

St. Lawrence County Early Land Records Collection 1784-1814

MSS 188

.5 linear feet—Box 1 is in oversize

History

The early land transactions of the North Country are a complex story of collusion and speculation. The following is a brief overview of some of the key events:

1783 September 3. Treaty of Paris ends the war of revolution. United States is recognized.

1784 Constable & Co., a trading and investment company is formed by W. Constable, G. Morris and Robert Morris for 7 years.

1786 May 5. NY State Legislature approves an act for the division and sale of “unappropriated lands of the State”. Each township created under this act is to be 64,000 acres in size and as square as possible and further divided into mile square lots and numbered in progression. The townships were to be sold either in quarters or *in single lots*.

10 towns in the St. Lawrence River Valley are created: (Ben Wright, surveyor)
Louisville, Stockholm, Potsdam, Madrid, Lisbon, Canton, DeKalb, Oswegatchie,
Hague (Morristown), and Cambray (Gouverneur).

1787 July 10. Public auction of the 10 towns at the Merchant’s Coffee House located on the southeast corner of Wall and Water streets in lower Manhattan. High bidders include Michael Connoly, John Meyers, Daniel McCormick, Thomas McFarren and others who are actually acting as straw men for **Alexander Macomb**.

Dec. By the end of the year all the deeds for the 10 towns have been transferred to Macomb.

1788 ? sales by Macomb...?

1789-93 French Revolution

1791 March 22. NYS passes law authorizing stat land commissioners to sell more lands “in such parcels, on such terms, and in such manner as they shall judge most conducive to the interest of the state.”

April. Macomb contracts with Gouverneur Morris as his attorney to sell lots. Constable?

June. “Macomb’s Purchase” NYS accepts Macomb’s offer to purchase 3.7 million acres in six “great tracts” in northern New York at 8 pence an acre with no money down...

1792 March & April Financial panic, caused in part by Macomb’s speculation.

May. Macomb sells 4 towns (Cambray, Hague, DeKalb & Oswegatchie) to Gouverneur Morris, Robert Morris, Henry Knox, and Samuel Ogden for £ 3,200.

June. Macomb unable to pay creditors; jailed in debtors prison...

His land holdings transferred to William Constable and Daniel McCormick

August? *Compagnie de New York* formed by James LeRay’s brother-in-law, Paul Chassanis, to sell tracts of land to French immigrants fleeing the Revolution.

1801 Constable bankruptcy

1802 St. Lawrence County incorporated from parts of Clinton, Montgomery and Herkimer counties.

While traveling north to visit his lands for the first time and planning to take an active role in the improvment of his vast holdings, making them easier to sell, **William Constable** suffers a seizure and is forced to return to his home in Manhattan where he dies in 1803 at the age of 51.

1808 **David Parish** (1778-1826) and his agent Joseph Rosseel begin purchasing land in NNY

Scope and Content

This collection contains letters, maps, deeds and other documents documenting land speculation, purchases and other transactions in parts of St. Lawrence County prior to 1815.

Provenance

Acquired by purchase and gift from various sources. Ongoing...

* = provenance information in department administrative file.

See also

Mss. Coll. No. 28 New York Company Records.

Mss. Coll. No 34 French Émigrés Collection.

Mss. Coll. No. 5 Parish Rosseel Collection.

Morris, Robert, (1734-1806).

The Papers of Robert Morris, 1781-1784. Pittsburgh: U. of Pitts. Pr. 1973- E302.6.M8 A35 1973 v.1-6

Morris, Gouverneur, (1752-1816)

The Diary and Letters of Gouverneur Morris..., NY: Scribner's, 1888 E302.6.M7 M8 1888 v. 1-2

Hamilton, Alexander, (1757-1804)

The Law Practice of Alexander Hamilton... NY: Columbia Univ Pr., 1964-1981 KF363.H3 G6 v. 1-?

Abbreviations:

ads = autograph document, signed.

als = autograph letter, signed

Contents:

Box 1. OVERSIZE

Folder Name

1 **Ogden, Samuel / Knox, Henry**

1792, June 25. Manuscript deed on parchment between Ogden and Knox concerning the towns of Hague (Morristown), Cambray (Gouverneur), Oswegotchie and DeKalb.

1794, Nov. 27. Addendum on same document as above;

Other names mentioned on the deed include Alexander Macomb, Robert Morris and Gouverneur Morris. The deed is signed by James Wilson, a future Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court.

2 1794. December 2. Ads. Land indenture between Ogden and **Benjamin & Mary Walker**

Box 2.

Folder Name

Constable, William.

1* 1784, May 10. 6 pg. ads outlining the articles of partnership among William Constable, Robert Morris & Gouverneur Morris. Signed by all three members & witnessed.

2* 1793, Dec 27. als to James LeRay, regarding a land purchase in the North Country;

Le Ray de Chaumont, James

3 1807, April 23. ads of a land agreement between LeRay and Madame de Stael. (in French)

Morris, Gouverneur

- 4* 1795, July 10. London. ads certifying payment to James LeRay for the transfer of lands.
- 5 1799, July 18. Morrisania. als to Nicholas Low regarding surveying costs [place not identified but most probably Lowville, NY area]
- 6 1800, June 19. Morrisania. als to Lieutenant Gouverneur Van Rensselaer, Albany regarding poisoning?
- 7 1801, April 1 Autograph fragment, unsigned. Description of land lots within lot number 4 of Macomb's Purchase. In town of Cape Vincent ? 15,000 acres to James Necker father of Madam de Stael and Louis XIVth Finance minister
- 8 1803, Aug. 9. Morrisania. als to David Ford, Morristown, NJ
- 9 1803, Oct. 13. – ads Power of Attorney to David Ford, authorizing Ford to sell land in the Black Lake area of St. Lawrence County. With notes by Ford and County Clerk's recording information.
- 10 1807, March 8. Typed transcript of letter to **David Parish**
- 11 1810, Nov. 5. Morrisania. als to David Ford, "Morristown near Ogdensburg" regarding land sales.

Chronological outline of Morris' life

Morris, Gouverneur /Attwater, Russell

- 12* 1809. als from Attwater to Morris detailing land development in the towns of Louisville and Potsdam. Includes map on verso of Potsdam and Louisville detailing property divisions.
- 13 1811. Autograph draft of letter from Morris to Attwater detailing improvements along Racket [sic] River in Louisville.

Morris, Robert

- 14 1800, Oct 17. Letter from Alexander Hamilton, Thomas Cooper, and David Ogden to Thomas Fitzsimmons, William Tilghman, and Herman Le Roy regarding Robert Morris's conveyance of land, with typed summary of letter.

Raymond, Benjamin

- 15 1805, Feb. 7. 8 p. als from Raymond to "the Proprietors Township of Potsdam,"

Macomb, Alexander

- 16 1789 Feb. 18 2p. a.l.s. Alex Macomb to Nicolas Low, New York