

# “Nowhere is it stronger than in Albany”

## Hamilton: An American Musical's *Connections to the NYS Capital City*

*Alexander Hamilton, the Schuylers, Aaron Burr, and the Marquis de Lafayette in Albany*

By Jessie Serfilippi



Albany's moment in *Hamilton: An American Musical* happens during the final song of Act I, as an enthusiastic Alexander Hamilton is looking to start his law practice after the end of the war and declares "Corruption's such an old song that we can sing along in harmony/ And nowhere is it stronger than in Albany!" Hamilton's law career certainly received a nice start in Albany, but that wasn't the only thing he did while in the city that would eventually become the capital of New York in 1797.

Though compared to the present day grandeur of New York City it may be hard to believe, Albany was an incredibly important city before, during, and for decades after the American Revolution. Because of its status, it played host to many people of significance, including, but most certainly not limited to, George Washington, the Marquis de Lafayette, Aaron Burr, and, perhaps more so than anyone else, Alexander Hamilton.

But Hamilton's Albany story starts before he was even born, let alone before he arrived on New York soil as an orphaned immigrant from the island of Nevis. It is thanks to one key Albany family, whose wealth and influence had long been established by the time Hamilton arrived on the scene, that Hamilton's Albany story is even possible.

Hamilton's Albany story begins with none other than the Schuyler family.

## The Schuylers: Colonial Dutch Royalty

If there had been royalty in colonial Albany, the Schuylers certainly would have qualified. Born in Albany to Johannes Schuyler and Cornelia Van Cortlandt in November of 1733, Philip



A display showing the original size of the Schuyler Mansion and grounds. (In the Schuyler Mansion's museum.)

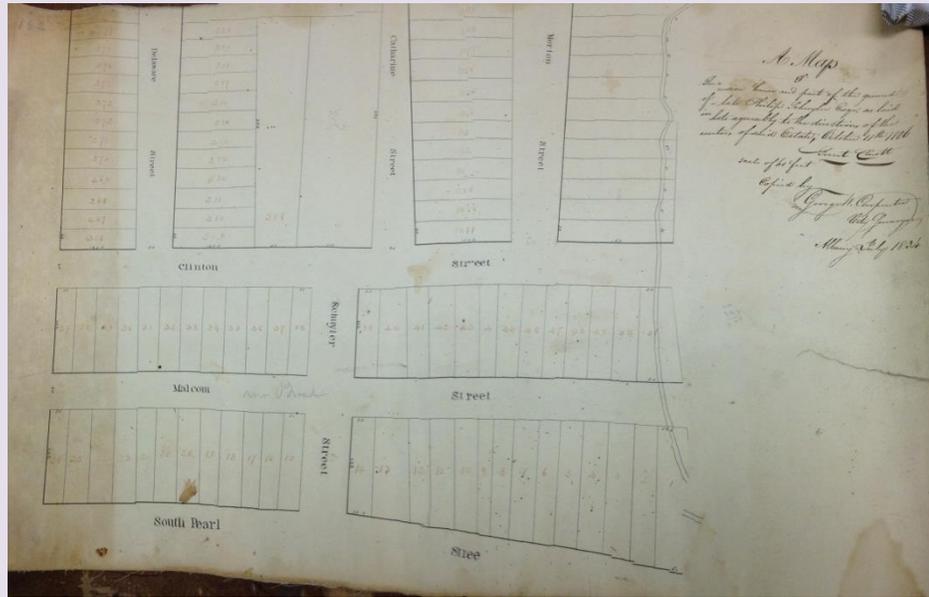
Schuyler was fourth generation Dutch in one of the original Albany families; his grandfather had even served as mayor. While Philip's family was most certainly not poor, his true wealth came when he married into the Van Rensselaer family. The Van Rensselaers, who owned the majority of the land

surrounding what would become the Corporation of Albany in 1686, were also

one of the original Albany area families, making the marriage an ideal match.

Philip Schuyler married Catherine Van Rensselaer in September of 1755. It was her dowry that allowed him to build the still-standing Schuyler Mansion between the end of the French and Indian War and start of the American Revolution. Situated within a mile or so of Albany, which was still stockade-surrounded at that time, it was the largest private home in the area, which meant that it was where anyone of status wanted to stay while they were passing through the city.

Schuyler was incredibly powerful and influential not only in the city of Albany, but throughout the northern colonies. Starting in 1755, he served with the British as both a captain and quartermaster in the French and Indian War. His prior military experience and successes led to his appointment as a Major General by the Continental Congress in 1775, where he served in the Continental Army as a trusted and revered military leader in the northern region of the colonies.



85-04075. Office of the City Engineer. Map of the Schuyler Mansion Estate as divided by its executors (1834). Courtesy of the Albany County Archival Collection.

Along with being a military leader, and later a United States senator from New York, Philip Schuyler was also father to fifteen children, eight of whom survived into adulthood. It was his second daughter, Elizabeth “Eliza” Schuyler, who Alexander Hamilton became acquainted with during the early winter of 1780, when he was serving as one of Washington’s aides-de-camp in Morristown, New Jersey. In April of the same year they were engaged, and on December 14, 1780, Elizabeth Schuyler became Elizabeth Hamilton. She and Alexander were married in the formal living room of the Schuyler Mansion, and her wedding was the only one out of her four other sisters that their parents were able to see. Her older sister, Angelica, had eloped in 1777, her younger sister, Peggy, would elope in 1783, the fourth Schuyler daughter, Cornelia, eloped in 1797, and the final daughter, Catherine, eloped in 1803, shortly after her mother’s death, though, unlike the other sisters, she eloped because her father was too ill for a wedding.



The fireplace in the formal living room at the Schuyler Mansion.

Soon after the wedding, in January of 1781, Alexander had to return to the front. Although Eliza joined him for a brief time, she soon returned to Albany, pregnant with their first child, Philip, who was born at the Schuyler Mansion on January 22, 1782.

Hamilton served in the army (with one brief stint of separation from Washington after a quarrel) until the victory at Yorktown in the fall of 1781, after which he rejoined Eliza in Albany, where they both stayed at the Schuyler Mansion for nearly two years. It is here that Hamilton's Albany story truly reaches its height, showing the importance of Albany not only to the young immigrant, but also its larger importance in the newly formed United States.

## Alexander Hamilton: Albany Lawyer

After the American Revolution there was a dire need for lawyers because a law had been passed that barred loyalists, even those who had previously been certified to practice law in New York State, from practicing. Hamilton was already on the fast-track to becoming an attorney because his military service reduced the three years of apprenticeship that were typically required of law students down to one. He, unlike other law students, also had access to his father-in-law's personal library, the second largest legal library in New York at the time.

Alexander and Eliza stayed at the Schuyler Mansion as Alexander finished his studies and set up his fledgling law practice before moving to New York City in 1783. This was nowhere near the end of Hamilton's time in Albany, though. The young lawyer had to make many trips from New York City to Albany, traveling between New York's two Supreme Courts at the time, to represent his many clients. It's said that he wrote at least one of the Federalist Papers during one of these journeys, either on the boat up the Hudson or at the Schuyler Mansion, where he always stayed, sometimes sans Eliza, while representing clients in the Albany court.

One of the most famous cases he was involved in, *People v. Croswell*, happened in Albany in 1804, when Hamilton brought an appeal before the New York Supreme Court. He gave a six hour long closing argument about freedom of press, the basis of which was eventually added to New York State's second constitution in 1821.



The desk in Philip Schuyler's study at the Schuyler Mansion.

Albany Corporation  
1810 To Harry Crosswell  
Dec. 4 For Advertising 1 3/4 Squares 3 times  
from Page 3 of the Bal. \$1,57 1/2  
In Comm. Council  
20th April 1812  
Attested - Chas. D. Cooper Clk  
P.S. Van Rensselaer Mayor  
Paid April 22, 1812  
H. Crosswell

92-02745. Chamberlain's Office. A receipt from a transaction between Harry Crosswell and the city of Albany in 1812. Courtesy of the Albany County Archival Collection.

It was also during his time in Albany for this case, while at a caucus for the Federalist Party at the City Tavern, that he proclaimed Aaron Burr a dangerous man<sup>i</sup>. This remark going public was the beginning of the end of Hamilton's life.

## Dueling Forces: Hamilton and Burr in Albany

While Hamilton and Burr's paths certainly crossed often, there are some notable instances of how these two men's lives intertwined in Albany. They both flocked to Albany after the war ended, though Hamilton had much more stable connections in Albany than Burr did.

While Burr came from money and was the son of two prominent families (his maternal grandfather was Jonathan Edwards, the infamous New England preacher who wrote the sermon "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," and his father served as the second president of what would eventually become Princeton College), Hamilton had become the beloved son-in-law of one of the oldest and most influential New York families. Hamilton had the privilege of accessing Philip Schuyler's extensive law library whenever he wanted as he studied to become a lawyer, and he was most likely allowed to utilize Schuyler's study at whim, as well. Burr, on the other hand, had to apply, like any other student, to use Schuyler's law books. This application process was most likely similar to the one students are still accustomed to today, including

obtaining references who wrote on Burr's behalf. Burr was granted access to the library, though one can only imagine how much it must have irked him that Hamilton, who, by colonial standards, had no status, had day and night access to such an invaluable resource.

Both men quickly passed their bar exams and were allowed to practice law in New York State. They both rose up among the ranks as prominent, respected, and sought-after lawyers, and there are even a few instances of the two of them teaming up for cases, suggesting that their relationship at this point was not as strained as it would eventually become.

Hamilton and Burr both had family lives in Albany, too. Both of their firstborn children were born in Albany; Theodosia Burr— his only child— was born only a year after Philip Hamilton. Burr is even said to have been in Albany while planning his daughter's wedding.<sup>ii</sup>

The start of Burr's political career was in Albany, as well. He served as a member of the New York State Assembly, which met in Albany, from 1784 to 1785, and again from 1798-1799. Burr also served as a member of the US Senate—defeating the incumbent, none other than Hamilton's father-in-law, Philip Schuyler, for the position in 1791. He served until 1797, when Philip Schuyler once again took control of the seat.

## **The Hamiltons and Yellow Fever**

1793 is commonly known as the year of yellow fever in the United States. It was the year the disease struck many large cities, including Philadelphia, where Hamilton, his wife Eliza, and their children were residing at the time, as it was then the US capital and he was serving as Secretary of the Treasury under George Washington.

Hamilton and Eliza fell victim to yellow fever in the late summer of 1793. They quickly sent their children back to Albany to stay with their grandparents in the hopes of sparing them the dangers of contracting the illness. The children were indeed spared from yellow fever, and both of their parents recovered. In September of 1793, the Hamiltons began the journey from Philadelphia to Albany to be reunited with their children. The journey was longer and harder than usual because many of the major cities they normally passed through were under quarantine and did not allow those who had contracted yellow fever to enter.

Meanwhile, as the couple made the arduous journey, on September 21, 1793, the Albany Common Council passed a law barring anyone who came from an area rampant with yellow fever from entering the city of Albany. This included the Hamiltons, who made it all the way to the opposite side of the Hudson before being told they could not be ferried across.

The Clerk having informed the Board, that it appears that the Appraisers heretofore appointed to make an Estimate and Assessment on the Inhabitants and Occupants of the Houses and Lots on that part of State lying west of the Houses of Henry Staats & British Glass and to extend as far west as Lodge Street to pave the same - have not held any office upon the Town Clerks Office, for their faithful discharge of their said offices. *Thereupon* -  
 Resolved that the Clerk call upon the said appraisers to make a return of the said appraisement agreeably to Law -

A Common Council held for the City of Albany at the City Hall of the said City on the twenty first day of September 1793 -

- Present**  
 Abraham Yates Jun<sup>r</sup> Mayor  
 Peter Lamsingh  
 John W Wendell  
 Abraham Schuyler } Aldermen  
 Henry Staats  
 Simon Dewitt  
 John F Cruyn } Assistants

Resolved that the account of William B. Moore be referred to the Committee of Accounts -  
 Resolved that Simon Dewitt John W Wendell and Abraham Schuyler be a Committee to prepare an ordinance, and to concert measures for preventing the Pestilential Fever now -

prevalent at the City of Philadelphia from being brought into this City -

The Board adjourned till Six O'clock this evening to meet at the House of James M<sup>r</sup> Gourck Innholder -

The Board met pursuant to adjournment at the House of James M<sup>r</sup> Gourck Innholder, Sept<sup>r</sup> 21 1793 at Six O'clock P. M.

- Present**  
 Abraham Yates Jun<sup>r</sup> Mayor  
 Peter Lamsingh  
 Abraham Schuyler  
 John W Wendell  
 Samuel Stvinger } Aldermen  
 Simon Dewitt  
 John F Cruyn  
 Henry Staats } Assistants

Resolved that the Superintendent and City Watchmen who are for duty this Night, immediately attend without a Draw, and be subject to his order till Ten o'clock -  
 Resolved that Mess<sup>rs</sup> Boyd and Cummings, or the person who may have Charge of the Ferry boats on the west side of Hudsons River immediately furnish without a Draw with a ferry boat and oars during this night and to morrow -  
 Resolved that a discreet and Active Citizen with four Men be immediately appointed as a Guard to attend at or below the Overseaw, whose duty it shall be to bring up, and detain every Vessel on her way to this City till she shall be Examined by one or more of the Physicians appointed for that purpose whether

there are any persons on board infected with a contagious disease, and in case the Physicians shall declare that there is any person so infected on board or if it shall appear that such vessels or any of the Persons on board come from a place where a contagious disease prevails, such vessel shall be ordered to remain at Anchor and no person permitted to Land till further Measures are taken, or permission of Entry be given by the Mayor, or in his absence by the Recorder or any three of the Aldermen of this City, and that no vessel be permitted to come up to this City without a Certificate from such Physicians appointed as aforesaid that on the Examination hereby directed to be made, the said vessel has no person infected as aforesaid on board, nor coming from an infected place  
 Resolved that hereafter any vessel having on board any persons or persons whatsoever coming from Philadelphia, from any place infected with a contagious disease to this City, or if any vessel or person shall be discovered to have arrived in this City from such places, she, he or they and every of them shall immediately be sent back - and all persons taking in Lodgers, and every Other Citizen in this City and its vicinity, are hereby earnestly requested to give immediate information to the Mayor, Recorder or any one of the Aldermen of this City, of all persons of the above description that may come within their knowledge -

Resolved that he and it is hereby enjoined on Mess<sup>rs</sup> Boyd and Cummings the Present Ferry men, to make diligent inquiry whether any persons from Philadelphia or any other approaching to be diseased offer to pass their Ferry to this City, and if such shall appear to be the case, immediately

to make report thereof, and detain them till they shall receive directions from the Mayor, or in his absence the Recorder, or any one of the Aldermen how farthest to proceed in the case and that the other Ferry men in the vicinity of this City, be and they are hereby requested to Observe a similar Conduct -

Resolved that the Physicians of this City be requested to attend in Relation in order to Examine every vessel that be brought too, agreeably to the foregoing Resolutions for the purposes aforesaid -

Resolved that the Clerk cause the four preceding Resolutions to be published in both the newspapers printed in this City -

Resolved that without a Draw be and he is hereby appointed Superintendent of a Guard to Watch, bring up, and detain all vessels on their way to this City, to the End that they and every Person on board may be Examined by the Physicians appointed for that Purpose suspecting contagious diseases and that he suffer no person from on board to Land until such Examination be made -

A Common Council held for the City of Albany at the City Hall of the said City on the twenty third day of September 1793 - 10 O'clock a. M. -

- Present**  
 Abraham Yates Jun<sup>r</sup> Mayor  
 Peter Lamsingh  
 Samuel Stvinger  
 John W Wendell  
 Abraham Schuyler } Aldermen  
 Simon Dewitt  
 John F Cruyn  
 Henry Staats } Assistants

89-01476. Albany Common Council. Minutes from September 21, 1793, meeting during which the council temporarily restricted travel into the city. Courtesy of Albany County Archival Collection.

Philip Schuyler had to negotiate with the current Albany mayor, Abraham Yates Jr., for the ferrying of the Hamiltons across the river to his home. They were begrudgingly allowed passage so long as they and everyone else in the mansion stayed on Schuyler's private grounds and did not enter the city. Schuyler agreed to these rules, under the condition that food would be delivered to them, but Hamilton was less than happy about these stipulations and threatened to break them if duty called him into Albany.

Thankfully, there was no need for Hamilton to go against the Council's orders. The ban was soon lifted with the passage of a resolution by the Albany Common Council that allowed anyone who had been in good health for two weeks after coming from a fever-infected area to enter the city.<sup>iii</sup> This allowed the Hamiltons, and everyone else who had been quarantined in the Schuyler Mansion as a result of their arrival, the freedom to move about the city as they pleased.

## **The Pastures: Albany Common Council Calls Upon Hamilton**

In 1795, the Albany Common Council was having trouble determining if a piece of land, the Pastures, belonged to the city or the Dutch Reformed Church. It was a desirable piece of land for the church as it provided them with a source of revenue.<sup>iv</sup> The council, on the other hand, wanted it to further develop the city.

After reviewing the Dongan Charter, the members of the council were unsure if the land was already legally the City's or if the Dutch Church had a proper claim to it. On April 27, 1795, they appointed Theodorus Van Wyck Graham to call upon Hamilton for his legal advice on the matter.

On June 22, 1795, Hamilton's response appears in the minutes the recorder kept of the council's meetings. While it is not in Hamilton's handwriting, it is exactly what he told them. He determined that the land did indeed belong to the Dutch Church based on past agreements between the church and the city. The church eventually gave the city the land, though not for nearly another twenty years.

# The Pastures Legal Dispute through Images



85-03883. Office of the City Engineer. Map of the Dutch Church Lower Pasture (1791). Courtesy of the Albany County Archival Collection.

*draw upon the Chamberlain to pay for the same  
 Resolved that J. V. W. Graham be Authorized to call on  
 Alexander Hamilton and retain him in behalf of this Board  
 and take his opinion in writing and report it to this Board  
 of the eastern extent of the grant in the charter of this City  
 to the Pasture and the legal extent of the conveyances of*

89-01477. Albany Common Council. Graham is assigned by the council to visit Hamilton and ask for his legal advice (1795). Courtesy of the Albany County Archival Collection.

10 the commence of accounts + + + + +  
 The Committee appointed by this Board on the Twenty Seventh  
 day of April last to take the opinion of Alexander Hamilton  
 in writing respecting the Eastern Extent of the grant in the

89-01477. Albany  
 Common Council.  
 Hamilton's opinion as  
 recorded by the council.  
 Courtesy of the Albany  
 County Archival  
 Collection.

56 Charter of this City, to the Pasture, and the legal extent of the  
 Conveyances Executed by this Board to the Corporation of the  
 Dutch Church in this City, and whether this Board by those  
 deeds have parted with the right of wharfage and Anchorage  
 along the Pasture; Report the following Case—  
 The Inhabitants of Albany previous to their Charter of  
 Incorporation were entitled among other things to a piece  
 of Land called the Pasture, which in the conveyance for it  
 is Expressly bounded on one side on Hudsons River, without  
 any Mention of high or low Water mark, the Charter from  
 the Crown to the Corporation confines this Grant, in the  
 Original Terms of it, and Grants to the Corporation by an  
 Independent Clause all the ground within the Limits  
 of the City between high and Low water marks it also by  
 another Independent Clause, grants to the Corporation  
 all Benefits and advantages of Anchorage and Wharfage  
 in the Port and Harbour of Albany the Corporation after  
 wards grants the piece of land called the Pasture in the  
 Terms of the Original Grant, either mediately, or immo-  
 diately to the Corporation of the Dutch Church the ordinary  
 Tides flow upwards beyond the Land called the Pasture  
 upon the case these Questions are made  
 1. Is the Pasture as now held by the  
 Corporation of the Dutch Church, or the assigns of that  
 Corporation bounded by high or low water mark—  
 2. Is there any right of Erecting wharves  
 or taken Wharfage annexed to this Land—  
 After having maturely considered the facts  
 in this case as exhibited in the extracts from the different  
 Grants communicated to me, and in the Charter to the  
 Corporation— I am of opinion—  
 As to the first Question—that the piece of  
 Land called the Pasture as now held by the Corporation  
 of the Dutch Church is bounded by high water mark as is  
 shewed by the following  
 As to the Second Question—that there can be no custom  
 upon, or adjoining to it below high water mark by authority  
 of its present Proprietors, consequently no wharf, no wharfage  
 June 12 1795  
 Alexander Hamilton  
 The Mayor, Recorder & Aldermen  
 of the City of Albany—

Resolved that this Board will purchase Pompey a Negro  
 man Slave of Davis Hunt for the price of sixty five Pounds  
 and that the said Hunt execute to this Board a proper  
 Bill of Sale, containing a Clause of Warranty, and that  
 the Chamberlain pay the said sixty five pounds when the  
 said Bill of Sale is Executed and that whenever the said  
 Pompey shall repay to this Board the said Sum of sixty five  
 pounds and sufficient Security to this Board, that he shall  
 not become a Charge to this City that then this Board will  
 Liberate and Manumit him + + + + +

At a Common Council held  
 for the City of Albany at the City  
 Hall of the said City on the  
 Twenty fifth day of June 1795

Present  
 John Taylor }  
 John Jauncey }  
 Altho Jon Cook }  
 Theodore F. W. Graham }  
 Charles Woodruff }  
 } Aldermen }  
 Stewart Dean }  
 Isaac Tuxay }  
 Enoch Leonard }  
 } Assistants

Resolved that Robert Heinear Superintendent of Highways  
 repair to Hunger Hill at the place where William Staats has  
 applied for a Mill Seat, and also the Western Extremities of  
 this City and see if any and what Damages are done to the  
 Commons of this City, and by whom, that measures may  
 be taken by this Board to prosecute the respective Trespassers  
 and also whether any City cuts Timber within the Bounds  
 of this City for the purpose of conveying it out of the City, and  
 about the same to this Board

## Albany Mourns the Untimely Demise of Alexander Hamilton

On July 11, 1804, Alexander Hamilton and Aaron Burr dueling in Weehawken, New Jersey. Alexander was struck and died the following day in a friend's home in Greenwich Village. News of his death reached Albany in the following days and elicited a strong response from Albany officials. On July 17, 1804, the Albany Common Council passed a resolution to wear black mourning bands around their arms for six weeks following what they deemed Alexander Hamilton's "untimely" death.

*A Law for regulating the use of weepers*

The Common Council having heard with Extreme regret of the untimely Death of Major General Alexander Hamilton Resolved Unanimously that as a Tribute of respect to the Memory of that Exalted and most worthy Man, the Members of the Common Council and the Officers of this Corporation will

wear a Mourning Gripe on the left Arm for the Space of Six weeks.

89-01479. Albany Common Council. The council reacts to the death of Alexander Hamilton. Courtesy of the Albany County Archival Collection.



Hamilton’s death also took a toll on the already-ill Philip Schuyler, who is said to have rapidly deteriorated after hearing of his beloved son-in-law’s death. Philip Schuyler died in the Schuyler Mansion on November 4, 1804, only a few months after Hamilton. He was predeceased by his wife in 1803, his son, John Bradstreet in 1795, his daughter, Peggy, in 1801, and his grandson and namesake, Philip Hamilton, who died in a duel in Weehawken in 1802, just two years before his father succumbed to the same fate.

Eliza lived until the age of 97, residing in New York City for most of her years, only moving to Washington D.C. in 1848, to be with her recently widowed daughter. Eliza’s dedication to Hamilton and his unlikely story is the reason his legacy was recorded and preserved and is still remembered today. Along with being the guardian of her husband’s name and story, Eliza also served as his connection to Albany. His marriage to her undoubtedly opened many doors that otherwise would have been closed due to his lack of status. Eliza truly was, as

Alexander himself put it in his final letter to her”, the “best of wives and best of Women.”

A monument to Alexander Hamilton at the Weehawken Dueling Grounds, directly across the Hudson from Manhattan.



Eliza’s grave in Trinity Church Yard, Manhattan, NYC.

## The Schuyler Sisters’ Albany

### “And Peggy”



Peggy Schuyler’s grave in Albany Rural Cemetery.

While Hamilton is now well-known for his sometimes risqué correspondences with Eliza’s older sister, Angelica Schuyler Church, he also maintained a steady and entirely innocent correspondence with the third Schuyler sister, Margarita “Peggy” Schuyler Van Rensselaer.

Peggy lived in the Albany area her entire life, marrying her distant cousin, Stephan Van Rensselaer III, who would later become Lieutenant Governor of NY and founded RPI. They had three children together, only one of whom survived to adulthood. Peggy died at the age of 42 in 1801, and is buried in Albany Rural Cemetery.

Peggy is also the star of a local legend claiming that she saved her younger sister, Catherine, from a Tory/Native American raid on the

Schuyler Mansion in August of 1781. If you have visited the mansion, you've seen the mark on the railing that is purported to be from the tomahawk a Native American threw at her as she dashed up the stairs with her baby sister in her arms.

This, however, is a legend rather than a fact. While the mansion was undoubtedly attacked that August, it was attacked by Tories, who were perhaps led there by a lone Native American guide who did not take part in the actual raid. The true origin of the mark on the railing is still a mystery, though it has been exaggerated by people taking slivers of it as souvenirs from the Schuyler Mansion.

## Political Daughters and the Adoptive Son

Although it was still typical to desire a male heir, Philip Schuyler didn't seem concerned that he and Catherine had three daughters before she gave birth to a son. In fact, he seemed to adore his girls, addressing each of them as "my dear child" in letters and lovingly mentioning Peggy in many of the letters he wrote to her husband.

Schuyler also made sure that his daughters were educated, and not only in the period-typical genres of female education, such as embroidery, music, and dance. Once the girls had their reading and writing basics, they were sent to a boarding school in New York City. Eliza is said to have been homesick during these years, while Angelica took to the social scene of the city right away. No matter how they felt about school while they were there, it was that strong educational basis along with their family name that allowed them—especially Angelica and Eliza—to later become important parts of the political scene.

Philip Schuyler seemed to regard his daughters as politically-competent women, as well. In one letter to Eliza, dated February 2, 1794, he tells her that her "friend Mr. Benson has been appointed a Judge to the Supreme Court" and goes on about how he hopes this will be helpful, perhaps to Hamilton's political career, and seems to convey this information to her much as he would anyone else, suggesting his respect for her intelligence.

Philip Schuyler, who was not one to simply comply with his daughters' wishes when it came to the men they wanted to marry, loved Alexander Hamilton from the start. While Schuyler was skeptical, and rightly so, of the wealthy John Church, the man who married his eldest daughter, and outright forbade one of his younger two daughters, Cornelia, from marrying a prominent lawyer because he didn't think he was a good man, he accepted the penniless, orphaned Hamilton like his own son.

He truly treated him like a son, too, even addressing him as “My Dear Son” in [a letter](#) he wrote to Hamilton on September 13, 1799. In Schuyler’s many letters to Eliza he called Alexander “My Dear Hamilton” and “My Hamilton.” In a letter dated May 11, 1795, Schuyler writes to a friend, John Tory, informing him that he already told Hamilton he could stay at Tory’s home during his journey to Fort Stanwix, much like any father would do for a child.

Albany September 20<sup>th</sup> 1802

Gentlemen—

The reiterated depredations, which are almost every night committed on my property, are such as to excite serious apprehensions, of disastrous results, unless means can be devised, tending to check them, none in your power occur to me, more effectual than that of directing the Lamps in Washington Street to be extended to oppose my residence, and of directing the city watch to extend its patrols to the same points.

Permit me respectfully to solicit you for these directions, as means for discovering and detecting the robbers.

When it is considered that I contribute more than any other citizen to the expense of the Lamps and watch, that I am therefore entitled in common with my other fellow citizens to participate in the benefits resulting therefrom, I trust a body whose cares are directed to the safety of the persons and property of their constituents, will not deem my request improper, ~~and~~ will be pleased to grant it. I am Gentlemen very respectfully  
 Your humble servant  
 P. Schuyler

To the Hon<sup>ble</sup> the Mayor, Aldermen & Commonalty of the City of Albany In Common Council convened

89-01323. Albany Common Council. A petition written and signed by Philip Schuyler to the Albany Common Council from September 20, 1802. Courtesy of Albany County Archival Collection.

For his part, Hamilton was also affectionate with Schuyler, calling him “My Dear Sir” in his letters. He also confided in Schuyler the same way he confided in his friends, the Marquis de Lafayette and John Laurens, who were also members of Washington’s military family, an exclusive group which included the general’s aides-de-camp, generals, and other various officers.

Hamilton's infamous Reynolds Affair became public knowledge in late August of 1797, when he penned and published *The Reynolds Pamphlet*, which details his affair with Maria Reynolds and her husband's extortion of him. This affair and the subsequent publication of the pamphlet must have stirred some of Philip Schuyler's fatherly instincts to protect Eliza, but there is a disturbing lack of letters from the entire family about the incident.



Philip Schuyler's grave in Albany Rural Cemetery.

One possibility for this lack of a reaction from Schuyler and the rest of the family is that Eliza, who outlived all but one of her siblings, Catherine, who was over twenty years her junior, burned those letters. She burned her own correspondences with Hamilton upon his death, which possibly included her reaction to the affair. She meticulously preserved Hamilton's letters to her, though, and wore a fragment of a poem he once wrote her in a locket around her neck. Still, none of Hamilton's letters that she preserved discussed the affair or pamphlet with the family. Whatever their initial reactions were, from the loving tone in the letters between Schuyler and Hamilton, they clearly reconciled.

When Hamilton died in July of 1804, Philip Schuyler, who was still alive but not well, was heartbroken. In a letter to Angelica written from his home in Albany and dated July 17, 1804, Schuyler tells his eldest child that he hopes "that the Supreme being will prolong my life that I may discharge the duties of a father to my dear Child, and her dear Children." Too ill to travel to the city, he was never able to do as he wished. Instead, Eliza returned to Albany to care for him as his health steadily declined<sup>vi</sup>. He died in November of that same year.

## A Family of Faith

Growing up, the girls and the rest of their family attended the Dutch Reform Church in Albany. The church was located in the middle of the city and for a long while was most likely the community hub for the colonists. By the time the girls were attending church there, Albany was bustling, but the church was still an important social institution, notably providing relief to the poorer members of the community<sup>vii</sup>.

*The Indenture* made and concluded this *thirteenth* Day of October in the *seventh*  
Year of the Reign of our Sovereign Lord *George* the third of great Britain France and Ireland King  
Defender of the Faith and so forth and in the year of our Lord Christ one thousand seven hundred and *sixty*  
*six* Between *Volkerb P. Douw Esq Mayor, John Th. Tenlyck Esq Recorder, Cornelis Tindbroeck Esq Mayor*  
*van Schaijk, John R. Bleicher, Jacob van Lansing, Abraham Gates, John and Peter Lansing Esq Aldermen*  
*Perrardus Lansing, John van Bockman, Abraham Tindbroeck, Thomas Hunn, Henry Bogard and John van*  
Willea assistants Together the Mayor Aldermen and Commonality of the City of Albany of the one part and  
*Paulus Hogstrop, John Tillman, John James Abbot and Jacob Torelgh* of the City of Albany of the other part  
witnesseth that they the said Mayor Aldermen and Commonality for and in consideration of the yearly  
Rents Covenants and Agreements hereinafter Reserved and contained to be paid performed and Kept  
on the part and Behalf of the said *Paulus Hogstrop, John Tillman, John James Abbot and Jacob Torelgh*  
their heirs and assigns and for Divers other good causes and Considerations them hereunto Moving they the  
said Mayor Aldermen and Commonality Have given granted signed Released and confirmed and by their  
seal and signen unto the said *Paulus*  
*Hogstrop, John Tillman, John James Abbot and Jacob Torelgh* their heirs and assigns a certain parcel of  
ground lying and being in the North part of this City of Albany of a full commonly called *Wout's Croft*  
Beginning at *sixty six* feet English measure Distant on a North *fourty five* Degrees *west* course from  
the Southwest corner of a lot of ground Formerly Released by the said Mayor Aldermen and Commonality to  
*Joseph Adam Gates* and Arising from thence North *fourty five* Degrees *East* *fourteen and a half* Rods  
then North *fourty five* Degrees *West* *fourteen and a half* Rods, then South *fourty five* Degrees *West* *fourteen and*  
*a half* Rods, then South *fourty five* Degrees *East* *fourteen and a half* Rods by Land measure Bounded on the  
North by *Fabron Street* South by *Wall Street* and East and West ground Belonging to the said Mayor Aldermen  
and Commonality together with all and singular the Liberties privileges hereditaments and appurtenances to the  
same Belonging or in any wise appertaining To Have and to hold the said parcel of Ground and premises  
with the appurtenances unto the said *Paulus Hogstrop, John Tillman, John James Abbot and Jacob Torelgh* their heirs  
and assigns to the Sole and only proper use and Behoof of them the said *Paulus Hogstrop, John Tillman, John James Abbot*  
and *Jacob Torelgh* their heirs and assigns for ever Provided always and these presents are upon this  
Condition

90-01177. City Clerk. Dutch Church Land Lease (1766). Courtesy of the Albany County Archival Collection.

## He Came From Afar: Lafayette in Albany

Lafayette is not only a beloved hero of the American Revolution, but he was also one of Alexander Hamilton's closest friends. The two of them were both important parts of Washington's military family, Alexander serving as an aide-de-camp and Lafayette as a major general.

In *Hamilton: An American Musical*, Lafayette's key song, "Guns and Ships," is a fast-paced rap during which the newly-fluent-in-English, young French general convinces Washington to call Hamilton back into service, this time not as an aide-de-camp, but as a general, preceding the Battle of Yorktown.

In both the musical and real life Hamilton was indeed given a command at Yorktown. It is this key battle that not only proves both men's bravery, but explains exactly why Lafayette is such a beloved figure in American history.



One of the redoubts Hamilton and Lafayette recaptured at Yorktown.

In the dark of night in October of 1781, Hamilton led his troops to Redoubt Ten, where they saw brutal hand-to-hand combat and many fatalities, often at the hands of their own men because they could not distinguish between their army and that of the British in the darkness. Lafayette followed-up Hamilton's attack with one of his own on Redoubt Nine, which his forces swiftly took from the British. With these two redoubts won, the British forces lost their major land defense. If not for Hamilton and Lafayette's leadership in the dangerous attacks, the outcome of Yorktown could have been largely altered.

This celebrated and revered French hero of the American Revolution spent a large amount of time, both during and after the war, in Albany and the surrounding areas.

## During the American Revolution

While it is his 1824 visit that is most often remembered, Lafayette was in Albany long before that, all the way back in 1778, when he was still looking to prove himself worthy of command to both Washington and the Continental Congress, who was responsible for appointing generals.

The beginning of Lafayette's Albany story finds the young general looking for a chance to command his own troops, already having suffered a wound at the Battle of Brandywine in September of 1777. The injury did nothing to slow him down, though. If anything, it seemed to have increased his desire to fight.

The eager twenty-year-old first visited Albany after a stint in various Pennsylvania makeshift hospitals and fellow rebels' houses recovering, followed by a small taste of the infamous Valley Forge winter.

Lafayette arrived in Albany on February 17, 1778, and stayed until March 31, only briefly leaving the city once during that time in order to attend a conference with Native Americans in Johnstown, NY, in an attempt to secure their support of the rebels<sup>viii</sup>. While it's clear that Lafayette stayed in Albany for over a month, and that he was surrounded by important generals in the northern arena of the war, it's unclear where he stayed during this time span, though one can make an educated guess: at the Schuyler mansion.

There are two reasons why it's likely that Lafayette stayed at the Schuyler Mansion during this initial visit. The mansion was where anyone of status stayed while in Albany, especially during the war. Lafayette was also working with none other than General Philip Schuyler at this time, who was serving as Commissioner of Indian Affairs in the Northern Department. To add to the credibility of this theory, Schuyler also wrote a letter to Washington from Albany during this time span, suggesting he was at the mansion for some of this time, as well, and it seems natural that he would have the young general stay there with him.

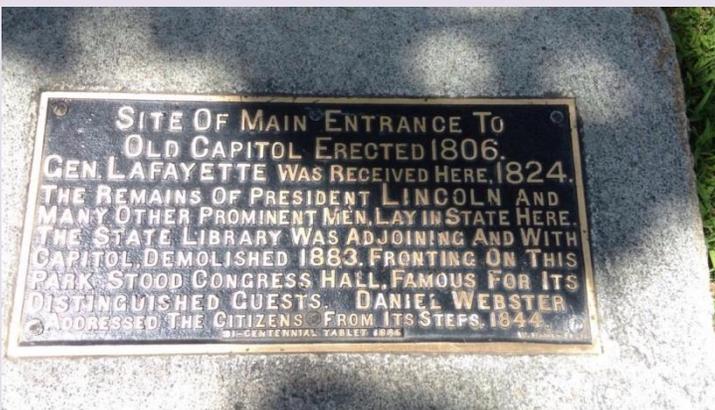
## Post-1783 Treaty of Paris

The Treaty of Paris had been signed and the war was officially over, but the country was a long way from being truly established. The Constitutional Convention wouldn't happen until 1787, after which Alexander Hamilton would pen his famous *Federalist Papers* in an attempt to convince New York delegates to ratify the Constitution at their state convention.

Still, Lafayette found himself back in his beloved America only a year after the official end to the fighting. Lafayette visited Albany again on September 23, 1784, where he gathered with other officials (James Madison among them) to attend a Native American Conference at Fort Schuyler (today referred to as Fort Stanwix)<sup>ix</sup>. He stayed in Albany through September 26, and then departed for the conference, returning to Albany again on October 8 for one day before continuing on his journey, which included a reunion, and, unbeknownst to either man, final meeting, with George Washington.

## Lafayette's Grand Tour: Albany Visit of 1824

Lafayette didn't return to the United States until 1824, when the then 66-year-old was invited back by Congress and President Monroe for a tour of the United States on the eve of its fiftieth birthday. His return was the cause of festivity everywhere he went, and Albany was no exception.



Plaque marking original Capitol entrance, where Lafayette was received during his 1824 visit.

The city, which had last seen Lafayette as a young general forty years ago, took every pain necessary to prepare for the Frenchman's return on the eve of Friday, September 16, 1824.

The Capitol was outfitted with artificial flowers and garland, tassels were purchased for the horses who would be a part of the parades and processions, the fence

George Washington died at his Virginia Estate, Mount Vernon, on December 14, 1799, only two years after he retired from his life of public service. On December 17, 1799, the Albany Common Council declared that they and other city officials would wear mourning bands around their arms for six weeks and that church bells would be tolled from 3 pm to 6 pm in Washington's honor that day.



89-01478. Albany Common Council. Resolution concerning Washington's death (bottom of right page), 1799. Courtesy of the Albany County Archival Collection.

surrounding the Capitol was repaired and painted, the walls of the building whitewashed, and a balcony erected for the band to play on during the events held in Lafayette's honor.

There were multiple banners in place when Lafayette arrived that night. The first one he would have seen read, "The Hero is Welcome." At the intersection of Church Street and South Market Street, there was an arch engraved "We remember thy deeds—We revere thy worth—We love thy virtues." There was yet another arch erected in his honor, this one at the end of Beaver Street, decorated with flowers and evergreen boughs<sup>x</sup>.

The largest temporary monument made in Lafayette's honor was a temple, which stood on State Street, where the Dutch Church the Schuyler family had attended decades ago once stood. The temple was described as "richly ornamented" with ivy wrapped around its pillars. On top of the temple sat an eagle, who is said to have flapped his wings as Lafayette passed by below<sup>xi</sup>.

The Capitol must have looked absolutely splendid that night, too, because, along with the repairs and decorations it underwent in preparation for Lafayette's visit, the city purchased over 200 candles so it would be glowing when Lafayette arrived at its front door.

No expense was spared on the food or festivities. The food and drinks consisted of cider, wine, brandy, port and claret, "sundrie liquids," crackers and cheese, cigars, and even lemon juice, along with dinner for all of the attendees at the various parties that were crammed into the Marquis' twenty-four hour visit. For one dinner alone, twenty bottles of wine were purchased. For another, thirty-four bottles of wine, along with other liquors, were purchased.

There was also much in the way of live music—bands played at the Capitol, on the various boats Lafayette took while in the area, and a group of boys was even outfitted with new clothes and shoes at the city's expense for their performance before the Marquis.

Revolutionary War veterans also played an important role in the celebrations. On Saturday, September 18, there was a reception for them at the Capitol. The city also ferried troops to the festivities and purchased powder and cartridges, suggesting they had an honorary firing of the guard while Lafayette was there, perhaps during the reception for the veterans. Troops also escorted him through the streets as a show of respect during his time in Albany<sup>xii</sup>.

The city not only spared no expense in its preparations for Lafayette's arrival, but it made sure to notify the citizens of Albany that he would be visiting, as well. Handbills were printed and passed out to Albanians in advance of Lafayette's arrival, but it's not as if they needed to scrounge up enthusiasm. A single handbill probably would have been enough to start the wild fire of excitement anticipating his visit. Lafayette, even though he was a citizen of France, was an extremely beloved American hero.

## Lafayette's 1824 Visit through Images

H. W. Snyder To Tappett & Malenbeck Dr.  
To Erecting Balcony. and arch  
repairing fence round park }  
repairing gate &c. &c. } — \$40-00  
Albany Sept 1824  
Rec<sup>d</sup> Payment  
Tappett & Malenbeck

92-00108.  
Chamberlain's Office.  
Receipt for the  
erection of a balcony  
on the Capitol and for  
fence repairs (1824).  
Courtesy of the Albany  
County Archival  
Collection.

Albany September 23 1824  
Compensation  
To Francisco Coste Do  
Fetches Powder Down From  
the Powder House - - - - - 45  
For Making the Cartridges & filling  
the same and Postages \$7-0  
\$7-45  
Rec<sup>d</sup> Payment Francisco Coste

92-00108.  
Chamberlain's  
Office. Receipt for  
powder and  
cartridges (1824).  
Courtesy of Albany  
County Archival  
Collection.



## “What is a legacy?”

Traces of Hamilton, the Schuylers, and Lafayette can still be found throughout Albany today.

The Schuyler Mansion, located on 32 Catherine Street, offers guided tours from the months of May through October. The general tour is focused on the life of Philip Schuyler and his family and can be taken on the hour from 11 to 4, Wednesdays through Sundays. No reservations are required.

A Hamilton-themed tour, which focuses on his time at the mansion and in Albany, is offered at 2 on Thursdays, Saturdays, and Sundays. Reservations are required.

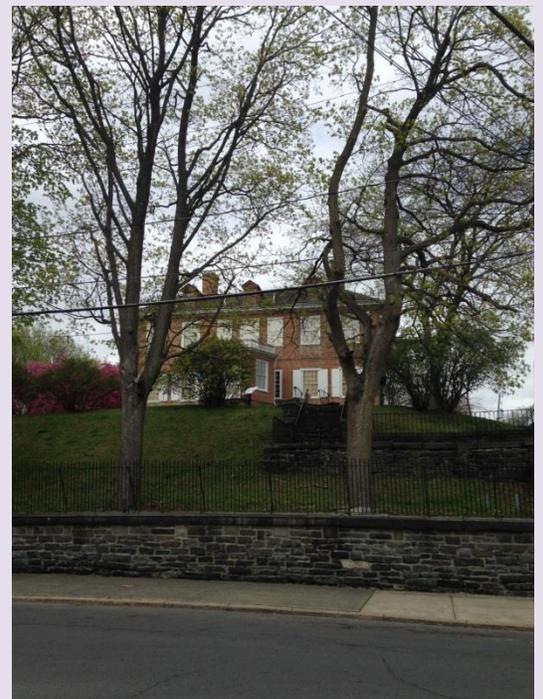
The New York State Library, located at 222 Madison Avenue, holds Schuyler Family Papers, which includes original copies of letters between Philip Schuyler and his children as well as his correspondences with other prominent Albany politicians.

The Albany Institute of History and Art is running an exhibit about Alexander Hamilton’s time in Albany now through December 31, 2016.

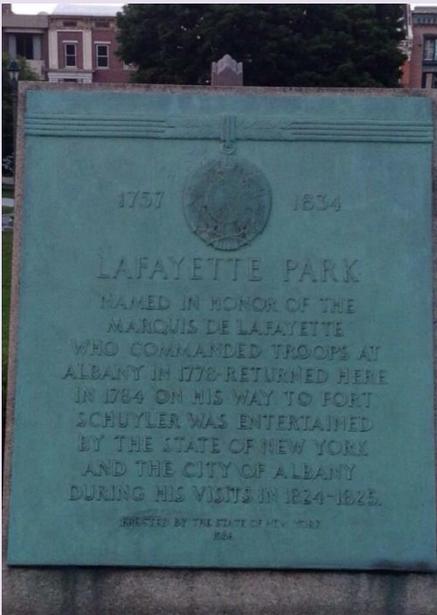
Philip Schuyler, Catherine Van Rensselaer, and Peggy Schuyler’s graves can be found in Albany Rural Cemetery.

Lafayette Park in downtown Albany is named for the Frenchman. There is also a plaque which marks the entrance to the original Capitol building, where Lafayette was received during his 1824 visit.

Multiple streets (Hamilton Street, Philip Street, Elizabeth Street, Catherine Street) are named in honor of Hamilton, Eliza, and the Schuylers. A statue of Philip Schuyler stands near the Albany City Hall.



The Schuyler Mansion.



The plaque in Lafayette Park in Albany.



*Hamilton: An American Musical* on Broadway.

# Recommended Reading

*Alexander Hamilton* by Ron Chernow

*Hamilton: Writings* edited by Joanne B. Freeman (The Library of American edition)

*Lafayette in the Somewhat United States* by Sarah Vowell

[The People of Colonial Albany](#) (NYS Museum)

[Founders Online](#) (National Archives)

[Lafayette in America, day by day](#) by James Bennet Nolan

[A Complete History of Lafayette's Late Time in America](#) by an officer in the late army

# Recommended Listeners

*Hamilton: An American Musical* by the original Broadway cast of Hamilton

[The History Chicks](#) (podcast)

[Ben Franklin's World](#) (podcast)

*Note: All photographs in this exhibition were taken by the author unless otherwise specified.*

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<sup>i</sup> Chernow, Ron. *Alexander Hamilton* (New York: Penguin Press, 2004), 681.

<sup>ii</sup> <http://newyorkhistoryblog.org/2015/05/14/the-albany-connections-of-burr-hamilton-and-schuyler/>

<sup>iii</sup> Chernow, *Alexander Hamilton*, 452.

<sup>iv</sup> <http://exhibitions.nysm.nysed.gov//albany/drc.html>

<sup>v</sup> <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Hamilton/01-26-02-0001-0248>

<sup>vi</sup> Chernow, *Alexander Hamilton*, 723.

<sup>vii</sup> <http://exhibitions.nysm.nysed.gov//albany/drc.html>

<sup>viii</sup> Nolan, J. Bennet. *Lafayette in America: Day by Day* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1934), 45.

<sup>ix</sup> Bennet, *Lafayette in America*, 225.

<sup>x</sup> Officer in the Late Army, *A Complete History of the Marquis de Lafayette, Major General in the Army of the United States, in the War of the Revolution, embracing an account of his late tour through the United States to the time of his departure* (New York: Robert Lowry, 1826), 433.

<sup>xi</sup> Lowry, *Complete History of the Marquis de Lafayette*, 433.

<sup>xii</sup> Lowry, *Complete History of the Marquis de Lafayette*, 438.