

ALEXANDER HAMILTON

arrived in America in 1772 at the age of fifteen—a poor, self-taught, ambitious immigrant from the West Indies. He settled in New York City in the midst of the colonial crisis, when oppressive taxes and other policies pushed Americans to question British rule. Hamilton soon befriended prominent patriots and embraced the cause for independence in his adopted country.

The American Revolution was a defining event in Alexander Hamilton's life and influenced his vision for the nation. He fought the Revolutionary War as an energetic but inexperienced private in a volunteer militia unit, a battle-tested commander in the Continental Army, and the principal aide-de-camp to General George Washington. These experiences convinced Hamilton that the new nation needed a strong central government and national institutions for the union of states to survive. Hamilton was an important and unwavering force in the political revolution that produced the U.S. Constitution and the American form of government, ensuring that the ideals he had fought for would endure.

After the war, Hamilton became an original member of the Society of the Cincinnati, an organization of veteran officers founded in 1783 to ensure that the principles of the Revolution and the sacrifices required to win American independence would not be forgotten. He believed that the Society—one of the few national organizations in the young country—was a valuable force for securing the future of the American republic. Hamilton led the Society as its second president general—an office first held by Washington—until his untimely death in 1804.

Alexander Hamilton's American Revolution—on view at Anderson House from March 15 through September 16, 2018—tells these stories through nearly forty manuscripts, rare books, artifacts and works of art drawn primarily from the Society's collections. The exhibition also includes important loans from Georgetown University, Hamilton College, the New York State Society of the Cincinnati and several private collections.

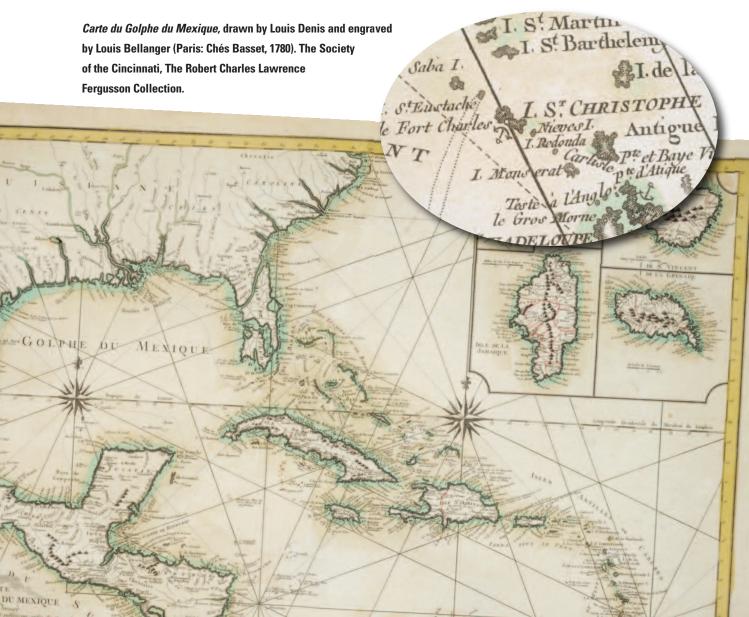
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Alexander Hamilton, Major General of the Armies of the United States of America, Secretary of the Treasury, &c. &c., engraved by William Rollinson after a painting by Archibald Robertson (New York: Published at the Columbia Academy of Painting, 1804). The Society of the Cincinnati, Purchased with a gift from a private foundation. In this stipple engraving issued just a few months after Hamilton's death, he is surrounded by symbols of his public service: books, papers, a quill and ink, the seal of the Treasury Department, a sword and cockaded hat and the Society of the Cincinnati Eagle insignia.

SON OF THE WEST INDIES

On January 11, 1757, on the island of Nevis in the West Indies, Alexander Hamilton was born, the younger son of James Hamilton, a Scottish immigrant, and Rachael Fawcett, the descendent of French Huguenots. His parents never married, branding Alexander an illegitimate child. The family moved to St. Croix in 1765, but after just a few years James had left and Rachael had died. At the age of eleven, Alexander was without either of his parents and was nearly penniless.

Alexander Hamilton's early education on St. Croix primarily took place in the mercantile firm of Beekman and Cruger, where he worked as a clerk. Alexander wrote letters for the owners and tracked the firm's shipments and finances, learning about accounting, economics and international commerce. Sensing Alexander's promise, his employers and friends donated money to pay for his formal education om the mainland. Alexander Hamilton left the West Indies in late September 1772, never to return.



Alexander Hamilton first set eyes on New York City in October 1772 at the age of fifteen. With twenty-five thousand residents, it was the second-largest city in America (behind Philadelphia) and a diverse, lively commercial hub. Hamilton quickly befriended men from prominent American families, many of whom would become leading patriots in the coming revolution. Hamilton

Hamilton probably supported the colonists' grievances with British rule even before he arrived in America. From newspapers, merchants and other sources in the West Indies, he would have learned about the Stamp Act and other taxes and restrictions, which were extremely unpopular on the Caribbean islands for their effects on trade. While a student at King's College, Hamilton

IMMIGRANT IN NEW YORK

initially enrolled in the academy in Elizabethtown, New Jersey, where he met William Livingston, future governor of New Jersey; Elias Boudinot, future president of Congress; and John Jay, future chief justice of the U.S. Supreme Court. After he completed his preparatory studies, Hamilton entered King's College (now Columbia University) in the fall of 1773. The curriculum emphasized the classics as well as ethics, rhetoric and logic. During this period, Robert Troup and Nicholas Fish were among Hamilton's best friends and intellectual sparring partners, as well as future brothers-in-arms.

joined the political debate with speeches and writings that caught the attention of patriot leaders. By the time the college suspended operations due to the war in the spring of 1776, Hamilton had already left to join the American army.

A Plan of the City of New-York & its Environs, drawn by John Montrésor and engraved by Peter Andrews (London: Sold by A. Dury, 1775). The Society of the Cincinnati, The Robert Charles Lawrence Fergusson Collection.

King's College was located one block west of the Common at the northern edge of New York City—labeled with the letter N and identified as the "Colledge" on this plan of the public buildings and military sites in and around the city.



THE FARMER REFUTED:

A more impartial and comprehensive

OF THE

DISPUTE between GREAT-BRITAIN ANDTHE

INTENDED AS A FURTHER VINDICATION

OFTHE

ANSWER TO A LETTER.

A.W. FARMER, A VIEW of the CONTROVERSY INTITLED

BETWEEN GREAT-BRITAIN and her Colonies:

INCLUDING A Mode of determining the present Disputes

FINALLY AND EFFECTUALLY, &c.

Tituli remedia pollicentur; sed pixedes ipsa venena continent. The Title promises Remedies, but the Box itself contains Poisons.

Naw-York - Minured by JAMES BIVINGTON -1955

The Farmer Refuted: Or, A more impartial and comprehensive View of the Dispute between Great-Britain and the Colonies (New-York: **Printed by James** Rivington, 1775). The Society of the Cincinnati, The Robert **Charles Lawrence Fergusson Collection**

Alexander Hamilton was one of the few revolutionaries to contribute both the power of his words and the might of his sword to the cause for American independence. Beginning in December 1774—while a seventeen-year-old student at King's College—he wrote a series of anonymously published political essays defending the right of Americans to govern themselves. These writings established him as one of the leading voices of the American cause and one of the best essayists in the colonies—"our oracle," said one New Yorker.



AMERICAN REBEL

These pamphlets were responses to pro-British essays penned by a loyalist, Samuel Seabury, who wrote under the pseudonym "a Farmer." Hamilton invoked the philosophy of natural rights and civil liberties, and the limits of English constitutional authority, to argue for American self-governance. His first essay, A Full Vindication of the Measures of the Congress, defended the formation of the Continental Congress and its boycott of British goods. Just two months later, in February 1775, Hamilton published his second essay—a much longer, more elegant, and more persuasive plea for protecting Americans' rights and liberties in the face of British oppression. In this work, he expressed hope for a peaceful solution to the colonial crisis, but he urged his readers not to underestimate the American side if war could not be avoided: "Whatever may be said of the disciplined troops of Britain, the event of the contest must be extremely doubtful. There is a certain enthusiasm in liberty that makes human nature rise above itself in acts of bravery and heroism." Hamilton's essays contributed to the growing fervor for independence in New York, especially after word of the Battles of Lexington and Concord reached the city on April 23, 1775.

Detail of Pulling Down the Statue of King George III, New York City by Johannes Adam Simon Oertel, 1852-1853. Oil on canvas. New-York Historical Society (1925.6).

The Declaration of Independence was read publicly in New York for the first time on July 9, 1776. Afterwards a patriot mob marched through the city to Bowling Green, where they tore down the gilded lead statue of King George III. Hamilton and his artillery company probably attended the reading, but Hamilton did not participate in the destruction that followed

STUDENT IN WAR

When the Revolutionary War began, Alexander Hamilton had no military training or experience. To learn the art of war, he threw himself into reading the available military manuals and histories from Europe. Hamilton read recent treatises on military skills and tactics alongside histories of the wars of Prussia, France and ancient Greece. He learned the complex elements of firing, transporting and supplying artillery from these books, along with advice from veteran artillerymen. John Muller's A Treatise of Artillery, first published in 1757, was the most influential work on artillery available in English during the Revolutionary period.

Hamilton also absorbed texts on philosophy, politics, economics and geography by authors including Plutarch, Cicero, Bacon and Hobbes. In 1777, Hamilton poured over the Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce, taking pages of notes on countries' industries and exports, exchange rates, currency, labor and land. That immense publication—two volumes weighing a total of twenty-five pounds—was an indispensable resource on the political, legal and financial aspects of trade and commerce.

While living in New York, Hamilton borrowed these books and pamphlets from the King's College library and Alexander McDougall, a patriot leader and future general in the Continental Army. When Hamilton joined the army, he took with him an astonishing load of books, carrying them on campaigns and studying them when his daily duties were finished. In addition to teaching him how to be a proper soldier and effective leader in a professional army, Hamilton's wartime reading helped shape his vision for the new nation's government, economy and institutions.



ARTILLERY: CONTAINING

Brafs and Iron Guns used by Sea and Land, and their CARRIAGES.

II. General Constructions of MORTARS and HOWITZES, their BEDS and CARRIAGES.

III. DIMENSIONS of all CAR-RIAGES used in ARTIL-

I. General Constructions of | IV. EXERCISE of the REGI-VICE Abroad in a SIEGE or

V. Its MARCH and ENCAMP-MENT, AMMUNITION, STORES, and Horses.

A Treatise of Artillery

by John Muller (London:

Printed for John Millan,

1768). The Society of the

Cincinnati. The Robert

Fergusson Collection.

Charles Lawrence

VI. Laftly, The necessary LA-BORATORY WORK for FIRE-SHIPS, &c.

To which is prefixed,

An INTRODUCTION,

WITH

A THEORY of POWDER applied to FIRE-ARMS.

The SECOND EDITION, With large Additions, Alterations, and Corrections.

LOHN MULLER, Professor (

Printe Where m

Volume 1 of The Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce by Malachy



Postlethwayt (London: Printed for W. Strahan, 1774). The Society of the Cincinnati, The Robert Charles **Lawrence Fergusson Collection.**

ARTILLERY CAPTAIN

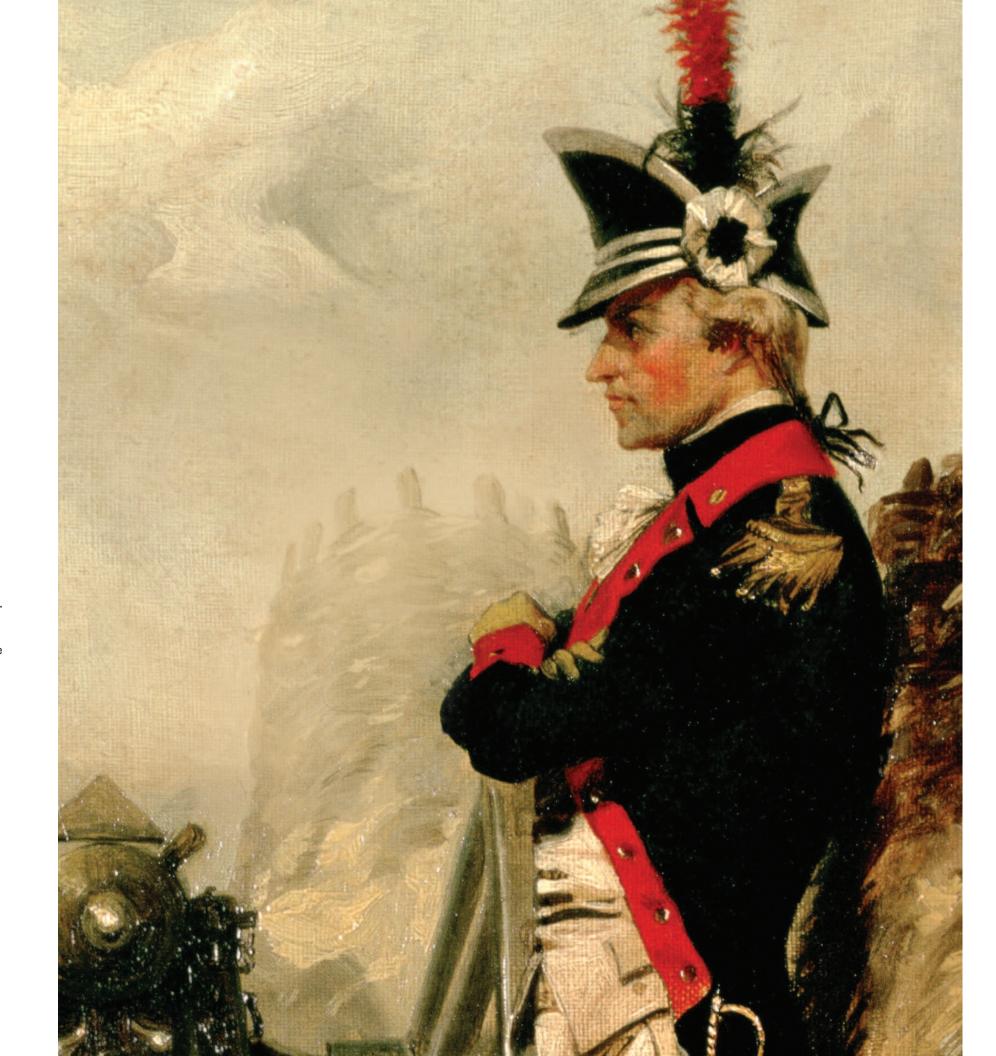
Alexander Hamilton's first experiences in the military came in artillery units during the early years of the Revolution—years that gave him his first taste of battle, his first exposure to the hardships of campaigns, and his first chance to lead soldiers as an officer. The outbreak of hostilities at the Battles of Lexington and Concord led him to pick up the sword. Alongside his friends Robert Troup and Nicholas Fish, Hamilton joined a New York City militia company named the Corsicans as a private. On the night of August 23-24, 1775, Hamilton participated in his first military action. At the urging of the New York Provincial Congress, he and sixty compatriots removed twenty-one cannon from the Grand Battery to prevent them from falling into enemy hands—while coming under fire from a British warship anchored in the harbor.

Hamilton became an officer on March 14, 1776, when he was appointed captain of the New York Provincial Company of Artillery upon the recommendation of Alexander McDougall, then a colonel in the New York Continental Line. Hamilton demanded strict discipline in his company but was devoted to his men, having lobbied for their pay and provisions, paid for their clothing, and recommended some of them—even enlisted men—for promotion as officers. By the end of the summer, his company was transferred to the Continental Army as part of Henry Knox's Regiment of Artillery.

Hamilton experienced war in the field for the first time with these units, during the New York and New Jersey campaigns. Among the last American troops to evacuate New York City in September 1776, Hamilton's artillerists helped protect the army on its retreat through New Jersey. When George Washington took the offensive at the end of the year, the Continental Artillery—including Hamilton's company—played an important role in the victories at Trenton, Assunpink Creek and Princeton.

Detail of *Alexander Hamilton*as a Soldier by Alonzo Chappel,
ca. 1857. Oil on canvas.
Museum of the City of New York.

The Corsicans, Hamilton's first militia unit in New York City, wore short green coats and leather caps bearing the words "Liberty or Death."



SOLDIER AND SCRIBE

The most important event in Alexander Hamilton's service in the Revolutionary War was his introduction to George Washington. It is difficult to pinpoint when they met, but by late January 1777, Washington knew enough about Hamilton's leadership, energy and intelligence—as well as his fluency in French—to ask the young captain to join his staff. Hamilton hesitated to relinquish his field command but believed that assisting the commander in chief would offer experience and prestige he could find nowhere else. Washington officially announced Hamilton's appointment as his aide-de-camp on March 1, 1777.

Hamilton became Washington's principal aide as well as a military advisor, contributing his opinions on matters ranging from battlefield strategy to troop enlistments. The two men never developed a close friendship but forged a bond based on shared struggles and triumphs in war, and common aspirations for America's future. "There are few men to be found, of his age, who has a more general knowledge than he possesses, and none whose Soul is more firmly engaged in the cause, or who exceeds him in probity and Sterling virtue," Washington said of Hamilton in February 1781. Witnessing the ineffectiveness of Congress to support the army, discontent and mutinies among the ranks, and the unreliability of Continental currency convinced Hamilton that an independent America would only survive if the states united under a strong central government with a national army and other institutions.

Washington depended on Hamilton so much that the general repeatedly refused his pleas for a field command. Hamilton's frustration with his role on the general's staff, Washington's exasperation with the tenuous state of the army, and long-standing personality differences between the two men collided in February 1781.

A small disagreement escalated and resulted in Hamilton's resignation from Washington's staff.

Hamilton's relentless campaign for a field command was finally successful in late July 1781, when he received command of a New York light infantry battalion. His leadership of the daring attack on a critical redoubt at Yorktown—which helped force the British surrender in October 1781—made him an American hero. Although the war would drag on for two more years, Hamilton resigned his commission in March 1782 and looked ahead to life in an independent, united country.

One of a pair of field epaulets, probably American, ca. 1775-1783. Metallic thread, cotton and wool. The Society of the Cincinnati, Museum purchase with funds donated by the New York State Society of the Cincinnati and The Robert Charles Lawrence Fergusson Fund. 1991.





PATRIOTIC CITIZEN

In the waning months of the Revolutionary War, Continental Army officers formed an organization dedicated to ensuring that the principles of the Revolution and the sacrifices required to win American independence would not be forgotten. Alexander Hamilton was among the 2,200 veterans who joined the Society of the Cincinnati as original members, pledging themselves to the organization's principles and to each other. Hamilton shared membership in the "One Society of Friends" with some of his closest friends and compatriots, including Nicholas Fish, Alexander McDougall, Nathanael Greene, Henry Knox, baron von Steuben, the marquis de Lafayette and George Washington.

Hamilton believed that the Society—one of the few national organizations in the new country was a valuable force for ensuring that the American republic would survive. Like many other veterans of the Revolution, he worried that the Union, which had been forged in the pressure of war, would weaken and dissolve as soon as that pressure was removed. He also worried that the American people, returning to the pursuits of peace, would ultimately forget that their liberty had been established by those who risked their lives to defend it by force of arms. The Society provided a reminder of the American republic's ideals and origins when political, economic and cultural differences threatened to fracture the young nation.

Hamilton was most involved in the Society during the 1780s, before he joined George Washington's first administration. In 1786, Hamilton led a committee of the New York Society charged with explaining the New York Society's opposition to the so-called "amended Institution." Two years earlier, Washington had proposed that the Society alter its Institution in response to criticism that the organization created a new form of aristocracy and could hold too much influence over the government. The proposed alterations would have eliminated the hereditary membership principle and removed anything "which has a political tendency." The latter was particularly objectionable to Hamilton, as it would have resulted in striking the second of the Society's Immutable Principles: "An unalterable determination to promote and cherish, between the respective States, that union and national honor so essentially necessary to their happiness, and the future dignity of the American Empire." Hamilton defended the Society's original Institution in a circular letter from the New York Society, which he drafted with James Duane and William Duer: "We reverence the sentiment contained in that clause too much to be willing to see it expunded. Nor can we believe that its continuance will on reflection, give umbrage to any whose views are not unfriendly to those principles which form the basis of the Union, and the only sure foundation of the tranquility and happiness of this Country."

Detail of the Society of the Cincinnati Eagle insignia owned by Alexander Hamilton, made by Nicolas Jean Francastel and Claude Jean Autran Duval, Paris, 1784. Gold, enamel, silk and metal. Private collection.

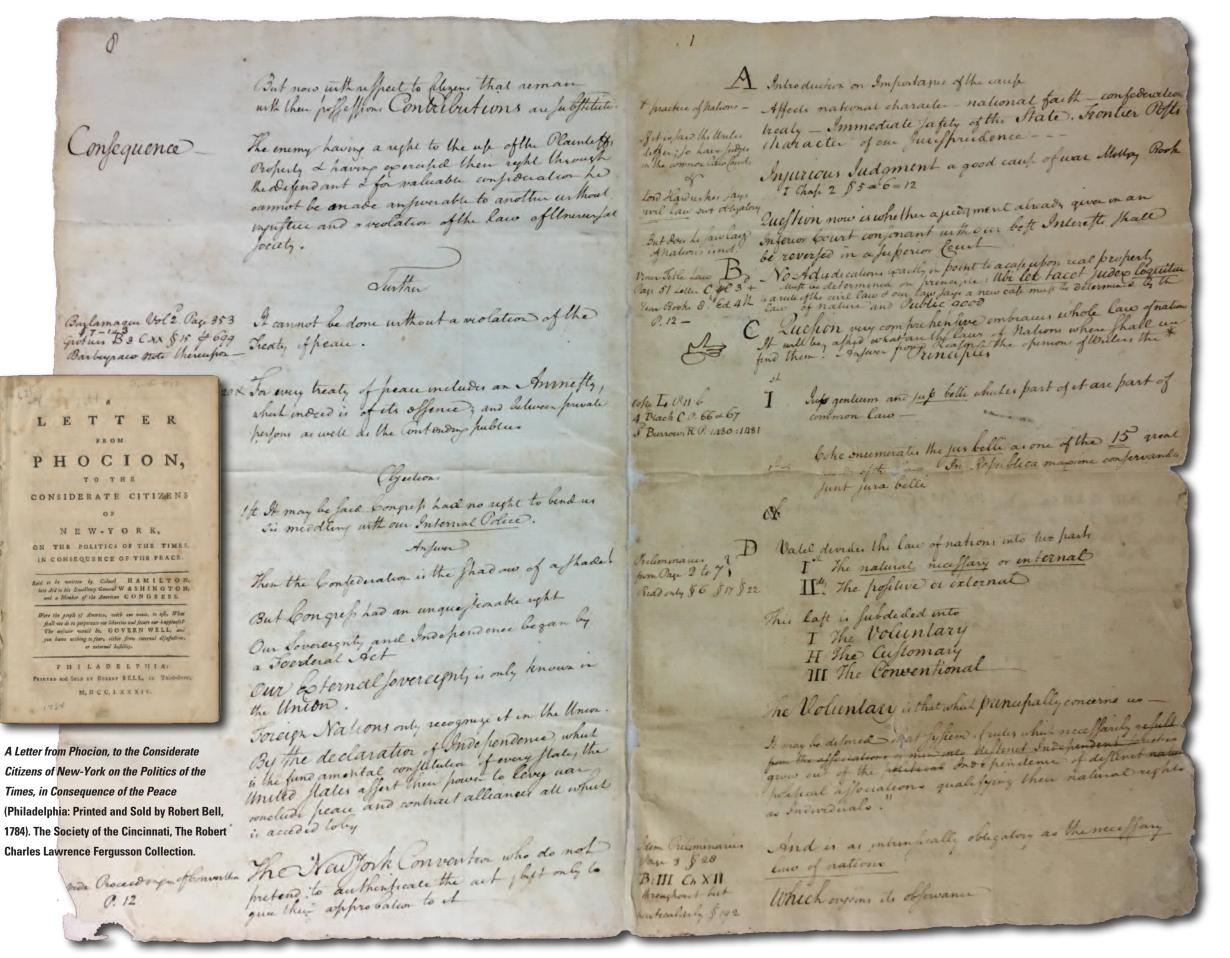
"Subscription List," July 4, 1789.
Collection of the New York State Society of the Cincinnati.

During the New York Society's annual meeting on July 4, 1789, Hamilton was elected vice president, gave a eulogy for Nathanael Greene, and attended dinner at the City Tavern. This document bears the signatures of seventy men who attended the dinner, with Hamilton's second on the list. The underwritten members of the Society of the Concinnation propose Dineing together at the & definying the expenses of the day, agree to depose in the hands of the Committee of arrangement Twenty Shillings ea

ATTORNEY AT LAW

Alexander Hamilton spent more of his life working as an attorney than he did in any other position. His intellect and oratory skills were well suited to practicing law, but, more importantly, he believed that the profession offered the best foundation for a political career. By October 1782, Hamilton had passed the New York bar exam and qualified as a counsellor to argue cases in court. He soon established a law office in New York City, taking mostly civil cases.

The treatment of loyalists after the Revolutionary War provided Hamilton with his first major case. In New York, loyalists were punished for their royal allegiance by confiscating their property, preventing them from voting, imposing special taxes, barring them from certain professions, and even inflicting physical attacks. Hamilton considered this treatment to be both unlawful and unethical. At the height of the violence in early 1784, he wrote two essays under the pseudonym Phocion to persuade New Yorkers to choose mercy toward their former enemies. Around the same time, to the shock of his fellow patriots, he agreed to serve as the defense attorney for a loyalist, Joshua Waddington, who was being sued by a patriot widow for back rent on her family's brewery while it was occupied by the British. Hamilton's arguments in this and similar cases helped to establish the doctrine of judicial review, that high courts could examine state and local laws and declare them illegal if necessary.



Alexander Hamilton's handwritten arguments for Rutgers v. Waddington, 1784. Burke Library, Hamilton College.

FEDERALIST

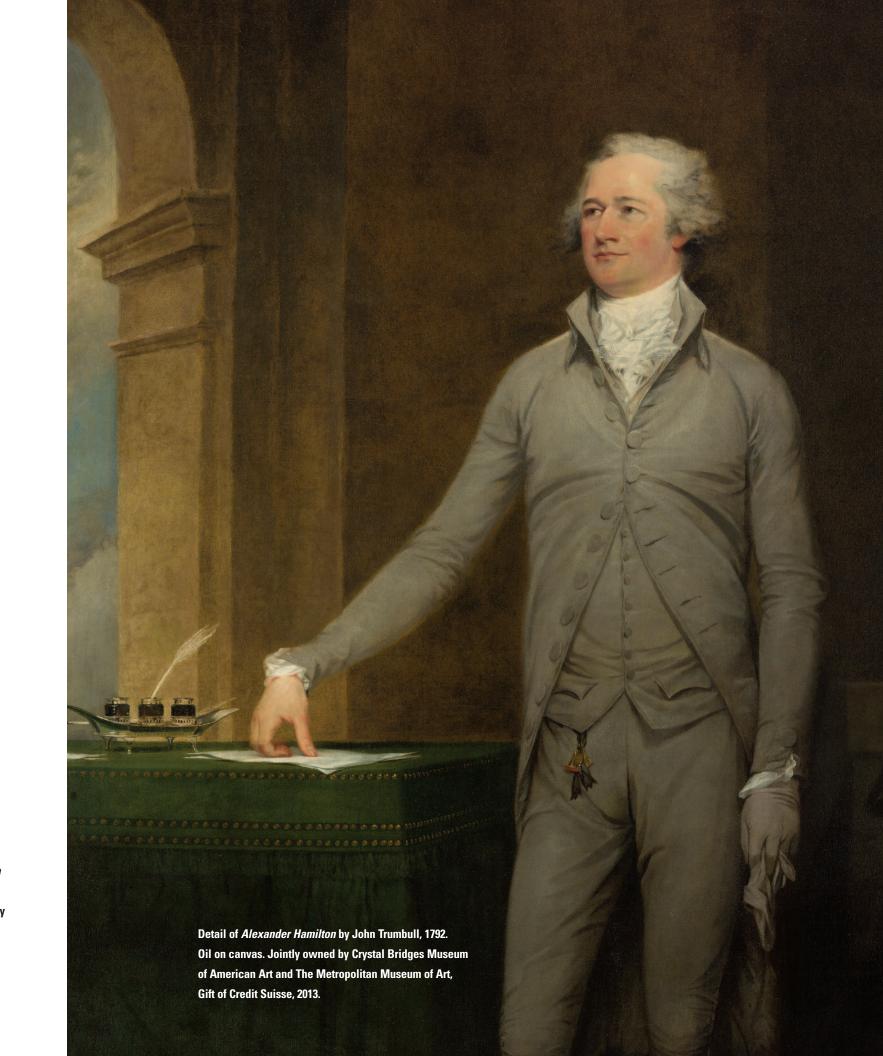
Four years after the end of the Revolution, Americans had yet to devise a system of government that honored their achievement of independence—a system that promoted individual liberty, economic prosperity and national unity. The Articles of Confederation, ratified in 1781 to create a loose assemblage of sovereign states, was a failure. A Constitutional Convention convened in Philadelphia in 1787 to outline a stronger central, or federal, government— Hamilton's most ardent goal for the republic. The resulting document established a truly unified country under a federal government that drew its authority from the people—finally answering the question of what sort of nation the Revolution had created.

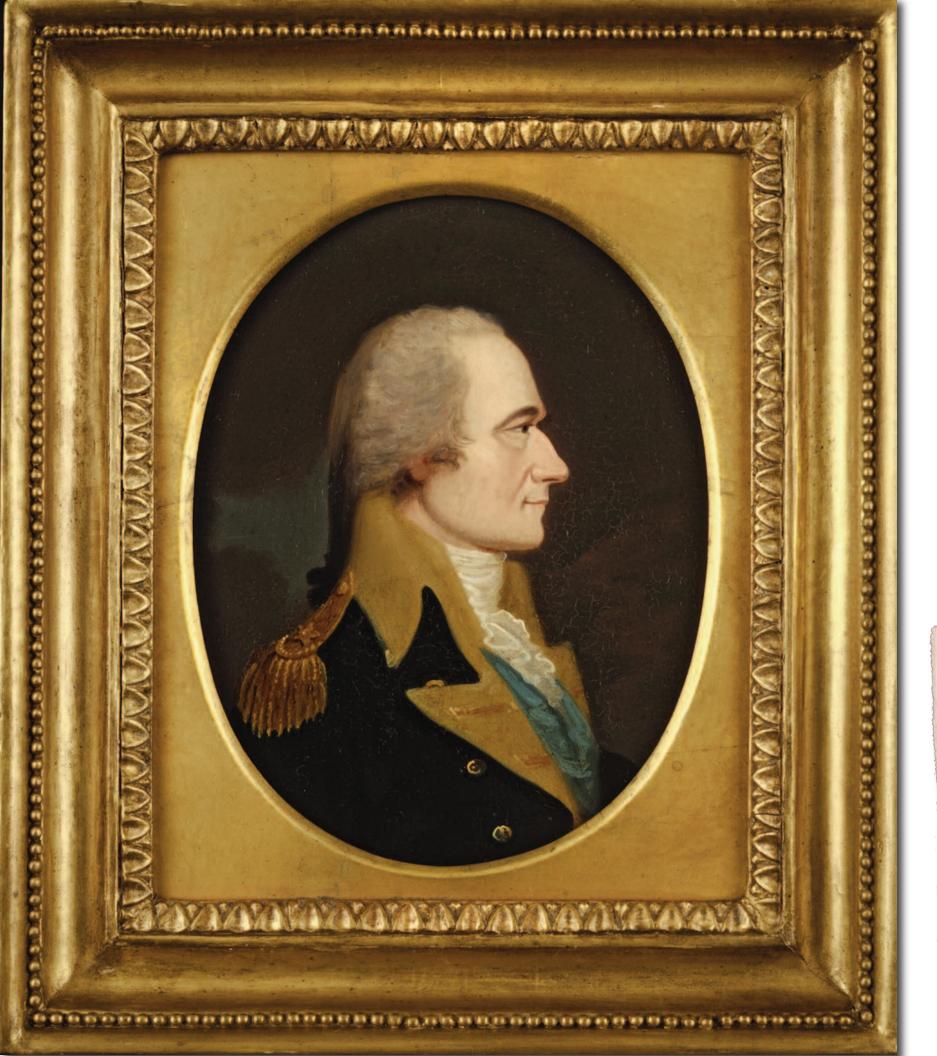
Alexander Hamilton was a critical force in the drafting and ratification of the Constitution. He was a prominent delegate to the convention and, when the document was completed, he became the only New Yorker to sign the Constitution.

The lengthy and contentious ratification process divided Americans into Federalists, who supported the Constitution, and Antifederalists, who opposed the document and its powerful centralized government. To explain the Constitution and garner support for its ratification, Hamilton conceived of the Federalist Papers, a masterful series of essays that remains the most important work of political thought in American history. The eighty-five essays written by Hamilton, James Madison and John Jay were first published individually in New York newspapers—in that form referred to as the Federalist Papers. In the spring of 1788, they were compiled in a bound two-volume work, The Federalist, published by Archibald McLean in New York.



The Federalist: A Collection of Essays,
Written in Favour of the New Constitution
(New-York: Printed and Sold by J. and
A. M'Lean, 1788). Rare Books, Booth Family
Center for Special Collections,
Georgetown University.

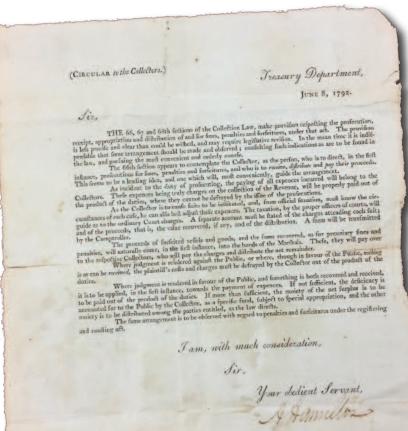




PUBLIC SERVANT

Between 1789 and 1800, Alexander Hamilton reached the pinnacle of his political and military careers. For the first few months of George Washington's presidency, Hamilton privately advised him on how to establish an American government under the Constitution. Then, in September 1789, Hamilton formally joined Washington's cabinet as the first secretary of the treasury. Hamilton became the architect of the country's financial system, promoting American goods and economic independence, managing government debt, proposing taxes, creating a customs service, and establishing a system of paper money. Upon his resignation in January 1795, Washington offered one of his highest compliments: "In every relation, which you have borne to me, I have found that my confidence in your talents, exertions and integrity, has been well placed."

Hamilton was pulled back into public service in July 1798 by the Quasi-War, an undeclared conflict with France over America's neutrality and trade relations. He was commissioned the senior major general in the U.S. Army and second in command to George Washington, who, at sixty-six years old, deferred most of his authority to Hamilton. While organizing this new force, Hamilton attempted to introduce his own reforms, including establishing a permanent national army and a military academy. When tensions with France relaxed in the summer of 1800, he was honorably discharged from the army, bringing his military service to an end.



"Circular to the Collectors" issued by Alexander Hamilton, Treasury Department, June 8, 1792. The Society of the Cincinnati, Gift of Marian Towles Beckwith, 1987.

Alexander Hamilton by William
J. Weaver, ca. 1806. Oil on wood
panel. The Society of the Cincinnati,
Museum Acquisitions Fund
purchase, 2016.

Hamilton wore a uniform like the one depicted in this portrait as a major general in the U.S. Army during the Quasi-War—but the artist mistakenly painted only one star on each epaulet instead of two.

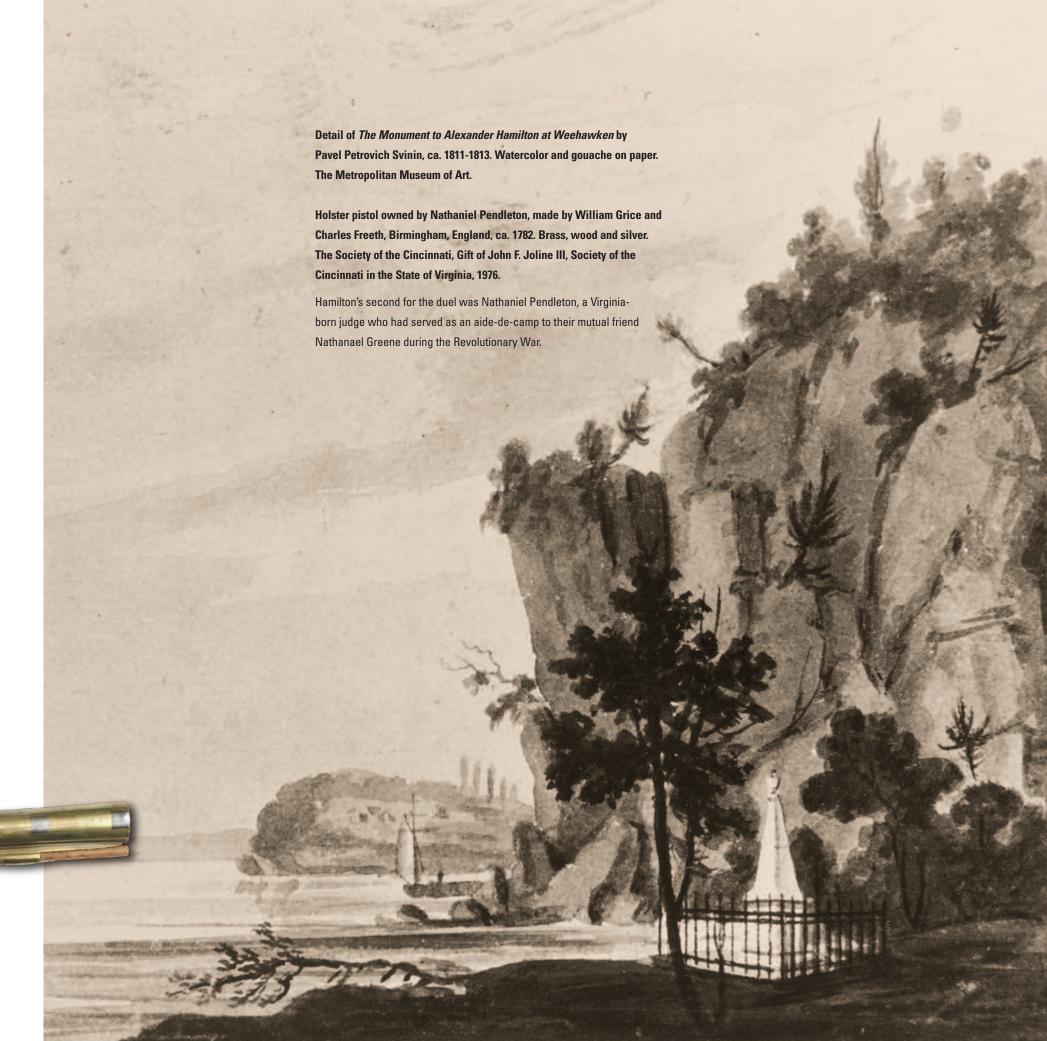
JULY 11, 1804

Aaron Burr's campaign for governor of New York in 1804 set in motion the events that led to his duel with Alexander Hamilton. Hamilton feared that Burr would try to ally New York with New England and secede from the Union over the Louisiana Purchase controversy. Most Federalists—but not Hamilton—opposed the purchase, predicting that the new territory would expand slavery and their political rivals' power. Hamilton abhorred the idea of secession: "If they break this union, they will break my heart," he had written. When Burr lost the election in April, he blamed Hamilton for his surprising defeat and the end of his political career. Two months later, they traded contentious letters on Hamilton's supposed attacks on Burr's character. As both men became increasingly obstinate and concerned about restoring their honor, they agreed to a duel to settle the dispute.

Just one week before their scheduled duel, Hamilton and Burr dined with the New York State Society of the Cincinnati, of which they were both members. "Burr, contrary to his wont, was silent, gloomy, sour; while Hamilton entered with glee into all the gaiety of a convivial party, and even sung an old military song," reported the artist John Trumbull, who also attended the annual gathering of veterans of the Revolution.

At 7 a.m. on July 11, 1804, Alexander Hamilton and Aaron Burr faced each other on a small dueling ground in Weehawken, New Jersey, overlooking the Hudson River. They fired their pistols within seconds of each other. Hamilton's shot hit a tree twelve feet off the ground. Burr's shot did not miss, striking Hamilton above his right hip. Hamilton was immediately rowed back to New York and taken to a friend's house, where he died the next day. It was a heartbreaking scene—"his wife almost frantic with grief, his children in tears, every person present deeply afflicted." "Thus has perished one of the greatest men of this or any age," declared Oliver Wolcott, Jr., Hamilton's successor as secretary of the treasury.

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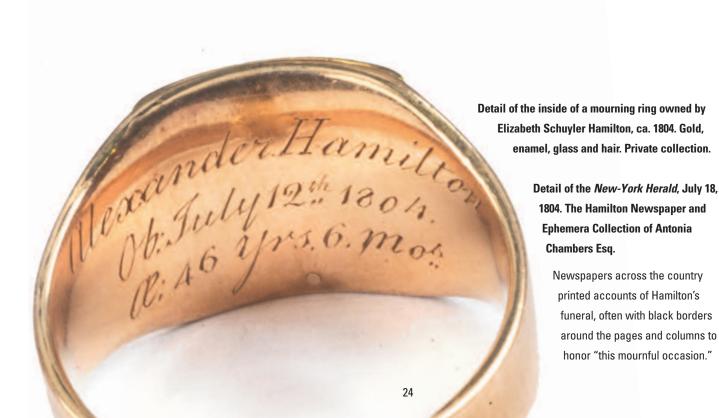
HAMILTON MOURNED

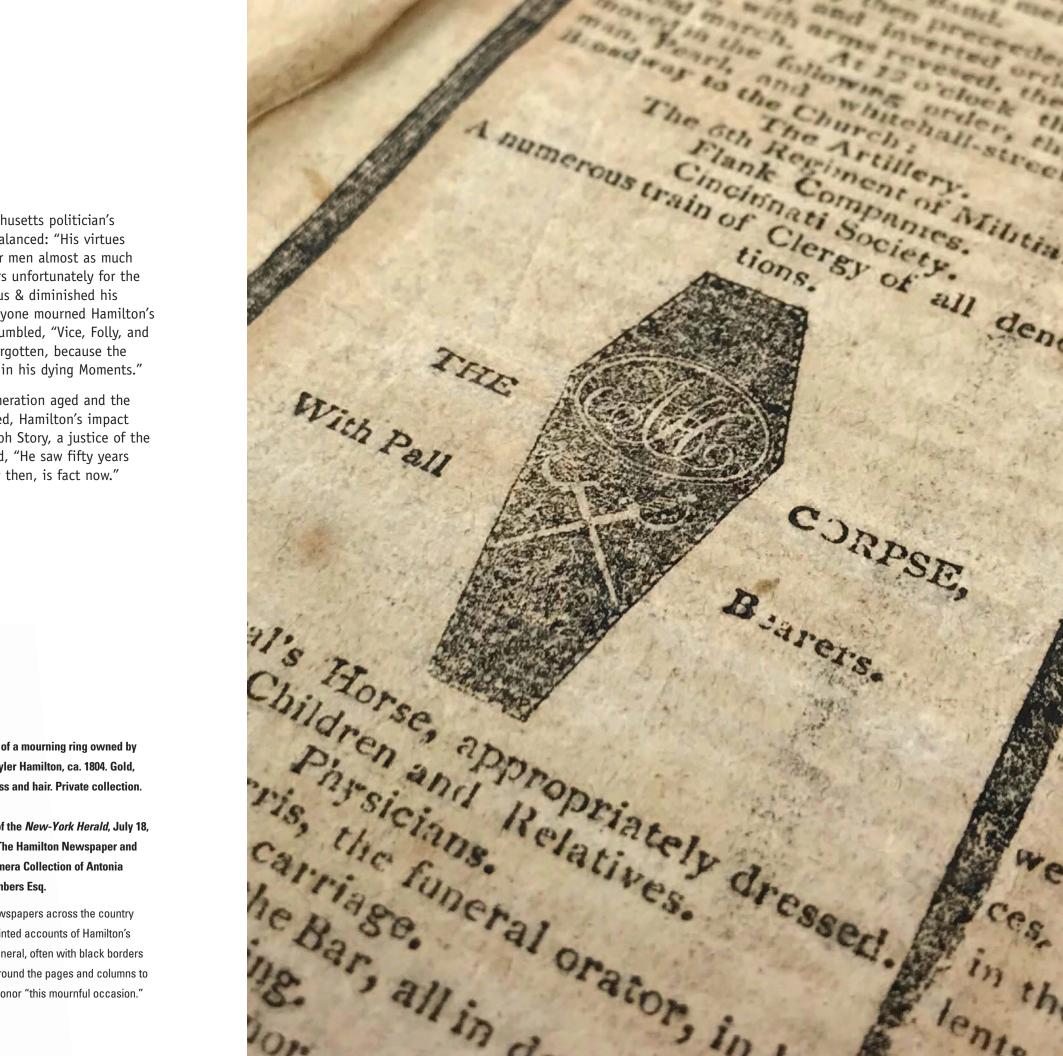
News of Alexander Hamilton's shocking death spread guickly through New York City. His friend Gouverneur Morris found "the whole city agitated, every countenance dejected." Two days later, the city council hosted Hamilton's funeral, which it asked the New York State Society of the Cincinnati to organize. The solemn event began with a lengthy procession through the city, followed by Morris's funeral oration and the burial in Trinity churchyard. Hamilton was laid to rest in the heart of his adopted city, where he spent most of his life studying, conceiving, defending and administering institutions that came to define the American government and sustain the Union.

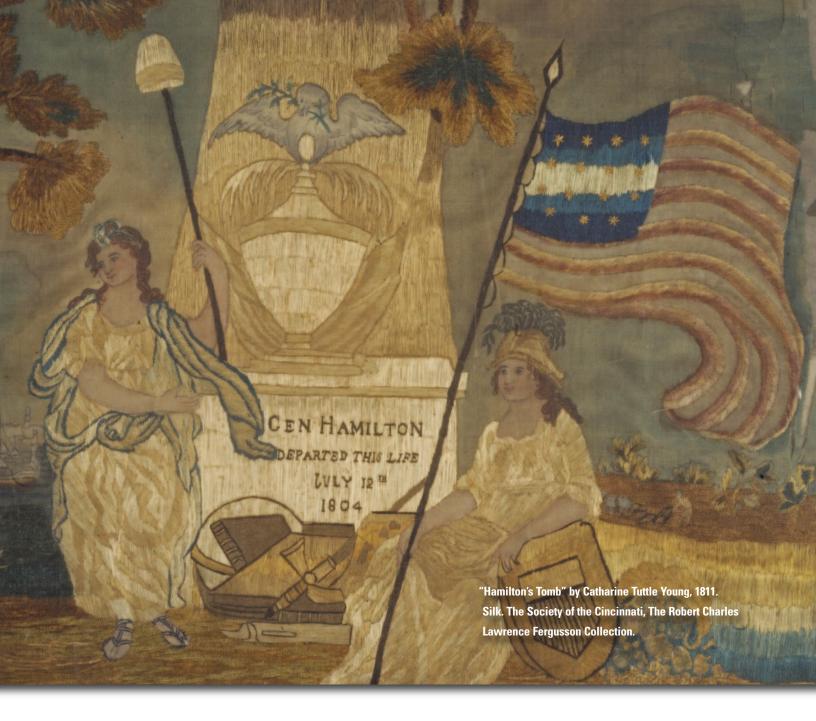
Even in death, Hamilton inspired sharply divided views of the importance of his life and work. One of Hamilton's eulogizers, the Reverend John M. Mason, considered him the "greatest statesman in the western world, perhaps the greatest man

of the age." One Massachusetts politician's sentiments were more balanced: "His virtues surpassed those of other men almost as much as his talents—his errors unfortunately for the Country were conspicuous & diminished his influence." But not everyone mourned Hamilton's passing. John Adams grumbled, "Vice, Folly, and Villainy are not to be forgotten, because the quilty Wretch repented, in his dying Moments."

As the revolutionary generation aged and the nation it created matured, Hamilton's impact became clearer. As Joseph Story, a justice of the Supreme Court, remarked, "He saw fifty years ahead, and what he saw then, is fact now."









The American Revolution Institute of the Society of the Cincinnati promotes knowledge and appreciation of the achievement of American independence, fulfilling the aim of the Continental Army officers who founded the Society of the Cincinnati in 1783 to perpetuate the memory of that vast event. The Institute supports advanced study, presents exhibitions and other public programs, advocates preservation and provides resources to teachers and students to enrich understanding of our War for Independence and the principles of the men and women who secured the liberty of the American people.

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