

Foyer:

Hi, I'm Keith and I'll be telling you about the Grange, a little about Alexander Hamilton, his life, and family, and a bit about the United States at the time he lived.

Before I do, I like to orient you to the house. It was first built about three blocks north of here. Begun in 1800, the family moved in in 1802 and the house was completed in 1803. St. Luke's church- you can see the apse of the church out the sidelights- bought the house and moved it to the north side of the church in 1889. The National Park Service moved it again in 2008 to its current location. When we moved it, though, we rotated it about 180 degrees from its original orientation.

So, imagine this huge door, side lights and transom window facing south. This part of Manhattan was all farms, swamps and forest, but the city was a short 90-minute ride away for Hamilton in his riding chair. And that's where the money was. And money was one of the reasons he built this house. He was going to use this house to get rich. So, he borrowed a lot of money to build this mansion.

How does that work? How does going into debt and building a beautiful mansion make you rich?

(NOTE: I ask the crowd, “Didn’t they tell you downstairs that this is an interactive tour?)

The group members will say things like, “Sell it when it appreciates?” I answer that that is very 20<sup>th</sup>/21<sup>st</sup> century thinking.

OR,

They say, “Hamilton wanted to rent it out/AirBnB?” I say, good guess, but another reason he wanted to build this house was to raise his family in it, so there wouldn’t be room to rent it out. After a few guesses, I say:

The reasoning has everything to do with his image. Alexander Hamilton was our first master public relations expert. The logic goes like this:

1. If you live in a big mansion, you look rich
2. If you look rich, then you must BE rich;
3. If you are rich, you must be good at your job, and;
4. If you are good at your job, I am more likely to hire you.

Not only did Hamilton want to use the house to get rich, but he wanted to raise his family here. When they moved in, in 1802 (the house was still under construction, by the way) six of their seven children moved in. Angelica, the oldest child, was 18 and Eliza, the youngest, about three or four. Little Philip (the second Philip) was born in 1802, after the family moved in. As we go through the

house, I'll point out how it tells a story of balancing these two objectives Hamilton had for his house. It is a balance between making it family friendly and exquisite enough to impress potential clients.

The two main reasons he built this house were to raise his kids and to get rich. In his letters, he writes plainly to friends and relatives that that's what he wants out of this house. But in reading his letters and looking at the history, I believe there is a third reason. In 1800, when Hamilton begins to build the house, another event is taking place in America. Anyone know what it was? (The presidential election of 1800)

The presidential election was complicated – remember the Constitution was new and people on both sides of the aisle were trying to figure out what it allowed and what it forbade. Standing for election were: John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and Aaron Burr. For Hamilton there was a spectrum of dislike for these three. He didn't much care for John Adams, He didn't like Jefferson, but he really disliked, maybe even hated Aaron Burr.

Let's dig into that. Hamilton founded the Federalist party, and John Adams was a member. So you'd think Hamilton would support him.

(NOTE: IF there are children in the group, I ask if any play sports, or do anything team related. I then ask them the last time they let the other team win.

Obviously, they say they never did. To keep their interest, I tell them that's exactly what Hamilton did.)

Apparently, after watching Adams as president for four years, Hamilton believed Adams had to go, and the Federalist party could be reorganized. Hamilton worked in the back rooms to support C.C. Pinckney and, as he often did, Hamilton wrote a pamphlet, that- when leaked- caused an irretrievable splintering of the Federalist party. If he hadn't done that, his party may have enough electoral college votes to return Adams to the presidency, or the vice presidency. As it was, Jefferson and Burr had an equal number of electoral college votes. All of a sudden, the hated Aaron Burr could become president! Hamilton worked diligently to make sure Jefferson won the tiebreaking vote in the House of Representatives. He did, after 35 votes!

The result was a fractured Federalist party and a President Jefferson. The Federalists blamed Hamilton. But in Hamilton's mind, he had saved the party from another four years of Adams and his, "disgusting egotism." And thanks to his efforts, America was saved from having to endure a President Burr. This is how Hamilton always thought. His plans and actions were right – he couldn't understand why the party now turned against him.

About this time, he wrote to friends claiming to be retired. He would write that the best thing for a retired politician was to garden. And as the work on the house progressed, he wrote letters to the groundskeeper describing his garden. His instructions are minute, down to the ratio of clay, compost, ash to mix soil, his instructions for an apple orchard are so detailed it borders on OCD. I interpret this as a way to treat a little bit of PTSD after the fallout of the election of 1800.

So those are the reasons Hamilton built this house; raise a family, get rich, and treat his self-inflicted loss from his electoral machinations. Now let me tell you about the kind of house he built, then I'll give you a quick bio of the man himself.

Hamilton decided to build a Federal style house and that decision impacted what he could do in the design of the house. The most crucial element of a federal style house is symmetry. Imagine a line running down the middle of the house. Whatever happens on this side of the house, must also happen on the other side of the house.

I'll give you two examples of what I mean. If you look through the door to the study on my right, and look at the wall facing the street, you'll see a window. Go ahead, take a look. Now, another window, the same size, same shape, same distance from the front door has to be on the wall on the other side of the house.

Go ahead, take a look. Can you see the window? Is it the same size and shape?

(The window is there, but mostly obscured by the staircase.)

How can you tell if it is the same size and shape as the other window?

What's in front of it? The stairs! It is the same size and shape, but inside, it is nearly useless! But it's got to be there to conform to the strictures of federalist style.

Here's another example. In the dining room to the right, you'll see a fireplace- beautifully centered in the wall facing us. And in the parlor to the left is another fireplace, also beautifully centered on the wall. They both need a chimney. There are two rooms in the back of the house, and they, too, have fireplaces centered on the walls they share with the parlor and dining room. And they share the chimneys. There are fireplaces upstairs, and they, too, share the two chimneys in this house. The fireplaces are placed so that there are only two working chimneys in this house. When you go outside, look up at the roof and count the chimneys. You'll count four.

Two of them are fake. They're made of wood and painted to look like brick. The two working chimneys are in the back third of the house, and that's not symmetrical. But, if you plant two fake chimneys in the front third of the house, it makes a nice little symmetrical square.

That's how seriously they took the design principles of the federal style. It will come into play in the design of the dining room, and we'll get to that in a minute.

Before I tell you more about the house, let me run down the accomplishments of Hamilton and tell you a few stories about him.

This portrait, painted by John Trumbull in 1792 is magnificent. When it was painted, Hamilton wasn't even 40 years old, but had been:

- A refugee
- A student at the prestigious Kings College, now Columbia
- Captain of an artillery battery (Hamilton was ambitious and the fastest way to rise in the 18<sup>th</sup> century was to have a glorious military career. So he formed the battery, so he could be captain)
- He won a minor battle, near here in Harlem Heights and came to the attention of George Washington
- Within a year he was Washington's Aide de Camp
- After the war he was a congressman from New York
- While a congressman he came to view the Articles of Confederation as flawed
- He helped write the Constitution.
- He defended the Constitution in his Federalist Papers essays.
- Became a successful lawyer
- After the Constitution was adopted and George Washington was elected, Hamilton became the first Secretary of the Treasury.
- He retired, but got called back to be the Major General of the Army acting as Inspector General of the Army. While in that position he helped form what eventually became the Coast Guard.
- Outside of government, he founded the Federalist party

- Founded the Bank of New York
- Helped revitalize the New York Chamber of Commerce
- Founded the New York Evening Herald

Hamilton before he turned 40 had been BUSY!

Alexander Hamilton built this house, in part, to project an image of success. He may have been America's first master of public relations. I'll tell you a few stories that illustrate that.

When he was a representative from New York the Congress fiercely debated whether to fund and how to fund pensions of half pay for all Revolutionary War officers. There was nearly a coup, known as the Newburgh Conspiracy related to the issue. Hamilton was in favor of it because it might allow Congress the power to tax. But, in order to look like there was no conflict of interest, he wrote to the Secretary of War to renounce his claim to the pension.

The National Park Service loves it when I tell that story. I mean, what a great American! He gave up the pension so there wouldn't be a conflict of interest. We could use more like him, right?

Not so fast. I have no doubt, that part of Hamilton believed it was the right thing to do, but he also knew it looked good, too. The reason I say that is found in Hamilton's own writing. A few days before the duel with Aaron Burr, Hamilton wrote a letter to the American people – to us – outlining his property and wealth.



He had given up the pension fifteen years earlier, but he took the time in that final letter to remind us in that he had given it up for purely selfless reasons. He knew it looked good!

Now let's get into this painting, another example of him taking charge of his image. Remember I said Hamilton helped revitalize the New York Chamber of Commerce? The board of that body needed to increase membership, so they decided a huge portrait of their most famous member, hanging in the front hall would bring people in. They envisioned something like Hamilton in a uniform, medals dripping off him, maybe some artillery, the Federalist Papers. You know a painting that would make people look at it and say, "If that guy is a member of the Chamber, I need to be, too!" They hired John Trumbull, a very famous portrait painter, to paint Hamilton. The thing is, Hamilton and Trumbull were friends, and Hamilton, being an expert at managing his image, told John Trumbull, "I'll sit, but you can't paint anything that represents my government service. I want you to paint me looking like a rich, New York lawyer."

John Trumbull was stuck between his friend who wanted one thing and the people paying him, who wanted something different.

Trumbull threaded the needle brilliantly, I think. He has Hamilton standing, and looking to the future – tropes that are required in a painting like this. But he

puts Hamilton in this suit. Its fine, really expensive. While the style – breeches, long coat, etc. is still in style, it is slowly going out of style. Long pants and differently cut coats are coming into style. But to me, it hearkens back to the revolution and the founding of the United States. As a matter of fact, this style of suit was used by the United States as a uniform for our diplomats, until President Franklin Delano Roosevelt abolished diplomatic uniforms. Many countries still have diplomats that wear uniforms that look like this because it says, “statesman!”

In the corner, barely lit, and carelessly draped over a chair is a cloak. I squint and I see gold embroidery, and royal purple. So, I see John Trumbull saying, “Look, my buddy Al wants you to think he’s just a New York lawyer, but he’s actually American royalty.”

But John Trumbull’s best way around his conundrum is something else. Alexander had asked that John not paint anything representing his military or government service. So, John says, okay, I’ll do you one better. He didn’t paint him in a uniform or with medals, but he did paint his weapons. Can you find them?

(NOTE: I try to ask only children to answer this. An adult will invariably blurt out the answer. I give kids a hint by asking if they’ve ever heard the saying, “The pen is mightier than the sword.”)

Think about it, it is how Alexander Hamilton got everything done. It got him out of the Caribbean, cultivated his relationship with George Washington. It's how he got himself killed.

Okay, we know more about who Hamilton the man was, that he decided to build a Federal style house to raise his family, get rich and heal a little from his recent political decisions. Now we can start talking about the house proper.

It starts with this room. What would you call it?

(NOTE: People will say, foyer, front hall, entry way, etc. I agree with them.

Whatever you may call it, I call it a “waste of space.”)

Nobody eats here, nobody cooks here, nobody works here, nobody sleeps here. It is simply here to begin the work of impressing visitors. Look at the high ceilings, the beautiful floral carving on the Palladian arch. People, especially running children passed through it from part of the house to the other. I imagine it like a cartoon where people run in one door and out another...

One of the final touches meant to impress is the bust of your host hiding back there. Yes, don't let the Caesar haircut fool you. That is Hamilton.

The original was done by an Italian sculptor named Giuseppe Ceracchi. He craved fame and apparently asked many famous people to sit for him with the

promise of a terra cotta copy of their bust as compensation. He did Madison, Washington, Jefferson, and Hamilton. The story goes that when Washington's bust came it also came with a \$1,500 dollar bill. Washington politely refused and returned the bust.

It looks like Hamilton decided to pay for his. This is the kind of man we're dealing with – not afraid to have a bust of himself in his own home, and willing to pay for it. We think this marble copy of the terra cotta bust is the one Alexander's wife Eliza had with her until she died. She would call it, "My Hamilton."

Last, for this room, I'd like you to consider the floor. This is not the original floor, obviously, but as you walk and hear the creaking of the wood, that is original. A lot, if not all the wood for the Grange came from Alexander Hamilton's father-in-law, Philip Schuyler. He wrote letters begging Hamilton for schematics and lumber needs, promising to soak the lumber for months, dry it properly and send it down, ready to withstand rot and wear. He even gave Hamilton advice on how to brick up the walls so no rats and mice would make their homes there. I think he was more excited about the house than Hamilton.

We do not know how the floor was finished. It may have been marble and tile, or wood cut and painted to look like marble and tile. But we do know there would have been a canvas covering on it. It would be a thick sail cloth with several

layers of paint. It would at least have the same colors as the floor or may have been painted to resemble the floor.

Remember the children running in and out of this room? That canvas covering stayed down there to protect the floor. I imagine, when visitors, or future clients came to the house, that covering gets pulled up, the floor dusted off, and it is pristine and impressive. So even the entrance hall is designed to do dual use – allow passage for residents yet remain stunning for guests.

## STUDY

If you were a client or future client, you would be brought into the study to do business with Mr. Hamilton. Let's go in.

Remember, we rotated this house 180 degrees. So this window would have faced south and this window would have faced east. This gave Hamilton plenty of light to work all day without the need for candles. Alexander liked to save his pennies wherever he could.

He would have done his work, starting here in 1802, at this desk here. It is a faithful reproduction of Hamilton's desk here in the Grange. It is solid mahogany and wonderfully crafted. The original is downtown at the Museum of the City of New York. I like to point out that we have carefully displayed his weapons – Pen, ink, and paper...

Now you might think that's where all the magic happened, or downtown at his office. But we have letters from Alexander to his wife, Elizabeth/Eliza/Betsy. He writes things like: Dear Eliza, I love you, a thousand kisses to the kids, I'm in Fishkill; or I arrived here yesterday, my angel (from Dobbs Ferry), or My beloved Eliza, I am in Albany. He traveled all the time; mostly for his clients, but sometimes on his own business. And, at the time, we did not have courts in every

town, so every so often, as needed, lawyers and judges would travel a circuit to dispense justice throughout the states. We still call these circuit courts to this day.

When Hamilton traveled he needed a place to carry his weapons, the tools of his trade. He needed a travelling desk, and this is an exact replica of that desk. It has a writing surface and compartments for his pen ink and paper. The original is way upstate in Clinton, New York in the collections of Hamilton College.

You'll notice that we stuck an expense book in Hamilton's desk. Alexander Hamilton was meticulous about keeping track of his expenses. It has been very useful to us, but you'll find out later in the tour that it didn't do him much good. He kept a record of everything he spent money on for this house. For example, he spent \$250.00 on carpets from Brussels. That expense, plus the discovery of carpet tack holes in the original flooring, let's us say with some certainty that this room, the dining room and the parlor had wall to wall carpeting. The carpet we have on the floor now is not original, but it does have a pattern that was available in 1800. It is a guess, but an educated guess.

I'd like to turn your attention to the wall and the color on it. When we moved this house, we stripped it down to the bones. In the process, we discovered the walls in this room were painted this color. This is the only room in the house that we are confident of the colors. I think this is a Behr paint and it's called

something like, “Vineyard” or “California Vineyard.” Our modern marketing didn’t invent cute names for paint colors, though. This was a popular color. George Washington’s dining room in Mount Vernon had this color on the walls, Jeffersons Monticello sported this color, too. Thought they would have been slightly different shades, because they were mixed on site, all three men would have looked at this color and called it, “verdigris.” Its French for Green/gray. It was important for a few reasons. First, it was expensive. So it would impress your clients. And when it was first applied, it was bright! Like springtime green. Hamilton lived in a time we call the Enlightenment. It was a wild time with lots of new thinking that gave rise to science, democracy and a whole lot more. The people of the enlightenment believed that god was a creator, and nature was a perfect creation. If you could replicate the color of nature, that perfect creation, you could commune with the creator or tap into the creativity or serenity. So this color brings nature from the outside into this room.

The last few items I’d like to point out in this room are these five books. These belonged to Alexander Hamilton. When he died, he had perhaps a thousand books. That’s like having Google in your own home at that time. We have been able to track these down, there are inscriptions and margin notes in them from Eliza and Alexander’s hand.



They are books any educated person in the eighteenth century might own. There's a history of the world, a history of Rome, a history of Europe, and a book of classics. The fifth book is very particular to Hamilton, though. It is a History of Commerce by Adam Anderson. The title is actually about twenty words long, but we'll just use "A History of Commerce." Judging by the inscriptions it may have actually belonged to Eliza. But, there are two reasons I claim it is special to Hamilton. First, usually when historians write their pieces, they build on other scholars and add to their ideas. But Anderson is not like that. No, He picks out other authors, who also wrote histories of commerce, and he writes, "That guy's wrong, that guy's wrong, and that guy's definitely wrong. He doesn't spare anybody. I can just imagine Hamilton sitting in a chair like that Chippendale Wingback, reading this book and giggling to himself. In many ways, he wrote in the very same style. If he thought someone had a bad idea or was misinformed, he was never shy about expressing it in writing! I think Hamilton definitely had an affinity for Anderson. The other reason I love that this book is among the ones we've brought back to the Grange is Anderson makes the argument that currencies should be based on the decimal system, or tens. And that is exactly what Alexander Hamilton did, when he was First Secretary of the Treasury, he based our dollars on tens. I feel like this book is a great representation of Hamilton's ideas and spirit and I'm tickled that we have it back here in Alexander's study.

As I said, if you were a client you would be wowed by the front hall and shown in here to conduct business with Alexander. But if you were not yet a client, they would take you through the front hall, impress you there, then lead you into the dining room, where they would “dazzle” you! Let’s Go in there and see.

## DINING ROOM

Remember I made you look at windows and fireplaces to drive home the importance of balance and symmetry in Federal style architecture. This room illustrates Hamilton's commitment to that style even though it forced him to get creative to fulfill his wishes.

Alexander Hamilton wanted this room to be as big as possible, but if you make this room bigger, that room (I point to the parlor) has to be bigger- the same size and shape as this room. And that means the foundation gets bigger and the whole house gets bigger, all just to make this dining room as big as it possibly can. Hamilton cannot do that and remain true to the Federal style, but he really wants this room to be a place he can ENTERTAIN!

So he worked with his architect, who was John McComb Jr., THE architect in New York. He designed Gracie Mansion, just over there on the East River; and City Hall, downtown. In Mr. McComb's library were many books that showed the possibilities in this style of house. Alexander and John McComb could have made this room square, or oval, both very popular in Federal style houses. But they chose to make this (and the parlour opposite) octagonal, or eight sided. That gives them extra room. Usually there would be a room here, and a hall on the other side of this wall, that ran the length of the house, front to back; and on the other side of the hall

would be the twin of this room. An octagonal room gave Alexander and John three, straight walls on this side of the room, and- of course- the same configuration on the part of the room facing this room on the other side of the hall.

This wall and the same wall on the other room could then be moved closer and closer together until they touched, getting rid of the hall altogether. Because the walls on either side of the wall that moved were in a flat plain, the architect was able to put doors in them, that allowed passage from the front of the house to the back. By making these rooms octagonal, Alexander and John McComb were able to maximize the size of this room and still conform to the strict rules of federal style houses and not make the foundation and the rest of the house bigger.

But they put their heads together to see how they might squeeze even more space to entertain on top of the foundation they had decided on. So, they decided, adding porches, or porticoes, as they would have been called, wouldn't demand a larger foundation, or need to be heated. Wood and coal cost money! The creative pair put these monstrous, floor to ceiling windows and decided to make them triple-hung. That means this bottom sash can lift up, higher than I am tall. I could walk out, through the window without ducking. All three of the windows in this room, and the three windows in the parlour could convert into doorways to the portico. Suddenly you do not only have a large dining room in which to entertain, you have an enormous space to host a monster, embarrassing party!

But, despite the clear planning and building to be able to invite large numbers of society movers and shakers, I am not sure they ever got a chance to use the house that way. I have not seen any letters, mentioning any gatherings here of any great size. They were here, together, for such a short time.

But let's get back to the story of this room. They had cleverly made this room as big as they could, without either breaking the bank, or breaking the strictures of the Federal style. Now they could set about trying to make this room blind those who were invited into the room with light!

And that starts with this. This is called a plateau, and it belonged to the Hamiltons. And-like the front room- it is mostly a waste of space. It sits in the middle of the table – we actually have another section, so it would have taken up even more space. You can't put plates of food on it. It is just a mirror, that you polish, then polish again. And when you light the candles, it reflects the light up, brightening this room.

But, as with the size of this room, Alexander and John pushed the boundaries. On the back of these three doors, you will see there are eighteen panes, each filled with a mirror. They are meant to reflect the windows, pun intended. When you polished the plateau, and all the mirrors on the doors, lit up the candles, and got the fireplace roaring, the light bounced around in here like a disco ball!

I mentioned in the study that we know a lot about the house because we were able to study the house closely, when we moved it. And I noted that we had Alexander Hamilton's expense book that tells us what he bought to furnish and build the house. But a third important way we discover how a house was built and used, and what it meant to its inhabitants and visitors are letters. I haven't read too many accounts of what people were served at these dinners. I Think they may have been too blinded by the light to see what they were eating.

Before guests sat down, before the table was set, the Hamiltons would have laid down a piece of canvas, similar to the one that covered the front hall. It, too, would have been painted in a similar pattern to the carpet, or at least in the same color palette. It was called a "crumb carpet." Not only did it protect the carpet, it signaled to your guests that your carpet was valuable enough to invest in a crumb carpet to protect it.

Over here (I point to the wine cooler) we have an item that impresses guests on several levels. Not only is it silver and would have been polished to a fare-thee-well to dazzle, but its purpose would also dazzle, too. It is what's called a wine cooler. It is designed to make wine ice cold. I don't know about you, but I generally like to drink cold drinks in the summer. That was true in Hamilton's day, too. There is no way to make this item work, unless you have ice. Since there was

no refrigeration, one had to have a way to gather ice in the winter and keep it in that state until it was needed in the hotter months.

There was hardly an ice delivery service way out here in the sticks, so Hamilton needed an icehouse. An unheard-of luxury, except for the well to do. And, impressively, he did have an icehouse. We know this because he wrote letters to his architect complaining about its construction. An icehouse is nothing more than a hole in the ground with a roof over it to keep the rain out. In the winter months, Hamilton's workers would go to the North (Hudson), East or Harlem River to cut ice, haul it up here and put it in the ice house. Once it was filled with ice, they would pack it with sawdust, straw or hay to keep it insulated. Somehow, Alexander Hamilton was not satisfied with his icehouse, as designed by the famous John McComb Jr. I forget exactly what Hamilton complained about, something about the pitch of the roof was wrong, or not big enough.

We know, though, Hamilton would have had the ice to make this nice item work. There are sleeves for up to four bottles of wine, you fill the container with some water and lots of ice, and in 30 minutes you've got ice cold wine. I picture a scenario like this. Even in the summer, they would have the fire going and the candles blazing to carry home the effect of the light bouncing everywhere. Of course the guests are in their wool suits, and the ladies would be laced up in crinoline and baleen corsets. It would have been stifling!

So, Hamilton would bounce up and ask his guests if they'd care for some ice cold wine. Invariably they had to say something like, "You're darn tootin, its hot in here!" So, they'd sip the ice cold wine, compliment it, undoubtedly. Then, then! Hamilton could say, "Oh, do you like that? Well, you can thank George Washington, that ice cooler was just a little gift from him to me. It has something like 'thanks for the help,' engraved on it."

To me, the mirrors, the wine cooler, the plateau, its all designed to dazzle guests. Hamilton is just spreading it on thick, here. Almost begging his guests to come on as clients.

I like to point out this silver tray, on which the tea and coffee set sit. It is not extraordinary in its decoration, but it is beautiful. It was made in about 1794 by a silversmith in London. HER name was Elizabeth Jones. We cannot be sure, but I like to think that this tray did make its way to the United States to grace the table of Eliza and Alexander Hamilton. It doesn't make up for a lot of inequality, but she must have been extraordinary to break the glass ceiling of silversmithing in 18<sup>th</sup> century England.

So, after everyone had had their nuts, coffee and tea, they would have gotten up and withdrawn to the 'withdrawing room' or parlor. That is where we get the word 'drawing room' from.



## **Parlor**

This is probably my favorite room, for two reasons. First, five of these Louis XVI chairs are original to the house.

Can you guess which ones?

Sorry, that was a trick question, I do not know either. I know the numbers we use to inventory them, but I have decided not to crawl under the chairs to see which ones are original.

Don't be too disappointed, because the other reason this is my favorite room is this pianoforte is definitely original to the house.

Eliza's sister Angelica married John Church. They lived in London for a time. While there, Angelica went down to Cheapside and bought this from Clementi and Company. Clementi may have singlehandedly made the piano and piano music popular. When they returned to New York, Angelica brought this with her and gave it as a gift to her niece, also named Angelica.

Angelica the niece was a fantastic piano player. Alexander was pretty deft at tickling the ivories, too. But from what I've read his guests often wanted him to sing. He apparently had a beautiful and lively voice.

After a nice meal, the guests could come in here, listen to music, play some cards – I think this game dealt here is a form of ‘Casino.’ Maybe a little brandy, and if there was still ice left in that icehouse, the Hamiltons might serve a little ice cream in these sherbet glasses on this demi-lune table. From what I understand the Hamiltons liked their ice cream.

Here is something to consider. Look at the three doors behind you. They are not as tall as the doors they face in the dining room. They are less formal, more inviting, human. Some curators, in writing about the house feel that the day-to-day parlor for the family was upstairs, not here in this room. It may have been a school room, a play room, or only a room used when there was entertaining to be done, especially if their regular parlor was upstairs.

So, I can see this nice, cozy parlor being set up for those guests who may not have signed on the dotted line, after being dazzled in the dining room. Sure, bring them in here, have Angelica play the piano, and Alexander sing. Maybe lose a little money playing casino, dripping ice cream on the carpet. The folks privileged to come in here might have felt like the Hamiltons really liked them. They were being treated like family, after all. I’m pretty sure this room was also designed to help Hamilton close the deal on several occasions.

At the very least, it reinforces, to me, the fact that Hamilton designed and built a house that could serve many functions, and each room – at least on this floor- could be repurposed. When it was a family house, it was bare bones, and had protection on the floors. When it was a representational space, it could be glitzed up and made dazzling! In that regard, Hamilton succeeded.

I'd like to tell you a few stories, inspired by this portrait of George Washington, and then I'll wrap up the story of the house- at least as far as Alexander Hamilton is concerned.

The original of this portrait was painted by Gilbert Stewart. THE portrait painter of the age. It was done in 1795. The piece of paper in the portrait is likely the Treaty of Amity, Commerce, and Navigation, Between His Britannic Majesty and the United States of America. We know it better as the Jay Treaty. It did a couple things, and they inform our story.

First, it was essentially a free trade agreement between the United States and Great Britain. Since the start of the Revolutionary War, 20 years earlier, even after the end of the war, we had unsettled issues with Great Britain. This treaty settled many of the outstanding problems on both sides. We became friends with Great Britain, something our man Alexander Hamilton felt was necessary. He took a cold look at the potential for trade with France and with Great Britain and he decided

the United States was best served if it were on friendly trading terms with Great Britain.

Now France, on the other hand, looked at this treaty as a slap in the face. We had signed a treaty with them during the war that had language promising we'd be best friends forever. Rightly, they thought, "We helped you get rid of these bums, and now you're going to be besties?" Sure enough, within a few years we were in a 'quasi-war' with France- that's the reason Hamilton was called back to service and helped create the beginnings of our Coast Guard.

Here at home it does even more interesting things. George Washington is in his second term – the great Cincinnatus who will go back to his plow after two terms as president. He had essentially run unopposed, but since the constitution had been adopted, everyone – especially the ones who wrote it, were trying to figure out what is actually meant. What was government allowed to do, how much could a president or congress do without running afoul of the people and law?

These questions come to a head and help solidify the bare-knuckle, two party politics of the United States because of this treaty. Almost all the Founding Fathers wrote or said at one time that they detested political parties, believing them to bring out the worst in the political arena. But here we are a few years after the Constitution is ratified and Hamilton founds the Federalist party. Others coalesce

around Jefferson calling themselves either Jeffersonians or Democratic Republicans. Hamilton thought the treaty was good for commerce, and liked it on business grounds. He also came to abhor France at this point. It was in the middle of some nasty, reign of terror stuff after the French Revolution, too. Jefferson loved France was enthralled with the idea of total people power – everyone a yeoman farmer- and weak central government. So, their propensities split them on the treaty, and it got ugly.

George Washington got death threats. I know, George Washington got death threats!? Jefferson called him a “senile old man,” It was rough. And it was all being helped along by the extra mobilization of people that parties can drive. I love learning about this house and the times it has lived through, because it convinces me that the more things change, the more they stay the same! Hold on to that idea of party friction, it comes into play a bit later.

Back to the portrait. The original, like the wine cooler, was a gift to Alexander Hamilton from George Washington. For my money, that portrait is up in the attic, while the kids are running around. But as soon as the canvas in the foyer comes up, I’d dust that portrait off and slap it on the wall just inside the door. Picture it, Hamilton’s guests arrive, and while they are taking off their coats, they glance at the portrait, do a double take and ask, “Is that who I think it is?”

Alexander Hamilton gets to reply, that, yes, indeed it is George Washington. Oh, and he gets to tell his guests that the fine portrait is a little gift from the man himself. Again, Alexander Hamilton managed to build a house that would draw in clients and provide a comfortable, spacious place for his family.

## The End

The end of the story of the house, for Alexander Hamilton begins on July 10, 1804. He writes some letters to his friends and wife. Maybe he's at the big desk in the study over there, or maybe he's writing downtown on his portable desk. There is disagreement as to where he was the night before the duel.

He writes his will. In it he names John Church (his brother-in-law), Nicholas Fish, and Nathaniel Pendleton as his executors. These guys are Federalists, naturally. But let me remind you these are probably the only Federalists who still like him. In the will he basically says, sell the house and my property, pay my debts and give the rest to Eliza.

That's pretty straightforward. But let's look to this house. Sure his father-in-law helped him with the lumber. But he had to hire THE federalist architect of New York, and Hamilton needed to borrow money to pay him. The builder, Ezra Weeks, needed to get paid. I have seen letters that said Hamilton was delinquent in paying him. That's right, our first Secretary of the Treasury, late on payments to the man who built his dream home. Shameful. (NOTE: Hamilton defended Ezra Weeks' brother Levi, in a sensational New York murder trial in 1800 known as the Manhattan Well Mystery.) This house originally stood on about 34 acres. Hamilton

bought it in two parcels, from Jacob Schieffelin and Samuel Bradhurst and he had to borrow money to pay those loans.

Hamilton reckoned his debts and assets a few days before his duel. He thought the Grange would be worth 25,000 So, selling this house right away, at auction, would never fetch enough to pay off his debts. Things are pretty dire, wouldn't you agree?

Do you think it could get worse?

The correct answer is, "YES," things can always get worse.

For about 25 years, Alexander Hamilton has been borrowing money and buying land out in western New York and Ohio. Acres and acres of it- all on borrowed money. Before you judge him, it was going for about 6 cents an acre. All he had to do was wait until it hit 12 cents an acre, sell it and he has doubled his money. Hamilton owed between \$50,000 and \$80,000. All he had to do is stay alive and pay the interest on his loans, and his income as a lawyer allowed that. All he had to do is stay alive.

Of course, he didn't, no spoilers there.

Hamilton's executors, saddled with this sale of this house and care of Eliza – and the mostly young family she had to look after were in a bind. In Hamilton's letter to the American people I spoke about in the foyer, he mentions that Eliza



should be coming into some money from her mother, and that her father was wealthy as all get out. He doesn't say it outright, but he hints that maybe Eliza's father will help her out. As far as I can tell the executors never asked, or father-in-law Schuyler refused.

Now the executors might have had a case to take to the government. After all, the Vice President had shot and killed Hamilton – and his funeral cortege in New York was terrifically well attended, attesting to his popularity. They might have been inclined to help Eliza out. But remember the hated Jefferson was president and the executors were Federalists. I cannot prove it, but remember the bad blood between the Jeffersonians and the Federalists? I'm sure there was no way they were going to give him that political win.

And Hamilton's actions before and during the presidential election of 1800 made sure the Federalists, as a body, would not think about helping his widow.

I haven't pieced together exactly what they did, but they decided to go to their friends – Federalists and offer them a deal. Church, Pendleton and Fish, formed a larger body of trustees and they said to likely investors, "We'd like to sell you a subscription. It will cost 200 dollars. You can hold on to it for a couple of years and then redeem it for 200 dollars. These are Federalists – bankers and businessmen. They don't want to tie up their money for a few years and get

nothing for their pains. They want a profit. So the people who might buy this not only feel unkindly towards Hamilton, but they aren't going to make anything in the bargain. I don't know how they did it, but they sold four hundred and two of these subscriptions. With the money they raised, they paid interest due on all of Alexander Hamilton's debt, buying some time to sell the properties Hamilton had and figure out how to keep Eliza in her home before the next payments were due.

By the next April, in 1805, they began to advertise the property for sale, stating that, "the titles are free from all doubt or embarrassment." The New York Evening Herald had an advertisement listing the house for sale or rent on November 20, 1805. The house was finally bought, at auction, by Archibald Gracie. He was one of the larger body of trustees. I don't know how they did it at a "free and fair" public auction, but they managed to have one of the trustees buy the house. They slowly sold off the land Hamilton had speculated on and paid off the four hundred and two subscriptions. A short time later, they conveyed the house to Eliza Hamilton, along with \$20,000 dollars.

So, it's a happy ending.

Except, Hamilton was dead, and Eliza wore black every day for the rest of her life.

That's it, that's where I end the tale of the Grange. I leave you with no lessons, no morals. Just the thought that this house is here, and it offers a window onto the life of an extraordinary person who came within an inch of his dream of becoming a rich New York Lawyer and raising his family here. But he blew it. But this house also gives us glimpse of life in early America; how we lived, thought and fought. The more I study it and tell the story, the more America looks the same to me now, as it seemed to be in Hamilton's day. I'm glad this house is here, and I'm glad you stopped by and let me share its story with you.

Thanks.