

STATE LINE

Author's book dissects Georgia's boundaries and their evolving history

By Spencer Crawford
 The Villa Rican

Many take Georgia's state boundaries for granted as always having been there, but in reality those state lines have evolved over hundreds of years through wars, treaties, political maneuvering, litigation, heroic actions and even human error.

Dr. William Morton's new book, "The Story of Georgia's Boundaries," is the culmination of three years of research that documents the state's ever-changing boundaries and how they came to be. The story behind these state lines — some that are still in dispute with neighboring states — will be presented at the Neva Lomason Memorial Library in Carrollton on Sunday, Jan. 24, at 2:30 p.m.

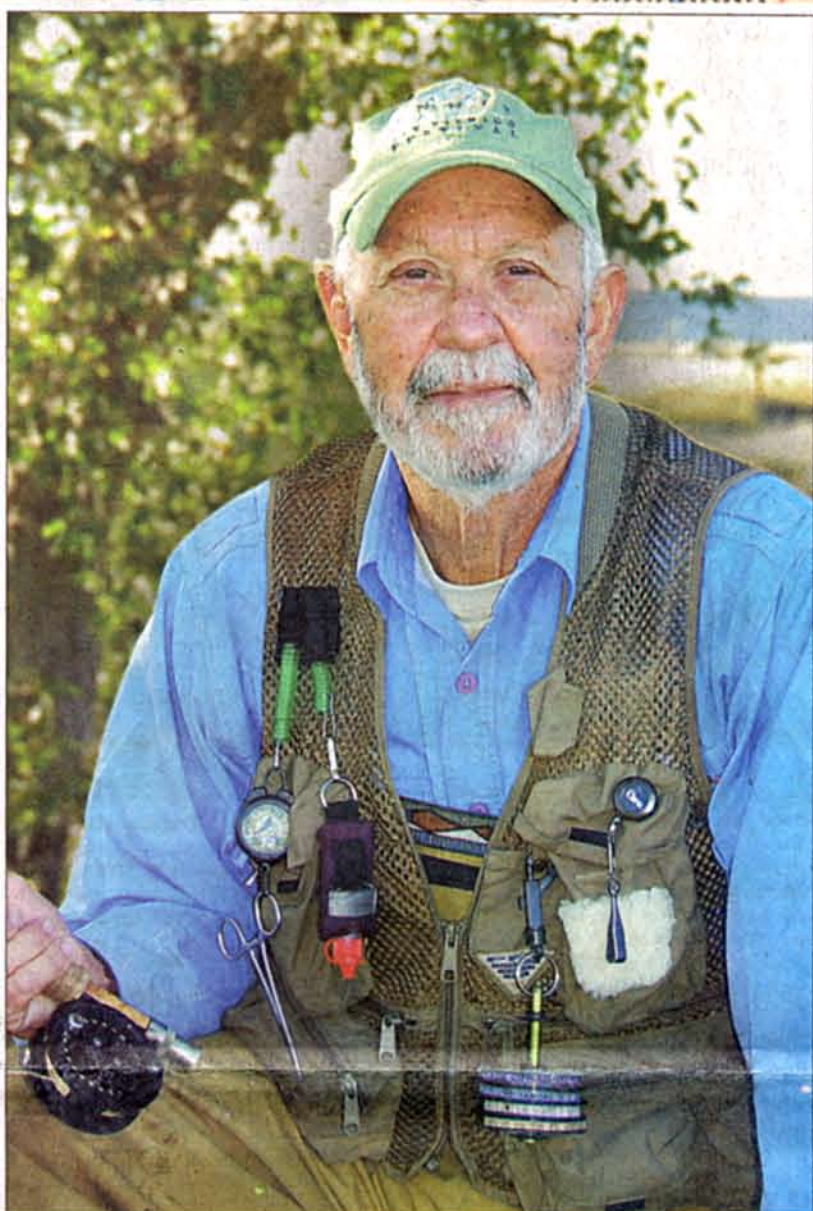
"Dr. William Morton's book, 'The Story of Georgia's Boundaries,' should be of great interest to the local genealogy and history communities with which the library has enjoyed long-standing partnerships," said Martha Goodson, Special Projects Librarian with West Georgia Regional Library. "The Genealogy Society, in particular, plays a major role in the development and preservation of the library's local history and genealogy collection, and has a large and active membership in the community. They will find that this author has done the kind of research that is vital to the continued historical study of Georgia families and communities."

In a more general sense, Goodson said a major part of the public library's role in the community is to be a cultural center, providing frequent opportunities for a variety of cultural experiences in the arts, sciences and humanities.

"Programs that encourage people to think and talk about history, art, poetry, and other cultures are integral to the library's mission," she said. "Such programs help to illuminate the experiences, beliefs and values that unite us as human beings and they stimulate us to make connections between our forebears and ourselves, as well as the community and ourselves."

Morton, who originally went to college to become a history teacher instead attended medical school and became a doctor, and later attended law school and received his juris doctorate. Yet, history was always his passion and his new book is a direct result of his love for the history of his home state, telling a story of Georgia's boundaries in the context of the events and personalities of those who helped determine them.

"When I was growing up I thought when Georgia was established as the 13th colony I thought there were about 12 people living here, but there were a million people here and they had already been here for almost 300 years," Morton said. "I'm not really getting into that part of the book, but I do set the stage and talk about the Revolutionary War and where Georgia was in that. I mainly go from the first charter of Georgia from King George II to the trustees in 1732



Dr. William Morton holds a medical degree and a law degree, but history has always been his passion. He put that passion to work the last three years to research his latest book, "The Story of Georgia's Boundaries," he discusses what went into forming the borders of Georgia over the last several hundred years.

and go from there. That's where the first boundaries were described. I'll talk about where they were and how they changed."

Throughout the book, Morton shares anecdote that illuminate the facts he documents using more than 200 bibliographic citations. For example, he introduces readers to the brilliant Andrew Ellicott, foremost surveyor of his time and associate of Washington, Jefferson and Franklin. He then contrasts Ellicott with the bumbling James Camak, whose incompetent surveys "haunt Georgians to this day." Morton also recounts details of James Oglethorpe's life when he returned to England after establishing the Colony of Georgia.

In addition, Morton examines every lawsuit affecting the common boundaries between Georgia and its neighbors and explains the resulting opinions rendered by the U.S. Supreme Court and others.

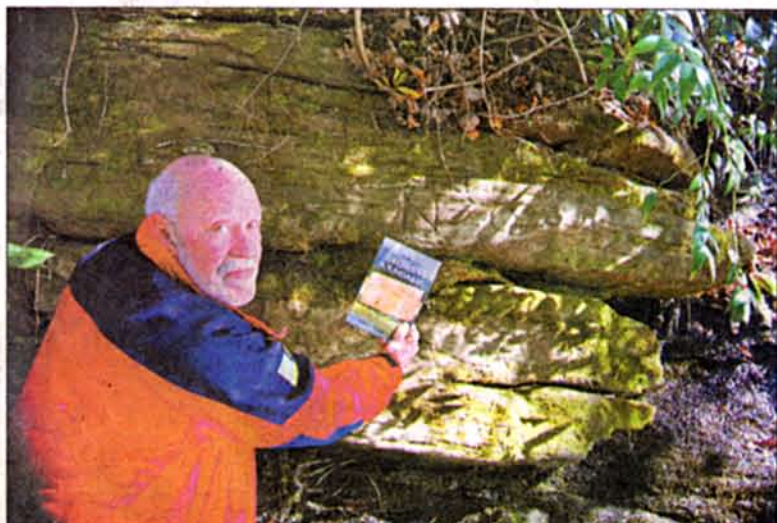
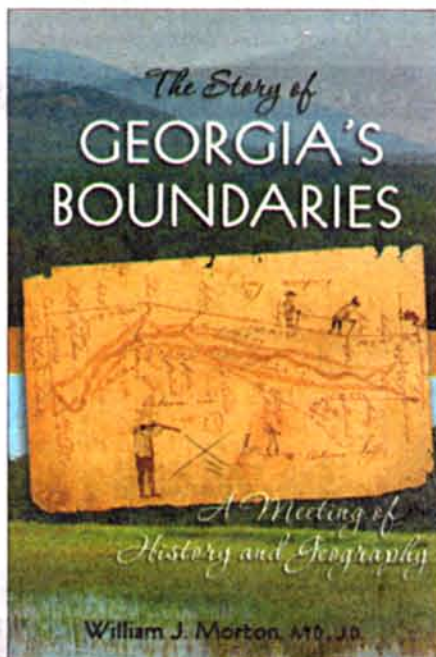
Numerous maps and illustrations in the book span from the Treaty of Tordesillas in 1494 to Georgia in 2009, including the boundaries after the Revolutionary War in 1783, as described

in the state's constitution in 1798.

"People will see the importance of the boundary lines of our state and of every state," Morton said. "We all ignore them. I ignored them for my entire life until three years ago. We don't understand the significance of them, and it's property and it's ownership. It's just like your house and the lot that you own; you're very protective of that and so are the states. So, the average person who sits in that audience is going to see how important our boundaries are and they may want to know more about the boundaries of every other state. I do."

Morton is also the author of "Medical Malpractice: Handling Urology Cases" and said after researching his latest book he became so fascinated with Andrew Ellicott he is seriously considering writing a book about the legendary surveyor's life for his next project.

For more information on Morton's new book, go to the Web site www.wjmorton-mdjd.com/book. For more information about upcoming West Georgia Regional Library events and program, go to www.wgri.net.



Left: Dr. William Morton's new book. Above: Morton and two surveyor friends recently walked seven miles into the Ellicott Wilderness in the very northeast corner of Georgia at its border with North Carolina and South Carolina and found Ellicott's Rock where in 1811 Andrew Ellicott carved NC/SC into a huge rock at the water's edge.