

# Inquiring Minds: Learning from History

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“I think the first duty of society is Justice.” - Alexander Hamilton ([more quotes](#))

[Intent](#) Past Issues: [1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#) [6](#) [7](#) [8](#) [9](#) [10](#) [11](#) [12](#) [13](#) [14](#) [15](#) [16](#) [17](#) [18](#) [19](#) [20](#) [21](#) [22](#) [23](#) [24](#) [25](#) [26](#) [27](#) [28](#) [29](#) [30](#) [31](#) [32](#) [33](#) [34](#) [35](#) [36](#)

## A NATIONAL HERO IS REBORN ON THE STAGE

Hamilton is now an award-winning musical with music, lyrics, and book by [Lin-Manuel Miranda](#).



Lin-Manuel Miranda

We first heard about him from our daughter who was in Wesleyan with him twenty years ago. We since saw him on *60 Minutes* and *Charlie Rose*.

The fast paced rap/hip-hop musical was suited the life of Alexander Hamilton who was the most prolific writer and executor of the Founding Fathers. Miranda discovered the unsung hero in [Ron Chernow](#)'s book, *Hamilton*.

I am 500 pages into that 700 book, and am absolutely amazed at the man and the politics of the time. Having spent 8 years with Washington as his Aide-de-Camp



Alexander Hamilton

in the Revolutionary War (8 years!) he and Washington soon realized that a weak federation of states was not enough to finance the war. It virtually ignored the patriots in the field, and merchants often sold goods to the better financed Brits.

While Hamilton and Washington (another Chernow book) showed raw courage, management skills, and patience; Jefferson (a former hero of mine) did not have the same experience. He fled from the British, and later (with Madison) supported strong states' rights, the French Revolution, and continually

connived to undermine both Hamilton and (eventually) Washington, even as he was serving as Secretary of State under Washington.

Meanwhile, Hamilton wrote the Federalist Papers which made a strong case for the newly drafted the Constitution, and set up a trade and banking program to get the US out of debt and establish it as a country to be taken seriously.

Yet the infighting and the politics were brutal, often threatening to break up the country. Everyone wanted a government, but without paying taxes. (Sound familiar?)

Hamilton and Washington were the glue that held the country together, not without a small consequence to their health, their families, and their personal finances. Both held on to their dream to persevere.

## AN ONLINE SUMMARY OF HAMILTON FOUND [ONLINE](#)

“Alexander Hamilton was a bastard, orphan son of a whore and a scotsman, dropped in the middle of a forgotten spot in the Caribbean by providence impoverished in squalor, who grew up to be a hero and a scholar. He was a Founding Father of the United States, chief staff aide to General George Washington, one of the most influential interpreters and promoters of the U.S. Constitution, the founder of the nation's financial system, the founder of the Federalist Party, the world's first voter-based political party, the Father of the United States Coast Guard, and the founder of The New York Post. As the first Secretary of the Treasury, Hamilton was the primary author of the economic policies of the George Washington administration. Hamilton took the lead in the funding of the states' debts by the Federal government, the establishment of a national bank, a system of tariffs, and

friendly trade relations with Britain. He led the Federalist Party, created largely in support of his views; he was opposed by the Democratic-Republican Party, led by Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, which despised Britain and feared that Hamilton's policies of a strong central government would weaken the American commitment to Republicanism...”

## WHAT I LEARNED FROM OUR FOUNDING FATHERS

1. They were not perfect: Jefferson and Washington had and were dependent upon slaves to maintain their estates. Hamilton was seduced into an affair where he was blackmailed. All had strong personalities, were vain, and easily offended. (Hamilton's ultimate fate.)

2. Washington, Hamilton, and Jefferson were land rich but in debt, and sacrificed much to give birth to the nation and nurse it through its infancy. They longed for their families

3. Politics then were brutal, ever much as they are now, but the debates were done more in writing using pseudonyms of classic heroes ([Pacificus](#), [Camillus](#), etc.) and making strong logical arguments on issues which clarified the Constitution.

4. The wives and women in their lives, [Martha Washington](#), [Elizabeth Hamilton](#), and [Abigail Adams](#), all played significant roles, suffered with, supported their husbands, and were the wind beneath their wings.



Eliza Schuyler Hamilton

We have much for which to be thankful, and must not take our country for granted. It, too, can be overtaken by those ignorant of the sacrifices and principles on which it was founded. May we have the patience of Washington. *Pax, Joe*