

ALEXANDER HAMILTON (1757-1804)

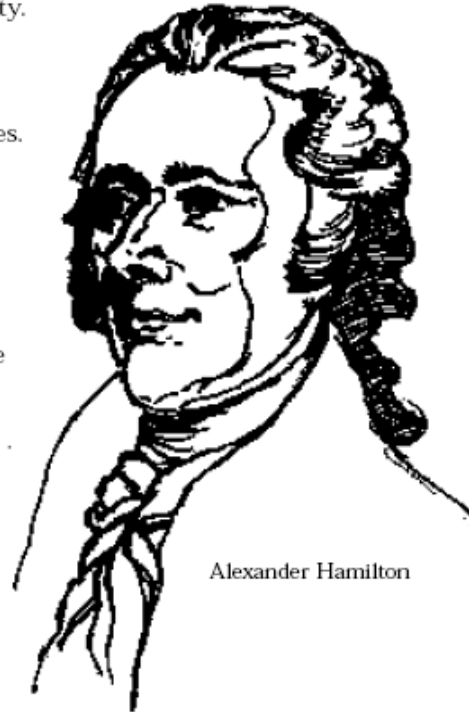
Alexander Hamilton was born January 11, 1757 on the West Indian Island of Nevis. From 1772 until 1774 he studied at a grammar school in New Jersey and later attended Kings College, now Columbia University.

In 1774, Hamilton entered the revolutionary movement by speaking at a public meeting. He urged the calling of a general congress of colonies. He also wrote anonymously two pamphlets, *A Full Vindication of the Measures from the Calumnies of Their Enemies* and *The Farmer Refuted*, to answer loyalist pamphlets. When war began he became a captain of artillery and later served at the battles of Long Island, White Plains, Trenton, and Princeton. Hamilton's brave service led to advancement, and George Washington made him aide-de-camp and personal secretary in March 1777.

Hamilton held a leading position in the Annapolis Convention in 1786, and drafted a resolution that led to the assembling of the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia in 1787. He did not play a significant role in the convention because of his desire for a strong centralized federal government which was not shared by many of the other convention delegates. He then turned to securing the ratification of the Constitution in New York and enlisted the help of John Jay and James Madison in writing the essays later collected and published under the name of *The Federalist*.

After the new American Government was established in 1789, he was appointed by Washington as the first Secretary of the Treasury. The finances of the nation were in disorder after the war and the changes resulting from independence. His report to Congress in 1790 called for providing funding for national and foreign debts of the United States as well as the assumption of individual states' revolutionary debt. After much debate, Hamilton's ideas were accepted. Other proposals made by Hamilton were also accepted, including his call for the establishment of a national bank and protective tariffs to encourage American manufacturers.

Hamilton was also very influential in his role in foreign affairs. He con-



Alexander Hamilton

vinced Washington to adopt a policy of neutrality during the war in Europe in 1793. In 1794, he developed instructions for the diplomatic mission to London which would result in the agreement known as Jay's Treaty.

In 1795, Hamilton returned to his law practice in New York City. He remained active in politics and was consulted on a regular basis by Washington, especially with the drafting of his farewell address. President John Adams, at the insistence of Washington, reluctantly appointed Hamilton as Inspector General of the army when it was believed that the United States would soon be at war with France. This caused bitter and public quarreling between Adams and Hamilton leading to factionalism within the Federalist Party.

Hamilton exerted his influence in the decision of the presidential election of 1800. The House of Representatives had to decide the election because of a tie vote in the Electoral College. Hamilton favored Thomas Jefferson over Aaron Burr. Later in 1804, when Burr was candidate for governor of New York State, Hamilton did everything possible to thwart Burr's candidacy. Burr was defeated and he provoked a quarrel with Hamilton, with the hopes of forcing him to a duel. Hamilton was obliged to accept, and he and Burr met on July 11, 1804, at Weehawken New Jersey. Hamilton was wounded and died on July 12.

Hamilton, leader of the Federalists, was often at the center of heated debates with the Anti-Federalists.

