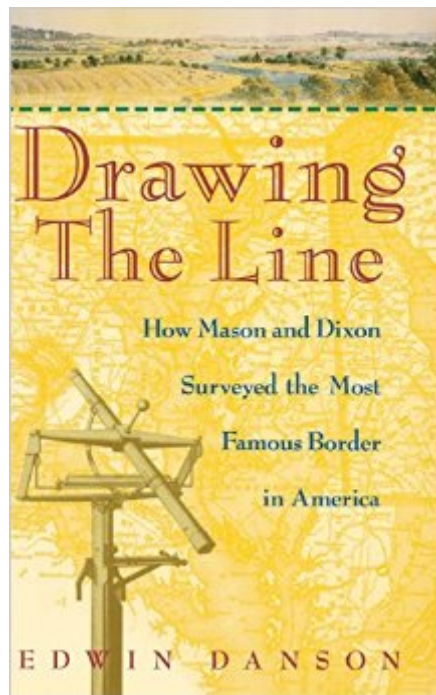


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# Drawing The Line : How Mason And Dixon Surveyed The Most Famous Border In America



## Synopsis

**THE FIRST POPULAR HISTORY OF THE MAKING OF THE MASON-DIXON LINE** The Mason-Dixon line—surely the most famous surveyors' line ever drawn—represents one of the greatest and most difficult scientific achievements of its time. But behind this significant triumph is a thrilling story, one that has thus far eluded both historians and surveyors. In this engrossing narrative, professional surveyor Edwin Danson takes us on a fascinating journey with Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon, two gifted and exuberant English surveyors, through the fields and forests of eighteenth-century America. Vividly describing life in the backwoods and the hardships and dangers of frontier surveying, *Drawing the Line* discloses for the first time in 250 years many hitherto unknown surveying methods, revealing how Mason and Dixon succeeded where the best American surveyors of the period failed. In accessible, ordinary language, Danson masterfully throws the first clear light on the surveying of the Mason-Dixon line. Set in the social and historical context of pre-Revolutionary America, this book is a spellbinding account of one of the great and historic achievements of its time. **Advance Praise for *Drawing the Line*** "Drawing the Line combines a fast-moving story, a human drama, and a clear account of surveying in the era of George Washington. An intriguing interaction of politics and science."—CHARLES ROYSTER, Boyd Professor of History, Louisiana State University, and Winner of the Bancroft Prize in History

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

A few years ago, I was kidding around with a high school senior in our school library in northern

Illinois, and I quipped, "Well, as Mason said to Dixon, you've got to draw the line somewhere." I expected at least a chuckle in return. The student, academically rated in the top 10% of his class, stared blankly back at me. "Mason and Dixon?" I asked. Nothing. "The Mason-Dixon Line?" Nada. "The border between Pennsylvania and Maryland? The boundary between The North and The South? The whole premise behind the Civil War?" Nope. He had never heard of it. The Line, I mean; of course, he knew about the Civil War. Maybe I took it for granted, since I grew up in a suburb about 25 miles north of the Line, in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. The Line was there, but nobody made a big deal about it. I don't recall being taught anything about it, myself. I made a mental note to someday rectify that omission. When Thomas Pynchon's *Mason & Dixon* was released, I was ready and interested. Ready and interested, that is, until I spied a copy in a bookstore, randomly opened it, and tried to actually read and understand the words on that single page. Hmmm. I returned the book to its display and allowed it to entice another potential buyer. As soon as Danson's book came out, I was ready and interested in the subject matter once again. And I believe I made the right choice with this one. There's A LOT of trigonometry and technical information in parts, and all of the math teachers in my past wouldn't be a bit surprised that I sort of skimmed over those paragraphs. But the extent of the politics and 18th-century science involved is intriguing.

No matter what you learned or didn't learn at school about Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon and the famous line(s) they drew. It's quite likely that no-one ever explained to you the how and the why of what Mason & Dixon did and how they achieved it and more to the point, just how extremely difficult and time consuming their task was in the 1760's. To put their achievements in perspective. Then, it was probably the modern equivalent of putting a man on the moon - without a global audience. Nowadays with modern clocks and Global Positioning satellite systems and the inclination to do so, we could do in a few days what took Mason & Dixon nearly 5 years to complete. This book makes a good attempt to cover the how and why. It gives a lot of the back story and related history that covers the original granting by English royalty of grants of land that would eventually become the US states of Delaware, Pennsylvania and Maryland and why the vague and incorrect nature of these original grants caused the boundary disputes between these colonies. The book also briefly covers what Mason & Dixon did to become the right people in the right place for this surveying job. Then it covers what & some of the how, Mason & Dixon did in the actual survey and boundary determination process and also what they did separately and sometimes together during the cold winters between the surveying 'seasons' when it was too cold to continue surveying which gives some flavour of the times shortly before America declared independence - most of this comes from

the Journal that Mason kept, which is now preserved in the US National Archives having been lost for many years after the War of Independence.

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