TB015

How to Implement ICSP™ Using PIC17CXXX OTP MCUs

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INTRODUCTION

PIC17CXXX microcontroller (MCU) devices can be serially programmed using an RS-232 or equivalent serial interface. As shown in Figure 1, using just three pins, the PIC17CXXX can be connected to an external interface and programmed. In-Circuit Serial Programming (ICSP™) allows for a greater flexibility in an application as well as a faster time to market for the user's product.

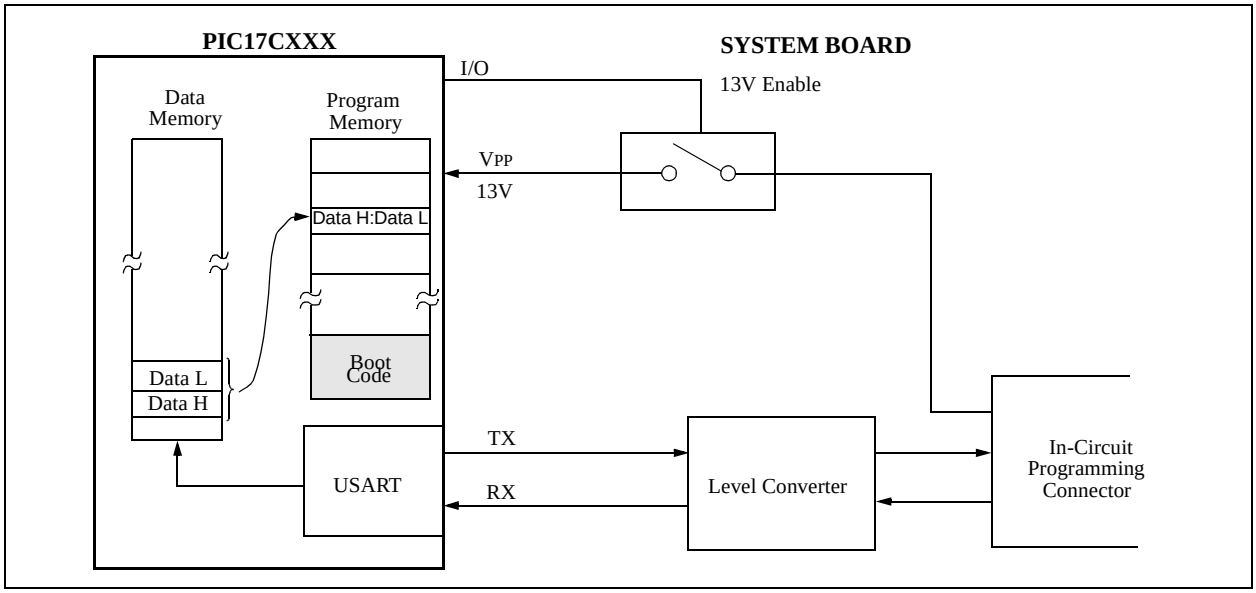
This technical brief will demonstrate the practical aspects associated with ICSP using the PIC17CXXX. It will also demonstrate some key capabilities of OTP devices when used in conjunction with ICSP.

Implementation

The PIC17CXXX devices have special instructions, which enables the user to program and read the PIC17CXXX's program memory. The instructions are TABLWT and TLWT which implement the program memory write operation and TABLRD and TLRD which perform the program memory read operation. For more details, please check the *In-Circuit Serial Programming for PIC17CXXX OTP Microcontrollers Specification* (DS30273), PIC17C4X data sheet (DS30412) and PIC17C75X data sheet (DS30264).

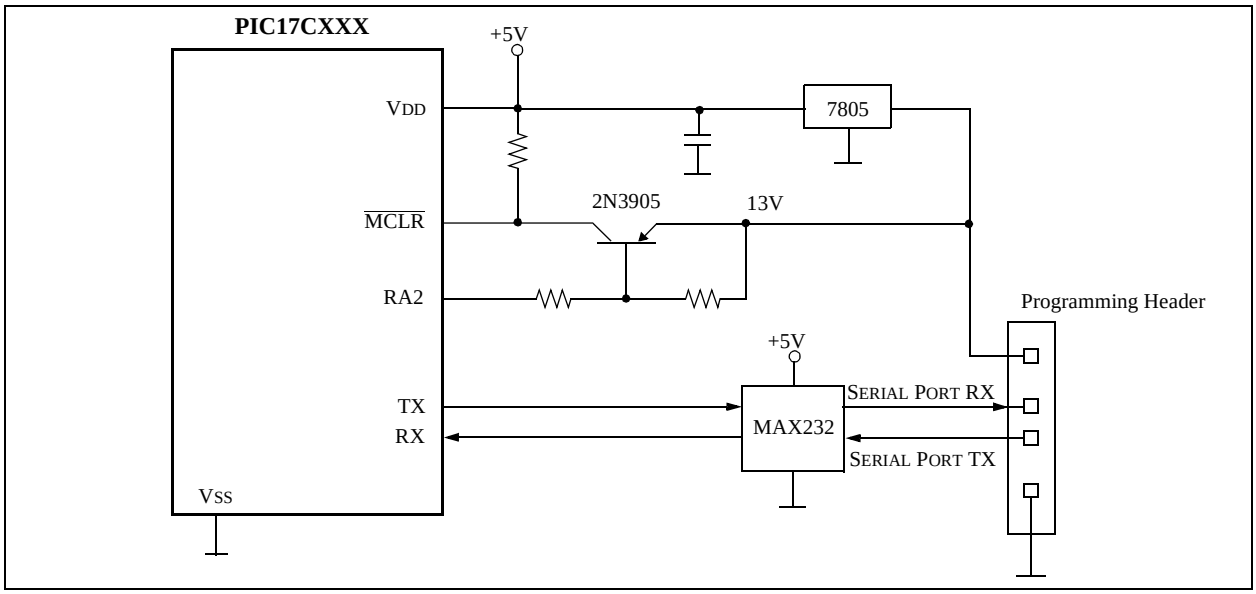
When doing ICSP, the PIC17CXXX runs a boot code, which configures the USART port and receives data serially through the RX line. This data is then programmed at the address specified in the serial data string. A high voltage (about 13V) is required for the EPROM cell to get programmed, and this is usually supplied by the programming header as shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2. The PIC17CXXX's boot code enables and disables the high voltage line using a dedicated I/O line.

FIGURE 1: PIC17CXXX IN-CIRCUIT SERIAL PROGRAMMING USING TABLE WRITE INSTRUCTIONS



PRO MATE and PICSTART are registered trademarks and ICSP is a trademark of Microchip Technology Inc.

FIGURE 2: PIC17CXXX IN-CIRCUIT SERIAL PROGRAMMING SCHEMATIC



ICSP Boot Code

The boot code is normally programmed, into the PIC17CXXX device using a PRO MATE® or PICSTART® Plus or any third party programmer. As depicted in the flowchart in Figure 4, on power-up, or a reset, the program execution always vectors to the boot code. The boot code is normally located at the bottom of the program memory space e.g. 0x700 for a PIC17C42A (Figure 3).

Several methods could be used to reset the PIC17CXXX when the ICSP header is connected to the system board. The simplest method, as shown in Figure 2, is to derive the system 5V, from the 13V supplied by the ICSP header. It is quite common in manufacturing lines, to have system boards programmed with only the boot code ready and available for testing, calibration or final programming. The ICSP header would thus supply the 13V to the system and this 13V would then be stepped down to supply the 5V required to power the system. Please note that the 13V supply should have enough drive capability to supply power to the system as well as maintain the programming voltage of 13V.

The first action of the boot code (as shown in flowchart Figure 4) is to configure the USART to a known baud rate and transmit a request sequence to the ICSP host system. The host immediately responds with an acknowledgment of this request. The boot code then gets ready to receive ICSP data. The host starts sending the data and address byte sequences to the PIC17CXXX. On receiving the address and data information, the 16-bit address is loaded into the TBLPTR registers and the 16-bit data is loaded into the TABLAT registers. The RA2 pin is driven low to enable 13V at $\overline{MCLR}$. The PIC17CXXX device then executes a table write instruction. This instruction in turn causes a long write operation, which disables further code execution. Code execution is resumed when an internal interrupt occurs. This delay ensures that the programming pulse width of 1 ms (max.) is met. Once a location is written, RA2 is driven high to disable further writes and a verify operation is done using the Table read instruction. If the result is good, an acknowledge is sent to the host. This process is repeated till all desired locations are programmed.

In normal operation, when the ICSP header is not connected, the boot code would still execute and the PIC17CXXX would send out a request to the host. However it would not get a response from the host, so it would abort the boot code and start normal code execution.

FIGURE 3: BOOT CODE EXAMPLE FOR PIC17C42A

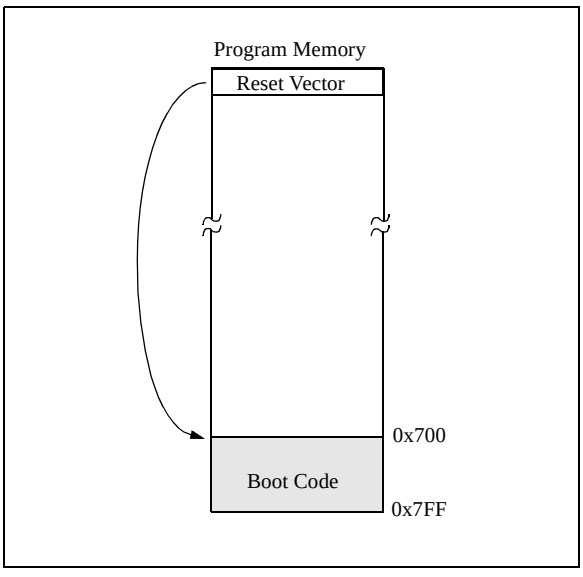
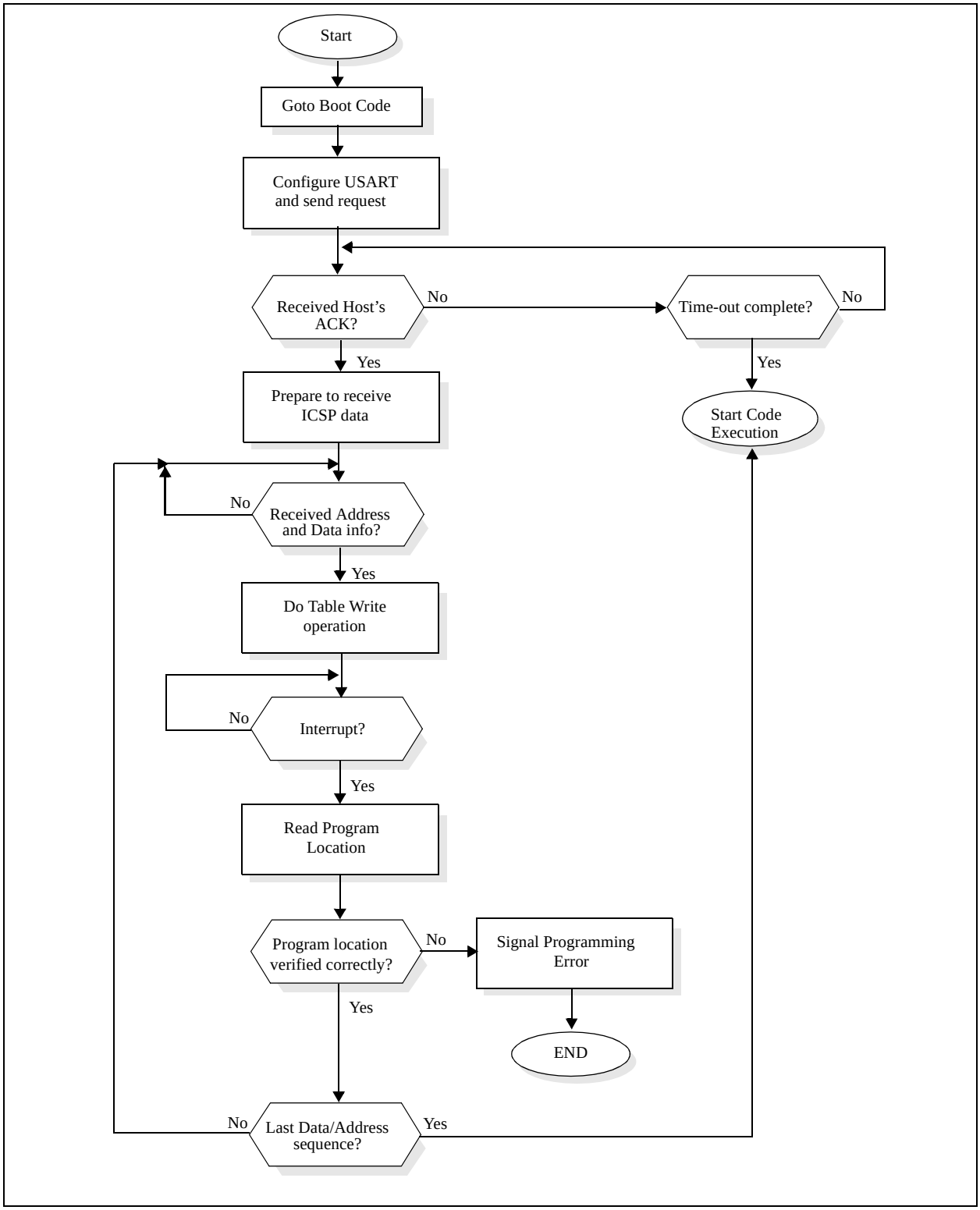


FIGURE 4: FLOWCHART FOR ICSP BOOT CODE



USING THE ICSP FEATURE ON PIC17CXXX OTP DEVICES

The ICSP feature is a very powerful tool when used in conjunction with OTP devices.

Saving Calibration Information Using ICSP

One key use of ICSP is to store calibration constants or parameters in program memory. It is quite common to interface a PIC17CXXX device to a sensor. Accurate, pre-calibrated sensors can be used, but they are more expensive and have long lead times. Un-calibrated sensors on the other hand are inexpensive and readily available. The only caveat is that these sensors have to be calibrated in the application. Once the calibration constants have been determined, they would be unique to a given system, so they have to be saved in program memory. These calibration parameters/constants can then be retrieved later during program execution and used to improve the accuracy of low cost un-calibrated sensors. ICSP thus offers a cost reduction path for the end user in the application.

Saving Field Calibration Information Using ICSP

Sensors typically tend to drift and lose calibration over time and usage. One expensive solution would be to replace the sensor with a new one. A more cost effective solution however, is to re-calibrated the system and save the new calibration parameter/constants into the PIC17CXXX devices using ICSP. The user program however has to take into account certain issues:

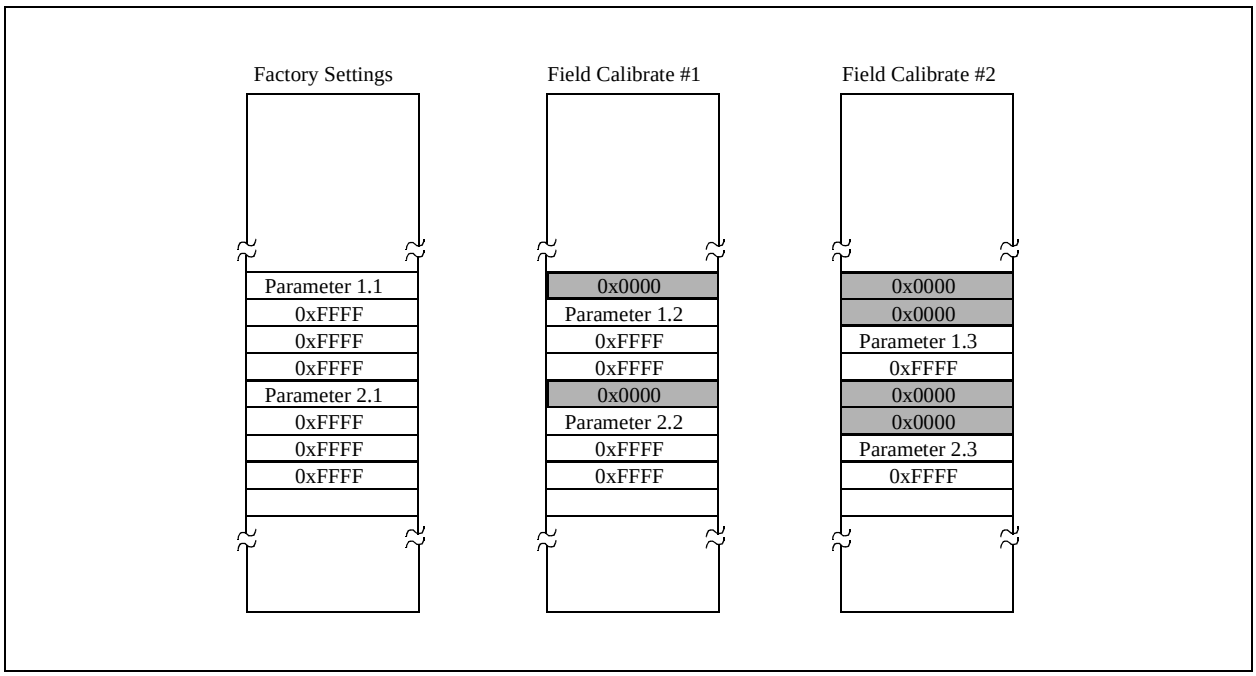
1. Un-programmed or blank locations have to be reserved at each calibration constant location in order to save new calibration parameters/constants.
2. The old calibration parameters/constants are all programmed to 0, so the user program will have to be "intelligent" and differentiate between blank (0xFFFF), zero (0x0000), and programmed locations.

Figure 5 shows how this can be achieved.

Programming Unique Serial Numbers Using ICSP

There are applications where each system needs to have a unique and sometimes random serial number. Example: security devices. One common solution is to have a set of DIP switches which are then set to a unique value during final test. A more cost effective solution however would be to program unique serial numbers into the device using ICSP. The user application can thus eliminate the need for DIP switches and subsequently reduce the cost of the system.

FIGURE 5: FIELD CALIBRATION USING ICSP



Code Updates in the Field Using ICSP

With fast time to market it is not uncommon to see application programs which need to be updated or corrected for either enhancements or minor errors/bugs. If ROM parts were used, updates would be impossible and the product would either become outdated or recalled from the field. A more cost effective solution is to use OTP devices with ICSP and program them in the field with the new updates. Figure 6 shows an example where the user has allowed for one field update to his program.

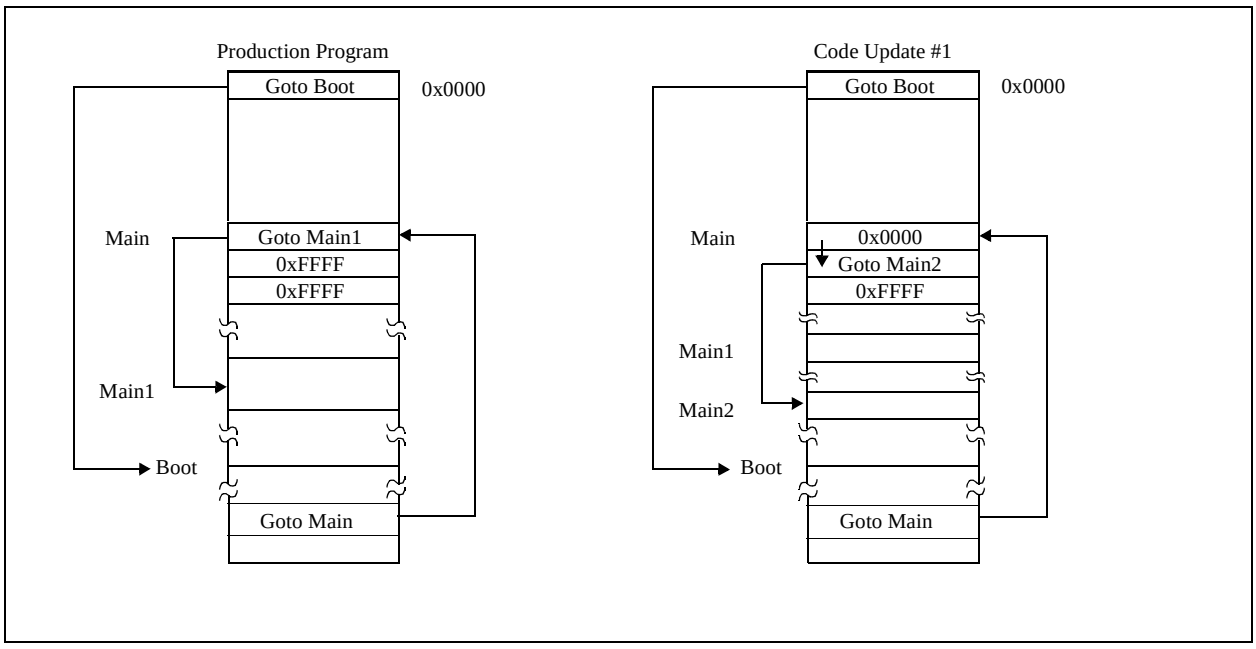
Here are some of the issues which need to be addressed:

1. The user has to reserve sufficient blank memory to fit his updated code.
2. At least one blank location needs to be saved at the reset vector as well as for all the interrupts.
3. Program all the old "goto" locations (located at the reset vector and the interrupts vectors) to 0 so that these instructions execute as NOPs.
4. Program new "goto" locations (at the reset vector and the interrupt vectors) just below the old "goto" locations.
5. Finally, program the new updated code in the blank memory space.

CONCLUSION

ICSP is a very powerful feature available on the PIC17CXXX devices. It offers tremendous design flexibility to the end user in terms of saving calibration constants and updating code in final production as well as in the field, thus helping the user design a low-cost and fast time-to-market product.

FIGURE 6: CODE UPDATES USING ICSP



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