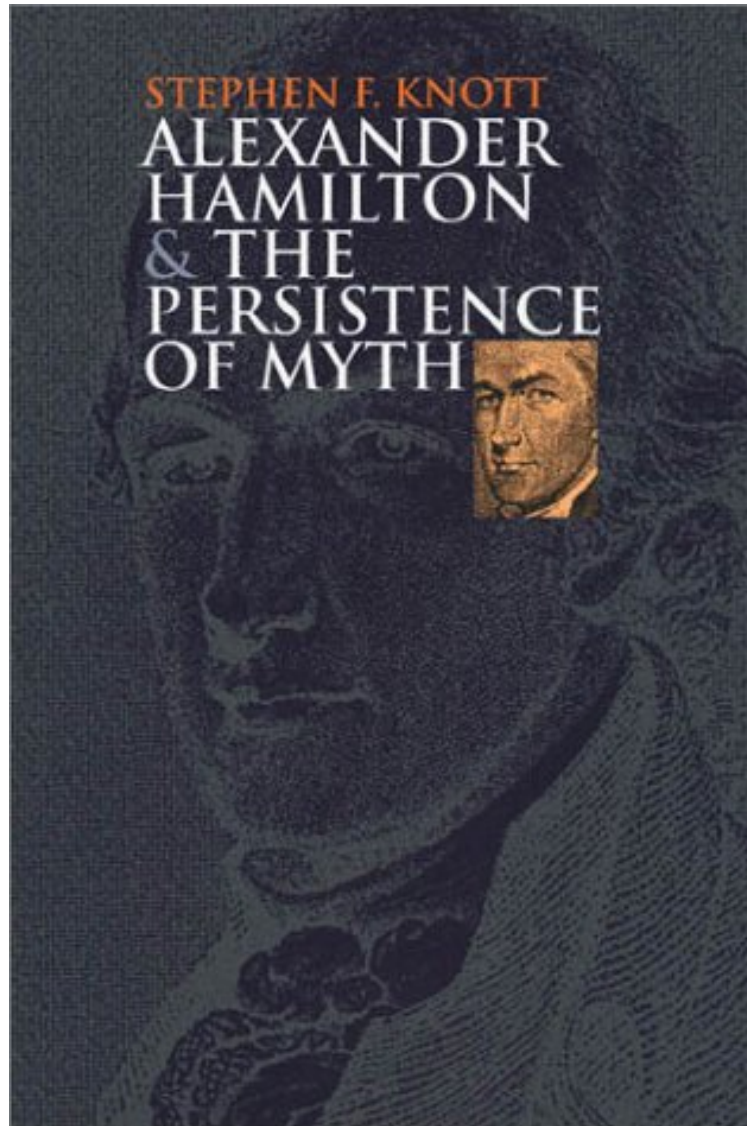


(Mobile pdf) Alexander Hamilton and the Persistence of Myth

Alexander Hamilton and the Persistence of Myth

Stephen F. Knott

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#1285702 in Books 2002-02-15 Original language: English PDF # 1 1.24 x 6.33 x 9.291, 1.45 #File Name: 0700611576344 pages | File size: 25.Mb

Stephen F. Knott : Alexander Hamilton and the Persistence of Myth before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Alexander Hamilton and the Persistence of Myth:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Objectivity: "That Noble Dream" By GDP Stephen Knott's 'Alexander Hamilton the Persistence of Myth' doesn't fit nicely into any typical genre - its neither biography nor a comprehensive historiography but an overview of the broader public image of Alexander Hamilton. It is an image very much manipulated by historians, particularly the sect of Thomas Jefferson worshipers like Dumas Malone, et al. Of course, those historians took their cue from Jefferson himself, a fierce rival of Hamilton's who enjoyed twenty-plus years after

Hamilton's death (1804-1826) to construct his own and his principal political opponent's images. Politicians and their faithful ideological flocks have been happy to formulate an image of Hamilton for personal advantages, as well. Written primarily in 2001 and published in 2002, 'Persistence of Myth' pre-dates the current Hamilton craze by over a decade. The book also places the image projected of Alexander Hamilton in the Broadway musical 'Hamilton' in context ... Hamilton the man is a rather protean figure. He can be the visionary of the modern United States of America, a monarchy loving elitist, or the "can-do" immigrant varying upon the craftsmanship of the portrayer. Knott's noteworthy debunking of the "great beast" statement frequently attributed to Hamilton is very effective. References to the "quote" appear repeatedly throughout the book, while the fragile underpinning of its source is surgically belied on p. 155 and fn 27, p. 275. Generations of Americans have had their opinions of Hamilton formed by what appears to be an unsubstantiated tale. While Knott's treatment of Hamilton is a sympathetic advocacy, it doesn't veer off into an anti-Jefferson screed. It seems only intent on achieving a more balanced view of Hamilton, a truly great American (both he and Jefferson were "great") The greatness of the Founding Fathers is not a zero-sum game. In fact, America is the dialectic outcome of Hamiltonian and Jeffersonian visions, which, fortunately, are always in tension. In addition to being political rivals, Hamilton and Jefferson serve as foils for one another. Exposition of their contrasts, which are necessary for understanding either man, often appear as criticisms. Knott's subject, however, is not Jefferson per se, but the crafters of Jefferson's image. Only the prickliest Jefferson lovers would likely object to Knott's treatment (and they have!). In a 1922 speech Calvin Coolidge, who himself has been subject to wavering public opinion, stated that when America ceases to remember [Hamilton's] greatness, America will be no longer great (p. 109). To appreciate the greatness of Hamilton there are several key resources available. Ron Chernow's 'Alexander Hamilton' is among them, as is Forrest McDonald's 'Novus Ordo Seclorum'. Carson Holloway's 'Hamilton versus Jefferson in the Washington Administration' is a worthwhile read. 'Persistence of Myth' is another. Addressing the issue of reputation and character, Abraham Lincoln used a simile: "The shadow is what we think of it; the tree is the real thing." So too with Hamilton - to remind ourselves of his greatness we have to look past the shadow and find the tree as best we can. 1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Great book on a great Founding Father! By Betsey A must-read book on Alexander Hamilton! Very well argued! 2 of 4 people found the following review helpful. A remarkable book... it must be a part of your Founding Fathers library! By V. Benedetto Stephen Knott knows his subject matter! In a time when understanding our Founding Fathers (what they meant, what they stood for, and why they knew it to be right for mankind for all time) is more important than ever, Knott brings Hamilton into full view. Only then, can we see him more purely and better understand why he rightfully was, among the Founders, a lion. Hamilton's fingerprints are everywhere on our Nation... which is why understanding him more clearly, through a more accurate prism, is essential. 'Persistence of Myth' does this and more... - Vince Benedetto

Alexander Hamilton and the Persistence of Myth explores the shifting reputation of our most controversial founding father. Since the day Aaron Burr fired his fatal shot, Americans have tried to come to grips with Alexander Hamilton's legacy. Stephen Knott surveys the Hamilton image in the minds of American statesmen, scholars, literary figures, and the media, explaining why Americans are content to live in a Hamiltonian nation but reluctant to embrace the man himself. Knott observes that Thomas Jefferson and his followers, and, later, Andrew Jackson and his adherents, tended to view Hamilton and his principles as "un-American." While his policies generated mistrust in the South and the West, where he is still seen as the founding "plutocrat," Hamilton was revered in New England and parts of the Mid-Atlantic states. Hamilton's image as a champion of American nationalism caused his reputation to soar during the Civil War, at least in the North. However, in the wake of Gilded Age excesses, progressive and populist political leaders branded Hamilton as the patron saint of Wall Street, and his reputation began to disintegrate. Hamilton's status reached its nadir during the New Deal, Knott argues, when Franklin Roosevelt portrayed him as the personification of Dickensian cold-heartedness. When FDR erected the beautiful Tidal Basin monument to Thomas Jefferson and thereby elevated the Sage of Monticello into the American Pantheon, Hamilton, as Jefferson's nemesis, fell into disrepute. He came to epitomize the forces of reaction contemptuous of the "great beast"-the American people. In showing how the prevailing negative assessment misrepresents the man and his deeds, Knott argues for reconsideration of Hamiltonianism, which rightly understood has much to offer the American polity of the twenty-first century. Remarkably, at the dawn of the new millennium, the nation began to see Hamilton in a different light. Hamilton's story was now the embodiment of the American dream: impoverished immigrant who came to the United States and laid the economic and political foundation that paved the way for America's superpower status. Here in Stephen Knott's insightful study, Hamilton finally gets his due as a highly contested but powerful and positive presence in American national life.

"A superb book about how and why one of the greatest of Americans has been one of the least appreciated. Knott's penetrating and sensitive account of the vicissitudes of Alexander Hamilton's public image over two centuries contains within it a subtle and profound commentary on the images Americans have had of themselves." Forrest McDonald, author of *Novus Ordo Seclorum: The Intellectual Origins of the Constitution and The American Presidency* "Knott has

done for Alexander Hamilton what Merrill Peterson did for Thomas Jefferson, and in the process he has made clear, as never before, the contours of American political history. No one interested in our national trajectory or in the current prospect can afford to ignore this fine book."Paul A. Rahe, author of Republics Ancient and Modern "Tracks the ups and downs of Hamilton on the stock market of historical reputation. Its appearance now is a welcome sign that a low-selling blue chip is recovering its true value."Richard Brookhiser, author of Alexander Hamilton, American "Fascinating and illuminating."John Steele Gordon, author of Hamilton's Blessing "An exceptional book-sweeping in scope, engagingly written, and highly informative."Richard K. Matthews, author of If Men Were AngelsFrom the Back Cover"Knott has done for Alexander Hamilton what Merrill Peterson did for Thomas Jefferson, and in the process he has made clear, as never before, the contours of American political history. No one interested in our national trajectory or in the current prospect can afford to ignore this fine book."-- Paul A. Rahe, author of Republics Ancient and Modern "Tracks the ups and downs of Hamilton on the stock market of historical reputation. Its appearance now is a welcome sign that a low-selling blue chip is recovering its true value."--Richard Brookhiser, author of Alexander Hamilton, American "Fascinating and illuminating."--John Steele Gordon, author of Hamilton's Blessing "An exceptional book-sweeping in scope, engagingly written, and highly informative."--Richard K. Matthews, author of If Men Were AngelsAbout the AuthorStephen F. Knott is assistant professor and research fellow at the Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia, and author of Secret and Sanctioned: Covert Operations and the American Presidency.