

Alexander Hamilton

1755—1804



WHY HE MADE HISTORY Alexander Hamilton was one of the founding fathers of the United States. He was also the first secretary of the treasury of the United States.



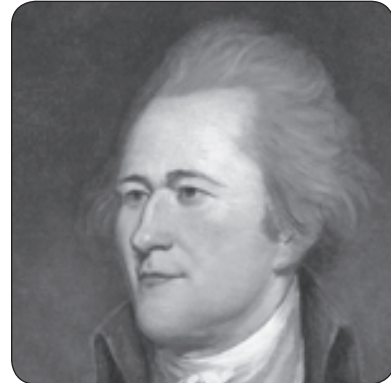
As you read the biography below, think about how Alexander Hamilton's influence helped shape early American government.

As the United States first came together as a nation, it took the influence of a few brave men to help build a working government. Alexander Hamilton was one of these men. Known for his strong convictions and bold personality, Hamilton wrote pamphlets and articles to gain support for the new nation and its Constitution.

Born in the West Indies, Hamilton moved to New York in 1772 to attend college. He soon began writing essays and giving speeches in support of independence. In 1776, he became a captain in the army, taking part in the Battle of Long Island. Hamilton later joined General George Washington's staff and served as the future president's personal secretary.

After the war, Hamilton worked to forge support for a powerful central government. With the help of John Jay and James Madison, Hamilton wrote a series of articles called the *Federalist Papers*. He argued that America needed a strong federal government, and that less power should be given to the individual states. He later helped found the Federalist Party, which favored a strong federal government.

Under President Washington, Hamilton was appointed the nation's first secretary of the treasury



Independence National Historical Park

VOCABULARY

Bank of the United States

national bank chartered by Congress to provide security for the U.S. economy

loose construction way of interpreting the Constitution that allows the government to take actions not specifically forbidden by the Constitution

in 1789. He got the president and Congress to charter the **Bank of the United States** in 1791. The bank helped stabilize and improve the U.S. economy.

Thomas Jefferson opposed the creation of a national bank, saying that the Constitution did not give Congress the power to do so. Hamilton argued for a view called **loose construction**, which allows the federal government to take any action as long as the Constitution does not specifically forbid it.

Hamilton remained an active participant in government and political life in the United States, even after he resigned from office. His strong opinions often put him at odds with other politicians, but Hamilton did not step down from his convictions. Instead, he wrote pamphlets that discredited or attacked these figures. One such politician was Vice President Aaron Burr. Disagreements with Burr over several matters led to a duel between the two men in 1804. Burr shot and killed Hamilton in the battle.

WHAT DID YOU LEARN?

1. What were two of Alexander Hamilton's accomplishments?

2. **Critical Thinking** Alexander Hamilton's picture appears on the \$10 bill, though he was never President of the United States. Why is his picture there?

ACTIVITY

3. Write your own article to contribute to the *Federalist Papers*. Write a short paragraph about why you agree/disagree with Alexander Hamilton's belief that the United States would benefit from a strong national government.