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Alexander Hamilton's Reports

Clifford B. Clapp



ALEXANDER HAMILTON'S REPORTS

By CLIFFORD B. CLAPP

I.

The memory of no American statesman has been better served by his official writings than was Hamilton's. In September, 1789, he became Secretary of the Treasury, and in January, 1795, he relinquished the office. Between these dates there appeared in rapid succession the reports that contributed largely to his contemporary fame and toward an encomium sometimes so ardent as to make Henry Cabot Lodge seem conservative in saying, "We look in vain for a man who, in an equal space of time, has produced such direct and lasting effects upon our institutions and our history." While Adams and Jefferson were still living, the anonymous compiler of Hamilton's most important official reports wrote, in 1821, "The 'official reports' of the first Secretary of the Treasury will form a sort of *text-book* for his successors through distant ages."

The National Archives possess no set of original printed editions of Hamilton's reports. The New York Public Library and other libraries have good sets of varying completeness. In the Library of the New York Historical Society is the collection of them owned by Oliver Wolcott, Hamilton's successor in office. And now in the University of Pennsylvania Library there has been uncovered what appears to be Hamilton's own collection of his reports. These are contained in two volumes, which include also a few of the significant contemporary reports of Jefferson, Knox, and Randolph, and, more important, the manuscript of a lost report by Thomas

Scott on the public lands. This report was submitted to Hamilton and never thereafter saw the light of day.

There can be little doubt that these volumes constitute Hamilton's official collection. At the end of the first volume is a list of Contents of that volume in Hamilton's hand. In the other volume there is, in addition to the manuscript report submitted to him, a copy in his hand of certain resolutions of the Continental Congress concerning the public lands.

Oliver Wolcott's set of the reports was probably among the materials he rescued from the fire at the Treasury Department. Hamilton's may have been preserved from destruction by Henry Kuhl in his offices of Chief Clerk in the Comptroller's Office under Hamilton, Assistant Cashier of the Bank of the United States, and Cashier of the Farmers' and Mechanics' Bank of Philadelphia; for Kuhl's name, probably an autograph, appears at the head of the first volume, on the title-page of the famous Report on the Public Credit. It is not known how the volumes came to the University of Pennsylvania Library. Of the printed material in the collection more than half of the pieces can reasonably be designated as either outstanding or important documents of our early national administration.

The manuscript of Scott's Report provides the first official statement to the Congress of the United States under the Constitution concerning the land claims and unclaimed lands in the Northwest Territory. It was made by Thomas Scott of Pennsylvania on June 15, 1789. The present writer knows of no other manuscript copy nor any printed edition. While apparently of no great import in itself it gave rise to the report by Hamilton on a public land office, which in turn was a direct incitement of the request of Congress for the report by Jefferson on southwestern and northwestern lands, a printed copy of which is in this collection.

II.

SCOTT'S AND JEFFERSON'S REPORTS

The reports of Scott and Jefferson in these volumes present a view of the northwestern lands that for authority, adequacy, and conciseness will not be surpassed.

The manuscript of Scott's Report bears the caption: "The Committee appointed to consider the State of the unappropriated lands in the Western Territory, and report thereupon, Report . . ." It is written on thirteen pages of English book paper, folded upward at the bottom to fit the volume, and interleaved with blanks. The hand, flourishing like that of a scribe, is yet to be identified. The document is at least *presque unique*. A copy may yet appear among Hamilton, Jefferson, Sherman, or Huntington papers, or somewhere among land company material, but there is no copy among the papers of the first Congress in the custody of the Clerk of the House, nor in the National Archives; nor is any indexed in the Mereness index of 85,000 cards at the University of Illinois for documents in Washington archives on the Northwest Territory, nor in the smaller collection of related cards in the Library of Congress. The text does not appear in *American State Papers* nor in the *Annals of Congress* nor the *Journals of the House of Representatives*. Above all, it does not appear in Carter's *Territorial Papers*. It has been cited as appearing in the *Annals of Congress*, but it is not there.

In *Annals*¹, 1st Congress, volume 1 (1834), column 453, under date of Monday, June 15, 1789, the reference reads as follows: "Western Lands. Mr. Scott, from the committee to consider the state of the unappropriated lands in the Western territory, reported. This report contained a very particular

¹ *Debates and Proceedings; compiled by Joseph Gales*. Washington, Gales and Seaton, 1834.

geographical account of that country. Ordered, That this report be referred to a Committee of the Whole upon the state of the Union." Under date of Monday, July 13, 1789, columns 622-632 contain the debate of the Committee of the Whole House upon the report, or rather, apparently, on a resolution, previously debated in May, of Thomas Scott of Pennsylvania for the Committee on the western territory²: "Resolved, That it is the opinion of this committee, that an act of Congress should pass for establishment of a Land Office, and to regulate the terms of granting vacant and unappropriated lands in the Western territory." And finally came the disposition of the Report which cast it into our Hamilton Treasury Volumes. On January 20, 1790, the resolution was laid on the table, but Alexander Hamilton was directed to report a plan for a land office and the report of the Scott committee was referred to him for his consideration. The net results were the report of Hamilton, July 20, 1790³, on a plan for disposing of the public lands (a plan that like the earlier one of Jefferson failed of final accomplishment) and the report of Jefferson, November 8, 1791.

Jefferson's Report⁴ consists of eight printed pages. It was mutilated in the Ford and Memorial editions of his works, the portion on the northwestern lands being omitted entirely, al-

² For Thomas Scott, consult *Biographical Dictionary of Congress*, and the several publications written under the direction of the Western Pennsylvania Historical Survey. The other members of Scott's committee making the report were Benjamin Huntington and Roger Sherman. A different committee headed by Scott, was appointed for consideration of Scott's resolution on a land office.

³ Hamilton Treasury Volumes, vol. 2, no. 30; *American State Papers, Public Lands*, vol. 1, p. 4-5; *Works of Alexander Hamilton* (Federal edition), ed. by Lodge, vol. 8, p. 87-94.

⁴ Hamilton Treasury Volumes, vol. 2, no. 32; *American State Papers, Public Lands*, vol. 1, p. 17-20 (Lowrie ed., 1834), and *American State Papers*, vol. 16, p. 22-25 (Lowrie & Clarke ed., 1832); Carter, Clarence E., *Territorial Papers of the United States*, vol. 4, p. 84-100 (p. 93-100 being on the N.W. Territory).

though the entire text was available to the editors. It has since been printed in full in Carter's *Territorial Papers*.

Scott was ordered "to consider the state of the unappropriated lands in the Western territory"; Jefferson was ordered to report an *estimate* "of the quantity and situation of the lands not claimed by the Indians, nor granted to, nor claimed by, any citizens of the United States, within the territory ceded to the United States by the State of North Carolina, and within the territory of the United States northwest of the River Ohio." In Jefferson's Report as originally separately printed and contained in the Hamilton Treasury Volumes pages 3-5 concern the southwestern lands ceded by North Carolina, and pages 5-8 are on the northwestern lands.

Scott devoted himself to a formal, impersonal, detailed description, mainly in chronological order, of the several rights and grants contained in the territory, with their stipulated acreage, together with the actual sums derived by the United States or due to it from each. Jefferson, writing a personalized, wordy, more readable, but less precise statement, treated of the boundaries and supposed acreage of the several claims, reservations and grants, "from which results the residuary unclaimed mass, whereupon any land law the Legislature may think proper to pass may operate immediately, and without obstruction." But Jefferson was not concerned with the income derived from the land. Following the terms of the Congressional resolution he defined first the Indian claims, then those of citizens, first those reserved by States and then those of individual citizens, an entirely logical sequence. There is nothing in Jefferson's Report to indicate that he made any use of Scott's Report; how could he, since it was buried by Hamilton? But there is a probable allusion to Hamilton's Report when he speaks of "Some of these claims, being already under a special reference, by order of Congress . . ."

A detailed comparison of the two reports would be too extensive for the present article. It is sufficient to say that Scott begins with the cession by New York in 1781, delineates the boundaries of the United States set by the Treaty of Paris, treats of the cession by Virginia in 1784 with the reservation in favor of Clarke and his soldiers, a contingent reservation for the Virginia troops, and a reservation in favor of "the Kaskaskias," mentions the Massachusetts cession of 1785 and outlines that of Connecticut, goes on to treat of the Indian treaties of 1784 and 1785 in relation to the Connecticut cession, and takes up the sale of the Seven Ranges, the Cutler and Sargent grant, the Symmes grant, that to Flint and Parker, the sale to Pennsylvania, the Congressional reservations of 1788 in favor of "the Kaskaskias," and the Morgan contract. Jefferson treats of many, but not all, of these; and he supplies various details and reservations not cited by Scott.

Summing up, Scott reports that sales have been made "to the amount of 4,936,864 $\frac{15}{90}$ Dollars," and Jefferson says that "there remain at the disposal of the United States upwards of twenty-one millions of acres, in this north-western quarter."

III.

CONTENTS OF THE VOLUMES

The collection comprises 46 pieces, 13 in volume I, 33 in volume II. They date from May, 1785, to April, 1794. The arrangement of the documents in the volumes is not perfectly chronological, although aside from those on the public lands there was a tendency to make it so. In the following list, aimed at identification of the issues rather than clarification of the works, the pieces are given in the order of occurrence. Each title is much abbreviated, showing the first and the significant words, sometimes from the caption or the epistolary intro-

duction. The imprint is given in full when on the page bearing the title but is abbreviated in curves if printed elsewhere in the publication; in this case (C & S) indicates Childs and Swaine, the usual printers. Imprints or portions supplied from Evans's *American Bibliography* or other outside source are given, usually abbreviated, in square brackets. The Evans citation numbers are in brackets when identification of the issues is in doubt. Seven of the printed pieces have not been found in Evans, but some of these are known elsewhere.

⌊Vol. I. No. 1. Hamilton: Jan. 9, 1790⌋ Report of the Secretary of the Treasury . . . relative to a provision for the support of the Public Credit . . . Presented to the House on Thursday the 14th day of January, 1790 . . . New-York: Printed by Francis Childs and John Swaine. M,DCC,XC. 51p. Evans 22998.

⌊No. 2. Hamilton⌋ Treasury Department, March 4, 1790. In obedience to the order of the House . . . The Secretary of the Treasury, respectfully reports, That . . . the funds . . . payment of interest on the debts of the individual States . . . (N. Y., C & S) ⌊1790⌋ 3p. Evans 23003.

⌊No. 3. Knox: Jan. 18, 1790⌋ A plan for the general arrangement of the Militia of the United States . . . New-York: Printed by Francis Childs and John Swaine. M,DCC,XC. 26p. Evans 22988.

⌊No. 4. Osgood⌋ General Post-Office, New-York, January 20, 1790. Sir, In obedience to the orders of the Supreme Executive, I have the honor of laying before you such remarks . . . the department of the post-office . . . ⌊N. Y., C & S, 1790⌋ 7p. Evans 22978.

⌊No. 5. Jefferson: Apr. 14, 1790⌋ The Secretary of State, to whom was referred . . . the letter of John H. Mitchell . . . for supplying the United States with Copper Coinage . . . ⌊N. Y., C & S, 1790⌋ 2p. Evans 23001.

⌊No. 6. Jefferson: July 4, 1790⌋ Report of the Secretary of State, on the subject of establishing a Uniformity in the Weights, Measures and Coins of the United States . . . New-York: Printed by Francis

Childs and John Swaine. MDCCXC. 22p. Postscript on page 22 is dated January 10, 1791. "Errata" list of 7 lines follows. [Evans 22994 to 22997, and 23910]

[No. 7. Hamilton] Treasury Department, December 13, 1790. In obedience to the order of the House . . . requiring the Secretary of the Treasury . . . such further provision . . . for establishing the Public Credit—the said Secretary respectfully reports . . . [N. Y.] (C & S) [1790] 7p. Evans 23005.

[No. 8. Hamilton] Treasury Department, December 13, 1790. In obedience to the order of the House . . . requiring the Secretary of the Treasury . . . such further provision . . . for establishing the Public Credit—the said Secretary further respectfully reports, That from a conviction (as suggested in his Report No. I, herewith presented) that a National Bank . . . [N. Y.] (C & S) [1790] 22p. Evans 23006.

[No. 9. Randolph: Dec. 27, 1790] Report of the Attorney-General. Read in the House of Representatives, December 31, 1790. [Phila.] (C & S) [1791] 2 leaves & [3]-34p. [Evans 23908-23909]

[No. 10. Hamilton] Treasury Department, January 6, 1791. Sir, I have the honor to inform you . . . the formation of several returns . . . had been commenced at the Treasury . . . One of those returns, being a general Abstract of the Duties on the Tonnage . . . is herein transmitted . . . [Second title:] Treasury department, January 7, 1791. Sir, in addition to the papers transmitted yesterday, I have the honor to enclose you two Abstracts of the duties on Imports . . . [Phila? C & S, 1791] 2 leaves & inserted leaf (the latter oblong & folded). Evans 23926. Although Hamilton lists no. 10 as two items, as does Ford, it was numbered for the binder as one piece, and a pristine copy in the New York Public Library proves it to be a bibliographical unit.

[No. 11. Hamilton] Treasury Department, February 15, 1791. Sir, I do myself the honor to transmit through you . . . a general return of the Exports . . . ending on the 30th of September last . . . [Phila., John Fenno, 1791] [4]p. Evans 23927.

[No. 12. Hamilton: Jan. 28, 1791] The Secretary of the Treasury having attentively considered the Subject . . . relatively to the Establishment of a Mint . . . [Phila.] (C & S) [1791] 22p. [Evans 23920]

⌊No. 13. Jefferson⌋ Report of the Secretary of State, on the subject of the Cod and Whale Fisheries, made conformably to an order of the House . . . referring to him the representation of the General Court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts on those subjects; February 1st, 1791 . . . Philadelphia: Printed by John Fennō . . . M.DCC.XCI. 34p. Evans 23912.

⌊Vol. II. No. 1. Hamilton: Dec. 5, 1791⌋ Report of the Secretary of the Treasury of the United States, on the subject of Manufactures. Presented to the House of Representatives, December 5, 1791. ⌊Phila⌋ Printed by Childs and Swaine ⌊1791⌋ 2 leaves & 58p. ⌊Evans 23914⌋

⌊No. 2. Hamilton: March 5, 1792⌋ Report of the Secretary of the Treasury, on the Act for laying Duties on Spirits, &c. Read in the House of Representatives, March 6th, 1792. ⌊Phila⌋ Printed by Childs and Swaine ⌊1792⌋ 20p. Evans 24925.

⌊No. 3. Hamilton⌋ Treasury Department, March 16, 1792. The Secretary of the Treasury, pursuant to a resolution of the House . . . the best mode of raising the Additional Supplies requisite for the ensuing year, respectfully submits the following Report . . . ⌊Phila⌋ (C & S) ⌊1792⌋ 8p. Evans 24940.

⌊No. 4. Hamilton: Feb. 6, 1792⌋ Report of the Secretary of the Treasury, on the subject of the Public Debt . . . ⌊Phila⌋ Printed by Childs and Swaine ⌊1792⌋ 15p. Evans 24926.

⌊No. 5. Hamilton: Nov. 30, 1792⌋ Report of the Secretary of the Treasury respecting the Redemption of the Public Debt; and the Reimbursement of the Loan made of the Bank of the United States . . . ⌊Phila⌋ Printed by Childs and Swaine ⌊1792⌋ 2 leaves & 10p. & 1 leaf. ⌊Evans 24927⌋

⌊No. 6. Adams, Jay, Jefferson, Hamilton, & Randolph: Nov. 17, 1792⌋ Report from the Commissioners for Purchasing the Public Debt . . . ⌊Phila⌋ Printed by Childs and Swaine ⌊1792⌋ 19p. Evans 24921.

⌊No. 7. Adams, Jefferson, Hamilton, Randolph, (& Jay?): Feb. 25, 1793⌋ Report of the Board of Trustees of the Sinking Fund . . . ⌊Phila⌋ Printed by Childs and Swaine ⌊1793⌋ 29p. Evans 26364.

⌊No. 8⌋ The Committee appointed to prepare and report a plan for the reduction of the Public Debt, Report . . . ⌊Phila? 1794?⌋ 2 leaves & oblong folded leaf. The latter leaf, "Table exhibiting . . .", is dated December 27th, 1794. Not in Evans.

⌊No. 9. Hamilton⌋ Treasury Department, January 6, 1791. Sir I have the honor to transmit to you a Report . . . relative to Appropriations of Money . . . ⌊Phila? C & S 1791⌋ 12p. Evans 23925.

⌊No. 10. Hamilton: Nov. 4, 1791⌋ Estimate of the Expenditures for the Civil List of the United States . . . for the year 1792 . . . ⌊Phila⌋ (C & S) ⌊1791⌋ 20p. Evans 23895.

⌊No. 11. Hamilton: Nov. 14, 1792⌋ Estimate of the Expenditures for the Civil List of the United States . . . for the year 1793 . . . ⌊Phila⌋ Printed by Childs and Swaine ⌊1792⌋ 23p. Evans 24908.

⌊No. 12. Hamilton: Dec. 23, 1793⌋ Sundry Estimates and Statements relative to Appropriations for the service of the year 1794. ⌊Phila 1793⌋ 26p. (including folded or double leaf as p. 21). Evans 26349.

⌊No. 13. Hamilton⌋ Treasury Department, January 23, 1792. Sir, I have the honor to send herewith a Report . . . ⌊Phila C & S 1792⌋ ⌊4⌋p. Evans 24937.

⌊No. 14. Hamilton⌋ Communications from the Secretary of the Treasury . . . Printed agreeably to a Resolution of the House, of the 2d of March 1793. Philadelphia: Printed by John Fenno ⌊1793⌋ 65p. & a blank leaf (including oblong folded table as p. 64). Evans 26343.

⌊No. 15. Jefferson⌋ Philadelphia, January 8th, 1793. Sir, I have the honor to inclose you a Report of the assays and experiments made on the Gold and Silver Coins of France, Spain, England, and Portugal . . . ⌊C & S? 1793⌋ 2 leaves, each printed on recto only. ⌊Evans 26338⌋

⌊No. 16. Hamilton: March 28, 1792⌋ Return of Duties on Imports and Tonnage; also on Exports . . . ⌊Phila⌋ Printed by Childs and Swaine ⌊1792⌋ 1 leaf, 9p., & 4 folded tables. Last table, signed by Tench Coxe, is dated April 12th, 1792. ⌊Evans 24928⌋

⌊No. 17. Knox: Feb. 8, 1793⌋ Report of the Secretary of War on forty-seven Petitions. 1793 . . . ⌊Phila⌋ Printed by Childs and Swaine ⌊1793⌋ 11p. ⌊Evans 26362⌋

⌊No. 18⌋ In the House of Representatives of the United States, Tuesday the 8th of May, 1792. Mr. Fitzsimons, from the Committee appointed to enquire into . . . Major General St. Clair, reported . . . ⌊Phila C & S 1792⌋ 13p. Evans 24909.

⌊No. 19. Irvine, Kean, & Langdon: June 29, 1793⌋ The Commissioners appointed to execute the several Acts of Congress, to provide more effectually for the Settlement of the Accounts between the United States, and the Individual States, Report . . . Office of the Commissioners of Accounts, Philadelphia, June 29th, 1793. (Signed) Wm. Irvine, John Kean, Woodbury Langdon. I Certify the above to be a true Copy from the original. B. Dandridge, Secretary to the President of the United States. ⌊Phila? 1793⌋ Broadside. Not in Evans.

⌊No. 20. Hamilton: Jan. 7, 1794⌋ Report of the Secretary of the Treasury respecting the Tonnage of Vessels, made in pursuance of an order of the House . . . Third of January, 1794 . . . ⌊Phila⌋ Printed by Francis Childs and John Swaine ⌊1794⌋ 3 leaves & a folded leaf. Evans 27946.

⌊No. 21. Hamilton: Jan. 10, 1794⌋ The Secretary of the Treasury respectfully Reports to the House of Representatives, a Statement of the Actual Tonnage employed between ⌊ sic ⌋ the United States and Foreign Countries for a year, ending the 30th of September, 1792 . . . ⌊Phila? 1794⌋ Broadside. P.L.Ford. *Bibliotheca Hamiltoniana* (1886) 260 (2 copies). Not in Evans.

⌊No. 22. Hamilton⌋ Treasury Department, February 5th, 1794. Sir; I have the honor to transmit herewith, a Report, in pursuance of an order of the House . . . of the 30th of January last . . . ⌊Phila? 1794⌋ ⌊3⌋p. P.L.Ford. *Bibliotheca Hamiltoniana* (1886) 262 (1 copy). Not in Evans.

⌊No. 23⌋ / Congress of the United States. / In Senate, February 10th, 1794 / 1 The Committee of elections to whom was referred the petition of / 2 Conrad Laub and others against the election of the Honorable / 3 Albert Gallatin as a Senator of the United States for the State of Penn- / 4 sylvania—report, that they have . . . / ⌊Phila⌋ (Printed by John Fenno) ⌊1794⌋ ⌊4⌋p. Not in Evans.

⌊No. 24⌋ In the House of Representatives, Monday, February 24, 1794. Resolved, That a committee be appointed, to examine the state of the treasury department . . . ⌊Phila⌋ (C & S) ⌊1794⌋ 6p. Not in Evans.

⌊No. 25. Washington & Hamilton⌋ The Secretary of the Treasury. Sir, I Cannot charge my memory . . . ⌊letter⌋ G^o: Washington. United States, April 8th, 1794. ⌊C & S? 1794⌋ 3 leaves. ⌊On 2d leaf:⌋ Treasury Department, April 25, 1794. Sir, I have the honor to transmit herewith, a report . . . accompanied with the copy of a contract with the Bank of the United States . . . Ford, P.L. *Bibliotheca Hamiltoniana* (1886) 263 (1 copy). ⌊Evans 27919, erroneously called a broadside⌋

⌊No. 26. Hamilton: Nov. 19, 1792⌋ The Secretary of the Treasury, to whom was referred the several petitions in the list hereunto annexed specified—Respectfully makes the following report thereupon . . . ⌊Phila C & S 1792⌋ ⌊2⌋p. Evans 24931.

⌊No. 27⌋ By the United States in Congress Assembled. April 23, 1784. Resolved, That so much of the territory ceded . . . ⌊On 2d page:⌋ May 20, 1785. An Ordinance for ascertaining the Mode of disposing of Lands in the Western Territory. ⌊N. Y., 1785⌋ ⌊4⌋p. Evans 19283.

⌊No. 28. Manuscript copy in the hand of Hamilton⌋ In Congress April 21: 1787 Resolved That after the Secretary at war shall have drawn . . . In Congress Oct. 22, 1787 Resolved, That a million of acres . . . In Congress July 9. 1788. A Supplement to an ordinance entitled “an ordinance for ascertaining the mode of disposing . . .” ⌊A copy of three resolutions concerning military bounty lands in the Northwest Territory, which are published in *Journals of the American Congress: from 1774-1788*, and in *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*.⌋ Written on seven pages of English book paper, cut the size of the volume.

⌊No. 29⌋ The Committee to whom was referred the Memorial of the Directors of the Ohio Company of Associates . . . Report . . . ⌊Phila John Fenno 1792⌋ 9p. Evans 24872.

⌊No. 30. Hamilton⌋ Treasury Department, July 20th, 1790. In Obedience to the Order of the House . . . of the Twentieth of January last, The Secretary of the Treasury Respectfully Reports, That in the formation of a plan for the Disposition of the Vacant Lands of the

United States, there appear . . . [N. Y.] (C & S) [1790] 4p. Evans 23004.

[No. 31. Manuscript] The Committee appointed to consider the State of the unappropriated lands in the Western Territory, and report thereupon, Report . . . [Unsigned report made June 15, 1789, by Thomas Scott of Pennsylvania, to the House of Representatives of the United States.] Written on thirteen pages of English book paper, folded upward to fit the volume.

[No. 32. Jefferson: Nov. 8, 1791] Report of the Secretary of State, to the President of the United States, of the Quantity and Situation of the Lands not claimed by the Indians, nor granted to, nor claimed by any citizens, within the territory of the United States. Read in the House of Representatives, November 10, 1791. [Phila C & S 1791] 8p. Evans 23913.

[No. 33] Explanations and forms of official documents in relation to the Acts concerning the Registering, Recording, Enrolling and Licensing Ships and Vessels . . . Treasury Department, Comptroller's Office . . . [Dated by Hamilton in manuscript:] December 28: 1793. [Phila? 1794?] 34p. & 4 folded leaves & 1 blank leaf. Not in Evans.

