

History of the Dividing Line ^[1]

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History of the Dividing Line

by Lindley S. Butler, 2006

History of the Dividing Line^[2] refers to the lively account, written by Virginia commissioner [William Byrd II](#)^[3], of the North Carolina-Virginia boundary line that was surveyed by a joint commission in 1728 because the Carolinas were to be sold to the Crown by their [Lords Proprietors](#)^[4]. The work, whose complete title is *The History of the Dividing Line betwixt Virginia and North Carolina. Run in the Year of our Lord 1728*, has become a classic of southern colonial [literature](#)^[5].

The boundary expedition was the first exploration of much of the border region, and the urbane Byrd vividly described the natural wonders, [flora](#)^[6], [fauna](#)^[7], and [Indians](#)^[8] of the area. His humorous sketches of the lazy Carolina frontier folk, inhabiting a "Lubberland," have entertained readers since the publication of the narrative in 1841. Byrd was so taken with the beauty and apparent fertility of the Dan River Valley that he acquired 20,000 acres of the region from the North Carolina commissioners and named his tract the "Land of Eden."

Reference:

Louis B. Wright, *The Prose Works of William Byrd of Westover* (1966).

Additional Resources:

Byrd, William. *The Westover manuscripts: containing the history of the dividing line betwixt Virginia and North Carolina; A journey to the land of Eden, A.D. 1733; and A progress to the mines*. Petersburg: Edmund and Julian C. Ruffin. 1841. <https://archive.org/stream/westovermani00byrd#page/n3/mode/2up>^[2] (accessed August 21, 2012).

Kaeuper, Geoffrey. "New Dominance in the Old Dominion: Steadying William Byrd in The Secret History of the Line." *The Southern Literary Journal* 36. Number 1. Fall 2003. pp. 121-139. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20078386>^[9] (accessed August 21, 2012).

Masterson, James R. "William Byrd in Lubberland." *American Literature* 9. No. 2. May 1937. p. 153-170. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2920039>^[10] (accessed August 21, 2012).

Woodfin, Maude H. "Thomas Jefferson and William Byrd's Manuscript Histories of the Dividing Line." *The William and Mary Quarterly*. Third Series. Vol. 1, No. 4. October 1944. p. 363-373. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1922766>^[11] (accessed August 21, 2012).

Woodfin, Maude H. "The Missing Pages of William Byrd's Secret History of the Line." *The William and Mary Quarterly*. Third Series, Vol. 2, No. 1, January 1945. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1920688>^[12] (accessed August 21, 2012).

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[Butler, Lindley S.](#)^[18]

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1 January 2006 | Butler, Lindley S.

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- [7] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/subjects/wildlife>
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- [10] <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2920039>
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- [15] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/subjects/literature>
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