

Border
Romance

THE MASON AND DIXON LINE

BORDER
ROMANCE

THE STORY OF THE EXPLOITS OF

¶ CHARLES MASON

AND

¶ JEREMIAH DIXON

AN ESSAY BY EARL SCHENCK MIERS

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INTRODUCTION

FOR ALMOST a century and a half Mason and Dixon's Line, dividing Pennsylvania from Maryland, has occupied a unique place in American history and thought. Actually those two elusive gentlemen from London, Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon, whose names have endured despite themselves, had traveled on to a higher reward long before this one methodical exploit among their earthly accomplishments had acquired its lasting fame.

The real father of the romance that today surrounds this pair of "bounders" was that most eccentric of all Virginia statesmen, John Randolph of Roanoke. In fancy, one can easily imagine Randolph, with his wild eyes and sulphurous tongue, pacing the floor of the United States Congress during the acrimonious debates over the Compromise of 1820. In such moments Randolph liked to catch up a verbal whip with which to lash his opponents, and the very words, "Mason and Dixon's Line," crackled and snapped on his lips as he popularized them as the symbol of division between the slave-holding South and the non-slave North.

Randolph, like Thomas Jefferson, was one of those early Virginians who could never live comfortably with the institution of slavery; human bondage haunted his dreams at night and his meditations when awake; and he fought it with a relentless hatred. Yet his symbol of division between moral right and political wrong, which was what he made of Mason and Dixon's Line, was more an emotion than a fact: until the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment a century ago

(January 31, 1865) slavery existed on both sides of this now immortal boundary.

But who would have appreciated more keenly than a shrewd polemicist like Randolph that in shaping legend and ballad and American politics no artist permits literal truth to spoil his handiwork? Randolph was no fool; undoubtedly he knew the whole story: how the Line came to be fixed and why. Here was the kind of tale Randolph would have enjoyed telling on a winter's evening when a good brandy warmed the bellies of his listeners. If you would know the kind of families that turn a wilderness into an empire, he would have asked then, where could you find the equal of the Penns and the Calverts?

"By God, sir"—and the oath would have been no blasphemy to John Randolph—"they were men, those people. They stood by principle, inviting the devil to take the hindmost. Politics today—good God, sir, 'tis a thinned-down business over what it was in those times. They were history-makers, those fellows. . . ."

As, indeed, they were.

BARL SCHENCK MIERS

Edison, New Jersey

April, 1965

I TWO

REMARKABLE FAMILIES

THE OLD Admiral, Sir William Penn, tried all the time-honored devices by which a father should be able to curb a headstrong son—harsh words, entreaty, a boot in the breeches—but none worked. Son William was seventeen and attending Oxford when he emerged as a typical child of that age of religious dissent which so shook England in the middle 1600's. This intellectual revolution, which sought to substitute conscience for authority as men endeavored to live face to face with God, found William aligned with the Quakers, the worst rascals among the whole breed of non-conformists. Oxford tried its patient best (doubtless for the old Admiral's sake) to bring William to his senses. In God's name, why should any Penn become involved with this afflicted and forsaken sect?

The arguments failed.

So did a stiff fine.

Young Penn was told to pack his belongings and go home; Oxford did not want him.

Neither, for that matter, did the old Admiral: he administered a sound thrashing and sent the youth off to choose between two ways of life—either he could suffer poverty with a pure conscience or enjoy fortune with obedience.

But in that time what good Quaker did not thrive on adversity? For William Penn the succeeding years were filled with a variety of adventures that strengthened his faith and tempered his resolution. His sympathy, nourished by a bold intellect, reached out to embrace the persecuted Huguenots in France; jailed in Ireland for his beliefs he informed the Viceroy that religion "makes me a prisoner of malice, but my own freeman"; returning to England, he appeared in court with his hat on, a perfect piece of Quaker impudence; and to no one's surprise the bishops locked him in the Tower of London where, for all they cared, he could rot out the remainder of his existence. The old Admiral was saddened that William remained "some very melancholy thing," which was as close as he could come to defining a Quaker; still, his fatherly impulse prevailed and through the intercession of the Duke of York, after nine months young Penn was released from the Tower.

If the Admiral and Duke hoped that William would turn over a new leaf, they were disappointed within a twelvemonth, for he was back in court. The year was 1670 and William was twenty-five years of age. The trial became a duel between Penn and the recorder.

"Under what law am I indicted?" Penn asked.

"The common law," was the reply.

"Where is that law? The law which is not in being, far from being common, is no law at all."

Penn was hurried out of court, but not before he appealed to the jury to remember that they were "his judges." They voted for acquittal. The recorder sent the jury back with a tongue-lacing: "We will have a verdict, by the help of God, or you shall starve for it." Penn shouted after them: "You are Englishmen; mind your privilege; give not away your right."

For two days and nights the jury was confined without refresh-

¶ *Two Remarkable Families*

ments; on the third day, hungry but resolute, the jury decided: "Not guilty." The recorder fined each of the jury and jailed Penn for contempt. Clearly, with heretics like this, English life was falling apart.

Nearing death, the old Admiral paid the fines and freed his offspring. "Son William," he said, "if you and your friends keep to your plain way of preaching and living, you will make an end of the priests." But the rancor was gone. Although William remained "some very melancholy thing," the man recognized his magnetism of personality and spirit. "So be it, for better or worse," he seemed to say. What the old Admiral had glimpsed others would perceive in time: William Penn was a rare human being, powerful of intellect, almost unbelievably pure of heart.

Our tale jumps ahead a dozen years. When the Admiral died, the government owed him some \$80,000, which it plainly did not wish to pay in coin of the realm; so by granting William Penn a Quaker colony in the New World to discharge this debt the government solved many vexations. The vast area beyond the Delaware where Penn and his sectarian friends could settle in peace was to belong to Penn and his heirs in perpetual propriety; and "merrie King Charlie" insisted that the colony's name honor the old Admiral.

William Penn set foot upon the soil of his colony of Pennsylvania at Newcastle in early November of 1682. About a thousand emigrants came with him to join the three thousand Swedes, Dutch, Huguenots, Germans and English already settled there, giving him a solid foundation for his Quaker state. The measure of Penn was in the ultimate avowal of the Swedes that to "live, serve and obey him with all they had was the best day they ever saw"; the same measure was in the selection of Philadelphia, a Greek word signifying "brotherly love," for the name of his future city; the measure, too, was in his

address to the Indian chiefs upon their first meeting beneath the spreading elms:

“We meet in the broad pathway of good faith and good will; no advantage shall be taken on either side, but all shall be openness and love. I will not call you children; for parents sometimes chide their children too severely; nor brother, only; for brothers differ. The friendship between me and you I will not compare to a chain; for that might rust, or a falling tree might break. We are the same as if one man’s body was divided into two parts; we are all of one flesh and blood.”

Yet Penn had his worries; his claim to the three lower counties of Newcastle, St. Jones and Deale (the future state of Delaware) was questionable. Anxious for a seaboard for his province, Penn had offered before leaving England to buy this territory to avoid a dispute, but Lord Baltimore, claiming the counties as part of Maryland, had refused to sell. Upon occasion a surprisingly broad streak of the worldly-wise emerged in Penn, and he now appealed to the Duke of York, who once had liberated him from the Tower of London. Lord Baltimore’s claim, Penn argued, was “against law, civil or common,” and the Duke, a sly hand at colonial politics, gave the Quaker a quit-claim deed to the three counties.

Thus were planted the seeds of a controversy between Maryland and Pennsylvania and between the Penns and the Calverts that would endure for almost a century before it was settled by Mason and Dixon’s Line. A great amount of colonial history, both in the past and future, would contribute to the romance of this tale; and no little part of that glamor would stem from the character of the founders and proprietors of Penn’s sister colony.

Sir George Calvert, knighted by James I in 1617 and one of the King’s most active courtiers, had been interested in the New World

¶ *Two Remarkable Families*

since early youth. He was a member of both the East India Company and the London Company that settled Virginia; and in the year that the *Mayflower* sailed for America he bought part of Newfoundland, naming his domain Avalon. Calvert was as devoted to the faith of the Roman Catholic Church as Penn was to the Protestant non-conformity of the Quakers, and both these intellectual loyalties posed dangers on the shifting battlefields of British politics. By 1624 Calvert's enemies, exploiting his adherence to the Church of Rome, secured his ouster as one of the King's principal Secretaries of State; but James, only sixteen days away from death, could not completely abandon his old friend and gave him an Irish peerage by making him Baron of Baltimore in the County of Longford.

The bishops of England were not satisfied with half-measures in combating non-conformity; their persecutions continued. Lord Baltimore, dreaming of an asylum for his fellow worshipers, turned his vision toward the New World. Why would not Avalon provide such a refuge? A pamphlet entitled *Westward Hoe for Avalon*, published in 1622, told him that here he could expect to smell the perfume of "red and damask roses," hear the liquid notes of nightingales, and observe a mermaid languishing in St. John's Harbor. Prodded by such idyllic descriptions, Lord Baltimore twice visited Avalon; he encountered no mermaids but found the climate discouraging and the neighboring French hostile. His next hope for a sanctuary was "to plant and dwell" in Virginia, but, to say the least, his interview with Governor Harvey came to the point.

"Will you take the oath which we all have taken?" Harvey asked.

"I cannot with good conscience," Lord Baltimore replied.

"Then you must leave with the first ship hence to England," Harvey said.

So it came about that, finally, Lord Baltimore settled for a grant of territory north and east of the Potomac River and embracing Chesapeake Bay. Named Maryland in honor of Queen Henrietta Maria, the new colony was defined as extending along each side of Chesapeake Bay from the fortieth degree of latitude to the mouth of the Potomac and westward along the line of the river. That this claim overlapped the patent later given to Penn and included a clause susceptible to some very loose interpretation belongs to the story yet to unfold; meanwhile Lord Baltimore died in London before the great seal of England could be affixed to his charter and the grant passed to his son Cecilius. Its date was June 20, 1632.

Certainly no characteristic of the long administration of Maryland by Cecilius deserved greater commendation than his spirit of religious toleration. Not infrequently those persecuted by the Puritans of New England and the Anglican Churchmen of Virginia found refuge and peace among the Roman Catholic colonists of Maryland; and though the Archbishop of Canterbury might rant that Maryland was become a "pest-house of iniquity" that only could be cured by "an established support of a Protestant ministry," Cecilius was inflexible in his insistence upon freedom of worship. The celebrated Quaker, George Fox, preached in Maryland to members of the legislature, justices of the peace and an assemblage of Indian chieftains. The picture seems entrancing—the Indians reclining on the eastern shore of the Chesapeake, absorbed in the preaching of this benevolent wanderer—and one scarcely wonders that the occasion was called "a large and very heavenly meeting."

When Cecilius died in 1675 as the honored Father of Maryland who had successfully administered the colony for more than forty-three years, his peerage and patent passed to Charles Calvert. Historians have varying opinions about Charles; to some he has seemed "cold

¶ *Two Remarkable Families*

and self-centered" but others have glimpsed in him that "largeness of view and conciliatory disposition by which his father was distinguished." The truth, of course, was that Cecilius had been the product of an age fast slipping away; although touched with the sentiment of humanity, Cecilius had been a firm supporter of prerogative with no feeling for the spirit of popular power among the people that was then producing a Bacon's Rebellion in Virginia; and poor Charles, caught up by this new surge, hardly understood it any better than the former Lord Baltimore. Moreover, Protestant bigotry in London was gaining such ascendancy that in 1681 the English ministry ordered only Protestants to hold governmental offices in Maryland, thus disfranchising Roman Catholics in the province they had planted. Yet Charles must have weathered these stresses with some distinction, for upon one occasion the Maryland Assembly voted him a gift of 100,000 pounds of tobacco as a mark of "gratitude" for his "benign administration" and it was not a time when taxpayers ordinarily accepted such burdens with good grace.

All of the passions and prejudices that shaped the colonizing of the New World would be brought to a sharp focus in the boundary dispute between Maryland and Pennsylvania, accounting in no small degree for its enduring fascination. Colonizers followed many patterns. Some, like the adventurers who founded Virginia, came simply in search of profit and were loath to upset home investors with ideological arguments. Some, like the Puritans, sought a religious commonwealth that ruthlessly expelled other dissenters from their heaven on earth. Some, like the Calverts, mixed business with religious toleration, creating their own problems. Some, like Penn, wished to establish a fellowship of love but not without undertones of worldly wisdom. Small wonder these interests clashed!

II HISTORY WITHOUT LOGIC

HISTORICAL EXPEDIENCY, not logic, must explain why the Penns and the Calverts were able to leave their own peculiar imprints upon the map of the United States. Elsewhere across the nation boundaries between states have been determined by understandable factors—rivers, the crests of mountains, parallels of latitude, meridians of longitude—but there is one place where none of these rules apply. Explain, if you can, why the southern frontier of Pennsylvania does not extend to the New Jersey shore or why the eastern frontier of Maryland is not an unerring line joining this southern frontier of the old Keystone State. Explain, if you can, why the northern boundary of Delaware forms a circle and leaves a strip of Pennsylvania so narrow that, as historians once loved to teach, the ball of one's foot may be in Delaware, the heel in Maryland and the instep will make an arch over a portion of Pennsylvania.

Where the cartographer may despair to find sense in these boundaries, the historian smiles—understanding politics, he must fit his craft to the illogical. At least he can begin logically: in 1632 when Cecilius Calvert received his grant to Maryland. At that time the present states of New York or Pennsylvania did not exist in any form so that the

northern boundary of Maryland really reached to the southern frontier of New England. In this vast territory Calvert was given jurisdiction over all land "hitherto uncultivated," which seemed only to exclude the domains then claimed by the Plymouth Colony (1620), the Massachusetts Bay Colony (1629), and Kent Island in Chesapeake Bay, settled by William Claiborne in 1631. But the political necessities of later generations were to place a far different interpretation upon what the phrase, "hitherto uncultivated," truly signified, a circumstance that may well explain why today there is a State of Delaware.

In 1631, or three years before the first Calvert arrived at St. Mary's in Maryland, a group of Dutchmen founded Delaware's first white settlement near Lewes, calling the place Zwannendael or "Valley of Swans." These pioneers, about thirty in number, looked upon forests growing to the edge of the water. Huge flocks of birds all but blotted out the sun and herring seemed to choke the small streams. Traders rather than colonizers, the Dutch established their claim by nailing a tin coat of arms to a tree and dreamed of beaver and deer skins that one day could be taken here by the thousands. An Indian chief, attracted by all the hullabaloo at Zwannendael, appropriated the tin plate to shape into a pipe bowl; harsh words followed and tempers on both sides simmered; and when the next boatload of Dutchmen arrived, all they encountered were burned houses and bleached bones.

The next settlers in "hitherto uncultivated" Delaware were the Swedes, who, arriving near present-day Wilmington in 1638, named this spot Fort Christina in honor of their young queen. The Indians of the region, the Lenni-Lenapes (who were known respectfully among other Algonquins as the "Grandfathers"), soon became fast friends with these newcomers. The Swedes proved to be a marvelously peace-loving and productive people: they introduced the log cabin

into the New World, built mills and houses, boats and wharves, and encouraged such industries as cooperage, brewing, baking and weaving. The happy years were from 1643 to 1653 when the settlement was administered by tolerant old Johan Printz, whom the Indians called, with affection, "the big tub."

Then in 1655 the Dutch returned, obviously determined to turn over a new leaf as colonizers. They became good farmers, constructed canals and dikes to control the marshes, developed New Amstel from a fort into a full-fledged town, instituted town and village government and lived in harmony with the Swedes. Meanwhile in Europe the Dutch and English engaged in a vicious little war (in which William Penn's father, the old Admiral, played a conspicuous role); and as a side show to this conflict in 1664 a British expedition under Sir Robert Carr subdued the Dutch in the New World. So there was another turnabout in colonial fortunes; but except that New Amstel became Newcastle and the South River was now called the Delaware, life went on much as before.

During all these years the Calverts held Maryland. As Englishmen, they looked upon the Dutch and Swedes as "squatters" in a territory that rightfully belonged to them; and even if the Dutch plantation at Zwannendael could be considered as cultivating the "hitherto uncultivated," all that had remained of that colony was a brick house and some plowed fields after the Indians had repaid the harsh words arising out of the quarrel over the pilfered tin coat of arms.

Such, then, was the situation when in 1681 William Penn received his grant as Maryland's new neighbor. The Calvert claims were challenged right from the start for part of Penn's grant, westward of the Delaware, stipulated that his southern boundary was to be "a circle drawn at twelve miles distant from Newcastle northward, and westwards unto the beginning of the 40th degree of northern latitude."

But Penn, as we have said, was far from satisfied with this boundary; his province, as he saw it, was "lying backwards" unless he possessed those counties that later formed the State of Delaware.

Penn lay siege against his old friend, the Duke of York, who soon would become King. Where rested the truth? Insofar as England had claimed all this domain since the early voyages of the Cabots, what business had the Dutch and Swedes here as settlers in any case? And if this were so, what right had Penn to territory granted to the Calverts half a century before? How could the Dutch and Swedes influence the meaning of the phrase, "hitherto uncultivated"—this was a dispute between Englishmen! So argued the Calverts, then and later, with great vociferation; but Penn had the Duke's ear, and kept buzzing it, or so we are told, until that poor nobleman was "wearied with solicitation" and in 1682, "hoping for benefit from a possession which hitherto [had] yielded him none," conveyed to Penn the three Lower Counties that are now Delaware "as well [as] the town of Newcastle, with a territory twelve miles around it."

The arguments of course were not ended but continued throughout Penn's lifetime and that of Lord Baltimore; and the dispute might have become far stormier if both parties had not faced other troubles. When the Duke of York ascended to the throne as a Protestant, a sectarian tempest raged over who should govern Maryland and the Calverts wisely decided that they must weather this turmoil first. The temper of British colonial policy scarcely gave Penn any greater peace of mind for this was an age when the Crown wished to forget all proprietary claims and take over running the provinces from London.

Penn was in rather a peculiar fix. All the time he had precisely what he wanted—a decree from the Committee of Trade and Plantations, made in 1685, that gave him "a road to his too-backward-lying

province just as wide and as long" as the State of Delaware is today—but nothing could be done about this decision until after Queen Anne had ascended to the throne and Penn had died. A bit of fisticuffing between Marylanders and Pennsylvanians periodically spiced up this border dispute, though a few broken heads settled nothing; and in 1723, or five years after Penn's death, his widow agreed with Lord Baltimore "to preserve the peace" in the hope that their boundary difficulties could be resolved within the next eighteen months.

Nine years later Penn's heirs and the great-grandson of the first Lord Baltimore were still trying to reach an agreement and ending up in cross moods as they quarreled over what point in Newcastle should serve as a center for drawing a circle and whether the twelve miles should be a radius or the periphery. The Calvert huffiness by 1750 took a new turn with an appeal to King George II for a confirmatory grant based on the charter of 1632. George II sent the dispute to where it belonged, the Court of Chancery; and the verdict, when it finally was rendered, favored the Penns and set the middle of Newcastle as far as a middle could be ascertained, as the point for drawing the twelve-mile radius (not periphery).

Between the Penns and the Calverts legal wrangles had now become a habit; an argument over the proper length of a statute mile kept the contestants engaged for a number of months; and so, by one means or another, the dispute managed to stretch on until it was finally settled by a new deed executed July 4, 1760. The following year, according to the archives at Annapolis, nine local surveyors were hired to complete the peninsular east and west line of the boundary and to trace the twelve-mile circle. A survey by a rude chain, with sightings along poles through a narrow cut in the forest, proved painfully slow, and at the end of three years no one seemed satisfied with what had been accomplished.

¶ *History Without Logic*

In the summer of 1763, meeting in London, the Penns and Calverts agreed to start anew. Luck favored them with the availability of “two mathematicians or surveyors” who seemed capable of doing the job and thus into American history and legend walked those mysterious gentlemen, Messrs. Mason and Dixon.

III LAYING THE LINE

PRECIOUS LITTLE is known about Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon beyond the fact that they reached Philadelphia on November 15, 1763. Apparently Mason had been associated at one time with the Royal Observatory at Greenwich, and when in 1767 he was elected a member of the American Philosophical Society he was described simply as a "surveyor, of London." A year later the same designation was employed when Dixon became a member of the Society. Both gentlemen were engaged by the Royal Society to observe the transit of Venus across the sun as seen at the Cape of Good Hope (1761) and at Cavan, Ireland (1769), and a learned publication that appeared in 1787 bore the title, *Mayer's Lunar Tables, improved by Mr. Charles Mason*. Otherwise we know only when they expired: Dixon at Durham, England, in 1777 and Mason in Pennsylvania during February of the following year.

That indefatigable and imaginative Maryland historian of the mid-19th century, John H. B. Latrobe, discouraged by the fact that Mason and Dixon wrote the "merest" business letters and kept a journal "most naked of records" attempted to analyze their character from their handwriting. Mason—or so Latrobe speculated—was a steady,

unhurried penman whether noting a degree of latitude or the presence of suspicious Indians; clearly Mason was "a cool, deliberate, painstaking man, never in a hurry; a man of quiet courage, who crossed the Monongahela with fifteen men, because it was his duty to do so, though he would have much preferred thrice the number at his heels." In contrast Dixon had only flashes of neat handwriting and often lapsed into the carelessness of a schoolboy's scrawl; to Latrobe he was obviously the younger and more active partner, "a man of an impatient spirit and a nervous temperament, just such a man as worked best with a sober-sided colleague."

If Latrobe's deductions are correct, then Dixon must have had his way with Mason, for these two gentlemen no sooner touched ground in Philadelphia than they were hell-bent to unpack their instruments and get on with their survey. Though they adopted the peninsular east and west line of earlier surveyors, along with their radius and tangent point, Mason and Dixon had still to ascertain and establish the tangent from the middle point of the peninsular line to "the tangent point," and the meridian from here to a point fifteen miles south of the most southern part of Philadelphia, "with the arc of the circle to the west of it, the fifteen miles distance, and the parallel westward from its termination." They finished this task with a real respect for those predecessors who had made the rude chain-measurements of 1761 and 1762, for they found that their true tangent line "would not pass one inch to the westward or eastward" of the post marking the old tangent point. They measured off the fifteen miles and established the northeastern corner of Maryland; thus they reached the beginning of the parallel of latitude that was to provide the boundary between the two provinces.

Even their journal, that "most naked of records," cannot quite

squeeze the romance from their subsequent labors. Primeval forests rang with the clang of perspiring axemen clearing away the trees in a path eight feet wide to form "a visto" for setting up the posts to mark the line of the parallel. By June 17, 1765, they reached the Susquehanna and the proprietors must have been encouraged for they sent instructions to continue the line "as far as the provinces of Maryland and Pennsylvania were settled and inhabited."

Late October brought Mason and Dixon to North Mountain, which they climbed in the company of a Captain Shelby. The summit afforded a good view of the Potomac and of the Allegheny Mountains which they judged to be some fifty miles away in the direction of the line. The axemen returned to their chores; trees tumbled down, birds squawked at the intrusion, and curious Indians glowered and muttered at this white man's nonsense. One source, describing the eight-foot swath they cut, said that it could be seen for about two miles, "beautifully terminating to the eye in a point." That "cool, deliberate" fellow, Charles Mason, gave another view of the forest scene:

"*Nota Bene*: From any eminence in the line, where fifteen or twenty miles of the visto can be seen (of which there are many), the said line, or visto, very apparently shows itself to form a parallel of latitude.

"The line is measured horizontal; the hills and mountains, with a 16½-foot level; and, besides the mile posts, we have set posts in the true line marked *W*, on the West side, all along the line opposite the stationary points, where the sector and transit instrument stood. The said points stand in the middle of the visto. . . ."

Mason wrote these sentences in late September of 1766, and the work of the survey, which had now reached the summit of the Little Allegheny, had been stalled since June 4th; it would not be resumed

until the following June. The cause of the delay was that vague, sometimes all-encompassing reason—"Indian troubles." After all, these forests to the Shawnees and Delawares were "their woods" and a little deviltry could go a long way in teaching the white men with their transits, brass chains, posts and axes who were the real masters here. Prudence on the part of the surveyors rather than any overt act by the roving Indian bands seems to have decided the delay and meanwhile Sir William Johnson negotiated with the chiefs of the Six Nations to provide protection for the boundary marksmen.

By the time the chiefs of the Six Nations were satisfied with the activities of Mason and Dixon and had sent an escort of fourteen Indians, with an interpreter, to accompany the surveying party, the date was June 8, 1767. Within six days the line was pushed forward from the summit of the Little Allegheny to the summit of the Great Allegheny; everyone should have been happy. "And so the Indian becomes the protector against the Indian, as they mark the boundary of the sovereignties that, before long, are to obliterate the very memory of their aboriginal possessors," wrote Latrobe in an age when even Americans along the eastern seaboard lived close enough to the frontier to have conscience pangs over the vanishing redman.

Whether the escorts from the Six Nations quite approved of all "this gazing into the heavens, and measuring upon the earth" became a moot point, as Latrobe has noted; in August a Mohawk chief and his nephew went home, presumably having had a bellyful of such odd behavior. Soon the geese were honking overhead and the restless Shawnees and Delawares were back roaming "their woods."

On September 29 twenty-six of the white party had tossed at night long enough, fretting over what these Shawnee and Delaware rascals might do; they picked up their axes and left. Discouraged but not dis-

heartened, Mason and Dixon pushed on with the remaining fifteen axemen, hoping that recruits from Fort Cumberland would soon reach them. Not long afterward they came to a valley, calling its stream Dunkard Creek on their map, and here they encountered an insurmountable obstacle. In effect, their escorts said: "You have come to an Indian warpath and it is the will of the Six Nations that you go no farther." The proposition was unarguable; Mason and Dixon returned to Philadelphia, their labors ended.

In a report filed with the commissioners and dated November 9, 1768, Mason and Dixon's survey was described as covering "244 miles, 38 chains, and 36 links" from the Delaware or "230 miles, 18 chains, and 21 links" from its beginning at the northeast corner of Maryland. Honorably discharged from a labor of almost four years on the day after Christmas, Mason and Dixon were paid off and the Penns, reckoning that their boundary surveys from 1760 to 1768 had now cost £34,200 (Pennsylvania currency), must have hoped this business was at last settled. Thirty-six miles of the whole distance still remained to be run, however, a task that was subsequently completed by other hands; and later disputes as to the exact location of the line resulted in further surveys in 1849 and 1900, but no important error was found in the line decided upon by Mason and Dixon at the parallel of $39^{\circ} 43' 26.3''$, north latitude.

Souvenir hunters, removing the milestones set down by Mason and Dixon, were in large part responsible for these later surveys. The stones, carefully cut in England from oölitic limestone (known more popularly as Portland stone), were marked with a P on one side and an M on the other except that at every fifth mile the stones bore the coat of arms of the Penns and Lord Baltimore. As early as 1768 the stone at the "middle point" on the peninsular east and west line disappeared, a victim of fortune-hunters raised on tales that Captain Kidd

and other pirates had buried treasures along the shores of the Chesapeake. More than one mile marker was lost to these "money diggers," who for generations refused to believe that these stones—and especially those bearing armorial inscriptions—had not been left in the forests by treasure-bearing freebooters.

Writing in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* for September, 1876, the Reverend Tryon Edwards, who should have been a reliable witness, remembered seeing one such mile marker used as a cornerstone and support of a cornhouse; nearby four or five other mile markers provided the steps to the front door of a Negro's cabin. Since both these observations were made in Washington County, Maryland, near the site of old Fort Frederick, vandalism probably was not involved. When the last shipload of milestones arrived, Mason and Dixon had stopped their survey at the warpath; the stones, dumped at the fort, must have constituted a nuisance and anyone willing to cart them away should have been encouraged to do so. Through the years other milestones have been recovered from their impressment as doorsteps and curbstones; and future souvenir hunters, who read these pages, are forewarned that sooner or later the vigilant historian, if not the long arm of the law, will catch up with such mischief!

Our old friend, John Latrobe, presented his famous lecture about Mason and Dixon's Line in 1854. He was filled with the romance of his story—of how all colonial history was caught up in this tale and how from these scattered beginnings a proud nation had arisen. But he was worried too: clouds of civil war then gathered over that proud Republic, of which Mason and Dixon's Line had become the storm center, and he could only pray that "the Mason and Dixon's line of politics will gradually change its position until, as cloud-shadows pass, leaving earth in sunlight, we shall be seen, of all, to be a united and

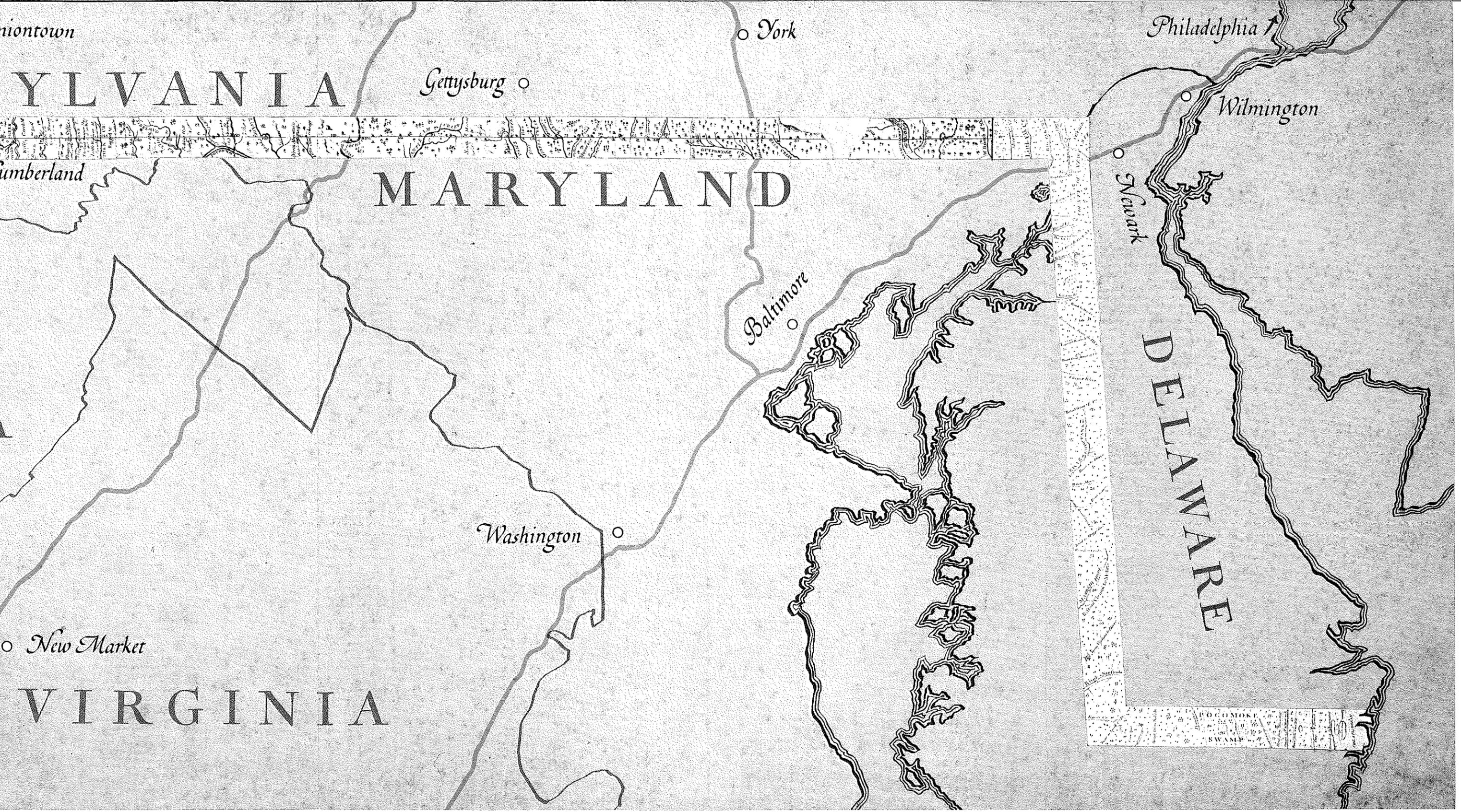
homogeneous people, not in this generation, or the next, or the next, but still, at an early date, looking to what we believe, under God, will be the duration of the Republic.”

A war came and passed; the Union endured; and now, a century later, that fact is the richest heritage of all in this story of the boundary which honors the memory of those two mysterious gentlemen from London.

THIS BOOKLET IS THE twelfth publication in a series of Americana commissioned each year by the Curtis Paper Company of Newark, Delaware.

The map in this booklet has been drawn by David Soshensky with the Mason and Dixon line placed in cartographic position. The eastern portion of the strip is reproduced from the original manuscript by Messrs. Mason and Dixon bearing their signatures. The cartouche on our cover has been adapted from this original. The western portion of the line is reproduced from a contemporary engraving based on the original surveys. These maps have been made available to us by the Princeton University Library to whom acknowledgment is made with pleasure and with thanks.

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Uniontown

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Philadelphia

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Gettysburg

Cumberland

MARYLAND

Wilmington

Newark

DELAWARE

Baltimore

Washington

New Market

VIRGINIA

↖
Wheeling

○ *Uniontown*

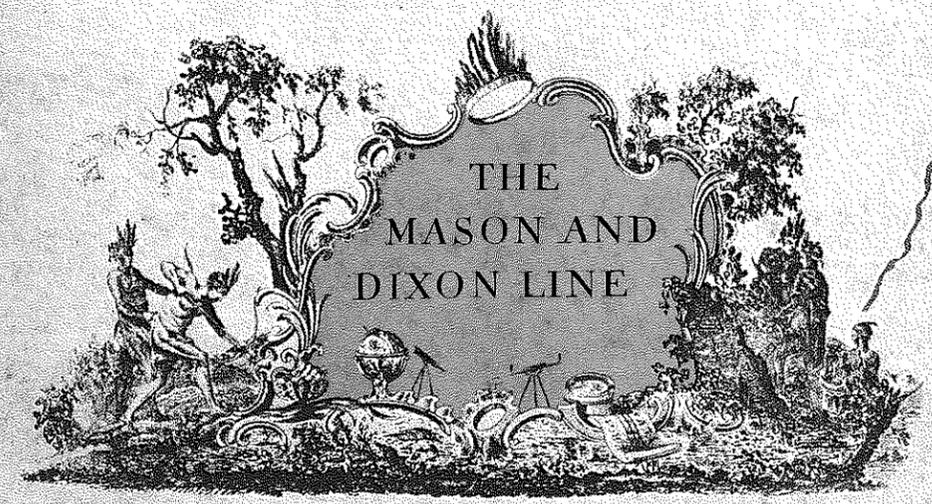
PENNSYLVANIA



○ *Cumberland*

○ *Grafton*

WEST VIRGINIA



○ *New Market*

VIRGINIA