

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. Over the years he transformed the grounds with gardens, hedges, and recreation areas, including a swimming pool, bowling green, and nine-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 porch with columns.

As his popularity grew and commissions poured in, Saint-Gaudens built a large studio where his assistants worked. 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: 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 Paul Manship, Herbert Adams, and Louis St. Gaudens, brother of Augustus. They created a dynamic social environment, at whose center 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. It is now the final resting place of Saint-Gaudens and his family.

After the death of Saint-Gaudens 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 here at the 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. In Rome Saint-Gaudens 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 marked a departure from previous American sculpture. Saint-Gaudens' fame grew, and other commissions were quickly forthcoming.



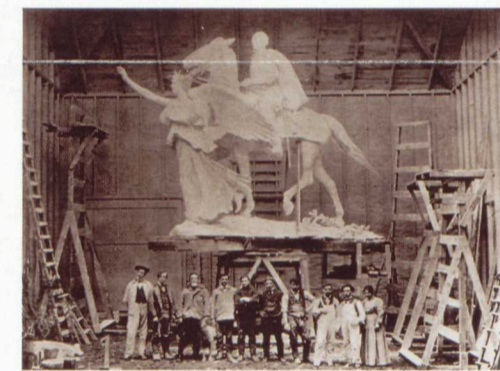
Saint-Gaudens and students at the Art Students League, c. 1888

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' 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, Peter Cooper Monument, and 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



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



Diana, Second Version, 1892

home year 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 a 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: the one cent piece and the 10 and 20 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 fully to design an American coin. After initial problems in producing coins in such high relief, the

gold pieces were issued a few months after the death of Saint-Gaudens in 1907 and were minted until 1933. The obverse of the 20 dollar "double eagle" coin, featuring the standing liberty, is still used for United States gold bullion coins. For many artists and collectors, Saint-Gaudens' design remains the most beautiful of American coins.

Stone cameos (left) of Mary Queen of Scots, 1873, and Mars, 1873. Ten and 20 dollar gold pieces (right), 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) has been likened to "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 surface contours.

Saint-Gaudens' reliefs are found in a variety of media, including

bronze, wood, marble, and plaster, and show a vitality and liveliness rarely seen in this form. His work demonstrates not only beauty in its composition but subtlety of expression and 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, like Cornelius Vanderbilt and Samuel Gray Ward, commissioned Saint-Gaudens to model portraits of

them and their families. He produced more than 100 such portrait reliefs (right).

Compositions in low relief include those of his wife Augusta, his neighbor's son William E. Beaman, and Scottish writer Robert Louis Stevenson, one of his most popular subjects. The portrait of Louise Howland (right) is in very high relief.



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 to 1897 and his permanent home from 1900 until his death in 1907. Numbers key these points of interest to the painting.

1 Visitor Center Trail This is your route to the visitor center.

2 Visitor Center Located here are the information desk, auditorium and orientation film, museum shop, drinking fountain, and restrooms.

3 Farragut Monument (1881) Saint-Gaudens' first commissioned public monument commemorated Civil War Adm. David Glasgow Farragut. Its great success assured Saint-Gaudens' reputation as a leading sculptor. Architect Stanford White helped design the pedestal, their first of many collaborations.



Interior, Little Studio

4 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.

5 New Gallery & Atrium After fire destroyed the Studio of the Caryatids, two remaining outbuildings were remodeled in 1948 as exhibition galleries. Architect John Ames added a Roman-style atrium and pool. Exhibits include portrait reliefs, designs for the 1907 U.S. gold coinage, medals, and cameos by Saint-Gaudens.



Atrium and pool, New Gallery

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

7 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 in Boston. Original and unique, the cast differs slightly from the original, which Saint-Gaudens took 14 years to complete.

8 Stable and Ice House Built before 1885 and remodeled in 1891, the ice house stored blocks of ice cut from Blow-Me-Down Pond. It now exhibits horse-drawn vehicles.

9 Cutting Garden This former vegetable garden is now planted with historic varieties of annuals used to replenish flower arrangements.

10 Adams Memorial (1891/1974) This is a recast of the bronze funerary sculpture commissioned by historian Henry Adams for his wife Clover and located in Rock Creek Cemetery in Washington, D.C. Adams called it "The Peace of

God;" Saint-Gaudens called it "The Mystery of the Hereafter . . . beyond pain and beyond joy."

11 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.

12 Little Studio Built in 1904 after designs by architect George Fletcher Babb, this building replaced a barn that Saint-Gaudens had converted into a studio in 1885. He worked here by himself. His assistants later enlarged and completed his sketches in a larger studio nearby, lost to fire in 1944. Saint-Gaudens designed the pergola with Doric columns in 1889 after a trip to Italy. Red stucco walls and casts from the Parthenon frieze complete the desired Mediterranean effect. The building now exhibits works by Saint-Gaudens.

13 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 later 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.

14 Ravine Studio Built about 1900, this studio was used by Saint-Gaudens' assistants for marble carving and sculpture production. Restored in 1969, it now provides a workshop for the sculptor-in-residence.

15 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.

16 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 holds the Saint-Gaudens family ashes.

17 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 forest featuring mature stands of white pine.

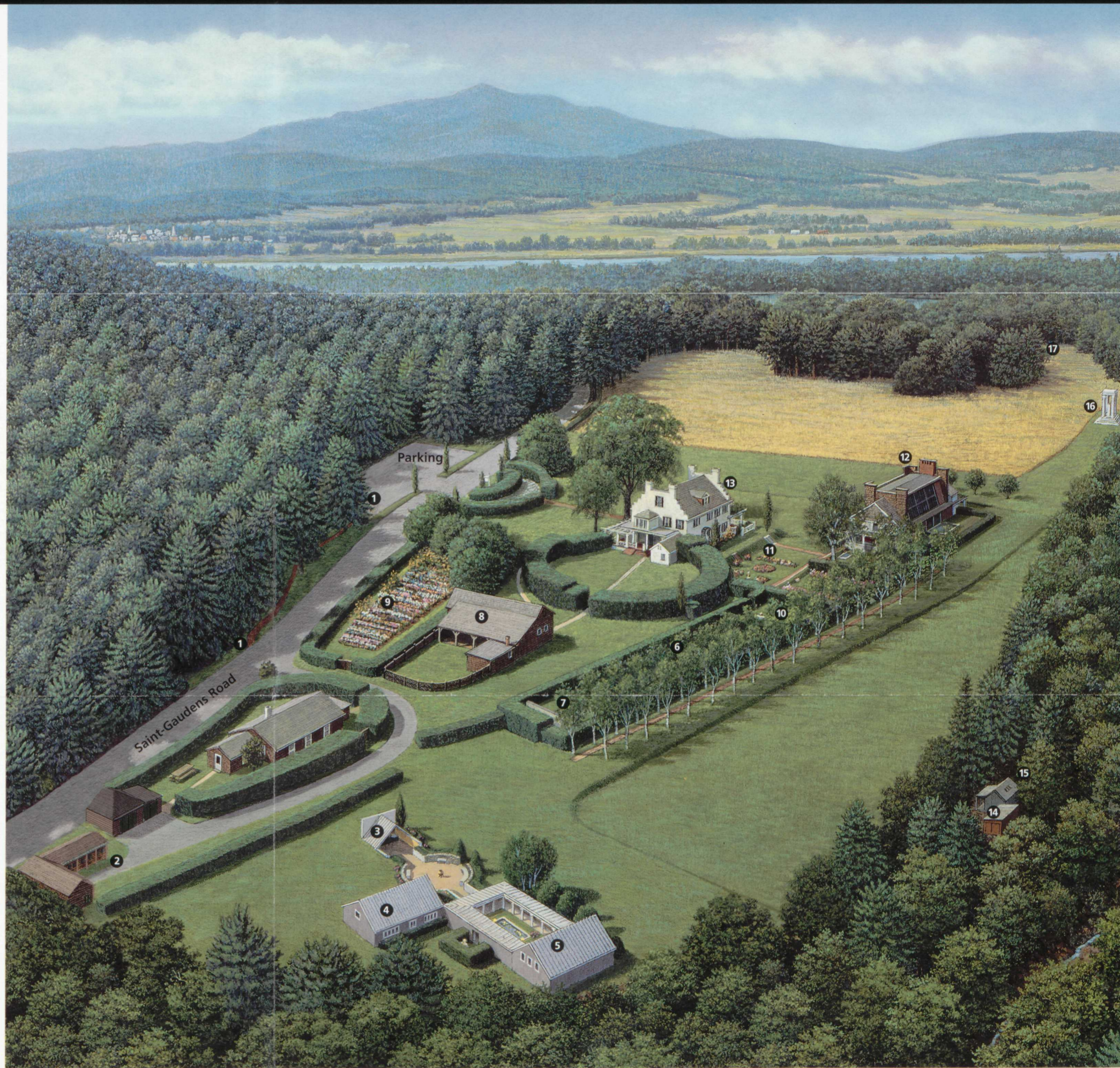


ILLUSTRATION NPS/L. KENNETH TOWNSEND, UPDATED 2003 BY ELIOT COHEN

About Your Visit

Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site is 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 two miles from Windsor, Vt.



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From Windsor, cross the covered bridge and turn left on N.H. 12A. From I-89 take exit 20 (West Lebanon) and go south on N.H. 12A. From I-91 take exit 8 (Ascutney) and go east to N.H. 12A north.

The park has no public telephone, food service, or camping facilities, but neighboring communities offer these services. The visitor center has wheelchair-accessible restrooms.

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., and the grounds until dusk. There is an admission fee for persons more than 16 years of age. This is a federal fee area, and Golden Age, Golden Access, Golden Eagle, and National Park Passes are honored.

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

Accessibility Some buildings and areas of the site (nos. 4, 11, 13, 14, 15, and 17 above) are not wheelchair accessible. Interpretive information in Braille, closed-captioned video, audio tape, and interactive computer formats is available at the visitor center (no. 2).

For More Information Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site 139 Saint-Gaudens Rd., Cornish, NH 03745-9704 603-675-2175 or www.nps.gov/saga

Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site is one of more than 380 parks in the National Park System. Visit www.nps.gov to learn more about parks and National Park Service programs in America's communities.



Dining room at Aspet



Flower garden