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Manuscripts and Archives Division

Guide to the

Alexander Hamilton papers

1775-1804

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Compiled by Casey Babcock, 2015

Summary

Creator: Hamilton, Alexander, 1757-1804

Title: Alexander Hamilton papers

Date: 1775-1804

Size: .25 linear feet (1 box)

Source: Various gifts and purchases, 1896-1948

Abstract: Alexander Hamilton (1754-1804) was a Founding Father, soldier, lawyer and statesman. He served as the first United States Secretary of the Treasury from 1789 to 1795. The Alexander Hamilton papers, dated 1775-1804, primarily consist of letters and documents either written or signed by Alexander Hamilton, and pertain to his career as a soldier, lawyer, statesman and United States Secretary of the Treasury. Autograph letters, drafts and copies of letters sent by Hamilton concern his Revolutionary War service, chiefly as an aide-de-camp to General George Washington; his legal practice in New York; and financial and political matters. Notable items include Hamilton's letters to President Washington, dated 1796, concerning the writing of Washington's Farewell Address to the nation, with a draft of the Address written by Hamilton for Washington's consideration. Documents include his 1782 appointment as Receiver of Continental Taxes in New York, legal documents relating to his law practice and personal estate, and legal notes and other items in his hand. Treasury Department letters are chiefly manuscript or printed circular letters which are not in Hamilton's handwriting but bear his autograph signature.

Access: Advance notice required.

Preferred citation: Alexander Hamilton papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library

Processing note: Compiled by Casey Babcock, 2015

Creator History

Alexander Hamilton (1754-1804) was a Founding Father, soldier, lawyer and statesman. He served as

the first United States Secretary of the Treasury from 1789 to 1795. Born in the West Indies, Hamilton came to the American colonies to attend school, graduating from King's College (Columbia University) in 1774. He fought as an American military officer during the Revolutionary War and was General George Washington's aide-de-camp prior to his resignation from the Army in 1782. In that same year he established his law practice in New York City and was appointed Receiver of Continental Taxes for the State of New York. Hamilton represented the State at the Constitutional Convention of 1787, and played a key role in supporting the adoption of the United States Constitution as co-author of The Federalist Papers with John Jay and James Madison. Hamilton was also instrumental in shaping the country's financial system. In 1789, President Washington appointed Hamilton as the first United States Secretary of the Treasury. He resigned in 1795, returning to his law practice in New York. In 1780 he married Elizabeth Schuyler (1757-1854), daughter of General Philip Schuyler. Hamilton was mortally wounded in a duel with Aaron Burr on July 11, 1804.

Custodial History

The bulk of the Alexander Hamilton papers are comprised of documents transferred from the Ford collection and the Thomas Addis Emmet collection. The Ford Collection was compiled by Gordon L. Ford, business manager of the New York Tribune from 1873 to 1881 and collector of documents pertaining to early American history. Ford's collection was later purchased by J. Pierpont Morgan and portions of it were donated to The New York Public Library in 1899. The Emmet Collection was collected by Dr. Thomas Addis Emmet, a collector of early American history manuscripts. His collection was later purchased by John S. Kennedy and donated to The New York Public Library in 1896. Various other gifts and purchases are also included.

Scope and Content Note

The Alexander Hamilton papers, dated 1775-1804, primarily consist of letters and documents either written or signed by Alexander Hamilton, and pertain to his career as a soldier, lawyer, statesman and United States Secretary of the Treasury. It is a synthetic collection of largely autograph material, combining gifts and purchases from various sources.

Autograph letters, drafts and copies of letters sent by Hamilton concern his Revolutionary War service, chiefly as an aide-de-camp to General George Washington; his law practice in New York; and financial and political matters. Notable items include Hamilton's letters to President Washington, dated 1796, concerning the writing of Washington's Farewell Address to the nation. His letter of 1796 August 10 encloses a draft of the Address, written by Hamilton for Washington's consideration. One personal letter to his wife Elizabeth Hamilton dated 1803 gives instructions for property improvements at their home, The Grange. Documents include his 1782 appointment as Receiver of Continental Taxes in New York, legal documents relating to his law practice and personal estate, and legal notes and other items in his hand.

Treasury Department letters are chiefly manuscript or printed circular letters which are not in Hamilton's handwriting but bear his autograph signature. Most are addressed to Collectors of Customs and concern customs and shipping regulations, the apportionment or collection of federal monies, and banking matters. Many are addressed to Jedediah Huntington, Collector of Customs at New London, Connecticut. Also included are a few signed receipts for drafts from Customs officers, a signed decision on a Customs case, and a clipped signature.

Key Terms

Subjects

Customs administration -- United States
Finance, public -- United States

Occupations

Lawyers
Soldiers
Statesmen

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Legal documents

Geographic Names

United States -- History -- Revolution, 1775-1783
United States -- Politics and government -- 1789-1815

Names

Hamilton, Alexander, 1757-1804
Hamilton, Elizabeth Schuyler, 1757-1854
Huntington, Jedediah, 1743-1818 -- recipient
Jay, John, 1745-1829 -- recipient
Washington, George, 1732-1799 -- Farewell address
Washington, George, 1732-1799 -- recipient
United States. Department of the Treasury. Office of the Secretary

Container List

Letters

- b. 1 f. 1 Letter to John Jay 1775 November 26
Jay, John, 1745-1829 (Recipient)
- b. 1 f. 2 Letter to unidentified person 1778 September 12
- b. 1 f. 3 Letter to George Fisher 1781 January 9
Fisher, George (Recipient)
Resident of Fishkill, NY. Agent in the state commissary department
- b. 1 f. 4 Letter to Marquis de Barbé-Marbois 1781 February 7
Barbe_Marbois, Franc_ois, marquis de, 1745-1837 (Recipient)
- b. 1 f. 5 Letter to Timothy Pickering 1781 February 15
Pickering, Timothy, 1745-1829 (Recipient)
- b. 1 f. 6 Letter to Thomas Tillotson 1782 November 10
Tillotson, Thomas (Recipient)
- b. 1 f. 7 Letter to George Washington 1783 February 13
Washington, George, 1732-1799 (Recipient)
- b. 1 f. 8 Letter to James Hamilton 1785 June 23 (fragment)
Hamilton, James, 1753-1786 (Recipient)
- b. 1 f. 9 Letter to Richard Varick 1786 December 31
Varick, Richard, 1753-1831 (Recipient)
- b. 1 f. 10 Letter to Edward Carrington 1792 July 25
Carrington, Edward, 1749-1810 (Recipient)
- b. 1 f. 11 Letter to the President and Directors of the Bank of the United States 1792
December 24
- b. 1 f. 12 Draft of a letter to an unidentified party 1794 August 11
- b. 1 f. 13 Letter to Barent Bleeker 1796 March 20
Bleeker, Barent, 1760-1840 (Recipient)
Albany merchant and land speculator. Treasurer of the Western Inland Lock Navigation
Company.
- Letters to George Washington
Concerning the writing of Washington's Farewell Address
- b. 1 f. 14 1796 May 10
- b. 1 f. 15 1796 July 5
- b. 1 f. 16 1796 July 30
- b. 1 f. 17 1796 August 10
Enclosed is a draft of Washington's Farewell Address, written by Hamilton for Washington's
consideration.
- b. 1 f. 18 1796 September 4
- b. 1 f. 19 1796 September 5
- b. 1 f. 20 1796 September 8
- b. 1 f. 21 Letter to Abraham Van Vechten 1798 April 20
Van Vechten, Abraham, 1762-1837 (Recipient)
- b. 1 f. 22 Letter to James M. Hughes 1799 July 12
Hughes, James M. (James Miles) (Recipient)
- b. 1 f. 23 Letter to an unidentified person 1800 January 3

Letters (cont.)

- b. 1 f. 24 Letter to Elizabeth Hamilton 1803 October 14
Hamilton, Elizabeth Schuyler, 1757-1854 (Recipient)

Documents

- b. 1 f. 25 Document appointing Alexander Hamilton as Receiver of Continental Taxes
in the State of New York 1782
Signed by Robert Morris with notes by Alexander Hamilton and his successor Thomas Tillotson
recording the collection of taxes, 1782-1784.

- b. 1 f. 26 Power of attorney from Hugh Seton to Alexander Hamilton 1784 March 27
- b. 1 f. 27 Document acknowledging Alexander Hamilton's representation as Hugh
Seton's attorney 1784 June 16
- b. 1 f. 28 New York Mayor's Court plea 1786 April 11
- b. 1 f. 29 Receipt of payment from Francis Childs 1787 November 12
- b. 1 f. 30 Excerpt of a letter from John Jay to Edmund Randolph 1794 November 19
- b. 1 f. 31 Statement of opinion regarding England and France circa 1795
- b. 1 f. 32 New York Supreme Court plea 1796 January 19
- b. 1 f. 33 Certificate of William Rogers for one share in trust relative to the estate of
Alexander Hamilton 1804 November 29
- b. 1 f. 34 Legal notes undated

Treasury Department letters

- b. 1 f. 35 1789
- b. 1 f. 36 1790
- b. 1 f. 37 1791
- b. 1 f. 38 1792
- b. 1 f. 39 1793
- b. 1 f. 40 1794