

# A UNIQUE POINT ON EARTH

**John D. HOHOL, USA**  
**Curtis SUMNER, USA**

**Key Words:** GNSS/GPS, History, Positioning

## **SUMMARY**

Most people are aware of the Greenwich Meridian. Set as 0 degrees longitude, it separates east from west in the same way that the Equator separates north from south. It also sits at the center of our system of time zones.

However, few people are aware of the four locations on earth where 45 degrees latitude and 90 degrees longitude intersect.

In rural western Marathon County, Wisconsin (USA), near Poniatoski, a small county park has stood since 1969 marking the intersection of the 45th Parallel North of Latitude and the 90th Meridian West of Longitude. Why is this important? This point in Marathon County is the most accessible as two points are located in oceans (Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean) and one point is found in a remote location in a mountainous region of China.

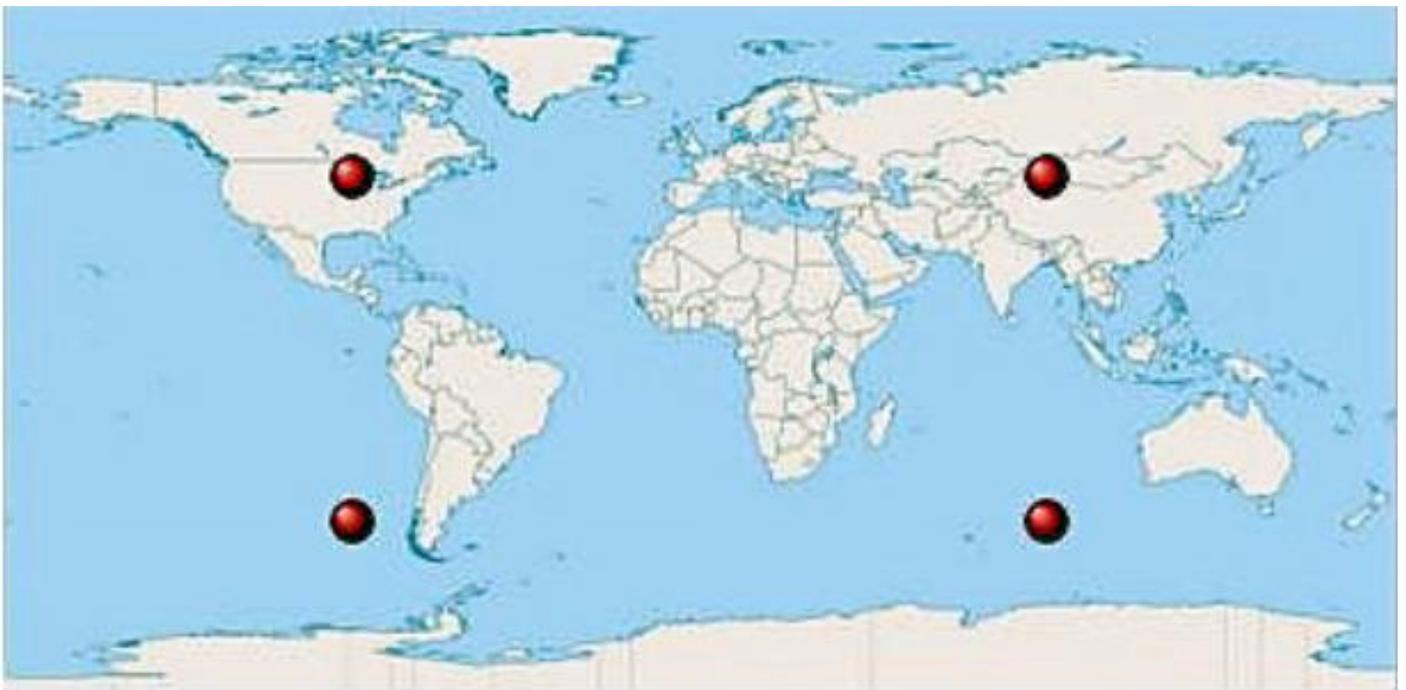
Recently the Marathon County Parks Department in collaboration with Christopher Fieri, Marathon County Surveyor, installed a new marker and information kiosk at 45°N and 90°W to better publicize the uniqueness of this special location.

## A UNIQUE POINT ON EARTH

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**Curtis SUMNER, USA**

There are four unique spots on Earth. Each is exactly halfway latitudinally ( $90^\circ$ ) between the Greenwich Meridian ( $0^\circ$ ) and the International Date Line ( $180^\circ$ ) while being exactly halfway longitudinally ( $45^\circ$ ) from the Equator and a Pole (North/South). Two of these spots lie in the ocean, one in a mountainous area of northern China near Mongolia and one in Marathon County, Wisconsin.



**The 45 x 90 points on a world map**



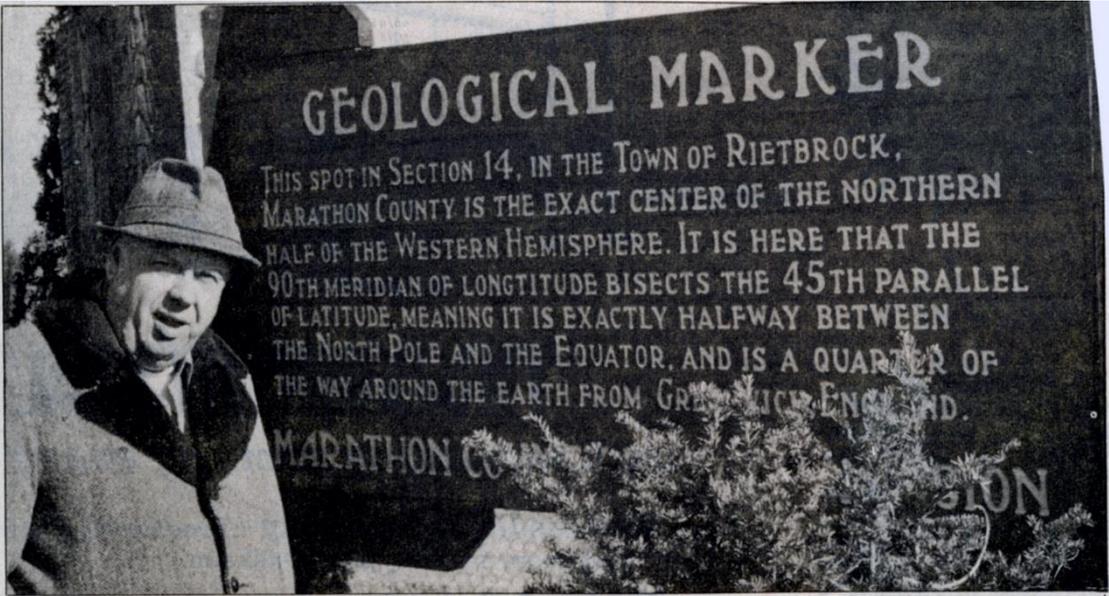


Back in 1963, John Gesicki began researching the invisible point located in the small community of Poniatoski (Poy-nee-ya-tah-skee). It took him five years to piece together the correct maps to pinpoint the exact center of the Northwest Hemisphere. By the time the U.S. Geological Survey arrived in 1969, Gesicki had the park ready for the marker. He even erected a sign highlighting the point. Unfortunately, the sign was titled GEOLOGICAL MARKER, not GEOGRAPHICAL MARKER.



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AP photo

**In the middle:** John Gesicki stands at the approximate center of the northern half of the Western Hemisphere, northwest of Poniatoski in Marathon County. His persistence and research of U.S. Geologi-

cal Survey maps resulted in a county marker being placed at the site. He has promoted the geographical point of interest — and his hometown — as a tourist attraction.

## In the center

### Location puts Poniatoski on the map

**By Diane Pacetti**

Associated Press Writer

**PONIATOWSKI** — John Gesicki has spent years promoting his hometown, population 111, and its claim to fame as the center of the northern half of the Western Hemisphere.

Actually, says Gesicki, the exact geographical center is a half mile west and a quarter mile north of Poniatoski in the town of Rietbrock about 200 miles northwest of Milwaukee — but why split hairs?

"We're just a little community," Gesicki said recently. "We have to promote what we have and that's all we have. That place is a point of interest that we can be proud of."

And no one is prouder than Gesicki, 66, whose persistence was responsible for the site in a field off a country road being located and suitably marked with a large wooden sign in the 1960s. The sign reads:

"This spot ... is the exact center of the northern half of the Western Hemisphere. It is here that the 90th meridian of longitude bisects the 45th parallel of latitude, meaning it is exactly halfway between the North Pole and the equator, and is a quarter of the way around the earth from Greenwich, England."

Mapmakers and surveyors agree the lines intersect somewhere northwest of Poniatoski, but some question whether Gesicki, who isn't a surveyor, found the exact point.

"First of all, believe it or not, we're still arguing over the exact size and shape of the earth," said state cartographer Art Ziegler at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

But Ziegler concedes Gesicki may have come within 40 feet of the true spot because he researched the matter with U.S. Geological Survey quadrangle and topographic maps.

"There have been skeptics," conceded Gesicki, "but they all have agreed that this is as close as anyone can possibly get ... We did a tough little project in a simplified way."

Gesicki, a former Marathon County Board member, made arrangements with the county for the site marker and hauled rock to transform a swampy area into one befitting visitors. He even struck a deal with the state for "geographical marker" signs on Highway 29, which point the way to Poniatoski.

Gesicki, owner of Gesicki's bar and general store, has bumper stickers reading: "Where in heaven is Ponia-

towski?"; "The exact center: Poniatoski, Wis." and "Worldwide center: Poniatoski, Wis."

Gesicki also established the 45-90 Club, with membership conferred on those who visit the geographical marker and stop by the general store to sign a register.

The register has about 4,000 signatures representing, he said, every state in the United States as well as China, New Zealand, Japan, Australia, Italy, Germany, Holland, France, England, Russia and Africa.

Gesicki said his interest in the spot began even before he knew where it was and why it was significant. As a youngster, he would hear bar patrons talk sometimes of something special about the area — but no one seemed to know what it was.

"It was bugging me for years (and) as time went by, I got a little bit more nosy," he said.

Now, Gesicki gets satisfaction out of knowing that little Poniatoski has parlayed its claim to fame into a tourist attraction.

"What we have done with a small community here is something a lot of people would like to be able to do with a bigger city," he said.

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This point in Section 14, in the Town of Rietbrock Marathon County, is the exact center of the Northern half of the Western Hemisphere. It is here that the 90th Meridian of Longitude bisects the 45th Parallel of Latitude meaning it is exactly halfway between the North Pole and the Equator and is a quarter of the way around Earth from the Greenwich Meridian in England. Wisconsin's 45x90 is only one of two of these spots found on land – the others are in the Pacific and Indian oceans – and of the two found on land, it is the only one that is marked as such. The other 45x90 found on land, in a rural mountainous area of China which is difficult to get to and it does not currently have a marker noting its significance.

The problem, however, was that the real 45x90 was on private farm property and away from the road. So, the best place for the marker was some 324 meters (1063 feet) away from the actual 45x90 spot, which is an unmarked piece of dirt in the middle of a soybean field. However, the owner of the property on which the point is located deeded land to Marathon County to provide access to finally mark and establish the exact 45°N x 90°W point. This was accomplished this past August 2017, the week before the American holiday Labor Day.





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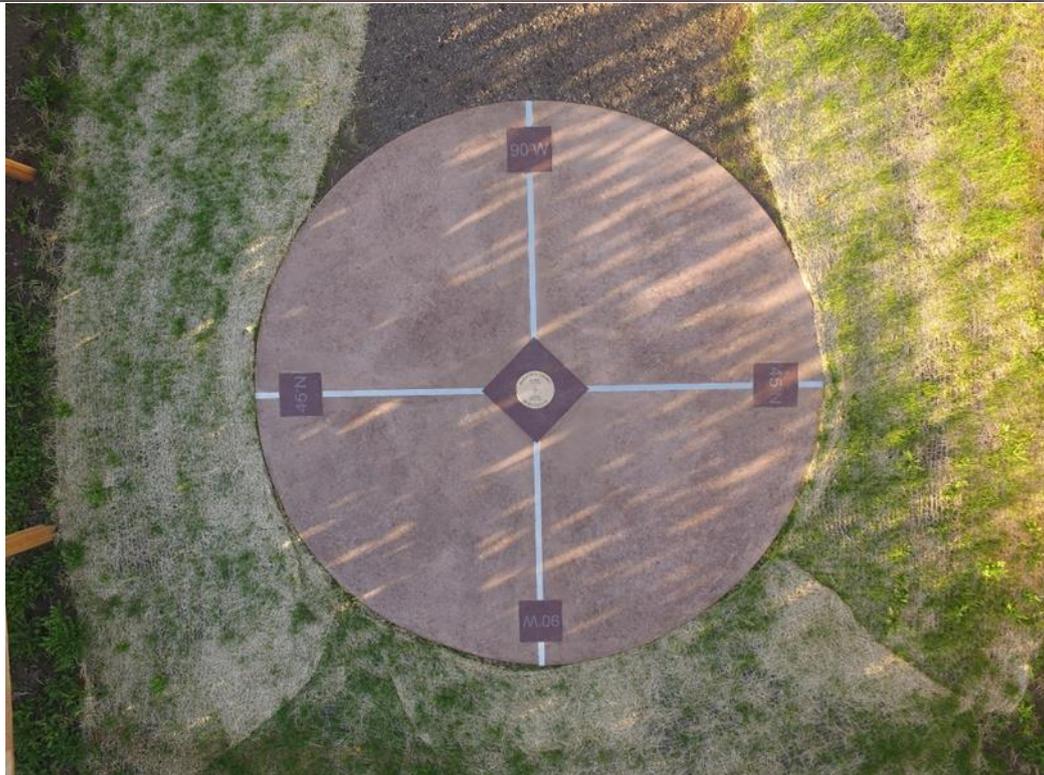
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# Parking Lot

## WELCOME TO THE 45°N - 90°W GEOGRAPHIC MARKER

Follow the path to the exact center of the Northwest Hemisphere where the 45th Parallel of Latitude intersects the 90th Meridian of Longitude.



Be sure to visit the Wausau Central Wisconsin Convention & Visitors Bureau in Wausau to sign the 45/90 book and become an official member of the 45/90 Club. Members receive a commemorative coin.  
Wausau Central Wisconsin Convention & Visitors Bureau - 219 Jefferson Street, Wausau, WI 54403

## Monument Location

### 45°N - 90°W Geographic Marker

This point is the exact center of the Northwest Hemisphere where the 45th Parallel of Latitude intersects the 90th Meridian of Longitude.  
Town of Rietbrock, Marathon County, WI



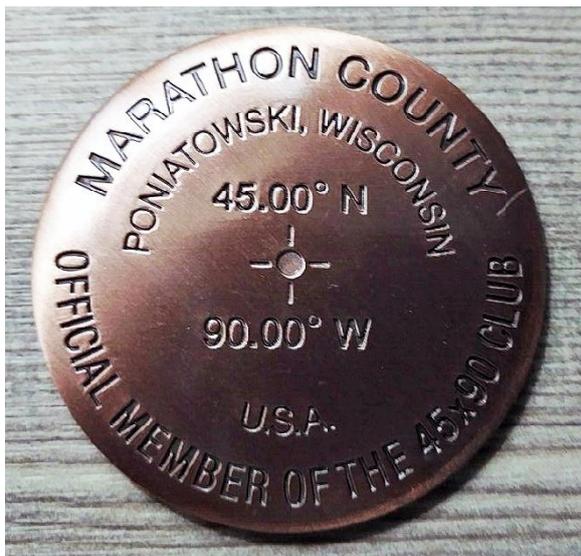
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After visiting the site, visitors can stop at the Wausau/Central Wisconsin Convention and Visitors Bureau to sign the Official 45/90 Logbook acknowledging having visited the site. They are then presented a special 45/90 commemorative marker as a souvenir.

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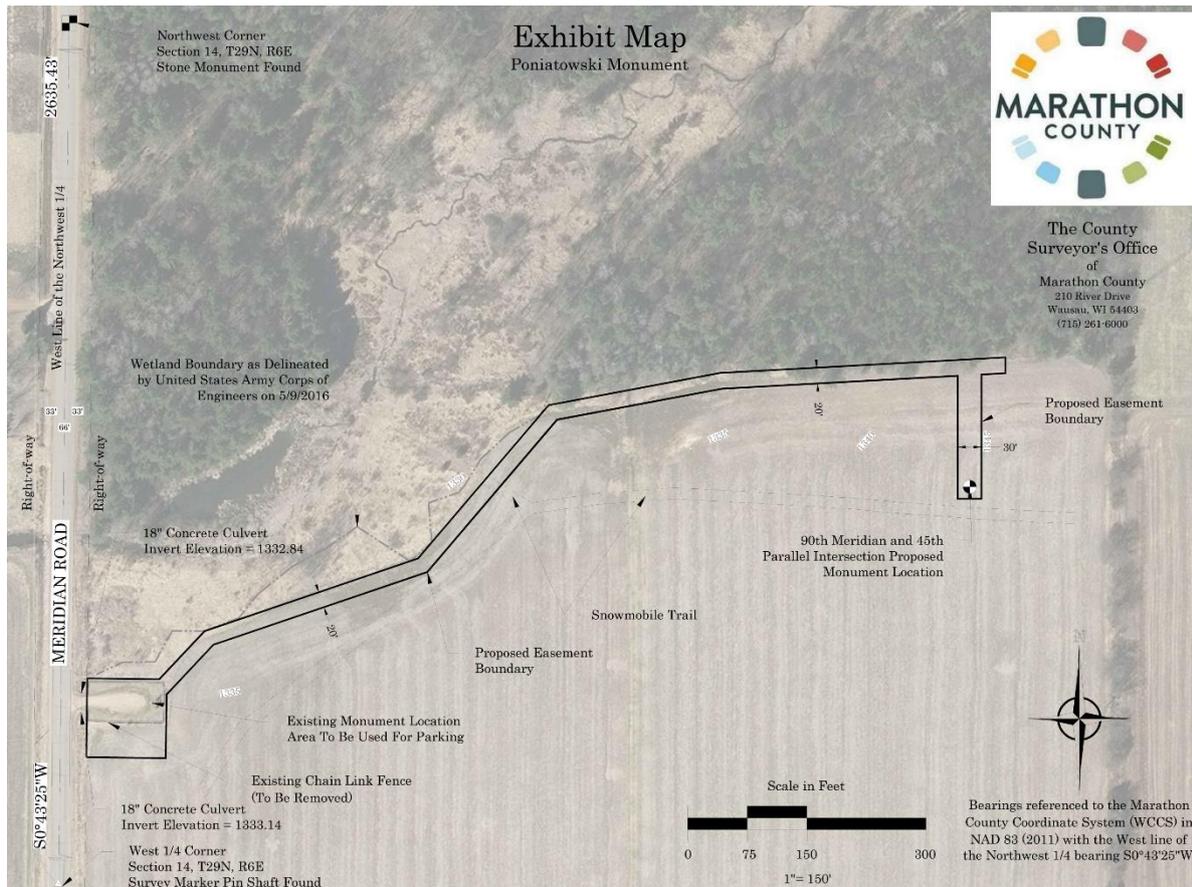
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## REFERENCES:

Christopher Fieri, Marathon County Surveyor

Wausau/Central Wisconsin Convention and Visitors Bureau

## CONTACT:

John D Hohol  
PO Box 8425  
Madison, Wisconsin 53708 USA  
Email: [jhohol@gmail.com](mailto:jhohol@gmail.com)

Curtis Sumner  
National Society of Professional Surveyors (NSPS)  
5119 Pegasus Court, Suite Q  
Frederick, Maryland 21704 USA  
Email: [curtis.sumner@nsp.us.com](mailto:curtis.sumner@nsp.us.com)

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