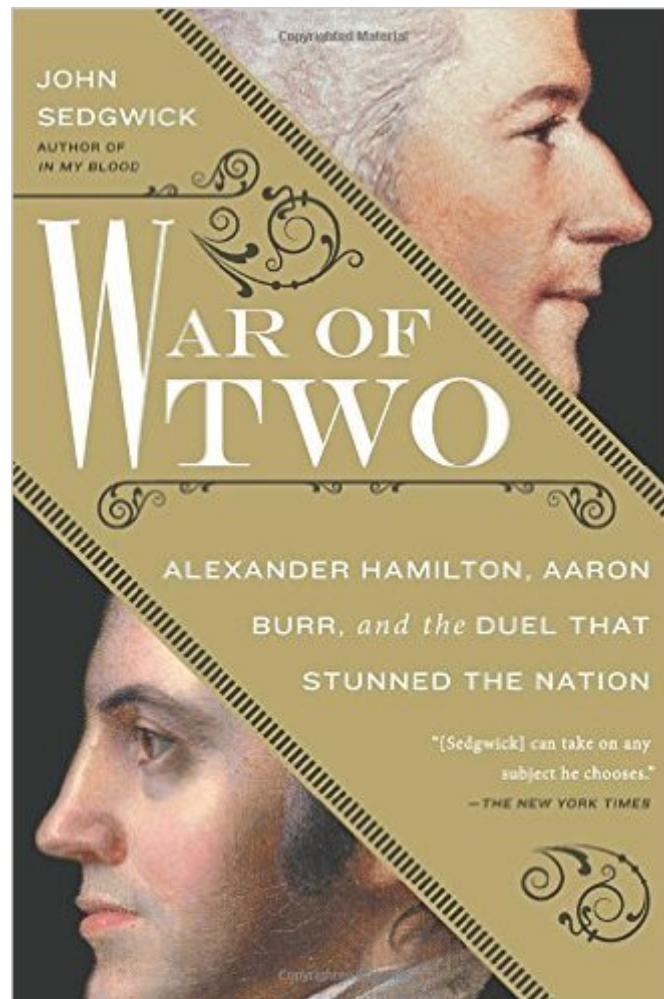


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War Of Two: Alexander Hamilton, Aaron Burr, And The Duel That Stunned The Nation



Synopsis

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. John Sedgwick suggests that Hamilton saw Burr not merely as a personal rival but as a threat to the nation. Burr would prove that fear justified after Hamilton's death when, haunted by the legacy of his longtime adversary, he embarked on an imperial scheme to break the Union apart.

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Customer Reviews

The phrase "War of Two" refers to a medieval definition of a duel, that semi-chivalric and deadly tradition by which gentlemen avenge a dishonor. Duelling, while no longer (overtly, at least) permissible or practiced, had the advantage of providing a final and dramatic endgame to conflicts that were often more political than personal. By the time of the American Revolutionary war, they were still a relative commonplace. But no duel in history can match for pure, egotistic drama the most famous one that unfolded in Weehawken, NJ in July of 1804. In a less conflicted era Aaron Burr and Alexander Hamilton might have been brothers. Though neither might have admitted it they shared more qualities than distinctions, including, though certainly not limited to, ambition, ruthlessness, political genius, eloquence, courage (often to the point of rashness), and voracious sexual appetite. Both attended Ivy League colleges and adhered to a keen life of the mind. Both were major players in the unfolding revolutionary war drama, each serving at various points directly under Washington himself while still in their early twenties. These were sculptors, visionaries of a radical new society, who did every bit as much as they thought. So why? Why did Aaron Burr, then the second sitting Vice President of the nascent United States, open fire on Alexander Hamilton, erstwhile Secretary of the Treasury and architect of the new nation's financial system, as the sun rose over the Hudson River and the adolescent city of New York behind it? One man's life was ended, and the other effectively ruined. And the new country suffered a needless and tragic blow to its noble mission of civility, and conscientious public discourse.

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