

What the Heck is a Township?

First of all, a township has nothing to do with a "town". Already confused aren't you. There are two types of Townships. One is a *Congressional* township. The other is a *political* township.

A Congressional Twp. is a unit of measure for land. With the addition of the Western frontier of Ohio, Indiana etc, Congress wanted to survey the new land to find out how much there was and to create some uniform standard for land survey and ownership. This was to replace the old "meets and bounds" system which ran from some creek to some tree and then north to some other tree. Problem is that creeks move around and trees die. Congress decided to create the Township. Each township was composed of 36 sections of land measuring 1 mile square. Hence a Congressional township was a unit of land that was 6 miles by 6 miles.

A political township is one of no standard size. One township can be 99 square miles in size; while another is exactly 6 miles by 6 miles and is exactly 36 square miles in size. A political township was began as a way to build and maintain Schools, Roads, Justice of the Peace, Constable, etc that have meaning in everyday life. Because the counties were not exactly square in shape, there are parts of another Congressional township attached to a Political Township.

The sections, or one mile squares of land, are numbered in an odd way as can be seen on the diagram below. With North being the top of the diagram, the sections are numbered from right to left and then the number wrap back and forth. Each 1 mile section contains 640 acres.

Townships are measured from two lines that cross at right angles. The line that runs east and west is called the Baseline. The line that runs north and south is called the Meridian.

Each Twp. is measured as north or south of the baseline, such as Township 1 North. This means that the Twp is the first six mile by six mile square of land north of the baseline. So this Twp would be from 0 miles to 6 miles north of the baseline.

Now the east - west dimension is called a Range. Now, if a township is east of the meridian or north/south line, it has an East designation.

To progress further into this, a township with the designation of Twp 2 North, Range 2 East, would mean that the area we want is about 12 miles east of Ft. Arbuckle and about 12 miles north of the base line.

Diagram of a Township

6	5	4	3	2	1
7	8	9	10	11	12
18	17	16	15	14	13
19	20	21	22	23	24
30	29	28	27	26	25
31	32	33	34	35	36

Now, we come to the legal description of a piece of land. This is very easy to understand. We have the Range and Township down by now. All we have to do is add the section of land to the description. Let's assume that we have a description like: S 31, T 1 N, R 1 E. Looking above at the Diagram to section 31. This area would be the section where the *Indian Meridian* and the *Baseline* cross on the west boundary and the south boundary. So, the southwest corner of the section 31 would be the Initial Point (IP) or the beginning point of the survey.

Intersection of the baseline and Meridian

The Green Township is T 1 N, R 1 E.



We now know that a township is measured north or south of the baseline and east or west of the meridian. We know that each township contains thirty six sections that measure one mile square. Each section contains 640 acres. Therefore a half section is 320 acres and a quarter section contains 160 acres. Let's look at Section 31 in the diagram below.

Section 31

NW 1/4 160 acres	NE 1/4 160 acres
SW 1/4 160 acres	SE 1/4 160 acres

If we owned the 160 acre piece of land that was at the convergence of the baseline and the meridian, the legal description would be the Southwest 1/4, Section 31, Township 1 North, Range 1 East or in shorthand, **SW1/4 S 31, T 1 N, R 1 E**.

Now you know what a Township is, why they were created and how they work.