



William Byrd's histories of the dividing line betwixt Virginia and North Carolina

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One of the most important and entertaining documents of early America is this work by William Byrd (1674-1744). A Virginian aristocrat, landowner, author, and governor, Byrd served as a commissioner in the 1728 survey conducted to establish the boundary between Virginia and North Carolina. Byrd wrote two accounts of that expedition. The shorter version (Secret History of the Line) is a baldly stated, frank account in which the sharp antagonism among the members of the commission is wittily reported and the participants concealed behind mocking fictitious names. The more formal "History of the Dividing Line" (for sale here) contains invaluable notes on the botany and zoology of the area (complete enough a coverage to amount to an early natural history of this part of the country) and on the customs, superstitions, and ways of life of the Indians and the few white settlers. In this edition, the two histories are printed on facing pages, each adding perspective to the other. . . This is an unabridged republication of the 1929 edition, with two recently-discovered manuscript pages. Copyright 1967. Dover Publications.

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