HAMILTON GRANGE NATIONAL MEMORIAL: MOVING HAMILTON'S HOUSE ACROSS THE STREET

Steve Laise: Alexander Hamilton is, far and away, the most fascinating of our Founding Fathers.

Steven Spaulding: Hamilton is definitely underappreciated. He was very successful in pulling together our financial system, and the Constitution, to actually put together the nuts and bolts, of not just our democracy, but of our governmental system. And he played the same role with his house.

Steve Laise: When the house was built in 1802, it was open farmland, but in 1889, west 143rd Street would have been built through Hamilton Grange. So the Grange was moved. It was purchased by St. Luke's Episcopal Church. They relocated it, they changed its appearance, they took off the porches and the front and the rear entrance. They essentially built the church right up to it, and an apartment building was built abutting on it, it really touched it.

In 1962, it came into the National Park System as Hamilton Grange National Memorial. It was just as distorted, as it had been after the first move. And so it was very important to the Congress that a location be found, where it can be fully restored to represent the house as Hamilton knew it.

Steve Spaulding: The move contractor was a firm out of Pennsylvania. Their religious affiliation is German Brethren, which is an offshoot of Amish. They're extremely talented in what they do. I think they were even taken aback. They jacked the building up thirty-five feet in the air, slid it forward fifty feet and jacked it back down into the street, and then drove it down a hill with six percent grade. They lay what are called roller bars, which are sixteen-inch I-beams, and that's what the building ends up rolling out on. And they have a hydraulic ramp which just shoves the building right out on the steel.

(Background construction noise): *One, two, three…*

It was a very surreal day because their families were there, so their wives were there in the long dresses and the bonnets, and the kids were there [kid noise], And with that and the diversity of the community that's up there, and all the people intermingled, and you look up and there's a house moving thirty-five feet in the air across the street. It was a - it was an enjoyable thing to be part of.

Seeing the metal supports coming out of the building was, in effect, the last part of the move. So the building now is sitting on the foundation.

Steve Laise: We have found a location in St. Nicholas Park, which is still part of Hamilton's original property. More important probably, though, is the fact that it's still in the neighborhood.

Steve Spaulding: The new site is going to allow us to be able restore it in a manner in which you can really appreciate the architectural character and what it was he was trying to achieve.