D/E6). Within the grids the numbers in the circles indicate that there is some information filed at that location. The researcher writes down all the numbers in the circles and then goes to the cross-reference book for that particular map. He looks up the grid, then cross references the numbers in the circles to the County Surveyor/Engineer Field Book and page number that covers that location. There is also a column that gives the year the work was done. The researcher then pulls the microfiche cards and determines whether the information is applicable to his project and if it is older or newer than the information he recovered from the Public Works/Road Department system.

Once the researcher has copied all the documents he feels will enable his surveyor to do the field survey, the research project is over.