

= James Morris III =

James Morris III ((1752 @-@ 01 @-@ 19) January 19 , 1752 ? April 20 , 1820 (1820 @-@ 04 @-@ 20)) was a Continental Army officer from Connecticut during the American Revolutionary War and founder of the Morris Academy , a pioneer in coeducation .

Born in Litchfield County , Connecticut , James Morris spent his early life hoping and training to be a minister . However , after graduating from Yale College , Morris accepted a commission of First Lieutenant from the Continental Army and joined the fight for American Independence . Morris was captured during the Battle of Germantown and spent most of the remaining war in captivity . Upon his release , Morris was promoted to the rank of Captain and supported Alexander Hamilton in the Siege of Yorktown . When he returned from the war , Morris began and ran an academy that trained both boys and girls together , a rarity at the time .

James Morris died in 1820 . In 1859 , Morris 's hometown of South Farms , Connecticut was renamed Morris in his honor .

= = Early life and education = =

James Morris was born to Deacon James Morris Jr. and Phebe Barns Morris in South Farms , Connecticut on January 19 , 1752 .

Even as a young man , Morris displayed a disposition for education , borrowing often from the library in nearby Bethlehem , where his father was a member . Through these studies , Morris hoped to eventually become a minister . When Morris was eighteen , his father sent him to live full @-@ time in Bethlehem and study under Dr. Joseph Bellamy . Morris continued with Bellamy until the spring of 1770 , when he spent the season studying under the South Farms minister Dr. Salmon Hurlburt . That fall Morris found yet another instructor in Mr. Nathan Hale , saying of him , " Mr. Hale was an accurate scholar and an able instructor . "

In September 1771 , Morris began more formal studies at Yale College . For his tutor at Yale , Morris was assigned future Yale president Timothy Dwight IV , who would be an influential force in coeducation in his own right . Morris was awarded his degree in July , 1775 , noting in his memoirs , " having had my share of honorary appointments . "

Upon graduation Morris returned to South Farms , where he helped his father with the harvest and took a post teaching grammar school in nearby Litchfield , where he received his first opportunity to teach and was paid " ' handsome wages ' hoping to reimburse his father for the heavy expenses of his college education . "

= = The War = =

= = = Commission and early service = = =

Morris 's tenure as an instructor in Litchfield was cut short when , within months of arriving , he received an unsolicited ensign 's commission in the Connecticut militia , which he accepted . While in the service of the Connecticut militia Morris saw his first action , fighting battles in both Long Island and White Plains . In his memoirs , Morris wrote of this time , stating that " The soldiers universally manifested a great respect for me , for my care of the sick and my attention to their wants , and for my sympathies in their distresses . "

In late December 1776 , Morris completed his commitment to the Connecticut militia and immediately accepted a commission in the Continental Army as a first lieutenant . After serving as a recruiting officer in Litchfield , Morris joined General George Washington and the army at Peekskill . On October 3 , 1776 , General Washington commanded this army in the Battle of Germantown . The American forces were ultimately unsuccessful in this battle and Morris was taken as a prisoner of war on October 4 , 1776 .

= = = Captivity = = =

The early part of Morris 's confinement were the most trying . He was taken to the " New Jail " in Philadelphia where he " was locked in a cold room ... destitute of everything by cold stone walls and bare floors ? no kind of a seat to sit on ? all total darkness , no water to drink or a morsel to eat ; without a blanket to cover [him] . "

Despite his meager accommodations , Morris decided to make the best of his imprisonment in Philadelphia by negotiating with his jailors to borrow books from the so @-@ called circulating library recently established by Benjamin Franklin in that city . One historian points to this time as when Morris was exposed to the philosophers that would be so influential in his later life as an educator : " From Milton , James Morris absorbed ideas in favor of healthy exercises to develop both body and mind at the same time ; from Rollin , the danger of following custom blindly rather than reason ; and from Locke , the novel idea that the English language was as important as Latin and Greek . "

In May 1778 , Morris convinced his captors to admit him to parole and was sent to Flatbush , Long Island , where he stayed with a Mr. Clarkson . In his memoir , Morris noted that Clarkson was " a man of science and large property , ... who owned the most extensive private library that [Morris] had ever known in the United States . " While still in captivity Morris found this situation rather comfortable and took every advantage of the library he so admired .

On January 3 , 1781 , Morris was freed as part of a prisoner exchange .

= = = Post @-@ release = = =

Upon his release , Morris returned to Peekskill where he discovered that he had been promoted to the rank of captain while in the custody of the British . Morris commanded a company back to White Plains until he received orders to head south to Virginia . Upon arrival , Morris 's company , under the overall command of General George Washington , aided in Siege of Yorktown , the last major battle of the American Revolution . Specifically , Morris 's company of light infantry provided support to the forlorn hope commanded by Colonel Alexander Hamilton .

= = Post @-@ war = =

James Morris returned to South Farms in December 1781 . Days after his return , on December 20 , he married Elizabeth Hubbard . Shortly thereafter , the people of South Farms made Morris both the Justice of the Peace and a Selectman . In the summer of 1782 Morris briefly returned to service , but was ultimately released from service in November of that year .

In the following years James and Elizbeth had five children :

Abigail Morris (b . 8 / 2 / 1783)

James Morris , IV (b . 12 / 4 / 1784) : 1803 Yale graduate , Tutor of the University of Georgia , Head of the Academy in Sunbry , Georga .

Reuben Smith Morris (b . 5 / 24 / 1786) : 1804 Yale graduate , attorney in Cayuga , New York .

Samuel Hubbard Morris (b . 2 / 6 / 1788) (d . 12 / 22 / 1793)

Robert Hubbard Morris (b . 7 / 25 / 1789) : " endowed with ' good academic education , ' " settled at Cayuga . "

In between the birth of James and Reuben , Morris became severely ill . During his illness , a man named Gad Farnam moved into the Morris 's home to care for him day and night . The two families became very close and Gad 's daughter Rhoda , only five years old at the time of the illness , later became Morris 's second wife . It was at this point in Morris 's life that he accepted that he would never realize his early dream of becoming a minister .

= = The Morris Academy = =

By 1790 , it had become common for children to come to Morris 's house for instruction and access

to his library . Morris welcomed all of these students , both male and female . Morris 's coeducation caused some stir within the community when some claimed that his education of women was " ' blowing up their pride ' so that ' they would feel themselves above their mates and they would feel above labour . ' " In 1794 , these frustrations were brought to fruition when a hearing was held in the church . The charges were dismissed and the publicity from the controversy brought so much attention , that , by 1803 , he had instructed students " from all the New England States except Rhode Island , and from the States of New York , New Jersey , Pennsylvania , Maryland , Virginia , South Carolina and Georgia . Also from the Island of St. Thomas in the West Indies , and from the Island of Bermuda . "

By the turn of the century , Morris found it necessary to formalize his instruction and construct a proper Academy building . The estimated cost was \$ 1200 , so Morris enlisted wealthy residents of Litchfield and South Farms .

On November 28 , 1803 , The Morris Academy moved out of James Morris 's home and into the brand new building . For the period from 1803 to 1812 , the Morris Academy grew to an average of 50 @-@ 75 students .

The Academy was handed to several other heads of school , until , on April 12 , 1888 , the Morris Academy was closed for good .

In the introduction to her book on the academy , Barbara Nolen Strong noted :

The Morris Academy is entitled to be called a pioneer institution because of its ' open door ' policy in coeducation . It was not the first in the United States , not even in Connecticut , but none of the other early academies opened their doors as wide and kept them open as long . No other coeducational academy spread its influence so far .

= = Later life = =

In September 1814 Morris 's wife Elizabeth died . The following March , Morris married Rhonda Farnam and the marriage bore two children .

Jane Elizabeth Morris (b . 1 / 30 / 1816)

Timothy Dwight Morris (b . 11 / 22 / 1817)

During the " second war with Great Britain " , at the age of 61 , Morris was commissioned as a First Major of the Second Regiment of Volunteers in the State of Connecticut .

Toward the end of his life , Morris compiled his memoirs , which were subsequently published as *Memoirs of James Morris of South Farms In Litchfield* .

James Morris died on April 20 , 1820 and was buried in the graveyard at what is now commonly referred to as the East Morris cemetery .

= = Legacy = =

In June , 1859 , South Farms was incorporated as Morris , Connecticut in his honor .

The James Morris Museum is located in the center of the town of Morris and contains original artifacts and writings of James Morris .

The foundation of The Morris Academy remains intact on the grounds of James Morris Elementary School , in Morris .