

ALBANY INSTITUTE
OF HISTORY & ART



ANNIVERSARY
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Albany Institute of History & Art

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NEWS

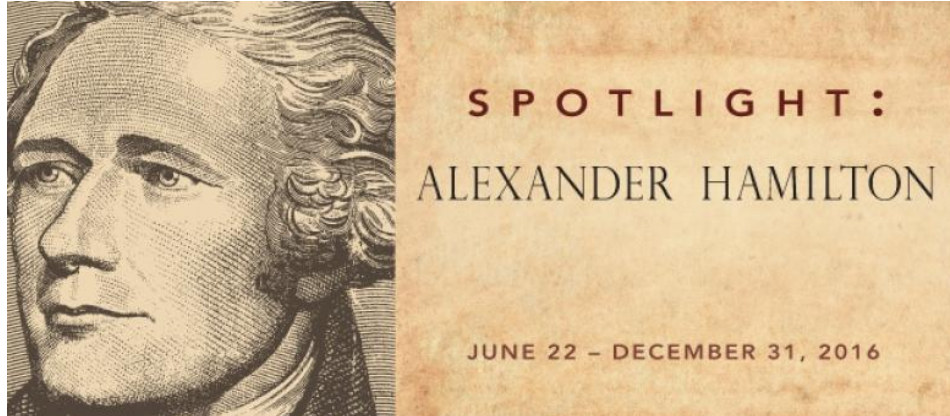
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NEW EXHIBITION HIGHLIGHTS ALEXANDER HAMILTON'S ALBANY CONNECTIONS

Spotlight: Alexander Hamilton is open through December 31, 2016

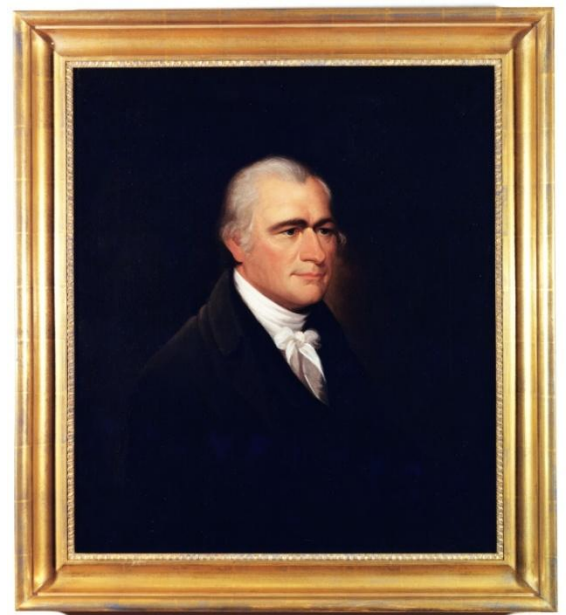


ALBANY, NEW YORK — One of the Founding Fathers of the United States, Alexander Hamilton (1757-1804) was a brilliant politician-lawyer who served as an indispensable aide to George Washington during and after the American Revolution. Among his many achievements, Hamilton is credited with creating the financial system of the United States, and was the first Secretary of the U.S. Treasury. The current Broadway musical sensation *Hamilton* has sparked an interest in the man on the \$10 bill. The Albany Institute of History & Art's new exhibition, *Spotlight: Alexander Hamilton*, highlights Hamilton's connections to Albany, New York through personal papers, family heirlooms, historic preservation efforts, and a stunning portrait painted by Albany's own Ezra Ames (1768—1836). This exhibition draws from the Albany Institute's collection as well as from Union College Permanent Collection; John G. Waite Associates,

Architects; and Fort Ticonderoga. The exhibition runs from June 22 through December 31, 2016.

Exhibition curator Diane Shewchuk is a big fan of the founding fathers and thought that with the soaring popularity of *Hamilton*, people would be curious to know more about Alexander Hamilton's connection to Albany, New York. "Hamilton first visited Albany in 1777 to speak to General Horatio Gates on behalf of George Washington," says Shewchuk. "Three years later Hamilton married Elizabeth Schuyler in the parlor of her Albany home. For the next twenty four years, Hamilton was a frequent visitor to the city to visit his in-laws, and to tend to legal and political affairs."

The anchor of the exhibition is a portrait of Hamilton painted by Albany's premiere and most prolific portrait painter, Ezra Ames, on loan from Union College Permanent Collection in Schenectady, New York. Ames first painted Hamilton in 1802. As was the custom at the time, Ames copied that first portrait at least once, including this version which was painted in 1810 and referenced in Ames' account book, which is part of the Albany Institute's collection. In 1875, the painting was given to Union College by Hamilton's namesake grandson because Eliphalet Nott, the "late distinguished President [of Union College] was the warm friend and most eloquent Eulogist of my grandfather." The portrait, which appears in several books about Hamilton, including Ron Chernow's biography and *The Founders and Finance* by Thomas McCraw, is part of Union College's Permanent Collection and is usually displayed in the President's House. It is on loan to the Albany Institute for Spotlight: Alexander Hamilton.



Ezra Ames, *Portrait of Alexander Hamilton*, ca.1810, Union College Permanent Collection

"Union College's portrait of a mature Alexander Hamilton, beautifully rendered, and set against a dramatic, dark background, was originally donated to the college by Hamilton's grandson in 1875, and upon acceptance, a letter from the Board of Trustees was drafted, assuring the donor, 'The portrait....will be carefully preserved by Union College as one of her most precious treasures,'" says Sarah Mottalini, Curatorial Assistant of Art Collections and Exhibitions at Union College. "It has remained as such, and we are delighted to be able to share it with a wider audience through the timely exhibition at the Albany Institute of History & Art."

Hamilton's most significant, though posthumous, connection to the College was the eulogy given by Eliphalet Nott on the occasion of his death at the hand of Aaron Burr in their infamous duel. "The sermon launched the career of young Nott, who would become Union College's 4th President during a term that spanned 62 years," says Mottalini. A copy of that sermon is on view in Spotlight: Alexander Hamilton.

“This exhibition looks at all the different ways Hamilton and Albany are linked,” says Shewchuk. “Hamilton’s connection to Albany started with the Schuyler family, but it is a story that is richer than most people realize and this is a great opportunity to tell it.”

For instance, Aaron Burr, Hamilton’s infamous foe, was also tied to Albany. The 1794 engraving *A Plan for the City of Albany*, from the Albany Institute’s collection, has been annotated to show the location of Burr’s Albany law office and the Tontine Coffee House in Albany where Burr was nominated to be the governor of New York State in February 1804. Newspaper accounts reveal public feuding between the two men. A letter published in the *Albany Register* on April 23, 1804, following a dinner at the Albany home of John Taylor escalated the rivalry between Hamilton and Aaron Burr, and ultimately led to the infamous duel that resulted in Hamilton’s untimely death on July 12, 1804.

The exhibition also explores the role of the Albany and New York City based firm John G. Waite Associates, Architects in the relocation and restoration of Alexander Hamilton’s home, the Grange. The Federal-style mansion, which was completed in 1802 and located in upper Manhattan (later Harlem), was designated a National Historic Landmark and in 1962 it became part of the National Park Service. John G. Waite Associates, Architects was secured in 2005 to develop a plan to move and restore the house. They designed systems and accessibility features that would cause minimal damage to the house; constructed a new cellar and basement for mechanical systems and exhibitions; and prepared a Historic Furnishings Report outlining interior finishes, floor and window coverings, and placement of furniture, art, and decorative arts. The restored Hamilton Grange National Memorial opened to the public in 2011 and in 2012 the firm received the Lucy G. Moses Preservation Award from the New York Landmarks Conservancy. Visitors will get a sense of the scale and the impressive attention to detail of this enormous project through a time-lapse video of the move and examples of furnishings selected for installation in the site, on loan from John G. Waite Associates, Architects.

Spotlight: Alexander Hamilton was generously supported by James, Courtney, and Victor Oberting III.

Exhibition visitors are encouraged to continue exploring Hamilton’s connections to Albany through special themed tours in the city. “When Alexander Hamilton Called Albany Home” is a special tour at Schuyler Mansion State Historic Site where Hamilton wed his wife Eliza. “Hamilton in Albany” is a self-guided walking tour created by the Albany County Convention & Visitors Bureau. Please visit each sites’ websites for more information.

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The Albany Institute of History & Art is located at 125 Washington Avenue in Albany, New York. Free parking is available in the museum’s lot at the corner of Elk and Dove Streets.

The exhibition galleries, Museum Shop, and the new Crisan Café at the Albany Institute are open Wednesday 10am-5pm, Thursday 10am-8pm, Friday 10am-5pm, Saturday 10am-5pm, and Sunday noon-5pm. In addition, the café and museum

shop are open Tuesdays from 10am-5pm. The Research Library is open on Thursdays from 1pm-4:30pm and by appointment.

Current admission rates are \$10 for adults, \$8 for seniors and students with ID, \$6 for children aged 6-12, and free for children under 6. Albany Institute members are admitted for free. There is no charge to visit the café or museum shop. The museum offers free admission to the galleries on Thursdays from 5pm-8pm and on the First Fridays of the month from 5pm-8pm. In addition, in 2016 admission will be \$2.25 on Saturdays as part of the museum's 225 anniversary celebration. To learn about other discounts and free admission days, please refer to the Visit section of www.albanyinstitute.org.

For more information, visit www.albanyinstitute.org or call (518) 463-4478.

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Founded in 1791, the Albany Institute of History & Art is New York's oldest museum. Its collections document the Hudson Valley as a crossroads of culture, influencing the art and history of the region, the state, and the nation. With more than 35,000 objects and one million documents in the library, it is an important resource for the region, giving our community a sense of the part the Hudson Valley played in the American story, and our own place in history. Permanent and temporary exhibitions are open year-round and create a sense of place, allowing visitors to meet the people who helped shape this region. Among the museum's best-known and most-loved collections are the 19th century Hudson River School landscape paintings by artists like Thomas Cole and Frederic Church, the 19th century sculpture collections, and, of course, the famous Albany Mummies that came to the museum in 1909 and have been on view ever since. For more information, please visit www.albanyinstitute.org and be sure to follow us on Facebook (www.facebook.com/albanyinstitute) and Twitter (@AlbanyInstitute).