

“HISTORY HAS ITS EYES ON YOU” BEHIND THE REFERENCES IN HAMILTON

In addition to the well-known cast of principle characters featured in *Hamilton* there are dozens of references to other historical figures throughout the show. Here is a closer look at these individuals in order of appearance:

Rachel Faucette & Peter Lytton

Referenced in: “Alexander Hamilton”

Referenced by: Company & George Washington

Line: “Alex got better but his mother went quick. Moved in with a cousin his cousin committed suicide.”

Rachel Faucette, Alexander Hamilton's mother, died of yellow fever when Hamilton was an adolescent. He and his brother, now orphans after the prior desertion of their father were taken in by their cousin, Peter Lytton, who subsequently took his own life a little over a year later.

Sam Adams

Referenced in: “Aaron Burr, Sir”

Referenced by: John Laurens

Line: “I’m John Laurens in the place to be! Two pints o’ Sam Adams, but I’m workin’ on three, uh!”

“Founding Father” and political philosopher who was the second cousin of President John Adams. Samuel Adams founded the “Sons of Liberty” in 1765 to fight taxation from the British government. Thomas Jefferson credited Adams with being a leading figure in steering the colonies towards independence. However, you may know him as the face of the Boston Beer Company.

Samuel Seabury

Referenced in: “Farmer Refuted”

Referenced by: Himself

Line: “Hear ye, hear ye! My name is Samuel Seabury and I present: ‘Free Thoughts on the Proceedings of the Continental Congress!’”

First American Episcopal Bishop and prominent loyalist during the American Revolution. He penned “Free Thoughts on the Proceedings of the Continental Congress” and “The Congress Canvassed” in 1774 under the pseudonym A. W. Farmer. Alexander Hamilton, known to be a bit of a wordsmith himself, published his own response in 1775 entitled, “The Farmer Refuted,” hence the title of this song.

Admiral Richard Howe, 1st Earl Howe

Referenced in: “Right Hand Man”

Referenced by: Company

Line: “British Admiral Howe’s got troops on the water. Thirty-two thousand troops in New York harbor.”

British naval officer who commanded troops in The Seven Years’ War, The American Revolution and The French Revolution. This line refers to Britain’s strategy of capturing major cities by blockading the coastline. They did so successfully, seizing Long Island in August 1776 and New York City the following month.

Nathanael Greene & Henry Knox

Referenced in: “Right Hand Man”

Referenced by: George Washington

Line: “Nathanael Greene and Henry Knox wanted to hire you...”

Both were Continental Army military officers that served under George Washington during the American Revolution. Nathanael Greene declined an appointment by Washington to serve in the first presidential cabinet and it was Henry Knox who ended up accepting, becoming the first Secretary of War, a position which he held from 1789-1794.

Charles Henry Lee

First Referenced in: “Stay Alive”

Referenced by: Alexander Hamilton

Line: “Instead of me he promotes Charles Lee. Makes him second-in-command.”

Major General for the Continental Army who was captured and held by the British for sixteen months. Upon his release, he often dissented with General Washington and frequently questioned his leadership. His lack of communication and questionable battlefield tactics at the Battle of Monmouth led him to be court-martialed for his actions. Lee was found guilty on three counts, ending his military career.

Martha Washington

Referenced in: “A Winter’s Ball”

Referenced by: Aaron Burr

Line: “Martha Washington named her feral tomcat after him.”

Married George Washington in 1759 after being widowed at age 25. Although she and Washington had no children together they raised two of her surviving children from her first marriage. She was the original “First Lady,” although that term would not be coined until after her death.

Ben Franklin

Referenced in: “Satisfied”

Referenced by: Angelica Schuyler

Line: “It’s Ben Franklin with a key and a kite! You see it right?”

Despite being a key component to the American Revolution and Founding Father, the only reference to Ben Franklin is Angelica comparing his electricity experiment to her feelings upon first meeting Alexander Hamilton. Among his many accomplishments, Franklin served as the first U.S. ambassador to France, first Postmaster General of the United States and founded the University of Pennsylvania.



Theodosia Bartow Prevost

Referenced in: "Story of Tonight (Reprise)"

Referenced by: John Laurens

Line: "Well I heard, you've got a special someone on the side, Burr."

Theodosia Bartow Prevost was the wife of British Army officer Jacques Marcus Prevost. However, during the American Revolution she used her home to quarter revolutionaries. This is where she met Aaron Burr and they began a romantic relationship in secret. However, in true Burr fashion, he "Waited For It" and didn't marry Prevost until after her husband's death.

Jonathan Edwards, Aaron Burr Sr, & Esther Edwards Burr

Referenced in: "Wait For It"

Referenced by: Aaron Burr

Line: "My Grandfather was a fire and brimstone preacher... My mother was a genius, my father commanded respect."

Jonathan Edwards, Aaron Burr's grandfather, was one of the first American theologians. His sermon, "Sinners in the Hand of an Angry God" is considered one of the first classic pieces of American literature and is often credited with helping to shape the revival of religious devotion in colonial America. Aaron Burr Sr was also a minister and founded the College of New Jersey, now Princeton University. The journal of Esther Edwards Burr, Aaron Burr's mother, has provided key insights for historians into early colonial life.

Thomas Conway

Referenced in: "Meet Me Inside"

Referenced by: Alexander Hamilton

Line: "Charles Lee, Thomas Conway. These men take your name and they rake it through the mud."

Major General in the Continental Army who organized the Conway Cabal; a group of senior officers who tried to have George Washington removed as commander-in-chief during the American Revolution.

Betsy Ross

Referenced in: "Guns & Ships"

Referenced by: Aaron Burr

Line: "How do we emerge victorious from the quagmire? Leave the battlefield waving Betsy Ross' flag higher?"

Seamstress who spent over 50 years making flags for the United States armed forces. American folklore credits Betsy Ross with creating the modern design of the American Flag. However, there is no conclusive, documented evidence to support this. The only source we have is the testimony of her relatives nearly a century later.

Jean-Baptiste Donatien de Vimeur, comte de Rochambeau

First referenced in: "Guns and Ships"

Referenced by: George Washington

Line: "We rendezvous with Rochambeau, consolidate their gifts."

French general who served as commander-in-chief of "Expédition Particulière," the code name given to French forces who were sent to North America to aid the Continental Army in defeating the British during the American Revolution.

Theodosia Burr Alston

Referenced in: "Dear Theodosia"

Referenced by: Aaron Burr

Line: "Dear Theodosia, what to say to you?"

Daughter of Aaron Burr. Married Joseph Alston who served as Governor of South Carolina during the War of 1812. At the age of 29, the ship she was travelling aboard went missing and was never recovered. There are numerous rumors as to what could have become to the ship, such as being seized by pirates, but none were ever substantiated. Aaron Burr maintained until his death that she died in a shipwreck and discredited alternative theories.

Levi Weeks

Referenced in: "Non-Stop"

Referenced by: Aaron Burr

Line: "Our client Levi Weeks is innocent, call your first witness."

The defendant in the first recorded murder trial in U.S. history. Weeks was accused of killing "Elma" Sands, a young woman he had been courting at the time. With the aid of family connections and wealth he was able to hire some of the most prominent attorneys in New York for his defense team: Henry Brockholst Livingston, Aaron Burr and Alexander Hamilton. Much to public disapproval, Weeks was acquitted after less than five minutes of jury deliberation. Although the show depicts the trial taking place prior to the Constitutional Convention of 1787, it actually took place in 1800.

John Barker Church

Referenced in: "Non-Stop"

Referenced by: Angelica Schuyler

Line: "I am sailing off to London. I'm accompanied by someone who always pays. I have found a wealthy husband who will keep me in comfort for all of my days."

English businessman who eloped to Europe with Angelica Schuyler in 1777 knowing that Philip Schuyler would not give their union his blessing. Church had his own duel with Aaron Burr in 1799 in which neither party was injured. An experienced dueler himself, it was his set of pistols that were used in the duels that killed both Philip and Alexander Hamilton.

John Jay

Referenced in: "Non-Stop"

Referenced by: Aaron Burr

Line: "In the end, they wrote 85 essays, in the span of six months. Jon Jay got sick after writing 5."

First Chief Justice of the United States and second Governor of New York. Using the shared pseudonym, Publius, John Jay, Alexander Hamilton and James Madison advocated for a stronger centralized government in "The Federalist Papers." They felt the current structure under the "Articles of Confederation" was too weak and could not be sustained. The topic of most of Jay's essays dealt with the dangers of foreign power and influence.



Sally Hemings

Referenced in: "What'd I Miss?"

Referenced by: Thomas Jefferson

Line: "There's a letter on my desk from the president. Haven't even put my bag down yet. Sally be a lamb darlin', won'tcha open it?"

Enslaved woman who is believed to have borne six of Thomas Jefferson's children. Although this assertion was initially doubted, modern DNA evidence has led historians to believe this to be the case. In 2018 The Jefferson Foundation of Monticello opened an exhibit honoring Hemings' life. Although there are very little autobiographical accounts from Hemings herself, it is believed she wielded an extraordinary amount of power for the time, negotiating unprecedented privileges for herself and her children.

Maria & James Reynolds

Referenced in: "Say No to This"

Referenced by: Alexander Hamilton

Line: "You've never seen a bastard orphan more in need of a break. Longing for Angelica. Missing my wife. That's when Miss Maria Reynolds walked into my life."

Alexander Hamilton's affair with Maria Reynolds is considered the first political sex scandal in U.S. history. Upon learning of their encounters, James Reynolds blackmailed Hamilton for nearly a year. In response, Hamilton published "The Reynolds Pamphlet," making his exploits public and effectively debilitating his political career and personal life. When Maria finally decided to separate from James she hired a prominent New York attorney as her divorce lawyer: Aaron Burr.

General Hugh Mercer, Jr.

Referenced in: "The Room Where It Happens"

Referenced by: Aaron Burr

Line: "Didja hear the news about good old General Mercer?"

Brigadier General in the Continental Army and close friend of George Washington who was fatally wounded at the Battle of Princeton. As referenced in the song, Clermont St. in Greenwich Village was renamed Mercer St. in his honor in 1799 and still bears his name.

Philip Schuyler

Referenced in: "Schuyler Defeated"

Referenced by: Philip Hamilton

Line: "Look! Grandpa's in the paper! War hero Philip Schuyler loses Senate seat to young upstart Aaron Burr!"

Served as a general in the American Revolution and spent nearly a decade as a New York State Senator. He also served in the first United States Congress as a New York Senator for two years before being unseated by Aaron Burr.

John Adams

First Reference: "I Know Him"

First Referenced by: King George III

Line: "John Adams?! I know him. That can't be. That's that little guy who spoke to me."

The second President of the United States and first Vice President. This line references the first meeting between John Adams and King George III on June 1, 1785 while Adams was serving as America's first ambassador to Great Britain. His son, John Quincy Adams was later elected sixth President of the United States.

George Eacker

Referenced in: "Blow Us All Away"

Referenced by: Philip Hamilton

Line: "Ladies, I'm lookin' for a Mr. George Eacker. Made a speech last week, our Fourth of July speaker."

Philip Hamilton confronted George Eacker at the Park Theatre in November of 1801. Uncomplimentary words were exchanged ending with Hamilton challenging Eacker to a duel. Hamilton's intention was to engage in a "delope," a common practice at the time to intentionally miss your target to avoid injury and maintain honor. Unlike in the show, Eacker fired first, but did not do so prematurely. In fact, roughly a minute of both parties doing nothing transpired before Eacker fired and fatally stuck Hamilton.

William P. Van Ness & Nathaniel Pendleton

Referenced in: "The World Was Wide Enough"

Referenced by: Aaron Burr

Line: "We rode across the Hudson at dawn. My Friend William P. Van Ness signed on as my- Number two! Hamilton arrived with his crew: Nathaniel Pendleton and a doctor that he knew"

Both William P. Van Ness and Nathaniel Pendleton were United States District Judges who served as the "second" for Aaron Burr and Alexander Hamilton, respectively. In the aftermath they issued a joint-statement regarding the proceedings. Although they could not reach consensus on who fired first, it is widely accepted that two shots were fired.

