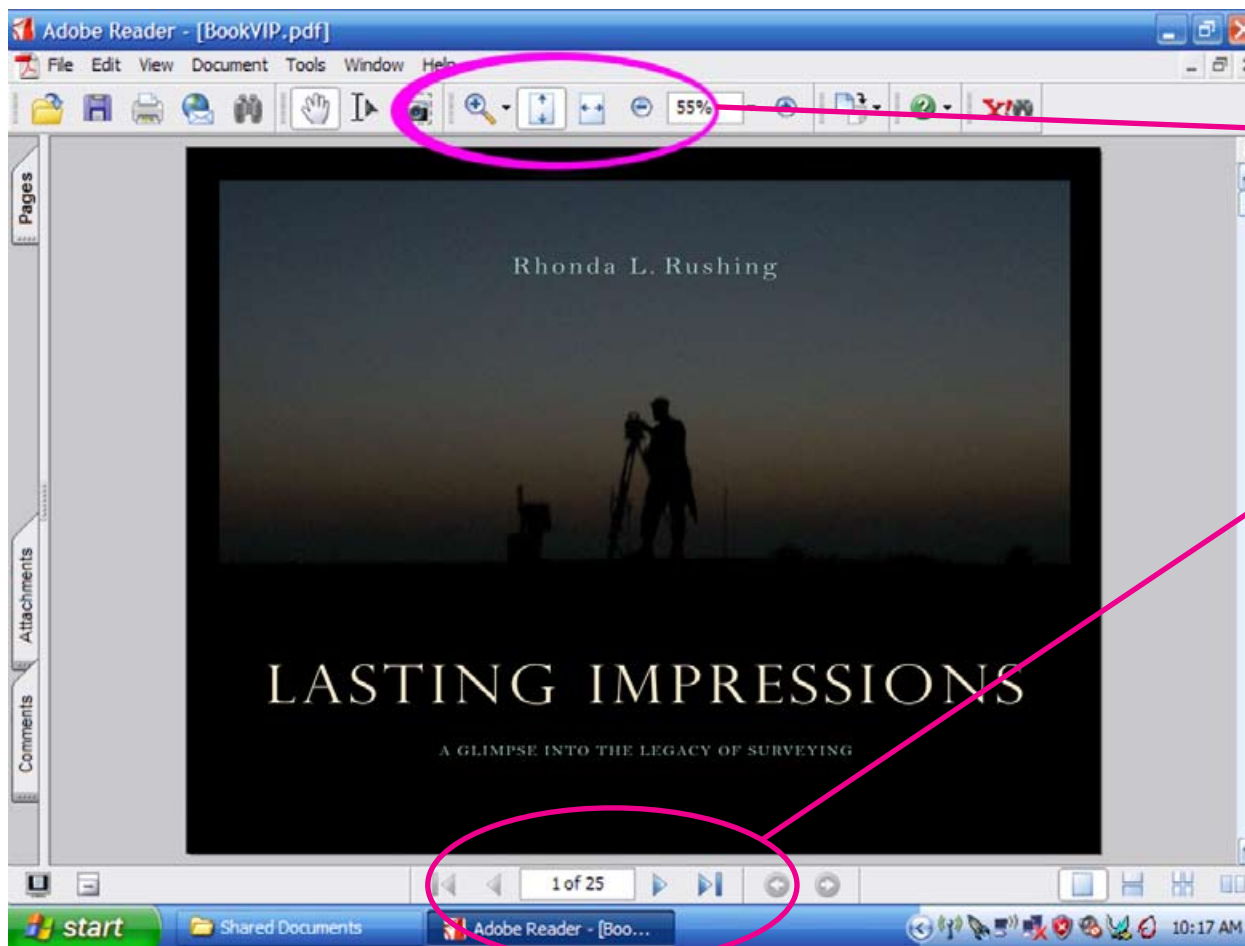


# LASTING IMPRESSIONS

NORTH CAROLINA AND VIRGINIA STATE LINE MONUMENT



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# NORTH CAROLINA AND VIRGINIA STATE LINE MONUMENT



The station is engraved on the north face: –VA–,  
on the south face: –N.C.A.–,  
on the west face:  
LATITUDE  
36° 32' 59"  
NO 1  
and on the east face: A.D. 1728

-----  
N.C.A. and VA  
BOUNDARY  
RE 1887 RUN  
W.D. PRUDEN NC.  
C.R. HOWARD VA.  
COMMRS.  
H.T. GREENLEAF  
ENGINEER  
A. M. SCALES  
GOV. N.C.A.  
FITZHUGH LEE  
GOV. VA

LATITUDE, LONGITUDE, & ELEVATION  
Latitude: 36° 33' 01.37840 N (NAD 83)  
Longitude: 075° 52' 44.94811 W (NAD 83)  
Elevation: 2.64 m (±0.3 m) (NGVD 29)

This majestic state line monument, which is located along the North Carolina and Virginia border, was set in 1887 during the joint North Carolina–Virginia resurvey of the line by W.D. Pruden (North Carolina) and C.R. Howard (Virginia). Yet, the story behind this monument goes back to not just the original 1728 survey, but to a blunder in a 1663 royal British charter. During the mid 1500s, the French and Spanish abandoned the part of North America referred to as Carolina, due to the absence of gold and silver veins. Then in 1663, King Charles II pronounced the land derelict and granted it to Edward Hyde, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Clarendon, and seven other lords proprietors with the northern boundary set as a line west from Luck-Island (now known as Colleton Island) at 36° North latitude to the South Seas (Pacific Ocean).

One of the grantees, Sir William Berkeley (who just happened to be the Governor of Virginia), recognized that the northern border of Carolina, at 36° North latitude, would not coincide with the southern border of Virginia, set at 36° 30' North latitude, but would instead leave a 31-mile stretch of no man's land between. Two years later, King Charles II (also known as “The Merry Monarch”) issued the following charter to correct the boundary description as follows:

*All that province, territory, or tract of land, scituate [situate], lying or being within our dominions of America aforesaid; extending north and eastward, as far as the north end of Currituck River, or inlet, upon a strait [straight] westerly line to Wyonoak Creek, which lies within or about the degrees of thirty-six and thirty minutes, northern latitude; and so west in a direct line as far as the South Seas Pacific Ocean.*

Unfortunately, this new description did not resolve the controversy, because there was no longer a creek named “Wyonoak Creek” in the vicinity. Each colony then claimed that the referenced creek was a different creek, so as to give them more land, which resulted in the affected residents being needlessly taxed by both colonies.

The story picked up again in 1715 with a new set of governors who decided to solve the matter equitably and sent a joint proposal to King George I. Twelve years later, in 1727, the presiding Virginia governor received an “Express Order” from the King to survey the line with appointed boundary commissioners from both colonies.

Ironically, one of the selected Virginia commissioners, William Byrd (who was not a surveyor, but an aristocratic politician), wrote two books about the survey. Consequently, most people think that he did the survey by himself and refer to the survey as Byrd's survey. The irony is carried even further, because in his official book, entitled *History of the Dividing Line*, he wrote detailed information about the plants, animals, settlers, and American Indians along the line, but omitted vital information about the actual survey. Whereas, in his unofficial book, entitled *The Secret History*, he mocked the land surveyors and the other commissioners.

Meanwhile, the appointed commissioners and surveyors met at Currituck Inlet on March 5, 1728, to begin the survey, and agreed to erect a cedar post on high ground above the inlet and proceeded westward. About a month later, after surveying through the Dismal Swamp, the surveyors reached the Blackwater River, proceeded one-half mile south to the mouth of Nottoway Creek (following the compromise agreement between the two former governors), and then westward to Peters Creek (present day Stokes County, North Carolina and Patrick County, Virginia).

Although the survey resolved the disputed land controversy, the line became ambiguous shortly afterwards because they did not erect any permanent monuments. Instead, they left only marks on trees, which necessitated a resurvey in 1887.

— A. Roger Barnes, PLS, County and State Boundary Surveyor, North Carolina Geodetic Survey, Raleigh, North Carolina

— Curt Johnson, Technical Writer, North Carolina Geodetic Survey, Raleigh, North Carolina

THANK YOU!

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