

A Letter from Susan Holloway Scott

Dear Friends,

Many thanks for your interest in my new historical novel, *I, Eliza Hamilton*.

Elizabeth Schuyler Hamilton (1757-1854) was the wife of Alexander Hamilton (c1755-1804), a Revolutionary War hero, statesman, politician, and abolitionist, the first Secretary of the Treasury, a signer and promoter of the Constitution, the founder of the American financial system, and, perhaps most famously for posterity, the only Founding Father killed in a duel.

You might also have heard that he inspired a certain Broadway musical that carries his name.

Like so many women of the past, Eliza's story has been overshadowed by her brilliant husband. She didn't help her place in posterity by destroying (or asking her son to destroy) most of her own letters and virtually eliminating her voice. As a result, she's too often been dismissed by historians, who variously describe her as shy and reclusive, a homebody, or a saint.

But the real Eliza's still there: in the letters of others who knew her, in diaries, in portraits, in memoirs, and most of all, in the achingly beautiful love letters her husband wrote to her over the years of their courtship and marriage. She was a mother, daughter, sister, and wife. She was intelligent and resourceful and strong, a woman who lived in the thick of some of the most turbulent and exciting times in American history. Her marriage was filled with love and passion, regard and devotion, but also marred by public scandal and unimaginable tragedies that broke her heart, but not her spirit. I'm honored to tell her story.

I hope you'll enjoy this extra content about Eliza, her life, family, and times. Over the next months, I'll be sharing more about her, as well as discoveries from my research junkets, on my history-related blog [here](#) and my web site blog [here](#), my [Facebook](#) page, and my [Instagram](#) account. You can also read a bit more about the book [here](#) in a recent post on Bustle.com.

Thank you so much for your support, and happy reading!



Susan Holloway Scott

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Friends, Family, & Rivals: A Gallery of Who's Who in *I, Eliza Hamilton*

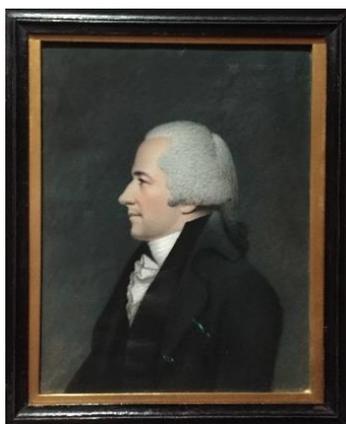


Elizabeth Schuyler Hamilton (1757-1854)

Portrait by Ralph Earl, 1787

Museum of the City of New York

Eliza sat for this portrait in the New York City gaol, where the artist was imprisoned for debt. Her dark brown hair is fashionably frizzled and powdered white, and her silk gown and sheer kerchief are also in the latest style. Unlike Alexander, who as a public figure sat for his portrait numerous times, this is the only known portrait of Eliza as a young woman.



Alexander Hamilton (1755/57-1804)

Portrait by James Sharples, c1796

New-York Historical Society

Drawn in pastels, this profile of Alexander was the one that the family regarded as the best likeness of the many portraits down of him, and was supposedly Eliza's favorite. He looks relaxed, good-natured, and confident, with the little half-smile that so many friends remembered. He's fashionably well-groomed, too, with his cropped and powdered hair (beneath that powder and pomade, his hair was a light reddish-brown), with a dusting of genteel powder on the collar of his coat.



Angelica Schuyler Church (1756-1814)

Portrait by John Trumbull, showing Angelica with her son Philip and a servant, c1785

Private collection

Angelica was the first-born of the eight surviving Schuyler children, and Eliza's closest sister. Intellectual as well as beautiful, Angelica was the best educated of the sisters, well-read and fluent in French. Married to Englishman John Church, she lived both in England and in France before finally returning to America. Devoted to Eliza, she considered Alexander a close friend as well as a brother-in-law.

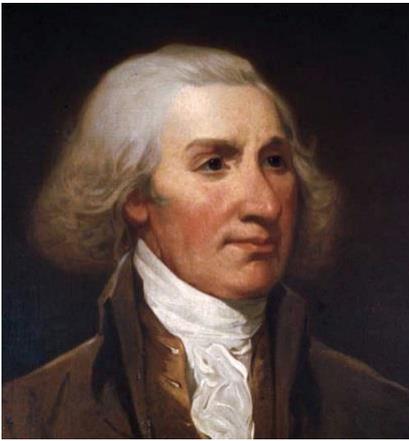


Catherine Van Rensselaer Schuyler (1734-1803)

Portrait by Thomas McIlworth, c1760

Collection of Schuyler Mansion

Born into one of the wealthiest and most prominent Dutch American families in New York, Catherine was skilled at managing two homes and a sizable household that included her large family (she bore fifteen children, eight of whom survived), servants, and enslaved people. She was not only renowned for her hospitality, but also joined her husband on many of his military campaigns, showing bravery and resourcefulness in the face of danger – a strong role model for her daughter Eliza.

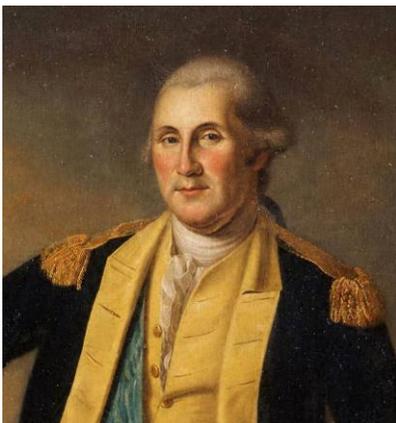


General Philip Schuyler (1733-1804)

Copy, 1881, by Jacob H. Lazarus of an original miniature portrait by John Trumbull, c1780

Collection of the Schuyler Mansion

A member of one of the elite Dutch-American families of New York, Philip John Schuyler was Eliza's father. He was appointed Major General in the Continental Army, and although he resigned his commission in the middle of the Revolution, he remained one of George Washington's closest friends and confidantes. He served in the New York legislature, the Continental Congress, and as a state senator in the First United States Congress. Alexander was his favorite son-in-law, and his untimely death likely hastened the General's own a few months later.



George Washington (1732-1799)

Detail, Portrait of George Washington after the Battle of Princeton, by Charles Willson Peale, 1779

The Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts

George Washington may be the best known of all 18thc Americans – the general and commander-in-chief of the Continental Army, the first president, and the all-around father of the country. But he was also an important mentor and supporter of Alexander, even a kind of surrogate father, and often a voice of much-needed wisdom and restraint. Who knows if Alexander would have fought that unfortunate duel if Washington had still be alive to advise him against it?



Martha Danridge Custis Washington (1731-1802)
Miniature portrait by Charles Willson Peale, 1772
Collection, Mount Vernon Ladies Association

A young widow with four children when she married George Washington, Martha had expected a quiet life on her husband's Virginian plantation. Instead she was thrust into the role of the wife of the commander-in-chief during the long Revolution, and afterwards eight years as the wife of the first president – duties that she performed with strength and grace even as she longed for the quiet of her distant home. She was a good friend and role model to Eliza, who especially welcomed her company and advice while their husbands served together during the war.



Aaron Burr (1756-1836)
Portrait by John Vanderlyn, c1802
New-York Historical Society

It's often forgotten that Alexander and Aaron Burr began as social acquaintances. In the early part of their legal careers, they occasionally served as co-counsels on cases. They lived near one another, met often at dinners, and had many acquaintances in common. Eliza called on Theodosia Burr, and their daughters were also friendly. It wasn't until the late 1780s that the relationship between Alexander and Burr began to deteriorate over politics, though even a week before their duel, they attended the same party, and none of the other guests were aware of any tensions between them. In this profile portrait, Burr looks urbane and pleasant – certainly not the cold-hearted murderer he was later accused of being.



Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826)
Portrait by Charles Willson Peale, 1791
Second National Bank Portrait Gallery, National Park Service

When Thomas Jefferson returned to America after serving as the United States Minister to France and became the first Secretary of State in 1790, Eliza welcomed him to New York. Jefferson had been a close friend of Eliza's sister Angelica when they'd both lived in Paris, and the Hamiltons looked forward to becoming friends with Jefferson as well. But political differences soon came between them, making friendship (as well as any political collaboration) impossible.



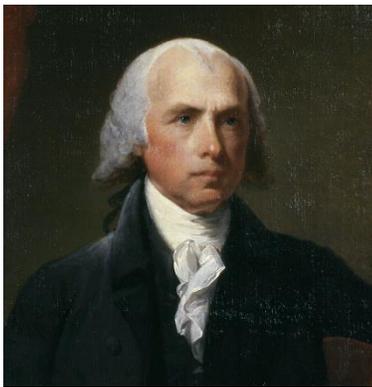
John Adams (1735-1826)
Portrait by John Trumbull, c1792
The White House

Although John Adams and Alexander were both staunch Federalists, determined patriots, and both trained as lawyers, they were temperamentally complete opposites. In addition to serving in the Continental Congress, Adams was elected to two terms as George Washington's vice president and another as president in his own right. Through much of that time he and Alexander were at odds, their animosity becoming so bitter that it marked the final decline of the Federalist party.



Abigail Smith Adams (1744-1818)
Portrait by an unidentified artist, c1795
Fenimore Art Museum

The daughter of a Congregationalist minister, Abigail was both a thoughtful reader and an eloquent writer, and in her letters to her husband John, she documented not only the Revolution as it happened around her, but her beliefs on the role of women and women's rights, as well as her thoughts on the politics and the politicians of her day. She was outspoken in her dislike and suspicion of Alexander – suspicions that in time proved well-founded.



James Madison (1751-1836)
Detail, Portrait by Gilbert Stuart, 1805-7
Bowdoin College Museum of Art

In the 1780s, Alexander and James Madison both believed in a strong federal government. They collaborated on the collection of essays that became known as The Federalist Papers in support of the ratification of the new Constitution. But over time Madison feared that the federal government (and Alexander) were becoming too powerful, and switched his allegiance to Thomas Jefferson and the new Democratic-Republican party, and eventually was elected president after Jefferson.



James Monroe (1758-1831)
Portrait by Samuel Morse, c1819
The White House

Like Alexander, James Monroe fought in the Revolution, studied the law, and served as a statesman in the country's early government (and eventually was elected the fifth president.) But as a confirmed anti-federalist and a member of the Democratic-Republicans as well as an ally of Thomas Jefferson, he was often at odds with Alexander politically, and his involvement in the revelations of the Reynolds Affair earned Alexander's lasting enmity. Eliza, too, never forgave Monroe, and always blamed him for many of Alexander's later political misfortunes.

What Eliza Wore: Dressing the Heroine of *I, Eliza Hamilton* Plus Discussion Questions

I've always admired the clothing of the 18th century, and I loved the opportunity to “dress” Eliza throughout *I, Eliza Hamilton*. In this era – and especially in America – clothing could mean much more than just personal taste. What you wore revealed not only your taste, but your social status, your wealth, even your marital status.

Before her marriage, Eliza would have dressed as fashionably as any young woman from London who was the daughter of a wealthy gentleman. Even while the Revolution limited trade with Europe, fine silks and ribbons found their way to America through smugglers, and older dresses of rich fabrics were often remade in the latest styles. The Schuylers would have taken care to see that Eliza was well-dressed, especially when she was entertaining possible suitors. Her clothing would have been considered a public display of her family's wealth and prominence.

After her marriage to the relatively impoverished Alexander Hamilton, she would have “made do” with her existing wardrobe, refurbishing and remodeling as styles changed. Once her husband's legal career began to prosper, he encouraged her to dress fashionably, both to please herself and to advertise his own success, and this only increased as his prominence within the new federal government grew. Hamilton was something of a male peacock himself, preferring bright colors and French tailoring, and when the two of them entertained or were seen at the theatre, they were noted as being a stylish, attractive couple.

With Alexander's death, Eliza's interest in fashion came to an abrupt halt, as it did for many widows in the 19thc. Not only did she continue to wear mourning in her husband's honor for the rest of her life (she outlived him by fifty years), but her mourning remained in the fashion of 1804, the year of his death. While other women experimented with oversized sleeves and crinoline skirts, Eliza continued to wear her black, high-waisted dresses with straight skirts until she herself died in 1854 – a visible and unavoidable statement of her grief and loss to all who saw her.

Fashion changed dramatically during the twenty-five years covered by *I, Eliza Hamilton*. Women like Eliza who as teenagers wore whalebone stays (corsets) and spreading hoops beneath silk dresses were wearing simple, high-waisted dresses of white cotton muslin with little corseting by the time they were thirty-five.

But don't be deceived by the sheer volume of the earlier dresses. Unlike the Victorian dresses of the 1850s that required layers of heavy horsehair-reinforced crinoline petticoats to maintain their size as well as tightly-laced corsets to achieve a tiny waist, the dresses of the 1770s weren't uncomfortable. The voluminous skirts were held away from the body and legs by hoops made of cane or whalebone (imagine an oval-shaped hula-hoop tied around the waist). The stays (corsets) were meant to create good posture and a desirable shape rather than to compress the waist; in fact, most women wearing well-fitting stays have a slightly larger waistline. The dresses themselves were usually made of such light-weight silk that the skirts floated gracefully around the wearer as she moved, while the silk made a seductive rustle. Dressed like this, women like Eliza had no trouble dancing, riding on horseback, or taking long walks. No women in the 1770s fainted on account of their clothing.

Here is a selection of dresses that Eliza could have worn during the course of her marriage, and a few questions to discuss. (All images are courtesy of LACMA, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.)



Silk dress and petticoat
(*robe à la française*), c1775



Brocaded silk taffeta
dress and petticoat
(*robe à l'anglaise*), c1780



Silk dress (*robe à
l'anglaise*), c1785



Silk dress (round gown)
with metallic embroidery,
sequins, net, and silk satin,
c1790



White cotton dress with
metallic embroidery,
c1795.



White cotton
dress, c1800.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

I, ELIZA HAMILTON by Susan Holloway Scott

- Which dress do you like the best? The least?
- Which would make you feel the most special as you entered a crowded assembly or ball?
- Most modern women would probably choose the c1800 dress because it looks more comfortable. But many older women in the late 18thc rejected the lighter fashions for being too plain, too revealing, or insubstantial. What do you think?
- The style for white, high-waisted dresses first appeared during the French Revolution as a fashion that was radically different from the formal court attire of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, and as a style that was inspired by the clothing of the ancient Greeks and Romans. Americans were also trying to dress in a similar new fashion, but many American women who were shocked by the violence of the French Revolution found it difficult to accept the new French styles that accompanied it. Have you ever made a fashion choice based on politics?

- Here are the two known surviving portraits of Eliza from the 18thc. The first (by Ralph Earl) dates from 1785, and shows Eliza with full, frizzed, and powdered hair and a close-fitting dress. The second portrait (by James Sharples) is from c1795, where she is wearing a gauzy, white muslin dress, and a ribbon and beads threaded through her naturally dark hair.

Which portrait do you prefer?

Which fashions do you prefer?



- Unlike today, when people often have thousands of images of themselves over the course of their lives via cameras and cell-phones, in the 18thc most people never sat for a portrait, and even a wealthy woman like Eliza only sat for these two as a younger woman. If you were only going to have one portrait done in your life, what would you wear?



Settings & Scenes:
A Few Places to Visit from *I, Eliza Hamilton*

**Inspired to visit some historical places after reading *I, ELIZA HAMILTON*?
If so, here's a list with the settings where history happened:**

Schuyler Mansion

Built by Philip Schuyler, the mansion is an imposing Georgian house built high on the hill overlooking the Hudson River, and was the largest house in the region for many years. It was the primary home of Eliza's family, and a special place to her; she often returned here to visit while her parents lived.

32 Catherine Street
Albany, NY 12202

<https://parks.ny.gov/historic-sites/33/details.aspx>

Philip Schuyler House

The original house that Eliza knew as a child was burned by the British during the Revolution; this is the house that was rebuilt by her father soon afterwards, and remained the family's country estate. It now is part of Saratoga National Historical Park.

Saratoga National Historical Park, New York
648 Route 32
Stillwater, NY 12170

<https://www.nps.gov/sara/planyourvisit/basicinfo.htm>

Ford Mansion & Washington's Headquarters Museum

The Ford Mansion served as Washington's Headquarters during the army's winter encampment of 1779-80; during this time, Alexander and Eliza fell in love and became engaged.

Morristown National Historical Park, New Jersey
30 Washington Place
Morristown, NY 07960

<https://www.nps.gov/morr/planyourvisit/basicinfo.htm>

Schuyler-Hamilton House

More correctly known as the Jabez Campfield House, this was house served as the lodgings during the Morristown winter encampment for Dr. John and Gertrude Cochran, Eliza's uncle and aunt. She stayed with them here during the early months of 1780 as her relationship with Alexander blossomed.

5 Olyphant Place
Morristown, NY 07960

<http://www.njdar.org/schuyler-hamilton.html>

Independence National Historical Park

*This Philadelphia Park contains a number of places that would have been familiar to Eliza and Alexander. Alexander was a delegate to both the Congress of the Confederation and the U.S. Constitutional Convention, which were both held in the **Pennsylvania State House**, which is now called **Independence Hall**. Originally built as the Philadelphia County Courthouse, the nearby **Congress Hall** served as the home of the U.S. Congress from 1790-1800. The original Department of the Treasury and the Hamilton's house no longer stand, but the **house owned by James and Dolley Todd** (who later married James Madison) would likely have been similar to the house rented by the Hamiltons on Third Street between Chestnut and Walnut Streets. **The First Bank of the United States** was founded at Alexander's urging while he was Secretary of the Treasury; unfortunately, it's not open to the public. There's also a portrait of Alexander by Charles Willson Peale on display in the **Second Bank of the United States Portrait Gallery**.*

143 S. Third Street (mailing address)

Philadelphia, PA 19106

(215) 965-2305

<https://www.nps.gov/inde/index.htm>

Hamilton Grange National Historical Park

The Grange is the only surviving house to have been owned and occupied by the Hamiltons. Built as their country estate when the surrounding neighborhood was still rural, it also became an emotional sanctuary for Eliza and Alexander after the death of their oldest son Philip.

414 West 141st Street (mailing address)

New York, NY 10031

(646) 548-2310

<https://www.nps.gov/hagr/index.htm>

Trinity Church

While the current church building dates from 1846, the parish has been on this spot since 1696. The Hamiltons (who lived nearby) worshiped here, as did George Washington during his first presidency. Eliza and Alexander are buried in the churchyard, as are their oldest son Philip and Eliza's sister Angelica Schuyler Church.

75 Broadway (at Wall Street)

New York, NY

(212) 602-0800

<https://www.trinitywallstreet.org/>

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