

Saint-Gaudens

Official Map and Guide

Saint-Gaudens
National Historic Site
New Hampshire

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Painting of Saint-Gaudens by Kenyon Cox, 1908



Aspet and the formal gardens, with view of Mt. Ascutney in the distance



The Little Studio



Saint-Gaudens, his niece Marie, his son Homer, and "Seasick" the goat, 1892

Saint-Gaudens in Cornish

Augustus Saint-Gaudens first came to Cornish in 1885, renting an old inn for the summer from his friend and lawyer, Charles C. Beaman. He adapted the house to his needs, and converted a hay barn into a studio. Saint-Gaudens grew to love the place and finally purchased it in 1892. The family continued to summer here until 1900, after which it became their year-round home. He named the estate Aspet after his father's birthplace in France, and over the years transformed the grounds with gardens, hedges, and recreation areas, including a swimming pool, bowling green, and 9-hole golf course. The house, built about 1800, was completely remodeled: a graceful, curving stairway with a study

was added off the main hallway, along with new bedrooms, a sun room, dormers, and a wide, columned porch.

As his popularity grew and commissions poured in, Saint-Gaudens built a large studio where his assistants could work. Saint-Gaudens' role became that of an executive producer, developing the concept and initial models for a sculpture, then directing his assistants in completing the work. In 1904, the large studio burned, destroying the sculptor's correspondence, sketchbooks, and many works in progress. A redesigned structure, named the Studio of the Caryatids, was quickly built, but in 1944 it too burned.

Many other well known artists followed Saint-Gaudens to Cornish, forming what was known as the Cornish Colony. Included were painters Maxfield Parrish, Thomas Dewing, George de Forest Brush, Lucia Fuller, and Kenyon Cox, dramatist Percy MacKaye, American novelist Winston Churchill, architect Charles Platt, and sculptors Paulanship, Herbert Adams, and Louis St. Gaudens, Augustus' brother. These artists made a dynamic social environment, at the center of which was Augustus Saint-Gaudens.

In 1905, members of the art colony produced the play "A Masque of Ours: The Gods and the Golden Bowl" at the

site, to honor Saint-Gaudens' twentieth year in Cornish. The stage set, in the form of a Greek temple, was later recreated in marble, and is now the final resting place of Saint-Gaudens and his family.

After Saint-Gaudens' death in 1907, the artist colony gradually dissipated. Aspet remains, however, as a reminder of that community and the work of one of America's greatest sculptors.



Shaw Memorial, final version, 1900, exhibited at Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site.

"A sculptor's work endures so long that it is next to a crime for him to neglect to do everything that lies in his power to execute a result that will not be a disgrace."

Augustus Saint-Gaudens

Sculptor of the American Renaissance

Augustus Saint-Gaudens was born March 1, 1848, in Dublin, Ireland, to a French shoemaker and his Irish wife. Six months later, the family emigrated to New York City, where Augustus grew up. After completing school at age 13, he expressed strong interest in art as a career and was apprenticed to a cameo cutter. While working days at his cameo lathe, Augustus also attended art classes at New York's Cooper Union and the National Academy of Design.

At 19, with his apprenticeship completed and his mind set on becoming a sculptor, he traveled to Paris where he studied at the renowned École des Beaux-Arts. In 1870, he left Paris for Rome, where, for the next five years, he studied classical art and architecture and worked on his first commissions. Here, he also met an American art student, Augusta Homer, whom he later married. In 1876 he received his first major commission: a monument to Civil War Adm. David Glasgow Farragut. Unveiled in New York in 1881, the work was a tremendous success; its combination of realism and allegory was a departure from previous American sculpture. Saint-Gaudens' fame grew, and other commissions were quickly forthcoming.



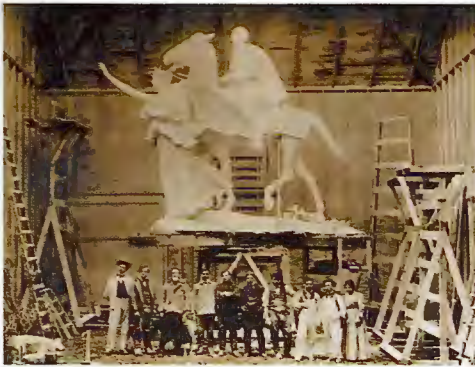
Saint-Gaudens and students at the Art Students League, c.1888

Saint-Gaudens' increased prominence allowed him to pursue his strong interest in teaching, something he did steadily from 1888 to 1897. He tutored young artists privately, taught at the Art Students League, and took on a large number of assistants. He was also an artistic advisor to the Columbian Exposition of 1893, an avid supporter of the American Academy in Rome, and part of the MacMillan Commission, which made recommendations for the architectural and artistic preservation and improvement of the Nation's Capital.

Saint-Gaudens's greatest legacy may be his public monuments, such as the Sherman Monument in New York's Central Park and his "Standing Lincoln" in Chicago, one of the finest representations of the Civil War President. Infused with both realism and idealism, Saint-Gaudens' monuments had a dynamic quality not seen before in American sculpture. The monument to Gen. William T. Sherman is a dramatic example of this technique, with the winged Victory leading a resolute Sherman on his march to the sea. He produced other enduring and distinctive public sculpture, such as the Adams Memorial, the Peter Cooper Monument, and the Gen. John A. Logan Monument. Perhaps his greatest achievement during this period was the Shaw Memorial, unveiled in Boston in 1897. Described as Saint-Gaudens' "symphony in bronze," this masterpiece took 14 years to complete.

Saint-Gaudens pioneered the integration of architecture, landscape design, and monumental sculpture, collaborating with leading architects like Stanford White to create innovative and unique settings for his works.

After being diagnosed with cancer in 1900, Saint-Gaudens decided to make Cornish his home year



Model of the Sherman Monument, Cornish, N.H. c. 1901



Diana, Second Version, 1892

round. For the next seven years, despite diminishing energy, he continued to work, producing a steady stream of reliefs and public sculpture. Following his death on August 3, 1907, his wife, Augusta, and their son, Homer, continued to summer at Aspet. In 1919, they established the Saint-Gaudens Memorial, an organization dedicated to preserving the place as an historic site. In 1965, the Memorial donated the property to the National Park Service.

Cameos, Medals, and Coins

Saint-Gaudens began his artistic career working in a form of miniature relief sculpture, the cameo. Apprenticed for six years in his youth to a cameo cutter, he produced a host of beautifully delicate cameos in both shell and stone. Later in life he created other masterpieces in miniature: medals and coins. He did commemorative medals for the Centennial of George Washington's inauguration in 1889, the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, and the Theodore Roosevelt Special Inaugural



medal in 1905. At the request of President Roosevelt in 1904, Saint-Gaudens designed three coins for the U.S. Mint: a one cent piece and the ten and twenty dollar gold pieces. Roosevelt and Saint-Gaudens wanted to evoke the beauty of the high relief coins of ancient Greece and Rome. With this commission, Saint-Gaudens became the first sculptor to fully design an American coin. After initial problems in producing coins in such high relief, the gold pieces were finally issued a few months after Saint-Gaudens' death in 1907,

and were minted until 1933. The obverse of the twenty dollar coin, "the double eagle," featuring the standing liberty, is still used today for United States gold bullion coins. To many artists and collectors, Saint-Gaudens' design remains the most beautiful of American coins.

Stone cameos of Mary Queen of Scots, 1873, and Mars, 1873. Ten and twenty dollar gold pieces, 1909 and 1907 respectively.



Portrait Reliefs

Among Saint-Gaudens' crowning achievements are his portrait reliefs. Considered the most complicated and difficult type of sculpture, bas-relief (low relief) is often likened to a "drawing in clay." As such, relief does not deal with actual form but the appearance of form. Details and perspective must be conveyed by means of light falling on subtle contours of the surface.

Saint-Gaudens' reliefs are found in a variety of media, including bronze, wood, marble, and plas-

ter, and show a vitality and liveliness rarely seen in this form. His work demonstrates not only beauty of composition, but subtlety of expression and an insight into the character of the subject. Muralist Kenyon Cox called him "the most complete master of relief since the fifteenth century."

Many prominent individuals, such as Cornelius Vanderbilt and Samuel Gray Ward, commissioned Saint-Gaudens to model portraits of them and their families. As a

result, he produced more than 100 portrait reliefs, ranging from compositions in low relief like those of his wife Augusta, his neighbor's son William E. Beaman, and the Scottish author Robert Louis Stevenson, one of his most popular subjects, to the very high relief of Louise Howland.



Augusta Homer Saint-Gaudens, 1906



Louise Howland, 1884



Robert Louis Stevenson, 1888

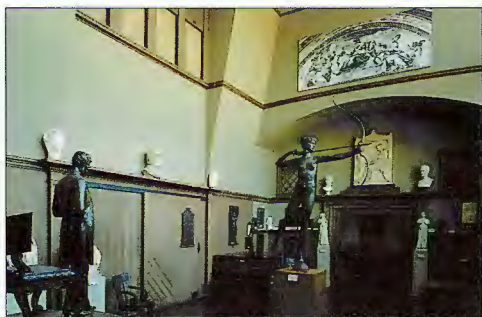


William E. Beaman, 1885

Touring Saint-Gaudens

Welcome to the home, gardens, and studios of one of America's greatest sculptors. This was Saint-Gaudens' summer residence from 1885-97 and his permanent home from 1900 until his death in 1907. The following points of interest are keyed by number to the painting.

1 Little Studio Built in 1904 after designs by architect George Fletcher Babb, this building replaced a barn that Saint-Gaudens had earlier converted into a studio where he could work on the "Standing Lincoln" monument; sketches were later enlarged and completed by his assistants in a much larger studio nearby, lost to fire in 1944. The pergola, with its Doric columns, was designed by Saint-Gaudens in 1889 following a trip to Italy. Red stucco walls and casts from the Parthenon frieze complete the desired Mediterranean effect. The building now contains works by Saint-Gaudens and a museum store in the former plaster-casting room.



Interior, Little Studio

2 Aspet Built about 1800 as an inn, this Federal style, brick house was known locally as Huggins' Folly. Saint-Gaudens renamed it Aspet in honor of his father's French birthplace and, after 1885, added dormers and the west porch piazza with its Ionic columns. The house retains original furnishings and decorative objects from Saint-Gaudens' travels. The majestic tree in front is a thornless honey locust, planted in 1886.

3 Flower Garden Old-fashioned perennials, enclosed by pine and hemlock hedges, echo Italian formal gardens. Saint-Gaudens was personally involved in all aspects of planning and developing the landscape around Aspet.

4 Adams Memorial (1891/1974) This is a recast of the bronze funerary sculpture commissioned by the historian Henry Adams for his wife Clover, located in Washington, D.C.'s Rock Creek Cemetery. Adams' own name for it was "The Peace of God." Saint-Gaudens called it "The Mystery of the Hereafter...beyond pain and beyond joy."

5 Bowling Green Saint-Gaudens used this area to play the sport of lawn bowls.

6 Shaw Memorial (1897/1900) This is Saint-Gaudens' final version of the monument to the Civil War service of the Massachusetts 54th Regiment of African American Volunteers. An original and unique cast of the memorial, it differs slightly from the original in Boston, which took Saint-Gaudens 14 years to complete.

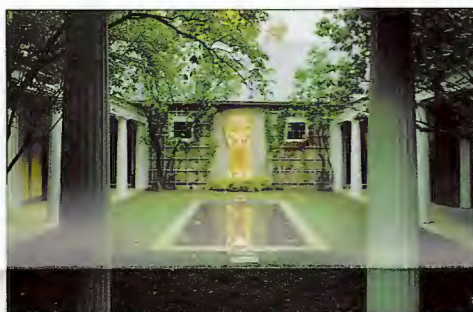
7 Stable and Ice House Built prior to 1885, and remodeled in 1891, the ice house was used to store blocks of ice cut during winter from nearby Blow-Me-Down Pond. Exhibited here are horse-drawn vehicles, including a sleigh.

8 Cutting Garden A former vegetable garden, this area is now planted with annuals to replenish flower arrangements. Efforts are made to propagate historic plant varieties.

9 Farragut Monument (1881) Saint-Gaudens' first commission for a public monument was this memorial commemorating Civil War Adm. David Glasgow Farragut. Architect Stanford White assisted in the design of the pedestal/base, the first of many collaborations with Saint-Gaudens. The great success of this work assured Saint-Gaudens' reputation as a leading sculptor.

10 Picture Gallery This original outbuilding was adapted in 1948 as a gallery for changing art exhibitions sponsored by the trustees of the Saint-Gaudens Memorial.

11 New Gallery In 1948, four years after a devastating fire destroyed the two-and-a-half-story Studio of the Caryatids, the Saint-Gaudens Memorial trustees remodeled two remaining outbuildings into exhibition galleries. Architect John Ames added a Roman-style atrium and pool to the complex. Exhibits include portrait reliefs, designs for the 1907 U.S. gold coinage, medals, and cameos by Saint-Gaudens.



Atrium and pool, New Gallery

12 Ravine Studio Built about 1900 and used by Saint-Gaudens' assistants for marble carving, this building also served for sculpture production after the 1904 studio fire. Restored in 1969, it now provides a workshop for the sculptor-in-residence.

13 Ravine Trail This self-guiding, quarter-mile nature trail begins at the Ravine Studio and follows an old cart path along Blow-Me-Up Brook. It terminates at the Temple. At the lower end is the swimming hole built by Saint-Gaudens.

14 Temple Designed in 1905 as a set for a play presented by artists of the Cornish Colony on the 20th anniversary of Saint-Gaudens' coming to Cornish, the temple was later redone in marble and now holds the remains of the Saint-Gaudens family.

15 Blow-Me-Down Trail This two-mile scenic hiking trail descends to the mill pond through the Blow-Me-Down Natural Area, 80 acres of woodlands that feature mature stands of white pine.



Illustration by L. Kenneth Townsend

About Your Visit

Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site is located just off N.H. 12A in Cornish, N.H. It is 12 miles south of West Lebanon, N.H., 12 miles north of Claremont, N.H., and 2 miles from Windsor, Vt. From Windsor, cross the covered bridge and turn left on N.H. 12A. The site may also be reached from exit 20 (West Lebanon) on I-89, then south on N.H. 12A, or from exit 8 (Ascunet) on I-91, then east to N.H. 12A north.

There are no public telephones, food service, or camping facilities available at the park. These services may be found in neighboring communities. Restrooms are located at the parking area. They are wheelchair-accessible.

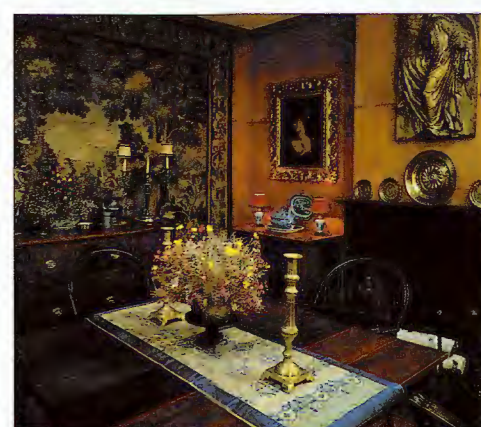


Hours and Fees The site is open daily from late May through late October. The buildings are open from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The grounds are open until dusk. An admission fee is charged for persons over 16 years of age. As a federal fee area, Golden Age, Golden Access, and Golden Eagle passports are honored.

For Your Safety Be alert for traffic when crossing from the parking lot, and take care while touring the park. The marble steps are slippery when wet, and brick paths may be uneven. Also, bees and poison ivy may be present near the forest and trails.

Accessibility Some buildings and areas of the site (nos. 2, 3, 10, 12, 13, and 15 above) are not wheelchair accessible. Interpretive information in Braille, closed-captioned video, audio tape, and interactive computer formats is available at the Little Studio (no. 1).

Administration Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. Questions or comments may be sent to the Superintendent, Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site, R.R. 3, Box 73, Cornish, NH 03745-9704, or phone (603) 675-2175. You can reach Saint Gaudens at www.nps.gov/saga on the Internet.



The dining room at Aspet



Flower garden