

**A HISTORY OF THE BANK
OF NOVA SCOTIA, THE
FIRST BANK CHARTERED
IN THE UNITED STATES**

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A History of the Bank of Nova Scotia, the first bank chartered in the United States by Lawrence Lewis

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LAWRENCE LEWIS

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sculpted by M. B. Hall N.Y. 1877

Robert Morris

FOUNDER OF BANK NORTH AMERICA
1781

William C. Ludwig Esq

*With regards of
Robt M Lewis*

A HISTORY

OF THE

BANK OF NORTH AMERICA,

THE FIRST BANK CHARTERED IN THE
UNITED STATES.

PREPARED AT THE REQUEST OF THE PRESIDENT AND DIRECTORS, BY
LAWRENCE LEWIS, JR.

PHILADELPHIA:
J. B. LIPPINCOTT & CO.
1882.

PREFACE.

THE occurrence of the centennial anniversary of the incorporation of the Bank of North America affords a fitting opportunity to present to the public an historical sketch of the origin and career of that venerable institution.

Unlike most of the banks in this country, its early annals abound in interesting features. It was the first bank chartered in the United States. Organized at a very critical period of the Revolution, almost wholly from a patriotic desire to sustain the feeble credit of Congress, its first transactions are most intimately connected with the financial operations of the National Government. By its aid troops were levied, arms and ammunition obtained, supplies furnished to the patriot army, and the expenses of the various departments of Government defrayed. Some of the most prominent financiers of Revolutionary times were numbered among its directors or supporters. Nor were these the only distinguishing features which marked its early career. The granting of its charter by Congress first raised the question as to the existence of implied powers in that body. The annulling of its State franchises by the vote of the Assembly

induced the first discussion as to the capacity of a legislative body to take such action. While the propriety of encouraging or prohibiting the system of banking in this country was first mooted in connection with its operations.

All these subjects will be found treated of at some length in the following pages.

The later history of the bank presents fewer points of interest to the general reader. To give an adequate idea of the scope and character of its operations the financial history of the nation would have to be passed in review, a gigantic task which yet remains to be performed, and which is, of course, quite beyond the limits of the present undertaking. No more has, therefore, been attempted than to sketch in rough outline those events in the history of the institution which seem best calculated to illustrate the principles and policy by which it has been constantly guided.

In some of the important financial crises through which this nation has passed, the Bank of North America has adopted a course diametrically opposed to that pursued by most of the banking institutions of the country. As a rule, the wisdom of the counsels by which it was guided has been fully justified by the event. Of this no better proof can be required than its great and constant prosperity. During the century of its existence it has never passed its semi-annual dividend, except upon five occasions, and then only during a panic unexampled in its magnitude and in the disastrous effects it produced upon the community.

Other features in the later history of the bank have seemed worthy of note. The terms of its various charters,

the election and resignation of its presidents, the mode and extent of the assistance afforded by it to the United States Government during the Rebellion, such are some of the topics which, though they may prove dull to the general reader, will be, it is hoped, of some interest to those concerned in the institution.

In the Appendix will be found an accurate list of the officers of the bank, chronologically arranged. This has been carefully compiled from the original archives in the bank's possession. To this have been added such documents connected with the history of the institution as it is believed will best illustrate the text of the narrative.

L. L., JR.

DECEMBER, 1881.



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