

## Samuel Maclay, Colonial Surveyor

**Samuel Maclay** was born June 17, 1741 in Lurgan Township, Franklin County, and died October 5, 1811 at his home in Buffalo Township, Union County, Pennsylvania. Maclay was buried on the family farm, a brick wall enclosing the family graveyard.

A monument honoring Samuel Maclay was dedicated in October 1906 when Maclay was reinterred at the Dreisbach Church Cemetery, across the road from his 18th century homesite. Several of Maclay's children still lie buried in the family graveyard.

Samuel Maclay worked as a surveyor with his older brother William Maclay (a noted surveyor, lawyer and politician) in 1767-68. The Maclays surveyed the Buffalo Valley, and Samuel settled in Buffalo Township. His stone house is down a lane off Dreisbach Church Road.

In July 1774, Samuel Maclay and John Lowden were chosen members of the Committee of Correspondence in Buffalo Township. The area had joined in selecting representatives from Northumberland County to the Convention of Deputies, which met in Philadelphia in January 1775. Maclay was lieutenant colonel of a battalion, and delegate with McLanachan, Geddes and Brady to the convention in Lancaster on July 4, 1776, which organized the militia for Pennsylvania.

In 1790 Samuel Maclay was chosen to survey streams in northwestern Pennsylvania that might be used for transportation. The survey took months, and covered about one-third of Pennsylvania, to the borders of New York and Ohio.

At the election in 1794, the Democratic Republicans defeated the Federalist incumbent in the legislature and elected Samuel Maclay to Congress, where he served from 1795 to 1796.

Maclay served in the state legislature, Congress, and the State Senate, where he became its Speaker. In 1802 he was elected to the United States Senate.

It was said that Senator Maclay spoke infrequently, but was active behind the scenes. In 1805 he was frequently mentioned as his party's candidate for Governor, but the party instead selected Simon Snyder. Several political choices (such as supporting George Clinton of NY over James Madison for US president, and opposition to Jefferson's embargo of European imports), led to Maclays' leaving politics in 1809 to return to his farm in Buffalo Valley.

According to Union County historian John Blair Linn, Maclay was a popular man, a good scholar and efficient writer, with an extensive library. When home at his farm, he was industrious. He was a good mechanic and often worked in his blacksmith shop.

There is a story of Maclay purchasing a fine new carriage in which he took his family to the Buffalo Crossroads Church one Sunday. Believing the other churchgoers thought the carriage too showy, he never used it again.

Maclay had a servant named Titus, an impressive man with white hair who dressed in a ruffled shirt and colorful coat.

Samuel Maclay married Elizabeth Plunket. They had 9 children: William Plunket Maclay, Charles, John (who served as register and recorder, and prothonotary for Union County before moving to Illinois), Samuel, David, Robert Plunket Maclay (Senator from Union County in 1842, then moved to Kishacoquillas Valley, Mifflin County), Eleanor, Hester, and Jane.



Maclay House



Maclay Monument