

James Morrison

(- 23 Apr 1823)

Morrison. At his lodgings in this city, yesterday, Colonel James Morrison, of Kentucky, a gentleman of high character for probity and patriotism. [A more particular notice of his life and public usefulness will be hereafter given.]

The National Intelligencer, July 16, 1823

The following is an extract from the will of the late Col. James Morrison, of Lexington, Kentucky, by which he bequeathed so liberal a donation to the University of that State.

"I give to the trustees of the Transylvania University and their successors the sum of twenty thousand dollars in trust, to vest the capital in some permanent productive fund, and out of the annual interest or dividends accruing thereon to pay the salary of a professorship to be instituted by them and to be denominated the "Morrison Professorship," or to apply the said twenty thousand dollars to the purchase of a Library, to be denominated the "Morrison Library," as the said Trustees may think will best promote the interest of learning and science.

"And all my residuary estate beyond the sum of eleven thousand dollars, I give and devise to the Trustees of the Transylvania University for the benefit of that institution to be applied to the erection of another edifice for its purposes, to be denominated "Morrison College," in the town of Lexington."

The National Intelligencer, August 11, 1823

The Late Col. Morrison

In announcing, not long since, the death of Colonel James Morrison, of Kentucky, we suggested that a more copious notice of the deceased would probably hereafter appear. The delineation of Col. Morrison's life and character, which has recently been published in the form of an admirable discourse, delivered in Lexington, Kentucky, by President Holley, of the Transylvania University, is so complete, that the following abridgment, by the hand of a friend of the editors of some passages of the work, cannot but be gratifying to many of our readers:

Col. James Morrison, the son of a poor but worthy and respectable emigrant from Ireland, was born in the year 1755, in the county of Cumberland, in Pennsylvania. He continued with his father in the usual employment of agriculture, till towards the close of his minority. He entered early into the service of his country, and was for several years a soldier in the war of the Revolution. He was one of the select corps of riflemen that made itself so formidable to our enemies, under the command of the celebrated Col. Morgan. He was in those hard fought battles near Saratoga, which, terminating in victory, caused the capture of Burgoyne and his whole army. On one occasion, in the autumn of that memorable year, this rifle corps fought nearly the whole day--so that before sunset, so obstinate and sharp was the combat, the field was four times taken and re-taken. Tradition, which yet supplies the absence of the written truth, recounting the deeds of this immortal band, assigns to Morrison an ample share in its hardships, merits, dangers, and triumphs. With the fatigues and privations of a hunter's life, also, he was afterwards familiar; and in such career, when savage hostilities ensued, Morrison's signal bravery and self possession often enabled him to baffle or surpass the stratagems and surprises of Indian warfare. After peace became established, and the United States assumed their high rank among nations, Morrison having settled himself at Pittsburg, in his native state, became the first sheriff of the County of Allegheny. Here he continued to reside for several years, distinguished for his social virtues

by a wide circle of admiring friends. During this period, he was married in his native county at Carlisle: and soon afterwards he formed and executed the determination of removing to Kentucky. In 1792 he entered into business as a merchant in the town of Lexington, and here met with that success which crowned all the subsequent acts of his life. In 1795 he was appointed by Governor Shelby Commissioner for assigning lands to the settlers south of Green River. In 1797 he was elected in Fayette County a Representative to the Legislature. Soon after this, he was appointed supervisor of the United States revenue for the district of Kentucky. From that time to a recent period, and more especially during the war of 1812 he has been successively engaged, chiefly by the National Executive, in offices both of trust and profit, extensive and highly responsible; all of which Col. Morrison has executed with unspotted integrity and uncommon success. The last situation, however, which he filled, was of a different nature from any of the former. He was appointed Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the young but flourishing University of Transylvania. To the peculiar duties of this new office, and the advancement of this excellent institution, when it was in its infancy but feebly supported, he applied all the energies of his sound and seasoned mind. And, while engaged in this most laudable service, he seemed insensible to bodily infirmities--and to know neither repose or fatigue. The University of Transylvania, thus cherished like an adopted favorite child, was not forgotten in his will, but has been recognized and honored as his most distinguished legatee. He correctly felt that the chief value of truth, liberty, humanity, religion, and immortality, depends on a well directed education; on a rational and moral formation of character; on the illumination and improvement of the mind; and that, without this, they would be unable to bestow that diversified and perfect happiness which is requisite to satisfy the inexhaustible and ever-expanding faculties of the soul.

As it was destined that he should die at a distance from his own town and home, he could not have chosen, had the privilege been allowed to him, a more appropriate place; one more gratifying to his patriotism, or to his laudable regard to his name and his character, than the City of Washington. There his ashes sleep, near to the sepulchre of the Father of his Country, and on the very spot where that great man fixed the seat of Empire. So few of our Revolutionary worthies are now to be found in the walks of our busy and protected life of domestic pursuits, and so numerous and unquestioned are the fruits of the wisdom and labors of the generation that made us free and independent, that the halo around every useful man of that glorious day, becomes peculiarly bright and far-darting--and while it catches all eyes, assembles about the possessor respectful, admiring and sympathetic friends. This charm, as might be expected, surrounded Morrison in his last sickness. He was an old and intimate friend but also our excellent Chief Magistrate, and could claim, as he received, every courtesy and delicate as well as faithful service at his hands. In addition to this, he had the cordial and devoted attentions of his friend, an eminent counselor, and distinguished statesman, H. Clay, Esq. his confidential and constant adviser--one who, knowing the thoughts of his mind, and the wishes of his heart, could administer more varied and effectual consolation, than perhaps any other individual, if we except his faithful and affectionate wife, who fortunately arrived in Washington several days before his dissolution. But the prescribed limits of the *Intelligencer* admonish us to sum up the character of this Revolutionary patriot abruptly: As he was benevolent and amiable we loved him; as he was industrious, intelligent, useful and successful, we respected him--as he was hospitable and generous, we applauded him--as he was philanthropic and munificent, we admired him--as he was honest, candid, faithful and religious, we revered him--as he was our friend and benefactor, the patron of learning, the supporter of good morals, the defender of sound principles, and the advocate of every valuable measure, we will gratefully remember him, and embalm his name with the virtuous.

Ely, Selden Marvin, "The District of Columbia In The American Revolution and Patriots of the Revolutionary Period Who Are Interred in the District or In Arlington," Columbia Historical Society, Vol 21, pp. 128-154

Colonel James Morrison of Lexington, Kentucky, died in Washington, D.C., April 23, 1823. He was a native of Pennsylvania, and Heitman registers him as an ensign, Eighth Pennsylvania from 21st of December, 1778, until he retired January 1, 1781. Colonel Morrison settled in Lexington, Kentucky, in 1792, and became a man of great wealth and founder of Morrison College in Lexington. He was state representative from Fayette and Quartermaster-General. The only record on his monument of military service is the title "Colonel".