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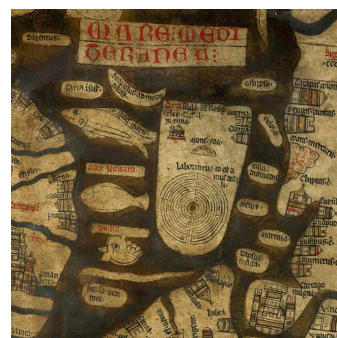
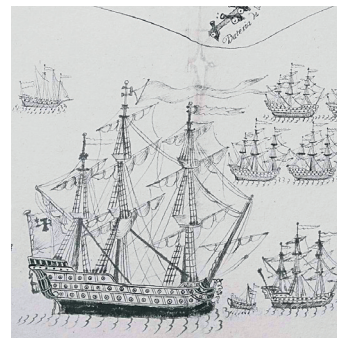
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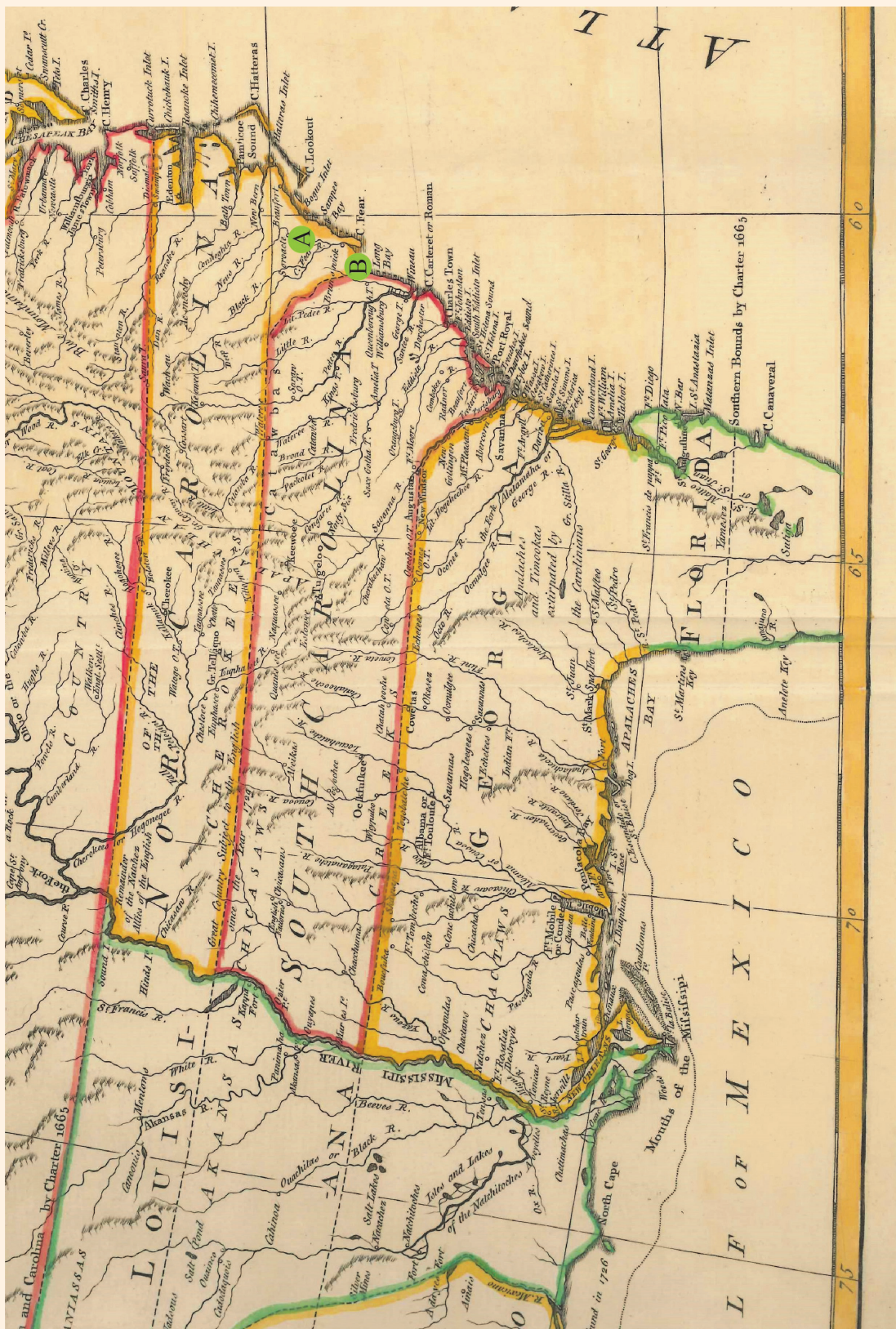
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Front cover Detail of 'A Draught of the Great Bay of Manilla and Harbour of Cavita ...' by William Nichelson, engraved by John Spilsbury and published by William Herbert, London, 1764. From the collection of Rudolf J.H. Lietz, Manila.





# BOUNDARIES OF THE PALMETTO STATE

*How royal instructions, survey errors, Indian treaties, and negotiations with neighbours shaped South Carolina*

**Edward E. Poliakoff**

South Carolina's distinctive shape is a legacy of ambiguous royal instructions, survey errors, Indian treaties, and negotiations with North Carolina and Georgia. This article discusses the origins and timelines of the state's boundaries with North Carolina, the Cherokee Indians and northeast Georgia, and how they were depicted on maps. We begin in 1729 after the British Crown reacquired the province of Carolina from successors of the Lords Proprietors, members of the English nobility to whom King Charles II had granted the territory in 1663,<sup>1</sup> and officially separated it into northern and southern provinces without delineation of their boundaries.

## **Boundary with North Carolina**

In 1735 boundary commissioners of North Carolina and South Carolina agreed a straight-line boundary to run northwest from a point on the Atlantic Ocean coast north of today's North Myrtle Beach in South Carolina up to the 35th parallel; 'and from thence due west to the So[uth]. Seas'.<sup>2</sup> Some late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century maps show this westerly-extended shape of the two provinces, including John Blair, 1768 (Fig. 1); Homann Heirs, 1777; A. Van Krevelt, 1778; and Thomas Bowen, 1790. The boundary agreement followed years of disputes and negotiations among the provinces and the Board of Trade in London, acting as agent of the Crown, concerning ambiguous language in the Crown's boundary instructions. South Carolina Governor Robert Johnson contended the Crown's instructions meant the boundary should follow the Cape Fear River and North Carolina Governor George Burrington argued it should begin at the mouth of the Waccamaw River, interpretations expansive for their respective provinces. Many contemporary maps

depicted versions of the agreed straight boundary line running northwest from the Atlantic Ocean but several, including John Blair, 1768 (Fig. 1); Homann Heirs, 1777; and Thomas Kitchin, 1778, show a curved line from the coast, perhaps reflecting the boundary arguments existing prior to the provinces' agreement.

The first segment of the agreed boundary was surveyed in 1735–37, from the coast northwest to what was mistakenly thought to be the 35th parallel. Surveying did not resume until 1764, perhaps due to difficult conditions surveyors encountered during the 1735–37 segment. In a May 1737 compensation petition to the Board of Trade, two of the initial surveyors – Alexander Skene and James Abercromby – said they had contended with 'Extraordinary fatigue Running the said Line most of that time thro' Desert and uninhabited Woods in many places absolutely impossible until your (petitioners) had cleared the same added to this the many large and Rapid Rivers as well as Creaks your (petitioners) had to pass by the assistance only of large Trees Cut down and Dug for that purpose'.<sup>3</sup>

In 1764, for reasons unknown, surveyors J. Moore, G. Pawley, S. Wyly and A. Mackay<sup>4</sup> headed west from where the surveying had stopped in 1737, instead of continuing northwest until they reached the 35th parallel. For about two months they surveyed 62 miles to a road southeast of today's Charlotte, North Carolina and stopped there to avoid encroaching on Catawba Indian land. 'By mistake, the line run in 1764 intended to be on latitude 35 was erroneously run on latitude 34 degrees and 49 minutes, resulting in 660 square miles being lost by South Carolina to North Carolina'<sup>5</sup> (Fig. 2).<sup>6</sup> Surveyors stopped at the boundary of Catawba lands in conformance with land rights the Crown had granted to the Catawbas and other Native American nations under the 1763 Treaty of Augusta (Georgia).<sup>7</sup>

In correspondence to the Crown's agent in London, South Carolina Governor Charles Montagu submitted a report in c. 1768 contending that the extension of

Fig. 1 John Blair, detail of 'A Map of North America from the Latest Surveys and Maps', 1768, London, 42 x 58 cm. Edward E. Poliakoff Collection (hereinafter cited as 'Author's collection.'). The map depicts South Carolina's early western expanse, erroneously curving its northeastern boundary line from the ocean, and shows the Cape Fear (A) and Waccamaw (B) rivers.



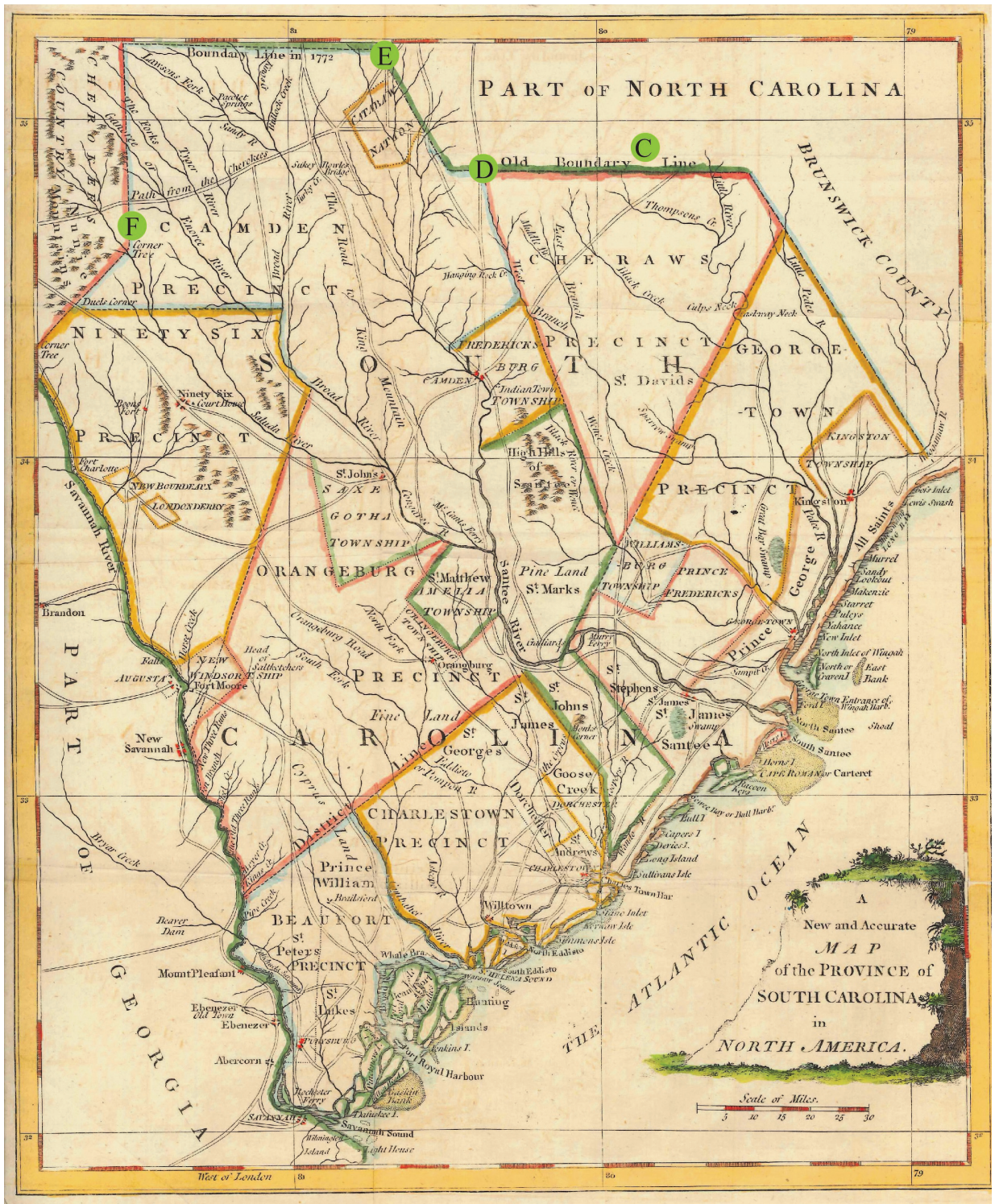


Fig. 2 'A New and Accurate Map of the Province of South Carolina in North America', *Universal Magazine*, vol. 64, June 1779, London, 33 x 28 cm. Author's collection. The map shows the survey error gap between the 35th parallel, which was the intended line (C), and the actual 1764 'Old Boundary Line' (D). It notes the presence of the 'Catabaw [sic] Nation' but without depicting the reserve's 1772 Catawba River boundary notch (E), and at the northwest corner shows the 1766 Cherokee Boundary that was in effect from 1766 to 1777 (F). Coloured lines show the seven judicial districts ('precincts') and several townships.



the errant 1764 line on a due west course from where it stopped near Catawba lands would result in his province losing almost 600,000 acres from what the Crown intended, a loss 'containing more land than two not the least counties in England'. South Carolina's correspondence said the 1764 line 'is eleven miles south of what His Majesty intended, by some mistake in the observation of Latitude taken by the (boundary) Commissioners in 1764'. Their correspondence also noted that '[i]t would be convenient and reasonable that the Catawba Indians should be comprehended in the proposed Boundary as a very useful Body of Men', citing the Catawbas' past services in pursuing and returning enslaved black labourers trying to escape captivity.<sup>8</sup> The Crown eventually granted South Carolina's request for compensation for the 1764 survey's lost territory by ruling that the westward extension of the boundary would start at the confluence of the Catawba River's main branch with its South (sometimes called West) Fork, a point north of the 35th parallel (Fig. 3).<sup>9</sup>

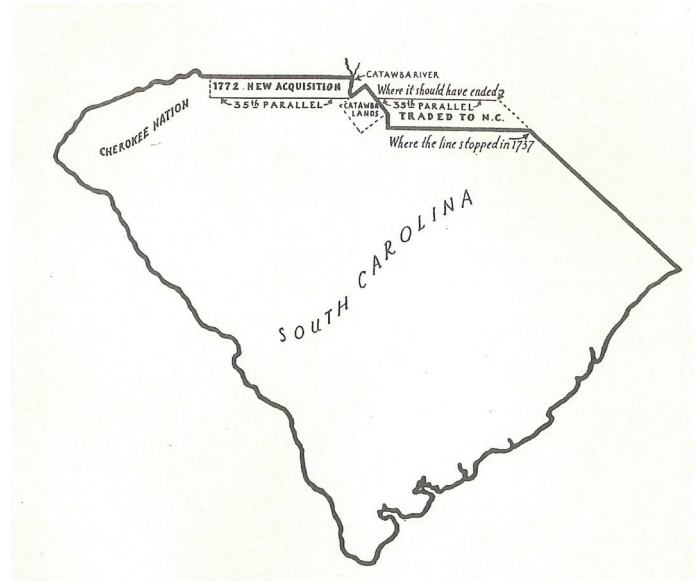


Fig. 3 Illustration of the lands South Carolina lost by the errant 1764 survey and gained by the Crown's compensating adjustment. A.S. Salley, (1929), p. 31, see note 2 on page 37.

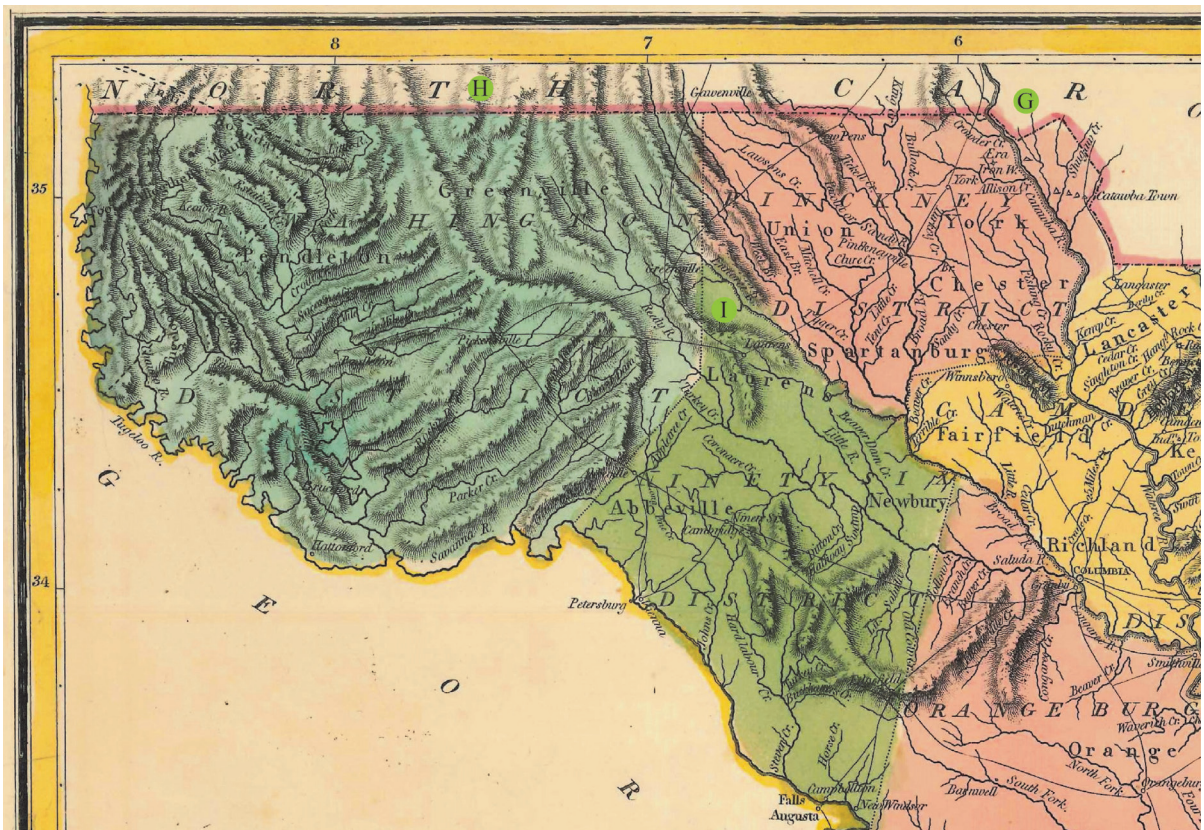


Fig. 4 Fielding Lucas, Jr., Detail of 'S. Carolina', 1816, Baltimore, 22 x 27 cm. Author's collection. The map shows a Catawba River boundary notch near 'Catawba Town' (G), an erroneously due west northern border (H), and a distorted depiction of the territory and riverine boundary west of the former 1766 Cherokee Boundary (I).