

to have contemplated any further communication on the part of this Executive than what
their Resolution refers to: any exposition therefore of the Principles, nature and extent
of the claim of this State, would not only be unauthorized but perhaps premature, still
on anxious desire to meet the views of your Excellency and the State of Virginia, has
induced me to forward a copy of a Letter addressed by William Cook, Esquire, to the
Legislature of Maryland dated October 1796 and which being assented by them to
be placed on their Journal has so far received the sanction of that honorable Body.

On perusal of this document your Excellency will immediately perceive, that the act
of the Legislature of Virginia is wholly incompetent to meet the difficulty intended by
the Legislature of Maryland, and in fact, that no measures can be adopted to ascertain
the Western Boundary between the States until it shall be first determined whether
the North or South Branch is the main Branch of the River Potomack, which in
effect will decide the Southern Boundary: no steps can therefore be authorized
by the Executive of Maryland on the part of their Commissioners in co-operation
with those of Virginia acting under an authority so limited, as in effect to
predetermine the principal point in controversy.

No other alternative then remains for this Executive, but to report their
proceedings to the Legislature of Maryland at their next Session, confiding in
the conciliatory expressions which your Excellency has used on this occasion, and
trusting that no Motives can ever exist on the part of either State, to disturb that
harmony that now so happily exists, and which an adherence to the principles of
Justice will not fail to augment to their mutual benefit.

Should your Excellency become possessed of any Documents tending to elucidate
this subject, and will furnish me with them, it will give me great satisfaction
to lay them before the Legislature of Maryland at their next Session: and
with the most respectful consideration, I have the honor to be

His Excellency James Munroe
Governor of Virginia

Your Excellency's mo. ob. Servt.
John F. Mercer