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ALEXANDER HAMILTON STATUE RESTORED

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The Alexander Hamilton statue BEFORE restoration

Those who have made recent treks to the Harry B. Haines Memorial Park overlook to view the Great Falls may have noticed a cleaner, polished, and better-dressed Alexander Hamilton. The statue, abused by years of acid rain, low maintenance, and residual affectation, had slowly been losing its visual and structural integrity. The effects of the deterioration itself diluted the respect for Hamilton that was originally intended by those responsible for its creation. The conservation, initiated by the

City of Paterson's Historic Preservation Commission, was funded through a collaborative effort between SOS (Save Outdoor Sculpture, Washington DC), The National Park Service Urban History Initiative for the Great Falls Historic District, and the Paterson Municipal Utilities Authority (MUA).

Sculpted by Franklin Simmons in 1905, the Alexander Hamilton has stood overlooking the Great Falls since April 13, 1964. Prior to that, the sculpture stood opposite the Post Office in Dill Plaza since 1947. Originally its place was in front of City Hall until it was relocated to make room for the sculpture of Andrew F. McBride. However, its present site is considered by many as a more appropriate place for Alexander Hamilton because, according to some, it was here, on July 10, 1778, that Hamilton accompanied General George Washington when he met with the Marquis de LaFayette and "envisioned America as an independent industrial nation." Whether the three, in fact, ever stood before the Great Falls together is still widely debated, but nevertheless, it is due to the power of the falling water and steady supply provided by the Passaic River that this area was chosen by the Society for Establishing Useful Manufactures for their industry here.

The conservation treatment was conducted by T. S. Kreilick of Kreilick Conservation, LLC, who also submitted a full report with slide documentation of the conservation process to the City. An exhibit, based on this report and slides, is currently on display at the Great Falls Historic District Cultural Center. During his initial assessment of the sculpture, Kreilick found a white substance encrusted on its lower areas that, after analyses, was identified as plaster. Further investigation by Kreilick found that when the sculpture was cast, the interior had not been sufficiently cleaned of its casting materials. Subsequently, nearly 150 pounds of casting material needed to be removed from the sculpture's interior.



The Alexander Hamilton statue AFTER restoration

After dealing with the sculpture's interior problems, Kreilick treated its exterior with an air abrasive blast cleaning, which utilizes crushed walnut shells. The he

applied to its surface two coats of microcrystalline wax that were subsequently buffed. Kreilick also enlisted the services of sculptor John Phillips to replicate the cane that was missing from Hamilton's left hand. Additionally, treatment was also given to the sculpture's granite pedestal by removing the graffiti and soil that had accumulated over the years.

Considering the costly procedure that conservation is, preventative maintenance is the wiser route needed to protect our public sculptures. Why protect and conserve them? Imagine walking through the city's streets and parks without public art to show evidence of those who walked this land before us. Our public sculptures contribute to a sense of community identity and a way to honor individuals whose vision and achievements affected change in our society. Public sculpture inspires personal contemplation on the history that formed the present. It also gives to its viewer a visual experience and demonstrates how public art contributes to the visual personality of a neighborhood. Anyone interested in learning more about public sculpture is invited to view the video *Public Sculpture: America's Legacy*, presented by the Smithsonian Institution, available at the Great Falls Historic District Cultural Center.

The City of Paterson Historic Preservation Commission, in conjunction with the MUA, is planning a rededication ceremony for the Alexander Hamilton statue to be held at the overlook sometime in May 2004. For further information about this event call the Cultural Center at (973) 279-9587.