

**STATEMENT OF DANIEL N. WENK, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS OF THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES, CONCERNING S. 1969, TO AUTHORIZE THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR TO CONDUCT A SPECIAL RESOURCE STUDY TO DETERMINE THE SUITABILITY AND FEASIBILITY OF DESIGNATING ESTATE GRANGE AND OTHER SITES RELATED TO ALEXANDER HAMILTON'S LIFE ON THE ISLAND OF ST. CROIX IN THE UNITED STATES VIRGIN ISLANDS AS A UNIT OF THE NATIONAL PARK SYSTEM, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.**

**SEPTEMBER 27, 2007**

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Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to provide the Department of the Interior's views on S. 1969, a bill to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a special resource study to determine the suitability and feasibility of designating Estate Grange and other sites related to Alexander Hamilton's life on the island of St. Croix in the United States Virgin Islands as a unit of the National Park System, and for other purposes.

The Department supports S. 1969. However, the Department feels that priority should be given to the 37 previously authorized studies for potential units of the National Park System, potential new National Heritage Areas, and potential additions to the National Trails System and National Wild and Scenic River System that have not yet been transmitted to the Congress.

Studies of this type typically take approximately three years to complete after funds are made available. We estimate the cost for this study to be approximately \$250,000.

S. 1969 would authorize the Secretary of the Interior, in consultation with the Governor of the Virgin Islands, to conduct a special resource study of Estate Grange and other sites and resources associated with the life of Alexander Hamilton on St. Croix, in the U.S. Virgin Islands. The study would evaluate the sites according to established criteria to determine whether it is appropriate for addition to the National Park System, or whether it is better suited to protection by another entity.

Hamilton was born out of wedlock in Charlestown, Nevis, the capital of the island of Nevis, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Leeward Islands, West Indies to James A. Hamilton, the fourth son of a Scottish laird, and Rachel Faucett Lavien, of part French Huguenot descent. There is, however, some evidence that Hamilton's biological father may have been a Nevis merchant named Thomas Stevens.

In 1765, a business assignment led James Hamilton to move the family to Christiansted, St. Croix. James then abandoned Rachel and their two sons. After James left, Rachel supported the family by keeping a small store in Christiansted. She contracted a "severe fever" and died on February 19, 1768, leaving Hamilton effectively orphaned.

After his mother's death, Hamilton was twice adopted and worked as a clerk with a local import-export firm with ties to the New York area. Impressed with his writings, the local community created a fund to send him to New Jersey for a formal education. He was attending King's College in New York when the Revolutionary War began.

During the Revolutionary War, Hamilton served as an artillery captain, was an aide-de-camp to General George Washington, and led three battalions at the Battle of Yorktown.

One of America's first constitutional lawyers, he was a leader in calling the U.S. Constitutional Convention in 1787 and was one of the two chief authors of the Federalist Papers, the most cited contemporary interpretation of intent for the United States Constitution. Under President Washington, Hamilton became the first Secretary of the Treasury.

The Estate Grange, a former rum factory and sugar plantation, was once the home of Hamilton's mother and she is buried on the premises. The 115-acre estate is situated approximately 1.5 to 2 miles southwest of Christiansted National Historic Site and is owned by the Armstrong Trust.

In 1886, the Great House, which has five bedrooms and four baths, was used as a convalescent home for Danish gendarmes stricken by yellow fever at the Christiansted barracks. In later years the Great house was modified, by subsequent owners, by adding a grand staircase on the southwest corner of the building and converting the gallery to a dining room. The basement, with arched window openings and passageways, includes stone and coral-walled bedrooms, as-well-as storage areas.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes my testimony. I would be pleased to answer any questions you or the other members of the subcommittee may have.