'Remember Me to All the Members of the Whin Bush Club': Dr. Alexander Hamilton and the Scottish Tavern Club in America

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ABSTRACT

In 1744, Dr. Alexander Hamilton famously set off on a multimonth 'itinerarium' across British America's eastern colonies. Only one year later, the Scottish immigrant founded his notorious 'Tuesday Club' in his new home of Annapolis, Maryland. This article links these two major events in Hamilton's life to demonstrate how this homesick Scottish-born physician viewed his multimonth itinerarium as a last-ditch effort to find, or 're-create,' his idealized version of the Scottish-style tavern club in America. Ultimately, Hamilton's tour, during which he regularly lodged in American taverns, convinced him of three things. First, the American colonies harboured just enough genteel, British-born, or educated men to constitute a Scottish-style tavern club. Second, Hamilton himself was the ideal candidate to introduce such a club into the 'wilds' of America. Third, this endeavour simply could not occur in America's taverns, as Hamilton's itinerarium solidified his belief that to truly realize a healthy Scottish-style tavern club in Annapolis, he must do so without taverns, which he now considered nests of debauchery, ignorance, and class levelling. Consequently, Hamilton formed the Annapolis 'Tuesday Club,' a deliberate re-creation ('transmigration' in his words) of his beloved Edinburgh Whin-Bush Club without the tavern space. In the end, Hamilton's arduous journey to 'transmigrate' the Whin-Bush Club to America reveals perhaps more about his conceit and festering anti-American bias than it does about the true nature of Scottish club society or colonial American tavern culture.

Keywords: Alexander Hamilton, British American colonies, Taverns, Tuesday Club, Whin-Bush Club, Annapolis.

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Dr. Alexander Hamilton (1712–56) felt adrift. Poor employment prospects in his native Edinburgh, Scotland, forced the newly-minted physician to move to Annapolis, Maryland, in 1739, a decision he almost instantly regretted. Once an eager student at the University of Edinburgh who spent his days poring over medical pamphlets and nights pouring pints at his beloved tavern assembly, the Whin-Bush Club, Hamilton's New World prospects proved comparatively disappointing. He chatted with a pet parrot instead of his erudite Edinburgh club mates and slogged through muddy, half-timbered streets rather than the Gothic spires and genteel taverns of his native city. To make matters worse, physical illness added to the Scottish doctor's homesickness when he contracted a debilitating bout of malaria upon arrival in the southern colonies. After only a few months in Annapolis, Hamilton penned a pitiable letter to his brother in Edinburgh: 'Be so good as to remember me to all the Members of the Whin-Bush Club,' Hamilton lamented, 'inform them that every Friday, I fancy myself with them, drinking twopenny ale, and smoking tobacco.' With a final flourish that spoke volumes, Hamilton exclaimed, 'I long to see those merry days again.'[1]

Over the next five years, Hamilton felt the nostalgia-infused, 'merry days' of the Whin-Bush Club slipping further away with every pestilent Annapolis summer and 'smutty' American tavern conversation.[2] How, the haughty Hamilton wondered, might he ever find true Scottish wit and civility in America's dissembling urban taverns? His disparaging desperation continued: Did the men who might engage in such genteel conversation even reside in America? And if they did, how might an enlightened gentleman like himself recapture the magic of the Scottish tavern club in the distant environs of Annapolis and thereby re-create some sense of home (and self) in his newly adopted country? In 1744, Hamilton set off on a four-month 'itinerarium' across America's northeastern seaboard, during which time he repeatedly reflected upon these very questions.[3]

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[1] Alexander Hamilton to Gavin Hamilton, Annapolis, 13 June 1739, Hamilton Letter Book, Dulany Family Papers, MS 1265, Box Three, Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore, MD.

[2] Alexander Hamilton, *Hamilton's Itinerarium: Being a Narrative of a Journey from Annapolis, Maryland, through Delaware, Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts and New Hampshire, from May to September, 1744*, ed. Albert Bushnell Hart (St. Louis: William K. Bixby, 1907), 234.

[3] Hamilton labelled his travel diary as an 'itinerarium,' a term that dated back to ancient Roman travel guides that listed cities, villages, and other key stops in a traveller's journey. The closest parallel to such a text in British America was Thomas Prince's, *The Vade Mecum for America: or a Companion for Traders and Travellers*, which, unlike Hamilton's private diary, was widely available in bookshops throughout colonial America.

Hamilton's 1744 travel journal has long served as a sounding board for scholars of midcentury colonial American society. His three foremost biographers—Elaine G. Breslaw, Robert Micklus, and Carl Bridenbaugh—drew liberally from its contents. Breslaw considered the diary an important 'commentary on American life,' Micklus called Hamilton's 'depiction of colonial life … if not the best travel diary in the colonies, then certainly the most delightfully instructive one,' and Bridenbaugh described the Scottish immigrant as 'foreign enough to be interested in all aspects of the American colonies and yet sufficiently familiar with their civilization to … seize upon its fundamental and enduring traits.'[4] Historians have thus mined Hamilton's journal to understand myriad aspects of early American society, including tavern culture, religion, cosmopolitanism, and hierarchy, while others have positioned the physician's writings as key facets of early American satirical literature.[5]

Yet, scholars have overlooked the pompous purposes and convoluted consequences of the Scottish physician's American travels. Hamilton clearly contended that he had travelled for his 'health and recreation,'[6]

See Hamilton, *Itinerarium*,; Thomas Prince, *The Vade Mecum for America, or, A Companion for Traders and Travellers* (Boston: S. Kneeland and T. Green, 1732).

[4] Elaine G. Breslaw, *Dr. Alexander Hamilton and Provincial America: Expanding the Orbit of Scottish Culture* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2008). 117; Robert Micklus, *The Comic Genius of Dr. Alexander Hamilton* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1990), 112; Alexander Hamilton, *Gentleman's Progress: The Itinerarium of Dr. Alexander Hamilton, 1744*, ed. Carl Bridenbaugh (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1948), xi–xii.

[5] Perhaps most famously, historian J. A. Leo Lemay deemed Hamilton's travel journal 'the best single portrait of men and manners, of rural and urban life, of the wide range of society and scenery in colonial America.' Lemay, *Men of Letters in Colonial Maryland* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1972), 229. See also Klaus H. Schmidt, 'A Scotsman in British America; or, up against Provincialism: The Construction of Individual and Collective Identities in Dr. Alexander Hamilton's Itinerarium,' in *Early America Re-Explored: New Readings in Colonial, Early National, and Antebellum Culture*, ed. Klaus H. Schmidt and Fritz Fleischmann (New York: Peter Lang, 2002), 151–81; Elaine G. Breslaw, 'A Perilous Climb to Social Eminence: Dr. Alexander Hamilton and His Creditors,' *Maryland Historical Magazine* 92, no. 4 (1997): 433–56; Chris Beyers, 'Race, Power, and Sociability in Alexander Hamilton's "Records of the Tuesday Club"', *The Southern Literary Journal* 38, no. 1 (2005): 21–42; Vaughn Scribner, *Inn Civility: Urban Taverns and Early American Civil Society* (New York: New York University Press, 2019); *The Oxford History of the American People* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965); Zara Anishanslin, *Portrait of a Woman in Silk: Hidden Histories of the British Atlantic World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 237–41, 286; Hamilton, *Itinerarium*; Alexander Hamilton, *The History of the Ancient and Honorable Tuesday Club*, ed. Robert Micklus (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990); Micklus, *Comic Genius*; David S. Shields, *Civil Tongues & Polite Letters in British America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), xxiii, 178–90.

[6] Alexander Hamilton to Robert Hamilton, 29 September 1743, Annapolis, Hamilton Letter Book, Dulany Family Papers, MS 1265, Box Three, Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore, MD; Hamilton, *Itinerarium*, 1.

but the doctor's 'health' and 'recreation' alluded to more than simple physical convalescence or an escape from Maryland's pestilent climate—it also entailed fostering what *he* considered a healthy British American civil society through the cultivation of supposedly superior Scottish wit and urbanity. Somewhat despondent after five years in what he termed this 'barbarous and desolate corner of the world,' Hamilton viewed the tour as a last-ditch effort to find, or 're-create,' his idealized version of the Scottish-style tavern club in America.[7] The self-important Scotsman was calculated in his purpose. With few other options for lodging in most towns, ferries, and cities, Hamilton regularly, albeit grudgingly, stayed in taverns during his itinerarium. While therein, the Scot sought out fellow Scottish-born (or at least British-born or -educated) colonists, whom he considered closest to his equals, and with whom he ideally attended a local club and engaged in witty, edifying conversation. His efforts proved dismaying if not edifying.

Hamilton's itinerarium ultimately convinced him of three things. First, the American colonies harboured just enough genteel, British-born, or -educated men to constitute a Scottish-style tavern club. Second, Hamilton himself was the ideal candidate to usher such a club into the 'wilds' of America. Third, this simply could not occur in America's taverns. Ironically, Hamilton's itinerarium solidified his belief that to truly realize a healthy Scottish-style tavern club in Annapolis, he must do so without taverns, which he now considered nests of debauchery, ignorance, and class levelling. Consequently, Hamilton formed the Annapolis 'Tuesday Club,' a deliberate re-creation ('transmigration' in his words) of his beloved Edinburgh Whin-Bush Club.[8] Not only did Hamilton hand-pick Scottish- and British-born Marylanders as the Tuesday Club's initial members, but he also used the Whin-Bush Club's meticulous set of orders and rules as the Tuesday Club's founding documents. He also intentionally avoided the tavern as a meeting space for this, his precious enclave of Scottish erudition and elitism in the rustic American wilds.

Thus, although Hamilton—like so many other immigrants to the British American colonies—hoped to efficiently translate his home country to his adopted country, the vagaries of such a nostalgia-fuelled enterprise, combined with lingering feelings of nationalism and various complications on the ground, made this a difficult, if not impossible, process. Hamilton consequently found Scottish-style societal satisfaction not through embracing, but rather assuming superiority over, the existing

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[7] Alexander Hamilton to Robert Hamilton, 29 September 1743, Annapolis, Hamilton Letter Book, Dulany Family Papers, MS 1265, Box Three, Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore, MD.

[8] Hamilton, *History of the Tuesday Club*, 1:60.

British American cultural scene. Never mind that the unsettled Scot had only briefly experienced the Edinburgh-style wit and urbanity upon which he relied to bolster his patronizing persona. He believed that if properly directed by a polite, foreign-born gentleman such as himself, the pen and the pint glass might finally coalesce to re-create the fantastical Whin-Bush Club in the backwoods of the British American colonies, simply without the British American tavern and, in turn, few facets of colonial American society. As such, Hamilton's arduous journey to transmigrate the Whin-Bush Club to America reveals perhaps more about Hamilton's conceit and festering anti-American bias than it does about the true nature of Scottish club society or colonial American tavern culture. The home-sick Scottish physician scrutinized his initial interactions with British American colonists and their public spaces through the rose-coloured lenses of a world that had never truly existed: an Edinburgh drawn from an impossible dream, where genteel club members frolicked in a never-ending orgy of culture, cleverness, and conviviality. As is still the case, immigrants to American colonies often fostered nostalgic visions of their homeland as they attempted to make sense of their new homes.[9] This was (and is) a complicated endeavour that jostled the past and the present, fantasy, and reality into a kaleidoscope of competing visions, some of which encourage community, others of which foster seclusion.

CLUB, LIFE: DR. HAMILTON OF EDINBURGH

Hamilton's familial connections encouraged an environment of improve-ment and public engagement, which fuelled the physician's transatlantic quest for politeness. One of ten children, Hamilton was born in Edinburgh on 26 September 1712 to relatively wealthy, educated, and upwardly-mobile parents. His father was a professor of divinity and principal at the University of Edinburgh, which afforded the family a considerable measure of respectability, as did his siblings' successes in fields such as politics and medicine.[10] Hamilton's male family members also enmeshed themselves in Edinburgh's booming club and associational scene. Taken together, this family-driven foray into 'the characteristic institutions of Edinburgh's cultural life between the 1720s and 40s … the club and the

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[9] For more on the theory of 'Anglicization,' initiated by historian John Murrin who argued that the British American colonies became more rather than less like their British homeland during the eighteenth century, see Ignacio Gallup-Diaz, Andrew Shankman, and David J. Silverman, eds., *Anglicizing America: Empire, Revolution, Republic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015).

[10] Hamilton's older brother, John, became a physician, while his older brother, Gavin, was a member of the Edinburgh Town Council. See Micklus, *Comic Genius*, 30–31.

college,' paved the way for young Hamilton's future profession and public persona, which he considered synonymous with genteel power.[11]

Hamilton's birthplace proved as vital to his future endeavours as his birth family. The 'chief city' of the Scottish Enlightenment, Edinburgh, connected its citizens to a sprawling web of communication and commerce, learning, and leisure, which by the early eighteenth century fostered an equally diverse public and private sector.[12] Yet, the elitist, male-dominated club arose as perhaps the most beloved, impactful, and distinctive of all Scottish cultural institutions.[13] As the centre of the Scottish, urban, Enlightenment, Edinburgh hosted hundreds of such clubs, usually in those spaces that most encouraged 'a forum for free discussion of an unrestricted range of subjects,' as well as a wide variety of food, drink, and services: taverns.[14]

By the midcentury, however, a uniquely Scottish variety of the British club emerged in Edinburgh. As Breslaw argued, Scottish tavern clubs elaborated upon English standards of order, sociability, and improvement while also encouraging the use of wit and satire to concurrently obscure and highlight deeper, often controversial or social issues.[15] Elite Scottish men used these tavern clubs as salves for their own sense of imperilled national identity within the ever-expanding British orbit,

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[11] Nicholas Phillipson, 'Towards a Definition of the Scottish Enlightenment,' in *City and Society in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Paul Fritz and David Williams (Toronto: Hakkert, 1973), 133.

[12] Murray Pittock, *Enlightenment in a Smart City: Edinburgh's Civic Development, 1660–1750* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), 1.

[13] Historian Peter Clark has convincingly demonstrated that 'clubs and societies became one of the most distinctive social and cultural institutions of Georgian Britain,' estimating that no fewer than twenty-five thousand such institutions existed in the English-speaking world during the eighteenth century. Peter Clark, *British Clubs and Societies, 1580–1800: The Origins of an Associational World* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 2; Mark C. Wallace and Jane Rendall built upon Clark's contentions, arguing that Scottish club men contributed to 'the wider associational developments that stretched across England and Wales, Ireland, and the transatlantic world.' Mark C. Wallace and Jane Rendall, 'Introduction,' in *Association and Enlightenment: Scottish Clubs and Societies, 1700–1830*, ed. Mark C. Wallace and Jane Rendall (Lewisberg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2020), 2.

[14] Davis D. McElroy, *Scotland's Age of Improvement: A Survey of Eighteenth-Century Literary Clubs and Societies* (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 1969), ii; Historian Martyn J. Powell argued that 'the tavern and club became one and the same' in eighteenth-century Scotland and Ireland. Martyn J. Powell, 'Inventing the Public Sphere: Fictional Club Life in Ireland and Scotland,' in *Association and Enlightenment: Scottish Clubs and Societies, 1700–1830*, ed. Mark C. Wallace and Jane Rendall (Lewisberg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2020), 177.

[15] Elaine G. Breslaw, 'An Affirmation of Scottish Nationalism: The Eighteenth-Century Easy Club,' *CLA Journal* 33, no. 3 (1990): 308; Breslaw, *Hamilton and Provincial America*, 152.

nurturing a delicate balance between poisonous political polemics and satirical silliness. Some also hoped to improve their English enunciation and, thus, become more conversant in the British Enlightenment, while others overtly parodied the English club tradition through a litany of inside jokes and tongue-in-cheek ceremonies. Like its national progenitor, the Scottish tavern club was an evolving enigma that fed localized sentiments (and resentments) while mocking the very notion of such discussion. Insurrection might glint off a pint glass, only to fade with the next sudsy toast.[16]

As an Edinburgh native, member of a respectable family, and student at the University of Edinburgh, Hamilton was perfectly positioned to participate in the city's bustling tavern club scene, and he did so wholeheartedly. Hamilton flirted with various tavern clubs during his university years (1725–37) but became infatuated with one coterie in particular: the Whin-Bush Club. When Hamilton officially joined the Whin-Bush Club in 1737, its roughly fifteen members were Edinburgh natives by requirement. The club included doctors, lawyers, ministers, and those in other, more 'professional' livelihoods. They met once a week over a tavern table of simple food, beer, and tobacco, at which time they lampooned the day's leading events and had fun at each other's expense. As with other Scottish tavern clubs of the time, the Club's members only invoked controversial political or social issues with a careful sense of satire, even if those conversations belied deeper, often critical, concerns.[17] After days spent stooping over microscopes and wading through sick wards, such an environment was exactly what Hamilton craved.

Though rather short, Hamilton's time in the Whin-Bush Club—and, importantly, his nostalgia for that time—proved incredibly impactful for the rest of the Scotsman's public and personal life. Hamilton lived in Edinburgh for only a few months after his inclusion in the Whin-Bush Club. Having earned his medical degree by late 1737, the novice doctor realized that there were too many physicians in Edinburgh and not enough patients. His older brother, John, had recognized as much a few years earlier and decided to test his luck as a medical doctor in the comparatively underpopulated British American city of Annapolis, Maryland. Hamilton decided to join him, settling his affairs in Edinburgh and sailing for Annapolis during the winter of 1738–39; yet even as the young Scot watched Great Britain recede into the horizon, his brief but inspiring experience with the Whin-Bush Club seemed to follow him across the vast Atlantic Ocean. Hamilton's short stint in the Whin-Bush Club would,

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[16] Micklus, *Comic Genius*, 23–24.
[17] Hamilton, *History of the Tuesday Club*, 24–27; Hamilton, *History of the Tuesday Club*, 1:51–57.

in many ways, shape the rest of his public life, even if it unfolded three thousand miles away from Edinburgh in a land that many Britons labelled rustic at best and savage at worst.[18]

HOMESICK(LY): DR. HAMILTON OF ANNAPOLIS

Hamilton agreed with his British compatriots' negative assessments of Maryland. After months spent crossing the Atlantic Ocean, the Edinburgh transplant damned Annapolis as a 'distant and comical corner of the world,' which lacked the urbane pleasures of Edinburgh.[19] Hamilton complained to multiple family members that Maryland overflowed with changeable climates, 'scurvy' inhabitants, extreme weather, and a rash of pestilential diseases.[20] The frigid winters froze appendages and cut to one's very marrow, while the sultry summers forced Hamilton to shed clothing and throw open windows for passing breezes.[21] Three thousand miles from home, and with little more than a few shillings to his name, Hamilton felt unequipped to survive, let alone thrive, in this strange, often unpredictable corner of the British Empire.

By August 1739, Hamilton's hardships had steadily translated into physical and mental turmoil. A brutal bout with malaria 'seasoned' Hamilton to his New World climes, as such 'tropical' diseases did for so many other immigrants upon their arrival in America.[22] But 'violent fever' was not the only 'sickness' that Hamilton endured, for mental illness in the form of homesickness, loneliness, and depression soon accompanied the 'fevers & agues, fluxes & Pleurisy' so plentiful in Maryland.[23] During his first few years in Annapolis, Hamilton grew obsessed with exchanging letters with family members in Edinburgh. The young doctor needed loans from his mother and brothers to keep his fledgling business afloat (never mind purchasing a home, enslaved peoples, clothing, and furniture), but he also craved connection with close family. Hamilton often 'long[ed] to have a line' from his brothers,

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[18] See, for instance, Micklus, *Comic Genius*, 29–31; Andrew Burnaby, *Travels through the Middle Settlements in North America, in the Years 1759 and 1760* (Dublin: R. Marchbank, 1775), 89; Nicholas Cresswell, *The Journal of Nicholas Cresswell, 1774–1777* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1925), 21–22.

[19] Alexander Hamilton to Robert Hamilton, 15 March 1739/40, Annapolis, in Breslaw, 'Hamilton and His Creditors,' 446.

[20] Alexander Hamilton to Robert Hamilton, 20 August 1739, Annapolis in Breslaw, 'Hamilton and His Creditors,' 446.

[21] Breslaw, *Hamilton and Provincial America*, 79–80.

[22] See, for instance, Katherine Johnston, *The Nature of Slavery: Environment and Plantation Labor in the Anglo-Atlantic World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), 51, 103–13.

[23] Alexander Hamilton to Robert Hamilton, 20 August 1739, Annapolis, in Breslaw, 'Hamilton and His Creditors,' 446.

explaining that 'Nothing is greater Solace to me in this … corner of the world than a Correspondence with near Relations.'[24] On a deeper level, correspondence connected him with the very idea of home: the winding alleys of Edinburgh and its requisite tavern clubs.

Yet news from home brought Hamilton equal parts joy and shame. Friends married and had children, while he remained woefully single and without prospects. They thrived in a bustling centre of urban Enlightenment, while he struggled to make do in a ramshackle town on the far side of the world. By June 1742, Hamilton's desperation had reached new heights. Writing to his brother Robert, Hamilton explained that a pet parrot had become his primary club fellow, 'he being a very talkative animal.' 'In two or three years, if God Grants me Life,' Hamilton continued, 'I resolve to visit my native soil again.' The doctor had abandoned 'idle expectations of heaping up money' in America, and instead only hoped to pay off local debts so that he could 'repair to Edinburgh or Some town in Scotland and Exercise the office of a Pharmacopia with my Small Stock, till better business offers.'[25] However, as is so often the case, things grew worse before they got better.

By early 1743, Hamilton—still enduring the 'Extremely toilsome & Fatiguing' task of plying his trade while depressed, homesick, and hopeless—suspected that malaria had permanently damaged his lungs.[26] In the fall of that same year, he complained of a constant cough and began to spit blood into his handkerchief. The doctor almost surely had tuberculosis, an illness that would ultimately send him to an early grave.[27] But Hamilton did not own a crystal ball, and what he did have was a keen understanding of his disappointing present, so defined by mental, physical, and financial despair. Something had to change, and fast.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Hamilton initially tried to find some sort of solace in Annapolis' tavern clubs with little luck. Like every city in British America, Annapolis supported many taverns,[28] yet this colonial upstart city boasted few 'fine,' or upper-class, taverns like those in Edinburgh and even fewer experienced club men. Annapolis's 'nocturnal assemblies' disintegrated almost as quickly as they formed, thereby creating an unfulfilling array of shoddy, short-lived tavern societies.[29]

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[24] Alexander Hamilton to Robert Hamilton, 15 March 1739/40, Annapolis, in Breslaw, 'Hamilton and His Creditors,' 446.

[25] Alexander Hamilton to Robert Hamilton, 12 June 1742, Annapolis, in Breslaw, 'Hamilton and His Creditors,' 449.

[26] Alexander Hamilton to Robert Hamilton, 15 March 1739/40, Annapolis, in Breslaw, 'Hamilton and His Creditors,' 446.

[27] Breslaw, *Hamilton and Provincial America*, 87.

[28] Scribner, *Inn Civility*, 14.

[29] Breslaw, *Hamilton and Provincial America*, 76.

Such ephemeral assemblies proved poor balms for Hamilton's Whin-Bush–fuelled melancholy.[30] After this initial disappointment, Hamilton threw himself into his work, which also bore little fruit during his first five years in America. Constantly in debt, homesick, and growing more physically ill by the day, Hamilton's prospects reached a nadir in early 1743.

But, as the cold weather fortified Hamilton's lungs in the winter of 1743, his professional outlook changed for the better. Not only did Hamilton's customers begin to settle their debts, and thus help shore up his finances, but members of Annapolis' local elite also decided that this Edinburgh physician should run for a seat on the Annapolis Common Council, which he did with resounding success. Suddenly, Hamilton had achieved relative wealth and status in Annapolis, thereby assuring his family (and himself) that his move to Maryland was not entirely without merit.[31] But Hamilton was still far from content. Though political office came with prestige, the mobbish politicking necessary for election disgusted him. Moreover, the doctor's profession still required travelling vast distances in short periods, often under the 'broil[ing]' southern sun, which only further exacerbated his tuberculosis.[32] Hamilton remained discontented, even as he thrived more than ever in his professional life.

And there was still—always—that ever-looming, ever-luminous spectre of Edinburgh's club life. Despite professional progress, Hamilton found nothing similar in Annapolis to that (short-lived) wit and conviviality that he so relished in his favourite Scottish assembly, the Whin-Bush Club. Quite the opposite, in fact. Over the past few years, Hamilton's social life had screeched to a deafening halt. He considered Annapolis's taverns little more than crude watering holes compared to his fine Edinburgh haunts, and had given up entirely on the city's unreliable, often slipshod, clubs. This lack of genteel tavern life only bolstered Hamilton's entrenched sense of Scottish identity, not to mention his nostalgia for Edinburgh's associational world. In November 1743, the doctor assured an old Scottish clubmate that he had retained his 'native honesty, not having quite Lost myself in the American Subtilty and

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[30] In the *History of the Tuesday Club*, Hamilton references—through a fictional character who is supposed to loosely mirror himself—an attempt to create the 'Ugly Club' in America. Since no record of such a club actually exists, and it is only referenced in a mock history through a fictional, quasi-biographical figure, I have not included the Ugly Club in this article. For further discussion, see Breslaw, *Hamilton and Provincial America*, 151; Hamilton, *History of the Tuesday Club*, 1:xvii; Micklus, *Comic Genius*, 34–38.

[31] Breslaw, *Hamilton and Provincial America*, 106–13.

[32] Alexander Hamilton to Robert Hamilton, 12 June 1742, Annapolis, in Breslaw, 'Hamilton and His Creditors,' 449.

selfishness … nor have I forgot the days of yore, nor the frolics and pleasures we in Company partook of.'[33]

The Scottish physician needed a proverbial shot in the arm. Hamilton was no longer coughing up cash, but he was spitting up 'above half a pint [of blood] in Large mouthfuls.'[34] By 1744, the young doctor realized that his immediate 'health and recreation' must come from intentional, proactive measures rather than endless, long-ranging, and long-shot daydreams of having 'some of my Edinburgh friends to take a dinner with me, and a meridian bowl of punch.'[35] As such, on 30 May 1744, Hamilton set off on his now-famous itinerarium across America's northeastern seaboard, which was in many ways a desperate attempt not only to heal his ragged lungs through a change of climate, but also (especially) to locate and re-create his beloved Scottish tavern club in America.[36] If not now, then when?

A DESPERATE TRAVELLER: DR. HAMILTON'S ITINERARIUM

Historians have rightly concentrated on that key phrase from the first entry of Hamilton's *Itinerarium*: a 'journey intended only for health and recreation.'[37] However, they have too narrowly interpreted this critical passage. Some have positioned mental health (i.e., recovery from tuberculosis) as the *raison d'être* of Hamilton's 1744 trip, while others have focused on his mental health, or 'ennui,' as a driving factor.[38] Others have alluded to Hamilton's more cosmopolitan aspirations, noting that the doctor frequented taverns and clubs in his multimonth excursion, where he often sought out 'ubiquitous Scottish cliques of elite men.'[39] None of

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[33] Alexander Hamilton to John Balfour, Annapolis, 6 November 1743, Hamilton Letter Book, Dulany Family Papers, MS 1265, Box Three, Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore, MD.

[34] Breslaw, *Hamilton and Provincial America*, 104.

[35] Alexander Hamilton to Robert Hamilton, 20 August 20 1739, Annapolis, in Breslaw, 'Hamilton and His Creditors,' 446.

[36] Elaine Breslaw has also hinted at Hamilton's Scottish-centric purposes in this trip, but did not go so far as to assert that he did so with the intention of finding and re-creating the Scottish club in America. See Breslaw, *Hamilton and Provincial America*, 113.

[37] Hamilton, *Itinerarium*, 1.

[38] For physical health, see Micklus, *Comic Genius*, 38–40; Hamilton, *History of the Tuesday Club*, 1:xviii; Hamilton, *Itinerarium*, xii; For mental health, see Hamilton, *Gentleman's Progress*, xiv ('ennui'); Breslaw, 'Hamilton and His Creditors,' 434.

[39] Breslaw, *Hamilton and Provincial America*, 113 ('cliques'); Vaughn Scribner, 'Cosmopolitan Colonists: Gentlemen's Pursuit of Cosmopolitanism and Hierarchy in British American Taverns,' *Atlantic Studies* 10, no. 4 (December 2013): 11; Schmidt, 'A Scotsman in British America; or, up against Provincialism: The Construction of Individual and Collective Identities in Dr. Alexander Hamilton's Itinerarium,' 157; Beyers, 'Race, Power, and Sociability in Alexander Hamilton's "Records of the Tuesday Club",' 21–30;

these scholars is wrong. Hamilton most definitely believed that the crisper 'air and climate' of the northeastern colonies could assuage his ailing lungs, just as he hoped that escaping the daily grind in Annapolis—'this wicked country'—might lead to relaxation among more genteel, urbane company.[40] However, the Scottish doctor's intentions for his May 1744 voyage were more complicated than historians have thus far appreciated.

Hamilton alluded to as much, where he noted in his *Itinerarium*'s opening entry that the bad weather that forced 'a very circumflex course' around Chesapeake Bay did not bother him in the least. Since 'the journey was intended only for health and recreation,' Hamilton explained, 'I was indifferent whether I took the nearest or the farthest route, having likewise a desire to see that part of the country.'[41] Hamilton, travelling for physical and mental restoration, was happy to amble among the trees, meadows, and hamlets of Maryland and Pennsylvania, yet this unexpected detour, which led Hamilton through larger cities such as Baltimore, budding boroughs like Joppa, and industrial centres such as Principio Furnace, served as a welcome introduction to what he considered a revelatory, even critical, period for his American future.

Ultimately, Hamilton believed that *re-creating* the Scottish tavern club—namely, the fanciful Whin-Bush Club—would provide him with sufficient 'recreation' in America, thereby improving his own mental and physical 'health' and, in turn, helping the doctor to foster a healthier civil society in his disappointing home city, Annapolis. Hence, Hamilton's willingness to visit new places via an unforeseen route translated into a longer and more expensive journey. Perhaps there were clubs in Baltimore that might fulfill his hitherto unsatisfactory tavern experiences, or gentlemen of Scottish (or British) birth or education in Joppa with whom he might while away the evenings in satirical banter. All told, he was looking for some—*any*—experiences of Scottish-style tavern gentility that he might bring back to Annapolis. Only through inserting himself into as many interactions as possible might he find such models.

In every city, town, hamlet, or ferry Hamilton visited, he intentionally sought out 'genteel' colleagues, ideally in taverns and preferably in a club setting. Of course, 'gentility' meant different things on either side of the Atlantic. Most relatively wealthy British American colonists

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Robert Micklus, 'The Delightful Instruction of Dr. Alexander Hamilton's Itinerarium,' *American Literature* 60, no. 3 (October 1988): 359–84.

[40] Breslaw, *Hamilton and Provincial America*, 112 ('air and climate'); Alexander Hamilton to Robert Hamilton, 12 June 1742, Annapolis, in Breslaw, 'Hamilton and His Creditors,' 449 ('wicked country').

[41] Hamilton, *Itinerarium*, 1.

who deemed themselves 'gentlemen,' after all, would have been considered little more than aspirant members of the burgeoning middle class in Great Britain.[42] Yet, since the colonies did not harbour an aristocracy, men such as Dr. Hamilton could claim a status above their station in the Old World. In Hamilton's condescending eyes, his old-world birthplace—combined with his experience in the twin-pronged British club and college world—imbued him with gentility, power, and status beyond that of his colonial peers. This reflected Hamilton's belief that Edinburgh, and by proxy the Scottish tavern club, was a civilized, exclusive coterie of wit, urbanity, and enlightenment, which he believed only gentlemen like him could truly realize in this otherwise 'desolate' corner of the empire. As Hamilton explained to his brother, his own 'European Erudition' required interaction with other British gentlemen, lest it 'turn Rusty and lose its gloss in these American deserts, and degenerate into mere Barbarism and Savageness.'[43]

Hamilton mingled with Scottish gentlemen in organized tavern societies as much as possible during his 1744 journey, as he found such 'natives' the only possible match to his own enlightened sophistication. In Philadelphia, he 'went to the tavern with Mr. Currie and some Scots gentlemen, where we spent the night agreeably,' and in New York City, Hamilton often joined the Hungarian Club at the 'old Scotsman' Robert Todd's tavern, the Sign of the Black Horse. Todd had apparently established his tavern as a popular meeting space for Scottish men in the city. After one of the club meetings, Hamilton 'talked over old stories' with the son of his Edinburgh pharmacy professor, David Knox. In another instance, one of Governor Clinton's spies questioned Todd as to Hamilton's purpose in New York City, to which the Scottish tavernkeeper replied, 'He is a Countryman of mine, by God—one Hamilton from Maryland.'[44]

Hamilton wore his nationality on his silken sleeve. He revelled in entertaining 'a Scots gentleman' at his New York City tavern and ridiculing an Irish doctor who 'pretended [to be] Scotsman' by affecting a Scottish accent.[45] In Albany, likewise, Hamilton was happy that his

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[42] Lawrence E. Klein, *Shaftesbury and the Culture of Politeness: Moral Discourse and Cultural Politics in Early Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Michael Zuckerman, 'Endangered Deference, Imperiled Patriarchy: Tales from the Marchlands,' *Early American Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 3, no. 2 (2005): 232–52; Keith Wrightson, '"Sorts of People" in Tudor and Stuart England,' in *The Middling Sort of People: Culture, Society, and Politics in England, 1550–1800*, ed. Jonathan Barry and C. W. Brooks (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 28–51.

[43] Breslaw, *Hamilton and Provincial America*, 118.

[44] Hamilton, *Itinerarium*, 22, 58; Breslaw, *Hamilton and Provincial America*, 119.

[45] Hamilton, *Itinerarium*, 100–101, 215.

landlady happened 'to be a Scots woman, and was very civil and obliging to me for my country's sake,' while at a Marblehead tavern, Hamilton 'had a great deal of talk about affairs at home' with a Scottish reverend, Alexander Malcom. Always eager to polish his 'European Erudition,' Hamilton also drank tea with Malcom and listened to the reverend play 'some tunes on his flute and violin.' By the end of their encounter, Hamilton labelled Malcom a man of 'judgment and knowledge in that part of science' and music. During his return passage through Philadelphia, Hamilton finally 'spent the evening at the tavern with some Scotsmen.'[46]

Yet, despite all of Hamilton's tavern interactions with Scots 'gentlemen' (a list that could easily continue), his experiences at the Hungarian Club in New York City's Sign of the Black Horse and the Scots' Charitable Society at Boston's Sun Tavern were perhaps the most revealing. Both tavern clubs provided Hamilton with the closest approximation to the Whin-Bush Club since his arrival in America. Hamilton clearly enjoyed the Hungarian Club, or he would not have attended this Scot-centric knot of 'bumper men' with such frequency. Dr. Colchoun, who Hamilton applauded as a member of New York City's 'polite company,' first introduced the Scottish itinerant to the Hungarian Club, which met nightly at the Black Horse Tavern. Hamilton explained that the genteel club members—which included Archibald Home, Secretary of New Jersey and previous acquaintance of Hamilton among their ranks—'saluted me very civilly, and I, as civilly as I could, returned their compliments, in neat short speeches.' From there, however, civil customs seemed to give way to more 'spiritous' ceremonies, as the company 'set in for drinking' and toasted to all of the great men of the British Empire. Though 'averse' to excessive drinking among strangers, Hamilton nevertheless left the club 'pretty well flushed with my three bumpers, and ruminating on my folly.'[47]

Hamilton's ruminations apparently faded rather quickly as he became a regular member of the Hungarian Club during his 1744 travels. The very next night, Hamilton 'supped with the Hungarian Club.' They once again passed 'bumpers' of beer around the table, but in this meeting, they also added witty conversation to dinner and drinks. Hamilton especially liked their final topic: 'a piece of criticism upon a poem in the newspaper, where one of the company, Mr. Moore, a lawyer, showed more learning than judgment in a disquisition he made upon nominatives and verbs, and the necessity there was for a verb to each

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[46] Hamilton, *Itinerarium*, 84, 145, 235; For more on Malcom, see Maurer Maurer, 'Alexander Malcolm in America,' *Music & Letters* 33, no. 3 (1952): 226–31.
[47] Hamilton, *Itinerarium*, 49–50.

nominative, in order to make sense.'[48] Here was the Scottish-style club banter, loaded with biting innuendo, attended by genteel company and fuelled by 'twopenny ale' and tobacco, which Hamilton so missed![49] He was hooked.

Declaring that 'to drink stoutly with the Hungarian Club … is the readiest way for a stranger to recommend himself,' Hamilton spent most of his evenings in New York City doing just that among these esteemed 'dons.' On 1 September, Hamilton 'had an elegant supper' with the club, 'where were present the Chief Justice, the City Recorder, Mr. Philips, the Speaker of the House of Assembly, and several others.' 'A deal of news by the Boston papers and some private letters' made their way into the club company, Hamilton excitedly explained, which 'furnished matter for conversation all night.'[50] Just over a week later, Hamilton noted that he 'supped at Todd's with two or three of my countrymen.'[51] While the Hungarian Club did not perfectly mirror Dr. Hamilton's beloved Whin-Bush Club—he often critiqued the members for their excessive drinking—it nevertheless offered a combination of Scottish compatriotism, club conviviality, and satirical conversation, which he had found nowhere else in America. It was just the sort of society that Hamilton had left his Annapolis home hoping to find, and it was not the last of its kind with which Hamilton would interact.

The Scots' Charitable Society was an elite, cosmopolitan tavern club with deep roots in Boston, whose residents had originally founded the society in 1657 around quarterly charitable donations 'for the releese of ourselves being Scottish or any of the Scottish nation whome we may see cause to helpe.'[52] Like so many other Enlightenment-era charity and philanthropy groups, wealthy colonists now constituted the bulk of the Society, which they used to assert their own power, cosmopolitanism, and compassion in their locality and abroad.[53] In the case of the Scots' Charitable Society, furthermore, they also boasted their connections with

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[48] Hamilton, *Itinerarium*, 52.

[49] Alexander Hamilton to Gavin Hamilton, Annapolis, 13 June 1739, Hamilton Letter Book, Dulany Family Papers, MS 1265, Box Three, Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore, MD.

[50] Hamilton, *Itinerarium*, 215.

[51] Hamilton, *Itinerarium*, 224. Hamilton's comrades for the 'elegant supper' were most likely James DeLancey, Chief Justice of New York, Daniel Horsmanden, New York City Recorder, and Adolphus Philipse, Speaker of the New York General Assembly.

[52] Scots' Charitable Society, *The Constitution and By-Laws of the Scots' Charitable Society of Boston (Instituted 1657)* (Boston: Farrington Printing Co., 1896), 9.

[53] Robert A. Gross, 'Giving in America: From Charity to Philanthropy,' in *Charity, Philanthropy, and Civility in American History*, ed. Lawrence Jacob Friedman and Mark D. McGarvie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 29–48; Amanda Bowie Moniz, 'Labours in the Cause of Humanity in Every Part of the Globe': Transatlantic

Scotland, which many identified as their ancestral home. The Society's Scottish-facing purpose, combined with its location, provided Hamilton with yet another opportunity to reflect upon—and associate with—larger conduits of Scottish tavern club conviviality in America.

Hamilton described the Society as a 'charitable' group who 'act for the relief of the poor of their nation, having a considerable sum of money at interest, which they give out in small pensions to needy people.'[54] The Society's original twenty-seven members had agreed 'that none give less at there [*sic*] entering then twelve pence and then quarterly to pay six pence' and had thus established a solid monetary base from which to grow over the next eighty-seven years.[55] Hamilton was apparently convinced of the Society's importance, pledging three pounds of New England currency to the cause in exchange for a copy of the Society's laws and an official Society membership.[56]

Membership allowed Hamilton first-hand access to genteel company and conversation. At that first meeting, Hamilton noted that 'when the bulk of the company were gone I sat some time with Dr. [William] Douglass, the president, and two or three others, and had some chat on news and politicks.'[57] Since Dr. Douglass also studied medicine at the University of Edinburgh, the two had plenty to chat about. This Scottish-born Bostonian had also established himself as a leading British American physician due to successful smallpox inoculation studies, which made him that much more interesting to a condescending gentle-man like Hamilton.[58] Douglass was, in short, just the sort of man with whom Hamilton sought to commiserate in just this sort of tavern club.

Hamilton intentionally sought out certain taverns that hosted elite Scottish- or British-minded clientele who themselves organized specific types of associations through which to interact with each other in these popular public spaces. New York City's Hungarian Club and Boston's Scots' Charitable Society managed to approximate Hamilton's cherished Whin-Bush Club, which the Edinburgh doctor hoped to re-create in Annapolis despite its relative paucity of sociable and improving spaces. Unfortunately, however, the Hungarian Club and Scots' Charitable Society proved the exception, rather than the rule, to British American tavern life, at least according to Hamilton's pejorative perspective.

Philanthropic Collaboration and the Cosmopolitan Ideal, 1760–1815' (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2008), xi.

[54] Hamilton, *Itinerarium*, 162.

[55] Scots' Charitable Society, *Constitution and By-Laws*, 9.

[56] Hamilton was listed as a new member of the Scots' Charitable Society in their 1744 members list. See Scots' Charitable Society, *Constitution and By-Laws*, 95.

[57] Hamilton, *Itinerarium*, 162.

[58] Charles J. Bullock, 'Introduction: Life and Writings of William Douglass,' in *Economic Studies: Volume II* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1897), 265–75.

As 'the most numerous, popular, and accessible of all British American public spaces,' taverns had become ubiquitous facets of British American society by the time Hamilton left Annapolis in May 1744.[59] But popularity did not necessarily equal propriety in Hamilton's jaundiced eyes, for although British American taverns boasted various amenities and opportunities for sociability, their multi-faceted, multi-class character made them distinct—and, consequently, inferior—counterparts to their British brethren. By trying to be everything for everyone, in short, the majority of colonial American's taverns fell short of Hamilton's wistful Whin-Bush haunts. They could not provide the elite exclusivity of the finest British coffeehouses and inns, nor could they achieve the rustic sensibility of British ordinaries and alehouses.[60] So too did British American taverns' unmatched availability to a much broader spectrum of peoples prove more troublesome than advantageous for Hamilton's purposes. Hamilton did everything possible to disassociate himself from the 'lower sorts,' even though America's vast hospitality network largely relied on lower-status customers. But no matter—since taverns were Hamilton's only choice for lodging in most of his overnight stops, he became intimately acquainted with the uniquely American variety of these transatlantic spaces, and he usually did not like what he saw.

Hamilton especially detested what he considered to be the disorganized, drunken, and disorderly nature of British American taverns. On only the second day of his journey, Hamilton came upon Tradaway's tavern, where he 'found a drunken Club dismissing.' Watching as the inebriated customers struggled to speak in a legible fashion, let alone stay atop their bucking horses, Hamilton was 'uneasy till they were gone.' Tradaway's owner attempted to assuage Hamilton's discomfort, explaining that 'indeed he did not care to have such disorderly fellows come about his house.' And, though the tavernkeeper argued 'he was always noted far and near for keeping a quiet house and entertaining only gentlemen,' men such as the drunken 'country … Bacchanalians' whom Hamilton watched with a careful eye happened to be his neighbours, 'and it was not prudent to disoblige them upon slight occasions.'[61] American taverns were, after all, businesses intent on making a profit, particularly when located in rural areas with irregular customer bases.[62] Owners had to serve the customers they had, not the customers they wanted.

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[59] Scribner, *Inn Civility*, 2.

[60] Peter Clark, *The English Alehouse: A Social History, 1200–1830* (New York: Longman, 1983), 5.

[61] Hamilton, *Itinerarium*, 5.

[62] For more on taverns as primarily business-oriented institutions, see David Hancock and Michelle McDonald, eds., *Public Drinking in the Early Modern World: Voices from the Tavern, 1500–1800, Vol. IV: America* (New York: Pickering and Chatto, 2011), xii, xix.

If the tavernkeeper's excuses did little to mend Hamilton's opinion of Tradaway's tavern, his experiences therein accomplished even less. After a forgettable dinner of fried chicken and bacon, Hamilton half-heartedly engaged in a 'lumpish and heavy' conversation with a 'learned company' of the tavernkeeper (whose 'character or conversation' Hamilton deemed not 'worth notice'), a miller, and a 'greasy-thumbed' physician who showed off for the crowd by pulling the tavern maid's teeth while she 'made such screaming and squawling as made me imagine there was murder going forwards in the house.' As the physician finally extricated the woman's bloody tooth, the miller began to pluck notes from a half-strung violin. Having had his fill of this 'elegant company,' Hamilton escaped to his bedroom by ten o'clock that night.[63]

And this was only the beginning. Over the next few months, Hamilton repeatedly damned taverns and their 'surly' company as indicative of most colonists' degenerative, ignorant nature.[64] Hamilton lodged at a Philadelphia tavern where he 'observed several comical, grotesque Phizzes,' who talked 'upon all subjects—politicks, religion, and trade … most of them ignorantly.'[65] On a subsequent visit to the City of Brotherly Love, Hamilton 'dined at Cockburn's [Tavern], where was [yet another] set of very comical phizzes.' Hamilton kept to himself, listening to their 'very vulgar and unfurbished conversation … reaping as much instruction from it as it would yield.'[66] While resting at a Connecticut River ferry tavern, likewise, Hamilton disgustedly noted that a 'rabble of clowns' piled into the great room after dinner, and 'fell to disputing upon points of divinity as learnedly as if they had been professed theologues.' ''T is strange,' Hamilton reflected, 'to see how this humour prevails, even among the lower class of people here,' who he believed had little education and even less means of elocution. Such 'clowns' and 'riff-raff' should, according to Hamilton's condescending criteria of civility and order, remain in their own inferior sphere of life.[67] Nor did 'the middling sort of people' apparently appreciate their place, as Hamilton's various experiences in Boston's taverns (other than the Sun Tavern) led him to assert that middle-class Bostonians were 'disingenuous and dissembling, which appears even in their common conversation in which their indirect and dubious answers to the plainest and fairest questions show their suspicions of one another.'[68] 'Rabble,' 'clowns,' 'riff-raff,' and 'dissembling,' the mass majority of America's tavern

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[63] Hamilton, *Itinerarium*, 6.
[64] Hamilton, *Itinerarium*, 182.
[65] Hamilton, *Itinerarium*, 20.
[66] Hamilton, *Itinerarium*, 236.
[67] Hamilton, *Itinerarium*, 199–200.
[68] Hamilton, *Itinerarium*, 178.

clientele did not live up to Hamilton's exacting standards. Taverns might be practically everywhere in America, but men like Hamilton did not want them to be for everyone.

Yet, here was the problem. Despite gentlemen's best efforts, colonists often used taverns to ignore, or at least temporarily sidestep, old-world notions of order and deference.[69] Whenever Hamilton found himself among tavern 'company,' the Scottish itinerant intentionally played the 'spectator,' withdrawing himself from direct conversation and instead observing these 'savage and rude' specimens from a safe, albeit demeaning, distance.[70] This perspective reinforced Hamilton's own association with the polite literary traditions of Addison and Steele, as it allowed him to assume the role of 'Mr. Spectator,' while also asserting his supposed superiority in the immediate moment.[71] However, this aloofness worked better in theory than in practice. 'Wild' children peeping at Hamilton 'from behind doors, chests, and benches' and impromptu boxing matches between master and servant as they screamed 'little bastard' and 'shitten elf' at each other served as harsh reminders of British American tavern life.[72]

Hamilton viewed British American taverns—as he did the colonies and their inhabitants in general—as disorderly nests of class levelling and 'incivility'; unruly, provincial cousins of those 'penny universities' and genteel city taverns, which he so loved to frequent in Edinburgh.[73] And this was in the largest, most developed cities in America! What was Hamilton to do when he returned to Annapolis, at best a 'country market town' by British standards that hosted a litany of seedy taverns and an equally-suspicious set of residents?[74] Hamilton had found in his travels a select few British gentlemen who themselves cultivated an even more select collection of genteel tavern clubs; however, re-creating these

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[69] Zuckerman, 'Endangered Deference,' 232–52; Michael Zuckerman, 'Tocqueville, Turner, and Turds: Four Stories of Manners in Early America,' *The Journal of American History* 85, no. 1 (June 1998): 13–42; Scribner, *Inn Civility*, 64–108.

[70] Hamilton, *Itinerarium*, 112 ('savage and rude'). For Hamilton as 'spectator,' see Micklus, 'Delightful Instruction,' 373–75; For more on the vagaries and complications of 'company' in the early modern British Empire, see Phil Withington, 'Company and Sociability in Early Modern England,' *Social History* 32, no. 3 (2007): 291–307.

[71] Hamilton joined a long line of 'enlightened' British gentlemen in this pursuit. See Roy Porter, *Enlightenment: Britain and the Creation of the Modern World* (New York: Penguin, 2000), 88.

[72] Hamilton, *Itinerarium*, 26–27, 183.

[73] Breslaw, *Hamilton and Provincial America*, 118 (quote); For 'penny universities,' see Aytoun Ellis, *The Penny Universities: A History of the Coffee-Houses* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1956); Brian Cowan, *The Social Life of Coffee: The Emergence of the British Coffeehouse* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 89.

[74] Hamilton, *Itinerarium*, 237.

delicate associations in his new hometown would necessitate further modification of the Whin-Bush blueprint, itself a model based upon castles in the sky.

A WHIN-BUSH OF THE AMERICAN WILDS:
DR. HAMILTON'S TUESDAY CLUB

Hamilton returned to Annapolis in September 1744, 'determined,' in Breslaw's analysis, 'to reshape his Maryland environment in line with the other, more sophisticated colonies he had visited.'[75] However, Hamilton's intentions proved more complicated. He did not want to simply 'reshape' Annapolis into a perfect reflection of Boston, Philadelphia, or New York City, as he mistrusted much of the tavern-centric cultures of these colonial locales because of his disapproving experiences in most clubs up north. Rather, the critical Scotsman hoped to re-create the Scottish Whin-Bush Club in Annapolis through a self-aware siphoning process, which would necessitate the culling of American tavern culture, the collection of Scottish and British genteel companies, and the careful composition of a private club based on categories of wit, order, and decorum. Unfortunately, developments beyond Hamilton's control—namely rebuilding his business amid the economic fallout of war with France—combined with the planning necessary for such an endeavour delayed the physician's associational aspirations. But that was fine. At this point, he was used to waiting for change.

He did not tarry long. On the one-year anniversary of his departure for the Northern colonies (14 May 1745), Hamilton convened the first meeting of the 'Tuesday Club' in his private Annapolis residence. Hamilton was clear about the purposes of the Tuesday Club from the beginning, describing the association as 'no other than the same Club [the Whin-Bush Club] transmigrated to America.'[76] This declaration is critical for understanding Hamilton's American tenure thus far. During his first five years in Annapolis, the Scottish doctor languished in a fog of mental and physical illness, longing for Edinburgh's (largely mythical) club and college life, yet, by early 1744, the young man felt compelled—even desperate—to take his 'health and recreation' into his own hands. Hence, Hamilton's multimonth itinerarium, during which he cobbled together a variety of American experiences to learn which adjustments were necessary to 'transmigrate' the Whin-Bush Club to America.

One needs to look no further than the location, membership, and rules of the Tuesday Club's first meeting to understand Hamilton's

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[75] Breslaw, *Hamilton and Provincial America*, 144.
[76] Hamilton, *History of the Tuesday Club*, 1:60.

conscientious 'transmigration' process. Hamilton chose his own home for the gathering. He simply did not trust the American tavern—surfeit with disorderly patrons, dissembling companies, and crowded, stifling rooms—as a space through which to cultivate the satirical sophistication that he envisioned for his Tuesday Club. This was the Scottish tavern club, sans the tavern!

And Hamilton—the self-appointed secretary of the Tuesday Club—held steadfast to these principles. In fact, the Tuesday Club met exclusively in private residences for the first nine years of its storied existence. On 9 July 1754, when they finally convened in the Middleton Tavern, which was owned by a club member, Hamilton explained that 'no [club] proceedings were read,' as he 'was scrupulous about bringing the book of Records to such a public place of Rendezvous, as a tavern.'[77] 'Such a public place,' in Hamilton's jaundiced experience, was filled with ignorant people who might misinterpret their Club's witty banter, thereby leading to public censure or controversy. Even as Annapolis grew, it still did not harbour the spaces or company that might be trusted by Hamilton's class-conscious coterie.

Hamilton selected his Club members according to the same exacting standards that he applied to the location. From the moment Hamilton arrived in America, he believed that 'the natives of this place who have had a European education are far before their countrymen who have staid all their life in their unhappy country.'[78] The condescending physician's itinerarium had convinced him of this point as he considered interactions with British-born or -educated men to be the only even-tangentially civilizing experiences of his northeastern peregrinations. It should thus come as no surprise that Hamilton chose those of similar social status for his inaugural cohort. Of the Tuesday Club's first eight members, four were native Scotsmen, another three were native Englishmen; almost all had been educated in Britain, and at least six had been members of at least one other Annapolis association. Only through the careful cultivation of British-born or -educated men, Hamilton supposed, could a successful Scottish-style American tavern club truly be realized. Hence, his selection of men like John Gordon (Scotland), rector of St. Anne's Church in Annapolis, Robert Gordon (Scotland), member of the lower house, John Bullen (England), wealthy merchant and future mayor of Annapolis, and Witham Marshe (England), lawyer, and close confidant of one of the most powerful men in Maryland, Daniel Dulany the Elder.[79]

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[77] Hamilton, *History of the Tuesday Club*, 3:386.
[78] Breslaw, *Hamilton and Provincial America*, 152 (quote).
[79] Breslaw, *Hamilton and Provincial America*, 160.

Having handpicked the Club's setting and founding members, Hamilton completed the careful process of 'working a reformation in these [American] clubs' by initiating an intentional set of fifty-two club rules.[80] Predictably, he cribbed these rules from the Whin-Bush Club's fabled guidelines. Under Hamilton's watchful eye, each Club member went by a satirical pseudonym—Hamilton, for instance, was 'Loquacious Scribble,' while John Gordon was 'Mr. Smoothum Sly.'[81] In this same vein of satirical silliness, Hamilton instituted the 'gelastic' law, which encouraged heightened humour around 'heavier' topics, such as 'party matters, or the administration of the Government of this province.'[82] This proven method allowed Club members to discuss controversial topics in a relatively safe manner, using 'satire and laughter to both mask and underscore serious issues.'[83]

Hamilton had witnessed the exact opposite of such decorum during his itinerarium, watching in disgust as 'that violent propensity in human nature to dispute, every one thinking himself the wisest and most learned person in company' reared its ugly head time and again at the tavern table.[84] Hamilton especially despised 'Dr. McGraa' (Magraw), an Irish-born, Scottish-educated physician whom he met at a New York City tavern. At the end of his first conversation with McGraa, Hamilton could only remark, 'I never met with a man so wrapped up in himself as this fellow seemed to be, nor did I ever see a face where there was so much effrontery under a pretended mask of modesty.'[85] Hamilton judged rules that weeded out men like McGraa—never mind their behaviour—as absolutely imperative for realizing a Scottish-style tavern club in Annapolis. They would laugh an 'offending' participant, such as McGraa, out of the room before he could get a self-congratulating, club-destroying word in.[86]

Hamilton's efforts paid off, and quickly. The Club's ranks soon doubled, and then tripled, as membership in the Tuesday Club 'marked one as among the well-read upper or socially ambitious classes, those concerned about appearing in the manner of well-bred 'polite' society.'[87] Hamilton was happy to welcome new members, but only according to the narrow vision for this Whin-Bush Club of the American 'wilds.' They revelled in wit and merriment, organizing public parades, self-effacing

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[80] Hamilton, *History of the Tuesday Club*, 1:90.
[81] Hamilton, *History of the Tuesday Club*, 1:128.
[82] Hamilton, *History of the Tuesday Club*, 1:151–2.
[83] Breslaw, *Hamilton and Provincial America*, 152.
[84] Hamilton, *History of the Tuesday Club*, 1:132.
[85] Hamilton, *Itinerarium*, 102; For more on Magraw, see Hamilton, *Itinerarium*, 101n1.
[86] Hamilton, *History of the Tuesday Club*, 152.
[87] Breslaw, *Hamilton and Provincial America*, 162.

songs, and gaudy medals emblazoned with their Club motto, '*Libertas et Natale Solum*' ('Liberty and My Native Land').[88]

Over the next eleven years, men from throughout the British Empire made it a point to visit the Tuesday Club. Hamilton, meanwhile, married in 1747, and continued his thriving profession until his death in 1756. The Scottish physician remained perhaps most wedded to his beloved achievement, however: the successful re-creation of the Scottish-style tavern club in America. For Hamilton, the Club made his existence in America not only bearable but enjoyable. He asserted that without the Tuesday Club, life was merely 'a *tabula rasa* or *Cart Blanch*, or rather a blotted Scroll or Scutcheon, in which nothing of sense or significancy can be read or discerned.'[89]

Dr. Hamilton's passion for creating and cultivating the Tuesday Club ultimately revealed his deep devotion to maintaining his Scottish identity, which he considered part-and-parcel with Edinburgh tavern club life. His nostalgic fantasies of the Whin-Bush Club were imperative for such efforts, as Hamilton viewed his brief tenure among these urban dons as the peak of progressive, polite culture. But the harsh realities of life in America necessitated certain adjustments for a homesick, lonely, adrift man like Hamilton. From the moment the rather self-superior Scotsman arrived in Annapolis, he felt off course, if not outright put off, by this 'wicked country.'[90] Not only did Hamilton find the backwater city wholly lacking in networks of wit and sociability he so enjoyed in Edinburgh, but the Scottish physician's mental and physical health also flagged with the passing of every exhausting house call and pestilent season. By 1744, Hamilton decided to take his 'health and recreation' into his own hands through a multimonth itinerarium across America's northeastern seaboard, during which time he hoped to discover Scottish-style tavern clubs, which he could then 're-create' in Annapolis and, in turn, foster a 'healthy' civil society in these far-flung environs. The spectre of the Whin-Bush Club remained central to these endeavours, serving as a cruel muse for a desperate artist.

Upon returning to Annapolis, Hamilton decided that he could re-create the Scottish tavern club in America, but only, ironically, without the tavern. If the condescending gentlemen's myriad experiences during his journey had taught him anything, it was that America's taverns were nests of debauchery and class levelling that would destroy a genteel

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[88] Hamilton, *History of the Tuesday Club*, 2:128; Micklus, *Comic Genius*, 40–52; Hamilton, *History of the Tuesday Club*, xv–cv.
[89] Hamilton, *History of the Tuesday Club*, 1:310.
[90] Alexander Hamilton to Robert Hamilton, 12 June 1742, Annapolis, in Breslaw, 'Hamilton and His Creditors,' 449.

satirical club before it ever had the chance to flourish. Hamilton's vision of Scottish clubs, after all, was predicated upon a careful balancing act of wit and satire, which necessitated a learned company 'in' on the joke, not a blundering set of ne'er-do-wells unversed in the intricacies of civil society.[91] Thus, Hamilton's deliberate selection of British-born and -educated men for the inaugural membership of the Tuesday Club, as well as his deliberate set of rules borrowed from the Whin-Bush Club. Hamilton was apparently not alone in his desire for Scottish-style club conviviality in America as the Tuesday Club thrived over the next decade.

The Club's success makes sense, especially given that its founder was one among thousands of British immigrants who, though living and working in colonial cities like Boston or Annapolis, ultimately viewed Great Britain as their true exceptional home. They craved connection with the homeland in whatever form that might take.[92] 'Being British' in America was thus a complicated endeavour that often necessitated creativity as well as convention; immediate, localized life experience in close cooperation with large- and long-term schemes.[93] Yet, as especially demonstrated by Hamilton's lifelong engagement with the Scottish tavern club—first via the Whin-Bush Club in Edinburgh and then the Tuesday Club in Annapolis—re-creating one's homeland in one's new home was often based upon fantasy more than reality. Hamilton ultimately realized his capricious visions of Scottish tavern club life, not through embracing or assimilating to colonial American customs, but rather through assuming and asserting his own—and his fleeting visions of the Whin-Bush

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[91] For more on the intricacies of joking and laughter in eighteenth-century British society, see Simon Dickie, *Cruelty and Laughter: Forgotten Comic Literature and the Unsentimental Eighteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

[92] See, for instance, Julie Flavell, *When London Was Capital of America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 4–5; T. H. Breen, *The Marketplace of Revolution: How Consumer Politics Shaped American Independence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

[93] 'Being British' was (and is) a murky process at best. Historians of the eighteenth-century British Empire are still trying to come to a more effective definition. As Maya Jasanoff noted regarding British American loyalists during the American Revolution, 'the loyalists, like millions of imperial subjects well into the twentieth century, laid claim to being British though they did not live within the British nation-state … Enduring contests about how far to incorporate and how far to assimilate, about who did and did not count as British and how to make such a determination would inflect conceptions of British subjecthood and imperial governance for at least a century to come.' Maya Jasanoff, 'The Other Side of Revolution: Loyalists in the British Empire,' *William and Mary Quarterly* 65, no. 2 (2008): 211. See also Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707–1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003); David Armitage, 'Greater Britain: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis?', *American Historical Review* 104, no. 2 (1999): 427–45; Brendan McConville, *The King's Three Faces: The Rise and Fall of Royal America, 1688–1776* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 7–10, 138.

Club's—superiority over colonists' societal mores. In many ways, then, the Scottish doctor's brief sentimental tenure in the Whin-Bush Club defined the rest of his life in America, prompting Hamilton to cordon off a predictable space of his own where he made the rules, even if that meant eschewing much of the larger world. He became like J. R. R. Tolkien's whimsical character, Tom Bombadil, whom the wizard Gandalf described as 'his own master … withdrawn into a little land, within bounds that he has set … waiting perhaps for a change of days, and he will not step beyond them.'[94] 'Transmigrations,' as Hamilton came to realize, perhaps relish, are rarely straightforward affairs. Rather, they are personal endeavours fuelled by the past more than the present, capricious memories of a place and time that probably never actually existed but might—just might—finally materialize with enough effort and foresight, especially in a new place.

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[94] J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring* (1954; repr., Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1987), 279.