



Statues of Alexander Hamilton Outdoors in Manhattan

Well into the twentieth century, Alexander Hamilton was recognized as one of the greatest Founding Fathers – especially in New York City, for whose status as the commercial capital of the United States Hamilton was largely responsible.

Robert Ball Hughes's 1835 statue of Hamilton wearing a toga was the first marble statue produced in the United States. Fully 15' high, it stood in the grand rotunda of the New York Merchants' Exchange, home of the New York Stock and Exchange Board. Despite heroic efforts, the statue was destroyed in the Great Fire of 1835. A model survives in the collection of the Museum of the City of New York. (See Reynolds, *Monuments & Masterpieces* pp. 42-3.)

The following sculptures are listed in the order in which they were created.

1. *Alexander Hamilton*, by Carl Conrads, dedicated 1880. Central Park just west of the Metropolitan Museum (at about 83rd St.). Granite, approximately 10' high, pedestal approximately 9' high.

Hamilton is shown as an orator, with his right hand to his vest. The left hand, holding a rolled sheaf of papers, rests on a pillar. On the pedestal just below his feet are 13 stars, representing the original 13 United States. At the base of the pedestal are carved a chapeau de bras (a type of military hat), a sword and a scabbard.

The head was based on the popular Ceracchi bust of Hamilton done in the early 1790s, copies of which are preserved in the New-York Historical Society, New York Public Library, and the Museum of the City of New York. Conrads, however, changed the close-cropped Roman-style hair of the original to a colonial-era queue, and drilled the eyes, which gives them a much more life-like appearance.

Use of granite for the statue as well as the base is unusual: it's a difficult stone to carve. On the other hand, its durability has helped it hold up under conditions that have devastated many other outdoor sculptures. The pedestal reads "Hamilton," with "Presented by John C. Hamilton, 1880" beneath the hat and sword. John Church Hamilton (1792-1882), Hamilton's fourth son, wrote a seven-volume biography of his father that appeared in 1841-1864.

The speech at the statue's dedication in November 1880 was given by vaunted orator Chauncy M. Depew, with President Hayes, Secretary of State Evarts, and Mayor Cooper in attendance. "Hamilton's reputation as a statesman is beyond the reach of detraction," noted the *New York Times* on 11/20/1880, "his service to this country is hardly capable of

overestimation, and the placing of his statue at this late day in the chief popular resort of the American Metropolis is a tardy and inadequate recognition of the debt which all generations in the United States will owe him."

German-born Carl (or Charles) Conrads (1839-1920) was the chief sculptor for James G. Batterson, who owned a monument and stone business in Hartford, Connecticut.

Margot Gayle & Michele Cohen, *The Art Commission and the Municipal Art Society Guide to Manhattan's Outdoor Sculpture*, p. 227. Smithsonian Institution Research Information System (SIRIS) IAS 76002763.

2. *Alexander Hamilton*, by William Ordway Partridge, dedicated 1893. Hamilton Grange, 287 Convent Ave. at 141st St. Bronze, over life-size.

Chin high, head turned slightly left, hands flung out to the side, one foot forward, this Hamilton looks impassioned and persuasive. According to Gayle & Cohen, Hamilton is shown in 1788 speaking in favor of the Constitution at the New York Convention.

This work was commissioned for the Hamilton Club of Brooklyn and dedicated in October 1893 in front of the clubhouse at Clinton and Remsen Sts. in Brooklyn Heights. When the Club gave up the property in 1936, the statue was rededicated at Hamilton Grange, in whose small front yard it looks rather cramped. The Grange, Hamilton's "country" home in Harlem, had been finished a few months after his death.

The front of the pedestal is inscribed "Hamilton 1757-1804." On the sides are several lengthier inscriptions. From Guizot: "There is not in the Constitution of the United States an element of order, of force or of duration which he has not powerfully contributed to introduce or caused to predominate." From Webster: "He smote the rock of the national resources and abundant streams of revenue gushed forth." From Story: "The model of eloquence and the most fascinating of orators." From Stevens: "His rare powers entitle him to the fame of being the first intellectual product of America." And from Ames: "The name of Hamilton would have honored Greece in the days of Aristides."

Partridge (1861-1930), born in Paris, trained as a sculptor in Florence, Rome and Paris. He also lectured and wrote on art, from 1894-1897 as professor of Fine Arts at Columbian University (now George Washington University) in Washington, D.C. Ordway made his debut as a sculptor at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago, 1893, with a model of this *Hamilton* – his first large-scale work. His other works include the *Alexander Hamilton* and *Thomas Jefferson* at Columbia University (see below), *Samuel J. Tilden* on Riverside Drive at 112th St., and the equestrian *Ulysses S. Grant* at Bedford Ave. and Bergen St. in Williamsburg, Brooklyn.

Gayle & Cohen p. 314. SIRIS IAS 76007408. Reynolds p. 87.

"It may be that without a vision men shall die.
It is no less true that, without hard practical
sense, they shall also die. Without Jefferson
the new nation might have lost its soul.
Without Hamilton it would assuredly have
been killed in body."

–James Turslow Adams, *Jeffersonian Principles
and Hamiltonian Principles*, 1932

3. Alexander Hamilton, by William Ordway Partridge, dedicated 1908. Columbia University; enter from Broadway at 116th St., walk east, turn right (south) down the stairs, head east again to the front of Hamilton Hall. Bronze, approximately 8.75' high, with a 5.5' pedestal.

Hamilton stands with his right hand at his vest, holding a scroll in his left. This Hamilton is a bit more dynamic than the one in Central Park, because of the way his left arm is pulled behind him. (Looking at the statue in profile view makes this more obvious.) The base reads simply "Hamilton."

This statue was presented to the University by the Association of Alumni of Columbia College. Hamilton attended Columbia (then Kings College, located in lower Manhattan) from 1774 to 1776. He left to fight in the Revolutionary War and never received his degree.

For other works by Ordway, see #2. On the Columbia campus, *Hamilton* stands mere yards from a representation of his greatest political opponent, *Thomas Jefferson* (a 1914 sculpture by Partridge).

Gayle & Cohen p. 299. SIRIS IAS 87870199. Reynolds p. 87.

4. Alexander Hamilton, by Adolph A. Weinman, dedicated 1941. Northern end of the façade of the Museum of the City of New York, Fifth Ave. at 103rd St. Nickel silver bronze, 7' high.

This sculpture was based on Hughes' sculpture for the New York Merchants' Exchange, destroyed by fire in 1835. (See above.) The frowning Hamilton's right hand, holding a scroll, rests on a pillar. The inscription reads "Alexander Hamilton 1757-1804."

At the southern end of the Museum's façade is a sculpture of DeWitt Clinton (1769-1828), also by Weinman, 1940. The two were probably chosen to mark New York's emergence as a commercial center, via Hamilton's post-Revolutionary financial reforms and DeWitt Clinton's promotion of the Erie Canal, which routed much of the Midwest's agricultural produce through New York. Both sculptures were the gift of a trustee of the Museum of the City of New York. At the dedication Mayor La Guardia praised the Hamiltonian conception of government - not surprisingly, since La Guardia himself advocated a strong, active central government.

Weinman (1870-1952) specialized in architectural sculpture. A native of Germany who immigrated to the United States at age 10, he studied at the Cooper Union and the Art Students League, then worked at the studios of Philip Martiny, Augustus Saint Gaudens and Daniel Chester French. In Manhattan, the sculptures in the original Pennsylvania Station (*Samuel Rea* and *Alexander Cassatt*, as well as the eagles on the cornice) are Weinman's work, as are the 20-foot, gilded *Civic Fame* atop the Municipal Building at Chambers St. and the *John Purroy Mitchell Memorial* at Fifth Ave. and 90th St. In Washington, D.C., Weinman did sculpture for the National Archives and the Post Office Building. His work is more familiar to most Americans, however, in a much smaller format: Weinman designed the Walking Liberty half dollar (minted 1916-47) and the Mercury dime (minted 1916-1945) - more properly called the "Winged Liberty" dime, since Weinman meant the wings to symbolize liberty of thought.

Gayle & Cohen p. 256. SIRIS IAS 76002839.

Alexander Hamilton Chronology

1755 or 1757 Born in the West Indies
1773 Arrived in New York
1777 -1781 Aide-de-camp to George Washington
1780 Married Elizabeth Schuyler
1782-1783 Delegate to the Continental Congress
1784 Founded Bank of New York
1787 Delegate to the Constitutional Convention
1787-1788 Author, with James Madison and John Jay, of *The Federalist Papers*
1789-1795 First Secretary of the Treasury
1790 Established first Bank of the United States
1795 Retired from public life
1801 Founded the *New York Post*
1804 Died at age 47 of wounds received in duel with Aaron Burr. Buried at Trinity Church Cemetery in Manhattan with the epitaph, "The patriot of incorruptible integrity, the soldier of approved valour, the statesman of consummate wisdom, whose talents and virtue will be admired by grateful posterity long after this marble shall have moldered into dust."

"More than any other man save possibly Washington, he was regarded as the person who breathed life into the Constitution, and without exception he was viewed as the father of capitalism in America."

-- Forrest McDonald, *American National Biography*, 2000

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by Dianne Durante,

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