

Ann, in business. FitzSimons was elected as first vice president of the fraternal order Friendly Sons of St. Patrick in 1771, and was an active participant in the American Revolution. He raised and commanded a local militia, and was a member of the board that oversaw the Pennsylvania Navy, which provided the primary defense of the city of Philadelphia. After the war, FitzSimons entered politics, representing Pennsylvania in the Continental Congresses of 1782 and 1783, and as a delegate to the Constitutional Convention in 1787. After serving three terms in the Pennsylvania legislature, he was elected to the United States Congress in 1789 and remained there through 1795. FitzSimons died in Philadelphia in 1811.

Robert Morris (1734-1806), a fellow Philadelphia merchant, was one of the wealthiest men in the United States and was closely involved in the national finance and economic agendas of the early republic. A partner in the firm of Willing and Morris, he also served multiple terms in the Pennsylvania state assembly (1778-1781 and 1785-1787), and the United States senate (1789-1795). From 1781 to 1784 Morris was national superintendent of finance, during which time he was the founding director of the Bank of North America, the first financial institution chartered in the United States. In the late 1780s and early 1790s, Morris bought and sold a million acres of land in Western New York State, which inspired him to join in other speculative ventures with partners James Greenleaf (1765-1843) and John Nicholson (1757-1800) in the mid-1790s. With Nicholson, Morris invested in six million acres in New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, North and South Carolina, Georgia, Kentucky, and Maryland. Legal complications and lack of funds drove both men into bankruptcy, and Morris surrendered his holdings to creditors, including Thomas FitzSimons. Morris was held in debtor's prison for three years, 1798 to 1801, and died five years after his release.

In a letter to his friend the historian Benson J. Lossing, dated December 13, 1863, John A. McAllister wrote: "I find among the old manuscripts I bought the other day, several letters from a brother of Robert Morris respecting the Genesee lands in your state, a budget of letters written by Patrick Crookshanks in Georgia belonging to Morris & John Nicholson — Robert Morris must have been sadly afflicted with the real estate mania" (Lossing Papers (Coll. 1807), Historical Society of Pennsylvania). McAllister is most likely referring to the papers in this collection.

Collection Overview

The Thomas FitzSimons Papers spans the period from 1784 to 1811, covering the years when he was closely involved in Robert Morris's bankruptcy proceedings. The collection mainly holds documents relating to Morris's assets and their management. It is divided into two series: Correspondence, and Documents.

Series I, Correspondence (1784-1811) for the most part holds letters from men who were arranging surveys or transfers of real estate holdings with Robert Morris and Thomas FitzSimons, including tracts of land in western New York State and Georgia. The last letter in