

*Maclura*

*Moraceae*

*Maclura* commemorates a Scottish-born American geologist, William Maclure (1763-1840), who has been called the ‘father of American geology’. After a brief visit to New York in 1782 he returned to London, became a partner in an American merchant company and is said to have made a fortune rapidly. His business affairs necessitated a trip to Virginia in 1796 where he settled and became a naturalized citizen. From 1803 after completing an appointment as a commissioner in France (to settle American citizens’ claims on the French government for losses suffered during the French Revolution) a period followed when he travelled widely in Europe studying geology enthusiastically and collecting natural history books and specimens. In 1807 he returned to North America and embarked on a self-imposed major geological survey which involved visiting every state then in the Union and traversing repeatedly the Allegheny Mountains (some authorities say the Appalachian Mountains). This enabled him to draw the first geological map (coloured) of the United States which he presented to the American Philosophical Society in 1809 with *Observations on the Geology of the United States explanatory of a Geological Map*. He visited Europe several times in the following years and returning from France in 1812 he became a member of the Academy of Natural Sciences (ANSP is Philadelphia’s natural history museum). He also made several geological explorations in the Carribean during 1816 and 1817. Then in 1817 he not only presented a new edition of his geological map (which, unlike the first, included volcanic rock) and, separately, *Observations on the Geology of the United States of America*, to the American Philosophical Society but also became President of ANSP, a function he fulfilled until 1839. His map would be reprinted many times and receive a wide circulation, and authorities note it would influence future American geology. Now he entered a new phase in which he attempts unsuccessfully to establish agricultural schools. The first was in Spain in 1819 when he bought land (originally owned by the Church) for such a school for poor people which would have an ethos of work combined with moral and intellectual guidance. Spanish politics intervened, the land reverted to the Church and he returned to the USA in 1824 where he was involved in a similar project in New Harmony, Indiana to no avail. Poor health encouraged his move to Mexico in 1827 from where he made visits to the United States before his death.