



War of Two: The Dark Mystery of the Duel Between Alexander Hamilton and Aaron Burr, and Its Legacy for America

John Sedgwick

[Download now](#)

[Read Online ➔](#)

War of Two: The Dark Mystery of the Duel Between Alexander Hamilton and Aaron Burr, and Its Legacy for America

John Sedgwick

War of Two: The Dark Mystery of the Duel Between Alexander Hamilton and Aaron Burr, and Its Legacy for America John Sedgwick

A provocative and penetrating investigation into the rivalry between Alexander Hamilton and Aaron Burr, whose infamous duel left the Founding Father dead and turned a sitting Vice President into a fugitive.

In the summer of 1804, two of America's most eminent statesmen squared off, pistols raised, on a bluff along the Hudson River. That two such men would risk not only their lives but the stability of the young country they helped forge is almost beyond comprehension. Yet we know that it happened. The question is why.

In *War of Two*, John Sedgwick explores the long-standing conflict between Founding Father Alexander Hamilton and Vice President Aaron Burr. A study in contrasts from birth, they had been compatriots, colleagues, and even friends. But above all they were rivals. Matching each other's ambition and skill as lawyers in New York, they later battled for power along political fault lines that would not only decide the future of the United States, but define it.

A series of letters between Burr and Hamilton suggest the duel was fought over an unflattering comment made at a dinner party. But another letter, written by Hamilton the night before the event, provides critical insight into his true motivation. It was addressed to former Speaker of the House Theodore Sedgwick, a trusted friend of both men, and the author's own ancestor.

Sedgwick suggests that Hamilton saw Burr not merely as a personal rival, but as an existential threat to the American union. Burr would prove that suspicion correct after Hamilton's death, when, haunted by his rival's legacy, he embarked on an imperial scheme to break the union apart.

War of Two: The Dark Mystery of the Duel Between Alexander Hamilton and Aaron Burr, and Its Legacy for America Details

Date : Published November 3rd 2015 by Berkley (first published October 20th 2015)

ISBN : 9781592408528

Author : John Sedgwick

Format : Hardcover 455 pages

Genre : History, North American Hi..., American History, Nonfiction, Biography



[Download War of Two: The Dark Mystery of the Duel Between Alexan ...pdf](#)



[Read Online War of Two: The Dark Mystery of the Duel Between Alex ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online War of Two: The Dark Mystery of the Duel Between Alexander Hamilton and Aaron Burr, and Its Legacy for America John Sedgwick

From Reader Review War of Two: The Dark Mystery of the Duel Between Alexander Hamilton and Aaron Burr, and Its Legacy for America for online ebook

Greg says

Now I know why the stage show "Hamilton" is a sensation: the story itself is literally beyond belief and songs like "My Shot" and "Ten Duel Commandments" and "The Room Where It Happens", once heard, will have you singing brilliant lyrics like no musical ever. Hamilton, an immigrant, writes most of the Constitution, develops America's financial system, becomes mired in very nasty elections, and then...well, there is the breathtaking climax which (shame on me) I had forgotten about since grade school history. Sedgwick has obviously researched the story fully and therein lies the rub: he seems like the kind of author who can't leave a single note off the book's page and he does say he borrowed the structure (parallel trajectories of Hamilton and Burr are told side by side) from Vidal's "Burr". Still, it's a very good read.

Fredrick Danysh says

War of Two documents the feud between Alexander Hamilton and Aaron Burr and what brought about the infamous duel that took the life of Hamilton. Burr's life after the duel is covered. This was a revealing read of early United States history that dispelled some myths.

Jaylia3 says

I didn't know much about the 1804 duel between Alexander Hamilton and Aaron Burr before I read this double biography, but that (of course) didn't stop me from having an opinion: Hamilton, good; Burr (the "victor"), bad. Learning more about them was revelatory and provided some well needed nuance. John Sedgwick takes readers back to the beginnings of each man's life, revealing surprising similarities and stark contrasts. Both men fought in the Revolutionary War, practiced law in New York City, and held political office--Hamilton worked closely with George Washington and was the first Treasury Secretary, while Burr was Vice President during Thomas Jefferson's initial term as President. But their contrasts started at birth.

Alexander Hamilton was born out of wedlock on a Caribbean island, and then orphaned early and put to work. At twelve he had charge of the Beekman and Cruger shipping business, a job that would have been daunting for most men twice his age. When he was sixteen a ferocious hurricane ravaged the island, but instead of hiding inside Hamilton ventured out to see the storm and then wrote a dramatic account of it for the island's newspaper. His literary skills brought him to the attention of Hugh Knox, a local minister, who arranged for Hamilton to be educated in America. Hamilton never returned to the island.

Aaron Burr initially led a more privileged life than Hamilton because he was born into a kind of religious dynasty. His father was a minister and the second president of a prestigious New Jersey college that later became Princeton University, and his grandfather was Jonathan Edwards, a Calvinist minister and a leader of the Great Awakening religious revival of the 1730's-40's. Maybe because of his background Burr was driven to accelerate and excel in his studies, receiving a Bachelor of Arts degree when he was just sixteen. Burr was

a great admirer of early feminist Mary Wollstonecraft, and he made sure that his beloved daughter Theodosia was as well educated as any boy.

Sedgwick's penetrating account of the eventually fatal rivalry between the two men provides fascinating insights into the personalities involved and the history of their time. The love lives of several Founding Fathers are laid bare and I was intrigued by deportment differences between Federalists and Republicans. Those supporting the Federalist party made formal bows upon meeting and considered the handshake a vulgar Republican custom. George Washington in particular couldn't bare to be touched. One man who patted Washington on the shoulder to win a bet deeply regretted it afterwards, being almost undone by Washington's cold stare.

Federalists and Republicans even admired different doctors--Republicans preferred old fashioned bleeding and purging styles of medicine while Federalists like Hamilton favored gentler cures with doctors who allowed the body time to heal itself. America's polarized politics have a long history.

While I couldn't understand how he did it, I enjoyed reading about reactions to Hamilton's financial alchemy. He somehow managed to turn the country's prodigious debt into money that could be invested in things that would help the young nation grow economically, like canals and roads, but Republicans like Thomas Jefferson, who envisioned a society made up of gentlemen farmers, considered the whole business unseemly.

Moving, informative, and entertaining, the book takes the story forward many years after the Hamilton/Burr duel, including Burr's audacious attempt to hijack some Louisiana Purchase lands to found his own republic and ending with Burr's death in 1836.

Sarah (Presto agitato) says

John Sedgwick, the author of *War of Two*, is a direct descendant of the recipient of one of the last letters Alexander Hamilton wrote, the night before his fatal duel with Aaron Burr. The author's somewhat tangential connection to this dramatic historical episode serves as his segue into this account of the events and interpersonal relationships that led to the duel.

Sedgwick's writing style is entertaining and fast-paced. It's a nice change from the dry recitation of facts often found in this kind of book. Unfortunately, he is also more than a little cavalier about pesky historical details. He includes a bibliography and some vague endnotes, but does not cite specific references or evidence for a lot of unproven statements that are not accepted parts of the historical record. Other statements are just patently incorrect.

There has been a lot written about Hamilton, Burr, and the founding era over the past 200 or so years. Some works are conscientious about historical evidence, but others are blatantly partisan, especially when dealing with conflict among various founding fathers. The conflict between Hamilton and Burr is obviously the central one here, but just in general, the founders disagreed a lot, they gossiped, they were not always truthful, and they wrote a lot of things down for people to comb through later. Historians over the years have picked and chosen what to believe and what to discount. Some stories get propagated from generation to generation without ever being substantiated.

Sedgwick cites a lot of completely unproven tales as if they were accepted history. That would be bad

enough, but on top of that, he often makes rather incredible leaps into inferring the states of mind of historical figures. For example, the author cites the dubious rumor, without saying it was a rumor, that Hamilton looked a lot like his childhood friend, Edward Stevens, and may have been the son of Thomas Stevens rather than James Hamilton. “Properly, Alexander Hamilton was likely not Alexander Hamilton at all, but Alexander Stevens...If [Hamilton’s mother] had indeed been unfaithful, that would explain [her first husband’s] outrage and his insistence she be thrown in prison—depriving her of the ability to marry again and thus making Hamilton legitimate” (pg. 31). It’s a convoluted inference based on a flimsy premise and doesn’t really make any sense, since her imprisonment happened before Hamilton was born, not as a reaction to his birth, and was not the reason she couldn’t marry again.

Speaking of Hamilton’s birth, Sedgwick wades into the controversy over when exactly it took place while repeatedly confusing years and ages himself. He seems to accept without question the theory that Hamilton lied about his age when he came to the colonies, cutting off two years to make himself seem younger. This is not a settled issue. Many historians accept the birth year stated by Hamilton, his family members, and the engraving on his tombstone. There is some evidence that he was born two years earlier than he claimed, but Sedgwick doesn’t cite it. Instead, he surmises that Hamilton must have learned about Aaron Burr from a mutual acquaintance and heard how Burr graduated from Princeton at age fifteen. Hamilton was eighteen (or sixteen) when he arrived in New Jersey and still had to attend a preparatory school before starting college. Sedgwick says, “This delay made the age adjustment all the more imperative. Hamilton agreed to attend Elizabethtown Academy, just as Burr had. Or, perhaps, because Burr had” (pg. 39). It may make a good story that Hamilton had it in for Burr from the moment he arrived in the future United States, but it is completely speculative, rooted in a very questionable assumption.

The author references a flirtatious letter written by Hamilton to a female friend as being “pushy” for a sixteen year old. It’s a fair point, except that Hamilton was twenty (or twenty-two) when he wrote it (pg. 42). This makes even less sense, considering Sedgwick’s confident statements about Hamilton’s age. If Sedgwick’s own assertion about Hamilton’s birth year is correct, he wasn’t even in the American colonies at that age, let alone writing audacious letters to American women.

In discussing Hamilton’s extramarital affair with Maria Reynolds, Sedgwick states that the daughter of Maria Reynolds could have been Hamilton’s because she “was conceived after Reynolds came to know him” (pg. 319), but this is not true, as Sedgwick should have known from his sources (see Syrett, *Papers of Alexander Hamilton*, Introductory Note: From Oliver Wolcott, note #6 at <https://founders.archives.gov/documents...>). Susan Reynolds was probably around four or five at the time of the affair. She was even mentioned in James Reynolds’s letters to Hamilton, when he said he wanted to leave his wife and take their daughter with him. But why let that get in the way of a good story.

These things may seem like nit-picking, but I could go on and on. And these are only details I am aware of. It makes me wonder what else is incorrect that I just don’t know as much about. Sedgwick states at the end that his target audience was “the public,” so he did not “[fill] the notes with the chapter-and-verse references of academe. . . In the Google era, of course, most information, especially material pertaining to the Founding Fathers, can be traced without scholarly citations anyway” (pg. 405). This may be so, but then why would anyone bother reading this book at all? With or without Google, it is problematic that he gives direct quotations without clearly citing the source. Even worse, in at least one section he paraphrases Chernow (to put it nicely) without quoting him directly or citing him as the original source. Compare Sedgwick pg. 211 in the section with “John Adams brayed at his ‘indelicate pleasures’” with Ron Chernow, *Alexander Hamilton*, pg. 363, in the section beginning, “John Adams carped at his ‘indelicate pleasures’”. There are several similar sentences in this section in a different order with slightly different wording. The notes for this chapter do reference Chernow, who “captured the social scene in Philadelphia” (pg. 405), but that’s as specific as

they get.

My impression from all of this is that the author has read some books about Hamilton and Burr and then written this story from what he remembers, without being particularly concerned about what exactly he read or where he read it. It's all very readable and entertaining, and the author's ideas about why people did what they did are interesting, but with so much blurring of facts and conjecture, the result is a book as much fiction as history.

Grumpus says

Disclaimers: 1) I won this copy through a First Reads giveaway here at Goodreads and 2) I am a huge fan of Alexander Hamilton.

Ron Chernow's book Alexander Hamilton is what started my near Hamilton obsession. Hamilton is certainly an underappreciated founding father and I strongly oppose the proposed removal of his image from the \$10 bill. I would prefer to see Jackson removed from the \$20 if someone has to go but, I digress.

I have also read, Fallen Founder: The Life of Aaron Burr. The villain. Nancy Isenberg did a nice job with a very unfavorable topic. All-in-all, I did like that book too but how can you "love" a villain.

Duo bellum is the Latin from which the word "duel" is derived. It translates to War of Two which is this book's title--clever. That's one of those weird facts that will stick with me forever. The author did a fantastic job on writing the alternating biographies of Hamilton and "he who must not be named". In my readings of the individual biographies mentioned above, I never had the sense of how closely their lives paralleled even though they came from very difference socio-economic backgrounds. I was unaware of the similarities—including their dalliances with the ladies. They were real horn dogs in that regard; "he who must not be named" even more. I would classify "he who must not be named" as a Casanova as it seemed almost a game to him. He would even share his coquettishness with his highly educated daughter, Theodosia. What a unhappy life she must have lived. "He who must not be named" was always critical of her writing and would send her notes back to her with corrections. Sounds harsh yes, but it did make her one of the most intelligent humans of that time.

The duel played only a small part of the book but the road leading to it and the understanding of why it came about was well documented for me. The part I enjoyed the most was "he who must not be named's" reaction and flight out of the area in the days afterward. Though I knew most of the story, it was still astounding to read of this former Vice President's treasonous activities toward the United States.

I would recommend this book to anyone wanting to learn the complete "duel" story of which we are all familiar. I am certain you will learn something new.

Jean says

Sedgwick has written a parallel biography of two prominent figures from the Federalist era whose lives came together on the dueling ground. I have always been interested in Alexander Hamilton and have read most of the biographies about him. Hamilton was the chief aide to George Washington during the American

Revolution and author of most of the Federalist Papers. He was the first secretary of the Treasury. Aaron Burr was a prominent attorney and was Vice President under Thomas Jefferson. I found it most interesting to be able to compare the two men's lives side by side; I feel as if I have a better understanding of the two men.

Sedgwick goes into the emotional and psychological makeup of the pair. The author presents evenhanded and insightful profiles of the two men. He states that Hamilton was hyperactive and produced volumes of work and had an intense devotion to the Federalist cause. Burr was a brooding and libidinous and tended to communicate in code. Sedgwick states he was inspired by Gore Vidal's novel "Burr" (1973). The book is well written and meticulously researched. Sedgwick is a great storyteller therefore the book reads almost like a novel.

Sedgwick wrote about his own famous family in his book "In My Blood" (2007) from the revolutionary era of Theodore Sedgwick to modern day actress Kyra Sedgwick. I read this as an audiobook downloaded from Audible. P. J. Ochlan did a good job narrating the book. The book is fairly long at about 18 hours.

Sue says

"War of Two", written by John Sedgwick, is ostensibly about the duel between Alexander Hamilton and Aaron Burr but in reality it's about much more. It's about the political atmosphere that Hamilton and Burr worked in, their successes and failures, and the people who were important in their lives.

Most of this information can be found in more detail in other books, but "War of Two" treats it in a completely different manner. This book's strong point is that it discusses the emotions and passions of the time period, of Hamilton and Burr, and how those emotions led up to the infamous duel. This is a point of view that very few, if any, other writers have used and it worked. Rather than a dry description of the facts, the emotions and personal circumstances of Hamilton and Burr helped to truly explain the reasons behind the duel.

I think it's difficult for those of us raised in the 20th and 21st centuries to realize how divisive, cruel, and backstabbing the politics were in the early days of the United States. We tend to view our historical figures through rose-colored glasses and this book shows us some of the realities of the time. Burr has almost always been vilified but this book gives all of the historical characters, including Burr, a more human aspect.

I thought it was interesting that the author acknowledges not only some of the best of the nonfiction biographers of Hamilton and Burr, but also acknowledges Gore Vidal, a fiction writer who wrote "Burr", for giving him a good idea of the passions of the time period. It shows in the style of the book and once again, it works.

I'm highly recommending this book. It's getting 4 stars from me, only because I was a little put off by the extremely short chapters. It just seemed to chop up the book too much.

Becky says

I definitely enjoyed reading John Sedgwick's War of Two: The Dark Mystery of the Duel Between Alexander Hamilton and Aaron Burr, and Its Legacy for America. I thought it did a good job chronicling the lives of both founding fathers. The attention is rightly divided between the two men. Readers learn not just about politics and war but also more personal affairs such as family and home life.

Part one is titled "The Roots of the Hatred." Part two is titled "The Battle is Joined." Part three is titled "To the Death." Part four is titled "And Then There Was One." Each chapter title seems to be taken from a direct quote from a primary source.

I was familiar with the basics of this story having listened to Hamilton a couple dozen times. I think anyone interested in learning more would profit from reading this one.

From the introduction, "Hamilton came to America alone at sixteen, a penniless immigrant, from the West Indian island of Saint Croix, the only one of the original Founding Fathers not born on the continent" (xxii). And, "As for the illegitimate Hamilton, Adams derided him as "the bastard brat of a Scotch peddler" (xxii). And, "Hamilton could take four hours to say what Burr could say in thirty minutes" (xxii).

From chapter five, John Adams on New Yorkers [like Hamilton], "They talk very loud, very fast, and altogether. If they ask you a question, before you can utter three words of your answer they will break out upon you again and talk away." (38)

From chapter six, "Hamilton was primarily a man of action, driven to achieve; his strongest feelings stemmed from ambition, and indignation when his aspirations were not met." (44)

From chapter eight, "As Hamilton listened to the speakers bellowing into the wind, he found the arguments against the British to be surprisingly feeble, and, unable to wait his turn, he started to speak up, unbidden, from the middle of the crowd, first timidly, unsure, and then proudly, firmly; and finally he could not stop, bringing forth a great tumbling river of argument that washed over the crowd. At nineteen, Hamilton was not the most prepossessing speaker, or the most fully voiced, but he was the most persuasive--forceful, compelling, assured--and somehow all the more so for being so boyishly slender and obviously young." (54-5)

From chapter eleven, "Hamilton, Laurens, Lafayette, all three of them young, brash, brilliant, and glamorously handsome, quickly formed a three-way attachment that was unusual by the standards of a ragtag army." (85)

From chapter thirteen, "Hamilton was a man on the prowl and had been ever since he was a teenager...No wonder Martha Washington named her frisky tomcat Hamilton." (98)

From chapter fifteen, "To Hamilton, Angelica was sunshine itself. The relationship revealed a gushing enthusiasm for a woman that ran the gamut from playfulness to desire and back again. From the first, he was so taken by Angelica, and so bad at concealing it, that many people assumed they were the lovers." (110)

From chapter twenty-four, "And so it began: From that moment forward, as in the army, Washington would depend on Hamilton as he depended on no other. He would never make a significant decision without Hamilton's advice, often doled out in ten-thousand word installments, his quill flying, and he would never

question that advice, no matter how it turned out. Washington had plenty of wise men in his circle--Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Edmund Randolph, James Madison, all but the last of them in his cabinet, and all of them older, some substantially so--but it was Hamilton he turned to, over and over. He emerged as Washington's alter ego, the first among equals." (176).

There came a point when I stopped flagging all the passages that I liked/loved/found interesting.

The book is compelling and I definitely recommend it.

Norah McCaffrey says

The theme of this book is that there are better ways to solve conflict.

Caroline says

Sometimes I think Benedict Arnold has received a bad rap. His name has gone down in American history as practically a synonym for treason, the poster child for betrayal - and yet, if you ask me, Aaron Burr deserves it just as much, if not more. At least Arnold was committing treason for a cause and a side he held to the rest of his days; Burr just conspired to betray his country for his own petty revenge and personal benefit, and never held to a cause he believed in in his life - unless that cause was Aaron Burr.

And yet, just as in many ways Alexander Hamilton's memory and greatness have been obscured behind the figures of Washington and Jefferson (at least until Lin-Manuel Miranda and his musical came along!), so the memory of Burr's treachery has been lost. Their lives are so intertwined, so impossible to disentangle or even tell separately, that it was perhaps inevitable that if one was neglected and forgotten so too would the other. As goes Hamilton, so goes Burr. The thought that he is remembered by history not for anything he did or achieved, but simply as the man who murdered Alexander Hamilton, would no doubt infuriate Aaron Burr. But then we see the results of Alexander Hamilton's achievements every day - modern America is very much the world he made - whereas all Burr ever achieved of lasting significance was to kill Alexander Hamilton.

So this book then is a dual biography, and indeed it would be dishonest to try and tell Aaron Burr's life at least in any other way. Alexander Hamilton could absolutely warrant a separate biography (and Ron Chernow's is the best) but Burr's life was hedged and bound and circumscribed and defined in almost every way by his relations with Hamilton. John Sedgwick acknowledges this fact on almost page of this book - not just in the alternating chapters but in the recognition that Fate, or whatever you want to call it, had bound these two men's life together, not just in their actions or reactions, but in the mirroring of their experiences and the way their lives touched and spun off and reflected one another.

It would be hard to know which side of the Hamilton/Burr divide the author himself comes down on, so in that sense this book is admirably impartial. Personally, I am an absolute Hamilton partisan, so there were times when I wanted far more damning criticism of Burr's behaviour - but an historical biography is neither the time nor the place, and I recognise that! I just seethed and muttered under my breath at parts. Sedgwick's own ancestor knew both men and is mentioned at a number of points in the text - indeed, Hamilton's last ever letter was to Sedgwick - which must lend an interesting perspective for any historian.

All in all, a fine read and worthy addition to the recent spate of Hamilton books - long may they continue. But there is yet anything to rival Ron Chernow's masterpiece.

Emily Ross says

This book is supposedly about the famous duel between Alexander Hamilton and Aaron Burr in 1804, but is in reality, not really about that duel at all. It is a dual biography, ranging from both men's childhoods through college, spending quite a long time on the revolutionary war (which is understandable considering how it shaped both men) and then into their political lives, their personal lives and the run up to the duel.

I actually found it quite interesting reading after the duel, because at that point it became a singular biography of Aaron Burr, and it mainly focused on his attempt at treason, his relationship with Jefferson and his daughter Theodosia. This really made you feel for Theodosia and her husband because it felt like Burr took very little seriously in his later life, including his financial situation.

This was a well written biography, though it lacked a certain historical touch. Some words were used in the wrong context and it didn't really refer to other historians, who know the topic much better than Sedgwick did, though he does seem to have dedicated a lot of research to this book.

The narrator was also quite slow. I had to speed it up to 2.5x to stop myself from zoning out.

Larry says

The fateful meeting at Weehawken in 1804 between Alexander Hamilton and Aaron Burr was the most famous duel in American history. The duel both frames and ends this book, which is a dual biography of the sort once attempted by Stephen Ambrose when he wrote about Crazy Horse and George Armstrong Custer. It is deeply researched, very well written, and consistently interesting (to me, at least). Hamilton and Burr were alike in that they were political stars who had burned out due to faults in their characters, but Hamilton was clearly the heavyweight of the two. As Sedgwick writes at the end, looking out from the dueling site it is possible to see Hamilton's legacy in the skyline of the New York City financial district, made possible by the quality of his work as Secretary of the Treasury. Burr leaves no monument, save for an object lesson in what it means to squander talent.

Eric says

A good read, but not a real good history. But I looked at it from a hard core history buff's perspective. The author obviously did admirable academic research into the characters, and included many direct quotes from their own diaries, correspondence, and publications. But as he mentions in the first paragraph of his acknowledgments, he did all his research in his third floor apartment in Brooklyn. I'm sure the book would have been different if he had walked some of the battlefields, and traversed some of the waterways & trails that he talks about. On one side, he does a good job of putting the reader into the period, without imposing 21st presumptions of "what should have been done", but on the other side, he flings around military terms like he learned some army lingo in a Gilbert & Sullivan stage production, and it sounded cool, but he didn't learn what the words mean. The funniest example was his use of the word 'grapeshot' for small arms fire. It's

an artillery round, packed with small shot. I was discussing the book with other history buff friends at my favorite brewery, and one friend laughed "So they dueled at ten paces with cannons?" The author seems to be inspired by Gore Vidal's writings, but Vidal was well known to be creative with the facts when it enhanced the story line. Historical fiction readers will love this book, because the writing is superb, and it is a real great story out of our past.

J says

I don't want to say that this book is boring, but I'm bored with it. Sedgwick is trying to be scholarly yet accessible to the average reader of the street and manages to write a really chronological history in the end. The early parts are all about giving a picture of Hamilton and Burr as separate yet oddly similar men to the point where I really found I wasn't always sure who a chapter was about until one or the other's name appeared. As for the chronological nature of the narrative, it makes for slow beginnings and foundering middles until the really exciting stuff in the final two sections which is, honestly, not nearly so exciting because the build up has taken. so. long.

Okay, yeah, I might be somewhat of a minority toward this book, but it feels more like the author wanting to talk about part of his family history (of which there happens to be a lot - just ask people in a certain area of Massachusetts). The writing style is somewhere between dry and trying to be interesting (I'm not sure how much innuendo the author managed to get in, but let's just go with a lot). As a result, the topic feels overdone and perhaps not handled with the appropriate aplomb that someone casually looking into the subject will want to stick with.

Note: ARC received via Amazon Vine in exchange for review.

Janine Urban says

I was not disappointed with this book. Sedgwick has done an admirable job compiling a dual biography on what is perhaps the most famous duel in our nation's history. At no time did I find myself bored or tempted to skip, or actually skip, any pages. Both Hamilton and Burr are well represented with respect to their history and the events that led to the morning of July 11, 1804 at Weehawken. Although a Hamiltonian myself, I was glad to see Sedgwick remained largely free of bias of either gentleman and concentrated on the events.

Sedgwick begins by reminding us that no conflict begins at the end. Rather it slowly festers over time until finally reaching a head. It's no secret that Hamilton was a difficult man. Unforgiving and ruthless in his criticism, he called people as he saw them and stood behind his convictions. A failing, he said, of Burr. He made no secret of his disdain for Burr nor that he would go to any rhetorical lengths and means to oppose Burr's ambitions. Burr, we find, is a man that never stood for, nor stated, any political opinions. Which is unusual for someone that lived in the public and political eye. The public never fully knew him or what he stood for. His only cause was himself.

I recommend reading this book if you are curious as to the nature of each man and the events that led them to the dueling ground at Weehawken.

