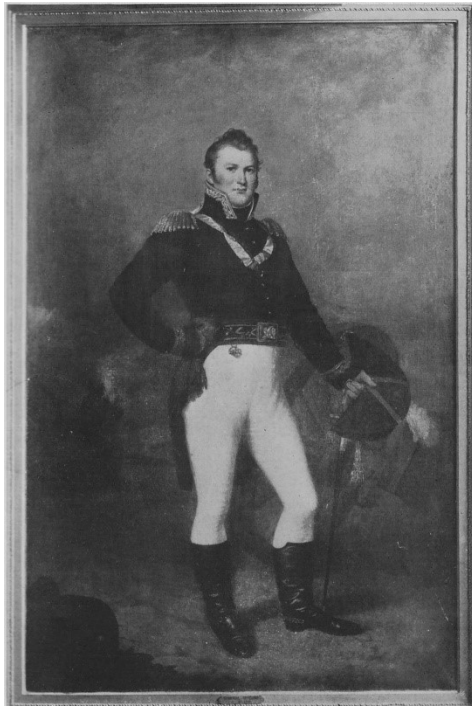


General Alexander Macomb

(4 Apr 1782 – 25 Jun 1841)

National Intelligencer, May 25, 1841 (Norfolk, May 20)

Major General Scott and Colonel Bankhead arrived here in the steamboat from Richmond yesterday afternoon, and we learn that Major General Macomb, Commander-in-chief of the Army, is expected this morning by the steamboat from Baltimore. The subject of the visit of these distinguished officers, it is understood, is to inspect the military works at Fort Monroe and the Rip Raps. -- Herald.



National Intelligencer, Saturday, June 26, 1841

We regret to announce the death of General Alexander Macomb, the General-in-Chief of the United States Army which occurred at half past 2 o'clock yesterday. His funeral will take place on Monday next at 10 o'clock a.m.

The National Intelligencer, Monday, June 28, 1841

The Funeral of General Macomb

Which is to take place from his late residence today, at 10 o'clock, will be an interesting spectacle as well as an honorable tribute to the station, the services, and the personal character of the late Commander of the Army.

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Baltimore this morning for the same purpose.

Little did we expect, when we attended the Funeral of Gen. Harrison, on which occasion Gen. Macomb commanded the Military escort, that we should so soon have to follow the remains of the living General to the tomb.

The National Intelligencer, Monday, June 28, 1841

The Late Major Gen. Macomb

We have a melancholy pleasure in transferring to our columns the following Biography of Major General Macomb, whose Funeral is this day to be solemnized, in whose death this city has to mourn the decease of a virtuous and beloved fellow-citizen, and in whom the Nation laments the loss of the distinguished and gallant Commander of its Military forces.

Major General Alexander Macomb was born at Detroit, April 3, 1782. The city of Detroit, at that time, was a garrison town, and among the first images that struck his eyes were those of the circumstances of war. These early impressions often fix the character of the man.

His father was a fur merchant, respectably descended and connected. He removed to the city of New York while Alexander was yet an infant. When he was eight years of age, he placed him at school

at Newark, in New Jersey, under the charge of the Reverend Doctor Ogden, who was a man of mind, belonging to a family distinguished for talents.

In 1798, while Macomb was quite a youth, he was elected into a select company, which was called, "The New York Rangers." The name was taken from that Spartan band of rangers selected from the provincials who, from 1755 to 1763, were the elite of every British commander on Lake George and the borders of Canada. At the time he entered the corps of New York Rangers, Congress had passed a law receiving volunteers for the defense of the country, as invasion by a French army was soon expected. This patriotic band volunteered their services to Government, which were accepted, but he soon left this corps, and obtained a courtesy at the close of the year 1798, and was commissioned in January 1799. General North, then adjutant general of the Northern army, soon saw the merits of the youthful soldier, and took him into his staff, as deputy adjutant general. Under such a master as the intelligent and accomplished North, Macomb made great progress in his profession, and in the affections of his brother officers of the army. The young officer that Hamilton noticed and North instructed, would not fail to be ambitious of distinction. He visited Montreal in order to observe the discipline and tactics of the veteran corps kept at that important military post, and did not neglect his opportunities.

The thick and dark cloud that hung over the country passed away—a great part of the troops were disbanded, and most of the officers and men returned to private life; a few only retained; among them was Macomb, who was commissioned as a second lieutenant of dragoons, and sent forthwith on the recruiting service, but it was not then necessary to push the business; and as he was stationed in Philadelphia, he had fine opportunities to associate with the best informed men of the city, and found easy access to the Franklin and other extensive libraries, of which advantages he did not fail to improve.

When his body of recruits was formed, he marched with it to the Western frontiers to join Gen. Wilkinson, an officer who had been left in service from the Revolutionary war. In the company of Wilkinson, and of Col. Williams, the engineer, he must have gathered a mass of materials for future use. With him he went into the Cherokee country to aid in making a treaty with that nation. He was on this mission nearly a year, and kept a journal of everything he saw or heard. This was a good school for one whose duty it might hereafter be to fight these very aborigines, and, in fact, these lessons of the wilderness are not lost on any one of mind and observation. The corps to which he belonged was disbanded, and a corps of engineers formed; to this he was attached as first lieutenant. He was now sent to West Point, where he was, by the code there established, a pupil as well as an officer. Being examined and declared competent, he was appointed an adjutant of the corps at that post, and discharged his duty with so much spirit and intelligence, that when the first court martial, after his examination, was convened, he was appointed judge advocate. This court was ordered for the trial of a distinguished officer for disobeying an arbitrary order for cutting off the hair. Peter the Great could not carry such an order into execution, but our Republican country did; and the veteran Col. Butler was reprimanded for not throwing his white locks to the wind when ordered so to do by his superior. The talents and arguments exhibited by Macomb as judge advocate on this court martial, brought him into very great notice as a man of exalted intellect as well as a fine soldier. He was now called upon to compile a treatise upon martial law and the practice of courts martial, which, in a future day of leisure, he effected, and his book is now the standard work upon courts martial for the Army of the United States. In 1805 Macomb was promoted to the rank of captain in the corps of engineers, and sent to the seaboard to superintend the fortifications which had been ordered by an act of Congress. By this service he became known to the first men in the country, and his merits were duly appreciated from New Hampshire to the Florides.

In 1808 he was promoted to the rank of major, and acted as superintendent of fortifications until just before the war, when he was advanced to a lieutenant colonelcy. He was again detailed to act as judge advocate on a court martial for the trial of Gen. Wilkinson, who had called the court on C.J. Butler.

He added to his reputation in this case. Wilkinson was his friend, but Macomb discharged his duty with military exactness.

At the breaking out of the war of 1812, he left the seat of Government, where he had discharged an arduous duty, in assisting to give form and regularity to the army then just raised by order of Congress. All sorts of confusion had prevailed, from the want of a uniform system of military tactics; he was fortunate in his exertions. When there was honorable war, he could not be satisfied to remain, as it were, a cabinet officer, and wear a sword only to advise what should be done, which seemed to be the regulations of the Army in respect to engineers; he therefore solicited a command in the corps of artillery that was to be raised, and was gratified by a commission as colonel of the third regiment, dated July 6, 1812. The regiment was to consist of twenty companies of one hundred and eighteen each. It was, in fact, the command of a division, except in rank. His reputation assisted in raising this body of men, and in November of that year he marched to the frontier with his command. Macomb and his troops spent the winter at Sackett's Harbor. He contemplated an attack upon Kingston, but was defeated in his plan by the fears of some and the jealousies of others; but he soon distinguished himself at Niagara and Fort George: at the same time Commodore Chauncey was endeavoring to bring the enemy's fleet to battle on Lake Ontario. The next service performed by Col. Macomb was under Gen. Wilkinson, and if the campaign was not successful, Macomb was no chargeable with any portion of the failure.

In January, 1814, he was promoted to the rank of brigadier general; and was appointed to a command on the east side of Lake Champlain. Nothing of importance in the history of Gen. Macomb transpired, although he was constantly on the alert in the discharge of his duties, until the coronal of his fame was won at the defense of Plattsburgh. This defense our limits will not permit us to describe with any minuteness, but suffice it to say, that, in the summer of 1814, Sir George Prevost, Governor General of the Canada's, had received a great augmentation of his regular forces, by detachments from the army which had fought in Spain and Portugal under the Duke of Wellington. These were among the best troops in the world, and he now determined to strike a blow upon our frontiers that should be decisive of the war, and bring our nation to terms at once. His fleet, on Lake Champlain, was considered superior to that of ours, and he was well informed that we had not there any army of consequence. Early in September he pushed on towards Plattsburgh, and met, for several days, with little opposition. His error was delay; but he wished to move safely, and saw nothing to prevent his progress. Previous to the 11th, there had been some smart skirmishing, in which the British found more courage and efficiency than they expected, from troops so hastily called out. Early on the 11th the British gave battle by land and water—fifteen hundred of the regular army, and uncertain bodies of militia, made up Macomb's army. The enemy was fourteen thousand strong. The battle was a decisive victory on the part of the American forces; Macdonough captured the British fleet, and Sir George returned to Canada the next night. The victory was as brilliant as unexpected. Honors were voted Macomb in every part of the country. New York and Vermont were foremost in their tributes of respect. The President promoted him to the rank of major general, dating his commission on the day of his victory. The event had a happy effect on the negotiations then going on at Ghent, and unquestionably paved the way for a treaty of peace.

After the close of the war he commanded at Detroit, his birthplace. He was received at this military post with distinguished honors; many remembered his person, and all had kept his reputation in view as a reflecting honor upon the territory in which he was born. He continued at that post attentive to his duty, and devising liberal things for the people of that region, without confining his exertions to any particular portion of territory, until, in 1821, he was called to Washington to take the office of chief of the engineer department. On the receipt of this information, he was addressed by all classes of the people of Detroit in the most exalted language of friendship and regard. On repairing to Washington, he assumed the duties of the bureau he was called to, and discharged them to the satisfaction of the

Government and the Army. On the death of General Brown, commander-in-chief of the Army, Gen. Macomb was appointed to that station, which he has ever since held, and in which he died.

Abridged from National Portrait Gallery

The National Intelligencer, Monday, June 28, 1841

The Funeral of Gen. Macomb

Which is to take place from the late residence today, at 10 o'clock, will be an interesting spectacle as well as an honorable tribute to the station, the services, and the personal character of the late Commander of the Army.

The Orders from the Departments, directing Funeral Honors to the deceased, will be found in our columns today.

The Company of U.S. Light Infantry on duty at Fort McHenry arrived here yesterday for the purpose of attending the Funeral.

It is probable, we understand, that a number of Volunteer Military Companies also will arrive in this city from Baltimore this morning for the same purpose.

Little did we expect, when we attended the Funeral of Gen. Harrison, on which occasion Gen. Macomb commanded the Military escort, that we should so soon have to follow the remains of the living General to the tomb.

The National Intelligencer, Monday, June 28, 1841

Adjutant General's Office

Washington, June 26, 1841

Agreeably to instructions from the Department of War, the following arrangements for the funeral honors of the lamented Major General Macomb have been made:

ORDER OF PROCESSION

1. Funeral Escort—In Column of March

Battalion of Infantry
Battalion of Marines
Squadron of Cavalry
Troop of Light Artillery

2. Commander of the Escort and Staff

3. The Clergy of the District and Surgeon-General of the Army

4. Pall-Bearers

Colonel Cross	H	Colonel Totten
Colonel Abert	E	Colonel Henderson
Colonel Bomford	A	General Towson
General Gibson	R	General Wool
Commodore Wadsworth	S	Commodore Warrington
Mr. W.C. Dawson, of the House of Representatives	E	Mr. Preston, of the Senate

5. The relations of the deceased

6. The General Staff of the Army

7. Officers of the Army

8. Officers of the Navy and Marine Corps

9. Officers of the Militia

10. The President of the United States and Secretary of War
11. The Ex-Presidents
12. The Heads of Departments
13. The Chief Justice and Associate Justices of the Supreme Court and the District Judges of the United States
14. The President and Secretary of the Senate
15. Senators and Officers of the Senate
16. Foreign Ministers and Suites
17. United States and Mexican Commissioners for the adjustment of claims under the convention with Mexico
18. Members of the House of Representatives and Officers
19. Governors of States and Territories and Members of State Legislatures
20. Judges of the Circuit and Criminal Courts of the District of Columbia, and Members of the Bar and Officers of the Courts
21. The Comptrollers of the Treasury, Auditors, Treasurer, Register, Solicitor, and Commissioners of the Land Office, Patents, Pensions, Indian Affairs, and Public Buildings
22. The Marshal of the District of Columbia
23. The Mayor and Corporate Authorities of Washington, Georgetown, and Alexandria
24. Officers and Soldiers of the Revolution
25. The Clerks, etc. of the several Departments, preceded by their Chief Clerks, and all other Officers of the Government
26. The Societies and Fraternities that may join the procession
27. Citizens and Strangers

The troops designated to form the escort will be commanded by Major General Jesup, (unless a senior officer should arrive,) and they will assemble in front of the mansion of the late General-in-Chief, at 9 ½ o'clock on Monday, the 28th of June, from which the procession will move precisely at 10 ½ o'clock.

The usual badge of mourning will be worn on the left arm, and on the hilt of the sword.

The Adjutant General of the Army is charged with the arrangements of the day, and will be aided by the Assistants Adjutant General, on duty near the headquarters of the Army.

L. Thomas,

Assistant Adjutant General

The National Intelligencer, Tuesday, June 29, 1841

The Funeral of General Macomb, Commander of the Army took place yesterday, agreeably in the order of arrangements officially announced, and was attended by the President, and all the Officers of the Government, both Houses of Congress, the Diplomatic Corps, Military and Naval Officers, etc. The solemn military and civic array which filled the broad avenue through the city presented an imposing spectacle, in keeping with, and appropriately closed by, the impressive ceremonies at the tomb.

The National Intelligencer, Tuesday, June 29, 1841

The following correspondence shows how impracticable it was for the Baltimore Volunteer Military Corps to accept the invitation to attend the Funeral of the late General Macomb:

Adjutant General's Office

Washington, June 25, 1841

Sir: It is with regret that I announce to you the death of Major General Macomb, who departed this life at about half past 2 o'clock p.m. The family of the deceased specially request that you attend the funeral, which will take place on Monday, the 28th inst. at 10 o'clock, a.m.

Should any of the Volunteer Companies under your command feel disposed to participate in the funeral ceremonies, a place will be provided for them in the escort, and we should be pleased with their presence on the occasion.

I am, sir, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

L. Thomas,

Assistant Adjutant General

Maj. Gen. George H. Steuart, etc., Baltimore, Md.

Baltimore, June 26, 1841

Sir: Your letter to Gen. Steuart, announcing the death of Major General Macomb, and containing an invitation for Gen. Steuart and such of the Volunteer Companies under his command as may feel disposed to attend the funeral on Monday next, has been handed to me as the senior officer in command during the temporary absence of General Steuart from the city.

On behalf of Gen. Steuart, and the officers and companies of the volunteer corps who have had the honor to receive this high compliment, I beg leave to express the profound regret with which the intelligence of the death of the distinguished head of the Army of the United States has been received.

In addition to the high sense of his military services which they entertain in common with the rest of their fellow-citizens, the Volunteers of Baltimore have also a grateful recollection of the kindness with which they have always been treated by the lamented deceased, in their occasional visits to the city of Washington.

It will not be in our power, however, to accept this invitation. It is understood the body of the late President of the United States will be brought from Washington today, and carried from the city on Monday morning, towards its final place of rest on the banks of the Ohio. It seems to me eminently proper that the Volunteer Corps of Baltimore should escort it in its transit through their city, and this will be done unless we are overruled by the wishes of the Committee who have charge of this melancholy journey. I am not yet distinctly informed what those wishes are, and in the uncertainty do not feel myself at liberty to form an engagement which may interfere with what appears to me a paramount duty at home.

Trusting that this reason may be satisfactory, I am and with respect, yours,

Benj. C. Howard

Brig. General 1st Light Brigade M.V.

To Assist. Adj. Gen. L. Thomas, Washington

The Evening Star, Saturday, March 16, 1901

Brave Gen. Macomb

Proposed Monument to Commemorate His Services

American Hero of the War of 1812

Once the Commander of the United States Army

Distinguished Career

The erection of a monument commemorative of the service of Major General Alexander Macomb at Detroit, Mich., his birthplace, sixty years after his death in this city, when in command of the United

States army, is a matter of interest not only in military circles, but to many of the older families of the District, as well as many of his relatives resident among us. The latter third of his three score years of life was passed in this city, and such was his intercourse with the people that, upon the announcement of his death here June 25, 1841, the press spoke of him as "the brave soldier of forty years, the useful citizen, the philanthropist and poor man's friend." His remains were followed to the grave by thousands of people--the funeral being one of the largest and most imposing, being attended by the President, cabinet, diplomatic corps, both houses of Congress, the corporate authorities of the three District cities--Alexandria not having been retrocede--and many civic associations. The military escort was composed of Major Ringgold's light battery of artillery, from Fort McHenry; a battalion of marines, under Major Tyler; the Washington Light Infantry, National Blues, Mechanical Riflemen, the Georgetown Grays and other volunteer companies of the District. The Baltimore military organizations were deterred from paying tribute to General Macomb, as they were the same day escorting the remains of General Harrison through Baltimore.

A handsome marble monument was erected over the remains of General Macomb in the family lot in which are also the remains of some of his family. There survive him quite a number of descendants to the third and fourth generations, a number of them residents of the District.

The services of General Macomb to the country were of inestimable value, but the crowning glory of career was his success in defending Plattsburg and defeating a British force six time as large as his own, saving the upper part of the state of New York to the country. The design for the Detroit monument represents him at this battle standing on the ramparts of one of his forts, field glass in hand. While the place of his birth, the town of Plattsburg, where he obtained a phenomenal victory, and West Point Academy, where he organized the corps of cadets, are all suitable places for a monument to commemorate his services, it would appear that besides the modest family monument over his remains at the Congressional cemetery, there should be one erected in one of Washington's parks. Indeed outside of army circles, he having served from 1821 as chief of the engineer corps, and from 1828 to his death, in 1841, as commanding general, there are hundreds of older Washingtonians in every walk of life who can recite pleasant reminiscences of the general. These would warmly appreciate the placing of a statue in his memory at some point in the nation's capital city.

Of Irish and French Descent

Descended from Irish-French stock and born in Detroit in 1782, when that place was a trading station, and being sent to school at Newark, N.J., he there showed his proclivity for a military life. When sixteen years old he joined the New York Rangers, and volunteered his services to the government. He soon after became a cornet of light dragoons, and next as assistant under Adjutant General North. When the war scare was over, in 1799, he went to Canada, but soon returned, and became a second lieutenant of dragoons. He saw service as such on the Ohio, and with a commission, making treaties with the Indians. He was then but a boy. When the army was reduced the dragoons were disbanded and an engineer corps, with one major, two captains, four lieutenants, and ten cadets were provided for. These, with artillery, were located at West Point and formed the nucleus of the Military Academy. Young Macomb was retained in the service as a lieutenant of infantry, and applied for and obtained a transfer to the engineers in 1802. Taking the course with the lieutenants and cadets, he was the first to graduate. He was made adjutant of the post, and as such organized the corps of cadets and became the head of the academy, being promoted to the rank of lieutenant colonel in 1811. In the following year, while performing the duties at the head of the academy, which had become a separate post, the duties of chief of engineers, the head being old and infirm, he also filled the position of adjutant general of the army.

The formation of two new regiments of artillery being authorized by Congress on the eve of the war of 1812, Macomb asked for and was given the colonelcy of one of them. This was the regiment,

recruited in the neighborhood of New York, and he marched with it to the defense of the northern frontier. The British designed to capture and occupy the upper portion of New York state, and a naval force, under Capt. Downie, was sent against McDonough's fleet, while from Canada Sir George Prevost came down on the Americans, with 16,000 well-disciplined troops, to exterminate or capture Macomb and the few thousands with him. The larger portion of the invaders were veterans who had served under Wellington, and Macomb had but few regulars which, with militia and volunteers, aggregated less than 3,000 men.

Macomb prepared for the attack by building forts to defend the town, and it is related that Gen. J.G. Totten, then a major and afterward the head of the engineer bureau and resident of Washington, was in charge of the work as the engineer officer. The attack came and the foe was vanquished on land and water. Macomb, with a loss of less than a hundred, defeated Sir George, inflicting a loss in killed, wounded and prisoners of 2,500. McDonough sunk the British fleet. In an old song 'tis said:

"Sir George Prevost, with all his host,
Marched forth from Montreal, sir.
Both he and they as blithe and gay
As going to a ball, sir."

After describing the battle and the astonishment of Sir George, the song ends:

"The rout began, Sir George led on,
His men ran helter skelter;
Each tried his best to outrun the rest
To gain a place of shelter.
To hide their fear they gave a cheer
And thought it mighty cunning—
He'll fight, say they, another day
Who save himself by running."

Electrifying Victories

These victories electrified the nation, the news reaching Washington shortly after the defeat of the British at Baltimore September 12. General Macomb received the thanks of the legislatures of several states, the freedom of New York city tendered in a gold box, a gold medal and sword from Congress and the brevet of major general.

At the close of the War of 1812, in March, 1815, the army was reduced to a peace footing, with two major generals and four brigadier generals, and Macomb was retained in the latter rank in charge of the fifth military division, with headquarters at Detroit. Under his administration of military affairs much was done in opening up the country, and he had so won the affections of the people that when, with his family, he left Detroit for Washington in 1821 the people crowded the wharves to bid him good-bye. Having been appointed to the head of the engineer corps, he arrived at the capital in June, 1821, and took up his residence in Georgetown, his family consisting of his wife and nine children. Ere a year had passed, and before Mrs. Macomb became acquainted with the capital, the general was left a widower. Five years afterward, in May, 1826, he married Miss Harriet B. Wilson, the daughter of a Presbyterian minister of Georgetown, and subsequently the family moved to the fine old brick residence at the northwest corner of 17th and I streets, erected about 1826 by Mr. William Williamson, who was long the navy agent here. This became the scene of many brilliant society functions, General and Mrs. Macomb and the grown children being most genial as hosts; and though the parties were often magnificent, with a military air about them, the plain citizen was made to feel at home. In compliance with the teachings of her youth, Mrs. Macomb drew the line on dancing. Though filling the

requirements of their station in society, the members of the family found time and inclination for a work by which they won the respect of the community in relieving the poor and needy, and the alleviation of suffering in an unostentatious manner.

The general was the author of a number of military works and possessed some literary ambition. A drama of frontier life from his pen found its way to the stage, and met with some success. One of the adjuncts to his home, purchased in 1831, was a fine garden extending to K street. A fine tenpin alley near the house was an attraction for many of his friends, military and civilian.

In 1828, on the death of Major General Jacob Brown, the command of the army was given to General Macomb, and he retained the position until his death. General Macomb was a prominent figure at the inauguration of General Harrison, and so youthful looking was he that the populace could not believe that he was a hero of the war of 1812, much less the commanding general of the army. A month afterward he commanded the escort at the funeral of President Harrison, whose remains were placed in the tomb at Congressional cemetery.

Less than three months afterward the body of the general was borne over the same route to the same cemetery, just after the remains of General Harrison had been forwarded to Cincinnati. The same minister, Rev. Dr. Hawley of St. John's Church officiated, and the same battery, Ringgold's, fired the salute. Many of the same troops and organizations participated, and, as stated before, almost the entire population of the District paid a tribute to him, thousands following the remains to the cemetery. There survived the general two sons and five daughters, and the family is yet represented in the army.

(Genl. Macomb's daughter Czarina died in Detroit April 24, 1846)

(Genl. Macomb's half-sister was the wife of Peter Flandraugh, defender against the Sioux Uprising (1861) and later Governor of Minnesota)

Will of Maj. Gen. Alexander Macomb (dtd. Feb. 27, 1841, probated July 9, 1841; Book 5, pp. 218-219; O.S. 2283; Box 15)

All real estate to wife for her lifetime, and after her death to children: Alexander A. Macomb; William H. Macomb; Catharine Mason; Alexandrine Staunton; Czarina Macomb; Sarah Macomb; and Jane Octavia Miller, and their heirs, to be equally divided between them.

My house on I St., City of Washington, in which I now reside, and the lots adjoining having been purchased from William Williamson with the separate funds of my wife, I consider as solely her property; to wife, all my personal estate except those legacies hereinafter mentioned.

To sons Alexander and William Macomb, my military equipment, trophies, medals and swords presented by the U.S., the first to have the gold medal presented to me by Congress in consideration of my service at Plattsburgh in the month of June 1814; the second, William to have the sword presented for the same occasion.

To children, equally divided, a claim when recovered, against the general government for brevet pay which amounts to about \$13,000 and which ought long since to have been paid.

Exrx.: Harriet B. Macomb, wife

Wits.: J.B.H. Smith; Samuel A. Houston; William P. Rodgers