

ALEXANDER HAMILTON: MYTH, LEGEND AND REALITY

William F. Cissel
President,
The Society of Virgin Islands Historians
26 October, 2007

“It is a capital mistake to theorize before one has data. Insensibly one begins to twist facts to suit theories, instead of theories to suit facts.”

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.¹

For a hundred years after his death, Alexander Hamilton’s connection with the West Indies was either reduced to a few anecdotes or ignored altogether. Early biographers summarily dismissed any possibility of positive contribution from a region they regarded as an economic and social “backwater.” This, of course, had not always been so, and they conveniently ignored Hamilton’s own assessment that his experiences clerking at Christiansted were “the most useful part of his education.”²

Since the turn of the twentieth century, that glaring omission has been gradually rectified. In his or her own way, Gertrude Atherton, Waldemar Westergaard, Holger Utke Ramsing, Broadus Mitchell, and Harold Larson began to reveal the triumphs and tragedies of Alexander Hamilton’s formative years in the West Indies through archival research.³ The subsequent compilation of Hamilton’s papers⁴ made surviving correspondence relative to St. Croix and about his parents more widely available. Biographies by James Thomas Flexner, Forrest McDonald, Richard Brookhiser, Stephen F. Knott, Willard Sterne Randall, and Ron Chernow;⁵ as well as local academic papers,⁶ have all acknowledged, if not elaborated on, the influence of the West Indian experience in shaping Hamilton’s character, values, and philosophies. Given these advances in scholarship, it is dismaying that the public’s understanding of the young Alexander Hamilton should still be misled by publications and statements “...in which truth and legend are hopelessly intermingled....[and o]ld errors continue to be repeated, and new ones added”—a concern as valid today as when it was first expressed more than half a century ago.⁷

The theme of this paper was prompted by certain assertions about Alexander Hamilton on St. Croix made by or on behalf of organizations,⁸ the U.S. Senate,⁹ and the National Park Service¹⁰ in support of Senate Bill S.1969. This bill would authorize “the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a special resource study to determine the suitability and feasibility of designating Estate Grange and other sites related to Alexander Hamilton’s life on the island of St. Croix in the United States Virgin Islands as a unit of the National Park System...”¹¹ The assertions in question purport to be factual but are without attribution, making identification of the original sources--much less any critical analysis of them--speculative at best.

Efforts to better understand the past are dynamic processes. Regardless of subject matter, interpretations are influenced by a host of different perspectives,¹² disciplines,¹³ and motives.¹⁴ Evidence, extracted from a wide range of sources, are subject to critical analysis to determine authenticity, credibility, purpose or intent, and extent of bias. These facts are then correlated to either support or refute a given hypothesis, from which one or more conclusions can be drawn.

Professional and amateur historians are guided by certain standards related to methodology and ethics. Nevertheless, there are individuals who either consider themselves or whom others style historians by virtue of their ability to pass off the findings of others as their own, without the slightest pang of conscience.

Regardless of how careful a researcher is, mistakes do occur from time to time. However, the discerning reader should pause if errors occur frequently or are of sufficient magnitude. Why would this happen? Few individuals deliberately go out of their way to risk embarrassment or loss of credibility because of fabrications, outlandish claims, or the uncritical repetition of proven inaccuracies. The errors referenced in this paper suggest either a lack familiarity with professional standards governing historical research, or a predilection to tailor the “facts” to the theory. Let us examine a few current examples.¹⁵

Home on the “Grange”

The family association

In 1738, James Lytton and his wife, Anne (Rachel Faucett’s older sister, and Alexander Hamilton’s aunt), left Nevis for the Danish island of St. Croix. They, like other planters and merchants from British and Dutch possessions in the Leeward Islands, came seeking opportunities through the plantation economy and real estate speculation. The Lyttons purchased, and resided at, the 150-acre sugar plantation designated No. 9 Company’s Quarter, a mile southwest of Christiansted. The plantation was later called “Grange.”¹⁶

What’s in a name

The Compact Oxford English Dictionary defines “Grange” as “A farm, esp. the residence and outbuildings of a gentleman farmer.”¹⁷ It has been asserted that the Lyttons gave their plantation this name.¹⁸ While it is tempting to infer an association between the St. Croix “Grange” and the Hamilton ancestral estate of the same name in Stevenston Parish, Ayrshire County, Scotland, one should bear a few pertinent factors in mind. First, the Lyttons had sold No. 9 Company’s Quarter to Nicholas Tuite in December, 1764. Second, the Lyttons had no acquaintance with James Hamilton (senior) prior to his arrival along with his family at Christiansted in May, 1765. Third, it seems the name “Grange” does not appear in records in association with No. 9 Company’s Quarter until August 12, 1769, when it is included in the entry for James Lytton in the St. John’s Anglican Church, Christiansted, Burial Register.¹⁹ The likelihood that the plantation was named “Grange” by Tuite, who came from Ireland and where it occurs as a geographic place name in two counties, warrants further research.²⁰ Incidentally, Estate Grange should **not** be confused with Estate La Grange, West End Quarter,²¹ which occurs from time to time largely due to carelessness misstatement.²²

Blest be the tie that binds

In mid-1745, Mary Faucett and her 16-year old daughter Rachel came to St. Croix, the largest of the “Danish Islands in America,” to visit Anne and her planter husband, James Lytton.²³ The visit coincided with the baptism of one of the Lytton’s children.²⁴ A recent source has stated that “...the teenage Rachel inherited a modest property her [late] father owned on St. Croix.”²⁵ This is indeed a revelation, and we can only hope that the source of this claim and the location of the property will be identified in the near future.

Rachel’s marriage to the older Johan [later anglicized to “John”] Michael Lavien was soon “arranged” by her mother, perhaps motivated by the prospects of social and financial advancement. All that glitters is not gold! Lavien, a former “merchant in Nevis” and an aspiring planter on St. Croix, has been estimated to be 12 to 22 years older than Rachel.²⁶ “After a short courtship...[Rachel and Lavien²⁷] were married at The Grange, the **stately** great house of the Lytton plantation”²⁸

After five years and the birth of a son, Rachel walked out of the marriage for reasons unknown. Lavien “brought public charges against Rachel for abandoning her ‘duty’ as his wife....[and] had her tossed into jail at the Christiansted fort.” She endured “...about three months...in an 8-by-10-foot cell with a single heavily barred window **looking out on a high wall** (emphasis added)...”²⁹ before her release and prompt departure for Nevis. Herein lies another example that “the devil is in the details”: it was quite impossible for the view from that cell window to be blocked by a “high wall,” since that wall was not erected until 1835--85 years after Rachel’s incarceration.³⁰ On the other hand, perhaps Rachel was ahead of her time...

A changeless presence

On St. Croix in the eighteenth century, it was customary for many weddings—especially upper class ones--to be solemnized in private residences rather than in church. Rachel’s wedding at the Lyttons has given rise to all sort of modern speculation and assumptions about what the great house looked like. In reality, the first scant details about the appearance of the great house at “Grange” were not published until 1971. We would do well to forego romantic images of elegance (e.g., crystal chandeliers and servants in livery) more appropriate to a later age. In 1745, St. Croix had been open to colonization under the Danes for less than eleven years. For the well-to-do, living conditions were comfortable but hardly luxurious in an otherwise pioneer environment. Most, if not all, “dwelling houses” (the term “great house” gained currency much later) were originally wooden structures on masonry foundations. As profits were realized from the production and sale of agricultural products (such as cotton, sugar, molasses, and rum), these houses were replaced on the same site with larger, far more substantial and elaborate masonry structures, which can be deduced by the significant increase in itemized value between inventories. A date stone on the “Grange” great house, inscribed “DE ANNA / ANNO 1761,” provides the likely year for this transformation.

Many buildings have a life of their own. Over time, they are modified to some degree to meet specific needs and circumstances—e.g., to accommodate larger families. In his

memoirs, Robert Skeoch (owner of Estate Diamond & Ruby in Queen's Quarter) made two statements regarding the great house at "Grange," having to do with the Hurricane of September 12-13, 1928. "The chimney....at Work & Rest...no longer exists as it was bought for its stone by the Armstrongs when they **remodeled** the house at the Grange in 1929 after losing their home at Hermon Hill in the 1928 hurricane"³¹ Furthermore, "They...fixed up a little room in addition to their mother's room [at Estate Hermon Hill] and lived that way for some time until the **restoration** of the old house at The Grange had progressed sufficiently for them to live there. That house had not been as badly damaged by the hurricane as was Hermon Hill."³²

These general statements were elaborated on in an online article about a tour of "The Grange," courtesy of "Jane, the custodian of the estate."³³ She noted that "Grange" was, "**Home of Rachel Fawcett Levine**, mother of the great American statesman, **Alexander Hamilton, who, presumably, frequented the estate**"....Rachel "...is buried on the premises and a gravestone was erected in the **1930's** [*sic.*] to commemorate her death" [emphases added]. The following architectural details of the great house, obviously provided by the current owners, are worthy of note: "The main level of the Greathouse is served by a grand staircase ascending from the front door on the southwest corner of the building. **This was added in the early 20th century.** At the top of the stairs is the dining room....This room was, at one time, a gallery (as its plethora of windows attests). **It was converted in 1929 to a dining room** by it then new owners who bought The Grange after their house, in Beeston Hill [*sic.*],³⁴ was destroyed by the devastating hurricane of 1928. East of the dining room (nee gallery) is the high-ceilinged living room, or drawing room as it was known. In the east wall³⁵ (which is 28 inches thick), a shuttered doorway opens precipitously on a vista of flat green fields³⁶ that once were planted in sugar cane..." The article goes on to say, "The Grange Greathouse has five bedrooms **and four baths.** The **basement is comprised of two handsome, stone- and coral-walled bedrooms as well as myriad storage areas. Arched window openings and passageways lend a unique architectural flavor and a decidedly non-basement-like appearance** to this level..."³⁷ [O]utside on the western exposure, we viewed the foundation of the old cookhouse which has been capped and converted to an above-ground cistern" [emphases added].

Nevertheless, we read that, "The building beside which is Rachel's grave, was damaged in the 1920s by a fierce storm and again by Hurricane Hugo in 1989; it was **faithfully restored** [emphasis added] on both occasions..."³⁸ Sweeping generalizations will have to be assessed according to applicable standards as part of the federal feasibility study, if that bill gets approved and funded. This will determine how precisely or loosely certain terms ("restored" versus "remodeled," each having its own technical specific definitions) have been used. It is safer at this juncture to say that the great house at "Grange"—inside and out—is today an entirely different building than that at the time of Rachel's wedding in 1745, and is markedly different from what existed between 1765-1773!

"Happy childhood hours"

Some authors have stated that Alexander Hamilton lived at No. 9 Company's Quarter³⁹ or at least "spent happy childhood hours" there.⁴⁰ Both assertions are fantasies. James

Lytton sold the plantation to Nicholas Tuite in December, 1764⁴¹—months before the Hamiltons arrived at Christiansted in May, 1765. After the parting of their parents in the summer of 1765, the Hamilton brothers lived with their mother, and would have spent a good part of each day working at her store⁴² or elsewhere to help earn a living. It strains the imagination to have them walk more than a mile each way to a property no longer owned by relatives, to do heaven knows what—perhaps contemplate the glories of the past. One could only imagine what the owner or his manager would have thought about the presence of relatively impoverished juvenile trespassers.

Rachel's gravesite and the monument

The last Alexander Hamilton association with “Grange” concerns the burial site of his mother. When the Lyttons sold their plantation to Nicholas Tuite, the family cemetery was reserved. Rachel died of Yellow Fever at her residence in Christiansted on February 19, 1768. She was buried the following day in the Lytton cemetery. To assert that, “As a divorced woman with two children conceived out of wedlock, Rachel was likely denied a burial at nearby St. John’s Anglican Church”⁴³ may be logical assumption in light of societal attitudes in the 18th century, but it still conjecture in the absence of contemporary documentation. The location of the gravesite (“Mr. Tuite’s Plant.”) is, along with other details, found in her entry in the St. John’s Burial Register.⁴⁴

A granite monument to Rachel is located a short distance to the northwest of the great house kitchen. Here is how it came to be: In 1901,⁴⁵ American author Gertrude Atherton traveled to St. Croix and Nevis seeking documentation for her pending “historical novel,” The Conqueror. She was shown Rachel’s entry in the church burial register, which indicated where she had been buried. Atherton, enthralled with Rachel’s independent and unconventional character, purchased the monument out of her own funds and had it erected on the estate in Rachel’s memory.

Here’s the rub. Traces of the Lytton cemetery have long since disappeared. Atherton’s selection of the site for the monument was arbitrary and partially influenced by aesthetic considerations, and has no relationship to the actual gravesite. Incidentally, the monument was inscribed with an incorrect birth year of 1736, rather than 1729.⁴⁶

The Alexander Hamilton you never suspected

Sleeping around

Modesty has little place when it comes to capitalizing on someone famous. A favorite association is that “so-and-so” lived (or slept) here. For example, George Washington slept in so many places that one is left to wonder when he found the time to become “the Father of his Country.” On a lesser scale, the same principle applies to Alexander Hamilton and St. Croix. In addition to supposedly living at “Grange” with his mother and brother (which has already been addressed), Alexander Hamilton was reputed to have lived at Estate Shoys from 1762-1765 while his father was employed there as manager.⁴⁷ This only serves to muddy the waters even further. This author knows of no contemporary proof for either allegation. After their mother’s death, the Hamilton boys lived with their cousin Peter Lytton until the latter’s suicide (perhaps they failed to tidy

up their room once too many times). “Alexander [then] went to live with the [Thomas] Stevens family just outside Christiansted...”⁴⁸ According to this scenario, Alexander Hamilton rode a horse to and from work.⁴⁹ The Stevens’ residence, however, was recorded on King Street.⁵⁰ This raises the questions (a) when King Street was ever considered “just outside Christiansted,” and in light of the Stevens’ actual residence (b) whether Hamilton really rode a horse the approximately three blocks to and from work.

Wearing out the library card

There is no question that Alexander Hamilton was of genius caliber. However, to state that Hamilton had, “by the time he celebrated his 12th birthday, ... read and reread Plutarch, Hume, Locke, Shakespeare, Milton, Livy, Hobbes, Machiavelli, Voltaire and Rousseau along with surveys of Greek and Roman history” without the benefit of extensive and formal tutelage staggers the imagination. It has furthermore been stated that, “Some of these books were among the titles in his mother’s library.”⁵¹ The Dealing (e.g., Probate) Court’s inventory of Rachel’s estate only collectively referred to “34 books” without listing the titles.⁵² It is most unfortunate that no citations were provided to support these claims. The practical explanation may lie in the fact that the evidence simply does not exist.

Adoption papers in duplicate

A senior official with the National Park Service, in testimony on behalf of S.1969, stated that, “After his mother’s death, Hamilton was twice adopted...”⁵³ This assertion was repeated in a local newspaper article, which specifically named “a cousin, Peter Lytton” and, after Lytton’s suicide, “local merchant Thomas Stevens.”⁵⁴ Although the individuals and the chronological sequence are correct, the assertion of adoption is not. The explanation is deceptively simple: these gentlemen were successively placed as “guardians.” The terms “guardianship” and “adoption” were not—and are not—synonymous.

Where DID Hamilton work?

Eleven-year-old Alexander Hamilton went to work for the firm of New Yorkers David Beekman and Nicholas Cruger in 1766, and not, as has been implied, after Rachel’s death in 1768.⁵⁵ Local tradition has long placed Cruger’s place of business at Nos. 56-57 King Street, across from Government House.⁵⁶ Not to be outdone, there have also been sporadic (although less well known) assertions which placed Nicholas Cruger’s business in Frederiksted, on “... Bay [Strand] Street, fronting the roadstead ... [where] Alexander Hamilton... had worked as a clerk...”⁵⁷ The likely cause of the legend of Nos. 56-57 King Street, Christiansted, stems from the fact that Cruger eventually owned that property **beginning in 1781**,⁵⁸ eight years after Alexander Hamilton had left the island! Details, details! In Hamilton’s time on St. Croix, property ownership records locate the store at Nos. 7-8 King Street, with warehouses at Nos. 23 and 26 King Cross Street.⁵⁹ Peter Lotharius Oxholm’s 1779 Plan No. 2 of Christiansted⁶⁰ shows that the “footprint” (outline) of the buildings there were laid out like a capital “L.” The storefront (the base of the “L”) faced King Street, and the two rows of warehouses with a narrow passageway in between (the leg of the “L”) extended along King Cross Street.

“Hamming” it up

A recent publication about Alexander Hamilton on St. Croix, claimed of “...whom all his friends called “Ham.” Although the source of this claim was not attributed, it has been traced to Hamilton biographers Ron Chernow and James Thomas Flexner.⁶¹

Unfortunately, the current author has chronologically misrepresented the application of that nickname. It originated as a term of endearment for Alexander Hamilton among fellow aides to General George Washington during the American Revolution, and NOT earlier on St. Croix. No evidence survives—if it was ever recorded in the first place—of the use of a Hamilton nickname on St. Croix, as we know that he called his boyhood friend Edward Stevens “Ned.”

The college fund

Most of his biographers generally acknowledge that the hurricane of August 31, 1772--described at the time as “the most dreadful Hurricane known here in the memory of Man.”⁶²—provided a providential opportunity for seventeen-year-old Alexander Hamilton. His vivid impressions were recorded in a remarkable erudite, half descriptive and half philosophical letter to his father, who was then living in Tobago. A Presbyterian clergyman at Christiansted, the Rev. Hugh Knox, was able to persuade a reluctant Hamilton to publish the letter anonymously in the Royal Danish American Gazette.⁶³ This reluctance is at odds with the allegation that, “The Gazette published several of Hamilton’s often startlingly accomplished and mature poems...” Hamilton’s authorship is assumed on the basis of the pseudonym, “a local youth.”⁶⁴ However, the Rev. Knox introduced the author of the hurricane letter as “a Youth of the Island.” The letter certainly made quite an impression on its readers, persuading some to actively try to further the young man’s education.

Published sources have attributed financial assistance to “two generous aunts;” “admiring friends and relatives;” public subscription; “wealthy merchants[,]...Nicholas Cruger[,]... Cornelius Kortright[,]...Thomas Stevens, the probate judge, and the son of *Stadthauptmand* [Town Captain Bertram Pieter] de Nully...”⁶⁵ What are the practicality of the various options?

Alexander Hamilton had only one aunt—his mother’s sister, Ann Faucett Lytton, who had already died in 1765—and not two. The other female relative, a first cousin--Ann Lytton Venton (later Mitchell)—was not been in a financial position to assist anyone. She and her first husband had fled St. Croix for New York in 1763 following his bankruptcy.⁶⁶

Recent Hamilton biographers have favored some form of subscription.⁶⁷ However, a thorough survey of the Royal Danish American Gazette between September, 1772 and July, 1773, by this author has failed to show any notices for public subscription, which would have been the norm. In the absence of a general subscription, it is reasonable to suggest that one or more of the gentlemen of means mentioned privately contributed the funds. Nicholas Cruger would have had the greatest reason to do so,⁶⁸ given Hamilton’s exertions on behalf of him and his business.

Rev. Knox, for his part, provided letters of introduction to influential people in New York and New Jersey, and particularly to his *alma mater*, the College of New Jersey at Princeton.⁶⁹ Not long after June 3, 1773, 18-year old Alexander Hamilton left St. Croix for British North America⁷⁰ and future greatness.

Conclusion

Any understanding of the past is shaped by a number of factors. Research about a particular topic or theme is affected by motive; the comparative use of primary, secondary, or tertiary sources; the proficiency, thoroughness, and analytical skills of the researcher; and the reflection of “balance” in the narrative. The successful defense of a premise—or the credibility of a conclusion—depends on the reliability and weight of supporting evidence. Independent authentication and relevance of evidence depends on an author’s acknowledgement of each and every source used. The practice of dispensing with such academic conventions is a disconcerting trend.

How authors present their work tells the perceptive reader a great deal that is not written. It may indicate that a particular author does not subscribe to certain standards. It may reflect either an attitude (“History...is to a large degree educated guesswork”) [71] or a philosophy (the “scientific principle” of “Occam’s [sic.] Razor,” in which “the solutions may not always be correct, but most of the time the approach will yield satisfactory results”) [72] toward historical research. The absence of credits may simply be a way of avoiding the inconvenience of less-than-compelling proof.

The same may be said of how authors regard contradictory findings. It may sound sophisticated, but is neither enlightening or convincing to the reader, to arbitrarily dismiss the research and findings of others (e.g., “lack of reliable records,” “reigning but suspect historical accounts” or as “a bit too facile”) [73] without the benefit of explanation.

These are all highly unsatisfactory. We may be entitled to our own opinions, but we are not entitled to our own “facts.” Three guiding principles may prove useful in historical research and writing. First, accuracy, objectivity, and sensitivity lay the foundation for a high standard of work. Second, give credit where credit is due. Third, just because something appears in print does not automatically make it true; put your own intelligence and discernment to use and draw your own conclusions.

Notes

1 Conan Doyle 2007.

2 “useful part of education”: Flexner (1978:37) and Brookhiser (1999:20). Summary of the future importance of Hamilton’s dealings with international trade, foreign exchange and credit, ships’ captains, customs officials, merchants and planters, warehousing and retail: Cissel (2004:14-15).

3 Atherton (1902, 1928), Westergaard (1917), Ramsing (1939), Mitchell (1951), and Larson (1952). Ramsing, although rarely cited for linguistic reasons, made use of many valuable sources found only in the *Rigsarkiv* (Danish State Archives).

4 Syrett (1961-1987) and Freeman (2001).

5 Flexner (1978), McDonald (1982), Brookhiser (1999), Knott (2002), Randall (2003), and Chernow (2004).

6 Specifically, papers by Arnold R. Highfield and William F. Cissel for the symposium, “Alexander Hamilton: the Formative Years,” held at Christiansted in July, 2004.

7 “Truth and legend hopelessly intermingled”: (Larson 1952:139). Examples of Alexander Hamilton legends, not addressed in this paper: (a) Paternity attributed to George Washington on his trip to Barbados in 1751 [see Flexner 1978:19], Ernst Frederik von Walterstorff, Governor-General of the Danish West Indies, 1794-1796 [see Ramsing 1939:270 and Larsen 1940:118], or “a Nevis merchant (*sic.*) Thomas Stevens” [ref. Wenk 2007]. (b) Racial identity noted as a “fable throughout the Caribbean isles” of Hamilton’s “quarter colored blood” through his maternal grandmother (Bobbé (1955:5); occasional editorials or articles in the St. Croix Avis (Avis 1982) and the Virgin Islands Daily News (Davis 2004) have elaborated on that premise. (c) Newman (1918:6) stated that Hamilton’s mother had died while he was an infant, and that he was sent to live with an aunt on St. Croix, arriving at Frederiksted. (d) St. Paul’s Episcopal Church, Frederiksted (1996) asserted that Hamilton worshipped there, although an organized congregation did not exist at that time--services being provided by the Rector of St. John’s Anglican Church, Christiansted, the Rev. Cecil Wray Goodchild. These legends, including the obvious anachronisms, were addressed in Cissel (2004). It is also outside the scope of this paper to refute and correct the fallacies regarding St. Croix--the prehistory; Columbian contact at Salt River [note year]; European attempts at colonization in the 17th century; the St. John slave revolt; supposed Danish interest in the succession to the Polish throne; the transatlantic slave trade; the Rachel Faucett—Johan Michael Lavien relationship; and James Hamilton (senior’s) life in Scotland and his motivation to come to the West Indies (Hoffman 2007:11, 11-14, 15-20, 20-22, 22, 23; 29-31 and 32-33, and 32 *et seq.*, respectively)

8 The Alexander Hamilton Society of St. Croix, which plans to “...erect a larger-than-life [statue] to be placed on a pedestal by the harbor....and is also working on establishing The Grange plantation, where Hamilton spent considerable time with his relatives the Lyttons, as a national monument.” (Hoffman 2007:8).

9 Error’s in Hatch (2007): (a) “It is believed they initially spent their days on a sugar plantation at Estate Grange, which was owned by Rachel’s sister Ann and her husband James Lytton.” (b) “...his mother died in 1769...” (c) “His mother was known to have the largest library on the island...” (d) “The Great House at Estate Grange is still there today along with a memorial marking the site where Alexander’s mother was laid to rest.”

10 Zandy Hillis-Starr, Resource Manager for the NPS units on St. Croix, was quoted as saying, “There is presently no national monument to the first secretary of the Treasury” (Kossler 2007). This overlooks “Hamilton Grange National Memorial,” part of “Manhattan Sites” of the national park system in New York City. Errors in Wenk (2007): (a) “There is, however, some evidence that Hamilton’s biological father may have been a Nevis merchant named Thomas Stevens.” (b) “After his mother’s death, Hamilton was twice adopted...” [see Lohr (2007), who named “a cousin, Peter Lytton” and, after Lytton’s suicide, “local merchant Thomas Stevens”]. (c) “...the local community created a fund to send him to New Jersey for a formal education.” (d) “The Estate Grange...was once the home of Hamilton’s mother...”

11 S.1969 (110th Congress, 1st Session), introduced August 2, 2007. The bill’s sponsor is Senator Orrin G. Hatch [R-UT], and cosponsored by Senators Jay Rockefeller [D-WV], Sam Brownback [R-KS], Evan Bayh [D-IN], Tom Harkin [D-IA], Bill Nelson [D-FL], and Mike Crapo [R-ID]. The text of the bill may be viewed at <http://Thomas.loc.gov>.

12 Influences include, but are not limited to, ethnicity, socio-economics, religion, and other cultural attributes.

13 Besides history, academic disciplines include archaeology, architecture, politics, economics, and demographics.

14 Examples of motives include the espousal of or opposition to a premise, philosophy, or ideology; self-promotion; and personality differences.

15 Most of the evidence and analysis that follows is drawn from Cissel (2004).

16 Hatchett (1859:25).

17 “Grange,” COED. Regarding the Hamiltons’ ancestral “Grange” in Scotland, see Cissel (2004:note 24), Ramsing (1939:231-232), Flexner (1978:16-18), and Chernow (2004:12-15).

18 Hoffman (2007:34).

19 St. John’s Burial Register 1769:August 12 (“James Lytton. Aug. 12th at Mr Tuite’s Grange Plant. Aged 67”).

20 Tuite moved to St. Croix from Montserrat in 1752. In Ireland, “Grange” is found in County Sligo and in County Tipperary.

21 McGuire 1925:110.

22 As reported by Kossler (2007).

23 Cissel (2004:2).

24 Ramsing (1939:230).

25 Hoffman (2007:28-29).

26 Cissel (2004:2).

27 It has long been a habit in at least the English-speaking islands of the West Indies, to address or reference males of social equal by their surname. This familiarity was never applied to women. The specific surname has been found in various contemporary registers or documents spelled “Lavine,” “Lavin,” “Lawien,” “Lawin,” “LeVine,” “Lewine,” “Lewin,” or “Lovien” (Cissel 2004:note 10).

28 Hoffman (2007:30).

29 Hoffman (2007:30-31).

30 Cissel (2004:2-3).

- 31 Armstrong (1971:91).
- 32 Armstrong (1971:136-137).
- 33 <http://www.gotostcroix.com/thegrange.htm>.
- 34 Hermon Hill, per notes 31 and 32.
- 35 This author, who had some familiarity with the great house, recalls this full-length window—not doorway--facing roughly north.
- 36 The great house is surrounded by large mahogany trees.
- 37 As explained by the late Irene Lowe Armstrong (Mrs. Robert K. Armstrong), the cellars (so-called “basement”) were converted into an apartment for her twin brother-in-law, Mr. Malcolm K. Armstrong.
- 38 Hoffman (2007:37).
- 39 “By 1765 Rachel and the boys were ensconced in The Grange great house, where Rachel had married Lavien in 1745 (Hoffman 2007:3 7).
- 40 Lewisohn (1970:147).
- 41 Ramsing 1939:244, 246.
- 42 Rachel’s rented shop/residence was at No. 34 Company Street from 1765-1766 and 1768, and temporarily at No. 23 Company Street in 1767 (Cissel 2004:6). Neither of these locations could be considered “not far up the road from the headquarters of the successor to the original Danish West India and Guinea Company, which was sold to the crown in 1754” (Hoffman 2007:38). The Danish Company’s offices at Christiansted were located on the second floor of the Guinea Company Warehouse (Cissel 2000), and not the building on Company Street as represented in Hoffman (2007:26).
- 43 Chernow (2004:25), rephrased without acknowledgement by Hoffman (2007:43): “She was not permitted to be interred in the churchyard owing to her irregular ways.”
- 44 The relevant entry in the St. John’s Burial Register for 1768 reads “Rachael Levine Feb. 26 at Mr. Tuite’s Plant. By D.O. age 32.” Burials on plantations (here abbreviated “Plant.”) were not uncommon in the 18th and well into the 19th century, with the ceremony at the gravesite and not in the church. Ramsing (1939:246) asserted that the Rev. Cecil Wray Goodchild (Rector, 1760-1785) performed the burial, while the “Anglican Deacon [*Degn*] Daniel Orly” issued notice for the funeral and convened the pallbearers. The surname “Orly” has not been found in a survey of the combined *Matrikler* and *Kopskatlister* for Christiansted between 1767-1769. However, a Daniel *Oxley* is found in the *Matrikler* residing on Company Street as early as 1761. His death is recorded in the St. John’s Burial Register several months after Rachel’s: “Daniel Oxley Octr. 14th in do. [“ditto,” i.e., buried the “Church Yard”] aged 42.” Since the parish did not have a deacon, it can be inferred that he was the parish clerk, responsible for recording baptisms, marriages and burials, assisting at Sunday services, and officiating at funerals in the priest’s absence [for duties, see Vestry Minutes 1792:July 3]. “D.O.” appears in scattered burial entries from October, 1761 until October, 1768, which corresponds with Oxley’s death.
- 45 Not the 1930s, as stated on the Estate Grange link on <<http://www.gotostcroix.com>>.
- 46 Rachel’s age is listed as 32 in the Burial Register (*q.v.*). If this was correct, she would have been born in 1736 and married to Lavien by age 10 (talk about a “child bride”), and would have given birth to her first son, Peter, at the age of 11! The date of her burial was recorded as February 26, instead of February 20. It should be noted that the preceding entry--in the midst of otherwise consecutive listings--was for March 16th. Since all entries in the Burial Register between 1761-1775 were equally spaced and written in the same hand—which changed noticeably in the latter year—the evidence suggests that the existing register is a transcription of the original, which could well have been water-damaged in the 1772 hurricane. Interpreting the ink smears on the original register would account for both errors (Cissel 2004:11).
- 47 Hoffman (2007:35) posits that, “...James Hamilton Sr., in the face of severe financial discomfort, left Nevis to take a job before Rachel and the boys moved to St. Croix in the early 1760s[,]” and that his employer was James Lytton. Hoffman (op cit.:23, 36) agrees with Louis Hacker (1957) concerning a 1762 arrival on St Croix, in spite of clear documentary evidence for 1765. “Shoys” (also found as “Shays”) is likely a corruption of “Shea,” an early owner. “Shoys” originally consisted of Nos. 44 and 45 East End “A” Quarter (McGuire 1925:176). The Lyttons neither owned the plantation Nos. 44 and 45 East End Quarter “A” nor knew Hamilton before he arrived at Christiansted in May, 1765, with his family (see Cissel 2004:7). Alexander Hamilton’s residency at “Shoy’s” was apparently “deduced” from fictional scenarios in Atherton’s “historical novel.”
- 48 Hoffman (2007:44). The fate of Alexander’s older brother, James, was even more distorted. After Rachel’s death, “James Hamilton Jr. had...taken residence with a family for whom he worked in Frederiksted as an apprentice ship carpenter” (Hoffman 2007:44). In reality, his carpentry master, the Scotsman Thomas MacNoben together with his wife, lived in Watergut, Christiansted (Cissel 2004:13).
- 49 Hoffman (2007:60, 61-62).
- 50 Cissel (2004:15).
- 51 Both statements are found in Hoffman (2007:41).
- 52 VLA, *Skiftbrevprotokoller 1767-1776:#XXIX*.
- 53 Wenk (2007).
- 54 Lohr (2007).
- 55 Compare Cissel (2004:7) with Hoffman (2007:44).

56 DeBooy (1918:218-219) stated that, “The house where [Alexander Hamilton] resided (*sic.*) is still pointed out to visitors.” Hoffman (2007:44-45) states “Right next to the company’s [Cruger’s] Christiansted warehouse, directly across King Street from what is now Government House, was a pen in which the slaves were inspected, sorted, oiled and readied for market—sometimes by the young clerk.” Lohr (2007) reported that “The [feasibility] study also includes...the building that housed Kruger’s [sic.] store on King Street in Christiansted.” This building, which came to house the “Alexander Hamilton Hardware Store” on the ground floor and “Hamilton House” restaurant on the second floor, was destroyed by fire in 1967. In rebuilding, only the façade and arcade facing King Street remain from the 18th century structure. The fire purportedly consumed a collection of Hamilton memorabilia belonging to the property’s owner [Jay Edelman] (Lewisohn 1970:150-151).

57 “Moore” (c. 1880s:1); Zabriskie (1918:47); and Taylor (1997).

58 Bough (1932:1) documented that Cruger became owner of No. 56-57 King Street in that year.

59 Ramsing (1939:265) and Larson (1952:147). Ramsing stated, “At the new Matricul for Christiansted in 1777, it appears that Cruger was the sole owner of the two lots Nos. 7, 8, in King Street at which he started the firm with David Beckman, but had enlarged the business by the purchase of Nos. 23 and 26 in King Cross Street.”

60 Oxholm (1779).

61 Hoffman (2007:59); Chernow (2004:91); Flexner (1978:146).

62 Royal Danish American Gazette (1772:September 9); Gentleman’s Magazine (1772:590).

63 The letter, dated September 6, 1772, was published in the Royal Danish American Gazette (1772:October 7). The full text can be found in Syrett (1961 1:34-38) and Freeman (2001:6-9).

64 Hoffman (2007:56).

65 The story of the “two generous aunts” is recounted in Larson (1952:148). de Booy (1918:204) wrote that, “[Hamilton’s] letter attracted so much attention from admiring friends and relatives that it was decided to give him the chance he longed for to go to the United States [*sic.*] to secure a college education.” Randall (2003:40) gave a list of donors, but did not indicate whether these were potential or actual; he did state that Rev. Knox arranged for pledges totaling 400 pounds.

66 Ann Lytton Venton’s (later Mitchell) precarious financial situation is documented by Ramsing (1939:239, 244, 253-254) and Larson (1952:144).

67 Chernow (2004:37-38). Absence of subscription notice in RDAG, see Cissel (2004:note 115).

68 Ramsing (1939:270).

69 Randall (*loc cit.*).

70 This time frame is based on a receipt signed by Hamilton on St. Croix on behalf of his cousin, Ann Lytton Venton, whom he served as agent (Ramsing 1939:252; Flexner 1978: 453-454). Compare this with the rationale for a 1772 departure by Brookhiser (1999:20) and Randall (2003:41).

71 Hoffman (2007:1).

72 Hoffman (2007:5).

73 Hoffman (2007:4, 27, 35).

Works Cited

Armstrong, Irene Lowe. Robert Skeoch, Cruzan Planter. Printed in the United States of America. 1971.

Atherton, Gertrude. The Conqueror. A Dramatized Biography of Alexander Hamilton. New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, Publishers. 1928..

------. “The Hunt for Hamilton’s Mother.” North American Review, 175 (June, 1902):229-242.

Bobbé, Dorothea. “The Boyhood of Alexander Hamilton.” American Heritage. June, 1955. Vol. VI, Number 4, pp. 4-9, 96-99.

Brookhiser, Richard. Alexander Hamilton: American. The Free Press/Simon & Schuster Inc. 1999.

Bough, James A. to Lt. Governor Lawrence W. Cramer. Correspondence re: Alexander Hamilton. Christiansted, VI. September 1, 1932. Copy in the St. Croix Landmarks Society archives.

Chernow, Ron. Alexander Hamilton. New York: The Penguin Press. 2004.

Cissel, William F. "Alexander Hamilton: the West Indian Founding Father." Presented at the Symposium, "Alexander Hamilton, the Formative Years." Government House, Christiansted, St. Croix. July, 2004.

------. "The Danish Slave Trade." Christiansted National Historic Site, National Park Service. February, 2002.

------. "Report. The Danish West India & Guinea Company Warehouse, Christiansted National Historic Site. Proposed Restoration and Slave Trade Museum." Christiansted National Historic Site, National Park Service. Revised January, 2000.

------. "Rise from Obscurity. The West Indian Boyhood of Alexander Hamilton." Christiansted National Historic Site, National Park Service. February, 2002.

------. "Some Observations on Colonial Christiansted." A Symposium on Virgin Islands History: University of the Virgin Islands (St. Croix), Society of Virgin Islands Historians, and Christian Albrecht University (Kiel). 31 July, 2003.

"Conan Doyle, Sir Arthur." Michael Moncur's Quotations. <http://www.quotationspage.com/quote/40103>. October, 2007.

Daily News of the Virgin Islands, The. Editorial. August 7, 2007.

Davis, Olasee. "Alexander Hamilton's link to Nevis-St. Kitts, St. Croix." The Daily News of the Virgin Islands. October 23, 2001, p. 20.

------. "Remembering Alexander Hamilton and his strong Virgin Islands link." The Daily News (U.S. Virgin Islands). February 5, 2004, p. 19.

De Booy, Theodoor and John T. Faris. The Virgin Islands: Our New Possessions and the British Islands. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company. 1918.

Flexner, James Thomas. The Young Hamilton: A Biography. Boston: Little, Brown and Company. 1978.

Freeman, Joanne B. Alexander Hamilton. Writings. New York: Literary Classics of the United States, Inc. 2001.

”Grange.” Compact Oxford English Dictionary. <http://www.askoxford.com>.

”The Grange: An Historic Greathouse.” <http://www.gotostcroix.com/thegrange.htm>.

Hatch, Orrin (United States Senator, Utah). Floor Speech, Alexander Hamilton Boyhood Home Act of 2007. August 2, 2007. http://hatch.senate.gov/index.cfm?FuseAction=PressReleases.Print&PressRelease_id=1875&suppresslayouts=true.

Hatchett, P. B. Statistics regarding Landed Properties on the Island of St. Croix. St. Croix: Printed at the “Avis” Office. 1859.

Hoffman, Robert. Alexander Hamilton. The Founding Father’s Boyhood on the Island of St. Croix. 2nd Printing. Christiansted: Southern Cross Publications. 2007.

Knott, Stephen F. Alexander Hamilton and the Persistence of Myth. Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas. 2002.

Kossler, Bill. “Symposium Speakers Survey a Wide Swath of Crucian History, Culture and Nature.” St. Croix Source. July 20, 2007. <http://www.choice.vi/findex.php?t=a&p=news&u=onpaper.com/stcroixvi/>

Larsen, Kaj. Governører, Residenter, Kommandanter og Chefer samt enkelte andre fremtrædende Personer I de tidlegere danske Tropekolonier. København: Arthur Jessens Forlag. 1940.

Larson, Harold. “Alexander Hamilton: The Fact and Fiction of His Early Years.” The William and Mary Quarterly. April, Third Series, Vol. IX, No. 2, pp. 139-51. 1952.

Lett, Christine. “V.I., Park Service join to study Alexander Hamilton.” The Daily News of the Virgin Islands. August 6, 2007. Page 6.

Lewisohn, Florence. St. Croix under Seven Flags. Hollywood, Florida: The Dukane Press. 1970.

Lohr, Lynda. “Congress Considering National Park Facilities to Honor Alexander Hamilton.” St. Croix Source. 26 September, 2007. <http://www.choice.vi/findex.php?t=a&p=news&u=onpaper.com/stcroixvi/>.

McDonald, Forrest. Alexander Hamilton: A Biography. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc. 1982.

McGuire, James William. Geographic Dictionary of the Virgin Islands of the United States. Special Publication No. 103, Serial No. 269. Department of Commerce, U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office. 1925.

Mitchell, Broadus. "The Man who Discovered Hamilton." Proceedings of the New Jersey Historical Society. Vol. 69, pp. 88-114. April, 1951.

"Moore Family in the Virgin Islands." Typescript of original ms. ca. 1887 at the St. Croix Landmarks Society Library.

Newman, E. M. "The Virgin Islands of the United States of America." The Mentor. Serial No. 161, Vol. 6, Number 13. August 15, 1918.

Office of the Recorder of Deeds, St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands.

Christiansted: No. 23 Company Street. Register VI, p. 143. 1920:December 1.

Christiansted: No. 34AB Company Street. Register VI, p. 158. 1847:May 4.

Olsen, Herbert. "Historic Structures Report. Part I. Fort Christiansvaern, Christiansted, St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands." Christiansted National Historic Site, National Park Service, United States Department of the Interior. 1960

Ramsing, H[olger] U[tke]. "Alexander Hamilton og Hans Modrene Slægt. Tidbilleder fra Dansk Vestindiens Barndom." Personal-historisk Tidsskrift. 60de Årgang, 10. Række, 6. Bind, 3-4 Heft, pp. 225-70. København: I Kommission Ejnar Munksgårds Forlag. 1939.

Randall, Willard Sterne. Alexander Hamilton: A Life. New York: HarperCollins Publishers Inc. 2003.

Royal Danish American Gazette. Christiansted, St. Croix.
1772:September 9; October 7; November 11.

St. Croix Avis.

1982:February 2.

2007:August 4 (page 4): "Alexander Hamilton's life on STX."

St. John's Anglican Church, Christiansted, St. Croix. "A Register of all the Burials in the Parish of Christianstadt in the Island of St. Croix in America. Cecil Wray Goodchild, Minister." 1761.

Syrett, Harold C. and Jacob E. Cooke (eds.) The Papers of Alexander Hamilton. 25 vols. New York: Columbia University Press. 1961-1987.

[Taylor, William Anglin]. St. Paul's Restoration. [1996].

The Gentleman's Magazine. London. Volume LXII, p. 590. 1772.

Tyson, George F. Personal communication with William F. Cissel. April 27, 2004.

Vestindiske Lokalkiver. "Kopskatlister: St. Croix." 1758- 1759, 1761-1769. Rigsarkivet, Copenhagen.

------. "Landlister: St. Croix." 1743- 1749, 1751, 1753, 1754, 1768-1773. Rigsarkivet, Copenhagen.

------. "Mandtalslister: St. Croix." 1748-1761, 1767. Rigsarkivet, Copenhagen.

------. "Matrikler: St. Croix." 1750, 1758-1761, 1765-1770, 1773, 1780, 1786-1787. Rigsarkivet, Copenhagen.

------. "Skifteprotokoller 1767-1776: Christiansted Byfoged." Rigsarkivet, Copenhagen.

Wenk, Daniel N. (Deputy Director, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior). Statement before the Subcommittee on National Parks of the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, concerning S.1969, to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a Special Resource Study to determine the suitability and feasibility of designating Estate Grange and other sites related to Alexander Hamilton's life on the Island of St. Croix in the United States Virgin Islands as a unit of the National Park System, and for other purposes. September 27, 2007. http://www.doi.gov/oc/2006/S1969_092707.pdf.

Westergaard, Waldemar. The Danish West Indies under Company Rule (1671-1754), with a Supplementary Chapter, 1755-1917. New York: The Macmillan Company. 1917.

Zabriskie, Luther K. The Virgin Islands of the United States of America. Historical and Descriptive, Commercial and Industrial, Facts, Figures, and Resources. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons/The Knickerbocker Press. 1918.

Illustrations

Government of the Virgin Islands U.S.A., Public Works Dept., St. Croix V.I. "Map of the Old Limits of Christiansted Town." [1940s].

Oxholm, Peter Lotharius. "No. 2 Grundriss af Byen Christianstæd med derudi liggende Fort Christiansværn opmaelt i Aaret 1779." Rigsarkiv, Copenhagen.

Stephen Knott talked about his book, Alexander Hamilton and the Persistence of Myth . In his book, Mr. Knott questions the accuracy of the historical accountsâ€¦ read more. Stephen Knott talked about his book, Alexander Hamilton and the Persistence of Myth . In his book, Mr. Knott questions the accuracy of the historical accounts written about Alexander Hamilton and examines the Founderâ€™s legacy. Mr. Knott also highlights the Broadway musical â€œHamiltonâ€ and its impact on restoring Alexander Hamiltonâ€™s reputation. close.Â He has written a monumental book, "alexander hamilton and the persistence of myth. " which, outside of biographies, if not the, is one of the most important books on alexander hamilton. Myths and Misconceptions. This section discusses misunderstandings, misrepresentations, and unresolved controversies about Alexander Hamilton. The statements discussed are either taken directly from writings or are general "facts" believed about Alexander Hamilton. For a book that gives a full picture of the many myths that surround Hamilton and how they came about, read Alexander Hamilton and the Persistence of Myth by Stephen F. Knott. Find out the truth behind these myths or misconceptions: Alexander Hamilton was Jewish. Alexander Hamilton was not eligible to be a US President. Al... I imagine death so much it feels more like a memory, is this where it gets me, on my feet, several feet ahead of me? I see it coming, do I run or fire my gun or let it be? There is no beat, no melody. Burr, my first friend, my enemy, maybe the last face I ever see If I throw away my shot, is this how you'll remember me? What if this bullet is my legacy? Legacy. What is a legacy? It's planting seeds in a garden you never get to see. I wrote some notes at the beginning of a song someone will sing for Alexander Hamilton was Aide-de-camp to General George Washington during the American Revolutionary War and a Founding Father of our country.Â Exploring history, destinations, people, & legends of this great country since 2003. Search for: Facebook Twitter Email Pinterest. Primary Menu. Skip to content. Home. Whatâ€™s New. Alexander Hamilton (January 11, 1755 or 1757 â€“ July 12, 1804) was an American statesman, politician, legal scholar, military commander, lawyer, banker, and economist. He was one of the Founding Fathers of the United States. He was an influential interpreter and promoter of the U.S. Constitution, as well as the founder of the nation's financial system, the Federalist Party, the United States Coast Guard, and the New York Post newspaper. As the first secretary of the treasury, Hamilton was the main