

Alexander Hamilton New Yorker

NEW
YORK
STATE
EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT



Cover Picture, Lent by the Hamilton Family.
Photograph, Courtesy of the Museum of the City of New
York. An unknown artist made this portrait of Hamilton as
a Captain of Artillery in 1776.

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Alexander Hamilton

NEW YORKER

1755 - 1804

BUREAU OF SECONDARY CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT
NEW YORK STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
ALBANY, 1957

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK

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NEW YORKERS may well be proud of Alexander Hamilton and the part he played in the history and development of New York State. It is fitting, therefore, that as a part of the Hamilton Bicentennial Celebration this brochure should be published emphasizing *Alexander Hamilton, New Yorker*. Designed as resource material for students in our schools and colleges, it is concerned primarily with Hamilton's activities in New York State.

The brief bibliography and the chapter notes will serve as guides for further study. The text, based on extensive historical research, was prepared by Dorothy Horton McGee. Laura M. Shufelt, a member of the State Education Department staff, acted as editor. The publication was designed by Vivienne Anderson, also of the Department staff.

Certainly, a study of the life and accomplishments of Alexander Hamilton will lead to a fuller appreciation of the importance of our State and National heritage and to a better understanding of his unique contribution to our democracy. It is hoped that this brochure will help achieve these goals.

JAMES E. ALLEN, JR.

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Acknowledgments

THIS PUBLICATION was initiated by the Alexander Hamilton Bicentennial Committee as part of the tribute by the Board of Regents and the State Education Department to Hamilton, who served as Regent of The University of the State of New York from 1784 to 1787. The committee, appointed by Commissioner James E. Allen, Jr., included Charles F. Gosnell, New York State Librarian and Assistant Commissioner for Libraries, chairman; Albert B. Corey, New York State Historian; William N. Fenton, Assistant Commissioner, State Museum and Science Service; Warren W. Knox, Assistant Commissioner for Instructional Services, and Frederick A. Morse, Secretary to the Board of Regents and Commissioner.

The bicentennial observance was marked by a special program in Albany on April 24, 1957, with Harold Syrett, editor of the Hamilton Papers, giving the principal address. Members of the Board of Regents and other distinguished guests participated in the program. A special exhibit of Hamiltoniana in the rotunda of the State Library was opened to the public. A copy of John Trumbull's portrait of Alexander Hamilton, painted in his memory for a place of honor in the Regents Room of the State Education Building, was unveiled.

Valuable help in the research for this brochure was given to the author by Ruth E. Babcock, assistant in school library service, New York State Education Department; Frederick L. Bronner, professor of history, Union College; Dorothy M. Bryan, vice president, Dodd, Mead and Company; Jacob E. Cooke, assistant editor, The Papers of Alexander Hamilton; Albert B. Corey; I. J. Ellsworth, superintendent, Saratoga National Historical Park; Richard H. Garlock, assistant vice president, The Chase Manhattan Bank; Charles F. Gosnell; Maud H. Greene, corresponding secretary, The New Jersey Historical Society; Alexander Hamilton, president, The American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society; Milton W.

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The project of preparing the brochure was completed under the general direction of Mildred F. McChesney, supervisor of citizenship education. Robert N. Andersen, associate in citizenship education, Albert B. Corey and Milton W. Hamilton reviewed the manuscript critically. The bibliography was compiled by Audna T. Clum, librarian, Averill Park Central School District, who worked under the supervision of Anna Clark Kennedy, assistant in school library service.

Chronology

1755	January 11	Alexander Hamilton born on Nevis, B. W. I. (Hamilton's statement that he came to this country at about 16 indicated 1757 as the year of his birth. The Probate Court record of his mother's estate has since established his age in 1768 as 13.)
c1768		Began his clerkship in mercantile firm on St. Croix
c1772		Sailed for Boston, en route to New York
c1773		Entered King's College (Columbia University)
1774	December 15	<i>A Full Vindication</i> , Hamilton's first pamphlet
1776	March 14	Appointed Captain of New York Artillery Company
	July - November	Fought in campaign in and around New York City
1777	January 3	Took part in Battle of Princeton
	March 1	Became aide-de-camp to General Washington
	October 30	Sent on mission to Gates at Albany
1778	June 28	Fought in Battle of Monmouth
1780	December 14	Married Elizabeth Schuyler at Albany
1781	April	Resigned as Washington's aide
	July 12 - July 4, 1782	Publication of the six <i>Continentalist</i> essays, favoring stronger national government
	July 31	Given command of a light infantry battalion
	October 14	Led attack on redoubt at Yorktown
1782	January 22	Birth of Hamilton's first child, Philip
	July	Admitted to practice law
	July 22	Elected delegate to Continental Congress
	October 26	Passed bar examination with degree of Counselor
1783	November	Opened law office in New York City shortly before the British evacuation of the city
1784	March	Elected a director of the Bank of New York which he had helped to organize
	June 29	Argued in the case of <i>Rutgers vs. Waddington</i>
	November 26	Became a member of the New York State Board of Regents
1785	February 10	Aided in organizing The New York Society for Promoting the Manumission of Slaves
1786	September 11 - 14	Delegate to the Annapolis Convention
1787	January 12	Took seat in New York State Assembly
	February 15	Report of Regents' Committee approved for presentation to Legislature -- Hamilton member of Committee
	February 15 - April 13	Aided in revision of law of 1784 establishing The University of the State of New York, the revised law being passed on April 13

	April 13	Trustee of Columbia College
	May 25 - September 17	Federal Convention at Philadelphia
	September 17	Signed Constitution for New York
	October 27	Publication of first <i>Federalist</i> letter
1788	June 17 - July 26	Led fight for ratification in New York Convention
1789	September 11	Appointed Secretary of the Treasury
1790	January 14	First Report on the Public Credit
	July 26	Debt Assumption Bill passed on agreement to locate permanent Capitol in Georgetown on the Potomac River
	December 13	Report on a National Bank
1791	January 28	Report on the U. S. Mint
	November 22	Charter for the Society for Establishing Useful Manufactures
	December 5	Report on Manufactures
1793	January 29	Hamilton-Oneida Academy (Hamilton College) founded – Hamilton a trustee
	April 22	Washington's <i>Proclamation of Neutrality</i>
	August	<i>No Jacobin</i> papers protesting acts of French agents
1794	January	<i>Americanus</i> papers against aiding France in European war
	September 30	Took the field to suppress the Whiskey Rebellion
1795	January 16	Final (or Second) Report on the Public Credit
	January 31	Resignation as Secretary of the Treasury
	July 22	First of <i>Camillus</i> series defending Jay Treaty
1796	May 15 - September 4	Prepared draft of Washington's <i>Farewell Address</i>
1798	March 10	<i>The Stand</i> , first of seven articles against French policies
	July	Appointed Inspector General of the Army with the rank of Major General
1800	June	Retired from Army
1801	February 17	Responsible for Jefferson's election as President over Burr, who became Vice President
	November 16	Founded <i>The New York Evening Post</i>
	November 23	Eldest son Philip mortally wounded in duel with an opponent of the Federalists
		Built home, "The Grange," on upper Manhattan Island
1804	February 13	Argued in defense of freedom of the press, as counsel in <i>People vs. Croswell</i>
	July 11	Mortally wounded by Burr in duel at Weehawken, N. J.
	July 12	Died in home of William Bayard, New York City
	July 14	Buried in Trinity Churchyard, New York City

ONE

Education for Leadership

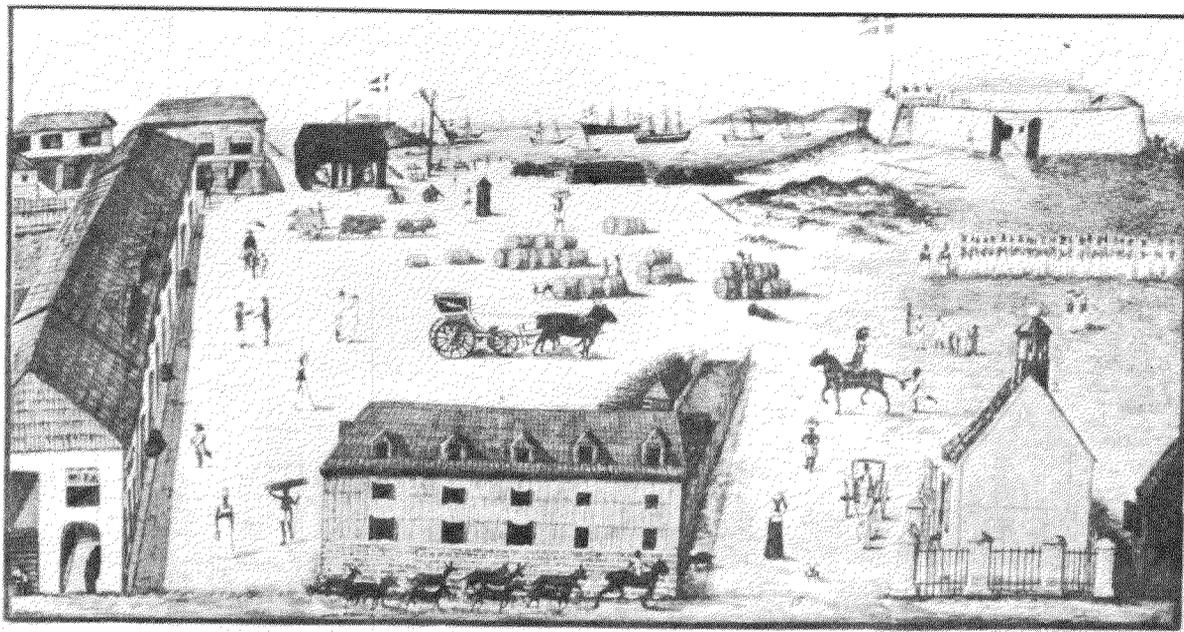
ALEXANDER HAMILTON, the great New York Patriot, literally built the United States! In economic terms, this startling statement is really true. He established public credit at home and abroad. He knit the loose confederation of States into a firm union. For his own State of New York he helped to build strong military, political and educational foundations. As a legislator and as a member of the first Board of Regents of The University of the State of New York, he was an advocate of measures promoting the State's vast system of public and private schools and colleges. Natu-

rally New Yorkers wish to know about an adopted son who, as statesman and educator, won and deserved this high praise in his State and Nation.

Could anyone, peering in at an office door in the Danish West Indies island of St. Croix at a wisp of a sandy-haired lad bent over the accounts of Nicholas Cruger, merchant, have imagined that this slender boy was the person who would some day gain such a tribute and win such honor? Entering the St. Croix office early in the year 1772, a visitor would have

The port of Christiansted on the island of St. Croix, pictured here as it was in 1815, was probably little changed from the days when Hamilton managed the affairs of Nicholas Cruger there.

From The Danish West Indies, courtesy of W. Westergaard and the New York Public Library



CHRISTIANSTED, ST. CROIX, IN 1815

TRANSLATION OF LEGEND (omitted from this illustration): "Representation of the wharf on the island of St. Croix in the West Indies with 1 the fort Christiansteden 2 the Danish church 3 the provisor's house 4 the weighing house 5 the English tavern 6 Great King street 7 the quay 8 Sankin Fredrik's battery 9 Louisa Augusta's battery 10 the custom house 11 dwelling house 12 the Harmony 13 Baron Britton's house 14 Bladud's house 15 Church street." (In the original, three ships flying the United States flag may clearly be seen in the harbor. The remaining vessels have the red and white Danish flag. The soldiers are on dress parade with their white trousers and red coats; the women, black and white, are clad in colors equally striking; while the planter aristocrat who is riding proudly off is shielding himself from the hot sun with a bright red parasol. Horses, mules, goats, oxen, and a pig, all help to lend animation to this lively scene.)

found the rather shabbily dressed young apprentice in full charge of the business during a five months' absence of Mr. Cruger. Though ill from overwork in the first weeks of Mr. Cruger's absence, he persisted with the intelligence and strength of will so often evident in his brilliant future career. Strong men were to be swayed by that mind and will — superior officers like Gates and Putnam during the Revolution, delegates at the New York Convention ratifying the Constitution, political associates in Washington's cabinet. Many, too, were to feel the spell and warmth of his charm, which no doubt smoothed the way with a customer when a shipment of Mr. Cruger's flour arrived a few shades too dark or even, may Heaven forbid, a bit wormy!

It is interesting and important for Americans today to observe the evidences of talent and the youthful experiences that foreshadowed Hamilton's astounding career, particularly in view of the major handicaps of illegitimate birth and the insecurity of his early years.

Alexander and his older brother James were born on the British West Indies island of Nevis. His father was James Hamilton, fourth son of Alexander Hamilton, Laird of the "Grange," in Scotland; his mother was Rachel Faucett Lavien, daughter of John Faucett, presumably of a French Huguenot family. Because of an unhappy marriage, Rachel Lavien was separated from her husband, John Lavien.

The two boys knew only poverty in the midst of the tropical luxuriance of Nevis and of St. Croix, to which the family moved in 1765. Their father, when his business affairs failed, deserted the boys and their mother. When Rachel Lavien died in 1768, the young Hamiltons were left in the care of two of her relatives, both of whom died the following year. It was presumably the same year in which his mother died that Alexander became an apprentice clerk for the firm of Beckman and Cruger, New York merchants, in St. Croix.

¹ See notes at end of chapter.

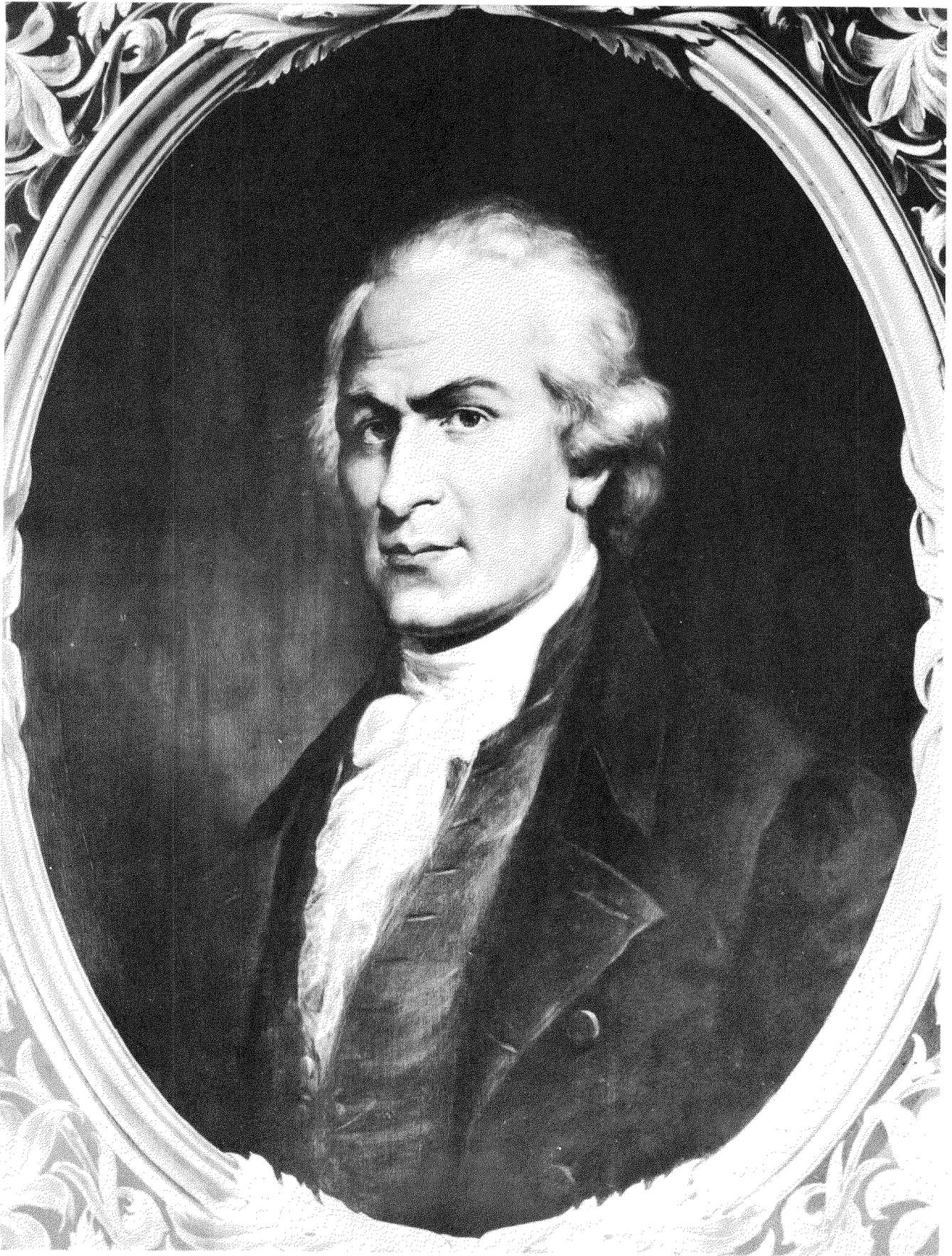
Alexander's elementary education was augmented by a thorough study of business methods through his work in the Cruger counting-house, a fluent knowledge of French and avid reading. Pope and Plutarch were his favorite authors.

Extremely precocious and full of restless energy, Alexander wrote of his ambition to a friend Edward Stevens, who was studying either at a neighboring island or on the continent. To get ahead in the world, he said, he would risk his life, though not his character. Since he was too young to expect immediate advancement, he was determined "to prepare the way for futurity." He admitted to building castles in the air from his stool in the countinghouse. In boyish rashness he concluded, "I wish there was a war."¹

Alexander, left at the age of 16 in charge of Mr. Cruger's affairs, carried on efficiently the extensive trading interests in the islands, in Europe and America. He conducted the large correspondence of his employer in a very mature style. It seemed that no detail of the business escaped him. He commented to Cruger about one ship's cargo which was stowed very "hicheldy-picheldy."

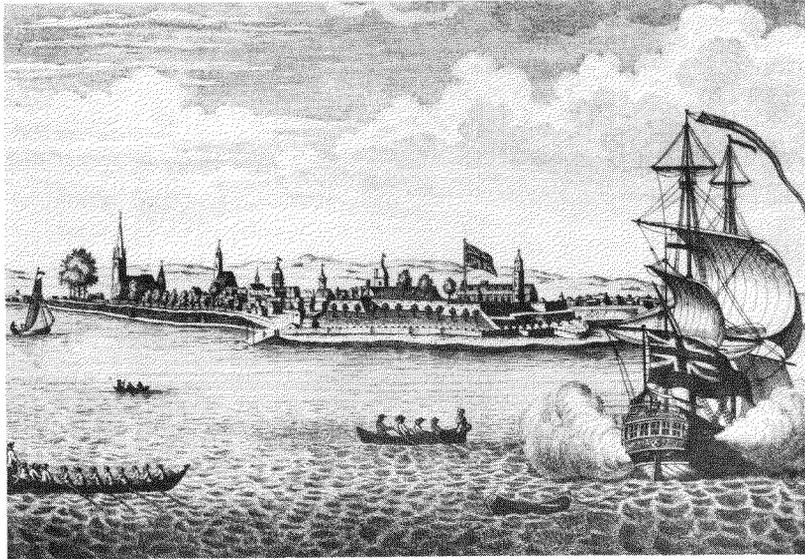
When Alexander's important chance for advancement came, however, it was not from his business connections, but through a new friend, the Reverend Hugh Knox, a recent arrival in St. Croix. The Reverend Dr. Knox was a Presbyterian minister and a graduate of the College of New Jersey (Princeton University). He took a great interest in Alexander and directed his choice of books. During the time they spent together a strong religious feeling was imparted to the boy. Their discussions on many subjects gave Alexander an insight that later was to prove so important to him as soldier and statesman.

On August 31, 1772, a violent hurricane devastated St. Croix. Hamilton's description of the event, at the suggestion of Dr. Knox,



Brown Brothers

This portrait by Constantino Brumidi, part of a wall panel in the President's Room of the United States Capitol, is the artist's own conception of Alexander Hamilton. Brumidi, a 19th century political refugee from Italy, has been called the Michelangelo of the Capitol.



From this view of lower Manhattan in the 1730's, showing Fort George, it is possible to imagine how New York appeared when Hamilton arrived about forty years later.

Courtesy of The New-York
Historical Society

was published anonymously in the *Royal Danish American Gazette*. The account of the storm,² written in overblown 18th century style and revealing the boy's deep religious faith, attracted great attention. It was one cause of Alexander's being sent to the mainland to study.

With the advice and encouragement of Dr. Knox and with Cruger's backing, the 17-year-old Alexander left St. Croix³ in the early fall of 1772. It is related that en route he had the terrifying experience of a fire at sea. After several weeks of sailing, the ship arrived at the port of Boston in October, a blackened hulk, and Alexander set out, probably by stagecoach, for New York. How strange the scarlet and gold of the October New England hillsides must have seemed in contrast to the palms and tropical flowers of the West Indies!

So it was that the talented and ambitious boy arrived in New York City. He was supplied with only a few letters of introduction from the Reverend Hugh Knox and a small stake, probably contributed by his employer, to enable him to further his education. He had no family connections on which to rely and his doubtful birthright continued to be a serious handicap.

At that time, New York, the capital of the colony, was a city of about 20,000 inhabitants. The people lived and worked at the lower end of Manhattan Island, mostly in the vicinity of the Battery. The city must have loomed large and grand to the stranger from the West Indies as he saw it for the first time — and lonely, too, until he had a joyful reunion with an old friend, Edward Stevens, who was at King's College (later Columbia University).

The precious letters from Dr. Knox introduced Alexander to Dr. Mason and Dr. Rodgers, both Presbyterian ministers in New York City, and to William Livingston and Elias Boudinot, who were prominent in New Jersey.

His advisers, including Livingston and Boudinot, placed Hamilton in the celebrated academy of Francis Barber, at Elizabethtown, N.J. Both of these men were patrons of the academy and both welcomed the youth into their homes.

How much the boy realized his future depended on his taking full advantage of his educational opportunities is evidenced by his hard work and by his concentration on his English composition. While at the Livingston house, during the winter of his attendance at the academy, he often studied until midnight; in

summer he sometimes prepared his lessons at dawn in the quiet of a neighboring cemetery.

Before the end of the school year Hamilton was pronounced ready for college. He applied to the College of New Jersey only to meet disappointment. His plan for an accelerated course was opposed by the trustees. The president, Dr. Witherspoon, expressed regret on Hamilton's failure to matriculate, as he felt that the young man would do honor to any college he attended.

Hamilton applied next at King's College and entered as a private student. He was permitted to advance from class to class as rapidly as his progress would enable him to do. The *Matricula*⁴ of King's College records the name of Alexander Hamilton under Admissions in 1774. Entrance requirements at that time included Latin and Greek grammar, translation of Caesar's *Commentaries* or some part of Cicero's works into English, the Gospels translated from Greek into Latin, and translation of English text into Latin and Latin text into English.

Hamilton and his particular associates in college, including Stevens and Robert Troup, formed a weekly debating club which continued until the outbreak of the Revolution. He took a leading part in the activities of the club and showed great promise as a speaker.

Alexander attended prayers twice a day, as the college required, and also, as revealed by his roommate, Robert Troup, he was in the habit of praying on his knees, both at night and in the morning.⁵

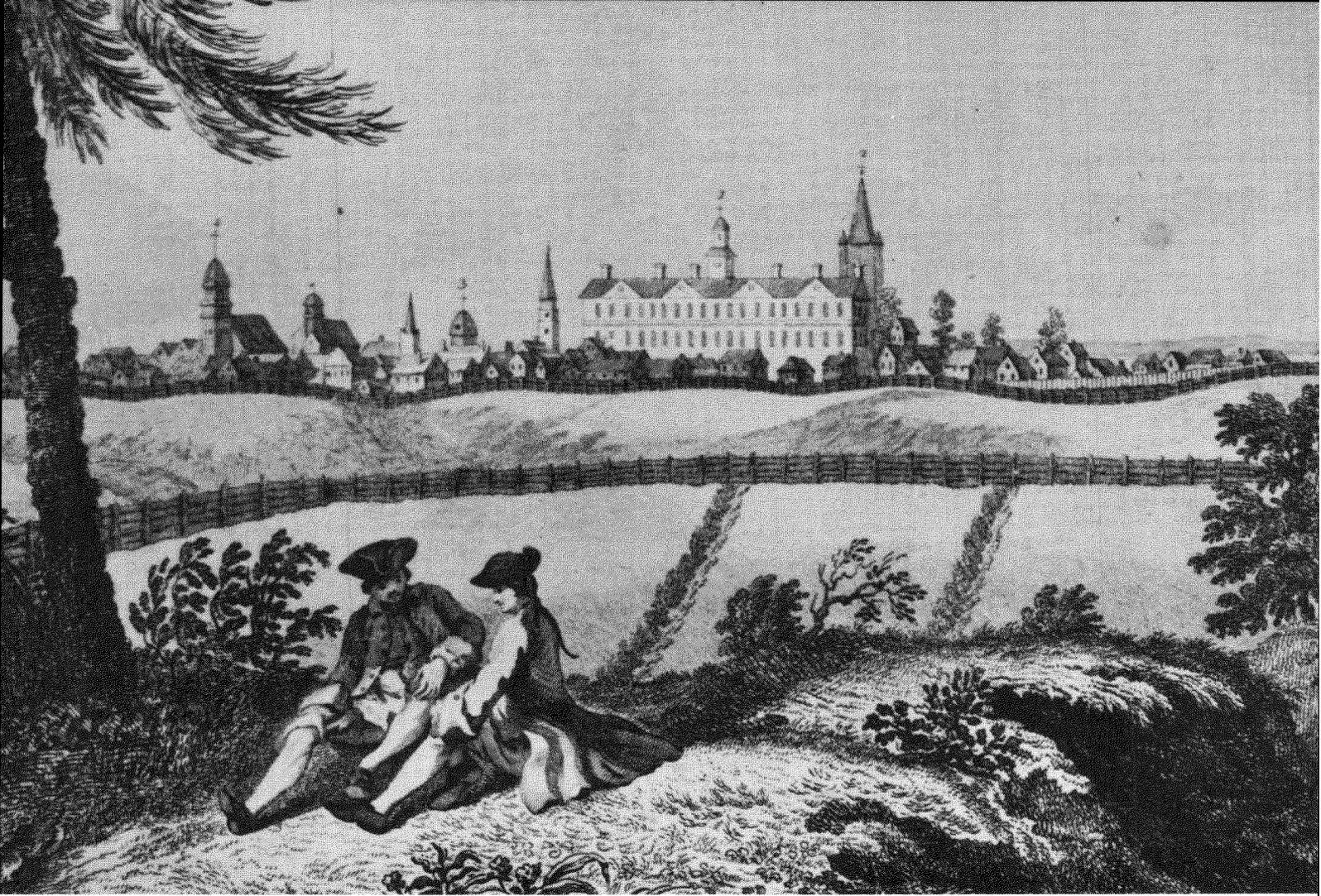
With all his devotion to study and other duties, Hamilton was not a dull and solitary drudge. He had a happy disposition and liked to be with his friends. One friend, Hercules Mulligan, who was established in trade as a fashionable tailor, later related in his *Narrative* that Alexander often spent the evenings with the Mulligan family, writing rhymes for their amusement, and that he was always amiable and cheerful.

Alexander's studies were intense and varied. The account book of Professor Robert Harpur shows that on September 20, 1774, "Mr. Alexr. Hamilton at £3 . . . 4 p Quar[ter] Dr entered with me this day, to Study Mathem[atic]s." The page opposite shows that the instructor was not paid until 1783, when he received five guineas from Colonel Hamilton.⁶ The scanty record of Alexander as a student includes an exercise book (now in the Library of Congress) in which he copied excerpts from the *Iliad* in Greek.

While Hamilton was studying at King's College, the conflict between Britain and the American colonies was approaching a climax. For men of character and conviction it was a time of decision. In New York Colony, there were many who favored the crown and joined the Tory side. What decision would the youthful Hamilton make? According to Robert Troup, it may have been that a trip to Boston shortly after the Boston Tea Party of December 1773 swung Alexander's convictions to the side of the Patriots. Previously he had had strong prejudices on the pro-British side. At about this time he became convinced by the superior force of the arguments in favor of the colonists. After his return to New York he took up the cause of the Boston Patriots by planning an essay in defense of the destruction of the tea.

As the conflict with Great Britain moved from protests toward armed hostilities, Hamilton's college career became more important to him. By applied concentration he had learned how to study. Fortunately he would be able to continue his education on his own when the Revolution brought his college days to an end. The skills he was acquiring in English composition and in public speaking were now to be used in the aid of his adopted country.

Alexander continued to support the American cause by contributing to Holt's *New York Journal*. One of Alexander's literary antagonists proved to be Dr. Myles Cooper, president of King's College.



Courtesy of the New York State Library

This view includes King's College as part of the New York City skyline about 1763.

The news of the "Intolerable Acts" of 1774, which punished Boston for the destruction of the tea, aroused Patriot feeling to a fever pitch in New York. On July 6, a public meeting was to be held in the "Fields" or Common [now City Hall Park] to protest the action of Parliament. It also concerned the choice of New York delegates to the First Continental Congress.

Alexander was taking his daily walk under some large trees along Dey Street when the notices were posted for the meeting on that day. He was so absorbed in his thoughts which he voiced to himself in an undertone that, at first, he was not aware of the groups of people discussing the meeting notices.

One of his neighbors, with whom he had often conversed, came up to him.

"Did ye hear, boy? McDougall has set a meeting of all Patriots for today. You have a

good, clear head. You must address the meeting!"

"Oh, I couldn't," Alexander quickly replied. "But thank you for the compliment. Where and when is it to be?"

He saw to it that he reached the "Fields" in time. But, as to speaking, that was different. Alexander listened intently to the excited, earnest orators. Realizing that many important points had not been brought out, he impulsively arose to address the crowd.

The sight of the slender, unknown youth with his boyish face arrested the attention of the people. Overawed by the scene, Alexander hesitated and faltered. Then as he started to talk his courage returned. His charm and sincerity captured the crowd as he described the oppressions of the mother country. There was loud applause as he finished. The people demanded to know who this speaker was.

“It is a collegian! It is a collegian!” someone called out.⁷ Alexander resumed his place in the crowd, flushed at the success of his first public speech.

The Nonimportation, Nonexportation and Nonconsumption Agreement and other Patriotic measures adopted by the First Continental Congress that fall were violently opposed by the government party in New York. In late November, a pamphlet written by the Reverend Samuel Seabury under the pseudonym of “A Westchester Farmer” was published in opposition to Congress and its acts. This booklet was known to the Patriots as the textbook of the Tories.

Hamilton took time from his studies to prepare an answer and on December 15, 1774, his *A Full Vindication Of The Measures Of The*

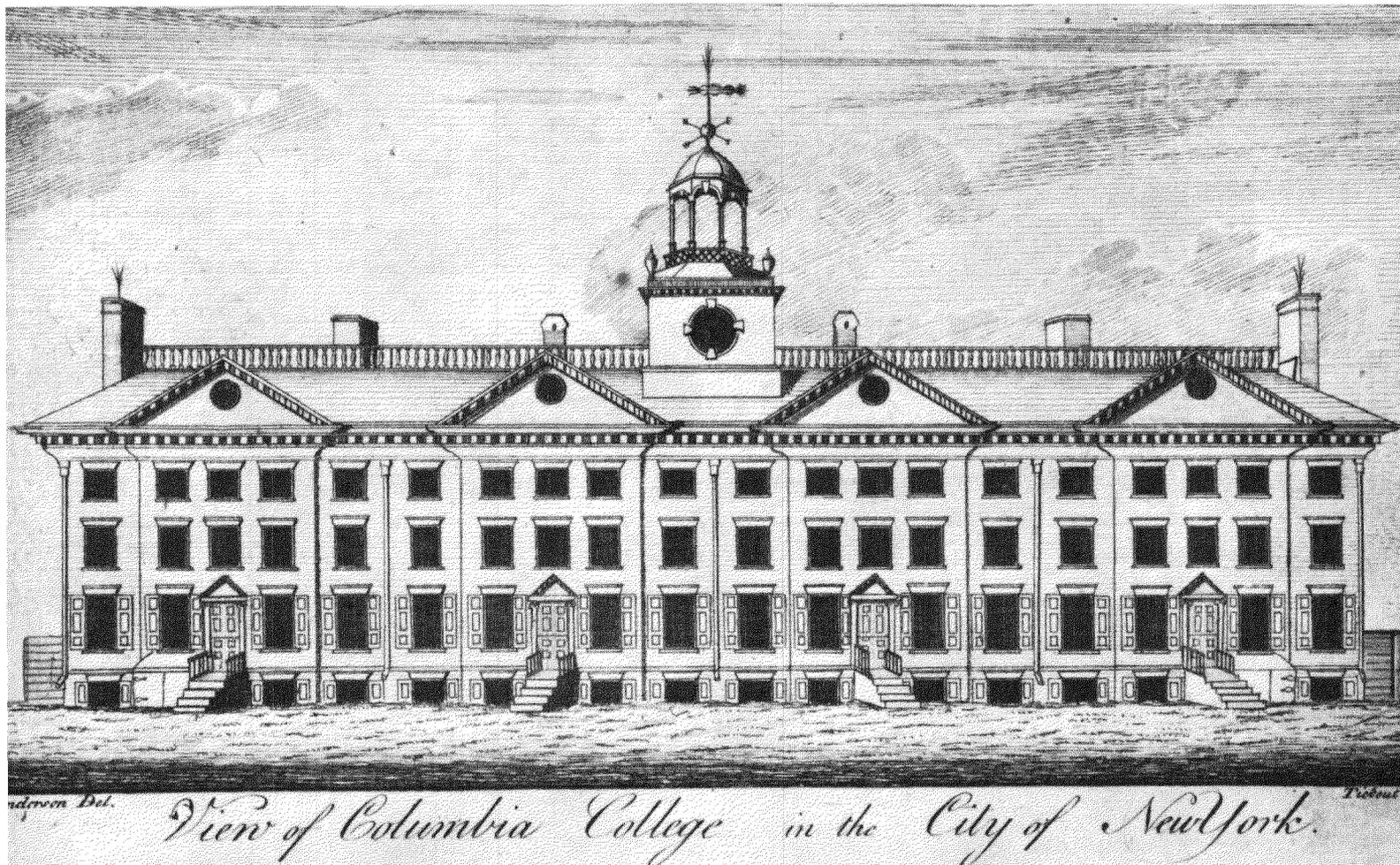
*Congress*⁸ was published anonymously.

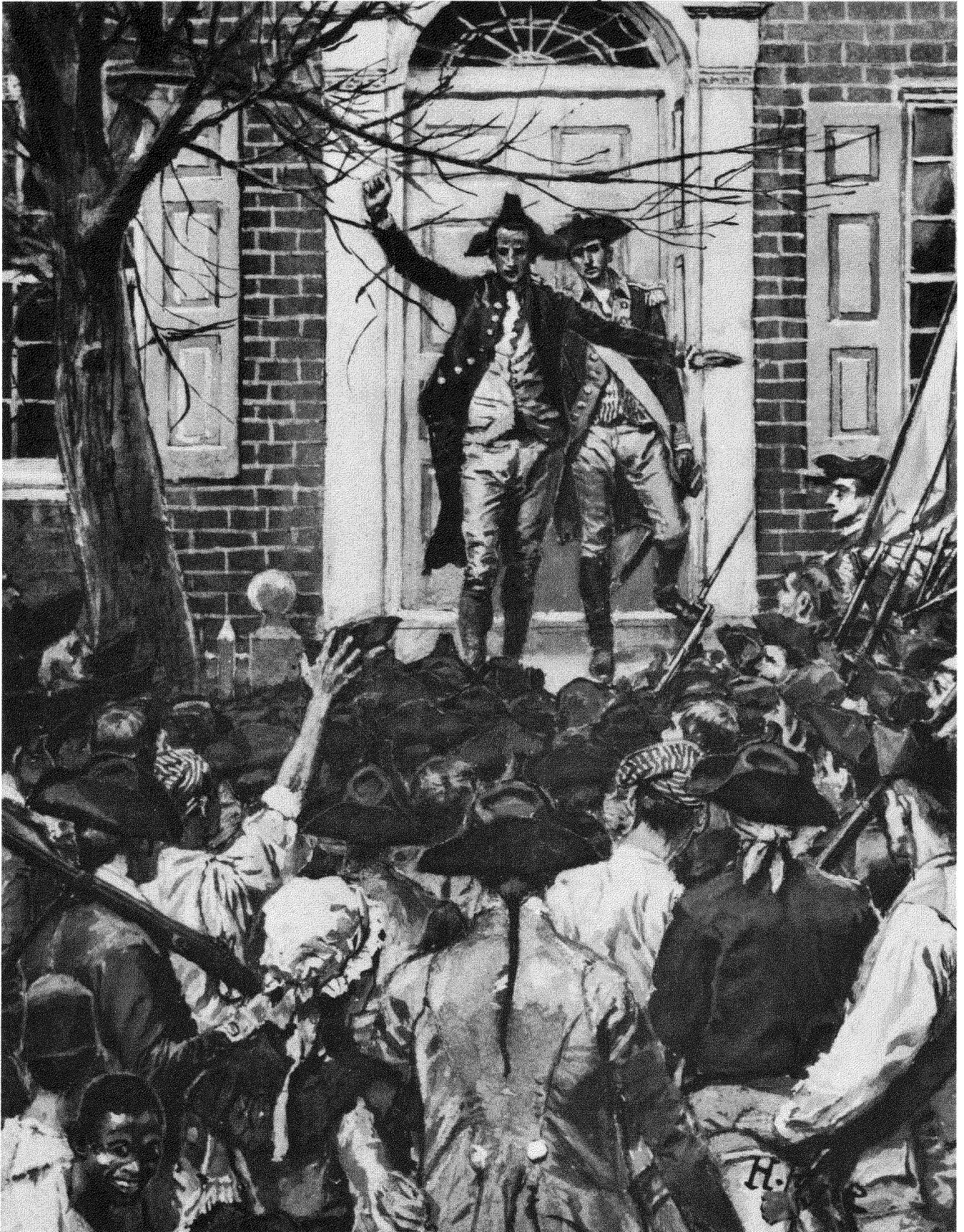
This spirited defense of the acts of Congress drew an answer from the Loyalist, Seabury. This was in turn protested by Hamilton in his *The Farmer Refuted*,⁹ published in February 1775. He reiterated the colonists’ claims to liberty, including civil liberty, under their God-given rights. In a well-known passage in this pamphlet he asserted that “the sacred rights of mankind are not to be rummaged for among old parchments or musty records. They are written, as with a sunbeam, in the whole volume of human nature, by the hand of the Divinity itself and can never be erased or obscured by mortal power.”

Hamilton’s reputation as a Patriot pamphleteer brought him to the attention of the New York leaders of the American cause. His liter-

This engraving from *The New York Magazine*, 1790, shows the severe façade of Columbia College (formerly King’s College) as it was in Hamilton’s time.

Courtesy of The New-York Historical Society





Courtesy of The New-York Historical Society

This drawing by Howard Pyle shows young Hamilton and his friend, Robert Troup, on the steps of King's College trying to save President Cooper from the throng.

ary skill was also noted by the Loyalists. Dr. Cooper made Alexander a most liberal offer to write for the British side, but to no avail. The offer was rejected.

When the news of the Battle of Lexington reached New York, Patriot feeling rose dangerously high. Among the Tories, no one was more unpopular than Dr. Cooper. On a night in early May 1775, a crowd gathered and headed for the college to seize and punish him. Hamilton's friend, Troup, recounted the story of what followed.

From his room Hamilton heard the ominous noise and roused Troup. They rushed out in the street and discovered that the crowd was bent on giving the Tory president a taste of tar and feathers.

"Hurry," Hamilton exhorted Troup. They pushed and shoved through the excited people and reached the building first. From the steps underneath Cooper's windows, Alexander halted the crowd, his slight form shaking.

"Harm this man and you bring disgrace on the cause of Liberty! You who profess to be champions of Liberty! Shame on you for such impropriety of conduct," he shouted.

Dr. Cooper thought the Patriot student was haranguing the people on to capture him. Frightened, he cried out from a window above, "Don't listen to him, gentlemen. He is crazy! He is crazy!"

Hamilton succeeded in holding back the crowd just long enough to give Cooper a chance to escape unharmed from the back of the building.¹⁰ He found refuge on a British frigate.

Hamilton had long cherished a dream of military glory. In 1775 he took one step toward realizing the dream by joining a volunteer corps formed by Edward Fleming, who had served as adjutant of a British regiment. Under Fleming's command Alexander became very expert in the manual of arms.

The company, probably known as the Corsicans, dressed in short, green coats and wore leather caps with the inscription, "Freedom or Death." They met daily for drill in the churchyard of St. George's Chapel, in the early morning before classes began. In the company were several friends of Hamilton's, including Robert Troup and Nicholas Fish. Hamilton, eager to increase his military knowledge, attended regularly.¹¹

Alexander Hamilton had used his talents of speaking, writing and leadership to oppose the repressive British colonial policies. Now he was acquiring soldierly skills that he fervently hoped to use in the coming war for American independence.

In the letter to Edward Stevens he had written, "I mean to prepare the way for futurity." As perhaps his mentor, Hugh Knox, in far-off St. Croix realized more fully than anyone, Hamilton was on his way.

Chapter Notes

- ¹ *The Works of Alexander Hamilton*. H. C. Lodge. Vol. IX, pp. 37-38
- ² *A Few of Hamilton's Letters*. G. Atherton. pp. 261-267
- ³ *The William and Mary Quarterly*. Third Series, Vol. IX, No. 2, pp. 139-151. For Hamilton's youth in the West Indies, see this article by Harold Larson. Also *Alexander Hamilton*. Broadus Mitchell, pp. 1-35
- ⁴ The Matricula of King's College. Columbia University MSS
- ⁵ *The William and Mary Quarterly*. Third Series, Vol. IV, No. 2, p. 213. For Troup and Mulligan *Narratives*, see this article by Nathan Schachner. *Ibid.* pp. 203-225
- ⁶ Robert Harpur Ledger. New York State Library MSS
- ⁷ *The Life of Alexander Hamilton*. J. C. Hamilton, Vol. I, pp. 21-23
- ⁸ *The Works of Alexander Hamilton*. H. C. Lodge. Vol. I, pp. 1-52
- ⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 53-177
- ¹⁰ *The William and Mary Quarterly*. Third Series, Vol. IV, No. 2, p. 219
- ¹¹ *Ibid.* pp. 218-219. Also *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*. E. B. O'Callaghan. Vol. VIII, pp. 601-602

TWO

Off to War

ALEXANDER HAMILTON had no doubts about the part he wished to play in the Revolution. He wanted to earn an active military command so that he could lead his men into the midst of battle. Those familiar with Hamilton's earlier achievements would have expected that he would do more than daydream about himself as a dashing officer in a resplendent uniform. With characteristic foresight, he took up the subject of military science, reading every available book. The skills of gunnery he learned from a British bombardier. He was able to build also upon his experiences in drilling with Fleming's Corsicans. With his natural exuberance and self-confidence, Hamilton must have had little doubt that he would meet the challenge of actual combat and emerge triumphant.

He was soon to have his first experience under enemy fire. It was the night of August 23, 1775. Captain John Lamb's Artillery Company began moving the 21 large cannon away from the Battery in New York City to avoid their capture by the British. With his fellow volunteers, Hamilton joined in the action. An armed barge from the British warship *Asia* fired upon the Patriots. Their answering volley killed a British seaman and wounded several others. The barge withdrew to the *Asia*, which fired a broadside ashore, wounding three of Lamb's men and damaging some houses,¹² including Fraunces Tavern.

As Hamilton's friend, Hercules Mulligan, and a few companions were straining to haul off one of the large cannon, Alexander ran up to help, discarding his musket so that he would be free to take hold of the tow rope. British broadsides fell around them as they rolled the cannon off and away to safety. Hamilton then returned for his musket and calmly retrieved

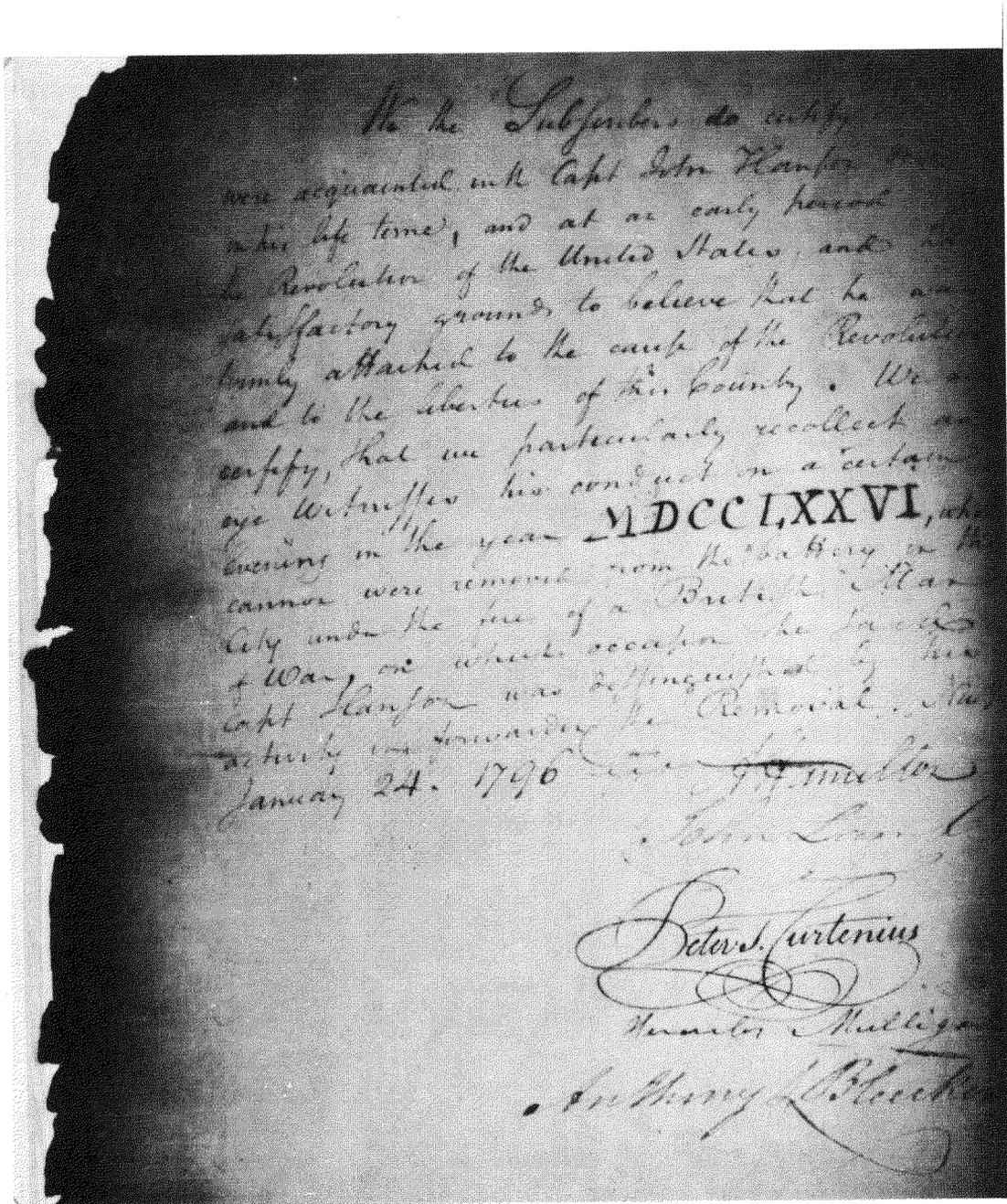
it, unconcerned at the cannon balls landing near him.¹³ His bravery under fire had been tested.

On this occasion, the Corsicans took two six-pound cannon as trophies from the smaller guns set up on the Battery. It is reported that Hamilton and the volunteer company buried these cannon in the King's College Green. The two cannon were apparently unearthed later for they were known to have adorned the entrance gate of the College Green at Park Place as late as 1855.

With all of Hamilton's enthusiasm for the colonial cause, he kept his essential sense of balance and his willingness to oppose popular moves if he felt them to be wrong. Once, as related by his friend Troup, he had defended the Tory college president, Dr. Cooper. We have it on the word of Hercules Mulligan that he now tried, this time unsuccessfully, to defend the property of a hated Tory printer. The incident began when Isaac Sears and a company of Connecticut cavalry rode into New York City in late November and closed in on the printing shop of James Rivington. Rivington, who had incensed the Patriots by his attacks on the Americans, had been the printer of Seabury's Westchester Farmer pamphlets, but he had published Hamilton's Patriot answers as well. Hamilton, according to the story, was indignant at the intrusion from Connecticut "upon our rights" as New Yorkers. He hurried to Rivington's shop and tried, without success, to convince the on-lookers that they should prevent the horsemen from removing the printing press. Sears and his men destroyed the press, and, taking the lead type with them, left the city. Later, Alexander wrote to John Jay that he could not help condemning the violent attack, although

he was aware of how dangerous and pernicious Rivington's press had been. The passions which arouse the multitude, who have not enough reason and knowledge to guide them, he warned, even when these passions are

turned against tyranny and oppression, often lead people to a contempt and disregard of all authority. In such tempestuous times, wrote Hamilton, the greatest skill of political pilots is needed to keep men steady and within



Courtesy of the New York State Library

Among the eyewitnesses signing this citation for bravery in helping remove the cannon from the Battery were Alexander Hamilton and Hercules Mulligan.

proper bounds. This letter to Jay serves to illustrate not only Hamilton's sense of right but also his feeling for moderation and conservatism.

To Hamilton his military service in the field was disappointingly brief – less than a year in the heartbreaking campaigns in New York and New Jersey early in the war and about three months at the end when he shared in the victory of Yorktown. On March 14, 1776, he received command of an artillery company through the influence of Colonel Alexander McDougall. This was the same McDougall who had presided when Hamilton made his "Fields" speech almost two years before.

When doubt was expressed about Hamilton's knowledge of artillery, McDougall proposed an examination. As a result, he was given a certificate of complete competency, and the New York Provincial Congress appointed him captain.

Captain Hamilton applied himself to his new command with his usual zeal. By vigorous recruitment measures, he raised the roster from about 40 to 67 men¹⁴ in less than a month. He used his own slender funds, perhaps including the final remittance of his education fund from St. Croix, to buy the best equipment available. Before long the members of his company were so well uniformed and drilled that they were conspicuous for their smart appearance and ready for the shock of combat.

In achieving this proficiency, Hamilton faced critical tests of his military leadership. The Orderly Book of Colonel Webb, his regimental commander, shows that four men in his artillery company were tried for mutiny on April 20 and two were found guilty. In the following month, two cases of desertion are recorded.¹⁵ On May 31, Hamilton was given permission by the Provincial Congress to search the ships in the harbor for deserters.



Courtesy of the New York Public Library

Hamilton drilling his Artillery Company on the Common.

He was a strict disciplinarian but he needed to be. Militiamen, in this period of revolution and dawning independence, were known to be very unruly. Disciplinary troubles, such as Hamilton's, were not uncommon.

In the hope of building up the morale of his troops, Hamilton wrote to the Provincial Congress on May 26 requesting the same pay for his company that the Continental troops received. He also asked for recruiting expenses and the bounty of frocks, or long rough linen overshirts. The Congress granted all his requests and allowed 10 shillings for each man enlisted, not exceeding 100 men. Alexander had tactfully mentioned that the frocks would be extremely serviceable in summer, while the men were on fatigue duty, and would enable them to make their uniforms last much longer!¹⁶ On August 9, the company was taken into the Continental Army.

Meanwhile, the British move to take New York brought Hamilton's company into its first real action. General Howe's army landed on Staten Island in force on July 3. On July 9, the Declaration of Independence was read in New York City in the presence of General

George Washington, the Commander-in-Chief. Three days later two British warships, the *Phoenix* and the *Rose*, sailed saucily up the Hudson River, out of effective reach of the American shore batteries. It is related that Hamilton's company was at the Battery and fired briskly at the two ships. Unfortunately, a shore cannon burst, killing two of Hamilton's men. Hamilton's company may have taken part in the Battle of Long Island at Brooklyn Heights on August 27. After the disastrous defeat in this battle, the American Army made a miraculous retreat to Manhattan Island two nights later. On September 15, when the British moved in on New York City, Hamilton's unit was at Bunker's Hill, a fort in lower Manhattan. The forces there were almost cut off from the main body retreating northward. The story of what followed is an ironic one, allegedly involving Aaron Burr, the very person who was to take Hamilton's life in a duel 28 years later. It is said that Burr, by acting decisively, saved the American troops at Bunker's Hill, including Hamilton and his company, from capture by the British. To do so by leading this strategic retreat, Burr actually risked court martial by defying the commanding officer at the fort. To the question, did Hamilton and Burr meet for the first time on this occasion, no one knows the answer.

During the retreat from Bunker's Hill to Harlem Heights, Hamilton lost his baggage and one of his precious cannon. This may have been the reputed occasion when he ordered the cart containing his baggage abandoned and the horse unhitched and harnessed to another cannon.

Hamilton and his unit marched as a rear guard the whole distance, covering the retreat of the withdrawing troops. His command is said to have aided effectively in a skirmish with a British force sent to cut off the Americans.

The American Army made a stand at Harlem Heights, but had to withdraw to White Plains. During the battle there, on October 28, Hamilton's company, serving under Mc-

Dougall, was posted on Chatterton's Hill, which overlooked the Bronx River. As told by John C. Hamilton, the company cannon were set up on a rocky ledge. From this vantage point their fire temporarily halted a group of Hessians who were about to cross the river by means of an improvised bridge. Then Hamilton's guns flashed to repel a British bayonet charge up the hill. The enemy forces, reinforced by British Light Horse, "with kettle drums beating and trumpets braying," took the hill from the American defenders. Hamilton was ordered to retire just in time.¹⁷

Following the loss of New York, Hamilton moved with General Washington and the Army across the Hudson River to New Jersey. It would be many months before Hamilton would stand upon New York soil again.

A little more than a year had passed since Hamilton had had his first taste of war from the *Asia's* guns. In this period he had earned a captaincy on his own initiative and had fought through the most difficult of campaigns, one of retreat in the face of overwhelming force. Hamilton had lived up to his early promise as a man of courage, good judgment and leadership.

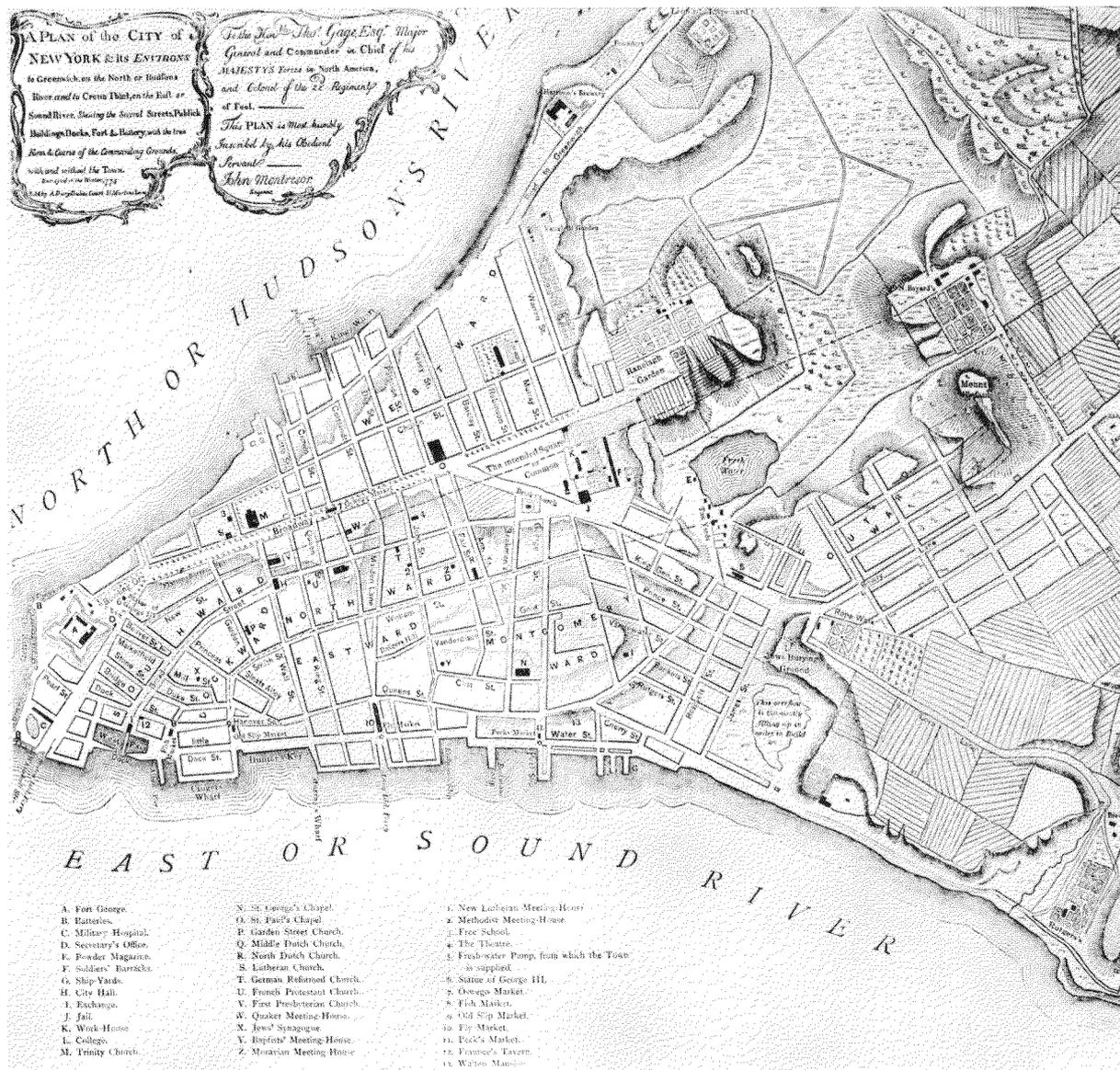
No amount of drilling, marching and fighting diverted Hamilton from his lifelong quest for new knowledge and for intellectual development. His pay book of August 31, 1776, one day after the retreat from Brooklyn Heights to Manhattan Island, shows miscellaneous notes on economics, trade and government. His future answer to a question that he penned at this time was to have great importance: Would it not be advisable to let taxes be collected by persons appointed by Congress?

Among the books he read during this period of his life were writings of Cicero, Demosthenes and Montaigne in addition to Bacon's *Essays*, Rousseau's *Emile*, Hobbes' *Dialogues*, Robinson's *Charles V*, Millot's *History of*



Courtesy of The New-York Historical Society

The reading of the Declaration of Independence before Washington's Army is shown here in a woodcut from a drawing by Howard Pyle.



Courtesy of The New-York Historical Society

This map of New York City in 1775 shows places familiar to Hamilton: King's College, the Common and the Battery.

France, Smith's History of New York, and Ralt's Dictionary of Trade and Commerce.

From the First Philippic of Demosthenes he copied the following: "As a general marches at the head of his troops, so ought wise politicians, if I dare use the expression, to march at the head of affairs"18 And so ought American thought, Hamilton reasoned, be

directed to the need for creating a strong nation!

No one knows for certain exactly how the boy from St. Croix came to the personal attention of General George Washington. Alexander's son, John C. Hamilton, relates that his father first attracted the notice of General Washington at Harlem Heights. At the in-

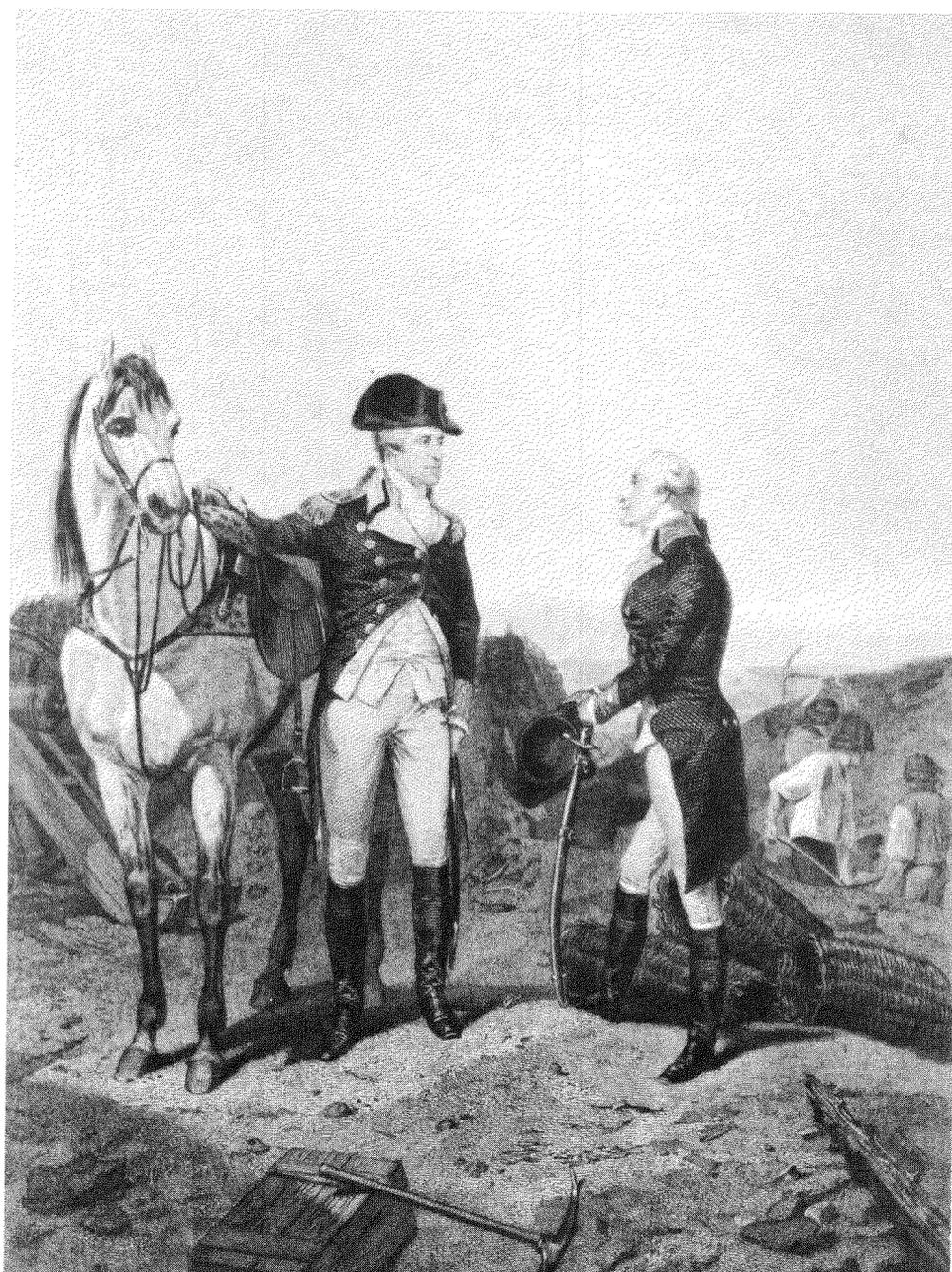
spection of an earthwork which Hamilton's company was constructing, the Commander-in-Chief talked with the young captain and invited him to his tent. At this interview Washington was reported to be favorably impressed by the youth's military talent.

Troup's version asserts that Hamilton was recommended to Washington by General Knox. George W. P. Custis, Washington's

adopted son, offers one opinion that the original contact was made by General Greene, who had noted the disciplined skill of Hamilton's company of artillery drilling at the "Fields" in the summer of 1776. Greene had conversed with the "mere youth" in command, says Custis, and had been impressed by evidence of his extraordinary ability. According to the Custis story, General Greene made friends with

At their first meeting, Hamilton and Washington may have looked like this.

Courtesy of G. P. Putnam's Sons and the New York Public Library



Hamilton and later introduced him to Washington.

The occasion on which Hamilton most probably came to the Commander-in-Chief's direct attention occurred during the dismal retreat through New Jersey. This is the Custis version of what happened. The American Army was almost caught by Cornwallis' forces during the crossing of the Raritan River. Hamilton's company was again part of the rear guard, set up this time by Washington on the river bank to check the British on the opposite edge of the Raritan. With a spirited cannonade, Hamilton helped to cover the American retreat. Custis declared that Washington was "charmed by the brilliant courage and admirable skill displayed by a young officer of artillery who directed a battery against the enemy's advanced columns that pressed upon the Americans in their retreat by the ford." The General ordered one of his aides to find out who the officer was and requested that he come to headquarters at the first halt of the army. During the interview which followed, Washington "marked him for his own."¹⁹

As the troops hurried through Princeton, Hamilton's company showed the results of his strict training and attracted attention as a "model of discipline." He, himself, was described as a "mere stripling, small, slender, almost delicate in frame, marching beside a piece of artillery, with a cocked hat pulled down over his eyes, apparently lost in thought, with his hand resting on a cannon," which he patted every now and then, as if it were a "favorite horse or a pet plaything."

The company and its youthful captain, perhaps only in the reserve force, took part in the fateful Battle of Trenton on Christmas night and in the Battle of Princeton on January 3. There is a persisting, but doubtful story, that at Princeton, Hamilton trained his guns on Nassau Hall, ordering the British, who had sought refuge there, to surrender. On their re-

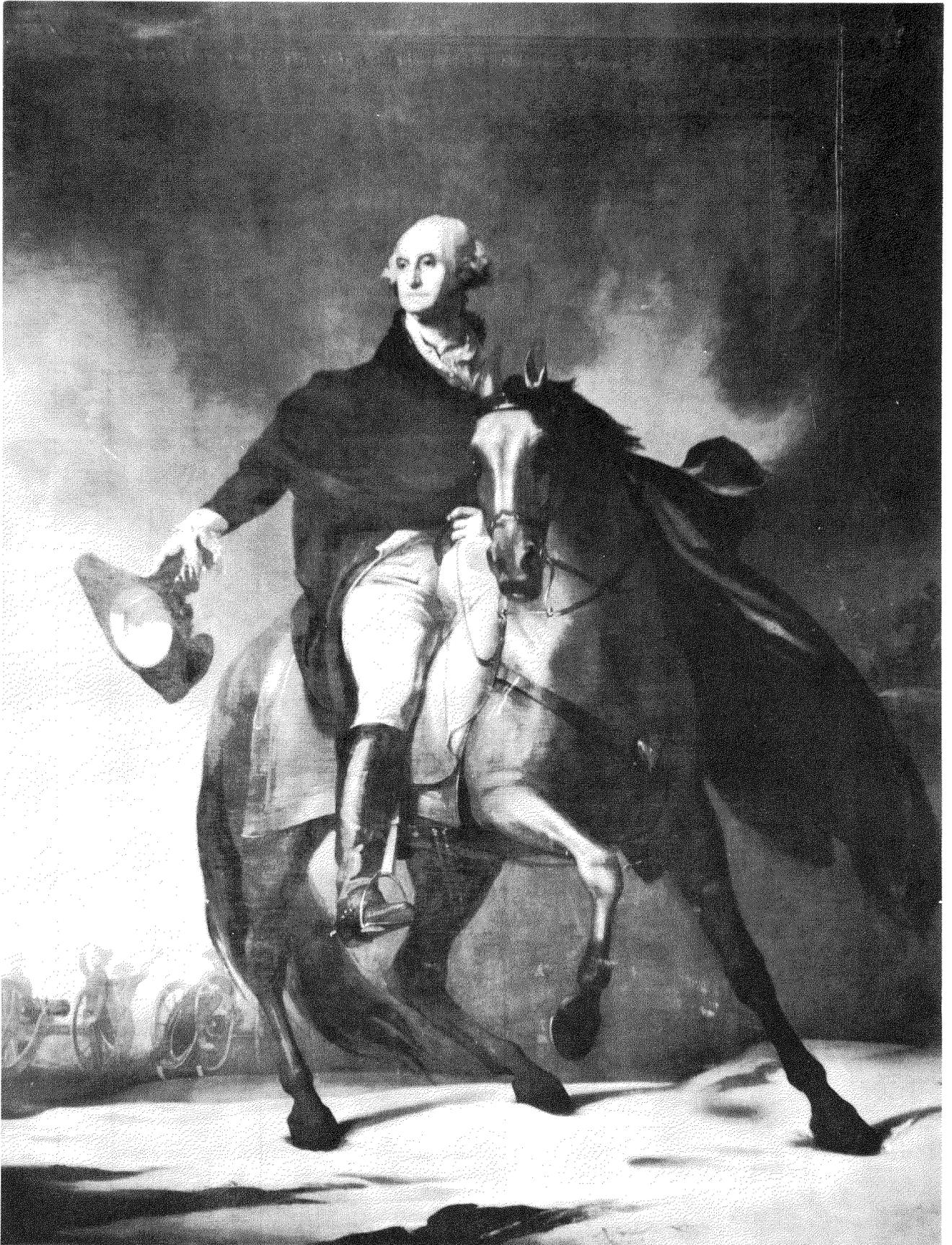
fusal, it is said, he was forced to fire and scored a direct hit, through the building, on a portrait of King George II. Under further shelling and a militia attack, the British surrendered.

The American Army went into winter quarters at Morristown. By March, Hamilton's company had dwindled to about 30 men and three officers. Some men died; others deserted. Because of an error in the enlistment period, others signed up with different units. No one had the authority to re-engage them when their terms of enlistment expired. As for Hamilton himself, his slender health had been undermined and he was, for a time, gravely ill.

During the winter encampment, Washington became acutely aware of his need for competent aides-de-camp because of the increasing volume of correspondence and military documents. It was absolutely necessary for him to have assistants who could think for him as well as execute orders. He did not hope to find experts in military knowledge. He desperately required aides who could at least write a good letter quickly and who were methodical and diligent. Recognizing that Alexander Hamilton possessed superior talents, the General offered him the position of aide-de-camp and the rank of lieutenant colonel.

Hamilton hesitated. In March 1776, he had turned down an offer from Lord Stirling to become his aide. He hoped that his active part in the ensuing campaigns would entitle him to rapid advancement as a commander of troops. But a request from General Washington was a great honor. Perhaps he could best serve his country in this role. Reluctantly, Alexander accepted. On March 1, 1777, he was officially appointed to the General's staff. From St. Croix, Hugh Knox congratulated his protégé. "You must be the Annalist and Biographer, as well as Aide-de-Camp, of General Washington — and the Historiographer of the American War!"

Hamilton served Washington with brilliance. He demonstrated independence of



Courtesy of The Union League of Philadelphia

Artist Thomas Sully has caught in this portrait some of the dignity and strength of George Washington who, as General and as President, exerted such a profound influence upon Hamilton's career.

thought on many occasions. More than once, in the face of extreme difficulty, he gave service far exceeding the duties of an aide.

During the campaigns of 1777 and 1778, Washington was accustomed to retire to a hard couch late at night. Wrapped in his cloak, his lamp trimmed, he would lie down, not to sleep but to think. When an express rider brought dispatches late at night or in the early morning, the General would open and read them. Then in his calm, deep voice he would order Billy, his faithful body-servant, "Call Colonel Hamilton!" Any person present when Hamilton reported to his Commander-in-Chief must have been struck by the contrast between the two men. Washington, who towered over Hamilton by a good seven inches, was then twice the age of his young aide.

The General often deferred to the judgment of the youthful Hamilton and relied on him to gather information from deserters, prisoners and such other sources as would help Washington make military decisions. Because of Hamilton's finesse in dealing with people and because of his fluency in the French language, he was sent several times after the signing of the French treaty of alliance to confer with French commanders and to arrange joint French-American operations.

The dispatches and letters that Hamilton wrote for his chief have been described as unrivaled in military annals for pertinence of subject matter and for elegance of style. The aide's pen dipped into matters of government and strategy, too, particularly when his personal opinion was sought by others. For example, Gouverneur Morris sent him a copy of the State Constitution for New York. Hamilton at first felt it would be presumptuous of him to criticize the plan. Then, in replying to Morris' own later comments, he emphasized the wisdom of separation of the powers of the legislature, the executive and the judiciary. Hamilton stated that these powers should be "vested in select persons, chosen really and not

nominally by the people." From Middlebrook, he wrote on June 28 to Robert R. Livingston in support of Washington's military tactics of delay and of avoiding battle with the superior forces of the enemy on equal terms. Hamilton had predicted the use of such strategy in *The Farmer Refuted*.

By September, Sir William Howe's armies threatened Philadelphia. On the 18th Washington ordered Hamilton to take a small force and destroy some army supplies stored in mills near Daviser's ferry on the Schuylkill River to prevent their falling to the British. Before the mission was finished, the enemy attacked. Some of the Americans crossed the bridge to safety. Hamilton, with four of the men, barely escaped to the river bank in time to board a large flat-bottomed boat moored at the edge of the stream. The British fired on the boat as Hamilton struggled desperately to get the sluggish craft across the flooding river.²⁰ One soldier was killed and another wounded, but Hamilton and his two other companions escaped unhurt.

As soon as he could, Hamilton sent off a letter to John Hancock, the President of the Continental Congress, warning him that Congress should leave Philadelphia immediately. The enemy had gained possession of two boats, he continued, which would enable them to ferry enough men across the Schuylkill River to endanger the city.²¹ Thus warned, Congress escaped before the British took Philadelphia on September 27. Meanwhile Hamilton had spent two hectic days in Philadelphia, using every command and entreaty he could in having all the property taken out of the city that would help the British army.

At the news of General Burgoyne's surrender to General Gates' American army at Saratoga, Washington hoped to receive enough troops from Gates to retake Philadelphia. Gates had not bothered to let the Commander-in-Chief know directly of the surrender. Gates was the hero of the moment and plans were

afoot to supplant Washington with the Saratoga victor.

For the delicate mission to obtain reinforcements from Gates, someone was needed who

could use his own initiative in carrying out orders and who would pursue his instructions beyond the call of duty. Washington's decision was, "Call Colonel Hamilton!"

Chapter Notes

- ¹² *The History of the Republic of the United States*. J. C. Hamilton. Vol. I, p. 99
- ¹³ *The William and Mary Quarterly*. Third Series, Vol. IV, No. 2, p. 210
- ¹⁴ *The New-York Historical Society Collections 1915 Revolutionary Muster Rolls*. Vol. II, 1775-1783, pp. 338-345
- ¹⁵ Orderly Book of Colonel Charles Webb, Connecticut State Library MSS
- ¹⁶ *American Archives*. Peter Force. Fourth Series VI, p. 1336
- ¹⁷ *The History of the Republic of the United States*. J. C. Hamilton. Vol. I, pp. 132-134
- ¹⁸ *The Works of Alexander Hamilton*. J. C. Hamilton. Vol. I, pp. 4-7
- ¹⁹ *Recollections and Private Memoirs of Washington*. G. W. P. Custis. pp. 344-345
- ²⁰ *Memoirs of the War in the Southern Department of the United States*. H. Lee. pp. 17-18
- ²¹ *The Works of Alexander Hamilton*. H. C. Lodge. Vol. IX, pp. 101-102

THREE

The Soldier Takes a Bride

IN ORDER TO PREPARE the way for Hamilton's desperately important mission to Albany to obtain reinforcements, General Washington wrote to General Gates from White Marsh, which was 12 miles outside Philadelphia. After expressing regret that the news of the Saratoga victory had reached him only indirectly, he explained that he had sent Hamilton, one of his aides, to present Gates with "a full state of our situation, and that of the enemy in this quarter."²²

On his way to Albany, Hamilton reached the headquarters of General Putnam at Fishkill, on November 2, 1777. To support his orders, the comparatively unknown officer had only a letter of instructions from his chief. He directed Putnam to send two Continental brigades and Warner's militia brigade to General Washington. Finding that 700 New Jersey militia were about to cross the Hudson to join Putnam, he issued an order that this force march instead to Red Bank, N. J.

Hamilton reached Albany about noon on November 4, and immediately went to see General Gates. Gates balked at Washington's plea to send a very considerable part of his army. His excuse was that Sir Henry Clinton might make another attack up the river and capture the finest arsenal in America, as he termed the one in Albany. To Hamilton's infinite embarrassment, all the help he could get from Gates was one brigade. He ran into insurmountable obstacles when he dared to oppose Gates, who had won the entire confidence of the Eastern States. The Saratoga hero had friends in Congress, too, who could be counted on to support him against Washington. In carrying out his instructions, Hamilton had

done what seemed best under the circumstances. Uneasy lest his actions displease his chief, he wrote a report to Washington,²³ and went to inspect the brigade.

Hamilton was enraged when he found that Gates had chosen the weakest of the three brigades at Albany to send to Washington. Consisting of only about 600 men fit for duty, the brigade selected was little more than half as large as the other two. Angered, Hamilton wrote Gates an ultimatum, demanding that one of the other two brigades be substituted and immediately dispatched.

His old friend, Robert Troup, who had become one of Gates' aides, must have been a great comfort to Alexander in his heartbreaking effort to carry out Washington's orders. But there was another man in the city, Major General Philip Schuyler, with whom Hamilton had corresponded officially, who could give the aide experienced advice on dealing with General Gates — and sympathetic understanding, too! This prominent Albany gentleman and soldier had been in command of the Northern Army when he was superseded in August by General Gates, in time for Gates to win credit for the Saratoga victory.

Hamilton called on General Schuyler at his handsome, rose brick house, "The Pastures," overlooking the Hudson River. He probably met the General's second daughter, Elizabeth, also called Betsey, of whom he had heard from his fellow aide, Tench Tilghman. In the summer of 1775, Tilghman had visited the Schuylers, while serving as secretary to the Indian commissioners, and had taken quite a fancy to Elizabeth, whom he described as a brunette with the most good-natured, lively dark eyes

that he had ever seen. He declared that these same eyes threw a beam of good temper and benevolence over her whole countenance.²⁴

The pleasant interlude of his visit to the Schuyler Mansion and the welcome advice from the General inspired Hamilton with new courage for his negotiations with Gates.

Given a little time to reconsider, Gates dispatched the brigade requested by Hamilton — and the weakest one, too.

Feeling more encouraged, Hamilton arrived at New Windsor on his return trip. Here he found that Putnam had apparently neglected and upset Hamilton's plans, in the interest of his own whim, a plan to take New York City. Actually, the two Continental brigades had refused to march, as ordered by Hamilton, due to lack of pay and supplies. Hamilton, ill from his long and disheartening struggle against the ignorance of some and the design of others, finally resolved the troop problems with the help of Governor Clinton. The desperately needed brigades, the two from Gates and the two from Putnam, were all on their way to reinforce General Washington.

At Peekskill, Alexander Hamilton collapsed completely and for days his life was in danger. During the crisis, a letter from Washington, giving his entire approval of all the steps his aide had taken, may well have turned the tide in Hamilton's fight for life.

There were several far-reaching and unexpected outcomes of Hamilton's trip to Albany in the fall of 1777. The so-called Conway Cabal, a scheme of certain members of Congress and a few Army officers to supplant Washington with General Gates, was revealed to the Commander-in-Chief before it was too late. Hamilton was accused by Gates of being the informant, on the grounds that he had learned of the Cabal through his friend Robert Troup, while at Gates' headquarters at Albany. This report proved totally unfounded. Hamilton's astonishing success in procuring reinforcements for his chief was a great aid to

Washington in the tense time of the Cabal. The added troop support bolstered the standing of the Commander-in-Chief and helped to maintain his military prestige.

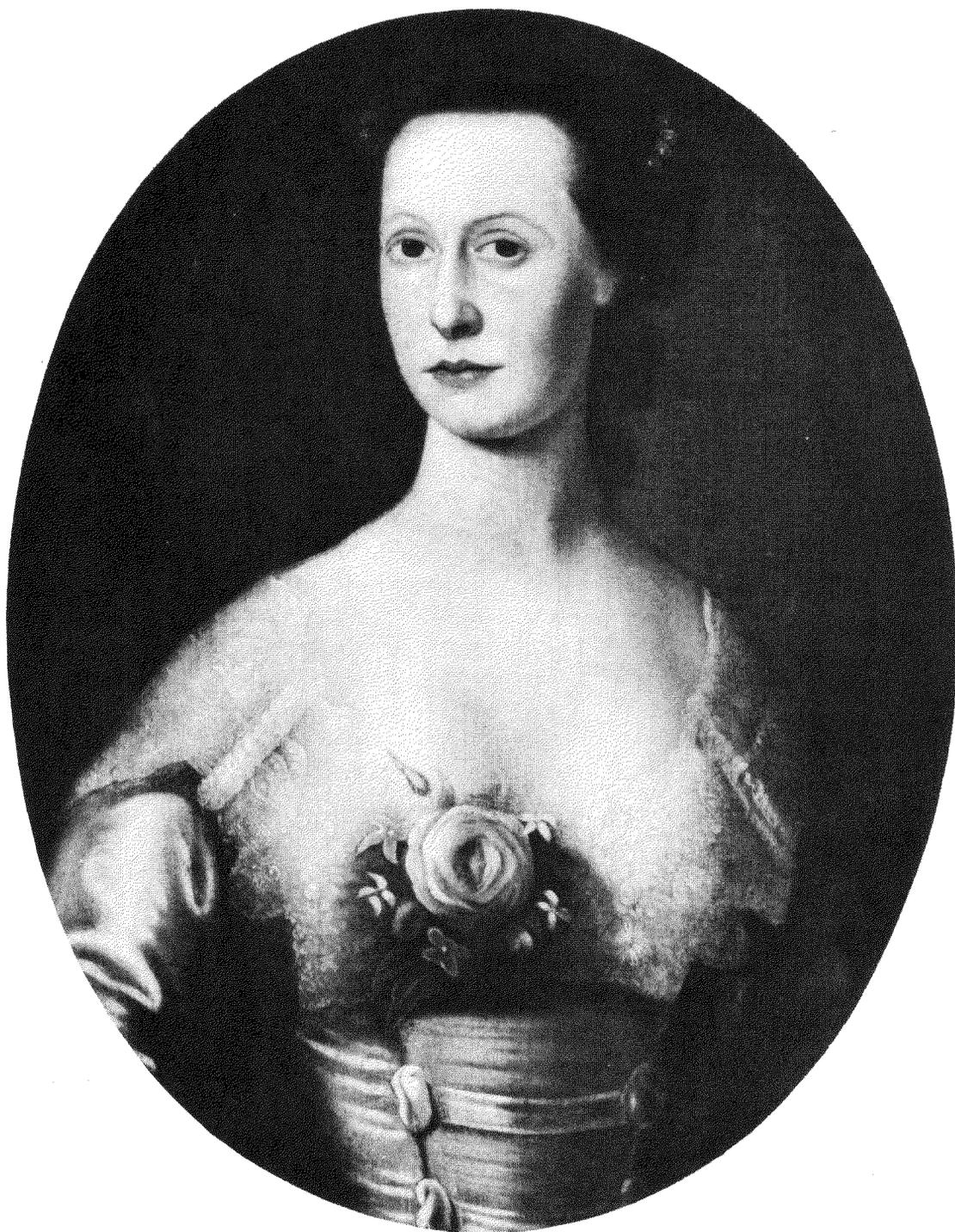
For Hamilton, personally, the most far-reaching and completely unexpected outcome of the Albany trip was that he probably met there or heard more about the girl who was to become his wife three years later — Elizabeth Schuyler, of one of the most prominent, aristocratic families in New York State.

On his recovery from his critical illness, Hamilton rejoined Washington and went through the grueling winter at Valley Forge with the Army. He absorbed much military science from his continuing service with General Washington, as well as from General von Steuben, Prussian drillmaster of the American Army, who came to Valley Forge in late February. From the constant dealings with Congress, Hamilton undoubtedly acquired useful political knowledge and a thorough understanding of the insuperable difficulties involved in financing the Army.

In late April heartfelt joy came to the Americans in the news of the French Alliance with the American States. The impending arrival of a French fleet forced the British army from Philadelphia on June 18, 1778.

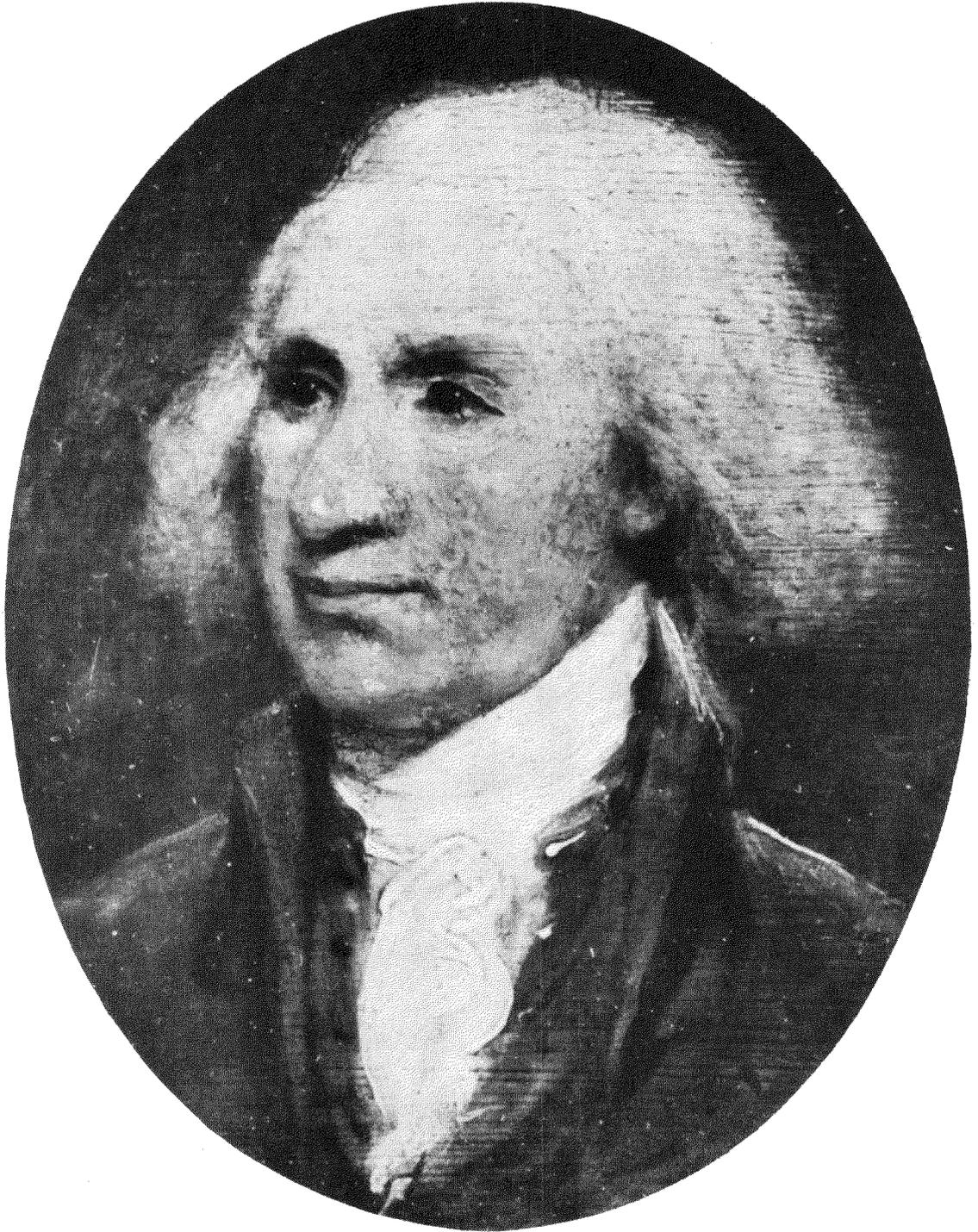
Sending Loyalist evacuees from Philadelphia to New York with the British fleet, Sir Henry Clinton ordered the army to march with him on the highway leading to Sandy Hook, N. J. At Monmouth Courthouse, where the American Army finally overtook Clinton, an advance corps under General Charles Lee started to attack the British rear guard. When the engagement was barely begun, Lee began to withdraw without apparent cause. The retreat had become practically a rout when Washington arrived to rally his forces and save the day.

Hamilton wrote of his chief: "I never saw the General to so much advantage . . . He instantly took measures for checking the enemy's advance, and giving time to the army,



Courtesy of The New-York Historical Society

Mrs. Philip Schuyler



Courtesy of The New-York Historical Society

Major General Philip Schuyler

which was very near, to form and make a proper disposition America owes a great deal to General Washington for this day's work. A general rout, dismay and disgrace would have attended the whole army in any other hands but his."²⁵

Hamilton, too, won laurels in the Battle of Monmouth, weary as he was from three days of scouting to learn the enemy plans. James McHenry, a fellow aide, wrote to Elias Boudinot about the merits of his friend, "Hammy": "He was incessant in his endeavours during the whole day — in reconnoitering the enemy, and in rallying and charging. But whether he or Col. Laurens deserves most of our commendation, is somewhat doubtful — but both had their horses shot under them, and both exhibited singular proofs of bravery. They seemed to court death under our doubtful circumstances, and triumphed over it as the face of war changed in our favor."²⁶

In the early part of 1779, according to John C. Hamilton, a plot to kidnap General Clinton was proposed to Washington. The British Commander then occupied a house in New York City, near the Battery. Light whaleboats with muffled oars were to be used and the kidnapers were to make their way to the house only a few yards from the Hudson River. When apprised of the plan, Hamilton agreed that the scheme would be likely to succeed. But the acute mind of Hamilton anticipated a real danger in its execution. He advised his chief that they would lose rather than gain by removing Sir Henry Clinton from the command of the British army. Didn't they perfectly understand his character? Might not an abler successor to Clinton present the problem of learning the habits and disposition of another individual which they might not so easily fathom? The project was abandoned.

From headquarters in Morristown, Hamilton recommended to John Jay, then President

This painting by Emanuel Leutze represents Washington rallying his forces in the crucial Battle of Monmouth. Hamilton and Lafayette are shown back of the Commander-in-Chief.

Courtesy of the Monmouth County Historical Association and the Frick Art Reference Library

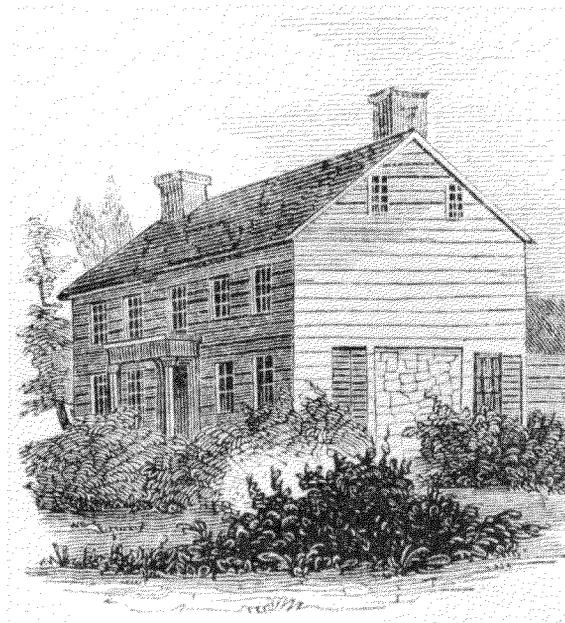


of Congress, the raising of Negro troops. He wrote to Jay: "I have not the least doubt that the Negroes will make very excellent soldiers An essential part of the plan is, to give them their freedom with their swords. This will secure their fidelity, animate their courage, and, I believe, will have a good influence upon those who remain, by opening a door to their emancipation."

Hamilton must have felt a sharp twinge of envy when his great friend and fellow aide, John Laurens, obtained a commission to serve in the South and departed for South Carolina in March of 1779. In the fall of that year, Hamilton asked General Washington to give him the chance, also, to fight in the South and raise his standing as a soldier "above mediocrity." This was refused. Hamilton was too valuable to his chief. With the promise of a command in the future, Hamilton continued as aide.

Not all of Hamilton's thoughts that fall and winter were on military matters. He had written earlier in the year to John Laurens in the South on the subject of a wife and playfully commanded his friend to find him one in Carolina. She must be young, handsome, well bred, virtuous and tender. She must be good-natured and generous, he continued, and she must believe in God. In regard to her fortune, the larger amount of that the better, he advised, at least enough to take care of her own extravagances. Alexander begged Laurens to be civil to his friend in describing the bridegroom. In conclusion, he jested again. Did he want a wife? No, he had plagues enough without adding that greatest of all!

The story of Hamilton's courtship and marriage is a true Cinderella tale with the leading parts reversed. When the penniless, unknown youth from the West Indies arrived in New York, no one would have imagined that eight



Courtesy of the New York Public Library

In this Cochran House at Morristown Hamilton courted Elizabeth Schuyler.

years later he would marry into one of New York's proudest families.

In 1779-80, the winter quarters of the American Army were located at Morristown. Mrs. Washington came up from Virginia to be with her husband, and the wives and families of other officers joined them.

Elizabeth Schuyler came to Morristown to visit her aunt and uncle, the Cochrans. Mrs. Cochran was General Schuyler's sister and her husband was Surgeon General of the Army in the middle department. General Schuyler joined his daughter there. He was a New York delegate to Congress at Philadelphia and came to Morristown to consult with General Washington on the state of the Army. Mrs. Schuyler journeyed down from Albany later in the spring to stay at the Cochrans' with her husband and Elizabeth.

Soon after Mrs. Schuyler arrived in Morristown, in 1780, she and Betsey received an invitation from Mrs. Washington to call upon her at the Ford Mansion, which was the official

headquarters. Mrs. Washington received Mrs. Schuyler and Betsey very kindly, kissing them both, for the General and Schuyler were very warm friends. Years later, Betsey told the historian, Benson Lossing, about this visit to Mrs. Washington.

There was some gaiety at the American camp despite the hardships and privations of that winter. Betsey's former beau, Tench Tilghman, was there. Alexander Hamilton, whom Betsey probably had met in Albany, was another of the gay bachelors. With his reddish-brown hair, a fair complexion and deep-blue eyes he seemed to Betsey to be very handsome. His manner was most appealing and he was a great social favorite.

As time went by, Hamilton quietly concentrated his attentions on the dark-eyed Betsey. He visited the Cochrans' house often. General Schuyler enjoyed Hamilton's company too! Together they discussed the overall military strategy of the War and the necessity of strengthening the government by giving more power to Congress. Schuyler became greatly impressed by the young lieutenant colonel's many talents.

Betsey Schuyler, called "the little Saint" by Tilghman, fulfilled all of Hamilton's stated qualifications for a wife. Besides, she captured his heart. He wrote to her sister, probably Angelica, whom he had not met, that her sister had found out the secret of interesting him in everything that concerned her. It was essential to the safety of the State and the tranquility of the Army, he continued extravagantly, either that Betsey depart from the neighborhood or that some other young lady, qualified to counteract her charm, come to Morristown.

On his return to Morristown, from a conference at Amboy on the exchange of prisoners, Hamilton asked General Schuyler for Betsey's hand in marriage. Mrs. Schuyler had not yet come to Morristown and the General said

he must write to consult her. On April 8, he advised Hamilton that he had received a reply from Mrs. Schuyler in which she consented to the engagement. But plans for an immediate marriage were refused. The Schuylers' oldest daughter Angelica had eloped from "The Pastures" in July 1779 with John Barker Church. This time the parents insisted on a wedding with all the trimmings in their Albany mansion.



Courtesy of the Frick Art Reference Library

This portrait of Angelica Schuyler Church, sister-in-law and admirer of Hamilton, is from a miniature by Richard Cosway. The town of Angelica, N. Y., originally part of the John B. Church tract of land in Allegany County, was named for Mrs. Church.

Having won her hand, Alexander fondly laid out plans for Betsey. He entreated his fiancée to take care of herself and employ all her leisure in reading. In addition to her amiability, she was to cultivate her other talents and gain a fund of knowledge to enrich their lives together.²⁷

Betsey had returned to Albany by then. Hamilton tried to concentrate on his military

duties as he awaited the day when he would marry the second daughter of the distinguished General Philip Schuyler.

On July 10, a French fleet arrived at Newport, R. I., with 5,000 soldiers aboard under the Comte de Rochambeau. To Washington's alarm, a British fleet, in nearby waters, threatened the French ships. Was still another blow in store for the patient Commander-in-Chief?

Alexander Hamilton, at headquarters, received an urgent message from the Culpers, Patriot spies operating in New York and on Long Island, before 4 p.m. on July 21, regarding the safety of the French fleet. As Washington was not present then, Hamilton wrote immediately to Lafayette, who was on his way to Newport to synchronize plans with the French, "We have just received advice from New York through different channels that the enemy are making an embarkation with which they menace the French fleet." On his return, Washington feigned, pretending an attack on New York, and the British ships came sailing back through Long Island Sound.²⁸

In the fall of the same year, 1780, Hamilton and Washington with others of Washington's

official family happened to stop at General Benedict Arnold's headquarters, opposite West Point. Information received at headquarters on that fateful September day revealed the shocking news that Arnold had plotted with Major André of the British Army to surrender the West Point fort, which Arnold commanded, to the enemy. Arnold, warned that André had been captured, had taken flight. Mounting his horse, Hamilton rode off to intercept him, but he was too late. The traitor had escaped by barge to a British warship. What of West Point itself? Had Arnold weakened its defenses dangerously? Would the British attack that very night? Hamilton was not sure of the answers but he could take no chances. He ordered the speediest possible action to reinforce the garrison. No attack occurred.

For his part in Arnold's plot, John André was sentenced to be hanged as a spy. Hamilton urged the granting of André's request to be shot instead. When this appeal was denied, Hamilton in disappointment questioned his Commander-in-Chief's judgment. For this action he was unable to forgive Washington.²⁹

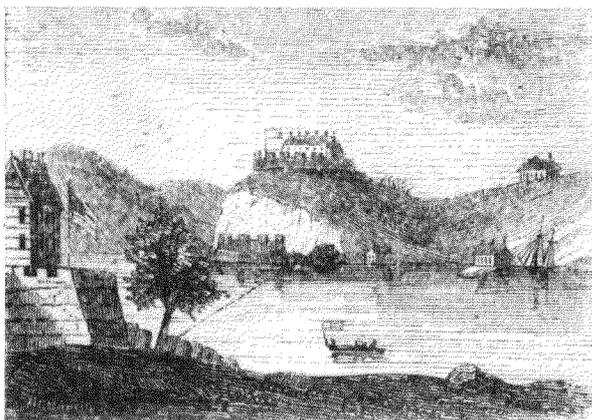
The coldness resulting from their differences over André's fate added to Hamilton's impatience for an active command. On November 22, 1780, he wrote to Washington applying for a role in a projected attack. This plan did not work out. Hamilton also failed to obtain a post which would have promoted him over the heads of some full colonels. He tried for a diplomatic assignment in France. Instead, it was voted by Congress to John Laurens.

Hamilton's patience was drawing to an end. There must be some way he could obtain a command!

Alexander wrote often to Betsey from Army headquarters: "You have no conception

This print shows West Point in 1780, the year of Benedict Arnold's attempted betrayal of the fort to the British.

Courtesy of the New York Public Library



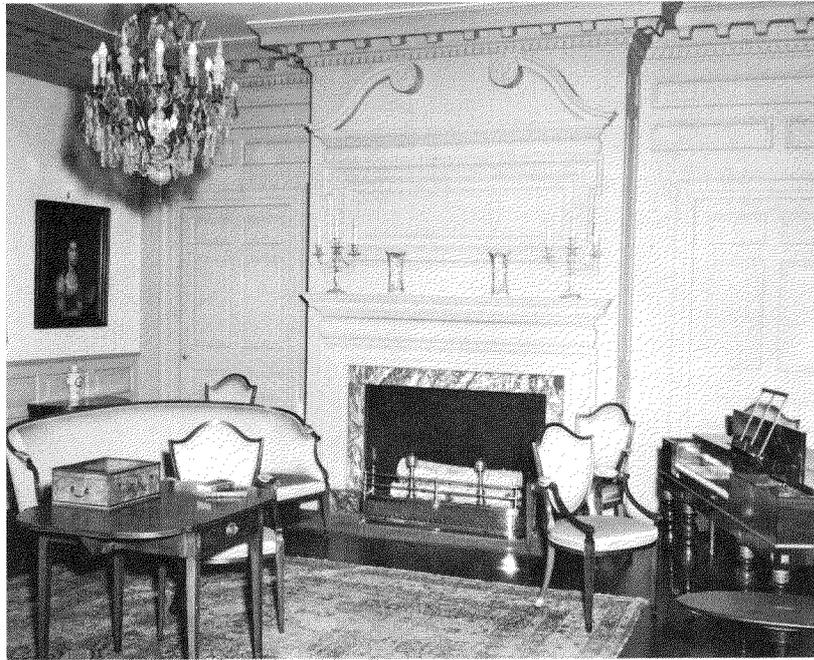
of how sweet a girl she is," he penned fancifully to her. "It is only in my heart that her image is truly drawn Ah Betsey, how I love her."

The wedding was set for mid-December, at "The Pastures" in Albany. Festivities began with all the splendor that rich and important parents can give to a marriage of which they heartily approve. Alice Curtis Desmond, in her book, *Alexander Hamilton's Wife*, tells of the joyful occasion at the Mansion: "For three

nights before the ceremony, the young people danced in the wide upper hall, decorated with holly and lighted by dozens of wax candles, until three in the morning.

"Never had Betsey's eyes shone so gloriously as when, on the fourteenth of December, 1780, Dominie Westerlo made her Alexander Hamilton's wife.

"The marriage was solemnized before the carved mantel in the blue drawing room. The bride wore white, which contrasted well with



Courtesy of the New York State Education Department

Before this fireplace in the Schuyler Mansion, Alexander Hamilton and Elizabeth Schuyler were married.

her olive skin. Her shining black hair was hidden beneath a towering white wig, from which hung a lace veil that had belonged to her grandmother, Angelica Livingston Van Rensselaer. To please his bride, Colonel Hamilton was married, not in uniform, but in a black velvet coat, white satin knee-breeches, white silk stockings, and rhinestone shoe buckles, the wedding gift of Lafayette. Hamilton even bowed to the current fashion which he disliked and wore a wig with a queue.

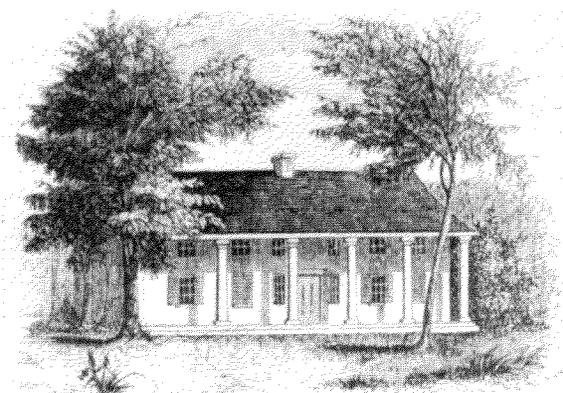
“‘As they have given and pledged their troth, each to the other,’ the Dominie intoned solemnly, ‘I pronounce that they are man and wife.’ He lifted his hand for the benediction.”

The Schuyler family and their influential relatives – the Van Rensselaers, Van Cortlandts and Livingstons – attended. The bridegroom was represented by brother officers, Robert Troup, Nicholas Fish and James McHenry. The latter was even inspired to write a wedding poem in celebration of the event.

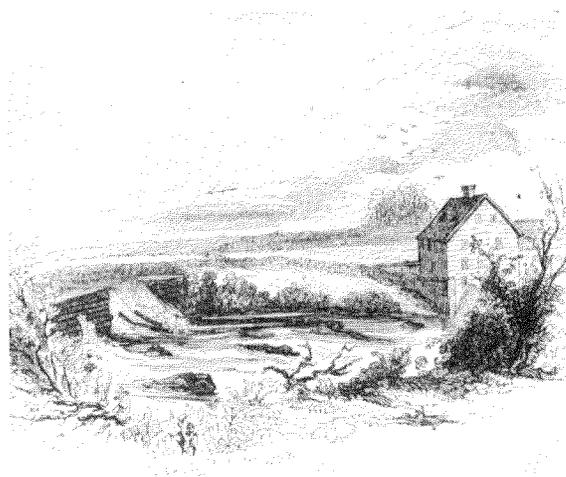
Visitors to Albany admire the beautiful Schuyler Mansion where this historic event

General Philip Schuyler rebuilt his mansion in Old Saratoga (adjoining Schuylerville) after the Saratoga victory.

Courtesy of the New York Public Library



took place. The mansion, now a historic site owned by the State of New York, is famous for its gracious rooms and exquisite furnishings, as well as for its historical significance. Among General Schuyler’s famous guests over the years were Benjamin Franklin, Charles Carroll of Carrollton and David Rittenhouse. General



Courtesy of the New York Public Library

This drawing of a mill on the former Schuyler estate in the Town of Saratoga is from Benson J. Lossing’s *Pictorial Field Book of the Revolution*.

Burgoyne stayed at the mansion after his surrender – and after he had burned the house on Schuyler’s estate in Old Saratoga!

Alexander Hamilton’s marriage allied him with one of the four largest landholding families of New York State. In addition to gaining stature as the son-in-law of a wealthy and prominent man, he was to become Philip Schuyler’s political ally and friend. He did not wish, however, to use his father-in-law’s influence or money to advance his own career. Hamilton was confident that he would make his own mark in the affairs of his adopted State and Nation.

Chapter Notes

- ²² *The Writings of George Washington*. W. C. Ford. Vol. VI, pp. 154-155
- ²³ *The Works of Alexander Hamilton*. H. C. Lodge. Vol. IX, pp. 106-109
- ²⁴ *Memoir of Lt. Col. Tench Tilghman*. O. Tilghman. p. 90
- ²⁵ *The Works of Alexander Hamilton*. H. C. Lodge. Vol. IX, pp. 140-142
- ²⁶ Letter of James McHenry. Emmet Collection, New York Public Library MSS
- ²⁷ *The Intimate Life of Alexander Hamilton*. A. M. Hamilton. pp. 127-128
- ²⁸ *General Washington's Spies*. M. Pennypacker. pp. 83-85
- ²⁹ *The Works of Alexander Hamilton*. H. C. Lodge. Vol. IX, pp. 205-223; also *George Washington*. D. S. Freeman. Vol. V, pp. 199-222

FOUR

Warrior to Statesman

AFTER THEIR HONEYMOON during the Christmas holidays, Colonel and Mrs. Hamilton went to Army headquarters in the Ellison house at New Windsor, N. Y. The reluctant aide resumed his duties in Washington's official family, but he continued to chafe at his inability to get a field command. In mid-February after a seemingly unimportant disagreement with his chief, he resigned his post.

Washington, impatient because Hamilton kept his chief waiting briefly, sharply rebuked the aide as they met at the head of the Ellison house stairs. Hamilton, who had intended no disrespect, said so brusquely, adding "but since you have thought it necessary to tell me so, we part." In spite of Washington's speedy effort to make amends, Hamilton kept his word and refused to remain on the General's personal staff.

Just before his formal retirement as aide late in April, Hamilton wrote to Washington from de Peyster's Point, which is across the river from New Windsor, asking for an assignment in a light infantry corps. This was refused for reasons of seniority. Soon afterward, Alexander and Betsey went to live at "The Pastures" with her parents.

In a renewed effort to get a command, Hamilton visited Army headquarters near Dobbs Ferry in July. Impatient at being held up on his request, he turned in his commission to Washington. The latter sent Colonel Tilghman to persuade Hamilton to retain the commission and promised prompt action on the matter. On July 31, Hamilton received the command of a battalion. He wrote to his wife in August about his coming departure for Virginia with part of the Army, and told of his unhappiness at the thought of being so far away from her. He cautioned her not to men-

tion his destination. Alexander had finally won his chance for military action!

The undisclosed operation in Virginia was the famous Yorktown campaign. On October 14, Hamilton led the attack on the enemy's left redoubt, which was one of the two remaining obstacles to the capture of Yorktown. The fortified post was quickly carried with little loss, as Hamilton described the action to his wife. He explained that his duty and honor had obliged him to make the attack in which her happiness was "too much risked."³⁰ The other redoubt fell that same night and Cornwallis surrendered on October 19, ending the military hostilities of the War.

* * *

THE LONG MILITARY STRUGGLE of the War of Independence over, Hamilton returned to Albany in October. It was imperative that he make a living for himself and Betsey and the baby that was expected. He decided on the practice of law as a profession and made plans to study with his old friend Robert Troup. Hamilton, however, was destined to pursue two new careers. He was to become a New York politician as well as a lawyer.

On January 22, 1782, the Hamiltons' first child, a boy, was born in the Schuyler Mansion. According to family custom, he was named Philip for his grandfather Schuyler. In the Dutch tradition a blue pincushion was doubtless hung on the doorknocker to announce the birth of a boy.

Alexander rented a small house in Albany for his family and settled down in earnest to his studies. Robert Troup moved in with the young couple to share expenses. After intensive study Hamilton was admitted to practice law as an attorney in July 1782. In October he passed his bar examination and was admitted

to “practice as Counsel” by the Supreme Court of Judicature. During his incredibly brief time as a law student, he prepared a treatise on the study of law which was later used by students and incorporated into textbooks.

In mid-June Hamilton had accepted his first civilian post in government – the office of Continental Receiver of Taxes – in New York State. Even though taxation was a great interest of his, he had declined at first, as he had no



Courtesy of the New York State Society of the Cincinnati

Eagle of the Society of the Cincinnati, founded at Fishkill by officers of the Continental Army who served under General Washington, the first President General of the Society. Hamilton succeeded him in this office in 1800. The General Society, in which membership is hereditary, is composed of 13 State Societies for each of the original 13 States and a French Society.

hope of anything but scanty collections. Robert Morris, the Superintendent of Finance, had written persuasively that Hamilton’s connections in the State, his skilled knowledge of men and politics and his great abilities would give him a fine opportunity to help the government by convincing the New York Legislature of the need for revenue.

Since July 1781, Hamilton had been publishing his views on the need to strengthen the Confederation in a series of six essays, called *The Continentalist*.³¹ He pointed out that the currency was so depreciated that it was all but worthless. There were no funds to maintain the Army and public credit was at its lowest ebb. Just as too much power led to despotism, too little power, he warned, led to anarchy, and both, eventually, to ruin. As Continental Receiver of Taxes, he realized he would have a chance to put some of his ideas into effect.

At the Legislature in Poughkeepsie, Hamilton with Schuyler’s aid succeeded in having an appropriation bill passed. Much more important was a second measure, written by Hamilton and approved by the lawmakers. It urged Congress to call a convention of the States to revise and amend the Confederation.

On July 22, 1782, with the backing of his father-in-law, Alexander Hamilton was elected one of New York’s five delegates to the Continental Congress. His law practice was put aside for the time being for the chance to aid in the formation of a stronger union. Hamilton journeyed to Philadelphia and attended his first session of Congress on November 25.

In Congress, he worked hard to provide funds for the bankrupt Confederation through allotments from State import duties. This first endeavor of his failed but Hamilton gained national prominence because of it. In December General Schuyler wrote to Betsey, who had remained in Albany with baby Philip, of his continuing pride in his son-in-law and his abilities.

An Act to amend an Act entitled "An Act for granting certain privileges to the College, heretofore called Kings College, for altering the Name and Charter thereof, and erecting an University within this State" passed the 1st day of May 1784.

Whereas it is represented to the Legislature, that from the dispersed Residences of many of the Regents of the University of this State, and largeness of the Quorum, who are made capable of Business, the Interest and Prosperity of the said University, have been greatly obstructed: And it is represented that certain doubts have arisen in the construction of the Act entitled "An Act for granting certain privileges to the College heretofore called Kings College, for altering the Name and Charter thereof, and erecting an University within this State" passed the 1st day of May 1784. For remedy whereof

Be it enacted by the people of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, and it is hereby enacted by the Authority of the same in addition to the Regents appointed in and by the before mentioned Act, the several persons herein after named, shall be and hereby respectively are constituted Regents of the said University (that is to say) John Jay, Samuel Provost, John R. Livingston, John Rodgers, John Mason, John Jaynes, Daniel Graf, Johann Chalkunze, Joseph Delaplaine, Gershom Linnas, Alexander Hamilton, John Lawrence, John Rutherford, Morgan Lewis, Leonard Linnensard, John Cochrane, Charles W. Knicht, Thomas Jones, Malachia Treat, Nicholas Remains of New York, Peter W. Yates, Mathew V. Fishers and Mr Woods of Albany, George L. Doll of Ulster, John Vandarbilt of Kings, And that the said respective Regents hereby constituted shall enjoy the same Power & Authority, as are granted to and vested in the other Regents appointed by the said Act, as fully and effectually, as if they had been therein expressly named.

Courtesy of the New York State Library

The Act of the New York State Legislature in 1784, designating Alexander Hamilton as a Regent, begins with these paragraphs.

The Treaty of Peace between the United States and Britain was signed in September 1783, and in late November the British evacuated New York City. Earlier that month, Hamilton had opened a law office in the city at 57 Wall Street to support his family in adequate style. The building was also the Hamiltons' home.

Long interested in the establishment of banks, both public and private, Hamilton joined in the plans to create a private bank early in 1784. He drafted the constitution for the bank, the stock of which was to be in gold or silver coin. On February 26, the proposals were approved and a committee was appointed to raise subscriptions. When the bank doors opened for business on June 9, in the old Walton house at 67 St. George's Square, Alexander Hamilton was a member of the board of directors.

Hamilton rose rapidly to prominence at the bar in 1784. He had the courage to defend a former Tory in the case of *Rutgers vs. Wad-*

dington when popular feeling against Tories was very strong in the State. Under the terms of the Peace Treaty, former Tories had legal rights which he felt must be upheld as a question of principle and justice. Treaties made by the National government, he said, were supreme law which no State could set aside. In support of his views on this matter, Hamilton wrote the *Phocion* letters that same year.

Hamilton, who had cut short his formal education to fight for his country, took an active role in education in his adopted State. In November 1784, he became a member of the Board of Regents of The University of the State of New York—the first State educational board in the Nation. Among his fellow Regents were John Jay, Brockholst Livingston, Robert Harpur and James Duane. The Chancellor of the University was Governor George Clinton — an old friend turned political opponent.

Hamilton's first meeting was on November 30, and his first piece of business was consid-

eration of Colonel Clarkson's mission abroad to solicit funds for the University. Clarkson, a Regent, had also been instructed to purchase some equipment for Columbia College (formerly King's College), on the advice of no less august a committee than Dr. Benjamin Franklin, John Adams and Thomas Jefferson!

Hamilton himself served on committees to raise funds for the University, to prepare an educational plan for Columbia and to decide on the number of permanent professors needed for the college. He also helped to select the professors!

In February 1787, Hamilton served on the Special Regents' Committee which recommended the changes in the education law which had provided for The University of the State of New York. The report recommended, in part, the establishment of public schools by public authority.³² At the time the Regents' Committee report was considered, Hamilton was a member of the State Legislature. In this capacity he helped to secure the passage of the bill by which these changes of the Special Regents' Committee were put into effect. The revised law of The University of the State of New York, passed in April 1787, provided for the chartering of schools and colleges and set up a separate trusteeship for Columbia College. It also stated that the Regents are "authorized and required to visit and inspect all the colleges, academies and schools which are or may be established in the State." Through his share in writing the Regents' Committee report and in working for the passage of the resulting legislation, Alexander exerted a widespread and continuing influence on New York State's school system.

On Columbia's separate incorporation, Hamilton became a trustee and continued in this post until his death. At the first commencement of the reorganized college, he received an honorary master of arts degree. He is remembered today at Columbia University by Hamilton Hall, a classroom building, in front of which a statue of Hamilton stands. Each

year, an Alexander Hamilton Medal is awarded to a distinguished graduate by the Alumni Association.

Alexander Hamilton's personal ambition fused with that for his country. He clearly saw that the weak, bankrupt government of the Confederation would lead to a complete collapse. If the God-given rights of life, liberty and property, for which the Revolution had been fought, were not carried into practice by a strong, solvent government, the struggle would have been in vain.

The Annapolis Convention of September 1786, called by Virginia to consider the commercial interests of the United States as a whole, provided the opportunity Hamilton had been seeking. As a New York delegate, he induced the delegates at Annapolis to call for another convention to revise the Articles of Confederation.

This move resulted in the Federal Convention, which opened in Philadelphia in May 1787. Hamilton was one of the three-man New York delegation. Unfortunately his vote was nullified by the votes of the other two members, who were Clintonians. Hamilton's own plan for a frame of government was too extreme for the Convention, but his views and influence were of great importance. After an absence in New York, he returned to the Convention and served on the committee on style and arrangement. On September 17, Hamilton signed the Constitution of the United States of America for New York State.

No one worked more tirelessly than he for its ratification. He conceived the idea which developed into *The Federalist*,³³ a series of 85 essays, published from October 27, 1787, to August 15, 1788, to encourage adoption of the Constitution. John Jay and James Madison collaborated in this tremendous and influential project. Jay wrote five of the papers. Hamilton wrote at least 51 and perhaps joined Madison in writing three more.

When the New York Convention for ratification convened at Poughkeepsie in June

At a Meeting of the Regents of the University at the Assembly Chamber in the City of New York on Thursday the 15th day of February 1787.

Report of the Committee to take into Consideration the present State of the University.

The Committee (appointed the 31st of January last) consisting of the Mayor, Mr. Jay, Dr. Rodgers, Dr. Mason, Dr. Livingston, General Clarkson, Mr. Gros, and Mr. Hamilton to take into Consideration the present State of the University and to report as soon as possible the Measures necessary to be adopted to carry into Effect the Views of the Legislature with respect to the same and particularly with respect to Columbia College.

But before your Committee conclude they feel themselves bound in faithfulness to add that the erecting public Schools for teaching reading writing and arithmetic is an object of very great Importance which ought not to be left to the discretion of private men, but be promoted by public authority: Of so much knowledge no citizen ought to be destitute, and yet it is a Reflection as true as it is painful, that but too many of our youth are brought up in utter Ignorance: Thi

1788, the anti-Federalists were overwhelmingly in the majority — 46 to 19. Against these crushing odds, Hamilton faced a superhuman task.

Hamilton worked passionately and fearlessly for adoption of the Constitution. When New Hampshire ratified on June 21, the Union was legally in operation. Virginia ratified four days later, but the fight raged on in New York. This State, because of its size and significance, was desperately important to the Union. Hamilton spoke almost daily in favor of ratification. Someone described him as a political porcupine, armed at all points, brandishing a shaft at every opponent. Finally, on July 26, New York ratified the Constitution *by three votes*. It is to Hamilton that credit must be given for breaking down the opposition and assuring the success of the new republic.

New York City, then the capital, had grown impatient at the delay in ratification and, in the hope of influencing the verdict in Poughkeepsie, arranged an enormous ceremonial parade for July 23 in honor of the Constitution.

The day began at 8 o'clock with a 10-gun salute from the "ship," *Hamilton*, built and presented by the ship-carpenters for the occasion. This craft, mounted as a large float, was "moored" at Bowling Green on the tip of Manhattan Island. It was equipped as a frigate of 32 guns. It measured 27 feet on the waterline and 10 feet in beam, and was manned by a large crew. It had sails outspread, but 10 beautiful horses took the place of windpower.

The pageant was organized into 10 divisions in honor of the 10 States which had already ratified the Constitution. The route of the procession began at the "Fields," where the young Hamilton had made his first public speech 14 years before. It circled through the city and headed for the Bayard country place, near Grand Street. First came trumpeters, then an artillery unit with a cannon followed by a detachment of light cavalry.

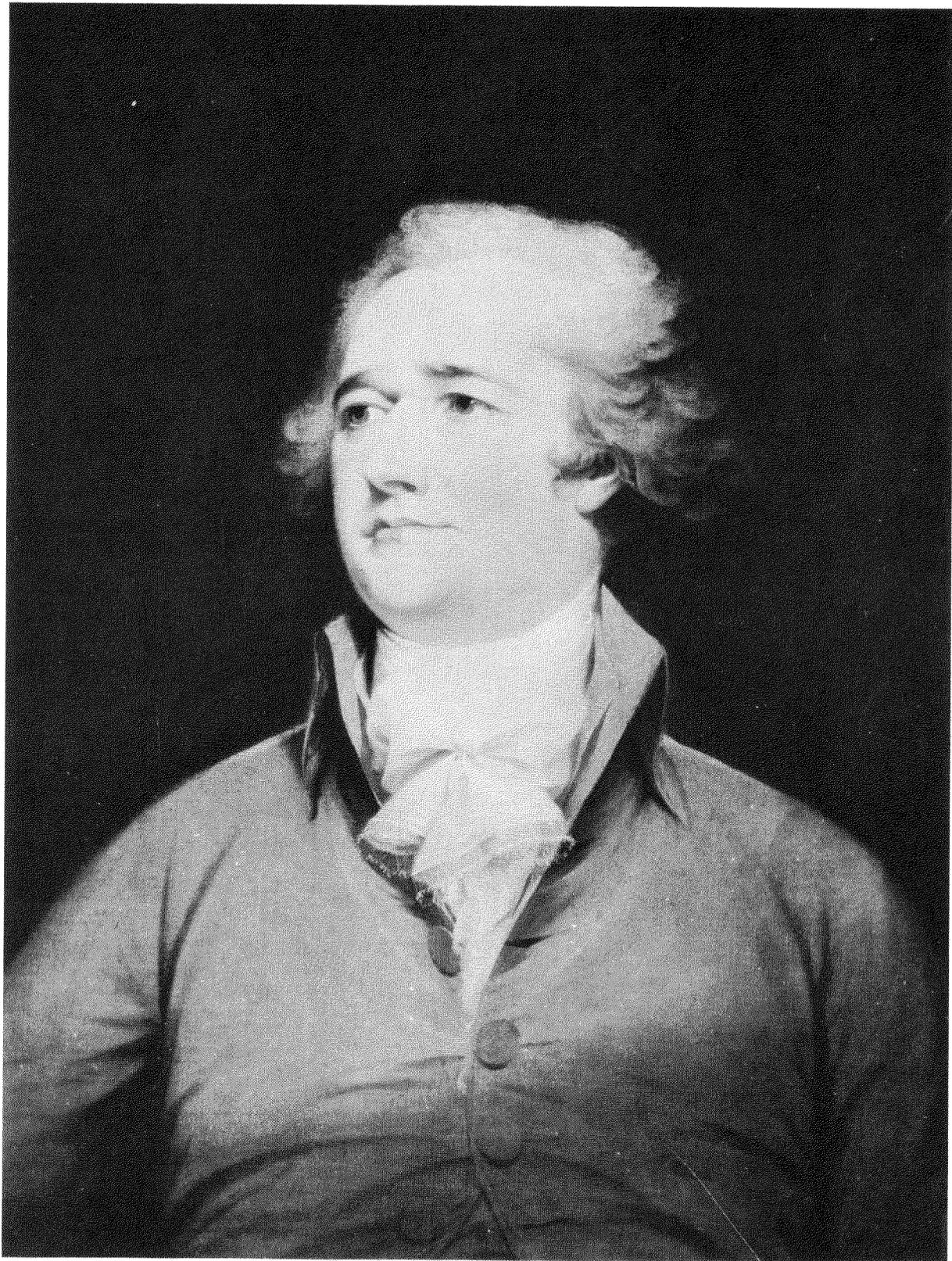
Foresters with axes escorted a man dressed to represent Christopher Columbus. Next came farmers, the Society of the Cincinnati, gardeners, tailors and grain measurers. The bakers marched with 10 apprentices who were dressed in white, wearing blue sashes and carrying large beribboned roses. Ten journeymen in similar costumes preceded another large float drawn by 10 bay horses. On this float was carried the "Federal Loaf." This masterpiece had been kneaded and baked from a whole barrelful of flour and labeled with the names of the 10 States.

Coopers, butchers, tanners, hatters, curriers, skimmers, leather-breeches makers, gloves, cordwainers, carpenters, furriers—all the trades and skills in the city were represented. They vied with each other in colorful and ingenious displays. Pictures of Hamilton with the Constitution in his hand were carried aloft on countless banners in every part of the procession. Because of all this attention to Hamilton, his critics derisively called New York City Hamiltoniopolis.

As the frigate *Hamilton*, which headed the seventh division, passed along Bowling Green, the President of Congress and members of that body were standing on the fort. The ship was immediately "brought to" before the fort and the crew fired a salute of 13 guns.

The float of the printers, bookbinders and stationers followed shortly after the *Hamilton*. This was a horse-drawn stage upon which was mounted a printing press in operation. As the stage moved along, several hundred copies of a song composed for the occasion were struck off and distributed to the crowd.

Engravers, coach and harness makers, coppersmiths, pewterers, gold and silversmiths, tobacconists and many more filled out the long procession. Dyers, dressed in various bright colors, displayed their motto, "Give Glory to God"; tallow chandlers bore a flag with 13 stripes and displaying a picture of Washington on one side and Hamilton on the other. Over



Courtesy of the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C.

Probably the best known portrait of Hamilton is this one painted by John Trumbull. A copy, executed by Gregory Stapko, now hangs in the Regents Room in the New York State Education Building in Albany.

the insignia of the trade were 13 candles, 10 burning and 3 not lighted.

Judges, lawyers, clergymen, the Regents of The University of the State of New York, the president, professors and students of Columbia College (impressive in their academic robes), and the vice president of the Bank of New York, as well as representatives of all the other professions, took part in the pageant.

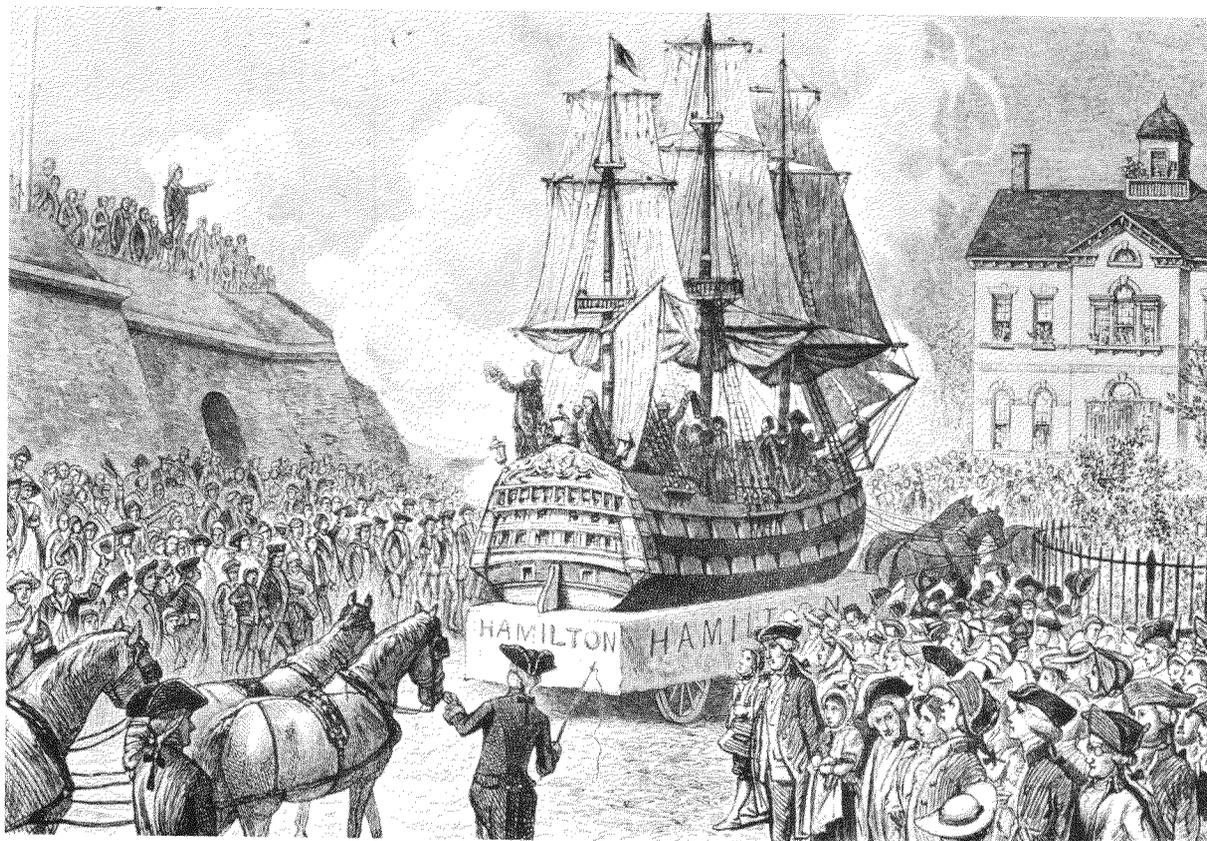
A luncheon banquet was ready for the paraders when the *Hamilton* furlled her top-sails and came to anchor at the Bayard place. Tables were spread for 6,000 persons, includ-

ing the President of Congress and the members present in New York.³⁴ The excitement was so great that many anti-Federalists forgot their convictions and shouted for the Constitution.

When news of the ratification by the State Convention reached the city five days later, groups of citizens went to the houses of Hamilton and other prominent Federalists and gave three cheers before each. It must have been rather an anticlimax to some — but not to Betsey Schuyler Hamilton, who awaited the return from Poughkeepsie of her beloved Colonel whom she had helped unfalteringly throughout his struggles.

The float *Hamilton* halts before the fort to fire its salute in anticipation of New York's ratification of the Constitution.

Brown Brothers



Chapter Notes

³⁰ *The Works of Alexander Hamilton*. H. C. Lodge, Vol. IX, pp. 247-250

³¹ *Ibid.* Vol. I, pp. 243-287

³² Copy of Minutes from the Records of the Trustees of Columbia College in the city of New York 1784-1787. The University of the State of New York MSS

³³ *The Works of Alexander Hamilton*. H. C. Lodge. Vols. XI and XII

³⁴ *History of the City of New York*. M. J. Lamb. Vol. II, pp. 321-328

FIVE

Nation Builder and Patriot

GEORGE WASHINGTON was inaugurated first President of the United States on April 30, 1789. A week later the Hamiltons attended a gala ball in his honor. Alexander was at this time engaged in a successful law practice. Betsey was a loving mother and the sparkling and gracious hostess in their busy New York household.

The most beautiful and distinguished ladies in the city attended the ball. Few jewels were then worn in this country, but the gowns were lavish and elegant and in the latest fashion. One ball dress was of celestial blue satin with a white satin petticoat. The accompanying headdress was fashioned of gauze and white satin, trimmed with a wreath of artificial roses and worn over rows of curls. Another dress was of two-toned gray striped Indian taffeta, with two collars, one yellow and one white, and a yellow bodice touched with blue. One pair of dancing slippers was of celestial blue with rose-colored rosettes.³⁵ As a favor, each lady received a Paris fan, decorated with a picture of President Washington. Several of the dresses worn at the ball are now owned by the Museum of the City of New York. In all, over 300 guests were present — many important government officials, the French and Spanish Ministers and members of the notable New York families.³⁶

As Betsey Hamilton joined in the festivities with her distinguished husband, she could hardly have dreamed that she would soon be, not first lady of the land, but first lady to one of the President's official family. How her dark eyes must have sparkled when the President invited her to dance a cotillion with him! Could this be Betsey, considered the most re-

tiring of the glamorous Schuyler sisters, confidently dancing the cotillion with the Chief Executive as her partner — in the spotlight of history?

Just over four months after the inaugural ball, on September 11, 1789, Hamilton was appointed Secretary of the Treasury. Although acceptance of the office meant great personal sacrifices for him, Hamilton did not hesitate. He felt that the fate of the Nation depended on his work in the finance department. Either the government would be established on a solid financial basis or it would fall back into bankruptcy. In answer to this new call to duty he gave up his law business, at which he was earning considerably more than the new post offered.

Already the Hamiltons were deep in the whirl of government entertaining. Fortunately, Betsey had been trained in the best tradition of the Dutch housewife. Even so, with her growing family, she found it increasingly difficult to make ends meet. Besides Philip, the Hamiltons by this time had three younger children. They were Angelica, who was almost five years old, Alexander, three, and baby James Alexander, one. In addition, the young orphaned daughter of a former Army officer lived with the Hamiltons.

On January 14, 1790, the Secretary of the Treasury presented his *First Report on the Public Credit*³⁷ to Congress. After heated debate, his plan to redeem the National debt, both foreign and domestic, at face value was passed.

The second step in his financial program was the assumption of the States' debt by the National government. This measure caused an

extended struggle in Congress that developed into a deadlock.

Hamilton felt that he must find a way to break the deadlock. One day he stopped Thomas Jefferson in the street when the latter was on his way to see Washington. He walked the senior statesman back and forth before Washington's door for half an hour while he

votes. Since this assumption bill would be a bitter pill to the Southern States, it was agreed that the permanent capital should be located near the geographic center of the Union, at Georgetown, on the Potomac River. In the interim necessary to build the Capitol, the government would be moved from New York to Philadelphia for 10 years.



*Lent by Mrs. John Church Hamilton
Photograph, Courtesy of the Museum of the City of New York*

Elizabeth Schuyler Hamilton used this sewing and vanity case.

explained that the survival of the Union was at stake if assumption was rejected. Pointing out the need for the various members of the Administration to work together, he begged the Secretary of State to appeal to his friends, as only a few votes were needed to pass the measure. Jefferson replied that he was uninformed on the subject, but if the Union might dissolve from failure to adopt assumption, he would arrange a dinner at which Hamilton could discuss the critical matter with some of his friends.

At the dinner, Hamilton was so persuasive that some members of Congress changed their

Assumption of the States' debt, with provision for repayment of principal, was approved by Congress³⁸ in late July 1790. Hamilton had achieved a great victory. One more step had been taken toward making the United States "one Nation, indivisible."

President Washington was very fond of driving out from New York City into the countryside in his post chaise or his coach. As a breathing spell in the fight over assumption, Alexander and Betsey Hamilton and others joined the President in a pleasant outing to Harlem Heights one day the early part of July. Dinner was planned at the former Roger

Morris house (Jumel Mansion) there. The President, his stepgrandchildren and his secretaries; Vice President John Adams, his wife Abigail and their son; Thomas Jefferson; Secretary of War Knox and Mrs. Knox and the Hamiltons were among those who rode in carriages to the Heights.

The President's coach was cream-colored, ornamented with painted cupids supporting festoons and with flower decorations around the panels. It was drawn by four to six prancing horses with painted hooves and was escorted by outriders in livery. This stylish carriage was probably preceded by the President's personal secretaries on horseback.

The party visited the battlegrounds of the Revolution, which must have been especially interesting to Washington, Knox and Hamilton. They reminisced about the fighting in that area and discussed the fine view from Fort Washington³⁹— this time unclouded by smoke from enemy gunfire.

In the fall of 1790 Alexander and Betsey moved with their four children to Philadelphia,

the temporary capital, which was to be their home for more than four years.

In January 1795, Hamilton resigned from the Treasury and took his family to "The Pastures" in Albany for a visit. In his work for a sound National economy, he had incurred scars and enmities which would plague him the rest of his life. Yet there were many who realized the value of his contribution to the Nation.

After his return to New York State, Hamilton was given a testimonial dinner on February 27 by the New York City Chamber of Commerce in its hall at the Tontine Coffee House. It was a very dignified and brilliant occasion to honor the former Secretary for his services in the Treasury Department. About 200 attended—the Chancellor and judges of the State, the Speaker of the Assembly, the recorder of the city, the president of Columbia College and many prominent merchants.

The President of the United States and other important officials were toasted and given three cheers. There were also toasts to

This letter of Hamilton to Betsey was written in the 15th year of their married life.

Courtesy of the New York State Library

For want of having made application on
time The Stage waggon has been engaged
so as to prevent my going in it. I
must therefore take my chance by water
which I shall do tomorrow and must
content myself with praying for
a fair wind to waft me speedily
to the bosom of my beloved
Adieu
A. Hamilton
Apr 8
1795

Love to thy & May.

Agriculture, Commerce, Liberty and Law, National Credit, Integrity and Knowledge, Patriotism – and to the People of the United States, “Brothers of One Family.”

On the former Secretary’s withdrawal from the banquet, the chairman offered his name and he was cheered three times three cheers.⁴⁰ It must have been a heartening echo as Hamilton left the Coffee House. Back in Albany, where he went again to rest after his arduous public services, he received a certificate of the Freedom of the City of New York, granted by the City Council.

After a long visit at the Schuylers’, Hamilton established his family at 56 Pine Street, New York City, in a small house which served as both office and home. In his own words, he was not worth \$500, having devoted his slender fortune and the best years of his life to the service of his country.⁴¹ Poorer than when he had accepted the secretaryship, he was forced to borrow to start practicing law again. With all his opportunities for self-enrichment, his personal honesty and integrity in the high government post had been unassailable.

One night the French statesman, Charles de Talleyrand, during his visit in New York, passed the little house on Pine Street, on his way to a party. Through the window he observed the slight figure of his friend Hamilton, bent over his desk, writing a legal document by candlelight.

Talleyrand was so struck by the sight and by what it represented, that he burst into the

*Courtesy of Mrs. Edward Small Moore
and the Frick Art Reference Library*

This portrait of Alexander Hamilton was painted by Ezra Ames about 1802. Elizabeth Schuyler Hamilton called this Ames portrait of her husband a perfect and excellent likeness.

brightly lighted salon where the party was in progress exclaiming to the elegantly clad assemblage, "I have just come from viewing a man who made the fortune of his country, but now is working all night in order to support his family."

In his legal career, Hamilton rose quickly and began to make a good income, although his charges were too moderate. Always a hard worker, he probed deeply into each case with astonishing perception. He did not accept the current opinions at secondhand, but traced the principles involved back to the original sources.⁴² When he had a serious situation to evaluate, he studied it carefully, then slept for six or seven hours, regardless of the time of night. On awakening, he took strong coffee, then worked at his desk for six to eight hours more. Although he wrote very rapidly, his manuscripts were so accurate and so legible that they seldom required correction, even for the press.

One legal case, completed shortly before Hamilton's death, is of special interest to New Yorkers. It was in February 1804 that Hamilton appealed the conviction of Harry Crosswell, a newspaper editor of Hudson, N. Y., for libel, before the Court of Errors in Albany. Crosswell had published in his newspaper, *The Wasp*, an article attacking Thomas Jefferson. Hamilton's defense was based on the principle of freedom of the press.⁴³ He was so eloquent that this appeal was considered by some to have been his best legal speech. Crosswell's



*On loan at the Museum of the City of New York
from members of the Hamilton Family*

Elizabeth Hamilton sat for this portrait in 1787 in the debtors' prison where Ralph Earl, the artist, was held. Her example brought him enough commissions to pay his debts and become a free man again.

conviction was upheld, however. The constructive result of Hamilton's effort came the next year, 1805, when a new libel law was passed as a result of Hamilton's plea.

Hamilton's interest in education continued with his service as trustee of Columbia College. In January 1793, the Hamilton-Oneida Academy in Herkimer (now Oneida) County had been founded for Indian and white students and Hamilton was appointed its premier trustee. This academy later became Hamilton College. Also named in his honor is the Alexander Hamilton High School at Elmsford as well as Hamilton County and the town and village of Hamilton in Madison County. In addition to Columbia, four other colleges and universities conferred honorary degrees on Hamilton and he received honorary French citizenship, too.

The interest of the former Treasury Secretary in the National government was unabated. He kept up a vigorous correspondence with officialdom during the rest of Washington's administration and drafted the Farewell Address of our first President.

Fearing that Thomas Jefferson, his political antagonist, would win the presidential election of 1796, Hamilton promoted the cause of John Adams, who subsequently won. During Adams' administration, Hamilton exerted great influence on the government. Operating from his New York law office, he really served as an elder statesman. It was, in fact, concern over the waning influence of the Federalist Party that led Hamilton in 1801 to establish *The New York Evening Post*, the oldest continuously published daily newspaper in the larger American cities.

When war with France threatened, Hamilton took up his pen to warn against yielding to the demands of that country. But he wished his fellow citizens to stop short of war. He felt that the economy of the Nation needed more years of neutrality and peace in which to grow strong.

He was convinced, however, that an impressive show of arms was necessary, both as a deterrent to war and as a defense if war came. It was in April 1798, during the French crisis, that John Jay, then Governor of New York, offered Hamilton an interim appointment as Senator from New York. Hamilton declined so that he would be ready to serve in the Army, if necessary. In late July, he was finally appointed Inspector General of the Army, with the rank of major general.

The death of President Washington in mid-December 1799 was a real blow to Hamilton. He wrote to Tobias Lear, Washington's secretary, that perhaps no man had equal cause with him to deplore the loss. He had been much indebted to the kindness of Washington, who had constantly provided him with a shield and protection from political opponents.⁴⁴

By that time, the Hamiltons' family of children had grown to number seven. After James Alexander had come John Church born August 22, 1792, William Stephen, born August 4, 1797, and Eliza, born November 20, 1799.

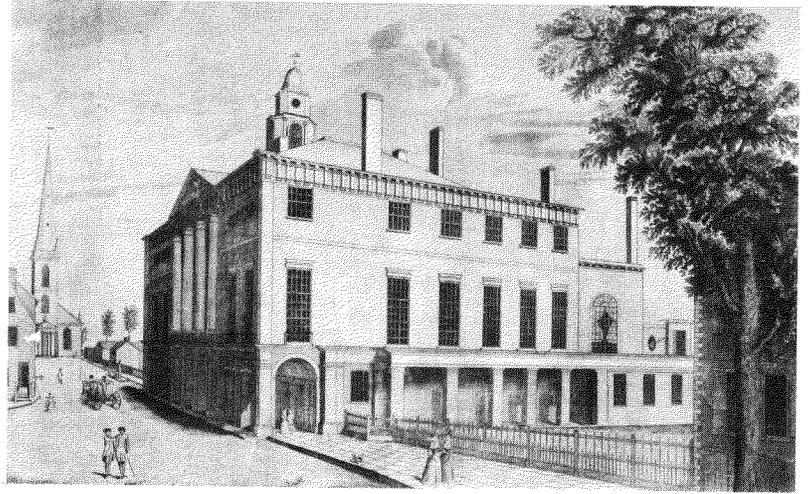
Alexander was a devoted father and always found time to romp and play with his children. Though he was always meticulously groomed, he did not mind when the youngsters mussed his neatly powdered hair or climbed all over his immaculate clothes. He is said to have joined Angelica in playing with her doll as often as she demanded, and he never hesitated to get down on all fours in the parlor to play bear with his sons.

In 1800, the Hamiltons were living at 26 Broadway. The family ranged from 18-year-old Philip to baby Eliza, still in her cradle. Angelica, now 16, was very musical. She practiced her music and studied French, but her formal schooling was presumably finished by then. Angelica often accompanied her father on the piano or harp when he sang.

Breakfast in the busy household was a hurried affair. Before the meal started, Mrs. Hamilton sat at the head of the table, cutting slices

This engraving shows Wall Street soon after the Hamiltons lived there. On the right is the former Federal Hall, where Washington was inaugurated as President. In the background is Trinity Church. Hamilton is buried in its churchyard.

Courtesy of The New-York Historical Society



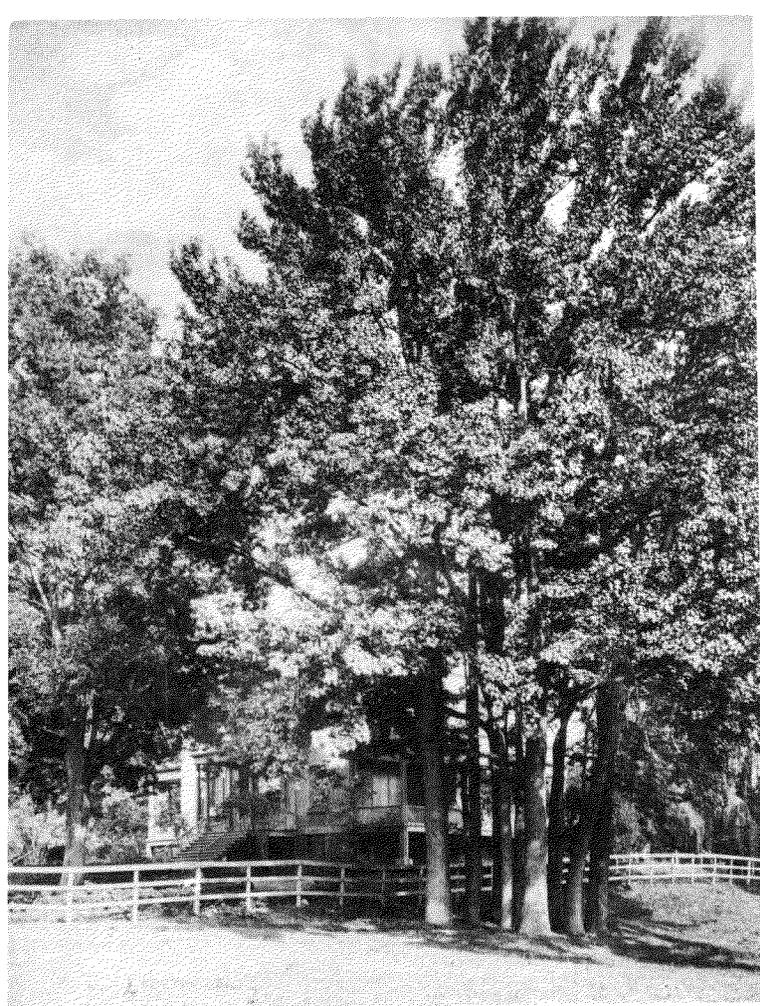
Courtesy of the New York Public Library

After the death of their eldest son, Philip, pictured here in the last year of his life, the Hamilton family never fully recovered from the loss.



*Lent by the Hamilton Family
Photograph, Courtesy of the Museum
of the City of New York*

This desk was owned by Alexander Hamilton.



Courtesy of The New-York Historical Society

After Hamilton built his New York home, "The Grange," he planted 13 gum trees representing the 13 original States. This picture shows the home and trees in about 1870.

of bread and buttering them. The younger boys stood at her side and read a chapter from the Bible or a portion of Goldsmith's *Rome*, in turn. When the reading was finished, their father and the older children were called to breakfast. Afterwards, there was a hectic rush as the boys were packed off to school.⁴⁵

Philip, the oldest son, showed great promise, and his father watched over his education with loving care. His letters are evidence of the great affection he had for the boy. When Philip was graduated from Columbia College in 1800 and took up law, Hamilton made out a special set of rules for him. His days were to be spent studying and reading. On Saturdays, from noon on, he was free to amuse himself. Sunday mornings he was to attend church, then be permitted innocent recreations for the rest of the day.⁴⁶

In 1800, Hamilton bought 16 acres of land in the country, north of the city, for \$4,000. General Schuyler contributed lumber for building a new house from his estate in Old Saratoga and promised to paint it. The house, named "The Grange" by Hamilton after his father's family home in Scotland, was located at the present corner of 143d Street and Old Kingsbridge Road. In 1889 it was moved to Convent Avenue near 140th Street. Hamilton took pains over every detail of the building and planned an extensive garden. Near the southwest corner of the house, he planted 13 gum trees, for the 13 original States. The family moved to "The Grange" in 1802.

Meanwhile Hamilton's career was moving toward its fateful climax as the rivalry between him and Aaron Burr grew more and more bitter. Hamilton's clashes with the brilliant and dashing Burr in the courts of law never had the deadly seriousness of their political encounters. Hamilton had developed an overwhelming fear of Burr's motives and character and was determined to keep him from positions of influence. When Burr and Jefferson were tied for the Presidency in 1801, Hamilton felt so deeply that Burr would endanger the country that he caused Jefferson, his political opponent, to be elected. Of course, Aaron Burr never forgave Hamilton.

In November of that same year tragedy came to the Hamilton family. Young Philip, the most promising of the children, was shot and killed in a duel by George Eacker, a violent opponent of the Federalists. The dispute was caused by Eacker's Fourth of July *Oration*, in which he had attacked Hamilton policies before an audience that included many Burr supporters. General and Mrs. Hamilton never recovered from this blow and their daughter Angelica became mentally unbalanced for the rest of her life as a result. A new son, born in June 1802, was named Philip for his beloved older brother. As a result of a legal quarrel, Mrs. Hamilton's brother-in-

law, John Church, had dueled with Burr in September 1799, but without incident. In the spring of the year 1804, Burr sought the governorship of New York State and Hamilton aided in his defeat. Burr challenged Hamilton to a duel on the basis of the latter's published disparagement of him.

Hamilton faced a grave choice. Should he accept the challenge? He was opposed to dueling on religious grounds. Should he refuse? In the custom of the day, a duel was an "affair of honor." Furthermore, Hamilton felt that, in the event that his country ever needed his military or political services again, his reputation for courage must be untarnished. He concluded that he must accept Burr's challenge. From the beginning, however, Hamilton planned to reserve his own shot and thereby not violate his religious principles.⁴⁷

On July 11, 1804, at the famous dueling ground at Weehawken, N. J., Hamilton arrived to face his opponent. The signal was given. Hamilton's gun discharged harmlessly, cutting some of the leaves of the trees above him. Burr's aim was deadly and true. Hamilton fell, mortally wounded.

With the fateful event at Weehawken, the career of Hamilton, one of New York's most distinguished citizens, came to its tragic and untimely end.

During the observance of this Alexander Hamilton Bicentennial Year, students of the Empire State might well review the debt they owe to Hamilton, the precocious youth from the West Indies whose quest for education brought him to the Colony of New York.

His initiative and hard work enabled Hamilton to serve his country as a Patriot, a speaker and a pamphleteer in the struggle for freedom from England. With courage and leadership as a commander of troops he fought for New York's independence and helped to end the military hostilities of the War at Yorktown. And as aide-de-camp to Washington he served brilliantly in many other campaigns.

Hamilton's studious habits and lifelong devotion to reading and research in history, politics, economics, education and in other fields, helped prepare him to play a leading role in the establishment of New York in its place of prominence and importance in the Union. Also, as one of the early Regents of the University, Hamilton exerted a real and lasting

Hamilton's New York home, "The Grange," was moved to this, its present location, in 1889.

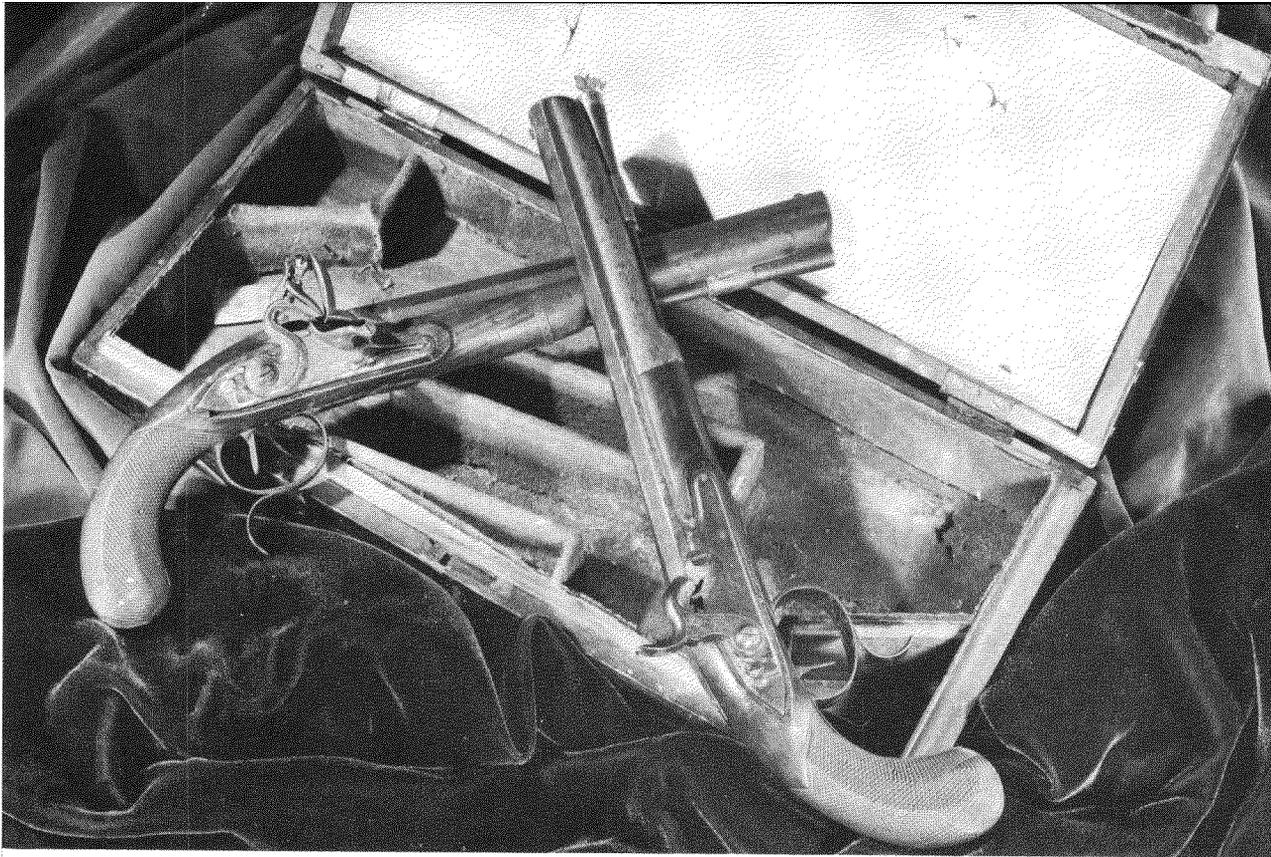
Lawrence D. Thornton





Courtesy of the Beale Collection, Modern Enterprises

J. B. Beale made this representation of the duel between Hamilton and Burr.



Courtesy of the Chase Manhattan Bank

These John B. Church pistols, used in the Hamilton-Burr duel, were owned by the Bank of the Manhattan Company when it merged with the Chase National Bank. The Manhattan Company, of which Burr and Church were original directors, supplied "pure and wholesome water" as well as banking facilities to New York City.

Hamilton faced Burr on this site, the famous Weehawken dueling ground.

Painting by E. C. Coates, Courtesy of the Fenimore House Collection, Cooperstown



influence on the school system of New York.

Hamilton recognized that the strength and security of New York and of all the other States rested upon the creation of an "indestructible Union." The story of his work to establish such a union is not within the scope of this pamphlet, but is generally featured in

other publications prepared for the Bicentennial observance. It seems appropriate that as New Yorkers we should emphasize the special contributions to New York State made by Alexander Hamilton, who was so largely responsible for providing a firm foundation on which the United States was to grow to be one of the great nations of the world.

Chapter Notes

- ³⁵ *History of American Costume*. E. McClellan. pp. 199-202
- ³⁶ *History of the City of New York*. M. J. Lamb. Vol. II, pp. 341-342
- ³⁷ *The Works of Alexander Hamilton*. H. C. Lodge. Vol. II, pp. 227-291
- ³⁸ *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*. A. A. Lipscomb. Vol. I, pp. 274-276
- ³⁹ *History of the City of New York*. M. J. Lamb. Vol. II, pp. 373 and 376
- ⁴⁰ *The Intimate Life of Alexander Hamilton*. A. M. Hamilton. pp. 205-206
- ⁴¹ *Recollections and Private Memoirs of Washington*. G. W. P. Custis. p. 352
- ⁴² *Memoirs and Letters of James Kent*. William Kent. p. 318
- ⁴³ *The Works of Alexander Hamilton*. H. C. Lodge. Vol. VIII, pp. 383-425
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid.* Vol. X, pp. 356-357
- ⁴⁵ *Reminiscences of James A. Hamilton*. J. A. Hamilton. pp. 3-4
- ⁴⁶ *The Intimate Life of Alexander Hamilton*. A. M. Hamilton. p. 215
- ⁴⁷ *Ibid.* pp. 393-395

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