

The Mason Dixon Line



Prior to 1760, there was a considerable amount of controversy that existed between Lord Baltimore and William Penn regarding the boundary lines between Pennsylvania and Maryland. This actually led to armed skirmishes between settlers who were trying to lay claim to parcels along the contested area. On one occasion the sheriff of Lancaster County had to raise a posse to act as a militia to try and restore peace.

The dispute was finally resolved in 1760 when the English crown insisted that the Baltimore and Penn families adhere to the articles of agreement signed decades earlier. In it, Baltimore ceded to Penn a large territory which contained the counties of Philadelphia, Lancaster, York, Adams, Franklin, among others. The articles of agreement stated that the boundary would be fixed along Mason and Dixon's line, two English surveyors hired by the families to determine the actual demarcation line. They laid out their "line" by placing stone markers one mile apart with each fifth mile having a crown stone with an "M" engraved on the Maryland side and a "P" on the Pennsylvania side along with the two coat of arms. Many of these stones can still be found today, right where they were placed two and a half centuries ago.

With the disputes effectively ended, permanent settlements began to arise in what was previously wilderness. Among them, Harbaugh Valley, situated in the northeastern part of Frederick County, Maryland not far from the Mason Dixon line.

Nestled up against the Catoctin Mountains (now best known as the site of Camp David), its natural elevation was appealing to Swiss immigrants as it would have reminded them of their homeland.

The very first to settle were three brothers (George, Ludwig, and Jacob Harbaugh), whose family provided the name of the valley. Ludwig was the 4th generational great grandfather of my aunt.

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