

David Hughes Burr

(Ingenieur Collection)

After studying law at Kingston, New York, and being early admitted to the State Bar, Mr. Burr's attention was drawn in other directions, and in 1824 he was appointed Adjutant to the New York State Militia and the next year Aid de Camp to Governor DeWitt Clinton, which position he held till 1829, when he resigned to accept a place as an engineer on the great National Road then built across the State of New York. While employed on this work, he accumulated the data for a State map, which upon publication met with such approval and success as to induce him to open a large map publishing house in New York City. The General Post Office Department at Washington was at this time very much in need of accurate information in regard to the various post offices and post routes, in many instances there being no means of locating them. The government therefore determined to organize a Topographical Division in the Department, and turned to Mr. Burr as the person best fitted for its head. It was only however at the personal solicitation of Postmaster General Barry that Mr. Burr consented to abandon his lucrative business and accept in 1832 the position of Topographer to the Post Office Department. At this time he also received the appointment of Geographer in the House of Representatives. He held these offices until 1846, when he went to Europe, and in England closed an arrangement with the map publishing house of Arrow Smith of London, for the issue of a full and complete series of maps of the several States.

Upon his return in 1848 he was appointed U. S. Deputy Surveyor for the State of Florida, and was the first to carry the compass and chain into that State after the Seminole War. Later he was appointed in the same capacity in the State of Louisiana, leaving there to accept the place of Geographer to the United States Senate.

In 1855 Mr. Burr was appointed by President Pierce, as the first Surveyor General of Utah Territory. He held this office during the exciting conflict between the Federal and Mormon authorities, often performing his duties at the risk of his life. Owing to the exposures, trials and fatigue through which he passed while in Utah, his health gave way. He returned home an invalid and remained so until his death.