

Hermione's Time-Turner
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As historians, we work with documents: letters, newspaper essays, diaries and the like. They are all helpful in their way, but often one wishes one had something more powerful. Something like the time-turner which Hermione Grainger uses in book three of the Harry Potter series: a little golden hour-glass that, when turned over, transports her back in time, so that she can take one class and then take a second class in the same time slot. But we would not want to use the time-turner for such prosaic purposes. We would want to use it to see moments in the lives of our subjects today: Hamilton, Jay, Livingston and Morris. Let me sketch a few of the moments that I would most like to re-visit.

First and foremost, I would visit Liberty Hall, in Elizabeth Town, New Jersey, in the fall of 1773 and the spring of 1774. At least three of our subjects frequented Liberty Hall that winter: Jay, who was courting Sally Livingston, and Hamilton and Morris, who were courting her sister Kitty Livingston. They were all young: Sally was only sixteen; Alexander probably only eighteen; John only twenty-eight. They were all brilliant: Alexander was in the process of learning, in a few months, all the Latin and Greek he needed for college. (Indeed, it seems likely that Jay and Morris were among those who urged Hamilton to choose King's.) And they were in love. Gouverneur's feelings for Kitty may have cooled somewhat since he had written, a year earlier, that "every day and every hour I feel a more violent inclination to enjoy your company." A couple of years later, Alexander would write to Kitty to challenge her "to meet me in whatever path you dare," especially "in the roseate bowers of Cupid." John's feelings for Sally were no doubt just as strong; they were after all married in Liberty Hall in April of 1774, but we unfortunately have no love letters between them from this period.

And these five were not the only fascinating figures in this domestic scene: what did William Livingston, that longtime enemy of King's College, think about this raid on his daughters by two former and one future King's College men?

Second, I would use the time-turner to return to Kingston, New York, on the afternoon of July 28, 1777. That was the day that Morris returned from the northern front and presented, to Jay and Livingston and the other members of the New York Council of Safety, an appalling picture of the northern front. Schuyler and his army, largely composed of weak militia units, was outnumbered two to one by Burgoyne and the British. The Council directed Jay and Morris to travel to Washington's headquarters, to persuade him, if at all possible, to send troops to save New York from conquest. How precisely did Jay and Morris make their way on horseback through war-torn southern New York and northern New Jersey? What precisely did they say to Washington, when they caught up with him outside of Philadelphia, and what did he say back? (We know that in general terms he rejected their request.) Why did Jay and Morris decide to go over the head of Washington (a man whom they already admired) to appeal to their friends in Congress in Philadelphia for additional troops? And finally, what were the arguments that they used to persuade Congress to send Daniel Morgan and his 500 Virginia riflemen, the men that served so ably and critically at the two battles of Saratoga?

Third, I would use the time turner to spend the month of July 1788 in Poughkeepsie, New York, where Jay, Hamilton and Livingston were part of the small Federalist delegation that somehow persuaded the anti-Federalist majority to ratify the Constitution. I would especially want to be present in the quiet after-hours conversations, when Jay in particular used his strong personal relations with many of the anti-Federalists to plead with them not to reject the Constitution. And I would want to watch every minute of the last-minute negotiations over the circular letter to the states, drafted by Jay, edited by Hamilton and others, the letter that allowed enough of the anti-Federalists, notwithstanding their grave reservations about the Constitution, to vote in favor

of it. There has been a tendency, over the years, to give Hamilton all the credit for the Federalist victory in Poughkeepsie. In the mural on the wall of the Poughkeepsie post office, it is Hamilton who shakes hands with Governor Clinton to "seal the bargain." It will not surprise you all to hear that I believe, if one could use a time-turner to watch that convention in all the detail that we watch our modern conventions, that Jay was far more important in turning around the anti-Federalists.

Fourth, and I suspect this would be a popular choice with this crowd, I would use the time-turner to visit New York City on April 30, 1789, to witness the inauguration of George Washington as our first president. Three of our subjects were in the city on that day: Livingston, as the senior judicial officer of the state, administered the oath of office to Washington; Jay was probably one of those on the balcony behind Washington; Hamilton, according to Chernow, "looked on from the balcony of his Wall Street home." What a moment that must have been, when Livingston turned to the crowd, after administering the oath, and shouted out "Long live George Washington, President of the United States." The crowd responded, according to those who were there, with long and repeated cheers; all the bells in the city rang out in joy; the cannon of ships in the harbor added to the happy din. We know much about that day, but there is so much more one would like to know: one would like to have a video of the inauguration itself, and the inaugural address, and the church service that followed in St. Paul's Chapel, and the fireworks that evening.

Fifth, and this may be a somewhat eccentric choice, I would like to visit Morrisania in August of 1812. Hamilton was of course long dead and Livingston was nearing death at his home at Clermont. But Morris was in full vigor: apoplectic about Madison's "criminal" war against Britain, and trying to rally New York's Federalists behind De Witt Clinton. He gathered at his home that August several friends, many of them friends from King's College: Richard Harison, John Jay and Richard Varick. Rufus King was there as well, a Harvard man himself, but whose son was a Columbia trustee. It is not clear whether all

these men were present on August 5 when DeWitt Clinton (Columbia College class of 1786) came out from New York City to speak with them and solicit their support. But I would like to think that they were, that the first generation, Jay and Morris, met that afternoon with a second generation of American leaders, the future governor of New York, the ardent advocate of the Erie Canal. What did they say about President Madison, about the riots in Baltimore, about the possibility that New England and New York would secede if the Southerners persisted in their mad war?

I could go on all morning but perhaps that is a good point to stop so that all of us can answer a few questions.