

PENNSYLVANIA ACADEMY OF SCIENCE MORE ABOUT MASON AND DIXON*

Thomas D. Cope

University of Pennsylvania

Since this Academy held its last annual meeting, two significant finds about Charles Mason have been made by Mr. Robinson working in England. Accounts of them are about to appear in *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* in a note written by Mr. Robinson.

The first find removes Mason from the list of famous persons of forgotten origins. Charles Mason Jr. was baptized on May 1, 1728 in Bisley parish in the Cotswolds, Gloucestershire. He was a son of Charles Mason, a local miller and baker. When Charles was 16 years old, a neighbor, Miss Susannah Peach, daughter of Samuel Peach Esq. of Chalford, Bisley Parish, Gloucestershire, was married to Rev. James Bradley, himself a native of Gloucestershire, Savilian professor of astronomy at Oxford University and Astronomer Royal of Great Britain. Twelve years later Charles Mason became assistant observer at Greenwich Observatory, succeeding John Bradley, a nephew of the Astronomer Royal.

The second find was made at Greenwich Observatory by Mr. Robinson among the files of the Commissioners of Longitude. It includes records of Mason's employment by the Commissioners and manuscripts in Mason's hand. Some of the manuscripts were sent back to England from Philadelphia after Mason's death in Philadelphia on October 25, 1786. Copies of these records and manuscripts have recently been secured by the Library of the American Philosophical Society.

Notices of Mason's death published in Philadelphia in early November, 1786, reported that Mason during his last illness had been visited by his old commissioner from Pennsylvania during the survey of the boundaries, the Rev. John Ewing, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church and Provost of the University of Pennsylvania. Dr. Ewing was a mathematician, natural philosopher, and astronomer. The death notices said further that Mason while ill had given his scientific papers and manuscripts to Provost Ewing with a request that Ewing continue Mason's work on positions of the Moon.

Will these papers and manuscripts be identified among those found recently at Greenwich Observatory?

In reply to your questions about Mason and Dixon, first asked during August, 1938, articles have continued to appear since our annual meeting of 1948:

In *Proceedings of the Pennsylvania Academy of Science XXII*, 1948: "Westward Five Degrees in Longitude" and "In Reply to Your Questions."

In *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, vol.92, No. 2: "Collecting Source Material about Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon."

There will appear in the immediate future:

In *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, vol.93, No. 2: "A Note on Charles Mason's Ancestry and His Family" by H.W. Robinson and "Degrees along the West Line."

* Acknowledgments continue to be due to the American Philosophical Society for grants from its Penrose Fund; to H. W. Robinson, Esq., lately librarian of the Royal Society, for his effective searches in many parts of England; to the President and Council of the Royal Society for permission to search and copy their records; to the Astronomer Royal of Great Britain for permission to search and copy records at the Royal Observatory at Greenwich, and for his interest in the project; and to Mr. Brian Frith of Gloucester, England, for his aid in searches made in Gloucestershire.