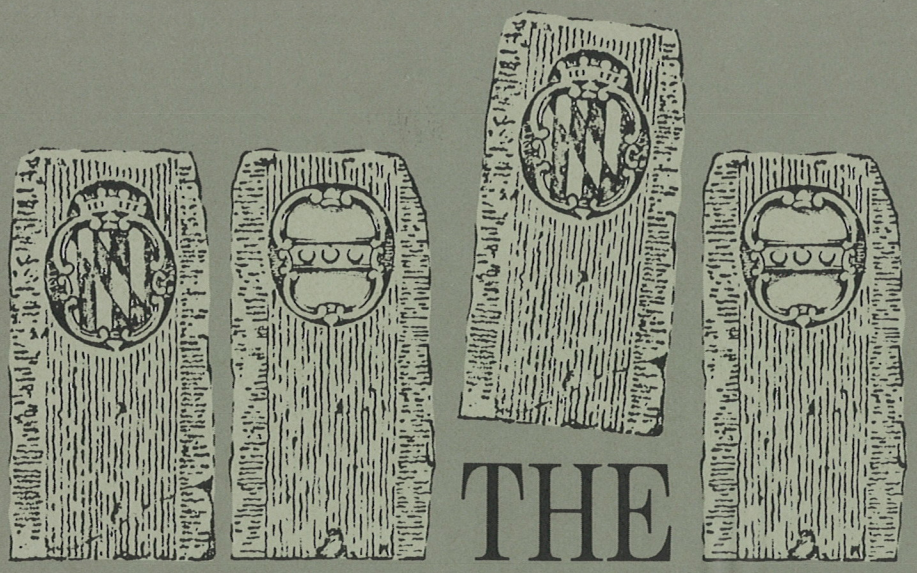


THE MASON/DIXON LINE

Commemoration
of the
Resurvey of the Mason / Dixon Line
(North—South Boundary)

Maryland—Delaware Route 404 at the
Mason / Dixon Line

Monday, June 26, 1978
11:00 A.M.

U.S. Department of Commerce
National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration

SCVTO BONÆ VOLVNTATIS TVÆ CORONASTI NOS

GREAT SEAL OF THE STATE OF DELAWARE

1793·1847·1911

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

PROGRAM

Master of Ceremonies

John O. Phillips
Captain, NOAA
Acting Director
National Geodetic Survey

Guest Speakers

Glenn C. Kenton
Secretary of State,
Delaware

Fred L. Wineland
Secretary of State,
Maryland

Dr. Kenneth N. Weaver
Director, Maryland
Geological Survey

Representative
Delaware State Boundary
Commission

Allen L. Powell
Rear Admiral, NOAA
Director
National Ocean Survey

Ralph G. Poust
National Geodetic Survey

Unveiling of Monument

Secretary Glenn C. Kenton
Secretary Fred L. Wineland

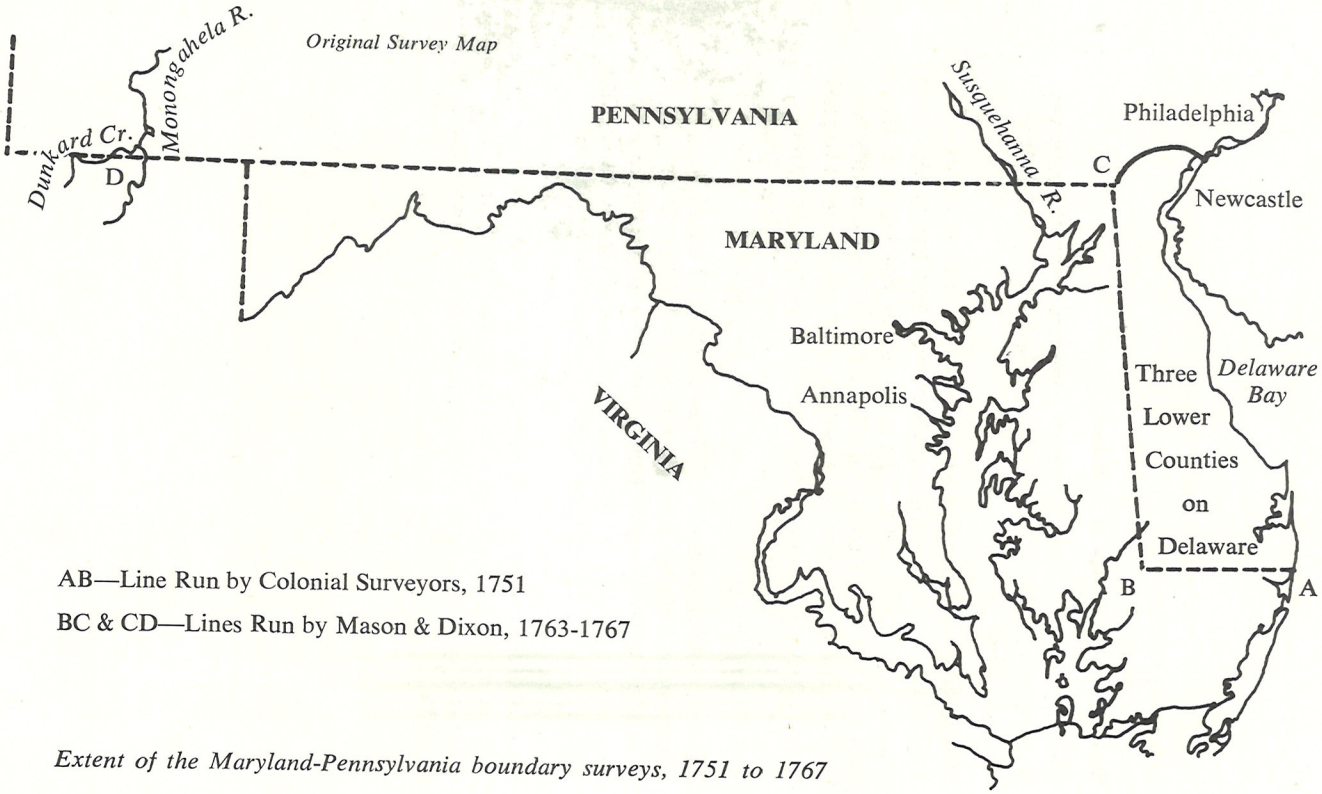
Concluding remarks by Captain John O. Phillips

Honored Guests and Friends:

Welcome to this ceremony which commemorates the resurvey of the territorial boundaries between the States of Maryland and Delaware.

This gathering is being held on the north-south boundary (the Mason/Dixon Line), originally surveyed by Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon in 1764. The resurvey by the National Ocean Survey, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Department of Commerce, was undertaken at the joint request of the Board of Natural Resources of the State of Maryland, and the State Archivist and Chief Engineer of the Highway Department of the State of Delaware. It was completed in 1962.

The east-west boundary (the Transpeninsular Line) was originally laid out by Colonial surveyors in 1751. This boundary resurvey was completed in 1974 as a result of a cooperative agreement between the National Ocean Survey, the Delaware State Boundary Commission, and the Maryland Geological Survey. On May 7, 1975, the States of Delaware and Maryland entered into a Memorandum of Understanding for the purpose of resetting monuments on the two boundaries and establishing new markers. The remonumentation was completed in 1976.



AB—Line Run by Colonial Surveyors, 1751

BC & CD—Lines Run by Mason & Dixon, 1763-1767

Extent of the Maryland-Pennsylvania boundary surveys, 1751 to 1767

Colonial Survey of the East-West Boundary, 1751

In accordance with a decree by Lord Hardwicke in May 1750, Commissioners from the provinces of Maryland and Pennsylvania met in the latter part of 1750 and agreed that surveyors employed on both sides should run the boundary line from Fenwick Island to the Chesapeake Bay. This boundary survey, identified as the Transpeninsular Line, was completed in 1751.

Mason-Dixon Survey of the North-South Boundary, 1763-1767

To settle long-standing boundary disputes, Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon, two English mathematician-surveyors, were engaged by the Penns and the Calverts (Lords Baltimore) to assist in completing surveys of the Maryland-Pennsylvania boundary. (The Three Lower Counties of Pennsylvania included in this survey later became the State of Delaware.) They arrived in Philadelphia on November 15, 1763. About two weeks later, they met with the Commissioners from Maryland and Pennsylvania to outline the necessary survey operations.

These operations are best described in a letter to Thomas Penn, as follows:

"Sir

We arrived here the 15th of November and immediately wrote to Governor Sharp signifying our arrival. On the 30th of November the Commissioners from Maryland came to this City and, they in conjunction with those of Pennsilvania, have given us instructions to the following purpose.

1st—to settle the latitude of the southernmost point of the City of Philadelphia by the Sector, (which we are now about).

2nd—to find a point by the Sector, 30 or 35 miles west from this place, having the same latitude as the southernmost point of this City.

3rd—From this point so found to measure 15 miles horizontally due south, which done, to observe the latitude of the south end of the said Line p Sector, and so proceed to run the parallel of latitude thro this last point which is to be the north boundary of Maryland and south boundary of Pennsilvania.

4th—On the 15th of June next, (if we receive no further orders from the Commissioners), we are to begin the Tangent, as those already run for Tangent are so very irregular differing from each other in the middle about 200 feet.

5th—When we judge we are within 10 days of finishing the said Tangent, we are to inform the Commissioners that they may meet us at Tangent Point or thereabout.

As our instruments are in very good order, and not in the least damaged by the voyage, we hope by the end of next summer, to give a satisfactory account of all the above work mentioned in our instructions.

We are
Sir
Your most obedient and
humble Servants

Charles Mason
Jeremiah Dixon"

Crownstone set by Mason and Dixon in 1764

The crownstones used by Mason and Dixon in the boundary survey, were cut and carved on the Isle of Portland, Dorsetshire, England. The stones, which are made of oolitic limestone and have shields from the Coats of Arms of the Penns on one side and of the Calverts (Lords Baltimore) on the opposite side, mark each fifth mile of the boundary. The milestones between the five-mile markers are carved with M and P on opposite sides.

These stones, which Mason and Dixon placed on the boundary, served as ballast on ships which came from England.

Department of Commerce Resurvey of the Maryland-Delaware Boundaries

In the early 1950's, an inspection was made of all monuments along the Maryland-Delaware boundaries. The majority of the monuments, established about 200 years earlier, were generally in good condition. However, some were chipped or broken, and others were out of position or missing. A report on the condition of each monument was then published by the Maryland Board of Natural Resources (Bayliff 1959). As a result of this report, officials of the States of Maryland and Delaware held a special meeting in January 1954, and agreed on a plan for the restoration and maintenance of their common boundaries. Quoting in part from Bayliff:

"FIRST, Maryland and Delaware will request Congress to pass an act directing the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey to resurvey the Maryland-Delware boundaries with the following objectives:*

(a) To reproduce with the greatest possible fidelity the original Maryland-Delaware boundaries laid down by Colonial surveyors in 1751 and by Mason and Dixon during the years 1763-1767.

(b) To locate as accurately as possible the original position of each marker installed on these boundaries; and

(c) To tie the original position of each boundary marker to the triangulation system of the surrounding territory so that the correct position of any marker can be accurately determined at any time in the future."

* The U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey was renamed the National Ocean Survey in 1970.

In accordance with these recommendations, a bill was passed by the 84th Congress and signed by President Eisenhower on August 11, 1955. This bill states:

"The Secretary of Commerce, acting through the Coast and Geodetic Survey, is authorized and directed, upon the joint request of (1) the Board of Natural Resources of the State of Maryland, and (2) the State Archivist and the Chief Engineer of the Highway Department of the State of Delaware to resurvey that part of the common boundary running generally north and south between the States of Maryland and Delaware which was originally surveyed and marked by Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon in the years 1763-1767 with a view to assisting such States to remark or otherwise delineate such boundary."

One of these numbered disks is placed every mile on the Mason/Dixon Line.

In this bill, Congress did not provide funds to carry out the resurvey as directed; however, in 1956 the Coast and Geodetic Survey (C&GS) made a reconnaissance of the north-south and the east-west boundaries between the two States to ascertain the condition of all boundary monuments and to recover the triangulation stations needed to connect the boundary survey to the National Network of Horizontal Control. Following this reconnaissance survey, no action was taken by the C&GS to perform a resurvey of the boundaries because funds still had not been appropriated. Then, in the early part of 1961, the Secretary of Commerce directed the C&GS to make a resurvey of the north-south boundary between the States of Maryland and Delaware in accordance with the Congressional Act of 1955. Field operations began in August 1961, and the project was completed in March 1962.

While the north-south boundary resurvey was in progress, officials of Maryland and Delaware made a request to the Director, C&GS, that a resurvey of the east-west boundary be performed following completion of the north-south boundary resurvey. A letter from the Director to the States' officials, dated December 15, 1961, states:

"You probably are aware that the current work is being done in accordance with a bill passed by Congress in 1955. At present, we do not have funds for an extension of the boundary survey, and such an undertaking with Federal funds would have to be approved by Congress. Perhaps the States of Delaware and Maryland would be interested in promoting the project."

The States' officials were very much interested in promoting this resurvey, since the boundary monuments had been established at intervals of five miles in the original survey of 1751. However, because of numerous delays, final action for a resurvey of the east-west boundary was not taken until 1973. Later in 1973, a cost-sharing agreement was signed by officials of the two States and the Director, National Ocean Survey, for a resurvey of the east-west boundary. This was completed in June 1974.

The remonumentation of the north-south (Mason/Dixon Line) and the east-west (Transpeninsular Line) survey was completed in 1976.

Acknowledgments

Maryland Historical Society, for assistance with Maryland State seal on the monument plaque.

Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs, Delaware, for assistance with Delaware State seal on the monument plaque.

Historical Society of Talbot County, Maryland, for loan of replica of crownstone for National Ocean Survey exhibit.

William J. Hingst, *The Banner Newspaper,* Easton, Maryland, photograph of crownstone.

And to the many other Delaware and Maryland State agencies, officials, and surveyors who assisted in this project and the ceremony preparations.

References

Bayliff, William H., The Maryland-Pennsylvania and the Maryland-Delaware Boundaries, *Bulletin* No. 4, 2nd Edition, July 1959, Maryland Board of Natural Resources, Annapolis, Maryland.

Meade, B. K., *Report on Surveys of Delaware-Maryland Boundaries,* National Ocean Survey, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, to be published in 1978. Copies will be available from Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402.