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*Clintonia*

*Liliaceae*

[*Colchicaceae/Convallariaceae/Uvulariaceae*]

*Clintonia* commemorates an American republican politician and lawyer, De Witt Clinton (1769-1828) who was Governor of New York from 1817 and is probably best remembered for his enthusiasm for and promotion of the construction of the Erie Canal. In the mid-1790s he began his studies of the natural sciences (which continued for the rest of his life) while continuing his political career. He became a member of the New York state legislature first in 1797, followed by a brief period in the United States senate from which he resigned 1802 to become mayor of New York (a post he held overall until 1815 and was remembered for it particularly for establishing the free New York City public school system). In 1812 he was narrowly defeated by James Madison in a presidential contest. However, from 1817-1823 he was Governor of New York State and it was during this period that all 463 miles of the Erie Canal were built, joining Lake Erie to the upper reaches of the Hudson River. Also at this time, he made unsuccessful attempts to harvest and market the fruit of the American mandrake (*Podophyllum peltatum*). With regard to the Canal itself historians have pointed out that it proved to be of benefit not only to New York State itself (increasing its wealth and importance significantly) but also too to the young nation as not only did it help to open up new markets for Mid-Western farmers but it also stimulated western immigration. He published several papers including *Letters on the Natural History and Internal Resources of New York*.