

PROFESSIONAL SURVEYOR

VOLUME 8 NUMBER 5

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 1988



SURVEYORS

**PRESERVING THE PAST
PROTECTING THE FUTURE**

THEY LEFT THEIR MARK

They Left Their Mark, by John Burt, published 1986 by Landmark Enterprises.

Buyers Guide: Hardcover; 11 x 8 1/2; 188 pages; 75 Illustrations and Reference appendices; ISBN-0-910845-31-X; Available from Landmark Enterprises, 10324 Newton Way, Rancho Cordova CA 95670.

James Robinson

Many books are designed to be read twice—once for pleasure and a second time to more completely understand facts, dates, and events in their exact contexts. *They Left Their Mark* is a many faceted book about a remarkable family doing their part in the opening of the wilderness. I highly recommend this book to both the pleasure reader and historian.

The author has a personal interest in the story, as he is among the present-day members of the extended family. He has researched in detail the arrival of the Burt family from England and how they planted their roots in this new land by surveying, farming, protesting against unjust taxes, and making their stand in the American Revolution.

The best known member of the family is William Austin Burt, a self-educated man who demonstrated a high degree of mechanical wizardry and rugged determination in pursuit of a career. He embodied the type of spirit that was needed to help open the West.

After traveling around what was then the "frontier," he settled in the Michigan Territory. His aim was to become a contract surveyor for the Public Land Survey. His first attempts were fruitless because all the positions were taken. He had to rely on his other skills to sustain him and his family.

It was not until the age of 41 that he received his first commission to survey the Public Lands.

One of his inventions, the Burt Solar Compass, was a major element in

the mapping of large parts of the country, especially where minerals in the earth played havoc with magnetic readings. The 1851 *Manual of Field Operations (Manual of Instructions for the Survey of Public Lands)* required the use of the Burt Solar Compass, or an instrument of equal quality. This instrument saved the government mil-

would have been enough to keep most people out of the area. Having no roads and with most Indian trails impassable, these early pioneers and surveyors had to pack in supplies on their backs as they continued to extend the rectangular survey throughout the territory.

Just as today, the job surveyors did then were only as good as the skill and integrity of the surveyor. All contract surveyors were required to post a bond. Often one surveyor would bond for another. If the survey was defective, the bond was used to pay for the cost of corrections. Burt had no defective surveys. One fact is worth noting about his integrity—when a surveyor who he had supported by posting a bond suffered from having made a defective survey, Burt resurveyed and corrected the area under contract without compensation.

In addition to detailing the invention and patenting the Solar Compass and Equatorial Sextant, the author describes the first American typewriter built and patented by this illustrious pioneer. Many mills, houses, canals and mines were constructed or founded by his family, all of which greatly enhanced the growth and economic well being of Michigan.

This book is nicely illustrated with 75 plates and has a very extensive list of reference notes. The appendix shows the Burt lineage, including the author's connection to William Austin Burt, and dates of Burt's surveying contracts with the General Land Office and miles surveyed with pay rates per mile.

The materials, printing, and binding of this book are first order. PS

ELEMENT	RATING
Frontal Material	
Forward	Good
Introduction	Good
Bibliography	Excellent
Index	Very Good
Table of Contents	Very Good
Illustration	
Line Drawing	Outstanding
Photographs	Good
Maps	Good
Adequacy	Very Good
Printing Quality	
Binding	Very Good
Text Appearance	Outstanding
Dust Cover	Good
Readability	Outstanding
LS Exam Value	None
LSIT Exam Value	None

lions of dollars because of its superiority over the magnetic compass. Employing this tool permitted the surveyors to do rapid and accurate work. It is unfortunate to note that the inventor did not receive any compensation for this marvelous instrument.

The historical facet of the book, particularly in the survey and development of the Michigan Territory, is well documented with dates, times and places. The awesome wilderness, extreme cold, gnats and mosquitoes

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