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# MAJOR GENERAL PHILIP SCHUYLER

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## FOUNDING OF UNION COLLEGE

Major General Philip John Schuyler (1733-1804) was born into a "prominent Dutch lineage...the prestige that can come from long established family roots... an arrogancy not without a touch of vanity, but also the wellspring of ambition".

The Major General married Catherine "Kitty" Van Rensselaer in 1755. Kitty gave birth to 15 children in the course of their long marriage, eight of whom survived to adulthood: Angelica, Eliza (Hamilton), Philip Jeremiah Schuyler, Margarita "Peggy", John Bradstreet, Rensselaer, Cornelia and Catherine or "Caty".

The Schuyler real estate fortune consisted of thousands of acres from Albany to Saratoga (part of which later became Schuylerville). While the Major General inherited this land, he also speculated in real estate and was "smitten with land hunger." His vast land holdings were eventually inherited by his son, Philip Jeremiah Schuyler.

Eliza Schuyler married Alexander Hamilton in 1780. The young couple was socially connected to President George Washington and his wife, Martha. When President Washington died in 1799, his wife presented locks of her husband's hair to close associates, including the Hamiltons. A lock of hair was a form of remembrance, a common practice during the late 18th century.

As the American Revolutionary War came to a close, wealthy landowners like Major General Philip Schuyler had vested interests in situating a new college in Upstate New York. Albany residents lobbied the Major General to locate the college in their hometown. However, he had a different plan. Always a speculator, Schuyler was exploring new commercial transportation routes along the Mohawk River and saw financial benefits in placing a new college in Schenectady. Despite intense lobbying from the residents of Albany, the Major General exercised his rank and political influence to sway his fellow members of the New York Board of Regents into locating the new college in Schenectady.

Schuyler wrote a letter on January 22, 1795 about this decision:

**"...Gentlemen, I do in full confidence commit myself, persuaded your decision will be that circumstanced as I am, I am bound by every consideration which ought to influence a moral mind, to support the application of our brethren of Schenectady..."**

MAJOR GENERAL PHILIP SCHUYLER LETTER, JANUARY 22, 1795

