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**Name:** De Witt Clinton

**Years:** March 2, 1769-February 11, 1828

**Residence:** Little Britain, NY;

**Brief Biography:**

De Witt Clinton was born to James Clinton, a brigadier general, and Mary De Witt. After graduating from Columbia College and being admitted to the bar, De Witt worked for his uncle, Governor George Clinton. In 1795, Clinton returned to practicing law and dabbled in some scientific studies. In 1796 he married the wealthy daughter of Walter Franklin, Maria Franklin and they had ten children. In 1797 he was elected to the assembly, which led to the state senate in 1798 where he worked on the Council of Appointment, this led to his appointment in the U.S. senate in 1802, which he then left in 1803 to be Mayor of New York City. For ten years Clinton served as Mayor of the ever-growing New York City, in which he was highly involved in many aspects of the city to make it safer. In 1810, Clinton began making designs for a canal that would link the Hudson River to Lake Erie. In 1812, Clinton ran for the Presidency, his loss in the election had horrible effects on his political career. He was stripped of his governorship and his ties to the Council of Appointment. He was also pushed out as Mayor, in 1815. This all changed in 1816 when the idea for the Erie Canal was becoming popular and under unusual circumstances Clinton was given governorship. Clinton almost immediately started the process to begin the construction on the Erie Canal. After his wife died in 1818, he remarried to Catherine Jones. He was reelected governor in 1820, but because of a wide dislike for him he did not run for reelection after that.

**Major Achievements:**

De Witt Clinton was instrumental in the development of the Erie Canal, was influential in the creation of the New York Historical Society, which he was President of in 1817. In 1814, he published his findings on the situation of scientific research in

America in his book *Introductory Discourse*. And while he was Governor his humanitarian efforts to improve the life of those living in the city were significant to those he helped.

**For More Information:** De Witt Clinton and the Rise of the People's Men by Craig Hanyan and Mary Hanyan; Birth of Empire: De Witt and the American Experience, 1769-1828 by Evan Cornog

**Resources:** American National Biography Online, Encyclopedia Britannica Online