



# Foundation Document Overview

## Hamilton Grange National Memorial

New York



### Contact Information

For more information about the *Hamilton Grange National Memorial Foundation Document*, contact: [hagr\\_superintendent@nps.gov](mailto:hagr_superintendent@nps.gov) or (646) 548-2310 or write to: Superintendent, Hamilton Grange National Memorial, 414 West 141st Street, New York, NY 10031

## Purpose



*HAMILTON GRANGE NATIONAL MEMORIAL commemorates the life of Alexander Hamilton and the role he played in the establishment of the United States through the preservation and interpretation of his home, The Grange.*



## Significance

Significance statements express why Hamilton Grange National Memorial resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

- Alexander Hamilton, one of our nation's founders, was a Revolutionary War leader, co-author of the Federalist Papers, signatory of the Constitution, first secretary of the treasury, and founder of the New York Post and the Bank of New York.
- Alexander Hamilton became the first U.S. Secretary of the Treasury in 1789 in which position he established the financial foundation of the newly established nation. His economic philosophies included developing a sound currency and creating a responsible fiscal policy for the United States. His interpretation of "implied powers" of the Constitution has been enshrined in law and precedent and has shaped the development of American government to this day.
- Built in 1801–02, The Grange was the home of Alexander Hamilton until his untimely death on July 11, 1804. Because he was actively involved in its design and construction, the house is a reflection of Hamilton's own rise from his humble beginnings to securing his place among the nation's elite.
- The home of Alexander Hamilton is one of only a few Federal Period houses still standing in the city of New York and is a rare example of noted architect John McComb, Jr.'s Federal residential architecture.
- Relocation and restoration of Hamilton's home was mandated by the Congress, in recognition of the impossibility of representing its historic appearance on the site where it stood in 1962. The extensive efforts to comply with the Congressional mandate and preserve the home were finally rewarded in 2011 when the newly sited national memorial was once again as Hamilton might have known it.

## Fundamental Resources and Values

Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance.

- **The Home of Alexander Hamilton.** Alexander Hamilton’s Federal-style country house is believed to be the only house ever owned by Hamilton. Located in the Hamilton Heights section of Harlem in New York City, the house served as Hamilton’s home from 1802 until his death on July 11, 1804, and subsequently was owned by his family until 1833.
- **Museum Collections.** The park contains a number of collections related to Alexander Hamilton’s life and his home. These include early 19th century furnishings, objects related to the building’s history, and Alexander Hamilton memorabilia.
- **Preservation of the Home of Alexander Hamilton.** Relocation of Hamilton’s home to a more “fitting setting” was a requirement of Congress when the park was designated. Preservation efforts, not only for the move but for the house itself, provided opportunities for education, interpretation, and the advancement of preservation ideas and techniques.

Hamilton Grange National Memorial contains other resources and values that may not be fundamental to the purpose and significance of the park, but are important to consider in management and planning decisions. These are referred to as other important resources and values.

- **Commemorative Resources**
- **287 Convent Avenue**



## Interpretive Themes

Interpretive themes are often described as the key stories or concepts that visitors should understand after visiting a park—they define the most important ideas or concepts communicated to visitors about a park unit. Themes are derived from—and should reflect—park purpose, significance, resources, and values. The set of interpretive themes is complete when it provides the structure necessary for park staff to develop opportunities for visitors to explore and relate to all of the park significances and fundamental resources and values.

- **Hamilton the Man.** Hamilton Grange is the lens through which we can view the career of Alexander Hamilton, an immigrant American from the Caribbean who rose from humble beginnings to make lasting contributions to the nation as a father of the federal government and the American economy. The Grange is Hamilton’s self-created monument to his career achievements, a mark of his acquired social status, a symbol of America as a land of opportunity, a refuge, a showplace, and a paradise comprising everything that was missing from his own background as a child, from a stable and loving family life to the refined, tasteful—and expensive—setting in which he entertained distinguished visitors from around the world.
- **Hamilton’s Role in Creating the New Nation.** As co-author of the Federalist Papers, Hamilton’s vision of a powerful federal government welded the semiautonomous states into a unified nation capable of managing growth across the North American continent and abroad. Hamilton’s role in the creation of the federal government and a strong economic system based on investment and industrial development made possible the rise of the United States to its present status. Federal fiscal policy and economic institutions were fundamental elements of his plan for a strong national government. Hamilton’s development and implementation of “implied powers” of the Constitution paved the way for a federal government that has the flexibility and mobility to adapt and change to allow for the nation to grow. To Hamilton, national survival and financial stability were so closely linked that he could not imagine one without the other.
- **Hamilton and New York City.** Hamilton’s contributions to the development of the city of New York included military, financial, and commercial enterprises that helped create the city as the world-renowned metropolis it is today.

## Description

Hamilton Grange National Memorial preserves the home of founder Alexander Hamilton. Born and raised in the West Indies, Hamilton was orphaned in his early teens. Taken in as an apprentice to an international shipping company that was based on his home island, his talents were recognized by local benefactors who created a fund to provide him with a formal education. Hamilton came to New York in 1772 at age 17 to study at King's College (now Columbia University).

During this period, he was exposed to American patriots and became a supporter of their cause. As a student, he wrote defenses of the revolutionary cause and published in local newspapers. Soon thereafter, Hamilton was commissioned as a Captain of Artillery at the beginning of the Revolutionary War; subsequently, his abilities were again recognized and he was invited to become an aide-de-camp to General George Washington.

After the war, as a member of Congress, Hamilton was instrumental in creating the new Constitution. As co-author of *The Federalist* (more commonly known as the *Federalist Papers*), he was indispensable in the effort to adopt the Constitution. As the first Secretary of the Treasury (1789–95), he devised plans for funding the national debt, securing federal credit, encouraging expansion of manufacturing, and organizing the national bank. As an integral member of Washington's cabinet, he developed the concept of "implied powers," which allows the federal government to do things in support of the Constitution that are not specifically spelled out in it.

Hamilton commissioned architect John McComb, Jr., to design a Federal-style country home on a 32-acre estate in upper Manhattan. This house was completed in 1802, and the estate was named "The Grange" after Hamilton's father's ancestral home in Scotland. Unfortunately, Hamilton was only able to enjoy his home for two years. On July 11, 1804, Hamilton was fatally wounded in a duel with his personal and political rival, Vice President Aaron Burr.

Hamilton's family continued to occupy The Grange until 1833. In the late 19th century, as development of upper Manhattan advanced, the original location of The Grange was absorbed into the expanding New York City street grid.

In 1889, the house was moved approximately 350 feet south to a site just north of the intersection of Convent Avenue and 141st Street. Here, the house was owned by the Episcopal Church and used by the congregation of St. Luke's Episcopal Church from the time of its move through the first quarter of the 20th century.

In 1924, Hamilton's home was acquired by the American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society and preserved as a memorial to Hamilton. A prominent statue representing Alexander Hamilton was acquired by the society from the Hamilton Society in Brooklyn and installed and rededicated at the site on October 19, 1936. In 1962 Congress resolved to establish Hamilton Grange National Memorial, and the property was acquired by the National Park Service. In the 1962 enabling legislation, Congress expressed its intent that Hamilton's home be relocated and "preserved in a fitting setting." To that end, in 2008 the National Park Service relocated the house to a site across 141st Street in St. Nicholas Park. Following its relocation the house was restored, and in September 2011 the house was reopened to the public.

Today, Hamilton Grange National Memorial comprises Hamilton's house on a one-acre site in St. Nicholas Park, a collection of museum objects including documents reflecting Hamilton's life and contributions to the founding and formation of the United States, and the second site of the house at 287 Convent Avenue where the Hamilton statue is located.

