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:

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: 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.

1787 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 and as his attorney to sell lots.

Constable?

June. “Macomb’s Purchase” NYS accepts Macomb’s offer to purchase 3.7 million acres 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.


1792 June. Macomb unable to pay creditors; jailed in debtors prison… His land holdings transferred to William Constable and Daniel McCormick


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 improvement 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.

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 34 French Émigrés Collection.
Mss. Coll. No. 5 Parish Rosseel Collection.

Morris, Robert, (1734-1806).

Morris, Gouverneur, (1752-1816)

Hamilton, Alexander, (1757-1804)

Abbreviations:
ads = autograph document, signed.   als = autograph letter, signed

Contents:

Box 1.
Folder    Name
x  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.

Box 2.
Folder    Name
x 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  c.1802. 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 Gouvernor Van Rensselaer, Albany regarding poisoning?
7  1801, ? Autograph fragment, unsigned. Description of land lots within lot number 4 of Macomb’s Purchase.
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 ?
11 1810, Nov. 5. Morrisania. als to David Ford, “Morristown near Ogdensburg” regarding land sales.

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

Raymond, Benjamin
15 1805, Feb. 7. 8 p. als from Raymond to “the Proprietors Township of Potsdam,”