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GSA Celebrates Centennial Year of Historic Federal Building
100 Years – the Alexander Hamilton U.S. Custom House

(NEW YORK CITY - May 8, 2007) The U.S. General Services Administration (GSA), steward of more than 425 historic federal government buildings, proudly celebrates the 100th anniversary of the Alexander Hamilton United States Custom House located at Bowling Green in New York City.

Opened in 1907, this beaux-arts treasure is a National Historic Landmark and one of the most significant historic buildings in GSA's national inventory. It was designed by renowned architect Cass Gilbert and is replete with interior and exterior features and art that add to its grandeur. The Alexander Hamilton U.S. Custom House is an icon of maritime commerce and truly reflects its era in American history.

"We at GSA are proud stewards of this 100-year old National Historic Landmark and are committed to ensuring that it continues serving the American people for another century, said David Winstead, Commissioner of GSA's Public Buildings Service. "Through our innovative historic preservation efforts, GSA continues a long tradition of federal architectural excellence."

GSA places great importance on its historic preservation responsibilities and currently holds over 425 historic federal buildings in public trust. These historic structures are the nation's public buildings legacy. GSA is committed to helping develop viable strategies for them and to supporting the President's *Preserve America* initiative, which calls on federal agencies to protect, enhance and use government-owned historic buildings, as well as to increase public access to these national treasures. Many buildings like the Custom House are landmarks in their communities.

GSA, partnering with the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI), U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), and the U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the Southern District of New

York, has led a number of initiatives to help mark the centennial year of the Hamilton Custom House. GSA has produced a documentary about the building entitled, "100 Years of Grandeur," and coordinated an effort to install a new exhibit about the building that will be permanently located in the famous Rotunda on the building's second floor. In addition, GSA hired a professional architectural photographer to document the building and has updated its brochure and issued new posters in honor of the celebration. The Centennial team is also co-sponsoring a variety of events at the building during the centennial year, including tours and lectures. The team is working with other local groups such as Open House New York and the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council to develop additional initiatives, including a writers' residency program.

A special highlight of the centennial celebration is the relighting of the façade of the building by OSRAM SYLVANIA, which has pioneered the development of new innovative light sources for use in historic structures. OSRAM SYLVANIA's new lighting design on the Custom House was celebrated in a ceremony held on Tuesday, May 8th. Guests representing New York's federal, cultural, and lighting industry communities gathered at the building for a gala event that concluded with a view of the new façade lighting.

"The Alexander Hamilton U.S. Custom House is one of the most significant historic buildings in GSA's national inventory. The relighting of this building is a wonderful way to celebrate the centennial of this historic icon and capture the stunning structural and architectural beauty the building brings to Lower Manhattan and the City of New York," said Emily Baker, GSA Regional Administrator.

In its heyday, the Custom House was a bustling place of activity as customs officers worked with the trade community to build the wealth of this nation. The building's use declined after the Customs Service was relocated to the World Trade Center. During the 1980's GSA undertook a major renovation and restoration project that gave this monumental edifice a new future.

Today, visitors will find the building a vibrant and active place, often filled with the happy sounds of schoolchildren on class trips to the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian George Gustav Heye Center, housed in the first two floors of the facility. Other federal agencies also bring activity to the building. The U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the Southern District of New York occupies several floors, while a number of smaller agencies have offices as well. And, in 2003, U.S. Customs and Border Protection returned to its historic roots in lower Manhattan and reestablished an office at the Custom House.

The Alexander Hamilton U.S. Custom House is a National Historic Landmark listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is also a New York City Landmark. More information about the Custom House and the celebration of its centennial year may be found by visiting the website:

www.oldnycustomhouse.gov.

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Founded in 1949, GSA serves as a centralized procurement and property management agency for the federal government. GSA manages more than one-fourth of the government's total procurement dollars and influences the management of \$500 billion in federal assets, including 8,300 government-owned or leased buildings and 170,000 vehicles. GSA helps preserve our past and define our future, as a steward of more than 420 historic properties, and as manager of **USA.gov**, the official portal to federal government information and services. GSA's mission to provide superior workplaces, expert technology solutions, acquisition services, purchasing and e-travel solutions and management policies, at best value, allows federal agencies to focus on their core missions.

Did You Know? GSA manages over 425 historic buildings including 64 National Historic Landmarks and 2 National Historic Sites. Historic buildings comprise ¼ of GSA's owned portfolio by square footage.