

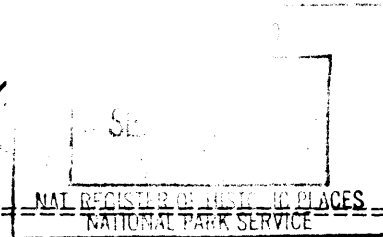
The Initial Point of the Gila and Salt River Base Line and Meridian  
Maricopa Arizona  
NPS Form 10-900  
(Rev. 10-90)

OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

1137



1. Name of Property

historic name Initial Point of the Gila and Salt River Base Line and Meridian  
other name The site of the northern-most monument marking the boundary of the United States and Mexico in 1851

2. Location

street & number The summit of Monument Hill at 115<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Baseline Road  
not for publication N/A  
city or town Avondale and the Gila River Indian Community vicinity X  
state Arizona code AZ county Maricopa code 013  
zip code 85323

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this x nomination      request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property x meets      does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant      nationally x statewide      locally. (      See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

James W. Gamsi ASST 26 August 2002  
Signature of certifying official Date  
ARIZONA STATE PARKS  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property      meets      does not meet the National Register criteria. (      See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau



=====  
6. Function or Use  
=====

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: RECREATION AND CULTURE Sub: monument/marker  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: RECREATION AND CULTURE Sub: monument/marker  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

=====  
7. Description  
=====

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation N/A  
roof N/A  
walls N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
other N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

=====  
8. Statement of Significance  
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Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

X A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

The Initial Point of the Gila and Salt River Base Line and Meridian  
Maricopa Arizona

- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Exploration/Settlement  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Period of Significance 1851-1853  
1867  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Significant Dates 1851  
1867  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation N/A  
 Architect/Builder N/A

The Initial Point of the Gila and Salt River Base Line and Meridian  
Maricopa Arizona

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property  
on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one  
or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary Location of Additional Data

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: Arizona Historical Foundation; Arizona State University Libraries, Government Documents Service/Map Collection; Brown University, Jahn Carter Brown Library; Bureau of Land Management, Arizona State Office; National Archives Records Administration, Rocky Mountain Region Facility; Oklahoma Historical Society; Yale University, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property N/A

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	<u>12</u>	<u>377650</u>	<u>3693600</u>	3	_____	_____
2	_____	_____	_____	4	_____	_____
	<u>See continuation sheet.</u>					

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Vincent Smith Murray

organization Arizona State University Public History Program date 06/28/01

street & number 1155 East Bishop Drive telephone (480)227-8173

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form  
The Initial Point of the Gila and Salt River Base Line and Meridian  
Maricopa Arizona

city or town Tempe state AZ zip code 85282

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Additional Documentation  
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Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.  
A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage  
or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

=====  
Property Owner  
=====

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Phoenix International Raceway

street & number 455 N 3<sup>rd</sup> Street telephone (602)252-3833

city or town Phoenix state AZ zip code 85004

name The State of Arizona

street & number 1616 W. Adams telephone (602)542-4364

city or town Phoenix state AZ zip code 85007

name Gila River Indian Community

street & number P. O. Box 97 telephone (520)562-6000

city or town Sacaton state AZ zip code 85247  
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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section  7  Page  1  The Initial Point of the Gila and Salt  
River Base Line and Meridian  
Maricopa Arizona

=====

**Description**

The Gila and Salt River Base Line and Meridian primarily govern the rectangular survey system in the State of Arizona. The Initial Point for this system is located at the intersection of two lines: the Base Line runs east and west through the Initial Point and the Meridian runs north and south through said location. Though once relatively distant from the urban areas in the Salt River Valley, Baseline Road now follows the line of its namesake and 115<sup>th</sup> Avenue runs along the meridian for a number of miles through the rural suburb of Avondale. A bridge over the Gila River, recently built by the Maricopa County Department of Transportation navigates the intersection of the two aforementioned roadways, facilitating travel from Interstate 10 to the Phoenix International Raceway, Estrella Mountain Park, and the southern portions of the community of Goodyear. Though the grid-like layout of the Phoenix-Mesa metropolitan area owes its existence to the rectangular survey system -- the major arteries following the township, range, and section lines -- the base line and meridian do not meet as transportation routes. The actual convergence of the two lines, the site of the Initial Point, is located on the summit of Monument Hill near the confluence of the Salt and Gila rivers.

Monument Hill is a foothill on the northern edge of a small mountain range known as the Sierra Estrella. The 115 foot high knoll is separated from the range by a small valley. From the summit of Monument Hill, one can see for some distance. To the southeast, from the mouth of the Salt River, the upstream course of the Gila River is visible as it stretches to the southeast into the Gila River Indian Reservation. To the east is the Salt River Valley, the most populous area in the state of Arizona. To the west, the Gila River is seen meandering towards its northern bend near the Buckeye Hills, where it will suddenly turn south on its way to Gila Bend and then west again to its terminus at the Colorado River. To the north is the "West Valley" of the Phoenix-Mesa metropolitan area, a largely rural and natural desert area, quickly being encroached by the advance of the unprecedented real estate development frenzy taking place throughout the region. From the summit of Monument Hill, one can witness the dynamic of settlement in the Salt River Valley as the desert is replaced by agriculture and agriculture is replaced by suburbia.

Lieutenant Amiel Weeks Whipple, Mexican Boundary Survey Commission Astronomer, recorded perhaps the first written description of the hill and its environs,

This is the most northerly point of the whole course of the Gila; and the hill seems to have been made for the use to

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section   7   Page   2   The Initial Point of the Gila and Salt  
River Base Line and Meridian  
Maricopa Arizona

=====

which it has been applied - viz as a watch tower. From it can be seen the course of the Gila above & below and the valley of the Hushientis (Salinas) for twenty or thirty miles. The hill has been arranged for a regular Indian camp ground <sic>. Upon the top and sides the fragments of rocks have been carefully disposed for protection from wind while comfortable sleeping places are formed and apparently have long been used for perhaps a thousand men.

Whipple also notes the remains of "recent signal fires" perhaps used to warn the Maricopas and Pimas of the coming of their enemies from the northwest, and of "fragments of old pottery" and petroglyphs from the people who settled in the area hundreds of years before the arrival of the Europeans and their progeny.<sup>1</sup>

Monument Hill, itself a remnant of ancient volcanic activity, encrusted with outcroppings of white quartz, has changed somewhat since Lieutenant Whipple penned his description. There is no obvious evidence of a large campsite, but the hill's use as a watch tower has continued, the proximity of the knoll to Phoenix International Raceway offering a superb vista of the racetrack. To the east, where the astronomer would have observed the fertile, yet then unoccupied, Salt River Valley, one now sees the vast Phoenix-Mesa metropolitan area, one of the fastest expanding urban areas in the United States. In the place of a signal fire, is the Initial Point monument, erected in 1984.

The Initial Point Monument is a five-foot diameter, circular, concrete slab, six inches thick, with four, eighteen-inch appendages stretching out towards the cardinal directions. The monument, inlaid with small blue tiles, possesses five 2½-inch steel survey caps, and a four by six inch steel plaque. Four of the metal caps are found in the four corners of the monument and have the names of the entities that reestablished the monument in 1984 and the corresponding Township and Range in which the cap is located. In the center of the monument is a survey cap engraved with "U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR BUR. OF LAND MANAGEMENT" on its interior perimeter. The plaque is located just below the central cap and is engraved, "DEDICATED TO ALL LAND OWNERS OF ARIZONA BY THE ARIZONA PROFESSIONAL LAND SURVEYOR."

Two other archaeological sites, AZ T:11:25 (ASM) and AZ T:11:45 (ASM), have been recorded on the slopes of Monument Hill. Both contain prehistoric petroglyphs and Hohokam ceramic artifacts. AZ T:11:45 has been determined eligible for the National Register and T:11:25 has not been evaluated.

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<sup>1</sup> Amiel Weeks Whipple, *The Whipple Journal*, Oklahoma Historical Society, November 30, 1851.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section   8   Page   3   The Initial Point of the Gila and Salt  
River Base Line and Meridian  
Maricopa Arizona

=====  
**Statement of Significance**

Dating back to the *Land Ordinance Act of 1785*, the U.S rectangular survey system contains thirty-one base line and meridian systems in the contiguous United States as well as five in Alaska. At the intersection of these two principal lines is the initial point of each of the systems. Lola Cazier in *Surveys and Surveyors of the Public Domain, 1785-1975* notes about the rectangular survey system, "Because of the system and the cadastral surveyors who transferred it from a plan on paper to regular lines upon the land, the swift and orderly settlement of a vast public domain became a reality.<sup>2</sup>(fnpl7)" Therefore, the Initial Point of the Gila and Salt River Base Line and Meridian is a noteworthy site not only because of its provenance, but because of its integral relationship to the rectangular survey system and said system's continuing contribution to the cadastral face of Arizona. The surveying of tens of millions of acres begins in reference to this point. Those lands not surveyed from the Initial Point are typically within military and Indian reservations or national parks and forests. The Gila and Salt River Base Line and Meridian section lines are also the basis for the arterial transportation system in the urban areas of Maricopa County.

The rectangular surveying system, stemming from the Initial Point, fueled the settlement of Arizona in the post-Civil War years. The selection of the site for the initial point and the subsequent surveying of the then Territory of Arizona coincided with the westward migration of the latter half of the nineteenth century and set the stage for the unprecedented, exponential population growth of the twentieth century. The site itself commemorates not only the development of the rectangular system and the allotment of land in Arizona, but the ownership of land in Arizona, both private and public, and the history of how this site was chosen.

On February 2, 1848, at Guadalupe Hidalgo, Mexico, "The Treaty of Peace, Friendship, Limits, and Settlement between the United States of America and the United Mexican States," created through negotiations to end the war between the United States of America and Mexico, was signed by representatives of the respective governments. Article V of said treaty, since then amended and abrogated by the Gadsden Purchase, described the agreed-upon boundary between the two antagonists. It stated:

The boundary line between the two Republics shall commence in the Gulf of Mexico, three leagues from land, opposite the mouth of the Rio Grande, otherwise called Rio Bravo del Norte, or Opposite the mouth of its deepest branch, if it should have more than one branch emptying directly into the sea; from thence up the middle of that river, following the deepest channel, where it has more than one, to the point where it strikes the southern boundary of New Mexico; thence, westwardly, along the whole southern boundary of New Mexico (which runs north of the town called Paso) to its western termination; thence, northward, along the western line of

<sup>2</sup> Lola Cazier, *Surveys and Surveyors of the Public Domain, 1785-1975*, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1975), 17.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section   8   Page   4   The Initial Point of the Gila and Salt  
River Base Line and Meridian  
Maricopa Arizona

=====

New Mexico, until it intersects the first branch of the river Gila; (or if it should not intersect any branch of that river, then to the point on the said line nearest to such branch, and thence in a direct line to the same); thence down the middle of the said branch and of the said river, until it empties into the Rio Colorado; thence across the Rio Colorado, following the division line between Upper and Lower California, to the Pacific Ocean.

The southern and western limits of New Mexico, mentioned in the article, are those laid down in the map entitled "Map of the United Mexican States, as organized and defined by various acts of the Congress of said republic, and constructed according to the best authorities. Revised edition. Published at New York, in 1847, by J. Disturnell," of which map a copy is added to this treaty, bearing the signatures and seals of the undersigned Plenipotentiaries. And, in order to preclude all difficulty in tracing upon the ground the limit separating Upper from Lower California, it is agreed that the said limit shall consist of a straight line drawn from the middle of the Rio Gila, where it unites with the Colorado, to a point on the coast of the Pacific Ocean, distant one marine league due south of the southernmost point of the port of San Diego, according to the plan of said port made in the year 1782 by Don Juan Pantoja, second sailing-master of the Spanish fleet, and published at Madrid in the year 1802, in the atlas to the voyage of the schooners Sutil and Mexicana; of which plan a copy is hereunto added, signed and sealed by the respective Plenipotentiaries.

In order to designate the boundary line with due precision, upon authoritative maps, and to establish upon the ground land-marks which shall show the limits of both republics, as described in the present article, the two Governments shall each appoint a commissioner and a surveyor, who, before the expiration of one year from the date of the exchange of ratifications of this treaty, shall meet at the port of San Diego, and proceed to run and mark the said boundary in its whole course to the mouth of the Rio Bravo del Norte. They shall keep journals and make out plans of their operations; and the result agreed upon by them shall be deemed a part of this treaty, and shall have the same force as if it were inserted therein. The two Governments will amicably agree regarding what may be necessary to these persons, and also as to their respective escorts, should such be necessary.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section   8   Page   5   The Initial Point of the Gila and Salt  
River Base Line and Meridian  
Maricopa Arizona

=====  
The boundary line established by this article shall be religiously respected by each of the two republics, and no change shall ever be made therein, except by the express and free consent of both nations, lawfully given by the General Government of each, in conformity with its own constitution.<sup>3</sup>

The survey was to begin in San Diego and work west to the Gulf of Mexico. The first appointee to the position of United States Boundary Commissioner was John B. Weller, a "loyal democrat" and former Ohio gubernatorial candidate. Andrew Belcher Gray, who had worked on the boundary line between the Republic of Texas and the United States in 1840, was appointed as Surveyor. Brevet Major William Hemsley Emory, who had served as Chief Engineer in the Army of the West during the war and had authored *Notes of a Military Reconnaissance from Fort Leavenworth in Missouri to San Diego in California* in 1848, based upon his service, was selected as Chief Astronomer and Commander of the Escort. Lieutenants Amiel Weeks Whipple and Edmund L. F. Hardcastle were appointed as Emory's principal assistants.<sup>4</sup>

The Mexican Boundary Commissioner was General Pedro Garcia Condé. Accompanying Condé was Surveyor José Salazar y Llarequi and engineers Francisco Jiménez, Martínez de Chavéro, Condé's son, Augustín, and interpreter/translator Felipe de Iturbide, the latter a son of the former Emperor of Mexico.<sup>5</sup>

The joint commissions were to meet at San Diego by May 30, 1849, but hindrances caused by the California Gold Rush delayed the United States Boundary Commission until June, their counterparts not arriving until July. The survey initiated on July 7 and was completed by the end of the year with Gray surveying San Diego, Emory locating the initial point of the boundary on the Pacific, Whipple locating the initial point across from the Colorado, and Hardcastle scouting the line between the two locations for drawing the line. The Mexican Commission, because their tools were not as accurate, curbed their involvement to inspecting the calculations of the American engineers.

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<sup>3</sup> Charles I. Bevans, comp., *Treaties and Other International agreements of the United States of America, 1776-1949* (Washington, D.C.: Department of State, 1968-76), 9:791-806.

<sup>4</sup> Lenard E Brown, *Survey of the United States Mexico Boundary, 1849-1855: Background Study* (Washington: United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Division of History, Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, 1969), 3. Paula Rebert, *La Gran Línea: Mapping the United States-Mexico Boundary, 1849-1857* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001), 22-23.

<sup>5</sup> José Salazar y Larregui, *Datos de los trabajos astronómicos y topográficos dispuestos en forma de diario. Practicados durante el año de 1849 y principios de 1850 por la Comisión de límites Mexicana en la línea que divide esta republica de la de los Estados-Unidos*, (Mexico City: Imprenta de Juan R. Navarro, 1850), 8.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section  8  Page  6  The Initial Point of the Gila and Salt  
River Base Line and Meridian  
Maricopa Arizona

=====  
With the inflated prices and lack of resources related to the Gold Rush, it was agreed in January, 1850, that the joint commissions should meet in El Paso (Juarez), the following November. That February, Weller received notice that he had been decommissioned, effective the previous June 20, and then-famous explorer John C. Frémont was appointed as his successor. Frémont declined the appointed post, for a position as California Senator, and was replaced by John Russell Bartlett. Emory had traveled to Washington D.C. to get the funding to pay off the debts incurred in the California survey, only to be removed by the Corps of Topographical Engineers from his position on the commission and replaced by Major J. D. Graham.<sup>6</sup>

It was at El Paso where the commissions found themselves in conflict. The problems stemmed from two major errors in the map that was being used as referenced by the treaty, J. Disternell's *Map of the United Mexican States, as Organized and Defined by Various Acts of Congress of Said Republics and Constructed According to Best Authorities*. On the map, the Rio Grande was 115 miles too far west and El Paso was thirty miles too far north. Commissioners Bartlett and Condé fixed the initial point of the boundary survey at a location on the Rio Grande at 32° 22' instead of eight miles above El Paso which would be at 31° 52'.<sup>7</sup>

Because of the differences of opinion in regards to the boundary as placed by the Disturnell Map and as interpreted by Commissioners Bartlett and Condé, Surveyor Gray refused to sign, and thus approve, the survey. This brought the boundary to a temporary standstill. While deciding what direction to approach, it was decided by the two commissions that Gray, Whipple and Jimenez would survey the Gila River portion of the boundary while Graham, who had replaced Emory, and Salazar would survey the Rio Grande.<sup>8</sup>

At the beginning of August 1851, the group surveying the Gila River began to plan the survey westerly along the river.<sup>9</sup> From the staging point at Santa Rita del Cobre, August 21, 1851, Surveyor Gray wrote Commissioner Bartlett,

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<sup>6</sup> William H. Emory, *Report on the United States and Mexico Boundary Survey Made Under the Direction of the Secretary of the Interior*, 2 vols. (Washington: A.O.P. Nicholson Printer, 1857-1859) 1:20-21. Brown 9-10. Deborah Carley Emory, "Running the Line: Men, Maps, Science, and Art of the United States and Mexico Boundary Survey, 1849-1856" *New Mexico Historical Review* (April 2000), Vol 75:2, 228-229.

<sup>7</sup> Brown, 2. William H. Emory, 1, :16.

<sup>8</sup> Brown 18,20

<sup>9</sup> Andrew Belcher Gray, *Report of the Secretary of the Interior 33<sup>rd</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session*, Senate Executive Document 55 (Washington: General Printing Office, 1855) 44-45.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section   8   Page   7   The Initial Point of the Gila and Salt  
River Base Line and Meridian  
Maricopa Arizona

=====  
Sir:

In compliance with your orders of today, and under the existing circumstances, I have now arranged the party to accompany me forthwith to the Gila, to meet the Mexicans. It is as small as possible, consistent with the faithful execution of my immediate duties, in any contingency which may arise, in the linear surveys to be made in accordance with the joint agreement of the commission on the - day of July. Their names are as follows:

J. H. Prioleau, first assistant.

Malcolm Seaton, sub-assistant.

William Bausman, sub-assistant and clerk. George Vandergrift, William Williamson, G. W. Dalton, Henry Marks, E. A. Brasford, and Thomas Roache, laborers; Manual Garcia, Mexican, to attend camp animals.

William Gordon, cook.

Messrs. Bull, first assistant, and W. A. Taylor, sub-assistant, with one cook (John Wight) and one laborer, (Brasford), to be left in charge of the camp at the Copper Mines, but to come up as soon as animals and provisions can be procured. Their services will be also required in the further linear survey of the boundary along the Gila. The first named laborers (cooks, camp attendants, chain-carriers, &c., &c., six in number) are absolutely indispensable to the least degree of accuracy, as required in the immediate performance of my duties as the United States surveyor, independent of any others (mechanics or laborers) which you may wish to accompany you, to aid in erecting monuments, marking the line, &c., and who also may be the most useful and one whom I must depend at times for aid in the linear surveys. Most of them are good men, and tried from personal observation. The others, which I know less about, are those in whom I am willing to trust.

This party is small; but under the circumstances which you mention, I find such is absolutely necessary to keep the faith of the government.

I send also, accompanying this, a list and the names of the men whom it appears have not been placed upon the roll of the "quartermaster," and whom it appears have been refused rations or provisions on that account. If there are any rules or regulations which you have enacted, or have been so made by the department, governing this survey, I should be pleased to have them (a copy) furnished me, in order that I may be so governed in future as to prevent the grub of those honest laborers being stopped.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section   8   Page   8   The Initial Point of the Gila and Salt  
River Base Line and Meridian  
Maricopa Arizona

=====

I have the honor to remain, very respectfully, your  
obedient servant,

A. B. Gray  
U. S. Surveyor, &c.<sup>10</sup>

J. D. Graham provided Commissioner Bartlett with a list of the astronomical and topographical party for the Gila River surveying party. This list included: Lieutenant A. W. Whipple, principal assistant astronomer and topographical engineer; John O'Donoghue, Henry C. Force, Frank Wheaton, and Hugh Campbell, assistants; J. R. Neide, Bernard Marron, and Thomas Harper, instrument carriers; James Halsted, Frederick Schaaf, and Alexander McDonald, laborers; Charles Fitzgerald, Whipple's cook; Davis Smith, Whipple's servant; J. Nickerson, cook; Guadalupe Medina, servant; Antonio Avelar, arriero (courier); James H. Smith, packer; and Thomas M. Fulton, herder.<sup>11</sup>

The commission met at the confluence of the San Pedro and the Gila rivers in September, 1851. Surveyor Gray wrote Commissioner Bartlett from camp on the San Pedro River, September 9, 1851.

Sir:

Learning that you are about to visit Santa Cruz for the purpose of procuring provisions, animals, &c., on account of the deficiency in the supply furnished by the quartermaster and commissary department at the Copper Mines, for the survey and reconnaissance of the Gila for fifty days, and an additional number of six pack-animals, with packsaddles, and two arrieros equipped; also two riding-saddles and bridles.

This, of course, so far as the subsistence goes for the assistants and men, is to be modified by anything which you may have provided for to meet at the Pimos <sic> villages.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

A. B. Gray,  
U. S. Surveyor, &c., &c.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Andrew Belcher Gray to John Russell Bartlett, 21 August 1851, 33<sup>rd</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, Senate Executive Document 6, page 108.

<sup>11</sup> J. D. Graham to Bartlett, 24 August 1851, 33<sup>rd</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, Senate Executive Document 6, 110-111.

<sup>12</sup> Gray to Bartlett, 33<sup>rd</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, Senate Executive Document 6, page 60.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section   8   Page   9   The Initial Point of the Gila and Salt  
River Base Line and Meridian  
Maricopa Arizona

=====

This would be the last communication between Gray and Bartlett that year. Shortly after receiving Gray's letter Bartlett and Commissioner Condé quit the surveyors for Santa Cruz, Sonora, in order to acquire provisions for the survey of the Gila River. While in Santa Cruz, Condé soon died of typhus and Bartlett became ill with said disease.<sup>13</sup>

The survey party continued its work without the promised provisions and on November 29<sup>th</sup>, 1851, arrived at the junction of the Salt and Gila rivers. The next day, the party inspected what is now known as Monument Hill. Whipple recorded in his journal,

Taking a mule, Campbell and I crossed the Gila and ascended the beautiful hill around the base of which the Gila winds to meet and embrace its "better half" the Hushientis ('Salinas').<sup>14</sup>

It was here that Whipple penned what may be the first description of Monument Hill. As was performed at the confluences of all of the major tributaries of the Gila, the survey party erected a monument on this hill at the confluence of the Salt and Gila rivers. On December 2, 1851, Whipple wrote in his journal,

Employed the day in having made a triangulation of the junction of the Salinas with the Gila and in connecting the astronomical station with Captain Jimenez' points and the monument on top of hill.<sup>15</sup>

The purpose of this monument was short-lived. It was judged that there was not a substantial southern route to California with the existing layout and just after the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo Boundary was completed, in so far as the Bartlett and Condé's replacement Salazar were concerned, arrangements were already in the works for a border further to the south.<sup>16</sup> With the signing of the Gadsden Purchase in 1853, the monument's purpose had ceased to exist, at least as a boundary marker.

"The Act of February 24, 1863, 12 Stat. 664, established the Territory of Arizona and the office of Surveyor General. All of the New Mexico Territory lying west of the present Arizona-New Mexico boundary,

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<sup>13</sup> Brown, 20. John Russell Bartlett, *Personal narrative of explorations and incidents in Texas, New Mexico, California, Sonora, and Chihuahua, connected with the United States and Mexican Boundary Commission during the years 1850, '51, '52, and '53* (New York: D. Appleton Company, 1854; reprint ed. Chicago: Rio Grande Press, 1965) 2 vols, 1:376, 379

<sup>14</sup> Whipple, November 30, 1851.

<sup>15</sup> Whipple, December 2, 1851.

<sup>16</sup> William H. Emory, 1:21

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section   8   Page  10  The Initial Point of the Gila and Salt  
River Base Line and Meridian  
Maricopa Arizona

=====  
including part of Nevada, was included in Arizona Territory. Levi  
Bashford was appointed Surveyor General in August 1863 and opened an  
office in Tucson on January 25, 1864. The Appropriations Act of July  
2, 1864 13 Stat. 344, attached Arizona under John Clark, Surveyor  
General of the New Mexico Territory, at Santa Fe. Bashford was  
terminated and closed the office on July 4, 1864."<sup>17</sup>

In the waning part of March 1865, Clark took an inspection trip through  
Arizona. He visited the area southwest of Phoenix at the junction of  
the Gila and Salt rivers. On the conical hill just south of the  
junction and just south of the Gila River, he discovered the boundary  
marker had been erected by the 1851 Boundary Commission. Clark, in his  
1865 report to Joseph S. Wilson, Commissioner of the General Land  
Office, stated that he had adopted this monument as the initial point  
for the Arizona Territory. In a letter dated May 24, 1865, Clark  
states:

Immediately opposite the mouth of the Salado, on the south  
side of the Gila, there is a conical hill, about one  
hundred and fifty feet in height, upon the pinnacle of  
which Mr. Bartlett, in making the survey of the boundary  
line under the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, established a  
corner 'to mark the mouth of the Salt River'. I visited  
this monument and found it completely built of stone,  
circular, about eight feet diameter at the base, four feet  
at the top, and eight feet high, with a post, four inches  
in diameter, projecting from the center of the top about  
six feet, upon which is marked -

"United States and Mexican boundary survey,  
1851. This monument erected in 1851 to mark  
the junction of the Gila and Salt Rivers.

A.B. Gray Surveyor"

The hill upon which this monument is erected is in fact a  
part of a short mountain range which extends southeasterly  
from this point, called the Sierra de la Estrella, but is  
separated by a narrow valley. It is a mass of igneous  
rocks and forms of itself and remarkable landmark; and,  
being situated immediately opposite the Salado or Salt  
River, the geographical position of which has been

<sup>17</sup> C Albert White, *A History of the Rectangular Survey System* (Washington: United States  
Department of Interior, Bureau of Land Management, Government Printing Office, 1983),  
133.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section   8   Page  11  The Initial Point of the Gila and Salt  
River Base Line and Meridian  
Maricopa Arizona

=====

determined, and, with respect to the arable lands of Arizona, being very central, I have selected it as the initial point for the meridian of that Territory, subject to your approval.<sup>18</sup>

Wilson replied, on to Clark on September 11, 1866,

As it is deemed expedient to initiate surveying operations in the Territory of Arizona, the recommendation made in your report to this office, under date of May 24, 1865, suggesting that the monument erected in 1851 by the Mexican Boundary Commission, situated at the confluence of the Gila and Salt Rivers, be used as the initial point, is concurred by this office; from that point you will establish the base and meridian lines for the public surveys in Arizona, calling this special meridian by the name of the Gila and Salt River Meridian.<sup>19</sup>

However, at the time, the Surveyor General's Office had no funds, so no surveys were run from that monument until two years later."<sup>20</sup>

In January and February, 1867, William Pierce, accompanied by assistants Andrew Napier, Robert Johnson, Albert Ashley, Charles H. Gray, Jesse Wilsey, and George Henderson; and utilizing the northernmost boundary monument as an Initial Point, began the first rectangular survey in Arizona, then a territory<sup>21</sup>. In his survey notes, he states

I find the Initial Corner to be located and described as follows viz

A monument of stones on the summit of a rocky hill on the s(outh) side of the Gila Riv(er) opposite the mouth of Salt Riv(er). Monument of stone circular in form about 8 ft(.) in diam(eter) at base 4 ft(.) at top and 8 ft high with a post in center projecting about 6 ft corresponding with description furnished me by the Surveyor General of New Mexico and Arizona<sup>22</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Report of the Commissioner of General Land Office for the Year 1865, Washington: Government Printing Office 1865.

<sup>19</sup> Thomas Edwin Farish, *History of Arizona* (San Francisco: Filmer Brothers Electrotype Company, 1918) 5 vols, 5:304.

<sup>20</sup> White, 137

<sup>21</sup> Farish 5:304-305.

<sup>22</sup> General Land Office Notes, Bureau of Land Management, Book 1328:7-8

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section   8   Page  12  The Initial Point of the Gila and Salt  
River Base Line and Meridian  
Maricopa Arizona

=====

Pierce was accompanied by troops from Fort McDowell. In mid-survey, these troops were removed to deal with Native Americans. He wrote the Commanding Officer of the District of the Verde on February 13, 1867:

Sir:

The escort which accompanied me on my survey having been relieved I would respectfully ask that a detail of twelve men be made to escort my survey party while at work in your dist. as it is considered unsafe to work without a military escort.

If it is impossible to furnish the required escort at present is it probable that one can be furnished at an early day?

I have the honor to be  
Very Respectfully  
Your Obedient Servant  
W. A. Pierce  
Deputy U.S. Surveyor.<sup>23</sup>

In a March 8<sup>th</sup>, 1867, letter from Deputy Surveyor Pierce to Surveyor General Clark that accompanied the field notes of the survey,

I would respectfully ask to be released from the obligation to complete my contract as it is impossible on account of Indian hostilities to furnish the work without a military escort nor was I able to get such an escort on account of the small number of troops in this territory and the men of my party refused to work without military protection.<sup>24</sup>

In a subsequent report by Surveyor General Clark to Commissioner Wilson, he describes the work performed by Pierce and company,

A contract was entered into with Deputy Surveyor William H. Pierce on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of December, 1866, for a survey in Arizona of 96 miles of the Gila and Salt River Meridian; 36 miles of the base line and standard and exterior township boundary lines, to amount in the aggregate to a sum not exceeding \$7,500. Mr. Pierce completed the survey of the meridian from the initial corner north 24 miles, the base line from the same corner east 36 miles, and the first standard parallel north along the south boundary of

<sup>23</sup> William Pierce to Guido Tlyes, Brevet Lt. Colonel, Commanding District of the Verde, February 13<sup>th</sup>, 1867, General Land Office Notes.

<sup>24</sup> Pierce to John A. Clark, March 8<sup>th</sup>, 1867, GLO Notes.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section   8   Page  13  The Initial Point of the Gila and Salt  
River Base Line and Meridian  
Maricopa Arizona

township 5 north, east 42 miles, and west 42 miles, when the military protection furnished him was withdrawn, and he was compelled to quit the field, the Indians infesting the country, rendering it unsafe and impracticable to continue the work without a military escort. At his request, and by your order, Mr. Pierce has been released from further obligation to prosecute the work under his contract.<sup>25</sup>

Shortly after the first survey was performed, an act of Congress transferred the Territory of Arizona to the Surveying District of California, under the supervision of Surveyor General L. Upton.<sup>26</sup> Because of the constant demand made by settlers for the survey of their land, Upton created three contracts for the work, the greater portion being in the Salt River Valley.<sup>27</sup> Thus began the surveying of Arizona, both as a territory and as a state.

The original monument stood solemnly for decades on the mound now appropriately known as Monument Hill. In 1899, a surveyor noted that the post was missing and the height was reduced from eight to five feet.<sup>28</sup> In the 1940's, it was discovered the monument had been completely destroyed. On April 16<sup>th</sup>, 1948, Arizona Senator Carl Hayden issued a letter of concern to Marion Clawson, the Director of the Bureau of Land Management. It stated,

I am writing you with regard to a matter which has come to my attention concerning the initial point of the Gila and Salt River Base and Meridian.

It has been discovered that the original monument has been entirely torn down leaving there a well defined ring of stone which indicates the outline of where the place of the monument was.

I am most interested in maintaining historical landmarks such as this, and I believe that the destruction of this monument is an unfortunate happening. I shall appreciate whatever you may be able to do to reestablish this monument.

Director Clawson instructed the Regional Administrator at Albuquerque, Herman E. Price, to reconstruct the monument.<sup>29</sup> Four years earlier, a surveyor named Ty White had discovered the "well defined ring of stone" and set a quartz stone 8x14X36

<sup>25</sup> Farish, 5:305-306.b

<sup>26</sup> Joseph S. Wilson to Clark, March 29<sup>th</sup>, 1867, GLO Notes.

<sup>27</sup> Farish, 5:306.

<sup>28</sup> GLO Notes 2010:13.

<sup>29</sup> Letter from Marion Clawson to Herman E. Price, GLO Notes.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8, 9 Page 14 The Initial Point of the Gila and Salt  
River Base Line and Meridian  
Maricopa Arizona

=====

inches in a mound of stone and triangulated the location to three  
U.S. Coast and Geodetic reference points.<sup>30</sup>

In a May 17, 1948 letter to the Arizona Senator, Regional Cadastral Engineer, Guy P. Harrington, stated that an engineer would be "assigned to the task" of reconstructing the monument in the late summer or early fall of that year. There is no information in the General Land Office notes regarding this monument, however, in 1962 another monument was erected at the Initial Point and dedicated on May 27, the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the United States General Land Office. Ty White's triangulation notes of 1944 were utilized for the 1962 monumentation and again in 1984.<sup>31</sup>

With the exception of the surveying and engineering community, as well as a small number of western historians, few know the significance, much less the history of, the Initial Point. The major transportation arterials follow the township and section lines of the Gila and Salt River rectangular survey system. Beginning with the original Phoenix townsite layout in the northeast and northwest quarters of section 8, Township 1 North, Range 3 East, Phoenix has consistently followed a grid pattern, with little exception. Other cities in the Salt River Valley have also followed this pattern, but perhaps not as effectively. Though the purpose of the site has changed from the original placement of a monument, its importance has increased immensely, township by township, section by section, acre by acre.

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<sup>30</sup> GLO Notes 4311:1A.

<sup>31</sup> W. Earl Merrill, *One Hundred Footprints on Forgotten Trails*, (Mesa, By the Author, 1978), 168

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 9, 10 Page 15 The Initial Point of the Gila and Salt  
River Base Line and Meridian  
Maricopa Arizona

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**Verbal Boundary Description**

From the center of the survey cap in the center of the current Initial  
Point monument, a four foot radius and a circle based on such.

**Boundary justification**

As the base of the original monument was eight feet in diameter, the  
site nominated should also entail the same dimensions.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section Photographs Page 16 The Initial Point of the Gila and Salt  
River Base Line and Meridian  
Maricopa Arizona

=====  
Photographs

Following information applies to all photos, except where noted.

1. Initial Point
2. Maricopa County, Arizona
3. Vincent Murray, photographer
4. Taken November 2000
5. Original negatives in possession of Vincent Murray

Photo 1: View west toward Monument Hill along Baseline Road (also  
base line)

Photo 2: View south toward Monument Hill from the meridian

Photo 3: View north along meridian from Monument Hill, includes view  
of Initial Point monument.

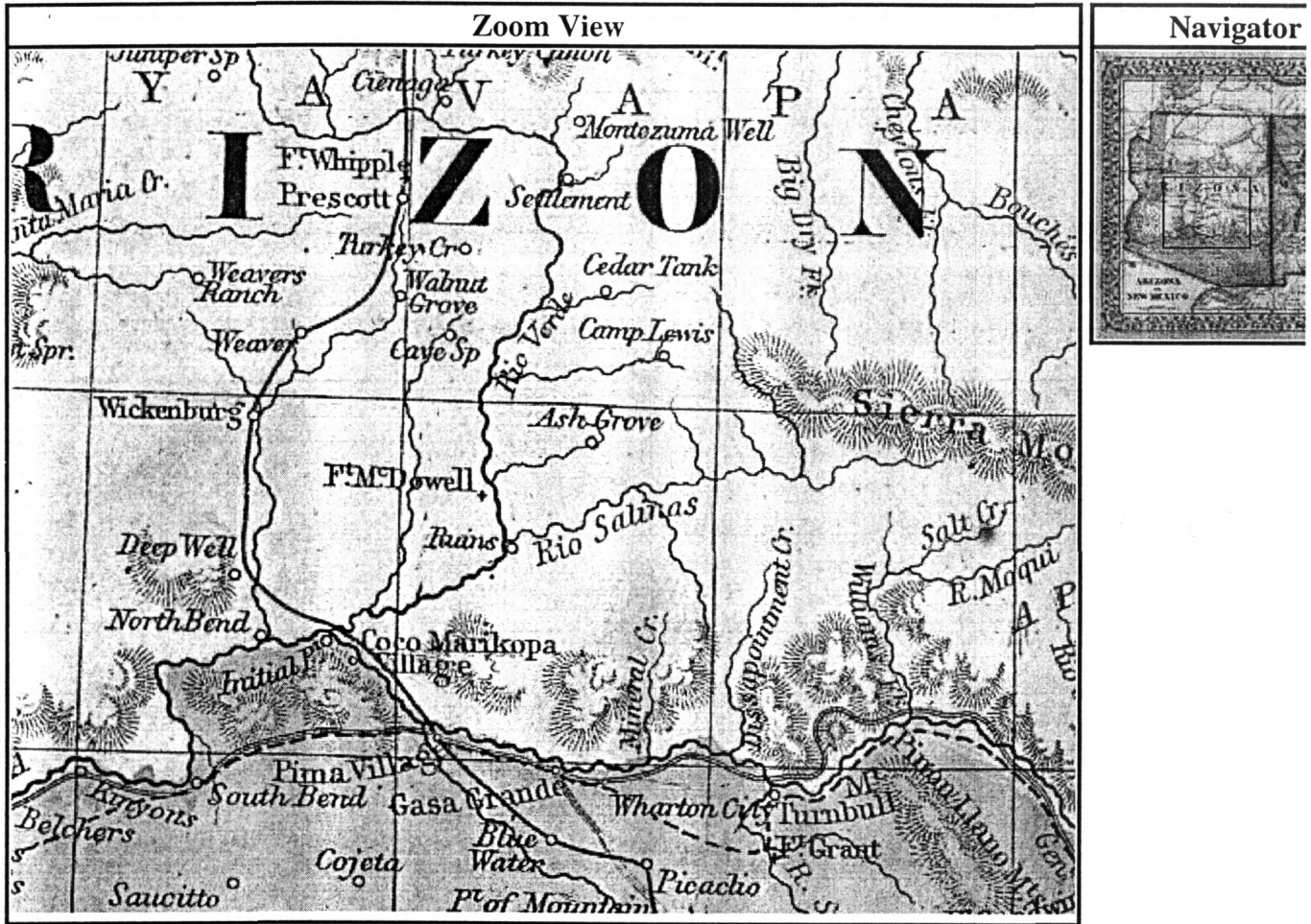
Photo 4: View east along base line, includes view of Initial Point  
monument.

Photo 5: View west, top of Monument Hill. Phoenix International  
Raceway in background.

Arizona and New Mexico.

Library of Congress map collection. S.A. Mitchell, 1867.

To change view, select desired zoom level and window size from the options below the Zoom View window and then click on the image. The display will be centered where you click. To move up, down, left, or right within a zoom level, click near the edge of the image in the Zoom View or select an area in the Navigator View. The red box on the Navigator View indicates the area of the image being viewed in the Zoom View.



Zoom In     Zoom Out [Full Image](#)

Window size  256 x 256  400 x 400  600 x 400  640 x 480  Initial (550 x 448)

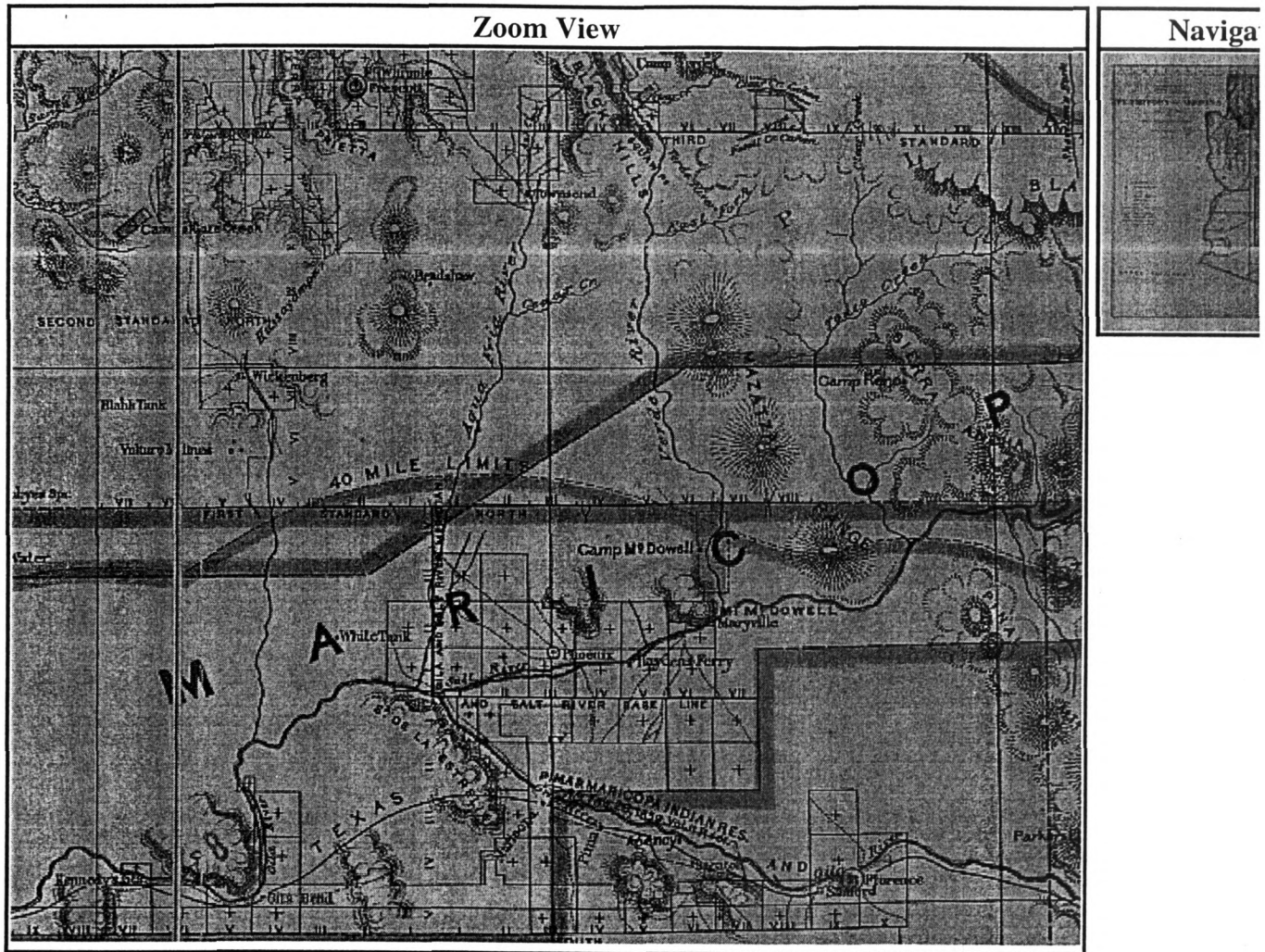
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**Territory of Arizona.**

*Library of Congress map collection. 1876*

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