

IT HAPPENED HERE NEW JERSEY

Alexander Hamilton's Dreams of Industry

Target Age: Middle/High School
Time Period: 18th and 19th century
Featured County: Passaic
NJ 350th Theme: Innovation

Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts:

R.CCR.1- Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

W.CCR.3- Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details and well-structured event sequences.

W.CCR.7- Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

NJ Common Core Standards:

Social Studies Skills: 6.1.12.B.1.a , 6.1.12.C.3.a

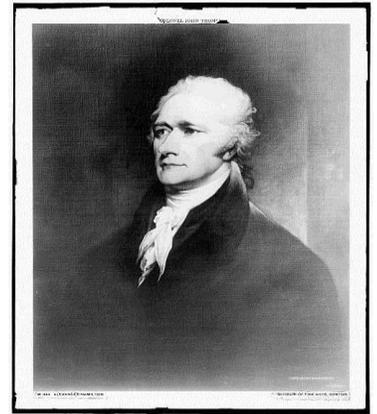
FOCUS QUESTION:

What role did New Jersey play in early innovations about the U.S. economy?

BACKGROUND:

On July 11, 1804, Weehawken, New Jersey became the site of the most infamous duel in American history—one that left one man dead and killed another man's political career and reputation. Aaron Burr was born on February 6, 1756, in Newark, NJ. He graduated from the College of New Jersey (later renamed Princeton University) at the age of 16, and both his father and grandfather were presidents of the college. Burr enlisted as a soldier in the American Revolution, ultimately serving under another infamous American colonist, Benedict Arnold. In 1782 he became a lawyer and set his sights on politics. In 1791 he won a seat in the United States Senate, and in 1800 Burr tied with Thomas Jefferson for the U.S. presidency. As this was before the creation of political platforms, a vote of the House of Representatives decided the tie; the candidate with the most votes became president, the runner-up became vice president. Burr's political and personal rival, Alexander Hamilton, was influential in getting Jefferson the presidency, and Burr became the nation's second-in-command.

Hamilton believed the way to save the fledgling United States was to strengthen the federal government. He argued against the Articles of Confederation, and he was a key supporter of the new



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Constitution. In 1787 and 1788, along with James Madison and John Jay, he wrote *The Federalist Papers*, a series of essays supporting the ratification of the Constitution. Hamilton was appointed the first secretary of the treasury, established the Bank of the United States, and formed an investment group called the Society of Useful Manufactures. He firmly believed that the U.S. had to develop its own industries, and in 1792, he founded Paterson, New Jersey (named for William Paterson), to become the national hub of manufacturing. The Great Falls and the water power they generated were the reasons Hamilton chose this location as the base for his industrial dreams.

Throughout their political and personal lives, Burr and Hamilton's paths crossed. Burr blamed Hamilton for debasing his name, and Hamilton seemed to find enjoyment in undermining Burr. In 1804, Hamilton publically called Burr "the most unfit and dangerous man of the community" and Burr promptly challenged Hamilton to a duel. Dueling was not uncommon during the early nineteenth century, and there were strict rules governing its conduct. But on that fateful morning in July 1804, Burr mortally wounded Hamilton who died the next day. Burr attempted to continue his political career, but was tried for treason in 1807, spent four years in Europe, and had lukewarm success in his law practice. He died in 1836 never having recovered from his morning in Weehawken.

ACTIVITY:

In 1791, Alexander Hamilton and his Society for Useful Manufactures planned for Paterson, New Jersey to be the center of American industrialism and to reduce the new nation's reliance on foreign industry. Paterson thrived for the next century and a half, and among its manufacturing successes could count the Colt revolver and the first submarine, the latter tested by John Phillip Holland in the Passaic River just above the Great Falls.

But this prosperity would not last. As the economy and technological needs of the United States changed, so too did Paterson's. By 1983, Paterson was the fifth poorest city in the United States. The town that had called itself Silk City, the Iron City, and the Cotton City, was in economic ruin. The unemployment rate was 9.9, almost twice the average of New Jersey.

More recently Paterson has sought to move from the American industry of millwork and production to the twenty-first century industry of tourism and service. In 2009 the Great Falls was designated a National Park, thanks to the work of many people, including Bill Pascrell, Jr., a former Paterson mayor who proclaimed "Paterson will finally be recognized for the seminal role it has played in shaping American history... This place is a hidden jewel—the history here is so rich, and this city deserves this kind of recognition." Instead of looms and heavy machinery, Patterson is investing in its natural marvels such as the Great Falls and its museums and restored historical buildings.

Begin by reviewing the National Park Service's application for Historic Preservation Certification (found online at <http://www.nps.gov/tps/tax-incentives/application.htm>).

The first section of the application asks for a description of the physical structure and a statement of historic significance. The second section asks applicants to outline the current state of repair (or disrepair) and their plan for maintaining or improving the site.

Next distribute the Great Falls National Park Master Plan (available here: <http://www.hamiltonpartnership.org/national-park/park-master-plan>), and assign students to work in groups to develop a one paragraph description of Great Falls, as well as a one-paragraph statement

about its importance to New Jersey and national history. If time allows (or as homework the night before), students might use the following sites for additional information:

<http://www.patersongreatfalls.org/cityofindustry.html>
<http://www.patersongreatfalls.org/otherindustries.html>
<http://www.nj.gov/dep/parksandforests/parks/great-falls.htm>
<http://www.rutgers.edu/about-rutgers/great-plans-great-falls>

Teachers working with older learners might ask them to complete more intensive research and complete the actual National Park Service Forms, to the extent possible.

FOLLOW-UP:

Who: Aaron Burr and Alexander Hamilton

What: A duel in which Burr mortally wounds Hamilton, who dies the next day.

Where: Weehawken, NJ

When: Morning, July 11th, 1804

Why: Hamilton calls Burr “the most dangerous and unfit man of the community”—the last of a long line of personal and political insults.

You are a reporter for the local newspaper. Write the headline and the lead paragraph for this news story. As a variation, ask students to change the voice of the newspaper. They could write as a mainstream newspaper (such as the *New York Times*), or as a tabloid reporter for the *Enquirer*; alternatively they might write as a reporter sympathetic to Hamilton or to Burr, or as a member of an organization protesting acts of violence to settle disputes.

For tips on how to develop a compelling news angle, have students visit “How to Write a Lead” at the Purdue University OWL Online Writing Lab: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/735/05/>

WANT TO LEARN MORE?

Places You Can Visit

National Park Service—Paterson Great Falls National Park (includes a strong collection of teacher resources): <http://www.nps.gov/pagr/forteachers/parks-as-classrooms.htm>

The Paterson Museum: <http://patersonmuseum.com>

Museum of American Finance: Statue of Aaron Burr

http://www.moaf.org/exhibits/hamilton_lineage_legacy/aaron-burr-statue

More Classroom Activities

Alexander Hamilton, PBS American Experience (120 minutes): PBS website also includes an extensive variety of teacher resources: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/hamilton/index.html>

The Duel, PBS American Experience (60 minutes): this site has extensive information about the duel, including a timeline of events, historical background and teacher resources:

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/duel/>

National Park Service, Teaching with Historical Places: Paterson, NJ: America's Silk City- according to its description, the lessons could be used in American history, social studies, and geography courses in units on labor-management conflict and the rise of unions, or on immigration:

<http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/twhp/wwwlps/lessons/102paterson/102paterson.htm>

"Our Story: Bergen County" (a website dedicated to project-based lessons to motivate students and foster the critical skills of research, analysis, and development of original conclusions; also includes primary documents and news articles about Paterson, NJ):

<http://sites.bergen.org/ourstory/Resources/industrial.html>

For More Information

The Federalist Papers, Library of Congress: full text of the 85 essays that present Hamilton's argument in favor of ratifying the U.S. Constitution: <http://thomas.loc.gov/home/histdox/fedpapers.html>

"Alexander Hamilton and the Creation of the United States," online exhibition, The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History: several dozen documents and objects related to Hamilton in this online exhibit. See money from the 1780s, portraits and documents, and a draft of Hamilton's farewell letter to his wife: <http://www.gilderlehrman.org/collection/online/hamilton/index.html>

"Alexander Hamilton: The Man Who Made Modern America," online exhibition of the New York Historical Society: key documents from the life of Alexander Hamilton, a Hamilton quiz, and information about the New York and New Jersey: <http://www.alexanderhamiltonexhibition.org/>

Famous American Trials: The Treason Trial of Aaron Burr: an extensive site dedicated to the 1807 trial. <http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/burr/burr.htm>

Joseph J. Ellis, *Founding Brothers: The Revolutionary Generation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000).

Thomas Fleming, *Duel: Alexander Hamilton, Aaron Burr, and the Future of America* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).

Joanne Freeman, *Affairs of Honor* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2001).

For Fun

Lin Manuel-Miranda's rap about Alexander Hamilton at the White House for President Barak Obama (4.5 minutes): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LBSuwa8mf9o>

Original *Got Milk?* Commercial- Who Shot Alexander Hamilton?: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OLSswwr6z9Y>

Video of the Weehawken dueling ground where the Hamilton-Burr duel took place: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-PPR70C4RNY>

CREDIT INFORMATION:

p. 1: Alexander Hamilton, Courtesy of Library of Congress; LC-DIG-det-4a26166

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