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Nothing can more effectually contributed to the Cultivation & Improvement of a Country , the Windom, Riches, & Strength , Virtue and Prity , the Welfare & Happinofs of a People, than a proper Edu= cation of Youth , by forming their Manners imbuing



Alexander Hamilton's working papers

POSTED BY MITCH FRAAS IN POSTS

≈ 2 Comments

In Congress April 21: 1787 Resolved That after the Secretary at was shall have drawn for The proportionale quantity of the lands already furveyed which were a Bija. to so the late army agreably to the ordinance of the 201 of may 1785, the remainder thate be advertifed for fale in one of the newspapers at least of each of the states, and at the expiration of five monthy from this day, the fale of the lands shall commence in the place where congress Shall fit, and continue from day to day until the Jame Shall be diffored of ; provided that none of the land Shall be fold at a lefs price than one dollar per acre, and that the fale thall be made agreeably to the mode fronted out by the ordinance aforefail . thall be unnede

 Copy in Alexander Hamilton's hand of a resolution of the Continental Congress on public lands. (UPenn Folio HJ8105 1790, v.2)

♣ WELCOME

Welcome to Unique at Penn, part of the family of University of Pennsylvania Libraries blogs. Every week this space will feature descriptions and contextualization of items from the collections of the University of Pennsylvania Libraries. The site focuses on those materials held by Penn which are in some sense "unique" - drawn from both our special and circulating collections, whether a one-of-a-kind medieval manuscript or a twentieth-century popular novel with generations of student notes penciled inside. See the About page for more on the blog and to contact the editor.

*** RECENT POSTS**

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On Monday, Penn hosts Lin-Manuel Miranda who will be giving this year's commencement address. His acclaimed musical retelling of Alexander Hamilton's life has sparked enormous interest in the first Secretary of the Treasury. A few months ago, in reading through scholarship on our collections, I came across a 1941 article describing a set of bound volumes here at Penn which seem to have once belonged to Hamilton himself [1]. I quickly realized that the two volumes had become separated in our collection, housed in different places and not cataloged as a set or in any way associated with Hamilton.

Our excellent catalogers Liz Broadwell and Amey Hutchins got to work and now I'm happy to report that we know a lot more about these volumes. They consist of 48 printed documents from the young United States government dating from 1785 to 1794, as well as two manuscripts, including one possibly in Hamilton's hand (above), relating to the sale of land in the trans-Appalachian west. (For a full listing see here).

It might be tempting to snooze at the thought of a compilation of government documents, but we know from a table of contents which has been identified as being in Hamilton's hand by one scholar* that these were likely part of his working library and as such reveal the documentary work of governing the new United States.

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 Manuscript table of contents of the first bound volume, Likely in Hamilton's hand. (UPenn Folio HJ8105 1790 v.1)

The volumes arrived at Penn sometime before 1899 when they were first inventoried. They were subsequently rebound in a modern library binding and the connection between the volumes was lost for a time.

The primary evidence for these having been owned by Hamilton are the table of contents written in what seems to be Hamilton's handwriting at the rear of the first compiled volume, as well as a manuscript copy of a government document also likely in Hamilton's handwriting in the second volume. The strongest association though for these documents is to one of Hamilton's assistants at the Treasury Department, Henry Kuhl (1764-1856), chief clerk of the comptroller's

October 2013 September 2013 August 2013 July 2013 June 2013 May 2013 April 2013 March 2013 February 2013 January 2013 December 2012 October 2012 September 2012 August 2012 July 2012 June 2012 May 2012 **AUTHORS** adminuatpa **Alexander Devine Dianne Mitchell** Lynne Farrington **Jacqueline Burek** John F. Anderies Regan Kladstrup Marissa Nicosia **Mitch Fraas**

office. His signature appears on the first document in the set and as he was involved with the early University of Pennsylvania it seems likely this set came to us from his family sometime before 1899.



Portrait of Henry Kuhl by Thomas Sully (1829)

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Title page of the first printed report in the first volume of the collected documents. Signed by Henry Kuhl. (UPenn Folio HJ8105 1790 v.1)

The work of managing the financial affairs of a new country was not easy, the 50 documents in the collection all testify to its complexity. Among them are a series of tables giving trade statistics, a host of reports on the payment of state debts, Jefferson's report on establishing uniform weights, measures, and coinage in the US, and a set of documents on selling western land to benefit the treasury.

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 Printed statement of finances in the US Treasury submitted by Hamilton to Congress in 1794. (UPenn Folio HJ8105 1790 v.2)

The statements of finances and lists of goods exported from each state highlight both the large debts carried by the new nation as well as a different scale of federal expenditure and governance than we might be used to. The main sources of revenue for the nation being customs and import duties which barely covered the salaries of government employees and the costs of the military, to say nothing of the country's debt obligations [2].

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 Abstract of goods, wares and merchandize exported from each state from 1st October 1790, to the 31st September, 1791. (UPenn HJ8105 1790, v.2). Pennsylvania exporting an impressive 1,833 barrels of apples!

Many of these workaday documents printed for government use are quite rare with only a few copies surviving in libraries today, they would likely have been consulted by Kuhl and Hamilton in their daily business at the Treasury and for later reference. The collection stops conspicuously with documents from 1794 shortly before Hamilton's resignation as Secretary of the Treasury. How exactly Hamilton used his working library of such documents is unclear and tellingly the libraries at both Columbia and Yale universities have similar compilations of government documents that purport to have been owned by Hamilton [3]. The collection at Penn helps remind us of Hamilton the administrator and the material process of governing a new state. *[Ed. Note: Handwriting attribution is a tricky field and though Clifford Clapp was confident in 1941 that the manuscript selections above were in Hamilton's hand, after discussion with experts I find it difficult to entirely sustain. The hand does however match that used in some Treasury documents signed by Hamilton, suggesting perhaps the work of a departmental clerk. More research is necessary on this score]

[1] See Clifford B. Clapp, "Alexander Hamilton's reports." University of Pennsylvania library chronicle v. 9, no. 2 (June 1941): 52-64.

[2] For more on fiscal policy, customs revenue, and the early administrative state in Hamilton's era see Gautham Rao, *National Duties: Custom Houses and the Making of the American State* (University of Chicago Press, 2016).

[3] The history and subsequent disposition of Hamilton's library is quite confusing. Jeremy Dibbell has done excellent work reconstructing and listing books owned by Hamilton as part of LibraryThing's "Libraries of Early America" series. This list includes a range of government documents listed as being held today at Columbia and Yale.

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