

presence of colonists before there should be a direct conflict with the powerful Duke of York. No question had as yet arisen concerning the relative rights of William Penn and Lord Baltimore since the grants to the former were not made until about 15 years later. On paper the original bounds of Dorchester County undoubtedly extended to Delaware Bay, but the swiftly-rolling events of the Dutch capitulation, the assumption of authority by the Duke of York, and the subsequent granting of the territorial rights by him to William Penn did not allow time for Lord Baltimore to establish by possession his rights to the eastern portion of what might have been Dorchester County according to the territorial limits defined in the Maryland charter. Practically the eastern limit of Dorchester was the western limit of New Sweden until after the work of the surveyors in 1761-1768, when Mason and Dixon finally determined the eastern limits of Maryland which were accepted as such by the English Chancellor in 1769.

From the date of its erection until the fall of 1684 no change was made in the boundaries of Dorchester County. Somerset County had exercised its authority over what is now the Fork District No. 1, or the territory lying between the northwest (Marshyhope Creek) and the northeast branches of the Nanticoke River, claiming the former to be the main branch of the river and consequently its northwestern boundary. On October 4, 1684, appears the following minute²⁰ on the Proceedings of the Council:

“Severall disputes haveing been, concerning the maine branch of Nanticoke River wch is said to be the bounds betweene Somrsett and Dorchester Counties, for the uncertainty whereof, the bounds of each County have also been disputed, and severall Errors may thereupon ensue, which to avoid for the future any to rectife as much as may be what is past This board passed this following ordr (viz:)

Somerset and Dorchester County bounds to be ascertained.

Maryland ss:

By the honble the Councill

Whereas Nantecoke River is said to be the bounds betweene Sommersett and Dorchester Counties, and there have been many disputes and doubts concerning the maine branch, and it is not sufficiently resolved which it is to the greate disquiett and disturbance of the Inhabitants there Seated: ffor redress whereof, and in ordr to settle the same to avoid any future contro-

²⁰ Md. Arch., 17: 286.