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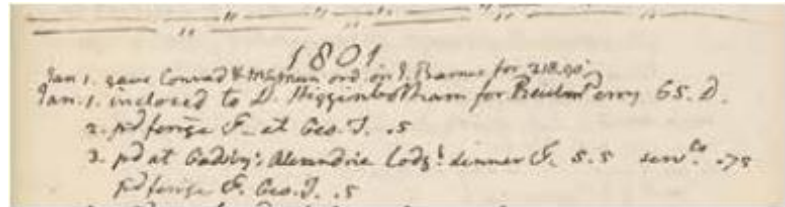
Out of the Attic

Jefferson, Hamilton and an Alexandria overnight stay

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Image: Courtesy, New York Public Library.

Continuing our Hamilton-related series this week, we highlight connections between Alexandria and the characters from the musical. Gadsby's Tavern museum has two events this month, a tour focusing on Hamilton's cohorts who visited the tavern, and an 18th-century gaming night.



This week, we highlight the man Hamilton probably considered his biggest rival, Thomas Jefferson. While Jefferson is remembered as the writer of the Declaration of Independence, his ambassadorial role in Paris during the Constitutional Convention allowed Hamilton, among others, to create a republic very different from what Jefferson envisioned, particularly through Hamilton's authorship of the majority of the *Federalist Papers*.

The election of 1800 dealt a political blow to Hamilton, as both Jefferson and Aaron Burr defeated John Adams, Hamilton's former political ally, and Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, Hamilton's preferred choice for president. Given that Jefferson and Burr received the same number of electoral votes, the election wasn't decided until 1801. While Jefferson waited for the state delegations to decide the presidency, he made a politically astute visit to Mount Vernon on Jan. 2, 1801. George Washington had died slightly more than a year earlier, and Martha Washington was less than a fan of the man who soon became our nation's third president.

In fact, legend has it that Lady Washington later told a group of gentlemen, which included the Connecticut congressman John Cotton Smith, that "next to the loss of her husband, it was the most painful occurrence of her life. [Jefferson] must have known, she observed, that we then had the evidence of his perfidy in the house." Supposedly, Mrs. Washington kept the death of two of her children in mind when she said that.

Jefferson's visit was publicized in order to help attract Federalist votes in his race against Burr. His reflections on the visit differed from Mrs. Washington's significantly. He wrote to his daughter Maria, "Mrs. Washington & Mrs. Lewis [Eleanor, Martha's granddaughter] enquired very kindly after you. Mrs. Lewis looks thin and thinks herself not healthy..."

Although his trip from the Federal City was to visit Mount Vernon, Jefferson stayed that night in Alexandria on his way back. According to his account book, Jefferson stayed the evening of Jan. 2 in Alexandria at Mr. Gadsby's City Hotel. Lodging and dinner was \$5.50 – a very large sum for the day considering the average room rate was \$1.50. Jefferson also tipped 75 cents to the servants, which was a common practice for the Virginian. These servants were the hotel's enslaved labor force. One explanation for the high bill is that Jefferson possibly paid for the room of his traveling companion, probably New Hampshire Sen. James Langdon, as well.



Office of Historic Alexandria City of Alexandria, Virginia

Unfortunately, we don't know which room Jefferson stayed in, what he ate or which one of the enslaved people at the Tavern he tipped. But we do know that in the game of politics that both Jefferson and Hamilton played, and Hamilton played it rather decisively the next month, a visit to Mount Vernon by Jefferson was considered necessary, and a stay at Gadsby's convenient.

"Out of the Attic" is published each week in the Alexandria Times newspaper. The column began in September 2007 as "Marking Time" and explored Alexandria's history through collection items, historical images and architectural representations. Within the first year, it evolved into "Out of the Attic" and featured historical photographs of Alexandria.

These articles appear with the permission of the Alexandria Times and were authored by staff of the Office of Historic Alexandria.