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When people hear the names Hamilton and Burr they automatically think of the famous 1804 duel in Weehawken. Well, what about the influence their ideas and actions had on the America we know today?

Alexander Hamilton, one of our Founding Fathers and then the nation's first Secretary of the Treasury under George Washington's leadership, worked out a detailed economic program for the national government that serves as our banking system today. Hamilton proposed the First Bank of the United States. He convinced Congress to establish a national coinage, a national banking system, a program to bring in money providing for the repayment of the national debt due to the Revolutionary War, and measures to encourage industrial and commercial development. This took under-supervised, uncontrolled banking out of the hands of each state, and put it into the hands of a central government His goal was a strong and varied economy that would also provide the nation with the means to defend itself. This central bank would provide the states with the means of providing loans to businesses assuring an economy that would grow as its nation grew. This remains a strong foundation of business and a major source of revenue for the United States today.

One other idea of Hamilton's that shaped the United States, as we know it today, was put forth in his argument that a strong central government was not an inevitable step toward tyranny.

After successfully splitting away from a country having complete control over its people without giving them a say in the way they were to be governed, states feared a strong central government. In an effort to win popular support for the Constitution, Hamilton, as a New York delegate to the Constitutional Convention, persuaded Madison and John Jay to join him in publishing a series of essays, *The Federalist Papers*. The idea that states could function independently and answer to its people, and still be united under the jurisdiction of a federal government serves as one of the most fundamental statements of American political values.

Aaron Burr, active in politics as a Republican, viewed the rights of the states as tremendously important. He left his law practice with Alexander Hamilton and entered the political scene when the New York Governor, George Clinton named him Attorney General.

Burr soon became one of the leaders of the New York Bar Association. He rose to the head of his profession through his strong knowledge of the law and his clever ability as an attorney. Burr was elected a senator two years later in 1791. He served six years and later won a seat in the state legislature when he was not re-elected to the Senate. As a member of the New York Assembly he supported a motion for the abolition of slavery in New York, and was made chairman of a committee to revise the laws of the Empire State. Though not as well-known as some of Hamilton's achievements, Burr did much to shape New York State government.

After the loss of his seat in the legislature in 1799, Burr began to organize the Democratic Party in New York City. The group grew to the point that could greatly influence the election of a democratic president. It was at this time that Burr saw himself in a federal government position. It was thought that he could be Vice President to Thomas Jefferson's presidency.

During the presidential election of 1800, Burr and Thomas Jefferson each received seventy-three electoral votes. The House of Representatives on the thirty-sixth ballot elected Jefferson President and Burr Vice President. (Alexander Hamilton, leading the New York delegation, decided to use his weight and influence to support Thomas Jefferson.) This was an example of the Constitution working on the behalf of the union. We are still dependent on the ability of the government to make such decisions, when there is no clear-cut choice.

One little known fact about Burr was that, through his love and respect of his daughter Theodosia, he became a strong believer in the rights of women. He believed that girls should receive the same kind of mental training as their brothers, women being not only the equal but the better of men. Burr made sure that she got the best of educations and cultural training. Here Burr was ahead of his time, because it took until the early 1900's for women to gain the right to vote, and with it came equal education and later the chance for equal opportunity. In a way, his push to abolish slavery in New York can be seen in a similar way.

Two hundred years have passed and the ideas that both Alexander Hamilton and Aaron Burr stood for still survive.