

Rapelye Family Papers
1812-1820
ArMs 1974.006

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Othmer Library
Archives and Manuscripts
128 Pierrepont Street
Brooklyn, NY 11201

Tel. 718.222.4111 X196 FAX 718.222.3794

library@brooklynhistory.org
www.brooklynhistory.org

OCR by Sarah Steele, January 2008

Overview

This collection contains four documents relating to Jacob and Isaac Rapelye, members of the prestigious Rapelye family of New York and descendents of Joris Jansen de Rapalie, Long Island's first settler. The documents span the period 1812-1820 and are honorary in nature, celebrating the establishment of Isaac's medical career, Jacob's military appointments during the War of 1812, and Jacob's political appointments in the State of South Carolina.

Biographical Note

Jacob and Isaac Rapelye (or Rappalye, as it was sometimes spelled) were both members of the multigenerational Rapelye family that was instrumental in the development of early Brooklyn. The Rapelye family originally descended from France, being founded by Gaspard Colet de Rapella, a member of the celebrated Coligny family. Gaspard's son, Joris Jansen de Rapalie, brought the family line to American soil when he emigrated to Fort Orange, NY, moving to New Amsterdam shortly after in 1626. Joris would later become the first settler of Long Island in 1637.

Jacob and Isaac Rapelye, both born in the eighteenth century, were descendents of Joris and distant relatives. Jacob, the son of John and Lemma (Boice) Rapelye, was born in Newtown in 1788. As a young man he worked as a clerk at the United States Bank in New York City, but at the onset of the War of 1812 he rose to New York's defense, becoming a lieutenant of artillery and later an adjutant to General George Izard. After the war, Jacob became a merchant in the dry goods business in South Carolina, but later became involved in politics and was appointed deputy secretary of the state of South Carolina in 1816. Jacob would return to New York in 1828, settling in Brooklyn, where he became involved in the real estate business and was a vital player in the opening of Clinton and Court Streets, the development of Atlantic Avenue, and the establishing of Carroll Park. In 1853, Jacob moved to a plot of land in Newtown he had purchased and named Laurel Park, where he built himself a mansion and resided until his death in 1867. Jacob was married to Elizabeth Van Mater, and the couple had ten children.¹ Much less is known of Isaac Rapelye, though some facts are well established. He was the son of Isaac and Jane Rapelye (formerly Jane, dan. of Carel Debevoise), and in 1820 received his medical diploma from the College of Physicians and Surgeons, located at what is now Columbia University. Isaac served as president of the Medical Society of the County of Kings for the year 1835.² He died in 1847 from tuberculosis.³

Augustus Rapelye, the donor of this collection, was born in Brooklyn in 1830 as the seventh child of Jacob and Lemma Rapelye. Like his father before him, Augustus was involved in the real estate business, running his own firm in New York. In 1885 he married Helen Schroeder of Woodside, the daughter of prosperous Herman Schroeder.

¹ Ross, Peter. *A History of Long Island: From Its Earliest Settlement to the Present Time, Volume 3*. New York: The Lewis Pub. Co., 1903.

² Stiles, Henry R. *A History of the City of Brooklyn*. Bowie, MD: Heritage Books, 1993.

³ Columbia University. College of Physicians and Surgeons. *Catalogue of the Alumni, Officers and Fellows, 1807-1891*. New York: Bradstreet Press, 1891.

The couple moved to Newtown village once Augustus retired from his business life in 1890, residing at the Sackett-Moore place. While in Newtown, Augustus took an active role in several local civic and church affairs. He was a member and later president of the board of education for district No. 1, and was both warden and treasurer of St. James Church in Elmhurst, which he had attended for many years. He was a trustee and member of the missionary committee of the Long Island diocese and also served its standing committee as a member and secretary. In 1898, he was a delegate to both the arch-deaconry of Queens and Nassau and the general convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in America, held in Washington, D.C. Augustus died in Newtown in 1890.⁴

Scope and Content Note

The Rapelye Family Papers includes four items celebrating the achievements of Isaac and Jacob Rapleye during the period 1812-1820. Items include Isaac's medical diploma issued by the College of Physicians and Surgeons, as well as Jacob's military appointments during the War of 1812, which included that of First Lieutenant in the Battalion of the Artillery of the State of New York (signed by Governor Daniel Tompkins) and First Lieutenant of Volunteers in the Service of the United States (signed by President James Madison). Finally, the collection also includes Jacob's appointment as Deputy Secretary of the State of South Carolina in 1816.

Item List

1. Rappalye, Isaac I. Diploma issued to Rappalye by the College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York, March 24, 1820. John Tayler, Chancellor.
Signed by:
Samuel Bard M.D.
Wright Post M.D.
David Hosack M.D.
Wm. J. MoNeven M.D.
Samuel L. Mitchell M.D.
William Hammersley M.D.
Valentine Mott M.D.
John W. Francis M.D.
2. Rapelye, Jacob Appointment as First Lieutenant in the Battalion of the Artillery of the State of New York, May 30, 1812.
Signed by:
Daniel D. Tompkins, Governor
Archd. Campbell, Dep. Secretary

⁴ Ross, Peter. *A History of Long Island: From Its Earliest Settlement to the Present Time, Volume 3*. New York: The Lewis Pub. Co., 1903.

3. Rapelye, Jacob Appointment as a First Lieutenant of Volunteers in the service of the United States. Wash., Dec. 12, 1812.
Signed by James Madison, President and W.Eustis

4. Rapelye, Jacob Appointment as a Deputy Secretary of the State of South Carolina, at the office in Columbia , July 3, 1816.
Signed by: John G. Brown, Secretary of State
2 documents.

(All presented by Augustus Rapelye, November 10, 1895.)