



A Hamilton

Alexander Hamilton Estate Grange and Other Sites

*Special Resource Study Update
October 2009*

Study Update

In August 2009, the National Park Service conducted public scoping meetings in St. Croix regarding the special resource study for Alexander Hamilton Estate Grange and Other Sites. Held August 11th and 12th in Christiansted and in Frederiksted, these meetings were an opportunity to inform the public about the special resource study and to obtain community input. About 40 people attended each meeting. Participants were flush with enthusiasm and interest regarding Alexander Hamilton's life on St. Croix and other local stories.

An exciting addition to the meetings was the use of a webcast to reach a wider audience. Suggested and implemented by local radio host Mr. Anthony Weeks, the meetings were recorded and broadcast live via the Internet. Archives can be found at www.kalaloo.com under "Kalaloo News."

Meeting Format

The two meetings were designed to gather input from the public using various methods. Each meeting consisted of a brief presentation by NPS staff, an open comment period, and informal small group discussions.

Special Resource Study Schedule

*PREPARE AND PUBLISH DRAFT STUDY
Fall 2009 - Spring 2010*

*GATHER PUBLIC INPUT ON DRAFT
Spring 2010*

*FINALIZE STUDY
AND MAKE RECOMMENDATION
Summer 2010*

*CONGRESSIONAL ACTION
Future*



Scenes from the public scoping meetings in Christiansted and Frederiksted

The Input That You Shared

Most participants voiced enthusiasm for the study. Below is a summary of the most common sentiments expressed:

Alexander Hamilton's story is compelling and should be widely shared.

Many remarked that Hamilton's story was deeply personal, with great potential to engage and inspire. The circumstances of Hamilton's childhood were unique among the Founding Fathers. Hamilton sprouted from humble origins — he was an illegitimate child and his family was poor. A largely self-made man, Hamilton worked hard for what he attained. As a result, people can identify with him. Hamilton's mother and father separated. That his mother raised such an impressive son was called an "inspiring story" that "celebrates the success of many single mothers."

Participants regretted that Alexander Hamilton's childhood on St. Croix is not well known in the United States and is little understood on the island itself. Most hoped that this story would be widely celebrated in the future.

Through work experiences on St. Croix, Hamilton learned about international trade and finance, which influenced his later contributions to the nation.

All agreed that living and working on St. Croix had a tremendous influence on Hamilton. Participants believed that Hamilton's occupation as a clerk for the import-export firm Beekman and Cruger was essential training in the subjects of finance and commerce. Some remarked that this was a demanding job, requiring Hamilton to work with several different languages and currencies and to coordinate the intertwined schedules of agriculture, industry, and shipping. Because of his extraordinary intellect and drive, Hamilton excelled in this role, and he absorbed valuable lessons that he later used in building the United States' financial system.

The diverse community of St. Croix shaped Hamilton's character and beliefs.

As a clerk on a small island, Hamilton interacted with and was shaped by a great variety of people, including enslaved Africans, free Blacks, and American and European merchants. It is important that these perspectives would be represented in any future park unit. In particular, there is an opportunity to draw connections between his early experiences and his opposition to slavery later in life. Hamilton's example presents opportunities for inclusive interpretation. A successful park unit would reach out to, and be embraced by, all segments of society.

Participants expressed many ideas for the sites that represent Hamilton's life on St. Croix.

Input reflected differing visions for Estate Grange and the other sites. The appropriateness of Estate Grange as a unit of the national park system was a subject of debate: some felt that Hamilton's connection to the estate is not supported by facts, while others regarded it as an especially fitting place to tell his story. Those who felt it should become a national park system unit envisioned the estate as a museum with interactive exhibits or as a repository for historical documents and artifacts. Others believed that the properties in Christiansted may make a better park unit, even if the buildings where Hamilton lived and worked have not survived. Many thought that these Christiansted sites should be better marked and highlighted through walking tours and programs.

Participants discussed the role of the National Park Service.

Participants told us that the National Park Service should manage one of the sites as a park unit devoted to Alexander Hamilton. Some participants voiced concern about increased federal ownership on St. Croix and raised the possibility of enhanced interpretation at Christiansted National Historic Site as an alternative to a new park unit.



Estate Grange



Burial marker at Estate Grange honoring Alexander Hamilton's mother, Rachel Fawcett



Potential historic slave quarters at Estate Grange



Office building on King Street, where the Beekman and Cruger store once stood



On Company Street, a garden now occupies the site of Hamilton's childhood residence



Project Website

<http://parkplanning.nps.gov/sero>

This website is a great way to stay informed and provide input about the special resource study. Once it is ready, the draft study will be made available on the website. You may post a comment to the website then or anytime that you like.

Thank you for your participation!