Most of Pennsylvania's border problems with Maryland during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries have been well examined by historians of colonial Pennsylvania. The controversy which surrounded the status of the three lower counties and the problems encountered during the creation of the arced border in the southeastern corner of the province have received much scrutiny. Likewise, the story of the Mason-Dixon Line can be found in numerous texts and journals. There is, however, at least one border episode that deserves more attention. Known as both the Conojocular War and Cresap’s War, the struggle with Maryland for lands in the lower Susquehanna River Valley was a catalyst which made a permanent east-west boundary essential. The conflict also forced Pennsylvania to either defend Penn’s claims west of the river or forfeit the embattled region to Lord Baltimore. Thus Cresap’s War became a pivotal event in Pennsylvania’s westward expansion as well as the establishment of a mutually acceptable border with Maryland.¹

Settlement along the southwestern banks of the Susquehanna was a hazardous undertaking in the 1730’s. Relations with local Indians had been friendly, but the expanding European population complicated provincial efforts to maintain harmony. The lower river valley was also subject to overlapping claims by the Penns and Lord Baltimore. Throughout the 1720’s rumors of plans by Maryland to plant settlements in the area sharpened Pennsylvanians’ fears. With the arrival of a quarrelsome Marylander, Thomas Cresap, in 1730, the border problems grew bitter.²

Cresap came to Maryland from Yorkshire, England in about 1717.
Trained as a carpenter, he possessed a restless spirit and wandered through the backcountry of Maryland and Virginia until his marriage in 1725. After marrying, Cresap settled in western Virginia but was driven from the region by residents who were upset with his fiesty ways. From Virginia he moved back to Maryland and then to the rich river valley along the lower Susquehanna. Settling approximately twenty-five miles north of the provisional border between Maryland and Pennsylvania, Cresap still considered himself a subject of Lord Baltimore. In 1731 he built a blockhouse for the purpose of ridding northern Maryland of all Pennsylvania squatters and Indians. A year later, in what was probably an attempt to extend his provincial authority, Baltimore reciprocated by commissioning Cresap as a justice of the peace for Baltimore County. Governor Samuel Ogle of Maryland also accommodated Cresap by granting him a patent for a group of Susquehanna River islands at Blue Rock, just a few miles west of Lancaster. Cresap's objective was to create a new ferry service and monopolize the east-west routes into the area. Not one to be trifled with, Cresap seemed willing to take whatever actions necessary, including armed conflict, to accomplish his goal. As his activities became hostile toward Pennsylvania and the indigenous population, locals began to realize the dangers he posed to Penn's province.

Within months of Cresap's arrival the long smoldering border troubles between Pennsylvania and Maryland grew to serious proportions. Local Indians complained that Cresap had assaulted a native woman merely for picking apples from one of his trees. Two Lancaster County justices reported that in obtaining lands along the Susquehanna Cresap and his cronies, all "men of desperate fortunes," had burned the lodgings and destroyed the goods of a number of peaceful natives. When charged with an offense or debt, these "men of loose Moral and turbulent Spirits" claimed that they were Maryland subjects and therefore not bound by Pennsylvania law. There were also stories that Cresap had threatened to kill anyone who opposed him, The justices concluded that the violent Marylanders, led by Cresap, would prefer to defend their actions by force rather than law.

Cresap, of course, saw things in a much different light. He claimed that Pennsylvania authorities had promised neighboring Indians a reward if they could drive him and his family from the river valley. Cresap added that a neighbor, James Patterson, and other Pennsylvanians allowed livestock to tear down his fences and destroy his corn crops. Cresap also reported being assaulted by three men as he ferried
them across the river. After a struggle the three threw him into the
deepest part of the Susquehanna and stole his boat. Only by good
fortune did Cresap survive the attack. According to Cresap, the assault
was the work of his scheming Pennsylvania neighbors.6

Upon learning of the problems, Governor Ogle accused his Pennsyl-
vania counterpart, Patrick Gordon, of complicity and "very poor
behavior." Ogle maintained that Gordon's actions intensified the bound-
dary problems and destroyed the truce established in 1723/24.7 In
several terse replies Gordon countered that Cresap settled at least
twenty miles north of the border between the two provinces. Maryland
had no authority to issue him a ferry license at Blue Rock or to intercede
in the current problems.8 Gordon called Cresap the ringleader of
desperadoes "who, casting an Eye on those lands rendered valuable by
our inhabitants," had threatened, beaten, and carried off Pennsylvania
settlers. The ever-growing German population seemed especially prone
to attacks.9 Further, Cresap's activities stirred up the local Indians, thus
threatening the entire valley. The Pennsylvania governor termed any
reports of a reward for Cresap's removal as fictitious and probably
products of Cresap's imagination. Declaring "I have heard more
complaints (about Cresap) than I have ever heard before," Gordon
insisted that Maryland abide by the 1723/24 agreement which prohib-
ited expansion by either colony into the area.10

Despite efforts in 1723 to establish a permanent east-west boundary
fifteen miles south of Philadelphia, relations between the two provinces
continued to deteriorate.11 In the winter of that year an incident occurred
which further polarized the factions. Cresap's problems with neighbor-
ing livestock were shared by John Lowe, another Marylander in the
disputed region. James Patterson allowed his horses to graze freely on
both sides of the river and some of Patterson's horses wandered onto
Lowe's land west of the Susquehanna. When Patterson found two of his
horses shot near the Lowe plantation, he confronted his neighbor.12
Lowe's sons, William and Daniel, readily admitted killing the horses
and promised to kill any other livestock that trespassed onto their land.
In response Patterson swore out a warrant for the boys' arrest.
Anticipating trouble, the local constable, Charles Jones, enlisted nine
men to help him serve the warrant. On the morning of November 26 the
posse went to the Lowe plantation. While trying to convince the Lowes
to surrender peacefully, the constable and his men were attacked by
Cresap and two others. In the brief exchange that followed, one of the
posse, John Hart, was wounded, but the Pennsylvanians were able to
thwart their attackers and seize the Lowes. Although followed by Cresap and his two compatriots, the constable and his men carried their prisoners off to the Lancaster jail without further violence.13

The events surrounding the arrests were soon relayed to Lord Baltimore. Armed with affidavits from Cresap and the elder Lowe (who had been released from the Lancaster jail), Maryland's proprietor claimed that the Pennsylvania posse came to Lowe's "in a Riotous, Violent and Outrageous manner;" broke into Lowe's house, pulled him out of bed, beat his wife and children, and, in the dead of night, dragged him over frozen ground and the ice-covered river. Baltimore chastised the Pennsylvania governor and demanded that those involved in "the most Outrageous riot ... committed in my province" be turned over to Maryland authorities.14

Not one to be intimidated, Governor Gordon vociferously defended his actions. After ordering a full investigation, the governor reasoned that Baltimore had either been "exceedingly misinformed" or heard only what he wanted to hear. According to Gordon, the "rioters" carried only three guns and they were unloaded. What violence occurred was the result of the Lowes' resistance or Cresap's foiled rescue. Since the incident took place "many miles within the known bounds" of Pennsylvania the governor rejected all requests that he hand over the Pennsylvanians involved. Instead, he promised that his province would pursue the case with all fairness. Though he agreed that the source of the problems was an ill-defined boundary, Gordon was alarmed by Baltimore's attempt to extend Maryland's authority northward.15

During the next twelve months sporadic hostilities marked the border relations. Again at the center of the gathering storm was Thomas Cresap. Cornelius Comages, Cresap's servant, reported that Cresap would not rest until the Lowes were vindicated. Comages charged that his master had killed at least four of Patterson's horses and was ready to kill more. On at least one occasion Cresap taunted his Pennsylvania neighbors that their laws did not apply to him and warned that he would burn out anyone who tried to enforce such laws.16 Pennsylvania Germans frequently became the targets of Cresap's abuses. He duped some Palatines into believing that their lands were actually in Maryland, then, for a fee, helped them apply for a grant from Lord Baltimore. Those who refused to go along with the misrepresentations were threatened with violence and some were tooted off to a Maryland jail.17

In at least one case, however, Cresap overstepped his bounds. In January, 1733/34, he sold a tract of land to William Glasspil. Along with "several of his hands," Cresap also promised to help his new
neighbor build a cabin. Unfortunately for the uninformed Glasspil, Pennsylvania had already assigned the land to John Hendricks. Hendricks alerted Lancaster officials about his problems and Sheriff John Emerson, a magistrate, and six deputies marched west to stop the Marylanders. Aware of the Pennsylvania plans, Cresap did not show up at the building site, but several of his men who did were arrested. While the sheriff and a deputy escorted their prisoners to the Lancaster jail, the rest of the posse stayed behind with instructions to arrest Cresap if he appeared. After hours of waiting the eager deputies converged on Cresap’s plantation. At the farm the sheriff’s men were greeted by ten Marylanders who came to defend their leader. In the melee that ensued two Pennsylvanians were pulled into the cabin and beaten while another, Knowles Daunt, was shot in the leg. The two captives were able to escape, but Daunt lay bleeding on the cabin porch for hours. By the next morning Cresap had once again eluded capture and Daunt was dying. With the death of Daunt a few days later the sage of Thomas Cresap and the related boundary dispute entered a new, more volatile stage.

After the battle at Cresap’s plantation, the war of words between the two governors expanded. Though ordered into the custody of the sheriff of Baltimore for the alleged murder of Daunt, Cresap was soon pronounced innocent of all guilt and his actions termed self-defense by Governor Ogle. Declaring that “this humor of rioting . . . has begun to infect a great many Inhabitants of Maryland,” Ogle instituted actions to fortify his province’s claims to the disputed lands. A few months after Daunt’s death Ogle granted 500 acres in the troubled region to Cresap and encouraged him to settle others by offering land at the cost of ten shillings per hundred acres. Further, any new Marylanders were promised that no rents would be collected until after a permanent boundary was established. Ogle also instructed Matthew Tighman, a Maryland land agent, “to allow my Land-Warrants to such People who apply and are residing in that part which is now in dispute between me and the Pennsylvanians.” Through these enticements the governor hoped to attract new Maryland settlement and to win over squatters in the lower Susquehanna valley. An expanded Maryland population would add credence to Baltimore’s claims and the Maryland settlers could be expected to defend the area against “riotous” Pennsylvanians.

As relations between the two colonies deteriorated during the spring of 1734, the Pennsylvania Assembly, upon orders from Thomas Penn, commissioned two agents, Andrew Hamilton and John Georges, to go to Maryland and discuss with authorities there the Cresap incident as well
as other difficulties. The Pennsylvanians hoped that mutually agreeable solutions could be found. Unfortunately, the mission ended in failure. According to Hamilton and Georges the Maryland governor consistently misrepresented Pennsylvania arguments and made proposals that the two agents were not empowered to approve. Afterwards Governor Gordon, like his Maryland counterpart, became ever more aggressive in dealing with the boundary dispute. Gordon agreed with Hamilton and Georges that despite what Ogle said about preventing future trouble, Ogle’s behavior demonstrated a very different disposition. Border county residents were told not to allow “any insults on their persons or assaults on their possessions.” Those “Pretenders (who) with force possessed themselves of Lands for which they can have no lawful Grant from any other persons but our Honorable Proprietors” were to be jailed. Sheriffs were instructed to frequently patrol the border region and were promised assistance in case of trouble. Border county justices were told to “exert your utmost Endeavors for preserving Peace throughout your county and protecting all Inhabitants in their just and right Possession . . . be assured of receiving all the Countenance that lawful authority can give.” These statements were, in effect, a declaration of a defensive war against anyone, especially Marylanders, trespassing upon Pennsylvania border lands, especially in the lower Susquehanna valley.

With Cresap still in the lower Susquehanna valley, attacks on settlers continued. In July 1735 a Lancaster justice of the peace, John Wright, and some of his indentured servants went west of the river to harvest wheat from his land. Once across the river Wright and his men were confronted by Cresap and about twenty other Marylanders. Armed with guns, swords, and pistols, the southern force marched into Wright’s fields and ordered the justice to forfeit his grain or be shot. Undaunted Wright refused to surrender his harvest and advised the Marylanders to leave his property immediately. The warning proved adequate. Despite threats from their leader, Cresap’s men left without violence. On another occasion a Pennsylvania sheriff and a posse came west of the river to arrest two debtors. After seizing the two, the Pennsylvanians were attacked and beaten by a band of about twenty Marylanders. Later that year Cresap boasted to Governor Ogle that if given fifty men he would go east of the Susquehanna and drive all inhabitants of southern Lancaster County out of their homes.

In May 1736 Maryland’s expansion into the valley brought more difficulties for many new settlers in the area. Acting upon Cresap’s request, Ogle sent a team of surveyors to lay out lands west of the
Susquehanna that had previously been claimed by Pennsylvania. Along with the surveyors came twenty guards who were to insure that no one interfered with the survey. With the threat of violence in the air, the survey was completed in mid-May.\(^{30}\) Though not authorized by Ogle, Cresap and other Maryland agents then began selling the lands to immigrant settlers. The Marylanders also required all settlers west of the river to acknowledge Baltimore’s authority or move elsewhere. If Baltimore was not recognized, Cresap and his men showed little compassion. Through an interpreter one German settler, Frederik Ebert, lamented that after he cleared, improved, and built a cabin on a tract of land near the Cadorus Creek, Cresap, under the guise of an authorized agent, sold the land to someone else and forced Ebert to move. Ebert’s tale was one retold many times in 1736.\(^{31}\)

To new settlers unsure about occupying previously improved lands, Cresap promised that the Maryland militia was about to march north and rid the region of all recalcitrant settlers who denied Baltimore’s authority. While some new settlers were wary of Cresap’s methods, others were not. Fredrick Lather grumbled that he paid Cresap for land which the agent was not authorized to sell; consequently, Lather’s deed was invalid and his money was gone.\(^{32}\) Like Ebert, Lather’s experience was not unique. Throughout the summer other settlers, especially Germans, became the prey of similar tactics.

In August the uproar caused by Maryland agents was heard in Philadelphia. In a petition to the Executive Council, Germans west of the susquehanna complained that they had been seduced “first by fair promises then by threats of punishment” into acknowledging Lord Baltimore’s jurisdiction.\(^{33}\) The petitioners admitted the wrong they had done the Quaker colony and proposed to correct the aberrations by returning to the laws and government of Pennsylvania. Samuel Blunston, the justice who presented the petition to the Council, corroborated the settlers’ stories, explaining that their ignorance of English enabled unscrupulous land agents to convince unknowing Palatines that all the land west of the river was Maryland.\(^{34}\) After reviewing the petition and Blunston’s report, the Council approved the request and welcomed the petitioners back as subjects of Pennsylvania. To insure that no harm would come to the repatriates, two constables were appointed to the western region.\(^{35}\) Governor Ogle, who received a copy of the Germans’ petition, denied the charges against his agents and countered that Pennsylvania had “permitted and allowed a Behavior contrary to all good Order and Rule of the English Constitution.”\(^{36}\) He vowed that in the future Maryland would not tolerate such actions.
A few weeks later Ogle's threat was realized. Upon orders from the governor, Colonel Nathaniel Rigby assembled a militia of three hundred men and marched north to join forces with Cresap. The first report of Rigby's march came to the Pennsylvania Assembly from the Lancaster County sheriff and from James Patterson who had been detained near Cresap's farm two days earlier. From Cresap's the Maryland force proceeded to John Hendrick's plantation on the west banks of the Susquehanna. Rumors spread that the militia was coming to seize John Wright, take his farmstead, and expel all Pennsylvania Germans between the Susquehanna and the Cadorus Creek. As the Marylanders approached Wright's Ferry, a band of about thirty Pennsylvanians, including Sheriff Ross, gathered at Wright's. In a message to Rigby the sheriff asked the purpose of the Marylanders' march and why they had come "in a manner that threatened the Peace in the Province." Insolently replying that he had come to keep the peace in Baltimore County, Rigby warned the sheriff not to interfere. The colonel then moved his men back to Cresap's farm, purportedly to cut bullets which could be used on Pennsylvanians. The next day, September 6, Rigby took one man prisoner and confiscated linen and pewter at a few German houses. Fear soon gripped all Pennsylvanians in the area. As the assaults continued and Marylanders "plunder the Dutch peoples' houses," the force at Wright's swelled to 150. Armed conflict seemed inevitable.

Fortunately bloodshed was avoided. On September 8, at the request of Colonel Rigby, Michael Tanner, a prominent German settler, was sent to the colonel as a spokesman for his Palatine countrymen. Tanner explained to the colonel and Sheriff Hammond of Baltimore County the problems German settlers encountered with Cresap and other agents of the Calvert government. Rigby and Hammond offered to allow the settlers' debts to go unpaid if the Germans reciprocated by returning to the authority of Lord Baltimore. Tanner was to give the colonel an answer to the proposal within two weeks. If there was no reply or if there was a negative reply, Rigby and his men would return to finish their business. The temporary solution was approved by almost everyone involved. With no provincial militia and little hope of military aid from the Quaker Assembly, the Pennsylvanians were glad to have two weeks to organize and arm a local force. Maryland also welcomed the truce. Few of Baltimore's officials expected the kind of resistance that they experienced from the pacific province. Once they realized that the westerners would not be bullied into submission, Rigby, Hammond and Ogle opted for a graceful retreat. Only Cresap was upset by the
agreement. He swore that the Maryland militiamen "were afraid of their own mothers' calf skins." Further, he pledged to continue Baltimore's battle even if the militia did not.

In the weeks that followed, the Pennsylvania Executive Council took steps to stabilize the area and protect its German residents. The Council proclaimed that Maryland's recent conduct "must undoubtedly be construed as a Levying of War." Ogle was accused of sending his militia at least twenty miles north of the border "to subject people of Pennsylvania to great terror." To prevent any future aggressions the Council ordered all border-county judges, justices and magistrates "to be vigilant and active in their several stations." Sheriffs were instructed "to hold yourselves in a readiness with the Posse of your County . . . to use the utmost diligence in apprehending and securing all such persons as have been incendiaries in, or authors or abettors of these late disturbances . . . (and) to exert legal powers wherewith they are invested for the Defense or Protection of the Inhabitants." However, despite a plea from Germans for more protection, the Council informed westerners that the Susquehanna River was a great barrier which made an official Pennsylvania militia in the west impractical.

Though the promised return of the Maryland militia did not occur, Governor Ogle, like Cresap, refused to concede the western lands to Pennsylvania. A few weeks after the September encounter Ogle and Cresap began to implement a new scheme through which they hoped to lure Englishmen and Scots-Irishmen onto lands near the Cadorus Creek. With the assistance of Charles Higginbotham Cresap enlisted two Chester (Pa.) County inhabitants, Edmund Leets and Henry Munday, to solicit western lands for others in their county. Probably unaware of the magnitude of the border problems, Leets and Munday were assured by Cresap that the original German settlers west of the Susquehanna had either vacated their lands or would soon be dispossessed by Maryland for not paying taxes. On a visit to Annapolis Leets and Munday were given further assurances by Ogle, who told the prospective settlers that the lands they sought were completely within the bounds of Maryland. Further, Ogle pledged that the obstinate Germans still in the area would be removed within a month. Should any Pennsylvania reprisals follow, the Maryland militia would be sent to the area to protect the new Maryland settlements. In return, the residents would be expected to pay surveying fees, acknowledge Baltimore's authority, and help defend their new homes. Leets and Munday were satisfied with Ogle's promises and went back to Chester County to relay the news to others. Upon their return home Leets and Munday were
arrested by Pennsylvania officials who had learned of the planned migration to the Cadorus.\(^47\)

At about the same time that the Chester County plot was launched, the Pennsylvania Executive Council was taking steps to rid the province of Thomas Cresap. On September 25, 1736, after years of threats, taunts and attacks, a warrant was issued which charged Cresap with the murder of Knowles Daunt.\(^48\) Serving the warrant proved a difficult and dangerous task. After two months of hesitation, the Lancaster County sheriff, Samuel Smith, assembled a posse of twenty-three to aid in the arrest. Early on the morning of November 23 the two dozen Pennsylvanians rode up to Cresap's cabin where Smith ordered Cresap to surrender. Supported by five of his men Cresap defiantly swore he would kill the entire Pennsylvania force before he was taken and backed his threat with two gun shots. The Pennsylvanians retreated, surrounded the cabin, and waited. Throughout the morning and into the late afternoon the siege continued. The only movement came from some of Cresap's men inside the cabin, who, seeing themselves outnumbered four to one, favored surrender. Of course, Cresap would have no part in such talk and threatened to shoot anyone who yielded. As night began to fall the sheriff, fearing the arrival of the Maryland militia, decided to wait no longer. A shed adjacent to Cresap's cabin was set afire and as the blaze spread Cresap and his men were forced to flee. In the struggle that followed, several were wounded and one of Cresap's cohorts, Laughlin Malone, was killed. By nightfall the quarrelsome Cresap, though he nearly eluded the Pennsylvanians, was captured. Smith escorted his prisoners to the Lancaster jail where Cresap was put in irons. Dubbed "the Maryland Monster" by his captors, Cresap was later transferred to more secure quarters in Philadelphia.\(^49\)

As soon as Ogle learned of the arrest he sent two representatives, Edmund Jennings and Daniel Dulaney, to Philadelphia to demand the release of Cresap. Armed with affidavits from Cresap's cronies, the two jurists called Sheriff Smith "a monster among men" and demanded that "actions of such Barbarity" receive swift punishment. According to Jennings and Dulaney, Cresap's farmstead was an "ancient gift from Lord Baltimore," thus Pennsylvania had no authority there. If there were troublemakers west of the river they were German squatters who were playing one province against the other to avoid paying taxes. Further, Sheriff Smith and his men were accused of being part of a long-standing plot to expel Cresap and purloin Baltimore's lands.\(^50\) Pennsylvania countered that Cresap, "a man raised from the lowest Infamy," had plagued the Quaker colony for years. His crimes were
committed in Pennsylvania, he was appropriately arrested and jailed by a Pennsylvania sheriff and would remain in Pennsylvania's custody. Rather than place any guilt on German settlers, the Executive Council blamed Ogle for encouraging Cresap. Had the Maryland governor taken proper steps Pennsylvania would not have had to arrest the troublemaker. While the Council invited boundary negotiations, it steadfastly refused to further discuss Cresap's release.51

With Cresap in a Philadelphia jail, Governor Ogle appointed Charles Higginbotham to oversee Maryland's activities in the Susquehanna valley. The new leader immediately organized a band of about twenty men, Irish ruffians according to Pennsylvanians, and began dislodging Germans.52 Higginbotham proved even more ruthless than his predecessor. Those settlers who refused to acknowledge Baltimore's authority were beaten, their homes broken into and sometimes burned, and their possessions destroyed. Some settlers were also carried off to Maryland jails. Within three weeks of Higginbotham's appointment at least half a dozen families were attacked and removed from the disputed area.53 As the assaults expanded, James Logan, president of the Executive Council and acting governor since Gordon's death in August, chastised Ogle for encouraging Higginbotham and causing innocent people to be forced out into the wilderness during the coldest months of the winter.54 Despite the complaints, the raids continued. By February 1737 most of the remaining Pennsylvanians west of the river were again in a desperate situation and few could be expected to stay much longer. Samuel Blunston warned that unless a standing force was sent immediately, the west side of the Susquehanna would have to be abandoned by the Quaker colony.55

Forced to act, the Pennsylvania Council instructed the sheriff of Lancaster County to assemble a unit of volunteers and take whatever actions necessary to repel Maryland attacks that threatened the area. Further, the Council appointed additional justices of the peace in Lancaster and sent two commissioners west of the river "to observe and report" any developments that might call for an armed defense.56 Though stopping short of an official militia the Council's response again demonstrated Pennsylvania's willingness to defend the west with arms if necessary. By placing commissioners and justices on the west side of the Susquehanna, the province also took steps toward the creation of towns and counties there. These actions reduced Higginbotham's raids to occasional forays. By spring the undeclared war between Maryland and Pennsylvania was limited to official correspondences.

In May 1737, amid charges and counter-charges between Maryland
and Pennsylvania, the Pennsylvania Executive Council sent John Kinsey and Samuel Preston to Annapolis. Forewarned that Ogle’s statements should be studied carefully, the two ambassadors were instructed to negotiate a truce with Maryland. In Annapolis Kinsey and Preston were able to reduce significantly the differences separating the two colonies. Most importantly, Maryland agreed to cease its armed ventures into the disputed region, and, in return, Pennsylvania promised not to police the area as vigorously it had. Also, both colonies agreed that the settlers in the valley should be allowed to recognize whichever government they chose until a permanent boundary was created. Though a few remaining points prevented a formal truce, the diplomatic efforts brought further harmony. Afterwards an uneasy peace returned to the valley.

The peace was enhanced in August by a proclamation from George II. Informed about the border troubles by petitions from both colonies, the king-in-council ordered the governors of Pennsylvania and Maryland to subdue any future disturbances. All magistrates, sheriffs, and other government officers in the troubled region were instructed “to use their utmost endeavors for preventing and suppressing . . . tumults, riots and other outrageous Disorders on the Border” but also to remain “vigilant and careful” in carrying out the royal commands. A year later the king further ordered that a temporary east-west border be surveyed fifteen and a quarter miles south of the southern limits of Philadelphia. Regardless of their original allegiances, inhabitants north of the line were to become subjects of the Penn’s and those south of the line would be Marylanders. Both colonies were told to select commissioners and begin surveying as soon as possible.

Four months later, in December 1738, preparations for establishing the boundary were completed when Pennsylvania appointed three agents to join a team of Maryland surveyors. Assembling in early December the representatives were able to determine a starting point and a method of surveying. However, winter weather forced the group to suspend their duties until the following spring. Reassembling in mid-April, the surveyors pushed steadily westward with few problems. They reached the Susquehanna River on May 5 and, though one Maryland agent returned home, the survey continued westward for another three weeks. By May 28 the line that George II had ordered was in place. Though it was still considered temporary, the line at last gave Pennsylvania and Maryland a mutually agreed-upon boundary.

While the border between Pennsylvania and Maryland did not become permanent until Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon made
their famous survey in the 1760's, the temporary line run in 1738-39 closed a dangerous chapter in the relations between the two colonies. Though the line did not end all border problems, it did end the most volatile encounter, Cresap's War, and enabled Pennsylvania to expand west of the Susquehanna River. Had the Quaker Colony not taken the actions it did in the late 1730s Cresap's War might have resulted in a far different boundary between the two provinces. Instead, Pennsylvania was able to retain western lands claimed by the Penns and, during the 1740s, begin establishing western settlements. The solution to Cresap's War should, therefore, be considered an integral part of westward expansion in Pennsylvania and a crucial encounter in the state's colonial history.

NOTES

1. The few available works on Cresap's War are either flawed by inaccuracies or are undocumented. Four York County (Pa.) histories written primarily in the nineteenth century (L. Daniel Rupp, History of York County, 1845; W.C. Carter and A.J. Glossbrenner, History of York County, 1834; John Gibson, History of York County, 1886; George R. Prowell, History of York County, Pennsylvania, 1907) have produced adequate narratives but documented few of their sources. The best documented monograph, though also lacking full documentation, is Kenneth P. Bailey's Thomas Cresap, Maryland Frontiersman (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1944). Unfortunately Bailey's work is flawed by numerous errors. Other than these five works little secondary information is available. Most historians of colonial Pennsylvania and Maryland pass over the entire event in a few paragraphs.

2. The border dispute between Pennsylvania and Maryland began in 1681 shortly after William Penn was granted land in the New World. Penn's charter was ambiguous and open to varying interpretations concerning the northern and eastern limits of Maryland. Between 1685 and 1715 there were few calls for a permanent east-west boundary, but, with the death of Penn in 1718 and the expanding colonial populations of both colonies, the border troubles became a primary concern for both provinces. During the late 1710's and early 1720's rumors of a Maryland plan to establish settlements along the Susquehanna in lands claimed by Pennsylvania alarmed the Quaker Assembly. In a few cases the rumors were accompanied by incidents in which Marylanders were accused of aggressions against Pennsylvanians. To counter any plans that Maryland had for the lower Susquehanna and to protect Penn's southwestern claims, Governor Keith established a proprietorial manor, Springettsbury Manor, along the Cadorus Creek in 1722. The creation of the manor only worsened relations between the two colonies and intensified the boundary dispute. Two years later, in 1724, the King issued a proclamation which ordered a boundary line to be surveyed within eighteen months and prohibited either colony from granting land in the disputed area until the line was completed. The royal proclamation quieted the troubles for a brief time, but, unfortunately, the two colonies could not agree on how to survey the boundary. Within two years new problems arose. By 1730 there were reports of Marylanders coming into the area and of Pennsylvania encouraging limited settlement under the jurisdiction of the Penns.  

3. Pennsylvania Archives, Series 1 (Philadelphia, 1856), 1:31; Maryland Archives (Baltimore, 1917) 28:20-21; Gaius Marcus Brumbaugh, Maryland Records: Colonial, Revolution, County and Church (Baltimore, 1915), 259; George Prowell, The History of
York County, Pennsylvania (Chicago, 1907) 2:58-60. Cresap and his wife had one child before they moved to the Susquehanna Valley and two children were born while the Cresaps were in the valley.


5. Minutes, 3:505-06.

6. Pa. Arch., 1:312, 313; John Gibson, ed., History of York County (Chicago, 1886), 48. As a result of the early troubles Cresap concluded that there was a scheme to remove all Marylanders, especially him, from the disputed region.


11. In 1732 a permanent border was established between the three lower counties (Delaware), under the authority of the Penns, and Maryland.

12. Gibson, History of York, 49. For a decade Patterson had kept horses on both sides of the river to facilitate trade with local Indians.


17. Minutes, 3:584-85.


19. Pa. Arch., Ser. 1, 1:418, 462; Md. Arch., 28:62; Bailey, Cresap, 37. In a deposition one Marylander claimed that the Pennsylvanians had vowed to hang Cresap. In reviewing the battle at Cresap’s farm, Governor Gordon agreed that the Lancaster posse should not have come onto the Cresap land, but insisted that Cresap should not have fired on the Pennsylvanians. Daunt’s death could only be termed murder according to Gordon.


23. Minutes, 3:590-97; Pa. Arch., Ser. 4, 1:427. According to Hamilton and Georges, Ogle insisted that the two agents join him in laying “the unhappy misunderstandings” before the King. The two Pennsylvanians countered that only the proprietor could give them that authority and he had not done so. Ogle, nevertheless, petitioned George II concerning the validity of the 1724 agreement. The King’s attorney and the Solicitor General replied that the agreement was still valid and that new settlement in the border region should still be discouraged.
29. Minutes, 3:664–666. Cresap vowed that he would bring cannons if necessary. His strongest threats were directed toward Lancaster County officials, especially Wright and Samuel Blunston.
33. The German settlers petitioned the Council because Governor Gordon died on August 5, 1736.
34. Franklin Ellis and Samuel Evans, History of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania (Philadelphia, 1883), 582–83. Blunston was a land speculator commissioned by Penn, thus he had a vested interest in the western lands. Blunston was later appointed a Justice in Lancaster County.
40. Ibid.
41. Rupp, History, 556.
44. Minutes, 4:70.
47. Minutes, 4:107–09.
49. Pa. Arch., Ser. 1, 1:504, 505–08, 510–11, 513–15, 524–28; Ser. 4, 1:584–88. Those with Cresap were: Miles Foy, Michael Rysner, Jacob Matthew Minisher, Daniel Southerland and Laughlin Malone. Malone was mistakenly shot and killed by Rysner. Cresap, upon seeing Philadelphia for the first time, claimed the Quaker City was "one of the Prettyest towns in Maryland."
Pennsylvania sent a petition to George II recounting the recent arrests and relating the most current problems with Maryland. After his release from the Philadelphia jail Cresap returned to Maryland. During the Indian problems of the 1750's Cresap distinguished himself as an Indian fighter in western Maryland.

Higginbotham and his men were paid a bounty for arresting those Germans in the disputed region who had signed the petition changing their allegiance from Maryland to Pennsylvania.

A typical report of an attack came from Catherine Schultz. She asserted that a gang of men led by Higginbotham broke down her door with an ax, stole a hogshead of rum, assaulted her and stole a horse.

In "observing," the Pennsylvanians discovered a fortress that the Marylanders had built near the Cadorus Creek. It was there that many Pennsylvania settlers were detained before being taken to Annapolis. The fortress also housed Higginbotham's men.

Both sides agreed that a petition should be sent to the King requesting intervention. However, Pennsylvania wanted to include a history of the border problems from 1681 to the present and Maryland wanted to limit the petition to the events of the 1730's. Also, the two provinces disagreed on how to determine the original allegiances of settlers in the disputed region. Consequently, a petition was sent to George II by both colonies.

It is clear that the early days of the survey were filled with petty contentions and bickering among the provincial representatives.

Maryland commissioner Levin Gale's son was reportedly dying and once the surveyors reached the Susquehanna Gale left the group to be with his son. Despite Gale's absence the survey continued.