

31 Saint-Gaudens National Historical Site

Cornish, New Hampshire



Tucked away amongst the peaceful woods and nearby Connecticut River sits the 33 acre estate of Augustus Saint-Gaudens (1848–1907), one of America’s most accomplished sculptors.

Born in Dublin, Ireland, Saint-Gaudens was raised in New York City, spent his artistic study in Europe, and returned to New York City, where his career as a sculptor flourished.

Amongst his most notable works are the bronze memorial to Civil War Admiral David Farragut, unveiled in 1881 in Madison Square Park in New York City, and the “Standing Lincoln” monument, unveiled in 1887 in Lincoln Park, Chicago. Saint-Gaudens was also the first sculptor to design an American coin. The \$20 gold piece he crafted in 1907 at the request of Theodore Roosevelt, is considered this country's most beautiful coin and is called a "Saint-Gaudens" by coin collectors.

In 1900, after a cancer diagnosis, Saint-Gaudens moved his family to Cornish, New Hampshire, where they had spent the previous 15 summers. As a resident of Cornish, Saint-Gaudens drew over 100 artists, sculptors, designers and politicians to the area, where he encouraged a summer colony of friends, family, those in his Art Students League of New York, and assistants he mentored over the years. Known as “The Cornish Colony,” the gathering thrived from 1885 through the years of World War I. Among those drawn to the “Cornish Colony” was the Parrish family, including popular artist Maxfield Parrish, who created luminous paintings of Connecticut River Valley scenes.

Saint-Gaudens died on August 3, 1907 at the age of 59. Today, his homestead is a National Historic Landmark and listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Besides the Appalachian National Scenic Trail, Saint-Gaudens is the only National Park Service site in New Hampshire. Visitors can tour “Aspet,” the family’s residence; the Little Studio, which served as his personal workshop, office and library; the New Studio and Art Gallery; the formal gardens, which are the setting for other notable reproductions; and, marble Temple with altar, containing the sculptor's ashes. Over 100 works of art are displayed throughout the grounds and exhibited in the galleries.

Visitors to Aspet will find the first floor dining room, living room and parlor as they appeared in Saint-Gaudens' lifetime. Leaving the house by way of the piazza, visitors walk through the formal gardens behind the house and enter the Little Studio, where bronze and plaster casts of some of Saint-Gaudens' most noted works and a collection of his low-relief portraits are displayed. The sculptor's desk and reference library are featured, as well as drawers beneath the bookshelves containing letters and papers saved by Saint-Gaudens.

Displayed on the grounds during the summer are a cast of the seated Lincoln and original base of the Farragut statue in New York's Madison Square. Strikingly displayed in an open front shelter are plaster cast sections of the Shaw Memorial, donated to the Saint-Gaudens Memorial by the Albright Art Gallery of Buffalo. A figurative Sculptor-in-Residence works in the historic Ravine Studio and explains the techniques used by Saint-Gaudens when creating sculptures found in the park.

The extensive gardens were designed by Augustus Saint-Gaudens and, although the content has changed over the years, the over-all design remains that of the sculptor's original vision.

Visitors can choose from several guided tours, or a unique self-guided tour, featuring The National Park Service's mobile phone/Ipod app, which provides audio tours of the park's historic buildings and monuments, images and information about Saint-Gaudens' artwork, and a guide to the trail system.

There are two hiking trails on the property, the Ravine Trail (0.25 miles) and the Blow-Me-Down Trail (1.5 miles). The Ravine Trail skirts the edge of the Blow-Me-Up Brook, while the Blow-Me-Down Trail offers glimpses of the Blow-Me-Down Brook, historical Mill and Pond. Over 200 species of birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and fish are found at Saint-Gaudens National Historical Site.

Saint-Gaudens National Historical Site is located at 139 Saint Gaudens Road in Cornish, New Hampshire, one-half mile from NH Route 12A and 12 miles south of West Lebanon, New Hampshire.

SOURCES:

<http://www.crjc.org/heritage/N08-4.htm>

<http://www.nps.gov/saga/index.htm>