

The St. Lawrence County Historical Association at the Silas Wright Museum

The St. Lawrence County Historical Association is a private, not-for-profit membership organization based at the Silas Wright Museum in Canton, New York. Founded in 1947, the Association is governed by a constitution, by-laws, and Board of Trustees. The Historical Association's membership meets annually at different locations throughout St. Lawrence County.

Officers:

President: Patricia Tocatlion, Ogdensburg
Vice-President: David Swanson, Canton
Treasurer: Clarke Gage, Canton
Secretary: Patricia Carson, Canton

Staff:

Shirley Tramontana, *Director*
Thomas E. Price
Stewart J. Wilson

Trustees:

Roselie Bambrey, Canton
Gary Canfield, Canton
Ruth Garner, Potsdam
Becky Harblin, Norwood
E. Jane Layo, Waddington
Ellen Magee, Morristown
Cornel Reinhart, Canton
Charles Romigh, Massena
Carl Stickney, Norwood
J. Rebecca Thompson, Hannawa Falls
Peter Van de Water, Canton
Robert Wells, Canton
Cay Zabriskie, Ogdensburg

Our Mission

The St. Lawrence County Historical Association is an educational resource center and museum that researches, collects, preserves, and interprets St. Lawrence County history through collections development, publication, exhibition, and programming; whose purpose is to help establish the intellectual and cultural connections that expand awareness and place St. Lawrence County in its state and national context, while revealing its unique identity. The Association examines different aspects of life in St. Lawrence County from multiple and diverse resources through community partnerships and collaboration. SLCHA values quality, integrity, and accessibility and operates within established museum standards befitting its American Association of Museums (AAM) accredited status.

SLCHA Membership

Membership in the St. Lawrence County Historical Association is open to all interested parties. Annual membership dues are: Individual, \$25; Senior/Student, \$20; Family, \$35; Contributor, \$50; Supporter, \$100; Patron, \$250; Businesses, \$50 to \$1,000. Members receive the *SLCHA Quarterly*, the Historical Association's bi-monthly newsletter, and various discounts on publications, programs and events.



St. Lawrence County Historical Association
at the Silas Wright Museum
P. O. Box 8, 3 East Main Street
Canton, New York 13617
(315) 386-8133

**Published continuously
since 1956**

The *SLCHA Quarterly* is made possible in part with public funds from the New York State Council on the Arts.

Managing Editor:
J. Rebecca Thompson

Production Editor:
Stewart J. Wilson

Editorial Board:
Melissa A. Barker
Don Butters
Dennis E. Eickhoff
George Gibson
Stanley M. Holberg
Jan Shideler

*Copyright © 1995 by the
St. Lawrence County Historical
Association. All rights reserved.*

Except for brief excerpts, no part of this publication may be copied or reproduced without the express written permission of the author and the Historical Association. The St. Lawrence County Historical Association is not responsible for the statements, interpretations, and opinions of contributors to *The SLCHA Quarterly*.

The SLCHA Quarterly is published Winter, Spring, Summer, and Fall each year by the St. Lawrence County Historical Association for its members and friends.

Additional copies may be obtained from the St. Lawrence County Historical Association, P.O. Box 8, 3 E. Main Street, Canton, NY 13617 at \$4.00 each (\$2.00 for members), plus \$1.00 for postage.

Contributions:

The SLCHA Quarterly welcomes contributions. For further information, or to submit a manuscript, please contact the editor through the St. Lawrence County Historical Association. Please address communications to: Managing Editor, *The SLCHA Quarterly*, St. Lawrence County Historical Association, P.O. Box 8, Canton, New York 13617-0008.

The St. Lawrence County Historical Association
QUARTERLY

Volume XL - Number 1 - Winter 1995

ISSN: 0558-1931

CONTENTS

Alexander Macomb and His Career Shift: Taking the Main Chance	1
<i>David B. Dill, Jr.</i>	
Two Accounts by Gouverneur Morris of His North Country Travels	15
<i>David B. Dill, Jr.</i>	
A Note from the Editors	23

Issue Editor:
Stewart J. Wilson

Production Assistance:
Thomas E. Price

Cover:
One of the 1787 parchment land charters by the State of New York to Alexander Macomb, whereby Macomb came to own large tracts of land in the northern part of the state, including St. Lawrence County.
(From the SLCHA Collections)

Alexander Macomb and His Career Shift: Taking the Main Chance

by David B. Dill, Jr.

One consequence of the American Revolution was the emergence of a new class of unfettered businessmen. Robert A. East has demonstrated that, like other recent wars, the Revolution bred forces which influenced economic change, mainly by fostering uninhibited enterprise and stimulating such new concepts as large business associations.¹

Despite the disruptions of war-time commerce, merchants benefited hugely from the absence of former British restraints on credit, currency, trade and land distribution, and lost no time discovering innovative avenues for entrepreneurship. Privateering was one example, but most significant was the custom of trading with the enemy, a practice even encouraged by the British as a way to procure supplies. Further reflecting the easy morality of the period, merchants doubling as government officials had their "gainful spirit" whetted by all manner of speculative opportunities, legal and otherwise, while still serving the public interest. Ethically or not, as American merchants profited they also set the stage for postwar economic expansion.²

The stronger of the opportunists elbowed out the weaker for wealth and influence, and although many of the old-line commission merchants and landed gentry survived, particularly men of such energy and intelligence as Gouverneur Morris, the

winners of 1783 were *nouveauriche*, and nowhere was this more true than in the money center of New York City. As East noted, the end of the war signaled "the transfer of some wealth into the hands of a small but vigorous set of newcomers, invariably young in years but national in viewpoint, who were prepared to take the business bit in their teeth and set a faster pace for the future."³ As they marched to a faster pace, many succumbed to overly exuberant speculation in land and securities, for in the new nation they had no experience in recognizing the hidden dangers of a free economy. Yet these undisciplined men contributed to setting America on a course to new institutions and financial growth.

There is no lack of models for parvenu merchants who had served the rebel cause. Classic examples of patriot upstarts are Robert Morris of Philadelphia and William Duer of New York, both of English birth, both self-made men moving easily in the fields of commerce and government, and both great speculators to the point of bankruptcy. Joseph S. Davis has identified Morris as "the prototype . . . 'captain of industry'" and Duer as a case study of the early American businessman.⁴

Less familiar and deserving recognition is a class of American newcomers who had spent much or all of the war under British rule. A fine illustration is a provocative quartet

of business associates prominent in New York City after 1783: Alexander Macomb, William Constable, William Edgar and Daniel McCormick. All native Presbyterian or Anglican Irishmen, they emigrated to provincial New York soon after 1750. Loyalist in name only, if that, and profit-hungry to the core, the men had become wealthy as merchant suppliers to the British army in Detroit (Macomb and Edgar), in transatlantic trade between England and British-held American ports (Constable) and in auctioning captured American vessels and their cargoes in New York harbor (McCormick).⁵

This study, focusing on Alexander Macomb, discovers that his life, rather than consisting of two apparently disconnected careers, had a unifying element of opportunism entirely typical of his time. As a youth he left provincial New York for the Detroit fur trade, which was then a satellite of New York's commercial network, as it offered a surpassing field for advancement. When the War of Independence called for taking sides, Macomb remained behind British lines, yet when postwar opportunities beckoned in New York City, there he went. The study will then show that in the atmosphere of a liberated marketplace, Macomb and others like him saw their careers ending abruptly for their failing to recognize the pitfalls of headlong speculation in land and securities.

The popular image of Alexander Macomb has been that of a simple fur trader, by implication an uncouth frontiersman whose interest in acquiring wilderness lands in northern New York derived from observations of fur-buying expeditions up the St. Lawrence River. If he had been such an individual, there would have been good reason to perceive Macomb as only a front for powerful insiders. But in truth Macomb had always been a sophisticated imaginative man on the make, accustomed to taking large risks and boundlessly confident of his ability to hold his own among the wolfish leaders and officials of his time.

Macomb showed his hustle at the tender age of eighteen, by boldly forsaking the family home for uncertain prospects in the Detroit fur trade. The lad's background little prepared him for such an adventure. Born in 1748 at Ballynure, County Antrim, he emigrated from Ulster in 1755 with his Scotch-Irish parents, brother, and sister to Albany, New York. His father John Gordon Macomb, never visibly affluent, almost certainly remained a Yorker, for there is no evidence that he moved his family to Detroit as the family genealogist has affirmed. By published record John Macomb served as county judge at Albany, raised a corps of 500 loyalists in support of General Burgoyne at Bennington, suffered confiscation of his home at nearby Hoosick, New York and, as recompense, received an appointment as paymaster of British provincial troops. Although in 1780 he petitioned General Frederick Haldimand (unsuccessfully) for a commissary post in the West, his only experience with Detroit may have been limited to visits in the 1780's.⁶ The conclusion, on slim evidence, is that in 1766 John

Macomb's son Alexander traveled to frontier Detroit entirely on his own and without capital.

Macomb found himself in an industry remarkable for relentless competition. New York merchants of the 1760's held a proprietary interest in the trading post of Detroit, and Michilimackinac beyond it, as the westernmost links of a trading network extending from the port city of New York via the Hudson, Mohawk and Niagara water route. In what amounted to an intercolonial trade war, aggressive New Yorkers like James Sterling, John Porteous and William Edgar struggled with the more numerous Canadians from Montreal. Tenaciously holding on to possibly one-third of the fur business, they undoubtedly benefited from their ability to import unlimited volumes of lower cost rum for the Indian trade.⁷

One of the most energetic New York firms was Phyn & Ellice of Schenectady. Needful of cash and a strong presence in strategic Detroit, the proprietors turned to a new trading firm owned by Alexander and William Macomb. In a document dated August 27, 1774, Phyn & Ellice sold its Detroit stock to the Macomb brothers and appointed them as its agents in that post.⁸

Such a prestigious arrangement with the Schenectady firm bespoke an impressive advancement for the 26-year-old Alexander Macomb and his younger brother William. The precocious young merchants were already operating a modest but flourishing trade with settlers, townspeople and outfitters; their first ledger recorded, for example, supplying a Mrs. Labute, perhaps a shopkeeper, with rum, wine, dry goods, animal skins and gunpowder, and billing her \$90 for the month of June, 1774.⁹

Affiliation with Phyn & Ellice may have helped land some official business. The brothers' petty ledger contained the account "Adventure to the Huron River" (a stream near Sandusky). The entries totaled \$2765 by March 3, 1775, and included such popular Indian items as black wampum, brooches, blankets, moccasins, horn combs, tobacco and rum.¹⁰

The "adventure" to the Indian country across Lake Erie was presumably a military one to curry Indian support, and its significance was appreciated by big suppliers like Macomb. As armed conflict raged in New England and Quebec during the early months of the War of Independence, it was only a matter of time before it spread to the western frontier posts. But all-out employment of Indian warriors as part of Britain's offensive strategy was still two years away.

Meanwhile the Macomb fortunes took another upswing with the arrival of Henry Hamilton, an ambitious Scottish-born officer who would become Macomb's strong supporter. On November 9, 1775 Hamilton assumed office as Lieutenant Governor and Superintendent of Detroit.¹¹ Duties of his position were equivocal and overlapped the commanding officer's, but did include responsibility for regulating the fur trade and keeping the Indians at peace. Because the posts lacked civil government, the four lieutenant governors at Detroit, Michilimackinac, Vincennes and Kaskaskia acted much as political officers attached to the military, reporting to the Governor of Canada in Quebec. Going beyond his jurisdiction, Hamilton haughtily overstepped the commanding officer's authority and even bypassed the governor by corresponding directly with

Lord George Germain, the American Department secretary at Whitehall.¹²

The American Revolution came to Detroit in 1777 when Germain, responding in part to Hamilton's needling, proclaimed an official Indian policy for the West. Writing on March 26 to Governor Sir Guy Carleton, he relayed an ominous message:

...it is the King's command that you should direct Lieut.-Governor Hamilton to assemble as many Indians of his district as he conveniently can...employ them in making a diversion and exciting an alarm upon the frontiers of Virginia and Pennsylvania.... A supply of presents for the Indian and other necessities will be wanted..., and you will of course send Lieut.-Governor Hamilton what is proper and sufficient.¹³

Germain's order to ship unlimited supplies of Indian gifts to Detroit made welcome news to its merchants, certainly to Alexander Macomb, who for over a year had been Hamilton's chief provisioner. A close social relationship further cemented their friendship, one so lasting that years later Macomb named his fifth son Henry Hamilton.¹⁴

In September of 1778, anxious to give a boost to his friend and irritated at the reluctance of other merchants to accept orders for government provisions, Hamilton made a point of informing the new governor, General Frederick Haldimand, that

Mr. Macomb ...has furnished goods at a more reasonable rate than any other merchant. If his prices are compared with goods taken up for the Crown at other Posts, I am well assured they will be found more moderate.... He has never charged

commission or expences, tho' he has given himself a vast deal of trouble in the purchase of Indian corn, flour, cattle &c. He has advanced on the Credit of the Crown to the amount of 12,000 £ N. York Currency [\$30,000] at one time.... I but do justice to a perfectly honest man.¹⁵

That Macomb, an astute merchant, could have been so altruistic or ardent a King's subject as to turn down a profit on a large part of his trade, stretches credulity. The assertion hints of collusion between the two men at the worst, or at least of the Lieutenant Governor's ignorance of standard business practice. It is logical to suppose that the Macombs would mark up prices enough to guarantee a generous return on their invested capital.

Haldimand, on the other hand, seemed to have no doubts about the profiteering aspects of the arrangement. He simmered for years over the Macomb monopoly and finally exploded in rage at the fortune which the Macombs made during the war.¹⁶ The Macombs' control of the government business, which they must have won by aggressive promotion, did indeed extend throughout the Revolution and beyond. Hamilton's successor, Major Arent Schuyler De Peyster, felt equally comfortable with Alexander Macomb, whose daughter Sarah married De Peyster's namesake nephew after the war.¹⁷

Not only did the Macombs supply provisions to the garrison and goods to the Indian Department on credit, but they also acted as paymaster for post personnel, militia, volunteers and interpreters. The scope of their business increased so greatly that by 1779 the brothers took in a third partner, William Edgar, and became the firm of Macomb, Edgar and Macomb; the

title implies that Alexander Macomb headed the establishment, although Edgar later took credit for saving the firm through his own prudence.¹⁸ As an illustration of the volume of their official trade, the partners billed Governor Haldimand for close to \$500,000 for the period of September 1779 through May 1783 alone.¹⁹ They were becoming wealthy: by October of 1781 the partnership could invest surplus funds of nearly \$250,000 at five percent interest.²⁰

There is, however, no way of breaking down their income between government and private sources. The partnership clearly continued heavy shipments of peltry.²¹ But it was the Indian Department which accounted for the heaviest volume at the Macomb warehouse. Besides providing foods for the lavish entertainment of visiting Indians, the store furnished vast quantities of whatever the Indians desired: stroud blankets, paper looking glasses, Morris bells, ribbons, jews harps, brass kettles, pewter basins, brooches, earbobs, and the like. Ledger entries of such goods for December 29, 1779 through May 1, 1780 added up to \$92,140.²²

Of all the Indian presents listed in the Macomb ledger, the really eye-catching items were the red- and buckhoun-haft scalping knives. In this single period the Macombs delivered the astounding total of 8,593 scalping knives.²³ Should Alexander Macomb, as leading partner, have shared moral responsibility with the British authorities for distributing what was, symbolically at least, a terrorist weapon? Having privileged status as government supplier, he was at least indirectly involved in the execution of British war policy, under which royal officials implicitly sanctioned the Indian practice of scalping American captives.

Lord George Germain had made that policy clear in March of 1777 without quite putting it into words, when he instructed Governor Sir Guy Carleton on the use of Indian warriors: "the most vigorous efforts should be made, and every means employed that Providence has put in His Majesty's hands for crushing the rebellion."²⁴ William Pitt, almost the only Englishman to pick on Germain's reliance on Providence as justification, fulminated against those who "dared authorize... to our arms the tomahawk and scalping knife of the savage? ...What! to attribute the sanction of god and nature to the massacres of the Indian scalping knife..."²⁵

Meanwhile terrorized Kentuckians placed their condemnation of Indian atrocities squarely upon the shoulders of Henry Hamilton, whom George Rogers Clark eternally memorialized as "the Famous Hair Buyer."²⁶ Controversy has arisen not so much over Hamilton's toleration of scalping as to whether he actually bought the scalps brought into Detroit. Some historians have painted Hamilton black, while others have sought to rehabilitate him for lack of evidence that he paid for scalps.²⁷

The argument has sidestepped the real issue. Hamilton and his Indian clients perfectly understood the simple scenario: the warriors accepted lavish gifts, including scalping knives, and in return went out to terrorize the American frontier. And in this drama, Alexander Macomb played a subordinate but rather clearly reprehensible role, without any known expression of remorse, and continued it throughout the war. Even as late as September of 1783, Macomb placed a substantial order for Indian presents, including 1,440 scalping knives.²⁸

With the war at an end, the partnership of Macomb, Edgar and Macomb began to dissolve. First to drop out, on September 3, 1783, was William Edgar, who followed the advice of a fellow-trader, Sampson Fleming, and moved to New York City. He took with him as his share a draft in the amount of \$120,000 - a good clue to the firm's net assets.²⁹ Within two years, the exact date unknown, Alexander Macomb also shifted his activities to New York City, leaving his brother alone in charge of the store.

Why Alexander Macomb chose to risk a second career under the American flag, while his brother remained loyal to the Crown, may have been a simple matter of differing personalities: Alexander, the aggressive, calculating entrepreneur; William, always the junior partner, a follower, more a conservative than an adventurer, content to live out his life as a Detroit merchant, with no further achievements than winning a term in the Upper Canada provincial assembly.³⁰ Alexander Macomb, the risk-taker, had visions of a higher sort.

The New York that Macomb encountered in 1785 was a city in flux, one that well suited his restless spirit. Its citizens, bustling about the work of restoring dilapidated buildings and renewing a moribund economy, exemplified a kinetic young America. In December of 1784 Elkanah Watson, the canal promoter and agriculturist, set foot in New York for the first time and described a town with "very irregular" streets, some 1,400 dwellings and a population of 20,000. Although "the sad vestige of a desolating war met the eye at every point," Watson was astonished "to see... a vast multitude of masts already clustered in its docks. The elasticity of its rebound has been

truly wonderful, and I saw in it a sure passage of its ultimate destiny."³¹

The city's society had also been in transition since 1782, as swarms of newcomers replaced thousands of fleeing Tories. The loyalists who stuck it out, historians now agree, suffered remarkably little retaliation and harassment, considering the stressful length of the British occupation. In explanation, Joseph S. Tiedemann has observed that their strength in numbers protected them in the process of conflict resolution, while Robert M. Calhoon concluded that activist leaders like Alexander Hamilton, the "legal theorist" of reconciliation, persuasively argued political unity as a national need. And John H. Shy suspected that America simply put aside ideology in a rush to "get on with its agenda."³²

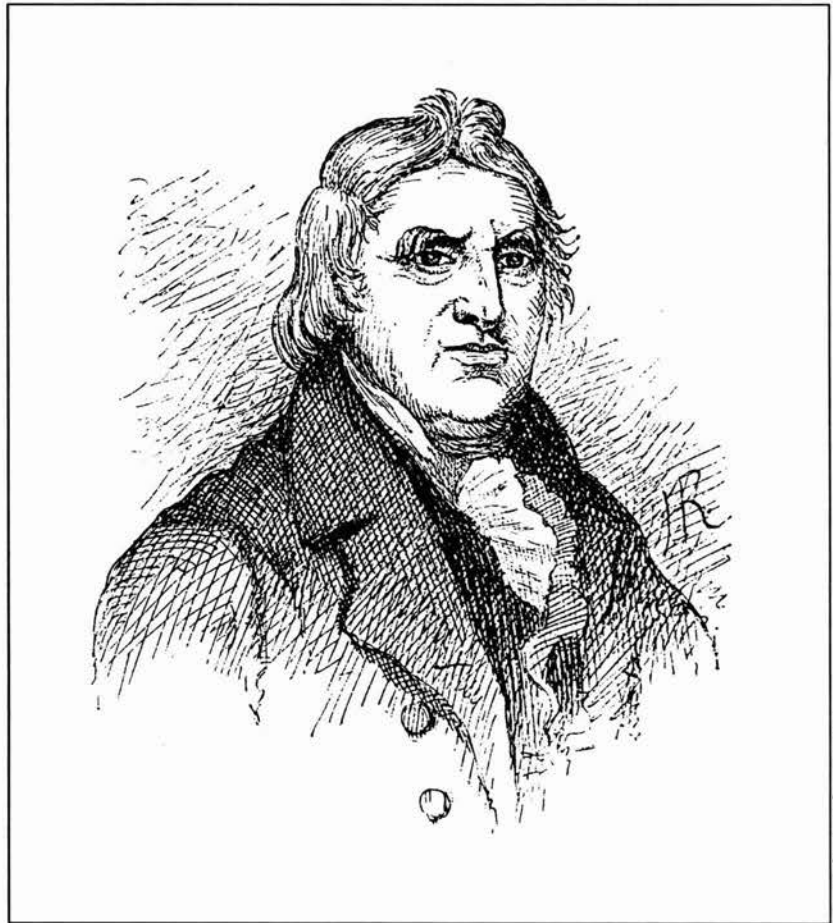
By 1785 reintegration had advanced to the point where an ex-Tory newcomer like Alexander Macomb assimilated into the mainstream without hindrance. His record as a supplier to Indian marauders evidently never came to light, nor would there likely have been scrutiny of his past by the "business is business" establishment. Moreover, he would not have allowed himself to appear as politically obnoxious as his unreconstructed father, who had preserved his loyalism ever since patriot watchdogs had marked him as "a Person highly inimical to the Cause... [and who] has been seen... dressed in a Rifle Smock."³³

Further, acceptance came readily through close ties with William Edgar, already established in New York, and William Constable, a long-time friend from fur trading days. Notwithstanding a murky earlier history of trading across enemy lines, Constable switched sides in 1778. Thereafter he enjoyed a secure and influential position in Philadelphia

and New York owing to the patronage of Gouverneur Morris and a well-publicized but tardy stint in the Continental army.³⁴ Another valued ally was popular Daniel McCormick, who as a recognized neutral during the occupation escaped confiscation of his property and as early as 1784 had won election to the newly formed Chamber of Commerce.³⁵

A common bond of these men, one that undoubtedly meant much to Irish-born newcomers like Macomb, was membership in the society of the Friendly Sons of Saint Patrick, one of the ethnic friendly societies springing up at the time. Organized by William Constable and Daniel McCormick in the winter of 1783, the society was primarily aimed to assist indigent Irish, but its social aspects also appealed to the convivial Irish-Americans. By tradition the largely Presbyterian members agreed never to discuss politics or religion at meetings, but politically-minded members like Governor George Clinton surely bent the rule once in a while. Constable, McCormick, Edgar and Macomb all held office as president or councillor at one time or another. McCormick, president for thirty consecutive years, was a familiar fixture at the head table of the high-spirited St. Patrick's Day dinners. On the practical side, members formed such close linkages in their business, church and civic affairs that the society had an unquestionably significant influence in their careers.³⁶ To the ambitious Macomb, president of the society in 1791, his membership had special meaning.

Joining a fraternal organization was one thing, but a surer way to prestige lay in ostentation, and Macomb was not one to be discomfited by display of a grandiose way of life. By October of 1787 the



From *Loosing The Empire State*

Governor George Clinton, a close friend of Alexander Macomb.

Macombs had settled into their new residence at 39-41 Broadway, one block south of Trinity Church. The family occupied the left half of the four-story brick structure just completed under the direction of Macomb. Its imposing frontage extended for 112 feet along the west side of the avenue, and New Yorkers gazing upon it in wonderment called it the finest private building in the entire city. As a measure of its splendor, the mansion, later a distinguished hotel, has been the subject of more comment by city historians than Macomb himself.³⁷

Admiration for the structure came even from George Washington, who leased the main dwelling from Macomb and made it the presiden-

tial mansion from February 23, 1790 until his departure for Philadelphia in late August. Tobias Lear, the President's secretary, and official visitors later described its interior, beginning with the large entry hall from which a single continuous stairway led to three upper floors. On either side were elegant and lofty-ceiling rooms for dining and receiving visitors. At the back glass doors opened to a balcony which afforded a handsome view across the grounds to Macomb's own wharf and the picturesque Hudson beyond it.³⁸

Macomb's motive in constructing such a grand residence cannot be explained solely on elitist terms. He also had to answer a genuine housing problem. The head of this house-

hold was remarkably prolific, and his menage had become truly formidable. In 1787, in addition to his wife Catherine Navarre, there were nine children at home. By 1790, Macomb was temporarily a widower, now raising ten children, seven more to follow. His household was staffed by at least twenty-five servants, of whom twelve were slaves (making Macomb the third largest slaveholder in New York City).³⁹ Not long afterward, his immense household, instead of a joy, became an increasingly heavy burden.

Compensating for self-indulgence and fascination for dazzling display, Macomb's personality had another, more praiseworthy, aspect, an apparently altruistic enthusiasm for promoting the public good. Seeming to enjoy his liberation from the dreary confinement of the Detroit stockade and anxious to present a new image, he threw himself into the city's civic affairs. There is no reason to dismiss all the effusions of Macomb's obituarist, who rightly praised him as a useful citizen "ever ready to aid in the embellishments and substantial improvements of the City of New York."⁴⁰ A contemporary attested to his "generous and profuse" benevolence, in sharp contrast to William Edgar's "penurious and retired" nature.⁴¹ City boosters counted upon Macomb's managerial talent for purchasing materials and directing the conversion of City Hall into Federal House, and the legislature called on him to help erect a building to house the state archives. As further evidence of his social consciousness, Macomb served as the first treasurer of New York's first scientific body, the Society for the Promotion of Agriculture, Arts, and Manufactures.⁴²

Political affairs, however, held little appeal for him, except perhaps

for business purposes. Nominally a Federalist like most men of his class, Macomb nevertheless backed his friend George Clinton, the anti-Federalist Governor. He served two terms as state assemblyman, December 1788 to March 1789 and January to March, 1791, but passively, for the Assembly *Journal* recorded only one minor assignment for him. He favored adoption of the Federal Constitution, but there is no record of his having taken part in the state ratifying convention, as some historians have asserted.⁴³

More to his taste was the business of buying wilderness lands at rock-bottom prices. Macomb was not alone. Throughout the nation almost every man of means itched to make a killing by speculation in the immense tracts which both the Federal and state governments were opening for settlement. In New York, strapped for ready funds to reduce the public debt, the anti-Federalist state government overcame its republican scruples and sold land only to moneyed land jobbers, who in theory were to take on the responsibility for development.

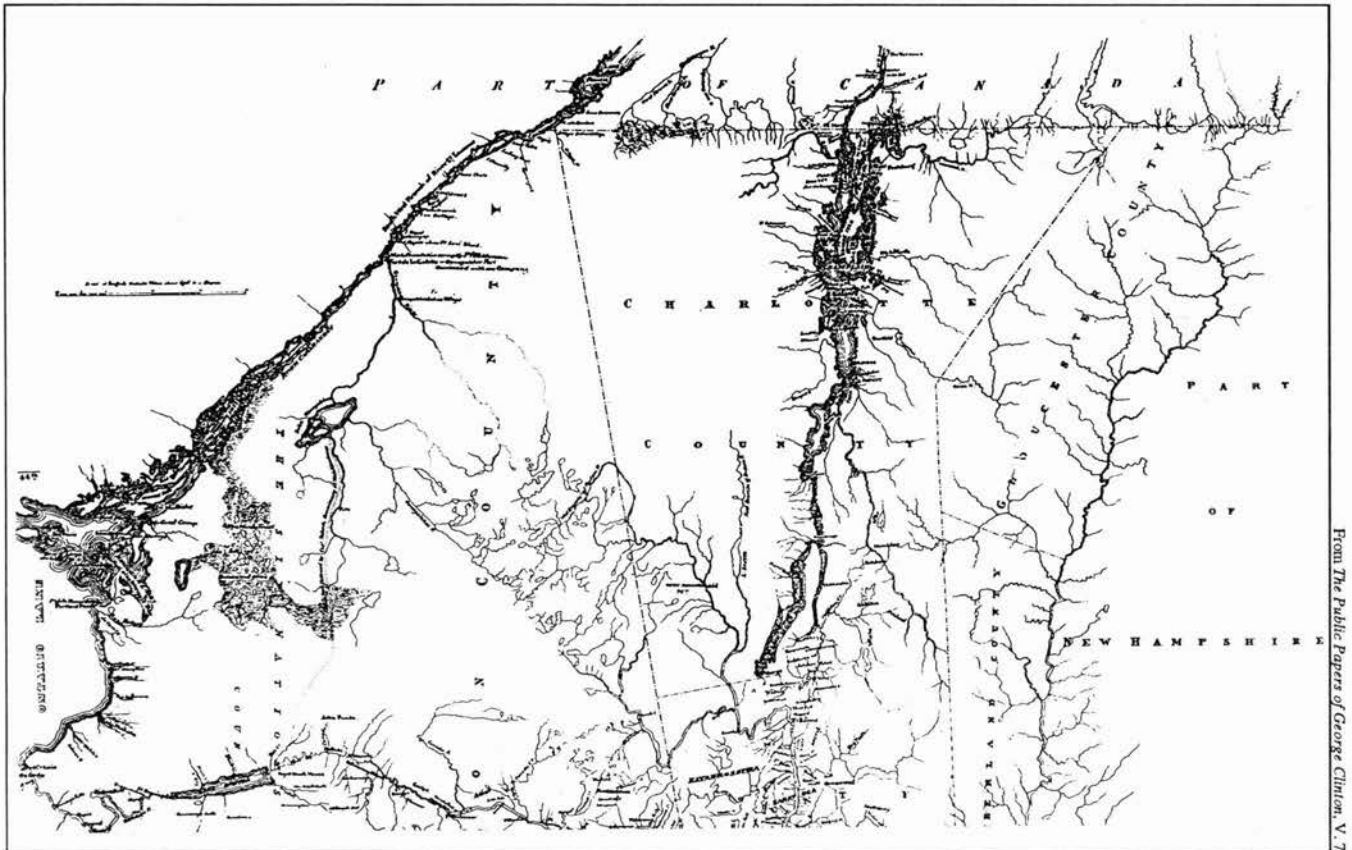
In practice, however, the initial purchasers displayed little interest in any role other than making quick resales to longer-term investors and land companies. The primary purchasers, like Alexander Macomb, were bolder risk-takers than the middlemen, who as developers aimed to subdivide their tracts into farm-size lots for contracting to pioneers. Speculators, land companies and settlers all played essential roles in the opening up of the nation's public lands, and land jobbers continued to be a factor until the Homestead Act of 1862.

But matters rarely went according to expectations for any of the participants in the land rush during

the early national period. The initial promoters frequently over-strained their credit during business slumps before running down secondary buyers, who in turn suffered deep discouragement on becoming aware that recovery of their investment took not years but decades. As one exasperated New York developer complained after fifteen years of experience, "It is slow realizing from new lands. I will never advise another friend to invest in them. Men generally have not the requisite patience for speculating in them." As for poverty-stricken settlers, titles to their farms seemed always out of reach, and many fell back on tenancy.⁴⁴

None of this immediately entered Macomb's mind when he took his first speculative flyer. Between 1786 and 1791, he and his partners acquired over four and one-half million acres of state and federal lands. In sheer magnitude and audacity, his land speculations placed him on a par with the giants, Robert Morris and William Duer, and an observer might have asked his motives. For one thing, as he lived on capital, his resources dwindled as the expenses of a large household mounted. Second, as he looked ahead, he hoped to pass on a landed estate to his ten children.⁴⁵ Further, and perhaps most important, was his compulsion, as always, to snatch a high-risk chance when he saw it.

The first venture came early in 1786 when the New York land commissioners auctioned a never-patented royal grant of 800,000 acres deep in the Adirondack Mountains. Its reputation as a ragged and forbidding wilderness doubtless discouraged most investors, but Macomb, as a neophyte land jobber, bid for and received patents to 173,000 acres of that mountain land.⁴⁶



From The Public Papers of George Clinton, V. 7

Map of northern New York and Vermont shortly before the Revolutionary War. Large portions of the western sections of this relative wilderness were purchased by Alexander Macomb only a few decades later.

His only known land transactions outside New York may have been influenced by the persuasive William Duer, who even while secretary to the Board of the Treasury masterminded the great Scioto land scheme in Ohio. No evidence exists that Macomb held Scioto stock, but he and William Edgar did join Duer in two other Ohio purchases. Early in the autumn of 1787 the Continental Congress, in its first offering of Northwest Territory land under the Ordinance of 1785, put up for auction the first seven ranges west of the Ohio, some forty miles west of Pittsburgh, and the partnership of Macomb and Edgar bought 89,000 acres of it, one-half of all that sold. Duer, perhaps respecting his official status, took only 4,000 acres. More or less simultaneously, the Macomb

brothers, Constable, Edgar, Duer and Alexander Hamilton each subscribed to Ohio Company stock; along with the other thousand or so proprietor-shareholders, mostly New Englanders, they held rights to future allotments in the Muskingum country.⁴⁷

At the same time Macomb became principle organizer of a syndicate to buy 640,000 acres of New York wilderness on the south bank of the St. Lawrence River. Historians have usually brushed off his role in this and his next speculation as merely a front for more powerful figures who preferred anonymity, but in fact Macomb claimed for himself and his associate Constable close to a third of the acreage, far more than any other participant and moreover, before its division, possessed the power to sell all of it.⁴⁸

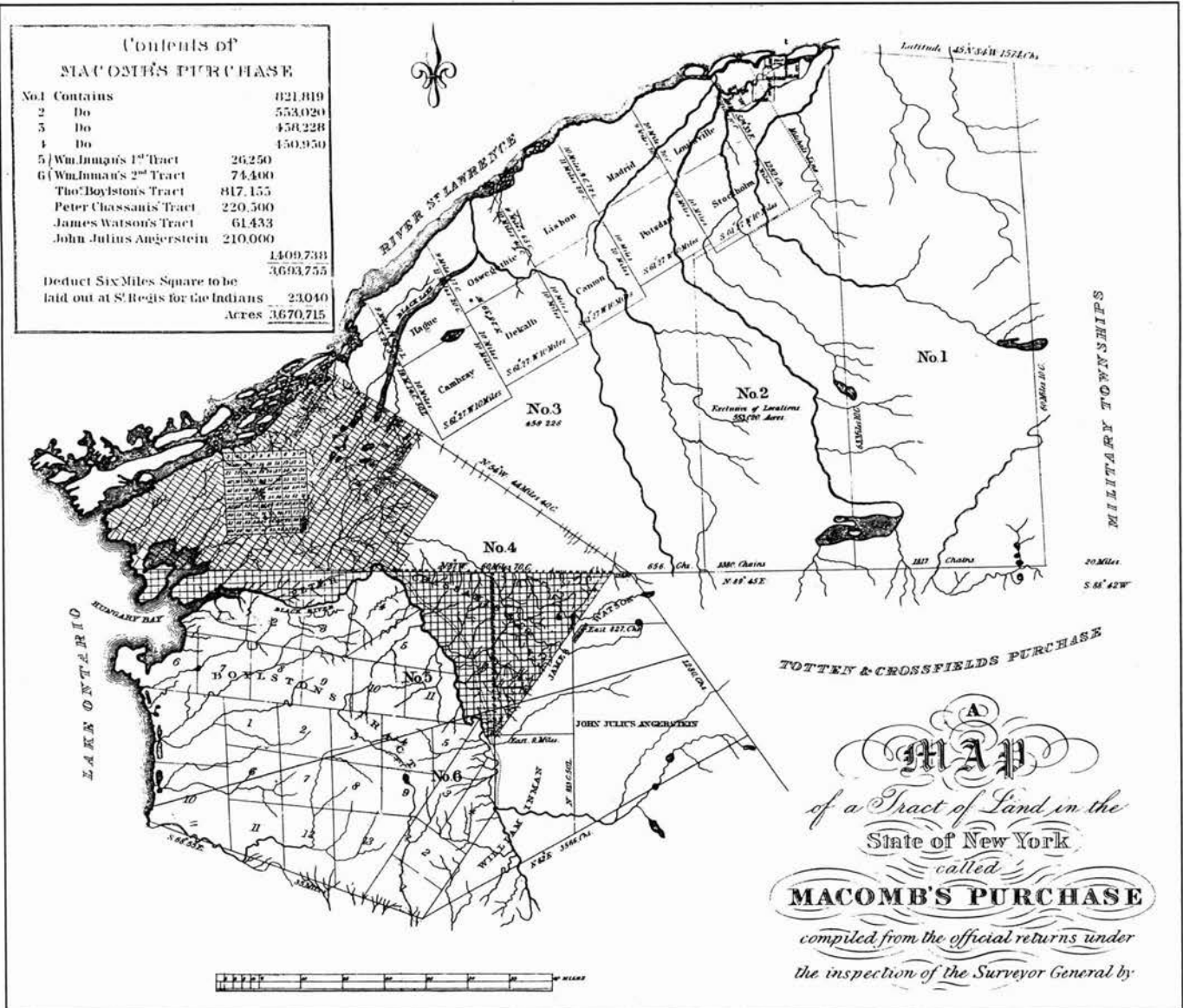
On May 5, 1786, in an effort to speed up sales of wild land, the New York legislature had directed the land office to lay out 64,000 acre townships and advertise them for public sale. In compliance, as their first project, the land commissioners laid out ten townships on the St. Lawrence, five fronting on the river, five behind them. The *Albany Gazette* for June 7, 1787 carried the advertisement announcing the auction to be held at the Merchant's Coffee House in New York City.⁴⁹ The sale went off on schedule, and Macomb emerged as the winning bidder for most of eight townships at not over a shilling an acre. Reaching for the other two, he undercut the democratic intention of the legislators that those be sold directly to individual settlers in mile-square

farms; he arranged under the table with such cronies as Daniel McCormick to bid in those lots for him.⁵⁰

The scheme was only one element in Macomb's cynical and audacious strategy. Although absolute proof is lacking, the outcome of the auction must have been prearranged by a syndicate of up to a dozen or so speculators who

shrewdly pooled their interests rather than face competitive bidding. A politically diverse group of former patriots and loyalists, present Federalists and anti-Federalists, their shared hunger for cheap wilderness lands overrode ideological differences. Following the Ohio Company practice, each signed up for a portion of fifty-six undivided rights entitling him to a proportion of the

acreage when finally divided, and each agreed to share certain joint concerns. But unfortunately for every one, the planning failed to allow for contingencies, and the lack of a detailed written agreement in this primitive American joint venture generated such confusion when it came time to make the division that even the sagacious Gouverneur Morris confessed bewilderment.⁵¹



Map of "Macomb's Purchase," showing the various tracts and sections of the purchase.

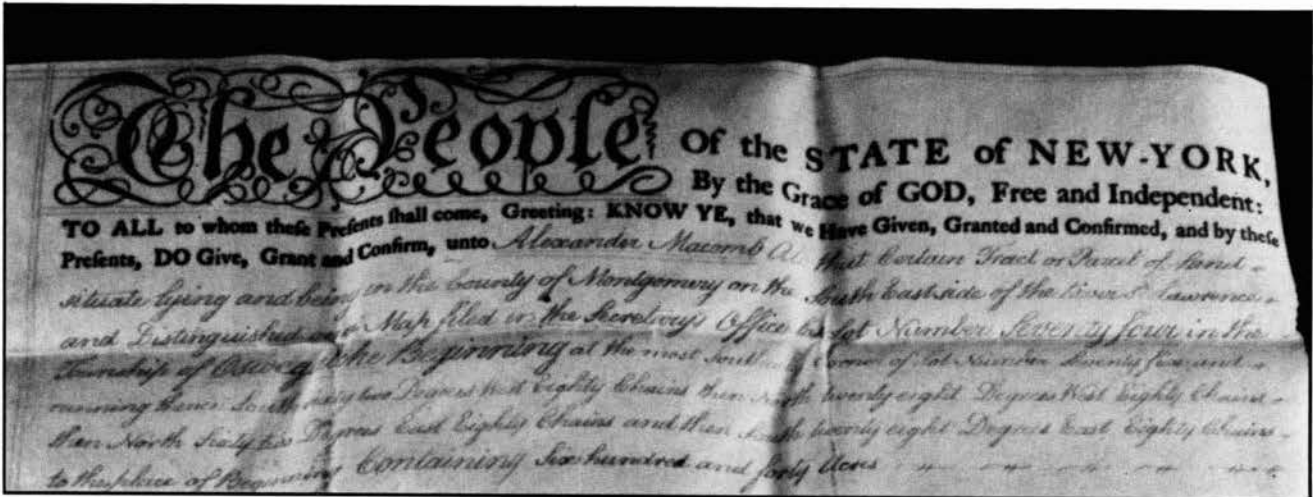
Macomb, the sole owner of record, actually shared planning and executive duties with Samuel Ogden, a Newark ironmaster and Gouverneur Morris's brother-in-law, a practical man who was perhaps the only proprietor with a genuine intention to personally develop the area. Morris spoke later of the two internal "companies" in the venture, Ogden's and Macomb's, but the

participants' names wherever completely divulged publicly and must be culled from private correspondence.⁵²

Ogden's group comprised, besides himself, Gouverneur Morris, Robert Morris and General Henry Knox. Macomb's probably included all of the following: Macomb himself, William Constable (apparently his equal partner from the begin-

ning), William Edgar, John Lamb, John Taylor of Albany, Jeremiah Van Rensselaer, and William Laight. Alexander Hamilton and General Philip Schuyler held unexplained allotments under the joint account.⁵³

More mysteriously, 42,000 acres were reserved, as Gouverneur Morris put it, "under the idea of persons in Canada." The designated Canadians may have been among the former



Detail photographs of one of the 1787 parchment charters granting land to Macomb (full view seen on the front cover). Note Alexander Macomb's name on the top portion of the document above. To the right is the seal attached at the bottom of the charter. Governor Clinton's signature is also seen next to where the seal is attached. (From the SLCHA collections)



loyalists who had settled the opposite shore of the St. Lawrence and who might have assisted in solving the St. Regis Indian problem and in developing the new lands, or so Gouverneur Morris implied. In private correspondence, but not publicly, Macomb named only one of them, Stephen Delancey, a notorious Tory politician of Albany who fled to Lachine, Quebec, where he became "inspector of loyalists." That in 1789 Macomb tried to peddle St. Lawrence lands in Montreal was charged by Dr. Josiah Pomeroy of Kinderhook in an affidavit designed to topple Governor George Clinton in the 1792 election.⁵⁴ Pomeroy's attempt to implicate the Governor in a Canadian plot was universally discredited by contemporaries and every historian since, but his account may have had some kernel of truth.

The Ten Towns purchase turned out to be one of a kind; thereafter land sales dropped precipitately. Reacting to what they regarded as onerous restrictions, land-hungry speculators and Clintonian politicians eager to plant anti-Federalist proprietors on the frontier combined to pressure the legislature into modifying the 1786 land law. Along with the alluring prospect that big land sale revenue meant no taxes, all these considerations overrode republican insistence that small lots be sold directly to yeoman farmers.⁵⁵

On March 22, 1791 the legislators passed a new land law with a vitally significant change, one that reeked of collusion: it authorized the commissioners to sell public lands "in such parcels, on such terms, and in such manner as they shall judge most conducive to the interest of the state."⁵⁶ Macomb was only one of many speculation-minded assemblymen who passed the bill, but as ultimately the greatest beneficiary

he might well have been one of the leading sponsors.

The land office lost no time in processing a stack of proposals and by September had approved thirty-five applications tallying up to five and one-half million acres and a contract value of \$1,030,435. Most were large grants, but the one that stood out conspicuously above all others became notorious as Macomb's Great Purchase. Accepted by the board on June 22nd, Macomb's proposal encompassed most of present-day St. Lawrence, Franklin, Jefferson, all of Lewis and part of Oswego counties in the northernmost stretches of the state. The remarkable audacity of claiming 3,670,715 acres – twelve percent of the state's surface – was matched by the niggardliness of the purchase price accepted by the commissioners: eight pence per acre.⁵⁷

As in the Ten Towns purchase, only Macomb's name appeared in the documents. In this transaction, however, he had two equal associates in William Constable and Daniel McCormick, a partnership which remained a secret for a year.⁵⁸ Otherwise the same reasons pertained as to why Macomb took responsibility as sole bidder. As to motivation, it is probable that Macomb and Constable had equally intense appetite, whereas McCormick went along for the ride.

But in January of 1792, when Governor George Clinton presented the land commission's annual report to the legislature, New Yorkers for the first time realized the full import of Macomb's Purchase. A great flap arose and intensified over the next several months.⁵⁹ By no accident, the uproar coincided with the bitterly partisan campaign for the governorship. Federalists heaped abuse on Clinton, of which Professor Alfred F. Young has given a well-

documented account. Most incendiary were the charges that Macomb had bribed the Governor, who was also a commissioner, by giving him a hidden interest, and that the commissioners had willfully ignored the land policy by granting only large tracts.

Although Macomb and his partners were intimate friends of the Governor and among his Federalist supporters, no solid evidence turned up which would have implicated Clinton in any way, and the uncharacteristically republican protestations of Federalist leaders evaporated.⁶⁰ Nor was there any apparent substance to insinuations that Aaron Burr, attorney general and a land commissioner, had nefarious motives by absenting himself from board meetings at which votes were taken.⁶¹ Yet doubts lingered on both issues.

The political controversy only heightened Macomb's lack of credibility. The sheer magnitude of his purchase and its giveaway price fostered a disbelief that any one man could possibly have managed it without bribing public officials. If the identity of his fellow speculators had been known from the beginning, there might have been less fuss. As it was, the Governor's enemies chose to see Macomb as a front man and failed to recognize him for what he was: a bold enterpriser of a new class, taking advantage of a once in a lifetime opportunity and shamelessly making an outrageous proposal.

While surveyors mapped Macomb's broad holdings, he turned to banking and corporate management. Recognizing his financial strength, the local branch of the Bank of the United States appointed him to its board, and in November, 1792, he was elected a director of the New

Jersey Society for Establishing Useful Manufactures, S.U.M. for short. The newly organized society was Alexander Hamilton's brainchild and one of the earliest and most ambitious of the nation's business corporations. Macomb's responsibilities included site selection and requisition of materials for the proposed plant, a task for which he qualified superbly.⁶²

But within months Macomb's world began to appear less secure. Burdened by the high cost of luxury living and an uncommonly large household, he also had carrying charges for his several land holdings, and to maintain his one-third interest in the Great Purchase he would have to meet a \$15,000 installment. Further, part of his capital was tied up in his share of William Edgar's China trade. William Duer's resources were similarly stretched by land speculation in Maine.⁶³ Seeing each other often as S.U.M. managers, the two men joined in a highly confidential and risky enterprise in which they expected to recoup their fortunes.

In their secret agreement dated December 29, 1792, the partners committed themselves to a one-year program of speculation in bank stocks and United States debt securities. All purchase decisions lay in Duer's control, but paperwork was to be in the name of Macomb alone.⁶⁴ Joseph S. Davis has described the association to be of mutual advantage: Duer's astuteness, but a tainted background requiring him to remain in the shadows, contrasting with Macomb's gross inexperience in security speculation, but with sound assets and a spotless reputation well suited for public relations. Both men, moreover, shared the same bold, confident temperament necessary for aggressive play in the stock

market. Throwing caution to the wind, Macomb rested his future in Duer's hands and completely disregarded the other's "fertile genius" for hatching ill-fated schemes.⁶⁵

What might have saved Macomb from folly was the sound counsel of his close friend, William Constable, who had often moderated Macomb's impetuosity. Although fully as audacious in land speculation as Macomb, in all other business affairs Constable was prudent and conservative. But sadly for Macomb, his friend had just departed for London, where he remained for three years of business for his firm and in negotiating sales of northern New York land. Replying to Macomb's confidential revelation of the Duer connection, Constable – from personal experience – urged extreme caution: "[Duer] will speculate on you – as after leading you into all the risqué. He will reap the profit.... You dare not differ with him on account of character but must pocket the loss...he cannot go straight."⁶⁶ The warning came too late.

Duer, Macomb, and an inner circle of associates, entered the market in a fury of activity, becoming familiar in the Coffee House stock exchange as the Company. Joseph S. Davis, who has worked his way through the intricacies of the hectic three months of speculation culminating in the Panic of 1792, concluded that the Company's aim was to control the Bank of New York and to corner the federally funded six-percent securities by bullish purchasing from the bears, chief of whom were three of the Livingstons (Brockholst, John R. and Edward). Macomb seemed to have recklessly committed all of his assets, and funds of the S.U.M., by giving his own notes. Men and women in all walks of life eagerly jumped into the mar-

ket, and when security prices fell and the bills could not cover their notes, a general panic followed. Duer and Macomb became bankrupt and were thrown into debtor's prison, where hundreds of angry noteholders threatened to break down the walls.⁶⁷

This was, as Joseph S. Davis has explained, a typical stock market panic caused by over-extension of credit, bringing failure to some and losses to many, as well as a collapse of security and commodity prices, and general confusion. Yet most businessmen recovered with surprising rapidity and even took steps to regulate the market so as to prevent such distress in the future.⁶⁸

Alexander Macomb emerged almost \$300,000 in debt, hounded by the unrelenting Livingstons and absolutely finished as a businessman.⁶⁹ His close friends, Constable and McCormick, and to some extent Edgar, tried to shield some of Macomb's estate from his creditors, but their efforts over several years failed to save him. "Laugh at all my visionary schemes," he exclaimed to Constable, an appropriate epitaph to a failed adventurer.⁷⁰ Duer, Robert Morris and Constable also failed in business during the 1790's. The bankruptcies of Macomb and Duer directly resulted from their impulsive conspiracy to corner the security market. Robert Morris owed his collapse to an overpowering self-confidence in a scheme to corner the French tobacco market.⁷¹ In the case of Constable, severe business reversals in the neutral trade ended his mercantile career.⁷² Contributing to their ruin, all four over-stretched their resources in land speculation by imprudently miscalculating the market.

No matter what stand they had taken in the Revolution, these pioneer enterprises and others like them

shared many of the same visions and the same misfortunes in the early national period. And by their very misjudgments and follies, they provided object lessons for a younger group of American businessmen, one of whom, John Jacob Astor, made none of their errors and became the richest man in America.

On the positive side, by breaking the chains of economic restraint and experimenting tentatively with innovations like corporations and consortiums, they set in motion the way nineteenth century American business would be conducted.

About the Author

David B. Dill, Jr. is a former resident of Gouverneur. He now resides in Northampton, Massachusetts.

Note

This manuscript was originally prepared by the author to appear in *The Watertown Daily Times*.

Footnotes

¹ Robert A. East, *Business Enterprise in the American Revolutionary Era* (New York: 1938), 30. The monographs most valuable to this study have been East's *Business Enterprise*; Joseph S. Davis, *Essays in the Earlier History of American Corporations*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, Mass.: 1917); and Alfred F. Young, *The Democratic Republicans of New York: The Origins, 1763-1797* (Chapel Hill: 1967).

² Bernard Mason, "Entrepreneurial Activity in New York during the American Revolution," *Business History Review*, 40 (1966): 190-192, 209-212; East, *Business Enterprise*, 31-48.

³ Mason, 237.

⁴ Davis, *Essays*, I: 111-112.

⁵ These men were more properly neutralists than loyalists; above all they were entrepreneurs and more akin to patriots Robert Morris and William Duer than to

Tory ideologues like, e.g., James Rivington, the New York City editor. True-blue Tory spokesmen were scarce, of course, and even Rivington may have been a closet patriot.

Alexander Macomb (1748-1831) must not be confused with his son Alexander (1782-1841), who rose to be Major General, Commanding-in-Chief, United States Army.

William Constable (1752-1803) switched to the American side before the end of the war. For his career see William A. Davis, "William Constable, New York Merchant and Land Speculator, 1772-1803," diss., Harvard University, 1957.

William Edgar (1739-1820), something of an uncharitable skinflint, passed his life making money.

Daniel McCormick (1744? -1834) served as lieutenant in the patriot militia until the British occupation of New York City, thereafter a vendue master. After the war, he enjoyed life as a merchant, convivial batchelor-about-town and philanthropist. To Alexander Hamilton, he was too quarrelsome.

⁶ Henry A. Macomb, *The Macomb Family Record*, (Camden, N.J.: 1917), 4a, 5: Excerpts and Miscellanea, Macomb Papers, Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library, hereafter cited as DPL; *Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collection*, 19 (1891): 582; 20 (1892): 260.

⁷ Wayne E. Stevens, *The Northwest Fur Trade, 1763-1800* (Urbana, Ill.: 1928), 8, 26-28, 33-36; R.H. Fleming, "Phyn, Ellice and Company of Schenectady," *Contributions to Canadian Economics*, 4 (1932): 7-10; Charles E. Lart, ed., "Fur Trade Returns, 1767," *Canadian Historical Review*, 3 (1922): 358. Lart gives a rare example of how fur consignments were distributed between Montreal and New York.

⁸ The agreement is quoted verbatim in Fleming, "Phyn, Ellice," 21-22.

⁹ Petty Ledger of Alexander and William Macomb, Macomb Papers, DPL. Detroit merchants carried accounts in New York pounds. From 1748 until 1796 the exchange rate for one New York pound was 2.50 Spanish silver dollars; in this study all amounts quoted in New York pounds are converted to dollars. Amounts under one pound, in shillings and pence, are not converted.

¹⁰ Macomb Papers, DPL.

¹¹ Silas Farmer, *The History of Detroit and Michigan*, I (Detroit: 1884): 242.

¹² John D. Barnhart, ed., *Henry Hamilton and George Rogers Clark in the American*

Revolution, with the Unpublished Journal of Lieut. Gov. Henry Hamilton (Crawfordsville, Ind.: 1951): 14-15; Henry Hamilton to Lord George Germain, Aug. 29-Sept. 2, 1776, in K.G. Davies, ed., *Documents of the American Revolution, 1770-1783, Colonial Office Series*, XII (Dublin: 1973): 209-214.

¹³ Germain to Carleton, Mar. 26, 1777, in Davies, *Documents*, XIV: 52.

¹⁴ For an example of Macomb-Hamilton intimacy, see Macomb to Hamilton, Feb. 4, 1779, in James A. James, "George Rogers Clark Papers, 1771-1781," *Illinois Historical Collections*, VIII (1912): 104. From Detroit Macomb wrote to Hamilton at Vincennes, just prior to the latter's capture by Clark, that "my better half is happy that you eat yor Xmas dinner at peace at St. Vincenne, since you could not do us that pleasure at Detroit." An American officer intercepted Macomb's letter.

¹⁵ Henry Hamilton to Governor Frederick Haldimand, n.d. but presumably Sept., 1778, in *Michigan Pioneer*, 9 (1886): 466-477.

¹⁶ Haldimand to Germain, Oct. 25, 1780, in Davies, *Documents*, 16: 416; Haldimand to Sir John Johnson, Sept. 22, 1783, in *Michigan Pioneer*, 20 (1892): 187.

¹⁷ Henry Macomb, *Macomb Family Record*, 17-18.

¹⁸ East, *Business Enterprise*, 191-193. East cites correspondence from the Edgar Papers (photostats), New York Public Library, hereafter cited as NYPL.

¹⁹ "Haldimand Papers," *Michigan Pioneer*, 10 (1886): 359, 426, 451, 556, 599; 11 (1887): 337, 364.

²⁰ Macomb, Edgar & Macomb, to James Phyn, London, Oct. 6, 1781, in Letter-book 1780-84, Macomb Papers, DPL.

²¹ Macomb, Edgar, & Macomb to John Warren, Niagara, July 10, 1780, in Letter-book 1780-84, Macomb Papers, DPL; Farmer, *History of Detroit*, I: 767. A single consignment to Niagara in 1780 included 102 fur packs, and on one occasion in 1781 the Widow Berthelet traded in over 12,000 skins of cat and fox, deer, racoon, bear, elk and wolf.

²² Ledger A, 1779-1780, Macomb Papers, DPL.

²³ Ledger A, Macomb Papers, DPL.

²⁴ Germain to Carleton, Mar. 26, 1777, cited by Gerald S. Brown, *The American Secretary: the Colonial Policy of Lord George Germain, 1775-1778* (Ann Arbor: 1963), 62.

²⁵ Cited by James A. James, *The Life of George Rogers Clark* (Chicago: 1928), 53.

²⁶George Rogers Clark to Governor Patrick Henry of Virginia, Feb. 3, 1779, in William W. Henry, *Patrick Henry: Life, Correspondence and Speeches*, 3 (New York: 1891), 220. According to James A. James, the epithet "hair buyer" was attached to almost any British officer on the frontier during the Revolution ("George Rogers Clark Papers," xxxviii n.)

²⁷For anti-Hamilton views, see Clarence M. Burton, ed., *History of Wayne County and the City of Detroit, Michigan*, I (Chicago, 1930), 129-130, 135-136; James, *Life of George Rogers Clark*, 51-54. For partial rehabilitation, see Nelson V. Russell, "The Indian Policy of Henry Hamilton," *Canadian Historical Review*, 11 (1930): 37; Barnhart, *Henry Hamilton*, 93-95.

²⁸Macomb & Macomb to Phyn & Ellice, London, Sept. 25, 1783, Letter-book, Macomb Papers, DPL.

²⁹Macomb, Edgar & Macomb to Robert Ellice, Sept. 3, 1783, and Macomb & Macomb to Phyn & Ellice, same date, Letter-book, Macomb Papers, DPL; East, *Business Enterprise*, 193.

³⁰*Michigan Pioneer*, 38 (1912): 338.

³¹James G. Wilson, ed., *The Memorial History of the City of New York*, III (New York: 1892), 1-26; Winslow C. Watson, *Men and Times of the Revolution; or, Memoirs of Elkanah Watson* (New York: 1856), 239-240.

³²Joseph S. Tiedemann, "Loyalists and Conflict Resolution in Post-Revolutionary New York: Queens County as a Test Case," *New York History* 68 (1987): 40; Robert M. Calhoun, "The Reintegration of the Loyalists and the Disaffected," in Jack P. Greene, ed., *The American Revolution: Its Character and Limits* (New York: 1987), 65; John W. Shy, "Force, Order, and Democracy in the American Revolution," in Greene, *American Revolution: Its Character*, 75-76. Philip Ranlet estimates the number of fleeing loyalists at 20,000 (*The New York Loyalists* (Knoxville, Tenn.: 1986), 193-194.)

³³*Minutes of the Albany Committee of Correspondence, 1775-1778*, I (Albany, 1923), 837.

³⁴Gouverneur Morris to Governor George Clinton, Mar. 2, 1779, in *Public Papers of George Clinton*, IV (New York and Albany: 1899-1914), 606-607; Mary-Jo Kline, *Gouverneur Morris and the New Nation* (New York: 1978), 288-294. Dr. Kline characterizes Constable's past as "shadowy." Also see William A. Davis, "William Constable," v, vi.

³⁵Wilson, *Memorial History*, IV, 535. (New York: 1892), 535.

³⁶Richard C. Murphy and Lawrence J. Mannion, *The History of the Society of the Friendly Sons of Saint Patrick in the City of New York, 1784-1955* (New York: 1962), 75, 76, 519, 523, 524, 530, 531, 535.

³⁷I.N.P. Stokes, *The Iconography of Manhattan Island, 1498-1909*, I (New York: 1915-1928), 422; Wilson, *Memorial History*, III, 68.

³⁸Stokes, *Iconography*, V, 1262; Stephen Decatur, Jr., *Private Affairs of George Washington from the Records and Accounts of Tobias Lear, Esquire, his Secretary* (Boston: 1933), 148.

³⁹Henry Macomb, *Macomb Family Record*, 15-26; Bureau of the Census, *Heads of Families at the First Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1790: New York* (Washington, D.C.: 1908).

⁴⁰*Daily National Intelligencer* (Wash. D.C.), January 20, 1831. General Macomb may have contributed the obituary, leaving out his father's Detroit background and New York bankruptcy.

⁴¹John Pintard, "Letters from John Pintard to his Daughter," *Collections of the New York Historical Society*, I (New York: 1937), 343.

⁴²Stokes, *Iconography*, V, 1232, 1278, 1279.

⁴³*Journal of the Assembly of the State of New York*, Twelfth Session, 3; Fourteenth Session, 117; and Joseph S. Davis, *Essays*, I, 280.

⁴⁴The quotation is by James Wadsworth, cited by Orsamus Turner, *History of the Pioneer Settlement of Phelps and Gorham's Purchase and Morris Reserve* (Rochester, N.Y.: 1851), 338n.

The foregoing three paragraphs digest the body of literature on western and New York land speculation. Among the most useful works are Paul W. Gates, "The Role of the Land Speculator in Western Development," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Development*, 66 (1942): 314-333; Ray A. Billington, "The Origin of the Land Speculator as a Frontier Type," *Agricultural History*, 19 (1945): 204-212; Paul D. Evans, *The Holland Land Company* (Buffalo, N.Y.: 1924); Ruth L. Higgins, *Expansion in New York with Especial Reference to the Eighteenth Century* (Columbus, Ohio: 1931); Helen I. Cowan, *Charles Williamson: Genesee Promoter* (Rochester, N.Y.: 1941); Barbara A. Chernow, "Robert Morris: Genesee Land Speculator," *New York History* 58 (1977): 195-220.

⁴⁵See, for example, Alexander Macomb to William Constable, Dec. 3, 1791, William

Constable Correspondence, Constable-Pierrepoint Papers, NYPL.

⁴⁶New York Department of State, Land Office Minutes, I, held by the Division of Land Utilization, 199, 205, 246; Franklin B. Hough, *A History of St. Lawrence and Franklin Counties, New York* (Albany: 1853), 235-236.

⁴⁷*Annals*, Fourth Congress, 1st Session, May 13, 1796, 1360; *Annals*, Fifth Congress, April 30, 1798, 1560; Albion M. Dyer, "First Ownership of Ohio Lands," *New England Historical and Genealogical Register*, 64 (1910): 363-369, 65 (1911): 51-60, 141, 143, 149; Joseph S. Davis focuses on Duer's role in the Scioto scheme, *Essays*, I, 130-150, 213-253.

⁴⁸For an example of Macomb as a front, see Young, *Democratic Republicans*, 239.

⁴⁹*Laws of the State of New York Passed by the Legislature of said State, at their Ninth Session* (New York: 1786); Hough, *History of St. Lawrence*, 236-238. Dr. Franklin B. Hough of Lowville, N.Y., a nineteenth century historian, scientist and conservationist, is 135 years later still the best authority on northern New York history.

⁵⁰Hough, *History of St. Lawrence*, 239.

⁵¹The agreement has been partially reconstructed from private correspondence. Providing clues are Henry Knox to Alexander Hamilton, Dec. 28, 1788, Harold C. Syrett, ed., *The Papers of Alexander Hamilton*, V (1961-1979), 239; Gouverneur Morris to Alexander Macomb, Nov. 30, 1790, Letterbook Commercial II (22), Gouverneur Morris Papers, Library of Congress; Alexander Macomb to Gouverneur Morris, Apr. 16, 1791 and May 3, 1792, Gouverneur Morris Collection, Columbia University Library; Gouverneur Morris to Samuel Ogden, Dec. 26 and Dec. 27, 1792, Letterbook Commercial III (23), Morris Papers, Library of Congress. Deeds recorded after issuance of patents reveal some names of original proprietors.

⁵²Gouverneur Morris to Samuel Ogden, Dec. 27, 1792, Letterbook Commercial III (23), Morris Papers, Library of Congress.

⁵³Gouverneur Morris to Samuel Ogden, Dec. 27, 1792, Letterbook Commercial III (23), Morris Papers, Library of Congress; in which Morris identified Ogden's group. Macomb named Philip Schuyler, Jeremiah Van Rensselaer, John Taylor of Albany, Alexander Hamilton and John DeLancey in an affidavit dated May 4, 1792 and published in the *New-York Journal and Patriotic Register* on July 7, 1793. That Edgar, Laight and Lamb were original proprietors is inferred from Hough, *History of St.*

Lawrence, 243. For Constable's half interest with Macomb, see William Constable to Alexander Macomb, July 7, 1793, Constable-Pierrepont Papers, NYPL. Taylor and Van Rensselaer, both of Albany, and John Lamb of New York City were patriots and anti-Federalists; William Laight was a wealthy neutralist hardware merchant in New York City during the Revolution.

⁵⁴Alexander Macomb to Gouverneur Morris, Apr. 16, 1791, Gouverneur Morris Collection, Columbia University; Gouverneur Morris to Samuel Ogden, July 20, 1791 and Dec. 27, 1792, Letterbook Commercial III (23), Morris Papers, Library of Congress; Gregory Palmer, *Biographical Sketches of Loyalists of the American Revolution* (Westport, Conn.: 1984), 214; "Doctor Pomeroy's Affidavit," Apr. 20, 1792, a handbill, Albany Institute of History and Art.

⁵⁵Young, *Democratic Republicans*, 232-237. The writer cannot add to Professor Young's scholarship in explaining the details of 1791 land sales and their political effect

on the campaign of 1792; see Young, *Democratic Republicans*, 232-243, 293-298.

⁵⁶*Laws of the State of New York Passed by the Legislature of the State of New York, 14th Session* (New York: 1791).

⁵⁷Hough, *History of St. Lawrence*, 252; Young, *Democratic Republicans*, 240.

⁵⁸Affidavit of Daniel McCormick, *N.Y. Journal*, May 4, 1792, as cited by Young, *Democratic Republicans*, 239.

⁵⁹*Journal of the Assembly of New York*, 15th Session, April 9, 1792.

⁶⁰Young, *Democratic Republicans*, 293-298.

⁶¹James Parton, *The Life and Times of Aaron Burr* (New York: 1858), 176. Jabez Hammond, a Republican historian of the early 1800's, disagreed. See his *History of Political Parties in the State of New York*, I (Albany: 1842), 60-61. Hammond thought it "preposterous" if the "vigilant, scrutinizing" Burr missed anything going on in New York City.

⁶²Davis, *Essays*, I, 280, 349, 395.

⁶³Davis, *Essays*, I, 265-270.

⁶⁴Duer Papers, II, New York Historical Society, 245.

⁶⁵Davis, *Essays*, I, 280. The quotation is by Alexander Macomb himself, Macomb to Constable, Jan. 1, 1792, Constable-Pierrepont Papers, NYPL.

⁶⁶Constable to Macomb, Feb. 6?, 1792, Constable-Pierrepont Papers, NYPL. For an appraisal of Constable's conduct, character and ability, see William A. Davis, "William Constable," 255-257.

⁶⁷Davis, *Essays*, I, 285-301.

⁶⁸Davis, *Essays*, I, 307-309, 313-315.

⁶⁹Benjamin Walker, an intimate of William Duer, reported in April, 1792, that Macomb owed \$683,000 to creditors; to pay them off he had only about \$400,000 in bills, notes, stock and cash. Cited by Davis, *Essays*, I, 302.

⁷⁰Macomb to Constable, April 7, 1792, Constable-Pierrepont Papers, NYPL.

⁷¹Chernow, "Robert Morris," 196, 219-220.

⁷²Davis, "William Constable," xi.

Two Accounts by Gouverneur Morris of His North Country Travels

by David B. Dill, Jr.

Editor's Note

A contemporary and associate of Alexander Macomb, Gouverneur Morris was one of the most prominent men of his era. During his career, Morris served as Minister to France and United States Senator. Additionally, he is credited with writing the final draft of the Constitution and suggesting the terms "dollars" and "cents" for our currency. Morris invested in land in St. Lawrence County and established a summer home at Natural Dam. He died in 1816 at age 64.

The 1808 Journey

In September 1808, during the third of his forays into his "wild lands" in northern New York, Gouverneur Morris boarded a batteau and navigated the Oswegatchie River from Cambray (now Gouverneur) all the way down to Ogdensburg. Always a farmer at heart, the retired statesman would go to any length for a first-hand inspection of his lands, to see for

himself the quality of the soil, the drainage and the percentage of potential agricultural land, as a means to establish the selling price per acre, and the water route seemed an excellent way to accomplish his ends. Moreover, he may have felt that going by river would be smoother than by the wretched roads he so complained of in his diary. If so, he must have been disillusioned, for he hadn't counted on the endless twists and turns of the Oswegatchie and its frequent rapids, many of which have since been evened out by the construction of several dams along the way.

Early in August he had left his Morrisania estate in what is now the Bronx and travelling leisurely for three weeks through Albany, Saratoga and Utica, had eventually reached the home of his friend LeRay de Chaumont in Leraysville. After a week's visit he continued to Cambray by oxsled, sulky, and even on foot, his guides clearing the trail of fallen trees as they went. His stay in Cambray was occupied in conducting land business with his local agent, Dr. Townsend, and in preparing for his trip downstream, described in the following excerpt from his diary as found in the original Morris Papers in the Library of Congress.

Sunday 11, September 1808

After breakfast this morning we set off from Cambray, and I go with my baggage down the river about



From T. Roosevelt's *American Statesmen: Gouverneur Morris*

Gouverneur Morris.

three miles in a canoe to the high falls where the batteau was left. The banks are fine, the lands fertile and the country beautiful. The falls which I have purchased give a fine site for water works. I think a canal through the left bank will give a head of eighteen feet, which may at no great expense be made in solid rock and good masonry. This must be a future object. I have agreed with Austin to build a saw mill and grist mill, for which I am to supply the funds and he is to give an annual rent of fifteen percent on the cost. On our arrival Mr. Rockwell is still occupied in preparing his boat, caulking and paying. We get off at ten and reach Gen. Morris's at three. There are many falls and rifts. At two of them we are obliged to unload, at two others we leave in the baggage. Some of them we shoot, especially the two last, which are steep, rough and crooked, but we get down well and very quick. The land along the river is as level as comports with such rapid descent, and in general good. In the evening Mr. Parish and Mr. Rosseel arrive. A very little rain this evening.

Monday 12

This morning is employed in the business of Gen. Morris and Mr. Parish, who close their bargain on the terms I originally suggested. Fine weather.

Tuesday 13

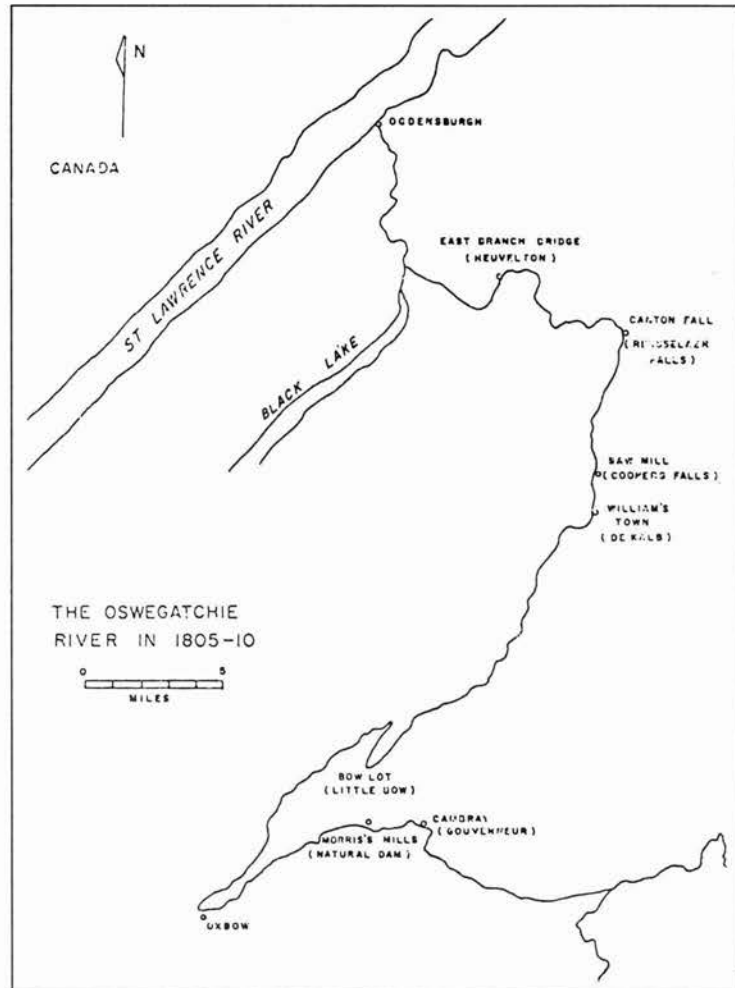
The trees yesterday showed the appearance of frost. A hoar frost of last night will clothe them in the livery of autumn. A fine day, but I am much indisposed. Write.

Wednesday 14

Very fine weather; am still indisposed.

Thursday 15

Up early and prepared for departure but without appetite, though not as ill as the two preceding days.



Map of Morris' 1808 trip.

Gen. Morris and Mrs. Morris are off before seven in a wagon for Ogdensburgh, but I wait for Mr. Zebulon Rockwell, sent yesterday to get a person to accompany Mr. Rosseel in the woods. This gentleman returned yesterday after a day's excursion with a man whom he considers as good for nothing. He comes this morning to express his regret at my detention, etc., etc. At a little after nine Mr. Rockwell returns with his friend Mr. Starnes and begs me to exchange services. I perceive that if he be detained he will work reluctantly and that by no means anxious, so I agree to the proposition and at half past nine embark with Mr.

Starnes, taking Gen. Morris's man, Daniel, to assist.

We shoot rapids (I think five) before we reach what the people of Cambray call the Bow and which, judging from time and motion, appears to be about fifteen miles. This place is said to be fifteen from William's Town [DeKalb], the capital of Judge Cooper's settlement, and I presume that it is about that distance on a strait line, but without consideration or calculation, for neither would help us, we proceed after a short meal of cold food at three o'clock on our voyage.

We are upwards of six hours performing it and we nevertheless went

at a good rate, favored a little, though but little, by the stream. This stretch is without rapids and if houses are built along the river at convenient distances it will, in fine weather, be a beautiful excursion for any one who is resident or his guest. I learn after my arrival that our distance was upwards of twenty miles, and I believe it.

Though the season is unfavorable, we took a large mess of fish, a dozen or fifteen pounds, and shot a pair of ducks. We saw a fine buck, but he seemed unwilling to cultivate an acquaintance with us.

After a tedious time during the night, seeing some lights Daniel is sent out to reconnoiter and returns with a man and a lantern to guide us to the hotel. We were within twenty paces of the landing, luckily, and got in half past nine, fairly seated in a well-furnished room. The people are civil and attentive and give me a dish of tea with rusk and butter, both good, by ten o'clock.

The land from the Oxbow to the bounds of Cambray and a little beyond it seems to be poor and broken. To the middle of that township, or rather, to within three miles of its eastern boundary, the shore is various but better than what preceded. Here we return two miles in a reverse course to what is called the Bow Lot in Cambray Settlement. The soil mends and the Bow Lot we know to be very good. From hence the coast descends faster than the bed of the river, so that for three miles west of the eastern boundary of Cambray the surface is smooth enough and the soil fertile. After we get into DeKalb we find on each side of the river low ground, which from appearance must be under water a great part of the year. Here and there hemlock ridges. In short, a country neither profitable, pleasant



From Lossing, *The Empire State*

Gouverneur Morris later in life.

nor wholesome. The Town Spot is very rough and apparently barren.

Friday 16

This morning there is an appearance of rain and we are told that our distance is but twenty miles, therefore stay to breakfast and are off two hours later than I originally intended. At half an hour after eight, however, we are in motion, and in a few minutes reach the mill, said to be one mile of the twenty. This gives us good hopes that we shall dine at Ogdensburgh. We unlade, and lugging our boat up a steep put her cargo on board in the saw mill and descend along a stage laid to draw up logs on.

After crossing into Canton the land, which was the same as that seen of DeKalb yesterday which in that township, mends and we shortly after reach the Canton fall. Some raftmen who were taking logs up to the saw mill had, on my enquiry, recommended shooting this fall on the left-hand side of the river, but Judge Cooper's brother, who happened to pass by, treated that opinion lightly and advised going down

the middle. This manner does not inspire confidence and if it did I should take the liberty of judging for myself. On examining it I am well convinced that the attempt to shoot it in the middle would have wrecked us. We get down easily on one side and pass other rapids before we reach the bridge, said to be ten miles from William's Town [DeKalb], but which must be at least fifteen, for we do not reach it till three o'clock.

Allowing one hour for crossing the dam, and for every waste of time which might have been saved had we known our distance, we have been upwards of five hours in motion and certainly at an average velocity not less than three miles an hour.

My boatman takes a quick meal during the rain after a warm morning begun lightly at noon, and being pretty abundant now, threatening hard for the evening. This bridge is said to be halfway, and from hence to the mouth of the Black Lake the water is still. I know it to be about six from thence to Ogdensburgh and a great part of the way swift water. If therefore the distance to the mouth of the lake be

but four miles, we have time enough to shoot the rapids by daylight.

We advance in a faint hope that for this stretch at least we have not been much misinformed, especially as by the road the whole distance to go is but seven miles and a half. Alas, there are not much less than nine of the dead water, which we do not reach till after sunset: judging by the decline of light, for the sky is clouded and we have constant rain.

Over the first and longest rapid we have daylight, over the next and worst we have twilight, but over the last we have no light and must therefore drag over rocks etc. as well as we can, feeling our way. At half an hour after nine, however, we are with our baggage fairly stowed at the Garrison. And thus we have in thirty-six hours performed this voyage, said to be not less than sixty miles and probably near seventy. The land along the river all the way this day is without exception too low, but a small expense of labor well applied would cure that evil throughout.

The 1815 Journey

Late in the summer of 1815, Gouverneur Morris made his fourth journey into northern New York, accompanied this time by his wife Anne and their two-year-old son. Whereas his earlier travels had been time-consuming, exhausting and even hazardous, by now there was a rudimentary network of safe roads and turnpikes in upper New York which he was anxious to see for himself. Accordingly, Morris ventured to load his young family, along with the necessary servants and baggage, into at least two of his own coaches and take off northward with confidence. Although he was to be

frustrated by the sad condition of the Russell and Ogdensburgh turnpikes in particular, the relatively swift journey was to require only about twelve travelling days each way, allowing almost six weeks for travel and visiting in St. Lawrence County.

The following is also excerpted from the original diary and letters of Gouverneur Morris in the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress.

Monday 7 Aug. 1815

Leave home early and see the sunrise when we are three miles on our way. Breakfast at Tarrytown and go on to Laycock's, eight miles. Cool morning, but warm afternoon.

Tuesday 8

Leave Laycock's at five, reach Deacon's at Peekskill half after seven. Get off again at a quarter before ten, reach Warren's at a quarter after twelve, stay a quarter of an hour and reach Fishkill at half past two. Weather grown warmer and threatening rain.

Wednesday 9

Leave Fishkill a little after four and reach Poughkeepsie before seven. Find that house full... leave before ten and reach Loop's inn at Red Hook in five hours....

Thursday 10

Leave Loop's a little later than intended, breakfast at Claverack and reach Miller's, three miles beyond Kinderhook, at 2 o'clock. A very light sprinkling of rain in the morning, high southerly wind. Cool, but a little annoyed by the dust. Distance this day about 35 miles.

Friday 11

Drizzling morning after a rainy night. We get off late. Breakfast at Merrick's and go thro' Albany, Troy and Lansingburg to Waterford.... Put up at Willard's Hotel, which seems rather unfrequented.

Saturday 12

Leave our abominable inn before five in a fog and take by mistake the river road. We do not discover our error until it is too late... determine to go round by Sandy Hill to my Bend farm and thence to Johnstown. Call at Mr. Morris's, who is abroad and his wife very ill, and put up at Cook's inn.... The weather has been pleasant, and the ride, after the fog was dispersed so as to render objects visible, was charming.... Our distance this day has been but twenty-seven miles. We drove slowly and got in shortly after noon.

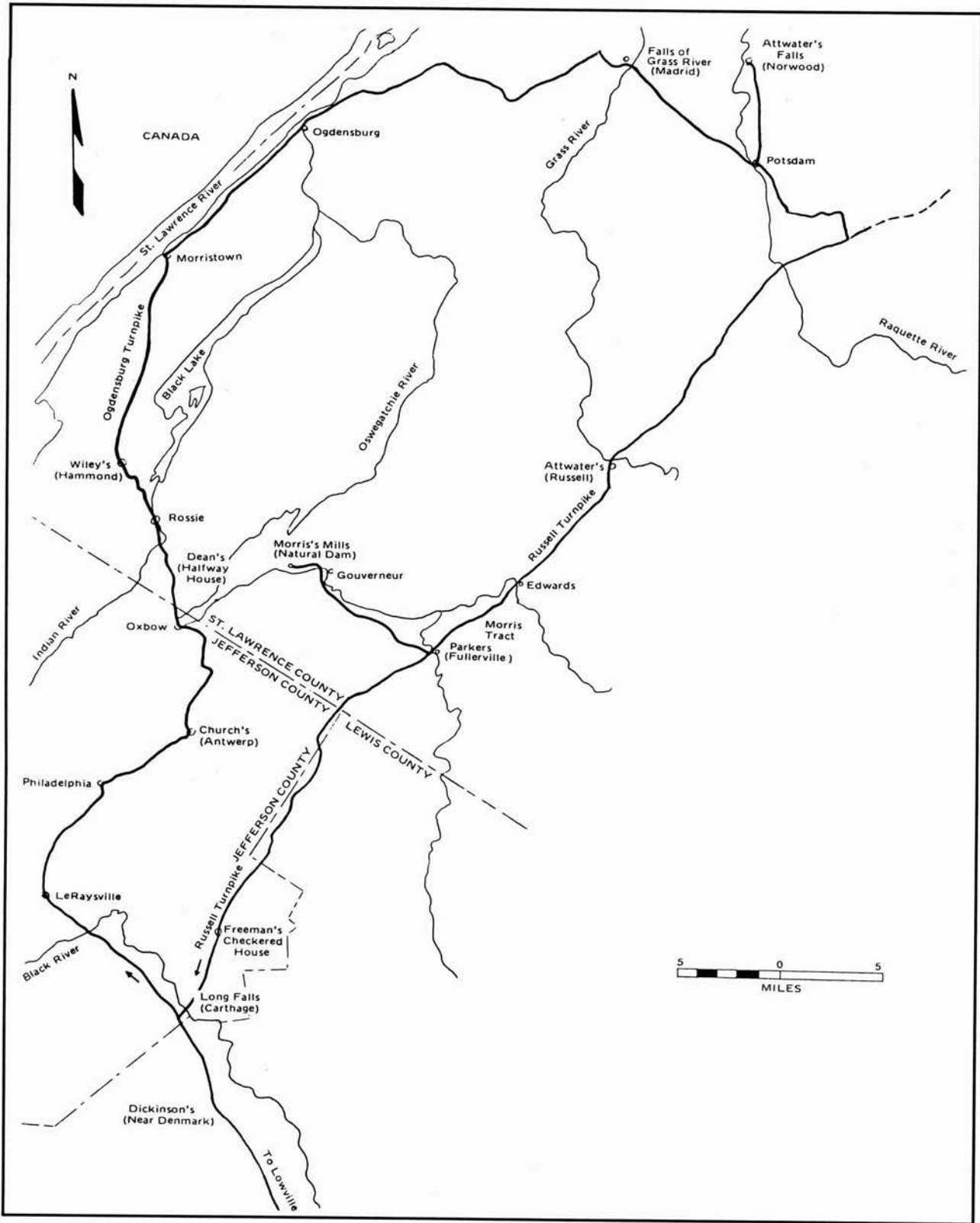
Sunday 13

We leave Mr. Cook's, a pretty good inn, before five and reach Sandy Hill, 13 miles a little after seven. Breakfast and go on to the Great Bend. Scott is gone to church. Continue on to Phillip's tavern on the road to Johnstown.... We arrive about two, and find the inn filled with people who come to a religious meeting in the barn of mine host. Weather rather warm and pleasant.

Monday 14

Leave the bad and extravagant house of Mr. Phillips before five, and go on over a hilly and rough road to Stephen Cornell's, which is still worse. Get a miserable breakfast, supplied, however, with alacrity, and after staying two hours to half past eleven, go on eighteen miles by a road generally excellent to Johnstown, which we make at half past three, but do not get housed till five, having examined two strongly recommended inns which are filthy, and then return to Mr. Kibbe's, where we ought to have stopped at entering the village.

I receive this evening a civil note from Justice Morrell telling me of an application to him by a man of the



Map of Gouverneur Morris' 1815 journey.

name of Dodge, for process against me to recover two dollars. Send my compt. by the messenger and desire to see Mr. Morrell. He comes, and I find the demand is set up by a drunken butcher for taking some of my baggage into a tavern against my will, and bringing it out again. The justice promises that I shall hear no more of the matter, if he can help it.

Tuesday 15

We are off before five and employ near four hours in going 12 miles to Mr. Lassell's [Lassellville], where we breakfast. The road hilly and rough, tho' good in some places. We leave Mr. Lassell's at half past ten and go on to Ives', where we give drink and meal to our horses, distance 13 miles. The road better, but very lofty hills. We then proceed to Smith's, 8 miles, and in this stage cross, I believe, the highest ground we have to go over....

Wednesday 16

A rainy day confines this day in a dirty bad inn.

Thursday 17

We leave Mr. Smith in the midst of his dram drinking, customary at six o'clock. Breakfast at the house of Williams, which seems to be a good one, at the end of seven miles and come on to I. M. Sheldon's, between twelve and thirteen, which we reach at two o'clock. The roads severe, the weather sultry. Very little of the country remains to settle, and generally speaking the soil is fertile.

Friday 18

We are detained when ready to set off by a shower. We encounter bad road for about eight miles, and not good for six more when we reach Mr. Wetmore's, having passed Mr. Starr's from his want of a sign. Mr. Wetmore's inn is very bad. We leave it as soon as we can, and get on seventeen miles to Welles's Hotel in

Lowville. Mr. Stowe comes in, tells me the news... [his] object in visiting me is to converse about the settlement of Castorland, which he wishes to engage in. Shortly after his departure, Mr. Bostwick comes. He seems a little tipsy. Speaks of Stowe in unfavorable terms.

Saturday 19

We are off early. Breakfast with the stage company at Dickinson's, nine miles, and then proceed sixteen more to LeRaysville.

For the next three days the weather was rainy and unpleasant. The Morris family rested and presumably were hospitably entertained by their host, Vincent LeRay, whose father (James D. LeRay) is said to have been in France at the time.

Wednesday 23

Leave LeRaysville early. Breakfast at Bossuit's, ten miles. LeRay precedes us. After breakfast we part and come on the Church's at Antwerp, 16 miles. The road pretty good. The soil from the Black River to the Indian River is in general of inferior quality, in some places bad, in some very good, tho' not of the first rate. Mr. De Villars calls on me this evening to speak of his debt. Refer him to Mr. Kent and explain the arrangement I had proposed, which seems satisfactory to him.

Thursday 24

Leave Church's at Antwerp this morning early and go eleven miles to breakfast at Dean's on the way to Rossie. A rainy morning. We are detained by the inactivity of our hostess till half past ten, and set out in the close of a shower, which is the last of any consequence.

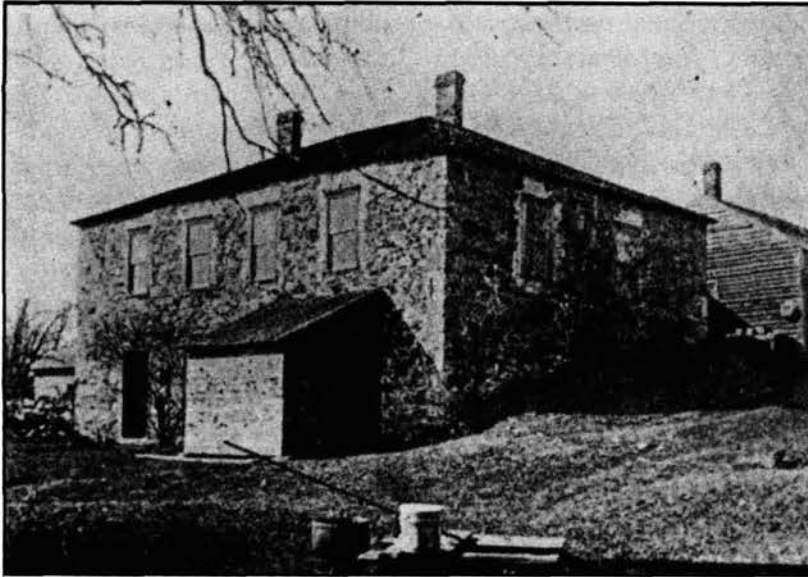
We travel eight miles over a very rough country. The road, tho' wrought at considerable expense, is

hardly passable and will, I think, turn out to be a mere waste of labor. I hope Mr. Parish's works at Rossie may prove better than his road. We stop, our horses very much fatigued, at Wiley's (Hammond) to feed, but he has no grain or meal, so we go on to Morristown, eleven miles, the road much cut and very slippery from the rain. Distance this day 31 miles, but the fatigue is equal to 50 for our cattle.

The soil along the first stage, except on rocky ridges, is very good, on the next nine miles generally bad. In the first is a swamp of near a mile, some part of which will, if drained, be very good. In the second is also a very large swamp, which by lowering the outlet of Black Lake four feet, will be of incalculable value. The last stage is through good land, but the road runs chiefly on a ridge of rock which is covered by a thin stratum of earth, and is in fact good for nothing but a road.

Morris, with his family and retinue, remained in Morristown from August 25 until September 10, except for a two day visit to Ogdensburg with Judge Nathan Ford and David Parish. His host in Morristown was David Ford, who was the land agent for the Morris tract in Hague. The lively Ford family must have been stimulating and agreeable company, for Gouverneur wrote David Ford on November 4, after his return to Morrisania:

On the whole, our journey of nine weeks and four days, though sometimes fatiguing, was pleasant, and for much of what we enjoyed during that period we are indebted to your kindness and that of Mrs. Ford. Present us to her in the most affectionate terms and to the young ladies. Gouverneur talks of you all very often and says of



From Centennial Souvenir History of Gouverneur

The "Mansion," Gouverneur Morris' farmhouse near Natural Dam, built in 1809.

each individual that he 'loves it.' He insists also that all are 'good,' even your black boy Jack.

While established in the Ford home, Morris invited a number of fellow proprietors of North Country lands, who happened to be nearby at that time. Among them were Vincent LeRay, Mr. Hammond (very likely Abijah Hammond, although Franklin Hough doubted he had ever been in the county), Mr. McCormick (probably Daniel McCormick), Gen. Lewis Morris (nephew of Gouverneur), Mr. Van Rensselaer (presumably Stephen, the Last Patroon) and Mr. LeRoy (Herman?). The landholders must have had a lively time discussing their mutual interests and, perhaps, engaged in a bit of hard trading.

Sunday, the third of September, was a particularly pleasant day. Both Gouverneur and his young son, who had both been ill, were well again. Judge Ford dined with the families, and in the afternoon Lewis Morris came with the news of Napoleon's surrender to the British ship "Bellerophon."

Continuing with the diary:

Monday 11 September

Appearances of good weather. Take leave after dinner and proceed on our journey to Ogdensburgh. Reach Judge Ford's at sunset. Appearances of fair weather.

Tuesday 12

Nimium ne crede colori. Copious rain last night and this morning, which arrests our progress.

Wednesday 13

We leave Judge Ford's at six, breakfast at the end of seven miles, and get on twenty-three or four [miles] to the falls of Grasse River. [Madrid] one of the most fatiguing roads I ever travelled. Some good land, and some very good. The last eight miles thro' the town of Madrid almost the whole distance a causeway of logs, originally bad, now very bad. A great part of the soil is swamp, and not of the first quality, some of it very poor. Near the Grasse River is good land and a fine settlement.

Thursday 14

We are off at seven and reach the

village of Potsdam at ten. A bad road, tho' not quite so bad as yesterday. The land very good except some of the cedar swamps, producing, however, uncommonly large trees. If not too extensive, they will be permanently useful.

Friday 15

Leave Potsdam after breakfast and proceed to Louisville, where by appointment I meet Judge Attwater and examine our property there [Norwood]. The position is fine and important. If duly improved, it will be very valuable. I never saw so many very large pine trees in the same space as there are on a part of this small tract. The soil is very rich. Limestone rock forms the bars which make the rapids or fall, which in the extent I suppose to be upwards of forty feet. Return to Potsdam. The road not yet good, but it will, with little exception, be excellent.

Saturday 16

We leave Potsdam after breakfast and reach the [Russell] turnpike after six miles. The first three and a half but so so, the last two and a half very bad, carried by Mr. Parish over very steep hills to keep it within his property. By going a little further west it would, as Judge Attwater informs me, be very level and very good.

After some serious difficulties, however, we reach the long-desired turnpike, and hope that our troubles are there to end. Far from it! Our toil is incessant. Most of the road is very bad: very steep hills, mud-covered causeways, stones, in short, so difficult and tedious that our march from Potsdam, twenty-one or two miles, consumes no less than eight hours. Alight a few minutes before five at Judge Attwater's [Russell].

Sunday 17

A windy, raw, disagreeable day.

Troubled with diarrhea. Mr. Parish, Mr. Ross [Rosseel?] and Mr. Charnock arrive at three. Rain this evening.

Monday 18

After a rainy morning it clears. Write.

Tuesday 19

Conclude my business with Judge Attwater this morning and set off late. Reach Parker's [Fullerville] at half past three and find an unfinished house to lodge in. Get quarters for the night at a log house with his father and mother, which is not too well fenced against the night's frosty air. The land we came over is rough and of inferior quality, except a tract of our own in Edwards, which is very good.

Wednesday 20

After great diligence we embark on board of an ox sled and four, for my farmhouse in Gouverneur at a quarter past ten, distance eleven miles. We soon find that the road would, with any other carriage be dangerous if not impassable. We arrive at half an hour after four, having stopped at different times to clear out the road. A very fine day, after a sharp frost.

Thursday 21

Again fine weather, tho' we had this morning white frost. Visit my mills and farm. Isaac Austin calls, and Dr. Townsend, who says Austin had taken measures to defraud me.

Friday 22

Still fine weather, but a threatening afternoon. Write. Mr. and Mrs. Austin come.

Saturday 23

Rain last night and this day. Write. Mr. Townsend comes and

tells me that Bolton can't make out his acct. yet, but will do it as soon as he is well enough. Townsend is persuaded of his honesty.

Apparently nothing remarkable happened for the next three days worthy of recording in the diary. The family rested in the little house near Morris' Mills, at what is now Natural Dam. Morris, it is worth noting, was accurate in referring to it as his "farmhouse." Later it was to be glorified as his "mansion."

Wednesday 27

Leave Gouverneur early in a wagon, then get into an ox sled and get out safely to Parker's, where we breakfast and get again in our coaches. Get on in the afternoon to Freeman's [Alfred Freeman's "Checkered House" four miles from Carthage].

Thursday 28

Leave Freeman's at eight and breakfast at Dickinson's [probably Denmark]. Set off as soon as we can and reach House's [now Houseville] at sunset, having narrowly escaped being thrown down a precipice as we ascend the hill to Martinsburgh. Had our driver been inexperienced, we should probably have lost our lives....

Friday 29

Leave House's, which is but a so so house, and come on to breakfast at Boonville. We pass Snow's, which is full of blackguards, and stop at Grant's, where an idle, insolent landlady renders it proper to leave her house and go to Snow's. An indifferent house. We go thence at ten minutes after one, and reach Sheldon's at five and twenty minutes after four. The road, tho' very bad, not quite so execrable as when we went up.

"From Snow's in Boonville to Sheldon's at the northern end of the turnpike," Morris wrote in his letter to David Ford, "was a distance of nine miles including the terrific Four Mile Woods, which by the bye may at a small expense well employed be made an excellent road, and we passed in three hours and a quarter. The route from there to Trenton, and along the northern bank of Canada Creek till we passed the cotton factory on this side of Newport, is beautiful. Some troublesome hills lie between that and the Little Falls. We were weather-bound one day at Miller's, near Kinderhook, and brought our horses home fatter than when they left it."

Home again at Morrisania! Now almost 64 years old, Gouverneur Morris was not to travel again. This was truly a farewell journey to his northern lands, for he would die within the year.

Note

This article is a reprint of two separate articles that previously appeared in *The Quarterly*. The first article was originally titled "From Cambray to Ogdensburg in 36 Hours with Gouverneur Morris" and appeared in the April, 1976 issue, while the second article ran in the October, 1977 *Quarterly* under the title, "Gouverneur Morris' 1815 Journey."

For Further Reading

Anne Cary Morris. *The Diary and Letters of Gouverneur Morris*. 1888.

A Note from the Editors

With this issue, *The St. Lawrence County Historical Association Quarterly* enters its fortieth year of production. The continuous production of the *Quarterly* since 1956 is a monument to the skill and energy of numerous editors and writers, to the Board and staff of the Association, and to the dedicated members of the Historical Association. Throughout the history of its publication, the *Quarterly* has seen many changes in design, focus, and content, but it has always been a vital and important chronicle of the varied heritage of St. Lawrence County.

Members and friends of the Association will observe a few changes in the *Quarterly* beginning with this issue. First and foremost, the *Quarterly* is under new editorship. The credits on the title page reflect a new strategy for managing the *Quarterly*. You will note we now have a managing editor, a production editor, an issue editor, and an editorial advisory board. This structure is designed to distribute responsibility related to publishing the *Quarterly* among a larger group of people. We hope this plan will enable us to maintain a regular and timely publication schedule, to provide editorial assistance to writers interested in having articles published, and to have a variety of viewpoints and expertise influence the *Quarterly*'s content, design, and editorial policy.

We encourage members and friends to submit articles, on topics related to St. Lawrence County history, to be considered for publication. If you have any comments or ideas for the *Quarterly* editors, please feel free to write us a note at the Historical Association. Finally, our thanks go to the former editors, Cornel Reinhart and Mark R. Petersen, for their years of service. On behalf of the editorial board and the SLCHA Board of Trustees, we look forward to serving you as editors of the *Quarterly*.

J. Rebecca Thompson
Managing Editor

Stewart J. Wilson
Production Editor

THE OLD WEST LIVES!

In February, 1882 *Harper's Weekly* magazine published and illustration of a twenty-one year old New Yorker, Frederic Remington. And so began the career of an artist who would be celebrated for generations as an artist captured the Old West. Remington would go on to create hundreds of images as diverse as the exciting *Charge of the Rough Riders Up San Juan Hill* to the serene *End of the Day*. During his career, cut short at the age of forty-eight, he would become a painter, sculptor and writer.

Although Remington was drawn to the West by the excitement conflict, he always returned to the land he loved—Northern New York. He produced many paintings of the St. Lawrence River and the Adirondack Mountains. Make plans to visit the Frederic Remington Art Museum and see the Old West come to life. The works are so realistic you may think you hear the thundering of hooves.

Tuesday, July 30, 1907

Blowing like hell-and quite tiresome. I to day finished *Indian Raid* and the work I had laid out for summer. Intend to sketch for study now and loaf-a sort of vacation. Mrs. picking her last peas. Our garden is so poor it hardly repays our pains but could be enriched. Ebbie H. posed for little indian and wounded buck picture. I have good drawing for it. Island is dry as a desert. They're afraid there will be a fire on Chippewa Point.

Frederic Remington

from Remington's personal journal

Plan to visit today!

The Frederic Remington Art Museum is open year-round.

Hours

May-October
 Monday-Saturday 10 am - 5 pm
 Sunday 1 - 5 pm

November-April
 Tuesday-Saturday 10 am - 5 pm
 Closed Sunday & Monday

Admission

Museum members are free
 General admission \$3
 Seniors \$2
 Youths under 12 Free
 Organized group tours \$2

Last gallery tour at 4:00 pm

Closed major holidays

Visit the Museum Shop for Remington reproductions, books, t-shirts, Native American music and videos Navajo woven rugs, and sterling silver jewelry.



**FREDERIC
 REMINGTON ART MUSEUM**

303 Washington Street ♦ Ogdensburg, New York 13669 ♦ 315/393-2425

Address Correction Requested
P.O. Box 8
Canton, NY 13617

BULK RATE
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 21
Canton, N.Y. 13617

NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATION



canton federal

SAVINGS & LOAN ASSOCIATION

Visit a Canton Federal Savings Mortgage
Loan Officer today and let us help you
obtain the home you have always
dreamed of. We'll work with you
to make it a reality.

Negotiable Order of Withdrawal (N.O.W. Accounts)
Passbook Savings Account
Christmas Clubs
Money Market Deposit Account
Money Market Passbook Account
Certificates of Deposit
Individual Retirement Accounts (IRA's)

Home Mortgage Loans
Equity Loans
Property Improvement Loans
Auto & Consumer Loans
Student Loans
Personal Loans
Mortgage Life & Disability Insurance

Direct Deposit Services
Money Orders
Travelers Checks
Drive-in Window
Banking By Mail
Free Notary Services
Automated Teller Machine



Member
FDIC



127 Main St., Canton, NY
386-4533