



PILLAR talk

A periodic publication designed to give you the ins and outs of civil engineering, surveying, management, and safety

A Surveyor's Lament



"IP"... I don't know how many times I've looked at a survey plat (mostly older ones) and cringed when I saw those two little letters at the change in direction of a boundary line.

Over the last almost 20 years of being a Land Surveyor, I think that I have come across almost everything imaginable at a corner of a parcel of land. Let me elaborate. A piece of iron rebar, iron rod, threaded rod, pipe, 6" nail, 8" nail, a 16 penny nail, a railroad spike, a steering knuckle of (insert your junk car name here), an axle, a roof bolt, a section of drill steel, an actual wooden stake or a pinch pipe. I could continue on but I think you get the idea. But is what I found in the field what the original surveyor actually set or found as a corner monument or just some random piece of junk? Or what I like to call "the rod du jour."

Virginia Code 18VAC10-20-370 (section 4) mandates that "as a requisite for completion of the work product, each land boundary survey of a tract or parcel of land shall be monumented with objects made of permanent material at all corners and changes of direction on the land boundary". This section of code itself leaves a lot of latitude for a choice of monument at a property corner. While other sections of the code place a minimum standard on the procedures and practices of land surveying, why hasn't there been a standard set for boundary monuments other than "shall be made of permanent material?"



I know that all of the items that I stated as discovered while performing a boundary survey are in fact "made of permanent material" and technically they have satisfied the Virginia standards. But there is a great deal of merit placed on a corner marker that is specially described on a survey plat. "IP" doesn't give me much description when I'm out there on the job. All it takes is a few other characters on a plat like "1/2" iron rod or 1" pipe or even a steering knuckle of (insert your junk car name here) and all of the sudden, voila, I found what the last surveyor set or found 50 years ago. There is a legal term that we use for items we find near a property corner that don't include these little adjectives: "Prima Facie" or face value. In other words "I have found something near the property corner; if it works then it just happens to work," not because it was specifically placed there. But is there something else there?

All I can say is that I know 50 years from now some Land surveyor will be looking at my maps while in the field and says "yep here it is, a ½" iron rod set at the corner". Not standing there scratching their head looking for an "IP."

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