BOUNDARIES
How the MASON-DIXON LINE Settled a FAMILY FEUD & Divided a NATION

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WE LIVE IN A WORLD OF BOUNDARIES.

Boundary stories are plentiful in newspapers, on television, and on the Internet. A country at war with itself divides into two separate nations. Religious boundaries lead to persecution. Cultural boundaries reflect the rich texture of diversity but also the tensions that arise when people misunderstand or misinterpret societal differences. Scientific boundaries range from the ethics of cloning to the exploration of new galaxies. All these boundaries—how they change and how they don’t—shape our world and who we are, as individuals and as members of the world community.

The story of the Mason-Dixon Line encompasses many different boundaries, some hundreds of years old. It begins with a country and the religious persecution of its own people. It becomes a property dispute. An escalating clash across cultural boundaries is part of the tale. So is surpassing a scientific boundary to achieve a feat many people deemed impossible. The line’s story slices through history and helps us
understand how human perceptions and the course of a country change over time. It is the story of how a political boundary became a symbol of freedom that helped shape the history of the United States. The tale of the Mason-Dixon Line reminds us to question the boundaries that surround us. And because it does, it is a tale for all times.

In some ways, the tale of the Mason-Dixon Line is a story of two: two feuding families, two colonies in America, two kings named Charles, and two adventuresome surveyors. It is also the tale of how nighttime skies steered daytime courses. To fully know the Mason-Dixon Line’s boundaries, you must know its roots. They begin in faraway places, then twist and turn in surprising new directions. They wind through heartbreak and triumph. And sometimes, without warning, they unexpectedly veer into danger.
Chapter One

OLD-WORLD PREJUDICE, NEW-WORLD DREAMS

MEET THE CALVERTS

The Calvert family was very familiar with boundaries and their restrictions. Even before his birth, in 1579, religious boundaries controlled George Calvert's life. His parents, Leonard and Alicia, were Roman Catholics. For them, worshipping publicly in England was illegal. As a little boy, George Calvert saw the Protestant authorities of Yorkshire force his father to conform to the Anglican Church. Had he refused, government jobs would have been closed to him and English society would have ostracized his family. He could even have faced imprisonment. Four years after his mother's death, George Calvert watched the same authorities similarly pressure his stepmother, who did refuse to conform. In reprisal, the authorities ordered Leonard to send twelve-year-old George and his younger brother, Christopher, to a village miles away from home, where a Protestant tutor would educate them.
When he was a teenager, George Calvert was, as his father had been, ordered to conform to the Anglican Church. The pressure was intense. If George failed to cross this religious boundary, certain futures would become impossible. He could never attend university— that was forbidden to Catholics. Nor could he hold a government job. Yet English society expected a boy with the Calvert family status to do both. George understood that, like his father, he had little choice. He complied and attended Anglican services. He never spoke publicly about how this made him feel.

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**CATHOLICS AND PROTESTANTS**

In the early part of the sixteenth century, the Roman Catholic Church festered with dissension about religious beliefs and practices. A group called Protestants split from the Roman Catholic Church and established Protestant denominations. For political and personal reasons, England’s King Henry VIII renounced the Catholic Church and in 1534 established the Protestant Anglican Church—also called the Church of England—as the country’s official church. Religious and political matters were not separated. English Protestants believed a person could be a loyal British subject only if he or she was a member of the Anglican Church. According to them, Catholics, such as the Calverts, placed loyalty to their religious leader, the pope, above loyalty to England. As a result, most Protestants regarded Catholics with mistrust and suspicion. Just ten years before George Calvert was born, one Englishman described the Calverts’ predominantly Catholic neighborhood in Yorkshire as “evil in religion.”

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George Calvert, the first Lord Baltimore, had ambitious plans for a colony in America.
POLITICS, DEATH, AND HOPE

George Calvert graduated from Oxford University, studied law in London, and began his political career in 1603 as the private secretary to Sir Robert Cecil, secretary of state to King James I. The following year, George married Anne Mynne, and a year later, their son Cecil was born. He and the many siblings who followed were all baptized into the Anglican Church.

As a discreet, skilled diplomat, Calvert quickly earned King James’s respect. He was knighted in 1617 and two years later was named one of England’s two secretaries of state. He bought a country estate in Yorkshire and planned the construction of his home there, Kiplin Hall. In 1621, Calvert thought beyond English boundaries and bought land in the New World, in Newfoundland, today a province of Canada. He expected that business ventures importing fish, timber, and other natural resources from Newfoundland would further enrich him and raise the Calvert family’s status.

Kiplin Hall, George Calvert’s country house, reflected his increasing power and wealth.
George Calvert and other Englishmen weren't alone in purchasing land in the New World. French explorers had navigated the Saint Lawrence River. Spain and Portugal had established settlements in the Caribbean and Mexico in the sixteenth century. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Spanish and Portuguese slave traders took African captives to the New World. In August 1619, the same year George Calvert became a secretary of state, the first Africans arrived in the Virginia colony, in America, when two planters traded food supplies for the 20 and odd Negroes on board Captain Jope's ship the White Lion. But in 1620, when George Calvert purchased his Newfoundland property, people living in Virginia were not on his mind.

Juggling business ventures, construction, and politics consumed all Calvert's time. In London, he was King James's advocate for a political alliance called the Spanish Match. The king sought a political advantage by having his son, Prince Charles, marry the youngest daughter of Spain's king Philip III. But King Philip and his family were Catholics. Fearing that this connection to Catholicism might threaten Anglican boundaries and influence British policies, the Spanish Match was highly unpopular with Parliament, England's governing body.

In August 1622, tragedy struck the Calvert family: Anne died in childbirth. Losing Anne, who was the dear companion and only comfort of his life, devastated George. Yet his ten children needed love and care; he had no choice but to carry on.

The following year, when King James granted him a royal charter for a large tract of land in Newfoundland, Calvert's ambitions grew. A royal charter gives certain rights and privileges to a person or a company. The charter granted Calvert the right to establish his own colony, the Province of Avalon. As Avalon's lord proprietor, Calvert swore allegiance to the king but had the power to rule his colony independently to set his own boundaries. Even as Calvert received the Avalon charter, he lost favor...
with Parliament over the Spanish Match and his friendship with Spanish Catholics. In February 1625, he resigned his position as secretary of state.

And then, making no public explanation, George Calvert converted back to Catholicism. His decision shocked his former colleagues. Yet King James did not withdraw his personal support. He publicly acknowledged his continuing regard for Calvert by granting him a manor in Ireland and the title Lord Baltimore. After King James’s death, in March 1625, his son, King Charles I, acceded to parliamentary pressure and approved increasingly anti-Catholic policies. This may be why Calvert soon moved his family to Ireland, which was predominantly Catholic.

Good reports from his agents in Newfoundland convinced Calvert that his family’s future was in the New World. In Avalon, he would make money, enriching his family, the king, and England. But Calvert sought more than riches and power. He wanted to change the boundary between politics and religion. He intended to prove to Protestant doubters that a Roman Catholic could also be a loyal British subject.
**AVALON**

In June 1627, when the Calverts visited Avalon, they found the colony deserted. George’s agents had lied about the colony’s progress and left. Still, Calvert remained hopeful that the colony would be successful, particularly if he assumed on-site control. He also pushed England’s religious boundary with a daring move: he let the Catholic priests who accompanied him to Avalon hold Mass in one end of his house while allowing Protestants to hold services in the other. This never would have been permitted in England. In Avalon, however, Calvert had the authority to do so.

Calvert moved his family to Avalon permanently in 1628. Twenty-three-year-old Cecil, George’s oldest son and heir, remained in England with his bride, Anne Arundell. While the rest of the family struggled in Avalon, Cecil managed the family’s English properties and, in his own right, gained the respect of King Charles I and other members of government.

Despite George’s hard work and high hopes, Avalon did not live up to his dreams. In a letter to King Charles, he wrote despairingly of the winter of 1628 to 1629: “from the midst of October to the midst of May there is a sad face of winter upon all this land. . . . My house hath been an hospital all this winter . . . of 100 persons, 50 [are] sick at a time, my self being one and nine or ten of them dyed.”

Unwavering in his dream of a New World colony, Calvert ended his letter, “I am determined . . . to remove my self with some 40 persons to your Majesty’s dominion of Virginia, where if your Majesty will please to grant me a precinct of land with such privileges as the King your father my gracious master was pleased to grant me here [in Newfoundland], I shall endeavor to the utmost of my power to deserve it.”
MOVING SOUTH

In the seventeenth century, smoking was the new rage in England. By the time the Calverts arrived in Virginia, in September 1629, English planters in the Virginia colony were already growing tobacco—a New World plant as profitable as gold.

George Calvert liked what he saw as he sailed toward Chesapeake Bay. By October 1629, he was on his way to England to persuade King Charles I to grant him a second royal charter, this time for a colony on Chesapeake Bay. In establishing this colony, though, Calvert had even more ambitious boundaries in mind. In his new colony, religion and politics would be separate.

For three years, George Calvert, his son Cecil, and influential government friends meticulously crafted and negotiated the terms of Calvert’s colonial charter with King Charles I. Recognizing the benefits goods from Calvert’s colony would fatten not only England’s purse but also his own, King Charles I approved. He declared George Calvert, Lord Baltimore, the colony’s lord proprietor. This meant that when George died, his heirs would inherit the title and the colony. By the spring of 1632, the charter for the Province of

Cecil Calvert and his grandson Cecil, who visited England in 1669-1670. The other boy, whose name is unknown, may have been a family servant.
Maryland—named in honor of King Charles’s wife, Queen Henrietta Maria—needed only final approval and official seals. There was one major difference between the charters for Avalon and Maryland: the stated intent to bring Christianity to the Indians living there. Ironically, even as Calvert removed a religious boundary and granted religious freedom to his colonists, he was required to convert the local native people to the Christian faith.

And then, with his colonial dream on the verge of reality, George Calvert fell seriously ill. He died on April 15, 1632, before the charter was passed. Achieving George’s dream of a Maryland colony was left to his son Cecil, who became the second Lord Baltimore upon his father’s death.
ON JUNE 20, 1632, when the charter for Maryland was signed and sealed, Cecil Calvert, although he lived in England, became lord proprietor of the Province of Maryland. Although Cecil had the right to set political and religious boundaries for Maryland, King Charles had the right to set its geographical boundaries. The charter partially describes Maryland as a peninsula surrounded by the Atlantic Ocean on the east, Chesapeake Bay on the west, and the Potomac River to the south. The colony’s northern boundary was described as that land "which lieth under the Fortieth Degree of Northern Latitude . . . where New England ends."

At that time, King Charles I, the Calverts, and even English map-makers had no specific knowledge of exactly which lands the fortieth degree of latitude crossed. Consequently, none of them had any idea of the huge fuss forty degrees of North latitude would cause in the future.
George Alsop was an indentured servant in Maryland from 1648 to 1652. He drew this map in 1666. It gave Europeans a tantalizing glimpse of the Chesapeake colonial frontier.

**A DARING DESIGN**

As lord proprietor, Cecil established Maryland on three foundations that he and his father believed to be crucial. The first that colonists could acquire their own land served a twofold purpose: it extended the English empire, and it gave the colonists property so they could increase their wealth. Loyalty to England and to the lord proprietor was the colony’s second foundation. The third foundation concerned religious boundaries.

Unlike England, Maryland would have no official established religion. To assure that religion would be a private matter, Cecil instituted a daring policy called liberty of conscience. Under this policy, as long as a colonist was loyal to the lord proprietor, no government positions would be withheld from him because of his religious beliefs. Nor would
a colonist be granted any special privileges because of his or her religious beliefs. Liberty of conscience was an unheard-of freedom in seventeenth-century England. Yet as soon as Cecil’s colonists reached Maryland’s shores, they would have it.

HIGH SEAS AND NEW NEIGHBORS

In November 1633, two ships, the Ark and the Dove, containing about 140 colonists—a mixture of Catholics and Protestants—left England for Maryland. Cecil Calvert and his family, however, remained in England, where Cecil felt he could best defend Maryland’s charter from political rivals. Leonard Calvert, Cecil’s twenty-seven-year-old brother, was one of the colonists; Cecil had appointed him as the province’s first governor. Also on board were priests who belonged to the Catholic religious order known as the Society of Jesus, or more simply as the Jesuits. Led by Father Andrew White, the Jesuits were there to fulfill the charter’s mission of converting native inhabitants to Christianity. To avoid conflict with the Protestants, the priests paid their own way and were subject to the same conditions as the other free colonists on the voyage.

Cecil Calvert recognized the likelihood of religious tension between Catholic and Protestant colonists and sought to forestall it in a letter of instructions. In it, he directed Leonard and other officials to preserve unity and peace amongst all the passengers on Shipp-board, and that they suffer no scandal nor offence to be given to any of the Protestants, whereby any just complaint may hereafter be made, by them, in Virginia or in England. He requested that all observance of the Catholic religion be done as privately as may be. Furthermore, Catholic colonists were not to discuss or debate religion, and government officials were to treat the Protestants with as much mildness and favor as Justice will permit.
The Maryland Dove is a replica of a 16th century merchant ship. She is named after the Dove, which carried supplies to Maryland in 1634.

In early March 1634, three months after leaving England, the Ark and the Dove sailed into Chesapeake Bay, described by Father White as "the most delightfull water I ever saw." While the waters of the bay delighted the colonists, the first view of their new neighbors may have worried them. Father White noted, "At our first coming we found . . . the king of Pascatoway had drawne together 500 bowmen, great pres were made by night over all the Country." As Native Americans observed the Ark and Dove, they felt a similar unease. News that the English "came in a Canow as bigg as an Iland, with so many men, as trees were in a wood, with great terrour unto them all" quickly spread among native villages. Neither group knew what to expect.

The Ark and Dove sailed up the Potomac River and landed at Saint Clements Island, where officials erected a cross and claimed the land. Later, accompanied by an interpreter, Leonard Calvert journeied
farther inland and met with the leader of the Pascatoways, who according to Father White gave leave to us to sett downe where we pleased.

The colonists chose a settlement site along the Saint Mary River, near the mouth of the Potomac. They traded Òaxes, hoes, cloth and hatchetsÓ with the Yaocomoco Indians in exchange for a large parcel of land along the river shore. For several months, the Yaocomoco people and the English colonists shared the site, which the English named Saint Mary City. This site and the Virginia colony’s Jamestown were the only two English towns in the Chesapeake Bay area.

**MOVING FORWARD**

Slowly, Maryland gained a toehold in America. Managing the colony long-distance, Cecil assigned manor lands to a select group of his colonists, who either paid for the land outright or rented it. They tendered part of every crop to the lord proprietor. In ten years, the colony’s population grew to between five and six hundred settlers.

Life in Maryland wasn’t easy. Building and sustaining a colonial homestead meant that everyone, even the wealthy, worked. Additionally, tobacco is a labor-intensive crop. All planters who could afford to hired help, mostly males. From 1634 to 1635, men outnumbered women six to one. During the second half of the seventeenth century, as other types of labor increased and as families were established, the ratio dropped to three to one.
A SERVANT WORKFORCE

ALTHOUGH SOME FAMILIES immigrated to the new colony of Maryland, most colonists were individuals seeking prosperous lives. Most of the early immigrants could not read or write. But public documents such as court records, wills, and estate inventories provide records of their lives. During the first half of the seventeenth century, the majority of Maryland’s workforce came from England as indentured servants enticed to the colony with the promise of fifty acres of land at the end of their indenture. These people signed a legal document called an indenture, in which they agreed to work for a landowner (called the master) for a specific length of time, usually four to five years. In return, the master paid the servant’s passage to Maryland and fed and housed him or her during the period of indenture. A master could sell an indenture to a third party if he or she so desired. The majority of indentured servants were seventeen to twenty-eight years old.

While most of the servants were English, some were African. During the first half of the seventeenth century, the English did not commonly use the term slave. All African and European workers, regardless of legal status, were called servants. In seventeenth-century English America, slavery was not hereditary, nor was it always a lifetime condition. A predetermined time limit could be set, although the term was often so long as to make freedom unlikely. Most of the Africans were slaves, but some were freemen. Others served as indentured servants for the term of their indenture and were then free of further obligation to the landowner.

As much as Cecil Calvert wished he could go to Maryland, he felt that he could best protect his colony’s boundaries, both geographical and religious, by remaining in England, where he lobbied endlessly on Maryland’s behalf. Leonard’s regular reports kept Cecil abreast of operations in the colony. While tobacco was Maryland’s chief cash crop, Cecil requested that Leonard also send goods such as timber and animal hides. Sometimes, though, his requests went unfulfilled. In April 1638, Leonard regretfully wrote, “The cedar you writt for... I could not
procure to send this yeare by reason there is very few to be found that are usefull tymbre trees. Ships loaded with trade goods regularly sailed between America and England.

While wild animals such as wolves, bears, and mountain lions roamed Maryland's forests, domesticated animals, specifically hogs and cattle, also posed a threat to a colonist's survival, as they could wreak havoc on crucial food crops. The solution? Fences although, in contrast to modern fencing practices, Marylanders enclosed their gardens rather than their livestock. Loose pigs and cows fended for themselves in the countryside. Colonists notched the animals' ears in different patterns to indicate individual ownership.
A tenant farmer's one-story home, with a loft for storage and sleeping, was clapboard covered. The chimney was made of wattle and daub.

Acre by acre, Marylanders carved their place in America. And perhaps most important to Cecil Calvert, Catholics worshipped openly in Saint Mary’s City, fulfilling the dream of liberty of conscience that his father and he had shared. However, religious tensions between Protestant and Catholic Marylanders grew. Some Protestants worried that the Jesuit priests who were preaching in Indian villages might turn the native inhabitants against the Protestants. Maryland’s Protestants and Catholics argued about ongoing disagreements in England between the king and Parliament. Colonists grumbled about some of Lord Baltimore’s policies concerning land grants in the province. Gradually, these tensions began to threaten the very survival of the province’s unique policy.
THE SEASONING TIME

Death was no stranger to Maryland’s colonists. Swampy conditions and impure water caused fevers and diseases, such as dysentery, that killed many immigrants within weeks of their arrival. Changes in climate and diet, plus a harsh work routine, led to more deaths. Those who survived this period, which the colonists called the “seasoning time,” could expect a hard life. Seventy percent of the men died before age fifty. Women had an even shorter life span. A quarter of the babies died during their first year, and half of those who survived infancy died before they reached the age of twenty. Most children lost at least one parent. Step and half brothers and sisters became very common due to the remarriage of the surviving parent. And the court assigned orphans without relatives to new families, for whom they worked in return for room and board.

A COUNTRY AT WAR

Troubled times in Maryland reflected troubled times in England. In London, conflict reigned between King Charles I and Parliament. Believing his right to rule came directly from God, King Charles claimed that he alone was best qualified to make important governmental decisions. Many members of Parliament, including a group of Protestants called Puritans, disagreed with this assertion and with some of the king’s religious and political policies. The Puritans also disapproved of plays, music, and dance, all pastimes loved by Queen Henrietta Maria (a Catholic) and the king.

As Parliament sought reform in politics and in the Anglican Church, the gulf between it and the king widened. Three times, King Charles I angrily dissolved Parliament and ruled England himself. When he finally reinstated Parliament, in 1640, general battle lines for a civil
war were already drawn: Puritans, merchants, and the Royal Navy supported Parliament; the aristocracy, the Anglican Church, peasants, and Catholics supported the king.

Fearing for their safety, Charles and the royal family left London in January 1642 under the protection of Royalist troops. Oliver Cromwell, a Puritan and a very powerful member of Parliament, remained in London, where he served as a commander of parliamentary forces.

In 1644, as England’s civil war intensified, Cecil Calvert, perpetually strapped for cash, busily juggled the governing of Maryland even as he safeguarded his family’s safety and position in England. That same year, William Penn was born in London. Less than forty years later, he would seriously threaten the Calvert family’s boundaries in America.
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“A thoughtful, insightful, challenging and extensively researched chronicle of United States history and the shaping of national identity from a unique perspective.” – Kirkus Reviews (starred review)