



JOHN DELAFIELD.

## John Delafield (1786-1853)

John Delafield is the visionary person who succeeded in getting the New York State Legislature to charter a state agricultural college on April 15, 1853. This may well have been the first chartered agricultural college in the entire United States. Without doubt it is the first chartered state agricultural college in New York State.

John Delafield graduated from Columbia College in 1805. Working for a wholesale dry-goods firm, he was at least twice put into serious jeopardy while on a ship transporting goods for the company. Later he started his own commission merchant business. Still later he became president of the Phoenix Bank in New York City. He was an early promoter of the Hudson River Railroad, a director of the University of New York, and an organizer of the

Philharmonic Musical Society.

In 1841, he retired from the banking business and decided to relocate. In 1843, he purchased a 352-acre farm at Rose Hill in Seneca County. He named his farm Oaklands. Devoting his energies to the development of this farm, he quickly made use of new farm technology such as tile drainage.

In 1850 he published a *History and Survey of the County of Seneca*, which was the most elaborate and accurate history of the county which up to that time had been published.

He was elected president of the Seneca County Agricultural Society in 1846. In 1851, he was elected president of the New York State Agricultural Society.

His crowning achievement as president of this state agricultural society was getting the New York State Legislature on April 15, 1853, to pass "An Act to Incorporate The New-York State Agricultural College." John Delafield was the president of the board of trustees and the college was to be located at his Oaklands farm.

Tragically, John Delafield died suddenly on October 22, 1853, and the work on the college at Oaklands never progressed further. The *Syracuse Daily Journal* on October 26, 1853, published an article on the death of John Delafield. The article included these comments:

There was probably no man in the State more deeply interested in the progress of Agricultural science and reform than Mr. Delafield, and his labors to urge it forward were arduous and incessant. The farmers of the State of New York are greatly indebted to him for the advancement which has been made in their noble profession....Such men as John Delafield are the true benefactors of our race. They do more toward enlightening, Christianizing, and enriching a people, than the combined efforts of rulers and statesmen. They not only teach how to enrich the soil but the mind with it.

(Information taken from *New York State Agricultural College: A History* compiled by Wayne E. Morrison, Sr.)