

a United States senator by the New York legislature to succeed Aaron Burr, on the fourth of March, that year.

“The election of Schuyler to the senate could not of course take Colonel Burr by surprise. Before that event was announced he had matured plans for getting the state of New York out of the hands of Hamilton and the federalists. His first step was to secure his own election to the state legislature, which was the easier from the fact that the city even then was more inclined than the rural counties to the democratic party. Accordingly General Schuyler, about the time he was conning his speech to the state senate for their suffrages, wrote to Hamilton, in alarm, to the following effect: ‘Mr. Burr, we are informed, will be a candidate for a seat in the assembly; his views it is not difficult to appreciate. They alarm me, and if he prevails, I apprehend a total change of politics in the next assembly—attended with other disagreeable consequences.’”¹

“On the sixth of March [1798], at a very general meeting of the federal members of the legislature, and citizens from various parts of the state, John Jay (governor), and Stephen van Rensselaer (lieutenant-governor), were re-nominated for re-election. Chancellor Livingston was nominated by the republican party in opposition to Mr. Jay.”

Although Governor Jay was “re-elected by a triumphant majority, the election evinced that the republican party was the rising party in the state. * * * * The city of New York again returned republican members of the assembly, among whom were Aaron Burr and John Swartwout.”²

“At that time there was, besides a branch of the Bank of the United States, but one banking institution in the city of New York, and that was controlled by federalists, who, as the republicans alleged, used their power for the furtherance of the federal cause. Both of these banks were, to a considerable degree, the creation of General Hamilton, and both were inclined to support and advance the author of their existence. The republican merchants, it is said, had long been accustomed to see their federal competitors ‘accommodated’ by the banks, while their own applications for aid were superciliously refused, and it was their cherished scheme to establish a bank which should be as complaisant toward them, as the ‘Bank of New York’ was supposed to be to traders of the other party. But this was difficult. Besides a chronic prejudice against banks in the popular mind, they had to contend against a federal majority in the legislature, which alone could grant a charter. In these circumstances, Colonel Burr, by an ingenious maneuver, accomplished what, by direct means, could not be done.

¹ The life and times of Aaron Burr. By James Parton, vol. i., pp. 231, 232.

² John Swartwout's first term in the state assembly embraced the twenty-second session of the legislature, extending from August 9 to August 27, 1798, and from January 2 to April 3, 1799.